Conversion

In the previous lesson, we discussed the first variable that you should take into account when executing your keyword research: traffic potential. In this lesson, we’ll discuss the second important variable: the chance to convert. How likely is it that someone who visits a page actually performs the action you want them to take on that page? We’ll explain what conversion entails and what makes a page likely to convert well. Then, we’ll discuss how conversion ties into your keyword strategy.

What is conversion?

Conversion is often associated with a sale, but in online marketing, defining conversion as just that is too narrow. Conversion, the way we define it, happens every time a visitor completes a desired action on your website. That could be a click-through to the next page, if that is your main goal on a certain page. But it could also be a user subscribing to a newsletter. And it could be a visitor buying your product. It can be anything that fits your business. In short: conversion happens when someone completes the action you want them to complete.

Let’s say you have an online shop. In that case, your most important conversion is turning visitors into customers. You want to make sure they buy a product. However, if you’re a real estate agent, your most important conversion will probably be a visitor contacting you after seeing one of your listings. And if you’re a psychologist with a website where people can make an online appointment, that would be a conversion, too. There are lots of different types of websites, so you need to determine what you define as conversions for your pages yourself.
What makes a page likely to convert well?

There are a lot of factors that make a page likely to convert well. Addressing every single one of them is beyond the scope of this course, so we’ll focus on the most important aspect: creating user-centric pages.

Sell the way people want to buy

The most important factor for converting well is to create user-centric pages. If you want to convert your visitor based on your own perspective on your product, you may turn visitors off. You have to do the exact opposite thing. You have to look at things from the perspective of your user. You shouldn’t sell the way you want to sell, but sell the way people want to buy.

Example: Headphones

Let’s consider an example. You’re doing some research on new headphones. You discover two companies selling headphones:

**Company A:** “Our headphones have noise-canceling, high impedance, and dynamic drivers.”

**Company B:** “With our headphones, you’ll never be bothered by noises around you. Your music will sound exciting, like you’re listening to it live! You’ll hear the deepest and clearest bass sounds you’ve ever heard!”

Which would you choose? Which description sounds more tempting? Most people would probably go for company B, because they offer exactly what people are looking for. Here’s the catch: both companies are saying the exact same things! Company B was just much better at identifying what its customers can relate to.

This is true for a lot of things. Users decide if they want our products, they decide to subscribe to a newsletter or not, they decide to fill out your form or not. So in that sense, conversion is very much user-centric. Conversion is about making your visitors happy.
Conversion and keyword strategy

We’ve discussed the definition of conversion, but how does conversion tie into your keyword strategy? It ties into your keyword strategy in two ways. First of all, certain types of keywords are more likely to convert than others. Secondly, conversion is one of the variables which you should take into account when deciding whether you should try to rank for a keyword. Let’s take a closer look at these two ways.

Types of keywords and conversion

There are certain types of keywords that are more likely to convert than others. The best way to explain this is to take a look at a practical example. Consider the following three keywords:

1. ballet shoes
2. pink ballet shoes
3. buy pink ballet shoes for toddlers

To determine which one of these keywords is most likely to convert, try to take the perspective of the searcher. What is the searcher most likely to be looking for or to do when entering those queries? Let’s consider this for the keywords mentioned earlier.
1. **ballet shoes**
   Not everyone using the query “ballet shoes” will be looking to buy ballet shoes right away. People might just be looking for more information about ballet shoes. There are all kinds of reasons people could be googling “ballet shoes”. This is almost always the case for very broad terms like this one. A quick look at the search results for this query shows, next to sites selling ballet shoes, information about preparing ballet shoes, picking the right ballet shoes, and information on a movie called “Ballet Shoes”.

2. **pink ballet shoes**
   People searching for “pink ballet shoes” are already more likely to convert. These people are searching for ballet shoes in a specific color, so it’s much more likely they actually want to buy a pair.

