

Ask.com mines online coupons with new aggregator

October 6 2009, By RACHEL METZ , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Ask.com hopes to persuade consumers that are fond of discount Web sites to bring their bargain hunts to its search engine.

On Tuesday, Ask is rolling out Ask Deals, a service that will let visitors search for online coupons and bargains that it indexes from several dozen popular coupon Web sites, along with retail Web sites, message boards and blogs.

Ask, which is owned by Barry Diller's IAC/InterActiveCorp, will be integrating the deals with regular search results on Ask.com - denoting deals with special icons - and making them available on a separate page devoted to bargain hunting, Ask.com/deals.

Ask Networks President Scott Garell said the company decided to focus on the bargain market because so many people use coupons. According to coupon-processing company Inmar Inc., use of electronic discounts and coupons more than doubled in the first half of 2009 from the same period last year, as overall coupon use rose 23 percent. Electronic coupons now account for more than 3 percent of all coupons used, up from about 2 percent last year.

Ask wants to save frugal consumers time and money, he said. The company determined that existing sites vary in quality and comprehensiveness, with some containing coupons that are fraudulent or invalid.

To make sure Ask Deals isn't posting out-of-date deals, Ask will use software to filter the results, Garell said. An editorial team will also point out special deals and help determine bargains are valid.

There are plenty of sites out there that sift through the best deals - and shopping is one focus of [Microsoft](#) Corp.'s retooled Bing search engine, for example. But Garell thinks Ask's plan to aggregate bargains from many places will lure savvy consumers.

"When you look at the raw scale and quality of what we're doing, it's better," he said.

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