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“Bing and Decide”: Launch of Microsoft’s
First Decision Engine

The Business Challenge

How do you successfully launch a new search engine brand in a market where the leader’s brand name is synonymous with search and its customers, so apparently content with what they have, that they don’t even see the need for another search product? This was the challenge faced by Microsoft in early 2009 when they prepared to introduce Bing, the newly reconfigured search engine, and come head to head with Google.

By 2009, Google’s dominance in the search market was undisputed and appeared unstoppable, while Microsoft search share continued to decline year after year:

- By June 2009, Google market share had climbed to a high of 65% in the US, up from 45% just 3 years previous (ComScore qSearch) with consumer satisfaction at an enviable 96% (Agency Research, January 2009).
- In contrast, Microsoft US search share continued to slip, from 13% in 2006 to just 8% in June 2009. Worldwide share was at only 3% (ComScore qSearch).
- Moreover, Microsoft’s existing search brand, Windows Live Search, had not made a dent in top of mind awareness among online users even after two years in-market (Ipsos, 2009).

The launch of Bing represented Microsoft’s third major attempt to enter the search market and challenge the industry giant. But the stakes were much higher this time around: the digital movement and intense competitive pressure had accelerated the need for Microsoft to refocus efforts in the online space, especially in search. Despite the economic slowdown, the US search volume had been increasing almost 20% YOY, with total US spending forecasted to exceed \$18B by 2011 (eMarketer, February 2009). Success in search engine marketing would help ensure Microsoft’s continued growth and success long term. So, on June 3rd, 2009, with heavy media blitz and aggressive offline and online marketing support, all eyes were on Microsoft when it officially launched Bing in the US.

The Campaign

The “Bing & Decide” campaign kicked off in June 2009 with an extensive, integrated line-up of TV spots, online display & high impact ads, search engine marketing, cinema, radio ads & endorsements, direct response marketing and PR. Non-traditional media was also tested extensively in-market to generate

additional buzz and word of mouth, and these included branded integration with TV programs such as Jimmy Fallon and Anthony Bourdain, sponsorship with MTV Networks, promotions on Hulu, and even photo and jingle contests.

Target Audience

The target consisted of core consumer segments (Information Seekers, Functional Organizers and Connected Socializers) that were identified as key search users by Microsoft segmentation research (Rosetta, January 2008).

Campaign Goals

1. Since Bing was a new brand, the first and foremost campaign goal was to create top of mind awareness of Bing as a search engine.
2. Differentiate Bing as a brand that “helps me to make better decisions”.
3. Finally, the campaign needed to drive actions, especially Bing search sessions.

How Research Contributed to Establishing Objectives and Sharpening Strategy

A. Uncovering Latent Dissatisfaction with Search

Several critical pieces of research were vital in providing the customer insights needed to frame the strategic direction of this campaign.

- First, early MSN quantitative research provided the Bing team the initial startling piece of insight: although self-reported consumer satisfaction with Google was high, many people were in fact *dissatisfied* with their search results! Half of all of attempted search queries failed to provide consumers with the information they needed and nearly three-quarters of people considered search results too disorganized. Even when people found what they are looking for, they spent on average 11 minutes per search to go through the long list of links to find what they are looking for (Harris Interactive, 2004).
- These findings were further validated by quantitative research work conducted by JWT, the agency team, who found that even among those consumers who claimed to be VERY satisfied with their primary search engine, 69% were frustrated with the sheer volume of search results they received and 63% wished their search engine presented results in a more user friendly way (Agency Research, January 2009).

Armed with these insights, the agency team realized they needed to surface this latent dissatisfaction with search in order to change how people perceive this category. To do so, they needed to disrupt the way people think of the category and make them acknowledge that this ‘search overload syndrome’ is a real problem. But that was not enough. To motivate people to try Bing, they also needed to clearly differentiate Bing from Google and other search offerings. Once again, the team turned to customer research for answers.

B. Positioning Research

- Qualitative research was conducted to explore what search concepts would appeal to consumers. This study revealed that people were very interested in a simpler, more visual, single click experience that would provide highly relevant search results. In fact, they would be grateful if such a new search tool really existed (Hall & Partners, February, 2008).
- Quantitative research (Ipsos, 2009) showed that 66% of online consumers were more focused on using the internet to get things done and make complex *decisions*, rather than simply to find or search for information.

