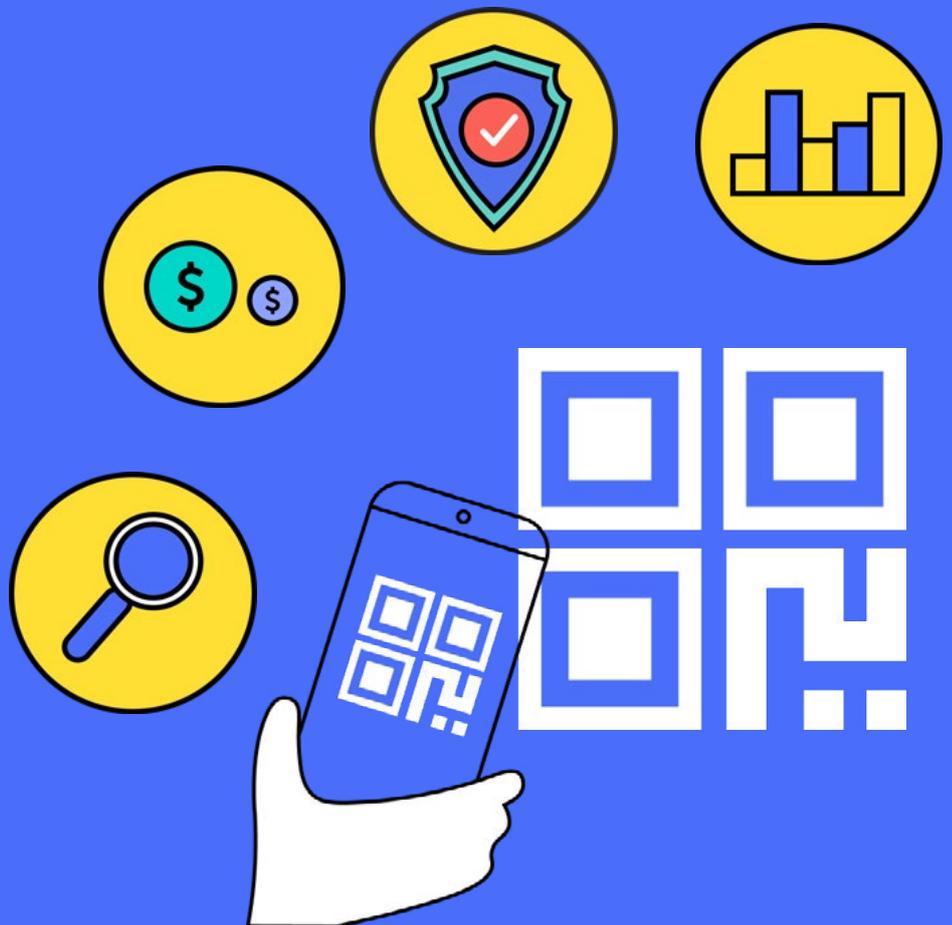

BRIJ

COMMERCE ENABLEMENT 2022: POST-PANDEMIC TRENDS IN RETAIL TECHNOLOGY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

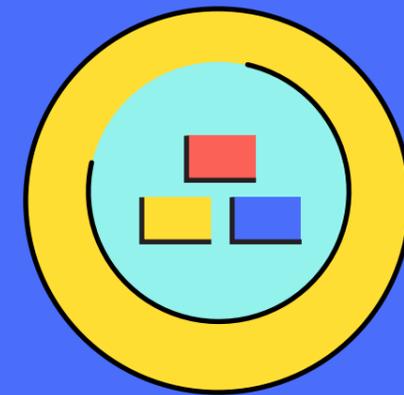
PRE-PURCHASE
Knowing the brand



AT-PURCHASE
Paying with choice



POST-PURCHASE
Building a community



The commerce world is changing—rapidly. The pandemic has catalyzed certain trends, accelerated others, and left a few in the past. As in-store foot traffic was put on pause, customers turned to e-commerce and began rewriting the playbook. With the rise of big data and increased access to digital devices, commerce has become defined by personalized experiences, efficiency, and transparency. Our report discusses some of the most important trends in commerce as retailers work to adapt to the ever-changing landscape.

In these discussions, we invite leaders across different industries—from financing options and subscriptions to customer engagement and reorder—to share their perspectives on changing consumer behaviors. In a world saturated with companies vying for customer attention and loyalty, we identify a need for a seamless omnichannel experience that puts the customer first. By understanding who their customers are, retailers can better allocate their resources to deliver an experience that naturally builds trust, loyalty, and community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTRIBUTORS

ALLOY

Sara Du, Co-Founder and CEO

CARTHOOK

Emily Foreman, CEO

CLYDE

Brandon Gell, Founder and CEO

CO-OP COMMERCE

Dean Bakes, Chief of Staff

GIVZ

Andrew Forman, Founder and CEO

GLIMPSE

Kushal Negi, Co-Founder and Chief Product Officer

GRIN

Brandon Brown, Founder and CEO

LOOP RETURNS

Chris Pinchot, Co-Founder

LUCKY

Sneh Parmar, Co-Founder and CEO

MALOMO

Yaw Aning, Co-Founder and CEO

NATE

Stephen Milbank, Chief Revenue Officer

OX

Arianna Thayer, Director of Marketing

REPEAT

Kim Stiefel, Co-Founder and CEO

SMARTRR

Gabriella Yithaek, Founder and CEO

TREET

Jake Disraeli, Co-Founder and CEO

VIOLET

Brandon Schulz, CEO and Co-Founder

BRIJ TEAM

Written by Amy Huang

Design by Madi Berse

Contributions from Kait Stephens, CEO & Co-Founder and Zack Morrison, CTO & Co-Founder

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PRE-PURCHASE

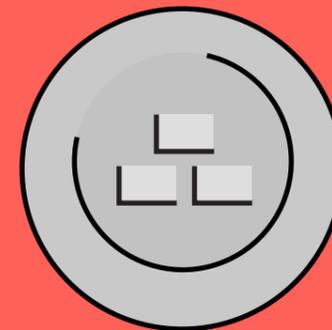
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SOCIAL COMMERCE

Social commerce is a powerful marketing channel with low barriers to entry. To make it a sustainable part of the brand, retailers must create a social commerce experience that is both seamless and authentic.

The pandemic has brought products directly to people's fingertips. With just a few taps on their smartphone, shoppers can discover and purchase products where they spend most of their screen time: on social media. When coming across an ad on Instagram or Facebook, for example, shoppers can learn more about the item and make a purchase without leaving the site. Given the past year of isolation, it is unsurprising that ecommerce has made its way onto social media, a platform for connection and entertainment, to power an engaging medium for digital shopping: social commerce.

In this chapter, we'll take a deep dive into one of the biggest e-commerce developments of the pandemic. While social commerce allows brands to reach customers where they are, brands have to balance that power with building trust on a platform that often breeds distrust. They need to prioritize authenticity when using these platforms, especially when partnering with influencers.

WHAT IS SOCIAL COMMERCE?

Social commerce refers to the ability of customers to discover and purchase products directly on a social media platform. It is by no means a novel idea; large social media platforms have tested several features of social selling throughout the years. Facebook, for example, tested the buy button in 2014 and launched Facebook Marketplace in 2018, which began as a peer-to-peer

shopping platform and now allows merchant selling. Instagram featured the buy button in

2015, implemented product tags in 2016, and began a partnership with Shopify in 2017 to reach even more sellers. [Earlier this year](#), Instagram launched a mobile-exclusive feature for product drops, which

help sellers create buzz for new limited items before their release. With a designated area on the app for drops, users can discover, browse, and purchase the latest product launches with little friction.

Facebook has nearly 2.8 billion monthly active users and Instagram has nearly 1.3 billion. With the [16.4% growth in social media](#) usage each year, it is clear where brands will find their audience. Social commerce allows brands to meet customers where they are: 84% of shoppers use at least one social media site before purchasing a product. As a meeting point, social commerce redesigns the pre-purchase experience with increased accessibility, visually-pleasing engagement, and product knowledge.

CONTENT IS THE NEW STOREFRONT.

The pandemic has heightened consumer expectations of convenience and frictionless experiences, leading brands to not only reimagine the social shopping experience with new capabilities but also connect all other channels that bring products to the customer.

[Violet](#), a native checkout experience solution, defines a channel as "places people typically go to consume content" and having a "captive audience that may want to buy the things they see." Channels like blogs, SMS, social media, and video are places for customers to discover and purchase products right

at the moment of inspiration. By going with a native, embedded checkout, brands can increase conversion by [up to 50%](#).

"There's a first-mover advantage for brands moving to new high conversion channels where you see a deeper connection to the consumer throughout the purchasing experience. Whether it's via live streaming, traditional social, or new interfaces, today's consumer is ready to buy in new ways, and the result is a closer relationship, and the opportunity to capture the customer where they are inspired

or most curious," says Brandon Schulz, CEO and co-founder of Violet. "Consumers are exhausted with the whole click-out affiliate link experience and appreciate seamless checkout, which has been true for a long time, but not something that could be accomplished off-site, in a holistic fashion until now."



Schulz also explains that ecommerce has become the primary source of revenue for brands, increasing the need to diversify marketing channels and revamp infrastructure to connect these channels. People will continue to be active online, and by connecting these different channels and covering much digital ground, brands can move with the customer and deliver a seamless product discovery and checkout experience.

SOCIAL COMMERCE TAKES ON A NEW LOOK.

Generation Z is the group that uses major digital shopping channels the most, with [about 60% of Gen Zers](#) discovering products through social media platforms. With social commerce, product discovery becomes more than just an image and call-to-action template that define most advertisements online. Rather, brands are increasingly engaging customers in two-way conversations through video, live streams, and in particular, influencer partnerships.

Influencers are a powerful part of social commerce. With an existing following, influencers help brands reach a wider

audience and promote products in relatable and creative ways—think of it as scalable warm introductions. "We now live in a creator economy," says Brandon Brown, CEO of [GRIN](#), a leading influencer marketing platform. "People used to watch companies [and] stations, now they want other people online."



The success of influencer marketing rests upon authenticity. When brands view influencers as an exchange of money for customer acquisition, it shows—it's easy to tell when people are simply in it for the money. Their influencers might not even use the promoted product, which alienates customers. But when they show how the product brings value to their own lives, influencers become a valuable bridge between brands and customers.

GRIN encourages brands to view influencer marketing as an opportunity to build genuine relationships with customers. "In the creator economy, authenticity is everything," Brown adds. "You achieve

authentic content through enabling direct brand & creator relationships. GRIN helps creators feel like a trusted, empowered partner to the brand - not just a transaction or a billboard."

