

Penguin 3 Update

The Return of the Penguin in United Kingdom



A Case Study by CEMPER.COM

December 14, 2012

Penguin 3 Update – United Kingdom

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Penguin 3 in United Kingdom

We went through the weekly Winners vs. Losers list from SEOlytics at the time the Penguin 3 update took place. 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 differentiates them from one another.



Sharp drop in rankings for a website in the losers group

Winners and Losers in United Kingdom

Winners	Change	Winners	Change
safepaydayloans24.co.uk	1,181%	easyhotel.com	148%
disney.com	697%	mst.edu	140%
merchantcircle.com	466%	nibusinessinfo.co.uk	138%
ileicestershire.com	337%	campaignlive.co.uk	137%
pinkhen.com	329%	bankopeningtimes.co.uk	132%
livetvchannelsfreein.com	319%	ronniescotts.co.uk	131%
getflv.net	255%	hecklerspray.com	128%
ctvnews.ca	240%	edinburghdirectory.info	127%
beforeitsnews.com	228%	reveal.co.uk	124%
mystore411.com	208%	realclassic.co.uk	121%
mylocalservices.co.uk	205%	adecco.co.uk	120%
motorhomefacts.com	204%	bowbie.com	112%
allmenus.com	204%	trialsjournal.com	109%
fdin.org.uk	197%	beadazzle.co.uk	104%
motorpointarenasheffield.co.uk	194%	alarabiya.net	101%
arenaticketshop.co.uk	193%	thebalmoralhotel.com	101%
aldi.co.uk	185%	prideofmanchester.com	101%
gowercollegeswansea.ac.uk	181%	mango.com	100%
w-sussex.sch.uk	177%	livetv.ru	100%
ccforum.com	175%	thomsonalfresco.co.uk	97%
officialwesthamstore.com	168%	digitalartsonline.co.uk	95%
achica.com	165%	johnsonscars.co.uk	92%
codemasters.com	162%	mwbox.com	92%
rhymes.net	161%	tudorplace.com.ar	92%
barchart.com	158%	thelocalweb.net	91%

Losers	Change	Losers	Change
holiday-rentals.co.uk	-90%	ityneandwear.co.uk	-54%
grannyflash.com	-89%	businessmagnet.co.uk	-53%
lyricsondemand.com	-85%	chemocare.com	-53%
inthepaper.co.uk	-85%	zamzar.com	-53%
mysheffieldjobs.co.uk	-84%	brewersfayre.co.uk	-52%
culture24.org.uk	-82%	dailytech.com	-52%
groupon.com	-82%	towerboots.com	-52%
oleole.com	-80%	scout.com	-50%
findaproperty.com	-77%	tyresmoke.net	-50%
mobiledia.com	-71%	imerseyside.co.uk	-48%
findanewhome.com	-70%	paroles2chansons.com	-48%
surfanic.co.uk	-69%	informe.com	-47%
fastphonenumber.co.uk	-69%	seroundtable.com	-47%
azmoney.co.uk	-67%	tn.gov	-46%
wrappz.com	-66%	trueknowledge.com	-45%
netmagazine.com	-65%	visitbradford.com	-45%
foreca.com	-64%	indexmundi.com	-45%
lineone.net	-62%	restaurantsofmanchester.com	-45%
albemarle-london.com	-61%	smarta.com	-45%
arduino.cc	-59%	flightstats.com	-45%
appliancespareswarehouse.co.uk	-58%	journalism.co.uk	-45%
argosgifts.co.uk	-57%	giveasyoulive.com	-45%
johnscross.co.uk	-56%	fancydressnation.co.uk	-45%
xs-stock.co.uk	-55%	pdc.tv	-44%
lightingstyles.co.uk	-55%	gumtree.com.au	-44%

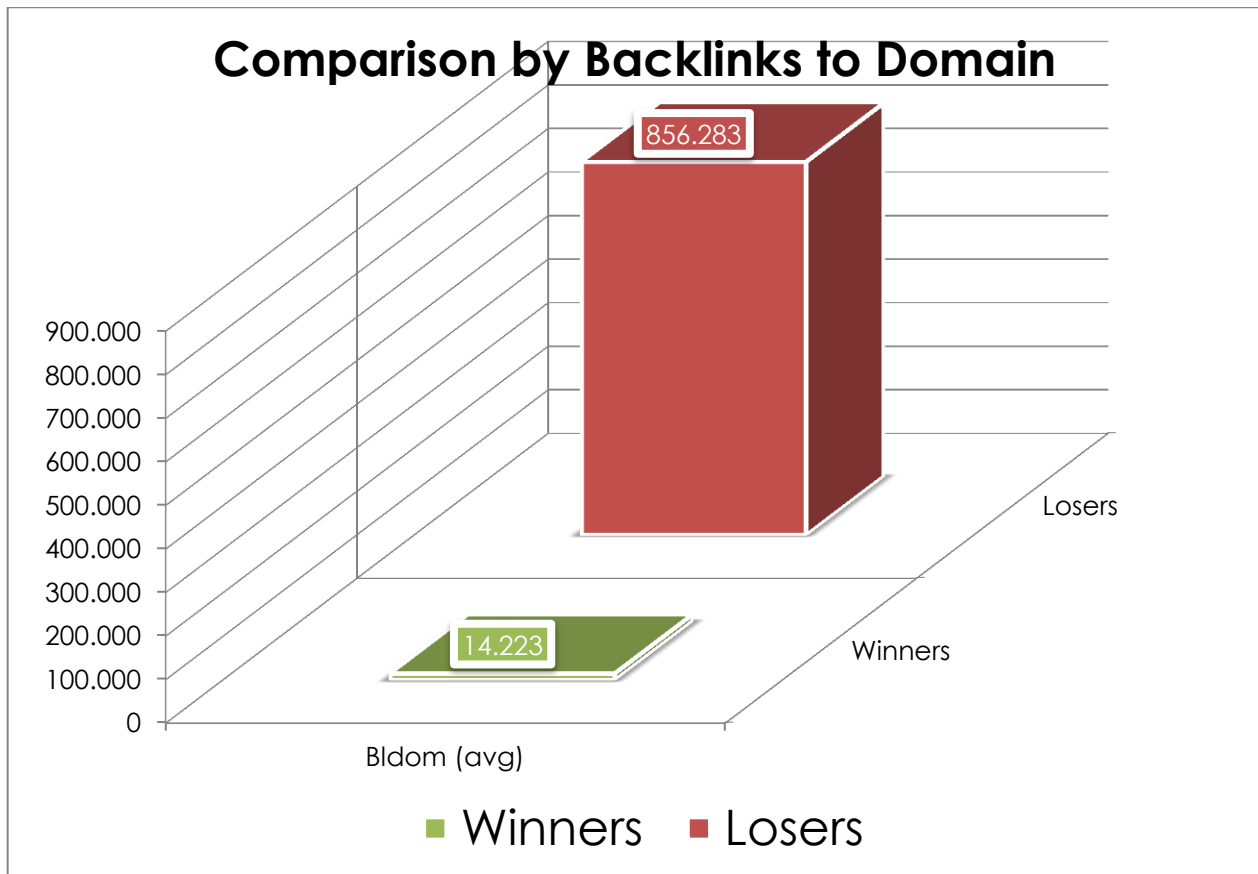
The next pages are dedicated to understand what the main differences between those two groups are.

Now, let's compare the Winners and the Losers.

