

FUTURE

Content Commerce Trend Report

JUNE | 2021

Intro

Content

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The widespread adoption of eCommerce amid the pandemic has created a new playing field for advertisers. As they take stock of how to reach consumers inundated with messages and overwhelmed by choice, it's important to focus on building trust aligning with content that reaches high-intent audiences. When done right, the opportunity is great: Future saw sales double in the early months of 2021 from where they were a year prior.

Drawing on Future's network of 180+ sites that reach over 300M people monthly, this report takes a look at eCommerce trends throughout the first third of 2021 with a focus on content commerce's impact. The popularity of content commerce between both publisher and advertisers is unlikely to slow throughout 2021, even as vaccination rates increase and consumers return to work at their offices.

Online shopping is here to stay.

01

Executive Summary

Ecommerce sales continued their strong performance throughout Q1 as Future saw tremendous year-over-year lift in both total sales order value (SOV) and total transaction volume. SOV growth in particular was strong, with the total SOV doubling in North America, currently \$4.9m.

*During Future's FY2020, the company drove **\$960M** in SOV for affiliate partners via HAWK its proprietary price comparison platform.*

Future's continued growth in content commerce shows the power of this strategy for connecting consumers to

the products they want through engaging, compelling, high caliber journalistic content.

The top performing articles of the quarter reveal that consumers are "best obsessed"—that is, they want to read content that helps them find the "best" choice for the item they're looking for, whether that's a laptop, VPN, or gaming chair.

The variety of high-performing articles also shows the evolution of content commerce. It's no longer a tool used simply to reach prospects at the point of purchase, but an incredibly efficient way to move customers throughout the purchase funnel, giving them options at every stage and helping them reach the point of conversion.

Sales order value growth (YTD 2020 vs 2021)



+106.1%



+37.3%



+101.1%

Total transactions (YTD 2020 vs 2021)



+108.9%



+16.7%



+82.0%

02

The Impact of Buyer's Guides

Buying guides - designed to help consumers make informed purchase decisions - remain the strongest drivers of conversions, but their true strength isn't just as a single type of article designed to drive sales. It comes from the interconnected nature of content, allowing a prospect to move across the funnel - from a piece of news to a review that is linked within the article, to a buying guide linked within that review.

Publishers and their affiliates need to not only look at the content that results in conversions but in the circle of virality around the content, which moves prospects across a content ecosystem and gives them *everything* they need to make a purchase decision. Publishers must remain editorially balanced as trusted sources for recommendations and insights to guide high-intent audiences.

Buyer's Guides Account For 60% of Sales Order Value Annually

This article alone sells the equivalent of **over 8+** mattresses a day

The screenshot shows the Tom's Guide website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with categories like Best Picks, News, Reviews, Phones, TVs, Security, Personal Finance, and Forums. A prominent banner for a 'Memorial Day Mattress Sale' features a Nectar mattress and accessories for 'UP TO \$399 IN ACCESSORIES'. Below the banner, there's a trending section with topics like Memorial Day Sales, iPhone 13, and Amazon Prime Day. The main content area features an article titled 'The best mattress 2021: top options for all budgets' by Julia Sagar, dated 2 days ago. The article includes a photo of a Nectar mattress on a bed and a 'Memorial Day Mattress Sale' advertisement on the right side. The ad lists 'PREMIUM PILLOWS', 'LUXE SHEET SET', and 'MATTRESS PROTECTOR' for 'UP TO \$399 IN ACCESSORIES'. At the bottom, there's a 'BE IN THE KNOW' section with a newsletter sign-up form.

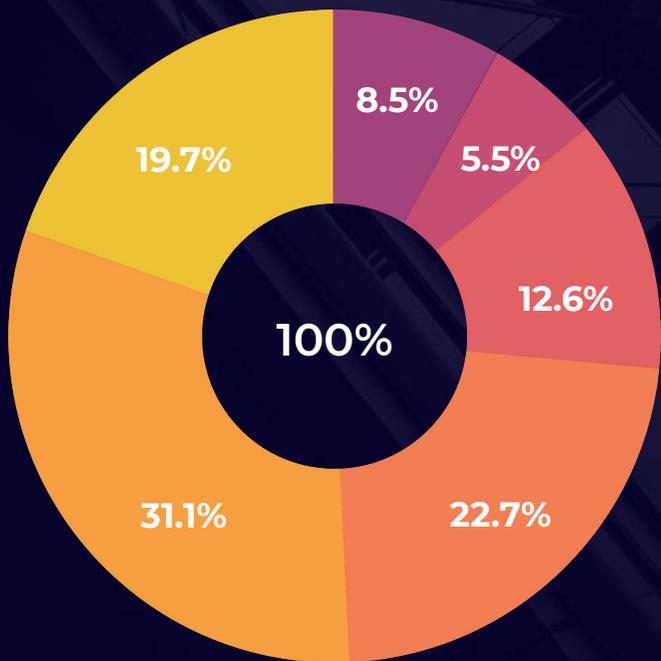
Advertisers see the value of aligning with high intent audiences

