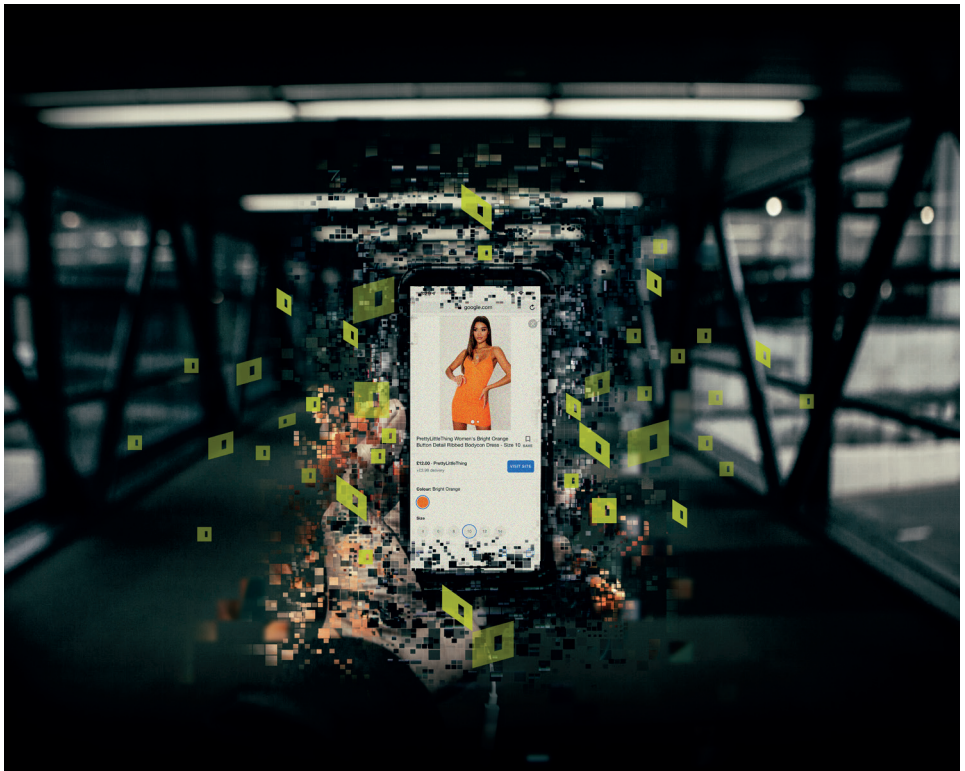




FIVE PRACTICAL TACTICS TO INCREASE PRODUCT VISIBILITY



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Visibility is vital for any business selling products; put simply, products cannot be purchased if they cannot be found.

Retailers need to ensure they keep their new and existing products in top position in a world where the algorithms powering search results listings change regularly. This means continually testing their product data to drive better performance and competitive advantage, ensuring any changes implemented are positively impacting their business and delivered quickly before competitors also react to market changes.

Retailers must be well informed and responsive to their customers' search behaviour. This will ensure product content is informative and matches consumer search intent. Anything less will result in 'invisible' products and consumers purchasing items on competitor sites, where

they can be found.

In this ebook, co-produced with our partner Intelligent Reach, we look at a planned approach to product visibility and the main drivers of visibility: optimising and experimenting with product information to be relevant for off-site product discovery, as well as identifying ways of increasing footfall by connecting the digital customer to the physical store. We also look at how retailers can meet new customer demands that require immediate product availability for collection from their local store. ■

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SPONSOR'S INTRODUCTION

Offsite product discovery is a vital source of retail revenue. The importance of product data is self-evident and proven. It is central to your product ad performance, no matter which channel you distribute your products into.

The inability to deliver sufficient quality and completeness of data, optimised for each individual marketing channel results in products that are less likely to be visible to potential buyers, costing you customer revenue.

Better quality product data and the ability to optimise feeds at scale drives increased ranking visibility, which in turn drives customer clicks and revenue, delivering enhanced performance and conversion rates.

