CONSUMER SURVEY

The State of Customer Experience

nosto

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INTEGRATED COMMERCE
Growth Stack

Table of Contents

Introduction

Analysts and trade publications have been saying it for years; consumers are more informed than ever and brands have to work harder than ever to win their business. This "Age of the Customer"[1] has led to the commodification of most goods, and this commodification of goods has led brands to focus on customer experience as a differentiator. Like product differentiation, though, customer experience differentiation is becoming increasingly more difficult. By commodifying how to create great customer experiences, direct-to-consumer brands have essentially commodified great customer experiences, themselves.

So, how can ecommerce brands continue to differentiate themselves with exceptional customer experiences?

To find out, we surveyed **1,100 consumers** who had a relationship over the past 12 months with one of 50 top direct-to-consumer brands.The consumers were asked to select a single brand (each brand was only allowed to be selected by a total of 22 consumers, which led to an equal amount of consumers for each brand) and then to rate their overall experience with the brand using a Net Promoter Score (NPS)[2] rating system. They were then asked to answer a series of questions about more specific aspects of the brand's experience. Finally, they were asked to answer a series of questions related to their personal preferences when it comes to customer experiences in general.

In this report, you'll learn:

- How shoppers feel about the customer experiences being delivered by top direct-to-consumer brands
- How top direct-to-consumer brands' customer experiences are living up to shopper expectations
- What brands can do to ensure they are delivering the customer experiences that keep shoppers coming back

(1) https://go.forrester.com/age-of-the-customer/
(2) https://www.netpromoter.com/know/

The Results: 50 Top Direct-To-Consumer Brands

Promoters	Average Rating
Warby Parker	9.5
Moment	9.4
Outerknown	9.4
Bonobos	9.3
Glossier	9.3
Ren Skincare	9.3
Chubbies	9.2
Allbirds	9.1
Fashion Bunker	9.1
Barkbox	9
Fashion Nova	9

Demoters	Average Score
Goodr	6.3
Hobo Bags	6.1
Hylete	6.1
Midnight Co	6.1
Parachute	6.1
Burrow	6
NoBull	6
Stowaway	5.9
Truvani	5.9
Beauty Counter	5.8
Brandless	5.8
Away	5.7
Meli Melo	5.7
Pacific Beauty	5.7
The Honest Co.	5.7
Love Wellness	5.5
Summer Salt	5.5
Tortuga	5.5

Passives	Average Rating
Everlane	8.4
MVMT	8.4
Nude Stix	8.3
Outdoor Voices	8.1
Touch of Modern	8.1
Harry's	7.9
Wear Pact	7.9
Kylie Cosmetics	7.8
Luma Sleep	7.8
Bombas	7.7
Huckberry	7.7
Rent The Runway	7.7
Brooklinen	7.6
Dollar Shave Club	7.5
Steve Madden	7.4
Thursday Boot Co	7.4
Obey	7.3
MeUndies	7.2
Thread Wallets	7.1
Charlotte Russe	7
Greats	7

* Average scores are representative of ratings consumers gave to brands within the consumer survey and are not representative of the brands' official Net Promoter Scores.

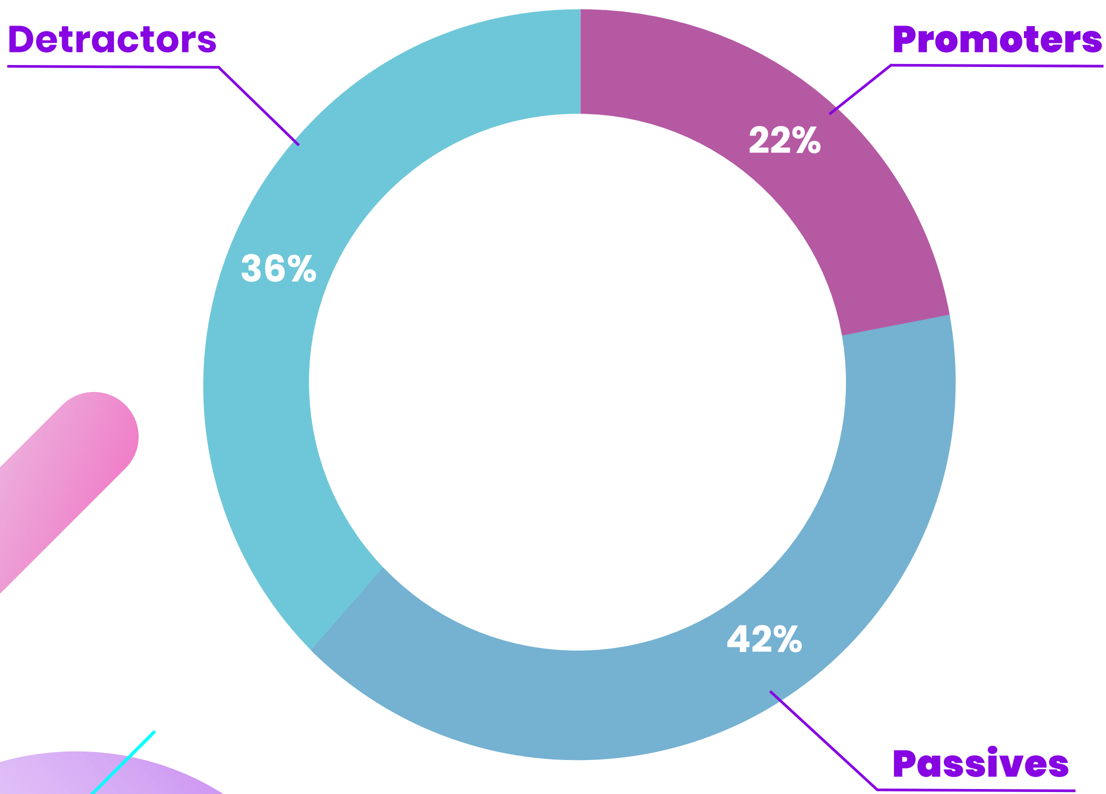
Consumer Expectations For Top Customer Experiences

