

# How to Dominate Global Google Searches

**One search result that won't pop up on Google is the secret sauce for ranking well in the search engine's individual country indexes.** But reports like the Searchmetrics SEO World Rankings can help practitioners draw conclusions, and one is pretty logical: In-demand, high-quality content is an important component of international SEO.

Searchmetrics analyzed 10 national Google indexes throughout 2017 to determine which domains have the highest SEO visibility, a metric the SEO platform developed to calculate how visible a website is in a search engine's organic results. In addition to ranking the 10 domains with the highest SEO visibility on desktops in each country, Searchmetrics created an overall ranking based on the number of countries where the domain ranks in the top 10. It crowned wikipedia.org the winner. The online encyclopedia was the most visible website in 8

out of 10 countries. YouTube's website came in second, followed by facebook.com, google.com, and apple.com.

Stephen Bench-Capon, content marketing manager at Searchmetrics, says the five top performers have become integral to people's lives. "It doesn't mean they're doing any special SEO tricks," he says. "They're just providing the most relevant answers for things people are looking for. The remarkable thing that makes Wikipedia stand out is that it covers such a vast range of search queries."

Other factors help Wikipedia's SEO, Bench-Capon adds. Its website is extremely usable and up-to-date, and visitors who click on it are likely to have a good experience and return, he says. "There's not a consensus on whether Google actually uses click-through rates and time on site to adjust its rankings, but there's a strong suspicion in the industry that it does," he says.

Google's website, Bench-Capon points out, is a bit of an anomaly, but it includes all the services Google offers, including Google Translate, Google Flights, and its maps—like if someone searches "pizza near me." "Google is in a perfect position to analyze what people are searching for and to spot these gaps and try to extend its presence as much as possible," he says.

## DOMAIN DECISIONS

Meanwhile, the Searchmetrics results show that generic top-level domains (TLDs) and country code TLDs (ccTLDs) can both perform well. Yes, all the domains of the global champions end in a .com or a .org., as do 76% of the top five domains across all non-U.S. indexes that Searchmetrics analyzed. However, about 66% of the sites that ranked in positions six through 10 for each country are national websites with ccTLDs—like those that end in .it for Italy or .fr for France. Tripadvisor.it and LeMonde.fr are two examples.



Searchmetrics determined that these five popular websites were most visible across national boundaries throughout 2017. All the winners maintained their places from last year's SEO World Rankings, with one exception: google.com replaced twitter.com.

“What I took from [the study] is that wikipedia.org and google.com—these mega brands—they’re going to rank well regardless, and they’re popular around the world,” says Kaitlin McMichael, iStock SEO manager at Getty Images, whose duties include managing international SEO for Getty and its iStock brand. “The fact [that] they are generic [TLDs] and doing well internationally doesn’t necessarily mean that’s what you need to do to rank well.”

Take Amazon, for example. Its website had an impressive showing in Google’s U.S. index, ranking seventh, and its different national sites ranked highly in the indexes of France, Germany, Italy, Austria, and the U.K. “I think ccTLDs can be a really good approach because they are unambiguous in their targeting,” McMichael says.

Of course, generic TLDs can use techniques to help Google understand their target audiences too. For instance, a site can create a subdirectory such as hello.com/br or a subdomain such as br.hello.com. Both tell Google the content in that section is geared toward visitors accessing the page in Brazil. Likewise, McMichael says websites can set up geotargeting in Google Search Console to further reinforce that certain pages are targeted to a specific country. In addition, hreflang tags on pages can be used to signal the intended language or, in some cases, both the language and country, she says.

**‘I think ccTLDs can be a really good approach because they are unambiguous in their targeting.’**

The choice of a URL structure often comes down to practical matters. “If you roll out a bunch of ccTLDs, those are all brand-new websites, and it can take time for a new website to gain traction—you need quality links from quality websites,” McMichael says. Additionally, maintaining various national sites requires a greater investment of time and money than targeting audiences through a single site that branches off for various countries. Getty has ccTLDs, but iStock—a newer brand—uses the subdirectory approach.

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the natural flow of chat-based conversation using packaged visual elements.

“The conversational UI functionality is available in more than a dozen Telerik and Kendo UI toolsets. As is standard across Progress’ UI tools, the components are easy to implement using existing development skills and with the technologies that developers prefer. Through the conversational UI components, developers can implement key UI design features such as calendars and date pickers that allow the developer to better control the direction of the conversation. ...

