Power Retail | g squared.

The Integrated Customer Journey:

What Sets Retail Leaders Apart

Executive Summary

The buying journeys of shoppers are appearing more fluid in 2025. There is a distinct need to cross between channels quickly and without friction. However, many retailers are still operating in tactical silos. Unfortunately, the disconnection between SEO, SEM, product, creative, advertising, and analysis can lead to lost customer acquisition and lower retention.

This report confirms that retailers in the top 50% for integrated customer journey tactics are driving more than double the YoY growth in potential customers to site compared to the bottom 50%. In SEO and SEM, that difference is more than 10x. In advertising and analysis, it's nearly 6x. The commercial impact of adopting (or failing to adopt) an integrated strategy is abundantly clear.

Digital integration is no longer a "wish list" item. It's the baseline for competing in an increasingly complex and competitive retail environment. Without accurate data and insights that span campaigns and activities, from top-of-funnel to bottom, retailers are only driving with one headlight. However, when they can see how and where each junction intersects, they can map out the most effective (and profitable) way forward.

With an illuminated view of the road ahead, retailers can also make it easier for each shopper to see and remember that seamless, connected experience. As customers continue to reconvert, the revenue engine keeps revving.

In 2025, it's all about delivering experiences that appear seamless, intuitive, and connected for the customer. It's now time for retailers to stop making decisions based on isolated data. Read on to discover how integrated customer journeys are helping retailers make more informed decisions, uncover additional revenue opportunities, and drive stronger growth.

– George Photios
Managing Director, G Squared

Introduction

An integrated customer journey, where each digital channel works together rather than in isolation, leads to stronger business outcomes. As explored in this report, retailers who take this approach are more likely to see greater year-on-year (YoY) growth than those who operate in silos.

We analysed how retailers perform across four core categories: SEO & SEM, Product, Creative, and Advertising & Analysis. We then scored each retailer based on the cohesiveness of their implemented strategies across these areas. We have defined retail Leaders as those scoring in the top 50% of integrated customer journey initiatives, compared with Laggards scoring in the bottom 50%.

Our exclusive research indicates a significant performance gap between the two retail cohorts. Leaders achieve substantially higher YoY growth of potential new customers to their websites.

Additionally, Leaders focus on strategies that work in combination across the digital customer journey, creating consistent and connected brand experiences that resonate with shoppers. Laggards, on the other hand, take a more fragmented approach, highlighting the gaps across digital touchpoints.

The following insights reveal what sets Leaders and Laggards apart, providing strategic clarity for retailers looking to outperform their peers.

SEO & SEM

Retailers who adopt an integrated and data-driven approach can significantly enhance their SEO and SEM performance.

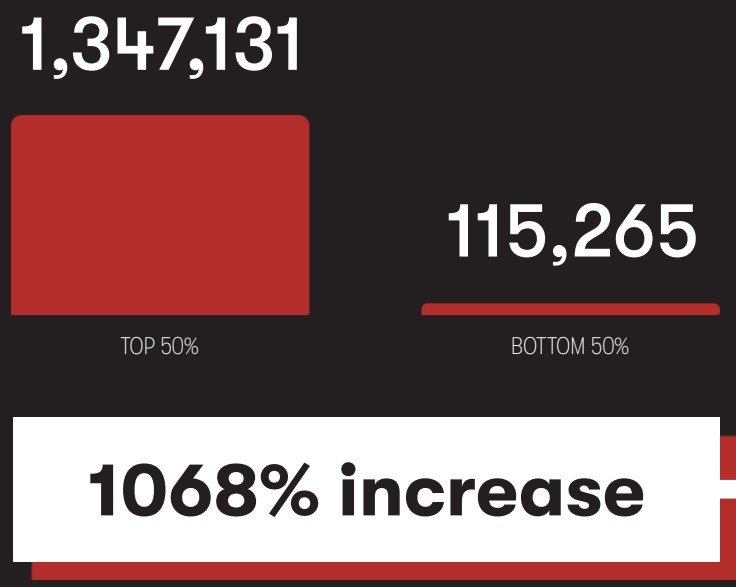
Most use tools like Google Ads or third-party platforms to refine their keyword targeting. However, more than a third can realise further gains by delving into competitor analysis.

Organic search continues to drive a significant share of website visitors. To boost return on investment (ROI), retailers should consider a mix of SEO tools to gain a comprehensive view of performance rather than relying on a single platform.

An integrated approach between SEO and SEM can further strengthen outcomes. Many retailers already use organic search insights to inform paid search strategies. However, they can gain even more value by incorporating high-performing organic search terms into SEM campaigns.

Although most retailers use branded-term keyword bidding tactics for brand protection, fewer use branded keywords to control messaging and landing page experiences. Consistent, engaging customer journeys and improved brand visibility are there for the taking—for those who take an integrated approach.

Retailers scoring in the top 50% of SEO & SEM tactics have experienced a 1068% increase in total YoY potential customers to site versus the bottom 50%.



No One Tool Tells the Full SEO Story

The vast majority (nearly 93%) of retailers use performance insights from Google Ads and third-party tools, such as SEMrush or Similarweb, to inform their keyword targeting strategies.

A much lower portion (around 64%) are leveraging competitor analysis to improve targeting.

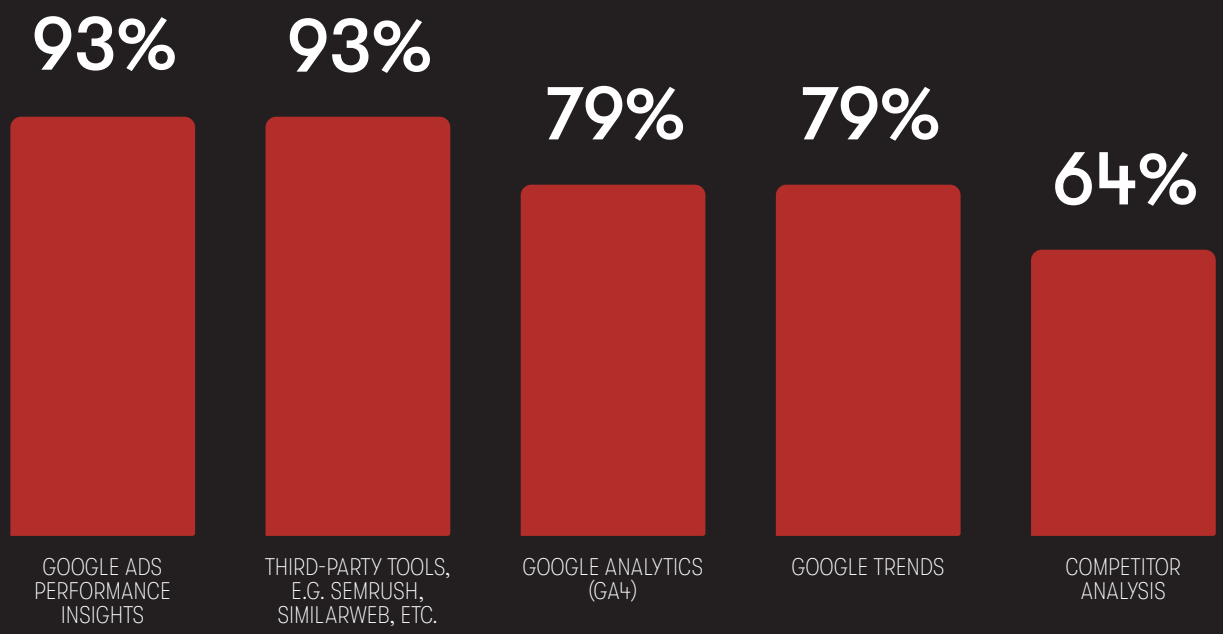
The impact of SEO cannot be understated. The Conductor Organic Search Traffic Benchmarks Report[1] shows that 27% of all website traffic in the retail industry comes from organic search activity.

