eCommerce trends 2021

Widespread AI implementation, portable purchasing, increased social media influence… Get to know these and many other trends that will rule the industry in the next 12 months.

White paper

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Introduction

This year, lucky eCommerce businesses have empowered their positions in the market owing to their flexibility and readiness to implement new innovations. Encompassing thousands of buyers and sellers as well as all kinds of goods and services, many retail companies managed to migrate to **virtual**

space in full scope. Even today, online shopping can be considered as a **common phenomenon.**

This industry is expanding so steadily that its **three-month growth** in 2020 may be compared with its previous **ten-year increase,** according to the McKinsey Quarterly eCommerce issue 2020. Despite such a leap, online sellers should think about the possible brisk changes and rapidly evolving customers' needs.

So, what are the topical matters in eCommerce? What can companies do to thrive in 2021 and beyond?

To answer these questions, we've gathered 6 relevant trends and supplementing QA activities that can help maintain a competitive advantage, astonish today's fastidious end users, and future proof your business.

The outlook for retail
trends 2021
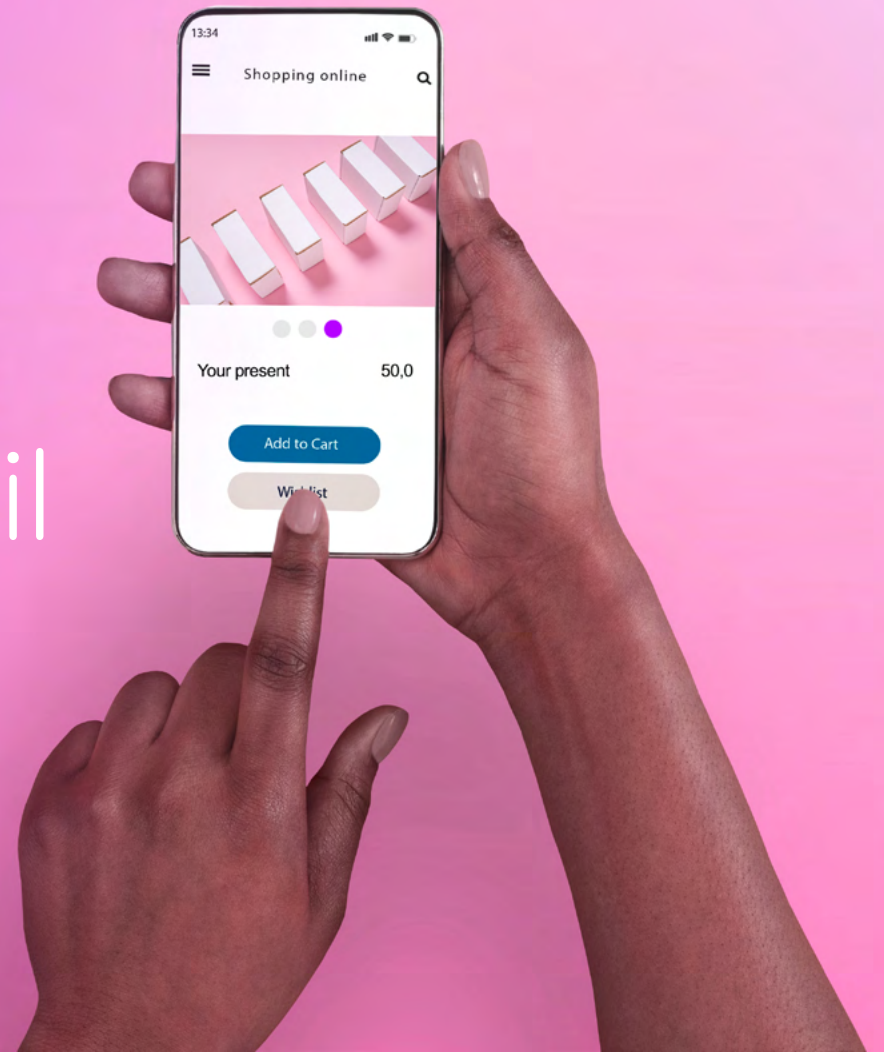
The outlook for retail trends 2021

With world's hitting changes, businesses should be prepared for a myriad of circumstances.

The eCommerce industry has embraced a great number of brands and their competition. Massive migration to the online ecosystem can make this even more complicated. With greater intensity, businesses had to implement **novel approaches,** like automated delivery, online services, personal packaging, and much more.

So, one may satisfy rapidly changing end-user requirements, get a stronger competitive advantage, and win the competition.

The current unprecedented global situation has affected the way every trend can play out in 2021. Let's have a closer look at **6 upcoming trends** of the industry.

Trend 1. Combining offline and online spaces

Brisk changes in buyers' habits make the phenomenon of "bricks and clicks" more widespread.

