

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2016



LOCAL SEARCH MARKETING


SEO TIPS

to Rank Your Website
Higher in Local Search

PENGUIN 4.0

Now operates in real time &
has been made part of the
core algorithm

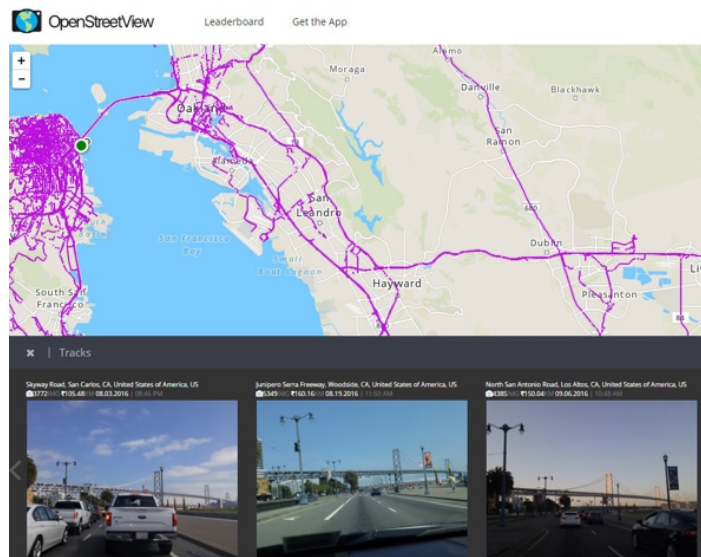


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01

LATEST HAPPENINGS IN THE WORLD OF LOCAL SEARCH FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 2016

- There was a lot of shuffling noticed in the local & organic search results in the first week of September, which indicates that Google has made some [changes in the algorithm](#) & maybe it's still going on. But because there is no official statement released by the Google, we have to sit tight and wait before jumping into conclusions.
- Google has recently updated the schema review [guidelines](#). Check it out.
- Invest some time in reading about the latest [local update](#) by Google which is been called "Possum" by the SEO experts.
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- To know how to best geo-target your paid ads, give this [article](#) a read which includes advice from seasoned experts.
- Local links can help the non-local business in many ways. To know how, refer to [this article](#) from Moz.
- If you have witnessed the disappearance of some Google reviews, It's probably because Google is running a spam review algorithm.
- Now you can show [events](#) in your Knowledge Panel with the help of JSON-LD Structured Data.
- Whenever you see updates in [Google My business locations](#), always read each and every point carefully because Google bundle up all the features and it's quite tempting to hit the "Agree all" button.
- TripAdvisor has recently acquired a New-York based social mapping start-up [CityMaps](#).
- Amazon has introduced "[Amazon Vehicles](#)", a car research destination and Automotive community. Speaking to the media, director of the Amazon Vehicles told that their intention is to help people to make a well -informed decision. Now people can view specifications, videos, images, and reviews of different cars. It's pretty obvious that they will start selling CARS in near future, otherwise, they would not have been invested their time and efforts in something that is just for "Informative purpose".
- Google has started penalizing sites that are not using the schema as per their guidelines. They have been warning site owners for a long time, but now they have started taking actions against it. Here's an interesting [discussion](#) on Local Search Forum.
- You can boost your rankings in the search engine result pages by [improving citation consistency](#).
- Just like Google, OpenstreetMap is now allowing people to upload the photos on the Map using <http://TheNewAppOnology.Solutions>. Seems like Crowd-sourcing is the best way to upgrade information, especially when it comes to maps.

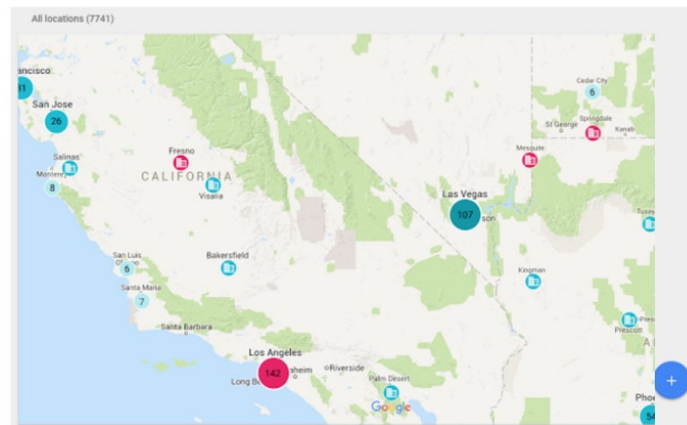


- Google My Business dashboards now offers [Map View](#) and Street View, making it convenient for the business owners to check whether the map pin of their business is in the exact spot or not.

