



iProspect Social Networking User Behavior Study

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Background & Definitions

In January 2007, [iProspect](#) partnered with independent research firm [JupiterResearch](#) to develop a series of survey questions focused on how the U.S. online population utilizes several of the most popular social networking websites (or social search engines).

For purposes of this study iProspect defines a “social networking website” as one that allows Internet users have the ability to add user-generated content such as: comments, reviews, feedback, ratings, or their own dedicated pages. All of the sites examined within this study allow posting of user-generated content. It’s because of its use of user-generated content, for example, that [Amazon.com](#) – a site which many see as a purely ecommerce site – was included in this survey. For visitors to Amazon have the ability to post “customer reviews” of products, allowing potential buyers to read the reviews prior to making a purchase decision. It should also be noted that among all the sites examined by this study, Amazon is the only one on which you can directly buy a product.

For the purposes of this study, iProspect considers a social networking site to also be a “social search engine” if it has a site-level search capability that allows visitors to query the user generated content within the site. All the sites referenced within the study have site-level search capabilities and are therefore considered social search engines. All the sites discussed within the study also allow their user-generated content to be indexed by at least some search engine spiders, so that their content can also be found through the use of traditional search engines. So for purposes of this document, the terms “social networking site” and “social search engine” are used interchangeably.

The specific websites that were included in the survey questions were selected based on iProspect’s own clients’ interest in, and utilization of, these sites as marketing vehicles more than other such sites. iProspect acknowledges that websites such as [Eurekster](#), [Digg](#), [Wikipedia](#), [Wikiasari](#), [Squidoo](#) and many others may be considered part of the emerging category of “social search,” but neither the survey, nor this resulting study, attempts to take an exhaustive look at every possible social networking or social search engine currently in existence. It does, however, include some of the largest, most well known, most visited, and most talked about players in the social networking space. The inclusion or exclusion of a particular website in this study also does not validate or invalidate that site as a viable site for marketing purposes, because marketers’ business models, product/service lines, and marketing goals vary widely.

At times throughout this document the word “participation” is used in reference to activities in which a marketer may engage on a social search engine. This use of the word is simply meant to represent the variety of ways in which a marketer could cause content that pertains to his or her company to appear on a social networking site. This could be in the form of a paid advertisement, a comment or feedback to a user dialogue, a rating or a tag, a “custom page” dedicated to their brand, or the ethical facilitation of user-generated content being added by a marketer’s customers.

Finally, the survey’s questions were fielded as part of a longer JupiterResearch survey that included questions on a variety of topics. Response data from iProspect’s questions was compiled and analyzed by JupiterResearch’s custom research division and was then presented to iProspect in February 2007. iProspect reviewed and studied the analysis performed by Jupiter, and identified findings it felt would be of interest to not only its clients, but to all online marketers.

iProspect created this document, the *iProspect Social Networking User Behavior Study*, in order to share those findings, as well as provide commentary on the insights gained, and the trends recognized, within those findings. The study goes on to provide advice to marketers on how to take advantage of the opportunities that the survey uncovered. Please note that JupiterResearch subsequently reviewed and approved the final content of this study prior to its publication by iProspect. All figures cited within this study reflect only the U.S. online adult population (ages 18 and over).

Methodology

In January 2007, JupiterResearch designed and fielded a survey to online consumers selected randomly from the [Ipsos U.S. Online Consumer Panel](#). A total of 2,223 individuals responded to the survey. Respondents were asked approximately 25 closed-ended questions about their behaviors and preferences regarding online holiday shopping, search, ISP and video, online social networking (on behalf of iProspect), and online dating.

Respondents received an email invitation to participate in the survey with an attached link to the Web-based survey form. The samples were carefully balanced by a series of demographic and behavioral characteristics to ensure that they were representative of the overall online population. Demographic weighting variables included age, gender, household income, household education, household type, region, and market size.

Additionally, JupiterResearch took the unconventional step of weighting the data by AOL usage, online tenure and connection speed (broadband versus dial-up), three key determinants of online behavior. Balancing quotas are derived from JupiterResearch's Internet Population Model, which relies on U.S. Census Bureau data and a rich foundation of primary consumer survey research to determine the size, demographics and ethnographics of the U.S. online population. The survey data are fully applicable to the U.S. online population within a confidence interval of plus or minus 3%.

In this survey effort, JupiterResearch worked with its research partner, Ipsos-Insight on the technical tasks of survey fielding, sample building, balancing, and data processing. Ipsos-Insight is one of the largest market research companies in the U.S. and maintains a general research panel of 400,000 households. Ipsos-Insight also has access to the Ipsos U.S. Online Panel, which comprises two million Internet users, offering JupiterResearch an effective way to target and survey current online users. Panel-based market research enables researchers to have baseline knowledge of each survey respondent, to increase survey participation rates, and to permit careful rationing of survey fielding to reduce survey burnout.

Executive Summary

The iProspect Social Networking User Behavior Study findings should be of significant importance to both search engine marketers, and to the social networking sites themselves, as it uncovers a number of opportunities for both constituencies.

