Search for Brands
Brand Marketer Guide

Table of Contents

think with **Google**

Introduction: Meet your interested audience

Until now, search ads haven't been part of the brand marketer's standard toolkit. They've been used primarily (and with great success) at the bottom of the funnel, where online sales and leads are generated.

But innovative brand marketers are now finding that search ads can do a lot more than drive direct sales. Search today provides access to a vast "interested audience," at all stages of the purchase funnel. Leading advertisers are using search ads to engage this audience, raising awareness and increasing preference for their brands.

This guide shows why brand marketing with search ads is proving effective and explains the techniques used by advertisers who are making it work. We'll look at how leading advertisers use search to do the following:

- Understand their current and potential customers
- Reach a vast, interested audience
- Engage and influence consumers at the moments when they're most receptive

We'll show how these advertisers are measuring the success of their brand marketing on search, including the results of a meta-study conducted by Google and IPSOS MediaCT that shows the effect search ads can have on brand awareness.

Finally we'll share success stories from three leading brand advertisers—Fiat, Intel and L'Oréal Paris —and present a set of questions that will help you understand whether search could be effective for your brand marketing.

Why does search work for branding today?

Constant connectivity has made search a part of people's everyday lives, as they switch from desktop to tablet to smartphone and back.[1]

Today we don't need to wait until we get home to search. We don't need to remember names from TV ads, scribble down phone numbers from radio ads, or save flyers. All this, and much more, is now on demand and in our hands.

A few years ago, the "First Moment of Truth" at store shelves began to be preceded by at-home moments of research on laptops and desktops—what became known as the "Zero Moment of Truth." Now there are billions of constantly connected "consumer moments" each day: a flood of interest in categories and brands as demonstrated at home, at work, in stores, at school and on the go.

These moments give brands a way to reach audiences throughout the purchase journey. They happen in context and, by virtue of the fact that a search took place, at exactly the times that people are most receptive.

Three factors make search work for innovative brand marketers:

- It's part of people's lives, making it the world's largest focus group
- It reaches a vast, interested audience, at every stage of the customer journey
- It influences that audience at the moments people are most receptive

To understand why search can prove so useful for brand marketers, let's look in more detail at how people search today.

How people search today

In today's constantly connected world, search happens at all times of the day and throughout the purchase journey. For the purposes of brand marketing, three types of search really count:
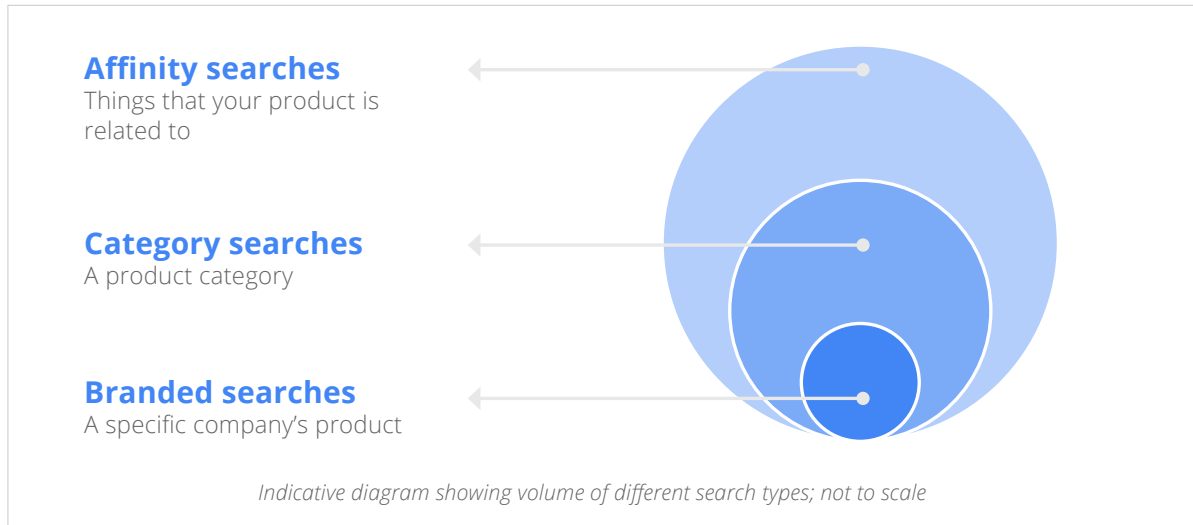
Branded Searches	These are searches where a brand name is typed in, often with a product, such as "nike running shoes" or "nike flyknit." Awareness and consideration are obviously solved problems with these searches—the brand name is already specified, so driving sales is the goal.
Category Searches	These are for a general category, such as "running shoes." Multi-brand retailers and aggregators target these searches to drive sales, as do many brands with the goal of driving sales to their own online stores. Today, more brands see that these searches offer a wider opportunity to build awareness and influence those who are interested but undecided.
Affinity Searches	These are the broadest types of searches, such as "marathon running" or "new york marathon." There's no product category here, let alone brand. But there is an interested audience. Pretty much every marathon runner wears running shoes, and you can bet that Nike, Adidas and New Balance would like them to wear their brands. Affinity searches are a wide-open opportunity for brands to increase awareness or preference.

All three of these search types happen daily at a huge volume across all product categories and industries. Here are some examples from the Auto, Consumer Electronics and CPG industries.

	Auto	Consumer Electronics	CPG
Branded Searches	ford focus	canon rebel t2i	pantene repair and protect
Category Searches	best compact car	digital slr reviews	moisturizing shampoo
Affinity Searches	fuel efficiency	taking great pictures	dry hair

At the branded level, people are already aware of your brand. At the category level, people haven't decided what brand they're interested in—they're considering. At the affinity level, they may not even be aware of your product or that it can solve their needs. Each of these searches is a chance to move someone down the funnel.
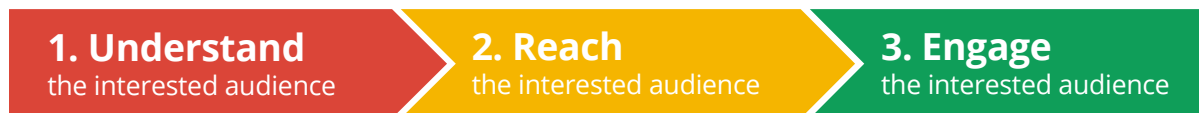
You can see that as searches grow broader, so do the opportunities to associate your brand with the attributes that you want to own. Additionally, as you expand from branded to category to affinity, the volume of searches you can address multiplies, increasing your reach dramatically.

