

What GoogleBot is Doing to Shopping Carts... and Why via @martinibuster

GoogleBot can add products to shopping carts. But it's only happening to these specific merchants.

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Contrary to common impressions about this topic, Google isn't crawling and adding products to random shopping carts. This is what's really going on.

What's really going on is that merchants who participate in Google Shopping (or Google's back-end for sellers the Merchant Center and Shopping ads) agree to have their sites crawled, including their shopping cart.

According to the Merchant Center Terms of Service:

"If the content you submit contains URLs or similar content, you grant Google the right to access, index, cache or crawl the URL(s) and the content available through such URL(s), or any portion thereof.

For example, Google may utilize an automated software program to retrieve and analyze the websites associated with such URL(s)."

The purpose of the is to keep the Google Shopping a trustworthy place for consumers to shop by weeding out the bad merchants.

In addition to crawling the shopping cart, Google also requires participating merchants to allow Google to crawl their shopping landing pages.

Blocking Google from the landing pages by using the robots.txt can cause that shopping page to be disapproved for Google Shopping ads and their Merchant Center, according to Google's support pages.

"Users expect that the information on your landing pages matches what is shown in your Shopping ads. To ensure this seamless user experience we perform automated quality and policy checks on product landing pages. These checks require

us to download the landing pages with Google's crawling system."

For example, one of the rules that Google enforces is misrepresentation of the merchant or the products.

Examples of issues Google is checking for are:

- "Failure to clearly and conspicuously disclose the payment model and full expense that a user will bear before and after purchase
- Failure to clearly and conspicuously disclose all related conditions before and after purchase
- Promising products or promotional offers that aren't available for users
- Making false statements about your identity, qualifications, or the promoted product (such as falsely claiming to be a certified reseller or using a brand name to promote another product)
- Using false claims or claims that entice the user with an improbable result (even if this result is possible) as the likely outcome that a user can expect
- Falsely implying affiliation with, or endorsement by, another individual, organization, product, or service"

Google's official statement (emailed to SEJ) is:

"We use automated systems to ensure consumers are getting accurate pricing information from our merchants. This sometimes leads to merchants seeing abandoned carts as a result of our system testing whether the price displayed matches the price at checkout."

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These are the Facts About Googlebot and Shopping Carts

- Google is not adding products to the shopping carts of random merchants.
- Google is testing and adding products to the shopping carts of merchants who participate in Google's shopping, merchant and Shopping Ads services.
- Every merchant who participates in those Google programs agrees to that kind of crawling, as agreement is required for participation.

Related: 6 Ways to Reduce Shopping Cart Abandonment

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