6MMCS002W
Digital Marketing, Social Media & Web Analytics

WEEK 3 –SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION TECHNIQUES PART A

DR VASSILIKI BOUKI

boukiv@wmin.ac.uk

Thanks to M. Margeti for some information on the writing styles.

Content of today's lecture SEO – part A

➢ Intro to SEO; Organic and paid results of a search engine

➢ On-site and off-site SEO techniques

➢ SEO techniques:

- 1. Keywords and site content [on-site SEO]
- 2. Site organization and technical SEO [on-site SEO]
- 3. Backlinks (external links) [off-site SEO]

➢ 1. Keywords and site content – in details

- Process
  - Step 1 (S1): understand keywords and keywords' elements / keyword structure
  - Step 2 (S2): Brainstorm
  - Step 3 (S3): Evaluate your keywords
  - Step 4 (S4): Categorize keywords.
  - Step 5 (S5): Develop your content
- Tools that can help to decide and evaluate keywords
- Problems with the use of 'keywords' – 'keyword density' – 'PANDA algorithm

What is SEO?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): 'Once highly ***specialized task*** relegated to the backroom of a website development team is now a ***mainstream marketing activity***'.
(from 'The Art of SEO')

SEO = how to let search engines (and audience) know about your website

SEO Goals:

➢ Visibility of the site

➢ Traffic of the site

➢ Return Of Investment (ROI) – SEO works hand-in-hand with Analytics

HOW could your site appear in search results?

Search results: Organic vs Paid

There are two kinds of results you get from a search engine:
'**Organic**' and '**Paid**' results

'**Organic**' results: results produced 'directly' by a search engine – the web page listings that are produced by a search engine and most closely match user's query.

'**Paid'** results → advertisements

Why should you want to *rank first* in 'organic' results (but not necessarily in 'paid' results)?

