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Research insights: Role of featured snippets in website traffic boost

30-second summary:

- Featured snippets account for a 35.1% share of all clicks.
- The featured snippet and knowledge panel SERP give a better click-through rate together.
- Users click on featured snippets that seem “informative”.
- Users who prefer the regular search results listings don’t click on featured snippets.
- “People also ask” boxes are an unpopular choice showing the lowest amount of clicks.
- 24% of users consider a featured snippet as an ‘Ad’ and don’t click on it.

Featured snippets are probably the first thing people see when they perform a search query. Acquiring the position ‘zero’ on the SERPs, the featured snippets dominate the page and immediately capture the attention of the viewer.

However, does it make an impact on the visitor? Do the featured snippets get more clicks when compared to the top results? How does the audience perceive them?

To answer these questions and more, we at Engine Scout recently conducted a study and analyzed how featured snippets influence searchers’ behavior and overall experience.

The methodology applied for the featured snippet study

In our study on featured snippets, we collected data from 3552 testers, who were asked to look at four different SERPs with snippets. They were required to make a search on Google related to a specific keyword and make a selection from the results.

To collect an unbiased opinion, featured snippets were not mentioned anywhere in the survey.

There were three choices for the testers to choose from: Ads, featured snippets, and regular result listing.

They were later asked which section they clicked on to estimate the Click-through rate (CTR).

What is a featured snippet and how does it boost website traffic?

The featured snippet is a summarized extract from a post that answers the user's '**search query**' most accurately. It is placed above all the Google search result listings, occupying position zero.

This means no matter what your website's ranking for a certain post if Google chooses a featured snippet from your post, it will appear on the top.

According to Ahrefs, it is 99.58% true that Google will only consider your content for a featured snippet if it is already ranking on Page #1. The other 0.42% pages that Google considers account for their '**People also ask**' box SERP feature. This feature only receives a total of 6% click shares, for the same reason.

The '**concise and direct**' nature of these featured snippets motivates users to click on them. According to our study, they account for 35.1% of all clicks which translates to getting '**extra traffic**' to your website.

Optimizing a post to rank for a featured snippet can be tricky. Any content can be worthy of becoming a 'Featured-Snippet,' including a **paragraph, a list, table, or even a video.**

Try these three quick strategies to win more featured snippets

that get clicks to your website.

1. Include direct answers to a search query in a paragraph snippet

Paragraph snippets account for 82% of the total featured snippets.

These snippets give the most relevant response to a query in a paragraph form. They usually also display a pertinent image alongside or above the text.

Here is an example of how Google shows a paragraph snippet when asked about ‘**What is SERP?**‘

2. Make the best use of keywords in your paragraph

Attaining the first rank in Google for a keyword requires quite an effort.

Enriching your optimized content for featured snippets with

the right keywords increases your chances of that ‘**Position Zero**‘ in the SERP.

Try to include **question-oriented keywords** in your content. People find search results with keywords resonating with their question as “**trustworthy**” and “**informative**.” This is the primary reason why they prefer a featured snippet over all other organic results.

Take a close look at your competitor’s featured snippets for some inspiration. Make a list of keywords that have triggered a featured snippet for them, and make your content surrounded by these keywords.

Several online tools can lessen your workload by retrieving information and keywords from the competition’s snippets. You can use them if you find it time-consuming to manually

optimize your content for featured snippets.

3. Include a knowledge panel in your content marketing strategy

A **box with information relevant** to a search query appearing on SERP’s right panel is called a **Knowledge Panel**.

It only appears when the search is about an entity, for example, business, person, or location. The information inside this box lets the reader know about the entity and gives them a way to reach out to it.

Featured snippet alone offers a close competition to the organic listing for the total click share.

But pages ranking for both the featured snippet and the knowledge panel outperform the organic listings for the CTR. A double featured snippet leaves behind the CTR of organic listings, getting 42.1% of the total click share.

Therefore, it is an added benefit if you strategize your featured snippet to trigger a knowledge panel.

For reference, check out this post to see how Gennaro Cuofano structured his featured snippet with his Amazon author page reference. Google considered this reference and used it to display a knowledge panel alongside his featured snippet.

The other side of the story

Featured snippets can sometimes work opposite to their intent.

