hallam

SEMRUSH

# 11 Growth Tactics for Your Ecommerce Business

Step-by-Step Case Studies and Data-Driven Best Practices

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About Hallam

Established in 1999, Hallam is one of the UK's leading providers of digital marketing services. Its mission is to help national and international business be more successful online.

An accredited Google Premier Partner, Hallam provides digital marketing services to B2C and B2B companies. Clients include the United Nations, Speedo, Suzuki and Saint-Gobain.

- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

- Pay Per Click Advertising (PPC)

- Web Design

- Digital PR

- Content Marketing

- Ecommerce Services

- Social Media

- Digital Marketing Strategy

- Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO)

- Digital Marketing Training

Shortlisted in no fewer than 16 categories at the Drum Recommended Digital Agency Awards 2018, the team won the Grand Prix Best Agency in the 49-99 staff bracket based solely on client reviews. Other accolades include two nominations at the Google Premier Partner Awards EMEA, two wins at the UK Digital Experience Awards, and two nominations at the European Search Awards for the Best Large SEO Agency and Best Large PPC Agency.

About SEMrush

SEMrush is an online visibility management and content marketing SaaS platform ensuring businesses get measurable results from online marketing. Trusted by over 4,000,000 marketing professionals, SEMrush offers solutions for companies in any ecommerce industry to build, manage, and measure campaigns across all marketing channels. With more than 40 tools for search, content, social media and market research data for more than 143 countries, SEMrush is now a must-have solution for all companies serious about online.

SEMrush in Numbers

4,000,000+
users

40+
tools

10.6
billion keywords

10.8
trillion backlinks

450
million domains

143
databases

SEMrush for Ecommerce

Solutions to Grow Your Business

E-commerce is a highly competitive environment. To surpass your competitors, you need to optimize your product pages thoroughly, set up ad campaigns with surgical precision and stay alert about customer reviews. The good news is that most of these tasks can be delegated to SEMrush tools.

Simple Workflow

5
Manage the Work of Your Team

4
Create Engaging SEO-friendly Content

3
Take Your Ad Campaigns to the Next Level

2
Find Customers through Competitor Analysis

1
Optimize E-Commerce Site from A to Z
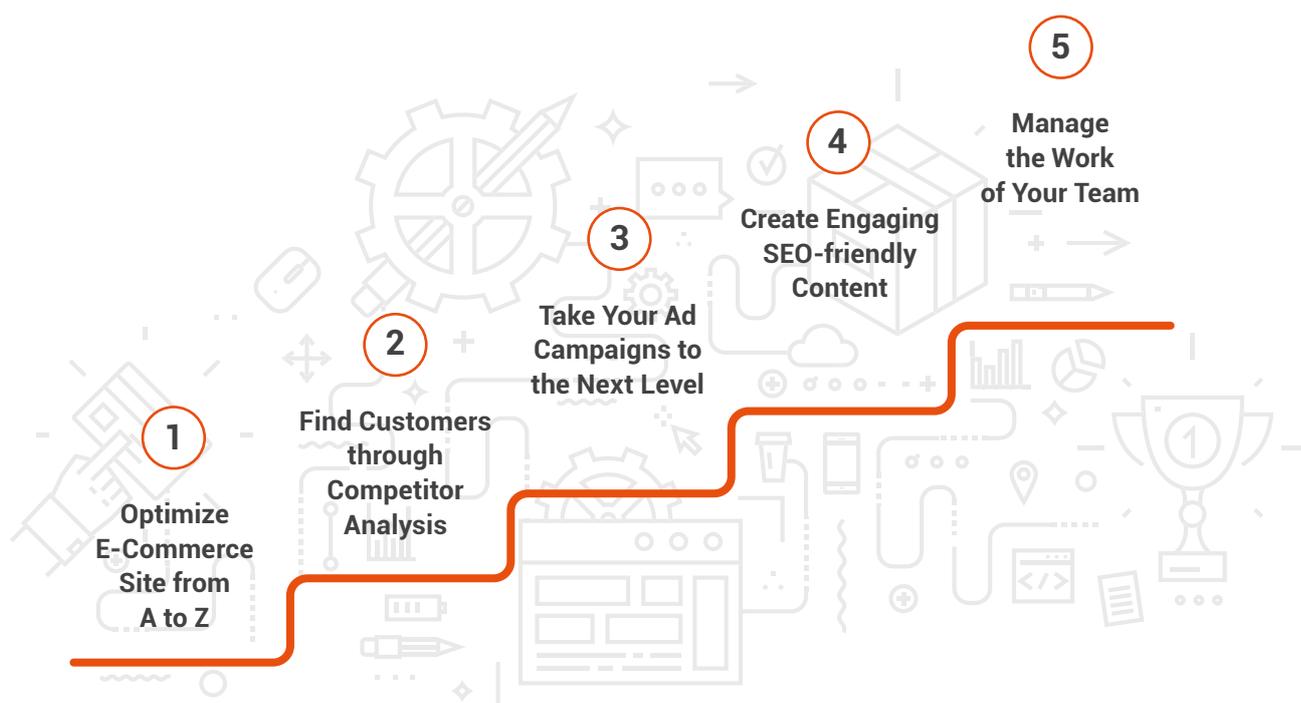
Get All You Need to Boost Your Ecommerce

Save your time and budget with 40+ tools in one package

Try now

Trusted by

PHILIPS   ebay   LUSH FRESH HANDMADE COSMETICS   boohoo

Introduction

In the last few years, competition online and in the SERPs has only intensified, and for businesses to succeed, it's crucial that they're aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their own marketing efforts, so they can continue to improve.

To help you best evaluate your performance when compared to the competition, and flag common problems and areas for improvement across the board, we've utilized the SEMrush toolkit. This has allowed us to gather and analyse data from 8,000 ecommerce sites, including their online activity.

Specifically, we looked at the following:

- How ecommerce companies have optimized their sites for mobile — especially now that mobile is leading the way in search.

- SERP features ecommerce businesses should take advantage of.

- Backlink strategies ecommerce sites are using to help to win the best positions.

- Technical SEO considerations that increase site speed and enhance user experience.

- How ecommerce sites are successfully implementing AMP, and combining this with PWAs.

- Optimization of images for visual search and conversion rates.

- Schema markup for product pages that will improve site performance.

- User buying habits, and how ecommerce sites can predict these patterns.

- How to utilize the right emotional triggers to increase sales.

- How to choose the attribution model that best represents the distribution of conversion value.

It's vitally important to keep your websites, and your SEO and PPC strategies up to date. This ebook was written to help you do exactly that. We hope that you find this data and the insights we've gleaned from it to be helpful in developing and improving your digital marketing and site development strategies moving forward into 2019.

Research Methodology

We started off with a sizable and wide-ranging set of data, gathered from more than 8,000 of the most visited ecommerce websites in countries including the US, the UK, Spain, Italy, Germany and France, among others. In order to avoid calculation errors, we didn't collect data for countries where Google is a secondary search engine (China, Korea, etc.)

The ecommerce sites in our research represent 13 different industry categories:

1. Sports & Recreation

2. Children

3. Food

4. Electronics

5. Health

6. Home & Garden

7. Clothing

8. Books

9. Furniture

10. Flowers

11. Jewelry

12. Music

13. Travel

Using SEMrush data, we culled the following information for each category:

- Total mobile and desktop traffic*

- Types of backlinks**

- Follow vs. nofollow backlinks**

For the ecommerce sites researched as a whole, our data analysis revealed:

- The most common mistakes made on mobile versions of websites**

- Ecommerce SERP Features***

- Top anchor texts**

- Technical issues related to crawlability, HTTPS implementation, international SEO and page load speed**

- Canonicalization**

- Hreflang tags**

- AMP implementation*

- Image alt attributes**

- Schema markups implementation**

- Emotional triggers in ads**

- Most searched items on Black Friday****

* Total mobile and desktop traffic, AMP implementation: data collected for August 2018.

** The most common mistakes made on mobile versions of websites, ecommerce SERP features, types of backlinks, follow vs. nofollow backlinks, top anchor texts, technical issues, canonicalization, hreflang tags, image alt attributes, schema markups implementation, emotional triggers in ads: data collected for October 2018.

*** SERP features: SERP features change daily and correlate heavily with overall Google SERP volatility, hence we decided to only show the data for October 2018. Data here is based on the percentage of SERPs where this feature appears in top 20 results.

**** Most searched items on Black Friday: data collected for November 2017.

Research Results at a Glance

When collecting and analyzing data from more than 8,000 of the top ecommerce sites online, we learned a great deal about the different factors affecting their success, including user behavior and what these sites are doing to get results across the board.

Free Shipping
is the most popular emotional trigger used to encourage purchasing
Go to page 89

46%
the avg. percentage by which mobile beat desktop
Go to page 16

89.3%
of the websites haven't implemented AMP pages
Go to page 65

47.88%
of the websites haven't implemented any schema markup
Go to page 80

61.7%
of the search results display Reviews SERP feature
Go to page 33

73.4%
of all backlinks are follow backlinks
Go to page 48

82%
the score mobile websites received for crawlability
Go to page 54

55.8%
of the websites have issues affecting the performance of their AMP pages
Go to page 66

19%
of the websites utilize hreflangs
Go to page 61

89%
the score mobile websites received for HTTPS implementation
Go to page 54

15.6%
of the websites have missing image alt tags
Go to page 74

44%
of the websites don't use canonical tags
Go to page 58

89%
the score mobile websites received for international SEO
Go to page 54

0.64 sec
the avg. page loading speed
Go to page 55

PS4
was the most searched for item on Black Friday in 2017
Go to page 90

Key Takeaways

1 **Increase site speed.** Your site loading speeds will impact user experience and your SERP rankings, so ensure that your mobile site is fast-loading.

2 **Add schema markups to your mobile site.** This improves visibility in the mobile search engines. Use product schemas to present product information to interested customers quickly, add reviews and rating schemas to highlight testimonials and help you sell more.

3 **Prioritize mobile.** More traffic is coming from mobile devices than desktop, and your site must be properly indexed to be competitive in the SERPs. Have a fully responsive site that is mobile-optimized.

4 **Pay attention to 4xx errors, slow loading speeds, and issues with mixed content.** These significantly impact a site's mobile performance in a negative way, and were the most common errors we found on the top ecommerce sites.

5 **Gaining featured snippets is a great tactic for ecommerce sites.** To maximize your chances of appearing for the high-value and high-volume terms, ensure that your site has clear organized information architecture, and that subcategories have concise crawlable text that Google will be able to serve as a featured snippet.

6 **Share reviews on your product listings.** When trying to boost visibility in competitive SERPs, reviews on product listings can give a website the edge, as positive ratings are known to increase click-through rates from search results.

7 **Optimize your images.** By investing in excellent product photography and correctly optimizing images with keyword-focused alt tags, your images stand a better chance of appearing in the SERP image packs, and potentially increasing click-throughs to your website.

8 **Pay attention to your competitors' tactics and analyze which backlink types are most represented.** By following their example, you will effectively grow and build a diverse backlink profile for your own site and stay competitive.

9 **Utilize hreflang tags to optimize your site for international SEO.** They explain what language and territory content certain pages are targeting. Fewer than 20% of ecommerce sites currently have them in place, so if you're targeting international audiences, you should be one of them.

10 **AMP is essential in helping web pages load faster on mobile devices.** This is key to significantly improving user experience. Faster load times increase the likelihood that users will stay on your site, engage with it, and potentially purchase from it.

11 **Use emotional triggers like "free shipping" to create urgency and increase impulse purchasing.** This can work for true impulse buyers, but also for those who have been researching your product and who are waiting for a deal to strike.

12 **Even with "impulse purchases", customers are doing at least preliminary research to evaluate their options.** They may decide on a whim to buy that PS4 on Black Friday, but they might also do a few quick searches to see who has the best deal instead of just purchasing on the first site they see. Having as much transparent information posted as possible will help win these customers.

13 **Choose the right attribution model.** For most businesses, this will mean ditching the Last Click attribution model, as it fails to take account of all events leading up to the conversion, and thus doesn't give an accurate portrayal. Using Linear or Position Based models will take multiple touchpoints into account and give you more accurate reporting.

14 **Offer product recommendations on your sites.** Use internal linking and featured products sections to show visitors additional items they might like. This increases the likelihood that they'll buy more than one item.

Desktop vs. Mobile Traffic
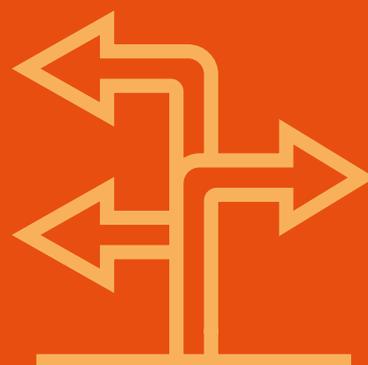
Desktop vs. Mobile Traffic

Over the past few years, the "desktop vs. mobile traffic" debate has been prominent. We've known that mobile traffic has been increasing significantly in this time, but has it actually surpassed desktop traffic?

We wanted to find out which kind of traffic ecommerce businesses were seeing more of, and whether this varied across different industries. Using SEMrush's new Traffic Analytics, we evaluated overall ecommerce traffic, and compared mobile and desktop traffic for each specific industry.

Total Traffic for Ecommerce, Global

	Desktop	Mobile
Books	40.3%	59.6%
Children	22.6%	77.3%
Clothing	26.4%	73.5%
Electronics	26.1%	73.9%
Flowers	24.4%	75.5%
Food	16.7%	83.2%
Furniture	26.2%	73.8%
Health	30.9%	69.0%
Home & Garden	19.4%	80.5%
Jewerly	28.8%	71.1%
Music	37.3%	62.7%
Sports & Recreation	29.0%	70.9%
Travel	22.6%	77.3%

Total Traffic for Ecommerce, the UK

Books		
40.1%		59.8%
Children		
22.6%		77.3%
Clothing		
28.4%		71.5%
Electronics		
25.3%		74.6%
Flowers		
24.0%		75.9%
Food		
15.3%		84.6%
Furniture		
25.0%		74.9%
Health		
34.6%		65.3%
Home & Garden		
18.1%		81.8%
Jewerly		
25.9%		74.0%
Music		
44.2%		55.7%
Sports & Recreation		
30.9%		69.0%
Travel		
22.3%		77.6%
Desktop		**Mobile**

> **Our research clearly indicated that mobile traffic is dominating ecommerce overall, regardless of the individual industry or the country in which the searches originated.**

When we looked at 13 popular ecommerce categories all together, we found that mobile beat desktop in total traffic by approximately 46%.

This trend is more prominent in some industries than others. The food industry was exceptionally high in mobile traffic, which makes sense as users are likely to search for "restaurant near me" when on the go, for example.

But this does not mean that desktop traffic is irrelevant; the books industry still had 40.3% of its traffic coming from desktop users, and for the music industry that figure was 37.3%. Mobile clearly matters a great deal, but in certain industries substantial amounts of traffic are still coming from desktop users.

Case Study: Why Mobile and Desktop Both Matter

In research undertaken for this study, it was demonstrated that mobile traffic can account for as much as 75% of total traffic share. Hallam measured this against their ecommerce clients, to see if the results were similar.

Kerry's Fresh distributes fruit and vegetable boxes to homes and businesses across the East Midlands in the UK. Over the last six months, 50% of their total traffic came from mobile devices, compared to 41% from desktops, and 9% from tablets.

However, while mobile users browsed the various products on offer, the number of visits they made to the basket and checkout pages were considerably lower than for desktop users. This was evident when Hallam compared revenue — 8.35% of total revenue over the last six months was generated from mobile users, whereas desktop users accounted for 86.29%.

This is similar to another ecommerce powerhouse, Housing Units, a furniture and home decor company based in Manchester. While mobile traffic here was significantly higher than desktop (50.83% versus 26.27%), the amount of revenue generated by each channel was similar (35.75% for mobile, and 37.94% to desktop), showing that, proportionally, desktop users spend more than mobile viewers. It's also worth pointing out that desktop and mobile traffic alone don't make up the full 100% of traffic; 22.99% of traffic is coming from tablets, and 5.36% of sales came from tablets.
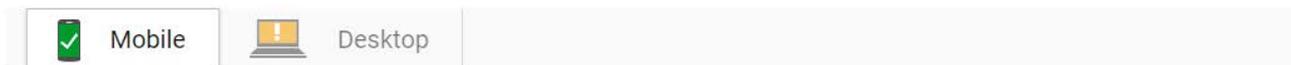
Data from the Chrome User Experience Report indicates this page's median FCP (1s) and DCL (1.6s) ranks it in the fastest third of all pages. Although the page could be more optimized it is probably unnecessary. Learn more.

Page Load Distributions

The distribution of this page's FCP and DCL events, categorized as Fast (fastest third), Average (middle third), and Slow (bottom third).

How to Optimise for Mobile Traffic

Both mobile and desktop channels are extremely important, and you'll want to increase traffic from both. However, while you probably optimize your desktop site on a regular basis, your mobile version may be neglected. Let's take a look at the main ways in which you can optimize your mobile channel, to increase traffic to your site.

Increase your site speed

In July 2018, Google confirmed that page speed will be a ranking factor for mobile searches. You can check your page speeds with Google PageSpeed Insights, and use Google's Mobile Speed Scorecard to compare your mobile website with competitors.

Increasing page speeds for your mobile site is similar to how it's done for desktop. Google PageSpeed Insights can help you track what you need to change and will point out areas that can be improved, such as:

- Optimising your images

- Minifying your code

- Reducing your number of redirects

- Using browser caching

For more information on why page speed is so important, head over to Chapter 5.

Consider Implementing AMP

Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) help to load your mobile website's pages as quickly as possible, which in turn helps you to rank higher on Google's search results, driving more traffic to your website.

For ecommerce sites, implementing AMP on your homepage and product pages will enable them to load almost instantaneously. If you have a WordPress site, you can set up AMP easily with the official plugin. You can find out more about AMP in Chapter 6.

Include all information

In the past an ecommerce company might have had a mobile site that was just a stripped-back version of its desktop site. Today this won't help you. To build your mobile traffic you need to make sure that all the information found on your desktop website is included on your mobile website, such as:

- Content: This should be SEO optimized with relevant keywords and internal links, and include images, alt text and videos.

- Meta Data

- Structured Data

- Hreflang Tags

If your mobile website is on a separate host, you'll need to ensure your server has the capacity to handle the increased crawl rate.

Property	Expected Type	Description
Properties from Product		
additionalProperty	PropertyValue	A property–value pair representing an additional characteristics of the entity, e.g. a product feature or another characteristic for which there is no matching property in schema.org.
		Note: Publishers should be aware that applications designed to use specific schema.org properties (e.g. http://schema.org/width, http://schema.org/color, http://schema.org/gtin13, ...) will typically expect such data to be provided using those properties, rather than using the generic property/value mechanism.
aggregateRating	AggregateRating	The overall rating, based on a collection of reviews or ratings, of the item.
audience	Audience	An intended audience, i.e. a group for whom something was created. Supersedes serviceAudience.
award	Text	An award won by or for this item. Supersedes awards.
brand	Brand or Organization	The brand(s) associated with a product or service, or the brand(s) maintained by an organization or business person.

Add Structured Data

Adding structured data to your mobile website through schema.org can help to make your products more visible on the mobile SERPs. Rich snippets will highlight important information about your products, which can help to increase your mobile traffic. We would recommend adding the following rich snippets to your ecommerce mobile site:

- Product Schema: This indicates to Google that it's a product page, and will show basic information such as brand, color, material and model.

- Reviews and Rating Schema: Testimonials can help to sell a product, and this will highlight your credibility and trustworthiness.

- Price Schema: This makes it easier for browsers to see how much your products cost, before they decide to click through.

- Product Availability Schema: This will let users know if you're out of stock of the product they want to purchase. This can help to reduce your soft bounces if users are clicking off your website because the product they wanted to buy is out of stock.

For more information about implementing structured data, head over to Chapter 8.

What It Means to You as a Marketer

Marketers need to embrace the fact that mobile now dominates search traffic, and that their sites must be adapted if they haven't been already. This doesn't mean that desktop is irrelevant; it's not, many purchases are still being made from desktops. But most ecommerce businesses have incredible desktop sites and barely functional mobile ones. You should make it a priority to have a fully responsive, mobile-optimized site that's ready to take on all that mobile traffic.

To improve your ranking in the mobile SERPS, you should:

1. Increase site speed. Your site loading speeds will impact user experience and your SERP rankings, so ensure that your mobile site is fast-loading. Check your current site performance with Google PageSpeed Insights, and use their Mobile Speed Scorecard to see how you stand up against competitors.

2. Don't create a "poor man's" version of your desktop site. This was a strategy that businesses could get away with in the past, offering reduced, lower quality sites with less information on the mobile versions. Your content should be optimized for mobile, but your mobile site shouldn't be lacking anything, including metadata, internal links, and SEO optimisation.

3. Add schema markups to your mobile site using schema.org to improve visibility in the mobile search engines. Use product schemas to present product information to interested customers quickly, and reviews and rating schemas to highlight testimonials and help you sell more.

4. Implement Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) on your site, which will increase the page loading speed and improve your ranking in the SERPs.

5. Remember to continually update your mobile site just as you do your desktop site. This is something many marketers overlook, even though mobile best practices have changed more rapidly than desktop best practices in recent years.

How SEMrush Can Help

⚙ **Traffic Analytics**

Shows you how your competitors attract traffic and what channels they prioritize.

Analyze the traffic of your rivals ❯

⚙ **Position Tracking**

Tracks and compares mobile and desktop performance in any geographical location.

Track your performance ❯

⚙ **Organic Research**

Discovers the golden nugget keywords and organic content strategies of your competitors both in desktop and mobile search.

Gain competitive intelligence ❯

⚙ **Sensor**

Tracks the volatility of desktop and mobile SERP results on a daily basis in 25 industries.

Check your industry ❯

⚙ **On Page SEO Checker**

Offers actionable ideas to improve the SEO of your mobile webpages.

Gather ideas for mobile SEO ❯

⚙ **Site Audit**

Analyzes the mobile crawlability of your website and checks common AMP-related issues.

Audit site's mobile-friendliness ❯

Mobile-First Indexing of Ecommerce Sites

Mobile-First Indexing of Ecommerce Sites

Mobile-first indexing has been a popular topic over the past few months. We've seen a lot of articles on the subject, discussing how it may impact site appearance in search results.

It's important though not to confuse mobile-first indexing with ranking — remember the basics of indexing and ranking when it comes to this topic.

Indexing vs. Ranking

Search engines perform two main tasks — indexing and ranking. The mobile-first index means that mobile pages will be crawled first, and Google will revert to desktop pages if no mobile page is available.

> **The factors Google use to determine search rankings include mobile usability (mobile friendliness). Mobile-friendly content will be ranked higher in search results when a user is searching on a mobile device — this has been a factor that's been around since 2015.**

Keyword rankings differ based on whether the searcher is using mobile or desktop. This is due to Google ranking factors and roadblocks that exist in their mobile results, such as mobile page speed as a ranking factor and the intrusive interstitial penalty.

How Can Ecommerce Companies Adapt?

The obvious: Make sure your site is mobile optimized

The first step you need to take, if you haven't already, is to switch to a responsive website as soon as possible. There are other options for optimizing your site for mobile, including having a separate mobile site, but responsive design is generally recognized as being the easiest to maintain.

To check whether your site is currently mobile friendly, check out Google's mobile friendly testing tool.

Start thinking mobile-first

With their move to a mobile-first index, Google is effectively stating that mobile is leading the way in search. If they haven't already done so, brands need to follow suit.

> **Thinking mobile-first doesn't mean mobile-only. As we discussed in the previous chapter, desktop still has a key role to play in search and the overall conversion funnel for many industries.**

A mobile-first strategy will take into account the types of searches typically undertaken on mobile, and will develop content best suited for those searches.

Google's micro-moments explain the typical search intent behind different types of query, and show how this might affect the search results returned in each case.

Be There

You've got to anticipate the micro-moments for users in your industry and then commit to being there to help when those moments occur.

Be Useful

You've got to be relevant to consumers' needs in the moment and connect people to the answers they're looking for.

Be Quick

They're called micro-moments for a reason. Mobile users want to know, go, and buy swiftly. Your mobile experience has to be fast and frictionless.

As an example of how ecommerce companies can implement strategies to target mobile users, a search for 'contact ASOS' on mobile should return options to contact the company quickly and easily.

Through the use of click to call markup, ecommerce sites can provide search engines with the data they need to offer this feature in their results:

3 ⁴ᴳ.ıll 🖃 ❀ ❗ ▷   ⏰ ✳ 🔕 44% ⏩ı 11:51

🏠   🔒 tps://www.google.co.uk   [31]   ⋮

Google

| contact asos phone | ✕ | 🔍 |

ALL   SHOPPING   IMAGES   NEWS   VIDEOS

ASOS.com   <   asos
Fashion company

asos.com

Asos.com is a British online fashion and beauty store. Primarily aimed at young adults, Asos sells over 850 brands as well as its own range of clothing and accessories. Revenue for the financial year ending 31 August 2015 was £1,119.9 million. Wikipedia

Stock price: ASC (LON) 5,172.79 GBX +3.79 (+0.07%)
7 Nov, 17:14 GMT · Disclaimer

Headquarters: London

0207 756 1000

Call the ASOS customer service telephone number **0207 756 1000** if you would like to make an enquiry with regard to their corporate and investor relations information.10 Oct 2016

ASOS UK Contact Number: 0845 697 0259 - UK Customer Service ...

Report on Performance Between Mobile and Desktop

Reporting on <u>desktop vs. mobile performance</u> is easily and clearly accomplished in Google Analytics.

> Measuring rankings and organic channel performance for mobile separate to desktop can give you a better picture of how things are working across both channels. As search usage continues to shift toward mobile, this will become increasingly important.

Device Category	E-commerce Conversion Rate ▼ ↓	E-commerce Conversion Rate ▼ (compared to site average)
	2.97% Avg for View: 2.97% (0.00%)	2.97% Avg for View: 2.97% (0.00%)
desktop	3.89%	30.73%
tablet	2.72%	-8.41%
mobile	2.05%	-30.90%

The vast majority of ecommerce sites need to adapt and work to improve the current situation of how their sites perform for mobile users. When designing a mobile-friendly site, certain mistakes keep popping up, even among top ecommerce sites.