3. **buy pink ballet shoes for toddlers**
   The keyword “buy pink ballet shoes for toddlers” is even more extreme. When someone searches for this keyword, they explicitly state their intention to buy pink ballet shoes (specifically for toddlers). Once someone who has entered that search term lands on a well-optimized page, the chance of conversion is sky-high!

Although the conversion rate for the third keyword is highest, you shouldn’t overestimate it either. People can change their mind, or maybe they want to visit several different websites to find the best deal. There could be all kinds of different reasons. Even for the most successful pages, conversion rates are very low. The average landing page across industries has a conversion rate of less than 2.5%.

**Conversion and choosing keywords**

The most important thing to consider here is the search intent of a searcher: what is the searcher looking for when entering a search query? Obviously, someone looking to buy is much more likely to buy than someone who’s just looking for information. You can’t really influence
that. We’ll dive into the different types of search intent when we look at creating landing pages.

What other conclusions can we draw? There’s a useful rule of thumb we can identify regarding keywords:

*The more specific the search term, the better your chances to convert.*

We’ve already seen that the longer the keyword you’re optimizing for, the fewer competitors you’ll have. So, it’s much easier to rank for long tail keywords than for more generic head keywords. This means focusing on a lot of long tail keywords could generate lots of traffic to your website. But long tail keywords are also generally more likely to lead to sales or other types of conversion. This is because they usually focus more on a specific product or topic. So, conversion is definitely one of the variables which you should take into account when deciding whether you should try to rank for a keyword.

This rule doesn’t always apply, though. If someone searches for “ways to tie ballet shoes”, that person is much less likely to convert for ballet shoes than someone simply searching for “ballet shoes”. Moreover, this rule of thumb is only applicable when every other factor is the same between the pages you’re comparing. A product page optimized for a head keyword may have a much better chance to convert than a blog post optimized for a long tail keyword, for example.
Applying conversion principles to your keyword strategy

How do you apply everything we’ve seen in this module to your keyword strategy? We’ve already determined that the chance to convert is one of the factors that you should take into account when deciding what pages you want to optimize for and pay the most attention to.

If you’re selling products, your product landing pages have by far the highest chances to convert and are very important pages on your website. If people are searching for a certain product, you almost always want your visitors to land on a product page. However, this isn’t the only way to drive sales. Depending on the search intent of your user, there are other ways of convincing your visitors to buy your products than just pulling your visitors into your product pages from the search results like a spider catches flies.

When people are searching with an informational intent, it’s fine for them to land on blog posts or informational pages. If you do a good job there, you can funnel your visitors to your product pages later. Not to mention the fact that other types of conversion may also be able to secure sales in the long run. For example, a newsletter subscription may be very important for your long-term traffic and customer retention. This tactic will lead to lower conversion rates, but a smart application of both
approaches may increase your total sales. Moreover, not every visit to your website has to result in a sale. Sometimes providing great information and a good experience is exactly what you want to do.

Don’t forget, your SEO strategy should be holistic. Just make sure you have a good idea of how each page stacks up conversion-wise. The best keyword strategy is made by researching every factor and making smart choices based on that research.

Example: Anna’s sustainable leather

Let’s go back to the example we introduced in a previous module: Anna and her sustainable leather webshop. She could create a page with information on vegan alternatives for leather. Or she could create a page where she tells all about the process of creating pineapple leather. If she adds links from these information pages to her product pages, people who are just looking for information on these subjects could eventually end up on her product pages. If she adds a clear newsletter subscription button to her information pages, people who are interested in these sustainable products might sign up for her newsletter and become returning visitors.

Conclusion

We’ve seen that conversion happens when someone completes the action you want them to complete. This could be a sale, but also a newsletter subscription or an appointment. We’ve also discussed how conversion ties into your keyword strategy. First of all, we’ve seen that long tail keywords are generally more likely to convert than shorter keywords. Secondly, we’ve seen that you should take conversion into account when deciding whether you should try to rank for a keyword.