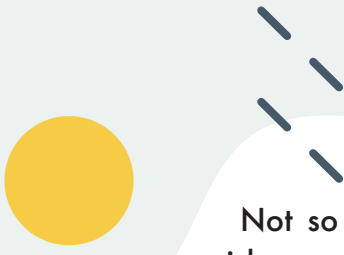



Direct to ~~Consumer~~ Community: Being Digitally Native in 2021



Not so long ago, we paroused through sunday markets, grocery store aisles, and our favorite local shops with comfort and ease. We chatted with vendors and staff. It seems that this joy has faded from reality. Our research shows that those same experiences and joys have not disappeared, they've transitioned into the digital world. We are in the midst of a radical paradigm shift as demand for online shopping is exploding with opportunity and potential, especially in the food and beverage industry.

As brick and mortar stores have become inconvenient and recently unsafe, digital shopping is transforming rapidly to fill the void left in the wake. And consumers are now actually seeking out direct-to-consumer products with 55% of consumers preferring to buy directly from brands rather than multi-brand retailers [1]. CPG brands from [Pepsi](#) to [Magic Spoon](#) are investing in digital customer experiences and personalized marketing more than ever before. Direct-to-Consumer strategies are the front-running tool to grow your customer base, build brand loyalty, and cut out middle-men along the way.

Your target consumers are looking for something to believe in and they're spending more time in front of their screens than ever before. According to Shopify, 54% of consumers have shifted their spending to online shopping since the pandemic began and 67% of younger consumers (18 - 34) now spend more online [2]. Almost 6 in 10 are willing to shop at new brands for the first time, so now is the time to get in front of them [2]. We want to show you how! In what follows, we outline not only how to reach your target audience and increase your brand awareness—but how to best engage your community to crush your sales goals, and maximize your return on investment.



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Why DTC?



How to Sell Online

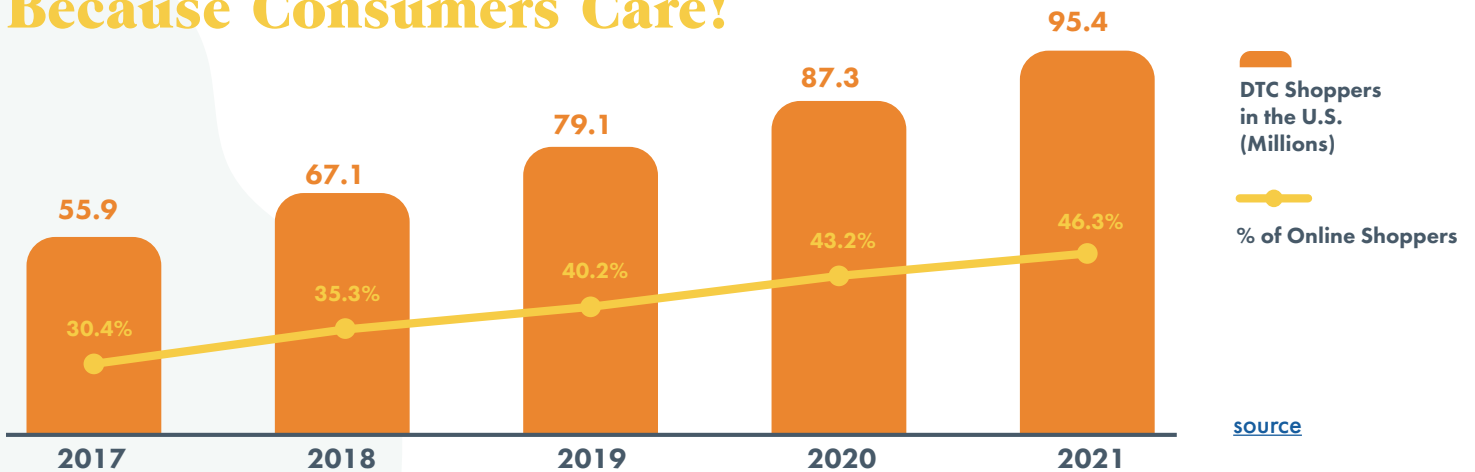
Introducing e-commerce into your distribution channels presents many challenges. Believe us, we've heard them all. First and foremost, it's a significant investment. You need to master fulfillment and shipping, product lifecycle, community relations, customer support, sales driven marketing, and more. With a strong omni-channel strategy, investing in DTC means larger profit margins, full control of your brand narrative, facilitated market penetration, and access to impactful data. It sounds too good to be true, but so does the internet. Over the last 10 years, we've helped clients, including Ocean Spray, maximize their e-commerce goals. Here's a taste of our expertise for free.