Access map view

At the top of your [list view](#), click the map icon . The map view will appear with your locations.

For places where you have lots of locations, a circle with the number of locations in that area will appear.



- If you are searching for a local service provider on Yahoo, be informed that soon you will be able to book appointments and deliveries with them using [Pingup](#).
- Google has partnered with a car pooling service called [Waze rider](#). They are currently providing ridesharing services in San Francisco.
- Ever heard about Google SERP app? Check this [article](#) out.
- Are we placing too much importance on citations and what role they play in local ranking algorithms? Here's an [article](#).
- To view account ownership options for Google My Business, click [here](#).
- If you are willing to handle Local SEO projects of enterprises, read this article from Cory Shirk where he is sharing some [valuable tips](#).
- BrightLocal has made the CitationBurst more comprehensive & easier to use with this new update. Take a [look](#).

- Google has added some [helpful buttons](#) in the reviews. Now you can again up-vote a review. This feature was dropped when they introduced Google Plus.
- Google has recently added a notice at the beginning of the My Business Guidelines, reminding everyone about the most basic rules.

Guidelines for representing your business on Google

Summary: Listings on Google My Business can only be created for businesses that either have a physical location that customers can visit, or that travel to visit customers where they are. Creating a successful listing that won't be suspended requires avoiding [prohibited content](#), accurately reflecting your business, and complying with the rest of the policies below.

- Want to manage your local web presence using your iPhone? Here's how you can do it.
- If you want to optimize your website for statewide search terms, invest some time in reading this article.
- To better understand the connection you must maintain between Google's Personal Assistant and Maps information, [click here](#).

02

PENGUIN 4.0 NOW OPERATES IN REAL TIME & HAS BEEN MADE PART OF THE CORE ALGORITHM



Finally, Google has updated the Penguin algorithm. The fourth release is also the last of this type since [Google Penguin 4.0 is now officially part of Google's Core Algorithm](#).

Penguin is now operating in real-time.

Penguin was launched in 2012 to stop sites from spamming the Google's SERP. The Penguin was able to detect the websites which were spamming the results but were going undetected by the regular spamming system.

But the catch was, the site with spammy behaviours had to wait for the Penguin to run again in order to get out of the list. Since it operated on a periodic basis, the websites had to wait for a really long time. Some sites even had to wait for couple of years to get out from the dark zone.

Google last updated the Penguin on 17-Oct- 2014 and the websites that were penalized had to wait really long. To be honest it was unfair on so many levels. As the need of the hour, Google decided to play it fair and made the Penguin run in real time along with its re-crawling and re-indexing process, making it much faster and effective.

It has become more page-specific.

Google has made Penguin 4.0 "more granular". Following is the official statement from Google:

"Penguin is now more granular. Penguin now devalues spam by adjusting ranking based on spam signals, rather than affecting the ranking of the whole site."

Earlier, Penguin used to penalize the whole site, so does being "more granular" means that it is now page-specific?

It means it affects finer granularity than sites. It does not mean it only affects pages.

No confirmation from now on?

Google will not release any statement, informing about future Penguin refreshes because they have made the Penguin to operate in real time, which means that it will be updated promptly. It's a constant process which leaves no room for confirmation or statement release.

Is it fully live?

Google has said that it will take a little more time as re-crawling the whole web is no joke, especially the deep links. Meanwhile, you can witness the changes as soon as Google re-crawls your site.

Our Takeaway

Right after the Penguin was official, we decided to run some numbers on our own campaigns. Our dataset of 3500+ websites and 250,000+ keywords (both local and national) makes it easy for us to get a birds-eye view of how our client campaigns are performing.

