



Feature Article

How can we attract tourists more effectively?
The possibility of keyword ads in tourism

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Attracting tourists to Komaruyama Castle Park

Those who are involved in tourism should be interested in how to market a specific destination and attract visitors there. When contemplating regional revitalization through tourism, an important key is to attract tourists more effectively at a lower cost. While you might come up with several means to do that, I believe keyword advertising can be one of the leading options. Thus, I conducted a survey to measure the effectiveness and the cost of keyword advertising. As a specific survey area, I chose *Komaruyama Castle Park* (Nanao, Ishikawa Prefecture), built by *Toshiie Maeda* in 1582.



Figure 1: Statue of Toshiie Maeda in Komaruyama Castle Park

The park's former name (Komaruyama Park) was changed in April 2014, and now Nanao city is undertaking the redevelopment plan around the park. Visits to the park have been declining, since 2009, (there were 7,588 visitors in 2013, whereas in 2009 there were 11,270). The majority of visitors come to view cherry blossoms (e.g., visits in April accounted for 46.8 % of attendance in 2013).

Developing a web site to provide information

Beforehand, I conducted a questionnaire survey from July 22-24, 2014. The questionnaire was intended for university students in Kanazawa city who attended tourism classes. The



Figure 2: Komaruyama Castle Park



Figure 3: Web site for the Noto region

number of respondents was 202. The students were asked about their recognition of the park, and 77 percent answered that they “do not know.” Thus, in order to attract visitors to the park, I found it necessary to let people know of its presence.

First, I developed a Web site to provide information on tour-



Figure 4: Web site search on Google

ism and gourmet food concerning the Noto region (<http://noto-kankou.seesaa.net/>). Then, I measured the effectiveness of attracting visitors through access analysis using Google Analytics. When I developed the Web site, I used Seesaa's Blog because of the degree of customization required.

There are 84 articles and 10 categories. In an attempt to attract tourists to a specific destination, it is necessary to notify potential travelers of its presence. Therefore, I utilized AdWords, a pay-per-click advertising service that Google Inc. provides to advertisers, to display ads on search results of 37 total keywords related to regional tourism, such as "tourism Noto," "Noto tourism," and "Nanao tourism." These ads were used to attract participants.



Figure 5: The keyword ads displayed on search results

The effect of the keyword ads

The keyword ads included the park's name, the URL of its Web site, and a brief description of the park. When visitors clicked on the ad, the Web site was displayed.

It should be noted that some keywords, whose cost per click (CPC) was high, were excluded. In this research, the word *conversion* (actions that advertisers want site visitors to perform) means the download of the Komaruyama Castle Park brochure (PDF) by visitors. I measured the percentage of visitors who visited a download (PDF brochure) site through the keyword advertising described above. The keyword advertising was classified into two categories, and the relative cost-effectiveness of each category was examined through a comparison.

Although there are a large number of studies on online marketing today, there are few articles on the topic of tourism. Studies on keyword advertising in tourism emerged after 2010, and few have attempted to analyze data about keyword ads in tourism. Search engine marketing is gaining the status of a major online marketing strategy for many destinations (Xiang and Pan, 2011). I believe that this kind of research will play an instrumental role in tourism in the foreseeable future.



Figure 6: The brochure of Komaruyama Castle Park

Table 1: Frequency of ad clicks and conversion

Action	Frequency (times)	Rate (%)	CPC/CPA (yen)
Click of Ads	842	0.13	63
Conversion	516	61.3	102

Notes: Ad click rate = ad clicks ÷ ad impressions; Conversion rate = number of conversions ÷ ad clicks.

The duration of this survey was from February 20 to April 30, 2015. The advertising cost was 52,709 yen. The limitation of the CPC was 250 yen. As a result, there were 842 ad clicks, whereas there were 636,415 ad impressions (the ratio of clicks to ad impressions was 0.13 %). The CPC was 63 yen, and clicks that led to conversion occurred 516 times (cost per conversion averaged 102 yen).

Considering each ad group, ad group 1, which was displayed for tourism-related keywords such as "Noto tourism" and "Nanao tourism", cost 33,766 yen (see Table 2), there were 506 clicks (the average CPC was 66.7 yen). Ad group 2, which was displayed for keywords related to the region and history or to castles, cost 18,943 yen, and there were 336 clicks (the average CPC was 56.4 yen).

The cost-effectiveness

Comparing the cost-effectiveness of the two groups, ad group 2 was superior to ad group 1 in both the average CPC and the average cost per action (CPA). With respect to the CPC, group 1 resulted in 66.7 yen, and group 2 resulted in 56.4 yen. The CPA was 107 yen for group 1 and 95 yen for group 2. This

Table 2: Frequency and cost of ad clicks and conversion in 2 ad groups

	Total Cost (yen)	Impression (times)	Ad clicks (times)	CTR (%)	CPC Mean (yen)	Conversion (times)	CVR (%)	CPA Mean (yen)
Ad Group 1	33,766	258,943	506	0.2	66.7	317	62.6	107
Ad Group 2	18,943	377,472	336	0.09	56.4	199	59.2	95

Notes: CTR (Click Through Rate) = ad clicks ÷ number of ad impressions; CVR (Conversion Rate) = number of conversions ÷ number of ad clicks; CPC (Cost per Click) = total cost ÷ number of ad clicks; CPA (Cost per Action) = total cost ÷ number of conversions.

