

5 *Strategies*



FOR INCREASING
ECOMMERCE
CONVERSIONS

W A L K W E S T

"Come gather 'round, people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters
Around you have grown"

Bob Dylan

Introduction

The times they are a changing. Covid-19 has indefinitely altered commerce globally. As small businesses across America grapple with in-person shopping restrictions, more and more consumers seek to buy goods online. "Brick and mortar" stores have begun to be replaced by "point and click."

Suddenly, shops all over the world have found themselves neck deep in something that had simply been a side item for so long: eCommerce.

eCommerce isn't new. [Book Stacks Unlimited](#), the first online shopping site, was created in 1992, followed shortly by Amazon and a host of others. Over the nearly 30 years since, we've seen eCommerce develop into an industry that created \$600 billion in revenue in 2019.¹ According to a [Digital Commerce 360](#) analysis of US Department of Commerce data, eCommerce sales are up 30% year over year in 2020.

It is more important than ever to compete in eCommerce and the most effective way to do so is to offer a better user experience.

User Experience (UX) design—the process design teams use to create products that provide meaningful and relevant experiences to users—has grown exponentially over the last decade as more and more companies recognize its importance to and impact on their bottom line. An [IBM study](#) found that the ROI of good UX design ranged from 10x to as much as 100x.²

Studies have routinely shown that investment in design correlates with revenue growth. [McKinsey and Company found](#) that the companies at the top of their Design Index averaged 10% revenue growth vs just 3-6% for the industry average. These results held true across medical technologies, retail banking, and consumer goods. Logically, this connects. When you invest in specialists to focus on increasing conversions, you would expect that revenue would grow as a result.

UX Design isn't entirely about conversions, it is also about creating enjoyable experiences that build trust and confidence in your customers and their experience with your brand.

“If you think good design is expensive, you should look at the cost of bad design.”

Dr. Ralf Speth

70%

of customers abandon purchases because of bad user experience.

67%

of customers claim unpleasant experiences as a reason for churn.

91%

of non-complainers just leave and 13% of them tell 15 or more people about their bad experience.

Companies lose

\$62 Billion

every year due to poor customer service.

Many companies are blind to the costs of bad design because it's not always explicit. Bad design is represented by the gap of your actual gains and the potential gains you would have with better design.

In many cases, a bad experience doesn't just cost you that person's business, **but their network's as well.**

62%

of customers say they share bad experiences with others.

79%

of people who don't like what they find on one site, will go search on another site.³

Slow-loading websites cost retailers more than

\$2 B in lost sales

each year.



Of course, hiring a team of UX designers to tweak and enhance your eCommerce store might not be an option for you. Like many businesses right now, you may be operating on a shoestring budget with increasingly narrow margins, and just trying to survive until things return to normal.

Maybe you're like me and think there will be a massive "Shop Local" bounce back post-Covid to save local businesses. You still need to survive until that day.

In this white paper, five strategies will be outlined that, when implemented, will help anyone increase conversions on their eCommerce website. We'll walk through examples of UX mistakes as well as those companies that are doing it well.

Content UX

Before entering the UX field, I studied to be a journalist. The principles of storytelling in journalism also apply to content strategy on digital platforms. It all centers around the Inverted Pyramid.

The next time you read a newspaper column, examine the structure of information more closely. The Inverted Pyramid method of content writing prioritizes the most important information within the first paragraph and uses the remainder of the column to disperse additional details to fill in the gaps. This was designed to allow readers to skim and consume more news, more quickly.

Web design should be treated no differently. Back in 2014, [Time Magazine found](#) that 55% of users spend less than 15 seconds on a webpage.⁴ Let's be real, it's not like our attention spans have gotten longer in the 6 years since.

