

# Review: New search partners aren't identical twins

September 30 2010, By MICHAEL LIEDTKE , AP Technology Writer

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(AP) -- Just because Yahoo Inc.'s U.S. website and Microsoft Corp.'s Bing are using the same technological ingredients for searching the Internet doesn't mean they're slicing and dicing the results the same way, too.

Understanding the differences can be helpful, particularly for people looking for the best alternative to Google Inc.'s dominant search engine.

The 10-year search partnership between Yahoo and [Microsoft](#) still allows them to cook up different recipes for displaying the results. Both wanted that flexibility because even though Microsoft and Yahoo are now teaming up to fight Google, they're still competing for traffic with each other. The reason: search requests yield more opportunities to sell the ads that appear alongside the results. If a person clicks on one of those ads while searching on Yahoo, it gets to keep \$88 of every \$100 in revenue, with the other \$12 going to Microsoft. If a person clicks on an ad while searching on Bing, Microsoft gets to keep all the money.

Yahoo switched its U.S. and Canada sites over to Bing's [search technology](#) in late August to lower its costs and free up more time and money to focus on building other services. As things evolve, Yahoo has indicated it will do more things to make its search results more helpful than Bing's, but so far, the distinctions have been subtle.

A review by The Associated Press found the differences between the search results on Yahoo and Bing mostly have to do with the ways that

the two services compile and display snapshots of key information at or near the top of the first page.

These additional features supplement the boring blue links to other sites that have been standard fare on most search services for the past decade. When it came to those links, along with most of the photo and video snippets, the results were virtually identical at Yahoo and Bing. For the test, the AP entered more than 30 different search requests in at the two sites on topics including sports teams, holidays, travel requests, business subjects, celebrities and high-tech gadgetry.

The AP only looked at results that came from typing queries into the main search boxes on Bing and Yahoo, because that's the most common way people find things online. Bing, in particular, has been heavily promoting its specialty services for travel and shopping as better ways to search for good deals, but often, people have to click another link or tab to use them.

Even without digging deeper into its search toolbox, Bing usually produced the more visually appealing results page. For instance, Bing offers more photo thumbnails on its first results page, as well as more video previews that can be played on the site by hovering over them with the computer's cursor.

Yahoo consistently showed fewer photo thumbnails and video capsules on the first page. What's more, the video capsules within Yahoo's search results usually required clicking through to the site where the clip was being hosted. Yahoo also didn't post any explanations about where the video clips came from or what they were about, something that Bing did.

Another Bing advantage: its site tends to offer more suggestions for other searches likely to be related to the initial request. Bing also provides a pane just to the right of the results that, as a reader scrolls

down, provides a glimpse of key information from each site in the list. Even when Yahoo's results featured all the same links, there was no way to get more information without clicking on the link.

Bing also seemed to bring more pizzazz to its results, such as when the AP searched for "Halloween." The recommendations were separated into different categories - "Halloween Decorations," "Halloween DVD," and "News: Halloween" - that were highlighted in orange. That's a nice holiday-themed touch that Yahoo lacked.

Yahoo excels when the requests are about entertainers, star athletes or sports teams. In these instances, Yahoo led off the results with a box containing a picture of the person or team logo, along with biographical information. For entertainers, the box also featured songs and video. In an apparent bias that might bother some people, Yahoo pulls some of this data from its own services, such as rivals.com for requests about some sports subjects.

Bing provided similar summaries on the same search requests, although they didn't seem to be as comprehensive as Yahoo's. An exception came when looking up Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer and Yahoo CEO Carol Bartz. Bing produced a handy biography about each executive, including their birthdates. Yahoo didn't do that, not even for Bartz.

Expect to see [Yahoo](#) to attempt to cram even more information about prominent people in its summary boxes. The company plans to unveil a new design for the boxes later this fall.

Some of the attempts to stand out proved to be more embarrassing than engaging. For instance, when the AP asked for a list of the best search engines, Yahoo's results led off with a row of five images that included pictures of vintage locomotives, a steam engine and two images of cold medicine.

That kind of incongruous result is the sort of thing that will send more people to Bing or, even more likely, [Google](#).

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