SEO
eBook
2019

The SEO eBook 2019 by Carmelon Digital Marketing deals with the aspects of onsite and technical SEO to help businesses build compliant websites that rank well in the SERPs. It is an essential read before planning a website, and it can be used to optimize sites with a weak presence in the SERPs.

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INTRODUCTION

The SEO eBook 2019 is an introductory exercise into how to perform Search Engine Optimization (SEO) - the standard digital marketing strategy that defines how well a website ranks on the search engine results pages (SERPS).

Throughout the manual, we will determine what SEO is, why it became a vital digital marketing strategy, and we will review in detail how to optimize a website to improve its performance in Google's SERPs.

We are publishing this in an effort to help teams to better understand how their own websites need to be optimized and how to take actions.

This document addresses everyone within the marketing team, be it the experienced digital marketing manager, the webmasters, the content writers, or the marketing newbies. It is important for everyone within the organization to understand the role of SEO in the digital marketing world and how to perform SEO on a website to have it compliant with Google's latest standards.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Each chapter of this document represents an important aspect when optimizing a website. Some sections are designed to give the reader a basic outline on how SEO has evolved in the past years and why some recommendations are necessary or even critical. Other chapters will summarize actionable guidelines on how to optimize a website and how to use some of the most popular SEO tools. This document is divided into several sections and subsections that can be easily overviewed when searching for specific advice.

All recommendations are referring to the current standards as defined by Google. Note that Google evolves and updates its algorithms frequently, which means that in the not-so-distant future the common practice of SEO may change. Optimizing a site is an on-going process, and you should always ensure that your site adheres to the most recent Google-approved SEO standards.

1 WHAT IS SEO

Search Engine Optimization, or in short SEO, is a popular term, often used when describing online marketing. According to Wikipedia, "search engine optimization is the process of affecting the online visibility of a website or a web page in unpaid results-often referred to as natural, organic, or earned results." The term "search engine optimization" was used since 1997 according to industry analyst Danny Sullivan, and was already practiced before, when the first search engines catalogued the early Web.

> Marketing was for a long time restricted to print, radio, and TV. However, since 1989, with the   introduction of the world wide web and the possibility to access all kinds of information in seconds; opportunities for companies to deliver their message to a higher number of potential clients has revolutionized the marketing industry. The advance of modern technology introduced new marketing strategies too.

Larry Page and Sergey Brin launched Google in 1998, when they were Ph.D. students at the Stanford University, in California. Their goal was to revolutionize the way search engines worked. They developed a new technology that should determine a website's relevance by the number of links and the importance of the pages that linked back to the original site. With their PageRank algorithm, they also paved the way for modern SEO.

The Internet has changed the way we access information overnight, and SEO gained significant momentum and importance. With the introduction of the mobile web, the world stepped into the future. Considering how ingrained mobile devices (such as smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, and more) are in our loves for both private and professional use, mobile online marketing is perhaps the most critical SEO aspect today.

Mobile marketing is the most critical SEO aspect today.

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1.1 How do Google and SEO work

According to NetMarketShare, as of October 2017, the global market share percentage for search engine usage favours Google, with over 80.6% for desktop and 97.1% for mobile. Who wants to be found on Google needs to be indexed by the search engine giant and to rank well. Who wants to be successful must appear on Google's first page, where the top ten search results are displayed.

Today, every company, every brand, every businessperson, and every professional who owns a website tries to promote it online. The number of competitors grows daily. The only way to prove to Google that a website is qualified to rank is to follow Google's guidelines for proper SEO.

Google's search engine can be compared to a library with items organized by topics, data, and info. The Google "spiders" – also known as crawlers – are mainly bots crawling websites and reading their pages to create entries for the Google's search engines database. The spiders index the web pages. With every search query a user is placing on Google, the search engine will review its index and display the most relevant answers at the top. Results are always based on relevancy, quality of information, and many other factors, which will determine the rank of a website. An algorithm decides if a website is relevant or not, or if a site will be ranked high or low on the SERPs. Google is updating this algorithm continuously, and with every update, they are getting smarter and more precise.

The "idea" to optimize a site following what Google finds essential is the cornerstone of SEO. Knowing Google's guidelines, rules, and no-goes are elementary factors when optimizing a website. The procedure to build or optimize a website in such a way that Google recognizes its quality and value is what SEO strives to accomplish.
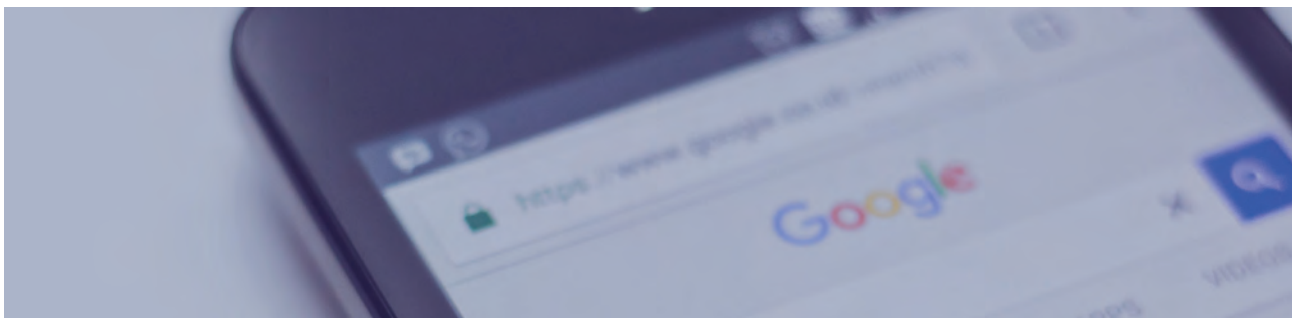
1

1.2 What is the difference between SEM and SEO

Since June 2003, Google has introduced to its result pages "sponsored links" which are the buyable text ads displayed as the first results on the Google SERPs.

This new method of advertising is called **search engine marketing (SEM)**.
SEM is defined as "a form of Internet marketing that seeks to promote websites by increasing their visibility in search engine result pages (SERPs) through the use of paid placement."

AdSense is a program that allows publishers in the Google network of content sites to serve automatic text, image, video, or interactive media advertisements, that are targeted to the site content and audience. Based on a placed bid through Google Ads (formerly Google AdWords) an ad might be displayed or not. Bids for the first ranks on Google's SERPs are among the leading SEM strategies. No SEO-related changes on a site are necessary. There is no optimization required. Ranking and results are seen immediately after placing a bid.

So, why is SEO necessary when SEM is an obvious option?

SEM and SEO are not replacing each other and are fundamentally different. SEM is a way to improve visibility, traffic, and conversions immediately. New brands, new websites, and highly competitive sites can profit from SEM. However, successful SEM will always depend on your budget. No matter how well your site performs, the moment you stop bidding, the site will disappear from Google's ad results. This is why SEM is seen as a short-term solution that can never replace SEO.

SEO is a long-term solution for good rankings on SERPs. SEO supports the process needed for Google to naturally discover the quality and value of your site and to display it within its first results organically – without the influence of bids or payments. Optimizing a website requires a lot of input, work, and patience, as changes within Google's SERP do not happen in real-time. It may take weeks or months till we see any changes within Google. However, the moment a site is performing well in Google's organic SERPs, the impact will be long-term.

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1.3 The necessity of incorporating SEO into your marketing strategy

Being reachable on the Internet is today a must. Businesses that don't promote themselves online lose the possibility to reach a massive number of potential clients. Having a great website is not enough. With the competition growing every minute, a website needs to perform at its best, with compelling copy and visuals, and follow Google's strict guidelines to rank on the first search results pages.

> According to online ad network Chitika, 91% traffic will stay in Google's first results page (top 10 organic results) with 32,5% on the first result, 17.6% on the second result, and 11.4% on the third result. In other words, Google's first three results represent 61.5% of the overall traffic.

2 CONTENT

"Content is the King" or why content is the lead element of every SEO strategy.
It has been known for years that SEO and content are interdependent. SEO can't exist and succeed without good content, and content can't be successful and findable without SEO. Here's why: Google's only way to determine the subject of a website and the quality of its information is through text. Crawling text will indicate how good or bad the content is. Because Google's main declared goal is to provide search users with the best available information for any query, it is clear that remarkable and unique content will perform well compared to the poorly written material.

3 KEYWORD RESEARCH

Good content will determine Google to recognize the quality and value of a website, so writing compelling copy is critical. Keyword research is at the foundation of good SEO and magnetic content that converts. Without keyword research, it is hard to identify which pages should be optimized on a site. A well-performed keyword research allows you to decide which keywords to use and how to optimize the text, as well as how to enhance on-page elements such as articles and mini text or HTML elements like meta tags. Keyword research will help you discover new opportunities to rank in Google's SERPs and how to bring in the most relevant traffic.

3.1 What are keywords and what is keyword research?

Keywords can be single words, terms, or even whole phrases. They reflect search terms that an internet user types in when placing a query in the search engine. Keywords connect a website to the searcher and define for Google if a site is relevant to the search query or not. Deciding which keywords are suitable for your site can only be done by performing in-depth keyword research. When identifying keywords, we need first to understand how the internet user searches for products or services.

We classify the following kinds of keywords:
1. Primary keywords or main target keywords
2. Secondary keywords or long tail keywords
3. Stem keywords

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1 Primary keywords or main target keywords

This group of keywords represents the most relevant and obvious terms a website needs to rank for. Primary keywords always include branded keywords (for example: Fattal, Fattal Hotels), product names (Herods Tel Aviv Hotel, Leonardo Boutique Hotel Jerusalem, NYX Herzliya Hotel) and the main terms to describe the website's product, service or goal (hotels in Israel, hotels in Eilat, Jerusalem hotels). These keywords are often also the most searched and the most converting ones.

2 Secondary keywords or long tail keywords

This group of keywords represents the more detailed searches a user is performing in search engines. They don't always reflect a considerable amount of search volume but do offer sound SEO opportunities. They often reflect the best possible long tail keywords which will add up to a great amount of traffic. For example: family-friendly resorts in Eilat, all-inclusive hotel near the Dead Sea, Tel Aviv romantic hotel for couples, Israel vacation with children, business hotels close to Herzliya.

3 Stem keywords

Stem keywords are generic terms that should be used by the content writer throughout the site to enrich the written text. Stem keywords do fit with every product page and describe the site in general. By adding this kind of keywords to the main SEO pages, we create even more long tail keywords and make sure we offer Google a variety of keyword combinations. Stem keywords may look like: luxury, family friendly, near the beach, all-inclusive, in Israel, accommodation, vacation, visit, trip, promotion, and other similar words.

4 KEYWORD RESEARCH TOOLS AND HOW TO USE THEM

As mentioned before - the foundation of SEO is keyword research. To perform keyword research, we rely on tools that show volume data and keyword ideas, both critical to determining which keywords should be optimized. There are many keyword research tools available, each one with its advantages and disadvantages - some free, some available for a price. We will review the most popular keyword tools and how to use them for ideal results.

4.1 Google Ads Keyword Planner

The most popular and most used tool for SEO is the Google Ads (formerly AdWords) Keyword Planner. Mainly targeting marketers who promote websites through PPC campaigns within Google, this is an excellent resource for SEO experts. The primary benefit of this tool is more than evident: we can pull out information directly from Google, which is the search engine you're most likely be targeting when optimizing your website. For years, the numbers were exact and reliable, but Google has changed the tool and the way it displays numbers recently.

Close Variant Keywords

In June 2016 Google has announced that it will display the same search volumes for several keywords which are defined by Google as close variants, which means plurals, typos, abbreviations, adverbs and similar words may all be grouped and be displayed as one keyword. Results have been broadened to include variations in word order and function words.

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For example, when searching for the keywords "tax accounting, tax accountants, tax accountancy," we get only results for close variant keywords:


Restricted Data for low-cost users

In September 2016 Google has restricted the display of search volumes again by defining different user groups. Keyword Planner's data limitations are restraining the view of search volumes for Google Ads account holders with "limited" or "low-cost" budgets, who will only have access to search volume data in the form of search volume ranges, instead of plain numbers.
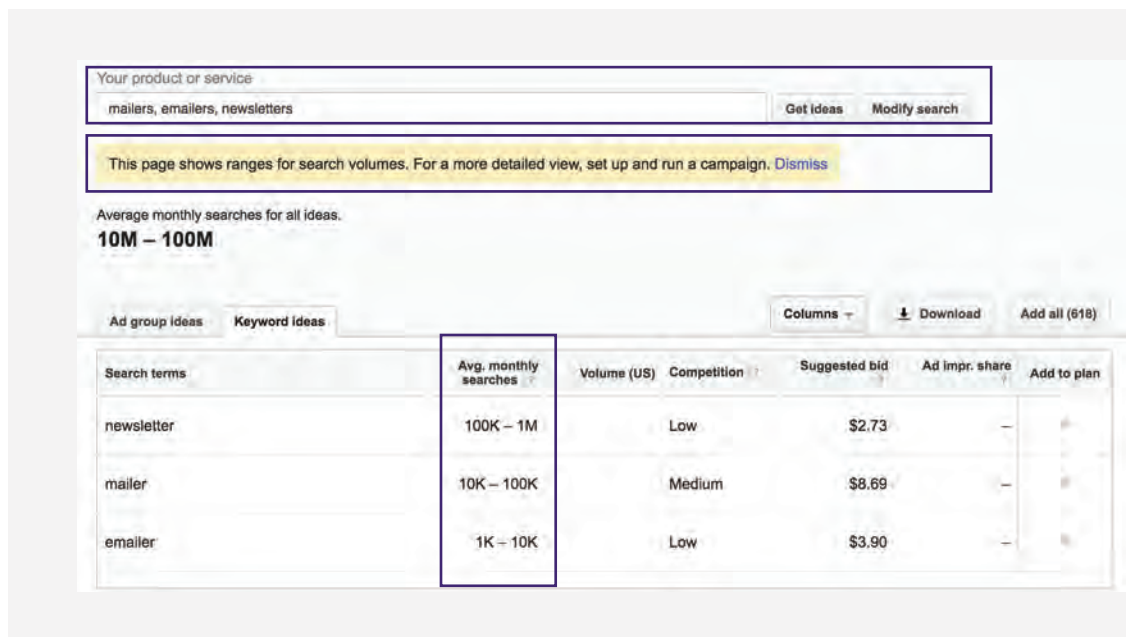
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Example of Keyword Planner Tool prior to September 2016

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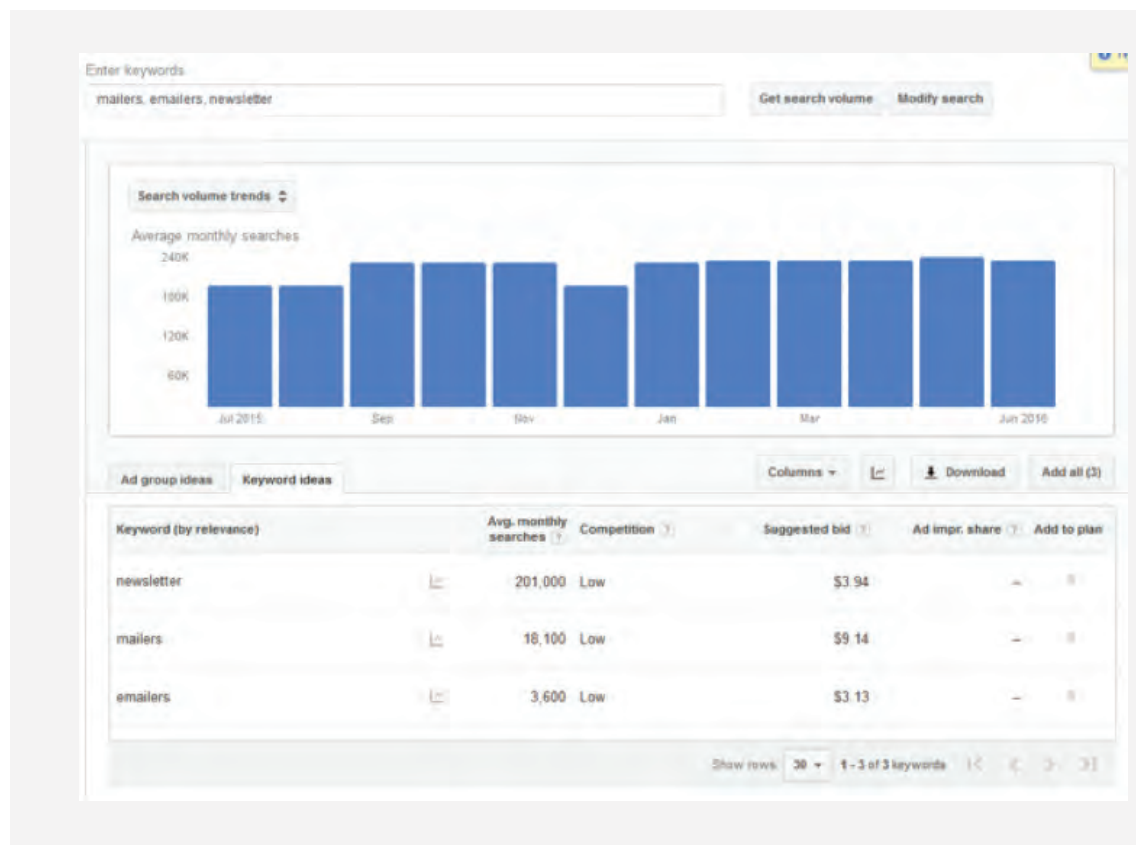
Example of Keyword Planner Tool after September 2016 using a limited account

4.1.1 How to use Google's Ads Keyword Planner:

1 Enter the Google Ads Keyword Planner at
https://ads.google.com/home/tools/keyword-planner/

2 Make sure to log or sign into an active AdWords account which has been used to perform high budget campaigns within your company

