AccuRanker

Click-Through Rate in SEO

White paper

Factors affecting Click-Through Rate in Organic Search

A data analysis of factors driving click-through rate in SEO based on AccuRanker's AI CTR model

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In this white paper you'll get an in-depth look at the factors that impact CTR in SEO.

Understanding what drives CTR is a critical factor in SEO, as there is a **1:1** correlation between the organic traffic and CTR. This is particularly important during the keyword research phase, since knowing the expected CTR for a given position on the SERP for a given keyword is crucial knowledge for you to make informed decisions about which keywords to target.

Here are some of the key findings in this report.

+ AI Overviews have a huge impact on CTRs for organic results.

+ There has been a shift in how many clicks the average SERP gets during the last few years.

+ Pixel position is often more important than rank.

+ The variation in CTR for a given rank is enormous, especially for ranks 1-3, highlighting the need for an accurate CTR model.

Introduction

In this report we look at CTR from a number of different angles, including the effect of different SERP features, words and search intent. We also look at the effect of a keyword's rank and how that effect varies depending on other features of the SERP.

Click-through rate in SEO

The findings we present in this paper are all data-driven, as described in the methodology box on the next page. Thus our findings are based on empirical evidence rather than subjective opinion.

By taking a data-driven approach, we aim to provide objective and actionable conclusions to help you make better decisions about which keywords to prioritise in your SEO efforts to get the most value.

AccuRanker's AI CTR model is accessible through the AccuRanker platform and API. With the model you can get accurate CTR estimates for all of your keywords on demand, both for your own rank and for the top 10 for each keyword.
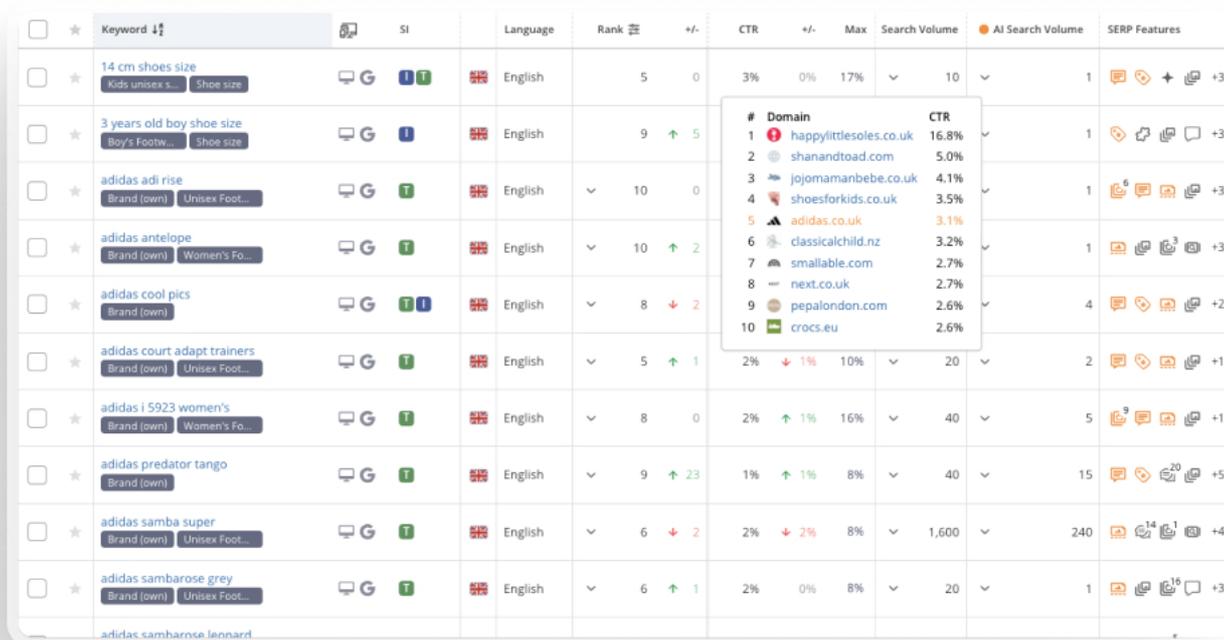
		Keyword ↓↑		SI		Language	Rank	+/-	CTR	+/-	Max	Search Volume		AI Search Volume		SERP Features
☐	★	14 cm shoes size Kids unisex s... · Shoe size	🖥 G	🇮 🇹	🇬🇧	English	5	0	3%	0%	17%	⌄	10	⌄	1	▦ ◈ ✦ ▥ +3
☐	★	3 years old boy shoe size Boy's Footw... · Shoe size	🖥 G	🇮	🇬🇧	English	9	↑ 5							1	◈ ◫ ▥ ▢ +3
☐	★	adidas adi rise Brand (own) · Unisex Foot...	🖥 G	🇹	🇬🇧	English	⌄ 10	0							1	▦⁶ ▥ ▦ ▥ +3
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☐	★	adidas sambarose grey Brand (own) · Unisex Foot...	🖥 G	🇹	🇬🇧	English	⌄ 6	↑ 1	2%	0%	8%	⌄	20	⌄	1	▧ ▥ ▦¹⁶ ▢ +3
		adidas sambarose leonard														

#	Domain	CTR
1	🔴 happylittlesoles.co.uk	16.8%
2	shanandtoad.com	5.0%
3	jojomamanbebe.co.uk	4.1%
4	shoesforkids.co.uk	3.5%
5	▲ adidas.co.uk	3.1%
6	classicalchild.nz	3.2%
7	smallable.com	2.7%
8	next.co.uk	2.7%
9	pepalondon.com	2.6%
10	crocs.eu	2.6%

Methodology

The analysis presented in this report is based on
1.3 billion SERPs from desktop and mobile searches on
Google in the United States in January 2025.

Click-through rates are all based on AccuRanker's
proprietary AI-based model, which takes into account
more than 120 parameters of the individual results on each
SERP.

The 120 parameters used in the model include several SERP
features, length of titles, title/keyword match, special
words, pixel position, total space occupied, and many more.

Who are AccuRanker

AccuRanker is a world leading SERP analytics and keyword rank tracking platform.

The AccuRanker platform offers a wide range of features. Lightning fast rank updates with accurate rankings on a daily or on-demand basis. The AI based CTR and search intent models mentioned in this article, segmentation and data cubing, dynamic competitors and much more is available through a user friendly interface with features suitable for agencies and enterprises.

In this report, we take a deep dive into the data to provide profound insights into the nature of click-through rates. All data points mentioned in this article are available on the AccuRanker platform.

