



SEARCH INSIGHTS:

Capturing Interest Across an Event's Lifespan

WRITTEN BY
Sonia Chung

PUBLISHED
April 2014

THE **RUNDOWN**

Our lives are often reflected in our digital behavior. Every search, social post, website visit, download and video view provides a window into the big and small events we're experiencing. Here, we look at how capturing and analyzing search data before, during and after an event, such as the Sochi Olympics or the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, can help to guide a thoughtful event strategy, regardless of whether your brand is a formal event "sponsor."

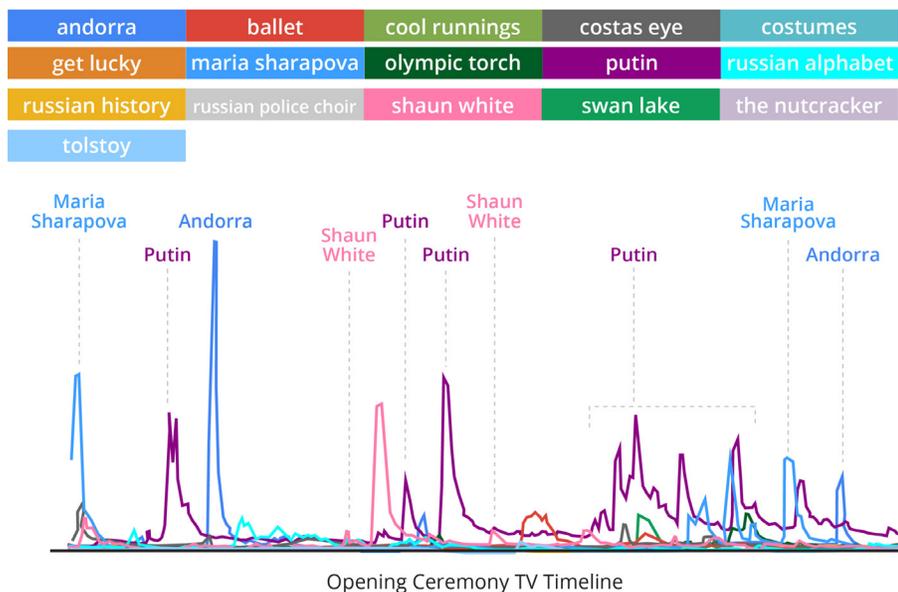
Oscar Night. The Olympic Games. Bonnaroo. We think of produced events as moments in time. Whether they're awards shows, athletic tournaments, music festivals or just live TV programming, they have a well-defined beginning and ending. Or do they? Through search data, many events actually create a much larger window of interest—and opportunity—online. By understanding search's role before, during and beyond an event, marketers can prepare to respond to consumers' needs and desires in new and timely ways.

Searching in the moment

When Lupita Nyong'o walked down the red carpet. When John Travolta flubbed Idina Menzel's introduction. These [Oscar moments](#) are just a few of many that prompted digital reactions—searches for “Oscar dress” and “Adele Dazeem.”

Because events are now multi-screen experiences, search captures even more of these real-time “in-the-moment” searches. During the 2014 Winter Olympic Games, for example, 60–65% of Olympics-related searches were performed on a smartphone or tablet. Because these searches happen immediately, we can clearly see the direct link between what is happening on live TV and its impact on digital behavior. There were many examples of this link during the opening ceremony alone. When the camera panned to Vladimir Putin seated in the audience or when Bob Costas acknowledged his eye infection, it created a digital loop for discovery and interest (see below).

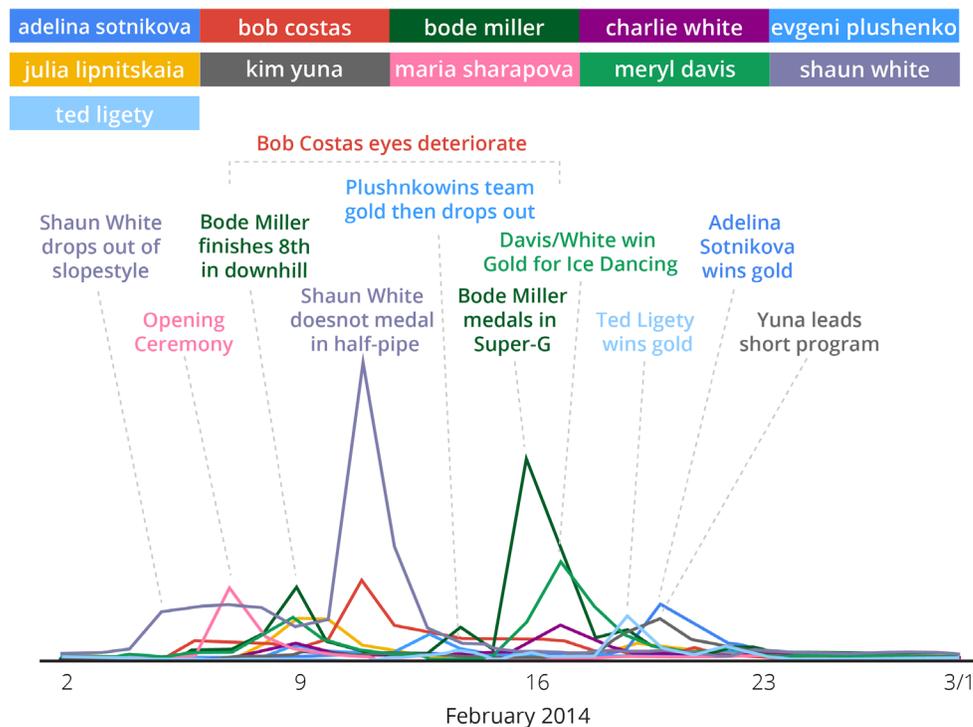
Sochi Opening Ceremony Live Searches



Source: Google Internal Data, February 7, 2014, Indexed Search Query Volume, United States

