

Penguin 3 Update

The Return of the Penguin



A Case Study by CEMPER.COM

October 22, 2012

Penguin 3 update - US research

Penguin 3 update - US research	1
Penguin 3 update.....	3
The Test sample	3
Overall analysis.....	4
Does Adwords spending play a role?	4
What about the link profile?.....	5
Does TitleRank play a role?	5
What does Power*Trust have to do with this update?	6
What about the link location?	7
Does the deep link ratio play a role?	12
What about Side Wide ratio?	13
Does domain popularity play a role?	14
Does the hosting country of websites play a role?	14
Now what about the location from where the links come?	15
What about Alexa rank? Does the traffic to the site matter?	15
What about domain age? Should I build a new website?.....	16
Depend Variables: Indexed Pages and Number of Keywords ranking	17
Does the number of indexed pages matter?.....	17
Does the number of keyword a domains ranks for matter?	18
Does anchor text variation have anything to do with the update?	19
Comparing in Segments of Brands to Big Brands, EMDs and Others.....	20
Big brands – Winners vs. Losers	21
Comparison by CEMPER Power*Trust.....	21
Anchor text variation	21
Deep Link Ratio	22
Domain popularity	22
Title Rank.....	23
Social Media.....	24
Brands – Winners vs. Losers	25

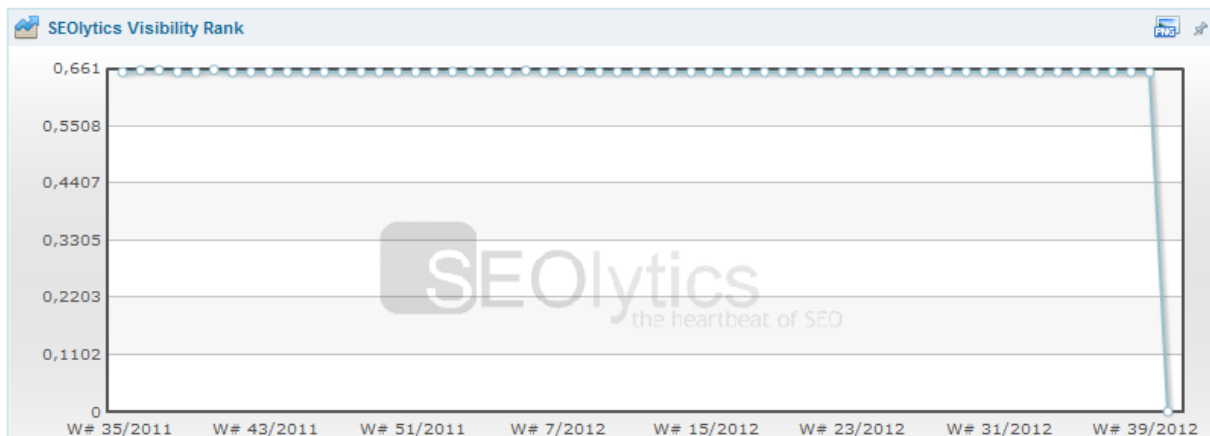
Comparison by CEMPER Power*Trust.....	25
Anchor text variation	25
Deep Link Ratio	26
Domain popularity	26
Title Rank.....	27
Social Media.....	28
Exact match keyword domains – Winners vs. Losers.....	29
Comparison by CEMPER Power*Trust.....	29
Anchor text variation	29
Deep Link Ratio	30
Domain popularity	30
TitleRank.....	31
Social Media.....	32
The “other” group – Winners vs. Losers	33
Comparison by CEMPER Power*Trust.....	33
Anchor text variation	33
Deep link ratio	34
Domain popularity	34
TitleRank.....	35
Social Media.....	36
Sub-Summary of segmented analysis	37
How did Social Media variables affect the Penguin 3 update?	38
Facebook Shares	38
Retweets.....	38
G+1	38
Pinterest.....	38
Other findings	39
Summary of findings.....	40

Penguin 3 update

The Test sample

We went through the weekly Winners vs. Losers list from SEOLytics for our contestants. All the results were checked, and only websites that showed sharp drops after the update were used for this case study. Thankfully, the data was clear enough not to include too much “noise” from the EMD/Panda20 updates.

We picked 100 websites, 50 winners and 50 losers and analyzed a number of factors to find out what makes them different.



Sharp drop in rankings for a website in the losers group

Overall analysis

Does Adwords spending play a role?

There have been a lot of theories around lately about Google favoring websites that spend money on Adwords. Let's look at what we found.

- 23/50 (46%) of the winners spent on Adwords.
- 14/50 (28%) of the losers spent on Adwords.

The winners spent an average of \$1.331 on Adwords, while the losers spent an average of \$231 (Numbers from [SearchMetrics](#), we checked [SEMRUSH](#) as well, and their numbers vary a bit, as expected).

Although the winners spent a lot more on average than the losers on Adwords, it is **very unlikely that this is a factor**, as **more than half** of the winners did not spend anything at all on Adwords and only 4 of the top 10 winners spent on Adwords.

Side note: We looked at winners and losers in other countries ([FR](#), [DE](#), [IT](#), [ES](#), [UK](#)) and found out that even fewer websites spent on Adwords.

	Winners	Enhancement	Brand	Adwords(SEMRush)	AW searchmetrics
1.	progressiveagent.com	463.84%	other	14085	3702.69
2.	thecoverguy.com	244.23%	brand	1100	237.89
3.	timewarner.com	222.36%	brand	0	0.00
4.	bayer.com	161.39%	brand	0	0.00
5.	letterwritingguide.com	156.99%	EMD	0	0.00
6.	miracle-ear.com	151.58%	Brand	0	0.00
7.	rydercup.com	149.56%	Brand	0	0.00
8.	komen.org	142.70%	Brand	6258	10646.49
9.	premierconsolidationloans.com	140.30%	EMD	0	0.00
10.	atitesting.com	136.00%	Brand	1232	1224.95

Top 10 winners Adwords spending

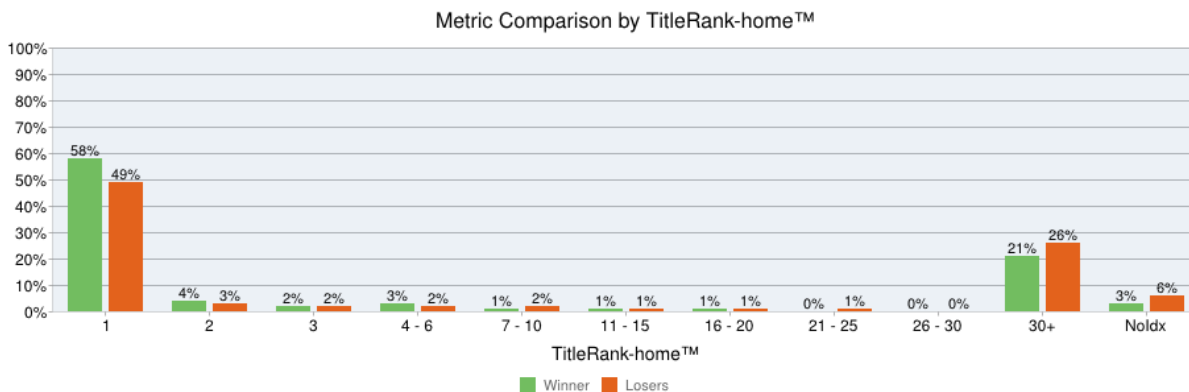
What about the link profile?

Does TitleRank play a role?

TitleRank is a metric that measures if a linking homepage is ranking for its own title in the Google search results.

The Winners have 58% of the linking websites ranking number 1 for their title while the losers only have 49%.

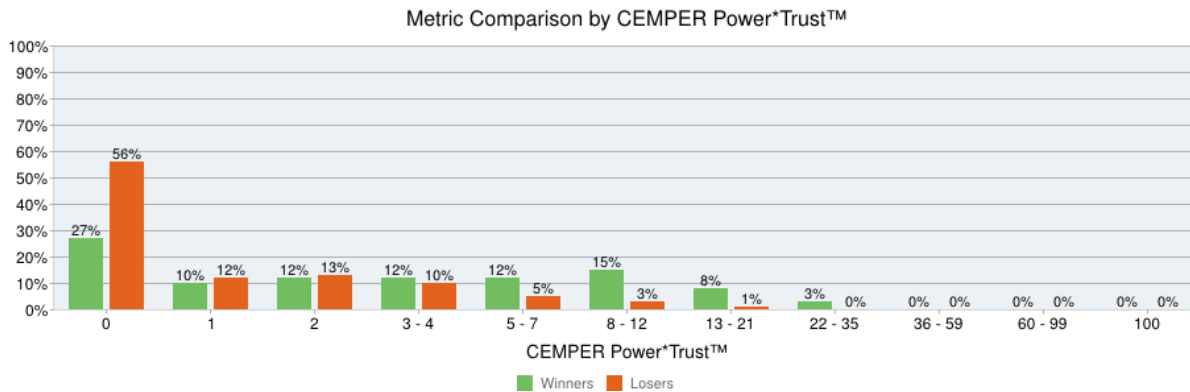
The spread is rather even until the end of the spectrum, where 21% of the winners rank 30+ for their title, while the losers have 26%. The losers have twice the number of non-indexed links as compared to the winners, 3% for the winners, and 6% for the losers. The correlation between the groups is 84%.



It looks like TitleRank plays a role in this update, like with [previous penguin updates](#). TitleRank is a great way to filter and sort out crappy links, (like spun content, that is pumped out to the internet) that might have Power*Trust, but don't rank for the page title. Google has [declared a war on spun content](#) and it comes as no surprise if Google added some weight on TitleRank. We believe that this is a factor although we cannot assume that this is the single factor of the update.

What does Power*Trust have to do with this update?

The chart below shows that the Power*Trust of the links by group. We will look more into how the Power*Trust splits into themes in in the next chapter.



The chart reveals that:

- Losers have 56% of the links with no Power*Trust.
- Winner have 27% of the links with no Power*Trust.
- Both groups are rather equal in the Power*Trust ranges from 1 – 4.
- Winners have 12% of the links with a Power*Trust from 5 – 7.
- Losers have 5% of the links with a Power*Trust from 5 – 7.
- **The winners have 26% of the links with a Power * Trust rating of 8 or higher while the losers only have 4% in that category.**

From this chart we can see that the losers have slightly more than twice the average amount of links with a Power*Trust value of 0, that is 56% for the losers compared to 27% for the winners. The links without Power*Trust might be a part of the reason why the losers group lost.

Let's take a deeper look into what happened when we look at the themes, link location and Power*Trust on the next page.

What about the link location?