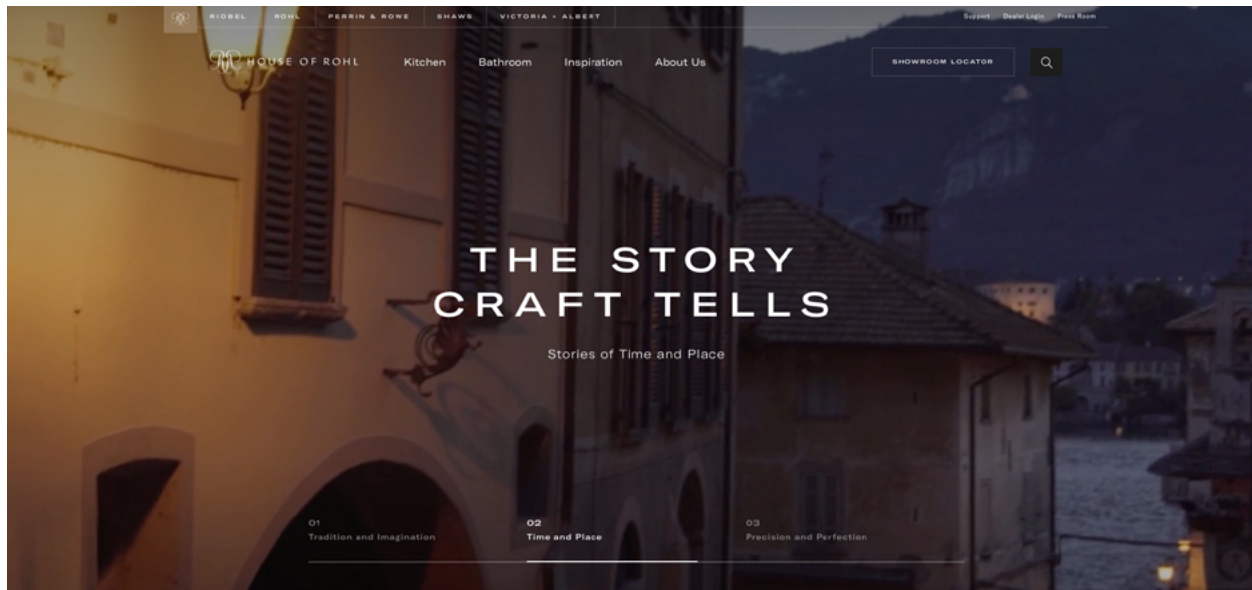
This narrow window places a premium on quality content and visuals. Using the Inverted Pyramid method, it's imperative to lead your website with eye-catching content that is quickly read and, most importantly, understood. This hero section should clearly communicate the What: what is your business and what do you offer.

As the user moves down the page, start to answer the other questions: How, Why, and Who. This supplemental information should act as validation and reinforcement of your hero statement.

For eCommerce stores specifically, users of established brands have come to expect that hero statements promote sales or new products. If you don't work for a well known brand, leading with a statement that succinctly establishes who you are and what your brand offers is imperative. In this case, following immediately after with product offerings helps clearly establish your brand identity for new users.

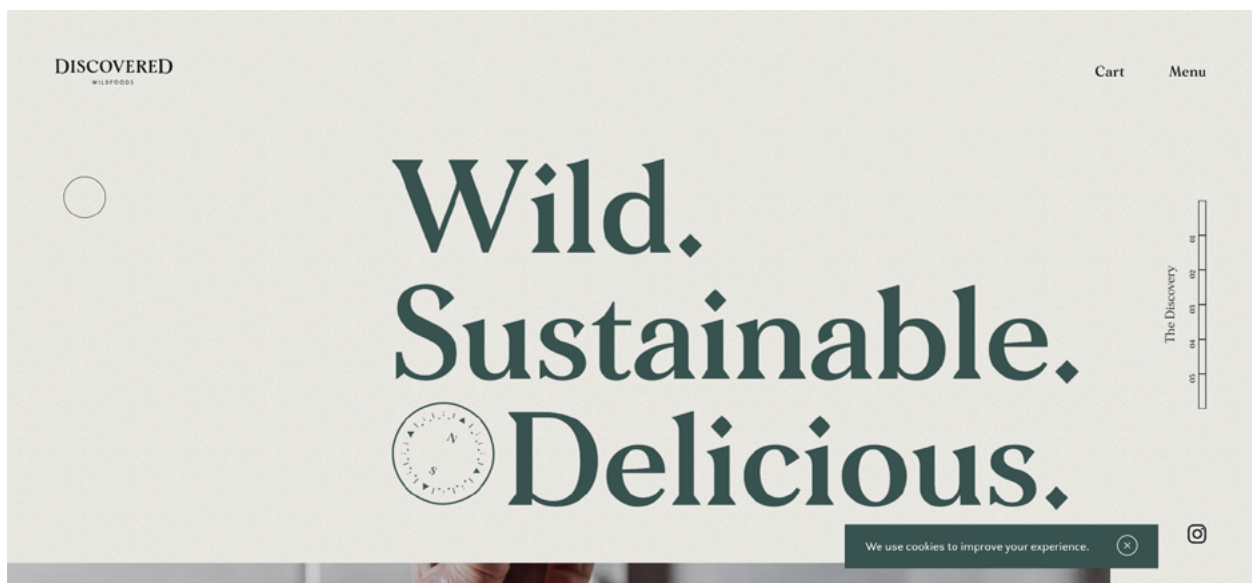
BAD EXAMPLE

House of Rohl has an aesthetically pleasing website; however, their messaging is vague and confusing. It's not immediately clear what products they offer or services they perform. Their website is definitely a brand play but this isn't going to lead to eCommerce conversions.



