

## THE **BOOM** REPORT

# IT'S TIME TO PUT YOUR SOUL BACK INTO SHOPPING

**“PEOPLE WILL FORGET WHAT YOU SAID, PEOPLE WILL FORGET WHAT YOU DID, BUT PEOPLE WILL NEVER FORGET HOW YOU MADE THEM FEEL.”** - Maya Angelou

**A brand isn't a person, but it can be something we count on.**

**As professional marketers, we are in a unique position to use brand cache, physical locations, digital, and our ethos to make people feel good... every day.**

### Feeling good has never been so important

The challenges of the past two years — a global pandemic, cultural and economic inequities — have left many of us anxious and reeling from the effects. But, as the world pushes onward in fits and starts to some semblance of pre-pandemic normalcy, it's time to collectively work together to start feeling better.

Currently, **only 25% of adults** say most things in their life are back to the way they were before COVID-19.\*

Lightspeed/Mintel - COVID-19's Impact on US Consumers: Fall 2021

Despite these challenges, we still haven't lost our desire to shop. For many of us, shopping still *feels good*. It's therapy for some, for others it takes our mind off the issues of the day — it's communal, it's emotional, and most importantly, it's fun! But in today's environment, we expect more; We expect shopping experiences that are more deeply connected to our lives.

### Soulful connections bring emotional comfort

You can't fake soul. People shop with their beliefs — which are born out of their soul not out of their wallets. Their **values, emotions, and desire** to express themselves creatively are with them every step of the shopper journey.

Through the right retail engagement, brands have an opportunity to collaborate with shoppers and their desire to feel good. Target, Nike, and Apple are all pioneers in tapping into shopper's values, emotions, and creativity — consistently and over time. And in doing so, they've created devoted fans and lifetime customers.

**71% of adults** agree that the pandemic experience has dramatically changed their perspective on life.\*

Lightspeed/Mintel - COVID-19's Impact on US Consumers: Fall 2021



## Shopping — especially in brick-and-mortar stores — provides comfort

People love to shop for a variety of reasons: Physiological boosts; that little reward for you and for those you love; a sense of achievement. Overall, shopping provides a sense of control and an emotional boost. (\* *Cleveland Clinic*) Whether shopping for this week's meals, that amazing new release of sneakers, or next year's vacation, it's often done so with others in mind.

Only **6% of consumers** say they aren't comfortable shopping.\*

Lightspeed/Mintel - COVID-19's Impact on US Consumers - Fall 2021

As disruption from the pandemic continues, routine activities, like shopping, are providing us with a sense of comfort, *especially when the experience also serves as a source of entertainment.*

## It's not just about feeling good, the experience has to warm shoppers' souls

Despite the growth of online sales — reported to be \$792B in 2021 — 80% of sales are still made in brick-and-mortar locations. (\* *Digital Commerce*) Shoppers still need to feel: Seeing, touching, and feeling products before buying, while engaging with the brand and other humans, are key drivers of physical location sales. Yet more needs to be done to ensure shoppers aren't just shopping. They need to feel brands are listening to them, and they need to be reassured they are choosing the right brands that meet their unique needs (we see you Kroger and 84.51).

*The best brands understand that shoppers are people with emotions and they care enough to do something — to make a meaningful connection with their shoppers. Which means it's now more important than ever to know who your shopper is.* And while not all brands have the global presence or cache as Starbucks, Lululemon, or Amazon, we could certainly learn from them as they find new ways to evolve.

Outside of the brands mentioned above, here are a few who might not be top of mind, but are certainly getting it right:



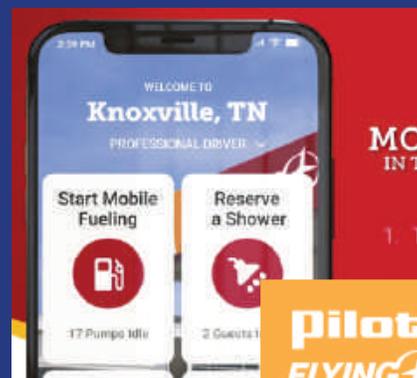
*HEB's invitation to stay awhile*



Texas' native son grocery store, with \$32B in sales, has become one of the nation's leading retailers. They continuously work to think like their shoppers and make grocery shopping more than just an errand. **HEB** has developed an awareness of what is most important to their shoppers — *a focus they bring to life powerfully through their store designs.* They build stores that incorporate the look and feel of the surrounding neighborhoods. They increased product assortments based on local needs and provide shoppers easy opportunities to choose how they shop, pay for, and receive their products. But it doesn't stop there. In addition to the in-store elements, HEB works to design and build social features such as unique, outdoor spaces with shaded picnic tables and playscapes for families, murals and art installations by local artists, as well as ensuring they leverage multiple environmentally sustainable elements. (\* *HEB Newsroom*)

