

eTail25^{YEARS}

AFTER
THE EVENT
REPORT

eTail Boston

August 12 - 15, 2024

Insights and strategies from
the live event that will shape
the future of retail



eTail Insights



CONTENTS

3

Executive Summary

3

Enhancing the
Digital Experience

6

Integrating an
Omnichannel Strategy

8

The Role of AI in Retail

10

Sustainable and
Ethical Retail Practices

11

Key Suggestions

14

About the Event

14

About Our Sponsor

It's hard to believe another eTail Boston has come and gone! As the eTail Chief of Staff, I'm excited to reflect on the thought-provoking sessions, groundbreaking ideas, and powerful conversations that made eTail Boston 2024 extraordinary. Thank you to our eTail community for making it all possible.

From Warby Parker's opening keynote to the final panel with Thousand Fell and Adore Me, our speakers challenged us to innovate and navigate the retail landscape with confidence. This post-event report captures the essence of the event, including key session summaries, highlights, and reflections on emerging themes.

Thank you to everyone—speakers, sponsors, partners, and attendees—who made this year's event a success. We look forward to seeing you at **eTail Palm Springs, February 24-27, 2025!**



Kristin Schoenstein
Chief of Staff
eTail
Worldwide Business Research

Executive Summary

The eTail Boston 2024 event brought together retail and eCommerce leaders to discuss the latest trends and strategies shaping the future of retail. Key themes that emerged included enhancing digital experiences, integrating omnichannel strategies, leveraging artificial intelligence and data analytics, adopting sustainable practices, and focusing on customer-centric innovation. Retailers also shared insights on personalizing customer interactions, streamlining operations, and meeting evolving consumer expectations across online and offline channels.

Overall, the event highlighted how retailers are combining technology and customer-centricity to stay competitive and build lasting customer relationships in today's rapidly changing retail landscape.

Enhancing the Digital Experience

Enhancing digital experiences emerged as a critical focus for retailers at eTail Boston 2024, with companies implementing various strategies to create more engaging and seamless online interactions for customers. Key approaches discussed included:

Personalization and AI-Driven Recommendations

Retailers are leveraging artificial intelligence and machine learning to provide highly personalized product recommendations and content.

For example, some retailers will utilize AI-powered chatbots and shopping assistants to replicate in-person shopping experiences online, tailoring suggestions based on customer preferences and behavior.

“It’s about tailoring that personalized experience to the customer, especially when they’re shopping online. When we have tickets to live events and our competitors have the same inventory, it comes down to what we’re serving to them and what we know about them, whether they are a new or existing customer.”

— **Mike DiMiele,**
Director, Digital Marketing, Vivid Seats



Improved Product Visualization

Companies are investing in advanced product visualization technologies to bridge the gap between online and in-store experiences. These technologies aim to provide customers with a more tangible sense of products they are interested in, thereby enhancing their confidence in making online purchases.

For example, Warby Parker discussed their innovative virtual try-on technology for eyewear, which allows customers to see how different glasses frames will look on their faces using augmented reality. This technology not only enhances the online shopping experience but also reduces the likelihood of returns by helping customers make more informed decisions.

Meanwhile, Lowe's optimized product detail pages for complex items like appliances, ensuring that customers have access to detailed specifications, high-resolution images, and even 3D models. This comprehensive approach provides potential buyers with a richer understanding of the products, simulating an in-store experience by offering a closer look at the features and functionality of each item.

"We've been thinking about how you can rearrange those elements of the page. We want to focus on the key items that people need to think about with those purchases so that they have a better experience."

— **Mary Beth Sisti, Director, Product Management, Lowe's**



Streamlined Checkout Processes

Retailers reported that streamlined checkout processes improve conversion rates and reduce friction at the time of purchase.

For example, Mizuno USA reported significant improvements in conversion rates after implementing a streamlined checkout process using Bolt technology. This initiative involved simplifying the checkout steps, minimizing unnecessary clicks, and integrating secure payment options, which collectively reduced the time required to complete a purchase.

