



The essential UX checklist for ecommerce stores

Introduction

Ecommerce is huge and that doesn't surprise anyone anymore. A side effect of this general awareness, with more people subsequently jumping aboard the bandwagon, is that ecommerce businesses are now finding it increasingly difficult to differentiate themselves. To stand out from the crowd.

Because amidst all the turmoil, hype, trends in technology, and a global pandemic for good measure, the bar was being raised non-stop by customers globally. People are becoming more tech-savvy, and mirror every new shopping experience they indulge in to the best one they've come across so far. That said, people probably don't keep lists of what they like about an online store, but they know something's good when they see it.

So it's up to us to give them the experience they're after.

This checklist is here to help you, your team, and your business to stay woke, find inspiration, and hopefully spark that experimental mindset needed to implement some changes or new features!

What UX is about

We're calling this a UX checklist for the simple reason that we're listing things in here that directly affect the user experience; the way customers perceive your product, and how it makes them think, feel, and act.

Think of user experience (UX) design as a never-ending conquest for relevancy and convenience for the user. You could say it's got to do with how a digital product *looks*, but the way it *feels* seems to cover more ground.

UX also addresses things like accessibility, usability, credibility, desirability, discoverability, and so on. The biggest takeaway, however, should be that it's a user-centric discipline. Designing a user experience without understanding the context, the user's needs and wants, patterns or behavior, doesn't work.



UX in ecommerce

Remember how we mentioned the struggling ecommerce businesses before? The ones that are having a hard time standing out? Well, generally speaking, few businesses have a truly unique product offering. In the sense that, there are other alternatives available on the market that more or less do the same thing, or fulfill a similar need. That might sound like a huge problem, until you realize just how few brands are out there making things nobody else is. Especially in the digital marketplace, you're never really alone. At least, not for long anyway.

So that begs the question: how can I set myself apart from the crowd, then? Price, maybe? We're sad to report that for almost every product out there there's a white-label version available for a fraction of the price. Very few possess the means of mass-production via exploitative labor to compete with that, you know?

So if you can't gain a competitive advantage through price, nor product, what else is there? I know you saw this one coming like ten minutes ago, but yes, it's the user experience.

People love brands that love them back, treats them as human beings, delivers spectacular customer service, is honest and outspoken, and lets users shop in a way that's near frictionless.

Contents

We've divided the checklist into a bunch of broad categories to help you navigate things a bit better. Think of it as improving the user experience of this document. See what we did there?

Brand Image is about the way you are perceived as an entity by your customers and prospects, along with all types of emotions associated with it. Tap into your customer segments and show them how and why you care about them, both as people and customers, specifically.

Convenience is really the backbone of ecommerce and a huge reason why online shopping has boomed so much over the last few years. It can adapt so well to a myriad of needs and wants of different users, but getting to that point is quite the challenge.

Loyalty is about spoiling your already existing customers, rewarding them for using your store, and encouraging them to stick around. Repeat purchases and retention rates are still underrated metrics, even though loyal customers often make up the bulk of the revenue.

Utility is a bit of a miscellaneous category, truth be told. It mostly deals with features that are generally nice to have. Features that improve the overall inclusiveness and accessibility of your website. This covers things like legibility, responsiveness, and guidance.

Marketing in this context doesn't include things like advertising or social media marketing. This is about marketing communications that happen on your store itself, or ones that are triggered by users taking certain actions on your website, like post-purchase emails.

Performance is about speed. A website that takes a second or two too long to load, triggers a sense of immediate frustration with a lot of users. Amazon even figured out that every additional 100 milliseconds of delay cost them 1% in sales.

Brand Image



Showcase your unique selling proposition.

Make the most out of the traffic you already have. Make it crystal clear to visitors why they should buy from you, and make sure this message is visible on your home page, above the fold if possible.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Use high quality product images.

High quality images allow customers to inspect your products in more detail, since they can't observe your product physically. It helps them imagine owning the product. A very worthwhile investment to make.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Display trust badges.

A trust badge is a badge or seal that you place on your website that is meant to instill trust in your potential customers. The most popular ones deal with checkout security, payment options and free shipping and returns.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Display inventory, shipping and return information on product pages.

