



How well are the top brands ranked in search engines?

› In collaboration with Jonathan Tower, IC-Agency

Every year, the WorldWatchReport reveals the most searched luxury watch brands online. By dissecting the search volume for the top luxury watch brands, IC-Agency, the publisher of this market study, was able to categorize the intentions of these searches and deliver insights and trends. Among this year's top revelations were the continuing online demand of counterfeit products and the growing demand of preowned watch models. Also revealed was Omega's increased popularity that was propelled by its Seamaster model, which overtook Rolex's Daytona as the most searched model.

If there is one thing that is clear, it is that these brands benefit from a large amount of search volume. However, the amount of searches for these brands does not necessarily translate into visits to their website; the brand's official website isn't the only one appearing in the search engine results and can be outranked by other sites such as those of resellers or of related blogs.

As search engines remain the main navigational tool for most Internet users, ranking remains key for many brands. Appearing among the top search results in search engines is important for most well established brands, but even more so for watch brands, who are competing for search engine real estate against resellers and counterfeiters that go to great lengths to appear at the top. Although some may be well ranked for their own brand name searches, how are they ranking on generic luxury watch terms? We set out to discover this using the same markets (Italy, France, United Kingdom, United States and Germany) and brands (Rolex, TAG Heuer, Omega, Cartier, Ebel, Girard-Perregaux, Jaeger-LeCoultre, Chopard, Breitling, Patek Philippe, Bulgari and Longines) as found in the WorldWatchReport. Our study consisted of using eight generic luxury watch keywords such as 'luxury watch', 'haute horlogerie' and 'ladies watch'.

The results show that there is room for improvement. Although most websites are optimized to appear when searching for the brand, very few sites even appear at all on these generic search terms. Since very few sites even ranked on our search terms, we measured performance by the number of appearances, instead of average rank.

Overall, Cartier had the highest number of appearances in our eight-keyword, five-country test. Cartier's advantage was aided by the fact that it has a family of country specific sites. In France, Cartier was one of the only brands to appear in the search results. Receiving the second largest number of appearances was TAG Heuer. This brand's performance was largely concentrated in the United States, where it appeared very prominently for the selected keywords. Despite having a large number of languages available on its site, it did not manage to rank high enough in non-English searches.

Rolex and Omega, leaders in brand searches, come in at third and fourth respectively, mirroring very much TAG Heuer's results. Ebel manages to appear on a few of the keywords, while all the other researched brands showed little results.

The keywords that triggered these brands the most were 'luxury watch' and 'Swiss watch'. These represented the keywords that were much more closely linked to the luxury industry. Keywords such as 'men's watch', 'sports watch' and 'ladies watch' saw very few appearances of our top 12 brands in their search results. While they represent keywords that are a part of a sector larger than the luxury industry, a strong presence here could help spread their brand's awareness and mirror their standing as a reference of quality to the entire watch industry.

When comparing these rankings with the results of online demand for these brands published in the WorldWatchReport, we notice that there is no obvious correlation between brand popularity and ranking. While the top three searched brands, Rolex, Omega and TAG Heuer, still perform relatively well, Cartier's multiple, global results outshone these much more searched brands, providing it with an opportunity to spread its brand.

Perhaps the largest conclusion to be drawn from this search engine ranking report is that there is an opportunity for a few of these top luxury brands to occupy prime search engine 'real estate'. There is an even bigger advantage to be gained for those with less brand awareness. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the route that leads to better ranking, but it can be a long process. Within a year, will one of these brands start to show considerably better ranking results? Only time will tell. ◀