Using SEMrush's Site Audit Tool, we took a look at how top ecommerce companies are optimizing their sites for mobile users. We searched for the most common mistakes made on mobile websites, and found that the vast majority of sites were plagued by significant problems.

The five biggest errors we found were:

1. 4xx error codes, which impact a user's ability to utilize or access the site correctly.

2. Slow page loading speed, which will drive users away and negatively impact SEO.

3. Issues with mixed content, which will negatively affect user experience and reduce confidence in your website.

4. Missing or empty title tags, preventing Google from identifying the content correctly.

5. Redirect chains and loops, which prevent users from getting to the correct destination quickly.

What It Means to You as a Marketer

In summary, start focusing on your ecommerce site's mobile users. Make them your priority for the year ahead, rather than thinking of desktop as the primary platform. More traffic is coming from mobile devices, and if your site can't match mobile users' needs, you'll lose the sale. Optimize now for mobile-first indexing and you'll see your overall site traffic and sales increase as a result.

Explore best practice for mobile-first indexing:

1. Start by evaluating the mobile functionality of your site. Use Google's mobile friendly testing tool to check mobile site health.

2. Prioritize mobile. More traffic is coming from mobile devices than desktop, and your site must be indexed well in order to be competitive in the SERPs. Have a fully responsive site that is mobile-optimized.

3. Mobile-first doesn't mean mobile-only, but it does mean being able to deliver the content that mobile users want. They typically want content that's easy to find (short, digestible, well-organized), quick to load, and that enables a speedy purchase or other action.

4. Consider the intent behind mobile searches. If users are looking for a brand on their phone, providing a brief summary of what the brand does and a clickable phone number can be a good option. Make it simple for users to get in touch with you.

5. Pay attention to 4xx errors, slow loading speeds, and issues with mixed content. These significantly impact a site's mobile performance in a negative way, and were the most common errors we found on the top ecommerce sites.

How SEMrush Can Help

⚙ Site Audit

Analyzes the mobile crawlability of your website and checks common AMP-related issues.

Audit site's mobile-friendliness ⊙

⚙ On Page SEO Checker

Offers actionable ideas to improve the SEO of your mobile webpages.

Gather ideas for mobile SEO ⊙

⚙ Position Tracking

Tracks and compares mobile and desktop performance in any geographical location.

Track your performance ⊙

⚙ SEO Content Template

Helps crafting mobile-friendly content based on actual content from the Google top 10 rivals for your target keywords.

Optimize your content ⊙

⚙ Organic Traffic Insights

Merges Google Analytics and Google Search Console data to reveal keywords that are driving your mobile traffic.

Get data-driven insights ⊙

Ecommerce
SERP features

Ecommerce SERP features

Feature	Percentage
Reviews	61.7%
Site links	55.83%
Carousel	52.01%
Images	33.65%
Knowledge graph	28.43%
Local pack	20.86%
Video	14.05%
Application	10.16%
People also ask	6.52%
News	5.97%
Tweet	3.76%
Featured snippet	2.27%
Instant answer	2.08%
Featured video	0.3%
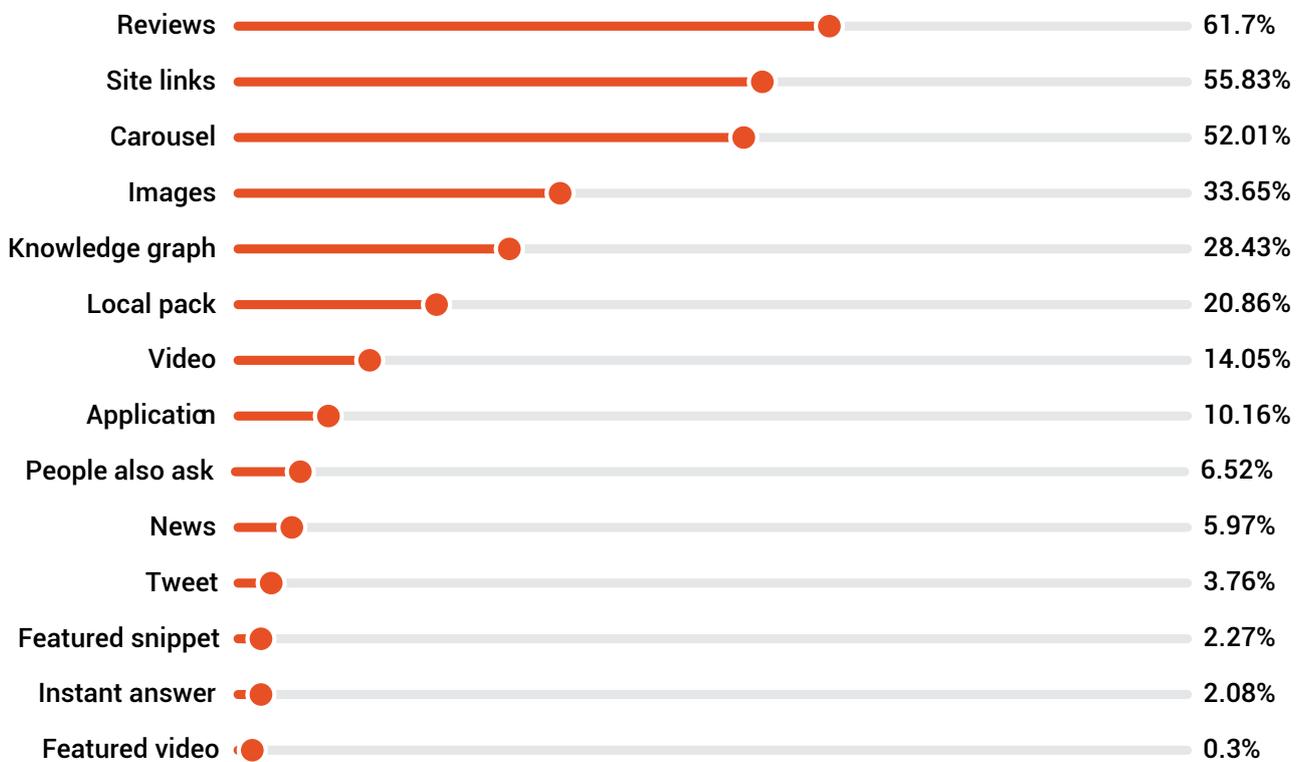
When planning your ecommerce SEO campaign, it's important to think beyond standard organic listings. Consumers now expect to see rich content in SERPs, including video, images, local map results, featured snippets and more.

> **As highlighted by SEMrush's research data, the top results display a variety of SERP features, with the most common worldwide being reviews, site links, carousel and images.**

But there are other SERP features such as featured snippets (around 2.27% of searches) and instant answers (around 2.08%). The data indicates that there are valuable opportunities out there when it comes to optimizing an ecommerce site for SERP features.

Case Study — Education Resources & Products Website

Find industry specific insights

When planning the ecommerce SEO campaign for their client TTS, a specialist online provider of resources and equipment for the education sector in the UK, Hallam wanted to ensure that TTS had as much visibility in the SERPs as possible by taking advantage of all relevant SERP features for the site's target keywords.

Hallam started by researching what kind of SERP features were most common for the keywords that TTS and their competitors were currently ranking for.

They quickly realized that for this sector, review and image pack were the most common SERP features:
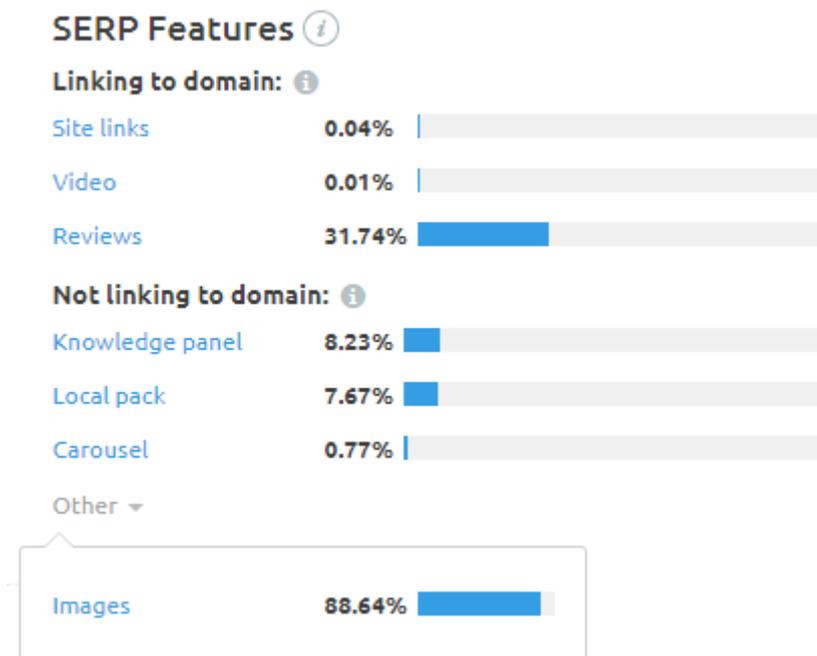
However, Hallam didn't want to focus solely on reviews and images, so also utilized featured snippets, so that TTS would appear for customer questions as well as commercial search queries in the form of lists, paragraphs and tables.

Reviews

For TTS's target keywords, and in this sector in general, approximately 32% of search results pages display reviews. Hallam knew, therefore, that it was important to ensure that reviews were implemented on the site, along with the relevant schema markup.

> When trying to boost visibility in competitive SERPs, review rich results on product listings give a website an edge, with positive ratings known to increase click-through rates from the search results.

In the case of TTS, it also means that the site's product listings stand out, even alongside top-tier sites such as Amazon. See below:

Buy Singapore Colours Place Value Counters | TTS
https://www.tts-group.co.uk › ... › Singapore Colours Place Value Counters ▾
★★★☆ Rating: 3.5 - 4 reviews - Starting from £19.99 - In stock
Securing their learning at 3 digits, then expanding to include up to millions and down to three decimal points. ... Supports maths curriculum coverage of counting, comparing and ordering numbers, understanding place value, counting in fractional steps and recognising fractions and ...

Place Value Counters: Amazon.co.uk: Office Products
https://www.amazon.co.uk/d/Educational.../Place-Value-Counters/B00K1B3DUW ▾
★★★★☆ Rating: 4.5 - 2 reviews
Inspirational Classrooms 3133405 "Decimal Place Value Counters Educational Toy (Pack of 300). Inspirational Classrooms 3133405 "Decimal Place Value ...

Image Packs

Another important SERP feature for ecommerce is images. In the case of TTS, around 89% of their keywords featured images on the SERP, as was the case with the competitors analysed.

In the example below, TTS are not ranking in the organic listings for the search "wooden noah's ark". However, the site is in the first position within the image pack.

By investing in excellent product photography and correctly optimizing images with keyword-focused alt tags, your images stand a better chance of appearing in the SERP image packs, and increasing click-throughs to your website.

Featured Snippets

Alongside image optimisation and implementation of reviews, Hallam focused on featured snippets. Featured snippets appear in position 0 of the search results, and Google selects what they feel is the most useful content from a web page to appear here as the answer to a question or search term.

Hallam have found that gaining featured snippets is a great tactic for ecommerce sites. In the case of TTS, the site appears as a featured snippet for the commercial phrase "school sports equipment" with the relevant category page. In this example, Google has pulled through the headings of the subcategories on the page into a bullet point list:

To maximize your chances of appearing for these kinds of high-value, high-volume terms, ensure that your site has clear organized information architecture, and that subcategories have concise crawlable text that Google will be able to present as a featured snippet.

Another useful strategy for ecommerce sites is to publish posts that answer potential customer queries, with the aim of appearing as the featured snippet for any "how to" or query searches typed into Google that are relevant to the sites' target audience.

Based on the recent SEMrush research, a whopping 52.57% of questions have featured snippets. If you remove questions, prepositions, and comparison keywords, the featured snippet total plummets. "How," "where," "which," and "what" all perform well with ordered and unordered lists.

So how do you do this? Start by generating a list of all the queries your customers will be asking Google — use SEMrush to research these opportunities and expand your list. Check out which featured snippets your competitors currently own using SEMrush, and work out how you can optimize and improve your own pages to try and steal them.

Another of Hallam's ecommerce clients, Ebadges, provides a good example of this. Hallam created a piece of content answering a key customer query: "do I need insurance to sell crafts?" This was quickly picked up by Google as a featured snippet for both this and other closely related queries, such as "do I need insurance to sell at craft fairs?"
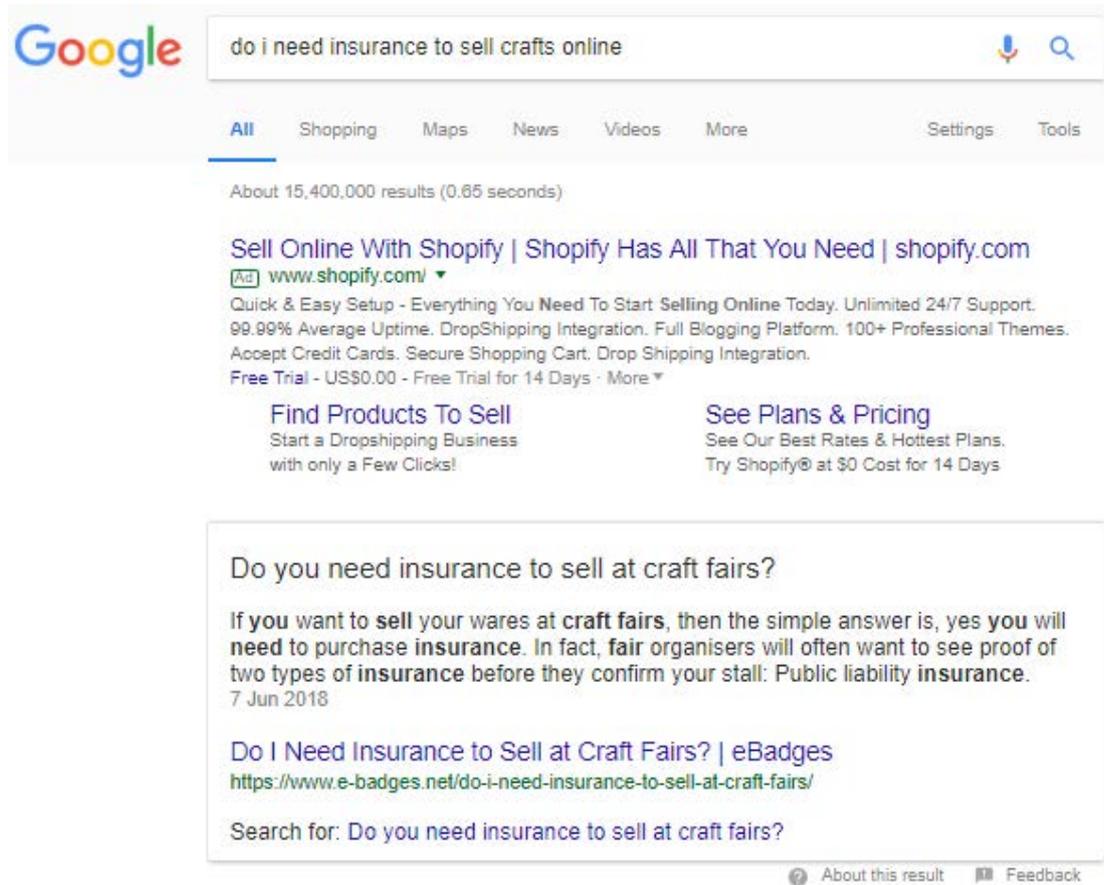
When Google started displaying the result as a featured snippet, it led to a significant increase in organic traffic to this page.

What It Means to You as a Marketer

SERP features are an amazing asset when it comes to search. They increase your visibility, authority, and sales. As highlighted by SEMrush's research data, the top results often display a variety of SERP features, with the most common across the globe being reviews, site links, carousel, and images.

To unlock the full potential of Google SERP Features:

1. Start by researching what kind of SERP features are most common for the keywords that your website and your competitors are ranking for.

2. When trying to boost visibility in competitive SERPs, reviews on product listings can give a website the edge, as positive ratings are known to increase click-through rates from search results.

3. By investing in excellent product photography and correctly optimizing images with keyword-focused alt tags, your images stand a better chance of appearing in the SERP image packs, and potentially increasing click-throughs to your website.

4. Gaining featured snippets is a great tactic for ecommerce sites. To maximize your chances of appearing for the high-value and high-volume terms, ensure that your site has clear organized information architecture and that subcategories have concise crawlable text that Google will be able to serve as a featured snippet.

5. Another useful strategy for ecommerce sites is to publish posts that answer potential customer queries as well as commercial search queries, with the aim of appearing as the featured snippet.

6. Questions, prepositions, and comparisons dominate featured snippet results. A whopping 52.57% of question-based keywords have featured snippets. Pay attention to keywords containing "how," "where," "which," and "what", as they all perform well with ordered and unordered lists.

How SEMrush Can Help

⚙ **Organic Research**

Uncovers SERP features occupied by your rivals.

Analyze your rivals ❯

⚙ **Keyword Magic Tool**

Spots keywords triggering SERP features and identifies keyphrases with question words in one click.

Find the best keywords ❯

⚙ **Sensor**

Discovers which SERP features are the most relevant to various industries.

Check your industry ❯

⚙ **Position Tracking**

Tracks the rankings and triggered SERP Features of your website and your competitors for a custom set of keywords. This tool also has a Featured Snippet report to identify your website's best chances to acquire Featured Snippets in the search results.

Track your performance ❯

⚙ **On Page SEO Checker**

Gives recommendations to target and rank for various SERP Features.

Skyrocket your rankings ❯

Backlinks
in Numbers

Backlinks in Numbers

When deciding which sites to prioritize in the algorithm, Google looks for signs of quality and credibility, wanting to show users trustworthy information. Backlinks to your site from quality, high authority domains will indicate that you have credible content, and will allow you to rank higher in the SERPs.

When collecting data for this ebook, we wanted to understand the strategies employed by the biggest ecommerce businesses' when link building, including the types of backlinks and anchor texts.

In order to get a big-picture look at what's happening online, we analysed information from more than 8,000 ecommerce websites in different countries to see how they were building backlinks.

Top Anchors

When developing your backlink profile, you need to be strategic. Ideally, your backlinks with anchor texts should lead directly to a relevant product or to content that your audience would be looking for. You may not always get to choose how external businesses and publications link to your site, but you can control the links you're building yourself.

Consider user search intent; that should be the driver for what you're linking to and when. Developing a smart link building strategy means creating intuitive anchor texts that will bring up content relevant to the user's interest.

As a key part of our research, we wanted to examine the most popular anchor texts in ecommerce sites' backlinks. Here's what we found:

Website	
Shop	
Here	
Visit Vebsite	
Privacy Policy	
Buy Now	
Click Here	
Source	
Blog	
Shop Now	
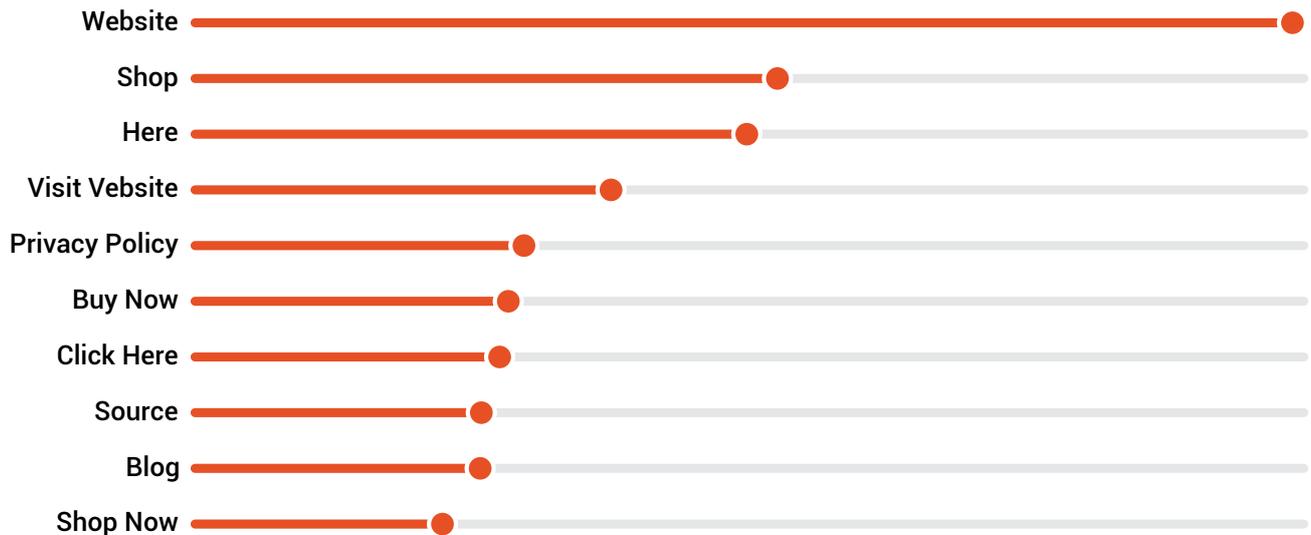
Many of the top anchors were call-to-action (CTA) oriented, creating a clickable link where they asked users to take an action like "buy now", "click here" or "shop," although the most popular anchor text was "website."

Among the less popular anchor texts in ecommerce sites' backlinks is "shop now", which accounted for 19%.

Types of Backlinks

Quality backlinks improve your rankings in the SERPs, bring traffic to your site, and can help members of your target audience to discover your site and your products quickly and effectively.

Clearly most websites put the majority of their links in text content that can be presented as a description of the product, in a blog post, or anywhere else. When we looked at the most popular backlink types, we found that backlinks inserted into text accounted for 93,17% of the total number of backlinks.

The form, frame, and image work for some ecommerce players as they want their clients to find the information in different, but still a user-friendly way.

So, pay attention to your competitors' tactics and analyze which backlink types are the most represented. By following their example, you will effectively grow and build a diverse backlink profile for your own site.

93,7%
text

6,26%
image

0,25%
form

0,32%
frame

Books

93.30%

6.29%

0.11%

0.29%

Children

92.82%

6.88%

0.16%

0.14%

Clothing

93.34%

6.23%

0.21%

0.22%

Electronics

92.67%

6.67%

0.38%

0.28%

Food

93.17%

6.52%

0.22%

0.08%

Flowers

94.50%

5.04%

0.15%

0.32%

Furniture

94.94%
4.89%
0.13%
0.05%

Health

93.87%
5.72%
0.09%
0.31%

Home & Garden

92.80%
6.36%
0.45%
0.38%

Jewelry

93.49%
6.20%
0.14%
0.17%

Music

92.95%
6.70%
0.13%
0.23%

Sports & Recreation

90.90%
8.42%
0.49%
0.19%

Food & Nearfood

93.17%
6.52%
0.22%
0.08%

Flowers

94.50%
5.04%
0.15%
0.32%

Travel

93.07%
5.14%
1.15%
0.65%

● Text ● Image ● Frame ● Form
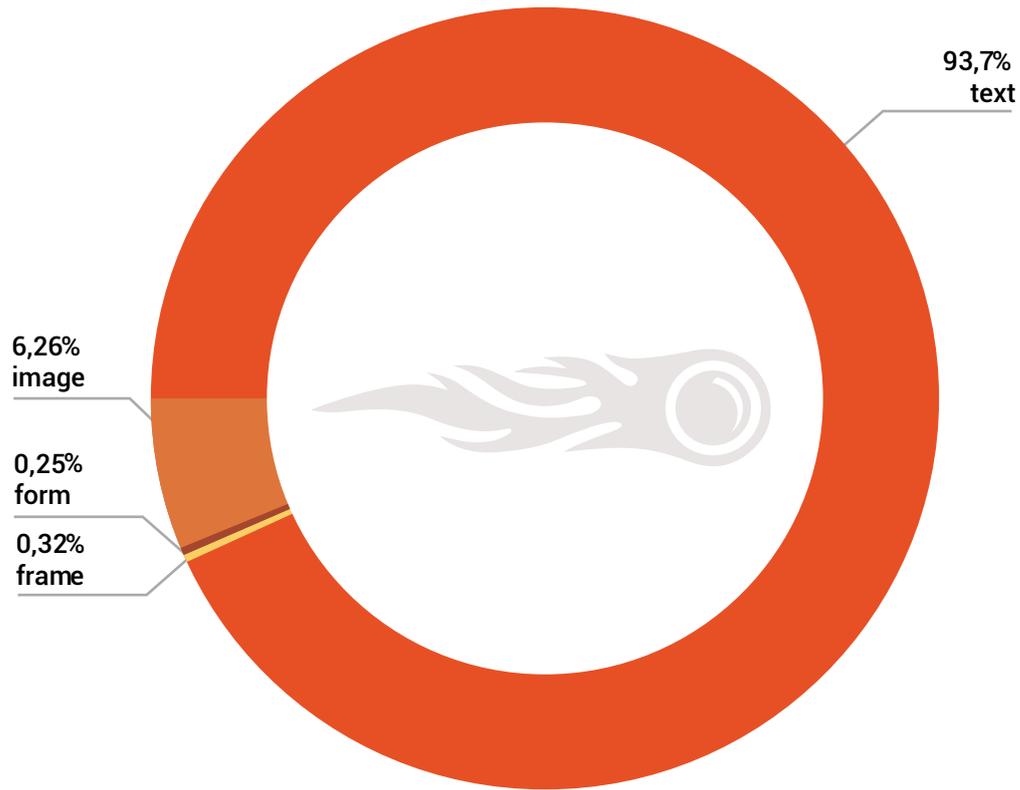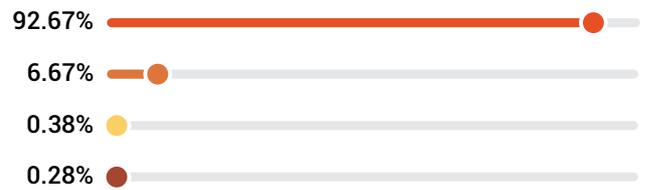
Text backlinks account for an enormous 93.17% of all backlinks, and this is prevalent in all of the industries that made up the study.