According to our study, 24% of users confuse featured snippets for Ads.

Therefore, merely optimizing content to target the featured snippet doesn’t ensure a high CTR.

Google keeps altering its interface to make the Ad label on the paid search results barely noticeable.

As featured snippets also acquire the top position on SERPs, it is very natural for someone to get confused and **not** click them.

According to Dr. Pete Meyers, the Marketing Scientist at Moz:

> *“The lesson for SEOs is that we can’t just target a feature – we need to understand query intent, what our buyers expect from that feature, and how they perceive that feature.”*

Try to make your content look like a straightforward, quick answer to a query with images for references to appear very different from an ad.

Wrap up

Google introduced the featured snippet to make it easy for searchers to find relevant answers quickly. With voice search technology becoming a common search tool for half of the smartphone users, featured snippets catered to the trend and enabled users to read the answer out loud.

To make Google identify your content worthy to pick snippets from, you have to optimize your content so it’s relevant and appropriate for voice search SEO, so it helps to bring in more traffic to your site.

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More about:

https://www.searchenginewatch.com/2020/12/03/research-insights-role-of-featured-snippets-in-website-traffic-boost/

Top 17 SEO Podcasts for 2021 via @martinibuster

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Google FAQ Provides Core Web Vitals Insights via @martinibuster

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How Search Queries Trigger Structured Information Cards (Knowledge Panels) via

@bill_slawski

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The Google page experience: What you need to know and five steps to prepare for 2021

30-second summary:

- Google page experience metric goes live in 2021.
- Rewarding pages that offer a better user experience.
- The signal measures a site’s performance, security, and mobile-friendliness.
- To prepare for 2021, get a fast web hosting service, optimize your content for mobile users, and install security measures (firewall, SSL, etc.).
- Avoid pop-ups and whole screen banners that restrict the visitors’ access to content.

The newest search ranking benchmark that’s cooking in Google’s development lab is the Google page experience metric.

In short, this upcoming metric aims to measure (and rank) the overall responsiveness and user experience of websites that show up in Google’s search results.

Google plans to introduce this metric alongside the current

ranking factors. However, there isn’t an exact date announced when this metric goes live.

As Google’s developers officially state in their blog:

> *“The ranking changes [Google page experience] described in this post will not happen before next year [2021], and we will provide at least six months notice before they’re rolled out.”*

You still have plenty of time to react. However, we suggest planning ahead and implementing some of the best practices as soon as possible.

Let’s take a look at what you can expect from this ranking update and how you can prepare your site from the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) perspective.

Elements of the Google page experience metric

Google is mainly building the new metric upon the Core Web Vitals that their Chrome team launched earlier this year.

The overall goal with Google’s page experience metric is to ensure the Google Search users are getting a mobile-friendly, safe, and straightforward browsing experience.

Let’s look at each element that contributes to the page experience metric.

1. Core Web Vitals

Google developed the Core Web Vitals because the average user enjoys fast and seamless web surfing. They also created a Chrome User Experience Report, which you can use to evaluate your site’s current performance according to these signals.

Source

The Core Web Vitals consist of three separate signals:

- Largest Contentful Paint (LCP) – quickness of the largest content piece's loading time.
- First Input Delay (FID) – responsiveness to the user's clicking, scrolling, and typing.
- Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS) – visual stability of the page.

To tick a box in each of these signals, your pages' LCP should be below 2.5 seconds, FID below 100ms and the CLS score less than 0.1.

2. Mobile-friendly site

Google already favors sites that are optimized for mobile users, and rightfully so.

Research conducted by Statista reveals that there are an estimated 3.5 billion smartphone users this year, with this number growing to 3.8 billion in 2021. It's safe to say that sites that aren't mobile-optimized will miss a lot of traffic.

Therefore, it makes sense that Google only wants their search to display mobile-friendly sites.

3. Safe-browsing

Google puts a lot of emphasis on security and weeding out potentially harmful sites from their search results. After all, if the top search results harm users, it won't look good on Google at all.

One of the signals with the upcoming page experience metric concludes if the indexed site contains any malicious or deceptive content. Some straightforward examples are malware, spyware, social engineering scams, and false information.

