



BOPIS Marketing Strategies for a New Retail Landscape

Promoting Online Shopping/In-Store Pickup In The Post-Pandemic Customer Journey

While the idea of BOPIS (Buy Online, Pick Up In-Store) may have burst into the spotlight during the global pandemic, the actual concept is nothing new. In fact, consumers have enjoyed BOPIS services—or “Curbside Pickup” in the restaurant industry—for years. And this in-store pickup practice is only gaining momentum today.

Simply put, BOPIS in retail enables a customer to buy goods online through a website or mobile app, and take advantage of same-day, in-store pickup from either their own vehicle outside the store or inside at a dedicated merchandise pickup counter. The social distancing and safety implications of BOPIS made it an obvious preference during the pandemic, but even before the pandemic, retailers had already seen a dramatic uptick in BOPIS activities.

In the first quarter of 2019, for example, Lowes saw a full 60% of customer online purchases picked up at a physical, brick-and-mortar store.¹ Likewise, Petco boosted eCommerce revenue by 5%—fulfilling 100,000 orders—when it implemented BOPIS in 2018.² A few years ago, the trend had started. The pandemic elevated BOPIS fulfillment to a trusted and legitimate shopping channel. And now, consumers expect it.

In the second quarter of 2020, Dick’s Sporting Goods reported that 75% of its online orders were fulfilled by local stores.³ In addition, according to McKinsey and Co., 56% of shoppers plan to continue using stores with in-store pickup long after the pandemic has ended, demanding it as an alternative to traditional in-store shopping and costly, time-consuming home delivery.⁴

Both consumers and retailers can reap the benefits of BOPIS fulfillment. For busy shoppers who have already adopted digital commerce—and 21.3% of all U.S. retail spending was online in 2020—these benefits include:⁵

- No shipping fees
- Faster service with no wait for shipments
- 100% in-stock guarantee
- Safety and convenience
- No risk of packages being stolen
- Simple use of promo codes

Behind the counter, retailers can take advantage of key factors such as:

- Incremental purchases, either online or at a merchandise pick-up counter
- Lower shipping costs
- Better inventory management
- A new way to differentiate service versus competitors

Today, upwards of 43.7% of the top 500 retailers offer in-store pickup (compared to 6.9% prior to the pandemic).⁶ According to retailers, the race is already on to put the pandemic behind them and 'win the holidays' in 2021. Turning BOPIS from a pandemic-driven opportunity into a true profit engine requires marketing professionals to focus on a few key imperatives.



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Connecting To The Customer Experience

BOPIS must be viewed as a strategic priority rather than as simply a tactical silo. After all, the practice of shop online, pickup in-store after the purchase is essentially a new type of customer buying journey.

"Successful retailers are creating innovative solutions to meet the changing needs of their customers," Tim Hill, Vice President/General Manager, NVISION, says. **"These new ideas provide both convenience and peace of mind when returning to the store environment. Just finding ways to get people out of their homes safely is helping to rebuild some community and connectivity."**

Clearly, shopping is an emotional experience, so first impressions matter even if that impression occurs in a busy parking lot. Brand consistency is at stake, so the parking lot or curbside pickup area might be the only touchpoint with the audience. The BOPIS retail experience had better be satisfying.



Exteriors Are In

Historically, parking lots, storefronts and building exteriors have been the responsibility of facilities management or the real estate department. Today, it's marketing that must focus on optimizing the brand experience outside the store, in addition to its merchandising duties throughout the aisles.

Traffic flow indicators, clearly marked directional signage and professional-looking exteriors play a vital role in the BOPIS consumer journey. Colors, consistency, voice and tone—all the elements of successful merchandising—should be applied outside too. This means establishing new relationships with landscape architects, sign painters and other vendors who can help enhance the drive-up experience.

