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2024 Search Benchmark Report and Best Practices

Holiday Edition

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GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

Search Conversion Rate

The proportion of Unique Searches with any cart event.

Unique Searches: Unique search queries that returned results. The same search query is counted only once in a session.

Session Conversion Rate differs from *Search Engagement Rate* by only counting cart events.

Search Engagement Rate

The proportion of Unique Searches with any click or cart event.

Unique Searches: Unique search queries that returned results. The same search query is counted only once in a session.

Search Revenue Rate

The percentage of the total **value** of completed orders **by shoppers** who **used the search** function during a specified period**, compared to the total revenue** generated by all shoppers in that period.

Search User Rate

The ratio of shoppers who used the autocomplete compared to the number of shoppers who visited pages where the autocomplete box was available during a specified period. Simply focusing into the search box counts as usage.

Zero Result Search Rate

Measures the proportion of searches that do not return any relevant products. The ratio of Zero Result Searches to Unique Searches.

Zero Result Searches: Search results pageviews where the search engine returned no results

WHY SEARCH MATTERS

DATA SOURCE

WHY SEARCH MATTERS

As shown in the chart below, although only **16% of shoppers use the search function on** online stores, they generate **55% of all online revenue**. This means that search users are **6.4 times more likely** to convert (generate revenue). This is because shoppers who search have a high purchase intent.

Note that search usage and revenue contributions vary by industry due to the unique nature of each vertical. That is why it can be helpful to look at the industry-specific benchmarks.

Industry	Search User Rate	Search Revenue Rate
Fashion	10%	39%
DIY	18%	62%
Consumer Electronics	22%	40%
Health and Beauty	20%	69%
FMCG	15%	54%
Pharmacies	7%	74%
TOTAL	**16%**	**55%**

Salesforce's analysis also reveals that personalized search results significantly enhance the shopping experience.

In fact, **personalized recommendations can account for up to 26% of revenue**, demonstrating the critical role of tailored search experiences in driving sales and customer satisfaction.

This is further supported by the fact that, according to Salesforce, **73% of customers expect companies to understand their unique needs and provide personalized offers**, highlighting the importance of an intelligent and responsive search system that can adapt to individual user preferences.

SEARCH AND PRODUCT DISCOVERABILITY

Since on-site search is a key component in driving online revenue and providing a great user experience, retailers need to make sure their search is performing well before the holiday shopping season arrives.

To do this, retailers should think about site search best practices and optimizing product discoverability.

Product discoverability is the data optimization of a product so that it is easily findable by algorithms including vector and affinity search. Product discoverability is key to moving E-commerce KPIs and providing a great online shopping experience.

Optimizing an E-commerce store for product discoverability includes a wide range of areas including:

- optimized product descriptions

- correct categorization of products

- merchandising strategies

- efficient use of product recommendations placed throughout the shopping journey

- SEO

- content creation

In conjunction, retailers need to have an enriched product catalog including the right product attributes and intelligent, or flexible, tagging to facilitate a great search experience.

DATA SOURCE

Data for this report is sourced from the Prefixbox Analytics Portal and later categorized to provide industry-specific benchmarks.

The industries analyzed include:

- Fashion

- DIY (Do-It-Yourself), or Home & Garden

- Consumer Electronics

- Health & Beauty

- FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods)

- Online Pharmacy

This report focuses on search usage from the first half of 2024 (January - July), along with a comparison against the entirety of 2023 (January - December).

