Make your site search & categories your best salesperson

Best practices on how to optimize site search and categories to enhance customers' shopping experience and increase conversions online.

bizzkit

Introduction

Today, consumers expect comfort, ease, and rapid results when shopping online. But how do you as a business ensure that your visitors find exactly what they are searching for and how do you present the most relevant products to the visitors who do not know exactly what they are looking for yet?

This report provides you with best practices on the most successful site search initiatives and provide you with tips on how to optimize your product listing pages, so your customers are presented the most relevant products that leads to purchase.

INTRODUCTION

Make sure your customers find what they are looking for

Customers expect the same experience when shopping online as in physical stores. According to Forrester 2022, 31% of all product finding tasks end in frustration as the users are not able to find what they are looking for. The Search bar and product listing pages (PLP's) can be considered the salespeople of the webshop trying in two different ways to help the customers.

SEARCH

PLP

[S E A R C H E R S / B R O W S E R S]

SEARCHERS

Make up 20% of webshop visitors

Searchers are almost at the end of the buying funnel and know exactly what they want. Since they are looking for something specific, they are ready to type the brand, product name, color, or size into the search bar.

BROWSERS

Make up 80% of visitors on a webshop

Browsers are people that are midway through the buying funnel and have already heard about a product, but only have a vague idea of what exactly they are looking for. They will start discovering wide in a main category and then go in-depth through sub-categories.

[SEARCHERS]

Great search experiences

Users are used to search to find what they are looking for and Google has set the bar high when it comes to showing relevant search results. Google has 4.3 billion users worldwide.

According to Forrester, 43% of users go directly to the site search bar when visiting a webshop. However, 34% of all site search engines does not return useful results. There is a good reason for optimizing search experience because searchers are 7-10 times more likely to convert than regular webpage visitor.

Your visitors turn to search either because they need something that the current page is not showing them or because they know exactly what they want. By increasing your understanding of your visitors' search journey and offering a search engine that returns the desires results, your visitors will be more likely to make a purchase. The better configured the site search engine is, the easier it is for people to find what they are looking for.

The search journey

People search in different ways and at different times during their shopping journey. The search becomes more specific when the consumer has moved further into the shopping funnel. Even though, there is not one specific rule of thumb when it comes to search the first step towards the good search experience is to gain a deeper understanding of the tendencies and consumer behaviour behind site search.

Searchers – The facts

This illustrates that high quality site search has become a must-have for any e-commerce business and shows the negative affect it can have if visitors are not able to find what they are looking for.

34%

of users search for non-product content. The rest often have search queries that includes a theme, feature, or symptom when they search.

15%

of e-commerce sites do not support the most basic types of non-product search queries.

20%

of search users submit another query after their initial search.

21%

of users simply leave the website on the spot out of frustration if they are unable to find what they are looking for.

Search vs. Browse survey

Internal survey from a current customer that has one of the biggest webshops in Denmark with more than 50.000 visitors a day confirms the importance of working actively with both search and browse.

Add to basket rate
18,83% on a search results page
10,04% on a product listing page (PLP)

The add-to-basket rate is much higher on search results pages so if you are able to show relevant search results your visitors will be more likely to convert.

Food for thought

Even though, we can conclude that spending more time on a page and viewing more pages results in a higher engagement rate it might also be an idea to think about how your visitors can convert faster. E.g. if a visitor knows exactly what he/she is looking for, it might be relevant to work on optimizing sorting of products in search and categories to ensure they are quickly able to find what they are looking for.

Number of viewed sites per session	Average time spent on site
Search: 7,62 sites	Search: 5:42 minutes
Browse: 2,58 sites	Browse: 1:39 minutes

— DID YOU KNOW?

People searching for something specific spend more time on a page and view more pages than browsers.

Your search engine is like a salesperson

The best e-commerce search engine is one that works like an excellent salesperson in a physical store. It understands questions and requests, and translates this into what the store offers, present suggestions, and help the shopper move closer towards a purchase. Every response to a question being asked to both a salesperson and a search bar can make or break a sale. The better configured the site search engine is, the easier it is for people to find what they are looking for.

