

# UX Playbook for News and Content Sites

Collection of best practices to delight your users

A solid blue horizontal line that underlines the text above it.

# News & content sites playbook at a glance

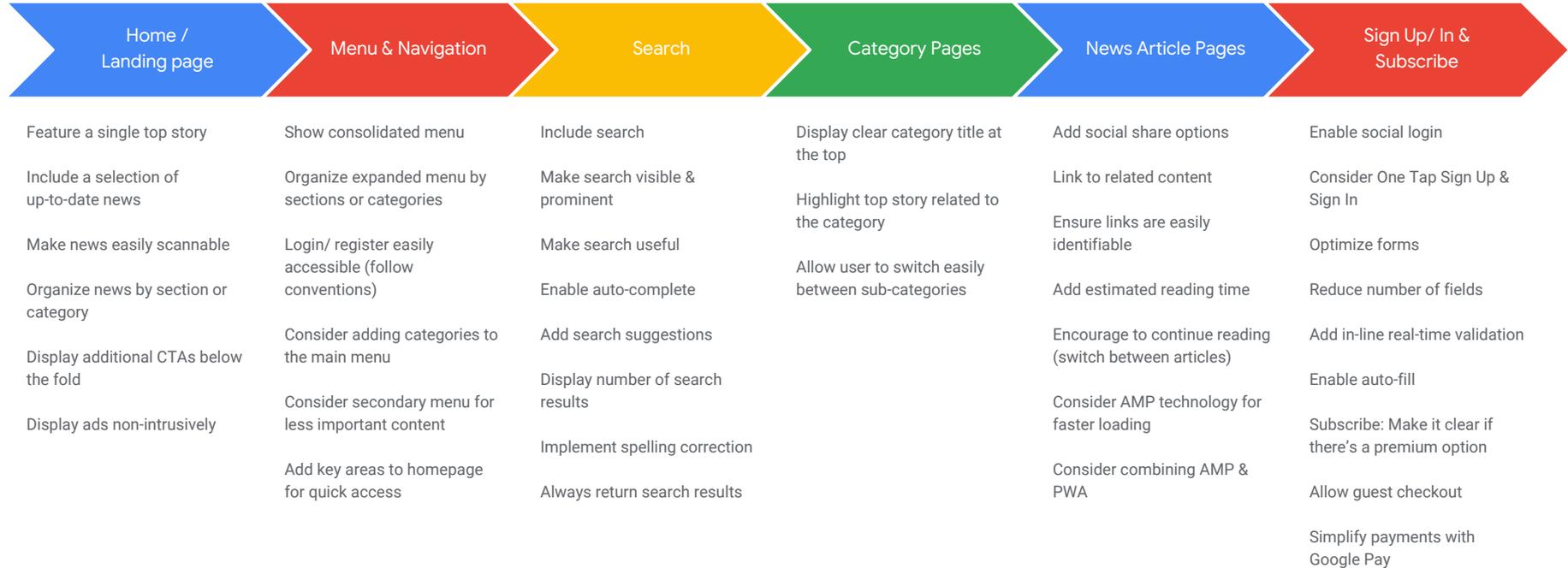
Creating frictionless experiences across the funnel

After looking at several news sites, we realized that there were certain universal UX elements that helped create a frictionless shopping experience. This list aims to expand on the 25 Mobile UX Principles and provide a checklist for improving your mobile site experience across 6 key site areas:



# News & content sites playbook at a glance

Creating frictionless experiences across the funnel



All recommendations  
should be A/B tested!

# Homepage / Landing Page

# News & content sites playbook at a glance

Creating frictionless experiences across the funnel



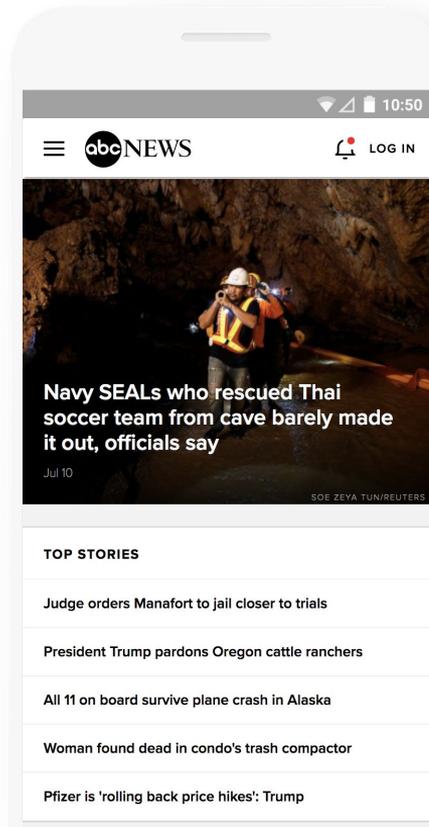
Section	Homepage/Landing Page	Ease of implementation	Impact	Key Metric
<b>Key suggestion</b>	Feature a single top story and remove automatic carousels	Easy	High	Bounce rate
	Additional CTAs below the fold	Easy	Medium	CVR
	Display ads non-intrusively	Easy	High	Bounce Rate
	Make news easily scannable	Medium	High	Time on site, Page views
	Organize news by section	Medium	Medium	Time on site, Page views

# Feature a top story or breaking news (remove carousels)

theguardian.com



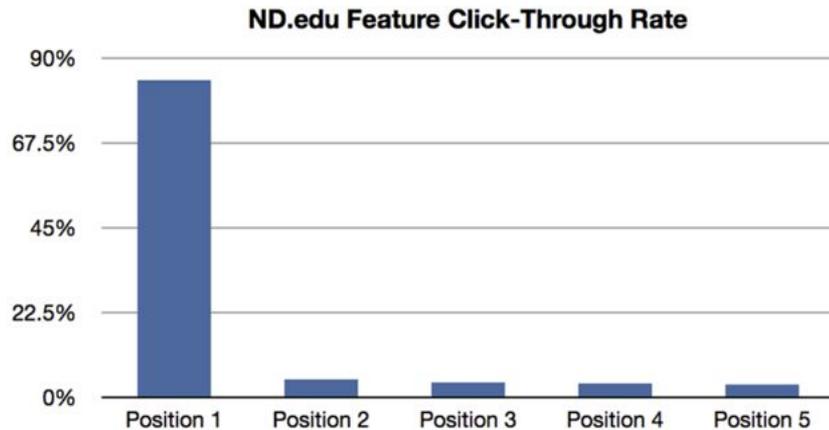
abcnews.go.com



edition.cnn.com



# Why to avoid carousels & sliders



## Research:

- [Conversion XL](#)
- [ClickZ](#)
- [Widerfunnel](#)
- [NN Group](#)
- [Erik Runyon](#)

## Pros for heavy content websites:

- Multiple pieces of content within less space

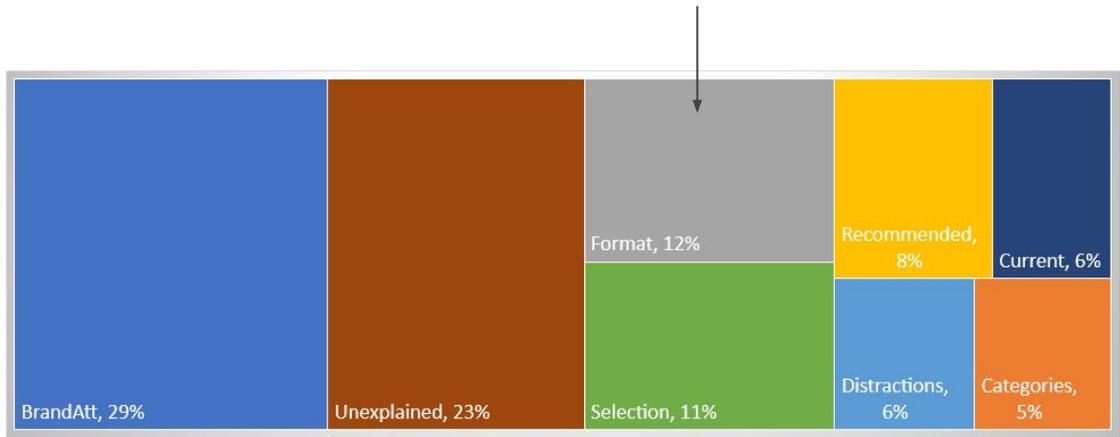
## Cons:

- Users often scroll past carousels (if you're using a carousel hoping that your users will see a variety of content, there's a high chance they'll only see the first frame)
- Not all content can be equally "important"

# Include a selection of up-to-date news



# The format and story selection matter most



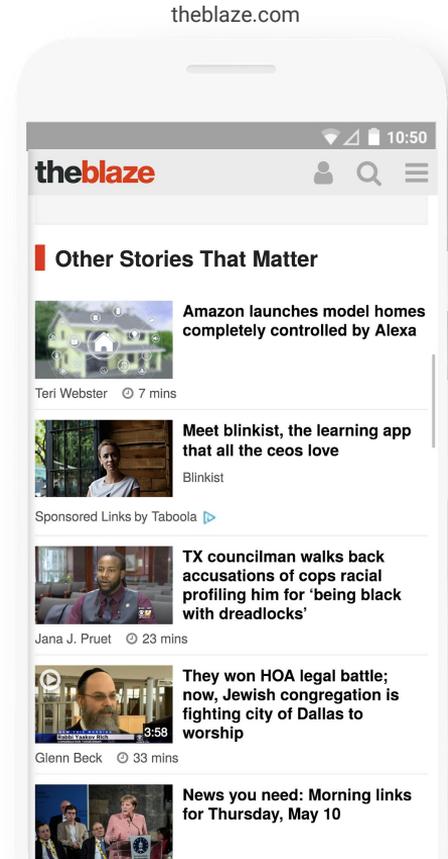
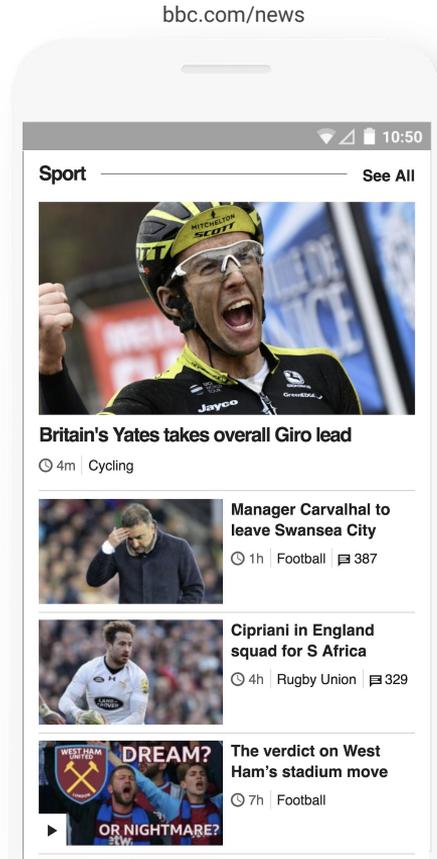
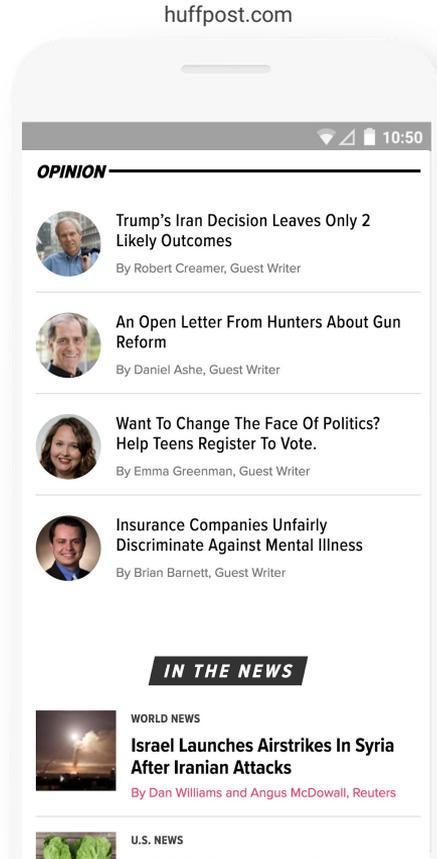
According to a study conducted by MeasuringU, the biggest drivers of the online news experience are the format of the articles and having a good selection of stories on the homepage.

**Research:**

- [MeasuringU](#)

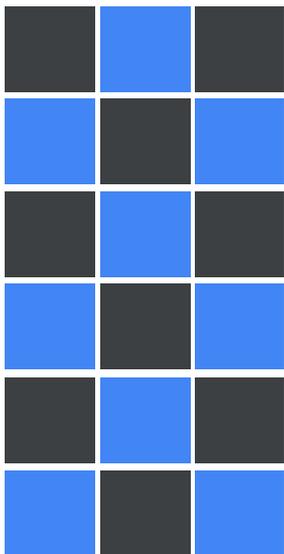
Source: MeasuringU. Key drivers of the news website experience explaining 77% of SUPR-Q scores.

# Make news easily scannable (eg. list view)



# Grid View vs List View

grid view



VS

list view



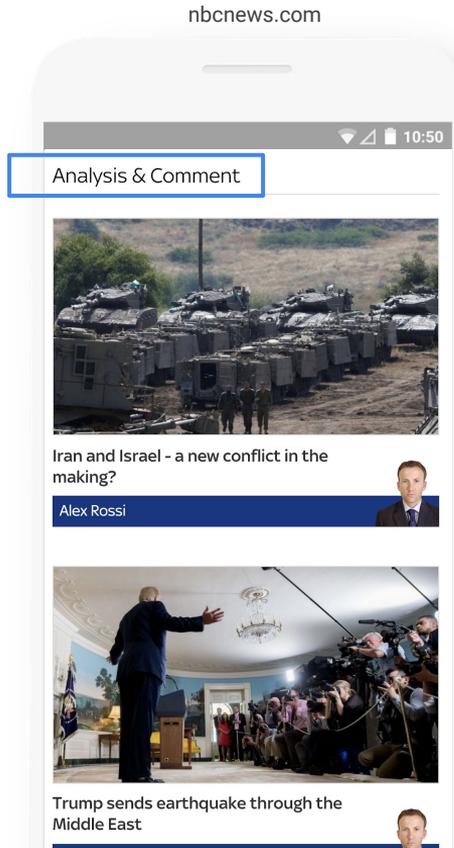
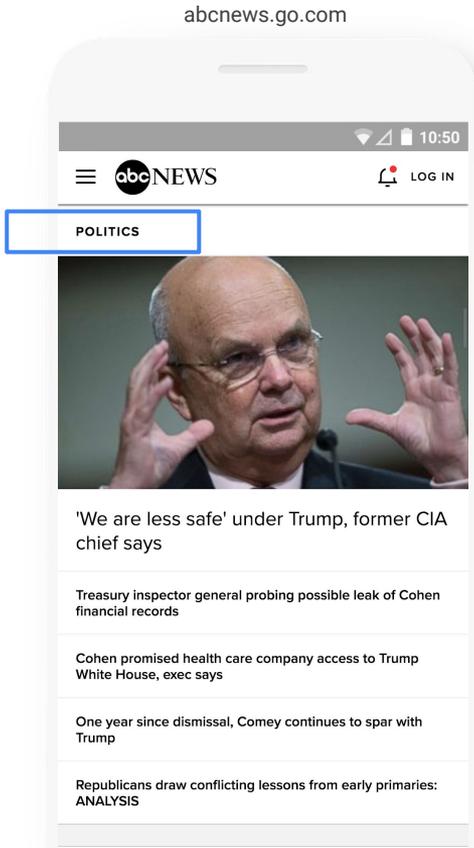
Choose the appropriate layout for the type of content you're displaying. Text-heavy content tends to perform better with list view.

