

HOTEL SEO FOR BEGINNERS

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR GOOGLE RANKINGS?



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OVERVIEW

It's established that showing up on page one of Google is pretty important for any hotel serious about growing their online profitability.

This means, getting familiar with SEO – Search Engine Optimisation.

While most hotel owners are aware of this need, getting started or making a success of it doesn't come easy. But, once you start breaking down the barriers, it's not quite as hard as you imagined.

This SEO guide for hotels is a starting point. It tells you how search works, the fundamentals and some tools along with strategic tips to get moving on your SEO.

“

70-80% of people ignore paid search results, choosing to only click on organic listings.

”

WHAT'S SEO?

WHY IT MATTERS?

SEO or Search Engine Optimisation is a combination of strategies used to **increase a website's visibility and ranking in search engines.**

Search Engine Land aptly describes it as "the process of getting traffic from the free, organic, editorial or natural search results on search engines."

It's important to keep in mind that SEO doesn't only mean building search-friendly websites; it's about **making your website BETTER FOR PEOPLE.**

ORGANIC RESULTS

The screenshot shows a Google search for "Hotels in New York". The top section displays sponsored ads for "Book PUBLIC Hotel NYC Today", "Early Check In", "Best Rate Guarantee", "Hotel in New York, NY | Lowest Price Guarantee", "Radisson New York Hotel", and "Manhattan New York City Hotels". Below the ads, the "ORGANIC RESULTS" section is highlighted with an orange box. It includes two main results: "THE 10 BEST Hotels in New York City, NY for 2018" from TripAdvisor and "The 30 best hotels & places to stay in New York, USA" from Booking.com. Both organic results provide detailed descriptions of hotel offerings, locations, and amenities.

Google Hotels in New York

About 2,480,000,000 results (1.10 seconds)

Book PUBLIC Hotel NYC Today | Great Service, Style & Fun
Ad www.publichotels.com/ ▼
Thoughtfully Designed with Great Service & Affordable Luxury for All. Book Now! Lower East Side. Modern Luxury. Rooftop Bar. Panoramic Views.

Early Check In
Guaranteed check in as early as 6am
. Perfect for red eye travelers.

Best Rate Guarantee
Lowest Rate When You Book Direct
Up to 25% Off If Lower. Terms Apply

Hotel in New York, NY | Lowest Price Guarantee | booking.com
Ad www.booking.com/New-York/Hotels ▼
★★★★★ Rating for booking.com: 4.4 - 267 reviews
Book your **Hotel in New York NY** online. No reservation costs. Great rates. Get Instant Confirmation. Secure Booking. Save 10% with Genius. **Hotels**. Motels. 24/7 Customer Service. Bed and Breakfasts. **Book a home for the night** · Apartments for tonight · Homes, apartments, & more

Radisson New York Hotel | Official Site | radisson.com
Ad www.radisson.com/New-York ▼
Get The Best Rate When You Book Direct with Radisson.com For Your Next Trip!

