



Legal Marketers and Click Fraud: A ClickCease Report

Introduction

Law firm and legal services marketers are increasingly reliant on Pay Per Click Campaigns to connect them with new clients. Under this agreement, companies purchase Pay Per Click (PPC) ads through contracts with online advertising platforms, most notably Google, where businesses pay a certain amount of money for a particular number of clicks on PPC ads. Click fraud is the act of clicking on a pay per click advert with no intention of buying or using the product or service.

Who carries out click fraud?

It is usually done by competitors in a cut-throat sector, with the objective to divert or negatively impact the advertiser's budget, or in an automated manner by bots.

Methodology

In this study we reveal for the first time the extent of click fraud for SMEs, based on more than 1.8 billion clicks across small and medium sized online ad accounts, analyzed from May 2019 to May 2020. This encompasses spending by small businesses, across 38 business sectors advertising in 78 countries.

Spend on PPC Ads by legal marketers

In a study by the University of Baltimore¹, it is estimated that law firm and legal services marketers spend around \$1.4 billion on pay per click advertising globally, including Google and Bing, with US law firms and legal services alone spending \$551 million each year.

Click Fraud Rates among Legal Marketing Campaigns

Legal marketers have been hit by a rise in click fraud, with one in four clicks on their paid search ads proving bogus. We found that lawyers and law firms suffered a 25% rate of click fraud in May.

Indeed, lawyers face among the highest rates of click fraud across paid – with only plumbers (81%) and realtors (52%) seeing a larger global spike in click fraud rates.

Mobile Click Fraud Growing

Marketers have suffered a 62% rise in mobile-device based click fraud attacking their ad budgets, during COVID-19 and lawyers have been particularly hard hit.

In general, Android-based click fraud makes up the vast majority of click fraud attacks. However, most lawyers use iPhones (IOS devices) and this type of mobile click fraud disproportionately affects lawyers.

During May, there was a 56% increase in the use of IOS-based click fraud between April and May 2020. This correlates with what we have labelled “white collar click fraud” in particular lawyers and realtors seeking cut throat hacks to eliminate competition, with law firm click fraud rates rising by 30% during the period of COVID 19 lockdown, and realtors seeing a jump in invalid clicks on their online ads by 42%. Indeed with 80% of realtors reported to have an iPhone, and 75% of lawyers, IS-based click fraud has emerged during COVID-19 as a rising weapon of click fraud against competitors.

¹The Economic Cost of Invalid Clicks in Paid Search and Paid Social Campaigns
<https://www.cheq.ai/ppcfraudcosts>