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INTRODUCTION

When your business operates online, you need to make sure that you have a strategy that will engage with your audience in a variety of ways. One of the most common reasons for businesses not making conversions is that they are missing the 'touchpoint' with which the user is likely to download information or make a purchase.

Conversions are the most important part of how your touchpoints are performing but they are the final stage. A touch point could also be how they find your site, which page they land on and if they are engaging with your social media. We also have to consider the information they submit, have they filled in a contact form or downloaded some information?

There are numerous questions that you need to ask when it comes to building out a strategy that will engage with your audience and encourage them to convert. This eBook will look at many of these and help you to offer the best user experience (UX) possible.



WHAT IS UX?

Essentially user experience or UX is the practice of making sure that you are offering the best possible online service to your site's visitors. This is vital if you are to retain existing business and win new consumers.

WHAT IS A CONSUMER TOUCHPOINT?

A consumer touchpoint is the part of your site or marketing activity that engages with the user and whereby they connect with your brand. They are your brand's points of consumer contact, from start to finish. This could be in the form of a sale or an enquiry and this will depend on where they are in the sales funnel. The main difference with a touchpoint is that it is the place of an interaction and not the channel in which they have found you.

You can separate touchpoints out into three distinct groups:

- Marketing channels (email, phone, social media, blogs, vlogs, podcasts, etc).
- Research channels (website, consumer forums, consumer services - chatbots, etc).
- Order fulfilment (delivery, payment, returns, etc).

SurveyMonkey said that: "Identifying your consumer touchpoints by making a list of all the places and times your consumers might come into contact with your brand is vital."

They put together the following table of touchpoints, but be warned, this isn't the be all and end all as it can vary a lot depending on your business.

These touchpoints or places of interaction will each serve a different purpose and are part of the consumer journey.

Before purchase	During purchase	After purchase
Social media	Store or office	Billing
Ratings and reviews	Website	Transactional emails
Testimonials	Catalog	Marketing emails
Word of mouth	Promotions	Service and support teams
Community involvement	Staff or sales team	Online help center
Advertising	Phone system	Follow ups
Marketing/PR	Point of sale	Thank you cards

WHY DO THEY BOTH MATTER?

There has been such a focus on UX over the last few years that there are many reports out there looking at why UX is so important. The answer, often overwhelmingly, is that consumers simply leave your site if it doesn't offer an easy, clear to understand shopping experience or that it doesn't contain the information that they require.

The impact that poor UX can have is seriously detrimental to your business goals, and with mobile shopping on the rise, businesses need to make sure their services are fully optimised. Consumers are so much more time savvy nowadays and with smartphone and tablet use at a record high, they are finding it easier to shop online. So where does this fit in with UX?

A study by Bizrate Insight found that a large number of those surveyed would exit an online shopping experience if they had been 'frustrated' by the performance, relevancy and overall UX of a site.

The report found that top eight frustrations of mobile shoppers are:

- Having to enlarge the screen first to ensure they touch/click in the right place
- Pages load slowly
- They have to use the 'full site' version to access what they're looking for
- Text is too small
- Entering information at checkout is frustrating
- Pictures are too small
- Not enough product information available
- Data security concerns

These points are only specifically linked to shopping but give a feel that the smallest problem can add to a poor UX and therefore conversion rates.

THE IMPORTANCE OF UX

Today's consumers are not only savvy but they are time starved and as such, they want what they want instantly; this means that the need to fill this demand is huge. UX is one of the areas that businesses are focusing on to ensure that they not only offer the products and services but that their consumers stick around or return.

The relationship between SEO and UX has never been bigger, largely because it is the 'end point' of most consumer journeys. Good SEO, in terms of ranking highly (visibility) and ranking for the correct or relevant keywords (optimisation) means that you have the best chance of being chosen by the user. Once this user becomes a visitor to your site, it is the UX that is the most influential factor in bridging the gap between a visit and a conversion.

If you are offering the product or service that you say you are and it is easy to read more about it/ them, then you are increasingly likely to keep the interest of the visitor. Additional content that answers any questions that they may have or gives them the technical specifications of a product will help your business to sound more authoritative and knowledgeable. This in turn builds trust in the brand and can lead to a purchase or conversion.

