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**A comparison between the Webmaster tool features  
of the big three search engines**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The big search engines, offer tools, to improve a website's ranking. These so called Webmaster Tools, deliver meaningful results about the status of a website. In this research, the Webmaster Tools from Google, Bing and Yahoo! were compared, to see which one delivers the most.

Focusing on the main features, for optimizing a website, like dashboard, configuration, reports, crawling, links and optimization tips, the result was not very surprising. There were differences between the tools, but in the end both tools have similar quality of the features. By the fact that Google is the bigger and better known search engine, they have an advantage. They are not without reason the biggest and most popular search engine.

## **KEYWORDS**

webmaster tools, google, bing, yahoo, search engine optimization

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

If people in Germany were asked how they find information online, they probably will say "in Google". Google managed to become the number one search engine. But there are others as well. Bing (former MSN Search) and Yahoo! are the two big competitors in the search engine industry. People how are providing information or products online, have a huge interest in ranking high on the search engine result pages (SERP). Due to that, people have a big interest in optimizing their website to meet the specifications of the search engine. To make it easier for the users, the search engines are providing tools. (Czysch, 2014)

The tools form the three big search engines Google, Bing and Yahoo! are a big support for Webmasters. While Google has its own tool, Bing and Yahoo! are sharing the same. They both have strong features, which help the people to better understand how search works and how they should optimize their site.

This research was focusing on the features of the tools. Which tool is providing more information and how user-friendly are they. For testing purposes the website of the Protosoft AG ([www.protosoft.de](http://www.protosoft.de)) was used. The site was already registered at Google, so there was already information about the site. Due to the fact, that the site was submitted to the Bing Webmaster Center for the first time, the dashboard was empty for almost a week. After that the tool was starting to collect information to compare.

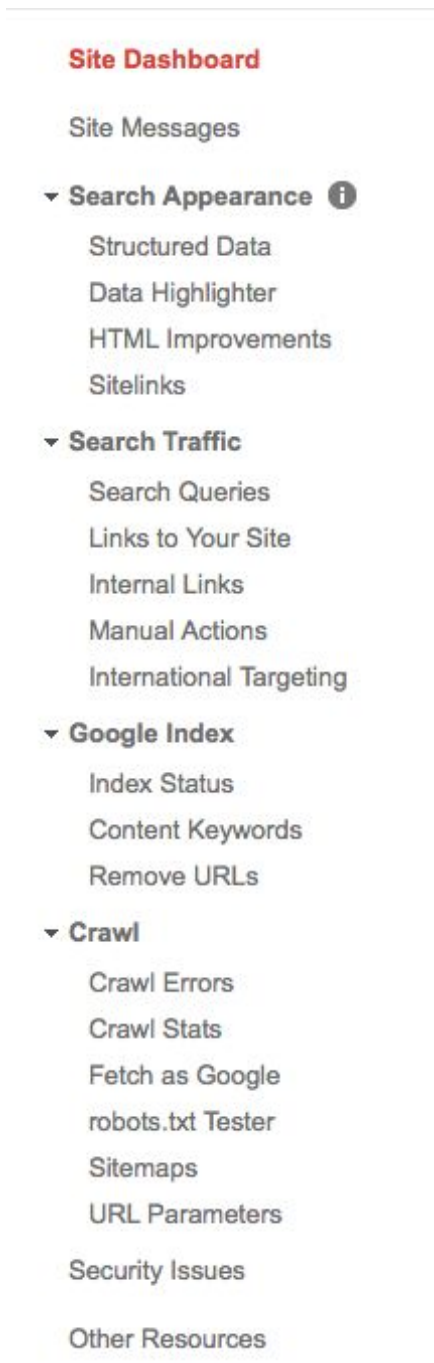
## **2. MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES**

### **2.1 Dashboard**

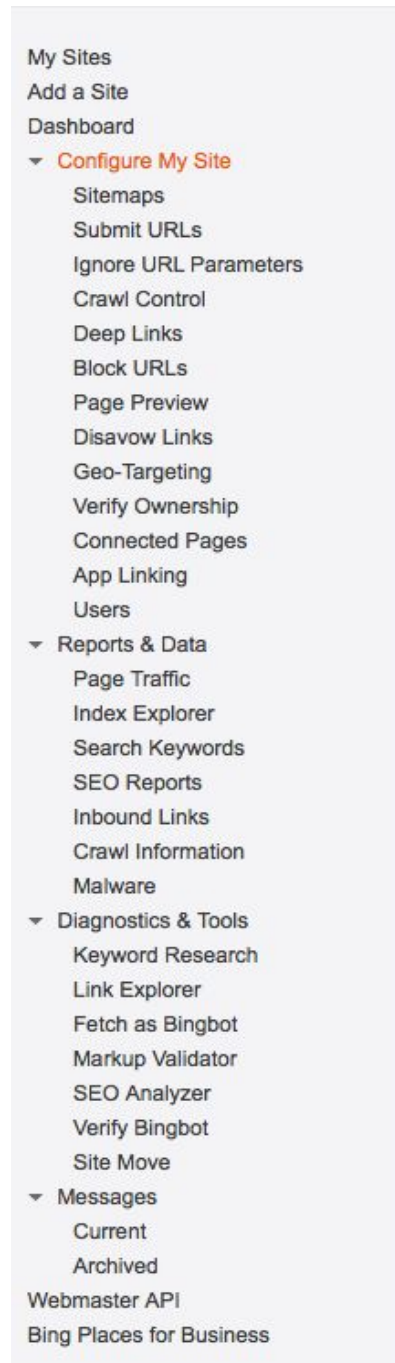
The Dashboard provides an brief overview of your website. While Google is showing crawling errors, search requests and your sitemaps, Bing is showing a lot more details like clicks from search, appeared in search, the crawled pages, crawl errors and the indexed pages. As far as that, Bing is also providing information about the sitemaps, keywords and inbound links.

