

SEMrush Annual E-commerce study

Trends for 2018



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Introduction

The end of 2017 provides an opportunity to identify strong and weak points of your current activities as well as determine necessary changes in the strategy of your on-line store. The increasingly competitive world of e-commerce challenges companies and makes them adjust their marketing strategy to an ever changing market. So how does your online business compare with other businesses in your industry?

To help you assess where you stand and make informed decisions about your marketing strategy and budget, we gathered and analyzed data from a wide spectrum of major e-commerce industries to show the sources and types of their website traffic, how they leverage advertising, the usage of the emotions in their ads and the makeup of their backlink profiles.

Moreover, we looked into the e-commerce websites' use of secure (HTTPS) versus traditional (HTTP) domain URLs and hreflang attribute (for surfacing search results and website pages in the correct language or regional URL).

We hope you find the insights gleaned from our research helpful in formulating a smart, cost-effective strategy for your e-commerce site going forward, be it a small business or international enterprise.



Methodology: How We Did What We Did

We started off with a big set of data consisting of more than 8,000 of the most visited e-commerce websites from different countries (US, UK, Spain, Italy, Germany and France to name but a few). In order to avoid calculation errors, we didn't collect data for countries where Google is a secondary search engine (China, Korea, etc).

The e-commerce sites in our research represent 13 different industry categories:

- 1 Sports & Recreation
- 2 Children
- 3 Food / Nearfood
- 4 Electronics
- 5 Health
- 6 Home & Garden
- 7 Clothing
- 8 Books
- 9 Furniture
- 10 Flowers
- 11 Jewelry
- 12 Music
- 13 Travel



Then, using the SEMrush data, we culled the following information for each category:

- The sources of website traffic and their relative significance
- The amount invested in advertising
- The type and size of display ads, devices targeted, and use of Google Product Listing Ads (PLAs)
- The relative types of backlinks *
- The emotional triggers used in ads **

For the e-commerce sites researched as a whole, our data analysis revealed:

- The distribution of organic site traffic between mobile and desktop, as well as by country
- The search engine results page (SERP features for site rankings) ***
- The most popular phrases, guarantee and call-to-action (CTA) language used in ads
- The top backlinks anchor words and phrases
- HTTPS vs. HTTP version of the websites and prevalence of the hreflang attribute ****

* **Traffic Sources breakdown, Organic traffic distribution, Advertising trends, Backlinks in numbers:** data for those parts is collected from more than 8000 websites worldwide over the period of January 1 to November 30 2017.

** **Emotional Triggers:** The data for this part is representing the frequency of usage of phrases in Ads, basing in 4M of Ads from different categories.

*** **SERP features:** SERP features change daily and correlate heavily with overall Google SERP volatility, hence we decided to only show the data for the October 2017. Data for this part is based on the percentage of SERPs where this feature appears in top 20 results.

**** **Technical issues:** Here the readers will find information based on sites' technical condition in November's.

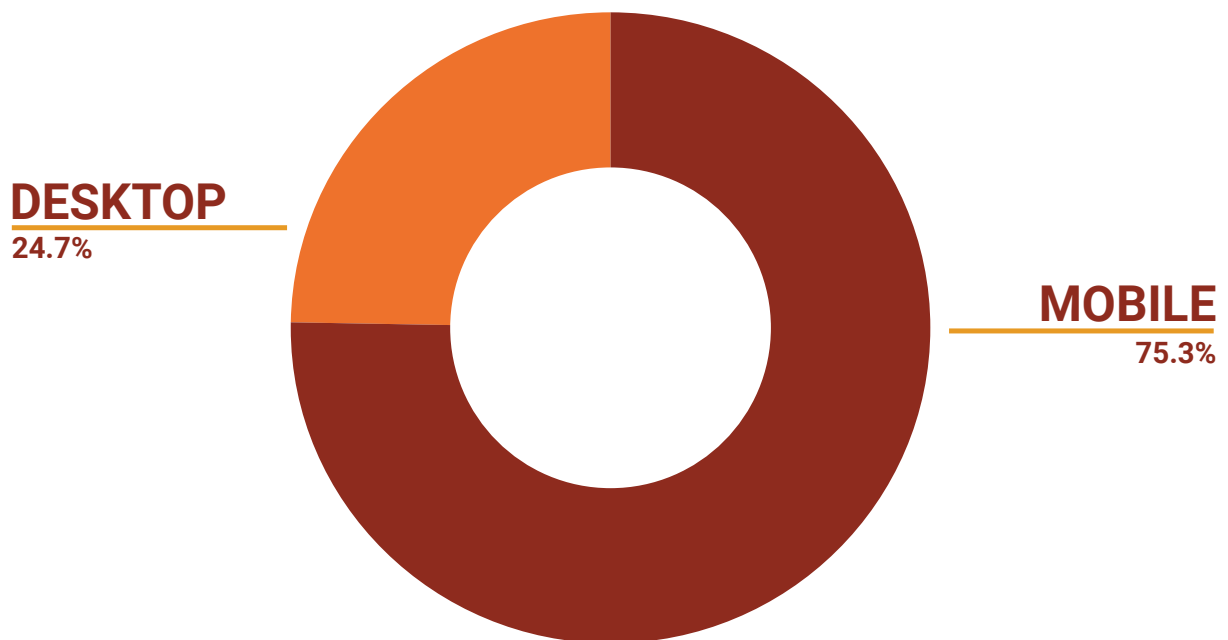
With that, let's take a deep dive into the research findings...



E-commerce websites traffic

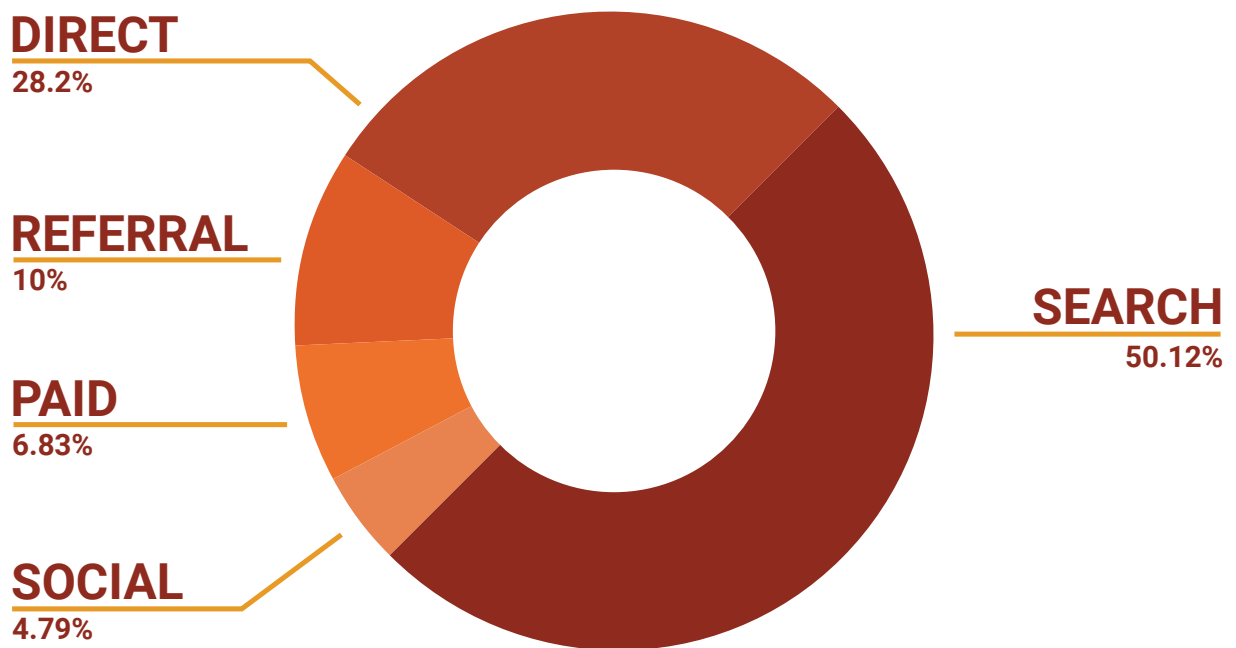
Traffic Analytics

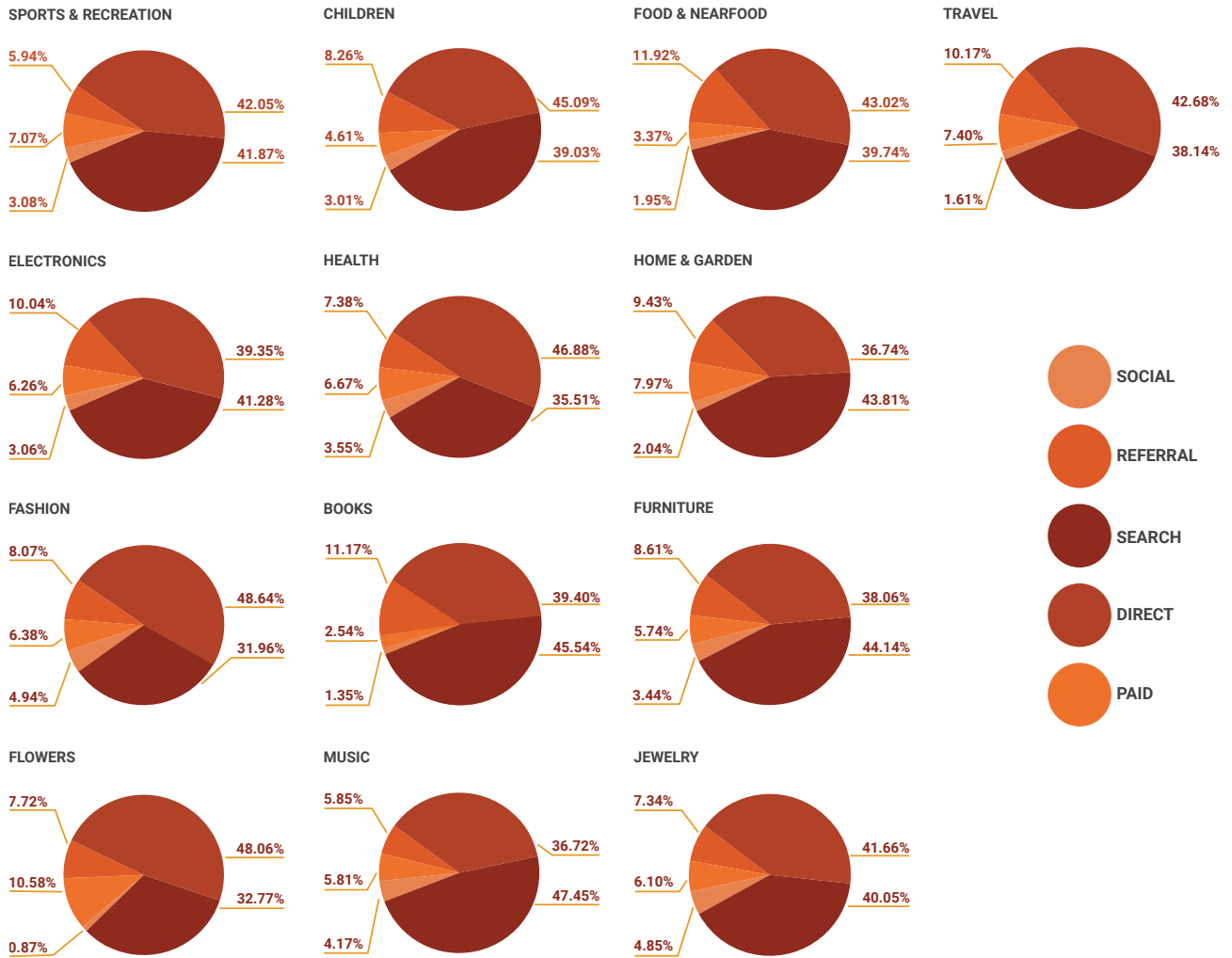
A traffic analysis of e-commerce websites showed that mobile traffic accounts for as much as 75% percent of all the traffic share – apparently, visitors to e-commerce websites mostly use mobile devices to navigate web pages. Site owners and webmasters should adapt to this trend by making sure their websites are optimized for mobile performance in terms of page speed and site design.



Sources of E-Commerce Website Traffic

Of the five sources of e-commerce website traffic – direct, referral, search, social, and Google Ads (that is presented as paid) – search traffic claims the lion’s share.





Search is the primary source of site traffic for five of the categories, followed by direct. Combined, direct and search traffic account for over 80% of all e-commerce website traffic among all the industry verticals studied.

Referral via links from other websites is the third most significant channel of total website traffic, with the exception of sports & recreation and flowers. Google paid advertising claims the third spot for these two categories.

Social media drives the least amount of traffic to e-commerce sites for all 13 categories.

What it means to you as a marketer

The relative dominance of direct traffic can be attributed to good brand awareness and brand loyalty. However, in and of itself, brand familiarity and repeat business is not a scalable strategy for long-term growth.

With search playing such a significant role in driving e-commerce traffic, it is well worth your while to invest in both pay-per-click (PPC) and organic search engine optimization (SEO) informed by a smart keyword strategy and competitive intelligence.

Both well-targeted paid ads and solid organic search practices are scalable

strategies that complement each other by raising brand awareness, keeping your company front and center as shopper's search for your product or service.