Findings and Implications

1. All three major search engines ([Google](#), [Yahoo!](#) and [MSN](#)) have a much higher percentage of the total U.S. online population visiting their sites on a daily and weekly basis than even the largest, most frequently visited, social networking sites. So despite widespread search marketing industry buzz about “social search,” marketers should continue to invest time, effort, and resources ensuring that their Web pages are found in both the paid and natural search results of the major search engines in order to be exposed to the largest audiences.
2. The most frequently visited social networking sites are visited by approximately one out of every four Internet users at least once a month. So despite not receiving visits in the quantities, or with the frequency enjoyed by the major search engines, a significant number of Internet users are currently visiting these sites somewhere between daily and monthly. Marketers should take note of this and identify the social networking sites whose “communities” of visitors closely match the profile of their target customers and prospects. Opportunities to reach target audiences on these sites, and to obtain links on these sites to marketers' own sites, are available through various types of “participation.” Finally, marketers should perform actions to expose prospects to this participation through a variety of channels (see #5 below).
3. Though sites such as [YouTube](#) and [MySpace](#) were designed to appeal to a high percentage of the online user population, many social search engines have been built to serve, and attract, a community that is defined by their affinity to a vertical industry, a business model, or an interactive activity type. Sites such as [del.icio.us](#) (bookmarking), [LinkedIn](#) (BtoB), and [TripAdvisor](#) (travel and hospitality), though visited by less than 10% of Internet users, nonetheless can serve as highly targeted, extremely effective means to reach very specific profiles of potential customers. Marketers should research their industry's/niche's universe of social networking sites, and explore those offering this special targeting.
4. Roughly one out of five visitors does not perform a search once they arrive at a social search engine. One probable reason is that in all cases, the user-generated content from each of the sites addressed by this study is indexed by at least some of the major search engines. As a result, these visitors are able to directly reach content on the sites without having to use the site's own search functionality. Given this user behavior, marketers who identify a particular social networking site whose community of users closely matches their target audience should be sure to investigate how much of the site's content is indexed in the major search engines. The easier the site's user generated content is to find on search engines, and the more channels that are available for Internet users to find content on one of these sites (see #5 below), the better the chance for marketing success.
5. Visitors primarily arrive at social networking sites through direct navigation/bookmarking, Google search, Yahoo! search, and links in emails (in that order). So aside from making certain that a marketer's particular form of participation on these sites can be found by users of Google and Yahoo!, they can also help their cause by ensuring that their content is of high enough interest, quality, or value that it will serve as “link bait” or “bookmark bait.” Doing so will encourage repeat visits, as well as the ability for direct navigation to the content. It is also apparent that the proactive pushing of potential visitors to social networking sites via email (from a current site user or from a marketer) is an important activity and channel in which to engage.

6. Internet users who visit social networking sites do so for a variety of reasons (or intents) including: for entertainment, to connect or network with others, to research a product or service, to purchase a product or service, and "other." The vast majority does not go to these sites with the intent to research or purchase products/services. But those marketers hoping to place their products in the path of motivated prospects ("pull marketing") should consider developing a strategy for participation on those sites where visitor intent is to research or directly purchase products or services. On the other hand, brand marketers should take advantage of the sheer numbers afforded by the majority of sites where visitor intent is to be entertained, or to connect/network with other people – where "push marketing" can be employed. These sites are more suited to introduce, or build awareness of a brand, product, or service to a community.
7. It's still early in the history of social networking, yet one out of three Internet users is already taking advantage of a site containing user-generated content to help make a decision to buy, or not to buy something. This bodes well for the future of these sites that take advantage of our human nature to trust the recommendations (and warnings) of fellow consumers more than we do the claims and "marketing-speak" of professional marketers. Given this user behavior, marketers need to initiate ethical mechanisms within their marketing mix to help drive, or provide incentive for the creation of positively-focused user-generated content about products and services on social networking sites. They should also perform a thorough "online reputation assessment" of the positive, negative, and neutral user-generated content on the leading social networking sites that apply to their target audience – especially any that appear within the first page of results of the major search engines. Once identified, positive steps can be taken to mitigate the impact of damaging content (see #8 below).
8. The majority of visitors to social networking sites have not posted comments on those sites. This creates great opportunities for marketers to create their own content for these sites (if allowed by the site's functional model) or to devise ethical ways to cause their current customers to post positively-focused comments. Though there is a mix of positive and negative comments about products and services across these sites, there is also a trend toward non-product-related comments being posted on sites where user intent is not to research or purchase a product, and little purchasing influence is generated. Depending on marketers' goals, they should participate on sites where the type of content that matches their marketing strategy can be found. It is also vital for marketers to "embrace" negative comments about their brand, product, services, employees, business practices, etc., that is discovered on social networking sites. By openly, honestly, and transparently addressing each piece of negative content – admitting to mistakes, explaining the steps being taken to fix or to improve – and doing so in a sensitive, factual, and non-promotional way, marketers can accomplish three important things: 1) they call their side of the story to the attention of their target community, 2) they demonstrate that they are human and are deserving of forgiveness and trust, and 3) they add neutral-to-positive content to the sites that contain the negative content.
9. The 18-24 year old age group is more prolific at visiting social networking sites and the major search engines weekly, as well as at posting content on social networking sites. This was the youngest age group surveyed and it's no surprise that the extremely Internet-savvy users visit these sites more frequently and are more interactive once they arrive. Marketers whose products or services target this age group have even more reason to establish a form of participation on sites frequented by these ultra-interactive users. Proactively engaging this age group (if, and where relevant) can both facilitate a rich channel of customer feedback and other user-generated content, as well as help establish a feeling of trust within this target community.

