

Mobile Search: what are people searching for and how do they search for it

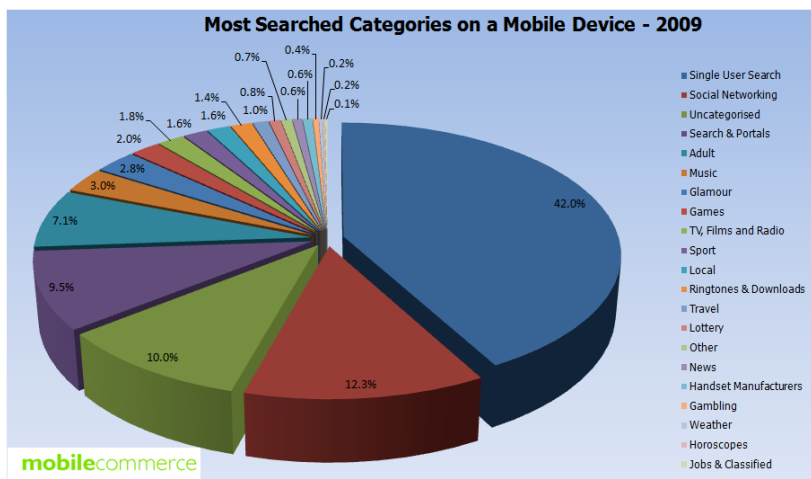
As the number of people using the Mobile Internet increases, the amount of mobile content is growing with it. As a result, there is a greater need than ever to make mobile content and services easier to find, both to enhance the user experience and ultimately to maximise the revenue opportunities.

The White Paper published today by Mobile Commerce: *'Mobile Search: What are people searching for and how do they search for it'* addresses how this affects search bidding, natural Mobile Internet and web results and shows how mobile sites can be monetised by adding a search box.

Mobile Commerce handles over 25% of the searches coming from the 17.38m Mobile Internet users via UK operator portals (see next section), plus a growing number of other portals seeking to monetise their mobile assets. In total dealing with a quarter of a billion searches per annum, a figure doubling each year, as people gravitate towards the convenience of the Mobile Internet with new generations of smart phones becoming the norm and better value data bundles/packages being sold.

Having built an analytic tool in 2002 to analyse these increasing numbers of search requests and clicks, a growing element of Mobile Commerce's core business model is the development of monetised search using paid listings, thus connecting mobile users with advertisers. This generates additional revenue for the network operators (through off-portal traffic) and gives advertisers distribution. The Mobile Commerce solution gives up to a 70% uplift in search clicks compared to a raw search engine implementation.

This table shows what mobile users are searching for:



NOTE: Single User Search are searches unique to just one user

Key findings from the White paper:

Context of growth of search on mobile

- The volume of searches we are seeing on mobile devices has more than doubled in the last 12 months.
- According to the UK Mobile Data Association, there were 17.38 million users using the Mobile Internet in December 2008 (Source: text.it) up from 16.5 million in May 2008.
- The Orange Digital Media Index April 2010 (Source: Orange) states that in December 2009 Orange had 3.41 million customers using Orange World (the Orange Mobile Portal) up 5% from February 2009.
- Part of the growth in search terms can be accounted for by new Mobile Internet users buying flat rate data bundles and having handsets with improved capabilities that make them easier to use, plus existing users trying the search function for the first time.
- However, the average number of searches per unique user is rising much faster. It has grown from 8 searches per unique user per month to more than 13 searches per unique user in the last 12 months. This is a clear indication that once users try the search box they continue to use it in greater and greater volume every month. This is because of changes in the behaviour of the use of the mobile phone with users becoming reliant on the Mobile Internet.

Is mobile search like fixed internet search? (No, it's not)

- A mobile phone has a much smaller text input device than the keyboard of a PC. This makes input errors much more likely. Mobile phone screens are small so the user sees less information before there is a need to pan left/right or scroll down. This makes navigation around pages, or down through different levels on a portal, a greater challenge. Therefore, the number of searches for items/content that are already somewhere within the portal is much higher than for the PC.
- Bookmarking on a mobile is much less prevalent than on the PC. Although it is possible to do, users tend not to – so they are much more inclined to use search to get to the content that they visit on a regular basis. This is exactly the behaviour that is seen and why Facebook was the single most searched term of 2009.

What else affects the volume of searches?