Online shoppers want to know more than just prices. They also want to know whether the item is in stock right now, how long it would take for it to get delivered to their doorstep, and what their return options are.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Abandonment Rate



Provide extensive, and visible contact information.

Customer service starts with providing as many ways for customers to reach you as possible. Email addresses, phone numbers, your business address... Display this prominently, and also mention how long it takes for you to reply.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Retention Rate



Share your core values.

The pandemic has shown that people like brands that care for them as individuals. Stay true to what you believe in, be vocal about it and show you mean it by taking positive, public action.

GREAT FOR

Customer Lifetime Value

Retention Rate



Offer loyal customers a choice of rewards.

Everyone loves discounts, but depending on your business, donations and support to benevolent organizations or actions for instance, can also trigger people to stick around and claim that reward. Try offering different rewards that fit your brand image.

GREAT FOR

Retention Rate

Average Order Value



Provide a thorough knowledge base or FAQ page.

With many brands, transparency is key when it comes to building trust. Collect the most frequently returning questions, objections or doubts from your customer service department and address them all individually on a dedicated page.

GREAT FOR

Customer Lifetime Value

Conversion Rate



Create product videos.

Users can get a much better idea of your product when video content is available. Especially if you're selling complex or innovative products, a 60-second explainer video can work wonders compared to an endless product sheet.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Offer free trials.

When you're selling products that more or less require repeat purchases or subscriptions, offer a free trial period to lower the threshold for customers to, you know, try it out.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Retention Rate



Offer no-risk returns and let users try your product before buying it.

A great way for you to build trust with first-time shoppers. Furthermore, a free return policy lowers the barrier of entry for new customers. This is also about sending a message to people saying that you trust your customers.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Retention Rate



Offer customer support across channels.

When you establish your channels for contact, let your customers know that you can help them through these channels. Think live chat, social media, or other messaging platforms. Try to be consistent across these channels.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Retention Rate



Be transparent about additional fees and costs.

The biggest reason for cart abandonment has to do with unexpected (additional) shipping costs that suddenly pop up right before entering your payment information. Communicate costs clearly, and timely.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Abandonment Rate



Highlight strides towards corporate responsibility.

Similar to communicating your core values, there's also a recent trend toward more aggressive corporate responsibility. Your customers want to know that your company is making an effort to give back to the community.

GREAT FOR

Customer Lifetime Value

Retention Rate



Offer advice and insights that add value.

You can use your digital marketing channels to do more than just offer coupons and new product information. By providing content that adds value to your customers, you're encouraging brand loyalty.

GREAT FOR

Retention Rate

Real Food.
Real Taste.
Real Nutrition.

A nutritionally complete hot and tasty meal packed with carbs, protein, fats, fiber and all 27 essential vitamins and minerals.

Shop Hot & Savory



Huel®

INSPIRATION

Huel

For something that apparently sparks a lot of controversy, Huel goes out of its way to demonstrate its legitimacy to its customers time and time again. Their mind-boggling amounts of content, references and reviews can attest to that.

Convenience



Display a noticeable search bar.

One of the more effective elements of efficient site navigation is having a prominent search bar on your homepage for your customers to use. Try to avoid immediately surrounding it with different page elements as well.

GREAT FOR

Abandonment Rate

Conversion Rate



Stick to conventional navigation design.

On desktop, lay out your site navigation in your header and have the search bar located in this same area. When it comes to mobile design, most ecommerce platforms resort to using the hamburger menu.

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Conversion Rate



Make top-level categories clickable.

Some websites have top-level navigation items that only trigger a dropdown instead of also linking to a new page. But this can be confusing for website visitors, especially if they have trouble opening the dropdown for some reason.

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Conversion Rate



Implement breadcrumbs.

Breadcrumbs are secondary navigation systems that show a user's location on a website. Similar to the fairytale, the breadcrumbs are for finding your way back home. Use this if you happen to have a lot of subpages or subcategories.

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Conversion Rate

Abandonment Rate



Sync users' shopping carts across devices.

Studies have shown up to 30% of retail ecommerce transaction involve two or more devices. You want your customers to be able to pick up right where they left off in a specific shopping session, no matter how far back in the past.

