

Google Organic Click Through Study: Comparison of Google's CTR by Position, Industry, and Query Type

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Overview:

In the wake of several Google algorithmic updates and changes to the presentation of Google search engine results pages (SERPs), Internet Marketing Ninjas (IMN) conducted a study in July 2017 to identify what more recent click through rates (CTRs) looked like for each of the first 20 positions in Google, with a primary emphasis on Page 1 results. We attempted to visualize the average CTR curve for a cohort of our own clients, in addition to CTR curves for more specific segments as well.

Our Methodology:

Data Set Source:

IMN manually pulled Google Search Console (GSC) reports for each client included within the study. We pulled Queries data for the previous 90 days, with Impressions, Clicks and Average Position data included for each query. Because we wanted a study that reflected the most potential visibility, IMN pulled the 1,000 queries for each client with the most Impressions over the last 90 days. Because queries where the client ranks on Page 1 or Page 2 tend to have the most visibility in the SERPs and because higher volume queries tend to result in more Impressions, IMN felt sorting by Impressions data would give us the most confidence and clarity in what Page 1 CTRs look like.

Data set size:

Our data set consisted of 20,000 queries in total, one pull of 1,000 queries for each of 20 different clients we chose for inclusion in the study. These 20,000 queries saw a total of over 60 million Impressions over the 90-day period we studied, and clients saw a total of over 4 million organic clicks in that same time from these queries.

Each ranking position on the first 2 pages of Google within our study saw:

- No less than 83 separate Queries ranking at that position (20th) and as many as 4,000+ (1st)
- No less than 34,000 Impressions (20th), and as many as 7.8 million (1st)
- No less than 440 Clicks (20th), and as many as 1.6 million (1st)

A summary table is found below in Our Findings.

Date Range:

IMN pulled Queries reports for 20 different clients from 7/7/17 to 7/11/17, with previous 90 day ranges. This gave us a peek back in time for most of Q2 2017 – April, May and June.

Client curation:

IMN chose 20 different clients for inclusion in the study, with overall goals of balance and representation from different business models and industry verticals.

Half of the clients included within the study (10) were Business-to-Consumer (B2C) websites that marketed directly to consumers. Half of the B2C clients (5) were ecommerce sites with shopping carts. The other half of B2C clients (5) were more service oriented, typically lead generation sites.

Half of the clients included within the study were Business-to-Business websites that marketed to other businesses or organizations. 3 of the B2B websites were wholesalers of physical products used by other organizations, 3 of them sold industry specific software and 4 of them otherwise sold services/solutions.

Cohort Segmentation:

Besides B2B and B2C distinction as site Types, queries that referenced client names or their websites, including common misspellings, were tagged as Branded queries. All other queries were tagged as Non-Branded by default.