3 Choose on the top menu bar the icon tool - click under the PLANNING category on the Keyword Planner link
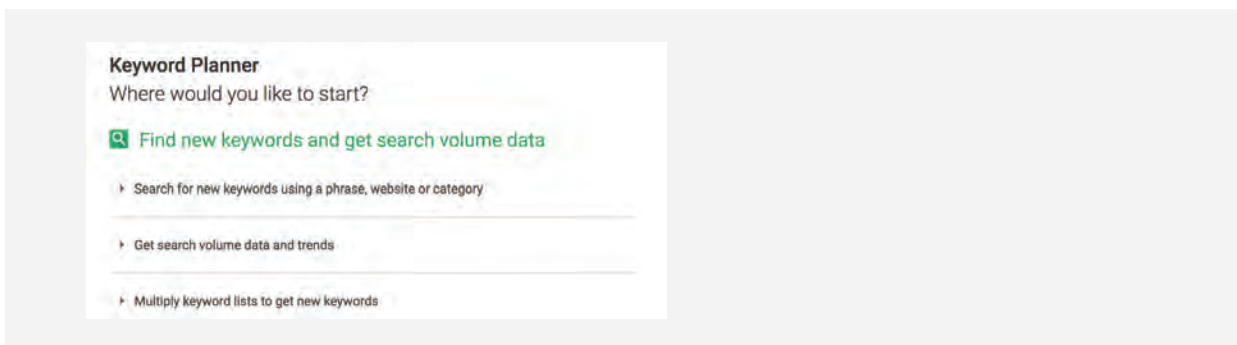
4
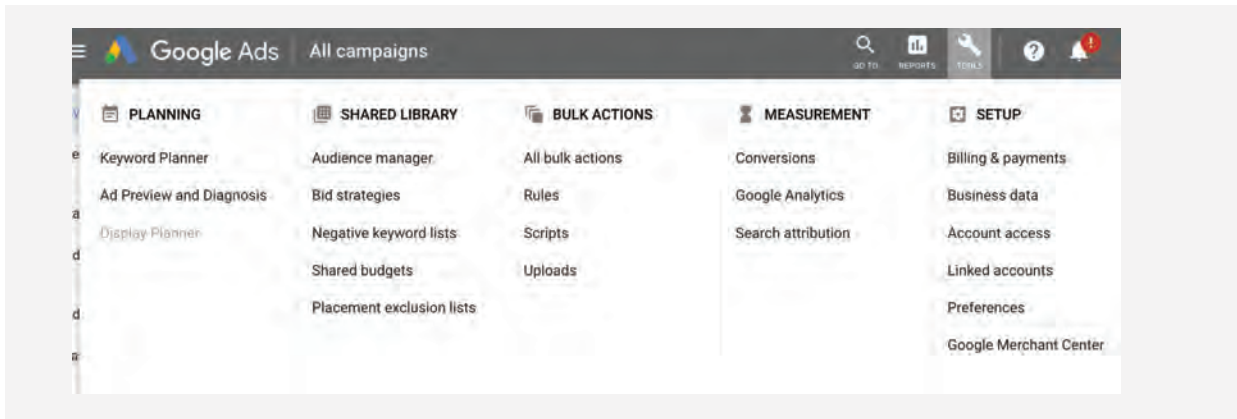
Next: make sure to choose the "previous Keyword Planner" link, which is placed on the bottom
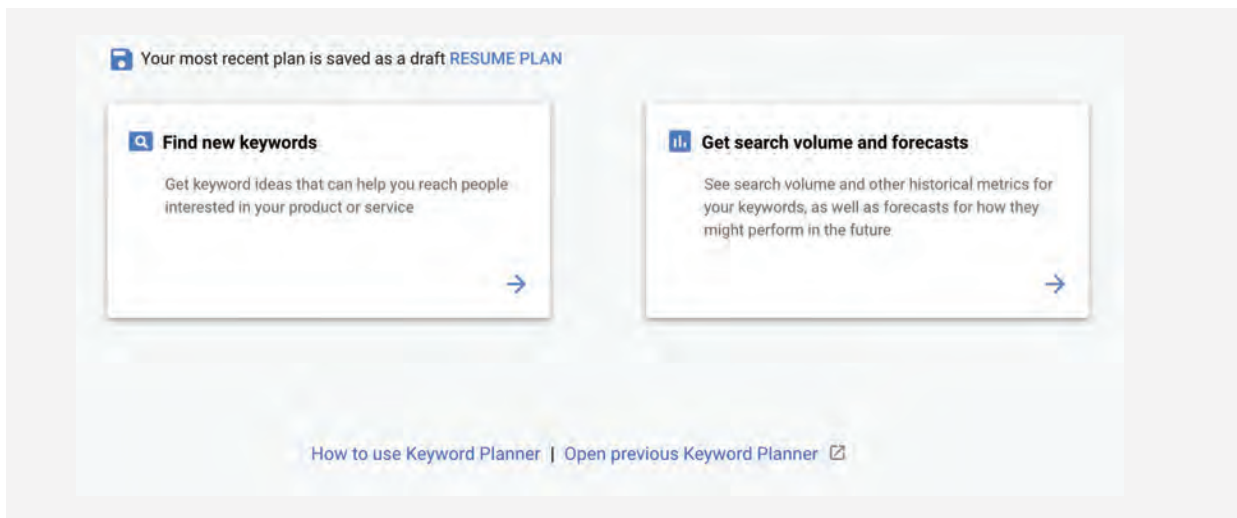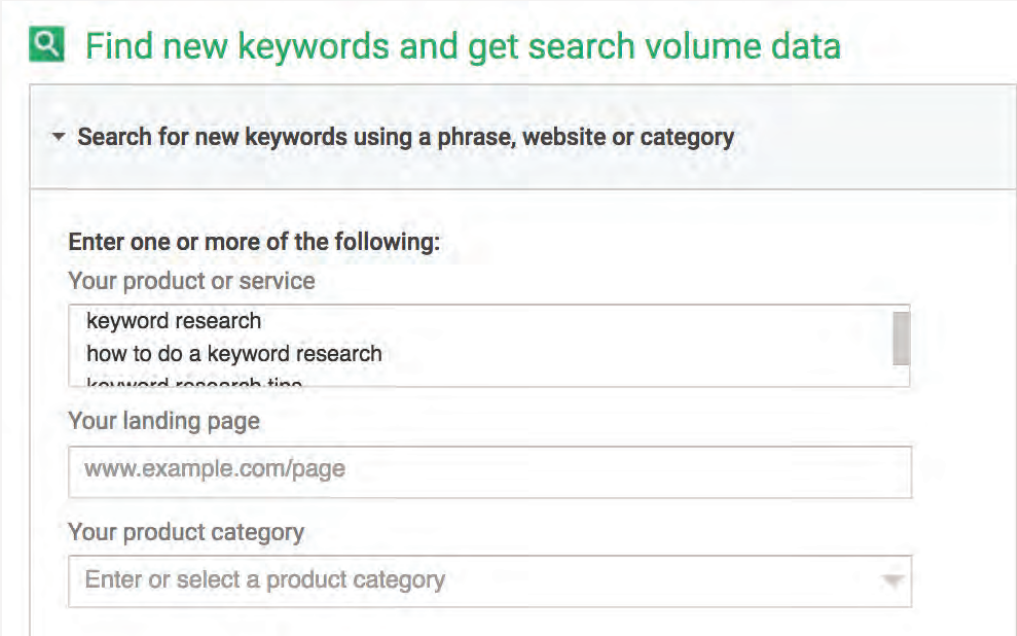

4 There are three different ways to perform keyword research within the Keyword Planner:

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Option 1 - Search for new keywords using a phrase, website or category

In this option, you will look for keyword ideas based on the keyword you submit. Clicking "Search for new keywords using a phrase, website or category," you have options to continue.

Choose if you want to perform the keyword research based on a specific keyword (first tab) or based on a landing page (second tab). The third tab can be used to define the product category relevant to your research.

After defining the first tabs, you must set the target market. Not defining it means you are looking for global numbers. However, if you are interested in specific numbers within a country, you have to change the targeting location/language.

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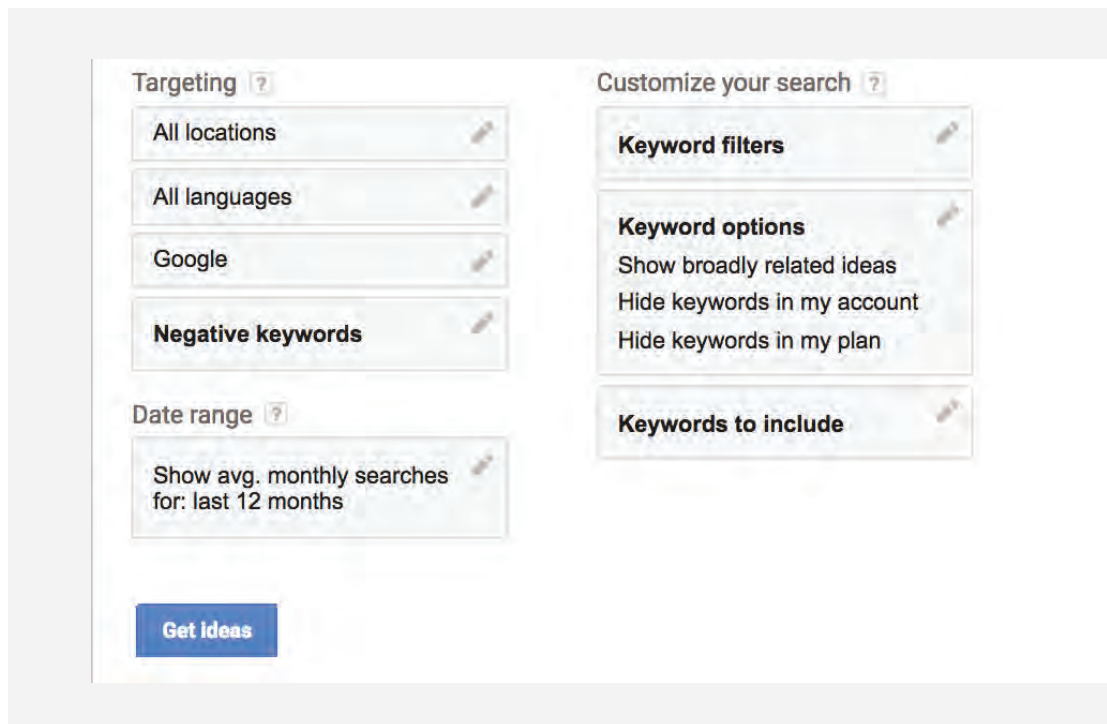
Other options are available

Location - define in which market the keyword research should be investigating

Languages - define in which language we are performing the keyword research

Google – we mostly don't change this option

Negative keywords – in this tab you can include the keyword that will not be relevant to the searched product/service. For example, searching for Teva-relevant keywords, we want to avoid any keywords that relate to shoes/sandals

Date range – not necessary to define

Keyword filters – determine and filter average monthly searches (not recommended to discover new keywords)

Keyword options – more options to filter keywords (not recommended to discover new keywords)

Keywords to include – which keyword you must be include in your search – for example to find for brand-related keyword phrases, add your brand

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Option 2 - Get search volume data and trends

In this option, you will look for the exact keywords you have submitted. The Keyword Planner will suggest no new ideas. This option is helpful if you have collected a list of keyword ideas beforehand, especially if you want to verify the search volume of a large number of keywords.

4

Type into the keywords field all the exact keywords and keyword phrases you want to investigate. Copy-paste your list of keywords into the field or upload an Excel file with all the keywords. Separate keyword phrases with a comma or list one per line. In the next tabs, you can define markets, languages and more

Location - define which market the keyword research should be investigating

Google - we mostly don't change this option

Negative keywords - in this tab you specify the keyword that will not be relevant to your product/service. For example, searching for Teva-relevant keywords, we want to avoid any keywords that are relevant to shoes/sandals

Date range - not necessary to define

Option 3 - Multiple keyword lists to get new keywords

In this option, you will be able to combine a high number of keywords and create keywords phrases quickly.

List 1 - Enter a group of keywords

List 2 - Enter a group of keywords

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After defining the keyword groups, you have additional options:

Location - define which market should be investigated by the keyword research

Google - we mostly don't change this option

Negative Keywords - in this tab you can define keyword the keywords that are not relevant to the searched product/service. For example, searching for Teva relevant keywords, we want to avoid any keywords that are relevant to shoes/sandals

5 After having chosen any of the three above options and submitted all needed information, click on the Get ideas/ Get search volume buttons
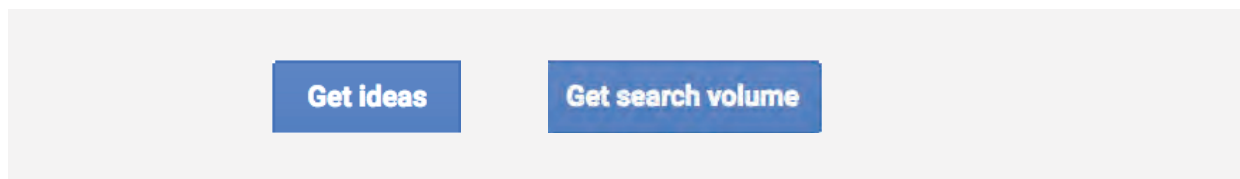
6 It's time to analyze and sort out the keywords! Start to review the results displayed by the Keyword Planner. Add relevant keywords and keyword phrases to your bucket list by clicking on the "add to plan" button on each row. Clicked keywords are marked with a green V sign.

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All collected keywords and keyword phrases can be reviewed on the righthand bar.
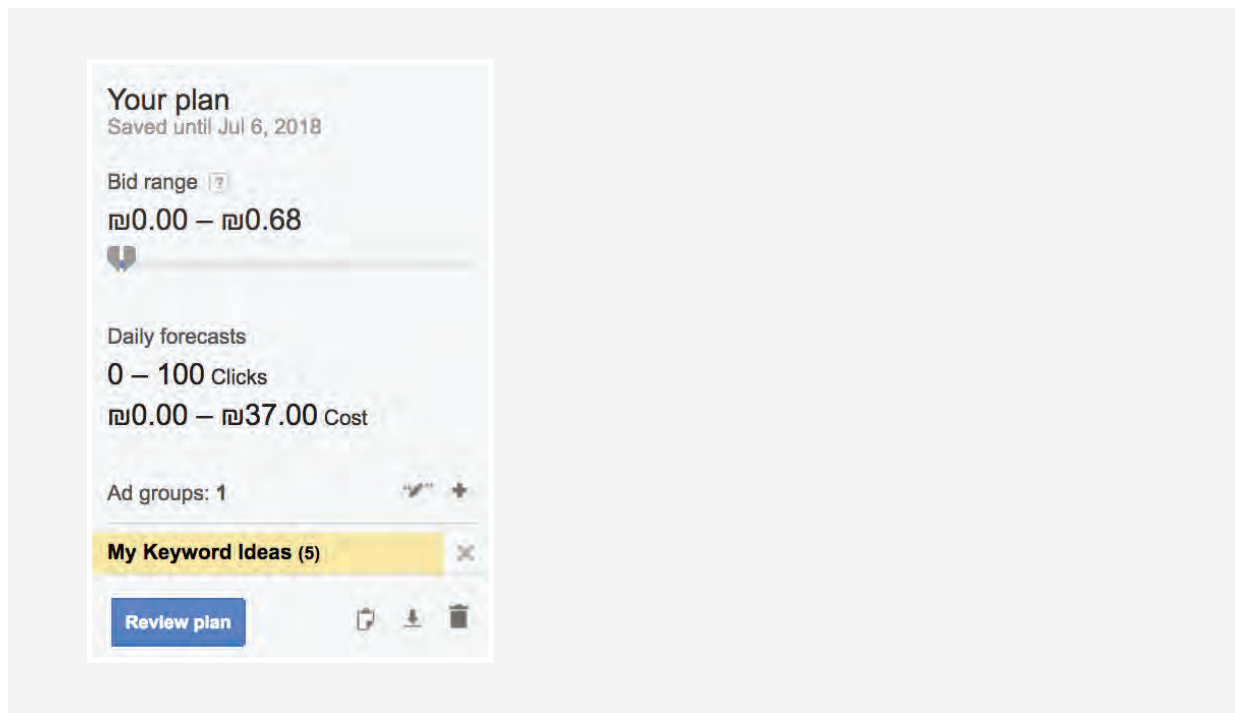
Continue performing your keyword research. Dig deeper. Play with the keywords, search options and try to find more relevant keywords that might be of interest. Does a keyword have an incredibly high search volume? Try to figure out what long tail keywords can be discovered that are useful for your site.

You can do this using the top search bar. By editing search terms within the search field and clicking "Get ideas" you continue using the current search method. If you want to change the search type (search for new keyword ideas, get search volume or multiple keyword lists) click the Modify Search button and restart. Keywords added to the list are all saved during the process.

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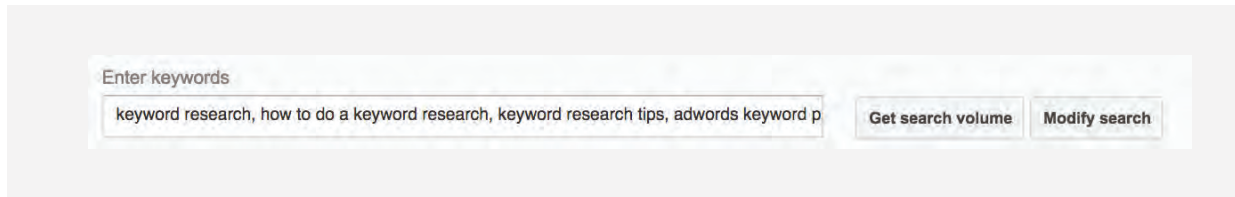
8 When you are ready, download the keyword list:
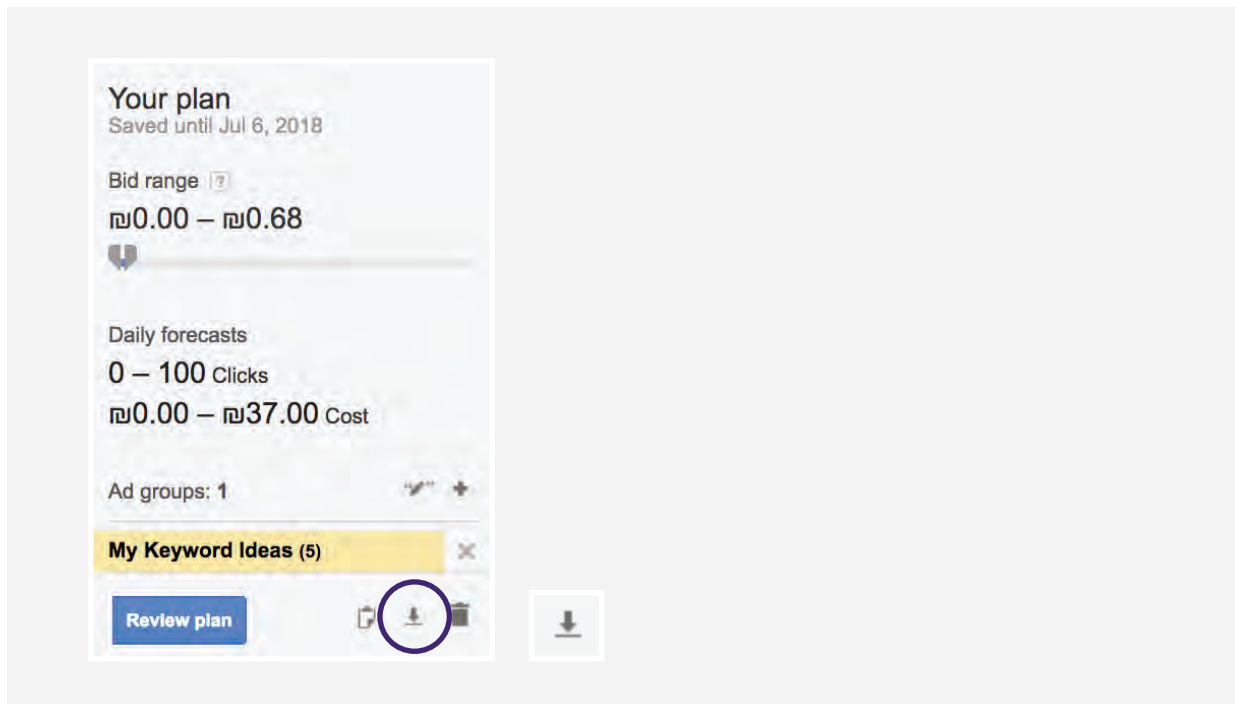
Keep in mind, when performing a search for a specific market or language, finish your keyword research and download your keyword file before moving along with a new market/language. If not, numbers within the downloaded Excel file will be mixed up.

