Mindtree
A Larsen & Toubro Group Company

Shaping the new retail customer experience

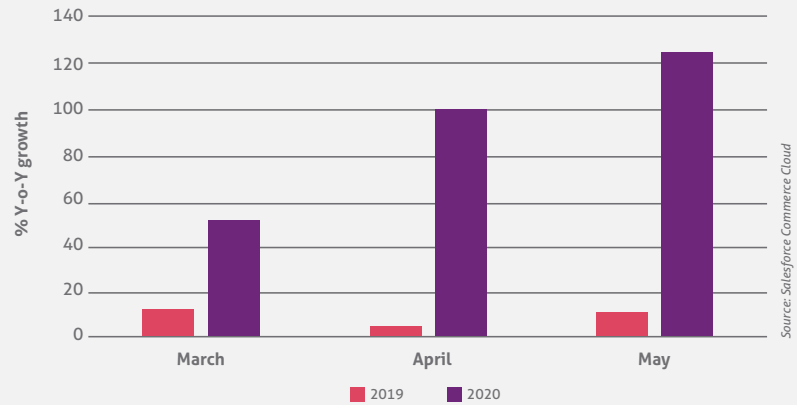**A Mindtree White Paper / July 2020**
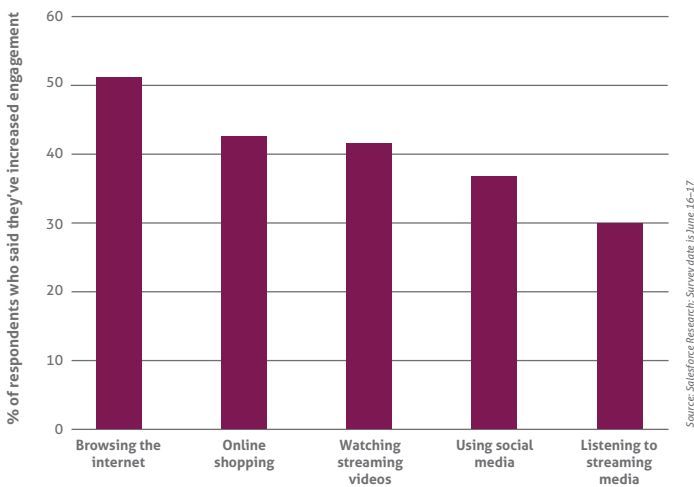
Welcome to possible

Global change

It's no secret, the impacts of COVID-19 have been felt across the globe. After the World Health Organization officially declared a pandemic in mid-March 2020, states began shelter-in-place initiatives and businesses closed their doors. Retailers looked for agile ways to stay engaged with customers and turned to e-commerce to fulfill their needs.

According to **data** from Salesforce's Commerce Cloud platform, digital sales in the US were up 65% from January to May compared to that same time period in 2019. Even as states and stores began to open up, May's digital sales growth was up over 120% compared to May 2019.
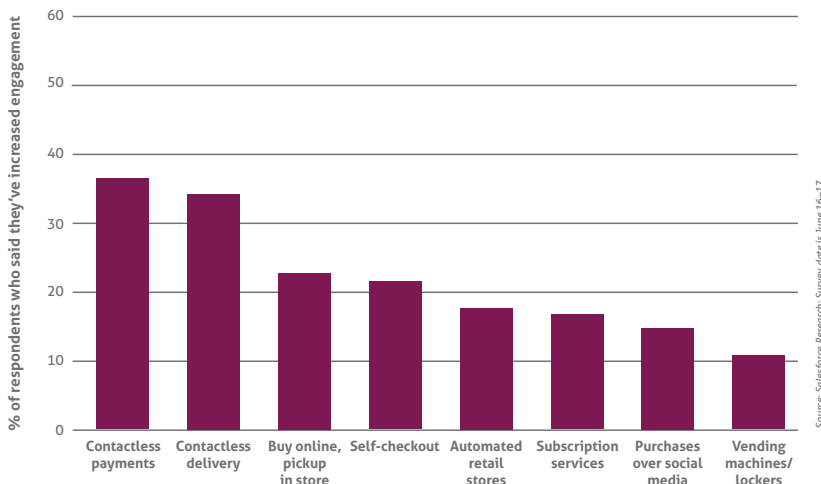
Digital sales surged 65% through May 2020 (doubled in April and May)

