

9.6 Search Engine Bias

Search engines are driven by algorithms, statistics, and advanced query technology, so they cannot possibly be biased, right? Unfortunately, that's wrong. Let's take a look at what search engine biases exist, and how you can counter them.

Personalization

Like most things on the Internet, search engines are products designed specifically to please the consumer. As such, search engines personalize your search results to prioritize sites they know we'd enjoy more. While this may not seem nefarious — in the end, you get what you want! — this is still a form of search engine bias.

Result manipulation

Search engines, especially Google, have long been accused of perpetuating [social](#) and [political](#) biases with their algorithms. Being created by humans, algorithms are de facto imperfect. For example, one of the major shortcomings of search engines is the disproportional coverage of content from particular websites or groups. You might notice in your SERP that big companies and American websites (with .com URLs) will usually be ranked higher than their counterparts.

This is because of backlinks. Large businesses and bloggers from Western countries are more likely to be referred to in other sites, and thus rank higher at the SEO. This becomes a problem for entrepreneurs just starting out, especially in non-Western states.

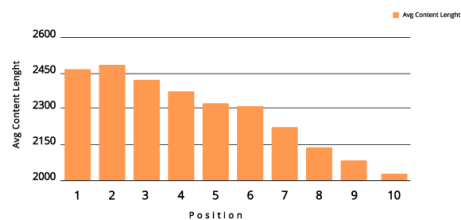
For instance, if you search "Best Nigerian Foods" on Google, you will likely not see a Nigerian URL (.ng) among the first page results. This is the case even though English is the country's official language, it has 99 million Internet users, and the search is directly related to their country!

As a small company, the preference of search engines for large enterprises can make it very difficult to penetrate the market. Here's what you can do to counteract the bias.

Combating Search Engine Bias

- **Find your niche.** Instead of trying to create a wide range of content, find a niche and really work on it. Most algorithms prioritize sites focusing on narrow topics.
- **Site relevance.** In SEO fields, relevance is calculated by how much content on a given web page is relevant to the active search term. It's also very important to consistently update both your business information and your website's content.
- **Engaging visuals and infographics.** In our fast-paced world, infographics are a great way to share information, as they require little reading. Focusing on visual content may increase the backlinks and interactions you receive, propping you up in that SERP.
- **Create unique content.** This shouldn't come as a shock, but if you see content holes in your niche, fill them up — ASAP! This way, any new searches regarding that specific topic will likely be redirected to your web page, which will in turn garner new users and increase recognition of your brand.
- **HARO.** HARO is a website that connects journalists with industry specialists. By aiding a journalist in writing their piece, you and your website will likely be linked as sources, scoring you extra backlinks.
- **Long-form content.** Even though it seems everyone wants short posts, research has found that long-form is the way to go. The best-performing article pieces are usually those at around 2,450 words. This is probably due to its establishment of authority (long-form pieces are typically well-researched and in-depth), as well as SEO (the more content you write, the more keywords you can put in!).

Avg. Content Length of Top 10 Results

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