As a result, customers experienced an "effortless checkout" process that not only enhanced their overall shopping experience but also contributed to higher customer satisfaction and retention rates.

Content Integration

Retailers are focusing on integrating compelling content throughout the customer journey. This includes user-generated content, curated content from influencers, educational content, and even personalized content created through generative AI.

In one simple but compelling example, Garnet Hill redesigned its site to weave storytelling into product listings, including "Griditorials," small content blocks with bullets about products, on product listing pages. According to Mark Murphy, Senior Director of eCommerce & Digital Marketing at Garnet Hill, this allows customers to "learn about all the details of a product without potentially sacrificing that conversion."

Mobile Optimization

With mobile commerce continuing to grow at an unprecedented pace, retailers emphasized the critical necessity of optimizing digital experiences specifically for mobile devices. This involves ensuring that websites and applications load quickly, as slow load times can lead to customer frustration and increased bounce rates.

Easy navigation is also crucial, as mobile users expect intuitive interfaces that allow them to find products and information effortlessly.

Additionally, mobile-friendly checkout processes are essential to facilitate seamless transactions, reducing cart abandonment rates. Retailers are increasingly adopting responsive design techniques and leveraging mobile-first strategies to cater to the growing number of consumers shopping via smartphones and tablets, thereby enhancing the overall user experience and driving higher conversion rates.

"We went into this redesign with the idea of marrying content and commerce, weaving storytelling into every step of the customer journey without it getting in the way of conversion."

**— Mark Murphy,
Senior Director,
eCommerce & Digital
Marketing, Garnet Hill**



Integrating an Omnichannel Strategy

Omnichannel strategy integration emerged as a key focus for retailers at eTail Boston 2024, with companies emphasizing the importance of creating seamless experiences across all customer touchpoints. Key aspects of omnichannel integration discussed at the event included the following:

A Unified Customer View

Retailers emphasized the importance of breaking down data silos to create a single, comprehensive view of the customer across all channels.

One search expert noted, "The first thing that really helps make a seamless experience for omnichannel is deconstructing your data silos. If you can have a single pane of glass to view the customer at all their touchpoints, you can make informed, transparent decisions."

This unified view enables personalized experiences and more effective marketing strategies.

Consistent Brand Messaging

Companies like Victoria's Secret, which manages multiple brands, highlighted the importance of maintaining consistent brand messaging across channels while tailoring it to specific platforms and audiences.

Jill Marcus Smith from Victoria's Secret explained their approach: "We do a lot of work with each of our brands to understand who they are, who their brand ethos is, and who their target customer is. Then, we look at that through a lens of either the Victoria's Secret or the Pink customer".



INVENTORY VISIBILITY AND FULFILLMENT OPTIONS

Retailers discussed the importance of providing real-time inventory visibility across channels and offering flexible fulfillment options:

- Buy Online, Pick Up In-Store (BOPIS):** Kohl's emphasized the importance of connecting digital and physical experiences through services like BOPIS, as this combines the ease of shopping online with the fast fulfillment of buying in-store.
- Ship-from-Store:** Retailers are leveraging store inventory to fulfill online orders, reducing shipping times and costs.
- Reserve Online, Try In-Store:** This option allows customers to browse and reserve items online before trying them on in-store, blending digital convenience with the tactile in-store experience.

"It's important that we have that direct one-to-one connection and we use that as a big part of our broader Harry's customer strategy."

— **Doug Hwang, VP, Head of Digital Commerce, Harry's**

Cross-Channel Analytics

Companies emphasized the importance of tracking customer behavior across channels to gain insights and optimize the overall shopping experience. Doug Hwang from Harry's highlighted their approach: "We know that some of these journeys start on our direct-to-consumer ads, and then we know they're buying in Target because we're also reaching out and talking to those customers".

Channel-Specific Strategies

Retailers emphasized the need for channel-specific strategies while maintaining overall brand consistency. Sergio Tache from Dossier Perfumes noted, "Each channel deserves its own strategy and its own thought in the function of who you're addressing". This approach allows retailers to tailor their offerings and messaging to the unique characteristics of each channel while maintaining a cohesive brand identity.

