

Microsoft ads say search is sick, Bing is the cure

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(AP) -- Microsoft Corp. is inventing a new malady for which its new Web search site, Bing, is the only cure.

That's the premise of the \$100 million, four-month advertising campaign Microsoft hopes will turn Bing into a verb and give the software maker a fighting chance against search leader [Google](#) Inc. - unlike its last redesign, Live Search, which launched four years ago to such little fanfare that many Web surfers still don't know where to find it online.

In the first Bing ad, set to debut Wednesday night, Microsoft unveils "search overload" syndrome - the state of confusion brought on by search results that don't answer a user's question. The commercial starts with bleeps and blips and a montage of Web-video frivolity (think cat playing piano).

"While everyone was searching, there was bailing," a narrator says over news footage from the economic meltdown. "While everyone was lost in

the links, there was collapsing."

The chaotic footage and soundtrack give way to upbeat rock music and stock-footage-style shots of children happily using consumer electronics and adults making calculations, rehabilitating injuries and going places.

"It's time to Bing," the narrator concludes. When he says the word "Bing," his voice goes much, much higher.

The current events scenes are intended to tie the idea of saving money during the recession to using the new [search engine](#) to find travel and shopping deals, said Ty Montague, chief creative officer at JWT, the agency responsible for the TV ads.

"The world of excess is over," he said. "What people need is something that is more meaningful, gets to the point more quickly, gets them to what they want."

Next week, Microsoft will switch to a humorous approach, launching four more ads showing people answering everyday questions with monotone streams of semi-related words - "search overload" personified, the company says.

The ads, which call Bing a decision engine instead of a search engine, don't show off any of its new features. Microsoft is saving those details for an online campaign, which will include a two-hour stretch in which every ad on The New York Times' Web site is for Bing. On a Facebook page devoted to Bing, Microsoft already has more than 20,000 "fans," though the company did not say how many of them work for the company. Its Twitter followers top 16,000. And Microsoft is planning to promote Bing on the TV Web site Hulu.com, but executives wouldn't say when.

Microsoft is also paying to have Bing mentioned on Bravo's "The Rachel Zoe Project," a reality show about the celebrity stylist, and a new NBC series called "The Philanthropist," which will start in the fall.

To be sure, it's not clear any amount of advertising can help Microsoft win a bigger slice of searches and their related advertising revenue, which could help pull its unprofitable online division into the black. IAC/InterActiveCorp. and Yahoo Inc. have both tried TV campaigns, but Google, which shuns most formal advertising, has been the only search engine to continually increase its market share in the U.S.

Microsoft's U.S. market share is about 8 percent, according to comScore Inc. Yahoo Inc.'s share of the U.S. market has fallen from more than 30 percent five years ago to about 20 percent in April, comScore said last month. Google now holds about 64 percent of the U.S. market.

Yusuf Mehdi, a senior vice president in Microsoft's online group, said the company is targeting an increase in market share within a year.

"Anyone who thinks there will be a magical change of [market share](#) overnight is not being realistic about what it takes," Mehdi said.

On the Net:

<http://www.microsoft.com/Presspass/presskits/bing/home.mspx>

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