These findings led the Microsoft product development team to focus their efforts on creating an innovative search interface that was visual, organized and surfaced relevant results quickly – a tool that enabled consumers to easily navigate through the vast amount of information to make more informed decisions. The end result was that the team created a tool that is more like a ‘*decision engine*’ instead of a simple search engine. Intrigued with the expression of ‘decision engine’, the marketing team tested it in messaging and found that the positioning appealed to consumers and generated brand interest (PSB, February, 2009). Additionally, research also put to rest any doubts about whether the campaign should be linked with the Microsoft name or not: consumers clearly welcomed the association with Microsoft as the brand name added a high level of credibility to an unknown brand, and therefore encouraged trial.

With that, the concept of Decision Engine was born and became part of the campaign strategy: *Bing is a decision engine that would help you make better search decisions*. The final campaign objectives, then, contained two distinct parts –

- First, *disrupt the search category* by surfacing the nation’s search overload affliction and then *introduce Bing*, the Decision Engine, as the cure.
- Second, *demonstrate Bing specific features and benefits* to give people a compelling reason to *try Bing*.

C: Optimizing Marcom Strategy and Allocations:

Another facet of this campaign was the rigor with which we set up the hypotheses, learning objectives, data collection and subsequent analytical strategy in order to be able to make both quick-turn optimizations as well as longer-term shifts in marcom strategy. These are described in more detail below, but we think that the various research measurement pieces put in place were integral to the continued success and optimization of the campaign.

The Media Plan

1. Disrupt & introduce Bing: A combination of TV, cinema, radio, and rich digital media were used to bring this to life. The tone was humorous and fun, and the core creative idea of the Syndrome phase of the campaign was to dramatize real-life situations in which people respond irrelevantly and uncontrollably to ‘keywords’ they hear around them as a demonstration of the problem of search overload. Bing was then introduced with the words: *“Find the cure at Bing.com. It’s not just a search engine, It’s the first ever decision engine from Microsoft.”*
2. Demonstrate Bing and encourage trial: A mix of product-focused TV spots, branded integration and digital banners ads highlighting Bing features and benefits (such Price Predictor and Cashback) were used to motivate people to go online and try Bing. The Branded integration with TV shows further demonstrated people using Bing to make decisions about everyday life.

How Research Contributed to Campaign Development & Execution

Again, both qualitative and quantitative research, using a mixture of face to face and online methodologies, was instrumental in guiding the development of the campaign.

- Qualitative concept refinement research (Hall & Partners, March 2009) was conducted on the offline tactics (i.e., TV, radio, out of, etc.). The study successfully validated that the strategy was compelling but also identified some executional elements that needed fine-tuning. Notably, the research revealed some unexpected insights: although consumers were very willing to try the new search engine, they would try it only once. This highlighted the importance of making sure the actual product experience met expectations.
- Second round of concept refinement research (Hall & Partners, May 2009) centered on the digital ads created by Razorfish to ensure that they successfully supported offline advertising and drove brand interest and trial.
- Finally, quantitative copy testing of the finished TV ads and key digital executions was conducted among over 1,300 consumers to quantify how well the ads were working individually and together as a campaign (Hall & Partners, June 2009). This research tested brand perception shifts pre vs. post ad exposure and found that the campaign did build Bing as a 'brand that helps me make better decisions' and drive interest in trying, with response enhanced after multiple ad exposure. The 'Syndrome' TV advertising, in particular, was highly effective as its humorous real-life depiction of search overload resonated strongly with the audience. These findings all helped the team finalize key media decisions for the campaign.

