

COLUMNS

After Mobilegeddon, focus on site search for mobile-friendliness

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Shaun Ryan is CEO of SLISystems

By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

By **Shaun Ryan**

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Mobile commerce is exploding. The majority of traffic to ecommerce stores is coming from mobile devices (Shopify 2014) and mobile commerce is growing three times faster than overall ecommerce.

In its “Spotlight on Modern Retail 2015,” the National Retail Federation found that during the first three quarters of 2014, retailers reported their mobile sales grew a whopping 87 percent.

Well aware of the growing mobile masses, on April 21 Google expanded its mobile-friendliness ranking signal to reward mobile-friendly sites with higher search rankings and demote those that fail its test (a.k.a. “mobilegeddon”).

While the full impact is still to be seen, action by many online retailers is still needed.

To guide developers, the search giant provided them with the top things to know when building a site for mobile devices. Here is how ecommerce site search fits in and can help contribute to your mobile success.

#1: Make it easy

Google's #1 recommendation for building a mobile-friendly site is: Make it easy for customers.

Heavily contributing to the mobile-friendly signal is whether or not visitors, after landing on a mobile page, can easily complete the tasks they want to accomplish by solely using the mobile site.

For instance, when visitors using smartphones search for new running shoes on the Sports Authority, the company's mobile-friendly site helps them easily find and buy the shoes they want, which in turn will now help Sports Authority fare better in Google smartphone rankings.

Mobile-optimized site search helps retailers connect shoppers with the products that they are seeking, making it easy for mobile visitors to find, research and complete a purchase – their main objective.

Given mobile's space and speed challenges, the search box is the best gateway to finding products and content on mobile sites. That, in turn, has a big impact on engagement metrics such as conversion rates, bounce rates, average time on site and average pages requested per session, which affects its mobile-friendly signal and mobile search ranking.

Helping site visitors easily complete their objectives now has a direct impact on mobile search rankings, making good site search more important than ever before.

#2: Measure effectiveness

Google's second recommendation for building a mobile-friendly site is: Measure the effectiveness of your site.

Optimized site search is a vital part of delivering a satisfying shopping experience to mobile users as it helps visitors quickly and easily engage with the site, often increasing conversion rates and average order values, and lowering bounce rates.

Leading ecommerce companies, including international cosmetics brand e.l.f. Cosmetics and specialty retailer WebUndies.com, have experienced impressive measured results with mobile-optimized site search.

Lesley Klein, director of ecommerce at e.l.f. Cosmetics, said, "Conversion for mobile visitors using site search is four times the rate versus mobile users who don't use search. With 30 percent of our online traffic coming from mobile devices, we're providing a seamless shopping experience no matter how or where people come to e.l.f."

Terri Hunsinger, co-owner at WebUndies.com, said, "Mobile site search has been very effective in bringing 2,500 products to the forefront for customers who are trying to search on small devices where it can be difficult to see our broad product selection. People are spending more time and more money and are more engaged because of the accurate search results they are seeing."

AS WITH SITES such as e.l.f. and WebUndies.com, optimized mobile sites make it easy for customers to shop.

Whether Mobilegeddon ends up significantly impacting search engine optimization or not, your optimized mobile search will strongly contribute to better online shopping experiences and conversions.

Shaun Ryan is CEO of [SLISystems](http://SLISystems.com), San Jose, CA. Reach him at shaun.ryan@sli-systems.com.

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