

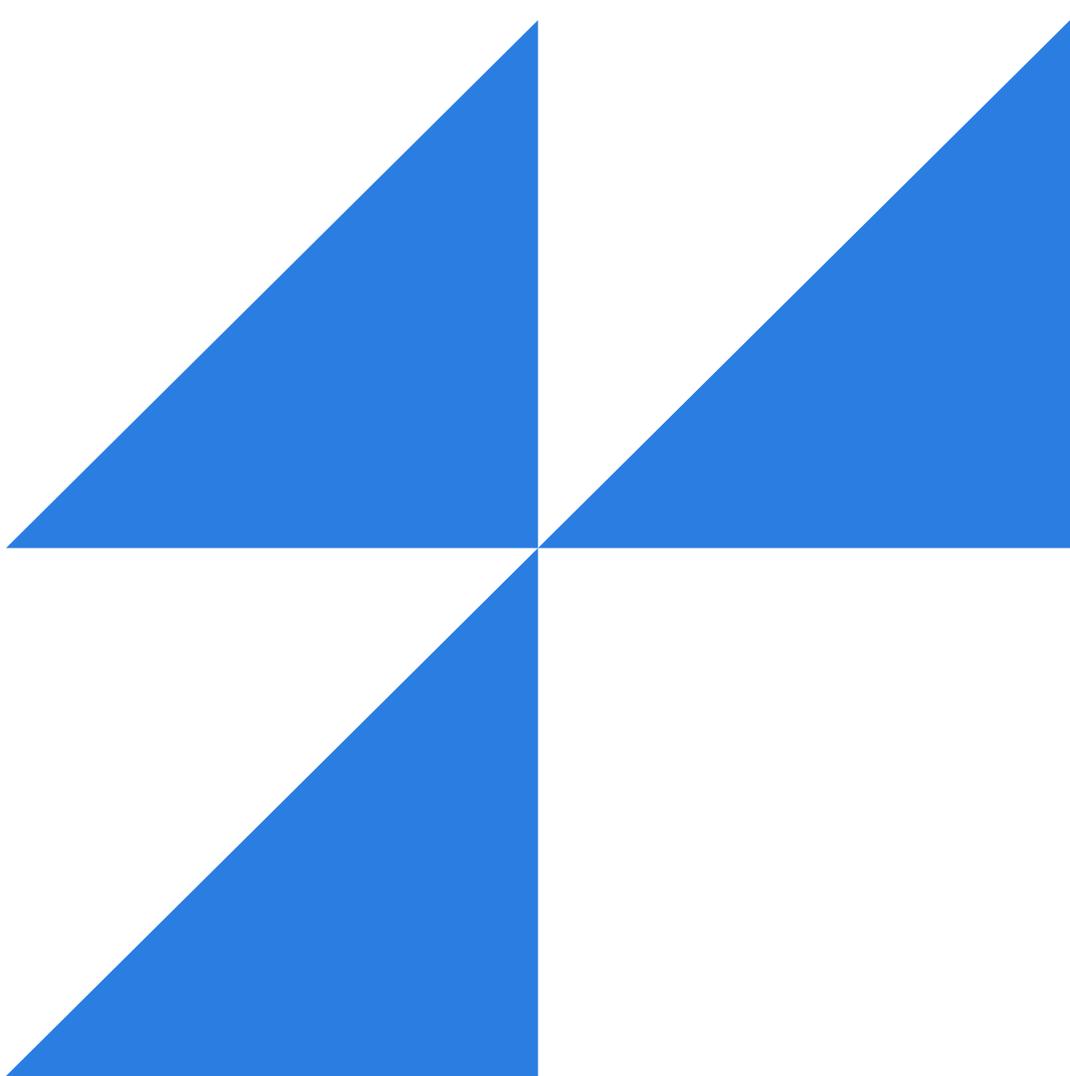


EXPERTS COMMENT ON THE

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# TOP ECOMMERCE TRENDS FOR 2020

IMPRESSION



# Introduction

In 2017, global ecommerce sales reached \$2.3 trillion – this figure is expected to **increase to \$3.9 trillion by 2020**. Like most areas of digital marketing, the ecommerce sector is evolving as fast as it's growing. New tools and techniques emerge all the time and it's important to stay on top of the latest trends.

With this in mind, we've consulted some industry experts and put together a white paper on the top ecommerce trends for 2020. A wide range of different contributors have weighed in with their views, ranging from directors of global ecommerce platforms to academics who have written textbooks on their topics.

Over the course of the report, we'll cover 10 trends that could potentially have a significant impact on the world of ecommerce over the next few years. Kicking things off with voice search, we'll go on to discuss structured data, position zero SEO, native advertising, user-generated content, shoppable social media posts, augmented reality, entity salience and natural language processing, chatbot technology, and email marketing.



# Voice Search

According to [Nielsen](#), one in four American homes owned a smart speaker in 2018 and 20% of queries made through the Google Search app in 2016 were voice searches.

Moreover, [Bright Local](#) found that 58% of consumers had used voice search to find a local business in the last 12 months. Given the meteoric rise of voice search, it has the potential to shape the future of ecommerce as we move into 2020.

We spoke to two high-ranking figures in digital commerce-related companies to get their expert views. Ed Kennedy is a senior director at the global ecommerce platform, [Episerver](#). Guy Redwood is the founder of [SimpleUsability](#), a behavioural research company that specialises in web, mobile, and voice usability.

**“One of the most important innovations of the next ten years”**

Ed defines voice search as “a user experience feature of modern websites and mobile apps that allows users to search for items on a website by simply speaking into their mobile device or virtual private assistant (VPA) [e.g. Amazon Echo, Google Home]”.

The experts we spoke to consider voice search to be “one of the most important innovations of the next ten years”. Adding to this, Guy argues that the practice of using voice commands instead of typing into a search bar “will soon become embedded in everything we engage with.”

