

# Nine for '09

## Digital marketing research predictions for 2009

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# 1) During a recession, people are proud of their prudence

- In a time of recession, everyone's looking to save a few dollars, Euro or Yen. In 2009 we expect further growth in traffic to financial advice sites like the UK's [moneysavingexpert.com](http://moneysavingexpert.com), which is already up to over 6 million users per month. [MB research in the UK](#) has already shown price comparison websites emerging as key influencers within certain categories, most notably car insurance; this coincides with a move away from company websites. Price comparison websites are regarded as giving information that is both relevant and convincing, and have a decisive impact on final purchase, so expect their influence to strengthen further next year.
- We also expect something of an "online wartime spirit" to take hold, where users will be particularly proud of their prudence and will be more willing to share cost-saving advice. In China, "Tuangou" (which means "group purchase") is already becoming more and more popular - people can bargain and get a better price given the volume. Some leading sites such as Liba.com have more than 1.8 million registered members and about 1,000 group purchase orders are placed everyday.
- Brands should find ways to help satisfy this desire to save. Tactics such as cost-saving tips and online discount coupons (perhaps via aggregators such as [myretailcodes.com](http://myretailcodes.com) or [myvouchercodes.co.uk](http://myvouchercodes.co.uk)) make a great deal of sense. Now is also a great time to introduce a viral element into these campaigns. Mobile coupons may also be set for a surge in popularity as new technologies such as [Scanbuy](#) gain popularity on camera phones
- Just one word of warning: while coupons can be very useful tactics to build short-term engagement, they should not be used excessively for fear of undermining long-term brand value (Millward Brown have plenty of evidence that brands which continue to spend on brand-building marketing during recessions are most successful)



## 2) Online video commercialisation continues

- Online video became significantly more commercial in 2008, and this trend seems set to continue in 2009. Within the US, online video is now widely used, and the main question for 2009 is which platforms marketers will choose to invest in. [Hulu.com](#) (currently US-only, but likely to expand overseas) is completely ad-supported and 18 months post launch is already making similar revenues to YouTube despite just a fraction of its traffic (6 million monthly users to YouTube's 83 million). YouTube does provide some opportunities for advertisers (most notably brand channels and some in-stream ads), but it currently offers ads on just a small proportion of its inventory. Driven by the financial downturn, some advertisers may become more conservative in 2009 and retreat to the now established pre-roll format on sites such as hulu and Yahoo. User-generated sites such as YouTube, Facebook and [MySpace](#) could well respond with innovative video advertising opportunities of their own.
- Outside of the US, online video consumption and commercialisation still lag a year or two behind, but the fundamentals are in place in many markets. Broadband pipes make it possible, consumers like watching it, and content providers (both professional and amateur) are posting increasingly attractive material. In Western Europe, sites such as the [Spiegel](#) already have a strong video focus. This commercialisation is also taking place in China where leading sites such as [Youku.com](#) (70% licensed content, just 30% UGC) and [Tudou.com](#) are making increasingly large advertising revenues.
- MB & DL learning to date is that online video advertising has strong breakthrough overall, but particularly in new formats and in new markets; once the novelty period is over, impact scores tend to settle at lower levels. Hence we see great opportunities for advertisers who are prepared to continue pushing boundaries in 2009.



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### 3) Viral video – just for you!

- In the closing days of the recent US presidential campaign we saw one of the most creative online campaign elements: a personalised viral video hosted on cnnbcvideo.com which reminded Obama supporters to vote. It was a fake news story about the one voter whose failure to turn up had handed the election to McCain – that one voter's name could be personalised and users could forward the video to multiple friends.
- This successful campaign was organised by the moveon.org action group. According to them, by Election Day it had been seen 20 million times and sent to 15 million people. It's worth taking a minute to consider why it was so successful, and it's clear there were several contributing factors:
  - > It was clever, new and different, and made creative use of the technology
  - > It had a feel good factor – it was funny, brought a smile to supporters' faces
  - > It made people feel they were doing a good deed by telling others about it
  - > It was topical and timely
- It seems almost certain that marketers will jump on this new advertising format in a big way in 2009. If handled well, this is a great opportunity to put users at the centre of a brand's ads and to generate free pass-along. To ensure success brands will need to ensure this tactic is genuinely relevant to their brand communications strategy rather than a gimmicky bolt-on. The additional production costs and the intensely personal nature of the creative may also make this an ad format which marketers are more likely to pre-test prior to launch.



