

Google™ vs. bing™

Search Engine Preference

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Objectives

Overall Impressions

- Gather users' general impressions of the Google and Bing search engines, including overall functionality, presentation of content, and overall fit with user expectations and needs.

Ad Space Performance

- To gauge the amount of attention paid to advertising space on the two sites and to determine if any aspects of the page design might influence this.

Future Use

- Gauge users' reaction to the overall value of the Google and Bing search engines and their willingness to use or continue to use one or the other.

Methodology

1. Participants

- > 12 users were tested.
- > All users reported they used Google as their main search engine. We were not able to locate users who were not familiar with Google to some extent.
- > None of the users had used Bing

2. Eye Tracking

- > Users performed a “hotel search” and a “shopping search for digital cameras” on both Google and Bing.
- > Eye Tracking data was collected for the Homepages and Search Results pages (i.e. the 1st and 2nd pages that users saw).
- > Users completed both searches on one site and then repeated the searches on the other site. The task order was rotated to mitigate bias effects. When analyzing users’ eye tracking data we only used the data gathered from the site they visited first.

3. Retrospective Analysis

- > Users were shown a replay of their Eye Tracking recording and asked to provide a commentary on their thoughts and actions.

4. Think-Aloud & Review

- > Users were asked to comment on expectations, likes/dislikes, ease/difficulty, suggested improvements, usefulness, etc.

5. Survey

- > Users were asked to complete a short survey to sum up their sentiments.

Key Insights

1.

Most users preferred the Bing visual design and thought that it was slightly better in terms of organization and refinement options.

Visual design:

"Bing feels warmer and more inviting than Google."

Organization of a page's functionality:

"Bing's initial search result gives more helpful information than Google."

Refining search results:

"Bing's search refining features were more helpful than Google's."

2.

However, despite some positive factors in Bing's favor, users thought that both search engines produced equally relevant results.

Overall, most users stated they would continue using Google over Bing and were unlikely to switch.

Result relevance:

"The results [for the two sites] are about the same."

Users were already familiar with Google, and the additional "decision-making" and visual improvements found on Bing were not enough to convert most users.

Users preferred using Google to Bing 2 to 1.
(12 total users; 8 chose Google, 4 chose Bing.)

"Bing generates interest, but it's hard to take me away from Google because I'm so comfortable with it."

"The differences are very small [between the two search engines]. They're too small for me to switch to Bing."

3.

For the camera search, Bing attracted 150% more user viewing time to the ad space at the top of the search result.

Users attention was much more concentrated just below the ad space on the camera search result page on Bing compared to Google. We believe this was due to the interest in the refinement options that only Bing offered in this area. In turn we strongly suspect that this was a significant factor in users spending about 150% more time looking at this ad space on Bing.

Overall Preferences

Overall Preferences | Survey Results & Reasons

Google **8**

bing **4**

Overall reasons for preferring Google

- Familiarity
- Enhancements in Bing not enough to convert
- Already using other Google apps

Overall reasons for preferring bing

- Better results organization and filter options
- Welcoming design

Detailed Preferences	Google	<<<	<<	<	Tie	>	>>	>>>	bing
Visual Design			•	•	•	••	•	•••••	•
Organization of features (e.g. Are sections such as the Explore Pane and Related Searches appropriately placed?)		••		••	•	•••••	•		
Refine & Filter Options (e.g. How easy was it to find and use sections such as Refine Results and the Shopping Results area?)			•	•••	•	••••	••		•
Relevance of Results	•	•		•	•••••••		••		

