

ORIGINAL RESEARCH · APPBREW

The Page Nobody Wrote a Word For.

We crawled the collection pages of 20 of the internet's best-known Shopify DTC brands. These are the pages that hold their internal links and absorb their category search traffic. Two out of three shipped with zero words of description.

— BLANK BY DEFAULT

48

famous US Shopify DTC
brands crawled and
platform-verified

65%

of audited collection
pages carry zero words
of description

46%

of the 48 have already
moved to a headless
storefront

WHAT'S INSIDE

Nine short sections. About fifteen minutes.

01	A note on method	Why every number here comes from a real page, not a guess
02	The funnel	48 brands in, 20 survived platform verification
03	The key thesis	Why the collection page matters more than it gets credit for
04	Collection description depth	65% of stores wrote nothing at all
05	Canonical duplication	Where collection links and canonical tags disagree
06	Structured data completeness	How many stores actually help Google understand their pages
07	Key takeaways	What this actually means for a merchant
08	The Shopify SEO checklist	Eight fixes you can hand to a developer this week

A NOTE ON METHOD

Every number here comes from a page we actually opened. Nothing is estimated.



AppBrew Research

Original research · SEO & on-page audits

We started with a list of 48 famous US Shopify DTC brands across six categories and asked one question first: are they even still running a standard Shopify storefront? Verifying that turned out to be most of the work. The answer, on its own, was a finding.

Of the 20 that were, we audited every one on three things we could measure objectively: whether their primary collection page has a written description, whether their collection-to-product links create duplicate-content risk, and whether their pages carry the structured data that helps Google understand them. No sampling, no guessing. If a metric couldn't be read directly from a real HTTP response, we logged it as unmeasurable instead of estimating it.

THE EVIDENCE BASE

48 brands verified, 20 stores fully audited, 0 unmeasurable metrics.
Live crawl, September 2026.

20/20

stores, zero errors

02

48 brands in. Only 20 made it through.

Before we could measure a single SEO metric, every brand had to clear one gate: is this still a standard Shopify storefront, or has it moved to a headless front end that a normal Shopify SEO audit doesn't really apply to? Checking that, brand by brand, turned out to be a finding on its own.

20

confirmed standard-Shopify

Server-rendered Liquid themes we could audit like-for-like: Glossier, OLIPOP, Magic Spoon, Tuft & Needle, Bones Coffee, and 15 others.

22

headless / Hydrogen

46% of the 48, including Gymshark, SKIMS, Rare Beauty, Fenty Beauty, Allbirds, and Bombas, now run a custom React or Next front end on a Shopify backend. We confirmed this with literal markers: `cdn.shopify.com/oxygen-v2/` serving the page's own stylesheet, or `_next/static` chunks sitting alongside a Shopify backend.

From our platform verification pass

2

other platform

MVMT runs on Salesforce Commerce Cloud, confirmed by its own security header. Oatly US isn't on Shopify at all.

3

genuinely unreachable

The Ridge (connection reset on every attempt), Caraway (blocked with an HTTP 403 from both a scripted crawl and a real browser), and Hims/Hers (a Cloudflare CAPTCHA we chose not to bypass). We logged these as unmeasurable instead of guessing.

03



The collection page is the most internally-linked, most category-relevant page on the entire store. And it's the one page *no template forces you to write.*

— APPBREW RESEARCH, ON THE BLANK-BY-DEFAULT PATTERN

Every product page ships with a title and a price. A collection page's description field is empty by default. Nothing in Shopify's setup ever forces a merchant to fill it in.

