

Have You Considered Voice Search in Your SEO Strategy?

A comprehensive online marketing and SEO strategy should include voice search as one of the key upcoming elements.

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In 2011, Apple launched one of the first versions of voice search in the form of Siri. At the time, many believed that Siri might become serious competition for Google. Since then, voice search has been introduced on other platforms, and smart phones continued to grow in popularity. Now, with companies like Google and Microsoft actively pursuing development of their own voice search platforms, it's clear that the technology is on the fast track and will continue its prominence. In fact, many analysts suggest that voice is set to transform online search in various ways. Thus, as you devise and execute your own online marketing and SEO strategies, it is important to maximize the potential of voice search.

USE OF LONG-TAIL KEYWORDS AND PHRASES

Online voice search allows you to speak the keyword into the microphone of your voice-enabled Internet browser search on a laptop, smartphone, or tablet instead of typing it in text form as usual. It enables the user to ask the query in a natural sentence form rather than in a brief form. In conventional text search, the user mostly needs to think before typing the most relevant keyword term or phrase in order to get the best results. However, in case of voice search, the user will tend to ask the query in a longer form, using natural language.

For instance, if in text form, a potential patient searching for a skincare treatment in Los Angeles will type: "cosmetic dermatology Los Angeles." In the case of voice search, the user will speak the question, "Where can I find a cosmetic dermatology practice in Los Angeles that is reputable as well as affordable?" Both search terms appear

different, but they are aimed at achieving the same goal. In case of voice search, the query is more descriptive and precise.

In anticipation of voice search, Google launched a whole new search algorithm called Hummingbird in 2013. Rather than match identical keywords as provided by the searcher, Hummingbird makes an effort to figure out the real meaning behind the words. Hummingbird aims to produce more satisfying search results, and the technology is designed to achieve higher accuracy with voice search.

INTUITIVE SEARCH

Search engine giants such as Google have been researching for years to make the online search process more intelligent and intuitive so that the users can get more precise information that they are looking for. For instance, if a dermatology patient has a query: "suggest a good dermatology practice in and around Los Angeles" and the second query says: "Is it affordable," the voice-enabled search engine will understand what does "it" stand for in the second query.

Furthermore, voice search can have the power to deliver information matching the specific interests of the user. For instance, Google Now provides information about stock prices, sports scores, weather conditions, local traffic status even without the user having to ask for it.

LESS EMPHASIS ON KEYWORDS

As voice search evolves, the importance of keywords will tend to reduce. When a person speaks, they will typically be in a conversational mode, and voice search will have the capability to interpret such queries accurately. Google's



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Businesses or professionals with a larger number of positive reviews on websites such as Yelp, CitySearch, OpenTable and healthcare websites will have an advantage. With voice search, the users may be able to find information about you through third party sites, forums and reviews, even before they discover your practice website.

This can alter the way online content will be created going forward. Even the traffic to the dermatology website may reduce in this process, but more potential patients will be able to find relevant information through other sites. The impact in such a situation is usually more favorable, resulting in a higher inflow of patients at the dermatology practice.

As voice search consistently gains wider acceptance, it will be important to repurpose your online marketing and SEO strategy. Those who embrace these changes early will stand to achieve a competitive advantage over others. Search technology is bound to grow and improve in the foreseeable future, and voice search is going to be an important part of it. ■

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experts such as Matt Cutts have spoken about it in the past and acknowledged that the future trends in voice search will see a lower need for keywords.

In voice search, a potential patient may say “a reputable dermatology practice near me” instead of “dermatology practice in Los Angeles.” Search engines are gearing up to develop the capabilities to interpret such queries intuitively to reduce the dependence on keywords.

PEOPLE-FOCUSED CONTENT

As the usage of voice search grows and the technology develops, online content will have to be increasingly targeted towards people and not search engines. To check for a local business listing on Siri or Google Now, means that you should have your latest updated information, including location, phone number, and work hours, available online.

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