Whilst voice search will certainly have an impact on many aspects of our lives, what effect will it have on ecommerce specifically? Guy says that “until recently, search engine optimisation solely focused on keywords and behaviour of website visitors via a keyboard. Now it’s imperative your strategy takes into account how your customers use voice-activated devices such as Alexa, Siri or Google Home.”

There are particular changes you can make to your digital strategy in order to optimise for voice search. It’s important to keep the tone of your content natural and take long-tail keywords into consideration where possible (these are more likely to be used in voice searches). Other suggestions include structuring content around frequently asked questions and obtaining rich snippets, which are often read out by VPAs in response to a query.



**“Commerce transactions from VPAs are still low”**

In terms of consumers converting through VPAs, however, Ed suggests that opportunities are limited at the moment: “Convenience and repeat purchases are the most common VPA-driven commerce experiences and will likely remain there for some time [...] in VPA scenarios, where no screen is present, reading back search results from a VPA can be an overwhelming user experience. As such, commerce transactions from VPAs are still low.”

He gives the example of someone trying to find an outfit using voice search. Imagine a user asking Alexa to find them an outfit for an event – even if Amazon produced the relevant results, it’s unlikely that the user would listen to the descriptions of these outfits and make a purchase without looking at them.

## “Immediate voice to search functions are beginning to appear on websites”

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From Ed’s perspective, the future of voice search is still bright. He expects that “as VPAs with touch-enabled screens become more ubiquitous and consumers cycle out their first-generation Echos or Google Homes, we will see an uptick in voice commerce.” Although he warns that “we’re not quite there yet,” he would “not be surprised to see this feature playing a bigger role in VPA voice commerce in 2020.”

Looking forward to 2020 and beyond, there are exciting changes on the horizon for voice search and ecommerce. Ed says that “immediate voice to search functions are beginning to appear on websites, including Amazon.com’s website and mobile app. Consumers will begin to expect these functions on most ecommerce websites, but not for one or two years.”

Based on his recent client work, Guy sees voice search expanding into industries that you wouldn’t previously have anticipated: “we can expect to see businesses you’d perhaps not even consider relevant to voice search having to adapt quickly. We’ve recently completed a voice search research project for a landscaping materials manufacturer, so even in the B2B sector it’s becoming prevalent.”



# Structured Data

Structured data markup is a useful tool for ecommerce marketers. It enables Google to recognise the purpose of a page instantly – pages can be marked up as product pages or blog posts, for example.

The snippet below demonstrates Google's Structured Data Testing tool, where users can assess the format of their structured data.

Product	<b>PREVIEW</b>	0 ERRORS	5 WARNINGS	^
<b>@type</b>	Product			
<b>image</b>	https://images.asos-media.com/products/nike-tall-club-full-zip-hoodie-in-grey/12495774-1-grey			
<b>itemCondition</b>	http://schema.org/NewCondition			
<b>productID</b>	12495774			
<b>sku</b>	12495774			
<b>name</b>	Nike Tall Club full zip hoodie in grey			
<b>description</b>	Nike Tall Club full zip hoodie in grey at ASOS. Shop this season's must haves with multiple delivery and return options (Ts&Cs apply).			
<b>brand</b>				
<b>@type</b>	Brand			
<b>name</b>	Nike			
<b>offers</b>				
<b>@type</b>	Offer			
<b>availability</b>	http://schema.org/InStock			
<b>priceCurrency</b>	GBP			
<b>price</b>	48			
<b>eligibleRegion</b>	GB			
<b>seller</b>				
<b>@type</b>	Organization			

Structured data can also be used to improve the appearance of search engine results pages (SERPs), enabling them to list information such as the price, review ratings, and stock levels of products on the page itself. In this way, using structured data markup can help to improve click-through rates (CTRs)

Even in 2019, it's a ubiquitous feature of digital marketing, playing an important role in the world of ecommerce. Many ecommerce brands are already using structured data markup, with [schema data appearing in 33% of Google SERPs](#).

## “Structured data is taking up more and more real estate within SERPs”

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Our discussions with two structured data experts confirmed its significance. Ryan Cecil, marketing manager at [RegEx SEO](#), argues that it's “impact has been huge for several years now”. Matt Seabridge, digital marketing specialist at [Attain Design](#), also notes that “structured data is taking up more and more real estate within SERPs.”

Structured data is vital to both users' and search engines' understanding of content. “Without properly implemented schema,” Ryan argues, “it would be really hard from the user's perspective to differentiate between similar products from different brands.”

At the same time, Ryan notes that “search engines are getting better and better at understanding structured data, using more and more different properties. All that affects how and what is displayed in search results - from pricing to reviews to descriptions etc.”

With regard to the future of structured data and ecommerce, Matt thinks that its influence could become more widespread: whilst “SEOs and Google themselves claim that [structured data isn't a ranking factor](#) [...] at some point down the road, Google might use structured data to monitor CTAs and thus boost your SEO.”

## “We'll see even more schema types launched within the next year or two”

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The use of structured data is also linked to the rise of voice search. To facilitate the increasing number of voice searches, Matt believes “we'll see even more schema types launched within the next year or two, putting ecommerce sites in an even better position to sell directly from SERPs and through voice-based searches.”

Both Ryan and Matt argue that it will be important to keep abreast of developments in structured data over the next few years. Matt points out that updates to structured data functionalities are common.

For example, “Google has recently introduced new rules to the reviews schema”. This update means that fewer rich snippet reviews will be shown in SERPs in order to prevent self-serving reviews (when a business reviews themselves online).

## “Whenever a new property is announced, run and implement it as soon as you can”

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He also highlights how ecommerce businesses can take advantage of changes to structured data such as the introduction of FAQ schema, which will enable brands to “attract users at the earlier research stage of their purchasing journey.”