Avoid no results

A 'no results' page is the web page that is shown to a user if the site search engine cannot locate any content relevant to the user's search query.

A 'no results' page is one of the worst obstacles a shopper can meet and can have severe consequences for businesses.

21% of users would immediately abandon the website after an unsuccessful search. Users who experience this will be less likely to return to a shop if they cannot find what they are looking for. Instead, they will go to the competitor and if they find what they are looking for they will be more willing to visit the same shop again next time.

One of the most common reasons for visitors being exposed to a no results page is that the site search engine is not able to process language, meaning users must use the exact same jargon as the site uses.

By removing the obstacles, that hinders a shopper during their buying journey and lowering the rating of no results searches you can boost your chance of selling more.

Understanding a query

Enhancing your understanding of your users search queries helps you optimize your site search and deliver relevant results.

DRESS = GOWN
T-SHIRT = TEE
SOCKS = STOCKINGS
TROUSERS = TROWSERS
SWEATSHIRT = SWEETSHIRT
PANTS = TROUSERS = JEANS
SWEATSHIRT = PULLOVER
CARDIGAN = CADIGAN
SHOES = SHOOS

Manage synonyms

Visitors often use varied language to search for the same item. Common synonyms must be programmed into the search engine so it can handle synonyms that captures the variety of ways visitors refers to the same item. Companies can use their site search data to understand which synonyms are most important and what key terms they might be missing out on. It may also be useful to take hypernyms and decompound words into consideration as these can also influence a query.

Manage human errors

Visitors often misspell words and misuse punctuation, especially on smartphones. A great site search engine must be able to manage typos. Companies can also create landing pages with a curated set of products and set up redirects. For curated listings it is a good idea to place the products with the highest conversion rate at the top. It is almost impossible to manage all misspellings that will happen on your site. However, companies can adopt best practices for the search user interface (UI) to make the UI as helpful as possible for the user to navigate through.
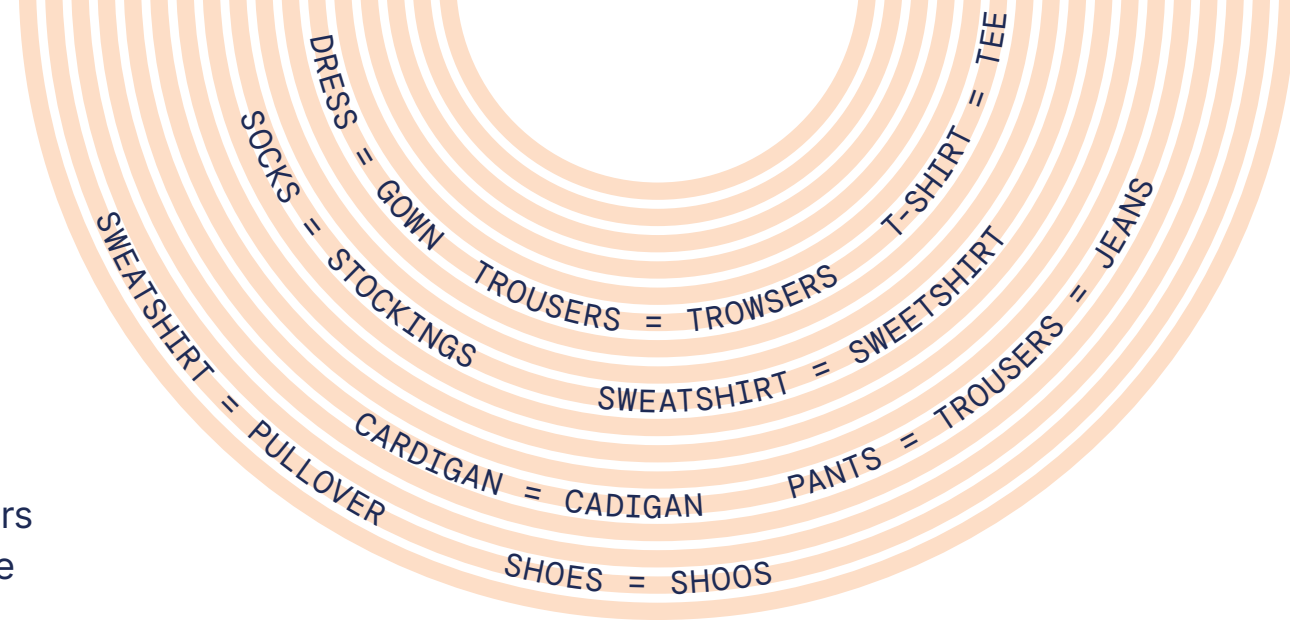
Confirm the search

