Search Engine Marketing

Introduction

The days when shoppers hopped around brick-and-mortar stores are over. According to **Statista**, 85% of the world's population shop online. Out of this, about **48% of purchases** start with search engines. That's why businesses strive to appear on top in search engine result pages (SERPs).

Businesses use various strategies to grab that coveted top rank on SERPs. Search engine optimization (SEO) is a key strategy. Businesses also use Search engine marketing (SEM) to boost their visibility on search engines.

So, what is search engine marketing? It's securing a top rank on SERPs through paid methods.

For instance, If you search for 'athletic shoes,' you'll see shoe vendors pay Google to show you advertisements. That is a part of their search engine marketing strategy

Content table

What is search engine marketing?

Search engine marketing (SEM) is a digital marketing strategy used to increase the visibility of a website in search engine results pages (SERPs).

While the industry term once referred to both organic search activities such as search engine optimization (SEO) and paid, it now refers almost exclusively to paid search advertising.

Search engine marketing is also alternately referred to as paid search or pay per click (PPC).

Why is SEM important?

With an increasing number of consumers researching and shopping for products online, search engine marketing has become a crucial online marketing strategy for increasing a company's reach.

In fact, the majority of new visitors to a website find it by performing a query on a search engine.

In search engine marketing, advertisers only pay for impressions that result in visitors, making it an efficient way for a company to spend its marketing dollars. As an added bonus, each visitor incrementally improves the website's rankings in organic search results.

Since consumers enter search queries with the intent of finding information of a commercial nature, they are in an excellent state of mind to make a

purchase, compared to other sites such as social media where users are not explicitly searching for something.

Search marketing reaches consumers at exactly the right time: when they are open to new information. Unlike the majority of digital advertising, PPC advertising is non-intrusive and does not interrupt their tasks.

Results are immediate with SEM. It is arguably the fastest way to drive traffic to a website.

How SEM works

Search engines use complicated algorithms to ensure the most relevant results are returned for each search, including location and other available information.

In paid search advertising, sponsored ads appear at the top of and on the side of search engine results pages to gain more visibility and prominence than the organic results.

Let's say that you are a customer looking for a product or service online. You go to a search engine and type in your search terms (also known as keywords).

In your search results page, you will come across various company ads whose keywords match the keywords in your search.

These ads appear in prominent locations on the page – along with the other search listings that match your keywords. The paid listings are highly relevant to your specific search, making it likely that you will click on them.

Now let's take a look at how SEM campaigns work from the marketer's perspective.

SEM networks are self-serve operations. Once a marketer selects a network, they can get a campaign up within a short period of time.

When setting up a campaign within an SEM network, the marketer is prompted to:

- Conduct keyword research and select a set of keywords related to their website or product
- Select a geographic location for the ad to be displayed within
- Create a text-based ad to display in the search results
- Bid on a price they are willing to pay for each click on their ad

Text-only ads are easy to produce. Marketers enter a headline, text for the

body of the ad, a call-to-action and a URL for the hyperlink.

Search engine marketing is considered by many to be the most efficient way to spend marketing dollars.

Examples of search ad networks

The two primary search networks that SEM professionals target are Google Ads (formerly Google Adwords) and the Bing Ads.

Google AdWords is actually two networks: Google Search Network and Google Display Network. The first network consists exclusively of search-related websites owned by Google, while the second includes properties such as YouTube, Blogger and Gmail. The Bing Ads allows customers to buy ads on both Yahoo's network of websites and Bing's network.

While Google Ads is a much larger network (around 2x the size), the pricing is often lower on Bing Ads. Marketers may be able to get a better rank for a competitive keyword phrase for less than they get on Google. And some report that the clickthrough rates are higher as well.

How A/B testing can complement SEM

Since you are already making an investment in search engine marketing to bring traffic to your website, it is a worthwhile effort to optimize that traffic for conversions and increase the efficiency of your spending.

A/B testing your landing pages is an easy way to maximize your spend, either by optimizing for average order value or revenue per page.

Optimizing your landing page can increase your Quality Score with search engine marketing networks, thus reducing your average CPC.