

SALSIFY | Guide

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO **BUILDING WINNING SHOPPING EXPERIENCES**

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE LATEST SHOPPING INNOVATIONS

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Build Winning Shopping Experiences With Salsify

AS SHOPPERS EVOLVE, **EXPERIENTIAL SHOPPING IS THE FUTURE**

Experiential shopping has become a modern retail buzzword, but the practice itself is as old as time. The first market to experiment with this was the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, which quickly turned into an experiential shopping destination when sellers began to attract buyers with aesthetically displayed goods.

Static displays soon transitioned into dynamic ones — jewelers crafting rings, game-makers offering chess sessions, and food vendors whipping up delicacies right before your eyes.

This age-old practice of providing rich and immersive shopping experiences continues in today's digital world, whether a customer is shopping in a brick-and-mortar location or online.

Shopping experiences, when the buying journey includes high-quality, engaging product content and innovative shopping options, are must-haves for modern shoppers — and are essential for keeping up with the future of shopping.

The best brands and retailers provide experiential shopping experiences online. Brands and retailers use tools like video, virtual try-on, augmented reality (AR), and gamification to digitally mimic the in-store experience and make online shopping fun, interactive, and convenient.

While experiential selling across various channels is a winning sales strategy, it's also no secret that consumers have endless options.

In a world with an exorbitant amount of online stores, what can you do to ensure your shopping experience reaches the right customers in meaningful ways?

This guide will cover everything you need to know to create winning shopping experiences in today's thriving online, offline, and hybrid retail landscape.

“Shopping experiences, when the buying journey includes high-quality, engaging product content and innovative shopping options, **are must-haves for modern shoppers**”

HOW BRANDS AND RETAILERS CAN BUILD ENGAGING SHOPPING EXPERIENCES

1. Incorporate Enhanced Content Across Digital Touch Points

Online shoppers can't touch, try, or see products in person, so they're looking for engaging, online experiences that offer them the next best thing.

[McKinsey & Company](#) retail expert Tiffany Burns explains customer expectations when interacting with brands and retailers online. "As a consumer, when I go on the retailer's website or app, I expect to see availability, a connection to what's in the store, and a way to order things that I can pick up in-store," says Burns.

Slow-loading websites, inconsistent content across sales channels, and outdated inventory can pose major roadblocks, however.

Today's tech-savvy consumers count on brands and retailers to bring the physical shopping experience online as smoothly as possible. And a reliable way to accomplish this is by investing in enhanced content across all your digital touch points.

Here are some types of enhanced content to add to your product pages.

Live Videos

Live video shopping lets customers virtually interact with your products the same way they would in person. With live video, your sales representative can answer questions on the fly, showcase products real customers use, and even collaborate with recognizable influencers to capture the attention of niche audiences.

China is a pioneer in the live-shopping industry. For example, online retail giant Alibaba livestreamed a pre-sales campaign for Singles Day, an unofficial holiday in China for people not in relationships, and generated \$7.5 billion in total transaction value within the first 30 minutes, according to [Forbes India](#).

Other popular companies are also trying their hand at livestreaming:

- **Amazon Live** is growing in the United States with live cooking shows, makeup tutorials, and fitness demonstrations.
- **Nordstrom** has a dedicated shopping channel with a lineup of events and styling sessions for its customers.
- **Tchibo and Douglas** in Germany are promoting product lines in weekly livestreams.

If you're looking to engage customers in digital settings, investing in livestreaming is an excellent place to start.

Video FAQs

Many brands and retailers are successfully using video FAQs to answer the most burning customer questions in a visual and more comprehensive manner. These video FAQs can include product tutorials, demonstrations, and applications to give in-depth answers to common questions.

[Hims](#), a haircare brand for men, is one brand that posts video FAQs to answer common product questions. These videos act as a proxy for an in-person sales representative and make it possible for customers to get answers quickly.

Video Testimonials

Two out of three people say they’d be more likely to purchase after watching a testimonial video demonstrating how a business, product, or service had helped another person like them, according to research from video platform [Wyzowl](#).

Additionally, 88% of people in a different [Wyzowl](#) study said they’d bought a product or service after watching a video.

[Warby Parker](#) is an example of a brand that uses video testimonials to build trust across various customer touch points, including its website, Instagram, etc.