Ranking first…

Eye-tracking results from the book 'The Art of SEO' (p.15)
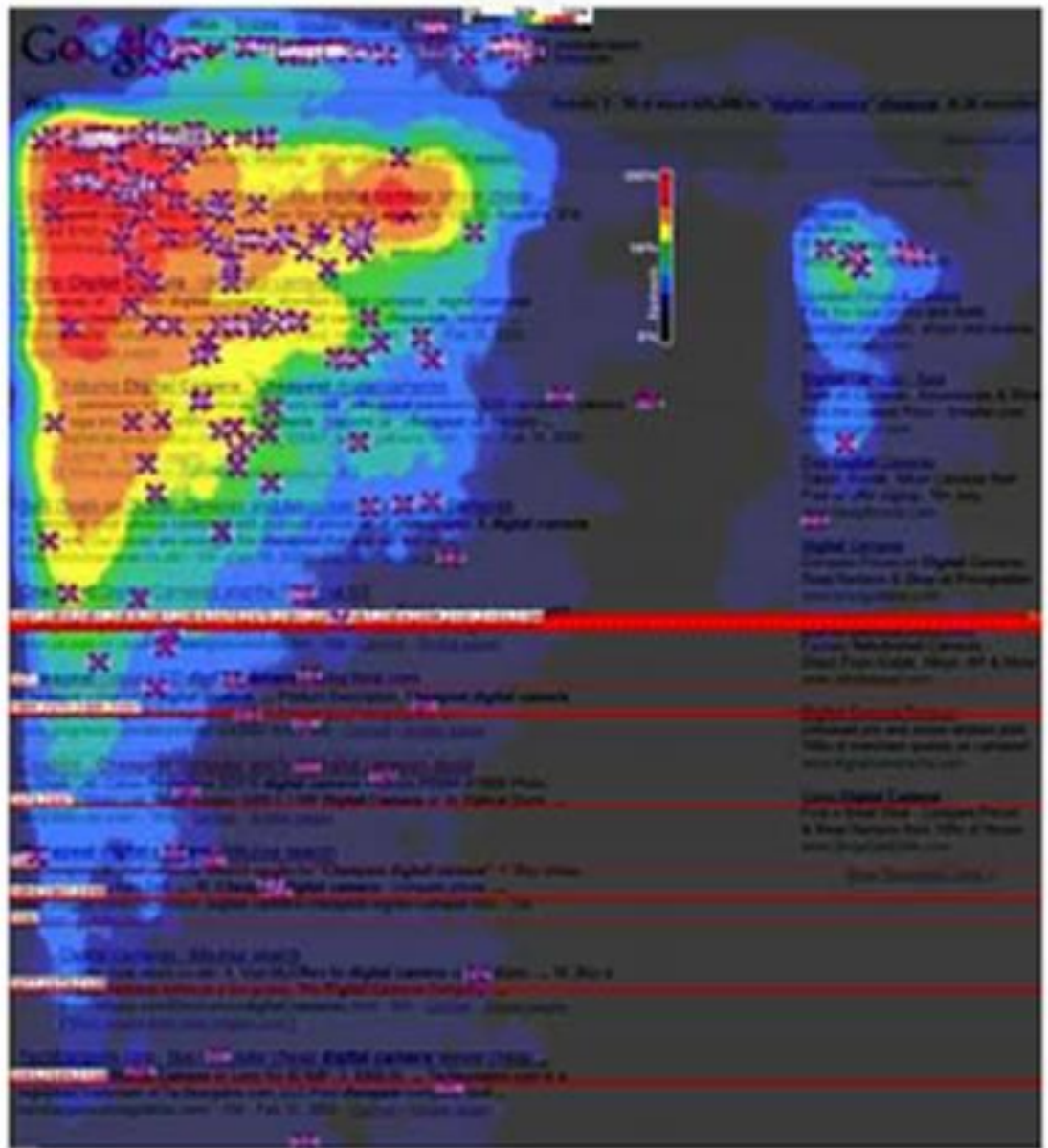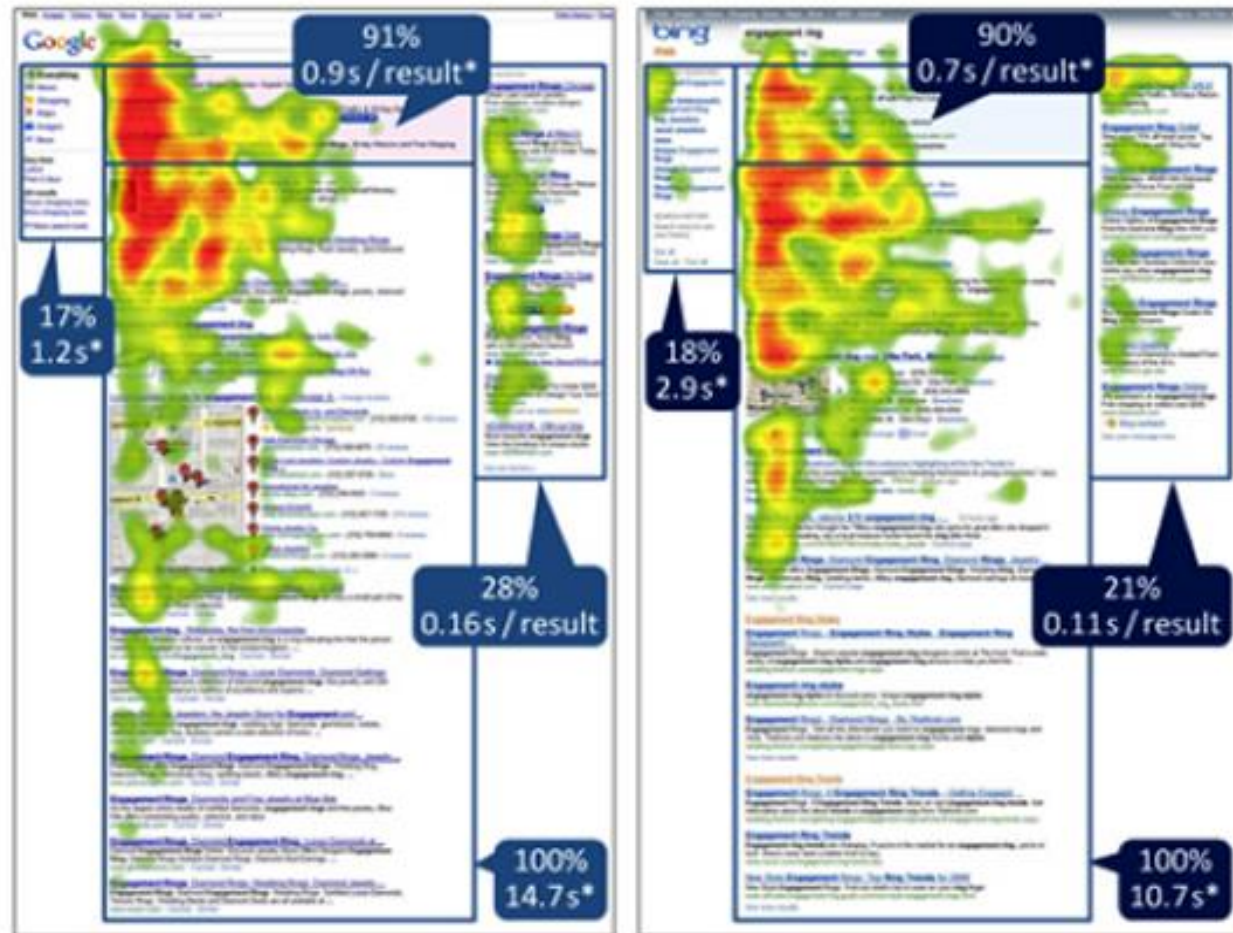

