Defining Niche Keywords & Keyword Difficulty - Development of a New Essential and Unique SEO Tool

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Niche Keywords

It is common knowledge amongst search engine optimizers that finding "niche keywords" is fundamental in our quest to attract visitors to a website. There are many keyword suggestion tools that claim to find niche keywords but in practice they generate lists of keywords without any practical means or guidance for separating out the niche keywords for us. In this article "keywords" includes keyword phrases.

How do we define a niche keyword?

Surprisingly, there does not appear to have been even one serious attempt at a definition of a "niche keyword".

The following definition is recommended: A niche keyword is defined as having an above threshold search volume for the targeted locality of a website with potential for top ten positioning on the search engine results page (SERP) for that locality (country).

Locality

Although websites remain reachable from any location, the vast majority of websites are targeted at visitors within a country, state/county/province, or city/town. Only a minority of websites aim to provide information universally or seek sales internationally. Locality

orientated searches form the fastest growing sector on the internet - currently estimated at 12%. A search that includes a locality has a better chance of converting on e-commerce and e-marketing websites.

When we seek niche keywords for locality based websites, we need data on the number of searches conducted for that locality and an assessment of the competition for the country specific search engines. The most popular search engine is Google. Examples of Google country specific search engines are Google.co.uk, Google.ca (Canada), Google.fr (France) and Google.jp (Japan). In addition to having the largest search database, and being free of charge, the Google keyword research tool has the advantage of providing both global and country specific monthly search volumes.

Threshold Search Volume

The threshold search volume that is acceptable for a website is dependent on its purpose.

A global information website might choose a threshold search volume of a thousand searches per month before it would consider creating a web page focused on a keyword.

A website seeking clients within a locality might consider the return on investment acceptable for developing a web page on a keyword with potential to attract even one additional client a month.

Top 10 Positioning on Search Engine Results Pages

Few searchers click on web pages positioned below the top ten on SERPs. Whereas 42% of searchers click on the number one positioned web page for a search, only 0.7% of searchers will click on the 11th positioned web page and 0.07% for the forty first positioned web page. Put another way, if the number one web page for a keyword receives 600 visitors, the 11th web page will receive 10 visitors and there will be just one click on the 41st. From an SEO point of view, a web page that cannot be positioned within the top ten positions for a keyword on the SERP will fail to bring much traffic.

Keyword Difficulty

Keyword difficulty is an assessment of the chance of positioning a web page within the top ten positions on a SERP for a keyword.

Competition

Traditionally competition has been evaluated mainly by the number of 'results' which is the number of competing web pages. The Keyword Effectiveness Index - KEI - is the most popular formula for identifying "effective" keywords. It incorporates keyword popularity data (P = number of searches) and the competition (C). The formula is P2/C.

Invariably a search will show at least hundreds of competing web pages (results) and often millions. Whilst the number of results will provide some indication of keyword difficulty, it is the strength of the top ten web pages compared to the potential strength of the page we can build on our website that will determine if our page can reach the top ten. The competitive strength of the top ten competing web pages for a keyword is not a direct function of the total number of competing web pages. The strength of the competition of the top 10 competing web pages

for a keyword with only 10 thousand competitors will be far greater than 1,000th of the strength of the competition for a keyword with 10 million competitors.

From a search engine optimization perspective every web page should be optimized around one keyword.

From a web design point of view, we need to consider three types of web pages:

1. Pages that are required to cover the theme of the website but are based on keywords that are so competitive that they are unlikely to achieve top page positioning and therefore will not bring visitors to the website. For example, a holiday accommodation advertising website may produce an excellent page on "Italy". If it provides useful information, it will be appreciated by visitors who arrive on the website. High positioning on the SERPs for "Italy" is unlikely, however much effort you put into it, and this page will not bring visitors from the search engines.

2. Pages that are required to cover the theme of the website and are based on niche keywords and may bring visitors to the website - in practice there are unlikely to be many of these.

3. Pages that are not obviously required to cover the theme of the website but are developed around relevant niche keywords from a list of keywords initially generated by a keyword suggestion tool. The difficulty here is separating out the niche keywords from the full list. We need to focus our precious time and SEO efforts on the niche keywords where we can successfully compete.

How do we find the niche keywords from a list of keywords initially generated by a keyword suggestion tool?

In 2004, it was estimated that Google included 200 factors in its positioning algorithm. In 2009, many search optimization optimizers believe Google now uses more than 300 factors. It is unlikely that each of these factors carry equal weighting.

Using retro-analysis of top ten positioned web pages for numerous keyword searches, the author identified the most important, but underestimated, factor in the Google algorithm that determines positioning on SERPs (HomePage PageRank or G-Factor-I). It then became apparent that a second factor (G-Factor-II - a hidden boost to the effective PageRank of HomePages competing for a keyword) significantly influenced positioning.

Once aware of G-Factor-I, identification of niche keywords by manual analysis of a list of keywords generated by my favourite keyword suggestion tool proved to be prohibitively time consuming. For a list of 50 keywords, the G-Factor-I must be determined for each of the top 10 web pages - 500 calculations. A unique, purpose built program - Keyword SEO Pro - has been commissioned. No analysis is required for G-Factor-II.

The Most Important Question In Search Engine Optimization

The most frequently asked question that I am asked by web site owners is "How can I get my web pages to the top on the SERPs for my keywords?" My advice may surprise you: Take out the "How"!

You will then have the most important question web site owners and search engine optimizers

should be asking:-

"Can I get my web pages to the top on the SERPs for my keywords?"

Using the combination of KeywordSEOPro to analyze for G-Factor-I for a list of keywords and by comparison with G-Factors-I and II for your own web pages, you will be able to identify your niche keywords and focus your SEO efforts appropriately. A more detailed explanation is provided on the website.