Social commerce is only at its beginning, and brands should aim to deliver a seamless experience from the very first interaction with a customer. The use cases of social media and other channels are vast; as brands continue to reimagine social commerce and shoppable content, they need to prioritize authenticity and frictionless experiences to build trust with their customers.

In the creator economy, authenticity is everything. You achieve authentic content through enabling direct brand & creator relationships. GRIN helps creators feel like a trusted, empowered partner to the brand - not just a transaction or a billboard.

— Brandon Brown, CEO of GRIN



There's a first-mover advantage for brands moving to new high conversion channels where you see a deeper connection to the consumer throughout the purchasing experience. Whether it's via live streaming, traditional social, or new interfaces, today's consumer is ready to buy in new ways, and the result is a closer relationship, and the opportunity to capture the customer where they are inspired or most curious. Consumers are exhausted with the whole click-out affiliate link experience and appreciate seamless checkout, which has been true for a long time, but not something that could be accomplished off-site, in a holistic, fashion until now.

— Brandon Schulz, Co-Founder & CEO of Violet



84%
of shoppers use at least one social media site before purchasing a product

PRODUCT DISCOVERY

In increasingly competitive markets, brands need to complement social commerce with other marketing strategies to reach high-intent customers. Experiential retail and brand partnerships are two ways that brands can take product discovery to the next level.

Because brands recognize the value of making content shoppable on social media, social commerce is quickly becoming a go-to channel for customer acquisition. But redirecting to another space will simply lead to crowdedness, keeping brands on the lookout for complementary marketing strategies to expand their ecosystem and stand out.

Getting customers to know that your brand exists is challenging, and even if they step through the door and onto your website, it's not guaranteed that they will stay there to complete a purchase. In this chapter, we'll take a look at some solutions built on collaboration and personalization that better connect brands to customers, and customers to a seamless experience from start to finish.

SHOPPING WITH A GLIMPSE: THE VALUE OF EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL

It is difficult to stand out in a sea of merchants equally determined to reach customers, but competition often breeds creativity. Successful brands know that acquisition isn't about spending the most money or being the loudest—it's about taking the time to understand what customers need and then designing an enjoyable shopping experience around these needs.

A good example is experiential retail. As people spend more time shopping online, they spend less time frequenting malls, but people still value physical products and try-ons, aspects of an in-store shopping experience that are hard to replicate online. But malls aren't the only places where meaningful interactions with products happen. By identifying these other spaces, brands can reach customers at more targeted touchpoints.

[Glimpse](#), an experiential retail platform, helps brands do exactly that. The company's expansive network of short-

term rentals allows brands to set up physical marketing campaigns in high-traffic showrooms, where customers can discover products through experience. "The pandemic had led people to really value travel and experiences and has created a wave of additional demand that is here to stay," says Kushal Negi, Co-Founder of Glimpse. "By placing products into luxury short-term rentals, brands can connect with consumers in powerful and memorable ways that they could not otherwise. An incredible night's rest on a mattress, high quality furniture to sit back and relax on, and amazing snacks offered as a welcome gift are all experiences that brands can create through Glimpse to make a powerful and lasting impression on consumers."

By meeting customers where they are and delivering a natural experience, this product discovery channel puts the customer first and gives brands [deep insight](#) into the holistic customer journey, including "foot traffic, brand affinity, intent to purchase, and conversion through unique discount codes"—valuable data that social marketing would unlikely provide. The core of experiential retail is the consumer receiving value from a product, which creates a strong foundation for brand-consumer relationships right from the beginning.

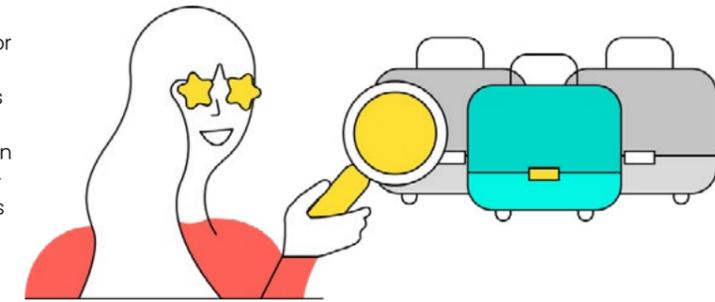
IT TAKES TWO: THE PROMISE OF BRAND COLLABORATIONS

Marketing without data is like shooting darts blindfolded, and in a world where first-party data is increasingly more difficult to acquire, brands are marketing aimlessly. They need to work smarter to reach customers that are looking for their products.

One way is through brand partnerships and collaborations that bring value to brands and consumers. [co-op commerce](#) has created a network of co-ops that strategically group brands together. Every time a brand features products from

their partner brands on an order confirmation page, the brand earns credit to spend on placements and visibility throughout the co-op network. This process creates high-quality and purposeful product recommendations that bring value to customers.

"Brand partnerships are unique in that they allow for brands to unlock cohorts of high-intent customers from their partners' customer base," says Dean Bakes, Chief of Staff of co-op. "co-op allows brands to seamlessly partner and cross promote products to these high-intent consumers."



Reaching high-intent customers requires having customer data. This includes knowing the channels that are driving new purchases, the products that drive the most traffic, and the partnerships that are generating the highest ROI. Each brand has unique customer data—accessing it means knowing clearly where the customers are and how to best reach them.

"We reveal where your net new customers are coming from and ultimately where your customers are shopping," Bakes says. "Not only are you able to acquire these high fidelity customers via co-op, but we provide brands with the data that reveals where their more intentional, 1:1 partnership opportunities are. Efficiency has become so important when it comes to targeting and curating an audience and curating a brand. So when we think about it, more than anything we want to be known for our amazing recommendation engine, making great recommendations for other products based off of information that we have at that moment."

Shoppers essentially have a filtered view of brands and products without needing to manually do it themselves. "Ultimately, we are trying to build the best discovery and recommendation platform for all shops and shoppers alike," says Bakes. "We really want the experience to be relevant and

feel good for consumers and help them cut through the noise that exists in the world of products."

From fashion & apparel to health & fitness, [brands across industries](#) have experienced success with co-op.

- Fashion & Apparel: 91% of [The Ridge's](#) customers

acquired through co-op are net new.

- Health & Wellness: [Hydrant](#) experienced 36% lower CPA (cost per action) on co-op than Facebook.
- Home & Kitchen: [Made in Cookware](#) experienced a 12% click-to-conversion rate.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

When thinking about customer acquisition, brands need to approach product discovery creatively and intentionally. Successful brands employ a variety of strategies that complement one another. Experiential retail and brand partnerships are two ways that brands can personalize and diversify their marketing strategies. Experiential retail caters to consumer preferences for trying before buying, and partnerships allow brands to reach high-intent customers with high-value product recommendations. This sounds great for the brand, and even better for the customer.

“The pandemic had led people to really value travel and experiences and has created a wave of additional demand that is here to stay. Brands looking to get in front of these experience-seeking consumers have put product placements top of mind as one of the key channels to leverage to reach this audience.”

— Kushal Negi, Co-Founder of Glimpse



“If you think about Facebook and Instagram, they sit on a tremendous volume of pixel data across all of these individual brands, which is how it's able to curate recommendations. However, Facebook doesn't allow brands to leverage first-party data and share when a customer lands on their page for example. As a result of this absence of aggregate consumer data, individual retailers are challenged to create personalization within their acquisition strategies. Brand partnerships are unique in that they allow for brands to unlock cohorts of high-intent customers from their partners' customer base.”

— Dean Bakes, Chief of Staff of co-op commerce



AT-PURCHASE

PRE-PURCHASE
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QUICKER PAYMENT

Given the high rate of cart abandonment, especially on mobile devices, brands need to reduce friction at checkout to make it easier for customers to make inspired purchases.

The next time you make a purchase, keep count of how many clicks it takes for you to reach the confirmation page. Throughout the checkout process, you most likely will need to create an account or log into one, input shipping and billing information, and review your order. This sounds straightforward, but each step is an additional roadblock to the checkout page.

In this chapter, we'll take a look at the movement towards a more streamlined checkout process. While this promises speed and convenience for the customer, brands can sometimes end up sacrificing acquisition of first-party data, and, along with it, personalization. To compete with large marketplaces that already have quicker checkout in place, brands need to reduce friction at checkout.

AN INTRODUCTION TO QUICKER CHECKOUT

In the world of quick checkout, Amazon has long been the model. In 1999, they were granted a patent on their 1-click technology, which expedites the checkout process because customers don't need to re-enter shipping and billing information. The patent gave Amazon a significant advantage in the marketplace as it reduced ecommerce cart abandonment, a major pain point with an average rate of nearly [70%](#).

The patent expired in 2017, leading major ecommerce platforms and tech companies to implement their own one-click technology. Shopify, for example, rolled out Shop Pay, an accelerated payment feature that makes checkout completion [40% faster](#).

Apple Pay and Google Pay both allow customers to pay without needing to re-enter credit card or shipping information. One-click payments are a game-changer for retailers that sell products that need to be continuously replaced, such as groceries and other

consumable items. For big-ticket items like furniture and technological devices, quicker checkouts matter, too.

One common route retailers take to encourage purchase completion is offering guest checkout. This allows customers to check out without creating an account, which often requires personal information and email verification. When placed right next to a sign-in option that requires more clicks, guest checkouts soar in popularity; in fact, offering guest checkout increases conversion rates by [45%](#). It makes sense, then, for brands to take this route to reduce cart abandonment.

But of course there is a catch. It's not just new users who choose the guest checkout—so do those who already have an account. This anonymization from the guest checkout has significant implications for post-purchase experiences. The

checkout stage is one of the earliest touchpoints where customers give brands valuable first-party data that is used to personalize future interactions with the brand, such as receiving emails, product recommendations, or special perks. Loyalty programs are an effective way for brands to strengthen relationships with consumers, but these programs count on customers registering and using their accounts.

So what can brands do to give customers a better checkout experience without losing access to first-party data? Bolt, a one-click checkout

platform, suggests a solution: brands shouldn't get rid of the guest checkout option—they should replace it with something better. Bolt's identity-powered commerce links customer accounts across devices and websites to form a

universal shopper profile that customers can access for every merchant in the Bolt network.

Bolt's [infographic](#) provides more details: "We're first to market with this game-changing identity layer that unlocks store account registrations for retailers while tying together the benefits of a store account, a network account, and a one-click checkout experience for shoppers through a single sign-on. Now, more independent retailers can access customer insights and engagement opportunities that were previously only available when shoppers created store accounts."

Equipped with consumer insights, brands are then able to deliver both a seamless checkout and post-purchase experience.