When strategising how to increase quality website visitors from SEO, retailers should remember that different tools can offer unique insights. By using a combination of tools, retailers can achieve a holistic perspective on SEO performance.

To maximise ROI from SEO-focused activity, it's vital for retailers to effectively measure and analyse organic channel metrics through a range of tools and tactics.

[1]https://www.conductor.com/academy/organic-website-traffic-industry-benchmarks/

How does your SEO team/agency inform keyword targeting? (Please select all that apply)



93% of retailers use performance insights from Google Ads and third-party tools to inform their keyword targeting strategies.

Most Retailers Use SEO Data to Refine SEM

In 2025, the overwhelming majority of retailers (93%) monitor organic search keywords to fill gaps in their paid search program.

Retailers who scrutinise organic search keywords can identify high-performing terms they may not have adequately represented in their paid search (SEM) campaigns.

Our data highlights the strategic mindset of most retailers towards an integrated SEO and SEM approach. By adopting this perspective, retailers can enhance SEM coverage with high-value keywords, improve budget allocation efficiency through proven SEO keyword performance, and increase ROI by leveraging keywords that drive organic and paid visitors simultaneously.

Does your Paid Search team/ agency monitor and fill organic search keyword gaps?

93% YES

7% NO

Retailers Bid Branded to Protect and Control

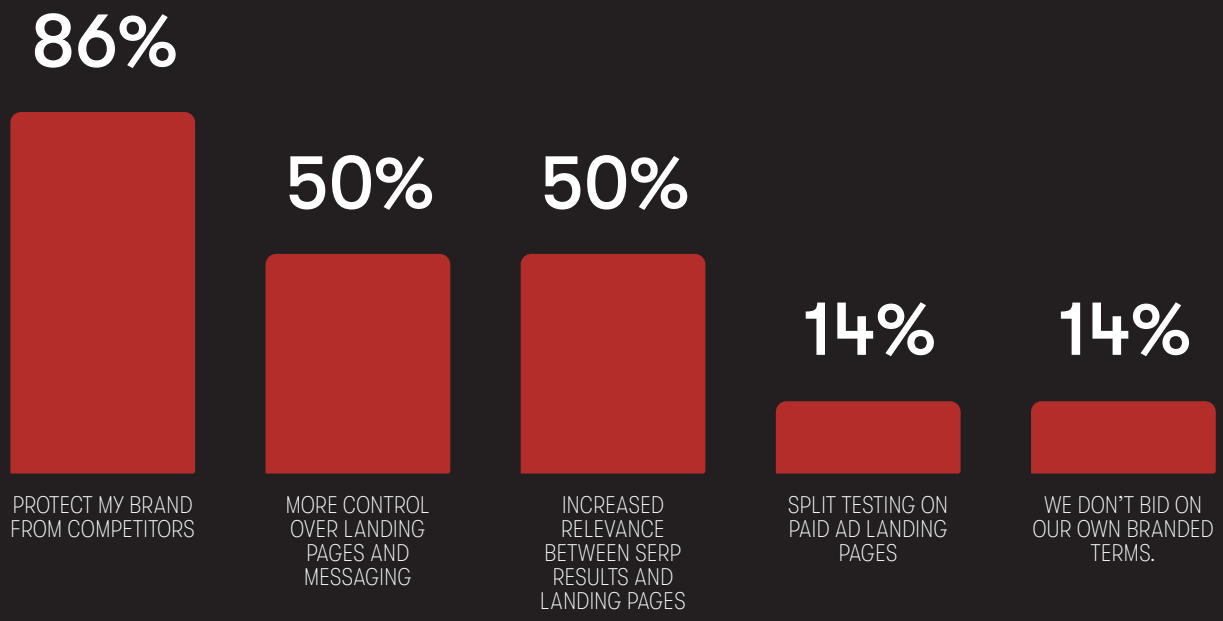
Most retailers (86%) are in self-protection mode when it comes to SEM branded-term bidding.

Only half (50%) use their branded terms to increase control over landing pages and messaging or to boost relevance between search engine results page (SERP) listings and click-through landing pages.

Only 14% A/B test paid landing pages, while an equal number do not bid on their own branded keywords at all.

Feedback from G Squared clients who bid on branded keywords shows these retailers (over and above brand protection initiatives) also experience increased brand visibility, greater creative and messaging control, and enhanced relevance of shoppers' journeys from SERPs to landing pages.

Why do you bid on your own branded terms? (Please select all that apply)



Only 50%

of retailers use branded terms to increase control over landing pages and messaging or to boost relevance between SERP listings and click-through landing pages.

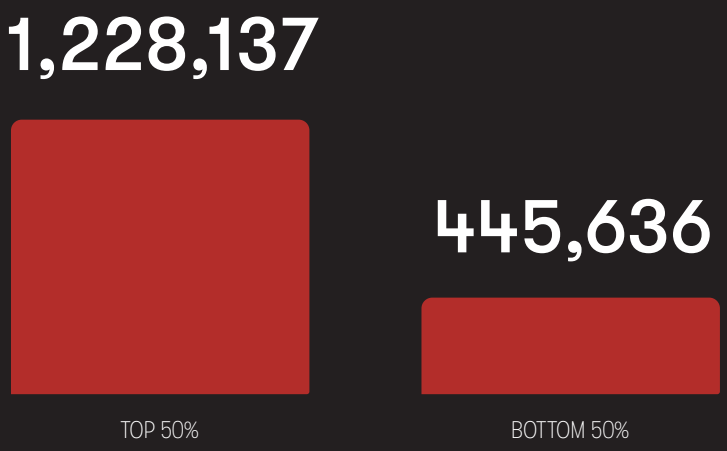
Product

A clear opportunity exists for retailers to strengthen the on-site experience by incorporating personalised product recommendations.

