XVAIMO

Adobe Commerce (Magento) SEO Guide 2024

A complete guide on how to perfect your Magento website

Contents

About Vaimo

Vaimo is one of the world's most respected experts in digital commerce and customer experiences. As a full-service agency, we deliver consulting, design, development, support, and analytics services to brands, retailers, manufacturers, and organizations all over the world.

Vaimo is a full-service digital experience agency helping brands, retailers, and manufacturers worldwide drive success in digital commerce and customer experiences.

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Preface

Setting up an online store is a tremendous challenge, from acquiring new customers to satisfying existing ones. It is also a technical challenge for any individual or organization delving into an ecommerce platform (standalone or integrated), online sales and marketing, merchandising, logistics, and so forth.

This document will help your organization draw the maximum out of the Magento platform to acquire traffic organically (that is, via non-paid ranking on search engines). Search engines today are the primary medium of traffic acquisition for any online store. **Search engines display** non-paid search results in their **search result** pages according to what content they deem most relevant for every query submitted by online **users**. There is a set of elements that makes an online store more relevant than others in the eyes of a search engine. These elements are almost the same from one search engine to another. This Guide will outline the most important elements a store owner can act upon to make their online store more relevant to search engines.

Acting upon "SEO" (Search Engine Optimization) poses many challenges. In our view, the main challenge is designing an informative and user-friendly online store and a search engine-friendly store. Sometimes, these two aspects collide, and the store owners must consciously decide which aspect may prevail.

This Guide is intended to provide medium-sized enterprises with sufficient material to draw the maximum from the Magento platform, specifically in search engine optimization. Therefore, this document should be considered a checklist of "must-haves" to achieve high results in search engine optimization.

This Guide will be divided into sections describing the diverse elements impacting the ranking of an online store on any search engine. However, most of our examples and best practices will mainly apply to Google's search engine due to its large **market share**.

Introduction

Let us consider an analogy to understand your role as an online retailer and the role of search engines.

Let us assume that you are a shopkeeper and own a grocery store. In this grocery store, you sell diverse products, ranging from vegetables, meat, bread, and fruit to frozen or canned food, etc.

Let us now assume that I am a potential customer. I am entering the store to buy beans. This is the first time I am entering your store; hence, I need to become more familiar with the layout of it. I may feel lost initially but will rely on standard categories and signage systems common to most grocery stores.

This signage system will significantly reduce uncertainty and increase my likelihood of buying the beans. Therefore, the signage can be seen in this context as the equivalent of the "categories" on your online store.

So far, I have found the "canned food" department in your store (which I assumed was the main department for the type of beans I am looking for). I now expect more information to guide me along the aisle for the beans I seek. I identify smaller/intermediate signage in the aisle (this can be seen as the equivalent of "sub-categories" in your online store).

I have finally localized the beans in the aisle. I am now holding a tin can of beans in my hands. The price label on the rack contains the product name ("Baked Beans"), a very short description ("Baked Beans in Tomato Sauce"), the brand ("Heinz"), and the tin can volume (415g).

This is the backbone of your product page. The barcode on the tin can is your HTML code. It includes all relevant information for search engines.

I am now headed toward the cashier with my can of beans. The store employee will scan the barcode on the packaging (the same action executed by "search engines") and transfer all information into the cash register system. Only a partial amount of information will be shown on the display (this is the equivalent of your Search Engine Results Page or "SERP").

Your challenge regarding Search Engine Optimization is to produce relevant information about your store and its products. Furthermore, you must make the information easily readable by the search engines to rank on the non-paid organic part of the SERP.

Foreword about site structure for SEO

Search Engine Optimization and User Experience

1. A website should be easily accessible to Google web crawlers, allowing them to crawl pages rapidly and understand the content of the web pages.

2. Keep the number of main categories between 2 and 7. Indeed, Google web crawlers should be able to hastily crawl your website architecture and send the most important content for indexing. Adding a profusion of categories may represent a time-consuming structure for a web crawler and could be detrimental to the user experience.

3. Sub-categories (nested into main categories) should also be logically organized into a hierarchical tree grouping similar/complementary content (from a visitor's perspective).

4. URLs for main categories and subcategories should follow the same logic.
   Example: https://www.mystore.com/accessories/watches

5. Think in terms of the "number of clicks away from the checkout."

6. Top Navigation Header should contain your main categories and possibly the nested sub-categories.

7. Use internal links strategically. Internal links can help search engines determine the internal hierarchy of content and help the web crawlers move from one area of your website to another. Thus, search engines can index web pages that seem relevant to a query, even if this webpage is not directly quoting the query terms entered in the query bar (see: https://www.semrush.com/blog/internal-links/).

Technical on-page SEO

The elements listed below are essential to best inform search engines of the hierarchy of your online store. They should be present on any given page of your online store.

Meta titles

For default meta titles: (excluding non-content pages: Start with Main Keyword - the maximum length should not exceed 70 characters; however this number varies, as the actual limit is based on pixels. Should you go over the limit, Google will shorten the meta title, and the quality of the description may be compromised).
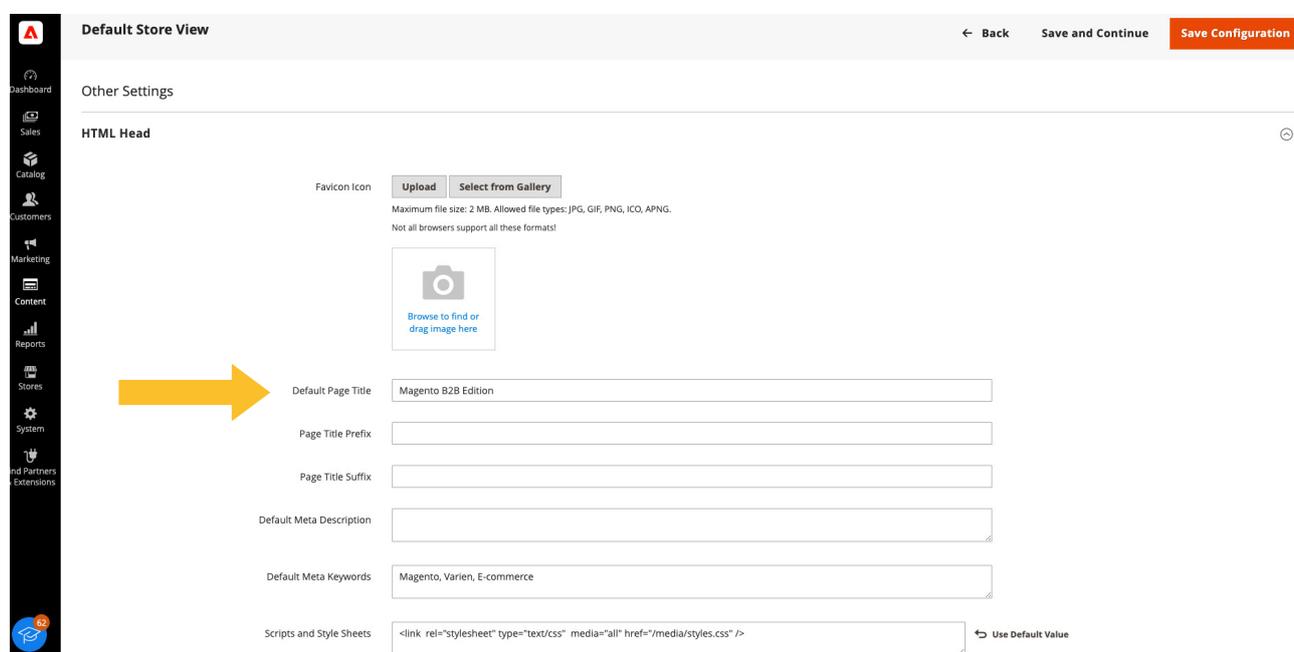
In **Magento 2**: Content >> Design >> Configuration >> Store View >> HTML Head

You can enter a default page title and a suffix and or prefix for the page title. We recommend using suffixes and not prefixes for page titles.

