



ClickZ

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# The Era of Ecommerce

Capitalizing on the New Customer Journey

# About the report

**This report is published by ClickZ in partnership with Catalyst, a specialty search, social, and ecommerce agency part of GroupM/WPP.**

It is based on a survey of more than 750 North America-based consumers and a survey of more than 600 business to consumer (B2C) client-side marketers across the following sectors: appliances, baby care, beauty and personal care, clothing and apparel, consumer electronics, footwear, furniture and home decor, non-perishable goods and beverages, and toys.

This research has been complemented by numerous in-depth interviews with senior marketers who are actively engaged in ecommerce advertising for their brands.

The report is aimed at all B2C-focused companies marketing and selling to consumers across the sectors named above.

The marketer survey was conducted in August 2018, and the consumer survey was carried out in August–September 2018. Interviews were carried out between June 2018 and September 2018.





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# Executive summary

In last year's *Age of Amazon* report published in September 2017, we told the story of the ecommerce giant and what its ascent means for marketers.

Since then, Amazon's growth has only accelerated, most notably as its market cap passed the \$1 trillion mark<sup>1</sup>.

We could be led to assume that this success has come to the detriment of the rest of the ecommerce industry. However, the 'Amazon Prime Effect'<sup>2</sup> has also triggered an era of increased innovation amongst Amazon's competitors.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/04/technology/amazon-stock-price-1-trillion-value.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-prime-effect-how-amazons-2-day-shipping-is-disrupting-retail-1537448425>

As a result, this report assesses the role of Amazon in the ecommerce landscape, but also aims to go beyond this to look at the wider industry from a consumer and an advertiser perspective.

Building on last year's research, this report first highlights consumer behaviors across demographics, devices, and product categories with 18 leading retailers and search engines, from product discovery through to purchase and customer loyalty.

Next, this report uses exclusive survey data and findings from interviews with leading brands and technology providers to understand how brands are connecting with consumers through advertising across retailers and search engines.

At the intersection of these two datasets, a host of illuminating discoveries arise:

### **Product discovery is split evenly across retailers and search engines**

When consumers know what they are looking for, 50% of ecommerce journeys start with a retailer and 50% start with a search engine.

Google is the most popular starting point overall (46%), followed by Amazon (20%).

In contrast, when consumers do not know what they are looking for, 62% of ecommerce purchase journeys start with a search engine and just 38% start with a retailer.

### **Consumers are non-exclusive in their purchase journey**

Consumers move frequently from retailer to retailer as they research their purchases. For example, they are just as likely to visit Pinterest to review product imagery (22% of respondents) as they are to visit Google (22%) for the same.

It is clear that consumers are charting their own paths to purchase and taking research into their own hands.

### **Advertising budgets are misaligned with consumer behaviors**

70% of responding brands to this year's survey have increased their ecommerce marketing budget within the last 12 months, while just 5% have decreased spend.

Amazon is a core beneficiary of this growth, with many advertisers shifting emphasis from Google<sup>3</sup> to take advantage of the ecommerce giant's improving set of offerings.

However, this report also finds that the majority of browsing and purchasing activity occurs with non-Amazon retailers.

### **Brands are failing to grasp the full ecommerce opportunity.**

Just 25% of brands say they have a

defined strategy for ecommerce retailers beyond Amazon.

Surprisingly, only 28% of responding brands have a defined strategy for Amazon, and a further 38% are "working on it".

That marks an increase since ClickZ's *Age of Amazon* report in 2017, when only 17% of brands said they had an Amazon strategy in place. In increasing numbers, brands are putting plans in place for Amazon. However, many lack the agility required to adapt to these new opportunities.

### **What brands need to do to improve ecommerce performance**

Brands have adapted their approach to ecommerce advertising since 2017's *Age of Amazon* report. 43% of brands now outsource their Amazon advertising campaigns, compared to just 26% last year.

The same can be said with non-Amazon retailers, where 47% of brands outsource their campaigns as well.

### **Capitalizing on the ecommerce opportunity requires an integrated strategy.**

'Improved user experience' (22%) and 'closer alignment of digital marketing with merchandising teams' (8%) were both voted in the top five biggest ecommerce opportunities today by brands.

Delivering on those ambitions will require much closer collaboration between internal departments and agency partners. ClickZ data uncovers a lack of integration in brands' approach to ecommerce advertising on search engines and across retailers.

### **Conclusion**

The fierce competition between Google and Amazon is driving the pace of innovation. While Amazon has posted \$2.2bn<sup>4</sup> in advertising revenue and is growing at a "triple-digit" annual rate<sup>5</sup>, Google's advertising products brought in a huge \$95.4bn in 2017.

The global ecommerce market share battle is only getting started. Brands need to up their game to capitalize on what is an unprecedented era of ecommerce opportunity.



**Clark Boyd**  
Author, *The Era of Ecommerce*



<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/08/google-search-losing-some-advertising-business-to-amazon-ad-sources.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://digiday.com/marketing/amazon-advertising-now-worth-2-billion/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2018/10/08/google-search-losing-some-advertising-business-to-amazon-ad-sources.html>





# Key findings

The following are the key findings that have shaped the structure and content of this report.





When a consumer knows what they are looking for, 50% of ecommerce journeys start with a retailer; 50% start with a search engine.



20% of consumers go to Amazon first when they know what they are looking for, and a further 10% start at Walmart. 46% of consumers begin with Google.



When a consumer does not know what they are looking for, 62% of ecommerce purchase journeys start with a search engine and just 38% start with a retailer.



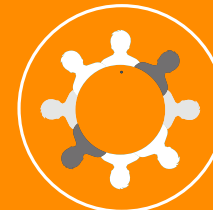
While a huge 96% of consumers surveyed had visited Amazon within the last year, 78% also said they had visited the Walmart website to research or purchase.



Only 53% of brands who have a marketing presence on Amazon also carry out similar activities on Walmart. The drop-off in advertising activity beyond Google and Amazon is marked —and at odds with how consumers purchase online.



85% of browsing and purchasing activity occurs with non-Amazon retailers; meanwhile, only 25% of US brands say they have a strategy for ecommerce retailers beyond Amazon.



Across the board, advertisers are struggling to keep pace with consumer behaviors. On average, there is a 29 percentage point gap between the proportion of consumers who have visited a retailer to research and the proportion of brands who market on that retailer's website (53% vs. 24%).



Even if a purchase ultimately occurs offline, the role of online interactions remains critical. We found that 74% of consumers research online and then purchase in-store either “Always” or “Sometimes.”



Within the large section of brands (63%) planning to increase their Google Search budget over the next 12 months, 79% say they can attribute spend to results “well” or “very well” on this advertising platform.



There is a lack of integration in brands' search strategies across all product categories. Responsibilities are split between departments and more brands plan to decrease (17%) than increase (14%) their investment in third-party, cross-retailer platforms. A new approach to ecommerce search is required, starting with a more integrated strategy.



# Foreword from Catalyst

**For the past twenty years Catalyst has helped brands connect with consumers through the search marketing channels**

As ecommerce websites have evolved to become key consumer discovery platforms, so have our strategies and services. Today we take a holistic approach to driving consumer and brand connections across all discovery platforms.





From paid media activations to SEO opportunities, we are at the forefront of search marketing across traditional engines like Google and Bing, as well as emerging opportunities on ecommerce sites like Amazon.

In last year's *Age of Amazon* report, Catalyst and ClickZ explored how consumers and brands were adapting to Amazon's dominance as both a key shopping destination and an advertising platform.

In this report, we arm advertisers with strategies they need to maximize business results across all discovery platforms and ecommerce channels.

However, as Amazon's growth has accelerated, their competition has also begun improving how consumers discover and purchase products on their sites. Walmart and Target have been investing in better customer experiences and are working towards more direct advertising opportunities.

Google is expanding its Product Listing Ad (PLA) features and capabilities while Bing rolled out In-Market Audiences for improved targeting.

Given these trends, in this year's research we've taken a broader look at the consumer journey, examining even more discovery channels. From traditional search engines

to ecommerce websites, and from vertical-specific retailers to visual search, we sought to understand how and when consumers are using specific channels and how advertisers are prioritizing each channel.

Our findings supported our hypothesis around the nonlinear consumer journey.

However, as we evaluated how advertisers were planning consumer connections across discovery touchpoints, we uncovered a large disconnect between how consumers are discovering products and brands and how advertisers are investing their marketing budgets and resources.

Ultimately, we found that there are huge opportunities for advertisers to think more holistically about reaching their consumers during each phase of the consumer cycle.

In this report, we arm advertisers with strategies they need to maximize business results across all discovery platforms and ecommerce channels.

We hope that this report provides brands and advertisers with the new insight and innovative thinking required to be a leader in today's era of ecommerce.



**Kerry Curran, Catalyst**

Managing Partner, Marketing Integration

Catalyst is a specialty search, social, and ecommerce marketing agency. Catalyst specializes in digital solutions that are innovative and effective, and that consistently deliver business results for Fortune 1000 companies. From advanced Amazon marketing strategies to sophisticated search campaigns, Catalyst offers industry leading capabilities required for best-in-class search and social programs.

Contact Catalyst to maximize your brand's business results.

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# Acknowledgements



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Vertical Strategy Lead, Retail

Amy Vener leads Pinterest's retail strategy and helps partners understand how to best use the Pinterest platform to achieve a competitive advantage within their industry. She works across product and marketing organizations to have a holistic view on how Pinterest can best meet the needs of retailers.



**John Denny, CAVU Venture Partners**

VP eCommerce & Digital Marketing at CAVU Venture Partners

John is an experienced Amazon, ecommerce, and digital marketing strategist with an expertise in Amazon advertising, SEO, and operations. He is currently VP Ecommerce & Digital Marketing at CAVU Venture Partners. Prior to joining CAVU in early 2018, he was VP of ecommerce & Media at Bai, during which time Bai was named Amazon's "Vendor of the Year" for 2015.



**Brian Monahan, Newco**

Co-founder & Chief Evangelist

(former VP of Marketing at Walmart and Head of Customer Strategy at Pinterest)

Co-founder and Chief Evangelist, Brian Monahan is an award winning pioneer in the marketing industry who joins NewCo full time after having spent three years as Walmart.com's Vice President of Marketing. Brian conceived of NewCo in 2012 alongside friend and fellow cyclist, John Battelle, while they were on a mountain bike ride through Brian's home county of Marin, CA, where he lives with his wife and two daughters.



**Kerry Curran, Catalyst**

Managing Partner, Marketing Integration

Kerry Curran is Managing Partner, Marketing Integration at Catalyst. She has over 18 years of experience in client services, business development, and digital marketing. In her role on the Catalyst executive team, Kerry leads business development and marketing across all of Catalyst's search and social business. Kerry is also recognized as a search marketing and ecommerce thought-leader. She has spoken at SMX Advance, SMX West, Criteo's Commerce Summit, key WPP ecommerce events, and more. Kerry has been featured on Forbes, DigitalCommerce 360, MediaPost, and more.



