

Misusing Monopoly over Online Search - Google

What is the issue?

\n\n

US President Donald Trump recently accused Internet giant Google of abusing its monopoly over online search.

\n\n

What is the concern?

\n\n

\n

- Google has become an inalienable part of almost everyone's online life.

\n

- However, not a lot is known about how the search engine works and how it picks results.

\n

- Google does not disclose much about its search formula because of two reasons:

\n

\n\n

\n

1. its entire business is based on it

\n

2. a lot of people would try to game the system if they got to know how it was done

\n

\n\n

How does Google possibly work?

\n\n

\n

- The primary factor that determines the Google algorithm is the PageRank formula.

\n

- Under this, it gave value to how many sites are linked to a certain page.

\n

- There are many other factors that help a page to rank well.

\n

- These may include the URL structure, headlines, bounce rate of the page, and the time spent on the page.

\n

\n\n

\n

- There is a whole industry that is built around trying to understand this system.

\n

- It does this by incorporating pages with keywords and packing in other elements to help a page do better.

\n

- But this so-called search engine optimisation (or SEO) does not always help.

\n

- As, other factors like authority of the website and its tradition cannot be faked.

\n

- Over the years, Google has updated its algorithm at regular intervals to prevent people from taking advantage of it.

\n

- Each update brings some pages up and others down.

\n

\n\n

What is Trump's allegation?

\n\n

\n

- Trump alleged that Google was “suppressing positive stories” about his administration.

\n

- E.g. the negative stories are being done by authoritative websites like The New York Times or CNN.

\n

- The positive stories are limited to the relatively small rightwing sites.

\n

- Given the discussed algorithm, the negative stories are likely to show up on top more often.

\n

\n\n

\n

- Google has said its search is not affected by political ideology in any way.
\n
- However, it has been found that 0.25% of its daily traffic is linked to intentionally misleading, false or offensive information.
\n
- This is where it tweaked the algorithm, leading to complaints of a drop in traffic for many sites.
\n

\n\n

What next?

\n\n

- \n
- Google moves towards a search format where users don't really have to search to find a result.
\n
- It is using artificial intelligence and machine learning to pre-empt a query and surface a result.
\n
- This could mean results get prioritised and are hence not really neutral.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Indian Express

\n

