

Understanding multichannel vs omnichannel commerce

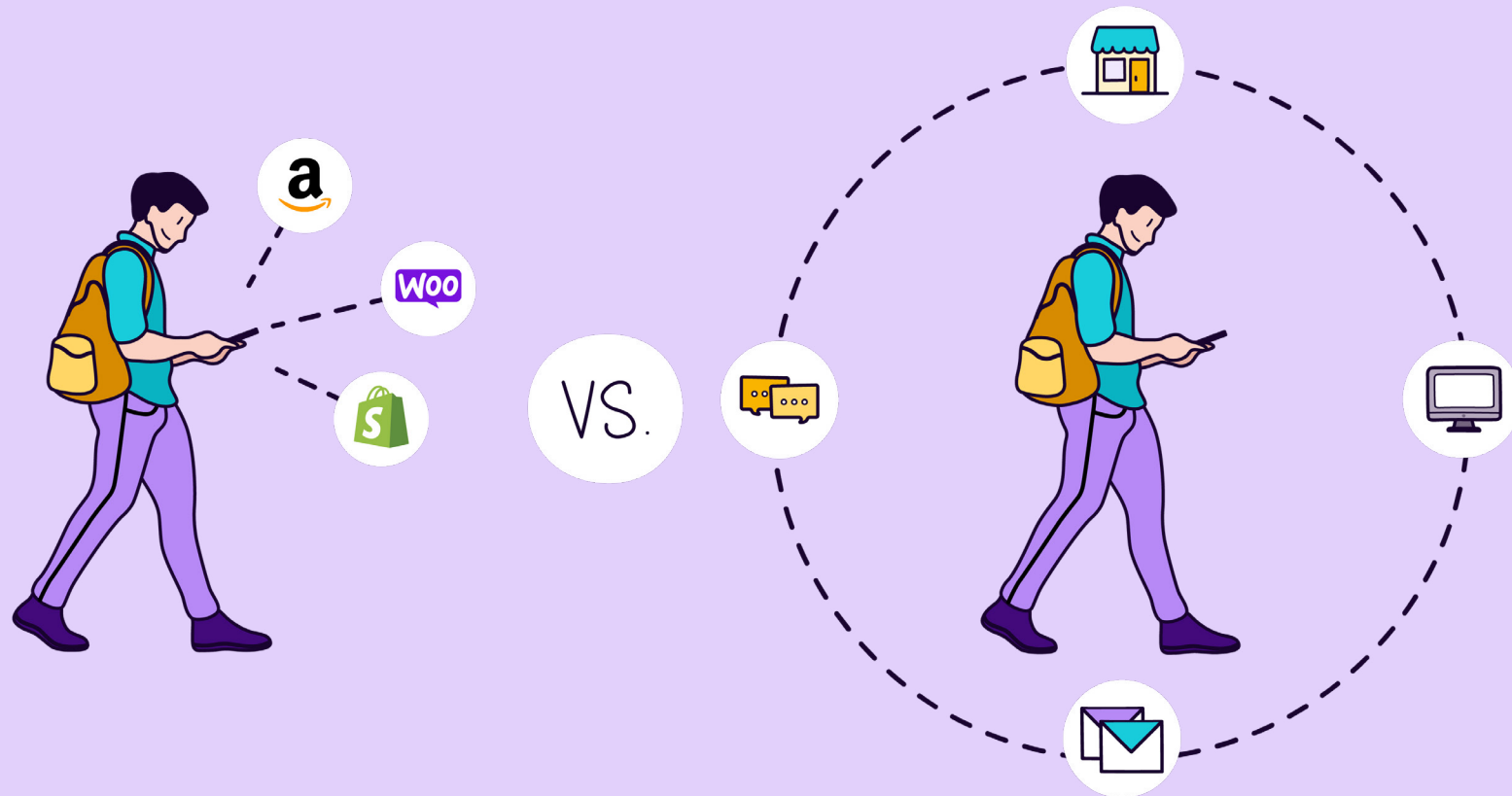


Table of contents

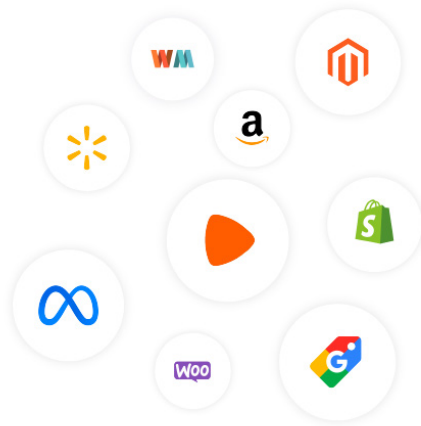
01	Understanding multichannel vs omnichannel commerce	3
02	What is the difference between omnichannel and multichannel commerce?	5
03	What is headless commerce?	7
04	Types of sales channels in multichannel and omnichannel commerce	10
05	What are the benefits of multichannel and omnichannel commerce?	11
06	What are the challenges of multichannel and omnichannel commerce?	13
07	Next steps in exploring multichannel and omnichannel commerce	



Understanding multichannel vs omnichannel commerce

Multichannel and omnichannel commerce are selling strategies that help businesses reach buyers across multiple sales channels. While these strategies seem similar, the main difference lies in the buyer experience—making it important to **differentiate between these two strategies**.

What is multichannel commerce?



Multichannel commerce (or multichannel retailing) is the strategy of **selling your products or services on multiple sales channels**. These channels could be your brick-and-mortar store, Amazon, Google Shopping, or wherever you'd want to sell. In this strategy, each channel functions independently. The goal of multichannel commerce is to **reach as many customers as possible**, all while giving them the option to buy your products on the channel they like the most.

An example of multichannel commerce is when a furniture company sells furniture through **four different channels** (like their physical store, their Shopify webstore, a mobile app, and Amazon). The furniture company manages each channel separately and caters to the needs of the buyers on each specific channel.