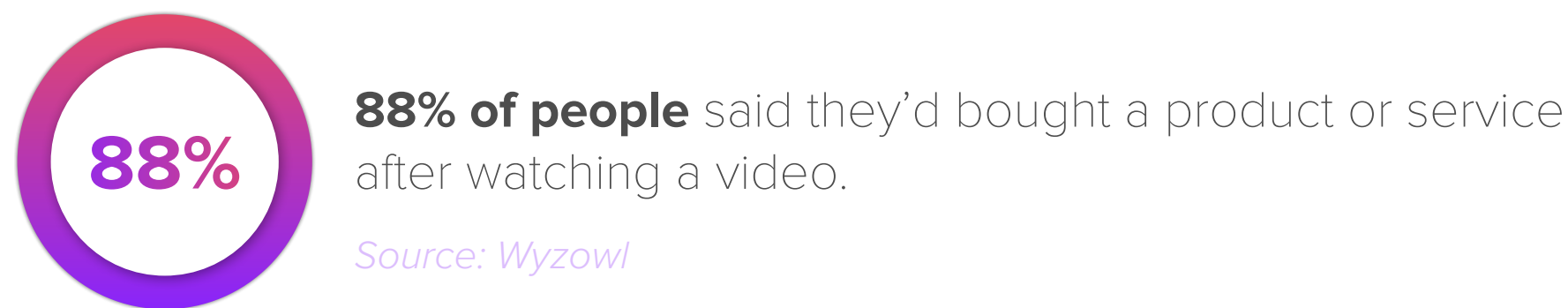


Image Galleries

One of the best ways to improve the online shopping experience is to optimize all your product pages with beautiful image galleries.

Salsify’s “[2022 Consumer Research](#)” report found that 70% of U.S., 73% of British, 50% of French, and 48% of German consumers are “more likely to buy from a personally relevant product page,” which includes high-quality images.

For example, the makeup brand [Ilia](#) has outstanding product image galleries. Curious consumers can click on the makeup shade that matches their skin tone most and see how it looks on a live model.

Ilia’s galleries include more than one image for each respective product to give consumers an idea of exactly how the product will look on a person with a similar skin tone.