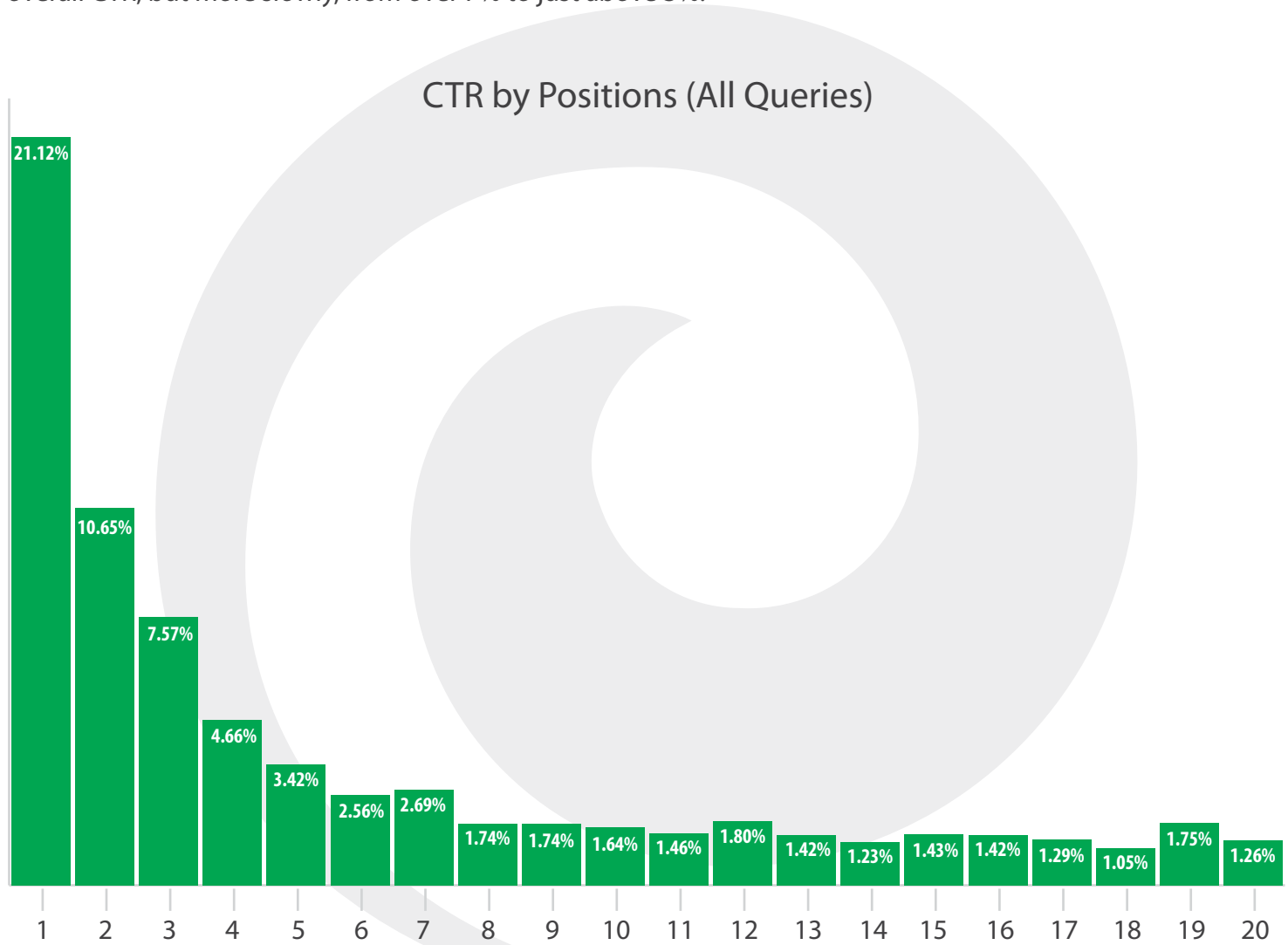
GSC data for Page 1 rankings will typically display average ranking data in 1/10th intervals. Hence, a #5 average ranking might initially display as 5 or 5.2 or 5.8; for our purposes, we kept these decimals within our master data set, but within our analysis, we merged all queries with a 1 to 1.9 as a #1 ranking.

Similarly, we merged all queries with a 2 to 2.9 as a #2 ranking, and so on. This allowed us to smooth out discrepancies in sample sizes for each of the 1/10th intervals in the master data set and present the data visually as consistent single unit ranking intervals.

Our Findings:

All Queries:

Across All Queries, a #1 ranking averaged just above a 21% CTR. The CTR for a #2 ranking dropped to just above a 10% CTR, half the rate at which a #1 ranking receives clicks. Queries ranked 3 to 7 continued to drop in overall CTR, but more slowly, from over 7% to just above 3%.



At Positions 8-10, the CTRs were above 1.5%, but still below 2%. Page 1 queries accounted for 82% of all queries, 96.8% of all Impressions and 99.3% of all Clicks.

The sum of the average CTRs for Page 1 queries was just over 57%, suggesting 43% of Queries do not receive a Page 1 organic click and that users in these situations either navigate to Page 2 or beyond, or they do not click on an organic result at all.

Page 2 Queries saw CTRs all above 1%, but none above 2%. Surprisingly, there's a slight dip back UP on the top of Page 2, where the 12th position saw a slightly higher CTR than spots 8-11. This might be a consequence of data set size or an indication that with the new SERPs presentation that users who did click over to Page 2 were more likely to click on a Page 2 result than previously expected or understood.

The sum of the average CTRs for all Page 2 queries was 14%, which when combined with total Page 1 CTRs, accounted for just under 72% of all Impressions. This suggests that 28% of all queries didn't receive a Page 1 or Page 2 click – they are deeper page clicks or NO clicks at all.

