

What retail marketers should  
**DO** about AI right now

@willcritchlow / @searchpilot

How can we  
USE AI?

What are our  
competitors  
doing?

What are  
consumers  
doing?

How can we  
USE AI?

How can we  
USE AI?

Productivity  
Content  
Tools

**What are our  
competitors  
doing?**

What are our  
competitors  
doing?

AI “slop” is a  
major  
problem for  
Google

**What are  
consumers  
doing?**

What are  
consumers  
doing?

Not  
predictions:  
this is about  
*NOW*





# Get the recording and slides

(Only needed if you didn't  
pre-register)

[bit.ly/searchpilot-ai-seo](https://bit.ly/searchpilot-ai-seo)

Today's focus:

How customers are  
using AI to find things  
to buy

What should retail marketers DO...

What should retail marketers DO...

...about AI overviews,  
ChatGPT etc?

There's a reason we're focusing on retail

ChatGPT (or even  
Google) won't ship  
people things

Let's start with the punchline:

You're here for  
tactics...

Right now

Channels as  
they EXIST

Right now

Channels as  
they EXIST

Next

Be  
accessible



Right now

Channels as  
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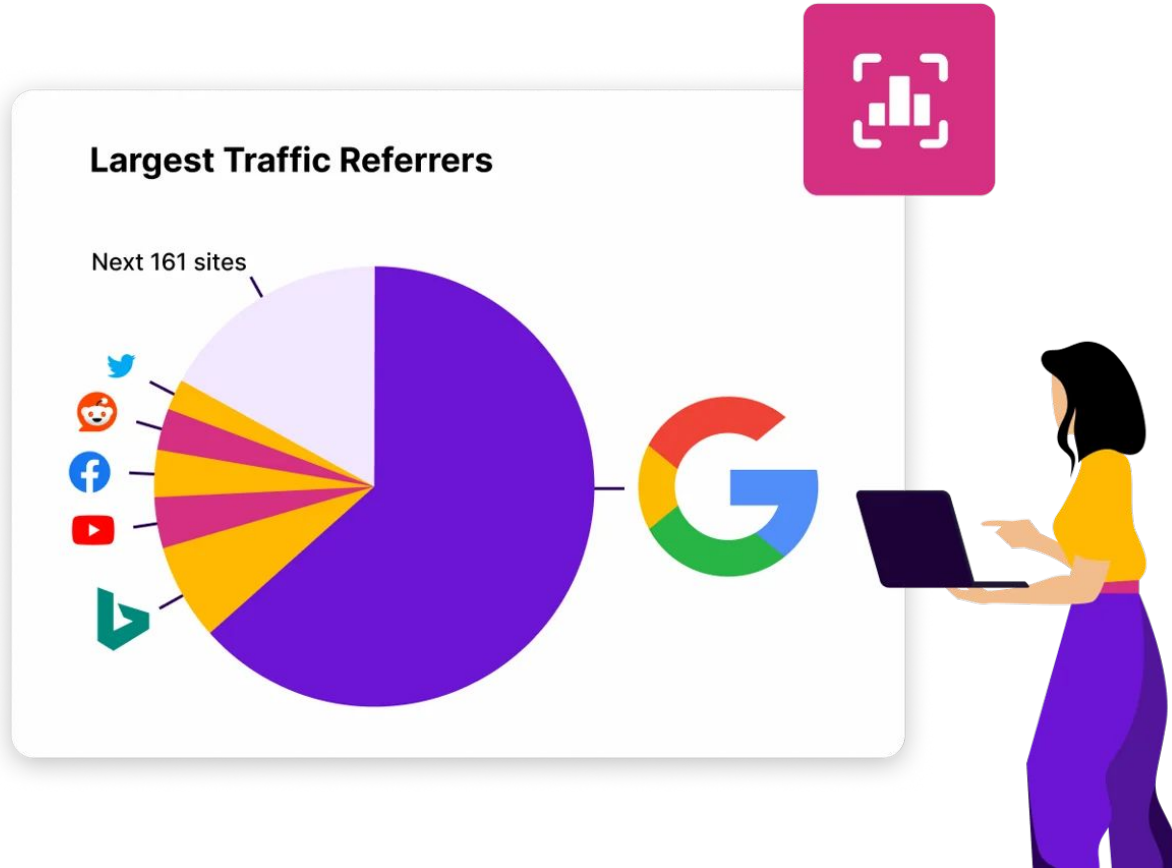
Eventually

Extend  
experiments

Right now

Channels as they  
**EXIST**

If we're talking about AI-powered marketing channels...





