



CarGurus SEO Tactics

Highlighting Examples of Manipulative SEO Practices

India Hosted Sites Linking to CarGurus

Question: are CGs gaming the SEO/traffic System?

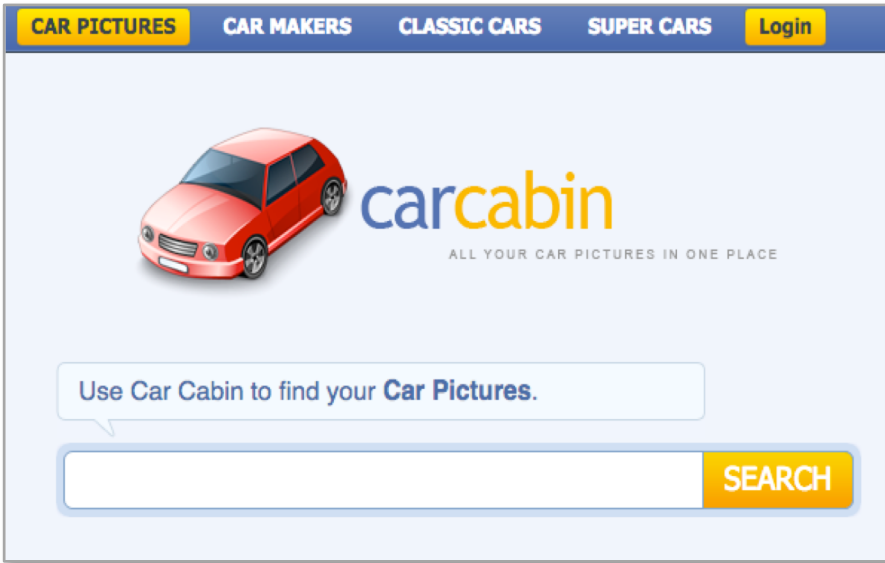
- Yes. SearchMetrics data highlight 66% of total external links pointing to CG's site originate from IP addresses residing in India, 17% in Sweden an only 6% from the USA (website list attached to this email)

What India hosted websites are within the 66% that link to CG's?

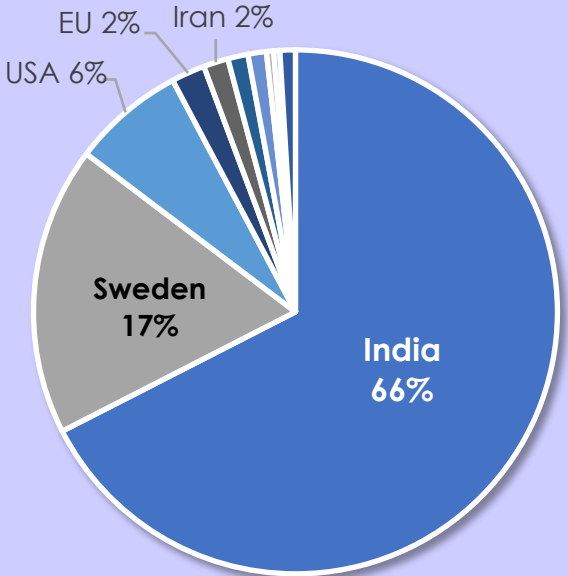
- Top 10 sites consisting of the majority of links are below right
- Sites are poor in quality & content
- CarCabin.com (see right) accounts for majority of links
- Full list of India hosted domains linking to CGs is attached

What Next?

- Blackhat tactics like this can be reported to engines like Google
- See: <https://searchengineland.com/report-competitor-spam-293377>
- Linking analysis of CGs & our competition will continue
- Spam reports submitted to Google



Above: homepage of Carcabin.com. The #1 driver of India hosted links to CG's



Top 10 locations of Websites Linking to CG.com

Top 10 India domains making up 66% of links pointing to CG.com			
#	Referring Domain	# of Links	IP Address
1	carcabin.com	530831	104.28.18.109
2	alchemytoday.com	190302	104.18.35.91
3	dvduck.com	44707	104.31.88.76
4	automoblog.net	15588	104.24.98.73
5	jrcases.com	11303	104.27.136.49
6	vsmgmt.com	6619	104.206.168.242
7	tattoodonkey.com	2881	104.28.1.69
8	imagejuicy.com	972	104.28.5.45
9	blackpumpkin.com	946	104.28.18.87
10	greencarreports.com	878	104.27.141.166
-	Other	17530	N/A
	Total India Hosted Links	822557	N/A