At the surface level, one could easily make the assumption that these brands are obviously making shoppers happy since they're consistently performing in terms of growth. According to the survey, shoppers would mostly fall into the Passives **(7-8)** category for these top direct-to-consumer brands as the average rating was 7.2. Less than a quarter **(22%)** of the brands have an average rating that falls into the Promoters category **(9-10)**, and nearly two-fifths **(36%)** of the brands have an average NPS score that falls within the Detractors category **(0-6)**.

With a large majority of consumers scoring these top brands either in the Passives or Detractors ranges, it's safe to say that even the brands with some of the best customer experiences in the market have a long way to go when it comes to meeting shopper expectations.

As seamless, intuitive customer experiences continue to prove themselves as a powerful growth lever, direct-to-consumer brands will continue trying to find and formulate templates for what makes a great customer experience. But what are consumers actually enjoying and what are they simply tolerating?

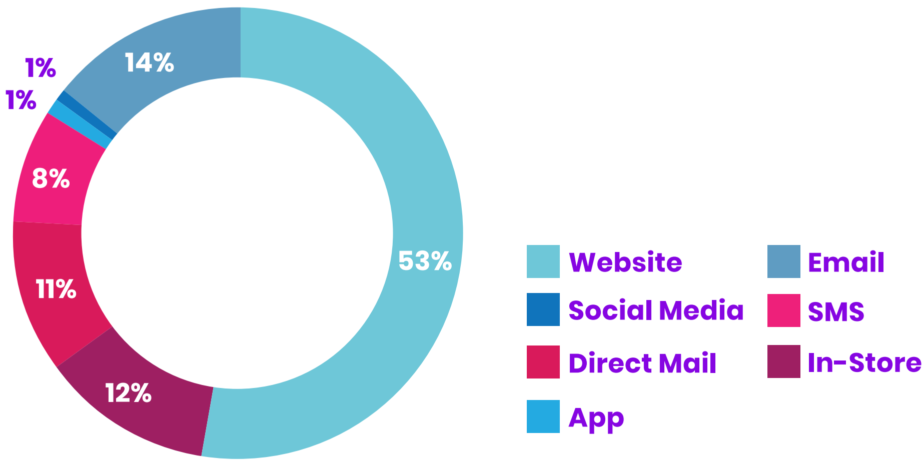
Average NPS Breakdown



Meeting Consumers Where They Are: Omnichannel Experiences

Knowing where consumers most interact with brands is vital to understanding what types of experiences they want to have. Most shoppers like to interact with brands directly on their website **(53%)** with in-store **(14%)**, via email **(12%)**, and through social media **(11%)** all falling in a tight succession of second, third, and fourth. Very few shoppers actually care to interact with brands in their native app or through SMS or direct mail.

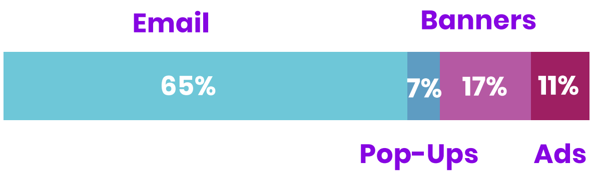
Where consumers mostly interact with brands



Fortunately, when shoppers do interact with brands through more than one channel the majority of them **(57%)** feel like the top brands are doing well to deliver seamless cross-channel and device experiences.

