Click, Click, Buy: The New E-Commerce Consumer Journey



HOW, WHERE AND WHEN TO GET PRODUCTS IN FRONT OF PURCHASE-READY SHOPPERS

channeladvisor®

How well do you know your consumers?

You've analyzed your traffic, fine-tuned your ad campaigns and scoured activity across your marketplaces. But do you really know what your consumers are doing?

Despite the depth of data available today, the e-commerce consumer path to purchase can often feel like a moving target. Constant changes to mobile technology, voice commerce and search algorithms are continually reshaping how consumers interact with brands and retailers. They can compare prices, read reviews, search for sales, factor in shipping options and so much more.



IN OTHER WORDS...

The days of a consistent and reliable "search, click, buy" process are long gone. In its place is a complicated web of steps, each one inching your target consumer closer to the "buy now" button over the course of many days, weeks or months.

This continually-evolving journey is no longer a clear-cut funnel, but more of a constant, continuous cycle of activity. Each consumer path is unique and uncertain — which means today's e-commerce seller hasn't reached its full potential until it's maintaining a strong presence at every turn.

An Evolving Journey

When e-commerce was still relatively new, retailers and brands could map out the typical path a target consumer would take when making a buying decision — and then use that "journey" to predict the behaviors of hundreds or thousands of other shoppers.

Not so today.

For every transaction you have with a consumer, there were at least a dozen different influences that went into that person's decision to buy from you.

There are some scenarios where the journey is still straightforward and simple: A shopper in need of replacement water filters for the fridge, for instance, or the distance runner whose favorite water-wicking shirt is worn thin.

Increasingly, however, consumers are cycling through longer and more complex journeys that span a multitude of channels.

The sheer volume of online buying options now available to consumers means there's no surefire way to know precisely how people discover your products — or what they'll do next.

Thousands of different touchpoints could be used in any combination of ways to create hundreds of unique consumer journeys. All for the same, single product.

56% start product searches on Amazon

34% purchase products directly through social media

90% rely on product reviews

96% say free shipping affects purchase decisions

And the list goes on...

Sources: ChannelAdvisor, eMarketer

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU START TO MEET CONSUMERS AT EVERY TOUCHPOINT?
Consider what happened at ChannelAdvisor customer, Seismic Audio. By all accounts, the company's e-commerce strategy was a success. But even as the auto parts retailer experienced high growth on eBay and Amazon, execs were aware of untapped revenue potential among consumers who shop elsewhere. So they found a way to list on additional channels such as Rakuten, Sears, Newegg, Best Buy and Google Shopping. Within nine months, gross sales were up an astounding 1,250%.

So, what does the ever-evolving e-commerce journey look like today? Let's take a look at some possible scenarios...

A Flash of Inspiration

IT ALL STARTED...



WITH A FACEBOOK FEED

Your target consumers are scrolling when they first appear: the "after" photos of a friend's gleaming, newly remodeled kitchen. The comments section fills fast with inquiries: Where did you get those pendant lights? How did you discover the tiles? Soon there's a steady flow of conversation about specific manufacturing brands and retail sites.

ON A COMFORTABLE COUCH

Meanwhile, another consumer is situated in front of a Food Network show when a sudden surge of inspiration strikes. I could do that! Within seconds, she's using the voice assistant on her smartphone to see how sous vide cookers and beer fermentation bottles are used in home kitchens.

AS SOON AS INSPIRATION HITS, THE FIRST "PHASE" OF THE CONSUMER JOURNEY HAS BEGUN.

Take a thousand different consumers, and you'll get a thousand different entry points:

One might be shopping for another product on Amazon when a suggested item captures his attention.

Another could be drawn to a new product line by a business she follows on Instagram.

A third is streaming a video that turns out to be the source for a great idea.

While retailers and manufacturing brands have long been told to prioritize awareness as the first phase in a conversion cycle or funnel, the process in fact starts much earlier: at **inspiration**. Consumers are frequently motivated by multiple outside influences to discover products — and this inspiration can occur virtually anywhere, at any time.

The more comprehensive your marketplace and digital marketing strategies, the more likely your brand will make an impression at this stage.

When does inspiration strike?



