

Case Study – International Search Engine Marketing with Exact Keyword Match IDN Domain Names

Introduction

In 2007, we set out to demonstrate having an exact keyword match IDN ⁱ domain could significantly help with search engine positioning for non-English search terms at Google over an extended period of time.

Now a good couple of years have passed, it's December 2009, let's see how we got on....

Methodology

In order to guarantee a worthwhile trial, we needed to ensure the keyword we chose was highly competitive, so ended up choosing the *most commonly searched* Thai language term ⁱⁱ, เกมส์, which translates to “games”.

So the domain name was, in Thai characters: เกมส์.com, and in punycode ⁱⁱⁱ: xn--12c8d1a4fxc.com

The site we put up was a fairly typical static “free flash games” site, containing around 1400 games, and 1450 separate HTML pages.

What other SEO work did we do apart from building a reasonably well optimized website? Not too much to be honest. DMOZ didn't have a category editor at the time for the Thai “games” category. So the only external links we really got were from a few local Thai website directories.

Results

After spending six months “escaping the google sandbox”, the homepage of เกมส์.com has been permanently top ten for the matching keyword เกมส์, with positions distributed roughly as follows:

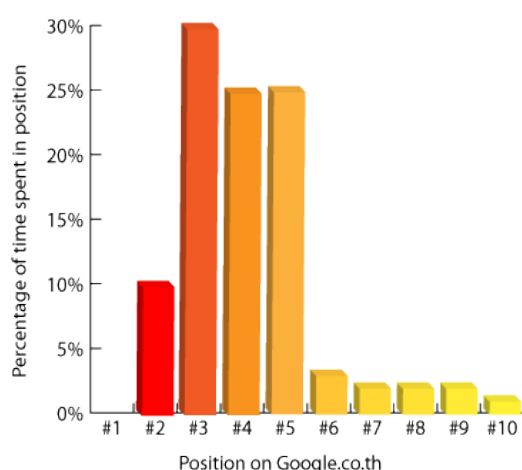


Fig 1: Time Spent (%) In Each Top Ten Google Position

At the time of writing (December 2009) it is in the #4 position:

