

# SEO and conversions: Creating exposure and maintaining relevance



*You've chosen the best eCommerce solution, migrated to a proper CMS, designed your website, set up customer service points, launched, and promoted your online store to the world. Congratulations! So what's next?*

*There is always room to improve, measure, and test. Why not revisit the development steps again? Take a few steps back to understand the process: reassess the design and usability of your website, site performance, and visibility.*

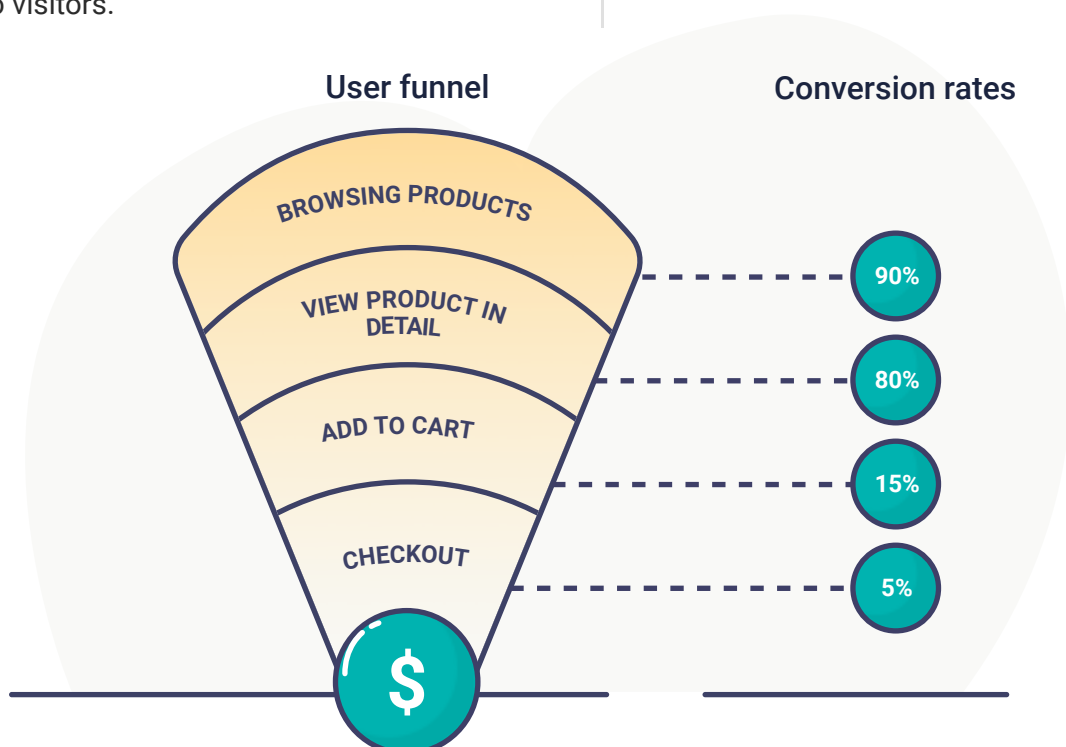
## What are conversions?

**Conversions** are a key metric that every eCommerce website needs to take into consideration. Think about your customer and KPIs - whether they may have saved an item to purchase later on their profile, add an item to their wishlist, shopping cart and ultimately making a purchase. These are typical conversions that take place on an eCommerce site.

An easy way to measure your eCommerce online conversion rate is to divide conversions into visitors.

For example, during a set period, you have 1000 visitors visiting your website, and 100 conversions (or purchases). Dividing your 100 conversions with the 1000 visitors during that set time, your conversion rate is 1%. Typically, eCommerce stores have a conversion rate of 1 - 2%, with your baseline goal needing to be more than 2%.<sup>1</sup>

But - conversions don't just happen automatically. Optimize it. As an eCommerce store, you need to identify your business goals to then align the conversion points such as going through the conversion funnel. In a way, it's measuring success and improving the overall shopping experience to drive KPI points (such as sales) throughout the overall customer journey, or simply, what is called conversion rate optimization (CRO). This can be done on customer touchpoints such as the store's landing page, product pages, shopping cart page, and essentially any of the touchpoints in the customer journey of the overall shopping experience.



The possibilities are endless in transforming your digital customer experience and journey with the evidence to prove the shift from in-store to digital is happening. A recent 2020 survey conducted by Alvarez & Marshall, discovered an average of 44% of European consumers are buying online for the first time as a result of the closures of non-essential retail (in-store shops) due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and are thus, experiencing and encountering new customer journeys.<sup>2</sup>

We've so far covered the essentials and roots of finding the conversions. Let's dive deeper into understanding three main elements that intersect between your customer's interactions, your eCommerce website/store, and the overall experience to drive your sales and site performance.