NATE: QUICKER CHECKOUTS WITH INSPIRED PURCHASES

A company that is taking mobile checkouts to the next level is [nate](#), the world's only universal shopping app. It allows customers to buy from any online store in one click—all [2.1](#)

[million](#) of them. [nate](#) allows users to buy first and pay later, eliminating any friction from initial thoughts to checkout. Reducing friction in the mobile shopping experience is a worthwhile investment, especially because the average cart abandonment rate for mobile ecommerce is [nearly 86%](#).

The average cart abandonment rate for mobile ecommerce is nearly 86%.

"Mobile devices are ripe with distractions. As more purchases are shifted to our devices, speed to complete checkout is critical as a defense against distractions that interrupt and prevent checkout," explains Stephen Milbank, CRO of [nate](#). "[nate](#) captures the consumer's desire for the brand/product at the moment of inspiration and provides a simple, delightful purchase experience. Positivity is preserved because there is no opportunity for an onerous checkout experience to erode the brand affinity that was created at the inspiration moment."

People procrastinate, even on buying items that they need or really like and often leaving them in the cart. [nate's](#) platform drives home the importance of a seamless checkout process to meet customers where they are and power inspired purchases.



Mobile devices are ripe with distractions. As more purchases are shifted to our devices, speed to complete checkout is critical as a defense against distractions that interrupt and prevent checkout. [nate](#) captures the consumer's desire for the brand / product at the moment of inspiration and provides a simple, delightful purchase experience. Positivity is preserved because there is no opportunity for an onerous checkout experience to erode the brand affinity that was created at the inspiration moment.

— Stephen Milbank, Chief Revenue Officer of [nate](#)



BNPL

BUY NOW PAY LATER

As the pandemic heightened financial uncertainty, people began shopping more consciously and embracing more lenient financing options. Buy now, pay later has become a popular mode of payment, and its growing ubiquity is another indicator of young consumer shopping preferences.

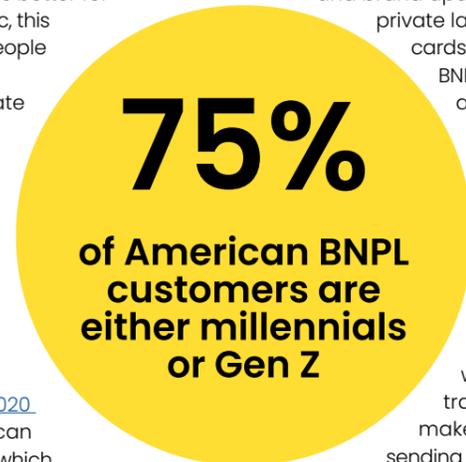
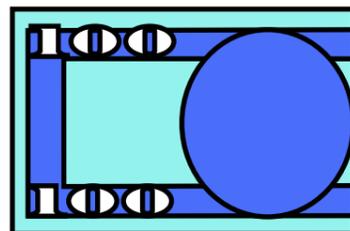
Most people would agree that paying for a \$100 item over a few weeks rather than in one sitting is better for our mental health. During the pandemic, this sentiment became more popular as people began shopping with more financial consciousness. In the search for alternate financing options, people have increasingly turned to buy now, pay later (BNPL).

THE APPEAL OF BNPL

When shoppers choose BNPL at checkout, they typically pay the first installment at the time of purchase, and the remaining three installments over the next couple of weeks. A [July 2020 survey](#) found that nearly 56% of American consumers have used a BNPL service, which is up from 38% the previous year. Between 2019 and 2020, there was a [1200% increase](#) in BNPL lending volume in the U.S. To understand why BNPL has soared in popularity, we need to take a look at the populations that use the service the most: millennials and Generation Z.

Nearly [75%](#) of American BNPL customers are either millennials or Gen Z. Aside from the extra financial flexibility, the appeal lies in interest-free installments. Compared to credit cards, BNPL solutions typically don't charge interest, only late fees. Contrary to the concern that BNPL services encourage reckless spending, consumers have cited using BNPL platforms to better manage their spending.

With BNPL's extended payment timeline, customers engage with the brand for a much longer time beyond the point of sale, through not only



payment reminders, but also new product announcements and brand updates. Compared to customers who use private label credit cards, which are store-issued cards that can only be used at that store, BNPL customers are much [more engaged](#) across the length of the relationship. They are also more likely to purchase more expensive items, increasing average order value. And for brands looking to attract younger customers, offering BNPL is a smart move.

With such ease of payment, though, BNPL can easily become a double-edged sword. As BNPL becomes more widely offered, brands need to maintain transparency to help their customers make the best financial choices. This means sending payment reminders and informing customers of any late fees.

BNPL IS STIRRING UP HEADLINES

BNPL addresses a number of young consumers' shopping needs, placing the model at a vantage point going forward. BNPL existed before the pandemic, but its success during the pandemic is evident from major moves within the industry.

- Afterpay, a leading BNPL platform from Australia, was recently [acquired by Square](#), an American financial services and digital payments company, for \$29 billion.
- PayPal launched its own BNPL feature, Pay in 4, [last year](#).
- Apple has [expressed interest](#) in tapping into the BNPL space, making plans to partner with Goldman Sachs.
- Affirm, a BNPL unicorn (a startup company valued over \$1 billion), [went public](#) this past January, highlighting the rapid growth of BNPL platforms. Affirm, which has already become partners with 12,000 merchants, [confirmed](#) its partnership with Amazon in late August this year, giving customers a flexible payment option at checkout.

Competition resembles significance, and there's no doubt that BNPL is here to stay.



BOPIS

BUY ONLINE PICKUP IN STORE

Last mile delivery, the most important part of the fulfillment process, is a massive pain point for brands. In the last year, the customer has spoken: they want curbside pickup and BOPIS to stay. What makes BOPIS so powerful is that when done innovatively, it is a wonderful fusion of the digital and physical worlds, and brings immense value to brands, retailers, and customers. The success of BOPIS once again shows the transference of the same customer values to every part of the shopping experience.

More often than expected, people find themselves to be in a rush. Picture shopping malls during the holidays, when suddenly the entire neighborhood seems to have put off holiday shopping until the last minute. Or when someone needs a gift for a birthday event that evening and manages to both find one and pick it up in the store a few hours before the party. Evening (and friendship) saved.

Not all heroes wear capes—some of them offer same-day order fulfillment. Better known as buy online, pick up in store (BOPIS), it's the closest that shopping has come to a product appearing with a snap of the fingers.

BOPIS is now an expected feature at checkout, but it didn't become famous overnight. How did BOPIS become a non-negotiable part of today's shopping experience? What value does it bring to brands, retailers, and customers? This chapter explores these questions and shows why retailers need to deliver a seamless order fulfillment process to build and strengthen brand-consumer relationships.

THE PANDEMIC SUPERCHARGED BOPIS'S POPULARITY.

Shopping during the pandemic has raised consumer expectations, especially of order fulfillment. They expect more options during checkout and quicker delivery, forcing businesses to experiment with and implement new technologies to adapt to these expectations. But last mile fulfillment, the final stretch of the shipment process where the package arrives on a customer's doorstep, has been a major pain point for businesses.

First, it's time-consuming. Delivery trucks often make multiple stops, which can either be miles apart from each other or blocked by traffic. Second, it's expensive, making up [more than 50%](#) of the total cost of shipping. With an increase in online orders and customer aversion to shipping fees, businesses needed fulfillment models that were both cost-efficient and quick.

For many reasons, BOPIS and curbside pickup met everyone's needs.

The standard BOPIS experience looks like this: the customer places an online order and chooses a pick up location (e.g. in-store, at a designated location, or curbside), receives an email or text notification that their order is ready for pickup, and heads to the location to retrieve their item. The simplicity of the process made BOPIS and curbside pickup a perfect fulfillment model for the earlier months of the pandemic, when customers wanted to shop as safely and efficiently as possible.

It's unsurprising, then, that the use of BOPIS and curbside pickup has increased for [78% of customers](#) since the start of the pandemic, and that [nearly 70% of customers](#) expect to continue using these models after the pandemic subsides. As retailers begin to open up their stores, BOPIS offers the opportunity to increase foot traffic and maintain the same levels of safety and convenience.

Customers miss the in-store shopping experience and are eager to go back; overall foot traffic

for beauty retailers was [288% higher](#) for April 2021 than April 2020. "We've seen that our very best shoppers are those that shop online and in-store," says Kecia Steelman, Ulta Beauty COO, in an interview with fashion magazine Glossy. "There's not a tradeoff of one or the other."

THE PROMISE OF BOPIS

The pandemic supercharged the use of BOPIS, and its continued popularity has everything to do with its ability to connect the digital and physical experiences, driving value for customers, brands, and retailers.

Value to Customers - No shipping fees and quick delivery are two of the most important benefits for customers. [Nearly 50% of customers](#)

cited saving on shipping costs as the main reason for choosing BOPIS, and nearly 40% cited speed. Customers are also guaranteed that the product they want is in stock and ready for pickup, which helps them avoid making multiple trips or finding substitutions.

Value to Brands and Retailers - BOPIS also allows ecommerce brands and retailers to save on shipping costs and gain ownership over last mile fulfillment, especially if they have relied on third-party carriers. It is nearly [90% cheaper](#) to service BOPIS than fulfilling directly from a warehouse. With BOPIS, Retailers can maximize store inventory and turn unused warehouse space into designated pickup locations.

BOPIS also promotes cross-sell opportunities, with [85% of customers](#) saying they made an extra purchase in the store when picking up an online order.

A RECIPE FOR BOPIS SUCCESS.

BOPIS connects the digital and physical worlds, driving value for brands, retailers, and customers. [90% of retailers](#) will offer BOPIS in 2021, each hoping to gain a competitive edge. But when businesses that are not equipped for BOPIS try to go live with the option, they struggle to deliver a seamless order fulfillment process and face the consequences.

Luckily, this past year has served as a trial for what works and doesn't, and several players have emerged as leaders of BOPIS. One example is [Ox](#), a platform that helps brands and retailers automate workforce and fulfillment to maximize productivity

and adapt to consumer expectations. Ox addresses the need for speed and efficiency in delivery with the idea of micro fulfillment centers (MFC). These are small, conveniently-located spaces that serve solely as pickup and return stations. Smaller retailer brands can use unused space in their existing storefronts as MFCs to provide curbside pickup for customers. This means lower fulfillment costs, as micro-fulfillment is estimated to reduce costs associated with an order by [75%](#).

"Ox connects brands to their consumers for a better customer experience," says Arianna Thayer, Director of Marketing at Ox. "Consumers benefit from more delivery options and windows, faster delivery speed, more accurate orders, and smarter substitutions in the event of an out-of-stock."