We were not surprised to find that, so far, this update didn't have any major negative impact on our client campaigns. In fact, we have seen improvement in overall percentage of keywords ranking on page 1 of Google. We are quite confident that the new and improved 2016 SEO deliverables which we offer saved our clients. This is another example of how our strategies future-proof your business and avoid your website getting hit by such major updates.

In case you have been caught by this update, we can help you get back on track. Please contact our sales reps to assist you.

For the history buffs:

Penguin 1.0 on April 24, 2012 (impacting ~3.1% of queries)

Penguin 1.1 on May 26, 2012 (impacting less than 0.1%)

Penguin 1.2 on October 5, 2012 (impacting ~0.3% of queries)

Penguin 2.0 on May 22, 2013 (impacting 2.3% of queries)

Penguin 2.1 on Oct. 4, 2013 (impacting around 1% of queries)

Penguin 3.0 on October 17, 2014 (impacting around 1% of queries)

Penguin 4.0 & real-time on September 23, 2016

03 WHAT IS THE POSSUM UPDATE AND HOW IT AFFECTS LOCAL PACK

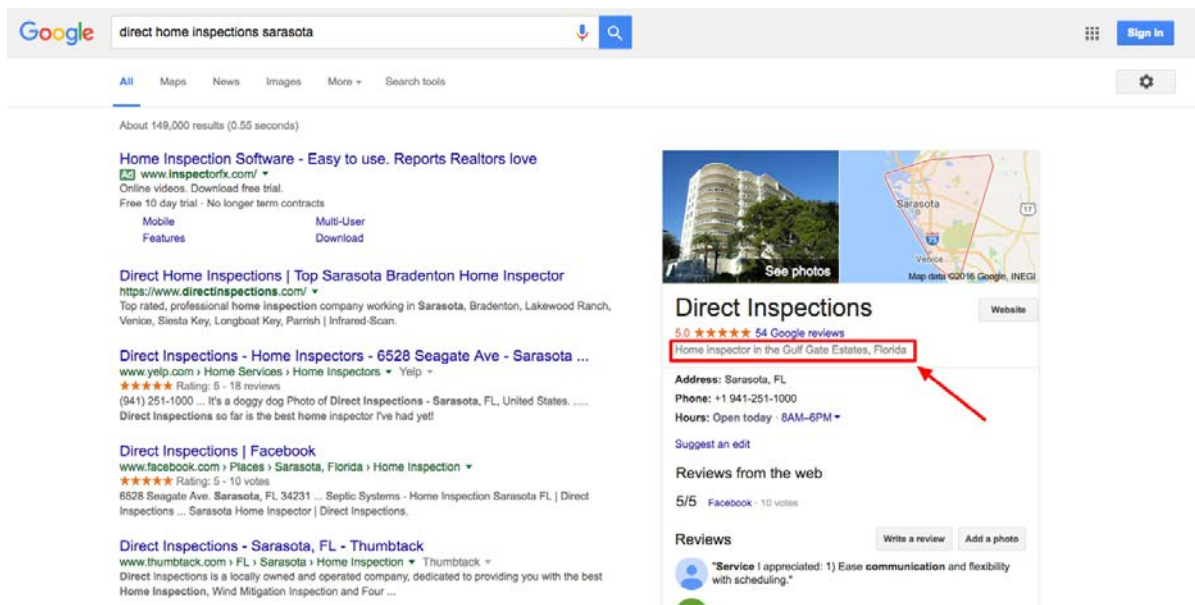
Google reportedly updated its local search algorithm in the first week of September. The Local search community is calling it "Possum".

What exactly was the update?

This is one of the biggest updates since Pigeon. However, it only impacted the local 3 pack and local finder, organic search results are completely unaffected from this update. It is believed that this update was applied to diversify the local results and hinder spam from ranking well.

1. City limits have been exceeded.

Earlier, it was very difficult for businesses which "technically" fell out of the city limits to rank well on the search engine result pages. They were facing a real tough time. But after this update, some have witnessed a major hike in their rankings. For example, a business in "Gulf Gate Estates, Florida" ranks for the term "direct home inspections sarasota"



2. Google has become more sophisticated in identifying businesses.

Earlier, Google used to filter the websites that had the same name, domain, site or address. But a business that had a different NAP and domain name often ranked separately. After this update, Google has become more sophisticated in identifying the business. Now, you might not see the same business ranking twice in the SERP for the same term, even if they have no similarity between their websites. It clearly indicates that Google knows more about the business and the industry than we thought.