**We need to experiment to find out what the machines are going to prefer.**

Our “AI search” plan should start with our Google plan

**Test adding pricing table**

Services

Inconclusive

-

↑ 0.8%

**Update title and H1**

Products

Positive

7,930 won

↑ 9.2%

**Update meta description**

Products

Negative

3,458 rescued

↓ -6.4%

Monitor them all: **usage** *and* as a **channel**



#1

Test for Google

#2

Monitor LLMs



Right now

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Next

Be accessible

# Remain visible: #1 robots.txt

For **ecommerce** my view is that you want product content to be consumed from your site.

I would consider aligning LLM bot crawling permissions with googlebot.

**ACTION:** check for googlebot user-agent directives.



## PARSE YOUR ROBOTS.TXT FILE THE SAME WAY GOOGLE'S CRAWLERS DO

Choose a Googlebot, enter your robots.txt file in the text area and enter the path you'd like to check.

Crawler

Googlebot

Specify user agent (if "other" crawler selected):

Robots.txt file

```
User-agent: googlebot  
Disallow: /foo/
```

Path to check

/foo/

Parse

# Remain visible: #2 Don't require JS for rendering content

[Vercel study](#) shows major LLM crawlers don't use JS:

- OpenAI (OAI-SearchBot, ChatGPT-User, GPTBot)
- Anthropic (ClaudeBot)
- Meta (Meta-ExternalAgent)
- ByteDance (Bytespider)
- Perplexity (PerplexityBot)

Remain visible: #3 (re-)consider registration walls

## **GOAT:**

# Who is the Greatest Economist of all Time and Why Does it Matter?

A GENERATIVE BOOK BY TYLER COWEN

Do you yearn for something more than a book? And yet still love books? How about a book you can query, and it will answer away to your heart's content? How about a book that will create its own content, on demand, or allow you to rewrite it? A book that will tell you why it is (sometimes) wrong?

That is what I have tried to build with my latest work. It's called *GOAT: Who is the Greatest Economist of all Time and Why Does it Matter?*

# Remain visible: #4 applies to media coverage too

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/robots.txt>

```
User-agent: anthropic-ai
Disallow: /
User-agent: ChatGPT-User
Disallow: /
User-agent: Claude-Web
Disallow: /
User-agent: ClaudeBot
Disallow: /
User-agent: FacebookBot
Disallow: /
User-agent: Google-Extended
Disallow: /
User-agent: GPTBot
Disallow: /
User-agent: OAI-SearchBot
Disallow: /
User-agent: PerplexityBot
Disallow: /
```

**NOTE:** The game theory is more complicated for media companies.

**AND:** Some of them have partnerships despite blocking external crawling!

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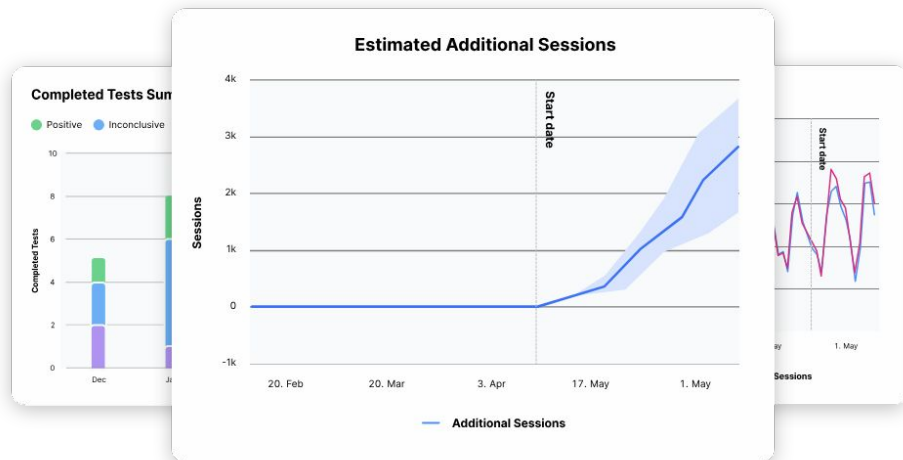
Extend  
experiments

Eventually

Extend experiments



Only when the traffic justifies it...