**Jennifer DiMotta, Jennifer DiMotta Consulting**

President & Owner of Jennifer DiMotta Consulting LLC

For more than 20 years, Jennifer has built high growth ecommerce businesses across retail, CPG, and brand companies through harmonizing strategy, culture, profitability, and top talent development. Prior to launching Jennifer DiMotta Consulting LLC, a leading ecommerce and Digital Marketing consulting firm, Jennifer held high-ranking positions at Bluemercury, Sports Authority, Office Depot, ReStockIt.com, and Hayneedle.



**Luis Navarrete Gomez, LEGO**

Head of Global Search Marketing

Luis is Head of Global Search Marketing at The LEGO Group, and defines the strategy for organic and paid search activity globally for the iconic toy company.

Luis comes from a technical background in computer science and has more than 14 years' experience in search marketing with cross-functional expertise in technology and business management and leadership.



**Meaghan Werle, Kantar Consulting**

Senior Analyst

Meaghan is a Senior Analyst on Kantar Consulting's digital research team, focusing on Amazon and emerging digital and ecommerce trends across channels. She develops thought leadership on topics like social commerce, online grocery, and emerging technologies in retail for Kantar Consulting's websites, events, and custom projects. Before joining Kantar Consulting in 2016, Meaghan was an analyst at a market research firm in the Greater Boston area, working on marketing communications and package design studies for various CPG, financial services, and pharma clients. Meaghan graduated from Cornell University with a B.A. in psychology and minors in visual studies and communication.



**Nikolai Zeinikov, Heineken**

Ecommerce Director

Recently included in Shopper Marketing's "Who's Who in Ecommerce 2017" and "Who's Who in Digital Marketing for Shoppers 2018," Nikolai has more than 10 consecutive years of winning in CPG ecommerce and Digital Marketing. He's worked in 16 different countries in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. His career includes senior ecommerce positions in companies such as The Walt Disney Company, Kimberly-Clark, and most recently Heineken USA.



**Patrick Cartmel, Criteo**

VP, Agency Strategy, Client Services and Sales

Patrick Cartmel is VP of Agency Strategy and Partnership at Criteo, the advertising platform for the open Internet. Patrick joined Criteo as part of its 2016 Hooklogic acquisition, where he led the sales and account team managing the top media agency and brand manufacturer engagements globally. Patrick has previously held positions at Undertone, WPP, MEC, Atlas, and Avenue A/Razorfish.



**Rob Gonzalez, Salsify**

Co-Founder, EVP Business Development

Rob is the co-founder of Salsify, which works with companies like Coca-Cola, 3M, Johnson & Johnson, Mars, LEGO, Levis, Bosch, L'Oreal, and hundreds of other global brands to manage and optimize their brand presence on the digital shelf.



**Sean Kainec, Comcast**

Director of SEO

Sean Kainec is a career digital and technology focused marketer with extensive ecommerce, retail, and strategy experience. He currently manages the strategic vision, implementation, and measurement of SEO and partners with Comcast's other entities to ensure a unified vision of SEO is spread throughout the greater organization. Sean is also a member of the Yext Customer Advisory Board.



# Product discovery is split evenly across retailers and search engines

**50% of consumers start their journey with a retailer while 50% go to a search engine**

Much has been made of the shift to Amazon for initial product discovery, with some studies<sup>6</sup> stating this is now the default starting point for consumers today.



<sup>6</sup><http://go.bloomreach.com/rs/243-XLW-551/images/state-of-amazon-2016-report.pdf>

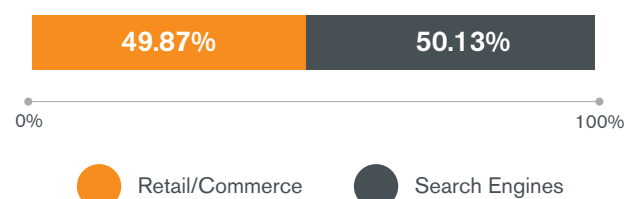
However, new ClickZ research, conducted exclusively for this report, underlines the importance of all major online retailers for these initial stages of the purchase journey.

In this section we compare where consumers start their purchase journey when they know what they are looking for and when they don't.

### Where consumers start their purchase journey when they know what they are looking for

When consumers know what they are looking for, 50% of ecommerce journeys start with a retailer and 50% start with a search engine.

**Figure 1.** Where do you start your research when you know what you are looking for?



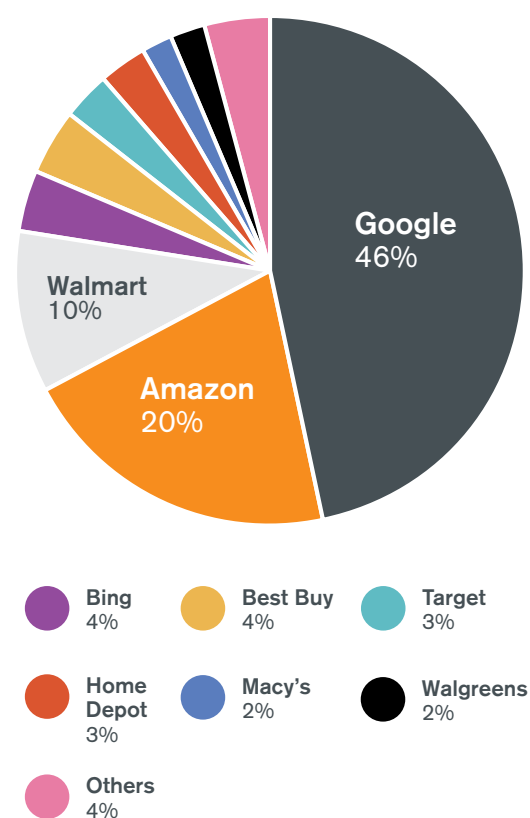
Amazon is the most popular of all retailers, with 20% of consumers stating they go to this website when they know what they want to buy. A further 10% start their journey at Walmart. A wide range of retailers including Best Buy, Target, and Macy's are also important sources of information.

**FIGURE 2. WHERE DO CONSUMERS START RESEARCH WHEN THEY KNOW WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR? (FILTERED BY TOP FIVE RETAILERS.)**

Amazon	20%
Walmart	10%
Best Buy	4%
Target	3%
Home Depot	3%

The full picture of this consumer trend is depicted in Figure 3, showing Google as the most popular starting point when consumers know what they want, followed by Amazon.

**Figure 3.** Where do you start your research when you know what you are looking for? (Filtered by search engines and retailers)



When consumers know what they are looking for, they are just as likely to go directly to a retailer's website as they are to visit a search engine (fig.4)

Filtering the above chart by the 50% of consumers who start this research process with a search engine, the vast majority (93%) use Google and only 7% use Bing.

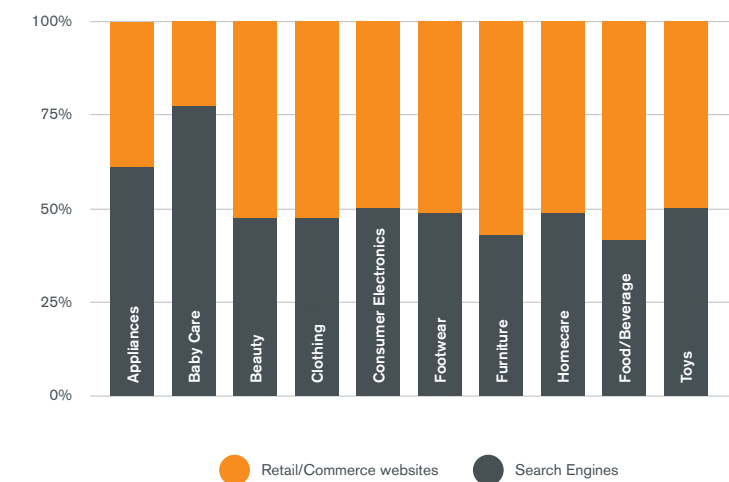
This highlights the enduring importance of Google as an entrance to the online shopping journey.

Of course, Amazon results make up a healthy proportion of product search results on Google, which begins to point to the blurring of lines between retailers and search engines today.

Although in isolation retailers form a smaller contribution to this research journey, when combined they account for 30% of the total. It is therefore essential not to overlook the impact of sites such as Walmart, Best Buy, Target, and Home Depot when considering a retailer strategy, which we will delve into more detail later in this research.

When comparing product categories, there is a relatively even split between retailers and search engines, with retailers slightly edging ahead for furniture and baby care (fig. 4)

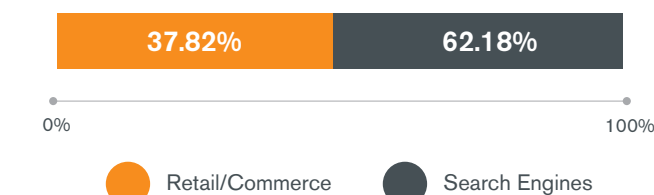
**Figure 4.** Where do you start your research when you know what you are looking for? (Segmented by product category)



### Where consumers start their purchase journey when they do not know what they are looking for

In contrast to the 50/50 split when consumers know what they are looking for, when consumers do not know what they are looking for, 62% of ecommerce purchase journeys start with a search engine and just 38% start with a retailer.

**Figure 5.** Where do you start your research when you do not know what you are looking for?



“Each interaction between consumer and brand now has its own rules.” – Patrick Cartmel, Criteo

More specifically, the majority of consumers (55%) go to Google when they do not know what they are looking for. 18% of consumers start this open-ended research process on Amazon.

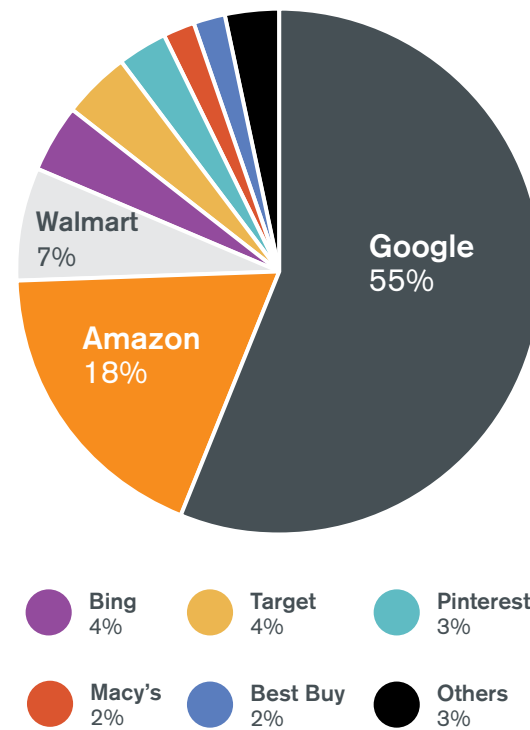
There is also a significant long-tail of retailers that consumers depend on to help them narrow their search, including Walmart (7%) and Target (4%).

This could create a fragmented picture of the research process, but consumers still expect consistency in every interaction they have with a brand.