Evergreen eCommerce

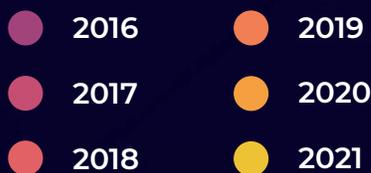
Evergreen eCommerce is an incredibly important piece of the content-commerce puzzle. With more competition than ever before, retailers can't rely solely on the dozen or so tentpole sales events. Brands need to sell year-round. And leverage digital word of mouth generated by editorial recommendations and reviews.

Future's content analysis shows that content written in previous years still drives conversions. In Q1 2021, **49% of all sales order value came from articles created before 2020**. With small tweaks and SEO adjustments, a piece of content that is several years old can continue to drive sales and be valuable for consumers and advertisers.

Evergreen commerce content continues to drive revenue years later. Content investments compound over time through strong SEO and domain authority.



Content Cohort



49%

*Evergreen
ecommerce*

Of all sales order value came from articles created *before 2020*.

73%

*Evergreen
ecommerce*

Are buying guides published *before 2021*

04

Consumers Are ‘Best’ Obsessed And For Good Reason!

A scan of the top performing articles, as determined by SOV, shows a common keyword in headlines: “best.” Clearly, consumers are driven by a desire to invest their money on the very best product, whether that’s a laptop, biking shoes, a telescope, a new washing machine or mesh router.

These consumers are inundated with choices, and it’s clear that they are seeking the help of a trusted source.

Journalism offers validation and cuts down on the noise. When complemented with advertising, it can lead audiences to the best choice faster and more effectively.

Publications that make recommendations based on editorial insight and qualified testing build consumer trust, which is the valuable asset that retailers tap when they leverage content commerce across the consumer journey.

The best Roku device to buy in 2021

By Phil Nickinson 3 months ago

The best gaming chairs in 2021

The best gaming headsets in 2021

By Jorge Jimenez, Dave James about 1 month ago

Best laptop 2021: our pick of the 15 best laptops you can buy this year

By Matt Hanson 15 days ago

A Online user has questions

They go to Google and ask for answers

Future sites answer questions through editorial

B

What is the best price?

How can I?

How does it work?

Where to buy?

Should I buy?

What is the best?

Is it worth it?

Does it work with?

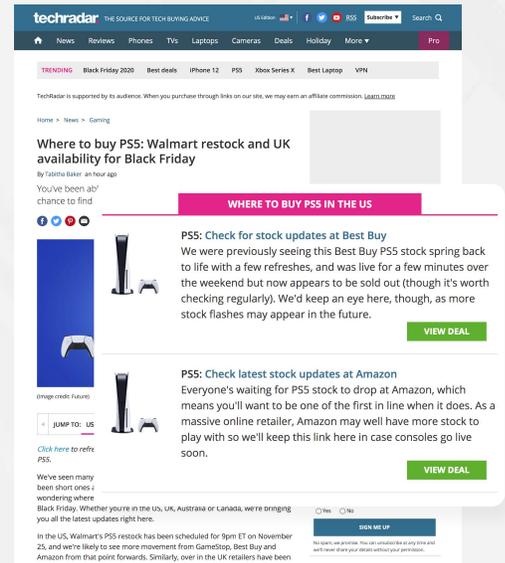
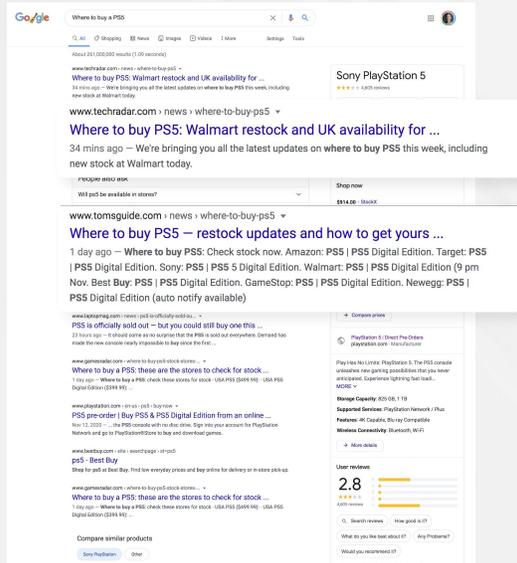
Do I need?

