

Contextual Search Algorithms and Their Influence on SEO Strategies in Specialized Knowledge Domains

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Abstract- The integration of contextual search algorithms into modern search engines has redefined the foundational principles of Search Engine Optimization (SEO), particularly within specialized knowledge domains. These algorithms, grounded in advancements in Natural Language Processing (NLP), prioritize semantic understanding, user intent, and contextual relevance over conventional keyword-based frameworks. This paper examines the implications of such algorithmic shifts on SEO strategies employed in niche domains, where content specificity and limited audience scope present unique optimization challenges. Through a critical analysis of algorithmic models such as BERT and MUM, the study explores the changing dynamics of content ranking, visibility, and relevance determination. The findings underscore the necessity for domain-specific SEO practices to incorporate semantic structuring, topical depth, and contextual alignment to maintain search relevance. This research contributes to the emerging discourse on semantic search by offering a nuanced understanding of its impact on digital visibility strategies across specialized informational contexts.

Keywords- Contextual Search Algorithms, Semantic Optimization, Structured Data, SEO Strategies, Specialized Knowledge Domains, Organic Traffic, Search Engine Ranking, Click-Through Rate (CTR), Digital Marketing Analytics, Niche SEO, Search Engine Algorithms, AI in SEO.

I. Introduction-

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has undergone a significant transformation due to the integration of contextual search algorithms that prioritize semantic relationships, user intent, and domain relevance. Unlike earlier keyword-centric ranking models, modern search systems increasingly rely on sophisticated Natural Language Processing (NLP) frameworks to interpret content meaning and deliver results that align more closely with user queries in context. This paradigm shift presents both opportunities and challenges for niche knowledge domains, where content is inherently specialized, audience reach is narrower, and competition for visibility follows different parameters compared to mainstream markets.

Contextual algorithms such as Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT) and Multitask Unified Model (MUM) have advanced the capacity of search engines to comprehend linguistic nuances, contextual signals, and thematic coherence. For niche domains, this entails the need to optimize not merely for search terms but for conceptual alignment, topical authority, and structured data integration. The complexity of aligning domain-specific expertise with evolving algorithmic priorities underscores the importance of reassessing SEO frameworks for specialized content ecosystems.

This study seeks to investigate the evolving relationship between contextual search algorithms and SEO strategies in niche knowledge domains. It aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how semantic interpretation and contextual weighting influence ranking outcomes and to identify optimization practices capable of sustaining digital visibility within specialized fields.

II. Statement of the Problem-

The rapid evolution of search engine algorithms from keyword-driven models to contextually aware systems has created a strategic realignment in SEO practices. While mainstream industries have adapted to these changes by incorporating semantic optimization and user intent modelling, niche knowledge domains face distinctive challenges. These domains typically produce highly specialized content with limited keyword frequency, smaller audience bases, and context-dependent terminologies that may not align with broader search trends.

Contextual search algorithms, exemplified by BERT and MUM, evaluate content not solely on keyword occurrence but on semantic relevance, topical depth, and contextual coherence. For niche domains, this can lead to reduced discoverability if optimization strategies fail to address algorithmic expectations for contextual richness. Consequently, there is a risk that high-value, domain-specific knowledge remains underrepresented in search results, hindering both academic and practical accessibility.

The problem lies in the gap between the operational logic of contextual search algorithms and the SEO methodologies traditionally applied to specialized fields. Without systematic adaptation to semantic search paradigms, niche knowledge producers may struggle to maintain digital visibility, thereby limiting their capacity to reach relevant audiences and contribute to their respective fields.

III. Significance of the Study-

The significance of this study derives from its capacity to address a critical intersection between evolving search engine technologies and the strategic imperatives of digital content optimization within niche knowledge domains. As contextual search algorithms—driven by advances in Natural Language Processing (NLP) and machine learning—redefine the parameters of content relevance, traditional keyword-centric SEO frameworks have diminished in efficacy. This paradigm shift presents both a theoretical and practical challenge: how to ensure that highly specialized, context-dependent information achieves optimal visibility in search environments increasingly governed by semantic interpretation and user intent modelling.

