

1 Introduction

The importance of the World Wide Web for businesses and consumers has increased. Visibility of the website on the internet has become very important for delivering information to potential customers. Millions of internet users around the world search for relevant information on goods and services every day. This results in half of the internet traffic going through search engines. To sort through billions of documents and web pages, the search engine gives an easy and popular interface between publisher and customer (Enge, Spencer, Stricchiola, Mazzanti, Matteuzzi and Bisai, 2019). Millions of users daily rely on search engines to conduct their daily searches. Google held 91.9% of the market share on January 2022. Bing had a 2.88%, and Yahoo! had 1.51%. YANDEX follows it at 1.27% and Baidu at 1.16%. Google performs over 8.5 billion searches every day. That figure is consistently increasing, with 70% of clicks going to the top 5 results on search engine result pages. An in-store sale is generated by 78% of local smartphone searches. Almost half of the product searches begins on Google. The appropriate SEO approach can enhance sales and conversion rates (Mohsin, 2023).

Obtaining free, high-quality traffic, highly qualified traffic is one of the main roles and objectives of a successful digital marketing strategy. The process of obtaining free traffic is not easy. An effective marketing programme will benefit from free traffic in many ways, especially if paid or media strategies are implemented. Organic optimization through SEO can increase traffic and sales conversions. Various search engines are available today where users can find information about different products and services and make quick decisions. The secret to being found by the right people at the right time is through search engines (Papagiannis, 2020). The use of effective SEO techniques can enable small businesses to appear before larger companies on the search result page. Due to this, search engine optimization (SEO) now plays a more important role in increasing a website's ranking (Tomasi & Li, 2015).

The objective of the research is to focus on SEO and how businesses can improve their search positions through SEO. In the study, a literature review is

conducted on marketing, the consumer decision-making process, and digital marketing. Furthermore, the research takes a deep dive into search engine marketing (SEM), search engine advertisement (SEA), and how to use SEO in practice, its value for businesses, how to measure and track SEO, and the most important SEO key performance indicators (KPIs). Based on the research applying the techniques on the website and interviewing SEO masters the author tried to understand how SEO can be improved to gain visibility.

2 Literature Review

To understand the importance of SEO it is first important to understand the basic theories of marketing and how SEO is applied by marketing professionals.

2.1 Marketing

Marketing is the process of providing products, services, and experiences to customers to meet their needs, wants and, demands in exchange for financial benefits and building relationships. Therefore, marketing today is not just about selling products but also about satisfying the needs of customers. All companies and organizations must integrate marketing into their growth strategies today. Businesses today rely heavily on modern marketing technology (Drummond and Ensor, 2012).

The marketing process is broken down into five steps. Companies strive to comprehend the consumer and establish a solid customer relationship in the first four steps. They acquire value from the consumer in the form of profit, sales, and long-term client equity at the last stage.

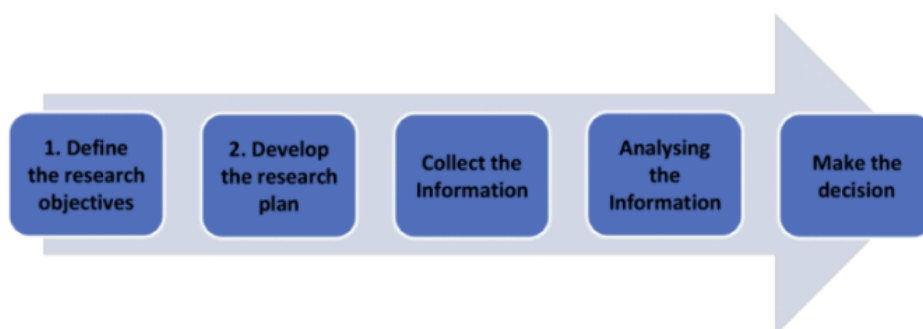


Figure 1 : 5 Steps of Marketing Process (Marketing10, 2020)

Marketing mix refers to the combination of techniques, tools, and activities a marketer uses to reach their target audience at the right time, place, and price. The marketing mix consists of 4ps that is Product, Place, Price, and Promotion.



