

## 8.2: Introduction

With millions of people performing billions of searches each day to find content on the Internet, Google alone processes over 40 000 searches per second (Internet Live Stats, 2017). It makes sense that marketers want their products to be findable online. Search engines, the channels through which these searches happen, use closely guarded algorithms to determine the results displayed.

Determining what factors these algorithms take into account has led to a growing practice known as search engine optimisation (SEO).

SEO is the practice of optimising a website to achieve the highest possible ranking on the search engine results pages (SERPs). Someone who practices SEO professionally is known as an SEO (search engine optimiser).

Google uses about 200 different factors in its algorithm to determine relevance and ranking (Dean, 2016). None of the major search engines disclose the elements they use to rank pages, but there are many SEO practitioners who spend time analysing patent applications to try to determine what these are.

### Note

Take a look at this speculative list of Google's 200 algorithm factors from BackLink: <http://backlinko.com/google-ranking-factors>.

Other types of websites that rely on search, like YouTube and Facebook, have their own algorithms. Facebook's News Feed algorithm, for example, uses around 100 000 factors to rank and sort content that appears in users' news feeds.

SEO can be split into two distinct camps, white hat SEO and black hat SEO, with some grey hat wearers in between. Black hat SEO refers to trying to game the search engines. These SEOs use dubious means to achieve high rankings and their websites are occasionally blacklisted by the search engines. White hat SEO, on the other hand, refers to working within the parameters set by search engines to optimise a website for better user experience. Search engines want to send users to the website that is best suited to their needs, so white hat SEO should ensure that users can find what they are looking for.

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