



CONVERSION RATE OPTIMISATION

The Ultimate Checkbook For Your Website.

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WELCOME ABOARD!

I wanted to start this e-book with a grand welcome and an even more extravagant Kudos for starting your eCommerce venture. If you don't own a company and are reading this book to implement strategies for the company you are working for, welcome. I congratulate you for all your efforts. To everyone else in between this spectrum, a warm welcome to you and a big thank you for being part of this journey with me.

Here's what you can expect from this small read:

First off, we at WebSpero believe only in data. Data is the ultimate guru when it comes to all things technology. We don't favor "hunches" or "expert opinions." As the data comes up, we act accordingly. This book will highlight the same theme throughout.

I have tried to simplify things as much as possible so that even if you are new to conversion rate optimization (CRO), you will have a detailed understanding of the subject.

I give you page by page analysis for your website so you can use this book as a checklist and ensure each page is optimized to its full potential.

And best of all, if you are a new startup owner, fret not; I have covered CRO strategies you can start implementing right away so that you kick off your business the right way.





“CRO IS THE PROCESS OF DESIGNING A WEB EXPERIENCE ON YOUR SITE SUCH THAT AS MANY AS POSSIBLE USERS TAKE THE ACTION YOU WANT THEM TO TAKE ON YOUR SITE.”

So let's get started by first understanding what exactly is conversion rate optimization. CRO is the process of designing a web experience on your site such that as many as possible users take the action you want them to take on your site.

These actions (conversions) may be in the form of requesting a contact or navigating through your pages, or purchasing from your store. There are two categories of conversions: Macro conversions (Purchasing something from your store, requesting a quote, or subscribing to any of your services).

And then there are micro-conversions (when your visitor signs up to receive emails from you, or if they create an account, or if they add something to their cart)

Usually, these designs are done by hand in A/B testing or testing all combinations of two or three variables using the multivariate testing procedure.

This is how it used to be done traditionally. Now, however, we have a lot of tools to make our lives easier. Tools like Sentient Ascend help make your website as efficient as possible by giving you an in-depth analysis of what exactly is working on your site and what needs re-working.

1. WHY DOES CRO MATTER?



INCREASE PROFITS



INCREASE ADVERTISING SPEND



INCREASE MARKET SHARE

1. You increase Profits: Let's get straight to it. You are working hard and putting in all this time and effort to grow your business.

Growth is the ultimate aim of any business. So this point is practically a given.

But hold on, there's more! When you optimize your conversion rate, you now have the resources to:

2. Increase your spend on advertising: Think about it, as you begin increasing your conversion rate, your budget for PPC, affiliate marketing, and every other advertising will automatically increase. Think about it, as you begin increasing your conversion rate, your budget for PPC, affiliate marketing, and every other advertising will automatically increase.

This means all your advertising efforts will suddenly become much more rewarding. Now that you're able to do this, you eventually have...

3. More market share: Every Marketers' dream!

As you begin optimizing your conversion rate, your traffic begins to increase (you're now able to buy more traffic). That way, you can bring in more customers.

More customers = More repeat business!

This way you speedily increase your market share!

2. HOW CAN YOU CALCULATE CONVERSION RATE?

Let's take an example of an eCommerce site — Tony's T-shirts. A visitor could make a new purchase for each session. We need to improve our site, so they make as many purchases as possible. If a user visited the site multiple times, suppose three meetings — that would count as three sessions, which means three opportunities for conversion.

Let's look at each of these three visits and how they behaved:

Meeting 1: No conversion— the user was acquainting themselves with the site and looking around.

Meeting 2: The user purchased a new T-shirt. This is a conversion!

Meeting 3: User returned to Tony's online store and purchased three T-shirts more this time! Yet another conversion! Although they purchased three things, this would count as a single conversion.

To understand our conversion rate, we would take the number of unique purchase orders and divide it by the total number of sessions.

For our hypothetical user, they converted over two out of three times they came to Tony's site:

USER A UNIQUE ORDERS	SESSIONS
2	3
$\frac{2 \text{ ORDERS}}{3 \text{ SESSIONS}}$	= 66% CONVERSION RATE

To calculate your store's conversion rate, you need to look at all the unique orders and divide that by the total number of sessions.

WHAT IF A USER CAN ONLY CONVERT ONCE?

Now imagine Tony has a second site where he has a membership service. It allows his customers to subscribe to a monthly surprise fashion box curated by designers, allowing people to input their style and choices. A designer would suggest what would look best on this customer. The idea of this business is that a customer can only subscribe once. But they can surely visit multiple times to keep track of the blog etc. Let's look at the visitors' behavior:

Session 1: Visitor comes to the store for the first time, looks around, explores but doesn't purchase anything- No conversion.

Session 2: User subscribes to the surprise fashion box; this is Tony's conversion.

Session 3: User comes back and explores the blog articles and other quizzes Tony has on finding out their style statement.

In this case, our users can't convert each time they come to his site. So, rather than looking at the number of sessions, we will measure the conversion success by how many unique users visited his site.

To figure out his conversion rate, we would take the total number of unique orders and divide it by the total number of unique visitors :

UNIQUE ORDERS	UNIQUE USERS
1	1
$\frac{1 \text{ ORDERS}}{1 \text{ UNIQUE USER}}$	= 100% CONVERSION RATE

3. 5 WAYS YOUR SEO EFFORTS COULD IMPROVE THROUGH CRO

OK, your CRO effort may not directly relate to bringing in more organic traffic to your website or even ranking higher on search engine result pages, BUT CRO has the following distinct benefits:

Improved customer insights: Your CRO efforts pay off in allowing you to understand your key audiences better. You eventually begin understanding what language resonates with them and best speaks to what they're looking for. Your CRO efforts look at helping you find the best customers for your business. This means that your efforts aren't wasted at catering to just about everyone; instead, you can streamline your efforts and cater to only those that will eventually become loyal to your business. You get the right kind of people for your business.

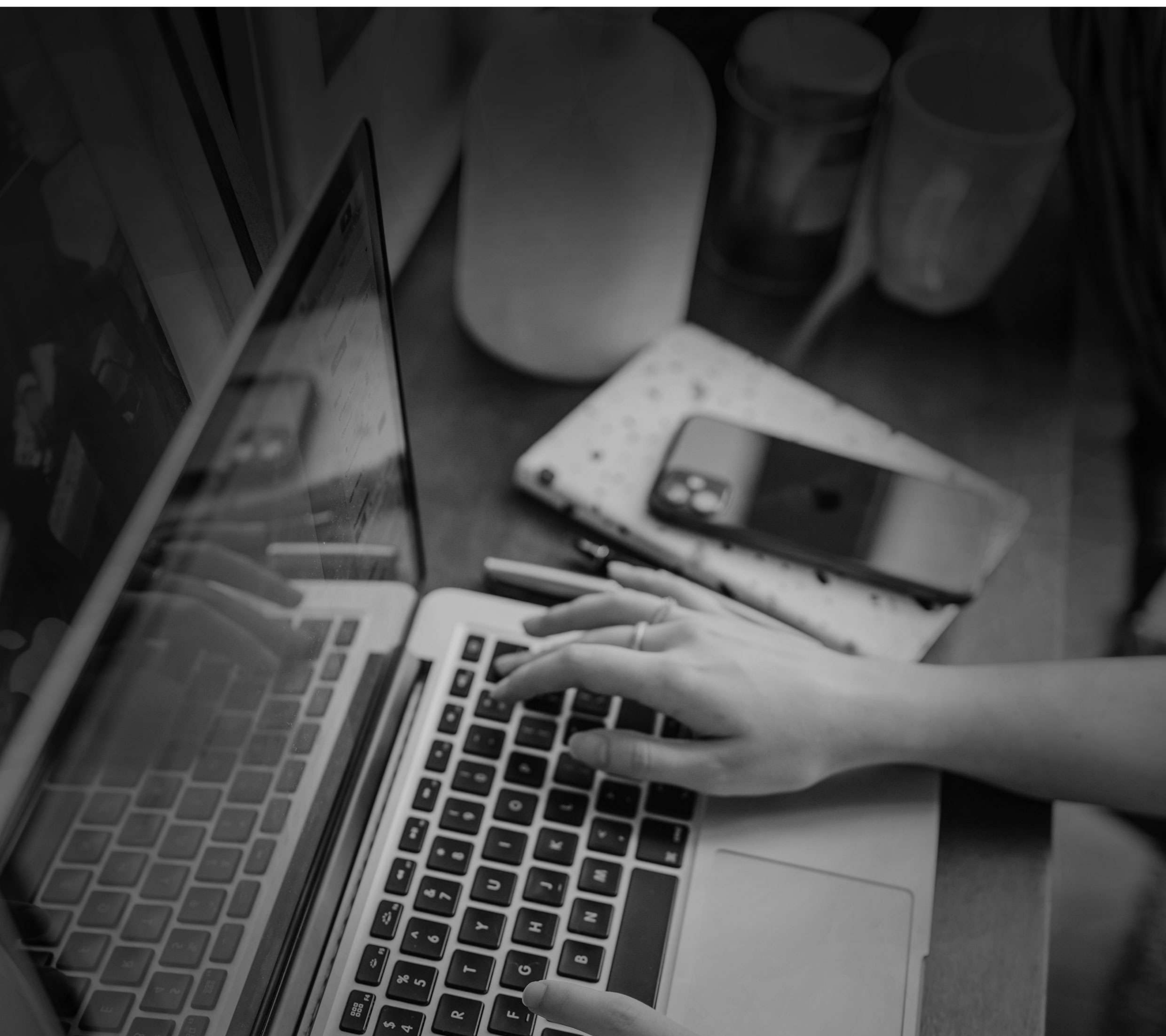
Better returns on your income: This is where work smarter and not harder comes into play. A higher conversion rate would mean you start gaining more of the resources you have. By understanding how to make the most of the resources you have, you'll get more people buying from you without needing to bring in more people.

Better scalability: Your audience size might not scale as your business grows and so it becomes even more essential to invest in CRO efforts because only then can you scale further without running out of resources or audiences. Users aren't infinite. You need to get your browsers to become buyers; only then will you be able to grow your business without running out of "potential" customers.

Better UX: People crave amazing user experiences. They love feeling smart and intelligent. They hate complicated things that take time for them to understand. They stick around on your website when it simplifies things for them. CRO can show you

exactly which parts of your page are working so you can take inspiration from that data and optimize your other pages accordingly. CRO would help you build engagement on your site. The longer people stick around, the better your chances at making a sale.

Enhanced Trust: If you want a user to share their credit/ debit card details with you, you can bet on it they will only do so if they feel your website is a safe one and that their details are safe. Consider your website to be your number one salesperson. So, just like you have your offline sales team, you need your website to look professional, courteous, and ready to be there for your customers' questions as and how they come up.





CRO PROCESS

Can't you almost imagine it? This is why I mentioned the most crucial place to allocate your resources to optimizing your conversion rate. It all starts here!

Now that you know why Conversion Rate Optimization (Henceforth would be mentioned as CRO) is so crucial for your business, let's get straight to an in-depth look at HOW you can optimize your conversion rate:

PHASE ONE: RESEARCH! RESEARCH! RESEARCH!

Stop listening to "experts" and people who have "been-there-done-that". Also, "gut feelings" and "years of experience" aren't necessarily what sound advice is based on. Oh, and don't forget the misleading metrics like "micro-conversions" or "split-testing the color of your buttons." Stop wasting precious time and money on ANYTHING that isn't centered on DATA.

Data is the guru in today's day and age. Whatever data shows, it goes. There have been countless examples I have come across where someone was continually chasing the "experts opinion." I say that in quotes because a genuine expert would revert you to look at the data. Don't ever forget that. Don't end up in the rabbit hole of losses just because you're chasing what works for someone else. Always focus on what YOUR data tells you about YOUR customer insights. That is all that matters. Here are a few ways to source the data needed:

Become your company's customer: When was the last time you bought your own product/ services? When was the last time that you experienced what you offer? I know it might seem weird listening to it at first but bear with me, the first thing I ask my clients when they want CRO is this: **When was the last time you ordered something from your website?**

The reason being, you get a lot of insights into what's working and what needs fixing. You also get insights on how your customer would feel when they go through your website. Believe me when I tell you hundreds of clients I have served were shocked when they experienced their website themselves.

They were able to tell us the same points we found problematic when we audited their website. Now when you do this step, don't forget to record the **data** in the form of screenshots. You can also use tools such as Camtasia to record your buying process. Camtasia is a screen recording and video editing tool.

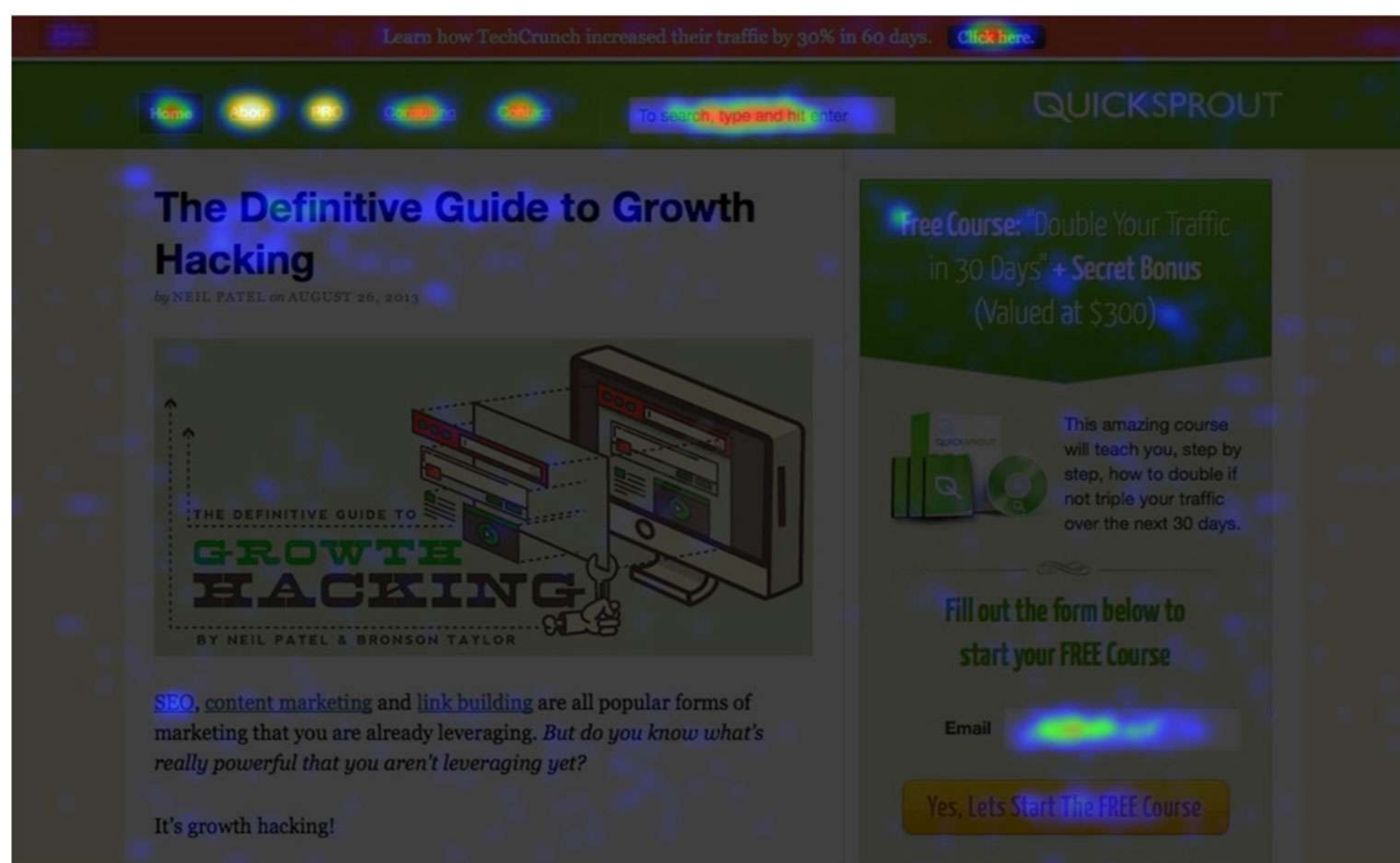
Get your Google Analytics Funnels right: So many people skip this crucial step. Google Analytics is a powerful tool to help you define your goals and create the right funnels to optimize your efforts.

