

Widening the search

Despite search's rapid growth, marketers are still failing to grasp its full potential. Having been used just as a direct response platform so far, it could play a big role at the centre of marketing strategy

To many in the advertising industry, the rapid growth of search over the past five years may have come as a surprise. But it need not have done. As consumer behaviour continues to change at pace, the internet is becoming increasingly central to the lives of the digital generation.

But recent research suggests search could be treated as much more than a direct response platform. If used correctly, the medium could hold the role of catalyst within the overall media mix, sparking off the use of other marketing techniques. While search has already been used heavily in commoditised markets such as financial services and travel to help acquire customers, it may also have a role in other industries too.

Unilever, in association with Mindshare, Metrixlab and Google, has recently carried out a research study with 5,000 mothers with children under 15 to try and find out which media are most effective and efficient

when used in ad campaigns. It hoped to discover how search might be used best in the FMCG market.

The research was run in the UK for one of Unilever's biggest brands, Flora, around its Cooking with Schools programme. Flora has a marketing strategy around promoting health – exemplified by its associations with cholesterol reduction, heart health and the London Marathon – but it is keen to enhance its brand associations with family, kids, cooking and nutrition. As part of the campaign, Flora created web content related to health, recipes, family and kids activities to try and bring these brand values to life.

The research shows some interesting results in three core areas. First, the figures appear to reveal that search marketing has a positive effect on brand metrics. If users were exposed to a Flora text ad in the top or side sponsored link position on Google, directly above or alongside the search results, it created

a 6% uplift across a range of traditional brand values including, “good for family”, “nutritious” and “good for cooking”, compared with a control sample.

Taking this one step further, if users were exposed to the ad and as a result clicked through to the Flora website, this resulted in a 19% uplift in brand metrics.

The second theme concerns efficiencies in brand spend. While the study was hoping to understand the role that search plays in branding, Unilever was also keen to find out how efficient search was as a branding tool when compared to other media.

The research indicated that for this campaign the branding impact of search was almost double the impact of TV for top-of-mind awareness (TOMA). Due to the reach of TV, this was the most effective media at increasing TOMA but in terms of efficiency and budgets, Flora's search campaign proved to be 10 times more efficient than television in

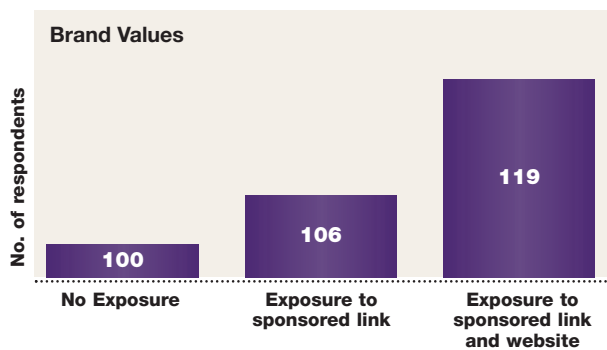
terms of TOMA, and 3.5 times as efficient as radio.

The third insight from the study revolved around how the online and offline marketing environments can work together. Unilever was keen to see how using search affected the efficiencies in its offline media spending on the Flora campaign.

The data suggested that search ads running in parallel to traditional campaigns “turbocharged” the effectiveness of the offline media. When TV and search were used in tandem, results showed a 3% uplift in efficiency in driving brand metrics, per pound spent. Radio plus search revealed a 10% uplift in efficiency, while print media with search produced a 9% rise.

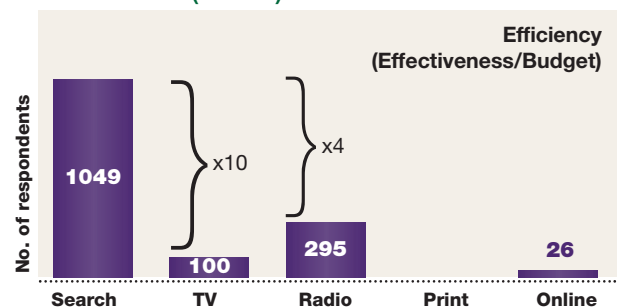
The results suggest that the FMCG sector might be wise to consider search as a branding tool as well as a direct-response mechanism. Presenting commercial messages to consumers at the very point they are actively choosing to express an inter-

Search can act as a branding tool



Source: Google

Search is 10x more efficient than TV in raising top-of-mind awareness (TOMA)



Source: Google



Cooking with Schools: Campaign to enhance the Flora's values with families

est in a particular area or product could be an effective way to win new consumers at cost-effective prices.

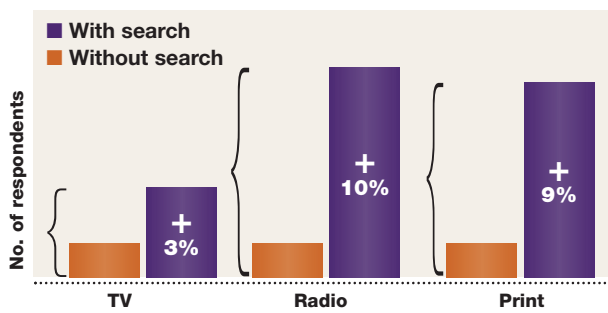
In cash-tight times, where marketing directors are being asked to account for every pound spent, not to consider search in branding strategies is potentially missing an opportunity. Most importantly, it may help marketers understand and better plan offline media as well as online campaigns.

Or, as Amanda Smith, relationship marketing manager at Flora, puts it:

the most important thing is that brands understand the impact of different media techniques in detail so they are able to run sophisticated campaigns mixing elements both on and offline. She adds: "We are now seeing the impact sponsored search can have on branding and how it can work with other media, both on and offline, to bring us the most effective campaigns." ●

Google contributed to this week's Trends Insight

Adding search increases the efficiency of TV, Print and Radio in impacting Brand Values



Source: Google