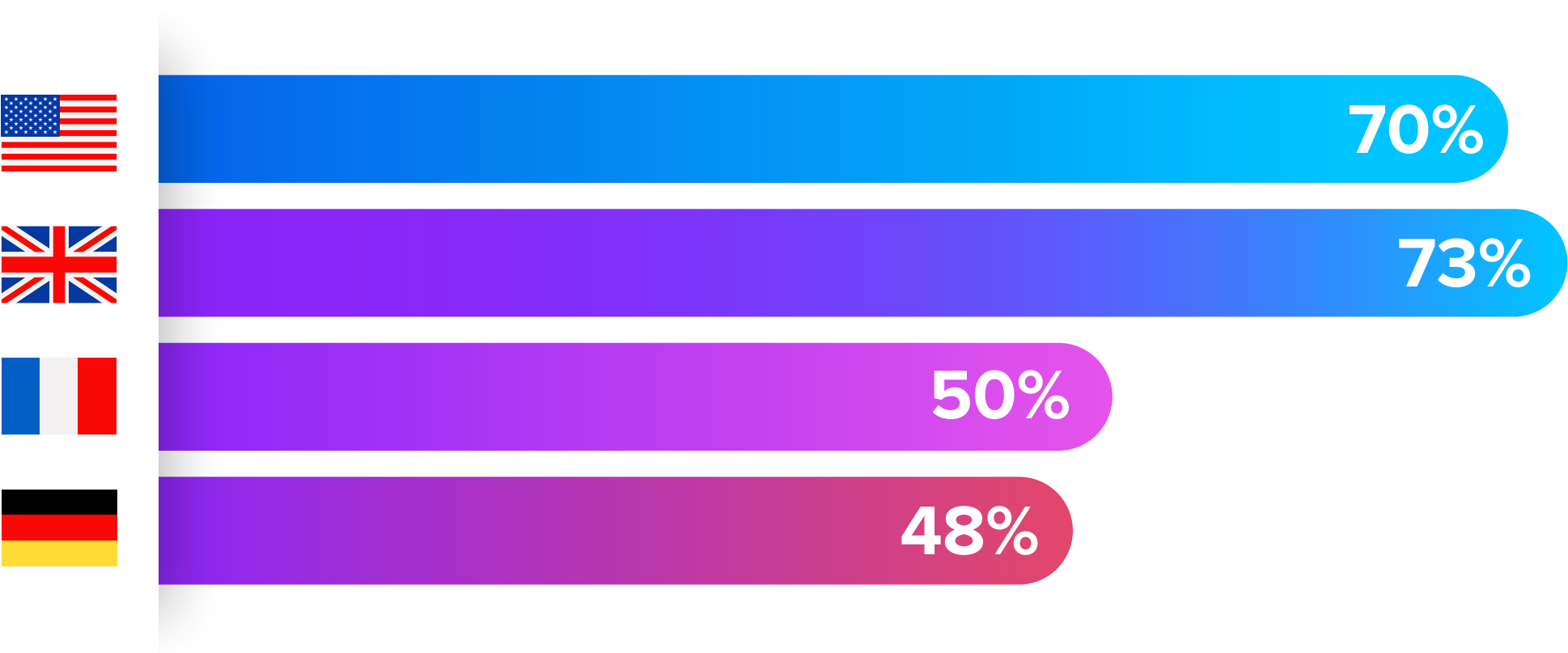
Value-Based Content

Value-based content is anything that adds value to a shopping experience or offers a deeper look into how a brand or retailer’s product looks, works, or improves a consumer’s life.

For example, [Fly By Jing](#) sells Sichuan chili crisp, Zhong sauce, and other delicious products — but the brand doesn’t only post a product photo and call it good. It also includes recipes consumers can make with its products. This approach is the perfect example of outstanding value-based content.

Tutorials are another example of value-based content. Several makeup brands include video, step-by-step, and user-generated content (UGC) tutorials demonstrating how consumers can achieve gorgeous looks with their products.

Percentage of consumers that are “more likely to buy from a personally relevant product page,” which includes high-quality images. (By Country)



Interactive Content

Interactive content is another way to emulate an in-store shopping experience, and it can provide consumers with personalized recommendations based on their interactions.

Quizzes are a trendy example of interactive content. With online quizzes, consumers answer a series of questions and get product, size, color, and style recommendations based on their answers.

Customers have a lot of options for purchasing products — both online and offline. If you want to stand out as a brand or retail organization, it's essential to invest in content that gives as much detail about your product as possible to help consumers make informed purchasing decisions.

2. Leverage AI To Connect With Your Target Audience While They Shop

Out of all digital shopping technology, experts project artificial intelligence (AI) adoption to grow the fastest in upcoming years, according to a [Salesforce](#) report on the current state of sales.

What's more, AI can create \$1.4 to \$2.6 trillion of value in marketing and sales, according to [HBR](#).

AI adds immense value in the world of commerce because it automatically analyzes extensive data sets, creates customer personas based on that data, and then uses that information to provide personalized connections and recommendations to individuals.

Macy's is a retail brand leveraging AI in a notable way to target customers and improve online and offline customer shopping experiences. For example, [Macy's On Call](#) provides personalized support to shoppers while reducing in-store staff. It's tailored to answer store-specific questions such as directions

to a particular item or stock availability. The bot is equipped with sensors and mood detectors to sense frustration and send human help.

Adopting AI can help you elevate online, offline, and hybrid shopping experiences with personalized guides, style-identifying systems, targeted recommendations, and more.

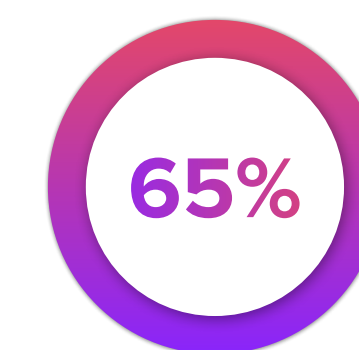
3. Create Collaborative Online Shopping Experiences To Mimic Shopping With Friends and Family

Shopping is usually a communal activity. A [SurveyMonkey](#) study found that 65% of U.S. shoppers turn to family and friends as their most trusted source of information on products and services.