It can show you exactly where you need to be focusing your efforts based on where you are losing traffic and where your most significant opportunities are.

Leverage various Analytics Packages: We live in times that allow us access to a world of information. The world is running on capturing data, and many tools can help you reduce your manual efforts. Some tools can do most of the thinking ahead of time for you.

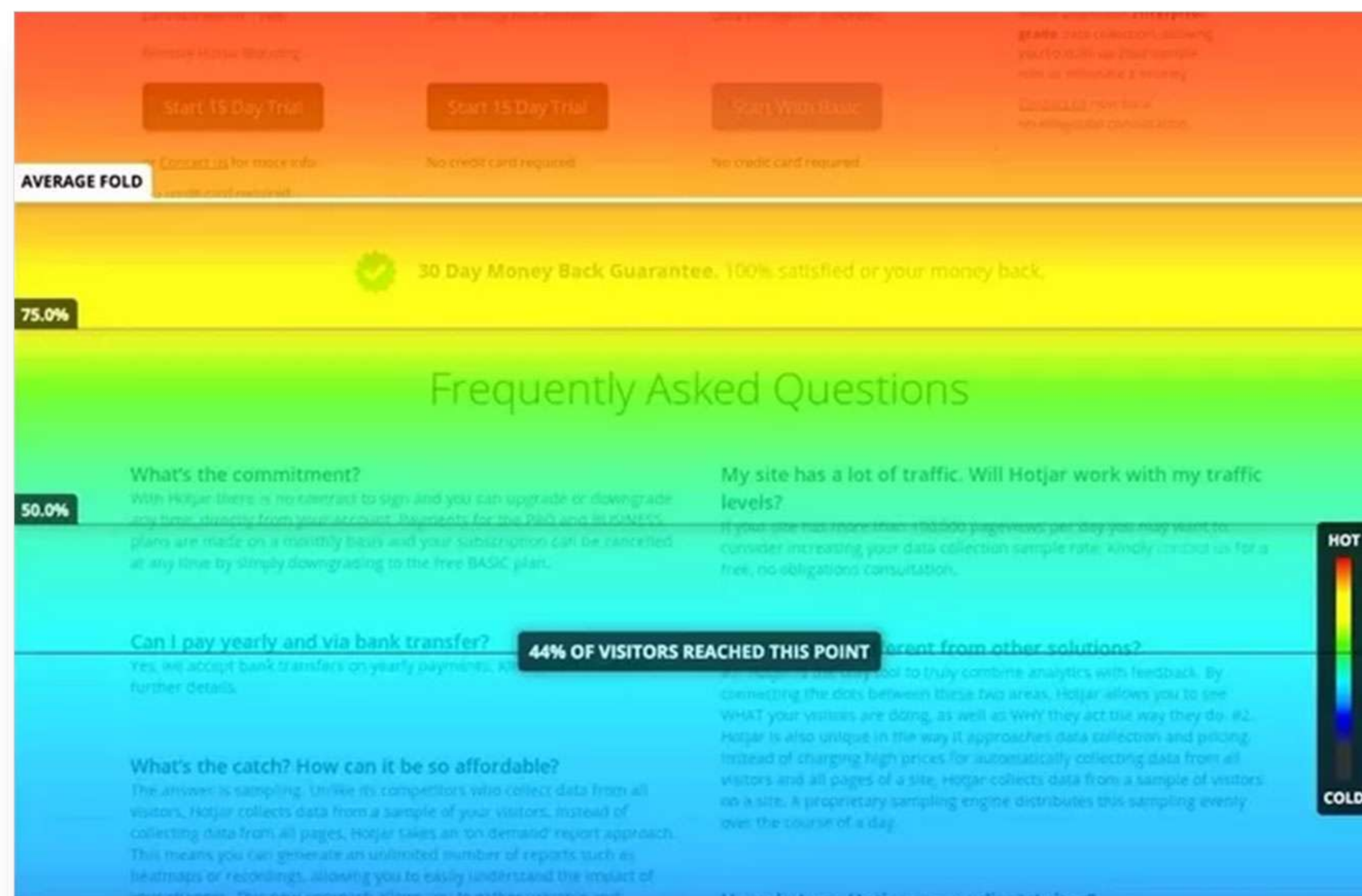
Here I will be sharing with you two tools we find extremely resourceful:

- Crazy Egg is a wonderful tool that generates heatmaps of your website. It will show you exactly where on your website you get the most clicks. It is better than Google Analytics, as it shows clicks on inactive elements on your website (these include the things your visitors click on that aren't links)
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Crazy Egg – Optimize areas of clicks on inactive elements.

- ClickTale is yet another tool to consider as it has several functions it handles:
- You get to see how far down your website your visitors actually scroll.
- You can see recorded videos of your customers' sessions. Now you can see how your customer looks at your website.
- You get terrific 'form' analytics on ClickTale. You can see precisely which question your visitor decides to bounce.



ClickTale- a map of how far down your web page a customer scrolls

Customer Surveys are a data mine: If you've diligently followed the steps mentioned above, you too have a gross idea about what is not working on your website.

Nonetheless, the input from your customers still takes precedence as it is data. And as I mentioned at the start, we will focus our efforts on gathering and interpreting data because **data is guru**.

By now, you would have built a good enough list of customers that you can send your email surveys to. Conduct customer surveys through tools like SurveyMonkey or Google Forms.

Whatever the means, ensure you don't give your customers multiple choices to choose from. We want them to input their data, their opinions. We don't want them to give us the 'the closest to' option.

Your Sales staff have a reservoir of data: Your sales staff know the exact questions your clients ask. They know what objections arise when they sell your products. Also, they know the answers to these questions. This is why you should be focusing your efforts on gaining insights from your sales team.

Did I mention, your website is the online equivalent of your most significant sales executive. There's a ton of data that needs to be discovered from your website too.

Find out what the current breakdown of your traffic looks like.

them to give us the 'the closest to' option.

- How much traffic does your website get?
- What demographics are you attracting?
- What device are your customers using to check out your website?



We want to gather as much data as possible. This research phase is what will set us up for success in the future. All of these points mentioned above need to honor the following goals:

What are we testing?

When you have a data reservoir, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by it and not know where to start. Something we practice here at WebSpero and encourage our clients to do too is to begin looking at the data as a whole and start compiling a list of common themes they find. Sometimes, that could mean feedback from customers- their grievances, etc. You can start your CRO process by looking at these new insights.

To give you an example, if your customers revert saying they don't feel their personal information is safe on your website, an excellent place to start is by hypothesizing to add more trust signals to the checkout process (image of association with Mastercard/ Visa so your details are safe/ Two-step authentication, etc.)

Who are we testing?

This is the time when you need to focus on segmenting your customers as best as possible. Analytics data quality is not 100% reliable always, and I understand that. However, you need to do your best to keep the tests for data collection relevant to your customers as much as possible. For someone new to your website, they should have a different set of tests/ surveys as a recurring customer. Segregate your visitors based on demographics and what stage of the funnel they enter your site from. You can test these and more on Optimizely.

Where are we testing?

This is apparent; you need to set which page or set of pages you want to test. If you want to test just one product page or a collection of similar products at once, that's up to you. Although just be careful not to get skewed results by keeping in mind the products' buying cycles. You don't want to test a \$500 garden shed and a \$10 garden gnome together because you wouldn't be receiving the right data.

While you test your pages, note to keep a simple checklist to ensure a tracking code has been added correctly to the pages. I know it sounds very straightforward, but it's one step that is quickly forgotten.

PHASE TWO: EXPERIMENT FERVENTLY

I hope you were able to finish all the steps listed in Phase one. As mentioned earlier, the stronger your research in phase one, the more results your CRO efforts would yield.

Now you have so much data in your hands. Begin creating a spreadsheet with a list of all the usability issues on the one hand and the objections on the other. This means one side would contain all the reasons your customers can't buy your product, and the second side would contain all the reasons why your customer won't buy from you.

Look at the list and begin highlighting the ones that come up often. Think of ways to overcome the usability issues that come up. Write down the solutions for the same on a new column on your spreadsheet.

An example will be if your client bounces while you ask them to sign up. Try to reduce the effort by allowing signing in with Google/ Facebook. Or allow for guest accounts. Get creative. Lovefilm.com ensures that it adds a tracking code to pick up where you left off if you abandon their sign-up process. It will redirect you back to their sign-up form even when you browse their website. You need to get creative and be willing to negotiate.

I talk about negotiations because you will need to prioritize which opportunity cost is more resonant with you. There's always an opportunity cost, so you need to start with not the quick wins, but the quick and BIG wins.

With all these hypotheses in mind, here are some things to keep in mind:



Are the changes testing my hypothesis directly?

It sounds like a silly straightforward question, but I can assure you it's straightforward to veer off course during the research phase.

Are your changes on-brand?

This tends to be a problem in big brands where there are multiple teams. When the design team is different from someone in the marketing team, it's easy for the brand's message to get lost. It would be best if you were mindful of the same.

Are the changes executable?

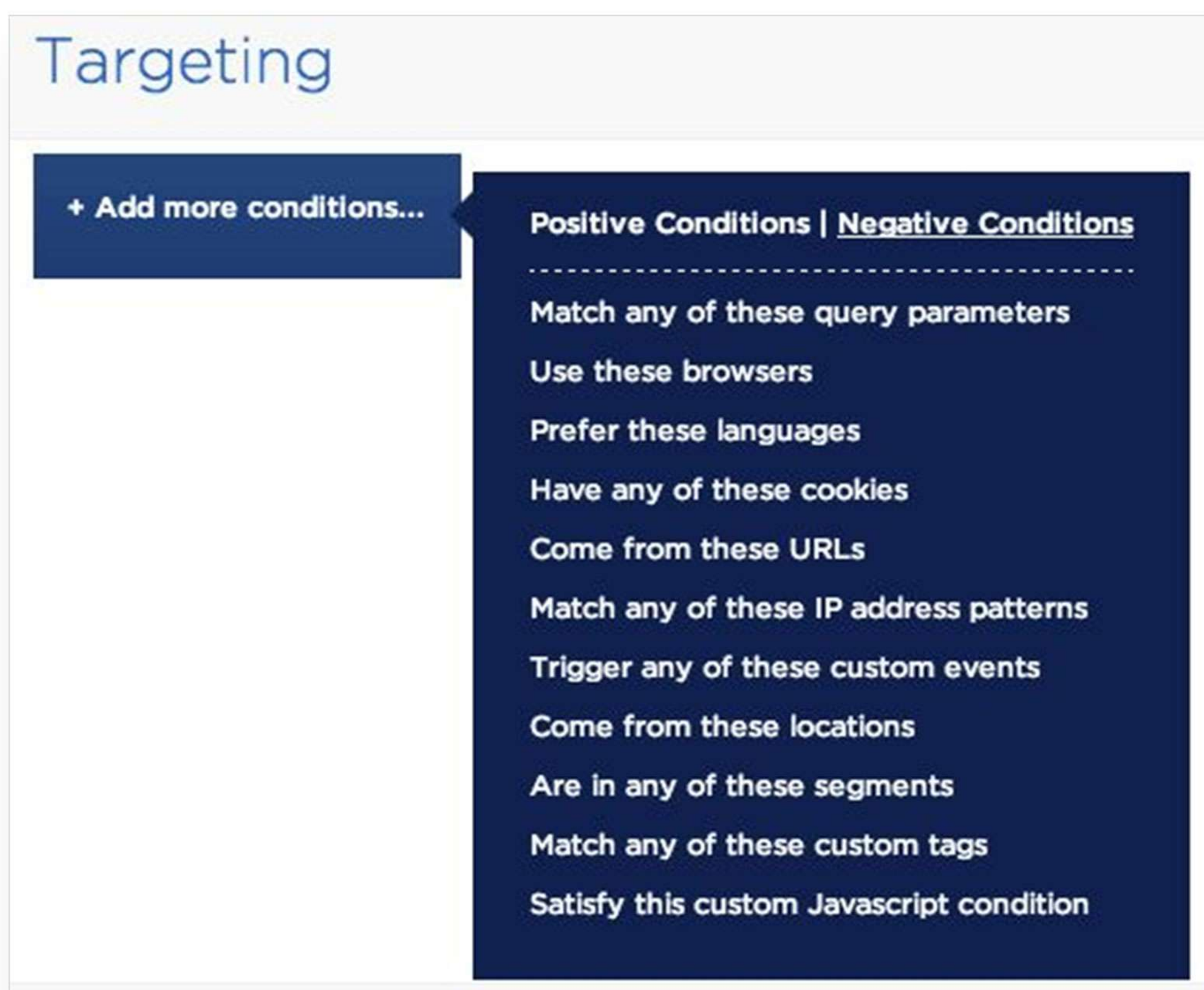
You need to be realistic in your goals and see that the tests you run and the hypotheses you choose, you can execute realistically. Don't try to do something fancy that someone else did, especially when you might not be in a position to follow them. Besides, as we discussed earlier, it's your website. Focus only on what's best for you from the data that you collect.

PHASE THREE: DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING

You can choose Optimizely to run split tests and execute designs on client websites. Visual Website Optimizer is another Moz approved alternate you could choose from.

Ensure that the tests you are implementing are simple and that they work across different browsers before putting live. If there are many graphics or other visual elements in your design, ensure they run correctly.

This is how it would look on Optimizely:



You get to decide what portion of your traffic is sent to testing pages. This also means that if you have high traffic numbers, it can offset a test's threat resulting in a drop in conversion rates. So if you send 10% of your traffic to the test, then 90% will just go on as normal.

Here's how the setting looks on Optimizely:


Connect your Optimizely with your Google Analytics account so that you determine the average order value for each cluster of visitors you send your conversation tests.

Traffic Allocation

Specify the percentage of traffic that should be included in this experiment and be tracked for conversions. Visitors that are not included will not count towards your monthly quota.

100%
Included in experiment.

0%
Excluded from experiment.



Percentage of visitors who will see each variation:

Original	<input type="text" value="50.00"/> %	Pause
Variation #1	<input type="text" value="50.00"/> %	Pause

[Apply](#) [Cancel](#)

PHASE FOUR: REVIEW AND REPEAT

As we review the data from the tests you just completed, remember to keep a database for future reference. Now you get to look at what needs further optimizing and what parts of your website are thriving

Time to analyse the results.

I wanted to congratulate you on the big wins firstly. I also want to remind you that losses can be interesting as well. A good way to look at your losses would be to flip your view on them. E.g., Instead of saying, "Conversion rate of Page B was lowered by x%, you could say, "Something about Page A increased the conversion rate by y% over page B." Just by changing your perspective, your focus changes to finding out what that "something" is.

Can your big win be improved further?

If adding customer reviews and testimonials helped improve your conversion rate, what if you could push the winning elements to the extreme and see how big your wins could get?

Can your 'wins' be applied to other parts of your funnel?

The moment you begin to see your CRO efforts becoming fruitful, keep a record of what's working. Then ask yourself, "can we apply this same to other parts of our funnel?" Take the same principle that improved the conversion rate, add trust, emphasize a particular benefit, add a guarantee, and now work out how you can use this to other parts of your funnel.

OPTIMIZATIONS

THE CONVERSION RATE OPTIMISATION PROCESS

DISCOVERY

1 DATA GATHERING

- COMPANY
goals/USPs
- CUSTOMERS
objections
- WEBSITE
usability sales funnel

2 LIST HYPOTHESES

- WHAT AREA WE TESTING?
e.g. hi-res images
- WHO ARE WE TESTING?
e.g. new customers
- WHERE ARE WE TESTING?
e.g. 5 x product pages

GOALS

- ✓ FIND OBJECTIONS & PROBLEMS FOR CUSTOMERE
- ✓ FORM HYPOTHESES
 - Customer type
 - Page types
 - Problems
- ✓ ENSURE TRACKING IS SET UP CORRECTLY TO BENCHMARK CURRENT CONVERSION RATES

EXPERIMENTS

3 WIREFRAM NEW DESIGN

- ADDRESS HYPOTHESES
- ON BRAND
- TECHNICALLY DO-ABLE

4 LIST HYPOTHESES

- RIGHT SEGMENTATION /TARGETING?
- BROWSER TESTING
Sign off

GOALS

- ✓ VARIATIONS LIVE & TRACKING
- ✓ ENSURE DESIGN IS CROSS-BROWSER TESTED
- ✓ NEW DESIGNS SIGNED OFF BY CLIENT

REVIEW

5 WAS HYPOTHESIS CORRECT?

- STATISTICAL SIGNIFANCE HAS BEEN REACHED
- HYPOTHESIS WAS CORRECT
Scale result
- HYPOTHESIS WASN'T CORRECT
what did we learn?