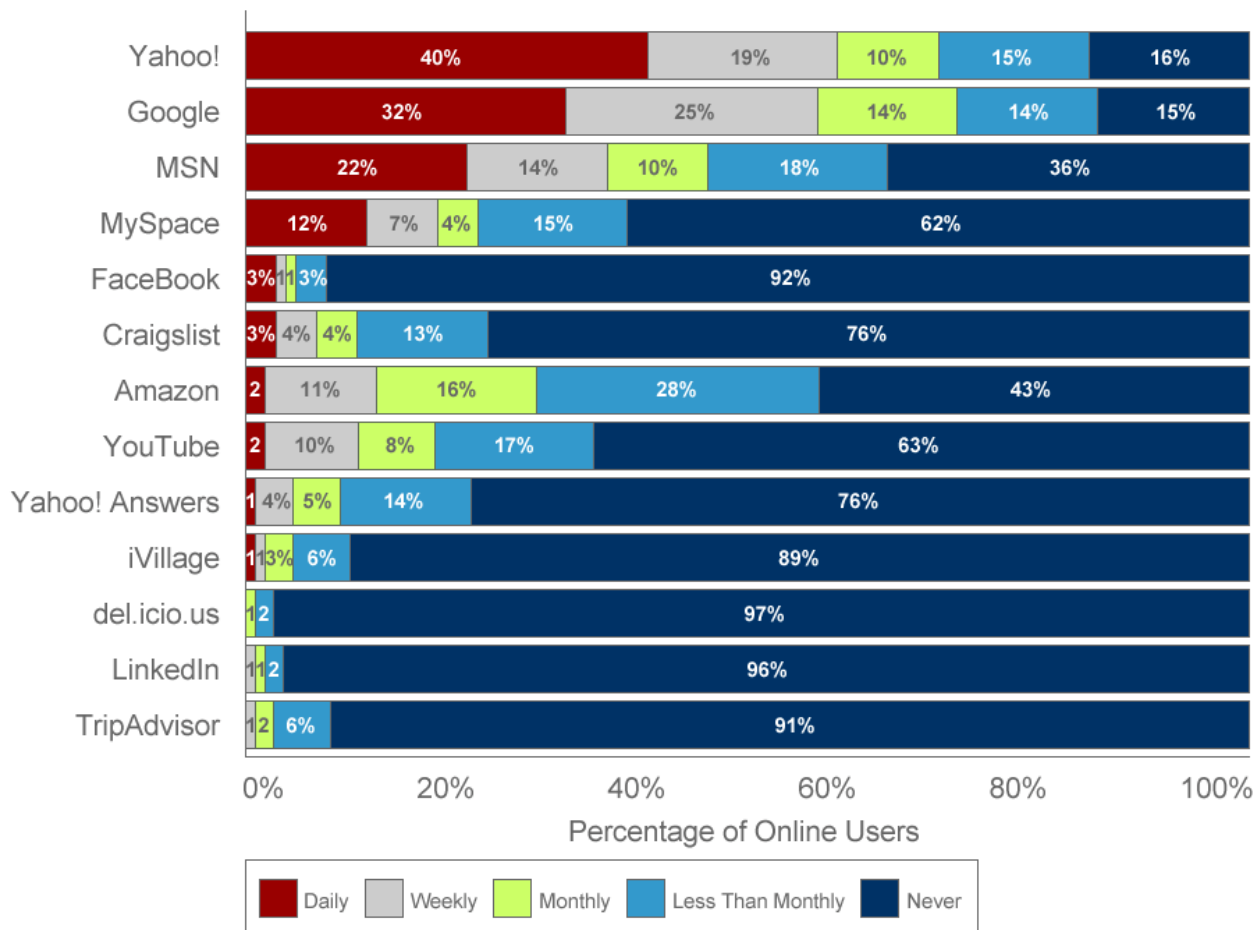
Questions and Responses

This study focuses on the findings generated from the following questions and responses:

1. When Internet users were asked...

“During the past 12 months, how frequently have you visited each of the following websites?”

