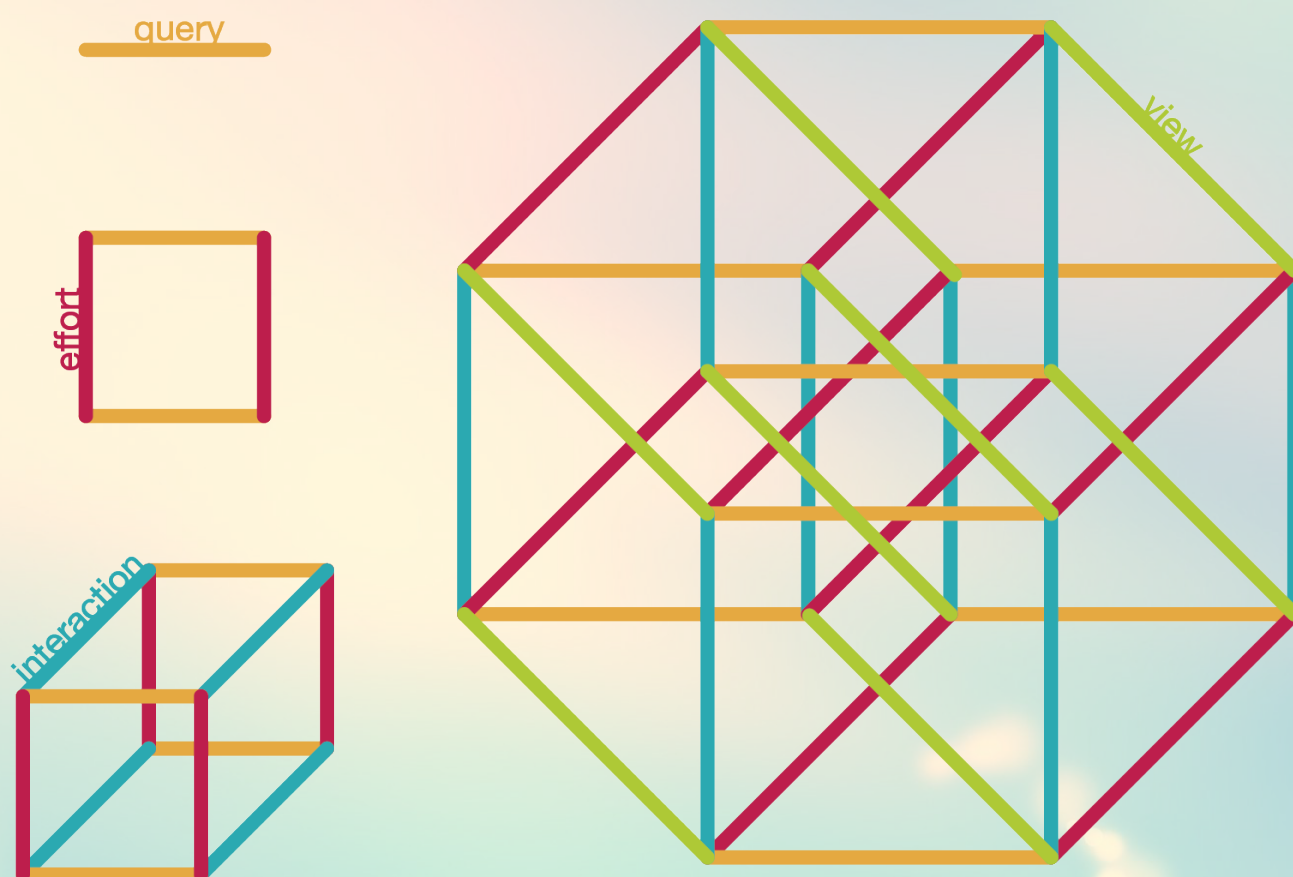




Findability and Search Joy

THE PATH TO CUSTOMER CENTRIC STRATEGIES
ACROSS ALL DIGITAL CHANNELS

by Ángel Maldonado



Findability



Table of Contents

Introduction: More than just Search	2
Search is a wicked problem	3
Putting the customer first	4
Customer Centric Search as a strategy	5
Omni-channel Search	6
What is Findability?	6
Measuring Findability	7
Findability Sample by Query <i>“denim dress”</i>	9
Conclusion	10



Introduction: More than just Search

We all love Search, that one place where you can actually say something and get a response. A place to discover things, to locate, to cut through. When sending a query, one feels like they're opening a present, wondering what lies behind.

Search can be one of the **coolest parts of a store and it can also be the most annoying**. It has always been exciting, and the higher the expectations are that we have from it, the greater the chances of getting either really annoyed or feeling that wonderful eureka moment.

Search has the power to trigger these feelings and therefore needs to be looked at carefully and creatively.

An eCommerce Search project requires much more than just a Search Engine. Search is pure Human - Computer Interaction and the perception of its performance is subjective, totally dependant on the eye of every consumer.