For CMS pages (Home, About Us, Contact Us, etc):

In **Magento 2**: Under Content >> Pages >> Choose a page >> Under the tab: Page Information >> Enter a Page Title (see screenshot below)

For Category pages:

In **Magento 2**: Under Catalog >> Categories >> Click on a category and select the Page Title field (see screenshot below). If you leave this blank, the page title will automatically be generated from the category name.
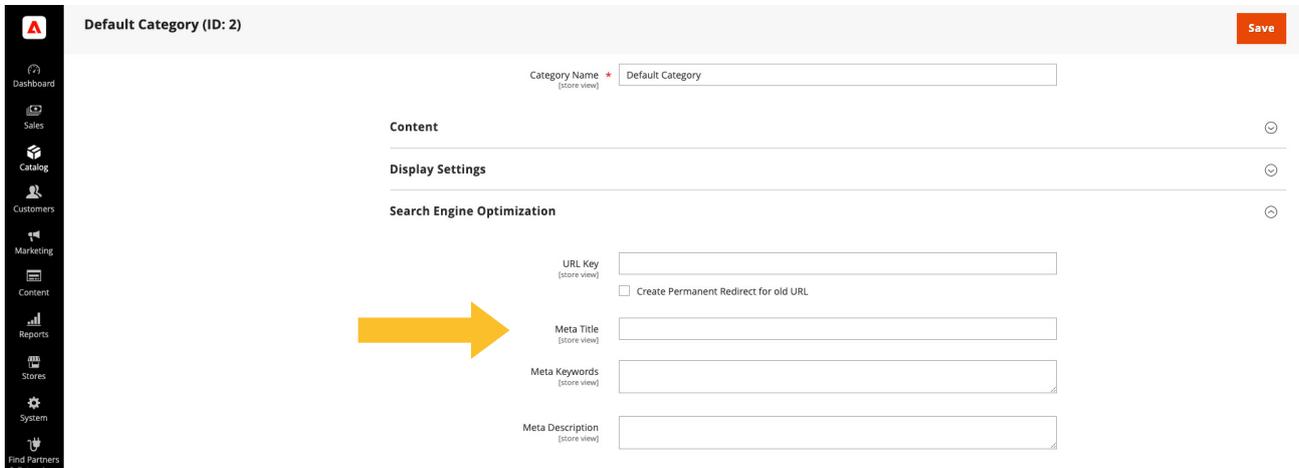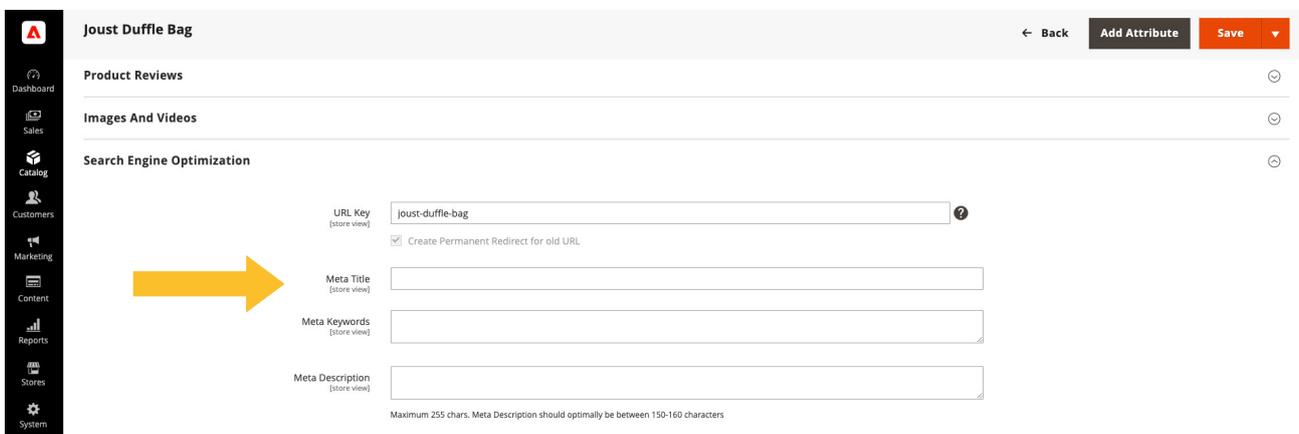

For Product pages:

In **Magento 2**: Go to Catalog >> Products >> Go to a product page and select Search Engine Optimization >> Meta Title field (see screenshot below). If you leave the field blank, the title is automatically generated from the product name.

Furthermore, each web page should have a unique "Title." Search engines should not have to experience confusion (over which content to retrieve and return to a user query).

Meta description

This is used to describe the page listed in the search results. To maximize relevance and positively impact Click-Through-Rate (or "CTR"), the keywords used in the description should be informative and well-researched, and the maximum length should not exceed 160 characters (see: https://www.semrush.com/blog/meta-description/). An important tool in this keyword research is the official "Adwords Keyword Planner tool". This tool can identify the best-converting keywords for any item sold on your website.

Meta descriptions can be added manually in Magento in different places depending on the page type.

For Category pages:

In **Magento 2**: Under Catalog >> Categories >> Select the respective category and specify the Meta Description (see screenshot below).
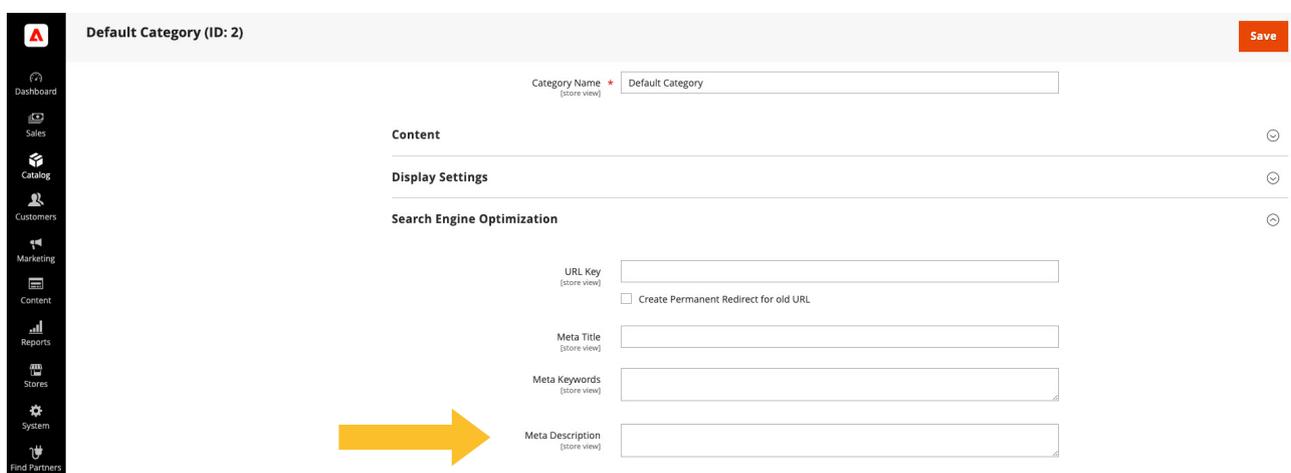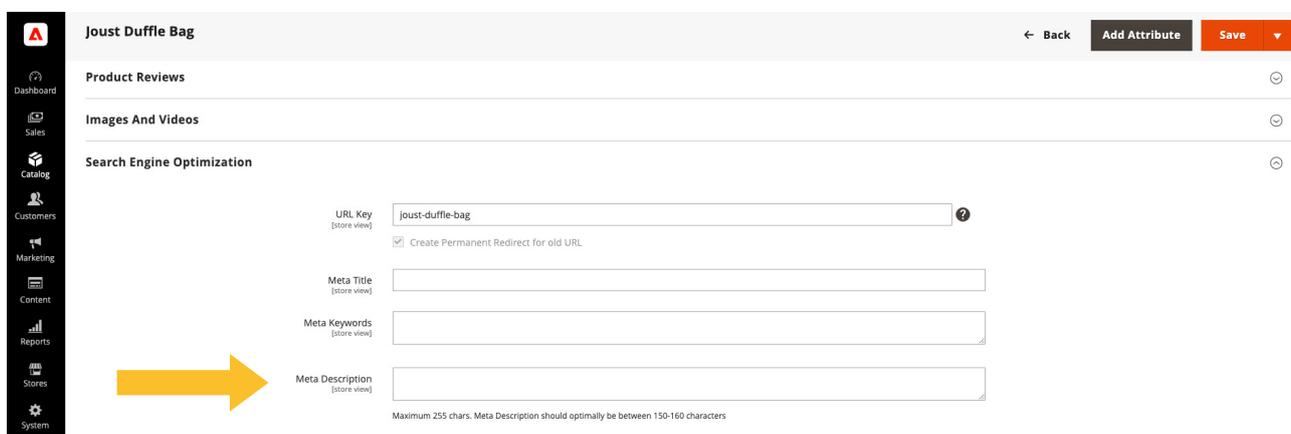

For Product pages:

In **Magento 2**: Under Catalog >> Catalog >> Click on a product and specify the Meta Description in the Search Engine Optimization tab (see screenshot on the following page).

For CMS pages:

In **Magento 2**: Under Content >> Pages >> Select the respective page and specify the Meta Description in the Meta Data Tab (see screenshot on the following page).
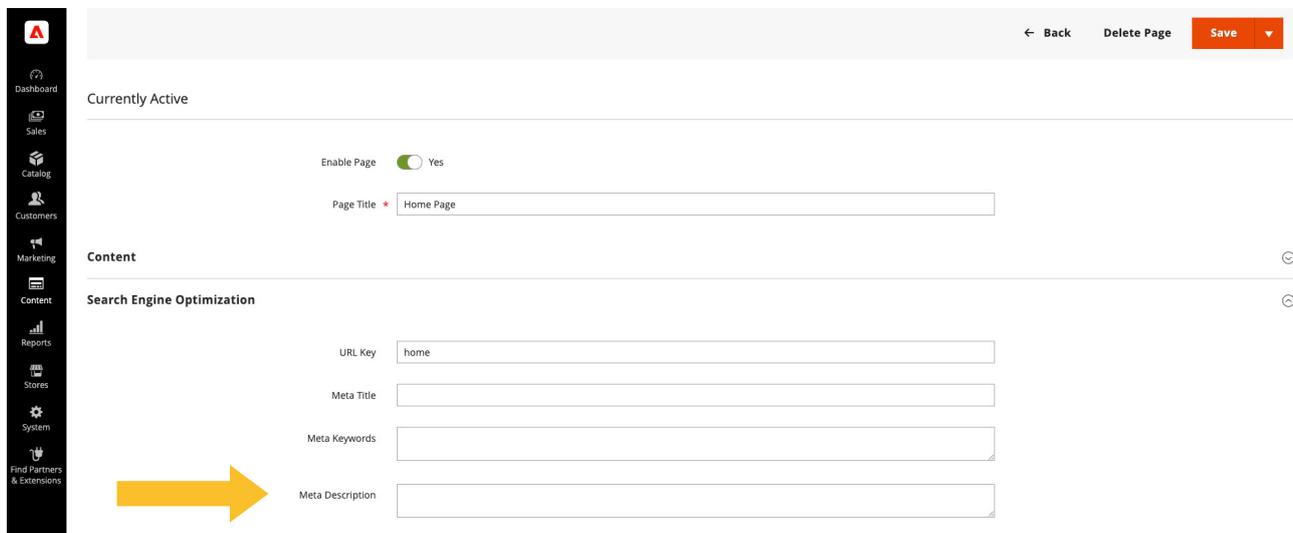
Heading 1 to 6 (H1 to H6)

Heading 1 (or H1) is the most important component of the HTML structure of a page after the Page Title. Each web page should contain a unique H1, including your main keywords.

This component communicates to search engines that the content of a page is starting. The most important keywords of the content following should be included in the H1.

- Magento automatically generates the Heading 1 (or H1) from the category or product name. However, you should ensure that your homepage and other CMS pages have text formatted as H1 and are visible.

- In **Magento 2**: Under Content >> Pages >> Select any page >> Go to the Content Tab and specify the Content Heading (see screenshot below).

Images

Add multiple images per SKU / Item (Base Image / Small Image / Thumbnail Image): Images may help in reducing "Bounce Rate," increase "Time on Site," and provide search engines with a different type of crawlable content (see point 6 below).

- Alt Text and Alt Titles for Images (HTML): These elements should contain a descriptive text per image, as search engine web crawlers cannot "read" the content of an image. These are also used to describe images to the visually impaired. A practical way to describe an image is using "text." This text can help Search Engine web crawlers retrieve an image highly relevant to a user query (for example, for "Red Leather Jacket" via Google Image Search, (see: https://www.semrush.com/blog/alt-text/). Image titles are generally added when the image is uploaded to Magento. Updating this post import is seldom actioned due to the manual intervention needed, so it is only done case by case.