It is also recommended to build out your scalable organic strategy by expanding referral traffic. Cultivating a strong backlink profile of high authority domains serves to improve site ranking on the search engine results pages (SERPs) as well.


Finally, while social brings the least amount of traffic to the e-commerce categories we researched, it isn't without value in spreading word of mouth about your brand...and like organic traffic, it's free!

How SEMrush helps

Traffic Analytics

shows the sources of your own and your competitors' website traffic. You can view direct, search, referral, paid and social traffic as a whole, or separated by channel.


Our estimates are based on clickstream data originating from multiple proprietary and third-party data sources.

Analyze the traffic of your competitors 

Brand Monitoring

allows you to monitor your brand's reputation, as well as your online rivals', by tracking mentions and customer reviews across the digital space.

Filter results by source and date, discover new word-of-mouth opportunities for brand promotion, and create marketing buzz around your product or service.

Monitor your brand 

Backlinks

helps you conduct a deep link analysis of all referring domains' authority, gain competitive link intelligence on your rivals' backlinks, spot new referral traffic sources, and improve your link building strategy with the insights gained.

View the types and geolocation of all your site's incoming links, see anchor texts, and discover both the referring site's and your site's target webpages.

Check your backlinks



Organic Research

offers insights for powerful competitive intelligence.

See your online competitors' best performing keywords and organic content strategies both in desktop and mobile search. Evaluate the value of keywords against the key web performance indicators, discover new organic competition, and track changes in your domain's position in the SERPs relative to your rivals.

Get competitive intel



Keyword Magic Tool

gives you millions keyword ideas for building a profitable SEO or PPC campaign.

Discover long-tail keyword opportunities for rich content and higher search rankings and select the best keywords for your campaign. Estimate how much traffic they'll bring by determining their click potential with real-time metrics of search volume, keyword difficulty, competitive density and CPC data.

Create your profitable campaign



Social Media Tracker

reveals both your own and your competitors' best-performing posts with the highest engagement rates across multiple social media platforms, giving you detailed information about likes/dislikes, views, shares and comments to inform your social media strategy.

Track mentions and the hottest trending topics in your industry, and easily build reports on your social media campaigns to showcase your results.

Develop your social media strategy



Organic Traffic Insights

merges Google Analytics and Google Search Console data to reveal the 99% of 'not provided' keywords. Discover not only which keywords are driving search traffic to each page of your website, but which of them are resulting in conversions.

Gain insights into key customer behavior metrics such as the number of sessions, their duration and bounce rate.

Uncover your not provided keywords



PPC Keyword Tool

allows you to easily collect keywords through multiple channels, manage and optimize your keyword lists, efficiently eliminate duplicate and competing keywords, and perfect your PPC campaign with a polished keyword list.

Optimize your PPC campaign



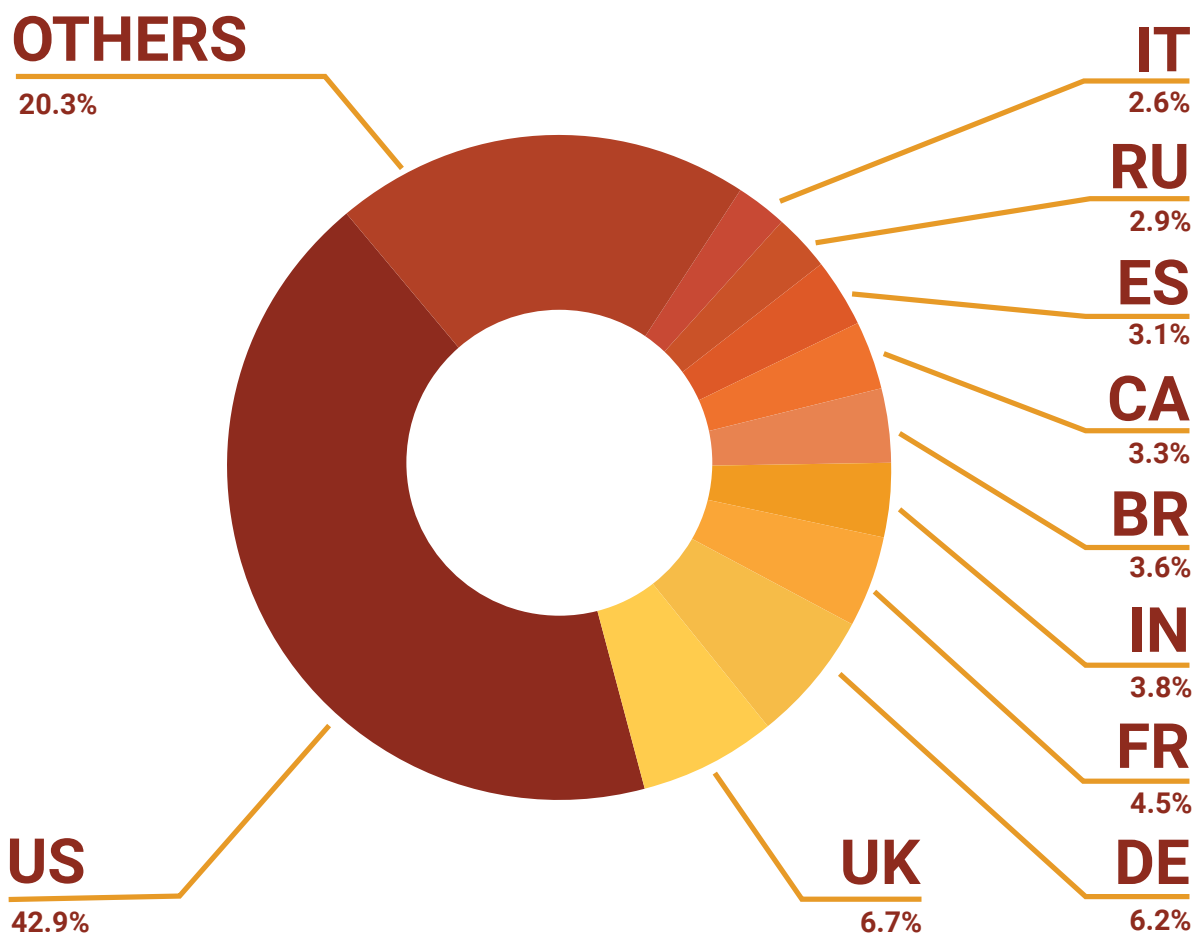


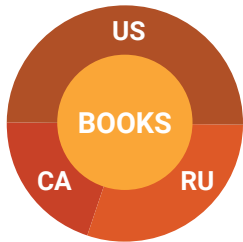
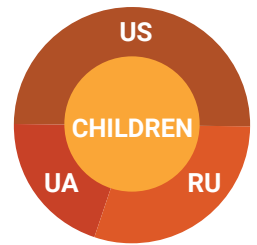
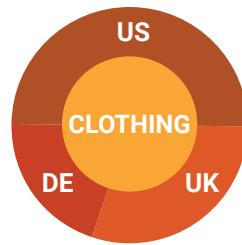
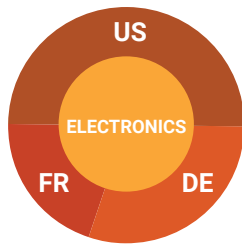
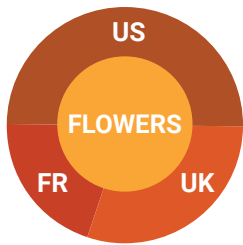
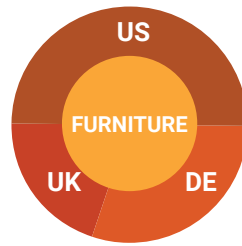
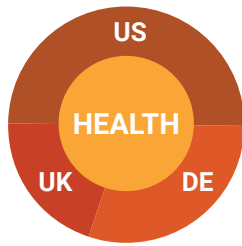
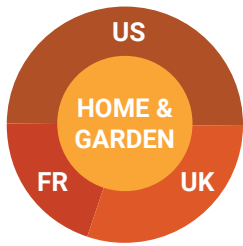
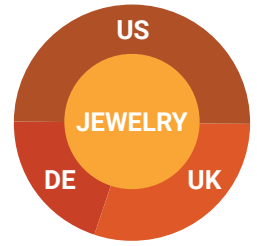
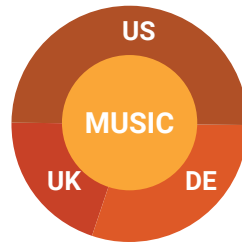
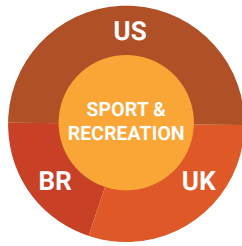
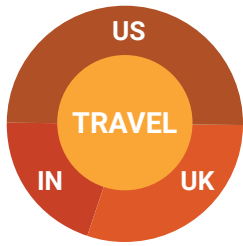
Organic Traffic Distribution

Countries Distribution of Organic Search Traffic

The US leads the international pack as the country of origin for organic search traffic, accounting for 42.9% of traffic for all 13 categories combined. It also is the primary country driving traffic to each industry vertical in our study.

Other countries combined, outside of the individual countries listed, account for 20.34% of organic search traffic to all the e-commerce categories in the research.





- The UK is a far distant second to the US as a source of organic search traffic, and Germany third, both for all categories as a whole and separately. The UK is second to the US for seven of the verticals, Germany for four, and Russia for two.
- The UK is a significant source of traffic to travel, sports & recreation, jewelry, home & garden, food/nearfood, flowers, and clothing categories. German searchers are most interested in music, health, furniture and electronics, while those from Russia search more for children and books.
- When the third largest origins of organic search traffic are considered, the countries are more diverse. India, Brazil, France, Canada and Ukraine are represented in this grouping.

What it means to you as a marketer

While most of the organic search traffic to the e-commerce industries studied come from English-speaking countries, it's important to ensure the best user experience for any visitor from any country.

The way to do this is to implement "hreflang" attribute to display your site's web pages in the correct language. Google also recommends using hreflang for content with small regional variations, such as those between the US and Great Britain.

If, like most business owners, coding is not your area of expertise, then it's highly recommended you consult someone fluent in international SEO.



How SEMrush helps

Site Audit

ensures your web pages are literally up to speed so you can take advantage of the Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) format that dominates mobile search results globally.

Allow us to check the page load time and overall health of your site.

The International SEO catches hreflang attribute implementation issues in its international SEO report. Ensure you consistently deliver the best user experience with up-to-date International SEO reports to discover hreflang issues.

Audit your website and improve your UX 

Position Tracking

allows you to track your website's organic search ranking on mobile and desktop, create multilingual campaigns for any locale worldwide, and spot local competitors that are ranking in Google's top 100 results for the same keywords that you're targeting.

Inform your multi-device marketing campaigns with insights into your website's keyword rankings and site positions in desktop, tablet and smartphone.

Create smart multi-device campaigns 

Organic Research

gives you insights into your competitors' mobile and desktop organic search strategies.

Uncover what keywords your online rivals are targeting for both their mobile and desktop platforms, and leverage that competitive intelligence to inform your own organic search strategies for mobile and desktop campaigns.

Discover mobile vs. desktop strategies 



SERP Features for E-Commerce

SERP Features for E-Commerce

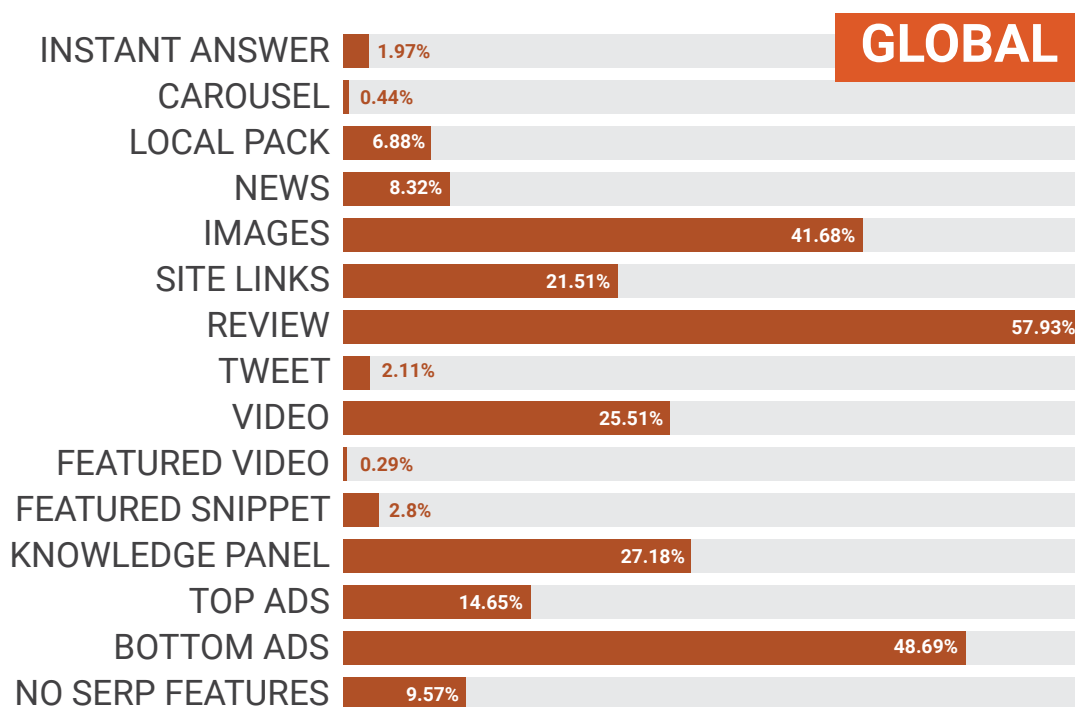
As part of our research, we looked into what e-commerce site features show up in the highly competitive top 20 listings included in the search engine results pages (SERPs). Along with the SERP features, we checked the availability of ads on SERPs.

