algolia

Searchandising: 9 best practices for better conversion rates

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I need to align my online merchandising strategy with guidelines from the global marketing team. But I'm too dependent on developers' bandwidth and knowledge.

– Brooks,
Online Category Manager

Why read this eBook?

Search is a strong driver of sales and revenue. Amazon's **conversion rate shoots up 6x** when visitors do a search (for Walmart 4x, and Etsy 3x). Research shows that retailers in general see advanced search see over **2x higher conversions with advanced search.**

One of the fastest ways to accomplish these results is **searchandising**: curating search results to **promote products**, align those results with **business goals,** and **track how users are interacting** with online store offerings. And yet, merchandisers and e-commerce strategists don't use searchandising nearly as much as they should.

Obstacles include:

— Relying on developers/IT to make ranking changes

— Struggle to get good data on search queries, search results, product rankings

— Inability to make relevant decisions and iterate

This handicap is becoming particularly costly with the unprecedented e-commerce growth in 2020 and beyond.

The goal of this guide is to give you best searchandising practices so you can fine-tune your strategies and show measurable results that directly affect sales and revenue. Whether you're just starting with searchandising or consider yourself an expert, you'll find actionable tips and a roadmap to making the most out of your site search and discovery.

Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3

FOUNDATIONAL

Searchandising comes into play once your standard search configuration has been properly set up. It allows you to more precisely curate search results by promoting, boosting, and/or burying products for given search terms, and by layering rules specific to your business on top of basic relevance.

Here are best practices for foundational searchandising that will boost your key search and business KPIs.

BEST PRACTICE #1:

Decrease the occurrence of “No Results” pages

THE “SYNONYM” STRATEGY

PROBLEM “I know that my users often search for ‘soccer’, however we don’t have any products containing this word, so our users land on a ‘no results’ message, and bounce”

SOLUTION “We created a one-way synonym to surface items containing or relevant to ‘football’, such as “soccer” and “cleats” , but also prefix search, so that queries for “f”, “fo”, or “foot” will start showing results for both “football” and “soccer”.

Have a look at your no-results rate. Is it above 3 or 5% This is a bit too high. Although we know we can’t bring it down to zero (what if a user searches for phones when you sell only phone cases?), we can still bring it down to acceptable levels. Use search analytics to see what users are often searching for, but is not available in your catalog by that exact name, then solve it with synonyms.

Better even, let artificial intelligence do the work for you.

BEST PRACTICE #2

Make the most of your most popular queries

"BOOST, HIDE OR PIN" STRATEGY

PROBLEM Looking at my search analytics, I noticed that "dress" is the 10th most popular search term, but has a 0% conversion rate.

SOLUTION By analyzing search results for the search term "dress", I noticed that we only offer black cocktail dresses. So, I reordered search results by pinning a few colorful dresses, as well as different types of dresses (casual, cocktail), to make search results more diverse and relevant.

Regularly look at your search analytics to understand which searches are the most popular, then look at their CTR and conversion rates. Similarly, look at searches with the lowest CTR and conversion rates, so you can reorder your results accordingly.

