

From Social to Search

Expanding your reach beyond social 2018

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Over the last 10 years we've seen a major shift in the way we interact online. The advent of social media as a viable medium to do business has transformed the digital landscape, providing consumers with unparalleled choice and marketers with the data and insight on how to target new and existing audiences with ever-more tailored advertising.

With a captive audience of almost 2.5 billion users both Facebook and Instagram have given rise to the concept of the "social-brand" and single handedly aided in the creation of multiple sub-sectors from which challenger and disruptor brands have flourished.

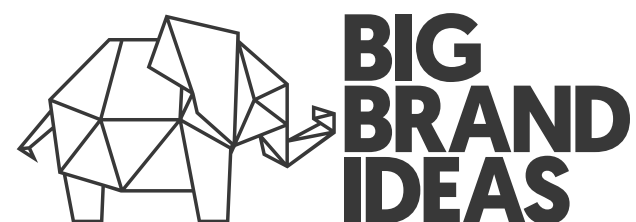
In the last two years, over 23 million new brand accounts have been created on Instagram, whilst the number of brands engaging in targeted advertising on the platform has doubled. It's a similar story on Facebook where the number of advertisers has swelled to well over 4 million in under 4 years.

The growth in the number of advertisers on social means that brands must be prepared to spend more to engage with new and existing audiences, a fact illustrated by a recent estimate by [Adweek](#), which gave conservative estimates of a 79% increase in Facebook advertising costs over the next 12 months.

If you're a social brand, you've probably considered exploring alternative channels of growth for your business; maybe you're already invested in a bit of paid-search or have begun reading up on SEO. In which case the following pointers will be invaluable in your pursuit of search excellence.

The Good News?

A social brand expanding into search has some genuine advantages that can make the transition more successful and act as a foundation for efficient customer growth.



Your existing influencers can help you

Search engines use links to a website as a proxy for popularity and authority, and sites with a lot of audience-relevant links typically perform better for their target markets.