The frame backlink type is the least represented in the books, clothing, flowers, health, jewellery, and music verticals.

The form backlink is the least represented in the electronics, children, food, furniture, home & garden, sports & recreation, and travel verticals.

Follow vs. Nofollow Backlinks

There is much discussion about how follow and nofollow backlink attributes can impact your position in the SERPS.

Follow backlinks are more advantageous overall, because they'll pass "link juice" onto your website, giving you some SEO perks from the other site's domain authority.

If you're focusing on link building to increase your placement in the SERPs, you should prioritize follow backlinks.

That being said, nofollow backlinks from high authority sites can still send you large volumes of quality, relevant traffic. This is beneficial overall because they will belong to your natural backlink profile.

While you can't control the type or number of backlinks you receive from other sites, there are steps you can take to improve your backlink profile.

Creating original, useful content on your site is a good step: your audience and industry peers will find this valuable and want to share it, linking back to you in the process.

It can be a blog post detailing new strategies, an in-depth tutorial, or an infographic that automatically gets you a follow backlink when people grab the embed code to share it.

Our study shows that follow backlinks are prevalent in all of these ecommerce industries. These were discovered in 73.4% of analysed websites, while nofollow backlinks were found in only 26.6%.

Nofollow   **Follow**

26.6% ———————●————————————————————————— 73.4%

Travel
23.50% ———————●———————————————————————— 76.50%
Music
24.06% ———————●———————————————————————— 75.94%
Jewerly
25.89% ————————●——————————————————————— 74.11%
Flowers
29.20% —————————●—————————————————————— 70.80%
Furniture
22.78% ——————●————————————————————————— 77.22%
Books
23.05% ——————●————————————————————————— 86.95%
Clothing
22.64% ——————●————————————————————————— 77.36%
Home & Garden
27.08% ————————●——————————————————————— 72.92%
Health
31.64% —————————●—————————————————————— 68.36%
Electronics
32.94% ——————————●————————————————————— 67.06%
Food
27.18% ————————●——————————————————————— 72.82%
Children
29.19% —————————●—————————————————————— 70.81%
Sports & Recreation
23.47% ——————●————————————————————————— 76.53%
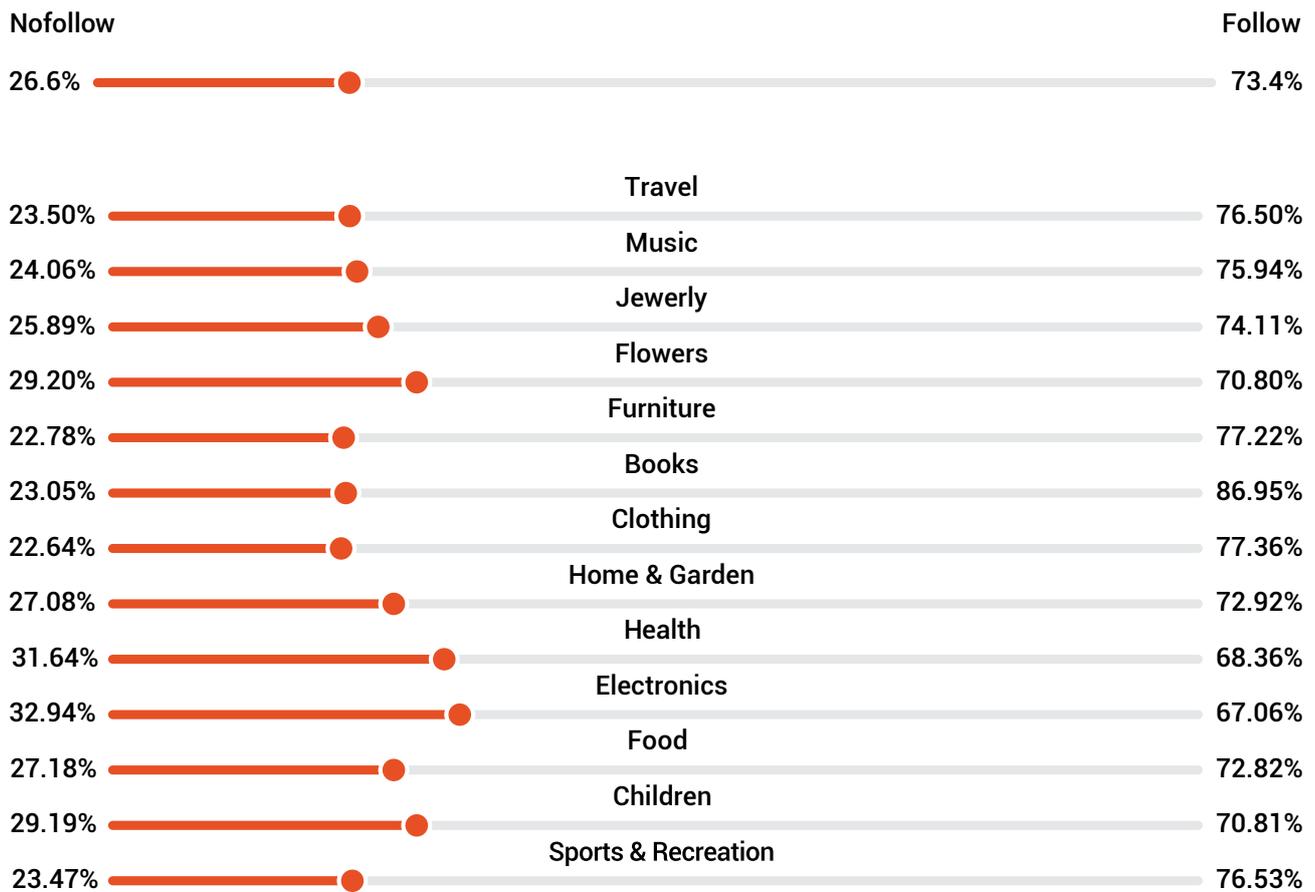
The clothing industry is currently linked with follow attribute backlinks more than any other industry, with a total percentage of follow backlinks coming in at 77.36%. Meanwhile, the electronics industry is connected most heavily to nofollow backlinks, which make up 32.94% of their total.

Link Building for Ecommerce Sites

Gaining links for ecommerce sites can sometimes be difficult — especially with content marketing — for a number of reasons:

- The media can assume that your outreach content is merely to promote products.

- Many ecommerce clients are highly focused on ROI, and therefore want all content to be product-focused. In these cases, clients often need to be educated on what link-worthy content really is.

- It can be hard bypassing advertorials and sponsored articles in order to truly "earn" links and coverage.

When Hallam conduct link building strategies for their clients, they tend to focus on larger content campaigns that are interesting and engaging, and which make websites want to link to them.

> **However, guest posting and link reclamation are the most consistent methods for gaining links.**

For link reclamation, Hallam monitor mentions of their clients' brand name, service and products, and then follow up to ensure that the mention includes a link. The majority of links they build for their clients are follow, with branded anchor text.

Hallam created and delivered a combined SEO and digital PR strategy to meaningful gift company, The Present Tree, which involved creating several guest posts, and a larger content marketing piece. The result of this was a 143% increase in traffic to the homepage, 59% increase in revenue, and 10 keywords ranking in position 1 on the SERPs.

> **We've provided some tips for ecommerce businesses looking to successfully build links to their websites:**
>
> - **Your content needs to be interesting — and unfortunately, for readers, information about your products just isn't interesting! You need to think outside the box and create something truly engaging in order to earn links.**
>
> - **Diversify the media and websites you hit. Some industries are more receptive than others to receiving content and linking to it — you'll find success with certain websites, and none with others. It's all about trial and error and discovering what works for your brand.**
>
> - **Don't neglect "dull", nitty-gritty link building tactics such as brand mentions and reclaiming lost or broken links. Yes, it can be time consuming and repetitive, but it's an easy way to gain links to your ecommerce site.**

What It Means to You as a Marketer

Link building can be an important SEO force for ecommerce businesses, gaining user traffic by increasing site authority (and thus their ranking in the SERPs) while also driving direct link traffic.

Constructing this strategy correctly, not only gives you the opportunity to win the best positions, but also makes it easier for your user or client to find the information they're interested in, and construct the best backlink profile, comparing your website with the competitors you have in your niche.

To unlock the full potential of backlinks, you should:

1. Remember that quantity matters, but quality matters, too. Having a large number of backlinks from diverse sites is a plus, but the backlinks that will carry the most weight will be those that are high authority sites. Google looks for indicators of quality, and it's no surprise that they'll make sure that the sites linking to you are quality, too, when factoring your backlinks into your SEO score.

2. Create unique, valuable, well-written content. This will help you attract audiences and earn more backlinks organically.

3. Pay attention to your competitors' tactics and analyze which backlink types are most represented. By following their example, you will effectively grow and build a diverse backlink profile for your own site.

4. Track the backlinks that you're receiving with tools like SEMrush's Backlink Audit. This will help you see which sites are linking to you and what content they're finding valuable. You can reach out to them in the future, try to target additional publications, and create more content that performs well.

How SEMrush Can Help

⚙ **Backlink Analytics**

Compares your backlink profile to your rivals' profiles and helps you build a competitive pool of referring domains.

Find backlink ideas ❯

⚙ **Backlink Audit**

Provides a workflow to audit all of your links, monitors all your new and lost links from unique domains and helps to disavow toxic backlinks in your backlink profile.

Manage the backlink profile ❯

⚙ **Link Building Tool**

Allows you to uncover new outreach opportunities and acquire the highest quality backlinks in your niche.

**Reveal outreach opportunities** ❯

Technical SEO

Technical SEO

Your site must be technically sound. This is a key component of SEO success. If a search engine has difficulty crawling and understanding your site, how can it index and serve it to the most relevant people in its results page? This is particularly true of ecommerce sites, due to their sheer size and range of filtering options.

We gathered data on how desktop and mobile sites performed with 4 key checks:

- Crawlability, which assesses how site elements affect the ability of search engines to successfully crawl your site. The main focus areas are sitemap, robots.txt file, internal links and URL structure.

- HTTPS implementation, which checks for all HTTPS-related issues.

- International SEO, which looks for issues like the use of the right language and country codes, conflicts with page source code, incorrect hreflang links, etc.

- Website performance, which takes into account additional factors like site speed and loading issues.

Crawlability
80%

HTTPS Implementation
91%

Perfomance
85%

International SEO
88%
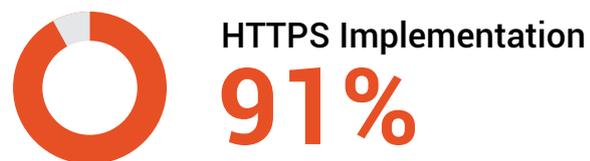
We found that most of top ecommerce sites included in the research did well with performance overall.

Desktop sites scored 80% for crawlability, 85% for performance, 88% for international SEO, and 91% on HTTPS implementation. That being said, there's still a gap to perfection that leaves room for improvement, opening the door for sites who really want to edge out their competition and connect with their audience base.

Crawlability
82%

HTTPS
89%

Perfomance
89%

International SEO
89%

When evaluating the performance of mobile sites in comparison to desktop, we found that mobile sites actually had higher scores for website performance, crawlability and international SEO.

Mobile fell behind only slightly in HTTPs implementation, at 89% instead of desktop's 91%.

So, what can you do to improve the technical integrity of your site to prevent it from negatively affecting its SEO performance?

Page Speed

Page speed is an important ranking factor for two reasons: firstly, it's important for search engines, and secondly, it's important for users (which in turn reinforces its importance for search engines).

To understand how site speed can affect a search engine, it's important to know how websites work and how search engines interact with them.

A website gets to a browser as follows:

- A user requests a domain. As long as that domain is linked to an IP address via DNS (which you set up when you create your site), then the person will be redirected to the site.

- Once the person has made their request to get to a particular site or web page clear, the browser now needs to make a DNS lookup request to convert the domain name to its IP address. This means that the browser requests to view the code with which the site is constructed (so it's requesting your HTML, Javascript, CSS files etc).

- The server sends over these resources and files for the browser to load.

- Once it's received these files, the browser essentially assembles and renders the web page — it creates a Document Object Model (DOM) — this is what you see when you inspect a page's source code, and it contains all the code files it's asked for.

- Browsers only show a site if they have received, parsed and executed all necessary code — so they send over one final request to the server in case there's anything missing.

- Now the website appears in the user's browser as the code has been fully rendered.

Seems like a long process! It is, but every stage of it is essential — and this is where page speed comes in. If your server is shared with other sites, or has limited capabilities, this will slow down the process by which your site is offered to users. The same applies if your HTML, CSS or JavaScript code file are clunky or very large. All of these factors will affect how quickly a search engine can load your site for a user.

0.64 sec
Avg. Page (HTML) Load Speed

2.43%
% of slow pages (> 3s)

We found that the average HTML site loading speed was a total of 0.64 seconds, and that a total of only 2.43% of slow pages took more than three seconds to load.

Overall, this means that the top ecommerce sites have a very low number of slow pages, especially when compared with other ecommerce sites not in the top of their field. Standards here are high, and the correlation between top sales and top loading speeds are impactful.

Make sure that your site is up to these standards, and look for ways to improve site speed if it isn't. However, there are still some things to look out for to speed it up.

Based on an analysis of 150,000 websites, we found that a total of 82.89% had issues that negatively impacted their page speed.

Other issues to watch for include:

- Uncached Javascript and CSS files

- Uncompressed pages

- Redirect chains and loops

- Too large Javascript and CSS files

- Too many Javascript and CSS files

- Large HTML page size

Compress, condense and bundle your files:

When using the Page Speed Insights tool, it will tell you to "minify" your resources. This means that if your site is built with multiple CSS files (for example), then you can save time by compressing (which abbreviates certain code variables, reduces the amount of line breaks and spaces) and "bundling" them.

Instead of having multiple CSS files, you should add them all into one file, provided they are all written in the same coding language (so all CSS together, all JavaScript together etc.), creating fewer requests for the browser to make and have to wait for.

Optimize images:

Images are the main culprit for high page load times. To ensure that your images load quickly you can:

- Add responsive images via srcset (this allows you to have multiple versions of your image, and to specify which version should be used in different situations — think of it as responsive images). More on this here.

- Enable lazy image loading — here are Google's own guidelines. It essentially means that if all resources are downloaded except the images, the web page is shown with a low resolution version of the images, which load as the page gets read.

- Compress images.

- Choose a small image format.

- Submit an image sitemap.

Having a slow website also affects your users: if they're on a very slow loading website, they will possibly get frustrated and leave. Bounce rate, average time on page and other user experience signals of this type all get analysed by search engines now.

The poorer the user experience on your site, and the less time people are willing to spend on it, the less likely it is that search engines will rank it. This is why page speed is a ranking factor.

Canonicalization

A canonical URL tells a search engine that although there might be certain similar URLs on the site, they are the same — you're not trying to spam the search results with loads of similar URLs, and you're acknowledging it.

This is a particular risk on ecommerce sites, as there are so many potential variables. For example, you may have a web page for coats, and you sell loads of them, in all shapes, sizes and styles. If someone filters the coats page, this may happen:

The original URL (www.mysite.com/coats) may look something more like this: www.mysite.com/coats?%size=8:style:%camel%.

As there are loads of different permutations and orders for people to choose, this will create a tonne of different URLs — all with more or less similar content: a list of the coats you sell.

This is why it's extremely important to add a rel=canonical tag, or simply add a canonical link to the HTML of the page, as it will tell search engines that you know that these are all similar pages; however, you would like search engines to only index and serve the main page.

56%

44%

● with canonical link

○ without canonical link
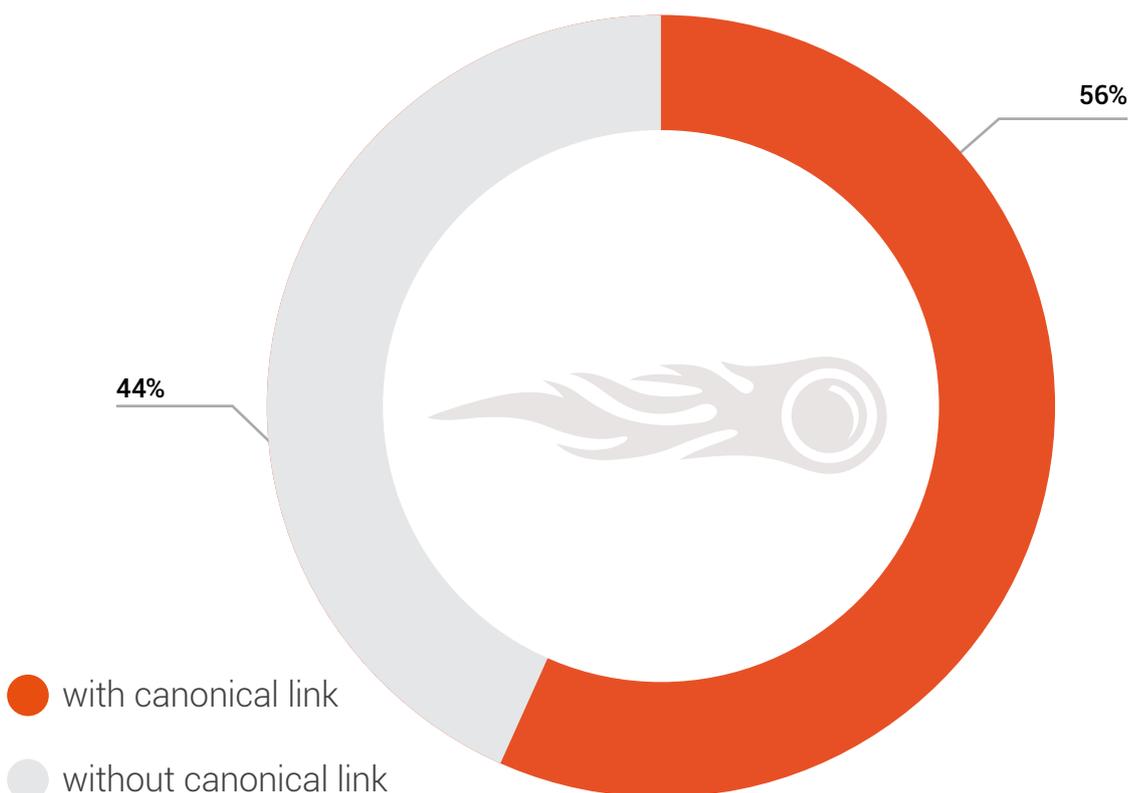
After examining top ecommerce sites, we found that slightly more than half used canonical links, with 56% of sites utilizing them.

So an entire 44% of top ecommerce sites didn't use canonical tags, leaving significant room for improvement in almost half of the top sites (and likely many other ecommerce sites, too).

HTTPS Implementation

The https protocol essentially protects the integrity and confidentiality of a user's data on your website.

For users on an ecommerce site adding their payment details and address, the https protocol is a must. Users need to know that there is no risk of a data breach, or of their details being used elsewhere by malicious parties.

In fact, being on a non https site literally tells users that it is not secure.

As far as trust signals go, this is a relatively simple one to implement. Google wants its users to feel safe and to be served websites that will not compromise them or their data — and while search engines have not specifically said that it's a ranking factor, most likely it kind of is.

Crawl Budget

During a given period of time, the search engine will crawl a certain quantity of your website's pages: that number is your crawl budget.

If you perform a log file analysis of your server logs, this will tell you very specifically which of your pages search engines are interacting with.

It will most likely show you a number of pages that search engines are wasting their time with: pages that have been redirected, pages that return 404 errors, blog posts from a long time ago, duplicate pages, to name a few examples.

This information will enable you to do a huge clearout of your site, so that you can maximize the crawl budget and get search engines to actually crawl, index and serve the pages that you want.

Once you've done your log file analysis, you should:

- Remove duplicate pages.

- Prevent the indexation of pages with no value (your privacy policy, expired promotions etc) by adding a no index tag to these pages, or a disallow rule in your robots.txt file.

- Fix any broken links: there is no reason for there to be a load of broken links on your site. Either fix them, or redirect them to a relevant page that works.

- Keep your sitemap.xml up to date so that search engines are aware of all the pages on your site that you want to index.

Internationalization

If your site is aiming to reach international markets, we cannot stress how important certain technical elements will be in helping you to reach that target.

This is a very brief checklist of things you should be looking at to make sure that your site reaches the right audience. For a more comprehensive view of this, read this guide.

- Make sure the site structure (CCTLDs, subfolders or subdomains) works for your business and does not stretch your resources.

- Hreflang tags: these tell users what language and territory your pages are meant to be targeting, and they are absolutely essential. We found that only 19% of sites utilize hreflangs, while 81% did not. If you're trying to optimize your site for an international audience , use them; if you're not — and many sites only have one language version of their site — then these aren't needed.

81%

19%

● without hreflangs

○ with hreflangs
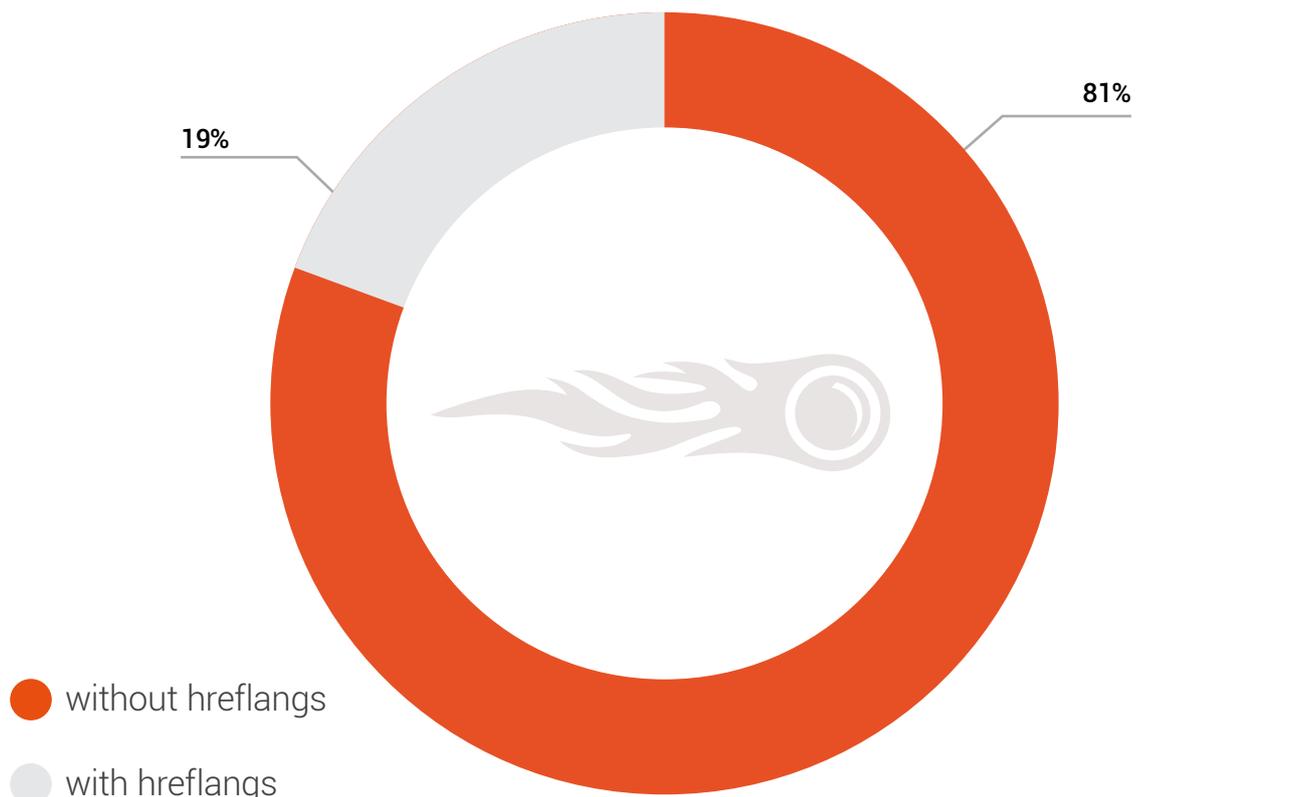
- Content language tags (not absolutely essential but a nice bonus).

- Geotargeting in Google Search Console.

- Schema markup (organisation schema which includes your different office locations, plus blog posting, article, product schema in the relevant language).

What It Means to You as a Marketer

It would be great if SEO was just about choosing the right keywords and throwing in some alt image text. But in order to reach the top of the SERPs you need to get the technical side down too. The research we gathered shows that while most ecommerce sites are doing well, there's still room for improvement. The performance of your site can be exceptional.

In order to perfect your technical SEO, you should:

- Perform a site audit immediately. Use SEMrush's Site Audit tool to look for any problems, big or small, affecting your SEO performance. The tool will offer specific suggestions for how to fix errors quickly.

- Focus on site speed. Site loading speed affects how users and Google will perceive your page, so look for any issues that could be negatively impacting it and leading to slower loading times. Issues with Javascript and CSS files are some of the most common errors, but there can also be issues with the server or hosting plan you're using.

- Ensure your HTTPS is implemented correctly. If you don't have HTTPS, convert immediately. Users and Google alike want to know that customers' information will be kept secure.

- Look for small glitches like duplicate errors or broken links, which can affect the crawlability of your site. If search engines aren't able to properly see what you have on your site, they won't be able to rank you properly.

- Utilize hreflang tags to optimize your site for international SEO. They explain what language and territory content certain pages are targeting. Fewer than 20% of ecommerce sites currently have them in place. Schema markups designating office locations, if relevant, are also important for geotargeting.

How SEMrush Can Help

⚙ **Site Audit**

Checks your website's health for over 120 on-page and technical mistakes: HTTPS implementation errors, duplicate content, pages with slow load speed, hreflang attributes and canonical links checks, and more.

Audit your website ❯

⚙ **Sensor**

Allows you to see how the HTTPS domains are filling your industry over time.

Check your industry ❯

AMP for Ecommerce

AMP for Ecommerce

The Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) Project is an open-source library that makes it easier to create beautiful, functional websites that work well on mobile. Considering how much ecommerce traffic is coming from mobile devices, we wanted to look at how many sites were actually implementing AMP and how well they were going about it.

