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SEO: A PROVEN TOOL FOR CUSTOMER ACQUISITION

Marketers, worldwide, are striving for delivering results in the midst of a pandemic. Limited marketing budgets are forcing CMOs to invest only in smart and proven marketing strategies. SEO has emerged as one such tool that has helped achieve long-term marketing goals with high Return on investment (ROI).

With ever increasing importance of search in people's lives, importance of SEO cannot be ignored. SEO can prove to be useful at every stage of marketing funnel. This report presents our work for client Zivame as a success story.

Kaushal Thakkar

Founder and Managing director Infidigit

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PREFACE

Onset of Covid-19 caused businesses to significantly cut-down their marketing budgets. As per Global mid-year forecast published by GroupM, India's advertising economy can witness a decline of more than 20%¹. Tight marketing budgets have pushed marketers to focus only on potent customer acquisition tactics and search engine optimization (SEO) has emerged as one of them². It is more critical now than ever before to focus on the customers who are likely to provide highest return on your marketing investment.

At Infidigit, we have seen that effective implementation of a well-designed SEO strategy will not only result in generous increase in website traffic, but also help achieve long term marketing goals. A good case in point is our client Zivame, India's top online retailer of women's intimate and activewear. Our goal was to increase non-brand sessions, increase new users from organic search, achieve top ranking for popular keywords, and gain market share. We formulated a unique SEO approach comprising advanced and latest techniques. As a result, traffic for non-brand terms went up by 116%, new users visiting website went up by 73%, and market share improved by up to 20 times for select categories.

The biggest advantage of using SEO for acquiring customers is that unlike other strategies adopted for customer acquisition, **gains made using SEO are not transient in nature**; they last for a long time and if customers' interest are given priority, customers only increase with time without any noteworthy additional spending by brands on SEO.

Covid-19 has brought a seismic shift in consumer behavior and therefore marketing efforts need to adjust as well. Increased focus on health and hygiene, social distancing, working out of home, income certainty etc. has been the driving force behind these changes. With use of SEO, brands can monitor search trends to understand important factors in a customer's buying journey.

Marketers can then use valuable insights in consumer intent to devise a focused strategy to get new customers and retain old ones.

¹ GroupM Global mid-year Forecast https://www.indiantelevision.com/mam/media-and-advertising/media-agencies/global-tv-advertising-to-decline-by-176-in-2020-groupm-mid-year-forecast-200623?page=4

² State of Local SEO industry report 2020 by Moz



At Infidigit, we strongly believe that SEO should emerge as marketers' preferred choice for customer acquisition. This paper highlights how SEO can boost the effectiveness of acquisition marketing and play a role in your customer acquisition strategy. Our work with client Zivame is also presented as a case study.

We hope you find this report timely and insightful.



Kaushal Thakkar Founder and Managing DirectorInfidigit





Role of technology in people's lives is increasing with each passing day. India now has 700 million unique mobile phone subscribers, out of which 451 million are active internet users³. Low-cost smartphones, affordable data tariffs, and a desire to explore have given millions an opportunity to experience the power of digital.

Digital revolution has created a noticeable impact on customers' buying journey- both online and offline. No matter what your demographic is, everyone uses Google to find answers to their questions, enrich their knowledge base, enhance their skill levels, seek validation for their purchasing decision, and of course to discover the world around them.

160 +

Billion monthly searches on google

53%

Of all site traffic comes from organic search

75%

Of people who find local, helpful information in search results are more likely to visit physical stores.

Source: Raconteur.net

Search trends are a source of valuable insights

Ever since search engines have come into our lives, using search to look for answers has essentially become our second nature. Study of search trends can give brands most valuable insights into what customers are looking for.

³ Mobile Marketing Ecosystem Report 2020 published by Mobile marketing association India and GroupM October 2020 www.infidigit.com



50%
Of organized retail is likely to be influenced by digital in 2020

People use search at every stage of their journey, and a growing number of them are researching online before making a purchase offline. A finding suggests that 50% of the organized retail will be influenced by digital in 2020⁴.