Page 3 and beyond Queries represented just over 10% of all Queries, but constituted less than 1% of all Impressions (0.82%) and barely 1/10th of 1 percent of all Clicks (0.14%).

The average CTR for a Query past Page 2 was 1.12%, suggesting that while it's very unlikely that a query ranked beyond Page 2 would see many impressions, when they did, the CTR was fairly comparable to Page 2 rankings – about 1% of the time the client got an Impression beyond Page 1, they saw a click from it.

A summary table for the bar graph above:

All Queries:

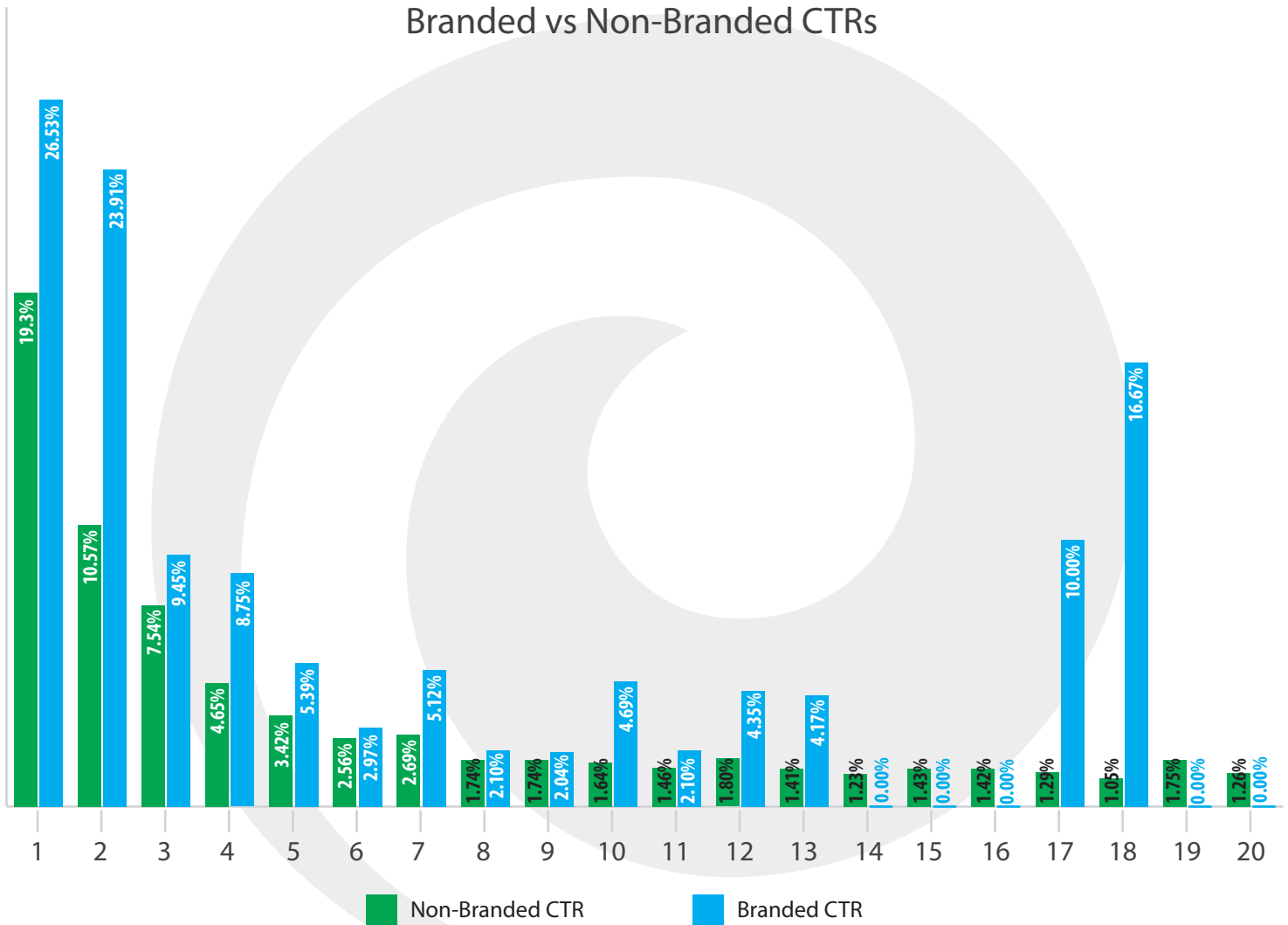
Position	Impressions	Clicks	CTR	Queries	Position	Impressions	Clicks	CTR	Queries
1	7,827,348	1,652,931	21.12%	4,005	11	623,422	9,128	1.46%	354
2	5,294,156	564,045	10.65%	2,348	12	331,843	5,983	1.80%	208
3	7,180,218	543,568	7.57%	2,195	13	106,706	1,510	1.42%	175
4	8,942,980	416,629	4.66%	1,872	14	123,310	1,521	1.23%	139
5	7,494,264	256,444	3.42%	1,543	15	68,937	989	1.43%	109
6	8,832,562	225,926	2.56%	1,313	16	41,906	597	1.42%	118
7	8,592,201	231,323	2.69%	1,251	17	43,028	554	1.29%	96
8	5,509,401	95,988	1.74%	967	18	53,147	560	1.05%	106
9	1,828,294	31,767	1.74%	737	19	38,863	680	1.75%	92
10	358,835	5,888	1.64%	255	20	34,799	440	1.26%	83
					>20	520,686	5,812	1.12%	2,034