Marketers can work with their local in-store teams to ensure a smooth, orderly traffic flow; provide specific training to customer service and product fulfillment specialists who interact with waiting customers; and employ a wide array of signage to ensure customers feel safe and in control, all while building brand loyalty. It's no small task, but BOPIS marketing communications are vital. In fact, c-level decision-makers have begun transforming their most successful individual store BOPIS marketing plans into full-chain marketing initiatives.

The Best Programs Take Into Account:

PATH: What are you doing to ensure your customer can seamlessly navigate to and through the experience?

PURCHASE: How does the customer know what to do when they arrive? What does that experience look like?

PROMOTION: How are you using signage to educate people about your new capabilities and how to use them?

PERMANENCE: What type of experience are you creating and what is it saying about the direction of your brand?



A Critical Extension Of Your Brand

More than a year after the pandemic started, it's clear that BOPIS should be viewed as a permanent part of the retail experience versus a temporary fix to facilitate social distancing guidelines. For example, all signage should be professionally produced rather than ad-hoc. Messaging should adhere to brand guidelines to create a seamless, on-premise experience that promotes safety, speed and brand intimacy. It's also important to consider returns in addition to pick-ups.

Successful stores with in-store pickup may dedicate and train specific staff for BOPIS customers, ensuring these team members can alleviate customer friction, minimize long traffic lines, and solve any problems quickly and professionally. Such teams should be supported with real-time inventory capabilities to prevent customers from arriving at the store only to find their item is actually out of stock.

In-store pickup areas and curbside services should promote safety and cleanliness. Signage and floor clings can help direct waiting shoppers to the proper check-out lane inside a store, while upsell tactics such as candy or gift card displays can help drive incremental sales. Making the customer feel safe inspires confidence in both the store and the brand, encouraging return visits and even a quick lap around the store.



The Marketing Toolkit

Moving from individual stores to the corporate marketing level requires a new investment in BOPIS tools, tactics and strategic planning. In addition to traditional broadcast advertising, digital environments such as websites or shopping apps should spotlight BOPIS availability. Public relations efforts with both shopping center management companies and local municipalities should focus on the benefits of efficient traffic flow and a safer shopping experience. Any merchandising or point-of-purchase planning should incorporate order online, pickup in-store messaging and necessary signage or staging elements.

Forward-thinking brands are already making capital expenditures in exterior traffic flow redesigns, parking lot changes, exterior signage applications and interior merchandise pick-up areas.

For example, in 2018, The Home Depot began a three-year plan to invest over \$11 billion into improving the overall retail experience in their stores. In just the first two years, sales rose by 3.5% and more than half of the company's online orders were picked up in-store versus delivery.⁷

While BOPIS in retail requires serious marketing consideration and investment from the c-suite, the potential sales are well worth the efforts.

BOPIS Fulfillment Benefits For Retailers



Incremental Purchases
On-site/Off-site



Low Shipping Cost



Better Inventory Mgmt.



Differntiation



Ideas, Promotions And Logistical Firepower

Creating and implementing a powerful BOPIS strategy requires more than the commitment of store management and c-level executives. It means relying on expert partners who have the knowledge, marketing supply chain specialization and a robust network of suppliers to quickly and cost-effectively implement proven BOPIS omnichannel solutions.

NVISION offers an experienced BOPIS consulting team that works alongside key partners to help marketing professionals manage the various elements involved in a successful BOPIS retail execution. From logistical support and streamlined supply chains to value-added expertise, NVISION works with the largest, most forward-thinking retail marketers. Our team can leverage emerging best practices and proven strategies, helping you stay on top of this dynamic and evolving marketing channel.

Sources

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2. [Petco to offer BOPIS services](#)
3. [Stores are 'critical' for Dick's Sporting Goods' booming ecommerce sales](#)
4. [Perspectives on retail and consumer goods](#)
5. [US ecommerce grows 44.0% in 2020](#)
6. [Nearly 44% of Top 500 retailers with stores now offer curbside pickup](#)
7. [BOPIS Strategy In Retail and eCommerce Defined With Examples](#)