

Value of an E-Shop's Search Feature

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Contents

Introduction	3
Site search importance	4
How many customers use site search?	5
Is search used more on desktop or mobile?	7
How much can search earn?	8
Is it still true that customers prefer to shop on desktops?	9
What part of the e-shop's revenue comes from search?	10
Lost opportunities	12
How many searches bring no results?	13
Why do searches bring no results?	14
Why should you pay attention to searches with no results?	16
Search results ranking	17
When customers don't click on the search results?	18
Does eliminating no results searches make sense?	19
How many customers go past the first page of results?	21
How many products do the customers view?	22
Search interaction	23
How can autocomplete help?	24
Does autocomplete increase revenue?	25
Do filters help customers?	26
What should you do right away?	27



Search is a vital function of every e-shop.

The customer can simply enter text and find a product they want to buy without excessively going through the whole assortment of the e-shop.

We could say that site search is **an alternative to a shop assistant**, who helps the customer in a shop. The customer comes in with a request and the shop assistant presents the available products.

They **must know** what the customer wants and help navigate them. If the customer can't find the desired product, they can't buy it. At this point, every seller should be alert because **they are losing a potential profit**.

In the online world, and your e-shop, it works the same way. If the customer can't find what they are looking for, logically, **they will not buy it and go looking for it somewhere else**.

How serious is this problem? Is a well-functioning site search important for an e-shop? Can it increase revenue? What should it be able to do, and what functions should it have?

We bring you updated data that will answer these questions and more.

Based on data from almost 1,500 e-shops, divided into 13 e-commerce segments, we summed up the findings that will help your e-shop **produce more satisfied customers** and **increase revenue**.



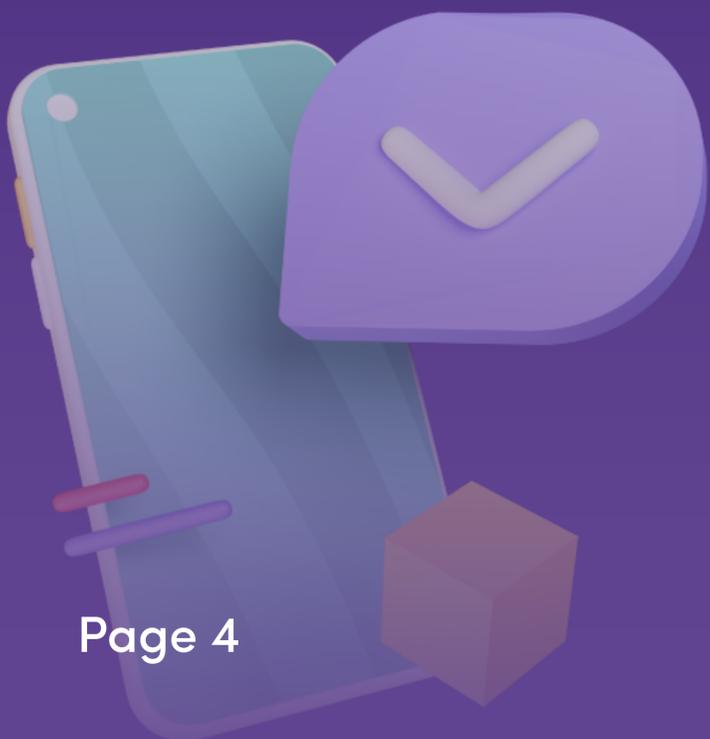
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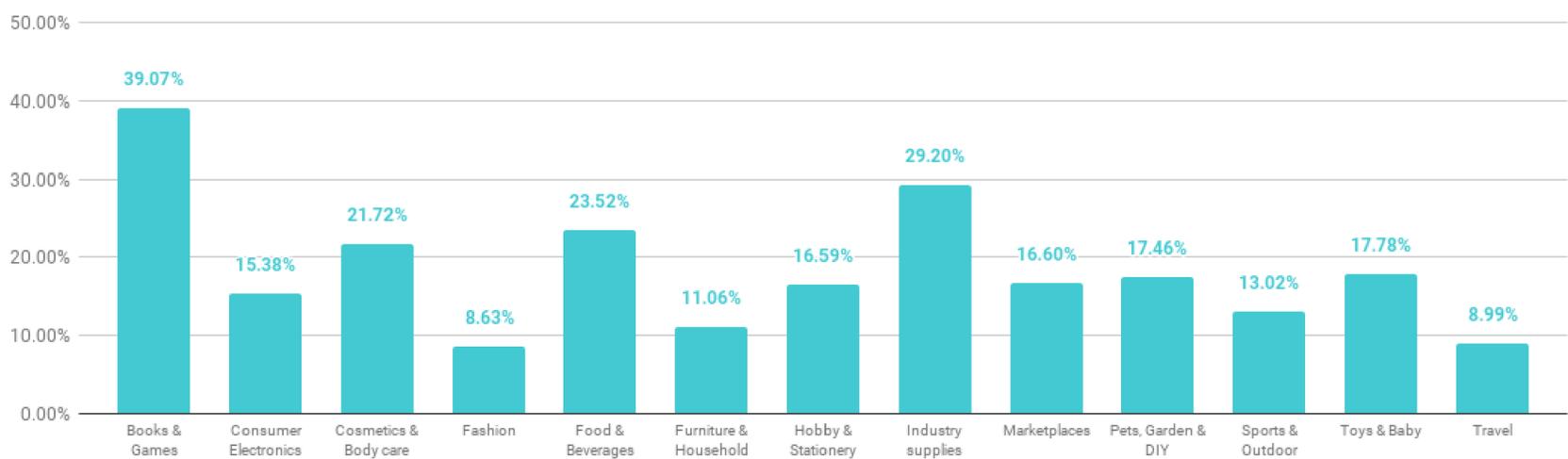


Site Search Importance



How many customers use site search?

Search usage



About a fifth of customers uses e-shop site search. Too many to ignore this fact when optimizing search features on e-shops. You can't afford to ignore a fifth of visitors in your e-shop, can you? However, there are huge differences across the segments.

Site search is mostly used in the Books and Games segment and least used in the Fashion segment. These differences stem from the fact that visitors in various segments have different goals and are also influenced by the main products in each segment.