Branded vs Non-Branded Queries:

MN observed some fairly significant differences between Branded and Non-Branded queries. These differences only confirmed for us the importance of distinguishing within our data set which queries were Branded, as they tended to have significantly higher CTRs than non-branded queries.

Even though they were less than 4% of all Queries and Impressions, Branded queries constituted over 13% of all actual Clicks in our study, so they have a clear tendency to skew the CTR for All Queries slightly upward, compared to only Non-Branded Queries.

Branded vs Non-Branded CTRs

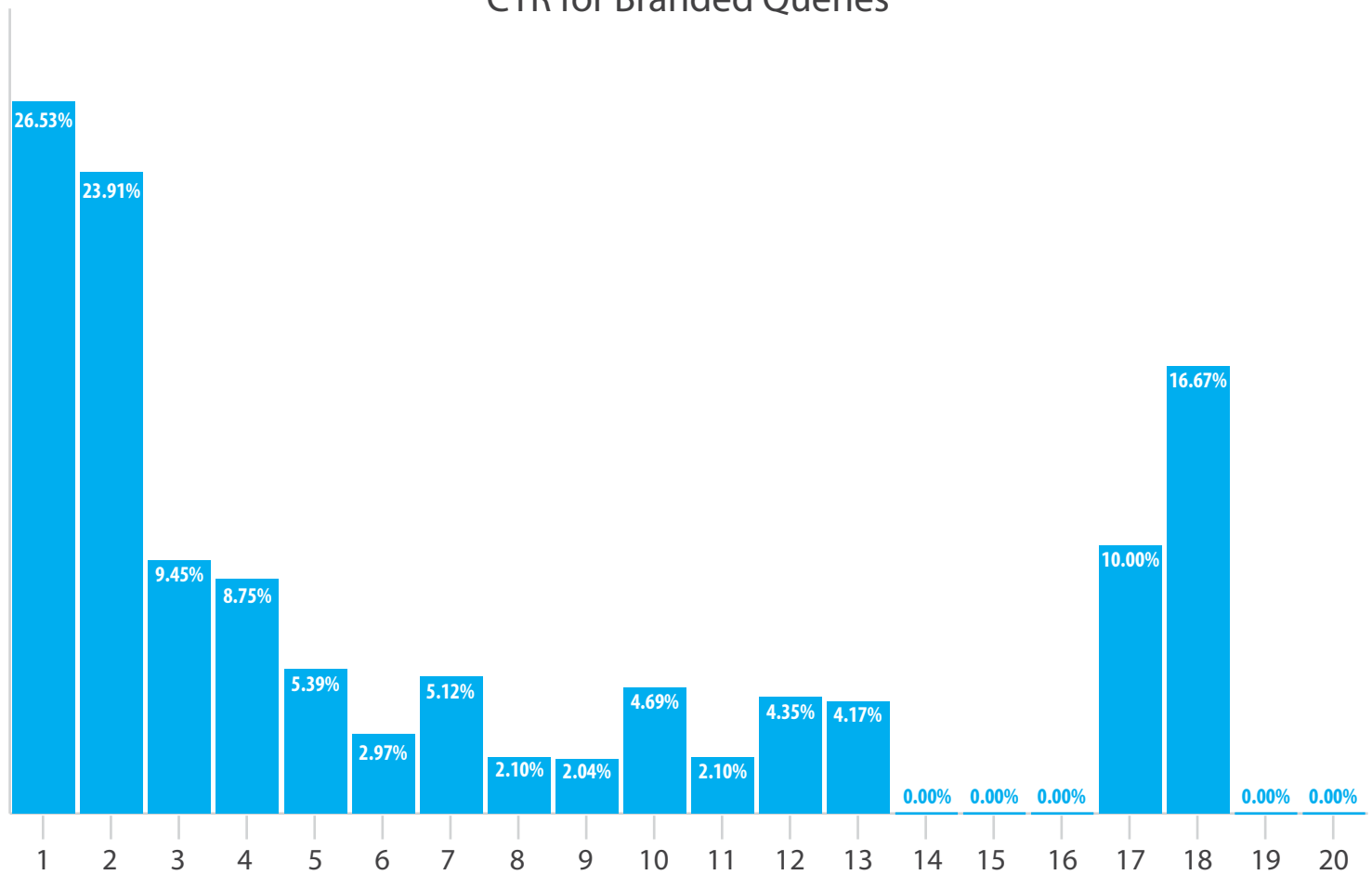


Branded Queries:

One limitation within our data set that we observed is that Branded queries' visibility is disproportionately skewed toward Page 1 overall, and even on Page 1, toward the Top 3 results. The #1 position for a Branded Query saw over a 25% CTR, and the 2nd position saw over a 23% CTR as well. By positions 3-4 range, the CTR is still near 10%, but then it begins to drop and fluctuate.

While there were some Page 2 and beyond results seeing Impressions for Branded queries, there simply wasn't very many of them included within our data sets. Branded queries saw over 97% of all Impressions come from the first 3 positions in Google and the top 3 positions also accounted for 99% of all Branded organic clicks.