GOALS

- ✓ SUCCESSFUL HYPOTHESIS FOUND
- ✓ SUCCESSFUL TEST SCALED

Now that I have given you an understanding of how CRO works, let's dive deep into how each page of your website can be optimized to bring in quality leads. Each page needs your focused attention. Finetune each metric and keep experimenting and pushing the limits, a tiny step at a time.

Again I would like to reiterate, don't focus on what your competition is doing and blindly apply those tactics. It may work if all your criteria (demography, customer avatar, etc.) are the same. But if you have worked hard to find your niche while entering the highly competitive industry of e-commerce, you have already taken the first steps right. Then you also know it is no use blindly implementing your competitors' strategies. Everyone's business has a unique pulse-point. It should be your obsession to find out what yours is; and how you can make it better. The following are a few points on how you can optimize each page of your website for optimizing your Conversion Rate.



1. HOME PAGE OPTIMIZATIONS

➤ **Best-Selling Products need Highlighting on Home Page**

Tools like Google Analytics and administrator reports can give you insights on which of your products are best-sellers and the exact categories that are performing. Once you've analyzed the data and found these top sellers, focus your marketing efforts on promoting these. You can leverage the banner slides and recommended products section to highlight them.

➤ **What are the other ways to order from your store?**

You have put so much thought into selecting all the ways to be accessible to your customer. Make your customer aware of the same. Clearly show them ALL the ways they can place an order from you. Even if it means you are accessible by fax! Don't shy away from showcasing that. There's no concept of being "outdated" when it comes to connecting with your customers. Certain customers prefer to order in a certain way, and these options will help you with your conversion rate.

➤ **Videos on Home page is the new black**

And there's a good reason for that. Humans are social beings, which means they interact with faces better than they do with screens. Try to add a "human" element to your home page by showcasing either testimonials/ the research that went into a new product during its launch/ how a product is made... the options are endless.

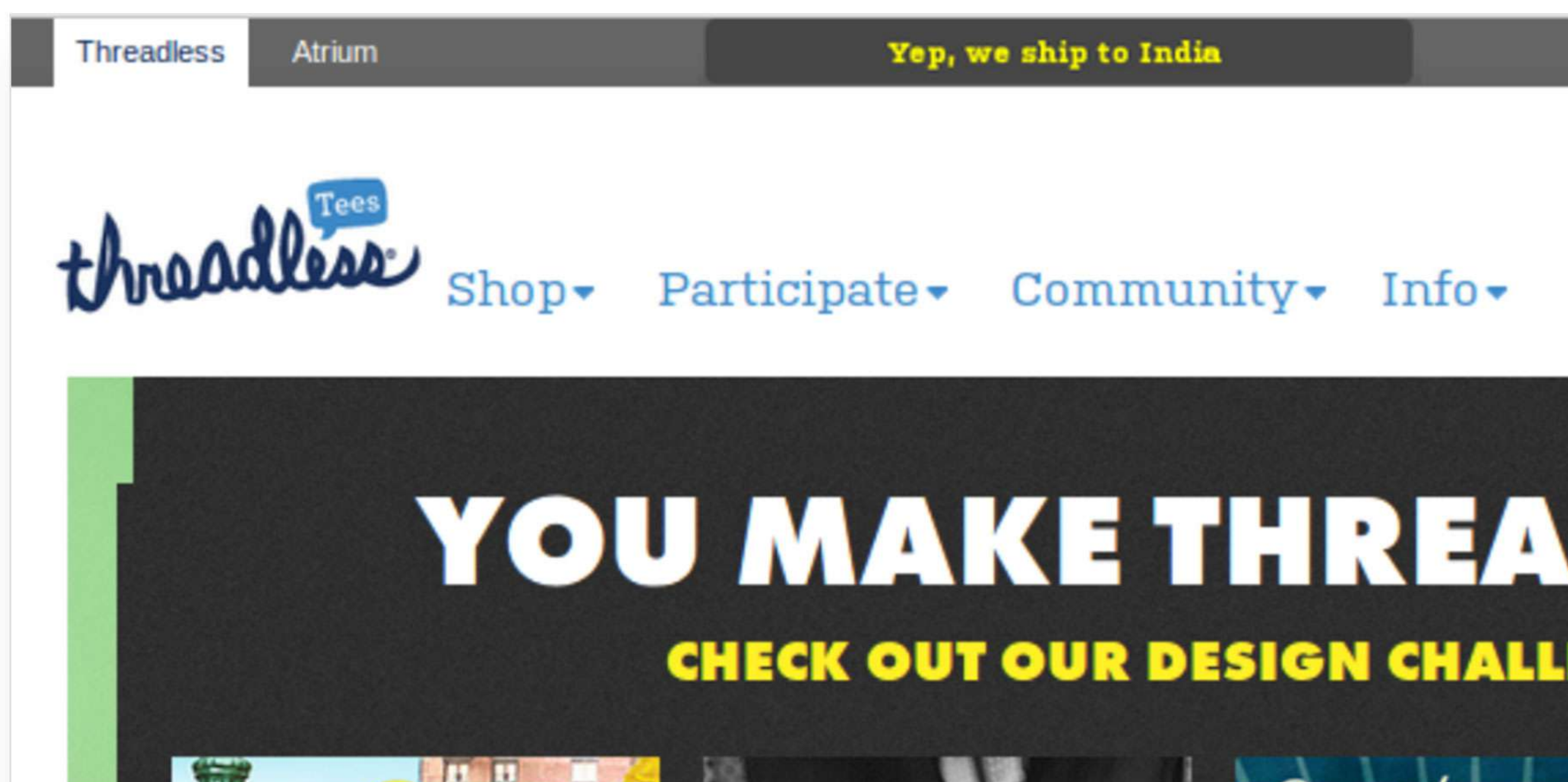
A professionally made video will go a long way in establishing trust and thereby optimizing your conversion rate.

➤ Go local

At this point, it is a given. Yet, I come across so many websites where the basics like these are overlooked. This is why I have decided to add this as a separate point so that you can cross away each step one by one.

When you ship internationally, you need to assure your customers that you can cater to their orders with the same high quality you do locally. So you need to ensure going global, in a local way. Ensure that your website is optimized for them. Let the prices be displayed in their currency. If you are aware that they aren't an English speaking country, perhaps best to invest in a translator to optimize the text on your page instead of relying on Google's auto-translate. Although Auto-translate does a great job, it doesn't pick up the sentiments as well. So hiring a freelancer fluent in that language to write the copy would just feel more welcoming to your customers.

You can also enable functionality that determines the customer's country from their IP address and show them a notification on the top header like, "Yes, we ship to Australia."



2. NAVIGATION OPTIMIZATION

Today's times are all about the hustle and bustle. You can assume most of your customers are in a rush, and I am willing to bet a majority of them are multitasking, taking full advantage of the 'multiple tabs' option. Statistically speaking, research states you only have 8 seconds of your customer's attention span. CRO is based on making the most of these 8 seconds and expanding that very attention span: a.k.a keeping them "hooked."

This is why optimizing your navigation bar is so important. Don't ever take it for granted that your customer will stick around and explore your website. You need to make your website optimized for your customer. Don't base the menu (top, side, or footer) on your hunches on what looks good, rather go back to your data and understand what your customer is searching for and make it accessible to them on your menu. Take them straight to your best sellers. How you can do this is discussed further:

- **Avoid vague category structure:** Your inventory and the number of categories on your website should be synonymous. Don't create multiple categories just to have 100 different categories. You know you wouldn't like to visit a site that drives you in circles. Only include the links to products that users are actively searching for on the store. Don't show the links that you think are important, which contradicts the data.
- **Sort category structure by popularity:** Users visit 100 different sites a day (OK, I'm exaggerating, but you get the point). They know how websites in different industries and categories work. They almost have a roadmap within their minds and expect every website to work in that manner.

Usually, products are sorted in ascending order of popularity or in alphabetical order. Stick to the same rhythm. This creates ease of movement within the users' minds, and we all love "flow."

- **Use Crazy Egg to create a focused category navigation:** If you're using Google Analytics overlay for insights on clicks, you're probably not getting the full picture. CrazyEgg is a better tool in giving you intelligent insights into what people are clicking on within your webpage. It creates heatmaps and generates other useful insights into what changes need to be implemented within your website.

Even CrazyEgg can't generate heatmaps for links within Javascript pop-ups and menus (under the 'not-visible' tab), but it still can give you a list of links inside the menu along with the total clicks. Use Google Analytics to find out what people are searching for and create categories based on what people are searching.

VISIBLE ON THIS PAGE NOT VISIBLE BOTH			
ELEMENT	TYPE	CLICKS	PERCENT
Check the V2 electronic cigarette price	Link	1800	20.8%
Check the Blu Cigs electronic cigarette pr...	Link	707	8.2%
Read a review about the V2 electronic ciga...	Link	542	6.3%
allelectroniccigarettereviews.com/wp-conte...	Image	483	5.6%
allelectroniccigarettereviews.com/wp-conte...	Image	479	5.5%
Check the South Beach Smoke electronic cig...	Link	420	4.9%
packs_input	Form	311	3.5%
cost_input	Form	304	3.5%
Calculate Savings	Form	270	3.1%

- **Create categories based on what people are searching:**

Google Analytics > Account > Standard Reporting > Content > Site Search > Search Terms.

Sep 15 Sep 22		
Total Unique Searches	Results Pageviews / Search	% Search E
28,321 <small>% of Total: 100.00% (28,321)</small>	1.94 <small>Site Avg: 1.94 (0.00%)</small>	47.48% <small>Site Avg: 47.48%</small>
Primary Dimension: Search Term Site Search Category		
Secondary dimension Sort Type: Default		
Search Term	Total Unique Searches	
1. %	2,102	
2. holloway	465	
3. charles river apparel	358	
4. nfl uniform set	285	
5. augusta sportswear	251	

The keywords with the top "total unique searches" are what your customers are searching for. You will find the top searches of products and brands here. These are the obvious contenders to be placed in a way that stands out inside your navigation menu. CRO is based on catering to what your customer wants; to make their life easier and their time on your site more memorable.

- ▶ **Use a Compelling Business Tag-line:** Have you wondered how important Nike's "just do it" was to their brand? I'm sure you have! I wanted to draw this comparison because it's important you not overlook the tiny font below your logo. I'd argue it's just as important as your logo. Put in a little creativity into creating a business tag line that summarizes the experience you're offering to your customer. This would drive customers to make more purchases in your store.
- ▶ **Avoid writing vague 'Unique Selling Points'** You know how cheesy vague USPs look on other's websites. There's no purpose to them, and it's honestly tiresome. So stay away from filling in details just for the sake of it.

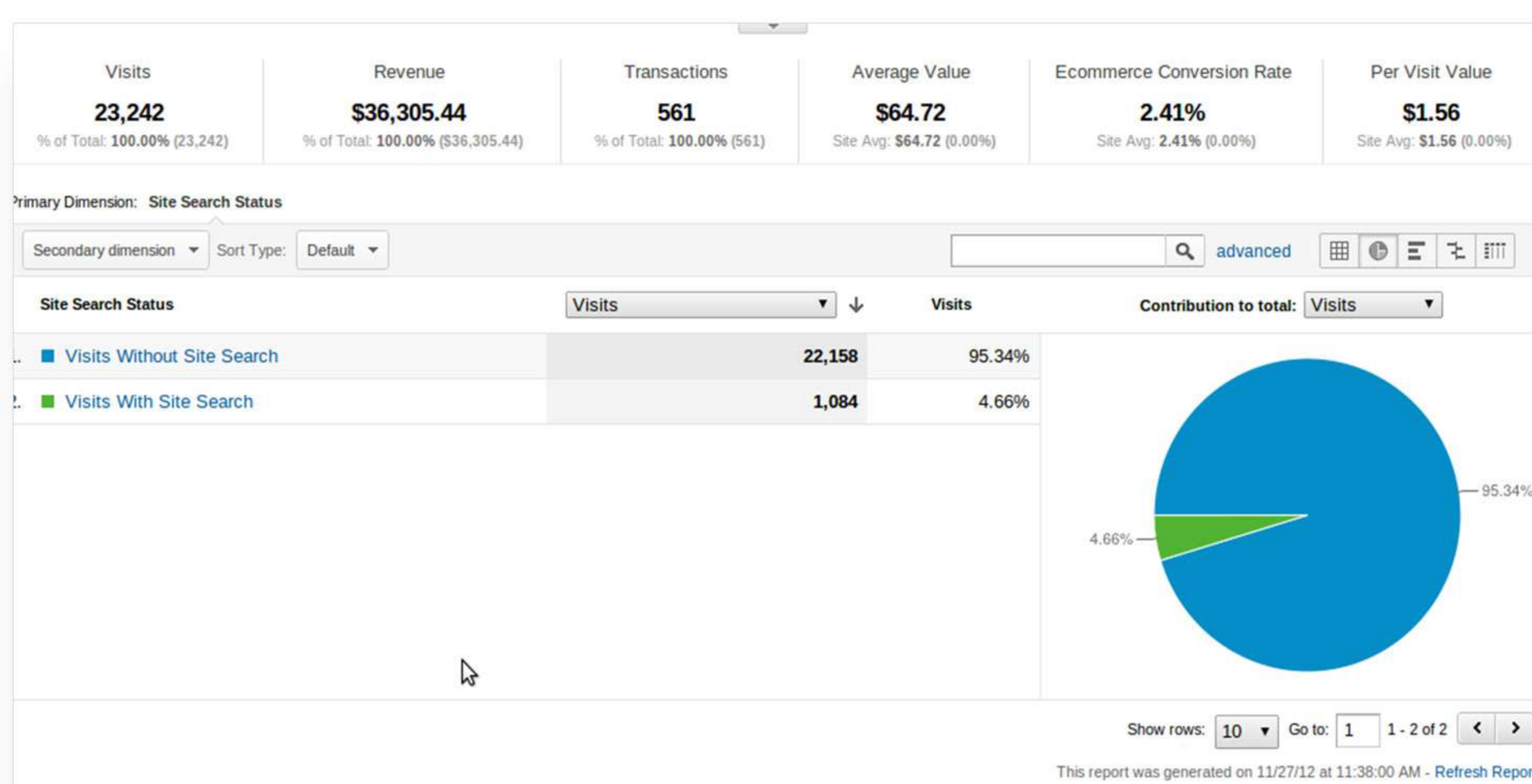
Highlight the specific values you bring to the table in the clear cut no-BS way. Why should a customer buy from you? Answer this question with the values you provide. Remember the 8-second attention span of customers? Drive them home by staying relevant and honest. Best to get as specific as you possibly can.