Factors affecting Click-Through Rate

Knowing the rank is not enough

The most obvious factor to analyse when considering CTR is the rank of the result on the SERP. Unsurprisingly, a higher rank is usually associated with a higher CTR. But the CTR for each rank varies greatly!
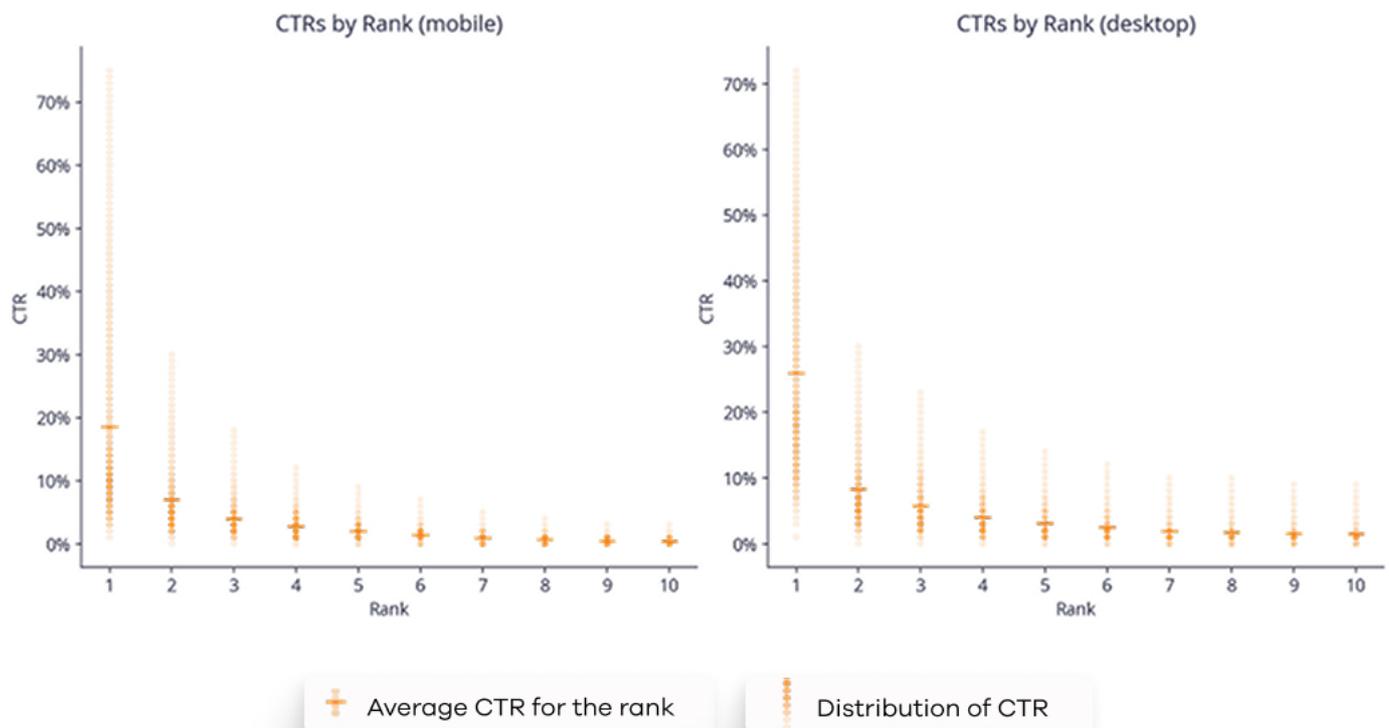
For example, the CTR for a rank 1 result will vary depending on the layout of the SERP. **Is it a featured snippet? Are there ads above it? What is the search intent?** And so forth. This means that looking at rankings in isolation when tracking keywords can be misleading - you have to include CTR in the picture!

The charts show the distribution of CTR for rank 1-10 based on 1.3 billion mobile and desktop searches in the US. The horizontal lines show the average CTR for the rank, and the color of the dots shows the distribution of CTR.

The better the rank, the higher variation you see in the CTR. This means, that a static CTR model based on rank will struggle, especially for the top ranks.

For rank 1, the average CTR on desktop is around 26%, whereas on mobile it is just 18.5%. In both cases the CTR varies greatly from close to 0% to 75%! Let's imagine you used a static CTR model where rank 1 gave 24% CTR. This model may underestimate CTR by more than 50% for certain keywords! Or severely overestimate it for other types of keywords.

As you will see later in this report, there are many reasons for this variation. In example, navigational search intent is associated with a high CTR for rank 1, whereas transactional searches will have a lower CTR for rank 1.

In addition, the position on the page can vary greatly for rank 1, for instance if there are ads at the top which will have a big negative impact on CTR. In the next section, we will show the impact of position on the page for CTR.
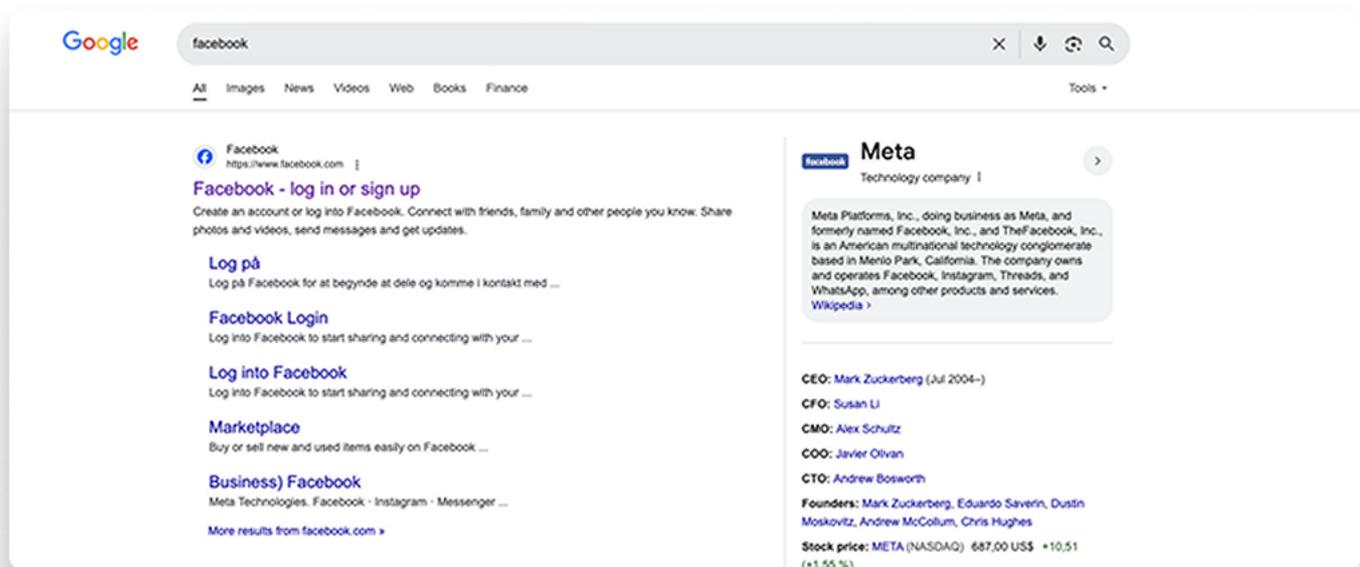
The results boasting the largest CTR are most typically **navigational searches with sitelinks**, where the user has a clear goal to reach a certain page. The smallest CTR is found on pages where much of the SERP is occupied by "non-organic" results. The share of such pages has increased significantly in the last few years.

This large variation in CTR for specific ranks highlights why using a static CTR model or an inaccurate CTR model can be very misleading. With AccuRanker's AI CTR model, you can see the predicted CTR for each rank in the top 10 for all the keywords you are interested in.

Did you know?

On some SERPs, rank 2 gets more clicks than rank 1 - especially for featured snippets The avg. difference in CTR between rank 6 and rank 10 is only ~1% Search intent has a huge impact on CTR for each rank

AI Overviews steal the traffic

The prevalence of AI elements on the SERP is only likely to increase, so it's important to understand how they affect your traffic. AI Overviews have been rolled out in most major countries, and they are having a huge impact on CTR!