However, it is not a penalty and Google is not removing or hindering your business from ranking well. Instead, they have made the local packs work like the organic filter, which picks the best & most relevant listings. So only one of your listings (which is most relevant to the search query) will make it to the local packs instead of all, to keep it fair.

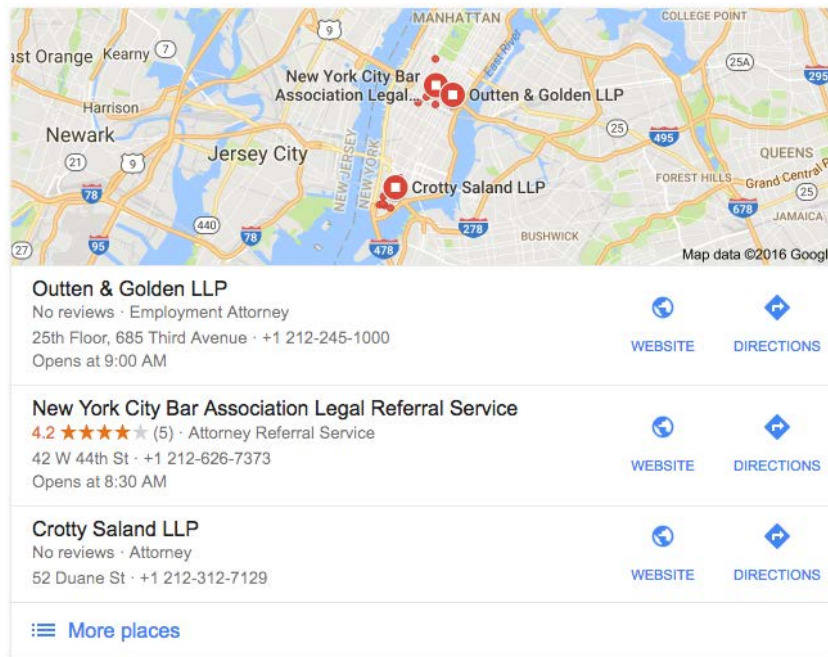
3. Location of the searcher is more important than ever.

One of our clients called us lately. "My ranking in the Google map has dropped from 1 to 9", he said worriedly. We immediately checked the ranking and to our surprise, his listing was in the ninth position. We were wondering that how it's even possible? So we decided to check the rankings from the location the business was actually located i.e. Dallas instead of their headquarters in Alabama (where they were searching from). We sighed a breath of relief as we found out that their listing was still in the first position. So why it was showing a different result?

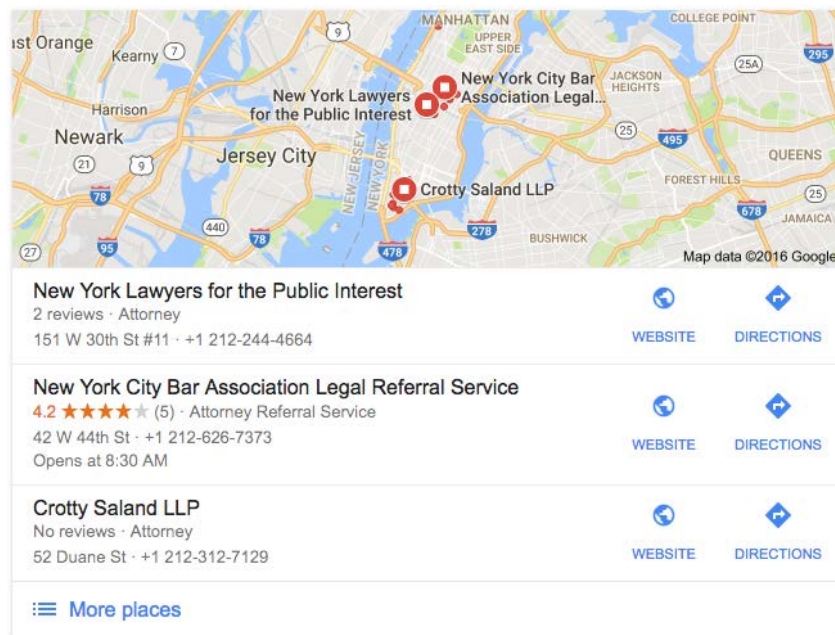
Well, the recent update has placed more importance on the location of the searcher. If anyone searches for a business listing, sitting far from the location, they are more likely to get zoomed out results, and will get less varying results if they are within the limits.

