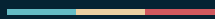


# How to win the SERPs by maximising search coverage



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## 01. How SEO helped businesses survive COVID-19

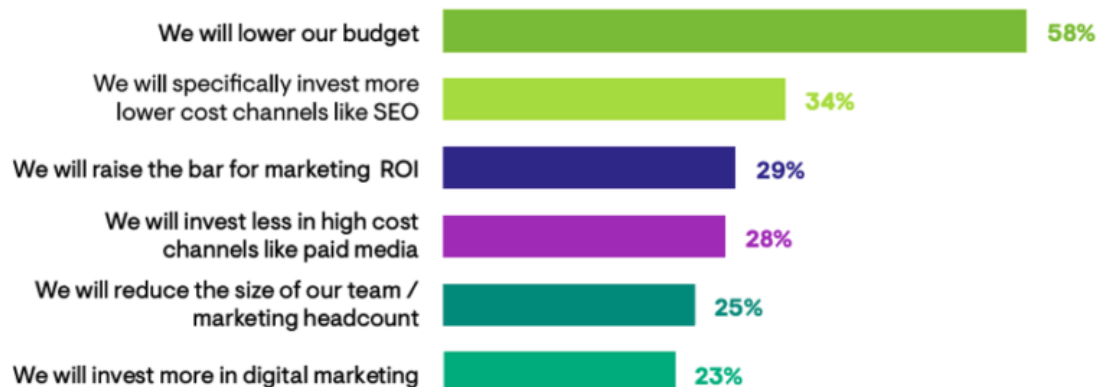
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When the coronavirus outbreak forced countries around the world into lockdown, brands responded by reducing their ad spend in a bid to cut back on marketing expenses. According to the World Economic Forum, ad spend was down 9% on average across Europe by June, while the UK and Germany pulled spending back by 12% each.

## Marketers turn to SEO in times of crisis

According to [a report](#) from search insights provider Conductor, the most common response to COVID-19, aside from lowering budgets, is to invest more in “lower cost channels” like SEO.

### How would a global recession impact your marketing strategy?

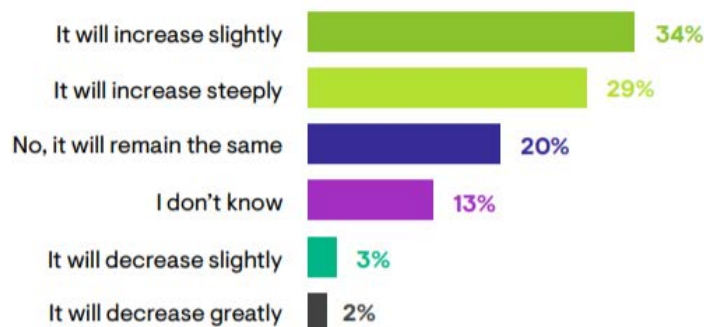


The same report found that 63% of marketers predicted SEO would become more important during the coronavirus outbreak, while 66% listed organic search as their top-performing channel in 2019.

## 63% of Marketers Predict SEO Will Become More Important During This Time

- In contrast, 4% of marketers claim SEO will decrease in importance

### Will SEO be more or less important during this time?



Writing for WordStream, [Kristen McCormick explains](#) why SEO is more important than ever during COVID-19. While Jum Yu offers his own take on the role of organic search during the outbreak in [an article for Search Engine Land](#).

Here are some of the key points raised in the two articles:

01. SEO is a low-cost, high-ROI strategy
02. Organic search drives long-term traffic
03. Local search is crucial as lockdown encourages people to look closer to home
04. SMBs benefit from desire to support smaller businesses
05. People turn to search engines amid uncertainty
06. COVID-19 search trends generate new opportunities

As a low-cost strategy, SEO provided a key channel for brands that wanted to maintain their online presence and build for the future while ad spends were paused.

## Surge in local searches

[According to Deloitte](#), 59% of people in the UK have used local businesses more since the lockdown was announced. Interestingly, British consumers say a key reason for their interest in local businesses is a desire to support them during the crisis - not only because of the travel restrictions put in place during the height of lockdown.

Google Insights tells us [there was a sharp rise in “when will” searches](#) after the lockdown was introduced, a clear side-effect of the unknown future. However, these searches quickly died down after restrictions were eased and the search giant saw a drastic surge in “near me” searches instead.



## Small businesses go online for survival

[Research carried out by Hitachi Capital UK](#) finds that one in seven (14%) of small businesses are transitioning towards becoming fully or mainly online enterprises in order to survive the coronavirus outbreak. The study suggests that businesses offering services fully-online have increased by 50% since the lockdown was announced, increasing from 24% to 38%.