Segments with higher search usage rate

The customer usually knows exactly, which product they want to buy (e.g., Kill Bill Blue Ray)

Product title clearly identifies it (card game Uno)

The visual is not used primarily to evaluate the suitability of the product (book cover)

The picture is only to confirm, if the found product is a correct one (book cover)

Site search saves customers time because it brings them to desired products faster than if they had to find their way through the navigation menu

Segments with lower search usage rate

The customer wants to see a wider offer (summer dresses)

Product titles are not intuitive (dress Casablanca)

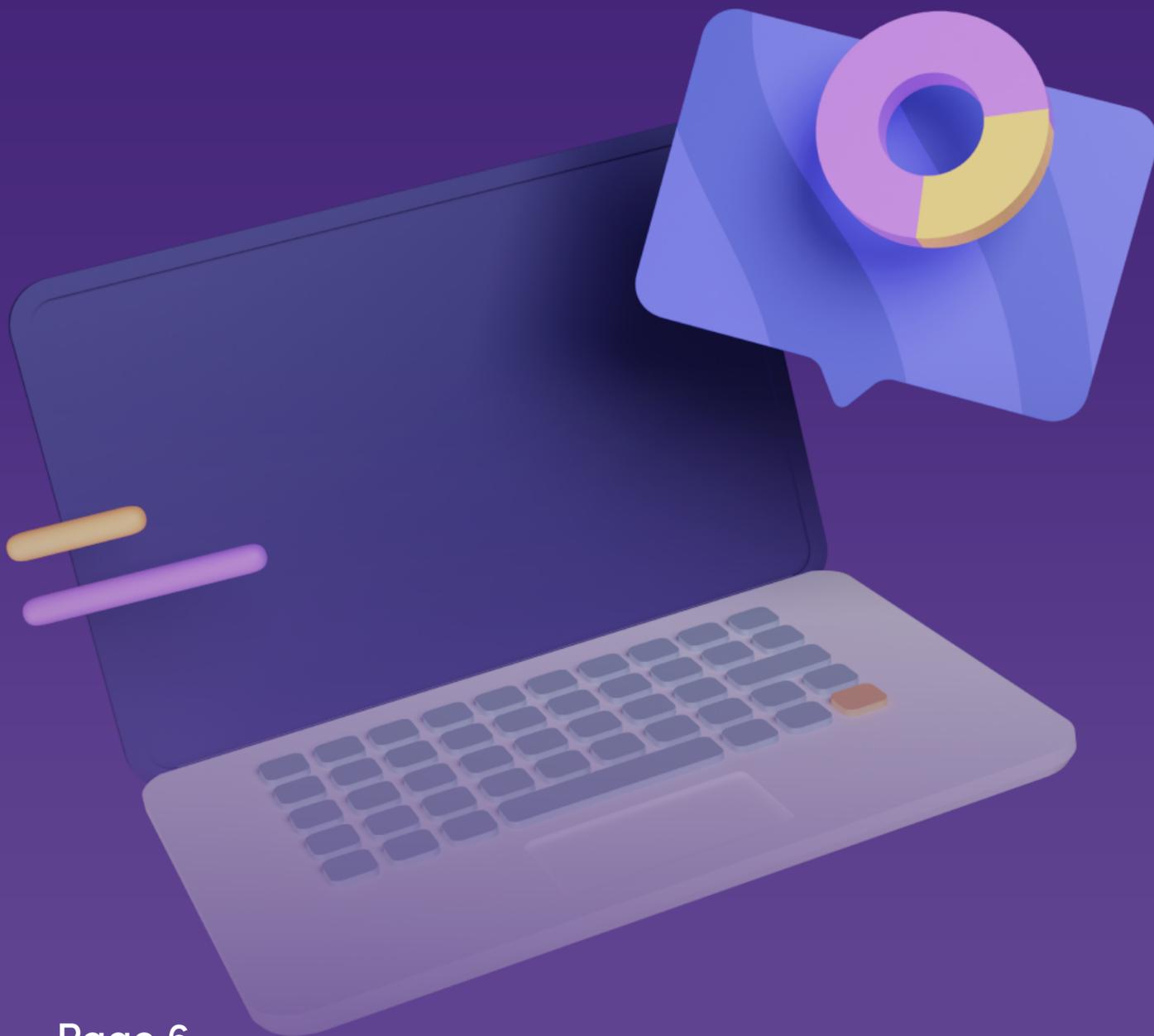
The visual is mainly used to assess the quality, appearance, and use of the product (clothing details)

The image is the most important product information (clothes)

Customers are willing to see a wider range of products and they're more likely to use navigation to see more of what's available

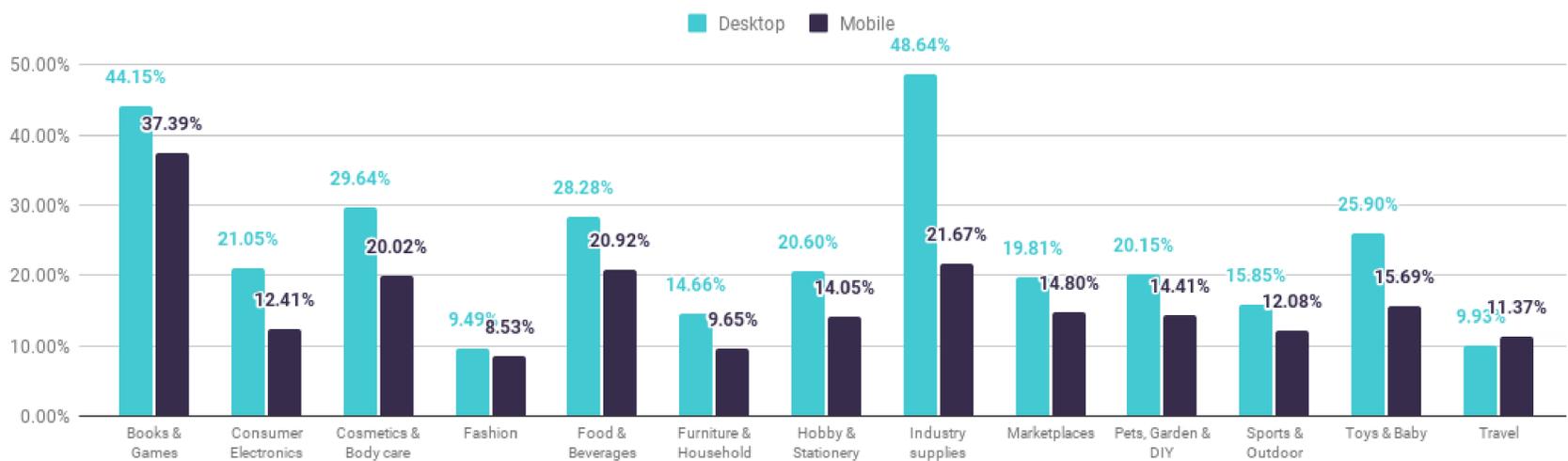


**If the customer
uses site search, they
usually already
know, what products
they want.**



Is site search used more on desktop or mobile?

Search usage by device



If we have a look at search usage data from a device perspective, we see that mobile usage rates are slightly lower.