Affinity searches
Things that your product is related to

Category searches
A product category

Branded searches
A specific company's product

Indicative diagram showing volume of different search types; not to scale

This is the stuff of brand marketers' dreams: an enormous audience, each member of which can be reached at his or her perfect moment of interest. It's why leading advertisers are increasingly using search as a brand marketing tool.

Building your brand with Search

So how do you take advantage of this opportunity? The best approach has three steps:

1. Understand the interested audience | **2. Reach** the interested audience | **3. Engage** the interested audience
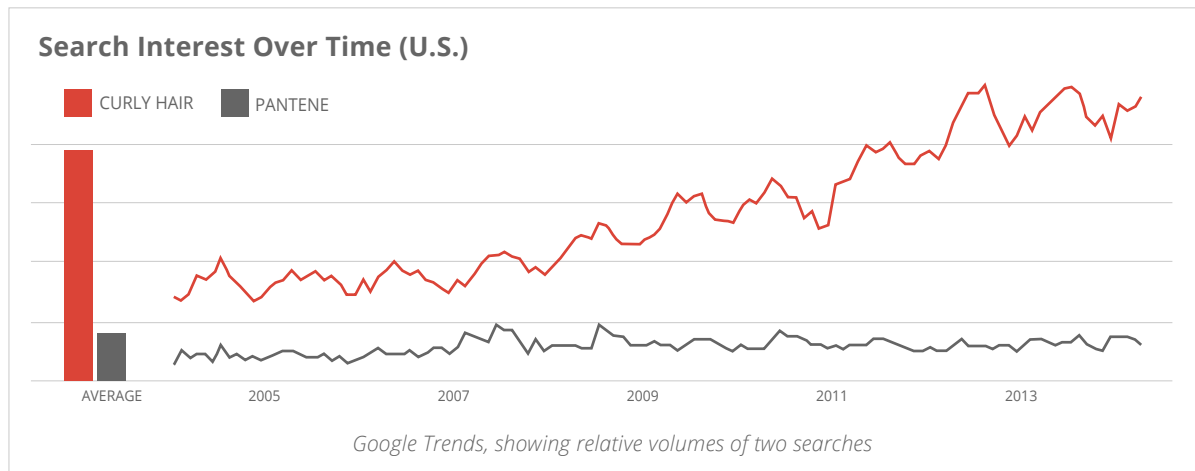
The rest of this guide explains each of these steps, later covering techniques for measuring success.

Understanding the interested audience

Brand marketers have always sought to get inside the minds of their audience. And that's where search *starts*.

Consider hair care: Using standard Google insight tools, you can see what people are searching for—and what they're interested in finding.

Let's start at the affinity level, with a search for "curly hair." Google Trends shows that interest is steadily growing in the United States. Although it doesn't show absolute volume, you can check relative volume by adding in a popular hair care brand. The volume of affinity queries for "curly hair" alone is often higher than the volume of branded queries for hair care brands themselves.

Search Interest Over Time (U.S.)

CURLY HAIR   PANTENE

AVERAGE   2005   2007   2009   2011   2013

Google Trends, showing relative volumes of two searches

This is a huge interested audience and a huge opportunity for the brands that grab it. It's just the start, too; the total size of the interested audience includes all related queries. For example, while the chart above shows the search volumes for the exact two-word query "curly hair," the interested audience is the sum of many more curly hair–related queries, such as "how to manage curly hair" and "hair styles for curly hair."

Let's dig deeper and look at what those who are searching are interested in finding. Google helps here: The organic results (that is, the basic unpaid search results in the left column, not marked "Ad") show you Google's own assessment of what this audience may be looking for, based on millions of past search queries.

Note: If you're doing this experiment, use Chrome's "Incognito mode" or the equivalent private browsing mode on other browsers. This stops Google from taking your personal search history into account and provides a standard set of results for a query.

In the case of "curly hair," you can see that there are tens of millions of organic results. That volume of content indirectly demonstrates the interest in the topic. Look closer at a sample of results and you'll see the specific area of interest: how to style curly hair.

Organic search results for "curly hair"

Here's the interesting bit: In this case, no brand appears in the organic results. Yet almost every large hair care brand has products for people with curly hair. Here, then, is an opportunity to reach a huge interested audience at precisely the moment people are thinking about the problem your product solves. Because there are no brands in the organic results, the ad spaces on the results page present a clear opportunity to reach this audience at this moment.

All the elements are here: a popular affinity query, a large interested audience, a clear view of what users are interested in … and the opportunity to reach them at the moment that matters. The next step is to take the same approach for all the queries your audience is searching for.

For hair care, using Keyword Planner or working with your search team to generate a list of similar queries could look something like this:

Chart showing relative interest in hair types
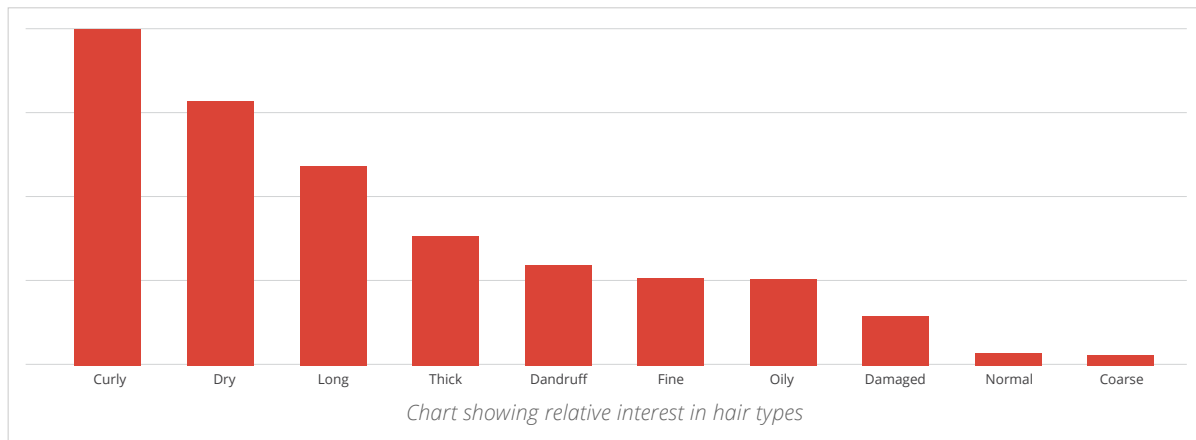
This information is invaluable. It not only shows you where the interest lies so you can target your search ads, but it can also help inform your wider marketing strategy—online and offline.

