

AI Sparks

Cutting through the AI hype with one clear insight each week

Could a Higher Conversion Rate Be Bad for Growth?

For years, one of the guiding principles of eCommerce has been simple: eliminate friction. Fewer clicks, shorter forms, faster checkout, and increasingly, AI-powered experiences that anticipate what customers want. And the results are typically measured through one familiar metric: conversion rate.

But here's a question worth considering. What if some friction is actually good for the customer?

Think about a shopper buying skincare products who is asked about skin sensitivity. Or someone purchasing expensive furniture who is encouraged to double-check dimensions before checkout. Both experiences introduce friction and may slow down the purchase process. Yet both could also help prevent a costly mistake.

Perhaps we've been overlooking an important distinction: friction that obstructs a decision versus friction that improves a decision. This distinction becomes particularly interesting in the age of AI. Instead of simply removing every obstacle, AI could help identify when a shopper would benefit from additional information, a thoughtful question, or even a moment to reconsider.

Of course, unnecessary friction should still be eliminated. But the goal should perhaps shift from creating the fastest possible path to purchase to creating the most helpful path to the right purchase. And that raises a bigger question: if conversion rates improve while returns, dissatisfaction, or buyer's remorse increase, are you really optimizing for growth?



Your spark for the week:

Not all friction is bad. As AI transforms customer experiences, the next frontier of conversion optimization may be knowing which friction to remove and which friction to preserve.

NetElixir is an AI-First digital marketing agency helping leading eCommerce brands unlock profitable growth through data, experimentation, and innovation.