Housewares & Home Furnishings

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Design a custom online experience to furnish your shoppers with seamless product discovery

Housewares and home furnishings are a highly personal choice, where individual style, color, texture and fit within the home are principal decision criteria. Online retailers must create highly personalized and highly interactive experiences that engage shoppers and build their trust so they are willing to transact large purchases, in most cases without actually seeing or touching the products.

Online is the fastest growing channel for home furnishings. Economies are improving, unemployment is declining and new home sales are on the rise. This means consumers are expected to have more disposable income to spend on furnishing their homes, and more of them will be looking to buy online.

Industry Outlook

Industry Status

Growing

Average annual growth 2011 to 2016

▶ **16**% US

▶ **12**% UK

▶ **7**% AU

Projected annual growth through 2021

▶ **14**%

Projected growth in new companies entering the market

▶ **11**%

Make Them Feel at Home with the SLI Buyer Engine™

The SLI Buyer Engine™ is a cloud-based, machine-learning platform that predicts what your shopper is most likely to buy right now. This shortens the path to purchase, making it easy for you to delight customers and increase revenue. The Buyer Engine™ powers SLI Systems' suite of apps, which guide shoppers through the buying journey to the perfect products for their homes.

Turn Researchers into Buyers

Home furnishings are a commitment—often large purchases that will last for years. A 2015 survey from Furniture Today shows that home furnishings shoppers increasingly use online sources as research tools. The same survey shows a wide gap between online research and online purchases. Consumers compare products online, then visit a brick-and-mortar store to buy.

Site traffic is always good, but conversions are better. You can turn more researchers into buyers by catering to their needs in the following areas.

LEAD THEM TO YOUR USER-GENERATED CONTENT

Researchers trust their peers, so make it easy for them to find ratings and reviews. Make ratings part of your refinement and sorting options, and provide a visual cue for those ratings on the product results page. Customer testimonials grow new shoppers' confidence in your business.

CREATE DYNAMIC NAVIGATION

Researchers turn to online channels because they can navigate through hundreds of varying designs and products in one place. Increase conversions on navigation pages by showing the most popular products based on shoppers' behavior at the top of navigation results. By using product metadata, SLI Learning Navigation® builds dynamic navigation based on shopper behavior to guide shoppers to what they want in the fewest amount of clicks.

GET SOCIAL

Social media is a popular channel for online product research and sharing, especially among tech-savvy millennials, who, according to a Consumer Buying Trends survey, have become the largest consumer group in the U.S. furniture and bedding market. As millennials age and move into home ownership, online retailers need to adapt their strategies to cater to the individualistic tastes of this group.

You can engage with potential customers on the social platforms they use, and bring that content into your search results. SLI Learning Search® lets you showcase social content, so shoppers can see what others are saying and how they are using your products.

Personalize Search Results

On average, searchers are buying at three times the rate of other site visitors. Optimize your search capabilities to capture every revenue opportunity.

SLI Learning Search® turns shoppers into buyers by accurately predicting which products they are most likely to buy and displaying those products first in search results. Learning capabilities allow the software to incorporate trends and seasons so customers no longer have to scroll through page after page of irrelevant results. This means higher conversions and lower bounce rates.
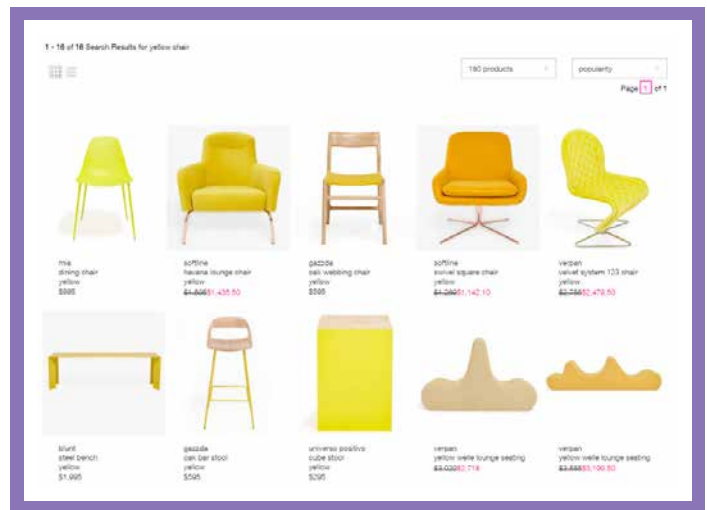
A search for "yellow chair" understands the shopper's intent and displays first the results that shoppers are most likely to buy.

In a survey by Accenture, 73 percent of consumers said they prefer doing business with retailers who use personal information to make their shopping experience more relevant. One to one personalization is the future of online retail. SLI Enhanced Search Personalization (ESP)™ adds contextual personalization to the award-winning relevancy of Learning Search®. SLI ESP™ acts as a personal shopper for your visitors, whether they are first-time or returning customers, by curating a relevant selection in real time based on their activity.