What is omnichannel commerce?

Omnichannel commerce (or [omnichannel retailing](#)) is the strategy of **creating a seamless and integrated buyer experience across all the channels you sell from**. In this strategy, the channels are interconnected and work together to create a unified buyer experience.

The goal of omnichannel commerce is to **provide buyers with a consistent and cohesive brand experience**, regardless of the channel (or device) they choose. Here's what omnichannel can look like:



1

A customer searches for a product on a brand's **mobile app**.

2

The customer adds the product to their **cart**.

3

Then, they decide to complete the purchase on the **brand's webshop** on a laptop.

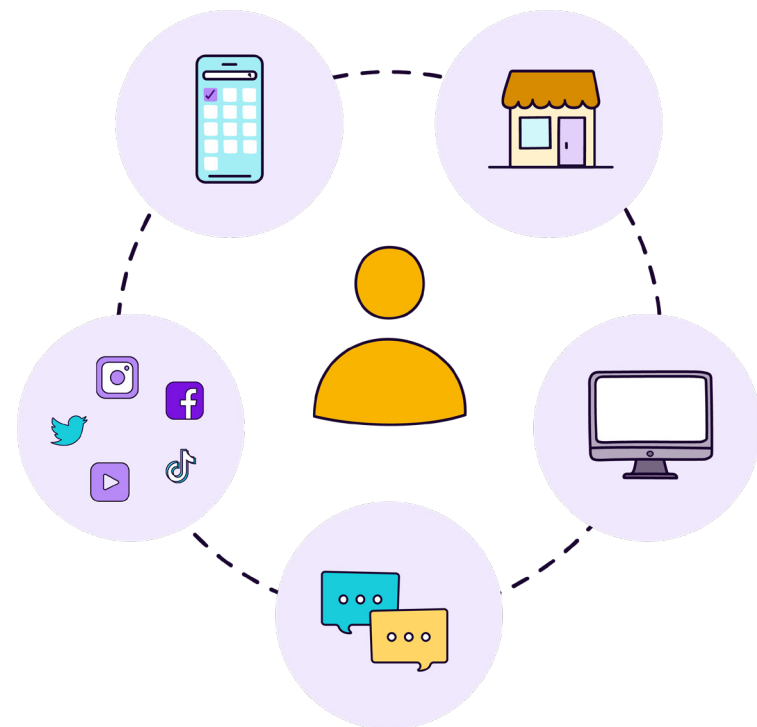
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With an omnichannel experience, the product on the mobile app will show up on the webshop so that **the customer can complete the purchase without having to start over**.



What is the difference between omnichannel and multichannel commerce?

By looking at what multichannel and omnichannel commerce is, we can start to understand the differences. We know that multichannel commerce is a strategy that focuses on **selling across multiple channels to reach a wider audience**, while omnichannel commerce is a strategy that focuses on **creating a holistic and consistent buyer experience**. Here's a closer look at the difference between a multichannel and omnichannel commerce approach.