- **List View:** Attention decreases from top to bottom - More relevant / recent news should come first
- **Grid View:** Attention spread more evenly - best suited for visual content

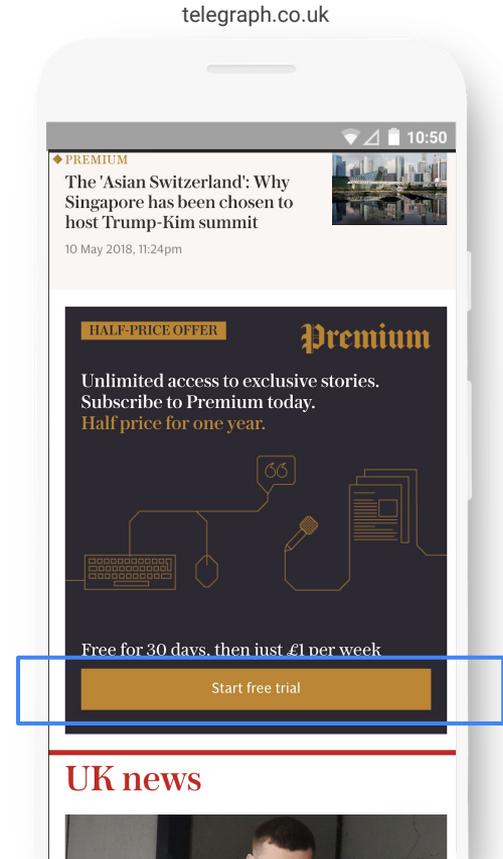
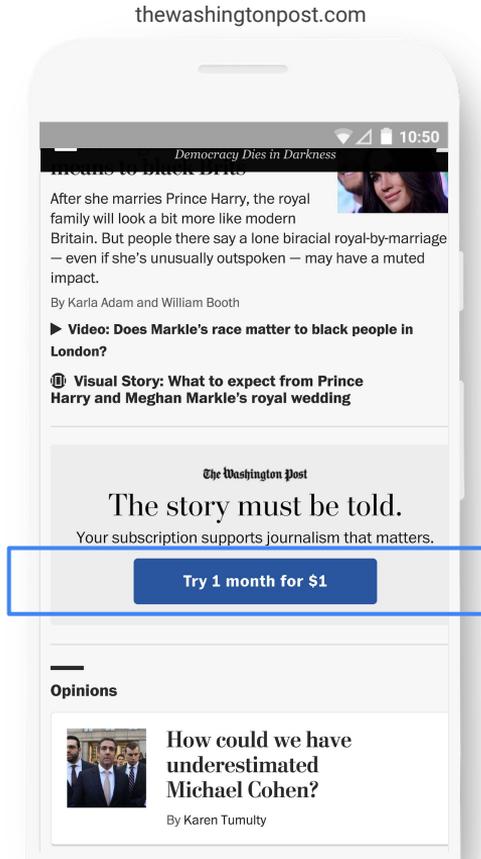
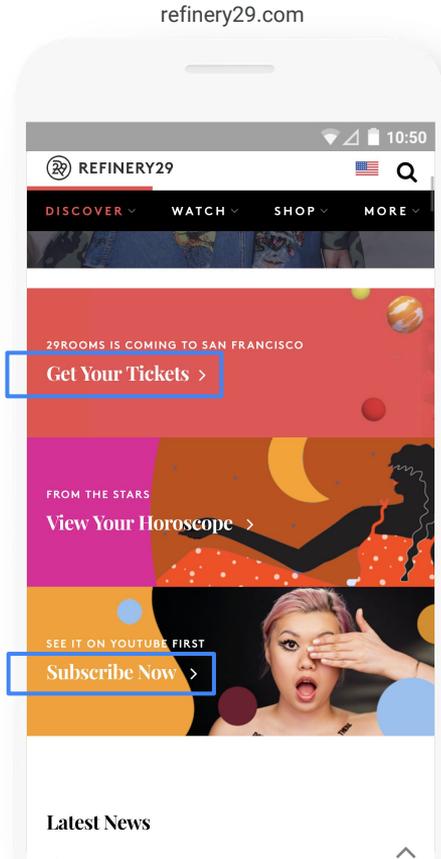
## Research:

- [Fact-finder](#)
- [Nielsen Norman Group](#)

# Organize news by section or category

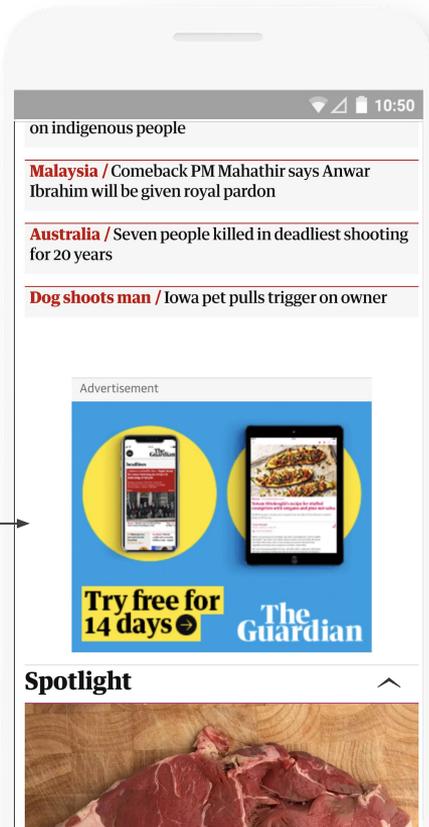


# Display additional CTA(s) below the fold

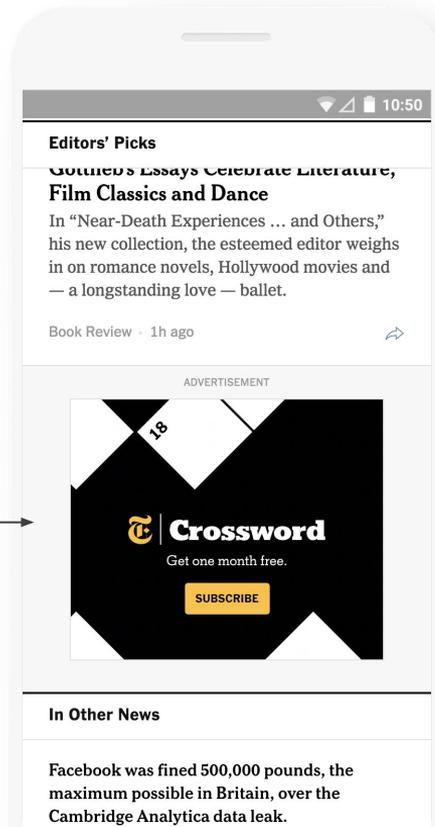


# Display ads non-intrusively (don't interrupt experience)

theguardian.com



thewashingtonpost.com



huffpost.com





# Menu & Navigation

# News & content sites playbook at a glance

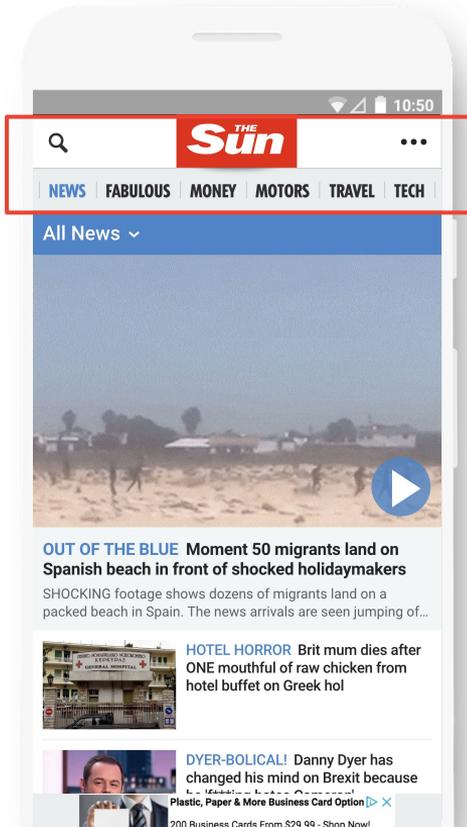
Creating frictionless experiences across the funnel



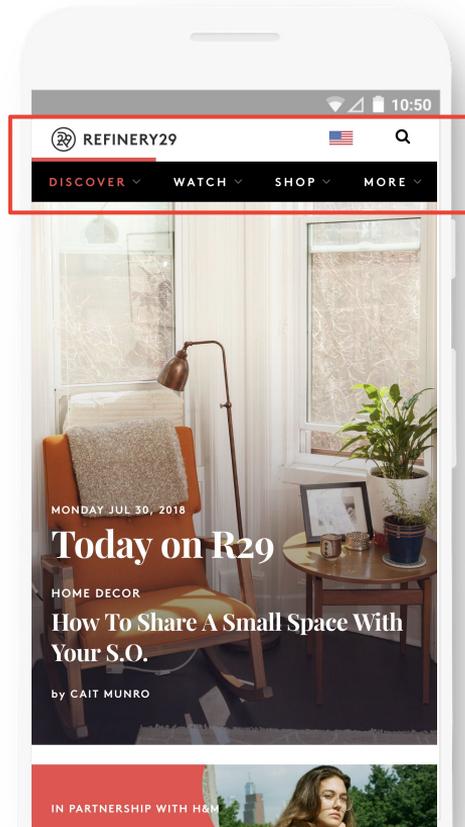
Section	Menu & Navigation	Ease of implementation	Impact	Key Metric
<b>Key suggestion</b>	Show consolidated menu	Medium	High	Page views / depth
	Login / register easily accessible	Medium	High	Sign-up rate, returning visitors
	Add categories to main menu	Medium	Medium	Page views / depth
	Add secondary hidden menu	Medium	Medium	CTR
	Add key areas to homepage for quick access	Medium	Medium	Page views, CTR
	Organize expanded menu by sections or categories	Medium	Medium	Page views / depth