“For developers that want to build their own chat experiences on frameworks offered by Microsoft, Facebook, Google, and Amazon, Progress’ newly announced conversational UI components for Telerik and Kendo UI make it easy to build an engaging chat experience. For organizations looking for an out-of-the-box chatbot solution for transactional customer service use cases, Progress offers [Progress NativeChat], an AI-based chatbot solution that can be trained and deployed in weeks.”

#### **LookBookHQ Introduces Content Insight and Activation Engine, Changes Name to PathFactory**

LookBookHQ announced the launch of PathFactory, which it says is the first content insight and activation engine. According to the press release, it “helps B2B marketers connect audiences at all lifecycle stages with the information they need, wherever they engage. To reflect the company’s vision to power data-driven content delivery and provide marketers with a path to greater relevance, insight, and revenue, LookBookHQ has also changed its name to PathFactory. ...

“With this launch, PathFactory makes a ... leap forward in helping marketers use content strategically to achieve critical marketing outcomes. It provides the decision support required to analyze what is and isn’t working to ... generate revenue, and automates content delivery to help buyers buy. ...

“The PathFactory Engine gathers external visitor and account data, analyzes content using artificial intelligence, and combines that information with the engagement data it collects to build a complete understanding of the role of content in the buyer’s journey as well as the impact it has on pipeline and revenue. The Engine uses this data and insight to activate content, and connect buyers with the most relevant information when they need it.”

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*(The Challenges of Multilingual Chatbots Are Worth the Reward, from page 5)*

27-year-old Artem Goldman, a spot on *Forbes*' most recent 30-under-30 list.

The more complex the chatbot, the more chatbot designers need to consider the user experience. Even something as (seemingly) simple as asking to change a seat can lead to frustration; something as complex as building a visa application has the potential to go further awry. If you want to avoid the user frustration described at the beginning of this article, you need to keep the user experience front and center.

“Chatbot users who need to type will want the chatbot to be easy to read and chat with—no matter the language,” says Senturia. “In regions where there are different levels of formality in the written system and/or register in the spoken version, the chatbot needs to aim for a balance of readability and respect for most users (i.e., Simplified vs. Traditional Chinese or informal vs. formal ‘you’ in Spanish). Users may not want to bother with punctuation, capitalization, diacritics, and so on, to

save their hands from fatiguing; so they should be able to answer with the fewest symbols or letters as possible.”

She offers these other considerations: “In areas where the Roman alphabet is not the standard writing system or for multilingual users, minimizing the need to switch keyboards can make it easier on the user. For any language, the experience is visual, so it needs to be brief and easy to read.”

KLM, for its part, has been expanding on its chatbot efforts to include more complex ones, such as an application on Google Assistant that helps users pack for a trip. The application is intended to be both useful and somewhat playful; KLM even refers to its chatbot persona (“BB” for “blue bot”) as being “cheeky from time to time.” This element of humor can go a long way in helping users navigate chatbot-based applications—and by doing so, improve the acceptance of the technology as more organizations look to expand its usefulness and footprint. ■

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## LOCAL LINGO

Regardless of its address format, a website will benefit from having strong visitor engagement. Localization that involves more than straight translation is critical. After all, content that is merely translated from an original site may not resonate with a foreign audience—the references could be confusing, for example.

Localization professionals can help adapt copy and integrate elements such as the appropriate time format, currency, and colors, says Chris Raulf, an international SEO expert and founder of Boulder SEO Marketing. “Your site has to appear as if it were created in that country,” he says. Ideally, those experts can also research strong keywords to help Google understand the content of pages. These aren’t for keyword stuffing, which is the misguided practice of stuffing content with keywords that

don’t flow. Rather, the keywords need to be used elsewhere, such as in a page’s headline, URL, title tag, and image alt tags, McMichael says.

Incorporating keywords people use in the U.S. may not be effective; in some cases, equivalents will be necessary. Americans may search for a “cellphone,” but Raulf points out that searchers in Switzerland could be using the term “natel,” while those in Germany could be referring to the device as a “handy.”

Those small but significant differences serve as a reminder that creating content for foreign audiences and getting it to show up prominently in Google indexes—or any other search engine—isn’t an easy proposition. McMichael says, “International SEO, like any good SEO strategy, really takes time, investment, and planning to do it right.” ■