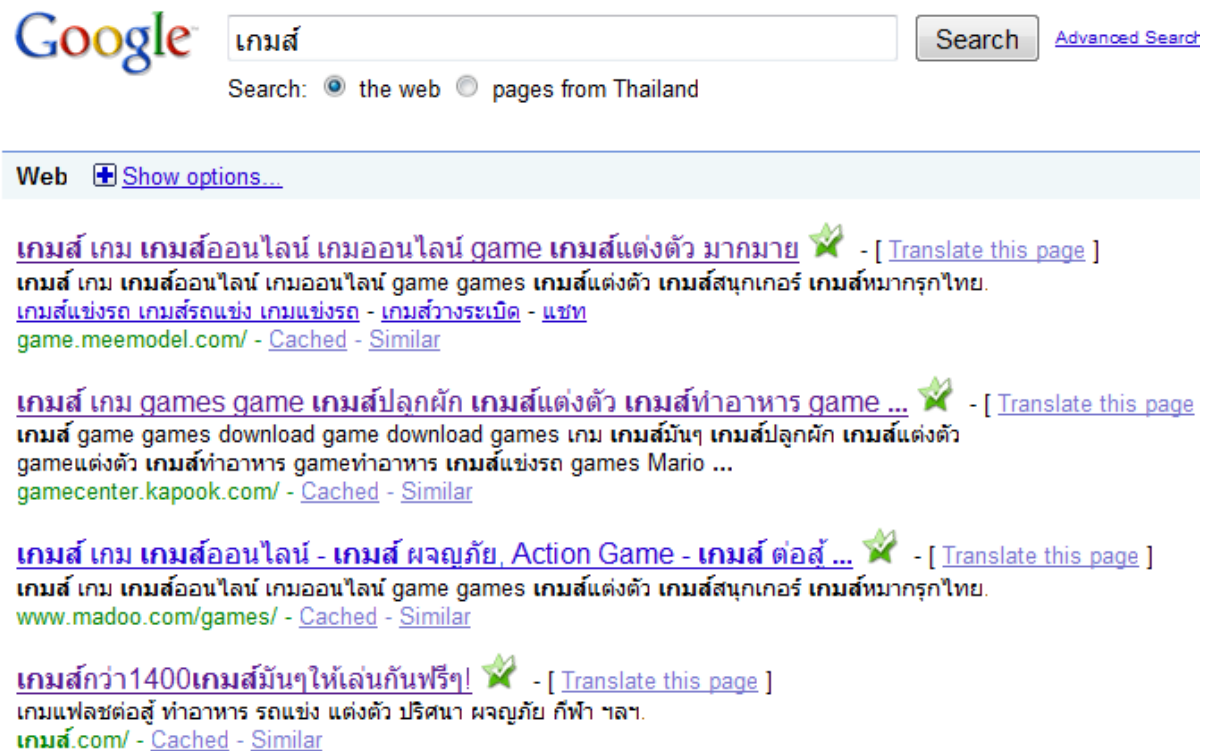


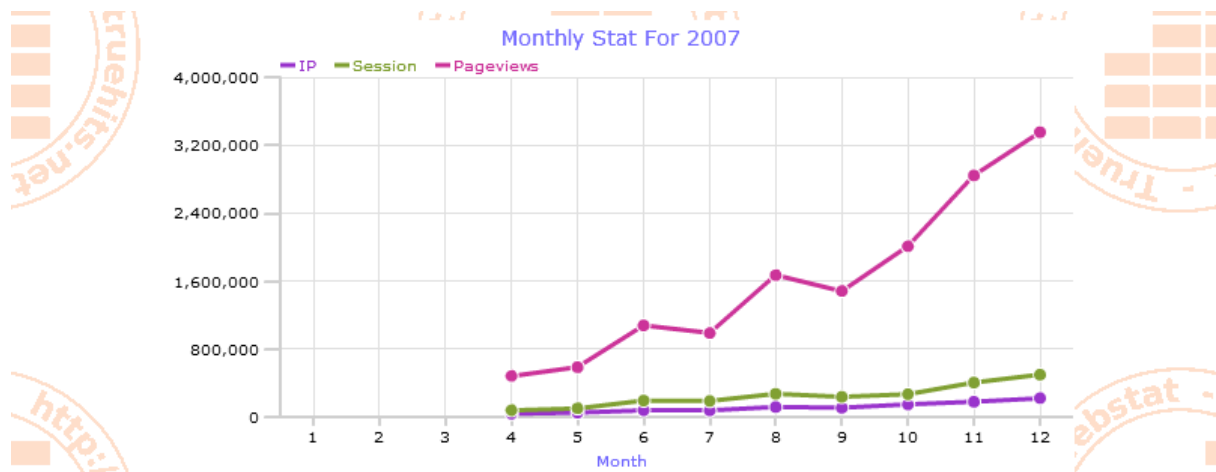
Fig 2: December 2009 Google Search Position For Search Term เกมส์

And around 70% to 75% of new visitors each month come from our main search term:

TOP Search Keywords จากจำนวนทั้งหมด 2608 อันดับ [ดาวน์โหลด Excel] [ตารางเปรียบเทียบตลอดทั้งปี]				
	NAME	Pageview	IP	Visitor
1.	เกมส์	699,863 (71.07%)	-	-
2.	เกมส์รถแข่ง	100,632 (10.22%)	-	-
3.	เกมส์รถ	40,549 (4.12%)	-	-
4.	เกมส์แต่งตัว	34,584 (3.51%)	-	-
5.	รถแข่ง	20,724 (2.10%)	-	-
6.	เกมส์ต่อสู้	18,530 (1.88%)	-	-

Fig 3: New Visitors Coming From Search Term เกมส์

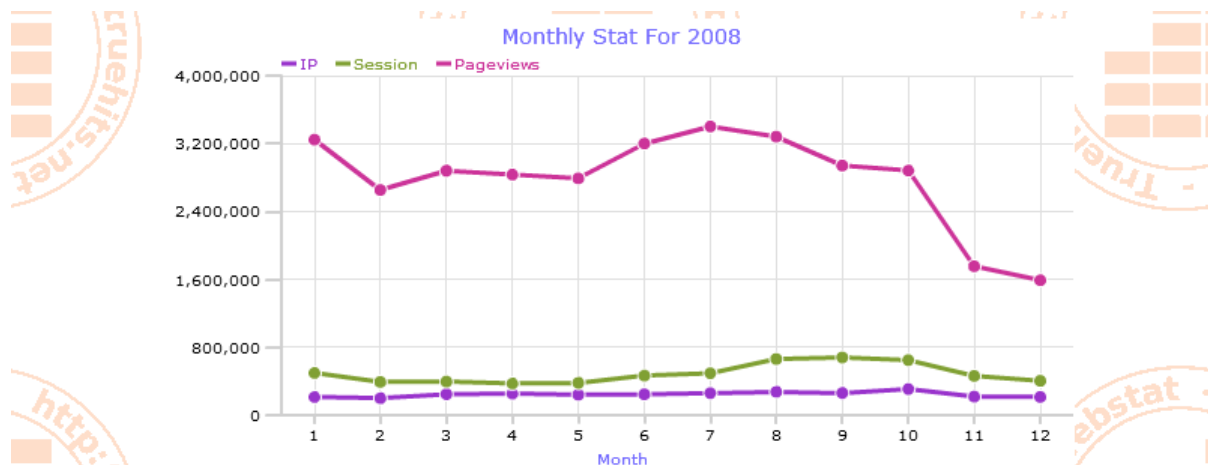
Here are screen-shots to show the number of visitors and page views the site has generated in 2007, 2008, and 2009 respectively:



