

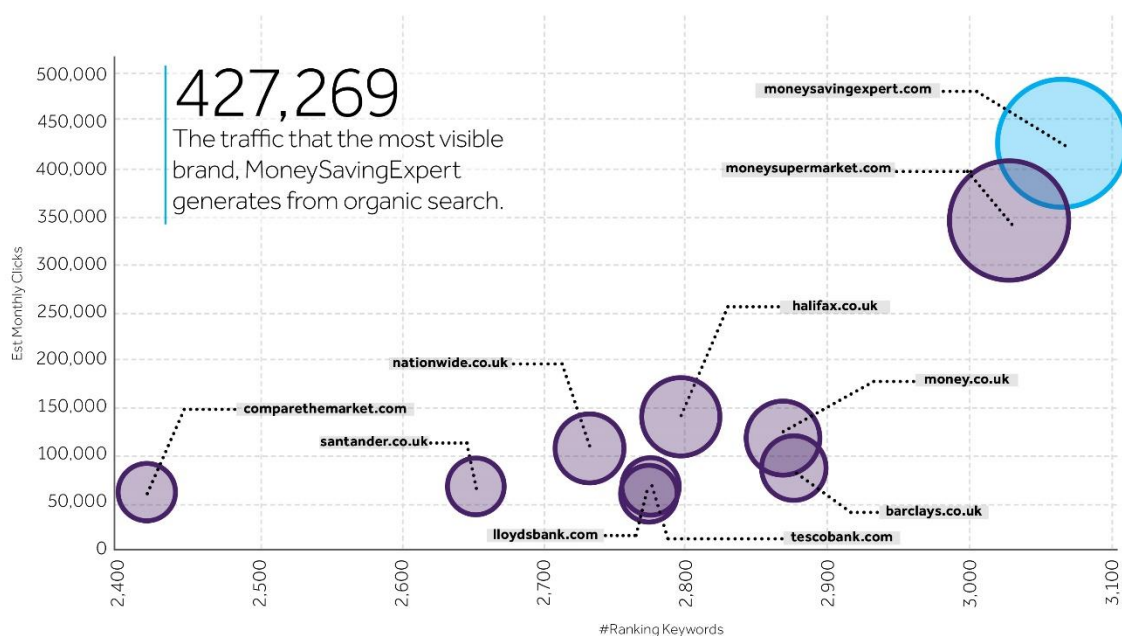
Traditional banking brands adopting new strategies to regain traffic from organic Google search.

Whilst price comparison websites have dominated the search results in the retail banking sector, the latest intelligence report from digital agency Stickyeyes reveals that traditional banking brands are successfully recapturing search traffic with innovative customer-centric SEO strategies.

Michael Hewitt, Content Marketing Manager at Stickyeyes explains.

Google search has not been kind to traditional banking brands in recent years, as challenger brands and price comparison websites have taken their share of traffic.

Organic Search Visibility: Consumer Finance



This isn't a phenomenon unique to consumer banking. Numerous sectors have seen a similar shift in the search landscape and shifts in consumer behaviour towards comparison-led customer journeys, but it has perhaps been most acute in the financial services sector.

Comparison websites grew to prominence in the aftermath of the economic recession of the late 2000s, at a time where consumer confidence in established brands was at its lowest for generations, and encouraged consumers to move away from brand loyalty and to be much more informed and discerning about financial services. This was reflected in Google's search results, and traditional brands found themselves being forced out of Google's top positions and newer, more agile brands stepped in to take that traffic.

Traditional brands changing their approach to search

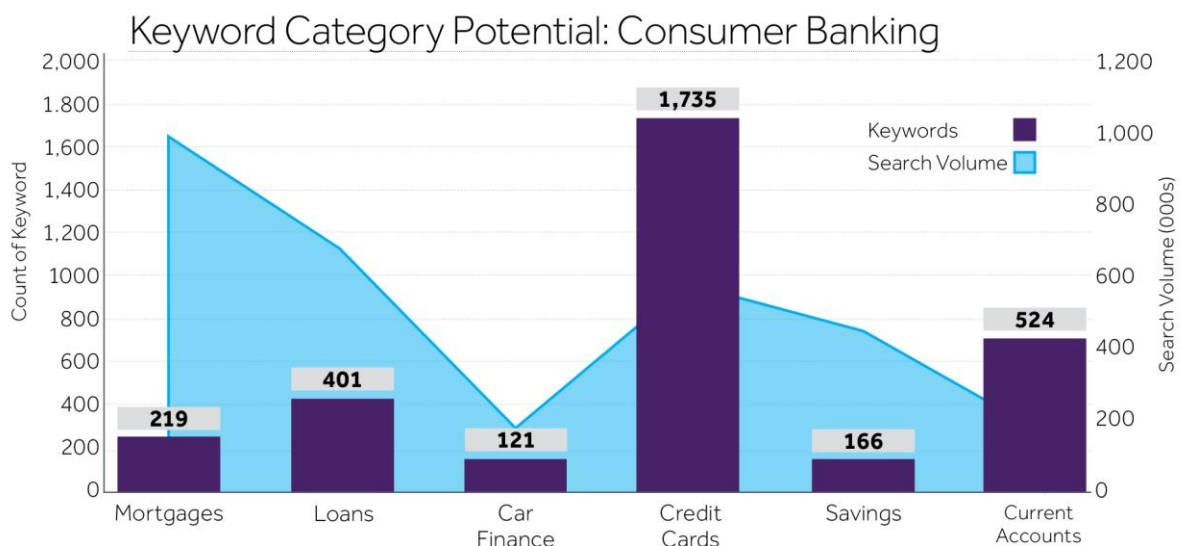
But whilst today there remains something of a duopoly in consumer banking search markets, consisting of the two major price comparison and advice websites from the Money Supermarket

Group (MoneySupermarket.com and MoneySavingExpert.com), there are indications that traditional brands are recapturing traffic share through the deployment of targeted search tactics and strategy.