CTR for Branded Queries

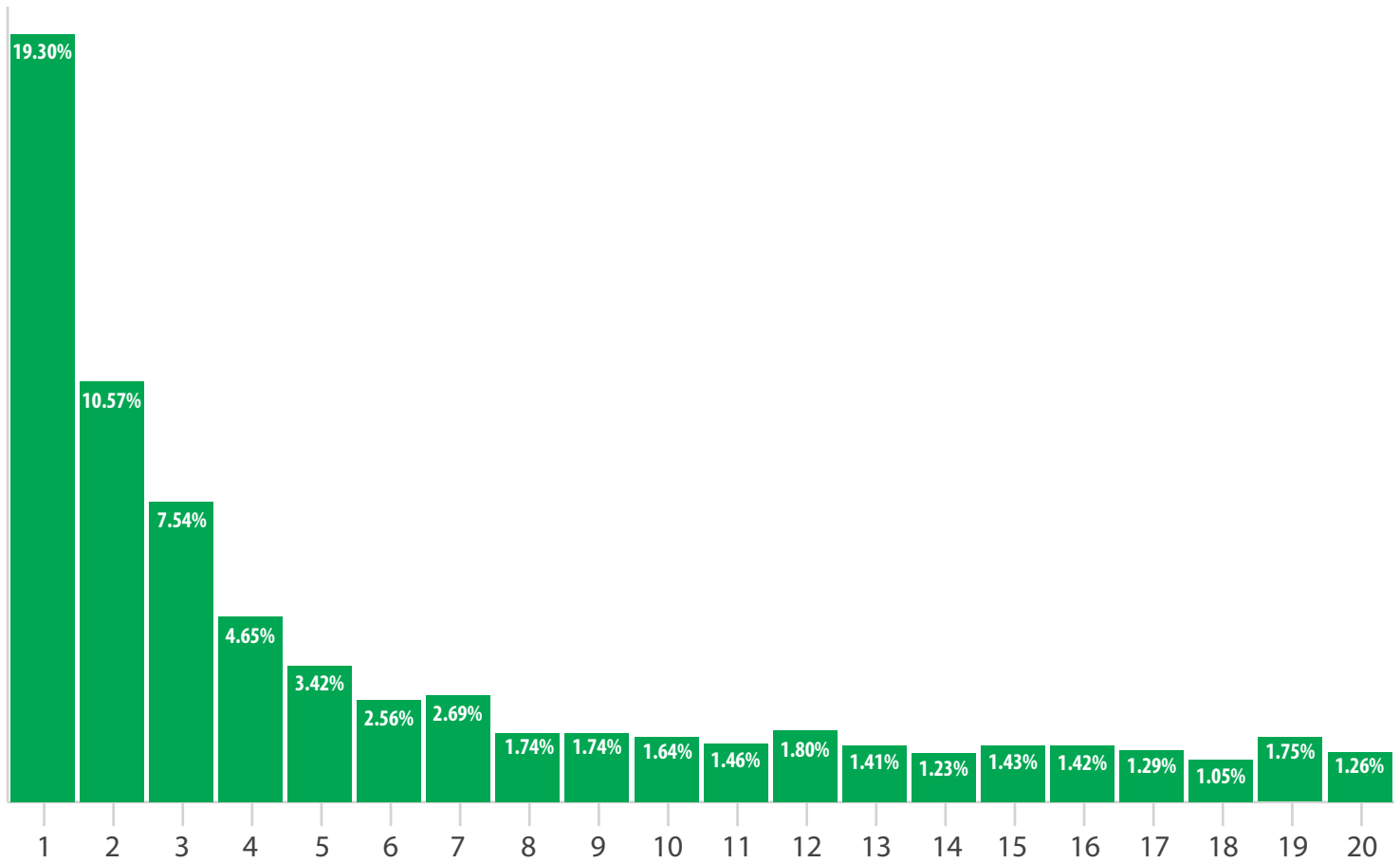


Past positions 5 or 6, the amount of Branded query data is simply just too small to have the same level of confidence in the CTRs than in Spots 1-5. There are some fluctuations and spikes on 2nd half of Page 2 queries best explained by the limitations of small, randomized data sets.

Non-Branded Queries:

Non-branded queries had CTRs closer to the All Queries averages than Branded queries did. A #1 ranking for a non-branded query saw just under 20% of the clicks. A #2 ranking secured just over 10% and a #3 saw 7.5% of all clicks.

CTR for Non-Branded Queries



Past position #3, CTRs continued to drop, but more slowly, and they leveled off as the rankings moved toward the bottom of Page 1 and onto Page 2. No position from #8 through #20 saw any less than a 1% CTR, but none were higher than a 1.8% CTR either.

