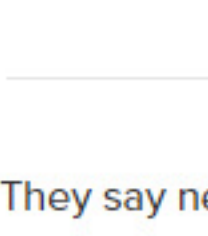




# Keep Your Eye on The Prize: The Story of Mariener Eyewear



CUSTOMER STORIES WRITTEN BY ANDREA ZOELLNER

They say necessity is the mother of invention. For Dutch entrepreneur Marien Klootwijk, this rings true: In 2012 he needed to replace an expensive pair of sunglasses, was disappointed with the selection within his price range available in The Netherlands, and was inspired to launch [Mariener Eyewear](#).

## From clear vision to competitive company

Even in the beginning, Marien had a clear idea of what his company was about. “Mariener offers no-nonsense eyewear with a clean, high-performance design at entry-level prices,” he says.

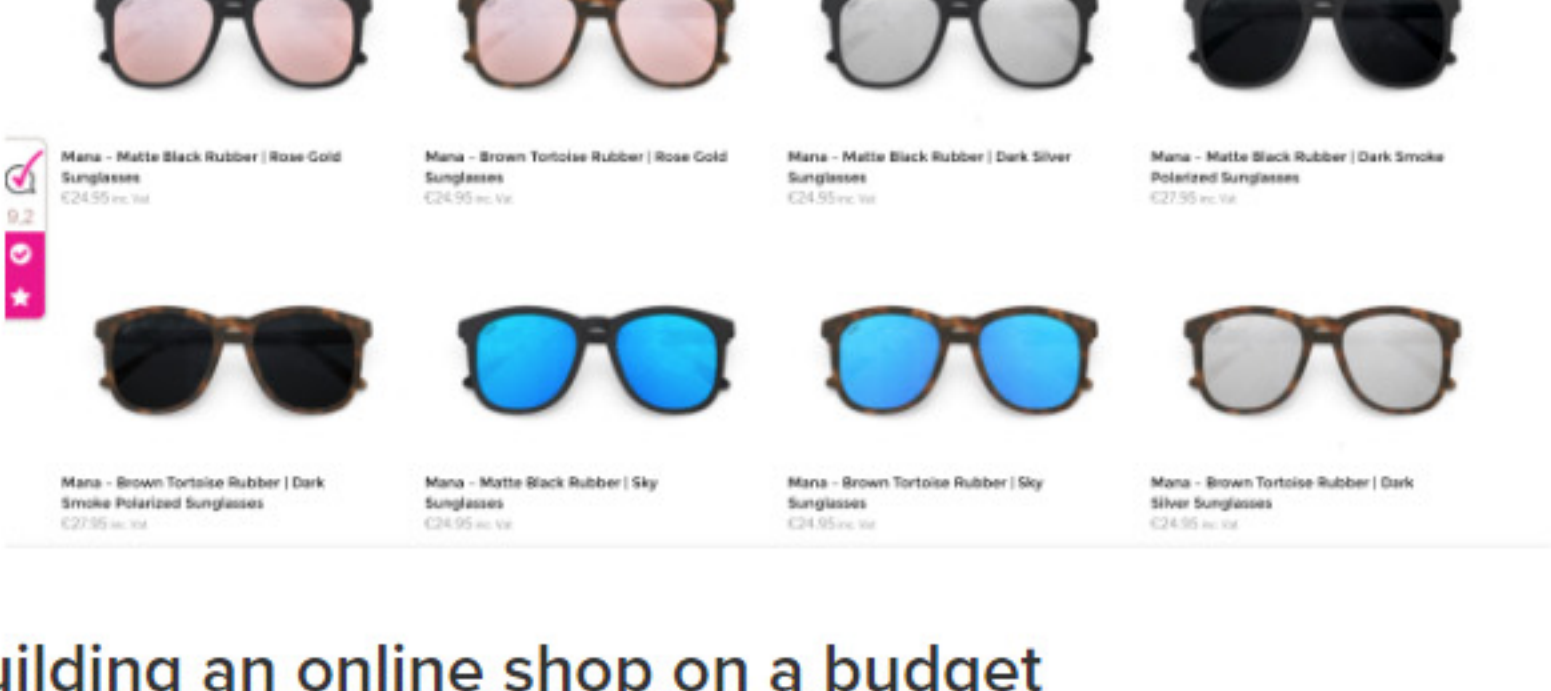
Representing The Netherlands in his branding was also important, demonstrated by generous splashes of orange, the national color of the country, throughout his website.