Top 10 Websites Hosted in India Linking to CG.com

Dynamic Rendering / Cloaking to Manipulate Engines



Used BMW X5 for Sale in San Francisco, CA 94118 [Change ZIP](#)

Search Used Search New Save Search

By Car By Body Style By Price

BMW

X5

All Years to All Years

ZIP 94118

Radius 50 mi

Search

Filter Results 264 listings

Price \$1,000 - \$87,000

Include Listings Without Available Pricing

Mileage 3,000 miles - 1,000,000 miles

Transmission Any Manual Automatic

Trim

BMW X5

Email me price drops and new listings for these results. [Subscribe](#)

By clicking "Subscribe," you agree to our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Use](#).

Best deals first Showing 1 - 18 out of 264 listings Next

Sponsored Listings

2015 BMW X5 sDrive35i RWD

Good Deal \$3,293 BELOW

Price: \$31,496 \$356/mo est.

Mileage: \$1,847 mi

Location: Mountain View, CA 35 mi

Dealer rating: ★★★★★

Authorized BMW Dealer

2017 BMW X5 sDrive35i RWD

Good Deal \$2,792 BELOW

Price: \$45,999 \$656/mo est.

Mileage: 14,173 mi

Location: Mountain View, CA 35 mi

Dealer rating: ★★★★★

Authorized BMW Dealer

2017 BMW X5 xDrive50i AWD

Fair Deal \$847 ABOVE

Price: \$62,998 \$1,173/mo est.

Mileage: 22,745 mi

Location: Petaluma, CA 35 mi

Dealer rating: ★★★★★

- Sponsored Listings
- **No** long form content on VDPs



Used BMW X5 for Sale Nationwide

Search Used Search New

By Car By Body Style By Price

BMW

X5

All Years to All Years

ZIP

Radius 100 mi

Search

Find BMW X5 listings in your area

ZIP [Go](#)

Best deals first [First](#) [Previous](#) [Loading...](#) [Next](#)

2011 BMW X5 xDrive50i AWD in Jersey City, NJ 07304

Great Deal

Price: \$17,488

Mileage: 25,415

Location: Jersey City, NJ 07304

\$5,848 BELOW

CarGurus BMV of \$23,134

Average time on market: 28 days Certified Pre-Owned: No Transmission: 8-Speed Automatic Color: Deep Sea Blue Metallic Description: Used 2011 BMW X5 xDrive50i AWD for sale - \$17,488, 25,415 miles with Sport Package, Leather Seats, Sunroof/Moonroof, M Sport Package

Avg. Dealer Rating: ★★★★★ (24 reviews) "This place is such a far I search a car by cargurus and I found the hybrid and the price is 8998 after that I call to this dealer and ask if it still available and they told me its still available and then 15 minutes later I call them back and ask for the price is 8998 they said no it gonna be 11900 and I ask them I found your car on the website cargus 8998 and then they told me it sold few minutes later I check on cargurus they already took down the car out. They told me when I see the price 8998 I told them on cargus. This dealer isn't honest. They put on the other website with the very low price and then when you come to them . They show you the very different price about 3000 more than the price they commercial."

2018 BMW X5 sDrive35i AWD in Catonsville, MD 21228

Great Deal

Price: \$47,723

Mileage: 4,530

Location: Catonsville, MD 21228

\$10,735 BELOW

CarGurus BMV of \$58,458

Average time on market: 40 days Certified Pre-Owned: Yes Transmission: 8-Speed Automatic Color: Alpine White Description: Used 2018 BMW X5 sDrive35i AWD for sale - \$47,723, 4,530 miles with Bluetooth, Leather Seats, Sunroof/Moonroof, Navigation System, Premium Package, Alloy Wheels

Filter Results listing

Price

- Loading...

Include Listings Without Available Pricing

Mileage

- Loading...

Transmission Any Manual Automatic

Nationwide Shipping Hide nationwide shipping

Trim

- **No** sponsored Listings
- Long form content on VDPs available

Dynamic Rendering

Why does CarGurus use Dynamic Rendering?