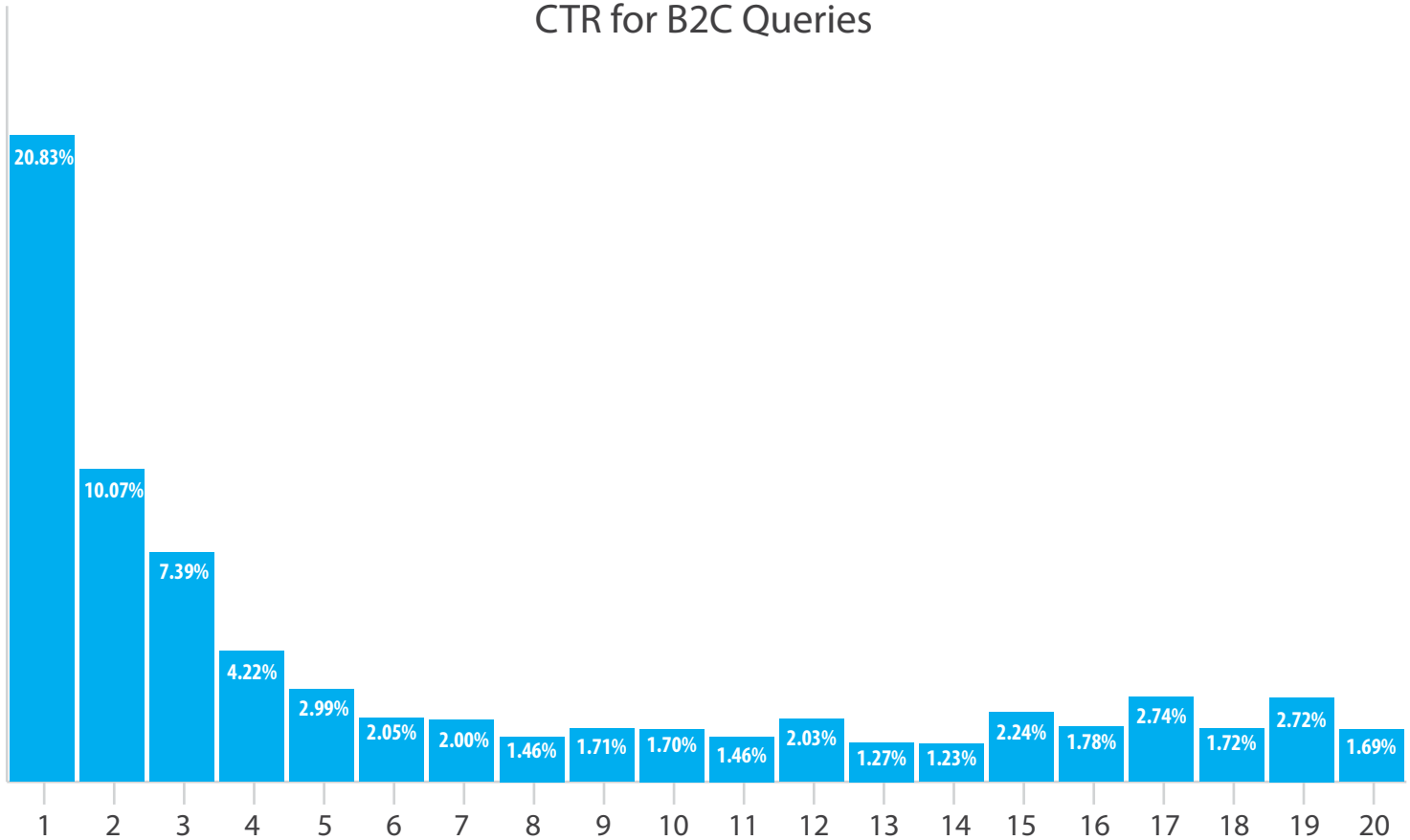
B2C vs B2B Queries:

IMN also observed some slight but noticeable differences in the CTRs for queries aligned to B2C businesses versus B2B businesses. As a broad generalization, our data suggested B2B queries has slightly higher CTRs for rankings on the top half of Page 1, but lower CTRs on Page 2. Conversely, B2C queries tended to have lower CTRs on the top half of Page 1, but the CTR drop-offs on the bottom of Page to Page 2 were lower and slower than we observed for B2B.

B2C Queries:

The CTR for a #1 ranking in B2C verticals was slightly less than All Queries, at just over 20%. A #2 ranking secured just over 10% of the clicks.