- In **Magento 2**: To specify ALT text, go to Catalog >> Products >> Edit a product, go to the Images and Videos Tab >> Click on an uploaded picture >> Specify the Alt text in the corresponding field. (See screenshot below).
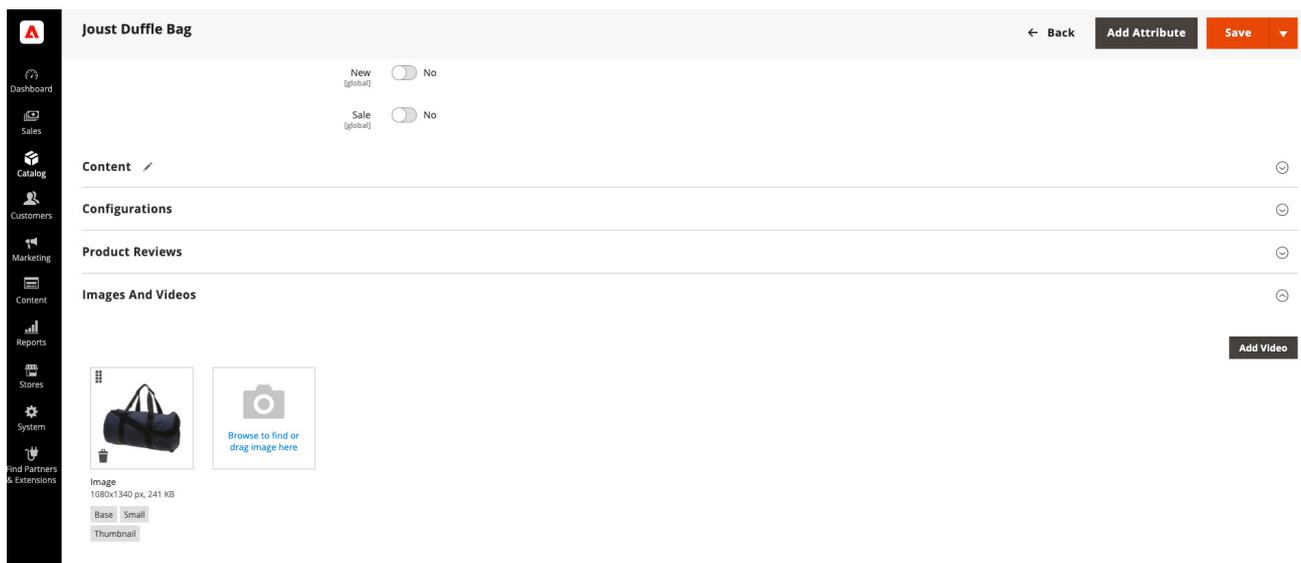
Meta keywords

Google has withdrawn meta keywords as a potential ranking factor from its algorithm over the past years (many users were misusing this element to rank higher on SERP). Nevertheless, up to five meta keywords can be referenced per webpage as they still seem to be viewed as a potential ranking factor for relevancy by other search engines' algorithms (for instance, Bing, Yahoo, etc).

Therefore, it can be important for the meta keywords to be filled out to rank higher on search engines other than Google.
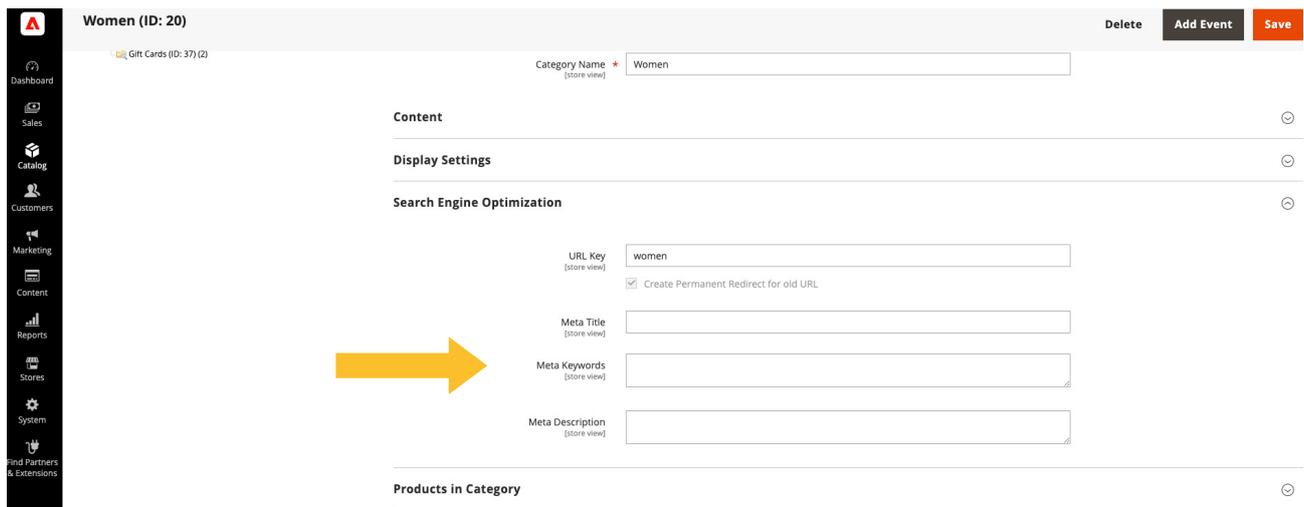
In **Magento 2**: Meta keywords can be specified in Magento in different places depending on the page.

- For Category pages: Go to Catalog >> Categories >> Select any Category and specify the meta keywords.

- For CMS pages: Go to Content >> Pages >> Edit any page >> Specify the Keywords in the Meta Data Tab.

- Default meta keywords: They can apply to all pages. Go to Content >> Design >> Configuration >> HTML Head - Meta Keywords.

- For Product pages: Go to Catalog >> Products >> Select any Product and specify the Meta-keywords in the Search Engine Optimization Tab.

URLs

Assuming that you use a logical hierarchical structure for your website, the URLs used by each product page should be descriptive and easy to query for a search engine user.

Magento automatically creates search engine-friendly URLs by default. These URLs can be changed on the platform by the business owner.

In **Magento 2**: You can check that the URLs produced by Magento are search engine-friendly under Stores >> Configuration >> General >> Web >> Search Engine Optimization>> Use Web Server Rewrites = "Yes."

A web crawler will typically record the content of a URL from left to right: https://www.mystore. com/accessories/watches

The "https" protocol indicates to the web crawler that SSL Encryption is used on this website. The domain name for this URL is www.mystore.com, and the path is /accessories/watches. The web crawler breaks down the URL into three pieces of information to record its content in an index.

Whenever creating a new product in Magento, the platform will append the path to the product directly after the domain name (example: www.mystore.com/watches) if the setting is not modified in the admin panel.

In **Magento 2**: You can control or modify the setting for Categories in the path to product under Stores >> Configuration >> Catalog >> Catalog >> Search Engine Optimization >> Use Categories Path for Product URLs = "No" (to keep the product name as path right after domain name, as explained above) or "Yes" (if you prefer to have the category in the path to the product, beware that conflicts may arise due to the recurrence of a product in multiple categories).

Anchor text

An anchor text is the user-visible text on a hyperlink. Use specific text on internal links, descriptive of the target content. Since the "Penguin" update of its algorithm in 2014, Google has emphasized content and penalized sites that duplicate content on anchor texts (as part of its overall algorithm update).