For smaller businesses making the transition to online operation, organic search is the obvious strategy to prioritise. Lockdown has [encouraged consumers in the UK to do more of their shopping online](#), get more items delivered to their home and deal with more local businesses - all of which are opportunities small businesses can capitalise upon during this difficult period.



## 02. How to win the SERPs by maximising search coverage

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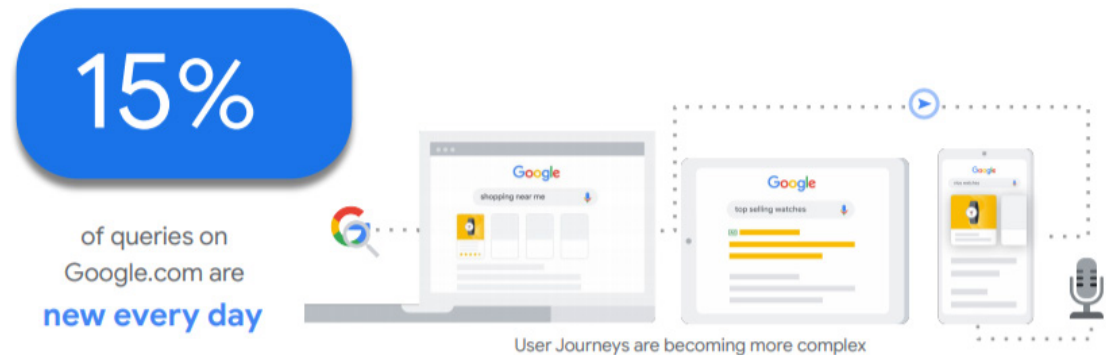
SEO sounds great when you call it a low-cost, high-ROI strategy that delivers lasting results, but there's no getting away from the fact that competition is fierce in the SERPs. This is why it's so important to make the most of crises like economic recessions and the coronavirus outbreak, when brands reduce their marketing efforts and competition in the SERPs eases.

Whether times are good or not, the key to getting ahead of the competition is identifying opportunities and maximising your search coverage across every relevant touchpoint. The good news is that new opportunities are emerging every day. The challenge is getting there before they dry up.



## Beat your rivals to new opportunities

In terms of beating the competition, the biggest advantage you can have is the ability to find new opportunities as they emerge, and capitalise on them before your rivals are able to react.



According to Google data, 15% of all queries performed on the search engine are new every day, meaning they have never been searched for before. So, no matter what industry you're in, capitalising on the best of these first will give you a competitive advantage.

Vertical Leap's SEO specialist, Tom Light, [explains in detail](#) how you can use Google Trends to find emerging search trends and even predict them before they happen. You can then [explore these trends to find the most valuable keywords and related search terms](#) using keyword tools and search features like Google's autocomplete and *People also ask* section.

Consumer behaviour is always evolving and finding new opportunities first puts you in the best position to rank high quickly and maintain your position as rivals later discover the same trends. This is something you have to continually keep on top of though, or your presence will naturally start to shrink.

