

1 Million Videos

YouTube Ranking Factors Study



BACKLINKO YOUTUBE RANKING FACTORS STUDY:

Methods & Results

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To our knowledge, this is the first large-scale study of YouTube's search results ever conducted.

While there are many articles that list "YouTube's top ranking factors", we were unable to find any data supporting these claims.

We decided to conduct this study in order to better understand the relationship between various proposed YouTube ranking factors and actual rankings in the YouTube platform.

To understand these relationships we analyzed 65,000 YouTube search results (resulting in 1.3 million total videos analyzed).



WHAT WE DID— OUR STUDY METHODOLOGY

We used [Google Trends](#) to create our initial seed keyword list.

To create this seed keyword list, we collected the top non-branded keywords searched in YouTube across all categories over the last 5 years (Google Trends groups popular terms into categories, such as “Finance” and “Games”).

By using keywords across different categories we created a seed keyword list that represented several different industries. For example, our seed keywords included terms like: “workout”, “chemistry” and “pony”.

To expand this list of seed keywords, we used [KeywordTool.io](#). KeywordTool.io scrapes YouTube’s keyword suggestions. We plugged a subset of our seed keyword list into KeywordTool.io in order to generate additional keywords.

This resulted in a list of 65,000 keywords.

We then used a scraper to search for each of these 65,000 keywords in YouTube and pulled the search results into a database. At 20 video results per page, that equals 1.5 million total video results.

However, due to the increased in difficulty in collecting data for the metrics: “comments”, “shares”, and “subscriptions driven” (collecting these metrics require a full JS rendering of the video page), we used a subset of our 65,000 keyword data set to collect and analyze this data. We analyzed 44,526 video pages for the analysis of each of these 3 pieces of data.

To calculate correlations we used [Spearman Correlation](#) for all measures. This correlation is most appropriate when looking at how one or more variables effects rank positions. Like any correlation study, correlation does not always indicate causation. Therefore we were very cautious about interpreting the results from the study.

OUR FOCUS ON THE TOP 20 RANKING VIDEOS

By focusing on the top 20 ranking pages in YouTube, we focused on what we called the “winner’s circle”. In Google, 71.33% of searches result in a page one organic click. Few move onto the second or third page of the results.

Considering that YouTube’s search results include 20 results, it’s likely that even fewer searchers go past the first page of YouTube’s search results.

In other words, we wanted to find data that would help a website move from a #10-20 ranking to the top 3 results. Of course, our results also apply and extrapolate to pages 2, 3, etc. However, our results are looking at a narrow band of first page results. By confining results to top 20 we are looking at the difference between the rankings that matter most.

When we show a correlation of .07 it suggests a ranking signal that is twice as powerful as another ranking signal measure of .035. Think of the massive size of 1.3 MM videos in our sample. While many correlation studies stop at .05 for relevance, we are confident down to .03. Below that number we label our finding as little or no correlation. Clearly, .03 is a very small relationship. However, when you’re just looking at the “winner’s circle”, a few of these small differences can mean the difference between a video ranking #1 vs. #7.

BREAKDOWN BY RANKING FACTOR

LIKES

The number of “Likes” a video receives.

SUBSCRIBERS

The number of subscribers a channel has.

VIDEO VIEWS

The reported number of views a video has at time of our data collection.

COMMENTS

The number of comments a video has received in YouTube.

EXACT MATCH TITLE

This was a simple yes or no test. If the keyword appears exactly in the video title, it was a “yes”. Otherwise, it was a “no”.

KEYWORD IN TAG

This was a simple yes or no test. If the keyword appears exactly in a tag, it was a “yes”. Otherwise, it was a “no”.

 **SHARES**

The number of shares a video has generated (as reported by YouTube).

 **SUBSCRIPTIONS DRIVEN**

The number of people that subscribed to the channel from that video page (as reported by YouTube).

 **VIDEO LENGTH**

The total length of a video (measured in seconds).

 **VIDEO QUALITY**

Represents video pixel quality (720p, 1080p etc.).

 **KEYWORD IN DESCRIPTION**

This was a simple yes or no test. If the keyword appears exactly in a video's description, it was a "yes". Otherwise, it was a "no".

RESULTS (CORRELATION DATA)

RANKING FACTOR	SPEARMAN CORRELATION
Likes	0.121801724975
Views	0.126530750213
Comments #	0.107643041695
Exact Match Title	0.0147012590287364
Keyword in Tag	0.01563844348084
Shares	0.121176362191
Subscriptions Driven	0.0952794970413
Length	0.0366812588542312
Keyword in Description	0.00969802682216824
Subscribers	0.0657063257