

New Research Shows SEARCH ADS DRIVE BRAND AWARENESS

WRITTEN BY
Bao Lam
Koppel Verma

PUBLISHED
June 2014

THE **RUNDOWN**

What if search advertising is able to impact not just click-throughs and conversions but also traditional brand metrics? A new meta-analysis of 61 studies by Google and Ipsos MediaCT measured the impact of search ads on brand awareness, and the results were clearly positive—search ads increased top-of-mind awareness and unaided brand awareness. This finding and other results shown below prove that search ads are moving more needles than marketers might realize.

think with **Google**[™]

Search is no stranger to advertising. It's been around for over a decade—or *only* a decade, depending on your perspective. It's become a vital channel for driving conversions and direct response. And compared with other marketing tactics, the benefits are twofold: search campaigns deliver clear results, and those results are easy to measure against spend.

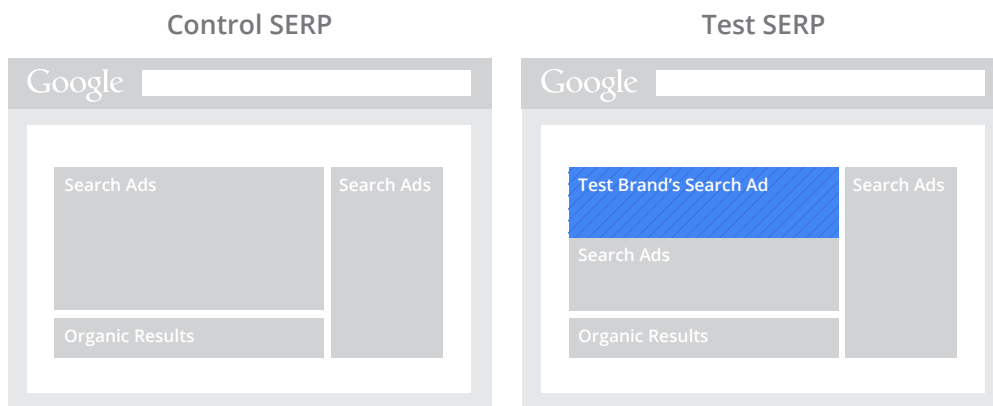
But the effectiveness of search advertising doesn't always translate into a prominent place in a brand's media plan. Search tends to be used for "lower funnel" direct-response goals, and the spend is often determined after budget has already been allocated to other media. This stems from the assumption that search only drives conversion and doesn't have an effect further up the funnel on brand awareness.

But what if search *does* impact brand metrics?

Throughout 2013, Google and Ipsos MediaCT conducted 61 simulated search experiments to measure the impact of search ads on brand awareness. The results show that search has a positive impact on both top-of-mind awareness and unaided brand awareness even when the consumer doesn't click on the ad.

In each of the studies, 800 U.S. consumers who met the advertiser's specific target criteria participated in a simulated online search scenario. The consumers were prompted to search for a specific category keyword (for example, "hiking boots" or "small cars") on their desktop or laptop. They were then shown either a Control search engine results page (SERP) or Test SERP spotlighting one of 12 categories: apparel and durables, auto, B2B, classified and local, consumer packaged goods (CPG), education, financial services, healthcare, media and entertainment, retail, tech and travel.

The Test SERP featured the test brand in the top search ad position, while the Control group did not feature an ad from the brand at all. The organic results of the SERP were not manipulated in any way.

