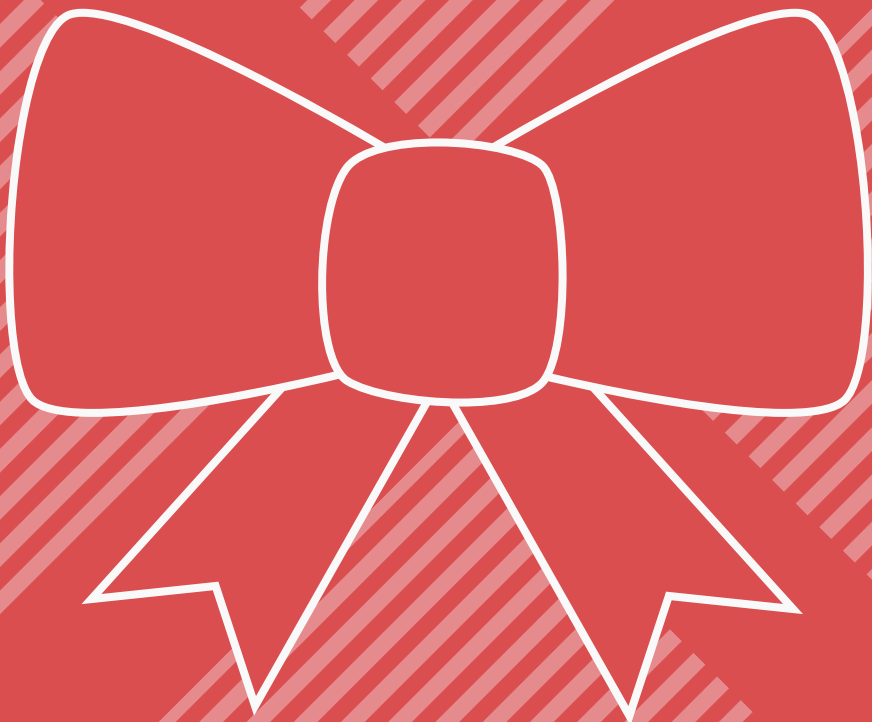


Making the most of
Christmas
in July



SALT
. a g e n c y

About SALT.agency

SALT.agency is a technical SEO agency based in Leeds.

Classed as one of the most unique and stand-out agencies in the UK, the company has decades of experience in organic search, technical marketing, and cyber security.

Offering bespoke services to clients from San Francisco to Australia, SALT.agency has recently expanded its offices to the City of London where it works with an expanding number of clients.

SALT.agency can help companies throughout the UK achieve recognition and exposure in some of the most competitive markets in the world. With more and more services heading online, it is imperative for businesses to be on the frontline of Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs).

As a technical SEO agency, SALT.agency can position businesses so that they can benefit from lucrative and growing online markets.



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Why the best Christmas campaigns are created in the summer

Although most thoughts are strictly tuned to sandy beaches and palm trees during the summer months, the time to start thinking about Christmas is now.

There's no doubt that the Christmas period, starting in late October, is one of the busiest periods of the year for companies across a wide range of sectors.

Last year it was estimated that British advertisers spent over £5.6 billion during the festive season, as traditional marketing budgets were taken out of television and newspaper advertising and redirected online.

This year, online budgets are expected to grow by 14 per cent year on year, with mobile advertising taking the lead.

But online exposure doesn't just happen because a company has spent money. The best

Christmas campaigns begin their initial stages while the country basks in the warm rays of the sun.

This is especially true in search marketing, where technical changes and marketing campaigns take weeks or months before revealing the full picture of progress.

If businesses want to make the most of the upcoming Christmas season in the search world, plans need to be prepped and implemented before the end of July.

In this whitepaper we shall be discussing two online markets that enjoy primetime sales during the Christmas season:

- > Luxury hampers
- > Alcohol delivery

So, let's take a look at how and why these two markets need to be gearing up for their busiest seasons in summer.



But online exposure doesn't just happen because a company has spent money. The best Christmas campaigns begin their initial stages while the country basks in the warm rays of the sun.