Key: • = 1 user's preference

Ads

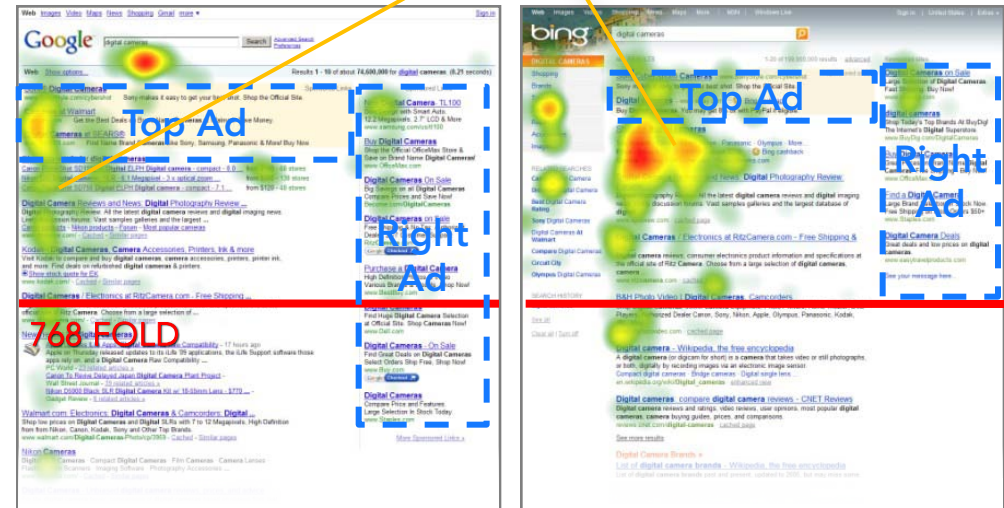
Ads | Performance Overview

Camera Search

- All users looked at the Top Ad area, whereas only half of these users looked at the Right Ad.
- What was very noticeable in the heatmaps was the level of attention below the Top Ad on Bing. We suspect this had a significant effect on the amount of time users spent looking at the Top Ad. Compared to the Google users, Bing's users spent a little under 150% more time viewing this ad space.
- Although further investigation of this "proximity effect" is required these preliminary results point to a very interesting potential "antidote" to banner/ad blindness.
- We were not surprised at the significant reduction in time spent looking at the Right Ad space. In other eye tracking tests where users have specific tasks to perform we typically see users identifying a primary "activity zone" where most of their attention is concentrated. (This is often confirmed in subsequent discussions with users.) On a results page, as expected, this is where the results are listed. Secondary areas such as the Right Ad space require users to make a greater effort to view them. Something only 50% of the users chose to do.

Much greater activity below Bing's Top Ad

Searching for Digital Cameras



Digital Cameras	Google		bing	
	Avg. Time Spent	Number Of Viewers	Avg. Time Spent	Number Of Viewers
Top Ad	2.0 sec.	All 6	4.9 sec.	All 6
Right Ad	0.6 sec.	3 of 6 users	1.0 sec.	3 of 6 users

Heatmap Key



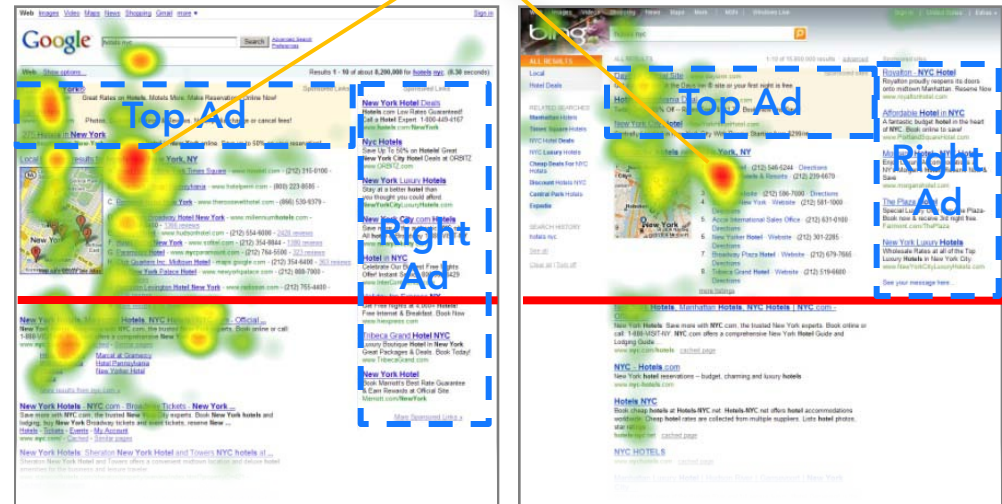
Ads | Performance Overview

Hotel Search

- > All users saw the Top Ad on both sites.
- > Although, the time spent viewing the Top Ad area is a little higher on Google for this search (see table) the difference is not as significant as for the camera search. Coincidentally, the heatmaps also show a less significant difference in user attention in this area. As stated on the previous slide we believe there is a connection between level of attention immediately below the Top Ad and the viewing time in this ad space itself.
- > Curiously, the proportion of users who looked in the Right Ad space on both sites was also 50% - the same amount as for the camera search. It is less clear to us how to influence users to pay more attention to this area.