To grow in a competitive retail segment like accessories, Marien knew he would have to offer something more than just a colorful website. As we [heard from Melissa of TinyTags.com](#) last month, finding your niche is key!

Last year, he and his team [successfully completed a round of crowdfunding](#) to introduce a new matte reflective lens technology that makes the lenses matte reflective from the outside, but completely see-through from the inside. They are the first in the world to introduce such an advanced technology at an affordable price point.

Niche? Check!



## Building an online shop on a budget

The Mariener online shop is directly inspired by the company's ethos. Although they sell in person along the shores of the sunny Dutch province of Zeeland, the business is almost entirely online. “The website is designed around the same philosophy as our brand: no non-sense and simple-to-use, yet attractive.” But just like the company itself, it had to be launched [on a shoestring budget](#).

“Since the company is bootstrapped, the budget was a real issue at first,” says Marien. “Thankfully WordPress and WooCommerce have a very low barrier to entry.”

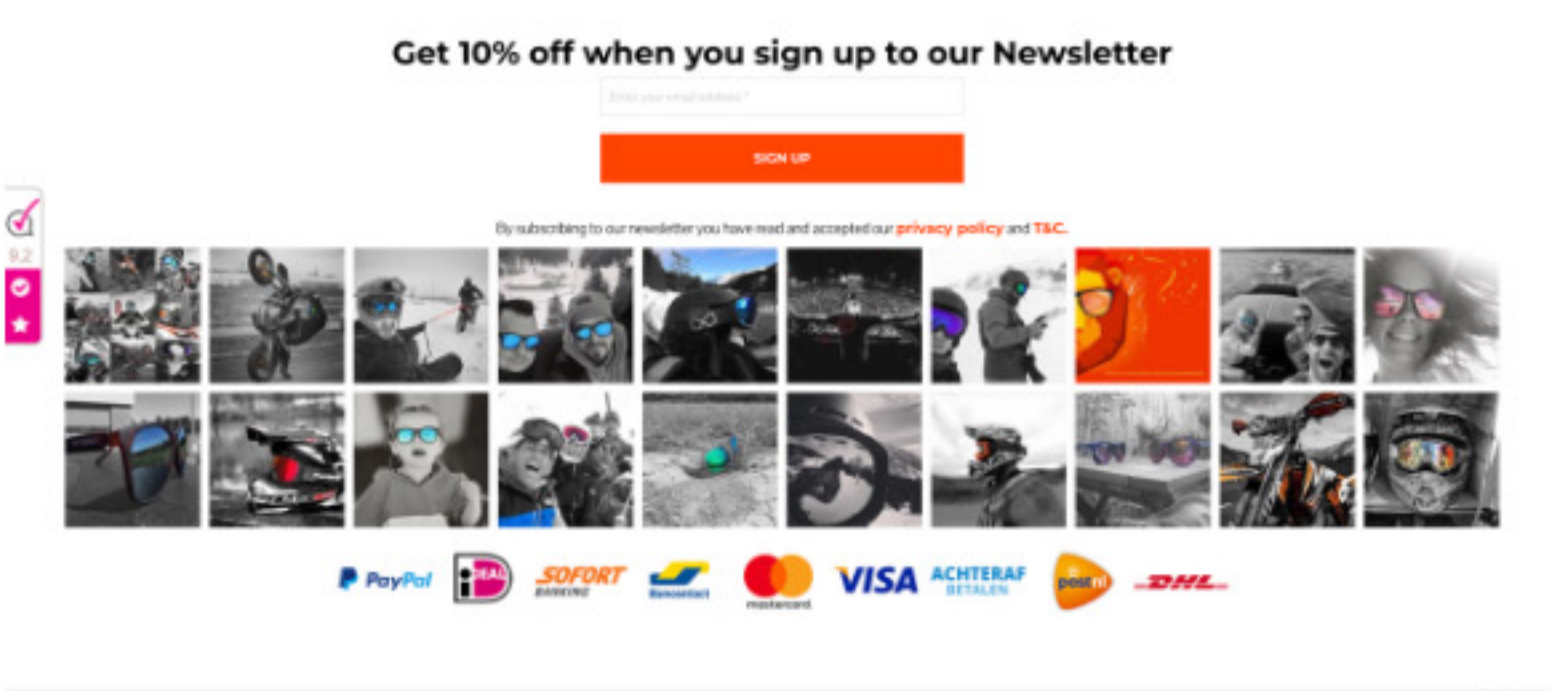
Before settling on WooCommerce, Marien had tried a variety of SaaS shopping carts but grew unhappy with the high costs.

