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Ecommerce Site-Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Does your site have the conversion factor?

Many websites that sell products or services fail to meet the expectations of their owners or the people that visit them.

It is time to ensure that your website is operating at its full potential by:

- ranking highly in the search engines for the kind of search terms your target customer will be using to find sites like yours
- enforcing your unique selling point and standing out from the crowd
- easing visitors from their landing page through to the point of conversion (the purchase of a product, the selling of a service, a newsletter signup, etc)
- meeting the appropriate ecommerce regulations and thereby ensuring that all site visitors view your company as one they want to 'do business' with.

This Site-Report is aimed at web sites that promote or sell products or services online and that may not be achieving these expectations, resulting in:

- low traffic
- poor conversion (typically less than 1%)
- early site abandonment

1.2 How is the Site-Report produced?

When producing the Site-Report, we analyse your web site from both a visitor - centric perspective and a technical perspective and identify major problems with the site that may result in poor performance.

The analysis focuses on:

- How visitors find your web site and impediments that may make this difficult
- The first impressions a visitor may have of the web site when arriving at your site
- Speed and download performance issues when using the web site
- Usability and navigation problems that may lead to site abandonment
- The persuasiveness of the content and the selling power of the copy (for example on the home page, department and product or service pages)



2.2 Department/Category pages

2.2.1 Are product/service descriptions engaging?

Personalize descriptions and make it easy for visitors to find out all they need to know about a product or service.

Use product/service descriptions to not only sell the product/service, but also answer any questions that they may have.

By including longer product/service descriptions, you are giving search engine spiders more information to crawl. Therefore, more detailed product/service descriptions not only help human visitors but also provide an SEO benefit.

Although the product descriptions tend to be short, the selling of products for the site is really done via the product images. The descriptions provide some useful additional information.

There is one downside of relying more on images than words to 'describe' a product, and that relates to search engine optimisation. As discussed later in the report, search engines prefer words to images (in fact, search engines just disregard images as they, unlike humans, can't tell what the image is of). Therefore, for a page such as the 'Sexy Mesh Thong by Pour Moi?' there is little textual content for the search engines to index.

2.2.2 Is the cost of each product/service clearly identified?

Product/service pricing should be clear and unambiguous. Where possible, pricing should be located close to the main call to action (e.g. buy now, register or signup).

Product prices are clearly shown on the category and product pages.

It is recommended that the font used for product prices on the product page is made larger to emphasise the price.

2.2.3 Does the site show the savings on RRP as a means of enticing visitors to purchase?

By showing Retail Recommended Prices (RRP), site prices and the savings a visitor may receive from purchasing on the site, they will see the benefit of making such a purchase.



2.3 Cart/Basket

2.3.1 Is it clear how to change the quantity of an item in the cart?

To change the quantity of an item in the cart, it is simply a case of entering a new quantity and clicking the 'update' button.

2.3.2 Is it easy to empty the cart?

Currently, the only way in which a cart/basket can be emptied is to either check the 'remove' box next to each product or set the quantity to zero for each product. It is recommended that an 'empty basket' button is added.

2.3.3 Is it possible to get back to the product page from each item in the cart?

By providing a link back from an item in the cart, you allow your visitors to easily view the details of that product and potentially related products. This can be used for cross-selling purposes and thereby increase the total order value

Although the products listed in the basket appear to have links back to the product pages, clicking the links results in an Internal Server Error page. It is therefore recommended that this is corrected as soon as possible.

2.3.4 Does the site require registration before an item can be added to the cart?

One of the most frustrating features on ecommerce sites is the need to register before a product can be added to the cart. Many visitors resent having to provide personal details at this point on the purchasing process and they will simply abandon the cart. It is much better to present registration at the end of the ordering process (once credit card details have been provided and the order confirmed) as an option.

The [HIDDEN] website does not require visitors to register prior to checking out. However, it does take the visitor through two identical pages in order to get to the checkout:

- basket page
- shipping information page



2.6 Terms and Conditions page

2.6.1 Does the site have a terms and conditions page and does it show information about pricing, placing an order, payment options, cancelling orders, delivery, returns and the complaints procedure for the site?

The [HIDDEN] website currently does not have a dedicated terms and conditions page although it does include separate pages dedicated to:

- shipping
- returns

For the reasons mentioned later in this report, it is strongly recommended that a dedicated terms and conditions page be added to the site with a link from the footer navigation.

Please note that the site does in fact have a terms and conditions page with privacy policy. However, this is only available when the visitor enters the checkout process. It is still recommended that this is added as a main page within the site and that a link from the footer to the terms and conditions page be added.