Due to the daily fluctuation in SERP features, which heavily correlates with the overall volatility of Google’s SERPs, we based our analysis on data gathered from October 2017.

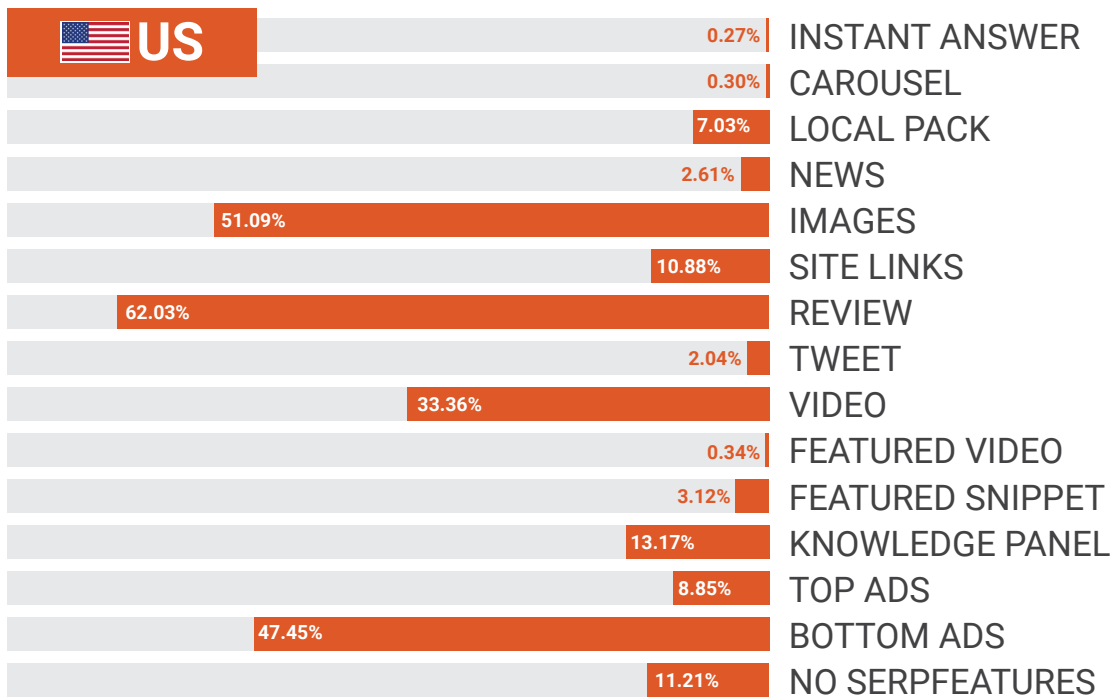
Our study revealed that “reviews” are the most prominent of the 15 SERP features

analyzed, both globally and for the US. The reviews feature is displayed in the top 20 results in 57.93% of the global SERPs, and in 62.03% of the US SERPs.

This parallel trend between global and US top 20 SERP features holds for more than half of the 15 studied, with the following six exceptions: news (8.32% globally compared to 2.61% for the US), images (41.68% to 51.09%), site links (21.51% to 10.88%), video (25.51% to 33.36%), knowledge panel (27.18% to 13.17%), and top ads (14.65% to 8.85%).



PERCENTAGE OF SERPS WHERE THIS FEATURE APPEARS IN TOP 20 RESULTS



PERCENTAGE OF SERPS WHERE THIS FEATURE APPEARS IN TOP 20 RESULTS

While Google’s “Knowledge Panel” proves to be a popular SERP feature globally, displayed in 27.18% of the top 20 search listings, the panel appears in only 13.17% of the US SERPs’ first 20 results.

Images surpass video by a substantial margin, both internationally and in the US. Worldwide, images claim 41.68% of the top 20 SERP listings, and even more so in the US with 51.09%.

After reviews, bottom ads appear in 48.69% of e-commerces globally and 47.45% in the US.

Featured video shows up in the smallest percentage of the top 20 search results globally. Instant answer shows up least in the US SERPs.

The carousel feature is also scant internationally and in the US, with only 0.44% and 0.3% of the SERPs displaying it in the top 20 listings, respectively.

What it means to you as marketer

For e-commerce marketers focused on the US, the data indicates incorporating reviews, images, bottom ads and videos in your web pages may help boost search rankings.

If you have a global or mixed base of target customers that include both US and international prospects, again, including images and reviews in your site pages may improve their search visibility.

Of the more notable disparities between global and US top 20 SERP features is video content. In the U.S, 33.36% of the top 20 listings have video as an attribute, compared to 25.51% worldwide. This would imply that adding video to site pages geared to the US market could give you a competitive edge.

Also, our research shows [Google's Knowledge Panel](#) results are far more prominent in the top 20 listings worldwide than in the US, capturing over twice of the SERP real estate with 27.18% to the US share of 13.17 percent.

Google's Knowledge Panel showcases individual e-commerce sites with a prominent "box" detailing critical information such as your business name, address and phone number ("NAP"). Clearly, for those that hope to capture local business, investing some time into simple coding with semantic [Schema](#) markup is a relatively cost-effective strategy for search visibility, especially for specific regional locales of international markets.

Yet another significant point of departure between US and global top 20 SERP features are site links. They claim significantly more of the top 20 SERP features internationally, and especially so with site links with 21.51% globally to 10.88% for the US.

While it's not possible to draw absolute conclusions from our data, it's worthwhile to note that the media slated for your e-commerce site pages (or absence thereof) should be carefully reviewed by your creative and marketing teams, depending upon your target markets.

How SEMrush helps

Position Tracking

gives you competitive insights into your site's web pages' search position for international, domestic, regional and local markets.

Track what strategies are working with multitar-get campaigns for any region or locale you're targeting.

Track your site's position



Content Analyzer

allows you to assess your website's content to see what is working in terms of your overall strategy as well as what isn't performing.

Gain insights into key customer behavior metrics such as the number of sessions, their duration and bounce rate.

View your content performance



On Page SEO Checker

gives you recommendation for reviews schema markups based on top 10 rivals analysis. Utilizing SEO tactics from your competitors and analytical research data from SEMrush,

On Page SEO Checker automatically offers practical suggestions.

Get your recommendation



Keyword Gap

lets you see what's working for your rivals relative to you with our side-by-side domain comparison.

Visualize data to efficiently inform your digital marketing team and your budget decisions to keep a step ahead.

See your competitive ranking





E-Commerce Advertising Trends

E-Commerce Advertising Trends

On the paid side of e-commerce, we gathered and analyzed data on the amount spent on Adwords, both as a whole and among the 13 e-commerce categories included in our research.

We also delved into how the industry is leveraging display ads, including the type and size of ads, the devices targeted, in addition to their use of keywords in Google Product Listing Ads (PLAs).

The data collected represent more than 8,000 websites over an 11-month period, from January 1st through November 30th of 2017.

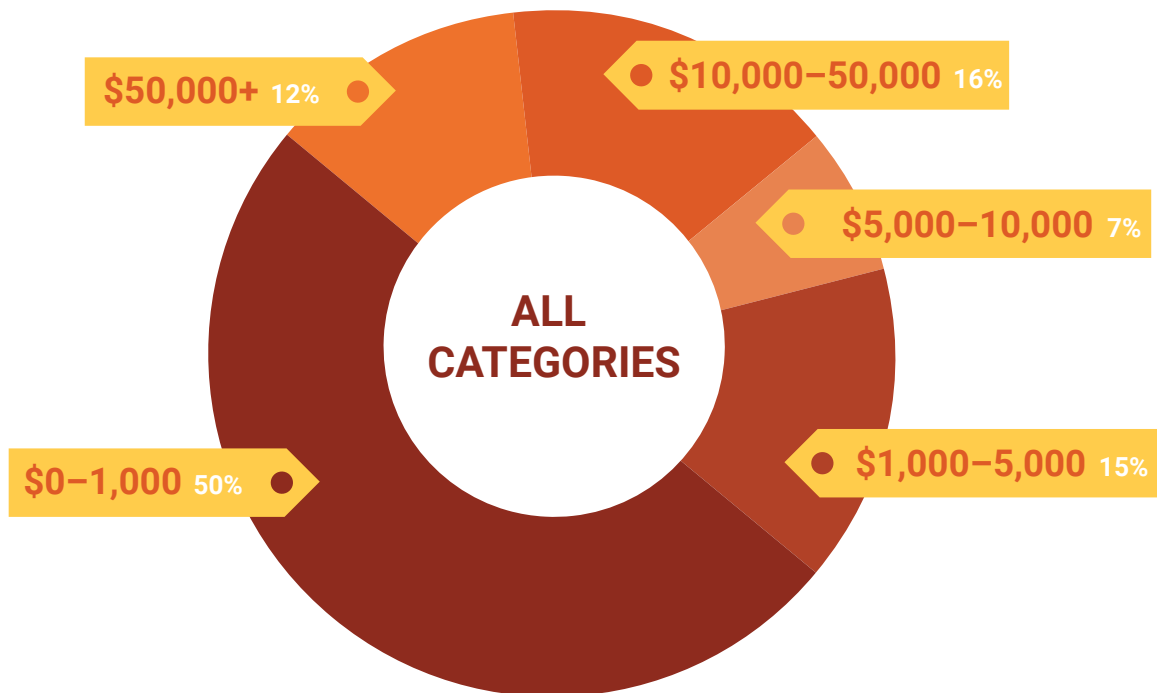


Paid Advertising Spend

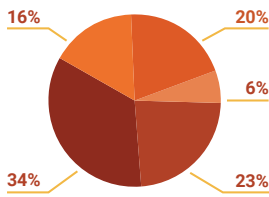
All told, a full 50% of the industries researched spend \$1,000 or less on paid advertising.

The second highest range of total ad expenditures falls within \$10,000 to \$50,000, with a remote 16 percent. This ad spend is closely followed by the \$1,000 to \$5,000 range for all e-commerce stores, claiming 15% of the total.

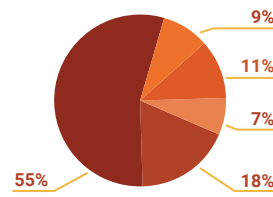
The fourth highest total ad expenditure is \$50,000+ with 12%, while the \$5,000 to \$10,000 range is least represented at 7 percent.



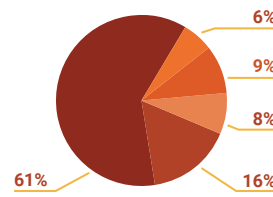
SPORTS & RECREATION



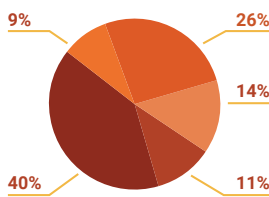
CHILDREN



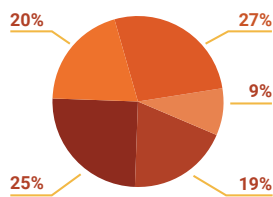
FOOD & NEARFOOD



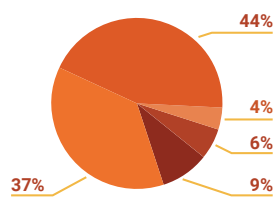
HEALTH



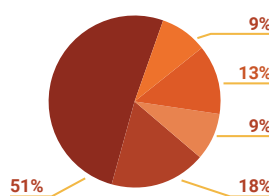
HOME & GARDEN



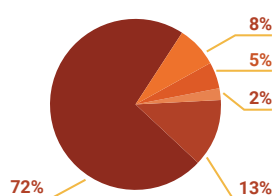
CLOTHING



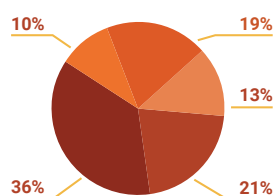
FURNITURE



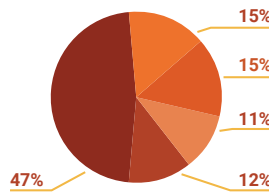
FLOWERS



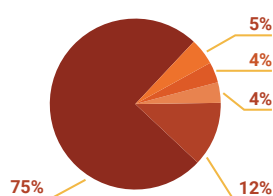
JEWELRY



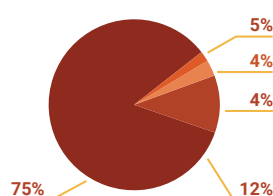
ELECTRONICS



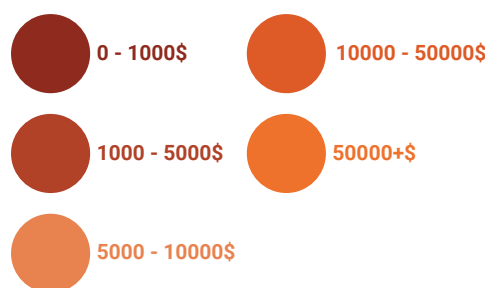
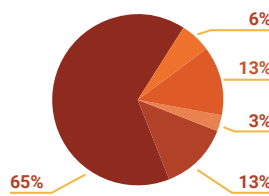
BOOKS



MUSIC



TRAVEL



The top three industries proving most frugal with their ad budgets are music, books and flowers. The music vertical leads with 84% of its total e-commerce ad spend in the \$1,000 or less range, followed by books (75%) and flowers (72%).