# Show consolidated menu (less than 1/5 of page)

thesun.co.uk



refinery29.com

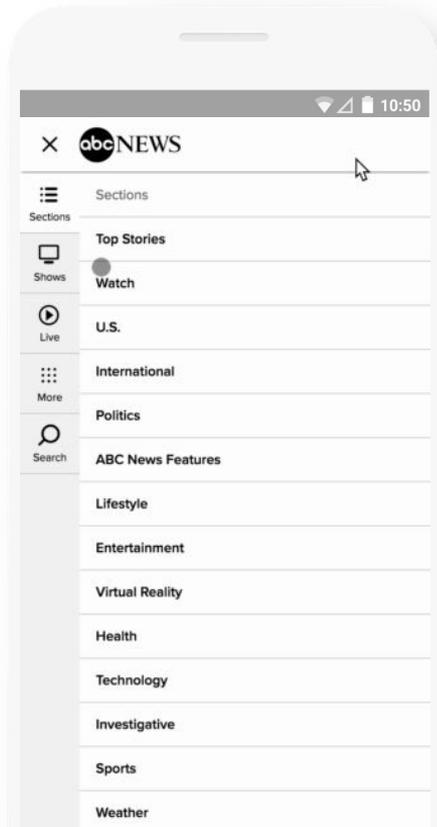


cnn.com

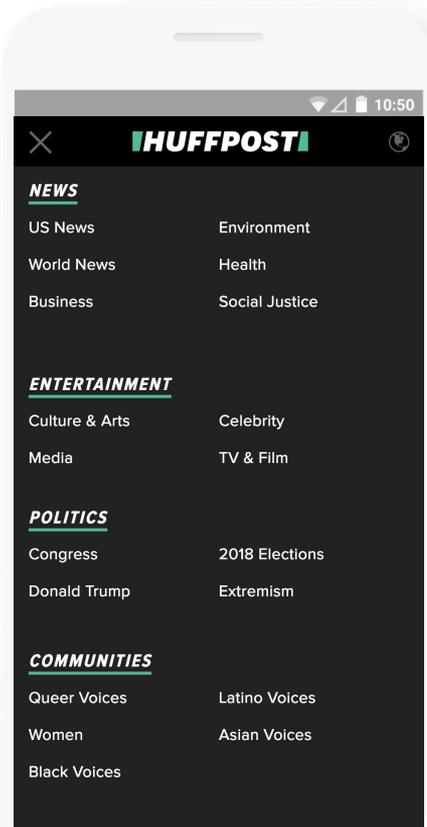


# Organize expanded menu by sections or categories

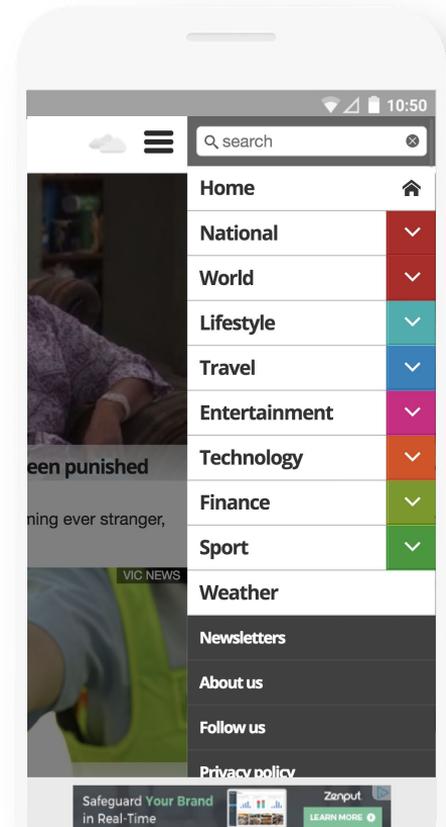
abcnews.go.com



huffpost.com

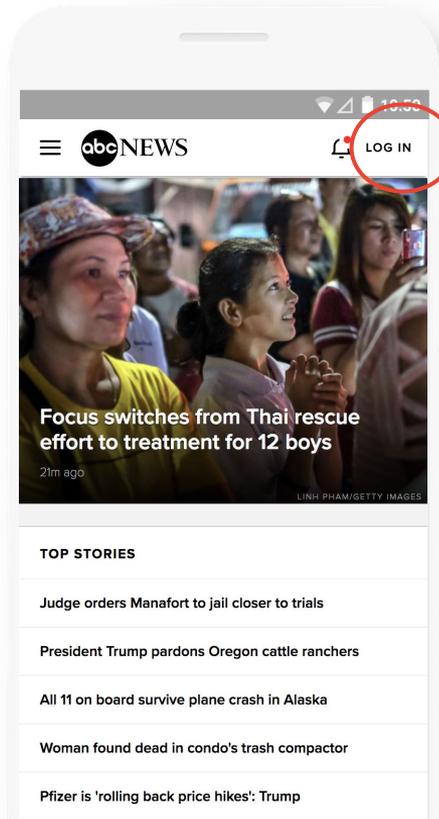


news.com.au

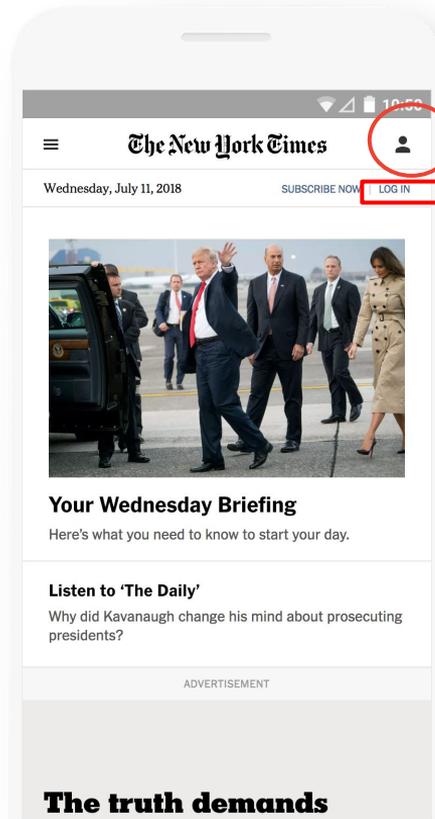


# Login/ register easily accessible (follow conventions)

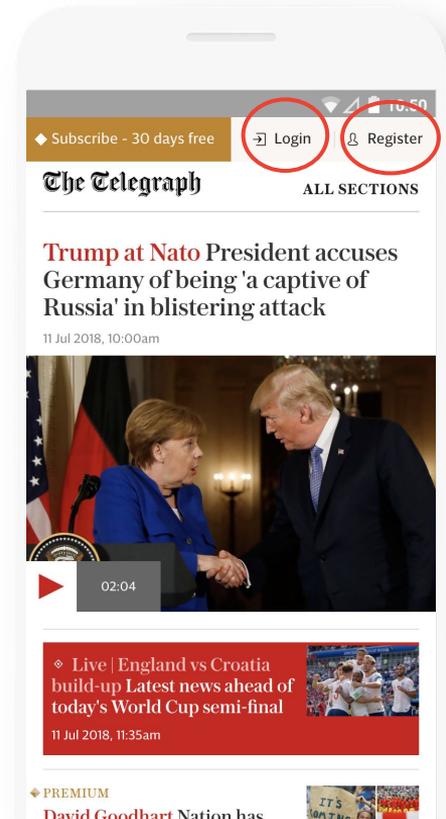
abcnews.go.com



nytimes.com

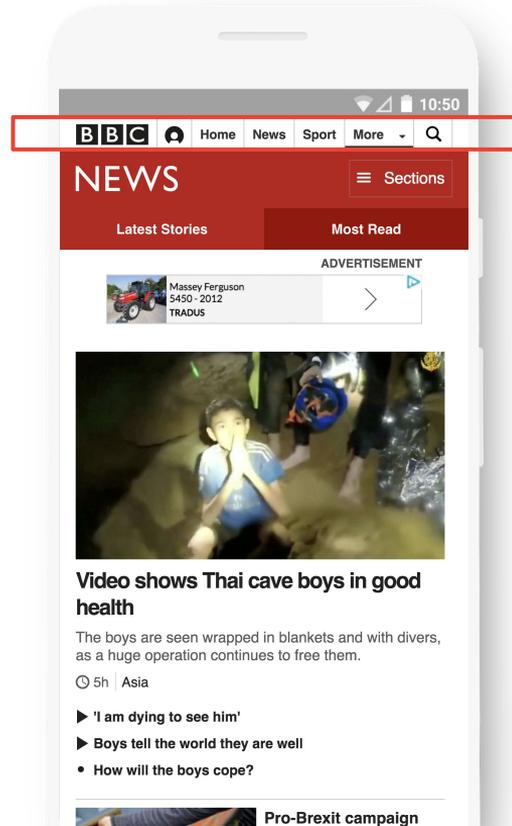


telegraph.co.uk

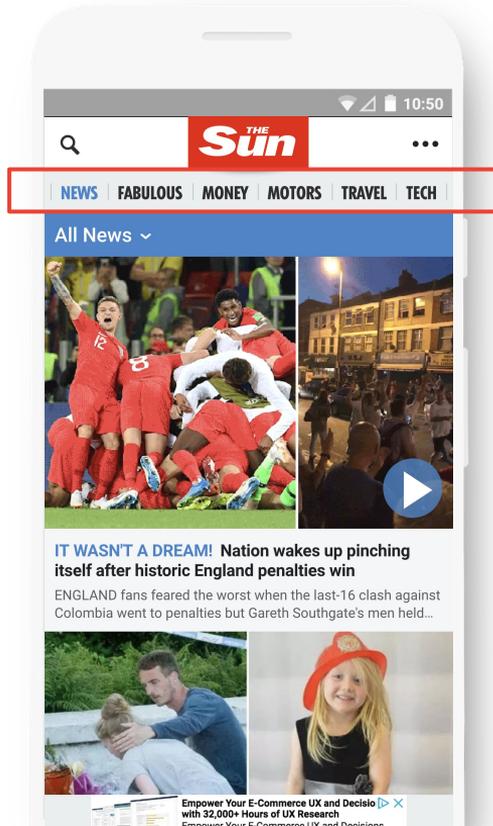


# Consider adding categories to the main menu

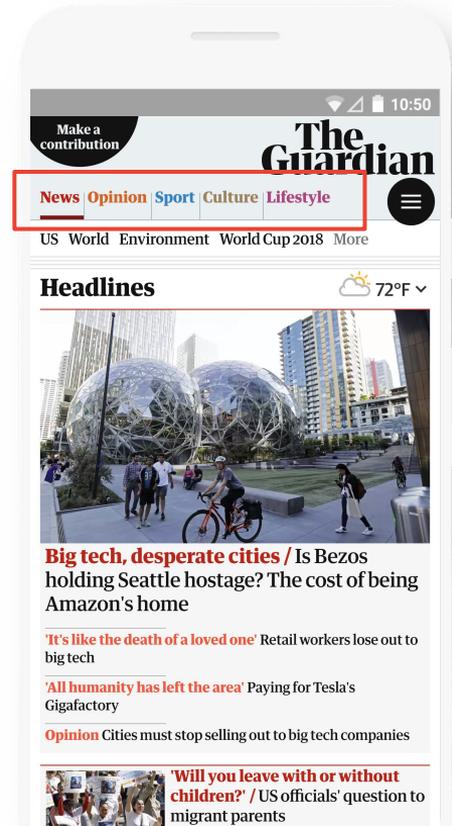
abcnews.go.com



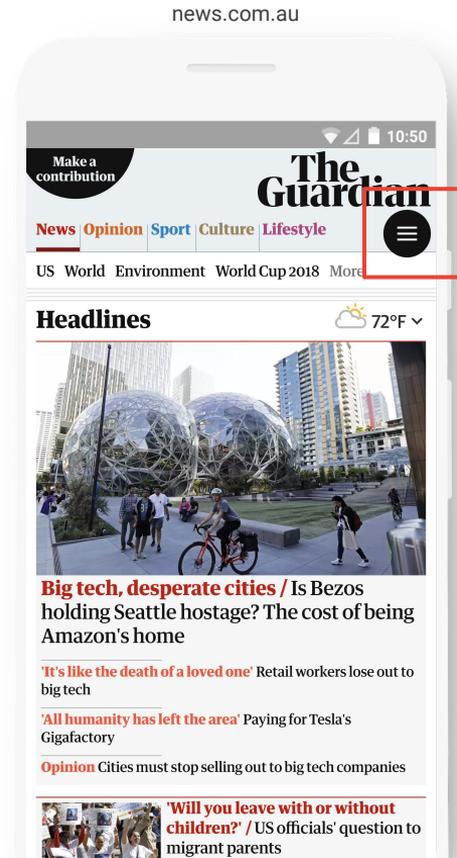
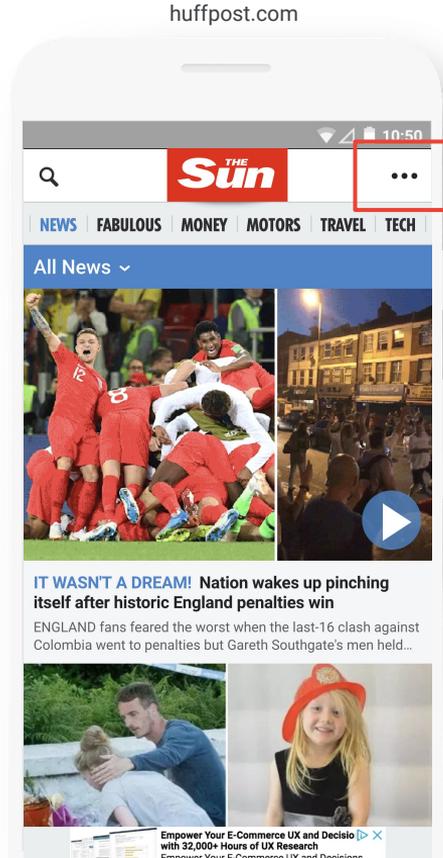
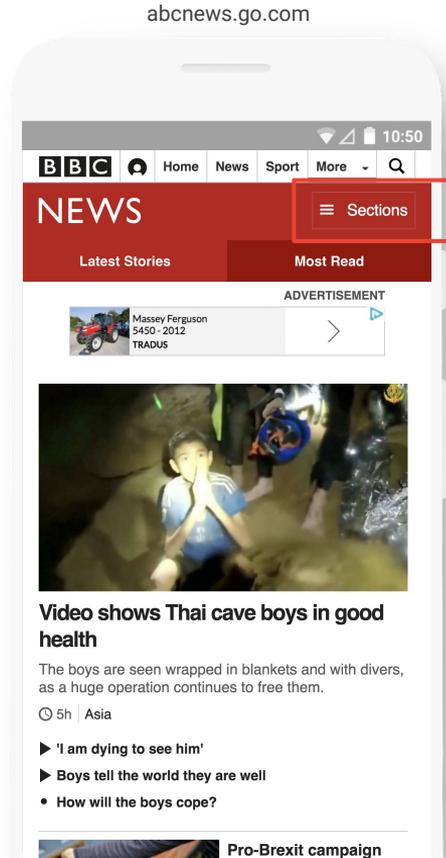
huffpost.com



news.com.au

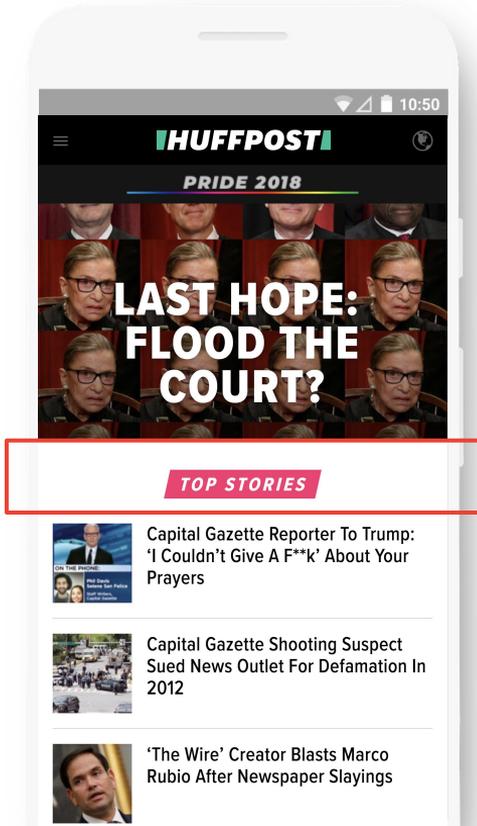


# Consider secondary menu for less important content

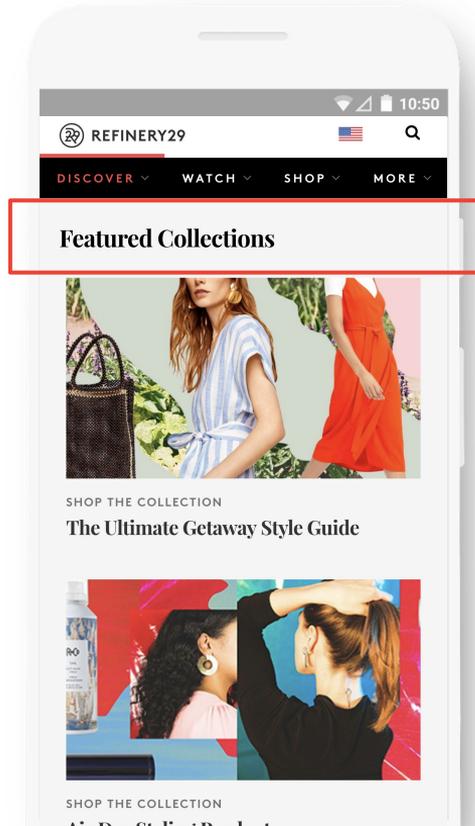


# Add key areas to homepage for quick access

huffpost.com



refinery29.com



nytimes.com





# Search

# News & content sites playbook at a glance

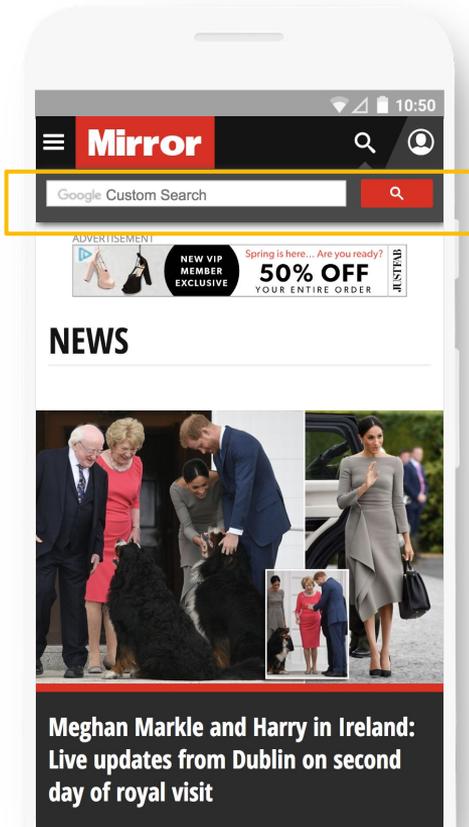
Creating frictionless experiences across the funnel



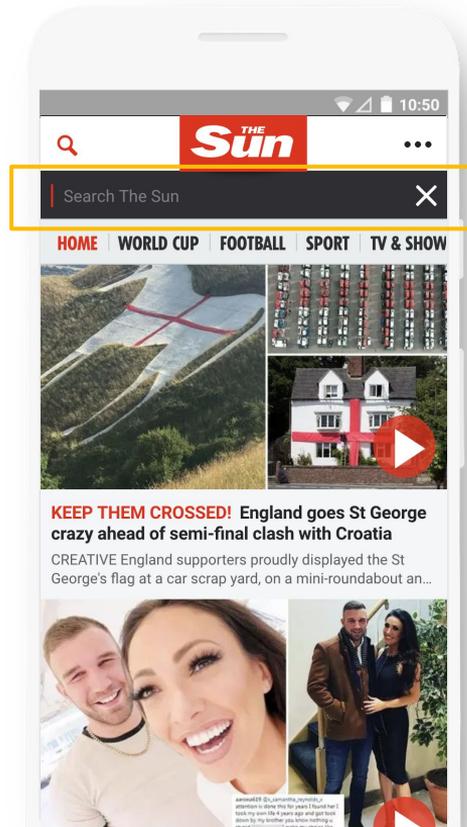
Section	Menu & Navigation	Ease of implementation	Impact	Key Metric
<b>Key suggestion</b>	Include search	Hard	High	% traffic w/ searches, CVR
	Make search visible	Easy	High	% traffic w/ searches, search depth
	Enable auto-complete (history-based search suggestions)	Easy	High	Bounce rate on traffic w/ searches, search depth
	Add search suggestions	Medium	High	Bounce rate on traffic w/ searches, search depth
	Display number of search results	Medium	Medium	Bounce rate on traffic w/ searches, search depth
	Implement spelling correction	Medium	Medium	Bounce rate on traffic w/ searches, search depth
	Always return search results	Medium	Medium	Bounce rate on traffic w/ searches, search depth

# Make search visible & prominent (preferably at the top)

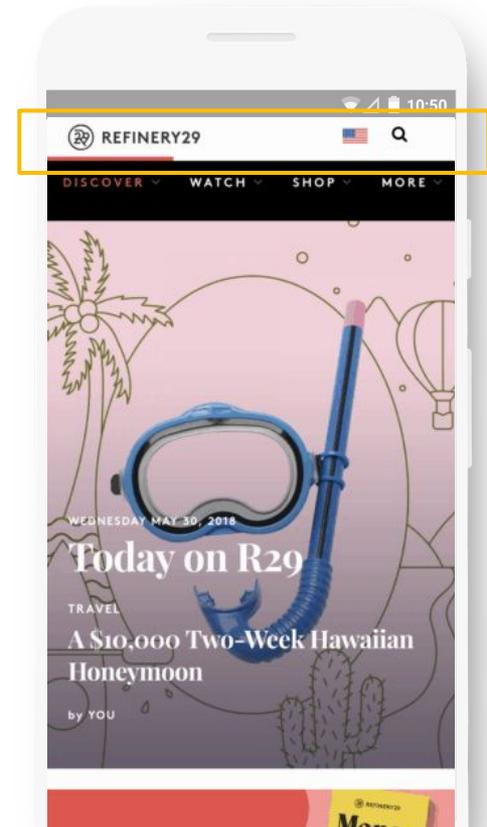
mirror.co.uk



thesun.co.uk

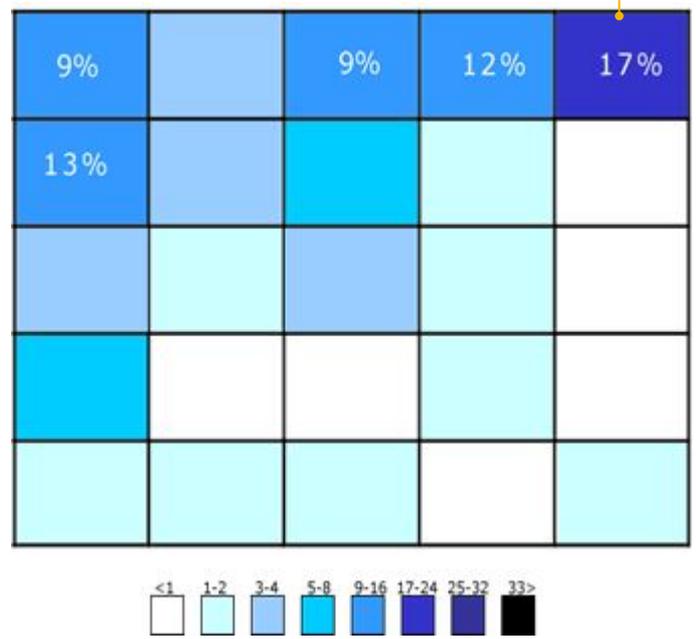


refinery29.com



# Search placement and visibility

users expect to find the search box on the top right corner



If search is an important function on your mobile site, it should be displayed prominently. The more content you have, the more prominently you want to display your search feature.