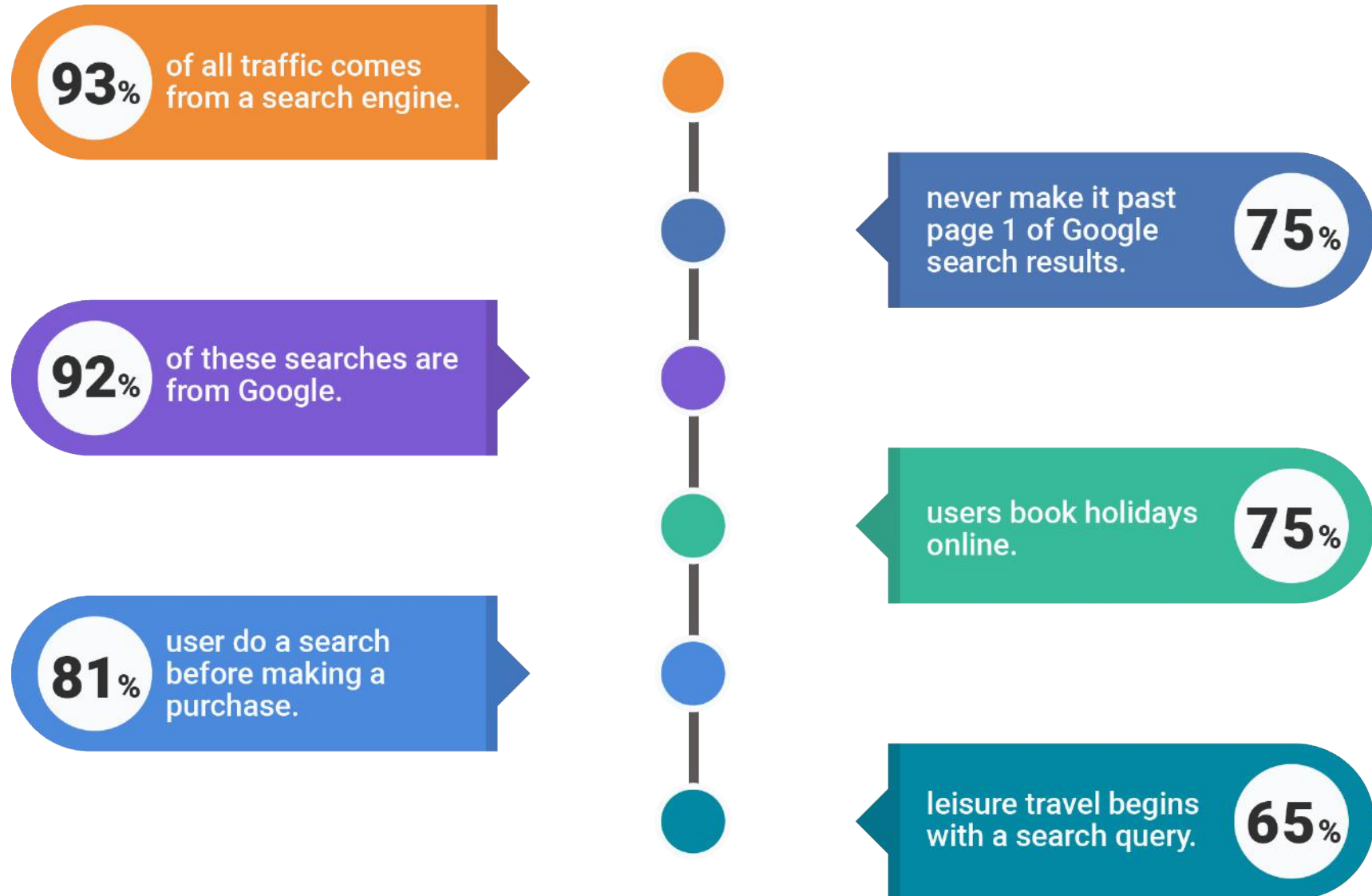
Manhattan New York City Hotels | Book Your Hotel
Ad www.newyorkjourney.com/ ▼
Find Attractions, Tours & More. Read Reviews To Make An Informed Decision. Book Online.

THE 10 BEST Hotels in New York City, NY for 2018 (from \$80 ...
https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotels-g60763-New_York_City_New_York-Hotels.html ▼
The #1 Best Value of 746 places to stay in **New York City**. Free Wifi. Restaurant. **Hotel** website.
YOTEL New York. Show Prices. #2 Best Value of 746 places to ...
New York City Hotel Deals · **YOTEL New York** · **Warwick New York** · **Pod 51 Hotel**

The 30 best hotels & places to stay in New York, USA - New York hotels
<https://www.booking.com/city/us/new-york.en-gb.html> ▼
Budget hotels and accommodation in New York. TownePlace Suites by **Marriott** New York Manhattan/Times Square. Manhattan, New York. AC New York Downtown by **Marriott**. The Gatsby Hotel. citizenM New York Bowery. Freehand New York. AC Hotel by **Marriott** New York Times Square. The Allen Hotel. **CITY ROOMS NYC** - Times Square.
Central New York City 412 hotels · **New York Central Park 66 hotels** · **Booking.com**

The 30 Best New York Hotels (From \$61) - Booking.com
https://www.booking.com/USA/New_York_State/Visit_New_York ▼
Budget hotels and accommodations in New York. TownePlace Suites by **Marriott** New York Manhattan/Times Square. Manhattan, New York. AC New York Downtown by **Marriott**. The Gatsby Hotel. citizenM New York Bowery. Freehand New York. AC Hotel by **Marriott** New York Times Square. The Allen Hotel. **CITY ROOMS NYC** - Times Square.

WHY SEARCH MATTERS?





HOW SEARCH WORKS?

Think of search engines as answer machines.