Intelligent Reach is the product visibility platform for retailers and brands needing to ensure their products are found by shoppers online, on mobile and in local stores. We help retailers get their products in front of relevant consumers where and when they are looking to buy.

Our platform enables your ecommerce and marketing teams

to easily visualise, validate and optimise product data feeds. Critical errors or missing attributes can be identified and fixed, improving data quality, making products more discoverable, more frequently, with reduced cost per click (CPC). We help achieve maximum exposure through data optimisation and content experimentation to match products to specific search intent and increase conversion, efficiently.

Intelligent Reach is the only platform using machine learning to enable content experiments on imagery, titles, categories, promotions and more, to drive high converting shoppers to customer websites and apps. Every 60 seconds, our platform processes over 2 million products and makes 8.5 million data improvements to meet the needs of retailers large and small. ■



STEVE RIVERS
CO-FOUNDER & CCO,
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SECTION 1: UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR VISIBILITY PLANNING

If a product is invisible, it can't be purchased. It sounds obvious but actually achieving it at scale across millions of products and hundreds of channels can be easier said than done. One of the first steps to visibility is to ensure a strong base data quality, ensuring that all products have accurate and complete attributes. From this foundation of good base product data, retailers can move into advanced optimisation and ideally scientific experimentation.

Retailers need not just to be 'visible' but relevant, creating an immediate impact with the right product data and a strong call to

RETAILERS NEED TO CONTINUALLY TEST THEIR PRODUCT DATA AND MATCH AGAINST THEIR CUSTOMERS' SEARCHES

action so consumers can commit to purchasing. Product content plays an important role in bringing customers closer to purchase as it can tell them whether an item is exactly what they are looking for.

With so many other pressures on retailers and brands in today's ultra-competitive tough trading conditions, visibility planning and off-site experimentation can become a mere afterthought, executed just prior to, or even after the launch of the campaign. This, in turn, leads to irrelevant and inconsistent product content. ■



SECTION 2: BRIDGING THE PRODUCT DATA GAP

Accurate and attribute-rich product data is pivotal to offsite visibility, impacting conversion, sales and overall business growth. Retailers need to ensure that their product information is up to date, relevant and complete. They need to be particularly conscious of this when they are unable to include images. Product names placed alongside good images will make an impact on the customer, but without an image defining attributes such as colour, brand and product type are essential. In a survey by IntelligentReach only 30% of retailers were found to have complete, accurate and attribute-rich product data being sent to different channels. The remaining 70% are missing out on customer traffic and sales.

Retailers need to understand basic data requirements to begin improving their off-site product discovery strategies. Optimised product content enables better control over shoppers' purchasing decisions and the ability to implement improved customer engagement strategies. In a survey of 6,008 consumers across six countries by VIGA, 41% of consumers will not go to another

store if they find all the information in the first place they visit. The most common information searched for is price comparison, cited by 74% of respondents, followed by reviews at 58%. However, 31% of customers would leave within 10 seconds if product information was lacking. Pricing was cited as the reason for site abandonment for by 39% pricing, followed by availability at 25% and images at 20%.

SIX VISIBILITY BOOSTING APPROACHES

Optimise product category mapping- Miscategorised products have limited visibility. Retailers need to focus on attributing their products with exact Partner product categories and relevant terms to meet the partners' ranking criteria. If products are miscategorised the search engine can reject retailers' items. A prime example would be using valid keywords such as 'handbags, wallet and cases' instead of 'handbag and cases.' The more information retailers provide, the more relevancy their products will have in search results.

Reflect core product information in titles - Product titles must reflect consumers' search intent. Retailers need to take the customer's perspective when optimising products titles, thus prioritising generic words and removing jargon. For instance, if a retailer sells TVs they should ensure their product information communicates all of the important attributes such as 'brand+model+MPN+size+Smart TV+4k Ultra HD' to accurately represent their products..

Alternative keywords - An accurate search term can connect a customer with the exact product they are looking for. It's especially important when retailers are targeting different markets. Retailers need to understand their customers' most relevant search terms to tailor their product data accordingly. For instance, adding the keyword 'thongs' to Havaianas's AU product data would increase traffic as it would reflect its customers' local idioms.