During pandemic, as health and hygiene became high priorities, search queries pivoted towards "immunity" (+500%), searches for Vitamin C surged by over 150% and for ayurvedic home remedies by 90%. Indians are constantly seeking truth and greater transparency from brands and institutions they engage with- 1 out of every 2 consumers want to know how brands are responding to pandemic.

Brands can analyze customers' digital footprints and position themselves as helpful experts and inspire customers to take actions⁵ as customers go through the stages of marketing funnel-awareness, consideration and purchase. Pepsico was able to anticipate customer's intent at scale and deliver a personalized experience to each customer, resulting 30% increase in brand awareness⁶.



Search trends have really helped Future Group know customer insights, which in turn have helped the business in forecasting and new products. Also search queries have driven online to offline in a big way, thus, driving business & footfalls.



Pawan Sarda

Group Head - Digital, Future Group

⁴ Google's Year in search report India May 2019

⁵ Google's report on "What is India searching for?" Link- https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-apac/country/india/what-india-searching-insights-brands/

⁶ https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-apac/tools-resources/data-measurement/pepsi-digital-transformation/ October 2020 www.infidigit.com

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Organic search can affect your business in many ways. Collective voice of the internet is playing a major role in influencing purchase decisions. As consumers grow more and more at ease with technology and rely on search for making real life decision, importance of SEO cannot be disregarded.

In times when budgets are cut down, SEO can deliver high returns at a low cost. Getting it right can yield ten-fold increase in organic traffic to your site. Marketers can use the power of a well-thought SEO strategy to support customers in their journey and deliver results for their business.

Search has a role in customer's buying journey and so does SEO

People have become research obsessed. They turn to search for answers at various stages of their purchase journey. Earlier, a buyer would linearly pass through all three phases starting from discovery to research to purchase but with advent of technology this funnel is not so linear anymore. People switch between phases at a click of a button and broaden or narrow their consideration set depending on their requirement. People turn to their devices to get immediate answers.⁷

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Below representation shows how search queries changes as a customer interested in buying a car moves from discovery to purchase phase, and how SEO can play a role in each phase.

Table shows how search queries changes as customer moves through phases of his purchase journey by taking an example of a person looking to buy a car.

Table aslo highlights the ways in which SEO can help brands in all three phases.



Discovery phase

Customer is aware of the product category, but he is not sure about the exact product he wants to buy and is looking for ideas.



Research phase

Customer is interested in knowing more about options available in market and differences between them.



Purchase phase

Research is done and it is decision time. Customer is searching for nearby store.

Examples of queries:

- best car under 10 lakhs in India 2020
- is it a good time to buy a car during coronavirus?
- petrol or diesel car, which is better in India 2020
- manual vs automatic pros and cons
- hatchback vs sedan difference

- Parand A Car X user review
- Car X vs Car Y which is better
- Car X vs Car Y mileage
- Car X ground clearance
- How is the performance of Car X on highways?
- Brand A dealership near me
- Brand A car exchange offer 2020
- Car X on road price in location Z
- Brand A service center in location Z

SEO can help brands

- Increase brand awareness by showing content on top in search results.
- Establish themselves as a thought leader
- Acquire customers at early stage of buying journey
- Organic traffic achieved due to SEO can be retargeted to increase top of mind recall.
- Brands can reach out to bloggers and comparison portal to provide them with information relevant for customers
- Improving user experience is an integral part of a welldesigned SEO strategy.
 Thus, SEO pushes brands to streamline the purchase process and enhance customer experience.



Discovery phase

Customer know that they have an issue and are looking for a solution. Customer is aware of the product category but is not sure of the exact product he wants to buy and is looking for ideas and inspiration. He turns to search for answers.

Below are some examples of search queries a customer considering buying car would make in discovery phase. Queries are about educating oneself about various product types such as petrol, diesel, manual, automatic, etc. within product category "car". Note that queries are illustrative and do not represent any individual's personal data.