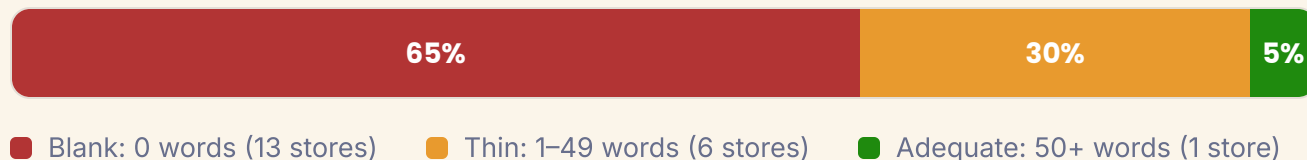
1 of 20

stores wrote 50+ words

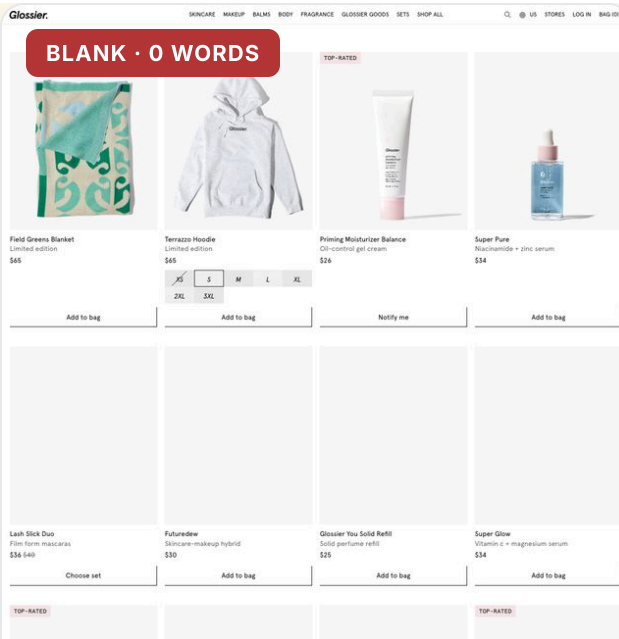
04

Collection description depth

For each store's primary collection page (the first one listed in its own `sitemap_collections` file), we pulled out the store's own written description text, not product titles or prices, and counted the words.



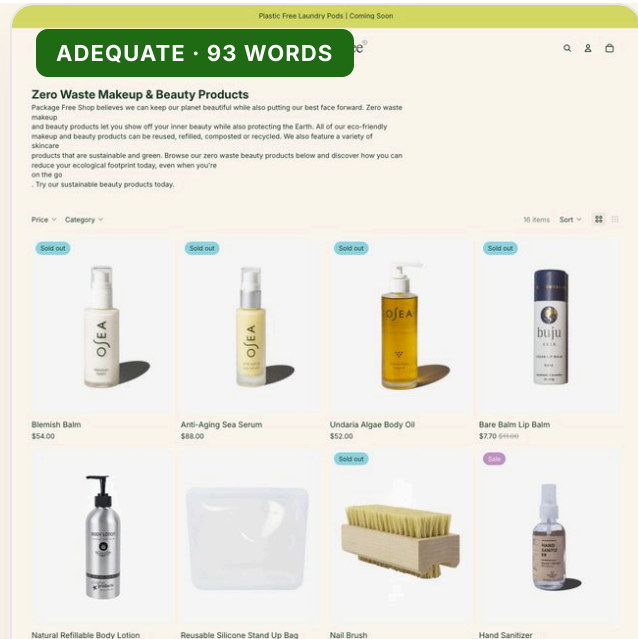
The 71% figure most SEO checklists quote for "thin content" actually understates the problem here. This isn't mostly stores writing a skimpy two sentences. It's **13 of 20 stores shipping a completely empty description field**. We checked every zero-word result by hand against the raw HTML to be sure. The collection page goes straight from the sort and filter bar into the product grid, with nothing in between.



Glossier · Shop All

The nav goes straight into the product grid.
No headline, no description block anywhere
in the raw HTML.

glossier.com/collections/shop-all-2



Package Free · Beauty

The only store in the audit with a real
editorial block above the grid: category
framing plus a natural mention of "zero
waste beauty products."

packagefreeshop.com/collections/beauty

STORE	WORDS	COLLECTION AUDITED
Package Free	93	/collections/beauty
Kosas	35	/collections/shop
BÉIS	12	/collections/accessories
Tuft & Needle	8	/collections/mattress-accessories
Tower 28	6	/collections/all
Native	5	/collections/best-sellers
OLIPOP	2	/collections/drinks

STORE	WORDS	COLLECTION AUDITED
Glossier, Rhode, ILIA, Liquid Death, Magic Spoon, Jeni's, Death Wish Coffee, Our Place, Jones Road, True Classic, Hydrant, Bones Coffee, Branch Furniture	0	13 stores, no description block found

Every store's word count was verified by hand against the raw page, not just the automated count.

THE NUMBER THAT SHOULD
WORRY A MERCHANT

65%

of the audited stores have a page that ranks, gets linked internally from every product on the shelf, and says nothing to Google or a shopper about the category at all.

05

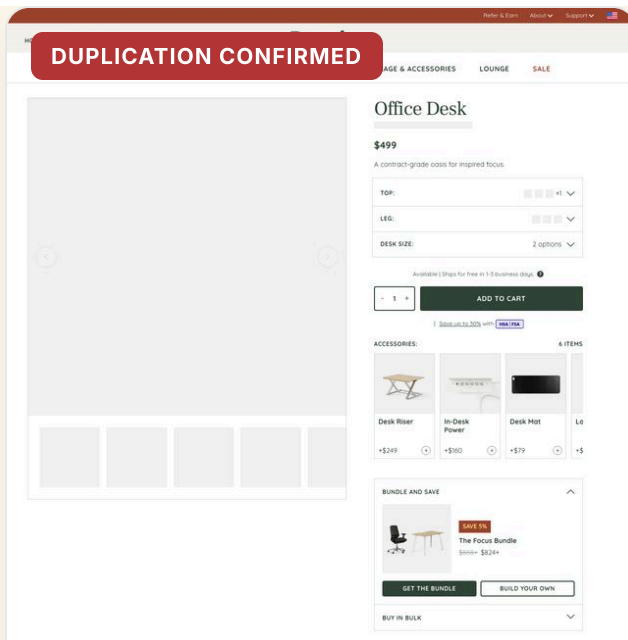
Collection-to-product canonical duplication

