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Google delists BMW Germany for foul play

Google has dropped BMW Germany from its search engine following attempts to boost its popularity ranking

by Stuart Miles published on 5 February 2006

Google has flexed its muscles and dropped BMW Germany from its search engine following the German car manufacturer's attempts to artificially boost its popularity ranking. The move is likely to send shockwaves through the Internet industry over fears that one company has such power and affect over a website's access to the public. The delisting was reported by Matt Cutts, a software engineer at Google, who works to stop websites tricking the system by featuring hidden text or different content from what the website visitor sees. In his blog, Cutts wrote that the methods used by BMW were a violation of the search engine's guidelines, and that a second company, camera maker ricoh.de will be removed soon for similar reasons shortly. "Don't deceive your users or present different content to search engines than you display to users", said Cutts on his blog entry. The delisting will mean that searching for terms like "BMW" or "BMW Germany" on Google will not return a direct link to the car company's German website, bmw.de, but instead the global site. Moreover, bmw.com.de's PageRank, the algorithms that assign every page on the web a sort of popularity ranking, has been reset to zero. Many big publishers and website owners enlist the help of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) experts to help improve search appeal in search engines, and while most methods are acceptable, some are deemed to be unethical. These so-called black hat tactics are commonly used by gambling or pornography sites. BMW is thought to be one of the highest profile companies to have a website blacklisted by Google.