3 STEPS TO LAUNCHING AN ENDURING DTC STRATEGY

1. Build an engaging, easy to navigate, e-commerce website
2. Establish an omni-channel marketing strategy
3. Execute, adapt, and optimize.

First, let's take a step back so we can teach you the magic formula. Notice how 'consumer' is crossed out in the title of this whitepaper? All successful DTC brands have one thing in common. They see their website as the flagship gateway to their product. They view their customers as a beloved community. **They give before they ask.** With a valuable product and a vision, the following steps will pave the way for your success.

Because Consumers Care!



The Flagship Gateway

The modern website is the single most useful resource for your consumers to learn more about your product, learn about your company, and contact you. These three core components find themselves floating on every website whether it was built by a multinational agency or Squarespace. You know that your website is your opportunity to display your brand to the world. Let's dive into how your website can be the most powerful tool to drive sales by establishing a community of customers with strong lifetime value. Customer lifetime value (CLV) represents the amount of money a customer is expected to spend on your products over the course of their lifetime. A favorable first impression and shopping experience can increase your retention, and thus increase your customer lifetime value.

Branding has jumped to the forefront of product differentiation. Every business development guru stresses the importance of developing a strong brand. While your logo, visuals, and copy contribute to your identity, we urge you to take it one step deeper and consider your customer's shopping experience. Grocery stores dedicate extensive time and resources to ensure that the staff are on-brand through the way they dress and communicate with customers. You can implement the same philosophy to your website's shopping experience. Read on for actionable steps that have made us one of the most trusted natural foods marketing agencies in the US.

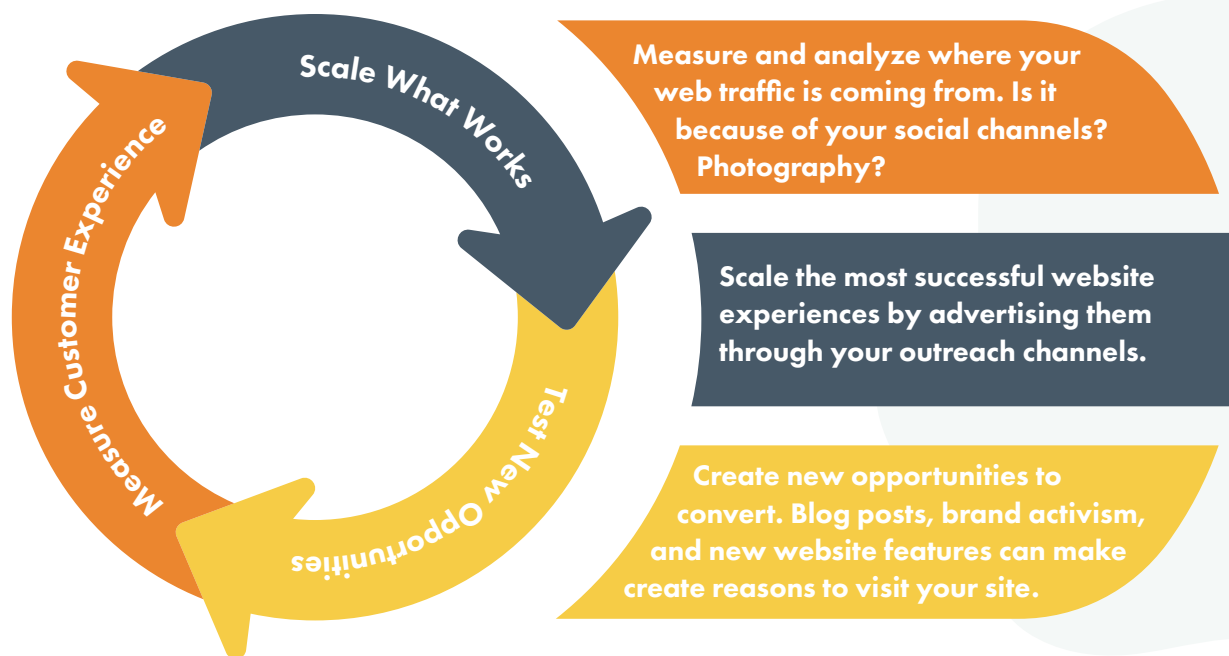
1. CONSIDER HOW YOU WOULD SELL YOUR PRODUCT IN A BRICK AND MORTAR SHOP...

