

Search engine branding to be examined by researcher

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Like other industries, companies that maintain search engines must work harder to recruit and retain customers. One way to do this is branding -- creating a cognitive impression that a user is likely to retain and rely on when making future decisions.

Jim Jansen, Penn State assistant professor of information sciences and technology, is investigating this process in a new project that examines branding among search engines, one of his main areas of study.

The search engine study will examine how users choose a search engine, how they evaluate that engine's performance in delivering the results they wanted, their reaction to the individual results, and the Web pages to which the search engine links.

"We are really interested in a multi-layered aspect of what causes a person to pick a particular search engine versus another one," Jansen said. "All these platforms are similar, why do customers view one particular platform as superior to the other?"

While companies like Google and Yahoo! have many successful applications, this project looks only at the search engines themselves and views them through a narrowly-constructed definition of branding.

Jansen said this approach will allow him to focus on what specific elements cause a user to choose one search engine over another and what role branding plays in the decision-making process.

The project, which is funded by \$50,000 in unrestricted funds from Google, will expand on Jansen's previous research in this area.

"We have found that users will evaluate results from a major search engine at a higher level than from a lesser-known search engine," he said. "We hope to build a multi-layer model of branding in this area -- from search engine selection to evaluation of the final Web page chosen from the results."

Source: Penn State

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