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Conversion Rate

Abandonment Rate



Allow guests to go to checkout.

Ideally you want every customer to create an account, but that's simply not going to happen. Instead of putting some people off, allow them to proceed to checkout without forcing them to create an account first.

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Abandonment Rate



Offer more delivery options.

If your business allows it, let users choose their shipping method of choice. This can vary from express delivery to local pickup. Appealing to customer's specific needs is the goal here.

GREAT FOR

Retention Rate

Conversion Rate



Provide personalized product suggestions.

Use customers' purchase history and product viewing data to your advantage by offering personalized products they might like as well. This is also a good reason for customers to create an account.

GREAT FOR

Customer Lifetime Value

Average Order Value



Minimize the number of form fields.

Be it during the checkout process, or in contact forms, the less a user has to input the less friction it creates for him or her to complete the action. Customers have also become increasingly wary of their security and privacy as well.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Abandonment Rate



Avoid distractions during checkout.

Do not harass users with deals and coupons at this stage; they've reached the point where they are willing to pay, and your job is to help them reach that objective as fast and convenient as possible.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Abandonment Rate



Apply cross-selling and upselling strategies.

Persuade customers to make a purchase of a higher amount via email or on product pages by showcasing other relevant items, upgrades or product bundles.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Average Order Value

Customer Lifetime Value



Make navigation between cart and store frictionless.

Consumers rarely go from point A to point B in a straight line. A purchasing order often involves a lot of back-tracking, second-guessing and comparing. Let users view their cart without interrupting their browsing experience on your store.

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Abandonment Rate



Ensure customers never have to repeat themselves.

Whether it's when filling out forms, navigating the website, interacting with customer support, customers hate it when they have to repeat themselves, or complete the same action more than once.

GREAT FOR

Retention Rate



Implement a live chat or chatbot.

Quicker response times help improve customer satisfaction and loyalty. It's very convenient and less costly than phone support as customer service representatives can have multiple chats going simultaneously.

GREAT FOR

Retention Rate

Conversion Rate

Abandonment Rate

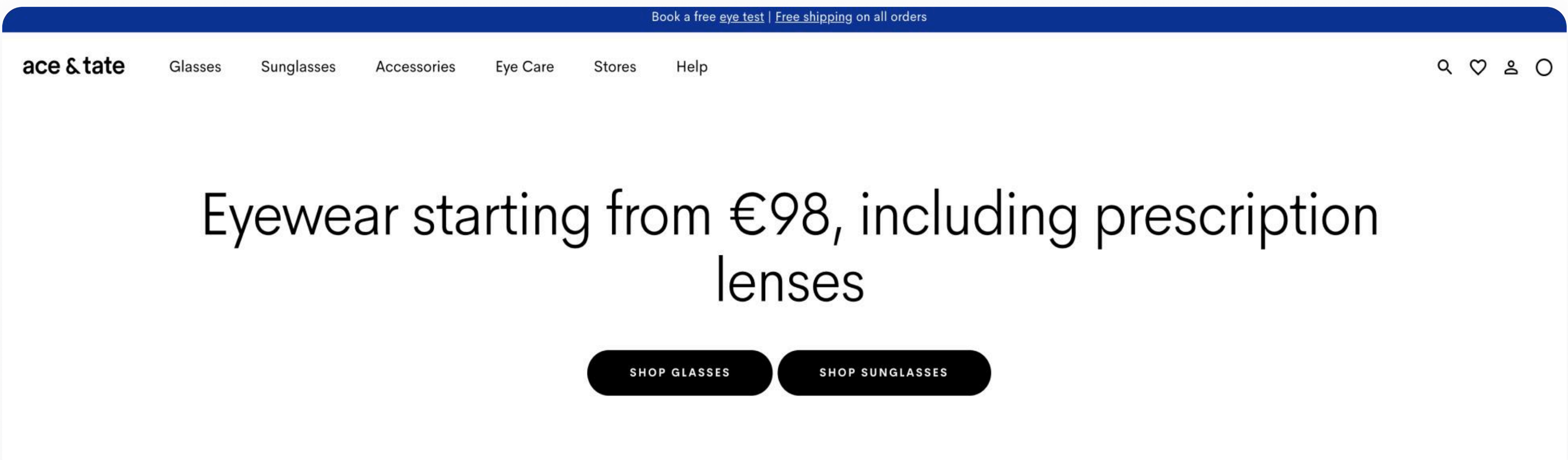


Keep items in the shopping cart visible throughout the checkout process.

