

THE 4 MAIN CHALLENGES IN ECOMMERCE FASHION & HOW TO TACKLE THEM

 conductor +  DEEPCRAWL



INTRODUCTION

Fashion is the second largest category within the retail industry, and with the rise of online shopping, ecommerce strategies have become an essential part of fashion brands' business models. In fact, [Forrester expects the number of online fashion buyers to reach 911 million globally by 2022](#), representing a £634 million market.

Despite the growing market and increasing demand for ecommerce fashion, brands within this space face unique challenges when it comes to optimising their websites and connecting effectively with customers within the SERPs (search engine results pages).

That's why Conductor and DeepCrawl joined forces to create this guide to empower ecommerce fashion digital marketers, SEOs and content marketers with the solutions they need to tackle these key issues, and increase traffic and revenue for their brands.

In this guide, you'll learn how to optimise your website and brand strategy and overcome the four main challenges in ecommerce fashion:

911M

**number of
online fashion
buyers globally
by 2022.**

1. **Keyword Targeting**
2. **Competitive Differentiation**
3. **Crawlability & Indexability**
4. **Budgets & Resourcing**



1

TAKE AIM: TARGETING THE RIGHT KEYWORDS



Everyone even tangentially familiar with SEO knows that successful sites optimise content using keywords. However, ecommerce fashion SEOs often face specific issues when it comes to finding the right keyword strategy.

"I find keyword research vitally important in category/product pages, especially being part of a fashion retailer. For example, keyword research highlighted that difference between searches for 'cross body' bags and 'bum bags' was absolutely huge. This was something that I fed back to our buying and copy teams to alter going forward. Also, the difference between 'rucksack' and 'back pack' is crazy. It's not good enough to have amazing product anymore, it has to be able to be found, which is why keyword research is so invaluable." -Jamie Jackson, Digital Marketing Assistant, Urban Outfitters Europe.

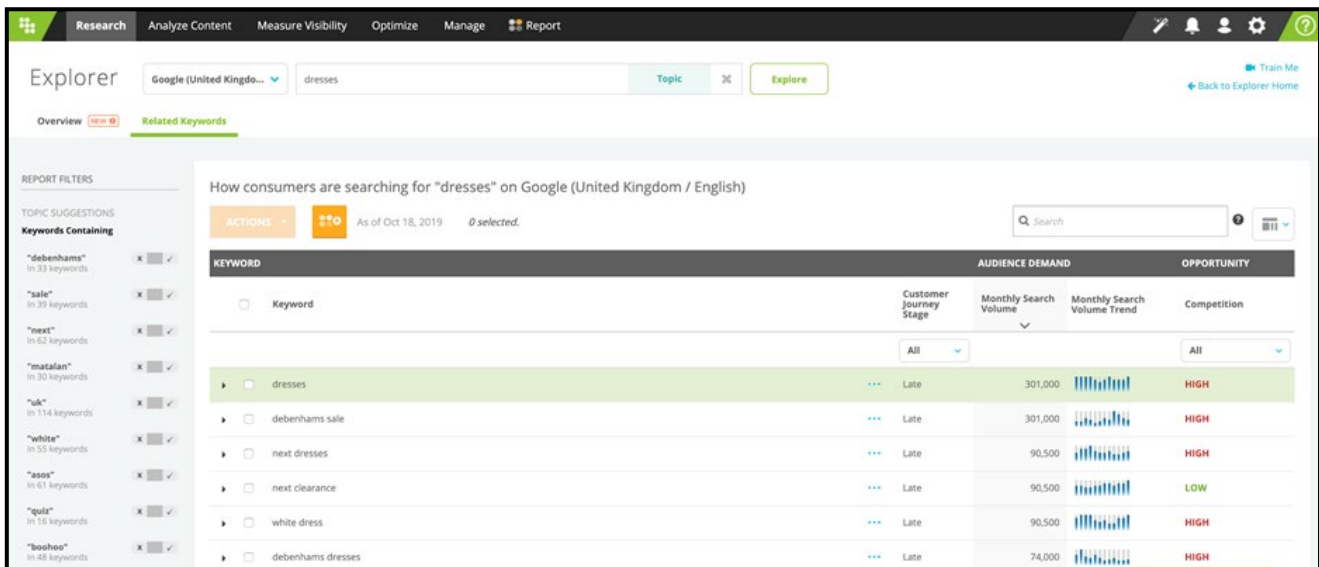
Finding the keywords that are right for your brand

Most ecommerce fashion SEOs will have experienced the challenge of upper management focusing on high search volume keywords. These are usually general head terms with massive MSV like "men's clothing" or "dresses." However, these are extremely competitive keywords, dominated by major brands.

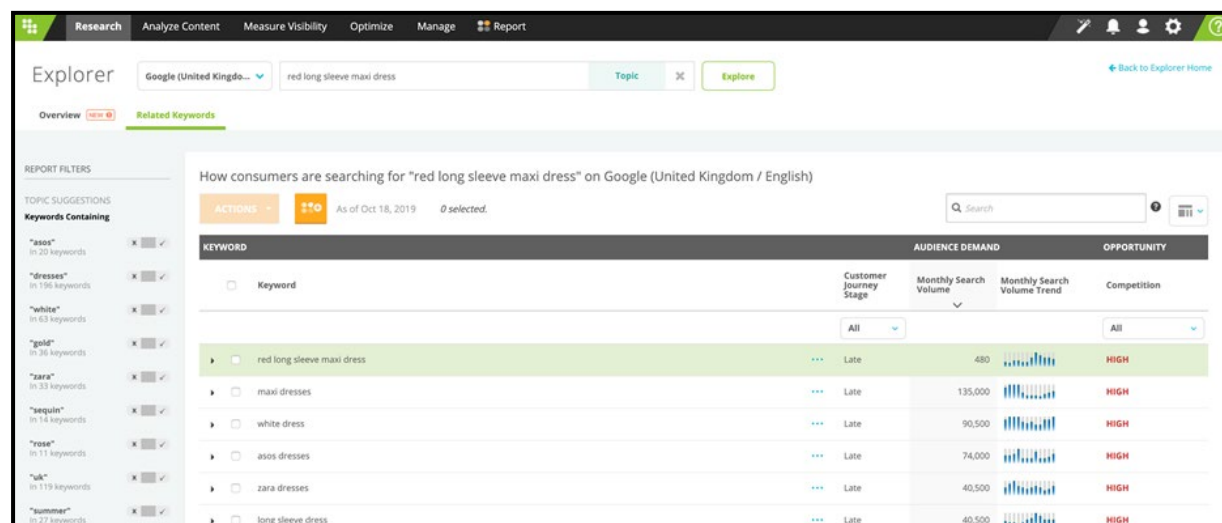
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The difference between 'rucksack' and 'back pack' is crazy. It's not good enough to have amazing product anymore, it has to be able to be found, which is where keyword research is so invaluable.

— JAMIE JACKSON,
Digital Marketing Assistant,
Urban Outfitters Europe.



They are also very broad terms which sit high up in the conversion funnel. Someone searching for “dresses” will likely be in the early stages of the research phase and looking for inspiration. However, someone who knows the exact colour and style of the dress they want, will likely be ready to buy from whichever brand that can meet their criteria.



The right strategy starts with detailed keyword research, and balancing your business goals and initiatives with search data to find the right fit that will yield measurable results.

Within this research stage, here are some key considerations and steps to follow:

- ✔ Educate stakeholders on keyword competition and the differences between head terms and long tail keywords, to steer them away from unattainable goals.
- ✔ Review competitors' keywords to identify any gaps or opportunities for your site to capitalise on.
- ✔ Analyse long tail keyword opportunities that could drive a higher quality of traffic to your site that might not be as obvious to your boss.
- ✔ Look for 'low-hanging fruit' opportunities which will yield results with minimal effort. For example, search terms that you're already ranking on page 2 for that can be pushed up to page 1.

With the advent of Google's mobile-first index, understanding what content is performing well on mobile has become more important than ever. If you aren't prioritizing mobile usability, accessibility, and overall customer experience, you will see your rankings drop.



Review competitors' keywords to identify any gaps or opportunities for your site to capitalise on.

In your keyword research, look for keywords that perform especially well on mobile, and create content that is optimised for mobile devices. Note how customers tend to move between mobile and desktop and how you can align the look, feel, experience, and personalisation of the version of your site that customers interact with on mobile with the desktop version so it feels seamless. Make it easy to bring customers toggling between multiple devices to the point of sale.

Identifying keyword combinations that will yield results

It is the SEO's job to make the case for choosing the right keywords to prioritise, as well as deciding which of the many combinations offer the biggest opportunities for their brand. These decisions need to be driven by search insights that clue us into the users' intent and help us drive business results at every stage of the customer journey.