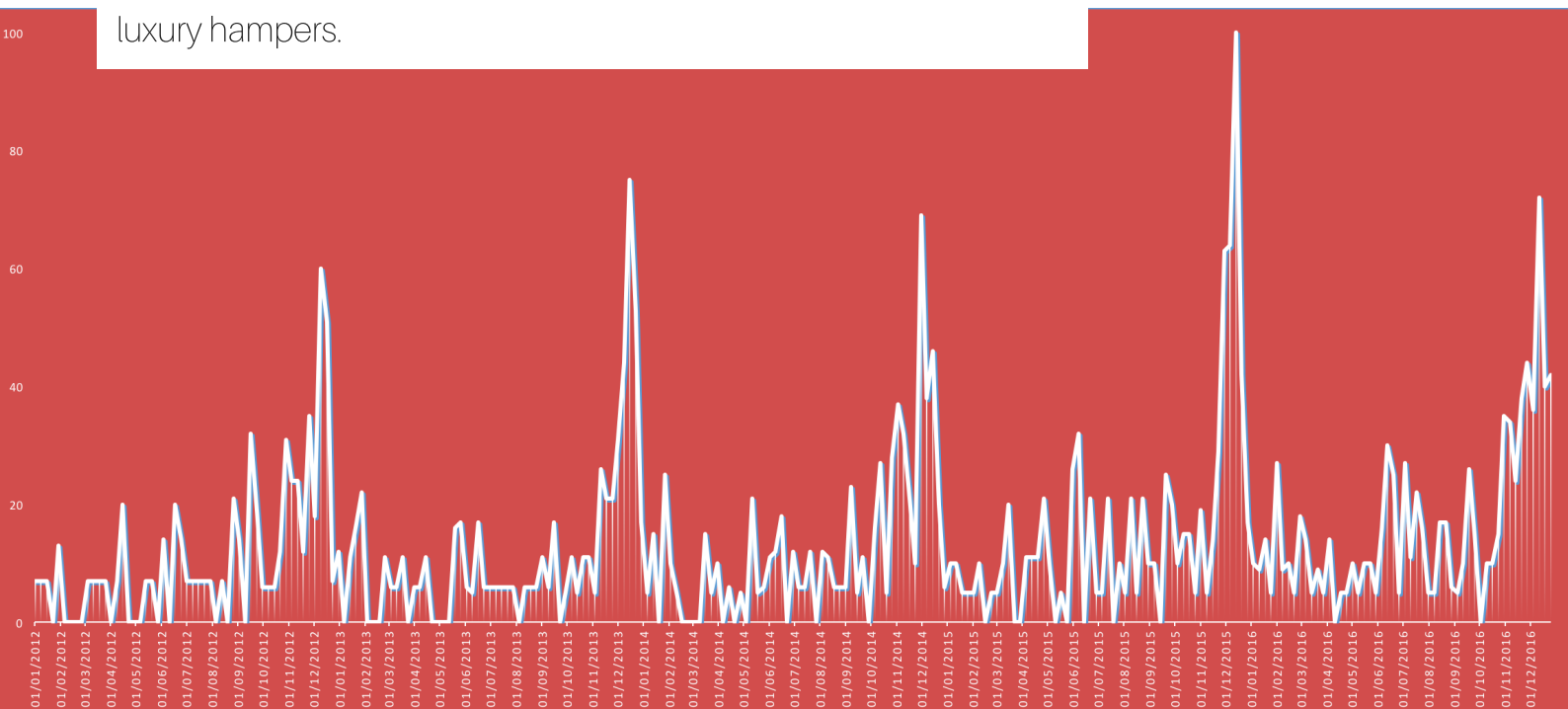
Luxury hampers

Earlier in May it was reported that the global luxury market is set to grow by two to four per cent in 2017, increasing to €290 billion in sales by 2020.

In the UK, the luxury market is expected to grow between seven to nine per cent by the end of the year, so getting ahead of that growth ready for December is key.

For the luxury hamper market there's no doubt that critical months surround the Christmas period, where gifts, parties, and social occasions are rife and bombastic in equal measure.

With this in mind, let's check out a 12-month search trend for luxury hampers.

