

ADVERTISING

## Marketers are in a constant battle to maximize ad efficiency

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Longchamp Autumn 2015 campaign

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

NEW YORK Brand executives taking part in the "Search vs. Display Advertising" panel at Luxury Interactive 2015 Oct. 14 agreed that shifts in the way Google displays search results are shaking up marketers' advertising methods.

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Since April, search results on mobile have prioritized mobile-optimized search, but other recent changes to the algorithm have pushed organic search results down the page. Accordingly, prices for pay-per-click advertisements have increased, forcing brands to be more efficient with ad spend.

"If you're just looking at last-click attribution you might have on sense of what key words are performing really well, but tech allows you to look at 15 to 20 touchpoints," said Mac Joseph, director of emarketing and social media at [Mandarin Oriental](#). "[But] for us a lot of conversions come through brands."

### Optimizing SEO

With the search algorithm changing, brands can no longer rely purely on organic rankings to propel them to the top of the page. The change is especially significant to retailers who carry multiple brands since changes may keep them away from the first page, where more than 90 percent of clicks altogether.



Left to right: Moderator Craig Witsoe, Elo Interactive; panelists Mr. Kadyan, Ms. Kyaw, Ms. Johnsen and Mr. Joseph

The growth of mobile traffic further complicates this problem, troubling even the highest organic results. A link in the middle of the first page might be visible on a desktop with minimal or no scrolling, but on a mobile device, the middle of the first page is suddenly much more work to reach.

"If you search Cartier just the term Cartier' the first page is nothing but Cartier," said Anurag Kadyan, senior director, ecommerce and digital marketing, [Tourneau](#). "It's its Facebook, its Twitter, its U.S. site, its global site, not a single retailer. Now you're forced to pay for that term."

For British automaker Jaguar, optimizing search and display means constantly reconsidering and looking at data to determine what search terms are most successful and tailoring methods based on where in the purchase journey a consumer is.

"We are looking at it more holistically and not just in silos," said Kim Kyaw, manager, digital marketing and social media at [Jaguar](#). "We're making sure we know what the attribution is and the most effective cost per conversion for our site and vehicles, but [SEO and SEM] also drive new interest. It's about managing a combination of people already interested and new people."

It's not just about search, though; an efficient advertising campaign will include social media and display ads in addition to paid search. Generally, display ads will generate awareness and could attract potential consumers at the beginning of the purchase journey, whereas search ads generally appeal to those a bit further along.

Of course, monitoring the effectiveness of every click or ad dollar is a tricky science and approaching it too simply could close off avenues. It's not enough to know what key word brought someone to a Web site; it's just as important to have a good understanding of what caused that search and pinpoint what it tells you about the customer.

"If you haven't tagged everything properly you don't know what experience [consumers] engaged in on your property, and then the message you're serving them is irrelevant, Tourneau's Mr. Kadyan said.

Value differs by industry as well. You cannot buy a Jaguar online, so the automaker must place a value on a visit to a dealership-locator page. Similarly, the decision to purchase a Rolex might take place over multiple visits to a site, and properly tracking consumer behavior to value a Web site visit, a scheduled appointment or another activity will go a long way to optimizing ad spend based on which of these next steps it most often leads to.

Other times, brands need to be creative in the name of cost efficiency.

"Cost-per-click is going up every year, so how do you get the biggest bang for your buck?" asked Debbie Johnsen, director of interactive marketing, [The Leading Hotels of the World](#). "Using things like RSLA to get somebody to come back after you've gotten the first click is a way to do that."

RSLA could become particularly important with ad-blocking software and mobile applications, which have recently been introduced on the market. Brands rely on traffic from effectively deployed advertisements to drive traffic, but they may be looking for new methods soon.



*Photograph of "Search Vs. Display Advertising" panel*

On the flip side, ad-blocking software has already demonstrated side effects, including faster page-loads, that brands may be able to leverage for their advantage. Bottom line, making ad spend more efficient is a constant struggle, looking for and controlling variables and adapting to shifts in the media and search landscape.

Ahead of the curve

The writing about the importance of SEO and maintaining high Google rankings has long been on the wall.

Since at least 2010, search engine optimization has been an absolute must for luxury brands looking to drive consumers to their Web sites and even in-store.

A study by comScore documented search engine habits of individuals, showing that Web pages found by Google generated significantly more hits than those on other search engines. Luxury brands who did not optimize for Google did not receive favorable results ([see story](#)).

One way to counter ad-blocking is sponsored content, which many brands have already experimented with.

For example, in April, jeweler Tiffany & Co. reached out to readers of New York magazine's The Cut with a promoted post about wedding planning.

The sponsored article featured celebrity party planner Bronson van Wyck's suggestions for nuptial celebrations, for which he used Tiffany engagement rings for inspiration. Native advertising enables a brand to speak to consumers through engaging content that can be both entertaining and educational ([see story](#)).

"Make sure you're looking at what touchpoints are playing a part," Mandarin Oriental's Mr. Joseph said. "You might be surprised by what is playing a large part."

Final Take

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