According to the Digital Marketing Institute: "The ideal online consumer journey is a user-friendly website that combines seamless navigation; a clean cut purchasing journey; dynamic and digestible content; top notch customer support and mobile device compatibility. By combining these elements a business can create an online environment that can make a brand."

A survey that followed this definition of a good UX website revealed that 79% of all consumers admit to searching for another site if the one that they ended up on didn't live up to expectations.



AUDIENCE PROFILING

Audience analysis is arguably the most important thing that you can do following a marketing campaign. Seeing the results is a totally different perspective from simply saying 'yes our sales have gone up in the period following the campaign'. This is about hard data.

One of the things that you can determine from the levels of interaction your marketing is receiving is product usage rate.

This forms part of the behavioural segment of the audience split and it relates to the way we categorise purchasers. The consumer can be split into one of three behavioural sub groups, light, medium, heavy user or a brand advocate. The aim for businesses is to get the consumer to move through the stages and become a heavy user of a brand advocate.

At the light stage of user behaviour they will be aware of the brand and will try the product out for the first time.

During the medium usage stage, the buyer is somebody who buys your products occasionally but may settle for an alternate brand if there's a better offer.

At the heavy usage stage, the consumer buys your product frequently and would rather not buy a product if it meant moving away from your brand. These are the most loyal consumers and the true brand advocates.

If you run a campaign that doesn't work, your analytics will tell you this and you can alter a number of things. Based on your data you should ask the following questions:

- Have I got the right audience?
- Are they properly segmented?
- Did the content translate?
- Was it informative?
- Was it offering value?
- Was it shareable?
- Were there links to products or the main website?
- Did I send my content out/live at the right time?
- Was the CTA effective?
- What can I change for next time?



COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

One of the most important things to think about when it comes from increasing your chance of a conversion is competitor analysis. Like every business in your market there is a consumer base. You need to be aware of this and have a strategy in place that will a) retain your audience and b) expand it by targeting those who are buying from others in your market. Essentially if you want to gain an edge on your competitors, you need to know what they're doing online. Ask yourself:

- **What are their strengths?** How can you incorporate what they're doing well into your own strategy?
- **What are their weaknesses?** And are you repeating the same mistakes they're making?

Analysing your current and potential competitors' search marketing activities will allow you to assess your position in the market and provide a context in which to make strategic decisions for your business online. Evaluating their strengths and weaknesses against your own will reveal where there are opportunities for improving your user experience and ranking.

If you create a table similar to the one below you are able to drill down into the technical on-page tweaks that might assist with your position in SERPs, and which ultimately might help you gain a competitive advantage.

Homepage	Your site	Competitor 1	Competitor 2	Competitor 3	Competitor 4
Keyword Selection	Very good	No keywords found	No keywords found	Good	No keywords found
Title Tag	Excellent	Very good	Very good	Excellent	Satisfactory
H1, H2, H3 Tags	Good	No H1 or H3 tags were found	Excellent	Very good	Excellent
HTML Content	Well structured, sufficient content	Lots of content, although not as well structured	Excellent. Well structured, user friendly	Informative and sufficient homepage content	Lots of homepage content
Alt Tags	Some alt attributes are missing	Majority of alt attributes are missing	Excellent	Some alt attributes are missing	Majority of alt attributes are missing
HTML Validation	1 warning, 6 errors	13 warnings, 18 errors	125 errors, 227 warnings	33 errors	24 errors, 10 warnings
Category Page					
Keyword Selection	Satisfactory, would benefit from wider variety of keywords	Good selection of keywords	No keywords found	No keywords found	No keywords found
Title Tag	Very good	Good	Too long	Basic	Good
H1, h2, h3 tags	Excellent	No h1 or h3 tags found	Excellent	Very good	Good
Alt tags	Some alt attributes are missing	Good	Excellent	Majority of alt attributes are missing	Excellent
Url	Too long and includes confusing code	Very good, user friendly	No issues	Very good	Very good
Category content	Very good	Well-structured and guides user further into the site	Very good	Detailed content	Good mix of content types

In a similar vein, you should also look to how your competitors handle UX. When comparing your site with those of competitors, it's important to bear in mind that keywords and technical SEO factors are not the be-all and end-all: there's strong evidence that Google and the other major search engines take UX into account when ranking webpages.