Figure 2: Marketing mix- 4P's (Indiafreenotes, 2020)

A product represents the goods and services that a company provides to its customers in the marketplace. A product or service's price refers to the amount clients or customers will have to pay. The place is where the product or service can be accessed and purchased. Promotion is basically when a company uses messages and media to persuade its potential customers to buy a product. A successful marketing programme integrates marketing mix elements to deliver value to consumers while engaging them and achieving the company's marketing objectives (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021).

2.2 Customer decision making process

Every day, consumers make a variety of purchasing decisions, and marketers concentrate their efforts on these choices. Most big businesses conduct extensive research into consumer purchasing patterns in order to provide answers to queries regarding what consumers buy, where they buy it, how much they spend, when they buy it, and why. Marketers can research actual consumer purchases to learn what, where, and how much consumers spend. However, it might be challenging to understand the motivations underlying consumers' purchasing decisions because the solutions are frequently buried deep inside the minds of the buyers. Consumers frequently are unaware of the specific factors affecting their purchases. Consumer characteristics include

cultural, social, personal, and psychological aspects, as well as their decision-making process, influence their behaviour. The decision-making process starts with the identification of a need, followed by a search for information and an alternative assessment to the purchasing decision (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017).



Figure 3: The five step decision making process (Marek Sotak 2016)

Over time, consumer behavior trends also evolve. People want things to do in today's fast-paced world that include all their senses as well as a variety of fresh touchpoints and completely unique experiences. People are rejecting the idea of passively on-looking and believe that it is no longer sufficient to fully immerse an observer in an experience. They now want to take an active role.

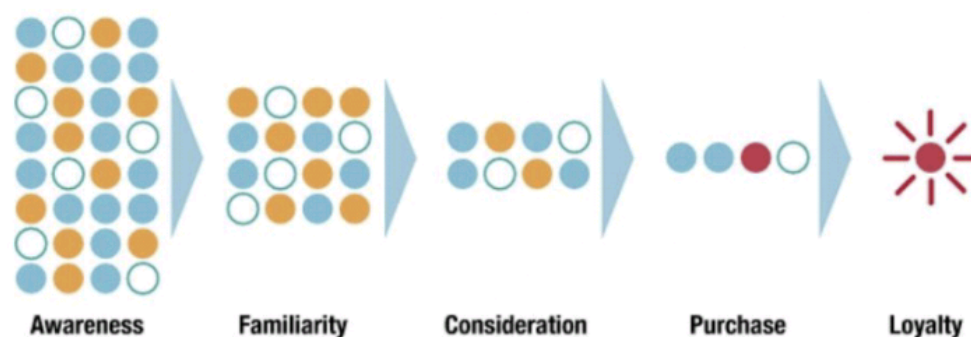


Figure 4: The consumer decision journey (Court, Elzinga, Mulder and Vetvik, 2009)

Consumers begin with a few prospective brands in mind (left side of the funnel), then marketing prompts them to narrow that selection as they proceed through the funnel, arriving at the end with the one brand they have decided to buy (right end of the funnel). Today, however, the concept of the funnel fails to capture all the touch points and important purchasing considerations brought on by the

expansion of product options and digital channels, as well as the development of a more sophisticated consumer.

Customers have also experienced super-personalization. With new technology, it is possible to read customers and deliver what they want, sometimes without even asking them. Modern technology is ingrained in people's daily lives and being online continually has become the norm. As a result, people's purchasing habits are changing, and marketers must take this into account (Stankevich, 2017).

2.3 Digital Marketing

Marketing efforts involving electronic devices, or the internet are considered digital marketing. Digital channels are used by businesses to reach out to customers through search engines, social media, email, and web pages. Online marketing, internet marketing, and web marketing are also terms that can be used to describe this. Using digital tactics and channels to reach customers online, where they usually spend most of their time, is digital marketing (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). A wide variety of tactics fall under the umbrella of "digital marketing," ranging from a website to a business's online branding assets like email marketing and online brochures (Desai, 2019). Digital marketing also helps to track data to achieve a positive Return on Investment (ROI). You can improve your marketing plan by determining which campaigns and channels are most effective. For example, you can find out how many people clicked on a digital ad. You can find out which types of digital marketing produce the best results, as well as whether your audience prefers smartphones over desktops. Your campaigns can be adjusted in real-time to improve results with digital marketing. There are countless tools available to track and measure user behavior, engagement, and conversions (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).