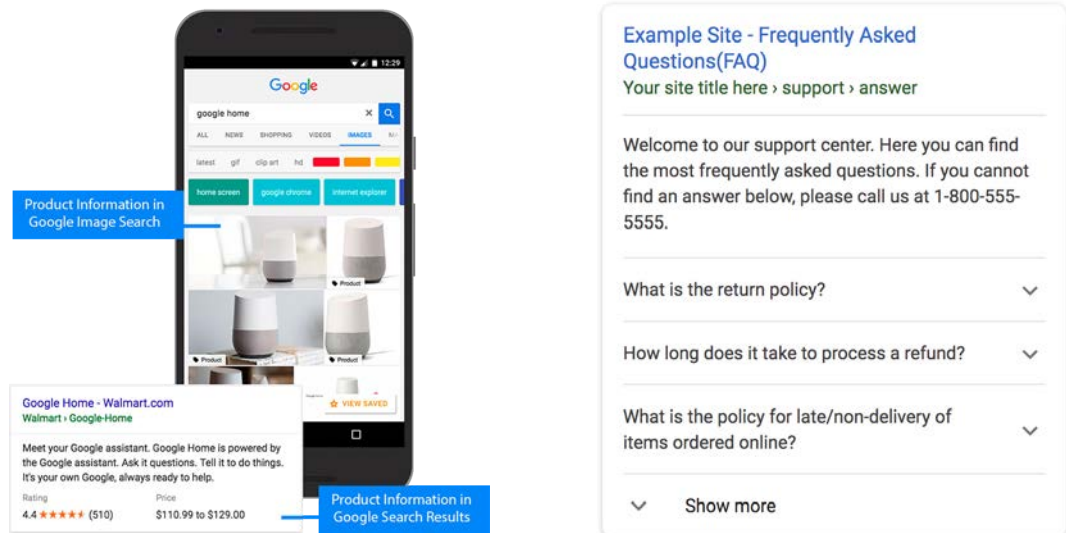


## Increase visibility and win more traffic with structured data

The sooner you seize new opportunities, the greater your chances are of establishing your position on page one - but you've still got to turn that coverage into traffic. With Google's SERPs becoming more complex all the time, you need to ensure your listings stand out from the pack. Structured data allows you to do this across your entire search coverage.

Google provides extensive support for structured data across [a library of rich results formats](#). Aside from making listings more visually dominant, they also provide relevant information for users, encouraging them to click through to the web page that most suits their needs or interests.

Regardless of which industry you're in and what type of content you're creating, rich snippets will increase your visibility and win you more traffic.



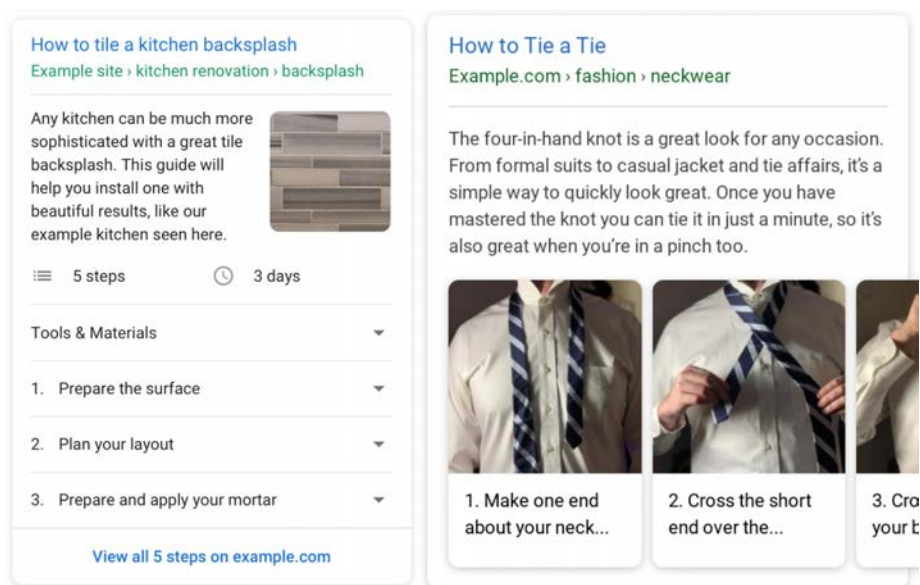
For example, retailers can add review scores, prices and other key information to their organic results, or add product information to images in Google Image Search (extending coverage even further in the process).

Likewise, there are rich results formats for articles, videos, local businesses, knowledge graphs, reviews and a range of other content formats.

You can also [mark up your FAQ pages](#) to show up in Google Search and create pages that specifically address key questions and long-tail keywords you've

identified. There's a slightly different format called [Q&A](#) for pages where single questions are responded to by a series of user-generated answers - much like a forum.

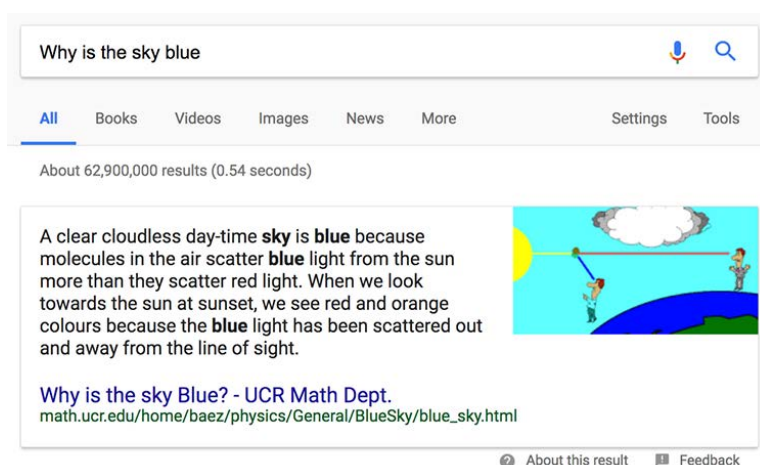
The trick is to find the rich snippets that are relevant to your search opportunities and content formats so you can increase visibility where it matters most. So, if you're publishing a lot of how-to articles on your website, you can mark-up these pages with [the dedicated structured data](#) for how-to pages to make them stand out in the SERPs.