- Date and time are also strong drivers of search terms e.g. The Boat Race, The Derby (the horserace not the city) and The Eurovision Song Contest.
- TV is also an influential driver of search terms and searches – The X Factor, Big Brother, Dancing on Ice all generate significant numbers of searches but only when the program is showing. These terms tend to last for a few weeks increasing dramatically towards the final episode and then disappear until the following season.
- Events are another driver of search terms – every time Joe Calzage fought the number of people looking for information on the fight rose.
- News also drives searches – the death of a celebrity always leads to searches as people look for information. 2010 has seen a leap in the number of searches for Malcolm McLaren following his recent death. The number of people searching “nats” and airlines has risen following the volcano.

What actually gets searched?

- In the top 20 most searched terms of 2009 there are 4 different ways of accessing Facebook, and 2 of accessing both Google and YouTube. Here is a list of the top twenty most searched terms.

1. Facebook	11. Yahoo
2. Google	12. Lottery
3. Bebo	13. You Tube
4. Youtube	14. Face Book
5. www.facebook.com	15. Flirtomatic
6. Ebay	16. Free Games
7. Ebuddy	17. Yahoo Mail
8. Facebook.com	18. Plenty of Fish
9. Hotmail	19. Google.com
10. MSN	20. twitter

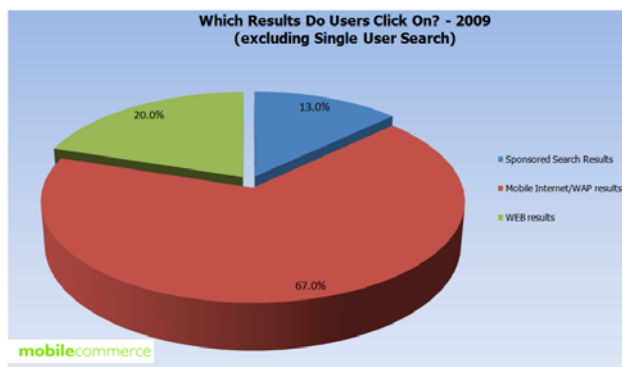
- The understanding of how subjects are searched is critical to companies wanting to get their mobile assets discovered either by bidding or through natural search e.g. Pacman is searched using hundreds of different search terms. For advertisers to get discovered they need to bid on not only these but also the other hundreds of Pacman terms, so they can be displayed to the long tail of people interested in Pacman.
- It may seem odd that Google is the second most searched term on mobile but the term holds a similar position on all operators' portals regardless of whether the search box is branded as Google, a competitor (usually Yahoo! in the UK) or is white-label. According to Google's 2009 Zeitgeist, Google is the 8th most searched term put into the Google search box on a PC! Some things are just not that easy to explain.

Local search may not be as close as you think!

- The single top mobile search term with a direct location context is Halifax. However, it is clear from the click pattern that users are not seeking information about the northern town but information on the bank with the same name. We would not classify this as a location contextual search.

- Manchester United was the most searched football club in 2009 (being searched in >200 different ways). Whilst all of these terms have a location element (Manchester) they probably should not be regarded as local searches. This is supported by other search terms including city names. For all searches including the term Sheffield 43% are football related and Sunderland where 58% are football related.
- Cinema is a term that does have a strong local search context. In a single month we would see in excess of 2,000 different search terms with the word cinema or one of the large cinema chains in the search string.
- Very few people local search using the term London (the most popular being: London Marathon, Transport for London and London Tube Map) as London locations tend to be searched by area, Peckham, Highgate, Hammersmith etc

Do users click on the results? (Yes, they do)



How does Mobile Commerce add value to Mobile Search?

- Mobile Commerce has a monetised search API that allows publishers to place a search box on their site. The API is configurable so the publisher can decide on what results they want to display to produce an optimal experience for their consumers.
- The Monetised Search API also supports “Did You Mean” and “Also Try” functionality, which interprets requests and gives an alternative if relevant.
- For Ad Network Aggregators, Mobile Commerce provides a search feed. This means that Ad Network Aggregators can offer their customers both Display Advertising and Search Advertising.
- All customers have access to on-line reporting which has been used by most customers to improve their portals by adding terms/services that are regularly searched making their portals more relevant to their specific audience.
- Mobile Commerce also supplies dynamic tag clouds so within a set of results for a subject like “games” a list of the most search games (Pacman, Tetris etc) can be displayed making it much easier for users to select a game that they are probably familiar with and other users have been searching.
- The service is available for UK, USA, Germany, Japan and Ireland.

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