% Y-o-Y growth

140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0

March   April   May

■ 2019   ■ 2020

Source: Salesforce Commerce Cloud

Activities with higher than usual engagement

% of respondents who said they've increased engagement

60
50
40
30
20
10
0

Browsing the internet | Online shopping | Watching streaming videos | Using social media | Listening to streaming media

Source: Salesforce Research; Survey date is June 16–17

Shopping activities with higher than usual engagement

% of respondents who said they've increased engagement

60
50
40
30
20
10
0

Contactless payments | Contactless delivery | Buy online, pickup in store | Self-checkout | Automated retail stores | Subscription services | Purchases over social media | Vending machines/ lockers

Source: Salesforce Research; Survey date is June 16–17

To better understand how consumer behaviors are changing in light of COVID-19, **Salesforce Research** has been conducting consumer surveys every two weeks. According to a survey they conducted starting on June 16th, 40% of Americans are shopping online now more than they did pre-COVID-19.

Survey respondents were asked how their specific shopping activities have changed: 55% of Americans said that they're shopping in stores less frequently than they did before the pandemic. 31% of Americans are doing more contactless delivery. When going into brick-and-mortar stores, Americans are choosing self-checkout and contactless payments more frequently, with 28% buying items online and picking up in store. Social media is gaining greater prominence with 13% of Americans buying products directly over social media platforms more than usual, with 41% spending more time on social media now than they did prior to the COVID-19.
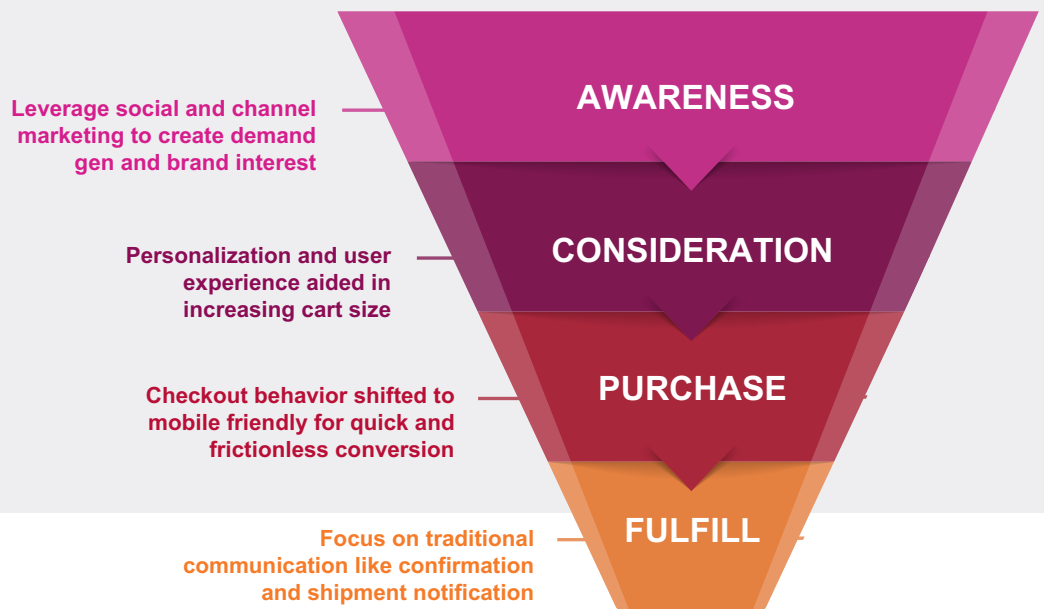
Navigating the new world

Knowing what you now know about consumer behaviors, what can you do to adjust your customer experience to meet these new behavioral demands? How do you adjust communication and UX strategies from the traditional e-commerce conversion funnel to build consumer confidence? Let's examine the Old World (OW = pre-COVID-19 era) vs the New World (NW = how we're living now).