The reason is simple – **the search is often hidden on mobile versions of e-shops.** It isn't available immediately. The customer has to tap several times before they can start typing into the search. **This 'hiding' forces users to look for one of the basic e-shop functionalities,** which naturally decreases search usage.

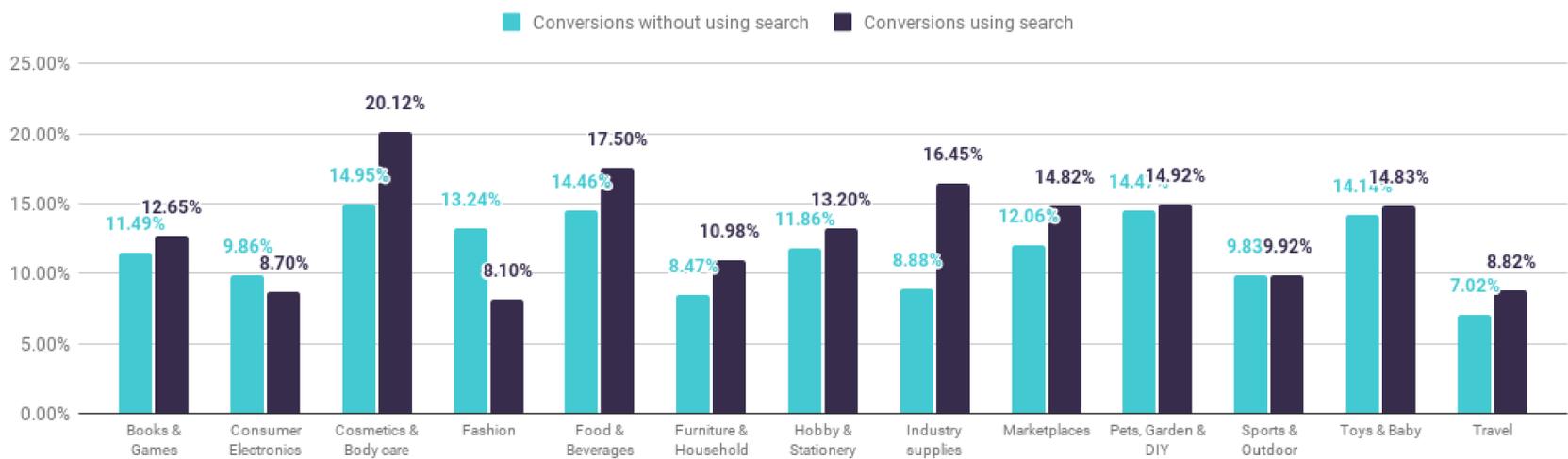
Tips for a well-functioning search on mobile

1. It's clearly visible and marked (magnifier icon).
2. Autocomplete appears immediately as you start typing.
3. Autocomplete shows product recommendations from the first character.
4. The results are shown from the first character.
5. It suggests complete queries while typing.
6. It highlights the matches.
7. The whole phrase can be deleted by tapping on an "X".
8. Keyboard automatically hides when it's not needed.
9. Autocomplete adapts to the mobile screen.
10. It shows all data that is important for the customer.



How much can search earn?

Conversion probability



An interesting indicator of the importance of search is how many customers directly buy one of the products after using it. In most segments, customers who use search convert more often than those who use the menu to find products. Why?

If the customer uses the search, they usually already know which product they need.

There is a strong chance that they have already decided to purchase. They only need to find the right product.

i Did you know that...?

Other research shows that 73% of e-shops confirmed revenue increase from site search if a specific person within the company is managing it.

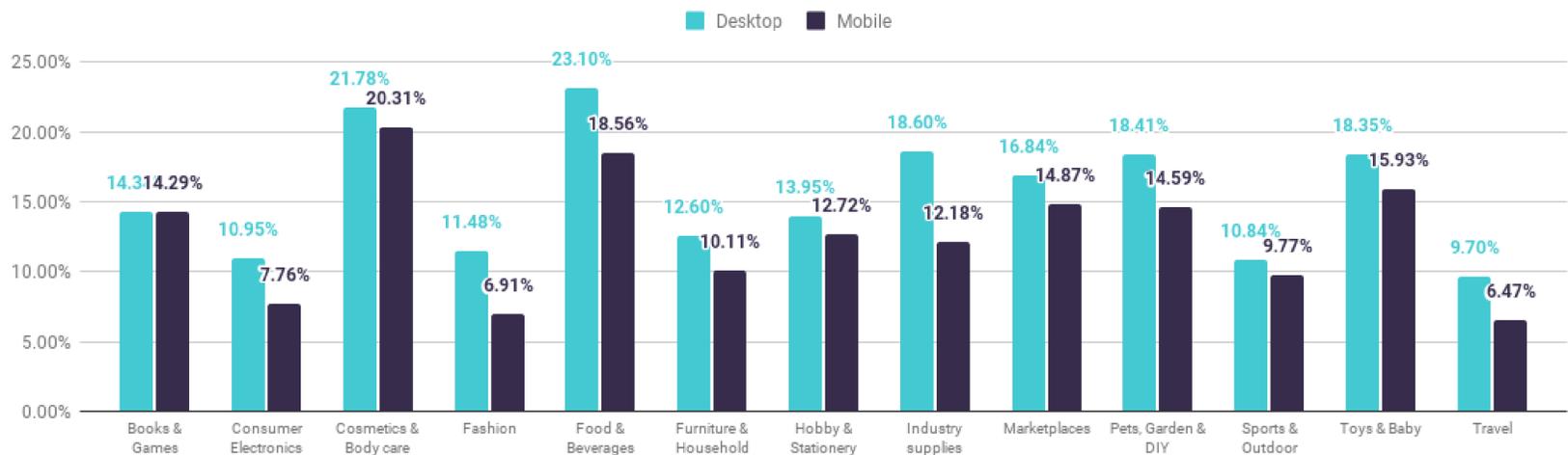
58% of e-shops in the same research only check the metrics.

Don't just be observers! You can affect what's going on in your e-shop more than you think you can.



Is it still true that customers prefer to shop on desktops?

Search conversion rate by device



When we look at the conversion rate from search by the device used, we see that most conversions, despite changes in customer behavior brought on by the pandemics are still happening on desktops.



- So, it's still true that customers often use a mobile phone to do research – they look at the offer and identify the products they want to buy and pay for them later, on their desktop.



What part of the e-shop's revenue comes from search?

Search conversions from all conversions



An important metric, which emphasizes the importance of search for an e-shop, is the search conversion rate vs all conversions.

The differences between segments more or less copy the site search usage rate. The graph shows that **the search can make up to 39% of an e-shop's total revenue** (some e-shops go as high as 80%).

i Did you know that...?