Another platform that powers same-day pick-up for brands is [Lucky Labs](#). They turn physical retailers, brick-and-mortar stores, gyms, and other physical businesses into product centers. Brands that join Lucky are able to offer BOPIS to customers at any of the local product centers. For brands, this allows them to reach more customers without extra overhead costs. For product centers, this increases foot traffic and up-sell opportunities.

"With Lucky, brands are able to offer same-day delivery leveraging the retail infrastructure and without any logistical costs," says Sneh Parmar, CEO & Co-Founder of Lucky. "This

in return increases their sales because consumers are more likely to buy if they can get a product the same day. Consumers want speed more than anything and we are helping solve that in a way that everyone involved wins!"

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The pandemic exacerbated existing pain points of the shopping experience, especially last-mile delivery. BOPIS emerged as an efficient and cost-effective way for brands to meet consumer demands, and its popularity continues post-pandemic.

"COVID forced retailers to adapt to consumer's growing demands for fast and efficient fulfillment," Thayer adds. "How quickly and creatively retailers have, and continue to adapt to these growing demands, is what will set them apart from the competition. Innovation will be a key differentiator for keeping and gaining new customers."

More than ever, consumers are seeing the efficiency of ordering online and having local fulfillment options. Consumers want same-day delivery (ideally same hour), however, brands are unable to provide that option by themselves. By partnering with retailers, brands can now offer same-day delivery to their consumers, without taking on extra overhead costs.

— Sneh Parmar, CEO & Co-Founder of Lucky



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— Arianna Thayer, Director of Marketing of Ox



SUBSCRIPTIONS

The pandemic has supercharged subscriptions, an avenue of recurring revenue. When implemented well, subscriptions have the power to turn one-time buyers into loyal customers and strengthen brand-consumer relationships.

It's not an overstatement to say that subscriptions create the most loyal customers. Content creators on Youtube, for example, encourage viewers to subscribe because subscribers not only drive revenue but also form an online community. YouTubers engage in two-way conversations with their subscribers to build strong relationships, and for brands that want to do the same, it's time to look at subscriptions.

In this chapter, we'll dive into the pandemic's impact on subscriptions and why it's the perfect time for brands to add subscriptions to their business strategy. If done well, subscriptions are fertile ground for building customer loyalty.

THE PANDEMIC SUPERCHARGED SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions have increased steadily over the years, but the pandemic has accelerated that growth noticeably; in Q4 2020, subscription companies saw a [20% growth rate](#). During a time when people searched for convenience, variety, and safety, subscriptions met their needs. Instead of braving a run to the grocery store, people subscribed to have their groceries delivered. To make staying at home more entertaining, they subscribed to Netflix, Disney+, and more. Subscriptions met consumers where they were, both physically and digitally, leading to a surge in the total number of subscribers; in the first few weeks of the pandemic, there was an [85% growth rate in new paying subscribers](#).

"The pandemic's effect on brick and mortar, and the not just convenience but necessity that it created for ecomm, made purchasing online more accepted by society as the default option," says Gabriella Yitzhaek, CEO and founder of [Smartrr](#), a platform that helps ecommerce

brands integrate a seamless membership experience for subscribers. "From toilet paper to groceries to apparel and cosmetics because malls were closed, the buying habits obtained during the pandemic gave ecomm a huge opportunity. Not just through one time purchases, but subscriptions as a way to further simplify the decision making and buying process."

Food-related services in particular have seen immense growth in subscribers throughout the pandemic. When restaurants closed temporarily, people began cooking at home more often, turning to meal-kit services for

recipe inspiration and grocery delivery services for convenience and safety. These shifts in consumer behavior led to tremendous growth for those companies. "What would have taken usually 3 years happened in 3 months and with very little customer acquisition costs," says Dominik S. Richter, CEO of Hello Fresh, a meal delivery company, in a call with [Business Insider](#).

AN AVENUE FOR TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

As an avenue for recurring revenue, subscriptions dulled the impact of the pandemic for some businesses. But subscriptions can do much more for brands, especially with building brand-consumer relationships. The future looks bright for subscriptions: [27% of consumers](#) expect to increase their number of subscription services.

It is important, then, for brands to recognize the value of subscriptions and their ability to increase two-way communication with customers. When one-time shoppers become subscribers, they come to know the brand at a much deeper level, simply through more frequent interactions. Subscriptions are the perfect opportunity

for brands to listen—when time spent with a brand goes from a day to months to years, brands get to show more of themselves and in return learn more about what their customers want. Chaeban Ice Cream switched to a subscription model to stay afloat during the pandemic, but they were able to do more. In a message posted on their [website](#), the team wrote: "We are also getting to talk with our customers in a whole new way. We are having detailed discussions about people's relationship with ice cream, their expectations around service and how they are doing during the crisis."

SOME BEST PRACTICES WITH SUBSCRIPTIONS

When making the choice to subscribe, there are still some roadblocks that push customers away.

For brands looking to convert shoppers into subscribers, they need to make the process as frictionless as possible to successfully acquire, and enjoyable as possible to engage. Smartrr has some tips.

- **Have an easy and transparent cancellation process.** [Nearly 50% of customers](#) were concerned about the hassles involved when cancelling subscriptions. Customers believe that companies strategically complicate the process to discourage cancellation, hoping that people will subscribe and forget. But this model inevitably brews frustration and communicates to customers that the brand wants nothing more than their wallets. Consumers want transparency throughout the shopping experience to make their own decisions, and cancellation processes are no exception.
- **Provide options that match lifestyle. Not everyone will use a product or service at the same frequency.** Subscribers of CPG such as makeup, drinks, and household products will choose delivery cycles that best suit their lifestyles.

When brands are in tune with lifestyle differences across their customers, they can provide more accurate options to more people.

- **Make membership exciting.** Once customers become subscribers, it's time for brands to get creative and make the experience worth the investment. Spotify, for example, does a great job of providing variety and gamifying subscriptions with yearly Spotify Wrapped, which gives users a breakdown of their listening trends, specially-made playlists based on listening history, and much more. CPG brands can also surprise subscribers with free samples and new releases. By making membership exciting, brands [increase product stickiness](#), market new products more effectively, and build community.
- **Offer alternatives to cancellation.** By offering options to pause subscriptions or [gift upcoming subscription](#) to someone else, brands increase customer retention as well as gain insight into the most common reasons for cancellation.

OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD WITH SUBSCRIPTIONS: BRIJ X SMARTRR

Smartrr helps brands deliver a seamless membership experience, and they have partnered with Brij to reach customers where they shop. Brij powers QR codes that give physical products a digital identity, serving as an on-product customer communications channel for brands. When customers scan a Brij QR code, they can access an enhanced subscription experience for consumable products. And while they're there, they can explore a wide range of functions right at their fingertips. With apparel, for example, customers can authenticate their item, learn about clothing origins, and access loyalty programs. With food, beverages, and kitchen items, customers can view recipes and learn about product ingredients. A product can be much more than its physical functions—its digital identity takes the experience to the next level.

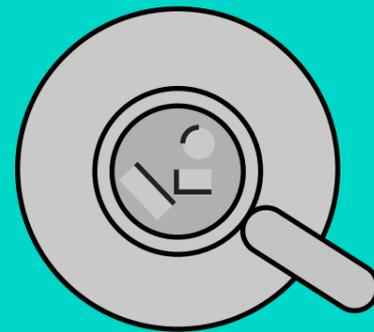
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— Gabriella Yitzhaek, CEO & Founder of Smartrr



POST-PURCHASE

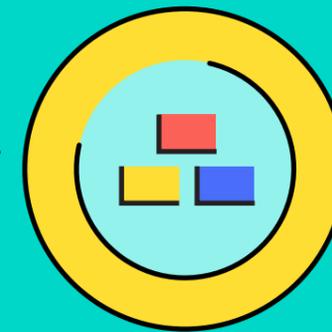
PRE-PURCHASE
Knowing the brand



AT-PURCHASE
Paying with choice



POST-PURCHASE
Building a community



CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

Post-purchase engagement is vital for customer retention, but its effectiveness depends on how well brands meet consumer preferences. As customers increasingly embrace a mobile-first mindset, brands should consider strategies for integrating newer channels to meet customers right at their fingertips.

This chapter will discuss the importance of post-purchase customer engagement in building brand-consumer relationships. We'll pay special attention to SMS marketing, a relatively new channel that brings brands closer to customers. With such power comes a set of best practices that brands should keep in mind before pressing the send button. Like any relationship, brand-consumer relationships need boundaries, and brands need to strike a balance between under-communicating and spamming when using SMS marketing.

A POWER DUO: HOW EMAIL AND SMS CONQUER CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

We have talked about a number of items on the post-purchase agenda throughout this whitepaper. From shipping and returns updates, to warranty activation and product reorder, consumer engagement is undoubtedly a layered process. One of the most valuable outcomes of consumer engagement and retention is loyalty; it is an industry rule of thumb that returning customers bring in significantly more revenue than new ones, making post-purchase engagement a worthwhile investment. The unifying thread throughout the individual pieces of the customer journey is opportunities for communication between a brand and the consumer. The most tried and tested channel for this is email.

Brands use email to communicate a variety of messages to consumers, as it is often the only piece of information brands have to reach their shoppers. Immediately after a purchase, for example, brands can send a personalized email thanking consumers, updating them on when to expect tracking information and delivery, or recommending other products they might enjoy. While email will remain an important channel for post-purchase communication, another channel

is quickly gaining traction for building relationships with consumers: SMS.

Using SMS as a communications channel signifies a deeper connection between brands and their consumers. Compared to email addresses, giving out a phone number feels more personal, as though you are giving away a part of yourself. So when customers sign up for SMS marketing, they are excited to engage more frequently and closely with the brand. The channel has been welcomed with open arms; [three quarters](#) of shoppers under 44 want to be able to contact a business via text.

WHY HAS SMS BECOME SUCH A SUCCESSFUL CHANNEL FOR MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION?

The answer has to do with something we hear often from our parents: we spend too much time on our phones. Nearly [80% of the U.S. population](#) owns a smartphone, making SMS arguably the closest and most accessible way to reach customers. Brands looking to meet customers where they are don't have to look farther than their fingertips; [91% of the U.S. population](#) have their phones somewhere nearby every hour of the day, and a third check their phones within a few minutes of waking up. This attachment means that customers will see text notifications more often, with [82% of people](#) saying they read every text message they receive.