1. Include LLM traffic in **experiment** measurement
2. Eventually: run dedicated AI experiments

This would be difficult to do today, because there isn't enough **FRESHNESS** in the AI results. I'm going to argue that by the time we need to, however, it'll be possible.

Let's back up

Some theory to  
support our tactics

## Directories

In the 90s,  
we could  
map the  
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## Search

Since then  
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## Agents

We are  
starting to  
rely on  
robot advice

# Agents

The return of  
competition

Google became dominant on an engine they understood



## Amit Singhal left Google in 2016...



... and the idea that core ranking should be understandable (and hence couldn't be deep learning-powered) left with him.

The years that followed saw ML come to organic search in a big way.



# Google

A man in a blue t-shirt is standing on a stage, gesturing with his hands while holding a small black device. Behind him is a large, illuminated Google logo in a serif font, set against a blue background. The scene is lit with blue stage lights.

Leading to a vision of a more personalised, intelligent and sophisticated product

**Threat 1**

ML-gen “slop”  
content

## Threat 1

ML-gen “slop”  
content

## Threat 2

Poisoning the  
training data  
well

## Threat 1

ML-gen “slop”  
content

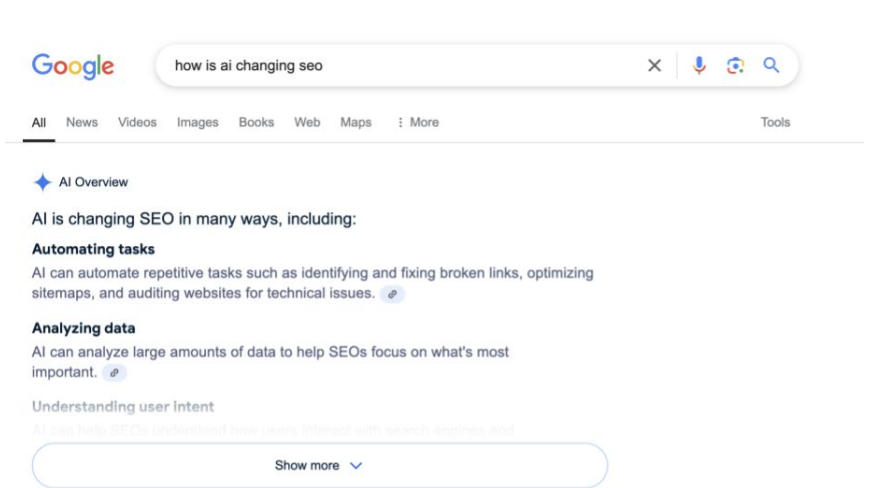
## Threat 2

Poisoning the  
training data  
well

## Threat 3

Not knowing  
how the algo  
works

# Clayton Christensen's model of INNOVATION



The screenshot shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text "how is ai changing seo". Below the search bar, there are navigation links for "All", "News", "Videos", "Images", "Books", "Web", "Maps", and "More". A "Tools" link is also visible. The search results are under the heading "AI Overview". The main text states "AI is changing SEO in many ways, including:" followed by two sub-sections: "Automating tasks" and "Analyzing data". A "Show more" button is located at the bottom of the visible content.

Google

how is ai changing seo

All News Videos Images Books Web Maps More Tools

AI Overview

AI is changing SEO in many ways, including:

**Automating tasks**

AI can automate repetitive tasks such as identifying and fixing broken links, optimizing sitemaps, and auditing websites for technical issues.