By integrating these omnichannel strategies, retailers aim to provide a more seamless and personalized shopping experience, ultimately driving customer loyalty and increasing sales across all channels.

The Role of AI in Retail

The emerging role of artificial intelligence (AI) in retail, as discussed at the eTail Boston 2024 event, is multifaceted, impacting both customer-facing interactions and internal operations. Retailers are increasingly leveraging AI to enhance the shopping experience by providing personalized recommendations and improving customer service.

Retailers are using AI to create a more personalized shopping experience by analyzing customer behavior and preferences to offer tailored product suggestions. This approach not only enhances customer satisfaction but also increases conversion rates by ensuring that customers are presented with products that are most relevant to them.

AI is also playing a crucial role in streamlining retail operations. Retailers are utilizing AI to optimize inventory management, forecast demand, and improve supply chain efficiency.

This is particularly important in an era where customer expectations for fast and reliable delivery are higher than ever. By using AI to predict trends and manage stock levels, retailers can reduce waste and ensure that popular items are always available, thereby improving customer satisfaction and loyalty.

"Reps no longer have to fill out weekly reports: estimating a 75 percent chance of closing a deal, or noting which leads are waiting for follow-up. AI now pulls all those data points together to create summaries, make predictions, and simplify both sales management and the reps' jobs."

— **Joan Abrams, Director ECommerce, D2C at Dorel Home**

By popular demand, eTail Palm Springs will debut an entire summit day dedicated to AI.

"We recently spoke with a startup that is developing an AI-powered voice chatbot, and we plan to use their technology to power our chatbots moving forward. I completely agree that customer service, from all angles, will be transformed by this technology."

— **Sarah Sathaye, Chief Revenue Officer, Naadam**



Furthermore, AI is being used to enhance the in-store experience.

For example, Tractor Supply Co. is implementing AI-driven tools to assist store associates in providing better customer service. By equipping staff with AI-powered devices, they can quickly access product information and answer customer queries more efficiently.

This not only improves the customer experience but also empowers employees by providing them with the tools they need to perform their jobs more effectively.

Lastly, AI is facilitating the integration of online and offline retail channels, creating a seamless omnichannel experience for customers. Retailers are using AI to analyze data from various touchpoints, allowing them to understand customer behavior across channels and tailor their marketing strategies accordingly.

This integration ensures that customers receive a consistent and personalized experience, whether they are shopping online, in-store, or through mobile apps.

“We’ve built a capability leveraging LLMs and generative AI that allows our team members to instantly receive information through earpieces, enhancing our customer service. This functionality acts like a Siri or Alexa for our staff, enabling them to provide instant answers and greatly improve our ability to assist customers.”

— **Sada Kshirsagar, VP of Product,**
Tractor Supply Co

Sustainable and Ethical Retail Practices

As consumers become more environmentally conscious, retailers are recognizing the need to align their business practices with these values. This shift is important for meeting customer demand, but it is also about ensuring long-term business sustainability. Retailers are focusing on sustainable sourcing, reducing carbon footprints, and implementing ethical labor practices to enhance their brand reputation and build customer loyalty.

One of the key strategies discussed was the integration of sustainability into the supply chain. Retailers are working to ensure that their products are sourced responsibly and that their supply chains are transparent. This involves collaborating with suppliers who adhere to ethical labor practices and using materials that are environmentally friendly.

By doing so, retailers can reduce their environmental impact and provide consumers with products that align with their values.

In addition to supply chain improvements, retailers are also focusing on reducing waste and promoting recycling. This includes initiatives such as using recyclable packaging, encouraging customers to recycle products, and implementing take-back programs.

These efforts not only reduce the environmental impact of retail operations but also engage customers in sustainability efforts, fostering a sense of shared responsibility.

Finally, the role of technology in supporting sustainable practices was highlighted. Retailers are leveraging data analytics and AI to optimize operations, reduce waste, and improve energy efficiency. For example, AI can be used to predict demand more accurately, reducing overproduction and minimizing waste. By integrating technology into their sustainability strategies, retailers can enhance efficiency and drive innovation in their sustainability efforts.