CTR for B2C Queries

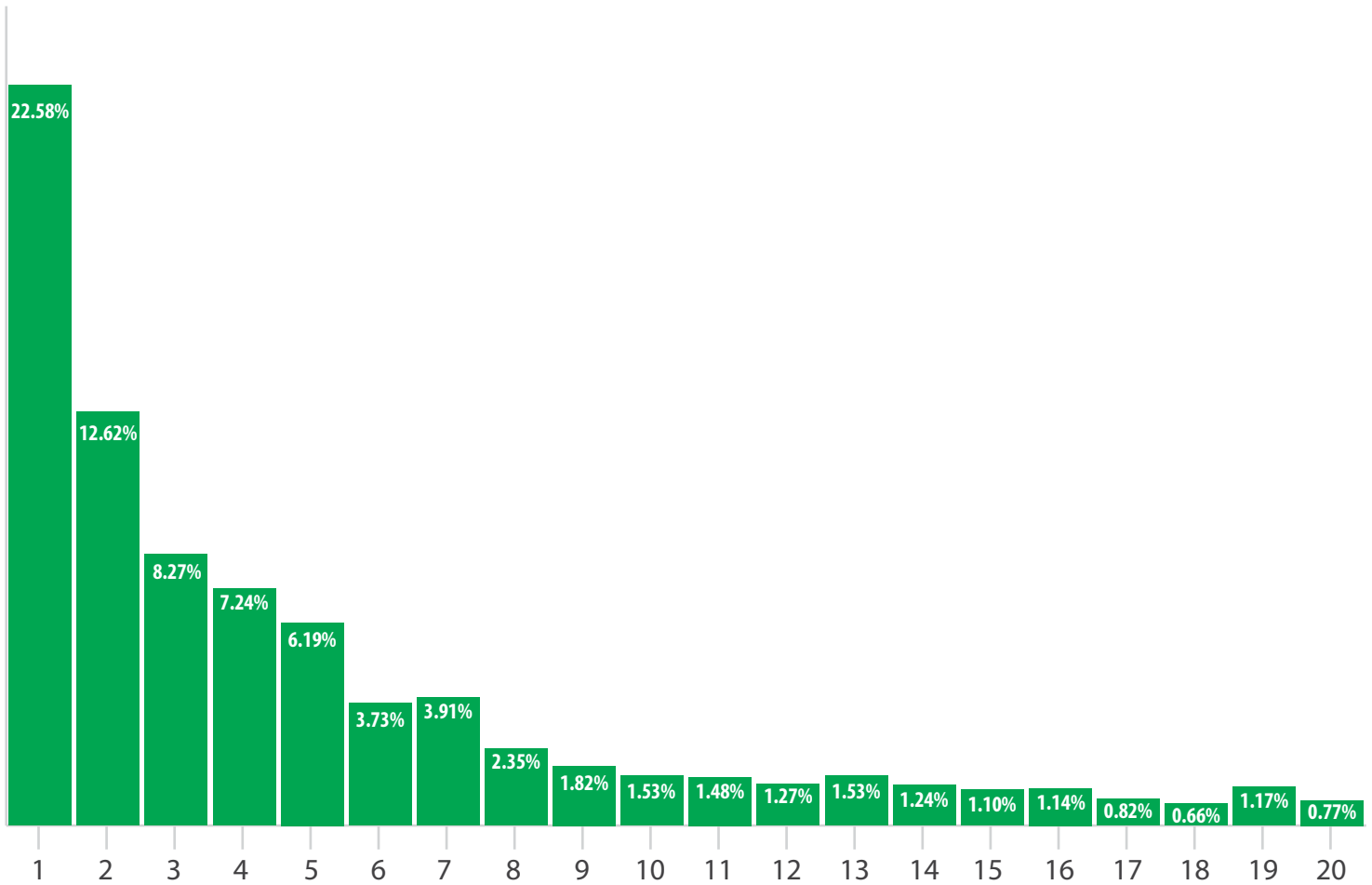


By position 5, CTRs were under 3%, but each remaining spot through the 20th position still secured at least a 1% CTR, and sometimes over 2.5%! The CTRs for spots 15-20 were not that far removed from those in spots 7-10, particularly in aggregate.

B2B Queries:

B2B queries had slightly higher CTRs than All Queries and B2C Queries on most of the Page 1 positions. A #1 ranking for B2B queries had a CTR just over 22.5% and the #2 position secured over 12.5% of clicks.

CTR for B2B Queries



A #5 ranking had a CTR that was still above 5%, and CTRs didn't dip below 2% until around the 10th position. In this regard, bottom half of Page 1 CTRs for B2B Queries are comparable to B2C.

However, CTRs on Page 2 for B2B verticals were generally lower than B2C rankings at the same positions, with some positions in the 1% to 1.5% range, but several below 1% as well.

Conclusions:

Based on the 20 clients and 20,000 queries, which saw over 64 million Impressions and over 4 million clicks, IMN found that:

1. On average, a #1 ranking in the SERPs had a CTR in the low 20's% range. IMN found that less than half (~40%) of the #1 rankings saw a CTR above 30%.
2. A #2 ranking was usually about half of what a #1 ranking secured - in the 10% range.
3. CTRs continued to lower, albeit more slowly, to about the 1% to 2% range by the bottom of Page 1, but Page 2 CTRs were not that far removed from bottom of Page 1 CTRs.
4. 28% of All Queries did not see a Page 1 or Page 2 Click at all.
5. Branded queries saw higher CTRs by far than non-branded queries for the top half of Page 1, but 99% of the clicks went to the first 3 positions for Branded queries. Data size and reliability past Position 5 for Branded queries was limited in our data sets.
6. B2B sites tended to have higher CTRs on the top half of Page 1 compared to B2C sites, about equal CTRs on the bottom half of Page 1, and then slightly lower CTRs on Page 2 compared to B2C sites.