

# Top Ecommerce Trends for 2022

## There's No Going Back

The pandemic accelerated ecommerce growth and this is the new normal. 86% of marketing leaders believe digital commerce will be the most important sales channel within the next two years<sup>1</sup>.

This isn't hard to imagine — shoppers are now three calendar years into wondering whether or not they absolutely need to make a trip to a crowded mall to see if something they want is in stock. Retailers had to rapidly innovate, iterate, and innovate again to meet the demand and shopper expectations.

Lucidworks



# Is It Revolutionary or Refreshing?

In general, trends most often tend to fall into one of two categories: revolutionary or refreshing. The former is all about charting new territory and trying something completely new. The latter is about refining and breathing new life into a tried and true process.

It's tempting to believe that every trend should be revolutionary and burst into new, uncharted spaces. In fact, a mix of the two is most likely to (safely) address the different challenges in ecommerce. Brands should be thinking about how to refresh what has always been working for them while simultaneously thinking about brand new opportunities they've never considered before.

Lucidworks





# Commerce Trends to Get Ahead of in 2022

# Visual Flyouts Will Be Tested

*A/B test the performance of adding image flyouts to type ahead search and see which approach wins.*

Everyone is familiar with type ahead in some form or another. Pioneered by Google years ago, it has since blown up to become a regular component of many ecommerce search experiences. Many large ecommerce brands are adding image flyouts to accompany text type ahead. When it works well with the flow of the shopper's experience, it can be a more engaging way to scan for products.

But not all products need images. Shoppers may not need to see "4x6 black picture frame" in the same way they'd like to browse "red pants". Plus, images can slow performance which is a big no no. Brands have to ask themselves if images are the best approach, and then test which method (image or not) works best for their customers.

Applicable Market(s)	Key Metrics	Discovery Challenges	Technical Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• B2C brands and retailers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Performance/Engagement</li><li>• Conversion Rate/CTR</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Better dynamic suggestions</li><li>• Arriving at faithful pages</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Type ahead templating</li><li>• Ability to control type ahead terms</li></ul>

# Next-Generation Dynamic Type Ahead

*The next generation of visual type ahead engagement is about facets and concepts.*

Another emerging type ahead trend provides a more dynamic search experience in real time. Type ahead will usually latch on and provide suggestions as keywords are entered, typically on the second or third keystroke. However we are now seeing advanced type ahead engage but on the very first click of the keys.

This advanced type ahead expands shoppers' search options by immediately offering related results pages or outright applying filters as they are typing. Next-gen type ahead brings customers to what they're looking for faster, and reduces the amount of time sifting through irrelevant content and products.

Applicable Market(s)	Key Metrics	Discovery Challenges	Technical Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• B2C brands and retailers</li><li>• B2B distributors and manufacturers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conversion Rate/CTR</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Managing image-facet relationships</li><li>• When to show the UX elements</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facet extraction</li><li>• Type ahead templating</li></ul>

# Pre-Loved Products Online

*Expand your brand's reach and do the right thing for the planet.*

Shoppers hold brands accountable for their impact on the environment and more websites are dedicated to sustainability efforts—such as prolonging the life of pre-owned (or “pre-loved”) products like clothing, accessories, camping gear, and more. Dedicating an entire site to these efforts is an integrated marketing initiative for brands that have made sustainability a core part of their messaging and we expect to see more of it in the future.

Interestingly, this trend presents its own kind of product discovery challenges in relation to synonym bridging. That’s because the nature of a pre-owned site creates competing priorities between selling new merchandise—which drives the biggest margins—and selling pre-loved items. Limited availability of pre-loved items also requires time-intensive updating by merchandisers if the brand is using outdated, manually curated ecommerce software.

Applicable Market(s)	Key Metrics	Discovery Challenges	Technical Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• B2C brands</li><li>• B2B manufacturers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conversion Rate</li><li>• Lifetime Value</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data quality/ “garbage in”</li><li>• Taxonomy &amp; classification</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ML-based classification</li><li>• Vector retrieval</li></ul>

# “Following” Searches

*Push product updates to shoppers who “follow” searches.*

With supply chain shortages and travel challenges, customers are finding themselves returning to websites to conduct the same searches over and over to check on things. This can become tedious, so brands have borrowed an innovative new trend from social media. It’s the concept of “following” searches.

Just like a Twitter user would follow a hashtag to funnel a specific kind of content, brands are allowing users to follow specific searches so that they can quickly check back in on availability, new products, or deals. This technique also allows brands to push notifications to its users, creating a direct line of communication for stock notifications, and opportunities to present more experiences along the way.