Like a progress indicator, including thumbnail images of the products customers have placed into their cart can be another grounding technique that reassures the customer of what they're purchasing.

GREAT FOR

Abandonment Rate



ace & tate

INSPIRATION

Ace & Tate

These guys went to greath lengths to make their shopping experience as convenient as possible. They even went as far as implementing an AR feature allowing customers to try on 3D glasses that are dynamically overlayed.

Loyalty



Display a separate category for new arrivals.

Customers who are becoming more familiar with your brand and are developing an affinity toward your products, will perceive a separate category for your newest products as a sign that you're regularly updating your inventory.

GREAT FOR

Retention Rate

Customer Lifetime Value



Incentivize customer referrals.

Let customers refer a friend via email or social media and reward them afterwards. As a side effect, when customers openly endorse your brand or products, they are more likely to buy from you again. This is called the consistency bias.

GREAT FOR

Retention Rate

Conversion Rate

Customer Lifetime Value



Leverage micro-moments with email marketing.

A well-timed email can nudge customers into making a subsequent purchase at several points in time: immediately after a purchase, once they've gotten full value from their initial purchase, and after a predetermined period of inactivity.

GREAT FOR

Customer Lifetime Value

Retention Rate



Encourage user reviews.

Social proof hugely affects consumer behavior, and user reviews are quintessential to the perceived quality of a product. Encourage or incentivize users to review products they have recently purchased via email or in-store notification.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Run a re-purchase or replenishment program.

Give your customers a reason to re-purchase items or a type of product they've bought in the past. Especially with seasonal products or consumables, retargeting users based on previous purchases helps you stay top-of-mind.

GREAT FOR

Retention Rate

Customer Lifetime Value



Give subscribers early access to new products.

A great way for new potential customers to sign up for your mailing list, and to spark early purchases or pre-orders. A sense of exclusivity, especially when other scarcity tactics are applied, can instil a sense of urgency into your customers.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Email Opt-In



Create quality content to nurture and retain subscribers.

For instance, many small scale ecommerce businesses create zines to inspire readers and celebrate culture. Being more vocal about who your company cares for and what it's passionate about, humanizes your brand.

GREAT FOR

Retention Rate

Email Opt-In



Offer a points-based loyalty program.


Research by Nielsen says 84% of shoppers are more likely to buy from brands with loyalty programs, and tend to spend 12% to 18% more than non-members. The key to a successful loyalty program is to keep it simple and straightforward.

GREAT FOR



Customer Lifetime Value


Average Order Value


Retention Rate



HOND KAT PROBEER NU WINKELPUNTEN ONZE WERELD

ACCOUNT  NL 





INSPIRATION

Edgard & Cooper

One of our own projects we're very proud of. Together, we've created a loyalty hub where customers can claim rewards by collecting points, or "belly rubs" in this case, by making purchases and completing actions on the site.

Utility



Display a progress bar during the checkout process.

A checkout process that's too lengthy or complex is a huge turn-off for customers. This can be alleviated simply by setting your customers' expectations before they even begin the checkout process in a visual manner.

GREAT FOR

Abandonment Rate

Conversion Rate



Provide multiple payment options.

You do not want to lose out on sales because of a payment issue. Especially younger generations have grown increasingly wary of credit cards, making Apple Pay, Google Pay and Paypal worthwhile payment options to have.

GREAT FOR

Abandonment Rate

Conversion Rate



Include a wish list feature.

A wishlist helps reduce the number of users that get lost on their way to check-out, and allows you to keep an eye on what customers want. Furthermore, it's an opportunity for you to retarget people with items stuck on their wish list.

GREAT FOR

Customer Lifetime Value

Average Order Value

Conversion Rate



Allow users to recover from errors.