## 4) Mobile marketing makes it's mark

- Mobile has been proclaimed the 'next big thing' for several years now, but does finally seem to be taking a firm foothold in the digital marketing arena.
- While most mobile marketing still takes the form of SMS or MMS messaging, mobile search and display ads are becoming increasingly commonplace. Particularly among younger respondents, mobile phones are clearly transitioning from devices used for calls and texts to portable information and entertainment devices.
- In 2008 mobile display advertising and accompanying research became sufficiently widespread that we were able to release our first look at mobile marketing performance. These positive early signs suggest there is clear advantage to those brands which are early movers in this space.
- More people already access the mobile internet just via mobiles than just via PCs, and in 2009, mobile internet access and user familiarity seem certain to increase, driven by a mix of lower access costs and growing adoption of new smart phones (iphone, G1, Blackberry Storm, Nokia N97 etc.), all of which offer an improved web-browsing experience
- The mobile industry remains hungry for research insight about mobile performance so 2009 seems set to be filled with more 'firsts' such as brand effectiveness tests for mobile video ads and more creative branded applications (eg. this year's successful Carling iphone pint)



## 5) Search doesn't sit still

- Search remains a massive proportion of overall online ad spend, and seems certain to remain a major battleground in 2009. In 2009, search is likely to become more colourful, more personal and possibly even voice-activated.
- **More colourful!** We've already seen ask.com integrate a [search preview feature](#), and now [Yahoo are integrating audio and video into their search results](#). This development provides marketers with greater branding opportunities within the search arena, alongside their directly measurable CPA returns. Might we see either display or video advertising in Google search results before the end of 2009?
- **More personal!** In an attempt to make search results more relevant to users, Google looks likely to provide a new service called [Google SearchWiki](#) which allows users to vote on and annotate search results. There is also speculation that Google will shift its algorithm to favour more user behaviour metrics such as click-through-rates and bounce-rates. Brands which suffer falls in natural search traffic volumes as a result of these changes may need to consider more paid search to counter this.
- **Voice-activated?!** While Google's recently launched voice-recognition app for the iPhone may not generally be as popular as [this tech review](#) suggests, this could at least become a neat party trick in 2009, and possibly a sign of things to come in the mobile search arena.



## 6) Ever tighter targeting



- Targeted audiences have long been a promise of digital marketing, and financial pressures seem likely to increase this emphasis further in 2009. If brands can't afford to market to so many people, they'll be even more keen that their money is spent talking to the right people.
- The different flavours of targeting (attitudinal, behavioural, demographic etc.) and their accompanying services will continue to compete for marketer attention, and the potential power of ISP-targeting will be tested in the UK as [Phorm](#) rolls out into the market. Geo-targeting will of course grow in importance due to mobile search and GPS. Online geo-targeting capabilities may also improve as search localisation continues. Social sites such as Facebook will attempt to take better advantage of their vast user profile information so we'll hopefully see better targeted campaigns running here too.
- From a research point of view, MB & DL will continue to focus on measuring not just 'reach' across campaigns, but 'effective reach' among targeted audiences who engage with and retain branded messages.