Note: There are many other ways in which search can help you understand your audience. It can tell you which terms people use to describe your products; how you're perceived in relation to other brands; where and when people are interested in your brand or the problems it solves; and it can even show rising trends. For more information, read the "Search Insights" series on thinkwithgoogle.com and ask your search team what they can provide.

Let's look at how this information can be put into practice, using search to reach the interested audience at the moments of interest.

Reaching the interested audience

Search operates at mass-media scale. Google alone handles over 100 *billion* searches every month. That creates opportunities such as the following on desktop and mobile:

Search results showing competitive coverage of an auto search term on desktop and mobile.
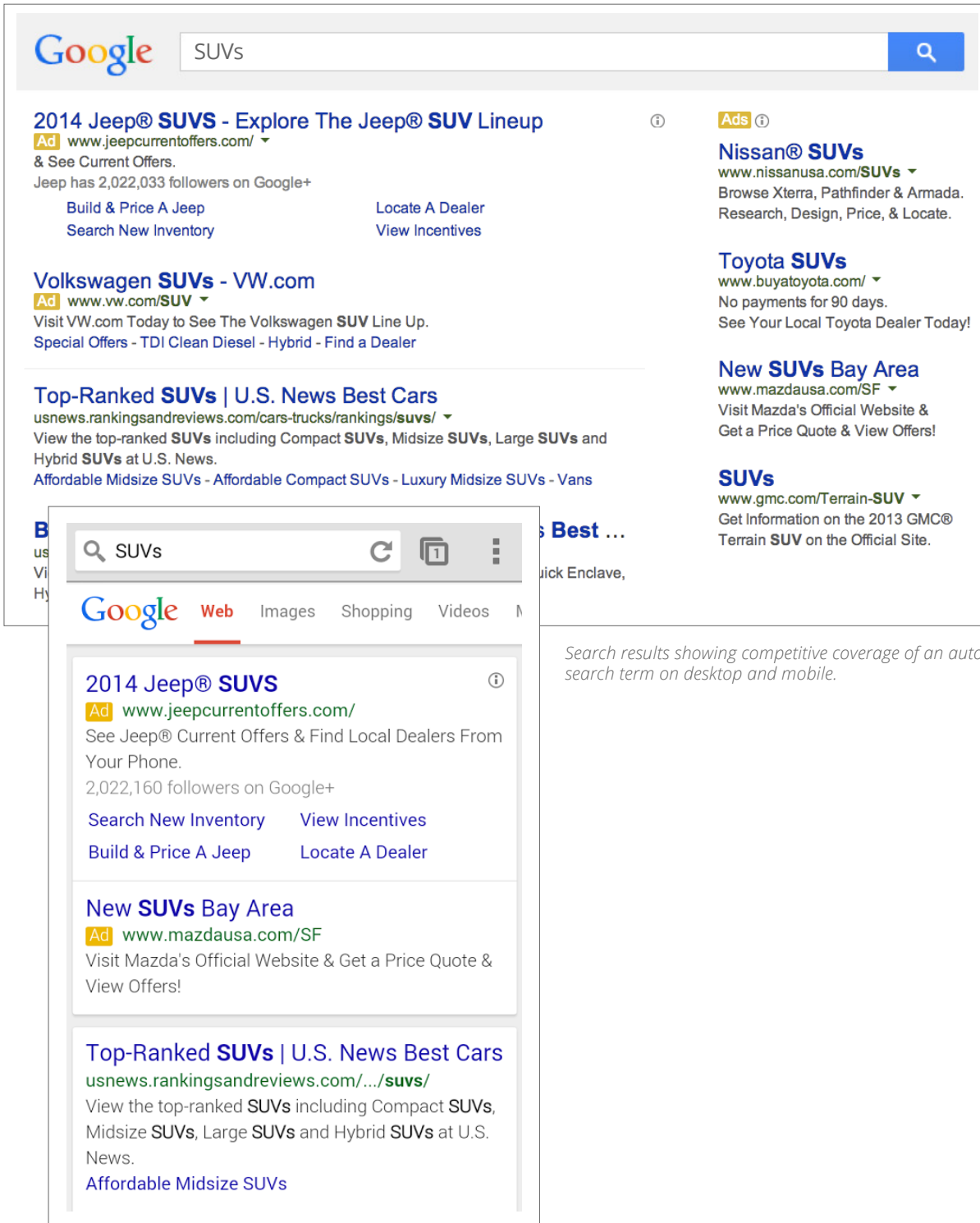
As you can see in this example, Jeep is in a good position. It is top of page and top of mind. If you're a brand marketer at a competitor who's not on the page, however, this picture should worry you. At the very moment someone is expressing interest in one of your product categories, you're not there.

To understand where these opportunities are, you need to take the search trends you've identified and decide where you want your brand to be present across branded, category and affinity keywords. For example, an energy drink company may want to be present on affinity searches for sports and individual athletes, but also on category searches such as "sugar free energy drinks."

Your search team can help you establish the search topics associated with your brand as well as the size of the interested audience for each topic. Generating keyword lists will help ensure that you cover all the different ways in which someone might search for topics related to your brand. For example, as mentioned above, while the search "curly hair" would cover a sizable chunk of interest in that topic, a hair care brand manager would also want to capture interest expressed in a different way, such as "how to manage curly hair" and "hair styles for curly hair."

Once keyword lists have been established for the topics you wish to cover, you need to know whether your ads are showing up against those keywords. You can check manually, but your search team can do this by topic (for example "curly hair," "dry hair") or by search type (as shown below).