Note: Google keeps working on and updating all its tools on a regular basis, trying to improve functionality and user experience by changing functions or user interfaces. The above demonstration is based on the default Keyword Planner UI of 2018. In the meanwhile, Google has released a new UI with new visuals and less functionality. For now both versions are available. But in the near future Google might decide to drop one of both which has less success based on the users' feedback.

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4.2 Google Trends (free)

Google Trends gives incredible insights into search data, search trends, and more. It is the perfect tool to compare keywords, product names, or even websites. Google Trends will not provide search volumes like Google's Keyword Planner, but it will compare two or multiple terms on a scale of 0 to 100, showing which keyword is more popular. The option to set up a time-frame shows the history of a trend according to seasons too. In addition, with Google Trends you can analyze trends around a specific topic or search term. You gain valuable intelligence on competitors, competitive keywords, locations, languages, and more.

Google Trends is not a classic tool for keyword researchers but may help you discover new keywords, define competitors, and help identify seasonality.
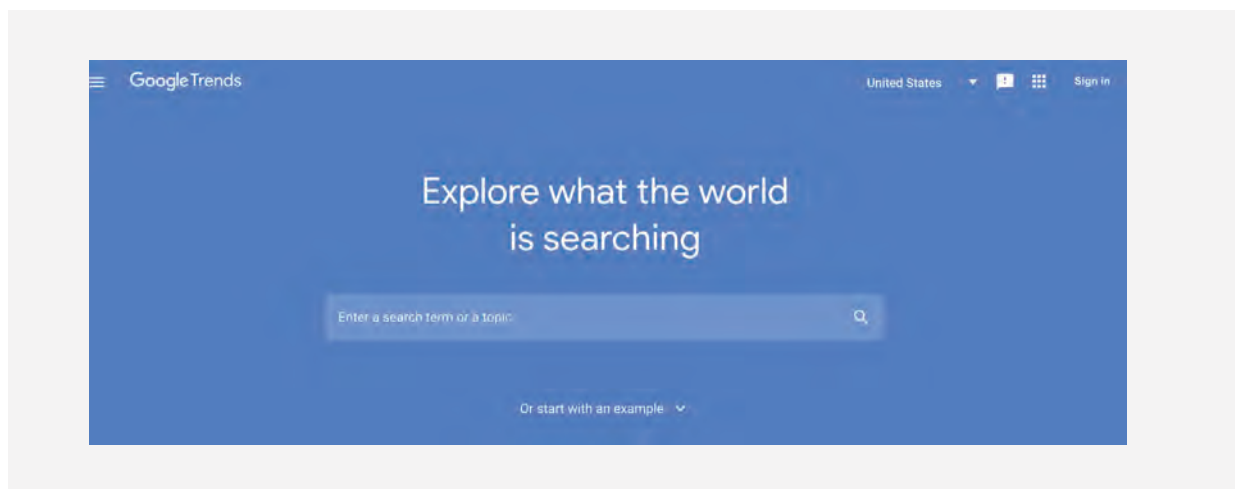
How to use it:

1 Visit Google Trends site on
https://trends.google.com/trends

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2 Enter in the search field your topic/keyword and define in the new window if your entered keyword is a search term, company, topic, or other. In our example we research the search trends about medications used to treat pain, fever, or inflammation.
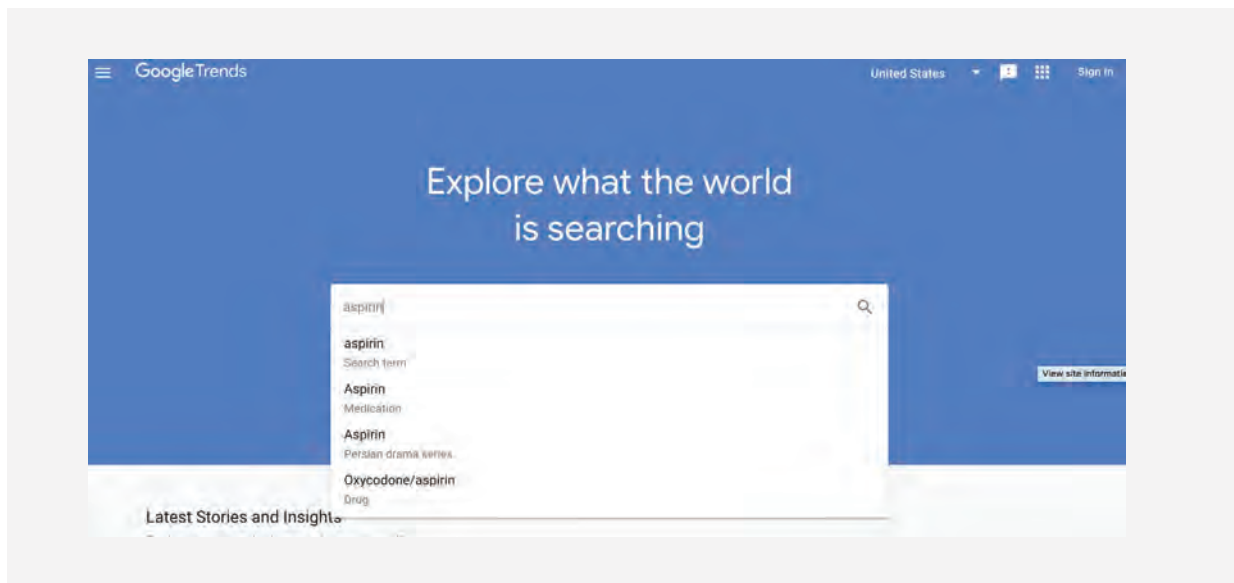
3 Define the search terms, which should be compared to the first search term
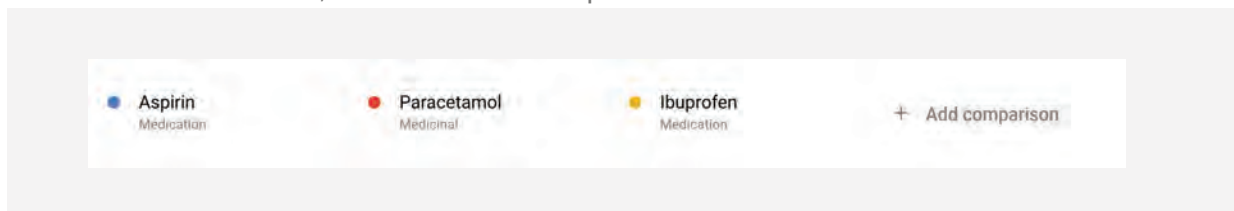
4 Optionally, you can select more parameters:
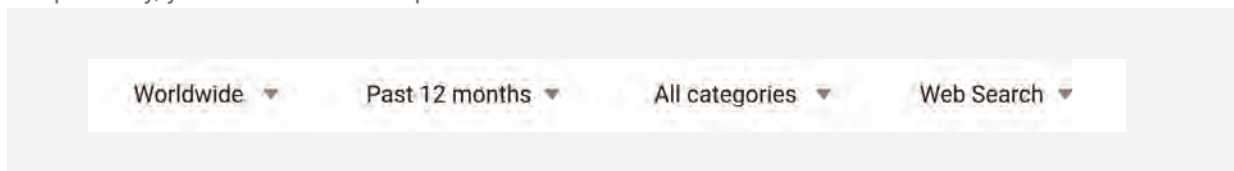
- **Location of the search** (worldwide, a specific country)

- **Timeframe** (past hour, past month, past year, custom time range)

- **Search category** (health, banking, pharmacy, etc.)

- **Web search type** (Web, images, news, Google Shopping, YouTube)

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5 Proceed with the search and anaylize the data. The first graph will compare the search trends of the chosen search terms.
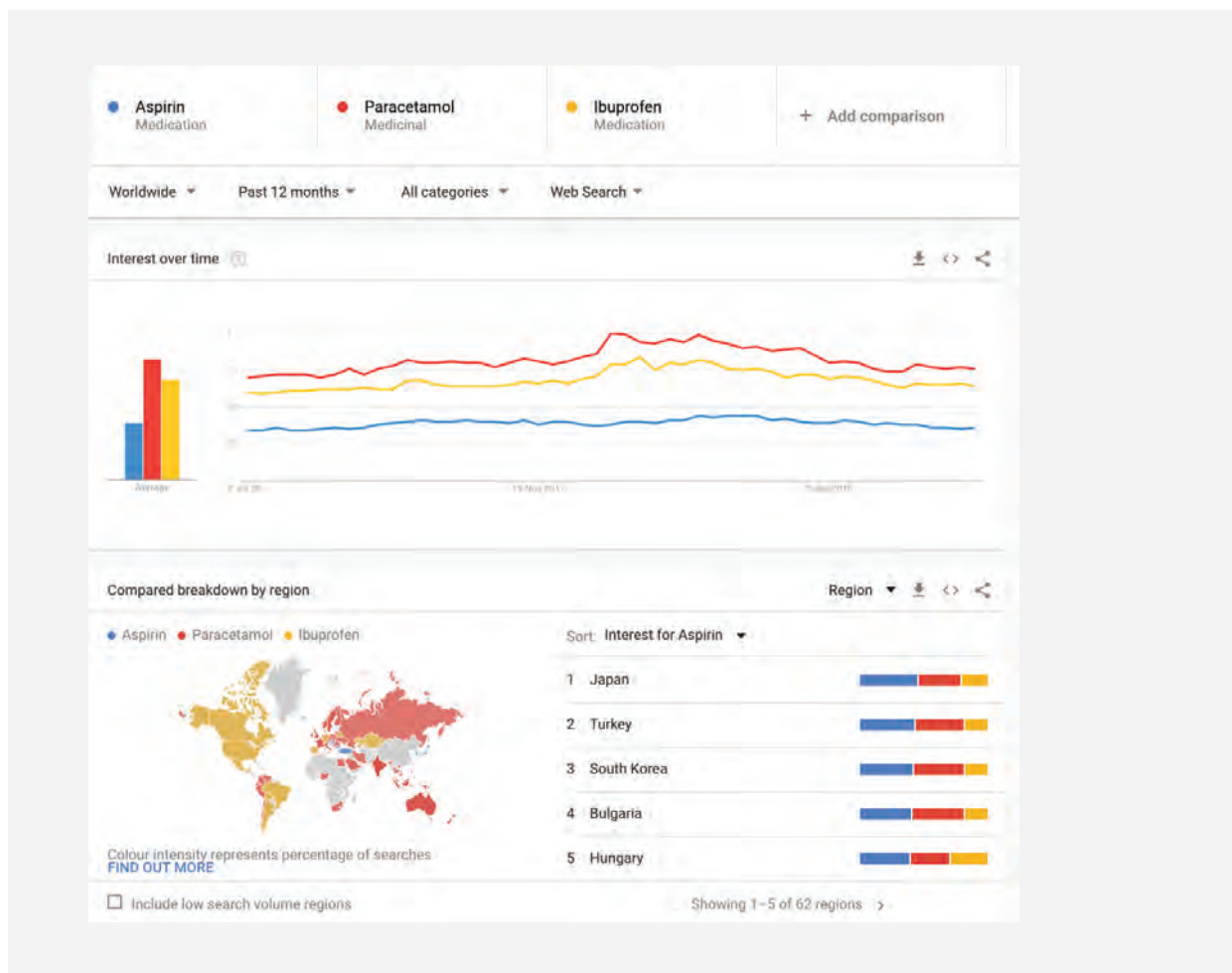
Numbers represent search interest relative to the highest point on the chart for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the peak popularity of the term. A value of 50 means that the term is half as popular. Likewise, a score of 0 means that the keyword was less than 1% popular compared to the peak. Please note that different regions that show the same number of searches for a term will not always have the same total search volumes as they only represent scales.

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Google Trends displays many other details, including "interest by region," "related queries," and so on:
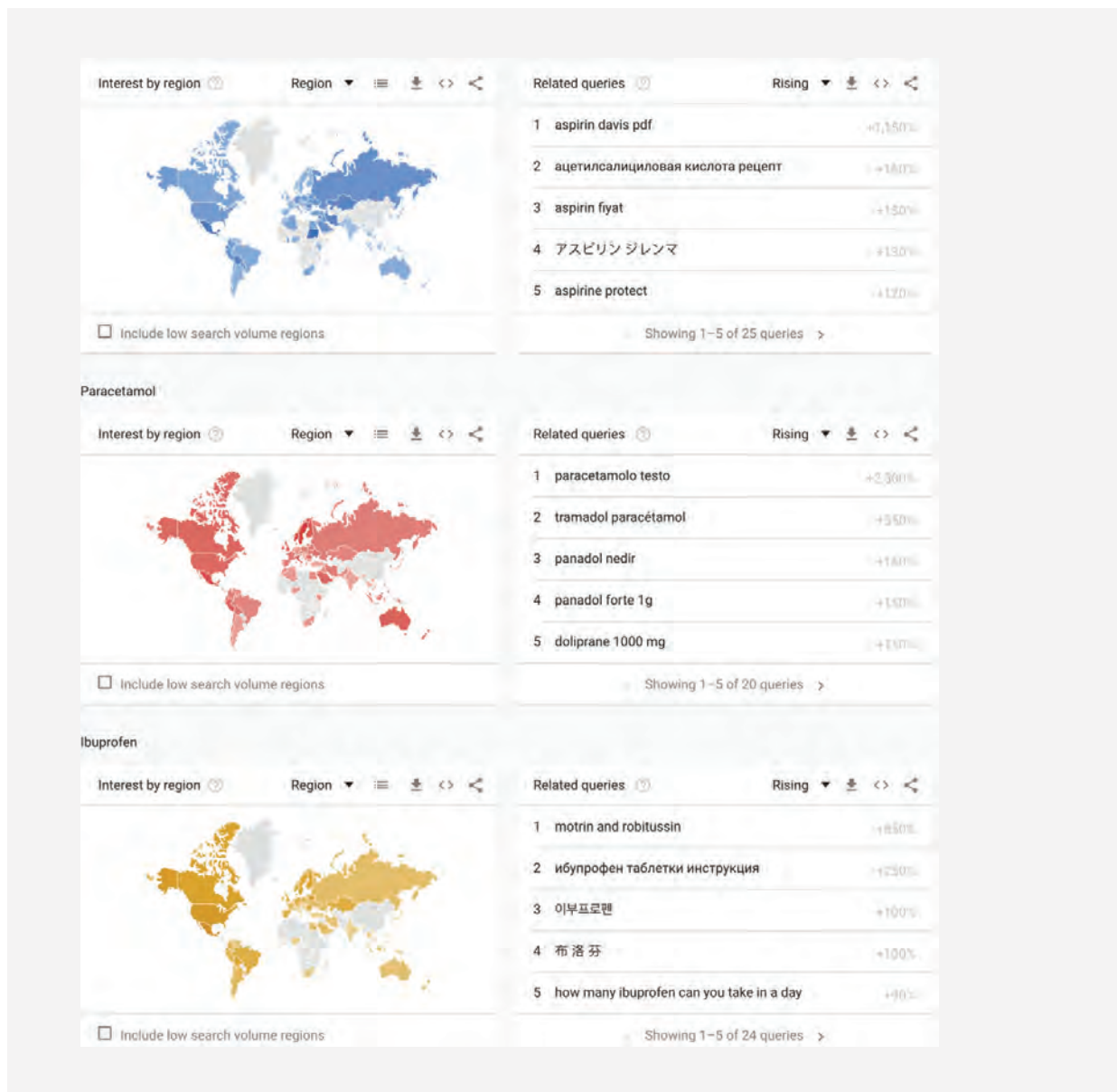
6 Discover more keyword ideas by clicking on the related queries section and continue comparing more search terms.

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4.3 Google Instant's Autocomplete Suggestions (Free)

The Google Instant's Autocomplete Suggestions is a service provided by Google within its search engine. Google will suggest possible search terms to a user when typing a search query within the search field.

Predictions are made based on a variety of factors including the popularity and freshness of the search terms. When choosing a prediction, you will perform a Google search using the keywords of your choice.

Google's Autocomplete service can be used to discover popular long-tail keywords directly from Google. This method is a quick and straightforward way to find new keyword phrases. It is a great technique to get inspired and collect ideas around a specific keyword.
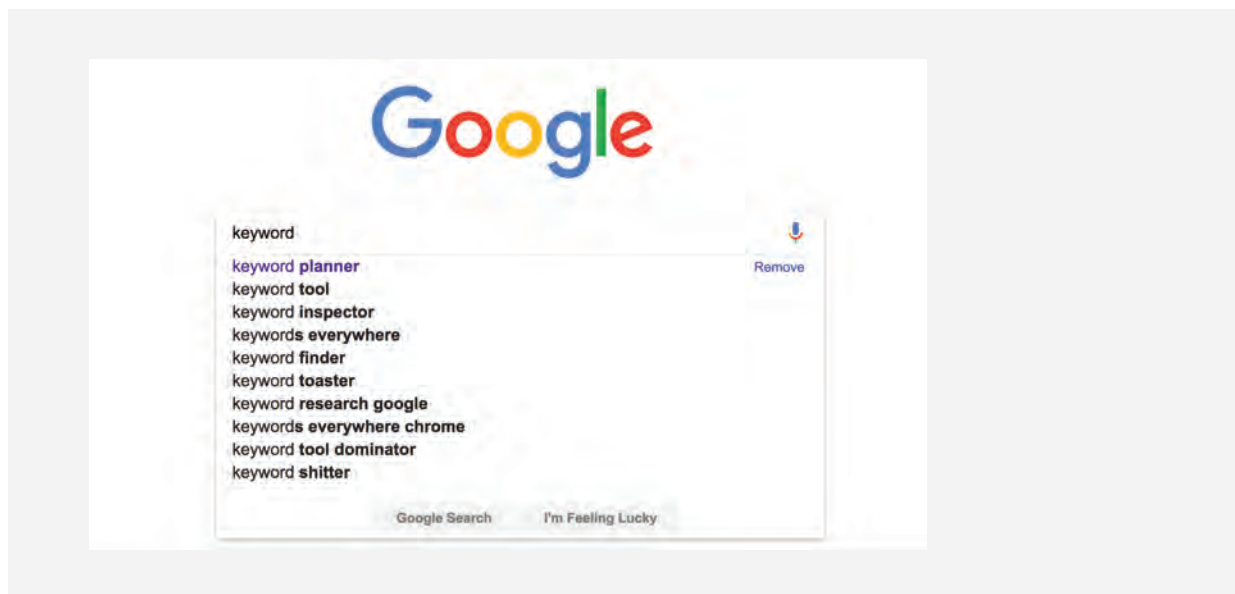
How to use it:

Go to Google's Search Engine. Type into the search box your main keyword. Wait for Google to auto-suggest keyword phrases or only the next keywords that might follow.

