

Search Engine Optimization: A Tool for Innovation in Business Communication

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Abstract

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has gained enormous popularity in business communication. These days, getting a business website on the first page of Google search is recognized as one of the perfect marketing tools to influence visitors' decisions and create a corporate identity and a brand image. The present study highlights the outcomes of the live project initiated for marketing the brand image of Jagannath International Management School (JIMS), Vasant Kunj, during the lockdown period with the help of a digital marketing team comprising JIMS students from three disciplines – Management, Computer Applications, and Mass Communications.¹ Thus, this study documents the insights that evolved during the project. The data regarding the progress of the ranking on the search engine result page (SERP) has been collected fortnightly for four months. The study documents the step-by-step procedure implemented to achieve the SEO results and analyzes the factors that affect the ranking of websites on SERP.

Keywords: Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Google Algorithm, SEO Keywords, Innovation, Business Communication.

¹ The initiative was introduced as a live project for the students under the JIMS Business Incubation Centre to nurture students through their participation from home in the times of Coronavirus. Under this project, students from all three disciplines, Management, Computer Applications, and Mass Communications, were selected. The project also provided a platform for faculty members and students from all three disciplines to collaborate.

1. Introduction

Search Engine Optimization has gained massive popularity with marketers concerned with the growth of businesses. An online presence is considered an essential factor in developing a company (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2008). Nowadays, reaching the first page of Google search by a business website is regarded as a near-to-perfect marketing tool that indirectly influences a visitor's decision and creates a corporate identity and a brand image (German et al., 2014). Performance results of a business website are available on Google in two ways: organic result listing (that is, based on search engine optimization) and paid search engine advertising, also called pay-per-click (PPC) (Kritzinger and Weideman, 2013). The present study confines its scope to an assessment based on organic result listing via a search engine, search engine optimization.

Search engine optimization is now well perceived as a tool for enhancing the effectiveness of business communication, which plays a significant role in external communication and helps transmit information from the organization to the public who are searching for relevant information in digital space.² Although there can be diverse business communication functions that may be achieved with search engine optimization, the primary ones may include informing, persuading, and promoting the organization's goodwill (Guffey and Loewy, 2008). Thus, given this framework, efforts were made to increase the organic searches so that the brand image gets a position in the visitors' minds which may further increase the flow of direct visitors to the website.

² External communications may include communications with customers, clients, the government, and the public.

The study conceptualizes the framework of innovation to understand the efficacy of Search Engine Optimization in promoting the business and creating the brand image. Schumpeter describes innovation as an original, effective invention, involves practical implementation, and has a meaningful impact on society. According to him, innovation is the basic underlying process for internal origination, with change driving economic evolution. Innovation may come about through new consumer goods, new methods of production, or even new forms of industrial organization that a capitalist enterprise creates (Sengupta, 2013). Thus, this study looks upon search engine optimization as a tool of effective business communication with the external public within innovation.

2. Background

The present study highlights the outcomes of a live project started by Jagannath International Management School (JIMS, Vasant Kunj) during the lockdown period owing to the spread of CoViD-19.³ The paper examines the theoretical framework of innovation to comprehend SEO as a tool for corporate communication.

Data regarding the progress of the ranking on the Search Engine Result Page (SERP) was collected on a fortnightly basis for four

³ In India, the lockdown period to control the spread of CoViD19 began on March 25, 2020. Suddenly, all the institutes and physical classes stopped functioning at one go. Realizing that aspect, the institute decided to take up an activity to provide hands-on experience and effectively utilize this time. Therefore, it was decided to start with a live project to increase internal communication within the organization. There are three departments: Department of IT, department of management studies, and media and communication studies department. Therefore it was decided to take up digital marketing of the institute as the live project that required multiple skills, including content, graphic designing, marketing, and expertise in computer applications.

months.⁴The data from Google analytics was also under observation to measure the progress of the project. The paper will briefly describe the strategies implemented to achieve the overall SEO results while also analyzing the factors that affect ranking a respective website on SERP.

Moreover, another objective of promoting the institute was that the admission process was about to start in August. Having a robust digital presence may provide an opportunity to generate a good number of leads. Thus, the initiative mentioned above as a live project was started under JIMS' Business Incubation Centre to nurture students through thorough participation. The team members consisted of experienced faculty and students from three disciplines – Management, Computer Applications, & Mass Communications.

