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3 Things Ecommerce Leaders Should Fix in 2023

2023 Consumer Survey Report

Just because the holidays are over doesn't mean the world stops browsing and buying. Retailers are now armed with the biggest batch of customer behavioral data they'll have all year. It's time to implement improvements based on how buyers are actually shopping.

Lucidworks surveyed shoppers across the U.S. and U.K. to understand the three things search managers, merchandisers, and ecommerce leaders can't afford to miss.

Read on to learn about:

1 The two most important navigation features for online stores

2 The most common customer journey pre-purchase

3 The one screen that all customers depend on

Nearly

100%

of shoppers

say that the search bar is important to their online shopping experience.

#1: Relevancy above all else.

You're losing money if your search is subpar.

Shoppers said definitively that the search bar is an important tool in their shopping journey. The survey revealed that 40% of people get a negative impression of a retailer if what they're searching for doesn't give them the results they want. More than two-thirds of shoppers did their research across multiple brands before buying this holiday season. Poor search results could be the kiss of death if they can't even find what they need for preliminary research. There's no way to compare prices or product details if you can't find the product in the first place!

Shoppers said that, second to search, filters are their most preferred way to navigate around a site. Retailers shouldn't think about search as separate from other navigation features. Each part of the home page, landing pages, and product detail pages need to deliver on that same high quality of relevancy that you'd expect from the search bar.

Luckily, the fix for improving search also improves these other navigation features. For example, the behaviors that are captured across the entire customer journey inform every part of the experience. Capturing customer behaviors to understand intent (with the support of advanced technology like semantic vector search and synonym detection) can power what's prioritized in filters and drop-downs. It's all search, even if there isn't a search bar.

"The core to a great digital experience starts with the search bar, the place where shoppers act with the most intent. The survey shows that 15% of shoppers want to get their shopping done as quickly as possible. If they can pop over to another site and instantly uncover what they want, you've lost a shopper that may not come back in the future."

–Jenny Gomez, VP Marketing, Lucidworks

How important is the search function on the sites you shop?

Extremely important — I love the search bar

65%

Somewhat important — I like it but don't use it every time

34%

Not important — I hardly use it

2%

#2: Research first, purchase later.

Your customer likely isn't buying on the first date.

73% of survey respondents said that they're very open to retailer recommendations.

Less than one-third of shoppers plan to make a purchase on their first visit. Many are comparing prices, scanning the inventory to get ideas, or online browsing for later in-store purchases. During this past holiday season, nearly 40% of shoppers say that they planned to take their time doing research to determine which brand is the best fit. Retailers can nudge them in the right direction with relevant recommendations.

Getting the most relevant results and recommendations to your customers is like Goldilocks and the Three Bears. You want to show shoppers products and content that aren't too restrictive and aren't too generic. Too restrictive and you could be losing out on an opportunity to showcase products they love but didn't know about. Too generic and shoppers leave frustrated because they couldn't find what they wanted.

Technologies like semantic vector search automatically create a browse and discovery experience that's juuuust right. Semantic vector search predicts relevance based on what shoppers tend to buy given a specific query, and it does so without curation by merchandisers and search managers. This advanced technology matches customer goals, not just words they type into the search bar.

When you go to an online retail store what are you likely going to do?

Compare prices
64%
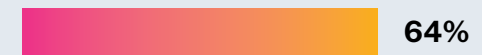
Browse the inventory to get ideas
55%

Get ideas for products to buy at a physical store
32%

Buy something right away
31%

"Applying a recommender strategy based on touchpoints and context is key. As new visitors lack familiarity with a catalog, recommenders for "you may also like", "similar items", and "complete the look" that are placed on a product detail page or the shopping cart page drive purchases for these new shoppers. For known or repeat shoppers, personalized recommenders such as "may we suggest" or "just for you" based on the customer's engagement — past and present — are a great way to drive additional purchases."

–Sanjay Mehta, Head of Industry, Lucidworks

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#3: Big sales on small screens.

Mobile wins (again).

70%
of survey respondents planned to do the majority or at least half of their shopping online.

As brands get better at connecting every channel, browse and purchase behavior travels with shoppers from device to device. Plus, native social ads bring brands to where shoppers already are, increasing the likelihood of seeing a personalized ad on mobile and then making a purchase.

More than a quarter of respondents say they are most likely to exit the site after adding items to an online cart, knowing they'll revisit it later. Just like you wouldn't leave your cart behind in a Target, you want your virtual cart to travel with you across devices.

Retailers usually connect digital channels using a master customer profile or identity token, regardless if the shopper is logged in or not. That token is then shared across all touchpoints and passed back into signals so the experience can be connected for continuous personalization. Many major retailers also perform identity stitching across devices using machine learning based on user context and behaviors when users are unknown. Ecommerce leaders should prioritize investments in technology that understand customer behavior and accelerate relevance across every channel and device.

When you're adding items to your online shopping cart, what are you most likely to do next?

Checkout immediately
52%

Exit the site, knowing I'll revisit
28%

Share the cart link with friends
17%

Exit the site without purchasing
3%

"Retailers should make sure 'not feeling disconnected' doesn't translate to duplicating the user experience. Many desktop sites have rich typeahead with thumbnails and suggested terms, search history, and suggested categories. Retailers need to simplify the UX for mobile. For example, exaggerate the typeahead capability, but limit things like thumbnails that may confuse the user."

Brian Land, VP Sales Engineering, Lucidworks

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Onward and Upward

The holidays are the most informative (and the most stressful) part of the year for retailers and consumers. VPs of Ecommerce all the way to search merchandisers need to remember these three lessons while unpacking the treasure trove of data that online shoppers delivered during the 2022 holidays. Ecommerce leaders must prioritize these three things:

1. Relevancy across every navigation feature

2. Results and recommendations that balance precision and discovery

3. Connect every screen for the biggest sales

We're ready to help. Lucidworks powered the holiday shopping experience for the world's top retailers. We know how to meet shoppers' goals to help them find what they came for and discover even more. Reach out today to see how we do it.

Get Started ›

Learn how Lucidworks accelerate relevant shopping experiences for your brand and meet every customer's need in the moment.