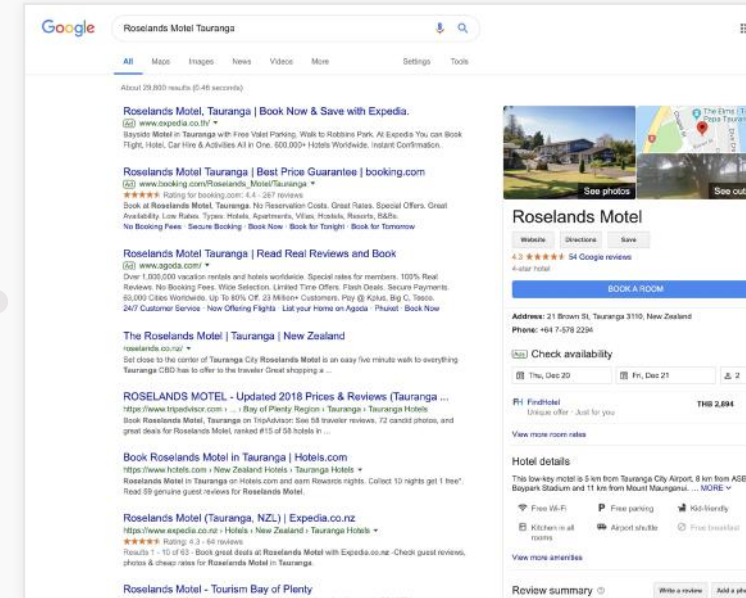
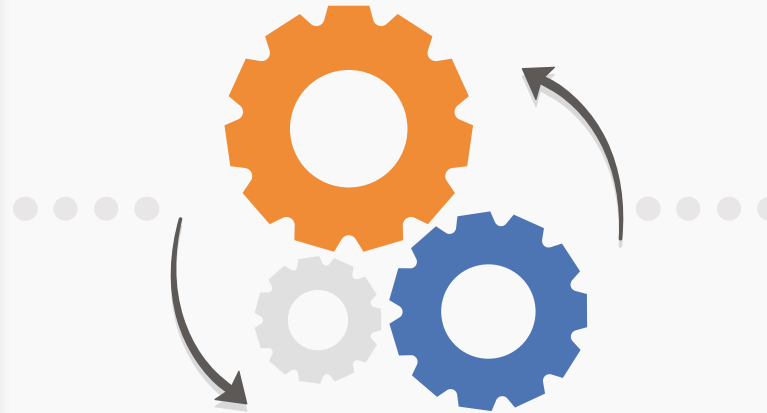
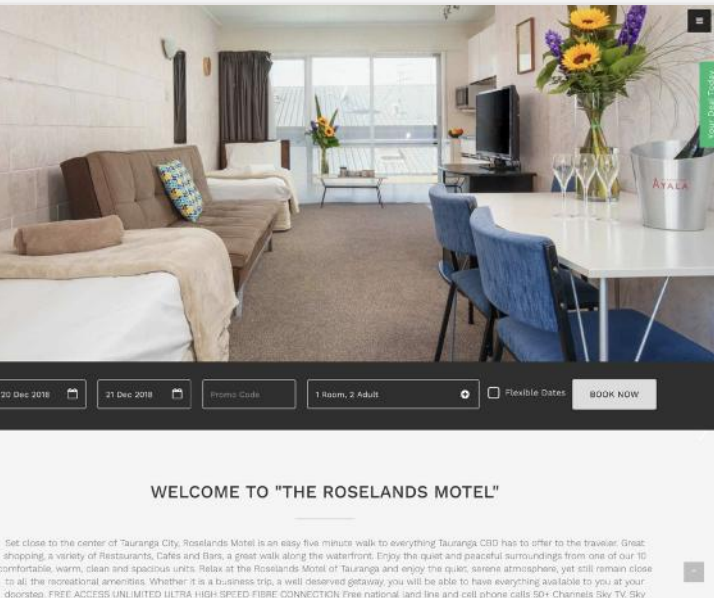
A user types in a query (called keyword). The search engine scours its data of billions of documents (web pages, images, etc) and in less than a second **serves up what it thinks is the most relevant response to the user's query.** Relevance and popularity along with hundreds of other factors influence the Search Engine Results Page (SERP).

In a nutshell, in order for a search engine such as Google to answer a query, it needs to:

- » **Know that you (business website) exist** and are 'search friendly'
- » Have **valuable content** about topic that you want to rank on
- » Build authority and trust by factor such as **links from other websites**

Google does a great job of guarding its search algorithm. But, if you follow the basics (above), you can rise up.

SEARCH ENGINES AT WORK



SEARCH SPIDERS CRAWL YOUR SITE AND SAVE A COPY TO THEIR INDEX.

AN ALGORITHM CHECKS IF THE INDEXED COPY MATCHES A SEARCH QUERY.

WHEN YOUR SITE MATCHES THE QUERY, IT APPEARS IN THE SERPs.

STOCKTAKE: WHAT YOUR SEO AUDIT TELLS YOU?

Whether you do it yourself or decide to hire an agency to drive your SEO efforts, an audit is a good place to start. Where is your website at in comparison to your business goals?