3. Research Objectives

The live project began with the following three objectives.

- A) Digital Presence – Digital presence includes the content that a business or organization has control over – it may include content on the websites, social media platforms, and other digital platforms. The customers or clients heavily rely on the information available online, which outlines the purpose of having a robust digital presence. The objective is to analyze the institute's website and social media platforms from students' perspectives to get admission. It was made sure to get a complete overhaul of all the content, like the information on the website and the posts on various social media platforms of the institute.

- B) Traffic – The number of visitors visiting the website and the number of pages they visit (called sessions) determines the traffic on the website. It is one of the ways to measure the effectiveness of an online business strategy for digital marketing. The second aim of the project was to bring better and higher web traffic.

- C) Conversion -The third objective targeted converting the leads generated through online platforms into admissions.

The paper also analyzes the brand identity established due to the project undertaken by considering the increase in direct traffic on the website.

4. Review of Literature

Search engine optimization is a part of a broader term called search engine marketing (SEM). SEM includes both paid and organic marketing strategies, where PPC means paid marketing, while SEO is the organic marketing strategy on the search engine. Thus, it is a technique that helps rank the website higher and make it more visible to the people searching for a product or service on a search engine.⁵ Sheffield (2020) describes SEO as a practice that involves web writing skills valuable to attract business customers and considers it one factor that requires attention in business communication pedagogy. While reviewing the literature, it was found that there is not much literature available that connects these three following domains – Innovation, Business Communication, and SEO. However, there is extensive literature available on the association between innovations and businesses. Some studies were explored to

⁴ Search Engine Rank Page (SERP) is the page that displays search results whenever we search on Google. These pages are numbered, and the position of the selected keywords is identified on the particular page. For example, the result appears on the third position of the first page of Google.

⁵Hubspot, Introduction to Search Engine Optimization: Getting Started With SEO to Achieve Business Goals. Retrieved on October 12, 2020, from <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hub/53/file-13204607-pdf/docs/introduction-to-seo-ebook.pdf>

understand the key concepts in the three domains mentioned above, and this study attempts to connect these domains.

When it gets associated with a business, innovation leads to new ideas, creating value for the organization. It is critical to define the term innovation in order to comprehend the link between innovation and business. In the two volumes of *Business Cycles* in the 1930s, Schumpeter defines innovation and distinguishes between invention and innovation. According to him, the invention is exogenous, that is, the primary research carried out in academic or non-profit institutions which leads to an entirely new creation; whereas the innovation process is endogenous that involves the capitalization of the invention; in other words, it consists of the market incentives for developing the propensity to invest further in the business. It may also include the rewards for inventions in patents (Rosenberg, 2000; Sengupta, 2013). Broadly defining the term, innovation is developing a new process, product, or organizational improvement. The Schumpeterian concept of innovation aims to attain long-term features of capitalist reality. The method of 'creative destruction' is the inability of 'static equilibrium' analysis that emerges due to disruptive technologies in the market. Schumpeter considered technological innovations central to long-term economic change, which was never earlier understood as an essential determinant of economics (Schumpeter, 1942).

Some studies illustrate the need for innovation in business communication, and the implementation of SEO to Business Communication in improving a website's result is categorically an invention. Search Engine Optimization as a whole is the art of enhancing a website's visibility in the main body of search engine results. Releasing this

aspect, techniques like keywords, on-page SEO, off-page SEO, backlinks, traffic, all these help in generating high and quality traffic, meant for increasing sales of the business, catch customers, and provide improvement for quality and growth of websites, too (Akram et al., 2010). Analkoti (2017) has put forward that any given company with a personalized website should have the prime objective of getting the website on page one of the various Search Engines.

As per a survey conducted by Moz (2015), the following is the weightage of thematic clusters of ranking factors in Google. For example – the domain level that includes domain name length, TLD extension, domain HTTP response time, and other parameters weights 5.21 percent in the SEO process. Similarly, it has been mentioned in the survey that the maximum weight is of Page-level Keywords and Content features to approx. 15%, Page-level Link features that include the quantity and the quality of links and their sources also carry the weight of approx. Nineteen percent and the largest share is by domain-level link features that include the number of links to the domain, trust/quality of links to the domain to approximately 21%. These parameters are the decisive factors in devising the strategy for SEO (Table 1).

