

**ZEEMAN**

&  algolia

# Zeeman improves Search performance and gives customers a 'remarkably simple' experience with Algolia



“Simplicity is a fundamental focus for Zeeman. It is also a strength of Algolia, which has allowed us to improve the performance and stability of Search and implement the value of simplicity into our platform and the customer experience.”

- Alex Bloemendal, Manager eCommerce, Zeeman

# Summary

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One of the largest textile brands in Europe, with 1,300 stores in seven countries, Zeeman had its website break under the weight of its own popularity in October 2021. The reason could be traced back to its existing search solution, so the company went on a search for a faster, more stable, and ultimately better one that could handle its needs today and tomorrow. It deployed Algolia in record time and hasn't looked back, iterating, and improving on Search to the benefit of its customers, its e-commerce and merchandising teams — and its revenue.

# ZEEMAN

## Use Case:

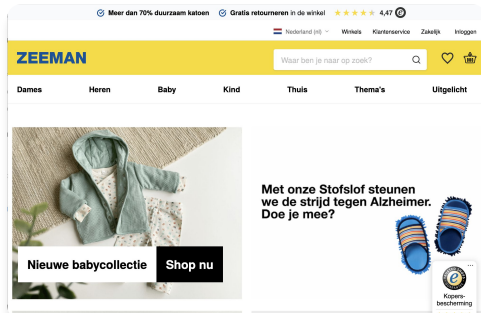
E-Commerce

## Headquarters:

Alphen aan den Rijn, Netherlands

## Customer Since

2021



## Key Results (Qualitative)

- Stable, high performance, more relevant Search experience
- Improved customer experience
- Increased conversions and average order value
- Reduced cart abandonment

## Feature Usage

Search API, Dynamic Synonyms, Rules, Instant Search, Autocomplete, Recommend, Merchandising

## Integrations



Adobe Commerce powered by Magento

## The Challenge

- Search solution couldn't handle website traffic
- Website downtime; revenue loss
- Unable to meet long-term goals

## The Solution

- Stable, scalable Search engine
- Expanded features and functions, including Synonyms and Rules
- Recommend and Merchandising features
- Roadmap support from Algolia

## The Results

- Faster, more relevant, stable Search experience
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Founded by Jan Zeeman in 1967 in Alphen aan den Rijn, Netherlands is a family business that boasts a strong Dutch mercantile spirit. **Zeeman** (the founder) had a then-revolutionary vision for his eponymous store: "Clothes and linen can be of good quality without being expensive". With that in mind, he built a chain of stores with affordable clothes and textiles through efficiency and large-scale purchases. In 1980, the company acquired Brons, becoming the largest discount textile brand in the Netherlands, after which it started its international expansion. Over its more than half a century in business, Zeeman has grown from a single store offering everyday low prices to a multinational company with a physical presence in seven European countries, and more than 1,300 stores.

Also key to Zeeman's success has been the company's strong focus on "remarkable simplicity," simplifying processes, the supply chain and customer experiences to create value, says Alex Bloemendaal, Zeeman's Manager eCommerce: "We live and breathe simplicity."

As devoted as the company is to low price clothing and textiles, it retains a strong commitment to creating social value in ethical sourcing, ensuring sustainability, and eschewing any suppliers using child labor practices. Because of its approach to lower pricing, there are rarely the traditional peaks and valleys that come in retail. "At Zeeman with our Everyday Low Price (EDLP) approach, it's like we have 365 days of Black Friday a year," Bloemendaal says. That, he notes, makes e-commerce more challenging.

“We’ve got a huge fan base to serve online, produce a fan collection, and our brand across Europe is really positive, strong, and fan-driven”

**Alex Bloemendal**  
Manager eCommerce, Zeeman

The store’s customers are those seeking value, whether out of necessity or due to the strength and popularity of Zeeman’s brands. With its widely-recognized focus on corporate social responsibility — the company was declared Sustainable Retailer of the Year (2021–2022) in the Netherlands — and its EDLP approach, Zeeman helps more than 70 million customers find affordable clothing.

With more than two decades of e-commerce experience, Bloemendal has been responsible for everything Zeeman does in that arena since he came on board in October 2020, including the company’s site as well as on marketplaces, and content. He also works in close collaboration with brand marketing.

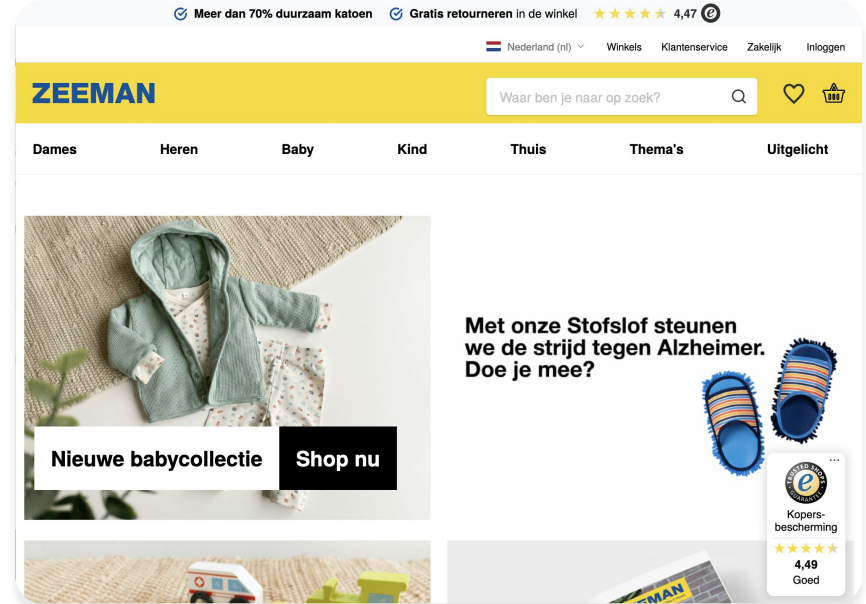
Of course, that includes ensuring the search functionality of the company’s website has the performance, stability and focus on remarkable simplicity that permeates Zeeman culture.