GOOD EXAMPLE

On the other hand, Discovered Wildfoods hits you right over the head with their brand statement. Three key words communicate their identity quickly, with enough lead to entice the user to scroll down and find out more. Not only is the site beautiful, but it is quite easy to understand what they offer and what they stand for.



Homepage UX

I love cheesecake.

So when I was about 13 and my parents told me about an entire factory that produced cheesecake, I told them that was my heaven. I thought I had won the lottery when they told me we were going there for my birthday dinner. Boy, was that a disappointment.

Not only were there NOT conveyor belts churning out a cornucopia of cheesecake flavors but their menu was impossible. The Cheesecake Factory has a famously long and complex menu, designed to give users a wide range of choices. To some, this flexibility of options is nice. To many, it is analysis paralysis.

Many website home pages suffer from the same issue.

When users visit a home page, their goal is quite often to get an overview of who you are and what you offer. This is where companies fall into a classic trap. I have found many clients that feel if they don't present everything they want their user to do or see on the home page, then they will never find it.

They tend to ask questions like "Can we add a few more products to this section?" or "Can we include all of our news and events into this panel?" My response is always the same:

You can but you shouldn't.

[In a recent study by the Nielsen Norman Group](#), one user thought that Urban Outfitters content blocks were an endless parade of ads. Another user thought that NutriLiving's homepage was too cluttered:

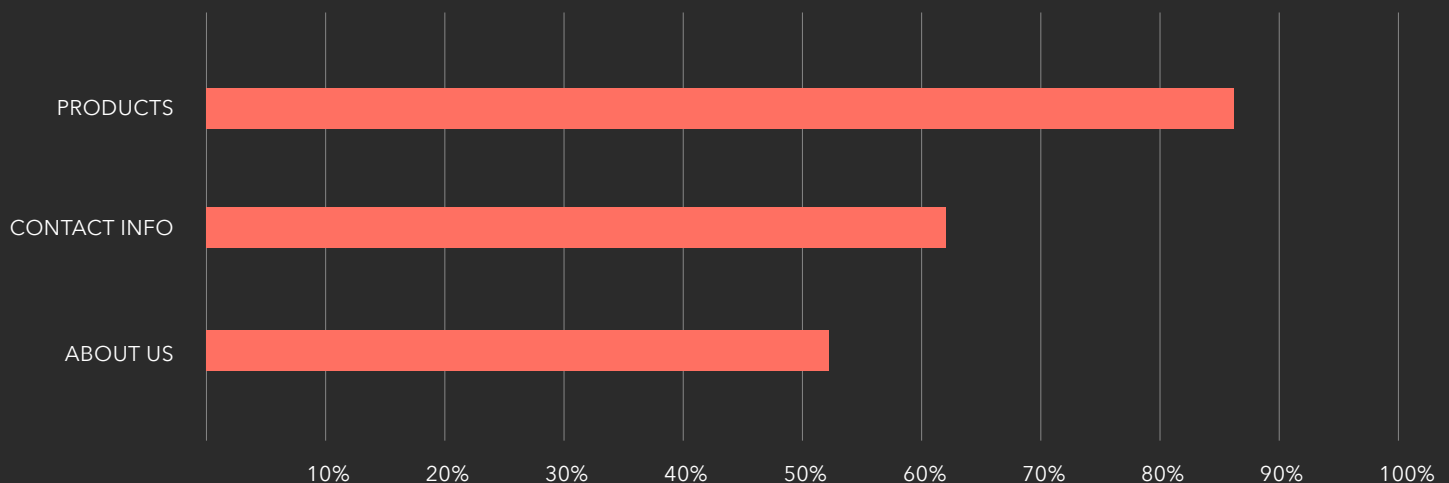
"I didn't like that right as you get to the start of this page; it's basically just ads down here at the bottom. It looks really cluttered. It just seems like ads more than anything. It doesn't seem well organized. It seems like everyone just kind of threw stuff on here and just didn't really care how it looked or the overall feel of it."

Therein lies the crux of the issue. **If you want everything to stand out on your homepage, nothing will.** The goal is to carefully select highlights to present to the user so they can get a taste of your brand identity and what you offer. Lean on your simplistic navigation to enable the user to browse through the sections that interest them.

If you find that users aren't navigating beyond the homepage, the issue is rarely that you don't have enough on the page, but rather what you do have isn't interesting enough to hook users in.