For CMS Pages:

- In **Magento 2**: Under Content >> Pages >> Select a CMS page >> Specify the anchor links in the Content tab.

Site-wide technical SEO

General Magento settings

Modifications in Magento settings can place you ahead of the curve compared to your competitors. Let us go through some of these (below):

Structured data markup

http://schema.org/ offers a variety of data tagging options (Markup). The tagging in the HTML code enables the business owner to pass on bits of information from product pages directly to search engines (information such as brand, product name, price, review ratings, availability, etc). This markup improves "Click-Through Rates" and can even be used by Google Shopping/ Merchant Center). For further details, (see: https://developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/structured-data/intro-structured-data)

In **Magento 2**: Natively supported by the Vaimo templates. Example of schema.org code for product reviews:

```
<h1 class="page-title">
<span class="base" data-ui-id="page-title-wrapper" itemprop="name">Fusion Backpack</span><h1>
</div>
<div class="product-reviews-summary" itemprop="aggregateRating" itemscope itemtype="http://schema.org/AggregateRating">
<div class="rating-summary">
<span class="label"><span>Rating:</span></span>
<div class="rating-results" title="67%"<
<span style="width:67%"><span><span item prop="ratingVaule">67</span>% of <span itemprop="bestRating">100</span></span></span>
</div>
</div>
<div class="reviews-actions">
<a class="action view" href="http://demo.strategy.vaimo.com/fusions-backpack html#reviews"><span itemprop="reviewCount">3</span> <span>Reviews</span></a>
<a class="action add" href="http://demo.stretegy.vaimo.com/fusion-backpack html#review-form">Add Your Review</a>
</div>
```

It corresponds to the following picture of the product reviews on **Magento 2** (see screenshot on the following product review).

Stellar Solar Jacket

★★★☆☆ 3 Reviews Add Your Review

As low as

$75.00

IN STOCK
SKU#: WJ01

Size
S M L

Color

Qty
1

Add to Cart

♥ ADD TO WISH LIST .l ADD TO COMPARE

Javascript rendering and PWA

Search engines need help crawling websites that do not appear to be based on HTML format. Since JavaScript is primarily used for Progressive Web Applications (PWA), it is important to understand the SEO requirements of using this website infrastructure/build type.

Currently, these websites are only being crawled by javascript-enabled Googlebots as the content served is the same as what a standard browser/user receives.

This slows down crawling and indexing as this form of Googlebot crawls less often, impacting the speed at which new content is discovered and ranked.

To improve the crawling and indexing speed and organic visibility, a server-side rendering or prerendering solution is suggested for all Progress Web App sites.

The recommended tool is prerender.io, as this uses its own crawlers to view the website and store-rendered .html copies of each discovered page, which is then served when user agents such as Googlebot crawl the website.

Mobile-friendly website

Google quietly updated its documented Google ranking systems page and completely removed several page experience-related ranking systems from the page. Google removed the mobile-friendly page speed and secure site systems from the retired section of the page. This meant that these ranking factors were signals used by other systems rather than ranking systems. However, it is still important to maintain a good page experience and a mobile-friendly site. **Despite mobile-friendliness not being a ranking system**, it is still a ranking signal, according to Google.

Duplicate content

Several similar or identical pages on the online store can lead to confusion from a search engine's perspective. One of the most common mistakes is that you can access the site with the prefix www and without. Search engines then perceive them as identical websites with two different URLs.

In **Magento**: Under Stores >> Configuration >> General >> Web >> URL options >> Auto-redirect to base URL >> Set to: Yes (301 Moved Permanently).

Another common mistake is to forget that dynamic URLs (filtered categories, for instance) can be indexed by Google. One way of passing all or part of the LinkJuice to the main "unfiltered" category is via a canonical URL (see: https://www.semrush.com/blog/canonical-url-guide/).

In **Magento 2**: Some of the canonical URLs can be configured from the admin panel. This can be found under Stores >> Configuration >> Catalog >> Catalog >> Search Engine Optimizations >> Use Canonical Link Meta Tag For Categories = Yes (the same setting applies for Use Canonical Link Meta Tag For Products) .

- Vaimo can ensure that this technical implementation is completed correctly.

SSL encryption (or HTTPS)

Since August 2014, Google has given preference (in its algorithm) to secure sites, meaning that adding Secure Socket Layer encryption at the domain level would provide a lightweight ranking boost (source: https://www.searchenginejournal.com/ranking-factors/https/).

It is up to the online store manager to choose whether to invest in such encryption. Vaimo strongly advises its customers to acquire an SSL certificate.

- Vaimo can ensure that this technical implementation is completed correctly.

Sitemap (XML AND HTML)

A sitemap is (as indicated) a map of your website describing to search engines the detailed multi-tiered or tree architecture of your website (the inner structure of it). This helps web crawlers index your website regularly (effortlessly).

In **Magento**: A Google Sitemap can be created under Catalog > Google Sitemap. A Magento tree-like sitemap (xml and html) can also be created.

In **Magento 2**: In Magento 2 there is 2 configurations required for sitemaps:

1. To configure a sitemap go to Marketing >> SEO & Search >> Site map >> Add sitemap

2. Set the sitemap to regenerate automatically, go to Stores >> Configuration >> Catalog >> XML Sitemap >> Generation Settings >> Yes

Vaimo can ensure that this technical implementation is completed correctly.

SEO tip: Vaimo recommends integrating out-of-stock products into your sitemap. This will ensure that all of your products appear on the SERP. Nevertheless, the out-of-stock products should be refilled regularly to avoid visitors' frustration and decrease the bounce rate.

Products discontinued from the catalog should be subject to 301 Permanent redirects (see related section below) and directed at similar products whenever possible (search engines still index them and are the subject of outbound links). The above measure ensures a controlled level of crawl error (or 404 pages) and bounce rate for your site.

Robots.txt file

Such a file is present at the root level of your website to restrict access to content not to be indexed (CSS files, for instance). This file points the web crawlers to the sitemap (XML).

In **Magento 2**: This can be altered from the administration panel of Magento. Go to Stores >> Configuration >> General >> Design >> Search Engine Robots

Nevertheless, we recommend leaving the implementation of such a file to Vaimo as we best know which parts to include and exclude from such a file.

Page speed > Core web vitals

To decrease Page load time, the online store manager can choose to merge Javascript and CSS files to gain performance (the downside being occasional instability).