If users make errors when entering a query, they should be made aware of it, so they do not drop off simply thinking that the product do not exist in the shop. It can be recommended to have the user confirm and remind them what they are trying to search for beneath the search bar.

Discover customer needs from data and personalize results

Each time users interacts with a site they generate lots of valuable data about their behavior and needs. Analyzing site search can help companies to understand their customers' search behavior and act upon that data. By uncovering top searches, popular products, low performing products etc. companies can adjust their relevance and fill in any possible gaps.

—— INFO

When personalization and proprietary customer data are integrated, revenue increases by 6-10%.

How to influence the query

There are different initiatives and features companies can implement to influence the query and avoid visitors being exposed to 'no results' pages.

Autocomplete and query suggestions

Autocomplete search and query suggestions offer recommendations and alternatives while the user types in the search bar. It helps users refine their search or perhaps discover a new query that is guaranteed to turn into results and ultimately help users find what they need faster.

Related tags

Related tags are much like suggestions. However, the tags remain on the page after the search has ended and as the shopping journey continues providing the user with a different user experience. This feature has shown to convert very well, especially on smartphones.

Dress

+ Michael Kors   + Midi   + Maxi   + wedding   + Summer
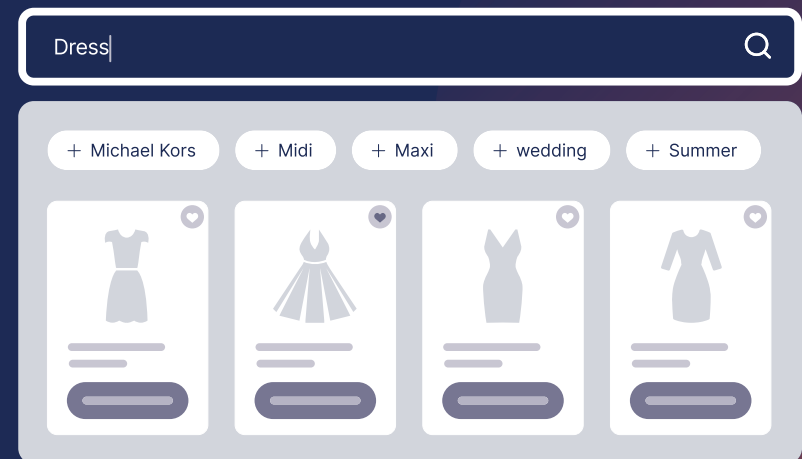
Bizzkit Ecommerce Search

Bizzkit Ecommerce Search is a strong on-site search engine that enhances customers' search experience with fast and relevant search results.