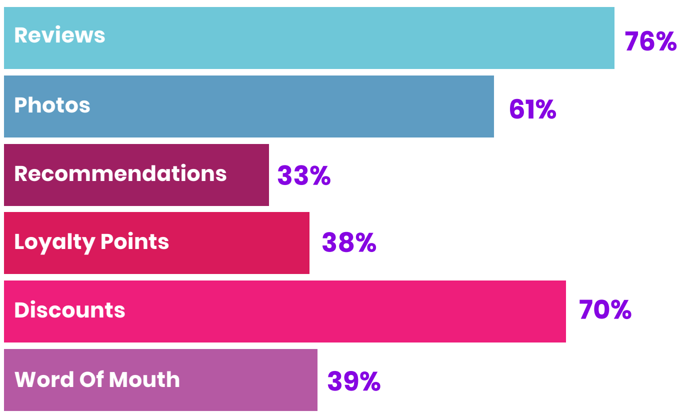
When interacting with a brand on multiple channels is the experience seamless?

How do you prefer a brand shares discounts and offers with you?



In terms of what makes a great experience no matter the channel most brands would claim that it's whatever drives shoppers to buy more and buy quicker. The three things that most help consumers make a purchase seem to be reviews **(76%)**, discounts **(70%)**, and photos **(61%)**.

What helps consumers make a purchase



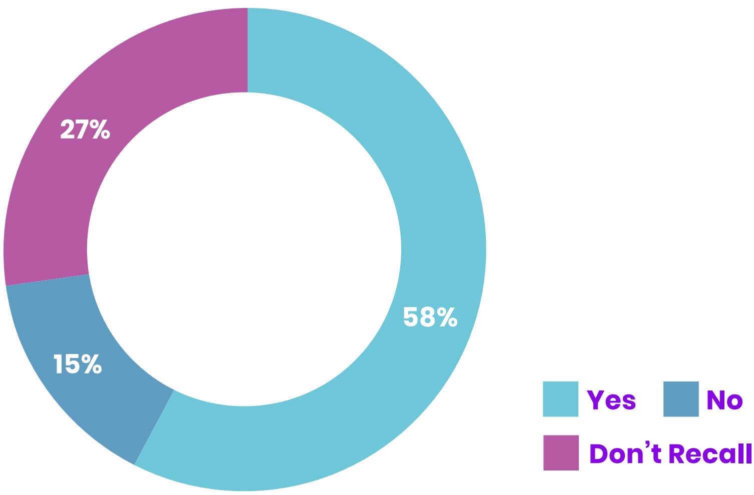
What does this say about shopper needs?

Well, shoppers seem to trust each other and rely on each other's feedback. They also seem to appreciate added value in the form of discounts along with information in the form of photos. As for how these discounts or offers are shared, shoppers mostly agree they prefer to receive them via email. The story these preferences tells is that shoppers like to be informed and valued, and they like to get their information onsite while being shown how valued they are through their email.

Making Every Impression Count: Onsite Experiences

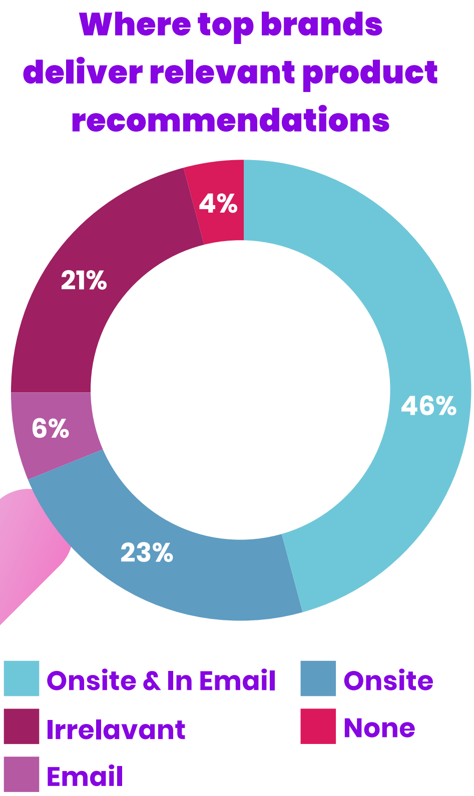
The onsite experience is a brand's most important asset. Brands have complete control of what their onsite experience looks like and shoppers have the greatest intention to buy when browsing a brand's site. For most shoppers, a brand's homepage is the first impression it gets to make on them each time they come to the site. First impressions are crucial when trying to win someone over. That said, when consumers were asked if these top direct-to-consumer brands are delivering relevant experiences on their homepage the large majority said yes. In fact, only 15% of consumers distinctly said the experience was not relevant.