- 1) Introduce greater content depth to their SRPs. This enables CarGurus to expand the amount of content & information on their SRPs in order to appear more informational & holistic. This content is only visible to search engines & not users (can be accessed on click). Hiding such content is directly aimed at improving rankings
 - 2) Sponsored listings are only visible to users & not search engines. Include sponsored listings but blocking this experience from Google.
- Both of these tactics are used and create a different layout between Google & users, in order to maximize rankings & revenue on SRPs.

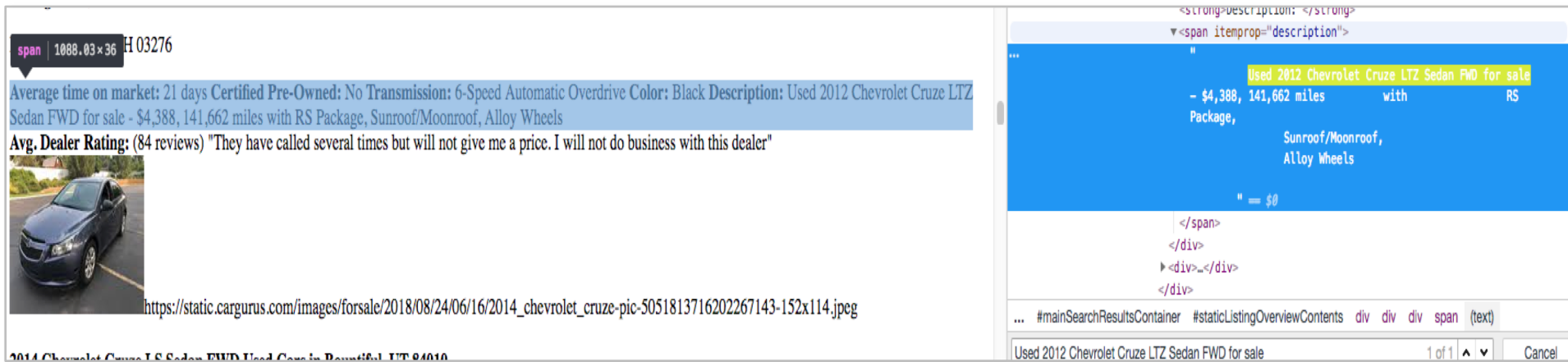
Dynamic Rendering

How is CG rendering different content for users & search engines?

1. CarGurus uses a “hidden layer” in the code to load content for search engines in the background.
2. Via page styling (CSS) the VDP content is hidden, thus making it invisible to the user. This content, however, is perfectly visible to search engines.
3. When loading an SRP, users are able to get a glimpse of the hidden content while the JavaScript is being fired.
4. Additionally, the "initially loaded" webpage that bots pick up shows no Sponsored Listings on the page. However, on "post load" which a user interacts with, the entire above the fold inventory experience are taken up by Sponsored Listings.

Dynamic Rendering

How is CG rendering different content for users & search engines?




The screenshot shows a car listing for a 2012 Chevrolet Cruze LTZ Sedan FWD. The visible content includes a price of \$4,388, 141,662 miles, and a dealer rating of 84 reviews. A developer tool overlay on the right shows the hidden HTML content, which includes the text "Used 2012 Chevrolet Cruze LTZ Sedan FWD for sale" and "Sunroof/Moonroof, Alloy Wheels".

span 1088.03 x 36 H 03276

Average time on market: 21 days Certified Pre-Owned: No Transmission: 6-Speed Automatic Overdrive Color: Black Description: Used 2012 Chevrolet Cruze LTZ Sedan FWD for sale - \$4,388, 141,662 miles with RS Package, Sunroof/Moonroof, Alloy Wheels

Avg. Dealer Rating: (84 reviews) "They have called several times but will not give me a price. I will not do business with this dealer"



https://static.cargurus.com/images/forsale/2018/08/24/06/16/2014_chevrolet_cruze-pic-5051813716202267143-152x114.jpeg

2014 Chevrolet Cruze LS Sedan FWD Used Cars in Beautiful LTZ 84010

```
<strong>description: </strong>
  <span itemprop="description">
    ...
    "
      Used 2012 Chevrolet Cruze LTZ Sedan FWD for sale
      - $4,388, 141,662 miles with RS
      Package,
      Sunroof/Moonroof,
      Alloy Wheels
    " = $0
  </span>
</div>
  <div></div>
</div>
```

... #mainSearchResultsContainer #staticListingOverviewContents div div div span (text)

Used 2012 Chevrolet Cruze LTZ Sedan FWD for sale 1 of 1 Cancel

- When analyzing the HTML code for any SRPs, we can identify the long form content, which users do not see, is loaded in the core HTML.
- As previously mentioned, this content is subsequently loaded through CSS. However access to content for users is limited and appears when disabling JavaScript or CSS.