OVERALL RESULTS

2024 H1 OVERALL RESULTS (ALL INDUSTRIES)

For the descriptions of all metrics visit the [Glossary](#) section.
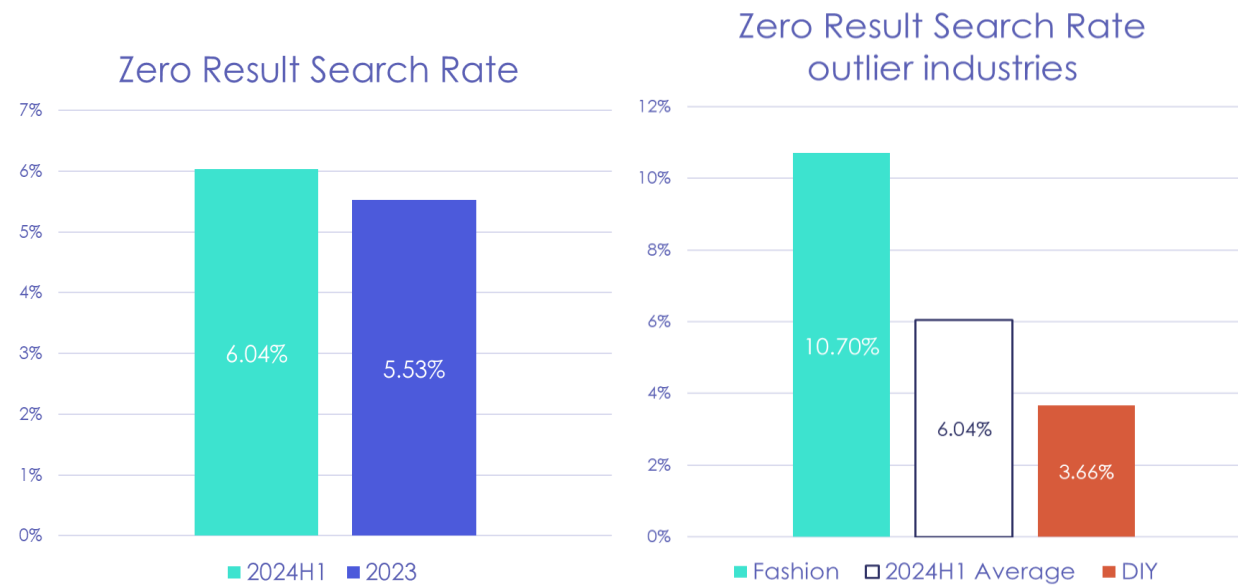
Zero Result Search Rate

Reducing Zero Result Search Rate is crucial for all E-commerce retailers to boost conversion rate and enhance user experience because landing on a zero result page is one of the worst experiences a shopper can have.

Retailers should focus on minimizing zero result queries in the months leading up to the holiday period.

Retailers should also keep in mind that zero result queries are inevitable, so the should follow best practices when designing their zero result page to help shoppers get back on the path to purchase.

To minimize the negative impact of zero result searches, retailers should focus on:

- adding synonyms to keywords and products. Start by looking at the top 100 search queries that lead to no result

- analyzing the top 10 no result queries to find how to fine-tune search configuration

- add related searches and products to the Zero Result Page to help shoppers continue their shopping journey

- place personalized recommendations on the Zero Result Page

- include a fun zero search result promo that says "whoops you searched something we haven't optimized, here's a cookie (or $5)" to keep the shopper from leaving the site

Zero Result Search Rate

6.04% (2024H1)
5.53% (2023)

■ 2024H1 ■ 2023

Zero Result Search Rate outlier industries

10.70% (Fashion)
6.04% (2024H1 Average)
3.66% (DIY)

■ Fashion □ 2024H1 Average ■ DIY
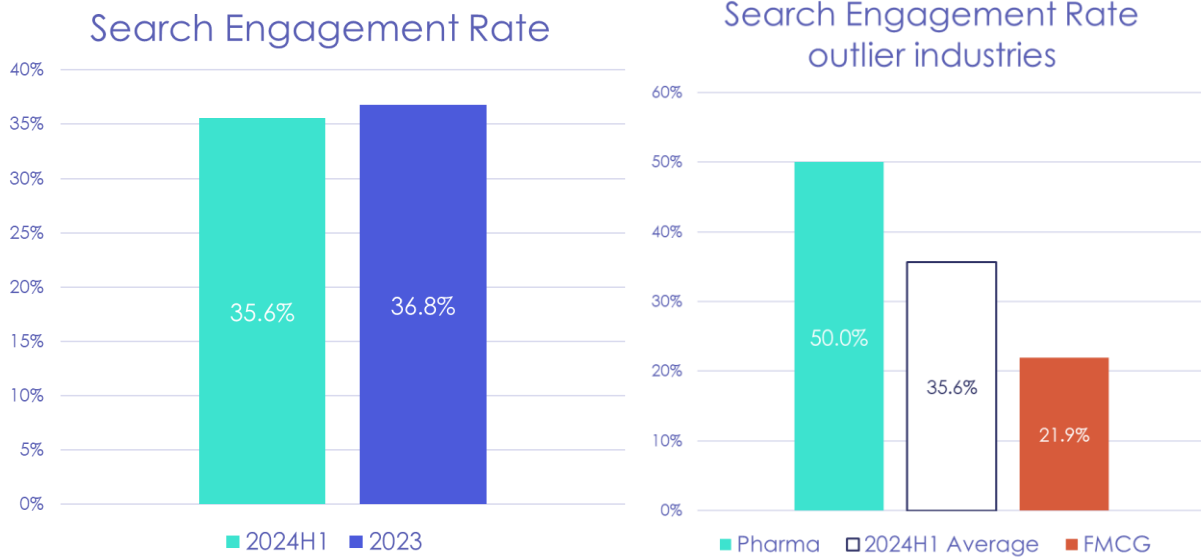
Search Engagement Rate