Top e-commerce players consider site search as a full-fledged channel, for which they even set aside a specific budget. They directly count on the income from this channel and regularly evaluate and optimize it.

How to find out if your search works well?

[Create a free account](#) and find out how your search is doing.



And how about your search?

There are search softwares on the market today, which, thanks to their advanced features, can help customers find the products they want and **boost the e-shop's profits significantly.**

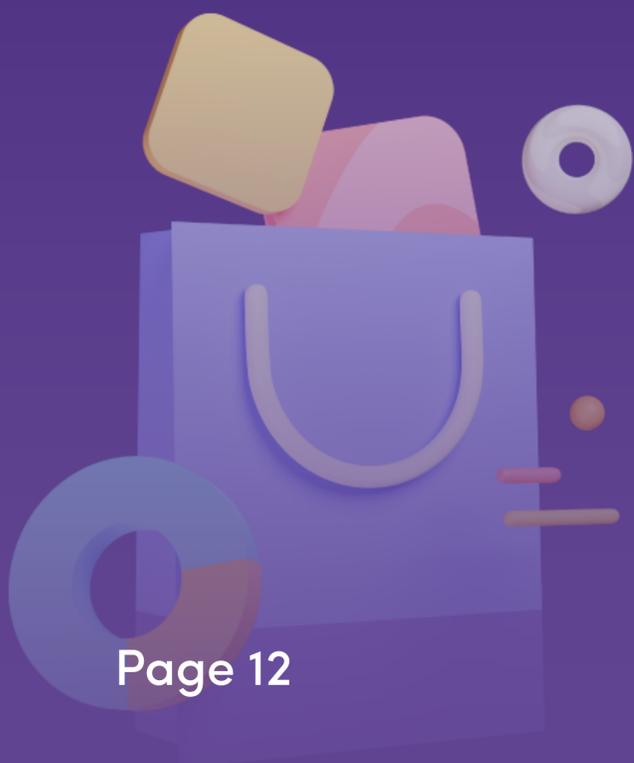
Can your search do this?

- Show suggestions starting from the first typed
- Rank results far beyond the full-text match
- Correct typos
- Allow synonyms for queries
- Determine filters relevant to the context
- Recognize different product code formats
- Distinguish various grammatical forms
- Allow product boosting
- Search by voice

Luigi's Box Search can offer these and many more features. If you want to find out how your e-shop can benefit from them, book **[a consultation with our specialist.](#)**

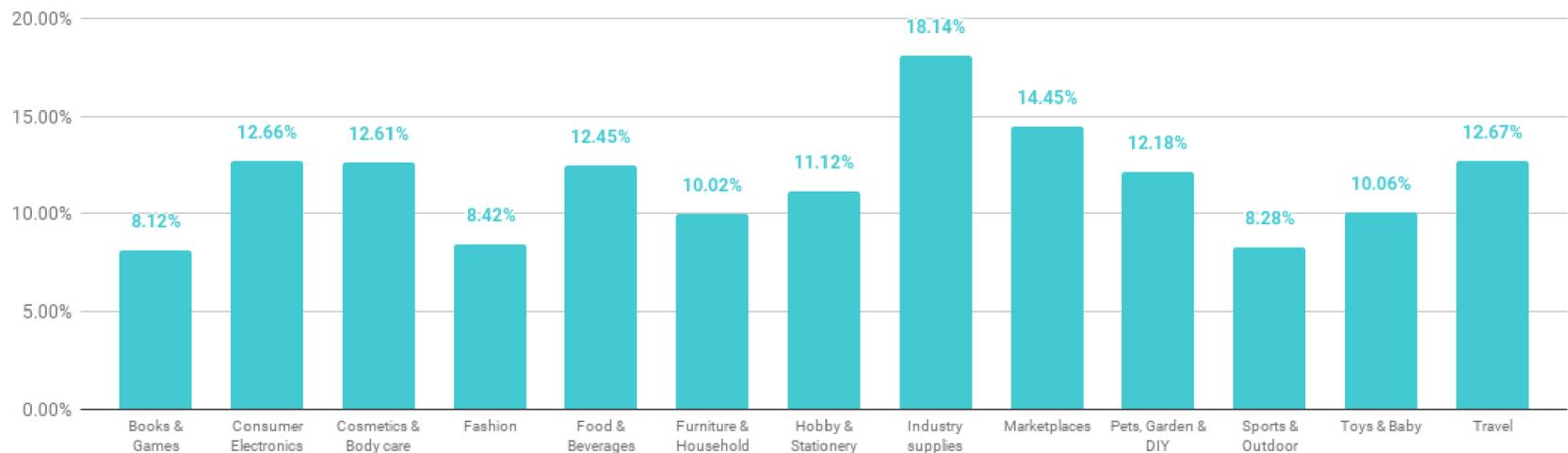


Lost Opportunities



How many searches bring no results?

Searches without results



For the search to generate conversions, it is logically necessary that the customer gets results for their query. However, on average, 13.4% of searches end up with no results. This happens least often in the Fashion segment and most often in the Industry supplies segment.

For instance, the high rate of searches with no results is in the Industry supplies segment is caused by the specific type of search – by product codes or product sizes – which not every search software can handle. The search must find the correct product with code 1/45-1B7, even if the customer has entered it as 1451B7.

i Did you know that...?

Even if there are **no search results**, you still can **customize the results page**. The goal is to **provide reliable guidance** through the web page for the customer and **lead them to selected pages** in the e-shop, such as the category lists, blogs, etc., thus eliminating the bad user experience.



Why do searches bring no results?

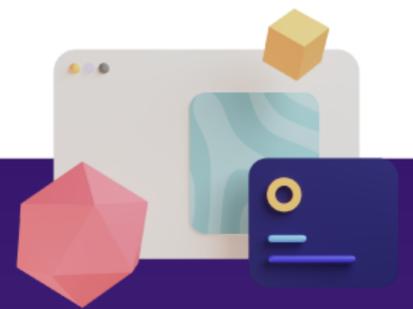
There can be several reasons why a search can't find any product fitting the customer's demand.

1. The customer is looking for products in a way the search can't handle

- enters the product name differently than listed in the catalog
 - uses a slang expression
 - uses a regional expression
 - knows only the colloquial product name
- writes with typos
- searches without diacritics
- writes the product name in plural
- types in a different format of the product code

2. The product isn't available in the e-shop

- the product is currently sold out
- e-shop doesn't offer the product at all



- **Almost all these issues can be solved by site search optimization.** A good e-shop offers features that can satisfy all of customer's demands:

1. Allows you to assign synonyms to queries.
2. Recommends synonyms based on customer behaviour.
3. Corrects typos.
4. Recognizes different grammatical forms.
5. Recognizes different product code formats.
6. Recommends alternatives to sold-out products.