What is the difference between omnichannel and multichannel commerce? (continued)

	Multichannel Commerce	Omnichannel Commerce
Definition	Selling your products or services on multiple sales channels	Creating a seamless, integrated experience across all you channels
Focus	Expanding product reach across buyers' preferred channels	Providing a consistent brand experience
Buyer Experience	Separate experiences across channels	Unified and consistent experience across channels
Channel integration	Channels function independently	Channels are interconnected and integrated
Branding	Branding could vary across channels	Consistent branding across all channels
Personalization	Limited personalization	More developed personalization
Complexity	Managing multiple independent channels	Integrating and aligning processes and systems across all channels



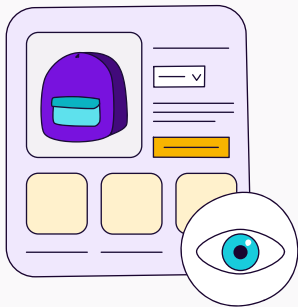
Important note: In order to be able to implement a multichannel or omnichannel approach, you need to make sure your systems are set up for these types of selling. You need to adopt a **headless commerce architecture**.



What is headless commerce?

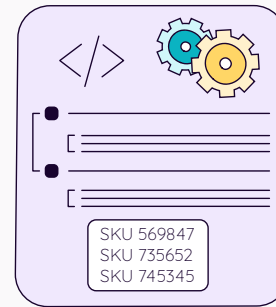
[Headless commerce architecture](#) is a new approach to building an ecommerce setup by decoupling (or separating) the frontend from the backend. You would remove the “head” (frontend) from the “body” (backend) for a more flexible and customizable solution compared to traditional ecommerce setups. And now that the head and the body are separate, they communicate to each other through **Application Interface Programming (API)**.

Frontend



This is the part of your website users **see and interact with**. This includes the user interface, design, layout, and the functionalities that users can see.

Backend



This is the system that makes everything on the frontend of the website work. This includes **coding, processes, and any data management** that users can't see.



What is headless commerce? (continued)

Headless commerce is **necessary** for you to be able to implement a multichannel or omnichannel commerce strategy because it allows you to customize your frontend on different platforms and integrate with third-party platforms more easily. You won't be tied to one backend-frontend setup, which means you'll **save time and have more flexibility** when adapting to different channels.

Curious to see how headless commerce compares with traditional commerce? Make sure to check out this [guide on headless commerce](#).



What is headless commerce? (continued)

Here's an example of how you could implement headless commerce.

Imagine you're selling on your webshop, mobile app, Google Shopping, and Facebook Marketplace. You would **tailor each user interface** (specifically for your webshop and mobile app), and you would create third-party integrations for your Google Shopping and Facebook Marketplace accounts. And since you've decoupled your frontend from your backend, you can still use the **same underlying ecommerce infrastructure** for every single channel.



Using a headless methodology offers you limitless possibilities since your back-end data is not coupled with a storefront. This allows you to adapt all of your content to different devices, platforms, and user interfaces easily.

David Alarcón

Ecommerce Specialist at Plytix



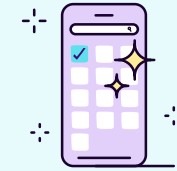
Webshops



Marketplaces



Mobile apps

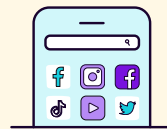


Types of sales channels in multichannel and omnichannel commerce

Physical stores



Social media
platforms



Comparison search
engines



What are the benefits of multichannel and omnichannel commerce?

Multichannel commerce has [unique advantages that brands can leverage for business success](#). And, the same can be said for omnichannel commerce. Let's break them down!

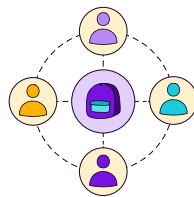
Multichannel commerce benefits



More sales opportunities

Expanding to more channels means you don't have to depend solely on one channel to bring in all of the revenue. Not only that but having a greater online presence gives your **customers more opportunities to engage with and buy** your products.

But don't just take our word for it—the numbers speak for themselves. A [Sellbrite study](#) found that merchants using three or more channels on average had **143% higher revenue** than merchants selling on one or two channels.



Greater market reach

By selling on different channels, you'll **tap into international markets and new customer groups** that you never could by selling on just one or two channels.