Shopify can serve the same product at two URLs: a clean `/products/handle` and a collection-scoped `/collections/x/products/handle`. That's fine, as long as the page's own canonical tag consistently points to one of them. We checked whether each store links to the collection-scoped URL, then read the canonical tag on that exact page.

STORES WITH A REAL
DUPLICATION RISK

2 / 20

That's 10%. A real finding, but a contained one. The other 18 stores either don't link the collection-scoped URL at all, or point its canonical back to itself correctly.



Branch Furniture • Office Desk

Linked from the collection at `/collections/essentials/products/office-desk`, but its own canonical tag points to the bare `/products/office-desk` instead. That's the exact split-signal pattern that confuses search engines.

TRUE CLASSIC, RAW CANONICAL TAG

Product URL checked:
`/collections/v-neck-tees/products/black-v-neck-tee`

Canonical tag:
`<link href="/products/black-v-neck-tee" rel="canonical">`

Duplication pattern present:
True

True Classic • Black V-Neck Tee

Same pattern here. The store links the collection-scoped URL everywhere in its own product grid, then canonicalizes away from it.

This isn't a catastrophic finding on its own. Google usually resolves it correctly anyway. But it's a free fix that both stores are leaving on the table. Point every internal link straight at the canonical URL and the ambiguity disappears completely.

06

Structured data completeness

We parsed every `application/ld+json` block on one product page and one collection page per store, and checked for the schema types that power rich results in search.

Product schema

65%

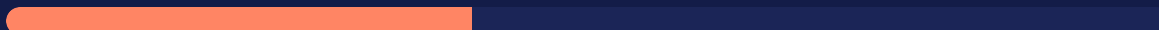
- 7 of 20 product pages carry no Product schema at all, not even name and price.

Organization schema

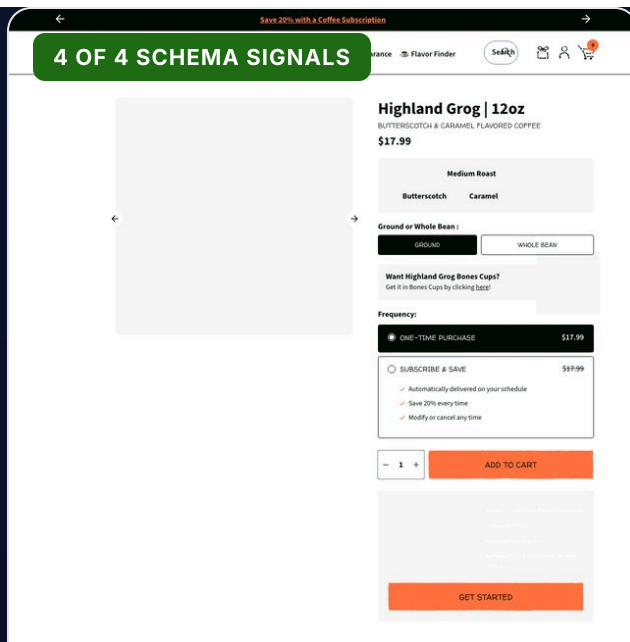
50%

- Half the stores give search engines no machine-readable brand entity to attach results to.

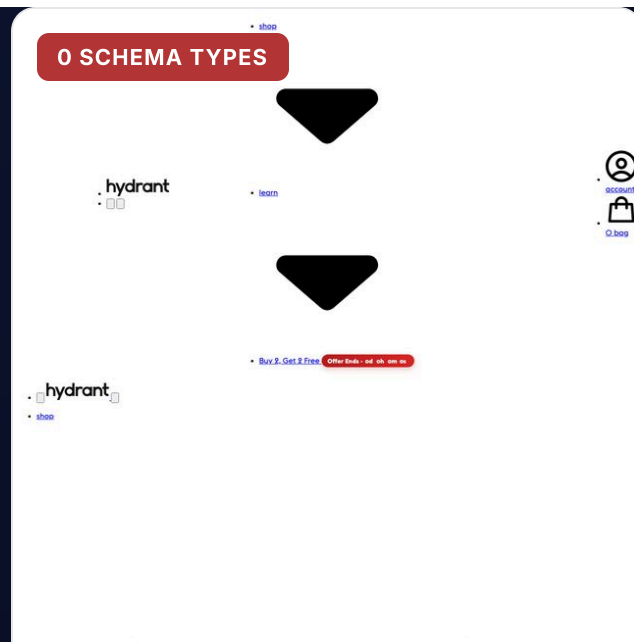
Breadcrumb schema

40%

- The weakest of the three. 12 of 20 stores show no breadcrumb trail to search engines.