WHEN SEARCHING

Mobile searches for "where to buy" grew 85% in two years



WHILE SCROLLING

30% have purchased products after discovering them on Facebook

80% follow at least one business on Instagram



WHEN ON-THE-GO

40% of online transactions are made on mobile



WHILE MULTITASKING

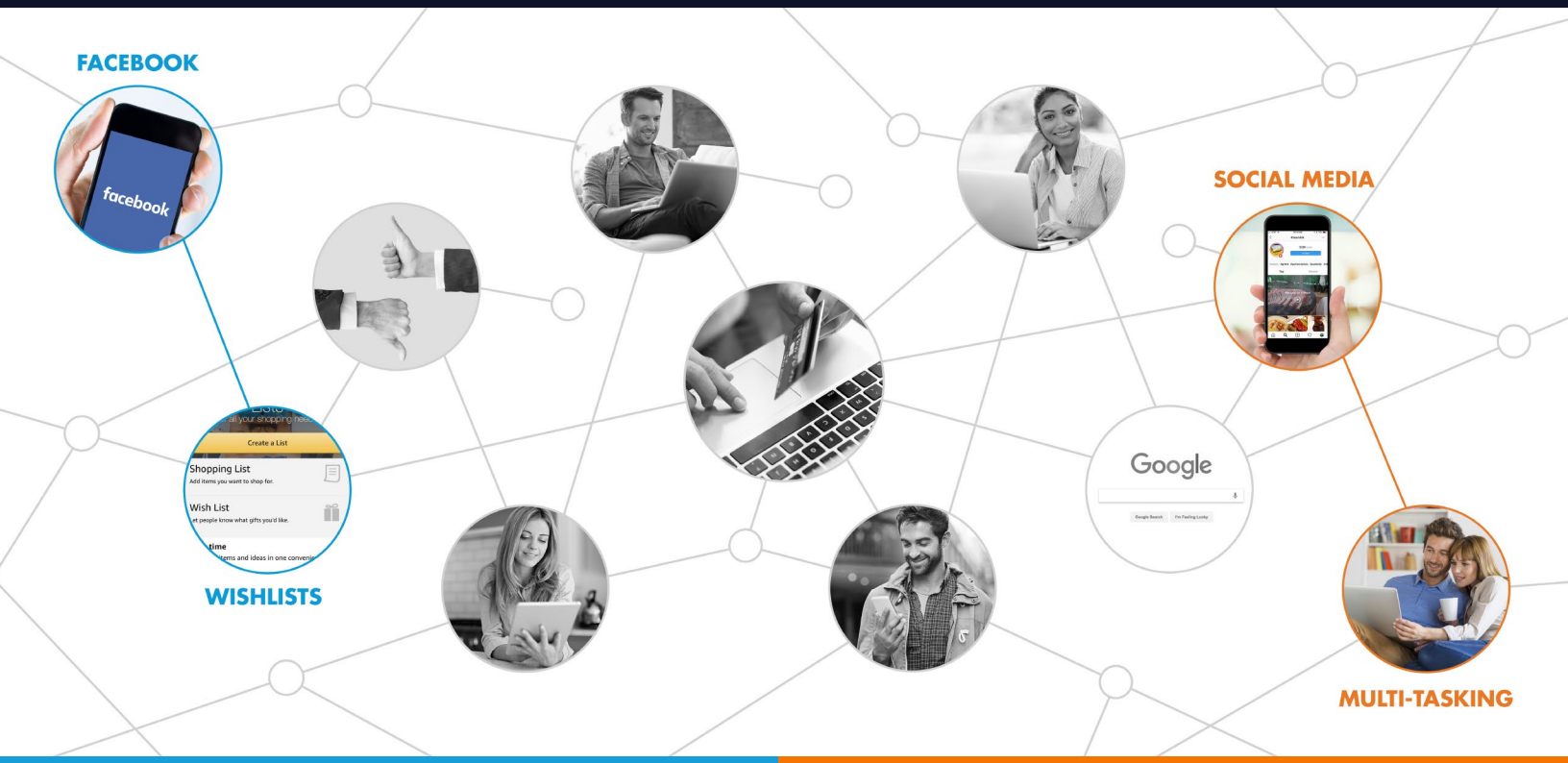
186 million use laptops and mobile devices to browse online while watching TV

44% use voice-activated speakers to make purchases weekly

If you want consumers to continue through the journey, your products must be everywhere.

The Shift to Awareness

AND CONTINUED WITH...