Starting in the *Awareness* stage, in the OW it was possible to generate awareness by leveraging social channels and other marketing efforts (like email, affiliates, etc.) to create demand generation and brand interest—things like sweepstakes, giveaways, and viral videos could really create a buzz. Today's shoppers have shifted focus and are looking for the latest up-to-the-minute buying information. In the NW, social channels should be used as a way to distribute key communications—highlighting store hours, in-store shopping requirements, curbside pickup logistics, and more. Bigger retailers with multiple stores should leverage Google maps to list more specific store information. Affiliate feeds should be update to date with the latest warehouse and store-specific inventory. As big box retailers may be sold out of certain essential items, make sure your Google Merchant feed is up to date. This will help you capitalize on Google Shopping as customers start to look for their items elsewhere.

As we move down the funnel into *Consideration*, the OW leveraged UX best practices and focused on personalization throughout shop flow to increase cart size and product exposure for online channels—as well as on cross-sells, upsells, and videos to support product detail pages (PDP). In the NW, focus should shift to providing information about new store regulations, store availability, and estimated delivery dates. When implementing curbside pickup, inform customers of the new pickup process and help customers navigate in-store experiences. Consider adding new information on the PDP about pickup timing or use a global banner to set clear expectations before customers even enter into the purchase flow.

Old world

AWARENESS — Leverage social and channel marketing to create demand gen and brand interest

CONSIDERATION — Personalization and user experience aided in increasing cart size

PURCHASE — Checkout behavior shifted to mobile friendly for quick and frictionless conversion

FULFILL — Focus on traditional communication like confirmation and shipment notification

Prior to COVID-19, the focus on *Purchase* influence was driven by creating frictionless customer experiences and mobile-friendly payment options—AVS (address auto populate), Single Page Checkout, and Apple Pay, to name a few. Building on this in the NW, retailers should now include instructional information that meets customer expectations during the shopping experience, therefore helping to instill confidence in buyers. Asking for customer pickup detail information (license plate state, car model, phone number to call), FAQ links, or generic messages that inform customers on what to expect should be emailed and texted to them.

The final stage of the e-commerce funnel, *Fulfillment*, has seen the largest shift in the NW. Prior to COVID-19, common place was distribution of communications like in-store order receipts, online

order confirmations, and shipping confirmation emails. Shoppers knew exactly what to expect when walking into a store, returning a product, or making a digital purchase. To ease shopper concerns in the NW, overcommunicate throughout each Fulfillment step—order confirmation, how to pick up the order, when to expect a shipment, and any steps in between to show order readiness and execution.

Salesforce studies have shown digital sales have more than doubled in 2020. While we shouldn't abandon the tactics or focus areas from the OW, we should work on identifying major holes in the store fulfillment scenario, which can help shape a brand's immediate digital roadmap. Retailers who can capitalize on this market, pivot quickly, and address those key customer concerns stand to benefit even without an unlimited technology budget.

AWARENESS — Leverage social and channel marketing to distribute communication and information

CONSIDERATION — Set expectations and ease concern for new fulfillment and in-store experiences

PURCHASE — Instill confidence and lay out "what to expect" for new shopping experiences

FULFILL — Overcommunicate to ease concern and elicit feedback for continued improvement

New world

Building a strong customer journey

While there isn't currently a perfect playbook on how to overcome all of the new implementation challenges, e-commerce teams are doing the best they can to create a seamless and well-planned buying experience. These efforts have not gone unnoticed. According to a study from the **Connected Shoppers Report**, 84% of customers say the experience a company provides is more important than their products and services. 25% of shoppers have recently taken their business elsewhere as a direct result of a poor in-store experience.

With those statistics in mind, let's take a look at a specific customer journey and explore tactics you can implement with Salesforce B2C Commerce, Marketing Cloud, and Service Cloud. These will help achieve an optimal customer experience across the major interaction points in Buy Online Pickup at Curbside (BOPAC).

Joyce's journey

Meet Joyce. She's headed out for a camping trip complete with social distancing safety measures and realizes last minute that she needs to buy a new tent.