To stay ahead in the game and ensure website search health, **we recommend doing regular audits**. Let's look at what is included in an SEO audit.



ON-SITE AUDIT



Visibility: Are all your web pages visible and indexed by the search engines? If the search engines can't find you, user definitely can't. Sometimes bad coding contributes to this.



Content: Low quality and duplicate content will be dismissed not just by users, but also search engines.



Keyword Analysis: Which keywords are driving traffic.



Semantic Structure: Is the on-page content structured using proper HTML headings and recommended Schema mark-up? Are all page staged with proper meta and title tags and descriptions?



Links & Images: Good distribution of hyperlinks and ensuring that all images have proper ALT and title tags form part of this part of the audit.



Site Speed & Mobile Usability: How fast does your site load and how easy is it to use and read on mobile are imperative to see search success.

OFF-SITE AUDIT



Backlinks: How many websites link to your content and what is the authority of the websites linking? More the links and higher the authority, better your chances to rank. Sometimes bad coding contributes to this.



Competitor Analysis: Mapping your results against a few key competitors. Where do you stand?



Social Mentions: Is your content being shared and your website mentioned?

HOW TO DO KEYWORD RESEARCH?



Keyword research is one of the highest return SEO activities. Mastering keyword research will not just help you gain organic traffic, but also help you understand your customers better.

Let's look at some basic keyword research steps.

START WITH BROAD TOPICS OR 'SEED' KEYWORDS

Find the **topics most important to your business**.

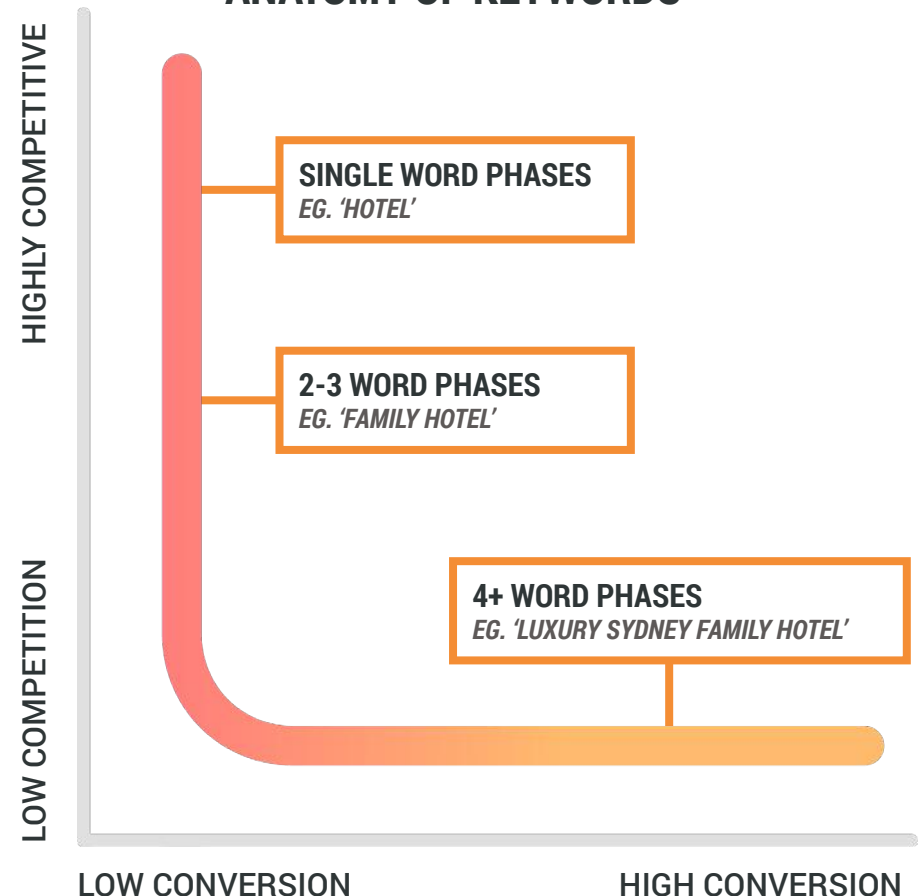
Eg. If you're a ski resort, it would be skiing, backpacking, etc. Now find the 'seed' keywords around this such as "hotels in [destination]".

NICHE DOWN FROM HERE

Seed keywords are typically high volume, but also very competitive and generally associated with lower intent to purchase.

Niche keywords are typically long tail (3-4 words and more). They're **less competitive and more focused**. *Eg. "Top things to do in [destination]"*.