How Research Contributed to In-Market Evaluation

Extensive in-market research tools were also put in place to test and track campaign performance weekly, capturing both attitudinal and behavioral responses across all elements:

- A proprietary campaign effectiveness tracker surveyed the three key target segments *every week*, measuring awareness and perceptions of search engine brands and the recognition level and responses to both offline and online Bing marketing communications. This methodology also allowed comparison of brand responses between those who were exposed to the campaign vs. those who were not (Hall & Partners). The tracker was sensitive enough to measure the effectiveness of a media pulsing experiment where weekly TRPS were increased one week and decreased the following. The data revealed that this strategy worked, and it was built into the media plan allowing the extension of media dollars and time in market.
- Nielsen IAG was used to provide in-flight, program-specific tracking of the TV, cinema, and non-traditional ads (such as branded integrated elements) airing in 26 networks. This syndicated tool measured recall as well as ad and brand response among Adults 18-49 who had a chance to view the ads during broadcast of their programs. This tracker allowed weekly measurements at the spot-level among broad consumer audience, and helped the team understand how branded integrations like in-pod and in-program placements contributed to awareness & perception shifts and performed in

comparison to traditional :30 and :60 second spots. This data further helped the agency reallocate spending to better performing executions as well as adjust media weight to programming that was better suited to Bing brand recall.

- Radian 6 was used to measure social media volume and sentiments on a daily basis. This included conversation on Bing and competitors from blogs, forums, fan interactions in Facebook, Twitter mentions and replies, video downloads on YouTube, etc.
- Online behavioral data, including number of sessions per week, query/session, cost per session, etc., was reported weekly. Click rates and cost per click were also measured for all digital media to track online effectiveness.
- ComScore search share data was monitored and tracked monthly to measure market share for Microsoft sites as well as competitive sites.

Business Successes

All campaign goals were easily exceeded within the first two months of the campaign (see Appendix for results):

- Monthly behavioral metric goals for online query sessions were exceeded by increasing margins.
- ComScore data recorded gradual increase in Microsoft search share with the launch of Bing. By August 2009, Microsoft search share was already at 9.3%, up from 8% in May (latest number in November was at 10.3%). This is significant because continuous upward movement is difficult to maintain in a category owned by Google.
- By mid-July, the campaign already surpassed the full-year awareness and perceptions goals. And more importantly, proprietary campaign effectiveness tracking showed that brand responses to Bing were significantly more positive among those exposed to the campaign than those who were not.
- Diagnostically, Nielsen IAG tracking indicated that the TV ad campaign performed at or above normative levels once sufficient media weight was put in the market – the ads were likeable, broke through the media clutter, and communicated message clearly. The data further indicated that likelihood to use Bing after seeing the ads doubled in the first 30 days. Nielsen IAG tracking also showed that Cinema advertising was highly effective, and exceeded Cinema norms on the breakthrough, branding and likeability metrics by more than a clear margin of 10% or more.
- Branded integrations on NBC's Philanthropist show and Bravo's Rachel Zoe project exceeded IAG norms for similar integrations in the internet business category. While certain integrations performed less well, they provided a rich opportunity for learning what works and what does not.
- Social media data indicated that the initial launch of this campaign generated very high volume of buzz, exceeding Google's volume.

The campaign is still performing very well and has recently expanded to the UK as well. Research results in the US continue to exceed expectations – recent data showed that the unaided brand awareness has already surpassed new second half goal, and Microsoft's search share is also on track to meet the June 2010 goal. What's more, in November, Advertising Age named Bing one of America's Hottest Brands in 2009, acknowledging that Microsoft has developed not just a great

search engine, but also a successful marketing campaign that has already given Bing a solid running start into the challenging world of search-engine marketing.