Entice & inform

A couple days ago, Joyce thought about purchasing a new tent and went online to explore. Since she wasn't comfortable entering the store and it was too late to ship it, she wasn't confident she would get a tent on time and decided that her old tent had enough life in it for this trip—until a key touchpoint on social media (an Instagram ad) kicked off her retail journey. Joyce is a valued customer and Northern Trail Outfitters (NTO) targeted her using data they had; for Joyce, it came at the perfect moment.
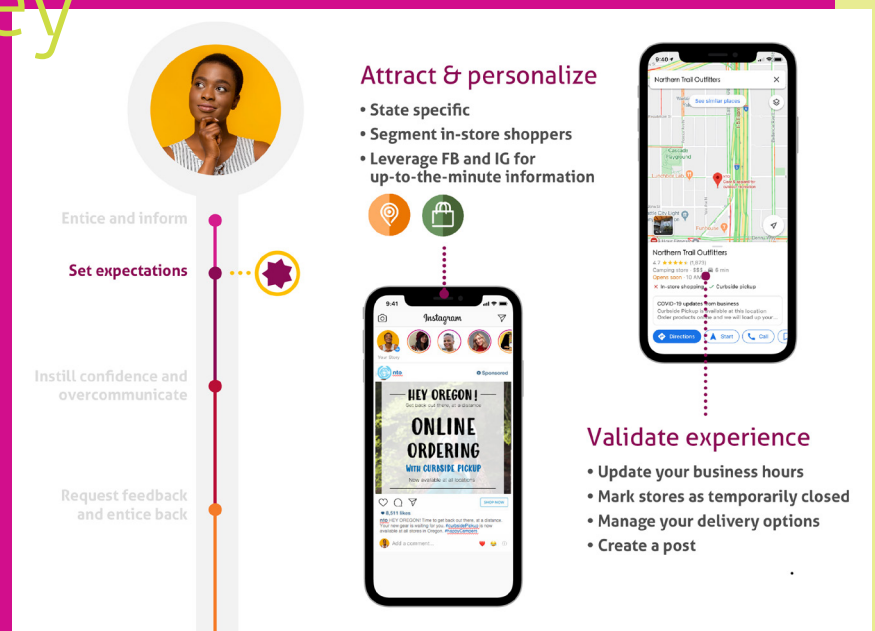
To ensure continuity in customer experiences from social to email to digital, you can leverage source codes from your social posts, triggering a mirrored experience with Salesforce B2C Commerce—either coordinating the homepage creative or simply carrying a geo-located banner. However, if you don't have the merchandising team to support 51+ unique state experiences, make sure that your digital messaging remains consistent. Use the same language, creative, and call to action across all marketing channels.
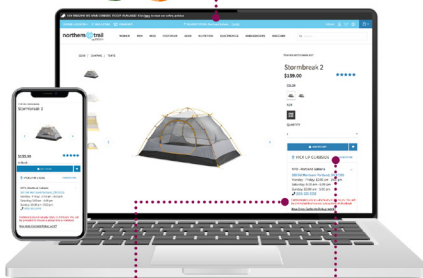
Set Expectations

The targeted social post enticed Joyce to visit the NTO website and she was able to find the perfect tent. *To add an extra boost of confidence, we leveraged Salesforce Commerce Cloud's geo-location services to pre-select the closest store location to Joyce. As she compared tents, she could immediately see if the items were available at her store.*

As Joyce makes her way down the PDP, there are clear pickup methods (in-store, at curbside, home delivery) near the "add to cart" button. This adds confidence and security before she adds it to her cart. *Included in the details are things like: store address, phone number, updated hours, and ways to pick up the goods.*

Joyce needs her tent before she heads out of town. She knows NTO has the tent she wants and it can be picked up curbside before she leaves for the weekend. Now armed with the information, Joyce confidently proceeds to checkout. *Continue that confidence and eliminate doubt by stating the average timeframe for picking up orders. Even a simple, generic message can reset expectations right on the PDP, allowing the customer to quickly determine whether their timeline can be met—rather than being disappointed as they make their way through checkout.*

Understand and address
- Keep cross-channel messaging consistent
- Personalize information based on geo-location
- Pre-select closest store for increased confidence

Entice and inform

Set expectations

Instill confidence and overcommunicate

Request feedback and entice back
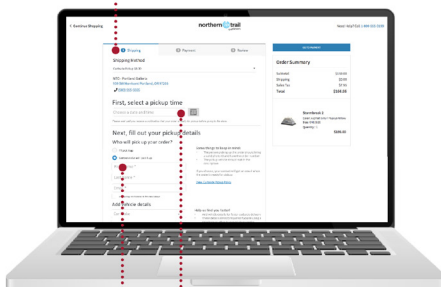
Eliminate doubt
- Provide timing expectations
- Provide self-service link for more detail

Be explicit
- Clearly message "curbside" as pickup option
- Include store hours and phone number

Keep continuity
- Clearly message "curbside" as the pickup option.