Half of them are yet to personalise key pages such as category and product display pages. This oversight limits their ability to engage with more than two-thirds of shoppers who say personalisation is important to the brand experience.

Retailers should also focus on consistency across product feeds. While most maintain congruent messaging across search, social, and marketplaces, one in five risk losing their shoppers' trust by failing to align off-site and on-site content.

Retailers scoring in the top 50% of product-related tactics have experienced a 176% increase in total YoY potential customers to site versus the bottom 50%.



176% increase

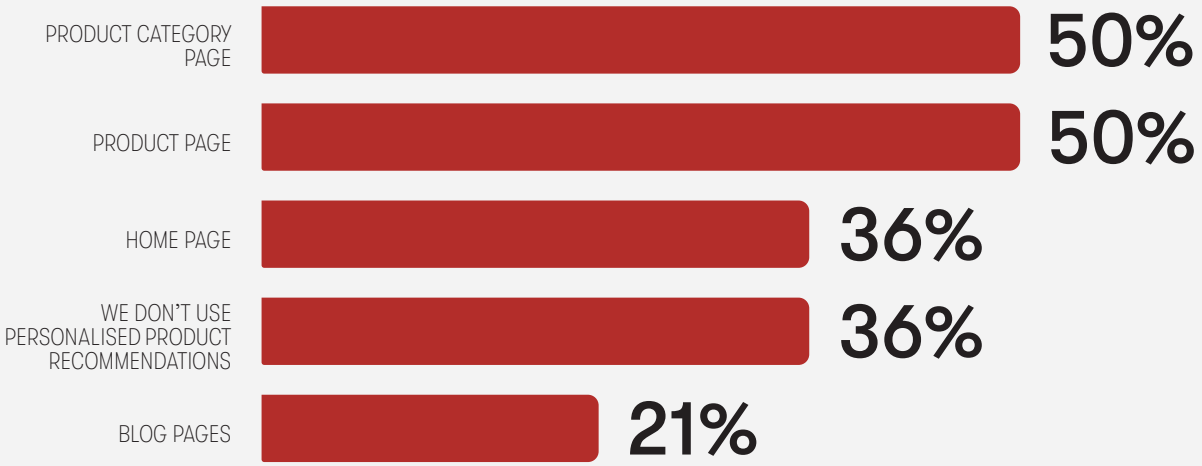
Personalisation Still Missing on Many Retail Websites

50% of retailers use personalised product recommendations on product category pages and PDPs.

An alarming 36% are not incorporating personalised product recommendations into their website at all. The Adobe 2025 AI and Digital Trends report[2] shows that 69% of consumers rate personalised product recommendations as an important or critical factor in the brand experience. Many retailers are missing out on the chance to connect with these shoppers who value recommendations.

[2]https://business.adobe.com/au/resources/reports/data-and-insights-digital-trends.html

Which of the following pages on your website incorporate personalised product recommendations?



36% of retailers
are not using personalised product recommendations on their website whatsoever.

One in Five Retailers Risk Messaging Mismatch

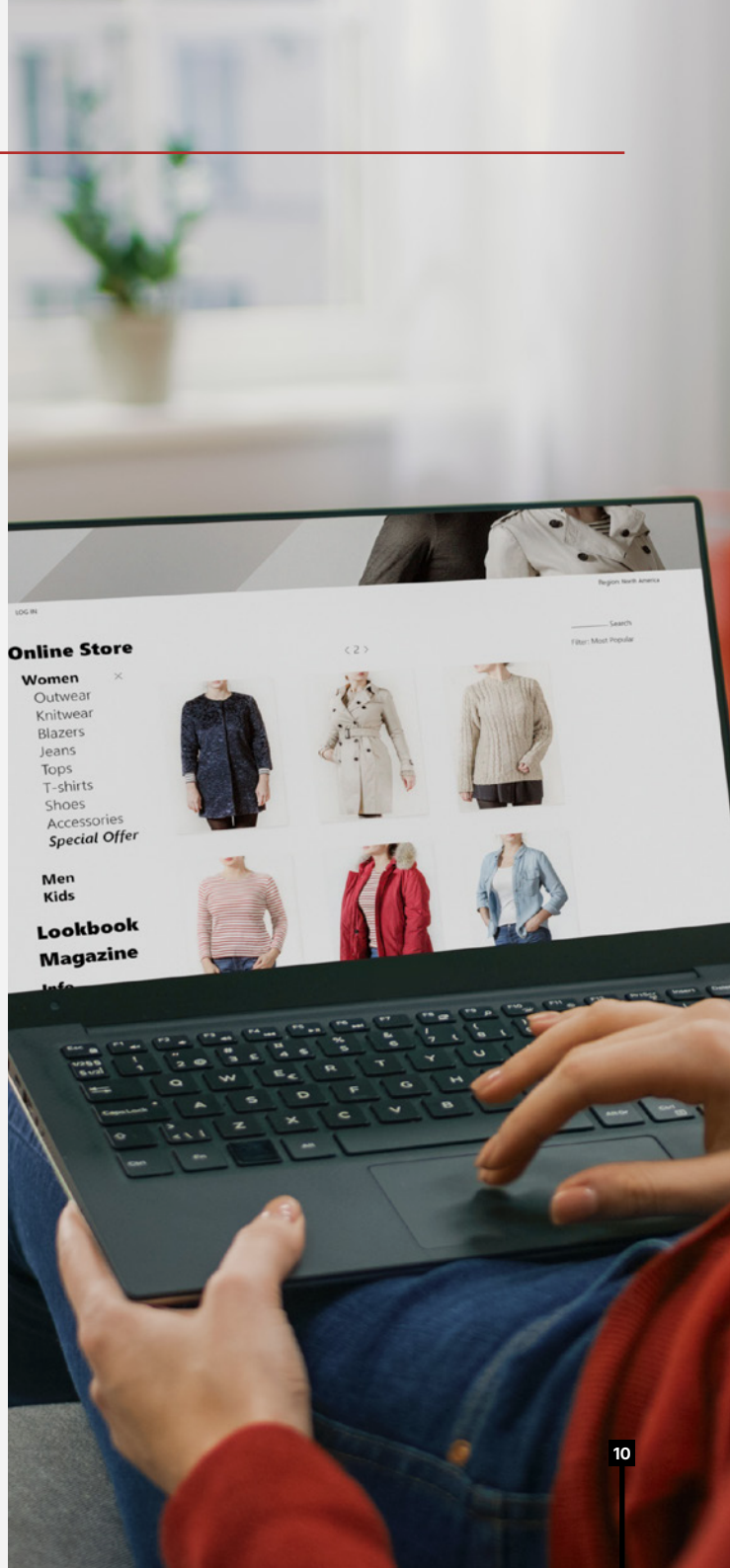
Consistency tells a similar story across product feeds (the product detail, description, and attribute data that retailers push to off-site channels to display and advertise their items).