Now, Findability, as a concept, is here to serve as an objective metric within this subjective and multi-dimensional challenge of Search. Findability, as an indicator, tells us whether consumers found what they are looking for, a key metric if our ultimate strategy is to make people feel good.



Search is a wicked problem

Search has historically been a **complex multi-dimensional problem**, so tough that with each attempt to create a solution, the understanding of the problem itself has been changing and yet, still today, Search remains to be frustrating to the eCommerce user, expensive to the store and so far intractable to the software industry.

At EmpathyBroker we believe this has been the case because the Search challenge tends to be defined in absolute terms of relevancy as opposed to **what is perceived as relevant by each consumer**.

There is no absolute perception of relevancy and each unique consumer has potentially unique intentions. In addition, many queries don't have a single right answer or even an objective best answer, and in many occasions the right result set is one that is **not only perceived as valid but is also presented through a rewarding experience**.

To the consumer, search within eCommerce has been traditionally a negative experience, particularly when compared with Web Search and other consumer tools that inevitably set the benchmark of what Search should deliver. In our view, eCommerce Search has failed to deliver for two simple reasons:

- » The consumer **context is ignored**.
- » Search is designed to display results and not to deliver a **gratifying experience**.

In eCommerce, there is no single right result to every query and yet there is a potential good result for every consumer. For example, the query “dress”, may offer good valid results for one customer and yet, the very same list of results can be perceived as incorrect for another. This is why **when Search is made aware of each consumer's varying context**, the probability of satisfaction is enhanced. Now, if results are also **instantly and aesthetically** delivered, then the consumer feels that **Search is not only efficient but satisfying too**.



Putting the customer first

The proper place to start is with a **customer-focused understanding** of what search is all about. To accomplish this, a quick look through the most popular queries serves to work out **what type of demands** people articulate through the Search box.

Placing each query into a cloud of words, with quantity of queries increasing the size of the term, you get something that will look a bit like this:



Cloud of popular Search Terms

What's clearly exposed is that the **most popular queries are generic**, simple one word queries providing low specificity. This type of generic query is nowadays the most popular first query that customers send through all store channels, a query that hinders in its intention two possible contexts:

- a) Committed
- b) Navigational

The level of Commitment sets the customer's mindset when Searching; the more committed the user, the more likely they will find what they are looking for regardless of the difficulty in attempting to find it. This reality can't be ignored as committed consumers may be tagged as successful because they Convert, although, when we look at all the steps involved in the Findability journey, these users may have gone through an astonishing struggle and frustration to be able to find what they so badly needed or desired. **The committed intention benefits from less and more relevant results.**



On the other hand, **Navigational queries expect diversity and discovery**, to be shown what is available and the wider the result set is, the better. Behind these type of queries, **consumers are prepared to view large numbers** of results to fulfil the need to discover. These type of queries may perceive the diversity and expansion of the relevant results as positive, to the point that **variations in the result set is likely to make them feel much better than narrow result sets**.

The challenge lies in how to disambiguate the intent of a generic query such as “jacket”, since for some people this query may target a specific jacket model, colour and material while for others the expectation is to discover all available jackets.

Customer Centric Search as a strategy

There are two ways of looking at the work that can be done to develop an eCommerce strategy:

- » **Conversion Driven:** Propounded by the majority of software vendors, targets every development as an action intended to increase Conversion. In other words, to go straight for the targets without restraints, that is, without considering that your consumers are inextricably driven by context, emotions and behavioural patterns.
- » **Findability Driven:** The other way, is to make the store interesting and unique to each consumer's intent.

When looking at your consumers from a customer centric angle, eCommerce developments accord with customer centric features.

Being driven by Findability rewards the user experience:

- » By **understanding** the consumer's effort in relationship with the intent, by placing the consumer journey at the centre of the stores strategies.
- » By creating consumer centric **experiences** that anticipate and cater to their needs, wants and expectations.
- » By treating the **consumer** not only as a means but as an end.

Findability is success in finding and success is dictated by the perception of relevancy that each consumer experiences out of each sent query (-as opposed to the relevancy of each result in absolute terms-).



Omni-channel Search

The eCommerce world has changed from stores that run on Web Sites to a new multi-channel world where eCommerce Search plays a new role.

Up to now, metrics have not been adept to reflect on this new ecosystem, failing to identify successful finding experiences across the omni-channel panorama. For instance, by depending on Conversion as an indicator of success, the level of commitment is ignored and therefore, the online store labels a particular user as successful when in reality the consumer in question may have gone through tremendous struggle and frustration. Equally, a non converting visit is labeled as a failure, when to the contrary, this visit may have experienced the perfect touch point as part of the multi-channel ecosystem.

What is Findability?

Findability defines whether people who are already on an online store (Site, App, Desktop, Tablet or Mobile) find what they're looking for.

