Commerce Search and Discovery

SPECIAL DATES

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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In recent years we've seen many brands close or reduce their physical presence in a move towards eCommerce and a drive towards online stores, a period often coined as the retail apocalypse. In fact, our recent research showed that 55% of UK consumers now prefer to shop online versus in store.

This shift has of course brought with it many benefits including lower overheads and a more global presence but it has also presented many unique challenges. Not least in terms of how brands transfer and maintain their authenticity in the digital world, but also how they can differentiate themselves and stand out in a highly competitive, over-saturated and often carbon copied marketplace.

In turn, the way modern consumers shop has also changed along with their needs, priorities and preferences. Contemporary shoppers want

speed and convenience yes, but they also want to feel important, understood and appreciated. They want the values, intimacy and trust of the traditional, physical store within the mass market digital world.

Moreover, for today's consumers, experiences are now as important, if not more so, than products, with
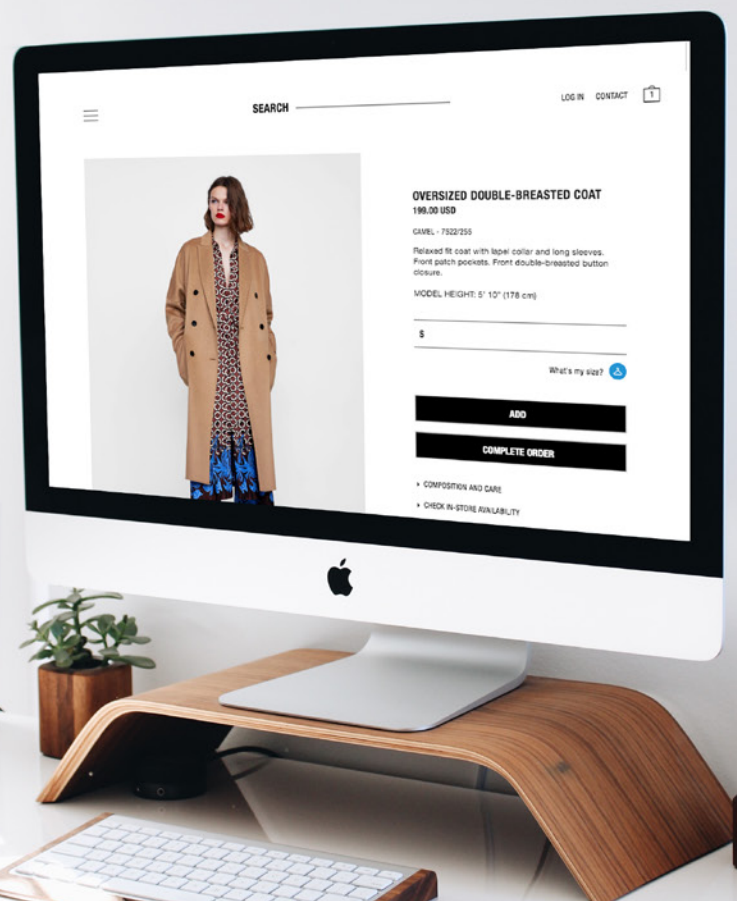
the requisite that these should be personalised and exceptional.

Today's retailers need to make people feel special and create experiences that are individual, that generate emotion, and that make people feel good and connected to a brand.

But how can retailers do this? How can they offer tailored experiences to thousands, sometimes millions, of remote customers. How can they design their online shops with the individual at the centre while also creating

digital experiences that are aligned with, and unique to, their brand values and narrative.

The secret is through developing a better understanding of their customers. After all, how can a brand really create a personalised experience without knowing what their clients want, why they want it and when? There are several different techniques and ways of doing this but one method is by analysing and examining online search and browse data, an incredibly valuable asset and one often overlooked and under-exploited by online retailers.

This data set can reveal important trends in consumer behaviours and, a key example of this is in regards to Special Dates. But what are these Special Dates, and how can retailers fully capitalise on them?

DEFINITION AND OPPORTUNITY

Special Dates are distinct days or periods when customers demonstrate different and singular characteristics, displaying common attributes and specific shopping patterns. For example, they may exhibit a higher commitment to purchase but not have a clear idea of what they're looking for.

Understanding the different types of Special Dates and the behaviours and patterns they produce and their search performance, such as an increase in query volume, more terms per query, higher specific queries and so on, as well as the shoppers' intent, can provide really useful information about the market, demand and trends.

It also helps retailers to anticipate and predict customer requirements, forecast trends and to detect and capitalize on opportunities through a deeper knowledge of the most common queries and market patterns.

Merchandisers and product managers can plan stock levels and stores can make more informed decisions to enhance the customer journey and create unique, more personalised digital brand experiences that are designed around the specific attributes of these shoppers.

Special Dates can also be some of the busiest shopping days of the year for retailers, generating high traffic, high buying intent as well as a high emotional sentiment for consumers. They are often also times when customers are open to engage and interact with the shop proactively and by understanding customer behaviours on these dates, online stores can enrich these user interactions, create longer session durations, improve findability and offer more joyful and meaningful shopping micro-experiences to attract and engage both new and existing customers.

OVERVIEW

There are different categories of Special Dates, each one demonstrating its own unique set of shopping particularities and traits, and in this paper we'll explore three specific types: Gifting Days, Sales and Promotions and Branded Special Dates.

GIFTING DAYS

These are dates when shoppers know they need to buy something but they may not know exactly what it is they're looking for. These are therefore days when there is a high purchase intent that also relies on a high discovery component, where shoppers hope for inspiration rather than necessarily searching for a specific item.

Gifting Day Special Dates include Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Easter and Christmas.

They are occasions that, especially for specific retailers, can be one of the busiest and most important days of the year driving millions of sales worldwide. For example, a chocolate specialist at Easter, a florist on Mother's Day, a bookseller on World Book Day or a toy store like Juguettos in Spain at Christmas.

This means it's especially important to understand shoppers' intent and characteristics on these days and, designing experiences that deliver relevant, personalized and inspiring product recommendations with dynamic optimized suggestions can be a huge game changer.

Data for toystore Jugettos shows a huge increase in searches over the Christmas period

SALES AND PROMOTIONS

These are dates when shoppers often demonstrate both a high purchase and a high findability intent having a pretty clear idea of what they want and an urgency to buy it before the item goes out of stock.

Sales or Promo dates include Summer Sales, Back to School, Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Boxing Day (UK) and Three Kings (Spain).

Black Friday has become one of the most important days in the year for eCommerce and for some sites it's even the highest gross revenue day of the year. The experience on the site during this period is therefore key as if the user has a bad experience during their visit, they will not only not make a purchase but may also never come back.
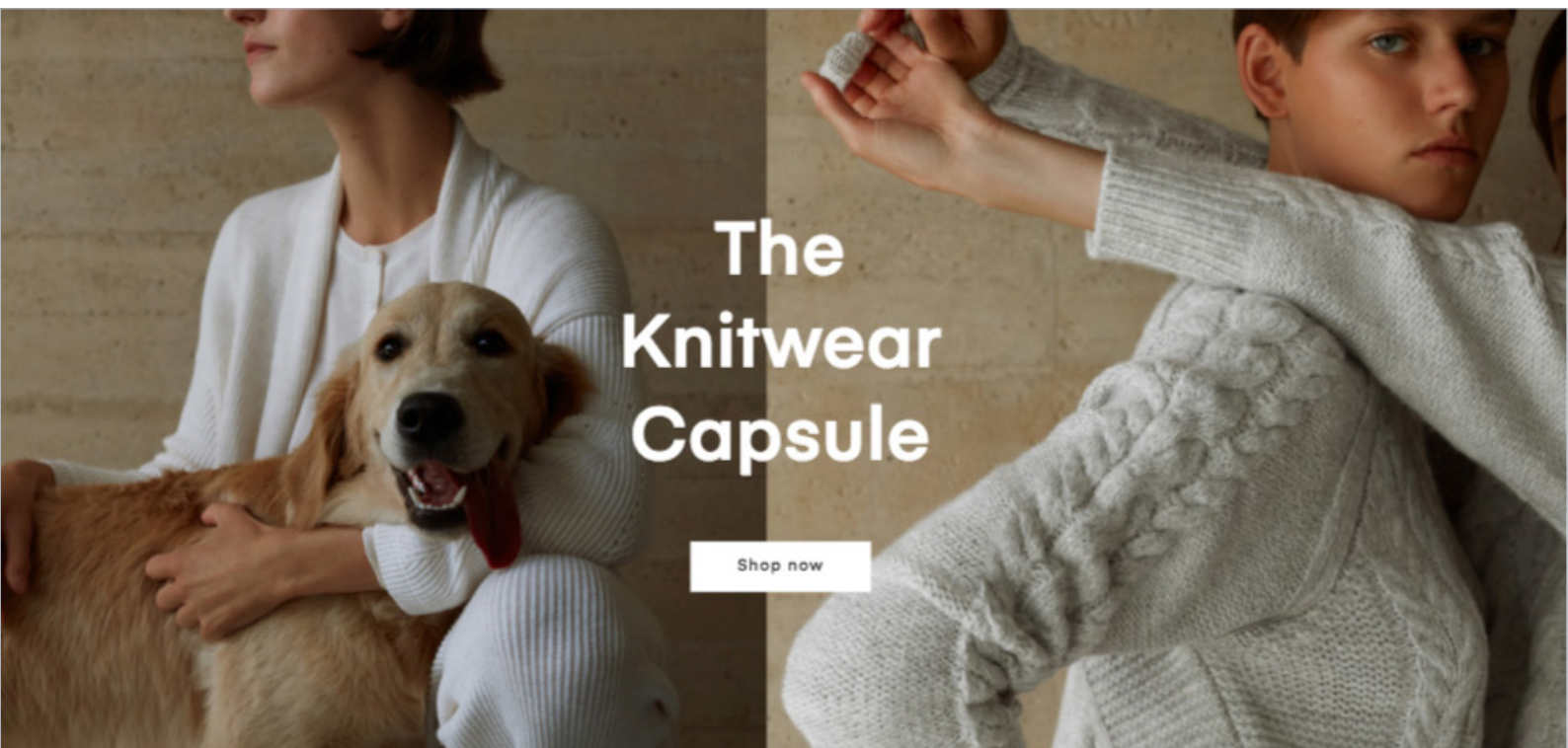
BRANDED SPECIAL DATES

During these periods, consumers demonstrate both a low findability and low purchase intent. They may be interested in learning about new items but have no preconceived need, no specific search focus and no particular mandate to buy.