FIGURE 1-8. Enquiro eye-tracking results

Ranking first...

Eye-tracking results from the book 'The Art of SEO' (p.16)

'Ranking first' – how could we achieve it?

Heatmaps showing the aggregate gaze time of all 24 participants on Google (left) and Bing (right) for one of the transactional tasks. The red color indicates areas that received the most total gaze time (4.5 seconds and above). Each callout includes the percentage of participants who looked at the area and the time (in seconds) they spent looking there. The numerical data are an average across all four tasks. Asterisks indicate values that were significantly different between Google and Bing at alpha = .1.

FIGURE 1-10. User Centric eye-tracking results

Let's look back...

With the enormous expansion of the web the last 20 years SEO evolved from a relatively basic activity to a real 'art'!

Google started in 1998 (4th of September!) [Apparently, SEO is not related with Google only, but Google is one of the key players].

Thousand of updates since then.

Those days things were relatively easy.

'Primitive' methods used for SEO

2000-2010: Most common SEO techniques

➢ Keywords

  ➢ Keyword density (how often a keyword appears in a page)

➢ Links

➢ Meta – tags (descriptors added at the HEAD of HTML pages)

➢ Doorway Pages (bad…)

2011 till today

2011: Panda (3 updates February, April and September – keywords, content)

❑ Also in 2011; personalized results; how does your site rank? How do you know?

2012: Penguin (April 2013 – spam links. Sites were degraded / devaluated)

2013: Penguin 2.0 (May 2013 – authorship, social media)

2013-2015: Hummingbird (Sept. 2013… Rewriting of the main code)

SEO

Did 'primitive' techniques disappear?

No…the question is **how** we implement those techniques.

In the past the main question was about of 'quantity' (e.g. quantity of links; quantity of content etc) – now it is more about quality.

SEO: Introductory remarks

DEVELOPER → creates a site for the 'Majestic hotel in London'

USER → is looking for 'hotels in London'

The search engine must 'connect' those two

Developer and user are met through language.

How will the search engine relate what the user types with the content of a web site?

SEO: Introductory remarks

- A search engine will make the **semantic and thematic connection** between **the keyword** a user types and the content of the website. Search engine ranks the relevance of your website's content to the user's keywords by evaluating numerous factors which depend mainly on:
  - How your content is written (its quality)
  - How your content is organized and implemented
  - How/What other websites around the Internet are linked to you (backlinks)
  - How 'local' is your business to user's keywords

SEO: Introductory remarks

- A search engine will consider these factors in long and complex algorithms.

  - These algorithms are not public, although there are some information about them (e.g. their name; how often they update or refresh).

  - Why not? The main reasons:
    - Business interests (other search engines)
    - So, they are not 'abused' (more about 'abuse', next week)

SEO techniques

Today we often talk about 'on-site' and 'off-site' SEO

'On-site' (please complete the definition …)

'Off-site' (please complete the definition …)

More information, practical advice:

https://www.square2marketing.com/blog/onsite-vs-offsite-search-engine-optimization-whats-the-right-mix

SEO techniques

We could identify three major areas / techniques related to SEO:

➢ 1. Keywords and site content [on-site SEO]

➢ 2. Site organization and technical SEO (domain name; URLs, root domains & sub domains; structure; navigation; <u>internal linking</u>; meta tags – snippets; sitemaps.xml and robots.txt) [on-site SEO]

➢ 3. Backlinks (external links) [off-site SEO]

Optimization via social media, would be considered under the 'backlinks' technique

SEO: Keywords and Content

Let's talk about 'keywords'… What is a keyword?