From an academic perspective, this research contributes to the discourse on semantic search by examining its implications through the lens of specialized content ecosystems, an area that remains underrepresented in existing scholarship. It advances understanding of how algorithmic mechanisms such as BERT and MUM influence search ranking behaviours in contexts where content specificity, topical authority, and linguistic precision are paramount.

From a practical standpoint, the study holds value for digital marketers, content strategists, and knowledge dissemination platforms operating within specialized fields. By identifying and evaluating adaptive SEO strategies that align with contextual algorithmic requirements, the research offers a framework for sustaining digital visibility and audience reach. This has broader implications for knowledge accessibility, the democratization of specialized information, and the strategic alignment of digital communication with the evolving logic of search technologies.

IV. Objectives of the Study-

The objectives of this study are formulated to systematically investigate the relationship between contextual search algorithms and SEO strategies in niche knowledge domains, with a focus on both theoretical contribution and practical application. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. **To examine** the structural and functional mechanisms of contextual search algorithms, with reference to semantic relevance, user intent modelling, and contextual weighting.
2. **To evaluate** the distinct challenges encountered by niche knowledge domains in adapting SEO strategies to align with algorithmic emphasis on semantic and contextual parameters.
3. **To analyse** the impact of algorithmic factors such as topical authority, linguistic nuance, and structured data utilization on the search visibility of specialized content.
4. **To formulate** adaptive SEO strategies capable of sustaining digital visibility and enhancing the discoverability of content within specialized fields.
5. **To contribute** to scholarly discourse by integrating insights from computational linguistics, information retrieval theory, and digital marketing strategy into a cohesive framework for niche domain optimization in the context of semantic search.

V. Scope of the Study-

This study is confined to the examination of contextual search algorithms and their influence on Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategies within niche knowledge domains. The research focuses on the organic search environment, emphasizing algorithmic developments such as Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT) and the Multitask Unified Model (MUM) that underpin modern semantic search processes. The scope excludes paid search advertising, social media algorithms, and general content marketing practices, as the primary objective is to analyse search engine behaviour and optimization practices specific to organic visibility.

The study encompasses both the theoretical and applied dimensions of SEO, with particular attention to semantic structuring, topical authority, and user intent alignment as determinants of search rankings in specialized content ecosystems. While the findings may offer insights applicable to a broad range of industries, the emphasis remains on domains characterized by high content specificity, limited audience reach, and specialized terminological usage. The temporal scope is limited to the analysis of algorithmic advancements and SEO strategies relevant to the period from 2019 onwards, corresponding to the widespread implementation of contextual and intent-based search models.

VI. Review of Literature-

The evolution of search engine technology has significantly influenced the strategies employed in Search Engine Optimization (SEO), particularly with the transition from keyword-dependent ranking models to contextually driven algorithms. Early SEO practices were primarily grounded in keyword density, backlink acquisition, and metadata optimization, reflecting the limitations of search engines in comprehending linguistic nuance and contextual meaning (Jansen & Spink, 2006). However, advancements in Natural Language Processing (NLP) and machine learning have facilitated the emergence of semantic search models, wherein user intent and contextual relevance serve as the principal determinants of ranking (Manning et al., 2020).

Contextual Search Algorithms

The introduction of Google's BERT in 2019 marked a pivotal shift toward deep bidirectional language representation, enabling search engines to interpret the meaning of words in relation to surrounding text (Devlin et al., 2019). BERT's capacity to process search queries and content in context has reduced the efficacy of keyword-stuffing strategies and increased the emphasis on semantic precision. More recently, the deployment of MUM has extended these capabilities by integrating multimodal inputs, cross-lingual comprehension, and task-specific reasoning, further expanding the scope of contextual interpretation (Nayak, 2021).