5. Methodology

The present study is primary in nature and the methodology implemented to execute the live project involved various steps – a) competitor's analysis, b) devising and executing the strategy for SEO (the detailed strategy is covered in the next section), c) data collection, d) analysis. Before, the initiating the implementation process, an understanding on Google's algorithm was necessary. By algorithm, we mean completing step by step instructions given to the computer. Thus, these

algorithm help in completing the three major steps as part of SEO; the first one is crawling, the second is indexing and the third is ranking. By choosing the appropriate domain, by implementing the certain Meta tags on the website and providing the relevant information in the form of content helps Google in identifying the website easily. To make Google crawl, it is necessary to submit the sitemap. The entire process leads to the second stage, which is, indexing of the website on search engine. It means to optimize the performance of the database. For example, there are number of websites from different genres are available on Google, we can call them as database, optimizing the site will include putting the relevant details and the domain name so Google may index the site in the particular category of websites. The third stage is ranking. It is the positioning of keywords on Search Engine Result Pages (SERP) of the Google. Google ranks the sites on SEP on various factors. Many of them are listed in the above-mentioned table (table 1). More prominently, they are the websites with most relevant content and higher traffic. Based on these understandings, a clear strategy was devised to implement the SEO process and the data (ranking of the websites was collected manually), followed with the analysis of data.

6. Devising the Strategy for Search Engine Optimization

Based on the literature review and considering the Search Engine Optimization factors, a step-wise strategy was devised to execute the Search Engine Optimization. The on-page and off-page steps were as followed:

6.1 Technical SEO Strategies

Step-1: SSL - SSL stands for Secure Socket layer. The function of SSL is to encrypt the data transfer in transit. SSL has got a new version which is TLS. TLS stands for

transport layer security. The initial version of TLS was TLS 1.1.

Step-2: Website is mobile-friendly–The purpose of a mobile-friendly website is to work similarly to the website on desktops, which means that nothing changes on a computer or mobile device. Features of websites like navigation, dropdowns, and small text cannot be used on mobile devices due to limitations. Flash animation is not there on mobile-friendly sites. Regardless of the device on which it is viewed, the website remains the same. It is user-friendly. Due to the change in the digital era, these days, primarily the users access the content over the phone; hence the websites must be mobile-friendly. Google does have a tool available that helps in checking mobile friendliness.

Step-3: Avoid duplicate content on the website- Any duplicate or repetitive content will harm the SEO of the website and the user experience as well. The fixing of identical content issues on the website will let the search engine identify the pages to crawl, index, and rank. It is beneficial to add value to visitors with original material to rank the website higher in search results. Duplicate content confuses Google and forces the search engine to choose identical pages it should rank in the top results. There is a greater possibility that the original page might not appear among the top search results. Due to the same content on multiple pages, the search engine crawl wrong pages and gives incorrect results. Duplicate content adds little to no value for the visitors and confuses search engines. The same content on the website may also harm the website's SEO performance. Duplicate content generally refers to substantive blocks within or across domains that completely match other content or are appreciably similar. There are several online tools available that help in

identifying the identical content on the websites.

Step-4: XML sitemap -The Sitemaps protocol allows a webmaster to communicate with the search engines to find URLs on a website available for crawling. A Sitemap is a type of XML file that lists the URLs of the website. It lets webmasters fetch additional information about each URL, e.g., when it was last updated, how often changes have happened, and how important it is with other URLs present on the site. It allows search engines to crawl more efficiently and effectively and identify the URLs that may be isolated from the rest of the site's content. Sitemaps protocol is a URL inclusion protocol complemented with URL exclusion protocol. XML Sitemaps helps Google to find the site's pages. It is important because Google ranks websites and not web pages.

Step-5: Implement structured data markup on a website - The Structured Data Markup Helper helps users markup elements on a web page so that Google can understand the data present on the page. The moment Google understands the page data; it results more attractively with new Google Search methods. Structured data, also called schema markup, is a code that makes it easier for search engines to crawl, organize, and showcase the content. Structured data helps the searching engines know what website data is clear, but search engines will have to determine the meaning of the raw data.