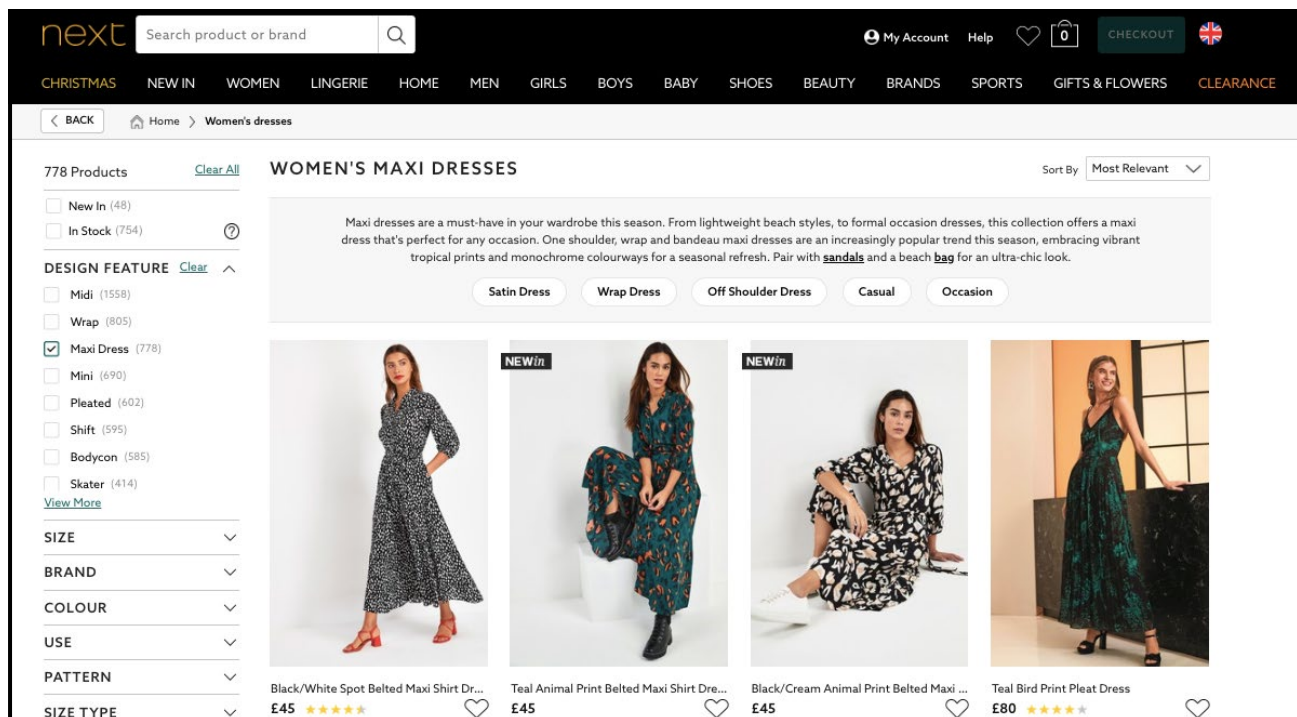
The very best ecommerce fashion brands excel at finding the right mix of content for their websites by deploying a holistic strategy that balances broad category pages, optimised product pages, and valuable content pages which will all map to search intent at different stages of the customer journey.

Optimising category pages

Category pages play an important role in a healthy ecommerce fashion organic marketing strategy, as they help to provide both users and search engines with context around the purpose and structure of a website.

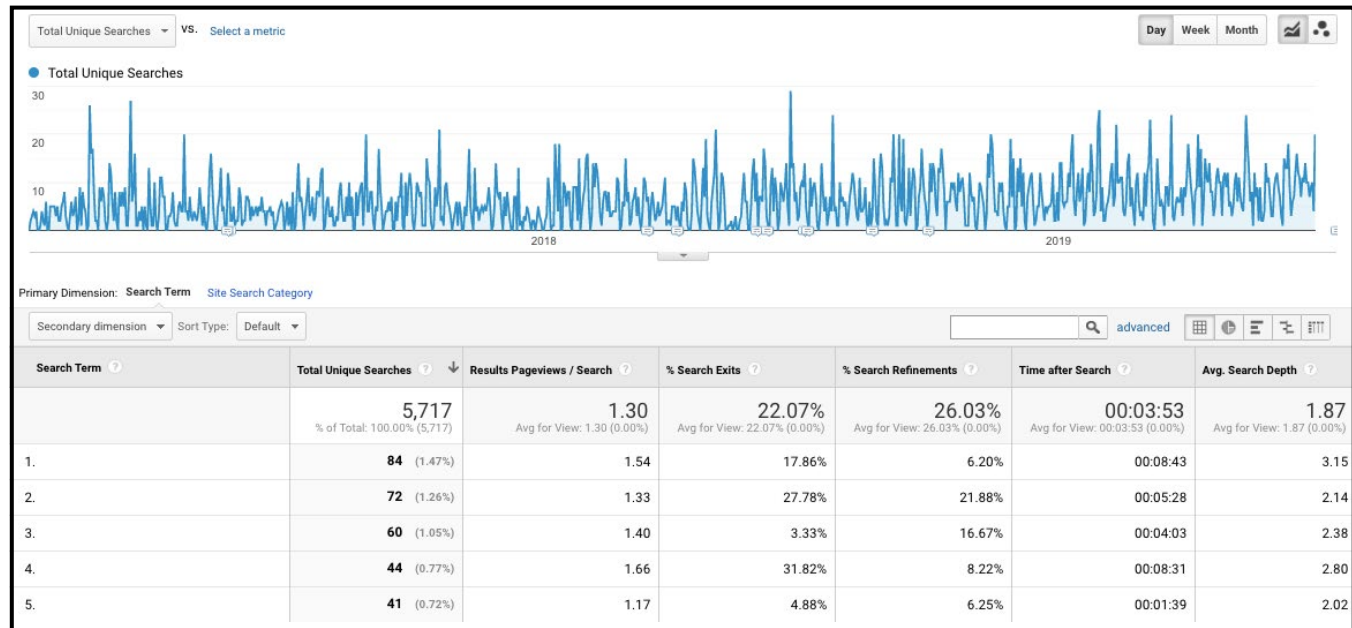


Make it easy to bring customers toggling between multiple devices to the point of sale.



To maximise the performance of your category pages, ask yourself the following questions:

- *Do I have category pages set up for all of my major product types?* Use on-site search data from your analytics tool to learn more about what your users want and feed this into your site's taxonomy.



Source: Google Analytics

- *Do my category pages include optimised descriptions near the top of the page?* These descriptions should not just be keyword-stuffed paragraphs. Instead, ensure you find the balance between optimising for relevance to key search terms and being helpful to the customer. Avoid adding content for content's sake, as this can actually make it more difficult for search engines to understand what types of queries your pages should rank for.
- *Are any of my category pages ranking for long tail terms?* For example, if you have a "maxi dress" subcategory page that is also ranking for "long evening dresses," that could represent an opportunity for a new subcategory page if that keyword has a decent search volume and clickthrough rate.
- *Do any of my product pages rank for broader search queries?* That might indicate the need for creating a category page to better target these terms.

“Including large informational blocks of text below the regular category content can confuse Google about the page’s purpose.

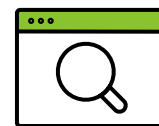
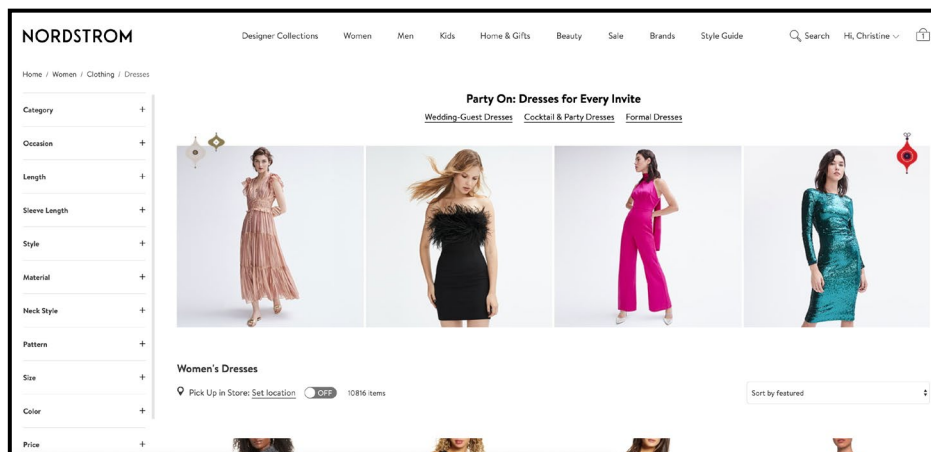
—JOHN MUELLER,
[Google Webmaster Hangout](#)

- *How can I maximise on seasonality?* Demand for certain categories or products will vary depending on the time of year. Split out search volume for your target category keywords by month and use these insights to feed into your content calendar and make sure category pages are optimised months in advance of query search volume peaks.



Source: Google Ads Keyword Planner

There is also an opportunity to leverage organic search insights to make sure your faceted navigation captures the most relevant filters for your customers, a huge opportunity for SEOs to connect and support e-commerce managers with search data. Use keyword research to determine the most common attributes people are searching for on Google (colours, styles, events, occasions, etc.), and incorporate them into the on-site faceted navigation for the best possible customer experience.



The most-searched terms and most-used filters are often great contenders for potential dedicated, optimised category pages.

Another potential source of customer information to inform category page planning is on-site search and use of those faceted navigation features. The most-searched terms and most-used filters are often great contenders for potential dedicated, optimised category pages. You can confirm the viability of the terms through organic keyword research.

Optimising product pages

The second stage of keyword research should focus on the product page level. There are basic SEO considerations for these pages such as optimised title tags, meta descriptions, header tags and URLs, but you can do a lot more to enhance these pages to both improve the customer experience and send the right signals to Google.