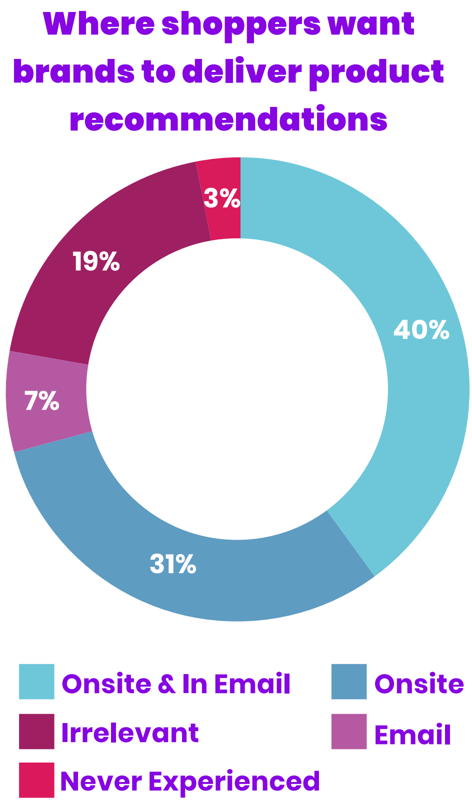
If consumers feel the content on brands' homepages is relevant to them



Product recommendations are a staple of any ecommerce customer experience. Amazon grew itself to one of the largest companies on the planet almost purely off the success of their recommendations algorithms. How these recommendations are presented, the logic or rules that dictate what they show, and the creative assets used to make them pop can make all the difference to a shopper.

To first learn how top direct-to-consumer brands are currently using product recommendations, consumers were asked to highlight whether they received recommendations both in their email and on the brand's website or if they received them via only one or the other. Then consumers were asked to signify how they prefer product recommendations to be delivered to them.





As shown in the data, the large majority of top direct-to-consumer brands are delivering product recommendations to customers via both onsite and in email. This aligns directly with consumer demand, which shows that most shoppers want product recommendations both onsite and in email. It's also interesting to note that if it's boiled down to onsite or in email only consumers seem to prefer onsite. One reason for this could be the intention behind a consumer browsing onsite over their intention when reading their emails.

Onsite Experiences Continued

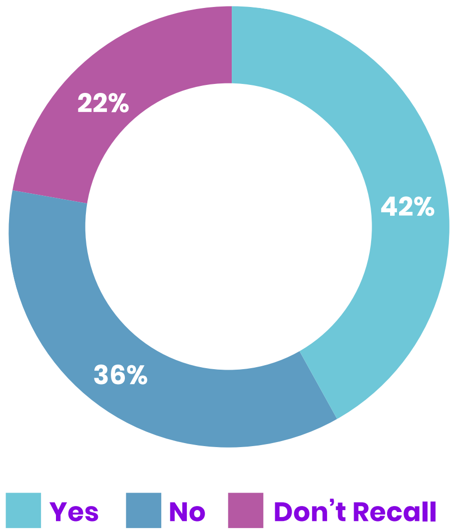
After relevance and ease, shoppers typically look for intuitive use of social proof within onsite experiences. This can come in the form of user-generated content aggregated from reviews and ratings or even images curated from customers' social media profiles. Social proof works, but are brands using it? The majority of shoppers say top direct-to-consumer brands do use user-generated content on their website. However, those who say they don't recall seeing social proof, together with customers who definitively said the brands didn't, beat out consumers who remember seeing UGC by **16%**.

Shoppers largely agree that social proof increases their likelihood of purchasing products, with **63%** saying it does and only **37%** saying it doesn't. By supporting the claim that the products are worth their price with third-party opinions, brands are able to much more easily convince shoppers to commit.

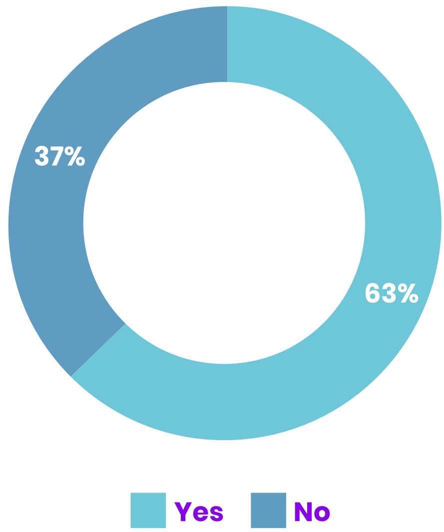
Live chat is an integral part of a successful onsite experience for ecommerce brands operating in today's market. Consumers no longer have the patience to wait on phone lines or communicate slowly through emails, so it's important brands give them a non-intrusive way to reach out. In fact, **65%** of shoppers say they want an option for live chat on a brand's website, and luckily **72%** of shoppers say that top brands do in fact offer this option.

Top direct-to-consumer brands who are meeting the experience demands of today's consumers are delivering onsite experiences that are relevant, social backed, and seamless in their service accessibility. Shoppers want onsite experiences that are catered to their needs while also wanting to know that others are experiencing what they want with the brand. They also want to have the ability to communicate with the brand on a one-to-one level.

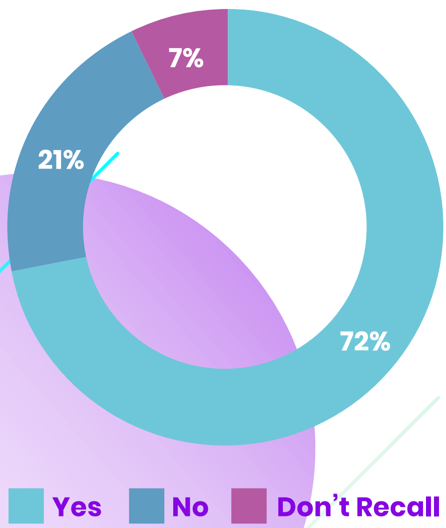
Do brands feature social media content or reviews on their site?



