

Product Categories, Manufacturers and Inventory reports

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Product Categories, Manufacturers and Inventory reports: Flat Catalog Optimization

Short answer:

Sales Analytics requires that Magento settings enable a couple of Flat table optimizations to be able to build Product Categories, Manufacturers, and some Inventory reports. To enable this flat table optimizations on your Magento Admin Panel you need to go to System --> Configuration --> Catalog --> Catalog, and in the Frontend area enable of couple of parameters named **Use Flat Catalog Category** and

Use Flat Catalog Product

. After that, you'll probably need to rebuild some Magento indexes, but you'll be able to access these new reports (if the parameters are not enabled and try to access these reports, you'll be redirected to the home Sales Analytics report).

Long answer:

Magento uses the EAV (Entity, Attribute and Value) database structure for most of its datamodels. Simplifying it a lot, it means that when saving and retrieving data objects you need to write or read on three related different tables. This EAV database structure is used because it is very flexible and scalable (you can add almost anything to the database without modifying the database structure). The downside of this is that this kind of structure is much slower than others due to its inherent complexity. (For further reference, please go to: www.magentocommerce.com/knowledge-base/entity-attribute-value).

To speed some things up, Magento combines this EAV database structure with another more "regular" one, also known as Flat tables, that simplifies (and so speeds up) many common requests. This is the case of Magento Sales and Orders data: all the Magento tables whose name starts with "sales_flat_" (that as its name implies are used to store Magento sales data) uses this flat table structure. And these tables are where our Sales Analytics reporting tool mainly operates.

Magento also allows the possibility to use this Flat table optimization for other types of data. On your Magento Admin Panel, if you go to System --> Configuration --> Catalog --> Catalog, in the Frontend area you'll see of couple of parameters named **Use Flat Catalog Category** and **Use Flat Catalog Product**. These values can enable flat table optimization for Magento Products and Magento Product Categories, and improve the overall Magento system performance when displaying the product catalog.

When these Flat optimization are enabled on your installation, Sales Analytics can build and provide a couple of additional report areas: **Product Categories** and **Manufacturers**, and provide additional reports for the **Inventory** area, whereas when these optimizations are disabled, none of them are available and redirect to the home Sales Analytics report.

For further reference about Magento Flat table optimization and how it affects overall performance, please go to www.pixafy.com/blog/2013/08/optimizing-magento-flat-table-optimization-and-how-it-affects-overall-performance/

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