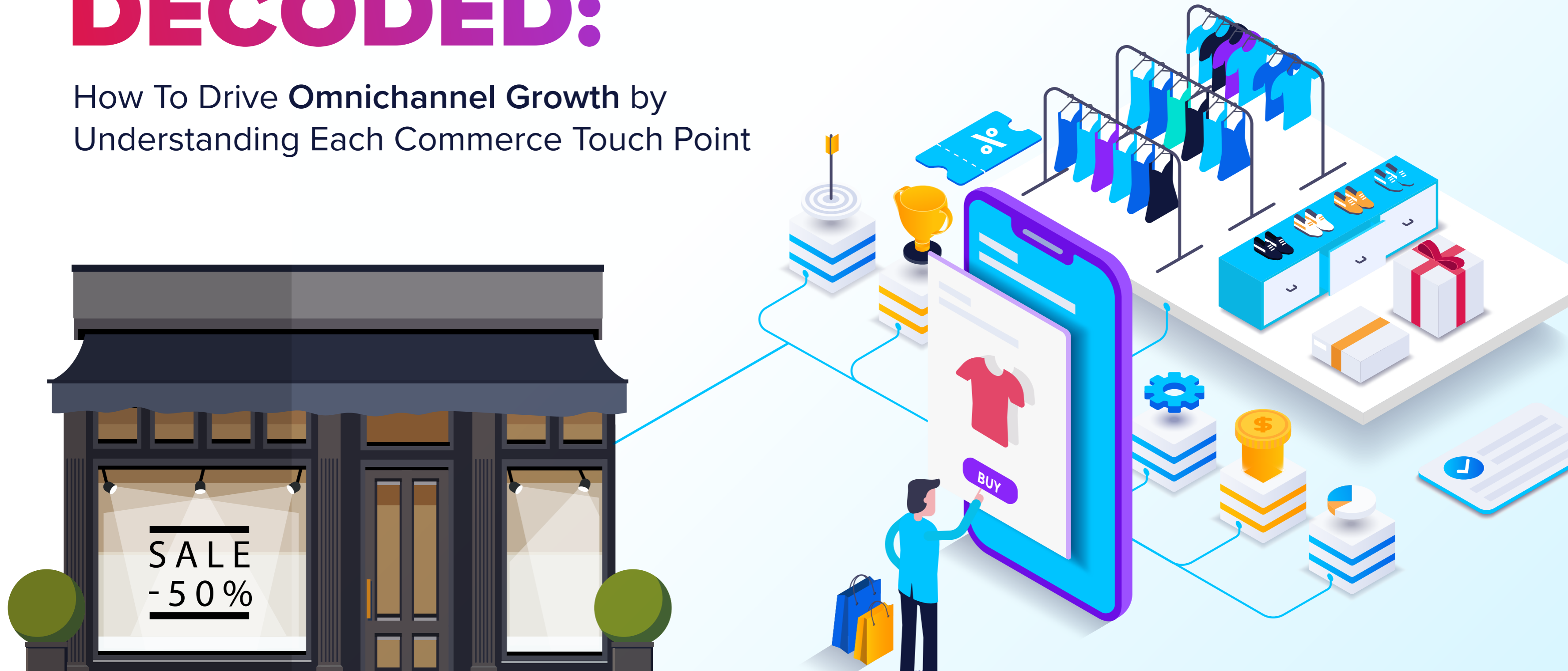


# DIGITAL SHELF DECODED:

How To Drive Omnichannel Growth by  
Understanding Each Commerce Touch Point



# Table of Contents

03

Meet the Authors

04

Growth Requires Coordination Across Every Sales Channel

06

Sales Funnel: Reach Your Next Customer Where They Shop

07

Content: Equip Your Shopper at Every Stage of the Funnel

10

Distribution: Drive the Search Algorithm With Availability

12

Retail Media: Drive Demand at the Point of Sale

14

Experience: Stand Out and Drive Conversion

16

Get Started: 5 Takeaways To Build and Execute an Omnichannel Growth Strategy

# Meet the Experts



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## Growth Requires Coordination Across Every Sales Channel

Whether you're just beginning to invest in digital initiatives or your ecommerce team is established but siloed from the rest of your organization, your future omnichannel success relies on your team's ability to coordinate and educate effectively across the divide.

To start, effective omnichannel planning can be as straightforward as establishing shared definitions and mutual understanding of how each channel — brick and mortar, direct ecommerce website, digital shelf, online retailer, social media, etc. — operates its content, distribution, retail media, and shopping experience strategies along the consumer path to purchase.

