



360i Point of View on Mobile Search

Overview

Search became the starting point for both consumers and marketers finding their way around the web, and it's undergoing a rebirth as mobile devices proliferate. Marketers now have more opportunities to meet consumers' needs exactly when and where their search is conducted.

This is the second in a series of POVs on mobile marketing, with several more to come. Read the previous post on [360i's Digital Connections blog](#), where you can also subscribe to receive subsequent editions.

Mobile search overview

"Why the mobile phone? Because it's the high-volume endpoint. It's not because we're nice people or something... It's our goal to make mobile be the answer to pretty much everything."
– Google CEO Eric Schmidt at Mobile World Congress 2010

Search engine marketing and optimization continue to matter across mobile devices, and Google, Microsoft, and Yahoo are jockeying to serve as the default engines across mobile handsets. Google has three advantages currently: default search placement on the iPhone, default placement across Google-powered Android phones (and other emerging computing devices), and its position as the leading search brand.

At Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference in June 2010, CEO Steve Jobs announced Bing was joining Yahoo as options for search engines on the iPhone, but Google remained the default. Google in turn keeps updating its mobile offerings on AdWords, allowing targeting by mobile carrier or operating system; it offered iPad targeting as soon as the WiFi-only version of the device was released.



Google's Eric Schmidt and Apple's Steve Jobs have different visions for the future of mobile search



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There is some debate as to what extent mobile search will matter as smartphones proliferate. Jobs himself has stirred the pot here. As reported in Mashable, Jobs said in April 2010, "On a mobile device, search is not where it's at, not like on the desktop." This was right around the time that Apple acquired Siri, a personal assistant application that responds to voice commands such as "Find me a taxi" or "What movies are playing nearby?" by coming up with relevant listings from specific services to meet those needs, rather than searching results across the mobile web. The lines of search are blurring, but unquestionably whether someone is typing "movie theater Chicago" or asking an app to retrieve local listings, searching for information remains a necessity; it's just the method that's changing.

Google Vice President of Product Management Susan Wojcicki [blogged about mobile search](#) when announcing the company's acquisition of mobile ad network AdMob, noting, "Over the past two years, Google's mobile search volumes have grown more than fivefold, at an accelerated pace. In the first three months of 2010, people with smartphones... searched 62 percent more than they did in the previous three months."

Google's Retail Advertising Blog further noted that 54 percent of users who researched online but bought offline used their mobile device to conduct their search. Search's role in connecting consumers with products and places is a core part of the mobile experience, even as new forms of searching (such as with personal assistants) open up other options.

How search is evolving with mobile devices

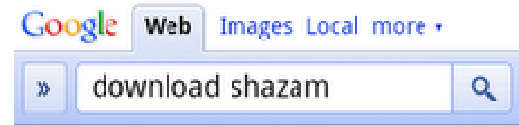
Search is evolving in several different ways across mobile devices:

- Mobile search is especially useful for **local queries**; whether or not they include local modifiers (such as a city name or zip code), consumers looking for "JC Penney" on their mobile phone will expect to find one in their area. The Kelsey Group reported in 2009 that about one in three mobile searches has local intent.
- No matter how much better mobile phone keyboards get, mobile users will keep **their queries shorter** when they can. Optimization in natural and paid search around higher volume keywords will be especially competitive.
- **Voice search** is making an impact, and all the major search engines incorporate it. A range of other companies have developed offerings here, including Jingle Networks' FREE-411 directory assistance, Naturally Speaking's Dragon Search application, and Apple's Siri.
- **SMS search** is still relevant for feature phones, where users text a query such as for business listings or stock quotes and then receive results back. Given that there's a brief delay between the query and response, these queries will likely diminish when smartphones dominate the market.

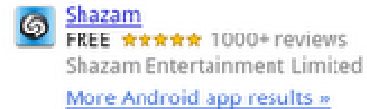


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- On Google Android-powered devices, a search button is **built into the phone's hardware**, making it possible to conduct searches instantly no matter what the consumer does within the mobile experience. Mobile search listings can in turn appear during a wide range of activities beyond searching from a mobile engine, such as when searching for driving directions or using various applications.
- The results pages themselves will continue to evolve to showcase more mobile-specific content. For instance, in June, Google added application links to its mobile search results, with links to download apps directly from Apple's App Store or Google's Android Market.



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Search engine results can promote mobile apps

For marketers with experience in search marketing, mobile search will require a relatively short learning curve, so it should be high in the consideration set for marketers just getting started with mobile.

Mobile search marketing best practices

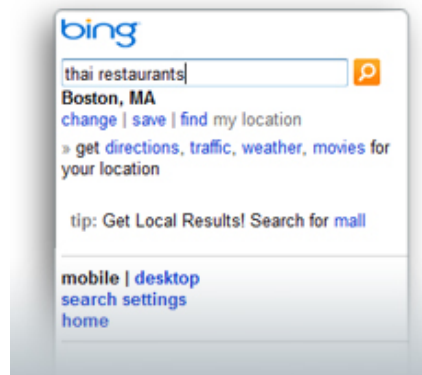
Here are a few tips that will help you get the most out of mobile search:

- Group mobile campaigns separately. They tend to perform differently from online search campaigns, and you'll often want to adjust the rules accordingly.
- Plan to broaden your scope. Mobile search volume tends to be significantly lower than online search for most keywords, so to achieve the best reach you'll want to target queries more broadly, include more high-volume queries, and possibly include additional keywords.
- Go local. If geotargeting matters at all for you with online search, it's going to be vital for mobile.
- Incorporate mobile functionality into the creative. Click-to-call was somewhat useful online, but it's poised to play a pronounced role in mobile search. Anytime a consumer would benefit by talking to a person, from a booking agent to someone at a local store, click-to-call can potentially improve conversion rates.



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- Target immediate needs. Mobile Marketer reported that 70 percent of mobile search users complete their task after one hour, compared to 30 percent on the PC. Make sure copy and landing pages are useful for consumers looking to meet their needs right at that moment. Microsoft's Doug McMillen told Mobile Marketer, "As a marketer you need to be there when a user needs you most. There's a huge payoff in terms of emotional connection with a brand if you're right there at the top of the listings and help the user accomplish their task easily when they're highly motivated to connect with you."
- Apply what you learned from online search marketing. Relevance is key, from the creative to the landing pages. Include a powerful call to action. Test and optimize continually.
- Don't assume it's just like the web though. With Bing as Verizon's default search engine on non-Android devices, carriers can still impact search engines' market share.



Mobile search users are especially inclined to try to fulfill immediate needs

360i's Concluding Thoughts

For marketers looking to reach consumers wherever they are, mobile search is a great starting point. To get the most out of it, marketers should plan holistically, tying mobile search into their broader search marketing programs.

Next Steps

Contact your strategic advisor to figure out how to further your goals through mobile marketing.

About 360i

360i is an award-winning digital communications agency that drives results for Fortune 500 marketers through insights, ideas and technologies. 360i helps its clients think differently about their online presence and evolve their strategies to take advantage of the new world of marketing communications – one where brands and consumers engage in interactive and multi-directional conversations. Current clients include Kraft Foods, H&R Block, JCPenney, NBC Universal, Nestle and Office Depot, among others. For more, please visit blog.360i.com or follow us on Twitter [@360i](https://twitter.com/360i).