In up to one-third of cases the customer leaves the website immediately after a failed search.



Why should you pay attention to searches with no results?

Exit rate from no results searches



We have seen how many searches end up with no results, what their causes are, and how to prevent them. But why should you care?

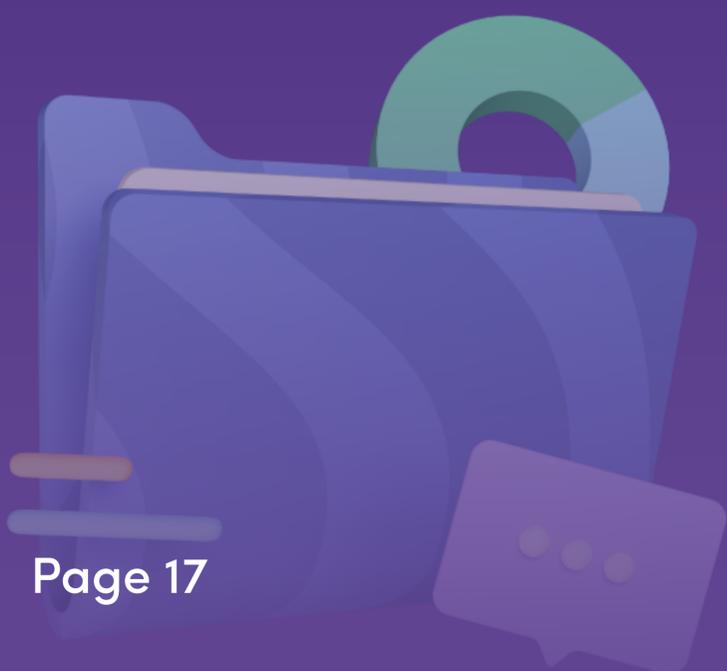
If the customers can't find the desired product, they won't have the patience to keep adjusting the query **until they find relevant results.**

One-third of customers leave the e-shop immediately after a failed search. This means they go find and buy what they wanted from the competitors. What's worse, in many cases the e-shop actually had those products, meaning they're missing out on potential revenue only due to bad search.

The risk of the customer leaving the e-shop after a failed search is approximately the same in each segment, ranging from 30 to 40%.



Search Results Ranking



When customers don't click on the search results?

Searches without clicks



In two of three searches, the customer doesn't interact with any result. This customer behaviour pattern is at the same level for all types of products and therefore doesn't depend on the segment.

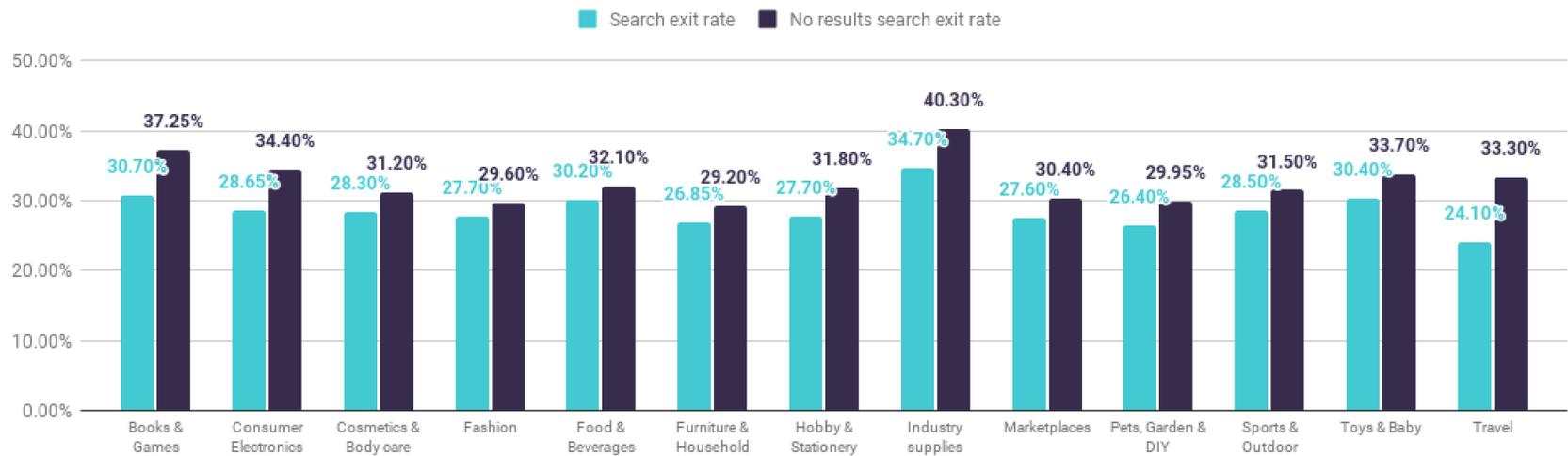
One of the reasons why the customer doesn't interact is that e-shops offer a lot of information about products already in the product tile. Without clicking on the product detail, the customer will find out the price, discount, availability, etc. They will therefore find out all the needed information even without clicking on any of the results.

This low search results interaction rate brings us to another problem – ideal product ranking in the search results.



Does eliminating no results searches make sense?

Exit rate



There are different ways to reduce your search exit rate, but does it make sense to try to eliminate them at all costs? Data shows it doesn't. When comparing the search exit rate and search with no results exit rate, there is only a slight difference.