Entice and inform

Set expectations

Instill confidence and overcommunicate

Request feedback and entice back

Set expectations and context
- Allow for pickup contact
- Include car details

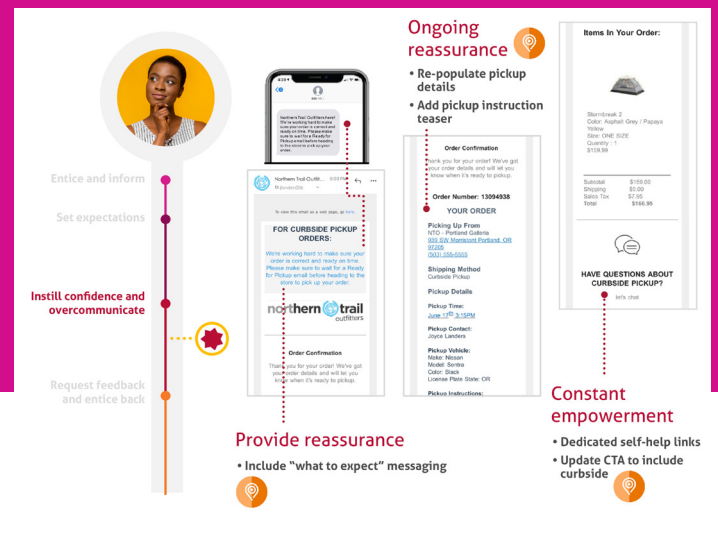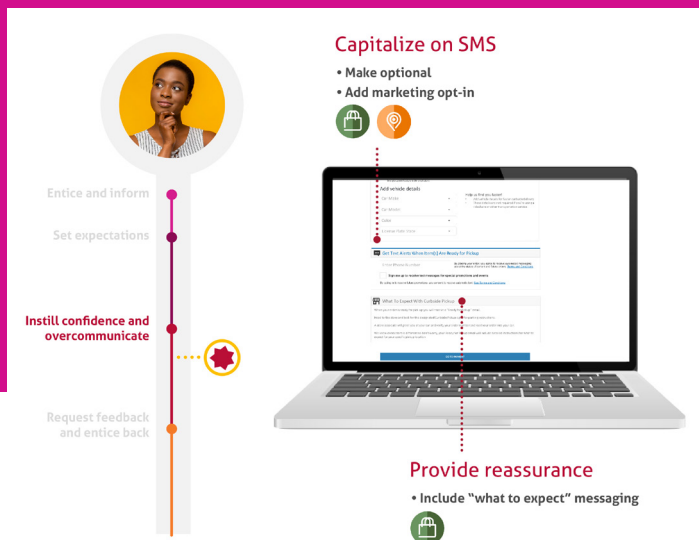## Give direction and empowerment
- Allow customers to choose a day and time
- Allow an "ASAP" option

Instill confidence and overcommunicate

Joyce has a lot of things on her mind—work, camping, and logistics. *At a time when shoppers are experiencing a barrage of new processes, setting expectations is critical. Keep continuity and reassurance from the PDP by prominently displaying the delivery method before requesting any additional information at checkout. Be sure to give customers a sense of purpose and direction by highlighting each step along with the reason behind it.*

Joyce knows she needs her tent ASAP. *Other customers may not need or want to pick up an item as soon as possible. Give your customers the power to pick up their order at a time that works best for them. Not only does this empower the customer, but it allows you to regulate the workload for your store associates.*

Joyce will be picking up the tent on her way out of town. *There will be cases where the customer placing the order is not the same person who is picking up the order. Allow the customer to share additional contact information to alleviate any questions upon pickup. We also recommend giving the option for the customer to enter the details of their vehicle such as make, model, color or license plate state to help the store associate quickly identify them at curbside. Make sure these fields are optional as we know some customers may be using public transit, rideshares, or car shares to pick up their order.*

