

Is Your Dental Website Mobile Search Optimized?



by Naren Arulrajah with Vikas Vij

A recent Brightlocal Study showed that 61 percent of the mobile users in the U.S. are more likely to contact a local business via a mobile website. More consumers are searching for products and services on their mobile devices on a more regular basis. More than 70 percent of the users searched multiple times via their mobile devices in 2014 as against 54 percent in 2013.

The increasing trend in favor of mobile search signifies the growing reliance on smart phones when it comes to making purchase decisions. Improvements in mobile apps and enhanced browsing experience have made the search process easier on mobile devices. Many small and medium businesses and professionals have mobile responsive websites, which has contributed to higher expectations of the users from mobile search.

Local Search for Dentists

As a growing number of consumers make use of their mobile devices to search for local businesses, it has become more important for dentists to focus on mobile search optimization in order to improve their online visibility. Dental services were ranked the third most-searched local business or service in 2014, following restaurants and general stores.

Twenty-seven percent people searched for a physician or dentist via a mobile device in 2014, as against 15 percent in 2013. The figures indicate a strong growth trend in favor of mobile

search for medical and dental services, with nearly double the number of people searching for these services through their mobile devices in 2014.

Google's Mobile-friendly Algorithm

Google has officially announced that it has rolled out a new mobile-friendly search algorithm to all of its data centers and is fully in place. The move acknowledges the growing usage of mobile search, and is indicative of how leading search engines such as Google view the future of mobile. As the new search algorithm gradually takes hold, it is likely to benefit websites that are properly mobile optimized.

Websites that fail to change with the changing times are likely to be left behind in terms of mobile search rankings. Dentists should review how mobile responsive their current dental practice websites may be, and what more may need to be done to make them highly mobile-friendly and mobile-efficient. The impact of Google's algorithmic change may be visible after sometime, but the primacy of mobile search is now inevitable and irreversible. Mobile efficiency will contribute in a key manner to how Google assigns rankings to websites in its search results in the future.

Need for a Mobile Optimized Dental Site

Ever since Google's announced the algorithmic change in favor of mobile search, it has become quite clear that websites that are less mobile friendly will tend to rank lower in search results as compared to the ones that are mobile optimized. While Google and other search engines such as Bing are not going to remove, block or penalize websites for not being optimized for mobile search, but they are likely to experience reduced online visibility in terms of search results.

Lower search rankings will almost invariably have an adverse impact on the traffic of local patients to a dentist's office. In particular, the mobile searchers will not be able to find a dental practice so easily online, if the practice website is not mobile optimized. Competitors in the same area with more mobile friendly websites are more likely to enjoy a distinct search ranking advantage in such situations.

How to Build a Mobile Optimized Website?

A website may appear well on a mobile screen, but this alone does not imply that the website is completely optimized for mobile search. Mobile optimization of a dental website will depend on various key factors, including coding, content and technical implementation. It will require an integrated effort across several disciplines, and will also include off-page factors.

While conventional search engine optimization (SEO) is already complex, mobile search will need an even greater amount of specialized knowledge. In case of mobile sites, the search results will change based on device and location. As compared to local online search, mobile search is considered to be 'hyper-local' and focuses on the current location of the user.

The most appropriate mobile configuration for a website will depend on several factors, which include the following:

- Quality and scale of the website content
- Technological capability and resources available
- The goals of the dental practice
- The points of conversion
- The expectations of the site visitors

The most important mobile configuration that Google recognizes and encourages webmasters to have is responsive website design. In this case, the dentist is required to create only a single website that serves the purpose of both desktop and mobile viewing. This will avoid the issues of content duplication and the hassle of managing two separate sites at the same time.

In case of responsive website design, the content included in the desktop site is adapted to render efficiently on mobile devices with varying screen sizes. The URLs of the web pages will not change in this case, whether the site is opened on a desktop or a mobile device.

With Google, Bing and other search engines leading the way in favor of mobile search, it has become abundantly clear that in absence of a mobile optimized website, a business is likely to disappear from top search results on mobile devices. Dentists who get their mobile SEO act together are likely to outperform their competitors in the struggle to attain local mobile search dominance.



Naren Arulrajah is President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, a complete Internet marketing company which focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education and the online reputations of Dentists.

With a team of 130+ full time marketers, www.ekwa.com helps doctors who know where they want to go, get there by dominating their market and growing their business significantly year after year. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call Naren direct at 877-249-9666