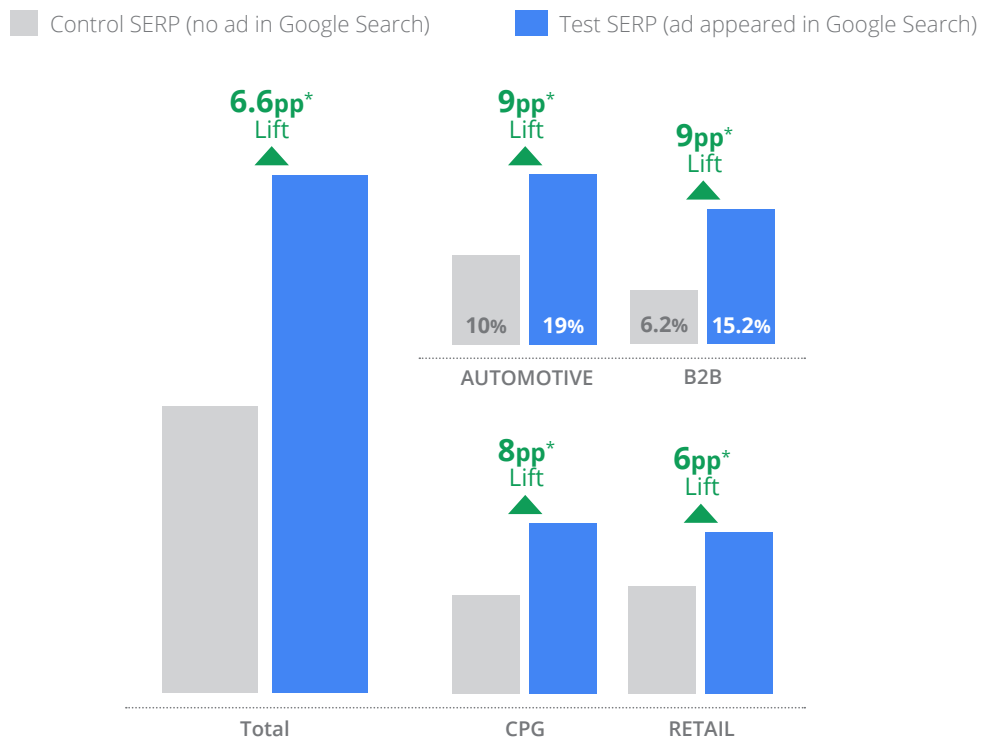


Search ads lift brand awareness

Results showed that search ads have a clear and positive impact on brand awareness. When respondents were asked what brand first came to mind when thinking about a specific category keyword, an average of 14.8% in the Test group named the test brand, while just 8.2% of the Control group named the same brand.¹ That's a 6.6 percentage point increase or an average 80% lift in top-of-mind awareness.

The average increase in top-of-mind awareness was also calculated for verticals with five or more studies. In auto and B2B, the average top-of-mind awareness lift was as high as 9 percentage points. CPG saw an average lift of 8 percentage points, and retail followed closely at 6 percentage points.

Top-of-mind awareness was higher among consumers who saw the test brand's ad in a search engine results page (SERP)



Source: Google/Ipsos MediaCT, Search for Brands Industry Research, June 2014. 61 studies across 12 verticals with 800 U.S. consumers. *Percentage Points. 6.6pp is the average lift across 12 verticals. Statistically significant lift at the 95% confidence level across all categories.

Search ads lifted unaided brand awareness as well. When respondents were prompted to name up to four more brands related to the specific category keyword, total unaided awareness among all brands named was 26.7% in the Test group versus 17.5% in the Control group, representing an average lift of 9.2 percentage points.²

Brand opportunities via search ads

The increases in brand awareness show that search advertising is, in the end, *advertising*—an opportunity for a brand message to impact a target audience and influence its market perception. While TV, print, out-of-home and other media are more typical for brand marketing, search advertising presents a powerful, cost-effective channel to drive brand metrics.

And unlike those more traditional channels, search can impact brand awareness in the moments that matter to consumers, when they are shopping and gathering product information; in other words, brands get access to an interested audience at the *moment the consumers are interested*.

Savvy marketers are taking advantage of search advertising as a way to showcase their brands prominently and distinctly among category-interested—albeit undecided—consumers. They have found that search is a way to drive awareness and consideration, not just conversions.

To reach your interested audience at the moments that matter:

- Buy category keywords (in addition to your brand terms) to connect with the largest possible search audience at the most effective moments of their purchasing process.
- Use the top ad slot and image search formats to help your brand stand out from other results.
- Consider search advertising for more than driving cost-efficient conversions (though it's good at that, too).

Similar to previous brand value of search studies for [United Airlines](#) and the [Travel Industry](#), this study highlights the role that search advertising can play in a brand's marketing plan. In addition, it proves the validity of putting search to work in tandem with web content, television, print and other traditional media channels. Search advertising provides brand marketers with an invaluable tool to reach large, interested audiences and accomplish their broad brand objectives.

For more information on Search for Brands, click [here](#).

About the methodology

From January to December 2013, Google partnered with Ipsos MediaCT to conduct 61 simulated search experiments to measure the impact of search ads on key brand metrics: top-of-mind awareness and unaided brand awareness. In each study, in-target respondents were prompted to search for a category keyword on their desktop or laptop and were then exposed to either a Test search engine results page (SERP) or a Control SERP. The Test SERP featured the test brand in the top search ad position, with all other ads on the page moved down by one position. The Control did not feature an ad from the test brand at all. The organic results of the SERP were not manipulated in any way.

Sources

- 1 Google/Ipsos MediaCT, Search for Brands Industry Research, June 2014. Question: Thinking about specific brands of X [where X is a category keyword e.g. small cars], which one brand comes to mind?
 - 2 Google/Ipsos MediaCT, Search for Brands Industry Research, June 2014. Question: Now please tell us what other brands of X [where X is a category keyword e.g. small cars] come to mind. If you cannot think of any brands, check the box labeled "Don't know."
-