◦ Several definitions – depend on the point of view

❖Keyword (from user's point of view): It is any word or short phrase that will be used to search for a topic (what the user types in search engine's window).

❖ Keyword (developer's point of view): It is any word or short phrase you will use to optimise your site; a word or a phrase you would like to appear for, in search results

❖Keyword (general definition): It is any word or short phrase that describes a website topic or a page.

SEO: Keywords and Content

The main question for the developer/SEO expert is to identify the best keywords that will make the site visible to users *who are looking for this site* and then build the content of the site around those keywords

TASK: Develop a list of keywords *relevant* to your site.

Keyword research is about researching and choosing specific keywords or key phrases for your website.

Ask yourself: 'What keywords would I like my site to rank for'?

  NOTE: each page could have different keywords

SEO: Keywords and Content

You try to understand:
- What terms people type in search engines
- How frequently they do it
- How relevant to your business objectives these terms are
- How competitive those terms will be to try to rank for

Process

Step 1 (S1): Make sure you understand keywords and keywords' elements / structure

Step 2 (S2): Brainstorm

Step 3 (S3): Evaluate your keywords by finding 'search volume' and 'competence'

Step 4 (S4): Categorize keywords.

Step 5 (S5): Develop your content around your keywords – develop your own style

SEO: Keywords and Content – s1: understand keywords

- Understanding keywords… Let's consider an example
- You just started your intenet business that is an online bookstore. Books can be read online. You offer some free books in order to attract customers. You also specialise in history books.
- Given the above description, what are the possible keywords?
    - Book
    - Online
    - Free
    - History

SEO: Keywords and Content – s1: understand keywords

- The first keyword 'book' is a term that is typed quite frequently – so someone might think that this is a good keyword.

- On the other hand we should consider **the relevance** of the keyword to our website and our business strategy..

- We **only** sell online books. If our keyword is 'book' then people who are looking to buy 'physical' books we'll be redirected to our site.

- Also we specialise in History books. If our keyword is 'book' then people who want to buy all kind of books (eg scientific books) will be redirected to our site.

- Finally, the keyword 'book' does not make our offer for 'free books' visible.

SEO: Keywords and Content – s1: understand keywords

- Furthermore, there are several other websites (some huge ones, like 'Amazon') that will try to optimize with (rank for) the keyword 'book'.

- As a result, 'book' is a very competitive keyword.

- Ideally, we should target a keyword/key-phrase, that is

  - Relevant
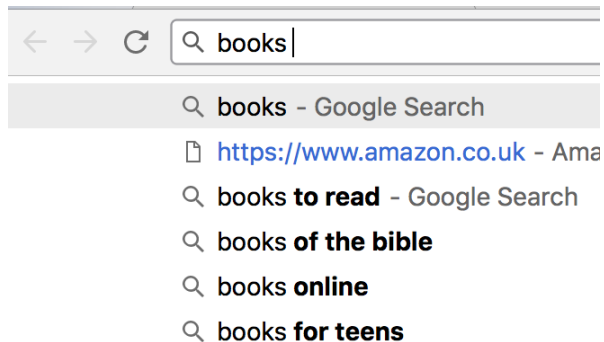 - Frequently used
  - NOT competitive

Let's see what we get if we try a search with:

  ◦ Book
  ◦ Book online
  ◦ Book online free
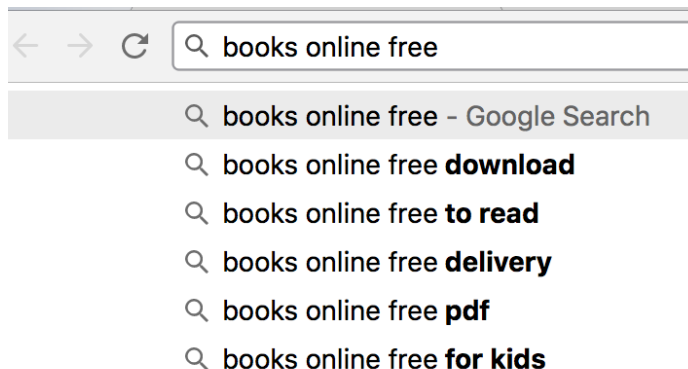 ◦ Book online free history
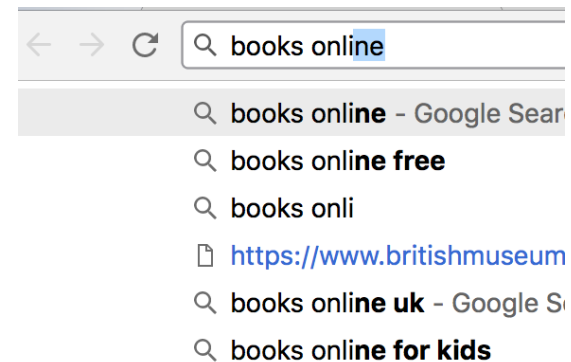
SEO: Keywords and Content – s1: understand keywords

