



GET AHEAD OF YOUR OVERSEAS COMPETITION

5 TOOLS TO UNDERSTAND YOUR MARKET

Understanding what your competitors are doing, where you stand among them, how you differ and which techniques are working for them are all hugely important to your online success. This may be doubly true internationally, where you might have less of an intuitive grasp of the market.

With that in mind, we've put together this list of our top five online market research tools, all of which can help you to quickly understand the market and your competitors in any country you choose. Three of these are from Google, the other two have been produced by small, independent companies.

1. The Google Keyword Tool

Google first released their 'Keyword Tool' so that advertisers could understand roughly how much they would need to spend if they were to advertise on any given Google search term.

A nice side-effect is that it's brilliant at showing you which are the most popular search terms in any country, how many searches they get each month, and how much competition there is for each of them.

As with any other online tool like this, the results are not always completely accurate, but they're good enough to give you an understanding of your market in any given country. Once you've found the most popular search



terms in any country, take a look at who ranks for them, and very quickly you can build up a picture of which of your international competitors get the most search traffic.

[The Google Keyword Tool is available for free.](#)

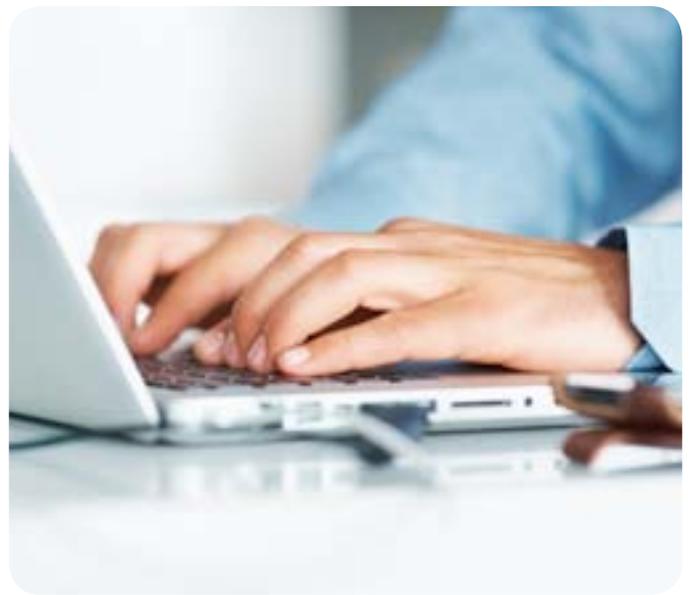
2. Google Insights

Google Insights is another brilliant market research tool from Google, this time allowing you to see how web users' interests change over time and how they differ by region.

Let's take the search term 'tennis' as an example. If you

search 'tennis' in Google Insights, it shows a graph of interest over the last 8 years; every year, September has the highest peak of interest, which coincides with the US Open finals. It also shows which markets are most interested in tennis, and gives a list of the most closely related search terms. You can also compare two different terms, for example 'tennis' and 'golf' to see how levels of interest compare against each other. Finally, it lets you compare by region, so you could answer the question ['how popular is tennis in the USA vs the UK?'](#)

So you can choose some keywords in your industry and [search in Google Insights](#) to see how popular they are elsewhere.



3. DoubleClick Ad Planner

The [DoubleClick Ad Planner](#) is another tool designed by Google to help advertisers that have a Google account. The most interesting parts of the tool are 'Search by Site' and 'Audience Planning'.

'Search by Site' lets you see estimated stats for any large site on the web, for any country. So, if you look at 'Topshop.com in the USA' it tells you the site has an estimated 510,000 monthly visitors, from a total of 4.6 million worldwide. It tells you most visitors are between 25 and 34, that 84% are female, that most earn \$25,000 - \$50,000 and it also gives you a list of other sites those people visit.

The 'Audience Planning' tool allows you to search by particular categories of interest. For example, rather than answer the question "what type of people visit this site?", it answers the questions "what type of people are interested in this topic, and which sites do they visit?"

You can take a look at the Topshop example for yourself when you sign up for Google's [DoubleClick Ad Planner](#) and search for "domain: topshop.com".



4. SocialBro

SocialBro is another fantastic free tool. As you may guess from the name, it's related to social media (mostly Twitter). It will tell you all about your followers: how many followers they have, where they're based, when they tweet, how 'influential' they are, and many other things. More importantly though, it allows you to do the same for anyone else's twitter account, or any search term you like.

At the most basic level, you could use this to see who follows one of your competitors abroad. At its most advanced, you could use it to understand who the most influential twitter users are in a particular country for any topic of your choosing.

5. Open Site Explorer

Open Site Explorer is a free tool from SEOMoz. It crawls the web, much like Google, which allows it to tell you which sites link to each other, how many links they have, which pages on sites they link to, and many other things related to the interlinking of websites.

The tool is designed with SEO in mind, but it's brilliant to give you a quick picture of who's linking to your competitors abroad. For example, if you're a company selling tour packages, and you're thinking about spending on marketing in Argentina, go to <http://google.com.ar>, search for 'tour operator', find a list of the top travel agencies and operators and then run them through Open Site Explorer to see how they each compare and who links to them.

Open Site Explorer gives you a little bit of information for nothing, but if you register (which is free) it gives you much, much more. Here's an example showing [a list of sites linking to one of Argentina's top tour operators](#).



SUMMARY

There are many 'online competitor research' tools available outside of these, but this list should give you the main tools needed to understand which countries you may wish to sell to, how large your market is, and who your main competitors are in each.