4. Slightest variations in the search term can bring different results.

Now even the slightest variation in the search term is bringing different results. Earlier, the search results for "New York Lawyers" and "Lawyers New York" were the same. But since the update, we are seeing different results for variations of the search term. So we suggest you to precisely select your targeted keywords while optimizing the site.



Local Pack result for "New York Lawyers"



Local Pack result for "[Lawyers New York](#)"

5. Organic filter and local filter are now less connected.

The recent update has drawn a huge line between Organic filter and Local filter. They seem to be completely different & very less connected to each other. Before the update, If Google filtered out your site organically, it was confirmed that your site rankings will suffer.

But after the update, we have seen many sites that are ranking well for competitive terms that are linking to the pages that were filtered out organically.

Summary

It seems like the update is still in a state of flux and not yet stable. You might experience fluctuations in results. It's possible that Google can revert any changes made. Anyway, we will be continuously evaluating any changes over the next few weeks and report if there is anything major.

04 STAY ACTIVE AND SEND MORE IF YOU WANT TO HAVE FULL ACCESS TO THE GOOGLE KEYWORD PLANNER

Not a single SEO professional or marketer can even imagine creating a search engine network campaign without the help of Google’s Keyword Planner. It’s an invaluable tool that has been a major help. But it seems like Google is limiting the full functionality of the keyword planner only to those who spend more. It’s like those with heavy pockets will get the pro version and those who are inactive or spend very little, get limited features.

What's new?

Although Google has not officially announced, but it is certain that inactive accounts or low spending accounts will only be able to see the range in the keyword planner and not the specific search volume. See below to know what we are saying.

High Spending AdWords Account:

Keyword (by relevance)		Avg. monthly searches ?	Competition ?	Suggested bid ?	Ad impr. share ?	Add to plan
seo services	↶	9,900	High	\$27.56	–	»
seo company	↶	8,100	High	\$27.50	–	»
search engine marketing	↶	3,600	High	\$13.47	–	»
seo	↶	110,000	High	\$11.67	–	»

Low Spending AdWords Account:

Average monthly searches for all ideas.
10K – 100K

Ad group ideas Keyword ideas Columns ▾ Download Add all (704)

Search terms	Avg. monthly searches ?	Competition ?	Suggested bid ?	Add to plan
seo services	100 – 1K	High	\$32.40	»
seo company	100 – 1K	High	\$26.33	»
search engine marketing	100 – 1K	High	\$14.55	»
seo	1K – 10K	High	\$13.79	»

Show rows: 30 ▾ 1 - 4 of 4 keywords |< < > >|

For example: For the keyword "search engine marketing" with location set to New York, the low monthly spend users will now see the average monthly search volume, which is about 100 - 1K, instead of the specific volume, which is 3,600.

Seems like Google is running a "limit the access to data" campaign. Few days ago, some users confirmed that they have received message from Google saying "In order to access the monthly search volume data, you must have an active campaign". At first, it looked like a bug, but now it is quite apparent that it's yet another move from Google to make it difficult for low spenders to access its data.

Bad news for low spenders & inactive accounts.

So where does Google draw the line? According to Google, how much money should one spend and how many campaigns they need to run in order to get their hands on the invaluable data?

They have not disclosed the exact numbers yet. However, after analyzing many cases and closely watching the patterns, we came to a conclusion that a minimum of 3-4 months of continuity on your Google AdWords account is required, if you want to get focused keywords results.