> **AMP is essential in helping web pages load faster on mobile devices, improving the user experience significantly. Faster load times increase the likelihood that users will stay on your site, engage with it, and potentially even purchase from it.**

When we collected data about AMP implementation, we wanted to take a look at how many ecommerce businesses' websites have AMP pages, and what percentage of ecommerce businesses are using AMP correctly.

10,7%

89,3%
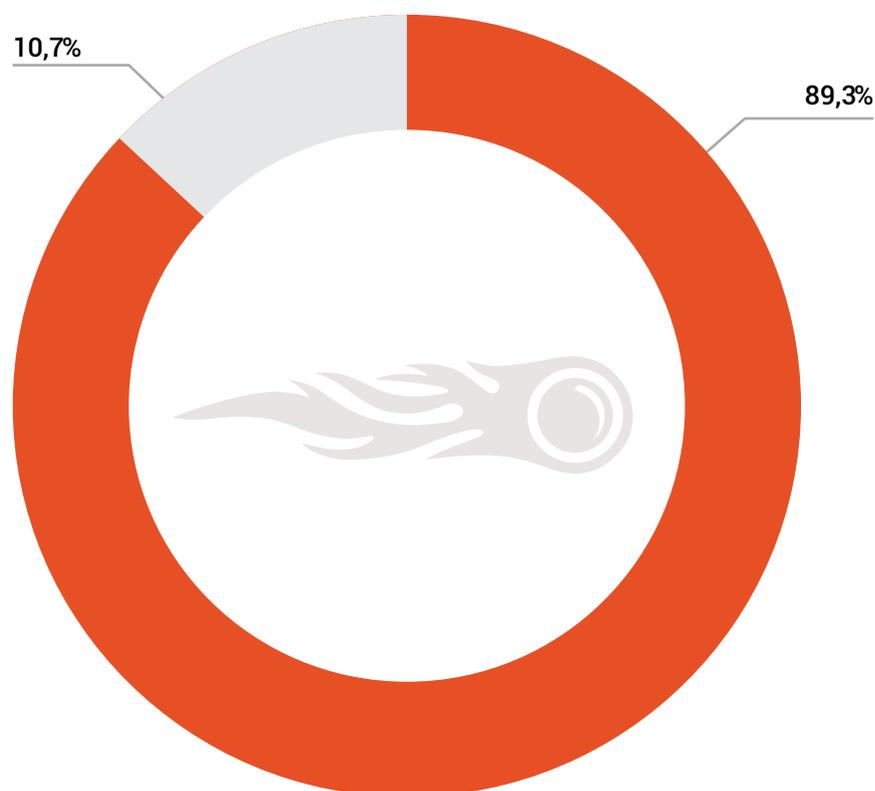
- websites without AMP pages
- websites with AMP pages

Of the sites that we analyzed we found that only 10.7% had dedicated AMP pages; the vast majority (89.3%) did not, creating an enormous missed opportunity for enhanced mobile performance.

The overall implementation of AMP is extraordinarily low, so ecommerce sites that adapt now have a huge opportunity to outrank their competitors by getting that valuable, all-encompassing mobile traffic.


55,8%

44,2%
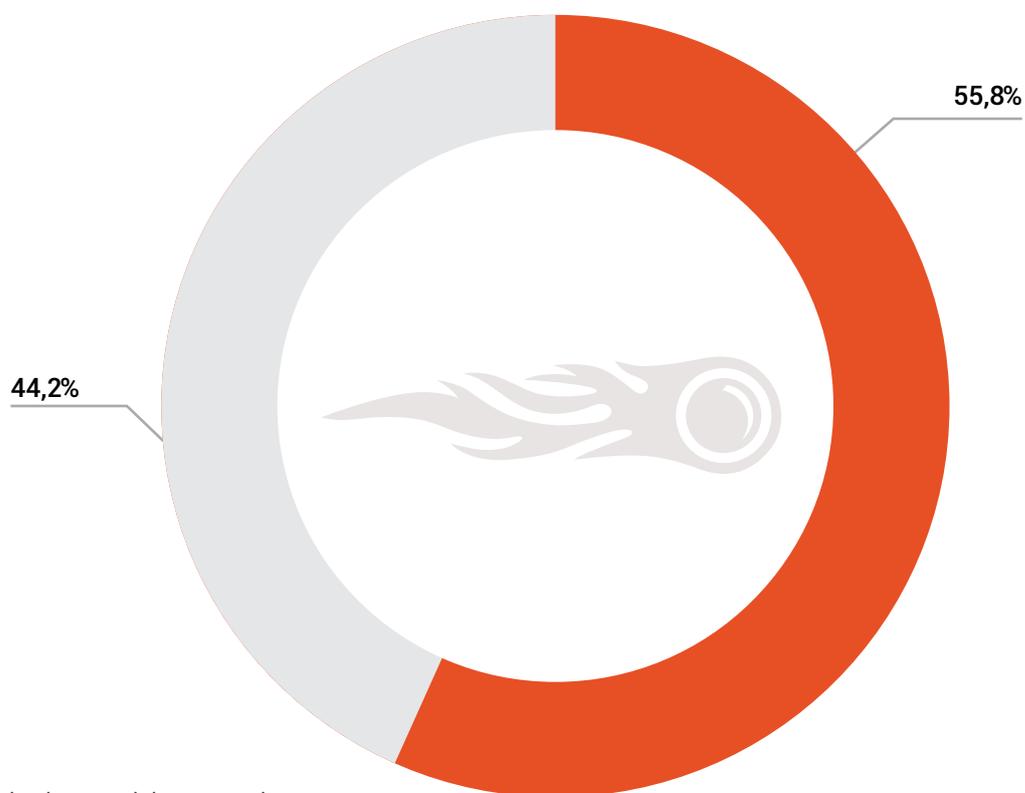
● websites with AMP issues

● websites without AMP issues

The next thing we looked at was how well websites executed the AMP implementation.

What we found surprised us: more than half of all sites had issues that affected the performance and effectiveness of their AMP content.

Only 44.2% had truly successfully created AMP content that was free from any issues.

The most common mistakes by percentage for websites with AMP pages
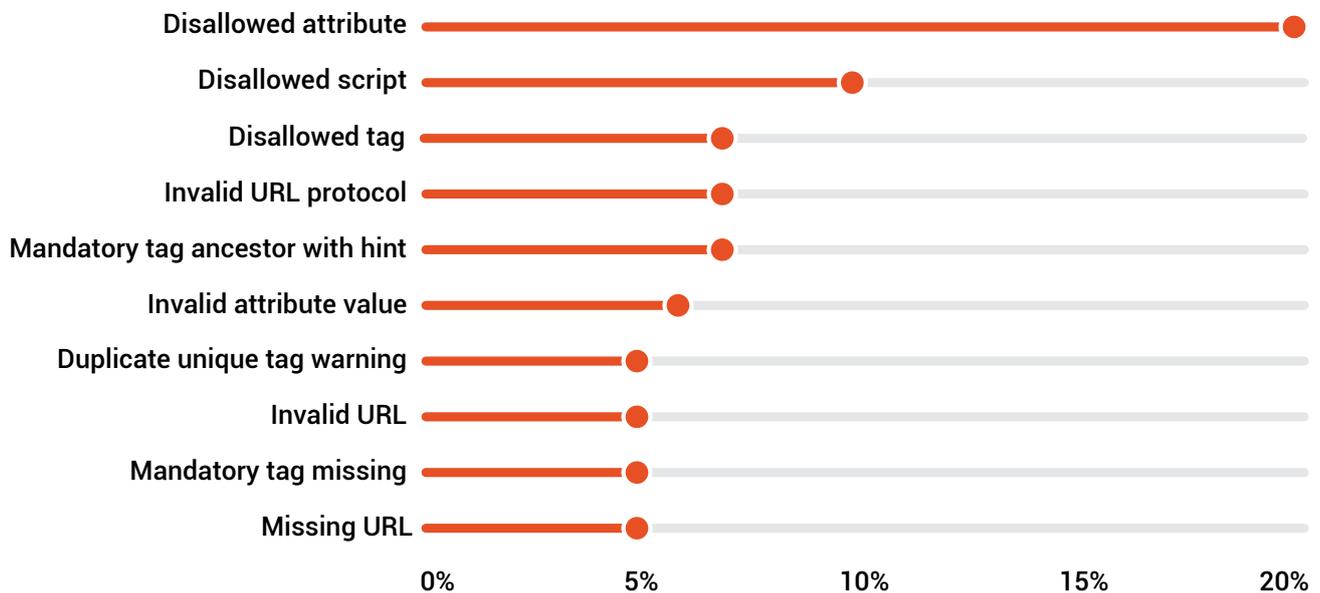
SEMrush Site Audit tool was able to assess the most common mistakes made when it came to AMP pages.

> **The data we collected showed that disallowed attribute was easily the most common issue, found on 21% of websites with AMP pages. Disallowed tags came in second, at around 9%. Other mistakes included missing URLs, duplicate tag warnings, invalid URLs, and missing mandatory tags.**

These errors are so common because AMP pages have strict requirements, which can be looked up in the AMP HTML Specification. Since these rules aren't common in general webmasters' practice, building AMP pages is tricky, but definitely not impossible. You can take a look at some of the most common errors, how to avoid them, and how to fix them here.

How Ecommerce Sites Can Utilize AMP

It's important to bear in mind that at the moment, AMP is somewhat limiting in terms of the benefits it can bring ecommerce companies. For example, it doesn't work with dynamic pages or features such as search results and shopping carts; and to be accepted as an AMP page, it must use Google's approved HTML, CSS, JavaScript and analytics tags.

However, that shouldn't put you off, because your resulting faster mobile pages can increase organic rankings and that has huge benefits. Follow our guide on how ecommerce sites can successfully implement AMP:

- Start with your homepage and product detail pages. Speeding these pages up enables potential customers to view essential information faster, while you're working around the current limitations. When eventually the AMP project is able to offer ecommerce-specific features, you can then consider rolling it out to the rest of your site.

- Consider using amp-carousel on your homepage, which enables viewers to see multiple pieces of content displayed on a horizontal axis.

- For product pages, look into amp-video and amp-accordion. Amp-video can highlight specific videos (remember that video source formats should always be served over HTTPS); whereas amp-accordion enables you to expand elements with particularly detailed features, e.g. product descriptions.

- Implement amp-analytics to understand how users are engaging with your site — it supports both Google Analytics and AdWords.

How AMP and PWAs Work Together

The benefit of AMP is near-instant delivery: great when a user first interacts with your website. Progressive Web Apps (PWAs) may be slow on the first load, but enables more interactive and engaging features throughout the user's visit to your site, which means they're ideal when used together.

For ecommerce websites looking to partner their AMP pages to their PWA, you'll need to link the two together.

By using amp-install-serviceworker, which is a script your browser runs in the background, you can combine your AMP pages with your Progressive Web App, ensuring that your user's experience is consistently fast while helping to increase purchases and drive revenue.

What It Means to You as a Marketer

Implementing AMP on your ecommerce site will help to increase mobile performance in a number of ways that improve the user experience. AMP won't be a strong choice for all sites, particularly those that rely on dynamic pages or site features, but most other ecommerce sites should consider implementing it.

With only 10.7% of the top ecommerce sites having implemented AMP, it's a good way to potentially set yourself apart from the competition and better connect with your audience.

To implement AMP successfully and see its maximum impact, you should:

- Watch for the most common AMP implementation mistakes and issues. AMP has strict requirements that need to be followed if you want to see its benefits, and it's easy to make mistakes. This is why 55.8% of sites with AMP had errors affecting its efficiency. Disallowed attributes and scripts are the most common, making up around 30% of all AMP errors.

- Implement AMP on the pages that matter most. For many ecommerce sites, this will be your homepage and your product pages. Having fast-loading product pages will often be more beneficial than a fast-loading mobile page in terms of capturing users and getting them to convert, and these work around AMP's current limitations.

- Utilize the current AMP features available to you, including the amp-carousel to highlight multiple products or the amp-video to offer mobile-friendly video content. The more your site can offer mobile users without slowing them down, the better.

- You can link your AMP with your Progressive Web App to increase site speed overall, keeping the user's experience consistently fast and keeping them engaging. You can combine your AMP pages with your PWAs with tools like the amp-install-serviceworker.

How SEMrush Can Help

⚙ Site Audit

Checks AMP-related issues on your site and offers suggestions for how to fix them.

Audit your AMP pages ❯

⚙ Sensor

Compares the presence of AMP pages across 25 industries.

Check your industry ❯

Optimization of Images for Visual Search and Conversion Rates
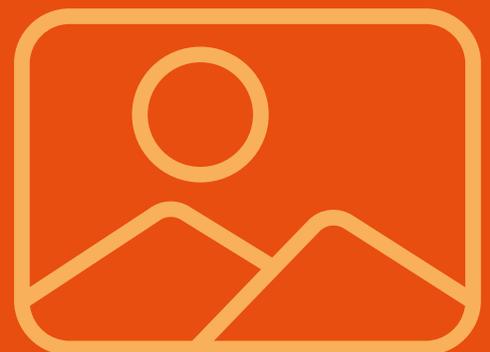
Optimization of Images for Visual Search and Conversion Rates

Users are unlikely to buy any product online that they don't see images of first, so it's essential for ecommerce sites that image optimization is a primary consideration.

Visuals also provides a potential source of traffic and revenue: image searches make up 21.8% of searches on web properties, and the usage of the emerging technology of visual search keeps expanding.

To capitalize on these facts, it's essential that your images are fully optimized to drive conversions.

Image Optimization Fundamentals

For any ecommerce site, investing in professional and high-quality product photography is essential to drive conversions.

Many ecommerce sites are required to use manufacturer imagery if they're a reseller. While there's nothing necessarily wrong with using stock images, sites should aim to use unique imagery where possible.

In the same way that you'd ideally avoid using boilerplate manufacturer copy for your products, a move away from generic imagery can help you stand out in the SERPs.

Ideally, as in the example below, you need multiple images per product, showing it from different angles, used in context, and with the ability to zoom and explore items — maybe even including a video or 360-degree photography.

Bee-Bot® Rechargeable Floor Robot

Product Code:

★★★★☆ Read 17 Reviews

Bee-Bot's® simple and child friendly layout is a perfect starting point for teaching control, directional language and programming. Read more

› Buy All & Save Option

› SAVE £100 with the 18 pack option Details

› SAVE £10 with the 4 pack option Details

| Choice | Select choice ▼ |
| Quantity | – 1 + |

From £ 49.95 ex VAT

Add to Basket ›

It's important that your images are saved using the correct file format. JPEGs are the standard choice. They are the most commonly used format across ecommerce platforms, providing a good compromise between file size and quality.

For smaller and simpler images like thumbnails or icons, quality is less of an issue and GIFs can potentially be used.

The PNG file type provides the highest quality images, but there's a corresponding increase in file size. Reducing a PNG's file size will lower the image's quality. It's unlikely that you'll need to use a PNG, unless the image is intended for print, or exceptionally high quality is essential.

Why do we need to avoid large image files?

> **Compressing images is one of the main ways a website can improve its speed. As we've discussed, site speed is a ranking factor, and a faster site means better user experience and increased conversions.**

The faster your ecommerce pages load, the fewer users will abandon a page due to impatience.

With Google focusing so much these days on user experience signals, anything your site can do to improve that aspect is worth pursuing.

If image delivery is slowing your site down, a content delivery network (CDN) can be used to speed things up. This is particularly useful if your site is international — this will mean that your site will load just as fast worldwide.

Optimizing images for organic visibility

Following image optimization best practice gives your product imagery the best chance of appearing in search results. Let's go over the fundamentals:

- **Image Alt Attributes:** The alt tag should be used to describe the contents of an image to both Google and users. Aim to use the keyword here if possible.

Broken internal images
0.11%

Missing ALT attributes
15.64%

> Many websites forget about image optimization. Data from a larger study of 100,000 websites and 450 million pages showed that 65.53% of sites had missing alt tags. Our research for this ebook showed that even among top ecommerce sites, 15.64% were making this mistake too.

At the same time, we also found that 0.11% of the top ecommerce sites had broken internal images and almost zero (0.003%) had broken external images, reflecting the importance of images for these sites.

- **Caption:** If relevant, using a caption can help Google to understand the context of the image, which may help it rank.

- **Sitemaps:** An image sitemap provides Google with information about the images on your site; this should update automatically as new images are added.

By optimizing your images, you not only give them a greater chance of appearing in image searches, but also in image packs, which display on the text search results page.

In the result below, properly optimized basics (including the title and alt tags) resulted in a product image appearing in the image pack at the top of the SERPs, in a prominent position above top ranking URLs including Pinterest.

Structured Data

Applying markup to your product pages allows Google to display extra information about your products in search results — this also applies across Google Images. Ensure that image information is included in the product page's structured data.

How to understand the value of images for your site

So, you've optimized your images and want to understand the benefits they're bringing to your site.

An update to Analytics in September 2018 made it easier to see how much traffic you get from Google Images.

Rather than being mixed in with google / organic, Google image traffic is now reflected in own google images / organic line.

Now, by simply navigating to the Source / Medium report and isolating google / images, Hallam saw that for their client's website, 864 users came from Google Image search in one month:

Source/Medium (?)	Acquisition		
	Users (?) ↓	New Users (?)	Sessions (?)
	864 % of Total: 0.40% (214,297)	758 % of Total: 0.41% (184,392)	860 % of Total: 0.29% (300,596)
1. google images / organic	864(100.00%)	758(100.00%)	860(100.00%)

Image optimization & visual search

> **Visual search represents an exciting potential new revenue stream for many ecommerce sites.**

This technology has seen considerable investment in research and development recently, from the likes of Bing, Pinterest, ASOS and Google.

If you're currently optimizing your images, then optimizing for visual search shouldn't be too complicated.

> **Ensure that images are properly optimized with file names and alt tags, and mark product images up with product schema to give Google as much information as possible.**

What It Means to You as a Marketer

Optimizing your images for visual searches is a necessary step in improving your overall SEO. Many top ecommerce sites are doing this already, and the vast majority of them are doing so more successfully than ecommerce sites on average. This can be seen in the fact that only around 15% of top ecommerce sites had errors with missing alt image tags; for ecommerce sites, in general, that figure was 65%.

In order to successfully optimize your images for search and conversion rates, you should:

- Use JPEG image files as often as possible. They're high quality but low file size, which increases loading speed. For small thumbnails or icons, you can use GIFs, but they're low quality. PNG files have the highest quality, but the largest file sizes, resulting in lowered site loading speeds that will hurt you in the SERPs.

- Using multiple images per product can increase conversions and give you more images to optimize. By incorporating your own images rather than generic stock materials, you can stand out more in the SERPs.

- Optimize each image correctly. Every image should have a file name and caption that's descriptive and potentially uses your target keywords.

- Include image sitemaps on your site, so that Google can receive information about the images that you have uploaded. These should update automatically when you add new images.

- Add product images to the structured data of product pages with schema.org markups, allowing your images to show up in the SERPs and in relevant searches.

- Include alt attributes like image alt tags for every image. Even among top ecommerce sites 15% had missing alt tags, so check your site now. Alt tags provide context to Google about what the image shows, so this is particularly important.

How SEMrush Can Help

⚙ **Site Audit**

Checks common image issues on your site and offers suggestions for how to fix them.

Optimize your images ❯

⚙ **Organic Research**

Checks keywords that trigger the image packs at the top of the SERPs.

Explore new opportunities ❯

Schema
Markup

Schema Markup

Few additions to the digital marketer's toolkit in recent years have shaken up the SEO landscape as much as Schema. It's surprising, therefore, to learn that structured data has been regarded as 'the future' of search since 2011.

Even today, Google needs a little help to understand site content, your brand and what your online presence encompasses. We give them this information by adding schema markup to sites.

> **While Google has previously denied that structured data use directly boosts ranking, it's clear that sites can benefit in other ways by implementing different types of markup. These benefits include higher CTR, increased traffic, and better conversion rates, so better rankings can often be an indirect result of schema use.**

Despite these attractions, many sites have still not adopted schema into their SEO strategy, whether due to a lack of understanding or awareness, bad previous experiences (you can receive a manual action for schema misuse) or technical difficulties.

> **In our analysis, we found that 47.88% of the ecommerce sites we reviewed hadn't implemented any schema markups.**

Of the 52% of ecommerce sites that had implemented schema markups, 44.96% were using Open Graph protocol.

After Open Graph markup, the next most popular option was Schema.org markups way back at 19.98%, and Twitter Cards schema which was used by 16.32% of businesses. Several sites that had implemented schema were using multiple types of markups.

Open Graph
44.96%

Schema.org
19.98%

Twitter Cards
16.32%

Different types of schema markups offer different benefits:

- Open Graph markups allow any web page to become a "rich" object on social media sites like Facebook. You can share product titles, price, descriptions, and images, or a blog post title, featured image, and summary.

- Schema.org markups create structured data that improve how your site appears in the SERPs. Add in information like product ratings to grab user attention and enhance information.

- Twitter Cards markups are like Open Graph for Twitter, and will pull website data. You can add rich Twitter Cards containing valuable and up-to-date information like price or product information.

Adding Schema to Your Site

For ecommerce sites, product schema is the most important markup. It includes price, SKU, description and review markup that can really improve CTR if used.

There are tools available that can automatically and quickly create schemas for your store, including the Schema Markup Generator. Simply choose the type of schema you want to create, fill in the details and your code appears on the right. Here's a mockup of product schema for a 49 inch TV:

Once you've filled in the details as thoroughly as possible, click the blue validate button in the top right corner to check that the code you've created is error free. The Structured Data Testing Tool that will open, is Google's own tool for ensuring that schema is correctly formatted.

```
1  <script type="application/ld+json">
2  {
3    "@context": "http://schema.org/",
4    "@type": "Product",
5    "name": "LG 49SK8500PLA 49inch Smart 4K Ultra HD HDR LED
   TV",
6    "image": "https://brain-images-
   ssl.cdn.dixons.com/2/6/10178162/u_10178162.jpg",
7    "description": "4K Ultra HD Certified with Dolby Vision
8  Catch-up TV & 4K Streaming with webOS
9  Picture quality: TruMotion 200
10 Freeview HD with Freeview Play / Freesat HD
11 HDMI 2.0b x 4",
12   "brand": "LG",
13   "sku": "233648",
14   "offers": {
15     "@type": "Offer",
16     "priceCurrency": "GBP",
17     "price": "749",
18     "availability": "http://schema.org/InStock",
19     "itemCondition": "http://schema.org/NewCondition"
20   },
21   "aggregateRating": {
22     "@type": "AggregateRating",
23     "ratingValue": "4.5",
24     "bestRating": "5",
25     "worstRating": "1",
26     "ratingCount": "1",
27     "reviewCount": "1"
28   },
29   "reviews": {
30     "@context": "http://schema.org/",
31     "@type": "Review",
32     "name": "Brian",
33     "reviewBody": "Brilliant picture quality (you have to
   be watching on UHD or Dolby Vision to experience this
   though)
34 Great menu and choice of options, a whole range of
   customizable picture and sound settings. AI features are
   ok, I haven't really experiment with these much.
35 Bad Points-
36 The remote control pointer can be annoying, if you let it
   get to you. It does however disappear after about 5 seconds
   of inactivity.
```

Any time new schema is added to a site, or current schema is tweaked, make sure to run it through the Structured Data Testing Tool before pushing it live (even if it's been created via plugin).

Errors often crop up unexpectedly. Google can also change what it requires within a particular schema type. For example, with Local Business markup the image field used to be optional. Google changed this to required in 2016, creating a wave of frustrated SEOs who had to update all their schema.

Depending on your CMS, there may also be plugins or add-ons that work in a similar way, where you input the relevant info, and the schema is then pulled through to the necessary pages. A number of these will work with Woocommerce and Shopify ecommerce setups (Woocommerce even comes with its own schema functionality built in, which is useful but a little limited). Plugins and add-ons can be more restrictive than creating the schema yourself and hard coding it in, but it's a great way to get started and should be a suitable long-term option for simpler sites.

Here, you can see a real-world example of where the schema pulls through into the SERPs, creating a far more enticing entry than the second image.

A Word of Caution

Schema is a wonderful thing, but falling foul of Google's guidelines can get marketers into trouble. The information placed within schema must be visible on the page that it is found on.

In others words, you can't put review ratings on a page where there are no reviews. Schema such as Local Business or Organisation can generally be placed on every page, as most sites have key business info like NAP details in the footer.

Overzealous marketers have found themselves receiving manual actions due to schema misuse. Google continues to crack down on webmasters, whether the misuse was intentional or not. Thankfully, such manual actions are simple to rectify, just by tweaking or removing the schema in question and submitting a reconsideration request.

What It Means to You as a Marketer

Having the ability to tell Google exactly what you want it to know about your client and the contents of their site, is a huge advantage for digital marketers. We don't need to assume or wonder anymore and therefore, schema use has become a part of best practice as time has gone on. It's critical for us to have an easy way of providing this information, in a way that is accepted by search engines and that genuinely helps searchers. Anyone not making the most of schema is missing out on better CTR, traffic and SERP features — and right now, that includes 47.88% of even the top ecommerce sites.

To unlock the full potential of schema and improve site performance, you should:

1. Start by adding product schema markups to your site, including product price, SKU, descriptions, and reviews.

2. Most schemas are underused, despite their great benefits; Schema.org is only being used by 19.98% of top ecommerce sites even though it gives businesses the chance to add valuable information to their SERPS that will appeal to customers and increase conversions.

3. Similarly, Open Graph markups were used by 44.96% of top ecommerce sites but Twitter Cards were only used 16.32% of the time, even though they serve similar functions. Diversifying the schemas on your site gives you more opportunities to appeal to your audience, with room for improvement across the board.

4. Use the Structured Data Testing Tool to ensure that all new or adjusted schemas are effective and error-free. Errors can crop up unexpectedly, even after minor tweaks.

5. Watch out for changes on Google. Google can (and does) alter its rules for particular schema types, so every time you update yours make sure that you match current standards.

6. Tools can automatically create schemas for your store, including Woocommerce's native schema functionality. Though this is more limited than the markup generator listed above, it is easy and convenient to use, and works well for smaller, simpler sites. You can also use schema-generating tools like the Schema Markup Generator, which make it easy to create a wide range of schemas.