Is it a good time to buy a car during coronavirus?
 best car under 10 lakhs in India 2020
 Petrol car vs diesel car

petrol or diesel car, which is better in India 2020

manual vs automatic pros and cons

hatchback vs sedan difference

Awareness of your brand plays a critical role here. Customer is aware of the category he wants to make a purchase in and would try to recall brands that operate in this category. When customer types his search query, brands have an opportunity to come across as an expert in the field and offer credible answers. This is a chance to win customers' trust in very early stage of their journey.

If you can capture customer's fancy in this phase, it can go a long way. You can nurture your leads and drive them to conversion by offering strong value and a delightful customer experience. You will find yourself way ahead of your competition.

Showing up in search results not only have potential of impacting clicks and conversions but can also affect brand value. Study conducted by Google in South east Asia markets reveals that after being exposed to the brands' search ads, a greater number of consumers said they thought that the brand offered high-quality products⁸.

⁸ Think with Google-The brand value of search: New research in SEA reveals the power of being present October 2020 www.infidigit.com



Content marketing and SEO will help you get there. Informative and relevant content will help you portray yourself as an expert and a thought leader in product category. **Technical SEO will optimize your site so that your content always appears on top in search results.** Remember, customers will not be able to find your content if your website is not optimized for search engines. **As a result, brand reputation improves, and you come across as a brand that is credible.**

Research phase

Customer has advanced a bit and is now interested in knowing more about options available in market and differences between them. He wants to know which option works best for him and does a thorough research before moving to purchase phase. It is also possible that customer knows what he wants, but he still compares options to ensure that the decision he has made is correct one.

Below are some examples of search queries a customer considering buying car would make in research phase. Notice that customer is now comparing two car variants he has narrowed down to. He is also keen to know about factors important to him such as mileage, ground clearance, highway performance. Note that queries are illustrative and do not represent any individual's personal data.

Pand A Car X user review

Car X vs Car Y which is better

Car X vs Car Y mileage

Car X ground clearance

Car X mileage user review

 \nearrow How is the performance of Car X on highways?



SEO helps you gain insights in customer's intent and gives you a chance to plan your next move. Now that you know that customer is serious about purchase, you can offer personalized offer or information to seal the deal. Brands often complement their SEO efforts with paid campaigns, email outreach, calls to retarget customers who are either interested in knowing more or in buying the product. Remarketing helps in reinforcing your brand in customers' minds.

Comparison portals play a big role in this phase because customers are often looking for comparisons and user reviews. As part of SEO strategy, brands reach out to bloggers community and comparison portals to provide them with correct information about their product and inform them about relevant updates. Also, people are increasingly turning to videos for answers. Youtube SEO can help you here.

Purchase phase

Research is done and its decision time now. Customer will be searching for nearby store or visiting shop section on your website.

Search queries will look like following. Note that queries are illustrative and do not represent any individual's personal data.

P Brand A dealership near me

→ Brand A car exchange offer 2020

Car X on road price in location Z

Brand A service centre in location Z

Local SEO can help you show up in searches when a customer is looking for results in a location. Google emphasize on providing its user a good experience. Hence, in order to achieve higher ranking and get results out of your SEO efforts, brands will have to focus on improving online experience for their visitors. If user experience is not good enough, a customer who has made up his mind to purchase might also turn away. So, SEO brings brand's focus on enhancing user experience.







ivame is India's top retailer for women's intimate and active wear. Company was founded in 2011 with the vision of helping women uninhibitedly shop for intimate wear.

Zivame wanted to achieve the following from its investment in SEO efforts:

- Improvise its organic search presence by increasing nonbrand sessions by 100%,
- ► Increase new users from organic search by 70%,
- Achieve top rankings for popular keywords and
- Gain significant market share for relevant categories.

We understood client's requirement and formulated a unique SEO approach that included eliminating duplicate content on site, automating update of sitemaps, meta descriptions and titles, contextually interlinking pages, and publishing rich content for popular search queries.

Eliminated duplicate content from site

On average, 29% of the content on website is duplicate⁹. Duplicate content is not necessarily bad, but it needs to be managed well so that search engines gets a clear signal of page authority. Google rewards high quality content and pushes down pages with thin quality content.