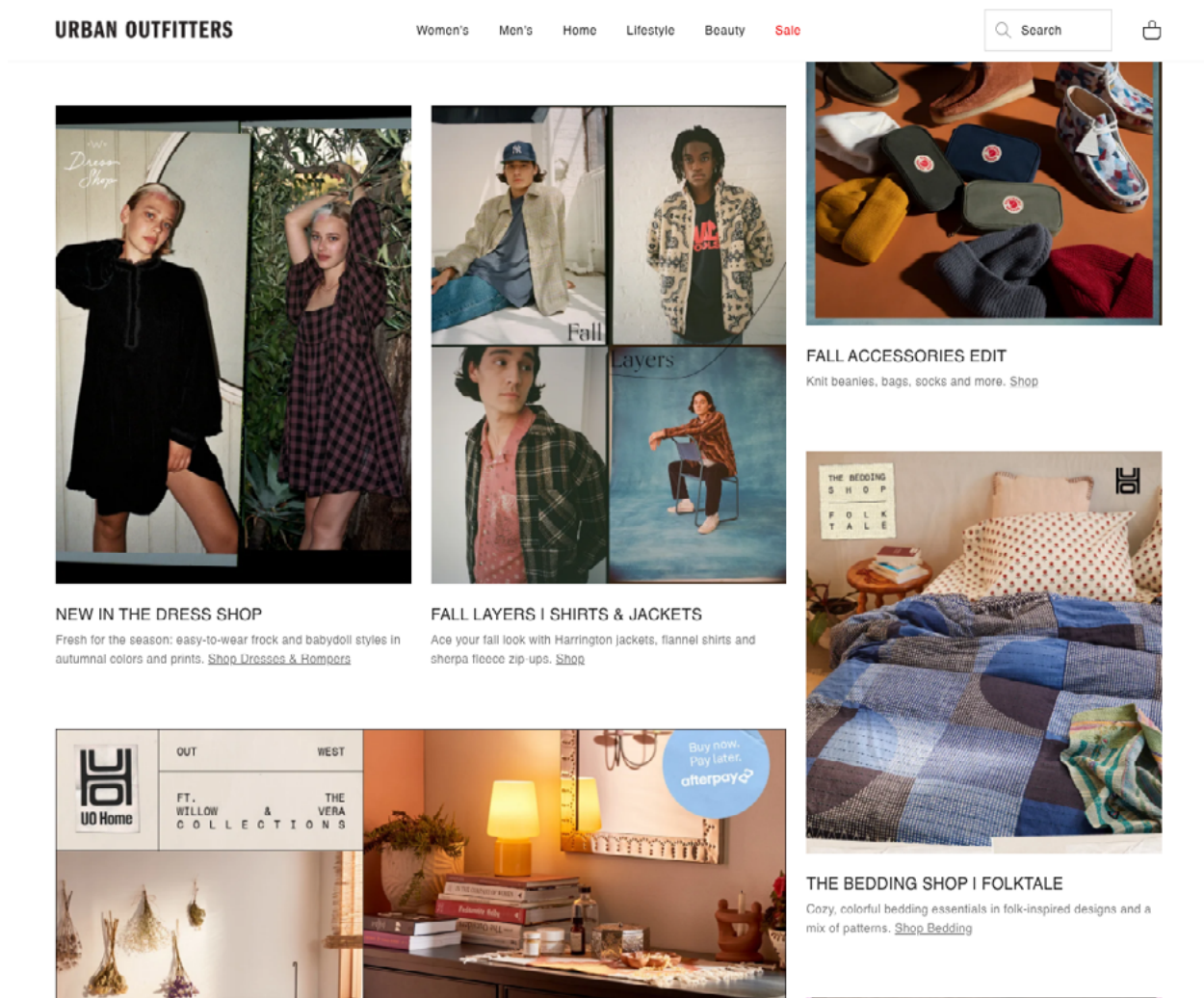
After landing on a homepage, **86%** of users want to see information about products and services, while **62%** are interested in contact information, and **52%** are looking for the "about us" section.⁵