Consider the following example: a user may search for “how to sew a dress”. Matt suggests that “an ecommerce site in the sewing industry can stand out from other sites ranking for ‘how to sew a dress’ by implementing FAQ schema on a tutorial page. This will allow their search result to stand out in the SERPs and attract the user to their site before they even start researching sites that sell sewing machines.”

Concluding our section on structured data, Ryan recommends “keep[ing] an eye on Google updates, and what properties are actually being used. And, whenever a new property is announced, run and implement it as soon as you can. Otherwise, your website will fall behind, users will go to your competitors, and you will lose sales.”

# Position Zero SEO

The term position zero SEO refers to the practice of trying to obtain featured snippets on Google SERPs.

There are many different types of featured snippet, including paragraphs, numbered lists, bulleted lists, tables, videos, and two-for-ones (where Google pulls information from two sites and combines them, such as text from one site and an image from another).

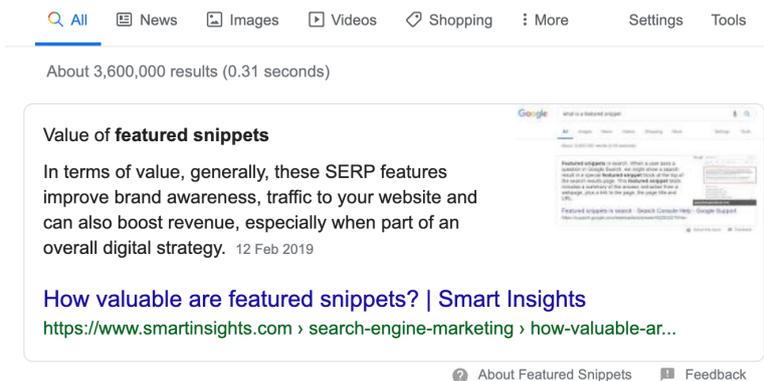
According to a study conducted by Ahrefs, **12.3% of Google search queries display featured snippets**. This same study also evidenced the value of obtaining featured snippets: sites that hold the first position in a SERP and also have a featured snippet **gain 31% more traffic** on average than those which just have the first position.

We interviewed Khalid Farhan, founder of digital marketing agency **Passive Journal**, to find out more about the importance of position zero SEO to ecommerce in particular. He argues that featured snippets are less important to ecommerce firms than other Internet-based companies due to the fact that “position zero results are generated for question queries (how to, where etc.)”

It is true that product pages will not be used as featured snippets for questions queries. However, as Matt suggested in relation to structured data, it is still possible for ecommerce brands to create helpful, informative FAQ page and tutorials that target prospects at the research phase of the purchase journey.

Due to the fact that featured snippets present users with information on the SERP itself, Khalid believes that “position zero will reduce CTRs.” He argues that “when people have what they are looking for on a SERP, they don’t have enough incentive to click on the listing”.

There is much controversy, however, surrounding the effect of featured snippets on CTR. Some studies support Ahrefs’ finding that holding position zero increases traffic: tracking a key page on his client’s site, Ben Goodsell found that obtaining a featured snippet resulted in a **516% increase in sessions**.



Whilst Khalid sees position zero as detrimental to traffic generation, he believes that holding featured snippets can be a great boost to your online branding efforts: “if you can market your position zero queries in a way that it promotes your branding, that will create a ripple effect which will improve your brand recognition and generate passive sales.”

Khalid personally recommends striving for position zero regardless of the effect on CTR – “even though it might not help you improve your traffic”, featured snippets will ensure that “you push down your competitors on SERPs”.

In relation to the future of position zero SEO, Khalid believes that legal troubles may curb the influence of featured snippets in years to come. “With Google fighting lawsuits all around Europe about data and snippets, I personally don’t think there will be much development in the featured snippet world in 2020. If anything, we will probably see a drop in position zero rankings for most queries.”

Only time will tell how featured snippets will affect ecommerce during the next few years.

# Native Advertising

Native advertising is a form of advertising which blends in with the style and function of the site it is featured on. It can often take the form of recommended content on publications or social media posts, intended to fit naturally with the platform rather than as an obvious advert.

Studies suggest that native advertising may be more effective than conventional ads. According to [Outbrain](#), consumers look at native ads 53% more than display ads, with native ads creating an 18% increase in purchase intent.

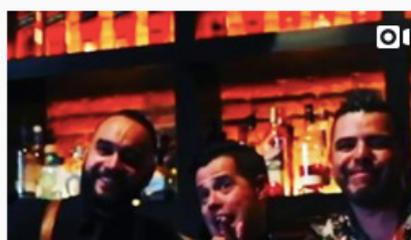
To find out more about how native advertising will impact ecommerce in the next few years, we spoke to a whole host of experts, including Steve Sharp, director of [Fat Cow Media](#), Nik Andreev, digital marketing specialist at [Compare My Move](#), Jacek Wieczorek, co-founder of SEO agency [Pulno](#), Holly Grave, paid media director at [Banc](#), and Gary Taylor, deputy MD of media and digital agency [tmwi Ltd](#).

Jacek states that native advertising is different to other forms of advertising due to its ability to “reach millions of potential users and engage them instead of just irritating them.” Expanding on this, Steve suggests that native ads “appear in a more natural way to the viewer as opposed to interrupting their user experience.”

With native advertising, ads can be tailored specifically to the brand’s advertising platform of choice. Jacek describes how “there are many flexible formats to choose from, starting with news feed mentions, through to regular text, to video ads.”

**“By the time 2019 is out, native advertising will account for 61% of digital display ad spend.”**

Steve claims that native advertising is one of the fastest growing advertising segments: he suggests that, by 2020, “native advertising will be the number one digital advertising segment.” This viewpoint is supported by Nik, who thinks of the ad format as “a breath of fresh air for ecommerce brands”.