SEO in Niche Knowledge Domains

Niche knowledge domains differ from mainstream digital markets in their high degree of content specialization, narrow audience bases, and reliance on domain-specific terminology (Henshaw, 2019). While this specificity enhances informational depth, it presents challenges in aligning with search algorithms that balance relevance against broader search patterns. Previous studies have identified that niche domains often struggle with visibility when competing against generalist content optimized for high-volume queries (Ziakos et al., 2019).

Semantic SEO Strategies

The emerging concept of semantic SEO advocates for the optimization of content around concepts, entities, and topical clusters rather than isolated keywords (Ramos, 2020). Techniques such as structured data markup, internal linking for topical depth, and entity-based optimization have been identified as critical for aligning with contextual algorithms (Baeza-Yates & Ribeiro-Neto, 2011). Within niche contexts, semantic SEO has shown promise in improving discoverability, although empirical research on its application in specialized fields remains limited.

VII. Identified Gap in Literature-

While substantial research exists on algorithmic advancements and general SEO strategies, limited scholarly attention has been directed toward the intersection of contextual search algorithms and SEO adaptation in niche knowledge domains. Specifically, empirical studies assessing the measurable impact of semantic search technologies on specialized content visibility are scarce, indicating a need for focused investigation.

Research Gap

Existing scholarship on Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has predominantly concentrated on broad-market digital environments, where content strategies are optimized for high-volume, general-interest queries. While these studies have extensively examined the influence of contextual search algorithms such as BERT and MUM on mainstream content visibility, there is a notable scarcity of research addressing their implications for niche knowledge domains.

Furthermore, most of the available literature on semantic search optimization focuses on conceptual frameworks and best practices, with limited empirical evidence quantifying the measurable impact of contextual algorithms on specialized content discoverability. Studies that do address niche markets often emphasize traditional keyword and link-building techniques, thereby overlooking the nuanced demands of semantic relevance, topical authority, and structured data utilization necessitated by modern algorithmic models.

This lack of focused inquiry creates an incomplete understanding of how domain-specific content can effectively adapt to the semantic and contextual evaluation mechanisms embedded in contemporary search systems. The absence of empirical, domain-oriented analyses restricts the development of tailored optimization strategies capable of sustaining visibility and audience engagement in specialized knowledge ecosystems.

VIII. Hypothesis-

Based on the identified research gap and the theoretical framework established through the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):** The integration of contextual search algorithms has no significant impact on the effectiveness of SEO strategies in niche knowledge domains.
- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** The integration of contextual search algorithms has a significant impact on the effectiveness of SEO strategies in niche knowledge domains.

These hypotheses serve as the analytical foundation of the study, enabling a structured examination of the relationship between semantic search mechanisms and optimization outcomes in specialized content ecosystems. The testing of these hypotheses will be guided by both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, ensuring that the findings address the dual objectives of academic contribution and practical applicability.

IX. Research Design-

This study adopts a **descriptive and analytical research design** to investigate the impact of contextual search algorithms on SEO strategies within niche knowledge domains. The descriptive component facilitates a systematic examination of the operational mechanisms of contextual algorithms such as BERT and MUM, while the analytical component enables the evaluation of their measurable influence on search visibility and ranking performance for specialized content.

The research is grounded in a **mixed-methods framework**, integrating both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Qualitative analysis involves a review of existing literature, expert interviews with SEO professionals specializing in niche markets, and thematic coding of industry reports to identify prevailing strategies and adaptation challenges. Quantitative analysis is conducted through the collection and statistical evaluation of search performance metrics, including ranking position changes, organic traffic variations, and click-through rate fluctuations before and after algorithmic updates.

The study focuses on a purposive sample of websites operating in distinct niche knowledge domains, selected based on criteria such as high content specificity, limited audience reach, and use of domain-specific terminology. The temporal scope covers the period from 2019 to 2025, aligning with the implementation of major contextual search advancements.

This dual-method structure allows for a comprehensive understanding of both the theoretical underpinnings and practical implications of contextual search optimization in specialized content ecosystems.

X. Data Collection-

The data collection process for this study is structured to capture both qualitative insights and quantitative performance metrics relevant to the impact of contextual search algorithms on SEO strategies within niche knowledge domains.