6.2 On-Page SEO Strategies

Step-1: Website and Competition Analysis – The primary focus was to look after the institute's website, how it ran, what it lacked, where it lacked, what were the changes were due to be implemented, and so on. The next step was the competitor's analysis. The competitors' websites were analyzed, and the list of tentative keywords was finalized. The

keywords were searched manually to check their positions on the SERP. After researching keywords' positions, the website was reviewed to check the availability of content and keywords. It proved to be an essential step, as it improved the results by a considerable margin.

Step-2: Optimization of Target Pages for Main Keywords – Keywords in general, for SEO, play a pivotal role in improving a website's ranking on the SERP, and so, attempts were made to optimize the web pages and the content too, to highlight the keywords, ensuring better and bigger web traffic in the future.

Step-3: Content Optimization – As mentioned above, most of the content on the website was updated with current and relevant information. It was optimized with SEO keywords. The content was optimized keeping in mind the audience, as well as the objectives laid out.

Step-4: Submit Sitemap to Search Engine - After the updates, the website was made live on search engines like Google visible in the results. Submitting the site maps to the search engine helps the search engine crawl the pages of the website and the content thereby.

6.3 Off-Page SEO Strategies

Step-1: Build Backlinks – These are the easiest ways to get the page ranked high as backlinks tend to have high organic search engine rankings. This technique was used to ensure that the website remains valuable and credible.

Step-2: Off-Page SEO Promotion and Reporting – As part of off-page SEO, the following measures were taken - a) promotion of website on the social media platforms, b) tweeting with the relevant URL of the website, c) posting the relevant content for students with the URL to the website on the third party-websites, posting the relevant content on the blog-site with the targeted URLs for SEO. So, promoting the website on third-party websites,

including building links, being active on the social media platforms, posting videos and images of the institute, led to valuable traffic and increased the website's credibility. Thus, all of these attempts were made to generate organic traffic.

Step-3: Analysis of Ranking and Traffic – With the help of Google Analytics, a picture as to where the website, keywords, and content ranked what is the amount of traffic we received after the changes we made.

7. Data Collection & Analysis

Keywords' Ranking – The first step was to shortlist the potential keywords and the second step was to identify their ranking on SERP. The keywords were mainly the long-tail keywords as the conversion rate is usually higher in the case of long-tailed keywords; that is, there is a probability of providing better web traffic. In the table mentioned below, the initial ranking of the keywords on SERP is mentioned. Moreover, the ranking was observed for three months. The table mentions the ranking followed fortnightly (Table 2).

The table 2 mentions the ranking of the keywords observed fortnightly. After a gap of three months, we again tested the keywords' ranking, and it was visible that most of the keywords ranking on page two or three of Google started appearing on top of page one with rank one, two, three, and four on page one.

Traffic - We also observed the website traffic from March to July, and it was double in July as compared to March (Table 3).

Technical Score of Website- The technical score of a website depicts the quality of the website. The more the technical score, the better would be the quality of a website. Before implementing the SEO techniques, the score of the website was forty five. As part of

SEO, many tests like page loading speed and mobile-friendliness were run on the targeted pages of the website, due to which the technical score increased to eighty.

Domain Authority (DA) is often used to describe a domain's relative "strength," determined by the backlinks. With the help of Moz, we tested our domain's authority before and after the live project. It is visible that there is an increase in the domain authority (Fig. 1). **Page Authority** predicts how well a particular page will rank on search engine result pages (SERP) or Google. Higher scores correspond to a more extraordinary ability to rank. It increased from twenty four to thirty in three months (Fig. 2). **Linking Domains** predicts the quality and the number of links that our domain is related to other domains. This parameter also witnessed the hike.

8. Conclusion

The present study focuses on the results achieved as part of a live project initiated by a higher education institution during the lockdown period amid the outspread of CoViD-19 aimed to engage the students from different disciplines - Computer Applications, Journalism and Media Communications, and Management. The live project was related to the implementation of Search Engine Optimization on the official website of the institute jimsd.org. The targets were set before the implementation of SEO techniques. The measures adopted included the following steps - a) competitors' analysis, b) keyword research, c) selection of landing pages, d) technical SEO of the website, e) On-page SEO, f) Off-page SEO, and lastly, g) evaluating the results through analytics.

