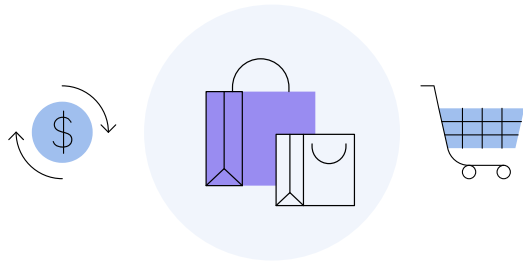




Drive more sales
by fixing these
**5 ecommerce
conversion gaps**

Retailers have spent billions of dollars trying to drive more conversions through their ecommerce channel.

Everything from speeding up the checkout process, optimizing site performance, A/B testing, creating customized experiences for different buyer personas, and adding new sales channels through social media, gaming, live streaming, and more have been on the table as brands continue to experiment with ways to maximize online revenue.



Despite all this, the typical online conversion rate for many retailers has remained stubbornly low, averaging at about 2% or less depending on the season. This, despite the fact that 43% of shoppers say they're shopping online more of the time since the pandemic.

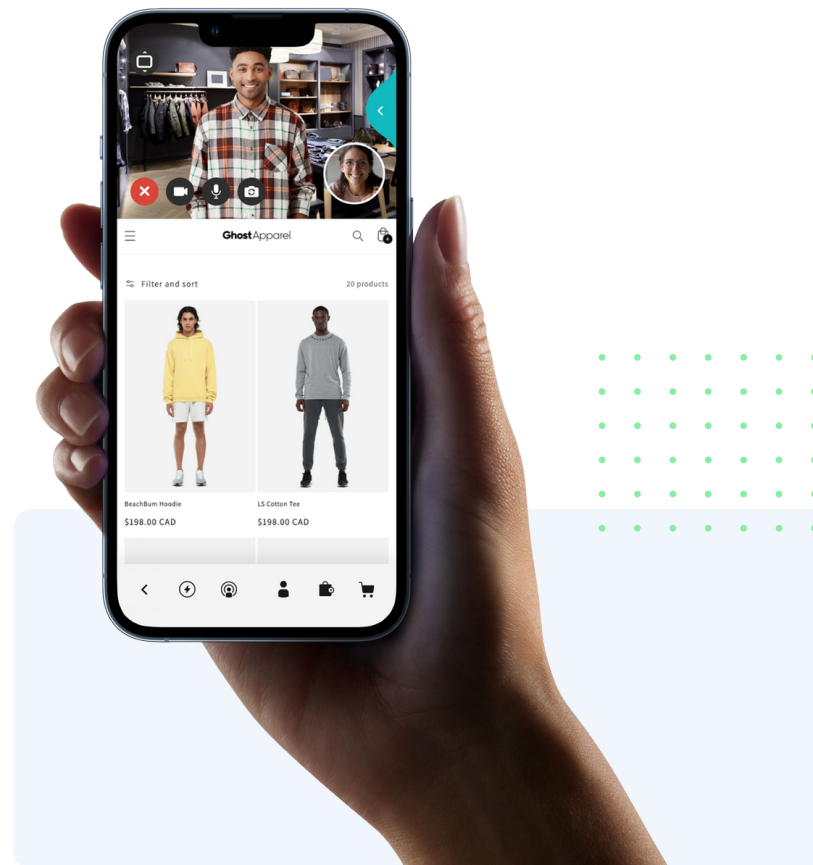
And with customer acquisition costs (CAC) soaring to new highs - roughly 60% higher than five years ago - it's more critical than ever to make the most of whatever traffic brands are managing to get in the virtual door.

There are many ways to point the blame for why conversion rates haven't grown alongside steeper CAC. Merchandising, pricing, customer acquisition strategies, and technical issues are just a few - and often, the ones where brands have spent a significant amount of time and effort to improve upon.

But what if it's not a blame game at all? What if it's just about recognizing the different ways customers shop, and how they use an online experience? What if it's about the inherent ways online shopping will pretty well always be different (and in many cases, lacking) than visiting a store?

In this ebook we're breaking down 5 ecommerce conversion gaps that speak to more macro roadblocks of online shopping.