Examples of Branded Special Dates include new capsule collection launches which can also align to external calendars, for example a festival season range in the UK or a new swimwear collection in the build-up to summer, or they could be purely brand specific dates. Retailers may even choose to create a micro-site to launch, for example, the latest mobile or TV set.

On such dates, it's key that online stores focus on the experience, and the wow factor placing a big spotlight on entertainment and creating moments that engender desire through cool browsing and narrative micro-iterations. This is a discovery experience that should be personalised, extremely cool and well designed to be inspirational and trigger buying intent.

OVERVIEW

As outlined, shopping during Special Dates may require, in some cases, planning and a process of discovery and entertainment. On the other hand, there are times when speed and precision are the key drivers behind success.

In order to create the best shopping experience, designers must consider and embrace three principles:

1. Brand values

2. The context of the user

3. The context of the experience

The following table splits up the different shopping experiences during Special Dates based on the degree of intent, in particular the findability and purchase intent.

	GIFTING DAYS	SALES AND PROMOTIONS	BRANDED SPECIAL DATES
FINDABILITY INTENT	LOW — "I don't know what to buy"	HIGH — "I have a good idea of what I want to buy"	LOW — "I'm not looking for anything in particular"
PURCHASE INTENT	HIGH — "I need to buy something"	HIGH — "I want to buy it before it sells out."	LOW — "I like the brand, but no need to buy"
FACILITATORS	• Search powered user profiling • Personalised search results • Search recommendations	• Instant Search • Merchandising tools • Product Ref/SKU Search	• Inspirational browsing • Search trends • Search-as-you type suggestions

As the demands and intent of the shoppers change for the different types of Special Dates, then so must the experiences. If brands are able to understand and utilise the learnings from these distinct days or periods, they can design the customer journey specifically to address the customer drivers.

GIFTING DAYS

Gifting Day experiences are often barely adequate in Special Dates such as Valentine's Day, Mother`s Day, Birthdays, Christmas and so on... Finding the right present for a special one is never an easy task, so any help and guidance during the discovery process is always going to be more than welcome!

Here the intent is: "I need to buy a present, but I don't know what yet."

Findability intent: LOW
The user is not sure what to search for, they seek inspiration and require help exploring ideas.

Purchase intent: HIGH
The user is highly committed, and there's a high purchase intent.

FINDABILITY INTENT **PURCHASE INTENT**

I need to buy a present, but I don't know what yet.

Experience Focus: Contextualisation

A situation that has high purchase intent with low findability means there's a great opportunity to sell as a retailer but only as long as the gift suggestions are relevant and well delivered, in as human a way as possible. It requires experiences that rely heavily on curated catalogue navigation to enable idea exploration and prescriptive suggestions.

The challenge here is twofold, and the following two key elements play a crucial role:

1. **Relevancy and User Context**
   Understanding who the buyer is shopping for, the relationship of the buyer with that person, the budget and so forth.

2. **Entertainment and Joy**
   As the shopping experience is for someone else, say a friend or family member, the experience must be super fun and engaging or there is a risk that the buyer will lose interest.

The first objective of a Gifting Day, therefore, is to learn about the user context (i.e. age, taste, interests, needs...). This requires creating a user profile in order to collect answers to the following questions:

Who are you buying a present for?
Depending on the type of Special Date, the answer to this question can be inferred from the event itself such as Mother's Day.

What is your relationship with that person? i.e. mother, friend, son... The answer to this question indicates age and in some cases even budget range.

What are this person's interests?
Gardening, art, interior design, reading, music.. and so on.

PROFILING

Profiling can be done explicitly through the use of a quiz or through multiple selection forms. Media outlets such as NYTimes, Medium, LinkedIn, Twitter and Pinterest frequently use interest tags for profiling their user's interests.

These type of forms work pretty well for broad content selection but don't

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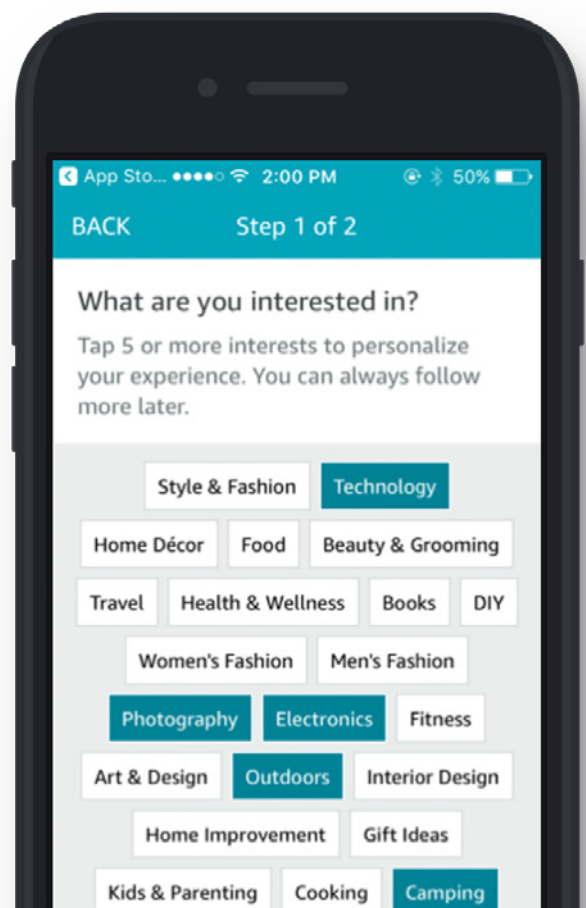
Mulberry extracts the user context, including budget, in a way that is also entertaining and fun

always perform as well for products and eCommerce where there's a highly visual component involved in the shopping process. Brands may need to get more creative with how to do this, like in the example on the left from Mulberry, where the retailer extracts the user context, including the budget, in a way that is also entertaining and fun.

Search technology can also be applied smartly in the user profiling phase to help with the selection process. There are many examples that use the search box as the driver for an structured selection of options, such as AirnBnb and Arket, as per the examples below.
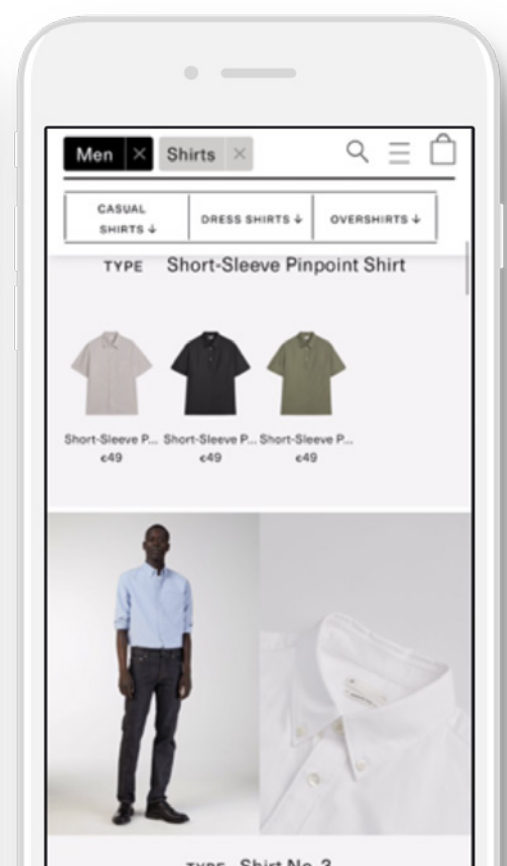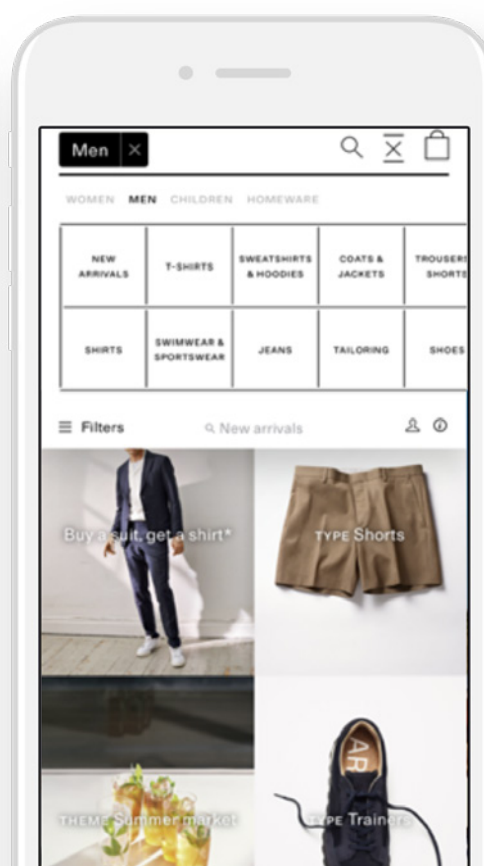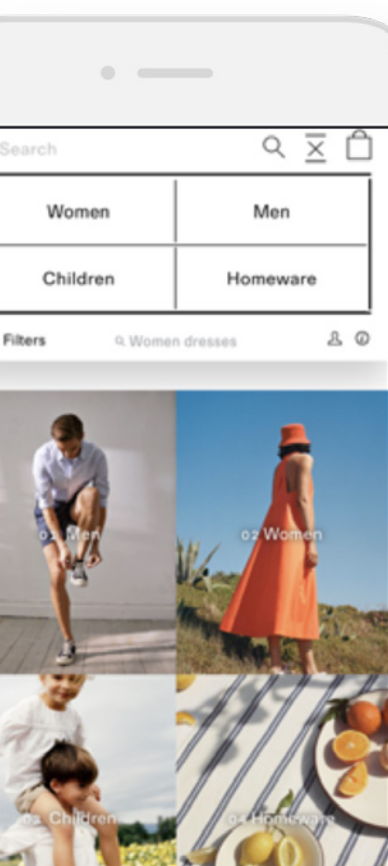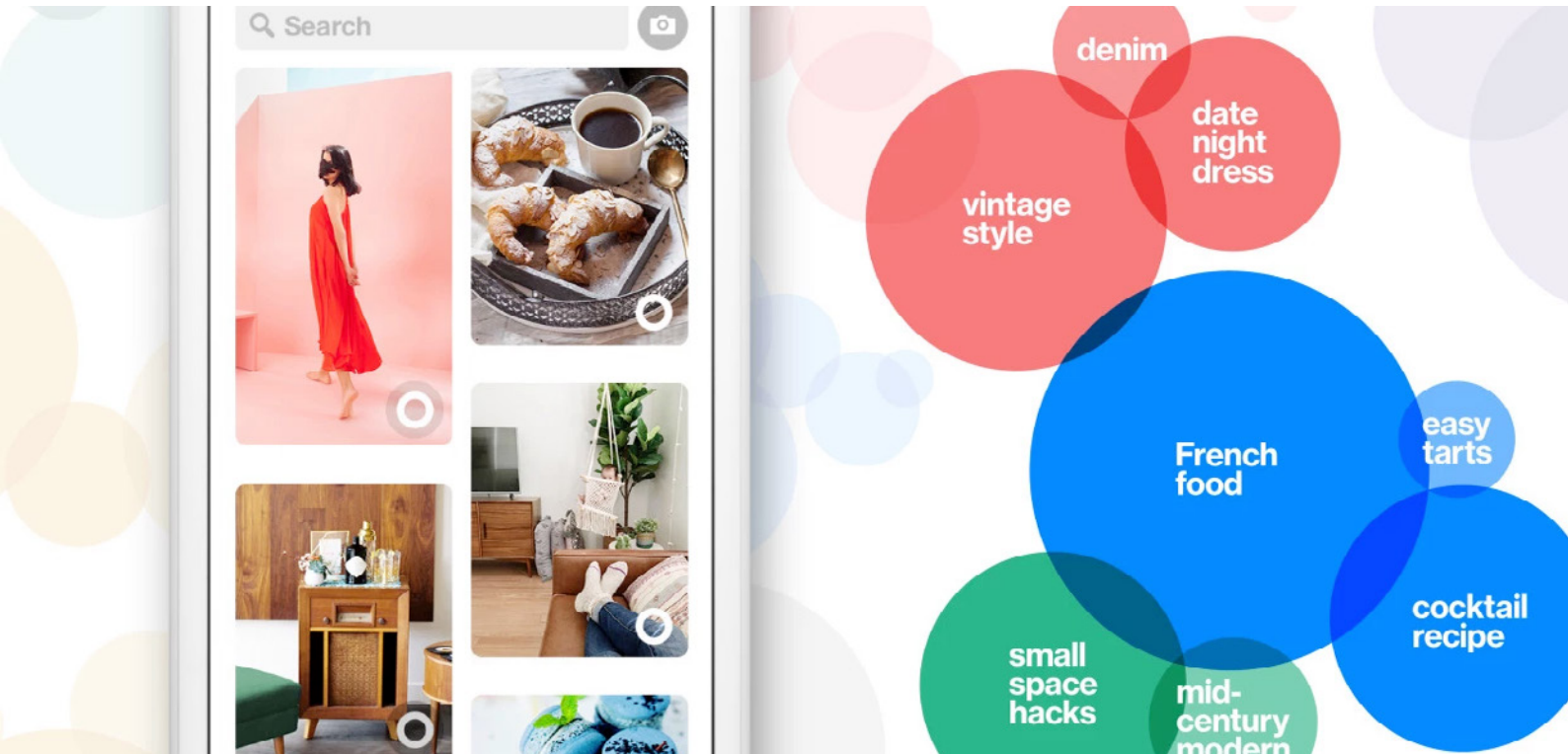
PERSONALISATION