As you can see from the charts, the CTR and thus the amount of organic traffic on SERPs with AI Overviews is much lower than on general SERPs, and especially when compared to **informational SERPs, where the prevalence of AI Overviews is greatest.**

The effect is similar to featured snippets, but more significant. This is especially true for ranks greater than 1, which are largely unaffected by featured snippets, but highly affected by AI Overviews. You can read more about the effect of featured snippets later in this whitepaper.

We can also conclude, that the effect on CTR is largest on mobile where SERPs with AI Overviews get around half the traffic as those without it.

AI Overview on desktop

AI Overview on mobile
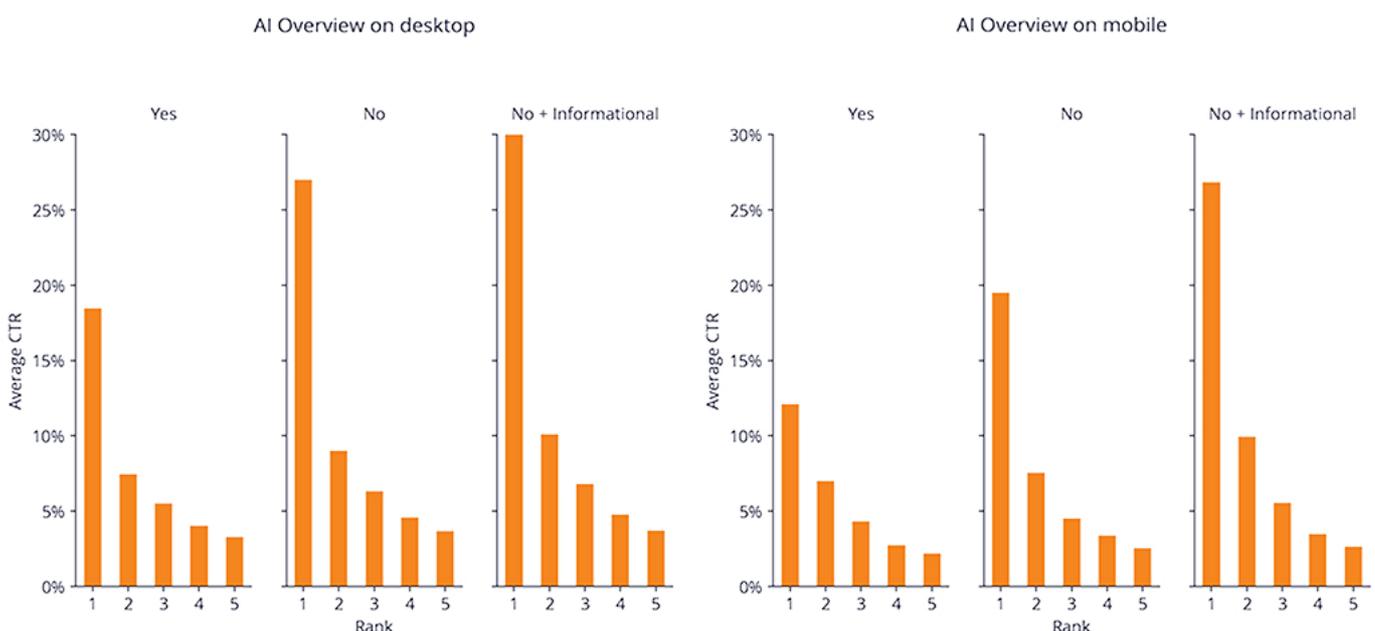
Pixel position is crucial - not "the fold"

A metric that often reveals more about CTR than rank is pixel position. Pixel position measures how far down the page a search result appears. A typical screen is 1080 pixels high, so a position above 1080 is often referred to as "above the fold", meaning that the result is visible without scrolling. In reality, of course, this depends on the size of the screen. AccuRanker stores the coordinates for all results and keeps track of whether a result is above or below the fold.

Average CTRs by pixel position (desktop)
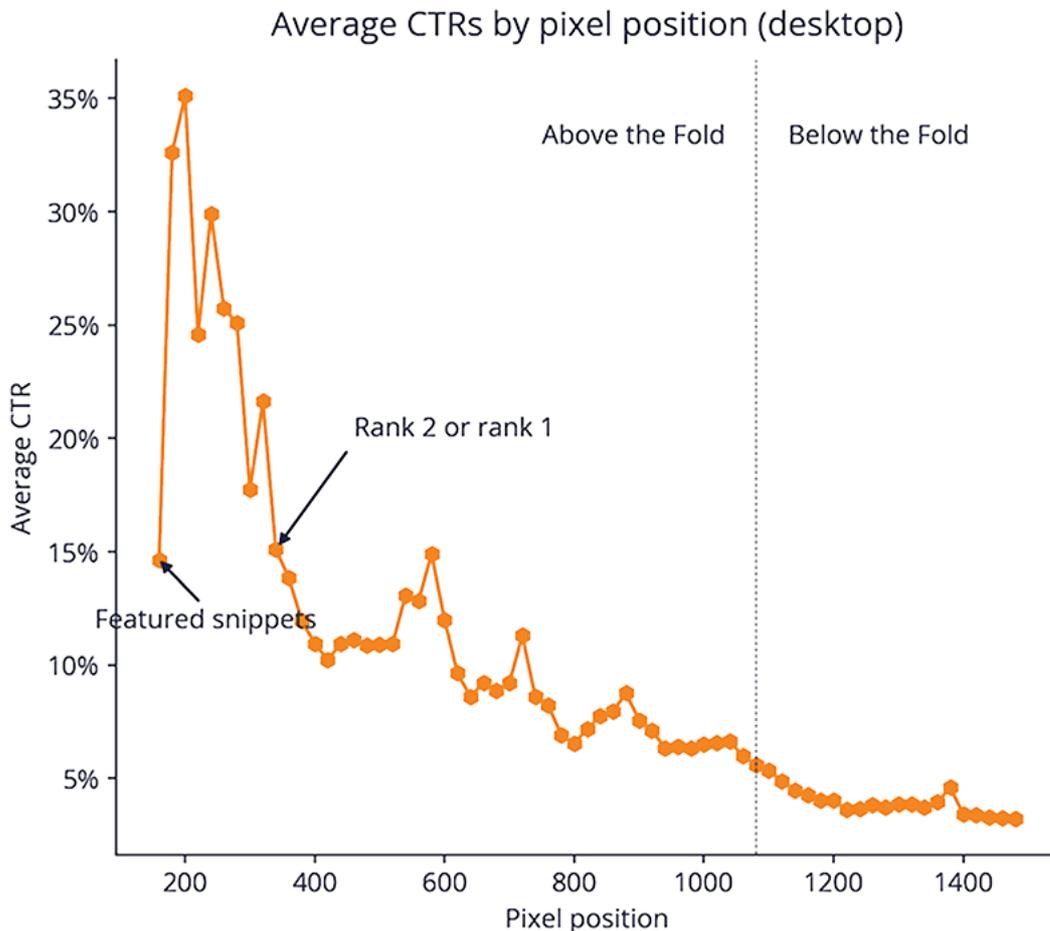
The graph on the previous page clearly shows a strong correlation between a position near the top of the page (corresponding to a small pixel position) and CTR. In addition, certain ranks have specific pixel positions based on the layout of the SERP. For example, featured snippets almost always occupy the same position, resulting in a relatively low CTR compared to the prominent position it occupies.