### **2.2 Configuration**

Bing is offering a lot of configuration possibilities. Google however is more or less hiding them from the User.



**Figure 1** Google Sidebar



**Figure 2** Bing Sidebar

In general the configuration is telling the search engine how to handle a site. With adding a sitemap for example, the search engine got the complete structure at one glance. The user can even tell the search engines how to handle confusing parameters. As seen in Figure 2 Bing has to offer a lot more options for configuring a website, like submitting and blocking URLs. Google also allows removing URLs, but it is located under “Google Index”.

## 2.3 Reports

This section provided reports and analytical information’s gathered from the crawler. When the Google- or Bing-Bot detected a site, which is not reachable or maybe spam, this was documented in this section. Bing also provided data about the page traffic. This included data from Bing and Yahoo!. Both tools were showing the URLs, which were linking to an inactive site. This helped to remove the sites, which are marked by the crawler.

## 2.4 Crawling

A feature, which was also offered by both Tools, was the “Fetch as Bingbot/Googlebot” option. This was allowing the user to see the site in the perspective of the respective bot.

```
HTTP/1.1 200 OK
Cache-Control: no-store, no-cache, must-revalidate
Cache-Control: post-check=0, pre-check=0
Connection: Keep-Alive
Date: Tue, 21 Oct 2014 11:35:55 GMT
Keep-Alive: timeout=15, max=100
Pragma: no-cache
Transfer-Encoding: chunked
Content-Type: text/html; charset=utf-8
Expires: Mon, 26 Jul 1997 05:00:00 GMT
Last-Modified: Tue, 21 Oct 2014 11:35:55 GMT
Server: Apache/2.2.12 (Linux/SUSE)
Set-Cookie: CMSSESSID0db7496d=ol5orpig1cj6vusdttdrjjcfmijf4tagl01tma9ie7eem6jounm61; path=/
X-Powered-By: PHP/5.3.17
```

**Figure 3** Googlebot point of view

This was basically the plain HTML Code but with some additional information's (as seen in Figure 3) at the top.

Google was offering the possibility to invite the crawler and submit the site to the index. This was very handy when content needed to be changed quickly or for example the site got hacked. Up to 500 times per month, Google allows to submit a site to the index. Even better was the opportunity to submit this specific site and all the other sites it links to (Cutts, 2011).

## 2.5 Search Queries

The search query section, offered very informative details by both of the Webmaster tools. Both tools were showing the keywords, which the people have searched for. They included information about the clicks the user were taking after the search and the amount of the searched keywords, were actually found on the site.

## 2.6 Links

When it came to analysing links, both Google and Bing had good options. Both tools provided a feature to test incoming links. The results were different. Bing counted 106 and Google 443 Links. The free tool “Open Site Explorer” counted 92 total links (moz.com, 2014). This result was just confusing as already realised by other users (Hines, 2014).

## 2.7 Optimization

## HTML Improvements

Last updated Oct 20, 2014

Addressing the following may help your site's user experience and performance.

| Meta description                                                     | Pages |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Duplicate meta descriptions                                          | 94    |
| Long meta descriptions                                               | 0     |
| Short meta descriptions                                              | 0     |
| Title tag                                                            | Pages |
| Missing title tags                                                   | 0     |
| Duplicate title tags                                                 | 35    |
| Long title tags                                                      | 0     |
| Short title tags                                                     | 0     |
| Non-informative title tags                                           | 0     |
| Non-indexable content                                                | Pages |
| We didn't detect any issues with non-indexable content on your site. |       |

**Figure 4** Google's Website optimization suggestion

**SEO Suggestions**

| Error Count | Description                                           |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 1           | The <h1>-tag is missing.                              |
| 1           | The description is too long or too short.             |
| 2           | The <img>-tag does not have an ALT attribute defined. |