Once the profile has been created, the second phase of the Gifting Day is to focus on the discovery element which will be based on personalised product search and recommendations. The search results provided will always match with the user affinities contained in the profile previously collected. This implies that user profiling must be done in real-time in order for search personalisation to work and to provide highly relevant results within the same session.

It's also key to understand and differentiate between the shopper's own personal tastes and the gifting preferences, ensuring that the two

The same query "denim" produces different results depending on the user. profile

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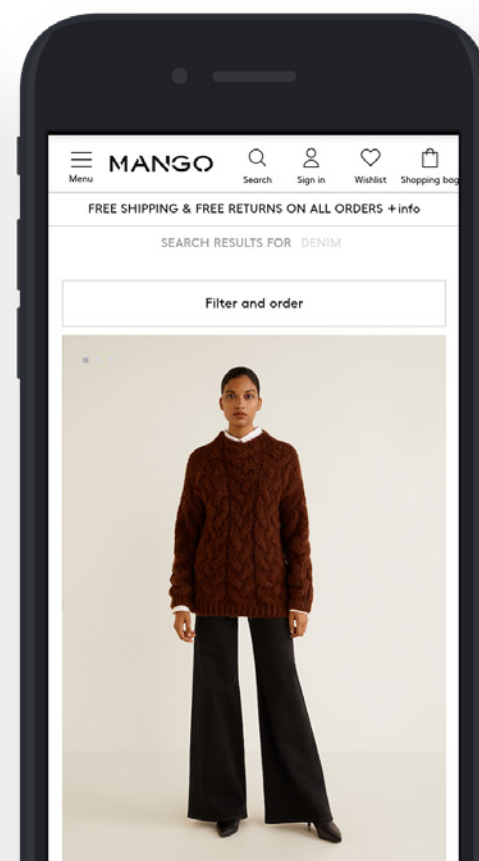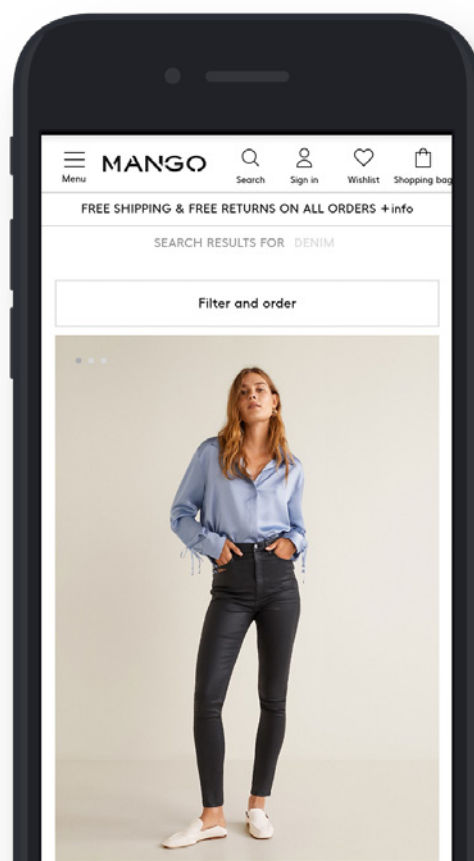
profiles are kept distinct and that the gifting experience does not affect or influence the individual's own future shopping results and experiences.

Another important search component to be used as part of the Gifting Day Special Date is that of search suggestions and trends. "People who searched for this also searched for" or "Trending now" as well as

"Picks for you" are must-have modules that make the discovery experience fun and entertaining.

For this magic to happen a set of signals, such as queries, clicks, likes, purchases and so on must be collected, processed and computed first in order to deliver relevant predictions and suggestions to each single person.

SEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Search recommendations work very well when users don't have a very well defined intent and seek inspiration. Search refinement recommendations

can be offered as tags, similar to Pinterest and Google Images. Below are examples of this from fashion retailers Pull&Bear and Oysho.

SALES AND PROMOTIONS

FINDABILITY
INTENT
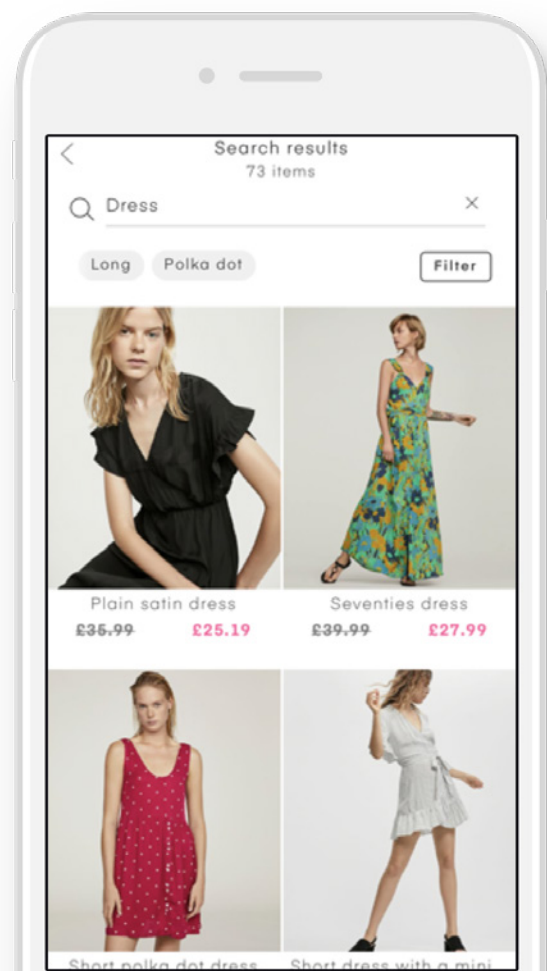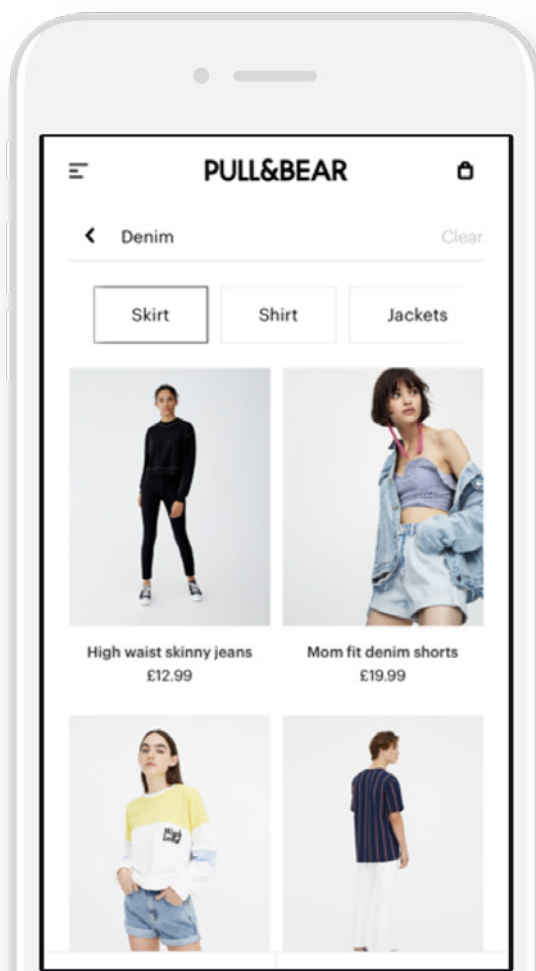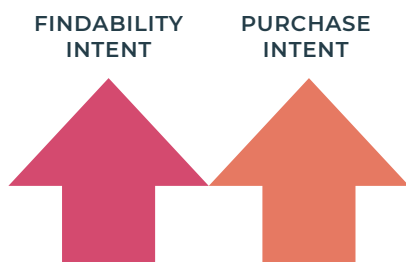
PURCHASE
INTENT

I know what I want, and I want to purchase it before it goes out of stock.