In **Magento 2**: Go to Stores >> Configuration >> Advanced >> Developer (see below screenshot).
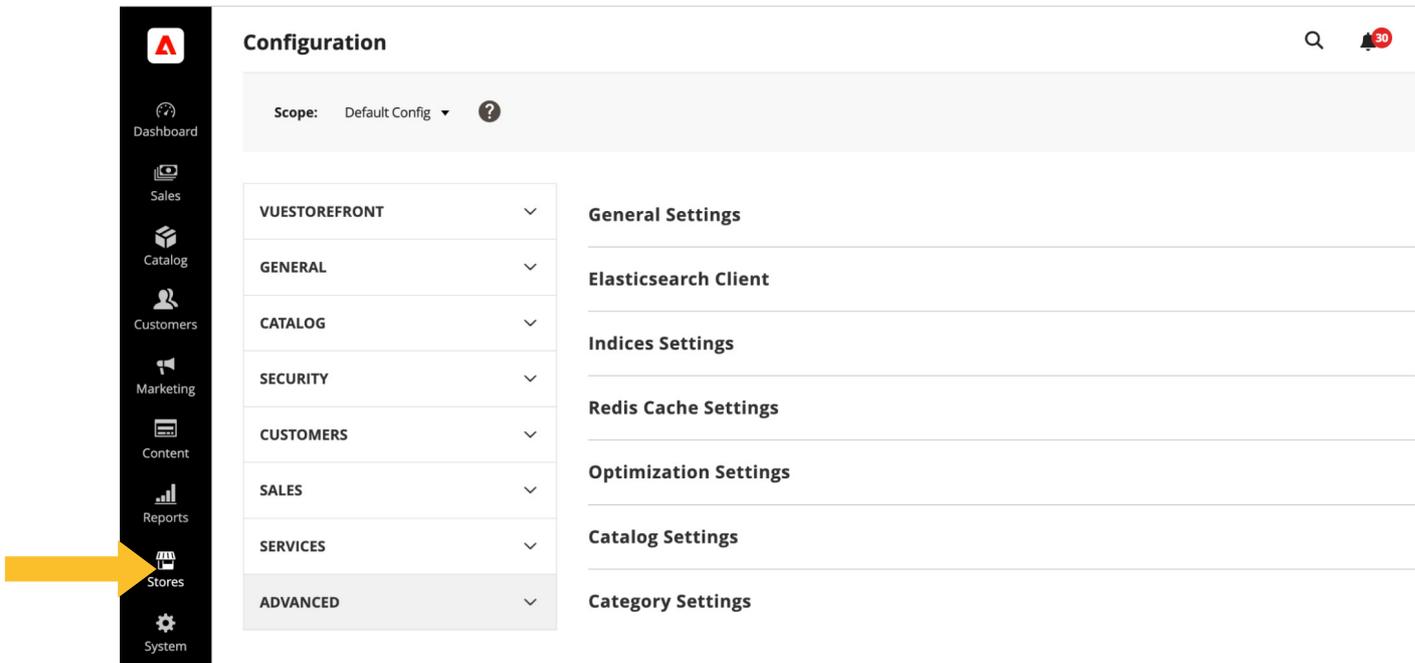
Google removed the mobile-friendliness, page speed, secure site, and page experience systems from its ranking systems page.

Google claims that the **page experience update** was a concept used to describe several important page experience factors that website owners should pay attention to.

According to Danny Sullivan, Google's Search Liaison, the Google page experience is still regarded as a ranking "signal" despite never being a ranking "system." Google emphasized that just because page experience was eliminated as a ranking factor, it does not imply that pages with good page experiences are not rewarded.

Google's fundamental ranking algorithms aim to honor content that offers a positive page experience. The emphasis for SEO should be on producing top-notch content that benefits users. Create websites and content that are superior to those of the competition. Ensure that users can access the content and enjoy themselves while viewing it on desktop and mobile.

Crawl errors (or 404 pages)

Submitting your sitemap (XML) to Google's link directory for index via "Google Search Console" will help web crawlers index new pages, identify the 404 pages, and help you fix them. We also recommend inserting links to your most visited categories on your 404 page to increase relevance for the visitor and reduce the bounce rate for this page.

301 permanent redirects

A 301 permanent redirect is aimed at redirecting visitors who landed on an outdated (unused) URL to a new URL. Web crawlers will follow the redirect to the new page and index it as having the "freshest / most relevant" content. Creating 301 permanent redirects is also the best way to pass SEO ranking juice to other URLs. (see: LinkJuice in Glossary). A 301 permanent redirect can be configured for URL paths (www.mystore.com/shoes where / shoes is the path) or for entire domain names.

In **Magento 2**: for individual URL paths, this can be enabled under Store >> Configuration

>> Catalog >> Catalog >> Search Engine Optimisations >> Create Permanent Redirect for URLs if URL Key Changed = "Yes"

Configuring 301 permanent redirects for domain names is a rather complex task; Vaimo can ensure that this technical implementation is completed correctly.

SEO considerations in the expansion phase

Whenever looking at expanding your presence into new countries, you will be faced with a choice to make regarding the three methods of geo-targeting:

- ccTLDs (Country code top-level domains): mystore.se

- Subdomains: se.mystore.com

- Subfolders: mystore.com/se/

In the part below, we will look into the diverse aspects of decision-making:

Cost: covers the cost of maintaining the setup (from 1 to 5: 1 for "Expensive" and 5 for "Affordable").

Resources: covers the level of internal and/or external help in configuring and implementing the setup (from 1 for "Intensive" to 5 for "Almost no resources required").

SEO performance: covers the overall SEO benefit of the setup (from 1 to 5: 1 for "Limited" and 5 for High).

Ecommerce performance: translates into CTR, Conversion Rate, and Average Order Value (from 1 to 5: 1 for "Poor" and 5 for "High").

	Cost	Resources	SEO Performance	eCommerce Performance
ccTLDs	1	1	4	5
Subdomains	3	2	3	1
Subfolders	4	4	5	3

- **ccTLDs:** Country code top-level domains can be expensive and do not benefit from the domain authority of the main (initial) store. Nevertheless, the long-term benefit of the commerce performance of such a setup is undeniable. It conveys trustworthiness and appears geo-localized to visitors.

- **Subdomains:** Can be expensive and cumbersome to set up. Furthermore, search engines perceive them as domain names different from the main (initial) store. Nevertheless, it can be interesting to configure such a setup if the goal is clearly separating entities within an organization.

- **Subfolders:** Can be resource-intensive to set up at first. Nevertheless, this setup can be a great short-term solution as they are relatively inexpensive options (no need to buy a top-level domain name) and benefit from the domain authority of the main (initial) store. Using hreflang tags in the HTML code can be critical for indexing. In such a case, geo-targeting can also be achieved via Google Search Console.

Multi-site SEO

In the case of multi-sites either sharing the same language or different languages, hreflang tags can be added to point the web crawlers to index the online store URLs for their corresponding Search Engine version. For instance, vaimo.se and all its URLs should primarily be indexed by Google.se, and the same applies to each site. This indicates to search engines that the online store directed at the Swedish audience (in English) shall be distinct from the online store directed at the English audience (in English). If the tags are missing, the web crawlers might get confused and return URLs to the wrong shop.

Example below:

```
<link rel="alternate" hreflang="en-gb" href="http://www.vaimo.se/" />
<link rel="alternate" hreflang="x-default" href="http://www.vaimo.com/" />
<link rel="alternate" hreflang="en-gb" href="http://www.vaimo.co.uk/" />
<link rel="alternate" hreflang="fr-fr" href="http://vaimo.fr/" />
```

Content Marketing

The most recent updates in the Google PageRank algorithm have increasingly emphasized rich and relevant content. Google sees content as one of the **predominant ranking factors** in its algorithm. This has led many online store owners to rethink how they act upon SEO.

