

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Rashmi Kaushik

*Research Scholar,
School of Business, Sushant
University, Gurugram,
Haryana*

Dr. Pooja Rastogi

*Professor Marketing
IMS Ghaziabad
(University Courses Campus),
Ghaziabad, NCR*

OPENING VIGNETTE

Have you ever come across any retail outlet without any signage, without any name or any idea about what actually they are dealing with? And when you land into that outlet for something, you suddenly get to know that they are dealing with something else?

On the other end there is another outlet with very attractive banners, containing all the information, logo, some attractive pictures, which are depicting the products they are dealing in. In this case, there would be fewer chances of landing wrongly into that outlet and then, coming back empty handed.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- *Learn about the evolution of SEO*
- *Understand various pros and cons of SEO*
- *You will be able to differentiate between different types of SEO*
- *Understand the concept of Black Hat and White Hat SEO techniques*

INTRODUCTION

As you realised, above, that in the first case the outlet was not an organized one, while the other one having clear information about the things that it contained that facilitated your search. Here in this chapter, we will learn how digital marketers actually use optimisation rules to make their websites attractive, visible and informative for their targeted customers.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process used by marketers to improve the quality as well as quantity of traffic, landing on a website through

search engines. SEO actually targets natural or organic results, most commonly known as unpaid rather than paid traffic. This organic traffic may be an end result of various search efforts made by potential customers, who may be scrolling through images, videos and write-ups to look for a product that he needs.

In other words, SEO involves making certain changes to your website design and content that makes your site more attractive to a search engine. It is actually a collection of few methods to achieve a better ranking on the search engine result page (SERP). As customers usually click on the pages that appear at the top of search engines.

To have the right results, it is important to understand and use all the positive aspects of SEO. It not only optimizes the website, but also increase the usability of any website which ultimately results in the better user experience. By using SEO, companies can stay ahead of the competition as optimisation of search engines would possibly attract more customers and result in higher sales.

EVOLUTION OF SEO

The history of SEO is not very old, as search engine optimization, which is commonly known as SEO, first originated in the 1990s. Since then, it has become the most powerful way to market a business. SEO gives businesses the ability to reach more customers and potential customers than ever before. Multiple corporations, small businesses, and every business in between can use SEO to increase their customer base and promote their websites.

One of the first search engine was Archie that was introduced in 1990. This search engine was used to search within a file directory. Another search engine, Veronica, followed Archie and was launched by the University of Nevada System Computing Services. Veronica provided similar search style as Archie using plain text files. A combination of its predecessors was Gopher search engine was introduced in 1991. It that offered searches for text files and online databases. Simultaneously, the World Wide Web was being developed by Tim Berners-Lee. Infoseek Lycos and WebCrawler followed these early search engines. Most significant search engines that were launched during this period were Ask Jeeves (now called Ask.com) and Altavista. These search engines paved way for the development of many other search engines, including the most powerful search till date Google.

PROS AND CONS OF SEO

Everyone has a different perspective, when it comes to choosing alternatives from various search engines like Google, Bing, DuckDuck Go or Yahoo. There can be lots of reasons behind the choice of a search engine. However, two key points to be considered, before making the choices would be- totality of appearance and formatting of the search results that one gets.

Like any other marketing tool, SEO also has some advantages and disadvantages. Best strategy to use SEO is to concentrate on the objectives to be achieved through the same and then using SEO accordingly.

Some of the positives of using SEO are as follows:

To attract maximum traffic: Some of the traditional methods followed by marketers to attract the potential customers were sending e-mails, making calls, using banners and distributing pamphlets. But in this digital era, using only SEO will fetch even better results. Through SEO, potential customers will be immediately diverted to your website that will help them in obtaining detailed information about your products and services.

Better Website Rankings: Putting relevant, meaningful and generic content on the website will automatically help the website to appear on the top of a search page.

Less spending on advertising: SEO involves no advertising costs in terms of paying to various advertisement platforms. Better SEO results can be obtained by just putting the high-quality content with right search keywords. So, we say that obtaining a valuable spot in search results is free of advertising cost.

Better User experience: As SEO involves keeping accurate, meaningful and relevant information on the website, potential customers, who are landing on the website, will spend more time, thereby reducing bounce rates. This will also increase the overall satisfaction level among users.

Supports Public Relation (PR) Strategies: Although, online PR and SEO may seem like two totally different strategies, using the former without using SEO will be a wasteful activity. As the ultimate aim of using online PR content is to inform

Shortcomings of SEO

Proper Knowledge of Key Word Search: In case of absence of proper knowledge of key words search, the results may not be very useful for users.

Assistance while collecting information: Whenever, we go to a physical outlet to take some information about any product, the salesforce is present to provide all the needed information instantly. But, in case of SEO, it would purely depend on the algorithms used by the search engine in fetching the results. Therefore, the results may or may not match the exact requirements of the customer.

Dependence on internet infrastructure: SEO strategy is completely dependent on availability of good internet infrastructure for the users. Sometimes, the user might not be present in an area that provides accessibility to such infrastructure.

Primary functions of a search engine

Crawling-It is the process through which any search engine starts scouring publicly available web pages using bots. As soon as, we type any keyword to search something, search engine sends a *bot* to different web pages or web posts, to find out the relevant content. All websites containing similar or relevant data as per the keywords are scanned and then all related information like images, link pages are collected.