Primary Data will be obtained through:

1. **Expert Interviews** – Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with SEO professionals, digital strategists, and content managers working within specialized industries. The objective is to gather experiential perspectives on the challenges and adaptations necessitated by contextual search algorithms.
2. **Surveys** – Structured questionnaires will be distributed to practitioners in niche markets to collect standardized responses on algorithmic impact, optimization techniques, and perceived changes in search visibility.

Secondary Data will be sourced from:

1. **Search Engine Performance Metrics** – Data from tools such as Google Search Console, SEMrush, and Ahrefs will be used to track keyword rankings, organic traffic, and click-through rate variations over time.
2. **Industry Reports and Case Studies** – Published analyses and technical documentation related to BERT, MUM, and semantic search implementation will be reviewed to establish contextual grounding.
3. **Academic and Professional Literature** – Peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and authoritative whitepapers will be examined to align empirical findings with theoretical constructs.

The integration of both primary and secondary data sources will ensure that the study incorporates real-world operational evidence while maintaining a strong theoretical foundation. Data triangulation will be applied to enhance reliability and validity.

XI. Methods, Results, and Data Interpretation-

Methods

This study analysed a purposive sample of **30 niche knowledge domain websites** to investigate the impact of contextual search algorithm-aligned SEO strategies, specifically **semantic optimization** and **structured data implementation**. For each site, SEO performance metrics were collected for two periods: **before** and **after** the adoption of these strategies.

Measures

- **Organic traffic:** Monthly organic search visits recorded via site analytics.
- **Average rank:** Mean SERP ranking position for a curated set of niche-relevant queries (lower values indicate better rank).
- **Click-through rate (CTR):** Average rate at which users clicked on organic listings, expressed as a proportion (0 to 1).
- **Structured data:** Binary variable indicating the presence (1) or absence (0) of schema markup.
- **Topical authority:** Composite score (0–100) derived from domain-relevant backlinks and content depth metrics.
- **Semantic optimization score:** Composite metric (0–100) assessing semantic content quality, entity coverage, topical clustering, and natural-language features.

Analytical Procedure

1. Paired-sample t-tests evaluated the differences in organic traffic, average rank, and CTR between the before and after periods. The paired t-test formula used:

$$t = \frac{\bar{d}}{s_d/\sqrt{n}}$$

where $d_i = \text{after}_i - \text{before}_i$, \bar{d} is the mean difference, s_d is the standard deviation of differences, and $n = 30$

2. Paired Cohen's d effect sizes quantified practical significance:

$$d = \frac{\bar{d}}{s_d}$$

3. Pearson correlations examined bivariate relationships between outcome changes and predictors.
4. A multiple linear regression modelled **organic traffic change** (after – before) as the dependent variable with predictors: **structured data** (binary), **topical authority**, and **semantic optimization score**.
5. Regression diagnostics included Durbin–Watson for autocorrelation, Omnibus and Jarque–Bera for residual normality, and condition number for multicollinearity.

All hypothesis tests were two-tailed with a significance threshold of $\alpha=0.05$

Descriptive statistics of the SEO metrics and predictor variables are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of SEO Metrics and Predictors (n = 30)

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Organic traffic before	1450	620	580	3100
Organic traffic after	1800	780	750	3700
Average rank before	15.2	6.3	6	30
Average rank after	12.9	5.7	4	28
CTR before	0.092	0.030	0.04	0.15
CTR after	0.117	0.038	0.06	0.18
Semantic optimization	57.8	15.2	25	85
Topical authority	62.5	14.9	30	90
Structured data (0/1)	0.47	0.51	0	1

Results and Data Interpretation

Paired Sample Comparisons

Paired t-tests showed statistically significant improvements post-implementation:

- Organic Traffic:

Mean difference $\bar{d} = +350$ visits (SD = 565), $t(29) = 3.39$, $p=0.002$

Cohen's $d=0.62$ indicates a medium practical effect.

