

How useful is Google Trends for digital marketing?

 By Jacques du Bruyn

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In South Africa, 94% of online information searches are made via Google. This means that the data gleaned by the platform is an incredibly accurate measure of what South Africans are searching for - as well as when and possibly why.



Source: www.unsplash.com

That information can be accessed via Google Trends and used as a powerful tool for digital marketing.

Targeting and testing

The challenge at the start of any campaign is deciding who it is targeted at. Marketers can put in a few geographic locations, target specific devices and add some demographic and psychographic targets like age groups and interests.

That's quite broad – which is where Google Trends really comes into its own. It allows digital marketers the opportunity to look at information around specific search terms linked to their campaign, giving them detail like the volume of searches, the period over which those searches generally occur and what the trends are in that period.



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It may indicate that there is particular interest in a set of search terms from a specific province or during a season – allowing marketers to specifically target that area or time period.

Seasonality of searches is particularly helpful for, for example, fashion retailers. Digital marketers are able to tell fashion clients when they should start promoting their next season's clothing – as searches for related fashion items start to ramp up.

Check on the competition

Google Trends also helps marketers determine the competitive landscape in the space. Say you're a manufacturer of wall heaters and want to know what your competition is doing in the marketing space. By virtue of being able to see which keywords are being targeted, you can see who else is vying for space, allowing marketers to estimate what the client is going to need to pay to make an impact in the digital space.

By looking out for periods where there's less competitor marketing, or by targeting under-utilised search terms, digital marketers can advise when smaller budgets would make a bigger impact or where there's less clutter in the space.



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Because the online market is so competitive, companies often get frustrated at the cost of a click for a heavily-used search term. Google Trends is able to tell us what keywords the audience is using too, which can help inform organic searches and lower costs – increasing organic effectiveness. When clients start using keywords that rank organically, the cost per click of AdWords goes down, because of the relevance of the offering increases.

In the content marketing space, Google Trends can help marketers define which keywords are most prevalent for a specific topic, to help put out more effective digital PR features for seeding in online media. Using the right terms at the right time can help improve the article's ranking – another organic search benefit.

Partnering for success

It all sounds relatively simple – so why does a company need to pay a digital marketing agency or partner to advise them when Google Trends simply lays bare the information?

For starters, the breadth and depth of knowledge across sectors and trends within a specialist digital marketing agency have benefits for clients. The broad knowledge of the digital landscape and what's happening, when – and how – is something that not many clients have the benefit of accessing.

Time and budget constraints often mean they're forced to stay in their lane and not look at, say, the opportunities a major sneaker campaign from a specific brand could offer their sock business.



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Digital agencies also use other tools to inform them – for example, Google Trends data is pulled into an agency's Google Data Studio, which is a visualisation platform and tool that helps marketers see how search terms and phrases change over time.

For a fashion brand, that allows for the building of a robust dashboard for the marketing manager which shows the seasonality for every product category they have, meaning they know the perfect time to activate a new seasonal campaign and measure how trends and climate change are shifting their customers' needs.

Any business not using the power of Google Trends is missing out on immensely valuable key information linked to what they do and who they do it for.

And any business not partnering with a quality digital marketing agency to harness the power of its insights is going to spend a long time in the digital wilderness while its competitors are capturing customers.

ABOUT JACQUES DU BRUYN

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