Here are some tips on enhancing the performance of your product pages to drive more traffic and conversions:

- **Create compelling product descriptions:** Many fashion ecommerce sites use the manufacturer's description instead of crafting unique copy that reflects keyword research and primes customers to buy. Remember: you are making the case to your customers why they should buy from you and not anyone else. If your products are being sold on other distributor sites, make sure you reinforce your position as the official brand site. Resellers often struggle with manufacturer regulations restricting changes to product descriptions, but don't hesitate to make the case to the manufacturer by providing examples of product description changes that result in better engagement or increase in average order value (AOV). Remember that the manufacturer has the same goal your brand does: to effectively sell the product.



JACK & JONES

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

- This is a men's denim shirt
- It's pretty comfortable to wear
- It's a classic. You'll wear it over and over
- The model is wearing a size L and is 187 cm tall
- JACK & JONES

Let's face it. A denim shirt is a classic. So you'll probably end up wearing this for years, and that's ok if you ask us.

- 100% Cotton
- Machine wash at 30°C
- Do not bleach
- Do not tumble dry
- Iron on medium heat settings
- Dry clean [no trichloroethylene]
- Hand dry

BESTSELLER®

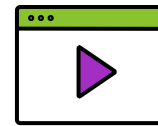
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- Article Number: 12138115
- EAN:

- **Include multiple images with optimised alt text:** A variety of images will make for a better user experience by allowing your users to get a more detailed idea of what your product looks like, but the alt text will make your site more friendly to those with disabilities as well as providing additional information to search engines.
- **Consider adding video:** Video does not just enrich the customer experience, but can also provide merchandisers with a captive audience on a page, which can help them increase average order value. Video provides additional opportunities on the SERP as well. The types of video to target depend on the retailer, but in general, review videos are useful to customers and perform well on the SERP, as well as serving as enhancements to product pages. Look for opportunities in the kinds of universal search results Google is serving: if video is featured, you should be competing for those spots. If the video is embedded on your site, you can use video schema to provide information about the content of the video.
- **Implement structured markup to be shown in rich snippets:** Schema markup helps search engines better understand the context of a page, and may drive higher CTR by providing a richer result on the SERP. It may also help Google and other bots enrich universal search results, voice search, and better entity classification of content. The most important schema for most ecommerce fashion brands is product schema, which allows you to input information about the product, price, and availability. Review schema is also a great addition to product and category pages and helps Google present social proof directly on the SERP.



Video does not just enrich the customer experience, but can also provide merchandisers with a captive audience on a page, which can help them increase average order value.

Trent Austin Design Lyle End Table With Storage & Reviews | Wayf...

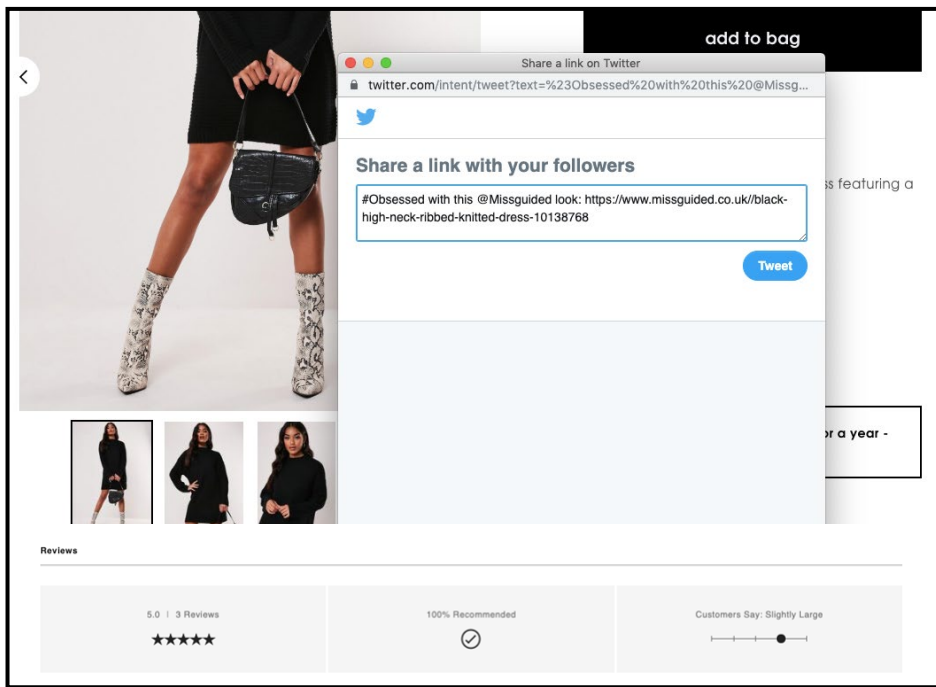
<https://www.wayfair.com> › ... › End & Side Tables › All End & Side Tables

★★★★★ Rating: 4.5 - 484 reviews - \$87.99 - In stock

You'll love the Lyle End Table With Storage at Wayfair - Great Deals on all Furniture products with Free Shipping on most stuff, even the big stuff.

Number of Drawers: 1

- **Add social proof:** From reviews to social sharing, these factors signal authority and trust to users and search engines. Build those elements right onto the product page and make sure they are easy for customers to use. As previously mentioned, [adding review schema](#), which usually show a star rating drawn from an average from reviews on a Knowledge Graph or on the SERP, can be especially helpful in making SERP listings more visibly appealing and informative. It's worth noting that the recent [Rich Results Update](#) has resulted in some fluctuation in which snippets on the SERP are displaying reviews, although that's expected to stabilise. In addition, provide opportunities on the page for people to share looks or content on social media easily.



It can often feel like an uphill battle to find the resources to produce engaging, unique content that reflects your unique selling proposition and is optimised for search engines across all of your product pages.

This can feel overwhelming, and there are only so many hours in the day of an SEO or content producer. However, here's where technology can help you prioritise and organise your product page to-do list. Take the following steps to identify and tackle your most pressing product page issues:

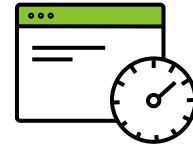
- Crawl your website to find thin pages that lack the content customers need or are missing key components search engines use to rank pages.

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Schema is a matter of best practice. If Google says it's important, you should at least make an attempt to do it. Any little thing could make the difference for you showing up versus your competitor. But there is such a thing as having too much schema. Make sure when you're implementing schema, it's relevant.

— KRISTEN KING,
Associate Marketing Manager
at Shoe Carnival

- Integrate consumer data (through an analytics tool) and search analytics data (through Google Search Console) to identify the top-performing pages on your site so you can understand where to deploy your resources to have maximum impact. This is hugely important, because not all pages are equally valuable to your business. In an ideal world, every product page would be perfectly aligned with the checklist we gave you in the previous section.
- Prioritise writing informative, engaging content for those top-performing pages, and make sure those pages check every item on the optimisation list for product pages. These pages will become the centrepiece of your case for more resource because you will be able to show the tangible effects these changes have on traffic, clickthrough rate, and conversion.



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Since SilkFred serves as a platform for hundreds of independent fashion designers to showcase their collections online, in most counts, they are the ones in control of product uploads and updates on the website, with thousands of new products being added to the website every day. This is sometimes more than our human moderators can handle.

While our brands are experts in their domain, most of them have never been exposed to SEO considerations, resulting in many of the issues that generally plague user-generated content websites in general, such as duplicate and thin content.

We are taking 3 approaches to tackle these issues to unlock our search engine visibility potential:

- 1. Educate:** We are working closely with our brands to educate them on how important is unique product information across products, not only for SEO, but mostly for their brand. More search engine visibility means more sales and revenues. As a part of this we have generated a set of SEO guidelines with quick and simple changes that could go a long way towards SEO performance. This is a really small set of instructions, with critical information only - overwhelming our brands with a 50-60 page book of instructions might have an opposite effect. We're already receiving positive feedback from the brands who have decided to implement these!
- 2. Restrict:** Adding things like a minimal character count and not allowing duplications to be saved can go a long way in preventing the further expansion of duplicate content on the website. This also contributes to the regeneration of existing products, as any change in the product requires new and unique content in order to save.
- 3. Automate:** We hope that in the future we'll make the brands' work much easier by automating the creation of product info based on their chosen set of product traits. It's a complex developmental solution, but would definitely mean a big win for all.

—ORIT MUTZNIK, Head of SEO at [SilkFred](#)

Optimising content pages

To win in ecommerce fashion, you need to understand that the customer journey doesn't start at the comparison or conversion point. By creating valuable, helpful content separate from your product pages, you have the opportunity to rank for keywords earlier in the customer journey and start building a relationship with your customers that creates loyalty to your brand and repeat buyers. Content pages might be blog posts or other upper funnel assets that aren't directly selling products.

Most major fashion e-commerce brands have some level of content strategy that extends beyond late-stage conversion, but all too frequently the content itself is a barely-veiled sales pitch. Make sure that value to the customer is driving the decisions around early-stage content for your brand.

Take a look at the content your brand is producing or considering producing, and ask:

- *Does this content align with both our brand's tone and our customer's needs?*

You should be developing a brand voice in your content that is probably somewhat different than the one you deploy on your product pages. While your brand voice on a product page is focused on conversion and sales, content pages are there to build a relationship with your customers, building trust and brand loyalty. Look at demographic and affinity data on your customers and develop a voice guide that speaks with the voice of the customer. Customers want to shop at brands that feel in line with their values. One great example of brands thinking about affinity beyond the point of sale is the shoe brand TOMS. They project an image of social responsibility that exemplifies the brand mission as well as building a relationship with customers that focuses on mutual values.