ANATOMY OF KEYWORDS





SELF AND COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

Do an audit of the keywords that's bringing you traffic. Then look at the keywords your competitors are ranking for. Are there missed opportunities? At the same time look for related keywords.

[Here's how to do it.](#)

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN DOING KEYWORD RESEARCH:

- » **Search Intent:** Think like a user when choosing your keywords. It's unlikely that a backpacker would search for "4-star accommodation". So as a hostel, that keyword is out of your target audience's intent.
- » **Search Volume:** Higher volume searches are more competitive. Strike a balance between long tail, low-volume and high-volume keywords in your strategy.
- » **Keyword Grouping:** Club your chosen keywords into meaningful categories so you can wrap content around them easily.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF OPTIMISED ON-PAGE CONTENT

“If you want to hide a dead body, put it on page 2 of Google.” That’s the truth. If you’ve got the right content, but still not getting due recognition by the search engines, look at your on-page elements as a start.

- ✓ Do you have the targeted keyword in your **title tag** or **page title**?
- ✓ Add **modifiers** to your page title such as review, guide, 2019 etc. for user ease.
- ✓ Don’t forget the **H1 tag**.
- ✓ Add sensible **URLs** – they should be short and provide a summary of the page.
- ✓ Use **engaging media** – videos, images, infographics ... these are all great to attract and retain a user.

“

By 2019, video will account for 85% of global internet traffic in the U.S.

”



- ✓ Create **great content**. It should be unique (definitely not duplicate web content and of value to the user. Readability of content using formatting is important.
- ✓ Use **links** to resources that will add value to your users in context of the content they are looking at. This includes – and must have – outbound links.
- ✓ **Responsive design**. If your website is not mobile friendly, Google will penalise it.
- ✓ **Improve site speed**. 75% of users don't visit a website that takes longer than 4 seconds to load. [Check if your website is fast enough](#).
- ✓ Use **social media** icons on page to encourage users to share. More the shares and engagement on a piece of content, the better it ranks.



BEYOND YOUR WEBSITE: LINK BUILDING & CONTENT PROMOTION

Off-page SEO activities help build **relevance**, **trustworthiness** and **authority** of your website. At the heart of off-page SEO is **backlinks**. When building links, it is important to remember quality scores over quantity. Consider the linking site's popularity, authority and trustworthiness.

Content distribution is key to backlink building. If you create content that's worth talking about; well, people will talk about it.

In addition to this, reach out to **influencers**, get into guest **blogging**, post on **social media** and travel forums, and submit **rich content** such as videos, images or infographics.

Local SEO is an important part of any off-page strategy. Make sure to [claim your Google My Business Listing](#) and optimise it.

ON-PAGE SEO

Site Performance

Title Tags for Links

Canonical URLs

Internal Links

Sitemap

301 & 404 Errors

Robots.txt

Keywords Density

Meta Tags

SILOS

ON-PAGE VS. OFF-PAGE: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

OFF-PAGE SEO

Article Marketing

Directory Submission

RSS Feeds

Social Bookmarking

Social Media

Press Releases

Influencers

Blogs & Forums

Comments

Forum Posting



LOCAL SEO VS. INTERNATIONAL SEO

If your property is looking to guests from around the world, then it's time to get into international SEO.

It is the process of organising and optimising your webpages to allow search engines to identify the countries you are targeting, the specific content and language for each user in a given location.

Local SEO is a more 'here and now' approach – optimising your website for a local audience. You're aiming to appear in search results like the local carousel, local knowledge panel, local packed results, local near results and local map pins.



An accommodation provider typically needs both types of SEO.

Before you dive into the very technical world of [international SEO](#), identify your target markets carefully. Base this on analytics from your website and past guests. Next look at the resource you have to manage multiple domains/ sub-domains or sub-directories you need to be successful in international SEO – technical, content and analytical.