Take control of your site search

With Bizzkit Ecommerce Search you will be more in control and have the ability to influence the results by working hands on with different parameters that affect search on your online shop. You get to combine your knowledge of the business and customer behavior with data collected from previous searches.
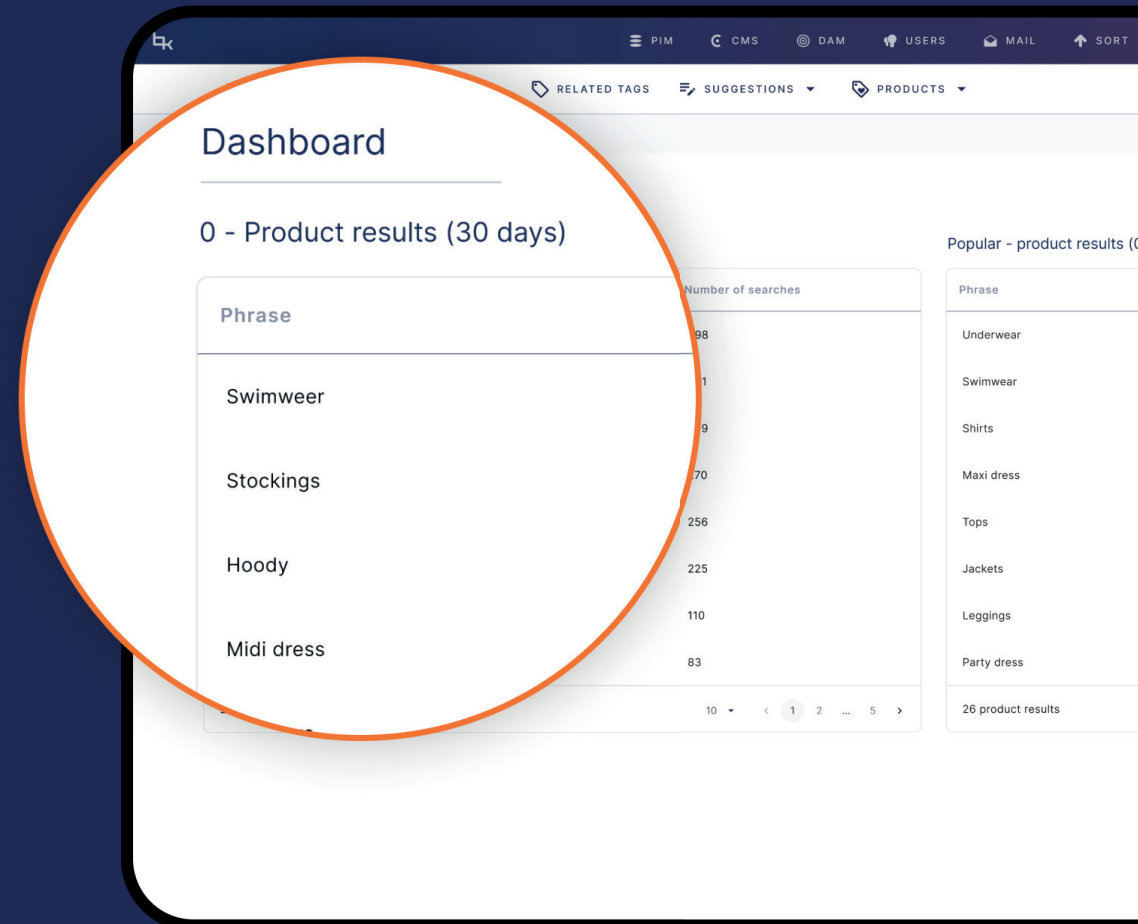
Enhance your understanding of search and act fast to influence queries

Understanding search is complex, but it can be easy. A dashboard allows you to gain an overview of most popular search terms and lists any search queries that fail to deliver results. The diagnostics tool lets you quickly and effectively understand the reasons why a given product is shown or not and lets you immediately work with synonyms, typos or other search concepts relevant to influence the search query and deliver the best, and right, results.

Mason black dress

Beautiful black Dress from Mason

Need a match within each block

Found in product description

Mason Dress

Not found in product description

Roug

Enrich product

[B R O W S E R S]

PLP's are like aisles in a physical store

In physical stores products are carefully placed on aisles and these are then carefully placed in sections so it is easy for the customers to navigate around the store. If all the products were placed randomly without any logic behind, it would be a mess for customers to navigate in and find the right products.

The same goes for online shops, but many companies tend to overlook structure which often makes it difficult for customers to find the products they are interested in. Webshop owners should treat their online shop as a physical store and create an organized infrastructure that serves the customers' needs and improves their shopping experience.

75%

of people never scroll past the first page

How do you ensure that your customers are presented the most relevant products as soon as possible, if you have hundreds, or thousands of potential products listed?