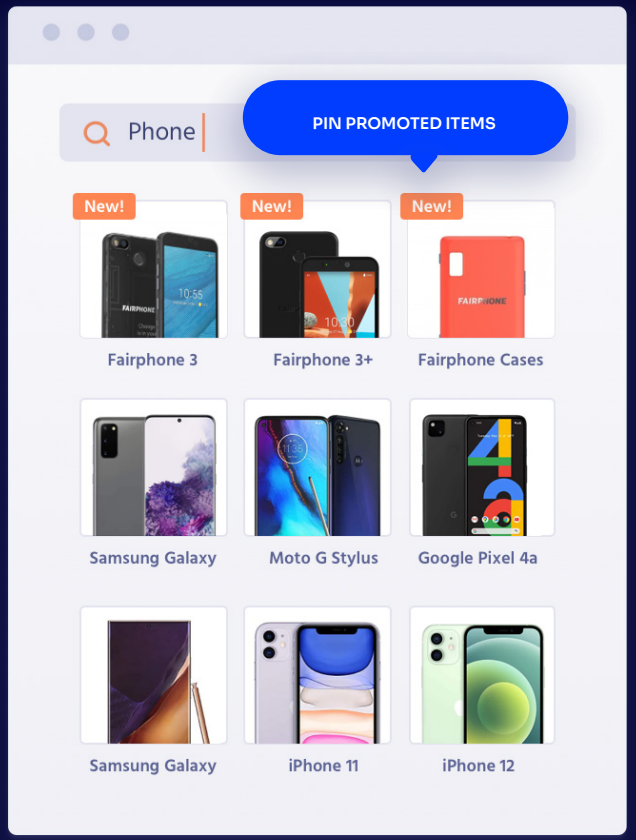
BEST PRACTICE #3

Promote your products on category pages and in search results

THE “PIN” STRATEGY

PROBLEM “My company sells electronics, and there is a new, ethical brand of smartphones called “Fairphone” that I’d like to promote.”

SOLUTION “I’ll reorder items on the category page I created specifically for smartphone searches by pinning “Fairphone” to show as first search result, then also reproduce this at the top of search results.”



Your category pages should reflect your merchandising strategies and offer the mix you want to see promoted. Increase your CTR and conversion rate by pinning these same promoted items in your search results.

Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3

ADVANCED

Blend your marketing with your search experience

Is your average desktop conversion rate under 3%? Or does it stagnate between 3 and 4%? This last figure is already above the average, but did you know that retailers with advanced site search capabilities get on average a 5.9% conversion rate, double that of retailers with basic search? These retailers implement - among others - advanced searchandising techniques to better engage with their users.
Let's have a look at these.

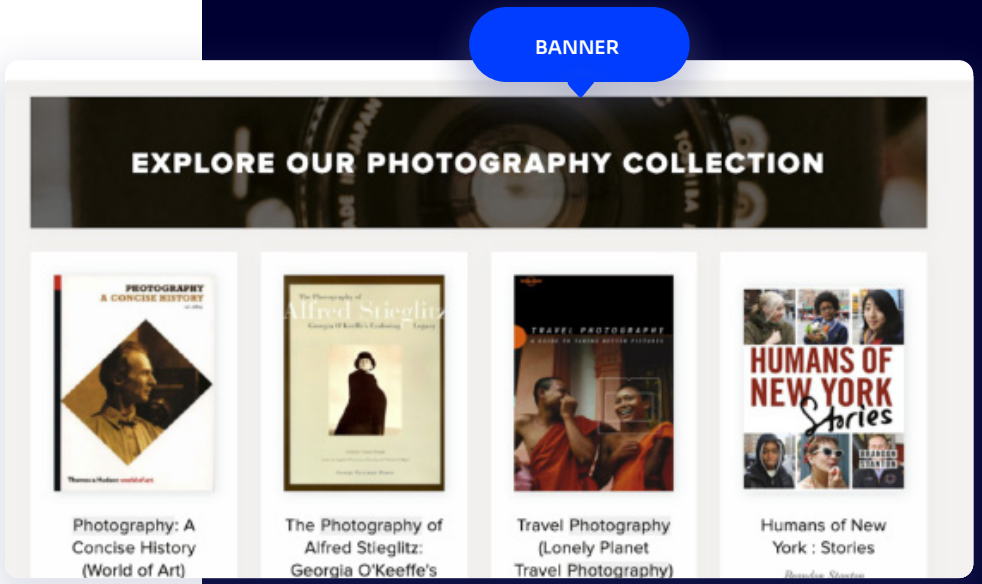
BEST PRACTICE #4

Inject your promotional campaigns in your search results

“ADD A BANNER” STRATEGY

PROBLEM I sell sports apparel online and have a marketing campaign planned for the upcoming World Cup. I’d like to promote it to users interested in soccer gear.

SOLUTION For users who search for “soccer” or “football”, I inserted into search results a promotional banner redirecting them to the landing page for our World Cup marketing campaign.