**Analyzing data**

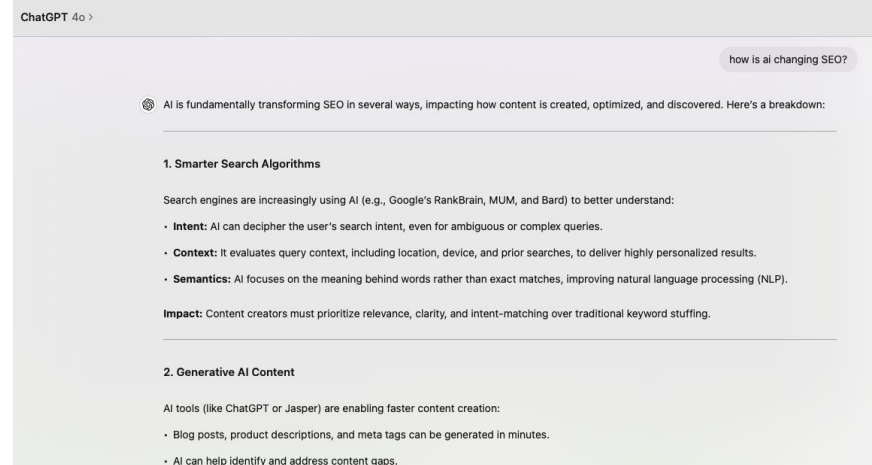
AI can analyze large amounts of data to help SEOs focus on what's most important.

Understanding user intent

AI can help SEOs understand how users interact with search engines and

Show more

**SUSTAINING** innovations improve existing products to make them better and more valuable



The screenshot shows a ChatGPT 4o interface. The user's query is "how is ai changing seo?". The AI response is structured as follows: "AI is fundamentally transforming SEO in several ways, impacting how content is created, optimized, and discovered. Here's a breakdown:" followed by two main sections: "1. Smarter Search Algorithms" and "2. Generative AI Content".

ChatGPT 4o

how is ai changing SEO?

AI is fundamentally transforming SEO in several ways, impacting how content is created, optimized, and discovered. Here's a breakdown:

**1. Smarter Search Algorithms**

Search engines are increasingly using AI (e.g., Google's RankBrain, MUM, and Bard) to better understand:

- Intent:** AI can decipher the user's search intent, even for ambiguous or complex queries.
- Context:** It evaluates query context, including location, device, and prior searches, to deliver highly personalized results.
- Semantics:** AI focuses on the meaning behind words rather than exact matches, improving natural language processing (NLP).

**Impact:** Content creators must prioritize relevance, clarity, and intent-matching over traditional keyword stuffing.

**2. Generative AI Content**

AI tools (like ChatGPT or Jasper) are enabling faster content creation:

- Blog posts, product descriptions, and meta tags can be generated in minutes.
- AI can help identify and address content gaps.

**DISRUPTIVE** innovations create “good enough” products that are more affordable and accessible

# Combine AI experts' views with studies of tech take-up



Tyler Cowen – The #1 Bottleneck to AI Progress is Humans



Dwarakesh Patel  
454K subscribers

Subscribe

1.4K




Share

Download

Thanks

Clip



The background is a vibrant, abstract composition of various geometric shapes and icons. It features a dark blue base with large, overlapping circles in shades of yellow, orange, red, and green. Scattered throughout are smaller elements like white airplanes, yellow chevrons, and small white dots, suggesting a theme of technology, growth, or global connectivity. The overall aesthetic is modern and dynamic.

**“If I look at it year on year, the traffic we send outside has only grown. That's what we have accomplished as a company.”**

– Sundar Pichai, Google CEO speaking on Hard Fork

“... we see that the links included in AI Overviews get more clicks than if the page had appeared as a traditional web listing for that query”

– Liz Reid, Head of Google Search in a [Google post](#)



**Google**

**ecommerce**



**Liking high commercial intent  
organic clicks**

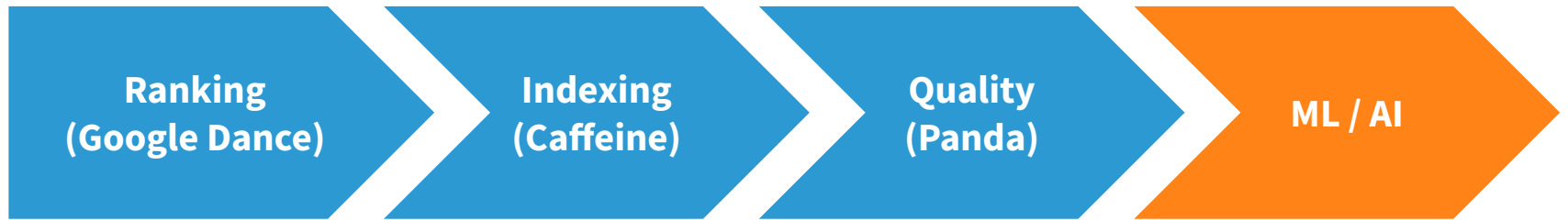
I said earlier:

ChatGPT (or even  
Google) won't ship  
people things

This implies:

Users are going to  
continue to want to  
reach PDPs *at least*.

