

● THE ECOMMERCE GROWTH PLAYBOOK

Grow your store **profitably**, not just bigger.

A practical guide for online stores and DTC brands that want to grow profitably, convert more visitors and turn first-time buyers into repeat customers.



Brandon Delardes
Founder & Director, Base Digital

Seen. Trusted. Chosen.

Grow.

● ECOMMERCE WHITEPAPER

The eCommerce Growth Playbook

How shoppers find, compare and choose products today, and a practical plan to grow your online store profitably, from first click to repeat purchase.



Brandon Delardes, Founder, Base Digital · Brisbane · Published October 2026

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1. How shoppers find and choose products

Online shoppers have more choice than ever, and less patience. They compare products, prices, reviews and delivery times across several stores, often on their phone, and they leave quickly if something feels unclear or slow.

The path to purchase is rarely a straight line. A shopper might see your product in a Meta ad, search for it on Google a week later, compare it in Google Shopping, read reviews, ask an AI assistant such as ChatGPT for alternatives and finally buy after an abandoned cart email.

The short version: growth that lasts comes from profit, not revenue alone. Every sale should be measured against what it cost to win, and every customer should be given a reason to come back.

What shoppers need before they buy

Whatever you sell, most buying decisions come down to the same few questions. Stores that answer them clearly, early and consistently convert more of their traffic.

- **Is this the right product for me?** Clear photos, sizing, specifications, use cases and honest descriptions.
- **Can I trust this store?** Reviews, real customer photos, clear contact details and a professional, fast website.
- **What will it really cost, and when will it arrive?** Shipping costs, delivery times and returns shown before checkout, not at the last step.

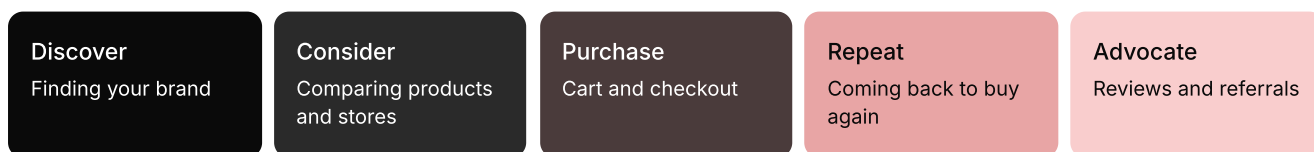
Where shoppers research

Shoppers move between channels constantly. The stores that grow show up consistently wherever their customers look.

CHANNEL	WHAT SHOPPERS USE IT FOR
Google search and Shopping	Searching for products, comparing prices and finding where to buy.
AI shopping assistants	Asking for recommendations and comparisons, such as "best framed art prints for a living room".
Instagram and Facebook	Discovering new brands and products, often for the first time, through ads and creators.
Your store	The deciding resource. Product pages, reviews, delivery details and checkout make or break the sale.
Email and SMS	Hearing about new products, offers and restocks from brands they already know.
Reviews and word of mouth	Checking what other customers say before trusting a new store.

2. The customer journey, stage by stage

Mapping the journey makes it clear what shoppers need at each point, which channels matter and what to measure.



STAGE	WHAT SHOPPERS NEED	KEY CHANNELS	MEASURE
Discover	A reason to stop scrolling, and a clear sense of what makes your products different.	Meta Ads, Google Shopping, SEO, AI search	New visitors, cost per new customer
Consider	Detailed product information, reviews, delivery details and reasons to choose you.	Product pages, remarketing, catalogue ads	Add-to-cart rate, product page engagement
Purchase	A fast, simple checkout with no surprise costs, and a nudge if they leave.	Checkout, abandoned cart flows	Conversion rate, checkout completion
Repeat	Useful follow-up, relevant recommendations and a good reason to buy again.	Klaviyo email and SMS, post-purchase flows	Repeat purchase rate, lifetime value
Advocate	An easy way to leave a review, share a photo or refer a friend.	Review requests, social, referral offers	Reviews collected, referral orders

3. Five foundations of profitable growth

Before adding more campaigns or budget, make sure these five foundations are in place. Each one makes every other channel work harder.

01 Tracking you can trust

GA4, the Meta Pixel and Conversions API, and Google Ads conversions set up correctly and checked against Shopify orders. Without accurate data, every budget decision is a guess.

02 A clean, complete product feed

Clear titles, accurate prices, good images, correct categories and stock levels in Google Merchant Center and your Meta catalogue. Your feed is the foundation of Shopping, Performance Max and catalogue ads.

03 A store that converts

Fast pages, clear product information, visible reviews, upfront shipping costs and a simple checkout. Small improvements here lift the return on every ad dollar.

04 Creative and offers that are tested

A steady pipeline of new ad creative, tested in a structured way, so you learn what makes your customers stop, click and buy. Creative fatigue is one of the most common reasons results decline.