When search is **hidden** behind menus or icons:

- Makes the search feature less noticeable.
- Increases the “cost” of interaction. Users need to take an extra action in order to access the search.
- Placing your search bar somewhere unexpected means your users will need extra effort to find it.

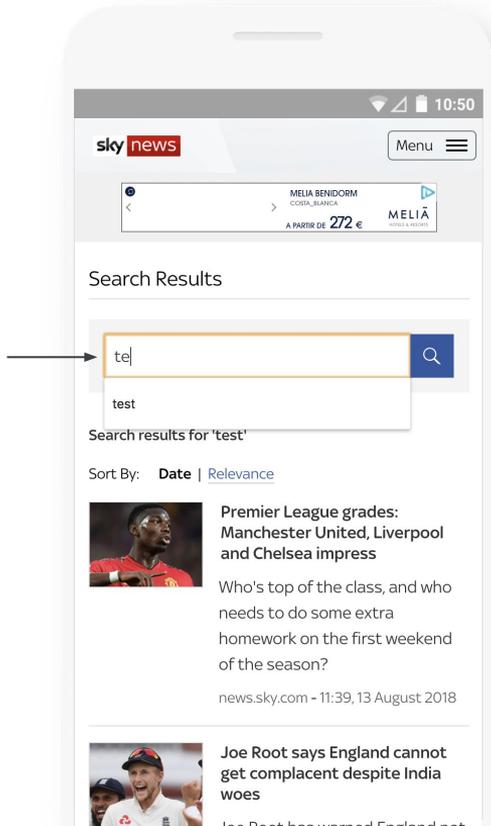
### Research:

Users look first towards the upper-right corner for search. If they don't find the search box there, they start scanning the top of the page (F-shaped pattern).

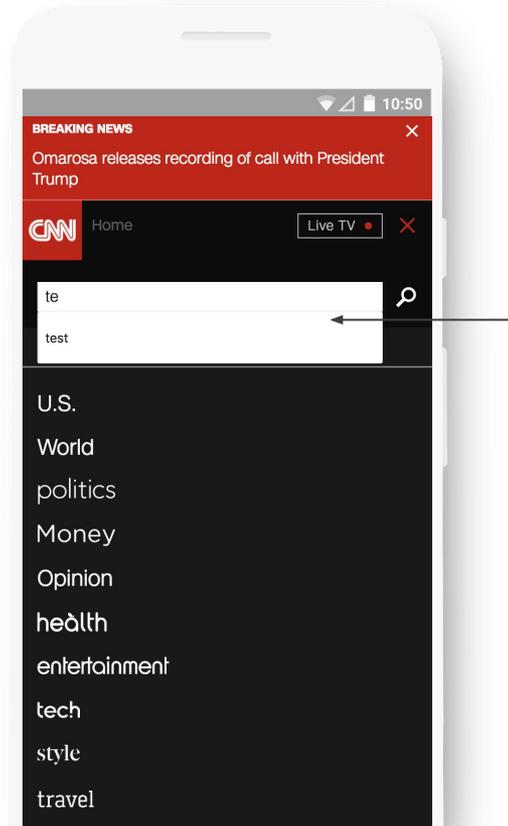
- [Dawn Shaikh and Keisi Lenz](#)
- [Nielsen Norman Group \(F-Shaped pattern\)](#)

# Make search useful: Enable auto-complete

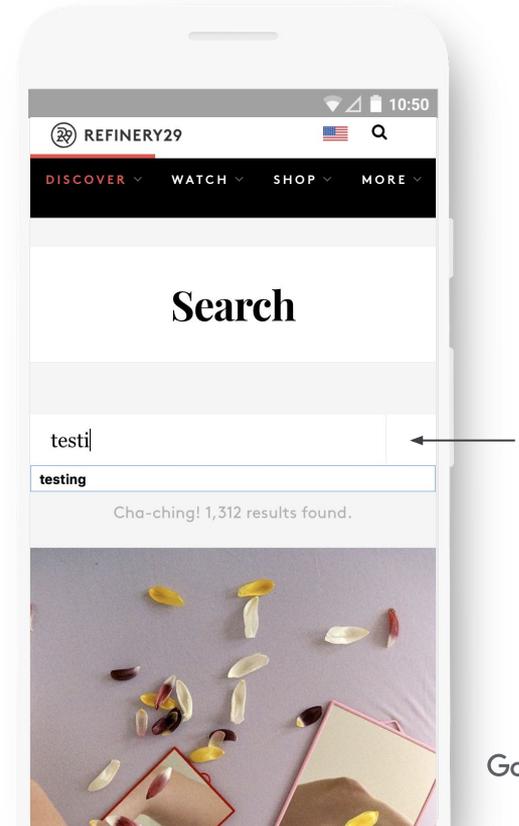
news.sky.com



cnn.com

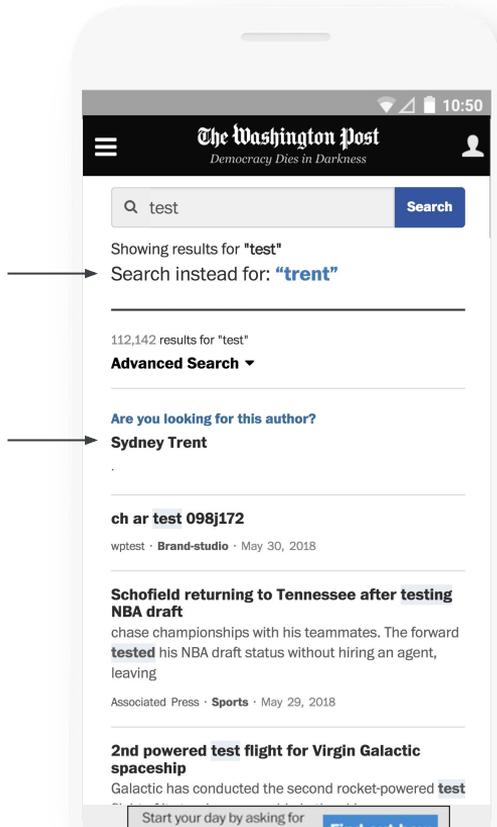


refinery29.com

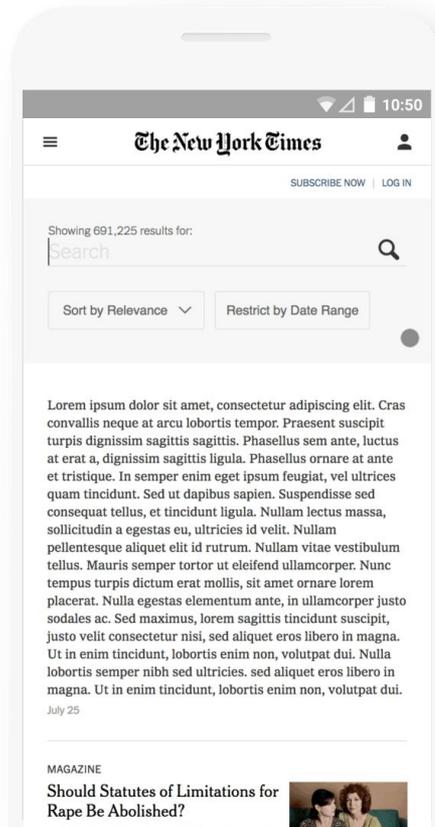


# Make search useful: Search suggestions

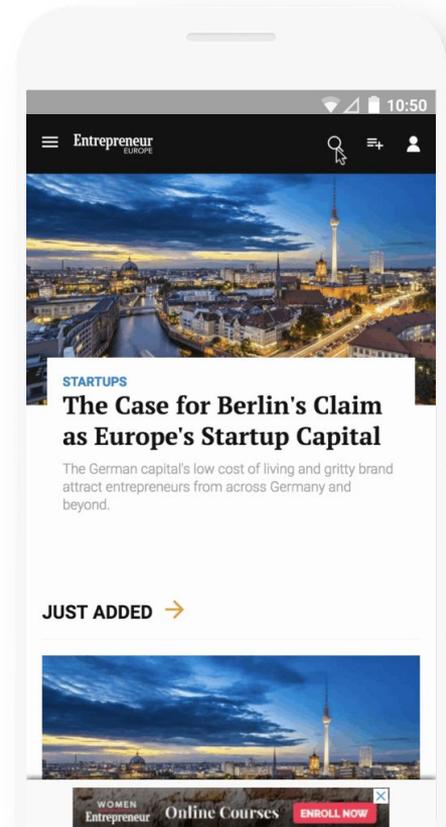
washingtonpost.com



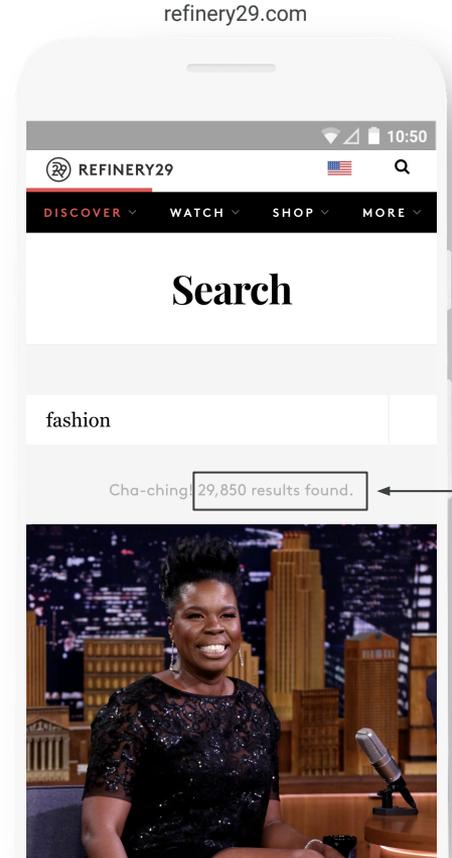
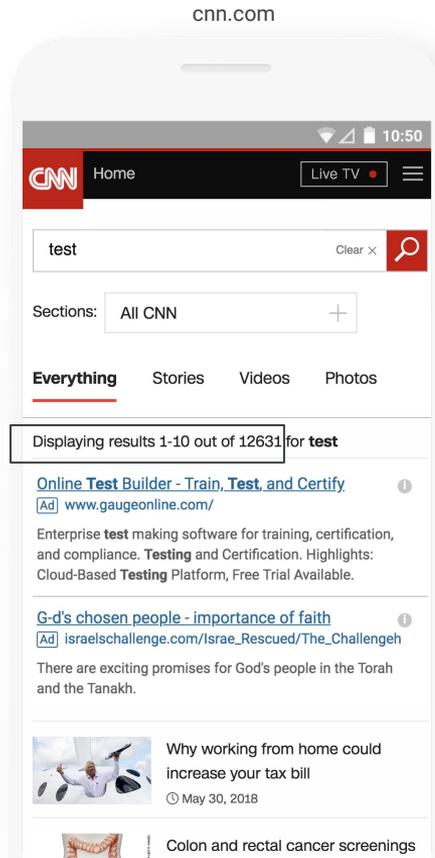
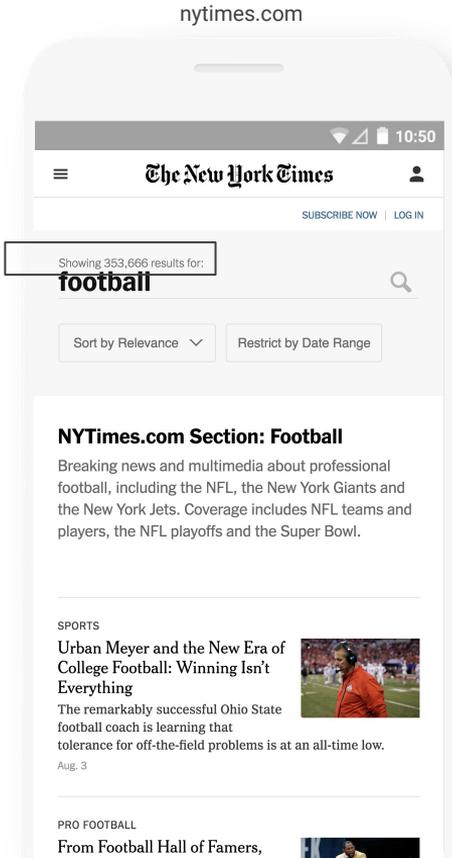
cnn.com