What Users Seek on Home Pages



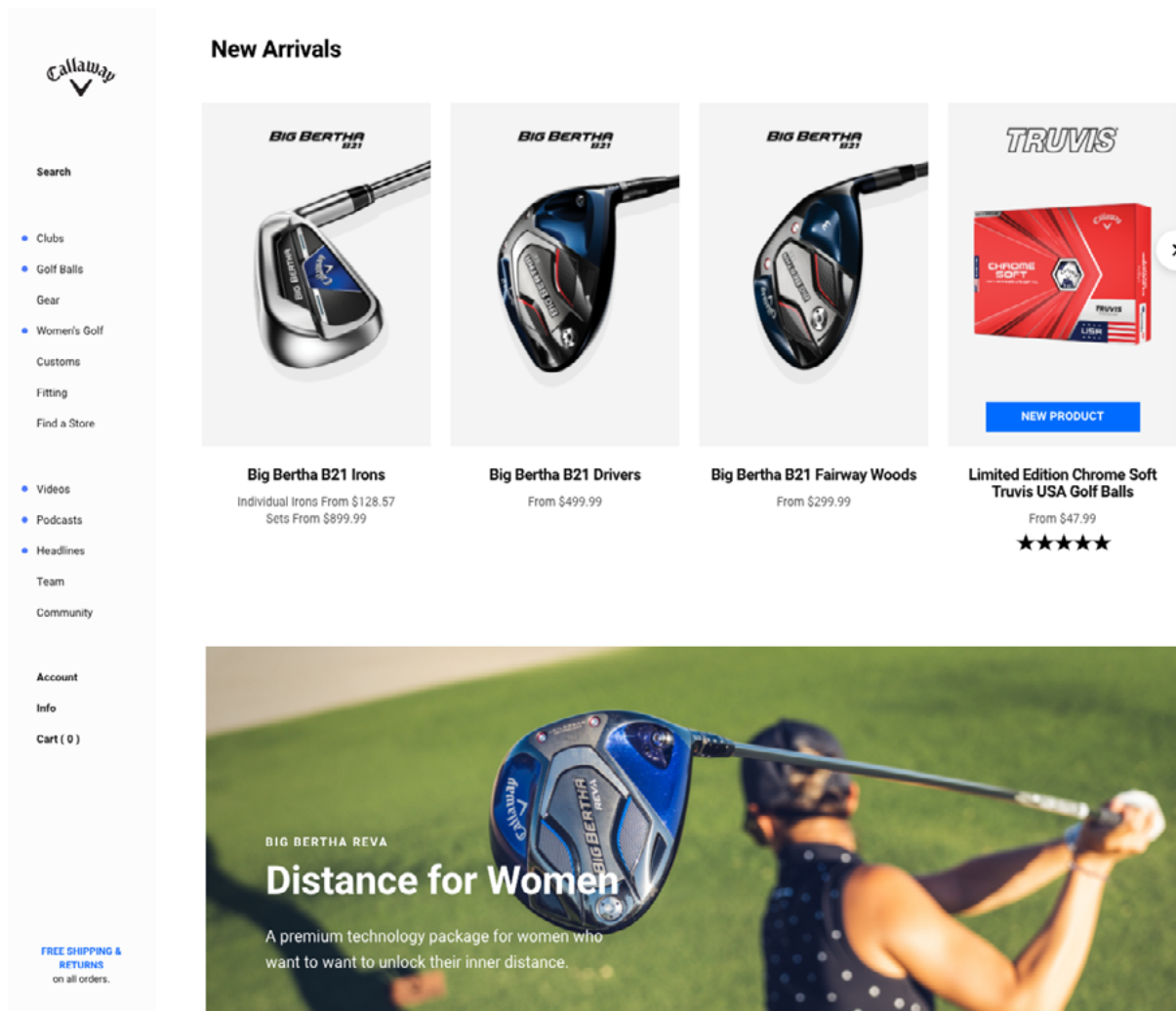
BAD EXAMPLE

The aforementioned [Urban Outfitters](#) might be able to get away with poorer UX practices because they cater to younger, more internet adept users but not everyone can. In the screenshot below you can see that it leans into a masonry grid. Even though it's perfectly mobile responsive, the desktop version throws a ton at you, without clear organization or segmentation. Bedding mixed with dresses mixed with bathroom accessories. The asymmetry is probably the point. They're Urban Outfitters...they're rebels...they do things differently...but it makes browsing much more difficult. When you try and show your users everything, you show them nothing that stands out.



GOOD EXAMPLE

[Callaway](#) has a beautifully revamped homepage that does a wonderful job of leveraging white space and larger blocks to highlight key products. In addition to a side navigation bar that enables a clean vertical scroll, they have segmented panels clearly, alternating between lifestyle imagery and product shots. This shows the user what's new and important versus standard product options.



Product Page UX

Basketball is king in North Carolina.

Growing up, I'd practice last-second, game-winning jumpers in my driveway until the sun totally faded. When choosing a basketball hero in this state, almost everyone gravitated toward Michael Jordan. The Wilmington native starred at UNC before becoming the greatest player to ever live.

