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Using Zero-Result SERPs to Teach Users to Search

ABSTRACT

In certain locales, search-query diversity is poor despite substantial search traffic and/or rapid traffic growth. Consequently, in such locales, the full utility of a search engine remains unknown or unleveraged by the user base. This disclosure describes techniques to provide example search queries along with zero-result search engine result pages (SERPs). The example queries can include queries that are popular in the locale, queries that are contextually relevant to the user's initial query, etc. The search examples provide user education for the use of a search engine and the possibilities of search, resulting in greater user engagement and retention.

KEYWORDS

- Search engine result page (SERP)
- Zero result SERP
- Search suggestion
- Query suggestion

BACKGROUND

In certain locales, search-query diversity is poor despite substantial search traffic and/or rapid traffic growth. There is some evidence that users are intimidated by a search box and often aren't able to craft search queries to meet their information needs. In some cases, search queries tend to be overly specific or highly misspelled, leading to zero-result SERPs. Consequently, for queries from users in such locales, a higher incidence of zero-result search engine result pages (SERPs) is observed. The full utility of the search engine remains unknown or unleveraged by the user base.

Currently, if a query results in no search results, search engines typically return a prompt asking the user to reformulate the query. While the suggestions in the prompt are useful, they generally do not include relevant examples of good search queries. Users struggling with query formulation are not able to apply the suggestions, nor are they able to leverage the full utility of search engines.

DESCRIPTION

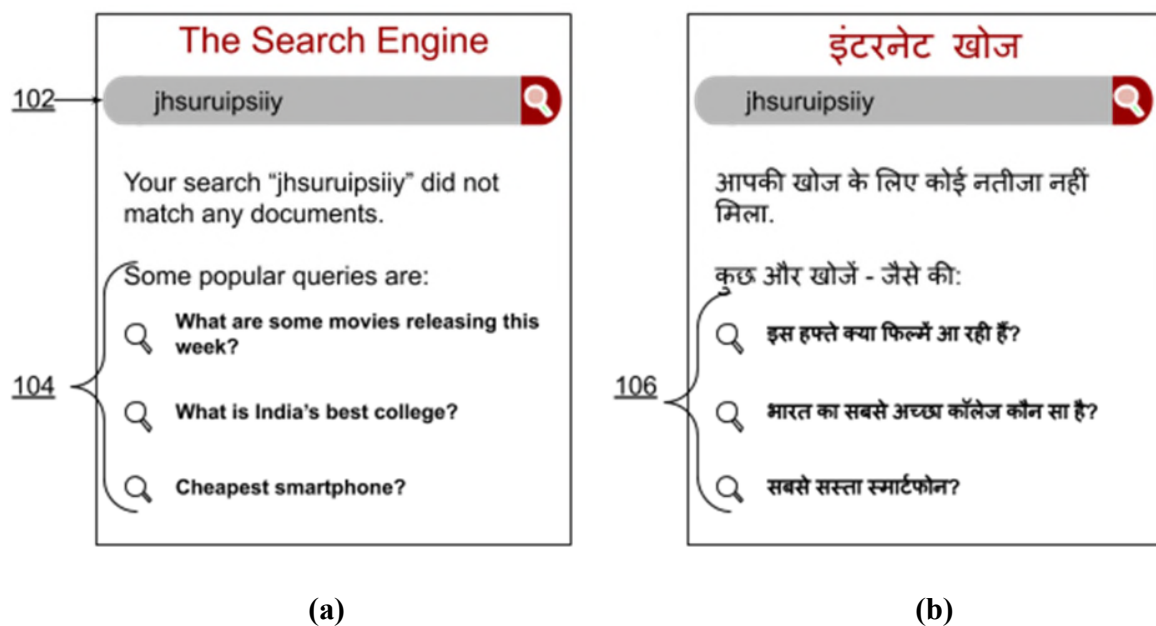


Fig. 1: Providing example search queries with zero-result SERPs

As illustrated in Fig. 1, this disclosure describes techniques to provide example search queries to zero-result search engine result pages (SERPs). In Fig. 1(a), a search query entered by the user (102) results in no search results. Example queries are provided (104), which serve to teach users to use the search facility, to show how search can be useful for them, to give concrete ideas for reformulating their queries, etc. The example queries that are shown can include queries that are popular in the locale, queries that are contextually relevant to the user's location, context,

initial query, etc. As shown in Fig. 1(b), the example queries can be served in the language of the locale (106), as can be the entire search engine interface.

The provision of relevant examples of search queries provides user education for the use of a search engine and the possibilities of search, resulting in greater user engagement and retention. This can result in a healthier (e.g., more diverse) search-query stream and greater user engagement and/or retention.

Further to the descriptions above, a user may be provided with controls allowing the user to make an election as to both if and when systems, programs or features described herein may enable collection of user information (e.g., information about a user's social network, social actions or activities, profession, a user's preferences, or a user's current location), and if the user is sent content or communications from a server. In addition, certain data may be treated in one or more ways before it is stored or used, so that personally identifiable information is removed. For example, a user's identity may be treated so that no personally identifiable information can be determined for the user, or a user's geographic location may be generalized where location information is obtained (such as to a city, ZIP code, or state level), so that a particular location of a user cannot be determined. Thus, the user may have control over what information is collected about the user, how that information is used, and what information is provided to the user.

CONCLUSION

This disclosure describes techniques to provide example search queries along with zero-result search engine result pages (SERPs). The example queries can include queries that are popular in the locale, queries that are contextually relevant to the user's initial query, etc. The search examples provide user education for the use of a search engine and the possibilities of search, resulting in greater user engagement and retention.