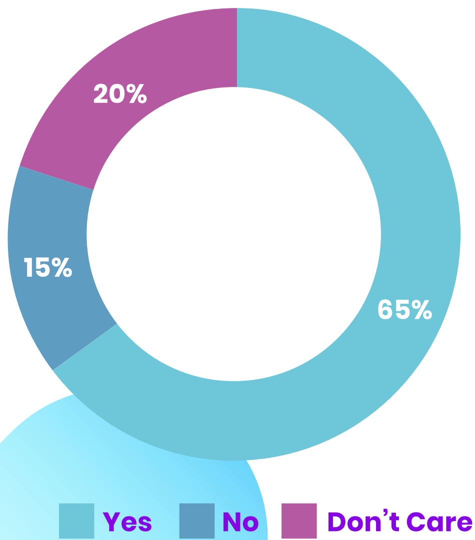
Are consumers more likely to purchase from brands who feature social media content or reviews on their site?



Do brands offer live chat on their site?



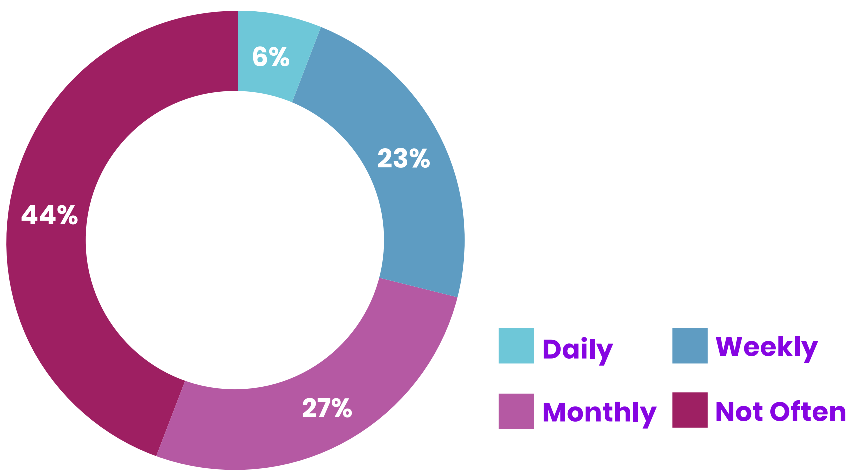
Do consumers want brands to offer live chat on their site?



Maintaining Their Attention: Email Frequency And Engagement

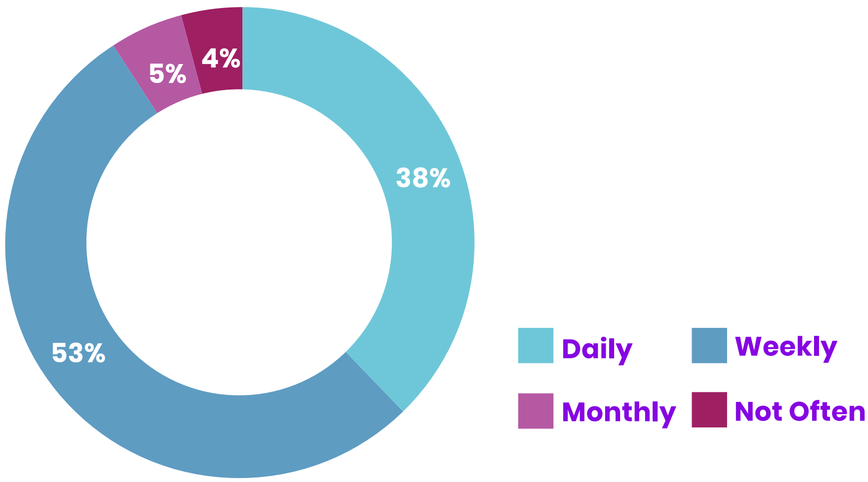
Every brand wants to find that elusive "sweet spot" for email communications that lands perfectly between enough for high engagement and not so much that it overwhelms shoppers. Around **44%** of consumers say they don't want brands to email them often. The number of consumers who want brands to email them monthly or even weekly is similar at **27%** and **23%** respectively.