Thoroughly Curate

With so many brick-and-mortar and online options available to shoppers of housewares and home furnishings, retailers are winning customers by catering to select styles and market niches. To target their markets effectively, online retailers must build out every aspect of their sites toward an intentionally curated experience. SLI Landing Page Creator™ allows retailers to easily curate, promote and move products with drag-and-drop merchandising controls and SEO-friendly URLs. You can learn from your shopper's behavior, then lead him or her on acustomized path of product discovery.

Help Them Visualize at Every Turn

Before they commit to a large purchase sight unseen, shoppers want to know the piece will fit in their homes, match their existing decor and have the feel, quality and comfort they expect. More and more home furnishings online retailers are turning to innovative 3D modeling software to showcase products from every angle and in every available color. Some software even allows shoppers to virtually "place" pieces from the website right in their homes. Visual experiences increase shoppers' confidence. And higher confidence means higher conversions.

Whether or not you currently have the capability to make use of the latest 3D modeling technologies, every retailer can boost shoppers' confidence by turning their sites into visual, interactive experiences.

IN THE SEARCH BOX

Visually display the most relevant product names, categories and images as users type into the search box with the patented technology of SLI Rich Auto Complete™. When you reduce the number of clicks required from search to purchase, you'll convert more shoppers into buyers.
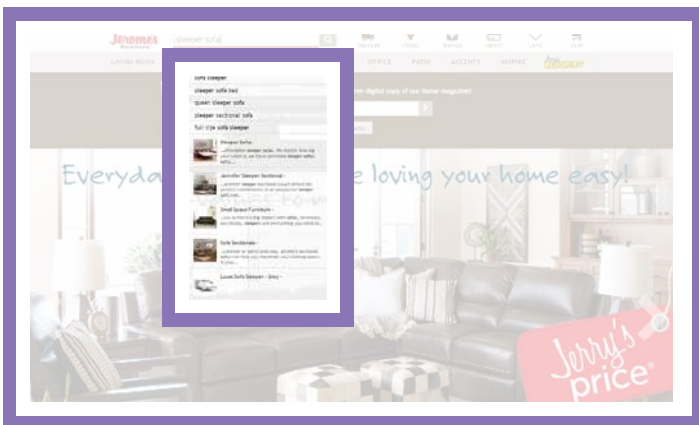

As soon as a visitor starts searching for "sleeper sofa," Rich Auto Complete™ visually displays the most relevant product names, categories and images, reducing the number of clicks from search to purchase.

IN SEARCH RESULTS

Help shoppers see items in context. Show images that display products within their setting. Include interactive content in search results such as images that switch when visitors hover over them. Allow visitors to see expanded product images without having to click through to the product page.

ON PRODUCT PAGES

Contextual images on product pages also reduce buyer remorse by giving shoppers a visual on actual size and fit within a room. Contextual images can be a powerful tool for cross-sell and upsell, enticing a shopper to complete the full look.
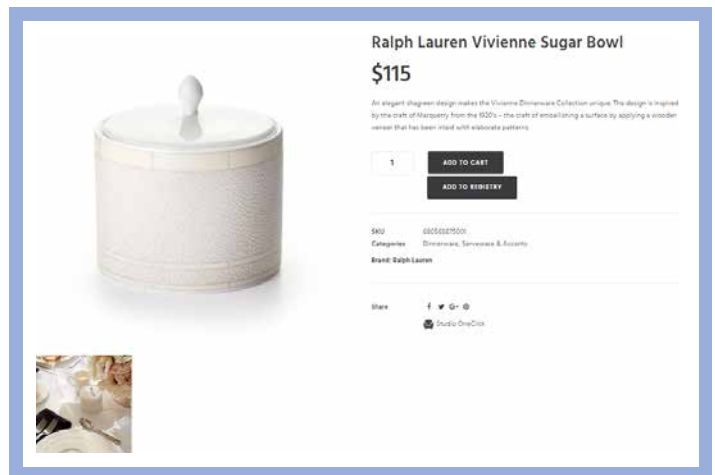
Contextual images on product pages increase buyer confidence and act as a powerful tool for cross-sell and upsell.

Target and Convert Search Engine Users

Getting more home furnishings shoppers to your site is a battle—a battle that is often waged through search engine referrals and paid advertisements. SLI Site Champion® increases site traffic by helping shoppers find your products in search engines. Site Champion® targets shoppers who have the highest levels of intent with surprising cost-effectiveness.

Make it Mobile

Between 2010 and 2015 the percentage of users who shopped for online furniture on a mobile device increased from 5 to 52 percent, according to online home furnishing marketing agency FurnitureDealer.net. All signs point to this trend continuing, which means savvy online retailers ensure their customers are just as happy shopping on their phones and tablets as they are on their desktops.