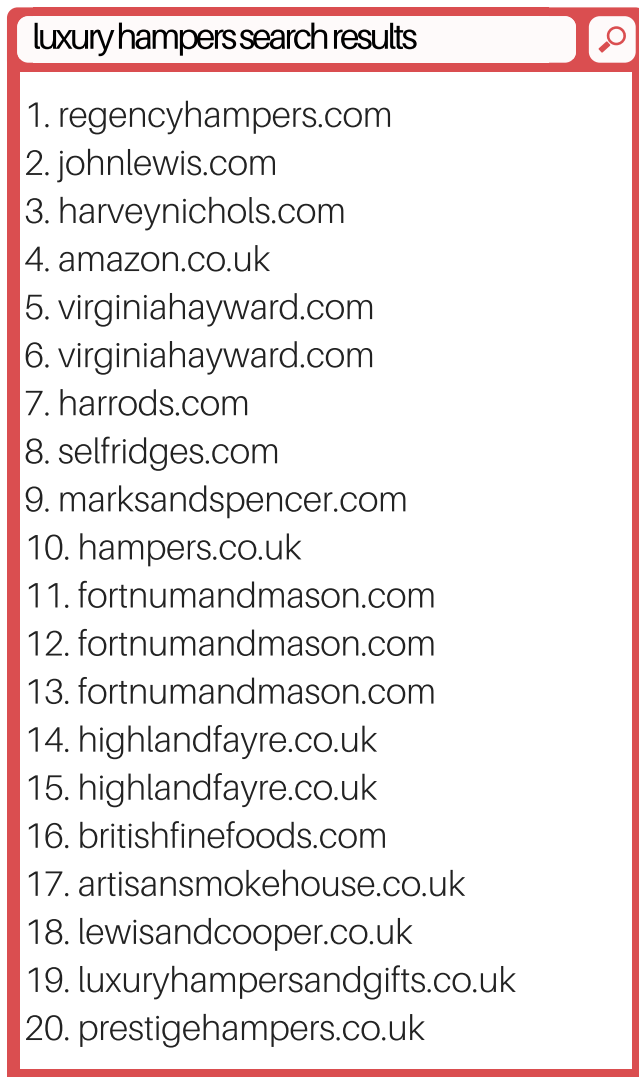


As we can see from the above data, there is a sharp interest in the term "luxury hamper" each year, peaking almost exactly at the postal cut-off date before Christmas.

Without fail we see a sharp decline in the following weeks and months, only to rise again as the years race back through to December.

This data offers hamper businesses a gauge of how much time they have in order to prepare and position themselves online for increases in demand — enabling them to provide the best possible customer service during busy periods. But as already stated, this preparation needs to begin now in order to reap the best possible rewards for the busiest weeks of the year.

With this in mind, it is probably best to take a glance at the first UK Search Engine Results Page (SERP) for the term “luxury hamper”, to see how Google treats the SERP and to see which companies look like they’re already gearing up for Christmas.



It is clear to see from the table above, retrieved on June 7 2017, that Google treats this SERP entirely as a commercial one.

Although one might expect “luxury hampers” to bring about entirely commercial results, this is not always the case.

This is because Google – and other search engines – must take into account that not all search terms are strictly commercial, even if their primary use is.

If a SERP happens to be purely commercial it tends to indicate that there is heavy competition within it, and it would likely be difficult for an outsider to suddenly gain entry.

This does not mean that it is impossible however, as an expert campaign that encompasses a range of tactics and considerations can get businesses moving forward ahead of their busiest season.

It is also worth pointing out that the SERP presented on the left contains organic results only, and does not take into account Cost Per Click (CPC) advertising, which is often seen on competitive and popular SERPS.

Also known as Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising, the model is commonly used on search engines by companies and advertisers looking to sell goods and services using lucrative phrases or terms.

The more popular a term is, the more expensive it will be for the company bidding on it, which means campaigns must be carefully planned.

At this point it is worth bearing in mind that a CPC campaign is predominately a small, yet important part of an online marketing campaign.

It would be very unusual and likely very costly to rely solely on CPC/PPC for online exposure.

There are many reasons for this, not only because it can become very expensive very fast, but also because people have a tendency to ignore sponsored advertisements.

In fact, according to one Google survey, 85 per cent of people claim to ignore sponsored advertisements while searching through its search engine.