How frequently consumers want brands to email them



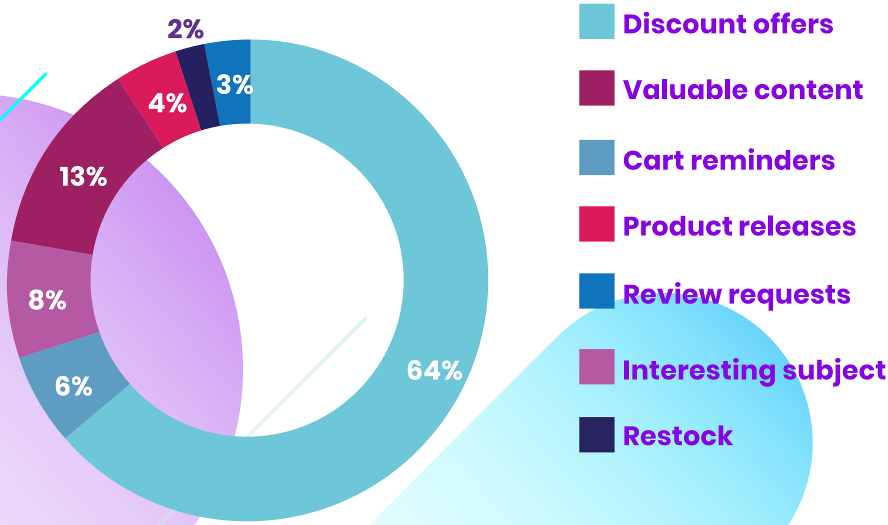
Currently, top direct-to-consumer brands seem to mostly email shoppers weekly, with **53%** of consumers saying that's how frequently these brands email them. The second most popular cadence for top brands today is daily, with **38%** of consumers saying they receive emails at this frequency. Currently, top direct-to-consumer brands seem to mostly email shoppers weekly, with **53%** of consumers saying that's how frequently these brands email them. The second most popular cadence for top brands today is daily, with **38%** of consumers saying they receive emails at this frequency.

How often brands email customers



That said, there are definitely types of email content that can convince shoppers to engage with emails no matter what. By far, consumers say that discount offers are what motivate them most to open emails from brands, with valuable content offers coming in second at . In other words, as long as emails are providing value to shoppers, it seems like they are willing to engage with emails at any frequency. Customers seem to care more about the substance than the frequency.

What motivates consumers to open emails from brands?

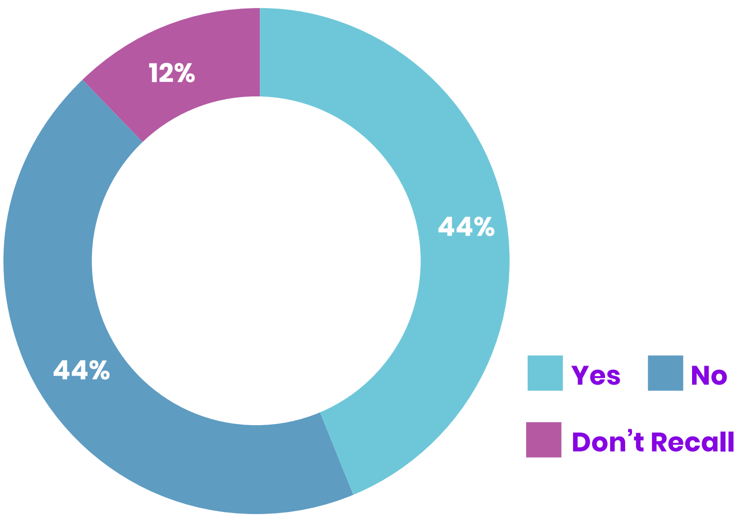


Maximising Your Reach: Social Media And Other Interaction Channels

Social media advertising was the key that unlocked a door of possibilities for countless brands over the past decade. Like never before, brands were able to create hyper-targeted advertising campaigns that spoke directly to consumers with messages curated especially for them.

Today, there's a near fifty-fifty split between consumers on whether the social media advertisements they see from top direct-to-consumer brands are relevant or not. This shift could be the result of growing consumer demand for authenticity over advertising or it could simply be a symptom of consumer fatigue.

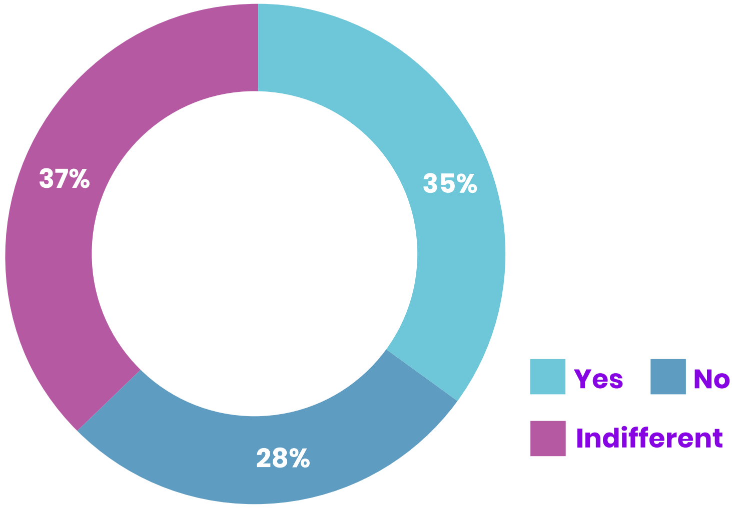
Do consumers find brands' social media ads relevant?