Example chart showing advertiser coverage of search interest
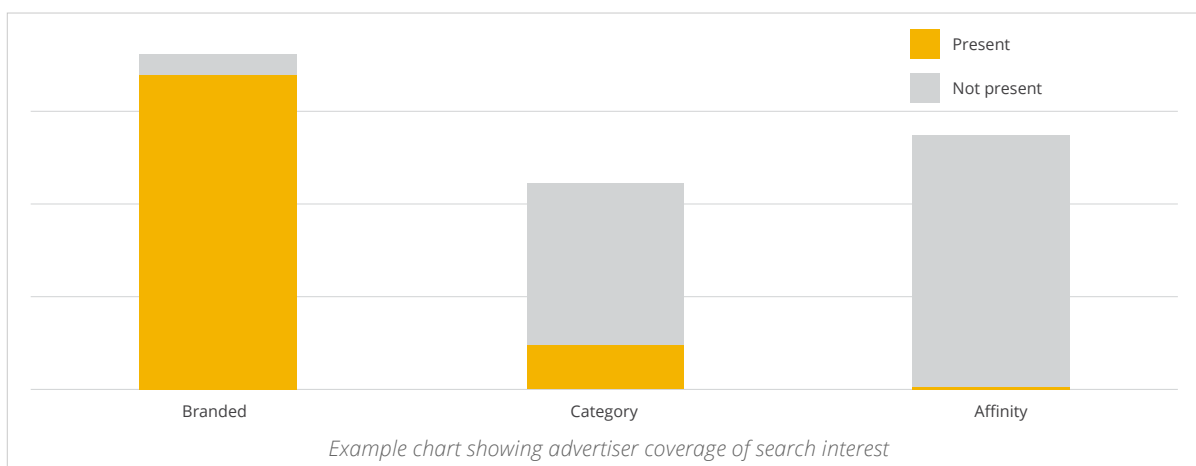
Note: You should look at this chart for desktop/tablet and mobile separately, as well as the two combined. It's likely that a very high percentage of searches in your industry come from mobile devices, and those searchers are no less valuable— you should ensure you're present for your interested audience on whatever device people are using.

Your Google account manager can also use actual Google data to show you how your performance compares to an average of key competitors, both in terms of impressions and clicks. This is the search equivalent of share of voice.

Your search team can estimate the spend needed to reach your desired audiences, or to reach your desired share of voice. They can also help you measure the brand results you get. (We'll discuss both of these later in the guide.)

All of this will help you see the opportunity available to you—or the challenge you need to address, if your competitors are owning your audience.

So someone has made a search that's relevant to your marketing goals, and you've reached them with an ad. You've ensured you were there. What determines your success from here? Two factors: the ad itself, and the brand experience the user gets after clicking it.
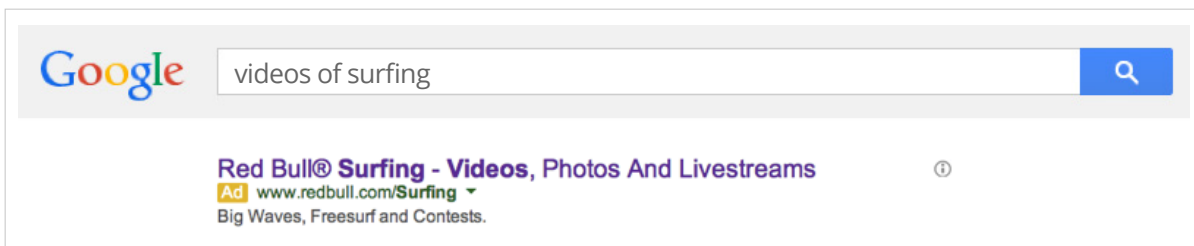
The ad they see

The first factor—the ad people see—has value simply as an impression. As mentioned in the introduction, research shows that search ads can increase unaided brand awareness (see "Measuring the Results," later in this guide). Some factors to consider:

1 Relevance

The key point: Your ads must be relevant to the search. If I search for dry hair, the ads I see should speak to dry hair, not to shampoo in general or just the brand. Search is built on relevance; searchers demand it and the system rewards it. Relevant ads get noticed more by searchers, get ranked more highly by search engines, and get you more influence per dollar.

Example: The Red Bull ad on this page is highly relevant to the search being performed. As noted earlier, organic (nonpaid) results can show you what is most relevant for a specific search. They represent Google's best assessment of what searchers are looking for.

Google | videos of surfing | 🔍

Red Bull® Surfing - Videos, Photos And Livestreams
Ad www.redbull.com/Surfing ▾   ⓘ
Big Waves, Freesurf and Contests.

2 Position

Top of page = top of mind. Your ad's position on a page is determined by a combination of how much you're prepared to pay for a click and the quality of your ad. Your search team or Google account manager can give you an estimate of where your ad will appear on the page based on those variables.

Example: The Intel ad at the top of this search results page is the most prominent content on the page.

Google | what is big data | 🔍

What Is Big Data - Take On Unstructured Data w/ Ease
Ad www.intel.com/BigData ▾
IT Leaders use Intel® Big Data
Intel has 564,069 followers on Google+

Big Data White Paper   Big Data Best Practices
Big Data Planning Guide   Cloud-Based Big Data

(intel)   **See a case study on Intel's use of Search for brand marketing located at the end of this guide.**   ▶
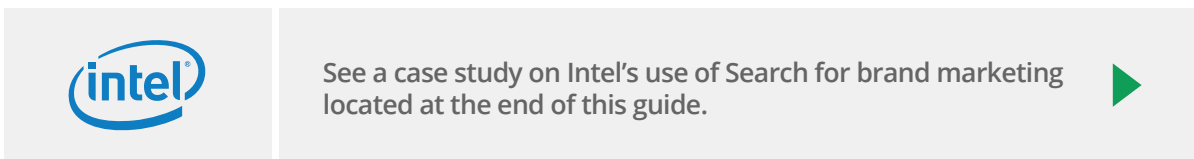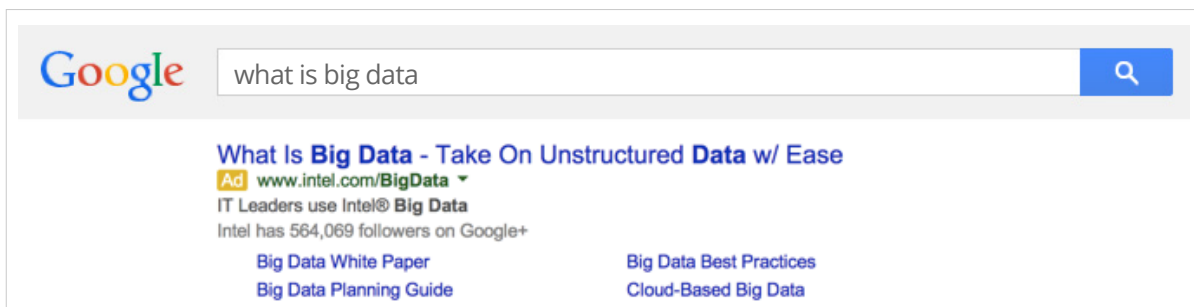
3 Ad content

All else being equal, more relevant content leads to more influence. An ad that offers highly relevant information and choices (such as sitelinks, a link to a store locator, catalog download or product reviews) will get more attention. "Ad extensions" like these are often available only to ads in the top slot, in which case you'll combine the benefits of ad content and position.