The Search Engagement Rate can give retailers insight into how relevant their search results are. The more relevant the results, the higher the engagement rate will be.

During the holiday rush, shoppers expect the online experience to be quick and easy, which means they have high expectations from the search function; it should immediately return relevant results.

Retailers can effectively increase Search Engagement Rate by:

- enriching search functionality with additional modules like related products, product recommendation, or personalization results

- expanding the search experience to take up more space on the page

- highlighting collections, bundles, promotions, and content

Expanding the range of what search delivers can increase engagement rate and make the overall experience stickier.

Search Engagement Rate

(Chart: bars for 2024H1 = 35.6%, 2023 = 36.8%; y-axis 0%–40%)

Legend: ■ 2024H1 ■ 2023

Search Engagement Rate outlier industries

(Chart: Pharma = 50.0%, 2024H1 Average = 35.6%, FMCG = 21.9%; y-axis 0%–60%)

Legend: ■ Pharma □ 2024H1 Average ■ FMCG

Search Conversion Rate

Increasing Search Conversion Rate is crucial for all E-commerce retailers, as **shoppers who search generate more than 6 times** the revenue of non-searchers.

Since marketing teams are driving more traffic, and more people opt for online shopping during the holiday season, **improving the Search Conversion Rate is one of the most effective ways to increase online revenue during the holiday season.**

Search Conversion Rate can be increased by:

- effective synonym management: add synonyms to the most frequent zero result searches

- ensure that the search engine can recognize and handle synonyms, related terms, and common misspellings

- personalize search results and product recommendations

- include add-to-cart buttons on the product tiles in the Autocomplete

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## Search Conversion Rate

Legend: ■ 2024H1 ■ 2023
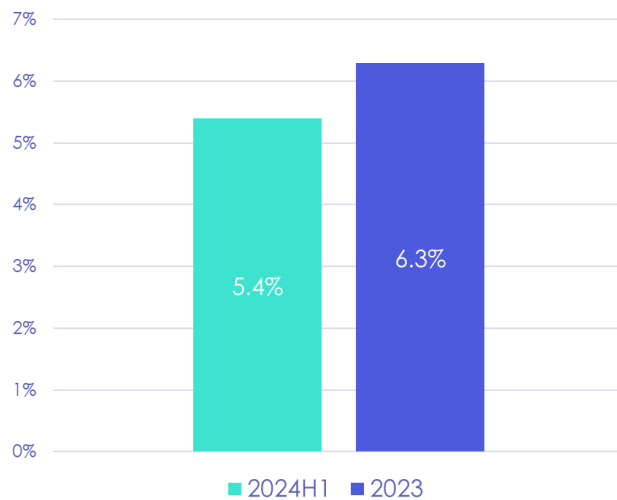
Search Revenue Rate

Since so much of online revenue is generated by shoppers who search, retailers should closely monitor their Search Revenue Rate both in the period coming up to the holiday season and during the peak months.

It's important to note that every industry is different and not all retailers can expect their KPIs to mirror those of other industries.

For example, people shopping on fashion sites often prefer to browse and explore collections, so here the Search Revenue Rate is lower than in the online pharmacy sector where shoppers who search have a high purchase intent.

Search Revenue Rate

Legend: ■ 2024H1 ■ 2023
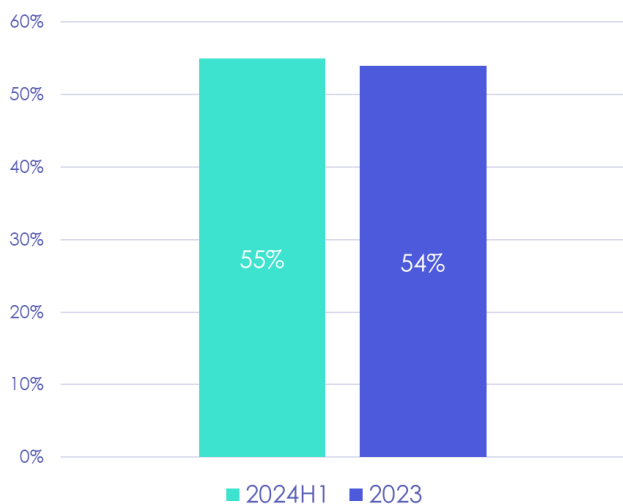
Search Revenue Rate outlier industries