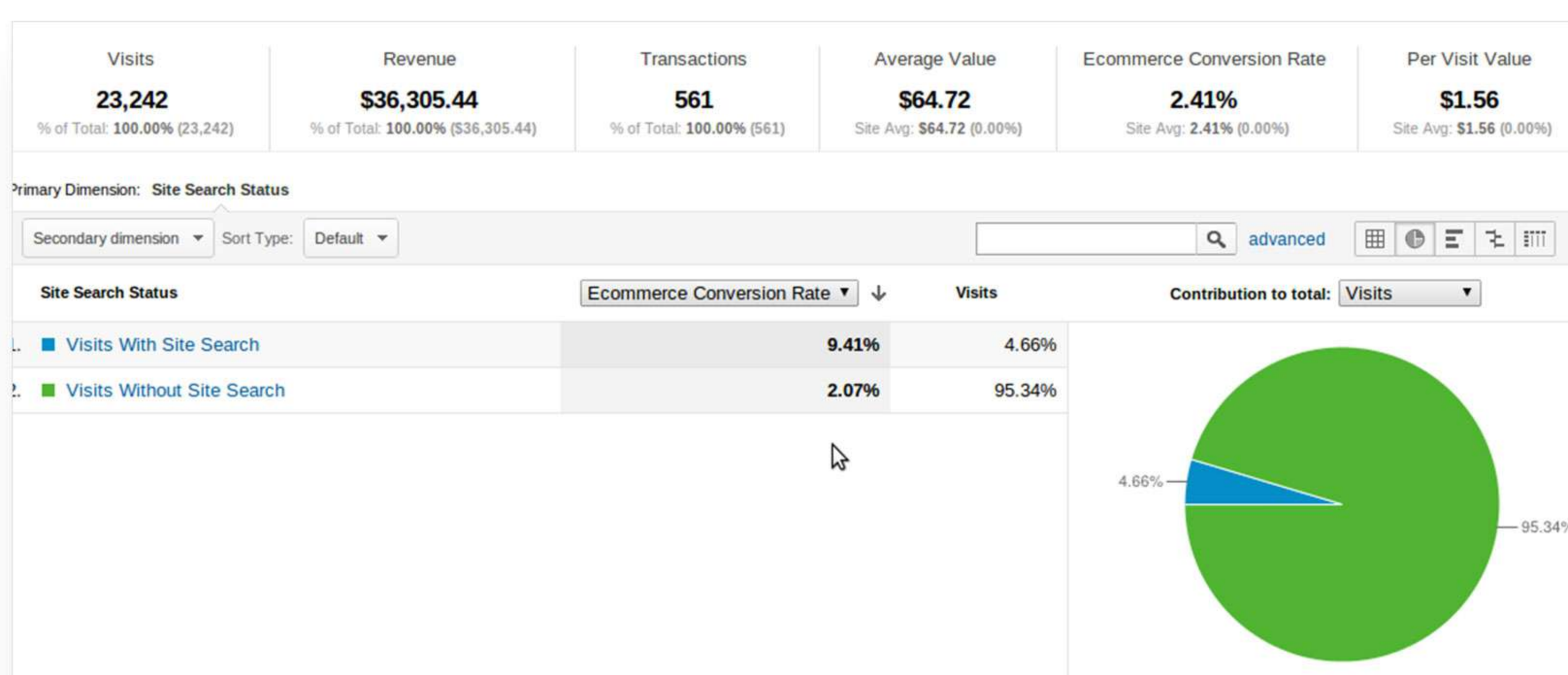
3. PRODUCT SEARCH OPTIMIZATION

Some of your customers would be "off the market" visitors. They enter your store from your home page. Such visitors generally know what they want, and they straight away search their product name on the search page. If this search option is dysfunctional or not present, you will be losing out on sales. This is a worse hit if your inventory is too much for someone to navigate manually. You can check if users are actively using product search by a simple google search:

Google Analytics (Content > Site Search > Usage)



You'll see that customers' conversion rate using product search is higher than customers that aren't.



Your search feature should be effective and:

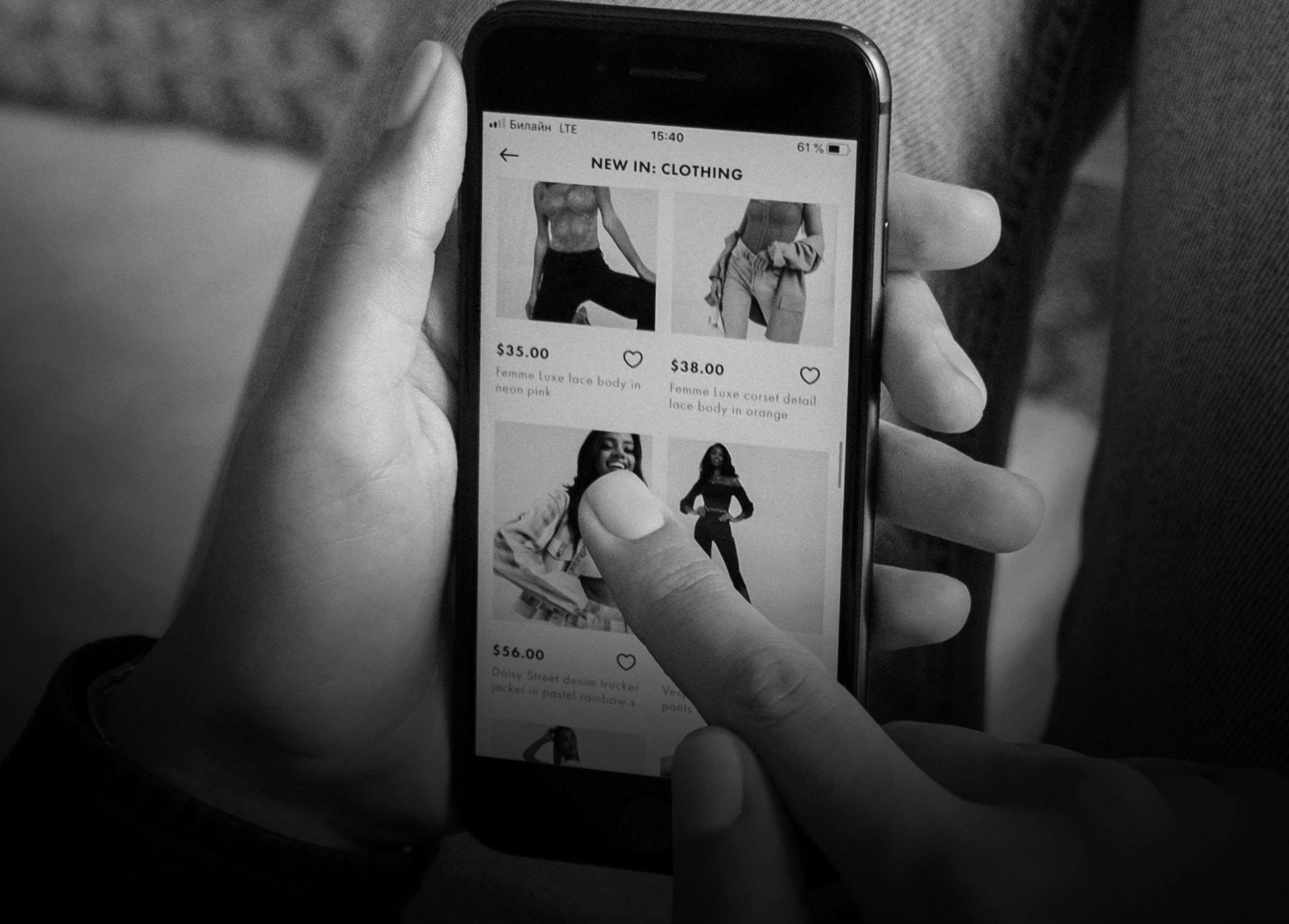
Easy to use: ANY user should be able to understand and use the search tool.

Fast and accurate: If you have a huge inventory, consider using 3rd party engines like Celbros or SOLR for faster search results.

Friendly: What would visitors see if there is no product match upon search?

- **Test your search for accuracy:** Test the accuracy of your search by using the singular and plural forms of keywords. For example, if you own a home decor store, "chair" and "chairs" should return the same search results.
- **Implement an intelligent search:** Ensure that your store search is intelligent enough to return search results as per the searcher's intent. E.g., the top search results returning on "chair" should not be "chair cushions." If your customer were looking for cushions, they would have specifically searched for it.
- **Implement Auto-Suggestions to help user search for relevant keywords:** This is a commonly used feature where just like google auto-completes your search request by showing suggestions, keywords similar to the product search are also shown. This helps people find what they are looking for speedily.cifically searched for it.
- **Use Category Search:** I understand that using product search engines like SOLR and Celebros is a heavy investment; however, if you manage a high volume of inventory, you should have a category level search at the least to help your users search in a particular category.
- **Let the user know what they searched:** When displaying search results, always remember to add the function to show the user what they typed in. An example would be like Google does (Did you mean_____ Showing results instead_____).

A person would have misspelled the product's name in many situations, and the search reverts with no results. Imagine if all these customers were just to abandon your store because they weren't shown an error in their spelling, which ultimately led to a no show.



- ▶ **Get high quality product images:** Gone are the days when people wanted to browse a website. These days, all they want is to "experience" it. An image is what captures the attention of your customer the moment they land on your page. A professional image can bring your two-dimensional store to life; there's no denying it.






Focus on making the default image a professionally taken one as it sets the stage psychologically for the customer on how their experience would be.

Avoid using stock photos. Rather capture real images of people using the product. Customers know when it's a stock image, no matter how close to the real thing it may be.

Don't show just one or two images. Try to add as many images of the product from various angles as you can.

- **Pay attention to your product's description:** Once you have added the right image to your site, you need to focus your attention on optimizing the product description.

There are tons of websites online that have "killer" copywriting words, winning sales layouts, etc. Don't fall into this ready-made trap. It would be a waste of effort, and it won't be fruitful in the least. A 5,000 sales copy will not lead to conversion if it doesn't speak to your customer. You need to understand the psyche of the buyer. Here's what I suggest to make your product descriptions more compelling:

-  The starting bullets and paragraphs gain a lot of attention from the customer: use this space to keep the most important features of a product.
 -  Don't try to force people into buying your product by nagging or building up "hype." Customers are smart, and they can sense non-genuinity from a mile away.
 -  Offer both product summary as well as detailed descriptions of the same. Those visitors in a hurry could check out the summary, and the visitors who have time can read the detailed list.
 -  Always use bullet points while providing information- it makes the customer experience better as you provide "comfort" to them.
 -  Add links to the privacy policy, return policy, FAQs, shipping, and other important pages to add to the ease of user experience.
- **Show Product Videos (for your top selling products at least):** As I mentioned earlier, humans are tired of technology while they are enchanted with it. It's a slow dance. It's a diligent one. Moreover, with the cheaper options available now to create videos, everyone's aboard the wagon. That's why in these times, there's no excuse for not having a professional video of your products: at the very least, have videos of your best sellers. This will not only encourage more sales but also garner more eyes to your products.

- **Don't let price be a surprise:** When customers don't buy, one big reason is the price. Either the price is too high, or the product claims are so vague, they can't trust them.

Your price should stand out on your page, and your visitor must easily find it as early into their buyers' process as possible. If you charge for shipping and handling, mention that as early as possible.

People don't like surprises when it comes to price points, and they certainly hate the guesswork involved. Make it simple and reduce your bounce rates or abandon rates, thereby improving your conversion rate...

- **Clearly show the product's delivery time:** Here is where the "under promise, over deliver" rule comes into play. Show a day extra to the estimated delivery time. This way, the customer is prepared mentally to receive the delivery, and when you deliver before the date, they generally become loyal to your brand.
- **Allow customers to select delivery date:** Here's something you can do to go above and beyond for your visitors. This establishes credibility and loyalty within your customers' minds towards your brand. Have them select what time suits them or which date works best for them. People feel safe when they sense they are in control of a situation. This invokes trust within the customer.
- **Enable Out Of Stock Notification:** Today's customers, however impatient they may be, they still are understanding. If you have established loyalty with your customers, they would happily wait for you to restock your inventory too! That is why adding this simple feature of 'emailing a customer as soon as you restock your inventory' might seem small but goes miles. Also, a bonus is that it gives you a high chance at a future sale.
- **Encourage users to leave reviews:** In today's day and age, you and I both know how valuable a commodity "trust" has become. When every third person has an online presence, these tiny steps to improving your conversion rate are what keeps you relevant and in the game.

HUMANS WANT SOCIAL PROOF AND CREDIBILITY.

HOW DO YOU GET THAT?

One simple way is to allow others to talk about your products/ services. Wherever possible, encourage using a review function.

It does seem scary- "what if someone leaves a nasty review?" True. And let me go ahead and say you WILL get a couple of negative reviews.

But what matters is how you solve it. Everyone knows people make mistakes, and we are trying to humanize your brand. We are trying to get people to see that, yes, our brand can make mistakes, but that doesn't mean we don't learn from them.

Now, this is not a green pass for you to take things callously and start slacking in your customer service. This is just to prepare you sometimes for reasons beyond our control; delivery might not occur on time, no matter how badly you wanted to avoid that situation.

That doesn't mean you beat yourself up for that. No. It means that you write a simple apology to your customer and assure them this isn't what your company stands for.

And that you are doing everything in your power to make your customers' experience a better one. We live in an era when people are paying for experiences and not for materialistic things anymore, no matter how much you want to deny it.

Responding to your customer feedback in a responsible and accountable way reassures your customer that they can place their trust in you.



4. CHECKOUT PAGE

When your customers reach the checkout page, they suddenly get all nervous and feel vulnerable. After all, it's their bank details that they're sharing with you. They are worried about their safety. You need to allow them an experience of safety. Provide icons, symbols, and use effective text that reassures them your website is safe, and they need not worry about anything. Here's your guide on what your checkout page should reassure your customers on:

Security

Assure your customers that your website is a secure one and that their privacy is of utmost importance to you. Show them that they're in control of how much data they are willing to share.

Transparency

Be as transparent as you can. It all goes back to people wanting to feel like they're in control of the situation. Transparency builds faith.

Payment Methods

Let all the payment methods accessible to your customer be shown clearly. Whether it is PayPal, Credit Cards, Google checkouts, Debit cards, or even Cash on Delivery, don't try to promote one over another. Keep it simple. Allow customers to choose what suits them best.

FAQs

Be one step ahead when you are creating pages for your website. There are certain generic questions every customer has about your checkout process. Answer them in a dedicated FAQ page for checkouts and add the link to your checkout page and the product page. Make the customer feel you are proactively thinking about their comfort.

- **Offer Persistent Shopping Cart:** You know how we are living in a world where time is money. Everyone's multitasking to save time. In the process, customers want technology that reminds them of what to do. People add things to their cart and forget to move forward to checkout.

Something comes, and off they go to check their new tab- perhaps it's a message from their boss, or they abandoned their cart to google the price point of the product, right at the nook of time.

Having a persistent shopping cart will not just remind them to hit buy, but more importantly, when they return to their cart and find it empty, they would prefer to end their session than add things back to their cart.

Therefore, enable a persistent shopping cart on your online store so that people find their products unless they manually remove them. How long should you allow them to keep their product in the cart? Well, "the longer, the better would be my response."

- **Don't make the user enter same information twice:** If there is a major theme in this book that you need to take away; that's this: **"People hate wasting time."**

Now I know you might be thinking, I spent all this effort making the customer feel like a king; the least they can do is spend time to check all that effort out. Sadly, people want the entire buying process to be over as soon as possible.

So don't make your visitors waste time filling in details about them that are not relevant. Start by taking out ALL the information that isn't of the utmost importance. Only keep mandatory the details of the truly crucial customer and keep all other information is optional.

One example would be, don't ask for a customer to fill in the billing address AND shipping address. Most people want their billing address to be the same as the shipping address. A few would want it separate.

So just keep a check box that asks them if they want a separate billing address and automatically fills in the details of their address otherwise.

- **Preserve information on a validation error:** This is just an extension of the above point to drive it home. If and when there happens to be an error anywhere on the form, ensure that all the customer's data is preserved. Imagine filling in 15 fields of data, and just because of a tiny validation error, your user has to go through that process all over again! These tiny changes go a long way in providing a wonderful experience to the customer, thereby making your CRO efforts more fruitful.
- **Clearly mark the fields as optional or mandatory:** Even you know how annoying it feels like when someone marks all fields of data as mandatory. It isn't very clear when they don't mark anything with the (*) and then the form doesn't submit. Time and time again, I have repeated "transparency" in this article, and for good reason. The more clear cut your communication, the more interested a visitor, is in your site.

Contact form

Please fill in your information and we'll be sending your order in no time.