Although 79% of retailers maintain consistency across search, social, and marketplace product feeds, 21% don't optimise trust-building through consistent messaging from off-site discovery to on-site conversion.

Are you using one consistent product feed across search, social, and marketplaces?

79% YES

21% NO



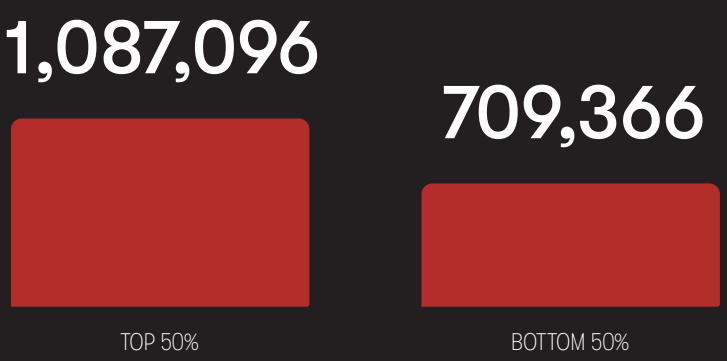
Creative

Retailers should prioritise consistency in creative messaging across all channels. While many align website copy with paid and owned media, some still fall short in this regard. Inconsistent messaging can weaken brand trust and undermine the overall customer experience.

Retailers commonly use AI to produce written content, but far fewer use it for visual creatives. Their creative focus also remains concentrated on acquisition. Few retailers extend the same attention to post-purchase messaging, missing a chance to reconvert customers after the sale.

Most retailers adapt messaging by platform and audience, but few tailor their creatives to shopper pain points. This gap leaves room to stand out from the crowd by addressing real customer challenges that encourage clicks.

Retailers scoring in the top 50% of creative tactics have experienced a 53% increase in total YoY potential customers to site versus the bottom 50%.



53% increase

Trust Starts with Cross-Channel Consistency

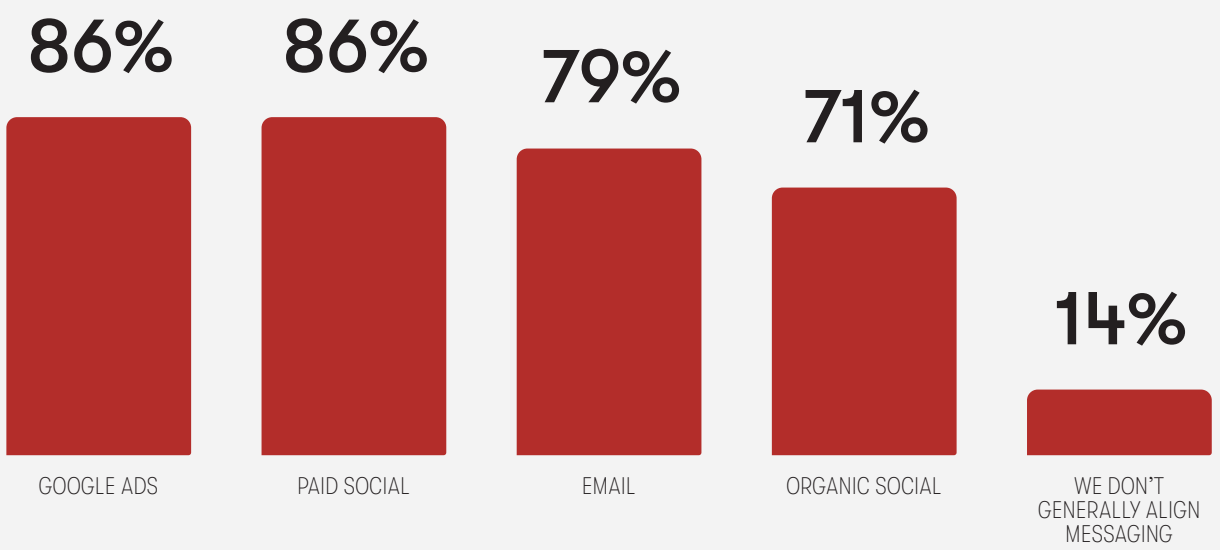
86% of retailers align their website copy with Google Ads and Paid Social channel messaging. 79% align copy with email and 71% with Organic Social channels.

Surprisingly, 14% of retailers are not aligning their website messaging with other channels.

According to Edelman's Trust Barometer[3], 81% of consumers need to trust a brand before considering a purchase. Consistent messaging plays a crucial role in establishing and maintaining trust throughout the buyer journey.

[3]https://www.edelman.com/news-awards/only-one-third-of-consumers-trust-most-of-the-brands-they-buy

Thinking about your website copy, with which other channels do you align messaging? (Please select all that apply)



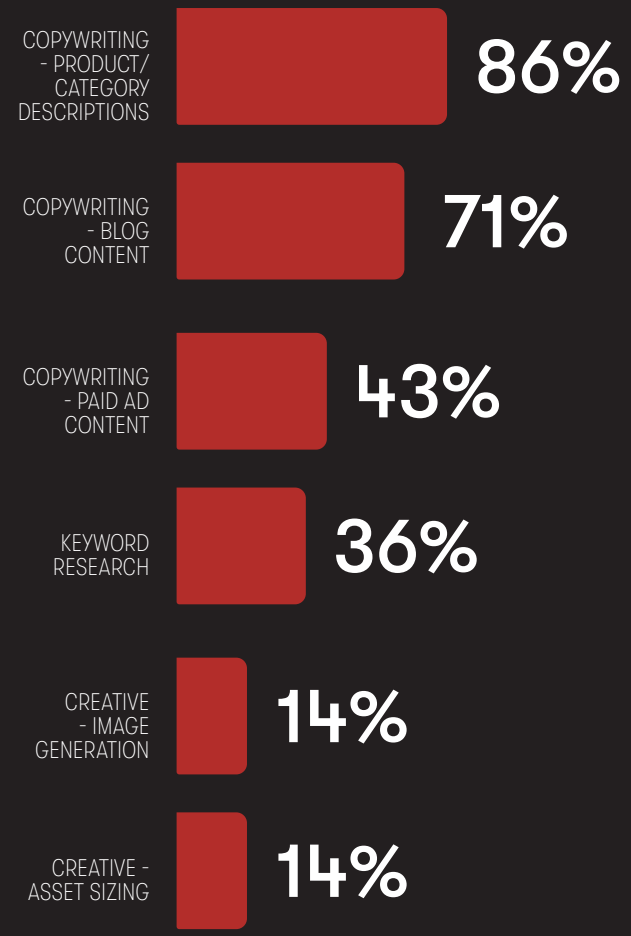
86%
of retailers align their website copy with Google Ads and Paid Social channel messaging.