I was more of a Tim Duncan guy.

Duncan a.k.a. The Big Fundamental was a soft spoken giant who would sooner aim for the backboard than posterize a poor defender. Born in the US Virgin Islands, Duncan grew up as a swimmer, but switched to basketball after being discovered by an American coach.

Without any knowledge of the sport, he focused on the fundamental skills of the sport in training: footwork, positioning, shot placement, all of the nitty gritty details. He simply didn't grow up marveling athletic wonders and trying to emulate them.

When designing your product page, **think Duncan and not Jordan.**

The fundamentals of a product page are absolutely imperative. Over the last 30 years of online shopping, we have developed expectations for the user experience. Nine times out of ten, the product image is on the left, information framed to the right with a title, short description, size or color options, a quantity field, and an add to cart button.

Some companies get themselves into trouble by trying to reinvent this classic layout, often failing or limiting their sales.

Poorly designed product pages have two results. Either the user can't determine if the product fits their needs and abandons their purchase or the user buys the product on assumptions and ends up dissatisfied and returning the product.

Arm your customers with all the information they want and they won't blame you, increasing the chance that if a product doesn't fit their needs, they'll still come back.

The Big Fundamentals

Here are the primary elements every product page should have:

1

Large images with the option to zoom in and examine details

2

Additional angles of the product

3

Clear and descriptive product title and information

4

Price (including clear understanding of additional charges)

5

Product specifications like shoe size or jacket color

6

Clear labeling of product availability

7

Clear Add to Cart or Checkout buttons

8

Customer or expert ratings and reviews

Get these elements correct and you'll be making sales, like a Tim Duncan bank shot, with methodical ease.

Imagery

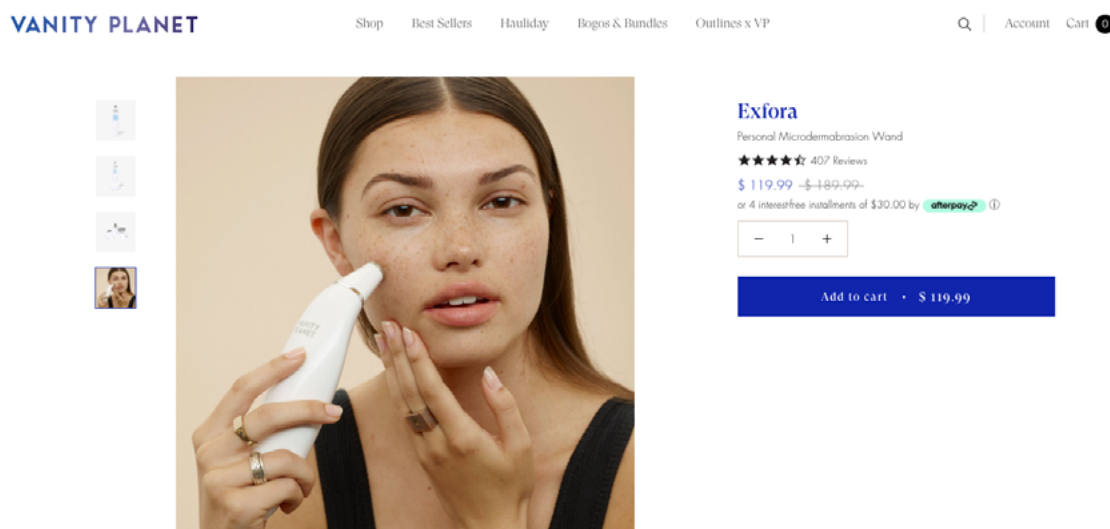
Humans process imagery roughly **60,000x** faster than text and **90%** of information transmitted to the brain is visual.⁶

Imagine NOT caring about your product imagery now.

What separates good product imagery from the bad is size, context, and function. Nielsen Norman Group found that their test subjects wanted to be able to quickly identify product details without having to dive too far into the product pages. Designing a page they could easily scan allowed users to find products they actually wanted, resulting in a raised purchasing rate.

Context is critical for purchases, especially for new users. Yeti created a visual tool on their product pages that allows you to see their coolers in the back of trucks or set up for camping, to help better visualize the look and feel of your potential purchase. When left to just static images, all of their coolers look similar against a generic background. However, when put into context, it becomes much clearer what differentiates their low-end product from the high-end.

We'll touch on video content and how best to leverage that a little later on. However, it's important to note here that including product videos that show how to operate or assemble the product are preferred overwhelmingly by users. VanityPlanet.com started incorporating GIFs to quickly show how to use some of their products, giving users a snapshot of the product's functionality.



