
WHICH GOOGLE DO YOU USE?

Did you realise it makes a difference?

When you call up Google to search for a website, did you know that it matters which Google you use? **John Turner** at **Burgh House** explains why.

Google is the established search engine of choice for most Internet users. But did you know there are many Googles? And did you know that it can actually make a difference which one you use?

Google has many domain names. Indeed it seems to have registered a Google for every area – google.com, google.co.uk, google.co.za (South Africa) and even google.sh. You might think this is simply a marketing trick, but it isn't. The results you get depend on which Google site you use.

Google.com is designed for an international audience, whereas the 'national' Googles give prominence to sites that originate in that country. So google.co.uk favours UK sites over non-UK sites. This can make a big difference to the results you get.

To give a concrete example, if you search for Burgh House on Google, our page ranking (i.e. how high we appear on the list of sites) varies across the Googles. On google.com, google.co.za and google.sh we are number 3, but on google.co.uk we are number 4 – a UK site for a care home in Norfolk takes the third slot.

To us this matters little, but just imagine you are searching for a car part. If you use google.co.uk you may find that UK suppliers are given more prominence than South African ones, who may have been able to supply the part quicker and cheaper.

When you next call up Google, have a look to see which one comes up. If your computer was imported from the UK and designed for the UK market it is probably google.co.uk. Indeed, some UK-originated computers are set up so that, even if you ask for google.com, it 'interprets' your wish and gives you google.co.uk anyway. You can override it but it takes effort. The effect is that your searches are being directed to the UK, to the exclusion of South Africa, Namibia and other possible sources. This may not be what you want.

There is no great conspiracy at work here. For most users it makes sense. UK residents tend to buy from UK suppliers; South Africans from South Africans, and so on. But living where we do, with a choice of sources for our goods, it's useful to be able to compare options from many possible places.

So next time you use Google, remember that it matters which Google you use and make a deliberate choice to use the one that best meets your needs.