The good news? There are actual solutions to these conversion gaps. Ones that can help retailers make the most of their existing traffic, rather than rely on increasingly prohibitively expensive acquisition strategies to fill their leaky buckets.



GAP #1

Traffic conversion

There is an obvious conversion rate gap for retailers between online (averaging about 2% for the year) and in-store (ranging from 20-40% and dramatically impacted by seasonality).

While it's tempting to draw a line from web traffic to checkout, the simple reality is many shoppers are actually just there to do research. In fact, 63% of consumers are doing research before they visit a store, a good amount of which is happening on your ecommerce site or other online channels.



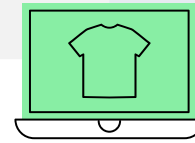
Brands have limited capabilities when it comes to tracking shoppers across digital acquisition and retention channels. This challenge only intensifies when it comes to linking online behavior to in-store browsing.

If a shopper can't find what they're looking for in their pre-store research process, they might not ever make it through the doors. And given the actual conversion opportunity is taking place in two siloed channels, the reason behind why would otherwise simply be chalked up to a non-converted web visitor.



63% of consumers are doing research before they visit a store, a good amount of which is happening on your ecommerce site or other online channels

3 Key Strategies



Build out more detailed PDPs

46% of U.S. shoppers abandon their online browsing or shopping journey if they can't find relevant product information. PDPs need to be optimized with as many relevant touchpoints as possible, including, but not limited to:

- Multiple product images
- Interactive 3D images
- Product videos
- Detailed product descriptions
- Fabrication and care / content / ingredients details
- Lifestyle suitability
- Sustainability
- UGC (reviews, photos, etc.)



Sync online and in-store inventory

The Covid-19 pandemic propelled many retailers to find ways for customers to understand what was in physical stores that they may not be able to set foot in. While the initial intent of this was to support initiatives like BOPIS (buy online pick up in store), many shoppers

provided positive feedback to retailers about how this service informed their decision to visit a brick and mortar store. Having in-store inventory numbers is a vital way to close the conversion gap between online browsers and in-store shoppers.



Provide live support

Even the most thorough PDP and inventory management system can still leave knowledge gaps. Having live chat is practically a baseline for most retailers looking to boost conversion rates. But live support could be even further enhanced with live video co-shopping. Associates can answer questions, provide recommendations and

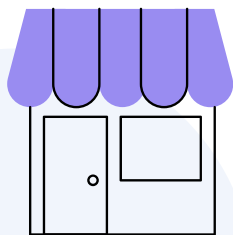
alternatives, saving the customer time both on the virtual storefront and having to browse in a physical store. Live shopping associates can even aim to convert the shopper within a call - even if they intend to visit the store later - by putting through the sale and having the item ready for pickup (BOPIS) when they come by.

GAP #2

Ease of access

When ecommerce first emerged, one of the early objections from both customers and retailers came down to delivery times delaying the instant gratification of shopping in-store. Ecommerce behemoths like Amazon have invested heavily in logistics infrastructure to shorten the time to delivery, with businesses like Shopify racing to catch up or provide alternatives.

Because of this, free shipping and expedited delivery have become the norm for brands looking to compete with the likes of Amazon. But retailers have started fighting back in more direct ways as well, using their brick and mortar locations as an advantage, instead of a limitation.



93% of customers
want their online experiences
to be equal or greater to their
in-store ones



Rethinking retail stores as mini-distribution centers has given brands a competitive edge when it comes to getting items just as fast, if not faster than Amazon, and certainly faster than a standard ecommerce fulfillment window of 3-7 days.

Online shopping may offer the convenience of being able to shop outside of store hours and seeing exactly what's in stock. But it'll always fall short from the ability to walk out of a store with an item in-hand - unless retailers can find a way to overcome this gap.

3 Key Strategies



Offer BOPIS or 'Click & Collect' services

The strategy of 'buy online, pick up in store' really took off during the Covid-19 pandemic, but it's carried on as an essential service for many retailers since

then. Shoppers can check out outside of retail hours, just like they would with a normal ecommerce purchase, but still get their desired product lightning fast.



