Twitter’s Title Replaced in Google Search Results by @martinibuster

Google mysteriously began showing the wrong result for Twitter on Thursday December 6, 2018. Multiple theories on why immediately popped up. The real reason turned out to be surprising and also led to even more questions.

Google Shows Wrong Title for Twitter

Google shows the wrong title for Twitter. It is showing the title for a Twitter account that belonging to a Twitter member, but not Twitter itself.

I discovered this earlier in the day and didn't think about it until I saw a tweet by Bill Hartzer (@bhartzer) about it on Twitter, where he asked,

> *"Why is Google showing a random Twitter account in the SERPS for Twitter?"*

- **The most immediate suspect was that a rogue hacker had hijacked Twitter and was redirecting it**.
- **Another theory pointed the finger at Google, that it was Google's fault.**

Google’s become so complex, it wasn’t entirely unreasonable to assume that Google was the culprit. Google accidentally removed an entire website from the index just a few days ago.

When you reverse the search and search for the ReallySlowMotion Twitter account, here is what Google showed:

A search for the music related Twitter account showed Twitter’s home page as the URL

Who was to blame?

Ex-Googler Pedro Dias (@pedrodias) suggested the culprit might be canonicals. In the world of SEO, canonicals are like the butlers in those mystery novels who always seem suspicious.

Pedro tweeted,

> *“Probably, for some reason Google chose that url as canonical for Twitter root URL.”*

Cache Adds to the Mystery

Then another clue made the whole mystery clear as mud.

When you clicked to view Google’s cache in the rogue search result for Twitter, an entirely different Twitter account showed up.

Then Martin MacDonald (@searchmartin) stepped in. He managed to view a version of Twitter without JavaScript enabled, a version that Google may have seen.

I’m not sure how he did it because Twitter tried to redirect

me to a legacy version of Twitter when I tried to view Twitter with JavaScript disabled.

Here's what Martin tweeted:

> *"The canonical, on the non JS enabled version of the desktop twitter homepage (that took a while to actually get to) points at the wrong page for some reason."*

And there you have it! The answer may be that Twitter is showing the wrong canonical.

Twitter Title Mystery Solved?

But does that solve the mystery? Seems like that answer leads to more questions!

- How did that wrong canonical end up on Twitter's home page?
- Was Twitter hacked?
- Was it an innocent mistake?

What has been suggested is that Twitter's canonical tag is incorrect. How that happened is a mystery.

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