“One of the biggest advantages of having WooCommerce and WordPress as the foundation of your shop is that it is open source and doesn't incur monthly costs or additional transactional fees that you would have with other SaaS eCommerce options.”

## The power of social proof, reviews, and localization

The site shows off the products through high-quality images but also seeks to create an emotional connection by showcasing the clients via [user-generated content](#).

“We've included a large footer area with real Instagram photos to keep the site from being too sterile and distant to our customers,” says Marien. “Our community is the backbone of our company, so we use a wide variety of content submitted by customers for our social media campaigns to make a personal relationship between the brand and them.”



User-generated content on Mariener.nl

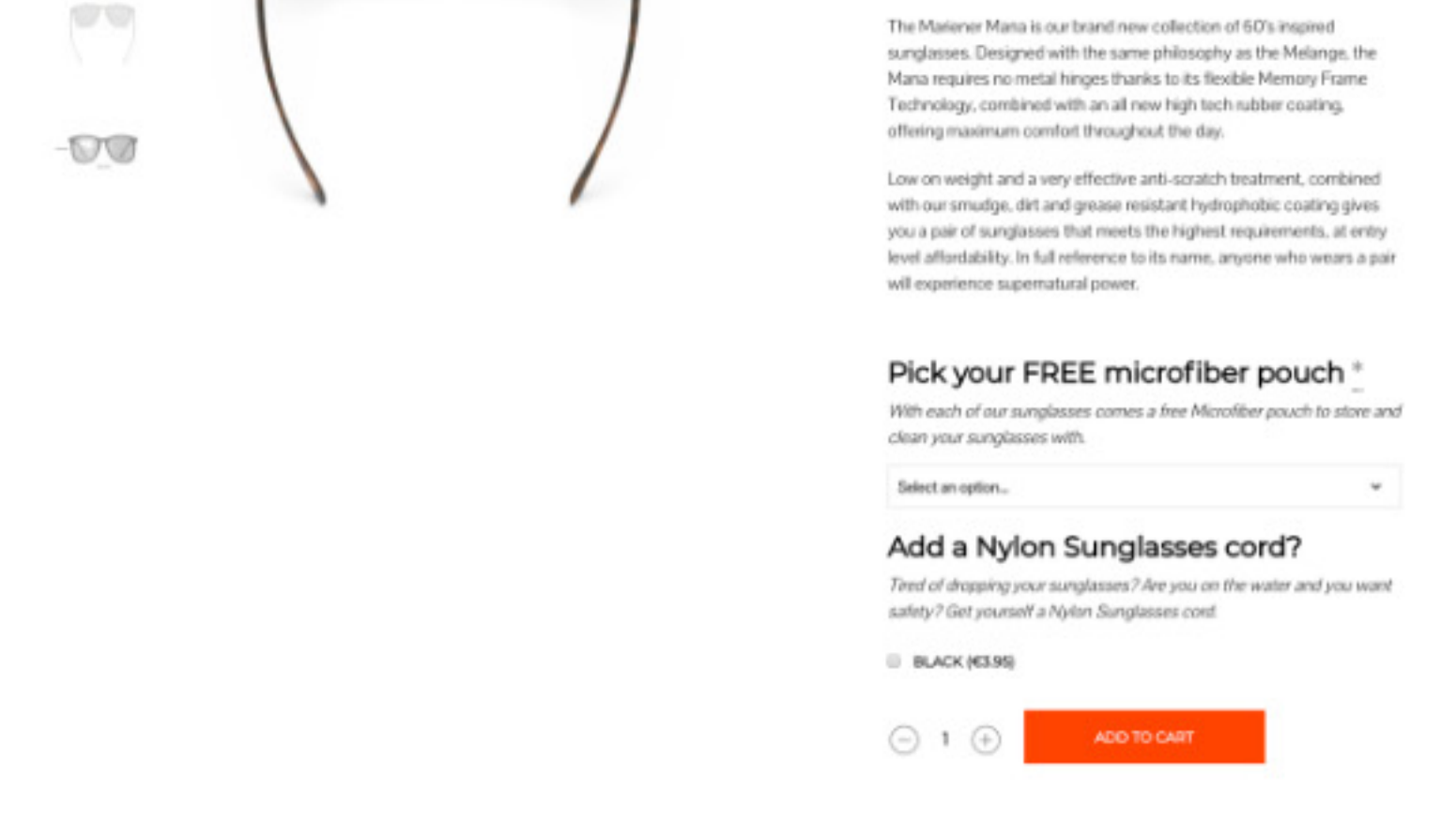
They also integrated the Dutch rating and review service [Webwinkelkeur](#), (similar to TrustPilot and Feefo) that collects reviews from customers and displays them externally to inform visitors. By displaying real reviews, the website is more transparent and personable. Learn more about [adding reviews to your WooCommerce store](#).

In order to be successful in The Netherlands, Mariener's site needed to be available in Dutch. With the addition of the [WPML multilingual plugin](#), they were able to make their website bilingual and gain from local [SEO](#).