**FIGURE 6. WHERE DO CONSUMERS START RESEARCH WHEN THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR? (FILTERED BY TOP FIVE)**

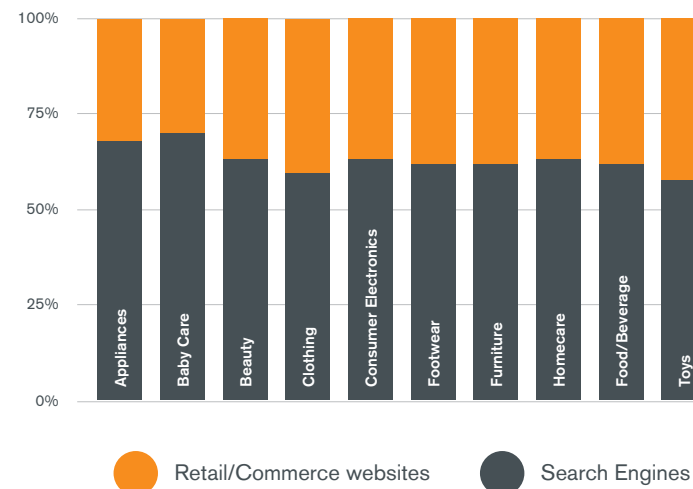
Google	55%
Amazon	18%
Walmart	7%
Bing	4%
Target	4%

**Figure 7.** Where do you start your purchase journey when you do not know what you are looking for? (Segmented by retailers and search engines)



The preference for search engines when in need of some inspiration cuts across all product categories, and is particularly marked for baby care (70%) and appliances (68%).

**Figure 8.** Where do you start your research when you do not know what you are looking for? (Segmented by product category)



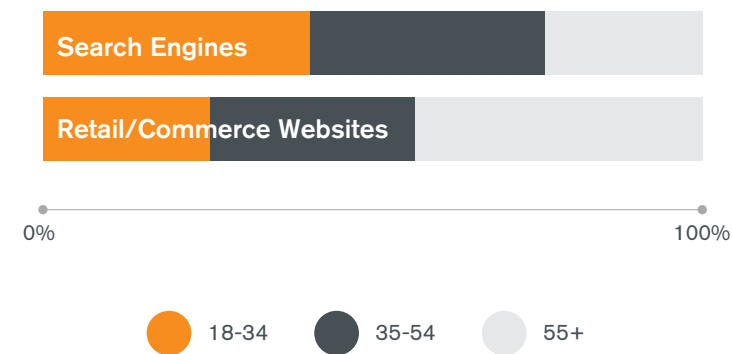
In terms of the number of products in their respective indices, a search engine sits above a retailer in the hierarchy. A search engine can index the URLs on a retailer's site, but a retailer will only have access to its own inventory and to those of its partners.

It is therefore not surprising that consumers opt for search engines when they want to cast the widest net.

Another noteworthy variation in consumer behaviors arises when this data is segmented by age.

Younger generations are much more likely to go to a search engine when they know what they are looking for (62%), while those aged 55+ tend to start this journey with a retailer or ecommerce website (65%).

**Figure 9.** Where do you start your research when you know what you are looking for? (Segmented by age group)



Within this section, the importance of both search engines and retailers throughout the purchase journey is apparent. When consumers know what they want, there is a 50/50 split between search engines and retailers as their first port of call.

Amazon takes a 20% share of the total and is the most popular retailer by a healthy distance. However, other retailers combine to make up 30% of this research behavior.

The balance tips in favor of search engines when consumers do not know what they want. In fact, this preference for search engines is even more pronounced among younger generations.

The following section will dig deeper into this data to discover the reasons why consumers visit each search engine or retailer.





**Consumers spend 55%  
of their purchase journey  
on the initial research  
stages. Brands need  
to inspire before they  
can move consumers  
through to sale.**

**AMY VENER**

VERTICAL STRATEGY LEAD  
RETAIL, PINTEREST



# Consumers are non-exclusive in their purchase journey

**78% of consumers who shop with Amazon also shop regularly with Walmart**

Looking beyond the initial research phase, modern consumers are active participants in shaping their own purchase journeys. The frictionless nature of ecommerce allows them to collect information to inform their decisions throughout their entire purchase journey.



Google describes today's consumer as "research obsessed"<sup>7</sup>, with product descriptions, imagery, reviews, and pricing often scrutinized in a series of "micro-moments" all before credit card details are entered.

With this in mind, this section analyzes the different retailers and search engines a consumer visits on their path to purchase.

It also sheds light on the reasons they visit each resource, from initial research through to consideration and then purchase.

### Consumers research products across a range of retailers before they buy

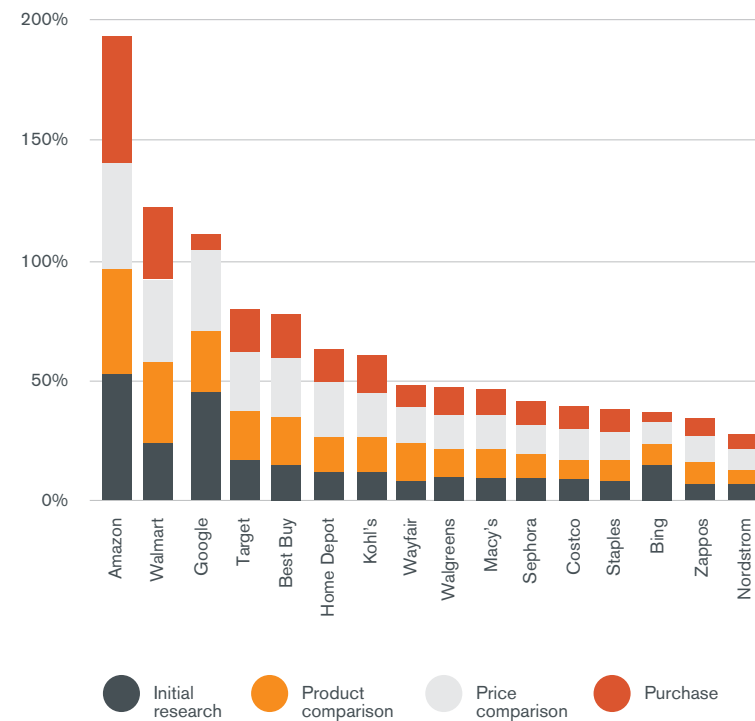
ClickZ's latest research found that more than 10% of consumers visit every retailer included in our analysis for research, comparison, and purchase, while 25% of consumers visited the five most popular search engines and retailers (Amazon, Google, Walmart, Target, and Best Buy), within the past 12 months for research, consideration, and purchase.

As seen in Figure 10, Amazon is the most visited site at every stage, from initial discovery to purchase.

However, the importance of major retailers such as Walmart, Target, and Best Buy should also be noted.

34% of consumers visit Walmart to compare products; 24% go to Target to compare prices; 16% seek out ratings and reviews on Best Buy. These are all significant contributors to purchasing behavior.

**Figure 10.** For which purposes have you visited the following websites in the last 12 months? (Methodology note: consumers were asked to pick all options that apply across all retailers)



As Rob Gonzalez from Salsify highlights:

“If you're only optimizing for Google, you're missing a lot of the real picture. Consumers are gathering information across all retailers and they expect high quality content every time.”

Even if a purchase ultimately occurs offline, the role of online interactions remains critical. ClickZ research finds that 74% of consumers research online and then purchase in-store either “Always” or “Sometimes.”

### The purchase journey changes based on the product category

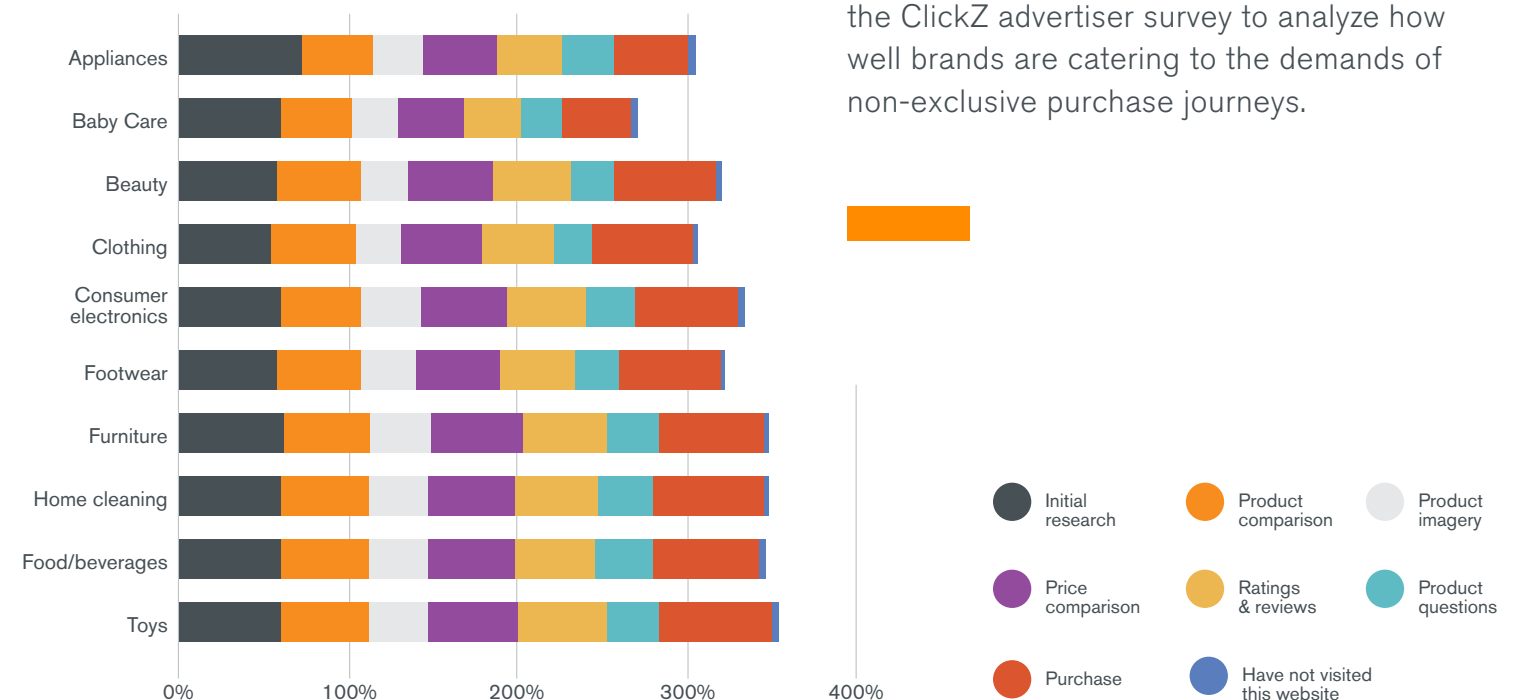
Interestingly, as we start to segment this data, the components of that information-gathering journey tend to differ across product categories.

For example, 50% of consumers surveyed have visited Amazon to compare consumer electronics purchases, while 48% have visited Walmart for the same reason.

Meanwhile, consumers are as likely to visit Pinterest (22%) to review product imagery as they are Google.

However, it is undeniable that Amazon is a significant influencer of online retail transactions across all product categories (Figure 11).

**Figure 11.** For which reasons have you visited Amazon across the following product categories within the last 12 months? (Select all that apply)



<sup>7</sup> <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/consumer-search-behavior/>

While 96% of consumers surveyed had visited Amazon within the last year, 78% had also visited Walmart's website to research or purchase.

It should therefore be expected that retailers who sell products via both retailers place emphasis on marketing to their customers on both websites, too.