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4.4 Bing Instant's Autocomplete Suggestions (Free)

Bing has developed an Instant's Autocomplete Suggestion tool that can be used to identify more keyword phrases. Visit **https://www.bing.com/** and discover more keyword ideas.
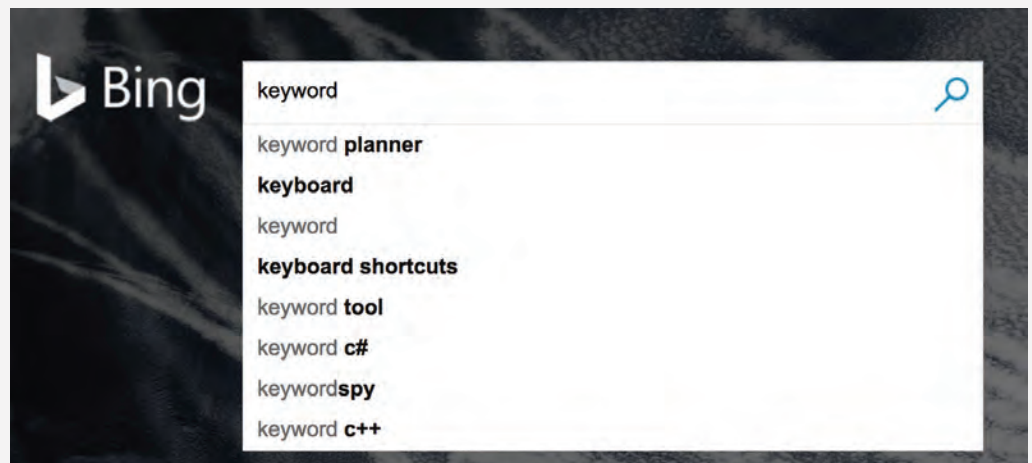
4.5 SEMrush

One of the most popular alternatives to the Google Ads Keyword Planner is SEMrush (**https://www.semrush.com**) and its keyword research feature. SEMrush is the perfect tool for any marketer, offering plenty of data and insights about traffic, keywords, social media, and more. SEMrush offers several analytics tools. For keyword research, SEMrush provides both short and long-tail tools, plus information on keywords for both PPC and organic traffic from more than 131 different countries.

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How to use it:

Enter the homepage **https://www.semrush.com** and choose the feature that serves your purpose:

• Submitting a domain/URL, SEMrush will open an overview domain analytics dashboard

• Submitting a keyword, SEMrush will open a keywords analytics dashboard

The keywords analytics dashboard is full of information about organic search, paid search, search trends, phrases match keywords, related keywords, organic search results (which reflect directly to online competitors), ads and more. Data can be adjusted to desktop/mobile, target market and even date (only for paying SEMrush subscribers). When you click on the tabs, or on the left menu links, you find more data under Phrase Match, Related Keywords, Ads, and History. Some tools require you to create a free SEMrush account, other tools are only available for paying SEMrush customers.

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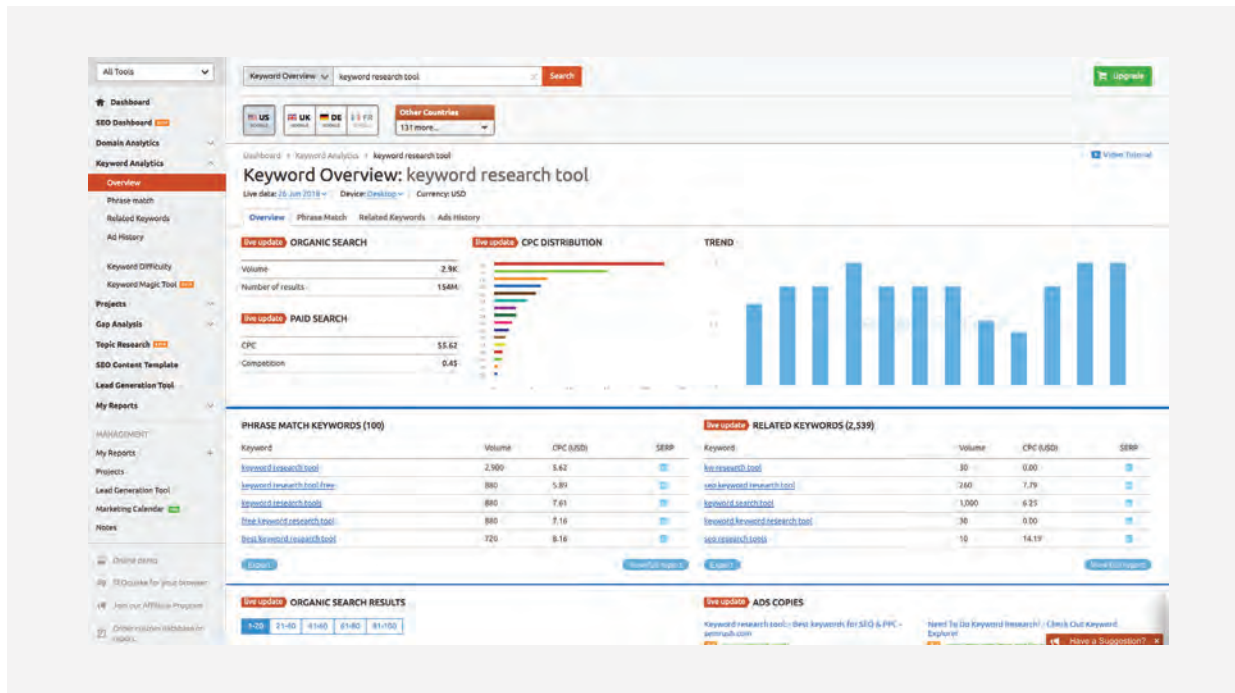
Additional keyword tools by SEMrush include the Keyword Magic Research tool and the Keyword Difficulty tool. But not all tools and data are accessible for users who don't pay for these services. For example, only the first 10 keyword matches will be displayed for every search for non-paying users. The use of the free tool is limited to 10 queries per day. A 7-day free trial is available for new subscriptions. To unlimitedly reach out the whole data and all other SEMrush tools, you must pay a monthly fee, which starts at 99$ per month.

SEMrush is a smart and quick application, known for all its details, but on the downside, it provides too much information, tools, and data that it might overwhelm new members.

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4.6 MOZ (20 searches per month for free)

MOZ is widely used by the community of SEOs, as it is known for its tools that make SEO, inbound marketing, link building, and content marketing easy. The MOZ keyword research tool called the Keyword Explorer, (**https://moz.com/free-seo-tools**) provides a mass of useful data.
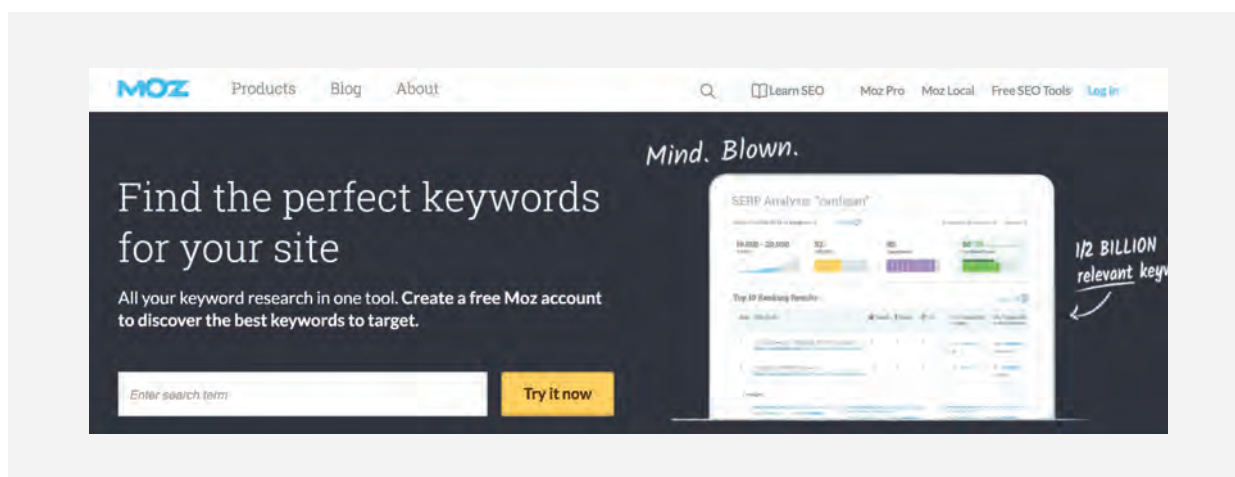
Entering a search term will lead you to an easy-to-read overview dashboard including data about monthly search volume, difficulty, organic CTR, priority, keyword suggestions, SERP analysis, and mentions.

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Keyword Suggestions, SERP Analysis, and Mentions dashboard.

The Keyword Suggestions dashboard will allow you to investigate more keyword ideas, filter, collect, and download them.

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The SERP Analysis dashboard includes organic results that reflect the organic competitors.
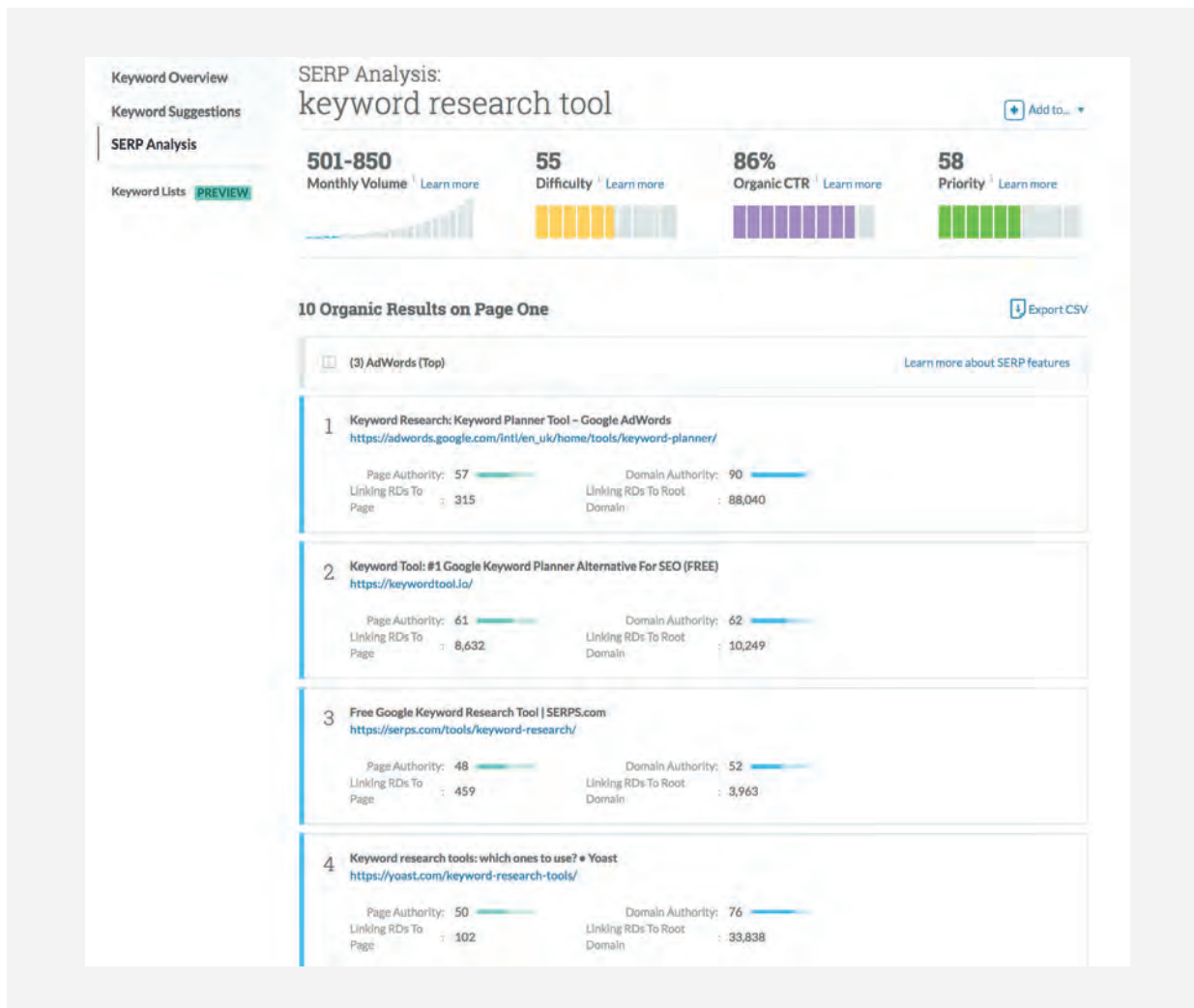
MOZ offers for non-members 19 of 20 free queries per month. A 30-day trial is available for new members. MOZ has developed an additional range of tools and features. For $149.00 per month, you get MozPro and all the intelligence you need to become an SEO wizard.

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4.7 KeywordSpy (Free)

KeywordSpy on **http://www.keywordspy.com/** is a free, easy to use tool that delivers excellent results for keyword phrases. You can perform keyword research in several markets, spy on competitors, discover who are your competitors on specific keywords, export your keywords, and more. The tabs "related" and "similar" are the most relevant sources to discover keywords. The tab "organic competitor" can help you dig deeper into the keyword research by discovering known organic competitors and spying on them:

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4.8 InstaKeywords (free)

InstaKeywords on **http://www.instakeywords.com** is a free long-tail keyword research tool providing keyword suggestions including global search volume, local search volume, number of searches in the last month, and Cost-per-click (CPC). Local search volumes for a specific market cannot be defined, so the function has poor, limited usability.
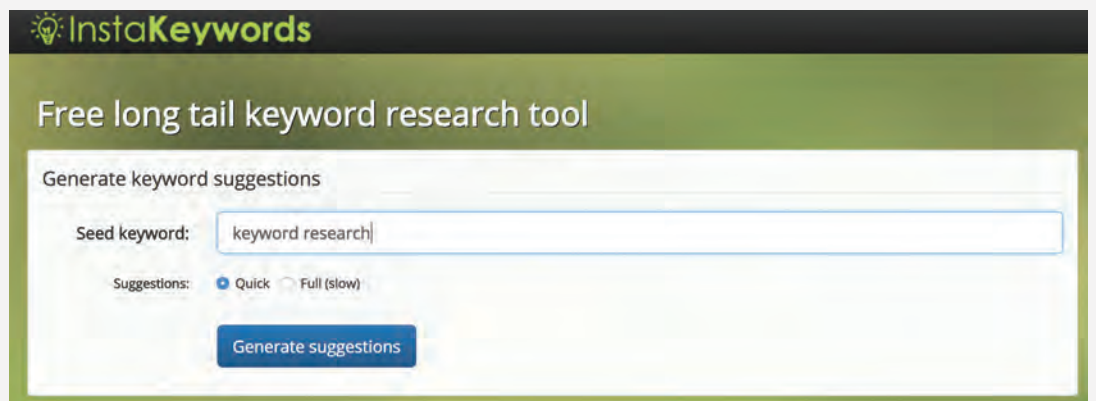
Keyword suggestions can be displayed as a short or a full report. In both cases, you can download your findings.

4

4.9 Keyword Tool (free & paid)

Visit **https://keywordtool.io** and start using the keyword tool, which provides a free version without creating an account. The tool can be used to search for keywords in specific languages and for specific markets. You have the option to search for keywords within Google, YouTube, Bing, Amazon, eBay, and the App Store:

The free version will display up to 30 unique keywords, only keyword ideas without search volumes. To get more information a monthly subscription is necessary. Plans start with a $48 fee per month. This tool can be great resource to discover more keyword ideas, not only to check search volumes.
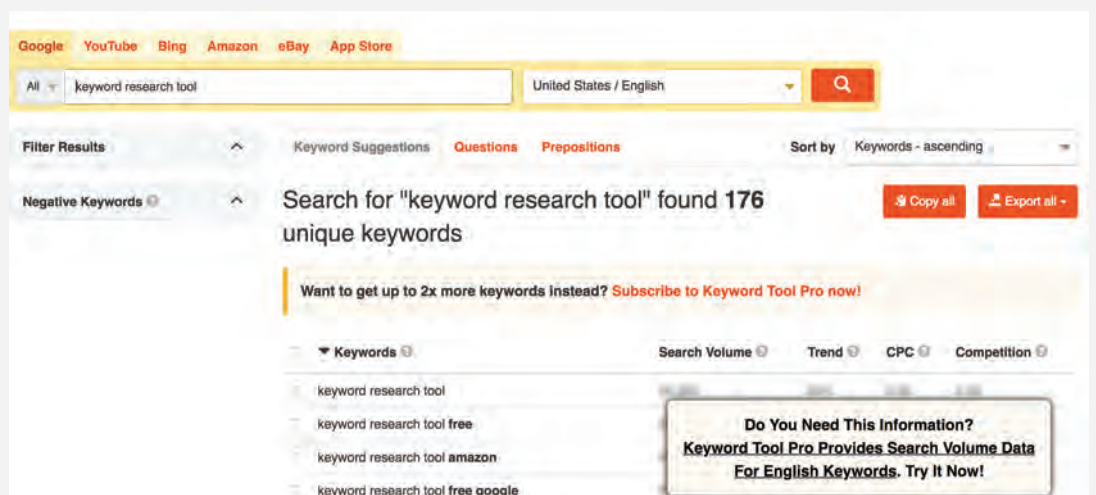
5 STEPS OF ANY KEYWORD RESEARCH

Before starting with any keyword research, it is critical to brainstorm with your colleagues and peers. Ask yourself, what is my main product/service, what defines my product/service, for what does my brand/company stand for, what makes our product/service unique, is my product targeting a specific audience, a particular location? Who is my main target audience and how would they most likely search for my product/service?

Spying on the competitors is an essential part of the process too. Visit the competitors' websites and have an in-depth look at what they are doing to rank. Which are their keywords? Some keyword research tools are helping you to identify the competitors' keywords with ease.

Based on what you find from brainstorming with your peers and spying on the competition, build a template (for example on an Excel sheets) with different main keyword groups, arranged by topic. Create long-tail keyword phrases too.

Perform your keyword research using the suggested tools and techniques and collect as many as keywords as you can.