Less significant difference in attention level below Top Ads

Searching for Hotels



Hotels	Google		bing	
	Avg. Time Spent	Number Of Viewers	Avg. Time Spent	Number Of Viewers
Top Ad	2.7 sec.	All 6	1.7 sec.	All 6
Right Ad	2.9 sec.	3 of 6 users	1.5 sec.	3 of 6 users

Heatmap Key



Ads | "Shopping Search" for a Digital Camera

⚠ All 6 users saw this area.

⚠ Average viewing time: 2.0s



⚠ 3 of 6 users saw this area.

⚠ Average viewing time: 0.6s



⚠ All 6 users saw this area.

⚠ Average viewing time: 4.9s

⚠ 3 of 6 users saw this area.

⚠ Average viewing time: 1.0s

* This portion edited to show all ads in a single view.



⚠ 1 of 6 users saw this area.

⚠ Average viewing time: 1.6s

Google Search Results Page – Digital Cameras

Bing Search Results Page – Digital Cameras

Heatmap Key



Ads | "Local Search" for a Hotel

⚠️ All 6 users saw this area.

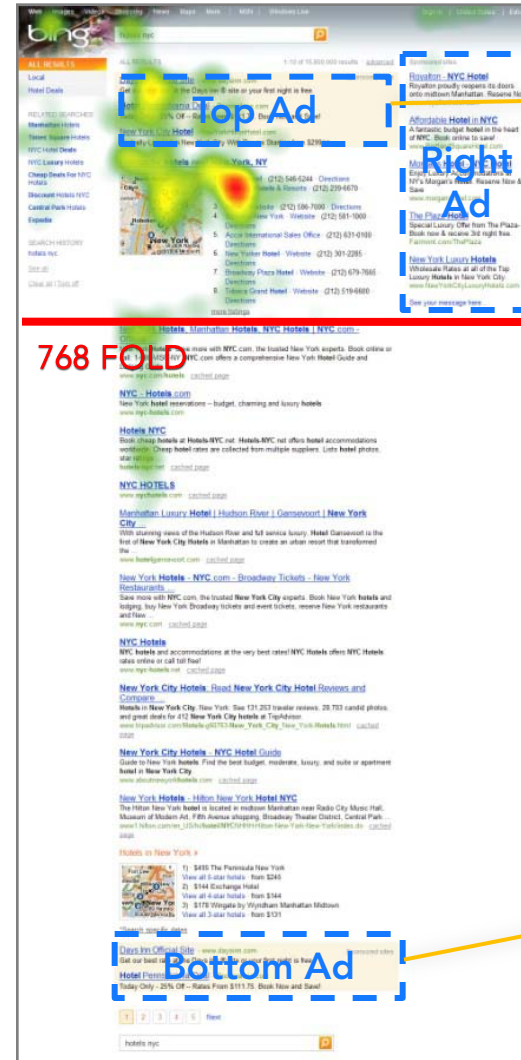
⚠️ Average viewing time: 2.7s

⚠️ 3 of 6 users saw this area.

⚠️ Average viewing time: 2.9s



Google Search Results Page – Hotels



Bing Search Results Page – Hotels

⚠️ All 6 users saw this area.

⚠️ Average viewing time: 1.7s

⚠️ 3 of 6 users saw this area.

⚠️ Average viewing time: 1.5s

⚠️ Nobody saw this area.