Serve up same day last-mile delivery options

Delivery services like DoorDash and UberEats were originally designed to get food from one place to another with smart, trackable logistics and an army of gig drivers. Now they're starting to be leveraged by savvy retailers who recognize their customers might like to

get more than just food delivered on the fly. Ordering and picking up an item is convenient. Getting it dropped off at your house like a pizza is the ultimate in converting online browsers to happy customers.



Offer a virtual window into physical stores

Offer live video shopping, staffed by associates that are close to a shopper's geographic location. A live sales associate could track down an item of interest within a store, hold it up for the customer to inspect, and even put it

aside until they're able to come in or sell the product within a call for pickup later. They get the convenience of instant gratification without the hassle of visiting a store that might not have what they want.

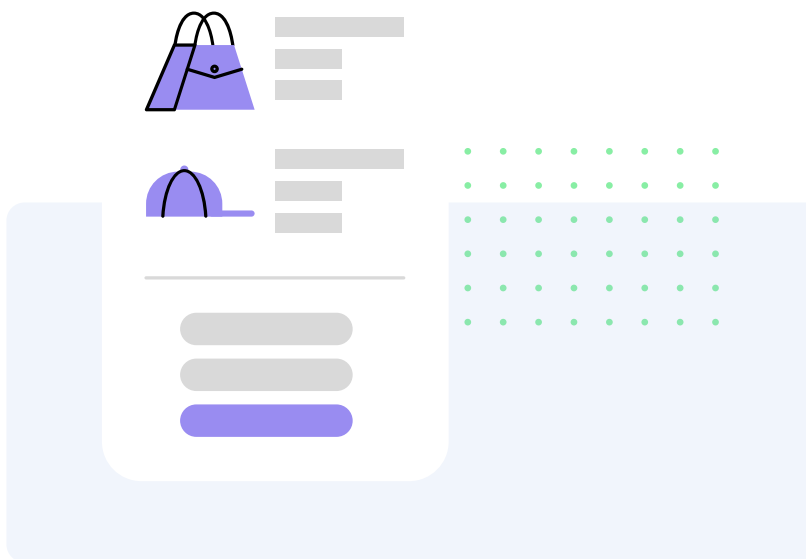
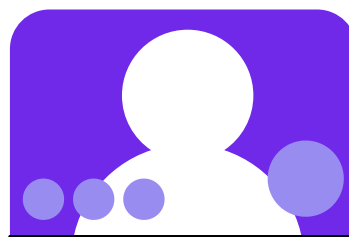
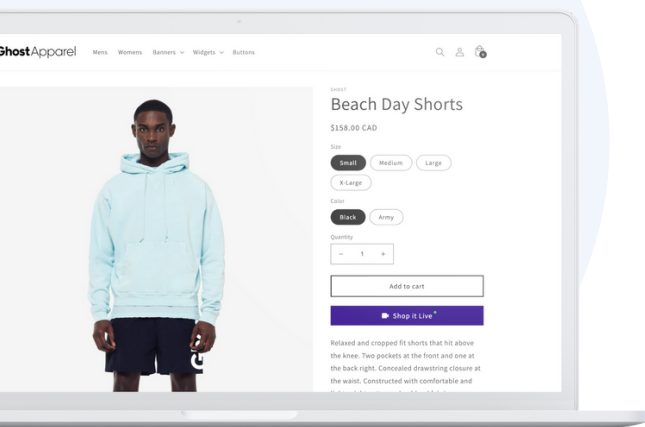
GAP #3

User experience

‘User error’ is a comical way to describe any technical issue that simply comes down to not knowing what you’re when using a tool. But it becomes a whole lot less funny if a shopper can’t find what they’re looking for, especially when a retailer might have exactly what they need.

Many brands are investing heavily in ways to make their sites more navigable while also providing more opportunities for customers to keep on clicking.

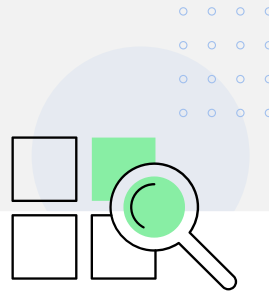
91% of shoppers
encountered at least one problem
when shopping online in 2021;
**34% of them cited not finding
what they want**



What’s unique about this particular gap is it plays out on both ends of the spectrum in terms of tech savviness. Younger, digitally native shoppers have short attention spans. If they click on an ad or spot a product an influencer was wearing and can’t quickly track it down, they’ll likely exit your site. On the flip side, older shoppers who are still relatively new to online shopping might be overwhelmed by features and functions retailers have introduced to convert shoppers. Or they might not understand how to search for a product that meets their needs.