7 Only put information in a schema that is readily available on the site page. You can't list reviews on a page where no reviews are featured. Google doesn't take kindly to misuse of schemas, so make sure that you stay in the clear.

How SEMrush Can Help

⚙ **Position tracking**

Checks you and your competitor's search engine rankings for Reviews and other SERP Features triggered by Schema.

Start watching your SERPs ❯

⚙ **Site Audit**

Audits a website and reports the percentage of pages using Schema.

Get your Schema audit report now ❯

⚙ **On Page SEO Checker**

Gives recommendations for your markup implementation based on your top 10 competitors.

Gather ideas ❯

Impulse Purchases vs. Well-Planned Shopping

Impulse Purchases vs. Well-Planned

Some users plan their online shopping. They'll do their research, spending hours, days or even months considering the buying options and reading reviews, before eventually coming to a conclusion.

Impulse buying is a very different story. A person sees an ad, or an email campaign, or a social media post featuring a product or service. It's instantly appealing to them. They might check the reviews, but they'll purchase quickly without overthinking it.

To maximize sales, it's important to optimize your site and your ad campaigns to appeal to both shopping planners and impulsive purchasers.

Appealing to planning customers means providing a variety of in-depth information on the site, featuring reviews, and building relationships when possible. Impulse buying, on the other hand, is much more emotional than logical. We took a look at the most popular emotional triggers that ecommerce businesses use in their ad campaigns.

Emotional triggers in Ads, popularity coefficient

Emotional Trigger	Value
Free Shipping	~100
Official Site	~52
Shop Now	~37
Low Price	~27
Shipping Order	~25
Shop Online	~20
Buy Now	~20
Best Buy	~21
Shipping Return	~16
Ship Free	~14
Orders Ship	~14
Order Now	~13
Free Return	~12
Site Shop	~12
Best Price	~12
Shop New	~12
Best Seller	~12
New Arrival	~11
Online Shopping	~10
Orders Shop	~9
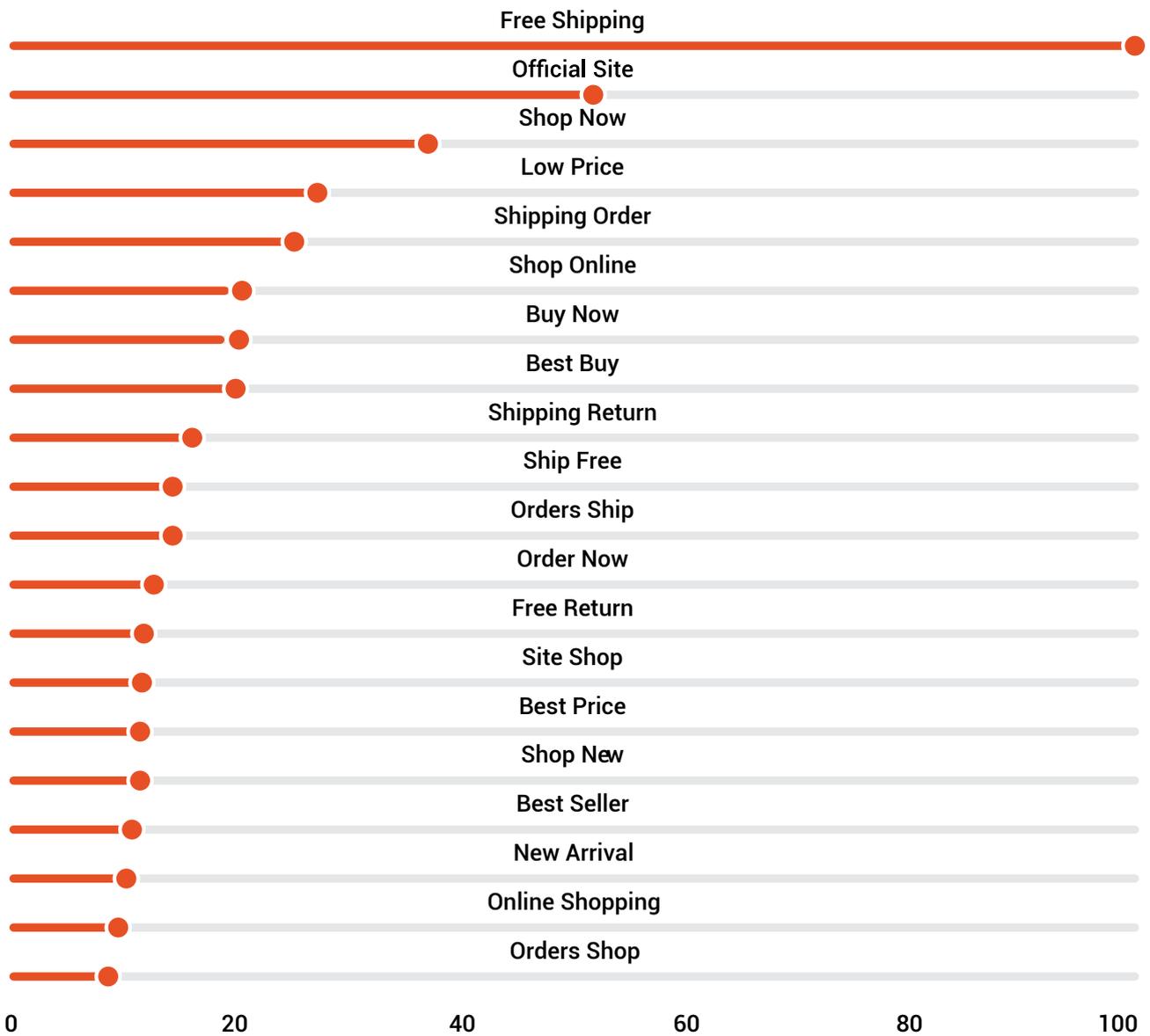
The most popular emotional trigger was the offer of free shipping, which appeals to users because it lowers their perceived risk and makes them want to act before missing out.

"Official site" and "Shop Now" were options two and three, showcasing the importance of both building trust with the customer and establishing urgency.

Hypothesis

We know that in general returning customers have a higher conversion rate than new users. However, we believe this factor is exaggerated during key sales periods, such as Black Friday.

Most Searched Products on Black Friday, Global
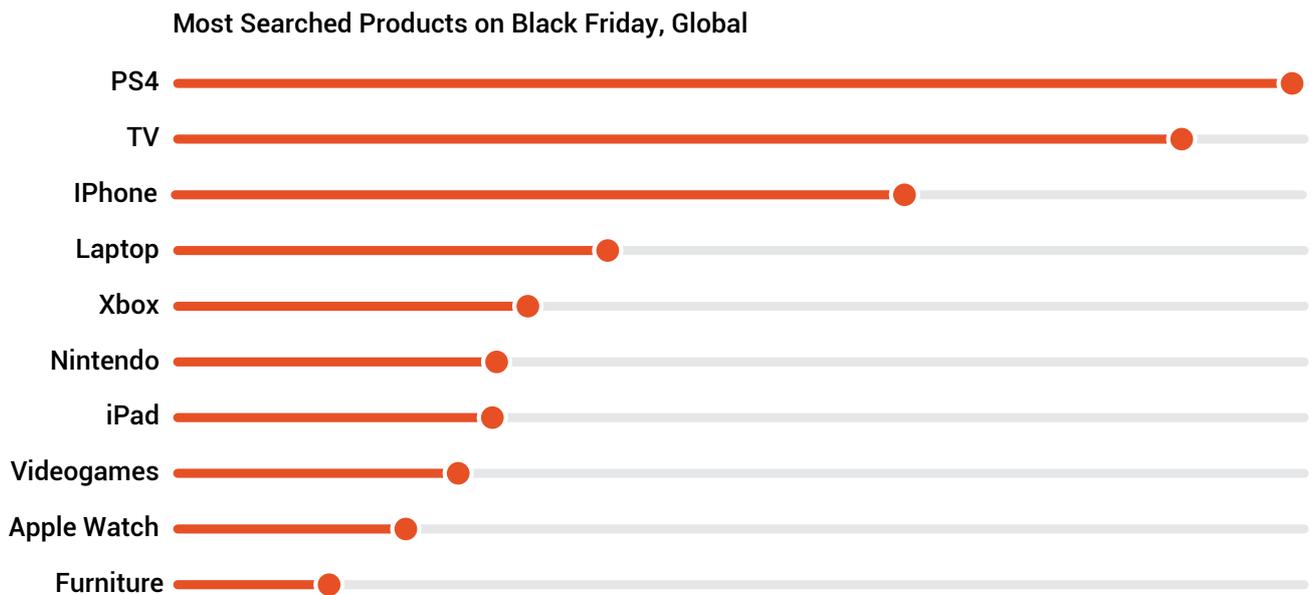
It was clear that expensive "luxury" items — especially those in the entertainment industry — were the most searched for items on Black Friday.

> **Potential customers are looking for great deals on high-priced items that they don't need, either for themselves or as an upcoming gift for someone else.**

Everything on the list is expensive, with the only potential essentials being furniture and laptops for work.

The level of research carried out by users prior to purchasing has become far more intense, and with the increased amount of information available, we're seeing a change in behavior.

The number of impulse purchases is decreasing around periods that previously would have been associated with that type of activity. But now, even those users are putting in the research, and expecting to find information that will help them make a quick purchase decision.

Timeframes and Businesses Reviewed

To help prove or dismiss the hypothesis, we have decided to focus on two ecommerce businesses that are B2C, and are heavily influenced by sales periods. These will be known as 'Fashion Retailer A', and 'Home Interiors Retailer B'.

The time frames we will be reviewing are 21/11/2014–28/11/2014 and 17/11/2017–24/11/2017. We feel this is a fair comparison that represents the changes in user behavior related to conversions.

Industry Trends and Search Patterns

When comparing the two periods, we can see that there is a subtle change in the search trends for a couple of key terms. The term 'Black Friday Deals' is a clear show of intent from the user, who is looking for items to purchase. On the two images below, we've pinpointed the like-for-like days where search volumes started to increase: the Wednesday prior to Black Friday. As you can see, the interest score is higher in 2017, although we are attributing that to the fact that the analysis took place in the UK, and in 2014, this sales season was still in its infancy. However, the main insight is the consistent number of searches conducted during the full week before Black Friday; this was not apparent in 2014.

This is also the case for the generic term 'Black Friday', which shows something similar (see below). By looking at these trends, we can see that interest over time has risen in the build up to Black Friday, instead of just the sales period itself.
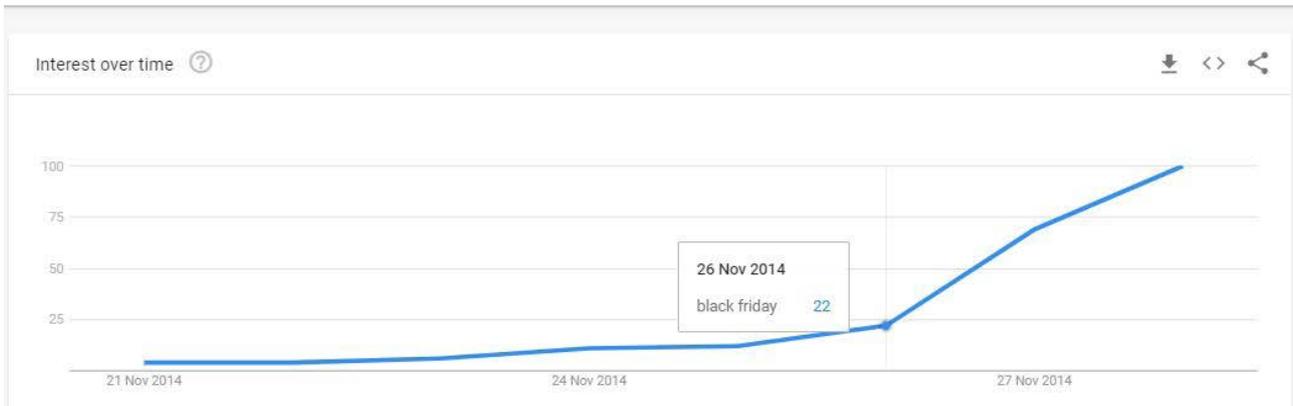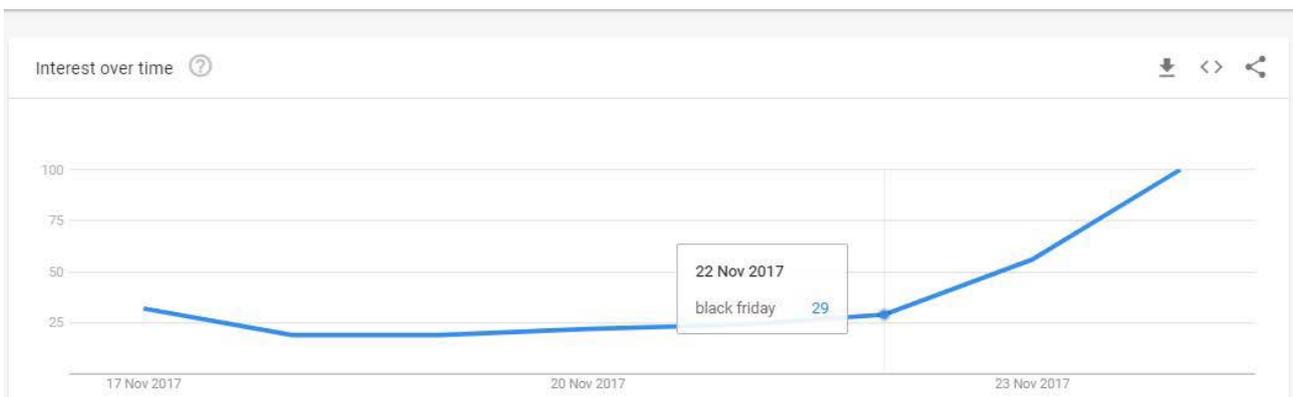
Results

The graphs below display all organic users on Black Friday, looking back to the Friday prior. This period has been identified as the main research phase for many Black Friday shoppers.

Fashion Retailer A

As you can see from the graph below, the conversion rate over the 4 days before Black Friday was often lower in 2017 than it was in 2014. However, sessions were consistently slightly ahead. This may suggest users are more inclined to carry out research ahead of what is seen as a typical 'impulse purchase' event.

18 Nov 2017	24 Nov 2017	● Ecommerce Conversion Rate	● Sessions
22 Nov 2014	28 Nov 2014	● Ecommerce Conversion Rate	● Sessions
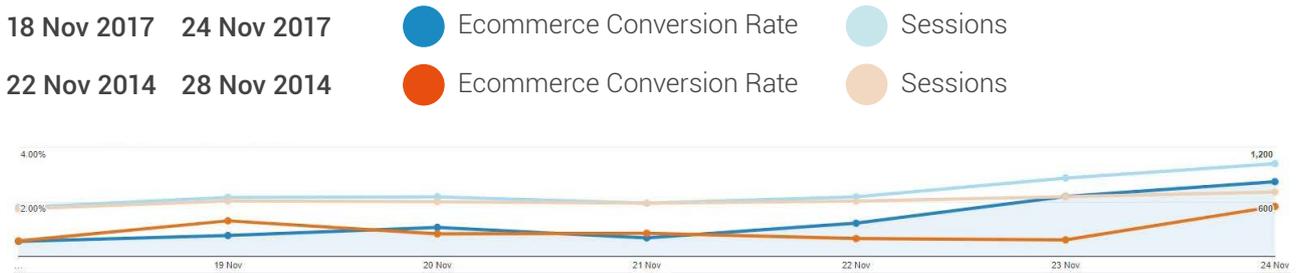
Based on the hypothesis, we would assume that dwell time for users and the average number of pages visited during the research period would increase. However, as you can see from the image below, this isn't the case. User behavior seems to become 'weaker' over time. There are a few factors that may have affected these results, and you can see these by referring to the Acknowledged Biases section.

18 Nov 2017	24 Nov 2017	● Avg.Session Duration	● Pages/Session
22 Nov 2014	28 Nov 2014	● Avg.Session Duration	● Pages/Session
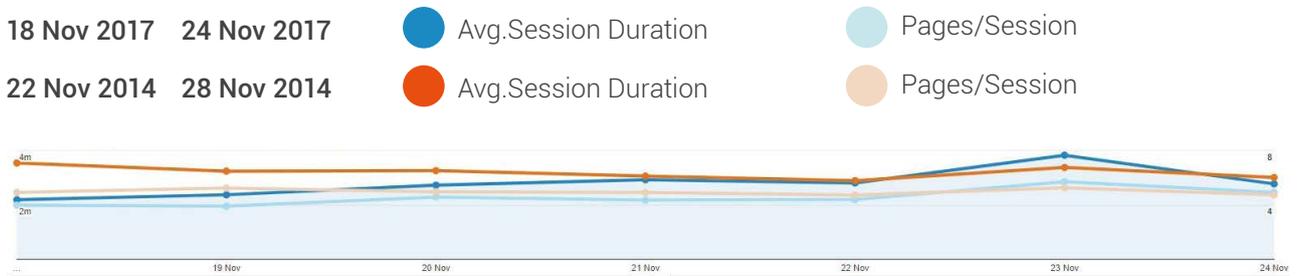
The final graph you can see for this retailer is the returning organic users for the two periods. You can see that there is a clear shift from the Wednesday ahead of Black Friday in 2017, with returning user volumes increasing significantly, at a rate much greater than what was seen in 2014. This could be the clearest indication to support the hypothesis.

17 Nov 2017	24 Nov 2017	● Users
21 Nov 2014	28 Nov 2014	● Users
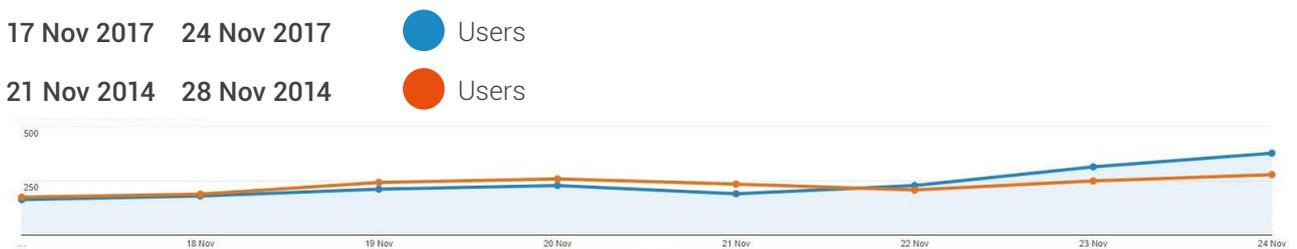
Home Interiors Retailer B

When looking at like-for-like data for retailer B, we can see that overall traffic has decreased over time, unlike with retailer A. This is down to overall organic performance, so we are discounting this when analysing the trends between the periods. We can see there is less of an obvious lift in conversion rate or user volume compared to what was seen with retailer A, but there was a change in conversion rate in 2017 as we built up to Black Friday. This wasn't apparent in 2014.

Putting aside the difference in actual performance, the trend lines suggest there were clear shifts in user behavior in 2017, which wasn't the case in 2014 as everything remained stable.

| 17 Nov 2017 | 24 Nov 2017 | ● Ecommerce Conversion Rate | ○ Sessions |
| 21 Nov 2014 | 28 Nov 2014 | ● Ecommerce Conversion Rate | ○ Sessions |
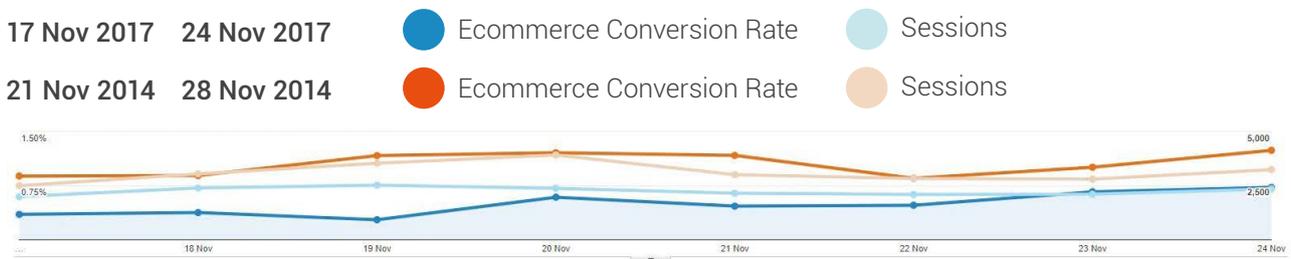
Again, not focusing on the overall performance drop over the three years, we're looking at what insights we can gain from the trending user behavior. The graph below shows that 'pages per session' has been consistent between the two periods, although the average session duration is slightly different. We can see in 2014 it remains flat throughout the research phase, yet there was a lift for the days leading up to Black Friday in 2017. What is strange, is that the conversion rate falls on the main sales days, suggesting that the quality of traffic and the product offering peaked too soon. This doesn't directly support or dismiss the hypothesis, but it does highlight changes in user behavior.

| 17 Nov 2017 | 24 Nov 2017 | ● Avg.Session Duration | ○ Pages/Session |
| 21 Nov 2014 | 28 Nov 2014 | ● Avg.Session Duration | ○ Pages/Session |
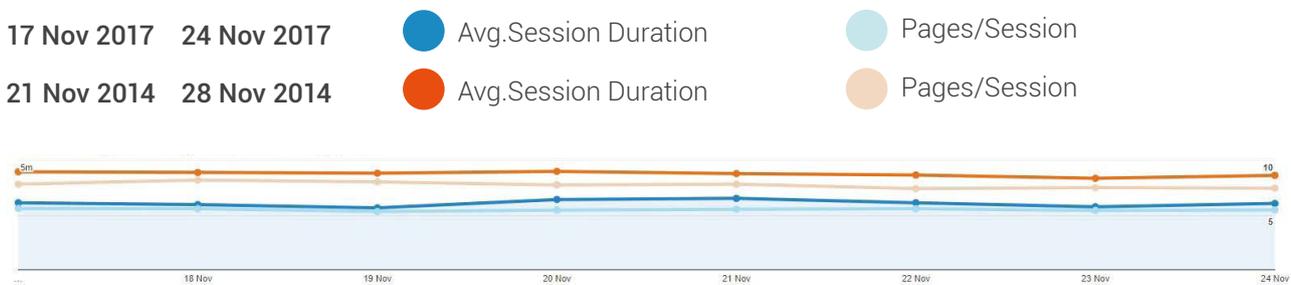
Returning visitor levels are fairly stable throughout the research phase, working against the hypothesis. We have seen some trends that suggest returning users spike during the main sales days, but this is not the case here. We actually found that in 2014, this was far more apparent, so if anything, the volume of returning users has plateaued more recently.

Summary

Based on the data we have used in this section, we can see that buying behavior is shifting and that retailers have an opportunity to take advantage of these changes.

> **In recent years, we've seen that users are searching earlier, and for longer. They no longer just expect to see what deals are coming, but in some cases, expect to have them available ahead of that time.**

With the saying 'Black Fiveday' now in common use, we already know that Thursday-to-Cyber Monday are pivotal days for retailers, but we are now seeing that the week leading up is potentially as important. The question presents itself — at what point will November as a whole be known as a key sales period, and not just Black Friday? Will retailers start offering deals even earlier, and will buyers start treating November in a similar way to the January sales? Of course, we don't know yet, but with Christmas on the way, November is generally a busy month, so with the potential to generate even more sales, there is a strong possibility that we haven't seen the end of this expansion.

Acknowledged biases:

- Stock level fluctuations

- Changes in the product offering

- Shift in the website organic visibility meaning traffic changes are likely

- Website/ecommerce store appearance and design affecting user behavior

What It Means to You as a Marketer

The rise of online shopping has made it easier for impulse purchasing to happen quickly. You don't even need to get users in the store; you just have to show them a well-timed ad. Utilizing the right emotional triggers for impulse buyers can help. That being said, more buyers are researching products for longer, so you need to appeal to both types of purchasers.

To appeal effectively to all customers, you should:

1. Use emotional triggers like "free shipping" to create urgency and increase impulse purchasing. This can work for true impulse buyers, but also for those who have been researching your product and waiting for a deal to strike.

2. Post deals as early as possible. More stores are sharing their Black Friday bargains, posting them online in early November. This makes it easy for researchers to assess what's best for them and to decide to purchase from you.

3. Even when "impulse purchases" are happening, customers are doing at least preliminary research on their other options. They may decide on a whim to buy that PS4 on Black Friday, but they might also do a few quick searches across the board to see who has the best deal, instead of just purchasing on the first site they see. Having as much transparent information posted as possible will help win these customers.

4. Intent-related searches peaked two days before Black Friday, showing high intent at the last minute and indicating more impulsive purchases. Make sure that you're ready a few days before all sales and big events to prepare for this.

How SEMrush Can Help

⚙ PPC Keyword Tool

Offers an easy interface to plan keywords and groups for a Google Ads search campaign.

Create your first ad campaign now ❯

⚙ Display Advertising

Analyses your competitors' display advertising strategies on the Google Display Network.

Start analyzing the competition ❯

⚙ Advertising Research

Shows the keywords that your competitors are bidding on and their paid search positions.

See rivals' top keywords now ❯

⚙ Ad Builder

Offers a quick way to build ads with competitive headlines, descriptions, UTMs, and more based on competitive research.

Create your first ad now ❯

⚙ Keyword Gap

Compares multiple websites' keyword sets (organic, paid, and PLA keywords) side by side to identify the gaps between competitors.

Get insights now ❯

Attribution Models: Understanding the Value of Paid Traffic

Attribution Models: Understanding the Value of Paid Traffic

Introduction

With the level of detailed measurements available in digital advertising, it's sometimes hard to know where to start when analyzing performance. That's where attribution modelling comes in. This is where performance can be segregated to different channels or campaigns, and help the advertiser understand where conversion value should be distributed.

So, What Is It?

When a conversion is carried out, that value will be assigned to a channel/campaign. The attribution model you use will determine how this is assessed.

So, for example, the traditional model was Last Click. This means that the last interaction a user has with a website, the channel or campaign that facilitated that visit will be awarded 100% of the conversion value.

Another commonly used attribution model is Linear. This means that each interaction a user has with the website leading to the conversion will be awarded equal value. So, if a user arrived at a website via a paid ad, then later arrived by an organic listing before converting, both channels will receive 50% of the value. With Last Click, organic traffic would have received 100%.