- *Does this content feel overly stuffed with keywords?* Remember: customers don't care what you're signalling to Google, and Google is increasingly aware of that distinction. Make sure your optimisations are occurring naturally.

- *Does this content answer the intent of what the customer is searching for?* For example, inspirational style guides and look books can be useful for your customers. Think about different ways your products can be discussed in different contexts: telling the story of a look, which might have higher search volume than specific product terms, is a great opportunity to bring people to your site. Here, Nordstrom has won the top organic ranking position on Google for "wedding guest dresses," a phrase searched 165,000 times per month on average. To achieve this, they have integrated educational, customer story-based content and a personalised retail experience for visitors into their site.

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You should be producing content disproportionately. Content is huge as we see what voice search will morph into over the next five years. All predictions show that content is going to be bigger, and that content is organic content, whether it's found via search, organic social, or some sort of other organic means. It is the cheapest way to brand yourself and acquire new customers.

— KRISTEN KING,
Associate Marketing Manager
at Shoe Carnival

Creating compelling content also gives you a great avenue to link out to product or category pages on your site, providing a better user experience. Remember that content can be your best salesperson if it answers the intent of the search, and helps your brand become your customer's trusted partner in the sales process, encouraging repeat buyers. That means they are more likely to come to your brand to share their experiences in reviews, discover new looks and products, and engage on a long-term basis.

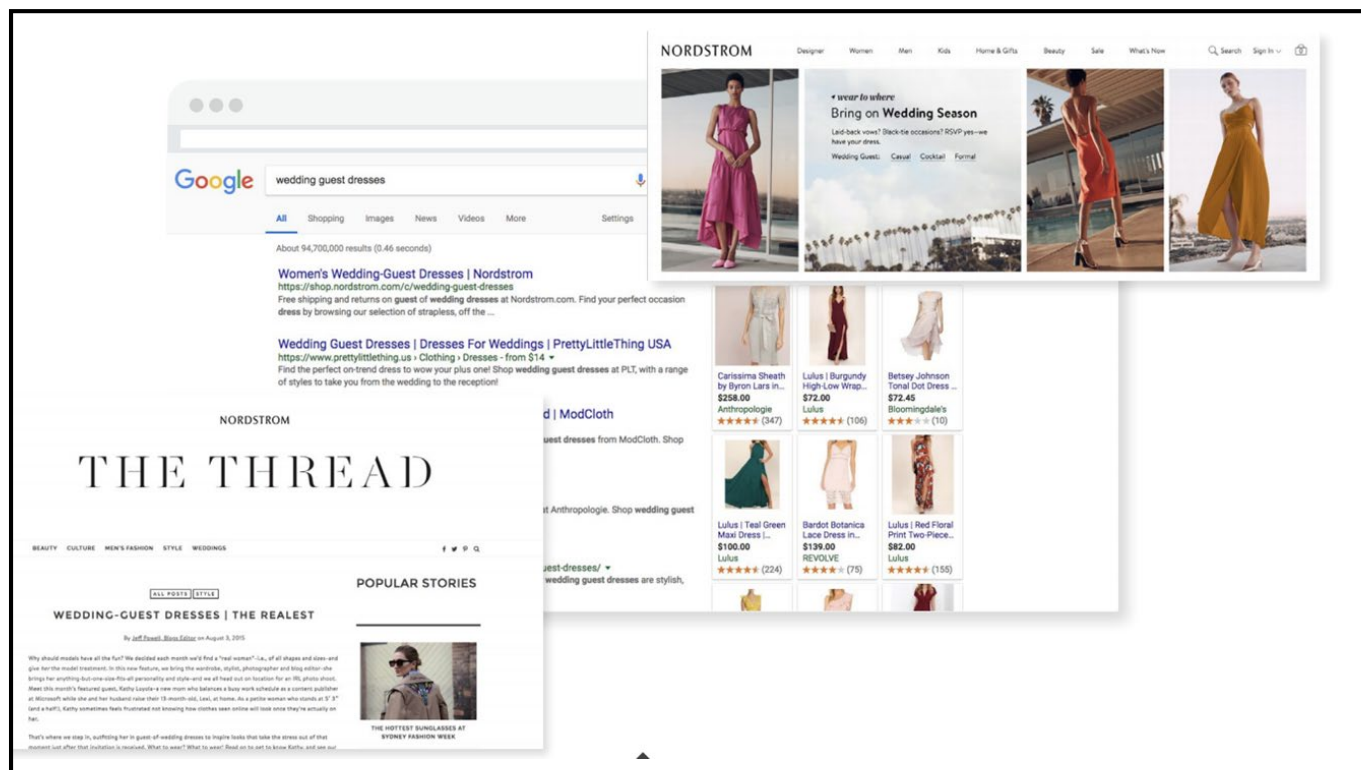
Monitoring your keyword performance

One issue that plagues ecommerce fashion SEOs is monitoring keyword performance of live pages on the site. Because ecommerce sites are often quite large due to the proliferation of product, category, and content pages, it's all too common for something to go live and not be re-visited or re-optimised.

That leaves your brand open to all kinds of issues, including cannibalisation of keywords by different pages or areas of your site. It also means you're probably not taking advantage of the kind of low-hanging opportunities, like striking-distance keywords.



It's all too common for something to go live and not be re-visited or re-optimised.



There are a couple of key ways to scale your ongoing keyword monitoring for a large ecommerce site and get in communication with members of your org beyond the marketing team:



- **Make sure you have the right technology.** You need an SEO tool that is built for the level of volume you need to track on the keyword side and helps you target the right actions to take to make the most impact on your business. Those features might include rank tracking, daily monitoring, differentiation between universal result types on Google, and more.
- **Think big when presenting insights and results from keyword monitoring.** Remember that many stakeholders are not as conversant (or even interested) in the nuts and bolts of SEO. When you are showcasing results, look for larger trends and major wins to make the case for the effect of your efforts and campaigns. Speak the language of the stakeholders and translate SEO insights and wins for them to not just get recognition, but more budget and resources. Apply the same thinking you use for understanding customer intent: what drives the stakeholders you're talking to? What words do they use? What do they care about? If they're thinking in terms of revenue, for example, talking about the number of keywords or SEO-only KPIs will just sound like technical jargon. How can the data and intelligence you have access to help them?

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We started by focusing on the brands that drove the most amount of traffic for our site. For each individual product under that brand, we did some research. From looking at keyword research around each product, we were able to understand how people were searching for those products, and compared that with market share information on the SERP to understand what our competition was doing.

That informed how we wrote specific titles, and meta descriptions, and we combined that with an updated XML sitemap and submitted to the search engine, and started to gain traction immediately. We continued crawling to identify pages that weren't indexing or had very little content or featured duplicate titles or metadescrptions and make changes to clean the whole back end up.

— VINNY TOTINO,
SEO/SEM Senior Manager at Solstice Sunglasses

- **Align your PPC and organic strategies.** If your PPC and SEO efforts are occurring in siloes, it is highly likely that your brand is spending money on pages where your organic results make it unnecessary, and not leveraging paid search as a way to make inroads on pages your competitors are owning or that are still in the growth phase on the organic side.
- **Evangelise SEO trends to help inform buying and merchandising for your brand.** The insights you can draw from your organic performance should not just be limited to the mechanics and content of your site. You can help other teams in your organisation use search data to identify seasonal trends and local demand to inform buying, merchandising, and stocking, helping them get ahead of the curve. Work with teams outside of marketing to bring down data silos. That will help you market and move product efficiently and help gain a holistic understanding of customer behaviour.
- **Connect with IT and keep the communication flowing.** With the rapid advancement of ecommerce technology and the need for agility in a competitive market, changes and updates to the site often happen without getting marketing involved, which presents a huge risk to businesses in terms of SEO. Tracked keywords are often the first line of defense and the place you'll catch wind of any negative impact of changes to the site, so opening up the lines of communication with any team that is involved with website maintenance and upgrades is a must.