Of all the categories, clothing invests most heavily in paid ads by a substantial margin. Online clothing stores spend 37% on ads within the \$50,000+ range.

The clothing industry also claims the highest ad spend within the \$10,000 to \$50,000 bracket, accounting for 44% of its total ad investment.

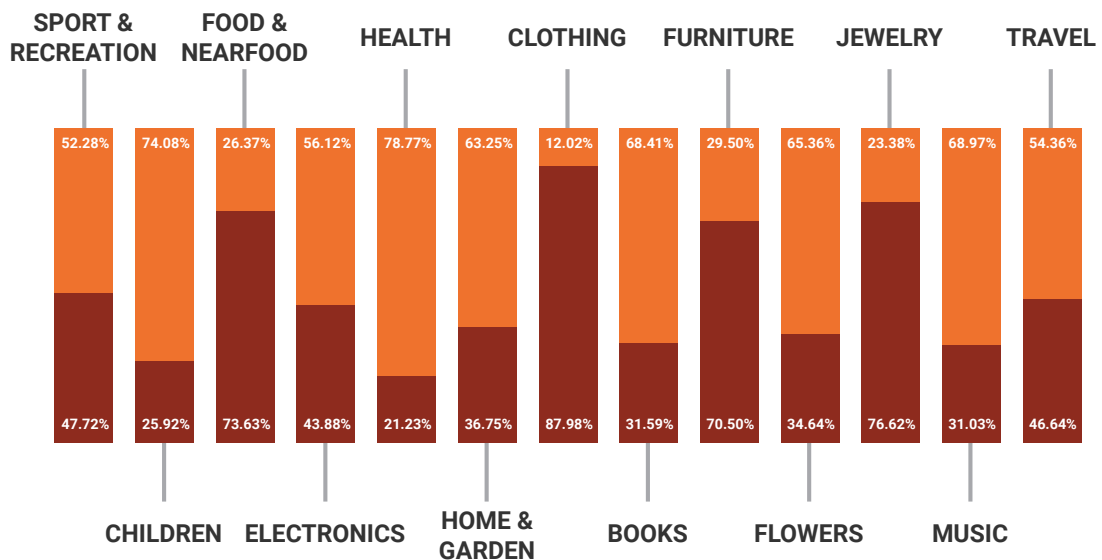
At a distant second to the clothing industry for the highest ad spend is the home & garden vertical. Its expenditure within the \$50,000+ range accounts for 20% of its total investment in paid ads.

Industries with the largest disparity between the least ad spend (\$1,000 or less) and the highest amount (\$50,000+) are food/near-food (61% total spend of \$1,000 or less compared to 6% of \$50,000+), health (40% to 9%), jewelry (36% to 10%), and most notably, music (84% to 0 percent).

Type of Display Ads

As a whole, the e-commerce industry overwhelmingly favors mobile-friendly HTML display ads over traditional media, which generally includes static or animated images.

The data shows the HTML format represents nearly 70% of all e-commerce display ads, well over double the approximate 30% of standard media ad types.



The industry categories leading in their adoption of HTML for their online display advertising include health (78.77% HTML vs. 21.23% standard media ads), children (74.08% vs. 25.92%), and music (68.97% vs. 31.03%).

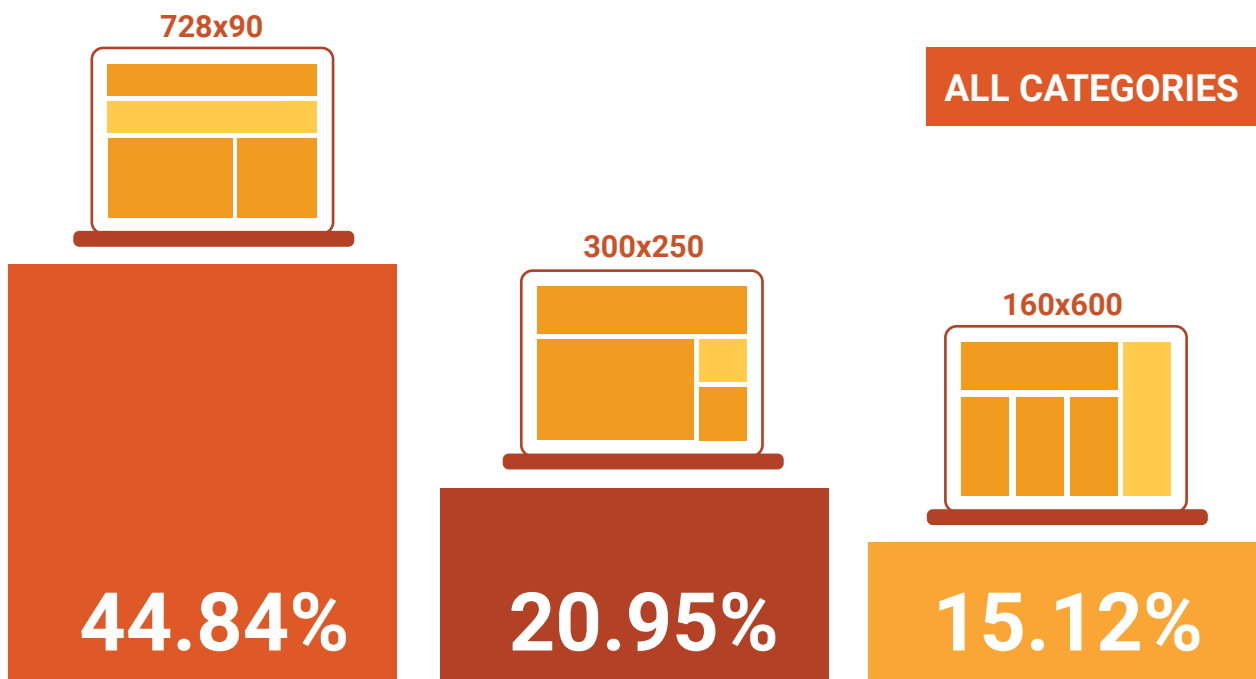
On the other side of the spectrum, the top e-commerce sectors favoring traditional media ads over HTML are clothing (89.98% media ads vs. 12.02% HTML), jewelry (76.62% vs. 23.38%), and food/nearfood (73.63% vs. 26.37%).

Size of Display Ads

Altogether, the e-commerce industry heavily favors the leaderboard (728x90) ad size, which accounts for 44.84% of all display ads.

The second most popular format is 300x250, accounting for 20.95% of ads. The 300x250 format is one of the two top performing [ad sizes identified by Google](#), rendering well on high-end mobile devices as well as on desktop. Lastly, ads sized 160x600 accounts for 15.12 percent of all display ads.

The e-commerce industry preferences discovered parallel the findings of our 2017 [Display Advertising report](#).



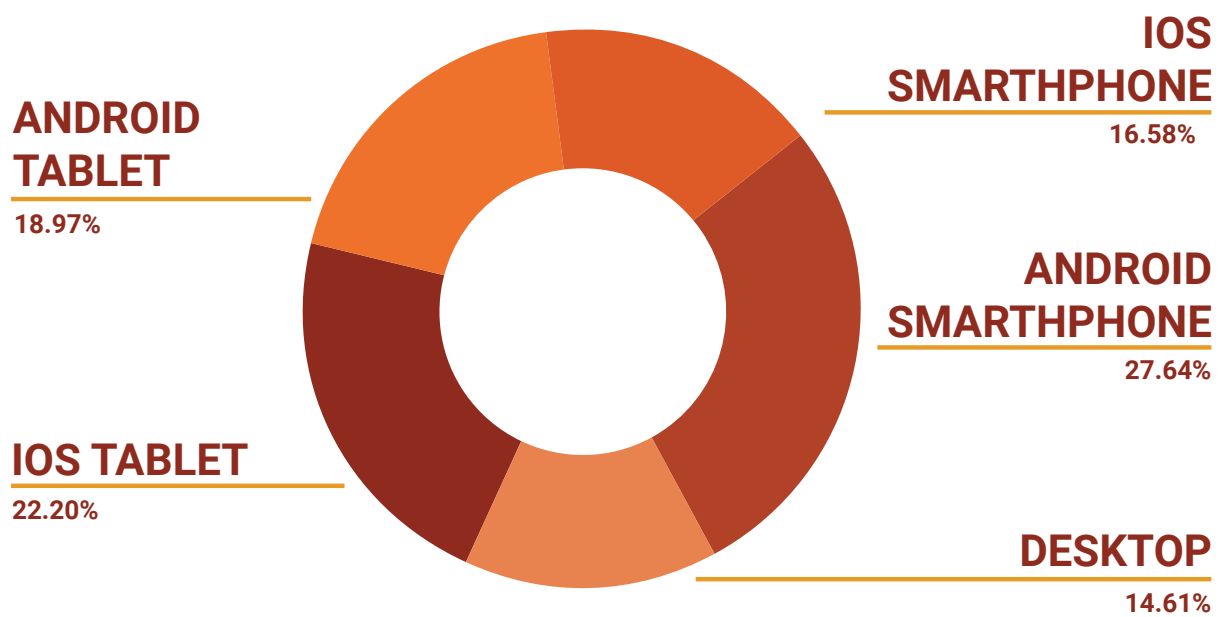


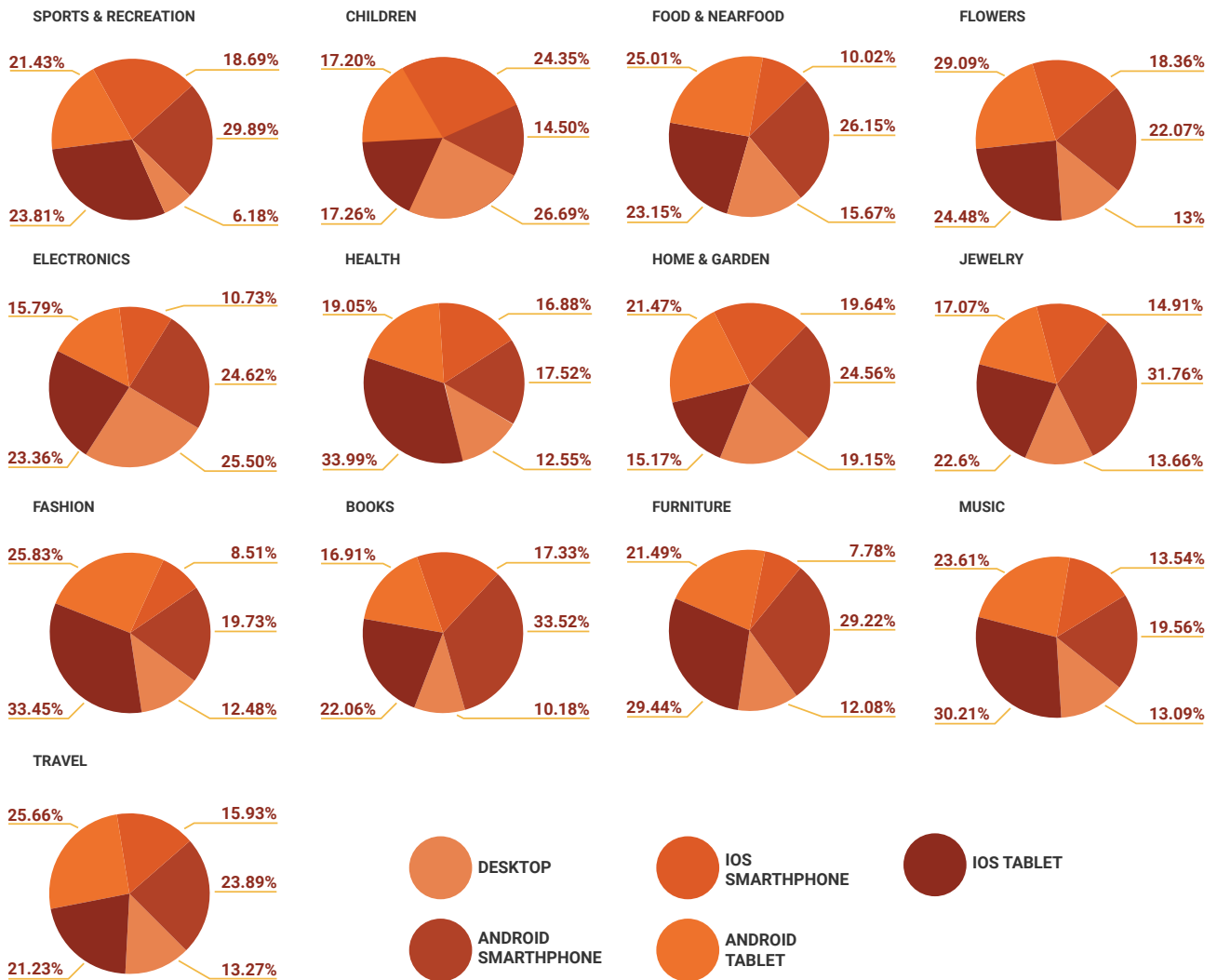
The leaderboard is the predominant ad format for 11 of the 13 e-commerce sectors researched. The two exceptions are sports & recreation, which predominantly employs the 160x600 format (65.05%) and jewelry, which invests most in the 300x250 ad size.

