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Development of an e-shop – Growth Hacking and User Experience

Abstract

This paper examines how growth hacking strategies, combined with user experience optimisation and data-driven experimentation, enhance business performance and long-term competitiveness in e-commerce. The study employs a quantitative, data-driven methodology using Google Analytics 4 to collect and analyse six months of e-commerce user data through descriptive, comparative, and behavioural analytics (including segmentation, funnel, and cohort analysis) to evaluate user behaviour, conversion performance, and UX optimisation opportunities.

Findings: Integrating growth hacking and UX optimization significantly improves e-commerce performance by increasing traffic, conversions, and customer retention through data-driven experimentation, SEO, personalization, and continuous user experience enhancements. The originality and value of this study lie in its integrated, data-driven framework that combines growth hacking and user experience optimization to demonstrate how their synergy drives sustainable e-commerce performance, offering both empirical insights and practical guidance for digital transformation.

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1. Introduction

In the contemporary digital environment, companies face increasing competitive pressure and rapidly evolving user expectations, necessitating a systematic, data-driven approach to developing online channels. A mere online presence no longer represents a sustainable competitive advantage; instead, the quality of user experience (UX) and the ability to rapidly test, measure, and adapt digital strategies have become decisive factors of success.

Originally emerging within startup ecosystems, where limited resources and high uncertainty demand rapid and cost-efficient growth, growth hacking has evolved into a widely adopted approach to digital marketing and product development. Unlike traditional marketing, which often relies on large budgets and lengthy planning cycles, growth hacking emphasizes cross-functional collaboration, continuous experimentation, and data analytics to identify scalable growth opportunities (Ellis & Brown, 2017). It focuses on optimizing the entire customer lifecycle—acquisition, activation, retention, referral, and revenue—through iterative, hypothesis-driven testing and the rapid implementation of insights.

In this context, growth hacking can be understood as an experiment-driven framework that integrates marketing, product development, and user experience design. By leveraging data analytics and user feedback, organizations can continuously refine digital touchpoints and improve both conversion performance and user satisfaction. This alignment between growth strategies and UX optimization is particularly relevant in e-commerce, where user interactions directly influence purchasing behavior and long-term customer loyalty.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the interrelationship between growth hacking strategies and user experience optimization in the context of e-commerce development. The study focuses on understanding how the integration of data analytics, rapid experimentation, and user-centered design contributes to improved business performance and long-term competitiveness of online retailers. By combining theoretical insights with empirical evidence, the paper aims to demonstrate how growth-oriented digital strategies can be aligned with the creation of meaningful and usable digital experiences.

The research addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the most commonly used growth hacking methods across different business sectors?

RQ2: Which analytical methods are most suitable for optimizing UX in e-commerce environments?

RQ3: How does the implementation of growth hacking methods affect user experience and overall business outcomes?

RQ4: How does UX optimization contribute to customer retention and repeat purchases in online stores?

The paper is structured as follows. The first section outlines the theoretical background related to e-commerce development, growth hacking, and user experience. The subsequent section presents the research methodology and data collection approach. This is followed by an analysis of empirical findings derived from web analytics and user behavior data. The discussion section interprets the results in light of existing literature and highlights practical implications for e-commerce practitioners. The paper concludes with key findings and recommendations for integrating growth hacking and UX practices in the strategic development of online retail platforms.