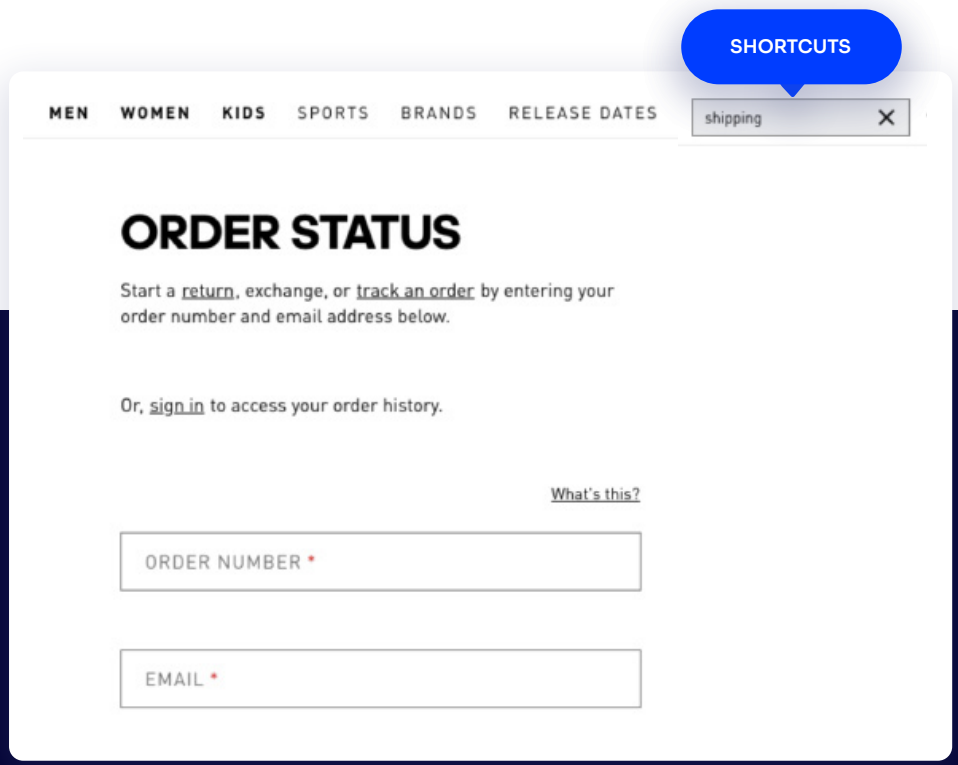


When you run a seasonal campaign and promote products or feature content on your website, make sure that related search results showcase a promotional banner for the relevant timeframe to grab your users’ attention.

BEST PRACTICE #5

Redirect to more relevant places

THE “REDIRECT” STRATEGY



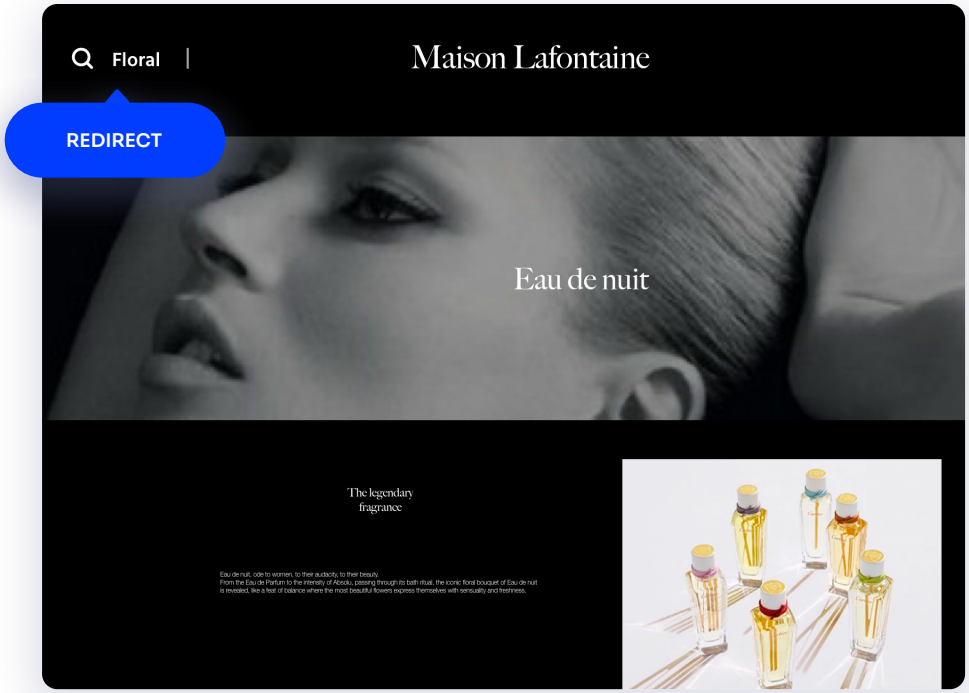
PROBLEM 1 During the coronavirus crisis, we noticed that a lot of customers were looking for masks, however we don’t sell any.