Competitor information - Retailers that sell products from different brands and manufacturers need to have a competitive differentiation. One of the ways to stand out is to have compelling product messaging; otherwise, consumers will assume that the product is the same and make their buying decision based on the lowest price. While retailers don't have control over their competitors' product pitches, they can focus on

including concepts such as reviews, delivery service reputation and quality standards to differentiate.

Test and experiment - Retailers that continually test their product data are able to drive relevant content delivery across all touchpoints. Content experimentation allows retailers to identify product data strengths and weaknesses and monitor the potential threat posed by competition. Product testing is especially important for fashion retailers that rely on images to attract customers' attention. Retailers need to A/B test a subset of images to determine those that drive the highest click-through rate.

Take a channel-specific approach - Retailers need to understand different channel requirements and stay on top of any ranking updates to create targeted ads that add value to a purchasing cycle. They need to stay on top of any ranking updates announced by the channel. If not addressed in time these updates may affect visibility. Retailers also need to consider that not all products will sell well on every channel, so determining the most suitable entry point is important for business growth. With better insight into each channel, retailers will have better control over the accuracy and freshness of their product content, so that their customers can find the relevant, current items that they're looking for. ■

SECTION 3: THE NEED TO EXPERIMENT AND OPTIMISE

Retailers need to listen to, learn, and act upon their customers' key needs, desires, and preferences to create content that fits the search intent of their potential customers. Ideally using it to differentiate their products or find opportunities that their competitors have not identified. This requires being willing to experiment with different approaches in order to find out what customers are looking for.

To achieve this, retailers need to ensure that their technology platform has the capability to A/B test alternative headlines, imagery, and content attributes across different channels in the same way they would test and



optimise their own websites. Most importantly they need a tool that can do this at scale across their entire inventory without significant manual processes. The key is to look for trends which can be applied to large segments of products.

They need to continually test their product data and take in feedback at every stage of optimisation. This means prioritising small and regular improvements rather than big and more occasional overhauls. Retailers' approaches need to remain fluid.

While developing product messaging retailers should also consider how changes in consumer behaviour and search engine updates can impact the effectiveness of their visibility strategies.

In the future this constant and real-time feedback can inform better forward planning including monitoring success against KPIs, identifying errors and finding potential growth areas. These include using different search terms for the same product such as plus size, curvy, tall or petite. ■

SECTION 4: ACHIEVING VISIBILITY THROUGH MORE ENTRY POINTS

HOW CAN RETAILERS FIND THE RIGHT CHANNELS TO INCREASE PRODUCT VISIBILITY?

Retailers need to provide ways for customers to discover their products, matching their shopping behaviour and preferred channels. They need to understand their customers so that they can reach them at the right time, with the right message for where they are naturally inclined to shop. They also need to know how much value each channel brings to their product findability.

Increasing numbers of channels across multiple markets, coupled with long IT queues to implement product data feeds, makes it impossible for retailers to scale quickly, impacting time to market and resulting in lost revenue opportunity.

As a starting point, it is worth looking in more detail at the main types of channels for product visibility. These include:

SEARCH ENGINES

Google Ads - Retailers need to submit product data to Google in the right format for creating successful ads. Failure to provide required attributes can prevent a product from showing up in Google Search results. The ads' specifications require comprehensive and accurate product data that will help with shoppers' purchasing decisions. Instead of adding free shipment in the title, retailers should create Google shopping promotions and schedule them for promotional events including Black Friday and Valentine's Day.

Bing Shopping Campaigns - Retailers are able to target their customers' search intent with an ad that links to their product page. Bing recommends using key information first in titles such as gender, size, colour, material and pattern details to differentiate. This also includes using images with a white background for a 'pop' effect.

When it comes to optimising product content for peak season, retailers need to make sure their product description has a seasonal or sale label to display the promotion.

MARKETPLACES

Amazon Ads - Retailers are able to showcase their products to consumers via Amazon's owned and operated sites. When optimising product information retailers need to consider choosing relevant keywords and phrase match as well as engaging headlines to maximise impressions.

eBay ads - Retailers have the advantage of showcasing their products to 170 million consumers on the marketplace, suggests BigCommerce eBay. The marketplace's product information instructions cite brand, model number, dimensions, colour, a capacity to appear at the top of its homepage.