This or this?

Best deals on ___ ?

Help me setup

How do I make it better?



05

Top-selling products: Adapting to the way we live now

The past year marked a radical shift in how many consumers lived their lives. Commutes and offices were out, and working from home was in. As a result, many needed to find products that were going to help

them remain productive and professional while they adjusted to a period of working from home. This trend continued in Q1 2021, as the top item categories are clearly tied to the digital essentials of remote working.

Notable product category growth, global (year-over-year April 2020-2021)



Auto

+243%



Photography

+179%



Clothing

+174%



Wellness

+98%



Headphones

+76%



Computing

+60%

marie claire

The 36 Best Swimwear Brands of Summer 2021

Your next go-to suit is on this list.

By Taylor Ayers May 28, 2021



er is just around the corner, which means lying out in the sun each, a park, or—for those city dwellers among us—a rooftop. dless of your location, you'll need a cute swimsuit. Thankfully, s that carry swimwear and vacation pieces are releasing their styles to help us ring in the warm weather. Ahead, you'll find of this season's best brands—from Reina Olga, which will have anding out on a crowded beach with their daring silhouettes right patterns, to Inez Valentine, a swimwear brand launched pandemic which showcases sustainable swimwear that will tuate your natural curves. With so much great swimwear to e from, your biggest issue will be where and when to wear all.

techradar

Best webcams 2021: top picks for working from home

By Carrie Marshall, Jess Weatherbed 16 days ago

What webcam is best suited for you?



(Image credit: Future)

Great news to folks who are still looking to buy the best webcams. Although these peripherals have experienced massive shortages in the middle of the pandemic due to high demands, dwindling supplies, and production issues, they are now readily available again. Logitech, Razer and Microsoft have replenished their stocks, which means that you can pretty much buy these from any store, online or otherwise.

There's a huge surge in demand for the best webcams due to the rise in folks working from or really just being stuck at home. PC users need these peripherals more than ever to connect with friends, family, and colleagues. Even those using

tom's guide

Best exercise bikes for home in 2021

By Kelly Woo 5 days ago

The best exercise bikes for cycling at home



(Image credit: Peloton)

The best exercise bikes provide a convenient and easy way to stay fit. If your local gym is at restricted capacity right now, or if the weather is bad, an indoor exercise bike is a great way to keep up with your cardio exercise.

An exercise bike is the first piece that many people buy when stocking up on the best home gym equipment. It provides a heart-pumping cardio workout that burns calories — even while performing other tasks, like working from home, watching TV, playing video games, reading or even calling into a Zoom

Notable Product Categories - Year To Date



United States



United Kingdom



Canada

1



Cameras



Headphones



Headphones

2



Headphones



Cameras



Cameras

3



Home Appliances



Home Appliances



Home Tech

4



Health & Beauty



Sporting Goods



Home Appliances

5



Gym & Fitness



Fitness Activity Trackers



Portable Electronics

Laptops, headphones, computer storage, and other accessories, like comfortable gaming chairs and webcams, were among the top items across markets, showing that

people were looking for the very best in gear to stay productive and unwind when they were off the clock. Consumers want their dollars to work harder than ever for them.

Conclusion

Even as consumers buying patterns shift according to their evolving needs, the data shows that they still value content that helps them make informed decisions and purchase the very best for their dollar.

Content commerce is a leading example of this, and one that advertisers should consider when determining how best to reach audiences in the new normal.

Key Takeaways:

Advertising aligned with commerce content is clearly an effective way to reach high-intent audiences, particularly as consumers are spending more time researching and making purchases online.

Consumers want to get the best products they can for their buck. This makes buyers guides a valuable content type that drives conversions.

Purchasing patterns show that consumers are embracing technology in all aspects of their lives, from gaming hardware for greater entertainment at home to photography equipment that lets them capture their adventures outside of it.