Heatmap Key



Other Findings

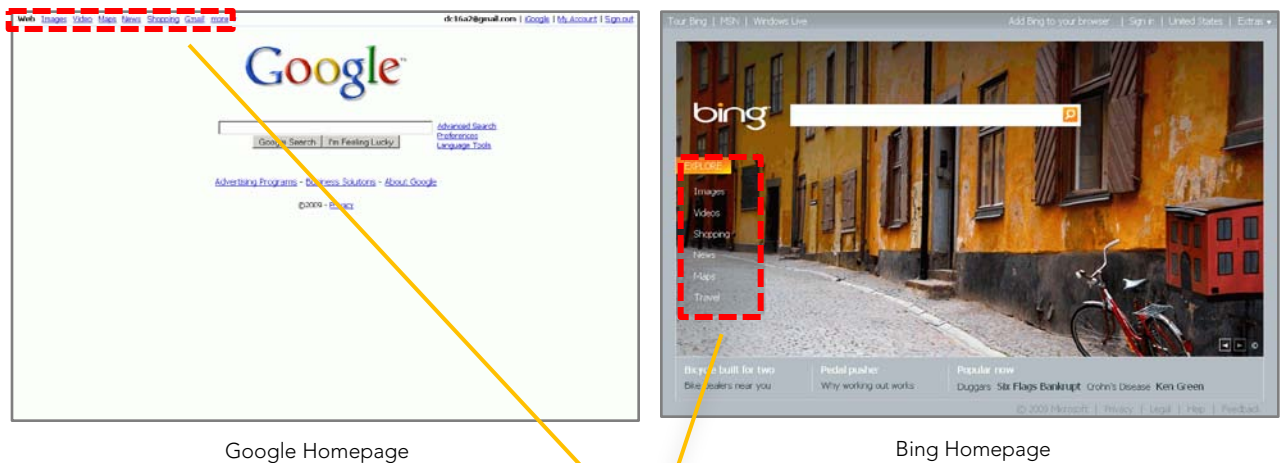
Other Findings | Search Homepage

Bing Photo Backgrounds

- Several users liked the photos used as the background of the Bing Homepage. These users found it "interesting" and "engaging."
- However, some users found photos distracting and a few users thought that it made the site feel like a travel site.

User Behavior

- Predictably, users went straight for the search fields on both Search Homepages taking about 1 second to see this area for both tasks/sites.
- About half of the participants noticed the Explore section on Bing. None of the users looked at the equivalent section in the top-left corner of Google.