## From online shop to marketing machine

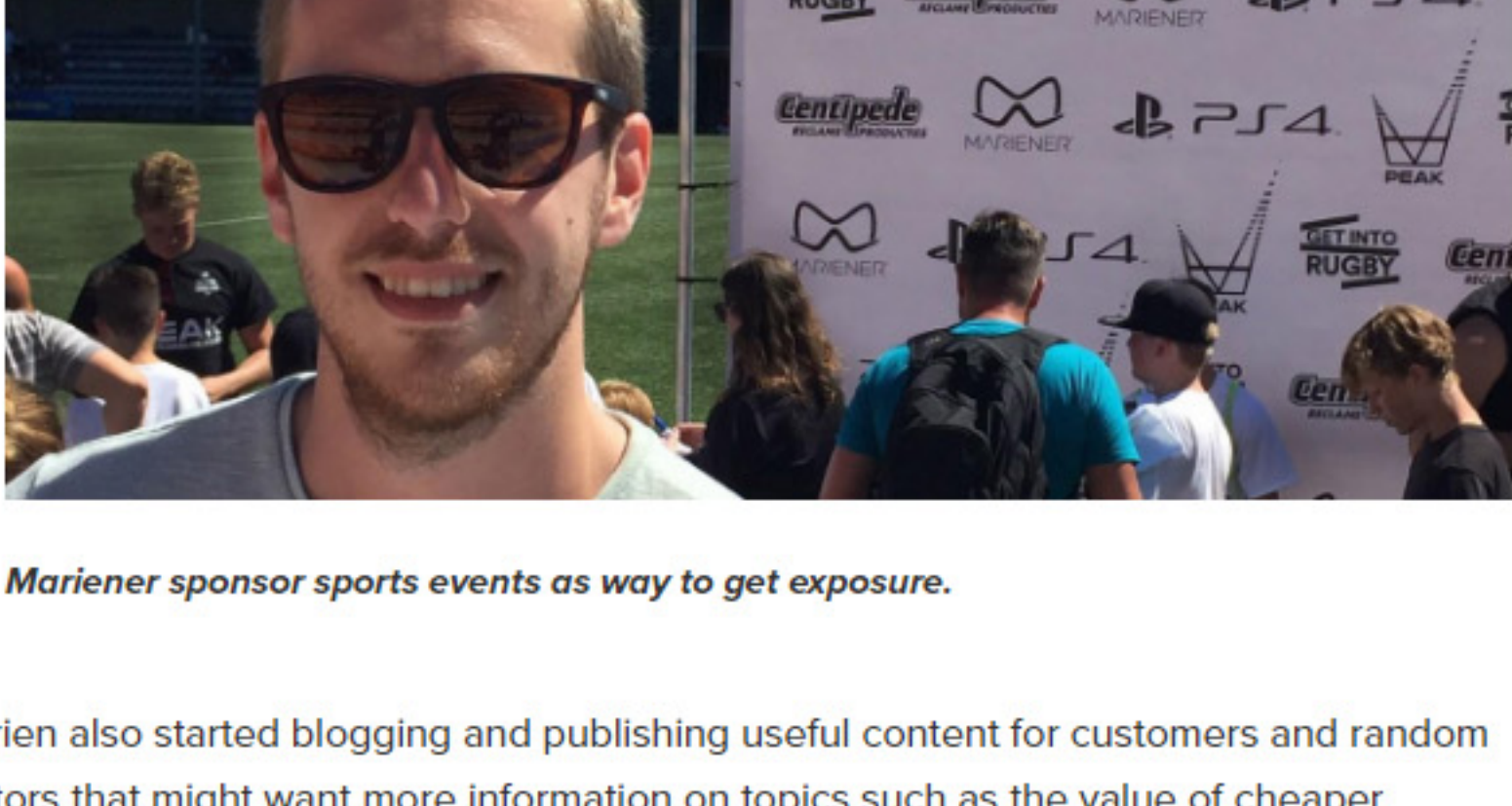
For Marien, who self-identifies as a perfectionist, having a functional website isn't enough, it needs to be fast and constantly evolving.

His attention is currently focused on spreading the word and increasing conversions through promotional sales strategies, content marketing, newsletters, and reaching out to influencers.



The Nylon Sunglasses cord suggestion on the product pages of Mariener.nl is a great example of [cross-selling](#).

“At first, we focused on growth through our resellers, which resulted in traffic from branded keyword searches,” he says. “But since more or less a year now, I've really invested in our newsletter, which we manage through the [Mailpoet WordPress plugin](#).”



Mariener sponsor sports events as way to get exposure.

Marien also started blogging and publishing useful content for customers and random visitors that might want more information on topics such as the value of cheaper sunglasses or [if sunglasses can be left in the car](#), for example.

“We know our products do well, we know we can sell our products through our website but I also want to offer more. Our blog and knowledge base need to become the foundation for our customers to figure out what they need so we can offer it to them.”

## Is there a necessity you could turn into a business?

As the Mariener Eyewear story reinforces, some of the most powerful business ideas arise from needs/wants we experience ourselves. Perhaps there's something you're missing you can turn into a service or business?

While you think on that, browse the [Mariener Eyewear](#) site for inspiration and, if you're tempted, get yourself some WooCommerce-powered sunglasses or ski goggles!