



THE ROI OF BEST-IN-CLASS MARKETING & DESIGN STRATEGIES IN ECOMMERCE

MAXIMIZE CONVERSION RATES & VALUE FROM MARKETING
INVESTMENTS

January 2022

Sarah Gaffney
Senior Analyst, Research Data & Operations

[LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#)

Ecommerce organizations today are tasked with meeting ever-changing customer needs and expectations to remain competitive in the market. This research report explores the impact of Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies, including SEO, web design, and social media capabilities, on ecommerce performance and the actions companies need to take to establish these strategies to cater to modern consumers.

The State of Ecommerce Organizations in Today's Dynamic Business Environment

Over the past two years, buyer behavior has transitioned significantly from in-person to online, forcing many organizations to enhance their ecommerce capabilities. Whether it's implementing new channels for BOPIS (Buy Online, Pick Up In Store) or supporting greater volumes of traffic on the ecommerce site, ecommerce teams have been tasked with keeping up with the rapidly changing pace of customer needs. Organizations that are unable to meet customer demands risk experiencing declines in customer loyalty, brand image, and overall revenue.

Aberdeen's research shows that the top two challenges **ecommerce organizations** face are competition and consistency (see sidebar). They need to differentiate their products and services from competitors, and creating a unique, seamless customer experience is essential to remain competitive. Consistency is also critical for ensuring customers receive accurate information across multiple touchpoints and engagement channels. Top performing organizations are utilizing Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies to overcome these challenges. For the purposes of this research, Aberdeen defines the three key **Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies** as:

- ▶ Using search engine optimization (SEO) to boost website visibility
- ▶ Leveraging tools and services to design an optimal web experience by ensuring the most relevant content is easily accessible
- ▶ Monitoring social media channels to expand audience reach and gain insights into their brand

Definition: For the purposes of this study, Aberdeen defines **ecommerce organizations** as companies currently using an ecommerce platform.

Top 5 Ecommerce Challenges

1. Increased competition requires differentiating based on customer experiences – **42%**
2. Customers expect consistent experiences across multiple touchpoints – **34%**
3. Customers have access to a wealth of information on many competitive products/services changing the dynamics of customer relationships – **32%**
4. Demographic changes of customers – **28%**
5. Proliferation of new customer engagement channels due to technological advancements – **27%**

% of Ecommerce Organizations

A well-designed website that is both easy to navigate and full of relevant, valuable content can help ecommerce organizations stand out from their competitors. Leveraging tools and services to design such an optimal web experience allows companies to better differentiate how their brand is presented to customers. Design services that ensure consistency in the look and feel across webpages and cater to demographic differences of visitors can also have an impact on alleviating these top challenges.

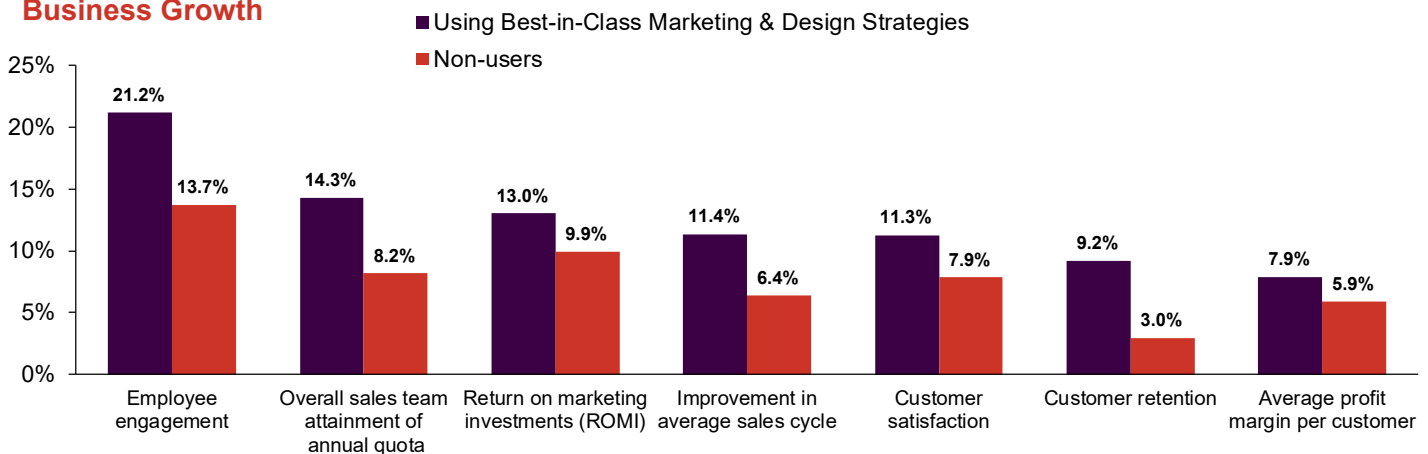
A marketing strategy, complete with SEO and social media capabilities, that tackles these challenges can significantly boost marketing effectiveness. Organizations need to recognize that consumers have more information at their fingertips than ever before, giving them more agency in the buying process. These empowered consumers are better able to educate themselves about products and services, and each buying decision is influenced by the messages they receive from businesses. Marketing is crucial in getting the right information and messages to the right buyers at the right time. Having a modern marketing strategy that supports today’s empowered consumers as well as the digital transformation of engagement channels can make a difference in the success of the organization.