Your Name

Your Email

Phone*

Message Subject*

Message*

Verification* I'm not a robot 

- **Give input example against each field:** This is a point that not a lot of businesses follow. You and I know the technical aspects of making a site and what kind of data our softwares need. A customer might not. Make the site user friendly by breaking down each process into its simplest forms. In this case, to minimize your visitor's chances of hitting validation errors, show them the right input examples next to each form field so that your user knows the right way to enter the requested information.
- **Offer a unified single 'Name' field:** Does the user's middle name matter? There is only one person with the first name of your user registered for the phone number they have entered. Avoid middle name and last name sections unless necessary (address field). The users account on your site need not have their last name. Ask yourself, "can I function effectively without this piece of data?" and only have those fields added.
- **Automatically pre-fill city & state field as soon as user enters a zip code:** I had accessed many sites that manually made me enter my city and state when I entered my zip code. It is annoying. Invest in an intelligent data input system that can fill in details, making the customer less effort.

- **Keep the form linear:** A user would start from the top and slowly work their way to the bottom. If you have activated a field trigger for your form, ensure that you keep it just below the field that triggers it. An example would be that a state field should come after the country field, especially if you ship globally. Imagine your user coming to your store from India and seeing the United States of America automatically ready at the end of the form. They won't think of checking if India is available unless they're in dire need of that product and you're the only one shipping. Better would be to allow them to select their country before filling in the details (state etc.)

Shipping Address

Country
India ▼

First name Last name

Street address

This is a PO, APO or AE box

- **Form field length should match the expected length of the input:** This one is not just for the design aspect but also for reassuring the user psychologically that their data is safe. Since high-quality websites focus on this detail, a customer is used to seeing a 12 digit space for their credit card and a three-digit space for their CVV number. Adding a 12 digit space for their CVV number would confuse them, and you probably could lose out on a sale because they might not feel certain about the details they enter.

Credit Card Type *

Visa ▼

Credit Card Number *

123-123-123-1234-????????????????????

- **Use Facebook Connect:** This one is fairly simple. How many times have you used the Facebook connect feature on other websites? Haven't you felt it was easier than manually filling in the registration form? The CRO process is all about making the user experience so good that you turn every visitor into a loyal customer. At least that's why all this effort. **Keep things simple for your customer, as simple as it can be.**
- **Be specific with your button's text:** Buttons are a great invention. They help focus your customers' attention on what is important amidst all the other text. That being said, if you were to keep a generic button just for the sake of adding a button, it might complicate things for your user. For example, a button that reads continue when added without thinking about what exactly you want your user to continue with would be useless solely because of the confusion it creates. Continue could mean 'continue shopping.' It could also mean 'continue to check out.' Your customer is not here to make sense of what you are trying to say. You need to make things easy for your customer. In this example, you mention what you want your customer to continue within the button: continue shopping or continue to checkout.
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- **Display validation errors in close proximity to the input field:** This is generally the most common usability issue found on a lot of e-commerce websites. The validation error is shown at the top, and more often than not, the customer wouldn't have seen it because of the scroll, and they're left wondering why the process isn't moving forward.

- **Display validation checks against each field:** Just as an extension to the above point, a good hygiene check is to add a "tick" mark next to the correctly entered data input. This just adds to user confidence that they are heading in the right direction.
- **Make 'Account Registration' an Optional Step of Checkout Process:** A recent study found that 25.6% of users are more likely to abandon their check out process if they were forced to register first! That is a huge amount of loss on sales, not just because of the number of people, but because so much effort goes in vain just because one tiny detail wasn't considered.

Have an option to log in as a guest rather than forcing your user's hand in giving you details about them. I know you feel it would save them a lot of time later down the road, but dont come at them with an "I know what's best for you attitude"; rather, allow them the option to decide what they want for themselves.

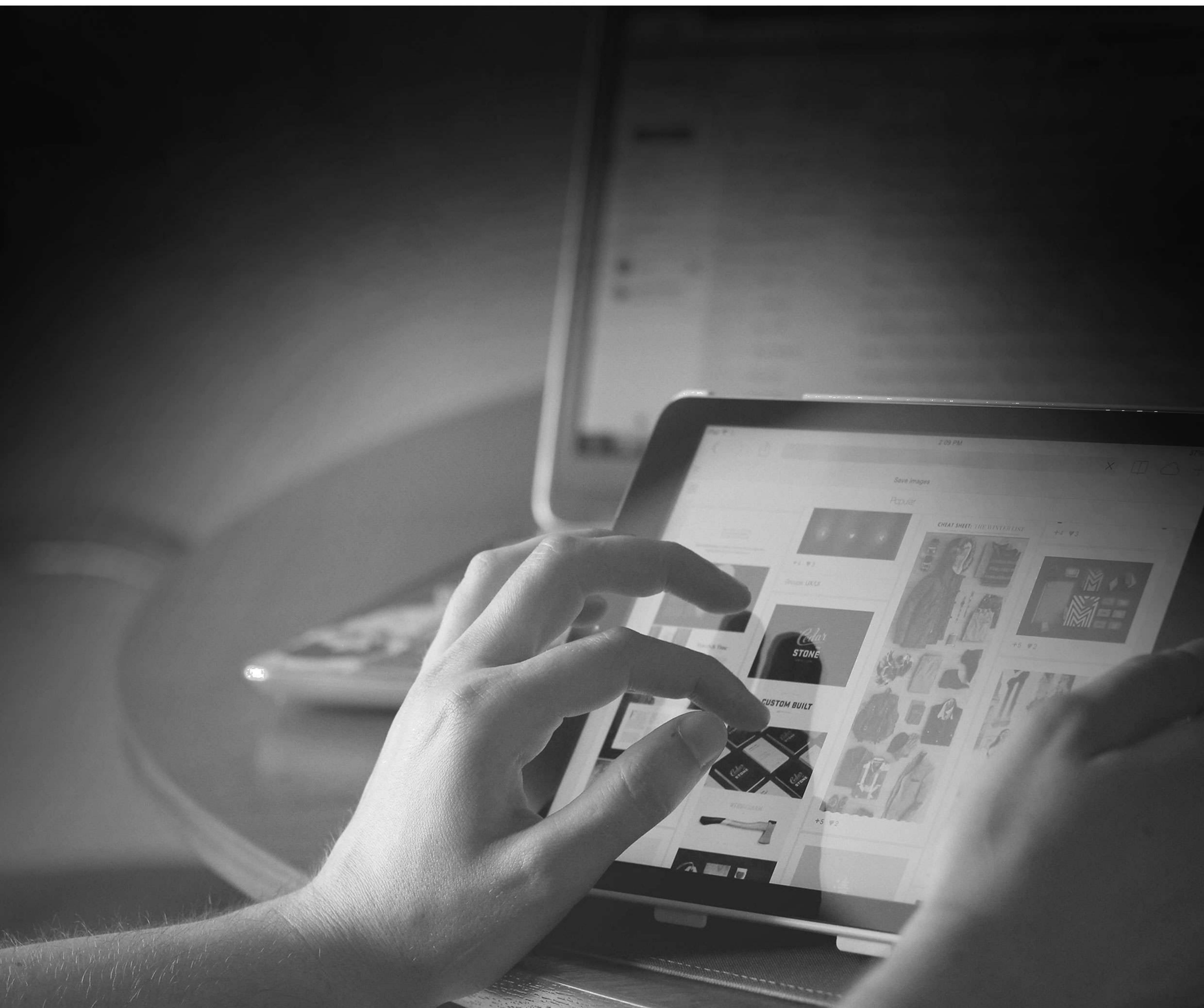
Check out how Apple allows for a guest registration form if a customer doesn't want to partake in creating an account.

- **Don't complicate Password Selection:** You are not a bank. There is no reason for you to complicate the registration process for a customer with a weird high-security password. Especially not one that mandates having a capital letter, a small letter, a special character, no space, and everything else in between. Keep things simple and allow the customer to select a password that is easy for them to memorize. Here's an example of what not to do:

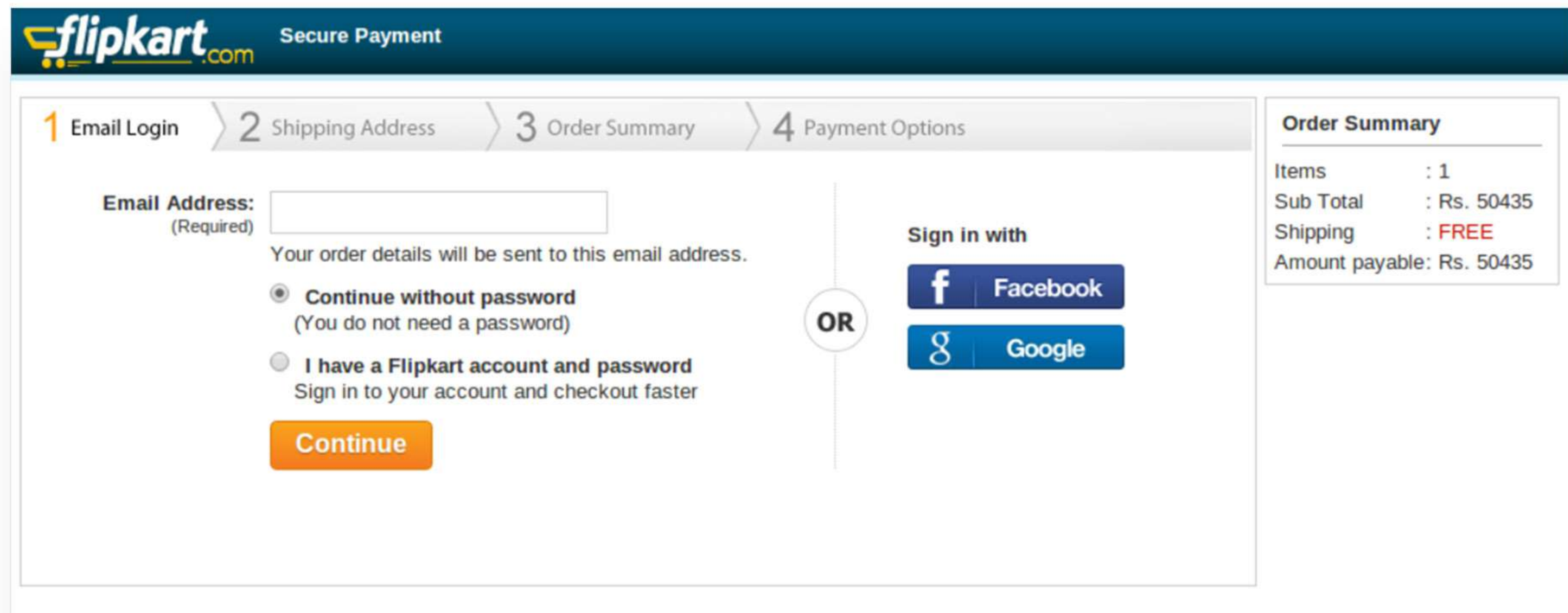
The screenshot shows a registration form with four steps: 1. SIGN IN, 2. DELIVERY, 3. GIFT OPTIONS, and 4. PAYMENT. A red error message at the top states: "Your password must be six or more letters and contain at least one digit and at least one letter. Please try again." The form includes a "SIGN UP" button and a note: "Required fields are marked with an asterisk*". The fields are: Title* (Mr), First name* (Pulkit), Surname* (Rastogi), Email address* (blurred), Confirm email* (blurred), Password* (masked with dots), Confirm password* (masked with dots), and Contact Telephone* (0 followed by blurred digits). There are two red error messages: "Please confirm your password." next to the Password field and "Please type your password in the Confirm Password box." next to the Confirm password field. At the bottom, there is a checkbox for "Keep me informed about what's on at Selfridges" and a question mark icon.

- **Make 'Guest Checkout' a more prominent option:** This is just an extension of the previous point. Make the guest checkout option more prominent using typography tools or other design elements so that your end-user doesn't feel forced to register. As said above, if they feel forced, they might abandon the process altogether.
- **Make your primary button most prominent among rest all call to actions:** This is common sense at this point, but I wanted to bring this into your checklist because I see so many websites that come my way without much thought put into the design element. Not all your buttons need the same importance. Especially at certain times, you might want the customer to do something but allow them to choose between two options. In these cases, you need to highlight your buttons accordingly. So use a certain bright color to highlight your primary CTA and perhaps just add various buttons like "save," "redeem," "apply," "OK," "calculate," etc. in an underlined fashion. Make sure your primary buttons like "checkout" "buy" "next" etc. are prominent and visually dominant.

- **Avoid unnecessary buttons on the checkout page:** Keep in mind to simplify the check out procedure for your users. So, only have primary buttons on the check-out page. Avoid using unnecessary, "apply" buttons. Use AJAX to automatically submit the data as soon as it is entered in the field. The changes should be applied without reloading the page. It should also be near the input field.
- **Primary button placement:** This is, yet again, a design element to consider. Keep in mind consistency. In the theme of keeping the customer happy by simplifying things, simplify their efforts on your page. When the CTA placement is consistent throughout your page, a customer can save time to read each button or search for a button keenly. Most websites have their primary button on the right. You can decide to have your placement, just ensure that every page is consistent.



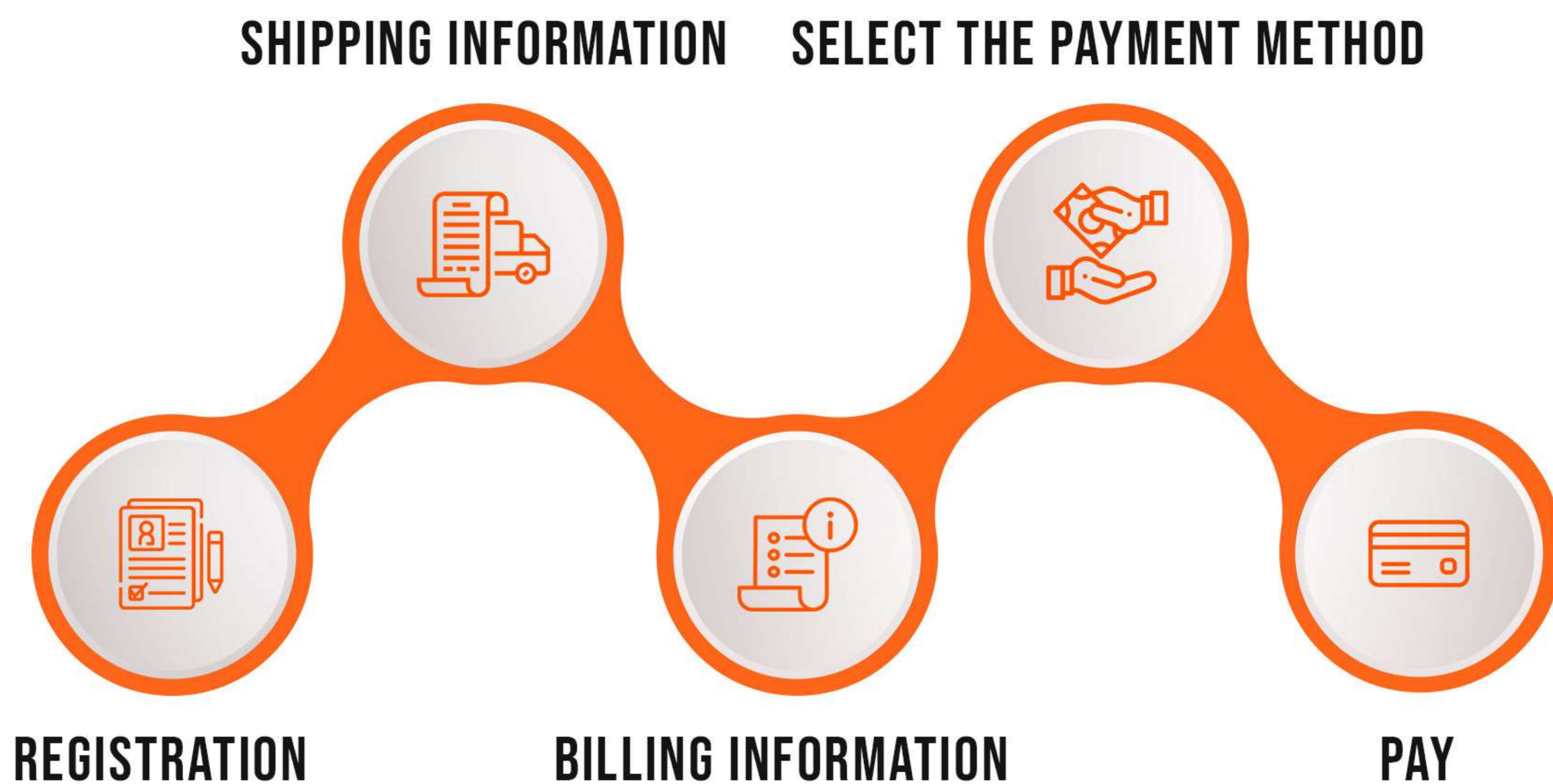
- **Limit the navigation and exit points on the checkout page:** You have worked so hard to help your user find what they are looking for and ultimately add that to their carts. Now is the time to allow them to focus on a seamless checkout. Remove all kinds of distractions from your checkout page like header navigation (or trim it) and use only things that encourage your customer to complete their checkout. Add guarantee, support information, return policy, etc.: things allow customers to feel safe during the checkout process.