A Missed Advantage as AI Visual Creatives Lag Behind

When it comes to creative asset production, retailers are most invested in using AI for generating product and category descriptions (86%), blog content (71%), and paid ad copy (43%).

AI-powered asset sizing and image generation are in use by only 14% of retailers.

Which of the following tasks are you using AI for? (Please select all that apply)



Post-Purchase Messaging is Often Overlooked

The vast majority (93%) of retailers use specialised creative and messaging within top-of-funnel (awareness) activity. 86% extend the same focus to middle-of-funnel (consideration) and bottom-of-funnel (intent) activity.

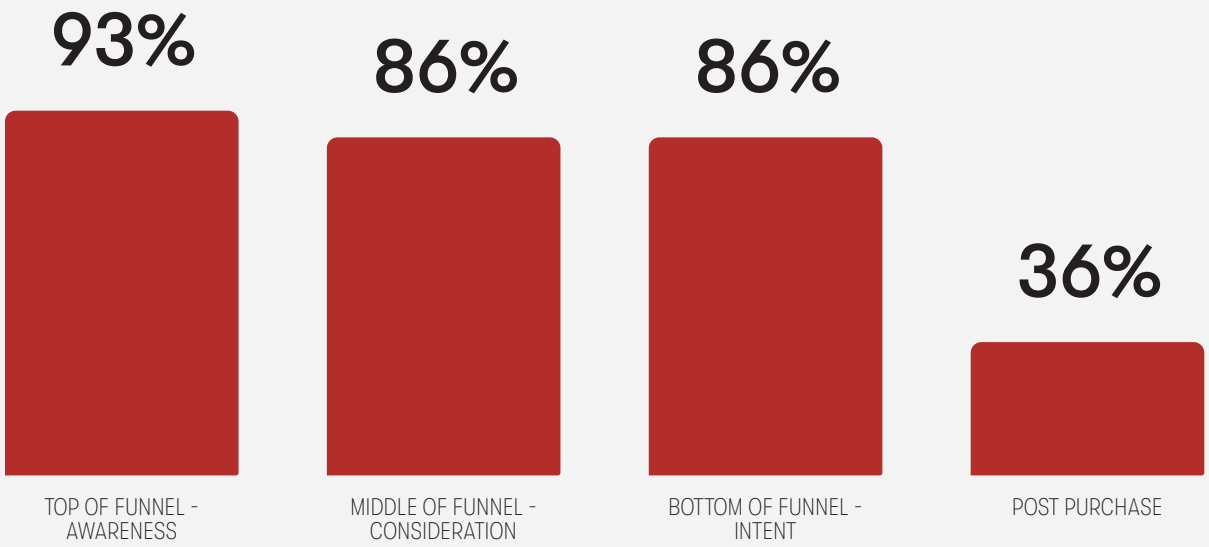
However, only 36% are tailoring post-purchase creatives and messaging. Nearly two-thirds of retailers are missing out on significant reconversion potential by neglecting this stage of the buyer journey.

Klaviyo's APAC Consumer Trends Report[4] shows that 59% of consumers say personalised marketing and messaging influence their purchase decisions.

The same report reveals 89% find emails with promotions and discounts engaging. However, 39% also think this about new product announcements, and 19% about educational content, including how-tos, tips, customer stories, and testimonials. Retailers should reflect on the power of specialised creatives and messaging in reconverting customers after the sale, even when not offering a discount.

[4]https://www.klaviyo.com/au/marketing-resources/apac-consumer-trends-report

Across which of the following funnel stages do you have specialised creative and messaging? (Please select all that apply)



Only 36%
of retailers tailor their post-purchase creatives and messaging.

Retailers Miss the Mark on Tailoring to Pain Points

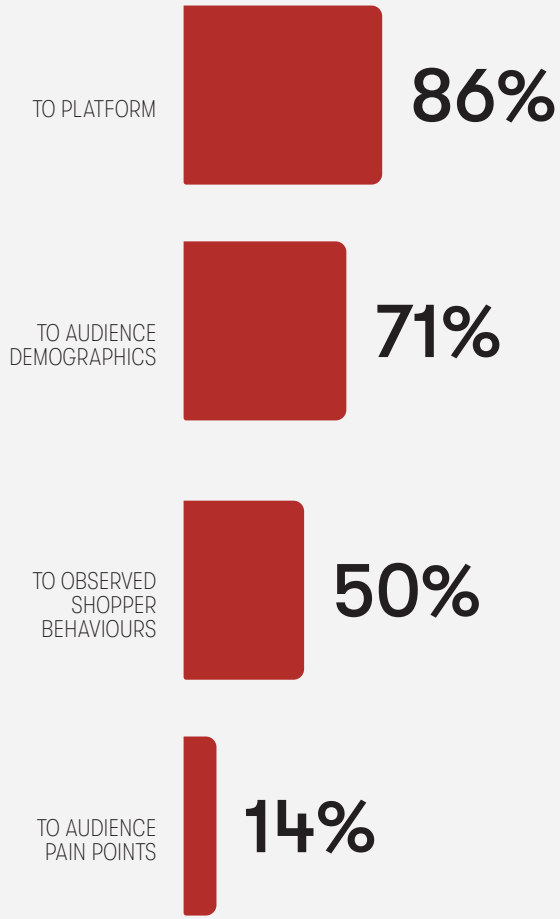
Most retailers (86%) take the approach of tailoring ad creatives to each platform, with 71% doing the same for audience demographics and 50% for observed shopper behaviours. Only 14% tailor ad creatives to their shoppers' pain points.

McKinsey research5 shows that tailored messaging to shoppers' individual needs influences 66% of them to make a purchase.

When most retailers have yet to personalise ad creatives around shopper pain points, a substantial opportunity exists for those who stay ahead of the personalisation pack.

[5]https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/the-value-of-getting-personalization-right-or-wrong-is-multiplying

How are your ad creatives tailored? (Please select all that apply)



Advertising & Analysis

Retailers often overlook the impact of tailoring ad creatives to shopper pain points. While most adapt messaging by platform and audience, few speak directly to customer challenges. This gap suggests ways for retailers to stand out with creatives that create stronger engagement.

