

SEO Case Study: How Discover Africa used longtail keywords to rank for competitive safari destination searches in Google

Discover Africa is a South African-based online tour operator offering authentic and flexible safari packages across Southern and East Africa.

The Challenge

Operating in a competitive market, Discover Africa has limited resources to spend on SEO and content marketing relative to the big players in the industry. To reach their clients through Google, they have to find creative ways to outrank the competition.

In this case study, we look at how the team approached their SEO plan surrounding the search term *"Botswana Safaris"* – a valuable but expensive and difficult phrase to rank for. The main challenges were:

- It would take months to rank well for this term, even with good on-page SEO
- Many companies compete for this search term; there are many websites with information on this topic
- Top results are dominated by paid ads (companies paying for the top spot in Google)
- Because the term is broad, even if they ranked well for it they would reach travellers early in the customer journey and their early research phase

The Solution

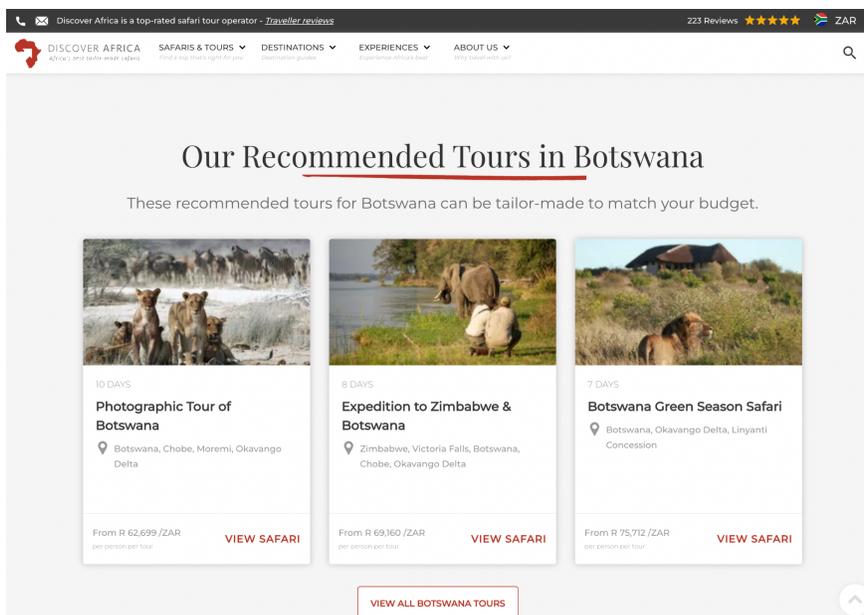
Step 1: Researching keyword ideas

Discover Africa researched keywords that would not only be more specific to what their audience was searching for but also easier to rank for because fewer tour operators had created content around these topics.

By understanding that international safari-goers do extensive research on *when* to travel to Africa, they focussed on keyword phrases related to the months of the year - eg. *Botswana in January, Botswana in March, Botswana in June* etc.

Step 2: Creating content

Next, they created web pages for the new content topics. Each page included practical information about travelling to Botswana during the specific month (like weather conditions, and how busy national parks get that time of the year), as well as links to recommended tours and safaris on their website.



The Result

First-page ranking with featured snippets

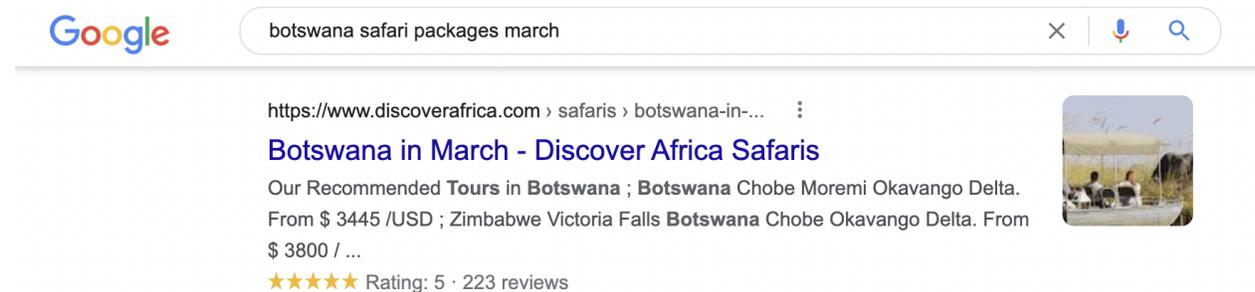
Discover Africa's website is recommended as the top result for searches related to the majority of months of the year, combined with the keyword "Botswana".



The screenshot shows a Google search for "botswana in june". The search bar contains the text "botswana in june" with a clear button (X), a microphone icon, and a search icon. Below the search bar are navigation options: "All", "News", "Images", "Videos", "Shopping", "More", and "Tools". The search results show "About 67 100 000 results (0,51 seconds)". A featured snippet is displayed, starting with "June and July are Botswana's coldest months and night-time temperatures in the Kalahari can drop below freezing. In the north, it rarely freezes, but lows of 5°C are common and morning game drives can be very cold. Daytime temperatures are roughly the same across the country, averaging between 20°C and 25°C." To the right of the text is a photograph of a savanna landscape with a zebra grazing in the foreground and a wooden lodge in the background. Below the snippet is the URL "https://www.discoverafrica.com › safaris › botswana-in-june" and the title "Botswana in June | Discover Africa Safaris".

First-page ranking for long-tail keywords including products

Apart from ranking for searches related to the month of the year, the new pages ranked well for more intentional searches related to production, including keywords like "safari packages"



The screenshot shows a Google search for "botswana safari packages march". The search bar contains the text "botswana safari packages march" with a clear button (X), a microphone icon, and a search icon. Below the search bar are navigation options: "All", "News", "Images", "Videos", "Shopping", "More", and "Tools". The search results show "About 10 000 results (0,51 seconds)". A featured snippet is displayed, starting with the URL "https://www.discoverafrica.com › safaris › botswana-in-...", followed by the title "Botswana in March - Discover Africa Safaris". Below the title is the text "Our Recommended Tours in Botswana ; Botswana Chobe Moremi Okavango Delta. From \$ 3445 /USD ; Zimbabwe Victoria Falls Botswana Chobe Okavango Delta. From \$ 3800 / ...". At the bottom of the snippet is a star rating of five stars and the text "Rating: 5 · 223 reviews". To the right of the text is a photograph of a savanna landscape with a zebra grazing in the foreground and a wooden lodge in the background.

Key lessons learned

- Understand your audiences and what they search for
- Diversify your SEO Plan for different stages of the customer journey
- Broad, competitive keywords are not always the most important
- SEO takes time, but you can be proactive while you wait for results

Assignment Ideas

The Challenge

Company X offers specialised safaris and trekking packages in Uganda, typically to adventure travellers from Europe and the US, between the ages of 22 and 45. Because they operate in a competitive environment, they are looking at creative ways to increase their website's Google Ranking, and reach potential clients early in their research and planning process.

Assignment

You are asked to help Company X with its new SEO plan. Based on what you learned from Discover Africa's Approach, create a short action for how Company X can outrank the competition.

Guiding questions

- Are there specific questions Company X's clients might search in Google when they start planning a trip?
- If so, what type of content can Company X add to their website to help Google find and rank them?