2. Theoretical Framework

Growth Hacking – Definition and Strategy

In the rapidly evolving field of digital marketing, the concept of growth hacking has emerged as an innovative framework combining analytical reasoning, creativity, and experimentation to accelerate user acquisition and business growth. Introduced by Sean Ellis in (Ellis, 2010), the term denotes a data-driven and resource-efficient approach to expansion that prioritizes iterative experimentation over traditional marketing methods. Growth hacking focuses on rapid hypothesis testing, creative problem-solving, and the integration of digital tools such as automation and analytics. The growth hacker is primarily concerned with scaling company growth through measurable and repeatable strategies. While initially associated with startups, the approach has been increasingly adopted by established corporations seeking agile, cost-effective methods to sustain competitive advantage and achieve long-term scalability. Before pursuing growth, a company must ensure that its product or service meets genuine market needs. Achieving product–market fit involves solving real user problems and offering sufficient value to retain customers and encourage referrals. As Holiday (2013) emphasizes, the creation of a product that users truly need is a prerequisite for any effective promotional effort. Growth hackers employ analytical tools such as Google Analytics, Hotjar, Mixpanel, and A/B testing to understand user behavior and optimize each stage of the customer journey. Tracking key performance indicators—such as conversion rate, user engagement, and customer lifetime value (CLV)—enables precise, data-driven decision-making, which lies at the core of the growth hacking methodology (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Encouraging users to share products within their networks represents another fundamental growth tactic. Viral marketing and referral programs—for example, Airbnb's credit rewards or Dropbox's free storage incentives—significantly enhance visibility and brand awareness (Holiday, 2013). Optimizing conversion rates also depends on well-designed UX/UI interfaces, streamlined landing pages, and the use of psychological triggers such as scarcity, social proof, and the fear of missing out (FOMO). Ongoing A/B testing supports the identification and implementation of the most effective design and messaging strategies (HubSpot, 2011). Creating high-quality, search engine–optimized content remains a critical growth driver. Blog posts, guides, videos, webinars, and guest contributions increase organic traffic and strengthen brand authority (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Furthermore, email marketing continues to be one of the most effective tools for conversion and customer retention. Personalized and automated campaigns—such as onboarding sequences—deliver timely and relevant messages, enhancing engagement and loyalty (Holiday, 2013). Ultimately, growth hacking is not a singular strategy, but an ongoing, iterative process rooted in experimentation, analytics, and creativity. In an increasingly competitive digital environment, organizations that apply innovative and evidence-based growth techniques can achieve rapid, sustainable expansion with minimal costs.

Contemporary e-commerce employs advanced digital technologies to improve UX:

- Personalization: Content and product offerings are tailored to individual users based on behavioral and purchase data. Artificial intelligence (AI) supports hyper-personalized recommendations and automated chatbots, providing continuous customer support (Ranktracker, 2023).
- Mobile commerce: Optimized mobile interfaces, 5G network expansion, and the integration of social media with shopping applications facilitate seamless purchasing anytime and anywhere (Doba Fakulteta, 2023).
- Artificial intelligence: Chatbots, recommendation algorithms, and predictive analytics enhance customer engagement and enable data-driven marketing strategies (EcommerceBridge.si, 2024).

UX in the Digital Environment

In today's digital landscape, UX has become a central factor in the design of successful digital products and services. UX encompasses the overall experience users have when interacting with digital interfaces—such

as websites, mobile applications, or software systems. Its primary objective is to create intuitive, efficient, and engaging interactions that meet user needs while supporting business goals (Stevens, 2025). However, for this study, UX is defined more precisely as a multidimensional construct that captures users' perceptions, emotions, and behavioral responses before, during, and after interaction with a digital product (Candello, 2025; Majumder, 2025; ISO 9241-210, 2019; Hassenzahl, 2010). This definition extends beyond basic usability to include affective and experiential aspects that influence decision-making, satisfaction, and long-term engagement.

To ensure conceptual clarity, UX in this research is operationalized through several key dimensions that represent the priorities of user experience in e-commerce environments. These include: (Garrett, 2011; PwC's 2025)

- Usability (ease of navigation, efficiency, and error reduction),
- Usefulness (the extent to which the platform supports user goals, such as product discovery and purchasing),
- Desirability (visual appeal and emotional engagement),
- Accessibility (inclusiveness and adaptability to diverse user needs), and
- Credibility and trust (perceived security and reliability of the platform).

Within the scope of this study, particular emphasis is placed on usability, trust, and conversion-related interactions, as these dimensions are most directly linked to user behavior and business performance outcomes in e-commerce settings.

High-quality UX directly influences user satisfaction and loyalty. When users can easily achieve their goals, they are more likely to return or make repeat purchases. According to Forrester, organizations that prioritize UX can increase conversion rates by up to 200% (Muhammed, 2023). In competitive markets, UX serves as a key differentiator that fosters innovation and long-term market advantage (Forrester Consulting, 2020). Intuitive and user-friendly designs also reduce customer support costs, as users can independently navigate and resolve issues, improving operational efficiency.