สถิติรายเดือน					
เดือน/ปี	ใน 1 ปี				
	Page Views	Unique IPs	Sessions	Visitors	[New% /Return%]
04/2007	483,683	40,162	80,972	38,371	[-/-]
05/2007	586,535(+21.26%)	54,003(+34.46%)	103,155(+27.40%)	51,275(+33.63%)	[-/-]
06/2007	1,078,342(+83.85%)	80,992(+49.98%)	194,387(+88.44%)	101,903(+98.74%)	[-/-]
07/2007	989,118(-8.27%)	78,010(-3.68%)	190,233(-2.14%)	102,170(+0.26%)	[-/-]
08/2007	1,670,129(+68.85%)	117,791(+50.99%)	274,439(+44.26%)	147,702(+44.56%)	[83.94/36.07]
09/2007	1,483,962(-11.15%)	109,354(-7.16%)	237,489(-13.46%)	127,491(-13.68%)	[78.65/40.38]
10/2007	2,010,729(+35.50%)	148,350(+35.66%)	269,826(+13.62%)	132,120(+3.63%)	[79.38/43.10]
11/2007	2,843,524(+41.42%)	179,705(+21.14%)	405,625(+50.33%)	221,380(+67.56%)	[99.26/29.88]
12/2007	3,354,031(+17.95%)	222,899(+24.04%)	499,108(+23.05%)	258,641(+16.83%)	[84.02/39.79]
Summation	14,500,053	1,031,266	2,255,234	1,181,053	-

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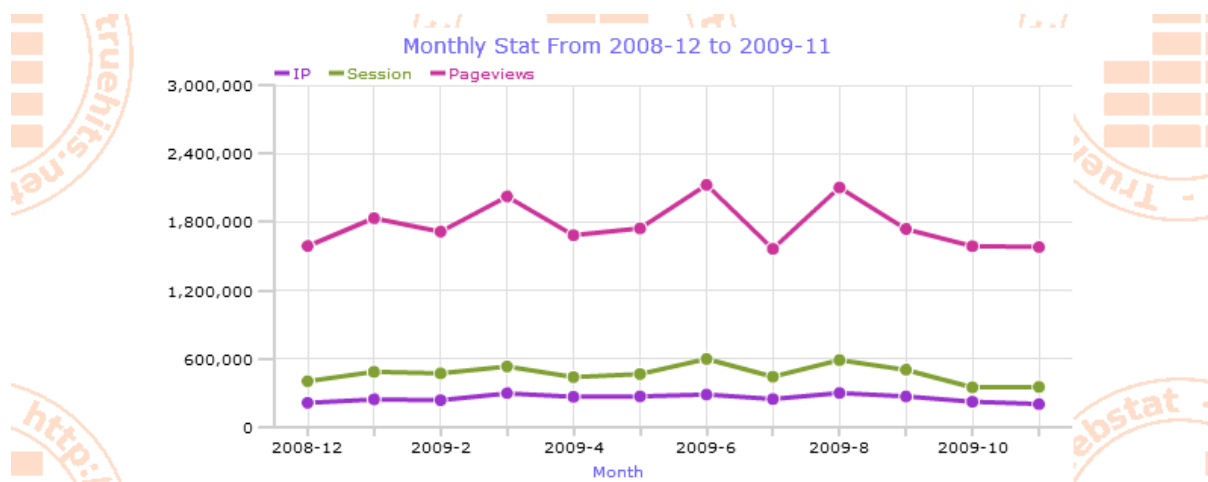
Fig 4: 2007 Visitor & Page View Statistics