The relationship between CTR and pixel position is far from linear, as other factors such as rank are also important. Even if rank 2 is displayed near the top of the page, it will see significantly less traffic than rank 1. So a high rank is important even on pages where many results are above the fold. On the other hand, a rank 1 will yield a low CTR if it is pushed down by ads etc, indicating a low pixel position.

Finally, the graph gives no indication that there is a difference between results before and after 1080 pixels, which is the typical definition of above the fold. Another thing we notice, is that compared to our whitepaper from 2023, the lowest pixel position is quite a bit lower, which means Google has gotten rid of some of the empty space at the top of the page.

The graphs below shows the pixel positions typically occupied by rank 1, 2 and 3. When compared with the graph on page 12, some of the trends make sense, for example the arrow pointing to "rank 2" corresponds to the beginning of rank 2 in this graph. You can also see the large spread in the position of rank 2 and 3, which is large compared to rank 1, mainly because the space occupied by rank 1 varies a lot.
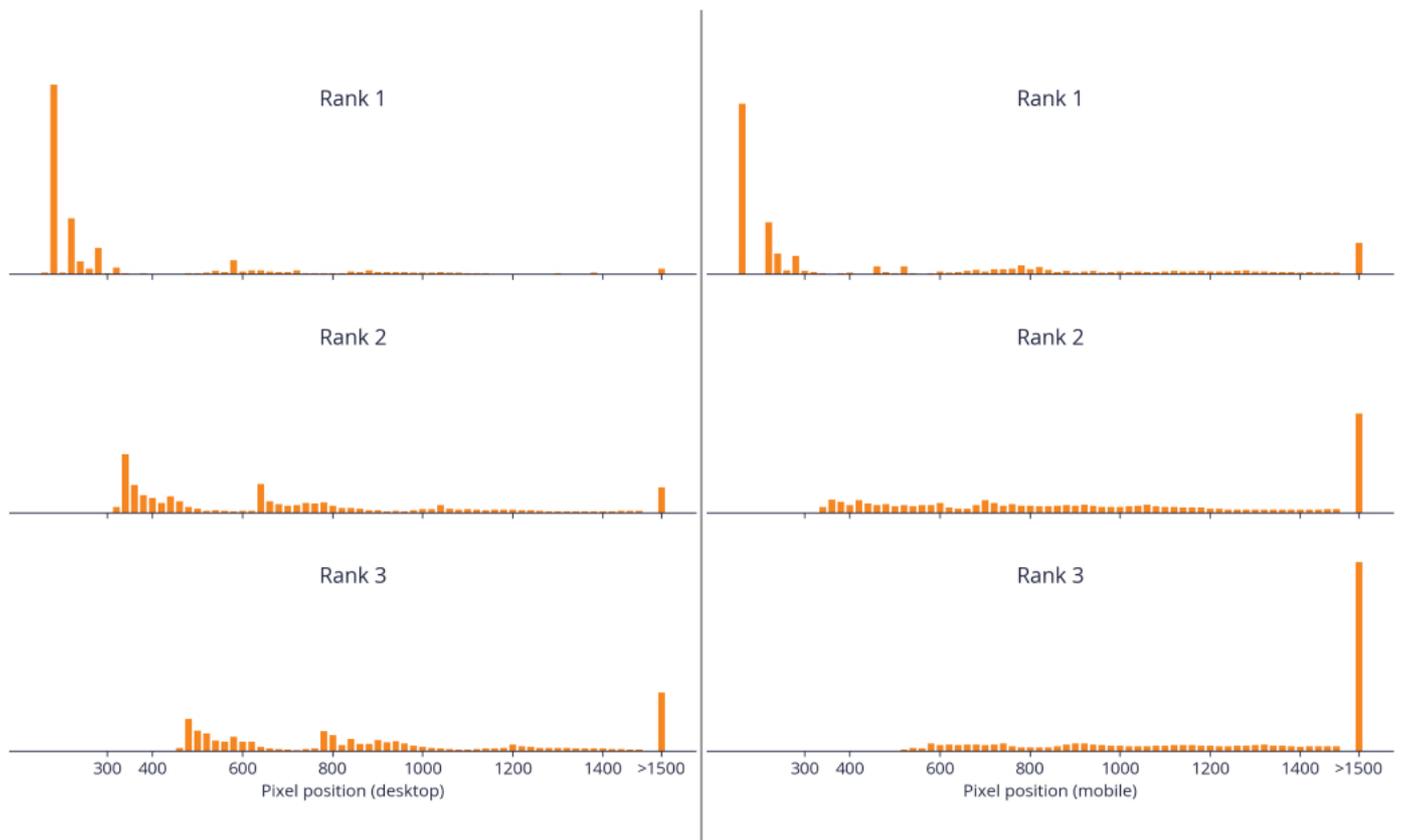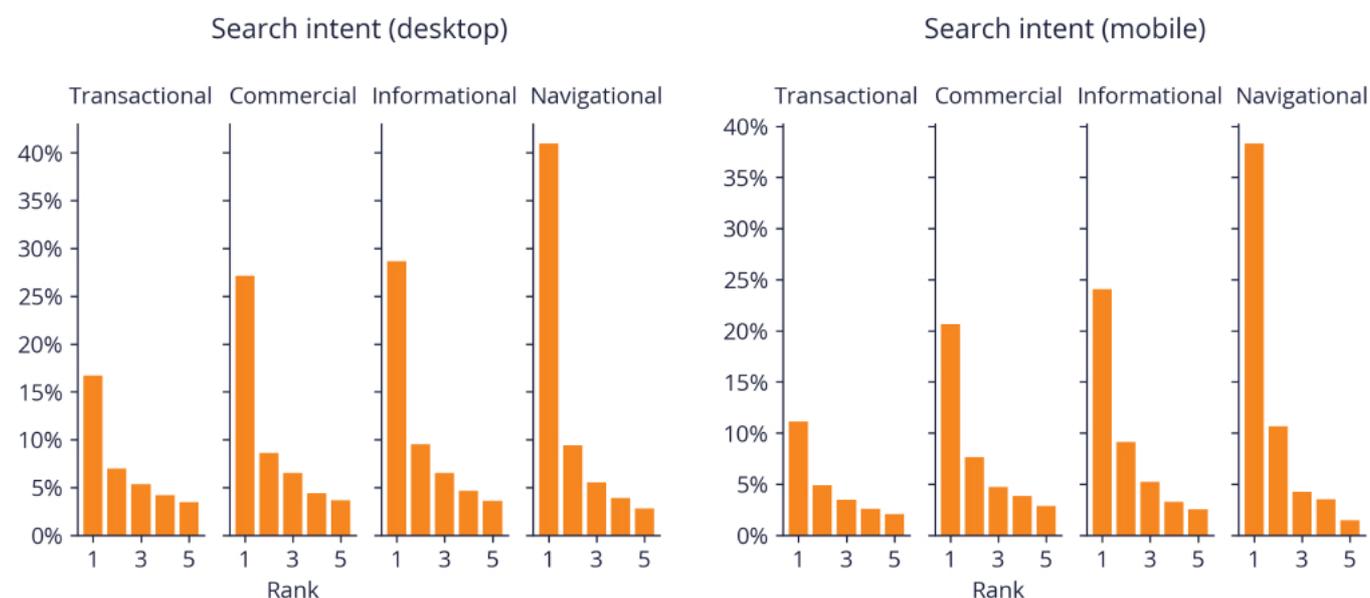
Search Intent has a big impact on CTR

One of the most interesting ways to understand CTR is to analyse different search intents. (On the next page, we present a short brush-up on search intent and how AccuRanker determines it.)