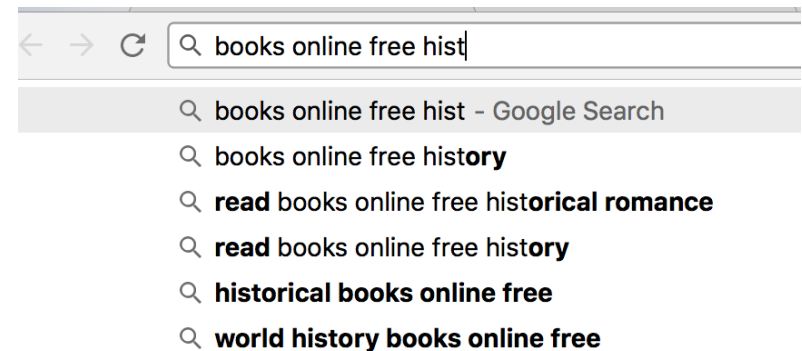Book

Book online

Book online free

Book online free history

SEO: Keywords and Content – s1: understand keywords

- Apparently as you start typing your query in a search engine, the engine tries to make the keyword/phrase/query more **specific**.

- Keyword elements (structure): **head | modifier | tail**

- **Head**: The focal point of the user's query and what the rest of the keyword relates to (e.g., Book)

- **Modifier**: a single word that can change the type of search (e.g., book online)

- **Tail**: a word that clarifies or adds further detail to the head term (e.g., history)

SEO: Keywords and Content – s1: understand keywords

- General or specific keywords?

- How long should a keyword be?

- Relation between keywords and conversion

HIGH

Short Tail - General Keywords
"wordpress themes"

SEARCH VOLUME

Middle Tail - More Specific Keywords
"wordpress themes for blog"

Long Tail - Very Specific Keywords
"free responsive wordpress themes for blog"

LOW **CONVERSION RATE** **HIGH**
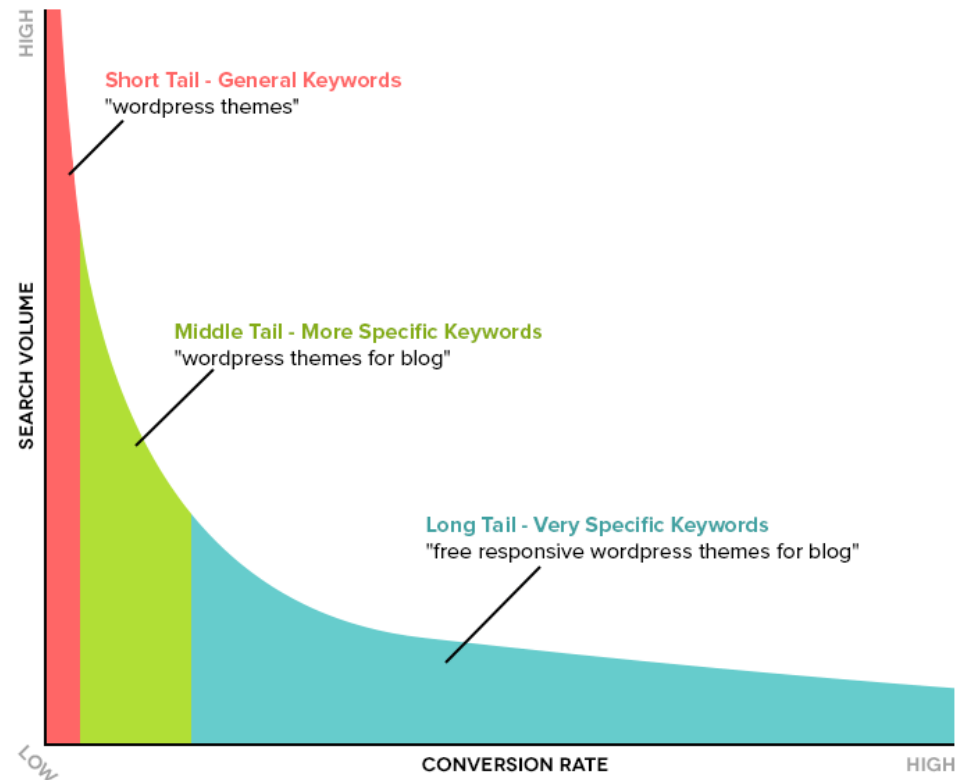
Source: SEO Pressor