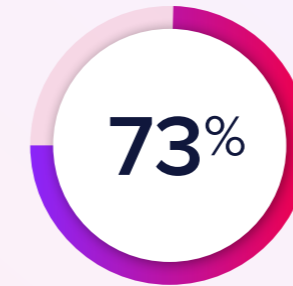
For longer-term growth, your organization must plan and allocate resources accurately based on total performance. It is critical to take into account the full picture of a product family, brand, or category.

Planning this way requires a deep understanding of brick and mortar and digital strategy so that every channel's influence is factored into every stage of the consumer journey. From the digital shelf (or the ecosystem of digital touch points) to the physical store or brick and mortar store — the experience must be seamless.

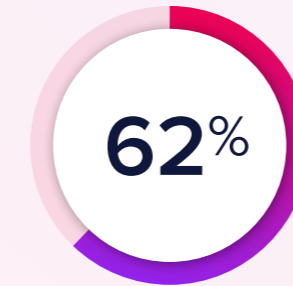
<sup>1</sup> Harvard Business Review, "A Study of 46,000 Shoppers Shows that Omnichannel Retailing Works", January 2017

<sup>2</sup> RetailGeek, "How Big is E-Commerce in the US and how did Covid Impact it?," April 2021

<sup>3</sup> Omnisend, [Marketing Automation Statistics 2019](#), May 2019



**Most shoppers use more than one channel.** 73% of retail consumers use multiple channels to shop, as reported in Harvard Business Review<sup>1</sup>.



**A majority of retail purchases are digitally influenced.** 62% of offline purchases are influenced by online, according to Forrester Research data<sup>2</sup>.



**Shoppers are 3.5x more likely to purchase when engaged by multiple channels.** 9% of shoppers purchased from campaigns that used three or more channels, compared with a 2.6% conversion rate for single-channel campaigns, as reported in Retail Dive<sup>3</sup>.

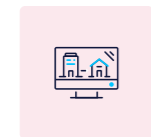
This report serves as a shared reference point for all brand, marketing, sales, and digital commerce leaders regardless of their primary sales channel. With it, you can bridge existing knowledge gaps between your online and offline teams.

Starting today, this report can help drive internal collaboration as well as explain how to allocate spend and resources when building a holistic omnichannel strategy.

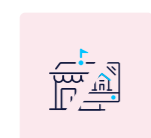
## Value of Report



**For experts in brick and mortar:** Use this report to understand how to collaborate better with your ecommerce colleagues and gain insight into why they might be asking for more content or retailer-specific tactics.



**For experts in digital:** Use this report to explain to your brick-and-mortar colleagues the complexities of the digital shelf and how a strong digital shelf presence helps drive in-store sales.



**For those trying to bridge the gap between brick and mortar and digital:** This report serves as a great educational and discussion tool to catalyze communication about where to focus your budget and time to enable growth as a business and prioritize channels.



## Path to Purchase: Reach Your Next Consumer Where They Shop

Much has been said about the changing consumer journey, from the impact of mobile commerce — which accounts for 10% of total retail sales today<sup>4</sup> — to the rapid increase in direct online spending during the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>5</sup>. The reality is every modern brand manufacturer must meet potential buyers on as many channels as possible with accurate product content and compelling experiences.

This report defines the common terms for strategies used in online and offline marketing in four areas, taking the path to purchase into account.