2.6.2 Does the site have a privacy policy?

It is very important to ensure that you treat your website visitor and customer's personal information with respect and explain to them why you need to collect information about them, and more importantly, what you are going to do with it.

The easiest way of conveying this information is with a Privacy Policy.

At first glance, the [HIDDEN] website does not appear to have a privacy policy. However, one does exist as part of the terms and conditions popup which is only available when the visitor enters the checkout process. It is still recommended that this is added as a main page within the site and that a link from the footer to the terms and conditions page be added.

2.6.3 Does the site require the use of cookies? If so, is the cookie policy clearly defined?

It is common for ecommerce sites to use cookies to retain information about visitors between visits. For example, this information may include identification information to uniquely identify the visitor so that the following features can be presented between visits:



3 General Issues

This section of the report deals with general issues related to the site that may not be issues that fall naturally into the ecommerce walkthrough. Often issues cited in this section relate to problems that are site-wide.

3.1 First impressions

This section deals with the visitor's first encounter with the site and raises issues that may lead to early abandonment of a website.

3.1.1 Is the Domain name memorable and easy to type?

Unless you are a well-known brand name, having an easy-to-remember and relevant domain name will help visitors remember your site in the future.

If a domain name has more than about 12 characters (except for the http://www and the country-specific TLD), and uses words that may be unfamiliar to the visitor, they may have difficulty in either remembering or typing the domain name.

The domain name, [HIDDEN], is both easy to remember and catchy. This increases the likelihood of visitors remembering it when going back to visit the site or passing a referral onto a friend (Word of Mouth (WOM) marketing)

3.1.2 Is the design of the site consistent and of a high-quality?

To portray an image of credibility, your site should look of a high-quality. This helps to convey a high-quality business and visitors will feel more comfortable making purchases from your site.

The [HIDDEN] website is generally of a good standard of design. Good quality images are used throughout the site along with a simple design with clear navigation.

3.1.3 If the site targets a UK market primarily, does it have a .co.uk domain?

A .co.uk TLD (top level domain) has 2 main benefits; it clearly shows visitors that the site is targeted at a UK audience and it ensures that the site is found for 'Pages from the UK' results within Google UK.

The [HIDDEN] site currently has a .com TLD. It would appear that the .co.uk domain has also been registered (note that it is due to expire on the 2nd August



thereby reducing frustration of choosing the wrong page; (b) adds textual content to a page that would otherwise only contain links. This is beneficial to search engines as they value pages with textual content with links within it.

The sitemap does not currently provide a short overview of each major page in the site. It is recommended that this is considered.

3.3.8 Is link text used effectively within the body of pages? (231)

Link text refers to the text that is used to provide a link from one page to another within a website. Unfortunately, the most commonly used link text is 'click here' with more than 2,940,000,000 pages listed within Google for this search term!

Link text is vitally important as it gives visitors an idea of what to expect from the page that is being linked to. It also helps boost the ranking of the 'landing page' for the search terms used in the link text.

The home page makes very effective use of link text from the main content of the page. This is a very good example of how to use link text for both a visitor and search engine benefit. As there are few other pages with text (other than the information pages), there are currently few other opportunities for using link text.

It is recommended that other opportunities be explored for using link text. This includes the linking from manufacturer names in the product descriptions, e.g. 'By Pour Moi? of the UK' on

http://www.becheeky.com/acatalog/Sexy_ribbon_thong_by_Pour_Moi.html.

It is also recommended that 'similar products' are either added as a list of products (with images).



3.5 Accessibility

Website accessibility is a major issues with many ecommerce site failing to meet the most basis of accessibility guidelines as published by the WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative, <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>).

However, it is now a legal requirement (under UK law) to ensure that your website is accessible to all visitors by meeting the WAI guidelines.

The guidelines are organised around 3 priority levels, priority 1 being the most basic which all sites must adhere to. Priority 2 guidelines should be adhered to and priority 3 may be adhered to.

Priority 1 guidelines include:

- ensuring that all images have associated alternate-text (alt-text)
- ensuring that information can be understood without the need for colour
- ensuring that clear and simple language is used on the site
- tables have row and column identifiers
- pages are usable when scripts or applets are unavailable.

Meeting these guidelines is vitally important to ensuring that you do not get prosecuted under the Disabilities Act.

3.5.1 Does the site have an accessibility statement?

The [HIDDEN] website does not currently publish an accessibility statement. It is recommended that this is considered as every ecommerce website now has a duty to ensure that it is accessible to any web visitors.