Simply not being able to find an item is enough to shed serious conversions.

3 Key Strategies



Enhance search capabilities

Practically 1 in 3 shoppers will use an internal site search. And those that do are anywhere from 2 to 3x more likely to convert. Sweet stat, but keep in mind this simply reflects where the buyer is at: They already have an idea of what

they're looking for. But if search is falling short, that's a whole lot of missed opportunity to drive more conversions. If site metrics aren't matching this ratio of searches to sales, it could point to a major hole in the overall CX experience.



Use AI-driven product recommendations

If a customer manages to get to a collection or PDP that's relevant to them, machine learning should start tailoring their site experience. Well-placed AI-based product recommendations can accomplish three things at once: Spotlight products that go well together

(bigger basket size), show off alternatives if an item isn't quite what the shopper was looking for (keeping them on site), and present the products a customer is most likely to be interested in (driving conversions).



Give shoppers a hands-free online shopping experience

Product recommendations are increasingly a table stakes feature of most ecommerce websites. But 68% of shoppers have stated that personalized or relevant experiences are still not 'often' provided when shopping online. Leave the algorithms, search tools, and mindless clicking aside for a second. Imagine pulling up a plush chair in a retail store for a customer to sit down in, while a salesperson finds out what they're looking for and tracks it down within the store. That's exactly the kind

of scenario that can be created in a live video co-shopping experience. Shoppers don't have to do the heavy lifting, or really any at all, other than verbalizing what they're looking for. Live shopping associates can then share collections or PDPs for consideration, add items to a customer's cart, and even get them to checkout within a single call. Bonus: This laid-back online shopping experience is well-suited to the less tech-savvy shoppers that are quicker to call it quits.

Inventory availability

At first glance, not being able to get an item of interest because it's out of stock is a buying or merchandising problem. And to be fair, it's one of the areas that ecommerce often beats in-store shopping. If a customer can't find their preferred size in a retail store, they have an option to get the item - but it's an arduous undertaking involving calling or checking in with other retail locations, driving there, checking out the item, and then buying it. Online, things are a little more black and white: An item is in stock, or it's not.



If an item isn't in-stock online, retailers will often give shoppers the option to sign up for restock notifications. But this entire experience of low-to-no inventory is another opportunity to drive down failed conversions while boost customer satisfaction.

76% of shoppers say they're willing to buy a substitute, even if they're shopping with a specific apparel item in mind



3 Key Strategies



Let customers know when stock is running low

Nearly 70% of online shopping carts are abandoned. Customers feel a lack of urgency when shopping online, largely because they're in the dark about how much of an item there is compared to the in-store experience (i.e. If there's one size medium left on the rack, the shopper will be more compelled to keep it in their hand for fear of someone else grabbing the item). Give shoppers some insight into how popular an item is by spotlighting:

- How many people have viewed the item in a specific time period (last 24 hours, last hour etc.)
- How many people have added the item to bag
- How many people have purchased the item
- How popular the item is (i.e. it's one of the top 5 most-purchased items in the last day)
- How few of an item or variant are left

These strategies act the same way as traversing a physical store with an item clutched in hand. The shopper will feel compelled to act, driving more conversions before they're out of luck. The trick to this strategy is to ensure it comes off genuine. If every item has a 'selling fast!' banner beside it, shoppers won't believe you. It's also not a bad idea to give shoppers context for top-selling products. If an item has 5,000 views in the last day, is that higher than average? Cluing in shoppers into what's hot and trending will motivate action.



