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Key Findings

- Conquesting on Google is prevalent in high-consideration industries like pharma and auto, where over half of brands tracked in the “[Digital IQ Index: Auto, U.S., 2020](#)” and “[Digital IQ Index: Pharma RX, U.S., 2020](#)” actively conquest competitors on Google. The tactic is less widespread in lower-consideration industries like beauty, where only 27% of brands tracked in the “[Digital IQ Index: Beauty, U.S., 2019](#)” surfaced competitive text ads.
- Marketers in high-consideration industries build competitor comparison pages that serve as destinations for competitive text ads on Google.
- Marketers across industries align language in competitive ad titles with consumers’ most commonly cited reasons for switching from their preferred brand to a new brand.

Key Recommendations

- Marketers across industries, but particularly in high-consideration industries, can build conquesting strategies to intercept competitors and enter into consumers’ consideration sets as they enter the final stages of research.
- Marketers can aid consumers’ research by driving to comparison collateral from competitive text ads. Marketers should evaluate comparison landing page options based on the robustness of their conquesting activity. Options include head-to-head comparison pages, multibrand comparison pages or preexisting tools.
- To drive awareness and convince consumers to click through on competitive text ads, marketers must include language that communicates a value proposition and aligns with consumers’ brand-switching motivators in ad titles.

Introduction

Conquesting refers to the paid search strategy of deploying text ads against competitors’ branded keywords. Marketers can use this tactic to intercept the consumer’s target and enter into their consideration set. Conquesting often sparks bidding wars that drive up the cost per click (CPC). To maximize investment, marketers must develop conquesting strategies that align with two phases: research and awareness.

Conquesting can run parallel to the research process for high-consideration purchases. Branded searches can signal the final stages of research, when a consumer has graduated from category searches and has begun to consider specific brands. In these cases, text ads deployed against competitors’ branded keywords should feel like a helpful steppingstone in the research process, not an unwelcome detour. One way to enrich research through conquesting is to create landing pages with comparison content. Rather than merely surfacing against competitor keywords, custom-made landing pages show consumers why you’ve surfaced, why the comparison is relevant and why your product is superior.

Conquesting is also an awareness tactic, introducing consumers to new products and services. Aside from consumers at the end of a long research journey, the other type of consumer searching branded keywords are those who are partial to a particular brand from the get-go: 46% of consumers consider themselves loyal to brands.¹ However, “brand loyalty” doesn’t always mean blind commitment: 39% of consumers define brand loyalty as considering a brand before others, while only 24% define it as always buying from a brand without considering others.² Only 26% of consumers claim it would be hard to convince them to switch to another brand, and ultimately, consumers do switch. In a Gartner survey across nine product categories, the clothing, shoes and accessories category represented the highest share of consumers claiming to be brand loyal (45%) yet the third highest share (26%) saying they recently switched brands.³ Simply by showing up on search engine results pages (SERPs), marketers can expose consumers to new, interesting or better-priced alternatives and spark brand switching.

1. [Retail Survey Analysis](#).

2. 2020 Gartner Emerging Marketing Technology Survey.

3. Ibid.

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