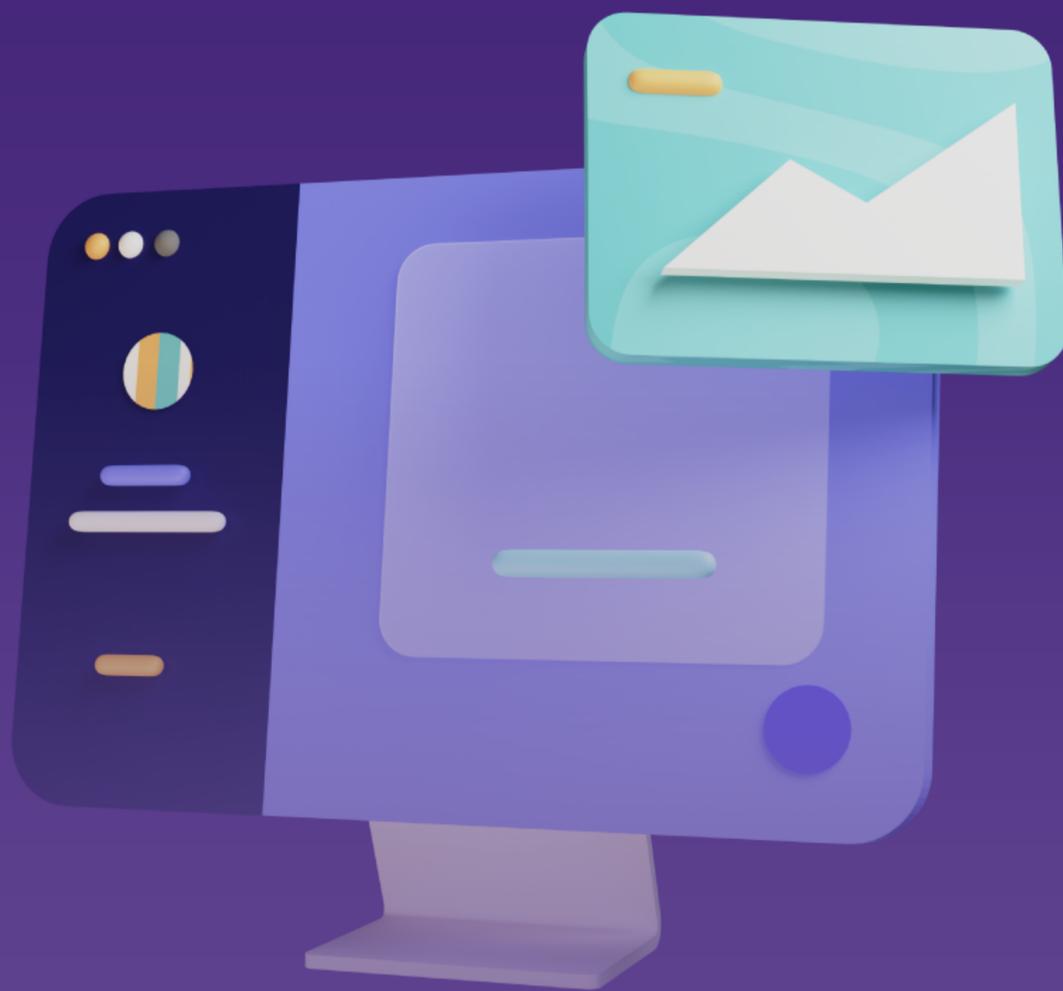
If you show the customer irrelevant results, it's almost the same as if you didn't show any results. The key is to show the results that interest them.

This means that you have to **pay attention to the correct product ranking** in the search results. If the customer is looking for "chocolate", they want to find chocolates, not chocolate-flavored yogurts.

That can cause many issues in a normal full-text search, because chocolates often do not contain the word "chocolate" in the product name, but chocolate-flavored yogurt does.

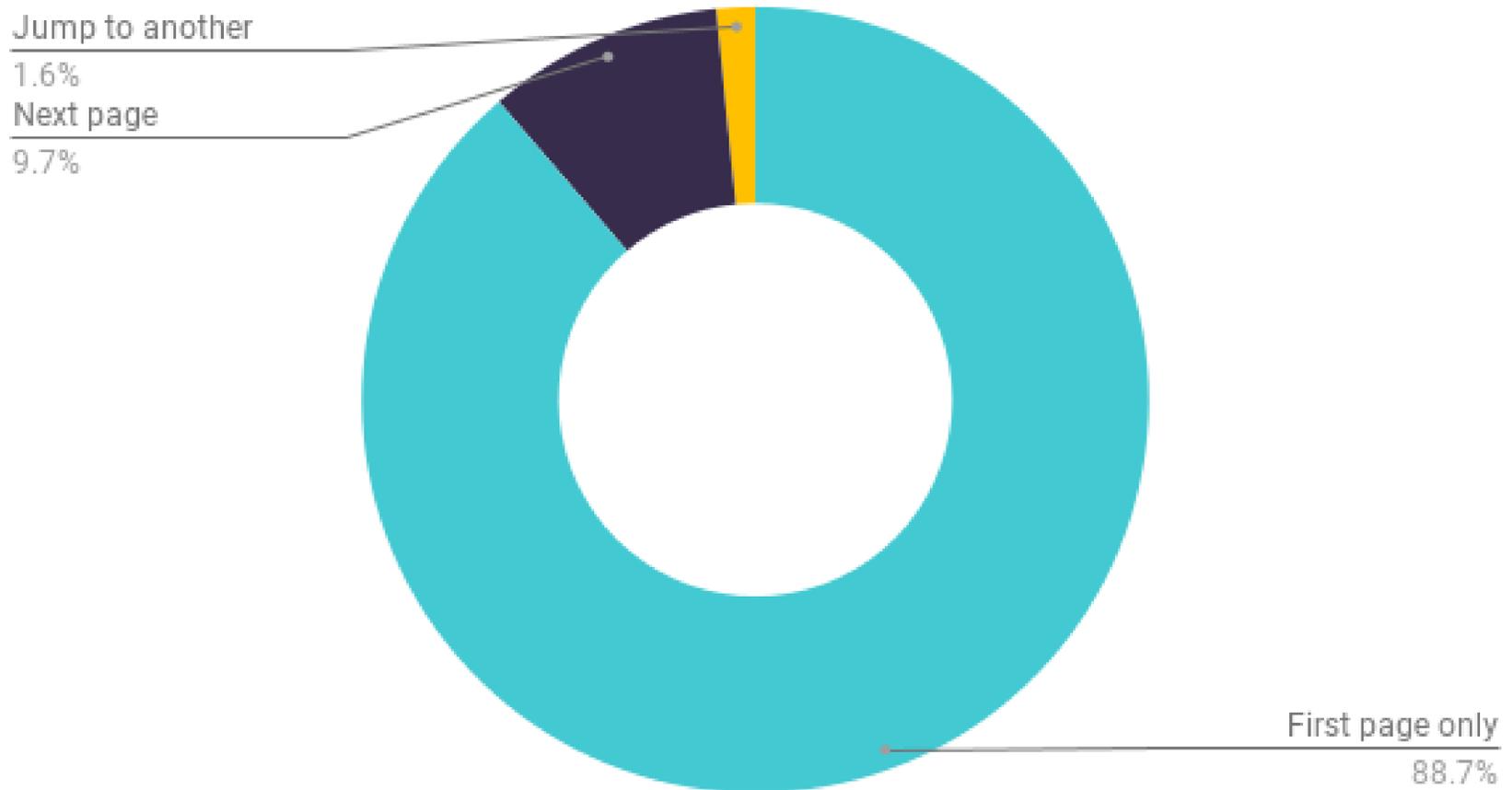


What is not on the first page of search results is as if it didn't even exist for the customers.



How many customers go past the first page of search results?