Domain analysis

Domains compared by Backlinks to Domain

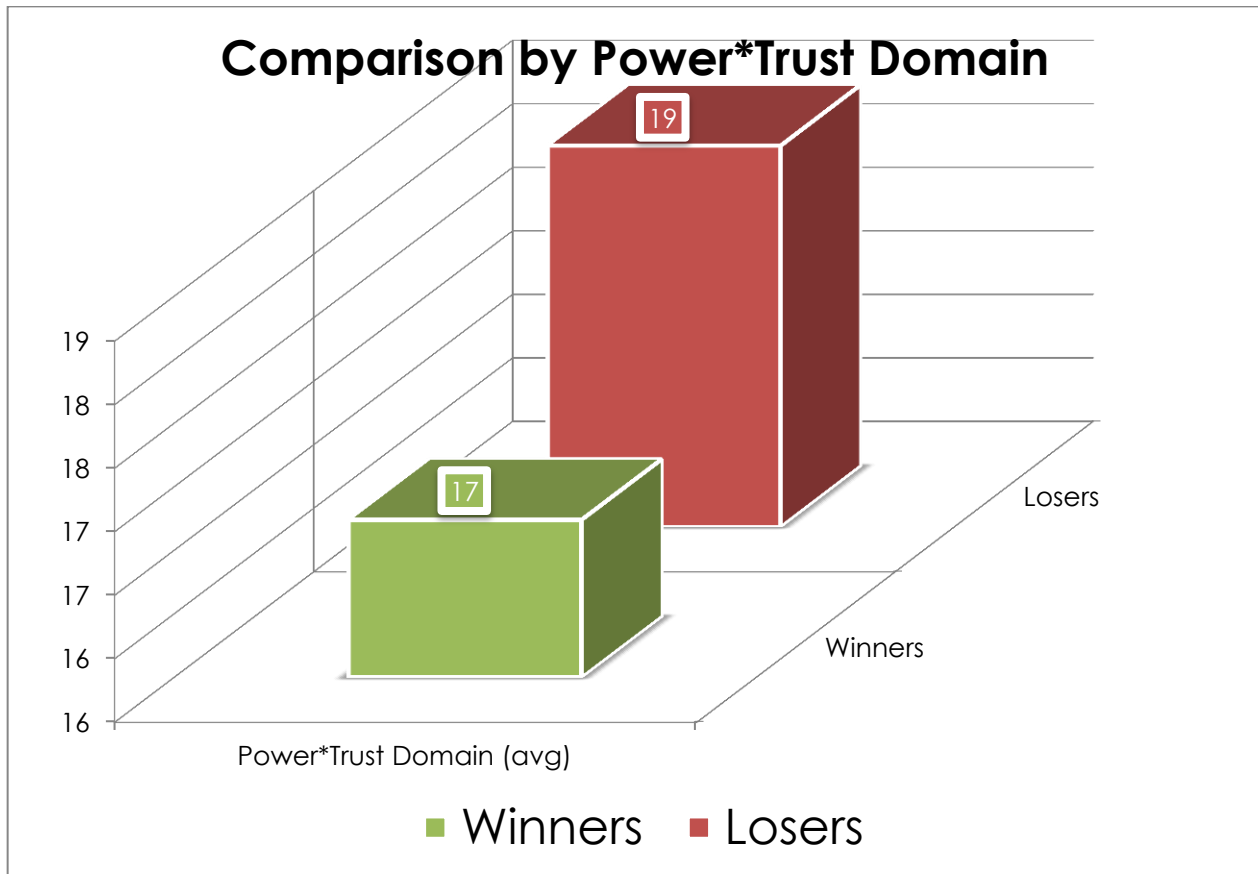
The amount of backlinks is an important factor since the beginning of Google, as the origin of PageRank™ calculation is based on. We all know that in our days its way more than just building links to obtain a **natural link profile**. A healthy website automatically grows over time but we'll have a more detailed look at the link growth later in this section.



It is pretty impressive what we have found here. These charts are showing a clear picture of the backlinks of our Penguin 3 domains. The average loser has more than 50 times the amount of Backlinks, compared to the winners. We'll dig into those backlinks in detail in the next section.

Domains compared by CEMPER Power*Trust™

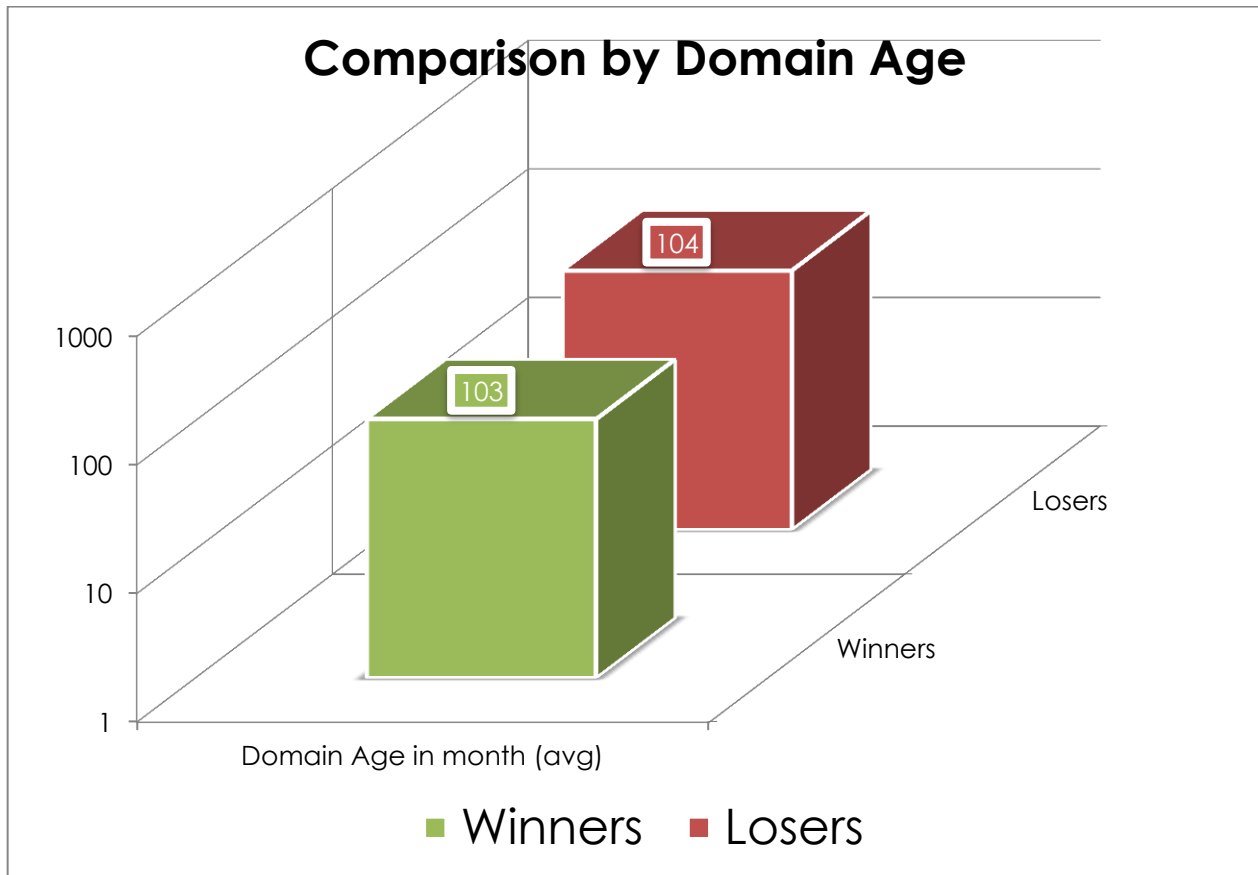
Since Google is always mentioning the overall quality of a site, I could think of no better metric to start with than the CEMPER Power * Trust™ metric. This is the most accurate metric for trust and quality on the market today. Power means the strength based on the number and power of links (better than PageRank™). Trust indicates the implied Trust of the page in Google, according to a system similar to the Trust Rank patent. By combining both metrics, you can easily rate the overall quality of a domain.



Again a very interesting finding what we're seeing here; the average loser has a higher amount of Power*Trust™, compared to the winners. That results from the massive number of backlinks of the losers, even if they are not that strong and potentially low quality.