Let's take a look at how the losers and winners compare when we look at the link location distribution. The numbers of interest have been highlighted and will be explained further below.

Type of Link	Losers	Winners
Blogroll	3%	1%
Comment	1%	1%
Footer	3%	9%
Forum Signature	0%	0%
Header	0%	4%
In Content	11%	10%
Link List	17%	17%
n/a	36%	38%
Paragraph	13%	11%
Sidebar	15%	10%

Although we have heard a lot lately about footer links being potentially toxic, it certainly doesn't look like this is the case here, at first glance, because the winners seem to have an even bigger share. However what sticks out is that winners have 4% of the links as header links, which are typically navigational links. That looks like a footprint we need to investigate. Let's take a more detailed look at these links.

Footer links by theme

The table below shows the top footer link-theme position (by average) and the average Power*Trust. Please bear in mind that the websites are in various niches, that's why we further analyzed the links by Power*Trust.

Winners footer link theme distribution	%	Average Power*Trust	Losers footer link theme distribution	%	Average Power*Trust
Computers/Internet	6%	5.9	Entertainment	7%	2.2
Sports/Recreation	9%	3.8	Financial Services	13%	2.8
Business/Economy	10%	4.7	Blogs/Personal Pages	13%	0.8
Health	11%	3.5	Business/Economy	17%	1.6
Vehicles	21%	8.8	Dynamic DNS Host	18%	0

This table shows that the loser's footer links are 18% based on Dynamic DNS host websites. In this case that means that the websites were hosted on a free subdomain from a host like

getmyip.com. The Power*Trust for these links is zero – basically worthless. The winners' footer links are mainly on vehicle websites. These links have an average Power*Trust of 8.8. This could be because some of the winners' websites are in automotive related niches, such as <http://salvageautosauction.com/> and <http://www.pplmotorhomes.com/>.

The losers also have 13% of the links on blogs/personal pages. In this case the Power*Trust for that group is 0.8. This category is often used by spamming programs such as SENukeX, but there are of course millions of legit websites in this category.

This shows us that the footer links of the winners group are stronger than those of the losing group.

Not all footer links are created equally. If footer links are a factor in this update, they are weighted by other factors, such as Power*Trust.

What about the header links?

The winners had 4% header links while the losers had less than 1%.

Winners header link theme distribution	%	Average Power*Trust	Losers header link theme distribution	%	Average Power*Trust
Government/Legal	4%	4.6	Financial Services	6%	1
News/Media	7%	0.5	Computers/Internet	9%	0.8
Real Estate	8%	0.5	News/Media	11%	0.04
Business/Economy	8%	4.8	Business/Economy	13%	1.5
Sports/Recreation	49%	3.1	n/a	17%	0.4

This table shows us that 49% of the header links to the winners are placed on sports/recreation websites such as <http://www.x3mlive.com/>. The Power*Trust for these links is 3.1.

The losers' header links are mainly (17%) placed on websites that weren't automatically classifiable. A website that can't be classified by theme is most often not a popular or a trusted website. In this case, the Power*Trust is 0.4. An example of a website that doesn't get automatically classified is <http://www.vioxxconsumerguide.com/>.

Again, we see that the links to the winners group have a higher Power*Trust value than the losers. If header links are a factor in this update, they are weight by more factors than just the location.

What about the blog roll links?

The losers had 3% blogroll links and the winners only had 1%. We picked these types of links because blogroll links, like header and footer links are most often site wide.

Winners blogroll link theme distribution	%	Average Power*Trust	Losers blogroll link theme distribution	%	Average Power*Trust
Political/Activist Groups	5%	2.4	Reference	9%	2.3
Shopping	5%	1.7	Shopping	9%	0.8
Entertainment	7%	2.6	Blogs/Personal Pages	10%	1.1
Blogs/Personal Pages	22%	2.0	n/a	20%	0.5
Audio/Video Clips	22%	3.5	Entertainment	37%	0.4

The winners have most (27%) of their blogroll links on Audio/Video websites, like <http://www.grindtv.com/>. These links have an average Power*Trust of 3.5. The losers have 37% of their blogroll links on general entertainment websites. These links have an average Power*Trust of 0.4.

From looking closely at the link profile of the groups, it looks like Power*Trust is a bigger factor than link location and theme alone.

Does Link Velocity Trend play a role?

The Link velocity Trend is a trend indicator that shows how link growth has changed.

This table shows the link velocity trend for the winners and losers groups.

	Losers	Winners
LVT avg	-6%	7%
Median	-8%	5%
LVT min	-87%	-59%
LVT max	77%	190%
Korrel	26%	
Linking Root Domains/Month	58	345

Looking at the table, we see that the general link growth of losers was 58 new domains per month on average, and with that negative trend of -6%, actually less in the recent months. They were declining in popularity.

The Winners on the other hand, were gaining on average 345 new linking domains per month, with a positive trend of 7%. Our winners obviously know **just the way link building has to be!**

The charts below show the winners link growth and the losers' link loss. The chart clearly shows how the winners are steadily gaining links, although the link loss of the losers is not as clearly visible.

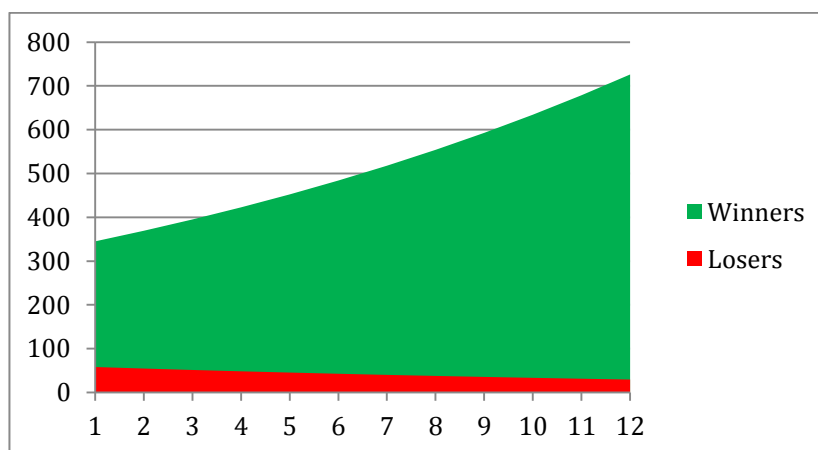


Chart showing winners link growth and losers link loss

This chart shows only the link loss for the losers. It's very clear the losers are losing links, and presumably popularity fast.



Chart showing losers link loss

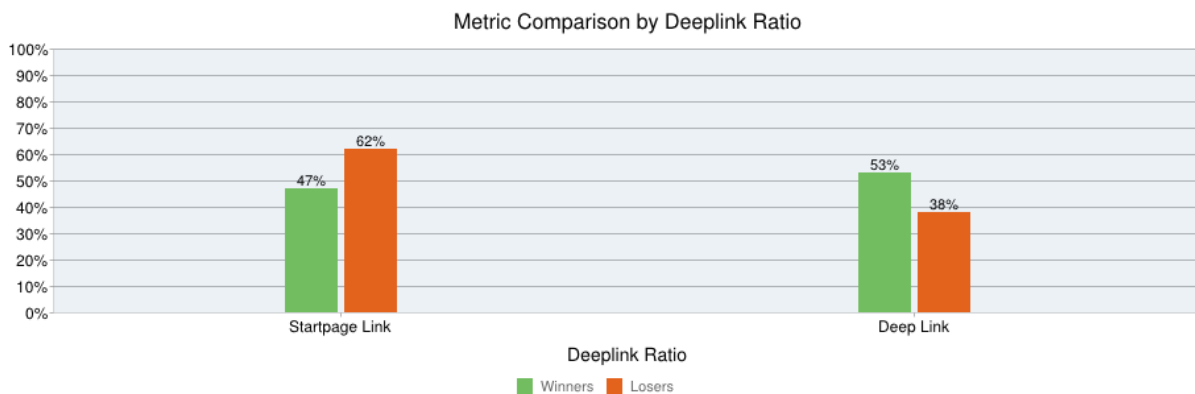
So it looks like Google is using this trend to find sites in favor, sites that are high quality and follow a pattern we have always advocated. Link building has to be steady or slowly growing.

Does the deep link ratio play a role?

We wanted to see if deep link ratio played a role.

When we compare the winners and losers in this update we can see that:

- Winners have 47% start page links.
- Losers have 62% start page links.



Historically, many webmasters have been guilty of building the majority of links to the start page. This has been done to try to get the start page ranking for a keyword. Since Google has declared time and time again that it doesn't want webmasters to build links, it is logical for Google to look for common link building patterns such as this.

Deep link ratio is probably a factor in this update for this reason.

What about Side Wide ratio?

The site wide ratio is the ratio between domain wide links and the number of linking domains to the domain. Basically, this is a good way to find side-wide links.

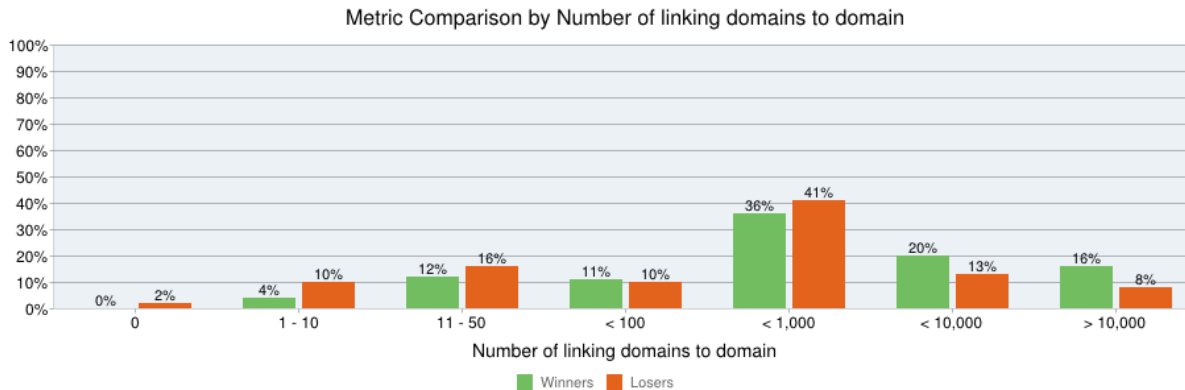
The table below shows that the average winner has an average of SWR of 545 while the average loser has 57. The median values are 44 for the winners vs. 18 for the losers. The correlation between the groups is 0.42.

Groups	Average	Median
Winners	545	44
Losers	57	18

The winners have a much higher (almost 10 times) SWR ratio as compared to the losers. This is not surprising given the fact that the winners have 9% footer links and 4% header links. Both of which are most often site wide.