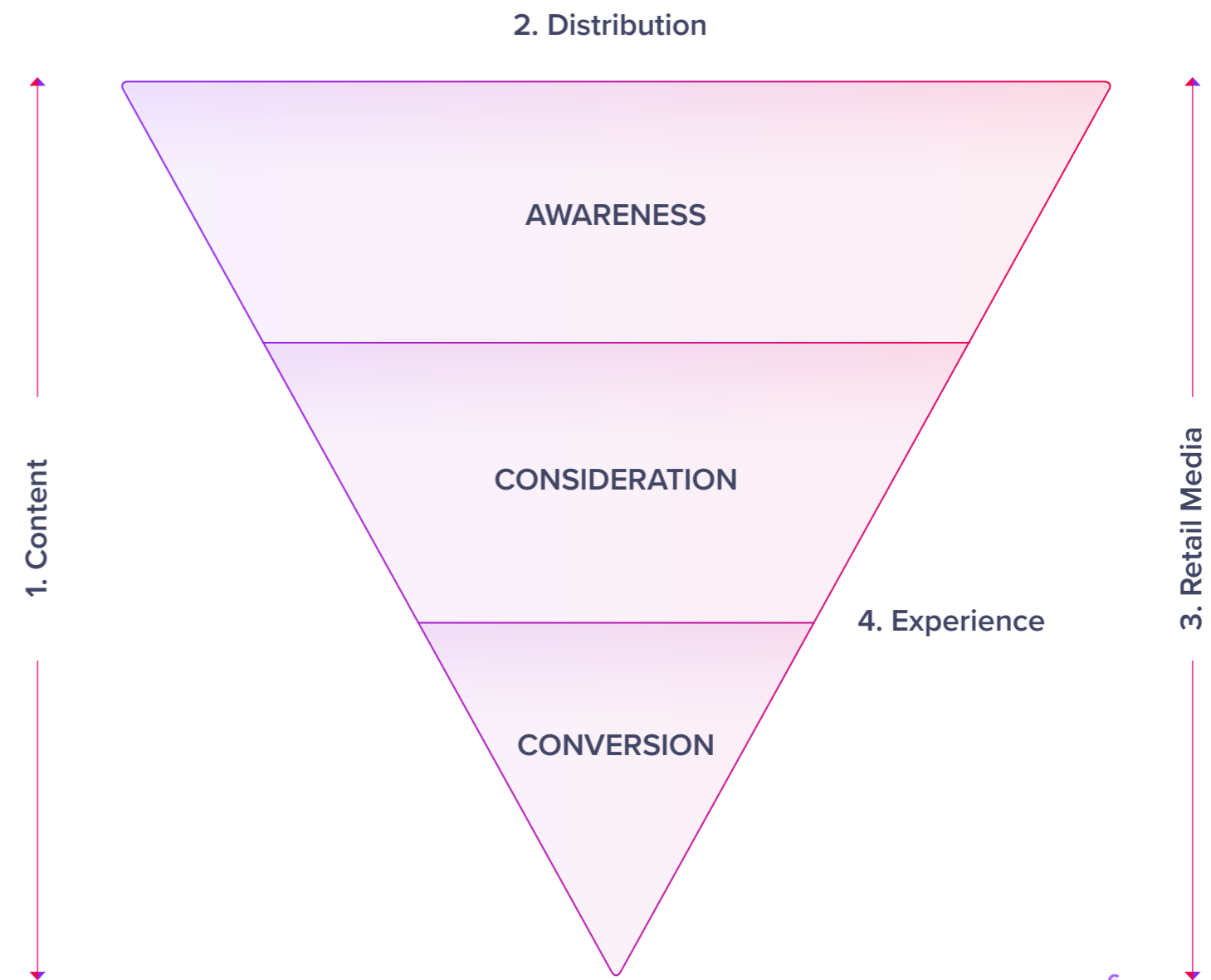
### Coordinate Omnichannel Strategies in Four Areas to Impact Growth

It begins with **content** — including product titles, descriptions, feature bullets, and enhanced content — or in-store experiences that provide shoppers with information about a product. All of this influences outcomes across every stage of the funnel.

Next, **distribution** determines where and how your products are available at which retailer or other consumer channel. This strategy should drive where to focus activity: There's no point in investing ad budget in regions where your product is less available or out of stock.

Next comes **retail media**, a subset of your larger branding and advertising strategy, that drives awareness and discovery close to the point of sale.

And, lastly, **experience**. These are the enhancements provided outside of regular shopping to help consumers understand the product — and ultimately select the product — and can be particularly critical to the consideration stage and winning the sale.



<sup>4</sup> Forrester, "M-Commerce Share of Total Retail", April 2021

<sup>5</sup> Digital Commerce 360, "Pandemic adds extra \$218.53 billion to US ecommerce sales", 2022