Domains compared by Domain Age

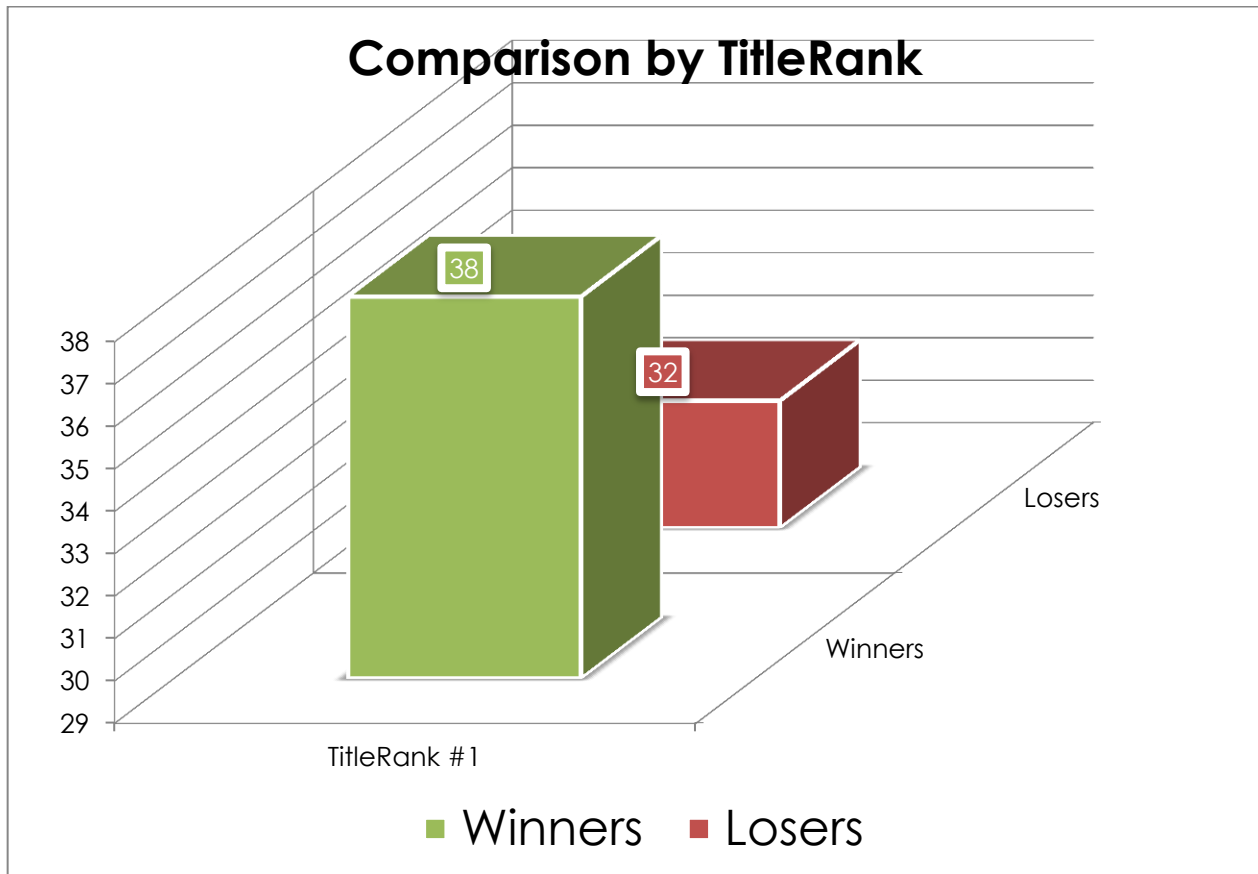
To measure the quality of a site, the domain age factor has been a clear signal of trust for years. The domain registration info is helpful for some SEOs. The domain creation date is especially said to be better if further in the past.



It is pretty interesting what we have found here. Among all 100 compared domains, nearly every domain has a very high average age. When we look at the overall data, it looks like ESPECIALLY old domains were affected in the Penguin 3 update again. That means that even a very old and "in general" trusted domain could be punished by Google after years of bad practices.

Domains compared by TitleRank™

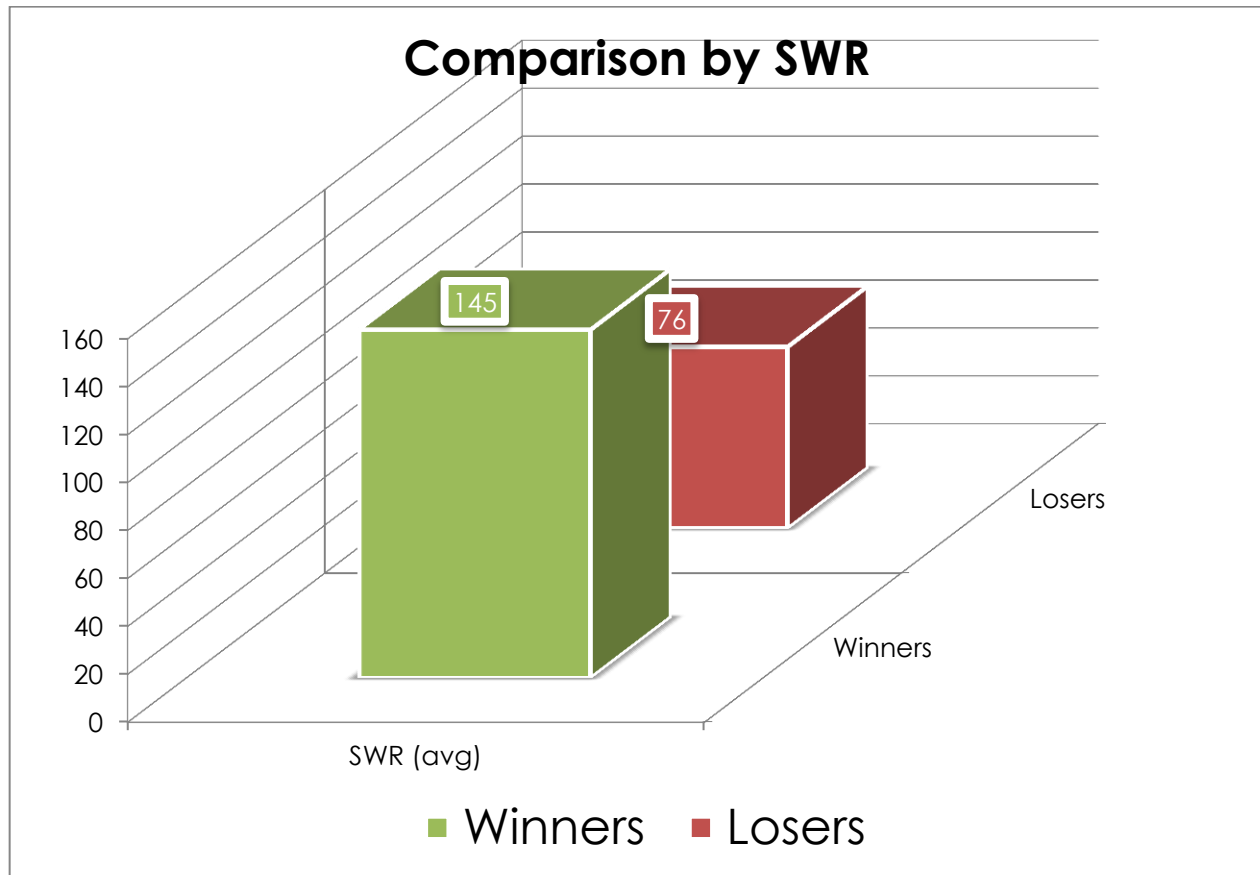
To measure the quality of a site in Google, we've created the TitleRank™ metric to describe how far up a domain ranks in Google. By extracting the title out of a website and seeing how well it ranks, we can directly derive its quality according to Google. If it ranks on a very high page number, or does not rank at all, it's probably penalized.



This chart shows that almost every winner (38 out of 50) ranks in the first place for its own title. Compare this to the losers it's not a big gap between them but they have only 32 out of 50 with TitleRank #1. A non-ranking title could be a clear sign for a low quality site but in this case we can interpret that having a ranking title **is not a factor in this update**.