Capitalize on SMS
• Make optional
• Add marketing opt-in

Entice and inform

Set expectations

Instill confidence and overcommunicate

Request feedback and entice back

Provide reassurance
• Include "what to expect" messaging

Ongoing reassurance
• Re-populate pickup details
• Add pickup instruction teaser

Items In Your Order:

Entice and inform

Set expectations

Instill confidence and overcommunicate

Request feedback and entice back

Provide reassurance
• Include "what to expect" messaging

Constant empowerment
• Dedicated self-help links
• Update CTA to include curbside

Joyce is getting prepared for her trip and isn't checking her email notifications regularly, but of course she has her phone on her. *According to IDC research, 79% of Americans have their phones with them at least 22 hours per day. If you're not capitalizing on SMS, you need to! We provided Joyce with an optional opt-in to receive order updates via SMS so she won't miss an update about her order while packing. As a bonus, we recommend adding the option for customers to sign up for SMS marketing communication at the same time.*

Joyce has chosen a pickup time and entered her car details, but she's still nervous about how this whole curbside pickup thing is going to work. *We've added some general information about what to expect when she arrives at the store. Remember we haven't even entered payment information yet, so at this stage, it is not necessary to share every detail or even make it store specific—but it is important to give a quick overview of the pickup process and inform customers that more details will follow. This will help them feel confident when placing the order.*

Joyce is feeling super confident now and is getting more excited for her trip. Let's checkout and see how Joyce will interact with NTO once she's placed her order.

Joyce read the important information when placing her order. But with camping on her mind, she'll need to reference that information again. *Send a confirmation email and text to reiterate the key messages. The email should include a banner at the top with important information regarding curbside pickup details. It should also state order details which gives customers confidence that the items in their order will be correct.*

Joyce notices that NTO has clearly called out their support information and included links for self-service. She heads into her pickup experience knowing how to contact customer service and where to find information if necessary. *With a direct connection to the service team, any questions or concerns can be resolved in a timely and seamless manner.*

Taken from the Connected Shoppers Report, "66% of customers say that they often have to repeat or re-explain information to different representatives. 59% of customers say it generally feels like they're communicating with separate departments, not one company and 68% would rather use self-service channels like knowledge bases or customer portals for simple questions or issues."
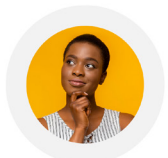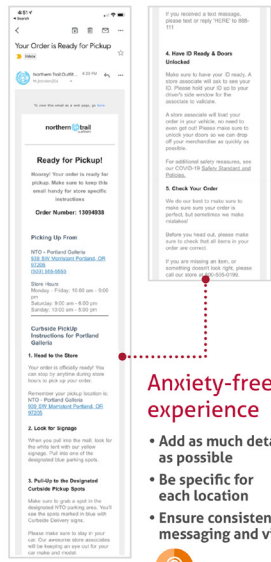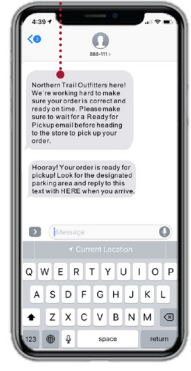
Real-time assurance
- Add pickup introduction teaser
- Include order status updates

Anxiety-free experience
- Add as much detail as possible
- Be specific for each location
- Ensure consistent messaging and visuals

Joyce feels comfort knowing she'll receive a text message when her order is ready. She can pack up her car in the meantime rather than watching for an email. *To enhance this portion of the experience, send a message when the order is being fulfilled with an estimated time for pickup.*

Joyce receives a text that her order is ready. It includes the order number she'll use to confirm her pickup when she arrives, along with the store address so she can quickly jump into a navigation app. Due to limited character space in the text, Joyce is also sent an email that her order is ready; it also outlines specific pickup instructions she needs to know.