SEO: Keywords and Content – s2: Brainstorm

Brainstorm – create a list with potential keywords
Think what services or products you provide and then what kind of **keywords** and **phrases** a user would use.

Ask yourself the following three questions:

1) Is the keyword relevant to your website's content?
2) Will users find what they are looking for on your website when they search using these keywords?
3) Will the users be satisfied with what they find?

Do not forget: the way you use to explain your product may not be the way a user uses to find this product.

◦ Example:
  ◦ You: "high value contents insurance"
  ◦ User: "cheap home insurance"

SEO: Keywords and Content – s3: Evaluate

There are several things you can do, to evaluate your keywords.

What do you want to evaluate:

a) Keywords lead to the 'correct' / expected results

b) How frequently they are used

c) How competitive they are

SEO: Keywords and Content – s3: Evaluate

a)

A very simple action you could take in order to find out if your keywords lead to 'correct' results, is to use them in a search engine.

What kind of results do they produce?

Are these quality sites?

b) Use online tools to find out how frequently these keywords are used/searched.

keyword volume or search volume: how many people are querying these terms on Google, Yahoo and Bing. Find out *how much traffic* the keywords you though about get.

c) Consider how **competitive** they are. Do not forget if a keyword is very popular is also very competitive

You should try to **balance** 'volume' with 'competitiveness'

Tools you can use for (b) and (c) are given in this presentation and tutorials but you can also do your own search.

SEO: Keywords and Content – s4: Categorise

'Categorize keywords' is the process of grouping keywords into topics or themes

By categorizing keywords, you add meaning and organization to the process of keyword research. It can also lead to something actionable, such as creating popular links on homepages or creating popular pages.

Following our previous example: you have a website that sells books specialized in History. You want to find out which products according to publishing house or historical period should be displayed on the home page according to the search volume. So:

You categorize the 'history books' keyword according to:

➢ Publishing House (e.g. 'Penguin', 'Oxford University Press', 'Cambridge University Press')

➢ Historical Period (e.g. ancient times, medieval period; first and second world par; golf war)

SEO: Keywords and Content – s4: Categorise

You may form categories such as:

◦ Books World War I (WWI)

◦ Books WWII

◦ Books WWII Oxford University Press

◦ Books Ancient Times

◦ Books Ancient Times Penguin

◦ etc..

When checking the search volume, it may be that 'Books Ancient Times' have the highest search volume so you may create a shortcut on home page.

SEO: Keywords and Content – s5: Develop your content

CONTENT – it is very important to have quality content in your site.

In order to develop quality content you must know your audience.

- Research your target audience and what they want and need
- Research what they are discussing and with whom
- Define what you want them to do when they visit your website

SEO: Keywords and Content – s5: Develop your content

Content

- Be original and bring something exciting, creative, engaging, or humorous, to create content that people will share.

- Combine content types (e.g., text with images, animation, and audio). You have plenty of them!

- But, design and implement all content types **well**!

SEO: Keywords and Content – useful tools

There are several tools to help you with:

- Brainstorming - Getting ideas about what relevant keywords to use

- Evaluating - Getting information about the search volume of keywords (what users type most frequently) and the competition (the keywords that the competition uses)

Apart from the tools we suggest here, you can do your own research.

SEO: Keywords and Content – useful tools

Google Keyword Planner tool:

It shows the competition and the search volume for a keyword and other related keywords

Ideally we want:

◦ low competition (keyword not so used by other companies)

◦ high search volume (keyword to be typed in frequently)

◦ But, relevance is the most important attribute: so it is a way to find a group of relevant long-tail keywords.