Domains compared by Side Wide Ratio

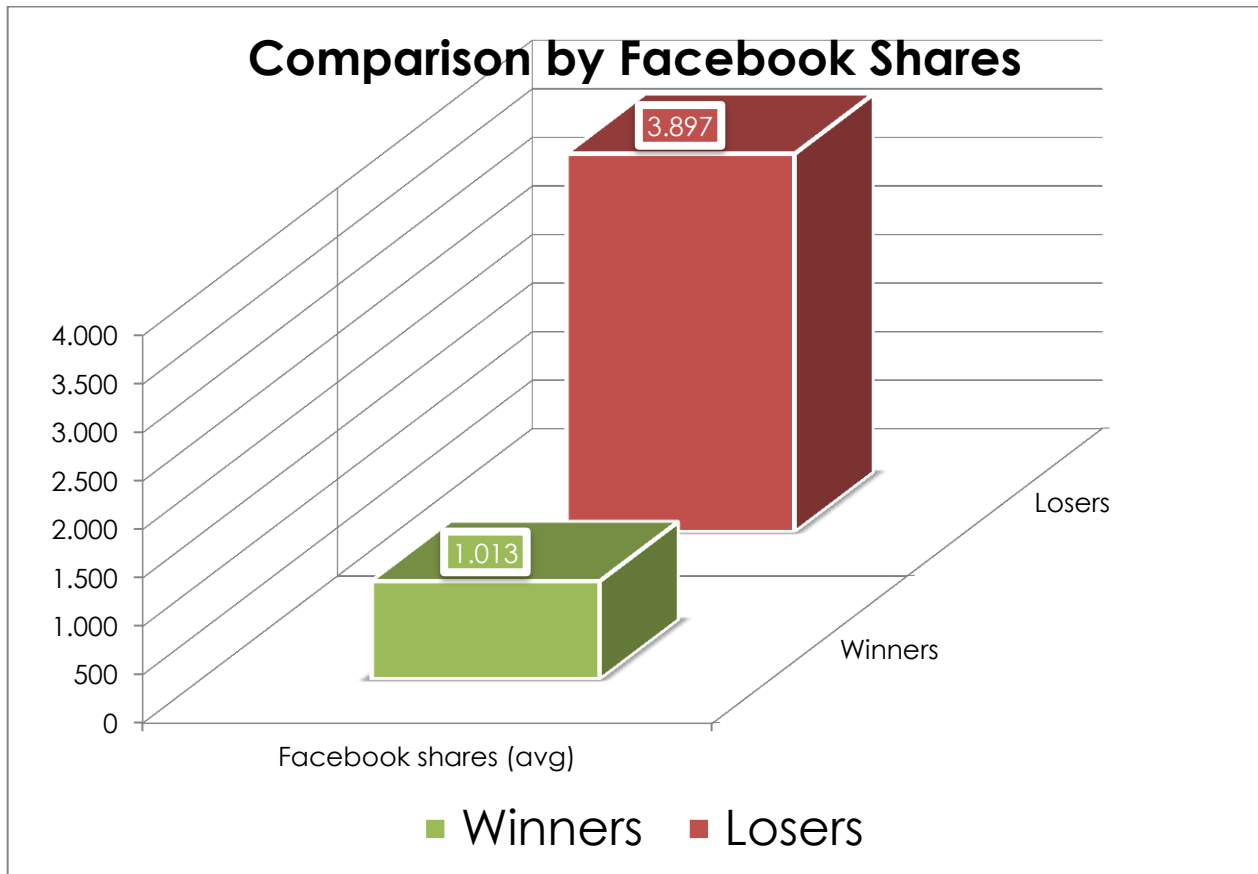
The site wide ratio is the ratio between domain wide links and the number of linking domains to the domain. Basically, this is a good way to find side-wide links.



The losers have a way lower SWR ratio compared to the winners. From this data we can interpret that having site wide links **does not provoke a penalty** in this update.

Domains compared by Facebook Shares

Social media activity is (and should be) an ever increasing factor in rating the quality of a website. It's a pretty clear factor to figure out if the audience likes the content and wants to share it with other people. In general, a very popular website or brand automatically grows in social networks as soon as they reach higher rankings in Google.

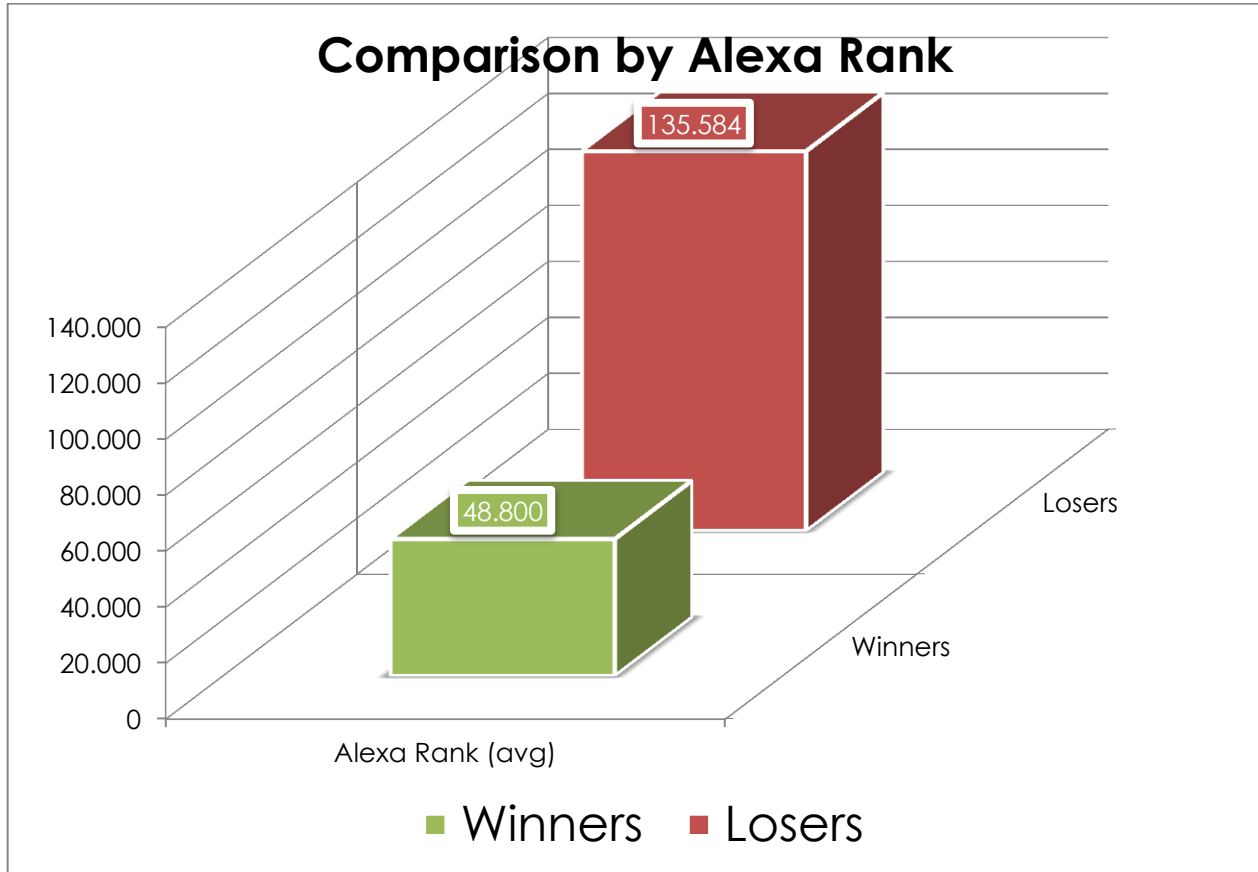


This chart shows the huge gap between an average losers' domain with up to 3.897 shares, whereas the winners have only 1.013. That might result from less activity in social networks on the winners' site.

From this data we can interpret that having a strong social media profile **makes no difference** in this update.