“You have mere seconds to convince a consumer to purchase. If your product display page (PDP) does not provide the information consumers need, they'll go on to the next one” – Kerry Curran, Catalyst

The following section introduces data from the ClickZ advertiser survey to analyze how well brands are catering to the demands of non-exclusive purchase journeys.







**How brands  
invest in  
advertising is  
far removed  
from how  
people shop.**

**PATRICK CARTMEL**

VP, AGENCY STRATEGY  
CLIENT SERVICES AND SALES  
CRITEO



# Advertising budgets are severely misaligned with consumer behaviors

**Ecommerce budgets are increasing, but brands lack a clear strategy**

This section analyzes the level of investment in ecommerce advertising by brands, before diving into the specifics of these advertising plans. The aim is to pick up on the previous sections and look at whether brands are advertising in line with how audiences behave online.



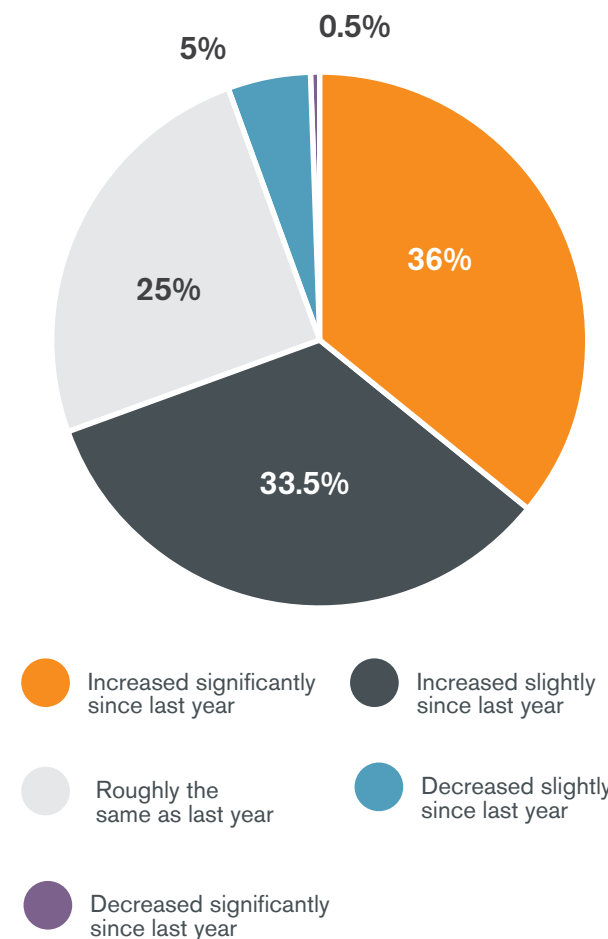
## Brands are investing in ecommerce to deliver on their business objectives

61% of responding brands to the survey stated that increasing online sales is a “strategic priority” for their businesses.

This represents significant growth over last year’s survey figures for the *Age of Amazon* report, when 52% of brands said increasing online sales was a strategic priority.

In line with this trend, 70% of responding brands to this year’s survey have increased their ecommerce marketing budgets within the last 12 months, while just 5% have decreased spend.

**Figure 12.** Which of the following best describes your ecommerce marketing budget?



This marks another important departure from 2017’s figures. Last year, 56% of brands said that additional ecommerce budget had been created by shifting focus from other channels, such as TV, Google Search, and social media.

In this year’s survey, 65% of brands which have grown their ecommerce advertising budget state that this is the result of “increased investment” from their organization, rather than a shift of emphasis from other advertising media.

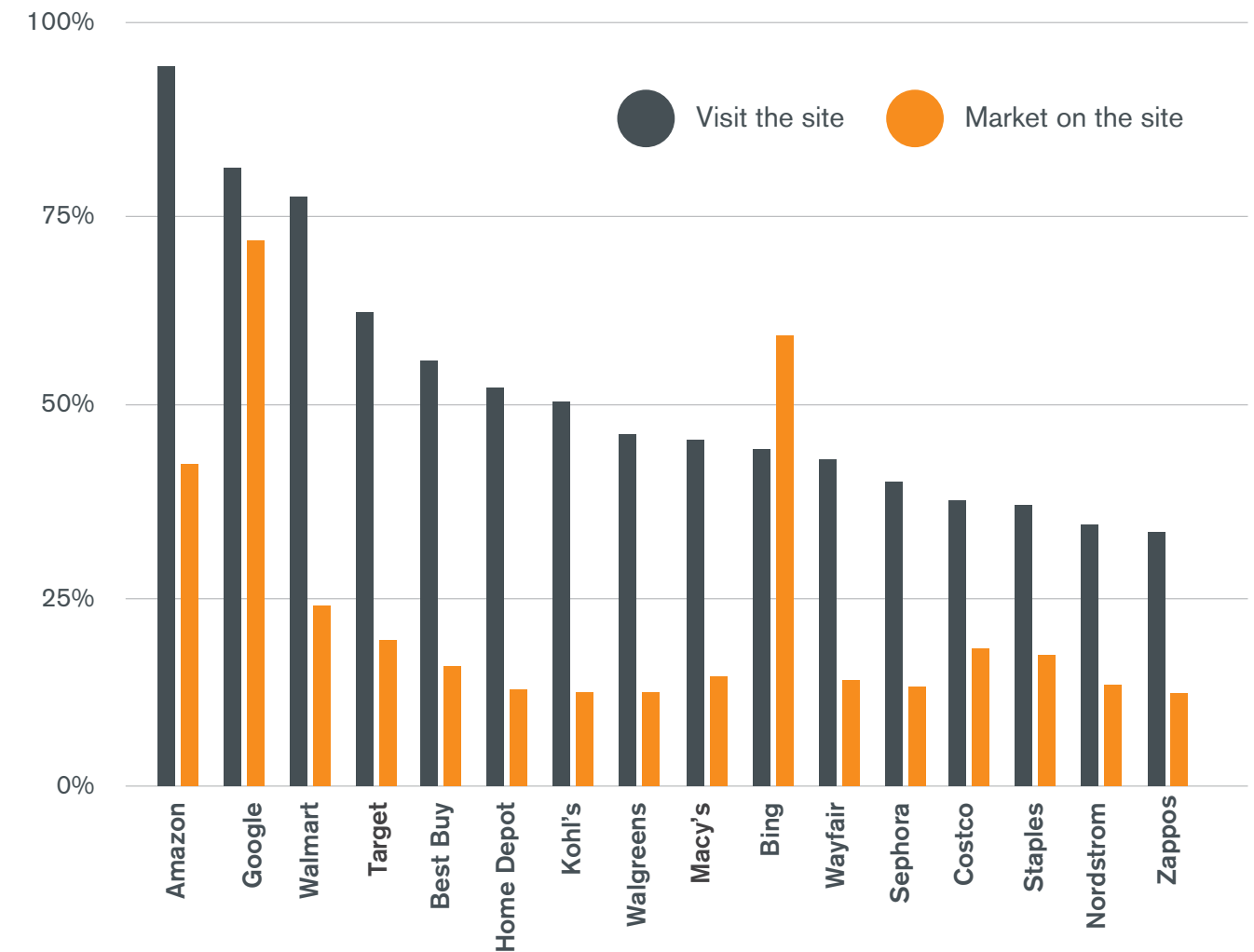
63% of brands plan to increase their Google Search spend over the next 12 months, with 61% also planning to spend more on organic search.

### Where are brands spending their increased ecommerce advertising budgets?

The key question is whether this has been coupled with a new approach to strategy, or if new budget means an extension of a tried and tested approach.

ClickZ research finds that brands are a significant distance from aligning their online advertising activity to their audience’s behaviors (figure 13).

**Figure 13.** CONSUMERS: On which of the following websites have you researched or made a purchase within the last 12 months? Versus ADVERTISERS: On which of the following retail sites do you engage in marketing activities?



As can be seen in figure 13 above, while brands sell their products across a range of retailers, their focus on marketing is skewed heavily towards Google and Bing, followed by Amazon.

Brands put significant resources behind organic search optimization for Google and Bing, and they complement this with paid search and display budget.

Across all other retailers, a different pattern emerges.

On average, 4% of brands optimize their Product Display Pages (PDPs) on non-Amazon retailers, 3% track their organic search rankings on these sites, and just 2% buy display or paid search ads with retailers including Walmart, Target, and Macy's.



## Brands lack alignment between sales and marketing activity

Amazon is a growing point of focus for marketing activities and remains the most popular ecommerce website for selling products. However, while 96% of consumers have visited Amazon in the past year, only 42% of brands that sell products on Amazon are engaged in marketing on this retailer's website.

Beyond Search and Amazon, figure 13 on the previous page shows that the drop-off in activity is significant and at odds with how consumers behave.

Brands do sell via these retailers, but they are unlikely to advertise or market through them.

## How brands are approaching Google Search and Amazon Advertising

The primary channel for online advertisers remains Google Search and, while Amazon Advertising spend is increasing too, other retailers are largely undervalued in relation to their influence on consumers.

ClickZ survey data reveals that 26% of ecommerce brands plan to increase their Amazon Advertising budget over the coming year, with a further 57% planning to spend roughly the same amount.

This makes for an interesting comparison with last year's *Age of Amazon* report data. In 2017, just 31% of responding brands were engaged in advertising on Amazon.

However, 63% said they planned to increase their budget over the coming 12 months.

There is an increasing sense of maturity about the Amazon advertising market now, but there is still a significant amount of room for growth.

## Increased budget is not matched with investment in strategy

Although budgets are increasing, just 28% of brands say they currently have a defined Amazon strategy today. Many are still figuring out how best to utilize the opportunities this retail giant can provide.

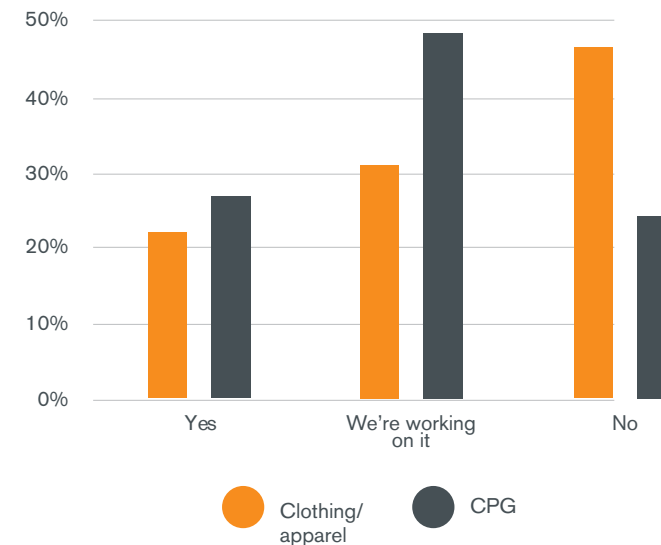
This is a notable change since ClickZ's *Age of Amazon* report. As noted above, 63% of brands said they planned to increase Amazon budget in 2017 but only 17% had a strategy in place for this retailer. In 2018, there is an emerging consensus that Amazon requires a bespoke and solidified strategy before increasing budget.

Kerry Curran of Catalyst adds:

“The brands we speak with are at varying stages of sophistication when it comes to an Amazon strategy. Some are just getting started with vague goals of increasing volume while others have it narrowed down to SKU or ASIN level strategies to drive household penetration or trial.”