WISHLISTS

Inspiration has turned into an idea, which means it's time to find products. One consumer is perusing search results on a marketplace mobile app to find the perfect pendant light. Another is relying on Google to figure out which items are needed to brew beer at home. Still floating on a cloud of momentum, these consumers are feeling motivated and moved to unearth the latest and greatest products at their disposal. New discoveries are being favorited and added to shopping lists.

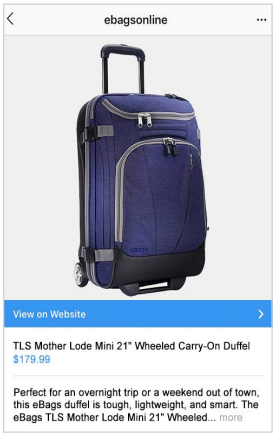
SCROLLING AND TAPPING

It's time for a mid-morning social media break, which means Instagram is pulled up. When the photo of a dreamy dining area elicits interest, all it takes is one tap to transform the image into a shoppable post. Soon the consumer is viewing products, prices and descriptions — all from one simple social post. While she may not be ready to buy, she's getting a much stronger sense of what she wants.

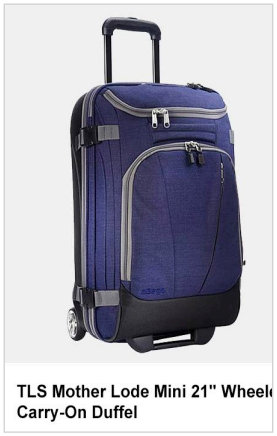
THIS IS THE MOMENT OF AWARENESS.

It might begin when a consumer is introduced to a brand for the first time. Or it could be a reminder of a retailer after a period away; a trigger that allures the prospective customer back with renewed interest. As brands and retailers slowly creep their ways into the consciousness of the consumer, those with the strongest search and social presence will make the most lasting impressions.

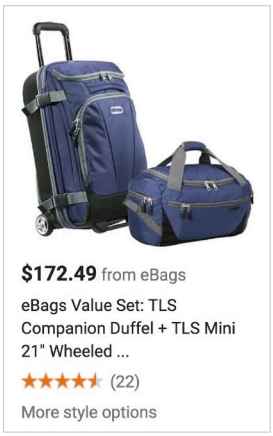
Same product. Multiple touchpoints.



SHOPPING ON INSTAGRAM



FACEBOOK DYNAMIC ADS



GOOGLE SHOPPING ACTIONS



PROMOTED

eBags TLS Mother Lode Mini 21" Wheeled Duffel Bag Luggage - Carry-On

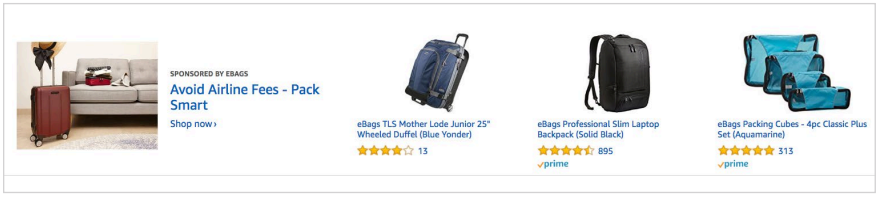
$179.98

Buy It Now

Free Shipping

Watch

EBAY PROMOTED LISTING



AMAZON HEADLINE SEARCH AD

EAGER TO CAPTURE MORE CONVERSIONS DURING THE AWARENESS PHASE?

Check your current strategies against these resources:

- Your Ultimate Guide to Amazon Advertising
- The Essential Guide to Facebook and Instagram Advertising
- Google Shopping Actions: Why You Need to Join Now

DID YOU KNOW?

2x

Amazon Prime members spend more than double what non-Prime consumers do.

More than one-third of consumers say social networks have become as important as other shopping resources.

People who use smart speakers to shop have been shown to spend 66% more than those who don't.

83% of consumers who contact a business using conversational commerce apps like Facebook Messenger and Alexa do so to learn about a product; 75% make an actual purchase.

Evaluation Intensifies

THEN TOOK A TURN WITH...