Going back to the SERP, it is interesting to see a range of sites which are included multiple times throughout. This likely means that the businesses are targeting the search term over multiple pages.

Virginia Hayward, for example, ranks both for its homepage and its primary page for hampers, indicating that both contain quality content that meets the aim of the majority of users.

Creating quality user content, whether your business is one of the largest or one of the smallest in the world, is critical for getting your website within the correct and most appropriate SERPs in Google and other search engines.

There was of course a time in online marketing when a website could perform well just by the amount of links it had, or how many times it managed to repeat or “stuff” the same keywords throughout its pages.

This meant that sites, whether commercial or non-commercial, could rank highly within competitive SERPs regardless of the user experience that they offered.

Before long, Google and other search engines began clamping down on manipulation and implemented a range of algorithms and penalties that would dampen a website’s urge to utilise dubious methods for success.

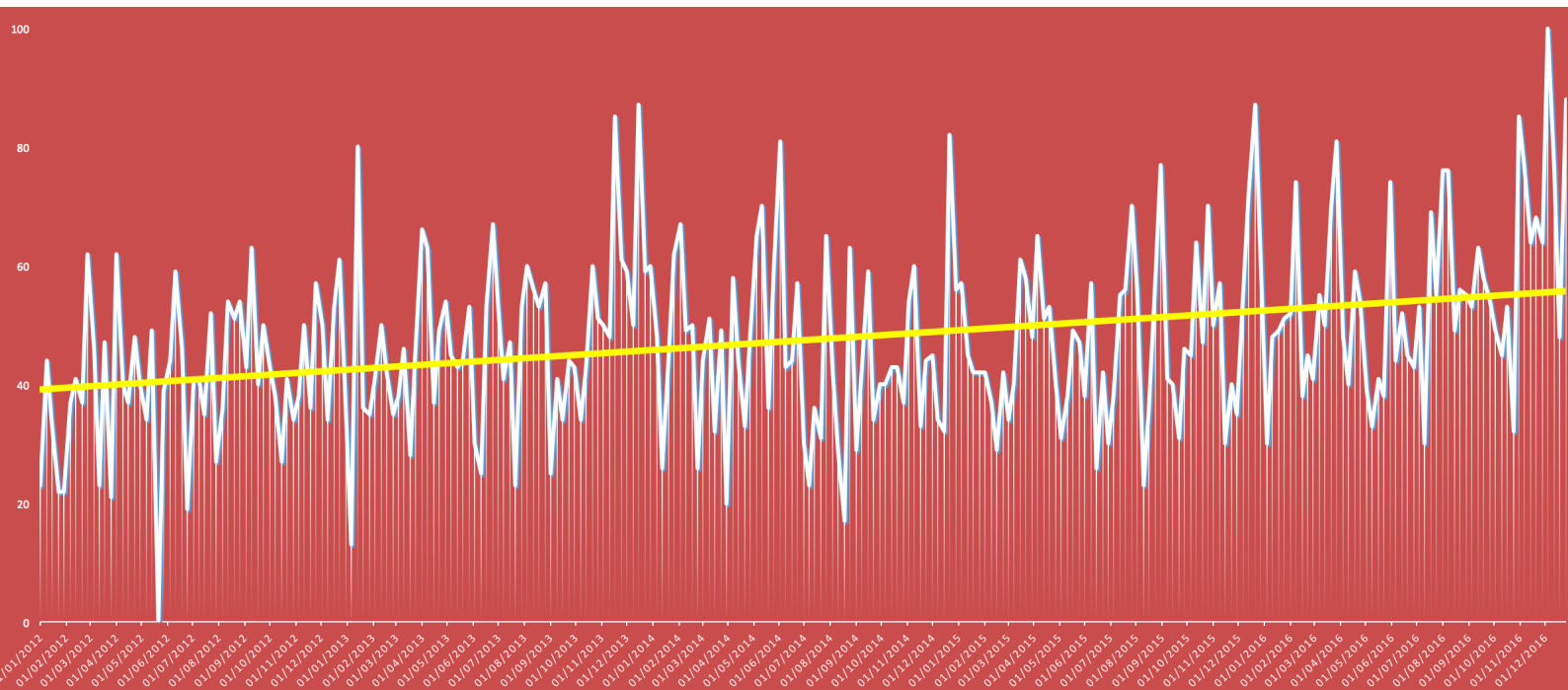
One of these, Google Panda, was specifically released to tackle low-quality or thinly populated websites, as well as content farms — sites that contain large quantities of low quality content that are aggregated from other sites.