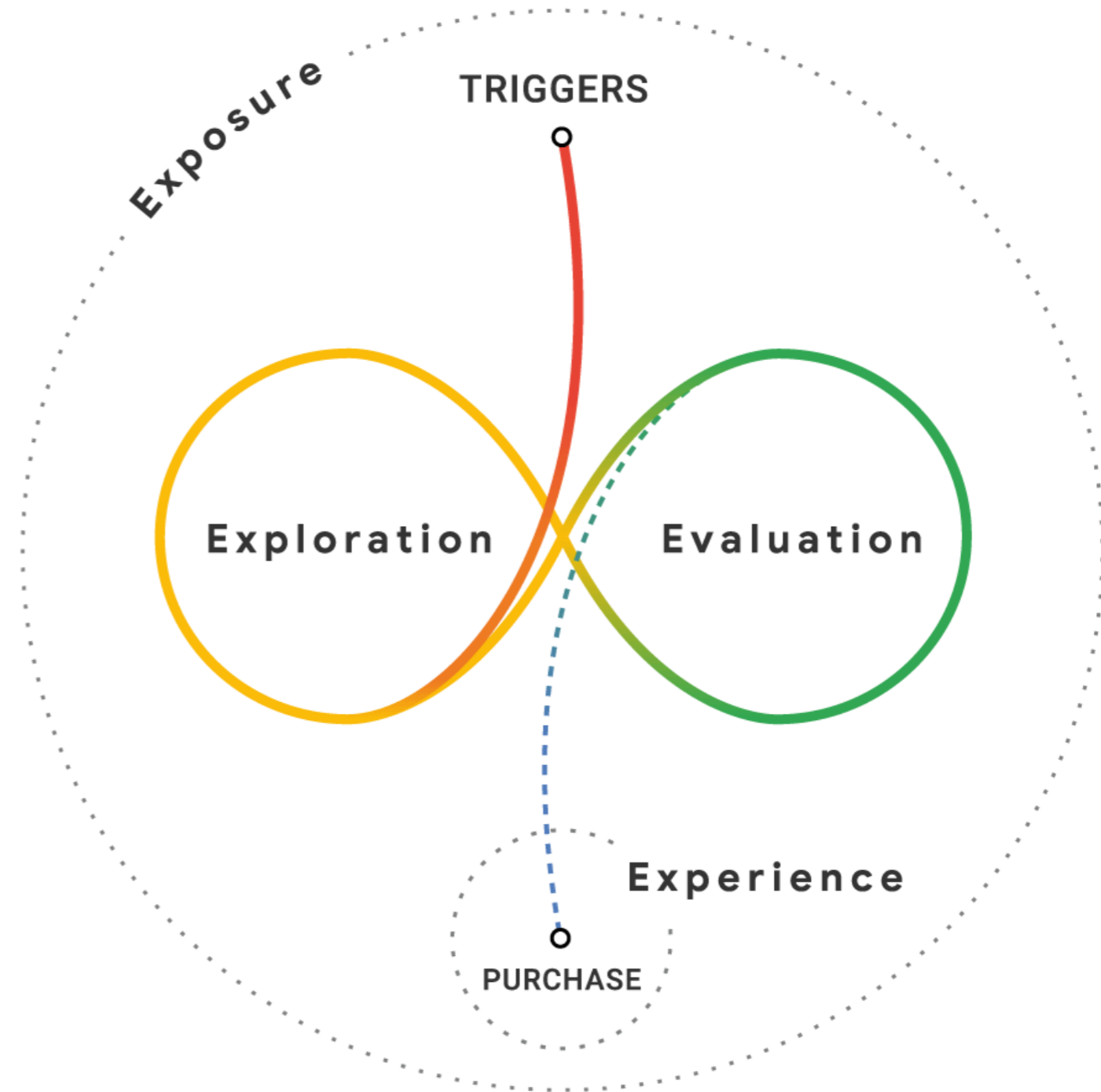
The marketing world widely adopts the example of a traditional path to purchase highlighted on the previous page. And in many ways, this is still the foundation of how consumers shop.

But with the rise of omnichannel, the way consumers shop today is rapidly evolving — and it is not as straightforward as a traditional funnel.

Shoppers no longer interact with a singular channel, which is why this report aims to close the gap between brick and mortar and ecommerce.

There are multiple touch points along the purchase journey — and they aren't necessarily linear: A shopper can enter a store, view an Instagram ad, hear about a product from a friend, or visit a direct commerce or another retail website.

These touch points aren't predictable, which means the path to purchase can look more like the recent Google concept of the “messy middle,”<sup>6</sup> which illustrates how shoppers are exposed to shopping touch points in a nonlinear path between exploration and evaluation — ultimately ending with a purchase. Along this “messy” journey, they engage with the complete brand experience.



<sup>6</sup> Google Consumer Insights [“How people decide what to buy lies in the ‘messy middle’ of the purchase journey”](#), July 2020

## Content: Equip Your Shopper at Every Stage of the Purchase Journey

Your product content provides shoppers information, benefits and features, answers common questions, and can influence outcomes across every stage of the funnel.

Centralizing product information, images, and other rich media assets in one location for both brick and mortar sales and ecommerce teams is critical to ensure you're consistent across the market.