Frequency of Website Visits

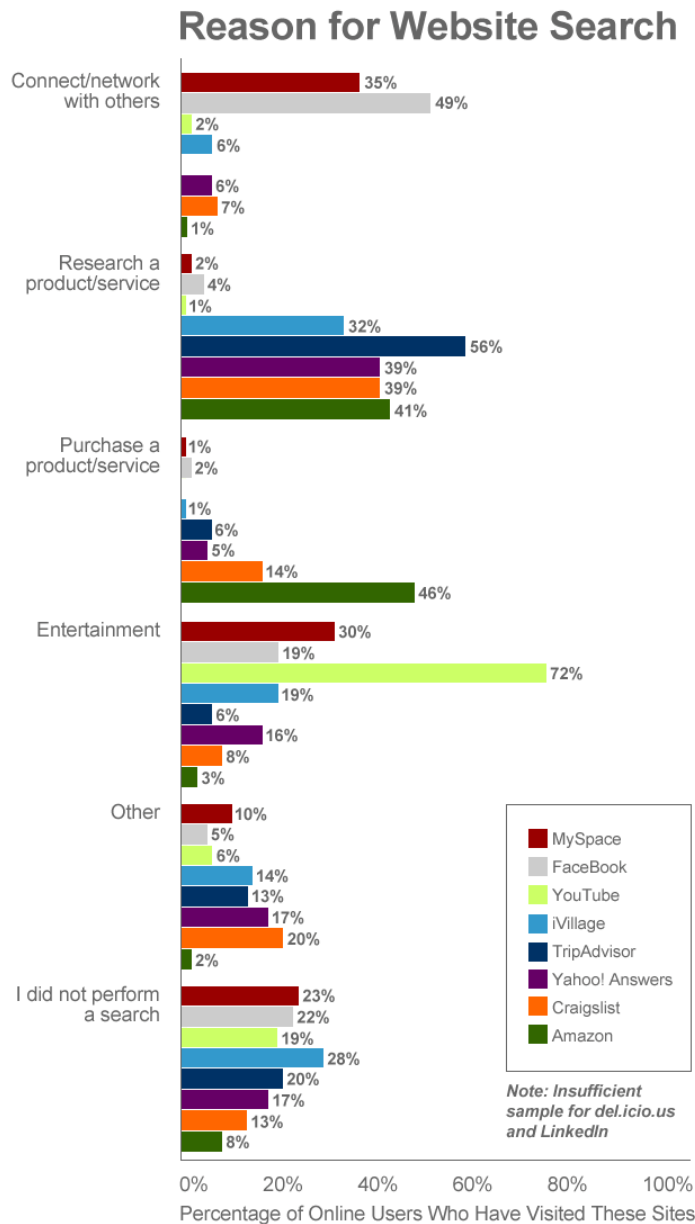


Source: JupiterResearch/Ipsos Insight Consumer Survey (01/07), n = 2,223 (US only)

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2. When Internet users who had visited one or more of the social networking sites referenced in Question #1 (which excluded Google, Yahoo! and MSN) were asked the following about those sites which they had visited in the past 12 months...

“Thinking of the last time you visited the following websites and performed a search, what was the reason for your search?”

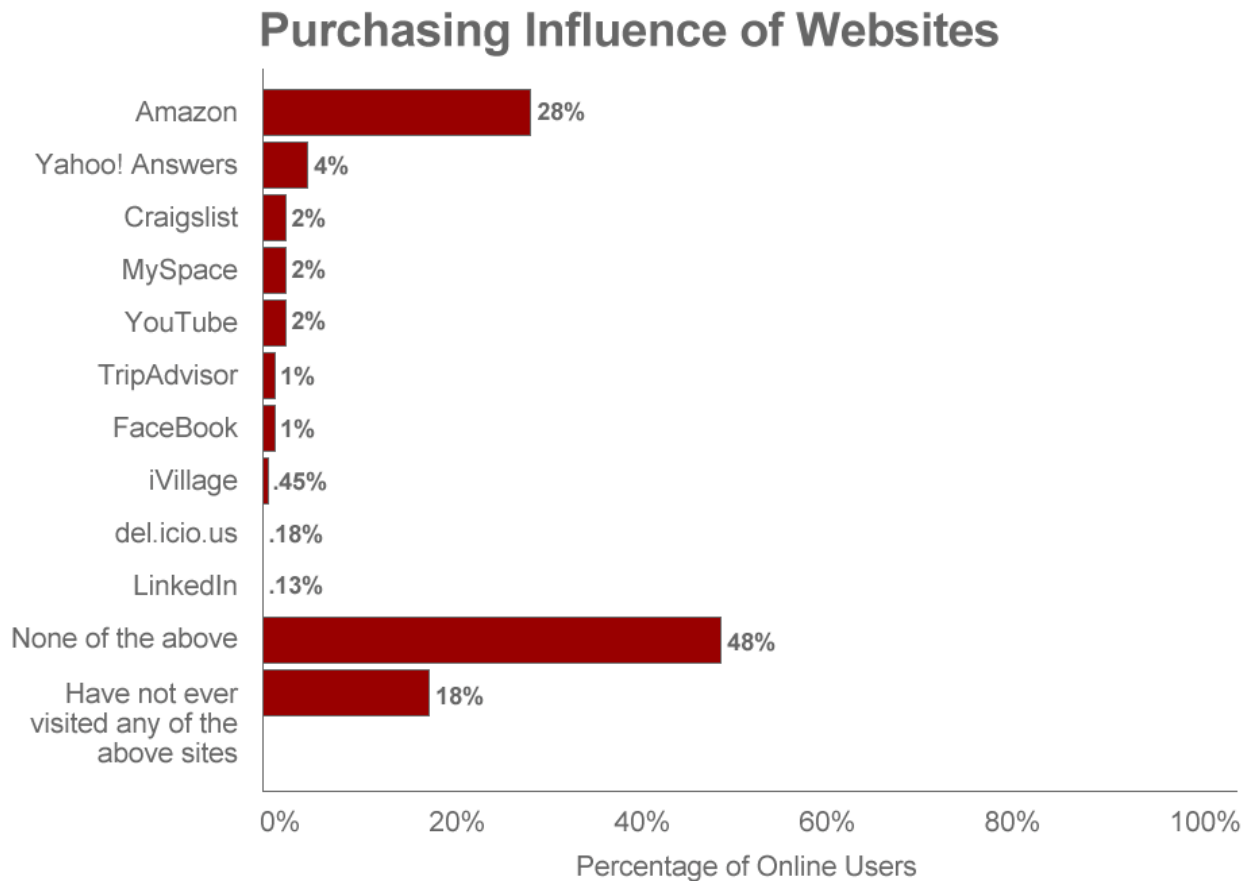


Source: JupiterResearch/Ipsos Insight Consumer Survey (01/07), n = 858 (MySpace); n=825 (YouTube); n=192 (FaceBook); n=84 (LinkedIn), n=518 (Yahoo! Answers); n=1268 (Amazon); n=204 (TripAdvisor); n=520 (Craigslist); n=81 (del.icio.us); n=240 (iVillage), (US only)

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3. When Internet users were asked the following...

