Google’s Martin Splitt: JavaScript-Loaded Images Can Be Indexed via @sejournal, @MattGSouthern

Google’s Developer Advocate Martin Splitt recently debunked a common SEO myth. He confirmed that images loaded with JavaScript can be indexed by Google when set up correctly.

Splitt shared these insights during the SEO for Paws Conference, a live-streamed fundraiser by Anton Shulke.

Here’s how to avoid common image indexing issues when loading images with JavaScript.

JavaScript Image Loading Isn’t the Problem

When asked about images loaded by JavaScript, Splitt clarified that the method is not to blame for indexing issues.

Splitt explains:

> *“JavaScript to load images is fine. A purely JavaScript image loading solution can absolutely get your images indexed.”*

This comment clears up worries among many SEO pros. Images may not appear in Google Images for reasons other than using JavaScript.

The Real Culprits Behind Unindexed Images

Splitt explained that something else is usually wrong if JavaScript-loaded images don’t appear in search results.

He pointed to a few common issues:

- **Sitemap Problems:** Sometimes, key images are missing from XML sitemaps.
- **HTTP Headers:** Some image files may have headers that stop them from being indexed.
- **Rendered HTML Issues:** If images don’t appear in the rendered HTML (the version Google sees after JavaScript runs), they won’t get indexed.

Debugging JavaScript Image Indexing Issues

Splitt offers a simple process to spot problems. Start by checking if images appear in the rendered HTML using tools like Search Console’s URL Inspection tool.

Splitt explains:

> *“You would have to check: is the rendered HTML containing the images? If it is, fantastic. If it’s not, then something else is off.”*

Since Google indexes the rendered HTML, any image missing from it won’t be found by Googlebot.

See Splitt’s full talk on JavaScript SEO in the video below:

[embedded content]

Common JavaScript Image Loading Techniques & Their SEO Impact

There are several ways to load images with JavaScript. Some common methods include:

- **Lazy Loading:** Loads images only when needed.
- **Progressive Loading:** Shows a low-quality image first, then upgrades to a high-quality one.
- **Infinite Scroll Loading:** Loads images as users continue to scroll.
- **Background Image Insertion:** Adds images through CSS backgrounds.

If they are set up properly, all these methods can work with Google's indexing. Each may need its own checks to ensure everything is working as expected.

Best Practices for SEO-Friendly JavaScript Image Loading

Even though JavaScript-loaded images can be indexed, following these best practices can help avoid issues:

- **Verify with the URL Inspection Tool:** Ensure images appear in the rendered HTML.
- **Update Your XML Sitemaps:** Include key images with proper tags.
- **Use Alt Text:** Provide clear alt text for images loaded via JavaScript.
- **Use Native Lazy Loading:** Add the loading="lazy" attribute where it makes sense.
- **Check Robots.txt:** Ensure you are not blocking JavaScript resources that load images.

What This Means for SEO Professionals

Instead of avoiding JavaScript, verify that images are loaded correctly and appear in the rendered HTML.

As websites rely more on JavaScript, understanding these details is key. SEO professionals who learn to troubleshoot and optimize JavaScript-based image loading will be better prepared to support their clients' visibility in search results.

Looking Ahead

This clarification is timely. Many modern sites built with frameworks like React, Vue, or Angular load images using JavaScript instead of traditional <img> tags.

Splitt's insights help dispel the myth that JavaScript harms image indexing. Developers can now focus on performance without worrying about SEO penalties.

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https://www.searchenginejournal.com/googles-martin-splitt-javascript-loaded-images-can-be-indexed/543377/