With prudent use of canonical and 301 redirects, we eliminated duplicate content for our client.

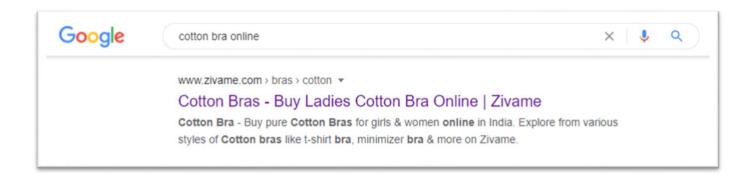
⁹ https://raventools.com/blog/duplicate-content/ October 2020



Automated updating of sitemap, title, and meta descriptions

Sitemaps let Google crawl your website more intelligently. A sitemap tells Google which pages and files are more important and, also provide valuable information about these pages such as when was page last updated, frequency of updates, etc¹⁰. For Zivame, we automated the process of updating sitemaps. This ensured that Googlebot does not miss out our frequent content updates.

Title and meta descriptions play an important role in improving click-through-rate (CTR). A high CTR is a sign of high-quality content and can positively impact page's ranking ability. Google highlights text from meta description in bold If it matches the search query (example shown below). Therefore, an aptly written meta description can generate user's interest and drive clicks.



For large websites such as Zivame, manually changing titles and meta descriptions would have proved to be a tedious task. So, we devised intelligent formulas that will update title and meta descriptions whenever product pages are created. This helped us in making changes at scale in no time.



Contextual interlinking of pages

Contextual links are the ones that are surrounded by relevant content. They are often part of content's body. Contextual interlinking is useful as it helps users navigate easily through pages and enhance user experience. It can also pass link juice from one page to another and significantly improve SEO. For Zivame, we went through the old content and introduced contextual links for old as well as new content. This enhanced reader's experience and brought traffic to new content.

Content marketing via blogs

We studied search queries to gain insights into customer's intent and published high-quality content to address those queries. Our endeavor was to answer customer's query in as much detail as possible and help her make the best decision for her. This helped us nail "Featured snippet" position for popular search queries.



Results

Our unique SEO approach was a result of out-of-the-box thinking and it helped Zivame garner top search results and achieve organic search objectives. Overall, we achieved some major search marketing breakthroughs.



116%

Traffic for non-branded terms jumped by



73%

73% jump in new users



93%

93% improvement in ranking of non-brand terms



1000

Grabbed the top search spot for more than 1000 keywords



Improved visibility of up to 14 times on targeted keywords



~ 20x

20 times improvement in market share for targeted categories





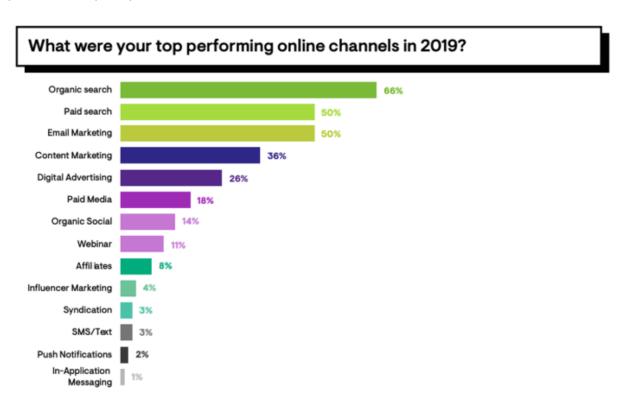
recent survey conducted across industries revealed that 66% of the marketers find organic search as top performing channel in 2019 and 63% believe that SEO will gain importance in coming times¹¹.

63%

63% of the marketers believe that SEO will gain importance in coming times

The survey, by Conductor, had 317 respondents drawn from Conductor's extended network across a range of industries, including B2B (24%), Retail (12%), Healthcare (11%), Media (10%) and others.