I said earlier that we needed freshness in order to test



“we know that customers want **low prices**, and I know that's going to be true 10 years from now. They want **fast delivery**; they want **vast selection.**”





I think the equivalent for Google would emphasise:

- 1. Freshness**
- 2. Completeness**
- 3. Relevance**

#1

Sustaining  
innovation

#2

Traffic to  
PDPs

#3

Importance  
of freshness



Prediction:

AI recommendations will **continue to send people to product pages**, and by the time this is a significant fraction of search traffic, the **need for freshness** will mean we will be able to **test to learn what works best**.




**In summary:**

Before a person can  
buy from you, a  
machine has to  
recommend you

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**Machine  
preferences  
are  
human-like**

In summary:

Before a person can  
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**We need  
hypothesis-  
driven  
testing**

Reminder of what we've covered:

How customers are  
using AI to find things  
to buy

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What should retail marketers DO...

...about AI overviews,  
ChatGPT etc?

Let's ~~start~~ end with the punchline:

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Want more?

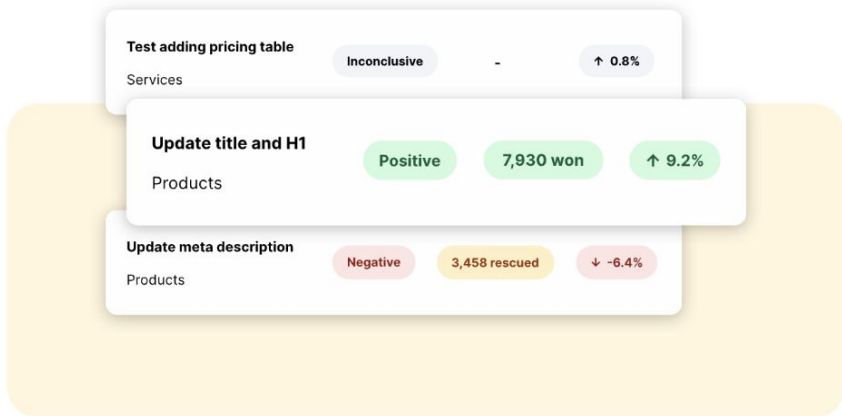
# SEO test your online shop (and avoid the drop)

In retail, competition is fierce, prices are pressured, and trends are transient.

Thriving in this market means deploying the **right** website changes fast. (And never deploying the wrong ones).

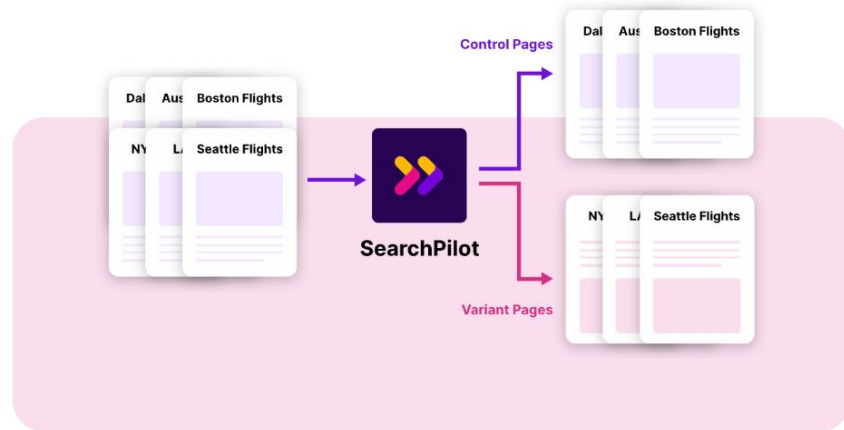
SearchPilot ensures every change you make has been tested and proven to build traffic and boost the bottom line.





## SEO done differently

Prove what works and what doesn't. And start making a measurable difference to your site.



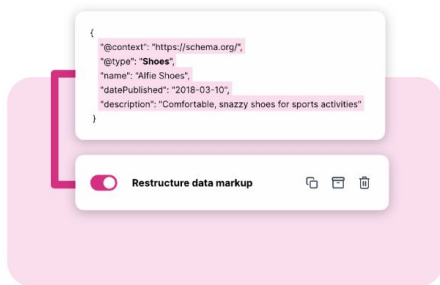
## True SEO testing

We don't split users, we split pages. Each page has one version, one page to crawl, one robust result.