Applicable Market(s)	Key Metrics	Discovery Challenges	Technical Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• B2C brands and retailers</li><li>• B2B distributors and manufacturers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conversion Rate</li><li>• CSAT</li><li>• Traffic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• UX: where and how to expose</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ability to subscribe to a search</li><li>• Job-based subscription processing</li></ul>

# Ubiquitous Filtering

*Distribute filters across the entire ecommerce site.*

This trend definitely falls into the “revolutionary” category, but nonetheless something that more brands should consider. Imagine instances in which a shopper could have opportunities to apply filters to the content on any given ecommerce page within the website. As they move through the customer journey, ubiquitous filtering could allow them to create a checklist of product features, interests, or qualities that they would like to take along with them wherever they go on the website.

One example of how to do this would be giving the consumer the opportunity to interact with a chatbot agent on every page and treat it as an additional and complex filtering method. This would create more opportunities to personalize the search, browse and discovery experience all the way to the cart.

Applicable Market(s)	Key Metrics	Discovery Challenges	Technical Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All ecommerce</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engagement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>VERY radical!</b> <b>Tread carefully</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Session-based personalization</li></ul>

# 3rd Generation Dynamic Categories

*Fill the right categories intelligently and without cumbersome rules.*

On the less radical side, 2022 welcomes the next generation of dynamic categorization. First generation categories were intensely rule-based, while second generation was a bit more of a soft understanding of how to fill out categories. This third generation will be much more dynamic.

Imagine searching for a day bed on a furniture website, and only have one result returned. Third generation dynamic categories would enable that website's search to understand why a shopper would be interested in a day bed, and return products in categories that could still be potentially relevant to their search. This technology would (in this instance) enable brands to provide search that can discriminate between bedroom collection type categories and day bed categories, and fill out thin categories like day beds with relevant products if they are stashed in some other category.

Applicable Market(s)	Key Metrics	Discovery Challenges	Technical Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• B2C retailers</li><li>• B2B distributors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Browse conversion</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Signal collection</li><li>• Standard deviation on cardinality</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Category analysis &amp; NLU/ NLP</li><li>• Deep learning / vector</li></ul>

# Semantic Query Routing

*Answer more complex queries with semantic search technology.*

It doesn't matter what an ecommerce brand is selling, the English language is incredibly ambiguous and challenging to parse for just about any search technology. There are countless combinations of words that can have countless meanings when arranged or rearranged in different orders.

What semantic query routing does is take a complicated multi-token search and break it down by each token and combination of tokens in the context of the universe of concepts that human beings who read queries automatically understand. Machine learning and natural language understanding technology that exists today is capable of doing this, and we will see it being applied more frequently in 2022.

Applicable Market(s)	Key Metrics	Discovery Challenges	Technical Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• B2C, especially apparel</li><li>• Non-Product Search</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Search refinements</li><li>• Search depth / page views</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explanation UX</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Runtime intent understanding</li><li>• A/B testing of search experiments</li></ul>

# Understanding Rises, Translation Falls

*Good translation is expensive, but it is no longer a barrier to findability.*

A product discovery experience that deals in English is already challenging on its own. If a brand has some content that is not translated on the site into a local language (in other words, a heterogeneous mix of one language and another), a problem arises. A major concern for brands is that consumers who are using one language will find certain content but not always get access to other relevant content that is in a different language.

Vector retrieval technology allows consumers to search for something in one language and find it in another. This is because there is an AI-powered understanding of the product or content beyond the language used to describe it. As vector retrieval becomes more prevalent, we can expect brands to worry less about focusing on translation. The technology empowers understanding, with the knock-on effect of allowing brands to go to market faster.

Applicable Market(s)	Key Metrics	Discovery Challenges	Technical Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All multi-language ecommerce</li><li>• B2C and B2B</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conversion &amp; CTR</li><li>• CSAT scores</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Works best for small documents</li><li>• How to message across languages</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flexibility in deep learning training</li><li>• Vector storage and retrieval</li></ul>

Lucidworks

# Where Lucidworks Stands

In the paradigm of revolutionary and refreshing, Lucidworks product discovery solutions pull the best from both worlds. Our ecommerce solutions are the only on the market that blend semantic vector search (a revolutionary technology designed to understand shopper intent), and traditional search enhanced by artificial intelligence and machine learning technology. (How refreshing!)

Lucidworks provides customers with a robust and flexible set of search, browse, and discovery solutions that allow them to deliver memorable, personalized digital experiences to their shoppers.

Get started >

Interested in learning more about what Lucidworks can do for your brand's ecommerce search strategy? Get in touch with us today.