เดือน/ปี	สถิติรายเดือน				
	Page Views	Unique IPs	Sessions	Visitors	[New% /Return%]
01/2008	3,246,874	214,468	497,854	262,679	[78.63/41.57]
02/2008	2,654,934(-18.23%)	200,992(-6.28%)	392,749(-21.11%)	210,620(-19.82%)	[74.21/44.26]
03/2008	2,881,560(+8.54%)	249,072(+23.92%)	396,503(+0.96%)	192,916(-8.41%)	[74.56/47.52]
04/2008	2,834,316(-1.64%)	254,248(+2.08%)	373,758(-5.74%)	179,096(-7.16%)	[74.18/47.99]
05/2008	2,790,552(-1.54%)	243,238(-4.33%)	381,667(+2.12%)	205,510(+14.75%)	[74.35/44.43]
06/2008	3,200,716(+14.70%)	246,214(+1.22%)	466,887(+22.33%)	261,370(+27.18%)	[78.14/40.68]
07/2008	3,401,998(+6.29%)	261,487(+6.20%)	496,114(+6.26%)	273,600(+4.68%)	[76.77/41.71]
08/2008	3,281,819(-3.53%)	275,960(+5.53%)	663,612(+33.76%)	375,609(+37.28%)	[82.23/37.74]
09/2008	2,941,354(-10.37%)	262,439(-4.90%)	681,849(+2.75%)	382,427(+1.82%)	[78.75/39.42]
10/2008	2,882,370(-2.01%)	309,562(+17.96%)	650,868(-4.54%)	349,137(-8.70%)	[77.43/42.36]
11/2008	1,755,665(-39.09%)	219,393(-29.13%)	463,066(-28.85%)	287,459(-17.67%)	[75.63/39.10]
12/2008	1,590,459(-9.41%)	215,889(-1.60%)	405,192(-12.50%)	258,801(-9.97%)	[76.79/37.65]
Summation	33,462,617	2,952,962	5,870,119	3,239,224	-

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Fig 5: 2008 Visitor & Page View Statistics



เดือน/ปี	สถิติรายเดือน				
	Page Views	Unique IPs	Sessions	Visitors	[New% /Return%]
01/2009	1,833,712	246,450	487,077	312,877	[77.00/37.04]
02/2009	1,716,702(-6.38%)	239,066(-3.00%)	473,333(-2.82%)	306,132(-2.16%)	[76.09/37.42]
03/2009	2,025,297(+17.98%)	299,915(+25.45%)	534,368(+12.89%)	325,497(+6.33%)	[75.70/40.51]
04/2009	1,685,886(-16.76%)	267,826(-10.70%)	441,568(-17.37%)	269,258(-17.28%)	[73.97/41.43]
05/2009	1,744,443(+3.47%)	271,937(+1.53%)	468,385(+6.07%)	301,472(+11.96%)	[75.69/38.42]
06/2009	2,125,752(+21.86%)	287,578(+5.75%)	600,443(+28.19%)	400,592(+32.88%)	[79.79/34.06]
07/2009	1,566,028(-26.33%)	249,265(-13.32%)	445,194(-25.86%)	302,901(-24.39%)	[75.99/36.04]
08/2009	2,102,793(+34.28%)	301,606(+21.00%)	589,722(+32.46%)	402,351(+32.83%)	[79.03/33.95]
09/2009	1,739,888(-17.26%)	271,407(-10.01%)	505,675(-14.25%)	355,696(-11.60%)	[77.54/33.87]
10/2009	1,588,949(-8.68%)	225,220(-17.02%)	351,623(-30.46%)	227,077(-36.16%)	[88.51/30.35]
11/2009	1,581,025(-0.50%)	203,819(-9.50%)	354,441(+0.80%)	245,322(+8.03%)	[84.77/29.11]
12/2009	152,811(-90.33%)	30,241(-85.16%)	43,612(-87.70%)	-	[-/-]
Summation	19,863,286	2,894,330	5,295,441	3,449,175	-

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Fig 6: 2009 Visitor & Page View Statistics

So from launch in April 2007 to the time of writing in December 2009, the site has generated around 68 million pageviews from 8 million unique visitors.

It is also worth noting where these visitors have overwhelmingly arrived from:

TOP Countrys by IP [ดาวน์โหลด Excel]				
NAME	Unique IPs	Percent(IP)	Pageview	Visitor
Thailand	54,984	99.64	268,299	-
Norway	42	0.08	144	-
United States	40	0.07	155	-
Korea, Republic of	20	0.04	77	-
Japan	13	0.02	86	-

Fig 7: Visitor Country of Origin Statistics

So that's 99.6% arrived from within Thailand itself. And let's see where those visitors are situated within the Thai border:

สถิติ ประเทศ เพื่อแสดง รายชื่อ จังหวัด ในแต่ละประเทศ (ค่าที่แสดงเป็น ผลรวมจาก IP รายวัน)				
1	Thailand		TH	51,916
	Bangkok	71.57%		37,156
	Unknow	10.78%		5,599
	Songkhla	1.85%		960
	Nonthaburi	1.73%		898
	Narathiwat	1.00%		518
	Ayutthaya	0.97%		501

Fig 8: Visitor Location Within Thailand

A whopping 71% come from Bangkok. So not only does the site produce lots of traffic, that traffic is incredibly well geo-targeted. How many ASCII “free flash games” sites produce such geo-targeted traffic? Very few, traffic is often scattered far and wide, which makes it incredibly difficult to monetize effectively.