**Analyzed Page Source Original**

```

Date: Wed, 22 Oct 2014 15:01:06 GMT
Server: Apache/2.2.12 (Linux/SUSE)
X-Powered-By: PHP/5.3.17
Set-Cookie: C082831D0db7496d41mgkatnl9qbir211ir5tvaigp0kt22coug015e4g80jl1&L; path=/
Expires: Mon, 26 Jul 1997 05:00:00 GMT
Cache-Control: no-store, no-cache, must-revalidate, post-check=0, pre-check=0
Last-Modified: Wed, 22 Oct 2014 15:01:06 GMT
Pragma: no-cache
Connection: close
Transfer-Encoding: chunked
Content-Type: text/html; charset=utf-8

<!doctype html>
<html lang="de" dir="ltr">
<head>
<meta charset="UTF-8">
<title>Home - Protosoft</title>
<meta name="viewport" content="initial-scale=1.0 maximum-scale=1.0 user-scalable=no">
<meta name="HandheldFriendly" content="true">
<base href="http://www.protosoft.de/">
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=utf-8">
<meta http-equiv="cache-control" content="max-age=60">
<meta name="robots" content="index, follow">
<meta name="title" content="Protosoft AG | Softwareentwicklung, IT-Services und Produktberatung">
<meta name="description" content="Die Protosoft AG bietet in den Geschäftsbereichen Software-Entwicklung, IT-Services und Produktberatung kundenspezifische Branchenlösungen für Fertigungs- und Dienstleistungsunternehmen und Dienstleistungs-Unternehmen an.">
<meta name="keywords" content="Linux, SUSE, Novell, VMware, Oracle, Protosoft, Software Entwicklung, München, Support">
  
```

**Figure 5** Bings Website optimization suggestion

Google and Bing were offering tips for optimizing the website. Google's "HTML improvements" were showing issues in the meta description, title tags and non-indexable content (as seen in Figure 4). Bing's "SEO Report" was showing that the page was missing h1-tags, alt-definition in the img-tags and the meta-description was too long/short. A nice feature here was, that Bing highlighted the part, which needed to be optimized (as seen in Figure 5).

## 3. COMPARISON

In April 2014, Annie Cushing already compared Google's Webmaster Tools and Bing's Webmaster Center to see, how to get the most out of the two. She came up with 99 comparison points, which she summarized in a Google spreadsheet. She came to the following conclusion:

*"I have to say, even though Google provides more goodies than Bing, I was surprised to see how much Bing held its own. And there are some features that Bing offers that Google doesn't, such as historical data <shakes fist at Google for limiting us to a measly 35 days> and Avg Click Position for query terms."* (Cushing, 2014)

Her full list with all 99 comparisons can be seen under this link:

<https://spreadsheets.google.com/pub?hl=en&hl=en&key=0AlakA6rJ7yhodHp2QzJnUnNiN3k0SHBnNXITV0ZLeWc>

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Website Evaluation

Google offers good features, and a lot of technology. The fetch as Googlebot feature, where you can pick up a Google crawler and submit your site almost instant to the index is very handy. Especially when the information in the index need to be changed quickly. The User interface is a little bit hard to understand. The dashboard was a little bit confusing when seeing it for the first time. Some features in the menu are located somewhere, where the user wouldn't expect them. Bing instead has a clear menu, where things could easier be found. In general, the Google Webmaster Tools were a powerful, clean and easy to understand helper for understanding the search process and optimizing the site.

Bing on the other hand, offers a great user experience, when logging in to the Dashboard. The Dashboard had all the most important information's for the user. They were presented in a nice arrangement of statistics and figures and by the fact that there were more information's, it

made a better impression at first glance. Some features were missing like the above-mentioned fetching and submitting feature. But there were features, like the SEO Report, which were better than Google. Especially the part, where it marked the corresponding section in the source code.

At the end, both sites had their strong and weak sides, but in the end it is the user who decides which tool he likes better.

## 4.2 Spreadsheet Evaluation

To see which of the tools is capable of the most, Cushings spreadsheet was taken as basis. After changing the “✓” to “1” and the “✗” to “0”, it was possible to sum up the numbers and getting a specific value for each tool. Assuming that 99 points were the maximum, Google got 82 and Bing 67 points.

This would maybe explain, why Google’s Webmaster Tools are still handled as the number one SEO tool. (see Figure 6).



**Figure 6** Most favorite SEO Tools (moz.com, 2014)

## 5. CONCLUSION

To choose between Google and Bing might be very hard. Both have good and high quality features. The user experience varies between the two, but this is a personal decision for every user. The best way to tell which one is better might be the actual use of them. Every user has to decide, what tools offers the most advantages for him.

Google has been on the market for a long period of time. Actually Google proved, that they are good in what they are doing. Google has the biggest market share, almost 72%. Yahoo! and Bing have about 11% (NetMarketShare, 2014). This might be for a reason. Google was the first site, which the most of us will think at first, when asked for a search engine. Many people are just used to use Google; maybe they were literally born into. This will be the main reason, why people might always try to make Google's crawler happy at first. Except the fact that Bing and Yahoo! maybe have better features.

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