Dynamic Rendering

Is this in violation of Google's Guidelines?

- From Google:

“Cloaking refers to the practice of presenting different content or URLs to human users and search engines. Cloaking is considered a violation of Google's Webmaster Guidelines and provides our users with different results than they expected.”

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/66355?hl=en>

“Hiding text or links in your content to manipulate Google's search rankings can be seen as deceptive and is a violation of Google's Webmaster Guidelines. Text (such as excessive keywords) can be hidden in several ways”

<https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/66353?hl=en>

Vehicle Detail Pages

How is CarGurus serving VDPs?

<https://www.cargurus.com/Cars/l-Used-Buick-Enclave-d1029?sourceContext=popularLinks#listing=203964779>

The screenshot shows the CarGurus website interface. At the top, the navigation bar includes 'CarGurus', 'Used Cars', 'New Cars', 'Car Values', 'Sell My Car', 'Research', and 'Questions'. Below this, a breadcrumb trail reads 'Home / Used Cars / Buick Enclave'. A horizontal carousel of car thumbnails is visible, with the selected car being a 2010 Buick Enclave CXL1 FWD. The main content area displays the car's title '2010 Buick Enclave CXL1 FWD - \$8,995' and location 'Gulfport, MS - 0 miles away'. A 'Champion' badge is prominently displayed over the car image. To the right, a 'Great Deal' badge indicates a price 'Below Market \$3,475'. Below the car image, there is a 'Contact Dealer' form with fields for name, phone number, and email address. A red banner at the bottom of the car image reads 'VISIT 455 E PASS RD GULFPORT, MS OR CALL 677-249-4445'.

- CarGurus is able to stick with one core URL between their SRPs & VDPs
- All VDPs are located after a “#” sign in the URL
- Google does not read or index after the “#”
- The VDPs are loaded through JavaScript and require a user click to be seen. This means Google will never see any of the VDPs, whereas users can freely click around.

Increased Keyword Usage

Compare Ford Edge to Related Models

165.95 × 16

Ford Escape vs Ford Edge

Ford Explorer vs Ford Edge

Chevrolet Equinox vs Ford Edge

```
><div class="cg-widget-wrap cg-popularListContainer">...</div>
><div class="cg-widget-wrap cg-popularListContainer">...</div>
><div class="cg-widget-wrap cg-popularListContainer">...</div>
▼<div class="cg-widget-wrap cg-popularListContainer">
  ▶<div class="cg-widget-header clearfix">...</div>
  ▼<div class="cg-popularEntry">
    ...
    <a href="/Cars/compare/Ford-Escape-vs-Ford-Edge_d330_d923" title="Ford
    Escape vs Ford Edge" alt="Ford Escape vs Ford Edge">Ford Escape vs Ford
    Edge</a> == $0
  </div>
  ▶<div class="cg-popularEntry">...</div>
  ▶<div class="cg-popularEntry">...</div>
```

- Important and high value internal links, related to the vehicle comparison market, shows signs of keyword stuffing.
- CarGurus is using "Alt Tags" alongside "Titles" in order to increase keyword density for these links.
- Alt tags are meant to be used for picture content. In these examples they are used on none image-based links

Summary

- Be it for the motive of artificially elevating traffic or boosting search engine ranking CarGurus are engaged in manipulative link building practices
- Due to a complex website architecture, CarGurus is able to hide content (and ads) for search engines and add additional elements purely for the users.
- Various “dynamic rendering” tactics give users & search engines a different experience. This is clearly in violation of Google’s guidelines.
- Additionally, CarGurus is able to use other SEO tactics in order to manipulate its crawl efficiency & keyword coverage.
- These additional tactics are not necessarily deceptive but considered poor practice.



Thank You.