# A goldmine for clicks and conversions

On a traditional e-commerce journey, your product listing pages (PLP's) are the first gateway to checkout. Most visitors browse PLP's in search for inspiration, making them the heart of the shopping experience and a direct gateway to your product pages.

They are the bridge that shuttle shoppers down the funnel until they buy making it important that the visitors are presented the most relevant products as soon as possible on the page. It is important to ensure the PLP is designed to promote product discovery, encourage user engagement, and decrease time to purchase.

— WHAT IS A PLP?
A PLP is a page on a webshop that presents a list of products based on a category or search query.
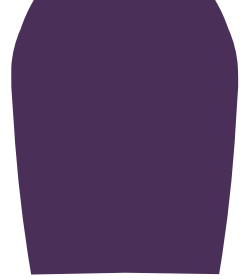
Simplifying the shopping experience

Creating a structure that is logical, convenient, and efficient is one of the most important steps to a successful user experience and hence a successful webshop.

Product categorization is important because it simplifies the shopping experience by making sure that visitors can easily maneuver through the catalog of offerings. Establishing an exceptional categorization system creates a map for online shoppers, especially the busy ones with little time or attention to spare.

— WHAT IS PRODUCT CATEGORIZATION?
Product categorization is the management of products by grouping products with related tags or attributes into categories and sub-categories.

Tree of categories

The best practice for creating a successful infrastructure is to use the tree structure where each category has several subcategories.

It is usually best to identify a top-level category or a meta category, which is the biggest and most general category, and avoid having other categories with the same name. The meta category is then further divided into subcategories or branches which are more focused. Under the subcategories are smaller categories which are more specific, and the products share the same characteristics. At the end of the tree, you will find that all products share the same attributes, also known as the leaf category. The tree structure further assures that the smaller categories only belong to one meta category or subcategory.

To optimize your category structure most effectively it is recommended to create a separate structure, one for browse and one for search. Browse requires a commercial structure focusing on the co-relation between products, whereas search requires a lingual focus where the structure is based on language.
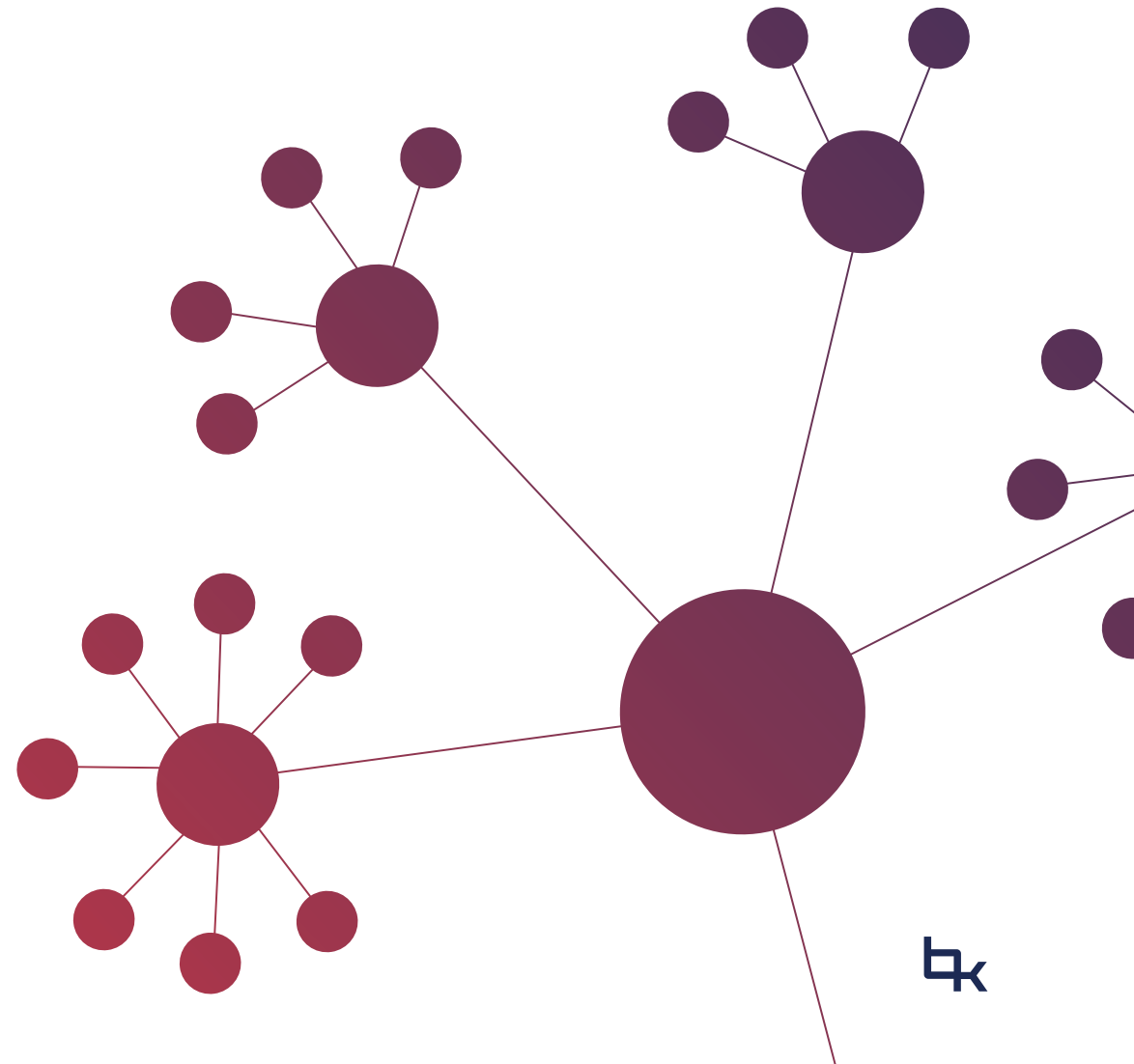
A different kind of salesperson