The sales season is a pretty hectic period in retail. There is a huge volume of purchases that take place in a reduced amount of time, ranging from hours to weeks. Shoppers go crazy, trying to find not only the things they need or want, but also looking for the best discounts.

For this second Special Date period, the intent is: "I know what I want, and I want to purchase it before it goes out of stock"

Findability intent: HIGH
The user has a pretty clear idea of what to search for.

Purchase intent: HIGH
The user is in a rush, there's a quite a bit of urgency regarding the purchase and access to the promotions.

Experience Focus: Instant Search

A search experience that drives sales is one that provides instant gratification and relevancy.

INSTANT SEARCH

People with a high findability and purchase intent heavily rely on the search box and expect to find and buy what they're looking for quickly. That's why the use of search-as-you-type suggestions is crucial as a means to save typing time, even if the search term is misspelled!

Also for Desktop devices, it's recommendable to use instant results. So that, after each keystroke, the results list changes and inspires users with products as well as saving them time typing.
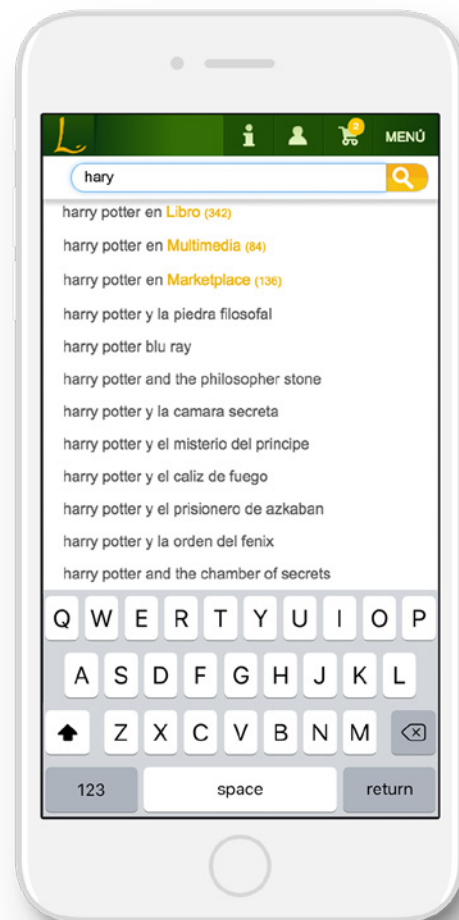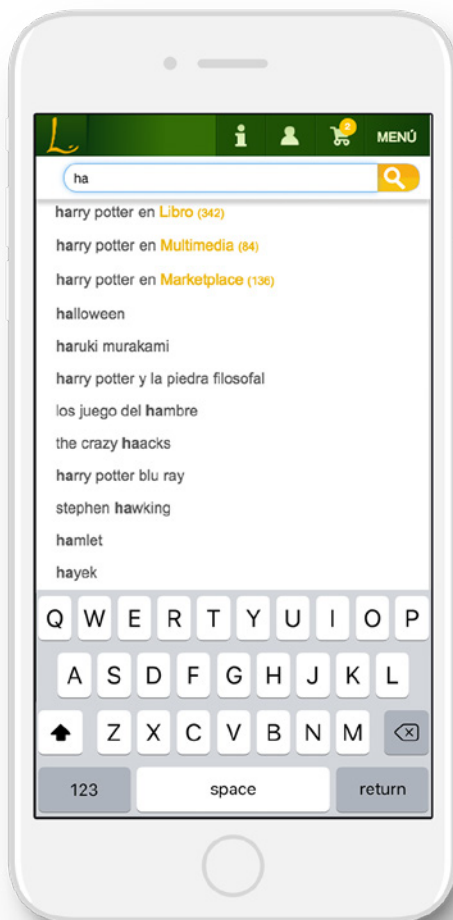
MERCHANDISING

From a retailer's point of view, it's critical to align search behaviour to merchandising needs, such as promotions and campaigns. Search results must take into consideration merchandising criteria such us which products are part of a campaign (discount, 3x2, etc.), stock levels, speed of sales and so on, and make sure that they're displayed on top of the list.

The use of promoted banners and links is also highly recommended as a quick driver of sales.
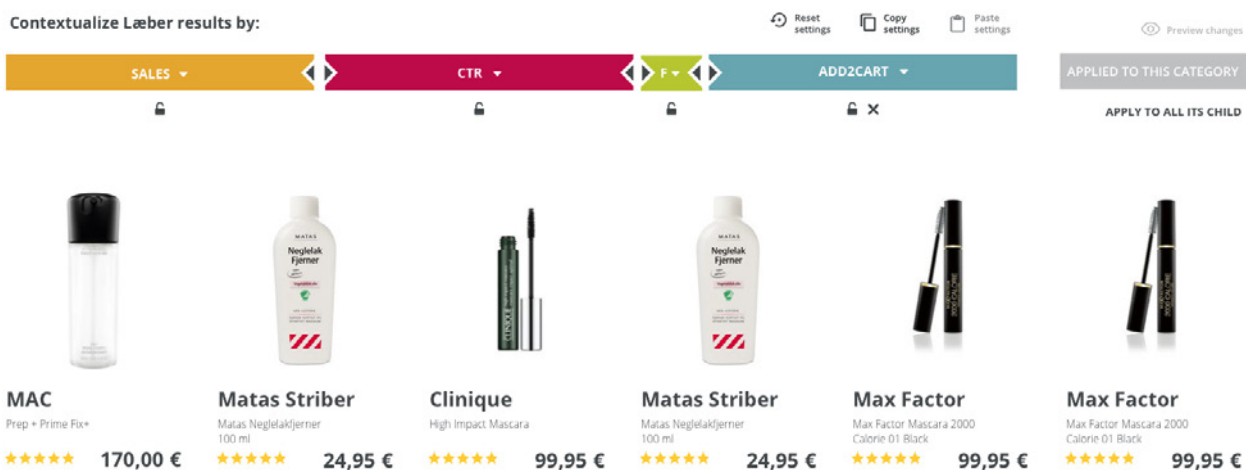
Interface of EmpathyContext API where you can configure search ranking results

PRODUCT REF/SKU SEARCH

The volume of SKU and product reference number or identifier searches substantially grow during sales periods. The search box must understand and anticipate this behaviour and provide quick access to these products through suggestions. In cases where the product is out of stock, such as the colour of a dress for instance, it should be smart enough to suggest an alternative colour for that dress, in the same way as a shop assistant would do in a store.

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BRANDED SPECIAL DATES

FINDABILITY INTENT

PURCHASE INTENT
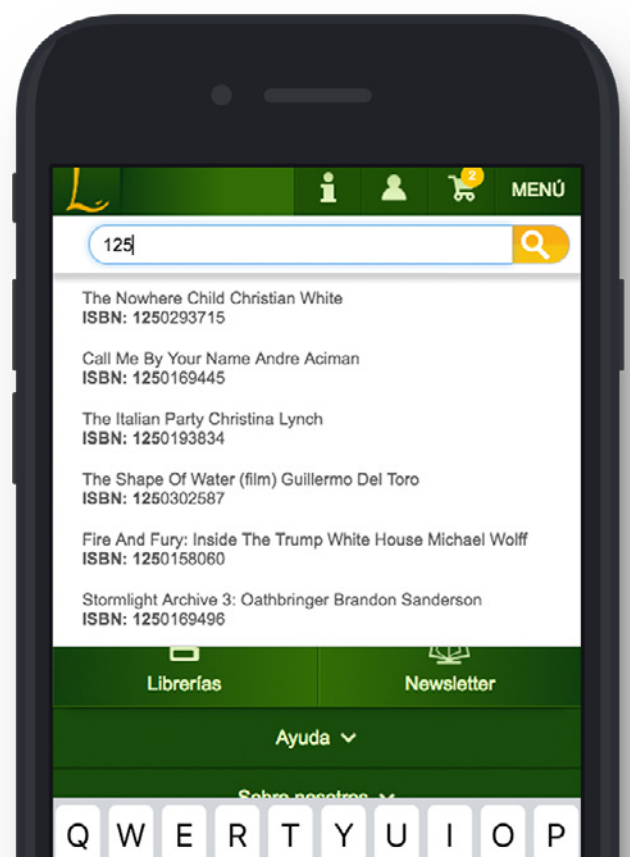
I don't particularly need anything but I'm interested to learn and explore new products.

Brands today also create their unique moments to surprise and engage their customer base through the use of special events, such as the launch of a new product or capsule collection, the opening of a new store, and so on. These types of "branded" Special Dates are also a great opportunity to engage with customers and inspire them through a fresh new shopping experience.

Here the intent is: "I don't particularly need anything but I'm interested to learn and explore new products."

Findability intent: LOW
No preconceived idea or need regarding what to search for.

Purchase intent: LOW
No particular need to purchase unless an interest is sparked.