“Of the websites that you have visited in the past 12 months, which influenced your decision(s) to either purchase or not purchase a product/service?”



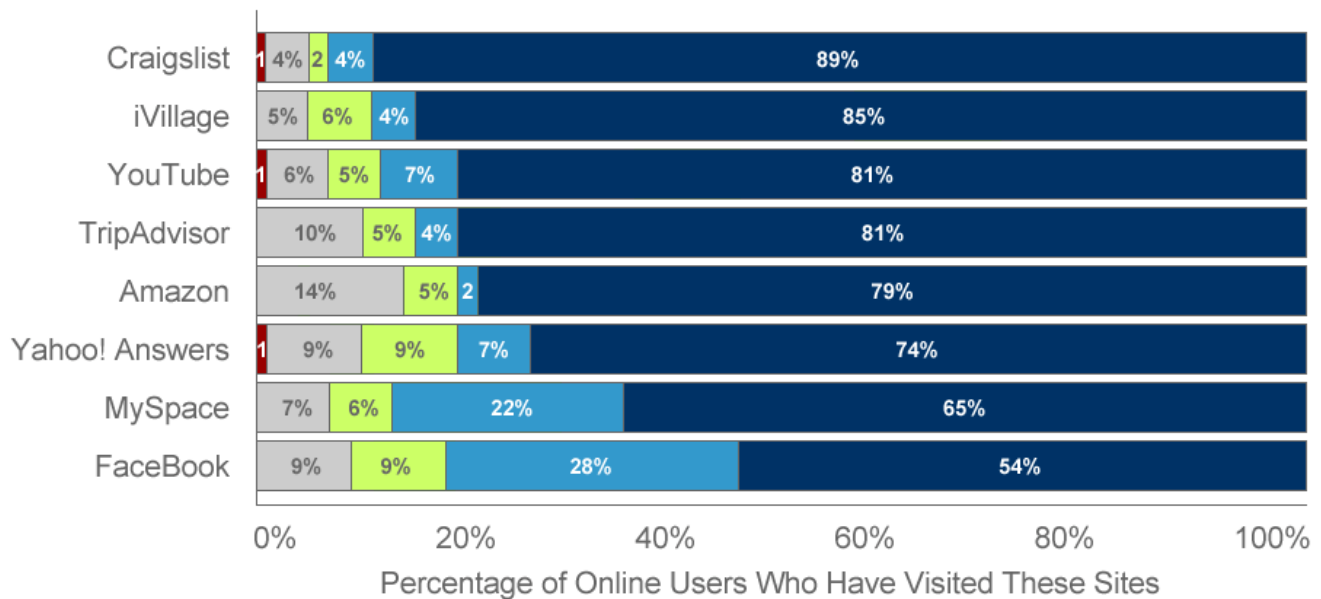
Source: JupiterResearch/Ipsos Insight Consumer Survey (01/07), n = 2,223 (US only)

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4. When Internet users who had visited one or more of the social networking sites were asked the following...

“Of the websites that you have visited in the past 12 months, what types of comments have you posted on each of them?”

Posting of Comments on Websites



Note: Insufficient sample for del.icio.us and LinkedIn

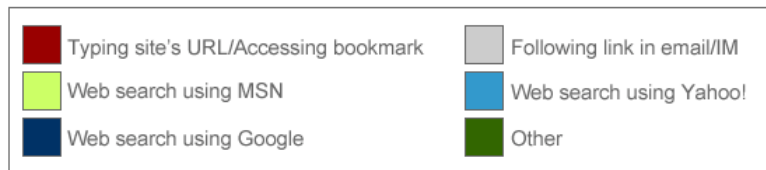
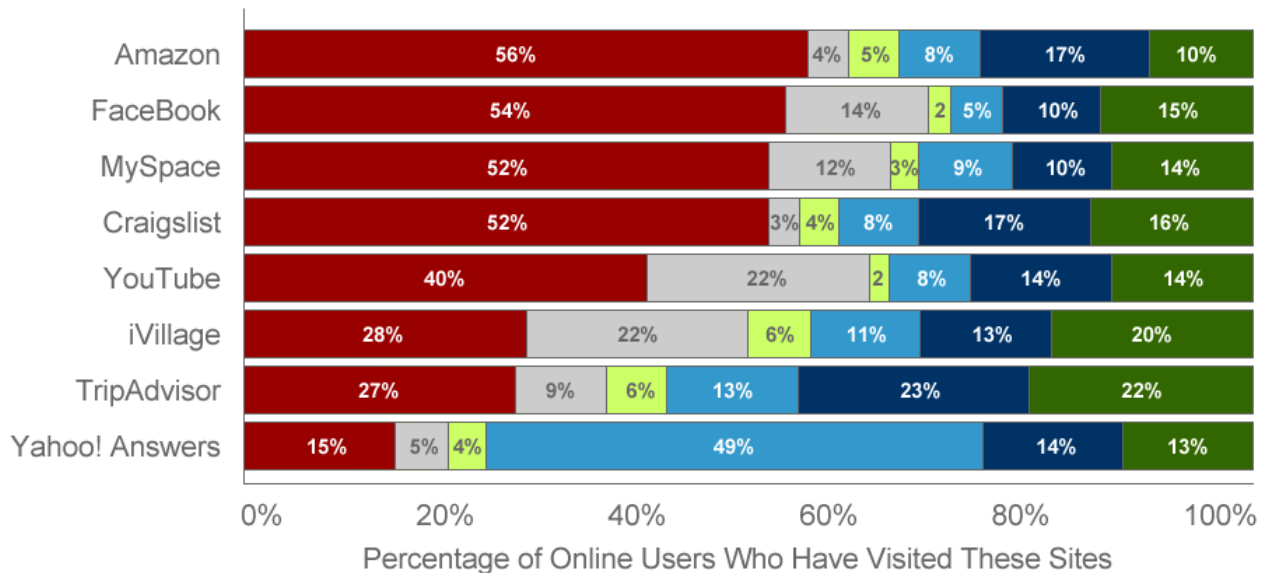
Source: JupiterResearch/Ipsos Insight Consumer Survey (01/07), n = 856 (MySpace); n=826 (YouTube); n=519 (Yahoo! Answers); n=1,269 (Amazon); n=204 (TripAdvisor); n=521 (Craigslist); n=240 (iVillage); n=191 (FaceBook), (US only)