The [Stickyeyes Consumer Banking Report](#) takes a detailed look at the state of the Google search results across more than 3,100 keywords in the consumer banking sector, as well as the key product areas of mortgages, credit cards current accounts, savings, personal loans and car finance. And whilst the strength of the price comparison websites is clearly evident, it is also clear that many banking brands are successfully generating targeted search traffic and visibility within the search results through focused keyword strategies, tactical deployment of content across key stages of the customer journey and innovative repositioning of their customer proposition.

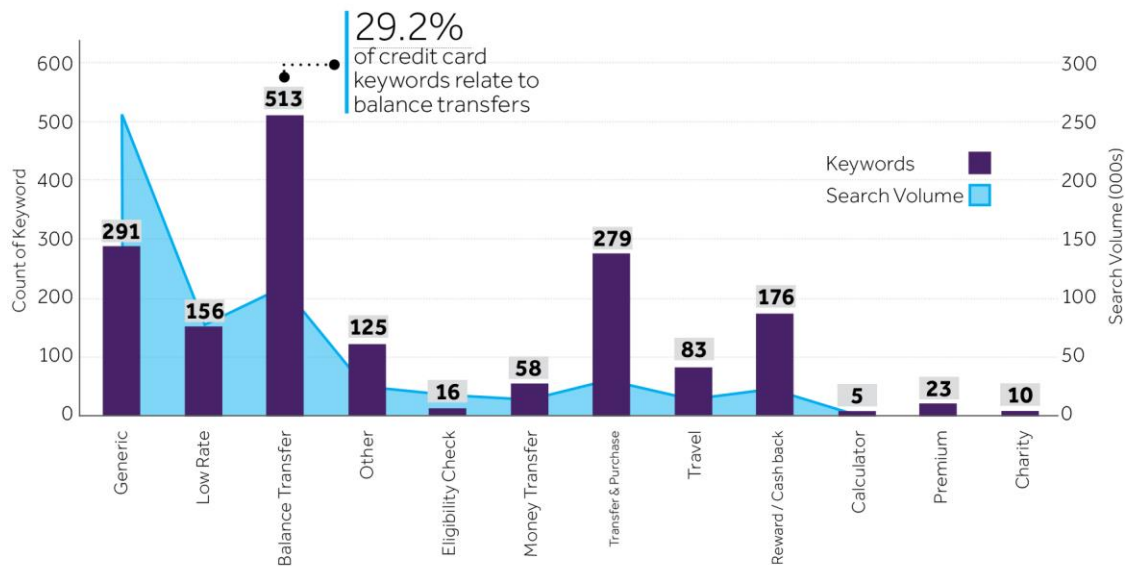
Traditional brands such as Halifax Bank, Nationwide and Lloyds Bank, Barclays and Santander are now out-performing price comparison websites and challenger brands in key areas of the sector, ranking prominently for keywords across multiple stages of the customer journey.

Much of this has been aided by search users themselves becoming much more focused in their search behaviour as they progress through the purchasing journey. In some markets, the keyword landscape has become particularly granular.



Of our 3,100 keyword sample, more than half of these relate to the credit cards market, demonstrating just how granular the search terms in this sector have become. It is reflective of greater consumer awareness of the diverse nature of products and services within certain sub-verticals of the financial services market. In the case of credit cards, almost a third of these 1,735 keyword terms relate to balance transfer products.

Keyword Category Potential: Credit Cards



The diverse nature of this search traffic represents a huge opportunity for banking brands to forcefully promote their proposition. Different banks have cards that specialise in different markets – balance transfers, rewards, zero foreign exchange fees or low interest purchase for example, and these consumer needs are reflected by a very diverse keyword market.

The brands that have capitalised on this trend by deploying content throughout the customer journey are the ones that have seen the biggest gains in search visibility. With the price comparison websites now dominating the high volume terms, these brands have focused much more on the keywords that generate the more targeted search traffic, that better serve the consumer's desire for information and solutions, and modified their content and, in some cases, the way in which they present an entire product proposition to suit.

The car finance market is another key sector that demonstrates this evolution in strategy. Car finance is the fastest-growing search market in the consumer banking sector, with search volume increasing 56% since 2004, and the way in which competing brands present their respective solutions had adapted to reflect this growth in traffic.

In other markets, we have seen a sustained effort by traditional brands to improve informational content, develop tools and improved user experience features that deliver a more positive digital experience. For the brands that are getting this right, it is now translating into an improved share in the search market.

Consumer-centricity is more important than ever in search

These developments are all positive signs for the retail banking brands, but it is important to remember that price comparison websites continue to dominate the market as a whole – and will probably continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

What the [Stickyeyes Consumer Banking Report](#) reveals is the extent to which the two main price comparison websites have a stranglehold on the search market in this sector, and that is understandable. Price comparison websites have driven a sea change in consumer behaviour throughout the sector, and they help Google to fulfil its ambitions to provide the most user-centric experience to the searcher that it possibly can.

But that doesn't mean that the retail brands do not have their place in the search results, but they are only going to achieve that with a much more customer-centric approach to digital and to search. Those banking brands that have enhanced their share of search visibility are the ones that have most demonstrably thought about how the customer journey translates to digital and to search, and focused on the keywords, the UX features and the content that are actually the most important within that journey.