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Searching for *Success*

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SEO strategies.

THE WAR FOR customer attention and mindshare has moved to the digital front. Brands address this through digital strategies that always include search engine optimisation (SEO) investments. This article looks into why the eCommerce platform, the foundation of the digital flagship store, should work hand-in-hand with your SEO strategies, and how it should support these initiatives.

As customers turn online to conduct research and inspiration for their next purchase, it has become imperative for retailers and brands to have a strong presence online, and for their digital flagship stores – the eCommerce site – to be the digital representation of their brand and customer experience. As bricks-and-mortar flagship stores are discovered as customers walk along High Street, so are digital flagship stores discovered in the customers' journey online.

But how do you make sure you get noticed? How do you make sure you turn up on the equivalent of High Street online, and provide the solution to the customer's immediate need? The best-looking eCommerce site with the greatest customer experience waiting to happen will be just that – waiting to happen – if no one knows it is there.

Taking SEO for eCommerce websites means giving your brand the best opportunity at being found by your target market – the digital equivalent of being the shop on the coveted High Street corner. Getting your SEO performing on a beautifully designed and easy-to-use website helps to support the performance of your bricks-and-mortar stores and also maximises your presence with established and new customers.

A digital flagship store has three main requirements for success:

- *Discoverability* – easy to find via digital channels like search engines and social media.
- *Accessibility* – making digital content available and usable for as many visitors as possible.
- *Experience* – time spent browsing your website is an enjoyable and intuitive experience for the visitor.

SEO is a science: the perfect mix of content and experiential details aimed at delivering customer satisfaction, and ultimately, sales.

How to optimise your eCommerce website

SEO is the systematic process of explaining to Google (and other search engines) why your eCommerce store is better and more relevant than your competitors through a series of optimisation techniques, including:

- Providing relevant, up-to-date content.
- Not skimping on site architecture details like index-friendly sitemaps, canonical links, redirects, mobile friendliness etc.
- Taking the time to enrich HTML (not as scary as it sounds!) with keyword-rich meta tags for page titles, descriptions, header tags etc.
- Providing interactive social media options.
- Having security measures in place.

eCommerce SEO is all about the detail. For example, if a fashion eCommerce site posted a new product online, they would need to prove to Google that people searching for this product would want to find their website. What is going to be more helpful to Google in guaranteeing their searcher will be delighted with their find? Simply listing 'New dress - \$279.00', or providing the visitor with a smorgasbord of interactive product information?

The Country Road product page ticks many SEO boxes, helping to give Google the confidence that their searchers will have a delightful experience by clicking through to this page. Google picks up that the page has:

- Helpful descriptive text.
- Media-rich content including four photos and a video.
- Links to other related products and content.
- Image tags.
- Been added/updated recently.
- Keywords naturally scattered throughout the text and HTML code.
- Mobile-friendly layout.
- Secure payment methods.

Google, in their bid to provide their customers ever-better experiences by providing the most relevant search results, does not necessarily make SEO easy for eCommerce websites. But by building a strong foundation on a robust and flexible platform, and making sure that the critical search factors are treated correctly – mobile-friendliness, security, quality content and a focus on relevant keywords, as well as optimisation for local search – your website is on rock-solid footing to be discovered online by its intended market. ■