- Would you place your customer's order in a bag or wrap it into a branded bundle?
- Would your customer use a shopping cart or a wicker basket?
- Would you offer a coupon with every customer's first purchase?

You should be asking similar questions for your website experience. The key is to identify the fundamental personality traits of your business and incorporate them into your customer's journey. Smart Sweets is an example of a DTC website that implements a strong customer journey to engage with their customers and personalize the shopping experience. Upon visiting their home page, you are greeted with the opportunity to "build a box".

In addition to providing a unique shopping experience, [Smart Sweets](#) establishes an experience for their customers. According to Marketing Dive, 43% of online shoppers are more likely to buy from companies that personalize their experience [3]. By providing a direct, personalized CTA, Smart Sweets prioritizes their returning customers as opposed to prioritizing new customers with resources such as "about us" or "products". Our experience and research shows that this makes a significant difference.

**Your website is the
flagship gateway
to your world.**



2. PROMOTIONS HAVE NEVER BEEN SO PERSONAL!

Amazon has a simple value proposition: cheap, fast, and easy. Investing in a DTC website allows you to deliver supplementary and targeted value. Think of it like this: we often throw away all of the coupons on the back of our receipts but gift cards have a special place in our wallets. By offering your product directly through your website, you are able to offer strategic promotional campaigns that consumers care about.

Let me take you back to one of your childhood birthdays. Do you remember pulling your present out of its bag? Do you remember double-checking the bag to make sure you didn't miss a card or sneaky side present? If you're anything like us, receiving that extra little gift made all the difference. That was an experience. A few years later, we all still love presents. This is the type of experience you can deliver by taking control of the entire customer experience. Since you send the packages yourself, consider including promotional coupons or side-gifts that create a connection with your audience. Aside from having your amazing product, your customers will rave about it on social platforms. It's significantly cheaper to sell to a repeat customer than a cold lead, so prioritize your community. The probability of making a sale to an existing customer is 60% - 70%, while converting a new target consumer into a customer is only 5% - 20% [4]. Improving your customer retention by just as little as 5% can increase profits by 25% to 95%

3. MAXIMIZING YOUR CUSTOMER DATA

Along with providing a unique customer experience, a DTC website gives you an opportunity to test new products and ideas with your audience. Giving customers a reason to return to your website also provides you with control of user data. By having full control of testing, you will achieve faster, more efficient speed-to-market and a winning control strategy. This wealth of information can help you understand which products are catching your audience's eyes. You now have answers to the following difficult questions...

- Is this new product viable?
- Can we charge more for this product?
- Does a specific audience segment have a predictable lifespan?

These questions are daunting and can take months to answer through retail. DTC takes that power from retail stores and online retailers and puts it back in your hands.