66% marketers saw organic channel as top performing channel in 2019, followed by paid search (50%) and email (50%).



https://searchengineland.com/seo-will-be-a-primary-focus-for-marketers-during-the-downturn-says-survey-332372
October 2020
www.infidigit.com



In times when marketers have been asked to cut down budgets, they prefer low cost and high ROI tactics such as SEO. 34% of marketers said that they will invest in low cost channels like SEO.



Complementing search insights with other marketing channels such as paid campaigns, video ads, email marketing, influencer marketing, etc. can do wonders for brands. Hawaiian airlines always relied on search ads to push customers to book flights, but this time airline adopted a cross-channel approach. It used search ads as the first point in a conversation with the aspiring traveler, aiming to build awareness, and then followed up with a video push. Thanks to the month-long campaign, Hawaiian Airlines increased flight bookings by 185%, while reducing cost per acquisition by 69% compared to other campaigns run concurrently.¹²



Hawaiian airlines achieved reduction of 69% in their customer acquisition cost by adopting cross-channel approach.



Brands should also consider upcoming trends and rejig their digital strategy to get maximum benefits. Below are some trends that we expect to see in coming future. Brands' SEO strategy will have to evolve to take these in account.

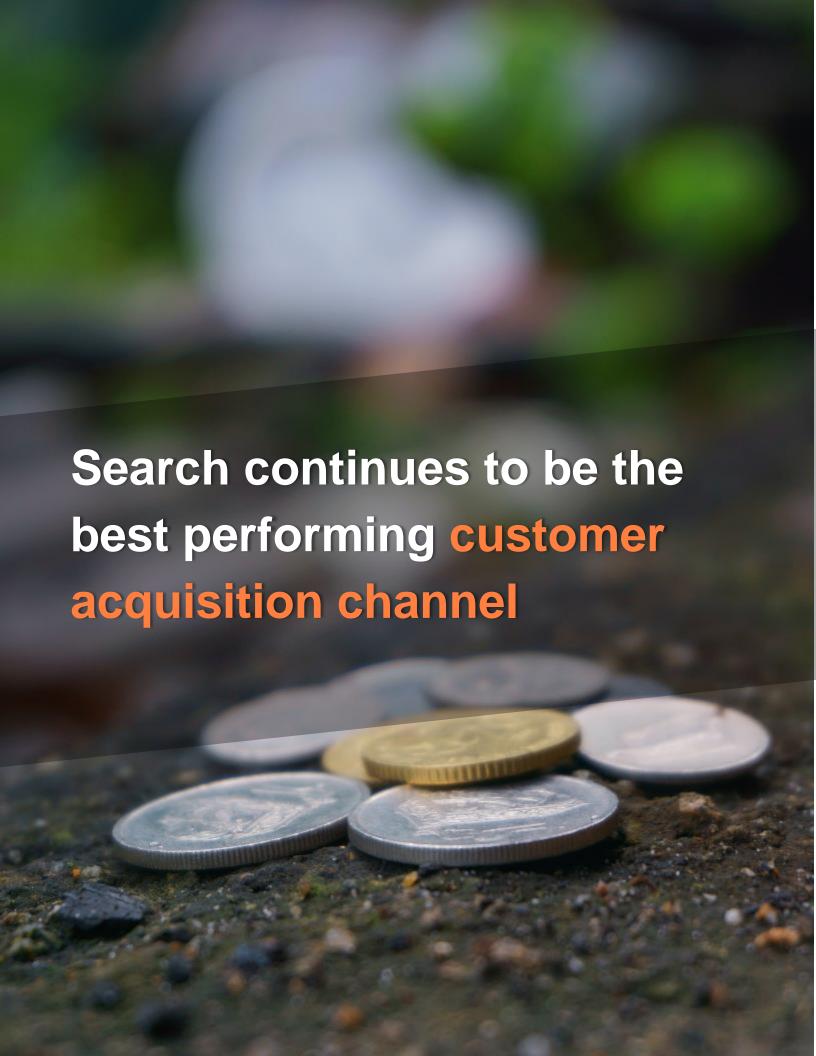
- Importance of Omnichannel marketing will grow- Consumers are looking for information and experiences across multiple channels such as social media, in-store, online store, videos, blogs etc. Brands will have to embrace omnichannel strategy to give their customers a coherent experience across all touchpoints. If executed properly, omnichannel strategy can help in acquiring customers quickly and at low cost.
- SEO will get tough with time- Share of zero-click searches is growing and search result pages are getting more and more consolidated with time. This means that your SEO team will have to work extra hard in order to be useful to users and find a place on top in search results. Thus, expert SEO agencies will be in a better position to support brands in achieving their objectives.
- Searches in local languages will grow Google's internal search data reveals that there has been a growth of 10 times ¹³in local language searches. In India, while Hindi is the dominant language, Tamil, Marathi, and Bengali are quickly gaining prominence online. A similar trend of increase in online usage of local languages is visible in several other countries. Brands will have to create content in local language in order to build deep connections with their customer.
- Video will be crucial for SEO strategy Video consumption is growing with time. By 2021, it is expected that people will spend on an average 100 min per day on watching videos¹⁴. Hence, incorporating videos in your SEO strategy can be great way to improve brand engagement. Once you understand how your brand maps to consumers' interests, you can build a plan to be there when people are looking.
- Popularity of voice searches is growing- Google witnessed 270% growth in voice queries (Y-O-Y) in India¹⁵. It is critical that brands create content that is optimized for this trend, otherwise it will be tough to gain traction in organic search.