Empowered consumers are better able to educate themselves about products and services, and each buying decision is influenced by the messages they receive from businesses. Marketing is crucial in getting the right information and messages to the right buyers at the right time.

The Business Value of Maturity in Marketing and Design Strategies

Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies do more than alleviate top ecommerce challenges—they help organizations achieve greater levels of revenue growth and operational efficiency. Figure 1 demonstrates the business impact that SEO, design, and social media capabilities can have on ecommerce organizations.

Figure 1: Best-in-Class Marketing & Design Strategies Accelerate Business Growth



Percent year-over-year change, n=797
Source: Aberdeen, January 2022

Companies using Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies are seeing a 21.2% average annual increase in employee engagement compared to only 13.7% for non-users. With greater insights into their brand from social media monitoring, companies can equip ecommerce, sales, and service representatives with the right information to effectively interact with customers. Greater improvements in employee engagement show that key marketing and design strategies help employees to better do their jobs and motivate them to stay with the company, reducing turnover of high-quality talent. If organizations decide to outsource their marketing and design functions, their core employees can focus their time on other strategic initiatives of interest, further influencing employee engagement.

The advantages in improvement in attainment of sales quota, reduction in average sales cycle, and increase in profit margins exemplify how marketing and design are tied directly to sales and revenue. Social media and SEO capabilities help drive customers to the ecommerce site, increasing the number of visitors and opportunities for the sales team to close and reach their quota. A well-designed website can influence customer interest once they arrive. Displaying relevant content, which has been personalized for each visitor based on customer data gathered through additional marketing efforts, front and center shows customers that the business knows what they're looking for, making it easier for the customer to complete a purchase in a shorter amount of time. Automation across marketing and design reduces operating costs, thus boosting profit margins.

These key marketing and design strategies help ecommerce organizations improve their overall return on marketing investments (ROMI) by 1.3x more per year than non-users. This shows how an expertly crafted website, social presence, and SEO approach influence marketing's contribution to the business. These benefits culminate into more than 3x greater annual improvement in customer retention and 1.4x greater annual improvement in customer satisfaction for ecommerce organizations using these strategies. Happier customers are more likely to make repeat purchases, increasing customer loyalty and overall customer lifetime value.

The benefits of these mature strategies extend into customer service teams as well. Customer service may not be the business unit that derives the most obvious value from design and marketing efforts. However, SEO, design, and social media capabilities can have a significant impact on their operations. Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies can set service agents up for success to resolve customer

Compared to non-users, ecommerce organizations leveraging Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies are also experiencing:

38%

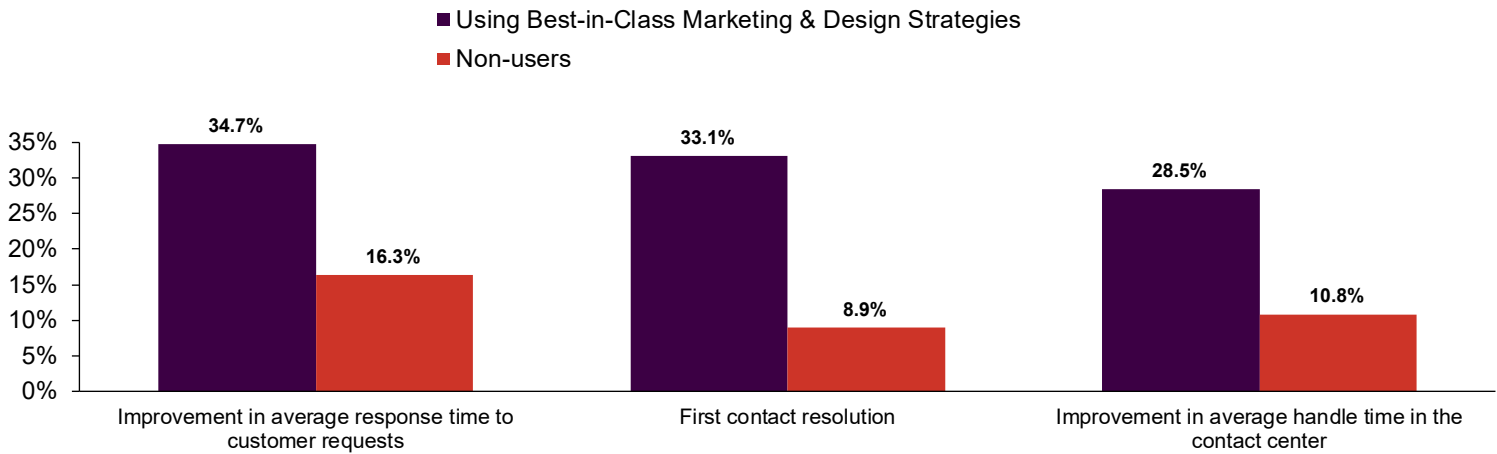
greater **return on marketing investments (ROMI)** and

32%

greater **first contact resolution rates**.

issues and keep customers happy. Figure 2 shows the efficiency gains those using Best-in-Class strategies are experiencing in comparison to non-users.

Figure 2: Customer Service Operations Benefit from Mature Marketing & Design Strategies



Percent year-over-year change, n=797
 Source: Aberdeen, January 2022

Service agents at ecommerce organizations using core SEO, design, and social media capabilities are faster at responding to customer requests, more likely to resolve requests on the first interaction, and able to minimize the time spent handling each request. Social media enables customers to reach out to businesses on platforms they are comfortable with, and allowing reps to respond on the same channel speeds up time to resolution. Easily accessible support features on the website help customers connect quickly with agents, reducing customer effort and showing them that the company cares about helping them find what they need. Design service partners that are knowledgeable about placement and functionality of support features can help organizations optimize customer service accessibility. Furthermore, service partners can help set up workflows to route requests to the appropriate agent.

SEO provides a strategic advantage for service teams. Leveraging the data from search engine results can help customer service leaders identify common product challenges their clients are attempting to solve themselves. They can then create customer-driven help articles and playbooks for service reps to address these needs. Marketing and design partners who specialize in SEO can help ecommerce organizations identify and capitalize on strategic opportunities before competitors by keeping an indirect eye on customer needs through search patterns.

Marketing and design partners who specialize in SEO can help ecommerce organizations identify and capitalize on strategic opportunities before competitors by keeping an indirect eye on customer needs through search patterns.

Critical Elements of a Best-in-Class Marketing & Design Strategy

Developing a Best-in-Class marketing and design strategy and achieving the aforementioned results involve more than adopting baseline SEO, design, and social media capabilities. Ecommerce organizations are investing in technologies and tactics alongside those assets to enhance their approach to marketing and design. There are four critical areas this report will explore to reveal how ecommerce organizations can prioritize their digital transformation needs and begin their journey toward implementing and advancing Best-in-Class strategies.

Marketing Technology Stack

From brand development to event planning to lead generation, marketing teams need to cover a lot of ground. These widespread marketing activities can easily become disconnected or siloed, but investing in platforms that bring marketing content under one roof can eliminate confusion over version control and audience engagement. Ecommerce organizations using Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies are more likely to invest in marketing solutions to manage and distribute their content (see sidebar). Working with a services partner to manage these solutions can further unite marketing activities and tie these activities back to the website.

Brand management systems help maintain current brand guidelines and distribute new materials when updates are made, making it easier to update logos and content on the ecommerce site and social media. Content marketing platforms and digital asset management systems are useful for managing content effectively and supplying the most relevant content to each customer. Marketing automation helps to increase efficiency of emails, notifications, and advertisements. Campaign management enables marketers to effectively leverage social media and SEO to get the organization's content in front of more prospects. By implementing a marketing technology stack that supports the Best-in-Class strategies of SEO, design, and social media, these mature ecommerce organizations are seeing greater advantages in ROMI and sales effectiveness. Once a top tier marketing tech stack is in place, marketing teams can build up these strategies and continuously work to increase conversion rates and brand image.