From this data and the data about link location vs. Power*Trust (page 7), we can interpret that having site wide links **does not provoke a penalty** in this update.

Does domain popularity play a role?



This metric shows links from sites by the number of linking root domains. That is the number of linking domains to the links that point to the target website.

The most important bars on this chart are the ones showing the values >10,000. These are links from big and established websites. The winners have 16% of links in the category and the losers have 8%. The winners have twice the amount of links from this type of sites. The correlation between the groups is 33%.

Since the winners had twice the average of links from very big (and most likely established) websites, we believe that domain popularity is **a factor in this update**.

Does the hosting country of websites play a role?

We have all heard that Google is trying to make searches more GEO relevant. This brings us to the next question: Does hosting country play a role in this update?

We looked the hosting country of the websites of our two groups, and found out that 39 of the winners are hosted in the US and that 35 of the losers are hosted in the US.

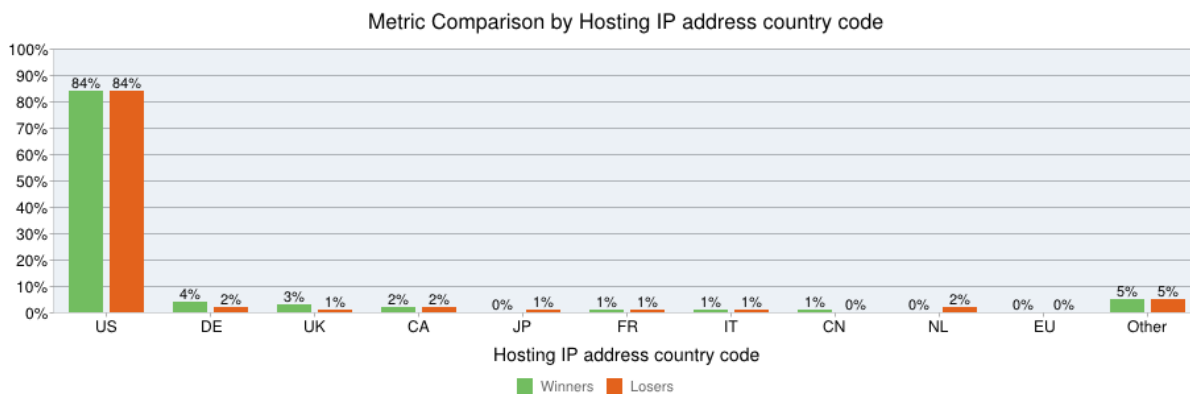
Winners			Losers		
Country	Total	%	Country	Total	%
US	39	90.7%	US	35	94.6%
GB	2	4.7%	DE	1	2.7%
DE	1	2.3%	CA	1	2.7%
NL	1	2.3%			

The difference is not statistically significant.

Again, it doesn't look like hosting country plays a role.

Now what about the location from where the links come?

The winners and losers both have 84% of the links from the US. The chart below shows how similar the winning and losing groups are in that respect. It certainly doesn't look like this update was about the hosting country of links. But then again, we are only looking at the US rankings. It will be interesting to see results of link geo distribution for the other countries we'll analyze soon.



What about Alexa rank? Does the traffic to the site matter?

The table below shows the Alexa rank for the winning and losing pages.

Group	From	To
Losers	50K	16M
Winners	2.7K	2.2M

The winners' websites were in a considerably lower Alexa rank bracket than the losers and thus received a lot more traffic. It is very possible that the low Alexa rank (high traffic) is a consequence of a healthy link profile, which pushed the websites higher in the search engines and before the eyes of more viewers.

This leaves the impression that Google uses user behavior and search traffic to identify sites in favor, just like they seem to do with link growth (see above for Link Velocity Trends).

Even if Alexa is skewed towards more tech/SEO savvy people, it would be skewed for winners and losers alike, which makes it valid again in comparison at least.

What about domain age? Should I build a new website?

The domain age is split accordingly between the groups

Group	Average Domain Age (years)	Median Domain Age (years)
Winners	10.2	11.03
Losers	9.6	10.07

This table shows that the average domain age for the winners is 10.2 while the average age for the losers is 9.6. Both groups mostly consist of old websites.

Looking at this, it appears that Google has specifically hit or rewarded older sites with this update. This looks like a cleanup job for spammy things that were done in the past and worked way too long.

Building a new website might be an option, if you find out that your website, and the websites of the main competitors have been penalized. A new website has done nothing wrong and thus is not (in theory) penalized. On the other hand building trust for a completely new domain doesn't come overnight.

Depend Variables: Indexed Pages and Number of Keywords ranking

The following two paragraphs show that we found very dependent variables being the indexation size and keywords a domain ranks for.

Does the number of indexed pages matter?

We looked at the number of indexed pages for the affected domains to try to determine if the quantity of content on the domain might be a factor in this update.

Group	Average	Median
Winners	970,096	12,600
Losers	76,791	390

The winners' domains have an average of 970,096 pages indexed while the losers' average is 76,791. This means losers only have 8% of the average indexed pages of the winners.

When we look at the median value, the winners have 12,600 and the losers only 390. The losers only have 3% of the median value of indexed pages of the winners.

Because of this great difference in the number of indexed pages, we believe that the number indexed pages (i.e. size of the site) is a factor in this update.

Sites with more indexed content are less likely to be negatively affected.

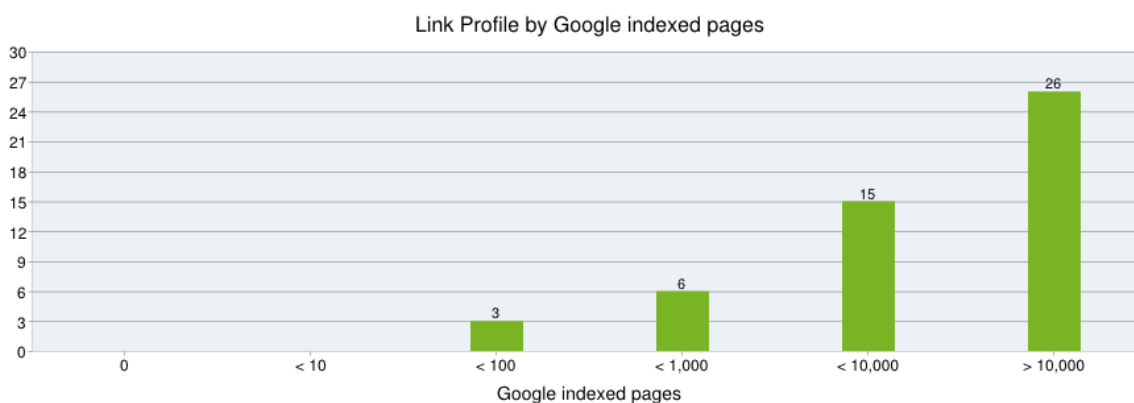


Chart showing the Google indexation of the winners group

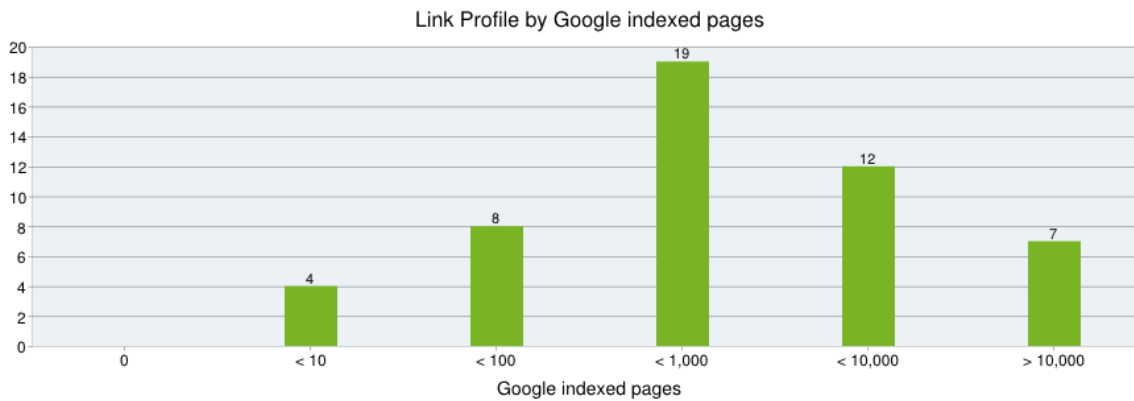


Chart showing the Google indexation of the losers group

Does the number of keyword a domains ranks for matter?

The table below shows the average and median values for KWDomain, the number of keywords that a domain ranks for.

Groups	Average	Median
Winner	15,975	3,557
Losers	676	177

The winners have an average of 15,975 keywords ranking, compared to only 676 for the losers. The losers only have an average of 4% of the rankings of that the winners have. When we look at the median value, the winners have 3,557 and the losers only 177.

The winners and losers groups, for the number of keywords they rank for have almost no correlation, 0.03.

Looking at the number of ranking pages is a good method to determine the quality of content. From looking at these numbers it is evident that the winners' pages rank better on average and thus are possibly of higher quality.

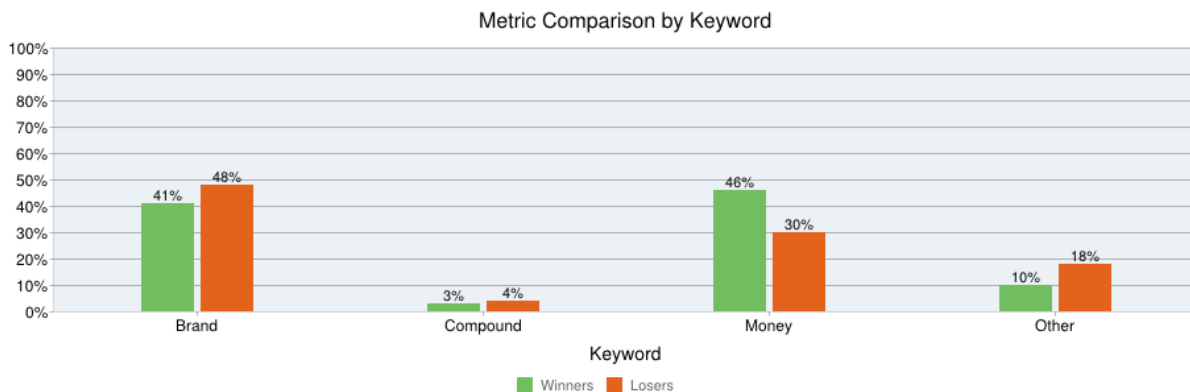
This is of course related to the number of pages indexed. Bigger sites have more content, and thus more chances for ranking on different keywords if they are of high quality.

We have suggested looking at high KWdomain counts when getting links or buying sites for a while now, and this seems to get confirmed again here.