As the demand for social ads decreases, companies must find new ways to acquire customers. One way social media companies are adapting to this new world is by allowing shoppers to purchase products without leaving the platform. This new model keeps users on the platforms while still promoting product discovery for brands. The only problem is that consumers are either indifferent about shopping on social media platforms **(37%)** or do not want to shop on them at all **(28%)**.

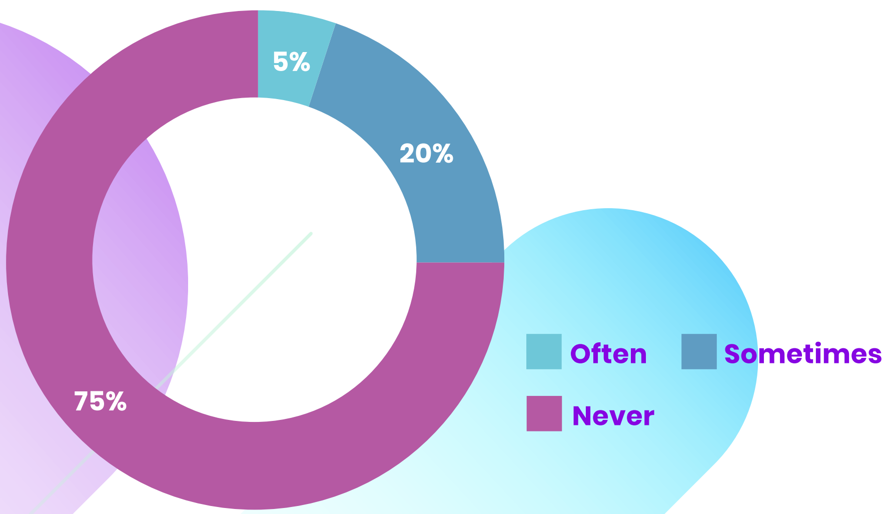
With the effectiveness of social advertising declining and only **35%** of consumers wanting to purchase products through social platforms, it appears the importance of social channels may be waning.

Do consumers want brands to allow them to purchase products on social media?



One of the hottest topics in the ecommerce industry right now is the emergence of voice shopping. With Amazon, Google, Apple and others offering in-home voice assistant products, brands are thinking about how consumers are interacting with everything from their lights to online shopping. While this could change, adoption of voice shopping is slow, with a large majority of shoppers **(75%)** saying they never make voice purchases, and only 5% of shoppers saying they make voice purchases often.

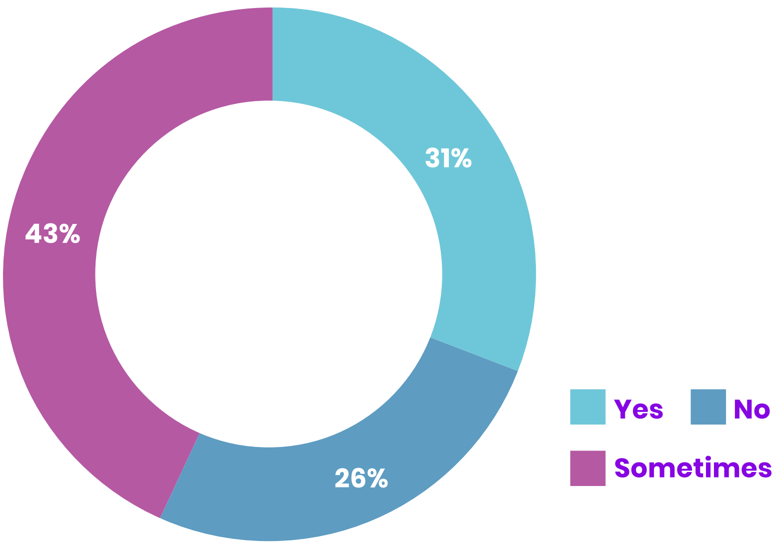
The frequency of which consumers make voice purchases