The findings obtained included that after implementing the SEO techniques stated above, most of the keywords appeared on the first page of the search engine (Google). With

the optimization of content, the bounce rate of the website decreased. The sessions were comparatively of longer durations. As a result of these activities, the technical score of the website improved from forty-five to eighty. The page authority and domain authority were also enhanced. The result was also reflected in traffic; the website conversion rate has succeeded, and the number of inquiries related to the admission process has doubled.

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Table 1: Weightage of Thematic Clusters influencing SEO

S.No.	Thematic Clusters	Inclusions	Weightage
1	Domain-Level Link Authority Features	Quantity of links to the domain; trust/quality of links; and domain-level page rank.	20.94%
2	Page-Level Link features	It includes the Page Rank, Trust Rank, Quantity of links, Author Text Distribution, Quality of link sources.	19.15%
3	Page-Level KW & Content Features	Topic modeling scores on content, content quantity/relevance.	14.94%
4	Page-Level, Keyword Agnostic Features	Content-Length, Readability, Uniqueness, Load speed.	9.8%
5	Domain-Level Brand Features	Offline usage of brand/domain name, mentions of brand/domain in news/media/press, entity, association.	8.59%
6	User, Usage & Traffic/Query Data	Traffic/user signals from browsers/toolbars/clickstream, quantity/diversities/CTR of Queries.	8.06%
7	Social Metrics	Based on the quantity or quality of tweets, Facebook shares, and others.	7.24%
8	Domain-Level, Keyword Usage	Exact or Partial Match of the Keyword with the Domains.	6.98%
9	Domain-Level, Keyword-Agnostic Features	Length of Domain Name, TLD extension, Domain HTTP response time.	5.21%

(Source: Moz Survey, 2015)

Table 2: Keywords with benchmark ranking (as of March 2020) and the fortnightly ranking on Google

Home Page URL	www.jimsd.org	Marc h' 20	April' 20	May '20	May'2 0	June'2 0	June'20	July'20	July'31
S.No.	Keywords	30/3/20	15/4/20	1/5/20	15/5/20	1/6/20	16/6/20	1/7/21	Page Rank

1	Air-conditioned infrastructure institute of GGSIPU in South Delhi	20	1	1	1	1	1	1	First Page
2	Top GGSIPU Institutes for BJMC/BA(JMC) in Delhi NCR	10	1	1	1	1	1	1	First Page
3	Best GGSIPU Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Comm. colleges/institutes in Delhi	22	1	1	1*	1*	1*	1*	First Page
4	Air-conditioned infrastructure institute of GGSIPU in Delhi NCR	25,26	2	1	1	1	1	1	First Page
5	Best Top Ranked GGSIPU Institute of Journalism and Mass Communication in Delhi NCR	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	First Page
6	Best GGSIPU Colleges of BCA in Delhi connected with Metro	20	1	1	1	1	1	1	First Page
7	Best GGSIPU Journalism Colleges/Institutes in Delhi NCR connected with Metro	18	2	2	1	1	1	1	First Page
8	TOP A+ Category/Highest Ranked Colleges/Institutes of GGSIPU University	17	4	4	4	4	3	3	First Page

	in Delhi								
9	Top GGSIPU Institutes in Delhi	55	5	5	2	2	1	1	First Page
10	Best BBA GGSIPU Institutes in Delhi NCR	31	7	7	4	4	1	1	First Page
11	Best BBA Placement GGSIPU Institutes in Delhi NCR	19	4	4	3	3	2	2	First Page
12	Best IP Institute for Professional Courses in Delhi NCR	Nil	7	7	7	7	5	5	First Page
13	GGSIPU Colleges/Institutes in Delhi with best placements	56	6	6	6	6	5	5	First Page
14	Top Ranking GGSIPU Colleges in Delhi NCR	Nil	16	16	13	13	12	12	Second Page
15	GGSIP University Admission 2020	Nil	40	40	40	40	40	40	Fourth Page
16	Best GGSIPU college near Vasant Vihar Metro	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	First Page
17	Best GGSIPU Institute for Journalism and Mass Communication in Delhi NCR	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	First Page
18	Top GGSIPU Institutes in Delhi with the best	4	1	2	2	2	1	1	First Page