Example: The State Farm ad at the top of this page provides valuable information and choices, using ad extensions such as reviews, ratings, social and sitelinks.
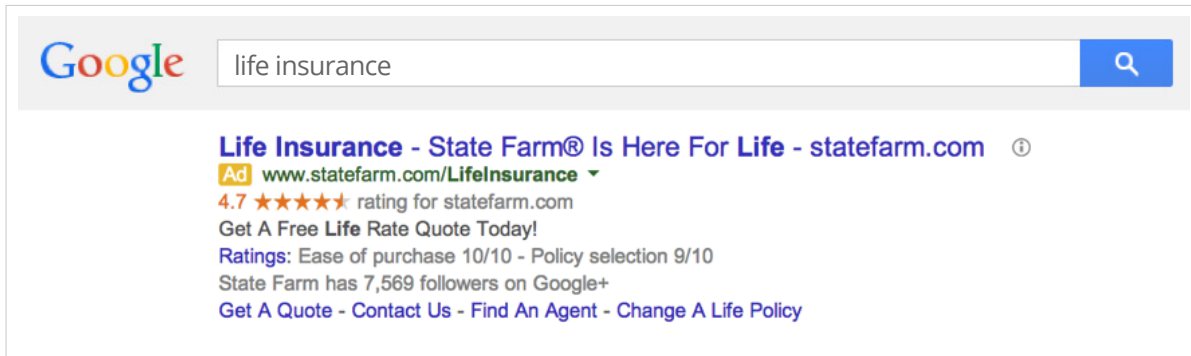
4 Images

Having images on a search ad is a great way to showcase brand imagery in a way that supports your overall brand campaigns and really stands out at the moment that matters.

Example: Compare the impact of this Fiat ad, which supports its overall brand campaign with photos, to the examples without images above.
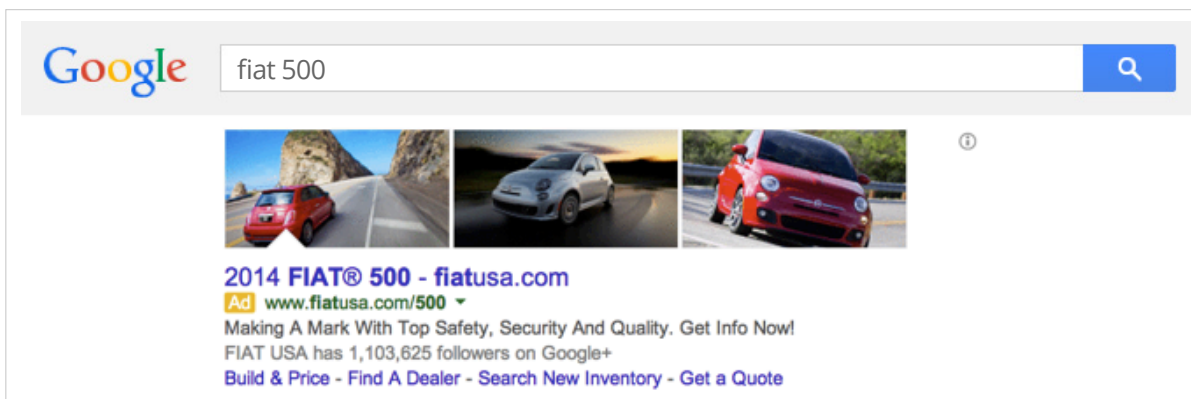
See a case study on Fiat's use of Search for brand marketing located at the end of this guide.

The brand experience

The brand experience people get after clicking on an ad is just as important as the ad itself. They will want to find information related directly to what they searched for. That's why search engines reward website relevance just as they reward ad relevance: with improved ad placement.

This is where content marketing meets search marketing. As a brand marketer, you create content as part of your brand and social media strategy. Search can connect your interested audience with this content.

In this example, L'Oréal Paris has produced a search ad and content that go together. It has provided useful and relevant content for an "ombre hair" search—its website provides information on the hairstyle as well as its product, because that's what people are looking for.
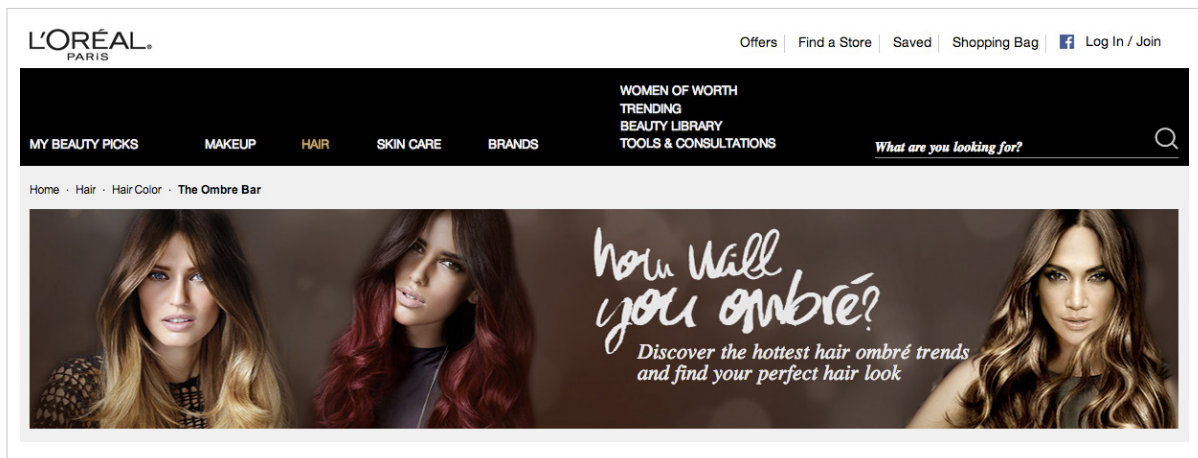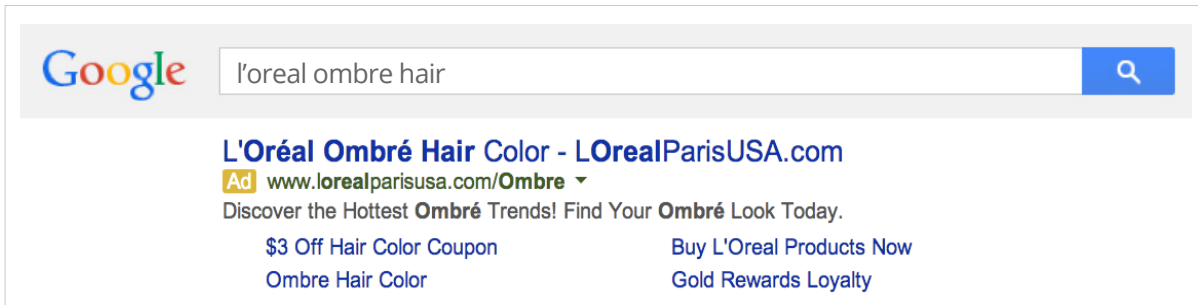
L'Oréal Paris desktop ad and landing page