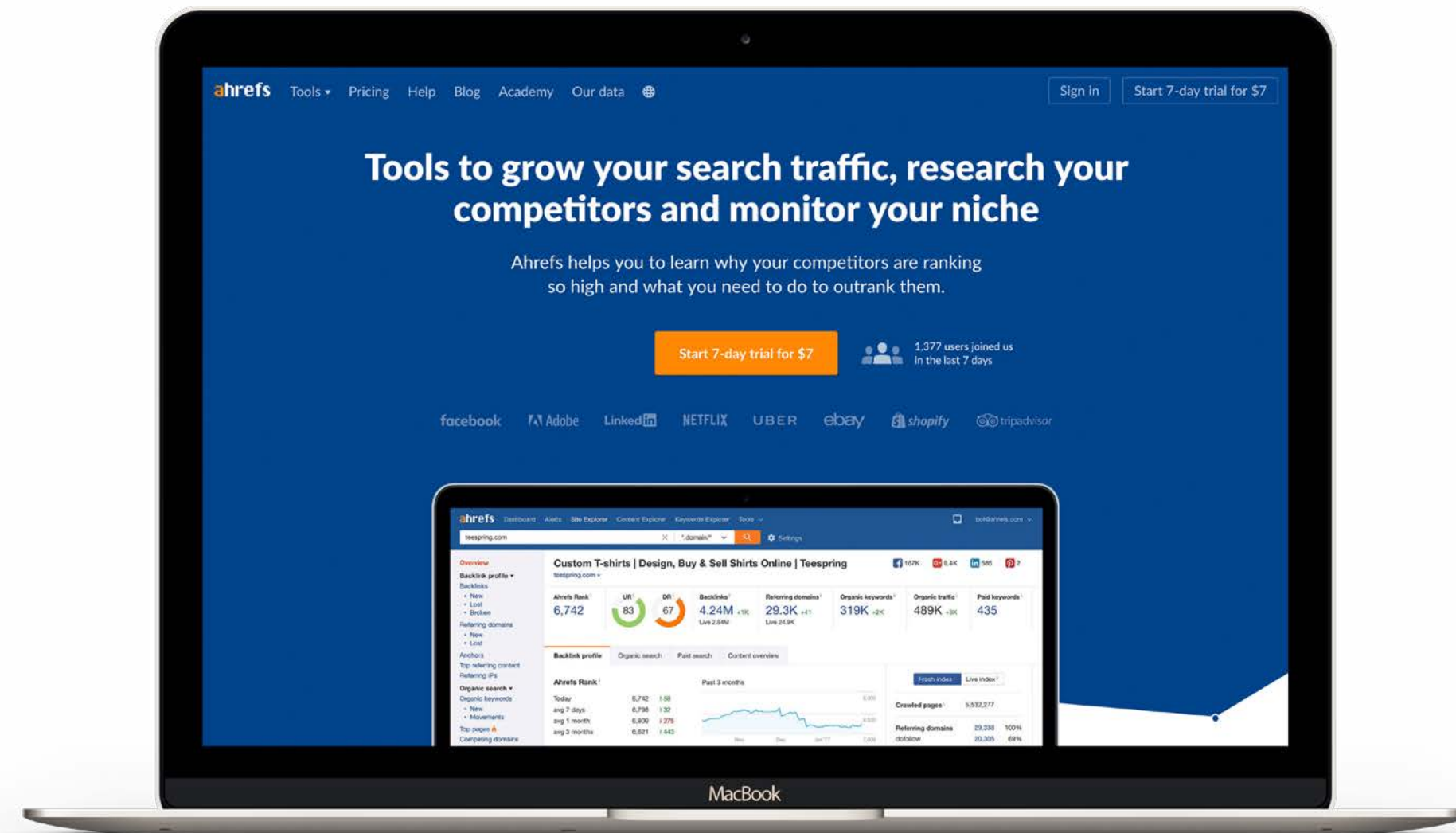
While ensuring that your site is technically sound and the content “works” for search is relatively straightforward, the time and resource investment in backlink profile development for established brands can be prohibitive.

By comparison, upstart brands with an established network of influencers on social media are at a stark advantage. Being able to lean on people who have already bought into your identity gives you a platform to build authority from.

Working with existing advocates across their other social and web presences will help to develop a strong link profile for your site that gives much greater longevity and value than profile sharing will.

Recommendations

- Be sure to research and use link analysis and web benchmarking tools such as AHREFS, Moz or Search Metrics – these can provide you with valuable insight on where your competitors are acquiring their links, what coverage they’re getting and how your website is performing in the search engines. Most tools also provide the ability to pull detailed reports.
- Unlike social media, the value of a link is determined by the rating of the domain which it sits on. This metric is referred to as domain rating or domain rank dependent on which tool you’re using. Other metrics such as an engaged audience, strong social signals and relevant content are all beneficial when looking to increase your website’s visibility.
- Understand the difference between follow and no-follow links; high-quality editorial websites will insist on no-following links, meaning they pass limited keyword value but provide other benefits such as increased traffic. Followed links do pass direct value, though these must be linked by brand anchor or URL as per [Google guidelines](#).





Search gives you access to instant markets

Passive audience building on social media is getting harder. With more brands in the mix, and platform restrictions it is getting more and more difficult to reach a new audience.

Search is great for discovery. When developing your strategy, think about the types of things that a user might search for before they buy rather than just at the point of purchase. Investing time in understanding how users behave throughout the purchase cycle can give you a real platform for finding customers.

Again, social brands are at a major advantage here. Because most social content is contextual rather than transactional, it fits well with a model of selling through the cycle rather than just at the final stage of consideration like most retailers.