## 7) The games people play



- Personalisation and portability are two major trends in gaming these days.
- Increasing numbers of major new game releases have a significant personalisation element to them. For example, [Little Big Planet](#) for the PS3 allows users to build new levels, and the eagerly-awaited [Sims 3](#) (due Feb 09) will allow players more control over the personality of the characters they control. Of the "[ten most anticipated games of 2009](#)", eight of them use online game play.
- Dedicated gamers will continue to bury their heads in portable game consoles; for them, Nintendo has just released the DSi in Japan, and [some reviewers](#) are excited about its arrival in other markets. Beyond consoles, the arrival of the iphone has clearly helped broaden the appeal of mobile gaming. There are already over 1500 games available for the iphone, and examples such as Sega's Super Monkey Ball have been downloaded [over 500,000 times](#).
- So, how can brands take advantage? Some brands may be able to create entertaining games built around their brands, and others may simply want to ride the wave of successful games via tie-ins. Either way, it doesn't look like the gaming phenomenon is likely to die down any time soon.

## 8) Keeping track of all this digital media

- A traditional online marketing model saw a brand use online search and display to drive traffic to a brand website. Now, as brands invest greater proportions of their marketing budget online, they are also more likely to use multiple digital channels. This increased complexity is bringing new brand management and insight challenges.
- First of all, it raises planning and development issues: which digital channels are the right ones for your brand and your marketing strategy? Which roles will each element play in the mix? How much should you spend on each?
- Then, once the activity is deployed, it raises further evaluation issues: given vastly different metrics and objectives, how do you compare the efficacy of your online search, display, viral, Facebook, mobile and gaming activity?
- Even if no single, simple answer is yet available, it seems certain that more brand marketers will be asking these questions during 2009.
- Survey research helps join up many of these dots, and we therefore expect to see integrated pre-tests and integrated tracking become more commonplace in the digital arena. By providing a common attitudinal currency, survey research demonstrates the different roles that each digital campaign element play and also enables ongoing campaign optimisation against your overall marketing objectives, rather than a piecemeal approach which focuses solely on optimisation within digital channel.



## 9) Turning online data into meaningful research insights

- One joy of the online world is the vast amounts of information which are readily available.
  - > [Google](#) provide search volume information so that brands can see how their search volumes vary over time and in 2009, Yahoo may also provide a free version of Index Tools to allow similar analysis of their search data.
  - > Various buzz monitoring services exist which aggregate the many comments consumers leave on blogs, websites and other forums. We expect use of this information for research purposes to increase next year (eg. the ARF has launched a "[Listening](#)" initiative in the US which encourages brands to do just that).
  - > Consumers' online footprints leave behind vast quantities of click-stream data which generate statistics such as click rates, interaction rates, sales conversions and so on.
- All of this new information provides two major challenges to marketers: firstly, what does the data mean, and secondly, how can I use it?
- To make progress on extracting meaning, we believe the key task is integrating these new information streams with existing data. Within Millward Brown, this means we'll be looking to further understand how search volumes can be integrated with survey research, working hard to integrate data from our Precis:cubed buzz monitoring service alongside more traditional brand tracking results, and also exploring how other behavioural information can be linked to survey research. By providing this proper context we think these new information sources can be fully understood.
- Applying this information effectively is both a cultural shift for researchers and a major logistical task. Researchers need to become increasingly adept at working with and distributing multiple data sources. They need to help brand marketers identify brand insights, developers see product conversations, ensure customer complaints are directed to customer service teams and so on. Information needs to be sent to the right place.... quickly. This is a major challenge for 2009.



## About

- Millward Brown's Futures Group is a global knowledge sharing forum which is consistently thinking about the digital trends that will have a significant impact in the next three years
- Priority areas include (but are not limited to):
  - > Online video
  - > New ad platforms (Mobile, Advergaming, Social networks, DVRs etc.)
  - > Web-based advertising in general
  - > Emerging recruitment and data collection techniques
- To find out more, please contact your local MB or Dynamic Logic representative
- For internal MB users, more information is available here:  
<http://mbonline/Futures/Default.asp>