While it's challenging for consumers to shop with friends online, it doesn't mean they don't want to experience the same sense of community in-person shopping provides.

For example, [Hatch](#) is a women's and maternity apparel retailer that curates daily events via video conferencing to connect long-standing customers with newer ones. The information exchange helps mothers form close bonds, build a valuable network, and offer each other product recommendations.

This kind of innovative experiential shopping helps elevate virtual shopping experiences, foster community, and encourage ongoing customer engagement.



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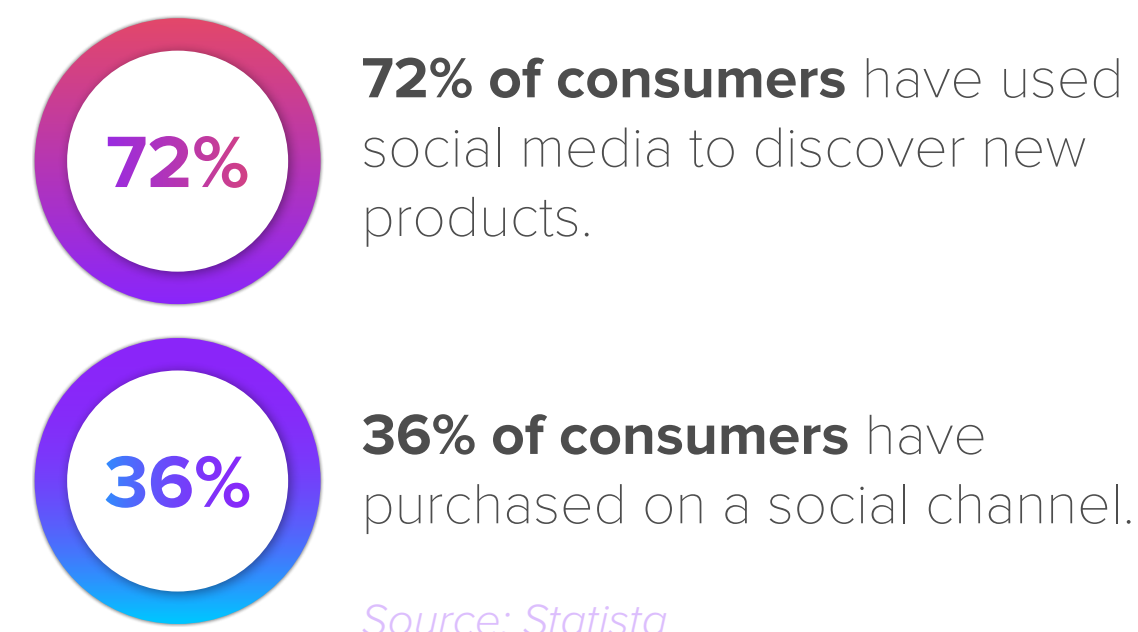
Source: Survey Monkey

4. Optimize Your Social Shopping Channels

Social commerce has skyrocketed in the past couple of years. We've seen the rise of social selling on TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and other social channels. And research from [Statista](#) shows consumers are responding positively to social commerce. Seventy-two percent of consumers have used social media to discover new products, while 36% of consumers have purchased on a social channel.

What's more, the trend isn't slowing down anytime soon as it's projected to grow to \$1.2 trillion by 2025, notes professional services company [Accenture](#).

If you're not participating in social selling, you're missing out on a huge opportunity to engage customers. Here are some ways you can optimize your social shopping channels to provide a better experience for your customers.



Create Shoppable Posts Across Your Social Media Channels

Create content on TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook to showcase your best products. Always include a clickable call-to-action (CTA) that lets people buy instantly.

Invest in User-Generated Content

User-generated content (UGC) platform [Tint](#) says 93% of marketers agree that consumers trust individual recommendations significantly more than branded content. UGC is relatable, real, and authentic — and today's consumers love it.

Partner With Influencers on Branded Content

Influencer marketing is growing faster than almost any other digital marketing channel. This year, it's projected to expand to a \$16.4 billion industry, says [Influencer Marketing Hub](#). It makes sense: Influencers create personal, daily connections with niche audiences, and their audiences are highly likely to take product recommendations from influencers.