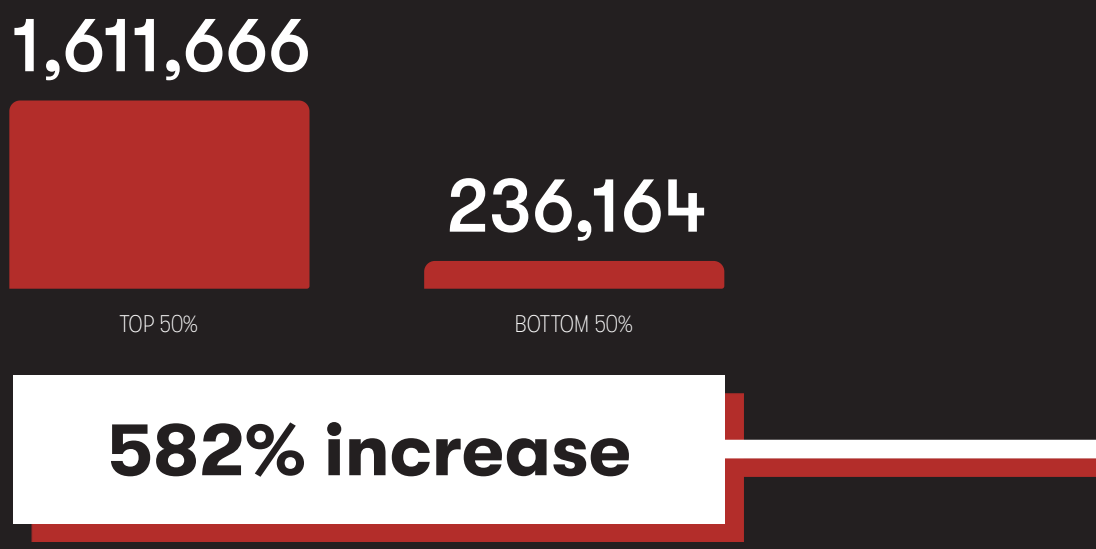
Most use A/B testing or creative rotation to combat ad fatigue, yet dynamic creative optimisation remains underused. Without a structured approach, some risk a decline in performance over time.

Half of all retailers lack a consolidated dashboard view of their online and offline channel performance. The retail environment is constantly evolving and susceptible to rapid and unexpected changes. Retailers must remain poised to respond instantaneously to challenges online and offline challenges, with consolidated visibility a critical factor.

Measurement of cross-channel impact is also limited. Without broader models, such as Media Mix Modelling, retailers miss insights that support long-term planning and budget strategy.

While paid search and Meta ads are widely used by retailers, underutilised platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and CTV may present ways to reach untapped audiences and extend paid media reach.

Retailers scoring in the top 50% of advertising and analysis tactics have experienced a 582% increase in total YoY potential customers to site versus the bottom 50%.



Ad Fatigue Fought with Robust Testing

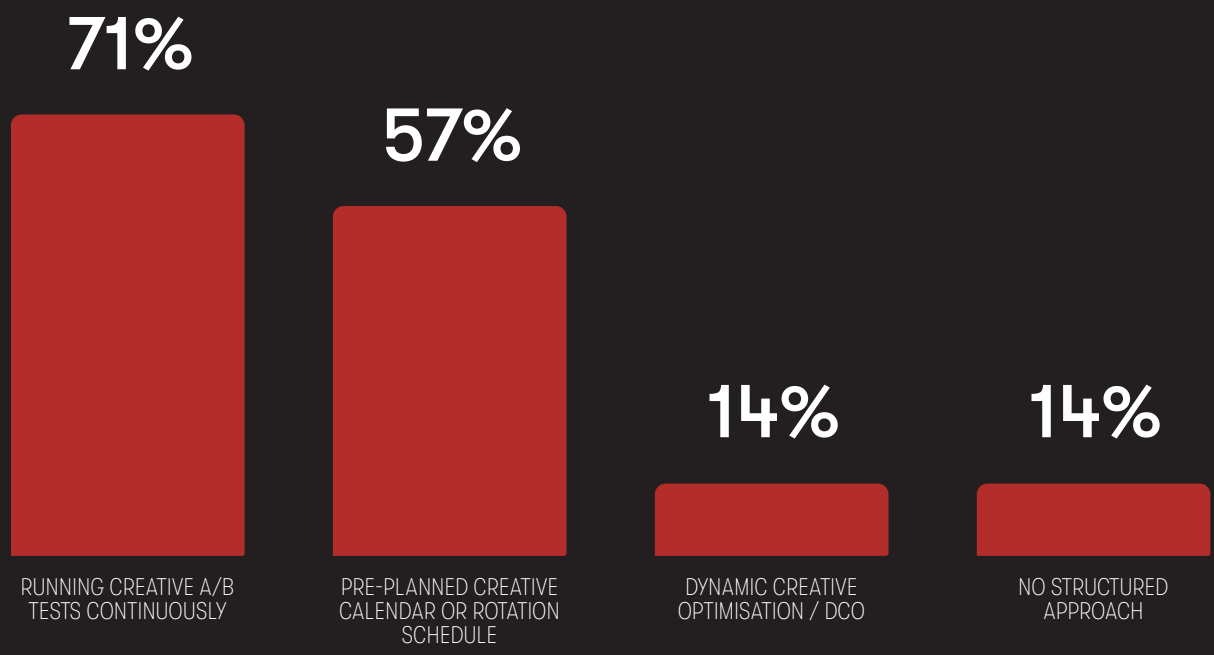
Continuous A/B testing is the number one way of fighting ad fatigue, as cited by 71% of retailers.

By comparing two versions of a creative campaign, A/B testing enables retailers to make data-driven decisions to refine ad performance, conversion, and overall ROI.

57% also use a pre-planned creative calendar or rotation schedule to keep ads fresh, while only 14% use dynamic creative optimisation.

Surprisingly, another 14% have no structured approach to combat ad fatigue.

How do you combat ad fatigue in your creative campaigns? (Please select all that apply)



71% of retailers
use A/B testing to combat ad fatigue.

Half of Retailers Lack Full Performance Visibility

Only 50% of retailers have a consolidated dashboard view of all online and offline channel performance. Just over a third (36%) have a single view across their digital channels, while 14% rely on individual and disparate channel dashboards.

Consolidated marketing dashboards offer retailers a comprehensive, real-time view of marketing KPIs and outcomes, enabling them to make informed, data-driven decisions. This panoramic view helps retailers understand which campaigns and channels yield the most effective results and return on investment (ROI).

Which channels does your reporting dashboard consolidate into a single view?