Driving Reach and Engagement

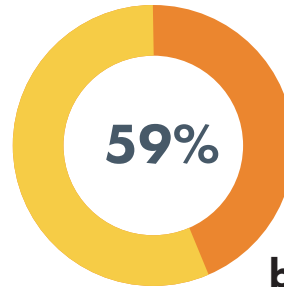
Like a brick and mortar store, great staff and a quality product don't bring people rushing through the door. In 2021, your marketing strategy needs to be centered around trust. While you can find a wealth of information elsewhere, there are 3 keys that impact sales significantly.

1. SOCIAL MEDIA PUTS YOUR COMMUNITY FIRST

The fastest way for your customers to reach you is social media. Aside from the content, the ads, the emojis, social media is the preferred method through which customers interact and engage with their favorite brands. According to Forrester, 80% of consumers use social media to engage with brands [5]. (Clients and customers are turning to social media for updates on closures, shipping information, product availability and more). 54% of customers use social media to research products and prefer using social for customer service. While the specific platform varies from brand to brand, all successful DTC brands are active on social media [5]. Testimonial blurbs are a thing of the past. Social proof starts with engaged followers.

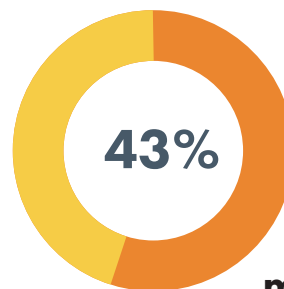
Social proof is the biggest converting sales tactic as 82% of Americans seek recommendations from friends and family before making a purchase. No matter what script you're reading, you're not as influential as your potential customer's best friend or mentor [6]. 92% of consumers are more likely to trust non-paid recommendations than any other type of advertising, so building an engaged and excited community online via social is key [6].

The secondary benefit of an engaging social media presence is the ability to reach new people. Social ads, influencers, advocacy programs and more are easily accessible through social media. Using the right platforms, tailoring content to your audience, and converting is significantly more complicated than we make it seem. We can make it easy for you with a quick consultation.



of shoppers prefer to buy new products from the brands they trust.

[source](#)



of customers spend more money on brands they are loyal to.

[source](#)

2. AS RESTAURANTS ARE CLOSED, THE INBOX IS STILL POPPIN'

Email is one of the most effective marketing tools at your disposal and a crucial component of any DTC strategy. 60% of consumers actually prefer email communication from brands [7]. While email can be used for brand awareness in the case of retail brands, email can be used to drive sales for DTC brands. 44% of users check their email for deals from brands and 60% have made a purchase after receiving a promotional email [7]. Your content can be personalized to specific audience segments, increasing the level of personalization for your community. Brands who use segmented campaigns note as much as a 760% increase in revenue [8].

Collecting emails is also significantly easier with an engaging website. By offering valuable content such as promotions on your website for the price of their email, you can build a list of potential repeat customers. It's so effective that you're reading this right now.

3. BECOME BEST FRIENDS WITH GOOGLE, BING, OR ECOSIA

Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is central to creating brand visibility on search engines. You can test your SEO right now by searching for important keywords that pertain to your brand. Does your company show up? If not, it's ok. SEO takes expertise but we have some tips for you. Start a blog or recipe page on your website and include keywords that pertain to your product offering. Ask yourself what kind of questions your customers are looking for answers to? How about: What are the best gluten-free cookies? Include these keywords on your website to increase your search engine ranking.

Is your brand in the natural or environmentally conscious space? Have you considered advertising on alternative search engines. If we're going to leave you with one last little secret. Check out Ecosia. You won't regret it :P

"DTC sales are forecasted to account for \$17.75 billion of total e-commerce sales in 2020, up 24.3% from the previous year." [9]

WE CAN HELP YOU TAKE PART!

At Heart Creative, we've built our business by taking care of your business. We build and implement strategic support packages tailored to crush your company's goals. Don't hesitate to contact us if we can help; whether you're an established client or new around here, a consultation call with us—on the house—is the best way to bring your brand where you want it to be!

[Let's Chat!](#)