WSJ: GoogleBot can add products to shopping carts

A Google crawler has been adding products to e-commerce site shopping carts, the Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday. Sellers have been complaining about a serial cart abandoner named, John Smith. Turns out John is a Google bot. A Google spokesperson told the Wall Street Journal that it built systems to ensure the pricing seen on the product pages is reflected when a user adds a product to the cart.

GoogleBot shopping. Google told Search Engine Land in a statement, "We use automated systems to ensure consumers are getting accurate pricing information from our merchants."

Sellers that upload their product feeds to Google Merchant Center may not realize it, but they agree to having Google's bots crawl their sites for price verifications when they agree to the Terms of Service. The bot is designed to ensure the price in the feed matches the price on the product page and when the product is added to the cart.

The automated system will disapprove items that don't pass pricing verifications.

Abandoned carts. Google is aware that this may cause issues for merchants and owners of e-commerce sites. Google told the WSJ, "This sometimes leads to merchants seeing abandoned carts as a result of our system testing the price displayed matches the price at checkout." That data can mess with e-commerce site owners' abandoned cart metrics, making them look artificially higher than they really are.

Can you block it? Not if you want to participate in Google Shopping or show your products in Surfaces across Google. Google's own terms of service for Google Merchant Center allow Google to crawl your site. It is possible, though, to control

the rate of crawling via the site’s robots.txt file.

Why we care. Google said it is looking to clarify how these automated systems work with merchant web sites in the future to avoid confusion. E-commerce site owners, if you’ve noticed funky abandoned cart metrics, it may be a bot.

About The Author

Barry Schwartz a Contributing Editor to Search Engine Land and a member of the programming team for SMX events. He owns RustyBrick, a NY based web consulting firm. He also runs Search Engine Roundtable, a popular search blog on very advanced SEM topics. Barry’s personal blog is named Cartoon Barry and he can be followed on Twitter here.
http://feeds.searchengineland.com/~r/searchengineland/~3/8mfg2oedl0U/wsj-googlebot-can-add-products-to-shopping-carts-337098