50%
ALL CHANNELS, ONLINE AND OFFLINE

36%
DIGITAL CHANNELS ONLY

14%
WE HAVE DASHBOARDS FOR INDIVIDUAL CHANNELS, NOT CONSOLIDATED INTO ONE VIEW

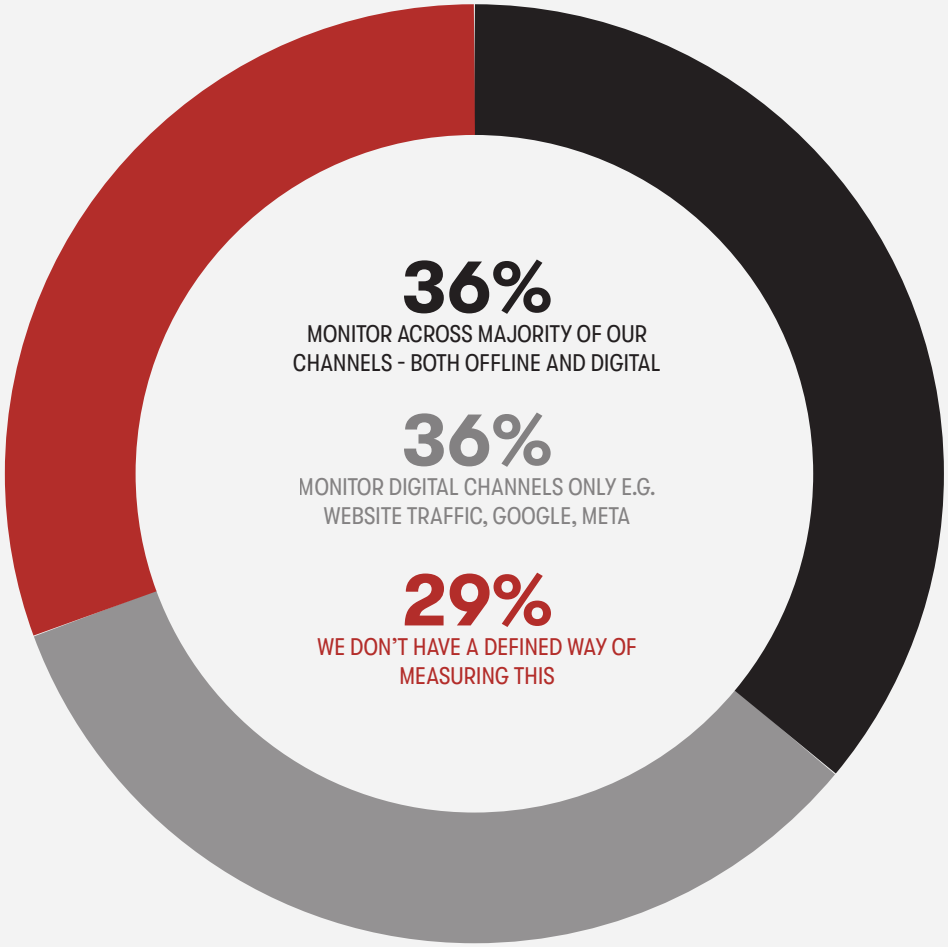
Few Measure Marketing Mix with Full Accuracy

29% of retailers have no defined way of measuring combined marketing channel performance, such as Media Mix Modelling (MMM), to understand the sales impact.

Retailers can use MMM to measure the effectiveness of digital and offline channels (such as TV, radio, and print). This approach also incorporates seasonal, behavioural, geographic, and even macroeconomic factors into the equation to provide a more accurate quantification of performance and offer insights for long-term planning and impact analysis.

While 36% of retailers monitor the majority of combined online and offline marketing performance, as in an MMM approach, the same number only monitor digital channels, missing out on vital insights.

How do you primarily measure combined marketing channel performance, e.g. Media Mix Modelling (MMM) to understand the sales impact?



Retailers All In on Search and Meta Ads

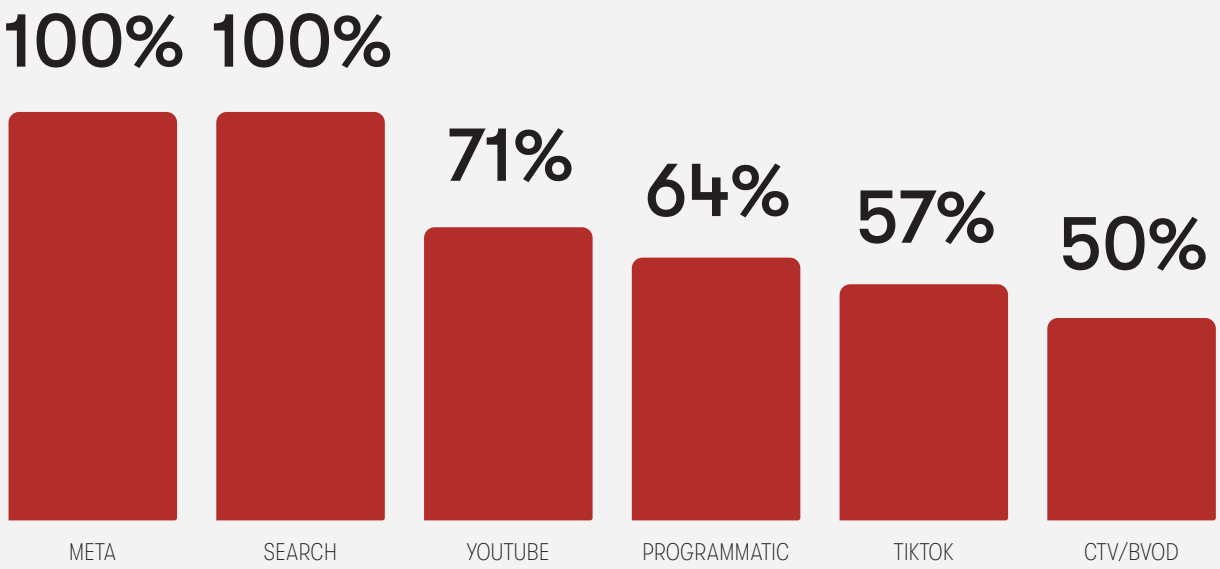
All retailers surveyed run ads across paid search platforms, including Google Ads and Meta platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. Interestingly, only 71% of retailers run ads on YouTube.

Search Engine Journal reports[6] that YouTube is the second-largest search engine globally, indicating that around three in ten retailers may not be connecting with this audience through advertising.

As a relatively new platform, TikTok receives advertising attention from only 57% of retailers. Connected TV (CTV) and broadcast video on demand (BVOD) scored the lowest, attracting only 50% of retailers.