Verify relevance. Some keyword phrases might reflect a large search volume, but high search volume does not always indicate that the keyword is relevant to your product/business. Perform a search on Google for the specific keyword within the corresponding search engine (Google.com or the local Google) and check the first 5 to 10 results. Is an internet user searching for the specific keywords really looking for your product/business? Is the word too generic? Try longer keyword phrases!

Make sure you are targeting the correct keywords, and we are not missing out any keyword opportunity.

6 OPTIMIZING YOUR CONTENT

After performing the keyword research, it is critical to review existing content to ensure it is properly optimized. If there is no content yet, it is your job to guide professional content writers to write SEO-friendly copy that includes your primary target keywords.

6.1 Definition of SEO-optimized content

These are the characteristics of content that is SEO-ready. It is not enough to repeat the same keywords over and over to rank. Quality content written for actual human beings is what Google likes best:

Important characteristics of the content:

1. Text should provide the best possible information to the reader
2. Text should be written in a user-friendly, compelling, and engaging way
3. Text should be marketing oriented – we want to sell a product/service
4. Content should be unique within the world wide web
5. Content should be optimized and findable by Google

6

6.2 Keywords per page

The first step prior to optimizing or writing texts for your website is to define which keywords should be targeted on which pages unless you have a one-page site. To avoid internal cannibalism or any kind of internal duplication, it is essential to optimize a specific keyword set per page. Assign keywords to individual pages and provide the context to optimize each effectively. Create one page per topic/product/service. A keyword set per page can be one keyword only or a group of 5 different keyword phrases. In some cases, the variety of keywords that describe the same product can be even higher. It is critical to find the most searched keyword variations and define them as priority keywords within a page. This refers mainly to priority and secondary keywords. Stem keywords that are more generic should be used widely throughout all pages.

6.3 How should an optimized text look like

No real magic formula assures success within Google when writing a text, but some basic guidelines are important.

Length

Although Google does not offer guidelines on text-length, typically, wordier copy ranks better than short texts. Long texts must be user-friendly though. They should also deliver fresh and exciting content. In general, we like to state, that content that provides useful and detailed information (and a more extensive range of keyword phrases) should at least include 300 words.

Placement of keywords

The keyword placement on each page is critical and can influence how Google "trusts" your site. Different signals are sent to search engine bots when a keyword is placed at the beginning of the first or at the end of the last paragraph of text. Keep in mind, that some text may remain hidden behind a "read more" button, which represents a less recommend placement of priority keywords. Make sure the target keywords are mentioned as close to the beginning of the text as possible. It is also recommended that keywords are being distributed throughout the page.

6

Keyword density

Once we talked about percentage when defining keyword density. Today, as we promote a set of keywords within the same page, we avoid the technical term of keyword density. Instead, we try to include as much as possible keyword varieties of a main target keyword.

For example, if a site such like Arena Hospitality offers a unique "glamping experience in Croatia", the recommended keyword phrases might be "family friendly glamping site in Croatia", "glamping resort in Croatia", "glamping holidays in Croatia", "luxury glamping with kids", "glamping in Croatia with children" etc. Based on the keyword research we would know which keyword phrase is the most searched one. The primary keyword phrase should be used a couple of times (2+) per every 200 batches of words within a text. It is equally important to use all the relevant keyword phrase varieties within the text!

6.4 How to optimize your existing content

Based on the chosen keyword set for a specific page, the existing text should be reviewed.

- How long is my text? Is it above 300 words?
- Does the content provide the best possible information to the reader?
- Is the content unique to the site? (Avoid duplicate pages!)
- Is the content unique online?
- Were the main keywords used in the text?
- How often were the keywords used?
- Where in the text were the keywords placed?

If any of the statements mentioned above are answered negatively, it is necessary to consider rewriting or adjusting the content. The fastest way is trying to implement keywords in existing text. This should be done carefully to keep the text-flow natural. Rewriting the existing text is an option that requires more input, but usually leads to better results.

6

6.5 How to create optimized, engaging quality content

Keep in mind, the content writer is not writing for Google, but for the readers! Text needs to be user-friendly and to engage with the reader to keep a visitor on the page and convince him or her that your product/ service is worth it. Google may send the visitors to your site, but it's up to you to make the sale. The more time a user spends on your website, the better your ROI. SEO benefits from this too, as time on site is a ranking factor.

6.6 Avoid over-optimization

Using keywords unnaturally, too often and in an unrelated context can be seen as over-optimization or even "spam." Google's algorithms are smart and can identify over-optimization, which lowers the quality of the content. Keep the user experience in mind and find the perfect balance.

6.7 Avoid internal cannibalism

Texts used within your own site should not be copy-pasted on countless pages. As each page targets a different set of keywords, it is important to write unique content for every single page. This is not only important for the user, who gets all his search info on this one page, but also for Google. Google does not like displaying duplicate content, so creating more pages with the exact content is pointless. Which page is more relevant to the user? You should avoid internal cannibalism to dodge any complications or even low estimation by Google.

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6.8 Unique content vs. duplicate content

The quality of your content will determine how Google will value your website. However, quality is also defined when we are compared to our competitors, all those other websites that are targeting the same keywords, selling the same products or services. To stand out, we must ensure that our content is unique! Copying content from another site is one of the biggest mistakes you can possibly make when planning your SEO strategy. It can kill your site's chances to rank for months. Even if it is only a couple of sentences or a set of words: use blockquotes and proper attribution if you must show anything someone else wrote before you. When Google detects duplication, as in two websites with the same text, it will decide on its own which one is the original (usually choosing the site that published it first, but it can also happen to ignore the first source). Duplicate content can lead to penalties or be the reason why a site will not rank on Google's SERPs.

6.9 What to do when duplicate content was found on the internet

If you identify a site, which has copied/scraped your content and displays it without permission, you must act. First, you must contact the webmaster of the infringing site, letting him know about the duplication and asking him to remove the content from his website. When dealing with content theft, it's unlikely to get a response and a peaceful resolve. Keep pro-active attitude and write new content for your site. Upgrade your content and make it even better. Yes, the issue of duplication will always exist, and there will be always smaller and weaker sites that will copy your content. Nevertheless, unique content is the best way to ensure the best possible assessment by Google. You can also file a DMCA takedown notice – but it will take time to be resolved, and it doesn't apply worldwide. The more time you waste on fruitless fights, the weaker your rankings. For full DMCA details visit: **http://www.dmca.com/Takedowns.aspx**

7 OPTIMIZING ON-PAGE ELEMENTS

Keywords should not be incorporated only in the body text of a page. We have a vast range of other on-page elements that are crucial for SEO.

7.1 Meta titles

Meta titles are coded into the HTML of a website and may not be visible on pages. Once placed within the code, a meta title will appear only in the Google SERP or in the browsers' upper part on the tab window. Leonardo Hotels is, for example, using the following meta title for its homepage: "Leonardo Hotels | Book Direct & Enjoy 10% Discount on All Bookings"

And at the top of a browser's tab window the meta title looks like this:

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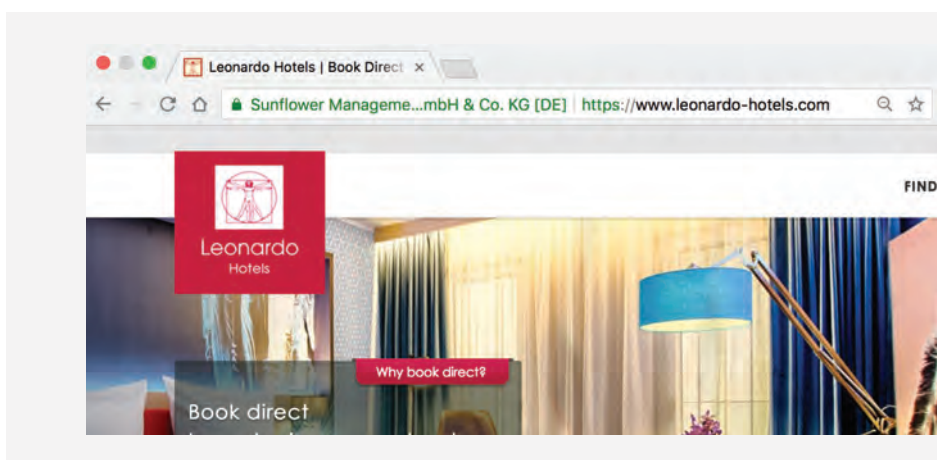
SEO requirements for meta titles

A meta title needs to be unique for each page, to include the main keyword phrase of a page, and to stay within 70 characters or less including spaces. It is advised to be short, sharp and void of unnecessary "stop words" like "function words," such as *the, is, at, which, and on*. The Brand name of the company should be visible as much as possible, while the main target keywords still occupy a primary position at the beginning of the meta title:

Example of a meta title schema: main target keyword – company name.

7.2 Meta descriptions

Meta descriptions are not visible on the main pages for website visitors. Once placed within the HTML code, the meta description will appear only in the Google SERPs when and if Google doesn't choose to display a snippet of the content more relevant for the keyword query. Leonardo Hotels is, for example, using the following meta description for its homepage: "Choose over 170 hotels and book directly online! Enjoy 10% discount on all bookings made as AdvantageCLUB member • FREE Wi-Fi • Lowest Price Guaranteed for business trips or holidays in Berlin, Munich, Amsterdam, Barcelona, …"

Leonardo Hotels | Book Direct & Enjoy 10% Discount on All Bookings
https://www.leonardo-hotels.com/ ▼
Choose over 170 hotels and book directly online! Enjoy 10% discount on all bookings made as AdvantageCLUB member • FREE Wi-Fi • Lowest Price ...

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SEO requirements for meta descriptions

Meta descriptions are guiding internet users through Google's result pages and help a site to attract users to enter. To improve UX, click-through rates (CTR), and conversions, you must customize and optimize meta descriptions for each page.

> The meta descriptions should be relevant to the content of the pages, include main keywords, engage with readers, attract a reader to click on, and stay within the limit of 160 characters including space. Google has in December 2017 launched a longer allowance of characters (up to 320) which has been recalled in May 2018.

7.3 Meta keyword tags

Meta keyword tags used to be a critical SEO element when optimizing a site. Today they are utterly irrelevant for most search engines but are still used as an indicator in minor search engines. Meta keywords should reflect the 3-5 main keywords that are targeted for every page.

7.4 Image alt attributes and image titles

One way Google understands the content of an image is by crawling alt attributes, title tags, and related text. As images may contain important information for internet users, it is essential that Google can "crawl" them properly.

Image alt attributes describe the content of the image for the search engines. They have a similar function like the meta tags, allowing image search engines to correctly index images, thus driving traffic to your site.

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We have to differentiate between two concepts - alt attribute and image title tag:

01 Image alt attributes (or alt tags)

Image alt attributes function as an alternative source of information for the visitors and for the search engines. A short description will be displayed in the frame of a picture if the image cannot be found or for users who disabled images in their browsers. Google has confirmed that it mainly focuses on image alt attributes when trying to understand what an image is about.

Reachable image:

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Non-reachable image displaying image alt tag:
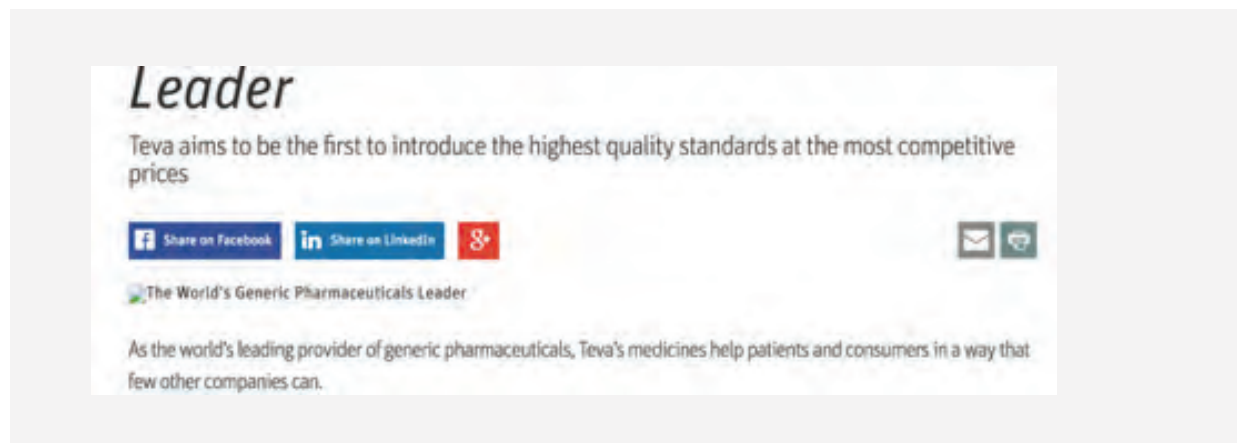
It is recommended that an image alt text describes in a couple of words what is seen in the picture: here we don't define what it means or why it intends to sell.

For example, the below image in Tevapharm.com uses the following image alt tag:
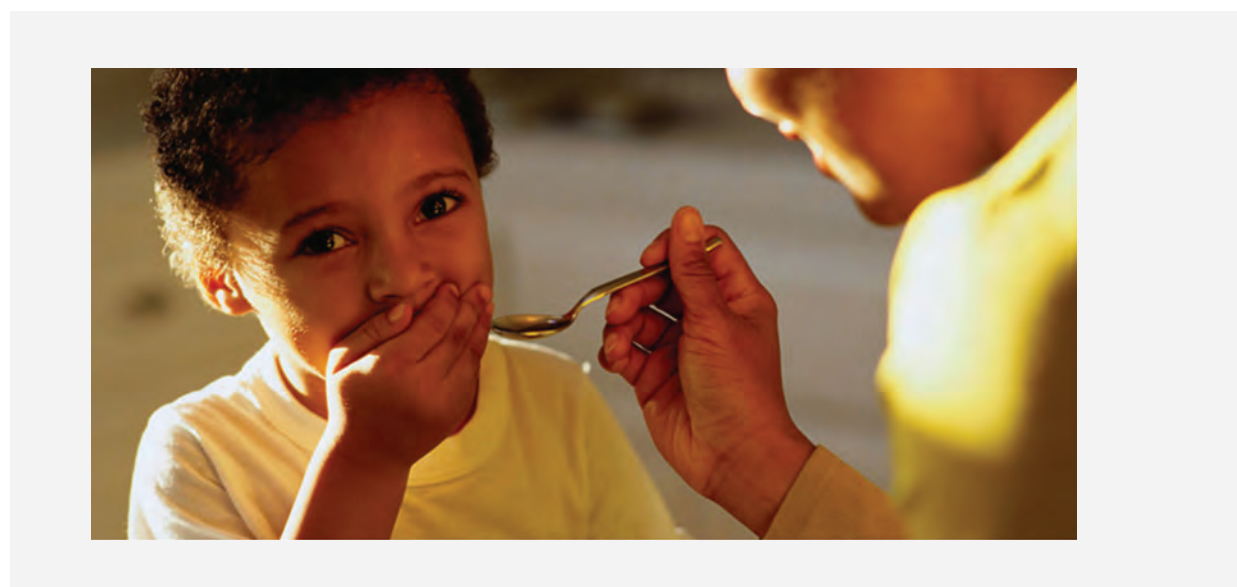
Current wrongly used image alt text on Teva Website = "The World's Generic Pharmaceuticals Leader."

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Although the image seems to be optimized, the alt text is wrongly used. The alt text does not reflect the content of the picture – a boy who does not want to get his medicine, or a mother giving his son a spoon of medicine.

Example of possible image alt text: "Young boy refusing a spoon of medicine."

02 Image title tag

The image title tag is giving additional information for a picture, by naming the topic/intention/title of the image. For example, in Firefox and Opera, the image title will pop up when the mouse hovers over a picture.

Possible title: "Caring for your child's health with Teva Pharmaceuticals." or "A spoon of medicine is better with Teva."

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7.5 HTML headings (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5 & H6) – Title attributes

HTML headings or title attributes are tags within the HTML code that define font, style, size, paragraph breaks before and after, and any white space necessary for a specific word, sentence or section within the page. HTML defines six different levels of title attributes, which follow a top-down hierarchy, starting with H1, followed by H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6. Creating title attributes within a text is like creating headlines and subtitles.

HTML title attributes are crucial for correct indexing by search engines, as they structure the content of a page and indicate to search engines the main topic of a page, enforcing the relevancy of specific keywords. That's why H1s always mirror the main title of a page and include the main keywords we want to target within the same page. It is important that each page uses only one H1 that should be placed at the top of the page. Subtitles or other content elements within the page should follow the order of H2 to H6; no heading should be skipped.

8 TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

8.1 URLs

The page addresses (URLs) are key elements from a search engine point of view. With optimized URLs, search engines can index a site better, minimizing errors.

The URLs should :

- Always be static – an URL should not be dynamic

- Stay short – short URLs are preferred by search engines and user-friendly (memorable)

- Refrain using needless parameters, which can be a result of inner filters or dynamic URLs - for example, example.com/?=abc

- Never use any special characters (* ? %)

- Never use diacritics (ä ô)

- Avoid internal coding, numbers (example.com/ake2e98)

- Always use only lowercase letters (example.com/lowercase instead example.com/LowerCase)

- Try to include your main keywords (example.com/keyword)

- Reflect the internal logical side structure using folders (example.com/category product)

- http/https should be consistent side wide. HTTPS is preferred since Google announced simple http is a security issue and will no longer display sites that do not comply: https://security.googleblog.com/2018/02/a-secure-web-is-here-to-stay.html

- Trailing slashes should be consistent side wide (example.com/category/ vs. example.com/category)

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8.2 Site structure

A site should divide its content into main content areas, visual for the users and logic for the search engines. SEO-friendly site structure should follow clear rules, using a logical structure: folders and subfolders, consistency, good URL structure, SILO structure.