Experience Focus: Discovery and Inspiration

This third type of Special Date event needs to focus heavily on designing a unique catalogue exploration experience. Personalisation still plays a key role, both within browsing and search however, profiling can be achieved better here through the design of a unique catalogue exploration experience.

The initial inspiration phase should therefore place a lot of emphasis on making browsing cool and entertaining. It should apply elements of expression, motion and the required set of micro-iterations, such as transition effects for example, to keep customers engaged. There are many ways to do this, such as using product mix and match techniques, "complete the look" suggestions with interactive editorials or by introducing new browsing concepts such as swiping, as in this the Grabble example.

Search-as-you-type suggestions are also a critical asset when designing
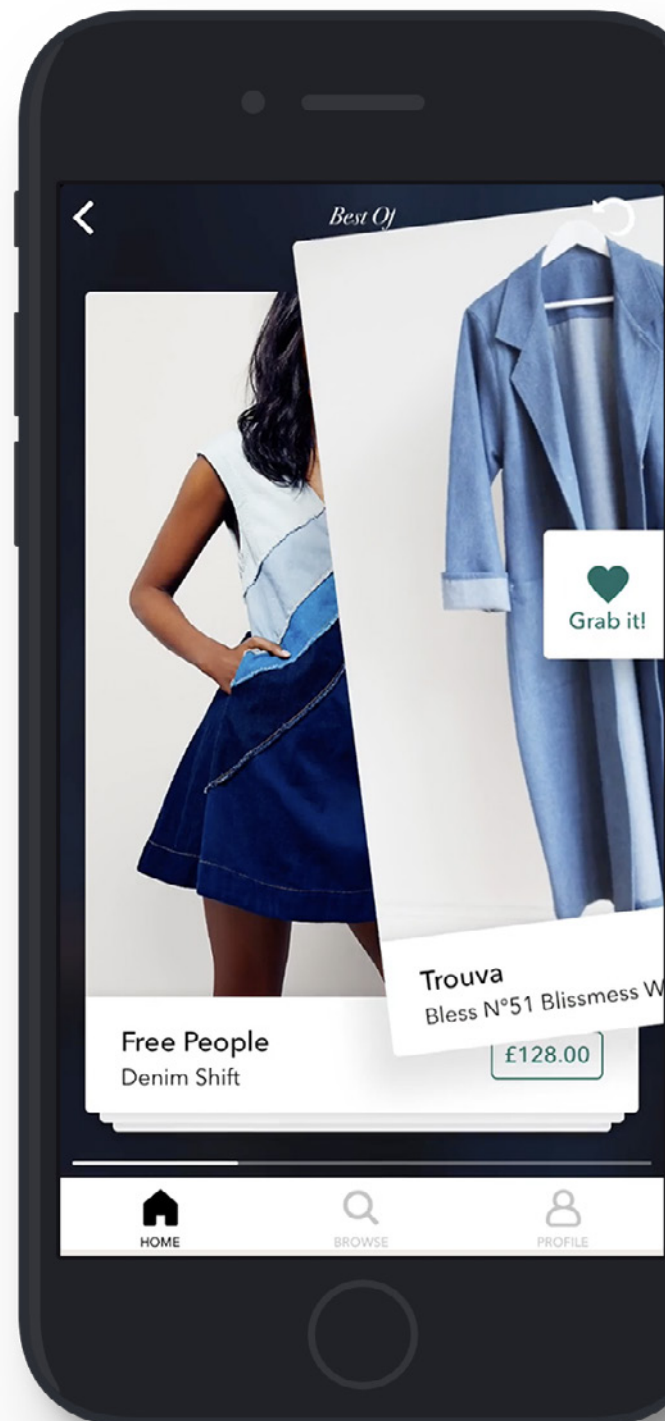
the best search experience and, more importantly, during branded dates. Again there's a need to guide and inspire users once they access a "blank" search box through the use of relevant and sexy search-as-you-type suggestions.

So as we can see, by understanding shoppers' behaviours, intent and using techniques such as profiling and personalisation as well designing cool

shopping experiences that generate emotion, inspiration and, as importantly, are fun and joyful can make a huge impact and difference on Special Dates.

In order to do this, it's really key to understand the unique attributes of these different types of shoppers to create tailored experiences, and one way to do this is through dynamically visualising the search data.
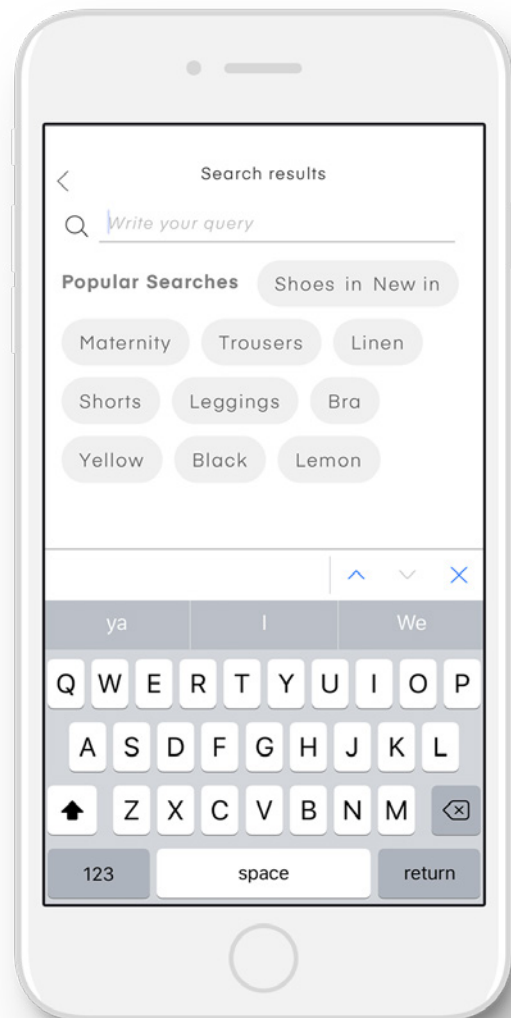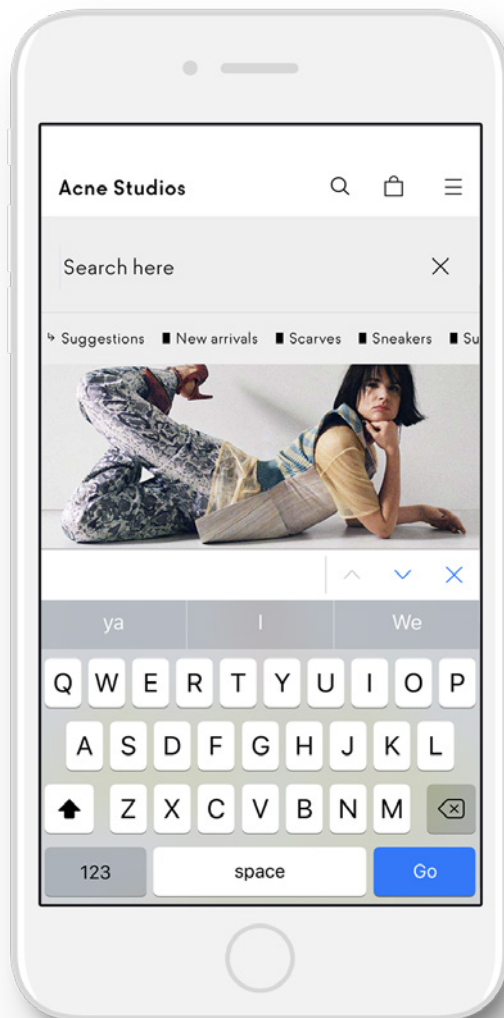
HOW TO DESIGN REPORTS AND VISUALISATIONS

Standard visualisations and graphs can provide very good information for analysing search performance and understanding shoppers behaviours during Special Dates. However, as these dates often have very specific needs and trends, and the volume of queries and events on a site can be a thousand fold, these need to be approached differently.

This means that a deeper analysis and specific set-up should be considered for each one, developing and using different visualisations for each different scenario. Indicators and visualisations should be personalized taking into account each different situation, its KPIs, the kind of business and the objective of the insights required, essentially what's important to measure and understand from each Special Date.

During the planning process, it's also really important to understand the purpose and/or objective(s) of each visualisation, the hidden insights to be revealed to the observer through the design, and the desired actions an observer will be able to take from these insights. It's also key to consider how the information will be displayed, balancing between wow-ability and understandability. Visualisations should always be clear, evident and actionable.

DEFINING THE OBJECTIVES

There are three clear and distinct reasons, although individual companies will also have their own additional needs and considerations, to create dynamic visualisations to analyse search and browse data.

To Detect Real-Time Necessities

This enables eCommerce companies to anticipate sales opportunities, the why, and to take corrective actions, the when, with immediate effect.

The Main Indicators for this type of visualisation are: Queries, Product views, clicks and purchases.

An example of this type of visualisation is our Now and Product Trends visualisation.

NOW

With our Now visualisation we can provide an overview of people's demand and intentions in real-time. The way the demand is formulated is shown through the incoming queries, and we can then see the search success in terms of the clicks, queries or No-Results.