Forecast Feature

So Google is compelling the low spending users to take even bigger risk? No, they are suggesting them to use Forecast Feature instead. This tool will come handy when you want to see the detailed monthly projections of cost, impressions & clicks. You can view this data at ad group level & by digging deep into the Keywords tab. You can even see the CTR rate, CPC & average position.

See? It's a great tool. However, the forecasting data is exclusively for AdWords campaign, and those looking for organic search data have to pay Google.

Takeaway

Google will give sophisticated reasons to justify its current strategy of limiting access of the data. But we all know that it's their way of saying *"If you want the monthly search data, you now have to pay for it."*

05

SEO TIPS TO RANK YOUR WEBSITE HIGHER IN LOCAL SEARCH



To rank your website higher, you should keep up the pace with Google as it keeps updating its algorithm. Following tips will help you to stay updated and improve your rankings in local search.

1. Start with Extensive Keyword Research.

Concentrate on your client's needs. If you provide what your clients are specifically searching for, you can get maximum results. Do a comprehensive research about the keywords that your prospects use and optimize your site accordingly.

2. Regularly Update Your Business Listing and Use Precise NAP

Keep a constant check on your business listing, especially Google My Business & ensure that it is relevant for the users. You can outsource Business Listing Management to make sure your business listing is on your client's search results. Also, using precise Name, Address and Phone Number (NAP) is essential. If you are using abbreviations make sure your abbreviations are acceptable by Google.

3. Clients' Reviews Play a Vital Role.

Having a review section on your website is a must and you need to ensure that you have a maximum number of positive and genuine reviews. Creating a system for constantly monitoring reviews will be beneficial as it will create a positive impact.

If you are in need of getting positive reviews, for your business we can help. Our review widget, which we offer as a part of our SEO, helps to get positive reviews from Google, Yelp and Facebook.

4. Design Mobile Friendly Website for Your Business

It is sad that we still have to remind people about it. But just for the sake of it - "Having a mobile friendly website is an absolute must because most of the people use mobile devices to perform any search". And if your website is not optimized as per the mobile screen, it will take longer to load and will be inconvenient for the users. Ultimately, they will simply hit the back button.

5. High-quality Content

High-quality content is the king. People start their purchase journey with research and if you provide them with the information they are looking for, they will prefer you over your competitors to do business. Avoid scraping content, though, it will do more harm than good.

6. Relevant Title Tags

Title Tags are one of the most important factors of search results. Use title tags which you think can be easily linked to clients' search. Remember, your title tags and tag lines should be descriptive.

7. Location Specific Pages

Make it easy for customers to find your business. If you have a multi-location business, create a separate page for each location rather than cramming all the information on one page. But don't forget to interlink the pages to ensure proper navigation.

Following the above-mentioned tips will help you up your SEO game. However, to get better results, you will have to constantly update yourself on the latest trends. SEO is not a one-time task, it's an ongoing process. In case you need any help, feel free to contact us. Our experts will guide you to the best of their knowledge.

06

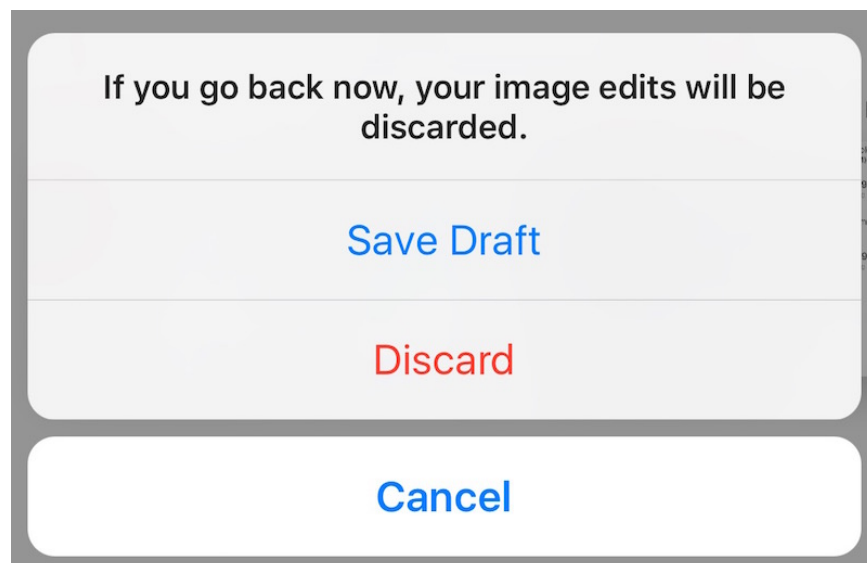
NOW YOU DON'T HAVE TO START FROM SCRATCH, THANKS TO THE NEW "SAVE DRAFT" FEATURE FROM INSTAGRAM.