In other words, it's feasible that a site with excellent user experience will outrank competitors with higher quality referring domains and better on-page optimisation organically.

If we consider the staggering possibilities afforded to the search engine by RankBrain, the machine learning element of Google's ranking algorithm, it is not unrealistic to hypothesise that user satisfaction variables, such as bounce rate and time on site, etc, could be learned and considered as part of the ranking algorithm to decide organic ranking positions, even without the need for analytics tagging or tracking.

Therefore, the bottom line here is: if you focus on traditional SEO more so than on the overall quality of your website, competitors may outrank you. You could represent your comparison like this:

UX	Your site	Competitor 1	Competitor 2	Competitor 3	Competitor 4
Site Feel	Modern, high quality and designed with users in mind	Not as user friendly, more basic website	Modern, clean, bold.	Modern, simple, young.	Corporate, more serious, like a news website
URL Issues	URL structure becomes too long at category page levels	No issues	No issues	No issues	No issues
Navigation	No issues	No issues	No issues	Navigation relies on internal site search. Traditional navigation bars are limited.	Standard navigation, user friendly
Blog	Multiple blogs available on the site	News section acts as website blog	Regularly updated site blog	Regularly updated site blog	Several blogs available on the site
Summary	Good site with some minor on page SEO issues. Nothing that will have a significant impact on the overall performance of the website.	Not as many visuals and no video content makes this website less appealing and eye catching. No on page SEO issues need urgently reviewing.	Good on page SEO and lots of well-structured content across the site.	Slightly different site to other competitors in terms of content and navigation. No major on page SEO issues. Modern look and feel to the site.	Good on page SEO, and overall look and feel of the website is good. Targeted at an older audience.

TIPS FOR CREATING GOOD UX

When it comes to implementing changes in order to boost UX here are some of the things that you should be mindful of:

Branding – One of the first things that you should do is to make sure that your branding is attractive and memorable. Although this may be a task for a different team, in terms of SEO it is important that you are mentioning your brand alongside all of the relevant searches and in terms of UX there is a lot to be said for reinforcing the branding message across the site and keep it front of mind. This is especially important when it comes to gaining return visits.

Layout and consistency – Keep the navigation the same for your site and make all of the buttons easily recognisable. If you are able to do this people will know where they need to go in order to find the information that they need. It will also help them to navigate to the end of the buyer's funnel and conversions will therefore increase. You can also add in similar or partner products here to further boost revenue.

Functionality – Structure your content to fit the needs of your user and make sure that the design of the site is responsive. Speed is also important here especially in B2C sites, particularly those in retail, where a consumer can be put off if images are slow to load. Always test and tweak your site speed where possible.

Mobile responsiveness – Talking of responsiveness, make sure that you are 'mobile ready' as an increasing number of transactions and searches are performed on mobile devices. If the appearance, speed or navigation of your site is poor on mobile then you could lose out to a rival.

Live chat – One thing that is often overlooked when it comes to UX is a live chat function. More and more websites are now using this in order to add an additional layer of customer support. If someone has a query once they reach your page or need help with the navigation then this can be a good area for them to have access to.

Data collection – What is the point in having visitors to your website if you aren't going to see what they are doing and look at ways in which you can improve. Look at things like heat maps to see where the users are on the site and also monitor things such as where they click and how much time they are spending on your page. A quick exit from the site could be indicative of a poor UX. Make changes and learn from the data that you have.



FINAL THOUGHTS

You can't make a sale if you don't have anyone to sell to and the main learning point here is that you have to have a balance between good SEO which will draw consumers in and then good UX which will delight the audience and lead them through your site to the point of purchase. If you concentrate on a strategy that takes both of these into account then you are in a good position and should see both more conversions and a higher ROI.

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ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO) and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year and Digital Agency of the Year 2018, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

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