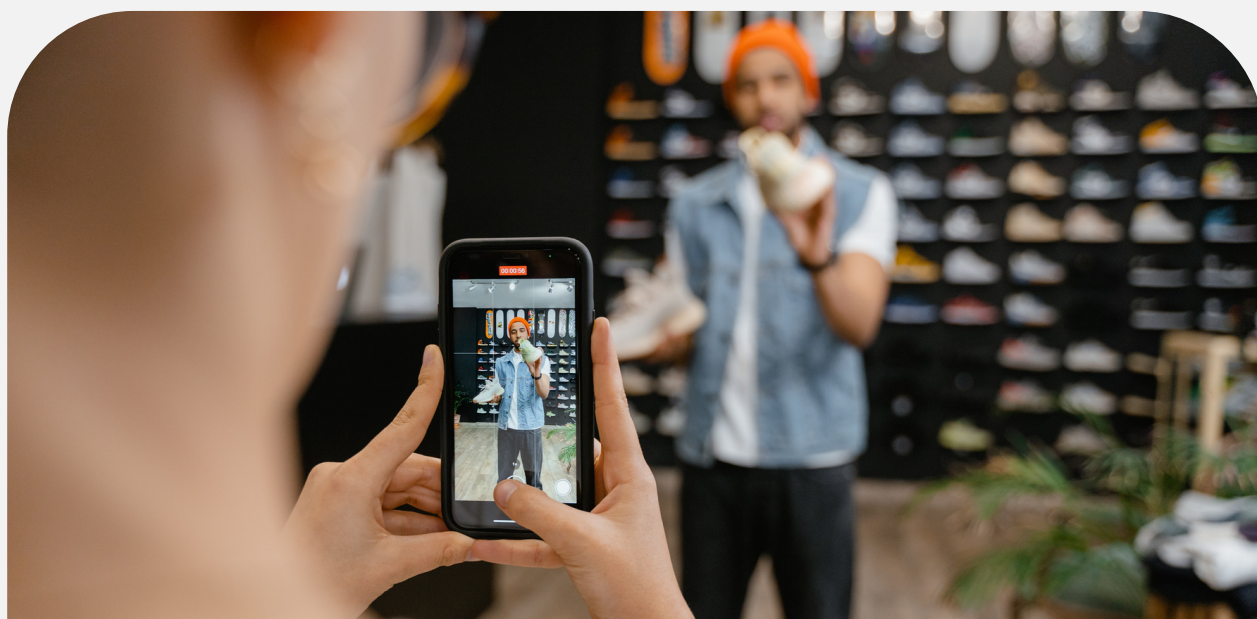
3 Key Strategies



Automate out-of-stock alternatives

If a shopper lands on a PDP where the entire product, or their specific variant is out of stock, you need to find ways to avoid bouncing. First, provide shoppers AI-generated alternatives of similar products on the site, in hopes they'll track down something that works just as well. If they really have their heart

set on an item, give them the chance to subscribe for a restock notification. Send an email confirmation for their restock notification, and in it, drop in alternative product recommendations, or the option to get 1:1 personalized service (keep reading!)



Fuel conversations, not frustrations

Invite shoppers to connect with a live personal shopper to track down alternatives. AI-generated recommendations are great, but speaking with an actual human gives shoppers the chance to specify what they loved about an item to find the best possible match. Alternatively, the

personal shopper might be able to dissuade a customer from their original buy altogether - filling them in on product details that might have made a product a bad fit, and making them feel more comfortable in the alternative, in-stock purchase they make instead.

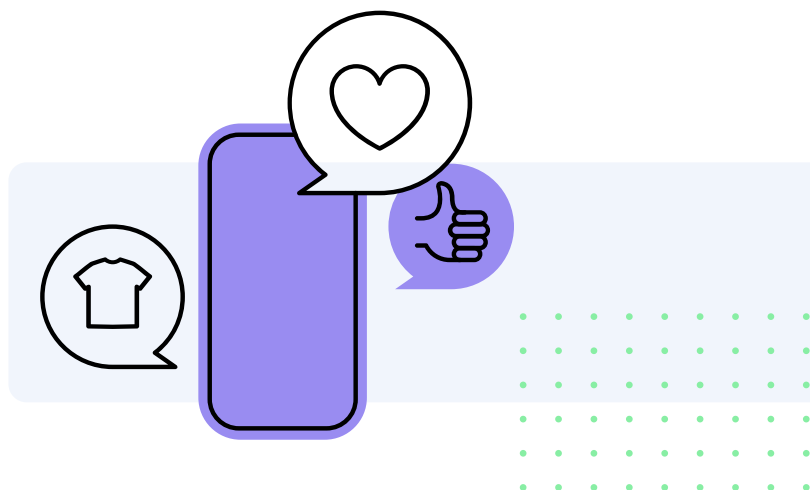
GAP #5

Social proof

Social proof has emerged as one of the major driving forces for conversion rate increases, and for good reason. Shoppers have a limited set of data points provided by the retailer - all inputs designed to put a product in the best (or at least, neutral) light as possible.