In-App Style Guides

Create style guides to go with your products to help shoppers visualize applications. For example, vintage retail brand [Elephant In My Room's](#) style guides provide suggestions on color blocking and styling sleepwear.

In-App Stores

Create stores on social media platforms like Instagram, Pinterest, and Facebook, to make it easy for people to shop inside the app and make purchases without switching platforms.

Brands and retailers that create stellar omnichannel shopping experiences are winning over brands that don't — and that includes creating cohesive and meaningful shopping experiences across social media.

5. Level Up Your Online and In-Store Shopping Recommendations

Gone are the days when customers were satisfied with generic product recommendations. People now want recommendations that are tailored to their personal preferences, location, shape, size, color, interests, and anything else that relates to their individual situation.

There are two main approaches brands and retailers can take when personalizing product recommendations.

The Bottom-Up Approach

In this approach, retailers make recommendations based on what the customer has recently added to their cart or already purchased. For example, if a customer added hiking boots to their online shopping cart, it could trigger a recommendation for wool socks.

The Top-Down Approach

With a top-down approach, companies make recommendations based on an overall theme based on customer data and preferences. For example, if a customer filled out a style quiz, the algorithm would trigger recommendations that correlate with a customer's answers.

Here are some examples of how brands and retailers are using these approaches to personalize product recommendations:

- **Jack Wills** is a popular fashion retailer using the bottom-up approach. If a customer adds a blue rain jacket to their cart and abandons their cart, Jack Wills will send a follow-up email with the jacket and additional clothing items that complete the outfit in terms of style, tone, and color.
- **Brooks Running** is a shoe retailer using the top-up approach. When customers land on its site, they have the option to take a shoe finder quiz. This quiz offers customers a series of 10-questions. Based on the customer's answers, the quiz will narrow down results and offer a personalized "perfect fit" shoe recommendation.
- **Sephora** is another brand that goes above and beyond in terms of offering personalized recommendations. Sephora uses Color IQ AI to suggest products. Color IQ scans a person's face to identify skin color and will match the right makeup shades based on unique tone.

For consumers who have gone through multiple rounds of trial and error only to end up with misfit products, these personalized recommendations act like a reliable, fashion-forward friend or an in-store sales associate.

6. Provide Shopping Options That Appease Hybrid Shoppers

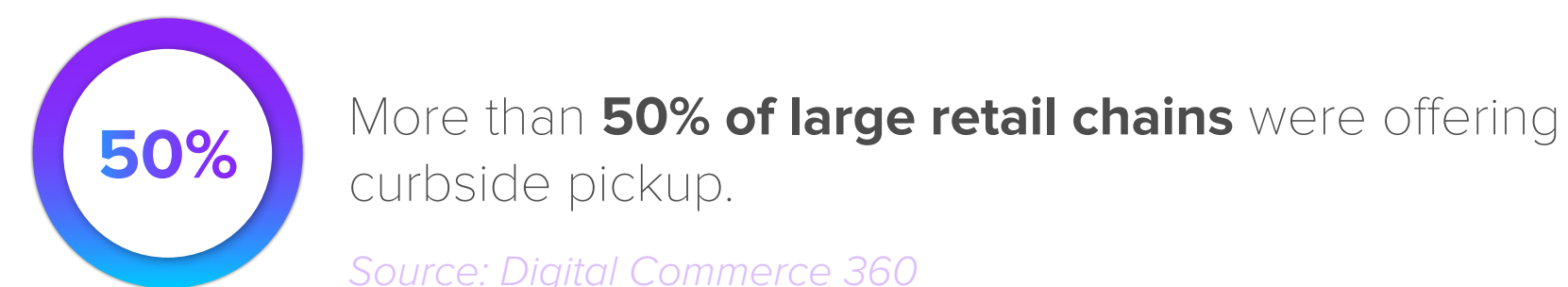
Today's customers don't have mutually exclusive shopping patterns. Consumers visit stores with friends and family, purchase on retailers' websites, impulse buy on social media, and also demand hybrid experiences where they can order online and pick up products in person.

Brands and retailers that cater to a well-rounded consumer are seeing boosts in revenues and increases in sales.

If you haven't already started providing hybrid shopping options, the time is now. Here are some popular options to consider.

