

Woods scandal a boon to Internet publications

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In this Tuesday, Nov. 10, 2009 file photo, Tiger Woods from the U.S. smiles during a press conference before the Australian Masters golf tournament at Kingston Heath Golf Club, in Melbourne, Australia. Google and Yahoo say they've seen a significant spike from traffic from people looking for information on the golf superstar and his alleged extramarital affairs. (AP Photo/Andrew Brownbill, File)

(AP) -- The Tiger Woods sex scandal has been a boon for online publications, even though it hasn't generated the same amount of Internet traffic as Michael Jackson's death or President Barack Obama's inauguration.

Provocative remarks by Yahoo Inc. CEO [Carol Bartz](#) at an investor conference in New York this week illustrate how major Internet

channels and niche publications are benefiting from the Woods controversy.

Known for her off-color commentary, Bartz told [financial analysts](#) Tuesday that the Woods story is "better than Michael Jackson dying" for helping Yahoo make money, because it is easier to sell ads against salacious content than morbid stories.

"It's kind of hard to put an ad up next to a funeral," she said.

In response to a question, Bartz even said Woods will "absolutely" help Yahoo make its numbers this quarter, a comment the company now says was meant to be a joke.

[Google](#) Inc. and Yahoo, which combined process more than 80 percent of all Internet searches in the U.S., said they've seen a significant spike in traffic from people looking for information on the golf superstar and his alleged extramarital affairs. Yahoo says searches for Woods' name are up more than 3,900 percent over the last 30 days. Neither Google nor Yahoo would provide specifics about how many more people were searching.

But the traffic bump still is not as pronounced as those that surrounded the entertainer's death in June and Obama's inauguration in January, both companies said.

Search volume at the peak of interest in Jackson's death was more than twice as heavy as the biggest days of searching for news about Woods, Google said. Revelations about Woods' private life began emerging last month after he crashed his sport utility vehicle outside his home in a gated community in Florida.

Despite holding a distant second-place ranking to Google in search,

Yahoo outflanked its rival last week in drawing more traffic to its sites from people searching the Internet in the U.S. for Woods' name, according to Hitwise, a research firm that studies Web traffic.

Hitwise says Yahoo and [Yahoo](#) News snagged more than 17 percent of all the traffic to major sites that came from searches of Woods' name. That's ahead of Woods' own Web site, CNN.com and Google's news site.

The firm said Yahoo's popular Web portal and e-mail service were likely big helps in attracting the traffic.

Smaller publications also are benefiting.

Time Inc. says its Golf.com Web site, which averages 2.4 million unique viewers a month, has seen traffic spike 600 percent since the story about Tiger broke after the Thanksgiving holiday. The traffic is similar to levels the publications sees only during major golf championships, said Scott Novak, spokesman for Sports Illustrated Group, which publishes Golf.com.

A lesson from earlier major news events is that [Internet](#) companies need to capitalize fast on the surge in traffic, because interest fades quickly.

Google's statistics show that searches for Michael Jackson stayed strong in the days after his death but fell off dramatically after a couple of weeks.

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