A proposed definition is as follows:

"Findability is a metric used to measure finding performance by Query, Visit or aggregations of these."

Findability indicates the ability of a consumer to identify an appropriate result or set of results that render satisfaction.

Findability is not a new concept and the first formal definition is often credited to Peter Morville:

"The ability of users to identify an appropriate Web site and navigate the pages of the site to discover and retrieve relevant information resources". (Peter Morville, 2001)



This definition includes two ideas while only the second is applicable to eCommerce search:

- » The ability of the website and its content to be found by customers searching externally.
- » The ability of the content of the Site to be found by customers internally (i.e. already on the site).

The second part of the definition is the focus of this paper. Can people who are already on your store find what they're looking for?

Measuring Findability

Theoretically, the perfect Search system will retrieve only relevant results (all results being relevant and none relevant results being left out).

Within the field of Information Retrieval (IR), precision (also called positive predictive value) is the fraction of retrieved results that are relevant. Recall (also known as sensitivity) is the fraction of the relevant instances that are retrieved.

One way to understand Precision and Recall is by thinking about the presents you have been given in your last 10 birthdays, if you remember them all, then your recall is 10 out of 10, but if whilst retrieving them you have had to mention 15 possibilities, then your precision was 10 out of 15.

In the real world the goal of perfect precision and recall is utopian since what is relevant and what is retrieved will never be constant and objective:

- » **Relevancy is subjective** to the observer. What one user sees as relevant, others may not.
- » **What is to be retrieved is dynamic** and dependant on the display and user ambient, time, space.

Therefore, measuring how successful consumers are in finding, requires an approach that connects each query to each effort level from the intent to the click.



The parity between a consumer's query (i.e. "*denim dress*") and the derived clicks are the essence of the Findability measurement. A single user click after the execution of a query, can't be a device to report reliably a gold standard judgment of relevancy of a result to a query, since the consumer responds to an idiosyncratic and variable judgment of relevancy that goes beyond one specific click into one specific result. Hence the necessity of considering the context of the click in terms of:

- » Is the click the result of a laborious query process?
- » Was the click preceded from other queries and filtering actions?
- » Has the click been successful?
- » Has there been a bounce after?

The achievement of high Findability depends on how good the click is in a result. The level of success of a click in a result is dictated by the level of effort prior to the query together with the degree of validity of the result (-bounce ratio-).

To be able to build an understanding of Findability in relationship to a particular query, there is also value in considering the agreement between the different occurrences of the same query.

Therefore Findability can be calculated at various levels:

- » By Query
- » By Aggregation of queries
- » By Visit
- » By Aggregation of visits



Findability Sample by Query “denim dress”

A Query can either:

- » **Fail**, resulting in no-results.
- » **Succeed**, resulting in a click (with no direct bounce).
- » Be **redefined** or laborious (sorted, required a facet, required pagination or scrolling).

Findability is more successful if the journey is shorter. As an example:

- » **Case A:** 100% Findability for the query “denim dress” when the Visit sent one query only and a result is clicked with no bounce.
- » **Case B:** 0% Findability for the query “denim dress” when the query gave zero results.

In between Case A and Case B there could be many scenarios such as:

- » **75% Findability** for the query “denim dress” if the query required a Filter in Gender “Women” and/or Style “Dresses”
- » **50% Findability** for the query “denim dress” if the query required various bouncing clicks before a successful click.
- » **25% Findability** for the query “denim dress” if the query required both the use of Filters/Facets as well as various unsuccessful clicks prior to a non-bouncing one.

Making Findability truly effective (in the sense of serving to objectively measure the success/failure of every interaction with a Search system) is a challenging goal and yet, Findability provides a solid and objective base of calculus to which you are able to benchmark key strategical design decisions.



Conclusion

Findability is the fundamental component of online conversion. Can your customers connect to your data correctly? - if not, they're not going to buy anything.

Measuring how complex or easy a discovery experience is, places focus on how people feel when searching and navigating. Looking for something can be as frustrating, as it is rewarding. The more we know about what we want the more likely we are to feel frustrated if whatever we seek is not findable.

Findability shifts focus from more conventional metrics such as Conversion to that which leads to converting, to that which makes us have either a good or a bad experience.

You are what you measure and your store strategy relies on metrics to support decisions. Are the chosen metrics enabling your store to put consumer's experiences first? Are the chosen metrics aware of the intrinsic relationships between your costumers and their contexts? Developing consumer centric experiences is an approach for which Findability is an enabler.

The very historical and traditional way of measuring Site performance (-and SiteSearch within-) by revenue Conversion was valid when eCommerce was a Site, which is not the case for today's world. Touch points are many and people search and navigate in mobile, tablets, desktops, social or the physical store.

This is why Findability is so important, because it helps when maximised across all eCommerce channels. Search influences beyond the Site, this is a reality that can't be ignored.