entrepreneur.com

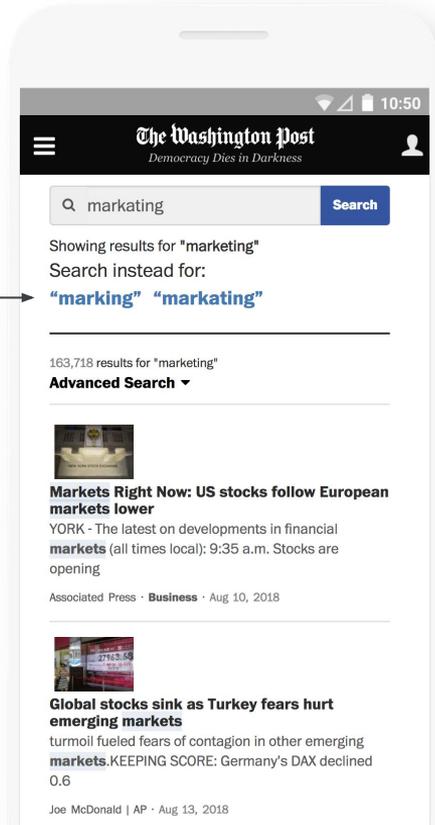


# Make search useful: Display number of results

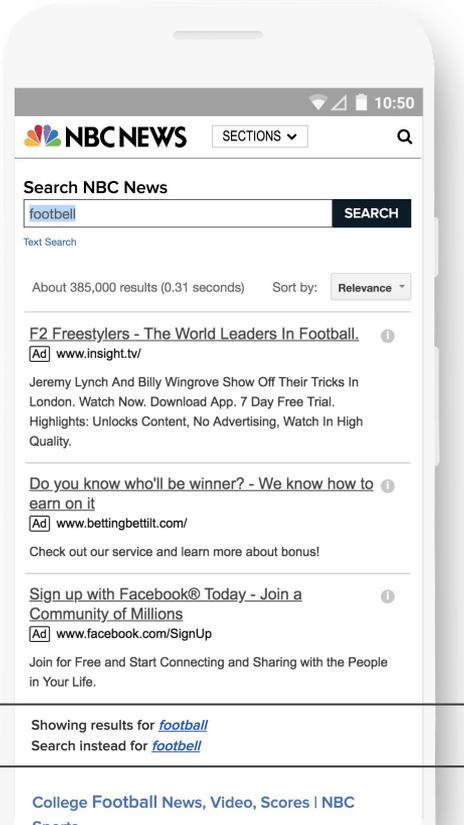


# Make search useful: Spelling correction

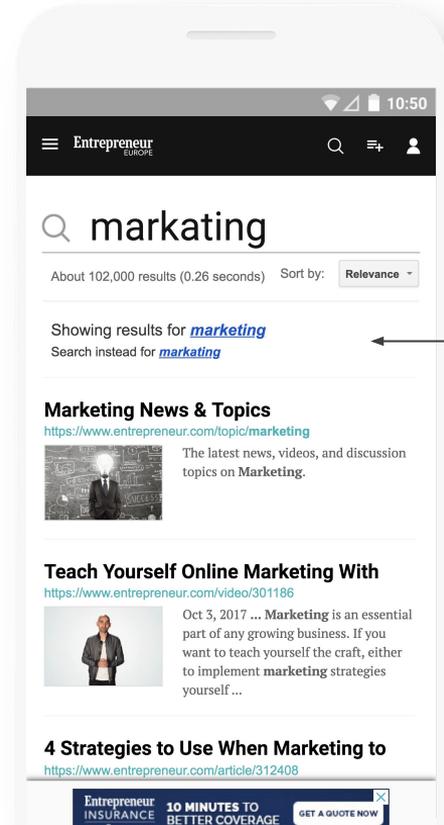
washingtonpost.com



cnn.com

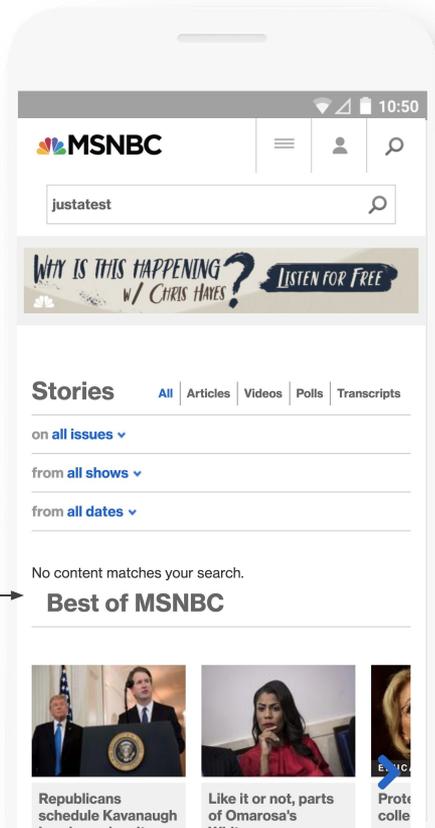


entrepreneur.com

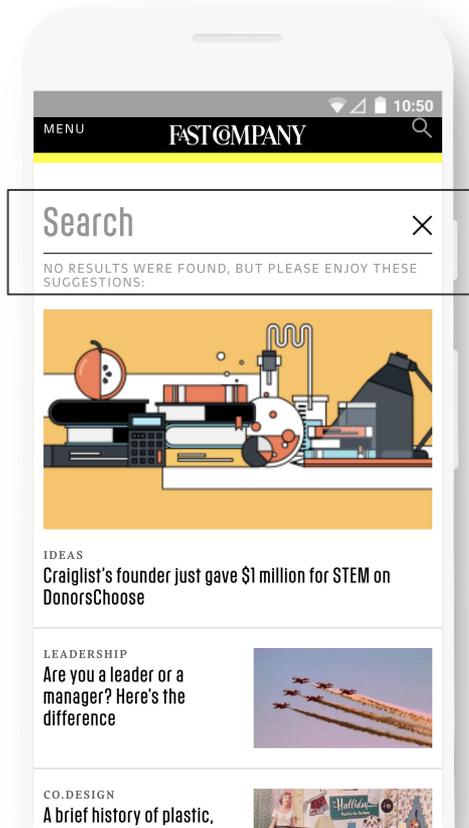


# Make search useful: Always return results

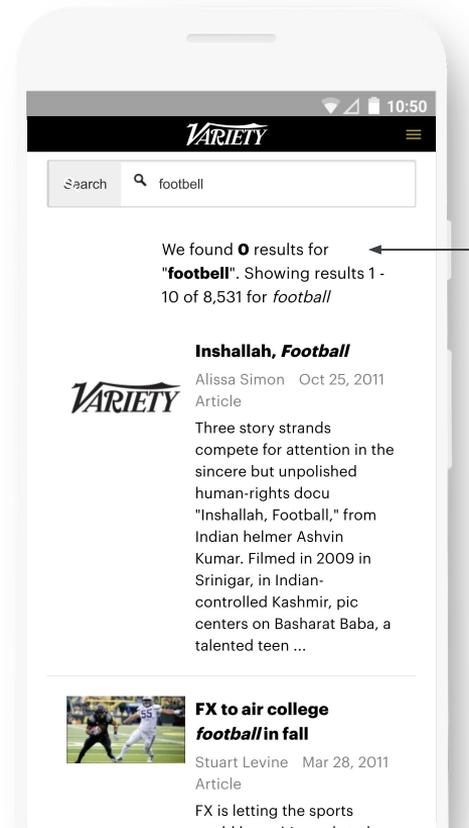
msnbc.com



fastcompany.com



refinery29.com





# Category Pages

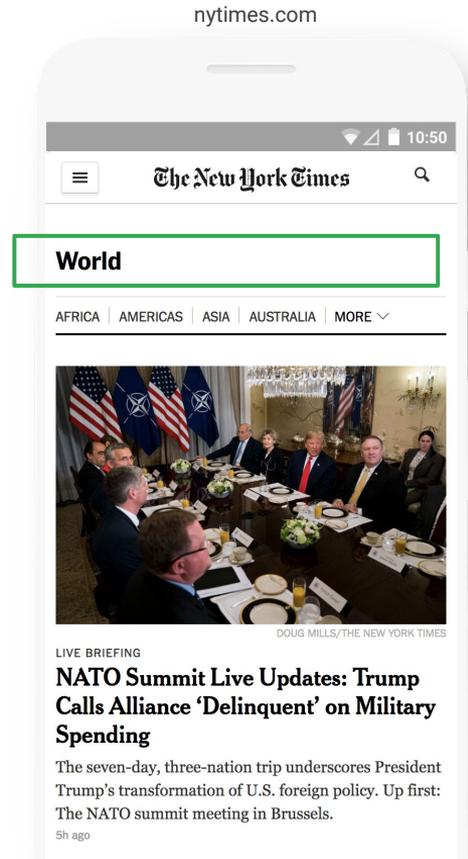
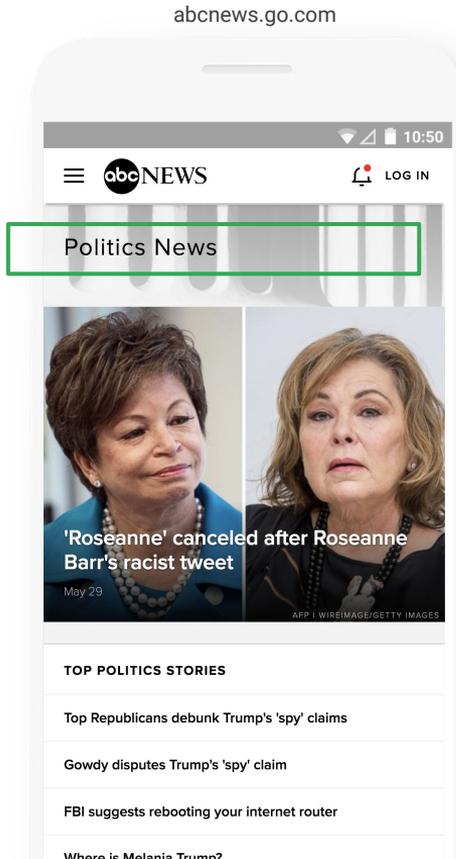
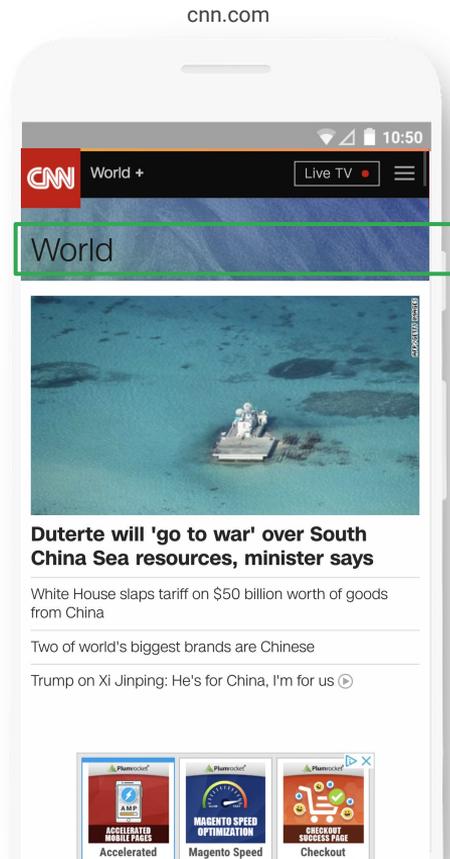
# News & content sites playbook at a glance

Creating frictionless experiences across the funnel



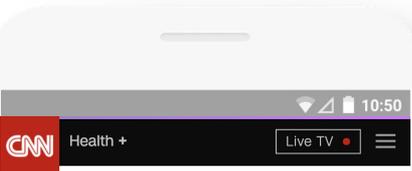
Section	Menu & Navigation	Ease of implementation	Impact	Key Metric
<b>Key suggestion</b>	Display clear category title at the top	Easy	High	Time on site, Bounce rate
	Highlight top story related to the category	Easy	High	Time on site, Bounce rate
	Allow user to switch easily between sub-categories	Medium	Medium	Page views, CTR

# Display clear category title at the top



# Highlight top story related to the category

cnn.com



The screenshot shows the CNN Health app interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the CNN logo, 'Health +' text, and a 'Live TV' button. Below this is the 'health' logo. The main content area features a large image of a woman in a black shirt pushing a cart of water bottles, with a police officer nearby. Below the image is a headline: 'What did we do?' Families struggle with anxiety over chemicals in tap water. Underneath the headline are several smaller article teasers with titles like 'When insurance wouldn't pay, parents funded cancer patient's lifesaving treatment', 'Violent crime is like infectious disease -- we can stop it spreading', 'How to design a school in the era of mass shootings', 'Historic face transplant gives suicide survivor a 'second chance'', 'Can 'detox teas' like Teami help you lose weight?', and 'What happened on Easter Island? New theory proposed'.

abcnews.go.com



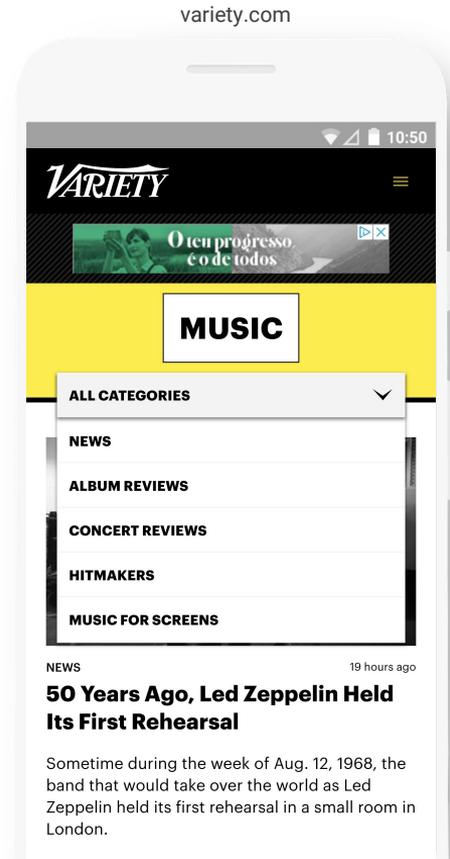
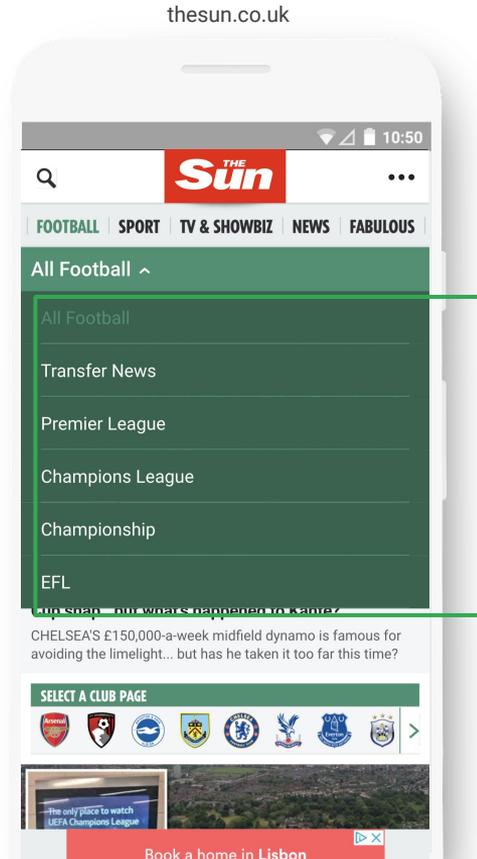
The screenshot shows the ABC News app interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the ABC NEWS logo and a 'LOG IN' button. Below this is the 'Entertainment News' category header. The main content area features a large image of Aretha Franklin performing on stage. Below the image is a headline: 'Queen of Soul' Aretha Franklin has died at 76. Underneath the headline is a 'TOP ENTERTAINMENT STORIES' section with several article teasers: 'AP Newsbreak: 'Queen of Soul' Aretha Franklin dies at 76', 'Black Americans aren't buying Omarosa on Trump', 'No one did it better' - Reaction to Aretha Franklin's death, and 'Correction: People-Aretha Franklin story'.

news.sky.com



The screenshot shows the Sky News app interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the sky news logo and a 'Menu' button. Below this is a banner for 'SYNOPSIS' and 'Gartner' with a 'Feed out why' button. The main content area features the 'Science & Tech' category header. The main content area features a large image of a smart speaker. Below the image is a headline: 'Regional accents 'suppressed by voice assistants''. Underneath the headline is a 'Research from Newcastle finds that people are being forced to talk in "normal English" to communicate with their voice assistants.' Below the article is a 'Apple to launch Apple Car by 2025 - report' section with a small image of the Apple logo.