The flowers and jewelry categories are outliers in their use of the 336x280 display ad format, which represents the second of the two identified by Google as a top-performing ad size. The flowers vertical employs the format for 15.7% of its ads, and jewelry for 8.86 percent.

Devices Targeted

Collectively, the e-commerce categories show a strong preference for mobile devices over desktop in targeting their display ads, with only 14.81% geared towards desktop. Of the 85.39% slated for mobile devices, slightly more is for smartphones (44.17%) than tablets (41.17%).





The three verticals most invested in mobile ads, including both smartphones and tablets, are sports & recreation (93.82%), books (89.82%) and clothing (87.52%).

Only two of the 13 categories target a majority of their display ads towards desktop, children (26.69%) and electronics (25.5%).

The top three online stores most invested in tablet display ads are furniture (72.42%), clothing (59.28%) and music (53.82%).

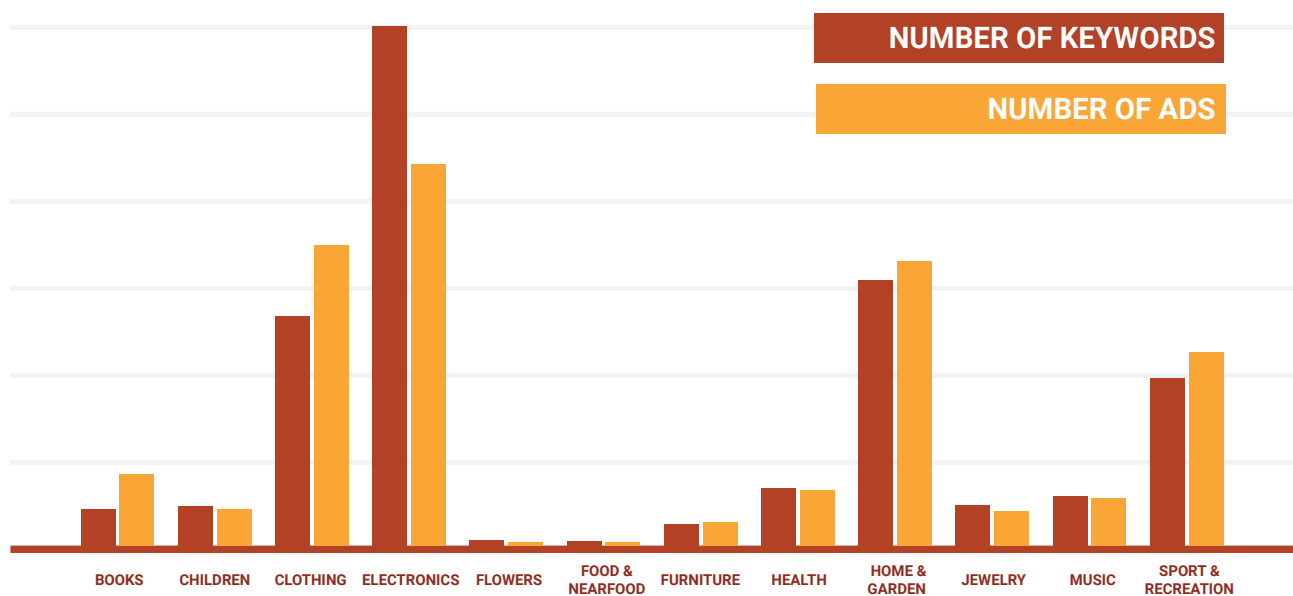
Between the iOS and Android tablets, the verticals demonstrate a preference for the iOS over Android (22.2% to 18.87%) as a whole. The opposite holds true for smartphones, with them leaning more towards Android than the iOS (27.64% to 16.58%) altogether.

The three categories leading in their leverage of smartphone ads are books, by a wide margin with 84.37%, sports & recreation at a distant second with 48.58%, and jewelry, with 46.35 percent.

Product Listing Ads

A significant investment for e-commerce can be the paid advertising is Google Product Listing Ads (PLAs).

Included in our research is how the 13 categories of online retailers are using their respective adwords campaigns.



■ Electronics most heavily leverages both number of PLA ads and number of keywords, representing 26.58% of all ads and 36.15% of keywords for its vertical.

■ The home & garden sector is a remote second to electronics in number of keywords (18.46%) relative to its total percentage of ads (19.83%).

■ Clothing follows the electronics vertical with its total percentage of PLAs (20.89%), but lags behind home & garden with its keywords (16.01%).

■ Sports & recreation is a distant fourth in its leverage of PLAs among online retailers (13.5%), but boasts a hefty 11.63% in its number of keywords.

What it means to you as marketer

According to our study, 6,19% of all traffic accounts for paid traffic, and even though its share isn't large, it goes without saying that such traffic is important for e-commerce industry.

When you work in digital marketing, you need to know what amount of money to invest in paid promotion (depending on the industry that you target). Besides, if you use paid ads, you need to know what type of ads work better for e-commerce industry. Same with the PLA items that attract a lot of customers' attention and

allow to buy a product in a couple of clicks. Having at your disposal all this information will definitely make your life as a marketer easier and help you be more effective in promoting your products.

Mobile traffic has been on the rise lately and of course it needs to be taken into account when launching your paid promotion. Apart from that, monitoring your competitors will give you the advantage when you design your marketing strategy and make estimations on how much money to spend on it.

How SEMrush helps

⚙ Advertising research

A tool that helps to identify the amount of ads used by the competitors in your niche, the estimated budgets they invest in advertising and keywords they are using for it, along with the historical data and changes they applied during the campaigns. Learn how much traffic they get from their ads and create the best strategy for your own website.

Monitor your competitors' Ads



⚙ PLA research

A tool that allows you to analyze the performance of an advertiser's Google Shopping ad campaigns. Reports generated by this tool are a powerful source of data for ecommerce websites as well as for agencies that want to take advantage of competitive intelligence tools!

Take advantage of the PLAs



⚙ Display Advertising

gather competitive intelligence on your top competitors to inform your own media plan. Pull a report of all the publishers where a competitor's display ads were found to get a deeper analysis of your competitor's target audience.

Create winning advertising strategy





Emotional triggers in Ads

Emotional triggers in Ads

It is very important to appeal to emotions in e-commerce ads in order to get more customers and pique their curiosity. That's why SEMrush decided to analyze what phrases the biggest e-commerce websites use in their ads to attract customers.

We collected and analyzed data on the most popular phrases in ads along with the discounts the leaders of e-commerce industry use among the 13 e-commerce categories included in our research.

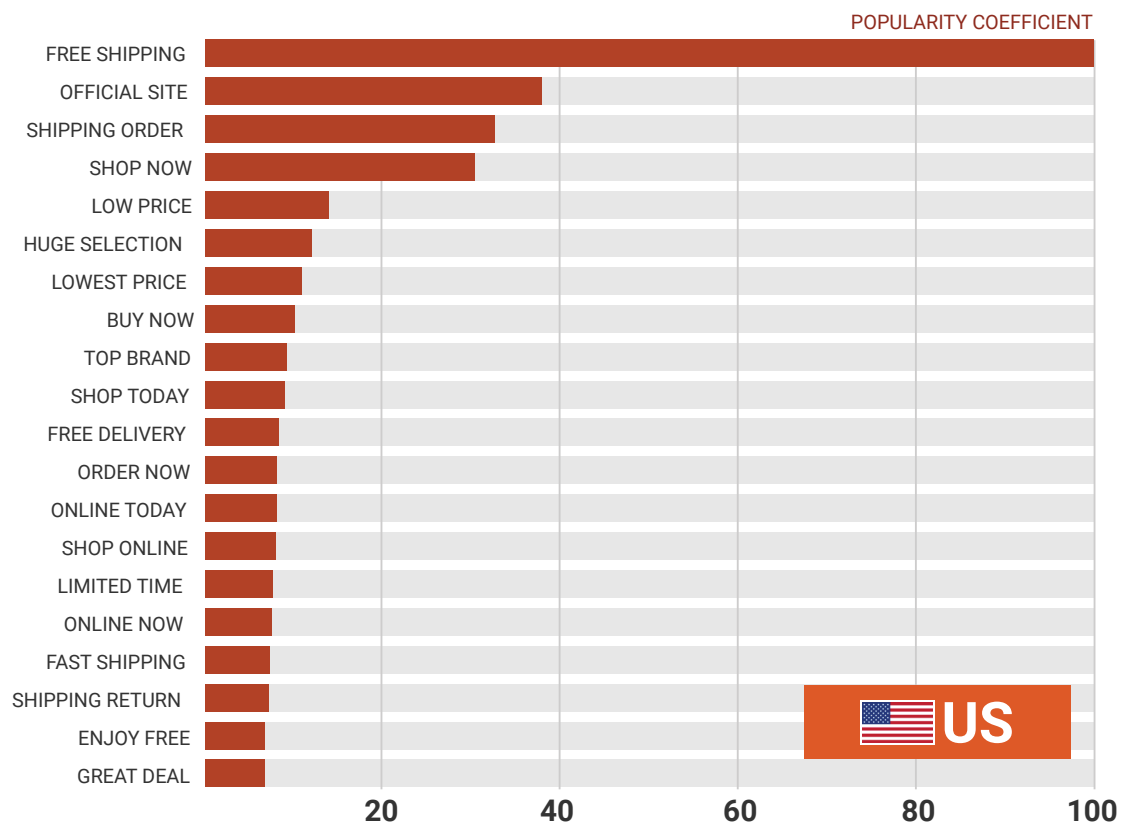
We also delved into how the e-commerce businesses guarantee certain services in their ads, and what "sense of urgency ads" they use to attract the customer right here and right now.

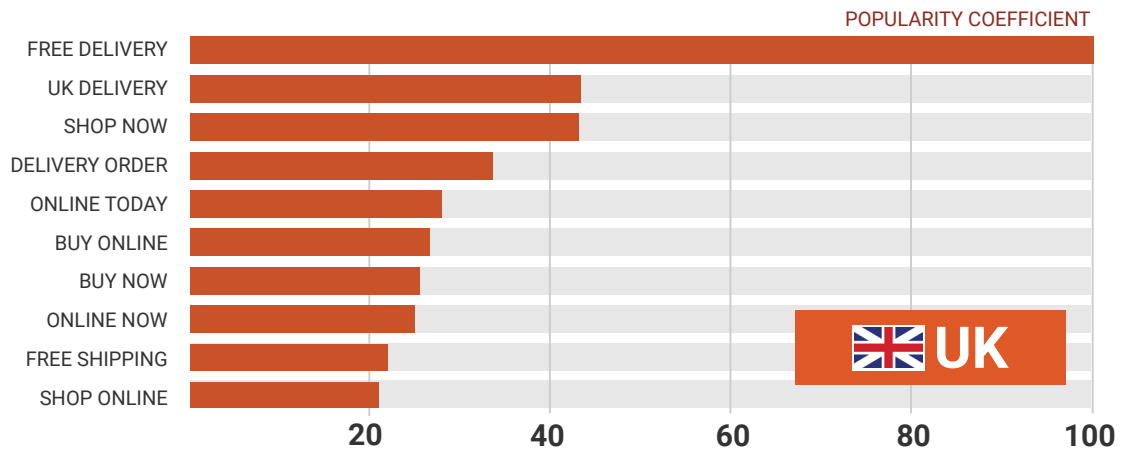
Apart from the US e-commerce ads, we also took a look at UK ads to see what the difference is between these two primarily English-speaking countries.



Phrases in Ads

This being said, “free shipping” is the most frequently used phrase in the US for all the industries studied. For the parallel UK e-commerce categories, the most popular phrase employed in the ads is pretty much the same, adjusted for British English: “Free Delivery.”





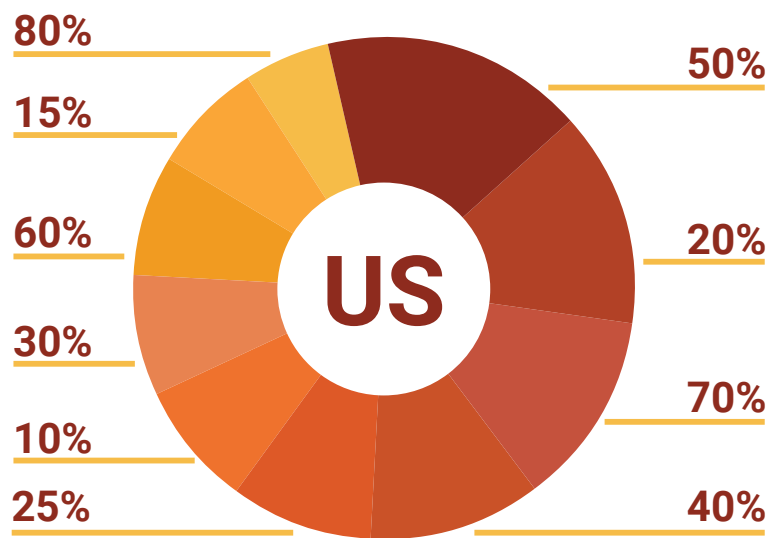
For US e-commerce ads, “Official Site” is the second most popular phrase. “UK Delivery” is the second most leveraged phrase in its e-commerce ads.