Yet brands that invest in review platforms and feeding in social content created by shoppers are seeing major results. Customers who interact with ratings and reviews convert at 120% the rate of those who don't; respective figures for Q&A are 157% and imagery at 91%.

More reviews typically leads to better results as well - 50 or more reviews per product can mean a 4.6% increase in conversion rates. Not only that, but shoppers that interact with user-generated content (UGC) are both 105% more likely to convert (and spend 11% more) than those who don't.



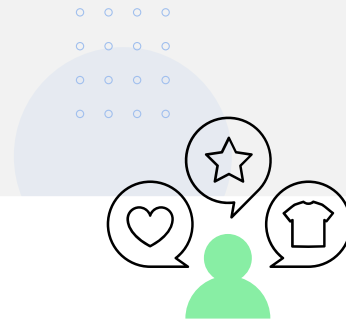
Only a fortunate few retailers will sell out products the moment they drop them - often buoyed by reputation, limited edition stock, special collaborations, celebrity / influencer hype, or a repeated bestseller being made available in a new variant. For the rest, UGC is becoming an increasingly critical way to drive more sales.

While many brands see influencer marketing as a shortcut to user-generated content, it's not a replacement for it altogether. Shoppers, particularly older ones, can be suspicious of an influencer's genuine take on a paid placement.



50 or more reviews per product can mean a **4.6% increase in conversion rates**

3 Key Strategies



Offer the trifecta of user-generated content: Reviews, Q&A, and images

On a base level, reviews and star ratings can only help shoppers. 9 out of 10 consumers read reviews before shopping - including checking for online reviews when making in-store purchases. But this is just one component of a solid UGC strategy.

Give shoppers the chance to ask questions publicly that can be answered by other customers, or by support staff. Finally, allow shoppers to upload images, or scrape images from social media, to give shoppers an 'in real life' (IRL) view.



Build UGC requests into the post-purchase experience

Customers are often happy to share their opinions, but they need the experience to happen on autopilot. Look into plugins that allow shoppers to provide product reviews from within an email, their user account, or some other central dashboard.

Considering incentivizing user reviews with loyalty program bonuses or promotions. Having shoppers use a company-directed #hashtag is an easy way to surface UGC from social media; offer up a daily gift card as a giveaway to drive more organic submissions with minimal effort.



Turn employees into advocates

Existing employees - including in-store workers and online customer support staff - are an overlooked resource to serve as brand ambassadors when engaging with shoppers. Think of it this way. A customer visiting a store and looking at a product online has the same amount of information if there are no other forms of UGC available (such as reviews). In a store environment, the shopper might ask a retail associate for help. Online, the options are often limited to email, phone, or at best, live

chat support. Elevate this experience by giving shoppers the same kind of one-on-one support virtually with live video chat. Employees can serve as solid brand champions; even though consumers know they're paid, they'll trust that they're speaking with a product expert to find what they need. Consider elevating select employees into influencers; create curated collection pages of their favorites, incorporate video recommendations and reviews, and build up their social profile.

That's a wrap!



As many ecommerce conversion rate optimization strategies increasingly become table stakes, innovative brands should be on the lookout for the next thing that will set them apart to create a better user experience that ultimately drives positive KPI results.

This ebook covers 15 key strategies to overcome some of the most common reasons for shoppers to avoid checking out, with one overriding theme: Bringing people into the digital experience.

At GhostRetail, we empower retailers to simulate the in-store shopping experience

virtually, giving shoppers the assistance of a real human to navigate and co-shop a website to find exactly what they need. For every shopper that is able to or interested in converting off built-in site automation, there is likely another that just wants some instant support to feel confident enough to hit checkout.

The results for GhostRetail clients speak for themselves:
On average, our customers see a 30% increase in AOV and a conversion rate of over 40% on connected calls.

Interested in learning more about how GhostRetail can help close the conversion gap?
[Book a discovery session with us today.](#)