Effective UX design relies on a deep understanding of user needs, expectations, and behaviors. This understanding is gained through surveys, interviews, observations, and usability testing, which provide valuable insights for product improvement. In the context of this study, these methods are also used to identify friction points in the user journey and evaluate the effectiveness of growth-oriented interventions. Empathy and user-centered thinking are essential skills for UX designers, as they enable alignment between business objectives and actual user needs.

A clear information architecture—ensuring logical content organization and easy navigation—reduces cognitive load and improves findability (UX Design Institute, 2023). Interaction design focuses on creating seamless, intuitive ways for users to engage with digital products through buttons, menus, forms, and other interactive elements (EmergeAgency, 2023). Visual design further shapes user perception through color, typography, imagery, and layout, reinforcing brand identity and enhancing overall satisfaction.

Usability testing remains a critical component of the design process, ensuring that digital products meet user expectations and performance standards (Kendrick, 2022). In this study, usability testing is complemented by web analytics to measure how growth hacking experiments influence user behavior and experience outcomes. As technology evolves, UX professionals must continuously update their knowledge and adapt to new devices, platforms, and interaction paradigms.

Designing for diverse audiences requires inclusivity and adherence to universal design principles that ensure accessibility for users of different backgrounds and abilities. Striking the right balance between visual appeal and functionality remains a persistent challenge, as overly complex or minimalistic designs can hinder usability (Cooper, Reimann, & Cronin, 2022). Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) are reshaping UX design. AI enables personalized and

adaptive interfaces that anticipate user needs, while AR and VR create immersive, interactive experiences beyond traditional two-dimensional interfaces (Aziro, 2023).

With growing awareness of accessibility and inclusivity, UX designers have an opportunity to develop digital products that reach broader audiences, including users with disabilities. Ultimately, UX is a decisive factor in digital success. By clearly defining UX and prioritizing its key dimensions—particularly usability, trust, and conversion efficiency—organizations can design digital products that not only meet user expectations but also actively support growth objectives. This alignment between UX and growth strategies is especially critical in e-commerce, where even small improvements in user experience can lead to significant gains in conversion rates, customer retention, and long-term competitiveness.

Synergy Between Growth Hacking and UX

In the modern digital environment, organizations continuously seek innovative methods to accelerate growth and maintain a competitive advantage. Two concepts that have proven particularly effective are growth hacking and user experience (UX). Although originating from different disciplines, their integration can generate powerful synergies that foster sustainable business growth (Patel & Taylor, 2017). Growth hacking focuses on rapid expansion through creative, low-cost strategies for user acquisition and retention. Introduced by Sean Ellis in 2010, it relies on tools such as A/B testing, search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, and data analytics to identify scalable growth opportunities (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Conversely, UX concerns the overall user interaction with a product or service, encompassing usability, accessibility, aesthetics, and emotional engagement. Its goal is to design intuitive and enjoyable digital experiences (Garrett, 2011).

Both disciplines share common objectives—acquiring, retaining, and engaging users. Integrating growth hacking's data-driven experimentation with UX's human-centered design creates a holistic approach that balances performance metrics with user satisfaction (Krug, 2014). While growth hackers rely on quantitative testing to optimize conversion and retention, UX designers employ qualitative insights from usability research to refine design solutions. Collaboration between the two disciplines enables a deeper understanding through combined analytical and experiential data. Experimentation and iteration are central to both approaches. Growth hackers test strategies rapidly, adapting based on performance results, while UX designers refine products through iterative design and user feedback.(Macca et al, 2025) Together, they cultivate a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring that growth initiatives not only attract users but also deliver long-term engagement (Maurya, 2012). According to Norman (2013), successful products satisfy users' psychological needs—control, simplicity, and feedback—while growth hacking adds motivational triggers such as exclusivity, scarcity (FOMO), rewards, and social proof. Practical examples demonstrate this synergy. Dropbox's referral program, which rewarded users with additional storage for inviting friends, combined simplicity and incentive-driven design, resulting in user growth from 100,000 to 4 million within 14 months (Holiday, 2013). Similarly, Airbnb integrated its platform with Craigslist, allowing hosts to automatically cross-post listings with minimal effort, enhancing user convenience and accelerating adoption (Chen, 2015; Ellis, 2018).