¹³ Google Year in Search report – India 2018

¹⁴ https://www.singlegrain.com/seo/seo-trends-

^{2020/#:~:}text=Video%20marketing%20will%20continue%20to,digital%20marketing%20trends%20for%202020.&text=96%25%20of%20people%20agreed%20that,way%20to%20improve%20brand%20engagement.

¹⁵ Google Year in Search report – India 2019



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rganic search brings traffic to not just your website but also to your physical store. Many retailers are experiencing surge of new customers in their brick and mortar stores after investing in search engine marketing. Petit Bateau, a 120-year-old global apparel brand used google analytics to discover following¹⁶-

- 44% of the in-store buyers visited brand website seven days prior to purchasing.
- Those who visited the Petit Bateau mobile site converted in-store at an 11% higher rate than those who didn't visit the mobile site. Mobile site visitors also spent 8% more on average.
- Company realized that its return from search was 6.4X higher than it had previously thought.

Petit Bateau is one of many retailers who are experiencing a wave of new customers coming in through organic search channel.

SEO helps you stand out from your competitors in organic search. Unlike in paid campaigns, brands don't have to pay for each click in SEO. So, any traffic (read new customers) that comes after initial investment is coming at negligible cost and it is not easy for competition to remove you from top ranks. Thus, SEO is one of the low-cost tools to acquire customers on a consistent basis.

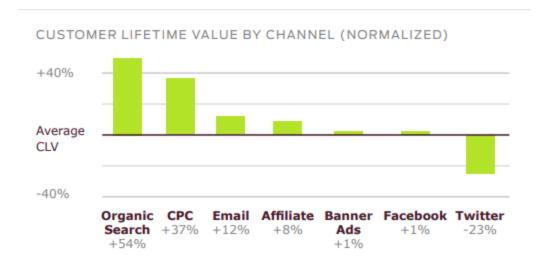
SEO is one of the low-cost tools to acquire customers on a consistent basis.

Besides acquiring customers at low cost, organic search helps you get highest-value customers. Findings derived from data spanning 72 million customers from 86 US retailers across 14 industries reveal that Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) of customers acquired through organic search is 54%¹⁷ higher than average of marketing channels.