To enhance user experience, Instagram has updated its app. The new "Save draft" feature now allows users to save their incomplete post.

Earlier, if the user would leave the app without posting the image / video, the changes were discarded and the user had to again work on the post from the beginning.

With this new change, after adding effects, tags, caption or location, if you press the back button to leave the app, an option appears to save the draft, making it convenient for the user to post it later.



When you wish to return to your pending post, tap the camera icon in the bottom, you can see your pending post as a draft in the library. You can now finish the editing and upload your post from there.

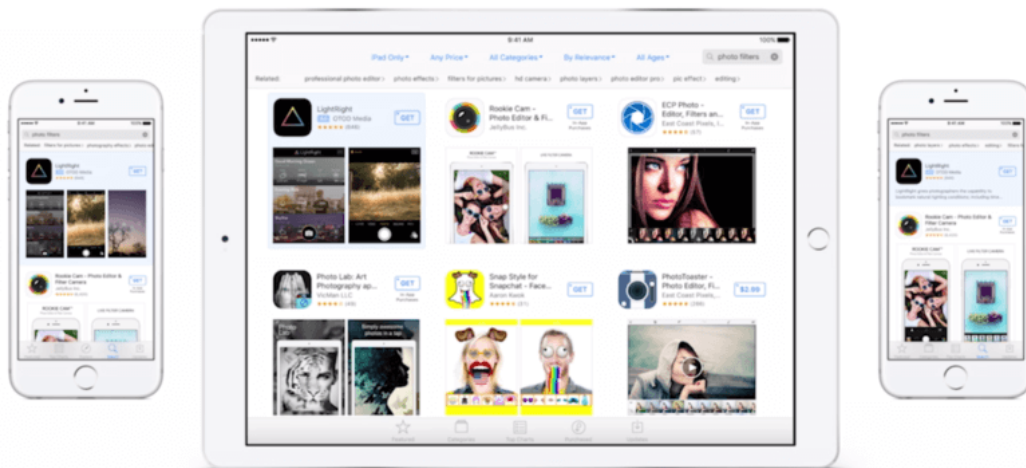
Users are happy with this new update on Instagram and many of them have expressed their joy via social media.

This update is not only beneficial users, but it is a blessing for businesses that uses Instagram for promotions and branding. They can prepare their posts well in advance and post it at the right time.

07 APPLE BRINGS IN SEARCH ADS FOR THE APP STORE

Apple has started [Search Ads](#) on App Store for iPhone and iPad users, but only in the US. The new development will take effect from October 5. Apple is offering eligible developers a \$100 credit for their first campaign when they sign up for Search Ads. A good offer indeed.

The search ads will be represented with a blue background. And the developers will not have to provide additional images and copy for the ad because the Apple will generate it automatically using the app metadata. It is highly likely that they will only show one ad per search to keep things uncluttered, at least at the beginning.