2.4 Evolution of Digital marketing

In 1990, the phrase "digital marketing" was first coined and utilized. The first clickable web commercial banner then went live in 1993. HotWired bought a few banner ads at that time for promotion and advertising. In 1994, new technologies were created and introduced to the market with a new purpose (the first online business transaction took place at this time). More search engines and tools, including HotBot, LookSmart, and Alexa, were introduced in 1996. Launched in 1997, Sixdegrees.com was the first social media platform. The launch of Google in 1998 made it the "golden year" for digital marketing. Microsoft debuted MSN in the same year as Yahoo debuted Yahoo web search. From 2001 to 2010, \$10 billion in sales were generated with the launches of LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, Google Buzz, and Amazon. The iPhone series was also introduced. Budgets for social media have increased by 64% since 2010, Facebook has taken over WhatsApp, mobile internet users have surpassed PCs, and Snapchat has introduced the explore feature. This is a summary of the short evolution of digital marketing (Ryan, 2017). Email marketing, social media marketing, content marketing, data-driven marketing, search engine marketing (SEM), and search engine optimization (SEO) are some of the modern digital marketing strategies that are becoming more and more prominent (Desai, 2019). With digital marketing, companies can reach, inform, engage, and offer products and services to customers digitally. Thus, digital marketing will continue to lead the technological revolution for many years to come. In order for businesses to implement their digital marketing plan, SEO has been one of the key tools. (Kim, 2021)

2.5 Basics of Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

2.5.1 Search

The use of search has become extremely popular today, and society is increasingly dependent on it. As consumers identify a need or a problem their decision-making process begins with searching the information. People can get whatever information they want anywhere anytime in a blink of an eye on their smart devices, for which in earlier days they needed to visit the library or consult some professional in a related field. Today there are many search engines where we can get millions of pages of relevant information about what we are looking for (Kritzinger and Weideman, 2013.). Modern search technology has made it easier for people to shop online, but it has also made it more challenging for businesses to rank high in search results. Google processes roughly 63,000 searches per second, according to the website "licreativetechologies.com". As a result, Worldwide, 5.6 billion searches are conducted per day, and approximately 2 trillion searches occur per year. Approximately three to four searches are conducted by the average person per day. The user can visit a website by typing an address in the address bar or clicking on a bookmark. In contrast, the search box is used by users to find specific information. Today, there is a significant demand for searches due to the ease of accessing information that used to require a trip to the library 20 years ago (Enge et al., 2015). Today's people search for solutions to problems, solutions to complete tasks, and ways to "do" things. They might be searching to make a purchase, discover the newest John Mayer songs, look at dog pictures, or book a flight (VIP CONTRIBUTOR Ryan Jones February 28, 2021). Therefore, search traffic is more valuable to marketers.

2.5.2 Search engine

A search engine is a software program or service that enables users to search and retrieve information from the World Wide Web or a specific database by

using keywords or phrases. Search engines use web crawlers or spiders to index web pages and other online content, creating a searchable index of the information available on the internet. When a user enters a search query into a search engine, the engine returns a list of relevant web pages or documents that match the query. The most popular search engines include Google, Bing, Yahoo!, and Baidu, among others. (Kritzing & Weideman, 2013).

2.5.3 Search engine visibility

Search engine visibility refers to being visible on search engine result page (SERP). The Google SERP is constantly changing, so it is important to keep an eye on it. A SERP page generally consists of two hyperlinks. One is an organic list that contains non-advertising links and the other is a sponsored list (Kent, 2020).

