![IMRG - The UK eCommerce Association]

Perspectives on site navigation and merchandising approaching peak 2024

It's almost time for the busiest season in retail's calendar - The peak season of 2024! During our recent events, we have been noting the perspectives of industry experts and retailers on the topic of site navigation and merchandising. You will learn about retailers' approaches to improving the customer experience and hear about the biggest setbacks retailers are facing, which will help you to prepare most effectively for site optimisation.

Read on to discover:
- Customer search trends noted by retailers
- Ways to optimise the site according to retailers and experts
- IMRG's perspectives on site navigation and merchandising

Customer search trends noted by retailers:

- Many deal-hungry customers search for items online after seeing things they like in store.
- Searches for peak season-related items are getting earlier and earlier each year.
- Search tends to be used by more customers if a retailers' product offering is particularly large (e.g., they sell items across clothing, home, electricals, etc).
- For retailers selling within a niche (e.g., instruments), they may find that a customer uses more specific search terms and filters each time they engage with this feature. These customers are more likely to know exactly what they want.
- While you may include the option for many filters, some retailers have noted that there are around 4 or 5 that are used heavily, and others that are used only in specific scenarios.

Ways to optimise the site according to retailers and experts:

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Ways to optimise the site according to retailers and experts:

- Provide multiple dimensions into search results, e.g., offer a refinement of search results, e.g., you may also like, or try altering your search results with these filters.
- It is valuable for home & garden retailers to include a 'width of product filter' so that customers can only view products that meet their requirements, reducing decision fatigue.
- Marketplaces have a large inventory, so retailers will benefit from pushing people to use search. This may create a more relaxed and easy shopping experience for customers who may be overwhelmed by the busy period.
- If you broaden the customers' search too much, you run the risk of customers not being satisfied with the product as it did not fit their expectations. This can result in high returns, and customers may start to presume that your search is broken.

- Retailers should push the most relevant search results first, and then products that customers may also like after – for these, retailers can mark them as 'other recommendations.' After all, customers may be tempted by things outside of their initial thoughts, especially if they're at the beginning of the purchasing journey.
- Retailers can experiment with having a static menu or filter bar and see if that increases the use rate.
- With AI product discovery, retailers can limit the number of 'no results' for customers. 'No results' pages can place retailers at a competitive disadvantage during an essential period such as Black Friday.
- Retailers can test promoting their Christmas product ranges at the top of their site navigation menu as soon as they have the stock. This can attract customers who like to plan early. Similarly, many retailers promote their Black Friday sale in the navigation menu as early as October.
- There may be value in using dynamic content, such as personalised product recommendations, targeted discounts, automatic search filtering, real-time inventory updates, and abandoned basket reminders to improve the customer experience and stand-out this peak.

IMRG's perspective on site navigation and merchandising:

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In Q4, customers tend to spend less time on retail sites. They are often more specific about what they're after and are more likely to jump around sites until they find a bargain they're happy with. Therefore, optimising the presentation of products and the functionality of the website is increasingly important.

It is worth noting that once a customer is on your site and engages with the search bar, the most popular search terms are Product type (e.g., winter duvet, blanket, coat), searched by 80% of customers, and the second is brand (e.g., Adidas, Silentnight), used by 20% of customers.

Providing relevant products for search results is crucial, especially considering that exit rates are most common on the product page (43%).

If you want to learn more about how to improve site search, download our free report today: The State of Site Search in eCommerce 2024