“It’s important to tell the customer, ‘This is where we’re headed by 2030.’ They’re excited about hearing goals. One of our brands’ entire ethos is around building sustainable alternatives, in some cases with zero waste. With every product we bring to market, we try to raise the bar.

— **Sarah Sathaye, Chief Revenue Officer, Naadam**

“We’ve embarked upon this journey to find the right raw material suppliers and the right manufacturers who could actually work with us on sourcing and utilizing sustainable materials. Over the years, we’ve also offboarded manufacturing partners who weren’t able to partner with us on this. You need to make sure that your entire supply chain is engaged with you in these efforts. You can’t do this on your own.”

— **Christina Chang, VP, Sustainability, Adore Me**



Practical Takeaways

Leverage AI for Personalized Customer Experiences.

Retailers should integrate AI technologies to offer personalized recommendations and enhance customer interactions. Personalized experiences can significantly increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, leading to higher conversion rates and repeat purchases. AI tools can analyze customer data to provide tailored suggestions, making shopping more relevant and engaging for each individual.

Adopt an Omnichannel Strategy to Seamlessly Connect with Customers.

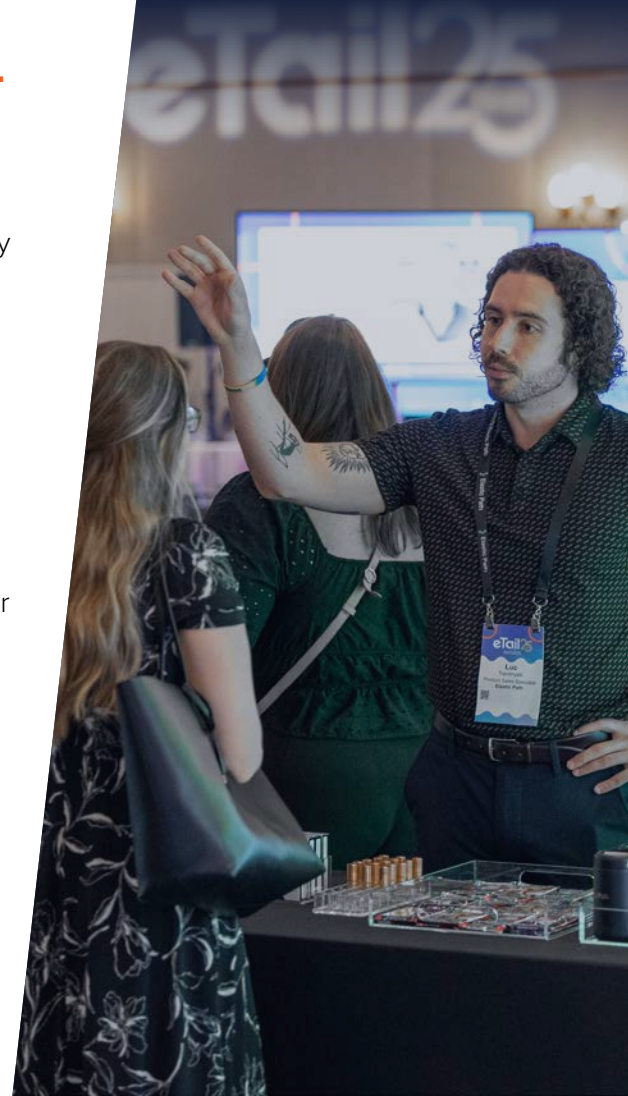
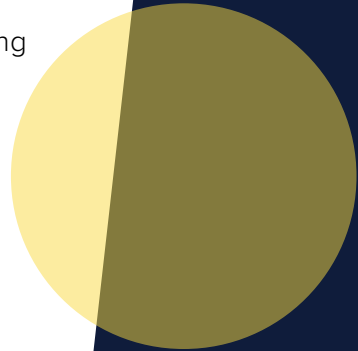
Ensure that your retail operations are integrated across all channels, from online to in-store, to provide a cohesive customer experience. This approach is crucial as it allows customers to interact with your brand consistently, regardless of the platform they choose. By meeting customers where they are, retailers can improve customer satisfaction and loyalty, and ultimately drive more sales.