### Site performance: The need for speed

Page loading times are one of the make-or-break aspects when it comes to site performance, a deal-breaker for your customers, and an underlying factor when it comes to search engine rankings - consider it a holy trinity of speed: the expectation, search engine results, and sales.

#### The expectation

It's become an expectation, and a given. Without speed, no matter which website or browser a user is on will always expect fast loading times and instantaneous website reactions. In fact, a Google study on industry benchmarks cites that half of visitors are likely to completely abandon a

website if it takes more than 3 seconds to load.<sup>3</sup> By having speed as a common expectation, customers are likely to see speed as a means of trust, stability, and maintenance in a website's performance. Customers are always on the move, and thus, your brand should always be on the move with them through omnichannel marketing, making speed in delivering your content an essential factor to drive conversions.

#### Search engine results

In 2018, Google updated its search algorithm to include page speed as a major ranking factor, with slow sites being less likely to rank highly in search results.<sup>4</sup> Thus, this results in a potential loss of traffic and consequently, customers. But fear not, this does not mean just because your site takes longer to load than average that your website will not appear on search results. Google's release of the 'speed-update' explicitly said that the algorithm downranks only extremely slow pages, whereas fast pages will reap the benefits.

#### Sales

A 2018 YouGov/Eggplant survey found that 73% of customers are more likely to completely abandon a slow-loading website and consequently move to a competitor site.<sup>5</sup> This is detrimental to the fact a 2017 Akamai study found that with a 1-second delay in a page's response, can result in a 7% reduction in conversions.<sup>6</sup> This leads to the [following example by Sean Work](#), that if your site is making \$100,000 in sales per day, a 1-second page delay can result in up to \$2.5 million in lost sales a year.

## SEO & CRO: A marriage

When you use the two together, they in turn increase both traffic and conversions (the best of both worlds), but not all SEO and CRO unions always work out. Imagine a site filled with SEO-hungry keywords and content, made unreadable to a user simply trying to find what they are looking for. The site turns into just SEO-bluff used to drive traffic without keeping in mind user experience and usability. Like all good marriages, *"it takes two to tango"*.

In SEO, the higher you rank on Google Search Results, the more likely you drive traffic, build brand awareness towards your site, and therefore increase your ROI; whereas in CRO, the idea is to continuously test and adapt your landing page to turn visitor traffic into purchases, with a step towards customer loyalty. Some best practices to consider when enhancing the SEO and CRO to your eCommerce site are:

### 1. Security & link authority

First and foremost, security is what makes your website trustable to a search engine.

#### This can be easily done through:

- Including a robots.txt file that tells search engine bots your site information, where it can and cannot look
- Creating a sitemap that lists all your pages
- Having HTTPS instead of HTTP through installing an SSL certificate on your website indicates a secure and trustworthy site, with benefits in SEO and higher rankings

There are two kinds of links to use within your website, inbound links, and internal links.

- With inbound links, what we also call backlinks or external links, are HTML hyperlinks that connect and point one website to another. Backlinks act to a certain degree like reputation, see it like votes - the more backlinks (votes) a website has of yours, the more popular and important you are.
- By constructing internal links (URLs) on your site a certain way, such as by categorizing them by product categories, with time, establishes a degree of trust and quality with search engines. With a high amount of internal links leading to a specific page on your site, allows the search engine to know that the page is important. Mobile & Page-loading times

## 2. Mobile & page-loading times

Consider decreasing the size of your images and cleaning up the HTML and Javascript on your site. Just remember the three trinitities of speed that affect the overall SEO and CRO union as described in the previous section: the expectation of speed, the effect on search engine results, and sales. Additionally, ensure that your page speed matches your mobile-site as well.

By having a mobile-site, reaps the benefits in SEO and rankings. With Google's mobile-first index, mobile-optimized sites are pulled up first rather than ones geared only towards a desktop format. User experience contributes to this factor, where your content needs to be adaptable to mobile.

## 3. Optimize your searches

When optimizing your searches, use keywords into your headline and title, making it more evident for Google bots to look first and determine relevant content. This is done by using header tags in order to show hierarchy within the content. For example:

- Heading 1 (h1) is where the title goes
- Heading 2 and 3 (h2 and h3) are then subheads

Additionally, search engine crawlers look through a site's metatags to determine its relevance. By using **metatags**, that are snippets of text describing a page's content, its source code, or HTML (therefore not actually visible on the page itself and exists at the head of the page), are only visible to search engines.