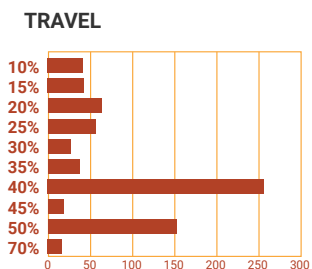
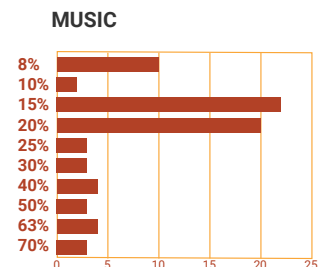
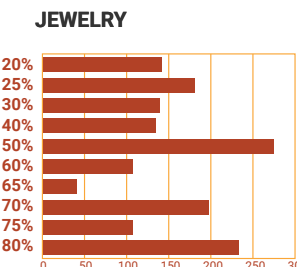
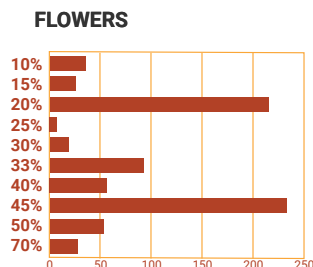
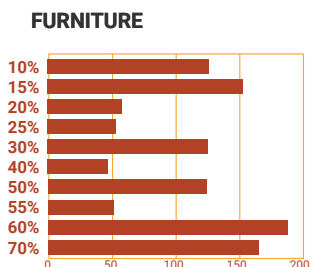
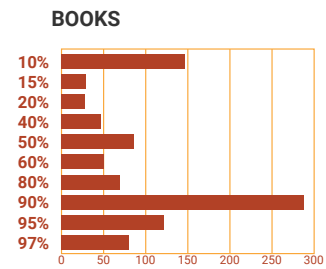
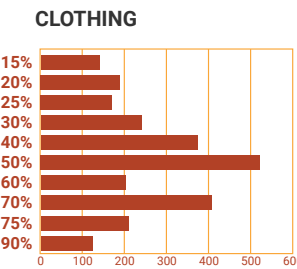
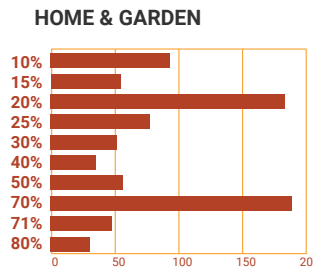
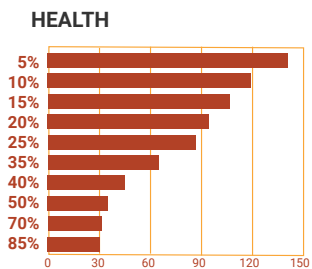
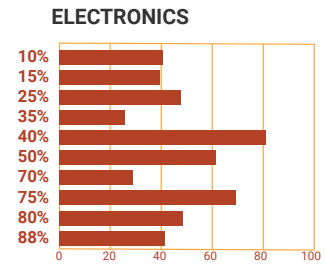
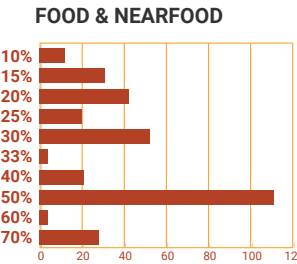
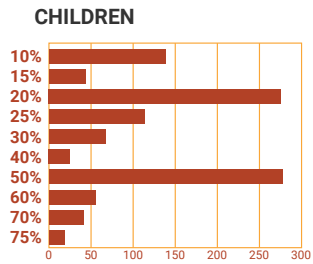
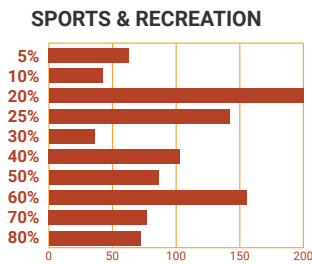
“Shipping Order” occupies third place in the US, while British e-commerce resources stick to the “Shop Now” call-to-action (CTA) in their ads.

Most popular discounts in Ads

The “50% discount” tops the list of the most advertised, and “80% discount” the least, by e-commerce businesses.

The data further shows that discounts differ significantly depending on the e-commerce industry. For example, the books category, unlike all the others, offers 90% discounts, which does not occur in any other category.





The only category of e-commerce businesses that use the 35% CTA discount is health, while the 33% discount is used in food/nearfood and flowers industry ads.

The US e-commerce industries use the 70% discount more often, while the UK online retailers demonstrate a preference for the 20% discount.

A 70% discount is mostly used by home and garden and health e-commerce industries. A 60% discount is the most popular for the furniture vertical, 45% for flowers, 40% for electronics, and 20% for sports & recreation.

A 50% discount is the most popular among children, food/nearfood and clothing industries, while 90% discount is the least popular among these categories and appears least frequently in the data set.

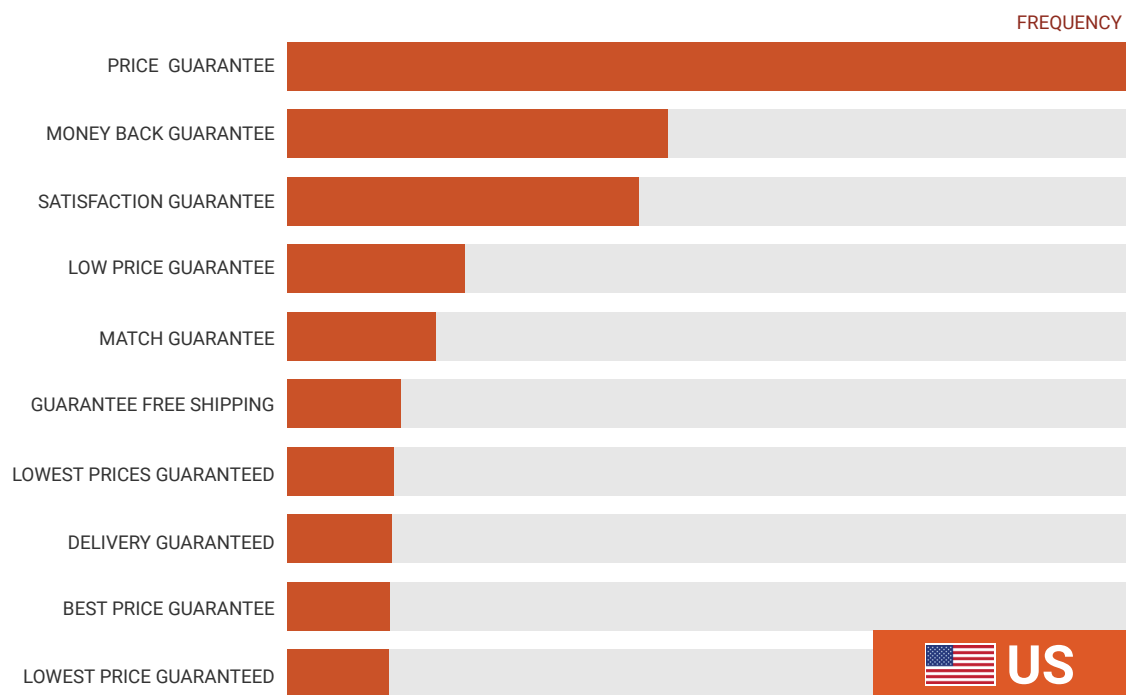
The only category of e-commerce businesses that use the 35% CTA discount is health, while the 33% discount is used in food/nearfood and flowers industry ads.

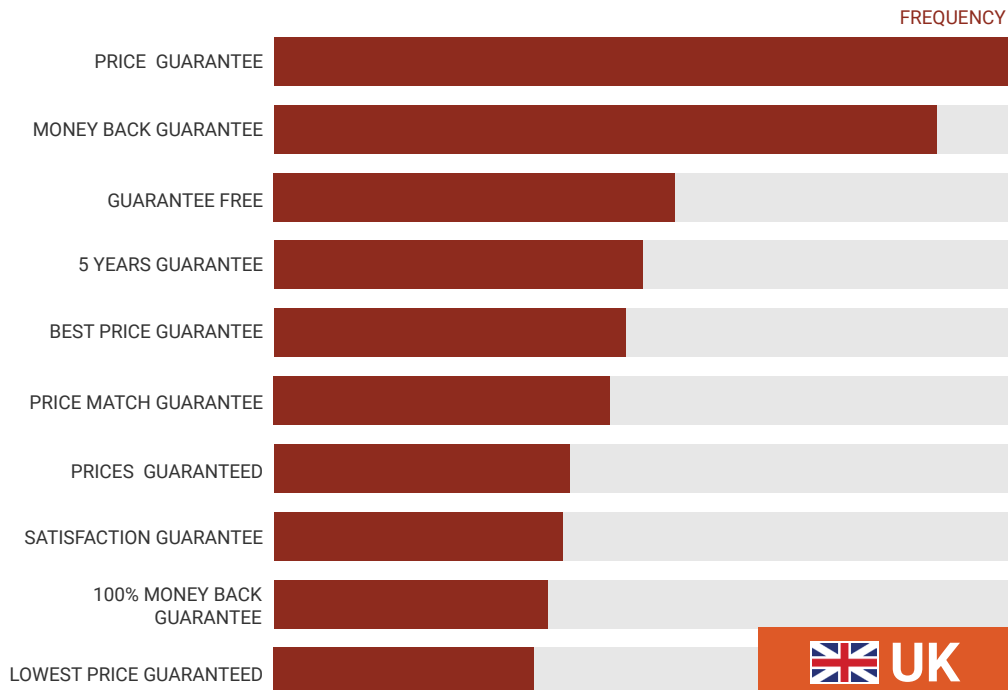
The most popular discount in the US and UK is 50%, while least popular for the US is 80%, and 75% for UK.

Guarantee Ads

Perhaps one of the benefits most valued by prospective customers is the guarantee provided by e-commerce businesses.

In our study, we analyzed the most popular guarantee-related phrases that e-commerce businesses use in their ads. The frequency of the phrases used is based on US and UK e-commerce ads, apart from the whole scope of websites encompassed in our research.





“Price guarantee,” the most popular guarantee-related phrase in the US and the UK, is aimed at securing the price of a product.

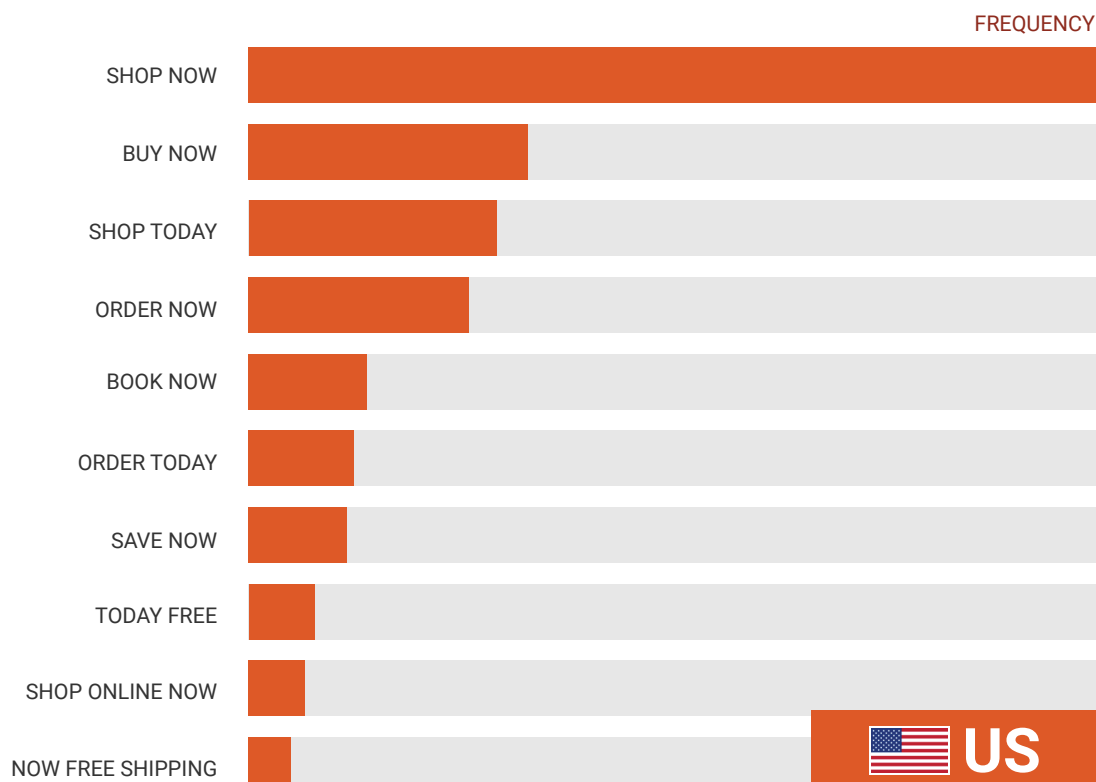
The second most popular guarantee phrase in e-commerce ads is “money back guarantee” for both the US and UK.