05 Retention built in

Klaviyo welcome, abandoned cart, browse abandonment, post-purchase and win-back flows that run automatically, so every new customer has a path to their second order.

4. A 12-month trading calendar

eCommerce marketing works best as an always-on program with planned peaks. Adapt this outline to your own product launches, sale events and seasonal demand.

ALWAYS ON · ALL YEAR

Google Shopping and Performance Max, brand search, Meta prospecting and remarketing, automated Klaviyo flows, SEO for collection and product pages, and regular creative testing.

EACH QUARTER

Review product margins, best sellers and stock. Refresh creative, update the product feed and plan launches and campaigns for the months ahead.

6-8 WEEKS BEFORE BLACK FRIDAY AND CHRISTMAS

Grow your email and SMS lists, build remarketing audiences, prepare creative and offers, check site speed and tracking, and confirm stock and shipping cut-offs.

BLACK FRIDAY AND CYBER MONDAY

Early access for subscribers, a clear schedule of emails and SMS, increased budgets on proven campaigns and close daily monitoring of spend, stock and margin.

CHRISTMAS, BOXING DAY AND OTHER KEY DATES

Shipping cut-off reminders, gift messaging, then end-of-season sales. Add your own key dates, such as Mother's Day, Father's Day or End of Financial Year.

AFTER EVERY SALE EVENT

Welcome new customers with a strong post-purchase flow, aim for a second order, and review profit by channel, not just revenue, before planning the next event.

5. Tracking you can trust

Accurate tracking is the foundation of profitable growth. When numbers are wrong, platforms optimise towards the wrong outcomes and good campaigns get switched off.

- **Use the Meta Conversions API, not just the Pixel.** Browser tracking misses purchases. Sending events from the server gives Meta a more complete picture.
- **Check GA4 against Shopify.** Compare orders and revenue regularly. Large gaps usually point to missing events or duplicated tracking.
- **Watch for bot traffic.** Bots inflate sessions and drag down reported conversion rates. Filter it out so you're judging real shoppers.
- **Look beyond platform ROAS.** Each platform claims credit for the same sale. Compare total revenue against total marketing spend to see the full picture.

6. Measuring what matters

Ad platforms report plenty of numbers. Focus on a small set of metrics that connect marketing to profit.

METRIC	WHY IT MATTERS
MER (marketing efficiency ratio)	Total revenue divided by total marketing spend. Shows whether marketing is growing the whole business.
ROAS by campaign	Shows which campaigns and products are pulling their weight, read alongside your margins.
Contribution margin	Revenue after product, shipping and marketing costs. The clearest measure of profitable growth.
New customer acquisition cost	What it costs to win a first-time buyer, compared with what they're worth over time.
Conversion rate and average order value	Together they show how well your store turns visits into revenue.
Repeat purchase rate and lifetime value	Show whether retention is working and how much you can afford to spend to acquire a customer.

Tip: set a target MER and a target new customer acquisition cost based on your real margins. Review them monthly, and use them to decide when to scale and when to pull back.

7. The 20-point eCommerce checklist

Work through this list. Anything you can't tick is an opportunity.

CHECK	AREA
1 GA4 purchases and revenue roughly match Shopify orders	Tracking
2 The Meta Pixel and Conversions API are both live and deduplicated	Tracking
3 Bot and spam traffic is filtered out of your reporting	Tracking
4 You track MER and margin, not just platform ROAS	Tracking

CHECK	AREA
5 Your product feed has no errors or disapprovals in Merchant Center	Product feed
6 Product titles include the words shoppers actually search for	Product feed
7 Campaigns are structured around margin and best sellers	Paid media
8 New ad creative is tested every month	Paid media
9 Meta catalogue ads reach shoppers who viewed but didn't buy	Paid media
10 Product pages load quickly on mobile	Store
11 Shipping costs and delivery times are shown before checkout	Store
12 Reviews are visible on product pages	Store
13 Checkout is short, simple and offers express payment options	Store
14 Welcome, abandoned cart and browse abandonment flows are live	Retention
15 Post-purchase and win-back flows encourage a second order	Retention
16 Every customer is asked for a review after delivery	Retention
17 Collection and product pages are optimised for search	Search & AI
18 Product schema is in place on every product page	Search & AI
19 You've checked how AI assistants describe and recommend your products	Search & AI
20 Black Friday and key sale events are planned at least six weeks out	Planning

WORK WITH BASE DIGITAL

Want to know where your store stands?

Base Digital is an independent, owner-led Brisbane digital marketing agency. We've helped Shopify stores and DTC brands grow across Google, Meta and Klaviyo, with tracking they can trust. We'll review your store against this checklist and show you the biggest opportunities for profitable growth, with no lock-in contracts and no hard sell.

calendly.com/base-digitalhello@basedigital.com.au

0401 048 471

36 Warry Street, Fortitude Valley QLD