There's a standard rich result for text articles, as well as one for showing image instructions and a mix of text, images and video.

## Claim the top of the SERPs with featured snippets

Featured snippets have been one of the most significant trends in organic search over the past five years. [According to SparkToro](#), roughly 50% of all searches now generate no traffic and featured snippets are cited as one of the biggest reasons for this, with [Moz data](#) suggesting 24% of all searches now show featured snippets.

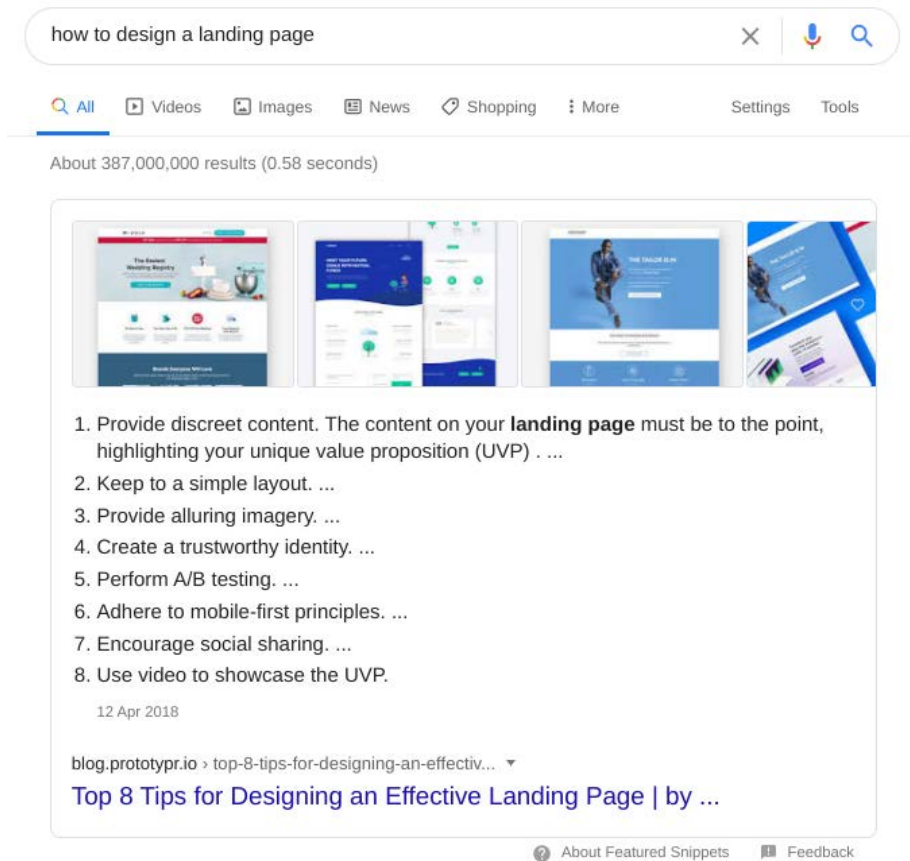


By providing an answer to questions in the SERPs, featured snippets remove the need for users to click through to a website to answer basic informational queries. However, [there are business opportunities to be found with featured snippets](#) and you simply need the right tools to find them.

Query	Is Question
	Yes
how does google ads data-driven attribution give credit for conversio...	✓
how to get google reviews	✓
what is google places for business	✓
how to measure content performance	✓
what is mobile first	✓
how to ask for google my business revies	✓
what is brand awareness	✓
how to increase web traffic	✓
how measure website traffic	✓
how to get more google reviews	✓
what is a ux strategy	✓
what is google panda	✓
how to advertise on youtube	✓
how to increase brand awareness	✓
what does seo mean	✓

Identifying featured snippets opportunities in Apollo Insights

Once you've identified your featured snippet opportunities, you can optimise your content to make them more suitable for the format. For example, you can create FAQ-style blog posts or step-by-step how-to articles that provide a summary of your content and encourage users to click through to your website.