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5. When Internet users who had visited one or more of the social networking sites were asked the following about those sites which they had visited in the past 12 months...

“Thinking of the last time you visited the following websites, please indicate which of the following methods you used to reach each site.”

Channels for Reaching Websites



Note: Insufficient sample for del.icio.us and LinkedIn

Source: JupiterResearch/Ipsos Insight Consumer Survey (01/07), n = 856 (MySpace); n=826 (YouTube); n=519 (Yahoo! Answers); n=1,268 (Amazon); n=203 (TripAdvisor); n=521 (Craigslist); n=82 (del.icio.us); n=240 (iVillage); n=191 (FaceBook); n=85 (LinkedIn), (US only)

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Detailed Findings

Just to reiterate, for purposes of this study iProspect defines a “social networking website” as one that allows Internet users have the ability to add user-generated content such as: comments, reviews, feedback, ratings, or their own dedicated pages. All of the sites examined within this study allow posting of user-generated content. And for the purposes of this study, iProspect considers a social networking site to also be a “social search engine” if it has a site-level search capability that allows visitors to query the user generated content within the site. So for purposes of this document, the terms “social networking site” and “social search engine” are used interchangeably.

As a reminder, the specific websites that were included in the survey questions that produced this study were selected based on iProspect’s own clients’ interest in, and utilization of, these sites as marketing vehicles more than other such sites. This resulting study does not attempts to take an exhaustive look at every possible social networking or social search engine currently in existence, but does include some of the largest, most visited players in the social networking space. iProspect acknowledges that websites such as Eurekster, Digg, Wikepedia, Wikiasari, Squidoo and many others may be considered part of the emerging category of “social search,” but neither the survey, nor this resulting study, attempts to take an exhaustive look at every possible social networking or social search engine currently in existence.

- 1. Social search engines are far from replacing the major, traditional search engines in terms of quantity and frequency of visits. Consequently, marketers need to continue to take action to ensure their websites are found in both the paid and natural search results of the traditional search engines.**

As is illustrated in the chart that appears under Question #1 within the “Questions & Responses” section, the three major search engines (Google, Yahoo! and MSN) are visited more frequently by a far higher percentage of the U.S. adult online population than all of the social networking sites included in the study. Yahoo! (whose home page is a true portal that includes access to its popular email feature) is visited daily by 40% of the adult online population. Google (the largest search engine according to market share, primarily offers search functionality on its home page) is visited daily by 33% of the adult online population. MSN (also a portal to other features) is visited daily by 22% of the U.S. adult online population.

Compare these figures with MySpace, the most frequented of the social search engines included in the study, with just 12% of the adult online population visiting daily. It quickly becomes clear why continued investment in being found within the results of the major search engines is still a highly recommended marketing strategy.

- 2. Social networking sites are being visited regularly by a meaningful percentage of the U.S. online population, with many sites attracting specific “communities” of visitors whose characteristics match those of specific audiences targeted by marketers.**

When focusing on the visitor frequency of the social networking sites examined, the data reveals that most have never been visited by the majority of the online user population (see chart that appears under Question #1). Several, however, are visited at least monthly by roughly a quarter of Internet users, including: Amazon (29%), MySpace (28%), and YouTube (20%). Of particular interest is that YouTube is visited at least monthly by 28% of online men, and by only 12% of online women – a fact that marketers of men’s products or services could use to their benefit.

The finding that some social networking sites are regularly being visited by a significant percentage of the online population illustrates a key advantage that these sites can offer marketers: the ability to participate on sites whose frequent visitors share a predominant set of traits that effectively define them as a “community.” This is something that traditional search engines, despite the advent of demographic targeting, cannot yet offer marketers to the extent that social networking sites can. Marketers’ participation on these sites could include activities such as placement of paid advertising, the posting of comments/feedback/ratings, and the creation of a “custom page” dedicated to a brand.

From a logistical standpoint, participating on social networking sites in a way that would allow a marketer to add a link from the social networking site to his or her own brand’s site provides an additional traffic channel as well as additional link popularity.

3. Some social networking sites that received visits from a very small percentage of the online population may nonetheless be viable vehicles for niche, or vertical-specific marketing.

Several of the social networking sites included in this study – ones that have received a fair amount of press coverage and are regularly discussed in search engine marketing circles – have never been visited by the extreme majority of the online population (see chart under Question #1). Specifically, del.icio.us (97% never visited), LinkedIn (96% never visited), and TripAdvisor (91% never visited) are sites whose targeted vertical industry or niche, or their functional model, have focused industry interest on them, and as a result, have made them excellent resources for marketers whose target markets fall within those industries or niches.

