

SEMrush Annual E-commerce study

Trends for 2018



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Introduction

The end of 2017 provides an opportunity to identify strong and weak points of your current activities as well as determine necessary changes in the strategy of your on-line store. The increasingly competitive world of e-commerce challenges companies and makes them adjust their marketing strategy to an ever changing market. So how does your online business compare with other businesses in your industry?

To help you assess where you stand and make informed decisions about your marketing strategy and budget, we gathered and analyzed data from a wide spectrum of major e-commerce industries to show the sources and types of their website traffic, how they leverage advertising, the usage of the emotions in their ads and the makeup of their backlink profiles.

Moreover, we looked into the e-commerce websites' use of secure (HTTPS) versus traditional (HTTP) domain URLs and hreflang attribute (for surfacing search results and website pages in the correct language or regional URL).

We hope you find the insights gleaned from our research helpful in formulating a smart, cost-effective strategy for your e-commerce site going forward, be it a small business or international enterprise.



Methodology: How We Did What We Did

We started off with a big set of data consisting of more than 8,000 of the most visited e-commerce websites from different countries (US, UK, Spain, Italy, Germany and France to name but a few). In order to avoid calculation errors, we didn't collect data for countries where Google is a secondary search engine (China, Korea, etc).

The e-commerce sites in our research represent 13 different industry categories:

- 1 Sports & Recreation
- 2 Children
- 3 Food / Nearfood
- 4 Electronics
- 5 Health
- 6 Home & Garden
- 7 Clothing
- 8 Books
- 9 Furniture
- 10 Flowers
- 11 Jewelry
- 12 Music
- 13 Travel



Then, using the SEMrush data, we culled the following information for each category:

- The sources of website traffic and their relative significance
- The amount invested in advertising
- The type and size of display ads, devices targeted, and use of Google Product Listing Ads (PLAs)
- The relative types of backlinks *
- The emotional triggers used in ads **

For the e-commerce sites researched as a whole, our data analysis revealed:

- The distribution of organic site traffic between mobile and desktop, as well as by country
- The search engine results page (SERP features for site rankings) ***
- The most popular phrases, guarantee and call-to-action (CTA) language used in ads
- The top backlinks anchor words and phrases
- HTTPS vs. HTTP version of the websites and prevalence of the hreflang attribute ****

* **Traffic Sources breakdown, Organic traffic distribution, Advertising trends, Backlinks in numbers:** data for those parts is collected from more than 8000 websites worldwide over the period of January 1 to November 30 2017.

** **Emotional Triggers:** The data for this part is representing the frequency of usage of phrases in Ads, basing in 4M of Ads from different categories.

*** **SERP features:** SERP features change daily and correlate heavily with overall Google SERP volatility, hence we decided to only show the data for the October 2017. Data for this part is based on the percentage of SERPs where this feature appears in top 20 results.

**** **Technical issues:** Here the readers will find information based on sites' technical condition in November's.

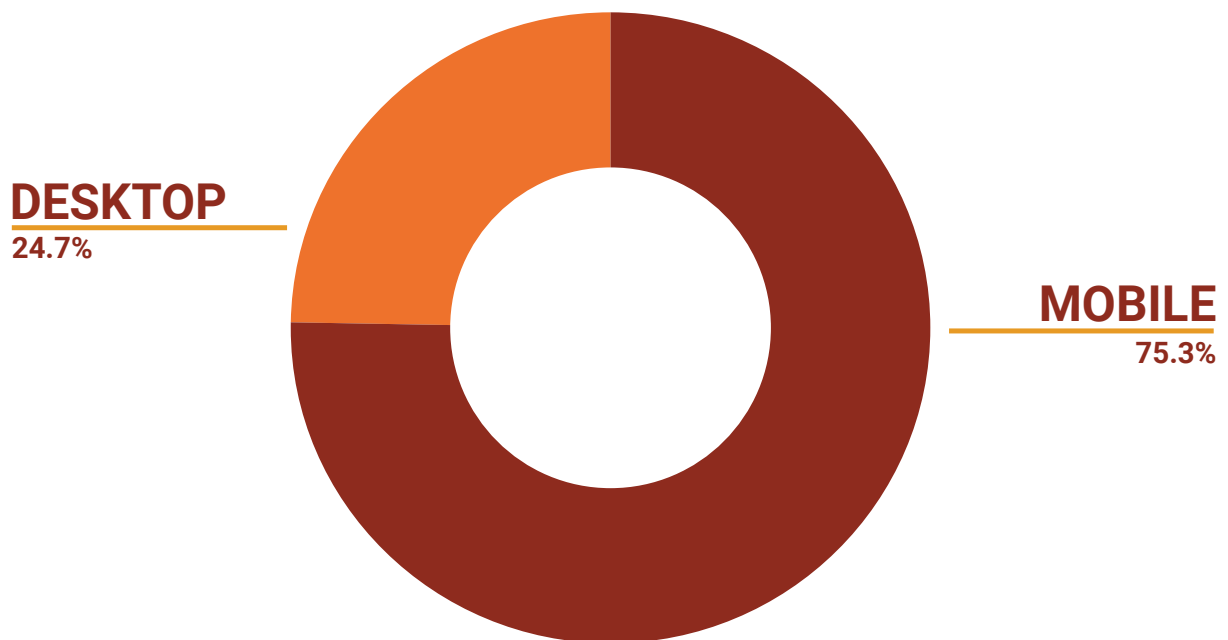
With that, let's take a deep dive into the research findings...