The charts below reveals some interesting insights. The difference in CTR for rank 1 is huge when comparing different intents. Navigational intent has an average rank 1 CTR of over 40%, while it is only 16% for transactional SERPs on desktop, and even lower on mobile. It makes sense that navigational intent has a high rank 1 CTR, as the user is typically looking for a specific site, and in many cases there may even be site links that drive up the CTR.

Compared to 2023, it seems that transactional SERPs has dropped significantly in CTR for organic results, whereas other types of search intents are less affected. For transactional mobile searches, the average rank 1 CTR is less than 11%! Desktop is around 16% compared to around 20% in 2023.

Search intent (desktop)

Transactional   Commercial   Informational   Navigational

Rank

Search intent (mobile)

Transactional   Commercial   Informational   Navigational

Rank

Note

When analyzing search intent in this report, we strictly focus on SERPs where the search intent is clear, i.e. the intent is not mixed by multiple or unclear categorisation.

What is search intent?

Search intent in SEO refers to the reason or purpose behind a user's search query. There are four main types of search intent.

Informational intent: The user is looking for information about a specific topic. They may be looking for definitions, answers to a question, or research on a particular topic.

Navigational intent: The user is looking for a specific site or page. They may already know the site or brand they want to visit and are using a search engine to find it quickly.

Transactional intent: The user intends to make a purchase or perform an action, such as signing up for a service or subscribing to a newsletter.

Commercial intent: The user is researching a product or service before making a purchase decision. They may compare prices, read reviews or evaluate options before making a decision.

By understanding the search intent behind a user's query, you can optimize your content to better meet the user's needs and improve your chances of ranking high in the SERP.

AccuRanker's Search Intent

AccuRanker determines search intent in a similar way to CTR - through an AI model. This model is trained on a combination of data manually labelled by SEO experts and a large amount of unlabelled data to identify patterns.

The model takes into account more than 100 parameters, such as special words in titles and descriptions, Ads competition, SERP features, etc., and has more than a 90% consensus with human experts.
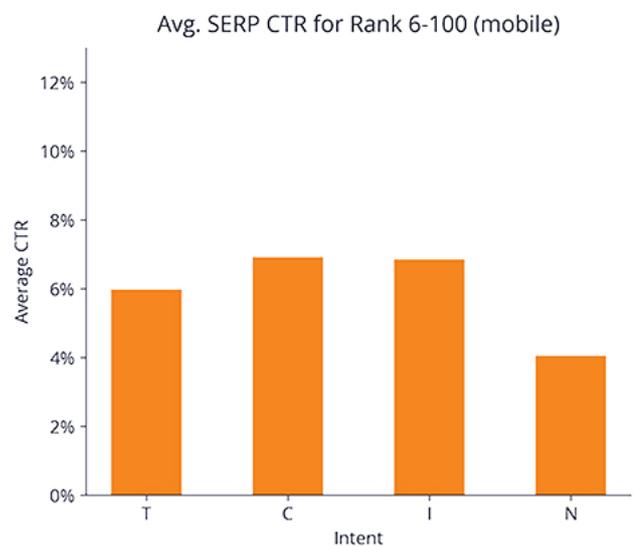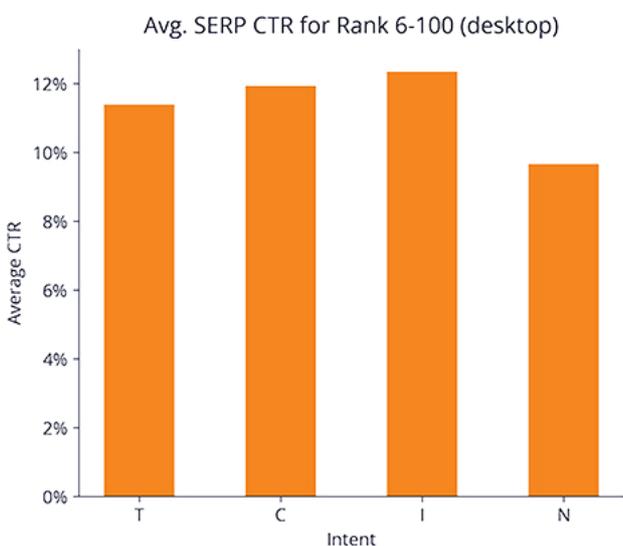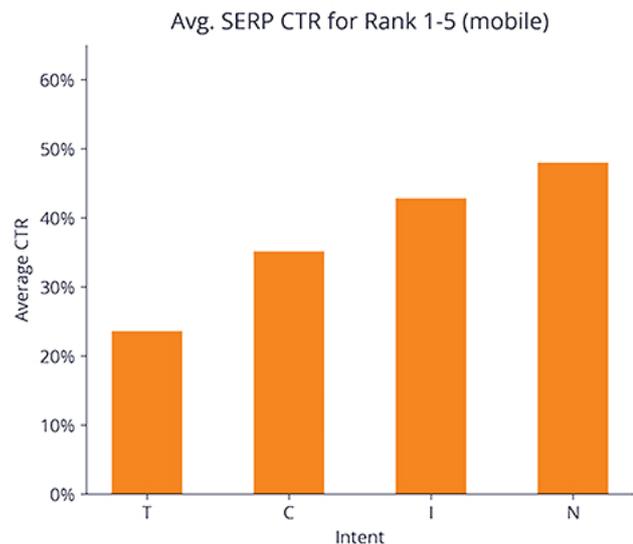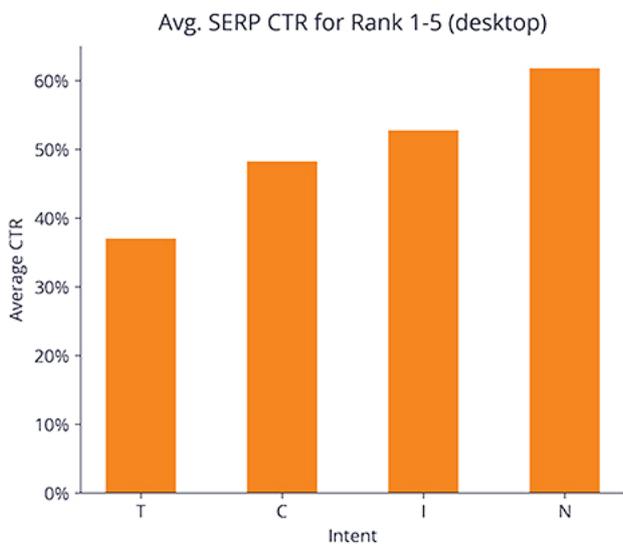
A SERP can display content with multiple intents, but for the purposes of this paper we focus on data where the intent is clear.