**Evangelise
SEO trends to
help inform
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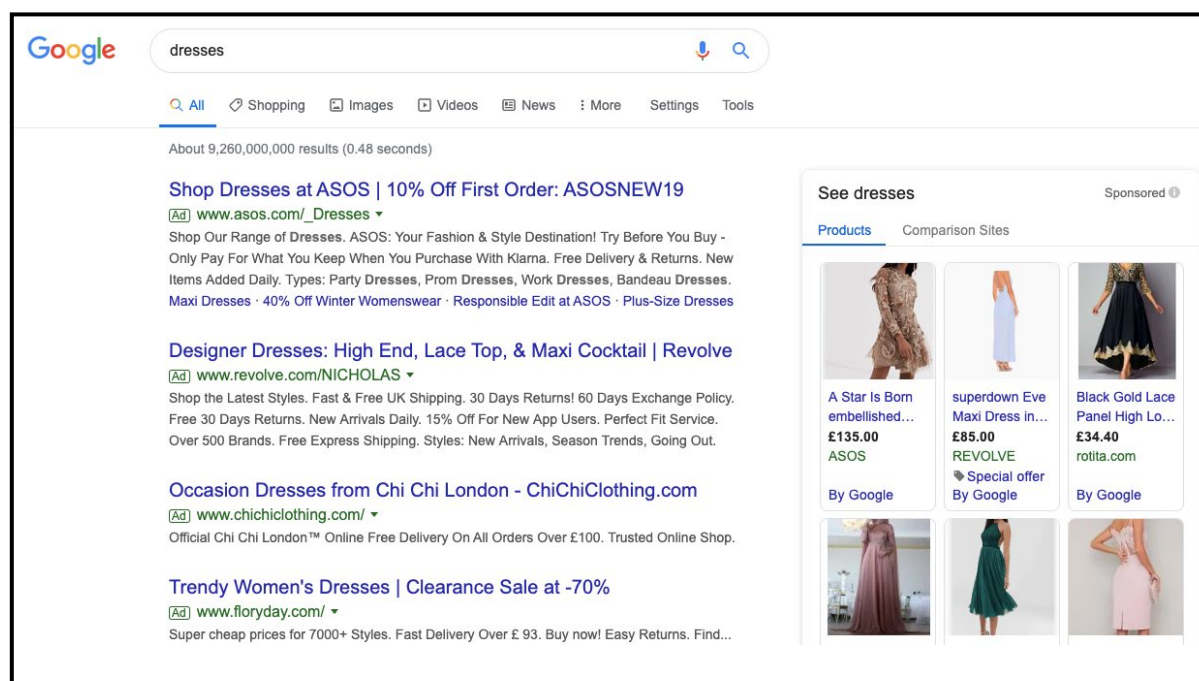


2

STAND OUT: PULLING AWAY FROM THE COMPETITION



The fashion industry is one of the most competitive spaces on the planet, and nowhere is that more obvious than in the SERPs. Type “dresses” into Google and you’ll see almost 9 billion organic results. So how do you stand out from the crowd?



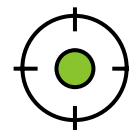
Creating a unique selling proposition

A unique selling proposition (USP) should be the foundation of any ecommerce fashion brand’s marketing strategy, because it’s what separates you from the crowd of competitors all begging for your customer’s attention.

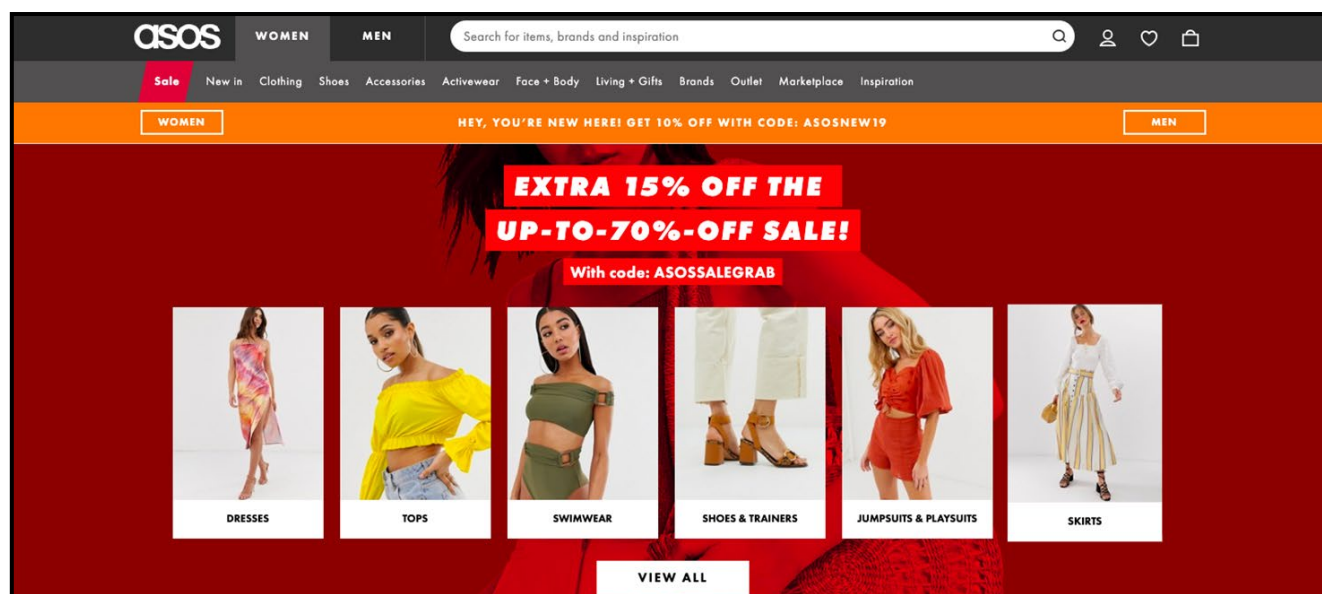
So let’s break down what a successful USP looks like. As a player in a saturated market, your brand needs to mean something to your customer to really pull away from your competitors, particularly if there is overlap of the actual brands your are selling.

Here's what you need to ask about your brand to create a truly unique selling proposition:

- *Who are your ideal customers?* If you are going to uniquely appeal to someone, you need to know them well. You need to have deep knowledge of who you are targeting. You need to know how they talk, what they're interested in, and what their lives are like. Combine demographic data from social media channels with insights from search about their buying habits and voice, what motivates them to buy, their channel preferences, and more to dig deep into who you're trying to speak to and build strong personas that drive your marketing strategy.
- *How do you help them solve their problems?* Dig into the customer's motivation to buy and help connect them with solutions across your holistic strategy. Do they want a less expensive makeup regimen that is environmentally friendly? Are they driven by the need for unique tie options they won't find anywhere else? This should impact your entire marketing strategy, from content to product pages to ads and beyond.
- *What makes your brand different?* You need to know what's out there in the market already to understand the messaging that customers are already seeing. Pay attention to what your competitors are saying and what their customers are saying about them: where are they successful? Where do they fall short? Maybe your big differentiator is shared values, price point, or delivery options. Look at the makeup of the SERPs for your key categories and see what's out there and what you can do better.



If you are going to uniquely appeal to someone, you need to know them well. You need to have a deep knowledge of who you are targeting.



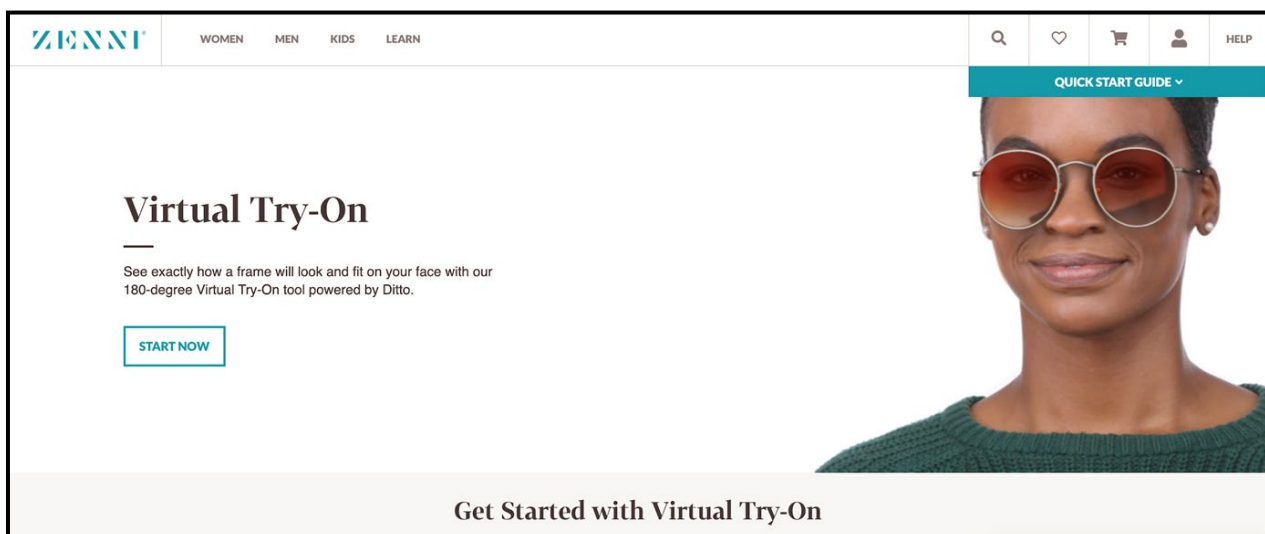
Once you have your USP in place, you need to apply it to every single part of your brand's marketing strategy, from targeted social ads to product page details to billboards. For brands that are not just in the ecommerce space, that also means bridging the divide between your brick-and-mortar stores and your brand's digital presence. The messaging your customers are hearing in store should be echoing what they're seeing online so the entire brand experience feels seamless.

To make the most of your USP, you need to execute on the following key marketing activities:

- **Create engaging, informative and trustworthy content** that supports your USP.
- **Continuously analyse what your competition is doing** (and not just your direct business competition). In the ecommerce fashion space, your competition isn't just major established brands or digital disruptors, it's also everything else your customers are consuming around your unique selling proposition: blogs, articles, YouTube videos etc. You need to know exactly what they're consuming and how you can leverage that knowledge to give them the best possible experience and bring them to the purchase decision.
- **Never stop trying to understand your customers better.** You should be constantly refining and revisiting that idea of your ideal customer and the personas you built from that idea. What new data do you have? What have you learned about their experiences? What new problems or challenges are they facing? What channels are they active in now? Staying current with your customers is essential to building long-term brand loyalty and continuing to grow customer-evangelists. One way many brands have started responding to new information about their customers and what they need is by adding new elements of personalisation or interactive elements to the digital experience.