Google released its internal official "**Search Quality Rating Guidelines**."

With content marketing, it is important to factor in the quality of the content you are producing on your site to ensure proper SEO practices moving forward. One of the most crucial factors for Page Quality (PQ) rating is the Main Content's (MC) quality. The MC significantly impacts how well a page accomplishes its goal. The degree to which the MC enables the page to achieve its goals and provides an enjoyable user experience is the guiding principle for assessing the MC's quality. The level of effort, originality, and talent or skill put into creating the content is usually a good indicator of the quality of the MC. Achieving accuracy and consistency with established expert consensus is crucial for YMYL (Your Money or Your Life) and informational pages.

Code-to-text ratio

The code-to-text ratio is the percentage of text that is actually coded on a given web page. The text is the actual written content on the page, whereas the code refers to the HTML code that is embedded on the page. A higher text-to-HTML ratio indicates an improved user experience. The likelihood that your website will rank higher in search engine results will increase with a high text-to-code ratio.

While it's suggested that the copy (actual text) of any page on your website should contain a minimum of 500 - 1000 words, it is more important that the copy be informative and bring value to the user.

This **code-to-text ratio** is not a ranking factor but is a strong enabler for crawlers, as crawlers like to gather content and deem an imbalance in this ratio a sign of a badly optimized page. The web crawler will interpret such imbalance as an attempt to create multiple pages on a topic stuffed with keywords with the clear aim of flooding a search engine results page with content from one site solely.

Although Google does not directly take the code-to-text ratio into account, several factors of that ratio support SEO best practices, so a poor ratio can still indirectly impact where your page ranks in search results. Your code-to-text ratio can determine which pages on your website need to be strengthened to provide crawlers with more information.

Social media

According to Matt Cutts ("Head of Google Webspam Team" at Google), "Google does NOT use signals from social media for search ranking."

The "difficulty of establishing identity" is the main reason behind Google's decision not to incorporate social media as a ranking factor. Nevertheless, shareable and popular content is a synonym for higher page authority (PA) and increased number of backlinks (a domain authority booster), which ultimately leads to higher ranking. Therefore, popular content on social media indirectly leads to higher ranking.

Blogs

An online blog is merely defined as a digital personal journal. It is, therefore, a fantastic opportunity for an ecommerce website to engage in a more personal relationship with its customers and potential customers. It is also a perfect format to shape content centered around long-tailed keywords.

One of the best methods for increasing your organic traffic and expanding your customer base is blogging. You can gain backlinks, raise brand awareness, rank for more keywords, and

maintain fresh and up-to-date content on your website. However, success requires planning, research, optimization, and promotion.

Nonetheless, try to avoid keyword cannibalization, that is, the tendency to create multiple pages based on a similar topic and terminology. Google might treat the latter as duplicate content (or Black Hat SEO techniques) aimed at boosting the online store on SERP for relevant queries.

Analyze bounce rate

Search engines are now able to calculate what they call the "dwell time" (or average time from clicking on a link on the SERP to the landing page and back to the SERP - also known as "long clicks vs short clicks"). The dwell time is a form of feedback mechanism for search engines, helping them to demote or promote a link on the SERP well after the PageRank algorithm has attributed a "spot" to the link on the SERP.

Dwell time measures how long users stay on a page from the search results before returning to the search engine results page (SERP). It measures how long a user stays on a page after clicking on a search result until they leave the page. It is not a guarantee that Google uses dwell time as a ranking factor. However, it can aid in measuring user interest in your pages.

Dwell Time vs. Bounce Rate vs. Time on Page:

All three metrics measure user engagement. Bounce rate and time on page differ from dwell time as they do not indicate whether the user returned to the SERP.

Here's a breakdown of the metrics people often confuse with dwell time:

- **Bounce rate:** A bounce occurs when a visitor arrives on a page, stays there for less than 10 seconds, and/or leaves without clicking anything or taking any other action on the page. Bounce rate measures user sessions during which they did not interact with the website.

- **Time on page:** The term "time on page" describes how long a user stays on a page before moving to another page (either another page on your website or another external page). This metric is based on two clicks: the click that directs users to a webpage and the click that directs them away from it.

It can be seen as a way for the Search Engine to self-learn from its algorithm mistakes and eventually correct them on an ongoing basis.

In concrete terms, search engines are able to evaluate the quality of the landing pages that they rank on the SERP.

Keyword modifiers

Keyword modifiers are words that can be interchangeably used in keyword phrases. These words are often popular in search queries, along with main target keywords. These words include general adjectives, positives, comparatives, superlatives, question words, color and style attributes, etc.

You can hone in on your main keyword using "keyword modifiers." A long-tail keyword that is pertinent to your industry and niche but concentrates on a specific facet of your business is typically the result of using keyword modifiers to target a search query.

Keyword modifiers are a great way of diversifying content, titles, and anchor texts (for internal links) and downplaying the reuse of keywords on related web pages (to avoid duplicate content from a search engine's standpoint).

LSI keywords (Latent Semantic Index)

LSI keywords are words semantically related to your main keyword(s); in other words, these are synonyms related to the title of the page. This information retrieval technique, latent semantic indexing (LSI), is used to find patterns in the connections between terms and concepts. Using mathematics, LSI can uncover relationships between terms that would otherwise be latently hidden within a collection of text (an index).

LSI keywords should primarily be used wherever long content needs to be displayed; hence, such keywords are relevant in blogs and general product descriptions. LSI keywords match the need for web crawlers to be fed with quality content and index it as such.

LSI is an outdated technology since it was created for smaller document sets rather than the entire web. Nevertheless, semantics is crucial to how search engines interpret a content page. There is no denying that synonyms and words with similar semantic meanings are necessary when writing in-depth about a subject.

The secret to success is launching a page that covers a topic, including using related keywords in your content. Rather than calling these LSI keywords, the concept of what is implied in this isn't always correct. If you look at the search queries that a top-performing page ranks for, it becomes clear that you need to optimize for topics instead of just single keywords.

Off-page SEO (Basics)

In the previous section, we strongly emphasized the actions an online store manager could implement for products from its online store to be correctly indexed and highly ranked by search engines.

In this short section, we will evoke off-page SEO. Off-page SEO primarily regards the tactics used to get inbound links from other websites to your website.

In the same manner as for on-page SEO, several factors (not all known) influence and help the Google ranking algorithm "Page Rank" determine the relevance of a page in relation to a user query.

For instance, these factors can be (non-exhaustive list):

- Topical relevancy

Ensure that all back links are relevant to the page.

- Language relevancy

- Number of linking domains and the number of links from each domain

The number of links is still a critical ranking factor; nevertheless, this is to be contrasted with the quality of the domain (see below). It is still better to get links from many domains than many links from one domain (from a search engine's standpoint).

- Domain authority of the linking domains

Strength of a domain (and its relative importance) in its market. Inbound links from highly authoritative websites signal to search engines that your website is of great quality and should be ranked as such. For instance, if you manage an online store selling fashion and apparel, you should try to get links from highly authoritative domains in this field (high-profile bloggers, online magazines, etc).