REVIEWS AND COMPARISONS

Fast forward a few weeks, and a pay raise at work means consumers are revisiting wishlists. Only this time, reviews and ratings are getting a lot of attention in attempts to discover what other shoppers think of products. Because consumers are increasingly aware that the same item may be available from multiple sellers — or offered by the same seller at different prices across various sales channels — this is also the time when price comparisons come into play.

NEW MARKETPLACE DISCOVERIES

After perusing listings on Amazon, it's time to do a quick search in Google. The mix of organic search results, paid ads and Google Shopping yields a whole new mountain of possibilities spanning numerous online retailers and e-commerce marketplaces. Who knew there were so many options? This could take some time...

THIS IS WHEN MORE INTENSE EVALUATION COMES INTO PLAY.

It's a critical stage for every brand and retailer. Quick decision-makers may skim a review or two; more methodical shoppers will scour every marketplace and product listing they can find. Sometimes these brand interactions are triggered days or weeks after initial inspiration and awareness; other times they happen in tandem with other "phases." Either way, there are a number of marketplace and digital marketing techniques that can play a critical role throughout the course of evaluations.

PRODUCT DETAILS

The more specifics shoppers see in the product description and imagery, and the higher the quality of the content, the easier it'll be to make a buying decision.

AD FORMATS

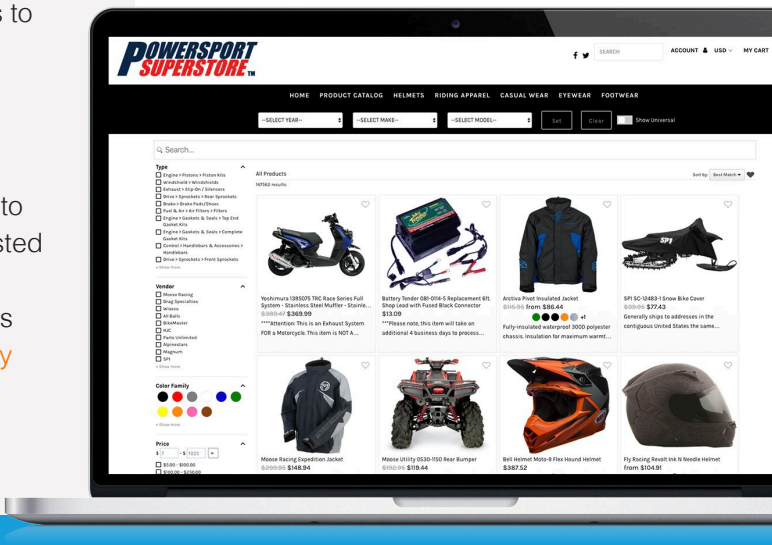
Diversifying your ad portfolio can greatly increase opportunities for getting your products front and center. For example, on Amazon alone there are Sponsored Products, Sponsored Brands and Product Display Ads — plus Amazon Stores and even Amazon Coupons to help drive shoppers closer to purchase.

COMPETITIVE PRICING STRATEGIES

All it takes is a few dollars' difference to lose a sale to another seller. By setting product prices to be adjusted automatically based on competition and consumer demand, you can keep this from happening. For this reason, many sellers rely on algorithmic and velocity repricing technologies to stay competitive on price.

WHEN THE RIGHT STRATEGY SENDS PROFITS SOARING

How much difference can a single new strategy really make? Just ask Powersport Superstore. Shortly after expanding to Google Shopping Actions, the online retailer increased year-over-year revenue by an additional 7% to 9%. And that's not all. Compared to other leading marketplaces, Google Shopping Actions was securing 3x more margin per sale.



DID YOU KNOW?

91% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations

69% of in-store shoppers consult with smartphone reviews rather than store associates