But with IDN traffic, which is almost by definition geo-targeted, all sorts of monetization options, such as local sponsorship deals, become a real possibility.

Conclusion

We firmly believe if we had launched “just another free flash games site” in Thailand without using an exact keyword match IDN domain name, we wouldn’t have got anywhere near the same search engine ranking for the term เกมฟรี as we have enjoyed over the last three years.

So whilst we can’t guarantee what effect employing an exact keyword match IDN domain name will have on your site's search engine positions, we do know the seemingly simple “left-right combination”:

Left: Acquire an exact match IDN domain for the keyword you wish to optimize for, then

Right: Optimize your search-engine friendly website homepage for that keyword

has delivered a knock-out blow for us by helping us maintain a great search position over an extended period of time for a very competitive keyword.

If you use the same simple technique, you stand a great chance of *beating out your competition* and securing a *long-term top ten Google placement* for even the most competitive international search term. You can also be pretty sure the *search traffic you get will be geo-targeted* and all the benefits that accrue from that.

What are we doing now?

We have moved onto our second major site, a Thai social gaming site, which we have just launched (November 2009) at เกม.com (เกม means “game” in Thai, and is the second most popular Thai search term behind เกมส์). At the time of writing, just after launch, it is #24 in google.co.th:

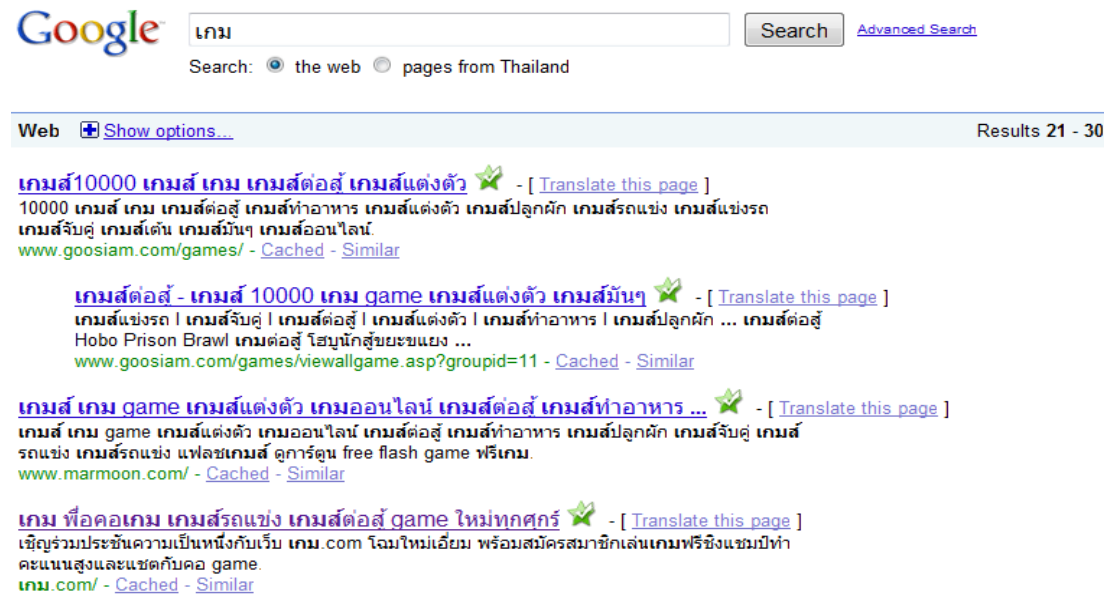


Fig 9: December 2009 Google Search Position For Search Term เกม

And we are looking for it to hit the Google top ten by early 2010 ! -> [Check new site Google position <-](#)

About The Author

Lee Hodgson is the author of the legendary [Domain Goldrush](#) articles.

Lee now specializes in IDN domain names / websites and his services include:

- Brokering IDN domain purchases, both single names and entire portfolios,
- IDN website development projects,
- IDN consultancy work.

His IDN website is at IDNGuru.com, and full details of his IDN services can be found there.

- i For an explanation of IDN domain names see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internationalized_domain_name
- ii Most common Thai language search terms taken from <http://directory.truehits.net/keyword.php>
- iii For an explanation of punycode representation of IDN domains see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punycode>