To focus on two core areas of ecommerce it is worth comparing responses from clothing brands with CPG companies in relation to their respective Amazon strategies.

**Figure 14.** Do you have a clearly defined strategy for marketing and promoting your brand on Amazon? (Filtered by clothing/apparel vs. CPG)



47% of responding clothing brands in the US state that they do not have a clearly defined Amazon strategy and only 31% are working on a strategy.

## The importance of a bespoke Amazon strategy

The rules of engagement on Amazon are different to those on Google, which means Amazon requires specific attention to maximize its potential.

Some retailers know this and have dedicated their attention to forming an Amazon strategy.

John Denny states, “At Bai Brands, we became the number one beverage brand on

Amazon, ahead of Coca-Cola and Pepsi, by leaning in on our Amazon strategy. That begins by understanding that there are numerous different kinds of searches. Consumers want the product, but they also want to know what's in it, whether it contains a lot of sweeteners, basically everything they can find out about what they're putting into their bodies. And when they want this information, they search for it.”

The advantages Amazon provides are not restricted to heritage or legacy brands, as this example shows. A new brand with a better handle on what consumers want—and knowledge of how to execute on this intent—can outrank more seasoned competitors.

Jennifer DiMotta adds:

“The barriers to entry for new brands are lower than ever before. If incumbents don't act, they can be overtaken by brands that understand the market and deliver a better product.”

With that in mind, it is surprising to discover that so few brands have a specific strategy either for Amazon or for the many other retailers their audience routinely visits.

Among advertisers who do have an Amazon strategy, 66% plan to increase their Amazon ad budget.



This suggests that most brands see this as an opportunity worth investing in, once they have compiled their research and set a strategy. The onus is on brands to precipitate this process, if they want to make their mark before the competition does so.

### The opportunity beyond Google and Amazon

ClickZ research has found that Google Search and Amazon are hugely influential drivers of online shopping behaviors and decisions. However, beyond this surface there is a burgeoning market for other retailers, with consumers moving from website to website as they carry out their research.

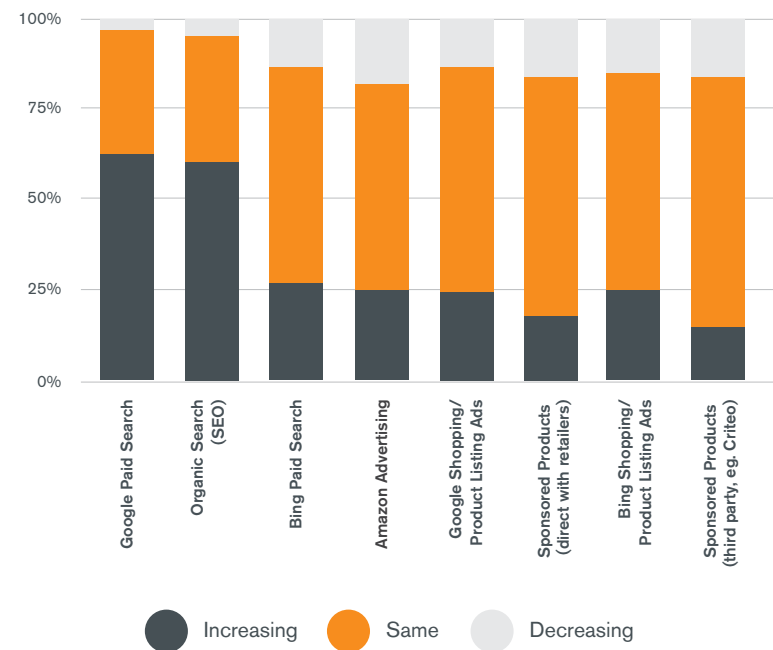
This means brands must be aware of the many contexts in which a consumer could come into contact with their products, and work to maximize the positive impact these interactions will have. Using the same product descriptions on every website or failing to remarket to interested consumers will let these important opportunities slip.

As a recent report from market research company IRI states<sup>8</sup>, “95% of CPG purchases are still made in brick and mortar outlets. While CPG purchases are likely to remain predominantly offline in the near future, digital is influencing 77% of retail decisions, even in the largely offline CPG world.”

The varied research, comparison, and purchase behaviors of modern consumers mean that brands cannot rely on their audience seeking out their content. It is

imperative to converse with customers where they are, through the brand’s website, across retailers, and through paid search.

**Figure 15.** Is your brand increasing or decreasing spend across the following digital marketing channels over the next 12 months?



It is therefore surprising to discover (figure 15) that more brands plan to decrease (17%) than increase (14%) their investment in sponsored products through third-party platforms.

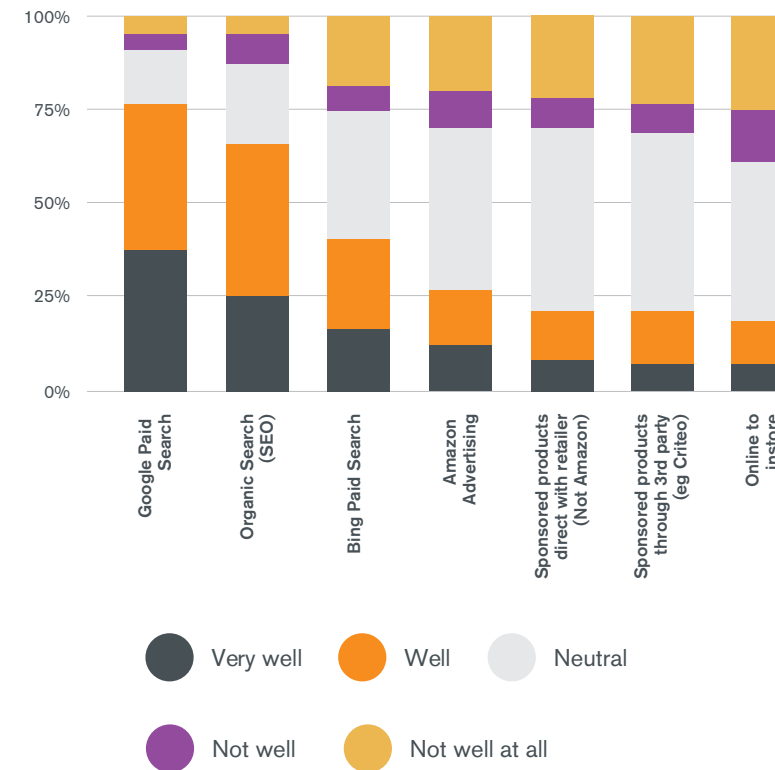
Furthermore, only 25% of US brands say they have a strategy for ecommerce retailers beyond Amazon. The sense emerges from this research that brands are not keeping pace with the market reality created by empowered consumers with more options at their fingertips than ever before.

### Attribution remains a work in progress and that is affecting marketing strategy

Within the large section of brands planning to increase their Google budget, 79% say they can attribute spend to results “well” or “very well” on this advertising platform.

That compares very favorably with the 28% of brands who feel equally confident about Amazon Advertising attribution.

**Figure 16.** How effectively are you able to attribute your marketing spend to results on the following channels?



Accurate attribution of spend to results is one of the enduring successes of the Google model and is one Amazon can aim to replicate. The launch of the Amazon Attribution tool<sup>9</sup> will go some way to addressing these initial concerns with Amazon Advertising results, even if it will take some time to catch up with Google.

“Amazon can execute close to intent in a way that Google cannot match” – Rob Gonzalez, Salsify

Patrick Cartmel of Criteo warns that “data can be a hindrance if brands can’t find a way to use their information to make better decisions.” This mindset can engender a hesitance among brands when it comes to embracing new advertising platforms.

In the interest of fishing where the fish are, brands should view Google as a crucial component part of the ecommerce journey, and one that is strengthened by focusing on other areas too. The online purchase journey is about much more than just Google and Amazon.

<sup>8</sup> <https://retailerleader.com/how-online-marketing-can-drive-offline-sales>

<sup>9</sup> <https://digiday.com/marketing/amazon-tests-attribution-pixel-so-brands-can-compare-whether-it-amazon-is-more-effective-than-its-rivals/>



**New technologies are enabling constant connectivity and brands have not yet taken advantage of it.**



# Brands are failing to grasp the full ecommerce opportunity

**It is essential to develop a full-funnel approach to search**

A general trend across all ecommerce sites included in ClickZ's surveys is that consumers are significantly more likely to research and purchase on a website than brands are to advertise on that same site.



There is a marked tendency among advertisers to focus on activities that drive results in the commercial stages, but there is relatively little focus on the initial research and discovery phases of activity.

Equally, some brands are tentative in their approach to Amazon advertising and as such, are missing out on the direct response marketing opportunities it provides.

34% of consumers who have purchased appliances in the last year visited the Home Depot website to look at product imagery; 14% of homeware brands have a strategy for promoting products on this website.

Kerry Curran at Catalyst adds, “Many of our clients started with the Amazon display advertising opportunities and are now recognizing the need and importance of sponsored ads closer to the moment of purchase.”

This misalignment between consumers and brands can be seen across all product categories and ecommerce sites.

For example, 46% of survey respondents who have made a consumer electronics purchase in the last 12 months have visited the Best Buy website to compare products.

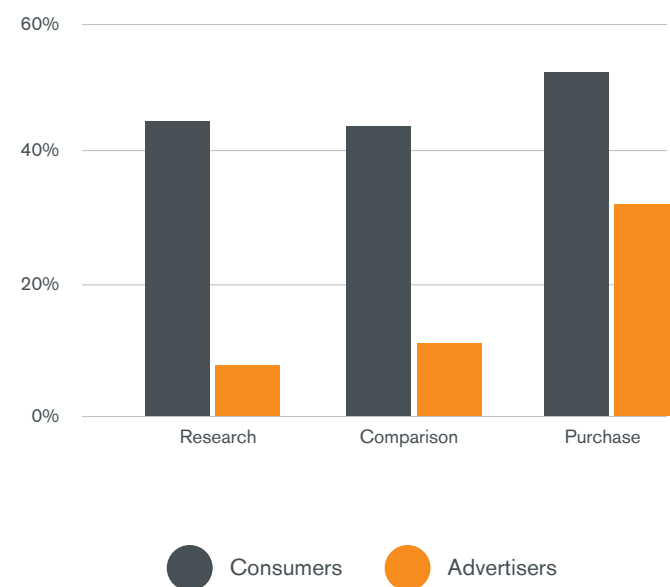
However, only 9% of responding consumer electronics brands say they have optimized their product descriptions specifically for Best Buy.

### Advertising activity on Amazon is out of step with how consumers research and purchase

Consumers spend a significant amount of time researching and comparing product details on Amazon before making a purchase.

Over 50% of consumers in the ClickZ survey have visited Amazon for research, comparison, and purchase within the last year.

**Figure 17. Consumers:** For which purposes do you visit Amazon? Vs. **Advertisers:** Which marketing activities do you undertake on Amazon? (Methodology note: Advertising activities filtered by targeted intent state.)



However, ClickZ surveys and interviews with senior marketers show that advertisers view search as a sales channel rather than an opportunity to engage early stage customers.

While consumers gather information and build up towards a decision based on the factors revealed in our survey, this report finds that most advertisers step up advertising activity once purchase intent is made overt.

