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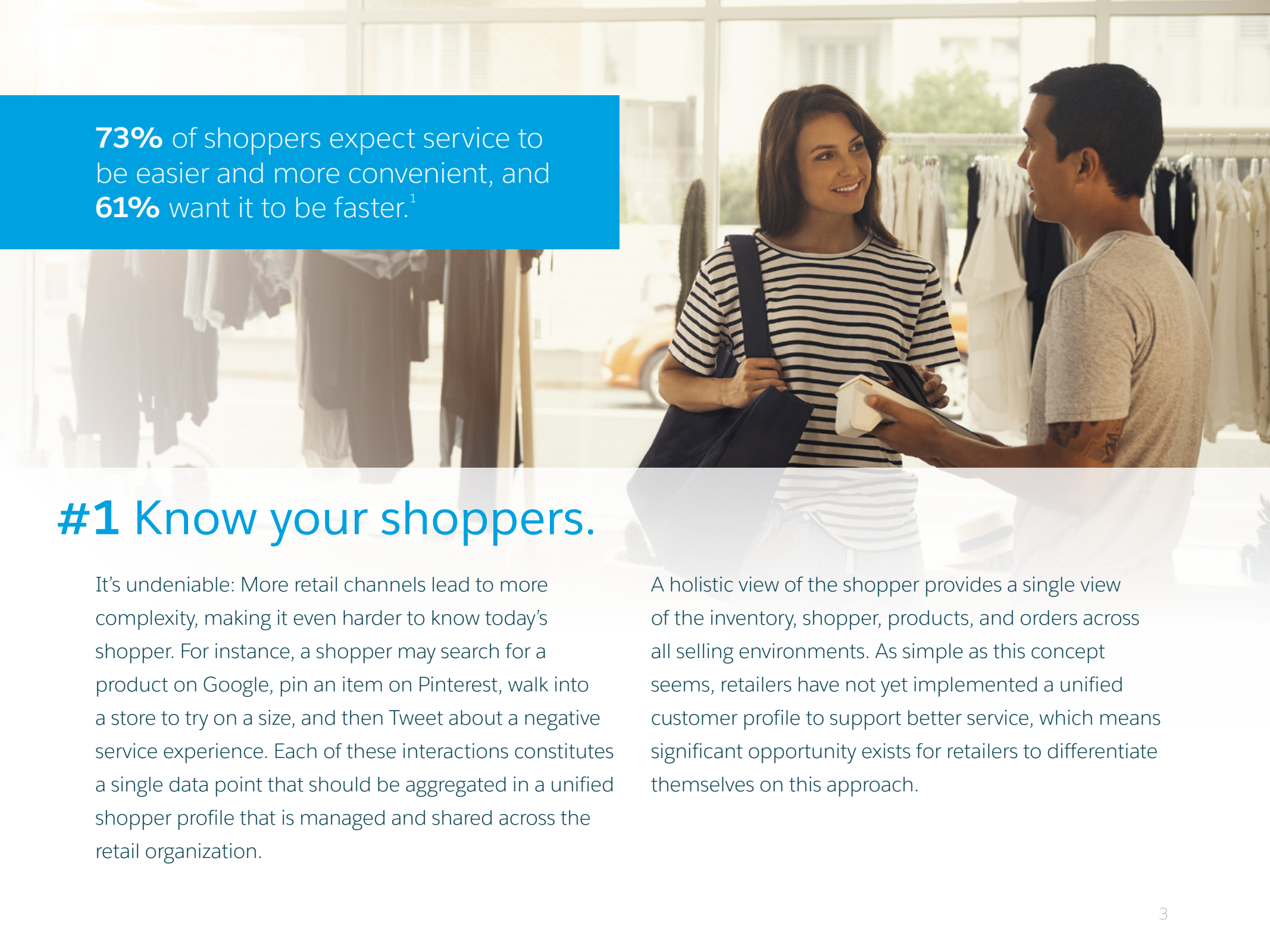
Introduction

The retail business seems straightforward: A shopper walks into a store, chooses merchandise, and strolls to the checkout where a sales associate rings up the transaction. Sounds easy enough, right?

If only it were that simple. For retailers, everything has changed. With the rise of digital and the birth of a new breed of sophisticated shopper, the shopping and buying process has become so complicated that retailers must disrupt this pattern or risk being disrupted.

A solid plan to supercharge the retail experience is key to surviving in this new age of shopper sophistication. Retailers taking advantage of these seven strategies will be well on their way to overcoming the new challenges and improving shopper service.