Pagination usage



How many times a day do you google something? And how many times do you go past the first page of the results? Exactly! And it works similarly for e-shops. Almost 90% of customers are interested only in **products on the first page of results**.

This, again, emphasizes the importance of correct product ranking. **What is not on the first page of search results is as if it didn't even exist for the customers.**

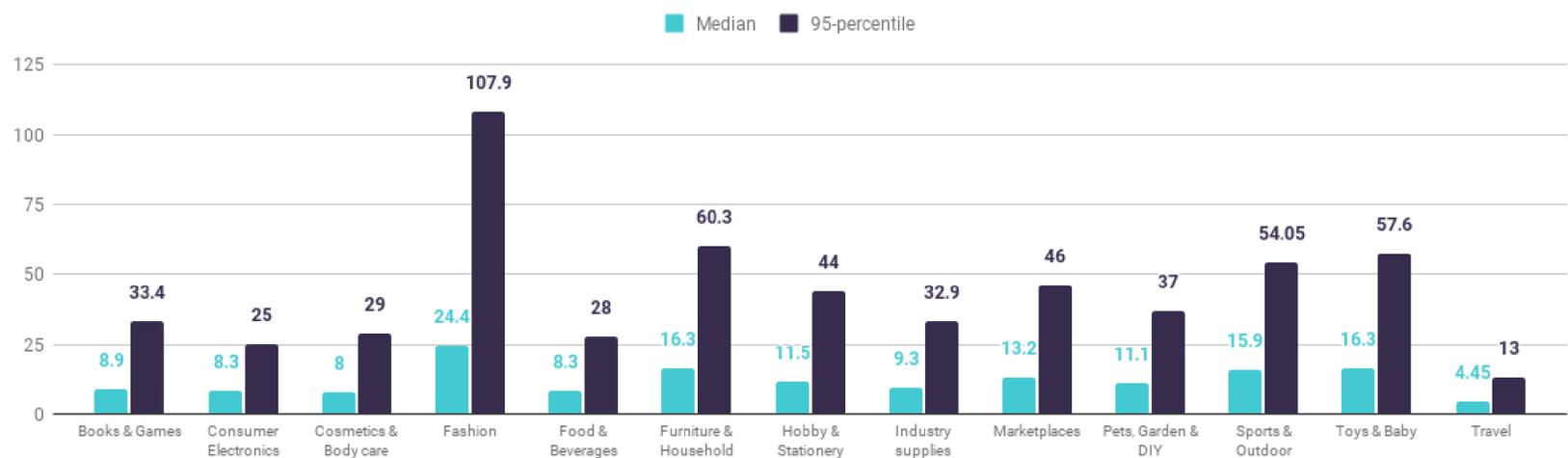
Not optimized product ranking means **lost opportunities for the e-shop in every segment.**

Don't let the customers leave your e-shop. Arrange a [consultation with our specialist](#) and find out how to increase your revenue.



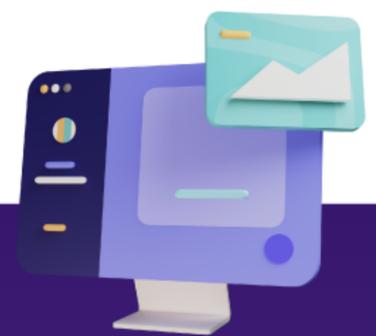
How many products do the customers view?

Click-through position



Another metric that emphasizes the product ranking importance is the position of the product that the customer is interested in, and if they decided to click on it.

The customer is willing to **spend more time looking at products** in those segments where the product's appearance is important for decision making.



- The average position of the clicked result again emphasizes how important it is to correctly rank products in the results list.



Search Interaction



How can autocomplete help?

Autocomplete usage



An effective way to make searching easier for visitors is using the autocomplete feature, also known as search-as-you-type.

The goal of autocomplete is to:

1. **Assure the visitor they're using the search feature correctly** and the online store knows/has the desired products.
2. **Make the user experience easier by not having to enter the whole query** (e.g. when using mobile devices).
3. **Efficiently guide the visitor to the category** they are looking for (for instance to level 3 of the website hierarchy or even deeper).
4. **Complete the context of the visitor's query**, as visitors often only know part of a product name. Autocomplete can show the categories and brands related to an entered query and efficiently inform them of a wider offer related to the entered query.
5. **Show the desired product itself**, provided that the query is specific enough (uses product code or exact name).

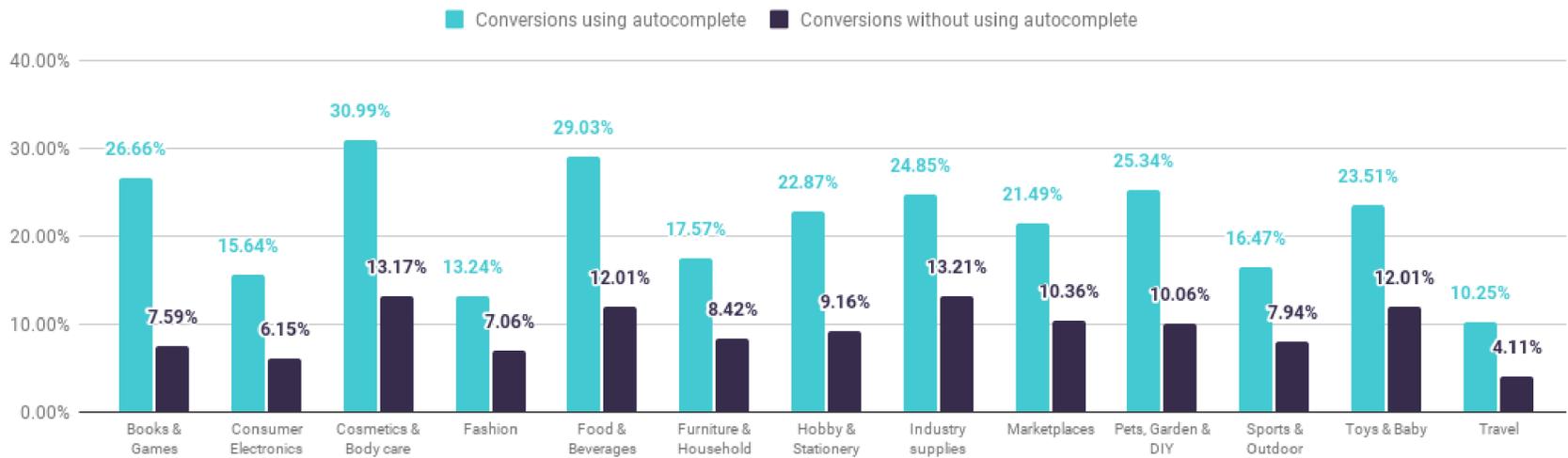
Autocomplete has the potential for various uses, which can be somewhat different from what we expect from classic search. It has two fundamental limitations which impact its functionality and can lead to different results than those displayed by the classic search function:

1. **It needs to be fast and react to every keystroke.**
Otherwise, it loses its purpose.
2. **It runs in a visually limited space** that needs to suffice for several top products and information such as product categories, brands, headings, and the most frequently used expressions.