Click-Through Rate in Organic Search
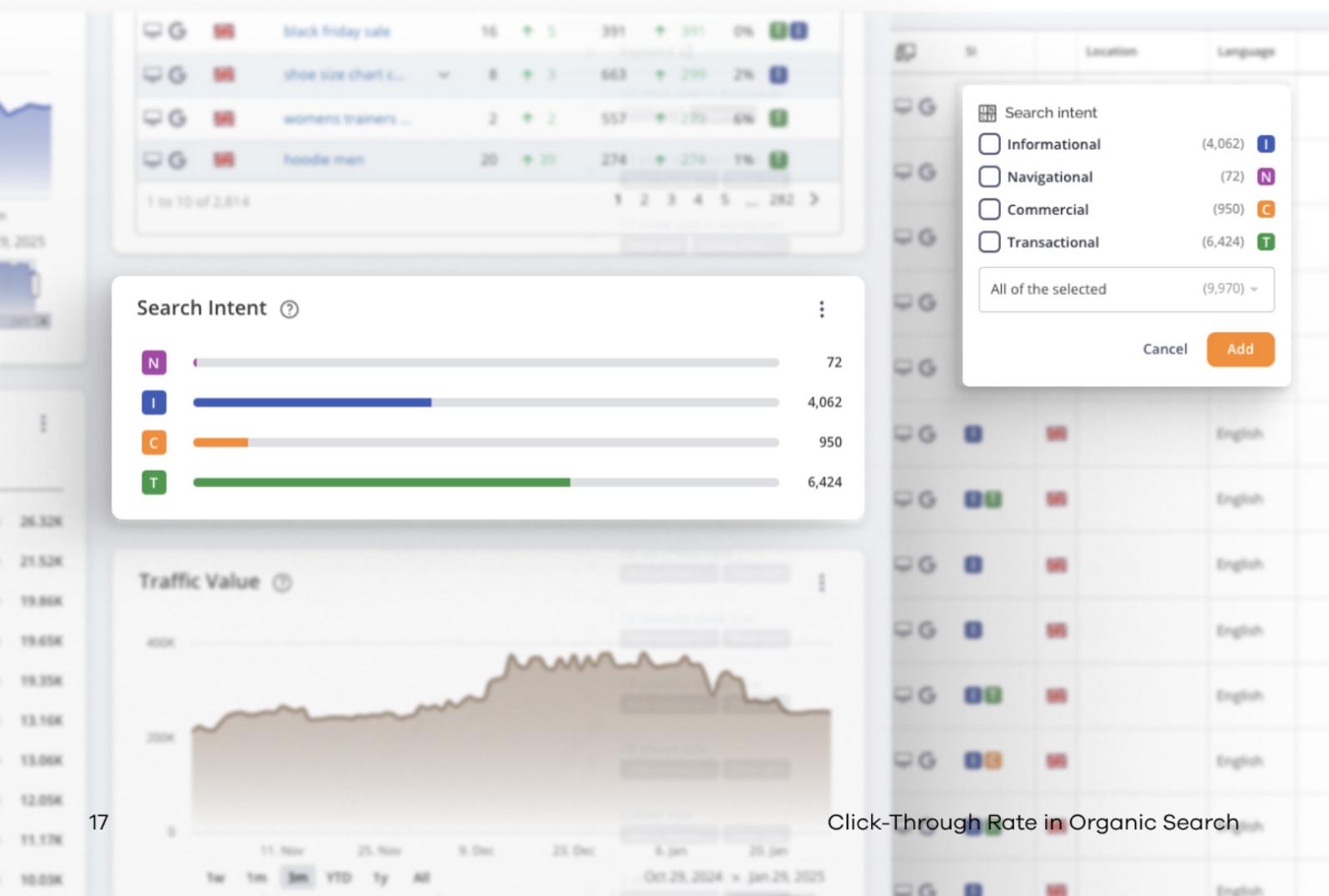
Digging a little deeper, the results for higher ranks are quite different compared to those with lower. For ranks above 5, transactional intent actually has very similar CTR to the other intens! This means that on transactional SERPs, breaking into the top 10 can be quite valuable, even if you do not reach the absolute top.

Looking at the sum of CTRs for rank 6 and higher for desktop, we see that these ranks get a total of 11% CTR for transactional intent and only 9% for navigational intent. For ranks 1-5, the result is reversed - here navigational searches get more than 60% CTR, while transactional searches get 36%.

This also means that 11/(36+11) = 23% of clicks on a transactional page go to rank 6 and above. That's a lot! The graphs beneath illustrate the points we have just examined.

Avg. SERP CTR for Rank 1-5 (desktop)

Avg. SERP CTR for Rank 1-5 (mobile)

Avg. SERP CTR for Rank 6-100 (desktop)

Avg. SERP CTR for Rank 6-100 (mobile)

Click-Through Rate in Organic Search

Featured snippets are not as desirable as you might expect

A much debated topic in SEO is whether it is worth it to pursue featured snippets or not. The data indicates that it may not be as attractive as one might expect.

Google

How does Google's featured snippet work?

All   Images   Videos   Web   News   Books   Finance

Featured snippets come from web search listings. Google's automated systems select featured snippets based on how well they answer the specific search request and how helpful they are to the user. Your feedback helps us improve our search algorithms and the quality of your search results.

G   Google Help
https://support.google.com › websearch › answer   ⋮
Learn how Google's featured snippets work

? About featured snippets • ▮ Feedback

People also ask ⋮

How does Google generate snippets?   ⌄

How to win a featured snippet?   ⌄

How do you rank snippets on Google?   ⌄

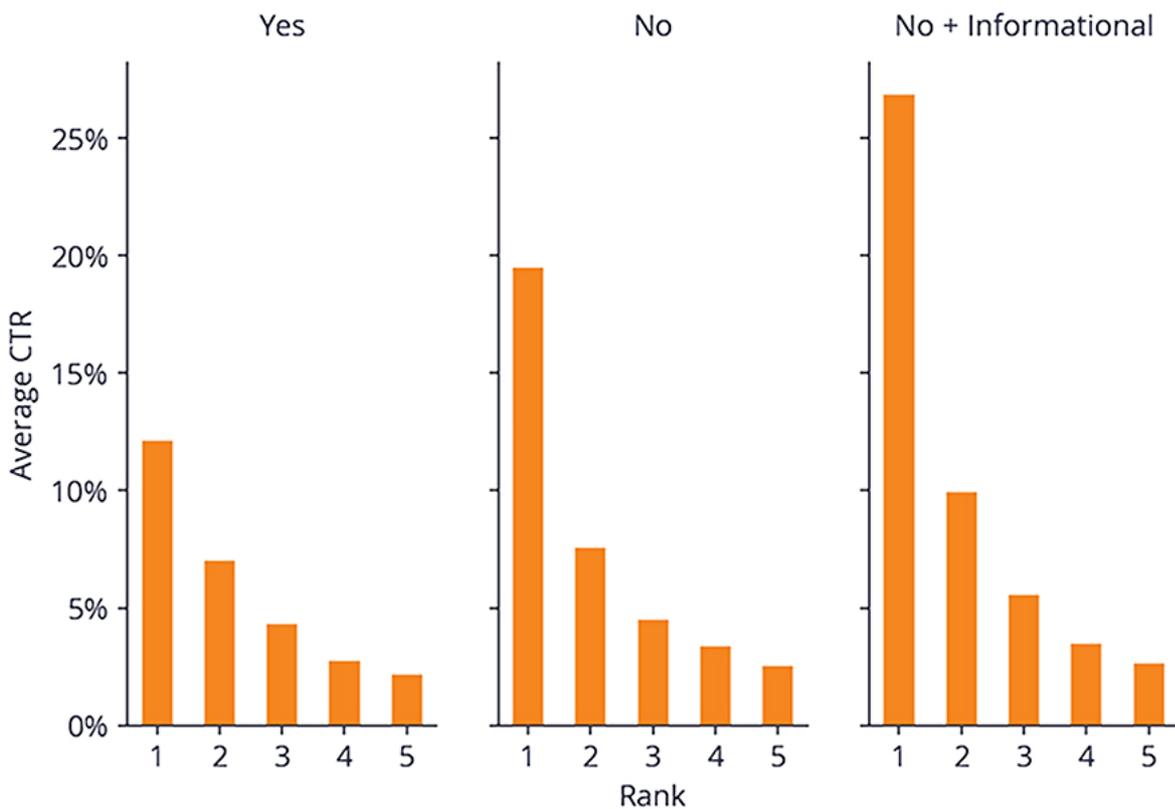What is the difference between rich snippets and featured snippets?   ⌄