SOLUTION 1 We chose to redirect them to our Covid-19 information page with other resources and products they could leverage.

Create shortcuts in your navigation to redirect users to results that better match their intent: FAQ pages, help, shipping services, or any other information they may be looking for.

PROBLEM 2 We are launching a new promotion campaign for our latest perfume collection “The night flower”. We created a dedicated landing page and need to boost traffic to it in record time.

SOLUTION 2 We redirected all related queries (“perfume”, “floral”, “romantic”) to the landing page for the “Night flower” promotional campaign.



When you create a new landing page because of a recent partnership or a dedicated promotional campaign, increase its traffic by redirecting your users to it when they type a related query. In addition, for high-volume, profitable queries, your visitors may benefit from a dedicated landing page that shows them the range of options on your site. For example, for the query “shoes”, you could offer a list of the different shoe brands, a shoe sizing guide, a link to shoes on sale, customer reviews of your most popular shoes, and a seasonal guide for winter shoes.

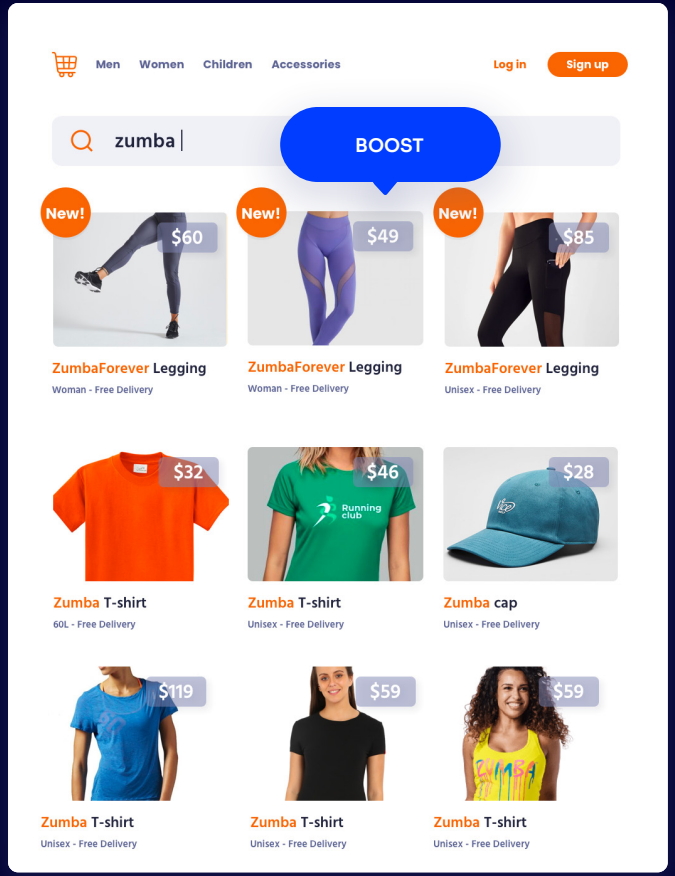
BEST PRACTICE #6

Match your user intent with categories and brand names

"BOOST" STRATEGY

PROBLEM When my users are looking for Samsung products, I'd like them to see Samsung products in top results. But, since I don't have that many Samsung products in the catalog, I'd also like to present them with similar brands in addition.

SOLUTION I boosted Samsung products to the top of search results to make sure this is what searchers see first. Next, I boosted X and Y phones in the similar price range so users have other options.



Optimize your search results pages by boosting category names and brands to improve relevance and match your user intent.

Level 1 | Level 2 | Level 3

EXPERT

Create advanced merchandising techniques for a customized experience

You've mastered the basics and dabbled in more sophisticated strategies, but you are now looking to master the search experience for your users. Let's look at some advanced searchandising strategies.