Especially relevant during the checkout process, let users undo actions or go back to a previous step in the process without having to fear losing their progress. This significantly improves the peace of mind for your customers.

GREAT FOR

Retention Rate

Conversion Rate

Abandonment Rate



Include a clear call to action on checkout and cart pages.

Many sites fail to include this. The logic behind this seems to be rooted in the assumption that when someone has added something to their cart, then they no longer need any incentive to actually buy it. The opposite is true, actually.

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Abandonment Rate



Identify funnel leaks.

Your Google Analytics offers insights into the behavior of your visitors. Rather than making assumptions about what’s going wrong or trying to test various conversion issues, examine the visitor flow and conversion pathways in Google Analytics.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Abandonment Rate

Retention Rate



Review the legibility of your website.

Try to achieve a proper level of contrast between font and background color, do not try to use more than two distinct font families throughout your site, use a large enough font size, and avoid center-aligned text.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Embrace a mobile-first design.

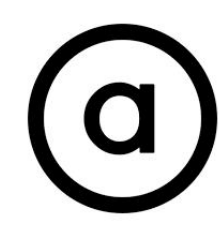
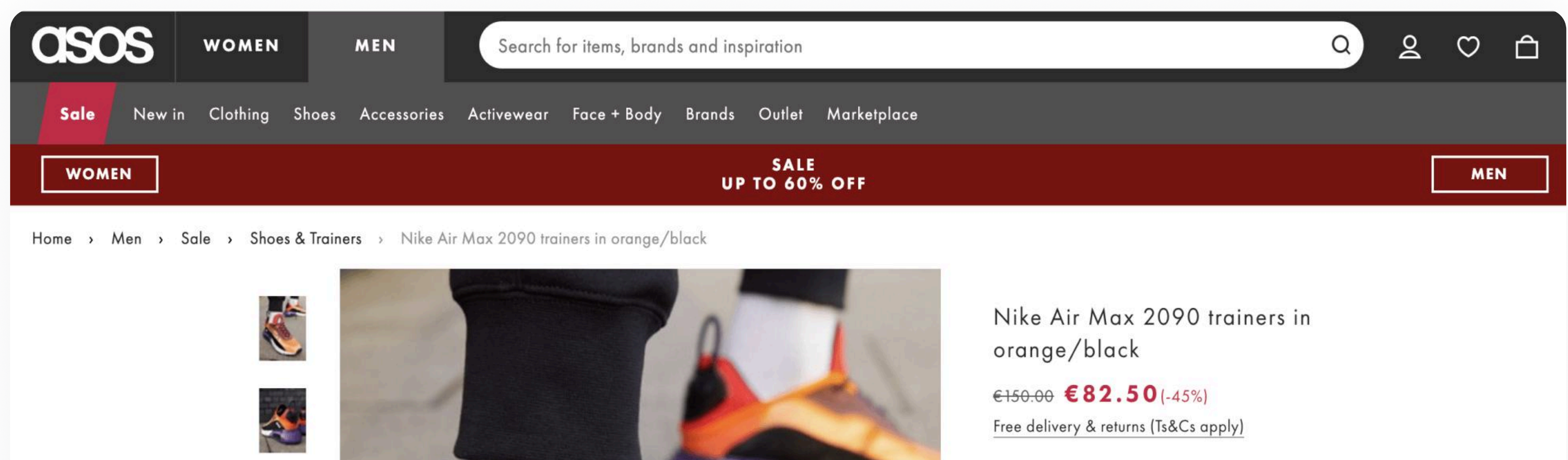
Over 50% of revenu in ecommerce originates from purchases made from mobile devices. With that in mind, if your store does not offer a mobile-friendly version, you're bound to struggle with customer churn forever.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Retention Rate

Customer Lifetime Value



INSPIRATION

ASOS

A gargantuan fashion retailer by any stretch of the imagination. But besides an ever-growing catalog, ASOS really delivers in terms of practicality and ease-of-use. Both on mobile and desktop, browsing is a smooth and full-featured experience.

Marketing



Avoid using sliding carousels.

Auto-forwarding carousels and accordions annoy users, reduce visibility, and is terrible for SEO. Even though it looks kind of cool, users would much rather take their time ingesting the contents of your website.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Always have a form present on your home page.