Consumers' relationship with their phones has prepared the stage for SMS marketing's success—[70% of consumers](#) believe it is a great way for businesses to connect with them. More than [80% of customers](#) want to be able to receive texts from businesses, as well as send them, and marketers expect SMS communication to play an important role in customer

engagement. But this makes for an increasingly competitive playing field, which means that brands need to be strategic and creative to keep the conversations going.

BEST PRACTICES WITH SMS

At its best, SMS marketing can strengthen brand-consumer relationships and drive customer lifetime value. When mishandled, however, it can lead customers to sever ties with a brand and become associated with spam. As brands come up with strategies to engage with customers via SMS, they should keep a few tips in mind to make the most out of the channel.

Less is more. There is power to figuring out an appropriate cadence and occasions for sending text messages. For example, brands can send an actionable message to shoppers who left something in their carts, when it is time to reorder a product, or when new items are dropped. The point is, words require purpose.

Complement email with SMS. While both channels can relay the same message, they are each better fits for different types of messages, which is why brands should leverage both. For example, they can send a confirmation email after a purchase, and follow up with shipping updates via SMS because it reaches consumers more visibly.

Allow for two-way conversations. [Three-quarters of consumers](#) get frustrated when they can't reply to an automated email. At that point, SMS

is simply not being used to its full potential. While texting a brand can take a while to get used to, being able to send and receive personalized, almost human-like replies from a company is a seamless way to engage customers.

With these different channels for communication, brands need to create a seamless experience. One way to do this is automation. [Alloy](#), an automation tool, believes in the importance of using data across multiple channels to deliver a personalized experience. "Automation helps brands

offload existing manual tasks and do work that wasn't possible before, by leveraging data from across the apps they use," says Sara Du, CEO & Co-Founder of Alloy. "Using Alloy, brands can centralize and leverage data from various touchpoints (ie SMS, email, helpdesk, shipment tracking pages) to create more personalized experiences for the consumer."

And perhaps most importantly, brands should be creative.

Customer engagement can happen anywhere and at any time throughout the customer journey, giving numerous opportunities for brands to leverage powerful channels to communicate with their customers. Emily Foreman, CEO of [CartHook](#), a platform that helps Shopify brands engage

through post-purchase offers, says: "It's super important for brands to always think about ways to optimize their customer experience and build brand equity. We help all levels of merchants think outside the box when incorporating

a post-purchase strategy into their tech stack 'essentials' list; helping them increase AOV and conversions."



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— Emily Foreman, CEO of CartHook



Consumers are bombarded with more information and options than they were in the physical world. This makes it critical for brands to not only tailor their marketing to capture consumer interest, but create a seamless buying experience that leads to more devoted, long-term buyers. Automation helps brands offload existing manual tasks and do work that wasn't possible before, by leveraging data from across the apps they use.

— Sara Du, CEO & Co-Founder of Alloy



DISCOUNTS & REWARDS

Loyalty programs are effective tools to drive customer LTV, but for a brand to stand out in today's crowded marketplace, brands need to reimagine rewards to meet changing consumer sentiments. The current loyalty language means that brands must reward creatively to build sustainable brand-consumer relationships.

Where would we be without loyalty programs? The biggest companies feature some of the best ones—think Amazon Prime, Starbucks Rewards, Sephora Beauty Insider, and The North Face's VIPeak. The individual naming is telling; loyalty programs are all about prime service, rewards, insider information, VIP treatment, and more. They give brands the opportunity to show up for their customers, especially long-time ones, and while there is no one right way to do loyalty programs, brands must listen to changing consumer sentiments to build a community worth joining—and staying in.

WHAT ARE LOYALTY PROGRAMS?

Loyalty programs reward customers, often in discounts or other member perks, for continuously shopping with a brand. With every purchase, social media tag, or positive review, customers accrue points that they can redeem. Brands add other rewards to the mix, such as birthday gifts and free shipping. [More than 90%](#) of companies have loyalty programs, and in the U.S. there are more than [3.3 billion](#) loyalty memberships. Let's take a look at some of the most common loyalty programs.

The point system: The North Face's VIPeak and Starbucks Rewards are examples of point systems, where the more you spend, the more points (or stars) you earn. Brands also increase consumer engagement by announcing competitions and games that have higher point value.

The tiered system: The more you spend, the higher the status you attain in the loyalty program. This often means access to exclusive deals and upgraded rewards. Brands distinguish tiers creatively, using titles such as silver, gold, or platinum. People enjoy exclusivity, making the tiered system an extremely attractive setup for customers.

The paid system: For a monthly or annual fee, customers

receive immediate rewards within the paid system. Amazon Prime, for example, offers customers free two-day shipping without a purchase minimum, as well as access to free audiobooks, movies, and music. The perks must be clear and outweigh the cost of joining.

There is no doubt that loyalty programs have immense value for both brands and consumers. For brands, these programs incentivize consumers to keep coming back with unique and interactive post-purchase experiences. For consumers, they make purchases count for more than simply filling a material want or need. Frequent interactions deepens a customer's emotional connection to the brand and extends their relationship, which translates to a [306% higher](#) customer lifetime value, increased average order value, and increased brand advocacy. As most brands already know, it costs them

[five times more](#) to acquire new customers than nurture existing ones.

Brands are increasingly investing in loyalty programs, but that has not been fully translating into customer loyalty. According to a [2019 Bond report](#) on loyalty, 44% of survey respondents answered that they were satisfied with loyalty programs, which is down from 47% in 2018. Only 22% were satisfied with

the level of personalization in the program. The modern consumer expects more, and in today's crowded marketplace, brands must be well-versed in the current loyalty language to make the most out of a powerful channel to build relationships with a different shopper demographic.

REWARDING WITH PURPOSE

At first glance, loyalty programs that recruit members through discounts are enticing; after all, who doesn't like a good deal? Discounts, however, may not be the most sustainable

foundation for loyalty programs, because they set an expectation for future discounts that trap brands in a vicious cycle. Of course, there are customers who highly value the monetary benefits and VIP treatment of loyalty programs, but in response to changes in public sentiments, there are other reasons that customers would be excited to join a loyalty program. One of these reasons worth discussing is social accountability.

More than ever, customers expect businesses to use their platform to raise awareness of certain causes and give back to the community. According to PWC's 2021 Consumer Intelligence Survey, [83% of respondents](#) were more likely to buy from companies that advocated for environmental concerns, and 76% from companies that advocated for social causes. These sentiments can be attributed to the fact that millennials and Generation Z, groups that care deeply about social activism, make up most of the consumer demographic. From pride parades to Greta Thunberg gracing the Time cover, these past few years have seen a rise in allyship and advocacy.

To reach customers who want to see businesses do their part in the movement, brands should consider reimaging their loyalty programs and reward with purpose. [Givz](#), a discount replacement tool, encourages loyalty through donations. Customers can choose to donate post-purchase to a charity of their choice. Purpose-driven loyalty programs are powerful for several reasons: they allow brands to lead with value instead of price, empower customers to feel good about their purchases, and allow brands to personalize their causes.

"The pandemic catalyzed the already growing movement of conscious consumers wanting to shop from purpose-driven brands," says Andrew Forman, CEO and

founder of Givz. "Consumers are now deeply passionate about something - the problem is that they're all passionate about different things. This has minimized the overall effectiveness of traditional incentives (i.e. discounts) - in some cases because discounts aren't resonating, in others because margins get crushed (\$50B lost per year to discounting in US alone), but in most cases because of

the long-term effects of training consumers to wait for sales and think of the brand as a 'discount brand'."

Forman adds that personalized donations allow brands to build authentic relationships with their consumers by "putting their money where their mouth is" and trusting consumers to send donations where they're needed most. Purpose-driven loyalty programs enable two-way conversations that show brands and customers that their goals align.

BRIDGING THE GAP: A BETTER WAY TO ACCESS

LOYALTY PROGRAMS

Discounts are a tried and true tactic for engaging consumers, but brands can provide a much more relevant loyalty program for customers that care deeply about social responsibility. Regardless of the type of loyalty program, brands should make it as easily accessible as possible. The post-purchase opportunity is laid out—how can brands get the word out?

The answer once again lies in consumer preferences. [Three quarters of consumers](#) prefer loyalty programs they can easily access from a smartphone. With Brij, brands can meet customers where they are by leveraging the use of QR codes on physical products. Customers can simply scan the QR on their product and join the brand's loyalty program with a tap. They can also refer friends to the brands in exchange for additional incentives, thus growing the loyalty program through word of mouth.



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 ”
—Andrew Forman, Founder & CEO of Givz



LOGISTICS

Customers are often left in the dark during the shipping and returns processes. By reducing friction during these processes, brands can build trust and loyalty in brand-consumer relationships, and turn these channels into opportunities for more communication with customers.

In our discussion of the post-purchase experience, we'd be remiss not to talk about the shipping and returns processes. After all, the only other exciting moment besides placing an order is receiving it—until you realize you should've gone with the other color, in which case a hassle-free returns process would save the day.

In this chapter, we'll take a look at the pandemic's impact on shipping and returns, and how ecommerce brands can (and should) make the processes as frictionless and communicative as possible. These two parts of the shopping experience, as leading solutions providers prove, hold untapped power for brands to retain customers and build those valuable relationships.

SHIPPING

Along with everything else, the pandemic has left its mark on shipping. For one thing, ecommerce sales have increased dramatically in the past year, creating a demand that carriers like FedEx, UPS, and USPS have found challenging to meet. Brands typically do not have insight into the shipping process, putting them in an awkward position when customers request for order updates. Package delays and misplacements are of course out of brands' control, but when they happen without any communication, it inevitably taints customers' perceptions of the brand.

Shipping can very well be the reason for a customer to discontinue relations with a brand—or it can be an opportunity for refreshing quality service and customer retention. While brands can't exactly will carriers to speed up the delivery process, they do have the capabilities to assuage consumer uncertainty by leveraging shipping as a new line of communication. One company that is helping brands achieve this is [Malomo](#), a shipment tracking platform and an expert on building brand-consumer relationships via shipping.

The power of getting shipping right lies in the fact that consumers are extremely engaged throughout the process. "Consumer shipping expectations have heightened significantly," says Yaw Aning, CEO and co-founder of Malomo. "Consumers are now checking tracking 200-300% more often than they did pre-Covid." This is as expected, given that carrier performance has [decreased by 150-600%](#). After placing an order, customers want to know when they can expect a delivery, and delays only amplify curiosity and worry.