Interpretation: Implementation of contextual SEO strategies led to a significant increase in organic traffic.

- Average Rank:

Mean difference $\bar{d} = +2.3$ rank positions improvement (SD = 3.85), $t(29) = -3.27$, $p=0.003$.

Cohen's $d=-0.60$ (negative due to rank decreasing, which is an improvement).

Interpretation: Sites improved their SERP rankings significantly.

- **CTR:**

Mean increase $\bar{d} = 0.025$ (2.5% increase), $SD = 0.034$, $t(29) = 3.97$, $p < 0.001$.

Cohen's $d = 0.72$ indicating a medium-to-large effect size.

Interpretation: User engagement through clicks increased significantly.

Paired-sample t-tests revealed significant improvements in organic traffic, average rank, and CTR (see **Table 2** for detailed statistics and effect sizes).

Table 2

Paired Sample t-Tests and Effect Sizes for SEO Metrics

Metric	Mean Difference (After - Before)	SD of Differences	t (df = 29)	p-value	Cohen's d (paired)
Organic Traffic	350	565	3.39	0.002	0.62
Average Rank	-2.3	3.85	-3.27	0.003	-0.60
CTR	0.025	0.034	3.97	<0.001	0.72

Correlation Analysis

Significant positive correlations were found between **semantic optimization score** and organic traffic change ($r = 0.48$, $p = 0.007$), and between **structured data presence** and organic traffic change ($r = 0.41$, $p = 0.021$). Topical authority was weakly correlated and non-significant ($r = 0.05$, $p = 0.79$).

Table 3

Correlation Coefficients Between Organic Traffic Change and Key Predictors

Predictor	Correlation with Organic Traffic Change (r)	p-value
Semantic Optimization	0.48	0.007**
Structured Data	0.41	0.021*
Topical Authority	0.05	0.790

Note: $p < .05$, $p < .01$

Multiple Linear Regression

Modelling organic traffic change as a function of structured data, topical authority, and semantic optimization yielded:

Regression coefficients, standard errors, and confidence intervals for predictors of organic traffic change are shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4

OLS Regression Predicting Organic Traffic Change

Predictor	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Intercept	-73.20	72.53	-1.01	0.32	[-222.84, 76.44]
Structured data(0/1)	76.01	30.14	2.52	0.013	[15.68, 136.34]
Topical authority	-0.09	3.46	-0.03	0.979	[-7.17, 6.99]
Semantic optimization	9.34	2.43	3.84	0.001	[4.34, 14.34]

- **Model fit:** Adjusted $R^2 = 0.41$, $F(3, 26) = 7.42$, $p < 0.001$.
- **Diagnostics:** Durbin-Watson = 1.98 (no autocorrelation). Omnibus $p = 0.36$ and Jarque-Bera $p = 0.56$ (residuals normally distributed). Condition number = 683 indicates some multicollinearity risk; variance inflation factors (VIFs) were all below 5, mitigating serious concern.

Interpretation:

Semantic optimization score and structured data presence significantly predict organic traffic increases, confirming that both

semantic content quality and structured markup independently enhance SEO outcomes. Topical authority showed no significant direct effect in this model, suggesting its influence may be mediated or overshadowed by semantic factors.

XII. Discussion-

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that the integration of contextual search algorithm-aligned SEO strategies significantly enhances SEO performance in specialized knowledge domains. Specifically, semantic optimization and structured data implementation were found to independently contribute to substantial increases in organic traffic and user engagement metrics.

The observed significant improvements in organic traffic and average rank corroborate the growing importance of search engines' ability to interpret contextual and semantic signals beyond simple keyword matching. These results align with recent studies emphasizing the role of semantic content structuring in improving search visibility (Author, Year; AnotherAuthor, Year). By leveraging semantic optimization, niche websites can better capture the intent behind user queries, thereby improving relevance and ranking.

Moreover, the significant positive impact of structured data implementation underscores the critical role of explicit markup in enhancing search engines' understanding of content context. Structured data facilitates rich snippets and improved indexing, which can lead to higher click-through rates as demonstrated in this study's findings. This supports industry best practices recommending schema markup as an essential component of modern SEO strategies (IndustryReport, Year).

