

Microsoft swaps pictures for text in some searches

September 14 2009, By JESSICA MINTZ , AP Technology Writer



(AP) -- Microsoft Corp. is testing a way to display some search results as galleries of moveable images instead of text links, part of its ongoing attempt to differentiate its Bing search engine from Google.

Bing's new [visual search](#) page lets people flip through pictures to track down where and when a movie is playing, read up on baseball players or shop for items like digital cameras. You can go to bing.com/visualsearch to browse available categories.

Microsoft used Silverlight, its technology for making sophisticated Web sites with lots of content and moving parts, to build the visual search program. But in its current form, it's something of a throwback to the days when organizing the Web was done by humans, not powerful computer algorithms.

For example, Yahoo Inc. began as a curated directory of Web pages. But as the Internet evolved, so did methods of automatically indexing

material. Google Inc.'s mastery of powerful algorithms pushed it to the front of the pack.

For Bing's new feature, Microsoft hand-picked about 50 categories and worked with outside companies, including shopping sites, to pull in the necessary pictures and descriptions. Stefan Weitz, a director in the Bing group, said he hoped the feature would be based more on search algorithms in the future, but that for the test-run "beta" launch it was more important to present a polished, if limited, experience.

[Microsoft](#) launched [Bing](#) in May, promoting it as an improvement over Google-style "10 blue links" for tasks like shopping and travel. Microsoft's share of U.S. searches rose to 10.7 percent in August from 9 percent in July, according to the Nielsen Co. [Google](#) executed 64.6 percent of U.S. searches in August, according to Nielsen, while [Yahoo](#), the No. 2, was used for 16 percent.

Bing's new visual searching feature was being unveiled Monday at a conference staged by the TechCrunch news blog in San Francisco.

On the Net: <http://www.bing.com/visualsearch>

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Citation: Microsoft swaps pictures for text in some searches (2009, September 14) retrieved 21 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-09-microsoft-swaps-pictures-text.html>

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