Native advertising on Instagram from Patrón – can you spot the advert?

According to Nik, native ads employ the “same marketing principle” as other channels, requiring “message relevancy, well-thought-out user targeting, and engaging, creative content” to succeed.

The idea of integrated marketing communications (IMC) still applies here, too. As Nik suggests, “brands will have to remember to use consistent branding across ads as users are less likely to blindly trust an ad or a website.”

“A slight decline is predicted in social numbers, which I would expect is largely due to concerns around Facebook’s ad-serving tools and ever-changing ad policies,” claims Steve. He suggests that although this trend will increase, so users should not expect big things from native advertising on social.

The experts give further warnings about understanding the process of creating native ads. Nik cautions that “it takes time to optimise, learn and improve results. It will be important to stay focused and always align with the wider business objectives”. He also suggests that native ads might not be the right approach for certain products and ecommerce brands should “avoid jumping on it” unless it fits their strategy.

Jacek echoes this point, suggesting that ecommerce brands should focus on using strategies which appeal to their customers. He expects that consumers will increasingly notice and understand native ads as a form of advertising, so brands must take into account how their existing customer segments will respond to it.

There is a particular focus on reaching the younger generations through native ads. Gary argues that “mobile native is the battleground and millennials are the target. These consumers have grown up in an age of super high-quality content on social platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok etc. and expect the same from brands and publishers.”

**“Too much opportunity is being lost when great content is not being seen at the right point in the purchase cycle.”**

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Looking forward to 2020, Holly urges ecommerce brands to take time to understand native advertising better. She suggests that a better understanding of native ads “along with its attributed contribution to sales” is key to influencing consumers and encouraging them to convert.

Jacek predicts that “new display formats for native ads” will emerge in 2020, “especially with the growing popularity of virtual reality.” This makes native advertising definitely one to watch for 2020, with investments from ecommerce firms already on the rise.



# User-Generated Content

User-generated content (UGC) is any content that is created and shared in a publicly accessible place by non-marketers.

It can take any of a number of forms. James Klymowsky, founder of [Peddler.com](https://www.peddler.com), notes that UGC “could be a picture of a meal at a restaurant, a beautiful shot of a destination, an unboxing video or a full review of a product.”

For these reasons, the rise of UGC has shaken up the world of ecommerce. Increasing reliance on advice from peers and the proliferation of UGC have forced ecommerce brands to take note.

“UGC has added a whole new layer to brand advocacy”

As James suggests, “UGC has added a whole new layer to brand advocacy and challenged brands to become smarter about how to use the voice of their customers. The winners in 2019 were those able to start a real conversation with their audience, either by challenging it or adding a social element to the campaigns that speak directly to Generation Z.”

But what of the future of UGC and ecommerce? “As the share of consumers from Generation Z increases,” James says, “we should expect any trends related to their online behaviour to accentuate.” This is likely to mean greater production of UGC and greater emphasis on it during the consumer decision-making process.

Content personalisation has been thought of as an important aspect of digital marketing for a while now. James argues, however, that “personalising content for the audience is simply no longer good enough”. In 2020 and beyond, ecommerce marketers will have to let go of the reins, “learn[ing] to focus less on anticipating what will work and more on listening to what in fact resonated with the audience”.

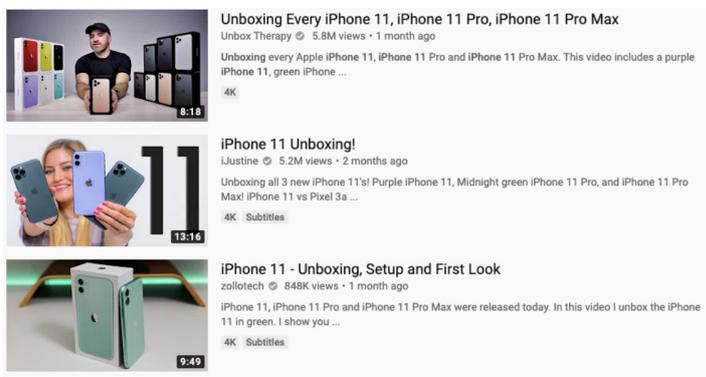
E-commerce companies are beginning to adapt to the increased importance of UGC. James has informed us that Peddler, for example, is launching the next generation of its Social Marketplace. This platform will aggregate user-generated content, providing a space for users to share videos, pictures, or written reviews connected to their experience of a product.

UGC is fast becoming an essential source of information for many consumers, who rely on it heavily during the decision-making process. Stackla spoke to 1,590 consumers and found that they see UGC as **9.8x more persuasive than influencer-created content**.

“Consumers are increasingly more interested in authenticity”

The persuasiveness of UGC compared to marketer- or influencer-generated content is partly about trust. James confirms this, stating that “consumers are increasingly more interested in authenticity and are sensitive to anything that comes across as a biased or endorsed opinion about a product or experience”.

Remembering a brand is also an important part of the decision-making process and millennials find **UGC 35% more memorable** than any other form of media. For ecommerce firms attempting to influence consumers’ purchase decisions, then, UGC is an invaluable resource.



# Shoppable Social Media Posts

Some social media sites now provide businesses with the option to publish shoppable social media posts.

These feature direct links to the point of purchase, allowing users to be taken to a shopping cart or product page on an ecommerce site.

According to [Hootsuite](#), 60% of Instagram users (more than 600 million people) use the app to seek out and discover new products. In light of this statistic, it's unsurprising that analysts at [Business Insider](#) predict that Instagram's shoppable social media posts will generate \$10 billion in revenue by 2021.