The screenshot shows the Flipkart checkout process at the 'Email Login' step. The page has a dark blue header with the Flipkart logo and 'Secure Payment' text. Below the header is a progress bar with four steps: 1 Email Login (active), 2 Shipping Address, 3 Order Summary, and 4 Payment Options. The main content area contains an 'Email Address' input field with a '(Required)' label. Below the field is a note: 'Your order details will be sent to this email address.' There are two radio button options: 'Continue without password (You do not need a password)' which is selected, and 'I have a Flipkart account and password Sign in to your account and checkout faster'. An orange 'Continue' button is positioned below these options. To the right, there is a 'Sign in with' section with 'OR' in a circle, and two buttons for 'Facebook' and 'Google'. On the far right, an 'Order Summary' box displays: 'Items : 1', 'Sub Total : Rs. 50435', 'Shipping : FREE', and 'Amount payable: Rs. 50435'.

- **Use Intelligent defaults:** To help make your customer's life a little easier, use intelligent defaults in the most commonly selected values selected by users. This will ensure their checkout process to be seamless. An example would be to help users decide by pre-selecting whatever is the most selected shipping option. If you don't want to go this route, you could alternatively add a "recommended" label to the most popular choice.
- **Let users force-proceed on potentially wrong validation:** Many forms are designed so that your customers are forced to correct the validations of optional or un-important fields. Allow your customers an option to force-proceed through potentially wrong validation errors. A simple example would be when a user is on a 'shipping address' part of the form, the unintelligent design of the form would stop them from proceeding further just because of "no special characters (./-.) use.

- **Present Process steps as navigational links during checkout:** Generally speaking, a lot of companies break down the checkout process into its basic steps like:



They also allow for forward navigation, but only a few allow for backward navigation. You should allow your customer to move forwards and backward and edit/ check any information they need to.

- **Never surprise users by adding extra costs abruptly:** Can you imagine if you're on a website and you're on the final step to checkout, and suddenly there is an increase in the price? How annoying would that be? Similarly, your customer would feel betrayed if there is a sudden addition to their bill. If you do charge for shipping and handling, mention that at the start of their checkout process. This point is in theme with transparency and gaining the trust of your end-user.
- **Make Newsletter sign-up's an opt-in by default, not opt-out:** Keeping in the theme of being transparent and upfront with your customer, this one is a no-brainer. I mean, I understand the need to gain new leads, but remember, we are asking for access to their "virtual home" (their email-address). Always knock before entering. Allow them the choice to permit you to opt into your newsletters. Else an opt-out option would just feel to them like you're forcing their hand. And as discussed before, they'd just move forward and opt-out.
- **Offer Brave and bold Guarantees:** A lot of customers expect some form of guarantee on their purchase, especially during shopping seasons. Test bigger bolder guarantees and ensure your offer is visible to them on all the prominent pages (Product description, checkout page, and cart).



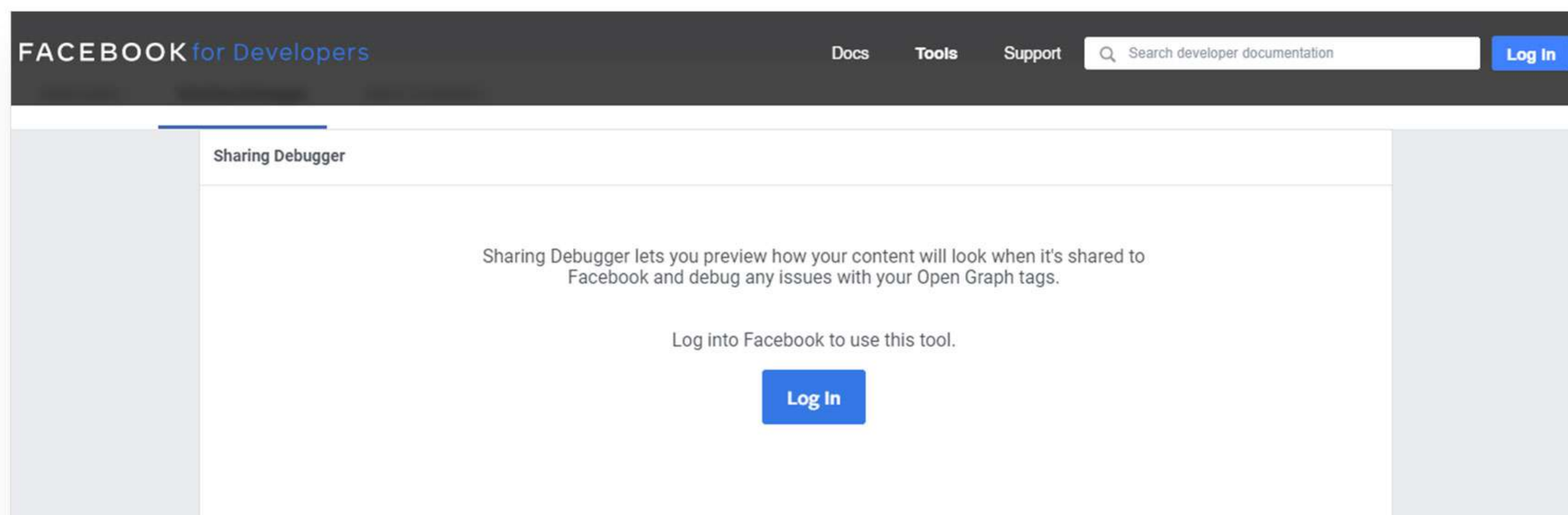
5. TOUCH POINT OPTIMIZATION

- ▶ **Meta tags: crisp & enticing:** Those 160 characters on your meta tag are your first level of contact with your customer. Granted, they are technically part of your Search Engine Optimization efforts but pay heed to make them shine through because this is the doorway to your store from your search engines. Potential customers searching for your business on various platforms will first be intrigued by what you have to discuss in the meta tag. So be mindful of the same.

You can use Google's WebMaster tools ([Traffic > Search Queries](#)) to check the Click Through Rate of your store. Make the needed changes in the meta-tags to get better CTRs. If the average position of a keyword is within the top 10, but the Click Through Rate of the keyword is low, this is an indication that your meta tags need re-working.

sports products	200	12	6%	8.6
olympia sports online	250	12	5%	5.0
sporting goods online	250	12	5%	5.3
sports jersey	900	30	3%	8.7
sports accessories	1,000	30	3%	5.6
sport accessories	700	16	2%	7.0

- **Enable Open graphs:** More and more people are accessing sites through their social media handles. Maybe it's an advert they saw on their feed, or perhaps someone shared a link to your site on their social media account. Either way, you need to ensure your site looks the way you intend it to, even when opened on Facebook. Open graphs will allow you to control how your store's pages look when shared on Facebook and use Facebook Debugger tools to see how your page looks when shared on Facebook.



- **Auto responder and Registration Emails:** Autoresponder emails are the ones that are sent directly to your customer when they newly register, create a new password, forget their passwords, or get the confirmation for their order. This is when you get creative and allow the customer a peek into your brand's values/ culture. Here is where you can build a relationship with your customers. Reflect that you do business sincerely and that you can be trusted for fast order fulfillment too.

When a customer recently registers on your website, send a warm email that is not too long, which clearly explains what they can expect from you. Keep it light-hearted, keep it fun, and don't bore them with a lot of words, break those long emails into small short ones and run a longer campaign if need be. As Gary Vaynerchuk says, Jab Jab Jab, Right Hook: Give give give, ask.

- **Password Reset Emails:** This is a pretty standard page, and the reason I say this is because by now, almost all stores have taken it for granted that people will register with them and then forget their password. It's almost as if they anticipate it. It is a standard page because not many people focus on the text within their password reset emails.

Keep the first email (to reset password) short and focus your attention on writing a copy for the confirmation page (password reset) and the email that goes to the customer after successfully resetting their password. Write a copy that speaks the language of your brand. Be empathetic and be accessible.

- **Order Confirmation Emails:** Order Confirmation Emails go to your customers automatically as soon as they place an order. These also tend to have the highest click-through rates. Be sure to jazz up these emails to showcase that you have been attentive to serving your customers right. Get to interact with your customers. Engaging with your customers through email will more likely open a sure-fire way to earn some brownie points. Showcase your brand's personality and the values you share. Allow them to respond to your emails. These tiny steps go a long way in making the customer feel like a king. You can also use this email to cross-sell other products strategically.
- **Enable Order Shipped Emails:** This is yet another automated email triggered as soon as your product is dispatched from the warehouse. It might not be opened sometimes, but the headline is enough to make the customer feel like they know where their product is and how long it would take the product to reach them. These emails grab your customer's attention, so ensure to talk about your social campaigns or other marketing efforts here.
- **Thank you messages:** Your website's development team has already added a few thank you pages on your website that get triggered at various points during a customer's buying cycle. Some of them are as follows:
 - When an order is placed.
 - When a subscription is made to your store.
 - When registration takes place.
 - When a user wants to be notified on restocking of the order.

Pay close attention to the copy of these pages because these pages are shown to people who have already decided to place their trust in you. Here are a few ideas you could use to help engage with your new fan following:

Ask them to check out your social media handles by giving them a link to the same on your thank you page.

You could show a "sign up" page to your newsletters.

This is also a good time to ask for feedback on their experience with your brand.

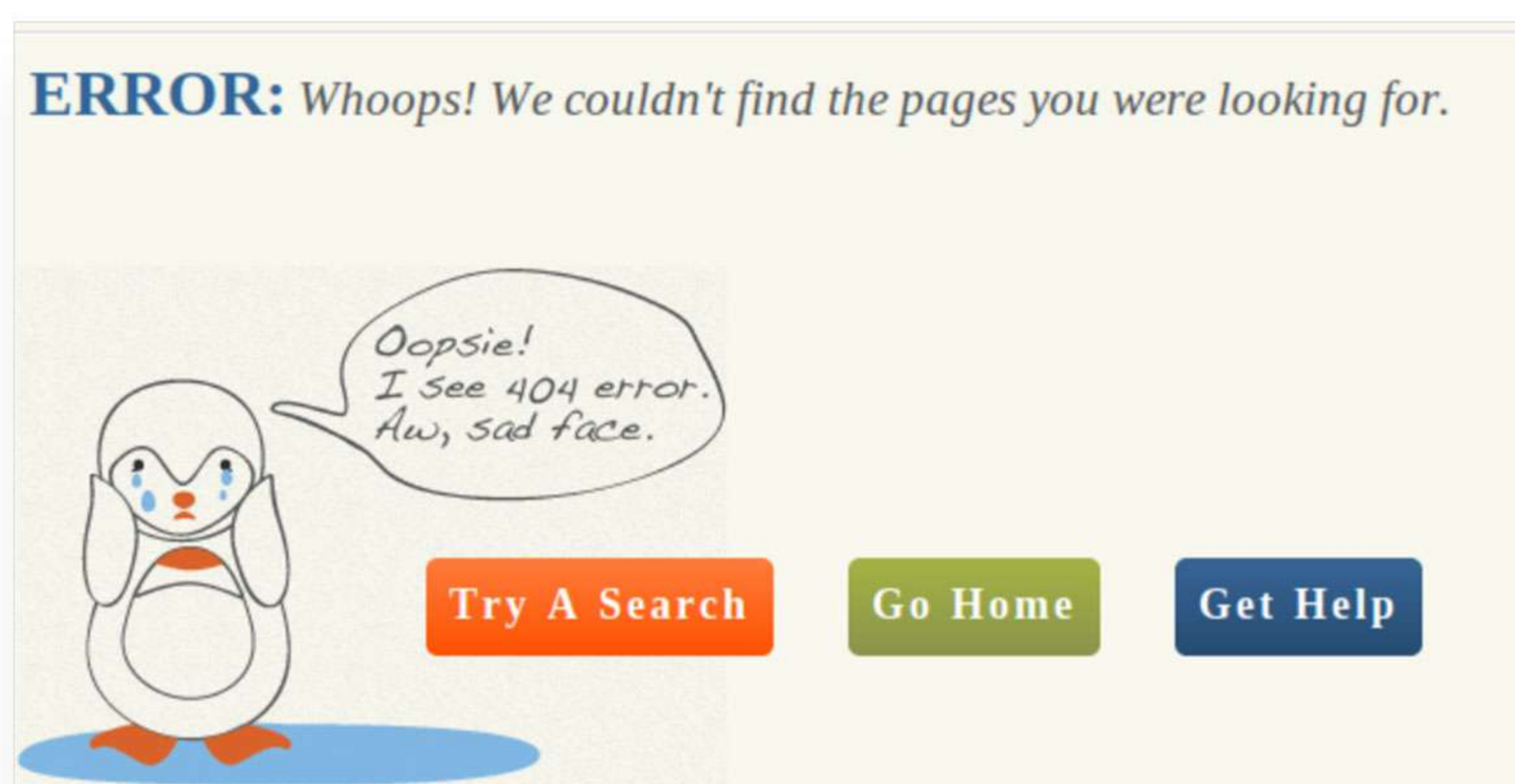
Show them you care by using this space to show your customer support links (call center, customer care email ID, or other points of contact).

➤ **404 Error Page:** These pages show up when a user searches for a page that no longer exists on the store. As the web page requested by the user no longer exists, the server sends them a 404 error page. A few reasons why this could happen are as follows:

- URL changing when store migrates.
- Admin deletes a page.
- Incorrect hyperlinking amongst other such issues.

Your store needs to have the following in its 404 error page as a rule of thumb:

- Friendly error message including a caricature/some image that lightens the mood.
- Search box so the user doesn't exist on your page.
- Customer support information to reassure the user of your presence
- Direct links to important pages (highly searched) on your site.



- **No Results Found (Product / Page):** This page is shown to the user when they have entered a query that your system fails to bring up as a search result. Developers generally leave a generic "no results found" error. But use this time to leave a lasting impression. Following is an example from Zappos:



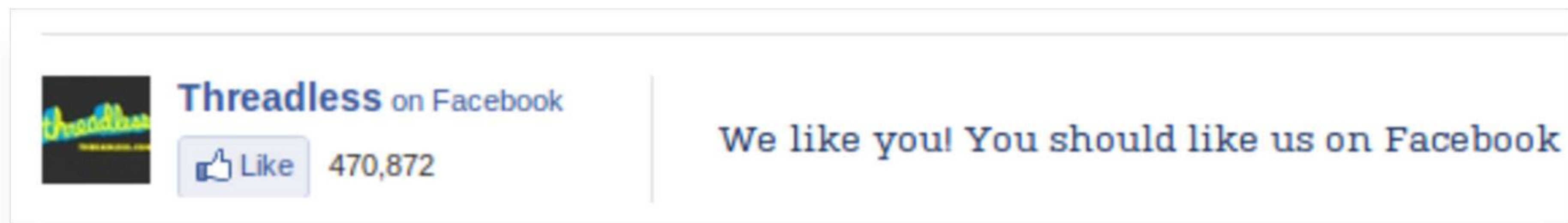
- **Validation Error Messages:** This happens when your customer enters the wrong detail within the input forms. For example, they entered their address in the input box that is requesting for their phone number. Here are a few places where validation error messages are generally shown to your users:

- Registration forms
- Login forms
- Email sign-up forms
- Pro-order forms
- Contact forms etc.

These messages are designed generically by a developer who isn't too concerned with your message's tone. But use this space to showcase the voice and personality of your brand. Trust me; these tiny steps lead to a big "wow factor" creation in your users' minds.