We can also see that search interest in the Winter Olympics continued throughout its two-week run. People tuned in and then continued to search for details on the ongoing drama, from the opening ceremony to Bode Miller’s highs and lows to the results of the figure-skating competition.

Sochi Olympics Search Trends



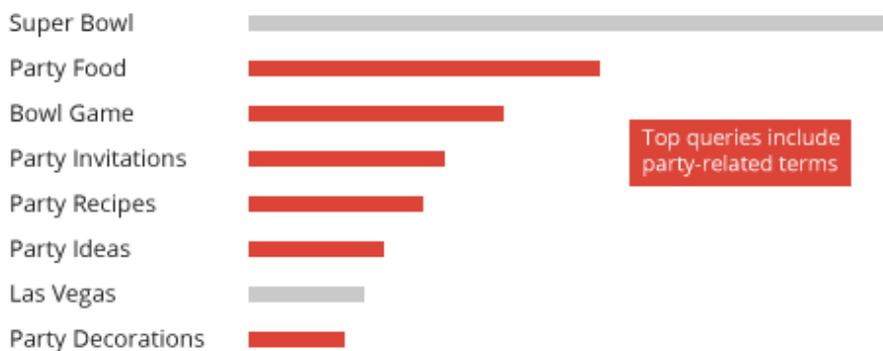
Source: Google Internal Data, February 7-23, 2014, Indexed Search Query Volume, United States

Whether an official “sponsor” of the event or not, a brand can take advantage of this search interest in many ways. Sometimes marketers might be able to anticipate the during-event searches (“Oscar dress”) and can prepare to capture that interest with relevant brand content (ushering people to a “Get the Oscar Look” dress page). They can also monitor search trends that emerge during an event (“Costas pink eye”) and join in the real-time search conversation. This can go beyond the chatter and cleverness of social media to provide real utility and branding opportunities. Imagine, for example, a pharmaceutical brand advertising against “Costas pink eye” searches to position its offering as *the* pink eye solution that would take home the gold.

Leading up to the event

Real-time searches are just part of the story; typically, interest builds for big events. Weeks before the Big Game kicked off in early February—even before we knew which teams were kicking off—we saw a lot of [search activity](#). Right after the holidays and throughout the month of January, people co-searched for the game and various party-related topics (decorations, recipes and themes).

Key Search Categories Preceding the Big Game



Source: Google Internal Data, January 2014, Indexed Search Query Volume, United States

These pre-event searches provide countless opportunities for marketers to respond meaningfully to the demand that arises for adjacent event categories. Brands aware of this pre-event search interest might create timely, event-specific content to address that unique demand, or they may merely ensure that their brand has a strong search ad position to drive additional visits to their best existing content.

After an event concludes

Even after an event is over, search interest lives on. People often turn to search to catch up on what they've missed or to relive what they've experienced. In fact, searches for Oscar dresses this year were highest the day *after* the show. Following sports games, highlights, replays and wrap-ups are especially popular.

These are moments of opportunity for brands to continue to capture the momentum once an event is over. Take an annual event such as the Coachella music festival. After the

event, marketers—whether for participating musicians, souvenir providers or media player sites—can address the search demand it created. They might add concert footage to their site, bringing post-event interest their way. They might alter the creative messaging of their digital campaigns based on the most-searched-about songs or moments of the concert. They might also start capturing interest for next year’s event. Less than an hour after last year’s festival ended, searches began for the 2014 festival(schedules, lineups and dates). This is a chance to remarket to visitors of the Coachella site, for example, re-engaging them around ticket sales or capturing sign-ups for festival alerts.

Rising Searches for Coachella



Source: Google Internal Data, May 2013, Indexed Search Query Volume, United States

The full search ticket

Events are more than just a moment in time. They’re a vast window into the needs, questions and curiosities of consumers. They also present a range of actionable marketing opportunities that “cascade” from an event—before, during and after it happens. Insights from event search behaviors can guide content development, identify new keywords to bid against or reveal ideas for targeting and creative optimization.

As you look to get the most value from events, here are some key things to keep in mind:

- For every offline action, there is a digital reaction. Make sure your brand is present for all relevant moments of discovery and research.
- During an event, augment your other real-time marketing efforts with a search strategy that presents a timely yet informative message to position your brand in the conversation.
- Before an event, anticipate the adjacent event searches and be present with your brand message, even possibly creating or promoting event-specific content.
- Look for opportunities to extend event interest after its conclusion and convert the excitement into demand for your offering.



Sonia Chung
Head of Insights Strategy, Agency Business Development, Google