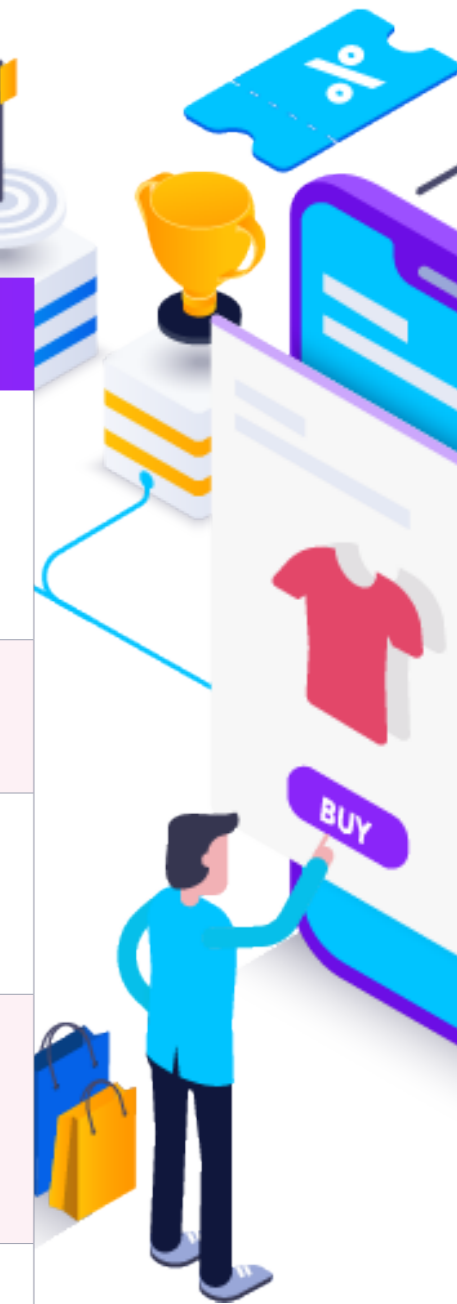
This data is the building block of your commerce strategy, and the opportunity and requirements vary depending on whether you're online or offline. Remember, 62% of offline purchases are influenced by online;<sup>7</sup> therefore, ecommerce provides a unique opportunity to amplify your products and brand messaging via content.

<sup>7</sup> RetailGeek, "[How Big is E-Commerce in the US and how did Covid Impact it?](#)," April 2021



## CONTENT: Brick and mortar to Ecommerce Decoder

Brick and mortar	Ecommerce
<p><b>Product Packaging:</b> From an in-store perspective, packaging has a lot to do with how to attract consumers on the shelf. It can depend on how other products in your category are being displayed and how to take up more space (or have a better presence) on the shelf.</p>	<p><b>Product Detail Page (Images, title, bullets, enhanced content):</b> Since consumers are not viewing content in the physical store, they need all of the information from the packaging on the product detail page (PDP) to view information about the product. Ninety-five percent of consumers who look at an image carousel view every single photo.<sup>8</sup></p>
<p><b>Aisle Markers:</b> Signs in-store that detail where items are located (i.e., personal care, beauty, snacks, and dairy).</p>	<p><b>Categories and Filters:</b> When searching for products online, filters, search, and categories are used to find certain products so they must match what the customer is looking for.</p>
<p><b>Shopper Marketing:</b> The goal of shopper marketing is to create customer awareness and enhance interaction and conversion with products. The focus is on the customer path to purchase.</p>	<p><b>Enhanced Content:</b> Content (typically below the fold) focused on providing more information about the product to drive conversion, can be via rich visual content or videos.</p>
<p><b>Persuasive Call to Action:</b> In a brick and mortar world, this is typically achieved with “calls-to-action” or other shopper content such as a shelf talker or copy on a display. Usually, this occurs in the form of celebrity or expert endorsements in the aisle. It can also be a result of advocacy from others.</p>	<p><b>Ratings and Reviews:</b> Ratings and reviews provide a persuasive mechanism for shoppers to hear what others have to say about the product or additional ideas on how to use it.</p>
<p><b>SKU Adjacencies:</b> Adjacent products are usually variants of flavor, ingredients, pack format, sizes, or colors.</p>	<p><b>Variants or Comparison Charts:</b> Variants on PDPs typically highlight products within the same product family.</p>
<p><b>Physical Shelf Pick Up:</b> Picking up and viewing an item in a store gives consumers the full experience.</p>	<p><b>360-Degree Product Videos/Size Reference Images:</b> Shoppers see the product as they would in a brick-and-mortar store and in use-case settings. An example would be a shopper viewing furniture in their own space.</p>
<p><b>Packaging and Claims:</b> The packaging and claim information on the product itself tells the product story.</p>	<p><b>Carousel Images/Badges:</b> Carousel images on PDPs showcase each product element and highlight crucial attributes to help the pages stand out.</p>



<sup>8</sup> OneSpace, "A Brand's Guide to Creating Image Carousels That Convert."