This is not to say that every vertical industry, or every possible audience profile niche, has a corresponding social search engine containing laser-focused content that attracts ultra-qualified visitors. However, where such sites exist, their functional model is often unique and “quirky” enough to grab the attention of industry press and marketers alike.

4. Visitors to social search engines don’t necessarily launch a search once they arrive, posing challenges to marketers who want their “participation” to be found.

In the chart under Question #2 within the “Questions & Responses” section, it is apparent that the search function of several of the social search engines examined by the study are used much less frequently than others. For example, 28% of visitors don’t perform a search on [iVillage](#), 23% of visitors don’t perform a search on MySpace, and 22% of visitors do not perform a search on [FaceBook](#). This data suggests that some visitors are most likely getting to the content they seek on these sites through other means (see detailed Finding #5 immediately below). In particular, many Internet users are performing searches on the major search engines, finding content from these search engine-friendly and well-indexed sites within their search results, and are clicking directly to the content they seek. In this way, they bypass the sites’ home pages and their own site search functions.

Marketers participating on these sites have the opportunity to dominate the search results page of the major search engines. They may have two of their brand’s website pages showing up within the natural results, as well as an ad appearing in the sponsored listings. Additionally, positive content about the brand appearing on these social networking sites can potentially result in multiple additional natural search results on the same results page.

Sites where a higher percentage of visitors are performing searches are relying more on site search to find content, and are most likely not as well indexed by the major search engines or as search engine-friendly as they could be. Marketers should seek out well-indexed, search engine-friendly sites for their initiatives to enhance the chances of dominating the search results page and having their content found by the online population.

5. Social search engines' visitors arrive through a number of methods, requiring marketers to facilitate multiple incoming channels to maximize the traffic to their content on the site.

The findings from the chart that appears under Question #5 within the "Questions & Responses" section indicate that visitors reach social networking sites through a variety of means. (This data adds further support to Finding #4 above.) The most prevalent channel to reach these sites is direct navigation (by simply typing in the known URL of the sites), or by accessing a personal bookmark on one's browser to bring a user to the site. Amazon, FaceBook, MySpace, and [Craigslist](#) are all examples of sites where more than 50% of the user population reach them via these means.

But beyond direct navigation and bookmarking, the power of other channels at driving visitors to these sites is fairly even, and includes: links in emails, Google search, Yahoo! search, MSN search and "other." This once again supports the point made in Finding #5: a well-indexed site with content that is easily found in the major search engines is good for the site and an attractive characteristic in the eyes of marketers (note the obvious anomaly where 49% of the user population to the Yahoo! Answers site gets there from the Yahoo! site – no surprise there).

Of interesting note is the fact that 58% of the online female population uses direct navigation or bookmarks to reach MySpace, while 47% of online males do the same. And direct navigation visitors to [Yahoo! Answers](#) are made up of 20% of the female online population, and just 11% of the male online population. This gender-specific data provides knowledge upon which savvy marketers may be able to capitalize.

Another way to use email to drive prospects and customers to specific content on a social networking site (to increase traffic to, and enhance the link popularity of that content) is to provide easy "copy-and-paste" link functionality within the email sent to prospects. This will allow recipients to easily copy and paste code into their personal websites to direct users to content they believe is interesting or useful on the social networking sites.

6. Some social networking sites are inherently better for marketers with selling and ecommerce goals, while others are better suited for brand building and awareness.

According to the chart under Question #2, visitors to each social networking site tend to have a predominant reason why they use search at the site. YouTube visitors are primarily seeking entertainment (72%, swelling to 76% if using broadband to access the Internet). Both FaceBook (49%), and MySpace (35%) visitors are seeking to connect/network with others. Sites where search was used for researching a product or service include: TripAdvisor (56%), Yahoo! Answers (39%), Craigslist (39%, but with an interesting split between 46% of online women and just 33% of online men), and iVillage (32%). As discussed earlier in the "Background & Definitions" section, Amazon is the anomaly here, with 41% of the online population visiting it to research products and services, and 46% visiting it to actually purchase products and services.

Given the reasons Internet users use search at the social networking sites, marketers can easily identify the sites that would be most likely to generate an immediate purchase, or influence a future purchase. Through the same means, they can also identify the sites that would be more useful to introduce a brand to an audience, generate awareness of a product or service, or affect some branding. Research conducted to discover the main intent of the majority of users to a site should also be used to help drive the type of marketing strategy to be pursued on that site.

7. Social networking sites are influencing the purchasing decisions of a meaningful percentage of the Internet users who visit them, requiring marketers to identify the sites where the level of influence is high, and to devise ways to positively engage with the visitors of those sites (“communities”).

The chart under Question #3 shows that across all the social networking sites reviewed for this study, 34% of the Internet user population has had a purchase influenced (one way or another) by one of these sites. All the editorial content that’s been generated within the last year about how the consumer is now in charge and that the marketer is merely along for the ride becomes more understandable given that one in three Internet users has had a purchase decision influenced by content generated by another Internet user.

As explored in #6 above, sites that influence the highest percentage of the user population (Amazon at 28% and Yahoo! Answers at 4%) are sites whose users visit primarily with the intent of either researching or purchasing products or services (no surprise). An interesting finding is that Amazon’s 28% becomes 33% for the online population using broadband to access the Internet. And Amazon’s 28% becomes 33% for the user population that has been online for five or more years, and reaches 40% for that part of the online population that is both using broadband and has been an Internet user for five or more years.

