

Online travel sites' report released

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While Travelocity had the highest sponsored click-through rate for April 2006 among the most-visited online travel agencies, according to a recent report from comScore Media Metrix, Orbitz received the highest percent of click-throughs from sponsored ads.

The new report is part of comScore's launch of its new search analysis product "Competitive Search Marketing Reports."

Online travel agencies comScore looked at included Expedia.com, Orbitz.com, Travelocity.com and CheapTickets.com, finding that more "than 50 percent of the total click-throughs to these sites were generated by sponsored ads, compared to just 11 percent across all Web search activity," according to the release.

Orbitz.com and CheapTickets.com led, each receiving about 72 percent of click-throughs from sponsored ads. Expedia received 62.5 percent and Travelocity received 55.9 percent.

"With search advertising accounting for roughly 40 percent of total online spending, it's clear that advertisers view the medium as a critical component of the advertising mix," said Peter Daboll, president and chief executive officer of comScore Media Metrix. "This is particularly true for the leading online travel agencies, which receive nearly two-thirds of their search-generated click-throughs from sponsored ads. This high volume of advertising makes it even more important for advertisers to focus on the search terms that have the most relevance to their target audience."

However, comScore also noted that even though Travelocity.com received a lower number of sponsored ad click-throughs than Expedia or Orbitz, it had the most "effective sponsored search advertiser, yielding a 6.5 percent click-through rate, compared to the 4 to 5 percent click-through rates achieved by competitive sites."

"Although both Expedia and Orbitz demonstrate leadership in total ad exposures and sponsored click-throughs, our analysis shows that Travelocity is making very effective ad placements," Daboll said. "While they have a lower percentage of their total click-throughs coming from sponsored ads (59.9 percent) than the other three competitors, Travelocity.com seems to be quite adept at search engine optimization, the other critical component of search engine marketing."

But comScore also found that Yahoo! was the preferred advertising channel among most-visited online travel agency sites in April, with 44 percent of sponsored ads placed by these sites; while Google has generated a higher click-through rate with 35 percent over Yahoo!'s 32 percent, said the release. Google's higher click-through rate indicated a higher ad relevancy, comScore noted.

Moreover, comScore compiled a list of top non-travel sites and travel sites that were popular among consumers who would eventually venture onto an online travel agency Web site. For example, comScore noted, "Consumers conducting travel-related searches are 127 percent more likely than average to visit site Bizjournals.com."

Non-travel sites included Bizjournals.com, About Cities & Towns, DoItYourself.com, CitySearch.com, MSN Local Search, Epinions.com, TheKnot.com, WeddingChannel.com, About Food, and SFGate.com, respectively. Popular travel sites were TravelNow.com, Hotels.com, TripAdvisor.com, Hotwire.com, Orbitz.com, SideStep.com, Travelocity All, Yahoo! U.S. Travel, Travelzoo.com and About Travel.

And who is using online travel searches? ComScore points out that these consumers are more likely to be from higher-income households, without children, and are likely to conduct their searches from work.

It found that households with incomes above \$100,000 are 10 percent more likely than average to conduct a search on travel terms, while those with incomes of \$75,000 to \$99,000 are 3 percent more likely to do so.

Furthermore, ComScore reported that one-member households were 7 percent more likely to conduct a travel search, compared two-member households who are 5 percent more likely to. In addition, where children are not present, consumers were 6 percent more likely to conduct an online travel search.

Also, consumers age 25 to 34 and 55 to 64 are more likely to conduct travel searches, whereas consumers are 23 percent more likely to conduct these searches at work.

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