Domains compared by Alexa Rank

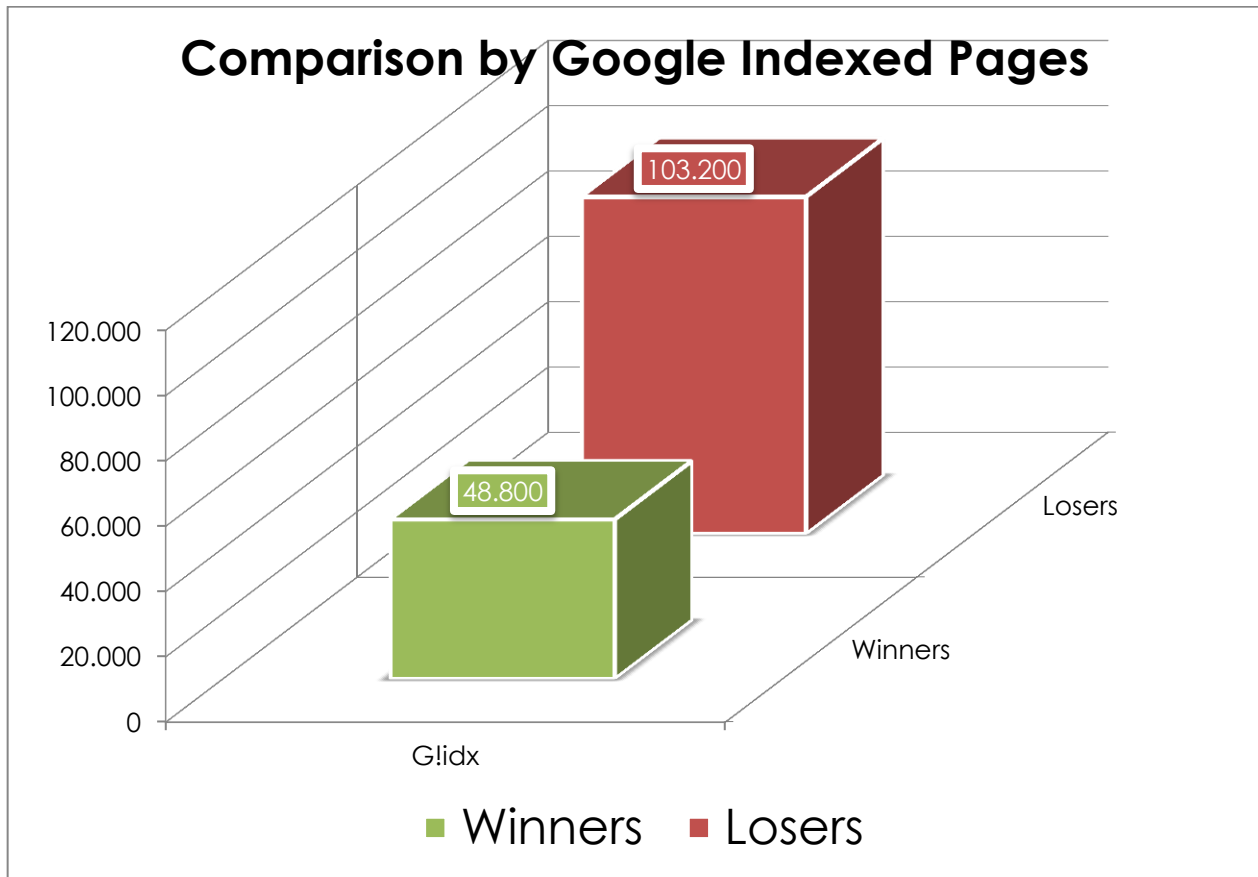
Even if Alexa is skewed towards more tech/SEO savvy people, it would be skewed for winners and losers alike, which makes it valid again in comparison at least.



The losers' websites have more than half the Ranking of the winners and thus received less 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 in front of 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).

Domains compared by Indexed Pages



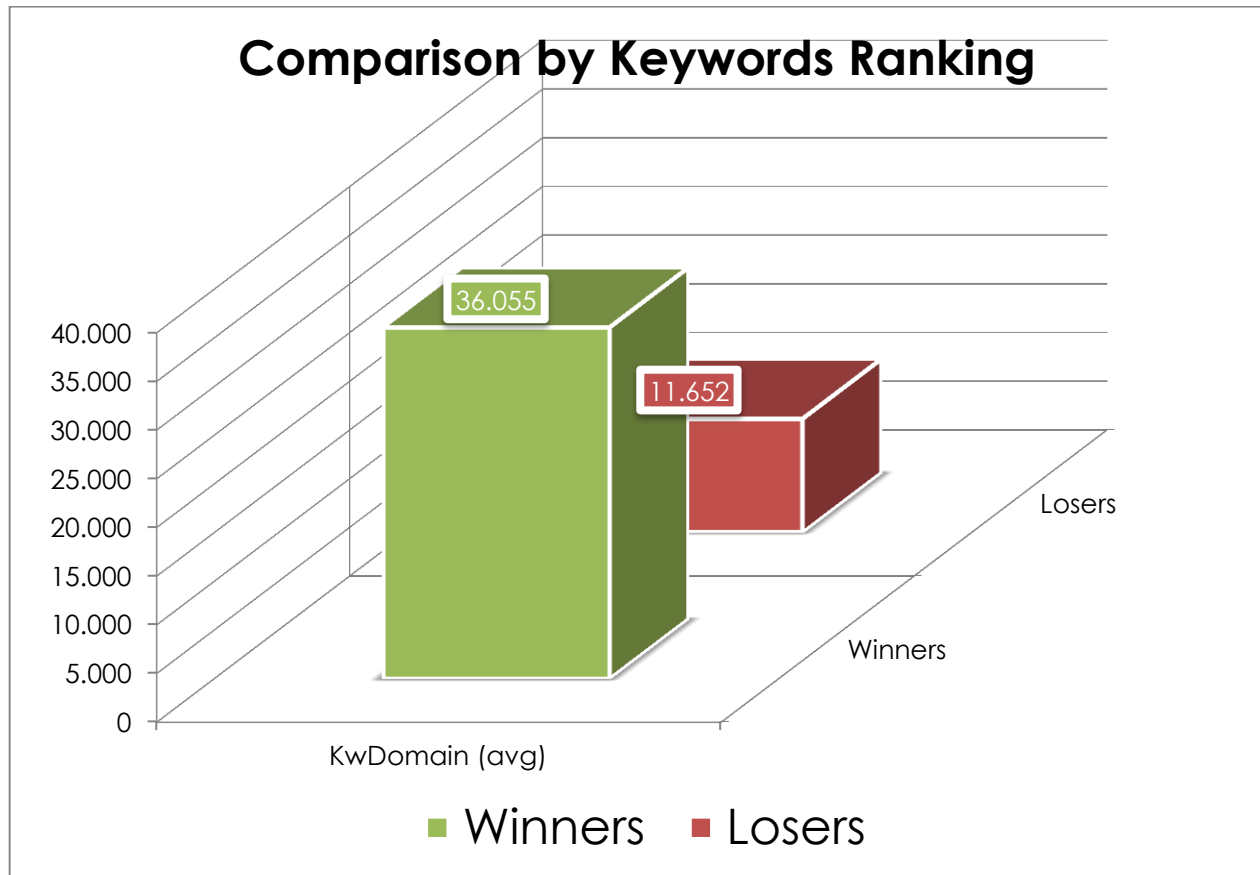
The winners' domains have an average of 48.800 pages indexed while the losers' average is 103.200.

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 low quality content are more likely to be negatively affected.

Domains compared by Number of Keyword a domain ranks for

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.



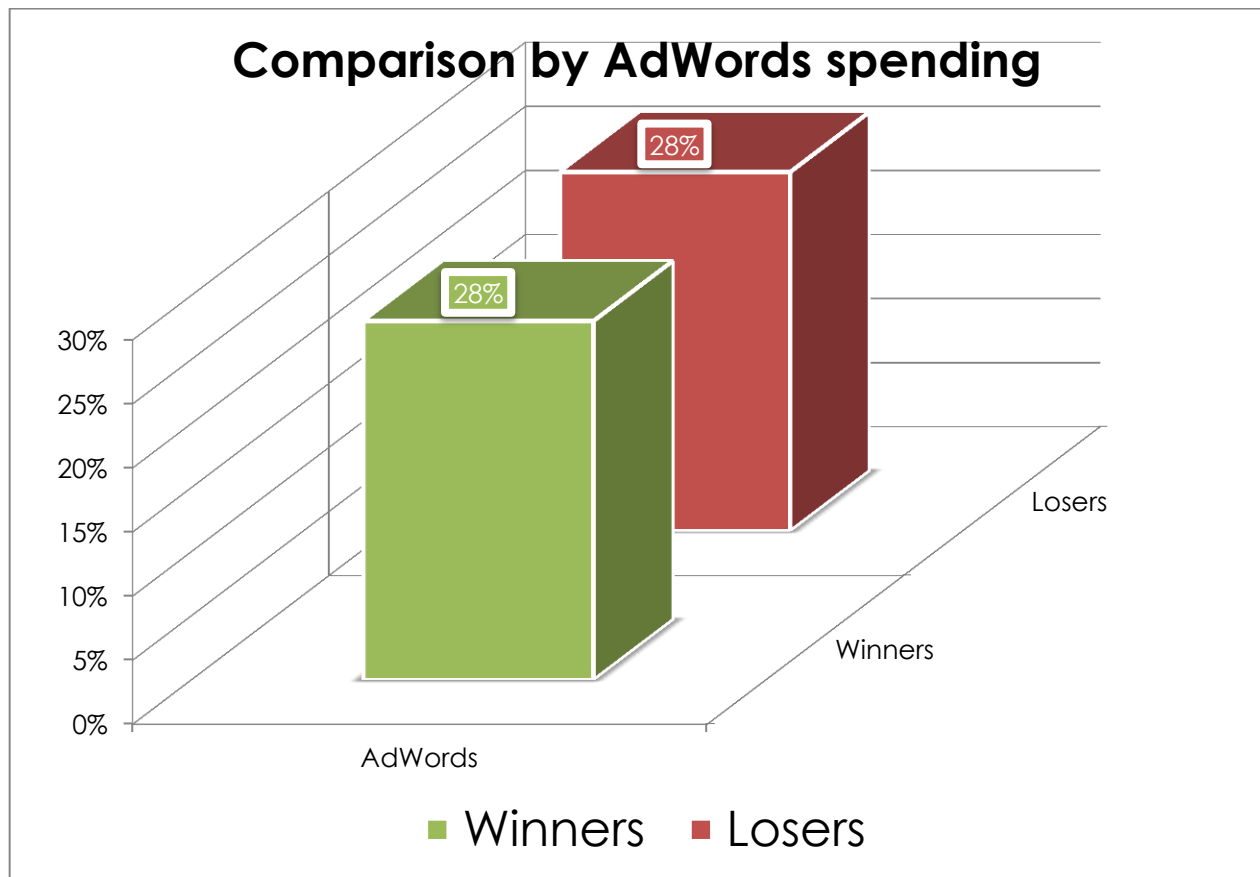
The winners have an average of 36,055 keywords ranking, which means that they have more than triple the number, compared to only 11.652 for the losers.