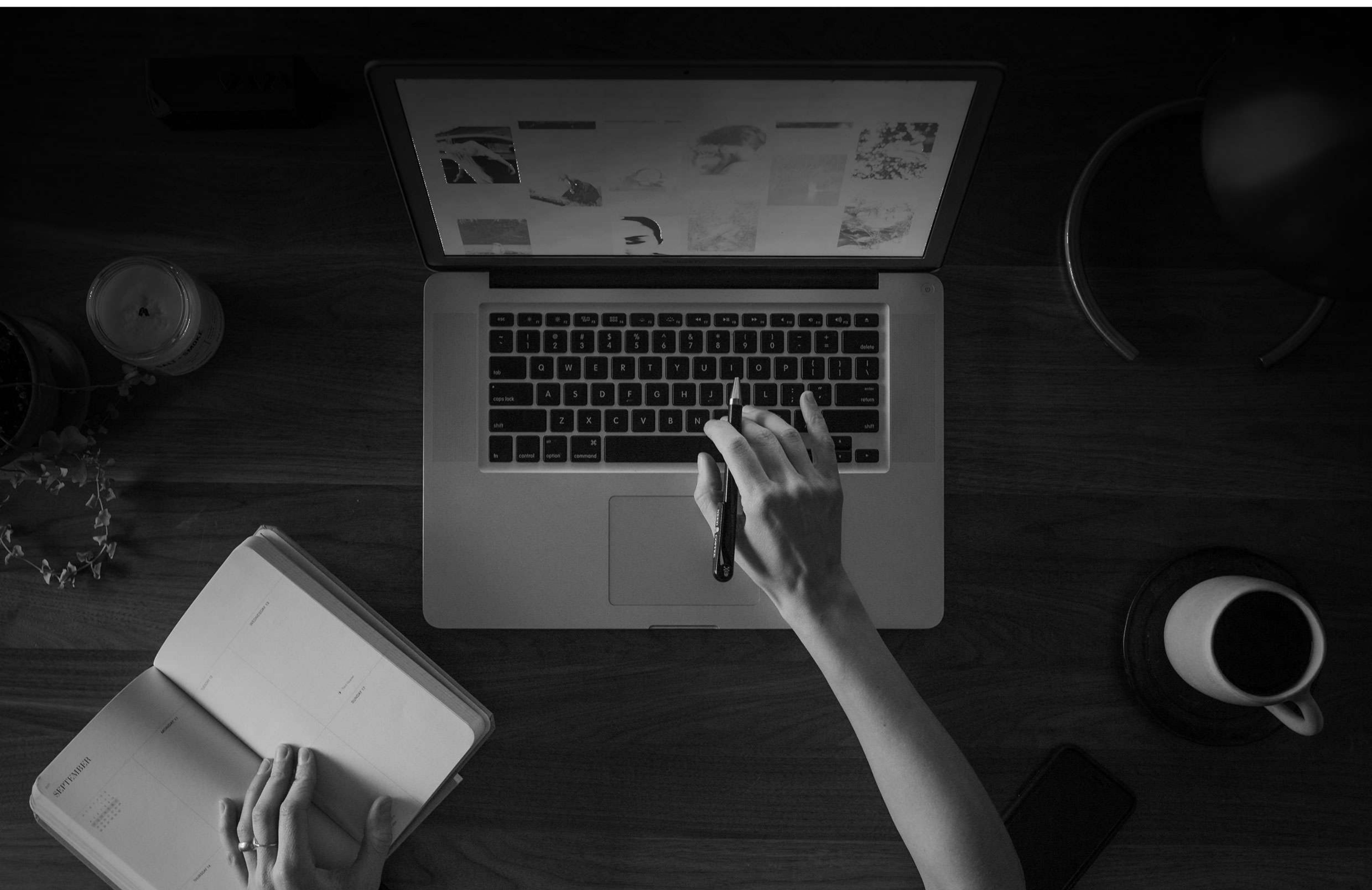
- **Multiple Payment Options:** Different people like different ways of paying. That is a no brainer. But here's the point to bring home: add the logos of all the different modes of payments accepted on your site. Visually these logos would bring up a better impression at a glance in the minds of your customers.
- **Social Media Proof:** I have already established how much people love social proof of any brand. It adds to trust. Consider linking the numbers on your website if you have a high following on Facebook or other social media accounts. This will immediately elevate the brand/ product image in the minds of your customer.

You can use Facebook like box widget, for example:



- **Google Trusted Stores:** Trusted Stores Program is a new program from Google, where they want your customers to find you (merchant). Now, as is with Google, they believe in serving customers first; and serving them well. They designed this program so the end-users find a high-quality shopping experience online. This is part of the Google shopping platform.

If you're using Google AdWords or other CSE (Comparison Shopping Engines), you need to jump in on this action. By adhering to the set quality checks by google, you get to have the backing of their services, a Google endorsement if you will. This means that you are rewarded with an increase in your organic SEO efforts manifold. You want that!



6. INFORMATION TOUCHPOINTS OPTIMIZATION

Your brand is online. There are not many tactile elements for a customer to get a 'touch and feel' of your brand. Therefore you must use all the available resources to add a human element to your brand. There are many other touchpoints that your customers interact with. These are the areas you need to optimize to provide the customer with the holy "wow factor experience," thereby building loyalty. Let's look at other such touchpoints you can work with.

- **Close-up videos of your products:** When your customer buys your product, the number one concern they have is, "how will this product look like in real life?" It's all guesswork for them. They have to make their best decision based on all the information provided to them at the time. Now add to that the anxiety of receiving something abhorrent, which is so far away from what was shown in the pictures on a website! These days with easy return policies, "trials" are easier, but still, we live in an age where time is money. No one wants to be spending their days worrying about the pick up of their products etc.

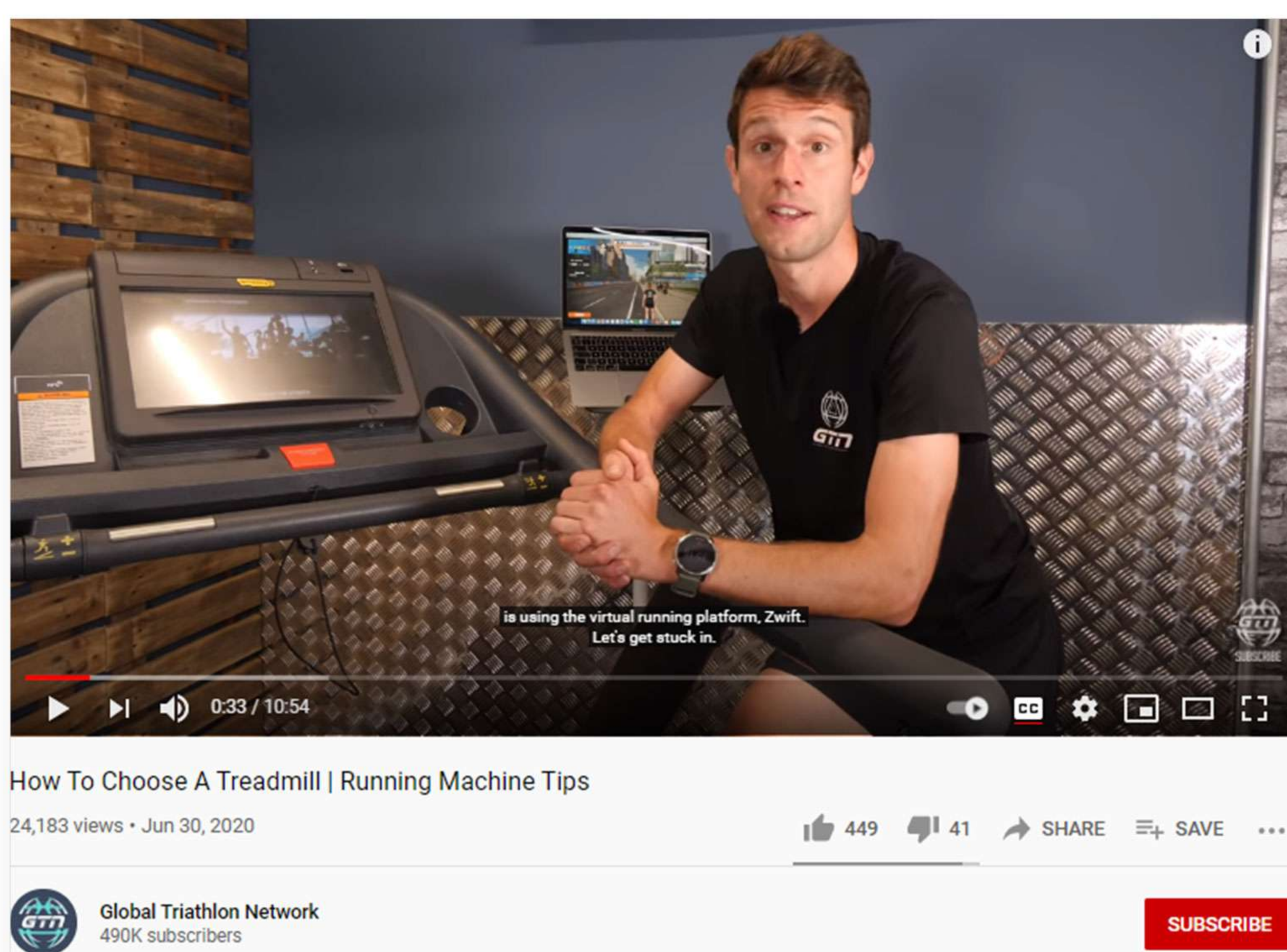
This is why a professionally shot close up video of your product is so vital. You don't need to spend a lot on this because there need not be any models or voice-overs. It can be a video without any audio! We are not making an advertisement, remember. We are just trying to show the customer what the product looks like. If you can showcase the material, the make, and the design through a camera such that it is close to a real trial, you would be saving so much time and effort of your own with lower returns and higher re-orders. Here's how MrPorter.com has created great videos of their small products.

➤ **Help your customers make an informed decision:** This is where you will apply your branding efforts to make you an expert in your field. You would have heard the term "thought leader." Well, to be honest, these days, it seems to be tossed around like candy, but true thought leaders are industry experts, the go-to authority on that particular subject matter. How you do this has a few different modalities for you to explore.

One could be through blogging. Write a lot of different articles on what you sell. For every question that you can think of, try addressing that in each of your articles.

Another good way to go about this is to do simple keyword research on your particular industry and head over to Quora and answer the unanswered questions/ have many followers interested in the answers.

Yet another modality is to create videos explaining the mechanics of your product. You can even create other videos relating to the keywords of your industry. Here's an example of a video from the Global Triathlon Network. They have chosen topics such as "How to choose the right treadmill | Running Machine Tips." This video helps its users select the best treadmill to suit their needs. It has been seen 21,000 times within just five months!



➤ **Your About page really matters; A LOT!:** If you were to check your “About” page's analytics, you would be amazed to see how many people check out the “about us” section of your website! People want to know your story. Humans crave connection. The way they build this connection is through the medium of stories. We are great storytellers; we always have been and will always be. It's part of our DNA. This is why your brand's story matters so much! Your users want to connect with you- they want to know who you are, what your values are, what drives you, and what value you will be provided to them at the end. Here's what you need to include on your about page:



Your whole story. It's an interesting one, and it deserves to be heard.



Your people: they make your brand what it is. Showcase them.



Throw in some hard facts.



Write in your brand's natural voice.



Add personality to your text by using images or videos.



Be “YOU”; your brand's authentic self.

➤ **Have a warm and welcoming Contact page:** Keeping in the theme of being accessible to your customer by providing a tangible tangent to your brand, ensure that you are highly ranked on customer service. Ensure your users know you are a customer-centric brand.

You can do this by adding multiple options for people to reach you (Social Media, live chat, email, toll-free number, etc).

You must have a place where a customer can meet you. A physical address where they can mail you at the least. Let your users know that they are talking to real people who are deeply rooting for their customers' joy.

► **Usability testing; you can't have enough of it!:** Test Test and Test some more.

Gather data as much as you can. Concrete data on what exactly is working and dump those strategies that aren't. Tools like [usertesting.com](https://www.usertesting.com) can help you hire remote usability testers for an economical price. Hand them predefined test cases, and you get a video result of their exact experience on your store. You also get a written, detailed explanation of their findings.



7. LOAD SPEED OPTIMIZATION

You know how annoying it is to have a high-speed wifi connection and have a website load slow. It's almost a feeling of being robbed. We have gotten so used to high-speed information that we almost forgot what it is like to wait. The reason I mentioned feeling robbed is that we use the internet because of its convenience. If a website takes a long time to load, it takes away from us the advantage of convenience. Google equips you with some great information on how you can increase your site's load speed. Let's look at a few important ones:

- ▶ **Leverage browser caching:** Caching is a twofold win: you decrease the round-trip time by disposing of various HTTP requests for the necessary resources. You significantly diminish the total payload size of the responses. Other than promoting a dramatic decrease in page load time for resulting client visits, enabling caching can likewise dramatically reduce the bandwidth capacity and hosting costs for your site.
- ▶ **Defer parsing of JavaScript:** To load a page, the browser should parse the contents of all `<script>` tags, which adds extra time to the page load. By limiting the quantity of JavaScript needed to render the page and deferring parsing of unneeded JavaScript until it has to be executed, you can lessen your page's initial load time.
- ▶ **Optimize images:** When you optimize each line of code for your site, remember your static content- including image files. Simple enhancements can radically diminish your download size without compromising on the website's quality.
- ▶ **Serve scaled images:** Once in a while, you might need to show the same picture in different sizes, so you will serve a single image resource and use HTML or CSS on the page to scale it. For instance, you may have a 10 x 10 thumbnail adaptation of a bigger 250 x 250 picture. Instead of compelling the client to download two separate files, you can utilize markup to resize the thumbnail variant.



- **Combine images into CSS sprites:** Consolidate images into as few files as possible using CSS sprites. This decreases the number of round trips and delays in downloading different files, lessens request overhead, and can diminish the total number of bytes downloaded by a page.


Like JavaScript and CSS, downloading numerous images brings about extra round trips. A site that contains numerous images can combine them into fewer output files to diminish latency.


- **Minimize redirects:** Limiting HTTP redirects starting with one URL then removes extra RTTs and wait time for clients.
- **Enable compression:** Compressing files with Gzip or Deflate can diminish the number of bytes sent over the network. Most present-day browsers uphold data compression for HTML, CSS, and JavaScript files. This permits content to be sent over the network in smaller forms and can diminish the download time.
- **Minify JavaScript:** The 'Minify JavaScript' filter eliminates useless bytes on the wire. While it's incredible to put comments, tabs, and whitespace in code to improve readability and maintenance, these are bytes that occupy space on the wire and that a browser's JavaScript parser needs to parse pointlessly.
- **Minimize request size:** Keeping cookies and request headers as little as conceivable guarantees that an HTTP request can find a way into a single packet.


8. SHIPPING AND RETURNS OPTIMIZATION

This is the final interaction a user has with your brand when he places his order. It is goodbye time. Now, it is up to you if you can convince your user to visit again or if they would much rather visit others. Here's where you get creative in adding value to your user. Nurture these leads and send them through various other funnels (with the user's permission, of course), and you have a long term customer. One funnel you can add them to is your social media channels. Gaining leads was the hard part, and you have accomplished that well. Now it's time to nurture them even while it may seem like the end of the road. Here are a few ways to do that:

► **Get your Shipping Policies right:** How you manage your shipping procedure makes a big difference to your CRO metrics. If you don't put in the required efforts at this stage, it increases your users' chances of abandoning their carts. Here are a few findings from a research paper conducted by UPS:

 Free and discounted shopping will intrigue your customers, but it wouldn't be a complete picture if you overlook your users' overall experience. Customers are willing to pay a nominal fee for having their delivery expedited if the option is given.

 During checkouts, especially, your customer wants you to be transparent. This means no "forgetting" to inform them of the minimum order for free shipping, no skipping out on informing your users about an estimated timeline of their delivery, and certainly no surge pricing. Everything needs to be meticulously discussed with your customers, and they should be aware of all your policies.

