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How Do You GOOGLE?

Before you create your first campaign, choose your keywords, or write a single ad, you should understand the basic mechanisms behind how people search.

The psychology of search is a deep subject, but fortunately for us a few smart marketers² have come up with an easy-to-understand and surprisingly practical framework that anyone can use to create powerful campaigns from scratch.

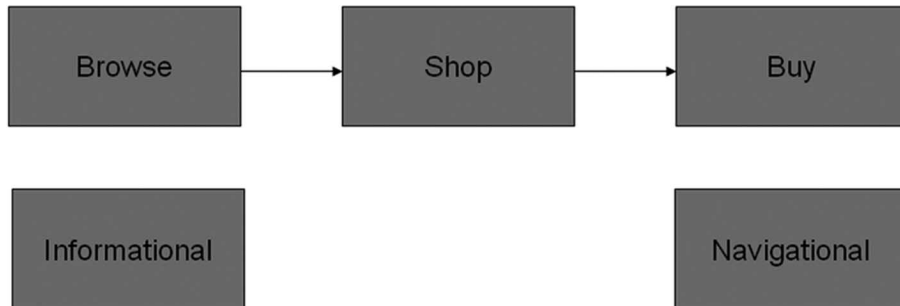
This model forms the foundation for keyword selection, ad copy, and even bidding strategies. It takes only a few minutes to learn, and the payoff is well worth it.

THE CUSTOMER LIFE CYCLE MODEL

This model of search behavior postulates that there is a correlation between the phrases that people type into search engines and their intent to purchase. In other words, you can guess how likely it is that someone will purchase from you based on their search phrase.

Under this model, search engine users tend to fall within one of three primary categories or two secondary categories:

² The original model of search behavior was created by Andrei Broder, who wrote about it in his paper “A taxonomy of web search” while working for AltaVista Corporation. It has evolved over the years and today is in widespread use among many top-tier search agencies.



Browsers are in information-gathering mode. The search phrases they enter tend to be short and not very specific (e.g., *Las Vegas*, *coupons*, *spyware*, etc). This group is least likely to make an immediate purchase, so aggressively promoting products to them is not the best approach.

Because browsers are generally looking for information rather than commercial offerings, they tend to click on natural results more often than ads. When they do click on ads, they will often click more than one as they gather as much information as possible. They usually start at the top of the page and work their way down (becoming more selective as they go along).

The browse group is closely related to the *informational* group. The difference is that the former are potentially buyers, whereas people in the informational group are highly unlikely to buy at all. People interested in celebrity gossip are an example. It would be difficult to monetize this group of visitors in any other way than through contextual or banner advertising.

Most people using search engines fall within one of these two groups, but you're far more likely to make a sale to a *shopper*. These people have an identified need and are considering their options. They are often using a search engine to compare different products or services.

You can almost think of shoppers as tire kickers. They might be seriously interested in buying now or later, but the immediate need is to assess their options. By appealing to that information-gathering need, you can often convert them to buyers (or at least capture their information for when they are ready to buy).

Buyers on the other hand are ready to buy now. They might be looking for a specific product, or just the first product that seems to meet their needs. Their information gathering is largely done, and they spend less time on the search engine and more time on vendors' Web sites.

Aggressive emotional or impulsive appeals often work with these visitors because the logical part of their brain has already been satisfied through prior research. Often, they need just the slightest push to buy from you. You want to tempt with promotional offers, and you should cater to instant gratification: fast shipping, high quality, low price, and so forth.

Finally, the *navigational* group is a subset of the buyer category. The purpose of their queries is to reach a particular Web site that they have in mind, typically because they've visited it in the past or because they assume that such a site exists. For instance, someone who searches for *greyhound bus* is almost certainly looking to reach <http://www.greyhound.com>.

These visitors are quite hard to convert. Unlike other types of searchers, they usually have only one "right" result. They know the site they want to visit, and only that site will do. Although making a sale to these visitors isn't impossible, it's certainly an uphill battle—one which will tie up an inordinate amount of your time and money.

IDENTIFYING YOUR VISITORS' PURCHASE INTENTION

The information above is critical for any marketer to know. In the offline world, companies pay dearly for this type of market research. Fortunately, you don't have to.

You can guess which group a visitor falls within simply by the length and specificity of their keyword phrase.

- Short, one-word keyword phrases that generate a lot of traffic are dominated with browsers.
- Two-and three-word phrases that contain comparison words such as *best*, *cheap*, or *review* are shoppers' terms.
- Phrases with four or more words or phrases that refer to specific products, SKUs, or model numbers are used by buyers to find what they want quickly.

- Specific URLs, companies, or brand names identify navigational searchers.

Here are some examples to get your wheels turning. In the coming chapters, we'll show you how to use this insight to transform your search advertising radically.

Browse	Shop	Buy	Navigate
Television	HDTV HDTV Reviews	Panasonic 43" plasma TV HVD3002 best price	Panasonic
Las Vegas	Las Vegas Airfare	Cheap Las Vegas	Expedia
Spyware	Best Antispyware Program	Spyware Doctor 4.0	pctools.com

SUMMARY

The phrases your potential customers are searching on reveal their purchase intentions. Most of your revenues will be generated through niche (shop or buy) keywords. Most of your traffic (and costs) will be generated from broad (browse) keywords. For this reason, most advertisers should focus on niche keywords.