The number of ranking pages definitely looks like **a factor in this update**.

Does anchor text variation have anything to do with the update?

The chart below shows the anchor text distribution of incoming link. Because of the amount of link data that is gathered for 100 websites, we classified the link profile to 74% although we suggest going up to 80 or more % when a single niche is analyzed.



The winners link profile is based 41% on brand links, while the losers have 48%. That is only 7% difference. The winners have 46% money keyword links and the losers 30%. That is 16% difference.

It could be that anchor text distribution has a place in the latest penguin algorithm, although the difference between the winners and losers in this example is not enough to be a deciding factor.

It is still a bit weird that the winners here have more money keyword links than the losers. This is similar to what we see when we split the winners and losers into 4 groups (on the next page). Before looking at the results, we had expected to see (again) that the winners have a higher brand link share.

Comparing in Segments of Brands to Big Brands, EMDs and Others

We wanted to see if we could further split our groups of winners are losers to see if we find an obvious pattern.

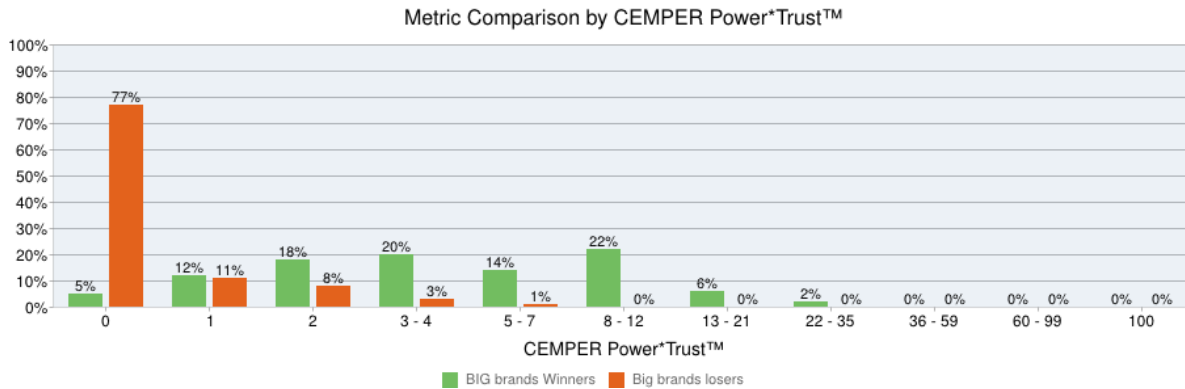
The groups were split into the following sub categories:

- **Big brands:** Brands that have a Google resource box (showing to the right of the SERPs).
 - **Example:** fashionising.com
- **Brands:** Brands that do not have a Google resource box.
 - **Example:** miracle-ear.com
- **Exact Match Domains:** Domain names that exactly match a keyword the website is targeting.
 - **Example:** businessleads.com
- **Other:** All domains that did not fit into the groups above.
 - **Example:** dogvacay.com

Let's take a look at how these categories compare.

Big brands – Winners vs. Losers

Comparison by CEMPER Power*Trust

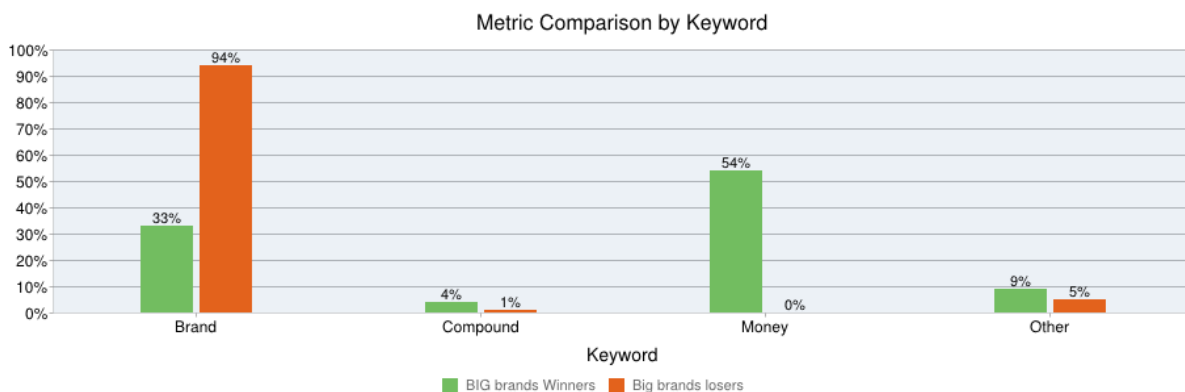


This chart shows that 77% of the links to the big brand losers have a Power*Trust of ZERO. This is enormous compared to only 5% for the winners.

When we move through the chart, we see that the winners have 30% of the links with a Power*Trust rating of 8 or higher while the losers have none.

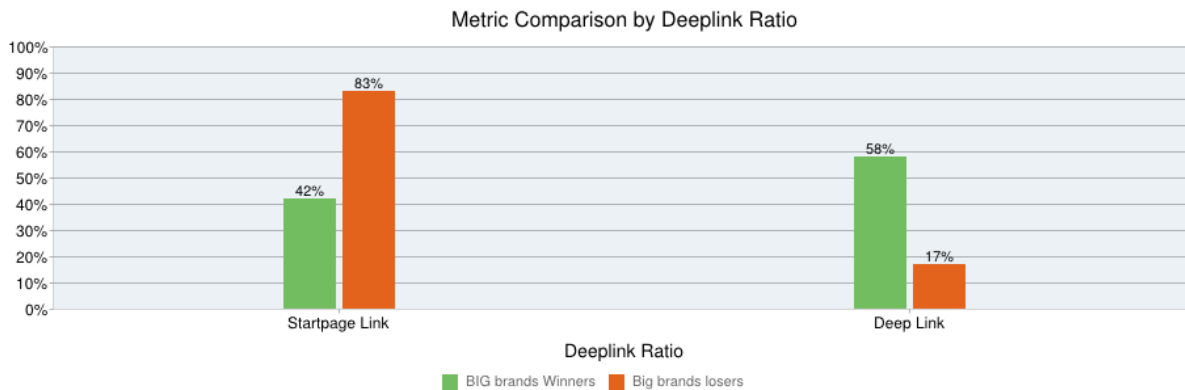
This chart shows that the losers have very little Power*Trust compared to the winners. This is not surprising given the Power*Trust results from the last chapter.

Anchor text variation



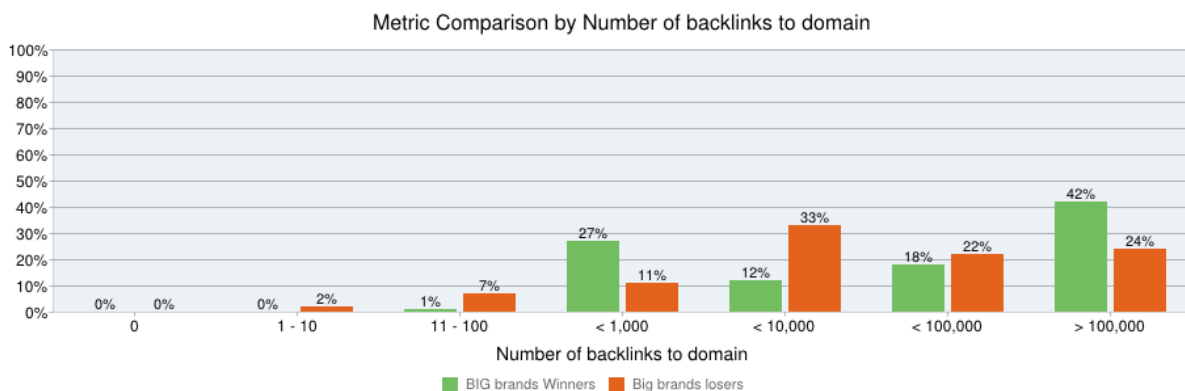
This chart shows the anchor text variation. The losers have 94% of the links as brand links while the winners have only 33%. The keywords were classified to 70%, so the winners might have some money keyword links, although it's clear that the difference between the groups is great. It looks like the losing group might have hit an over optimization trigger because of the unusually high number of brand links.

Deep Link Ratio



This chart shows that the losers have 83% of the links pointing directly at the start page, while the winners have 42%. This could be a sign of link building and might have set off a trigger in the Googleplex.

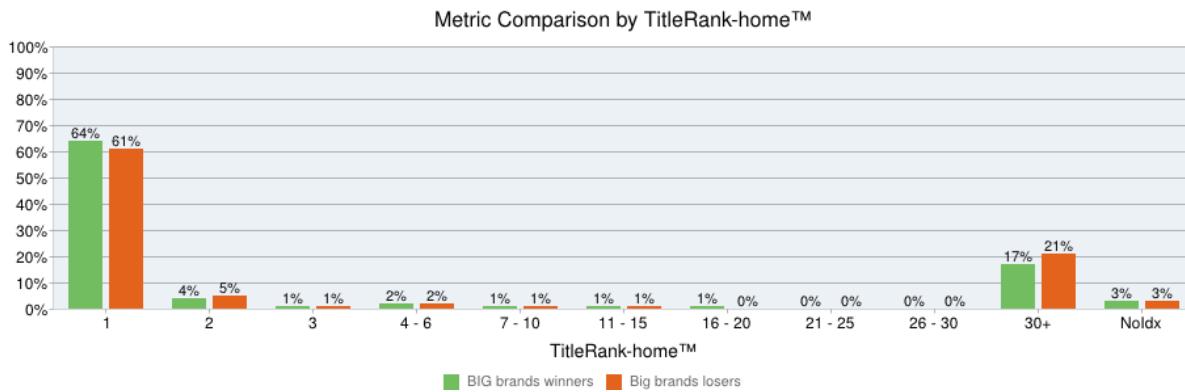
Domain popularity



This metric shows links from sites by the number of linking root domains. That is the number of linking domains to the links that point to the target website.

The winners have 42% of the links in the >100,000 group, while the losers have only 24%. That means that the winners have almost double the amount of links from big and probably well-established websites.

Title Rank



TitleRank is a metric that measures if a linking homepage is ranking for its own title in the Google search results. We can see that 64% of the winners' links rank 1 for their title. This is almost identical to the losers group, who has 61%. We can also see that 17% of the winners' backlinks rank 30+ for their title. Both groups have 3% of their links on websites that do not rank for their own title.

The difference between the two groups here isn't striking.

Social Media

Facebook Shares

When we looked into the Facebook shares we saw that the all of the losers have been shared. We also saw that 1 of the winners has not been shared.

Retweets

When we looked at twitter activity we found that all of the websites have been tweeted about.