This is a clear sign that those thousands of indexed pages of the losers do not provide good content. It looks like that it's not about quantity and again all about high quality.

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

Domains compared by AdWords spending

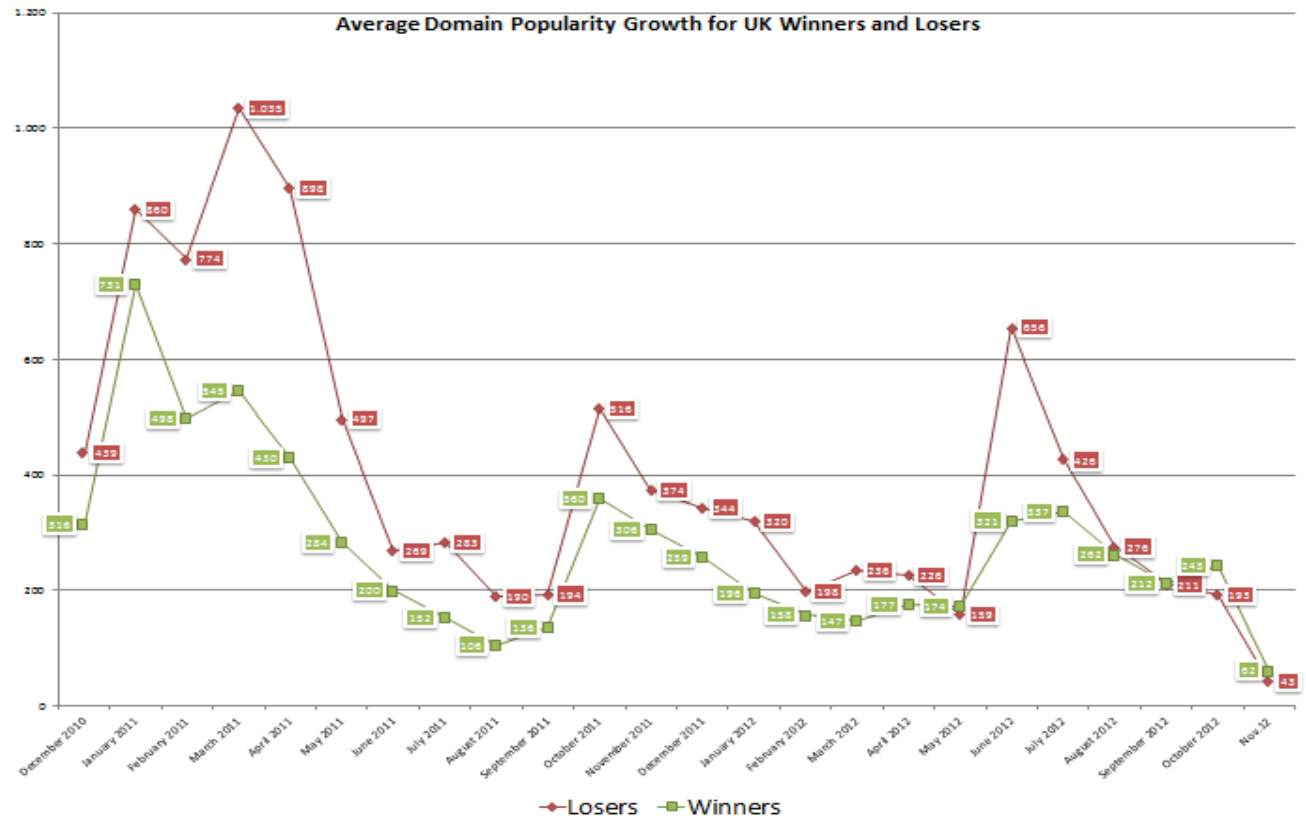
Just to make sure that AdWords spending is not a factor, like we all heard from some posts in the web; we've checked all UK winners and losers' websites. According to Searchmetrics we have found these numbers:



According to that data we can see that only 14 out of 50 winners and 14 out of 50 losers spend money on AdWords. As a result it is **very unlikely that this is a factor**, as **more than two thirds** of the winners did not spend anything at all on AdWords.

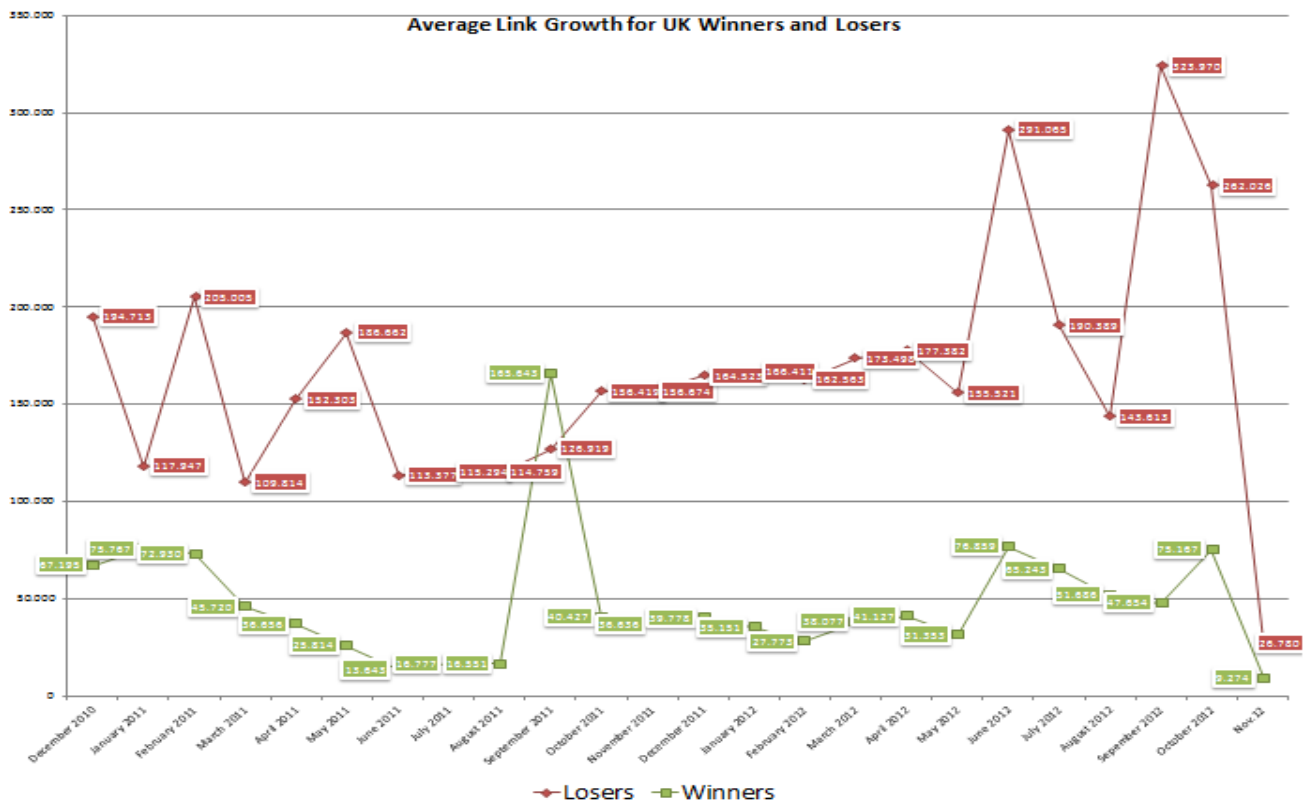
Domains compared by Domain Popularity Growth

The Domain Popularity Growth is one of the most important factors for a common **natural link profile**. A healthy website automatically grows over time because more and more webmasters tend to place a link to a higher quality site.