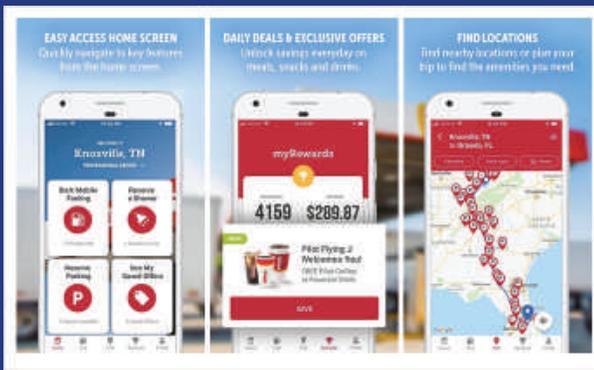
## Brands win when digital is used to create connections

Comfort, safety, and wellness are intangible products professional drivers have come to rely on from **Pilot Flying J's** awarding-winning mobile app. (\* *Mobile Web Award*) Crafted to simplify the journey on the road by saving drivers time and money, users self-select and create their driver profile (e.g. Professional Driver, RVer, or Auto Traveler) which then populates the app's features based on that profile's key needs. The app further takes into account additional personalized elements (geographic location, preferred stops, and amenities) to aid with day-to-day driving needs. Though based in Tennessee, their national footprint serves over 1.6 million traveling guests a day.



*Making your drive easier*





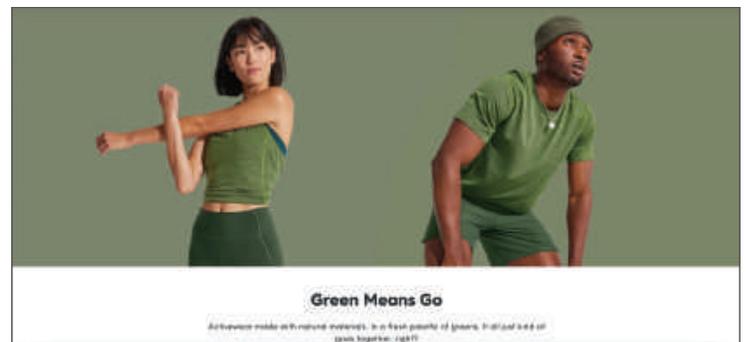
Key offerings such as safe rest parking for truck drivers, booking appointments with UrgentCare Travel, scheduling showers, or booking mechanical maintenance are all designed to help their shoppers with exactly what they need the most. With this shopper-focused execution, Pilot Flying J helps their users save time and money through a *digital experience that connects the retailer to each of their individual shoppers in a very personal way.*

## Digital: from convenience to experience

With digital now a cost of entry, successful brands have figured out how to leverage the medium to create experiences that bring their own soul to life. Brands that bare their soul online and down into the physical experience, align with their shoppers' values and earn more than sales, they earn loyalty.

**Allbirds** understood this ideal from their beginning as a DTC brand. Asking themselves why a remarkable, sustainable resource like merino wool was virtually absent in the footwear industry was the birth of a soulful brand. As they continue to grow and drive success digitally and in physical locations, they have never stopped baring their soul through their soles. And in the ultra-competitive shoe industry, staying true to their *idea of making things in a better, more environmentally friendly way, Allbirds has been successful in creating an entirely new category of shoes with an incredibly devoted following.* One that shares their passions for simple design and incredible comfort, all of which is successfully made from natural and sustainable materials instead of synthetics.

Their focus on living their values and sharing that passion with their target audience has turned their shoppers into brand ambassadors. Allbirds not only successfully created a new category of shoes, they also successfully elevated the shoes into a badge of shared values their shoppers are proud to wear.



*A soulful experience*

## Creating demand through price instead of creating connections is a surefire way to commoditize your brand

A dollar store is a dollar store, right? No, not right. **Dollar General** is much more than a dollar store. With more than 10,000 locations throughout the United States, Dollar General brings their southern hospitality roots to communities across the country that need the retailer's affordable products and pricing model. As a result, Dollar General has become a hero that helps families across the nation who otherwise would struggle by ensuring affordable items.



Won't you be my **neighbor?**

**DOLLAR GENERAL**

Fiercely proud of who they are, they have never been anything than that which they set out to be, "America's neighborhood general store." In living that ideal, they ensure that shoppers see they care about low prices, quality brands, and hassle-free shopping. *But they know that more is needed so they emphasize education and literacy within their communities. As they often are the only retailer within miles, their impact is truly connective and soul-baring.*

## Stop marketing solely to tech, start connecting on a human level

What separates brands today is their ability to activate at the critical points of their shoppers' day-to-day lives and needs. And when a brand shows how much they care and how much they understand their shoppers' challenges, they in turn are showing shoppers who they are at the core of their own soul. If you don't connect with your shoppers, you will fall behind the competition.

Whether it's experiences like HEB's community playscape, Dollar General's commitment to adult literacy, Pilot Flying Js driver app, or Allbirds dedication to their values, *helping people feel good by doing good could be great for your soul as well as your bottom line.*

Connecting on a HUMAN level sounds so simple and straightforward, but it's true.

At BOOM Ventures, our shopping marketing unit and experts specialize in curating the right level of retail brand and customer engagement through research and data, strategy, creative, design, build, programming, staffing, digital and innovation, social and overall marketing integration.

**Let's us help you bring the "soul" back to retail!**