This trend is clear on Amazon, but it is clearer still in relation to other retailers.

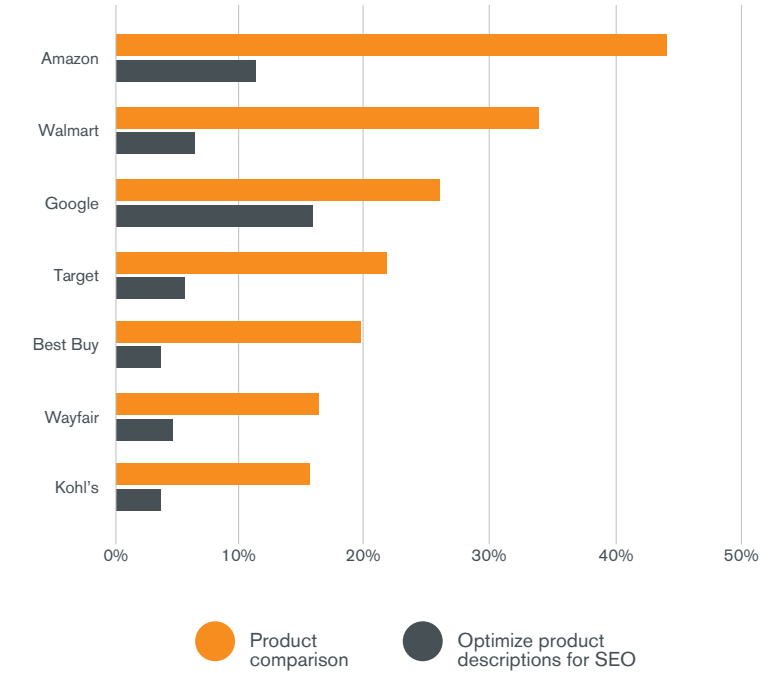
Of those brands who currently market on Amazon—either through organic search optimization or paid media—only 70% market on Walmart.

To cite another example, 34% of consumers visit Walmart for product comparison; a smaller figure than the 43% who visit Amazon for this purpose, but still a significant share of total traffic.

### Brands are not creating unique content for each major retailer

Figure 18 shows the percentage of consumers who visit search engines and retailers to compare products, versus the percentage of advertisers who optimize their product descriptions for each search engine or retailer.

**Figure 18. Consumers:** For which reasons have you visited this website? (Filtered by product comparison) vs. **Advertisers:** Which marketing activities do you undertake on these websites? (Filtered by Optimize product descriptions for SEO)



The discrepancy is stark, with Google the only arguable exception.

44% of consumers visit Amazon regularly with the intention of comparing products, but just 11% of brands say they have specifically optimized their product descriptions for Amazon consumers.

In proportional terms, this gap grows ever larger as the list of retailers continues. 34% of consumers compare products on Walmart; 7% of brands say they have optimized their product descriptions for this retailer.

The need for optimization goes beyond including target keywords in descriptions, although that process will help the audience to find a brand via search. This







vital exercise begins with consumer insight and a resultant strategy.

50% of brands who market on Amazon say they are “working on” a strategy for other ecommerce websites and 36% say they have a strategy in place, but this is still some distance behind the consumer behavior trends observed in this study. The non-exclusive consumer journey can incorporate a multitude of different search engines and retailers, too.

If a consumer moves from Amazon to Best Buy and then to Walmart to research the same product, it is because they want to find something different at each juncture. Perhaps it is down to price comparison, or to review shipping options, or to read customer reviews.

Nikolai Zeinikov of Heineken reflects on the specific challenges of such a competitive and fluid environment:

“When someone searches for our product, we need to be there. That means creating unique content that helps our consumer find us among the thousands of other options out there vying for their attention.”

### **A positive on-page experience can significantly increase purchase intent**

42% of consumers listed ‘Customer reviews’ as one of the three most important factors when considering whether to purchase with a retailer, with 39% saying ‘Product details’ is a foremost contributor to their purchase decisions.

While consumers do visit Amazon in higher quantities and with greater frequency than the other retailers considered for this report, in proportional terms consumers move steadily from initial research to purchase on each website, moving around to find a better deal or more information if they can.

If brands get this interaction right at the inspiration stage, not only will they make a valuable connection with the consumer, but they will also gather data that can help personalize the rest of the journey.

As Meaghan Werle of Kantar Consulting notes, this use of data is one of the key bridges between brands and consumers, and retailers of all sizes can access the required technology today.

### **The importance of agility in a search strategy**

As such, speed should be a paramount consideration for any website today. The mobile-first audience demands this and Google has taken the significant step of making landing page speed a factor in Google Ads<sup>10</sup>. The ongoing roll-out of the mobile-first index for SEO serves only to underline this imperative activity.

Integration does not mean uniformity, of course. Integration should lead to greater agility and a heightened capacity to adapt the overarching strategy to the needs of each channel.

This approach can be applied on a very granular level.

For example, brands often have different Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) based on the individual products they want to promote with each retailer.

“While moves into ‘inspirational’ ecommerce are important, it is the immediacy of online retail that sets it apart from the traditional retail experience”  
- Meaghan Werle, Kantar Consulting

Moreover, there are numerous types of search today. As Downstream CEO Connor Folley stated in a recent interview<sup>11</sup> with ClickZ:

“People make the false assumption you can treat Amazon like any other search engine. Users don’t go that deep in Google searches, but you’ve generally got a longer tail than on Amazon, where search is incredibly concentrated in the head.

For example, the top three keywords for lightbulb drive more revenue than all the other keywords combined. I think of each search as an individual shelf. The first one is right in front of the shopper’s face, the second is 10 feet away, the third is 50 feet away, and on and on to infinity. There are endless aisles, but it’s damn near impossible to get a customer to notice most of them.”

In essence, brands need to help consumers navigate the digital store through search marketing.

Those who have already engaged their audience can use the resultant data to personalize these interactions through remarketing, giving them a competitive advantage once the consumer is ready to purchase.

The rise of so many new, direct-to-consumer brands illustrates how rapidly an incumbent can be usurped by good ideas, implemented at the speed consumers crave, by a business of any size.

As John Denny highlights, “the agility to respond to new technologies and behavioral trends is sorely lacking in so many large businesses today”.

The following section begins the exploration of how brands can act to address this challenge, beginning with the division of advertising activities across departments.



<sup>10</sup> <https://developers.google.com/web/updates/2018/07/search-ads-speed>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.clickz.com/amazon-downstream-connor-folley/217037/>



**Large brands have failed to recognize the importance of Search for their audience, across all product categories.**

**JOHN DENNY**

VP ECOMMERCE & DIGITAL  
MARKETING, CAVU VENTURE PARTNERS



# What brands need to do to improve ecommerce performance

## The importance of an integrated approach to ecommerce search

Throughout this report, the fluid nature of consumer purchase journeys has come to the fore. However, advertisers often approach this situation in a fragmented manner, leading to an array of missed opportunities.





This applies to the organization of marketing departments, with responsibilities for key activities split across a range of teams and agency partners.

As a result, brands are struggling to achieve the cohesion and speed of delivery that will enable the experiences consumers crave.

The rules for Google and Bing optimization are well-known and accessible, but there appears to be a lack of consensus when it comes to product display pages (PDP) optimization for other retailers.

John Denny, VP ecommerce and digital marketing at CAVU Venture Partners and former VP ecommerce of Bai Brands, states, “Since Google emerged back in the late 90’s, the assumption has been that Google optimization is the number one priority.

However, retailers must not forget that their Amazon page can rank through Google, even if they don’t focus on it—particularly through branded search.

By moving beyond the well-known optimization processes for Google and Bing, brands stand to make significant gains by establishing an effective approach for other retailers.”

### The pivotal role of the product display page

As John Denny highlights, “Brands optimize their own website, but they may not even know what their Amazon PDP looks like. For some brands, in the CPG category

for example, there could be thousands of online distribution avenues and many organizations do not have a handle on how to deliver and optimize those product descriptions.”

Kerry Curran adds, “Too often we’ll see brand PDPs with incomplete descriptions or content that is pulled from manufacturing details or user manuals. This is a missed opportunity to engage, connect, and convert customers.”

38% of consumers state that a lack of content (either text or images) on a product page would make them leave a website without purchasing. Brands need to go further than optimization for Google and Bing if they are to deliver on the needs of a modern search strategy.

Optimizing a PDP includes SEO based keyword and content strategies, insights from reviews and Q&A, product imagery, and product attribute details, as well as ratings and reviews. Equally, it must bear in mind the reasons consumers visit this specific website.

### How brands are managing product display pages

PDPs are an important resource for consumers, but they are under-utilized by brands to tell their story.

ClickZ research has found that while 20% of consumers have visited Best Buy to view product descriptions, only 8% of consumer electronics retailers say they have created specific content for their PDPs on this website.

**Figure 19.** Which department/team manages your product display pages across retailers and marketplaces?

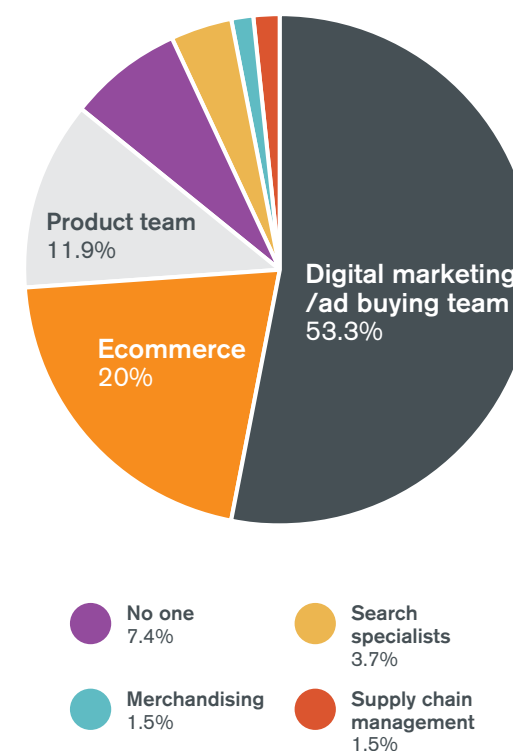


Figure 20 reveals that this important activity is typically handled by digital marketing specialists (53%), followed by the ecommerce team (21%) and the product team (12%). 7% of retailers say no one manages their PDPs and only 4% of responding brands say their search specialists are responsible for this.