Customers have their go-to shopping channels, so creating a multichannel presence gives you a higher chance of getting your products in front of those customers on the channels they like and use.



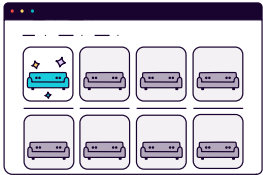
Increased customer convenience

Selling on the channels that your customers prefer makes buying your products more convenient for them.

When you adopt a multichannel practice, you're not only increasing your own reach and sales but also **giving your customers a better and more convenient experience**. It's a win-win for both you and your customers.



Omnichannel commerce benefits



More personalization

With omnichannel commerce, you'll have a lot of data around your customers and their behavior. This type of data can give you insights on how to better **personalize and tailor the customer journey**. You'll be able to create [personalized shopping experiences](#) with tailored marketing campaigns, messaging, and content.

And, trust us, customers love personalization. They love it so much that they are [80% more likely to buy from a brand with personalized experiences on one or two channels.](#)



Seamless buyer experience

Omnichannel commerce gives your customers a holistic and seamless experience. All of your sales channels come together to give your customer **one full experience**. Your customers can pick up right where they left off in the buyer's journey—making it easier and more enjoyable for them to shop with you.

These types of experiences are memorable and keep your customers coming back for more.



Increased cross-channel sales

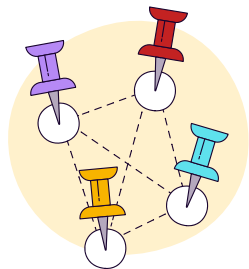
When all of your channels are in sync, you'll be able to keep customers engaged throughout all of your channels. By keeping them engaged no matter where they shop **increases your chances of converting your customers** across all your channels.

Customers will feel comfortable shopping on any of your channels knowing that they'll receive the same high-quality experience no matter what.



What are the challenges of multichannel and omnichannel commerce?

Omnichannel commerce challenges

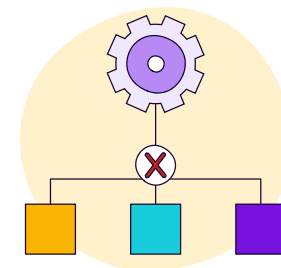


Ineffective channel integration

When connecting your channels together for a seamless shopping experience, you have to do it right. If you don't, you might lose data or mismatch during the implementation stage. Make sure you have a solid **omnichannel integration strategy** so that you can [avoid mistakes that typically occur when going omnichannel](#).

Channel conflicts

Channel conflicts are when the **information about a product is different on different channels**. This can come from varying channel requirements or not successfully updating your products across all channels. It's important to [prevent channel conflicts](#) in omnichannel commerce, so you can give your customers a seamless shopping experience.



Data management and privacy

To give your customers an integrated experience across all channels, you'll need to **collect, manage, and analyze your customer data**. This means you'll need to implement data governance policies to make sure you comply with privacy regulations and maintain data security.



Multichannel commerce challenges

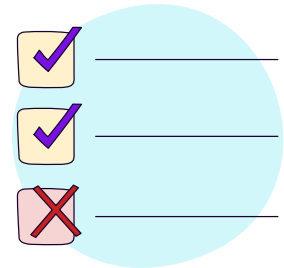


Siloed buyer experience

With multichannel commerce, most businesses manage each channel independently without integrating the shopping experience across all channels. This can lead to a **fragmented buyer experience** when customers shop between different channels.

Inconsistent branding

Since each channel works independently, it can be difficult to create and maintain consistent messaging across all your channels. Not only that, but there are **different requirements for each channel**—making it even harder to keep your brand content and messaging the same.



Complex channel management

Multichannel commerce is about more than just getting your product on to different sales channels. **There's a lot that goes into it.** From inventory and product syndication to fulfillment and customer service, you have to manage all of these aspects for **every channel** you're on.



Next steps in exploring multichannel and omnichannel commerce



Your journey in understanding multichannel or omnichannel commerce doesn't stop here. That's why we created a white paper on each selling strategy to help you better understand which one is the best fit for you. We even included some **extra tips** on how to get started for when you're ready to adopt your newest selling strategy.

So go ahead, download whichever one you'd like! Or even both, because, why not? **They're free!**

Multichannel Ebook

Omnichannel Ebook



hello@plytix.com | plytix.com