We spoke to the experts to find out more. Tanya Hemphill, managing director of digital training company [WeDisrupt](#) and co-author of Digital Business and E-Commerce Management, notes that many brands have already capitalised on shoppable social media posts in 2019.

Tanya uses the example of The Natori Company, a women's fashion designer and manufacturer, to illustrate the potential value of shoppable social media posts: this brand "found that adding shoppable posts helped achieve a 100% increase in revenue from Instagram and a 1,461% increase in referral traffic to their website."

**"Facebook and Instagram are becoming increasingly dedicated to keeping users on their website or app"**

Rob Miller, digital marketing specialist at [PS Website Design Ltd.](#), suggests that shoppable posts have intensified competition in the world of ecommerce "as brands need to keep up with producing high-quality imagery and targeting the right people."

At the same time, Rob believes that shoppable social media posts have opened up the door for smaller brands and ecommerce sites that are "more discoverable now and not completely reliant on people landing on their profile through traditional means."

Both Tanya and Rob predict that the newer shoppable post features will have a more noticeable effect in 2020. As Rob indicates, "Facebook and Instagram are becoming increasingly dedicated to keeping users on their website or app."

The main way in which these platforms are achieving this aim is by implementing their own checkout functions, which enable users to purchase products without having to visit ecommerce sites. With social media checkouts becoming more popular, Rob expects them to "shake up the world of ecommerce" and cause a "drop in on-site transactions" in the next few years.

Whilst Instagram shopping tags on product images have been available for organic posts for a while now, Tanya says that the social media platform is "currently testing them [...] in paid posts". She also notes that the 'Explore' section of Instagram now has a shopping channel.

**"The 'winners' will be those with strong brand storytelling"**

"Tailored to a user's interest and the brands they follow," Instagram's shopping channel allows users to "explore new brands and immediately buy, without heavy advertising or interfering with [their] general feed activity."

Overall, Tanya views shoppable social media posts as a "growth area for ecommerce companies" going forward. She believes that "the 'winners' will be those with strong brand storytelling and/or using influencers for user-generated content with shopping links."

# Augmented Reality

According to [Retail Perceptions](#), 71% of shoppers claim that they would visit retailers more often if they offered augmented reality.

The study also found 40% of consumers would be willing to pay more for products that they could experience through augmented reality.

To find out more about this changing world of augmented reality, we spoke to Ben Whitaker, EMEA director at [B-stock](#), and Jelani Harper, editorial consultant at [KM World](#).

Ben describes augmented reality (AR) as an “interactive experience of a real-life world product or environment”. He explains that AR is seamlessly interwoven with the physical world, where it is perceived as an immersive aspect of the real environment.

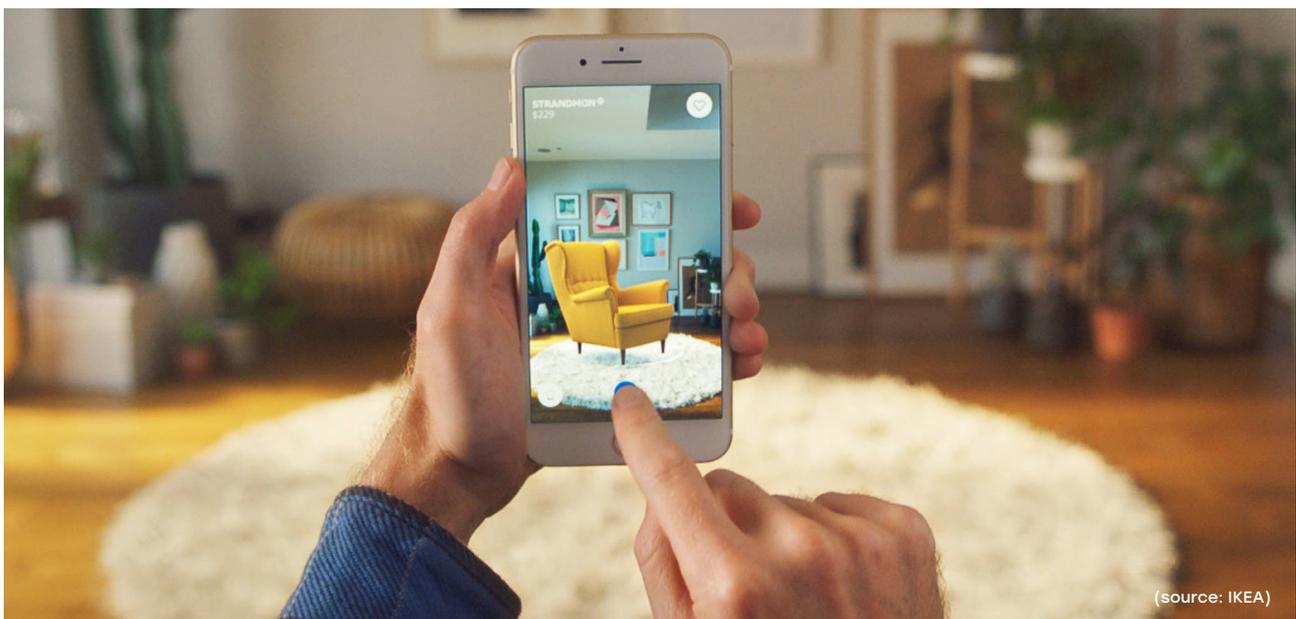
In an ecommerce environment, consumers can visualise products in a realistic context with the use of AR. Using AR, IKEA allows customers to [view how items of furniture would look in their home](#) through their smartphones. Beauty brand Sephora also offers visualisations to consumers who use their app, where they can project makeup looks onto their own face prior to purchasing.

Whilst “this concept started in the beauty industry, it is now expanding into the wider retail industry as retailers realise the benefits it could bring,” Ben explains.