Feedback

G   Google for Developers
https://developers.google.com › ... › Documentation   ⋮
Featured Snippets and Your Website
Featured snippets are special boxes where the format of a regular search result is reversed, showing the descriptive snippet first.
How can I opt out of featured... · Block featured snippets only

Featured snippets on mobile

The graph above shows that the average CTR for featured snippets is 12%, while rank 2 on pages with featured snippets has an average CTR of 7%. The difference is small compared to the typical difference between rank 1 and 2! Looking at the graph, it seems that featured snippets mostly affect the CTR for rank 1 (i.e. the result that has the snippet).

The effect is drastic, especially when compared to other informational SERPs, where the average CTR for rank 1 is above 25%.

So from a CTR perspective, featured snippets do not deliver the benefits you might expect. Users may have already found what they were looking for just by reading the snippet, making clicking unnecessary. On the other hand, featured snippets create exposure for your content whether the user clicks on it or not. However, we do actually see higher average CTR for featured snippets than in 2023, the typical SERP when there is a featured snippet has changed and brought the snippet more into prominence than previously.

Questions get a lower CTR

An interesting analysis is to investigate how some of the common words included in search queries impact CTR.

Looking at the aggregated CTR for all results on the page, we see that queries including "sale" often result in many clicks, which drive up the average total CTR for the page. You may recognize this behavior from yourself - when shopping, people are inclined to open several tabs in search of the right product and price. In fact, for some SERPs, the average CTR may be above 100, meaning several clicks.

Full SERP CTR by Word (desktop)
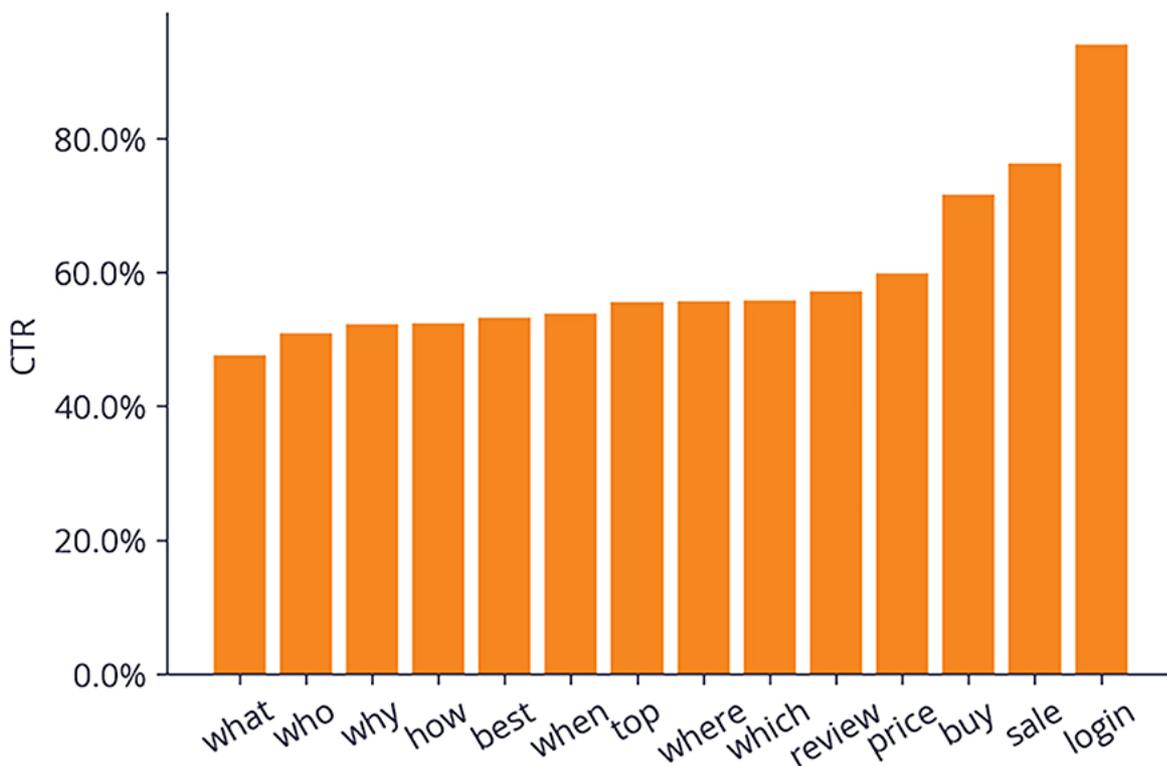
On the other hand, questions such as "why", "when" and "what" often result in SERPs containing features such as a knowledge panel or a featured snippet, resulting in a lower CTR as the information is presented right on the page.

Be aware that this is all based on averages and there will be questions including "why" with a high CTR. This highlights the importance of having an accurate model that predicts CTR on demand for all your keywords, to distinguish between what happens on average and what happens for specific keywords.
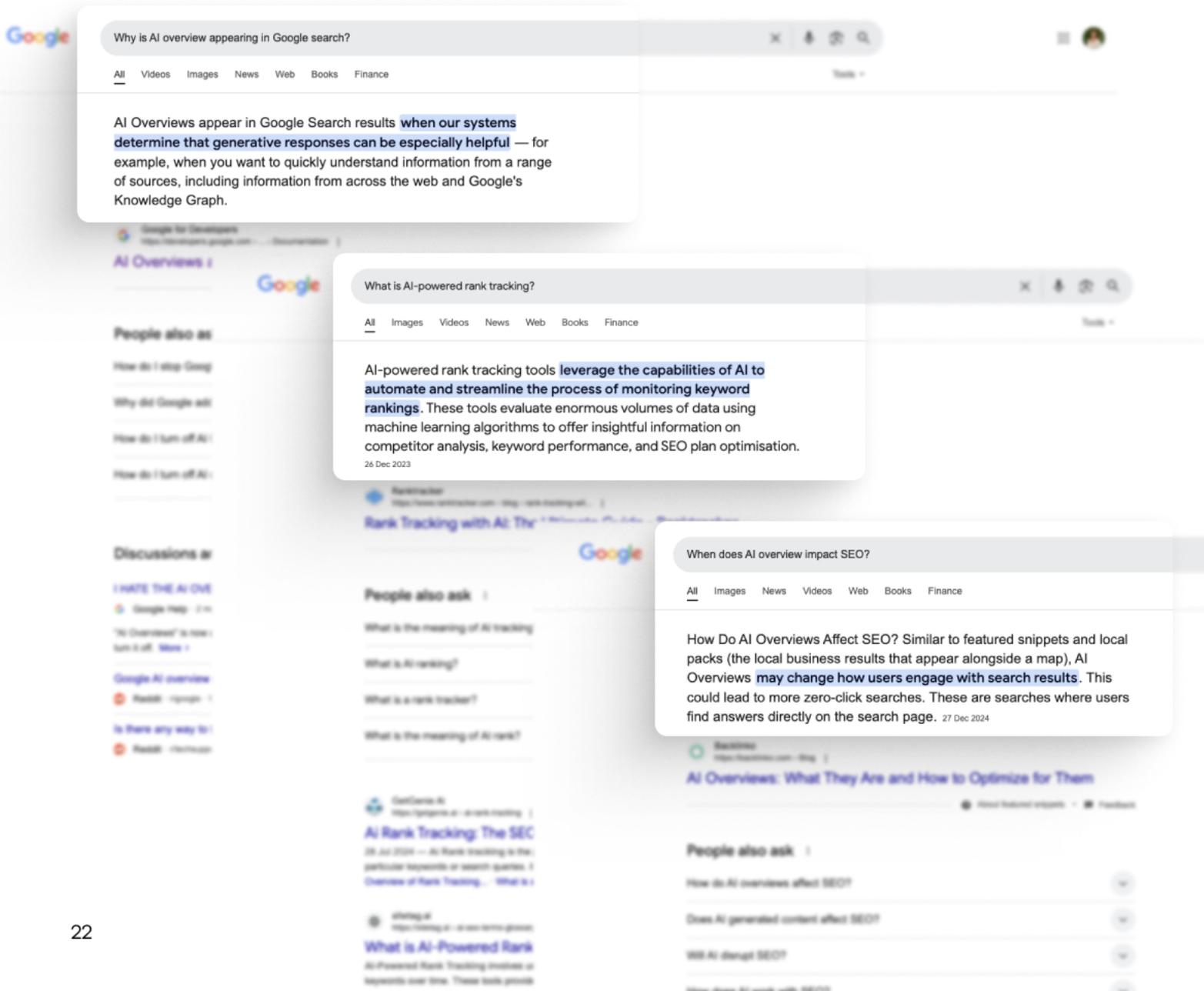
The effect of Shopping