Why Is It Important?

With an increasing number of touchpoints in a user's conversion journey, it's vital that you understand which ones have been most influential in getting that conversion. By getting this right, you will be able to make decisions based on accurate data.

However, get it wrong, and it will often mean under-reporting, resulting in poor judgement about what is and isn't working. The work and effort an advertiser puts into a campaign can be wasted if the conversion value is not being fairly reported back to the most influential interactions — often paid channels.

An analogy often used is a football team. A striker will not score any goals without their teammates assisting in the process. If three players pass the ball before passing to the striker who scores, are they all worthy of a degree of credit? This, effectively, is attribution modelling.

Challenges

Knowing which attribution to model

> **There is no 'right' answer when selecting the attribution model to use, just the one that best represents the fairest distribution of value.**

Many factors need to be taken into consideration: the business type, industry, target market, and the type of conversion you're looking to achieve.

With ecommerce businesses, many operate in competitive industries where other retailers sell the same or similar products.

Travel

The report is based on the analysis of **54,073** keywords

Most expensive keywords

Keyword	CPC
business travel services	$79.17
business travel agency	$49.62
corporate travel agent	$46.31

Most popular keywords

Keyword	Volume
travelocity	2,740,000
travel	135,000
centerparcs	135,000

*The screenshot was taken from the CPC Map Tool

The travel industry, for example, is highly competitive with up to 2,740,000 monthly searches for a single keyword ("travelocity"), and the highest CPC on a keyword clocking in at $79.17 for the keyword "business travel services." And according to our research, the competition is likely to get more difficult over time.
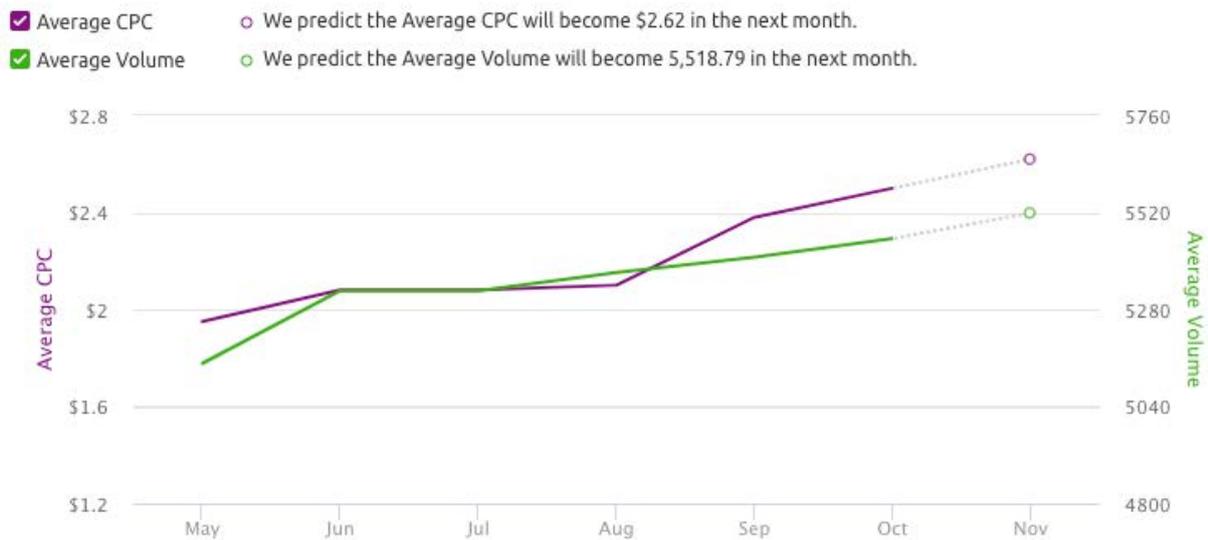
*The screenshot was taken from the CPC Map Tool

Those high CPCs won't be changing any time soon, at least not in the direction that we'd like. While both the average volume and the average CPCs are increasing steadily, CPCs have had steeper rate increases during the second half of this year. The competition is getting even tougher, and we're going to continue to see increased CPC over time.

With this in mind, ecommerce businesses must compete against multiple rivals, using a number of different channels and platforms to connect with the customer.

The customer's buying process is often much more complex in order to accommodate their research phase. Therefore, it's important that the right decision is made when selecting an attribution model(s).

But with more touchpoints to consider, it can be a difficult choice to make.

Complexity of the customer journey

With more information and purchasing choices available, understandably the buying process is continuing to get longer and more complex.

On the image below, you can see some of the journeys carried out by users before a purchase is made. You can also see the number of conversions and the total revenue each path generated. With a vast number of touchpoints, it's almost impossible to single out one attribution model that fairly represents all conversion path variations.

Path	Conversions	Revenue
Paid Search > Direct > Paid Search × 2 > Direct × 2 > Organic Search > Direct > Paid Search > Organic Search > Direct × 2	5 (0.48%)	£206.40
Paid Search > Direct × 14	5 (0.48%)	£385.00
Paid Search × 2 > Direct × 3 > Paid Search > Direct × 2 > Email > Direct × 2 > Paid Search	5 (0.48%)	£237.60
Paid Search × 2 > Direct > Email > Direct > Email > Direct > Paid Search > Direct × 5	5 (0.48%)	£193.50

Traditional default attribution model

As mentioned earlier, a commonly used attribution model is Last Click, or a similar version of it. The reason for this is its simple design, which allows people to clearly understand how conversion value is distributed. As a result, it's used across many mainstream reporting platforms as the default model.

> However, despite its clarity, Last Click is also heavily biased towards the last interaction, and offers no fair representation of other important interactions that assisted in a conversion.

Over time, different attribution models have been, and continue to be, introduced to try and remedy it.

Comparing different attribution models

To demonstrate how different attribution models represent conversion value in a variety of ways, we have provided examples. The first case shown is an ecommerce fashion retailer; the image below shows results over a three month period in 2017. In it, we compare the traditional Last Click model and the Linear model (mentioned above), and the metrics used are conversion value and ROAS.

MCF Channel Grouping	Spend (for selected time range)	Conversion Value & ROAS				% change in Conversion Value (from Last Interaction)
		Last Interaction		Linear		Linear
		Conversion Value	ROAS	Conversion Value	ROAS	
1. Direct	–	£289,525.19 (48.19%)	–	£248,808.99 (41.41%)	–	-14.06% ↓
2. Paid Search	£45,574.72	£175,294.52 (29.18%)	384.63%	£215,508.12 (35.87%)	472.87%	22.94% ↑
3. Email	–	£82,306.73 (13.70%)	–	£89,571.50 (14.91%)	–	8.83% ↑
4. Organic Search	–	£46,212.52 (7.69%)	–	£40,109.72 (6.68%)	–	-13.21% ↓
5. Referral	–	£6,174.90 (1.03%)	–	£5,286.58 (0.88%)	–	-14.39% ↓
6. Social Network	–	£984.95 (0.16%)	–	£1,281.44 (0.21%)	–	30.10% ↑
7. (Other)	–	£327.50 (0.05%)	–	£259.97 (0.04%)	–	-20.62% ↓

As you can see, the direct channel shows up very favorably when using Last Click, whereas other channels such as paid and email are less impressive. However, when using a Linear model, paid gets an increase of 23% conversion value, receiving more credit for those earlier interactions.

The consequences of only using Last Click could be severe, especially if you were to make key decisions — such as increasing or reducing ad spend — based on its results.

Looking at the same business, on the image below you can see that the second most common conversion path is paid > direct. If using a Last Click model alone, paid would get no credit whatsoever. This highlights the potential risks and misrepresentation that the wrong attribution model can display.

MCF Channel Grouping Path	Conversions		Conversion Value
1. Paid Search × 2	1,368 (7.61%)		£22,108.78
2. Paid Search › Direct	1,270 (7.06%)		£27,085.94
3. Direct × 2	992 (5.52%)		£10,139.85

On the image below, we show a different ecommerce business data. Using the same metrics, we now highlight the difference between the Last Click model, and one called Time Decay.

Time Decay distributes most of the conversion value to the interaction closest to the point of sale, and gradually decreases the value of the interactions the further away they are.

Again, you can see that credit is more fairly distributed across certain channels with Time Decay, although it's not as evenly spread as with Linear. So, what would the result look like if you used that model too? Well, unsurprisingly, paid, which provides many of the early interactions, is assigned much more value with a Linear model than with Time Decay.

So, when we use a First Click model, which is one that operates in the opposite way to Last Click, assigning all value to the first interaction, you can see that paid's conversion value is increased even further.

> The point here is that attribution models interpret the same set of data in various ways, painting very different pictures for each channel or campaign performance.

Therefore, this highlights the importance of understanding each model, and which one(s) best represent your data.

MCF Channel Grouping	Spend (for selected time range)	Last Interaction		Time Decay		First Interaction		% change in Conversion Value (from Last Interaction)	
		Conversion Value ↓	ROAS	Conversion Value	ROAS	Conversion Value	ROAS	Time Decay	First Interaction
1. Direct	—	£2,578,318.69 (55.21%)	—	£2,381,892.31 (51.01%)	—	£1,834,562.35 (39.29%)	—	-7.62% ↑	-28.85% ↓
2. Paid Search	£56,003.06	£1,155,463.45 (24.74%)	2,063.21%	£1,280,309.10 (27.42%)	2,286.14%	£1,504,020.94 (32.21%)	2,685.60%	10.80% ↑	30.17% ↑
3. Organic Search	—	£723,329.91 (15.49%)	—	£851,606.40 (18.24%)	—	£1,225,331.70 (26.24%)	—	17.73% ↑	69.40% ↑
4. Referral	—	£138,200.72 (2.96%)	—	£82,059.67 (1.76%)	—	£24,189.85 (0.52%)	—	-40.62% ↓	-82.50% ↓
5. Email	—	£69,886.52 (1.50%)	—	£65,722.92 (1.41%)	—	£72,824.60 (1.56%)	—	-5.96% ↓	4.20% ↑
6. Social Network	—	£2,257.07 (0.05%)	—	£3,461.26 (0.07%)	—	£5,107.32 (0.11%)	—	53.35% ↑	126.28% ↑
7. Display	£1,366.74	£1,695.37 (0.04%)	124.04%	£3,911.44 (0.08%)	286.19%	£2,497.39 (0.05%)	182.73%	130.71% ↑	47.31% ↑
8. (Other)	—	£637.96 (0.01%)	—	£826.55 (0.02%)	—	£1,255.54 (0.03%)	—	29.56% ↑	96.81% ↑

What It Means to You as a Marketer

When you consider how the paid channel acquires users, and at what stage they come in the conversion funnel, we can see that using a Last Click model is not the fairest when reviewing performance. It also overweighs credit to channels that typically acquire returning visitors, such as direct.

There isn't a 'right' answer when it comes to assigning an attribution model to analyse paid traffic performance. However, you do need to select one that supports early interactions as this is where the main paid touchpoints will be found.

Our recommendation is to use an attribution model that supports multiple touchpoints, rather than one singular. So, Linear or Position Based could be appropriate choices. Those that use Google Ads may have access to a Data-Driven Attribution Model (DDAM) which is fluid, segmenting the value of each conversion in a bespoke manner to different interactions. Google has reported that the DDAM can improve the accuracy of assigning conversion value by up to 15%.

If you want to best assess what marketing efforts and PPC campaigns are working most effectively for you, you should:

1. Choose the right attribution model. For most businesses, this will mean ditching the Last Click attribution model, as it fails to take account of all events leading up to the conversion, and thus doesn't give an accurate portrayal. Using Linear or Position Based models will take multiple touchpoints into account. In our example above, the Linear model gave 23% more attribution to the original paid ad campaign that was the first touchpoint, rather than depriving it of credit all together.

2. If available to you, use the Data-Driven Attribution Model for your Google Ads. It's more fluid and, thus, often more accurate.

3. When deciding on an attribution model, look through the current analytics that you have set up. If you have the default Last Click enabled, for example, and it's telling you that only search traffic is getting you conversions, even though you're seeing significant clicks from Google Ads to those product pages, you'll likely realize that the attribution model isn't accurate. To find the best one for you, you may have to test out different models to see which one helps you make sense of conflicting data.

4. You need to consider a number of different factors when deciding how valuable your paid campaigns are. If you're paying $79.17 for a single click and getting a huge amount of traffic but limited conversions, you likely aren't getting the ROI you need. Attribution won't be the only factor to consider when determining the effectiveness and the value of your paid ad campaigns — cost and volume matter, too.

User Buying Habits and Behaviors On-Site

User Buying Habits and Behaviors On-Site

Large sporting events have the ability to bring neighborhoods, countries and people together. They create a sense of global community and celebration that few worldwide events can match. This inevitably results in an increase in global spending, particularly online. The importance of this is highlighted by the fact that sporting goods make up 20% of the most purchased products online.

Using the FIFA World Cups in South Africa, Brazil and Russia as case studies, we will analyse the impact these sporting events have on the products people buy and how they behave online.

Case Study: FIFA World Cup

To put into context the influence these events have on online activity, the 2014 World Cup is a fine example. Over the course of the event, host country Brazil saw a 27% increase in ecommerce sales. This resulted in an estimated $16.6 billion boost to the Brazilian economy. Even more impressively, Germany saw a 75% increase in ecommerce activity in the days following their World Cup win. On the other hand, a poor result for a nation can have a huge impact on online sales. Following their surprise 7-1 loss to Germany in 2014, Brazil reported a 17% drop in ecommerce activity!

What are they buying

Taking a look at the data surrounding this year's World Cup, we saw a spike in the general interest in football over the period of June/July.

football
Search term

+ Compare

United Kingdom ▼   Past 12 months ▼   All categories ▼   Web Search ▼

Interest over time ⊙
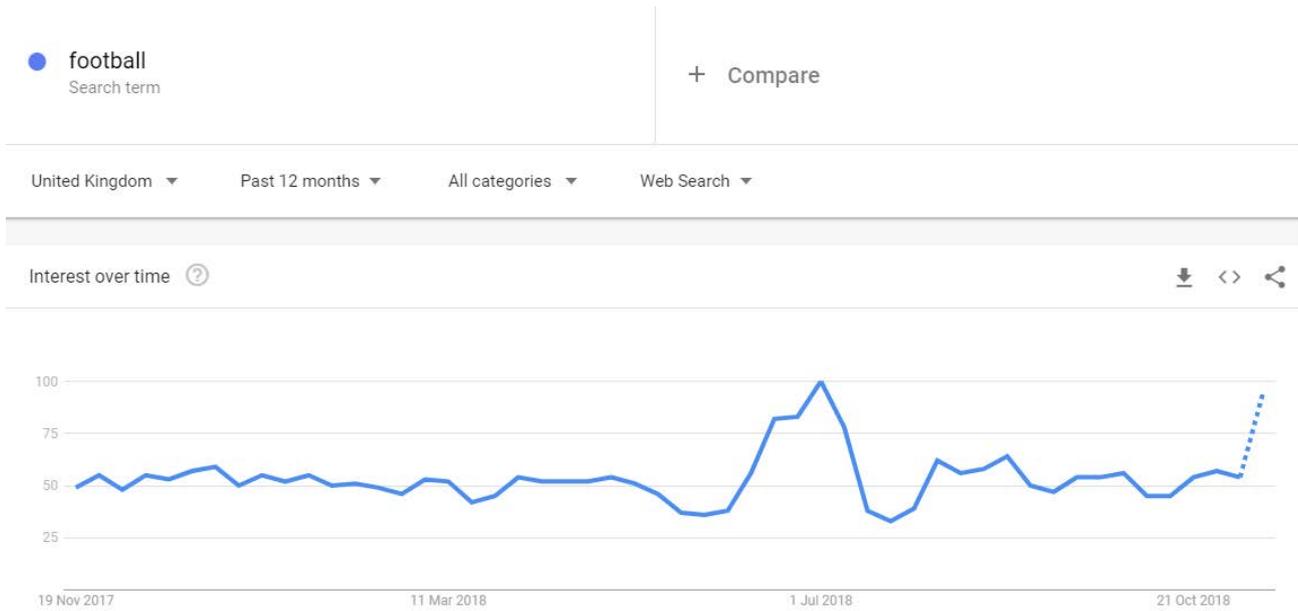
This increase is to be expected. However, the data becomes more interesting as we refine our search terms to include more ecommerce-friendly keywords.

buy football
Search term

+ Compare

United Kingdom ▼   Past 12 months ▼   All categories ▼   Web Search ▼

Interest over time ⊙
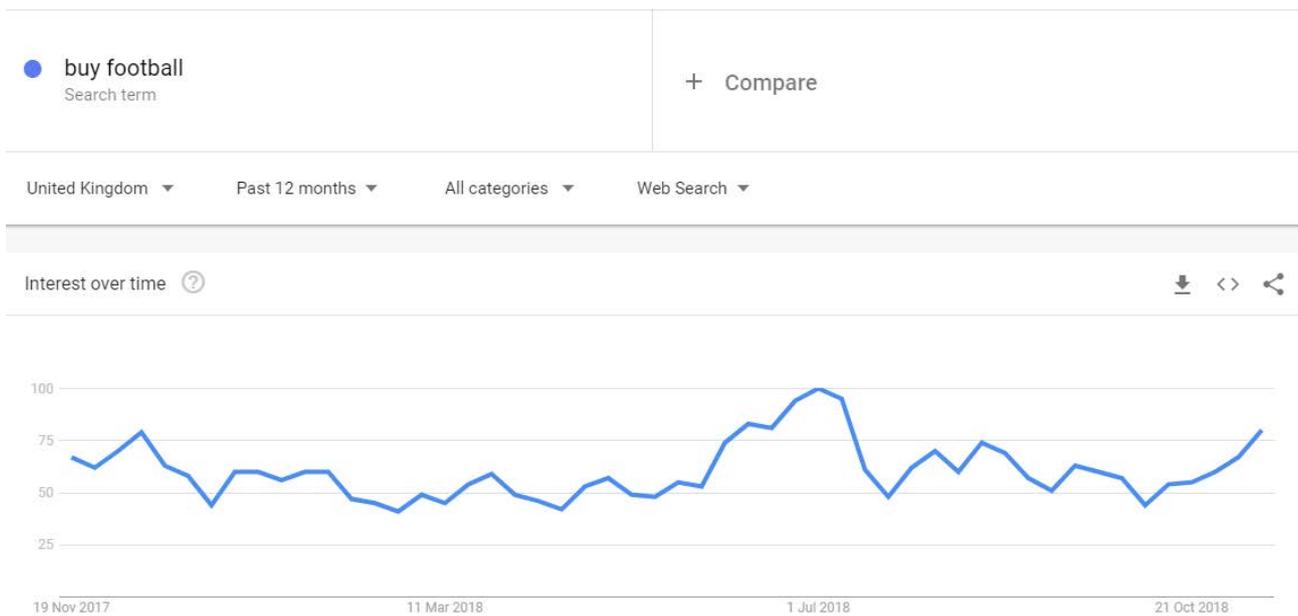
As with the term "football", there was a significant spike in the number of searches for the term "buy football" during the period that the World Cup was on (June 14th–July 15th).

Including the word "buy" in the search suggests that user intent to purchase increased dramatically at this time.

We saw a remarkable drop in user purchasing intent immediately after the World Cup final.

The same is true with football kits and buy football kits.
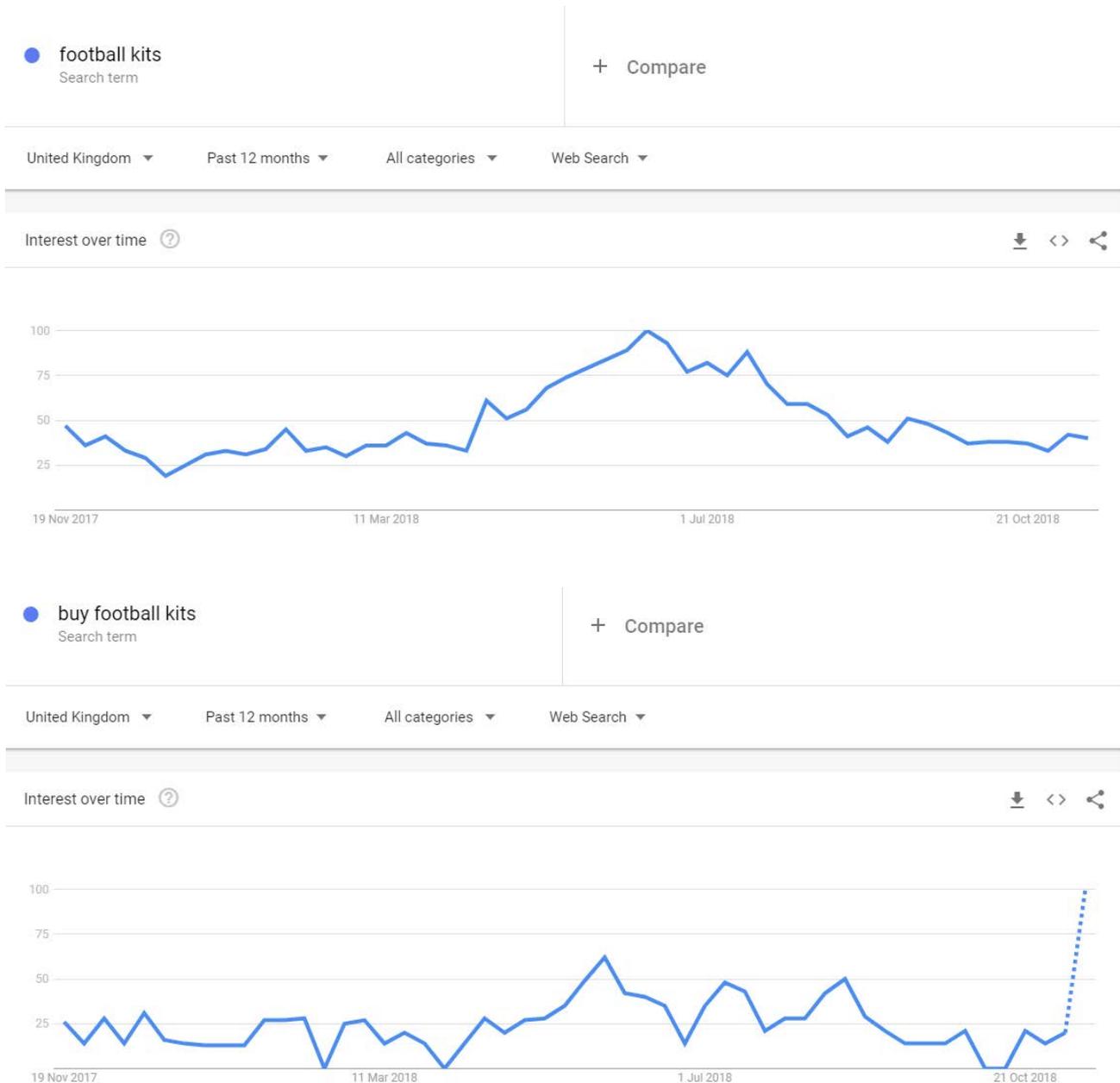
This trend is reflected in the experience of Hallam client, Clubline Football, suppliers of football kit, who saw a sharp increase in the number of footballs sold over the period of the World Cup.

User buying habits change with the sheer number of football-related products sold, but are consumers buying anything different to what they normally would over the World Cup?
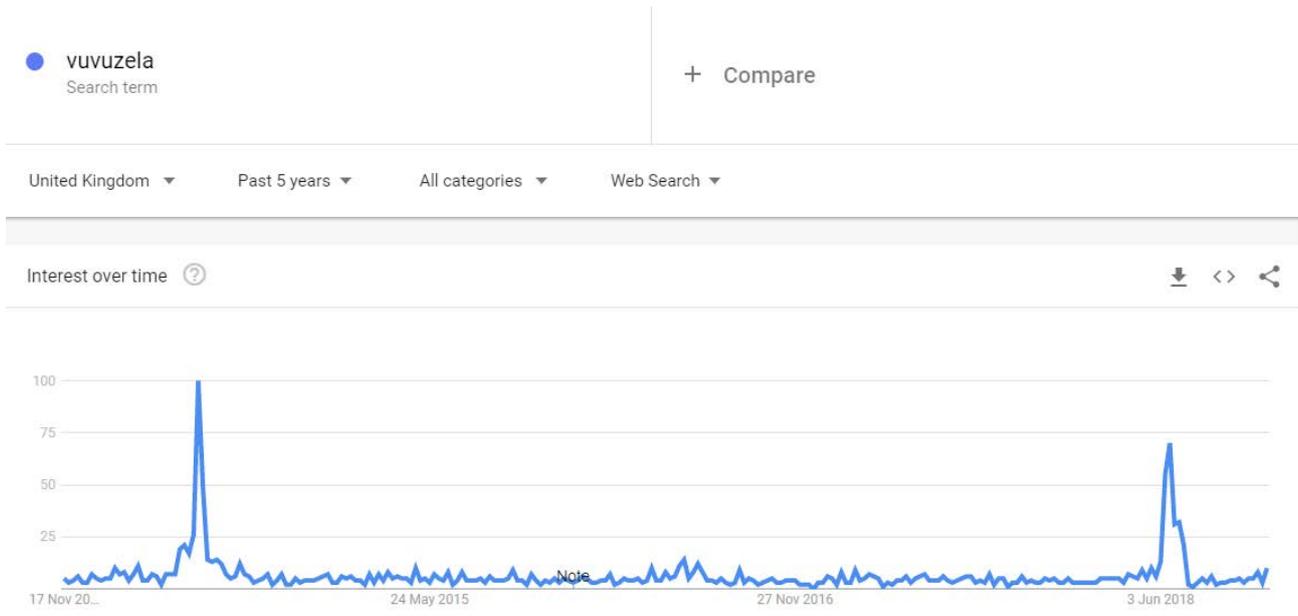
Vuvuzela example 2010 world cup

We can see that there is a huge increase in sales during World Cup periods, yet practically nothing outside of these events.

How are they behaving on site?

The data below provided by SEMrush outlines key behavioral metrics for the Sports & Recreation sector.