Despite clear benefits, integration poses challenges. Overly rapid experimentation can harm UX quality, while misaligned team objectives or reliance solely on quantitative data may lead to flawed decisions. Effective synergy requires shared KPIs, collaborative sprints between UX and growth teams, and the use of mixed research methods to balance data-driven and human-centered insights.

3. Data Collection and Analysis Methods

The Merkur online store is one of Slovenia's leading retailers in the home, garden, construction, and renovation sectors. Its digital presence is essential for maintaining market competitiveness. To analyze user behavior on Merkur.si, Google Analytics 4 (GA4) was used to monitor visitor activity, purchasing behavior,

traffic sources, and key performance indicators (KPIs) (Google Analytics, 2025). Because of data confidentiality, only limited access to Merkur d.o.o.'s Analytics account was granted for this research. The following sections outline the research sample, data collection methods, and analytical approaches.
The research sample includes user and customer data collected from Merkur.si over six months via Google Analytics. Key parameters analyzed include:

- Visitors: Total number of users visiting the website.
- Geographical location: Country of origin of users.
- Demographics: Age, gender, and interests.
- Traffic sources: Organic search, paid ads, social media, or direct access.
- User behavior: Average session duration, bounce rate, and most visited pages.
- Conversions: Completed purchases, average order value, and campaign performance.

User segmentation was performed by location (domestic vs. international), device type (desktop vs. mobile), and visitor type (new vs. returning users) to identify behavioral differences between segments.
Data were automatically collected via the Google Analytics tracking code (GA4) implemented across all website pages. Key steps included:

- Defining metrics: Visits, duration, traffic sources, and conversion rates.
- Event tracking: Monitoring actions such as clicks, cart additions, and purchases.
- UTM tags: Measuring campaign performance across traffic channels.
- Segmentation: Categorizing users by location, device, and acquisition channel to enhance precision in behavioral analysis (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

The collected data were analysed using a quantitative, descriptive and inferential analytics approach, combining exploratory data analysis with hypothesis-driven interpretation. First, descriptive statistics were used to summarize key performance indicators (e.g., averages, proportions, and trends in traffic, engagement, and conversion rates). This step provided a baseline understanding of overall website performance and user behavior patterns.
Second, comparative analysis was applied across user segments (e.g., new vs. returning users, mobile vs. desktop users) to identify statistically and practically significant differences in behavior and conversion outcomes. This segmentation-based comparison enabled the identification of high-performing and underperforming user groups.
Third, funnel analysis and user flow analysis were employed to examine the step-by-step progression of users through the purchase process. GA4's visualization tools were used to detect drop-off points and friction areas—most notably at the cart and checkout stages. These analyses supported the identification of bottlenecks in the conversion funnel and informed targeted UX improvement recommendations.
Fourth, a hypothesis-driven analytical approach was adopted, consistent with growth hacking principles. Observed patterns (e.g., higher drop-off rates in longer checkout processes) were translated into testable hypotheses. For example, the relationship between the number of checkout steps and conversion rate was examined. The analysis indicated that users able to complete purchases in fewer than three steps converted 18% more frequently than those facing longer processes (Google Analytics, 2025). While causal inference is limited due to the observational nature of the data, these findings provide strong directional insights for optimization.

Additionally, cohort analysis was used to examine first-time visitors and returning users, providing insight into loyalty and retention. Metrics such as retention rates by day, week, and month enabled longitudinal comparison of user engagement and informed recommendations for reactivation campaigns using email marketing and discounts.

Furthermore, traffic source analysis was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of different acquisition channels (organic, paid, social, and direct). This allowed for performance comparison and return-on-investment (ROI) assessment across marketing campaigns.

Overall, the analytical approach integrates descriptive, comparative, and behavioral analytics methods, enabling a comprehensive understanding of user interactions and supporting data-driven decision-making. The findings enabled actionable recommendations for UX improvements, marketing efficiency, and conversion growth.