Legend: ■ Pharma ☐ 2024H1 Average ■ Fashion

RESULTS BY INDUSTRY

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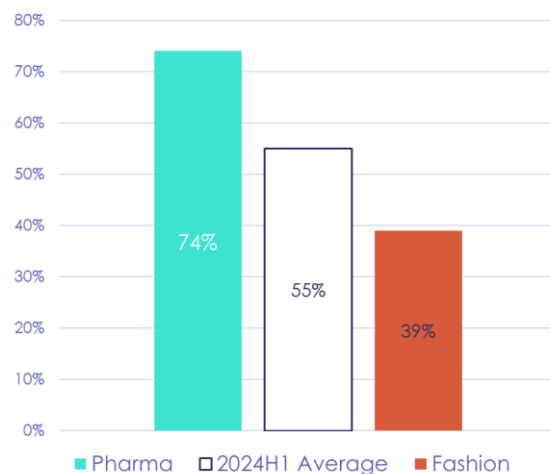
RESULTS BY INDUSTRY

While looking at the performance of your online store, keep in mind that due to the unique nature of each industry, shopper behavior varies and achieving the same results as other verticals may not be possible.

Industry	Zero Results Search Rate	Median Engaged Position	Search Engagement Rate	Search Click-Through Rate	Search Succes Rate	Time To Search Success	Search Revenue Rate
Fashion	10.7%	8.7	37.9%	37.9%	65.9	28.9	39%
DIY	3.7%	5.1	36%	32.9%	51.1	38.2	62%
Electronics	8%	4.2	28.7%	28%	49.7	44.4	40%
Health&Beauty	7.4%	6.4	34.7%	25.4%	46.4	34.3	69%
FMCG	8.3%	5.9	21.9%	20%	49.6	45.7	54%
Pharmacy	6.5%	2.7	50%	29.4%	56.5	28.1	74%
TOTAL	**6%**	**5.5**	**35.6%**	**30.1%**	**51.68**	**37.7**	**55%**

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Fashion

The fashion industry is unique because shoppers often prefer to browse (as opposed to search directly), so it is an outlier from other industries in many cases.

Industry	Zero Results Search Rate	Median Engaged Position	Search Engagement Rate	Search Click-Through Rate	Search Success Rate	Time to Search Success	Search Revenue Rate
Fashion	**10.7%**	**8.7**	**37.9%**	**37.8%**	**65.9%**	**28.9 sec**	**39%**
TOTAL	6%	5.5	35.6%	30.1%	51.7%	37.7 sec	55%

Because of this, E-commerce fashion retailers need a search solution that supports both search and product discovery.

Important functionality is:

- leveraging vector search (the latest search technology) since it understands a wider range of natural language queries

- Product Recommendations to help shoppers discover the product catalog

- Personalization to tailor search results to user preferences like size, brand or color based on previous purchases

- merchandising capabilities to set up campaigns to promote discounted or seasonal products

Online fashion retailers benefit from a high Click-Through Rate, which signals that shoppers often click on products on the Search Engine Result Page to get more information on the Product Detail Page. However, this doesn't translate to a high Conversion Rate.

So fashion retailers need to focus on not only optimizing their search and discovery experience, but also their marketing flow to bring shoppers who abandon their cart back to the site.

Fashion retailers, like all online retailers, struggle with Zero Result Search Rate. It's possible that if fashion retailers focus on decreasing this, by returning more (often irrelevant) products, it would be inversely correlated with Click-Through Rate.

Due to this, retailers must pick and choose which metrics to optimize based on business goals.

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DIY (Do-It-Yourself) or Home & Garden

Industry	Zero Results Search Rate	Median Engaged Position	Search Engagement Rate	Search Click-Through Rate	Search Success Rate	Time to Search Success	Search Revenue Rate
DIY	**3.7%**	**5.1**	**36%**	**32.9%**	**51.1%**	**38.2 sec**	**62%**
TOTAL	6%	5.5	35.6%	30.1%	51.7%	37.7 sec	55%

DIY retailers have a unique set of challenges they must tackle in order to provide a high-quality online shopping experience and competitive.