Table 3: Frequency and cost of ad group 1

Keywords	Ad Group 1						
	Ad Clicks (times)	Impression (times)	CTR (%)	CPC Mean (yen)	Conversion (times)	CPA Mean (yen)	CVR (%)
Nanao tourism suggestion	0	29	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Noto suggestion	1	239	0.42	239	0	0	0.00
Noto tourism	11	3405	0.32	136	8	188	72.73
Nanao tourism	5	679	0.74	124	6	104	120.00
Noto hot spring	0	8	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Noto tourism suggestion	6	497	1.21	156	5	187	83.33
Noto autumn leaves	1	103	0.97	79	2	40	200.00
Nanao tourism spot	0	30	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Noto Nanao	6	2697	0.22	126	4	190	66.67
Shokusai market Nanao	1	83	1.20	144	0	0	0.00
Noto aquarium	5	598	0.84	110	2	274	40.00
Wakura hot spring tourism site	3	340	0.88	123	2	184	66.67
Noto tourism site	0	56	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Wakura tourism	8	2375	0.34	175	2	702	25.00
Nanao Shokusai market	0	53	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Noto Nanao tourism	2	199	1.01	34	2	34	100.00
Nanao Shokusei market	0	37	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Wakura tourism spot	0	80	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Nanao market	0	155	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Noto Wakura hot spring	4	2900	0.14	146	2	292	50.00
Wakura hot spring tourism spot	2	56	3.57	119	4	60	200.00
hot spring Noto	3	2792	0.11	223	1	669	33.33
Nanao tourism site	0	12	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Nanao café	0	215	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Nanao gourmet	1	826	0.12	164	1	164	100.00
tourism in Noto	17	3028	0.56	122	21	98	123.53

Notes: CTR (Click Through Rate) = ad clicks ÷ ad impressions; CVR (Conversion Rate) = number of conversions ÷ ad clicks; CPC (Cost per Click) = total cost ÷ number of ad clicks; CPA (Cost per Action) = total cost ÷ number of conversions.

can be attributed to the fact that because group 1 is comparatively easy to market, it tends to include costly keywords. Consequently, I presume the average CPC and the average CPA of ad group 1 was higher.

However, there does not seem to be much difference in conversion rates. Unless the intent is to attract visitors immediately, keyword ads like those used in group 2 might be advantageous. In other words, narrowing down the target visitors to those who are interested in a particular subject could pay off.

Let me focus on the each keyword (see Table 3 and Table 4). First, the ads of 14 keywords, such as “Nanao Cafe,” were not clicked (thus, conversions did not occur). The number of impressions for most of these words was less than 200. Consid-

ering that the total click rate was less than 1 %, a mere lack of search volume might be the cause (keywords such as “Nanao cafe” possibly could have been affected by a mismatch of the search purposes).

Regarding the conversion rate of each keyword, the rate of compound keywords, such as “regional + tourism” was comparatively high. On the contrary, the rate of combinations whose purpose was presumably the search for information about other destinations, such as “Noto aquarium” and “Noto hot spring” was low. These tendencies can be found with respect to the click-through ratio (CTR).

Considering the cost, there is a moderate correlation between impressions (the number of ads displayed) and the average

Table 4: Frequency and cost of ad group 2

Keywords	Ad Group 2						
	Ad Clicks (times)	Impression (times)	CTR (%)	CPC Mean (yen)	Conversion (times)	CPA Mean (yen)	CVR (%)
Komaruyama park	2	104	1.92	142	2	142	100.00
Komaruyama castle	1	49	2.04	57	0	0	0.00
Toshiie to Matsu Nanao	0	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Nanao castle	11	565	1.95	97	7	153	63.64
Maeda Toshiie	23	4380	0.53	113	11	237	47.83
Toshiie to Matsu	0	903	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Nanao Maeda Toshiie	0	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Noto castle	0	138	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Noto Maeda Toshiie	0	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00
Ishikawa pref. castle	4	858	0.47	104	4	104	100.00
Ishikawa pref. castle vestige	8	1357	0.59	107	6	143	75.00

Notes: CTR (Click Through Rate) = ad clicks ÷ ad impressions; CVR (Conversion Rate) = number of conversions ÷ ad clicks; CPC (Cost per Click) = total cost ÷ number of ad clicks; CPA (Cost per Action) = total cost ÷ number of conversions.

CPC. Likewise, a similar correlation between impressions and the average CPA can be found. These facts indicate that so-called “*big keywords*,” which offer many impressions, tend to be costly in the field of tourism. Thus, money can be saved by utilizing a number of “*small keywords*.” Similarly, keywords that market a product or service relatively easily, such as “*hot spring*,” also tend to be costly. It would be wise to avoid such keywords unless there is a need to produce results immediately.

Toward utilizing keyword ads in tourism

In the title of this essay, I questioned “*How Can We Attract Tourists More Effectively?*” As I have repeatedly stated, keyword ads have the potential to be an answer. In this survey, I developed a Web site and then measured the effectiveness of attracting visitors to it through keyword ads.

Comparing the two ad groups, ad group 2 was superior to ad group 1 in both the average CPC and the average CPA. However, the difference between the average CPAs of the ad groups was only 12 yen. Adopting compound keywords like “*tourism + region*” is therefore useful when attempting to market a product or service in the short term. As is often mentioned, proper nouns are more likely to trigger responses.



Figure 7: Students surveying Komaruyama Castle Park

As you might have noted, the number of people who have actually visited Komaruyama Castle Park after clicking the ads is still unknown. If I can measure the number of such visitors by holding some events, an analysis of the practical effectiveness of the ads and the most effective combination of keywords will be possible.

In addition, of the visitors to the Web site, 36.8 % were from abroad (23.6 % from English-speaking countries). Although most of these visitors are presumed to be expatriate Japanese, it is important to examine the characteristics of site visitors from foreign countries. Translating the content of the Web site into English and providing tourist information to foreign visitors will enable me to analyze the characteristics of keyword searches in English. Therefore, developing an English Web site may be a future challenge.

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