E-commerce websites traffic

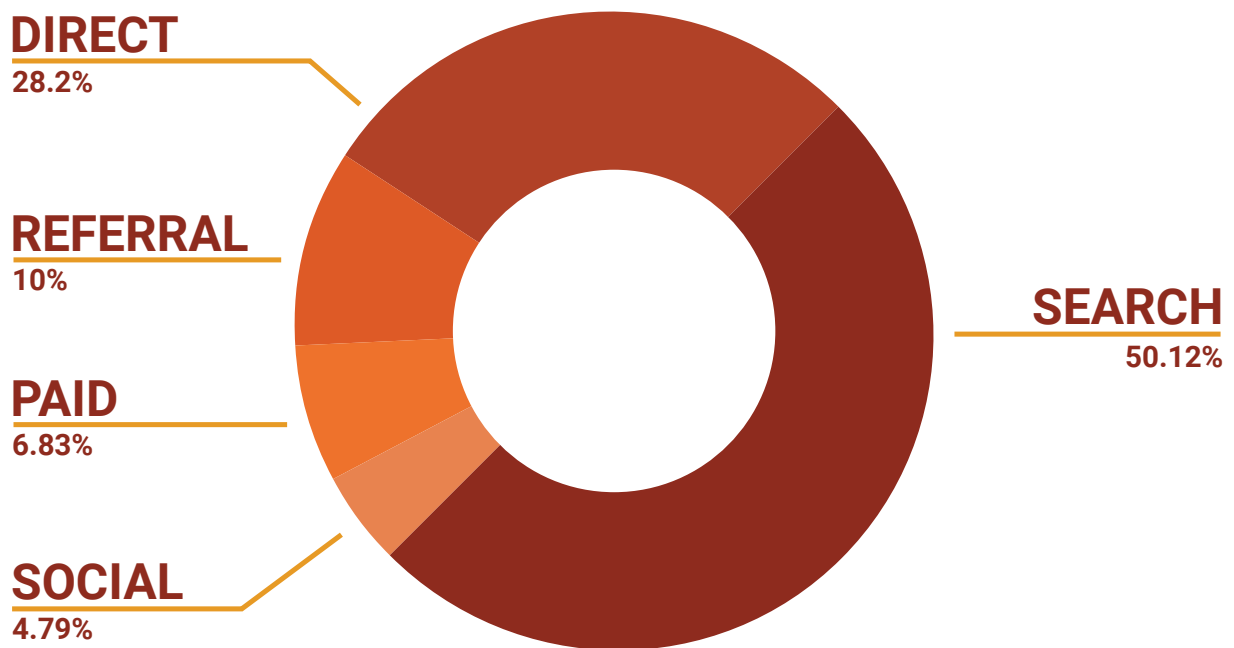
Traffic Analytics

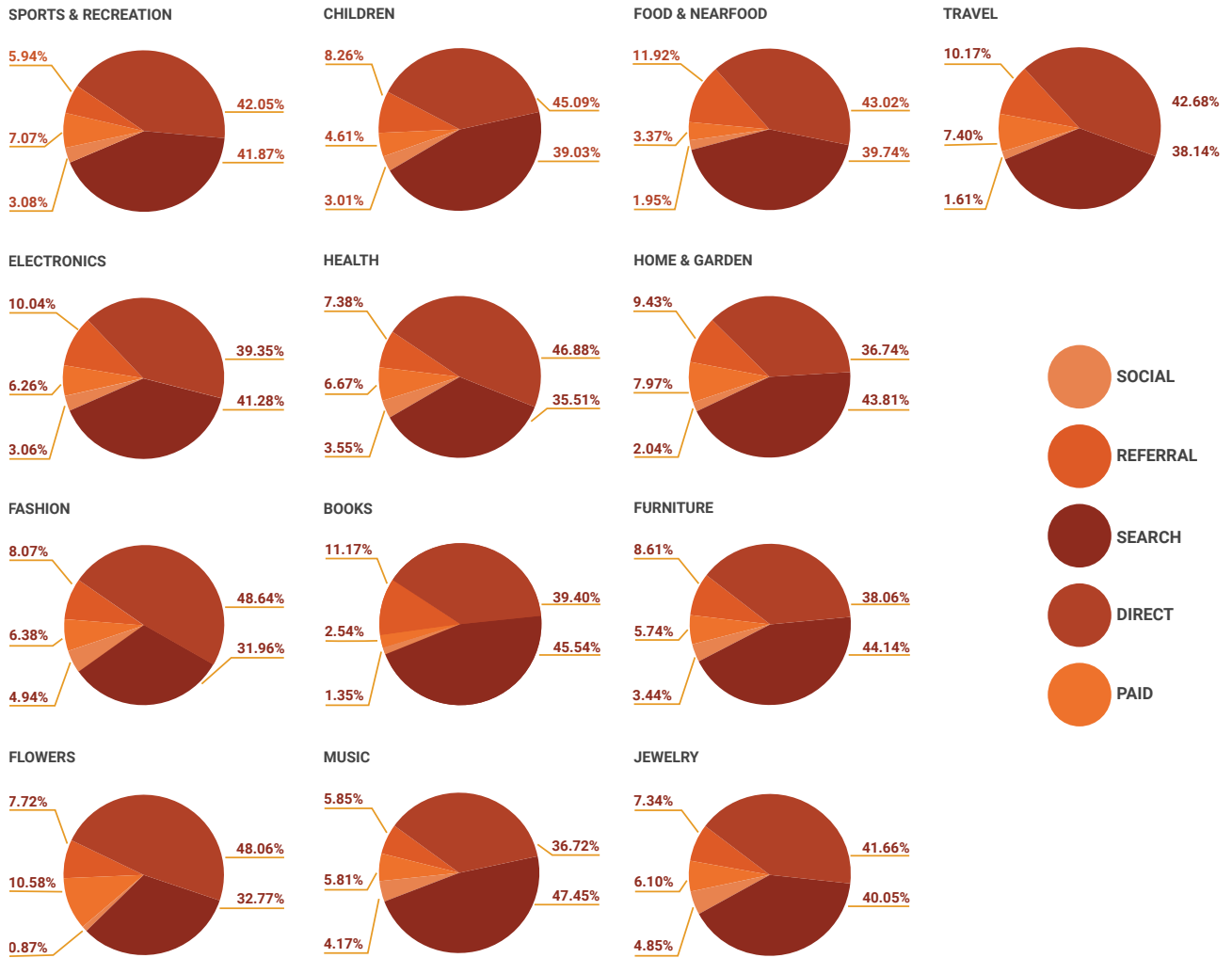
A traffic analysis of e-commerce websites showed that mobile traffic accounts for as much as 75% percent of all the traffic share – apparently, visitors to e-commerce websites mostly use mobile devices to navigate web pages. Site owners and webmasters should adapt to this trend by making sure their websites are optimized for mobile performance in terms of page speed and site design.



Sources of E-Commerce Website Traffic

Of the five sources of e-commerce website traffic — direct, referral, search, social, and Google Ads (that is presented as paid) — search traffic claims the lion's share.





Search is the primary source of site traffic for five of the categories, followed by direct. Combined, direct and search traffic account for over 80% of all e-commerce website traffic among all the industry verticals studied.

Referral via links from other websites is the third most significant channel of total website traffic, with the exception of sports & recreation and flowers. Google paid advertising claims the third spot for these two categories.

Social media drives the least amount of traffic to e-commerce sites for all 13 categories.

What it means to you as a marketer

The relative dominance of direct traffic can be attributed to good brand awareness and brand loyalty. However, in and of itself, brand familiarity and repeat business is not a scalable strategy for long-term growth.

With search playing such a significant role in driving e-commerce traffic, it is well worth your while to invest in both pay-per-click (PPC) and organic search engine optimization (SEO) informed by a smart keyword strategy and competitive intelligence.

Both well-targeted paid ads and solid organic search practices are scalable

strategies that complement each other by raising brand awareness, keeping your company front and center as shopper's search for your product or service.