> Due to the nature of the industry, a DIY retailer needs to heavily optimize their search so that it can:
>
> - understand DIY specific synonyms
>
> - convert units of measure
>
> - leverage dynamic filters to help shoppers easily filter through results

For example, it needs to return the correct results when a shopper searches for a 150-centimeter-long pipe, even though all the products are listed as 1.5 meters long. Or when a shopper searches for "sealant", but all the relevant products in the catalog are named with "caulk".

Additionally, due to the nature of the industry, shoppers frequently use the search function of an online store in order to check if specific products are available in the physical location nearest them; because of this, DIY retailers must also allow shoppers to search within a specific store's stock.

By investing time and effort into solving these industry-specific challenges, DIY retailers can benefit from a high conversion rate.

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Consumer Electronics

Industry	Zero Results Search Rate	Median Engaged Position	Search Engagement Rate	Search Click-Through Rate	Search Success Rate	Time to Search Success	Search Revenue Rate
Electronics	**8%**	**4.2**	**28.7%**	**28%**	**49.7%**	**44.4 sec**	**40%**
TOTAL	6%	5.5	35.6%	30.1%	51.7%	37.7 sec	55%

Consumer Electronics retailers face unique challenges due to large product catalogs and the complexity of products names and descriptions, which can make search a difficult problem to solve. This leads to the slightly higher Zero Result Search Rate and the slightly lower Search Engagement Rate.

Since shoppers are often browsing within a specific category, search queries can be quite broad, for example "headphones". Retailers need to effectively leverage site-search UX best practices to seamlessly help shoppers navigate and surface other, related products at critical junctions throughout the shopping journey.

To tackle the challenges of the industry, retailers should:

- leverage dynamic search filters to reflect relevant information based on the search query

- use the latest AI search technology (vector search) to understand a wide range of queries

- include rich product tiles both in the autocomplete and Search Engine Results Page to provide more product information to shoppers

- offer product recommendations for complementary products to enhance user experience

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Health & Beauty

Industry	Zero Results Search Rate	Median Engaged Position	Search Engagement Rate	Search Click-Through Rate	Search Success Rate	Time to Search Success	Search Revenue Rate
Beauty	**7.4%**	**6.4**	**34.7%**	**25.4%**	**46.4%**	**34.3 sec**	**69%**
TOTAL	6%	5.5	35.6%	30.1%	51.7%	37.7 sec	55%

Health and Beauty E-commerce retailers showed significantly higher Search Conversion Rate and in Search Revenue Rate indicating that retailers who optimize their search can reap big rewards.

Due to the unique nature of this space including a wide range of products, frequent price changes, promotional periods, and the importance of product ingredients, search is a difficult area to tackle.

To fully optimize their search, Health & Beauty retailers should:

- implement real time updates to accurately reflect discounts and product availability

- personalize search results to match shopper preferences, such as brand and skin type

- include dynamic filters to let shoppers filter products based on ingredients

- leverage guided selling tools like skincare quizzes to help shoppers find suitable products

Merchandising is an important tool for Health & Beauty retailers, not only to highlight sales periods and promote the products they want to sell, but also as an effective way to promote brands.

Retailers can use this functionality to create brand specific landing pages that allow shoppers to browse through one brand's product range. For example, if a shopper searches for 'Dove', they can be re-directed to Dove's landing page and filter through Dove's shower gels, deodorants, and lotions with Intent Clarification tiles placed at the top of the page.

FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods)

The FMCG industry differs from the aggregated industry benchmarks in several areas:

Industry	Zero Results Search Rate	Median Engaged Position	Search Engagement Rate	Search Click-Through Rate	Search Success Rate	Time to Search Success	Search Revenue Rate
FMCG	**8.3%**	**5.9**	**21.9%**	**20%**	**49.6%**	**45.7 sec**	**54%**
TOTAL	6%	5.5	35.6%	30.1%	51.7%	37.7 sec	55%

These differences can be attributed to the unique nature of the FMCG sector, such as large and complex product catalogs, and shoppers tending to place orders with many items at once.

Online FMCG shoppers often search for very specific terms related to their favorite brands and products, which may be named differently in the product catalog. Typos are also common in this vertical, so retailers need to be able to effectively handle these common issues.