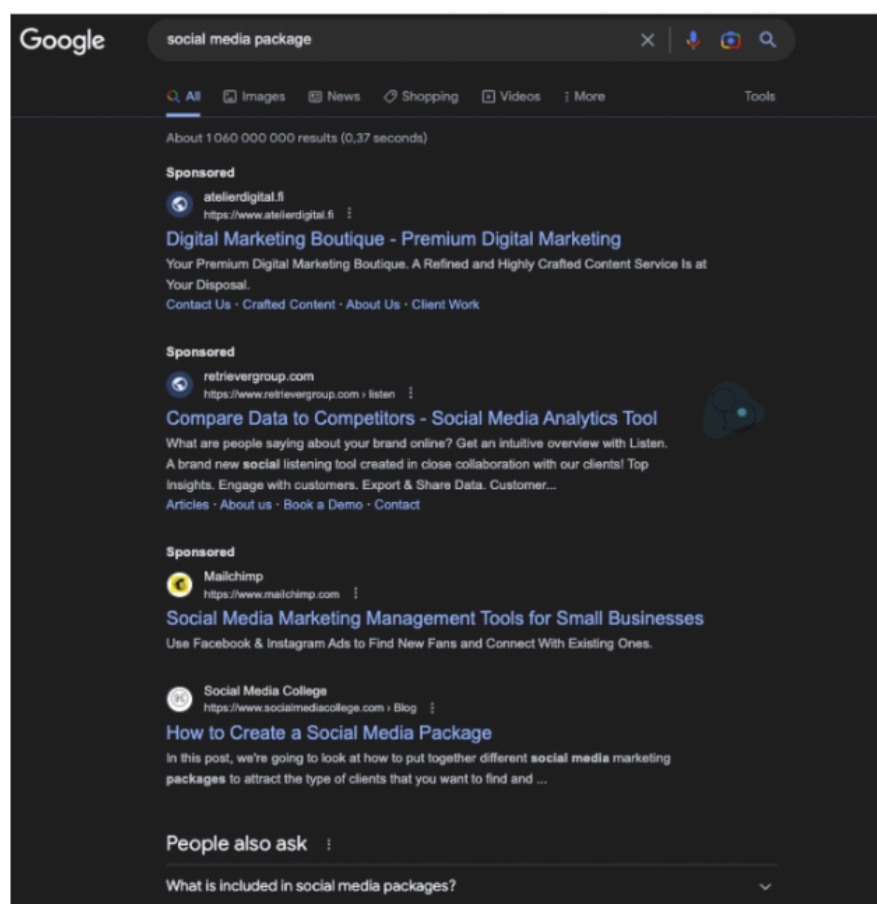


Figure 5: Search engine result page

Figure 5 shows the paid ads first which are listed under Sponsored, followed by organic results for social media package.

2.5.4 Search engine marketing

Search engine marketing (SEM) has become one of the most successful strategies for increasing the visibility of a company's website. The purpose of SEM is to improve a website's visibility in SERPs using SEO and SEA (Search engine advertisement) practices. The return on investment (ROI) offered by SEM is higher than that offered by traditional internet marketing. Internet marketers have a flexible payment rate when it comes to search engine marketing strategies like "cost per click" and "pay per click". Payment is based on the number of clicks achieved on paid advertisements (Sponsor links), which determines the number of ads that are clicked (Sathitwitayakul & Prasongsukarn, 2011).

2.5.5 Search Engine Advertising (SEA)

A search engine today is an important tool for finding information and making decisions. High rankings on SERPs are crucial for businesses to drive traffic to their websites and influence web users' actions. It is very challenging for businesses to attain a high ranking on a SERP because there are thousands of websites vying for the same position. One approach to addressing this issue is search engine advertising (SEA). As a result of the fierce competition for top search engine rankings, SEA was developed to allow advertisers to directly purchase placement on the first page of search engines. (Jafarzadeh, Aurum, Dambra & Ghapanchi, 2015).

Marketers can increase their website's visibility in search engine results pages by using SEM strategies such as contextual advertising, placement, and paid inclusion. A pay-per-click advertising campaign pays search engines only when a sponsored link is clicked, such as Google AdWords. Bidding allows advertisers to better target keywords relevant to their target audience when

placing these types of ads. Essentially, cost per click (CPC) is what advertisers and other Internet publishers pay search engines each time a user clicks on a sponsored link to visit their website (Sathitwitayakul & Prasongsukarn, 2011).

2.5.6 Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

An approach for increasing traffic through natural search engine rankings is search engine optimization (SEO). By "organic," it is implied utilizing unpaid, non-click-based techniques to increase website visibility. Numerous strategies can be used to execute SEO, such as the usage of relevant keywords, high-quality material, and multimedia content that has been optimized. It was once common practice for people to gain website visibility by implementing underhanded methods (black-hat SEO). The most popular tools for searching the web are search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo!. It is essential to boost your search engine presence utilizing ethical strategies because these search engines are getting progressively smarter (Shenoy & Prabhu, 2016).