¹⁷ http://pages.custora.com/rs/custora/images/Custora_EcommSnapshot_2013_Q2.pdf October 2020 www.infidigit.com

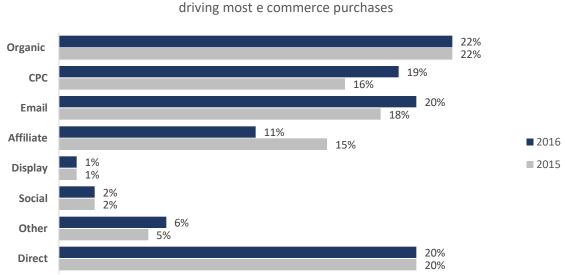
¹⁶ How mobile has redefined consumer decision journey for shopper- Report published in July 2016





Graph 1-CLV of customers acquired through organic search is 54% higher than average

Analysis of 100 million anonymized shoppers and 100+ online retailers show that organic search leads the chart as most effective acquisition channel indicated by channel driving orders on last click¹⁸. See graph below.



Orders by Channel
Organic, CPC (SEM), and Email continue to be the online marketing channel

Graph 2 shows performance of different channels as customer acquisition tool

¹⁸ https://www.smartinsights.com/digital-marketing-strategy/customer-acquisition-strategy/retail-acquisition-channel/ October 2020 www.infidigit.com

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Businesses that have big user base on mobile apps invest in different channels to bring more and more customers to their apps. They face a major challenge of fake app installs. On an average 30%¹⁹ of app installs are fraud because few advertisers take credit for installs that never happened.

Organic search can be used to counter the problem of fake app installs. Once customer is acquired from search, he/she can be migrated to apps. The synergy between web and app ecosystems is one of the reasons for success of some major ecommerce brands. Eventually, this reduces instances of fake installs and reduce customer acquisition cost.

In sum, effective implementation of SEO and good visibility in organic search can give your brand high value customers without earmarking huge investments towards customer acquisition.

1.0

Final thoughts



These are the times when marketers are asked to relook at their marketing mix and increase proportion of spending on proven tactics. In such scenario, Search engine optimization (SEO) has emerged as marketers' choice for achieving marketing goals, especially customer acquisition.

- Search plays a big role in customers' buying journey. 53% of all site traffic comes from organic search. 75% of people who find local, helpful information in search results are more likely to visit physical stores.
- SEO not just makes your brand visible but also help achieve marketing goals. Increased brand reputation, higher market share, improved customer experience, low customer acquisition cost, high customer retention, are expected outcomes with SEO.
- Complementing search with other marketing channels can give significant returns. Hawaiian airlines reduced its customer acquisition cost by 69% by adopting a cross-channel approach.
- Organic search continues to perform as the most effective customer acquisition channel indicated by channel driving order on last click.
- Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) of customers acquired through organic search is 54% higher than average.
- → 34% of marketers believe that it makes sense to invest more in low cost and high ROI channel such as SEO in times of a global recession.
- Frequent algorithm changes, increasing popularity of voice searches and increasing searches in vernacular languages has made SEO a complicated task. Executing it effectively will require an expert's hand. Brands should consider seeking help of a reputed SEO expert/ agency.

Contact Us

About Infidigit

We work with some of the largest brands across industries including e-commerce, banking, insurance, media, etc. We partner with brands to understand their business, craft the best-fit search marketing strategy and support it with flawless execution to ensure the brands achieve their business goals. We have unmatched expertise in implementing SEO at scale, even for websites over millions of pages. Our team has extensive experience with enterprise and e-commerce SEO, thus ensuring that our clients command a higher market share on search engines as compared to their competitors. We have been felicitated with awards at global platforms for our achievements

We become an extended search marketing arm of our clients to seamlessly work towards a common goal and drive results faster. We assume our role like an in-house SEO team, thus taking overall responsibility for the targets driven by the Digital Marketing and SEO teams. This helps us ensure that we are not myopic in our activities and remain focused on both immediate as well as long-term results.

Contact us at sales@infidigit.com

"In the past few years, we, at Zivame, have been looking to expand our reach in the digital space, especially Google. Considering how competitive the online circuit is, we knew we had to push the envelope.

However, since the time our association with Infidigit began, things have been looking exceptional with their data-driven SEO strategies. Thanks to which, we were exhilarated to see Infidigit achieve the target of 100% increase in non-brand traffic, two months before the set timeline. Such spectacular results can only take them forward in the road ahead."



Anuj Gupta
Head, Revenue and Product
Zivame