# Allow user to switch easily between sub-categories





# News / Article Pages

# News & content sites playbook at a glance

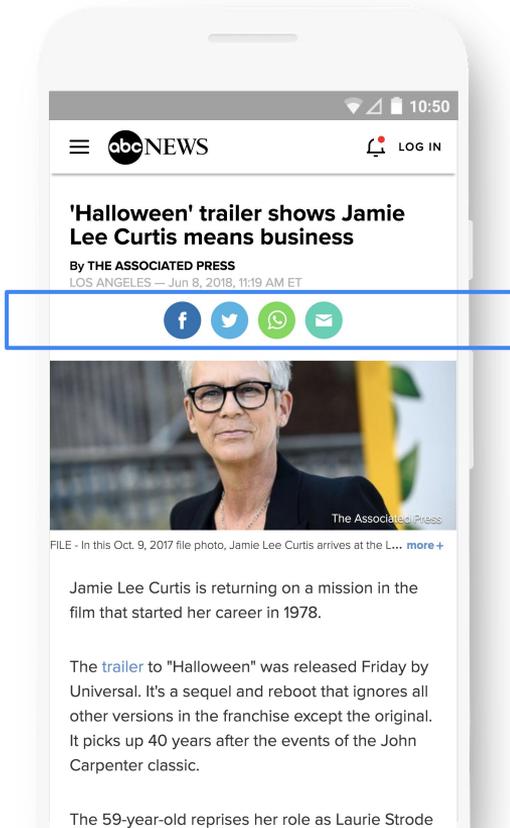
Creating frictionless experiences across the funnel



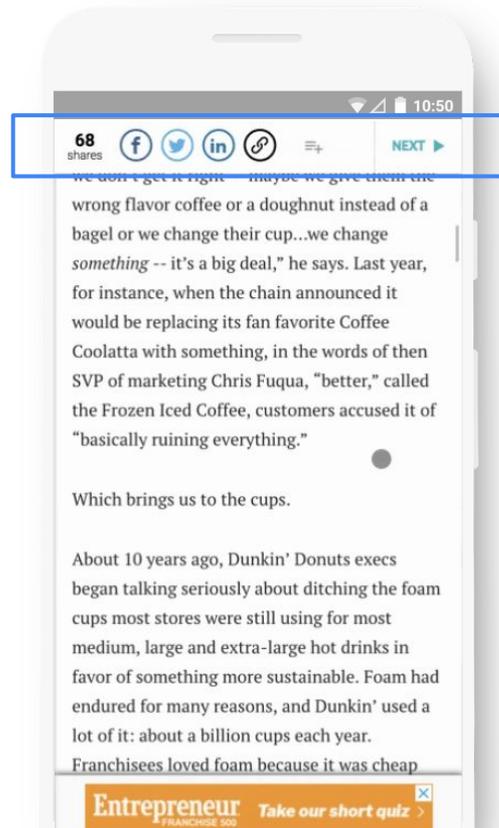
Section	Menu & Navigation	Ease of implementation	Impact	Key Metric
<b>Key suggestion</b>	Add social share options	Easy	High	CTR
	Link to related content	Easy	High	CTR, Page views
	Make links easily identifiable	Easy	High	CTR, Page views
	Implement AMP technology	Medium	High	Bounce rate, time on site
	Consider AMP & PWA	Hard	High	Bounce rate, time on site
	Add estimated reading time	Medium	Medium	Time on site / page
	Easily switch between articles	Medium	Medium	CTR, Page views

# Add social share options

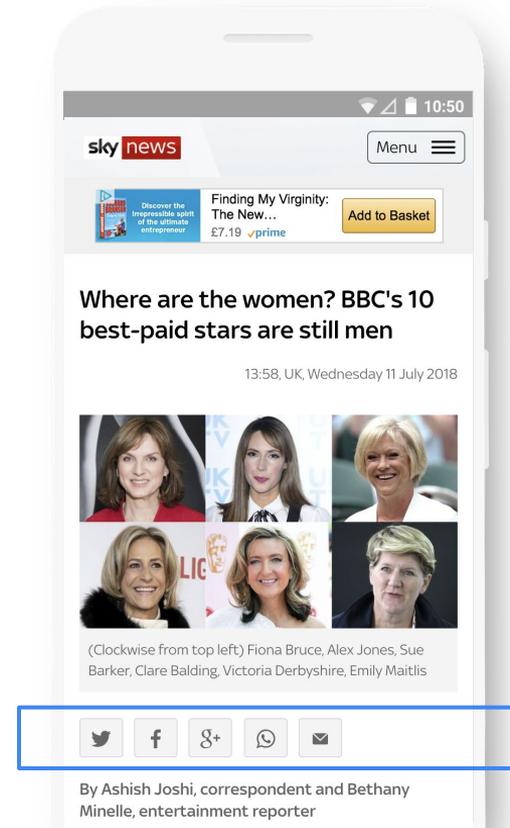
abcnews.go.com



entrepreneur.com

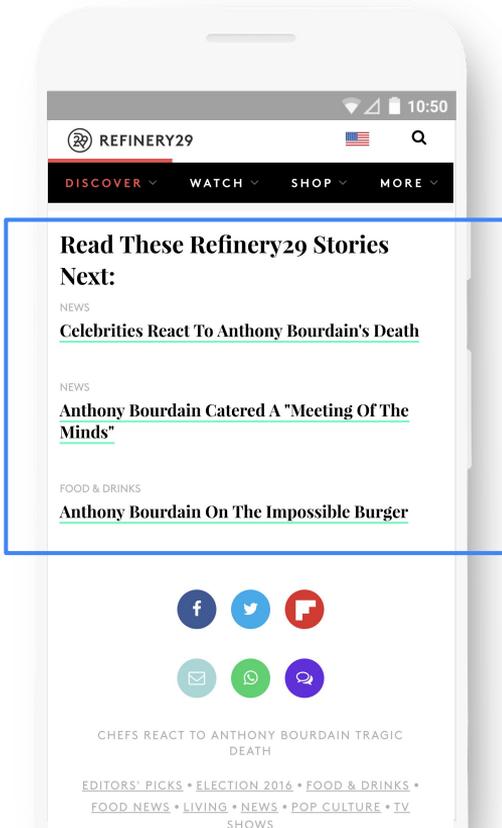


news.sky.com

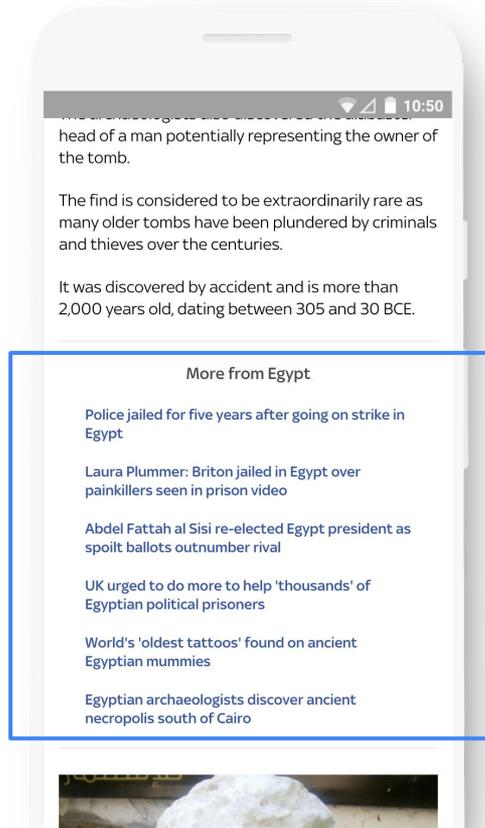


# Link to related content

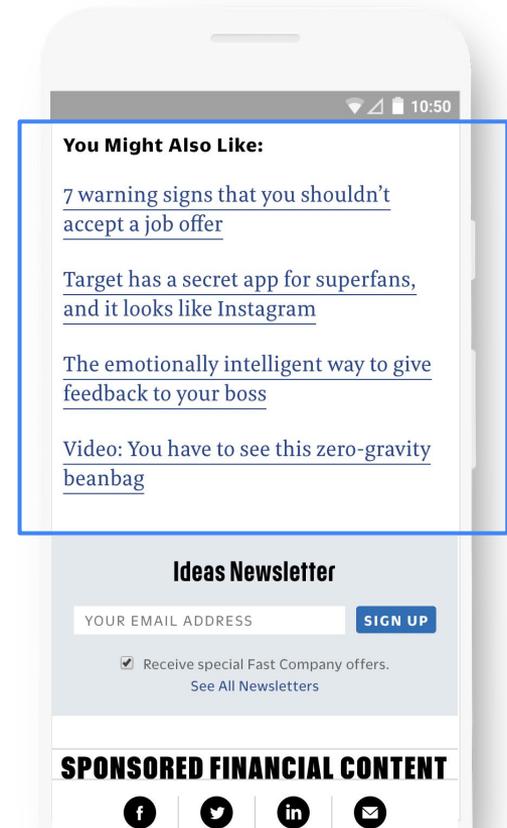
refinery29.com



news.sky.com



fastcompany.com



# Make links easily identifiable (underline, color, ...)

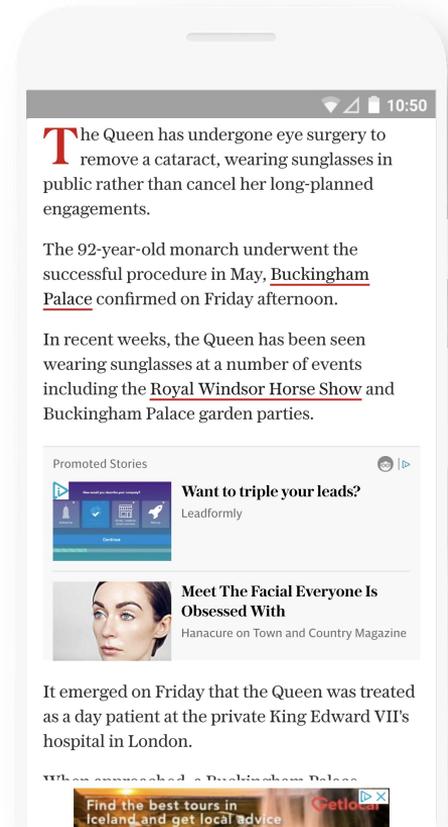
huffpost.com



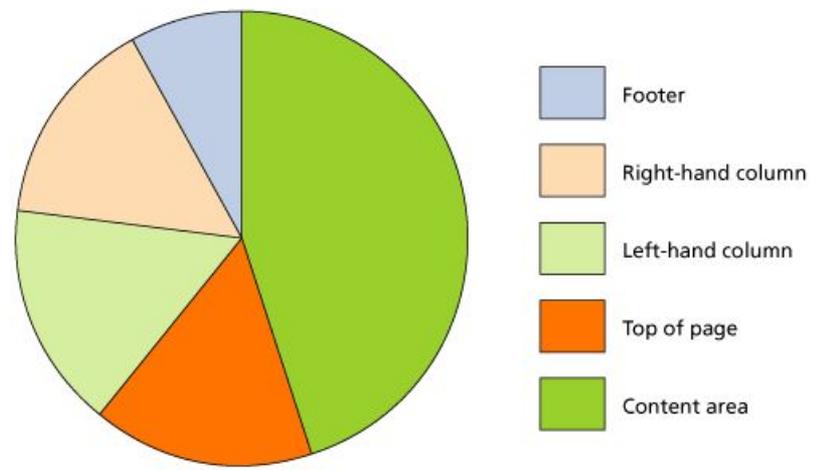
cnn.com



telegraph.co.uk



# Interior Page Behavior

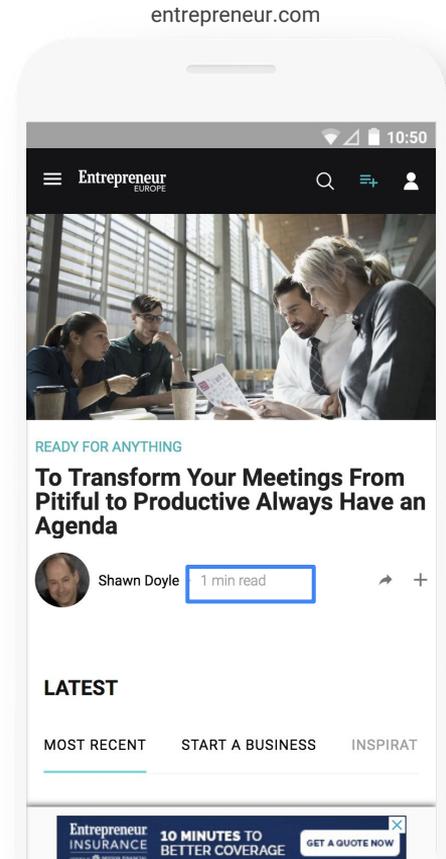
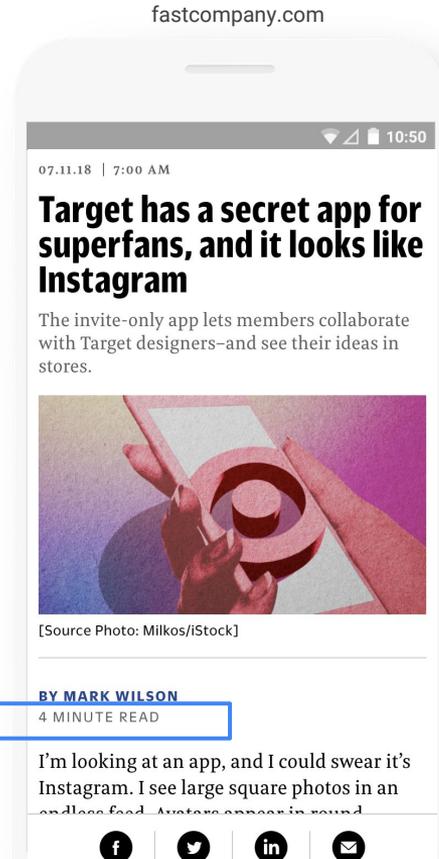
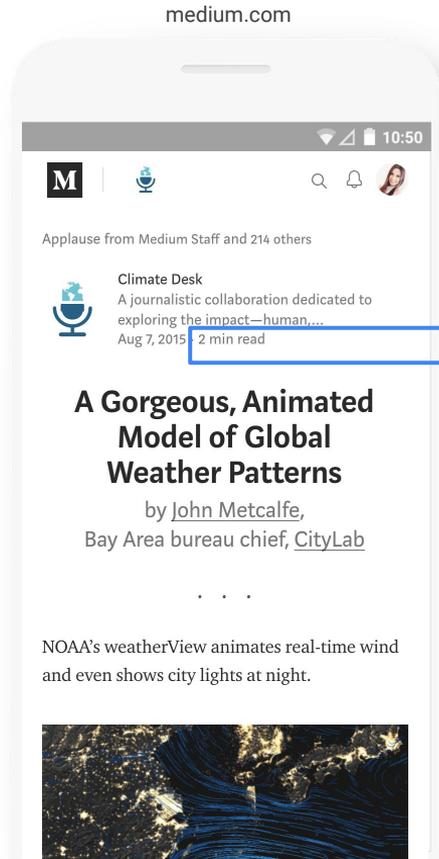


For interior pages, users usually spend more time in the content area than in areas that are used for navigation.

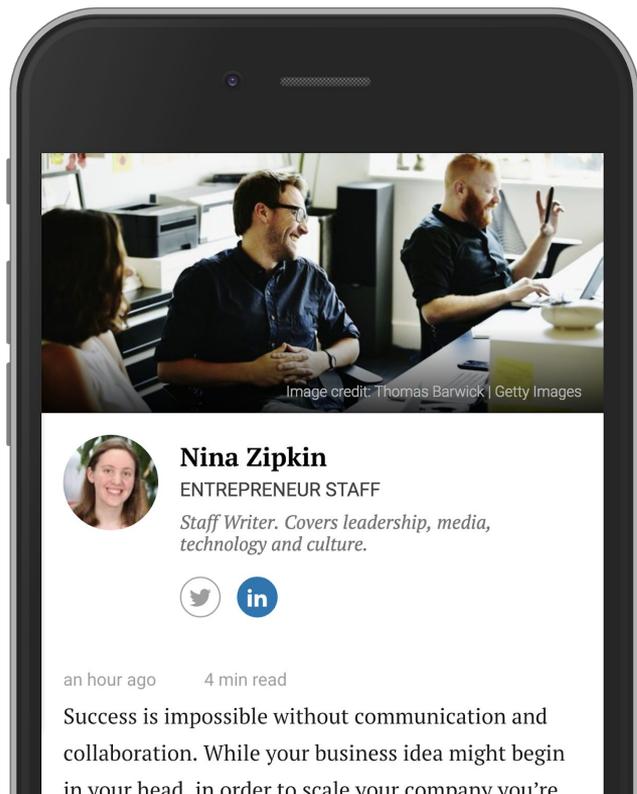
RESEARCH:  
[Nielsen Norman Group](#)

Source: "Prioritizing Web Usability", Jakob Nielsen

# Add estimated reading time



# How estimated reading time can increase engagement



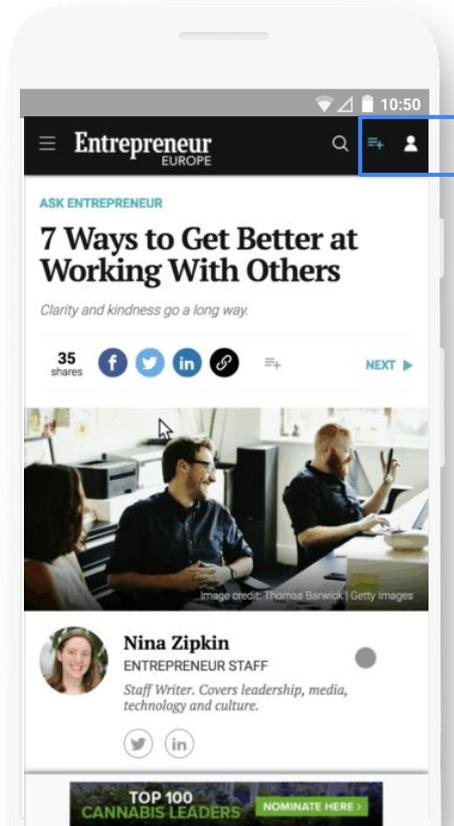
- The average adult in the United States spends 5 hours and 16 minutes with digital media, and only part of this will be spent reading your content.
- When someone sees an interesting headline, knowing in advance that it only takes a couple of minutes to read, they're more likely to engage.