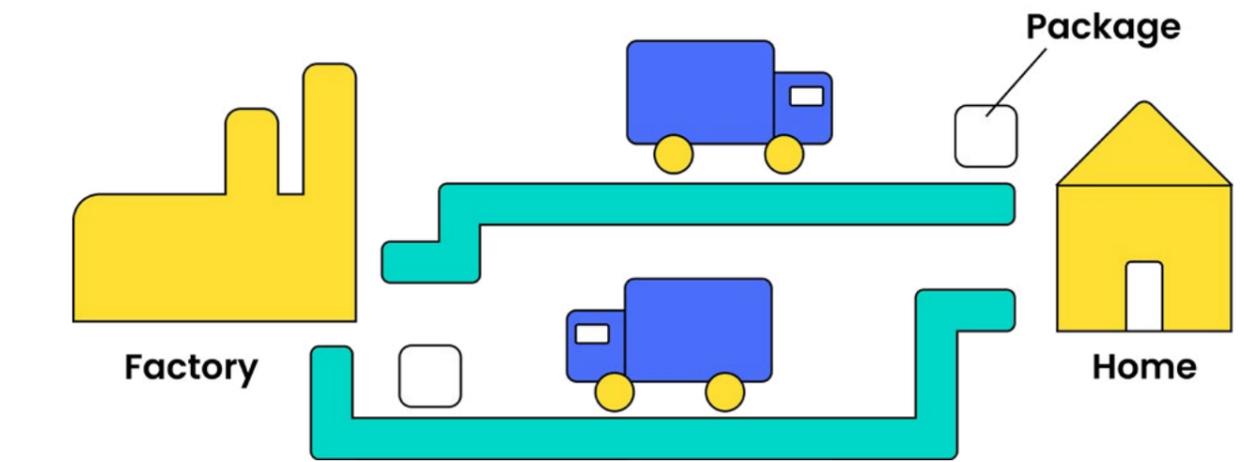
This is precisely why Malomo recommends that brands communicate potential shipping issues well before they happen, either at the top of the website or in the confirmation email. By acknowledging delays from the beginning, brands adjust customer expectations accordingly. "We've given merchants deeper insights into their entire fulfillment network to understand which carriers are underperforming," Aning says. "They've changed their shipping and customer communication strategies in response and have seen as much as a 70% reduction in support tickets related to shipping."

Brands can engage customers even further in the order delivery process. Open rates of tracking emails are [between 50 to 80%](#), highlighting a valuable marketing opportunity for brands to feature information on new products. For those who want to go the extra mile, they can include free samples in the package, send a thank you email, or encourage product review.

These things matter, especially because they enhance an experience that has a reputation for being slow and frustrating. By using shipping as another touchpoint for communication, brands are strengthening their relationships with consumers innovatively.

RETURNS

In the best case scenario, customers are happy with their purchase and promise to return. But online shopping can be unreliable, especially with apparel, and when customers receive a product with



defects or in the wrong size or color, they need to make a return. How hard can that be?

As it turns out, very. [Three of every four](#) shoppers cite returns as the most painful part of buying online. [Loop](#), a company working to redefine the returns process, conducted a [survey](#) that reveals exactly why. Two of the biggest online marketplaces were named as having the worst returns processes—Amazon for its millions of sellers enforcing different policies, and Shein for charging a shipping fee after the first return. This is valuable for ecommerce brands: knowing consumer preferences, brands can reinvent their returns processes to gain a competitive edge against these large retailers, and build consumer loyalty along the way.

[Over 60% of customers](#) check the returns policy before buying from a brand online. These are some things they consider to be green flags:

- **Free return shipping.** Nearly [three quarters of customers](#) would be hesitant to shop from a brand that charges for return shipping. Inform customers on the homepage that this is offered, and it will be one fewer obstacle to buying from your brand.
- **A generous return window.** Loop reports that [80%](#) of their processed returns happen in the first 21 days, which should inform brands of the length of an optimal return window. To give customers more flexibility with returns, a reasonable return window would be around 30 days.
- **Minimal heavy lifting.** A little over [90% of consumers](#) would buy something again if the return process was easy. This means providing the return label and (ideally)

packaging to minimize heavy lifting from the consumer end.

The returns process is also a second chance for brands to give customers a product that they will love. Customers typically initiate a return because they want the product in a different size or color. Brands should incentivize customers to opt for exchanges instead of refunds with one-click exchanges and product recommendations. Loop offers a [Shop Now feature](#), which allows customers to apply the value of their current return order to another purchase. This makes it easier for customers to continue their relationship with a brand. Exchanges have a significant impact on customer lifetime value (CLV): a brand that works with Loop saw a [131%](#)

[increase](#) in CLV when customers interacted with the returns process. This figure increased by nine percent when customers went through the exchange process.

The last stretch of a seamless returns and exchange process occurs at the drop-off location.

Happy Returns aims to make the experience as frictionless as possible: with over 2500 locations throughout the country, customers can fulfill a return or exchange without having to box or label their item. The average visit takes under [60 seconds](#) per item, expedited through the use of QR codes that make returns a safer process. The expectations with shipping are upheld here: brands should update customers throughout the returns process from start to finish.

The shipping and returns processes often leave customers frustrated and in the dark, and when brands make the experience as seamless and communicative as possible, they make sure that customers receive products that they'll love—and that goes a long way.

“Consumer shipping expectations have heightened significantly. Consumers now check tracking 200-300% more often than they did pre-covid.”

— Yaw Aning, CEO and co-founder of Malomo



“Consumers today expect a seamless returns experience. Providing a fast, easy and automated returns process drives retention, satisfaction, and ultimately lifetime value of a consumer to the brand.”

— Chris Pinchot, Co-Founder of Loop



WARRANTY

Warranties have long had a bad reputation for being everything that a good customer experience isn't, but with the increase in warranty purchase during the pandemic, it's clear that customers still value product protection. By making the warranty process more consumer-centric, brands can build loyalty in their relationships with customers.

Within virtually every significant area of our lives—health, home, car, travel, hobbies, and more—there is an option for insurance. This insurance serves as a safety net, as a layer of financial protection for when things go wrong. With products, this sense of assurance comes from warranties.

WARRANTY TERMS AND THEIR CONDITIONS

Generally speaking, a warranty is a seller's promise to the customer that the product works as intended (often called warranty rights). It also outlines the conditions for repair or replacement if the product does not function properly.

When people talk about warranties, they are usually referring to limited warranties, which are also known as manufacturer warranties. These are

provided by the manufacturer to the customer at no additional cost, and typically guarantee coverage for one year. As the name suggests, limited warranties come with limitations on specific parts of the product which are covered for repair in the event of a warranty claim. Extended warranties, on the other hand, extend the expiration date of limited warranties and are frequently offered by a third party at an additional cost. These optional warranties provide more comprehensive coverage.



THE VALUE OF WARRANTY IS THERE, BUT THE REPUTATION PRECEDES

For consumers, warranties add a level of security to expensive purchases. If the product is defective, the limited warranty guarantees a

replacement (and within the timeframe of coverage?). If you accidentally spill coffee on your laptop, the extended warranty will be there for you. For brands, offering product protection communicates ongoing support long after the point of sale. It also attracts customers who [tend to be more loyal](#), since they are more likely to invest in protecting their purchases. Even more, warranty activation gives retailers access to first-party consumer data, such as their name and email, that brands use to drive personalized shopping experiences, recommend relevant products, and more generally maintain an ongoing relationship with the customer.

But warranties have a reputation that precedes them.

The activation process is cumbersome and slow, and the terms and conditions are convoluted. The cost of poor customer service can't be ignored: about [50% of survey respondents](#) would switch brands after a poor experience, and nearly [60% of respondents](#) consider long holds and wait times to be the most frustrating parts of customer service. With their fair share of pain points, why bother with warranties?

The answer lies in the relevance and value of warranties, and making the ideal a reality.

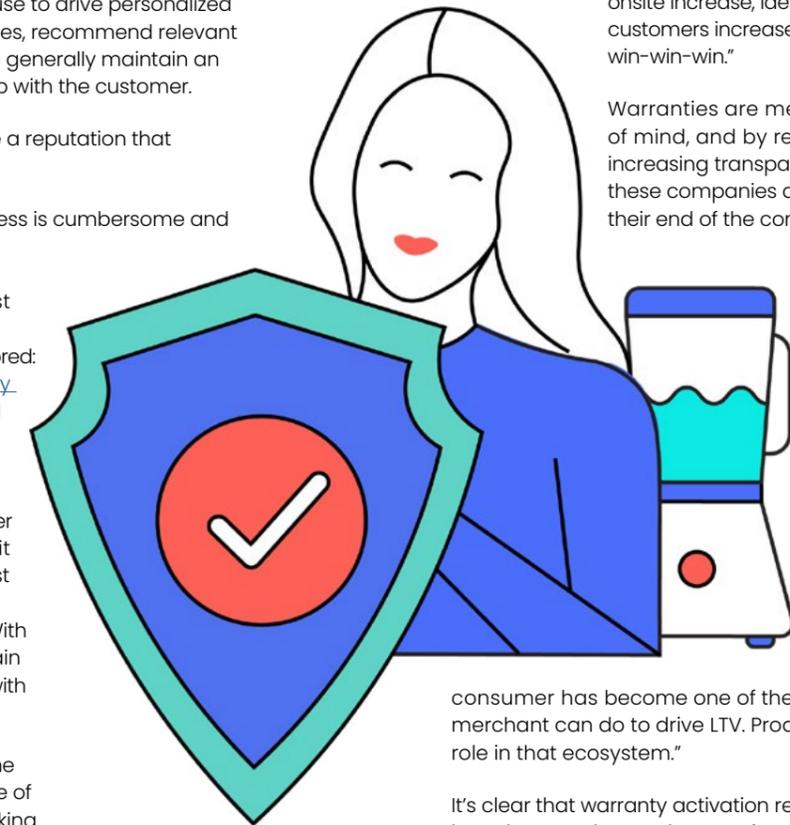
WARRANTY GETS A NEW LOOK

Customers value transparency, speed, and personalization throughout the shopping experience, and warranty companies like [Clyde](#) give the warranty process a new look by fulfilling these values. 93% of customers are likely to make repeat purchases with companies who offer excellent customer service, highlighting the immense value of getting warranty right. Clyde streamlines the claims process by automating enrollment, increases customer satisfaction by

reducing approval times, and provides more transparency.

"Every single thing about Clyde's experience is dynamic – from purchase to claim to resolution," says Brandon Gell, CEO and founder of Clyde. This focus on customer experience gives Clyde the ability to interact with consumers on a product SKU level, just like a brand does, making our experience a seamless extension of our brands. With this approach we see conversion onsite increase, identification of third party customers increase, and LTV increase – it's a win-win-win."

Warranties are meant to give a peace of mind, and by reducing friction and increasing transparency and accessibility, these companies allow customers to receive their end of the contract.



OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

"In 2020 and 2021 we not only saw explosive growth in retailers and brands that wanted to offer product protection, we saw a huge growth in the [percentage] of consumers purchasing warranties," says Gell. "Delivering full product ownership experiences from a brand to a

consumer has become one of the most important things a merchant can do to drive LTV. Product Protection plays a key role in that ecosystem."

It's clear that warranty activation remains important, and brands can enhance the experience by using warranty as a bridge for even more engagement. With Brij, brands are able to provide a better warranty experience for their consumers. Brij's one-touch product registration solution simplifies the warranty activation process: with the scan of a QR code, customers are incentivized to register their product and activate its warranty at the same time. Among other features, warranty activation becomes more transparent and easily-accessible.



In 2020 and 2021 we not only saw explosive growth in retailers and brands that wanted to offer product protection, we saw a huge growth in the % of consumers purchasing warranties. Delivering full product ownership experiences from a brand to a consumer has become one of the most important things a merchant can do to drive LTV. Product Protection plays a key role in that ecosystem

— Brandon Gell, CEO and founder of Clyde



PRODUCT REORDER

Brand loyalty and product reorder are intertwined; when customers enjoy a product, being able to reorder seamlessly with one click across all devices will strengthen brand-consumer relationships.

In every home there are a handful of items that we deem essential—makeup, groceries, clothes, toiletries. Whether it's a few weeks or half a year, there is an expiration date for these consumables, and when the time comes we often go back to the brands we trust.

Product reorder is telling; the customer most likely jumped back and forth between options, did their research, bought from your brand, and enjoyed the product enough to repurchase. With this sign of a delicate and budding loyalty, it is then up to the brand to make reorder as simple and rewarding as possible.

“THE CORE COMPETENCY OF EVERY CPG BRAND”

What does that look like? There are only two requirements: a centralized page and a one-click button, both of which are part of the Amazon reorder experience. On the homepage, users can navigate to “Returns & Orders,” then head to “Buy Again,” a centralized page for all previous orders. Choose an item, and without having to re-enter shipping or payment information, customers can place an order simply by clicking “Buy Now.”

These simple calls-to-action meet consumers' need for speed and frictionless experiences. Kim Stiefel, CEO & Co-Founder of Repeat, a platform that helps CPG brands turn one-time buyers into [repeat](#) customers, says, “A ‘buy again’ button is going to be a core competency of every CPG brand.”



This feature drives value for both brands and consumers. “On the business front, it allows the brand to extract more value from customers by presenting focused reordering experiences and tailored merchandising to encourage trialing new products,” Stiefel says. “On the customer front, it leads to easier reordering without subscription lock-in.”

There is no doubt that Amazon does product reorder incredibly well, and the number of active users (300 million) and unique monthly U.S. visitors (more than 213 million) speaks to the platform's success in catering to customer preferences. But third-party sellers on Amazon lose out on one of the most important values of product reorder: data.

On top of giving brands information on which products are the most enjoyed and repurchased, product reorder gives insight into the demographics of their customers. Which age group most frequently uses this line of skincare products? From which neighborhoods? When brands convert sales on their own websites, they acquire valuable consumer information, such as age and email address, that answers these questions and paints a more detailed

portrait of each customer. Amazon's third-party sellers, who account for more than half of the platform's sales, receive increasingly limited consumer data, and beginning earlier this year, will not be able to access the names and addresses of customers [unless they have a necessary reason](#).

Customers will undoubtedly continue to shop on Amazon, as well as on the many other ecommerce platforms that

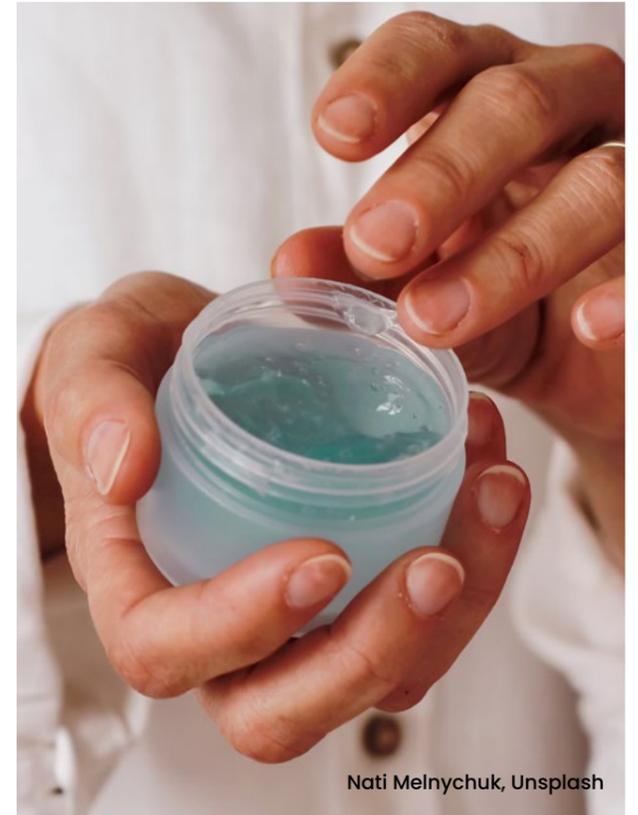
have similar data restriction policies. This means that brands need to reconnect with customers innovatively through new channels, especially if they want to deliver a seamless product reorder experience.

REORDER WITH ONE CLICK

One such innovation has been QR codes, whose usage and application have accelerated during the pandemic. Brij is pioneering the use of QR codes as a means of building a direct relationship between brands and customers. When shoppers scan a product's QR code with their smartphone, they gain access to the product's digital identity, making QR codes an excellent bridge between the physical and digital worlds.

Brij helps brands power frictionless, one-touch reorder with a simple scan of a QR code. With Brij, customers are able to reorder items on their smartphones with one tap. Brands gain access to valuable customer data that fully translates to more personalized experiences and meaningful two-way conversations with their consumers.

Stiefel says, “Because reordering happens based on product usage (not an automated time frame), brands end up with deeper, cleaner product usage data from their customers while their customers end up with what they want: good products, but not too much of them.”



Nati Melnychuk, Unsplash



“The way we buy things is fundamentally changing, but not just in a channel-based way (ie., online v offline). Online grocery didn't slide back, and it's now a habit. Part of that is because of the unique value props associated with ecomm (improved selection, convenience, personalization, etc). With that comes customer experience expectations that will carry into adjacent categories. A “buy again” button is going to be a core competency of every CPG brand, because the growing number of online grocery shoppers will come to expect it elsewhere.”

—Kim Stiefel, CEO & Co-Founder of Repeat



REUSE & RESALE

The fashion industry is undergoing a revolution and moving towards a more sustainable future. The pandemic has accelerated consumer preferences for resale and recommerce, and as the post-pandemic shopper continues to choose to buy second hand, brands need to think about integrating this new channel into their omnichannel strategy to meet customers where they are.

This chapter examines the circular economy's effect on one of the most pollutive industries, and what the push for sustainability means for brands. As the recommerce market continues to grow, we argue that brands should consider this trend as insight into what their customers really care about, as well as a firm nudge to meet customers where they are with resale.

WASTE NO MORE: THE PUSH FOR GREATER CIRCULARITY

It is no secret that the fashion industry is a wasteful one. Each year, [millions of tons](#) of clothes are made, worn, and thrown out. Every second, the equivalent of a garbage truck load of clothes is filling up landfills. Fast fashion, especially, has been critiqued for its unethical practices and contributions to climate change. To put things in perspective, the fashion industry's emission of greenhouse gases is [about the same](#) as that of the entire economies of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom combined. It is not an overstatement, then, to say that if we want to tackle climate change, we need to go circular.

The term "circular economy" is a regenerative approach that aims to eliminate waste by intentionally designing products for reuse. It stands in contrast to the "take, make, dispose" model of the linear economy. In the fashion industry, the circular economy presents itself in the growing phenomenon called resale.

Resale, or recommerce, is the selling of previously owned products, and it has changed the course of the fashion industry. With an estimated [9 billion clothing items](#) being unworn or sitting idle in consumers' closets and 36 billion being thrown away in the US each year, the recommerce market is a rich platform for spearheading

greater circularity. Its growth is astounding; resale is expected to grow [11 times faster](#) than the broader retail clothing sector by 2025. To understand why, we need to take a look at the drivers of this growth: the consumers, especially millennials and Gen Z.

Today's consumer is values-driven. They show up for sustainability in various different ways, from marching in the streets to shopping only at brands that are committed to the cause. While the push for sustainability in the fashion industry has long been in the making, the pandemic has been a significant factor in bringing resale to the front of consumers' minds. With growing unemployment and financial uncertainty, people reevaluated their spending habits and began to shop secondhand to save money. It has also become easier to participate in the market with the rise in ecommerce. The growing interest in recommerce has become an outlet for millennials and Gen Z to practice a sustainable and financially responsible lifestyle.

"The proliferation of resale can be attributed in part to a more environmentally aware consumer and the changing concept of 'ownership,'" says Jake Disraeli, Co-Founder & CEO of [Treet](#). "Largely driven by the younger generation who's grown to adopt a revolving wardrobe, resale is quickly growing

to become a preferred shopping method for anyone looking for a budget friendly and sustainable option."

For some people, it was their first time engaging in recommerce. First-time sellers in 2020 numbered [36 million](#), with nearly 80% of people who have never resold clothing open to trying it. For stated reasons, the pandemic greatly expanded the market's fanbase and catalyzed shopping habits

that will stick. Consumers want to be more active in practicing their values, and they want brands to do the same.

RETAIL MEETS RESALE: WHAT BRANDS CAN DO

There is no shortage of evidence that points to the role that sustainability plays in consumer behavior. Nearly [70% of consumers](#) consider the use of sustainable materials an important purchasing factor. With consumer sentiments running strong for increased sustainability, fashion recommerce marketplaces like The RealReal and thredUp have become leaders in the push for circular fashion. Retailers that have been associated with fast fashion are also recognizing the importance of ingraining sustainable habits. H&M, for example, is working to make circularity their business model and sustainability a part of their everyday decisions.

Vanessa Rothschild, the company's global sustainability steering and development manager, said [in an interview](#) with McKinsey & Co.: "[C]onsumers are making more conscious choices about what they wear, and that's where we see them starting to embrace circular business models. [...] Future winners will be companies that can problem-solve for customers and create long-term relationships with customers—companies that provide solutions and services, not just products."

While large companies like H&M, Stella McCartney, and Levi's are providing circular solutions, not all retailers have the resources to scale recommerce. But they should invest in the endeavor, not only because it will build loyalty in customers, but also because it is the right thing to do.