Consumers have easy access to more than 100 marketplaces around the globe

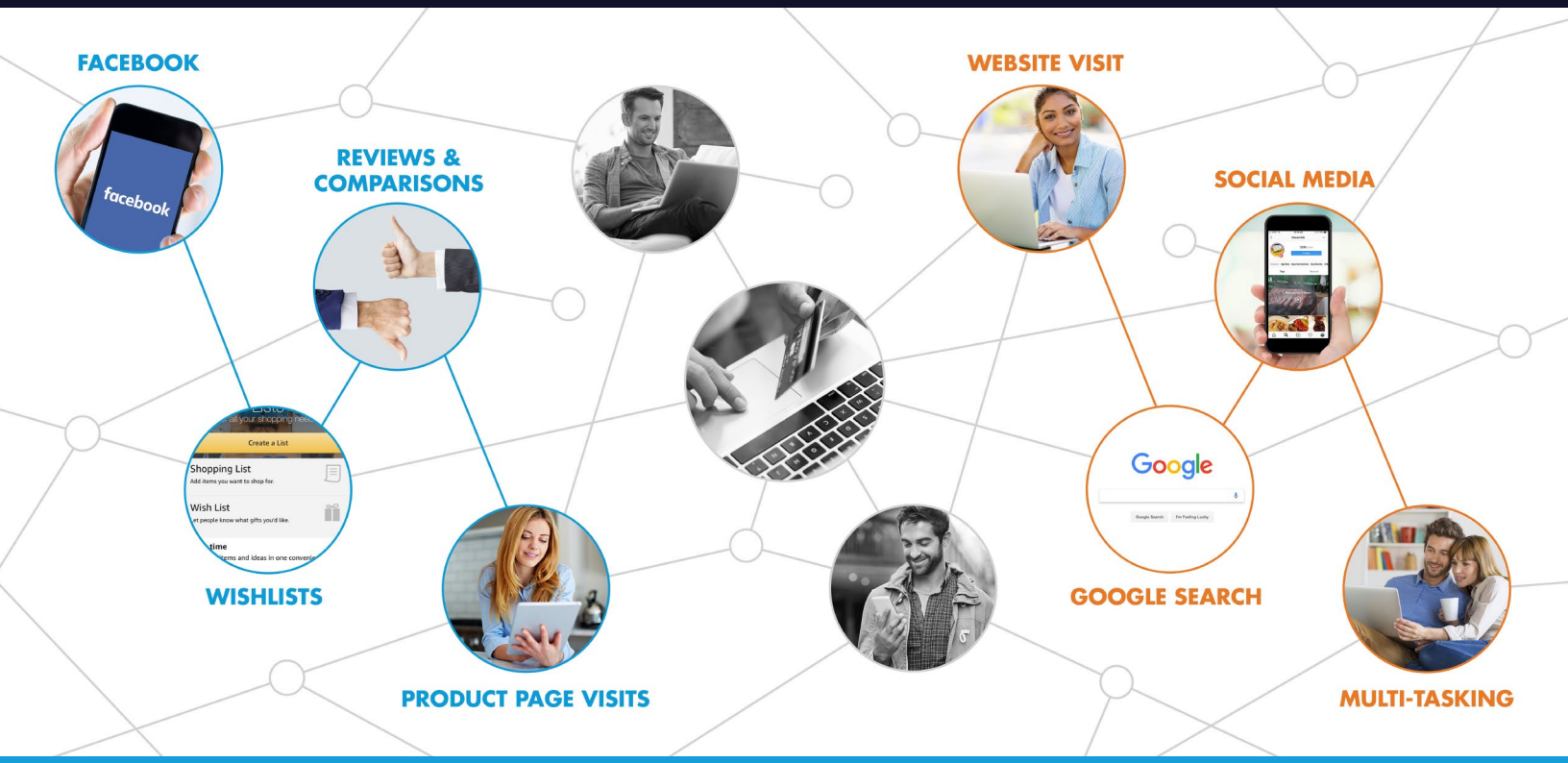
ARE YOU MAXIMIZING YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING AND MARKETPLACE PRESENCE AT THIS PHASE?

Here are a few resources to help you decide:

- 7 Marketplaces to Reach Wider Audiences in the US
- Owning the Amazon Search Results Page
- Pricing for Marketplaces: The Definitive Guide

Transition to Consideration

THERE'S MORE TO DELIBERATE WHEN...



MORE MARKETPLACE AND WEBSTORE VISITS LEAD TO EMAIL OPT-INS AS PRODUCTS ARE PILED INTO ONLINE SHOPPING CARTS

By now, e-commerce website visits are starting to result in email opt-ins as consumers actively seek out product discounts, updates and offers. As specific items undergo more serious consideration, products are added to shopping carts — not necessarily to buy, but rather to test. What's the free shipping threshold? How much will it cost after taxes and fees? What coupons or discount codes can be applied? These are a few of the many questions being asked as consumers consider their purchase options.

POTENTIAL PURCHASES COME UNDER SERIOUS CONSIDERATION AT THIS STAGE.