Utilize Data Analytics to Drive Decision-Making.

Retailers should harness data analytics to gain insights into customer behavior and optimize their business strategies. Being data-driven is essential for understanding market trends and consumer preferences, which can inform everything from inventory management to marketing campaigns. This approach enables retailers to make informed decisions that align with customer needs, enhancing competitiveness and profitability.

Commit to Sustainable and Ethical Practices.

Implement sustainable sourcing and ethical business practices to meet growing consumer demand for transparency and responsibility. Consumers are increasingly choosing brands that align with their values, and sustainability can be a key differentiator in a competitive market. By focusing on ethical practices, retailers can also participate in global efforts to reduce emissions, improve the lives of workers, and protect the environment.



The Longest Running Ecommerce Show For A Reason.

Actionable Tactics To Grow Your Business, No Fluff

We're not a tradeshow or a vendor led seminar. Our agenda is 100% focused on your biggest challenges and opportunities. No talking heads. No big egos. No commercials. You'll hear from Founders, CEOs, VPs and those who are in the trenches, doing the work. We cut out the fluff you get at other conferences to give you tons of actionable strategies to increase your profits.



55% Retailer Attendance

We protect our buyer to seller numbers to make sure you are meeting and interacting with the right people; hundreds of retail attendees over three days of insight, interaction, and innovation. This means you'll develop peer to peer relationships, make valuable new contacts and experience an event unlike any other.



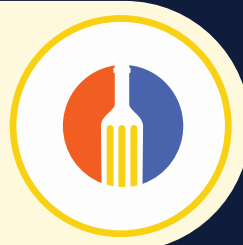
The Most Interactive eCommerce & Omnichannel Conference, Ever

Benefit from over 30 hours of discussion groups, creative think tanks, roundtables, structured and unstructured networking, plus a lot of fun while getting business done over three days. This is your opportunity to make new connections and speak "off the record" with your peers. You'll build connections with retailers like never before. challenges and tackle them head on together.



An Awesome Time, Guaranteed

We're known in the industry for awesome experiences you can't get anywhere else. Sip fine wines, kick back with cocktails, eat delicious food, and be wowed at our famous evening receptions. You'll make memories that last a lifetime.



Networking in the Heart of Boston!

Located in the heart of downtown Boston, our hotel provides the quintessential setting for work and play. Nestled in the historic Back Bay neighborhood, we're directly connected to the Prudential Center and within walking distance to some of the best restaurants, bars and entertainment that Boston has to offer.



WBR  INSIGHTS

The Digital Arm of eTail

This report is brought to you by WBR Insights.

With WBR Insights, your brand means more. Engage your target audience with custom thought leadership that matters.

WBR Insights helps you unlock sales-ready opportunities for your teams. Our unique approach to audience building and digital engagement provides actionable leads to B2B companies across categories.

Opportunities include custom research reports with lead generation, virtual summits for our conference attendees, custom webinars with on-demand recruitment, content syndication that drives high-value sales, and more.

[Access our full list of inventory maps to get started.](#)

DISCOVER MORE AT

[WBRESEARCH.COM/CONTENT](https://wbresearch.com/content)



About the Event

eTail²⁵_{YEARS}

eTail is your opportunity to be at the forefront of the retail revolution. How? By joining a community of innovators looking to strategize and connect with other eTailers. We talk with thousands of retailers, and what we hear again and again is that there is nowhere better to form connections, learn the latest insights, and have a great time collaborating than at eTail.

Join the excitement as we continue to celebrate 25 incredible years together!

For more information, or to register for an upcoming eTail event, please visit etaileast.wbresearch.com.

Interested in sponsoring eTail?

We Build The Conference... You Choose Your Experience

Sponsorship comes in all shapes and sizes. We'll work with you to create a one-of-a-kind package that puts your brand front and center!

[See Our Sponsorship Options](#)