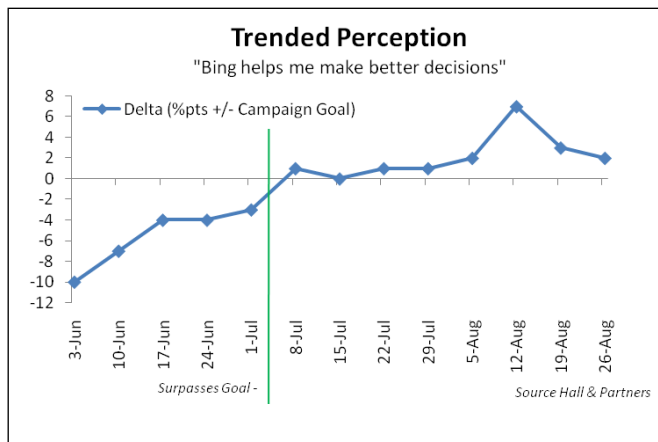
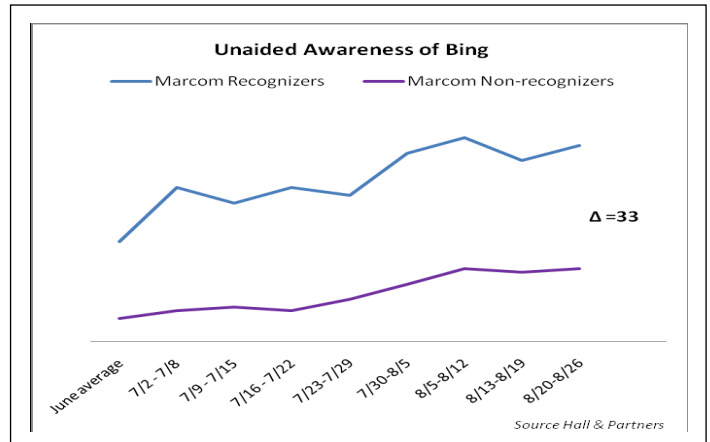
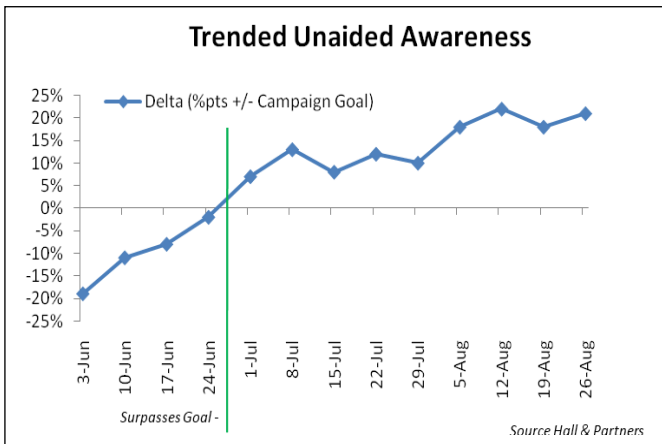
Appendix: Bing Campaign Results

1. Online Search Sessions

Bing search sessions (driven by marketing)	June	July	August
Index to target	114	130	133

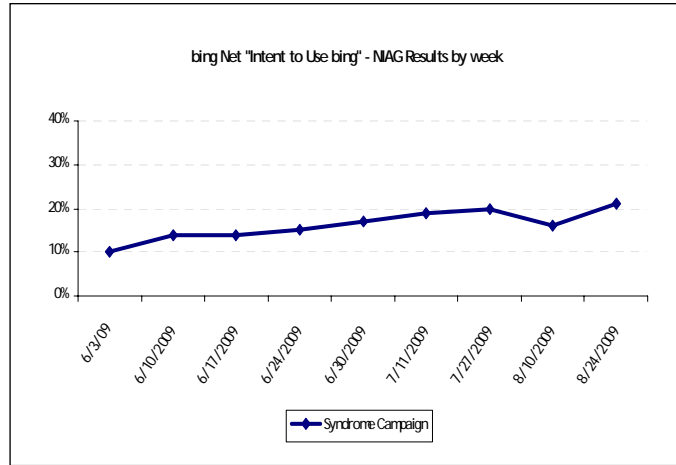
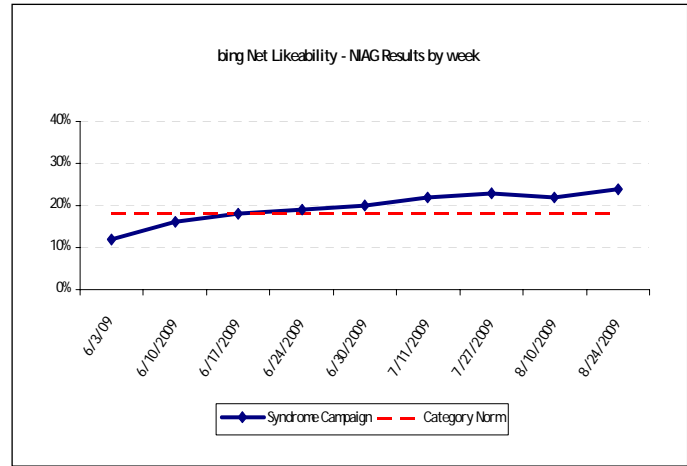
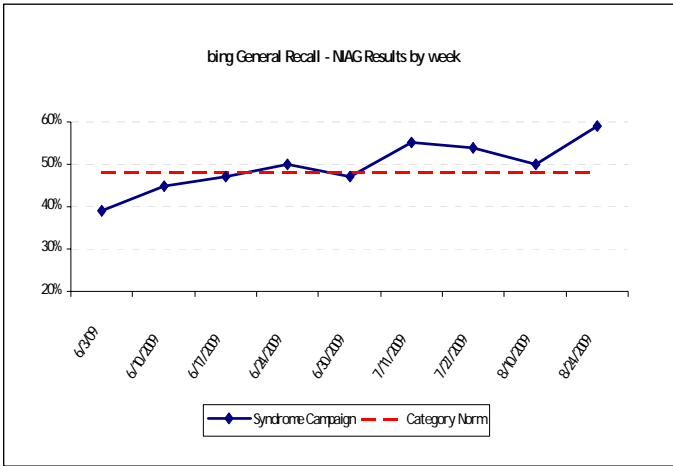
Source: Microsoft analysis