Jelani suggests that AR is becoming more accessible in the world of ecommerce, a trend set to continue for 2020. This point was reiterated by Ben, who believes that “100 million customers will shop using augmented reality” by 2020.

Consumers increasingly demand instant access, results, and purchases, which can be facilitated by AR. Given that this new technology permits consumers to visualise products instantly, Jelani feels that it will expand across all goods from household appliances to clothing.

According to Ben, AR is useful to consumers for “showing how the products work so they are familiar with all aspects of the product before they even buy them”.



Ben suggests that by understanding the size, colour and style of products better, consumers can be clearer about the product that they're thinking of purchasing. This, he claims, will help to reduce returns since "it reduces the likelihood of buyer's remorse and ultimately the item being returned."

Returns have become an increasing **issue** for ecommerce retailers, a trend snowballed by the free returns and exchanges offered by firms. Consumers now feel comfortable ordering multiple sizes and colours of clothes knowing they can try on and return pieces with little hassle or costs.

AR, some hope, could solve this by "driving engagement, increasing sales and fighting back returns". However, Ben suggests that AR cannot solve ecommerce issues entirely, stating that industries like retail will always suffer from returns.

**"There are so many varying factors that can lead a buyer to return an item and no amount of investment in AR solutions is ever going to completely solve that."**

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So despite technology getting smarter, more affordable and 'cleverer' than ever, Ben suggests it is not quite enough to completely satisfy every consumer with their purchase, at least not in 2020.

Despite this, ecommerce retailers should consider investing in augmented reality to stay ahead of their competitors. With many consumers embracing the new technology, it's only a matter of time before AR becomes the standard in a range of industries.



# Entity Salience and Natural Language Processing

Natural Language Processing (NLP) refers to the comprehension of text by machines.

It is carried out by artificial intelligence (AI) and has developed significantly in recent years – where AIs once approached the interpretation of text in a purely linear manner, NLP techniques have evolved to take into account the context surrounding words.

To discuss this area of AI research and technology in more detail, we interviewed Ben Garry, content specialist at [Impression](#).

Ben began by discussing entity salience analysis, an application of NLP which Google has confirmed is present in search. Entity salience, Ben explains, “is the idea that certain things (entities) in a text will be more important (salient) than others.” Salience is rated on a scale of 0 to 1, identifying the entities which should be the most important to the way humans understand the text in question.

The most significant progression in relation to entity salience is more a shift in attitude and recognition than a technological breakthrough, Ben explains: “if you look at the dates of articles about entity salience, there’s a bit of buzz around 2014/15, then barely anything until 2019.”

There has been a progression in understanding where digital marketers have started to take greater notice of NLP and entity salience. This means that anyone currently using this tool for their ecommerce site is way ahead of the game.

**“I recommend adopting early and experimenting now so that you’re ahead of the curve.”**

Ben suggests that optimising content based on entity salience scores can help pages that are already in the top ten, giving them the extra boost they needed to move to the highest positions:

“I have seen the biggest impact on pages that already rank in the top ten, as these tweaks can push them up another one or two places.”

Whilst the majority of ecommerce sites haven’t cottoned on to the benefits of NLP, Ben advises our readers to act now: “at the moment, it’s a niche topic that doesn’t really make it out of the SEO world, but I can see that changing [...] that’s why I recommend adopting early and experimenting now so that you’re ahead of the curve.”

To break things down further, he has put together some of the key things Google looks out for to judge which entities are important:

- **The entity’s position in the text** - the start of a sentence is more important than the end, which is more important than the middle.
- **Grammatical role** - it is always helpful to make your most important entities the subject of a sentence where possible.
- **Connection to other words** - the most important entities are those that provide context and meaning for large chunks of the text.
- **Entity graph** - Google looks at a text’s entities as a group to see if certain themes emerge. Entities in these themes are more likely to be regarded as salient, so make sure your text is focused and cohesive.

Entity salience is fairly easy for ecommerce marketers to experiment with since the [demo by Google](#) works better with small text chunks. Entering descriptions from your own products or category pages is relatively simple, allowing writers to understand how easy it is to interpret their content and make any necessary changes.

See the example from Google below:

## Try the API

Google, headquartered in Mountain View (1600 Amphitheatre Pkwy, Mountain View, CA 940430), unveiled the new Android phone for \$799 at the Consumer Electronic Show. Sundar Pichai said in his keynote that users love their new Android phones.

ANALYZE

[See supported languages](#)

Entities

Sentiment

Syntax

Categories

⟨Google⟩<sub>1</sub>, headquartered in ⟨Mountain View⟩<sub>2</sub> ⟨Mountain View (1600 Amphitheatre Pkwy)⟩<sub>12</sub> ⟨1600⟩<sub>16</sub> ⟨Amphitheatre Pkwy⟩<sub>7</sub>, ⟨Mountain View⟩<sub>2</sub>, ⟨CA 940430⟩<sub>8</sub> ⟨940430⟩<sub>15</sub>, unveiled the new ⟨Android⟩<sub>3</sub> ⟨phone⟩<sub>5</sub> for ⟨\$799⟩<sub>13</sub> ⟨799⟩<sub>14</sub> at the ⟨Consumer Electronic Show⟩<sub>11</sub>. ⟨Sundar Pichai⟩<sub>4</sub> said in his ⟨keynote⟩<sub>9</sub> that ⟨users⟩<sub>6</sub> love their new ⟨Android⟩<sub>3</sub> ⟨phones⟩<sub>10</sub>.