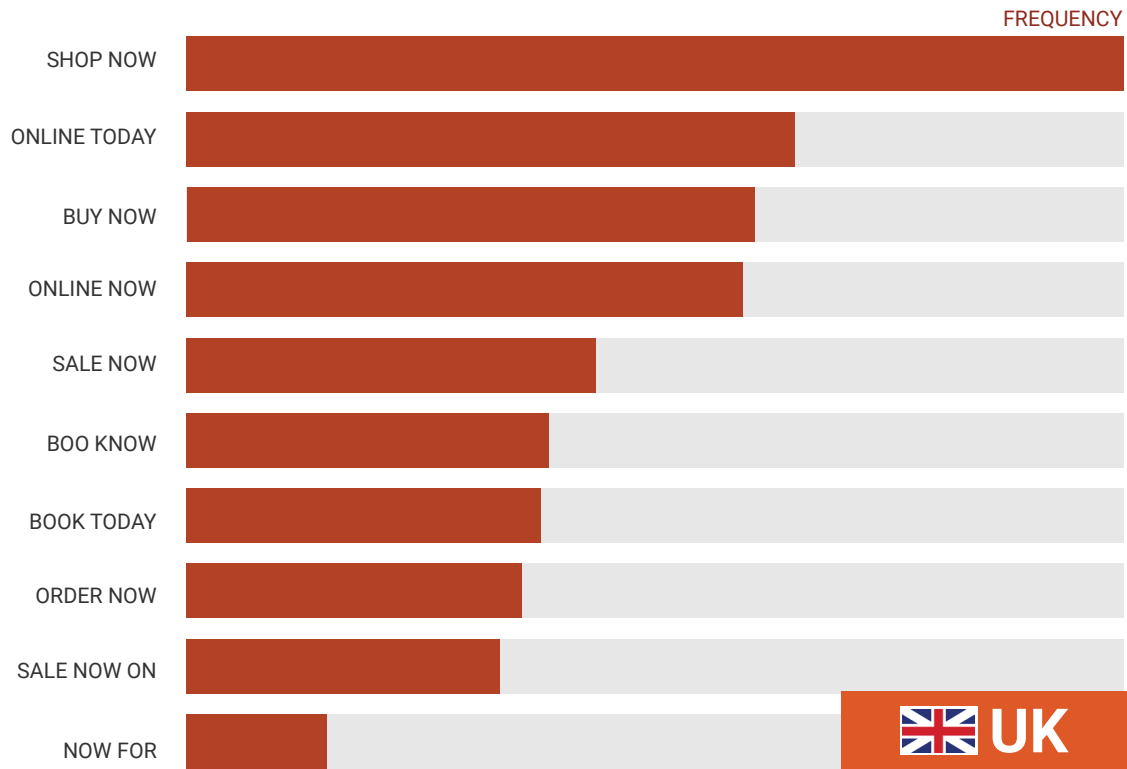
Most guarantee-related ads are connected with “money,” “price” and “shipping/delivery.”

Calls to action that create a sense of urgency

A call to action (CTA) creating urgency with a highly “clickable” button is one of the most powerful advertising tactics for immediately attracting customers to your website.

In our study, we examined what call to action buttons/banners are seen most frequently in the ads of the biggest e-commerce businesses. We also tried to identify what words and phrases can be considered “catchy” for the users that see your ads.





The most popular keyword that indicates urgency is “now.” In UK e-commerce ads, “today” is also a favored CTA.

The most often leveraged CTA for both the US and UK is “shop now.”

What it means to you as marketer

Appealing to emotions in your advertising campaign is one of the ways you can reach out to your customer. Think about how you can change the ads based on the knowledge of how the biggest e-commerces from the US and UK use them. Emotions that are displayed in the ads can affect the buying decisions.

How SEMrush helps

⚙️ Display Advertising

gather competitive intelligence on your top competitors to inform your own media plan. Pull a report of all the publishers where a competitor's display ads were found to get a deeper analysis of your competitor's target audience.

Create winning advertising strategy



⚙️ Advertising research

Examine the ads that are used by your competitors and create the best strategy for your e-commerce business, having at your disposal all the information about keywords to use, estimated budgets and traffic to get with the targeted keywords.

Discover your ad campaign's best options



⚙️ Ad builder

Boost your PPC performance by collecting your competitors' ideas. Create compelling ad texts, preview your ads and assign the newly created ads to existing keyword groups. Avoid the duplicate ads, and save both money and time!

Create your PPC campaign



When putting together the ads, you should keep in mind that it's important to accomplish two goals:

- Give the customer opportunity to understand that this add and this e-commerce is definitely what he/she was searching for.
- Act on this feeling.

Once you understand who your target audience is, you need to consider which emotional triggers you can attach to the message you send out.

To sum it up, this part of the study was based on the important aspects for e-commerce businesses: what phrases they use, what guarantees they provide and what calls to action they employ. Taking into consideration this information in the process of creating the ads gives you an opportunity to attract new customers while reducing cost-per-click (CPC) for an effective, competitive advertising campaign.



Backlinks in numbers

Backlinks in numbers

Creating the right backlink profile gives online businesses the opportunity to rank higher, as links from other relevant sites serve as a vote of credibility, trust, and authority to Google.

We analyzed what type of backlinks the biggest e-commerce businesses use, and the trend of the follow vs. nofollow attribute in backlinks to understand the online retailers approach to link building. Our analysis further breaks down the most popular and the most effective use of anchor texts.

This part of the study was based on the information of more than 8,000 e-commerce websites from different countries.

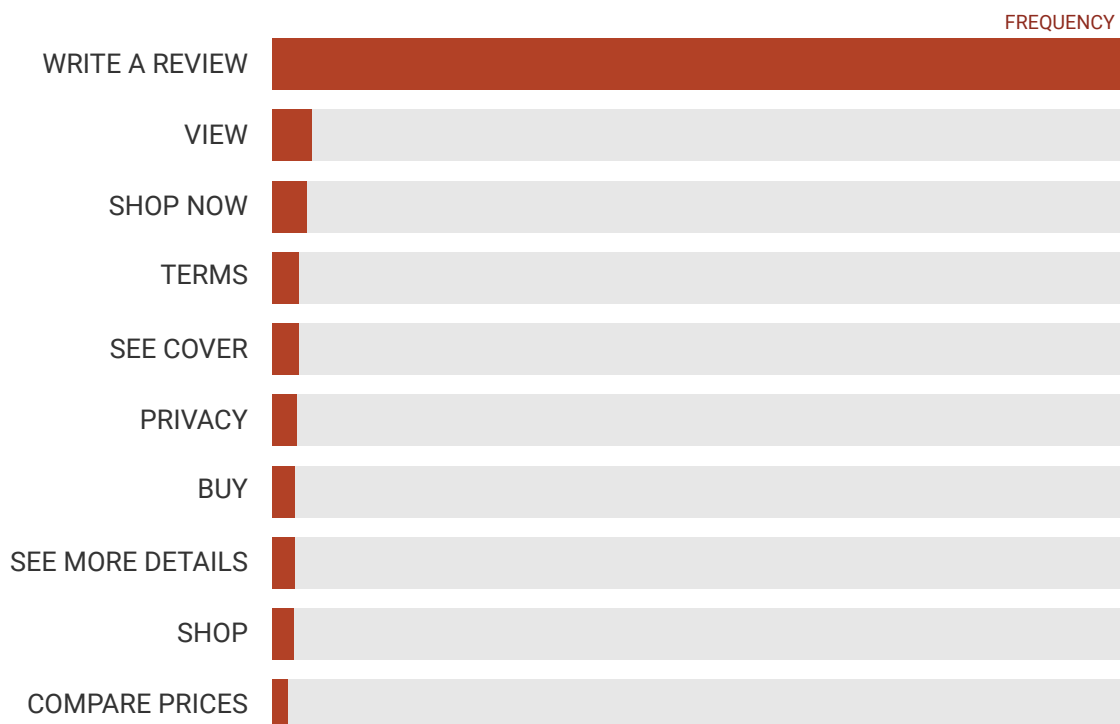


Top Anchors

Keeping users in mind, first, while thinking about your optimum profit margin is the best way to approach your link building strategy. The best anchor texts point directly to your product or category, which corresponds to the search user intent, in order to surface content relevant to the user’s interest.

Working on your link building strategy in a smart way, along with relevant partners and websites that align with your business or business goals can boost not only your rankings, but your e-commerce as well.

As part of our research, we explored the most popular anchors used by e-commerce websites, which is summarized here:



Among the less popular anchors is “compare prices,” used by approximately 14% of e-commerce websites.

“View” anchor is running second while “shop now” is third.

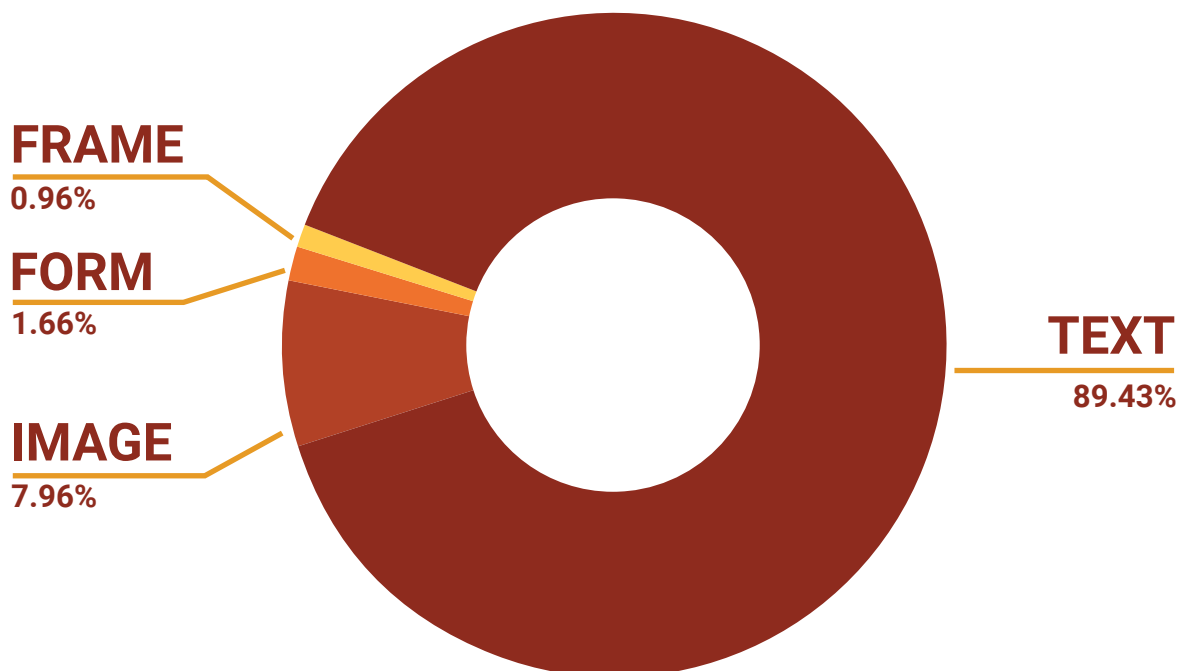
The most popular anchor text is “write a review”.

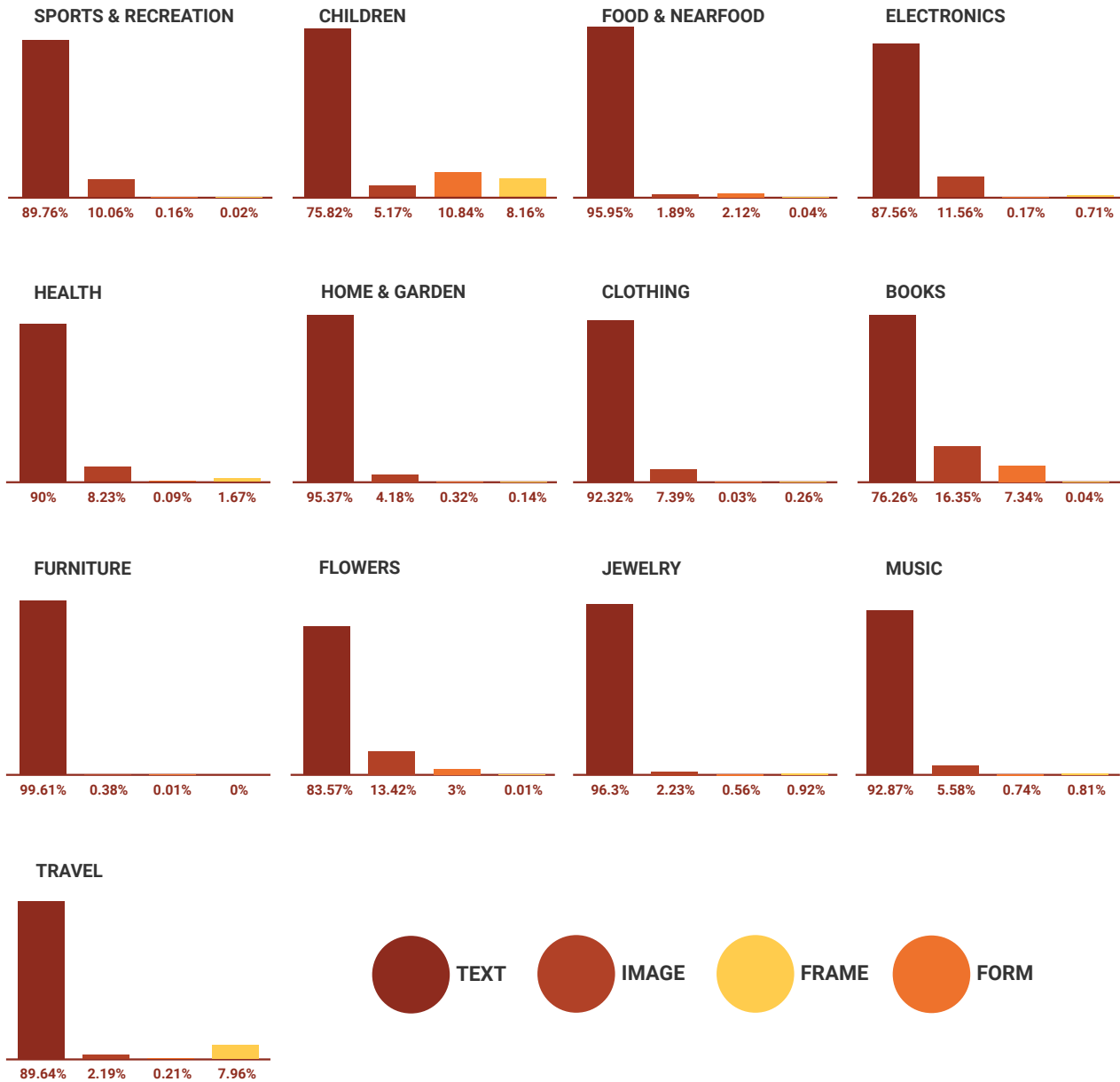
Type of backlinks

Backlinks allow user to discover your website, your content and your products in different ways from other sources. And there are different types of backlinks.