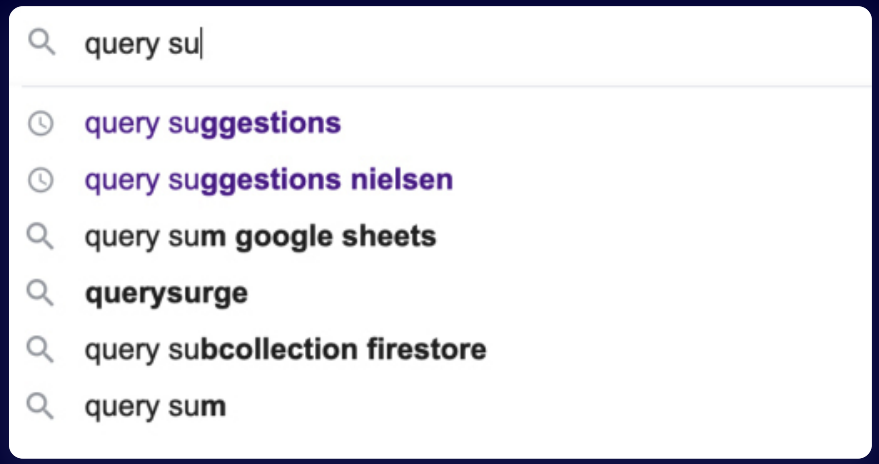
BEST PRACTICE #7

Merchandise your suggestions

"QUERY SUGGESTIONS" STRATEGY

PROBLEM When my users type in a search for "lego", they'll see a variety of suggested queries; I'd like them to see a query for lego video games first.

SOLUTION I'll pin "lego video game" at the top of my query suggestions.



We are all familiar with query suggestions: the common search feature popularized by Google that displays an updated list of relevant queries that your users can select from as they type. These suggestions help users find specific queries that are guaranteed to have results, and also minimize the amount that your users need to type, which can be especially impactful for mobile search.

The idea with searchandising is to include in query suggestions those queries that will reveal results most relevant to your business.

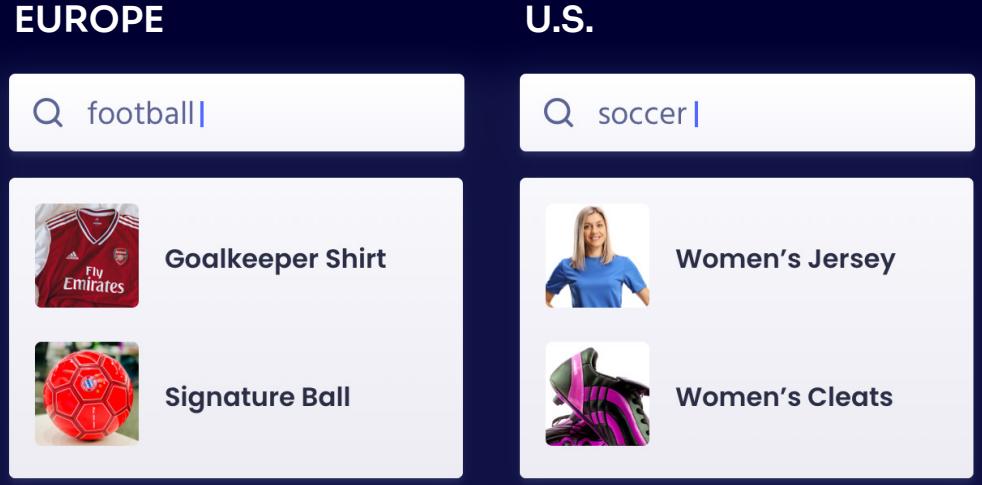
BEST PRACTICE #8

Adapt to your local customer base

"LOCAL RULES" STRATEGY

PROBLEM While our users in Europe search for 'football' gear, in the United States, users look for 'soccer' items. Furthermore, women's soccer gear tends to be more popular in the U.S.

SOLUTION Notre équipe américaine a mis en place un merchaOur US team searchandises for gear containing the term 'soccer', and makes sure to boost results geared towards women.



As a large or global retailer, you'll need to adapt to the specificities of each local market you're in, including languages. Give your local merchandisers the control to adapt to your customer base preferences.