Social Media Agility

Social media monitoring involves more than setting up social accounts and posting every now and then. A smart social strategy has a

Technology Platforms to Support Best-in-Class Marketing Strategies

Brand management

- ▶ Users: 93%
- ▶ Non-users: 79%

Content marketing platform

- ▶ Users: 92%
- ▶ Non-users: 55%

Digital asset management

- ▶ Users: 87%
- ▶ Non-users: 40%

Marketing automation

- ▶ Users: 84%
- ▶ Non-users: 56%

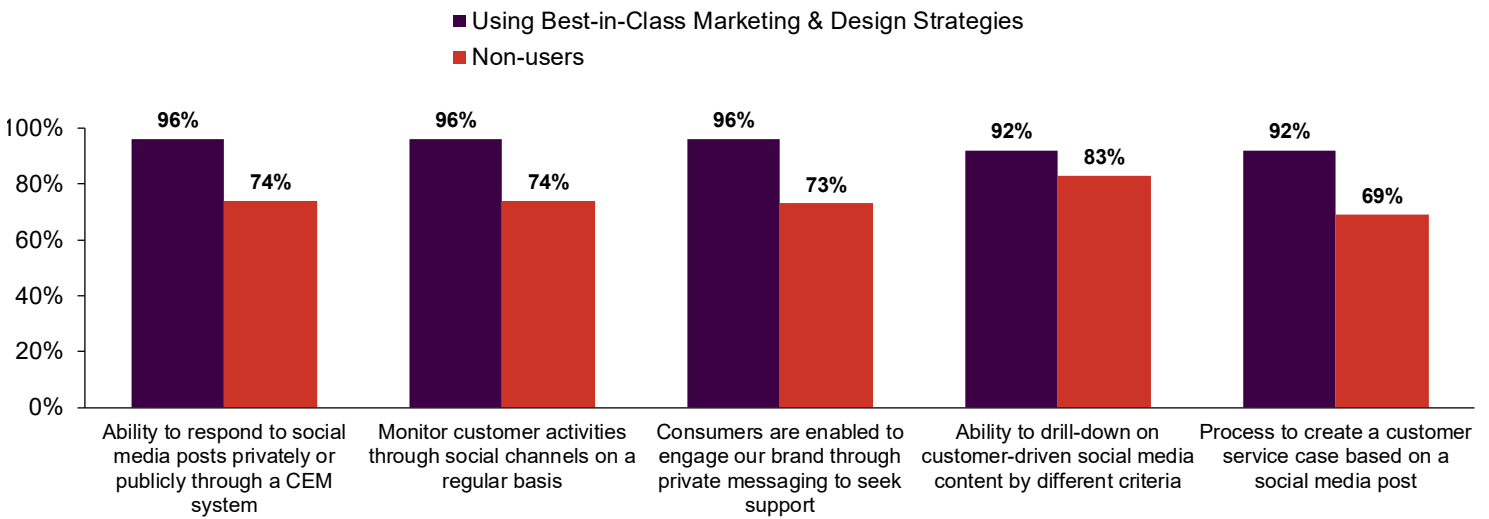
Marketing campaign management

- ▶ Users: 61%
- ▶ Non-users: 46%

% of Ecommerce Organizations

combination of both inbound activities, such as answering questions via direct messages or tracking interest on specific products and services through reporting, and outbound activities, such as displaying new content and conducting audience outreach. Ecommerce organizations using Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies are more likely to implement advanced social media monitoring capabilities to engage with customers on platforms they are comfortable with, as well as inform targeted product development or marketing efforts (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Enhance Social Media Monitoring to Keep Up with the Modern Consumer



Percent of respondents, n=797
 Source: Aberdeen, January 2022

With the ability to respond to social media posts through a customer engagement management (CEM) system, Best-in-Class strategy users are better able to collect and process feedback from their customers. They can see how customers are experiencing their products and services, and they can ask questions or point customers to surveys to help them improve their offerings and boost customer satisfaction. Enabling customers to reach out for support via social media helps to nurture social platforms as customer engagement channels. Customers who may be less likely to visit the website or make a phone call to get their needs addressed can easily contact the business through a channel they feel comfortable using, which increases time to resolution and overall customer happiness.

