

Exclusive: Paid search outperforms paid social—with the latter far more likely to bounce

Article

The news: Visitors from paid social are 41% more likely to bounce, notes Contentsquare's 2024 Digital Experience Benchmark Report.

- The study sheds light on the distinct paths and outcomes between paid search and social media channels, revealing critical insights for digital marketers, and finds that paid search boasts a conversion rate four times higher than paid social.
- This data emphasizes the need for marketers to understand and strategically act upon the differing visitor intentions and behaviors across these channels.

Why it matters: The contrast in conversion and bounce rates between paid search and paid social channels offers a deeper understanding of consumer behavior and intent.

- Paid search visitors, often with a defined intent to purchase, engage more deeply with content, making them prime targets for conversion-centric strategies. “Paid search attracts a far more intentional visitor,” said Contentsquare CMO **Jean-Christophe Pitie** in an Insider Intelligence interview.
- Conversely, social media visitors, drawn by engaging narratives or influencer endorsements, may not be as immediately ready to take action, which explains the higher bounce rates. This differentiation demands a nuanced marketing approach that is compatible with the unique expectations and readiness of visitors from each channel.
- Pitie underscores the necessity of aligning user experiences on paid channels with visitor expectations for both acquisition and retention. Since half of the users don’t proceed past the first page, knowing customer needs is critical to designing effective user journeys from their entry point.

Our take: Marketers must adopt a multifaceted approach to digital advertising, focusing on:

- Aligning investments with campaign objectives, using paid search for driving conversions and paid social to build brand awareness and engagement.
- Customizing landing page experiences to match visitor intent, recognizing the direct approach preferred by paid search users versus the more exploratory nature of social media users.
- Deepening the understanding of the audience's digital journey, tailoring strategies to deliver appropriate messaging at the right touchpoints.
- Committing to continuous testing and refinement of the user journey for each marketing channel, aiming to cater to different levels of visitor consideration and intent.

With a strategic, data-driven approach to digital advertising, marketers can more effectively distribute their investment between paid search and social media. This can not only boost engagement and conversions but also ensure more efficient management of marketing budgets, driving ROI while fulfilling broader business objectives.

Bounce Rate Worldwide, by Channel, 2022 & 2023

	2022	2023
Display, ads, retargeting	61.8%	66.1%
Paid social	60.0%	61.7%
Organic social	61.4%	60.6%
Direct	47.0%	47.2%
Email	45.0%	46.2%
Organic search	46.0%	46.1%
Paid search	44.0%	43.9%

*Note: among data analyzed by ContentSquare, broader industry metrics may vary
Source: ContentSquare, "2024 Digital Experience Benchmark Report," Feb 14, 2024*

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