Sports & Recreation, global

Avg. visit duration	Avg. number of pages per visit	Bounce rate

| 04:51 | 05:15 | 4.57 | 4.97 | 43% | 47% |
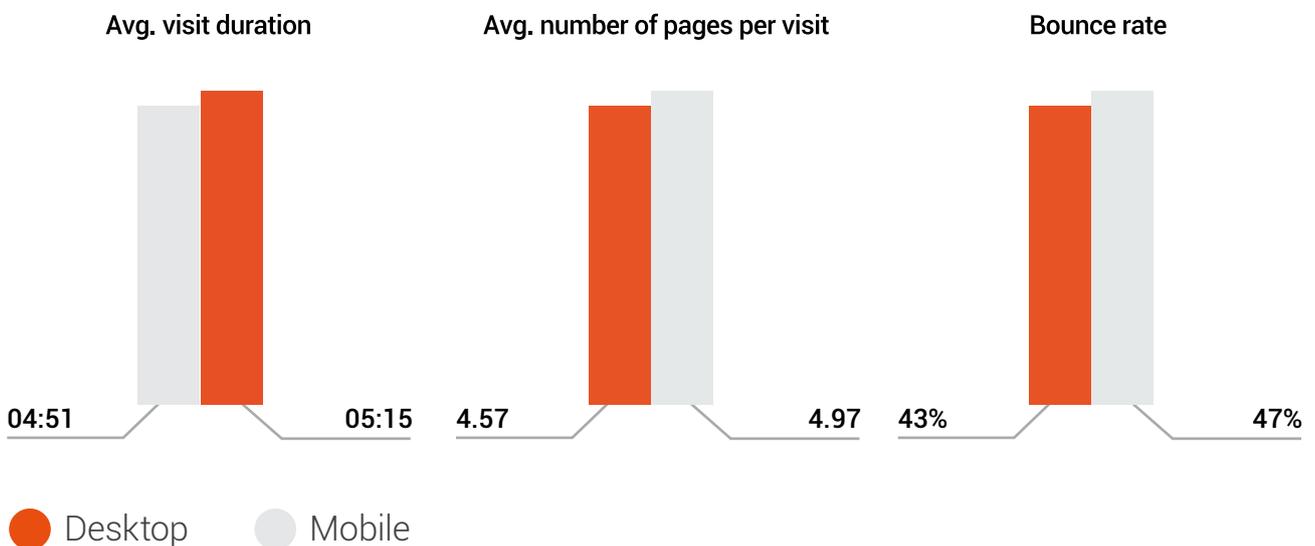
⬤ Desktop ⬤ Mobile

We found that desktop users typically stayed on sports and recreation sites 24 seconds longer than mobile users (5:15 for desktop vs mobile's 4:51), but mobile users seemed to be more engaged, visiting more pages on average (4.97 pages viewed per visit on mobile vs. 4.57 pages on desktop).

That being said, mobile users had a higher bounce rate of 47% instead of 43%.

Overall, the gaps between mobile and desktop were relatively small. This was consistent with most other industries, even though there was variation in the differences between the two, and which performed better in each industry.

Books, global

Avg. visit duration	Avg. number of pages per visit	Bounce rate
03:48 04:03	3.73 4.06	51% 52%
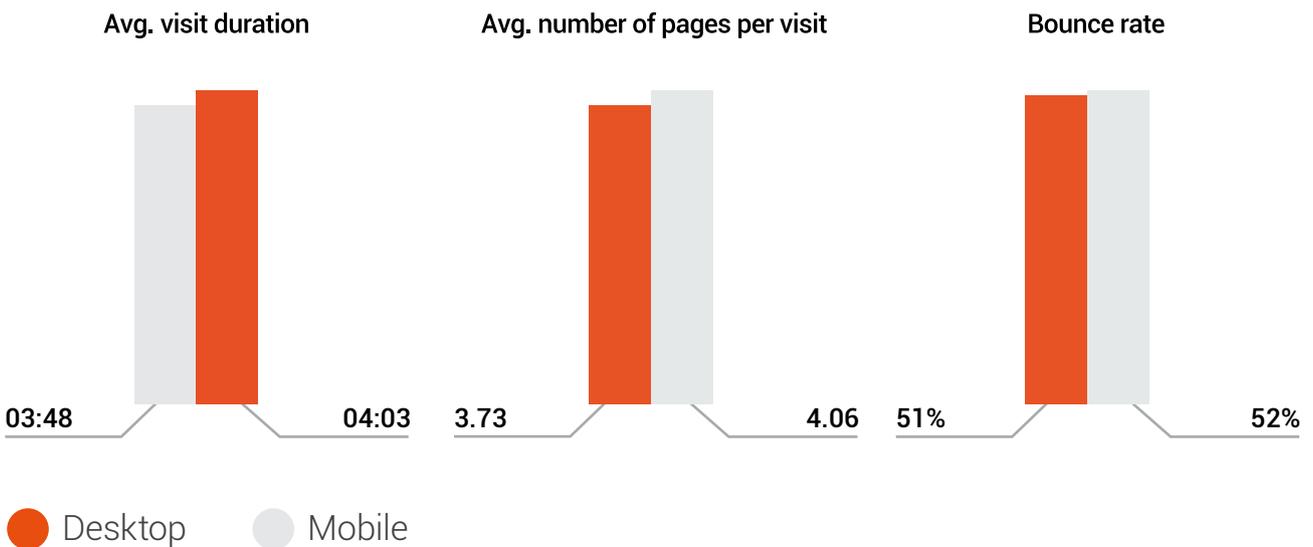
● Desktop   ● Mobile

In both the books and children industries, for example, mobile had higher bounce rates and average page views per visit than their desktop counterparts. Both these industries also had shorter visit durations on average than the sports industry, with the maximum times being 4:03 for books and 4:17 for children, though mobile visit duration was longer on children's sites than books or sports.

Children, global

Avg. visit duration

03:50   04:17

Avg. number of pages per visit

3.3   3.73

Bounce rate

45%   51%

● Desktop   ○ Mobile

Clothing, global

Avg. visit duration

05:52   07:03

Avg. number of pages per visit

5.89   6.61

Bounce rate

36%   40%
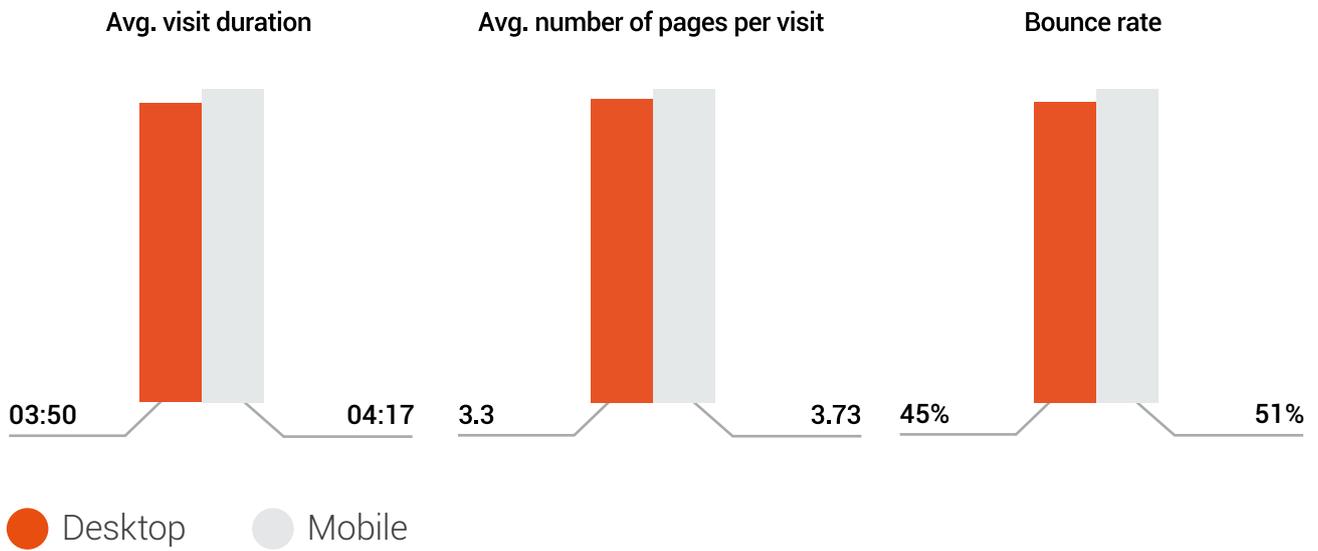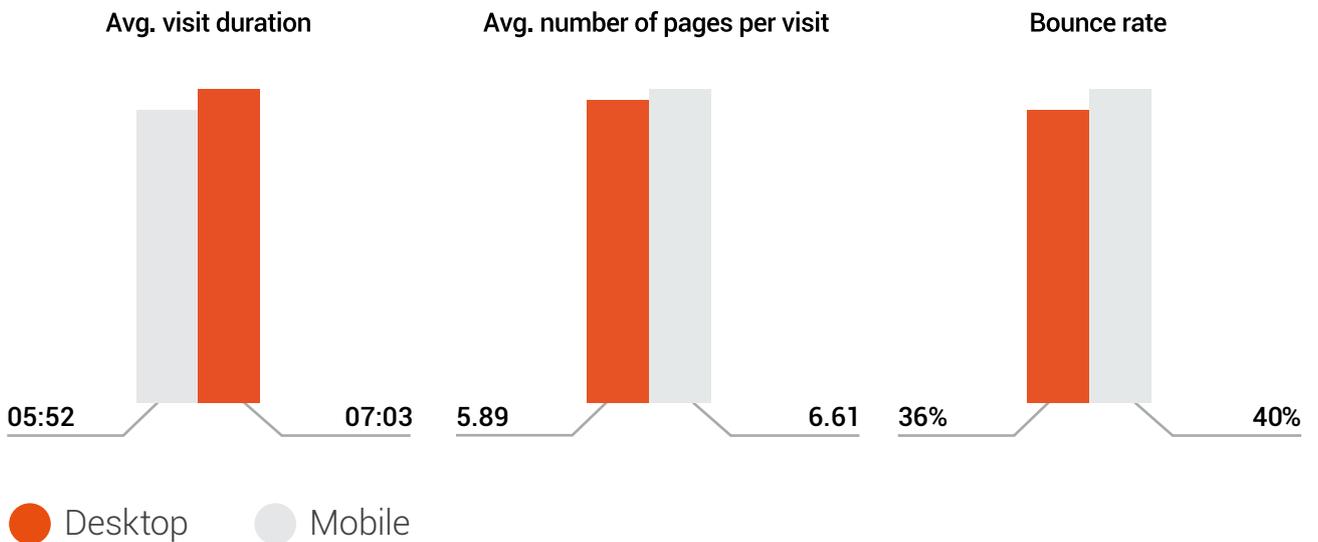
● Desktop   ○ Mobile

The clothing market has a bigger gap in average visit duration between mobile and desktop than the sports industry does, with more than a minute separating the two. The clothing industry has better performance overall, with longer visit durations, higher numbers of page visits, and lower bounce rates than the sports industry.

Electronics, global

Avg. visit duration	Avg. number of pages per visit	Bounce rate

04:50   05:15   3.38   3.46   49%   52%
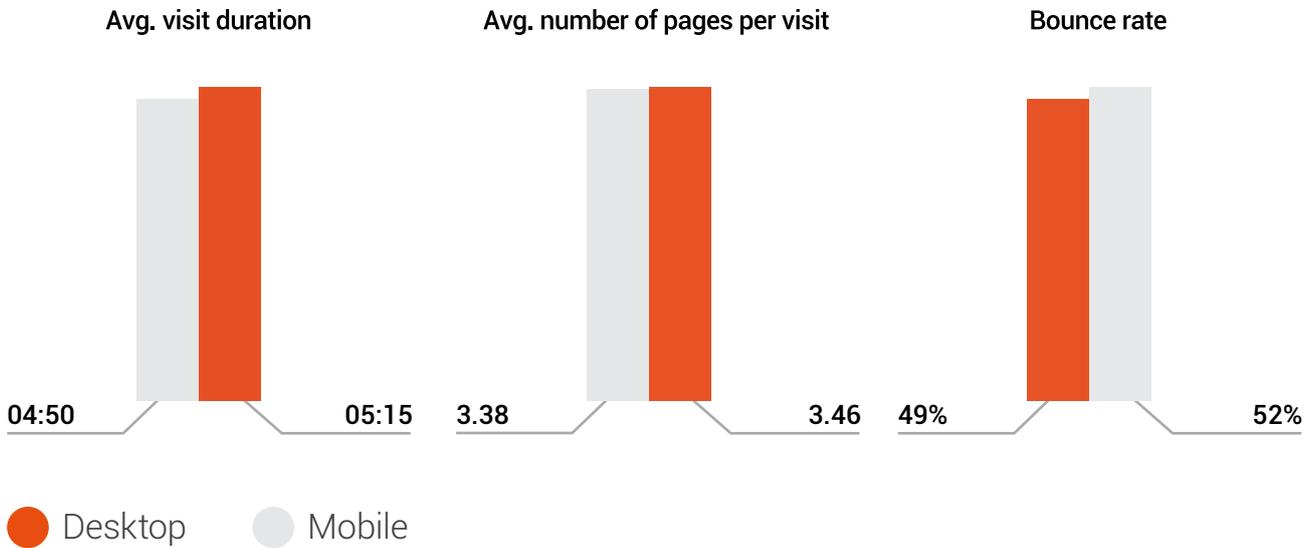
● Desktop   ● Mobile

The electronics and sports industries had nearly identical visit durations on both mobile and desktop, but the average number of pages per visit were higher across the board in the sports industry.

Flowers, global

Avg. visit duration	Avg. number of pages per visit	Bounce rate

03:22   03:47   3   3.08   36%   45%
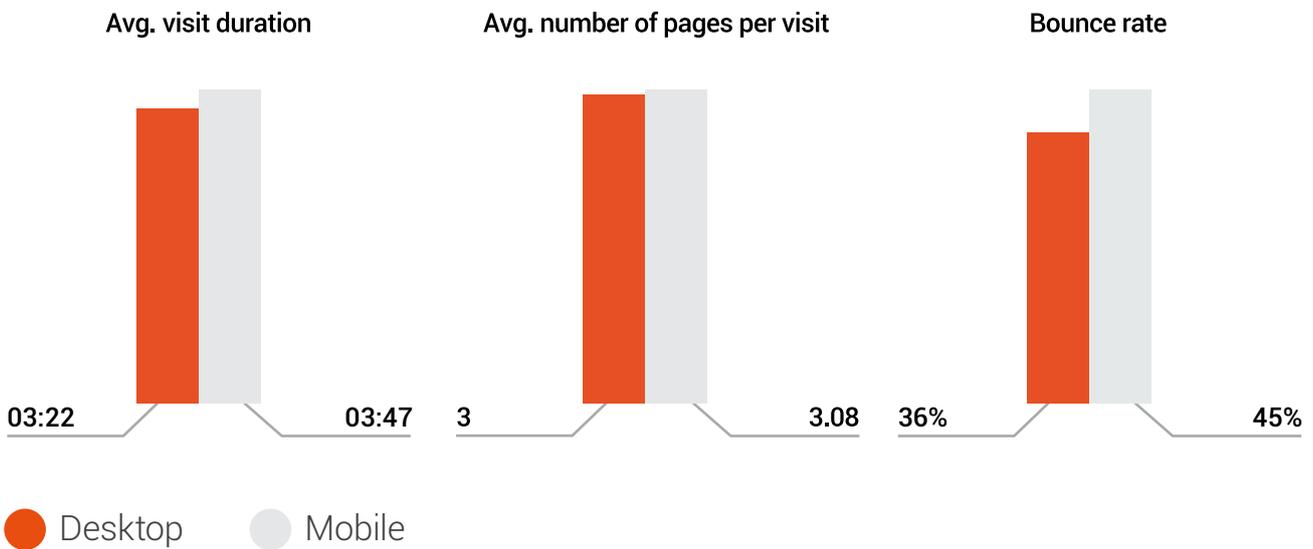
● Desktop   ● Mobile

The flower industry had higher mobile traffic, a higher number of pages per visit, and a higher bounce rate on mobile. The bounce rates in the flower industry were one of the highest disparities in terms of mobile vs. desktop traffic, with a difference of 9% between the two (with mobile having a higher bounce rate at 45%).

Food, global

Avg. visit duration	Avg. number of pages per visit	Bounce rate

03:46   04:05   3.32   3.56   44%   50%
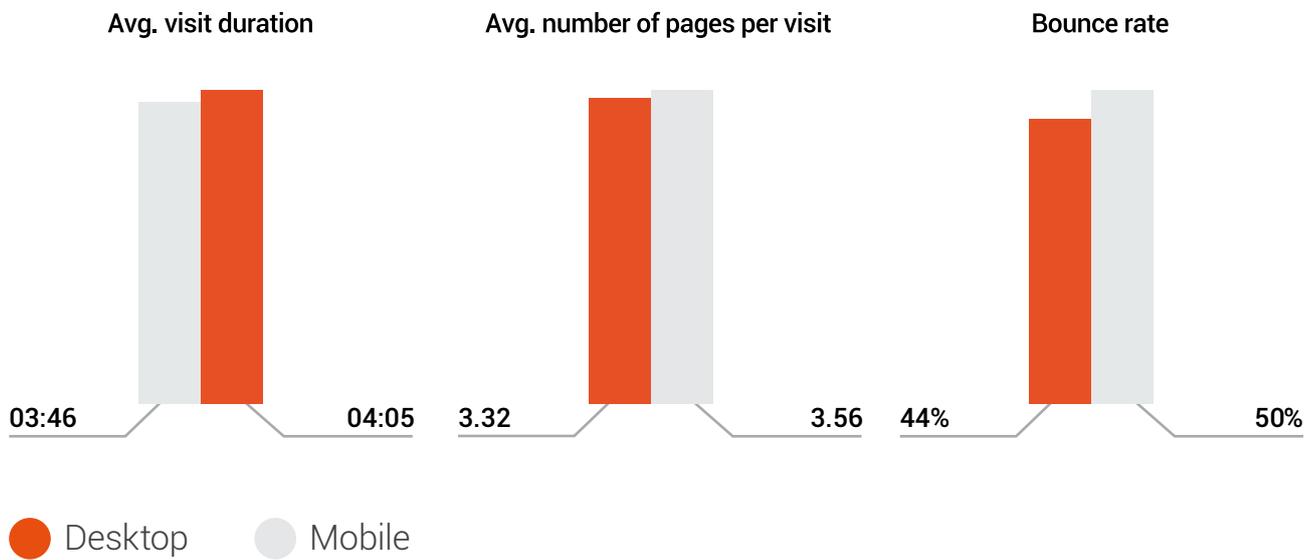
● Desktop   ● Mobile

Food (including "nearfood") ecommerce sites had similar data to the sports and recreation industry, with similar differences between mobile and desktop for visit duration, pages per visit, and bounce rate. The same is true for top ecommerce sites in the furniture industry, too.

Furniture, global

Avg. visit duration	Avg. number of pages per visit	Bounce rate

03:41   04:01   3.25   3.32   42%   49%

● Desktop   ● Mobile

Health, global

Avg. visit duration	Avg. number of pages per visit	Bounce rate

04:08	05:13	3.56	3.93	50%	54%
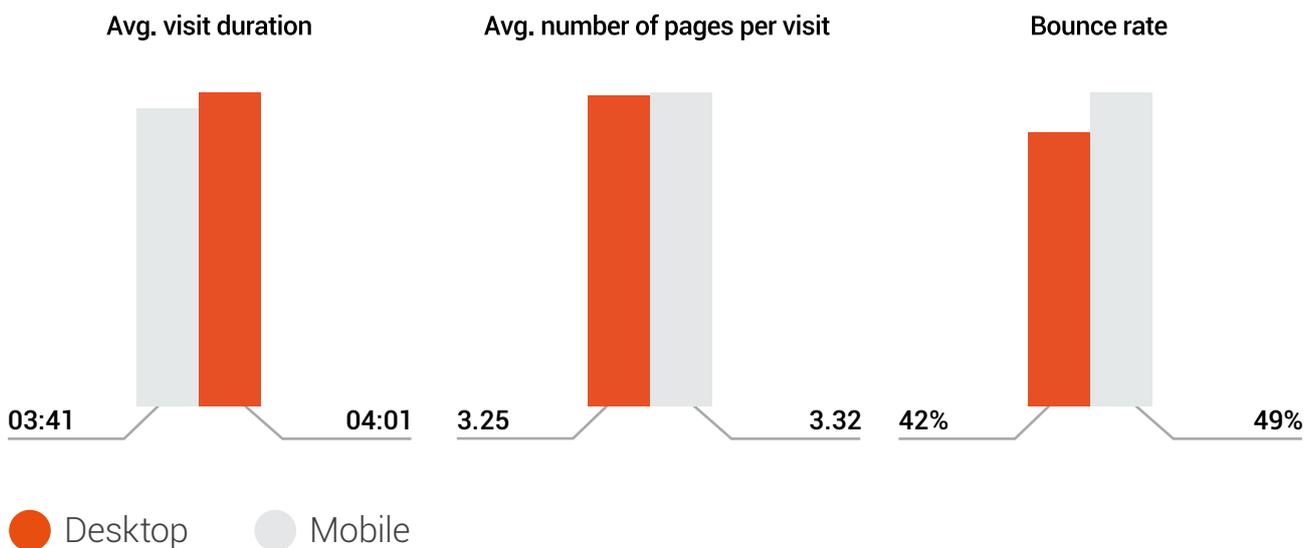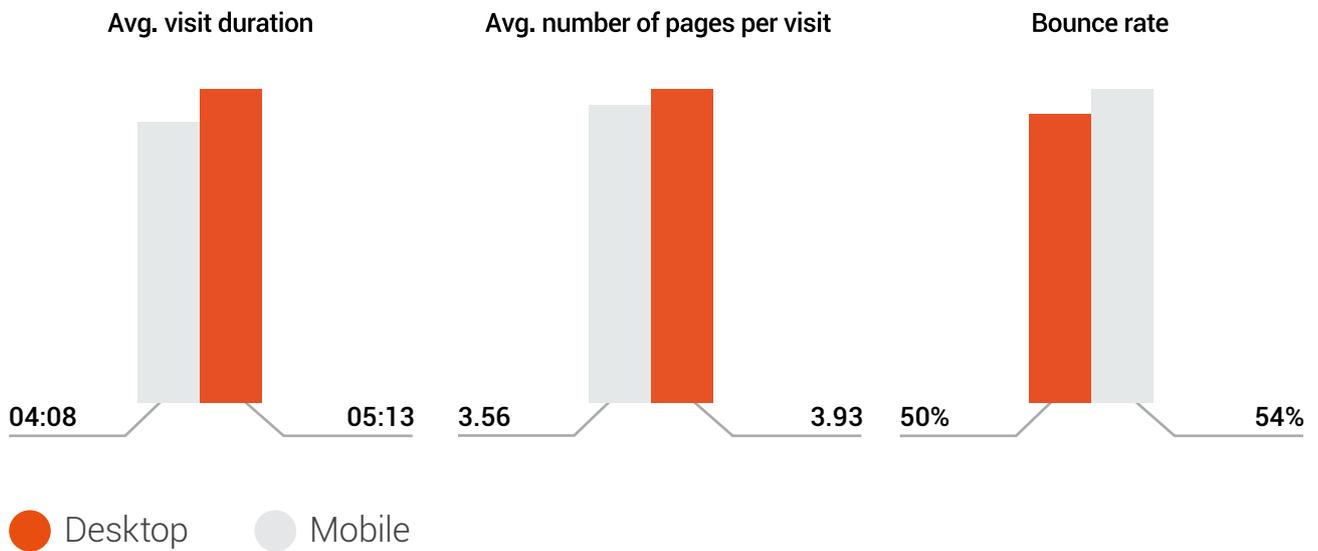
🔴 Desktop   ⚪ Mobile

The health industry saw much longer visit duration on desktop (5:13) than mobile (4:08), and the average number of pages per visit was also higher on desktop at 3.93 pages compared to mobile's 3.56. Mobile did have a higher bounce rate, indicating that the health industry contrasts to the sports and recreation top sites (and most other industries) in this area.

Home & Garden, global

Avg. visit duration	Avg. number of pages per visit	Bounce rate

04:22	04:52	3.96	4.11	46%	50%

🔴 Desktop   ⚪ Mobile
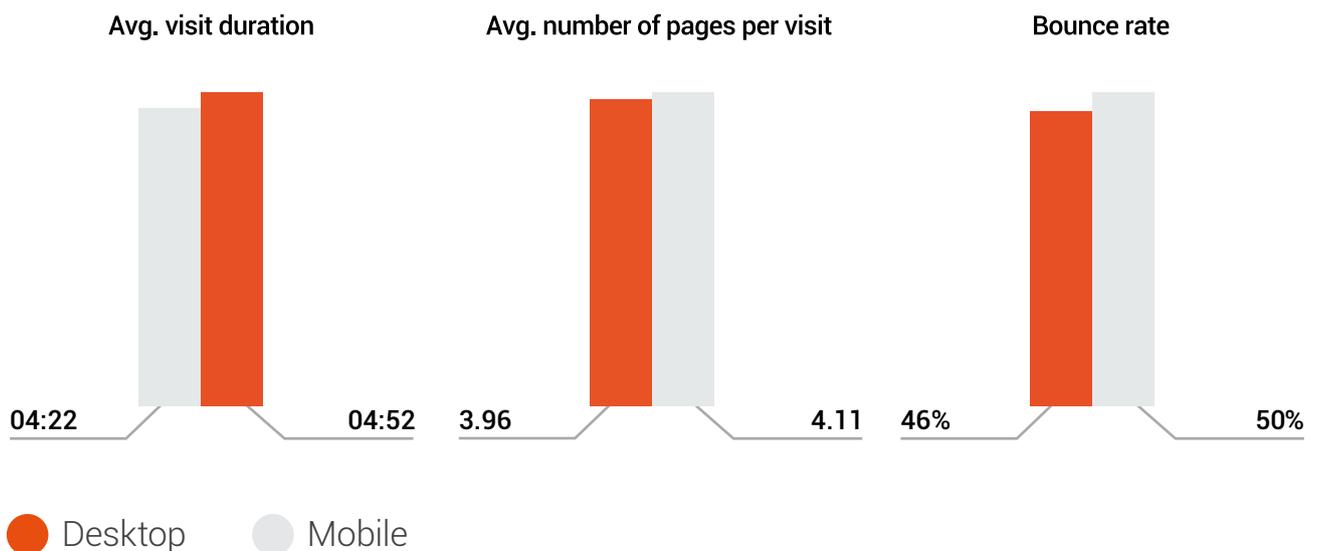
The home and garden industry and jewelry industry sites shared similar performances to each other, and were relatively similar to the sports and recreation industries. All three had higher visit durations on desktop, a higher number of pages per visit on mobile, and a higher bounce rate on mobile. The gaps between mobile and desktop were small in each industry.