Apply specific merchandising strategies to the audience segments on different devices. Leverage tags in your analytics to do so, and see conversion rates follow.

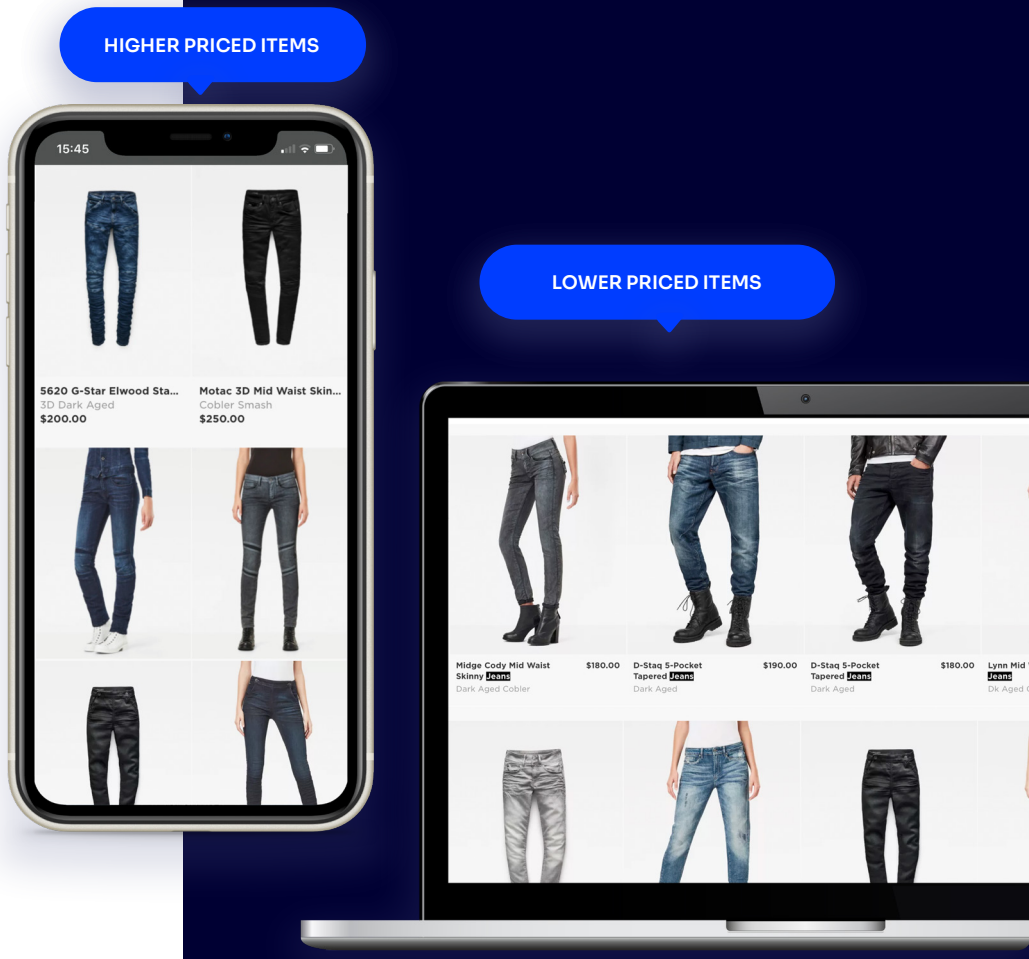
BEST PRACTICE #9

Set a merchandising strategy per device

“GO OMNICHANNEL” STRATEGY

PROBLEM I know my users on iPhone tend to spend more than others, so I’d like to target them with items more expensive than the average.

SOLUTION For iPhone users, I’ll boost items priced $100 or above.



LET US HELP

At Algolia, we take pride in working with merchandising teams from some of the world's best ecommerce brands. More than 9,500 companies, including Under Armour, Lacoste, Birchbox, Stripe, Slack, Medium, and Zendesk use Algolia to manage more than 95 billion search queries a month. Let us help you get creative and combine different strategies to enhance your search and navigation.

Thanks to our Rules and our Visual Editor, you can easily apply many of the above strategies in a mere few clicks, without involving your IT teams or waiting for hours for the changes to be updated.

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