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73% of shoppers expect service to be easier and more convenient, and **61%** want it to be faster.[1]

#1 Know your shoppers.

It's undeniable: More retail channels lead to more complexity, making it even harder to know today's shopper. For instance, a shopper may search for a product on Google, pin an item on Pinterest, walk into a store to try on a size, and then Tweet about a negative service experience. Each of these interactions constitutes a single data point that should be aggregated in a unified shopper profile that is managed and shared across the retail organization.

A holistic view of the shopper provides a single view of the inventory, shopper, products, and orders across all selling environments. As simple as this concept seems, retailers have not yet implemented a unified customer profile to support better service, which means significant opportunity exists for retailers to differentiate themselves on this approach.

#2 Go where your shoppers are.

Different shoppers prefer different channels for service. According to the Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report,[2] Gen X and Baby Boomers primarily prefer shopper service by phone. But Millenials would rather put the phone aside, opting for service by web chat or social media channels – ranking the phone as their least desired resource when seeking support.

When shoppers migrate toward messenger applications like Facebook Messenger, WeChat, and Skype to communicate with brands, retailers must be ready to respond. In addition, retailers must be prepared to resolve issues in-channel, which is proving to be a challenge as the number of channels increases.

Digital interactions now account for more than 35% of all interactions and continue to grow. At the current rate, digital will overtake voice within the next two years.[3] To meet or exceed expectations, retailers must adapt to shopper preferences and embrace solutions that enable service in any channel – from more traditional options, including phone and email, to more modern options like WhatsApp, SMS, and video chat.

#3 Make service seamless.

Although most shoppers begin their journeys in digital channels, these journeys may take them elsewhere.[4] A shopper may browse online, place an item in a shopping cart, and move onto the next task without ever completing the transaction. Later, this same shopper may visit a retail store to finalize an earlier transaction. And a week after that, the shopper may call the retailer's contact center to ask a question related to their purchase.

This same shopper might also seek to resolve service issues using multiple channels. In fact, more than half of all shoppers use multiple channels to resolve a single service issue.[5] Shopping journeys that traverse multiple channels pose complexity for retailers, since there are considerable investments in their systems, like POS, ecommerce, and call center solutions. Alone, these systems can operate as virtual silos, offering only a partial view of an individual shopper. This complexity affects the agent attempting to provide customer service, often forcing the agent to comb through multiple applications to obtain the right information for the shopper.

To provide a smooth, consistent customer experience that today's shoppers desire, retailers must provide integrated customer care across channels, supporting an omni-channel experience.
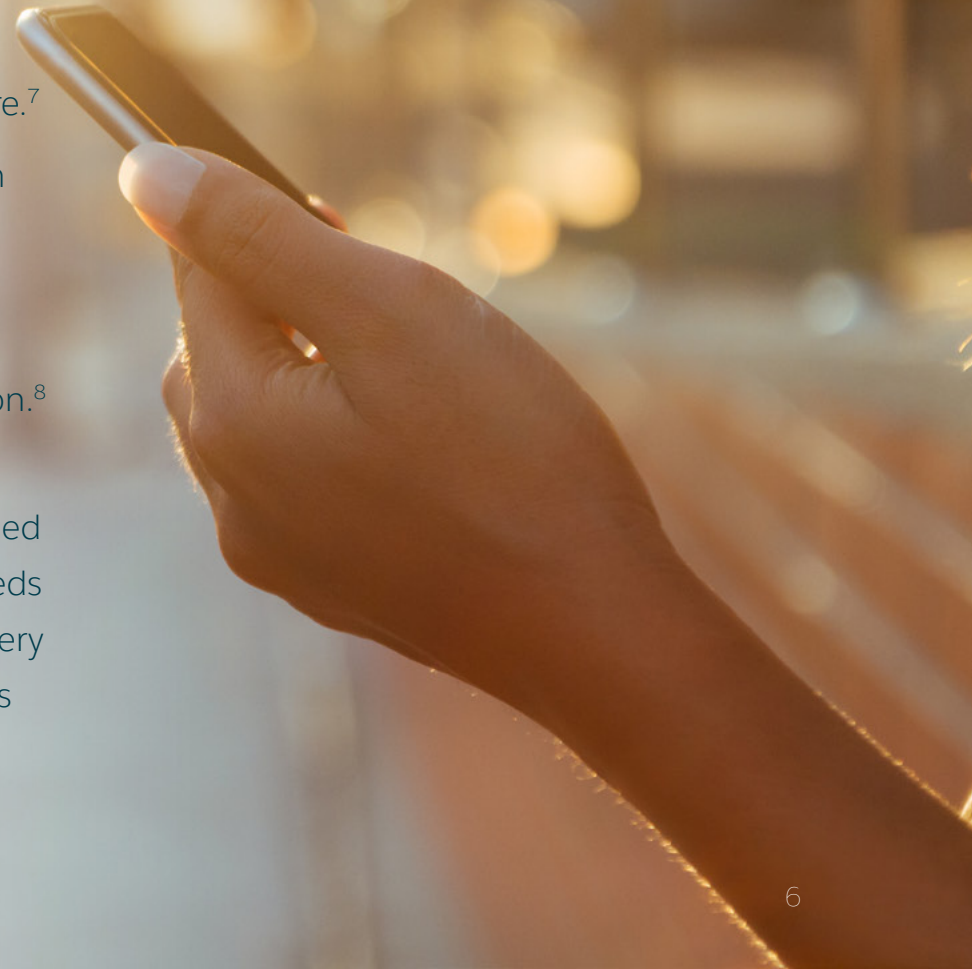
Only **27%** of shoppers feel retailers provide a smooth experience across channels.[6]