Does autocomplete increase revenue?

Autocomplete conversion rate



The importance of autocomplete can be easily seen in the following graph, which compares the conversion rate of visitors who used autocomplete with those who could see autocomplete

In all segments, the conversion rate of visitors who used autocomplete was more than double of those visitors who didn't use the feature.

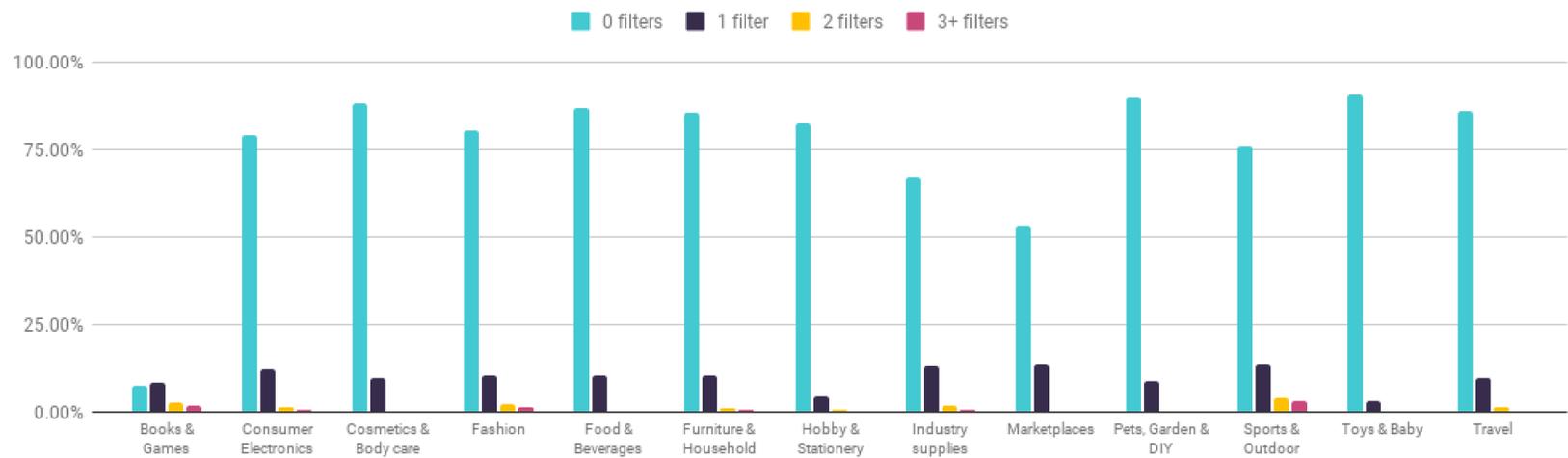
The segment worth pointing out is Books and Games, where autocomplete is used at a much higher rate. Most visitors in this segment search using the name of a specific book or author, which is unambiguous and can be significantly longer than queries used in other segments. If the autocomplete offers to complete such a name, there usually isn't much to hesitate about.

Another interesting segment is Cosmetics & Body care, which also shows a high autocomplete conversion rate. Even though its rate at which undecided visitors use autocomplete to move to full-fledged site search is approximately the same as in other segments, the data indicates that once they are in 'shopping mode', autocomplete becomes a very effective shopping tool.



Do filters help customers?

Filters usage



Filters are a common feature of e-shops. They are used to refine search results to make it easier for the customer to browse products.

Paradoxically, it turns out that customers do not use filters in most segments. The most common causes are:

1. They don't notice the filters.
2. There are too many filters.
3. The filters are irrelevant.
4. Visitors feel that the entered query should be sufficient enough to find the desired product

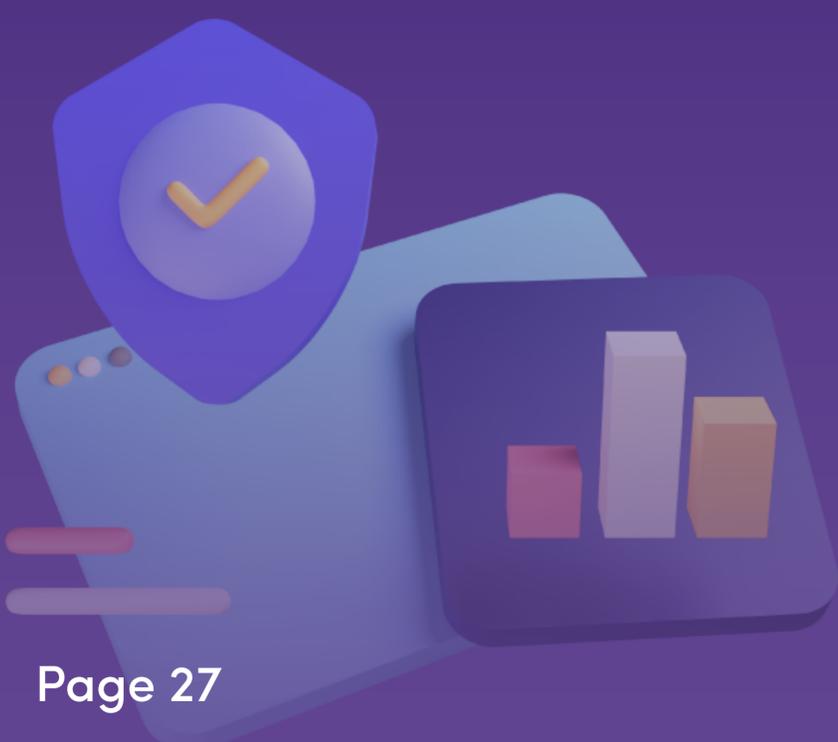


- Despite being less used, filters are critical for working with search results. The main issue is if the e-shop contains a large number of different products.

In this case, the static set of filters are not relevant for the customer as they cannot use them to narrow down the results. Therefore, it is important for the search that the e-shop uses search that is able to recognize the context and offer the customer only relevant filters.



What should you do right away?



5 things that you can do right away to make the search function on your e-shop better:

1. **Assign a specific person** that will care for the search, at least a part-time basis.
2. **Automatize!** Do not do manually what artificial intelligence can do for you.
3. **Include** search in your metrics and plans.
4. **Outsource** – you won't catch up with technology debt yourself.
5. **Take a look at our case studies** and find out how we have helped our clients.