## Research:

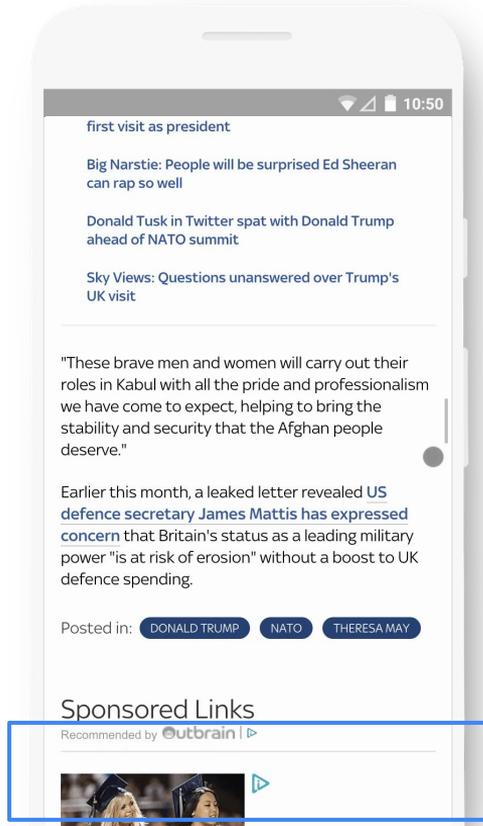
- [eMarketer](#)
- [MarketingLand](#)
- [New Yorker](#)

# Encourage to continue reading (switch between articles)

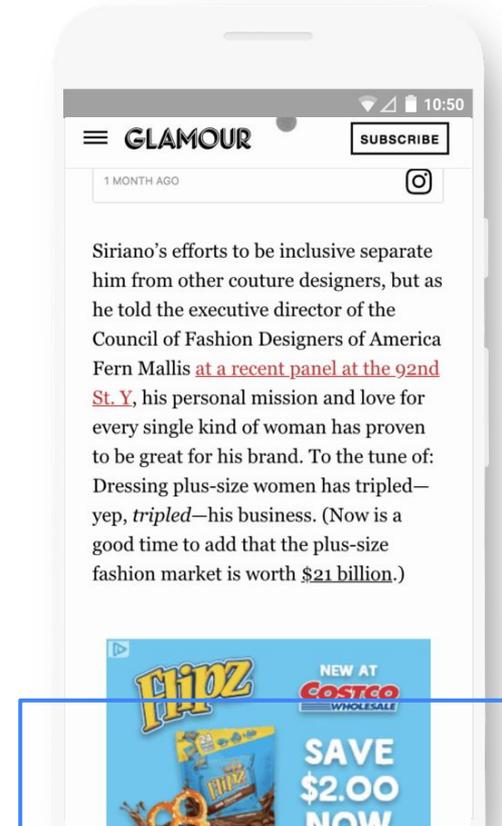
entrepreneur.com



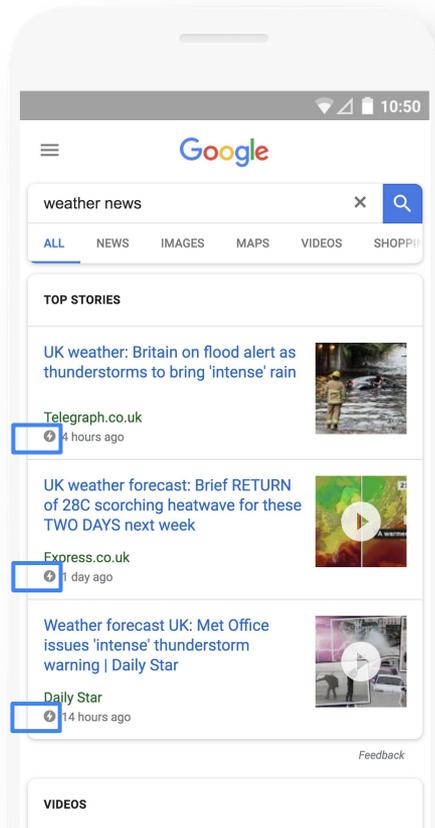
news.sky.com



glamour.com



# Consider AMP technology for faster loading



# Publishers are seeing great results with AMP

Confidential  
case study

RETENTION

terra 

3x more

time spent on AMP pages

AUDIENCE GROWTH

GIZMODO

80%

of AMP traffic is new

RETENTION

The Washington Post

+23%

ENGAGEMENT

TIME

13% increase

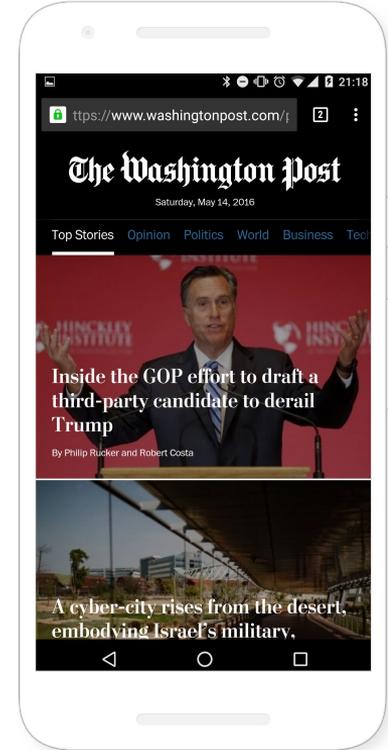
in time spent on site

# Consider combining technologies like AMP & PWA

1. **AMP** loads instantly, and silently installs Service Worker to “warm up” **PWA**



2. Once user navigates from AMP, content loads instantly



# Advantages of PWA for Publishers



## Add to Homescreen

Worthy of being on the home screen



## Performance offline

Work reliably, no matter the network conditions



## Push Notifications

Increased engagement, improved conversions



# Sign Up / Sign In & Subscribe

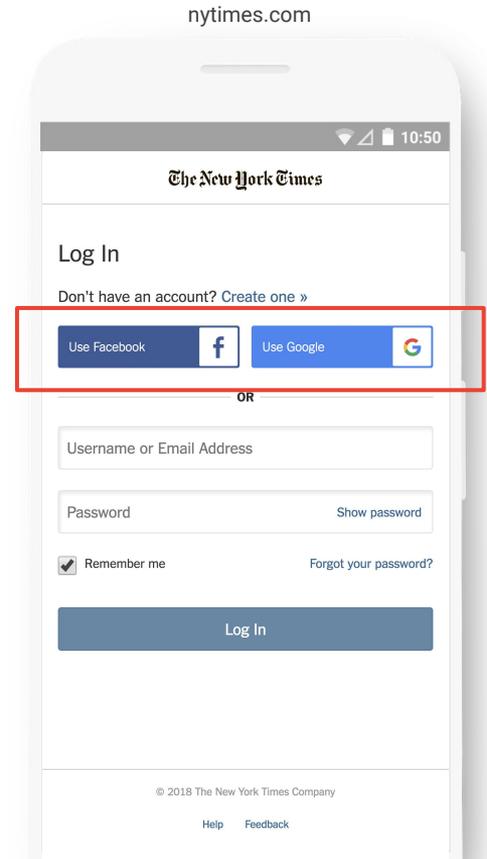
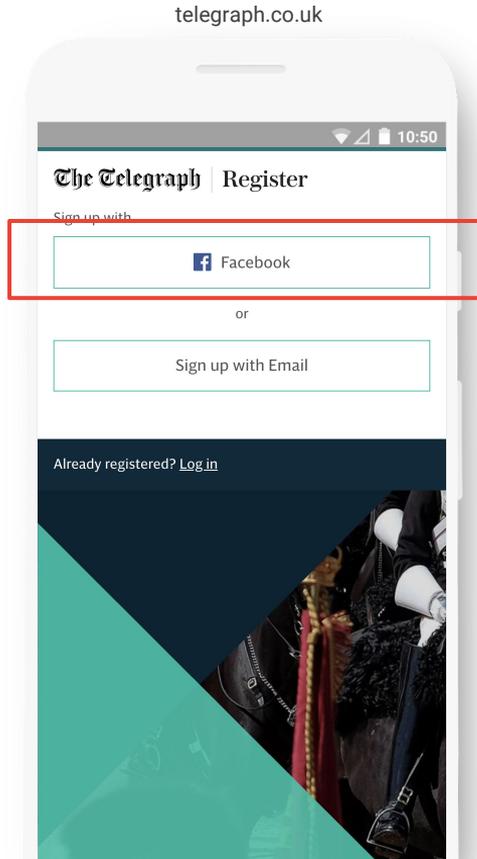
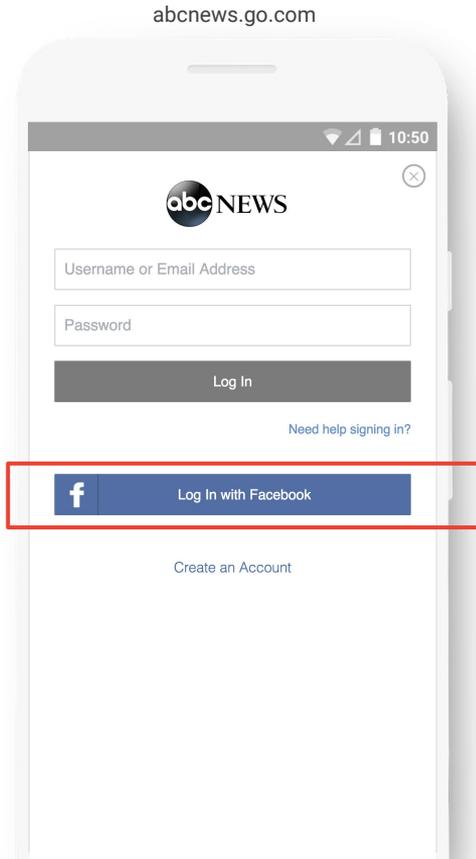
# News & content sites playbook at a glance

Creating frictionless experiences across the funnel



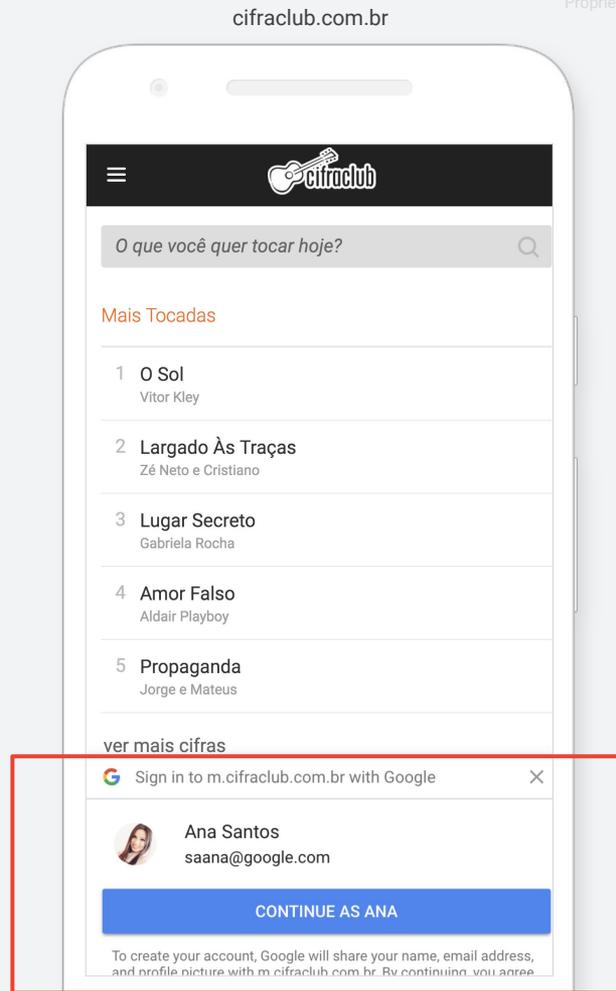
Section	Menu & Navigation	Ease of implementation	Impact	Key Metric
<b>Key suggestion</b>	Consider implementing One Tap Sign In & Sign Up	Medium	High	Sign-up rate
	Allow guest checkout (premium subscriptions)	Medium	High	CVR, Exit rate
	Simplify payments with Google Pay	Medium	High	CVR
	Enable social login	Medium	Medium	CTR
	Reduce number of fields	Medium	Medium	Form completion
	In-line real time validation	Medium	Medium	Form completion
	Enable auto-fill	Medium	Medium	Form completion
	Make premium option visible	Medium	Medium	CVR, CTR

# Enable social login

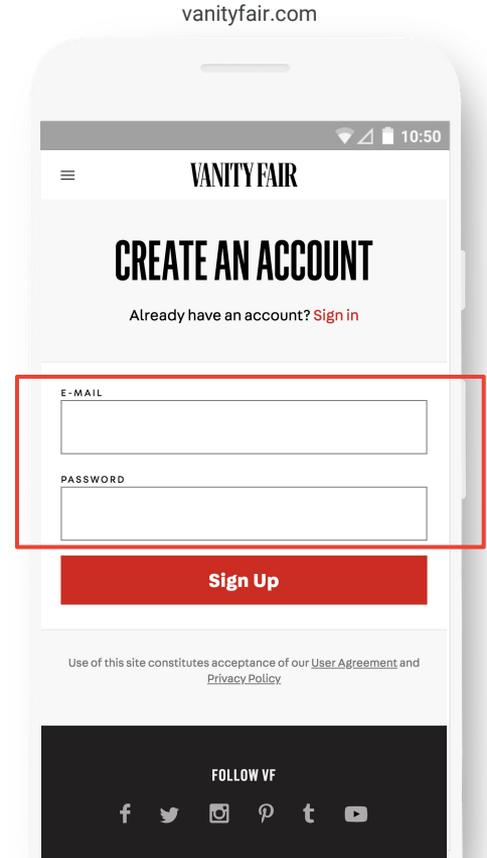
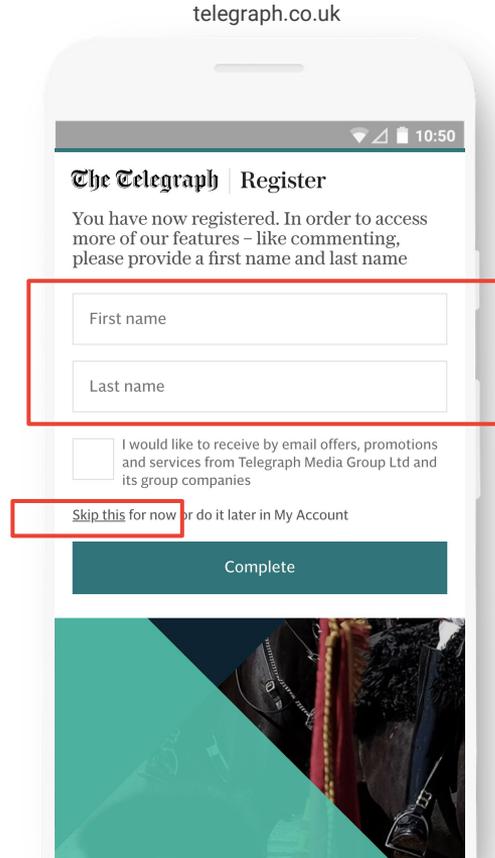
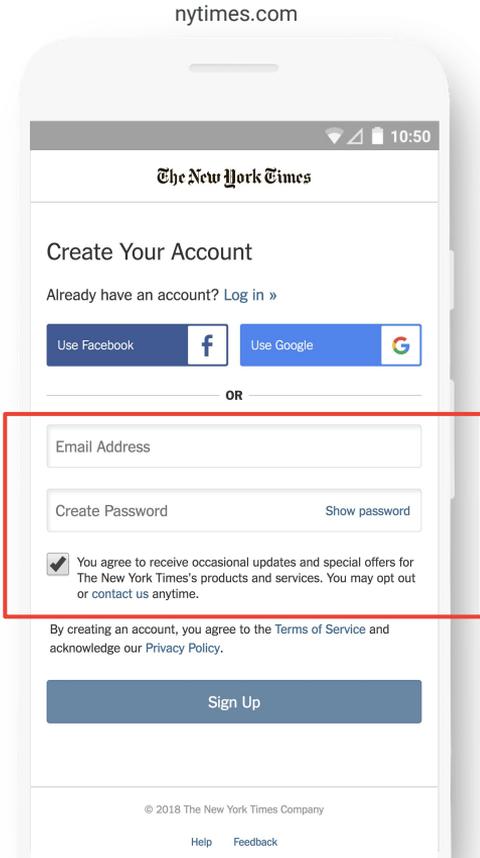