1. Google

ORGANIZATION

[Wikipedia Article](#)

Salience: 0.19

2. Mountain View

LOCATION

[Wikipedia Article](#)

Salience: 0.18

3. Android

CONSUMER GOOD

[Wikipedia Article](#)

Salience: 0.14

4. Sundar Pichai

PERSON

[Wikipedia Article](#)

Salience: 0.11

5. phone

CONSUMER GOOD

Salience: 0.10

6. users

PERSON

Salience: 0.09

7. Amphitheatre Pkwy

LOCATION

Salience: 0.07

8. CA 940430

OTHER

Salience: 0.05

Ben suggests that there are bigger changes coming for NLP, which is why grasping the basics now is key. Hints of improvements in sentiment analysis have been discussed – Google could “put even more even more weight on positive reviews and perhaps even give backlinks more or less importance depending on the sentiment expressed in their context.”

This demonstrates how important it is for ecommerce sites to look into NLP now and see if tweaking content can help to increase the rank of pages that are already in the top ten. As Ben explained, taking the time to execute these changes now could put ecommerce sites bounds ahead of their competitors.

# Chatbot Technology

Chatbots are pieces of software that consumers can interact with. They utilise natural language, thereby replicating the behaviour of human customer services. According to a survey conducted by Oracle, **80% of businesses claimed they would be using chatbots in some form by 2020**, with this being a particularly popular trend for ecommerce firms.

There are numerous **benefits to chatbots**: they reduce operational costs, they can be active 24/7, they only provide company-approved answers, and their answers are immediate which can reduce customer frustration.

We spoke to Alex Debecker, co-founder and CMO of the UK's leading chatbot company, **Ubisend**, to learn more about chatbots and ecommerce.

According to Alex, chatbots use AI to interpret human input. With the rise of voice-activated VPAs like Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant, the popularity of chatbots has soared in recent years.

**“Chatbots bring a complete shift in the way consumers experience ecommerce”**

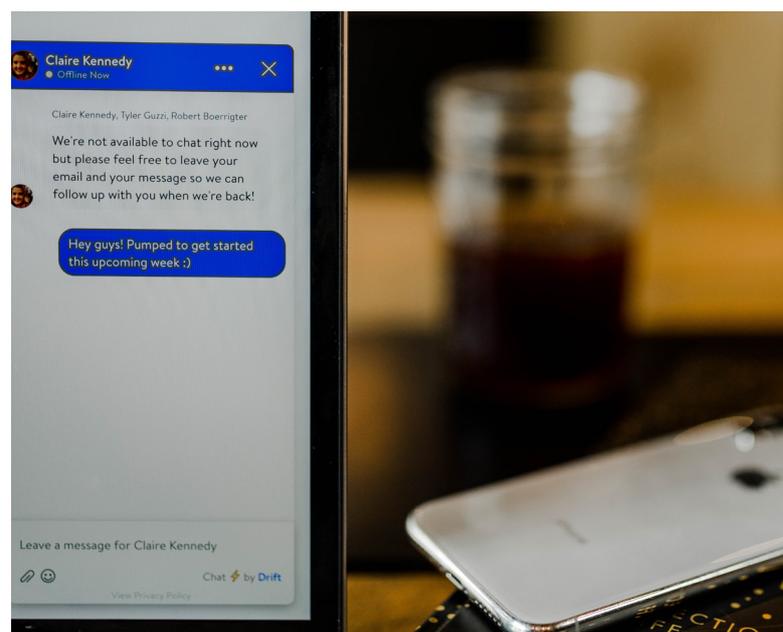
Alex argues for the importance of chatbots in ecommerce, stating that they offer a “complete shift in the way consumers experience ecommerce. They offer the equivalent of a highly trained salesperson you would find in physical shops at enormous scale.”

Chatbot technology allows customers to interact directly with a chatbot rather than having to navigate through a site. Alex suggests that this makes chatbots a must-have for businesses since customers now expect all firms to be offering them instant support.

In fact, a **recent study** found that 80% of customer queries can be solved, without supervision, by chatbots. This has the potential to eliminate the need for large customer service teams and allow ecommerce firms to reach hundreds of customers at once.

In the future, Alex suggests chatbots will be used increasingly for upselling and cross-promoting relevant products. When customers place items in their basket, complementary products should be proposed through conversations with the customer.

This, he proposes, will be a huge ecommerce trend for 2020, allowing basket sizes to increase but also leaving customers feeling better informed and satisfied.



# Email Marketing

Email marketing involves companies sending commercial messages via email, typically to a group of consumers.

<input type="radio"/> Trainline		Off to Nottingham any time soon? Try Tickets on your phone... Skip station queues using ti...	Fri 20:25
<input type="radio"/> VoucherCodes	   	Debenhams - Extra 10% off   Nike - Extra 30% off   adidas - Extra 30% off   EE Mobile - Free ...	Fri 18:14
<input type="radio"/> Ticketmaster		Black Friday is here! Big deals await... Jack Whitehall, Wicked, The Great Escape, Six Day Lon...	Fri 13:48

As one of the oldest forms of digital marketing, the aim of email marketing is to generate conversions from either past, present, or potential customers.

We spoke to Jenna Tiffany, founder and strategic director of [Let'sTalk Strategy](#), along with Tom Morrison from [Yoma Digital](#), to see what insights they could share about how email marketing will impact ecommerce in 2020.

Tom describes email marketing as “a direct and reactive approach which enables companies to send informative and promotional messages for commercial growth”. He claims that it is one of the most useful marketing communications channels, with its responsive nature meaning that “businesses can contact their database as and when something is happening”.

Tom reports significant changes to email marketing since the GDPR changes in May 2018, with businesses now only being able to contact those who have consented to hear from them. He suggests this new rule allows firms to identify loyal customers who have opted-in and have “a genuine interest,” increasing conversion rates as uninterested recipients have been removed from the mix.

With regard to email marketing developments in 2020, Jenna suggests that automation is key. Consumers are increasingly after relevant and personalised messages which ecommerce marketers must achieve at scale if they are to compete.