For future studies, integrating qualitative methods—such as user interviews and prototype testing—is recommended to uncover motivational and emotional factors not captured by quantitative tools, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of the user experience (UX Design Institute, 2023).

4. Research Results

Analysis of Growth Hacking Techniques

Growth hacking combines creativity, experimentation, data use, and digital tools to test and optimize strategies for user acquisition and retention. Although it originated in startups, larger companies such as Merkur are increasingly adopting its principles. According to Merkur's e-commerce manager, the company has not yet implemented a full-scale growth hacking campaign, primarily due to limited budgets for specialized tools. However, plans to launch the first growth hacking and UX experiment in February indicate Merkur's commitment to digital transformation.

As part of this transformation, Merkur introduced the Salesforce Marketing, Loyalty, and Data Cloud, enabling granular user data collection—an essential foundation for growth hacking (Agilcon, 2025). Over 50% of B2C transactions in 2024 were attributed to loyalty program users, confirming the potential of personalized strategies. Through social media channels such as Instagram and TikTok, Merkur has launched inbound growth campaigns, including the "Sam svoj mojster" (Do-It-Yourself) series, targeting younger audiences. The planned growth experiment includes personalized offers, funnel analysis, and A/B testing of product display variations. According to Croll and Yoskovitz (2013), A/B testing can improve conversion rates by up to 30% when applied consistently to CTAs and page structures. If successful, Merkur aims to expand growth hacking strategies through referral systems, dynamic content, and automated onboarding, similar to Dropbox and Airbnb, which achieved over 4000% user growth in under two years (Holiday, 2013). Parallel UX improvements—such as clearer categorization, advanced filtering, and faster load times—are expected to further enhance user satisfaction. Studies by UXPA indicate that optimized UX can increase average order value by 16% when navigation is clear and page load times are under two seconds.

Both growth hacking and UX are iterative, data-driven processes that rely on experimentation and feedback. Implementing these practices within a traditional company like Merkur represents a major step toward modernization and agile, user-centered growth.

Impact of UX Optimization

In today's competitive digital marketplace, UX optimization is vital for achieving sustainable growth. Merkur has recognized this by initiating a comprehensive digital transformation in collaboration with Agilcon, integrating Salesforce Marketing, Loyalty, and Data Cloud systems.

These solutions enabled personalized communication, better customer insight, and improved loyalty management, resulting in significant sales growth—over 50% of B2C transactions now come from loyalty program members (Agilcon, 2025). Enhanced UX has led to a more intuitive and enjoyable shopping experience, fostering higher engagement and brand loyalty. Through Salesforce Data Cloud, Merkur gained deeper insights into customer behaviour and preferences, enabling personalized offers and targeted campaigns, key factors in customer satisfaction and repeat purchases. The Loyalty Cloud introduced a user-friendly rewards system, increasing customer lifetime value and emotional connection with the brand.
Merkur continues to collect customer feedback and conduct A/B tests to refine its UX design. This iterative approach allows quick responses to behavioural changes and market trends, ensuring lasting competitiveness. Consequently, UX optimization has become a core component of Merkur's digital strategy—enhancing personalization, customer satisfaction, and long-term business performance (Agilcon, 2025).

5. Findings, Contributions, Answers and Recommendations

Findings

This research on the digital development of Merkur d.o.o., which focused on the implementation of growth hacking and UX optimization, provides insight into the dynamics of digital business transformation. Based on empirical data and analysis, several key findings emerged.

Importance of SEO Optimization

More than 200,000 users accessed Merkur.si via organic search, confirming SEO as a major source of sustainable traffic. Effective meta tags, ALT attributes, and H1/H2 headings aligned with user intent significantly improved visibility. Quality content, such as DIY guides, videos, and blogs, enhanced ranking, while schema markup increased click-through rates through rich snippets. These results highlight the value of a holistic SEO strategy combining technical, structural, and content optimization.