Joyce makes her way over to NTO and replies "HERE" in the text when she arrives. *Remember, this experience goes beyond digital, so display clear and consistent curbside signage to make the arrival seamless. Emails could also include a store layout map that calls out the curbside pickup location.*

After Joyce responds to the text, an associate quickly spots her vehicle and brings out her order. The associate requests to see her order number which Joyce pulls up on her phone. He then hands her the tent. Once her order has been picked up, Joyce receives another email from NTO confirming the completion of her pickup. *It's not always the case that the purchaser is picking up the order. This message can provide peace of mind in case the order was accidentally given to the wrong person. In that scenario, the phone number for customer service has already been provided in the email.*

Joyce receives a message that allows her to provide feedback on her experience. Having never picked up an order at curbside before, and with a tight deadline on top of it, she was nervous when she first started the process. With the continuous stream of information and reassurance, she felt at ease throughout her journey and wants to share her feedback. *Requesting feedback is a great way learn how new processes fair through the lens of a customer. You can solve issues in a timely manner, and ultimately, continue to learn how to optimize new business models.*

Joyce is sent a discount code for her next purchase as a thank you for her business. She feels great about the service she has received and is excited to head back to NTO before her next camping trip in a few weeks.
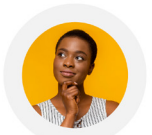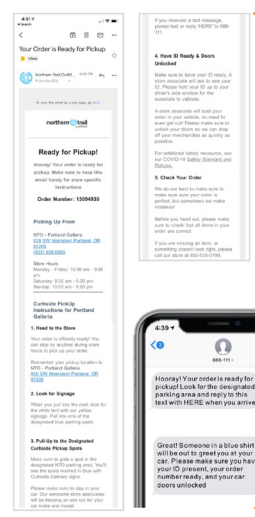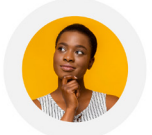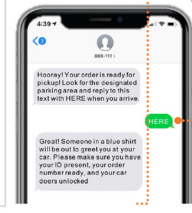

Anxiety-free experience
- Add as much detail as possible
- Be specific for each location
- Ensure consistent messaging and visuals

Customer centricity
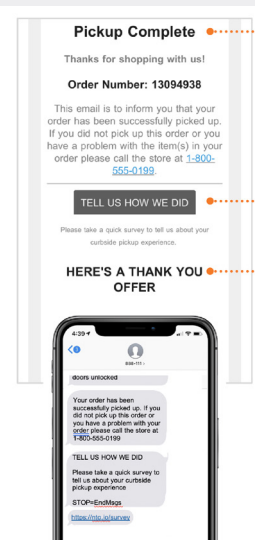- Real-time customer interaction and store notification

Security and service
- Confirm pickup
- Provide self-service for issues

Learn and optimize
- Request feedback
- Close feedback loop for issues

Surprise and delight
- Bounceback promo

Looking to the future

In mid-May, Salesforce Research asked respondents about their interest level in different shopping methods during the holidays (compared to their behaviors in 2019) to see how consumer behavior may have changed during this crucial period. 49% of Americans are now more interested in online shopping during the holidays than last year and 33% of Americans stated that they have more interest buying online and picking up in store. In fact, almost one third of respondents said they now have less interest in shopping in stores altogether. *It is important to note: Americans may need to do more online shopping due to capacity restrictions in stores—it is unclear when those will be lifted, as it is varying from state to state.*

This is why it's more important than ever for retailers to be preparing their digital capabilities for the holiday season. Brands that can implement foundational changes (by building customer confidence and continued communication) stand to not only retain and delight their customer base, but to attract new ones as the word spreads about great customer experiences that are being delivered.

From the beginning of the journey, capitalize on social channels to continue brand awareness and distribute important store information. Keep messaging consistent, contextual, and in the forefront of all touchpoints—from mobile, to shop flow, to in-store and curbside signage. And finally, continue communication, instill confidence, and request feedback. Customer expectations will continue to change, and it's imperative you capture feedback, and evolve to meet new customer expectations.

Resource links:

Salesforce Research

Salesforce Shopping Index

The Connected Shopper

About Mindtree

Mindtree [NSE: MINDTREE] is a global technology consulting and services company, helping enterprises marry scale with agility to achieve competitive advantage. "Born digital," in 1999 and now a Larsen & Toubro Group Company, Mindtree applies its deep domain knowledge to 300+ enterprise client engagements to break down silos, make sense of digital complexity and bring new initiatives to market faster. We enable IT to move at the speed of business, leveraging emerging technologies and the efficiencies of Continuous Delivery to spur business innovation. Operating in 18 countries and over 40 offices across the world, we're consistently regarded as one of the best places to work, embodied every day by our winning culture made up of over 21,000 entrepreneurial, collaborative and dedicated "Mindtree Minds."