PRODUCT TRENDS

By seeing real-time demand and intentions through a specific catalogue, we're able to translate queries into products. In this manner, we can identify product trends based on views, clicks and purchases.

blouse

tshirt

monos

black dress

top

dresses

zapatos mujer

vestidos

midi dress

jeans

white dress

tops

linen

bodysuit

kimono

vestido

벌라우스

top lencero

top

shorts

robe

linen

white dress

dress

mnaue

kimono

combinaison

jumpsuit

连衣裙

pantalones

blazer

body

kjole

slides

pantalon blanco

white

vestido blanco

shirt

1822/101

blk whote

ラメ カシュ クール

0/2459/146/

barn bad kläder

0796470

schwarze blusen ärmellos

tied block heel sandals

0387/067

short mom

kaszmirowy szalik

All languages

All stores

Interval: Last 15m

Queries
1.672.403

Clicks
584.154

24.9%

esults
970

9%

Views

Clicks

Purchases

Images   Product Text   Show: all itmes   Time Frame: 10 mins   30 mins   60 mins   Display Connections:
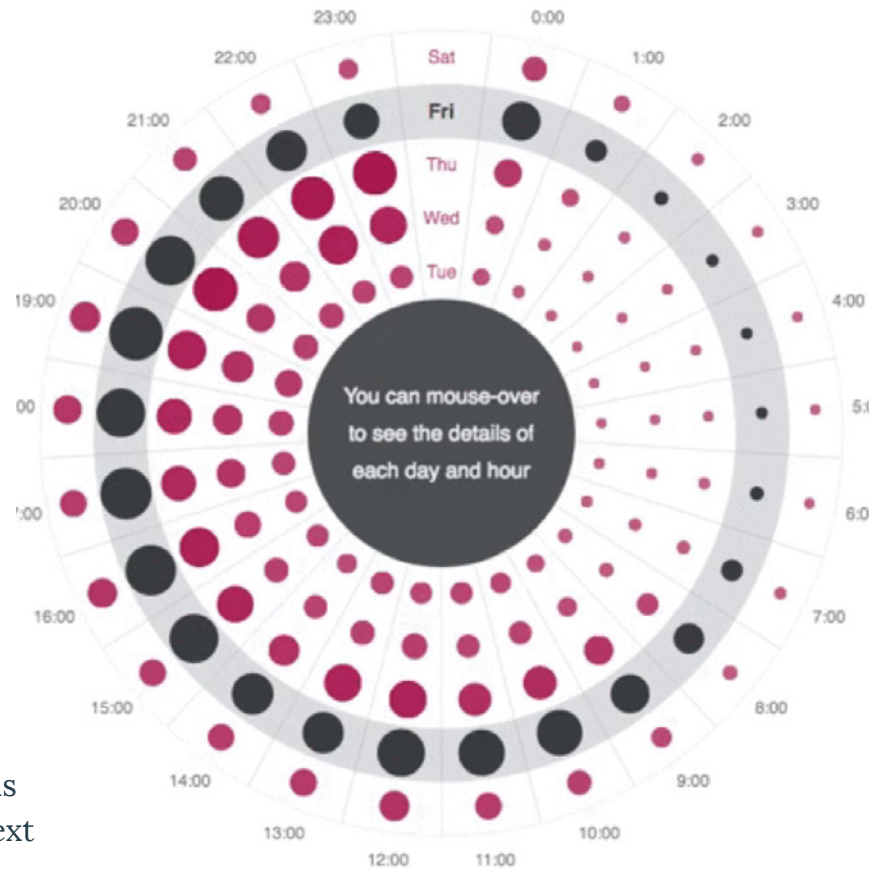
Global Performance Analysis

Retailers need to be able to examine and analyse online performance during Special Dates, especially as many represent critical time periods for brands such as Valentine's Day for a florist. This also enables them to assess performance, evaluate the impact on global revenue and drew conclusions and identify lessons learned and improvements for the next Special Date.

The Main Indicators for this type of visualisation are: Number of queries, CTR and Add to Cart by date and hour.

An example of this type of visualisation is our Black Friday Performance visualisation.

The visualisation provides an overview of global performance, showing outliers and decisive times within a specific timeframe. In addition, by mousing over the graph we can drill down further into the data to check the specifics for each day and hour.
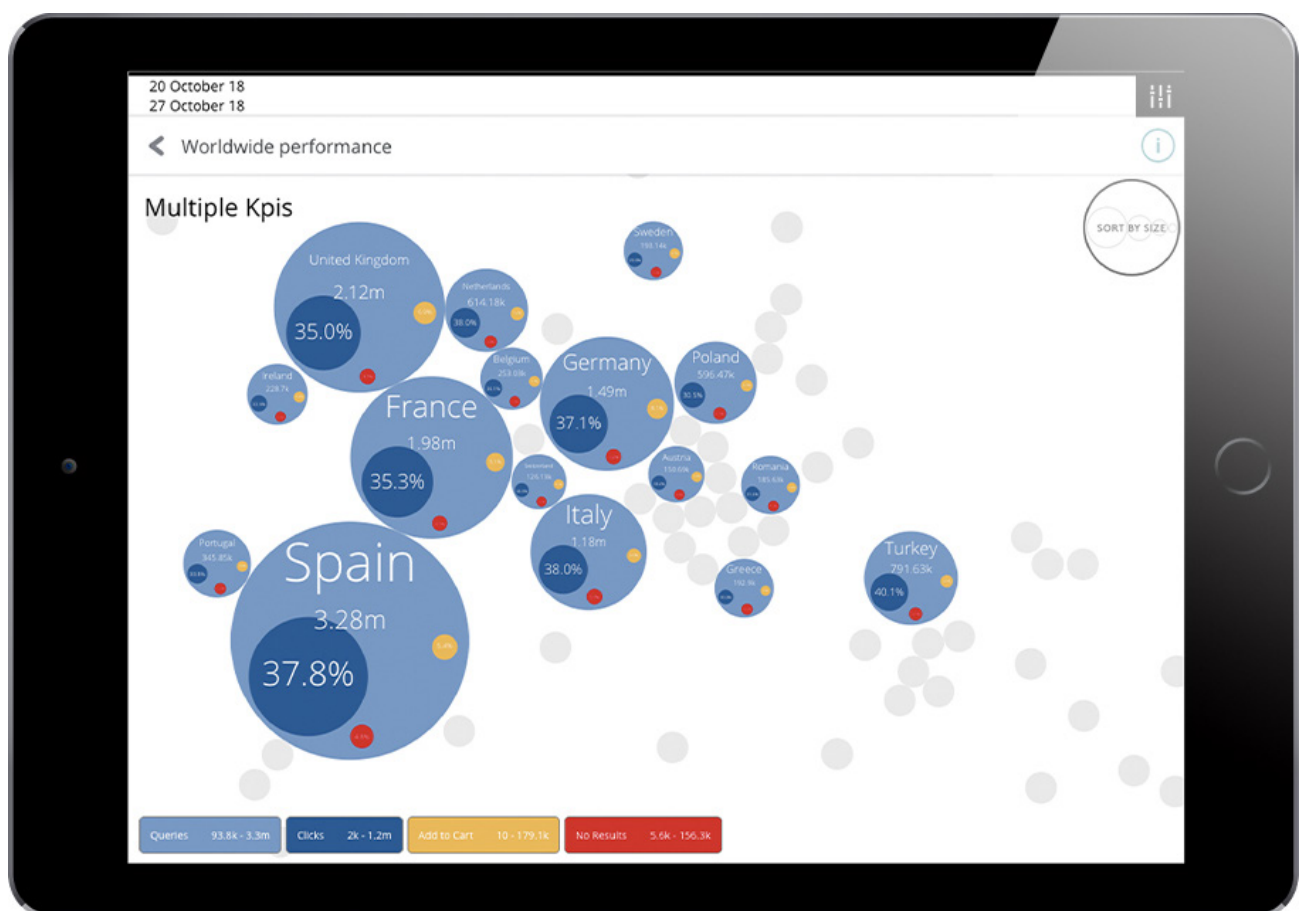
Location Analysis

It's also important to consider this option as it enables retailers to understand user's behaviour based on their location so the visualisation changes along with the user's locale, which also means being able to take into account context and location specific variables and trends. This could be both regional or global.

The why here will most likely be the same as in the previous examples but now, the map concept needs to be added into the equation. It may well in fact be beneficial to use this third concept as an entry point and then move to the earlier examples in a transitional flow.

The Main Indicators for this type of visualisation are: Number of Queries, CTR and Add to Cart %, Products Views, Clicks and Purchases by date and hour.

An example of this type of visualisation is our Now Map visualisation.

NOW MAP VISUALISATION

This visualisation enables data analysts and retailers to not only compare shopping habits and metrics across

countries but to really dissect the results on a national level while also observing the latest trends as they take place

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for each individual country. Each core metric can be analysed in parallel on a country level as well as across countries and continents.

This visualisation enables data analysts and retailers to not only compare shopping habits and metrics across countries but to really dissect the results on a national level while also observing the latest trends as they take place for each individual country. Each core metric can be analysed in parallel on a country level as well as across countries and continents.

GLOBAL VISUALISATION

We can also offer a complete overview of performance through a graphical representation of the location being analysed. The distribution of a specific dimension can be checked in terms of users, keywords or either products across the breadth of the map.

This data shows users, keywords or products as clusters of circles over each market placed on a globe by country and/or continent.

MARCH 2018 ▾ | JULY 2018 ▾

EUROPE/
ALL KPIS
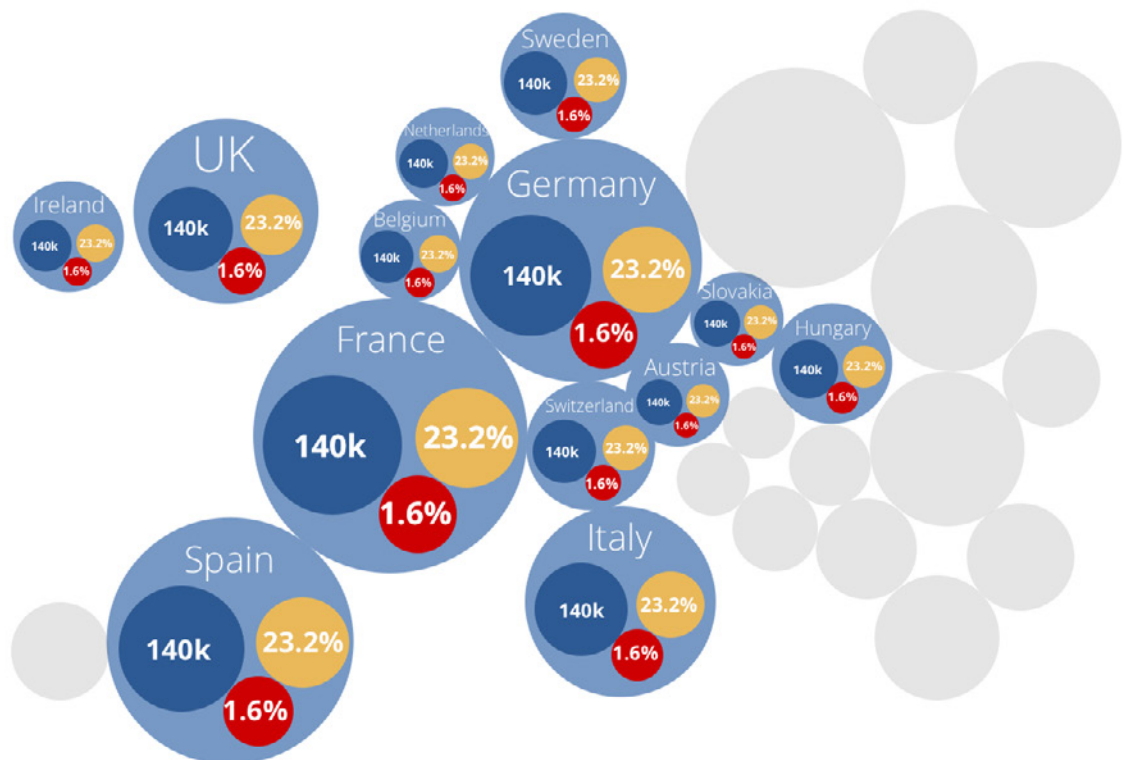
| QUERIES | 140K ● 1.4MIII ○ | CLICKS | 12.6% ● 45.7% ○ | ADD2CART | 8.2% ● 19.3% ○ | NO RESULTS | 0.2% ● 3.5% ○ |

What to Analyse on Different Special Dates

GIFTING DAYS

As outlined, these are Special Dates with a high purchase but a low findability intent. Sales on these days are not based on pricing promotions, they are social events where there can be an almost compulsory need to purchase but without necessarily a defined item or idea of what that purchase would be.

