

Search Engine Optimisation Trends in 2015

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Abstract— Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) as the name suggests is optimising the webpages or contents of your website such that they are easily understood by search engines and also making the pages rank higher in unpaid or natural traffic. In simpler words, SEO is the process of getting your website rank higher on search engine results using various techniques called SEO techniques. SEO involves understanding what do people look for, how search engines work, actual queries, competitors ranking for the keyword among various other factors. One of the world's popular search engine is Google with around 68.75% market share as of 2014 and there are over 284 million domains registered as per Verisign. This makes SEO an important aspect of any online marketing campaign.

Index Terms— SEO, Search Engine Optimisation, SEO Techniques, SEO in 2015, Google SEO, Search Engine Optimisation in 2015, SEO Techniques in 2015

1 INTRODUCTION

Google has over 68% of market share and thus is the most focusses search engine in today's market. Many businesses including online and offline depend on Google as their primary income source and such businesses strive hard to get maximum exposure on it. One method is paid traffic which can be achieved by Google's Adwords which helps people to gain top positions by bidding for them. The downside of this method is that the ads are shown based on the bid made by the client. Once the client stops paying money or exhausts his daily budget, the ads are gone. Thus, paid traffic is mostly used by companies with deep pockets or ones with short term goals and therefore cannot be relied on by mom and pop shops as they can be over their budget or goal longevity.

2 TYPES OF SEO

Search Engine Optimisation can be subdivided into various forms but the most popular and widely accepted are into two sub-categories namely On-page SEO and Off-page SEO

2.1 On-page SEO

On-page SEO refers to various optimisation techniques used by the developer to make his website craweable and easily indexed by the search engines. This includes but not limited to techniques such as using meta tags, using h1,h2,h3 tags, using proper a href tags and attributes for image tags along with focus on producing quality content for user. Numerous Google's updates have focussed on curbing over optimisation and demoting sites made solely for the purpose of ranking in search engines..

2.2 Off-page SEO

Off-page SEO on the other hand refers to activities that are performed on other websites. This primarily includes link building using various techniques such as blog posting, guest posting, forum posting, social bookmarking, article submissions etc. Off-page SEO falls under grey area of search engine optimisation because according to Google, the linking should be done naturally by other sites to provide reference or support and making mass links just to game the systems falls under black hat technique and has been frowned upon by the

community.

3 SEO IN 2015

Google uses numerous factors to decide which page to rank where using its algorithm. These factors have never been revealed completely and thus remain a mystery for most people who are trying to get their websites online. Having said that, from time to time, Google does drop hints through its blog or via Matt Cutt's videos which may help in rankign websites better.

3.1 Use of SSL

It is very rare for Google to announce the signals that may help boost ranking but in August 2014, Google made an official statement that gave a positive impact to HTTPS as a ranking signal. This means that sites having secured connections may receive a benefit over sites without one. One of the possible reason for this could be Google's strong movement to make everything secure. Thinking from webmaster's prospect this could be a simple way to avoid spam. Spam websites are generally low cost websites and thousands or more in number. Adding an SSL is a huge cost for such owners and thus would prevent them from trying to spam. But this puts a negative impact on small site owners who could barely afford the web hosting and domain cost and now would be forced to shift to SSL if the whole internet shifts to it. Although, as per studies, the impact as of now is very less on rankings but as time passes, this factor is bound to get stronger and thus it is suggested to get an SSL if one could afford.

3.2 Effect of Page Load Speed

Google is trying to make search as a consumer centric product and thus annoying slow loading pages take a back seat while rankings are done. This is particularly due to the fact that a slower website leads to a degraded user experience and increases the bounce rate. Bounce rate is the number of people that opened a website and closed it immediately without interacting with the website. Google has put up a Page Speed Insight tool that helps to gather scores and also updates that can be made on the page for it to load faster. Page Load Speed

is increasingly becoming an important factor in optimisation because Google wants websites to be made for user and not for its fast crawling search engines.

3.3 Mobile Friendly Websites

As the trend is in 2015, there is a boom in usage of mobile devices and tablets against traditional laptops and computers and thus it is imperative to have a mobile website. Having said that, even Google in one of its blogposts mentioned that not having a mobile website will hurt rankings on searches made on mobile. With growing number of portable devices, the number of searches will go up and if the site is not mobile friendly, one may be looking at losing numerous leads every day. Responsive and fast loading mobile websites will form a major chunk of optimisation in 2015.

3.4 Social Signals

As the use of Facebook, Twitter and other social networking websites is increasing, it is not uncommon for posts to go viral on internet through these sites. These sites offer user the content they look at and they like and thus including them for ranking factors is necessary for Google. In my test, I was able to rank a website for a medium difficult keyword with nothing but proper on-page optimisation and social signals i.e. Facebook likes and shares, Google +1s, Twitter tweets and Pinterest Pins. Although social signals may not be the only factor that will help one rank for difficult keywords, but it is increasingly getting importance with Google. Google also recently had a strategic agreement with Twitter and may show up tweets in its searches after next update

3.5 Fresh, New and Useful Content

One cannot deny the fact that content is the king. Any and every website's main ranking factor is how well it helps its user. Google as a search engine wants to help its users get what they want and if the website offers the users exactly what they want then its a win-win situation for everyone. Fresh and new content has always been an important factor in eyes of Google. To cross check this fact, I tried multiple tests and found that for same keywords (say macbook air), the newer and fresher content was ranked way above than old contents. This is particularly important for products or pages that are news item and thus show up in Google News as well.

4 CONCLUSION

The following observations were made on a sample of 10 websites in a popular niche.

1. For sites with similar backlink profile and PageRank, the site with SSL (beginning with https) was ranked slightly better than http version
2. Sites with better page load speed had lower bounce rates. This means better conversion for the owner.
3. Sites which did not have a mobile website did not show up for some keywords on mobile version of Google search

4. Sites that had an active Facebook and Twitter page were crawled more by Google bots (checked via cached date)
5. Along with websites, Facebook pages and status of pages were crawled and shown in search results
6. Sites with more and fresher content were ranked higher than those with copied or stale contents.

To sum up, Search Engine Optimisation in 2015 will be more focussed on user experience and security rather than anything else. No one knows all 200 factors that Google uses to rank a website and with tight lipped announcements made by them, it will still be a while till someone figured that out. But some giveaways by Google are to be picked up and providing user with what they want will benefit everyone – the website, the user and the search engine.

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