CarGurus SEO Tactics

Highlighting Examples of Manipulative SEO Practices

India Hosted Sites Linking to CarGurus

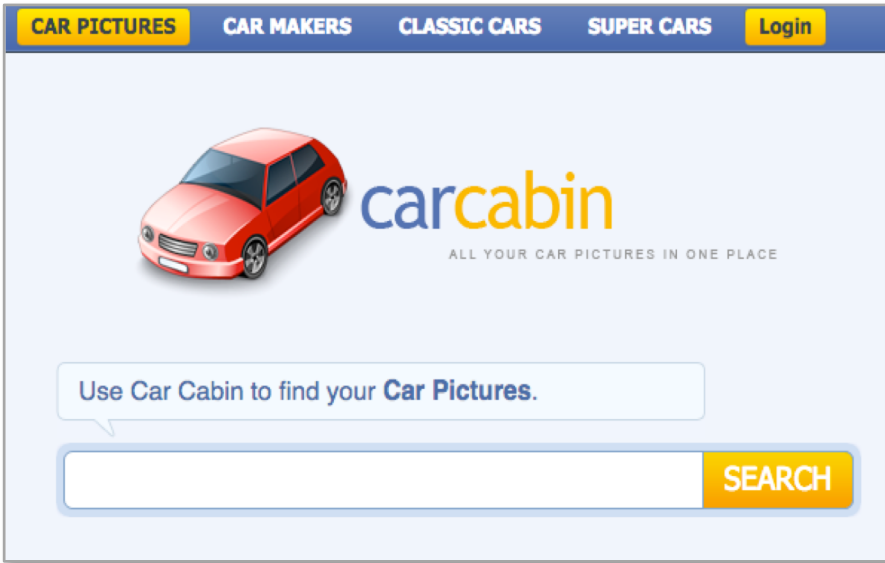**Question: are CGs gaming the SEO/traffic System?**
- Yes. SearchMetrics data highlight 66% of total external links pointing to CG's site originate from IP addresses residing in India, 17% in Sweden an only 6% from the USA (website list attached to this email)

What India hosted websites are within the 66% that link to CG's?
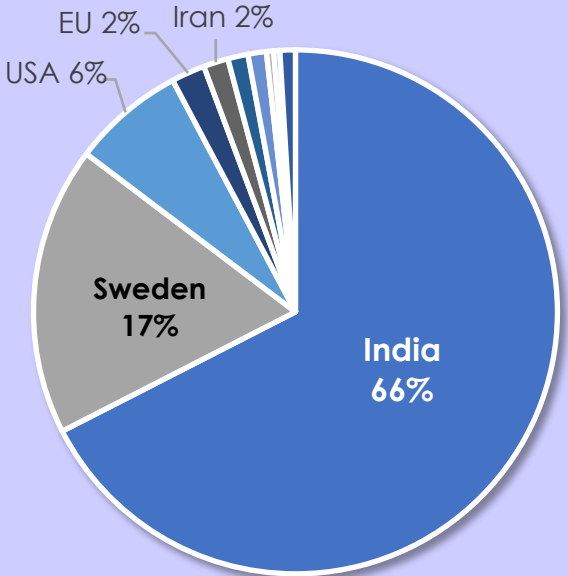- Top 10 sites consisting of the majority of links are below right
- Sites are poor in quality & content
- CarCabin.com *(see right)* accounts for majority of links
- Full list of India hosted domains linking to CGs is attached

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	jraces.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

- Sponsored Listings

- **No** long form content on VDPs

- **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 is 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 listing 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.
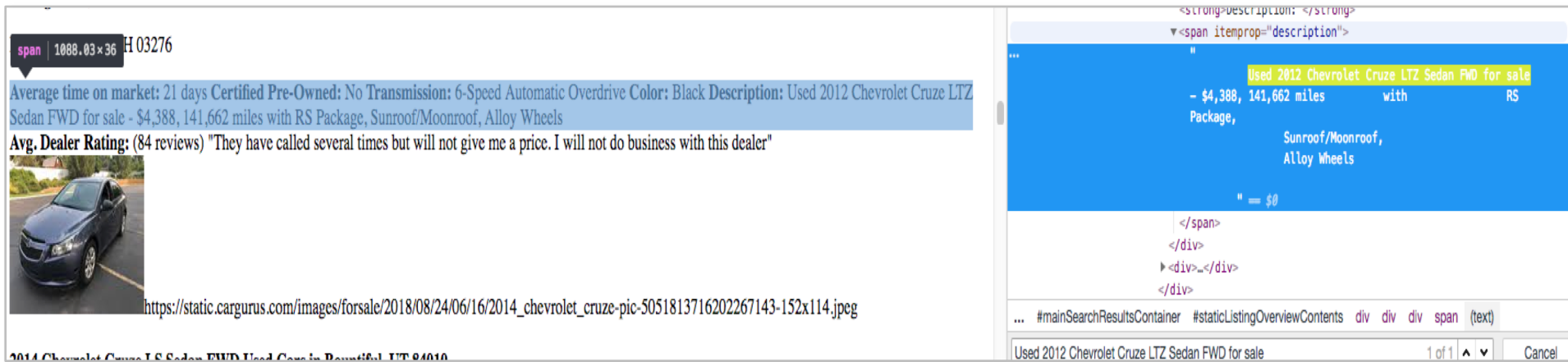
Dynamic Rendering
How is CG rendering different content for users & search engines?

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?

- 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

- 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

- 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.

cars.com

Thank You.