Manifesting Raving Fans: Experiences That Drive Loyalty

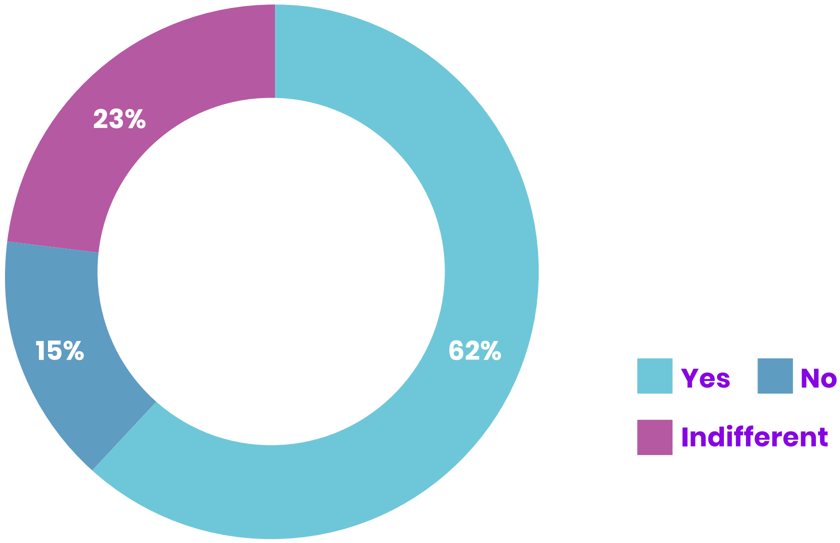
Convincing shoppers to continue coming back is difficult enough in and of itself. Getting shoppers to sign up for loyalty programs and to make referrals is even harder. Realistically, shoppers seem to be scattered when it comes to rewards for referrals. This could be the result of overly ambitious rewards programs or maybe the customer not being able to tangibly recognize the value of the rewards offered. Either way, **43%** of shoppers say they participate in referral programs sometimes and **31%** say they participate all of the time. That leaves **26%** who don't participate at all. This relatively even distribution shows that the model itself isn't broken but the execution of it hasn't universally convinced shoppers, yet.

Do consumers participate when brands offer rewards for referrals?



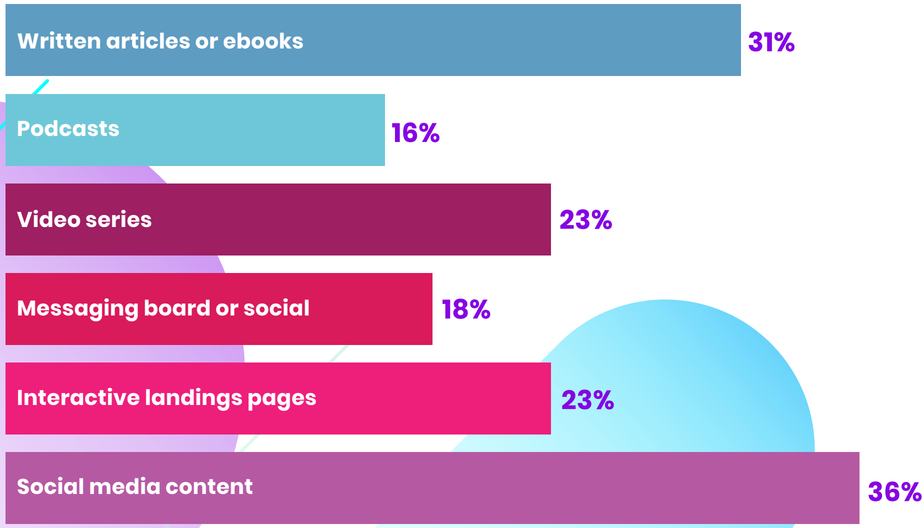
As for creating an account for a loyalty program, shoppers seem to mostly agree that they are definitely willing to do so. This low barrier of entry for high pay-off seems to be a must-do for any brand looking to deepen a relationship with its customers.

Are consumers more likely to create an account with a brand if they have a loyalty program?



Finally, in terms of content that brands can produce to keep shoppers coming back for something other than just buying, most consumers seem to agree they prefer either social media content **(36%)** or written articles and ebooks **(31%)**. The runner-ups are videos and interactive landing pages, both tied with 23% of consumers. Though, none of the content types scored particularly low relative to the rest, which could mean it's not as much about the format as the value the content provides.

What kind of content do consumers want from brands?



Conclusion

With onsite and email experiences remaining in focus for consumers and the focus on social media shifting from native social experiences to the leveraging of social content in other channels, brands have more opportunity than ever to consolidate their efforts into succinct owned channel experience strategies. By creating seamless experiences across all owned channels, brands can deliver the experiences customers want most. Orchestrating these types of experiences is easy with tools that can help tie customers' onsite behavior with offsite communications and personalize those communications with relevant social proof and offers.

Delivering fully personalized experiences that are consistent across the most crucial channels enables brands to build a community among their customers that fosters organic loyalty and increases the lifetime value of each and every shopper. In a world where acquisitions costs are forever rising, building personal customer relationships and inspiring organic word of mouth marketing is the only way to achieve the growth and positive customer experience that D2C brands desire.

›› To learn how you can create customer experiences that meet consumer expectations and land you in the top ecommerce brands, check out the Integrated Commerce Growth Stack.

Seamlessly integrate your personalization, social proof and owned marketing channels to deliver unique award winning shopping experiences. With the Integrated Commerce Growth Stack, brands can create, deploy and optimise unforgettable experiences across every touchpoint, orchestrating intuitive shopping journeys that increase customer lifetime value. Each best-in-class technology seamlessly integrates with the others, which allows brands to leverage the power of each in concert with the others.