

Chapter 20

Search Engine Marketing Strategies: Google Answer Box–Related Search Visibility Factors

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ABSTRACT

Ensuring search engine visibility is one of the key tasks of marketers nowadays. Besides regular organic results, other forms of rich content results appear on Google including the Google Answer Box. In this chapter, the author analyzes the factors that determine the chance of a website being excerpted in the Google Answer Box. Moreover, he uses a simulation to examine the most probable weights of three factors on the final rankings within the search engine results page. The created framework for constructing the assessment of factors can be used to develop similar models for different niches and keywords and utilized by organizations from various sectors. Adopting these findings by organizations and including them in their content and marketing strategy will have a positive impact on search visibility and thus translate to efficiency of marketing campaigns.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, the importance of search engine marketing (further as “SEM”) has steadily grown. Marketers are striving to get their brand to top positions on Google as the global leader in the market with search results to secure a significant traffic to their websites. Companies are investing into SEM and are incorporating search engine optimization (further as “SEO”) strategies to improve organic rankings. Despite the massive expansion of this technique over the past years, it has been found that only a few e-commerce companies invested in SEO systematically in 2013 (Kritzinger & Weideman, 2013). Improving rankings in the Search Engine Results Pages (further as “SERP”) enables companies to attract more visitors to their website, and working with the traffic appropriately can help improve other stats including average amount of time spent on the website or increase user engagement (Tomas

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& Li, 2015). Being visible on search engines helps to connect offline and online marketing activities and is crucial in today's multiscreen world. As Kates and Greenberg note, Google is changing the way people purchase and consume media and it can be expected that the fine line between online shopping and bricks-and-mortar shopping will blur even further, and eventually, will disappear completely. We can call it a digital paradigm (Kates & Greenberg, 2013).

In their search engine marketing strategies, companies need to balance their investments between SEO and pay per click (further as "PPC"). As the research of Berman and Katona indicates, low-quality websites have a reduced incentive to invest in SEO, giving an advantage to their high-quality counterparts (Berman & Katona, 2013). Within the organic results, Google has started offering users more types of search results. Displaying rich content results that contain not only title, text, and URL, but also image, video, categorized information or a longer extract from the website's content, are driven by Knowledge Graph. This technology will ensure that Google's results are more intelligent and are in line with users' expectations. With this technology, Google is able to answer more complicated questions that are being used as search queries, e.g. "How tall was..." or "How many cm is 1.25m". This added intelligence is based on creating relationships between diverse types of content. However, selecting content for Google Answer Box, which displays an information according to the type of search query, has required some manual work from Google's editors in the near past. As the algorithm evolves, Google is able to make this process more automated. In this chapter, the author aims at researching more details regarding the rules that are being applied by Google when selecting the proper content for its Google Answer Box appearing on the first Search Engine Results Page. The main objective of this study is to provide a framework for organizations to determine what factors play a major role when selecting a website to be extracted in a Google Answer Box (further as "GAB") and what creates the specific relevancy of a website regarding a search query of a "How to" type (which is the search query that most often comes with a Google Answer Box at the top of organic search results). This will be achieved by examining the factors that increase the chance for extraction into the GAB, the factors determining the SERP ranking generally, and by analysing the situation on the TOP10 websites for a specific search query from the point of view of content (visible editor and user generated) and website Authority, along with simulating the probable importance of these factors in the final SERP ranking.

BACKGROUND

Consumer behaviour has changed significantly over the past decade, with the internet being one of the catalysts of this change. Nowadays, people have much more information available online than ever before. In the "old days", they had to rely on the word of mouth, test magazines or their previous experience to select a brand or a product that will have the required level of quality and suit their preferences. Also, when search for other information that does not necessarily directly relate to goods' purchases, it needed a lot more effort to get to the results. Nowadays, with advanced algorithms of modern search engines, finding an answer to anything is lightning fast and typically requires less effort than before. Consumers can also rely on product reviews that are now integrated in various types of websites including search engines, local directories, social networks and specialised review sites. These, along with the company's own website(s), have a chance to be included in the search results when users search for a particular product, brand, review, or just a related information.

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