On these dates, it's really important to define the key indicators to determine what the visualisation should display, along with their prominence, to ensure the graph presents a clear and informed representation of the data. These could include, for example:

- List of metrics e.g. Count of Queries, Findability, CTR...

- List of Dimensions Breakdown e.g by Country, by Device Type...

- List of Filters e.g. Date Range, Time, Occurance...

- Time: Daily time series with aggregated sum time range

- Offline Visualisation facility

Due to the deadline nature of Gifting Days, an important factor for analysis is the time when purchases are made. The main indicators being the number of queries by date/ hour and the CTRs. This enables retailers to not only anticipate demand but also to make informed buying and design decisions, anticipate trends and detect opportunities. Let's take a specific example like Valentine's Day.

Valentine's Day

To understand the value of drilling down into the specific customer behaviours on Gifting Days and how this information can be harnessed, we looked at activity and searches on Interflora.es in the lead up to Valentine's Day 2018. The data revealed some interesting trends:
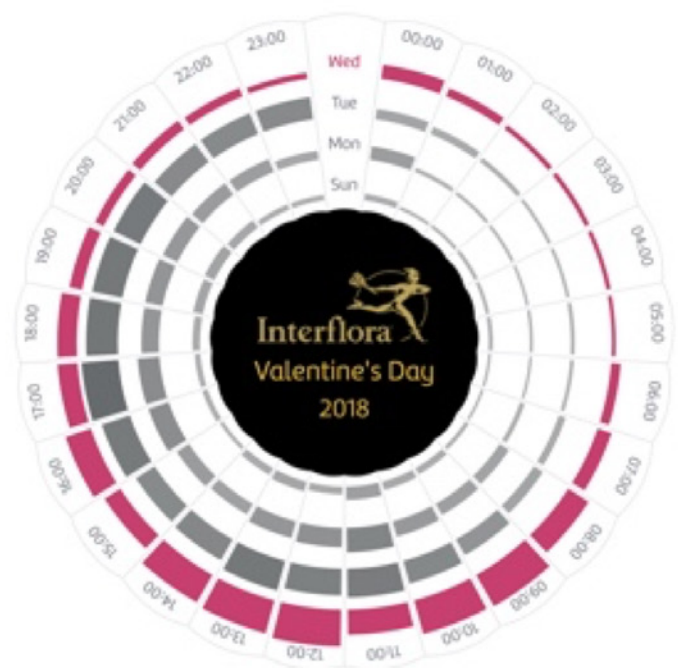
Search and navigation activity on Interflora.es in the lead up to and on Valentine's day 2018

- The most popular time to look for a gift was at 5pm on 13th February and 12pm on Valentine's Day itself.

- Most sales took place on the afternoon of the 13th between 4-8pm and the morning of 14th between 9am-2pm, demonstrating a lot of last-minute purchasing.

- Roses were, by far, the most searched and purchased gift on Interflora's website, with a bunch of the classic flowers coming in top place followed closely by a single red rose.

- Roses were searched six-times more than third-placed Margaritas and fourth-placed Orchids.

This shows us that on Valentine's Day, consumers demonstrate a very unique wave of last minute demand based on a high commitment to purchase, and this analysis could be very useful for the retailer when planning ahead for the following year, along with the customer searches and trends. What's more, our experience tells us, that as online shopping increases so does the use of search, and not just to find something specific like a bunch of roses, but also shoppers looking for inspiration.

This is also where personalisation tools and techniques can be really useful, helping to provide tailored suggestions based on a better understanding of the customer's individual needs and wants, likes and dislikes.

Most searched terms between Sun, Feb 11 and Wed, Feb 14

#1 rosa(s) (341 searches)
Atlántico Ramo especial con rosas naranajas

#2 rosa (339 searches)
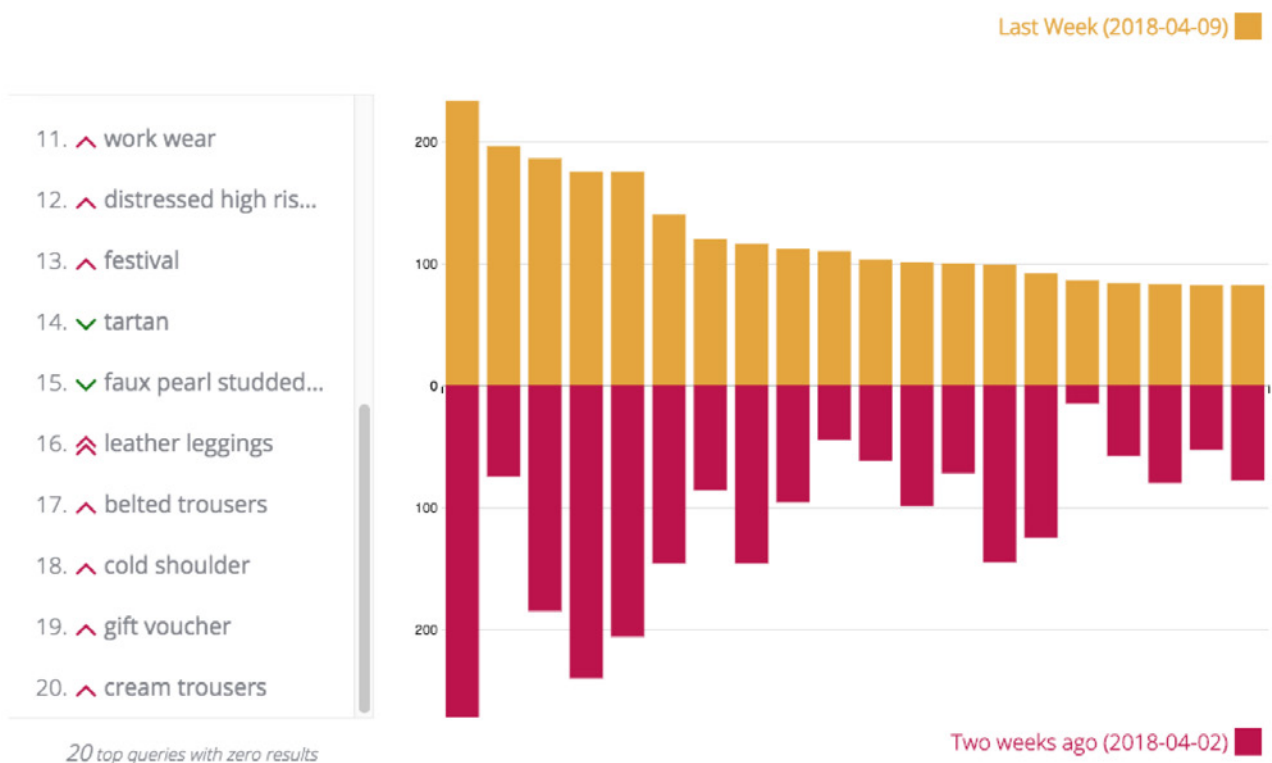**Prima** 1 Rosa Roja de Tallo Largo

#3 margaritas (114 searches)
Quarzo Ramo de Margaritas blancas

#4 orquidea (111 searches)
Índico Planta de orquidea

Last Week (2018-04-09)

11. ⌃ work wear
12. ⌃ distressed high ris...
13. ⌃ festival
14. ⌄ tartan
15. ⌄ faux pearl studded...
16. ⌃⌃ leather leggings
17. ⌃ belted trousers
18. ⌃ cold shoulder
19. ⌃ gift voucher
20. ⌃ cream trousers

20 top queries with zero results

Two weeks ago (2018-04-02)

SALES AND PROMOTIONS

During sales periods, there will be a lot of products going out of stock, a wide variety of searched terms and, due to the speed of queries, often an increase in misspellings. As an example, searches by product reference (SKU) or long tail queries are usually duplicated during these periods. This often means that we see an increase in the No Results rate so retailers need to be aware of this, and should put extra checks and precautions in place during these periods.

Our Zero Results visualisation compares the top no results queries within a specific period of two weeks. In that way retailers can check each term individually and apply corrective actions to align with customer needs and the demand for each product.

BRANDED SPECIAL DATES

As we've seen, these are dates that depend on designing a shopping experience that generates demand as customers tend to have both a low purchase and a low findability intent, with no particular desire or need to purchase anything. The main indicators to consider on these dates are Queries, Clicks and Conversion/ Add to Cart as the most interesting aspect for retailers on these dates is to measure the level of success of the experiences and whether they produced sales.