Indexing-After crawling, the next step is indexing. Basically, indexing is the process of organizing and saving all the content, found as an end result of crawling, at a single place. We need to remember that even if, your web page is crawled by search engine, there is no surety that it will be indexed by engine.

This is because the indexing depends upon the conclusion that your page is really worthy to be found. Content quality plays a very important role in indexing. When quality content is available on your page, it will automatically increase the probability of being indexed by the search engine after crawling every time.

Ranking-Depending upon the relevancy and content quality of the web pages, search engine assigns a rank to them and publish accordingly. In another words, whichever page will be having best possible answer to the query raised by customer, will be published on first page and on first rank as so on.

In addition to the functions above, SEO also perform other functions like Keyword research, internal linking of pages and promotion of content on various web pages.

BLACK HAT AND WHITE HAT SEO TECHNIQUES

The term 'Black Hat' was originally used to describe 'bad guys' in Western cinema. Black Hat SEO means using restricted practices that violate the rules of search engines. These techniques are primarily aimed at improving the rank of a website or page. Nowadays, these techniques are commonly used by people, who perform unethical activities with computers, including virus creators and computer hackers. Doorway pages, keyword stuffing, negative SEO and content automation are few examples of black hat SEO. Such practices are used by those who seek quick financial gains from their websites. It is also called 'Unethical SEO'.

On the other hand, White Hat SEO refers to the use of acceptable practices of optimization techniques to obtain higher SERP results. This technique maintains integrity of a website while obliging the rules of search engines. It comprises keyword-rich meta tags, title tags and so on, based on relevance to the webpage. White Hat SEO uses increased site loading times, high-quality content, mobile compatibility features and easy navigation. It is preferred by marketers for achieving long term goals and benefits. It is also called 'Ethical SEO'.

6.1 SEO Techniques – There are two techniques through which optimization process can be performed on to different Web pages. These are-

- On Page SEO
- Off Page SEO

On Page Techniques

In this technique, optimization is performed on the website, its pages and code. It is done to ensure that after every crawling, our pages are indexed by any search engine.

Both, technical elements and quality of content, are used to improve SERP results of the web pages. It will help in achieving maximum traffic and less bounce rate for the website.

Different techniques being used for On-Page SEO are:

Title tags: Title Tags describe what a page is all about. It is the tag that appears in blue color of a browser window to the user.

Meta tags: Meta tags contains more detailed information about a web page. These tags cannot be seen by human beings as they are visible to machines only.

Image Tags: These are the tags that guide on how to display any image. Because images cannot be embedded into a page.

Internal links: Internal linking is done by the search engine while crawling through the pages.

Heading Tags: These tags are available in six levels from H1 to H6 in HTML. H1 is considered as the most significant tag as it appears in the biggest size and increases visibility of the web page.

URL Structure: URL structure should always be concise and easily readable. However, a URL string may contain digits and alphabets, but it is preferable that it includes keywords.

Why to concentrate on On-Page Techniques?

A really rich, informative, crisp and quality content should be used to inform or educate the potential customers, whosoever is landing on the website. With the help of really good content, we can easily engage the customers for a long time also can reduce the bounce rate. All the images being used on the pages should be relevant with the content and properly planned and aligned. Altogether it will improve the “look and feel” factor of the pages.

A cautious selection of keywords which are very much relevant to the website and being used very much by the potential customers, whenever they search for similar kind of products.

Off-Page SEO Techniques

It refers to all techniques which can be used outside the website to improve its organic rankings in the SERP. The primary purpose of using off page SEO is to add on the number of high-quality links to your website on a regular basis.

Techniques used under off page optimization are-

Creation of Back links: As good content is the foundation of SEO, creating effective, useful and relevant content will help in creating numerous backlinks to the website.

Guest Author Contributions: Contribution by a guest author would enhance credibility and quality of the content. We should invite guest authors, who may be a reviewer, customer or general public to share their views on the website.

Social Media Engagement: It should be increased to make a website popular among the target customers.

Social Bookmarking: This is another technique used by marketers to promote a website. This consists of providing social media links on popular websites, such as Pinterest and Digg.

Link Baiting: It is the process of creating backlinks for a web resource like blog post.

Blog Posting: We can't update our business services on our website every day. But we can create a blog and update it with few new articles on daily basis; It will help us in generating more traffic on our website.

Some of the techniques that are also used in off-page optimisation are classified submission, profile creation, Q&A section and image submission.

CONCLUSION

SEO can help the organizations in getting quantity a qualitative traffic to their website as a result of organic or unpaid search. In today's digital word where the awareness and use of internet is increasing at a rapid rate, SEO may become a very important tool of marketing toolkit. So, every organization needs to consider SEO as a very important part of their marketing strategy. Main point to consider here is the SEO is like inbound marketing strategy where organization doesn't approach to the customers but customers themselves reach out to any organization. Moreover, organization doesn't pay anything for their ads displaying through SEO, which is there (i.e., payment) in case of PPC.

SEO automatically becomes authentic as we know it follows pre specified algorithms to generate the end results. Just because of these features, SEO automatically becomes a key element for any organization's digital marketing strategy.

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