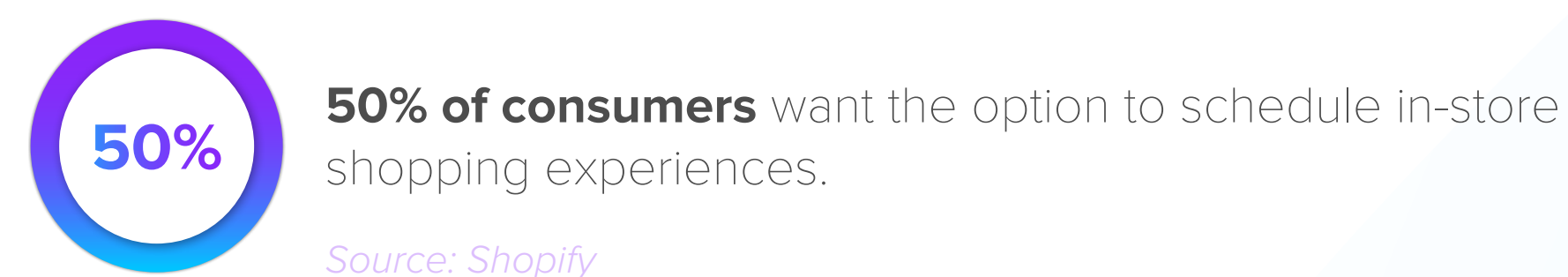
Curbside Pickup

As of 2021, more than 50% of large retail chains were offering curbside pickup, notes [Digital Commerce 360](#) — and it's with good reason. Curbside pickup is a convenient shopping option, and consumers love it. Even after the pandemic has slowed, customers are still actively participating in curbside pickups.



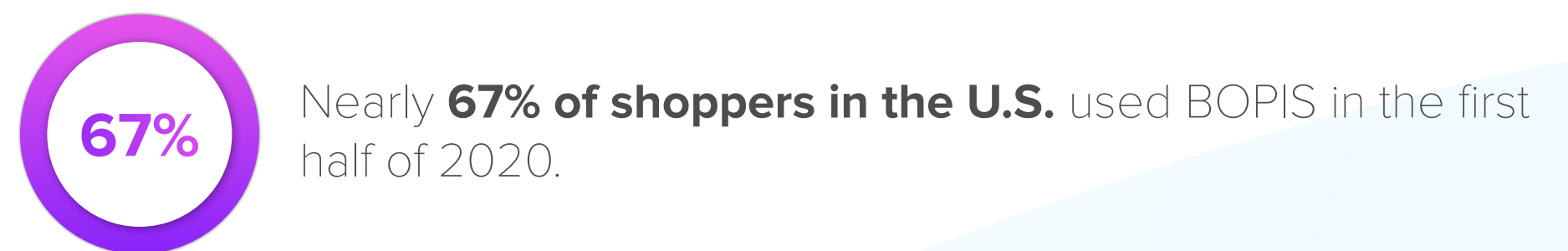
In-Store Shopping Appointments

[Shopify](#) found that 50% of consumers want the option to schedule in-store shopping experiences. This preference is especially true for consumers in the U.K., France, Spain, and Italy, according to the research.



Buy Online, Pick Up In-Store (BOPIS)

BOPIS is another rapidly growing worldwide commerce trend. Nearly 67% of shoppers in the U.S. used BOPIS in the first half of 2020. Globally, over 50% of adult shoppers use BOPIS, according to the [International Council of Shopping Centers](#). This trend is also projected to continue as experts say 10% of all sales will be click and collect by 2025, says [Invesp](#).



Buy In-Store, and Ship It Home

A common problem brick-and-mortar stores have is running out of inventory at a particular location. Buy in-store, and ship it home shopping options eliminate this problem altogether and help recover sales that may be lost otherwise.

If you have more than one retail location, it's critical to fuse your inventory together and fulfill sales promptly — no matter where your customer is browsing.

As mentioned, shopping is an omnichannel experience, and customers will come in contact with your brand across various touch points. The more you can do to create an integrated, convenient, and omnichannel shopping experience, the better service you'll provide.