How to keep them happy? Optimize the entire user experience—search, navigation, recommendations and banners—for smaller screens, slower load times and shoppers who don't want to type any more than they have to.

SLI Mobile™ makes it happen with technology that reads your customer's mind almost instantly. Expandable refinement options save valuable screen space, and a streamlined user experience makes shopping intuitive from any device.
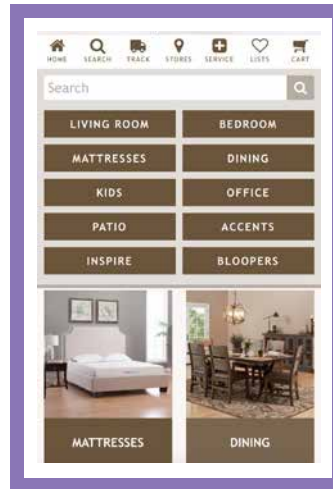
Expandable navigation and thumb-size tiles make shopping for home furnishings on a mobile advice a user-friendly experience.
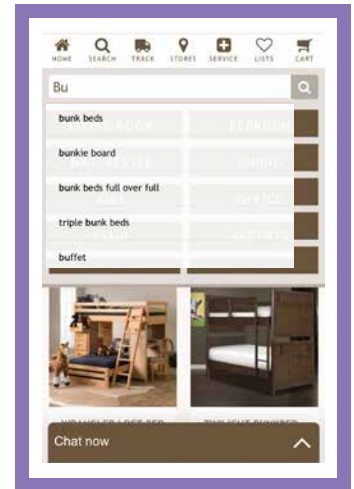
Autocomplete drop-down makes searching on a mobile device fast and intuitive.

Show Relevant Recommendations

Retailers of housewares and home furnishings can use smart recommendation strategies to enhance product discovery and increase average order values through cross-sell and upsell. But manually tuning recommendations consumes the time of merchandising teams.

SLI Learning Recommendations™ hits two birds with one stone. First, it learns from shopper behavior to predict the products each visitor is most likely to buy. Second, it saves time for your merchandising team by automatically displaying those products at the most opportune time, when they are most likely to get a click.

Where you place recommendations can support different aspects of your sales strategy. Recommendations on the home page showcase your most popular items to prevent bounce and cater to browsers. On search results pages, recommendations for "recently viewed" or "most frequently purchased" enhance user experience and new product discovery. On product pages recommendations highlight coordinated items in a set or related accessories to promote cross-sell and upsell. While recommendations in re-marketing emails capture what would have been lost revenue.

Recommendations powered by the SLI Buyer Engine™ continuously adjust to account for changing buyer behavior, seasonality and trends. By matching visitor activity, on-site recommendations can display results based on elements such as brand or category affinity.
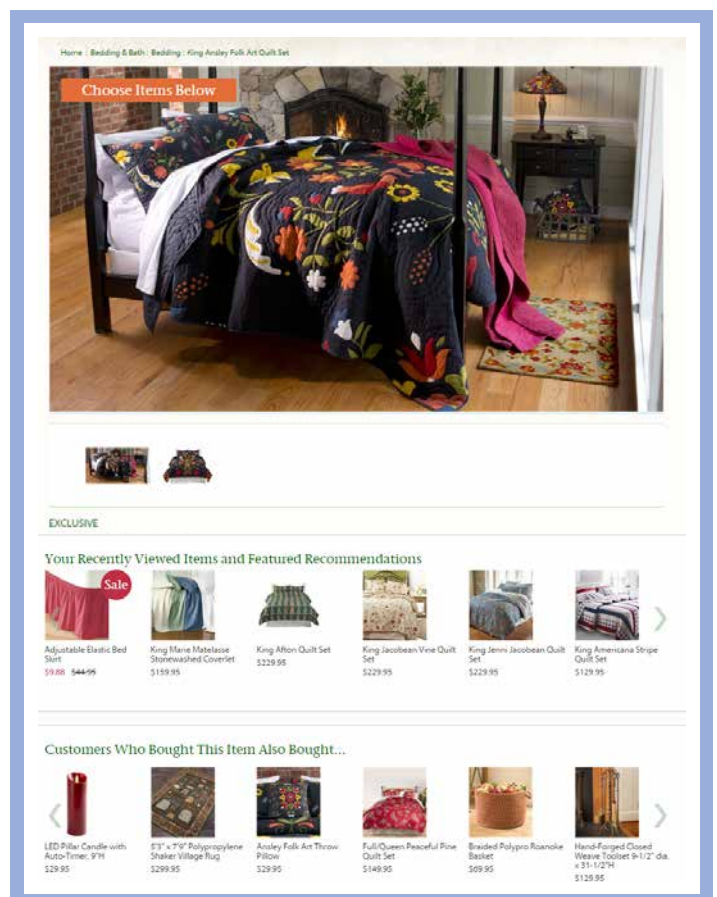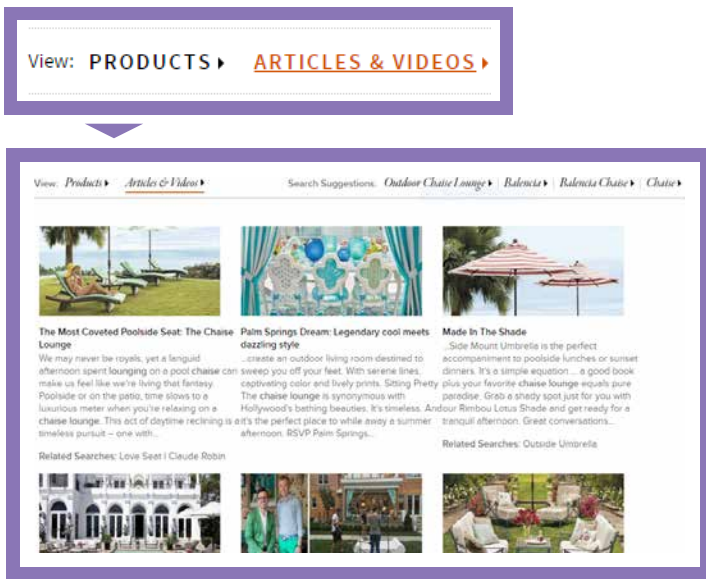