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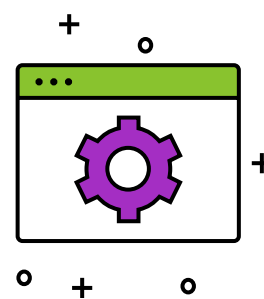
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DON'T FORGET THE BACKEND: MONITORING CRAWLABILITY & INDEXABILITY

A strong technical foundation is crucial for any ecommerce fashion brand, as the performance of the website can make or break a business. We have seen this in action this year when [ASOS' profits dropped by 87% due to technical SEO issues](#), after the brand launched 200 microsites and implemented significant changes to the site's navigation.

As [ASOS explained in their interim results statement](#):

"Traffic was further impacted by some instability in SEO performance, which led to a decline in the SERPs. This was caused by multiple customer navigation changes to our websites and our release of 200 local web experiences, which whilst strategically the right thing to do, had an impact on SEO rankings in the short term."



“

Every fashion ecommerce brand suffers with crawlability issues. It's just the unavoidable truth that none of us in technical SEO roles can hide from. You have buyers that feel the need to add every conceivable product variant as a crawlable, indexable entity in its own right. You have trading teams that want to want you to quickly surface trending products. There are UX teams that want to control the display and discoverability of products, and engineering teams that often see SEO as an unnecessary distraction to getting code live. And then there is senior management that wants you to deliver growth quickly.

Being able to identify and balance these competing requirements into a technical solution which also complies with SEO 'best practice' now and has the flexibility to adapt within the changing search environment is singularly the most challenging, rewarding and interesting aspects of SEO.

— LEE MCCOY,
Lead Product Manager of SEO, Social & Web Performance at [N Brown Group](#)

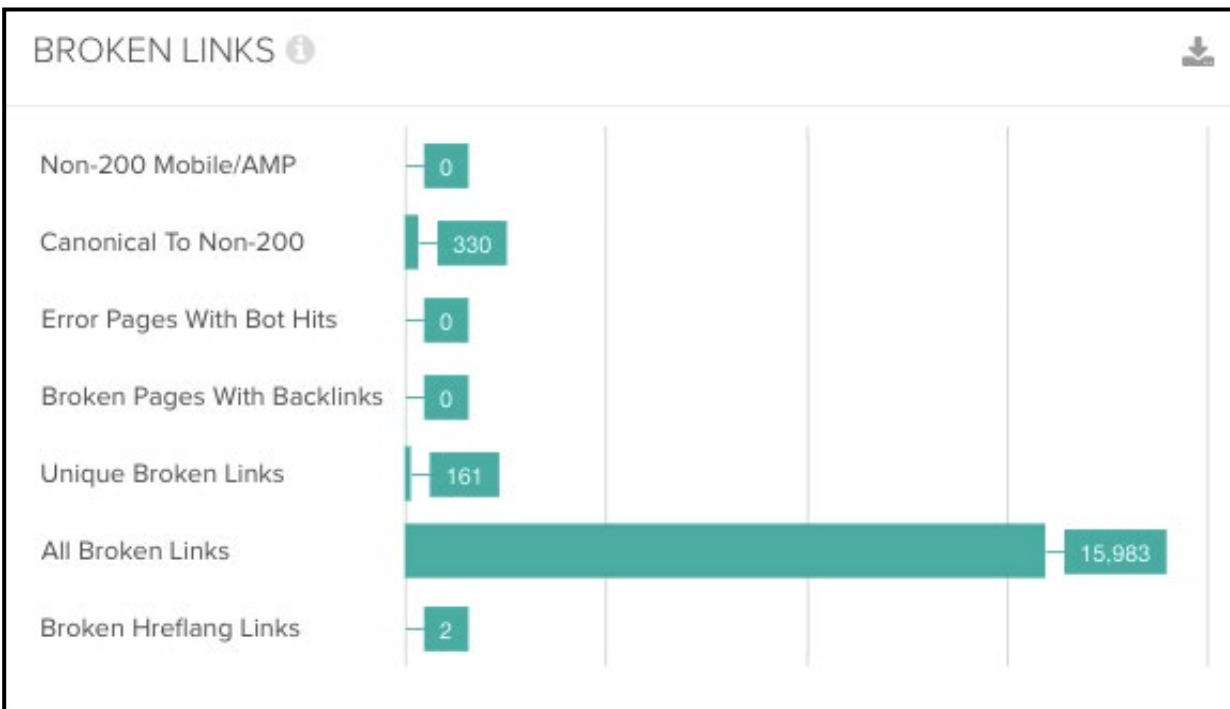
Examples like this demonstrate why it is crucial to optimise your site's technical health on an ongoing basis. Despite the importance of this, even the major brands often struggle with implementing technical best practices. In this section of the guide, we'll explain some of the key areas that can impact the crawlability and indexability of an ecommerce fashion website, as well as what you can do to mitigate these issues.

Monitoring internal linking

Ecommerce fashions sites all share a common trait: they are constantly changing. From new categories being introduced to the site and lacking internal links to aid discovery, to products selling out and creating 404 pages and broken links. Each day comes with something new that can impact the existing internal linking structure of the site.

Internal links are crucial for users to be able to navigate sites to find exactly what they want to buy, as well as for search engines to discover pages on a site and determine how they relate to one another, and, ultimately, how they should be indexed and shown in the SERPs.

To keep on top of internal linking, it's important to monitor your website by scheduling crawls to run weekly or even daily, depending on the size of the site and how frequently it changes.



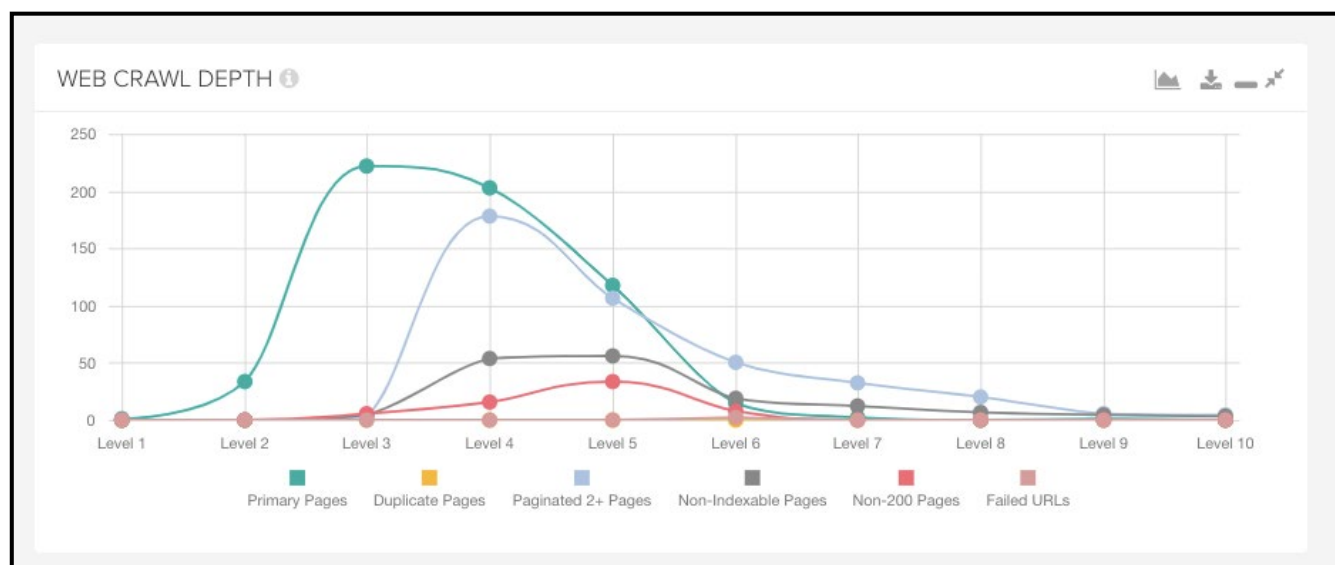
Source: DeepCrawl

Here are some of the key things to keep a close eye on to make sure your internal linking is optimised:

- **Broken links:** These create a frustrating roadblock within the user's journey to conversion.
- **Internal redirects:** Redirects can eat into a site's crawl budget and can confuse Google about whether you want the source URL or target URL to be indexed. Make sure you're only linking to target URLs wherever possible to avoid this confusion.
- **Crawl depth:** Analyse how far down your key pages sit within the levels of your site's architecture, and how many clicks it will take for a user or search engine to reach them. Important pages should never be more than a few clicks away from the user, no matter what page they're on. You can bring pages up to a higher level by linking to them from a more prominent page in your site's architecture. Implementing a clear architecture and on-site navigation, as well as linking relevant pages together, will help improve their findability.