Unfortunately for many, the update meant that those judged as poor by the algorithm would not be affected on a page-by-page basis, like some algorithms, but on the basis of an entire site.

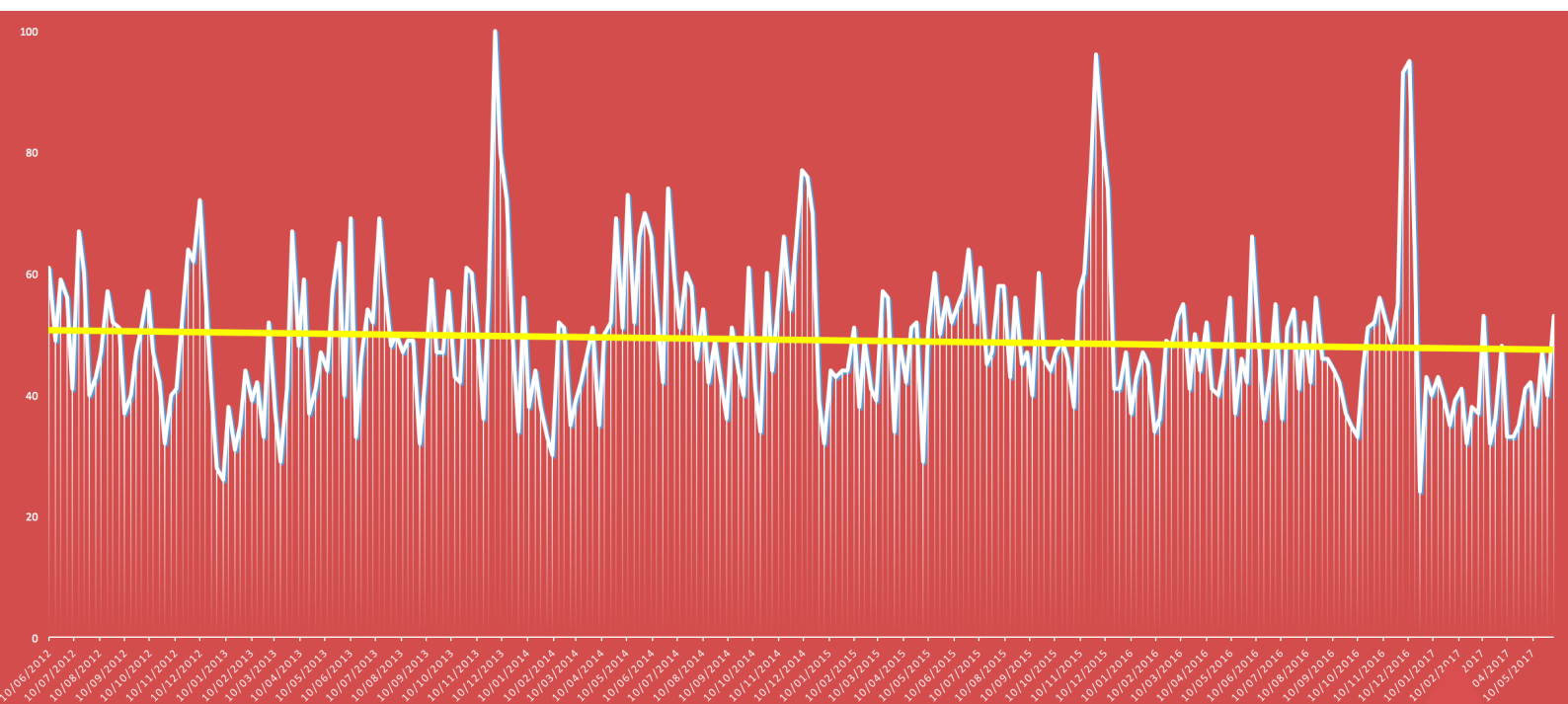
It is easy to assume therefore, that those found within the above SERP have adhered to Google’s guidelines by creating quality, user focused content across all pages.