This helps the search engine to understand what the page is about using relevant keywords, and can help with SEO

## 4. Create more relevant content and experiences

Search engines love unique content, and what better way than to grow organically through content such as creating blog articles with distribution making it optimized. A study found that content with around 2,000 words generally ranked higher on overall Google Search Results. Make sure to make the content shareable as well, whether that be a product page, blog article, or through social media - sharing allows an opportunity in converting potential readers (clicks) to website visitors to eventually sales.

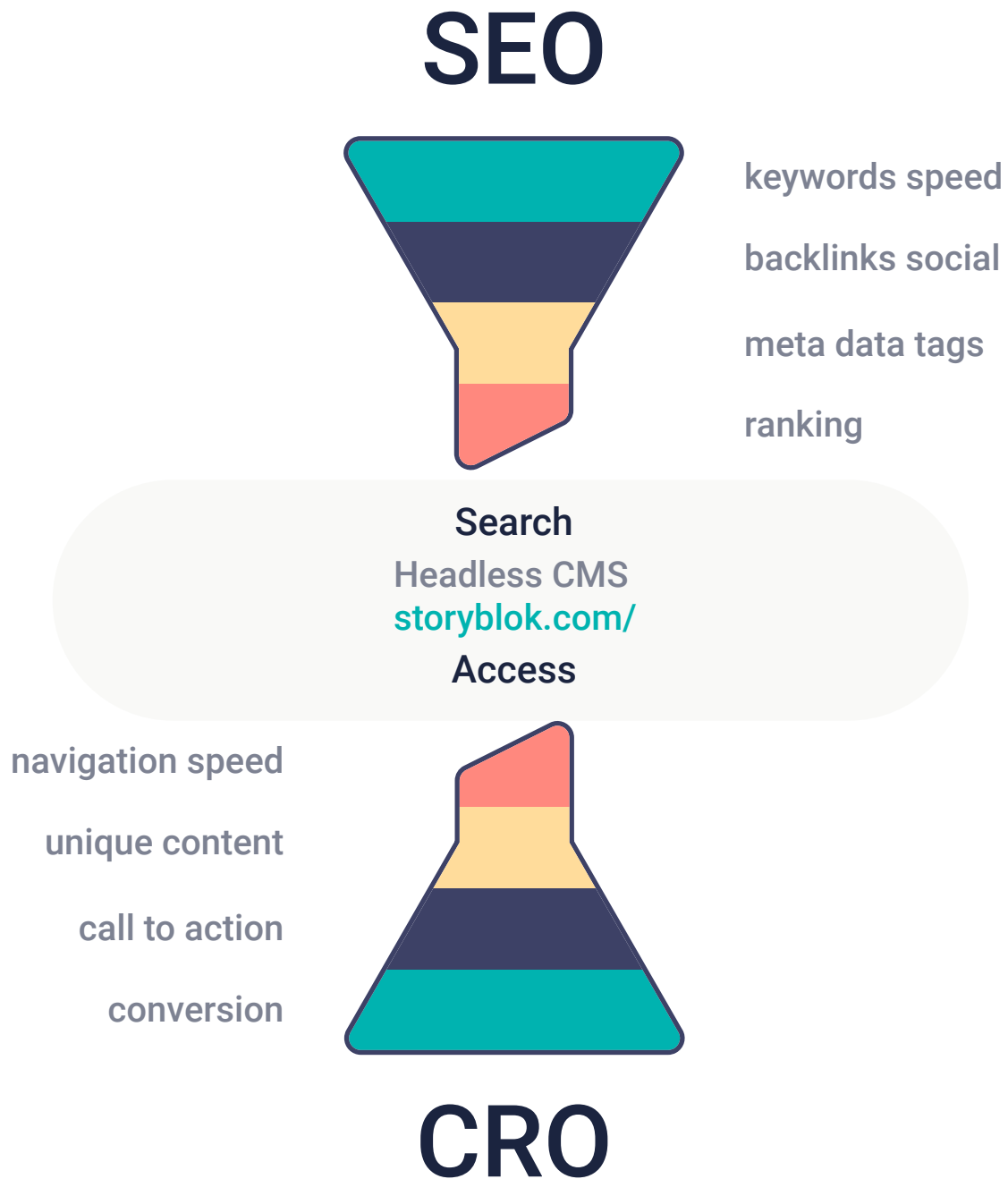
By making relevant content that is easily-accessible and configured on your site (through the use of user experience design), can lead to an increase in click-through-rates and time on site, thus leading to fewer bounce rates. This makes search engines understand the quality and content match your site has to a specific search.