Visitors wants just as much a personal shopping experience online as in-store. In physical stores, the customers can talk to a salesperson that can guide them through the different product categories and help them pick and choose between the items. Online, the filters and sorting options are the salesperson trying to understand what the customer is looking for.

Customers are likely to leave a page if there are no options to customize product lists making it key for companies to offer filtering and sorting options. Visitors should always be able to choose between generic options such as size, color, brand, and price. However, there should also be options which are more specific to each category e.g., for clothing it would be relevant to present options such as materials and fitting.

BRAND   DRESS   MIDI

SLIM   SLEEVE

500-1500 KR   MEDIUM

PURPLE   WOOL

LOAD
TIME

Visitors love fast sites. They want things fast, easy, and without any friction. Even milliseconds matter when it comes to page speed and visitors will notice a half second delay. If a page takes too long to load you have introduced a major hurdle that can end any visitors´ shopping journey. In order to provide a good user experience, you must have a fast site.

A 2-second delay in load time can result in abandonment rates of up to 87%

An authentic shopping experience

As visitors are not able to physically touch, smell or try on products online, visual representation is key to offer an authentic shopping experience. Users often judge whether the PLP has something interesting to offer based on the first few products listed.

Visual representation is key

Getting a sense of diversity from the product list is important to showcase the full range of products and help guide users towards the products they are most interested in.
Use high quality images that provide an accurate and detailed view of the products.

A pleasant aesthetic with standard product images on the same background, angles and displays promotes a coherent brand image.

Providing additional views on hover will help customers to see additional images of how the product looks before entering the product page e.g., by showing how the product can be viewed in an additional environment, on a model, in action or up close.

Offer extra motivators

Beyond standard information such as size, price etc. other information can be a motivational factor for the customers. These can be added on the product cards in the PLP, so customers have direct access to relevant information without having to turn to the product detail pages.

The motivators differ from industry and product range, and companies can choose the ones that are most relevant to their audience.

