12 SEO tips for large ecommerce websites

Approaching SEO for large ecommerce sites can be overwhelming.

With more pages than you can even get your head around and issues like product variants, complex filtering systems and expired products, SEO for ecommerce sites requires a different kind of SEO strategy.

Let’s be clear: all of the same keyword research and onsite optimization practices apply to ecommerce sites as they would for your standard brochure site. That’s the first step in the process, and we won’t cover those points here.

However, for ecommerce sites, it’s necessary to take things a step (or ten) further. In this post, we share our SEO tips for large ecommerce sites. Optimization for ecommerce takes time, but we’ll also provide tips to help streamline the process without scrimping.

Here goes…

Ensure your site is on HTTPS

Safety first! Although this falls under general optimization for all sites, switching to HTTPS is particularly important for ecommerce sites. With exchanges of personal details and users trusting you with highly sensitive payment information,

security is of the utmost importance.

As well as ensuring that your SSL certificate is correctly implemented, make sure to be transparent in communicating your security compliance to users.

Provide detailed information on the steps you have taken to offer utmost levels of security, and display any relevant logos to demonstrate that you comply with certain security standards.

Optimize category pages

Now that your website is more secure than Fort Knox, it’s time to focus on optimizing those all-important category pages. These are the pages on which to target those top-level keywords and should be high traffic generators.

Category pages often flop due to issues with thin content. Text is frequently left by the wayside in favor of showcasing the products. However, this approach is potentially catastrophic in terms of rankings. It always pays to have at least a solid paragraph of copy to describe the category.

To further bolster the ranking potential of your category pages, try to focus your link-building campaign on generating links to them. Since the category pages serve as gateways to your products, it is a good idea to prioritize these in your site optimization efforts.

Optimize product pages

Product pages can cause a real headache for optimization. The same issues often occur for the products pages as they do for the category pages – except there are tons more product pages to deal with. Think thin content, duplicate content, and non-existent metadata.

A good place to start is with the product descriptions. Get into the habit of writing unique descriptions for each product. It can be tempting to copy and paste the description from the manufacturer, but this means placing duplicate content on your site. And that's SEO suicide.

SEO aside, don't forget that these descriptions are fundamental in actually selling the product and increasing conversions. Try to tell a story with the description – make it interesting, enticing and in line with your brand personality. Speed up the process by devising a format for the product descriptions.

For example, one format could specify a title, short description, bullet point list of features, and a final note on the product. This will ensure consistency and also speed up the content creation process for your writers.

Consider including user-generated content on the product pages, including social media mentions and reviews. This will provide social signals, as well as helping to increase conversions and bring further unique content to the page.

Don't forget to write unique title tags based on careful keyword research. Again, it's worth creating a standard format for these titles, for ease and consistency. Enticing meta descriptions may not help you rank higher but they will increase click-throughs from the SERPs. Try to include popular, eye-catching words or phrases, such as 'free delivery', 'buy now' 'sale', 'reduced' or 'new'.

If you have thousands of products then you'll need to prioritize. You may be an SEO whizz, but you're not Superman/Wonder Woman/*insert superhero of choice*. Adopt a top-down approach and start by optimizing the most popular products first.

Product variants

One of the questions we get asked a lot is what on earth to do about product variants. By this we mean different styles, sizes, colours and models of one product. If flicking between these different options generates a new URL for each variant, then you'll be running into some serious duplicate content and keyword cannibalization issues.

So what's the fix? The best approach is to display options where the user can change the color, size or model but without the URL changing in the process. The exception to this would be if different colors or other variables are crucial to the product and will rank separately in the SERPs.

Ultimately, though, you don't want these pages to be competing with each other. If you do have different product variants, then be sure to canonicalize the main product version.

'Purchase intent' keywords

We're not going to provide a complete guide to keyword research in this post. But what we will say is this: be sure to include plenty of purchase intent keywords, e.g. 'Buy [insert product]'.

Users typing in such search terms are likely to be further down the sales funnel and therefore more likely to convert. Remember that SEO is not just about driving traffic; it's about driving conversions, and therefore revenue.

Images

Let's not forget the images: humans are visual animals at the end of the day. Deploy only the highest quality images to entice potential customers. Ensure product images are not too large or they could slow the page speed.

Plus, don’t forget the importance of image search – add appropriate alternative text to all images.

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Be wary of filters

The vast majority of ecommerce sites have some form of filtering system to help users find the products most relevant to them. Although these are super handy for the user, the trouble is that some filtering systems generate unique URLs for every type of filter search.

What’s so bad about that? Well, it means that one site could have thousands and thousands of indexed pages, all with duplicate content issues. As a result, it can make your site look frighteningly like a content farm in the eyes of Google’s pet Panda.

Check Google Search Console to see how many pages have been indexed for your site. If the number is unfathomably high then the best solution is to add a meta robots tag with parameters **noindex, follow** to the filtered pages. It will lead to these pages being dropped from the index, and you’ll no longer have to lose sleep over them.

Expired or out of stock items

One of the key issues with ecommerce sites is that products come and go *a lot*. There’s no need to remove out of stock items from the site, as you could be missing out on valuable search traffic.

Instead, leave the product page live, but specify when the product is due back in stock and provide similar options in the meantime.

If a product expires and will no longer be sold then you'll need to remove the page. However, do not forget to redirect the page! Set up a permanent 301 redirect for a newer version of the product, a similar product, or to the relevant category page.

Site architecture

Providing seamless internal navigation is essential not only for good user experience but also to help Google crawl and index your site. Ensure that categories are linked to from the homepage and that products are linked to from the category pages.

Provide links to products in blog content in order to continue the user journey and funnel them towards making a purchase. Try to link any new products from the homepage, as it will increase their chances of being indexed quicker by Google and getting found faster by users.

Breadcrumbs are also an important addition, as they ensure that every part of the user's path is clickable. This helps users navigate back to parent categories as quickly and easily as possible. Plus, they also appear in Google's search results, giving users an immediate overview of the site structure.

Pay attention to URLs

With large ecommerce sites, it's all too easy for URLs to get overly complex. Keep them clean and ditch parameters to ensure they are devoid of jumbled, nonsensical characters.

Be neat and tidy by sticking to lower case letters, utilizing

hyphens instead of underscores and keeping them short but sweet.

Schema for product pages

Adding schema markup to your product pages is absolutely crucial for improving the appearance of your site in the SERPs. Enhanced results means greater click-throughs.

There are two types of schema that you should add to your products: product schema and review schema.

Each product page should use the same template and therefore have a consistent layout. This means you can add schema markup to the template using microdata and the schema will be generated for each new product page.

Just make sure that you regularly test your schema using Google's Structured Data Testing Tool, and if you're new to it all, then utilize Google's Markup Helper.

Monitoring

As with any SEO strategy, you need to be continually monitoring and analyzing the results. This is even more important for ecommerce sites, due to the scale and constant changing of products.

Stay on top of identifying broken links and error pages. Analyse what's working and what's not, note popular keywords and pages, and address those not performing well for organic search. For the best results, it's always worth engaging in some A/B testing – whether this is for keywords, product description formats or images.

There's no doubt that SEO for large ecommerce sites is time-consuming. That's why so many ecommerce sites don't have the level of optimization they should, which presents a fantastic

opportunity for those who are willing to put in the grind. Small, incremental changes can make a big difference.

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Search Engine Land that Google had officially confirmed a change to how it displays

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to highlight the perspectives of women working in SEO, and how – if at all – they

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SEO. No-one can deny that you need high-quality links if you want to see succes

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