See a case study on L'Oréal Paris' use of Search for brand marketing located at the end of this guide.
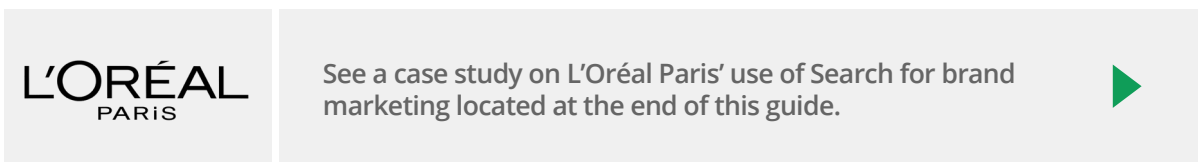
L'Oréal Paris has also ensured that it is present for its interested audience, regardless of the device each person is searching on. Its ad appears on mobile search, and its website is optimized for a mobile screen.
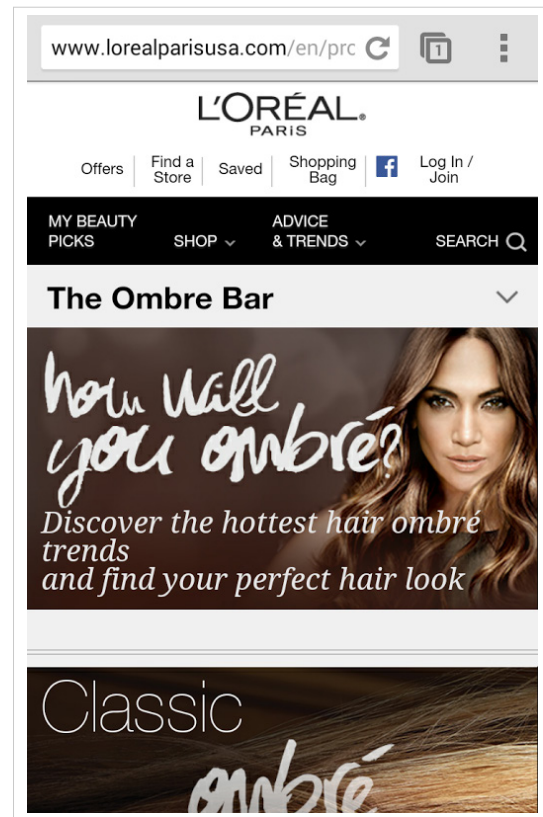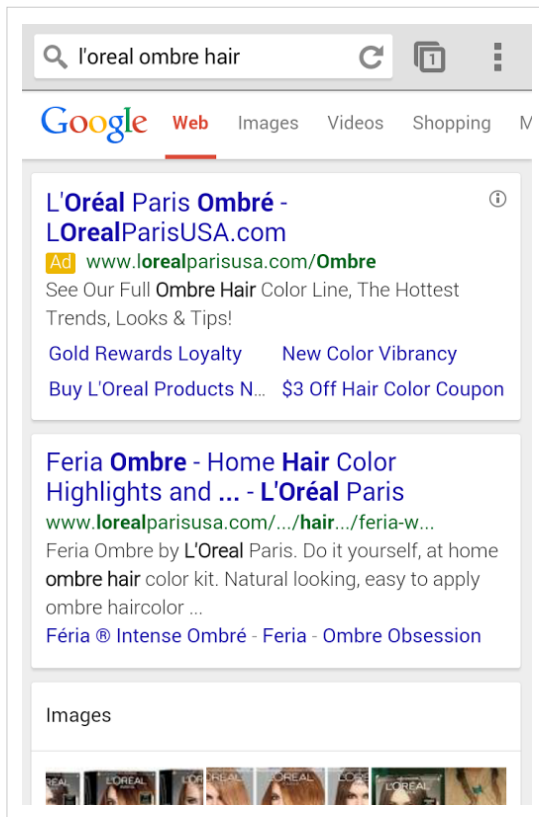
L'Oréal Paris mobile ad and landing page

Whatever your content, your brand's ads and post-click experience can provide targeted, creative and relevant advertising, delivered at scale, to an interested audience, where they want it and at exactly the moments that matter.

That's great brand marketing.

Measuring the results

Thinking differently about the power of search also means thinking differently about how you measure its impact.

Search advertising is typically measured in terms of "performance marketing" metrics such as cost per acquisition (CPA). Search engine marketing (SEM) teams often manage to a target cost per acquisition, where the "acquisition" is a sale, a lead or another specific conversion.

To succeed with brand marketing on search, you need to separate the measurement of your brand search campaigns from that of your performance search campaigns. For brand search ads, replace typical search metrics such as cost per acquisition with familiar brand metrics such as impressions, share of voice and cost per engagement.

In this section, we'll look at two types of measurement that can help track the success of brand marketing on search:

1. Brand volume metrics
2. Category coverage and share of voice

We'll also briefly cover a study conducted by Google and IPSOS MediaCT that found search advertising increased brand awareness. This type of measurement is currently custom built, but early results are positive.