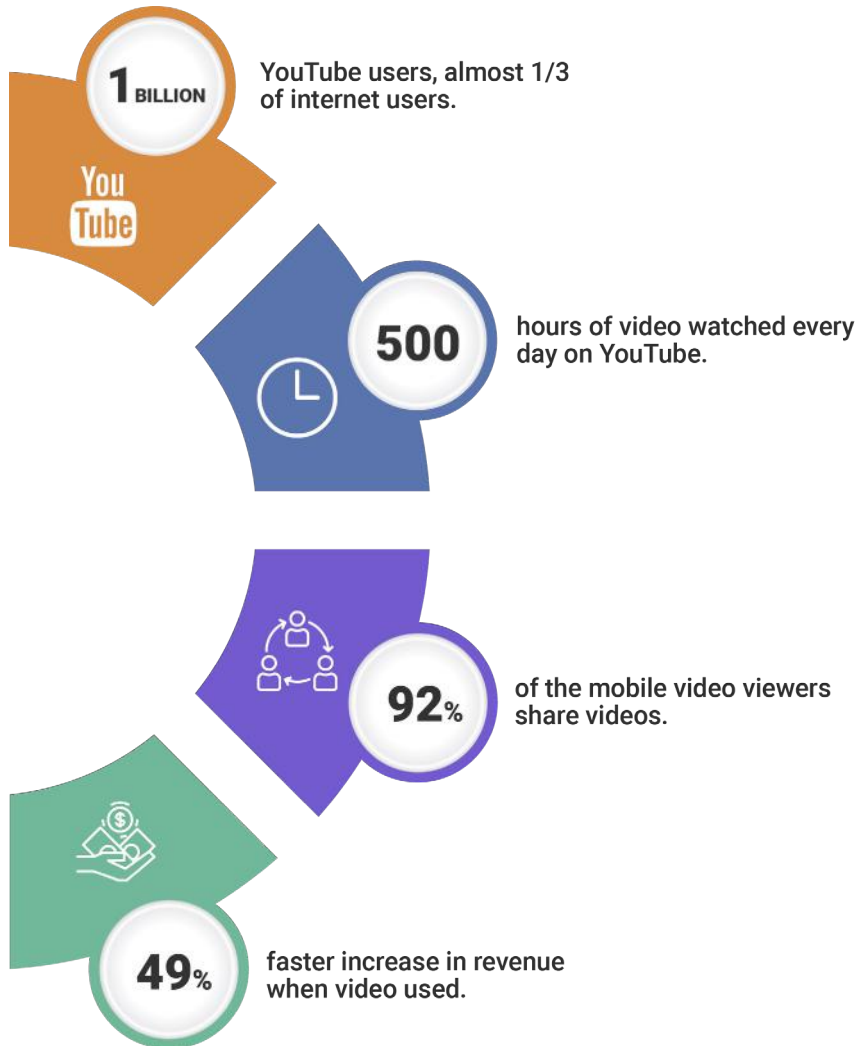
If you're not a technical wizard, get an expert to manage this aspect for you – it can get very complicated, very quickly. And, think beyond Google – Baidu, Yandex and Yahoo are you go-to for China, Russia and Japan.

Google Bing YAHOO!

Baidu Yandex AOL.

VIDEO SEO

If utilised to its full potential, video can contribute significantly to your SEO strategy.



Tips to use videos successfully for SEO

- » Define your goal clearly – is it to get backlinks, improve social sharing or increase conversion? Then set about making your video.
- » Make sure your video brings value to the user and is shareable.
- » Host your video on your own domain, not YouTube. The latter should be targeted if you want higher reach.
- » Create relevant metadata,
- » Remember keyword search for YouTube is different to Google. Analyse the two separately.
- » Make sure you have an attractive thumbnail image for your video/s.
- » Add a video transcript.
- » Create a video sitemap.
- » Allow embedding of your video.



BASICS OF MOBILE SEO

Mobile SEO is the process of optimising your website for smartphones and tablets. Given that **58% of Google searches are now mobile**, you can understand why marketers fuss about it.

Following Google's Mobile-First, all SEO activities are in favour of mobile. Google ranks mobile friendly websites over others.

If your desktop site is being served up on mobile, you're in trouble and it is time for an update – PRONTO! Luckily building a responsive site is easy in this day and age. We do not recommend having mobile sites (with an M before the URL) or dynamic sites (content served up based on device type).



TOP TIPS WHEN MAKING YOUR WEBSITE MOBILE-FRIENDLY, NOT JUST FOR THE SEARCH ENGINES BUT FOR THE USERS.

- » Ensure you trump the mobile speed test.
- » Content should be easy to read on mobile.
- » Use HTML5 for video and animated content (a coding language).
- » Don't miss the 'viewport content' tag – else your content will look funny on mobile.
- » Use styling to your advantage – smaller header images, negative space and social share buttons.
- » Don't rush into Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP). Study them carefully before implementing.



IS IT WORKING? MEASURING SUCCESS

Defining success in SEO can be a complex web. But, you're clear on the goals, there are plenty of metrics available to measure the impact of your work.