It is also recommended to build out your scalable organic strategy by expanding referral traffic. Cultivating a strong backlink profile of high authority domains serves to improve site ranking on the search engine results pages (SERPs) as well.


Finally, while social brings the least amount of traffic to the e-commerce categories we researched, it isn't without value in spreading word of mouth about your brand...and like organic traffic, it's free!

How SEMrush helps

Traffic Analytics

shows the sources of your own and your competitors' website traffic. You can view direct, search, referral, paid and social traffic as a whole, or separated by channel.

Our estimates are based on clickstream data originating from multiple proprietary and third-party data sources.

Analyze the traffic of your competitors 

Brand Monitoring

allows you to monitor your brand's reputation, as well as your online rivals', by tracking mentions and customer reviews across the digital space.

Filter results by source and date, discover new word-of-mouth opportunities for brand promotion, and create marketing buzz around your product or service.

Monitor your brand 

Backlinks

helps you conduct a deep link analysis of all referring domains' authority, gain competitive link intelligence on your rivals' backlinks, spot new referral traffic sources, and improve your link building strategy with the insights gained.

View the types and geolocation of all your site's incoming links, see anchor texts, and discover both the referring site's and your site's target webpages.

Check your backlinks



Organic Research

offers insights for powerful competitive intelligence.

See your online competitors' best performing keywords and organic content strategies both in desktop and mobile search. Evaluate the value of keywords against the key web performance indicators, discover new organic competition, and track changes in your domain's position in the SERPs relative to your rivals.

Get competitive intel



Keyword Magic Tool

gives you millions keyword ideas for building a profitable SEO or PPC campaign.

Discover long-tail keyword opportunities for rich content and higher search rankings and select the best keywords for your campaign. Estimate how much traffic they'll bring by determining their click potential with real-time metrics of search volume, keyword difficulty, competitive density and CPC data.

Create your profitable campaign



Social Media Tracker

reveals both your own and your competitors' best-performing posts with the highest engagement rates across multiple social media platforms, giving you detailed information about likes/dislikes, views, shares and comments to inform your social media strategy.

Track mentions and the hottest trending topics in your industry, and easily build reports on your social media campaigns to showcase your results.

Develop your social media strategy



Organic Traffic Insights

merges Google Analytics and Google Search Console data to reveal the 99% of 'not provided' keywords. Discover not only which keywords are driving search traffic to each page of your website, but which of them are resulting in conversions.

Gain insights into key customer behavior metrics such as the number of sessions, their duration and bounce rate.

Uncover your not provided keywords



PPC Keyword Tool

allows you to easily collect keywords through multiple channels, manage and optimize your keyword lists, efficiently eliminate duplicate and competing keywords, and perfect your PPC campaign with a polished keyword list.