G+1

When we looked at Google's own metric we saw that none of the losers have gotten a G+1. We also found out that 1 of the winners had not gotten a +1.

Pinterest

All of the losers have been pinned. We also saw that 1 of the winners has not been pinned.

Conclusions on social media activity can be found in the end of this chapter.

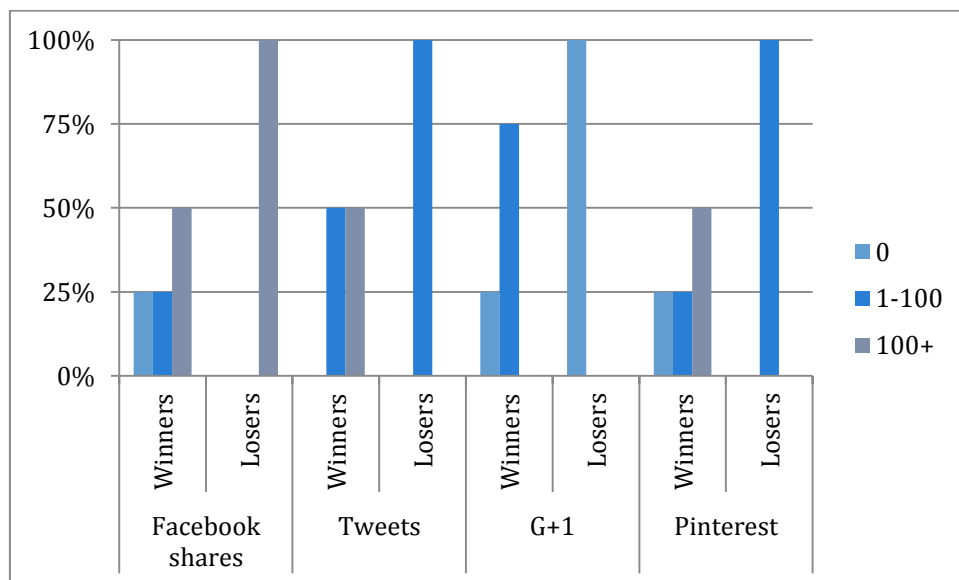
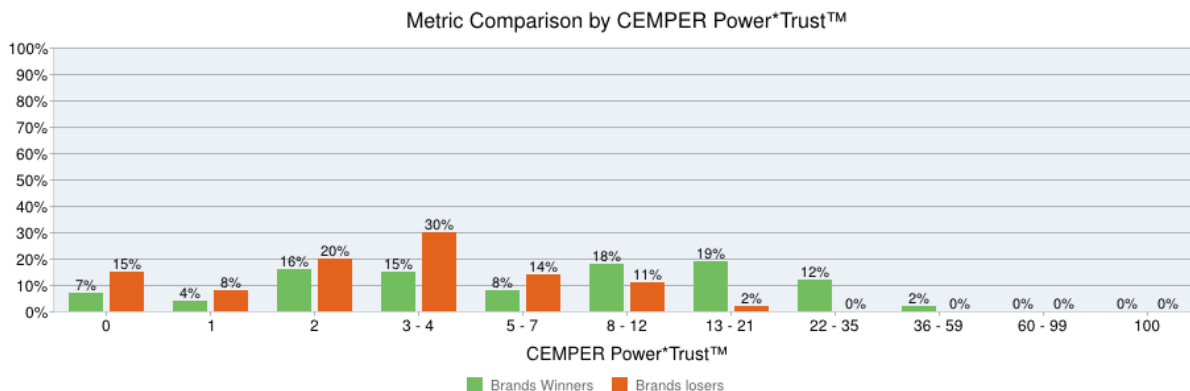


Chart showing the social media distribution

Brands – Winners vs. Losers

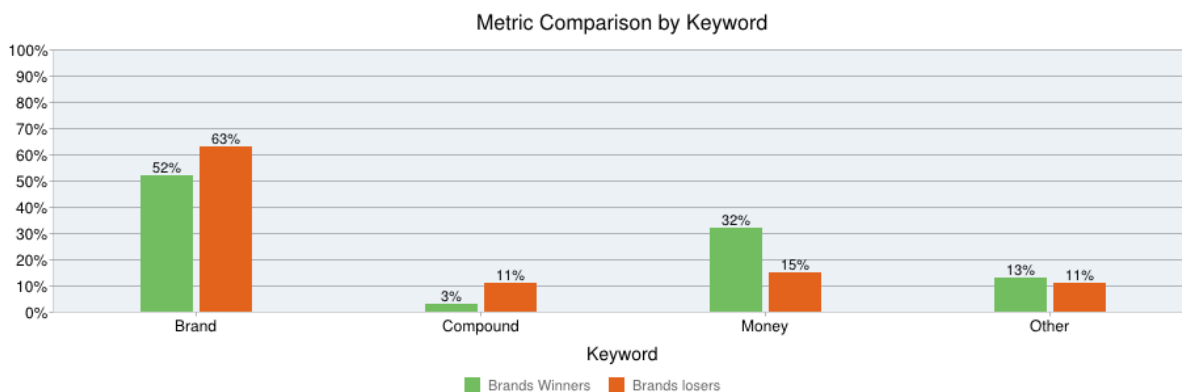
In this comparison, brands are brand names that do not have a Google resource box.

Comparison by CEMPER Power*Trust



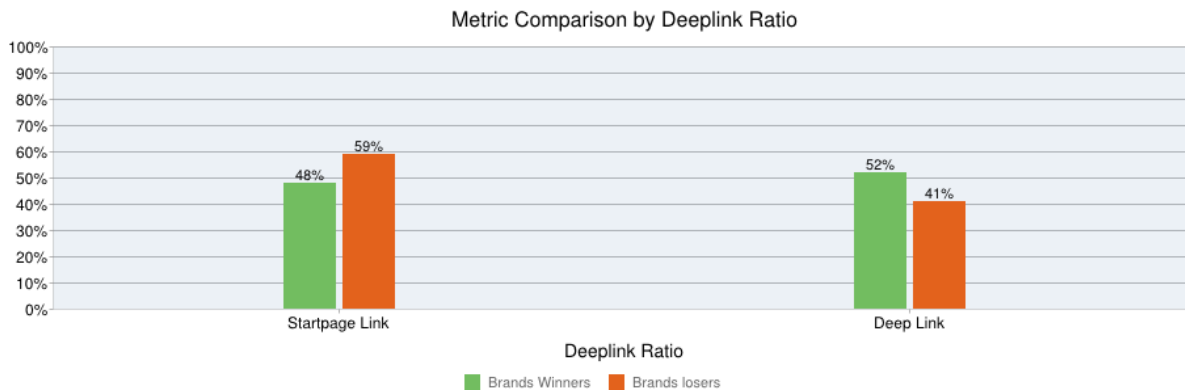
This chart shows that the losers have 15% of links with zero Power*Trust while the winners have 7%. The losers have 13% of the links with a Power*Trust of 8 or above while the winners have 51%. It's very clear that the winners have stronger and more trusted links.

Anchor text variation



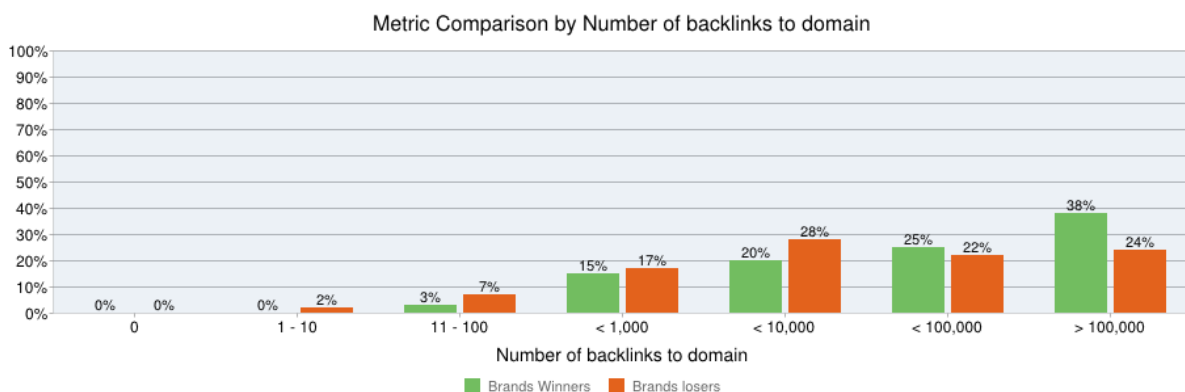
Just like with the big brands, we can see that the losers have a higher proportion of brand links. The losers have 63% and the winners have 52%. We can also see that the winners have 32% money keyword links while the losers have 15%. Again, it's interesting to see that the losers have a higher brand ratio than the winners.

Deep Link Ratio



When we look at the deep link ratio, we can see, yet again, that the losers have a higher proportion of start page links. The losers have 59% of the links to the start page, while the winners have 48%. The big brand and brand groups look like they are following a similar pattern.

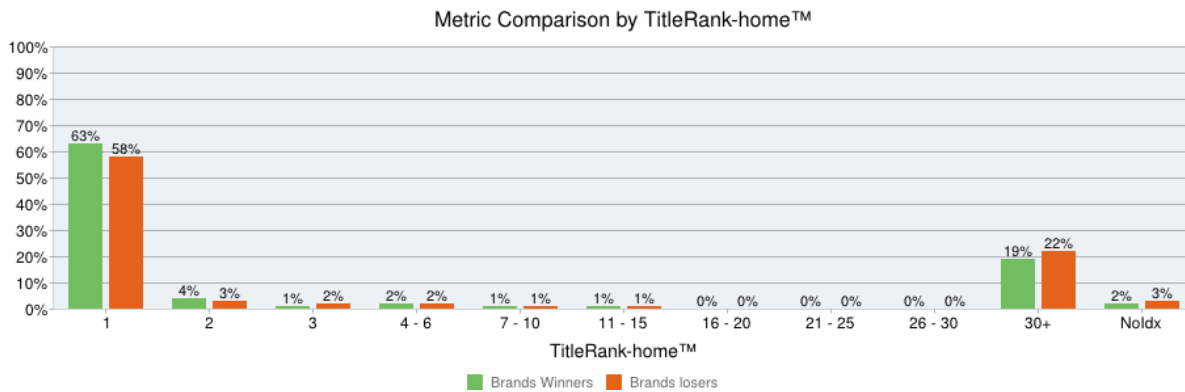
Domain popularity



This chart tells a similar story to the one from the big brand chapter above.

The winners have 38% of the links in the >100,000 group and the losers have 24%. This means that the winners have 14% more of links from big and probably well-established websites.

Title Rank



We see here that 63% of the winners have links ranking number 1 for their title. We can also see that 58% of the losers' fit into that group.