## Omnichannel Tactics for Content

- 1 Product Packaging** seen in-store should match exactly what's seen online, including imagery and ingredients. However, extend what you provide in-store when planning the **Product Detail Page**. Digital has more real estate to tell a brand story: Go in-depth about your benefits or manufacturing techniques and highlight essential product features that'll appeal to your target shopper.
- 2 Aisle Markers/Categories and Filters:** The categories in-store and online for the same retailer are sometimes (but not always) the same. Be sure that you take full advantage of any seasonal in-store promotions as well as online-only categories. In some categories, retailers will extend assortments available online beyond what they have at a physical location. Online, there's more opportunity to do cross-category promotion since you're not hindered by shelf space.
- 3 Both Shopper Marketing and Enhanced Content** provide information beyond the packaging to answer questions or engage a buyer. Both require extra planning and investment to provide to your retailer. While Shopper Marketing tends to be event-based for holidays or seasonality, enhanced content can be more evergreen, and many brands use the same brand family information across multiple products to extend its value.
- 4 Ratings and Reviews** can include product experiences or user-generated pictures and videos that provide additional content for you to incorporate into your marketing. Since it's user-generated, it's also less predictable or controlled than traditional in-store **CTA Tactics**, which could include celebrity endorsements, shelf talkers, or pre-arranged media.
- 5 Comparison Charts** enable your team to go beyond straightforward **SKU Adjacencies** and provide detailed, in-depth product comparisons across a family or product line.
- 6 Picking up the item from the shelf** is the most straightforward way a consumer understands what they're buying. Invest in **360-Degree Product Videos** or **Size Reference Images** to replicate this experience online and showcase the product in-use in a setting relevant to your ideal customer.
- 7** The product detail page enables you to tell more of a story because there's more real estate. Select a variety of **carousel Images** beyond straightforward packaging shots to communicate features, display size or value pack information, and demonstrate lifestyle and branding.

# Distribution: Drive the Search Algorithm With Availability

Distribution determines where and how your products are available at which retailer or other consumer channel. How your product shows up on the shelf is critical to its discovery. This strategy enables your teams to understand where to invest so that initial discovery of your product is possible.

## Brick and Mortar to Ecommerce Decoder

Brick and Mortar	Ecommerce
<p><b>Planogram:</b> A store’s planogram or layout of the shelf takes precise and careful planning based on category and store. The planogram points the eye of the consumer where they want them to focus. Shelf Placement is critical and a key performance indicator (KPI) is Share of Shelf.</p>	<p><b>Search Results:</b> Search is what determines which products will be seen first. There’s less space on the first page of results than there is on a store shelf. The first row of search results is the same as eye-level placement at a shelf in traditional retail. As noted by Search Engine Journal (SEJ), 64% of Amazon shoppers click on the first three items displayed on a search page.<sup>9</sup></p>
<p><b>Share of Shelf:</b> The amount of presence that your brand has within your in-store category. With brick and mortar, this has a broader reach.</p>	<p><b>Share of Search:</b> Visibility in organic search versus other brands. This is more targeted and specific to the need a consumer is searching for.</p>
<p><b>Slotting Fees:</b> The amount of money paid by a manufacturer to have products on the retailer shelves. Manufacturers must pay for prime shelf placement.</p>	<p><b>Paid Search:</b> Investment in paid search features or sponsored search results for your product.</p>
<p><b>Segmentation:</b> Creation of variations of a product for different markets.</p>	<p><b>Taxonomy:</b> Specific words or features that are associated with the product. Taxonomy is influenced by retailer-specific browse paths/navigation prioritization.</p>

<sup>9</sup> Search Engine Journal (SEJ), “Amazon’s Search Engine Ranking Algorithm: What Marketers Need to Know,” August, 2018

## Omnichannel Tactics for Distribution

- 1 Just as precisely as you invest in **Planograms** for each retailer store, your digital strategy must include search optimization for better **Search Results** on each retailer. Being low on the search results page is equivalent to poor shelf placement or a product left in the store room.
- 2 In-store shoppers do a visual scan and your **Share of Shelf** impacts the likelihood your product will be bought. Online, shoppers use keywords related to their needs so your **Share of Search** is critical. There are dynamic factors based on retailer algorithm logic that determine placement on the digital shelf, including relevancy to keyword, inclusion of the keyword in your product title, the click ratio on your product listing, the number of days your product has been listed, and your overall product sales online.
- 3 You can invest with each retailer to get a top spot through **Slotting Fees** in-store and **Paid Search** online. Understanding what your product's natural organic search results are as well as the volume of keyword searches done in a particular category will help you understand where paid search investments make the most sense.
- 4 Know your retailer's customer navigation logic — it's what consumers rely on. In-store will often base its signage on product **Segmentation**. However, in ecommerce, **Taxonomy** is what drives the menu and sidebar navigation as well as any product feature filters. It's important to provide all the related attributes to a retailer so that your product shows up in the correct location online.



