

Walmart, Pinterest, Etsy update their search experiences as shoppers clamor for more relevant results

Article

The trend: Retail companies are retooling their online search experiences to offer shoppers more relevant, personalized results—and ultimately to boost sales.

- **Pinterest's** “inclusive AI”-powered filters for skin tones and hair patterns are helping the platform attract more Gen Zers and increase engagement with shoppable content, per Business of Fashion.
- **Etsy** is using AI to boost higher-quality items in search results and deliver more relevant and diverse product recommendations.
- **Victoria's Secret** recently revamped its search experience, including adding a visual search tool, to help address customer queries more effectively and offer more useful, personalized results.
- **Walmart** will roll out its [genAI-powered search tool](#) to Android users this month to deliver more curated and relevant results while also guiding shoppers to products they didn't even know they needed.

Why it matters: A bad search experience is a major customer turn-off. Eighty percent of shoppers have left a retailer's site due to poor-performing search, [according to](#) a survey by Nosto.

- Irrelevant results are a particular friction point: More than two-thirds (69%) of consumers encounter them often when shopping online, while roughly one-third (35%) report abandoning a site for that reason.
- Other frequent pain points include lack of tolerance for typos and other errors, failure to recommend alternatives when a search returns zero results, and lack of filters to narrow down product listings.

The opportunity: Improving the online search experience is fairly low-hanging fruit that can yield a noticeable sales lift.

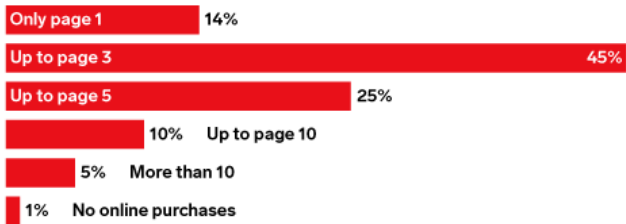
- **Zenni Optical's** revenues per search session spiked 34% after the retailer updated its search capabilities, CTO **David Ting** told Retail TouchPoints. It built a proprietary AI solution that shows customers a more diverse array of products in response to basic queries like “black rectangular glasses,” resulting in a more relevant search experience.
- The number of searches using Pinterest's hair-pattern and skin-tone filters grew 41% and 51% year-over-year (YoY), respectively, in 2023. In the same period, shopping behavior among

Gen Z users—who now account for over 40% of the platform’s monthly active users—grew 50% YoY.

What retailers can do: Online search is ripe for reinvention, especially as a new wave of genAI tools makes it easier than ever for retailers to deliver experiences that are tailored to consumers’ needs and preferences.

- Even small tweaks, such as using AI to assess whether shoppers are just looking for inspiration or have clear purchase intent, can help improve the quality and relevancy of search results.
- Adding multimodal search capabilities can also help by making it easier for consumers to communicate what they’re looking for so retailers can surface the products most closely aligned with their needs.

Estimated Number of Search Results Pages UK and US Adults Review Before Clicking on a Product Page, Dec 2023
% of respondents



Note: ages 18+
Source: Salsify, "2024 Consumer Research: The Modern Buying Journey," Feb 7, 2024

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