Optimize your PPC campaign



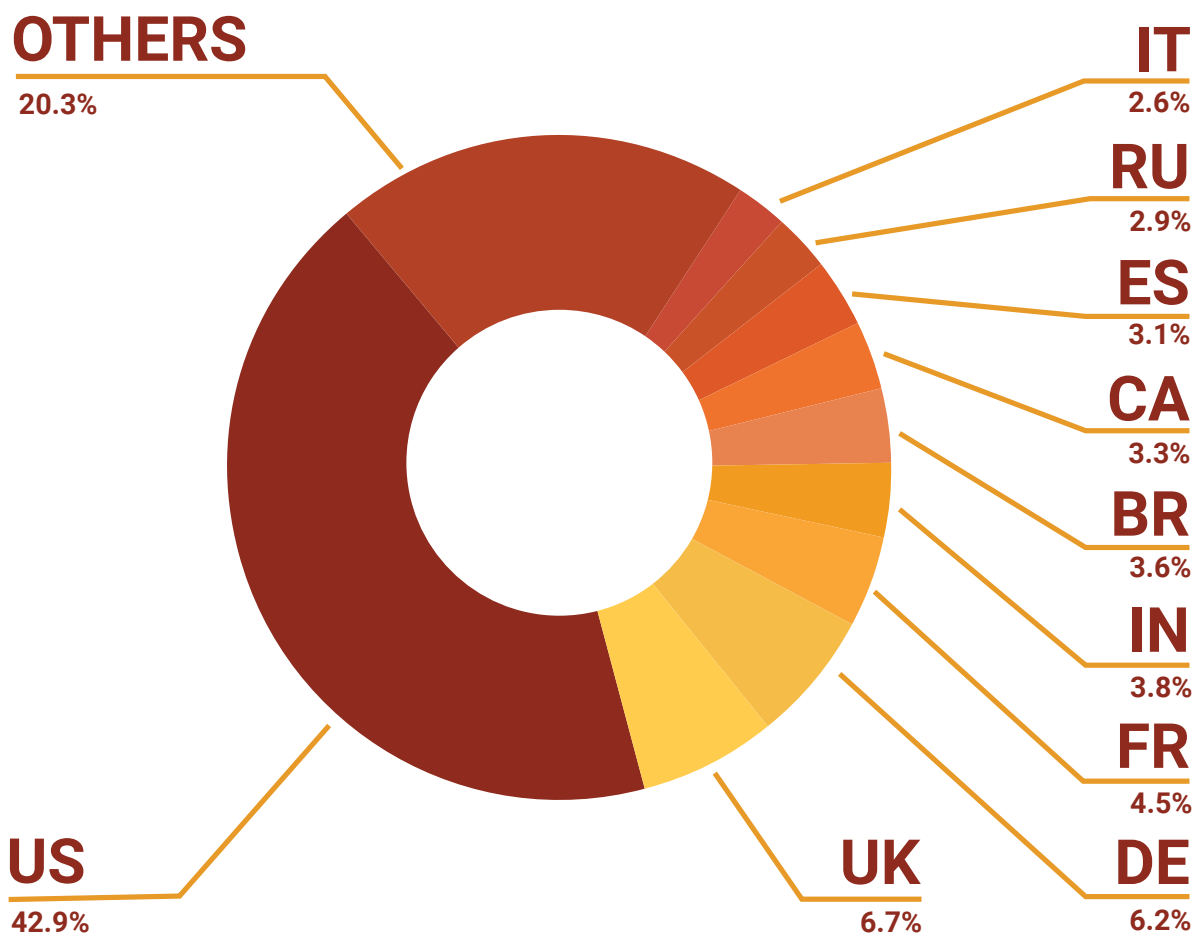


Organic Traffic Distribution

Countries Distribution of Organic Search Traffic

The US leads the international pack as the country of origin for organic search traffic, accounting for 42.9% of traffic for all 13 categories combined. It also is the primary country driving traffic to each industry vertical in our study.

Other countries combined, outside of the individual countries listed, account for 20.34% of organic search traffic to all the e-commerce categories in the research.





- The UK is a far distant second to the US as a source of organic search traffic, and Germany third, both for all categories as a whole and separately. The UK is second to the US for seven of the verticals, Germany for four, and Russia for two.
- The UK is a significant source of traffic to travel, sports & recreation, jewelry, home & garden, food/nearfood, flowers, and clothing categories. German searchers are most interested in music, health, furniture and electronics, while those from Russia search more for children and books.
- When the third largest origins of organic search traffic are considered, the countries are more diverse. India, Brazil, France, Canada and Ukraine are represented in this grouping.

What it means to you as a marketer

While most of the organic search traffic to the e-commerce industries studied come from English-speaking countries, it's important to ensure the best user experience for any visitor from any country.

The way to do this is to implement "hreflang" attribute to display your site's web pages in the correct language. Google also recommends using hreflang for content with small regional variations, such as those between the US and Great Britain.

If, like most business owners, coding is not your area of expertise, then it's highly recommended you consult someone fluent in international SEO.



How SEMrush helps

Site Audit

ensures your web pages are literally up to speed so you can take advantage of the Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) format that dominates mobile search results globally.

Allow us to check the page load time and overall health of your site.

The International SEO catches hreflang attribute implementation issues in its international SEO report. Ensure you consistently deliver the best user experience with up-to-date International SEO reports to discover hreflang issues.

Audit your website and improve your UX 

Position Tracking

allows you to track your website's organic search ranking on mobile and desktop, create multilingual campaigns for any locale worldwide, and spot local competitors that are ranking in Google's top 100 results for the same keywords that you're targeting.

Inform your multi-device marketing campaigns with insights into your website's keyword rankings and site positions in desktop, tablet and smartphone.

Create smart multi-device campaigns 

Organic Research

gives you insights into your competitors' mobile and desktop organic search strategies.

Uncover what keywords your online rivals are targeting for both their mobile and desktop platforms, and leverage that competitive intelligence to inform your own organic search strategies for mobile and desktop campaigns.

Discover mobile vs. desktop strategies 



SERP Features for E-Commerce

This is just an introductory excerpt

You can download the full version here:

<https://www.semrush.com/ebooks/ecommercetrends/>