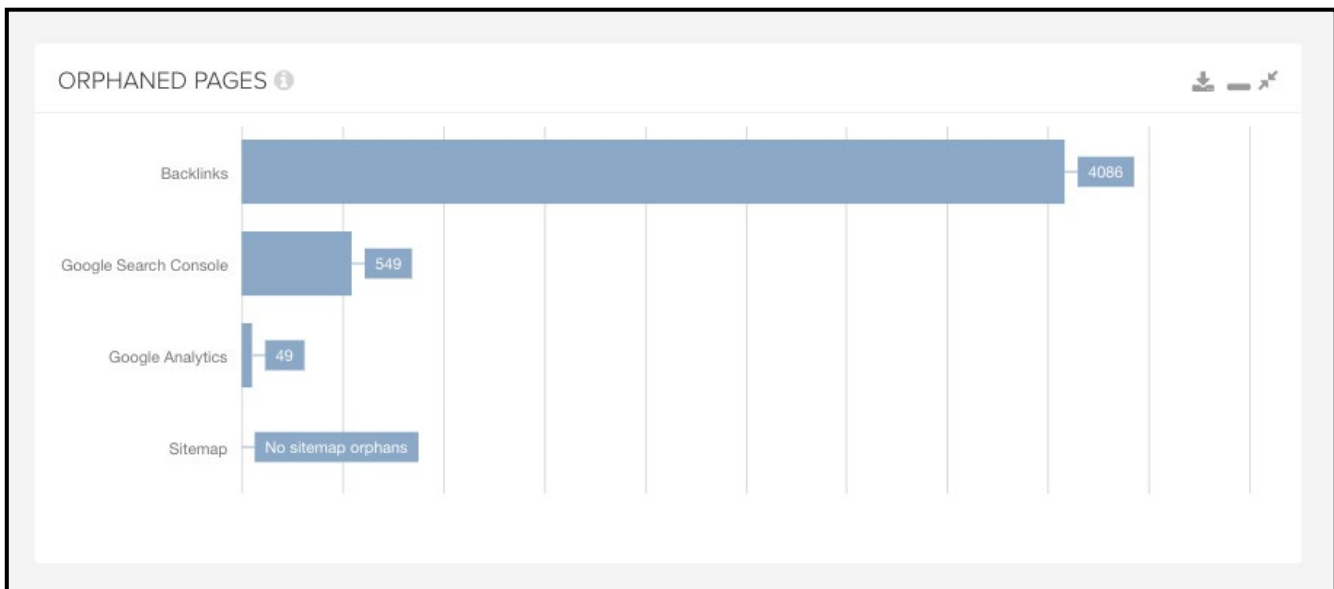


Implementing a clear architecture and on-site navigation, as well as linking relevant pages together, will help improve their findability.



Source: DeepCrawl

- **Nofollowed pages:** Make sure that you aren't nofollowing any internal links to high value pages so that link equity is able to flow through to them.
- **Orphaned pages:** These are pages that have no internal links to them from anywhere else within the site, meaning that search engines and users will struggle to find them.



Source: DeepCrawl

- **Page popularity and performance:** By combining multiple crawl sources such as your sitemaps, Google Analytics data, Google Search Console data, backlink data and log file data, you will be able to see which of your pages are getting the most impressions in search, sessions from users and visits from search engines. You should prioritise these pages to make sure they are being effectively linked to internally.

Handling parameters, faceted navigation and duplicate URLs

Customers coming to ecommerce fashion sites today expect some functionality that helps them control their own experience, particularly around sorting product results on the site. However, style, size, colour, price and other facets in combination can create endless combinations of duplicate URLs, especially when mixed with sorting facets.

This can be bad news for ecommerce sites when it comes to search engine indexing. Duplicate URLs contribute to index bloat, eat into crawl budget and reduce crawl efficiency, which can prevent your important pages from being crawled as often.



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To help resolve this issue, here are some of the tools you need to help manage your site's crawl efficiency:

- Use robots.txt directives to block low quality sections of your site from being crawled in the first place.
- Implement canonical tags for pages with identical content to consolidate rankings for duplicate URLs.
- Resolve any conflicting signals within your technical implementation by making sure that you're including the same final destination URLs in your internal links, canonical tags, redirects and sitemaps. This will help to ensure that the right URL will be selected to be crawled and indexed from within a set of duplicates.
- Make sure only necessary parameter pages that provide value to users are crawlable and indexable. Check which parameters are being used regularly and whether their filtered pages link to any otherwise unlinked product pages. Consider noindexing the rest and adding nofollow to any links pointing to them.

It's important to make sure that all of your important product pages can still be crawled and indexed, and that you aren't noindexing pages that are the only route for discovering particular products. It's possible to go too far when optimising crawl efficiency, as you may prevent valuable pages from being found.

Crawlability strategies will vary from brand to brand, with some allowing bots to crawl however many facet pages and paginated sets that they like, and others restricting crawling to only two levels deep, for example. Some facet or internal search pages, if they have a strong product offering and unique content, can actually be valuable to have crawled and indexed, as they may provide users with specific choices that more closely match their intent than the original category page.

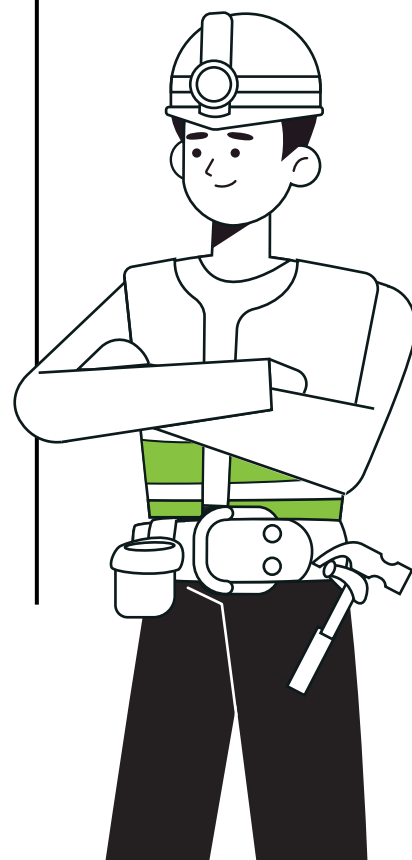
Managing page churn and out of stock products

If you ask any ecommerce fashion SEO what their biggest pain points are, most of them are likely to mention handling out of stock products. SEO is a channel focused on the long term; we rely on being able to slowly grow the authority of pages over time, which depends on keeping the same URLs live.

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Google only needs to crawl facet pages that include otherwise unlinked products.

— JOHN MUELLER,
[Google Webmaster Hangout](#)



This isn't how ecommerce fashion works, however. Products can sell out within days, and are often discontinued after every season, meaning that the SEO's strategy is at the mercy of the buying department.

Broken internal links are not the only issue caused by changes in product availability. Customers can also run into soft 404 errors when these out of stock pages are still available in the SERPs or are linked to externally from other sites. This can be a frustrating experience.



Regular crawling of your site is one of the best ways of keeping up to date with the changes that take place on an ecommerce site. This will allow you to discover discontinued pages as soon as possible, and handle them accordingly. We've put together some tips for staying ahead of page churn.

If the product will be coming back in stock:

- Keep the URL live with a temporary out of stock message on the page, alongside an option for the user to enter their email address to be notified when that product comes back on to the site. There are a number of different CMS plugins that can help you implement this feature.

If the product will be permanently discontinued:

- Implement redirect mapping to retain as much link equity as possible by directing it to another relevant page on the site.
- Focus on promoting a more evergreen hub page instead if the product page will only be on the site for a short amount of time. This will help you build more authority for your site over time and customers will always have somewhere permanent to link to and reference.

Both permanently out-of-stock or temporarily discontinued product pages are an opportunity to suggest similar products or incentivize buying or trying alternatives to a captive audience. Good communication with the buying and merchandising teams will help you implement these methods and more effectively plan longer term product management strategies.

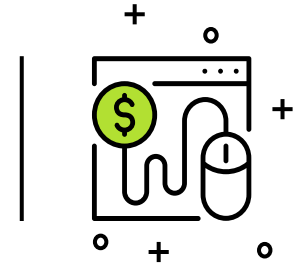
Focus on promoting a more evergreen hub page instead if the product page will only be on the site for a short amount of time.



4

MAKE THE CASE: GETTING THE BUDGET AND RESOURCES YOU NEED

One of the most difficult tasks facing SEOs and content marketers at ecommerce fashion brands is budget and resourcing. Automation and technology can help lighten the load, but these too often require significant investment.



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Working with our leadership team has essentially been about educating them on the importance of SEO and content, including the product descriptions and brand descriptions on our product and category pages. It’s an ongoing process to communicate and show the importance of our efforts on growing the business.

— MONICA SWENDSRUD,
DMM at Solstice Sunglasses

There are three key questions you should start by asking yourself before making the case for more resources:

1. *Have you evangelised the use of organic insights beyond your specific function?*
As we discussed earlier in this guide, the more data you unsilo, the more teams you can support with customer insights and data drawn from search, the better the result when you’re asking for more. Whether that’s helping to name new products by providing insight into the customer voice or providing more data to merchandisers around seasonal and local demand to help develop predictive models to allocate product, organic data has many more applications than just your brand’s website.

2. *Have you prioritised the right things to tangibly show the effect of your efforts on business goals?* Remember that your stakeholders don't necessarily care about the minutiae you uncovered in a crawl or the specific keyword opportunity you discovered. Identifying where you can have the most impact and applying the resources (time, budget, effort) you have now will help you build a much stronger case for why your brand should increase investment. That will depend a lot on your brand, but tying SEO efforts to revenue is always useful. Look for correlations between key metrics like average order value or conversion rates and organic entrances to the site, then prioritise those actions to sell the value of SEO for the business.
3. *Have you organised your results into a story stakeholders can understand and will find compelling?* You need to be developing storytelling skills that help you do a couple of things, including simplifying your explanations and drawing explicit lines between your efforts and the results you're showcasing. Consider what the stakeholders you're presenting to value and find ways to tie your expected outcomes to those priorities. For example, if your goal is a higher crawl budget, ask yourself how your desired outcome will help the business as a whole and whatever KPIs or action items the stakeholder prioritises. Let the audience determine your angle.