While many consumers aren't ready to buy, they are willing to connect. And therein lies the opportunity for savvy brands and retailers. As prospective customers weave their ways closer to purchase, a lot can happen as they consider parting with hard-earned money while interacting with merchants, marketplaces and search engines for research.

FACT
More than one-third of consumers purchase products through social media, and studies indicate that number will increase even more.

STRATEGY
Learn to sell in the age of social commerce.

FACT
63% of shoppers prefer to receive offers via email, the most popular method for communicating with sellers.

STRATEGY
Stay top of mind with the right mix of retargeting ads and emails.

FACT
Higher-than-expected shipping costs are the number-one reason consumers abandon online shopping carts.

STRATEGY
Automatically route orders to the most efficient, cost-effective carriers with shipping management technology.

FACT
Mobile searches asking "where to buy" products soared by 85% in just two years.

STRATEGY
Direct consumers to authorized sellers with Where to Buy widgets.



PURE FORMULAS™
Live life pure.™

WHY IT PAYS TO HAVE HIGH-QUALITY PRODUCT CONTENT
When considering purchases, consumers pay a lot of attention to product content — ads included. After optimizing Facebook dynamic ads, Pure Formulas' average order value increased 36%. The seller also saw a 38% decrease in cost per click and a 125% increase in click-through rate.

Time to Reconsider

MOTIVATION COMES IN THE FORM OF...





AN AD

It was intended to be a nudge; a gentle reminder of forgotten products just waiting to be shipped and enjoyed. “Oh right, I was thinking of buying that,” thinks the consumer as he clicks the retargeting ad. “Hmm… I wonder where else I can get it for less?” It’s certainly not the reaction the seller was going for, but a reality to be anticipated in today’s fiercely competitive e-commerce environments.

AN EMAIL

As the message is opened, the reaction is instantaneous: “Those items are still in my cart? Maybe it’s time to buy. But will I be paying the lowest price possible?”

THERE'S ALWAYS TIME TO RECONSIDER AND REEVALUATE.
As consumers balance their time between smartphones, laptops, TVs, smart speakers and other digital technology, they're quickly learning to use these devices together to achieve their shopping goals. They might see a video ad and then visit the mobile site. Or they may comparison shop on Google and Amazon first before using a retailer's app to make the purchase.

The process could span days or take a few minutes, but rarely does it occur all at once or within a single channel. That's why it's so important to use one data feed to optimize data across e-commerce channels. Research shows that today's empowered consumers expect personalized content to help them through each step of the customer journey — regardless of purchase touchpoint.

MARKETING
Facebook and Instagram
Amazon Sponsored Ads
Amazon Headline Search Ads
Amazon Coupons
Google Shopping Actions

SELLING
Automated inventory
Amazon
eBay
Walmart
Jet
Overstock
Wish
Rakuten
Plus dozens more marketplaces

FULFILLING
Drop ship vendors
Third-party logistics partner
FedEx
UPS
USPS
Pitney Bowes
Seller-Fulfilled Prime

PETER MILLAR

180% INCREASE IN PAID SEARCH VISIBILITY? IT'S POSSIBLE!
Within days of using ChannelAdvisor's product optimization technology, Peter Millar nearly tripled its search presence, causing the brand's product feed to show up for some 14,000 search terms. Wondering what else you can do with product content optimization? Find out here.

Converting at Last



THE SALE MAY BE DONE, BUT THE JOURNEY IS FAR FROM OVER.
By the time consumers approach the moment of conversion, their expectations are higher than ever. They'll be looking for a delivery on their doorsteps within days, if not hours. And when the package arrives, they'll decide within seconds if this will be their final purchase — or if it's just the start of a lasting, loyal relationship.