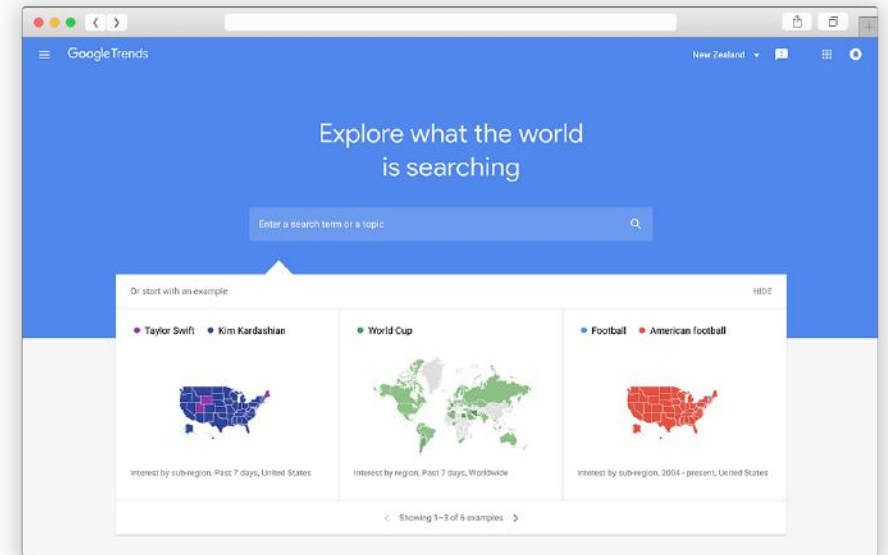
Pro tip: Don't rely on a single metric and single source to [measure your SEO success](#). Look at it through multiple lens:

- » **Keyword Ranking:** It's not just about how high you rank, but also which keywords and the quality of traffic these get.
- » **Backlinks & Linking Root Domains:** It's not just the quantity, but also the quality of inbound links that impact your rankings. Is your quality of backlinks growing?
- » **Organic Traffic:** If things go to plan, you should see an increase in your organic traffic. This is a factor of ranking as well as your click through rate – how many people who saw your listing actually came to your site.
- » **Referral traffic** also rises with an SEO strategy that is working.
- » **Brand Impact:** Has the search for branded keywords (that specifically mention your hotel) gone up with your SEO efforts?
- » **Conversion:** How many users are actually booking a room or taking the desired action on your website?
- » **Social Shares & Reviews:** Good content is what everyone likes to talk about and share. And, if your content is good, it will get you more traffic, awareness and conversions.

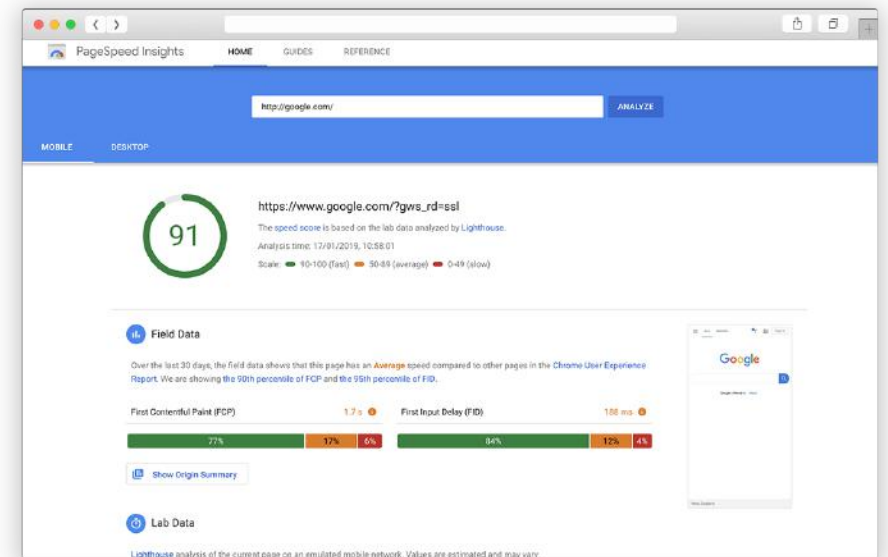
SEO RESOURCES WE LOVE

Arm yourself with these powerful tools to make gains on the SEO front.

- » **Google Search Console (GSC).** Not a nice-to-have but a must-have. Smart users can glean a lot of technical information along with things such as top searches, devices, etc.
- » **Google Trends.** Map what type of search is popular where with this free Google tool.
- » **Google Analytics.** Your data machine – free from Google. See where you traffic is coming from, how it is performing and analyse opportunities.
- » **Keyword Planner.** Also a free Google tool to help you find the right keywords.
- » **Google PageSpeed Insights.** Given the importance of load-time as a ranking factor, this should be a frequent-use tool for SEO.