This has always been the bread and butter of growing an email list; give your customers an easy way to opt-in at any time while they browse your site. This is low-hanging fruit when it comes to growing your mailing list.

GREAT FOR

Email Opt-In



Use incentivizing banners.

This is one of the most common tactics used by almost every large ecommerce store. Offer a one-time discount when people subscribe to your mailing list. Avoid using pop-ups though, as this detracts from the experience.

GREAT FOR

Email Opt-In

Conversion Rate



Implement discount thresholds.

You simply offer a percentage off the individual's total purchase once they spend a certain amount in a single transaction, or you provide free shipping once they do so.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Average Order Value



Provide extensive product information.

You may be losing sales by not thoroughly communicating product specifications and features. Not only does it increase your product's legitimacy, it also makes sure customers don't get frustrated.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Track user behavior on your website.

The penultimate condition required to create personalized shopping experiences. Make sure you can aggregate customer data from form submissions, email interactions, page visits and link clicks to get started.

GREAT FOR

Customer Lifetime Value

Retention Rate



Set up efficient SEO keywords.

Finding the right keywords is the key to rank your ecommerce website. Take the time to do some in-depth keyword research to pick the ones that suit your business. Long-tail keywords can really help you rank high on specific niches.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Leverage seasonality.

Some product offerings are more effective during different times of the year. Some products just need some context in order to be sitting pretty. Use this seasonality of your products to your advantage to create a sense of urgency.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Write compelling product descriptions.

In addition to offering as much information as you can, attention-grabbing descriptions can affect your conversion rate. Avoid using those boring descriptions provided by manufacturers and make them more appealing and Google-friendly.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Optimize URLs for search engine crawls.

Optimized URLs can really help search engines find your website and figure out what it's about. It also helps with website indexation in general. Furthermore, a good URL also informs visitors about what they can expect to see.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Pay special attention to post-purchase emails.

These emails have extremely high open rates, compared to general marketing emails. Take this an an opportunity for cross-selling and promoting genuinely useful content or special offers.

GREAT FOR

Retention Rate

Customer Lifetime Value



Notify users of their abandoned carts.

Probably the most straightforward way of preventing abandoned carts, and that's sending an email to customers who have recently left the store with items still in their cart. Shopify, for instance, does this by default.

GREAT FOR

Abandonment Rate



Ask your customers what their primary interests are.

Similar to when you're logging on to Medium for the first time, ask your customers or prospects (in a non-invasive way) about their preferences, beyond just cookies. Hyper-personalization is only possible when you know what your customers are after as individuals.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