7. Prioritize Digital Transformation and Adoption

Technology has revolutionized the omnichannel shopping experience. Developments in digital commerce and commerce technology make it possible for customers to get nearly whatever they want with a click of a button.

Commerce technology also makes it possible for brands to provide innovative and delightful shopping experiences for customers, no matter where they're shopping.

However, it's also critical to note that providing an integrated and cohesive omnichannel shopping experience isn't magic. It requires an investment in digital transformation and the adoption of the right commerce technology.

AR, virtual reality (VR), gamification, and commerce experience management tools are the driving force helping companies build these stellar shopping experiences. Let's take a closer look at some digital tools that help brands and retailers go above and beyond in a highly digital world.

AR

AR allows brands and retailers to enhance customer engagement by offering interactive experiences, including showing consumers how products can come alive in their own space — without actually being there.

For example, with AR commerce technology, shoppers can envision how a table would look in their dining space before they make the purchase.

[BMW](#) uses AR in their in-person showrooms to allow customers to customize car colors and features. This tactic helps customers visualize and get excited about the car they will be buying.

Virtual Try-On

VR lets shoppers try on products without even having to hold the product in their hands. While AR allows shoppers to see how products would look with the help of smart tech like smartphones, VR helps consumers experience trying on products.

For example, [Tarte Cosmetics](#) uses virtual try-on technology to show customers what a particular mascara, blush, or lipstick would look on them before they commit to a purchase.

Consider using VR technology to create high-touch experiences for online customers through virtual fitting rooms, product trials, and digital shelf planning.

Gamification

Gamification in commerce has grown significantly in the past couple of years, especially with the advent of crypto and blockchain technology.

Consumers are responding positively to brands and retailers that infuse the online gaming experience with the shopping experience. Sixty percent of consumers report they would buy more from brands if they offered an appealing game, according to [Digital Marketing World Forum](#).

One of the most recent and innovative gamification experiences is when [Nike](#) acquired digital fashion company RTFKT and made it possible for Nike fans to buy virtual shoes to use in the metaverse, an immersive online world that incorporates AR and VR technology.

Other brands are also getting creative with their gamification initiatives. For example, [Cred's](#) Bounty Game Show is a fun example of encouraging shopping through gamification.

LEVERAGE THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR COMMERCE EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT

The current state of retail provides ample sleek shopping options for today’s consumers. As such, the modern consumer now demands personalized, integrated, and convenient shopping experiences.

Consumers expect to be able to buy from their favorite brands — no matter where they choose to shop. Even shoppers across the world who prefer to buy from smaller, independent brands still want the convenience of shopping from big marketplaces, according to [Shopify](#).

For example, 72% of shoppers in the U.S., 65% of shoppers in the U.K., 62% in France, and 50% in Germany say they support small businesses. Yet, only 29% of shoppers have actually shopped with an independently owned business since the start of the pandemic, says [Shopify](#).