# SEO A/B testing for retail sites

SearchPilot gives your SEO teams answers specific to your site.

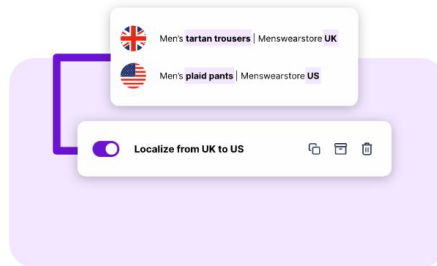


## Structured data markup

Which of the many markup options is going to provide the best ROI?

Is it worth adding [brand names to FAQ markup](#)?

What about [breadcrumb data](#)? Is what was once best practice still the best way to go?

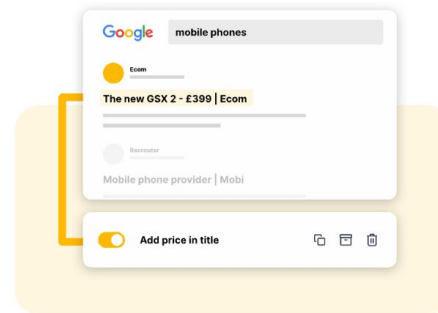


## Localization and stores

Should you add a [locale to your title tag](#)?

Could [localizing UK language to US](#) (think trousers to pants) increase traffic by as much as 24%?

Does the level of [detail about your stores](#) impact traffic?



## Titles and descriptions

Is it better to include [prices in titles](#)? And if you do, should they be dynamic?

What about the [brand name](#)? Where's the best position for it?

And should your [product description](#) be above the fold for more traffic?



# Flight Log: tap into the biggest conversations in SEO today

Designed for marketing moguls, data deep-divers, business leaders and SEO experts alike, Flight Log is our monthly newsletter, where we collate our unmissable insights from the SEO world.

With over 25,000 monthly subscribers, you won't want to miss out.

Sign up now via the form.



<https://bit.ly/searchpilot-flight-log>

Finally...

Want **EVEN** more?



# Speak to us about SearchPilot

SEO is your most undervalued and overlooked channel. It's time to turn it into a valuable catalyst for business growth and maximize your website's ROI with a robust testing platform.



**The capability to conduct testing will play a crucial role in assessing the impact of our efforts in supporting this channel, all while enhancing the overall site experience for our customers.**

Olivia O'Neill

Head of Digital Marketing Delivery, M&S



<https://bit.ly/searchpilot-demo>

🕒 1 min read

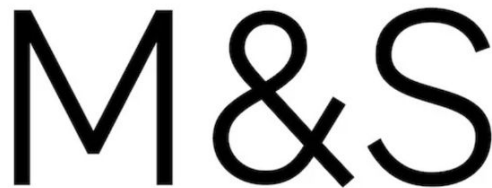
# SearchPilot partners with Marks and Spencer to Power SEO Experimentation

Retail

SEO A/B Testing

Posted May 23, 2024 by [Will Critchlow](#)

Last updated June 20, 2024

The logo for Marks and Spencer, consisting of the letters 'M', '&', and 'S' in a large, black, serif font.

Receive monthly insights on  
SEO and growth drivers

Get Flight Log 

## Popular articles

- [\[Updated 2024\] What is SEO A/B testing? A guide to setting up,](#)

We are excited to announce a multi-year partnership with [Marks and Spencer](#), one of the UK's most iconic retail brands. The deal is the beginning of an exciting journey to bring new visibility and results to the organic search channel with measurability and accountability.

Under the partnership, SearchPilot will deploy its cutting-edge analytics and search optimisation platform across Marks and Spencer's online retail operations in the UK and Ireland. The partnership aims to bring data and insights to the Marks and Spencer team, raise the visibility and understanding of organic search within the experimentation and leadership teams, and unlock additional growth in the largest digital channel.

# Thanks!

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@willcritchlow / @SearchPilot

Sign up to emails at [www.searchpilot.com/flight-log](http://www.searchpilot.com/flight-log)



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# Image credits

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