The difference between the two groups here isn't striking.

Social Media

Facebook Shares

When we looked at the Facebook shares we found that all of the losers had been shared on Facebook. We also found out that 1 of the winners had not been shared.

Retweets

The difference in twitter activity is not striking. We found that 5 of the losers have not been tweeted about. We also found that 3 of the winners had not been tweeted.

G+1

We looked at the G+1 activity. We found that 11 of the losers had not received a G+1. We also found out that 17 of the winners had not gotten a G+1. This doesn't look like an important factor.

Pinterest

Now let's look at the pins. We found that 4 of the losers had not been pinned. We also found out that 2 of the winners had not been pinned.

Conclusions on social media activity can be found in the end of this chapter.

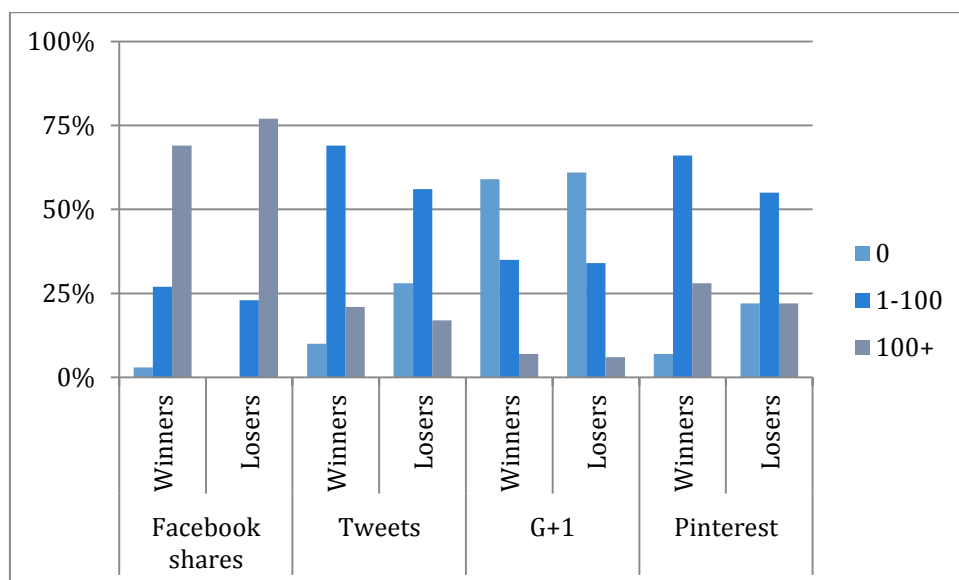
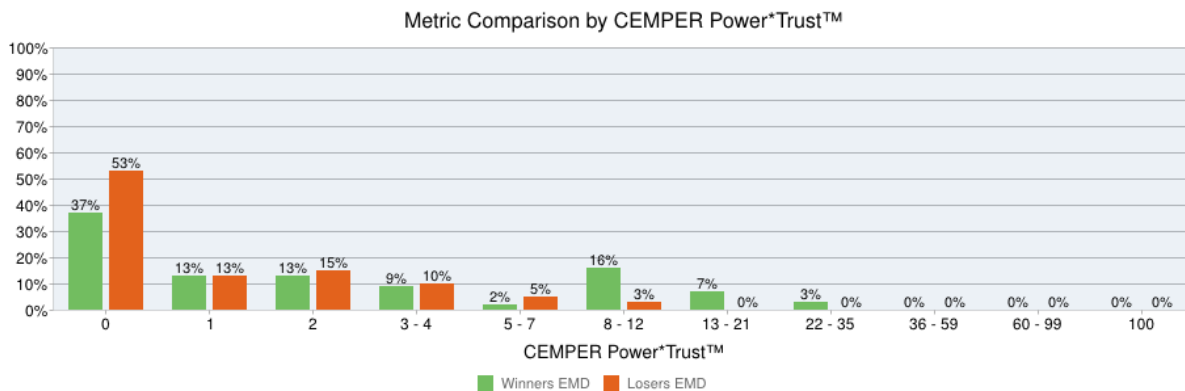


Chart showing the social media distribution

Exact match keyword domains – Winners vs. Losers

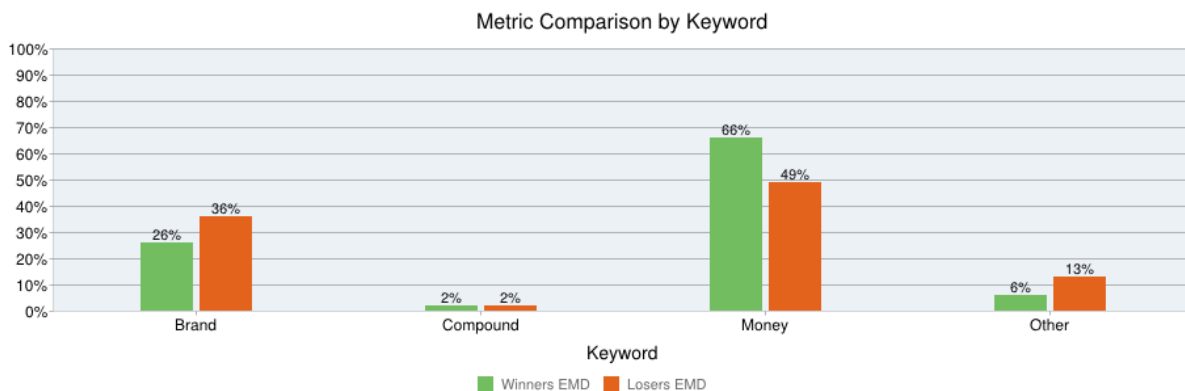
Exact Match Domains are domain names that exactly match a keyword the website is targeting.

Comparison by CEMPER Power*Trust



This chart shows us that 53% of the links to the losers have no Power*Trust at all. The winners have 37% of the links with no Power*Trust. The chart looks similar to the same chart for the big brands and brands chapters. The winners have 26% of the links with a Power*Trust of 8 or higher while the losers have only 3. Yet again we can see that the winners have a higher proportion of links with higher Power*Trust.

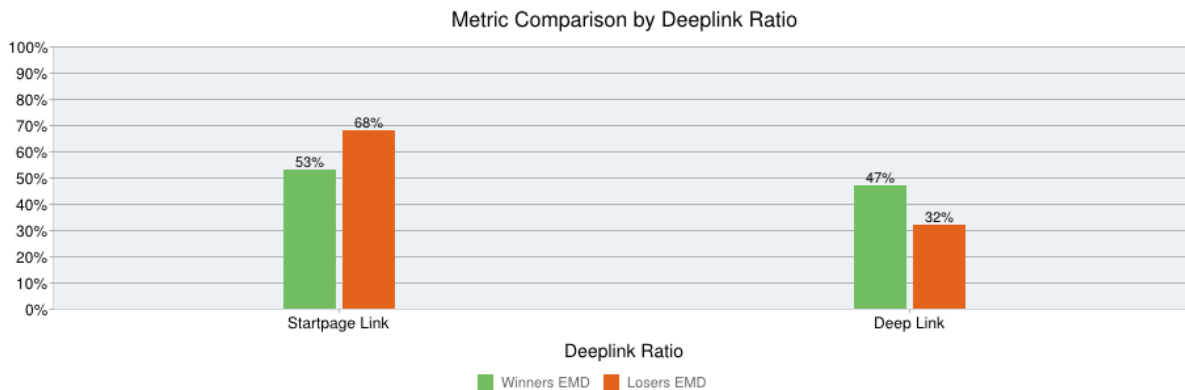
Anchor text variation



This chart shows the anchor text variation. We are seeing the same pattern for the EMD sites as for the previous groups we looked at. The losers have a higher proportion of brand links.

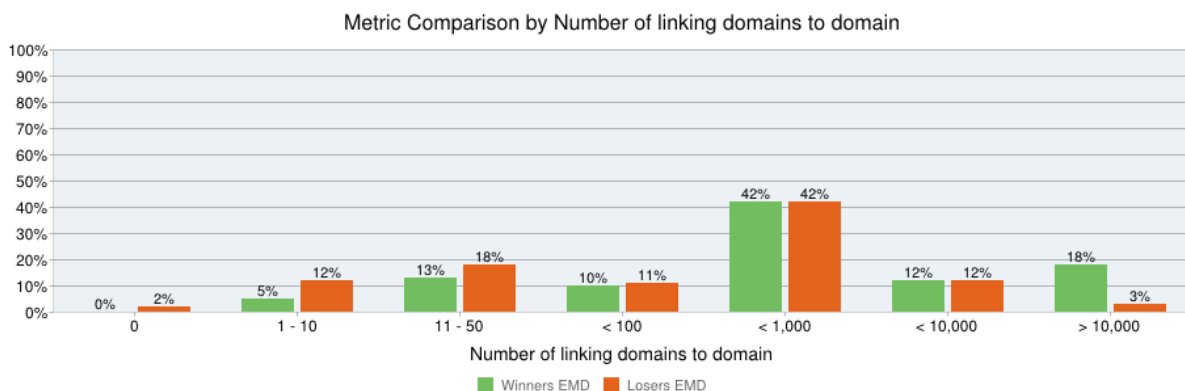
The winners have 26% of the links with no Power*Trust while the losers have 36%.

Deep Link Ratio



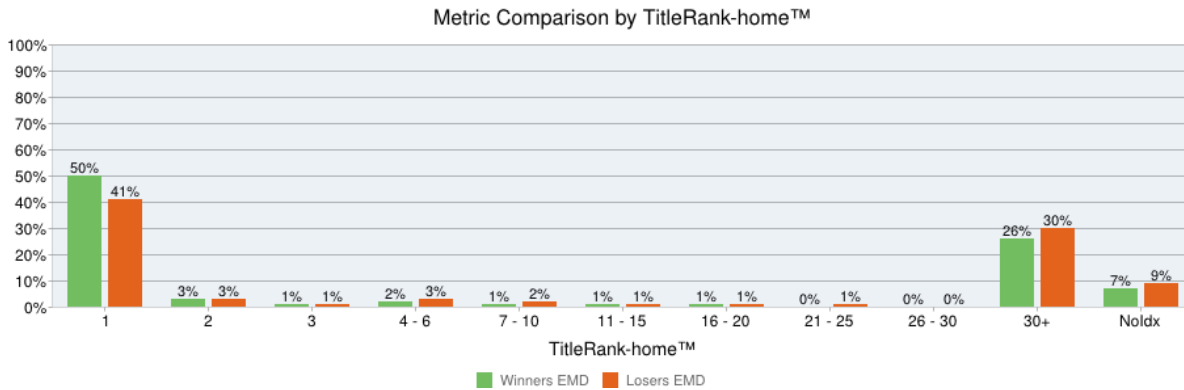
Not surprisingly, this chart shows similar results as before. The losers have 68% of the links pointing directly to the start page, while the winners have 53% of the links to the start page. These results are strikingly similar to the ones for big brands and brands.