Recommendations

- Tools like [answerthepublic](#) provide insight on what your audience is searching for and can provide insight on exactly what content you should be creating to attract them to your website. Maintaining a mix of high volume and low volume keywords is recommended.
- Try not to focus too much on high search-volume keywords; long-tail question related terms that deal with the what, where, when and why of a specific product or service are often less competitive and can help you attract your audience earlier in the consideration journey.
- Context is important, when writing content be sure to add the right type of [schema mark-up](#) before setting it live. This provides Google with valuable insight into who the content is appropriate for and can help to increase its visibility within the search engines.

“You need to focus on adding depth and context to build a story around a trending topic rather than just riding the relevance. Think about how the wider world responds to a post and curate interest rather than just contributing to it.”

Martin Crutchley, Head of Performance

Keeping things fresh

Google and Bing are subject to the same fast and trending interest cycles as Instagram and Twitter. Fresh content that's timed to coincide with spikes of interest performs well in search— particularly if it's well backed by a big social audience.

Remember though that there's a big difference between the content that you share on Instagram and what does well on Google.

Just like how you need to provide the best answer to a question to rank well for long term search interest, you need to provide the best aggregation to out-perform in search.

Recommendations

- Setting up custom [Google alerts](#) is recommended if you want to be first when creating timely, relevant content. Tools such as AHREFS also allow you to add much more granular reports on keyword mentions or new keywords that have entered the market.

- Stick to a consistent structure with no more than 500-600 words for regular blog posts; include an introduction, body content and summary section that provides internal links to related content and includes a mix of high-search volume and long-tail keywords.
- Regardless of breaking news stories, be sure to keep content across your website “fresh” by updating it every 3-4 months for top-level static pages. This can help Google to recognise that your website is consistently up-to-date which means it will be visited more often.



Short run campaigns work well in AdWords

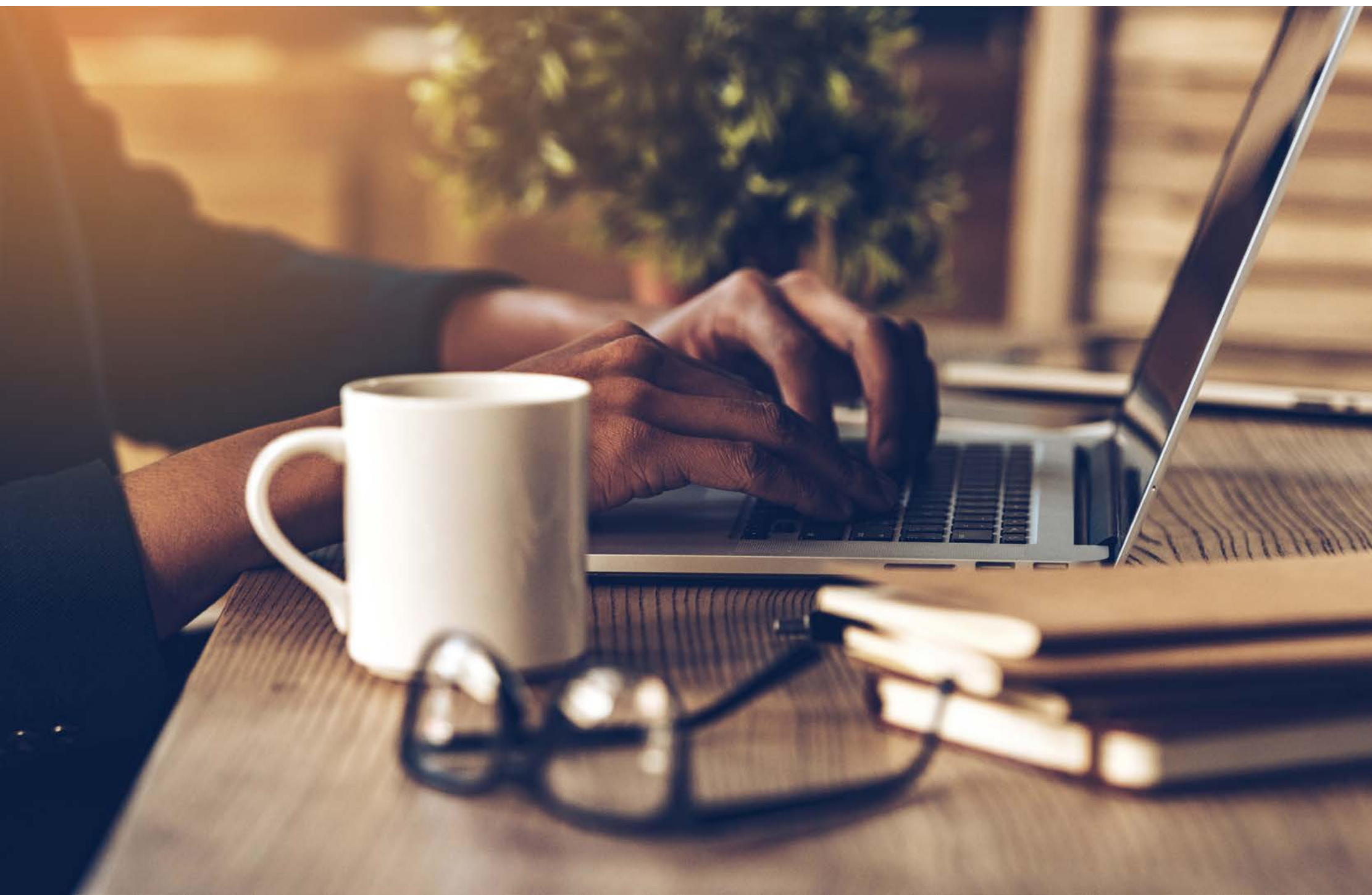
Search is often talked about as a long term, sustainable platform for traffic and revenue generation, but search also works well for flash promotions and quickly deployed short term campaigns.