A multichannel approach assumes applying **several selling means –** in-store, through the website or using social media. To win the market, brands often introduce a range of technologies, like IoT, robotics, VR/AR, and others. Considering the slow recovery after the pandemic, customers may require offline places as well where they can experience real-life purchase making.

As **customer experience (CX)** is one of the high-priority aspects, companies should care about convenient and easy shopping, whether it occurs in an offline or virtual space. Even today, brands embed VR environments into their websites to provide consumers with a comprehensive digital showcase. On the contrary, bricks and mortar stores introduce AR elements to ensure an immersive, feature-rich shopping journey.

Shopify's Future of Commerce report 2021 indicates a sophisticated number of respondents will prefer combined shopping in the next six months. **79%** of consumers will shop online on a regular basis, while **57%** of them will choose in-store purchasing.

Trend 2. AI as a personal shop assistant

$7.3

billion is seen to be spent on AI by 2022.

Artificial intelligence has been one of the top trends for several years already. It touches multiple industries, where eCommerce market players were amid the first ones to unleash the potential of the innovation. Their great spending on ambitious technology is associated with **enhancing customer experience,** an imperative eCommerce attribute.

Alongside improving pricing and forecasting, it is mainly used to meet buyers' needs and

requirements. Within AI-driven analytics, the business owners can promptly realize what they should stock in the stores and when they should make a shift. AI algorithms are getting more accurate each year. Soon, those robots stacking shelves at the warehouses may move to the **shop floor** and perform the work of sellers helping consumers find the necessary goods.

Trend 3. Customization to boost CX

A new shopping environment = new customer habits.

As the world is moving towards universal personalization, eCommerce companies have also put it on the front burner. **The ability to adjust** to a particular client speaks volumes about a brand, its prospects, and its success.

This important feature has already been taken for granted. In 2021, however, it may break new ground. Starting from targeted offers, it can embrace the entire consumer's journey, including tailored recommendations, personalized interactions with the stores, preferable paying methods, and much more.

In addition to improving CX, customization **brings other values** to the company. It includes reduced marketing and sales costs, increased customer satisfaction rates, enhanced sales conversion rates, and grown employee engagement, as McKinsey's analysts state.

Trend 4. Portable purchasing

73%

of all retail sales are expected to account for mobile eCommerce sales by the end of 2021.

One noteworthy leap is the use of mobile gadgets reflected on the shopping manners. More people started to search for goods and buy them online through their phones and tablets. By now, any website – and online store – should already be accessible on portable devices. So, a greater number of mobile apps has emerged in the market that reinforces the **severity of the competition.**

The term eCommerce may be converted into **mCommerce** soon within such progressive movements towards having the potential to become a **major selling channel.** Some statistics indicate **one-third** of people's decision to purchase is influenced by looking up additional information on a product or service via a mobile device.

Trend 5. Shopping over voice commands

55%

is the number of voice shoppers forecasted by 2022.

Owing to digital transformation, smart houses and IoT-based devices are on the rise now. The main means of purchasing within voice is a **smart speaker.** It has already become a norm to surf the Internet using this technology. It all started with Amazon's Echo and still, the market is watching the birth of new gadgets that will be in every household soon.

That implies market representatives should consider the trend and briskly absorb a **new fashion of shopping.** So, they may maintain a competitive advantage and astonish customers with novel opportunities.

Trend 6. Expanding marketing horizons with social media

70%

of consumers discover new goods using Instagram.

Speaking about channels, social media is one of the most convenient and profitable ways of shopping nowadays. In addition to personal intentions, like communication and posting, social networks became an environment for **brand building and its promotion** as well as selling activities. Such apps as Instagram and Facebook embedded the "Buy" button, and almost every brand leaves a link on their accounts.

Social media conversion to an all-embracing **marketing tool** provides companies with the possibility to expand their target audience, receive direct feedback, and compose a business strategy based on the statistics in one place.

Robust QA support for
introducing trends smoothly

Robust QA support for introducing trends smoothly

Contributing to business growth is one of the essential QA objectives.

To set the leading position is not as challenging as to sustain it. Once having incorporated retail trends into an IT strategy, companies should consider another tendency – **an appropriate level of quality,** which remains a vital aspect throughout the whole IT product life cycle, according to the World Quality Report (WQR) 2020-2021.

Within the vast diversity of presented applications in the market, end users have become more careful when selecting the suitable software product.

Quality assurance is a go-to way to provide customers with upscale IT solutions and get value from QA support and maintenance during the SDLC. We've prepared a **five-step QA scenario** being a must-have for any eCommerce business to help **achieve desired outcomes.**

Step 1. Implement a methodology for the project's effectiveness

52%

of WQR respondents always apply a shift left method and execute tests as early as possible.