Alcohol delivery

Another market that encounters particular demand during the Christmas season is the online alcohol delivery market, which, part in thanks to the rise in craft ales, has flourished over the past five years to become a staple part of the Christmas period.



With an added trendline to show the continuing interest in alcohol delivery services, it is possible, as with luxury hampers, to see increased demands around the Christmas period over the past five years. Although there are of course peaks during the summer months, where an increase in alcohol delivery is also expected, it is clear that the largest peaks in demand are between the weeks of Christmas and New Year.



Although the trend line in this example does decline ever so slightly, it does corroborate the earlier graph which shows that demand is increased throughout the Christmas season.

But why investigate multiple terms?

Again, planning months in advance is the key to a successful campaign that ensures that all bases are covered. With this reasoning in mind, it is important to investigate and analyse multiple search terms or keywords across one sector.

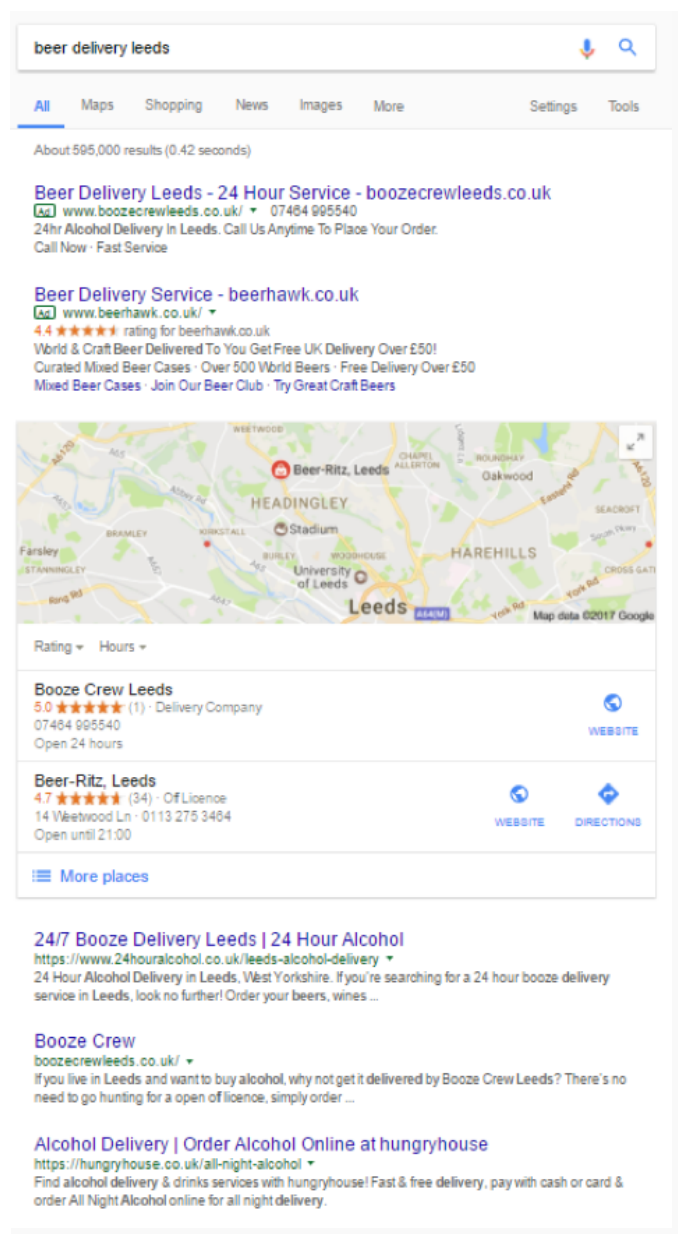
It is reasonable to assume therefore, that just because one trend line declines slightly, it does not indicate a decline industrywide.

SALT.agency uses a range of tools for international keyword research to allow for a full and comprehensive picture of the search market, ensuring that no stone or term is left undiscovered.

Although many large businesses prioritise their efforts into national exposure via SERPs, it is of course important for companies to investigate local SEO where applicable.