It's obvious that the majority of websites put the majority of their links like text element in content that can be presented as description of the product, in their blog post, or anywhere else.

The form, frame, and image works for some e-commerce industries as they want their clients to find the information in different, but still user friendly way. So, as a type of backlinks, we found images for only 7.96% of the analyzed ecommerces.





The “image” type is the least represented in the children category, whereas “form” is least represented in electronics, clothing, health, jewelry, music and travel verticals.

The most popular type of backlinks is “text”, which accounts for 89.43% of all backlinks and is prevalent in all of the industries comprised in the study.

The least popular type of backlink is the “frame”.

Follow vs. Nofollow

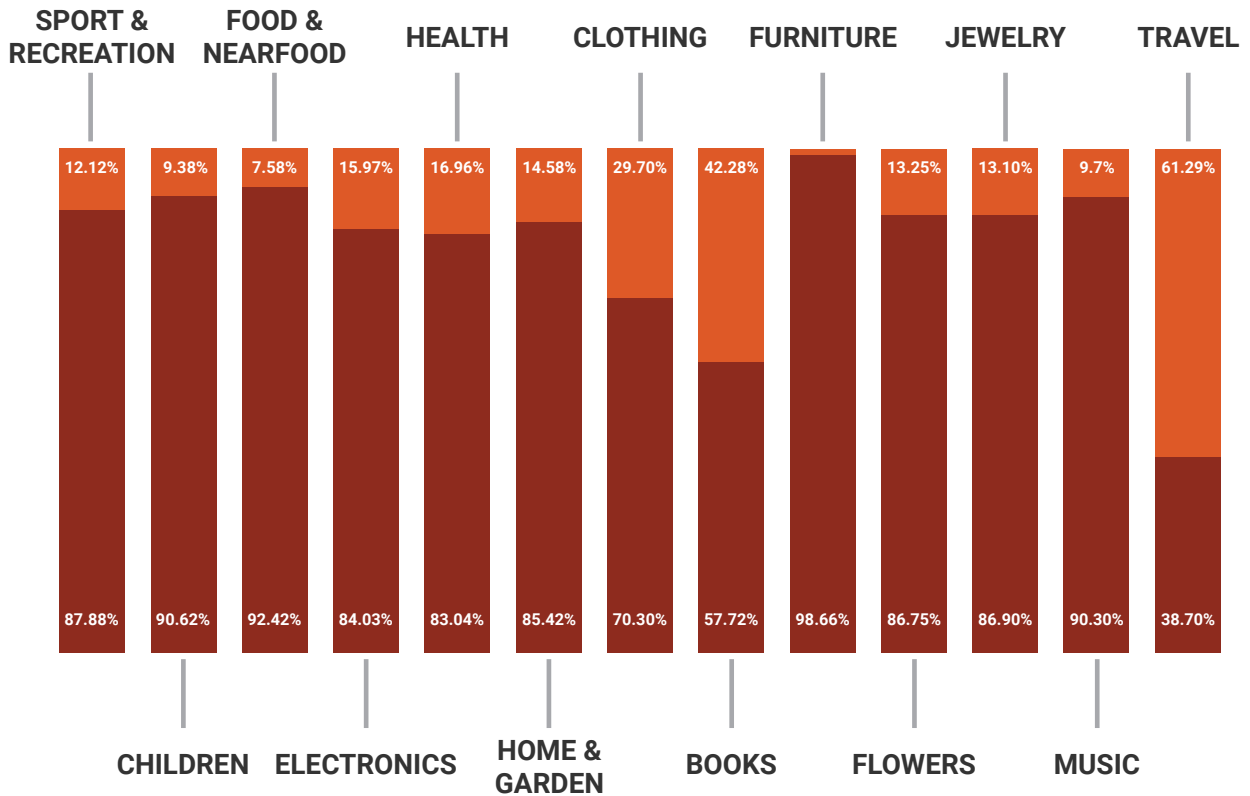
There are always questions about follow/nofollow attributes in your backlinks profile and how it can influence your search visibility. In order to answer this question, it's important to remember that follow backlinks pass "link juice" onto your website, it enhances the authority of your domain, which brings you a higher ranking.

However, it's not possible to only have always follow links but, having nofollow backlinks from high authority websites is great because the more popular the resources are that lead to your website, the more traffic it can bring to you.

By creating awesome or original content, that is special for your users, you are able to get a lot of backlinks naturally and attract more people to your website. By putting your efforts into a smart link building and outreach strategy, you can get the backlinks you need for better rankings and visibility to your online business.

Our study shows that the backlink strategy of e-commerce websites is about "follow" backlinks that we discovered in 79.5% of analyzed websites, while the "nofollow" backlinks in only in 20.5%.





The e-commerces that represent the furniture category are linked with "follow" attribute backlinks more than any other industry with 98.66%.

The travel industry is linked mostly with "no-follow" backlinks in their strategy, which represents 61.29%.

The book industry is linked with "follow" and "no-follow" backlinks app. in the same percentages with 57.72% and 42.28%.

What it means to you as marketer

The backlink strategy strongly influences higher rankings, whether you're an e-commerce or not. Constructing this strategy correctly, not only gives you the opportunity to win the best positions, but also helps your user or client find the information easier and gives them the opportunity to find the information they're interested in, and construct the best backlink profile, comparing your website with the competitors you have in your niche.

Using the data from our study, e-commerces have the ability to understand what is happening in their niche, how they can change their strategy, and what they

can do to have better positions. These types of backlinks can help to understand how you can organize your pages, where the anchors of the biggest e-commerces can be implemented in your profile, and the nofollow/follow attribute that can give you an idea of the 21st century SEO plans of even the biggest online shops.

Looking what your competitors are doing always gives you a better understanding of not only which types of links to use, but which websites/resources you can receive those backlinks from, and which trusted resources can be useful for you.

How SEMrush helps

Backlinks

helps you to conduct a deep link analysis of all referring domains' authority, gain competitive link intelligence on your rivals' backlinks, spot new referral traffic sources, and improve your link building strategy with the insights gained. Discover both the referring links and your site's target webpages.

Check your backlinks



Backlink Audit

provides an in-depth look at your domain's backlinks and helps with securing your SEO link building efforts from Google penalties. Analyze the links that are putting your site at risk, determine how backlinks affect your website using the toxic markers, and monitor new backlinks for your e-commerce.

Help your website with Backlink Audit



Link Building tool

collects a list of link building opportunities for your website and helps you to run an outreach campaign in order to contact website owners, acquire the best backlinks for your website backlink profile, and rank higher.

Find the best link building opportunities





Technical issues

Technical issues

Launching e-commerce is just the first step on your way to being the best one. All sites need to know which technical issues can negatively affect their website rankings. There are plenty of issues that websites have, which we analyzed in our latest [study](#).

In this analysis, we want to focus on two imperative things for any type of ecommerce sites: the HTTP/HTTPS and the use of hreflangs.

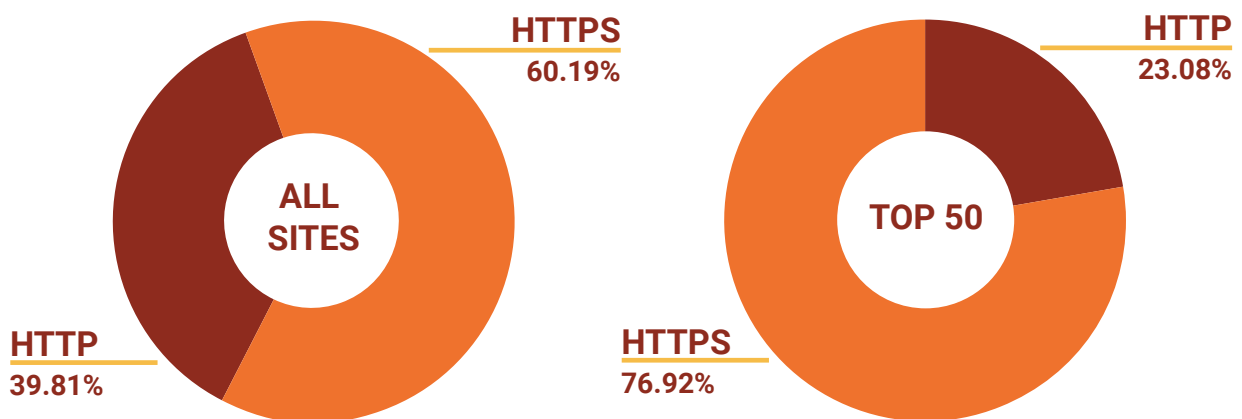
The first one is a must have for e-commerces, as the clients need to be sure that they are using the secure version of the website, which is important for payment processes. Having that in mind, the study is based on the analysis of the e-commerce website from different countries, as it was more logical to look at international e-commerce in terms of using hreflangs, which is working on different languages, as the usage of hreflangs can help you take the “wheel while you are driving”.



HTTP / HTTPS

By using HTTPS, you provide your user with security, credibility, and the best user experience. Both the user and Google has to trust your if you want people to make purchases on your website, especially because Google now prefers HTTPS websites.

If we look at different statistics, like our [own ranking factors study](#) (and others), we can find that most websites with HTTPS are on the first page (app 60-65%)

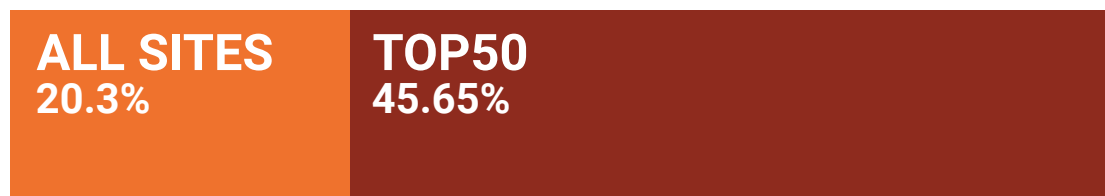


- 60.19% of all analyzed websites are using the HTTPS version of the website, while there is still 39.81% of those who are still using the HTTP versions.

- In order to get a better understanding of the situation, SEMrush looked through the top 50 websites (according SEMrush traffic data) and found that there are 76.92% of them who are using the HTTPS version.

Hreflangs

Using hreflang attribute is an easy way to offer more relevant content to your users in different countries' in the Google search. Hreflang implementation with indicating language or language/country of targeted audience, allows you to show different content in your ecommerce website pages with modifications like design, translated text, local currencies, or special offers which are more oriented to users in specific country.



■ Only 20.3% of all analyzed e-commerce have hreflangs implemented in their websites.

■ Looking at the top 50 websites, that are mostly international, we found that there are 45.65% of usage of hreflangs.

What it means to you as marketer

If you are a marketer, there is always the question how to make your website rank higher, and technical issues is one of the milestones for this process.

Aside from providing critical security and data integrity for both your websites and your users' personal information, this makes the user really happy. There are a lot of things you need to know about HTTPS implementation or migration from HTTP to HTTPS, such as: a valid certificate, server configurations, and website architecture. These points need to be under control in order to provide your users with best user experience and so that you

don't lose your positions in Google. Check our [study on HTTPS implementation issues](#).

If you want to prevent search bots from getting confused in your website language versions, you need the hreflang attribute. Hreflang helps search engines to determine which language the current page is written in, and whether there is an alternative version in another language. If you have an international e-commerce site, there are a lot of advantages to using and implementing it in your website. Discover how to avoid hreflang implementation issues with [this study](#).

How SEMrush helps

Sensor

offers a number of ways to dive deeper into more specific types of search results, including monitoring the presence of HTTPS versions of websites in the top SERP results, not only in general, but within specific categories that are relevant to your ecommerce business.

Check your industry HTTPS usage



Site Audit

helps you to understand your current situation of your site's HTTPS implementation, check for any problematic issues, and analyze international SEO efforts using the hreflang tag.

Start analyzing your website





We love your feedback!

Was this study helpful? Is there something else about e-commerce business that you are interested in? Drop us a line at ecommercestudy@semrush.com and our next post will be about it!