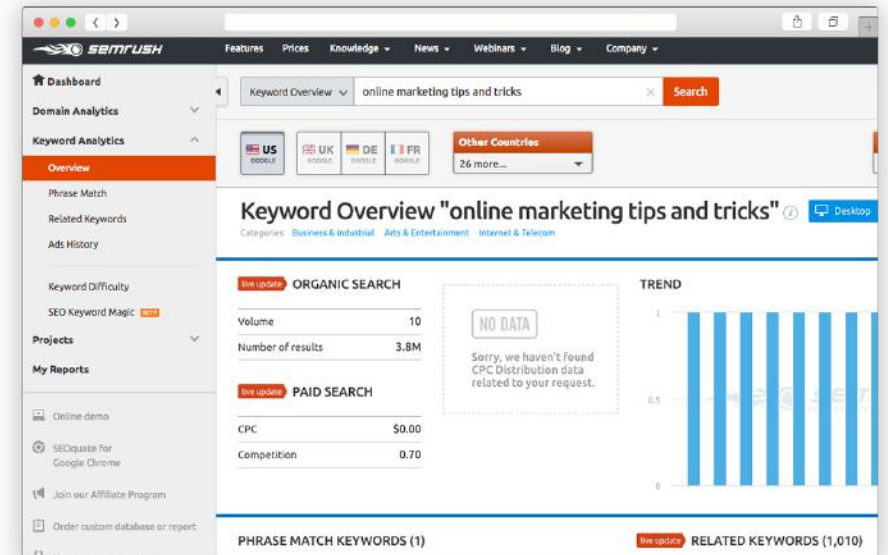


Google Trends

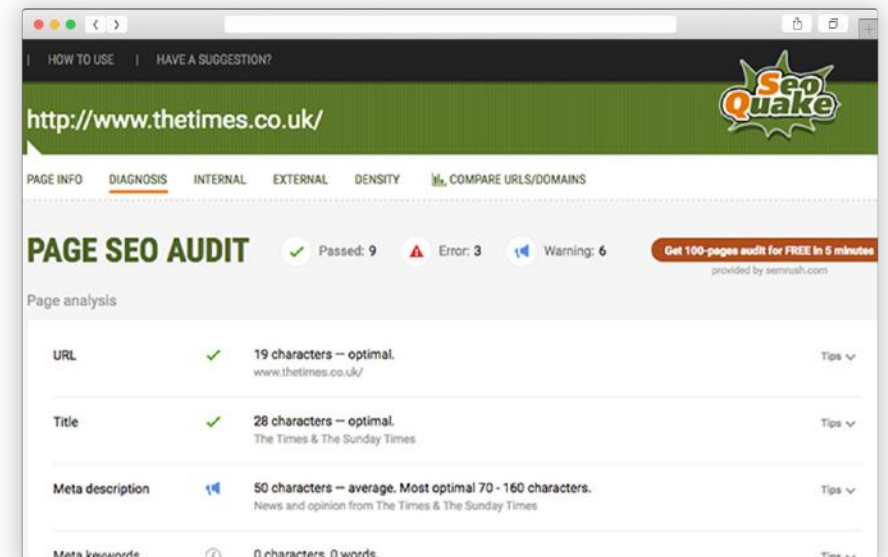


Google PageSpeed Insights

- » **Google Mobile-Friendly Test.** Does your website make the cut on mobile? Use this free tool to check.
- » **Redirect Path.** Do you have HTTP or redirect errors (search bots hate these!)? This Chrome extension can help you assess.
- » **SEM Rush.** A paid tool, but worth every penny as it packs in a lot of SEO activities into one platform. If you're doing it on your own, this is totally recommended.
- » **SEO Quake.** A Chrome browser extension that helps you run an instant on-page audit, including competitor sites!
- » **Screaming Frog.** More for advanced users, this tool provides a wealth of on-page and technical optimisation suggestions.



SEM Rush



SEO Quake

LET **STAAH** HELP YOU POWER YOUR ONLINE SUCCESS AND ACQUIRE MORE GUESTS.

Are you ready to take your property to its rightful next step?

Do you want to increase reach and see bookings clock in fast?

An all-in-one platform, **STAAH** can help attract, convert, analyse and maximise your bookings.



InstantSite
Website

Attract visitors with a beautiful & responsive website. Engage with good content & design. Then convert your web visitors into guests.



Instant
Channel Manager

Take your property's online distribution to the next level and grow bookings with our real-time hotel channel manager.



Gift Voucher Engine

Unleash the true power of gift vouchers with a e-shop for guests to buy gift vouchers directly from your website, multiplying your sales.



ConvertDirect
Booking Engine

A seamless guest experience begins with a simple & powerful hotel booking engine, designed to deliver more direct bookings.



ReviewMinder

A Review Management System which alerts you of new online reviews across multiple sites in one easy dashboard.



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