Establishing a regular cadence for monitoring customer activities on social media is essential for holistic reporting. To gain insights from

audience engagement data, businesses need a steady stream of information. Sporadic, manual downloads of data are difficult to compare across time periods and demographic groups. Investments in automation or partnerships with services organizations with social media experts can reduce employee time spent sifting through data.

Lastly, ecommerce organizations using Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies are more likely to leverage social media content for business and customer service intelligence. The ability to drill down on customer-driven social posts allows companies to see what consumers are saying about their brand and categorize this qualitative information for analysis. This data can be used to quickly identify common quality issues that the organization can fix before they become more prevalent. Processes to create customer service cases from social media posts further speed up the resolution of common product or service issues to preserve customer loyalty and satisfaction. By leveraging social media monitoring for strategic customer service, voice of the customer (VoC), and business intelligence efforts, ecommerce organizations can remain agile and adjust to changes in today's dynamic business environment.

Analytics & Integration

Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies wouldn't be as effective without analytics enablers to keep a pulse on ever-changing customer needs and expectations. Ecommerce organizations using mature marketing and design strategies have higher adoption rates for foundational technology enablers such as customer relationship management (CRM) platforms and predictive analytics (see sidebar).

The first step for establishing comprehensive analytics capabilities across the organization is to integrate customer data into a single source of truth. This is where CRM comes into play. With a unified system of data that is connected to the ecommerce platform, organizations spend less time searching for information or reconciling data between disparate systems. Then, companies can apply customer analytics and real-time reporting to the unified system to gain insights into today's empowered consumers. As stated earlier, consumers have more agency in the buying process than ever before, making it critical for businesses to stay up to date on what their customers want. Predictive analytics, powered by AI and machine learning, enables organizations to identify patterns in customer data and make data-driven decisions about products, services, pricing, engagement channels, etc. to meet anticipated needs and desires. Prioritizing analytics and integration alongside Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies ensures that businesses can keep up with changing customer needs and outperform their competitors.