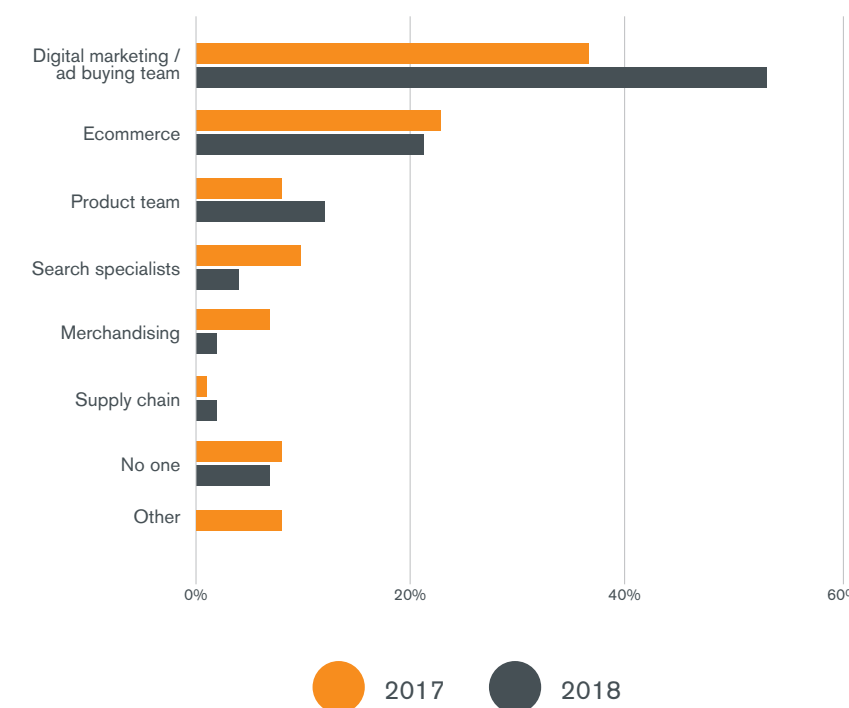
John Denny states that “new technologies are arriving to help brands unify their content across retailers, but they need to be coupled with a clear strategy for managing the content itself.”

That blend of people and technology is vital; both must work in tandem to create an effective search strategy today.

This lack of clarity is evident across all ecommerce product categories.

Beauty and personal care brands are more likely than others to assign PDP optimization to their digital marketing specialists (62%), while food and beverage brands tend to create this content through their product team (38%).

**Figure 20.** Which department/team manages your product display pages? (2017 survey data vs. 2018 survey data).



This has changed in some significant ways in comparison with ClickZ’s *Age of Amazon* report published in 2017, which asked the same question of ecommerce retailers.

There has been a 16 percentage point increase (37% to 53%) in the number of digital marketing teams that are responsible for PDPs since 2017, with a smaller decrease seen across search specialists (down from 10% to 4%).

This reflects a greater consolidation of these responsibilities within the digital marketing team, while key questions remain

about how much collaboration there is between this department and product, ecommerce, and search.

Sponsored Products and Sponsored Brands ad types perform differently depending on brand awareness, so a granular breakout of success metrics is required to maximize results.

### Expanding sponsored paid advertising

Amazon has been rapidly evolving the keyword based paid advertising opportunities available for promoting products within the shopping experience.

Sponsored Products ads integrate into the organic shopping results while Sponsored Brands (formerly Headline Search Ads) are banner ad types appearing at the top, left, or bottom of the search result pages.

Similar to traditional paid search advertising on Google or Bing, these ads are keyword based and depend on auction style bidding for placement. Campaign structure and strategies for keywords, match types, and bid management are also similar to paid search best practices.

Amazon sponsored ads require a search marketing strategy that is based in business goals. While many brands optimize to Advertising Cost of Sale (ACoS) or Return on Ad Spend (ROAS), these metrics

might not align if business goals are to dominate the search results, drive sales of a product with low margins, or conquest the competition.

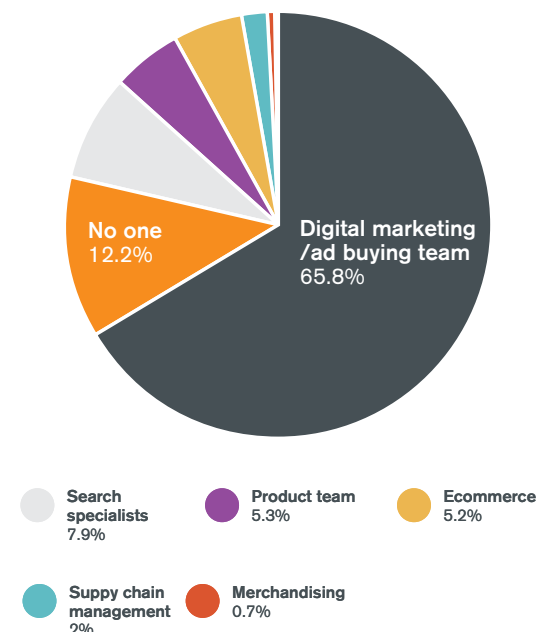
Successful optimization also requires advanced analytics, often beyond what is available in the Amazon User Interface (UI) which requires customized API based performance dashboards.

Sponsored Products and Sponsored Brands ad types perform differently depending on brand awareness, so a granular breakout of success metrics is required to maximize results.

### How brands are managing paid search across retailers

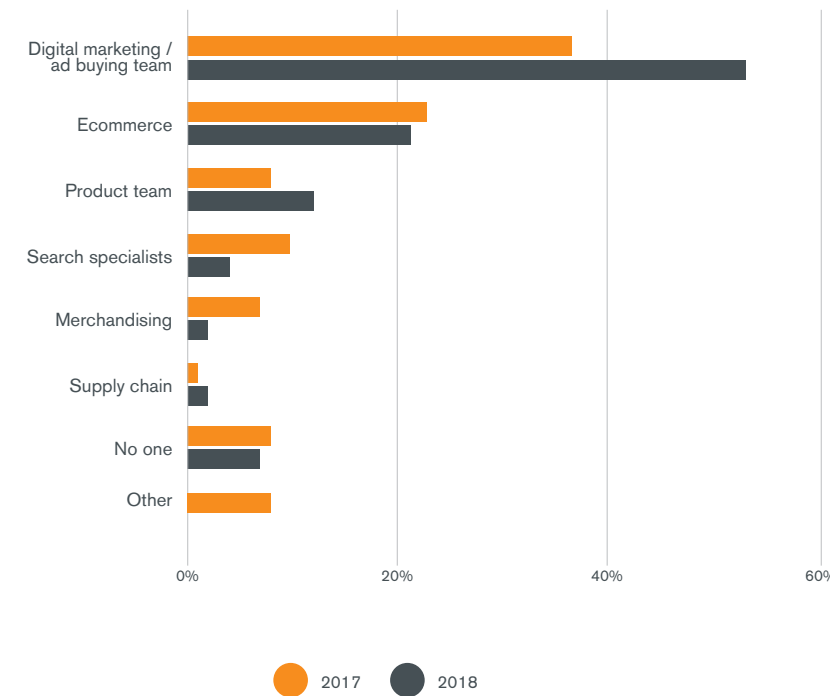
For paid search management (figure 22), there is a similar trend to that observed with product display pages, albeit with less focus on product teams and more on digital marketing and search specialists.

Figure 21. Which department/team manages your paid search across retailers and marketplaces?



Since 2017's *Age of Amazon* report, there has been an increase in the number of brands who hand this responsibility to their digital marketing department (up from 61% to 66%).

Figure 22. Which department/team manages your paid search across retailers? (2017 survey data vs. 2018 survey data).



### Taking an integrated approach to ecommerce search

There must be consistency in a brand's approach to paid search across retailers and search engines, but it is equally important that this activity forms part of a wider search strategy.

Within Amazon, PDP organic rankings are determined by an algorithm that incorporates search query relevancy and historical sales among other factors. When the PDPs are also promoted through Sponsored Product ads, sales

of that product increase, which positively affects the factors weighed in the organic algorithm, further improving the organic rankings. This "flywheel effect" can improve overall performance and drive a continued increase in sales.

As Kerry Curran of Catalyst notes, "There is a great opportunity in improving overall Amazon ranking performance and "share of search" by integrating sponsored ads with PDP strategies. Too often, brands are doing one but not the other, or working in silos. Shared strategies improves the potential for a PDP to rank and be highly relevant to the query, driving sales."

98% of responding brands are actively engaged in both organic search and paid search advertising today, but the opportunities to integrate these channels go largely untapped.

Without elevating search to a higher level of strategic importance within the business, it is difficult to maintain pace with a discipline that is in constant flux.

"Many brands are using Product Inventory Management (PIM) technology and running sponsored ads, but they are not connecting the two efforts or analyzing the performance data together." – Kerry Curran, Catalyst





As Bain & Company highlight in recent research<sup>12</sup>, “Many large brands make a set of common missteps. They may lack everything from the right talent, to sufficient ecommerce budgets, to the organization capabilities that will deliver dramatic gains in digital sales—or at least enable them to keep up with competitors.”

Sean Kainec of Comcast adds that the development of a digital center of excellence has helped to involve search from the beginning of all marketing campaigns. In turn, this has helped senior leadership to see the impact search can have when given a more prominent position.

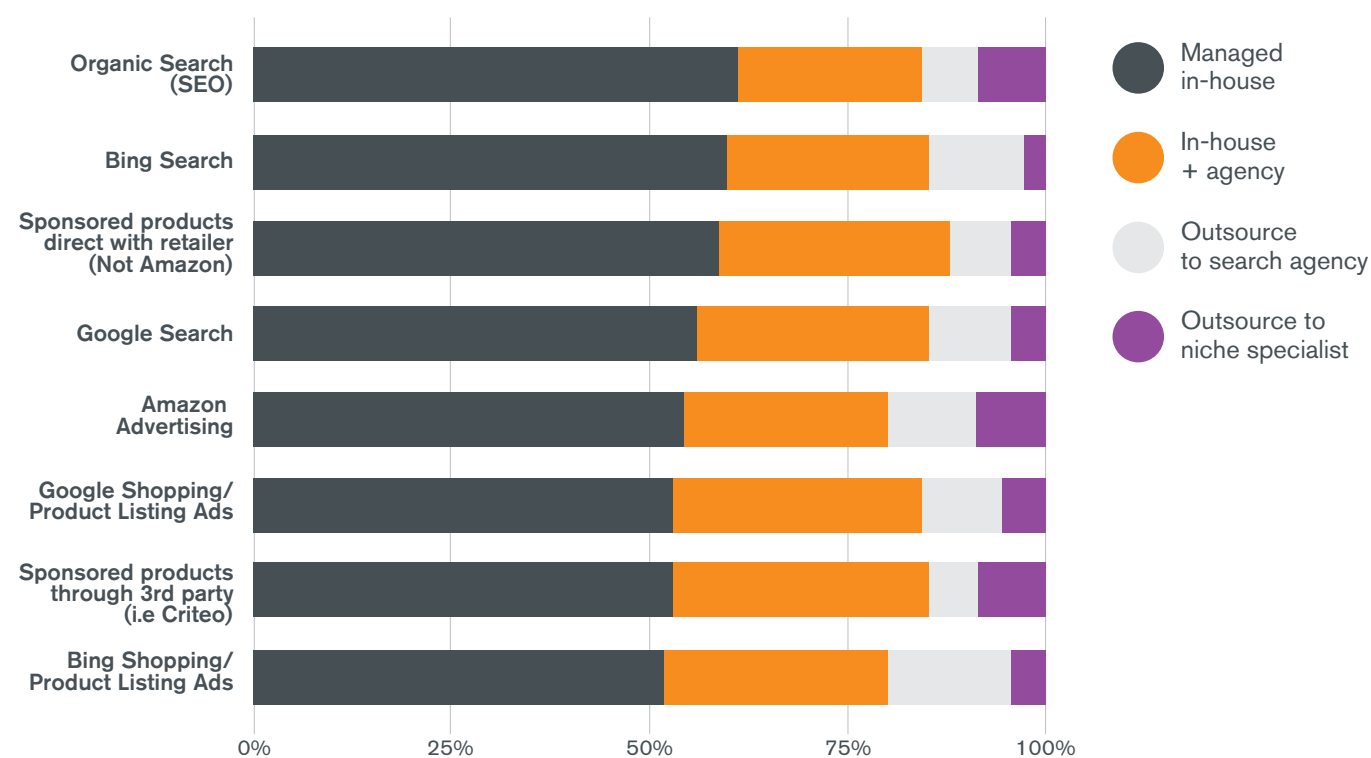
These lessons apply to technology, too. For example, retailers need to manage their product feeds via a Product Inventory Management (PIM) platform across multiple sites. This alone provides steep challenges and is the fundamental basis of an ecommerce plan. Marketers and supply chain management must share data and work together to ensure the right products are promoted at the right time.