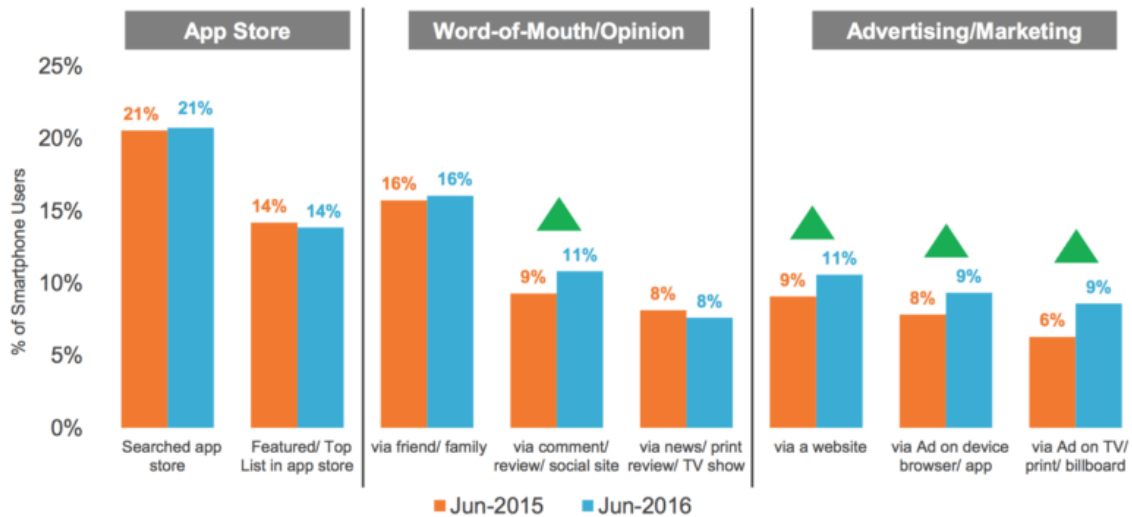
This new development will not only generate more income for Apple, but it will be beneficial for developers and publishers as well. The Search Ads will allow the developers to reach to their prospected users with ease.

Also, It will be convenient for the Apple users as well, because it is developed to enable a safe search experience. Apple claims that search ads will set a new standard for delivering relevant ads while respecting user privacy.

Developers can set a Max daily budget. Also, Apple is employing the "Second price auction". Which means that not only the bid price but the relevance will also play a major role. Developers can bid for the iPhone or iPod individually and can utilize the Keyword suggestion tool that offers popularity indicators & negative keywords capabilities. Developers can also filter their targeted audience as per the gender, age, and location. Not to mention that Apple is also providing "Analytics".

Most Common App Discovery Channels Among Smartphone Users

Source: comScore MobiLens, U.S., Age 13+, 3 Month Average Ending June 2016 vs. June 2015

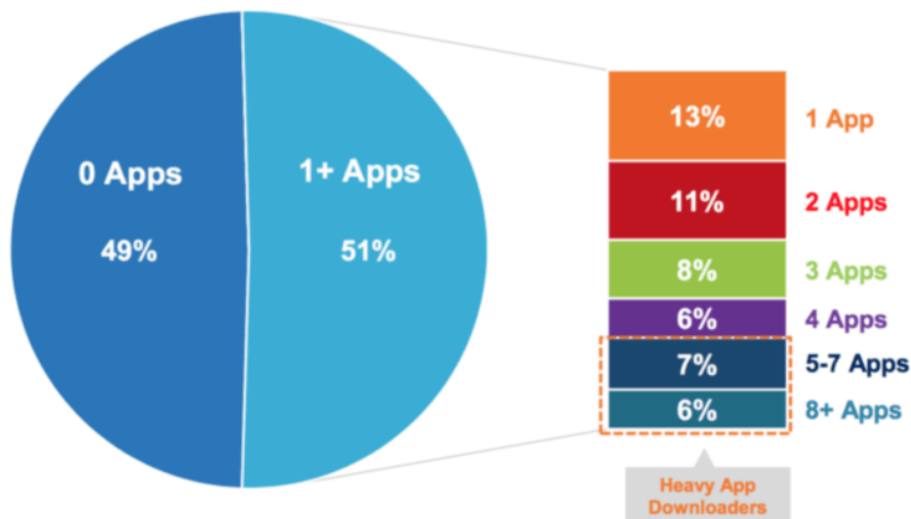


Currently, most of the people turn to app store for downloading an app. However, comScore has reported that the use of other channels to discover apps is increasing.

comScore also reported that more than 50% of the smartphone users don't download any new apps in a given month.

Smartphone Users' Number of App Downloads Per Month

Source: comScore MobiLens, U.S., Age 13+, 3 Month Average Ending June 2016



So maybe the search ads will be able to encourage more people to download by showing them apps that they might be interested in.

Again, Search Ads will go live in the App Store on October 5. Developers also receive a \$100 credit for the first campaign.

[Watch the Video](#)