URL example

- example.com/silo/category/supporting

- example.com/woman/dresses/prom
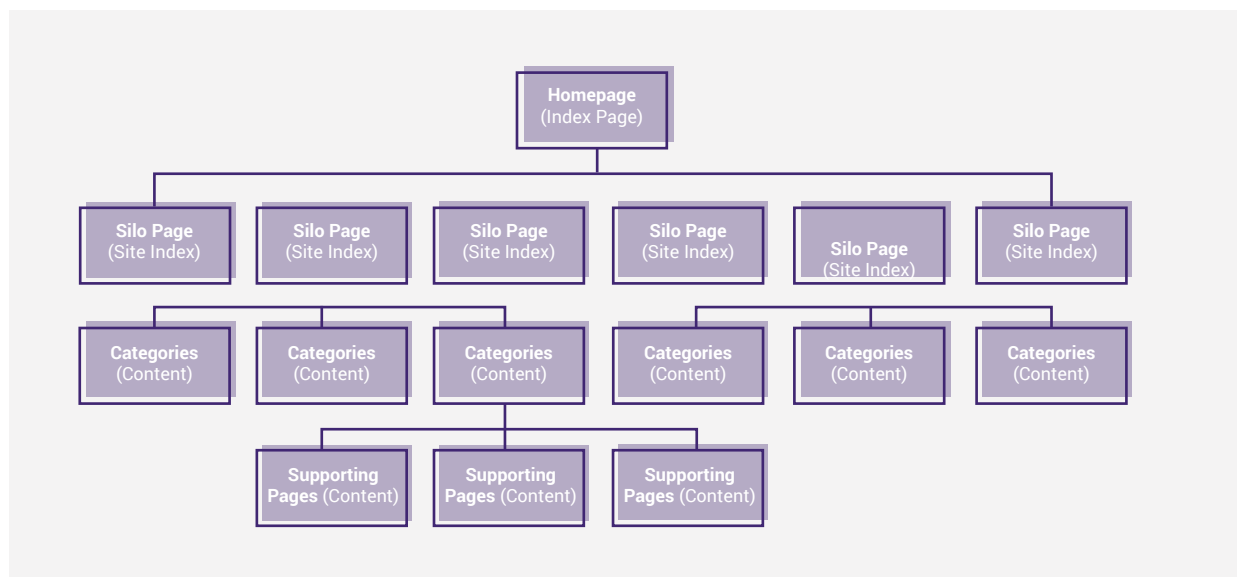
8

8.3 Meta robots

The meta robots tags are codes within the pages' HTML heads that show search engine bots instructions for how to crawl or index content and how to scan the displayed links. Whereas robots.txt file directives give bots suggestions for how to crawl the website's pages, robots meta directives provide more firm instructions on how to crawl and index a page's content.

The code of a Meta Robot Tag is :
<meta name="robots" content="[PARAMETERS]">

The parameters within the meta robot tags that need to be set up are:

- **Noindex: don't index a page**

- **Index: index a page.**

- **Follow: even if the page isn't indexed, follow all the links on a page and pass equity to the linked pages**

- **Nofollow: don't follow any links on a page or pass along any link equity**

- **Noimageindex: index any images on a page**

- **None: equivalent to using both the noindex and nofollow tags simultaneously**

- **Noarchive: don't show a cached link to this page on the SERPs**

- **Nocache: same as noarchive, but only used by Internet Explorer and Firefox**

- **Nosnippet: don't show a snippet of this page (i.e., meta description) on a SERP**

- **Unavailable after: stop indexing this page after a particular date.**

A standard code to instruct crawlers to index and follow a page looks like :
<meta name="robots" content="index, follow">

A robots' tag should be placed in the <head> section of each page. If no meta robots tags are set up, search engines will index and follow a site and all its pages by default

8

8.4 Cellular adoption

Traffic from mobile platforms, and especially smartphones, is on the rise all over the world, and for some markets has exceeded 50% of the web traffic. Mobile visits are different in essence from full-screen platforms visits, and require adjustments to the site, mostly using minimal visual load and enlarged action buttons.

It is critical to ensure that a site is mobile-friendly. Google provides an internal tool that tests if a website is mobile friendly because the mobile-first index of Google will determine your rankings too.
https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly

8.5 Cross-browser compatibility

Web users have a great choice of browsers: Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, Safari, and Opera, among the most popular.

SEO and user experience demand that a website works properly on all browsers, especially on their latest versions.

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8.6 Canonical tags

A canonical tag is a code used to help webmasters prevent duplicate content issues. The code is placed within the HTML header of a duplicate page and refers search engines to the "original" or "preferred" version of the same page. With the canonical tag, duplicate content issues can be maintained within the same site without hurting the site's performance.

> The canonical link tag looks like this:
>
> <link href="https://www.example.com/" rel="canonical" />

Generally, it is recommended to use on each page a self-referring canonical tag, which indicates to Google and other search engines that the page is the original and not the duplicate.

8.7 Robots.txt file

A robots.txt is an external text file that tells the search engines crawlers how to access the pages on a website. The robots.txt file regulates how robots crawl the web, access and index content, or which part of a website should not be crawled or indexed, by allowing or disallowing the behaviour of crawlers. On every website, there are pages or sections of a website that have no value to a visitor or a need to rank on Google's SERP. Those pages do not need to be indexed by Google, but they are still reachable by a visitor when entering the website.

For example:

- Content which is not relevant for the external user
- Private content that is displayed when being logged in within a site
- Engineering teams staging site
- Result pages when performing a search within a site
- Preventing search engines from indexing specific files on your website (images, PDFs, etc.)

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Important note when you create a robots.txt

- A robots.txt should be placed in a website's top-level directory

- A robots.txt is case sensitive: the file must be named "robots.txt" (not Robots.txt, robots. TXT, or otherwise).

- Each subdomain on a root domain uses separate robots.txt files.

The two main commands are:

- Disallow: do not crawl a particular URL or pages within a subfolder

- Allow (only applicable for Googlebot): access a page or subfolder even though its parent page or subfolder may be disallowed.

We recommend including the following code into the robots.txt file to allow the Google crawlers to review all CSS and javascript files to ensure total transparency.

> User-Agent: Googlebot
>
> Allow: .js
>
> Allow: .css

8.8 HTML sitemap

An HTML sitemap is a regular HTML page, reachable by visitors and crawlers, which lists all existing categories and pages. It helps crawlers to index and reach all the pages and allows visitors to have a better overview of the site and find a specific page. A great example is the HTML sitemap of Tevapharm.com: **http://www.tevapharm.com/sitemap/**

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8.9 XML sitemap

An XML sitemap can be seen as a roadmap for search engine crawlers, linking to all existing pages that need to be indexed. An XML sitemap improves to control over various search engines indexing parameters and allows proper monitoring of indexing through the webmaster's interface. The XML sitemap is reachable by search engine crawlers and not useful for the site's visitors. All reachable pages should be displayed correctly within the XML sitemap. You could also prioritize specific pages by setting up priority grades between 0.1 (very low) and 1 (very high).

A sitemap can be created manually or online using free XML sitemap generators such as **https://www.xml-sitemaps.com**

8

All pages must be placed within the XML sitemap even when error links are removed. Implement your priorities correctly too:

Example of https://www.carmelon-digital.com/sitemap.xml

```
url>
<loc>https://www.carmelon-digital.com/</loc>
<lastmod>2019-01-23T17:33:31+00:00</lastmod>
<changefreq>daily</changefreq>
<priority>1.0</priority>
</url>

<url>
<loc>https://www.carmelon-digital.com/digital_marketing_services/ppc_sem/</loc>
<lastmod>2019-01-03T17:50:14+00:00</lastmod>
<changefreq>weekly</changefreq>
<priority>0.8</priority>
</url>

<url>
<loc>https://www.carmelon-digital.com/articles/the-importance-of-technical-seo/</loc>
<lastmod>2019-01-23T16:42:34+00:00</lastmod>
<changefreq>monthly</changefreq>
<priority>0.6</priority>
</url>
```

8

After creating an XML sitemap, you can submit it to Google using the Search Console Sitemaps tool

8.10 Customized 404 error page

Every website needs to create and maintain at least a 404 error page, which will appear when a broken search query occurs. The 404 error page is notifying the user that the requested page does not exist anymore (or perhaps has never existed). When landing on such a page, the server sends out a message to the web browser that the HTTP request in question was invalid. As far as visuals and design are concerned, just customize a 404 page to prevent the loss of visitors. A 404 error page should match your branding guidelines and the overall look and feel of your website (logo, main navigation, some sort of content or message, and linking elements).

8.11 Content markup

Content markup means structuring and marking existing content of a website for Google to access relevant information fast. Google will have a better understanding of your context and will be able to display it through different search features or rich results.

Rich results on Google's SERPs include rich snippets, enriched search results that contain more than basic information, knowledge graphs, carousels, and more. See detailed examples within **https://developers.google.com/search/docs/guides/search-features**

Marking different types of content (using the Schema protocol or other tools) can significantly assist in correctly indexing of the data on your site. Your website will be displayed better by Google in response to a broader array of queries, and sometimes also receiving a (visually) more substantial representation in the search results.

8

8.12 Breadcrumbs trail

Breadcrumbs trails are links within an inner page of a website, and function as a navigation tool that allows the users to see where the current page is standing compared to the other pages of the site. Structure and hierarchy are critical for the UX of a visitor but also Google. The breadcrumb trail is one of the many tools that give the users feedback about where they are on the site but also gives them the possibility to move smoothly backward throughout the hierarchy of the pages. Breadcrumb trails are an essential tool because search engines are using them to scan websites.

Displaying breadcrumbs to all inner pages is important.
Breadcrumb trails should always reflect the inner structure of a site.
The last link of a breadcrumb trail that stands for the current page should not be clickable

Example:

Home > Category > Product > Supporting Page

Home = example.com/

Category = example.com/category/

Product = example.com/category/product/

Supporting Page = current page – no link should be implemented

9 MOBILE

The impact of mobile devices in our daily life cannot be ignored. It has directly influenced our daily life and standards, or the way we engage with the internet. Online marketing must adapt to a new reality: mobile optimization is a mainstream SEO strategy. While in 2015 Google reported more searches conducted on mobile than on any other device, 2016 was the first year that mobile took over desktop as the primary device used to access websites. With every year passing, the percentage of mobile traffic rises, while desktop traffic lowers.

Until 2017, Google differentiated between desktop and mobile SERPs, showing different results based on the desktop/mobile version of a site. Since 2017 the mobile-first rules supreme, which demands SEOs to prioritize the mobile performance of a website. Again: today, Google's results on the desktop are based on the performance of the mobile site.

Mobile optimization is an SEO must today, as it defines how a site will perform in Google. As the majority of visitors access a site from mobile devices, it is critical to ensure that visitors have a flawless experience. A site needs to be mobile-friendly, with responsive design to adapt to different mobile devices, to respond fast to any requests, and to display all the necessary information at a glance.

9.1 Mobile friendly and responsive

Until recently, webmasters used to create two versions of the same website: a desktop version and a mobile version. Often, each version would be reachable through different URLs, either domains or subdomains - example.com vs. mobile.example.com or m.example.com. Google would crawl each site separately, value each site individually, and display each site on different SERPs (one for mobiles and one for the desktop). The various site versions were seen as two separate websites. This changed in 2017 when Google introduced the mobile-first rule which ranks a site based on its mobile-friendliness. If your site displays well on mobile devices you are safe. Otherwise, fix everything to comply before it's too late.

Mobile-friendly means mainly that mobile devices can read and display the website correctly. Software and scripts that may prevent a flawless software experience (for example Flash) are redundant. Text should be readable without zooming, content size must adapt to the screen, and links should be clickable without proximity issues.

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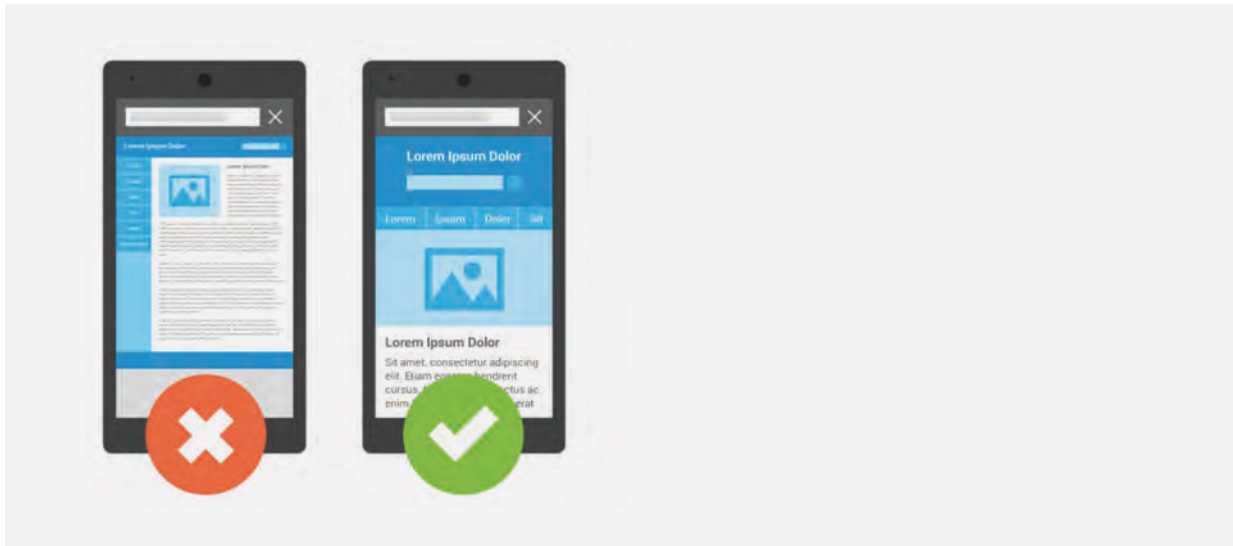
As a part of being mobile friendly, a website needs to be fully responsive. Responsive design describes a site's ability to adapt itself, its visuals and content to the format of any mobile device, no matter the size of the screen, to deliver the best possible user experience. Elements within the site, controlled by style sheets, JavaScript, and HTML, will be used and displayed differently when being accessed by different mobile devices. The design structure and visuals of the site will look differently from device to device. The domain or URL of a site should not change when being accessed by a different device.
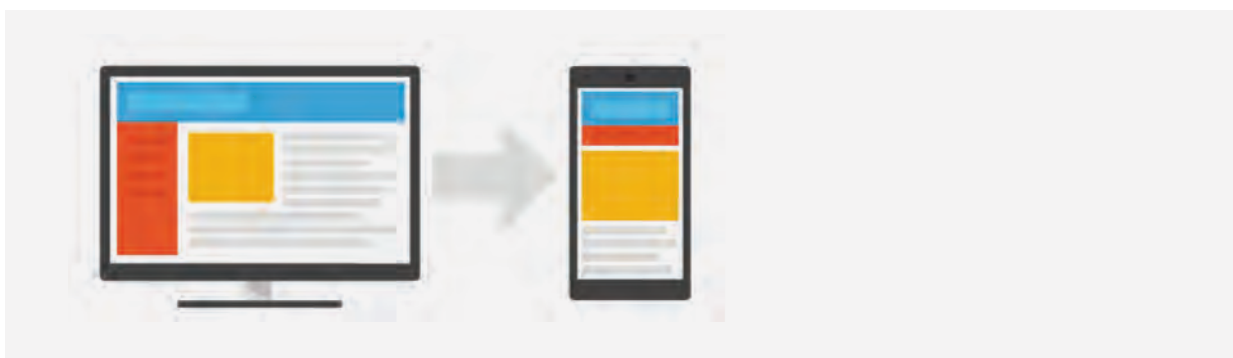
Sites must adapt themselves to whatever device they are accessed from. Google offers a free mobile-friendly test tool:
https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly

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9.2 Design

Design and visuals such as buttons, banners, images and more need to be adapted or recreated to ensure a site is responsive. Mobile design elements should be easily clickable, understandable by the viewers, and functional. Responsive design often requires a lot of input from the designers, but it is critical to ensure excellent mobile SEO performance and the best possible UX.

9.3 Content

With mobile-first, the content strategy of every site needs to be revised. Many websites would display rich content and inner pages on the desktop version, and the minimal content on mobile. Today, knowing that a website is valued based on the mobile version, all-important content needs to be displayed on both versions. Using responsive design should mean that all content is reachable by desktop and mobile devices. The same goes for content. A 400-long article on the desktop may be bad UX on mobile. It is critical to review all content and find a solution for the mobile devices. Rewriting content to fit on mobile devices may be one option. Hiding text under a "read more" tab may be another option. Multi-pages are often also a great solution. Whatever content strategy is chosen, keep in mind, reducing or hiding content on mobile will affect the performance of the whole site.

10 SITE SPEED

Many factors of a website will define its performance in Google SERP. One of the most important factors that get quickly overseen is the site speed, especially when optimizing for mobile. At the beginning of 2017, shortly after the mobile-first announcement, Google has confirmed that the site speed is one of the signals used by its algorithm to rank pages. A website with fast loading times tells the search engine bots that they can crawl as many pages as possible using their allocated crawl time. A slow load time will impact the performance of the site, its indexation in Google, and its ranking. Site speed is important for SEO but may be even more critical for the user experience. It is already known that a site that does not load within 3 seconds on mobile results in high bounce rates and loss of visitors.

Loss of conversions and revenue are the final consequences of a slow site too:

You could take actions such as:

- Reduce server response time

- Eliminate render-blocking JavaScript and CSS in above-the-fold content

- Leverage browser caching

- Prioritize visible content

- Optimize images

- Minify CSS

- Minify HTML

- Minify JavaScript

- Enable compression

- Optimize the mobile experience

- Avoid landing page redirects

To identify what is the speed of your site and what actions should be taken, use the mobile test and site speed test tools developed by Google:

- https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/
- https://testmysite.withgoogle.com

11 MONITORING

Every site should be monitored and reviewed precisely, on a regular basis. As a site reflects a brand and its reputation, it is essential to ensure that it works smoothly, flawlessly, delivers a great user experience and satisfies the visitor, while converting. Who wants to understand his own website and the incoming traffic, needs to monitor and analyse carefully. Monitoring traffic enables you to know who are the people visiting your website, where they are coming from, how much time they spend on a specific page, when and from where they are accessing your site, which % of your traffic converts, and when a visitor drops the process of conversion, what is the most viewed page, which % of traffic reached your site through search engines or direct traffic, and so much more. Monitoring the performance of a site enables you to know how Google sees your site, which pages/links are broken, does the site have any technical problems, how does your site rank in the Google SERPs, etc.

Webmasters have many tools to monitor their sites in detail. Some tools are free, while others require paid subscriptions. Here's a list of basic, free monitoring tools including some offered by Google, plus an example of paid tools which used internally by our staff at Carmelon Digital Marketing.

11.1 Google Tag Manager

https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1008015%20%20

Google Tag Manager is a tag management system that allows webmasters to implement and manage tags and code snippets quickly and easily. These are designed for applications like AdWords, Google Analytics, and 3rd party instances that can easily be managed, updated, and maintained. Changing specific codes or implementing custom tags for a site can now be handled from the Tag Manager user interface instead of editing a site's code. This reduces errors and frees a webmaster from having to involve developers when configuring tags.

11.2 Google Analytics

https://support.google.com/analytics/answer/1008015

Google Analytics is a tool that offers webmasters detailed reporting on website traffic. Google Analytics tracks users' visits sitewide, showing where they came from, how long they spent on your site when they left the site, and much more. Within the Google Analytics dashboard, a webmaster can set up goals and utilize E-commerce tracking, to better understand the journey of a visitor and how to improve conversion. Defining and implementing goal tracking and e-commerce systems in the analytics account is critical. Utilizing demographics and interest-tracking will give the webmaster useful insights about the market and visitors that are entering the site.

11

11.3 Google Search Console

https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/4559176

Google Search Console is a reporting and management tool that allows webmasters to understand better understand their websites form a technical standpoint. The Google Search Console is the main channel of communication with the Google search engine, collecting and displaying information like technical site performance parameters, errors, etc. It serves to maximize the website compatibility with most traditional search engines.