#4 Prioritize proactive social media.

The average amount of time shoppers spend on social media is rapidly increasing. In fact, social media and messenger apps are transitioning into the second home screen – that is, the place where shoppers spend most of their time on their desktops, tablets, or mobile devices. According to Digital Trends, individuals in the U.S. check their Facebook, Twitter, and other social media accounts 17 times a day. That's at least once every waking hour – if not more.[7]

These individuals are increasingly using social media as a platform to share their thoughts and feelings about shopping and service experiences. What's even more interesting is that these same shoppers are choosing to vent directly on social media instead of reaching out directly to a brand's contact center for issue resolution.[8]

Retailers risk missing out on the brand conversation if they ignore social channels. To enhance the shopping experience, retailers need to go the extra mile to ensure they are carefully tending to the needs of their shoppers. This means going beyond just responding to every service call by actively listening and responding to shoppers across social platforms.

#5 Help shoppers help themselves.

One of the great benefits of the digital age is that it provides the opportunity for shoppers to serve themselves. According to Accenture, 53% of shoppers prefer self-service.[9] Not only is it cost-effective, it also reduces the burden on overloaded retail call center agents.

Retailers need to empower their shoppers to find the best answer to questions – at any time and on any device. A digital knowledge base or shopper community is the best way to support the shopper's pursuit of self-service. With a single search, shoppers are able to peruse answers to their questions. When answers aren't readily available, they can then post a question to the customer community or bring their question to a service agent.

#6 Speed up problem-to-solution time.

Helping shoppers resolve their issues in a timely fashion is one of the easiest ways a retailer can deliver a better shopping experience.

But providing efficient service can be difficult when service agents are forced to toggle through multiple screens and applications to provide a shopper with answers. For many retail-shopper service organizations, efficiency is king. In fact, many service teams employ metrics like the average handle time and number of cases handled to evaluate performance. But to satisfy today's shopper, retailers need to think about more than just driving down costs and reducing workloads – they need to address overall shopper satisfaction.

When agents have a single platform to perform all types of service calls, from purchasing to locating a shipment, these agents can significantly reduce call handle time while increasing customer satisfaction.