To get a sense of how this works, check out Google's Security Issues report. You can also scan your website to see if any issues pop up at this time.

4. HTTPS

Following the security topic, Google also prefers secure sites with a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) certificate. Visibly, the difference is between *http://* and *https://* (where the latter is SSL secured) in the website's URL.

The SSL certificate's job is to encrypt any data that travels between the user and the servers. Even if a cyber attack occurs, the hackers are unlikely to make sense of the data.

If you've used the Chrome browser, then you might have come across a security warning with a suggestion that the connection is not secure. This is mainly due to the site missing an SSL certificate.

Source

5. No intrusive interstitials

Last but not least, Google aims to punish sites that aggressively keep the visitors away from quickly accessing the content they are looking for in the first place.

The main culprits here are the pop-ups that cover the entire screen, are difficult to dismiss, or keep popping up while consuming the content.

However, disclaimers, cookie usage information, age-sensitive content confirmations, login dialogs, and reasonably sized banners aren’t going to affect your ranking.

Source

Five steps to optimize your site for 2021

Google’s new page experience metric isn’t going to substitute

the current ranking elements. It becomes an additional ranking factor, but the most essential part from an SEO perspective is still the quality of the content.

Still, since the page experience metric IS going to affect the ranking results, it’s a great idea to know what you can do to prepare.

Here are a few steps you can take to get your site ready for 2021.

1. Get an excellent web hosting service

Your site’s performance is already one of the key ranking factors today. Either you have a server in-house or using a hosting service, it’s wise to make sure your site is fast and responsive.

You can analyze your site’s responsiveness with Google’s PageSpeed Insights tool or use a website performance monitoring tool such as Pingdom.

Additionally, you can check out sites that gather and share performance data on web hosting providers.

Source

2. Keep your page’s size lite

Images go hand-in-hand with today’s websites. However,

overstuffing your web pages with visual content is going to make your site slow.

There are a few ways to approach this problem, depending on the nature of your site.

You can optimize your images and make them *weigh* less by using an image compressor such as ImageOptim. If your page is already content-heavy, consider spreading the largest items to multiple pages within your site.

Alternatively, you can use a Content Delivery Network (CDN) such as CloudFlare to cache your content closer to the visitor's access point.

3. Optimize your site for mobile

As we proved earlier, the world is heading rapidly to mobile. It's not enough for your users to access your content with their smartphones; they also expect your site to adjust to the smaller screens.

Therefore, your site needs to be mobile-optimized.

The good news is that most modern website creation platforms, such as WordPress, already have mobile-friendly templates that don't require extra coding efforts.

You can quickly test if your site is mobile-responsive by using Google's Mobile-Friendly testing tool.

4. Install security measures

Website security definitely deserves a separate article to cover all the bases, but let's only focus on Google's perspective.

First, don't knowingly add any malicious scripts or deceptive content to your website.

Secondly, protect your site from malware and other hacking attempts by adding a firewall. While it’s not clear yet if Google will check your site for a firewall, you should have one in place either way.

And finally, install an SSL certificate that encrypts your data since Google is already keeping tabs on if a site is secure or not. However, most of the modern hosting services already include an SSL certificate with their plans.

Overall, investing in website security is worth it for peace of mind and from the SEO perspective.

5. Tone down or remove large pop-up banners

Google considers anything that keeps its users from accessing the content they search for as a nuisance.

Therefore, a piece of straightforward advice – don’t put a giant banner on your site. Make the promotion more subtle, and you won’t have any problems with Google.

As a reminder, cookie information, age-restriction policies, and login dialogs are the exceptions. Although, please don’t go overboard with these either for the sake of user experience.

Source

In conclusion

Google’s page experience metric will become one of the search ranking signals in 2021, but there isn’t an exact launch date yet.

Still, you can start preparing your site for the upcoming changes. Even if it’s unclear how much weight this new metric has on the search results, offering your visitors a great user experience is a substantial value on its own.

Start by testing your site’s performance, security, and mobile-friendliness. The results give you a pretty good idea of what to tweak and add to your site.

However, remember that the most important ranking factor is still the quality of the content.

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More about:

https://www.searchenginewatch.com/2020/12/01/the-google-page-experience-what-you-need-to-know-and-five-steps-for-2021/