# One Tap Sign Up & Sign In

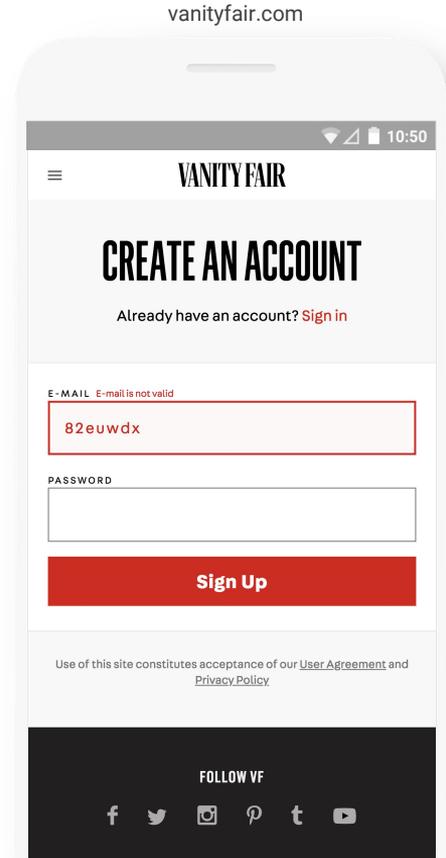
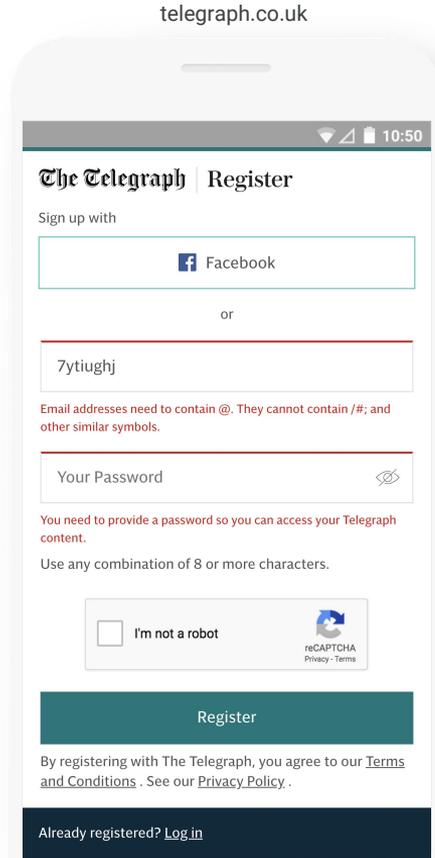
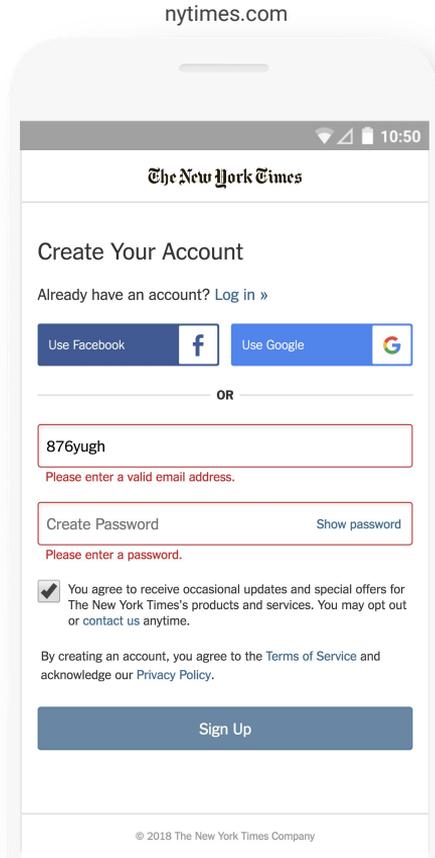
- Streamlined conversion UX - no typing
- Enable instant personalization on load
- Passwordless account security
- Supported on all major browsers



# Optimize forms: Reduce number of fields



# Optimize forms: Inline real-time validation



# Optimize forms: Enable auto-fill

bbc.com/news

BBC Register with the BBC

Email  
**tes**

- test@test.cdsa
- test@gmail.com

Passwords need to include...

- Eight or more characters
- At least one letter
- At least one number or symbol

Country  
**Portugal**

What's this for? ▼

Want email updates about more things you'll love?

**Yes please** **No, thanks**

What's in these? ▼

By clicking Register, you accept our [Terms of Use](#). Find out about our [Privacy and Cookies Policy](#).

**Register**

news.com.au

news.com.au

Log In Sign Up

t

- test@test.cdsa
- test@gmail.com

First name

Last name

Display name

Postcode

By registering you accept our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms & Conditions](#).

By registering you agree to be updated on new offers, products and services from News Pty Limited and any of its related companies using contact details provided.

[About our Privacy Policy](#)

abcnews.go.com

abcNEWS

Get access to this and other ABC sites!

A

- Ana

Suffix (optional) ▼

test@test.cdsa

Password

Please enter a password.

Show password

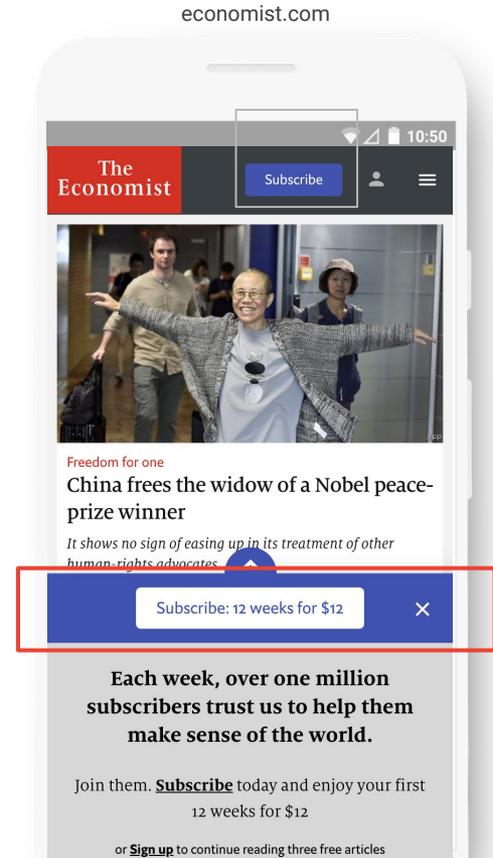
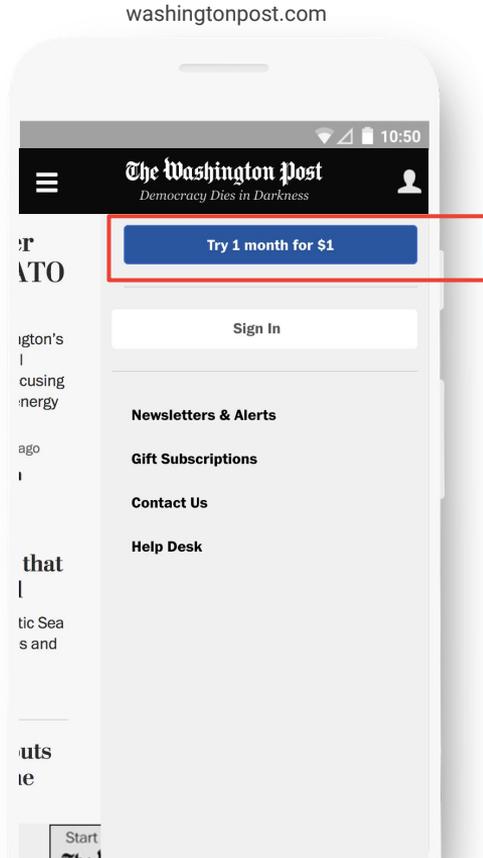
Gender (Optional)

Male Female

Birth Date

Month ▼ Day ▼ Year ▼

# Subscribe: Make it clear if there's a premium option



# Guest checkout (no account required)

washingtonpost.com

The Washington Post  
Democracy Dies in Darkness

YOUR SUBSCRIPTION

## Basic Digital

\$1 USD for the first 4 weeks  
then just \$6 USD every 4 weeks

\$78 \$60 USD a year  
Best Value

---

### Your contact info

Email address

You'll use **your email address** to sign in on washingtonpost.com and Washington Post apps. If this is a new account, we'll ask you to set a password later.

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### Payment method

VISA MASTERCARD DISCOVER

economist.com

The Economist United States

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I am a student

This is a gift

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theguardian.com

The Guardian

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## Subscribe to the Guardian Digital Pack

You've chosen:

Guardian Digital Pack  
(Daily Edition + Guardian App Premium Tier)  
US\$19.99 every month  
[Change payment frequency](#)

Promo code

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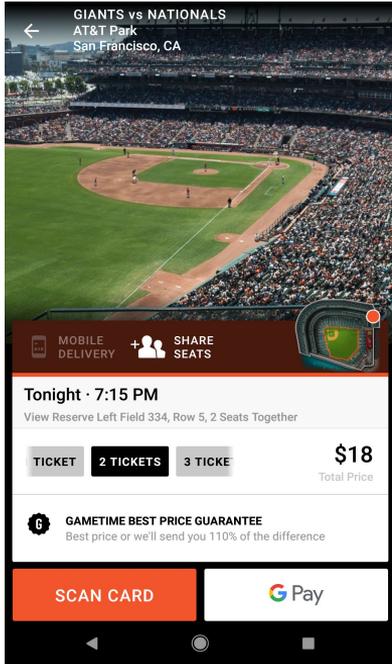
### 1 Your details

This site is secure  
Already have a Guardian account? [Sign in](#)

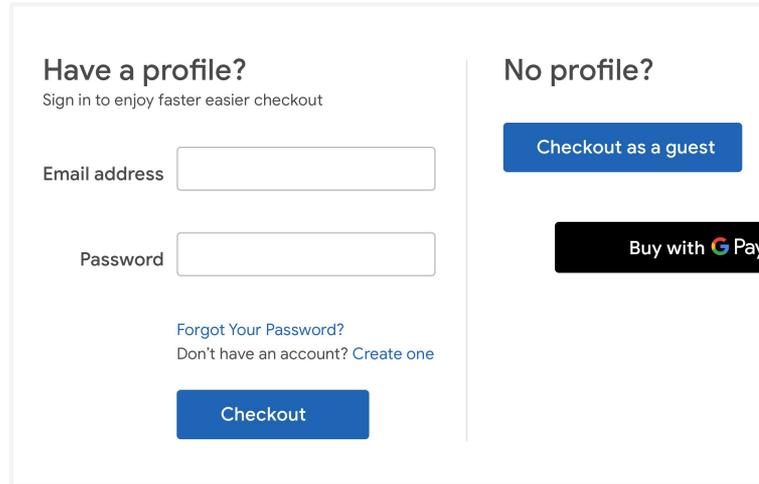
Title

First name

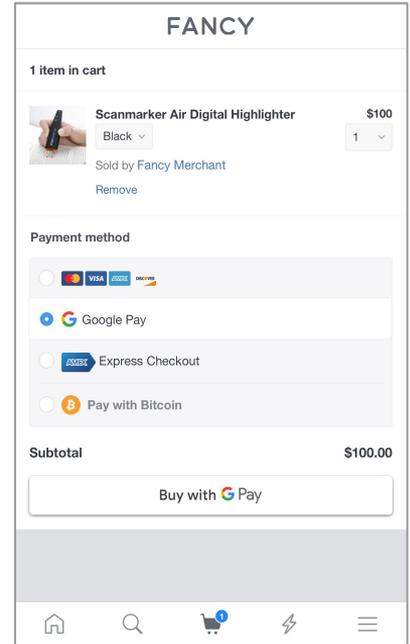
# Simplify payments with



Directly on product page



At guest checkout

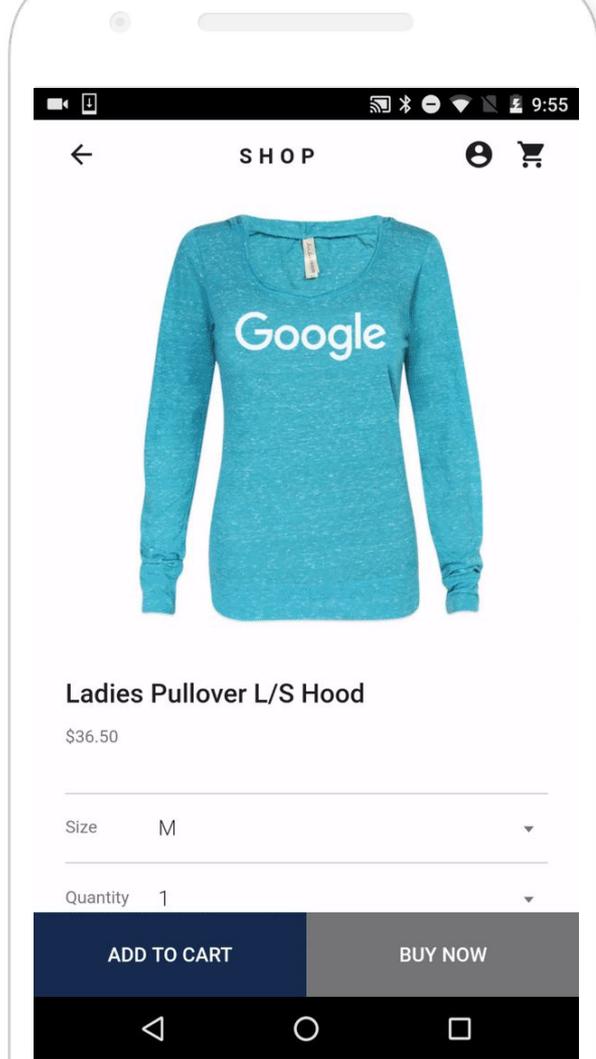


At payment

# Simplify payments with Google Pay API

- Guest checkout
- Leverages autofill
- Eliminates forms
- One tap to check out

[Introducing the Payment Request API](#)  
[Deep dive](#)  
[UX Considerations](#)



Thank You