## Retail Media: Drive Demand at the Point of Sale

Retail media — the advertising and promotional investments you can make with each of your retail customers — allows you to drive brand awareness and improve discovery at the point of sale. Increasingly, this spend allows brand manufacturers to collect conversion data and make performance-based investments online.

This additional spend is most powerful when aligned with your product strategy online and offline. Take into account product availability, prior sales performance, profitability, your competitors, your share of category, and growth goals on each channel.

### Brick and Mortar to Ecommerce Decoder

	Brick and Mortar	Ecommerce
	<b>Circular/Feature Ad Placement:</b> A paper advertisement either available upon store entry or in a newspaper.	<b>Offsite Retail Media Buy/Retailer Ad Network:</b> Ads that leverage first-party data to target consumers off of the retailer website and on other brand-related websites on the internet.
<b>4 Types of Secondary Display:</b>	<b>(1) End Cap:</b> Brands use end caps in stores to grab the attention of the shopper and highlight their products. This is often secondary placement and could be a cross-category display opportunity.	<b>Category Page Feature/Promoted Items (Paid Search):</b> Brands use paid media to run ads or promotions to highlight their brand to their specific audience. Could be a category page feature. This is also a great opportunity to showcase cross-category products within a brand portfolio.
	<b>(2) Store Display (anywhere in the store):</b> Fixtures in different parts of the store that promote specific products (often called secondary display).	<b>Category Ad Placement:</b> Locations where your ads can appear such as video, Google, or a specific retailer. It can be targeted by category. These are also sometimes called sponsored product ads and can show up in search and on the PDP.
	<b>(3) Store Display (front of store):</b> A store display is often prominently displayed as shoppers enter the store.	<b>Homepage Placement:</b> Shoppers typically start at the landing page as this is usually used for display ads (often paid).
	<b>(4) In-Aisle Complementary Category Merchandising:</b> In brick and mortar, secondary merchandising is a way to gain cross-category shelf placement.	<b>Search Engine Marketing:</b> In ecommerce, cross-category placement can be gained through unpaid SEO, when a product appears for a category term's results based on keyword. However, with paid investment opportunity, brands can buy search term ads to be included in the top sponsored spot for a consumer's search term.

<b>Print Coupons:</b> Physical print coupons available to customers.	<b>Digital Coupons:</b> Coupons that appear on retailer online sites and have a more targeted approach.
<b>Point of Purchase/Point of Sale at Shelf:</b> The point of purchase is where the shopper engages with the product either at the shelf or display, where conversion takes place, and where the shopper can pick up the item and read the nutritional information on the pack.	<b>PDP Content on the Digital Shelf:</b> The product detail page provides all the information typically displayed on the pack. There will also be additional reasons to purchase provided via both Visual and Written Content. See more detail under Content.

## Omnichannel Tactics for Retail Media

- 1** **End caps** and **Store Displays** enable shoppers to discover products outside the normal aisle in-store and marketers can use them for cross-category promotion of need-state or complementary items. **Category Page Feature, Category Ad Placement, Promoted Items, and Homepage Placement** are the digital equivalent with the added benefit of being more agile (you can switch the creative or featured items faster) and more accountable (collect impressions, click-through rates (CTRs), return on ad spend (ROAS), and other data to inform where you invest next).
- 2** Augment investments you make in a retailer's print **Circular** with **Offsite Retail Media Buys**, especially if you're hoping to reach a more targeted audience or have specific creative assets to test. Digital ad networks that provide on-site and off-site retail media buys enable you to target and test the creative you use.

- 3** Choosing when to invest in **Print Coupons** or **Digital Coupons** can depend on your budget, your intended reach, and the granularity and speed at which you want to measure retailer capabilities and test results. Digital coupons are more affordable, faster to implement, and you can invest in more sophisticated tracking tools to test and learn about each offer. Print coupons can have a wider reach and are effective when provided at the in-store point of sale to drive new product awareness and trials.



## Experience: Stand Out and Drive Conversion

Activities that fall under the experience category include additional effort a brand can put into creating moments of connection with a shopper.

These opportunities will vary based on each retailer and can play a critical role in differentiating your brand or product from the competition, winning the sale, and ultimately gaining a loyal customer. Advances in technology now allow brands to build customized experiences that consumers can interact with both online or in-store via digital kiosks.