72% of U.S. adults online said that valuing their time is the most important thing a company can do to provide them with good online customer service.[10]
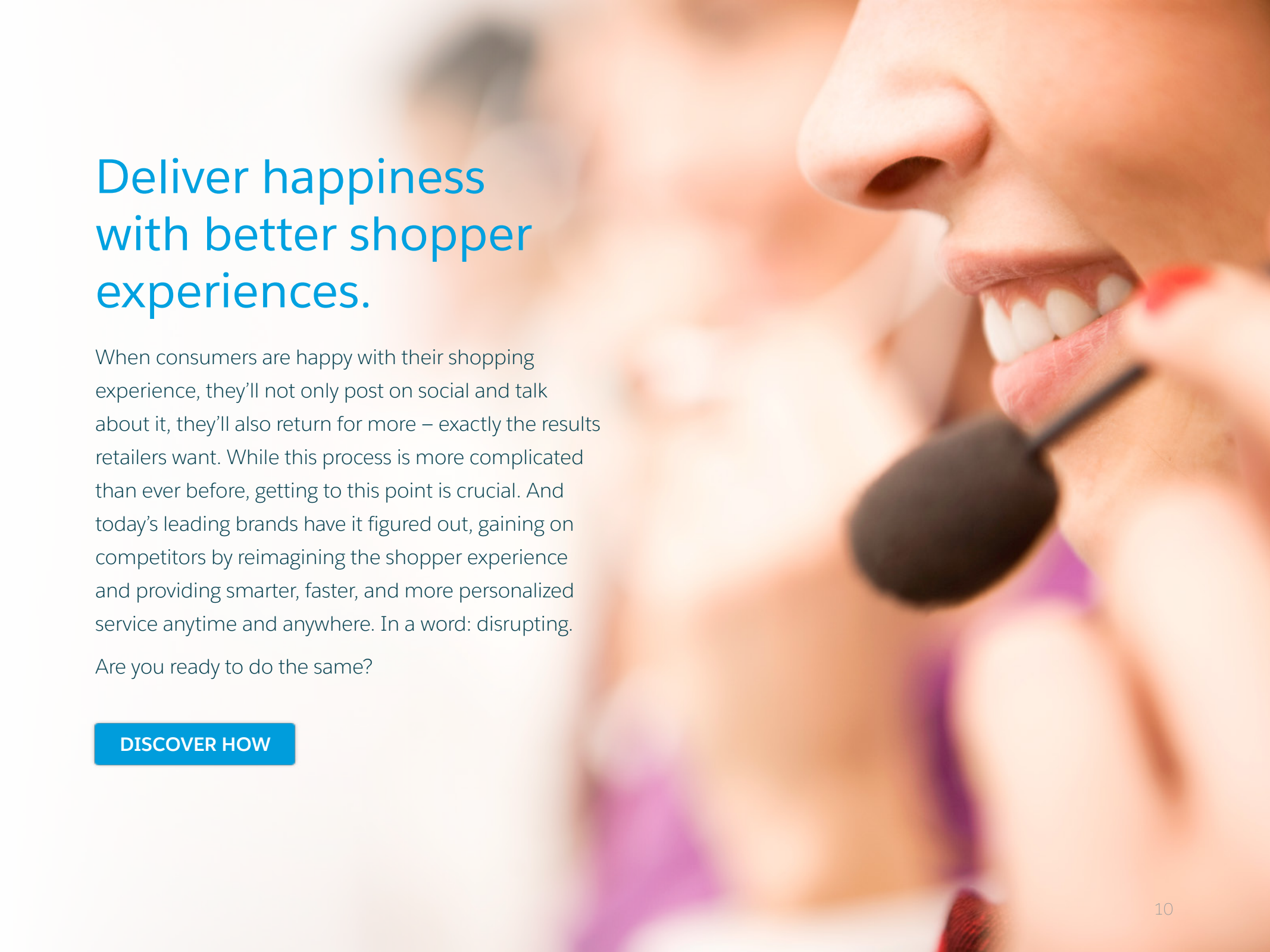
#7 Get data-happy.

Before the age of digital disruption, retailers could compete on the traditional four Ps of marketing: product, price, promotion, and place. Now that the shopper experience is one of the primary ways to differentiate a retail brand, however, retailers must adopt a new mantra: Service is the new marketing.

Providing a great service experience is no longer about simply responding to calls; it's about knowing shoppers and providing them with the right offer at the right time – on any channel. Each shopper interaction transforms into an opportunity to drive shopper loyalty, promote engagement, or make a sale.

With a rich shopper profile connecting behavioral history and preferences, retailers can use data science and predictive intelligence to personalize every journey for every shopper.

According to consumers, service agents failed to answer their questions **50%** of the time.[11]

Deliver happiness with better shopper experiences.

When consumers are happy with their shopping experience, they'll not only post on social and talk about it, they'll also return for more – exactly the results retailers want. While this process is more complicated than ever before, getting to this point is crucial. And today's leading brands have it figured out, gaining on competitors by reimagining the shopper experience and providing smarter, faster, and more personalized service anytime and anywhere. In a word: disrupting.

Are you ready to do the same?

DISCOVER HOW

Salesforce for Retail

The retail industry is changing faster than ever before. Success in this new, connected age means tapping social, mobile, analytics, and cloud technologies to engage with shoppers. Salesforce gives retail industry leaders an edge, helping them personalize everywhere, supercharge employees, and innovate at the speed of the shopper.

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