11.4 Carmelon Tool Center (CTC)

To achieve efficiently and successfully digital marketing results, it is critical to perform detailed QA audits, keep track of reporting, monitoring ranking and performance, and have access to qualified SEO maintenance tools. As a digital marketing company covering multiple marketing services such as SEO, PPC, ORM, CRO, UX, Web Analytics and more, Carmelon Digital Marketing has purchased through WEBCEO a white label platform which was named Carmelon Tool Center, or in short CTC. The CTC platform is the perfect tool for all team members but also the company's clients to analyse a site, check a sites performance and make sure the site is correctly optimized.

The CTC includes a wide range of tools, reports, and possibilities to dig into the data of the site. With the 15 indispensable online SEO tools, CTC is covering reports around site audits, site optimization, link building, social media, marketing analytics, ranking reporting and more. One of the most significant benefits of the CTC is that all kind of reports are summarized in one platform, may it be site speed, missing meta titles, duplicated meta descriptions, error pages, rankings of target keywords, or broken images, reachable for client and team. The CTC can be set up to send regularly all kind of reports per mail, displaying all the needed information in a simple, comprehensive way.

11

Find below an overview of all main subjects covered by CTC
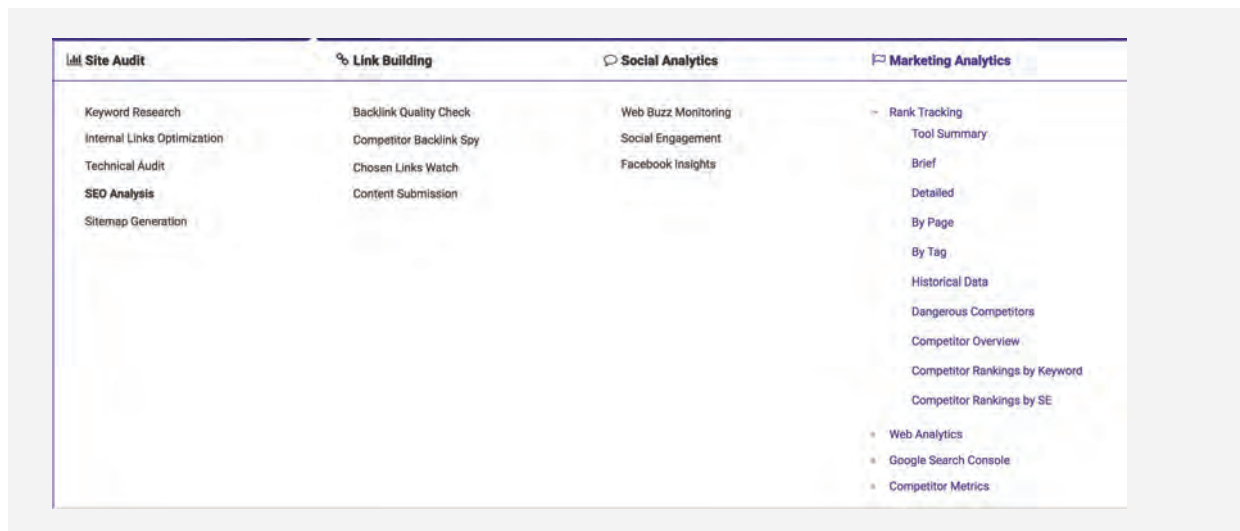
The perhaps most popular tools and reports within the CTC include:

A. Technical Audit

The technical audit is scanning the site for any technical issues such as Error pages, broken pages, broken images, server issues, access issues and slow response time pages.
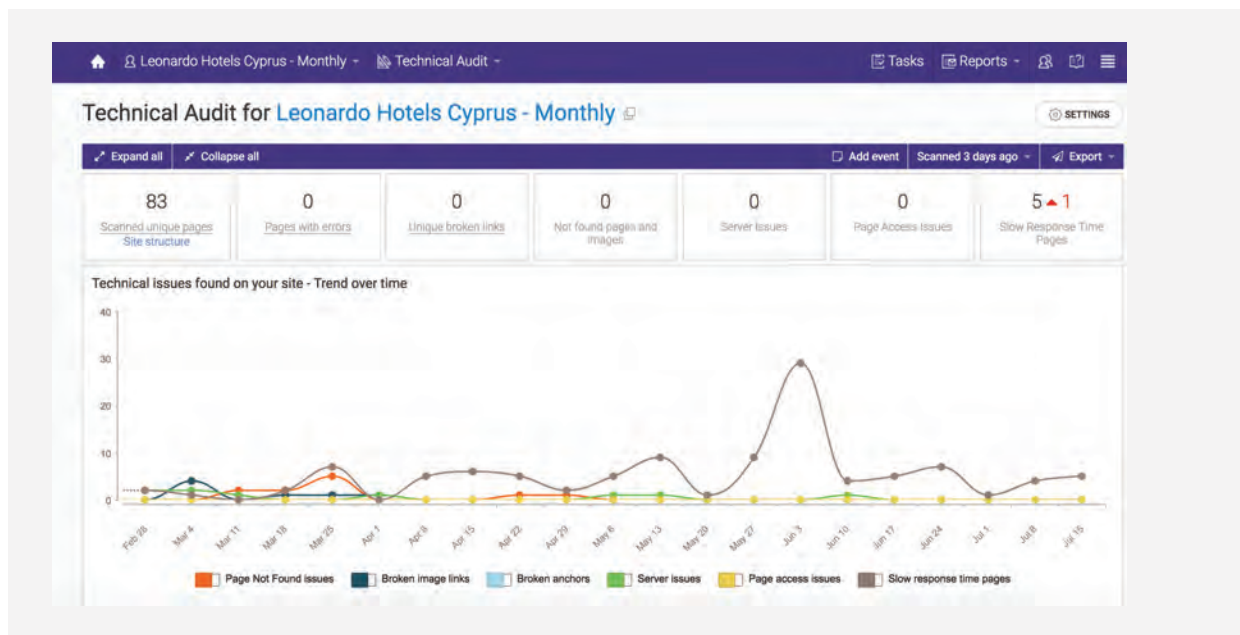
11

B. SEO Analysis

The SEO audit is scanning the site for any SEO related issues and summarizes them in different reports which are accessible through the main navigation or through the main dashboard. Reports include single page audit, mobile-friendly test, page speed test for mobile and desktop and more.
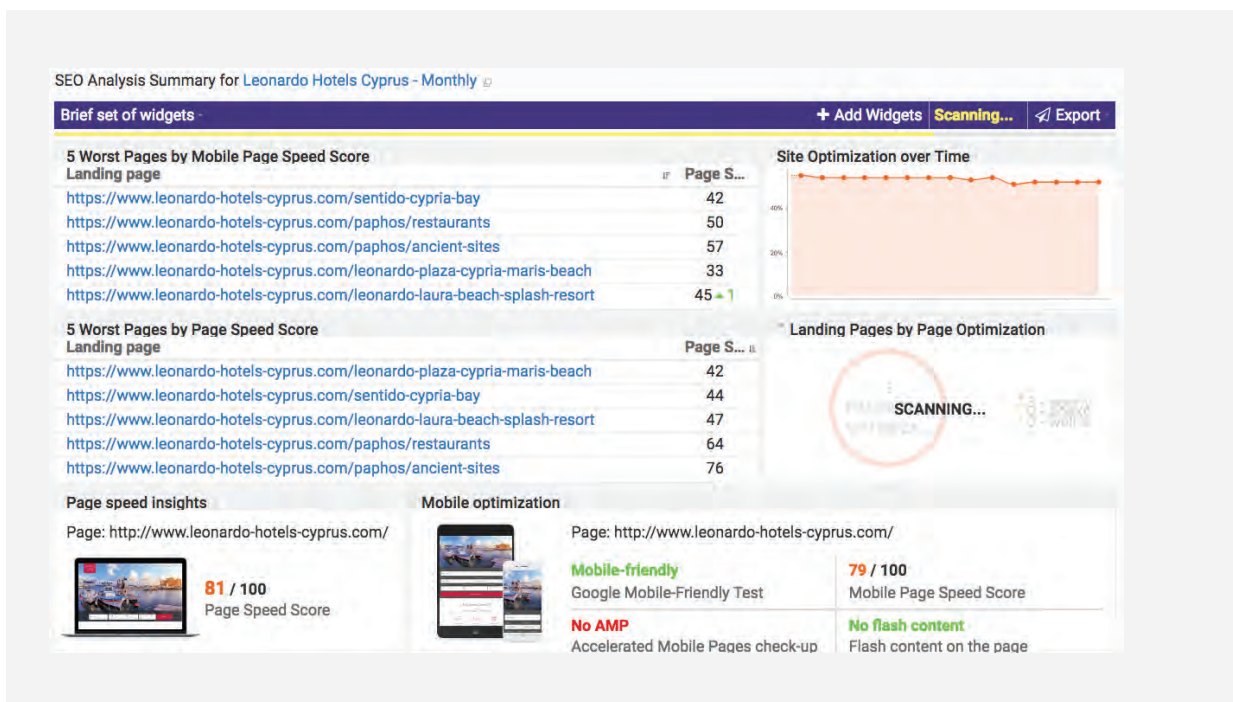
11

From the summary dashboard but also the menu a wide range of SEO analysis reports can be reached:
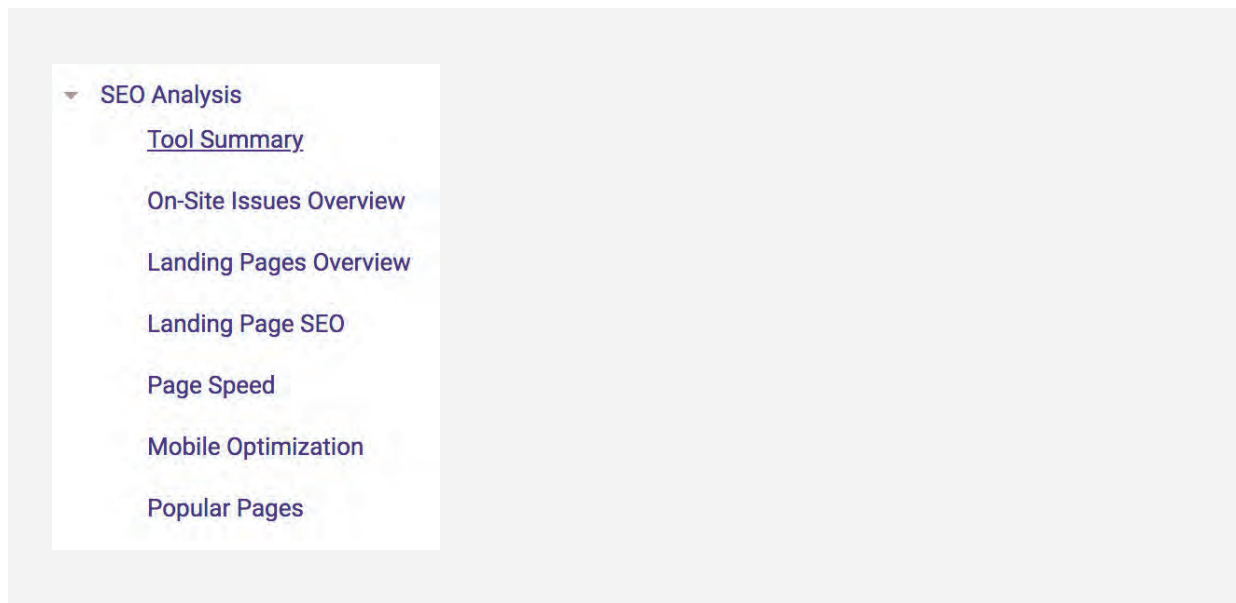
The On-Site Issues Overview report gives the best overview of critical issues related to all main SEO elements such as meta tags, duplication, headings, URLs, XML sitemap and robots. txt

11

Consider fixing

! Shorten Description tags of 72 pages

! Add ALT attributes to 28 images

Passed rules

✔ There is no multiple homepage issue

✔ All pages of your site have Title tags

✔ All Title tags have an optimal length

✔ All your Title tags are unique

✔ All pages of your site have Description tags

✔ All your Description tags are unique

✔ All pages of your site have H1 headings

✔ The H1 tag usage is correct

✔ The pages of your site have a reasonable amount of outbound links

✔ There is a Favicon on your site

✔ The structure of your pages' URLs is OK

✔ The URLs of your site's pages contain valid characters

✔ There are no 302 Redirects on your site

✔ There are no Meta Refreshes on your site

✔ The XML Sitemap was found on your site

✔ The Robots.txt file was found on your site.

11

The Rank Tracking tool provides a wide range of reports including various competitor reports. All reports can be set up to be send automatically to several emails
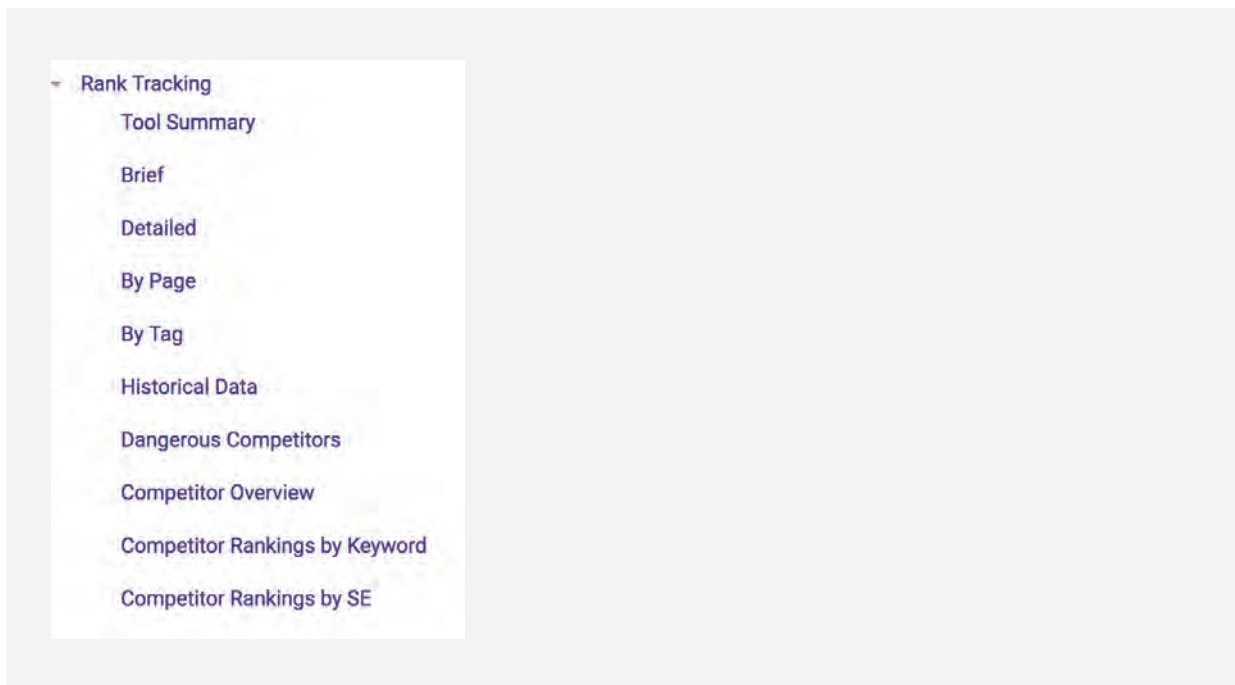
11

D. Web Analytics

With the Web Analytics tool in the CTC all kind of insight information of the site can be retrieved. The tool includes a wide range of reports such as Traffic Overview, Social Traffic and Traffic by various parameters such as country, city, languages and others.

Web Analytics
- Tool Summary
- Traffic Overview
- Social Traffic
- Efficiency
- Traffic by Country
- Traffic by City
- Language of Visitors
- Competitor Traffic

11

In the Web Analytics Summary, the report provides an easy to use overview of all traffic related data, linked to the inner reports as mentioned above.
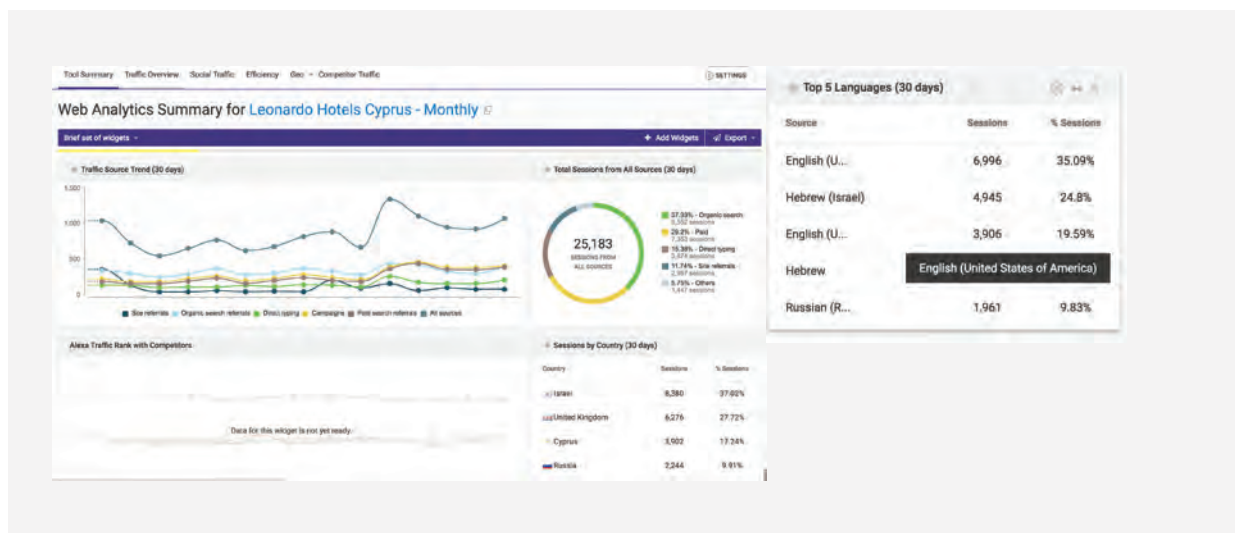
12 CMS REQUIREMENTS

If you want to perform the best possible optimization for your site, you need a powerful compelling and SEO-friendly Content Management System (CMS). The CMS is the mayor tool when optimizing a website: you will need it to implement most of the recommendations and changes. A CMS that does not allow SEO-related changes within a website will require the intervention of a web developer or, in the worst case, will not permit proper optimization of a site. An SEO-friendly CMS will define what kind of optimization is possible and what kind is not. To be suitable, a CMS should at least provide the following minimum requirements.

12.1 Minimum CMS Requirements

This chapter will detail the minimum requirements that are expected from a CMS. Disregarding these requirements could impair search engine bots from accessing and scanning your site, resulting in poor SEO development.

12

Technical Issues

01 System Output

Background: The system should create pages that contain components that are fully compatible with the search engine requirements.