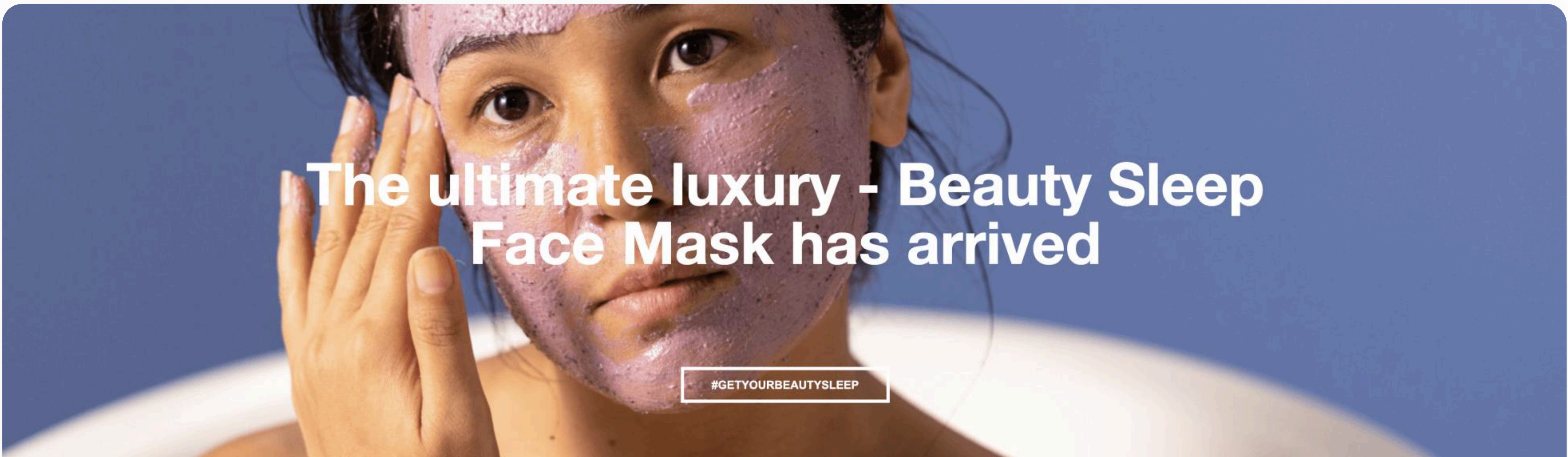


Use strategic SEO keywords in anchor text.

Your website is probably filled with clickable links, but it's a good idea to also include one or more keywords you want to rank for into the anchor text.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



LUSH
FRESH
HANDMADE
COSMETICS

INSPIRATION

Lush

This cosmetics company knows just how powerful seasonality of products is. Lush leverages trending aesthetics, events, and holidays to strengthen their product range.

Performance



Optimize your product images for SEO.

Having great quality product photos is one thing, but extra steps are required for them to become indexed or easy to find for bots. Google Images’ search results can drive a lot of traffic back to your website. Be sure to include alt text.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Run an order gap analysis.

This will help you map the amount of time between consecutive purchase orders to help you determine a calculated marketing strategy. You’ll avoid bombarding your audience unnecessarily, help prevent churn risk, and be more relevant in general.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Minimize HTTP requests.

According to Yahoo, 80% of a web page's load time is spent downloading the different parts of the page, like images, stylesheets, and scripts. With Google Chrome, you can use its Developer Tools to check this out and optimize where possible.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Use asynchronous loading for CSS and JavaScript files.

Scripts like CSS and JavaScript can be loaded synchronously or asynchronously. Loading files asynchronously can speed up your pages because when a browser loads a page, as it doesn't need to wait until a previous element is loaded.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Reduce server response time.

If you’re using a slow DNS, this increases the time it takes for browsers to locate your site. Be sure to evaluate this and move to a faster server if possible. For reference, DNS lookups on average take between 20-120 milliseconds to complete.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Choose the right hosting option for your platform.

Most new site owners choose the cheapest possible option for hosting, but that doesn't scale well. Consider switching from shared hosting to VPS hosting or getting a dedicated server.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate

Abandonment Rate



Consider optimizer plugins.

Tools that can aid with file compression or caching such as Gzip, Cloudfare and WP Rocket can significantly contribute to faster loading times. To give you an idea, WordPress has no built-in caching or resource optimization layers, at all.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Compress your images.

A quick win that yields huge results. In ecommerce, product images and assets can make up 40% or more of the page contents, so addressing file sizes here can make a big difference in loading speeds.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



Consider using a CDN when you're dealing with high traffic.

Too much traffic can overburden the server your website is hosted on, and increase load times for everyone. With a CDN, you can cache your site on a global network of servers, and connecting users are routed to the most nearby server.

GREAT FOR

Conversion Rate



INSPIRATION

B&H Photo Video

If we're talking raw performance in terms of loading times, then you'd be hard-pressed to find an online store that can load such an amount of content faster than B&H Photo Video. They're cutting it as close as .5 seconds in terms of overall load time.

About Nimble

Nimble is a full-service digital product studio. If reading that sentence produced a blank stare on your face, that's okay. Basically what we do is design and build ecommerce stores, mobile health applications, chatbots, web applications and other integrations, all with the intent of creating the best user experience possible. We build stuff for the people, you know? The reason we do this, is because many companies, big and small, lack the internal processes and expertise to properly prioritize challenges, create enough momentum, and focus on early validation. Given the impact of the global pandemic on the economy, we've now shifted our focus towards assisting and growing both healthcare and CPG businesses.

We sincerely hope this checklist was of use to you. If you happen to have any questions or remarks, hit us up at hello@nimblestudio.com.