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**Top Search Keywords Reflect Spirituality**

Laurie Sullivan, Dec 29, 2008 07:00 AM



Consumers became more spiritual and less materialistic this holiday season, according to San Francisco-based Kontera. The company supports that premise with analysis from technology it taps to provide advertising services to more than 10,000 Web publishers in its network.

The most clicked-on holiday keywords for 2008 in the U.S. highlight a return to traditional values and a holiday spirit, compared with a focus on material gifts in 2007.

This year's top-performing holiday keyword terms included "spirit" and "letter," rather than "gift," "present," and "shopping."

Keywords appear to reflect a greater focus on the complete

holiday experience, with popular keywords including "party," "decorations," and "stocking." Last year's list focused on the general holiday experience.

"Santa letter" ranked at the top of the most clicked-on holiday keywords for 2008, followed by "Christmas wish list," "Christmas spirit," "secret Santa," "gift idea," "Christmas decoration," "Christmas stocking," "Christmas," "Christmas Party," and "gift." In 2007, "Christmas present" topped the 2007 list, followed by "advent calendar," "secret Santa," "Christmas shopping," "Christmas gifts," "Christmas necklace," "unique Christmas gift idea," "holiday gift guide," "Christmas gift," and "Christmas gift for her."

Kontera's technology finds the most clicked-on keyword terms and ranks and matches them to the most relevant contextual ads, content, and information. Assaf Henkin, cofounder and VP of products, explained that Kontera's technology picks popular phrases based on relevance to text and ads displayed on publishers' sites supported by the company's technology. The phrases in articles and ads are assigned values. Knowing this allows advertisers to select and easily change keywords, which typically produce higher click-through rates.

The upside to the down economy this year became a focus on spirituality and the need to reestablish the meaning of the holidays, according to Amy Shea, EVP and global director at branding and marketing firm Brand Keys. "It has forced people into being more circumspect about what they bought this year for holiday gifts," she said. "Consumers reevaluated the gifts they gave. They didn't stop giving gifts for Christmas or Hanukah, but rather gave more thought when deciding on the gifts to give. This year the world's consciousness became part of the gift-giving decision."

That spiritual awareness also drove up click-through rates. Top-performing keywords experienced a boost between 30% and 65%. The click-through rate for "Secret Santa" rose by 43%, "gift idea" increased 63%, and "gift" jumped 38%.

Earlier this year, the National Retail Federation (NRF), the industry's trade group, had projected that holiday sales would grow 2.2% to \$470.4 billion in 2008--the weakest gain in more than six years.