Recommendation: Design HTML 5 pages avoiding obsolete components such as "Flash" or components such as Ajax that could hide content from the search engine bots. Critical objects such as navigation menu, links and text should be in plain text that is easily read by search engine bots. When adding images to a page, the text should be written as a caption – "live" text and not overlaying the picture (for example adding text over the image in Photoshop, Canva, or with other image-editing software).

02 Code Customization

Background: Code customization allows trouble-free editing of a page's source and adds important or missing codes.

Recommendation: The site manager/owner (or webmaster) should be able to change the code manually within any page and in general be able to implement any kind of code, such as Google meta tags and scripts, for example.

03 Complete control of the page URL, including friendly URLs and canonicalization

Background: The page address (URL) is an essential element for search engine optimization. The objective is to create a CMS that will allow you to generate a search engine-friendly URL (FU) which must be short, static, and as evident and logical as possible. Using short and clear URLs will help both visitors and search engines to navigate the site. As your site is easy to analyze and monitor, good URLs let the search engines index the page efficiently, with fewer errors

Recommendation: The CMS should allow complete control over the URL structure for new and existing pages, to give the site's manager flexibility in creating URLs that follow these rules:

12

- Syntax:
  - Creating URLs in English only without the use of special characters such as ô,א, à and others.
  - Creating URLs without the use of special characters such as *, $, %, and others.
  - Allows the use of lowercase letters to avoid duplicate URLs.

- Error Prevention
  - Voiding duplicate URL's: the CMS should alert the manager if a page with a similar URL is being created. It is also recommended that the CMS alerts (but does not prevent) the manager from creating a page with a similar name but a different URL.

  - Preventing unwanted Redirection: the CMS should create the FU as a final URL but should not use an internal URL. For example, if the internal URL is www.example.com/p=123/456, it should display as www.example.com/shirts/kids/ for the end user. It is also imperative that the CMS will deny any unnecessary redirects to the home page.

For example

A typical error is creating the home page at www.example.com/homepage - which is not advisable. Why not? The average web user will visit the site through www.example.com, and redirection to www.example.com/homepage may be off-putting and confusing.

04 URL Redirects

Background: Any site, at a certain point of its existence, will need to delete or pause a specific URL and replace it with another. In these cases, 301 or 302 redirects are mandatory.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow the site manager to directly control the redirects, without having to contact a developer or the need for server-side actions.

05 Breadcrumbs

Background: The navigation component on the site is also known as breadcrumbs and shows both visitors and search engines the current location (hierarchy-wise) within site, allowing for smooth navigation to critical pages in the current category.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow the manager to add the name that will be shown in the breadcrumb (page name, most of the time). If the site manager didn't add a unique breadcrumb, the CMS should automatically use the page name to avoid pages without any breadcrumbs.

12

06 Sitemap

Background: The sitemap can help with the site's index speed and help to identify the correct page hierarchy. In the past sitemaps were only added to large websites, but it is recommended that any site, regardless of its size should add a sitemap to improve the search engine's indexing.

Recommendation: The CMS should create a sitemap that is based on the following guidelines:

- **Format:** the recommended format for a sitemap is XML. If the site map is larger than 10MB, it is possible to compress the file with a ".gz" suffix or to use multiple sitemaps

- **Location:** the sitemap should be located at the root of the domain, for example, www.example.com/sitemap.xml

- **Size:** up to 50,000 URLs in a single sitemap and up to a file size of 10MB

- **Creation:** the CMS should create the map automatically and include any page that exists in the site unless specified otherwise. The CMS should also allow excluding any page from the sitemap.

- **Updating:** the CMS should update the sitemap every time a page is added, removed, or changed in any way

- **Content type marking:** the CMS should automatically mark different content types on the map (for further details see the link at the end of the list)

- **Multiple sitemaps:** if the sitemap is too large, it can be divided into smaller sitemaps to accelerate the index speed. However, creating several small sitemaps should be avoided since it can harm the site's SEO.

- **Maps by content type:** if there are several content types used within the site (videos, pictures, news, etc.) several sitemaps can be created for each content type.

- **Mobile:** if there are mobile phone specific pages they must be marked appropriately. If the site is mobile-only, then a mobile-specific sitemap should be created (see more details in the link at the end of the list)

For details and technical information such as mobile sitemaps, content-type marking and more, please see Google support and the official data provided by the sitemaps protocol site:
https://support.google.com/webmasters/topic/4581190
http://www.sitemaps.org/index.html

12

07 Robots File

Background: The robots file informs the search engines which pages to index and which to avoid from including in the search engine results page (SERP).

Recommendation: The CMS should create a robots file based on the following guidelines:

- Format: text file (txt)
- Location: the file should be located at the root of the domain, for example, www. example.com/robots.txt
- Creation: the CMS should create the file automatically, and as default should allow access to any page within the site unless specifically marked not to. The CMS should allow you to mark any page you don't want to be scanned by the search engines.
- Updating: the CMS should update the file automatically every time a page was marked as a noindex page
- Editing the file manually: the CMS should allow manually editing the robots file to block directories or block entire categories

For details and technical information about the robots file, please see the following articles by Google:

https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/6062608
https://developers.google.com/webmasters/control-crawl-index/docs/robots_txt

Technical Issues

08 Robots File

Background: The CSS allows to do visual changes within a site or a page to edit colors, layout, fonts, and other elements on the page.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow full control of the page CSS file, so the site manager is able to upload customized CSS files.

09 Backup and export

Background: Scheduled backups of the whole site and the possibility to export specific site content protects the webmaster against loss of existing content and pages while working on the CMS.

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Recommendation: The CMS should be able to be set up for scheduled backups. In addition, the site manager should be able to download or export any page within the site to manually backup the content.

10 Page meta tags

Background: The meta tags (meta title, meta description, and meta keywords) are critical for correct indexing of pages by the search engines, and help the visitor choose your site over the competitors. When not correctly filled, Google "assumes" them and displays them most of the time in an unflattering or even useless way.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow full control of the page's meta tags, based on the following guidelines:

- **Meta title tag: the CMS should let the site manager add and change the title tag on each page. It is recommended that the tag includes the main keyword phrase that describes the content of each specific page.**

- **Meta description tag: the CMS should allow the site manager to add and change the description tag on each page. The description should be minimum 230 and up to 320 characters (including spaces). It is recommended that each description is short and well-written to attracts the potential visitor to enter the site.**

- **Meta keyword tags: the CMS should allow the site manager to add and change the keywords on each page.**

- **Meta tags automation: the CMS should use automatic templates to fill in the meta tags if not provided by the site manager.**

11 Image alt attributes and title tags

Background: Images are some of the most important tools to draw visitors to the site from the search engines. You need to use image tags to help the search engines to index them correctly. Without alt attributes and image title tags, the search engine will look at the text surrounding the images, often delivering poor results to the users.

12

Recommendation: The CMS should allow the manager full control of the image alt attributes and title tags while also filling the tags automatically if no tags were added. The CMS should respect the following guidelines:

- **Alt attribute tag: the alt attribute is the most important tag for images. It describes the image for the search engines since their algorithms, as complicated as they may be, can't identify the purpose of the image**

   Each image should contain an alt attribute tag that is relevant to the image and the content of the page.

- **Title tag: this tag is especially important for visually impaired visitors since it describes the image as a text when the mouse cursor is "hovered" over the image. Also, if for some reason the image is not displayed, the title tag will be displayed.**

- **Image meta tags automation: the CMS should use automatic templates to fill in the meta tags if not provided by the manager.**

12 No-index tags

Background: In particular scenarios, the site manager will want to signal the search engines not to scan and index specific pages but allow the search engines to enter the page and to scan related pages. The "no-index" tag exists for this purpose.

Recommendation: As a default, all of the pages of a website should be indexed. However, the CMS should allow to check and add the no-index tag to the site when necessary.
A warning label that the "no-index" tag is active should appear each time when the site manager works on a specific page.

13 No-index tags

Background: In specific cases, the site manager will want to signal the search engines that he is conscious that similar or even duplicate content are currently live on his site. A typical scenario where we usually can't avoid temporary duplicate pages is when a search result page within a site was created due to a visitor's search. The search function will most likely lead the visitor to the exact same page as an existing product/service page. For example, if a user search within the site for "blue kid's shirts," the search results will be displayed on an automatically-generated page for blue kid's shirts which might look like: **www.example.com/ shirts/kids?color=blue** while the original page with exactly the same content is located in at **www.example.com/shirts/kids/blue**

12

In this scenario, the canonical tag should be implemented in the duplicated pages to help the search engine bots understand that both pages are very similar or even the same. The tag is also useful to let the search engines now that the pages were not created for spamming purposes: we are aware of the existence of duplicate content but refer one of the pages as the original which should be credited for the performance of all duplicate pages.
Please note that this tag should be used only if we wish to keep the page available for users on the site, if not then we will use redirections.

Self-pointing canonical tags make it clear for the search engines, which is the original page.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow adding a canonical tag to each of the site's pages and to a specific page group. The CMS should also be able to set up self-pointing canonical tags as default when creating a page.

14 Pagination

Background: Pagination allows the existence of similar pages without the need to be canonicalized and reduce the value of any page by transfer all its credit to the claimed original source. Typically, in websites where multiple product pages appear (page 1-35 of product X), we want to make sure that Google does understand the relationship between all those pages. Google's recommendations are available in the following article: **Pagination**

Recommendation: The CMS should allow the implementation of rel=next / rel=prev tags within the code of the relevant pages.

15 Open Graph tags

Background: Open Graph tags (OG tags), allow the site manager to control what content is displayed when a page is shared on Facebook and how.
Without OG tags, when a page is shared on Facebook, the content that will be shared can't be controlled and monitored.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow full control over the OG tags in every page while sticking to these guidelines:

12

- **Title tag:** the title tag should include the title of the page, content, object, etc. that will appear when displayed on Facebook

- **Site name tag:** the name of the site (can be constant and repeated through the site)

- **Description tag:** the description tag is the most important tag in the OG tags. It should include one or two sentences about the content that shows up in the post

- **Type tag:** the type tag describes the content's type, categories, hotel, blog, article, etc.

- **Image tag:** the image that will represent the content, the image must be in either a PNG, JPEG or GIF format and with dimensions of at least 50px by 50px

- **URL tag:** the URL that will be associated with the content in the link

Further reading about the Open Graph protocol on the official website: **http://ogp.me/**

16 Custom tags

Background: Often, webmasters need special tags to perform specific actions, such as adding a Google analytics tag to a page, tagging a page for tracing, etc.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow adding special and custom tags to the site in a specific page or in a page group (a category for example). The CMS should also allow adding the tags to the following areas in the site:

Content and Links

17 Language support

Background: When targeting a focus audience we need to adapt the whole website and content to the spoken language of the targeted audience.

Recommendation: The CMS should be able to handle unusual signs and characters in any language!

18 Page Headings

Background: Headings are HTML codes which allow making specific text stand out visually. The header tags (H1, H2, H3, etc.) have a high value when the site is being indexed by the search engines.

12

Recommendation: The CMS should allow full control over the headings and give the manager complete control over H1, H2, H3 while sticking to these guidelines:

- The CMS should enable the manager to add header tags to the page with the text manager or in alternative ways. It is recommended that the heading will contain the page's main keyword

- Tagging the heading in the text editor (or any other way) will automatically add a heading code to the page (depending on the selected hierarchy H1, H2 etc.) as well as a visual change on site

- The CMS shouldn't allow more than one H1 heading per page

- The CMS should display a warning when trying to add a low-level heading without a higher heading above it (for example adding H3 without an H2 above it)

19 Link Control

Background: The search engines check regularly the links on the site's pages and use link mapping between different pages and sites as an essential parameter when indexing and giving priority to each page.

Text links from a relevant (not necessarily exact) keyword or keyword phrase to a related page help increase the linkability between the site's pages and drive visitors to less visited pages. Text links help search engines index your web pages for the keywords you want to target.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow full control over the links on the site and allow the site manager to link from any text or image while granting complete control on the links properties:

- Link type: the preferred link type is "href" however other types should be allowed as well.

- Link source: the CMS should allow marking text from the page to create the link. Or, if an image is set up as a link, the CMS should allow adding the correct image attribute tag

- Styling: the styling for the URLs should be unified and clear, a style that is different from the regular text on the page. Linking without a visual cue could result in penalties from the search engines. It is recommended that the standard formatting will be used (blue text with a blue underline). However, the CMS should allow the use of any color that fits the site's design as long as the link is clearly marked

12

- Link tags: for each link, the site manager should be able to signal the search engines whether to follow or not follow, index or not index the link. As a default, all links should be followed and indexed

- Link attribute: for some links, the site manager should be able to set up target="_blank" to external links, where the visitor should land on a new tab within the browser instead of leaving the site

- Excessive links in a page: In specific scenarios, too many links can harm the site's rankings. Therefore, the CMS should alert the manager if a page contains more than 60 links on a page

20 Footer text

Background: Adding a small text segment to the site's footer is a common practice. Although most of the time it will be used for a disclaimer and copyright notice, adding a meaningful text segment with several keywords and links can help indexation of the site.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow full control over the footer, including adding text, images, and other common components.

21 Footer links

Background: Adding a footer menu helps the visitors navigate the site with ease and enforce the indexing rate by the search engines.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow full control over the footer links, including adding links according to the definition in the links section. The CMS should let the site manager to add a footer menu or to create a custom footer menu on every page.

22 Error page (404 page)

Background: When a visitor tries to access a page that doesn't exist within the site, the server displays a 404-error page. Customizing the 404-error page (instead of using the server's default page), as well as adding custom messages and elements, will help to prevent the drop off rate of the visitors.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow full control over the 404-error page, to give the webmaster total flexibility over the visual appearance and functionality of the 404-error page while sticking to these guidelines:images, and other common components.

12

- **If a 404-error occurs, the CMS should show the site's customized 404 error page instead of the server's default error page. An automatic redirect to the home page without displaying the customized 404 page should be avoided**

- **The 404-error page should be kept in the same design as the rest of the site and should include main elements such as the site logo, header, navigation bar, footer, etc.**

- **Complete control over the error text and to be able to add text links**

- **Visitors retention: the CMS should allow adding elements to help keep the visitors on the site according to the site's manager choice**

For example: return to homepage button, relevant content, search options, etc.

12.2 Recommended CMS Requirements

In this section, we will detail requirements that are not essential for SEO, but using them can facilitate site management, improve the activity of the site when „talking" to the search engines, and finally add to the number of visitor's actions and conversions.

Monitoring

1 "Thank you" pages

Background: Displaying a thank you page after an action or conversion of a visitor is an efficient way to keep the visitor on the site. Furthermore, the thank you page can help monitor the visitor's actions.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow the manager to create and fully control the thank you pages.

2 Buttons markup

Background: To improve monitoring visitor's actions on the site it is recommended to scrutinize interactive elements on the page such as action buttons (order buttons), essential links, play buttons of a video, etc. Most of the time, to monitor such elements, the site manager will need to embed an event code.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow the manager to create and fully control event codes from the CMS without a programmer's intervention or without the need for hard-coding the event code.

12

Content

3 RSS

Background: Distributing the content is one of the most important ways to increase the traffic volume to the site and the number of conversions. The RSS feed is an efficient tool for this purpose. While not any website has a use for RSS, it is essential that this feature remains available for future proofing.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow the site manager to create several RSS feeds (news feed, shop feed, etc.)

4 Newsletter

Background: The newsletter is another efficient way of distributing content, increasing the traffic volume and the number of conversions. While not every site has the need for a newsletter component, it is essential that this feature remains available for future proofing.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow the visitors to add or remove themselves from the mailing list. The site manager should be able to see all of the registered users, create and edit newsletters, and send them to all or just some of the subscribers.

5 Content markup

Background: Content markup tags the type of content within a page (article, product, business, etc.) and allows the search engines to index the site more efficiently.
A correct markup of the different content types will allow the search engines to display the site in response to a broader array of queries. Also, in response to specific queries, content markup will result in a visually superior display of the page in Google's SERPs, giving it a significant advantage over the competition.

Recommendation: This section is a recommendation only – adding the option of content markup directly from the CMS is complicated. Nonetheless, if a certain content type is significant to the site (for example – products in the site's shop), it is recommended to have in the CMS the option for adding markup for those pages. This option will prevent the use of external tools or developer's intervention every time new content is added to the site.

For further information regarding content markup, please go to **https://schema.org**.

12

6 Ratings

Background: Ratings are a specific type of content for a site. Most of the time, they are composed of reviews or grades (and sometimes both). Ratings have a positive impact on the indexing rate of the pages since they are a type of content frequently updated. They also tend to add credibility to the site. Ratings require unique technical markup that helps the search engines to identify them as what they are and not as regular pages.

Recommendation: Not every site needs the rating component, however for future proofing, and if applicable, it is recommended that the CMS will know how to handle rating markup.

7 Mobile compatibility

Background: The volume of visitors browsing from their mobile devices is growing with each passing day. Many times up to 50% of the overall traffic comes from mobile devices. Therefore, it is recommended that you will choose a CMS that can create pages which are mobile and desktop friendly.

Recommendation: The majority of the mobile compatibility isn't CMS dependent, but instead it depends on the developers and the way they developed the site. The CMS should be able to identify the platform that the user is browsing through and show the website accordingly. It is recommended to create the site in a responsive design to ensure the maximum compatibility with every device.

For further information about responsive design and other technics, please visit the following page: **https://developers.google.com/webmasters/mobile-sites/mobile-seo/**

Conversion

8 Related content

Background: Related content can have a huge impact on the conversions and actions on the site. On top of that, since most of the content is a rich in images and text, it can help the index rate of the site.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow the site manager full control over the related content, be it text or products, including adding text, links, images etc.

12

9 Forms

Background: Forms are a great way to communicate with the visitors and allow them to perform several actions such as buying products, contacting the site owners, leaving feedback etc.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow the manager full control over the forms of the site, including text in the forms, fields name, call to action buttons, event tracking, etc.

10 Site speed

Background: Search engines measure the site's speed and use this as a parameter for indexing in SERPs. Slow sites get ranked lower than their competitors with higher site speed. Losing high positions in SERPs because of poor speed will result in less qualified traffic to your website. On top of that, slow site speed will hurt the user experience, increase the drop off rate, and make the site unusable for mobile visitors, since data usage can be costly in some countries.

Recommendation: Google recommends a load time of fewer than 1.5 seconds per page, and while the site speed isn't tied directly to the CMS, it is essential that the CMS will allow the following options:

- Data compression
- Control of the site caching
- Control over the image size (see next section)

11 Site speed images

Background: When an image is kept in the server with dimensions (height and width) that are different from the size on the page, it must be resized to load properly. This process requires many resources from the server, increasing the site's load speed considerably.

Recommendation: The CMS should allow the site manager to change the dimensions of the image after it was uploaded. If the same image is displayed on different pages, the CMS should automatically create and save copies of the image on the server in all of the required sizes.