The only store to clear all four checks. Product, ProductGroup, BreadcrumbList, and Organization types all show up in the raw JSON-LD, with review ratings embedded through aggregateRating.



No application/ld+json block of any kind on the product page. We confirmed this with a direct parse of the raw HTML.

One thing worth flagging: review schema showed up on 55% of stores, higher than Organization or Breadcrumb. But it's almost always injected automatically by a third-party review app like Judge.me, Loox, or Yotpo, not written by the merchant. It's real and it counts, but it isn't proof of deliberate SEO effort the way the other three are.

07

Key takeaways

TAKEAWAY 01

Being a famous, well-funded DTC brand doesn't mean a store takes care of its collection pages. Glossier and Liquid Death score exactly the same as much smaller stores here: zero words.

TAKEAWAY 02

Nearly half of this list has already moved to headless commerce. Any SEO checklist built only for standard Liquid themes quietly stops applying to the biggest brands in the category.

TAKEAWAY 03

The fixes here are cheap: write the description, fix the canonical, add the schema. The gap isn't technical difficulty. It's that nothing in Shopify's default flow ever asks a merchant to close it.

08

The Shopify collection page SEO checklist

Eight fixes pulled straight from what we found. None of them need a re-platform. Most of them are an afternoon of work for a developer who already knows your theme.

1

Write a real collection description

Aim for at least 50 words, placed above the product grid, in plain language about what's actually in this category.

2

Write it for a person, not a crawler

Explain the category the way you'd describe it to a shopper standing in front of you. Don't stuff it with keywords.

3

Check your primary collection specifically

The one your own sitemap lists first, or the one your main nav actually points to. A rich "Sale" page doesn't help if your real category pages are blank.

4

Link straight to the canonical product URL

If your product's canonical tag says `/products/handle`, don't link to it from a collection as `/collections/x/products/handle` anywhere in your theme.

5

Add Product schema to every product page

At minimum: name, price, and availability, marked up as `application/ld+json`.

6

Add Organization schema sitewide

Your brand name, logo, and social profiles, so search engines have a machine-readable entity to attach results to.

7

Add BreadcrumbList schema

A simple category trail (Home > Category > Product) that search engines can read and show in results.

8

Recheck everything after a theme change

A new theme or app install can quietly drop your schema or reset your canonical logic. Re-run this checklist any time your storefront changes.

09

HOW THIS WAS BUILT

Public-web crawling only. No APIs, no estimates, no sampling.

CRAWL ETIQUETTE

Single-threaded, one request at a time per domain, a real browser user-agent, a delay between requests, robots.txt checked before every fetch, and failures retried twice with backoff before being logged.

COLLECTION PAGE SELECTED

The first collection listed in the store's own sitemap file, with the exact URL and selection method recorded per store.

PLATFORM VERIFICATION

We checked for `cdn.shopify.com` and `.myshopify.com` references, `/cart.js` JSON validity, a Shopify-format sitemap, and Hydrogen or Next.js markers, then classified each store as standard-shopify, headless, other-platform, or uncertain.

MARKET CONTROL

Every fetch was checked against each store's own `Shopify.country` flag to confirm US-market content, after an early pass turned up an unwanted geo-redirect.

THE 20 AUDITED STORES

Glossier	Beauty	Magic Spoon	Food/Bev
Rhode	Beauty	Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams	Food/Bev
Kosas	Beauty	Death Wish Coffee	Food/Bev
ILIA Beauty	Beauty	Bones Coffee	Food/Bev
Tower 28	Beauty	Our Place	Home
Jones Road Beauty	Beauty	Tuft & Needle	Home
OLIPOP	Food/Bev	Branch Furniture	Home
Liquid Death	Food/Bev	Package Free	Home

BÉIS

EDC

True Classic

Apparel

Native

EDC

Hydrant

Health

BEFORE YOU GO

Your collection pages are worth five minutes of checking.

Open your own store's main collection page right now. Is there a real description above the grid? Does your product schema show up when you view the page source? Most of what we found here takes less time to fix than it took to find.

AppBrew Research

Original research, live crawl, September 2026

appbrew.tech

Sources: a direct HTTP crawl of each brand's own storefront, September 2026. No third-party SEO APIs were used, and robots.txt was honored throughout. Full method in the Methodology section above.