What we see here is that the Losers have constantly almost double the linking domain growth per month than the Winners. While the Winners have built an average of 6.610 new linking domains over the last 2 years (275 per month), the Losers have built an average of 9.618 new linking domains over the last 2 years (401 per month).

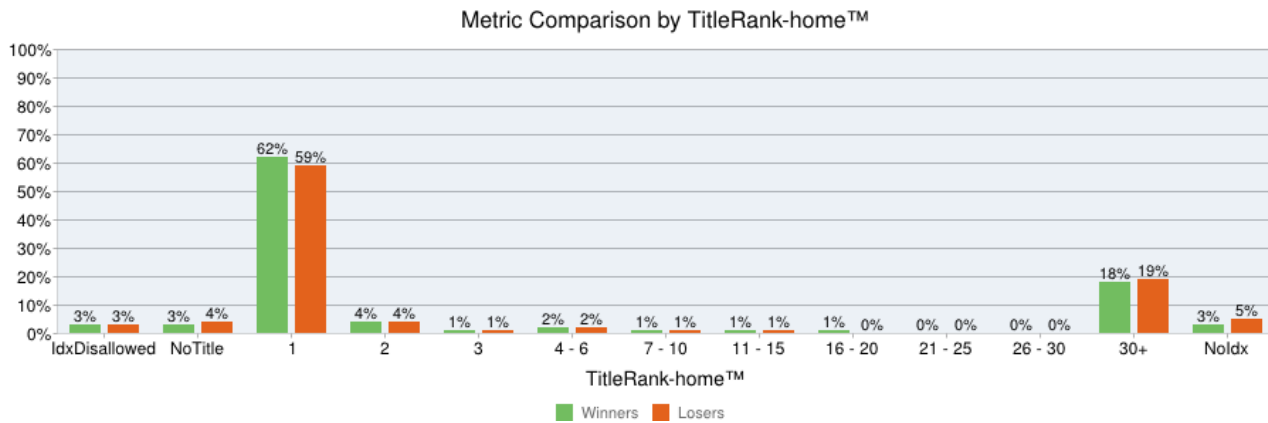
Domains compared by Link Growth



The overall link growth draws the same picture: the losers' website has a way higher link growth volume than a winners' site

Link Profile Analysis

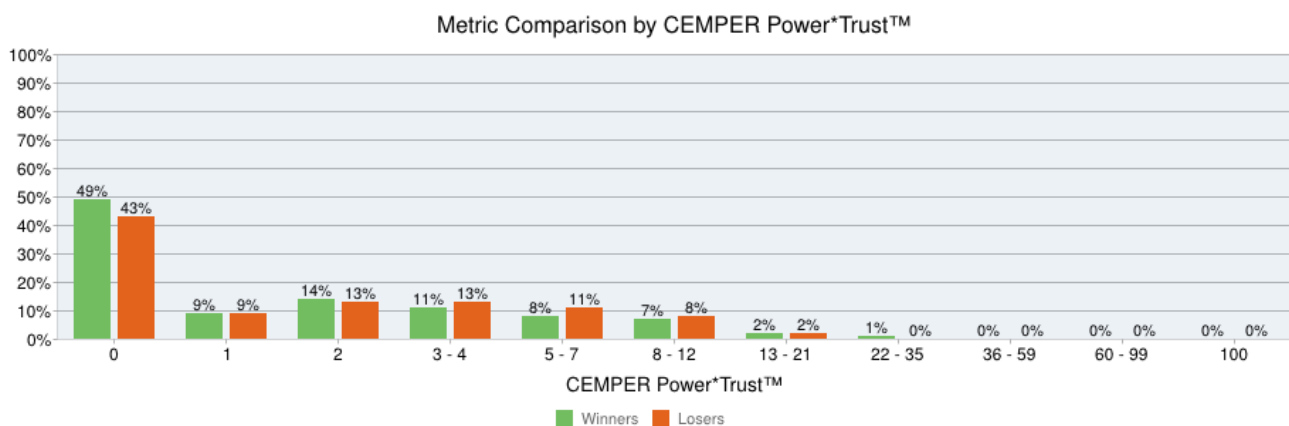
Link Profiles compared by Title Rank



The Winners have 62% of the linking websites ranking number 1 for their title while the losers have 59%.

Here, as well as in Germany the spread seems rather even until the end of the spectrum, where Winners have 3% of not indexed Links while the Losers have 5%.

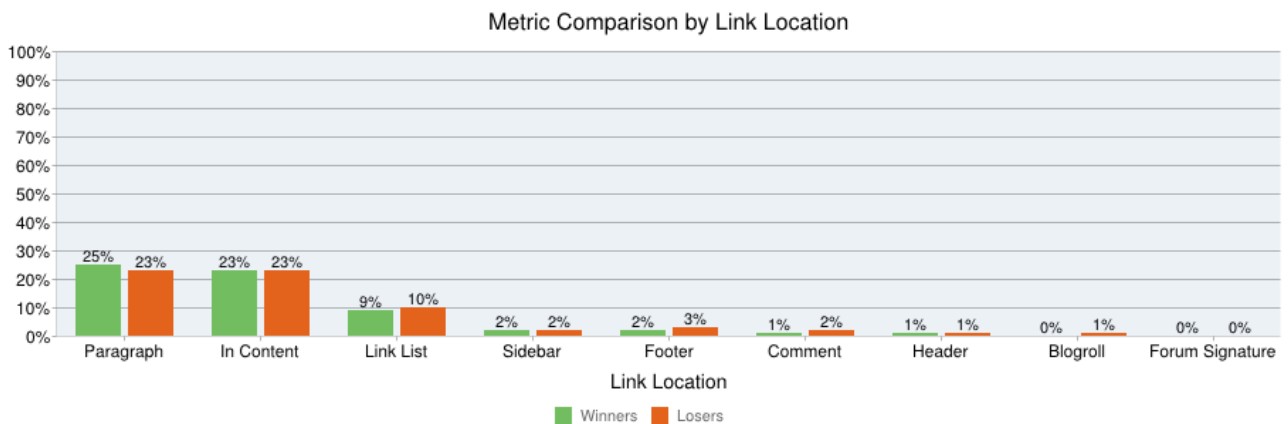
Link Profiles compared by CEMPER Power*Trust™



This chart shows us that the Winners have more links with a Power*Trust™ value of 0 than the Losers who seem to have stronger links as you can see when looking at the higher categories from 3 to 12. Therefore, we do not think that this is of any importance in the update.

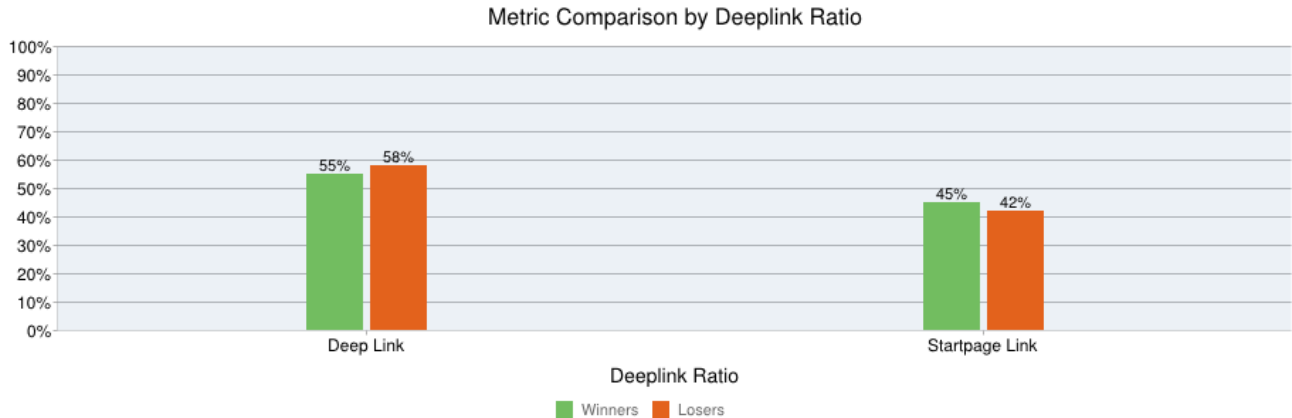
In category 22-35 we also see that the Winners have an advantage over the Losers whose Power*Trust™ value doesn't reach the borders of 21.