VISUAL CONTEXT EXAMPLE

YETI

COOLERS

DRINKWARE

BAGS

GEAR

CUSTOM

THIS IS YETI

CORPORATE SALES

NEW ARRIVALS

SEARCH

CART 0

CHOOSE YOUR TUNDRA SIZE

75

105

110

19 7/8
TALL

30 7/8
WIDE

19 3/4
DEEP

TUNDRA HAUL HARD COOLER

WHITE

\$399.99

IN STOCK

ADD TO CART

Starting at \$36/month. [Learn More.](#)

USA / EN

FREE GROUND SHIPPING. [SEE DETAILS.](#)

SITE MAP

SHOP LOCAL

SIGN IN

YETI

COOLERS

DRINKWARE

BAGS

GEAR

CUSTOM

THIS IS YETI


CORPORATE SALES


NEW ARRIVALS


SEARCH


CART 0


↑












↓



♥

TUNDRA HAUL HARD COOLER

★★★★★ 4.7/5 (1849)

YETI Nation spoke and we listened. Our first-ever YETI cooler on wheels is the answer to taking Tundra's® legendary toughness and unmatched insulation power the extra mile. And nothing was sacrificed in the making of this cold-holding powerhouse, ensuring the Tundra Haul® lives up to the Tundra name. The Tundra® Haul® is now the toughest cooler on two wheels.

To customize this cooler with a **collegiate** or **MLB**™ logo, [click here.](#)

Note: Tundra Haul is not compatible with the dry goods basket or divider.

WHITE

\$399.99

IN STOCK

-

01

+

ADD TO CART

COMPATIBLE ACCESSORIES

WALKWEST

5 STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING ECOMMERCE CONVERSIONS

14

Rating and Reviews

For new stores, you may not have enough ratings or reviews to feature. A single 3-star rating might be more detrimental to you than simply omitting reviews entirely. However, studies show that recommendations are the surest path to sales.

The importance here is both quantitative and qualitative. Users want to see an overall number that they can quickly scan to judge quality, but they also want to see the feedback from other users about the product. This adds considerable value in a few ways.

First, reviews give users confidence that the product they are purchasing is going to fit their needs. While a high rating acts as a natural filter, the qualitative feedback allows users to make a final decision between their final group of options.

Second, it verifies information presented in the description. If a pair of jeans is listed as slim fitting in the description but all of the reviews say they are actually quite baggy, it damages the credibility of the site.

Which brings us to the final advantage: **negative reviews**. Though it seems on the surface to be problematic, users tend to place more credibility and trust in sites that have negative reviews posted alongside the positive ones because it shows the company is transparent. As long as the positive reviews outweigh the negative considerably, it can act as a boost for store credibility.



There are no wolves in the movie -_-,

6 May 2016

By [Shiva P.](#)

This review is from: The Wolf of Wall Street (Blu-ray)

There were no wolves in the movie -_-

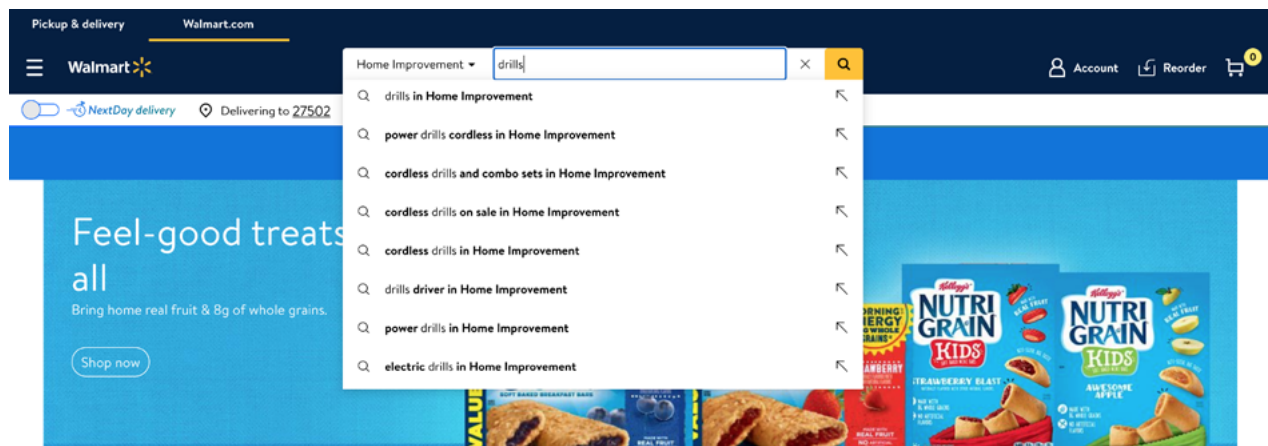
Search

It's search, come on.