In order to address these challenges, FMCG E-commerce retailers should focus on:

- utilizing dynamic and faceted filters to enable shoppers to narrow down results

- leverage the latest search relevance technology (vector search) to understand natural, everyday language

- keep product details like price, discount, and availability up to date in real-time

- allow shoppers to add products to their basket directly from the autocomplete

Retailers should keep in mind that shoppers may just be using the online search in order to see if certain products are in stock at the physical location nearest to them. Because of this, FMCG retailers should allow shoppers to filter to a specific location and search just within that store's stock.

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Online Pharmacy

The online pharmacy sector differs from the overall average in several areas:

Industry	Zero Results Search Rate	Median Engaged Position	Search Engagement Rate	Search Click-Through Rate	Search Success Rate	Time to Search Success	Search Revenue Rate
Pharmacy	**6.5%**	**2.7**	**50%**	**29.4%**	**56.5%**	**28.1 sec**	**74%**
TOTAL	6%	5.5	35.6%	30.1%	51.7%	37.7 sec	55%

Pharmacies have the highest Search Revenue Rate and highest Search Conversion Rate because shoppers on an online pharmacy typically have high purchase intent and immediately go to the search bar with a specific product in mind.

To maximize online revenue from search, retailers should:

- manage synonyms efficiently and effectively, as shoppers often search for brands or symptoms instead of specific product names

- allow shoppers to add products to their basket directly from the autocomplete

- leverage vector search as it can understand a wider range of search queries and the meaning behind them

KEY TAKEAWAYS

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SITE SEARCH INDUSTRY BENCHMARK REPORT

Importance of Search in E-commerce

Revenue Contribution: Although only 16% of shoppers use the search function on E-commerce websites, they account for 55% of the total online revenue. This highlights that search users are 6.4 times more likely to convert, making effective search functionalities crucial for E-commerce success.

Because search is such an important driver of online revenue, e-retailers need to make sure their search is performing well before the holidays arrive in order to make the most of the increased traffic during the holiday season.

Personalization: Personalized search results can significantly enhance the shopping experience, with recommendations potentially contributing up to 26% of revenue. Customers increasingly expect businesses to understand their unique needs, emphasizing the importance of intelligent and responsive search systems.

Key Metrics

Zero Result Search Rate: This measures the proportion of searches that yield no relevant results. The overall rate remained largely the same from 5.53% in 2023 to 6.04% in 2024 H1. Industry-specific rates vary, with fashion having the highest at 10.7% and DIY the lowest at 3.66%.

Search Engagement Rate: Overall, 35.6% of searches resulted in user engagement (clicks or cart events) in 2024 H1, slightly down from 36.8% in 2023. Online pharmacy retailers had the highest engagement rate at 50%, while FMCG had the lowest at 21.9%.

Search Conversion Rate: This rate dropped from 6.3% in 2023 to 5.4% in 2024 H1. Online pharmacy retailers had the highest conversion rate at 20%, while fashion had the lowest.

Search Revenue Rate: This metric, indicating the percentage of revenue generated by users who used the search function, was 55% in 2024 H1, up slightly from 54% in 2023. Online pharmacies had the highest revenue rate from search users at 74%, while fashion had the lowest at 39%.

Industry Insights

Fashion: High zero result rates and low conversion rates suggest a need for better product discovery features such as recommendations and personalization.

DIY: Low zero result search rates indicate effective synonym management and search functionality tailored to industry-specific needs.

Consumer Electronics: Similar to fashion, these sites benefit from detailed and dynamic filters and rich product information to improve search engagement due to the fact shoppers often browse their large product catalogs.

Health & Beauty: High conversion and revenue rates highlight the importance of real-time inventory updates, seamless navigation, and personalized search results.

FMCG: High zero result rates and low engagement and conversion rates suggest room for improvement in search optimization.

Pharmacy: This industry shows high engagement and conversion rates, emphasizing the effectiveness of targeted search solutions and the direct shopping behavior of users.

These takeaways underline the critical role of optimized search functionalities in enhancing user experience, driving engagement, and boosting conversions and revenue in E-commerce.

ABOUT THE SPONSORS

About Prefixbox

Prefixbox is a leading AI-powered product search and discovery solution for E-commerce retailers. AI Search, Recommend, and Navigation suites help retailers increase conversion rate and revenue without needing manual optimization. For more information visit: www.prefixbox.com.

Search is hard, Prefixbox makes it easy.

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