2. Awareness and Perception



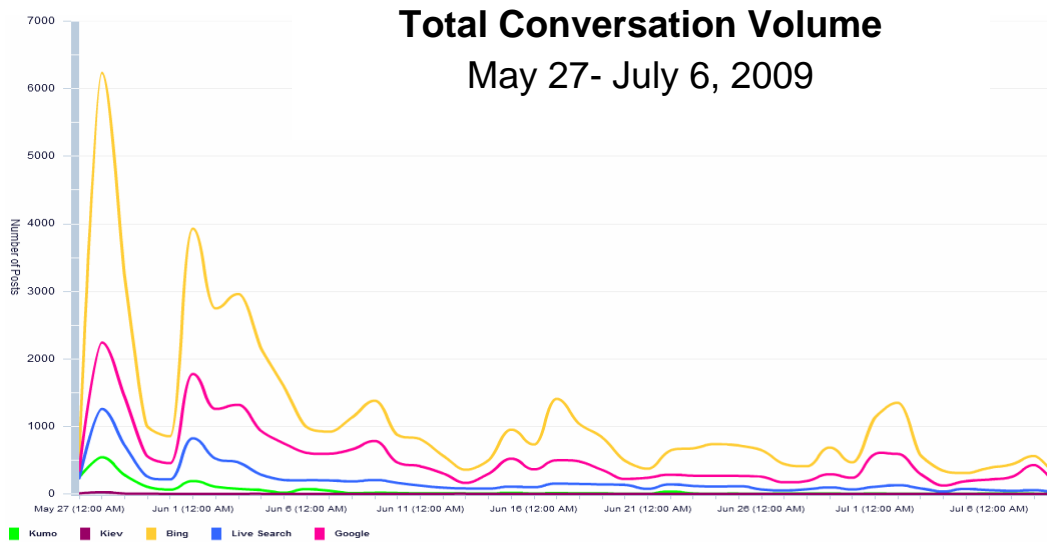
Source: Microsoft Proprietary Campaign Tracker

3. TV Advertising Performance



Source: Nielsen/IAG

4. Online Social Media Buzz Tracking



Source: Microsoft analysis

5. Monthly Search Share

Media/Measures	May-2009	Jun-2009	Jul-2009	Aug-2009	Sep-2009	Oct-2009	Nov-2009
Total Internet	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Core Search
GOOGLE SITES CORE SEARCH	65.0	65.0	64.7	64.6	64.9	65.4	65.6
YAHOO! SITES CORE SEARCH	20.1	19.6	19.3	19.3	18.8	18.0	17.5
MICROSOFT SITES CORE SEARCH	8.0	8.4	8.9	9.3	9.4	9.9	10.3
ASK NETWORK CORE SEARCH	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.8
AOL LLC NETWORK CORE SEARCH	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.0	2.9	2.8

Source: ComScore