Link Profiles compared by Link Location



As in Germany, this chart shows us that the link location is almost evenly distributed. Winners have slightly more paragraph links than the Losers, but the other categories from In Content to Blogroll are relatively evenly allocated. It looks like the link location doesn't play a part in this update.

Link Profiles compared by Deep Link Ratio



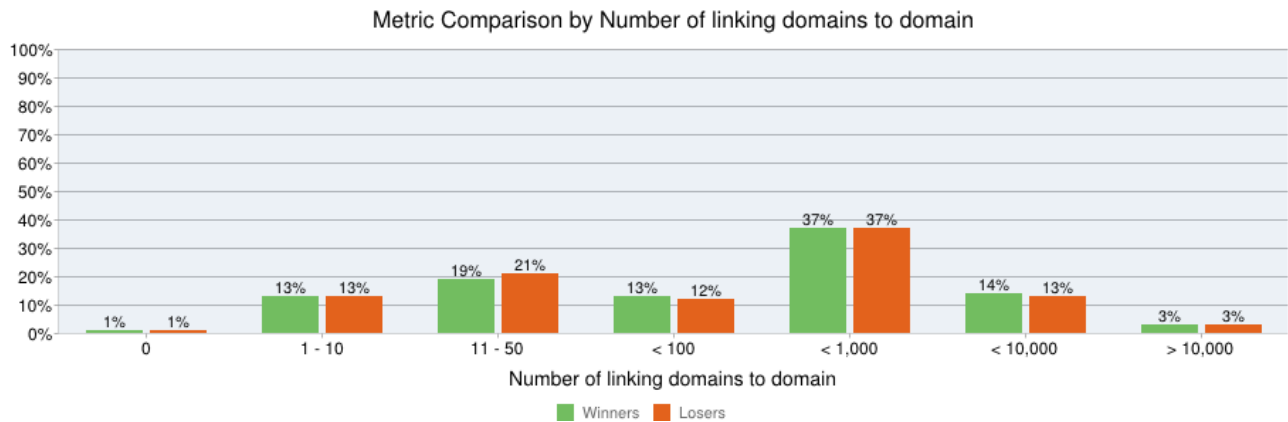
When we compare the winners and losers in this update we can see that:

- Winners have 45% Startpage Links and 42% Deep Links
- Loser have 58% Startpage Links and 55% Deep 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.

Due the inconspicuous differences we can say that the deep link ratio is probably not one of the main factors in this update.

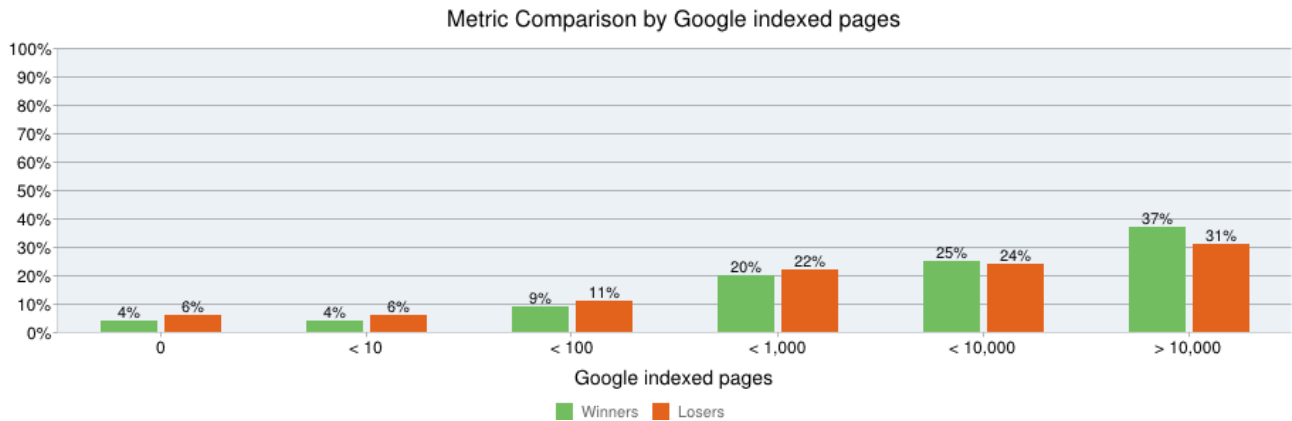
Link Profiles compared by Domain Popularity



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 allocation shown in the important categories with values <10,000 and >10,000 that signify links from big and established websites, is very similarly distributed between Winners, who have 17% and Losers, who have 16%.

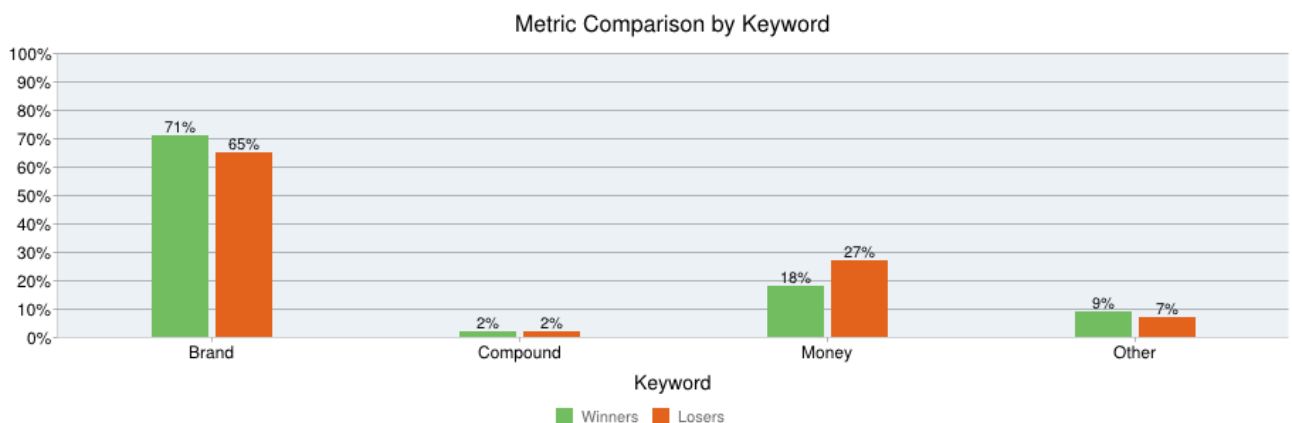
Link Profiles compared by Indexed Pages



The most important bars on this chart are the ones showing the values >10,000. These are links from big and established websites. Here, the Winners are the clear leaders with a total of 37% of links in those categories while the Losers only have 31%.

Link Profiles compared by Anchor Text Distribution

The chart below shows the anchor text distribution of incoming link.



The link profile of the Winners is based 71% on brand links, while the Losers have 65%. That is only 6% difference. The winners have 18% money keyword links and the losers 27%. That marks a difference of 9%.

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.

According to that data we can see that this is **very unlikely a factor**, as **the difference between winners and losers** is not that big.

Conclusion

- Especially old domains have been a target in this update.
- The overall domain strength is still a very important factor. This means the winners simply have got a link profile with higher quality.
- The domain growth of the Losers is much higher and reflects that a lot of negative link building campaigns have been influencing the downward spiral of this update.
- As we have always preached: It's not enough to just build more and more links to push one's website forward. To get a better site one must keep the quality standard very high!
- Social Media is a highly growing factor and should be considered in every link building plan

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