SEO is an investment that yields long-term benefits rather than being a cost. The top of the results list takes weeks or even months to attain, so marketers cannot expect a miracle to happen overnight. Marketers must pay attention to many skills in SEO (search engine optimization) since they are used by search engine managers as offenses and defenses. Users who want to find something they want would be less likely to find it if everyone knew how to increase access to high rankings. This would mean a large amount of spam would result. In that sense, search engine managers must update their technology regularly, and many rules are designed to penalize those who deceive search engines intentionally (Shenoy & Prabhu, 2016).

SEO skills are developed methods that can be used in search engines. Therefore, to get a good ranking for a website, one should pay attention to SEO. The other side of this coin is that, to keep ranking high, one must always pay attention to search engines. This is because their ranking might suffer if they lose some updates. Today an increasing amount of time and resources is

being devoted to improving the rankings of websites on Google and other search engines (Enge et al., 2015).

2.6 Search engine visibility

This chapter answers the questions: Why does search engine visibility matter? How do search engine rank websites? And what are the benefits of SEO?

2.6.1 Why does search engine visibility matter?

One of the most common tools used by people to find information online is a search engine. Most visitors to websites are now coming from search engines instead of direct links. Because of this, search engine exposure is becoming more and more crucial (Enge et al., 2019). There are two ways in which customers can find a business website: through paid search results or organic search results (Kritzing and Weideman, 2013). The benefit of improving search engine visibility has a positive impact on social activism, awareness of the brand, and sales. Regardless of the objective, businesses aim to provide potential customers with relevant details information (Enge et al., 2019). Marketers have flexible payment rates for SEA strategies, including pay per click and cost per click, since the number of clicks on the advertisement determines payment. On the other hand, SEO's long-term search engine visibility plan gives businesses the ability to raise the position of their website in organic search result. Search engine visibility encourages a desire to purchase or a sense of trust in a brand, which may eventually result in a purchase (HubSpot, 2017). Numerous companies believe that providing users with a superior branding experience is valuable, even if they do not click on the website link on the search engine results page (SERP). This is because the user may assume that a business is exceptional or trustworthy if it appears at the top of major search engines like Google, thereby benefiting the company. This effect may be particularly advantageous for results that are ranked at the top of the list. There is a rapid growth in those companies who are spending on search engine visibility compared to other online advertising (Ward, 2017). Digital businesses frequently rely on their listings in SERPs to be successful.

These SERPs are more than just a source of information; they frequently increase brand strength and brand recognition. Sadly, modifications to the search algorithms frequently have an impact on SERPs. Some firms face immediate negative effects as a result of these modifications, while others see stable traffic or even gain from them (Klatt, 2013).

2.6.2 How do search engines rank websites?

Search engines typically operate using three components: crawling, indexing, and ranking. Crawling is a computer code which is called a spider that moves around the internet looking for a new content. As they discover something new, the spiders "Read" it as they move from one link to the next in search of newly additional material. indexing can be defined as the act of search engine spiders storing newly discovered data for later use by users in a database. The last and most crucial component of search engines' operation is ranking. This stage deals with how search engines decide which results are relevant and how they present them to the user. No one has a complete understanding of how search engines choose whether result should appear first or not when a specific keyword is searched, unless you work for a company like Google or Bing (Wilson, 2017).

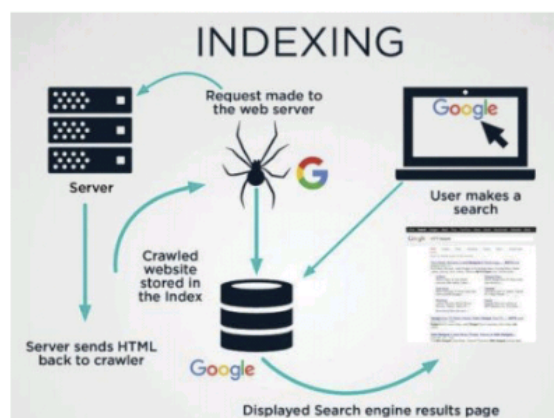


Figure 6: Indexing (Greyling, 2022)

Modern search engines send spiders or robots to crawl over websites that are registered with them in order to construct an index of words on those pages.