 Your customer doesn't mind waiting for their package as long as you tell them how long exactly they need to wait. If there seems to occur an unforeseen delay in delivery, communicate that with your customer. They are much kinder than you think. Add progress sliders to show how the delivery is progressing. Be as transparent as can be.



As said multiple times before, customers love the feeling of being in control. Providing them with simple options like "adding a special delivery instruction" will go a long way in empowering your customer to make decisions for themselves about their delivery.



Lastly, if you have a strong return policy, I can almost ascertain that you would have repeat business. People love feeling special. Make the return process as simple as possible and as customer-centric as possible. Keep your customer happy, and they will feel valued enough to come back for more.

- **Offer Free Shipping:** We don't understand the psychology behind a customer wanting to save \$6 on shipping and forgo a \$10 discount yet. Either way, customers want your shipping charges reduced to 0.

This being said, I understand that sometimes everyone can't offer free shipping. You can try adding a flat shipment fee if that works for your business.

If it doesn't, don't worry; just be upfront with your customer about the same. Tell them how much you charge for shipping and why. But never spring up an additional shipping charge to the final bill.

- **Display the Free Shipping Threshold Order Value Prominently:** Showing a "free shipping" banner on your store can draw more eyeballs in. However, if you omit to mention the "threshold order" value on the same banner might feel like you are tricking your users.

If your user has progressed to his cart without seeing that you have a bare minimum order requirement to qualify for "free shipping," the abandonment rate goes up. Therefore, beware of how your site looks like to your users, not the intentions behind creating your online store.

► **Offer a good return policy:** Customers have certain standard apprehensions in their minds when they buy a product online:

- Will it fit me?
- What if I don't like it?
- Would the product be the same as seen on the screen?
- What if the quality isn't good?

You need to answer these questions in your FAQs and create an attractive returns policy to help ease the anxieties of online shopping in your customer's minds.



9. CUSTOMER RETARGETING

Customer retargeting is an important part of your CRO initiatives simply because we are making our systems and our functions as efficient as can be. The cost of acquisition is way too high and losing out on leads just because of failure to nurture them is money down the drain. Here are a few ways you can retarget your users that have abandoned their shopping carts:

- ▶ **Use Ad-Roll:** This is a great tool when you want to target the customers who abandon their carts midway. You can improve your store's conversion rate by showing those users banners that encourage them to come back and check out.

You can create all sorts of personalized and dynamic banner ads using AdRoll. It is additionally useful because it allows you to segregate your potential customers using data about the kind of products they have seen, how far along the purchase funnel they moved through, or any other action you specifically want to target.

- ▶ **Use Adwords Remarketing:** With this tool, you can target those who have visited your website and then show them tailor-made advertisements when they're surfing other websites on Google Display Network.

These ads help bring your users back to your site and convert them by giving them offers best suited for their needs on customized landing pages.

- ▶ **Clean your Email Subscriber List from time to time:** If you are like most e-commerce business folks, you're no stranger to knowing how important email marketing is for your store. It drives a lot of traffic to your website.

You need to put in a bit of effort to ensure your email channel's conversion rate is at its peak. For this, you need to keep track of people at various levels of dis-engagement and inactivity within your list of subscribers.

From here, figure out how many of them have been on your list for a while but aren't opening your emails. This piping down process will ensure you have better conversion rates showing and help save you from being tagged as a spammer.

Bonus? You will get a clearer picture of your engagement rates with your customers, and you can begin to tweak your email campaigns accordingly.

- **Offer Cashbatcks:** A lot of people use this strategy to get repeat business. Offers like "Get \$15 off on purchase of \$50" are a great way to encourage people to revisit your store. This builds customer loyalty and also helps improve your CRO efforts because of repeat orders.



BEST PRACTICES

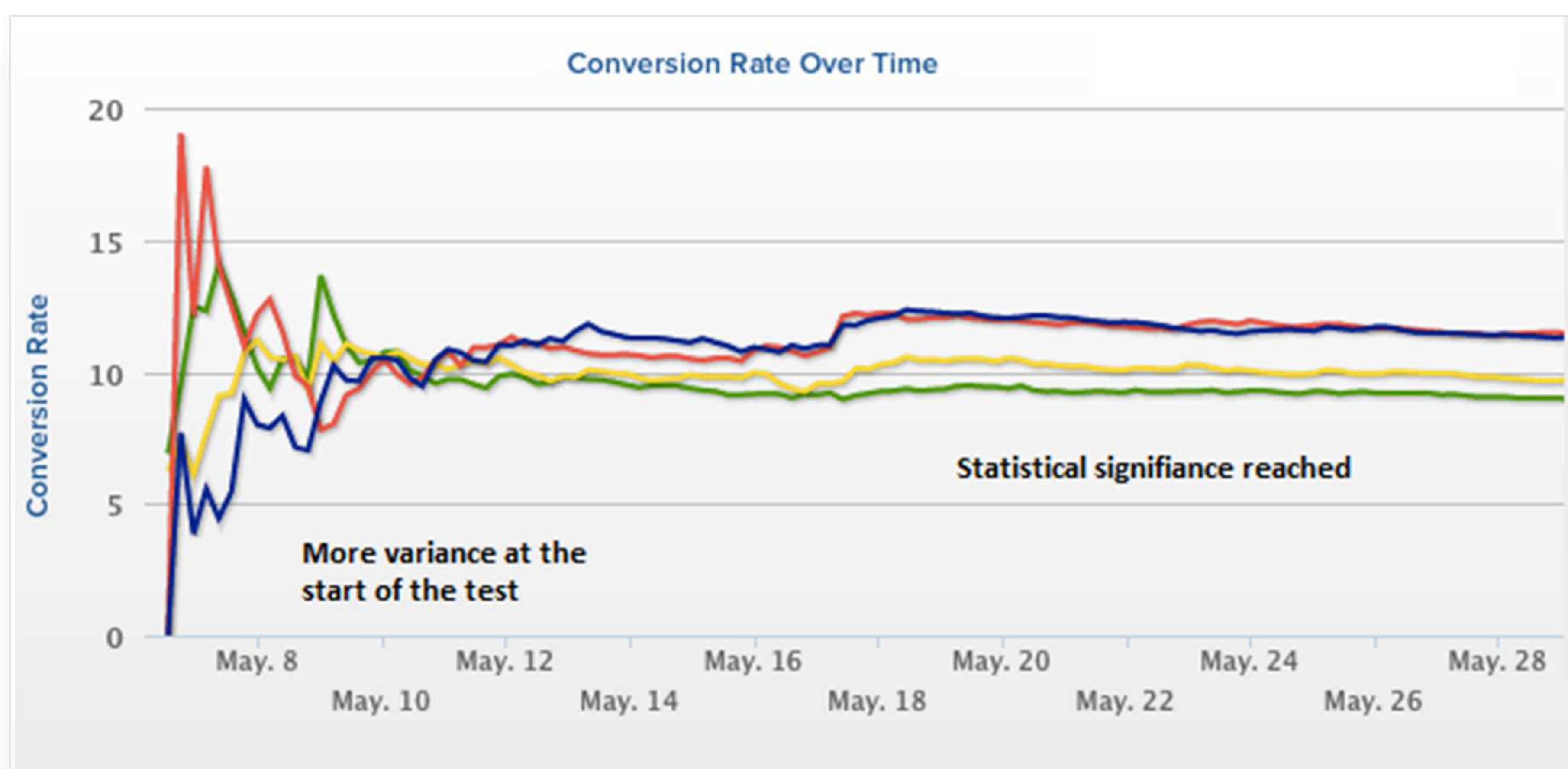
FOR IMPROVING YOUR CONVERSION RATE

Let's talk about the few ways you can optimize your conversion rate even when you don't have a lot of traffic to your store yet:

1. Make big changes: In order to see if your split test results mirror the truth and not just a freak coincidence, you need to have numerous actions taken on it. Let me explain to you in detail:

Version 1 of a certain page would have a conversion rate of 5%, which only says that on average, it creates five conversions for every 100 users that visit the page. But after some time, what if it starts making seven conversions over the next hundred visitors? It would then show the conversion rate as 7%. This is why you need to have more visitors because these freak coincidences normalize, and you begin to get a realistic image of your data over a period of time.

If the conversion rates of both versions A and B are very similar, you would need to wait a bit before you get a higher level of accuracy to make certain which is better than the other. But if both versions have different conversion rates, you'll find the winner soon.



2. Test goals with better conversion rates: You have a selection of things to optimize for, and by and large, it's ideal for optimizing for things that produce revenue—so you should optimize for sales or leads generated.

Lamentably, such things, by and large, have lower conversion rates, which implies that they take more time to test, as compared to testing for bounce rates, time on page, or click through.

Now let's look at an example:

Suppose we were to take a simple sales page. Your primary goal is for the end sale. Your secondary goal is for your user to just click through to any other page in your store. For sales, your page would convert at 2.7%, whereas for your secondary goal, it would convert at 34%.

Now, suppose you have 100 visitors, and you have successfully made three sales. Also, 32 of these visitors fulfilled your secondary goal too. This would give you the following data:

- **Objective 1:** actual rate 2.7% - apparent rate 3% - margin of error 11.1%
- **Objective 2** – actual rate 34% - apparent rate 32% - margin of error 5.89%

So you can perceive how the measured conversion rate for objective two would be considerably more exact significantly earlier in the test. This is a characteristic of how the stats work.

While it's ideal for optimizing for sales, you may help your bottom line more by beginning with a higher value test, for example, testing for bounce rate:

To decrease your bounce rates, just run a test where a click on any link on the page is viewed as a conversion. So on the off chance that your bounce rate is 40%, at that point, your "conversion rate" is 60% - and that is the score to beat.

A small word to the wise:

The facts demonstrate that reducing your bounce rate won't really build up your

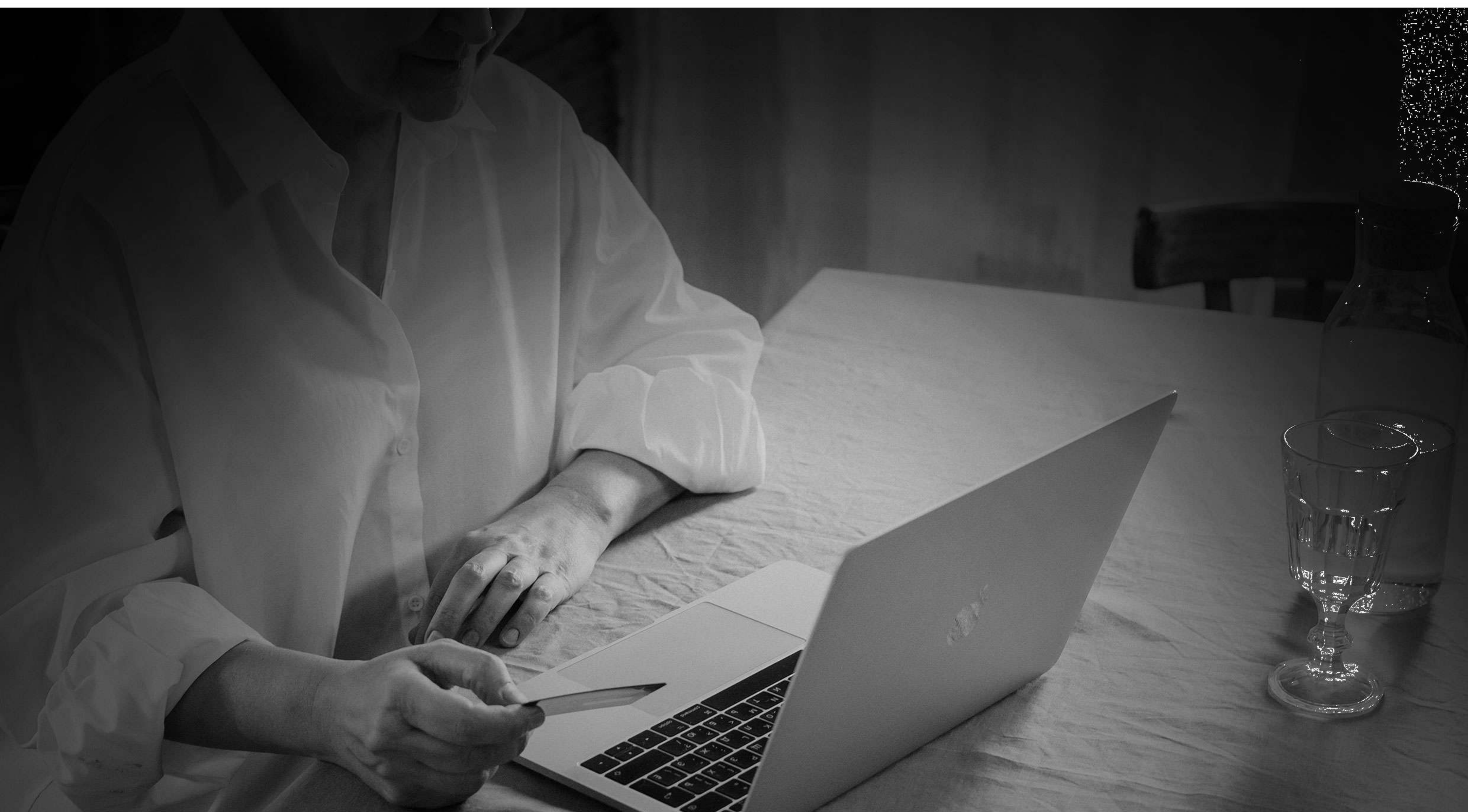
sales numbers, so don't do whatever is prone to hurting your sales, however. As long as you employ good judgment, you will probably find that decreasing bounces increases various sorts of conversions.

And on the off chance that improving your bounce rate does improve your sales conversion rate, at that point, that will make a sales-based split test more achievable in the future!

3. Reduce variations: This is a straightforward concept. On the off chance that you are running a test on a certain page of your site, and that page gets 100 visitors for each month, at that point, you should split those visitors between the current page (variety A, otherwise known as the control) and your different variations.

If you have little traffic, at that point, you should just test each new variation at a time.

This way you can give your new variation of 50 visitors every month. While in the event that you attempted to add another variation, every variation would just get 33 visitors for each month – increasing the time it would take to get a substantial result.



4. Test high traffic pages: Just like testing bounces instead of your sales, it would be great if you could work on making your checkout pages and contact forms more efficient. However, it seems less plausible because of low traffic.

It is more likely that your homepage would get many people visiting compared to any other page on your site. So you should start here. If other pages garner more eyeballs, start there.

So, testing your homepage would yield results much faster than any other pages on your site. This would reflect on how fast you see your improvements. This would eventually mean that traffic starts funneling down to other pages; that way, those pages become easier to test.

5. Test lots of things & Test every page at once: Of course, you know that you should only be testing two variations of a page at once, but that doesn't mean you stop testing multiple pages and their variations together. This way, you have so much of your results coming back simultaneously, thereby saving time.

For example, you could choose to test the copy and headlines of your homepage while keeping your conversion goal to reduce bounce rates. At this same time, you could also test email sign up completions on your blog post pages.

This way, within a few weeks, you'll have resulted from two to three different texts that were done during the same time frame when you have your results.

However, your last option is to test everything and all pages at once with the same test. You can group pages and test general changes in things that show up on every page.

6. Start now and be patient: As with most things in life, don't wait for a perfect time to start. Just start testing your site, even if your traffic is 0. Leave it running for six months, and you will realize you have so much data to look up to. Eventually, as time goes on, you'll collect more and more information about what's working and what's not, but up until then, don't wait for a perfect time to start.

And with that, I would like to end this book by saying, "You've got this" don't overthink and get overwhelmed. As I mentioned in the previous point, all that matters is that you start. Optimization takes time.

Everything starts with data, and all you have to do at your early stages is to begin collecting this data. I would love to know which strategies helped you grow your eCommerce store. Please send me an email at rahul@webspero.com sharing your feedback on which strategy helped your business the most.

I love hearing back from people like you because it provides me insights into the challenges you faced, and then I can too get to learn. Meanwhile, I encourage you to check out WebSpero's LinkedIn profile. You'll find the link on our website. You should be following us for more such free content on all things Digital Marketing.

Also, Let us, the CRO Experts take over your optimization requirements. Schedule a meeting with us here: <https://calendly.com/webspero-consultant>. You will also get a clickable link of the same on our website.