[6]https://www.searchenginejournal.com/seo/meet-search-engines/

Which of these channels do you run ads in?
(Please select all that apply)



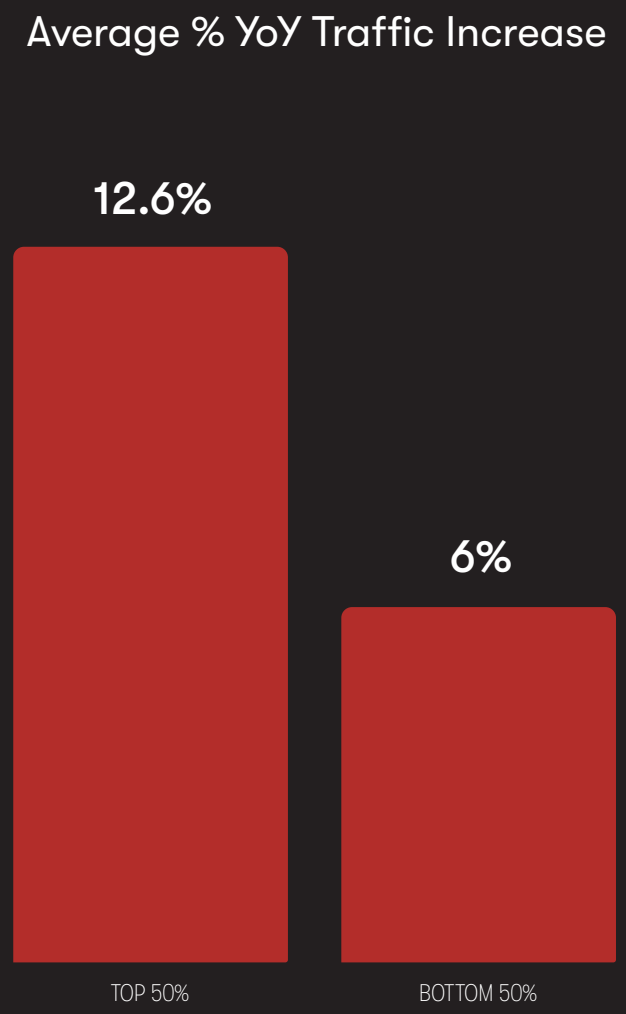
Only 71%
of retailers are running ads on YouTube.

Conclusion

Retail Leaders achieve significantly higher growth in potential customers to site than Laggards. This performance gap is clearly reflected in the data:

- 12.6% YoY growth in potential customer visits for Leaders
- 6.0% YoY growth for Laggards
- The G Squared Digital Integration Index also reveals that higher ratings generally align with much greater increases in site visitors

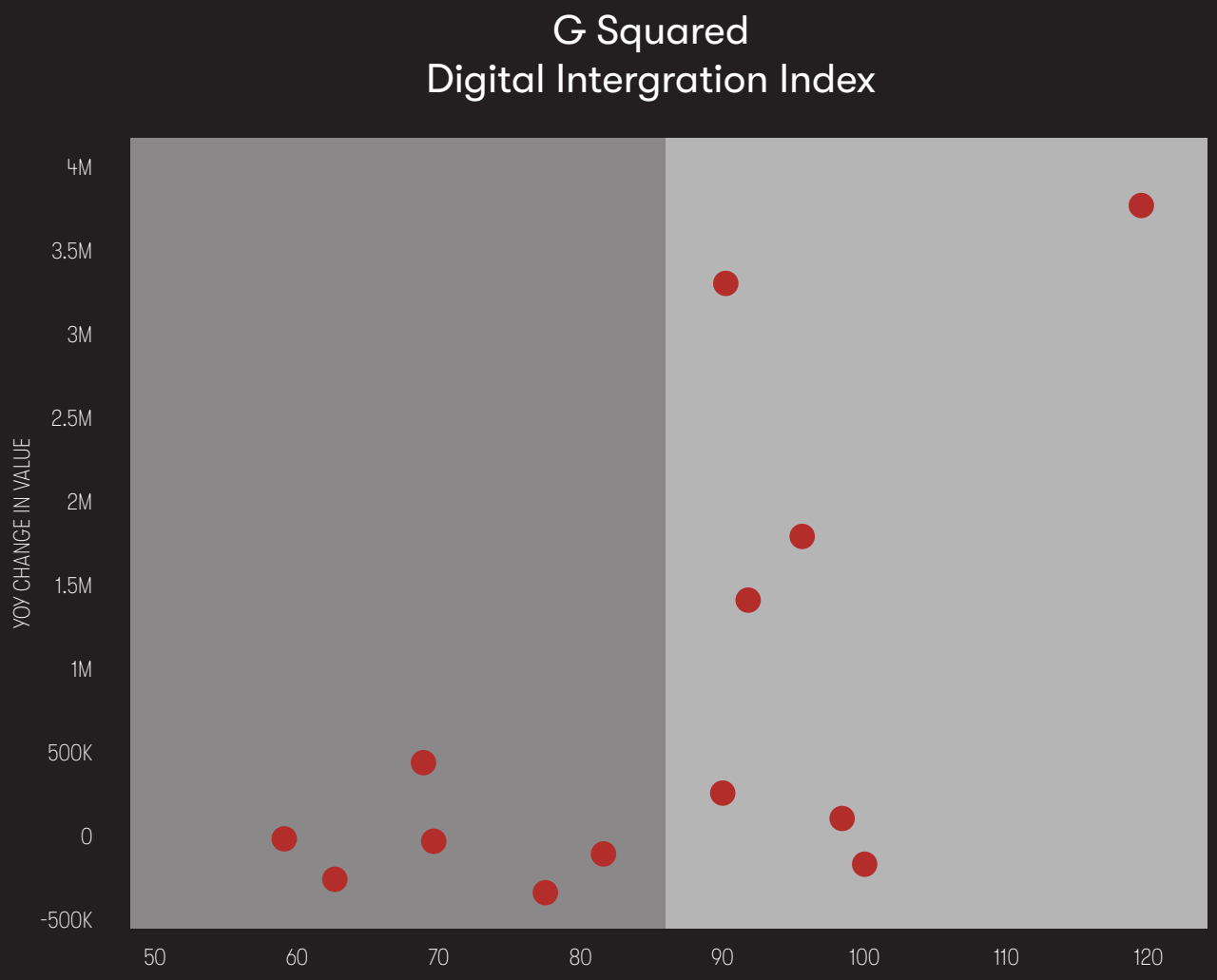
While digital integration is not a silver bullet, it is a clear enabler of growth. Several factors contribute to retail success, including product quality, pricing, brand reputation, and broader economic conditions. However, the foundation laid by an integrated digital strategy helps retailers adapt faster, create stronger connections with shoppers, and maximise the impact of their marketing investment.



To strengthen market position, retailers should focus on building strategies that connect the customer journey across all touchpoints. The most effective approach revolves around:

- Aligning digital channels to deliver a cohesive customer experience
- Closing the gaps between data, creative, and execution
- Using integrated strategies to move faster and adapt to change
- Prioritising investment in connected marketing efforts to drive measurable performance and enhance commercial outcomes

Retail leaders following this path are not only growing faster on average, but also resetting the performance benchmark across the industry.



Thank you

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