### Brick and Mortar to Ecommerce Decoder

Brick and Mortar	Ecommerce
<p><b>In-store Sampling:</b> In-store sampling is done during busy store periods to recruit new shoppers to try brands.</p>	<p><b>Targeted Sampling and Past Purchase Seeding (Sample Emails or Communities):</b> The ability to target shoppers who haven't bought the product before to purchase items and drive ratings and reviews.</p>
<p><b>In-Store Consultant/Expert:</b> Live assistance when buying a product to help identify which is right for the shopper. A great example is in the beauty category with specific shades of makeup.</p>	<p><b>Guided Selling/Product Selectors/Live Chat:</b> Helps to identify the needs of the shopper by asking questions to lead them to a specific product. Online chat features can connect a shopper directly to a trained salesperson or artificially intelligent (AI) bot designed to address questions.</p>
<p><b>In-store Demonstrators:</b> In-store demonstrators show how to use the product and explain its key features and benefits.</p>	<p><b>Livestream Shopping:</b> In livestream shopping, demonstrators and influencers typically offer products while demonstrating the items.</p>
<p><b>Showrooms:</b> Space designed to showcase products in-store and allow customers to interact directly with merchandise. Can include interactive kiosks in-store to allow shoppers to access a wider range of inventory or great level of detail.</p>	<p><b>AR/VR Technology:</b> Investments that allow consumers to see virtual renderings of a product from an ecommerce site. These might include virtual try-on or in-home models that allow consumers to take photographs of themselves or their living spaces to "try out" merchandise like furniture or makeup.</p>

Brick and Mortar	Ecommerce
<b>Aisles:</b> Groups of adjacent product categories are put together in aisles.	<b>Taxonomy/Browse Nodes:</b> Products grouped together in a taxonomy or browse nodes online act as aisles of associated categories (filtering).
<b>Big Box Store/Supercenter:</b> A store that sells everything all in one place with many options.	<b>Marketplace:</b> Multiple sellers of multiple different products.
<b>Boutique Store:</b> Looking for special assistance or a specialty item at a specific store.	<b>Direct-to-Consumer (DTC/D2C):</b> Branded site with specialty items that might not be sold on other retailer sites with a unique assortment or specialty items.

## Omnichannel Tactics for Experience

- 1 When promoting new products, **In-store Sampling** helps you reach the foot traffic in a specific aisle, whereas **Targeted Sampling and Past Purchase Seeding** allows you to reach a specific target buyer at their home and gather customer feedback in the form of reviews, helping launch new product or develop product prior to large roll-out.
- 2 If your brand is already invested in **In-store Consultants**, consider adding **Guided Selling** automation to your digital presence. This is a way to provide product consultation and recommendations at scale.
- 3 Allow your customers to see a product in action and have a dialogue addressing their questions with **In-store Demonstrators** and **Livestream Shopping**. Choosing between online and offline tactics here will depend on if your interest is in reaching localized foot traffic or a dispersed and more targeted audience. Factor in your ideal customers' preferences as well as which format will complement your product's strengths when choosing.



# Get Started: 5 Takeaways To Build and Execute an Omnichannel Growth Strategy

- 1 Cross-channel collaboration is the key to planning a product's total growth.** Understand the online and offline opportunities with each retailer and enable your teams to communicate and measure results as an omnichannel team.
- 2 Prioritize brand storytelling online to drive discovery and conversion.** When it comes to planning product content, there's more real estate online as well as a strong likelihood it's the first place a shopper is seeking information. Go above and beyond what a retailer requires and include as much information — expressed in bullet copy as well as imagery — whenever possible.
- 3 Customize your approach based on the channel and retailer.** It's critical to understand each retailer's aisle and taxonomy strategy, as well as the shoppers that frequent each location. This information can help you plan shelf placement priorities, search term strategy, and determine when to grow your reach with boutique or marketplace selling.
- 4 Adjust your retail media investments based on your target goals and capitalize on your ability to test digital offers.** Media spend online can often be more flexible and more trackable than traditional print. It's a great place to test targeting or limited edition products before bringing them to wider markets. It's also important to analyze the conversion data available and adjust spend based on the in-market results.
- 5 Provide experiences that are authentic to your product's strengths and your ideal consumer's needs.** When it comes to investing in additional experiences, consider the moments that will help showcase your brand values and your product strengths. Consumers crave these personalized shopping experiences, and it's an opportunity to build loyalty. Use the channels that your ideal consumer is most comfortable with.

**The Digital Shelf  
Institute**

The Digital Shelf Institute (DSI) is a community dedicated to developing and sharing the best actionable insights and strategies for brand manufacturers to win on the digital shelf.