That emphasis on a cohesive strategy to avail of these new opportunities extends far beyond supply chain management. Search is a business-critical function now and, as such, must be closely aligned to the organization’s performance objectives in order to deliver on them.

### How brands work with agency partners to deliver search and display advertising

While the majority of brands say that their organic search, paid search, and display advertising are handled by the digital marketing team, there is still a lack of collaboration between these different specializations. In part, this is explained by the split of activities between numerous agency partners and in-house teams.

**Figure 24.** How do you manage activity across the following digital marketing channels? (Methodology note: Includes only those brands who are engaged in these marketing activities.)



With regards to paid search, there is an even split between those brands who manage paid search in-house (49%) and those who partner with an agency or outsource the activity altogether (49%).

Compared to data from last year's *Age of Amazon* study, there has been an increase in the proportion of retailers engaged in Amazon paid advertising who outsource at least some of this activity.

This number has risen from 26% in 2017 to 43% in 2018, with a smaller proportion now buying all Amazon media in-house. These essential tasks are outsourced to media agencies, digital performance agencies, search specialists, and niche Amazon specialists.

The growth of Amazon Advertising, now the third biggest advertising platform in the US<sup>13</sup>, brings a requirement for consistency in a digital marketing strategy.

However, ClickZ research has found that organic search (SEO) and Amazon advertising are the two digital marketing channels most likely to be outsourced to a niche specialist.

At a time when advertisers are already struggling to create and promote the content their audience is searching for, an integrated approach is as necessary for product feed management as it is for content creation and promotion.

This is a challenging endeavor, but it is no longer an optional add-on.



<sup>13</sup> <https://money.cnn.com/2018/09/19/technology/amazon-digital-ads-google-facebook-microsoft-oath/index.html>



**Brands need to remove layers of business intervention if they want to mirror the fluidity of consumer journeys online.**

**JENNIFER DIMOTTA**

PRESIDENT & OWNER, JENNIFER DIMOTTA CONSULTING



# The opportunity is clear—and capitalizing on it begins with an integrated strategy

**More accurate consumer targeting across retailers was voted the biggest opportunity in ecommerce today by 30% of brands**

ClickZ asked brands what they saw as the number one opportunity in ecommerce marketing, today and in five years' time.







'More accurate consumer targeting across retailers' was the clear winner, taking 30% of the vote as the biggest current opportunity. That winning margin drops in the vote for the biggest opportunity in five years (to 23%), but it still leads the field.

Brands are aware that consumer behavior is complex and that their audience does not shop exclusively through Google and Amazon. As a result, they are craving the capabilities they need to engage throughout the ecommerce ecosystem.

Reaching the right audience is essential, but brands also need to know what to say when they get a consumer's attention.

Brian Monahan of Newco builds on this:

“The greatest opportunity in ecommerce is to have personalized storytelling catch up with personalized targeting.”

**Figure 25.** (left) What do you believe is the biggest opportunity in ecommerce advertising today? Vs. What do you believe will be the biggest opportunity in ecommerce advertising in 5 years?

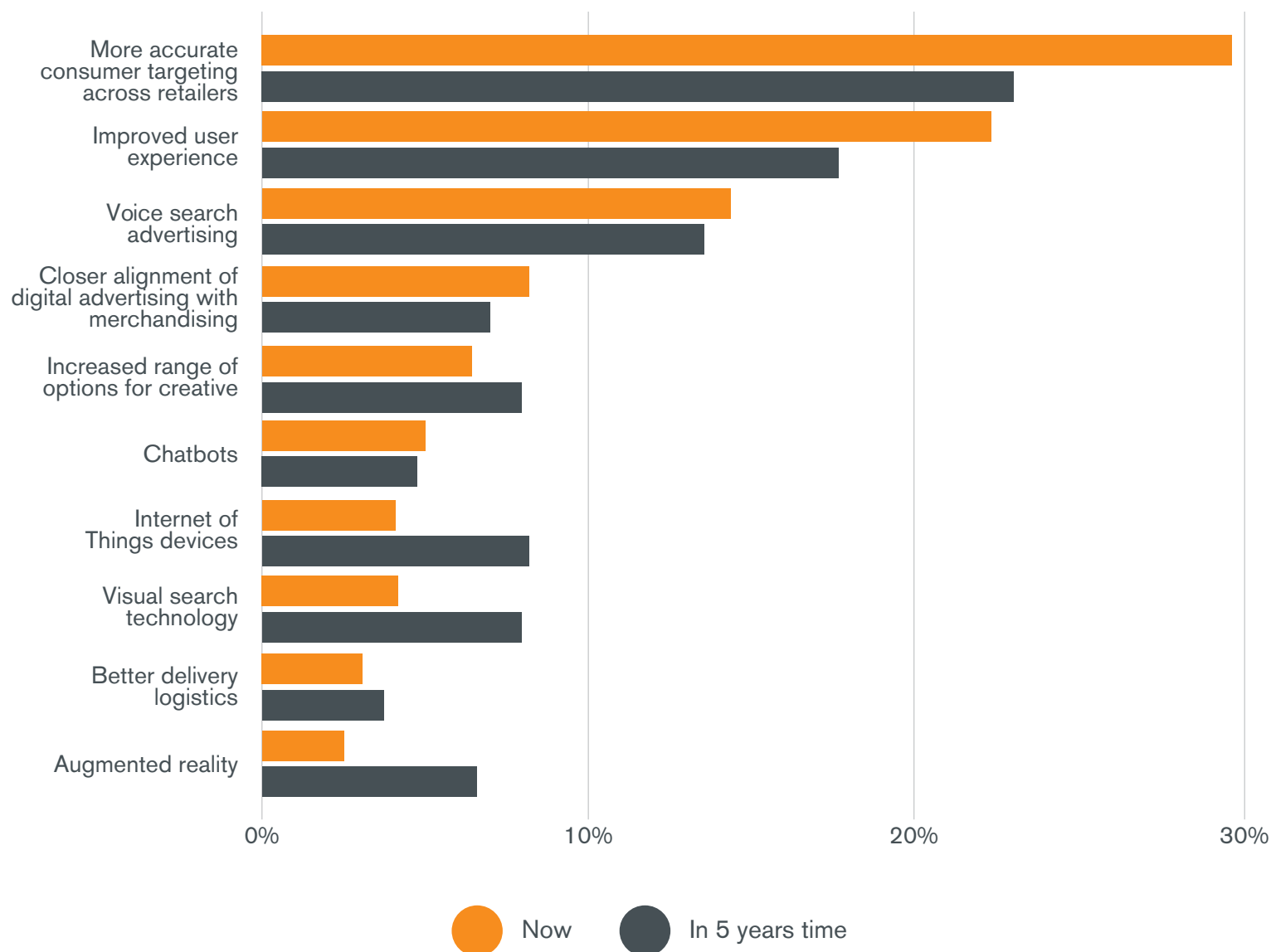
Other popular choices for the biggest opportunity today include 'Improved user experience' (22%), 'Voice search advertising' (14%), and the closer alignment of digital marketing with merchandising teams (8%).

This reflects the varied strands of an ecommerce strategy. Customer experience, cutting edge technologies, and inter-department collaboration are all vital for success.

Today we are seeing Google, Walmart, Target and others, increase investment in shopper advertising opportunities to compete with Amazon's market share.

In five years, we are most likely going to see a more balanced playing field with shopper advertising budget spread across more ecommerce sites and platforms.

Brands need to act now to capitalize on the unprecedented opportunities this will provide.





# How to optimize for the digital shelf

The following are eight practical steps to help any brand take advantage of the ecommerce opportunity



# One

**Start with business goals:** Brand stakeholders must have a clear understanding of what you are trying to achieve through ecommerce marketing. Budgets, strategies, and KPIs need to ladder up to business goals. Goals should be clearly communicated to all teams to ensure campaign optimizations are pacing towards maximizing business goals.

# Two

**Take a holistic view of ecommerce:** Use consumer behavior data across search engines and retailers to inform your strategy, and double down on what sells. This applies to keyword search query, SEO rankings performance, transaction data, and a host of user engagement metrics. Synthesize these sources to adopt a clear view of the customer experience each time they encounter and interact with your brand.

# Three

**Look beyond Amazon and Google:** Consumer behaviors are unpredictable. The empowered modern audience will browse and purchase on their own terms, with 85% of these actions occurring with non-Amazon retailers. Brands need to ensure that wherever their audience finds them, they receive the best possible experience. By unifying your ecommerce strategy across all retailers, you can also adapt much more effectively when new opportunities arise. That agility is the key differentiating factor between brands that are thriving in ecommerce today and those that are struggling to keep pace.

# Four

**Remember that retail websites are query-based platforms:** From both an organic and paid perspective, keyword strategies should be the foundation of your ecommerce marketing strategy. Create unique content for each retailer based on search trends, behaviors, favored attributes, and consumer requirements. The demands of an audience can change based not only on the retailer, but also the product type they are researching. This can affect imagery, the use of user-generated content, and the format of product descriptions, for example.

# Five

**Use advanced analytics to optimize for performance:** Standard data sets do not support the whole picture. API based dashboards can integrate data from multiple sources to provide a true, holistic view of actionable insights for optimizing your ecommerce marketing programs.

# Six

**Integrate internal teams:** Search comes in various shapes and sizes today, across Google, Amazon, and a growing list of other retailers. Search can also be accessed through voice, image, or text. It is the true voice of the customer and should feed into business strategy. Equally, Search requires support if it is to succeed. Use the industry's elevated importance to embrace a new way of working, with search alongside the shopper, ecommerce, merchandising, and supply chain management teams.

# Seven

**Prioritize budgets to align with consumer journeys:** The most expensive—and most profitable—stage of the consumer journey is the purchasing phase, of course. Sophisticated marketers are considering this fact as just one element of a broader strategy. Consider how more visual paid search ad formats could allow you to engage with consumers earlier and provide you with data to personalize their journey. Search is about much more than reaching the “hand raisers” today.

# Eight

**Collaborate with the right agency partners:** The landscape is fragmented and new platforms will continue to arise and grow. Working with a disparate team of niche specialist partners only heightens the challenge for brands. Instead, work with an agency partner that has deep expertise in all areas of ecommerce and search marketing. Whatever happens next in the online retail space, they will be best positioned to help you take advantage.

# Notes



**ClickZ**