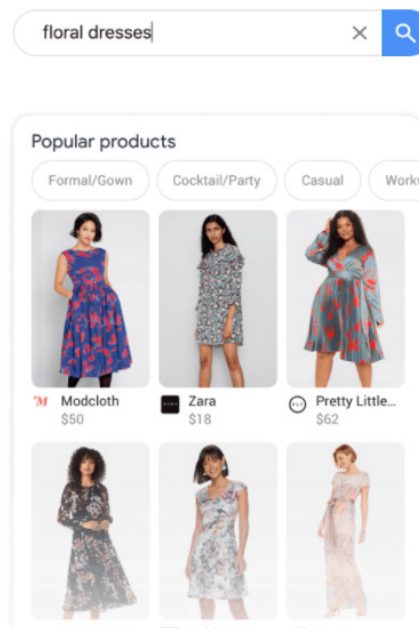


## Cover every touchpoint along your sales funnel

If 15% of all Google searches are completely new to the search engine, this means people are finding new ways to discover brands like yours every day. At the same time, search technology and behaviour are constantly changing. For example, users are increasingly using voice search to start sessions and new search features are rolling out all the time, such as organic product listings.

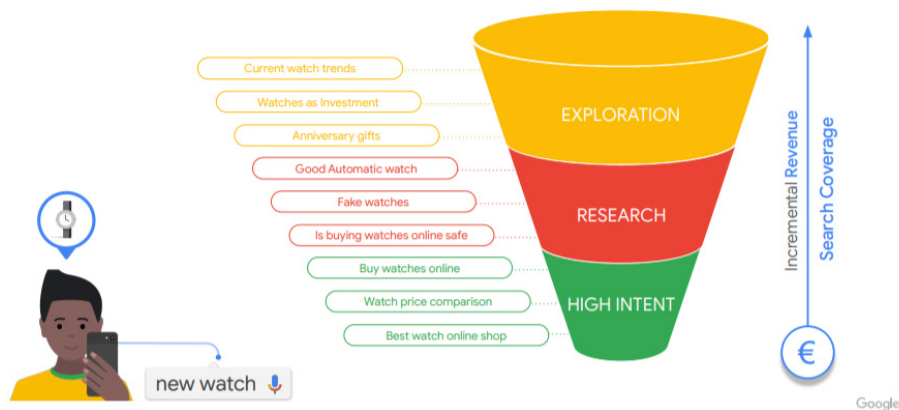
Every new search trend, technology and algorithm update changes the potential touchpoints connecting users with your brand at different stages of the marketing funnel. It's crucial that you're able to maintain full coverage across every stage of the funnel, even as new opportunities come and go.

With time being such an important factor, you need to keep a constant eye on search trends to find the latest keyword opportunities and then branch out by finding new, related search terms that may be valuable.



Ranking for new search terms doesn't happen instantly so it's imperative that you're able to move first. And, once you've secured your position in the SERPs, you also need to [make sure your website and marketing funnel are optimised](#) to convert traffic into leads and customers.

...hence you need to make sure to be present every time a user shows interest along the funnel...



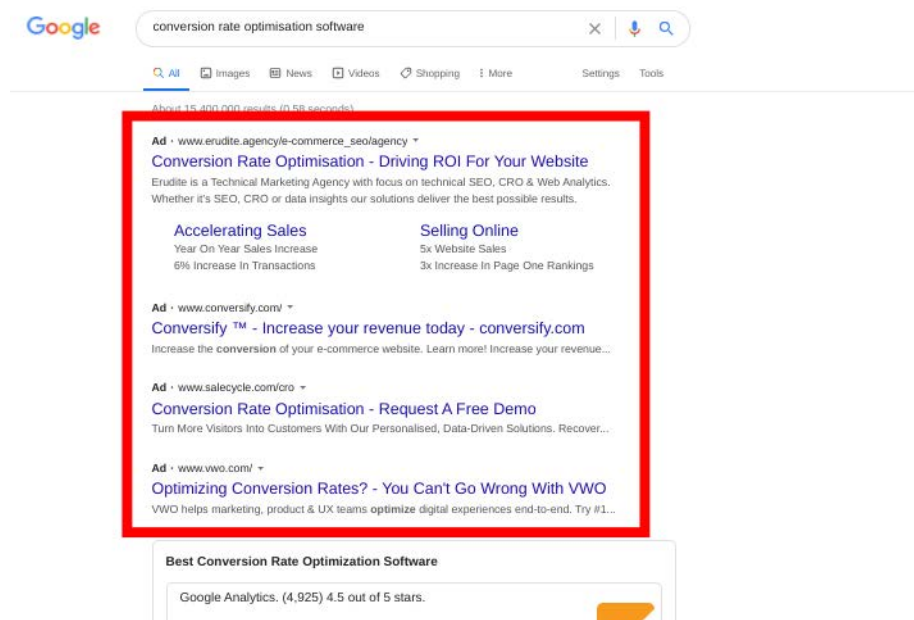
## Make the most of paid search opportunities