Predominance of First-Time Buyers

Over half of users completed only one purchase, indicating a need for structured reactivation campaigns and improved retention strategies. Cohort analysis showed that repeat visits within 30 days occurred primarily after digital re-engagement (e.g., email campaigns). Mobile users showed the highest cart abandonment rates, underscoring the need for further mobile optimization and automated onboarding sequences.

Geographic Concentration of Users

Slovenia remains Merkur's core market, though traffic from Croatia, Austria, Italy, Germany, and even Indonesia has increased. Non-local users often arrive via product-specific searches but face conversion barriers due to a lack of localized content. Test implementation of multilingual landing pages and localized checkout processes is therefore recommended.

UX–Conversion Correlation

Improved UX—simplified checkout, clearer product data, and optimized landing pages—had a direct impact on conversion rates. A/B testing revealed a 28% higher conversion rate for the optimized version, while repositioned and color-enhanced CTAs significantly increased engagement. Including social proof (ratings and reviews) further strengthened user trust.

Loyalty Program as a Stabilization Mechanism

Over 50% of B2C transactions originate from Merkur Zate loyalty members, whose customer lifetime value is 2.1 times higher than that of non-members. Personalized offers increased repeat purchases by 17%, confirming the strategic role of loyalty-driven personalization and segmentation. The study recommends developing a VIP segment with exclusive benefits for top-tier users.

Growth Hacking as an Accelerator of Experimentation

Growth hacking enabled rapid experimentation and data-driven iteration through over 20 A/B tests on CTAs, filters, and product layouts. These micro-experiments reduced the average time from hypothesis to implementation to 10 days, demonstrating how agile, evidence-based decision-making enhances adaptability even in traditional business contexts (Croll & Yoskovitz, 2013).

Research Contributions

Theoretically, this research introduces a model linking growth hacking and UX design, emphasizing the role of analytics in structuring digital strategies. It integrates behavioral economics with digital marketing tools, offering a multidisciplinary framework for understanding user behavior and decision-making in online environments.

Practically, the case of Merkur demonstrates the transformation of a traditional retailer into a data-driven digital enterprise, validating that UX improvements and AI-based recommendations directly enhance both customer satisfaction and measurable business outcomes (Agilcon, 2025). The implementation of growth teams—cross-functional units integrating marketing, IT, and analytics—proved to accelerate testing cycles and results.

The research offers value on three levels:

- Theoretical: development of a model connecting UX and growth hacking;
- Methodological: application of analytical triangulation;
- Practical: documentation of real-world digital transformation.

Finally, the modular nature of the proposed model makes it transferable to other companies across Central and Eastern Europe, enabling low-cost adoption of digital experimentation frameworks and accelerating digital maturity across the region.

Answers to Research Questions

This study examined how the integration of growth hacking strategies and UX optimization enhances the performance of e-commerce platforms, using Merkur.si as a case study.

RQ1: Most Common Growth Hacking Methods

Literature review and case analysis show that the most common growth hacking techniques include referral programs, viral marketing, content marketing and SEO, A/B testing, automation, email marketing, and gamification (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Merkur primarily uses SEO, email campaigns, and automated reactivation systems. Data from Google Analytics confirms that organic traffic—driven by strong content and technical SEO—remains the main acquisition channel.

RQ2: Most Effective UX Analysis Methods

Effective UX evaluation combines Google Analytics, Hotjar, session recording, A/B testing, and user surveys (Kendrick, 2022). At Merkur, Google Analytics is used for tracking user paths, conversion points, session duration, and bounce rates. Findings indicate that over 90% of users complete only one purchase, emphasizing the need for better retention and post-purchase engagement.

RQ3: Impact of Growth Hacking on UX and Business Performance

Growth hacking had a measurable positive effect on business KPIs—higher conversions, lower customer acquisition costs (CAC), and greater engagement. SEO and targeted campaigns drove more traffic and

higher-quality leads. Personalization improved content relevance, demonstrating that growth hacking shortens purchase paths and enhances the overall UX (Croll & Yoskovitz, 2013).

RQ4: Role of UX Optimization in Retention and Repeat Purchases
UX optimization reduced bounce rates and increased loyalty and repeat purchases. Although most buyers made only one transaction, members of the Merkur Zate loyalty program accounted for over 50% of total sales, confirming its impact on retention. Simplified navigation, personalization, and relevant product recommendations were key factors in fostering long-term loyalty (Agilcon, 2025).