Google Homepage

Bing Homepage

"Explore" section

Other Findings | Search Results Page

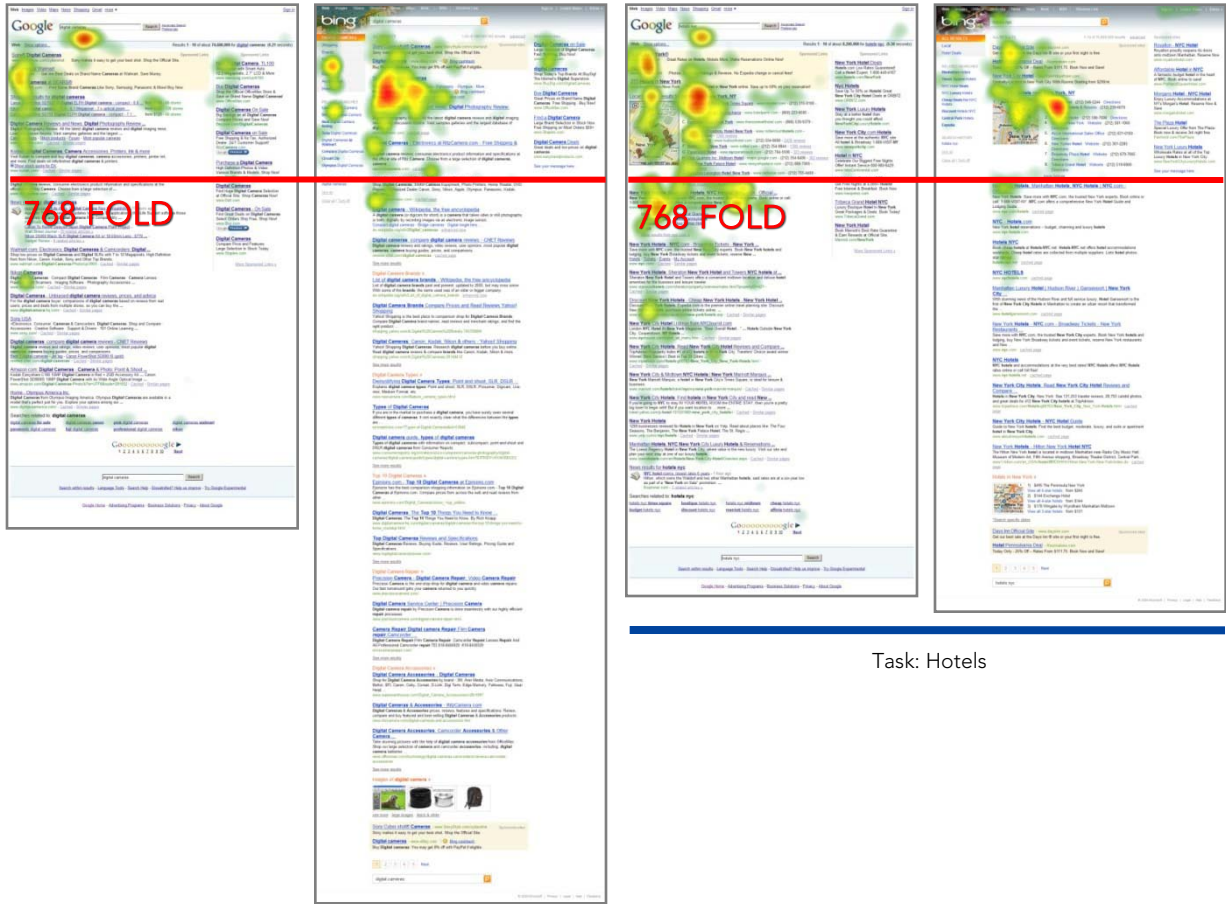
Time On Page & Scrolling

- Users' attention appeared to range further down the page for Google's Search Results page than Bing's. We suspect this result is due to Bing users finding a viable link/option more easily. Typically these options were above the fold.

- For both tasks, "time on page" was shorter on Bing than Google:

	Google	Bing
Digital Cameras	15.7 sec.	10.5 sec.
Hotels	14.8 sec.	10.6 sec.

- Several user stated that finding something to help narrow their search felt "easier" on Bing than Google.



Task: Digital Cameras

Task: Hotels

Task: Digital Cameras

- 3 of 6 users ventured below the fold for Bing, while 5 of 6 did this on Google.

Task: Hotels

- 4 of 6 users ventured below the fold for Bing, while all 6 users did this on Google.

Other Findings | Bing's Explore Pane & Categories

Explore Pane (Bing only)

- Users were initially unsure what the links in the Explore Pane would do. Some users said the results seemed inconsistent and unexpected. For example, clicking the Shopping link when searching for digital cameras leads to a Product Search page. However, clicking the Top 10 link conducts another search that unexpectedly changes the original search input from "digital cameras" to "digital cameras top 10".
- Users spent about 150 % more time in the Bing's Explorer Pane when searching for digital cameras over hotels:

	Digital Cameras	Hotels
Avg. Time Spent	1.2 sec.	0.5 sec.

As users were clearly attracted to the map and local hotel listing options, which provided them with very relevant "next steps", this was not a surprising observation.

Categories

- Users did not notice the Category headers/segments on Bing. When shown to users for comment, reaction was lukewarm as to the value of this arrangement.

Heatmap Key



Explore Pane

Categories

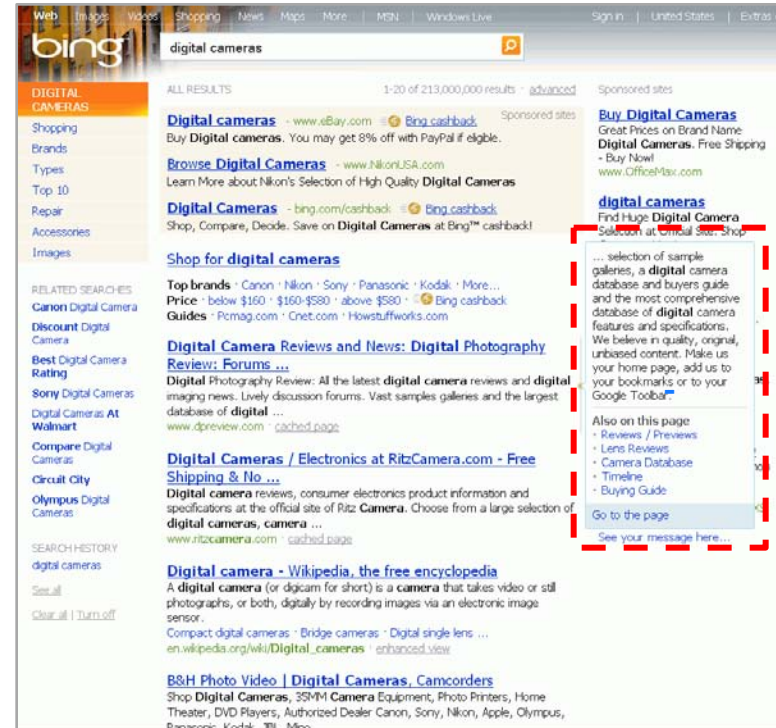
Task: Digital Cameras

Task: Hotels

Other Findings | Bing's Quick Preview

Quick Preview (Bing only)

- Out of twelve users, the Quick Preview was only triggered by one user on Bing's Results Page by accident.
- In its current form, users did not feel the Quick Preview provided an accurate representation of the destination page and placed little value on this function.
- A few users pointed out that this function duplicates information found in the search result.