31

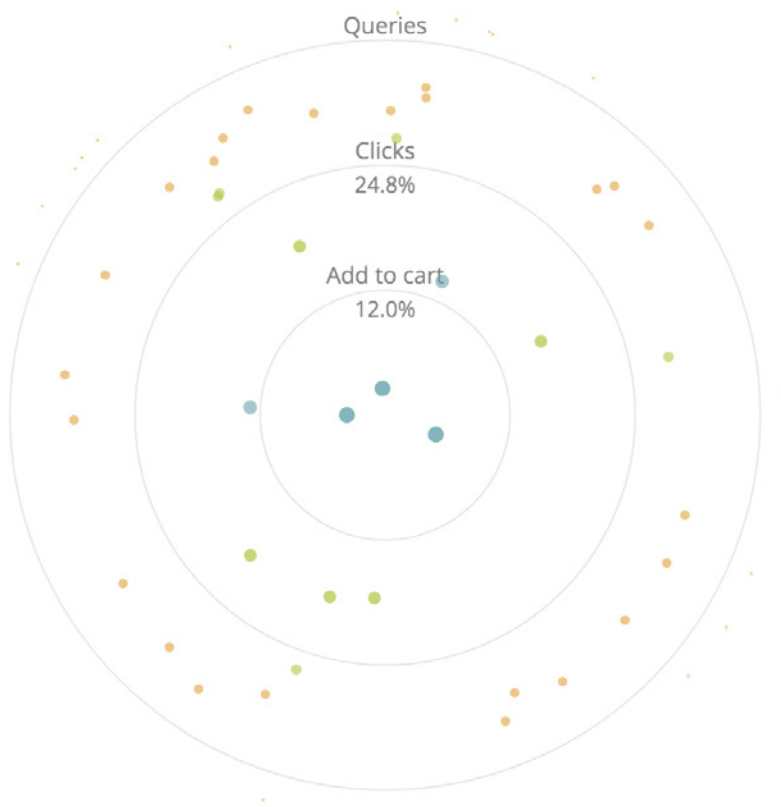## Real-Time Search and Top Keywords Visualisations

The below visualisation represents a new way of visualising real-time search data by focusing specifically on the user and not only on the query. In this case, based on dummy data to represent the journey of each user through search, we can clearly see the progression from Queries to Clicks to Add to Cart.

What's key here is that this isn't based on historical data, using information from the past to make informed decisions to improve the product or shopping experience for the future. This visualisation uses real-time data to analyse what's happening in the present and anticipate the needs of the users as they are presented on screen, critical given how fast trends can develop and change. It also means actions or changes can be made dynamically if the discovery experience isn't deemed to be working effectively enough.

Data analytics is a powerful and essential tool and more detailed information showing the entire customer journey could also be incorporated such as, for example, the queries made by each user, the exact products clicked at each moment, the performance indicators involved, and so on.

It's also really important to be constantly measuring and analysing spikes in activity to identify and define new Special Dates and trends that could bring about specific combinations of intent for customer touch points. These should then be mapped to the relevant reporting criteria and visualisations.

Real-Time Search *and* Top keywords visualisations

# How the Analysis should vary with the Type of Business and the Need

Each retailer or eCommerce site has its own particular needs, and these can be even more pronounced on Special Dates. It's therefore really important to consider, gather and understand the initial intentions from senior managers and input these into the design of each visualisation. This will enable the graphs and metrics to be expressed in a way that they can fulfill their particular requirements and highlight the search performance criteria specified for a Special Date.

As an example, a retailer could perhaps be especially interested in understanding the performance of a special date by analysing the performance in each territory or region where the campaign has taken place or maybe the differences in the shopping behaviours based on the devices used, for example how customers on mobile vary to those using a desktop. Understanding these trends and behaviours

will enable the retailer to make more informed decisions that are personalised to a region or device.

CASA DE LIBRO ON WORLD BOOK DAY

One example of this is analysis carried out on Casa de Libro, Spain's largest bookseller, on World Book Day. In addition to analysing the general increase in site traffic on this Special Date and the most searched items, they wanted to also understand the regional impact and diversity.

Nationwide analysis on casadelibro.com on World Book Day 2018
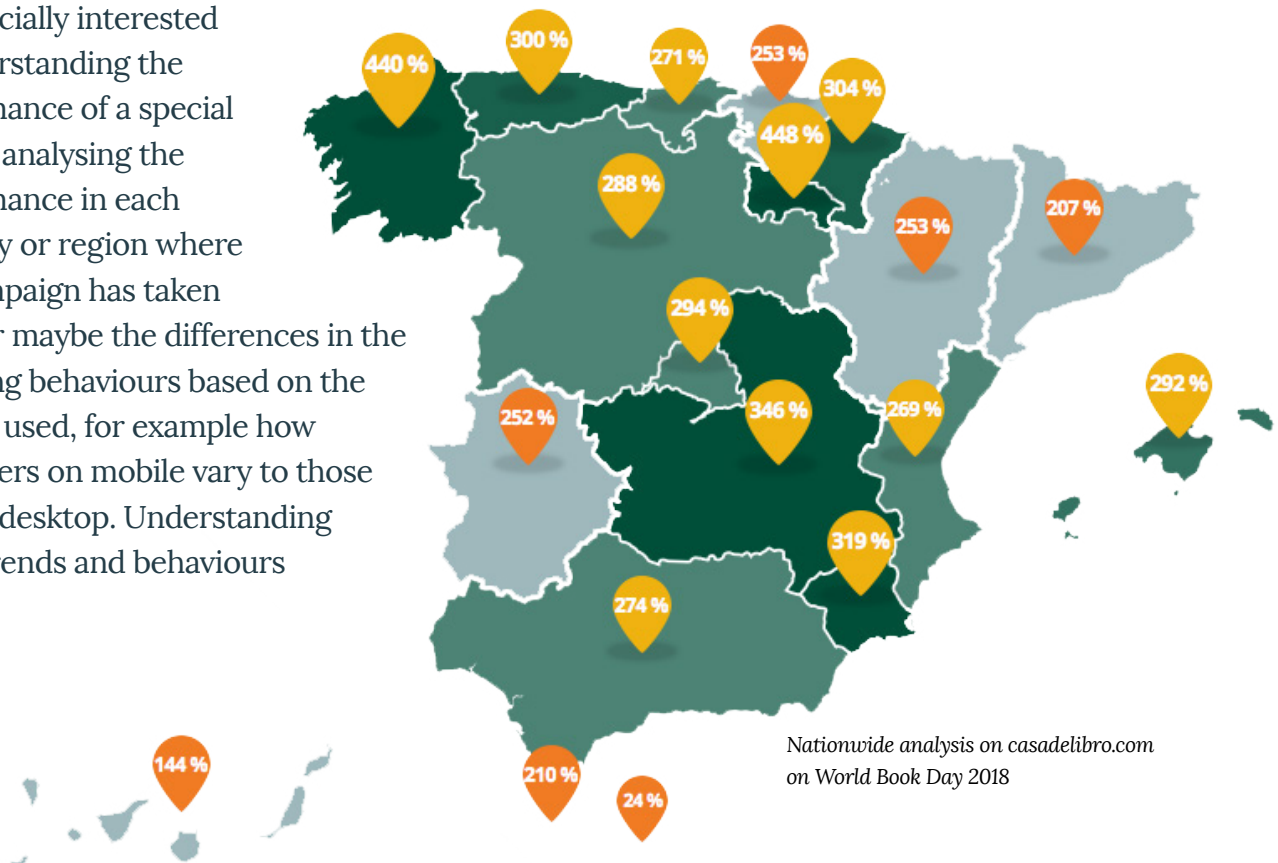
By reviewing the queries and searched terms across the whole of Spain we could get a good representation of the differences between each community and region in terms of both performance and preferences. The following diagram shows the increases in volumes per region based on the day before, thus also taking into account regional population sizes.

Those in the lighter green came in below the national average for an increase in queries on World Book Day compared to the day before, such as Cataluna and Extremadura, whereas those in a darker green are above average. This shows that people in the regions of Galicia and La Rioja, for example, were more influenced by World Book Day, which could be very useful information for the bookseller for use within future campaigns.

As we've seen, dynamic and often real-time visualisations can be really useful, and in some cases essential, as analysis and performance tools for retailers. There are four key concepts and observations, outlined in an article by the Harvard Business Review (https://hbr.org/2012/09/metrics-are-easy-insights-are-hard), that can be really useful when tackling the challenge of understanding search data and these should always be considered and followed during the visualisation process.

Collect

The first step in understanding and being able to analyse and improve an eCommerce business is the collection of the data. There needs to be a mechanism or tool in place to be able to properly capture and collect the site's search data to then be able to leverage the key data asset.

Connect

Some site search data will be more helpful once it's been aggregated while others will need to be more specific and actionable. It's important to use human intelligence to be able to connect the correct data, in the best format, to campaigns and site improvements.

Manage

One key element is not to let site search information overwhelm you. There are many systems, key performance indicators, and even algorithms to help collect, manage and process site search data.

Analyse and Discover

Always remember to work collaboratively with the company's marketers and merchandisers when reviewing the site's search data. It should be a team effort as only by working collectively are companies able to identify and find the keywords and key insights that will improve the business.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Throughout this paper, we've seen how Special Dates can offer a key and unique opportunity for retailers to not only create digital experiences that stand out and are aligned with their brand values and narrative but to be able to design these around the specific attributes of shoppers, making consumers feel special, understood and appreciated.

Search and browse data on Special Dates, periods when shoppers display specific characteristics and common attributes, can reveal important trends in consumer behaviour. Analysing and visualising these patterns, through well designed reports, as well as understanding shoppers' intent, can deliver many competitive advantages for eCommerce brands.

It allows them to anticipate and predict demand, plan stock levels, forecast trends, detect and capitalize on opportunities, make more informed decisions, create longer session durations, improve findability, enhance and personalise customer interactions, enrich the user journey and, of course, boost sales.

Through Special Dates, brands can transfer and maintain their authenticity in the digital world and also, importantly, create exceptional and personalised experiences. Whether that be through tools like profiling or personalisation to offer tailored inspirations on a Gifting Day or cool experiences with specifically designed features and techniques that wow on a Branded Special Date.

A deeper knowledge and better understanding of customers ensures consumers not only feel more connected to a brand that gets them and understands their needs but means they enjoy more joyful and meaningful shopping micro-experiences, turning perhaps even the least loyal, most sceptical consumers into brand devotees.
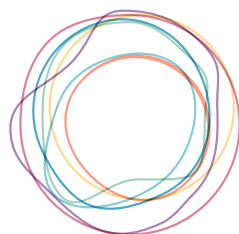
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