In 2012, Google released the Google Venice algorithm, and it changed how certain websites and businesses are picked up in local search results.

Taking a look at "beer delivery Leeds" we can now see the familiar local stack that Google brought into its local searches only a few years ago, due to the Google Venice algorithm.



This algorithm takes larger keywords and interprets their meaning in a highly analytical way so that a more accurate offering is displayed to a user.

When that user searches for a popular term for a given geographical area, they are presented with what's known as a stack, which typically comprises of Pay Per Click (PPC) advertisements, followed by a map of the local area and the basic contact details of prominent businesses found within it.

Due to the introduction of the stack, the number of businesses appearing before the organic search results can vary from five down to three and this influences how people click through to various websites.

The predominance of a local stack within a SERP such as this is extremely powerful for the businesses that are included within it.

The first thing to notice in this stack is the presence of paid advertising, and by one of the largest and most prominent beer delivery companies and breweries in the country — Beerhawk.

Quite often local SERPs will contain advertising from national companies searching for local exposure by advertising on such a level, which is a good idea when you consider that over 90 per cent of consumers use search engines for their local area.

So, for example, companies such as Beerhawk might be quite successful in advertising their services in local searches and in larger cities.

The fact that paid advertising is being used on a local search basis shows that there is a healthy level of competition for online liquor and beer shops within the Leeds area.

We can also see the usual business map, which provides the typical business Name, Address and Phone Number (NAP).

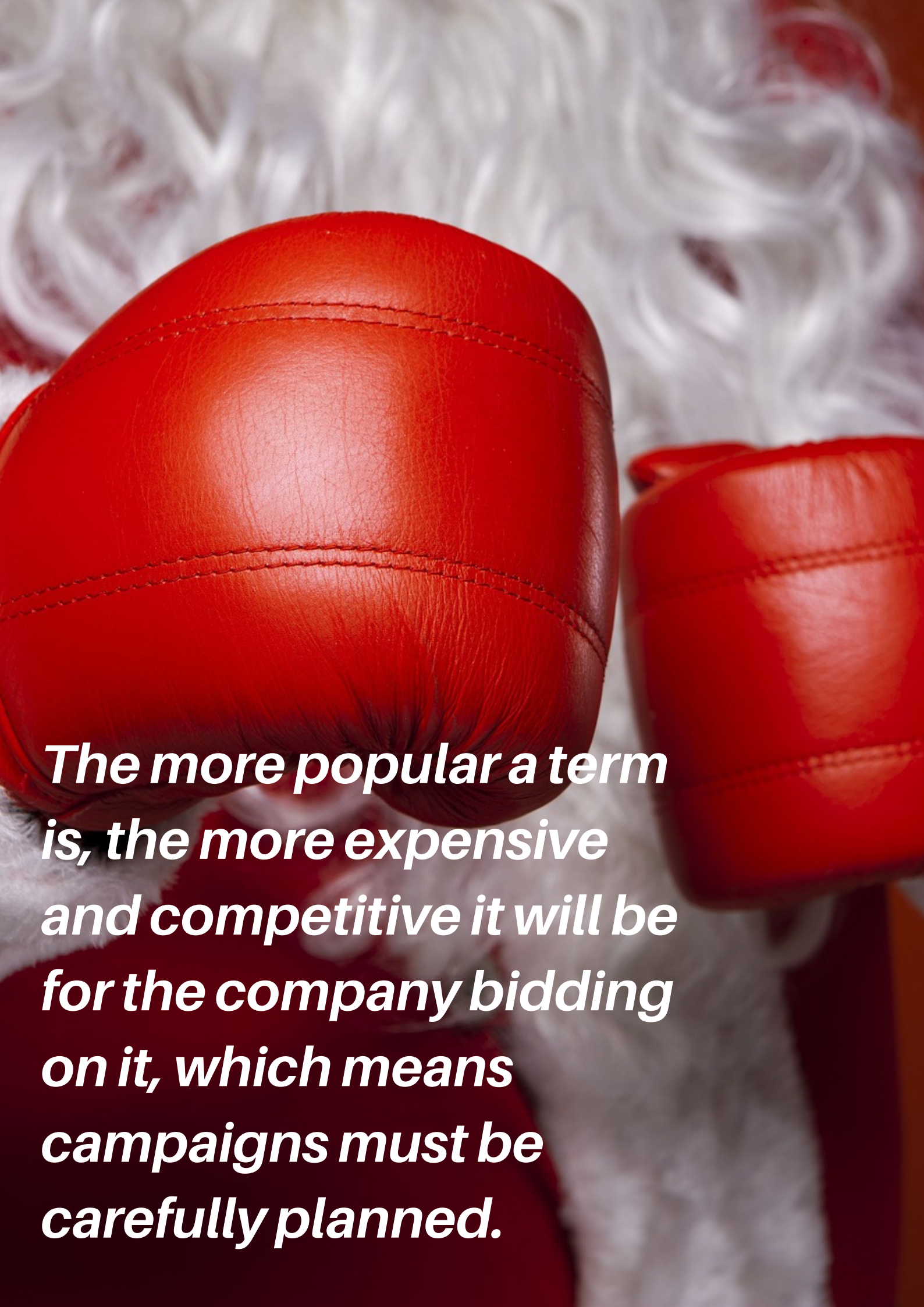
It is likely that these businesses have taken the time out to provide Google with their most basic information, entering complete and accurate data while at the same time, verifying their physical locations.