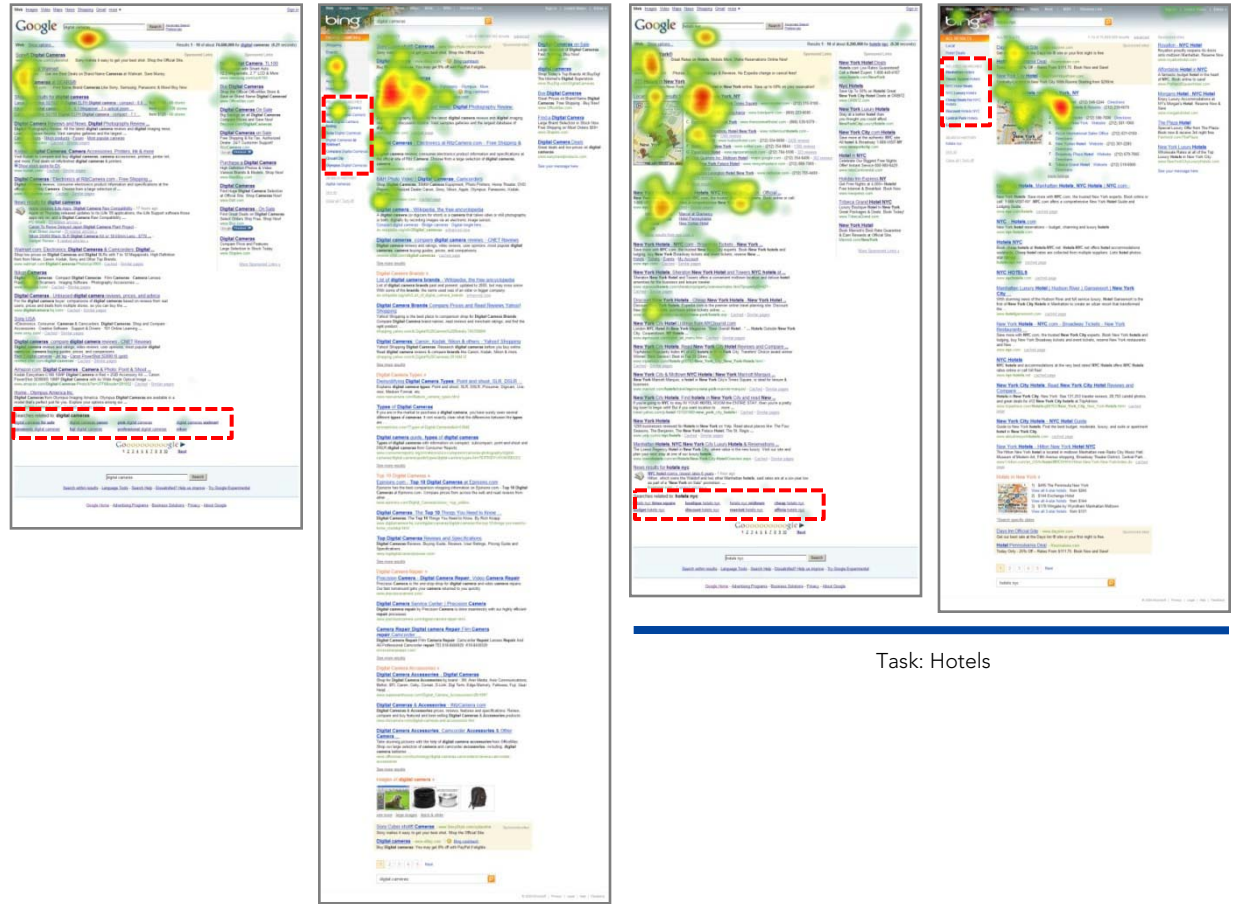


Bing – Quick Preview

Other Findings | Related Searches

Related Searches

- Users were shown the different implementations of the Related Search on both sites. There was universal agreement that regardless of the different ways it was presented this was a useful option.
- Only one user saw the Related Search section at the bottom of the Google Results pages without assistance from the interviewer. In contrast, three of the six Bing users saw the Related Searches section on Bing. The Google Related Search section was simply too far down the page.



Task: Digital Cameras

Task: Hotels

Heatmap Key