Brand volume metrics

Successful advertisers treat search as another brand media type by using brand-relevant volume metrics to place it right alongside TV, print and digital display. Useful metrics include the following:

- Impressions
- Website visits (clicks)
- Engagement actions on a brand website, most often "time on site."

Your search team can produce these metrics.

> **Note:** Whatever metrics you use, search advertising is fundamentally click based. The average number of clicks you receive per 100 ad impressions (called the click-through rate, or CTR) will affect your position on the search results page. The higher the CTR, the higher your ads will appear, all else being equal. So, for best results and costs, make sure you're promoting relevant website content with good ad content.

As your search team provides you with an estimate of the search volume that your keyword lists can deliver, they should also be able to estimate the spend needed to cover these keywords.

Unlike other brand media, search ads aren't priced by impressions. You pay only if someone clicks on the ad. But your search team can still provide an equivalent CPM estimate for your search ads to help you compare the price of search ads to other brand media.

When making this comparison, remember that the search audience is actually expressing interest. You should take this into account when assessing the cost relative to other media; in cases where the CPM is higher, results might also be.

A more direct comparison between digital ads can be made by using a "cost-per-engagement" (CPE) measure. "Time on site" is the most common measure used here.

Category coverage and share of voice

Once you have understood the search topics (for example, curly hair, dry hair) with which you want to associate your brand, you can also measure how successfully you reach those interested audiences, including in relation to your competitors.

As discussed earlier, you should have keyword lists for each of those topics. Your search team or Google account manager can estimate the number of searches these will cover and track your coverage of those searches as a percentage over time. This will help you own your brand associations and reach the largest, most important audiences. As you deliver results, you can expand or refine your topics and keyword lists.

Your search team may also be able to provide you with impression and click statistics in relation to your competitors—the search equivalents of share of voice. You may want to set targets for these metrics as well as for coverage of the keyword lists you've identified.

Once you have set targets, your search team should be able to provide you with cost estimates for reaching them. Note, however, that these will only be estimates; actual cost will depend on many factors, including the volume of searches received, the relevance of your ads and landing pages, and other businesses advertising on the same searches.

The awareness impact of search ads

How do search ads affect brand metrics? This form of search measurement currently requires custom experiments. However Google has run a meta-study across 61 such experiments, in conjunction with IPSOS MediaCT.[2]

The meta-study showed that search delivered an average uplift in top-of-mind awareness of 6.6 percentage points, from an average of 8.2% top-of-mind awareness in the control group to 14.8% in the test group—an average 80% relative increase.

There was a similar effect on total unaided awareness when participants were asked to name up to five brands, which rose by 9.2 percentage points, from 17.5% to 26.7%—an average 53% relative increase.
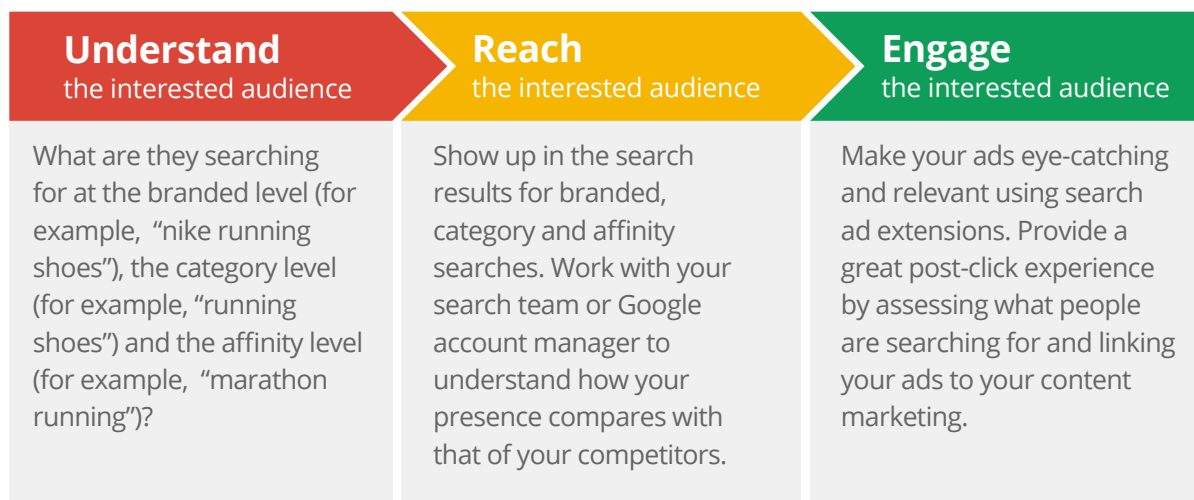
Finally, individual brand studies have seen similar increases in perception metrics. For an example, see the Fiat case study at the end of this guide.

Summary

Search has truly become part of people's lives. Thanks to constant connectivity, people now search across all product categories and at all times throughout the purchase journey.

Smart brand marketers are using this fact to reach a vast interested audience at exactly the moments people are most receptive.

To take full advantage of this opportunity:

Understand the interested audience	**Reach** the interested audience	**Engage** the interested audience
What are they searching for at the branded level (for example, "nike running shoes"), the category level (for example, "running shoes") and the affinity level (for example, "marathon running")?	Show up in the search results for branded, category and affinity searches. Work with your search team or Google account manager to understand how your presence compares with that of your competitors.	Make your ads eye-catching and relevant using search ad extensions. Provide a great post-click experience by assessing what people are searching for and linking your ads to your content marketing.

Then measure in ways that let you see the results alongside your other brand media. Use coverage metrics to show your reach of the interested audience and your share of voice relative to that of competitors. Use volume metrics to show reach and engagement. If you wish, show how your search spend breaks down according to traditional brand measurement, such as CPM.

With search ads, you're not just buying an audience; you're buying an interested audience. You're reaching them throughout their purchase journey. And you're influencing them at moments that truly matter.

Case studies—Fiat

About

Founded in 1899, Italian automaker Fiat invests passion in its products to create some of the world's best-designed and most loved compact cars.

Goal

After a 28-year absence, Fiat returned in 2011 to a U.S. market with established competitors and decreased brand loyalty across three generations of consumers. The company's goal is to drive brand awareness and market share in the auto landscape using search.