Impressing upon you the importance of search in 2020 shouldn't be difficult. Google was valued at over \$320 billion in 2020.⁷ Putting that number into perspective, if they lost one dollar every minute it would take them 614,346 YEARS to go broke.

Search has become our default way of navigating the internet. Because of this prominent user experience, we tend to expect eCommerce sites to offer a similarly simple search experience on their store.

EXAMPLE



10 Principles for eCommerce Searching Capabilities

VISIBILITY

It is imperative that the search box is incorporated into the main navigation, stands out against the rest of the menu items, includes a magnifying glass icon, and accessible from any page on your site.

REVIEW SEARCH TERMS

Keep an eye on what terms your users are using to search. This could tell you what items are trending or which ones are difficult to find through browsing. This could indicate ways to improve your navigational structure as well as inform marketing efforts.

ACCEPT COMMON SYNONYMS

Searching for “women’s purse” or “women’s bag” on your boutique site should return very similar if not identical results.

CATEGORY RESULTS

Consider giving special treatment to category pages vs product pages. If a user searches “Golf” it’s better to offer them a main Golf category page first with golfing products as secondary results.

SCOPED SEARCH

Large sites like Amazon or Wal-Mart allow a user to search within a specific department like Automotive or Jewelry. If you have a site with a wide range of categories, consider this option to allow for refined searching.

ENTER KEY

Small but simple. Users prefer to search by typing and hitting Enter because it’s a quick and fluid motion. Enable the Enter key to initiate the search on all of your search fields.

ACCOMMODATE MISSPELLINGS

When you search for “Niek” in Google it will return results for the correctly spelled “Nike” with an option to return to a search for the original term. A closest word match algorithm will prevent users from running multiple searches.

MULTI-WORD SEARCHES

When a user searches for a “gold watch” they expect to see all results that match both words displayed first. If you serve them all things gold, they’ll think you don’t have watches. If you serve them all watches, they’ll think you don’t have gold ones.

SUGGESTED SEARCH TERMS

Popularized by Amazon and Google, the type ahead drop down that shows terms matching your text input allows users to simply enter a few characters rather than the full query.

RESULTS PRESENTATION

Make sure results are presented in a clean and structured layout with the search terms and number of results clearly displayed. Users are accustomed to having additional filtering options on the left side of the results page in order to continue narrowing down their options.

New Media Advertising

Where there's an audience, there's an ad.

Very few platforms have leveraged advertising quite like Instagram. Just three years after launching, and a year removed from their sale to Facebook, Instagram became one of the hottest advertising platforms in the world.

Introducing sponsored posts in 2013 launched Instagram from a trendy social media platform into a full blown business that would create and foster an entire economic ecosystem of "influencers." In February 2016, Instagram announced over 200,000 advertisers on the platform. By September, that number had grown to 500,000.⁸

Today, that number has grown to over 2 million monthly advertisers and over 25 million business profiles.

In this day and age, it's not enough to just have a clean website with clever content, beautiful product photos, and sound UX fundamentals. You need to supplement all of that with a well rounded new media strategy.

One of the cutting edge methods that eCommerce stores are using is quite old: video. Creating interactive video content is not only massively engaging but versatile enough to work across platforms.

[One recent study found](#) that interactive videos boosted conversions by as much as 30%. This is because videos allow users to see products in use, being tried and tested, as opposed to a stale white background or draped over a mannequin. It enables customers to make a better purchasing decision, which can drive up the average order value by as much as 40%.

Ted Baker does a wonderful job with their [interactive video content](#) by highlighting their products in a fun way and allowing the user to engage with the video to learn more about each item.

For companies with low budgets, this kind of content can be an efficient use of ad spend, that can be leveraged on social media as well as your website. You want your money to go further and help you stand out from the crowd and interactive video content accomplishes both.

Conclusion

There is no foolproof plan for navigating into eCommerce waters. There are simply too many variables at play to have a one-size-fits-all strategy. However, each of the UX tactics outlined here are steps you can take to boost sales, engagement, and brand loyalty.

About the Author



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Chris is an award winning creative with over 10 years of experience leading the design of eCommerce, brand, and application websites. Chris' primary focus has been in the UX field where he's worked with international corporations like Toshiba and Genesys as well as local favorites like Josh Cellars and Great Outdoor Provision Company to improve the usability and visual quality of their websites and applications, always with the goal of increasing customer success.

Footnotes

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