



Cloaking on Google's SERP – search engine spamdexing?



Background

- The Internet is growing exponentially and acting as the repository of an enormous amount of information - the content quality is also being compromised.
- Content relevancy is continually being decreased by an increasing number of unethical black hat techniques to trick the search engine algorithm in order to obtain a higher ranking.
- Cloaking, (another form of spamdexing) was identified as existing on the search engine result page (SERP) of Google, regardless of the practice being denounced by the search engine.

Conclusion & Significance

- This research provided evidence that the search engine algorithms are still failing to fully address unethical practices like cloaking.
- Some developers are implementing cloaking without being noticed by search engines.
- The research also established that the waiting time for indexing can be prolonged by such practises and this may result in some websites not being indexed at all.

Research Objectives

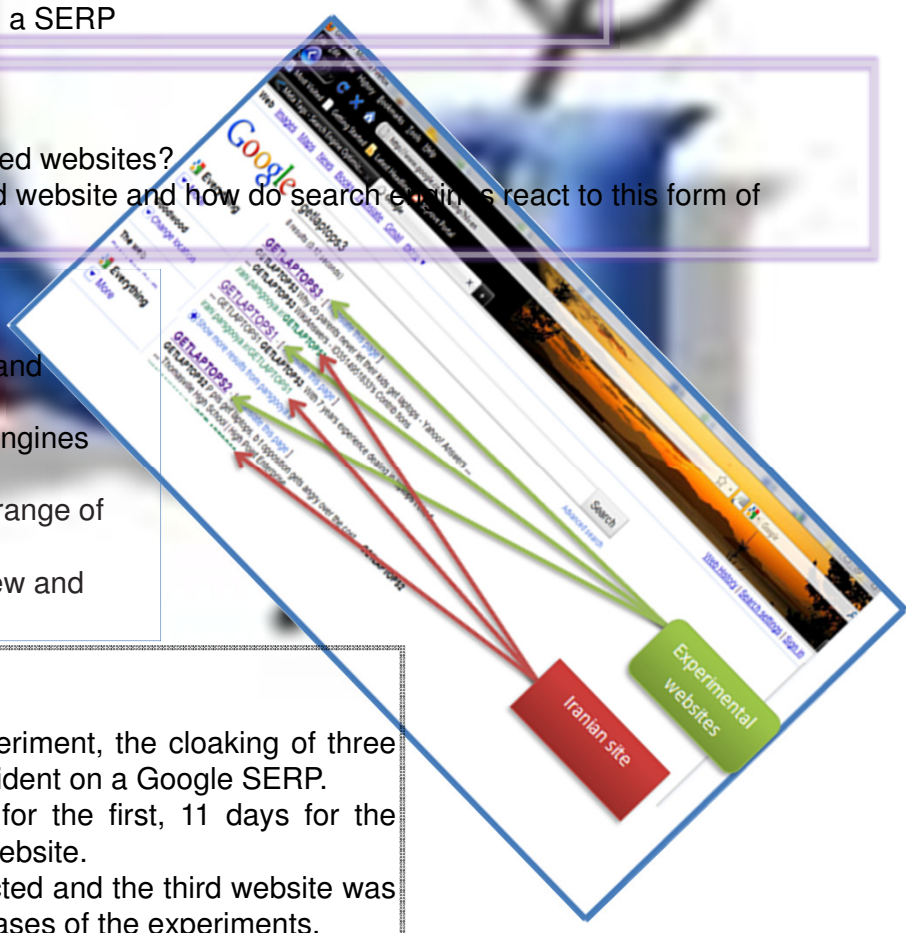
- To determine search engine reaction to spamdexing (Cloaking).
- To investigate the existence of cloaking on a SERP

Research question

- Do Google, Yahoo! and Bing display cloaked websites?
- How do search engines interpret a cloaked website and how do search engines react to this form of spamdexing?

Research Method

- Design test websites with identical layouts and content, except for keyword density
- Host websites, submit to top three search engines
- Allow time for crawler visitation
- Evaluate how search engines interpret the range of keyword densities
- Compare empirical results to expert interview and literature review results



Major Findings

- After 16 days of the phase 1 experiment, the cloaking of three websites by an Iranian site was evident on a Google SERP.
- The cloaking lasted for 10 days for the first, 11 days for the second and 39 days for the third website.
- A phase 2 experiment was conducted and the third website was not indexed by Google for both phases of the experiments.
- None of the websites submitted to Yahoo! and Bing were cloaked.

References

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