Automated recommendations that learn from shopper's behavior are proven to get the most natural upsell and cross-sell results.

Stand Out with Creative Content

Big box retailers use their vast resources to attract home furnishings shoppers. They offer low prices, free shipping and other perks that are difficult, if not impossible, for niche retailers to match. And their market share is growing. Internet Retailer reports that in 2016 Amazon sold roughly $7 billion worth of housewares products to U.S. consumers—a 33% jump from 2015.

In this competitive landscape many home furnishings retailers find success by giving shoppers what big box retailers don't— an experience that melds shopping and a lifestyle community. You can do this with creative content that offers insider knowledge and expert advice.
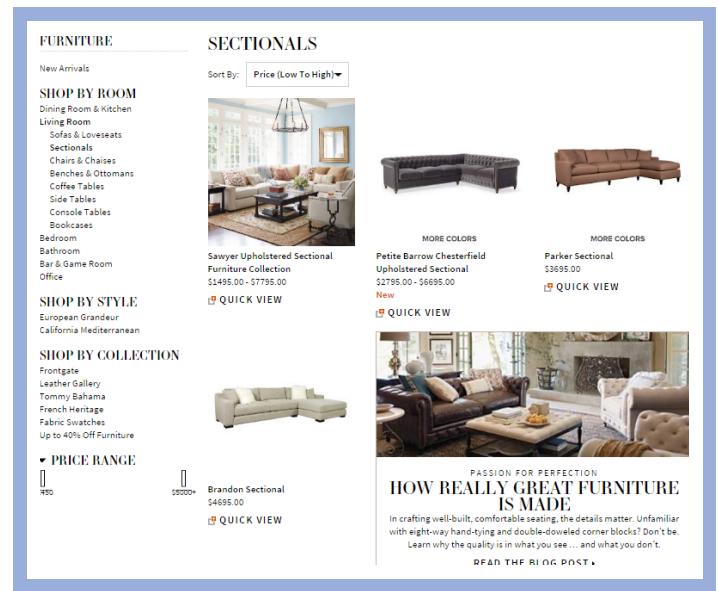
Creative content can take many forms. Articles on design are popular for visitors who are looking to create a specific look in their homes. How-to videos are great for building buyers' confidence toward purchasing items that have to be assembled or maintained. As mentioned earlier, social content from your Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest feeds will make shopping on your site personal and interactive.

Whatever creative content is right for your visitors, make it searchable. Display the results where you want to engage your shoppers, whether alongside search results or in a separate tab.

When you include creative content on your site and make it searchable, it carries a 1-2 punch of building shoppers' trust and simultaneously building your site's SEO value.

A search for "chaise lounge" returns not only a products results page, but a page containing lifestyle articles containing the keyword, accessible on a second tab.

Articles related to the search term ("sectionals" in this case) appear right in the product results grid to increase shopper engagement and keep them on site.

Compound Profits with Machine Learning

Home furnishings shoppers are a selective group. Predicting individual style and intent is critical to winning conversions. When every facet of product discovery is driven by machine learning, it creates a virtuous circle that automatically compounds profits over time. Your shoppers continually create new data.

That new data is used to create a better customer experience. A better customer experience means more site traffic. And more site traffic means more data.

Continuous machine learning increases traffic, converts more shoppers into buyers and maximizes order values...quarter after quarter, year after year.