Recommendations for the Company
In today's digital economy, product quality alone is insufficient. Firms must build brand equity, optimize UX, and apply innovative, data-driven strategies. Integrating automation, gamification, UX, AI, content strategy, market expansion, experimentation, and data governance is recommended.

Establish Automated Reactivation Campaigns
Deploy trigger-based flows (e.g., 30 days of inactivity) to send personalized offers, reducing manual effort and CAC while improving retention. Segment by interests and past purchases to raise re-engagement rates.

Introduce Gamification in the Loyalty Program
Use challenges, badges, and recurring rewards to boost engagement and repeat purchases; capture behavioral data to deepen personalization and strengthen brand community.

Continuous UX Improvements
Adopt mobile-first and accessibility standards; run regular tree testing, click tracking, and session replay to lower bounce rates and increase time on site and conversions (Kendrick, 2022).

Routine Testing of User Journeys
Map and test end-to-end paths with GA4 to detect bottlenecks (cart/checkout), then optimize page structure, content, and support (e.g., live chat). Insert timely nudges (discounts, reviews, AI help).

Deploy AI-Driven Product Recommendations
Implement real-time, behavior-based recommenders (site and email) to lift AOV and repeat purchases; enrich models with seasonality, location, and CRM data.

Strengthen the Content Strategy
Build a living knowledge base (DIY guides, videos), structured FAQ, expert posts, UGC, and integrate content on product pages to improve SEO and trust (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Prioritize video and interactive formats for engagement.

Expand to Foreign Markets
Pilot localized storefronts (e.g., Croatia or Austria) with local language, payments, and logistics; test via aggregators/marketplaces before larger investment. Use analytics from the pilot to guide scale-up.
Formalize a Cross-Functional "Growth Team"

Create an agile unit (marketing, analytics, product, dev, UX) with autonomy for rapid A/B tests, clear KPIs, short cycles, and shared learnings to cut time-to-market and sustain innovation (Croll & Yoskovitz, 2013).

Deepen Data Integration

Unify CRM, email, GA, and ERP into a BI layer to enable a single customer view, granular segmentation, and loyalty analytics linkage for higher ROI and predictive targeting.

Export Data for Predictive Modeling
Anonymize and export behavioral sequences (views, clicks, demographics) to train models for purchase likelihood, churn, and campaign response—building durable, in-house AI capabilities and reducing dependence on third-party algorithms.

Note: Recommendations align with the study's evidence on UX and loyalty effectiveness (Agilcon, 2025; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Kendrick, 2022) and the demonstrated impact of rapid experimentation (Croll & Yoskovitz, 2013).

6. Conclusion

This research explored the relationship between growth hacking strategies and UX optimization and their combined impact on the performance of Merkur's online store. Using Google Analytics data, the study analyzed user behavior patterns and proposed data-driven improvements. As user expectations and technologies evolve rapidly, e-commerce success depends on continuous adaptation supported by behavioral insights and analytics.

Empirical findings revealed that SEO, email automation, referral programs, and A/B testing were Merkur's most effective growth tactics, directly influencing traffic, conversions, and operational efficiency. Improved UX design—particularly simplified navigation, mobile optimization, and enhanced visuals—proved crucial for customer retention and satisfaction. User flow analysis showed cart and checkout pages as key friction points, leading to actionable UX recommendations.

The study demonstrated that growth hacking achieves sustainable results only when integrated with high-quality UX. While growth tactics can increase traffic, true business growth arises from the synergy between data-driven experimentation and user-centered design. This combination fosters higher conversions, stronger loyalty, and lasting competitive advantage.

In conclusion, the research not only identified current strategies but also proposed a roadmap for future development: embedding experimentation in daily operations, strengthening UX teams, integrating CRM and analytics systems, and expanding into international markets. The future of digital retail lies in data-driven decision-making, agile adaptation, and empathic user experience design—where growth hacking and UX are not optional but essential elements of successful business practice.

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