Domain popularity



Yet again, we can see that the domain popularity plays a role. The winners have 18% of the links in the >10,000 group while the losers have only 3%. It's very clear the winners have a higher proportion of links from more established and bigger websites.

TitleRank



The chart shows that 50% of the winners' links are placed on pages that rank 1 for their title. We can also see that 41% of the losers links rank number 1 for their title. When we move through the chart we see that 26% of their winners' link rank 30+ for their title, while 30% of the losers fit into that group. The chart also shows that 7% of the winners' links and 9% of the losers links are not ranking for their title.

The winners have a higher proportion of links ranking number 1 for their title. As we said before, this looks like a light factor in this update.

Social Media

Facebook Shares

When we look at the Facebook shares we see that 8 of the losers have not been shared on Facebook. We can also see that 1 of the winners has not been shared.

Retweets

The losers are not popular with the twitter crowd. 17 of the losers have not been tweeted about. This is very high compared to the winners group, who only has 3 websites that have not been tweeted about.

G+1

Again, we can see that the winners look more popular. 17 of the losers have not had a G+1, while only 5 of the winners have had that questionable honor.

Pinterest

When we looked at the pins, we found that 13 of the losers had not been pinned while only 2 of the winners had not been pinned.

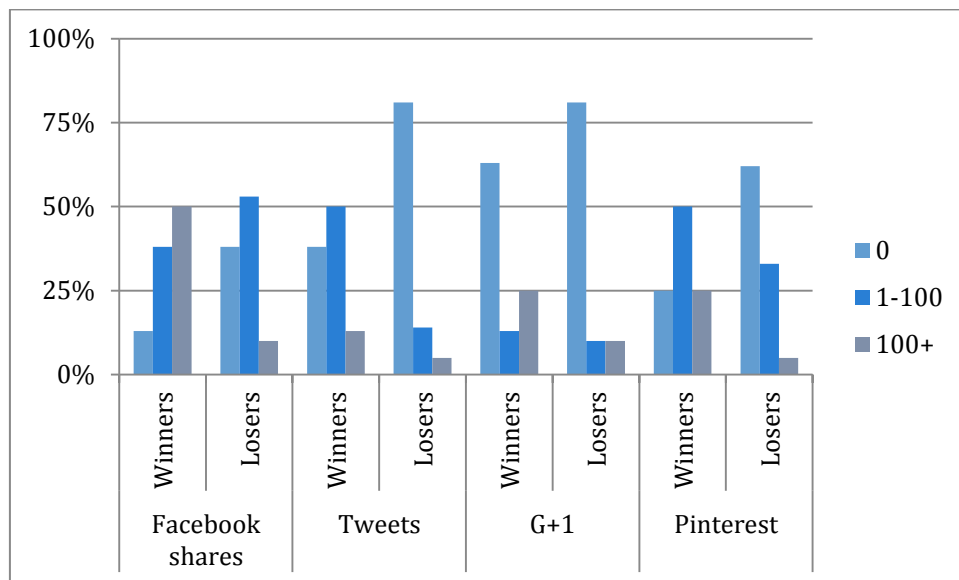


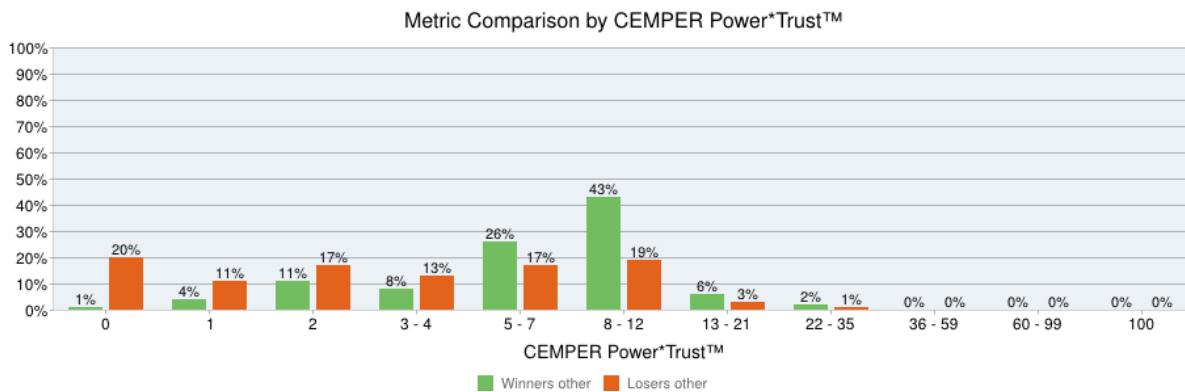
Chart showing the social media distribution

Conclusions on social media activity can be found in the end of this chapter.

The “other” group – Winners vs. Losers

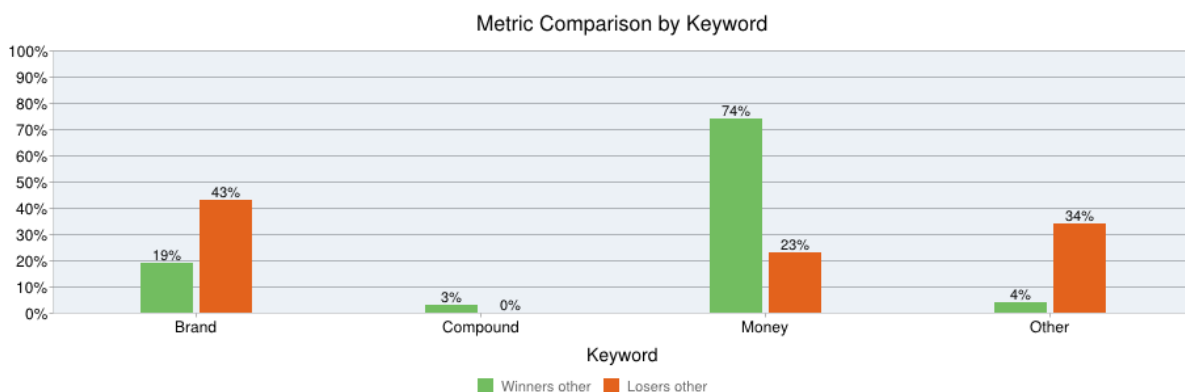
This group has everything that wasn’t classified as a big brand, brand or an exact match domain.

Comparison by CEMPER Power*Trust



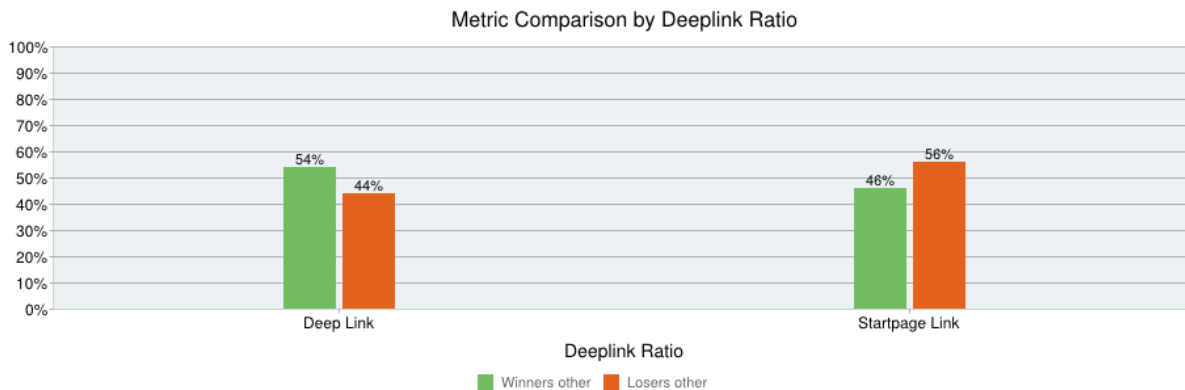
This chart shows us that 20% of the links to the losers have no Power*Trust at all. This is very high when we see that only 1% of the losers’ links are in that group. We can also see that 23% of the links to the losers have a Power*Trust of 8 or higher compared to 51% of the winners. The Power*Trust results look similar for all the segmented groups we checked. The winners got stronger Power*Trust links.

Anchor text variation



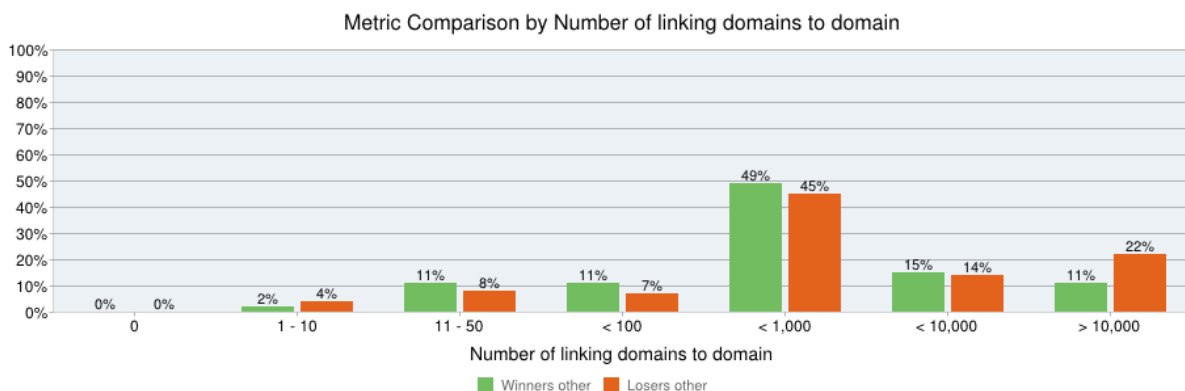
For our fourth and last group we checked, we can see again that the losers had a higher proportion of brand links. The losers have 43% brand links while the winners have 19%. The winners have 74% money keyword links while the losers have 23%. This really looks like a pattern.