Organic search is by far the largest source of online traffic, responsible for [directing 53% of all visitors to websites \(PDF\)](#). Paid advertising (search and social) generates 15% of all traffic while organic social media contributes 5%. These figures highlight the importance of a strong organic search strategy but there are two key points they don't show:

01. You can't maximise search coverage without paid ads
02. Paid search generates a different type of traffic than organic search

In terms of maximising your search coverage, you're simply not going to be visible for some of the most important queries to your brand without showing in the top pack of ads.

In the screenshot below, you can see four ads in the top pack, which take up most of the viewpoint above the fold. Then, you have a featured snippet taking up an equally sizeable portion of the SERPs, presenting the first organic opportunity on the page.

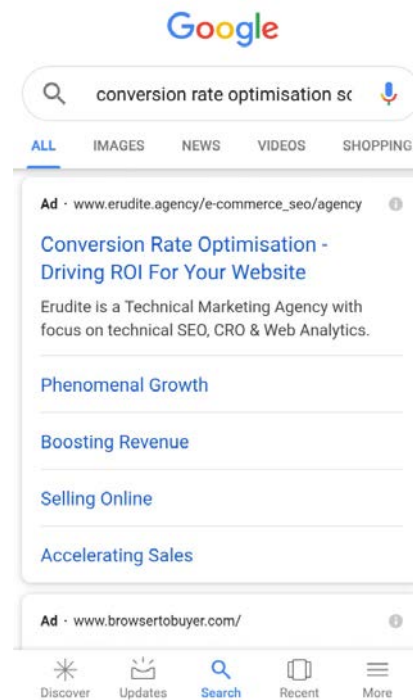


Try the same search on mobile and users have to scroll down a significant amount of the page before they'll make it past the four ads and see any organic results at all. In order to be visible for these searches, you need your ad to show in the top pack - you simply won't be able to maximise your search coverage otherwise.

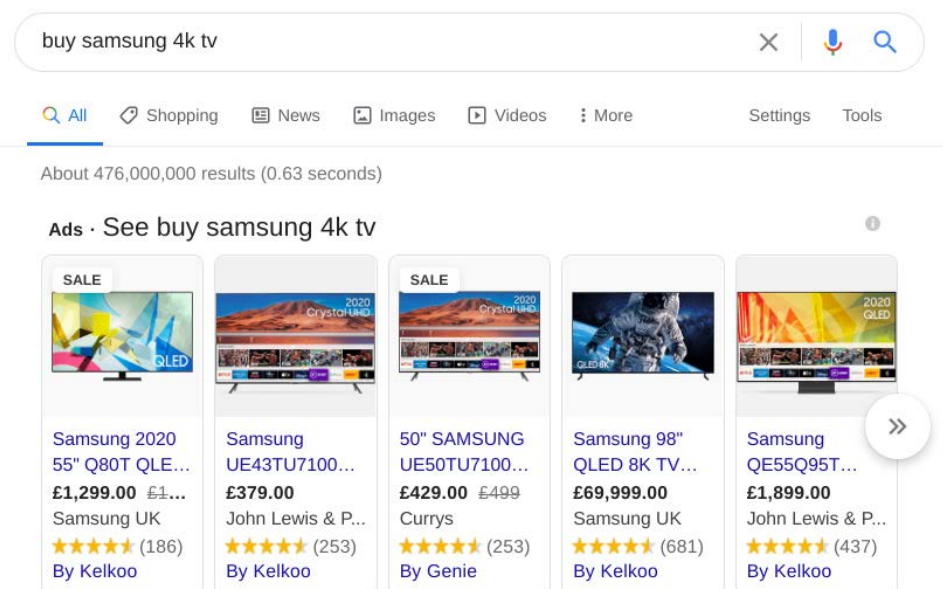


Visibility isn't the only important factor either - paid ads generate a different type of traffic than organic listings. Generally speaking, informational queries typically generate results pages with organic listings, while queries demonstrating a higher purchase intent normally trigger paid ads.

As a result, organic search tends to generate leads with a lower purchase intent that you can nurture along the buying process and turn into paying customers at a later date. On the other hand, paid ads are more likely to capture traffic from people who are ready to buy now or in the very near future.