You can capture a wide audience of highly engaged, in-market users from AdWords, and use advanced audience targeting to keep budgets under control and ensure that you only appear for the people most likely to buy from you.

Brands that know their audiences better can run much more efficient campaigns than those with a broad and diffuse customer base. Social Media based brands have access to information about their best customers that can supercharge campaign activity.

Recommendations

- Brands migrating from social are often very aware of the cyclical nature of their audience's purchasing habits; this data can be used to target them at specific moments during the consideration journey with high-quality targeted advertisements via [Dynamic Remarketing](#).
- Much of your audience demographic data on Facebook and Instagram can be used in Google Adwords to create hyper-targeted ads that appeal to them at various stages in their consideration journey. Be sure to familiarise yourself with the various [targeting options available](#) and experiment with different creatives and messaging to increase engagement.
- Text ads on Google Adwords also include the option to show ads at specific times of day, providing the ability to increase or decrease your bids to ensure maximum visibility or to conserve your budget when you know your audience aren't actively looking to buy. Take time to look over the [time-of-day reports](#) in Google Analytics to discover more.





Moving forward

Moving Forward

Social First Brands possess many advantages that transfer directly to other digital channels. From knowing exactly what motivates your audience to purchase through to maintaining strong influencer relationships – the challenge is deciding which channels to focus on first.

For many companies, leading with paid search provides the ability to refine their proposition for a transactional audience and gives real time feedback about what areas are most profitable. The learnings from a test campaign can lead to more efficient use of time later in organic search.

By comparison, organic search can provide a more stable (and cost effective) commercial outcome, but it will take longer to get results. The main investment is in time and resource to create search friendly content and the right technical infrastructure.

While both flavours of search offer step-change opportunities for Social First Brands, they also require strategic thinking and planning to maximise what is available. Before pulling the trigger, it's essential that you do the right research to discover what your customers are looking for and how they want to find it.

At Big Brand Ideas we help brands achieve genuine growth by super powering social activity with search. We deliver an intelligent approach via a team of industry leaders from search, paid, social, content and PR backgrounds. Our aim is to cause disruption by working efficiently with brands via our simple ethos of 'doing things differently'.

For more information or a chat about how we can help you, please contact:

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