Investments in Foundational Technology Enablers

Customer analytics

- ▶ Users: 94%
- ▶ Non-users: 76%

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

- ▶ Users: 91%
- ▶ Non-users: 68%

Real-time reporting and alerting

- ▶ Users: 87%
- ▶ Non-users: 62%

Predictive analytics

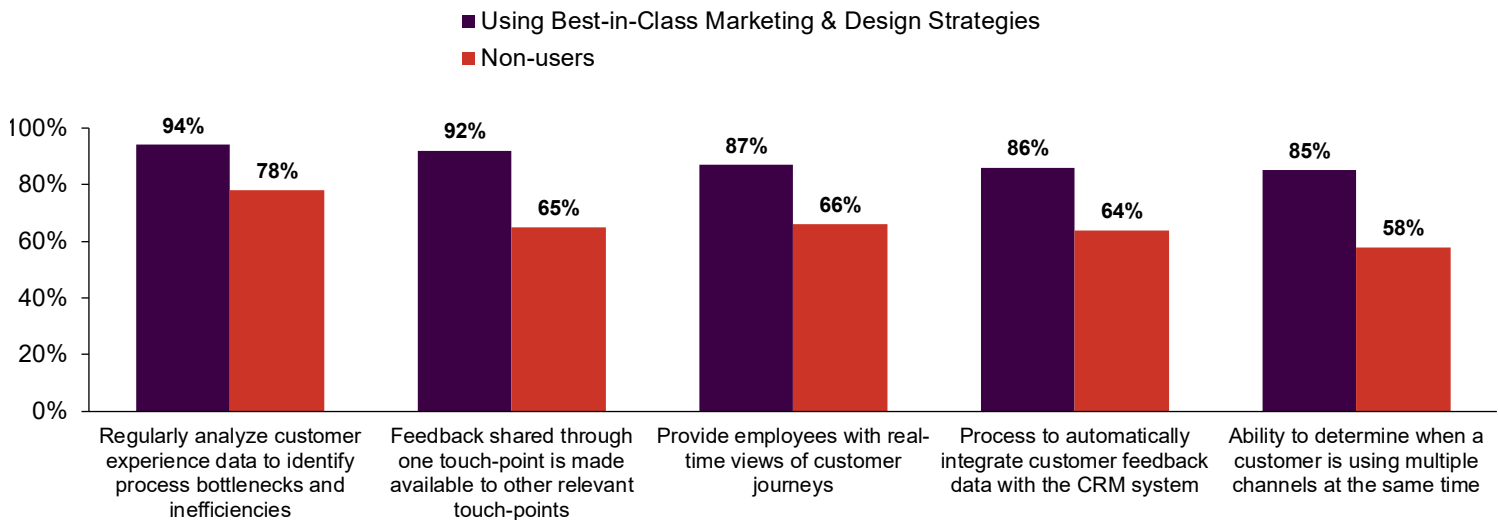
- ▶ Users: 80%
- ▶ Non-users: 57%

% of Ecommerce Organizations

Continuous Improvement

Businesses using Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies don't stop at outperforming their competitors today—they work to continuously improve their marketing and design processes to stay on top in the future. They are more likely to establish visibility into VoC data and customer journeys to ensure they are living up to customer expectations and implementing process updates effectively (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Visibility into VoC Data and Customer Journeys Leads to Continuous Ecommerce Improvements



Percent of respondents, n=797
Source: Aberdeen, January 2022

Regular analysis of customer experience data and processes to integrate feedback into CRM systems ensure that the voice of the customer is being heard and responded to. It's easy to let VoC data sit in a repository to be reviewed later, but regular analysis and integration with CRM establishes a constant stream of customer experience information that is being fed back to sales and customer service agents. Reps can then immediately use that feedback to address current customer needs as well as plan to change their approach to ensure future customer satisfaction. An ecommerce platform that supports VoC data capture and integration with CRM tools helps to establish a seamless flow of feedback from customers to the business.

Customer journey data helps marketing and sales teams determine the optimal engagement action to move potential customers closer to a sale. Sharing feedback at multiple touch points ensures consistency across the

customer journey, combatting one of the main challenges ecommerce organizations struggle with. Knowing when a customer is using multiple channels also promotes consistency and minimizes customer frustration. Having a real-time view of customer journeys enables organizations to identify when a sale is in jeopardy and intervene with discount offers or communication from a sales or service rep as needed. These continuous improvement capabilities amplify the business benefits of Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies by boosting profits and finding new ways to delight customers.

Summary & Key Takeaways

Ecommerce organizations are entering a new era of business. As a result of the availability of information on competitive products and services, customers are savvier throughout the buying process, and companies must adapt to gain their loyalty. Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies help ecommerce organizations cater to today's modern, empowered consumers and remain agile as customer needs change. These strategies have many operational and financial benefits, but implementing them doesn't happen overnight. There are four critical actions businesses should take to establish these Best-in-Class strategies:

- ▶ Invest in a comprehensive marketing tech stack upon which to build Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies.
- ▶ Leverage social media monitoring for strategic customer service, VoC, and business intelligence efforts.
- ▶ Implement customer analytics and real-time reporting to gain insights into today's empowered consumers.
- ▶ Establish visibility into VoC data and customer journeys to develop continuous improvement processes.

Businesses should consider working with a services partner to support Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies. A partner can help bring together all marketing and design solutions, which makes integration and analytics even more seamless. Experts in social media, SEO, and design can reduce the burden on internal teams and set ecommerce organizations up for success. Whatever the plan of action, prioritization of Best-in-Class marketing and design strategies is a step toward increasing the vital impact marketing and ecommerce teams have on the agility and achievements of the entire organization.

Related Research

- ▶ [CX Agility in Marketing: 5 Key Building Blocks to Maximize Marketing Effectiveness; November 2021](#)
- ▶ [CX Agility in Commerce: 5 Key Building Blocks for Customer Loyalty; November 2021](#)
- ▶ [Maximize the ROI of Chat in Commerce Activities; October 2020](#)

About Aberdeen Group

Since 1988, Aberdeen Group has published research that helps businesses worldwide to improve their performance. Our analysts derive fact-based, vendor-neutral insights from a proprietary analytical framework, which identifies Best-in-Class organizations from primary research conducted with industry practitioners. The resulting research content is used by hundreds of thousands of business professionals to drive smarter decision-making and improve business strategies. Aberdeen Group is headquartered in Waltham, Massachusetts, USA.

This document is the result of primary research performed by Aberdeen Group and represents the best analysis available at the time of publication. Unless otherwise noted, the entire contents of this publication are copyrighted by Aberdeen Group and may not be reproduced, distributed, archived, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written consent by Aberdeen Group.

18431