If a business failed to do these tasks, it is highly likely that they would not appear within local search queries and would therefore be outcompeted by their close competitors, as Google determines ranking largely on three factors:

- > Relevance
- > Distance
- > Prominence

The last of these three is quite possibly the most crucial, as this refers to how well known a business is, and Google will try and reflect its rankings on how well a business is performing in the real world.



A close-up photograph of two red boxing gloves. The glove on the left is in sharp focus, showing its textured leather surface and white stitching. The glove on the right is slightly out of focus. The background is a soft, white, textured surface, possibly a towel or a blanket.

The more popular a term is, the more expensive and competitive it will be for the company bidding on it, which means campaigns must be carefully planned.

It will also consider links, articles and news stories about the company, as well as local directories.

Although Google says that there “is no way to request or pay for a better ranking on Google” the prominence of paid advertisements in some local searches tends to contradict this statement.

If an alcohol delivery company was to try and appear locally without paying for advertising however, a mix of fresh content, technical site restructuring, and basic local search integration should mean that they will be able to rank within local searches — if this happens to be their objective.

As discussed earlier, a PPC campaign can offer luxury hamper and alcohol delivery companies quick access to users and income – but not without great cost.

Organic search offers long-term revenue to companies offering technically brilliant websites that adhere to strict search engine regulations, but this often overlooks local demand.

Local search directs search engine users to companies that pinpoint certain towns and cities as their base of operation, providing an ultra-specific audience within a specified geographical area — but foregoing important national industry keywords.

It is only with the implementation of all three strategies therefore, that businesses can make the most of the toughest and most competitive search areas.

With a bespoke and thorough audit, it is possible to identify underperforming and overlooked technical specifications — the crucial first step of any campaign.

A business that hasn't had an audit within the past six months should be asking itself not only whether its site is prepared for growth, but whether it is enough to compete with competitors in the first place.

What seasonal companies can do now.

With a strong online approach, backed by technical authority and modern search marketing, businesses can safeguard and expand their authority on both national and local levels.

Now more than ever, individuals are taking to the internet to search for luxury gifts and party supplies – hamper and alcohol companies offer both in abundance.



SALT.agency provides free technical health checks to businesses throughout the world. For more information, contact John@salt.agency.

<https://salt.agency/>

SALT.agency

We are one of the most unique SEO agencies in the UK and are on the forefront of technical marketing.

We have decades of experience in SEO and digital marketing, specialising in a variety of areas to create a perfect formula for bespoke services and offerings.

RESEARCH SOURCES

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/nov/02/uk-christmas-ad-spend-to-hit-a-record-high-of-over-5bn>

<https://globenewswire.com/news-release/2017/05/30/999973/0/en/Global-Personal-Luxury-Goods-Market-Expected-to-Grow-by-2-4-Percent-to-254-259BN-in-2017-Driven-by-Healthier-Local-Consumption-in-China-and-Increased-Tourism-and-Consumer-Confidenc.html>

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