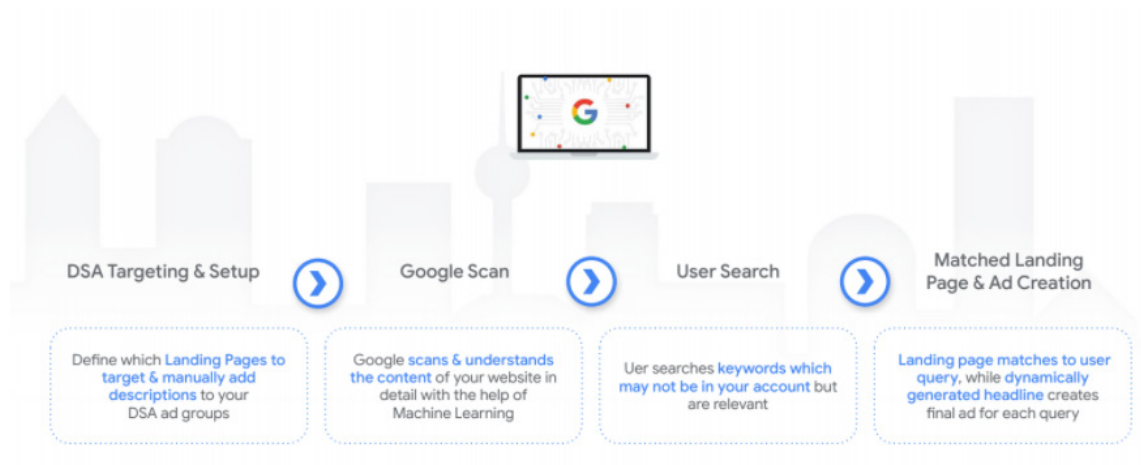
You need both types of leads from your search marketing strategy. This is another reason why it's so important to maximise your search coverage.





## Combine Dynamic Search Ads with broad match keywords

[Dynamic Search Ads \(DSAs\)](#) are an automated ad format in Google Ads that automatically create headlines relevant to user search queries and the content on your website. The idea is that you spend less time creating endless ad variations for small keyword variations and more time generating traffic from your advertising campaigns.

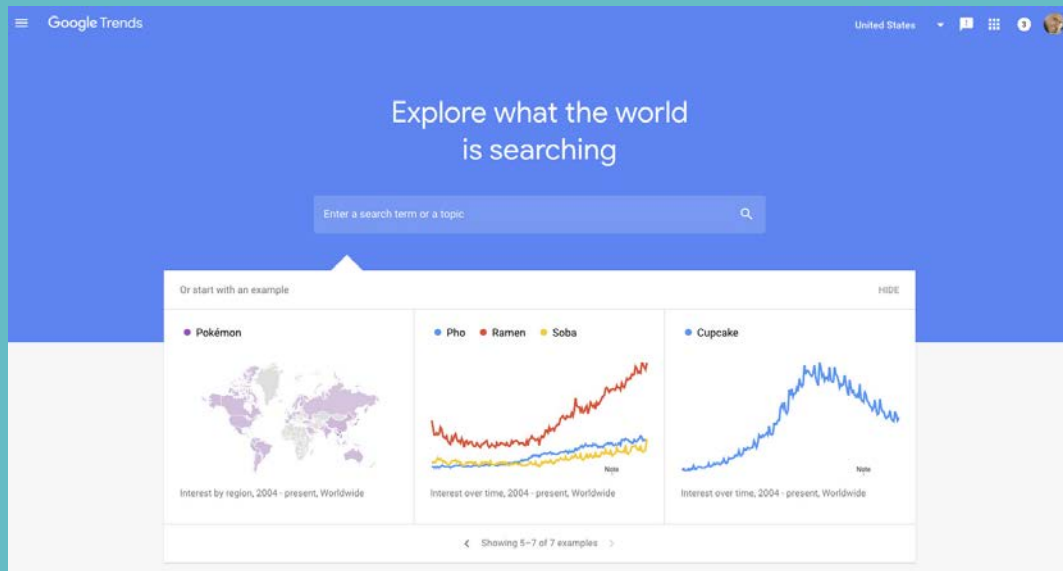


DSAs allow you to cover more search queries and expand your search coverage without the manual workload. Google says the ad format drives the overall performance of your campaigns through four crucial KPIs:

01. +15% more clicks
02. +35% higher CTRs
03. +30 lower CPAs
04. +10% ROI

To truly maximise your search coverage, Google recommends combining DSAs with broad match keywords, which increases the potential variations that your ads can show for. This allows your ads to show for the widest possible range of queries while DSAs ensure your ads remain relevant to every search term they show for.