He believes an e-commerce company should be continuously improving on customer experience, seeing things through the customer’s eyes. “I’m one of those builder-type guys. I’m not good with leaving an existing situation the way it is. I always want to grow and improve.”

# A critical need for stable, reliable Search

In October 2021, Zeeman's site crashed following a particularly popular campaign. Their previous e-commerce platform couldn't handle the increased traffic the website was receiving, and the root cause was determined to be their existing search engine.

"We fixed our setup, but we wanted to go a step beyond that," Bloemendal says. "And the real fix was to replace the search solution with an external one that was scalable in the cloud, and we did a review of the market, which included Algolia."

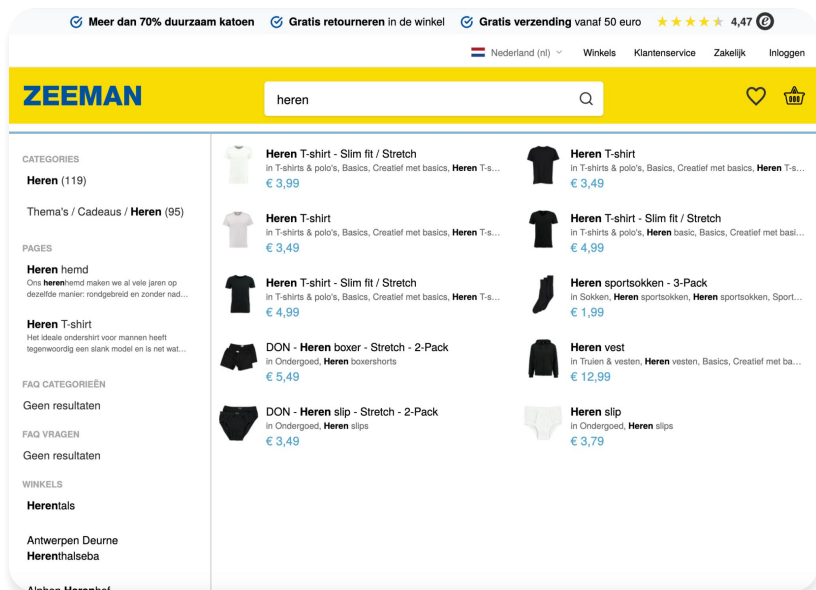


It selected Algolia to provide it with a search solution that would be stable and scalable, could be implemented quickly, and was future-ready, prepared for models like modular or composable commerce. Bloemendaal says Algolia came recommended by its system integrator and other companies it did business with, and that the platform's simplicity at its core made it a good match with Zeeman's own focus on simplicity, using technology to do more, better and with greater efficiency.

“We needed someone who could fix our burning platform through stability,” he says, noting that there wasn't initially a goal of leveraging Algolia for anything other than scalable, fast, and stable search capability.

The Algolia implementation met the company's need for deployment speed: “Two weeks after signing the minimum viable product (MVP) was already ready to go live,” Bloemendaal says. “That's one of the successes of Algolia, together with our system integrator, Kega, and my team.”

Once Algolia Search was live, the Zeeman team started to learn and see opportunities to use other Algolia features to measure search events, optimize, refine, and customize search, and train merchandising to develop synonyms in conjunction with AI Synonyms. They moved forward, ultimately adding Recommend, and Merchandising capabilities to their Search stack.



“We were so happy that we investigated ways to improve on Search and use more services from Algolia,” Bloemendal says. “That is the strength of Algolia, the ability to provide us with a solid roadmap. It allows us to innovate iteratively on our platform, the way an e-commerce company should.”

# Better user experience and growing value

Bloemendal is pleased with how the relationship with Algolia, and the development of better search functionality have grown. “The journey started with just ‘help, help, we’ve got a problem,’ and it has turned into ‘OK, what’s next?’ As we had hoped.”

Algolia became a strategic partner, supporting Zeeman in its long-term search roadmap. Together with the merchandising team, the e-commerce team started using Algolia to improve user experience.

“What I found positive was our Algolia account representative gave us their opinion on how we should or shouldn’t do things, which is good because not every vendor speaks out,” Bloemendal says.

Today Algolia is implemented in Zeeman’s online and mobile stores in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Spain, Luxembourg, Germany, and Austria — all countries where it is active. Algolia indexes are set up to be multilingual to function between national sites.

Through testing, Zeeman determined that a small layout change around the placement of its search bar resulted in a notable uptick in conversions and more traffic using search than merely browsing. “We were able to do this because we have Algolia, we were not able with our previous solution,” Bloemendal says.

“With Algolia you don’t need a lot of knowledge or people to use Search in a smart way.”

**Alex Bloemendal**  
Manager eCommerce, Zeeman

Using Algolia's Merchandising tool, the company expects to boost conversions from browsing as well. The company's most recent implementation is Algolia Recommend, from which they've seen similar performance out the gate without any refinements or improvements and they expect to see great results once they've optimized it more.

Using Algolia, Zeeman has seen improvements in conversions year-over-year, a notable increase in average order value (AOV) — especially from mobile orders — a reduction in cart abandonment thanks to improved relevance, ultimately resulting in increased revenue. All while improving search speed and ability to handle increased traffic. Since implementing Algolia, Zeeman's issues with downtime are a thing of the past.

Bloemendal sees Algolia as an important piece in the company's technology stack for years to come. Having implemented Search several times in his career, he says the transparency, speed of deployment, and ease of use Algolia brings make a significant difference.

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