Most consumers aren't willing to wait more than 4 days for delivery

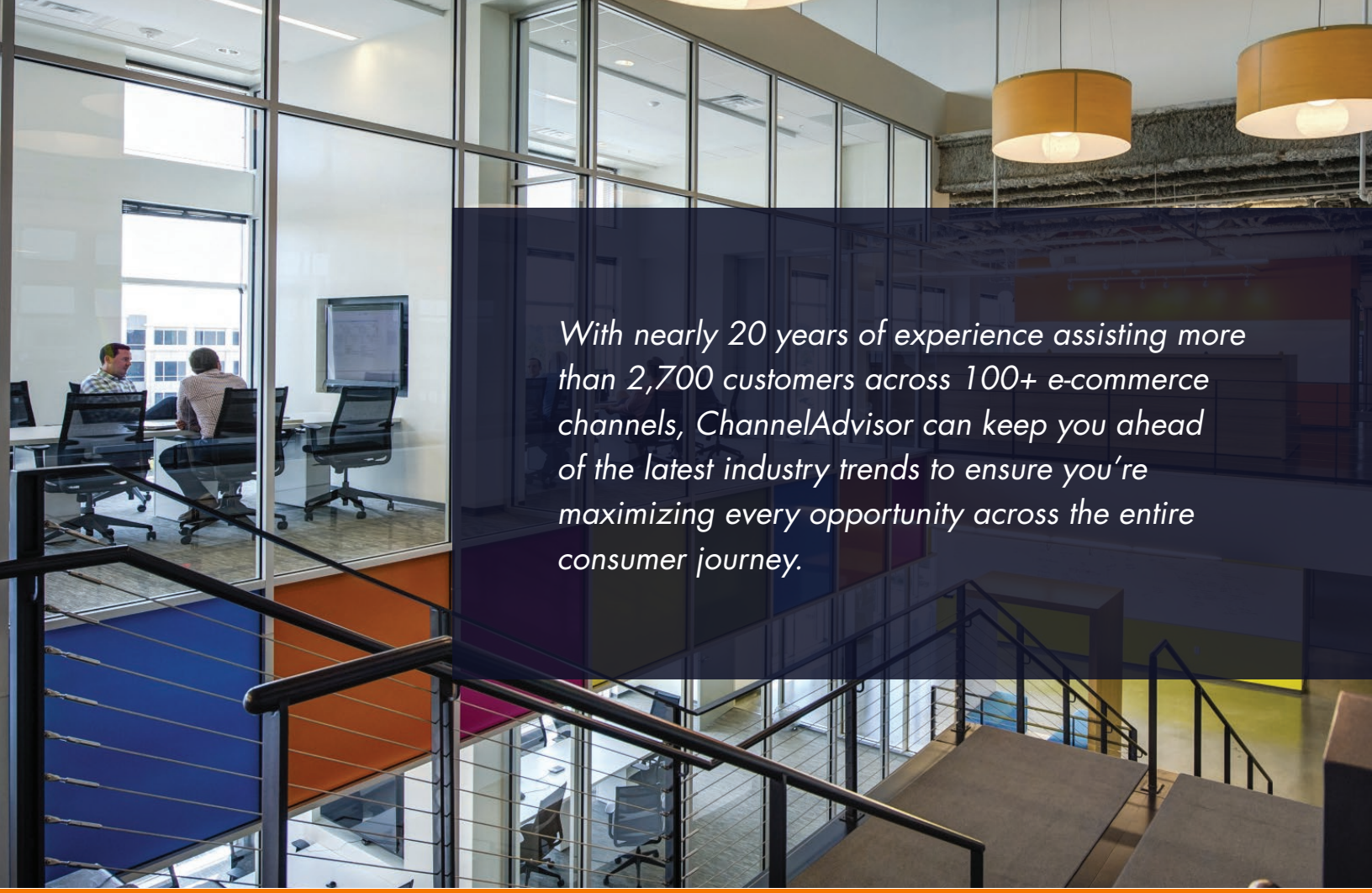
But fulfillment costs can add up fast.

With automated order routing, you can quickly identify low-cost options and have each order sent instantly to the most cost-effective fulfillment partner.



Who's traveling on this journey?

Put simply, everyone. Your customers are everywhere. They can browse and buy from anywhere, at any time. Most importantly, they are always on. Today's consumer could be visiting any number of e-commerce channels at any given time. That means you should be, too.



With nearly 20 years of experience assisting more than 2,700 customers across 100+ e-commerce channels, ChannelAdvisor can keep you ahead of the latest industry trends to ensure you're maximizing every opportunity across the entire consumer journey.

Connect and optimize the world's commerce

ChannelAdvisor is a leading provider of cloud-based e-commerce solutions that enable retailers and branded manufacturers to integrate, manage and optimize their merchandise sales across hundreds of online channels including Facebook, Google, Amazon, eBay, Walmart and more.

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