

Search as we “Now” know it

Search has always been, and will always be, about need and want fulfilment. However, due to technological and social advances, consumers demand faster and more instant fulfilment in the digital space. Quickly bringing together an abundance of related information, making sense and opinion of it, so that it is relevant and easily consumed, is not necessarily what search engines were set up to do.

The main reason behind this is the main search engines base the relevance of searches on algorithms and not necessarily personal intention. This can leave users still needing to filter the information that they get back. The time that this takes diminishes the instant nature of the web. Therefore, to improve the real-time nature of search, users have begun by-passing this to a certain extent, mainly by using their friends as their filters and by using applications that refine search by more personalised and structured data input.

Content creation online is outpacing the ability to consume it. With millions of daily status updates and billions of webpages vying for our time, users are increasingly turning to their friends and “like minds” to filter through the information overload within their web searches. The rising dominance of Facebook and other social media means that peers are becoming the curators of each others’ online consumption. This could reduce the dependence on Google in the future as search will be determined more and more by people and not just algorithms. The falling numbers in traffic to brand websites, and the increasing difficulty and time it takes to optimise these sites, means that advertisers will increasingly look towards finding greater relevancy through searches based on friends’ recommendations in social media.

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The abundance of information online is also driving users to look at more structured data sources. Consumers are increasingly using applications in place of search. Applications downloaded to mobile devices, like the iPhone or iPad, mean that users will no longer have to wait to be at a computer, type “GAA Championship” into their Google Toolbar and click on the blue link to get the latest information they want on the GAA. They can get it instead “on the go” when and where they want it. And these searches can also be refined further through location-based services within applications as well as image tagging and QR coding, both of which will help integrate mobile internet browsing into consumers’ daily use.

These cultural changes in how consumers launch their searches, and the escalating demand for fulfilment in ‘now’ time, means that online search will be divided between many players as opposed to one. Therefore, companies and brands need to establish their relevance across the broader search environment now and in the years to come.