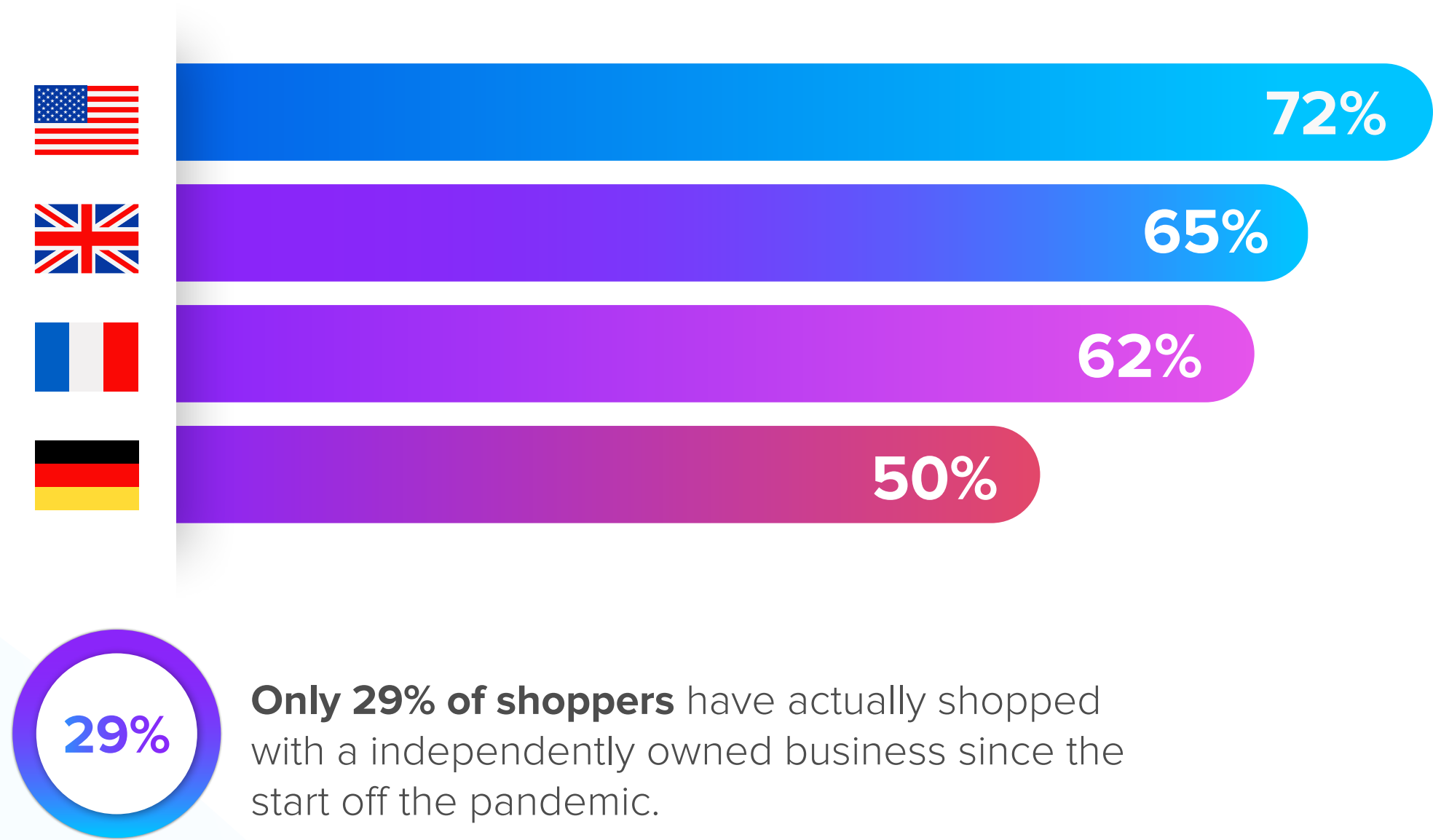
While global consumers express the desire to shop with independent businesses, convenient shopping experiences are still winning sales.

It’s not enough in today’s modern retail landscape to silo your shopping experiences. Instead, you must provide outstanding, experiential, and omnichannel shopping experiences that are integrated across all digital platforms. Brands and retailers that improve discoverability, fulfillment, and ease of shopping will remain successful.

The best way to cater to the needs of demanding modern consumers is to organize your digital shelf across platforms. Tools like commerce experience management solution help merchants tell a cohesive brand story across all digital touch points.

It pays off to invest in tools that keep your digital shelf organized. “By 2025, organizations offering unified commerce experience by frictionlessly moving customers through journeys will see a minimum of a 20% uplift in total revenue,” according to [Gartner](#).

Percentage of consumers that support small businesses.



BUILD WINNING SHOPPING EXPERIENCES WITH SALSIFY

Building winning shopping experiences requires creativity, digital transformation, and smart software to drive personalization and targeted content across all digital touch points.

Request a guided demo of the Salsify Commerce Experience Management (CommerceXM) Platform to learn how it could help you evolve to meet the changing demands of shoppers worldwide.

[Request Demo](#)

ABOUT SALSIFY

Salsify empowers brands, retailers, and distributors in over 100 countries worldwide to build shopper-centric, frictionless, and memorable commerce experiences. These experiences help increase brand trust, amplify product differentiation and assortments, boost conversion rate, grow profit margins, and speed time to market.

Learn why the world's largest brands like Mars, L'Oreal, Coca-Cola, Bosch, and GSK and retailers and distributors like E.Leclerc, Carrefour, Metro, and Intermarché use Salsify to stand out on the digital shelf.

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