Another interesting SERP feature to dive into, is the effect of Shopping.

As you can see from the charts, the effect is quite large, but you might have expected it to be even bigger compared to other transactional searches. The effect is especially big on mobile. However, it is important to keep in mind that even if a transactional SERP does not have the Shopping feature, it may have other SERP features "stealing" traffic from organic results.

Shopping (desktop)

Shopping (mobile)
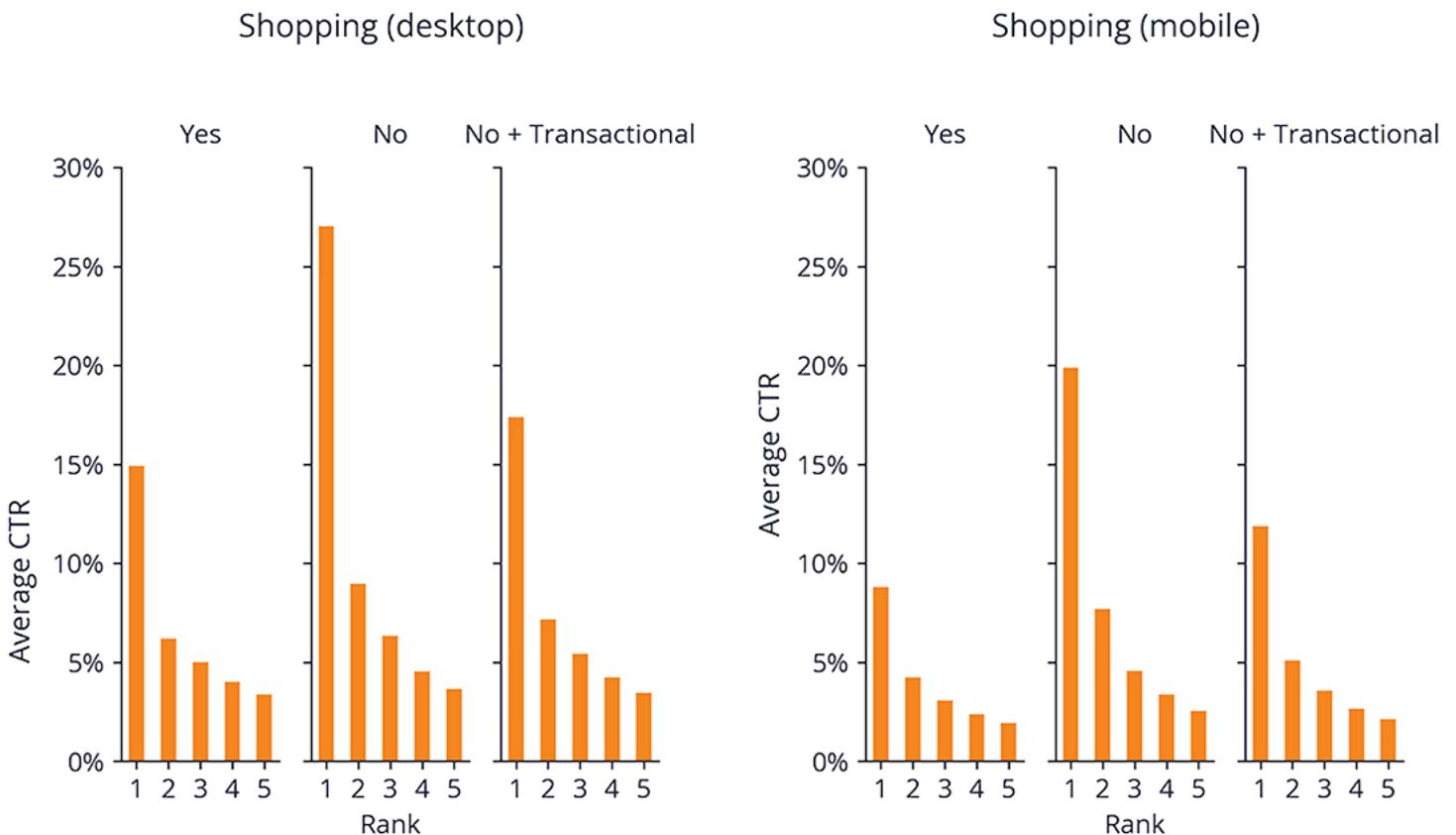
Conclusion

We analysed the impact of rank, pixel position, AI Overviews, search intent, featured snippets and specific words on CTR. The analysis showed that CTR is strongly influenced by all the different factors analysed, but no single factor gives the full picture. For example, the CTR for rank 1 can vary from a few percent to almost 100% depending on the layout of the SERP and the user intent.

This means that a CTR estimation model must take all these factors into account to provide reliable estimates. Having reliable estimates of the expected CTR for different ranks for a given keyword is crucial in the keyword research phase. Such estimates are essential when estimating the potential for different keywords.

Visit accuranker.com if you wish to learn more about AccuRanker and all its unique features. Here you will find free tools and you can order a free trial to test AccuRanker on your own if you wish to explore the AI CTR model.

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Tracking with AccuRanker

AccuRanker is a world leading SERP analytics and keyword rank tracking platform. With AccuRanker, you can track the CTR for all your keywords and the CTR of competing results on the SERPs. Using this data, you can optimize your content strategy and invest your resources into all the keywords with most potential - and track this progress with AccuRanker's unparalleled accuracy, speed and data management features.

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