SOCIAL

Instagram - The photo-sharing site attracts a significant share of younger shoppers, defined as those between 16 and 24 years old. The platform's 'IG Shopping' app is designed to bridge the gap between liking a product on the site and actually pressing the purchase button. Research by RetailX suggests that 29% of UK and US millennials use social media to actively

purchase products. This allows retailers to target younger consumers who may prefer to combine shopping with following their favourite social media influencers.

Facebook Dynamic Product Ads -

Retailers are able to promote their products from their catalogue across Facebook, Instagram, the Audience Network and Messenger. Choosing the right type of product sets, which are placed in retailers' catalogues, can help them to maximise their visibility. To create a successful product set retailers need to include concrete broad themes as too narrowly defined ones can cause ads to experience under-delivery.

RETAILERS NEED TO BE ABLE TO CONTROL AND PUBLISH THEIR PRODUCT FEEDS WITHOUT THE HELP OF THEIR IT TEAM, FROM A SINGLE INTERFACE TO ACCELERATE THE TIME TO MARKET

Affiliates - This is a growing product advertising and sales tool for omnichannel retailers. In fact, a third of UK consumers use voucher and comparison sites to purchase products, suggests Mediakix research. Affiliate ads lead to increased product visibility as retailers' products are exposed to a larger market. ■

SECTION 5: CONNECTING THE DOTS OF DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL

Retailers need to start connecting their digital and physical practices to keep up with the changing way that customers want to shop. A study by Forrester suggests that 45% of brick-and-mortar purchases will be web-influenced by 2020. Consumers see no difference between channels - but they do pay attention to the price, service and convenience that are delivered through these silos. Retailers need to deliver a consolidated experience that will benefit both channels.

Inventory information, such as item availability and stock-count for each individual store is especially important. Retailers need to manage their store data so that their ads appear to the right customers, bolstering their chances of success.

FIVE WAYS TO RESPOND TO GROWING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS AND DRIVE LOCAL PRODUCT FINDABILITY

Google merchant centre -

Retailers can upload their product data to this platform to allow

consumers to view their online and in-store inventory. Retailers are also able to regularly edit their full inventory to keep an accurate account of their stock levels to serve local inventory ads (LIAs) when consumers are shopping for their products nearby.

Local inventory ads -

Omnichannel retailers can use this tool to direct nearby customers to their local store, thus driving more footfall and bringing convenience to a shopper. When a shopper clicks an ad they arrive on a Google-hosted page for the retailer's shop where they can view in-store inventory, find out opening times and directions to a physical store. Retailers are able to monitor the impact of their digital ads on foot traffic and in-store sales.

Facebook location targeting -

This allows retailers to strategically push product-related ads for locally available products based on the geographical location of consumers, thus driving online consumers to the physical store.

Click and collect - This offers the benefits of increased footfall, customer convenience and speed of fulfilment it provides. A study by Bell and Howell suggests 49% of shoppers would purchase an additional product when collecting an item in-store. By giving shoppers frictionless collection retailers give customers extra time to browse and buy complementary products. Retailers should take advantage of the two channels to combine online choice and offline convenience.

In-store events - Holding launch events brings great volumes of product exposure. Retailers need to use in-store events to drive brand engagement and offer their customers the opportunity to 'experience' an item before it goes out on a website as a way of increasing customer interest in a product. As their selling point, they need to take advantage of the physical store capabilities that aren't available online, providing brand experience and being able to show off the product and its functionality. ■

CONCLUSION

IMPROVING VISIBILITY STRATEGY IN AN EVER-EVOLVING CLIMATE AND RESPONDING TO CHANGE

We have seen how complex building offsite visibility is and how important product experimentation is to remain relevant in the retail environment.

A comprehensive approach to

visibility means addressing all channels of the customer journey, including retailers' online and offline channels. It means building systemic continuous content testing into your digital marketing processes. ■



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