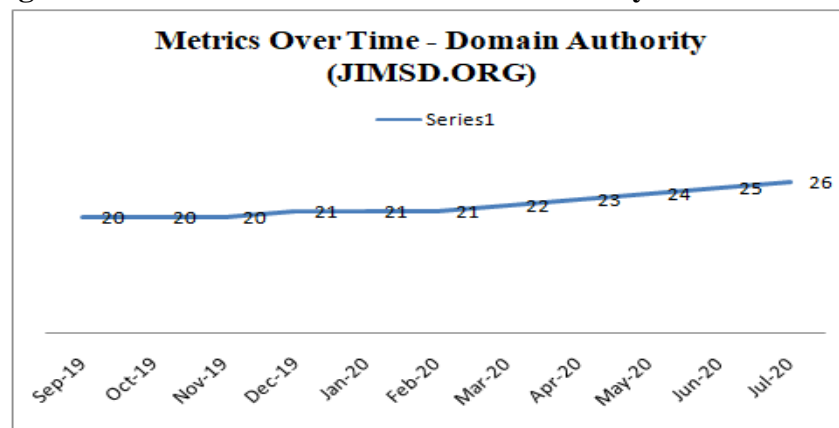
	Placement Records								
19	Best GGSIPU BCA Institute near Metro in Delhi NCR	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	First Page
20	Best GGSIPU College near Chattarpur Metro Station	2	4	1	1	1	1	1	First Page
21	Best GGSIPU Institutes in South Delhi with Metro Connectivity	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	First Page
22	A+ Category GGSIPU Institute Near Metro in Delhi NCR	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	First Page
23	Best GGSIPU Mass Communication near Metro in Delhi NCR	4	4	3	3	3	1	1	First Page
24	Topmost GGSIPU Colleges for BCA near Metro in Delhi NCR	6	4	1	5	5	1	1	First Page
25	Top GGSIPU Colleges/Institutes in Delhi NCR with best Placements	7	5	5	5	5	4	4	First Page

Note: *referred to the snippets.

Table 3: Source of Traffic on the website in terms of the total number of users and the new users from March 2020 to June 2020

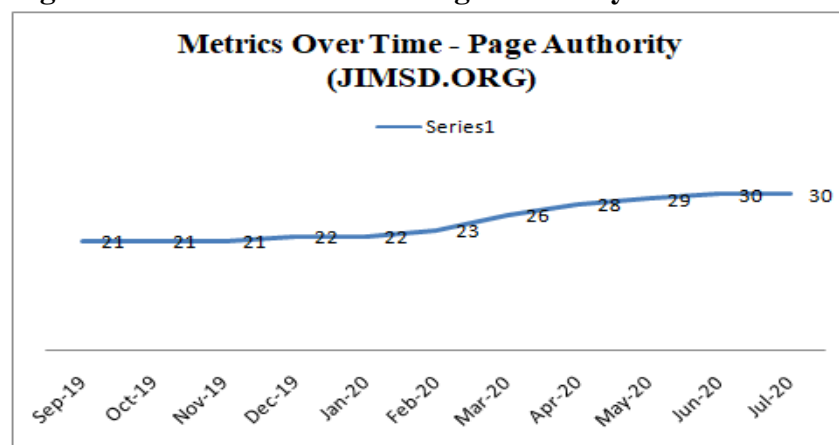
Month/Source	March		April		May		June	
	Users	New Users	Users	New Users	Users	New Users	Users	New Users
Organic Search	838	679	1005	897	1143	1024	993	873
Direct	455	422	535	508	481	440	721	687
Social	29	28	17	14	50	47	76	62
Referral	18	11	37	30	37	19	64	61
Total	1340	1140	1594	1449	1711	1530	1854	1683

Figure 1: Metrics over time – Domain Authority of JIMSD.ORG



(Data source: moz.com)

Figure 2: Metrics over time – Page Authority of JIMSD.ORG



(Data source: moz.com)