Jewerly, global

Avg. visit duration	Avg. number of pages per visit	Bounce rate

Avg. visit duration: 04:43 / 05:03

Avg. number of pages per visit: 4.59 / 4.77

Bounce rate: 42% / 48%

● Desktop   ○ Mobile

Music, global

Avg. visit duration	Avg. number of pages per visit	Bounce rate

Avg. visit duration: 03:46 / 03:53

Avg. number of pages per visit: 3.4 / 3.95

Bounce rate: 49% / 50%
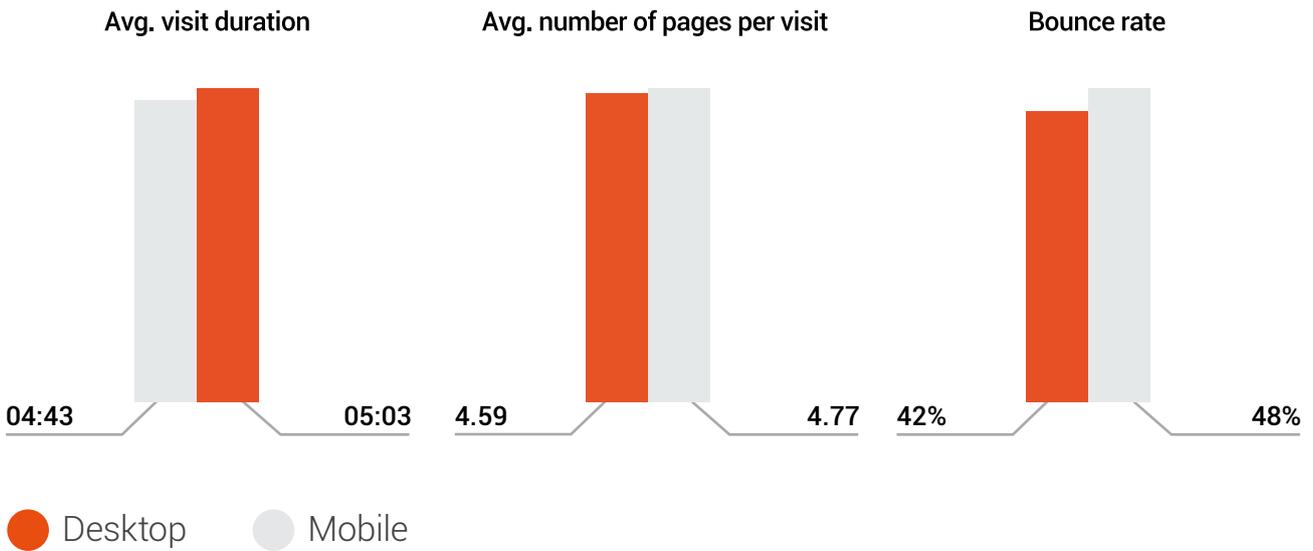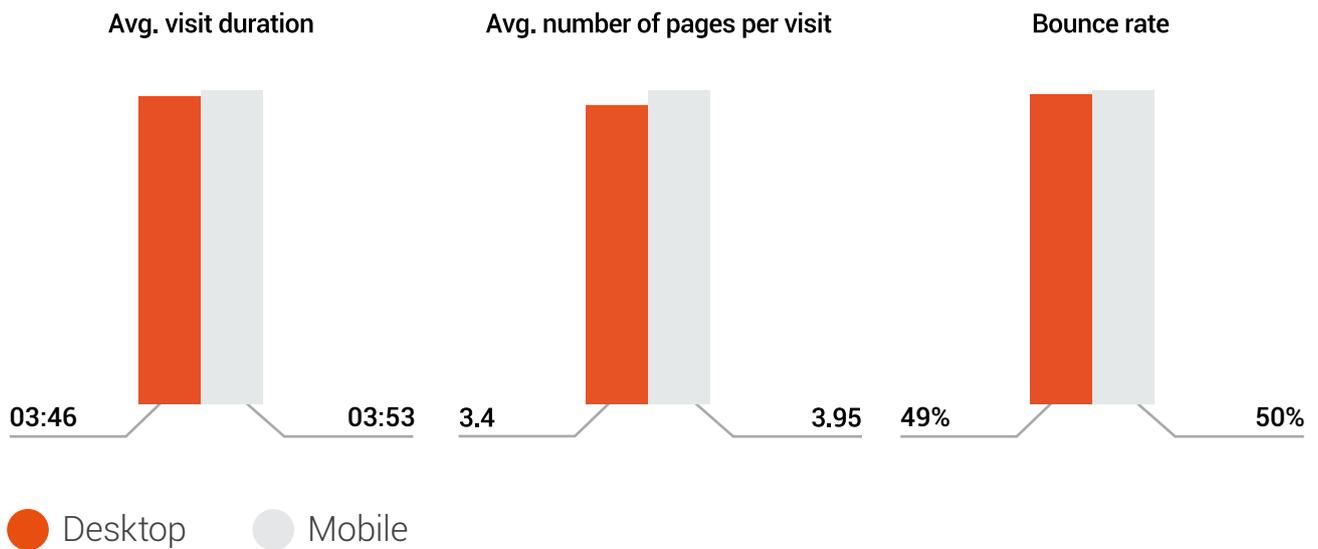
● Desktop   ○ Mobile

Top ecommerce sites in the music industry were among of the only ones where the average visit duration was higher on mobile than desktop, with mobile traffic staying for an average of 3:53 minutes, while desktop trailed behind at 3:46. That being said, the music industry had higher bounce rates and shorter visit durations than the sports industry as a whole.

Travel, global

Avg. visit duration	Avg. number of pages per visit	Bounce rate

05:55	07:18	3.9	4.57	42%	43%
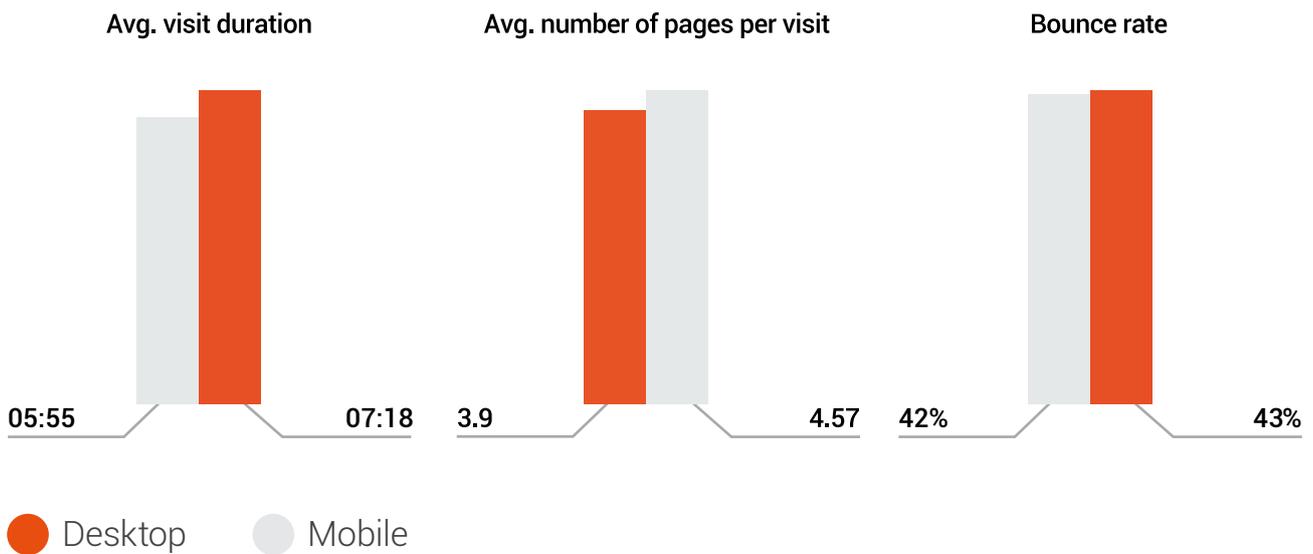
● Desktop   ● Mobile

The travel industry also saw large gaps between desktop with mobile, with visit duration on desktop at 7:18, while mobile trailed behind at 5:55. This was a bigger gap than the sports industry, but mobile users visited more pages at an average of 4.57 compared to desktop's 3.9. The bounce rates between the two were almost even.

In addition to the metrics above, it can be helpful to look at behavior statistics before and during a specific event. These can be difficult to track, but they include:

- Shopping Cart Abandonment Rate

- Dwell Time

- Average Order Value

- Customer Acquisition Cost

- Customer Lifetime Value

- Product Performance

- Non-Branded Product Performance

- Basket-Level Performance

What It Means to You as a Marketer

The above data and analysis highlight the incredible opportunity for ecommerce sites during major sporting events. Users spend more money and invest their money in products they wouldn't normally purchase.

What techniques can you use to gain more conversions during sporting events?

1. Researched and targeted paid ad campaigns will help you expand your presence significantly, leading to more conversions. Make sure you're including keywords and common terms used during sporting events, and feature relevant products that have strong selling performance.

2. Offer fast, free shipping. This will help you to stay competitive, and with many customers waiting until the last minute to order, this can increase conversions you might otherwise have missed out on.

3. Offer product recommendations on your sites, using internal linking and featured products sections to show visitors additional items they might like. This increases the likelihood that they'll buy more than one item.

4. Assemble high value bundle promotions. Offer deals like customers getting free name and number printing on their items if they purchase a full England kit. This will help you increase your average order value.

5. Create a sense of urgency to drive more sales. Urgent situations cause people to think less clearly about their purchase, resulting in buying through impulse rather than logic. By setting countdown timers and low stock indicators, you can infer product scarcity, increasing your chances of a sale.

6. Use retargeting. World Cups cause people to search for products or to land on websites they normally wouldn't visit. Use retargeting campaigns to follow up with visitors and convert them into customers.

7. Make payment as simple, safe and easy as possible. Offer multiple types of digital payment if possible.

8. Ensure that your site is mobile friendly. Plenty of traffic will come through mobile, especially if they want a last-minute purchase during half-time.

9. Diversify your digital strategy. Use a combination of paid campaigns, social ads, and search optimization. You'll be capturing customers at as many touchpoints as possible, and maximizing the number of people in your funnel. Integrate your campaigns when possible, and make sure all offers are listed on your social channels.

10. Consider creating specific category pages for the event or even for an audience segment. During the World Cup, for example, offer "World Cup Kits" or pages with multiple product pages featured.

How SEMrush Can Help

⚙ PPC Keyword Tool

Sets up a Google Ads campaign in SEMrush so you can target your event-specific keywords with ads.

Start planning your next campaign now ❯

⚙ Display Advertising

Shows you analysis on your competition's use of display advertising on the Google Display Network.

Analyze your rivals' past ad campaigns ❯

⚙ Advertising Research

Gives insight into the paid keywords your competitors use in their Google Ads search campaigns.

Uncover rivals' advertising keyword strategy ❯

⚙ Organic research

Gives insight into the keywords your competitors use to get organic traffic from non-paid search results

Uncover competitors' top organic keywords ❯

⚙ PLA Research

See all of the products and prices that your competitor advertises on the Google Shopping.

See competitors' top advertised products ❯

⚙ Traffic Analytics

Provides insight into user behavior on your competitors' websites.

Analyze your rivals ❯

⚙ Organic Traffic Insights

Analyzes user behavior on your website by combining Google Analytics, Google Search Console and SEMrush into one dashboard.

Set up your dashboard ❯

Understanding User Intent for eCommerce Websites: Organic vs. Paid

Understanding User Intent for eCommerce Websites: Organic vs. Paid

Last but certainly not least — the ability to understand the intent of your online customers is an important talent that every ecommerce marketer should develop. After all, knowing what brings a user to your website and being able to anticipate their next move seems like a sure way to increase your sales.

So in this section of the book, we'll help you understand some key differences in user intent for users visiting ecommerce site via both Organic and Paid channels.

We'll look at the following:

- Key sales periods

- Site Search

- Time to Purchase

- Attribution

- What this all means for you

In each example, we'll discuss a potential hypothesis and try to prove this using some data.

We'll also take a look at the different types of Google Analytics attribution modelling to gauge how the users cross-over the various sources when engaging with the site.

Key Sales Periods

Hypothesis

Users who arrive from paid traffic during key sales periods see a higher conversion rate lift vs. the research period, compared to organic traffic. We believe this is due to search intent, and the highly targeted nature of this channel.

Black Friday & Christmas

According to Google Trends data, we can see that users in the UK tend to start researching "black Friday sale" at the beginning of September until the sales period on the last Friday of November. Similarly, "Christmas sale" queries increase in the same period and peak around the 25th of December on Christmas day.
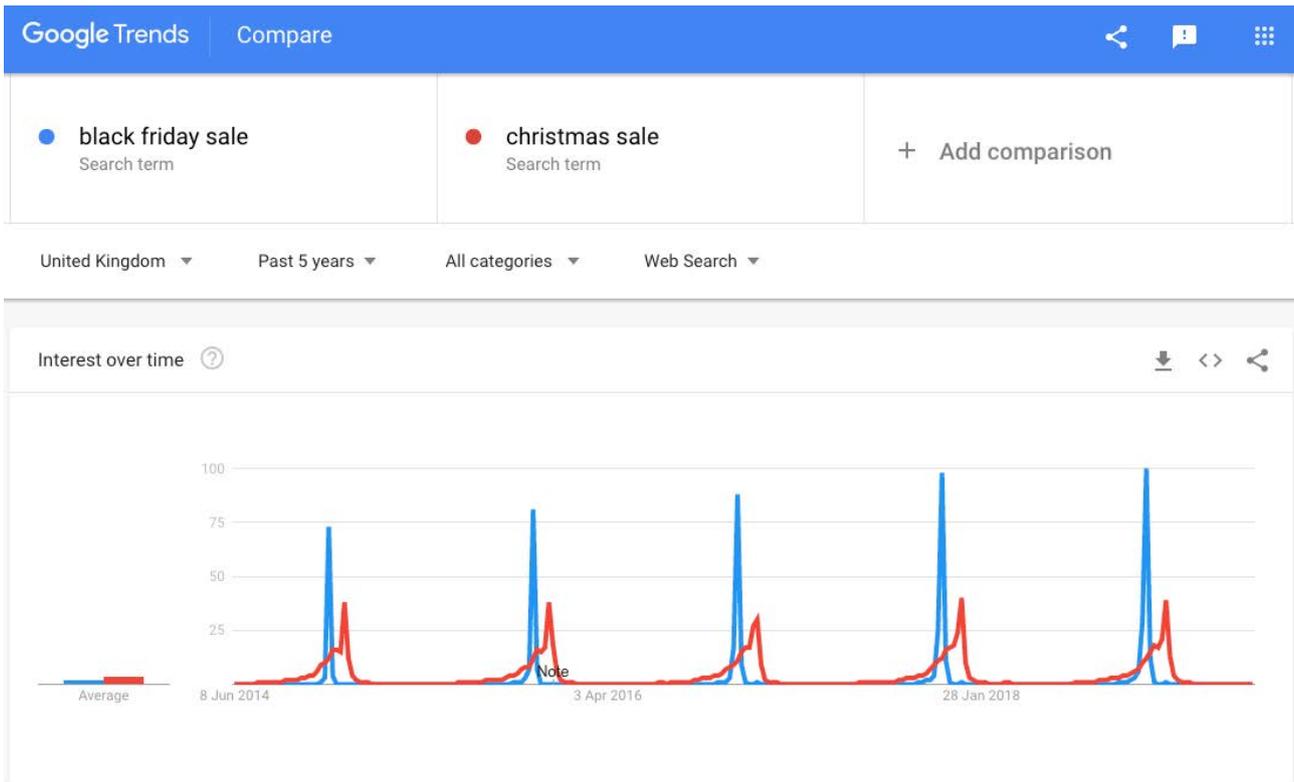
Google Trends data for UK searches for Black Friday Sale and Christmas Sale

Looking at actual ecommerce date, the below example from Garden4less confirms there's a more aggressive increase in conversion rate for Paid traffic in comparison to Organic.

Ecommerce conversion rates showing a much higher uplift for Paid traffic in the sales period compared to Organic traffic

This is evident from the above when comparing the week at the beginning of October (start of the research phase) compared to the week during Black Friday.

- Organic Traffic conversion rate increased by 36% from 1.97% to 2.84%

- Paid Traffic conversion rate increased by 65% from 2.65% to 5.22%

This shows a 57% greater lift on the Paid conversion rate compared to Organic.

Similarly, the Christmas period also shows a higher lift in Paid Traffic conversion rate where Organic conversion rate remains relatively flat from the beginning of December until the 15th where the conversion rate drops again.

Site Search

Hypothesis

Users arriving from Organic Traffic are more inclined to be in the research stage when they use the site search function and are less likely to purchase compared to Paid Traffic. Similarly, users who arrive from Paid Traffic and do not use the site search function are more likely to convert due to the highly targeted nature of the traffic.

Users not using Site Search

For our client Garden4less, visits without site search show an ecommerce conversion rate of 2.14% on Paid Traffic vs 1.33% on Organic traffic which is a 61% increased chance of a sale via Paid.

Default Channel Grouping	Site Search Status	Acquisition			Behaviour			Conversions
		Users	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages/Session	Avg. Session Duration	E-commerce Conversion Rate
All Users		1,003,549 % of Total: 94.87% (1,057,805)	982,480 % of Total: 93.58% (1,049,872)	1,452,015 % of Total: 92.50% (1,569,771)	68.89% Avg for View: 64.48% (6.83%)	2.22 Avg for View: 2.54 (-12.72%)	00:01:21 Avg for View: 00:01:38 (-17.83%)	1.80% Avg for View: 2.07% (-12.68%)
Paid Traffic		512,891 % of Total: 48.49% (1,057,805)	475,827 % of Total: 45.32% (1,049,872)	765,318 % of Total: 48.75% (1,569,771)	75.69% Avg for View: 64.48% (17.38%)	1.97 Avg for View: 2.54 (-22.26%)	00:01:06 Avg for View: 00:01:38 (-32.56%)	2.14% Avg for View: 2.07% (3.44%)
Organic Traffic		398,806 % of Total: 37.70% (1,057,805)	359,244 % of Total: 34.22% (1,049,872)	488,649 % of Total: 31.13% (1,569,771)	60.11% Avg for View: 64.48% (-6.78%)	2.54 Avg for View: 2.54 (-0.18%)	00:01:40 Avg for View: 00:01:38 (1.71%)	1.33% Avg for View: 2.07% (-35.50%)

Google Analytics data for users not using Site Search

Users are generally more engaged when they visit a site and use the site search function. We can assume that there is likely greater user intent to complete a purchase due to being more engaged when searching for a specific product.

Users using Site Search

From our client's data. the conversion rate is a lot higher for users using site search with a rate of 6.07% for Paid Traffic which is 183.6% higher than users that didn't use the function. Similarly, there is a 258.7% increase for Organic Traffic at 4.77%.

Default Channel Grouping	Site Search Status	Acquisition			Behaviour			Conversions
		Users ↓	New Users	Sessions	Bounce Rate	Pages/Session	Avg. Session Duration	E-commerce Conversion Rate
All Users		94,356 % of Total: 8.92% (1,057,805)	67,391 % of Total: 6.42% (1,049,872)	117,757 % of Total: 7.50% (1,569,771)	10.14% Avg for View: 64.48% (-84.28%)	6.52 Avg for View: 2.54 (156.79%)	00:05:14 Avg for View: 00:01:38 (219.89%)	5.29% Avg for View: 2.07% (156.32%)
Paid Traffic		45,941 % of Total: 4.34% (1,057,805)	29,184 % of Total: 2.78% (1,049,872)	57,150 % of Total: 3.64% (1,569,771)	11.52% Avg for View: 64.48% (-82.14%)	6.43 Avg for View: 2.54 (153.22%)	00:05:06 Avg for View: 00:01:38 (211.42%)	6.07% Avg for View: 2.07% (194.07%)
Organic Traffic		32,968 % of Total: 3.12% (1,057,805)	23,838 % of Total: 2.27% (1,049,872)	37,471 % of Total: 2.39% (1,569,771)	4.11% Avg for View: 64.48% (-93.62%)	6.99 Avg for View: 2.54 (175.30%)	00:05:40 Avg for View: 00:01:38 (245.96%)	4.77% Avg for View: 2.07% (131.04%)

Google Analytics data for users using Site Search

Users are generally more engaged when they visit a site and use the site search function. We can assume that there is likely greater user intent to complete a purchase due to being more engaged when searching for a specific product.

Where are the Users Searching?

In terms of where users are using the site search function, interestingly they are predominantly on the home page or basket page.

Start Page	Total Unique Searches ▼ ↓		Total Unique Searches ▼	
Sessions with Revenue	5,324 % of Total: 13.01% (40,911)		5,324 % of Total: 13.01% (40,911)	
1. /default.asp	1,006		18.90%	
2. /NET/Basket	606		11.38%	
3. (entrance)	323		6.07%	
4. /shop-brand/Muck-Boot	38		0.71%	
5. /shop-for/Kids-Wellies	38		0.71%	

Data for this particular client showed that the Site Search use took place on the homepage and basket page

Time to Purchase

Hypothesis

Users are more likely to purchase immediately taking 0 Days to Transaction if arriving via Paid Traffic compared to Organic.

Looking at the Data

Using Garden4less as an example, Paid shows 92.29% of users purchased immediately vs 82.49% for Organic users.

Interestingly, as the days progress, Organic has a much higher percentage of Organic users who take at least a day to purchase. This indicates that Organic users are more likely to research further and have a longer time to purchase when compared to Paid.

Days to Transaction	Transactions	Percentage of Total
0		
Organic Traffic	6,955	82.49%
Paid Traffic	18,558	92.29%
1		
Organic Traffic	270	3.20%
Paid Traffic	412	2.05%
2		
Organic Traffic	154	1.83%
Paid Traffic	188	0.93%
3		
Organic Traffic	109	1.29%
Paid Traffic	135	0.67%
4		
Organic Traffic	79	0.94%
Paid Traffic	101	0.50%
5		
Organic Traffic	58	0.69%
Paid Traffic	64	0.32%
6		
Organic Traffic	69	0.82%
Paid Traffic	75	0.37%
7-13		
Organic Traffic	236	2.80%
Paid Traffic	233	1.16%
14-20		
Organic Traffic	121	1.44%
Paid Traffic	91	0.45%

Data for this particular client showed Paid Traffic is more likely to have users purchase in less than a day compared to Organic Traffic

Attribution

In terms of attribution, we can see that Organic search contributes a lot more revenue in terms of assisting in conversions when compared to direct conversions.

In context, when analysing user intent and conversion data, Organic Traffic is more likely to assist in conversions whereas Paid Traffic is likely to be the last or direct interaction prior to purchase.

Default Channel Grouping	Assisted Conversions	Assisted Conversion Value		Last Click or Direct Conversions	Last Click or Direct Conversion Value	Assisted/Last Click or Direct Conversions
1. Paid Search	12,011 (45.94%)	(43.60%)		16,018 (48.84%)	(43.76%)	0.75
2. Direct	6,021 (23.03%)	(25.23%)		9,422 (28.73%)	(35.71%)	0.64
3. Organic Search	5,984 (22.89%)	(23.29%)		5,743 (17.51%)	(15.16%)	1.04
4. Referral	1,004 (3.84%)	(3.66%)		1,139 (3.47%)	(4.05%)	0.88
5. Email	528 (2.02%)	(2.08%)		229 (0.70%)	(0.71%)	2.31
6. Display	546 (2.09%)	(1.91%)		202 (0.62%)	(0.47%)	2.70
7. Social	28 (0.11%)	(0.14%)		32 (0.10%)	(0.10%)	0.88
8. (Other)	21 (0.08%)	(0.09%)		12 (0.04%)	(0.06%)	1.75

Organic Search shows a much higher contribution in terms of Assisted Conversion Value

What It Means to You as a Marketer

The impact of key sales periods cannot be ignored

As a marketer, there should be a more intense focus on Paid activity during key seasonal periods as you are likely to sell more products with similar amounts of traffic coming to your site due to the uplift in conversion rate.

The uplift is impacted by the special offers that you may have on the site as well as a fundamental market shift. The general increase in search queries leading up to key sales periods such as Black Friday and Christmas will also increase the likelihood of users actively searching for and purchasing at the time.

Don't forget about site search!

Site search is often an overlooked area, an afterthought within ecommerce. However, this should form a part of your fundamental strategy when looking to engage users who are ready to purchase.

Your landing pages may be great destinations, however, you need to make all products on your site easily accessible to increase sales. Ensure your site search function is operating as it should be. Perhaps work on improving its capabilities to further ease the burden of finding specific products. Extra functionality such as rich autocomplete could be an option.

> **Understand the importance of timely ad copy, where users are in their buying journey and how organic and paid channels mix**

The time it takes to purchase via Paid traffic is often a lot less compared to Organic traffic. Your ad copy should be compelling enough to convert users who are ready to buy as this will form the majority of sales via this channel.

In addition, organic traffic shouldn't be overlooked. As is often the case, this channel acts as an assistant when driving for more revenue. You would always need to consider your Paid and Organic strategies in equal measure and how they benefit each other. Marketing teams do tend to sit within silos and the overall impact of campaigns can be missed.

How SEMrush Can Help

⚙ Ad Builder

Tap into an inexhaustible source of creative ideas to craft compelling ads for Google's paid search

Reinvent your Google Ads ❯

⚙ Advertising Research

Learn from your competitors' mistakes and capitalize on their best ideas to create a flawless paid traffic campaign

Optimize your paid traffic campaign ❯

We love your feedback!

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