You need to have a google account

SEO: Keywords and Content – useful tools

Google Trends

Google Trends shows:

- ◦ the popularity of a keyword over time
- ◦ events which may have triggered spikes in popularity
- ◦ regional popularity
- ◦ other related keywords which people search most often

Access:

https://trends.google.com/trends/

SEO: Keywords and Content – useful tools

'Keywordtool':

http://keywordtool.io/

It provides a list of relevant keywords, their search volume and competition (the last two attributes cannot be accessed free of charge).

SEO: Keywords and Content – useful tools

More online free tools.

http://www.wordtracker.com/ (free account; territory search)

http://tools.seobook.com/keyword-tools/seobook/ (free account)

Many paid services e.g.
https://www.rankingcoach.com/en-gb

SEO: Keywords and Content Problems – example

Let's see an example. Please read the following paragraph carefully – it comes from an article published on the internet. Can you guess what the author is trying to optimize the page for? (the example is from the book 'SEO 2013 & Beyond, A. Williams).

"Understanding Pomegranate Juice Benefits

Some people may not be that knowledgeable about pomegranate juice benefits but it is actually a very effective source of Vitamin C. The pomegranate fruit contains a lot of healthy nutrients and you can get a lot of good immune system boosters out of pomegranate juice benefits. It can actually provide around 16% of the required amount of Vitamin C that adults need to take on a daily basis. Pomegranate juice benefits" also include Vitamin B5 as well as the antioxidant element of polyphenols and potassium."

SEO: Keywords and Content Problems – example

"Understanding **Pomegranate Juice Benefits**

Some people may not be that knowledgeable about pomegranate juice benefits but it is actually a very effective source of Vitamin C. The pomegranate fruit contains a lot of healthy nutrients and you can get a lot of good immune system boosters out of **pomegranate juice benefits**. It can actually provide around 16% of the required amount of Vitamin C that adults need to take on a daily basis. **Pomegranate juice benefits** also include Vitamin B5 as well as the antioxidant element of polyphenols and potassium."

What is the issue in the above paragraph???

'Keywords density' & Content quality

SEO: Keywords and Content Problems – example

Types of visible **keyword stuffing** include:
- Unnecessarily repeating words or phrases
- Adding words that are out of context
- Inserting blocks of the same keyword
- Using keywords that are not relevant to the topic of the page

(https://blog.alexa.com/keyword-stuffing/)

'Keywords density' & Content quality

SEO: Keywords and Content Problems – keyword density

Keywords density: *Keyword density* is the percentage of times a keyword or phrase appears on a web page compared to the total number of words on the page. In the context of search engine optimization keyword density can be used as a factor in determining whether a web page is relevant to a specified keyword or keyword phrase.

In the past web developers tried to 'cheat' search engines by increasing the keyword density.

(Remember what we discussed in week 2 about how search engines work)

The result was low quality content.

SEO: Keywords and Content Problems – keyword density – PANDA

Google strikes back…

What is 'Panda'?
Google Panda is a change to Google's search results ranking algorithm that was first released in February 2011. The change aimed to lower the rank of "low-quality sites" or "thin sites" and return higher-quality sites near the top of the search results. (from Wikepedia "
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Panda")

Mainly 'panda' is about keywords and content.

What is the 'correct' keyword density ???

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rk4qgQdp2UA

SEO: Keywords and Content Problems – keyword density

There are many online (free and paid) tools that allow you   to check websites for keywords density. Example:

https://www.internetmarketingninjas.com/seo-tools/keyword-density/

http://tools.seobook.com/general/keyword-density/
(do your own search to find more similar tools)

Summary

This week we talked about SEO techniques and we examined in details 'keywords'. More specifically, we talked about:

➢ Organic and paid results of a search engine
➢ On-site and off-site SEO techniques
➢ SEO techniques:
- 1. Keywords and site content [on-site SEO]
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- 3. Backlinks (external links) [off-site SEO]

➢ 1. Keywords and site content – in details
- Process
  ◦ Step 1 (S1): understand keywords and keywords' elements / keyword structure
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  ◦ Step 3 (S3): Evaluate your keywords – **keyword volume or search volume**
  ◦ Step 4 (S4): Categorize keywords.
  ◦ Step 5 (S5): Develop your content
- Tools that can help to select and evaluate keywords
- Problems with the use of 'keywords' – '**keyword density**' – 'PANDA algorithm

Next Week

Next week we'll continue with the other SEO techniques that are related to:

2. Site organization and technical SEO (on-site technique)

3. Backlinks (off-site technique)