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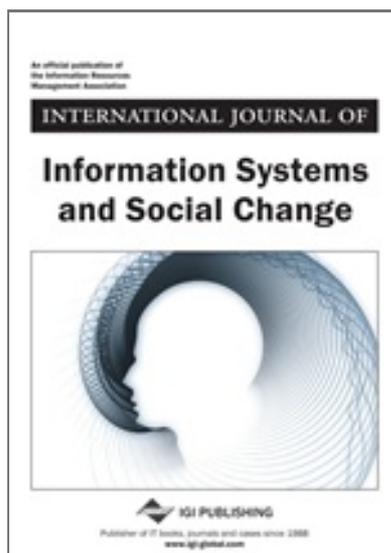


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## The Search Engine as an Internet Service Channel

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## Abstract

Development of the search engine as a major information and marketing channel resulted from innovative technologies that made it capable of presenting rapid, relevant responses to queries. To do this, the search engine compiles an index of web pages of information stored on the World Wide Web, ranks each page according to its incoming links, matches keywords in the query to those in its index, and returns what it determines are the most relevant pages to the searcher. Innovative and cost-effective ad placement algorithms have attracted advertisers to search engine websites and intensified the competitive dynamics among industry leaders. Their interacting software also continues to draw advertisers from traditional, mass marketing channels like television and newspapers to the online medium to cater to customers who have expressed an interest in their products and services.

## Article Preview

## Industrial Framework

### The Personal Computer (PC)

The commercial success of the IBM PC, first sold in 1981, marked a major shift in the industry by downsizing the computer and its cost and making it available for individual use at home and at work. Technological advances in user-friendly software and powerful micro-processing semiconductor chips also made the PC efficient in creating files, documents, and databases and its use spread rapidly among professionals, office workers, and students who had relied on the typewriter. Microsoft became the main beneficiary of this transition even though it did not develop but instead purchased the technology for the operating system (OS) software that IBM leased for its PC. In the partnership, Microsoft's management, unlike its counterpart at IBM, understood that software controlled the computer, and the PC with applications programs like word processing would commercially supplant the bigger mainframe machine. The mainframe was also a stand-

alone machine that did not share its processing power with other computers. This changed with the spread of the desktop computer especially at research and development (R&D) firms where work on technical projects was conducted simultaneously by engineering teams. Such efforts could be accelerated if the machines were networked allowing information and work to be shared among members of the team. To advance the time-sharing of computing power, Sun Microsystems introduced the first networked work station â a more powerful PC â in 1982 adding to the flexibility and utility of desktop computers (Southwick, 1999). These attributes resulted in a major shift of marketing power from hardware manufacturers of large computers like IBM and DEC to software developers like Microsoft and assemblers of PCs like Compaq which acquired DEC and its Alta Vista search engine in 1998 (Steinmuller, 1996).

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