More businesses utilize Agile practices on their IT projects. Software testing is becoming a concurrent part of the software development life cycle and an inevitable stage before going live. A flexible strategy with the **Agile or DevOps** in the heart can help connect the execution of the QA processes more directly to the business needs. Especially in the new post-outbreak climate, the rate of its usage will only increase.

The evolution of Agile methodology adoption is illustrated in introducing novel work approaches. For instance, by **shifting the testing activities left** throughout the SDLC, one may optimize QA processes and **avoid release delays.**

Step 2. Introduce test automation to get outcomes promptly

Adopting wise automated testing brings new levels of speed and flexibility to QA.

Businesses strive to get desired results **at short notice.** Test automation is a reliable way to achieve these objectives. By applying **lean test automation,** one can obtain a range of benefits, namely shortened time to market, better control and transparency of testing activities, reduced QA costs, and much more.

However, some companies face **challenges** with implementing test automation. There are still problems with right-skilled specialists, environment stability, and getting ROI. So, in 2021, these elements of effective test automation should be of a **high priority** in order to keep supremacy in the market.

Step 3. Apply new mechanisms and models including next-gen QA

88%

of WQR respondents consider AI to be the strongest growth part of the test activities.

Software development and testing approaches are becoming more and more computerized. Businesses embark on novel technologies to improve organizational performance and **decrease operational costs.** Within en masse introduction of cloud computing, AI, and machine learning to the projects' activities, the retailers don't want to fall behind.

Having gotten closer to the customers, companies need to process information more accurately and

thoroughly to gratify clients' expectations to the fullest. Moreover, incorporating innovative QA services to an IT strategy helps reach planned outcomes rapidly and be ahead of the competitors. It is already seen when selecting a QA tool, the majority opts for instruments based on AI due to its **effectiveness and progressiveness.**

Step 4. Perform security testing to guarantee privacy and safety

42%

of business representatives marked enhancing security as the vital aspect of an IT strategy, according to the WQR.

As an excellent customer experience is a number-one priority amid eCommerce businesses, they concern consumers' requirements as never before. Interacting with clients on **common platforms** directly, companies create new ecosystems where CX is even more crucial. When more personal data is being collected and stored, there will be a greater need for **penetration testing** as well as data safety and regulatory alignment checks.

People want to be sure in privacy of their transactions, personal information, and the ability to do online shopping pushing all fears aside. To avoid malicious actions, applying security testing should be accounted for. Thus, alongside refined CX and confident users, it positively reflects on company's **reputation and IT expenses.**

Step 5. Empower QA culture

Being already a substantial part of the SDLC, QA should gather more attention.

Each year, the awareness of software QA importance is increasing. Recent events have reinforced its implementation in a number of companies. However, it is no longer enough to introduce QA, as it requires **constant improvements** to tweak IT solutions to perfection. Alongside understanding on an organizational level, it is essential to **spread the idea** of robust QA ecosystems to employees.

Work still needs to be done in the adoption of tools, technologies, and environments as well as advanced training, mastering novel models and approaches. **Building a stronger community culture** and empowering teams with more responsibility for software quality will be the foremost development directions.

Practical overview:
collaborating with a retail company

Practical overview: collaborating with a retail company

Intending to **cut hosting expenses** and **enhance general organizational performance,** a major US-based manufacturer of home appliances turned to a1qa for comprehensive QA support to ensure delivery of high-quality IT products. The solutions under test include **B2C** and **B2B** platforms.

Having got acquainted with all products' nuances and hallmarks, the QA team performed functional testing, UAT, test automation as well as conducted performance and integration checks.

The collaboration with a1qa helped the client reduce **operational costs** and reach **faster time to market.** Moreover, the QA team encouraged numerous **process improvements,** namely applied smart team scalability, contributed to switching QA activities to Agile practices, standardized an approach to evaluating quality state amid various teams, and many more.

2+	33	90%	30%	4,000+
years of the project duration	QA experts involved	of manual testing efforts saved due to test automation	reduction in loading speed of all eCommerce solutions	test cases prepared

Summing up

eCommerce trends are not new, however, they are gaining relevance over time. 2021 will be a year of major computerization and a shift to online ecosystems. Applying multiple selling channels, AI- and voice-based solutions, the spread of

mobile and social media shopping – all of this are initiatives being made to meet the prime business objective, **consumers' satisfaction.**

However, to keep leading positions in the market, companies should not only follow the trends, but also provide an appropriate **level of software quality.** Incorporating next-gen QA with the right methodology and lean test automation to an IT strategy is a confident start of 2021. Thus,

organizations may maintain their competitive advantage, get business and operational benefits as well as meet end-user needs and expectations **strengthening company's reputation and revenue.**

Need assistance in testing eCommerce software?
Feel free to <u>contact us</u> and get support from our experts.

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