From her experience “consulting with ecommerce brands worldwide,” Jenna notes that the “welcome journey” email campaign format is one of the most effective: “it provides a prime opportunity to capitalise on the attention of a new subscriber [...] setting expectations of what will be included

in future emails whilst gathering more information about the subscriber.”

**“Capturing data from certain trigger questions and turning them into personalised marketing emails could be the future”**

Tom supports this, claiming that increased technological advancements are key in this area. With the rapid growth in AI, he suggests that email marketing is becoming a more powerful tool – “capturing data from certain trigger questions and turning them into personalised marketing emails could be the future.”

In particular, Tom believes that smart speakers will play an important role in email marketing strategies in the upcoming years. With Google Assistant or Alexa, he envisages that personalised emails with quotes for insurance, for example, will be generated from information the smart speaker has captured. “All of this could be triggered by a simple question to your smart speaker, for example, “compare house insurance quotes,” Tom suggests.

Alongside this, Tom advises ecommerce firms to continue to optimise their email marketing strategy for mobile in the coming years. In 2019, [mobile accounted for 46% of all email opens](#) and this is set to increase in 2020.

Tom predicts that mobile email marketing will overtake desktop as more users continue to use mobile for online searches. Ensuring that mobile readers experience personalised and smooth content is imperative for success going forward.

# Conclusion

With the ecommerce sector more competitive than ever, the gap between savvy brands at the forefront of digital marketing updates and those unsure of how to incorporate these techniques is rapidly widening.

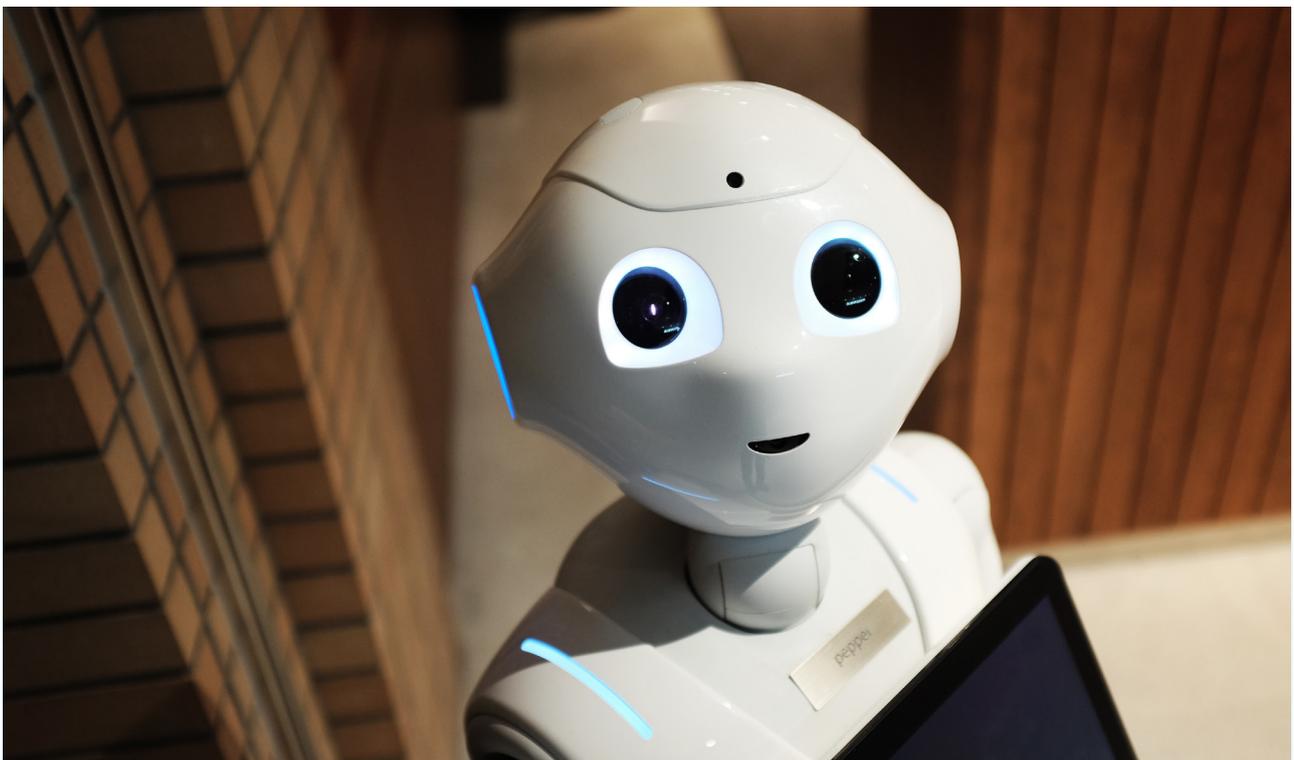
In this report, we have looked over ten prominent trends and tools for ecommerce in 2020. With constant innovation in the industry, this is an exciting time in which businesses can always benefit from early adoption of new technologies.

With the rise of chatbots, AR, and UGC, it is clear that delivering the best customer experience is a key priority for 2020. In an age when consumers expect instant and personalised responses at their fingertips, technology has evolved to meet their every need.

This is further emphasised by the introduction of immediate voice to search functions and the increased prominence of featured snippets in 2019, both of which are designed to enhance the user's experience.

Our experts have also urged ecommerce brands to focus on NPL, demonstrating the major impact that AI is having on the industry.

The key takeaway from this report is to make changes now and adapt to trends as they hit the market. With competition on the rise and technology moving faster than ever, staying at the forefront of changes is imperative.



If you would like to discuss the trends in this report, then feel free to comment below or contact us directly.

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**Jonathan Theuring**

[impression.co.uk/get-in-touch/](https://impression.co.uk/get-in-touch/)



**Saffron Shergill**

[impression.co.uk/get-in-touch/](https://impression.co.uk/get-in-touch/)

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