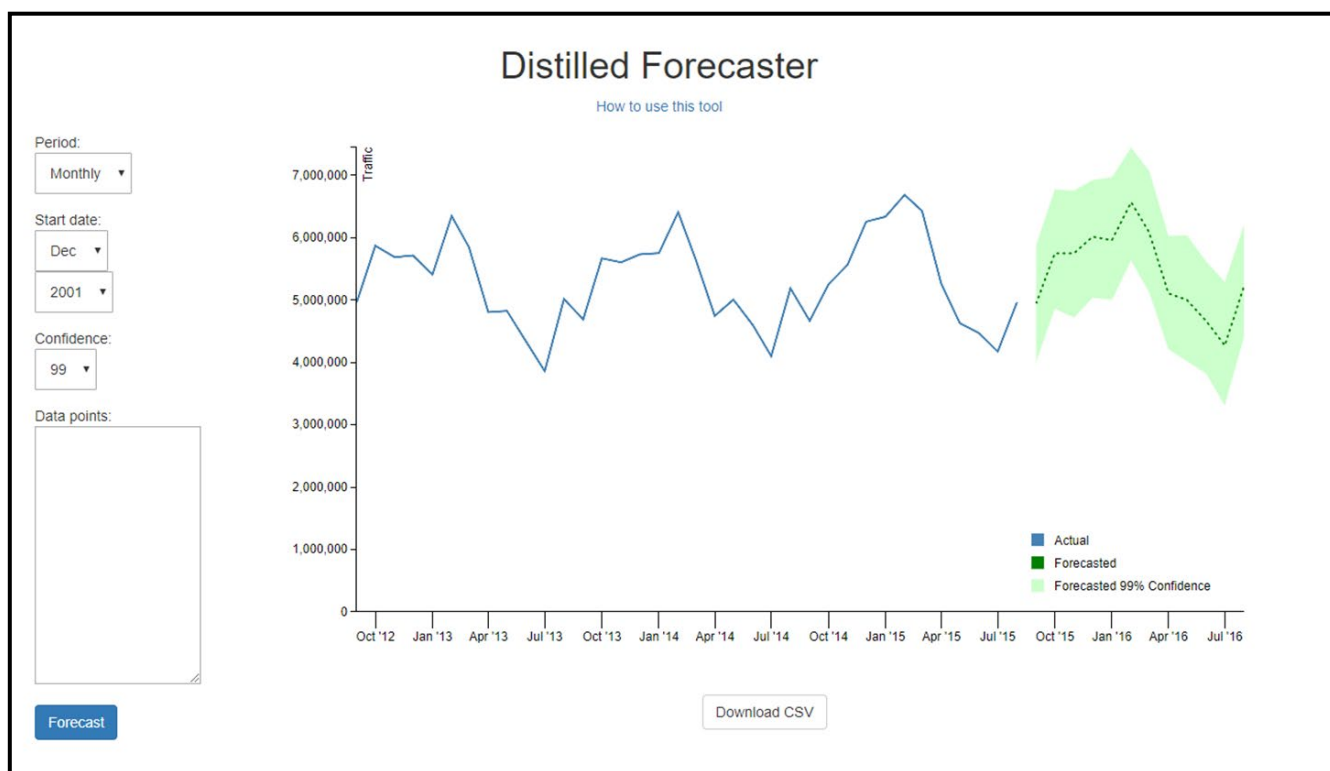
Making the case for budget and resources is an often under-appreciated part of a top-notch SEO's job, and that means finding the right way to communicate expectations, impact, results, and needs.

To help make sure that you are successful in making your case, we put together some key actions you should take:

- **Set expectations:** The idea of setting specific expectations can be a little scary for SEOs and content marketers because there are a lot of things you can't control, from algorithm updates to fluctuating SERPs. But what you can do is identify a problem and a hypothesis that explains how you propose to fix it. If traffic has been dropping to your site and you believe the issues are tied to Google's switch to mobile-first, for example, find data to support that conclusion, make the case for why stakeholders should care, and then clearly identify what needs to be done to address the problem. Remember that these problems should be large-scale, not individual initiatives. Your hypothesis should include the projected outcome including what you think will happen if the problem is fixed. This structure will help stop you from diving too far into details that can be distracting or overwhelming for stakeholders.
- **Forecast impact:** Identify three projected outcomes for long-term SEO performance: flat performance, targeted growth, and aggressive growth.



Your hypothesis should include the projected outcome including what you think will happen if the problem is fixed.



Then make the case for resources you'll need to achieve either targeted growth or aggressive growth. Make it clear that without them, performance will remain at the flat performance level. Don't tie these forecasts to short-term results or individual campaigns: those are much harder to accurately predict. Instead, create a report that focuses on percentage growth of organic traffic over a year or more. That way you're not tying specific forecasted traffic growth to a specific initiative, and you can convince stakeholders to consider the bigger picture.

- **Report on results:** Not every metric is weighed equally for stakeholders, so you need to focus on the ones that matter most to them to make a more compelling argument. For most stakeholders, those metrics will be around revenue: conversion rate, average order value, channel attribution, etc. The other key to effectively reporting results and making your case is to speak plainly. You don't need to get technical or use excessive jargon to prove yourself; speak the language of the people in the room.
- **Tie your needs to outcomes:** If you want stakeholders to invest in a new hire or a piece of expensive technology, you have to make it very clear what the return on investment will look like, tying it as closely and clearly as possible to revenue. Even when you are making the case for a technical fix, make sure to connect the dots between what you want and what affects the bottom line in an easy-to-understand, powerful way.



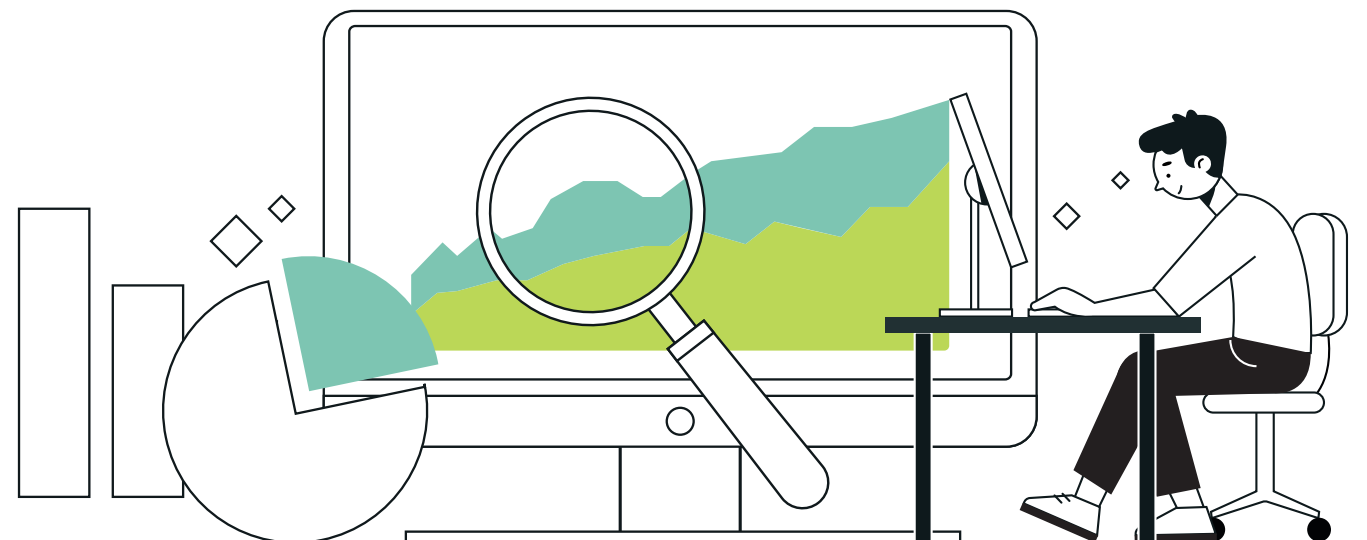
Create a report that focuses on percentage growth of organic traffic over a year or more.

TO SUM UP

Creating a strong ecommerce fashion marketing strategy that increases traffic and revenue can be a significant challenge in our ever-changing digital marketing world. However, that challenge is not insurmountable. We hope this guide has helped you to diagnose some of the main issues your team is facing and prioritise the right steps to take to put your marketing strategy and processes on the right track.

To achieve success in this industry, you need to:

- **Research valuable keywords beyond head terms and deploy a strong keyword strategy for your brand.**
- **Understand what your competition is doing and how you can differentiate your brand from the crowd.**
- **Keep on top of your site's technical health to make sure your customers get the best possible on-site experience.**
- **Create a strong, data-driven story to make the case for more resourcing and budget from your company.**



Every ecommerce fashion brand has different needs, but as you continue to scale and confront bigger challenges, finding the right technology platforms is essential to success. Conductor and DeepCrawl have partnered together to bring ecommerce marketers an all-in-one solution that helps SEOs, content marketers and marketing teams crawl, monitor, strategise and create.

Learn more about the Conductor and DeepCrawl partnership.



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