It is incumbent on marketers to analyze the inherent “DNA” of sites on which they are considering participation. Specifically, they should target sites that both do a great job attracting visitors whose intent matches the type of marketing strategy they want to employ, as well as those whose user “community” demonstrates traits that are comparable to those of the targeted audience. In addition, they also need to assess the appropriate form of participation based on the nature of the content model of the site. For example, does it allow for the building of pages dedicated to a brand? For linking to that brand’s site? For posting comments or engaging in an online dialogue with users? Or placing paid advertising? It’s key to a marketer’s success to select the method(s) of participation on these sites that are most readily used, and accepted, by its user community.

The use of “online reputation assessment” techniques is also recommended in order to identify the content that may have a negative purchasing influence. Once identified, various techniques can be implemented (on both the marketer’s own brand site, and on targeted social networking sites) to mitigate the negative content by replacing its search engine visibility with positive and neutral content.

8. While a percentage of visitors to social networking sites add user-generated content to the sites they visit, the vast majority do not. This provides marketers with opportunities to ethically influence their customers to produce content on these sites which portray their brands in a positive light.

Looking at the chart under Question #4, it’s obvious that posting content on social networking sites (an activity which, ironically enough is inherent in defining a site as a social networking site) is not yet common practice among the vast majority of the online user population.

For marketers, adding content to a social networking site can be as direct and commercial as placing a display, search, or contextual ad for products on the site. Or, marketers may post user-generated content (perhaps about an upcoming free customer-only event or offer), include a link to an existing positive comment on the site within a monthly newsletter (encouraging readers to add their own “success stories” about products when they arrive there), or create a custom page dedicated to a brand, products, or services (on sites that provide this model).

The marketplace is full of horror stories of marketers who posted positive or self-promotional content on social networking sites under the guise of being just another visitor to the website, and failing to

identify themselves as representatives of the very brand that their content was supporting. When this form of “fraud” is detected, retribution on the part of user communities has typically been both swift and merciless. Brands immediately lose any credibility and trust that they had built within their online communities, and a plethora of negative user-generated content typically ensues. So the watchwords for any dialogue with your target audience on a social networking site are openness, honesty, and transparency.

Also, realize that it may be significantly easier for a marketer to place new content on a social networking site than to add similar content on his or her own brand’s site – based on access to development resources and the timing of site update schedules.

Finally, marketers should seek to participate on social networking sites that provide some sort of “reward” for their users who post, tag, or rate content on the site. These rewards could take the form of “points” redeemable by the user for something of value, or as automated suggestions generated by the site of related products that the user may be interested in exploring. Any mechanism that facilitates users telling more and better stories on these sites should be of interest to marketers.

9. The younger the user, the more apt he or she is to visit, frequent, and proactively interact with a social networking site, enabling marketers who target younger prospects to effectively do so through prudent participation on these sites.

MySpace (68%), YouTube (65%) and FaceBook (42%) are all visited by a greater percentage of the 18-24 year old user population, as well as more frequently than other age groups. They also search YouTube (81%) and MySpace (41%) for entertainment purposes more than other age groups. And finally, 18-24 year olds post comments on MySpace (56%), YouTube (31%) and Amazon (30%) more than other age groups.

Frankly, it would have been interesting to have surveyed 15, 16, and 17 year olds about their use of these sites, as they may be even more prolific at some of these activities than even the 18-24 years olds. But the lesson to be learned here is that the youngest group of Internet users surveyed are using social networking sites with a greater frequency, in greater numbers, and more interactively than older users who have been using the Internet even longer than their younger counterparts.

Marketers of brands, products, and services that apply to consumers in this younger age bracket must not only recognize the importance of social networking sites as a channel to reach these prospects today, they should also realize that as these 18-24 year olds mature and migrate into the next age bracket, their use of social networking sites will probably increase as the number and variety of social networking sites grows, and the options to join online communities gets exponentially larger. By engaging with these users now, marketers have the opportunity to build a relationship with them that could potentially last a lifetime.

About iProspect

Founded in 1996, iProspect is the Original® Search Engine Marketing Firm. We help organizations with large, complex websites increase their online ROI and market reach through natural (organic) search engine optimization, pay per click advertising management, paid inclusion management, feed management, and other related services.

iProspect has a long legacy of research and thought leadership in the search marketing industry:

How Visible is the Fortune 100 to Web Searchers in February 2001.

Marketing Tactics of Big Brands Not Meeting Web User Expectations in July 2002.

Searcher Behavior Shows Top Listings are Most Important in November 2002.

iProspect's Search Engine User Attitudes Study in April 2004.

iProspect's Natural SEO Keyword Length Study in November 2004.

iProspect's Search Engine Marketer Performance Study in August 2005.

iProspect's SEO Metrics & ROI Study in August 2005.

iProspect's Natural SEO Outsourcing Study in August 2005.

iProspect's Search Engine User Behavior Study in April 2006.

Findings from iProspect research are regularly used to enhance our service offerings and to educate clients on search engine marketing best practices and industry trends. iProspect studies are frequently quoted by speakers at search marketing industry events, and by both business and trade press.

With offices in Boston, San Francisco, Madrid, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Oslo, and Copenhagen, iProspect can be contacted at 1-800-522-1152, or by visiting www.iprospect.com.

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