How it understands its audience

- Recognize the opportunity to influence many undecided shoppers who are in the market for compact cars
- Recognize the growing numbers of constantly connected consumers on mobile by analyzing historical data for mobile traffic in search of auto-related content online

How it reaches its audience

- Bid on broader "category" terms such as "small car" or "compact car" to get the attention of new customers and undecided shoppers
- Bid competitively on specific brand or retention terms such as "Fiat" or "Fiat 500" to connect with those already looking for the Fiat brand
- Measure search ad impact on brand awareness and perception through a Google/Ipsos research study

How it engages its audience

- Continuously test and iterate ad copy to be relevant to desktop vs. mobile consumers
- Drive users to tailored, branded content on both desktop and mobile-optimized landing pages

Results

- In the study, total unaided brand awareness increased 11.5 percentage points when a Fiat Search ad was present, from 11% to 22.5%.
- In the study, top-of-mind awareness on mobile increased 4 percentage points when Fiat appeared in the top sponsored position, from 15.3% to 19.3%.
- 120% increase in year-over-year sales between 2011 and 2012.

> **While we understood the value of segment search in driving engagement, we were pleasantly surprised to also see a lift in Fiat brand measures thanks to search impressions alone. Through our presence on the search results page on small car queries, the Fiat brand's awareness and favorability increased, and it really helped drive undecided shoppers' consideration of the brand.**
>
> ### Susan Thomson
> Director of Media & Social Media, Chrysler Group LLC

Check out the full case study: www.thinkwithgoogle.com/case-studies/fiat-search-for-brands.html

About

Intel is widely known for its high-performance computing products and services, even though it doesn't sell directly to consumers.

Goal

Intel aims to reach its constantly connected audience (both consumers and business/IT professionals) as much as possible to create impact, drive brand engagement and build its customer base.

How it understands its audience

- Intel uses search insights to better understand consumer online behavior and preferences, such as the products and services consumers are searching for most as well as the language they use in their search queries.

How it reaches its audience

- Intel advertises against a wide range of keywords to capture the needs of its diverse audience. For example, the company bids for affinity (such as "what is big data"), category (such as "2 in 1") and brand-specific (such as "Intel Ultrabook") keywords.

How it engages its audience

- The company capitalizes on search ad formats such as sitelinks and extensions to deliver key brand messages to consumers based on their needs and to drive users to the appropriate, tailored landing pages—removing unnecessary steps of content hunting for users.

> **For us, now, paid search engine marketing is not an add-on or adjunct. It's a core component for integrated marketing. We basically do not launch a product, an initiative or any new web content without some sort of search component and that's more often than not paid search.**
>
> **Corey Carrillo**
> Global Search and Online Marketing Manager, Intel

Check out the full case study:
www.thinkwithgoogle.com/case-studies/intel-building-its-brand-on-search.html

About

A member of the L'Oréal Paris Group's family of beauty brands, L'Oréal Paris offers leading makeup, skin care, hair care, styling and hair color products to women and men worldwide.

Goals

L'Oréal Paris wants to build brand love and be there for consumers at the moment of inspiration. It aims to appeal to a wide range of consumers and be the top destination for beauty.

How it understands its audience

- L'Oréal Paris uses search insights to understand beauty trends and develop products and messaging to meet consumer needs.

How it reaches its audience

- L'Oréal Paris advertises against branded, category and affinity search queries to address diverse consumer needs throughout the purchase journey.

How it engages its audience

- The brand goes beyond serving relevant, useful brand content on ad landing pages. It has also created an entire website, hairstyle.com, based on how consumers are searching for their ideal looks.

Results

- Brought styling trends to the home hair color category for the first time by launching the first DIY Ombré kit
- Rejuvenated the home hair color category: 50% of Feria Ombré consumers were new to the category, most under the average age of the typical hair color consumer
- Established Search insights as an essential tool for L'Oréal Paris trend spotting and trend monitoring

> **Within L'Oréal Paris, what we did with the Ombré launch has really become a success model. It proves you can be nimble and respond to trends even if you're a consumer packaged goods company. If you use Search to stay close to the consumer, listen, and really understand what she's looking for, you can react to it quite quickly.**
>
> **Julie Chamberlain**
> VP of Marketing L'Oréal Paris Haircolor, L'Oréal Paris

Check out the full case study:
www.thinkwithgoogle.com/case-studies/loreal-paris-builds-brand-love-with-search.html

Questions to ask yourself and your search team

These questions will help you see if you're making the most of your branding opportunities with search. Your search team should be able to provide the answers.

Understanding the interested audience

- What can our search campaigns and Google's Search Insight tools tell us about our customers and potential customers? (See Google's Search Insights series on ThinkwithGoogle.com.)

Reaching the interested audience

- Are we appearing on branded, category and affinity searches, as below?
  Searches that name our brand or products?*(for example, "nike running shoes," "nike flyknit")*
  Searches related to our category? *(for example, "running shoes")*
  Searches we want to associate with our brand? *(for example, "marathon running," or sponsored athletes)*

- What branded, category and affinity keywords should we appear on for branding purposes—beyond those that we use for conversions?

- How many times do our ads appear vs. the number of moments when they could appear? (This is known as "impression share lost.")

Engaging the interested audience

- When our brand appears, is it prominent, eye-catching and relevant? Would we notice our own ad based on its text, extensions and placement on the page?

- What's the average position for our ads? What search formats ("extensions") are we using? Have we enabled all extensions that could possibly benefit someone who is just hearing about our brand?

- How do our reach and position compare with those of our competitors? What's our share of ad clicks? (Your Google account manager can help here.)

- Do our ads lead to an exciting and relevant brand experience? Or is it just our homepage or online store?
  (Remember to look at basic Google results to understand what searchers are really interested in).

- Are we connecting searches with the relevant content we already have? Do we need to build new content for the interested audience? If so, what?

Measuring the results

- Are we using brand marketing metrics instead of performance marketing metrics for our brand search campaigns?

- Do we know exactly how many website visits and page impressions we're getting from search ads?

- Are we tracking engagement actions on our site as a success metric, such as the length of time visitors spend there or how many visitors engage with interactive content?

Sources

[1] Google/Ipsos Media CT/Sterling Brands, The New Multi-Screen World, August 2012.

[2] Google/Ipsos Media CT, Search for Brands Industry Research, June 2014.