

# How to deliver exceptional CX in the wake of the pandemic

Article

*Join us to hear more from Jeremy Goldman, eMarketer principal analyst at Insider Intelligence, as he covers the challenges and opportunities that marketers encounter when focusing on CX and how to make those calculations to garner continued investment. [Click here to reserve your seat.](#)*

The customer experience (CX) landscape has changed dramatically over the last year as pandemic-induced lockdowns and social distancing pushed many consumers to try new technologies and experiences, such as click and collect, proximity payments, and augmented reality (AR).

In our recent report, “[Ecommerce and Retail Customer Experience 2021: 6 CX Trends That Will Stick Post-Pandemic](#),” we focused on the CX trends that had the most significant shifts last year and have staying power:

**Collecting—and making sense of—first-party data:** While this is a trend that has been prominent for some time now, COVID certainly led to its acceleration. Brands and retailers are reorienting themselves to capture first-party data to improve self-reliance, marketing performance, relevancy, and ultimately, customer experience.

“The more the retailer can learn about the shopper, the better the offers,” said John Helmle, executive vice president and president of fintech at Inmar Intelligence. “The more relevant the offers, the better the experience.”

**Virtual “try before you buy”:** Many companies are looking to innovate around the process by which consumers try out products not only from afar but also in-store. Chanel is one of many: Its Lipscanner technology purports to be the first AI-enabled scanner that can take any image and match its color to one of the company’s 400-plus lip products.

**Click and collect:** This channel’s growth can be attributed to a number of factors, including shipping delays during the dawn of the pandemic, according to Lauren Cooley, senior vice president of retailer and brand solutions at RetailMeNot. Another factor is, retailers are incentivizing click-and-collect purchases.

“We’re seeing more retailers [leveraging click and collect] at significantly increased levels,” Cooley said. According to RetailMeNot data, Q1 2021 saw 31% more click-and-collect discounts messaged than in Q1 2020.

**Reducing checkout friction:** Consumers have long been moving toward demanding more frictionless payment methods, and social-distancing and sanitizing practices brought on by the pandemic pushed many to try proximity mobile payments for the first time.

“We’ll continue to see more and more frictionless experiences, whether it be through a virtual wallet; or in a brick-and-mortar store, the ability to just pick up goods, scan them yourself; or via in-store scanning mechanisms, and you can just walk out with them,” said Pete Stein, global

lead for experience and commerce at Merkle. “That trend of contactless is going to continue in a pretty big way.”

**Returns:** With consumers becoming increasingly used to the experience of using their home as the dressing room, ecommerce returns are on the rise. Free returns may have something to do with it as well.

“Based on the loyalty and conversion implications, if you don't offer people free returns, many of them aren't going to buy on your site,” said Adam Vitarello, co-founder and president of reverse logistics firm Optoro. Given their increasing prevalence, returns can make or break the customer experience.

Of course, there are more than just five key aspects of CX that ecommerce and retail marketers must pay attention to, but these are a few that are worth extra scrutiny. We'll be covering these in detail during our upcoming webinar, “**Delivering Exceptional CX Across Ecommerce & Retail: 5 Trends to Watch**,” on June 10 at 2pm ET. We look forward to seeing you there!