If you find any of the keyword variations broad match includes aren't working for you, all you have to do is add these as negative keywords to prevent them from triggering your ads.



## 03. Get there first with intelligent automation

Although new search opportunities are emerging all the time, it becomes increasingly difficult to rank for them over time. It's easier to maintain your position at the top of the SERPs than it is to replace brands already ranking there, so businesses that get there first have a clear advantage.

Traditionally, large businesses that could analyse vast amounts of data were able to discover new search trends and claim the top spots for themselves. Today, tools like Google Trends and Keyword Planner mean any business can find new search opportunities but it still takes time to analyse hundreds or thousands of different queries, even with a tool like Google Trends that gives you open access to search data.



The answer lies in intelligent automation technology - such as our own software [Apollo Insights](#) - that collates data from hundreds of third party sources, including tools like Google Trends, to detect search trends as they emerge. This means a business of any size can find new search opportunities without manually analysing thousands of datasets - by which time other brands will have beaten you in the SERPs.

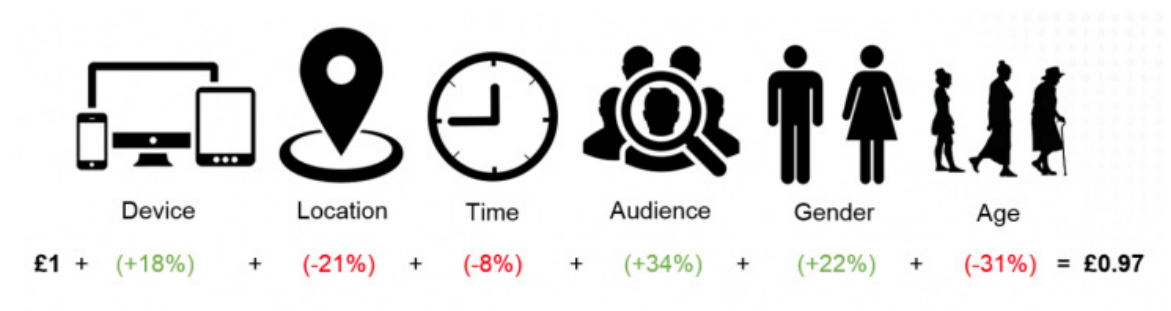
Automated search analysis gives you instant insights, allowing you to take action as soon as new opportunities emerge.

Taking this even further, intelligent automation uses artificial intelligence to analyse data, make decisions and then take automated action, based on the outcome of the analysis. For example, [Apollo's intelligent algorithm analyses vast amounts of search data and cross-references this with campaign performance](#) to identify new opportunities and potential threats to your search ranking.

It then ranks these opportunities and risks in terms of importance for marketing managers to action.

This means you're getting instant search insights as new opportunities emerge and automated prioritisation, allowing you to put campaigns in place while your rivals are playing catch-up.

You can also use intelligent automation to maximise your search coverage at the most profitable times for your business. For example, [data scientists at Vertical Leap use intelligent algorithms to automate bidding in Google Ads](#) based on performance across devices, locations, time of day, day of the week and the targeting options applied. The algorithms then automatically optimise bids to increase them when performance indicators point to higher conversion rates and reduce them when the opposite is true.



This means your bids are always optimised to maximise conversions and generate the best ROI for your ad spend.





## 04. About Apollo Insights

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Apollo Insights is our proprietary intelligent automation technology that uses artificial intelligence to deliver real-time insights from hundreds of third-party datasets and performance metrics from your campaigns.

Apollo's intelligent algorithms help you find new search opportunities before rivals and maximise your search coverage.

### Real-time search insights

Apollo provides instant insights so you're always on top of the latest search trends and at the front of the queue to take advantage of new search opportunities.

### Predictive analytics

Spot issues with your website and campaigns before they start hurting performance with Apollo's AI-powered predictive analytics algorithms.


### Competitor analysis

Keep track of competitor performance to inform your own campaign decisions.

### Advisor

Apollo's intelligent AI algorithm, Advisor, analyses millions of datasets and campaign performance to identify opportunities and risks, turning them into smart recommendations that are automatically prioritised for you.

# Talk to us about your search marketing



We are a Google Premier Partner and have almost 20 years' experience managing SEO and PPC campaigns for the likes of P&O Cruises, Fat Face, Harvester and KFC. If you'd like to chat to us about how we can help you, or would like a demo of Apollo Insights, contact us on:

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