- Domain registration length

The longer a domain name has been registered, the more trustworthy it is in the eyes of the search engine's algorithm.

- Domain history

If you inherit a domain name, try to ensure no Search Engine penalty is linked to it, as a penalty is bound to the domain name.

- Country TLD (stands for "Top Level Domain") extension (co.uk, se, fr, etc.) A top-level domain per site can help you achieve better ranking on SERP.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the preface of this Guide, setting up an online store is a tremendous challenge. Reading through this Guide, you might now feel overwhelmed by the amount of work to put into making your website search engine friendly. It becomes even more overwhelming when you realize this is only one part of ecommerce success. To succeed as an online retailer, other aspects must be factored in (merchandising, online marketing, retention efforts, logistics, Conversion Rate Optimisation, etc.).

Fortunately, putting work into Search Engine Optimization is not an overnight task; it can be planned according to available time and impact on SERP.

In this Guide, we merely point at the most important success factors in making your site relevant and worthy of being highly ranked by search engines. Rest assured that our goal at Vaimo is to help you succeed as an online retailer; hence, we hope that we can assist you in the near future regarding SEO questions and other aspects of ecommerce.

Appendix on SEO tools

Audit

Free Tools :

- Varvy: See: https://varvy.com/ - General audit tool covering most aspects of site optimization to achieve a higher ranking on SERP.

- Moz Free Tools : See: https://moz.com/tools - Information about domain authority / page authority / links / meta tags for any website, etc.

- SEMRush tool: See https://www.semrush.com/kb/806-seo-toolkit. It is a great tool that outperforms Google Data Analytics when researching competitors. Additionally, many companies use this tool to research their own and rival websites to manage campaigns and conduct keyword research for SEO (on-page and technical), PPC, SMM, PR, content marketing, link building, and SMM.

- SEOquake: See https://www.seoquake.com/. It is a free plugin that provides information about key SEO metrics, allows obtaining a complete report for internal and external links, compares URLs/domains, etc.

- SEOptimer : See: http://www.seoptimer.com/ - Identifies elements to improve in areas such as on-page SEO, performance, mobile-friendliness, social link building, security protocols, technology used, etc.

- GTmetrix: See: https://gtmetrix.com/ - Identifies technical elements to improve your website performance (more specifically related to page speed performance).

- SEO browser (simple mode): See: http://seo-browser.com/ - A tool that displays results of your website's content like a web crawler sees it (enables quick gains in crawlability).

There are multiple comprehensive paid plans (of the above services), but the free tools will guarantee that you start planning for optimization.

Must-haves

Structural Tools to measure the SEO effort over time (non-exhaustive list):

- **Google Search Console:** Provides information about clicks from Google, critical errors identified by web crawlers, tests whether Google web crawlers understand the content present on your website

- **Google Analytics:** Web analytics tool providing information about traffic sources, including the Organic Search results derived from Google.

- Both tools can be linked together to give a holistic view of Search queries, website behavior, and conversion patterns.

Glossary of terms and acronyms

Algorithm: Program derived from a calculation to return relevant results to a search query.

Anchor Text: The user's visible text on a link.

Black Hat SEO: Aggressive use of SEO techniques that focus entirely on search engines, not human website users.

Bounce Rate: The percentage of sessions who enter an online store and leave it without viewing any other page.

CTR (or Click-Through-Rate): The ratio of users who click on a specific link to the number of total users who view a page.

Conversion Rate: Percentage of users who complete a desired goal on the online store.

(Web) Crawler (spider): A program that moves through the web via the links and reports the links available to the search engines via the Indexers.

Data Feed (of Products): A mechanism to update a recipient with selected data.

Domain Authority (DA): Measures the relative strength of a domain (in its market).

Google Merchant Center: A service that presents users of a Search Engine with products matching their queries. This service presents pictures of products relevant to a user query. Online stores can create product feeds in Magento to populate the Google Merchant Center. Google Merchant Center is subject to product listing ads and auctions/bids through AdWords.

Google Search Console (formerly Google Webmaster Tools): An interface that monitors clicks to the online store from Google as a Search Engine. One can also get alerts for critical errors and issues. Last but not least, it is an interface that enables the testing of the content indexed by Google (and see if it is understood as it should by the Search Engine).

Google Shopping: A Service providing users allowing users to search for specific products, get product recommendations, and make price comparisons between diverse stores. Online stores can create product feeds in Magento to populate the Google Shopping service.

HTML (or Hypertext Markup Language): The standard markup language for creating web pages and web applications.

Index: A database of links and words that search engines can query.

Landing page: A web page onto which the user lands (from somewhere external to the online store).

Latent Semantic Index (LSI) keywords: Words semantically related to your main keyword(s); in other words, these are synonyms associated with the page's title.

Link Building Strategy: The strategy upon which the quantity and quality of external links pointing at your online store will be determined. This strategy highly depends on partnerships

with websites that leverage higher ranking potential than others.

LinkJuice: A term used to define the relative power of a link (either internal or external) that can be given to another web page (source: https://goo gl/BTwhCa).

Long tail keywords: Longer and more specific keyword phrases that visitors are more likely to use closer to their purchase process.

Search Engines (Web): Search engines crawl the web for content to index. After that, the content indexed is displayed as a response to a user query. Search engines try to show results as relevant as possible to the user using proprietary algorithms. See even "How do search engines find your web pages and index them (See: How Search Works goo gl/WwJv9d).

SEO (or Search Engine Optimization): Tactics used to grow visibility in Organic (non-paid) search engine results to user queries

SERP (or Search Engine Results Page)

SSL (Secured Socket Layer): A standard security technology that transfers sensitive information between a server and a client. This standard security technology is subject to a protocol. The site-wide presence of such a protocol is used as a ranking signal by Search Engines ("https" format in the URL of a website indicates that the protocol corresponds to SSL).

Page Authority (PA): Measures the relative strength of a page (compared to the rest of the website it belongs to)

PageRank: Google uses a ranking algorithm called PageRank (see: https://goo gl/sJQ1gf). This algorithm is composed of about 200 variables and assigns a value between 0 and 1. These variables are constantly reviewed, with around 500 to 600 modifications per year.

Short Tail Keywords: More generic keywords are used by users when they begin their purchase process.

Sitemap: It is a file saved in the site's root directory on the site's server. This file helps search engine spiders efficiently crawl the site's structure and help users find something specific.

SKU (or Stock Keeping Unit): It represents a unique identifier for products and services (in Inventory Management).

URL (Uniform Resource Locator): More commonly known as a web address displayed in the address bar of most web browsers.

301 Permanent Redirect (Status Code): The process of directing users who intended to view page "A" to page "B." This can be done for various reasons, the most common being that page "A" is no longer up to date (but has been indexed by search engines for a long time and therefore ranks well on SERPs).

404 (Status Code): The requested page is not available. This can happen for various reasons; the main one remains the indexing by search engines of a recently deactivated CMS page. This page remains available to visitors via its URL but should not be available for viewing.