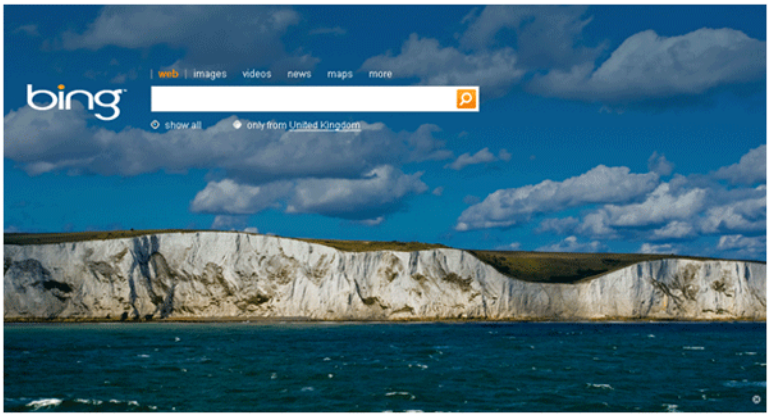
To Bing, or not to Bing

Fri, May 29, 2009 | Posted by Jonathan Stewart

You?ll be forgiven for being a bit confused about the emergence of the newest search engine on the scene ? Bing! Officially announced yesterday bySteve Ballmer at the D7 conference, Bing is Microsoft?s latest attempt to refocus their search efforts, and will be launching on the 3rd of June. Until this week, most within the SEO industry were aware that Microsoft were up to something , but we?d all become quite familiar with the previous codename assigned to the project; Kumo. So it came as quite a shock when rumours started to surface that they were changing the name to Bing.



So why Bing? Over at the Live Search blog, Bing was announced on a post humourously titled ?The Sound of Found - Bing?. They go on to say:

?We needed a brand that was as fresh and new as our approach. It needed to be like the product ? optimized for the Internet. A name that was memorable, short, easy to spell, and that would function well as a URL around the world. We like Bing because it sounds off in our heads when we think about that moment of discovery and decision making ? when you resolve those important tasks?

Within Ballmer?s speech, he talks about the fact that ?Bing? works internationally. It also works as a verb ? ?I?ll Bing you later?, in the way that Live and MSN never did. When I first heard the name Bing I thought it was ridiculous, but it kind of reminds me how people scoffed when Nintendo announced the Wii ? and see how well that?s caught on, eh? I think Bing?s definitely got legs.

Microsoft?s search offering has long been blighted by confusing branding, and has appeared in various guises:

? Microsoft Search

? MSN Search

? Live Search

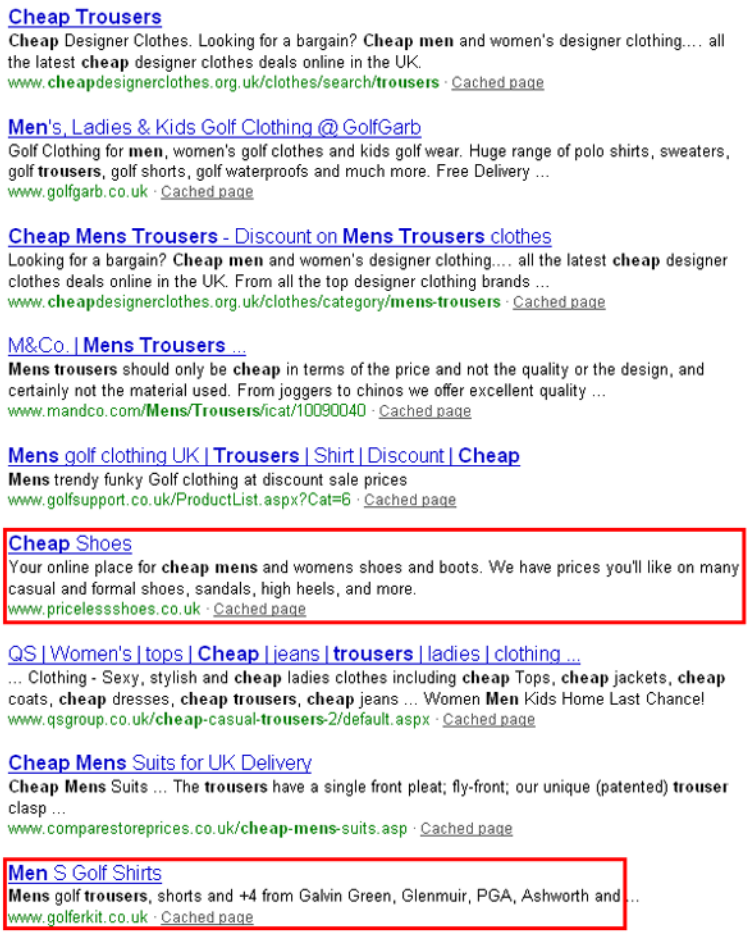
? Windows Live Search

so it?s good to see them distance themselves from previous incarnations. It will be very interesting to see

how the move away from their existing brand equity will affect them, although I?m sure the reported $100 million advertising campaign will do no harm. In case you?re not aware, that figure is big ? 4 times what Google spent on all their advertising last year!

Microsoft is also taking the move to reposition their search offering. They no longer use the phrase ?search engine? ? instead, Bing is a ?decision engine?, confidently stating that *?the world doesn?t need another search engine ? it needs a decision engine.?*

For me, a good search engine is more than just a verb. It has to deliver good relevant results. That?s what Google did, and the verb came (quite unexpectedly) after. And this is where Microsoft has always fallen down. Within 2 searches, I quickly found an excellent example to help me illustrate Microsoft?s flaws:



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These are the results for the query ?cheap mens trousers?. I?ve highlighted the results I think are unsuitable. If I?m searching for trousers, why am I being shown websites about shoes and golf shirts? It?s important that Microsoft iron out these bugs in the algorithm when Bing is launched, or pay more attention to this moving forward than they appear to have done in the past.

All this, however, may be in vein. Adage noted that:

?Google has conducted internal tests, according to people familiar with them, in which the company put its logo and treatment on another engine?s search results. Users still prefer the results with the Google logo, even if they?re not Google results?

So perhaps they should simply use that $100 million to pay for the use of Google?s logo? It?s certainly interesting times in the search engine world with the advent of Bing, Wolfram Alpha, and real time search. I really hope Bing is a success ? anything to shake up the search engine landscape and reduce Google?s market share has to be a good thing.

Further Information

Bing on Twitter

Watch Bing in action

Press Kits (with screenshots)

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