And it doesn't have to be complicated.

One way brands and retailers can integrate resale as a channel is by partnering with an existing resale business to help handle logistics. In fact, [60% of retail executives](#) believe that is the best approach. Treet, a resale marketplace software solution, is one example. The team takes care of the resale logistics, such as technical upkeep and customer support, and personalizing the resale marketplace according to the brand's style. Companies like Treet make the process more frictionless and eliminates any reason for brands to ignore the facts—especially when it means strengthening consumer relationships and increasing customer lifetime value.

What does including resale mean for brands and retailers? Disraeli offers some insight: "Standing behind resale shows consumers that brands are taking the lead to become more sustainable. This also creates more opportunities for previous customers to engage with the brand in new ways and for new shoppers to try out the brand for the first time."

Indeed, resale is an entry point for customers who normally wouldn't buy new products from a brand at full price. It also would draw younger customers, drive revenue, and help brands stay relevant. Consumer sentiments have shifted for the long-term, and the new meeting point is resale.

BEST PRACTICES: AUTHENTICITY AND TRANSPARENCY

As retail executives dip their toes into these waters, there are a few important values that they must uphold. Recommerce

brings immense value to brands, but that only happens when brands provide a safe and seamless experience for consumers to build trust. One concern with resale, for example, is product authenticity. How can consumers know for certain that their Louis Vuitton purse, purchased in a secondary market, is real?

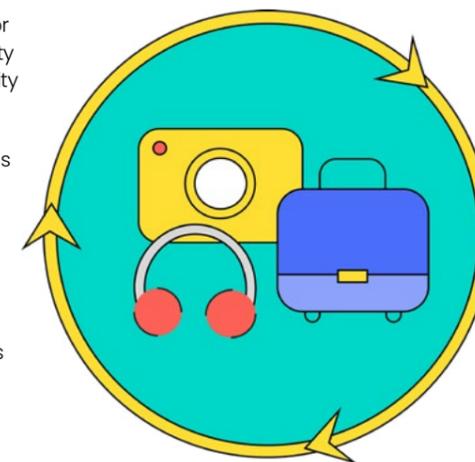
This is where digital identities come in. As most of us do not have trained eyes for identifying counterfeit items, making use of the digital identities that brands attach to their products would allow for automated authentication. Consumers can scan a unique QR code or NFC tag, for example, to determine the product's authenticity. This brings value to both

consumers and brands, as the digital identities serve as a bridge to reconnect brands to their customers even in the resale space.

And it goes without saying that brands should be genuine in their sustainability efforts. Customers can tell when brands are hopping on a trend simply for the profits (think Pride Month), which is why it is important for brands to integrate circularity wholly, beginning with being transparent with product ingredients. Brands can once again leverage QR codes to communicate to consumers that their products are good for the environment. For example, consumers scan a shirt's QR code that allows them to learn more about the product's origins. This facilitates a two-way conversation where brands show their dedication and consumers show their support.

[A McKinsey & Co. survey](#) determined: "Overall, consumer sentiment suggests that the COVID-19 crisis could serve as a reset opportunity for players in the apparel, footwear, and luxury sectors to strengthen their sustainability commitments and accelerate industry-wide changes, such as reduced seasonality and scaling of circular business models."

The pandemic has indeed catalyzed a revolutionary shift in fashion. Rothschild said it well: "Fashion's next normal will be 'ownership' rather than 'ownership.'" The time for innovation is now.



The proliferation of resale can be attributed in part to a more environmentally aware consumer and the changing concept of 'ownership'. Largely driven by the younger generation who's grown to adopt a revolving wardrobe, resale is quickly growing to become a preferred shopping method for anyone looking for a budget friendly and sustainable option.

-Jake Disraeli, Co-Founder & CEO of Treet



BRIJ

ON-PRODUCT CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

As it becomes more difficult for brands to rely on traditional channels for consumer information, Brij helps brands reconnect with their customers by providing an on-product customer communication channel for direct dialogue.

Commerce has evolved to take on a modern look, with shoppable ads and contactless payment defining the current landscape. People now have greater access to brands and their products than ever before, whether it's through social media, television, or video. But throughout these changes, one challenge has remained: brands don't know who their customers are.

The biggest online marketplaces—namely Amazon, Walmart, and eBay—make up nearly 52% of all US ecommerce sales, but brands know nothing about the customers who shop through these channels. Amazon, for example, has made it harder for its third-party sellers, who account for more than half of the platform's sales, to acquire first-party consumer data. Earlier this year, Amazon announced that sellers wouldn't be able to access the names and addresses of consumers without a necessary reason.

The acquisition of first-party consumer data is made more difficult by Apple's iOS 14 updates, which give users the ability to choose whether or not to let apps track them across other apps and websites. If they allow tracking, apps will then be able to personalize their advertising. The recent launch of iOS15 strengthens consumer privacy by protecting their data from third parties.

The pandemic has changed consumer trends and expectations, bringing about rapid adoption of technologies that add convenience to everyday life. One example of this behavior change can be seen in the sudden ubiquity of QR codes. From digital restaurant menus to contactless payments, to vaccine tracking, QR codes have become a part of daily life for most consumers.

Brij has leveraged this new consumer behavior to create an entirely new communication channel through on-product QR code experiences. For the first time brands can create a direct relationship with customers who shop through 3rd party ecommerce and retail channels.

Here's how it works:

First brands add the Brij app to their Shopify store allowing QR code experiences for each product to be created in minutes. Users can then download and print QR codes on insert cards, product packaging, or on the product itself.

When a customer picks up a product with a Brij QR code, they'll see a clear

incentive for them to scan the code and register their product. Whether it's to redeem a discount, activate a warranty or view exclusive content, customers know that they get an immediate benefit for sharing their information with the brand. They can also reorder or subscribe to recurring shipments directly from the brand with a tap.

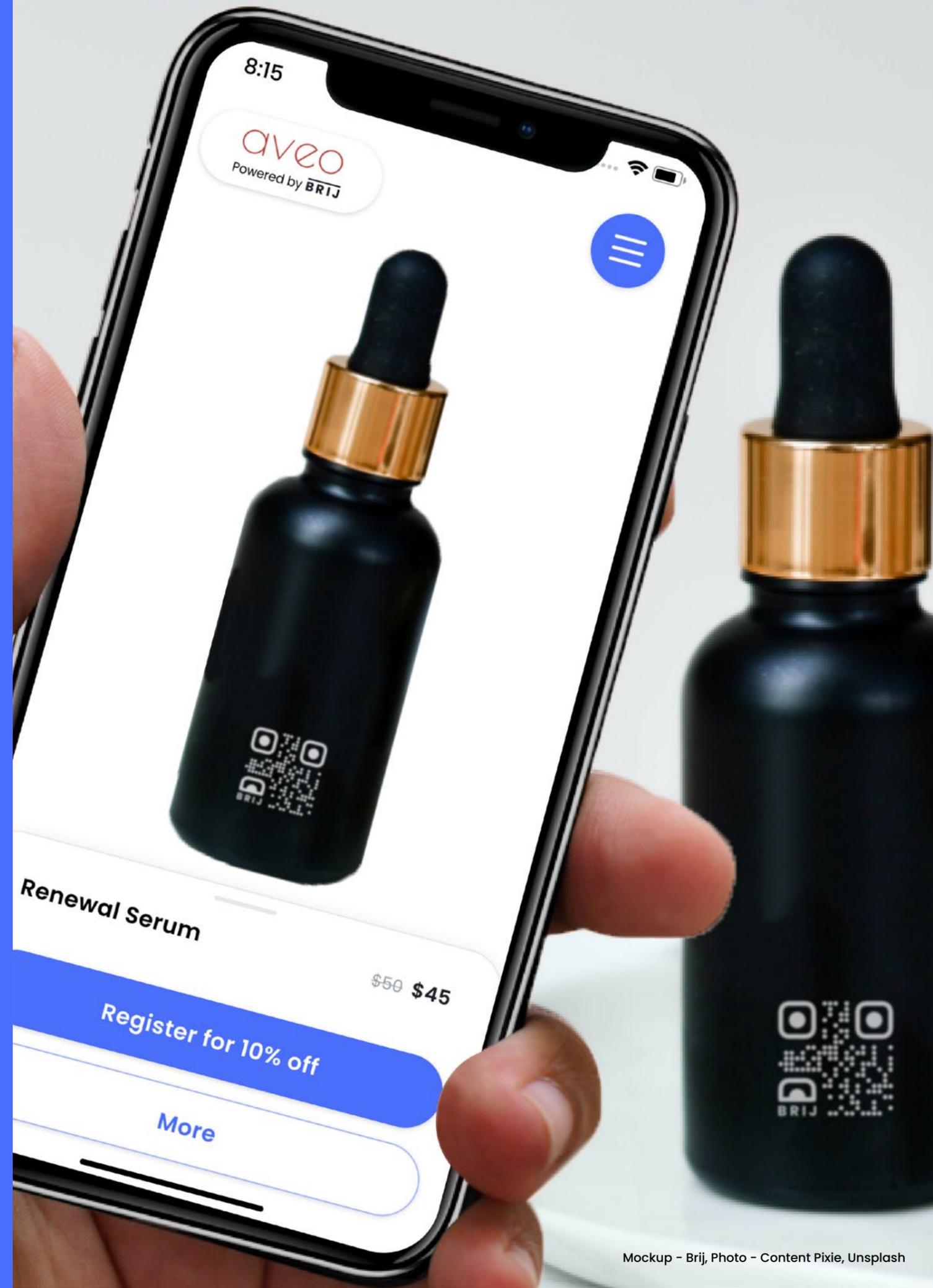
As soon as a customer registers a product, their information such as name, email, location, and purchase history are automatically added to the brand's CRM. Now the brand can begin a direct relationship with that customer regardless of where this customer was acquired.

"Brij has built an on-product communication platform for brands to have a direct dialogue with their customers, regardless of the channel that they sell through," says Kait Stephens, CEO & Co-Founder of Brij. "By bridging this relationship, Brij helps brands provide a true omnichannel experience to their customers to help build loyalty and drive better experiences for consumers and their products."



Brij has built an on-product communication platform for brands to have a direct dialogue with their customers, regardless of the channel that they sell through. By bridging this relationship, Brij helps brands provide a true omnichannel experience to their customers to help build loyalty and drive better experiences for consumers and their products. Our product is good for brands, but great for consumers

- Kait Stephens, CEO and Co-Founder of Brij



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Find out how Brij can help
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omnichannel experience by
scanning the QR code below