## 5. A "Call To Action" (CTA)

Normally putting a CTA at the top of your page makes sense but in the purchasing journey, not quite. A page should be like a storytelling opportunity, your chance to show and tell about your product, giving customers also the chance to think about the project and consider its features before purchasing. This is why you should put your CTA at the bottom of your page, and content at the top.

Bring your customers on a storytelling journey, convince them, and allow them the space to breathe and consider before clicking-through.

An easy way to view this is through this infographic of an SEO/CRO funnel:



## UX/UI: First impressions

What is a website without design? A customer's first impression and interaction involve the interface and usability of your website from the beginning to the end of their digital customer journey, with 94% of first impressions being design-related.<sup>7</sup> Simply, your eCommerce site is where customers have the opportunity to gain brand awareness and exposure - learning about your brand.

For an eCommerce website to generate its sales effectively, it needs to have a thought-through user experience (UX) design in place, turning touchpoints into conversions. The goal for a brand is to make customer interaction with its brand and website as smoothly as possible, while satisfying the needs of the customer - making UX design an important investment in your eCommerce website.

### What is UX/UI (User Experience/User Interface)?

**UX** is the overall interaction and experience a user has with a product or service, taking into consideration each step of the user journey, how the user feels, and the feasibility of accomplishing each task during the experience.

**UI** on the other hand is the overall look and feel of the design, presentation, and interactivity with the product or service.

Think of it as 'love at first sight' - your website's design can become a catalyst or deal breaker to win over your customer's hearts. This points to the fact that 88% of online consumers are less likely to return to a website if it has bad user experience

and 32% of customers willing to walk away from a brand they love after just one bad user experience on the brand's website.<sup>8</sup>

### What are some things to consider when optimizing your site's UX design?

#### Make navigation simple

Consider swapping out your drop-down menu for a menu bar, or streamline entirely your drop-down menu. You can't necessarily make sales if your customers can't find what they are looking for - so why not make it visible and seamless into your site? Your site's navigation menu is usually the first place customers look to find what they want or need. Keeping in mind, when (re-)designing your navigation, depends on how users currently interact with your site and organize information as well as the nature of your products and how you intend to present them.



A great example of integrating design into navigation is [Apple's menu bar](#). Check out Storyblok-built examples with [Dear Sam](#), [Raleigh UK](#), [Asket](#), and [Aubade](#).



## Pages that capture and convert

When creating and structuring your landing and product page usability for your target audience, make sure to design yours smartly. This means supporting search queries with the product name or model (SKU) number, grammar corrections, suggestion return results if a product is not available for example, and doing justice visually through high-definition photographs or videos of your products and brand through storytelling.

Additionally, omnichannel personalization resonates with the way you display products to visitors, based on their purchasing history, preferences, or browsing behaviors and habits. From there, you can analyze the way a customer interacts with your website, thus making product recommendations that best suit their preferences. Suggestions based on browsing habits and purchasing history are also an opportunity to offer product recommendations while a customer browses to up-sell and cross-sell. For return customers, consider having a personalized features section, voice search, personalized email newsletter, or a personalized landing page.

## Follow the sales funnel

A sales funnel, or purchasing funnel, are stages that move the customer throughout various touchpoints and interactions that they have with your site, products, and overall persuasion of the benefits to make a purchase. These include:

- **Introduction (Awareness)** - Where the customer gathers information about the brand, products, and benefits, learning that it exists on the market.
- **Education (Interest)** - More information is unraveled and provided to the customer about the features and benefits the product and brand can provide.
- **Evaluation (Analysis)** - This is the stage where the customer matches your brand versus a competitor's, seeing which one suits their needs, usually done through each brand's USPs (Unique Selling Point).
- **Decision (Engagement)** - The customer gathers the information conducted during their research and reaches a decision-making point. This is the point to engage with the customer with additional benefits to win them over, offers, and eye-catching CTAs.
- **Purchase** - The purchase is conducted where the customer passes through adding the product to their shopping cart, pay, and await their purchase.
- **Retention (Repeating the experience)** - During this stage, the customer has the opportunity to interact with customer service, leave feedback or reviews, subscribe to your newsletter, and conduct a repeat purchase.





In the context of UX-design, the sales funnel can be represented throughout the website interface, landing page, mobile site, and move with the customer outside onto social media, through email marketing, and even in-store.

## Key Takeaway

A lot goes into launching a budding and successful eCommerce website amongst [over 20 million commerce sites](#) that currently exist “out there”. No matter what product it is your brand is selling, surely the main and one key goal is to sell (more). People who search for products through eCommerce websites typically know what they are looking for and in turn, expect a high-performing and user-friendly site suited to their needs. The steps to achieve this are straight-forward, with the idea behind pointing to conversions and thus, to site performance.



# Endnotes

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