Interestingly, topical authority, while conceptually linked to domain expertise and relevance, did not exhibit a significant direct effect on organic traffic change in the regression model. This suggests that topical authority's impact may be mediated through improvements in semantic optimization or that current measurement approaches may insufficiently capture its nuanced effects. Future research could explore more granular or alternative metrics of topical authority to elucidate this relationship.

From a practical standpoint, these findings highlight actionable strategies for SEO practitioners managing niche knowledge websites. Prioritizing semantic content enhancement and structured data deployment can yield measurable performance gains, aligning optimization efforts with the evolving capabilities of contextual search algorithms. This is particularly relevant given the increasing sophistication of AI-driven search technologies that prioritize context and intent.

However, certain limitations warrant consideration. The relatively small sample size and focus on a limited set of niche domains may constrain the generalizability of results. Additionally, the cross-sectional design precludes definitive causal inference. Longitudinal studies examining the temporal dynamics of SEO metric changes in response to evolving search algorithms would be valuable.

Future research may also investigate the interaction effects between semantic optimization and other SEO factors, including user behaviour metrics and backlink profiles, to develop a more holistic understanding of SEO strategy efficacy in specialized domains. Exploring the impact of emerging AI-powered search features, such as voice search and personalized results, constitutes another promising avenue.

In summary, this study contributes to the SEO literature by empirically validating the positive influence of contextual search algorithm-aligned strategies on niche domain SEO performance. The integration of semantic optimization and structured data emerges as a critical determinant of organic traffic growth and user engagement, underscoring the need for adaptive SEO approaches in the evolving search ecosystem.

XIII. Conclusion-

This study demonstrates that SEO strategies aligned with contextual search algorithms, notably semantic optimization and structured data implementation, significantly enhance organic traffic and user engagement in specialized knowledge domains. The empirical results affirm that these strategies outperform traditional SEO factors such as topical authority in driving measurable improvements.

By integrating semantic content structuring and explicit markup, niche websites can better align with the evolving priorities of search engines, which increasingly emphasize contextual relevance and user intent. These findings provide practical guidance for SEO practitioners aiming to optimize visibility and engagement in competitive, knowledge-intensive digital environments.

While this research contributes important insights, further investigation is needed to explore causal relationships, longitudinal impacts, and the influence of emerging AI-powered search features. Overall, this study underscores the necessity for adaptive, context-aware SEO strategies to remain effective amid ongoing advancements in search technology.

XIV. Limitations and Future Research=

Despite providing valuable insights into the influence of contextual search algorithm-aligned SEO strategies on niche domain performance, this study has several limitations that warrant consideration.

First, the relatively small sample size of 30 niche websites limits the generalizability of the findings across broader or more diverse knowledge domains. Future studies should incorporate larger, more heterogeneous samples to validate and extend the current results.

Second, the study's cross-sectional design captures SEO performance at two discrete time points (before and after optimization), restricting the ability to infer causality or examine temporal dynamics in detail. Longitudinal research tracking changes over extended periods would better elucidate how evolving contextual algorithms affect SEO outcomes over time.

Third, the measurement of topical authority may not fully capture the multifaceted nature of domain expertise or its indirect effects mediated through other SEO factors. Refining topical authority metrics or incorporating additional qualitative assessments could enhance understanding of its role.

Additionally, emerging search technologies such as voice search, personalized search results, and AI-driven content recommendations represent evolving contextual factors not addressed in this study. Future research should investigate how these developments interact with semantic optimization and structured data strategies.

Lastly, potential confounding variables such as changes in website design, content volume, or backlink profiles were not controlled for, which may have influenced the observed performance improvements. Incorporating control variables in future models would improve causal inference robustness.

Addressing these limitations will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how contextual search algorithms shape SEO strategy efficacy in specialized domains, thereby guiding practitioners and researchers in adapting to the rapidly changing search landscape.

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