Deep link ratio



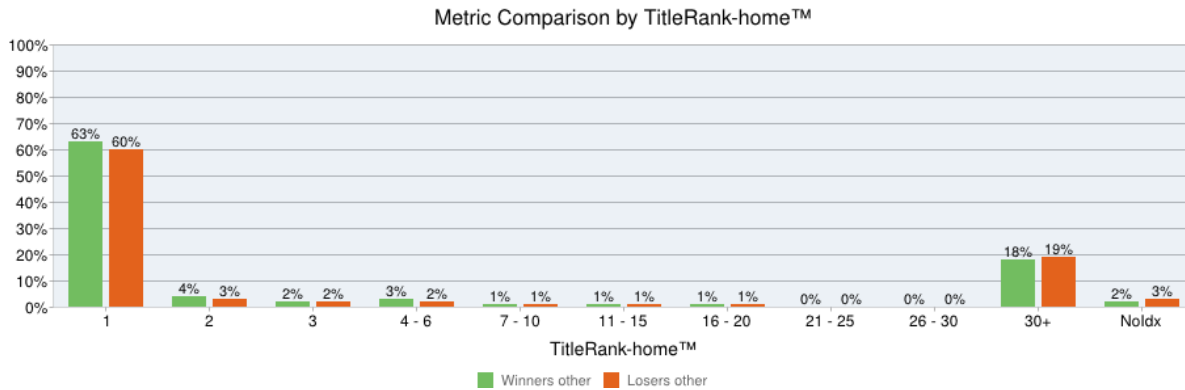
This chart reveals that 44% of the losers' links are start page links, while the winners have 54% of the links pointing to the start pages. These results are similar to the other groups we checked. It looks like deep link ratio could be a factor.

Domain popularity



Having gone through the other 3 groups, we were a bit surprised to see that the trend is different here. The losers have 22% of the links in the >10,000 bracket, while the winners have only 11%. This time around, the losers have **double the proportion of links from big and well established websites**. This could be the exception that proves the rule.

TitleRank



This chart shows that 63% of the linking websites rank number 1 for their title, while 60% of the losers' links fit in the same group.

We also see that 18% of the winners rank 30+ for their title, while the losers have 19% in that group.

The number of non-indexed links is 2% for the winners and 3% for the losers.

Again, we can see that the winners' group has a slightly higher proportion of links that rank for their title. We are starting to see a pattern here.

Social Media

Facebook Shares

Only 1 website in this group has not been shared. That website is a part of the winners group. This is hardly a factor here.

Retweets

Both the winners and losers group have a number of sites that have not been tweeted about. That is 4 of the winners and 5 of the losers.

G+1

When we look at Google's own homegrown social metric, we see that 6 of the losers have not had a G+1 and 3 of the winners as well. The difference in numbers is not striking. This is not a factor here.

Pinterest

Both groups contain 1 website that does not have a pin on Pinterest. Again, this doesn't look like a factor.

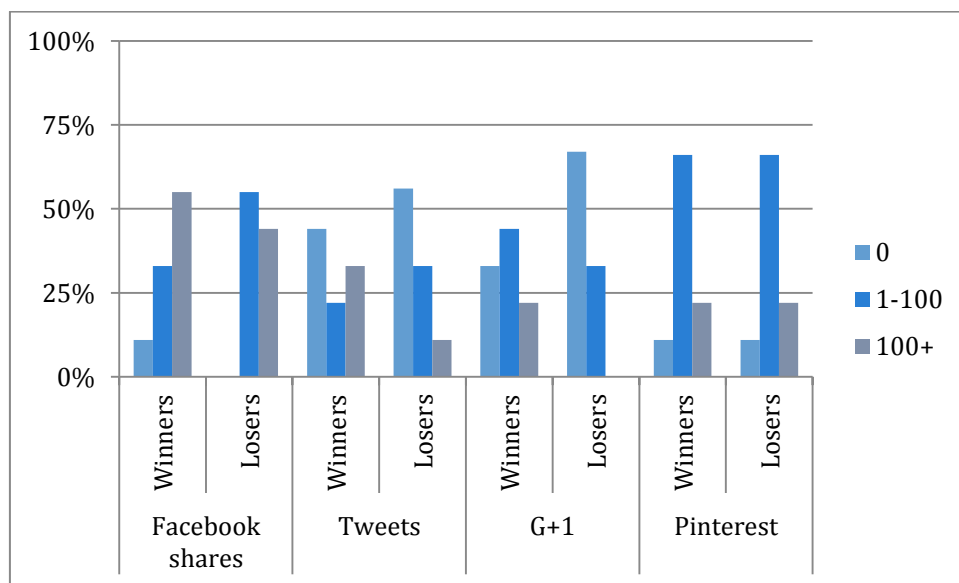


Chart showing the social media distribution

Conclusions on social media activity can be found on the next page.

Sub-Summary of segmented analysis

Good that we got findings more specific now!

Once we segmented the domains in related type of domains the effects of winners vs. losers become much more apparent. For example we can see that:

- In all cases, the losers had a higher proportion of links with no Power*Trust at all.
- In all cases, the losers had a considerably higher distribution of brand links.
- In all cases, the losers had a higher proportion of start page links.
- In 3 out of 4 cases, the losers had less links from big and well-established websites.
- There was not a clear pattern in the social media profiles between the groups. It doesn't look like social media had much, if anything, to do with this update.
- TitleRank is very similar between the groups. The winners' links rank slightly better for their title compared to the losers' groups.

This update is starting to look a lot clearer; it looks like Google was telling us the truth all along.

Now let's continue to the next chapter and look at social media activity for all the categories combined.

How did Social Media variables affect the Penguin 3 update?

The role of social media in search engine rankings is a highly debated topic. Let's take a look at the social metrics for our two groups of winners and losers.

Facebook Shares

When we look at the Facebook shares we see that 3 of the losers have had no shares. That is the same number as for the winners. We find it unlikely that this is a factor in the update.

Retweets

We can see that 27 (out of 50) losers have had no tweets or re-tweets. We can also see that 10 of the winners have had no tweets or re-tweets.

It doesn't look like twitter plays a role in this update.

G+1

What about Google's own social metric? Most of the losers, 36, have had no G+1. When we look at the winners we see that 26 have had no G+1.

Although Google is most likely taking note of G+1 for quality rating, it doesn't look like a factor here.

Pinterest

What about the "new kid on the block"? Pinterest is gaining momentum fast, is it a factor in this update?

The results show that 18 of the losers have had no pins at all. When we look at the winners we see that 6 of them have had no pins.

Since 6 of the 50 winners have had no pins, it is highly improbable that Pinterest had a role in this update.

From looking at these 4 social media metrics we can assume that social media shares did not play a role in this update.

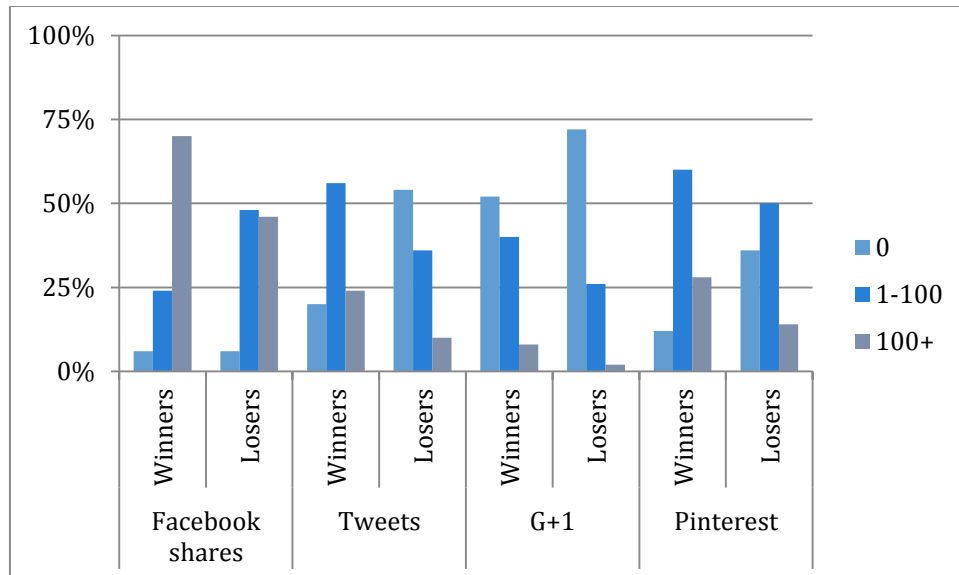


Chart showing the total social media distribution

Other findings

Most SEOs don't only build links to their websites. Most SEOs try to optimize their websites for search engines prior to building links. Although the majority of SEOs agree that Penguin is an offsite algorithm, we decided to take a look at the losing websites to look for a known thorn in Google's all-seeing eye, keyword stuffing.

We found that 28 of the 50 losing websites were stuffing keywords on their start page. We are not saying that Penguin is looking on-site; we are saying that a webmaster that stuffs keywords on his own site is likely to build links as well.

Summary of findings

Search engine algorithm updates normally change, or add weight on a number of signals. It's never one single thing alone. This table attempts to summarize the impact of the findings.

	No	Low	Medium	High
Adwords Spending	X			
TitleRank			X	
Power * Trust			X	
Link Location		X		
Link Velocity Trend				X
Deep Link Ratio			X	
Side Wide ratio		X		
Domain popularity				X
Hosting country	X			
Alexa rank		X		
Domain age		X		
Indexed pages			X	
No. of keywords a domain ranks for			X	
Anchor text type		X		
Social media shares	X			

From this table we can draw the conclusion that **Link Velocity Trend** and **Domain Popularity** are the two most important factors of this update. If your website was hit you should put focus on a growing link velocity trend and links on websites with a high domain popularity.

We also consider TitleRank, Power*Trust, Deep link ratio, number of indexed pages and the number of keywords a domain ranks for to be important factors. These factors are important although not as significantly found as the factors mentioned above. Further research should help clear that up for other countries.

We also found that link location, site wide ratio, Alexa rank, domain age and anchor text type have a very low impact in this update.

And last but not least, we found out that Adwords spending, hosting country and social shares are **NOT** factors in this update.

Now that we have analyzed the data, we conclude that this update is about exactly what Google told us all it was trying to do, reward high quality websites. When most webmasters think of a high quality websites, they naturally think of the quality of the content and on-site factors.

This update is once again about rewarding high quality link profiles and pushing back low quality link profiles.

It certainly is way more fine-tuned than previous Penguin updates, which makes a lot of sense.

We do recommend analyzing your niche in a similar fashion as we expect to see even clearer differences then. Keep in mind we compared many different verticals here, and if we confirmed one thing at least, it's that the Google algos are not a one size fits all, as you often read.

Google has different "measures" and rules in every theme, country, language and even keyword spaces.

Next we will look at countries like UK, Germany, and Spain. Stay tuned and [sign up](#) to get notified [here](#).

Or [try for yourself](#) for free , <http://cemper.co/pengu3trial>

You can download a crazy excel sheet with lots of metrics on link velocity trends, link growth changes and more [here](#). You can also download the full list of winners and losers we used – including traffic drops, adword spending and classifications [here](#)

Please let us know what you think about the case-study in the comments of the post where you got this, <http://cemper.co/pengu3>