3.5.2 Does the site comply with Accessibility guidelines?

The WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative) publish guidelines that all publicly-available websites must follow. Failure to meet these guidelines can result in prosecution under the UK's Disabilities Act.

The [HIDDEN] website does not currently comply with the accessibility guidelines recommended by the WAI. There are a number of reasons for this including images without alt-text (including 'view basket' and the credit card images)



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- front image of Triangle frill bra & thong by Sista Shei
- rear image of Triangle frill bra & thong by Sista Shei

3.5.4 Are any key features only accessible with JavaScript? (144)

Although JavaScript can provide interactive features to a website, these features may not be available to all visitors. For example, some visitors may have JavaScript disabled. The most typical use of JavaScript is for menu systems. At worst case, visitors without JavaScript enabled won't be able to navigate your website. It is also important to remember that it is not possible for search engine spiders to use navigation that is JavaScript-based.

It is estimated that 10% of Internet surfers have JavaScript disabled. Therefore, if your site relies on the use of JavaScript for key visitor-transactions such as adding items to a cart or viewing pages within the site, you are potentially making areas of your site, and most importantly, functionality that directly affects conversion inaccessible to 1/10th of your visitors.

Although as mentioned earlier in the report regarding the excessive JavaScript file, JavaScript is used on the site (although in that case for some unknown reason), visitors without JavaScript can use a majority of the key features of the site. In fact, the only problems encountered with JavaScript disabled were:

- viewing enlarged product images did not work
- display of Terms and Conditions from Order Information step of the checkout did not work.

It is therefore recommended that the 'no script tag' be used to provide an alternative means of viewing this information in the event that the visitor does not have JavaScript enabled.

Tip: How to find out if your site requires JavaScript

The easiest way to check whether your site requires JavaScript is to disable it and then navigate your site. A great tool that allows JavaScript to be enabled/disabled with one click of the mouse is the Web Accessibility Toolbar from NILS (<http://www.nils.org.au/ais/web/resources/toolbar/index.html>).



4.2.4 Is the meta-keywords tag used for keyword stuffing?

Search engines place little emphasis on the keywords meta-tag due to years of abuse by web designers who stuffed the tag with keywords in the hope of good search engine placement. There is now little need to use the keyword meta-tag for anything other than common misspellings of words on a page.

During the review of the site, no keyword meta-tags were used. Given the fact that the keyword meta-tag is ignored by every self-respecting search engine, this is of no concern.

4.2.5 Are there any impediments that would prevent a search engine spider from accessing pages within the site (such as the use of JavaScript navigation)?

In order to be listed in the major search engines, it is important that the 'spiders' are able to get to as many pages as possible within the site.

There are certain features that may stop these search engine spiders from indexing all of the pages within a website. These include:

- *JavaScript menus –if you use JavaScript, the search engines spiders may not be able to navigate through the links on your site to every page. One solution to this problem is to add a static sitemap which has links to all the pages instead.*
- *Dynamic pages – many websites use databases to store information such as articles, products, etc. However, dynamic websites may prevent spiders from accessing pages due to the use of excessive URL parameters, slow downloading page or passing session identifiers between pages.*

No impediments that could prevent a search engine spider from accessing all relevant pages in the site were found during the review.

4.2.6 Does the site use any techniques to influence search engine ranking that may result in penalty? (256)

There are a number of shady techniques used to influence search engine ranking.

These include:

keyword stuffing - filling keyword meta tags and other hidden tags with targeted search terms

Appendix A - Summary

The table below shows the main issues with the site in order of priority.

1	Is the cost of each product/service clearly identified? (155)	5	Yes
2	Does the home page have clear links into other areas of the site? (212)	5	Yes
3	Does the homepage clearly show the site's USPs and benefits to visitors? (136)	5	Yes
4	Is it clear whether prices on the site include tax and delivery? If not, are these easy to work out? (156)	5	Yes
5	Does the home page download in less than 15 seconds? (141)	5	No
6	Is it clear how to purchase a product or service? (160)	5	Yes
7	Is the navigation within the site clear and consistent? (138)	4	No
8	Are there 'contact us' details clearly available? (145)	4	No
9	Does the site publish a physical address? (146)	4	Yes
10	Does the site have a terms and conditions page and does it show information about pricing, placing an order, payment options, cancelling orders, delivery, returns and the complaints procedure for the site? (147)	4	No
11	Do all pages have different (and enticing) titles? (171)	4	No
12	Does the website have a good search engine saturation? (179)	4	Yes
13	Does the home page have clear branding? (210)	4	Yes
14	Does the site use SSL to ensure visitors' personal information (including credit card details) are safe? (217)	4	No