SIZE

PRICE

QUICK CHECKOUT

ADD-BUTTONS

SALES AND DISCOUNT

STOCK AVAILABILITY

POPULARITY

RATINGS

PRICE

SIZE

SIZE

PRICE

QUICK CHECKOUT

ADD-BUTTONS

The order of products matter

Internal survey from a current customer that has one of the biggest webshops in Denmark with more than 50.000 visitors a day confirms the importance of optimizing the PLP.

The add-to-basket rate decreases significantly from page 1 and forward meaning that it is crucial for companies to make sure that the user is presented to the most relevant products already on the first page. Using personalization is a great tool to help you narrow down your understanding of what the user is searching for. The companies are the ones that knows their customers best and therefore it is also important to take your own understanding of your business and customers into consideration when trying to influence the sorting of products.

Add to basket rate – on the PLP

26,30% add products to the basket on page 1

5,80% add products to the basket on page 2

2,87% add products to the basket on page 3

Persona lization

Visitors want just as much a personal shopping experience online as in-store and they are most likely to prefer companies that quickly understands what they want and why. Showing the most relevant products early in the PLP makes a difference. The order of the products should be carefully selected and not setup by coincidence.

Add recommendations

By adding recommendations at the top of the PLP, you can quickly turn the visitors´ attention towards products they will be most likely to like and buy.

Visitors' context

Showing the products in the right order also entails knowing the visitors´ context such as where they are and what time of the year it is.

Virtual experts

Bring in in-store expertise and integrate a chat function so the visitor can easily get tips and tricks on how to find and use the most relevant products that goes beyond filtering.

Beyond personalization

With Bizzkit Commercial Sort you can take control of your categories and search by combining your business knowledge with user behavior and influence the sorting of products in the most optimal order by adjusting on different parameters. Behavioral data such as past purchases, adds-to-basket and clicks are merged with business parameters such as news, inventory status, margin, popularity and more.

You gain insight into the individual parameters and have the option to adjust and optimize each parameter weight to influence the sorting of product lists and maximize revenue for your categories.
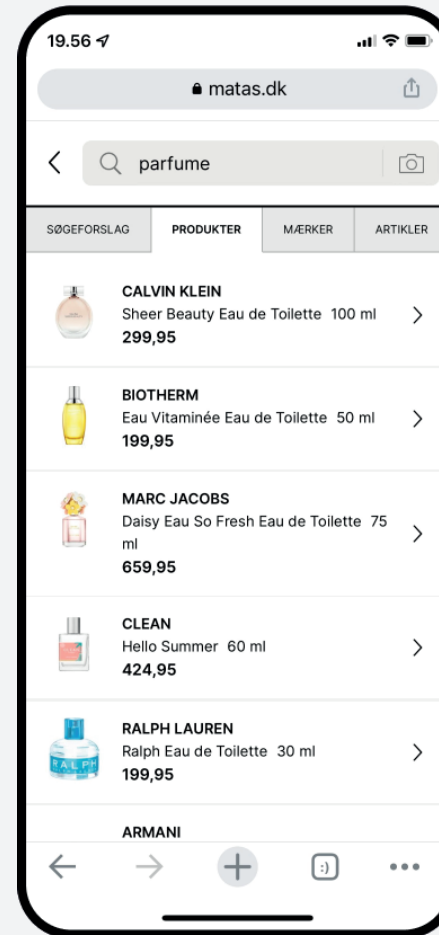
Weighted Score

# of clicks	4.523
Campaign	3.452
Review	2.345
Margin	5.234
Total	**15.554**

Weighted Score

# of clicks	2.755
Campaign	3.233
Review	3.445
Margin	4.345
Total	**13.778**

Want to optimize your webshop?

Optimizing and improving your business with focus on search and sorting is an ongoing process. One that requires a strong foundation and effective e-commerce platform. With fully integrated PIM, DAM and CMS, Bizzkit offers the strongest software foundation for ambitious webshops.

The platform is built headless or as composable commerce, where the final solution is configured and designed based on your business processes and customer journeys. For your custom solution, Bizzkit offers access to Commercial Sort and Ecommerce Search.

Do you want to know more?

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