



Guide

Retail Series | 3

How to power consistent, multi-brand, omnichannel experiences



Introduction

In 2024, roughly 22% of global retail sales are expected to occur online – a significant jump over 2019's pre-pandemic figure of only 15%. And online's share is expected to increase, with projections suggesting e-commerce will account for 24% of an \$8.1 trillion dollar global market by 2026.

But even as consumer spending surges, retailers face strong headwinds:

- Every retailer – no matter how big or how small – now competes in a truly global marketplace
- Rampant inflation and rising interest rates are putting the squeeze on customers' disposable income, further intensifying competition among retailers
- With an increase in online shopping comes an increase in returns, forcing many retailers to explore fees to cover soaring shipping and processing costs



To attract and retain customers, retailers worldwide are exploring store makeovers, pop-up stores, celebrity partnerships, loyalty programmes, and other promotions. Behind the scenes, many are also engaged in merger and acquisition activity and are investing significantly in transformative technologies.

As eCommerce and retail businesses evolve, managing digital identities is an increasingly critical function. When the right Customer Identity and Access Management (CIAM) platform is implemented, retailers can optimise operations, organisational processes, and marketing programmes to delight customers with personalised experiences at every touchpoint – from product discovery to purchase and beyond.

While the literal definition of CIAM has remained consistent over the years, its true meaning and impact have evolved as digital transformation has changed how customers and retailers build relationships and interact.

“With digital transformation and pressure to build orchestrated Identity into the customer journey, CIAM solutions are an essential building block of customer management.”

[The Forrester Tech Tide™: Identity And Access Management \(IAM\), Q1 2023](#)

A modern CIAM platform allows retailers to leverage data and create meaningful relationships with customers, tackle the problem of fragmented data, satisfy customer demands for data privacy, and even help reduce instances of fraud and other security issues.

In this guide – which is one piece of a five-part collection – we'll focus on CIAM's role in how to power consistent, multi-brand, omnichannel experiences.



A consistent experience, no matter where customers are

In retail, the standard is now effortless, relevant, and safe interactions – whenever your customers demand it, wherever they are, on whatever device they choose.

Meeting these expectations requires giving customers a consistent experience:

- Across all your brands
- In-person (whether in a permanent or pop-up location)
- Online (e.g., mobile apps and websites)
- In every interaction (e.g., when making a purchase, receiving a promotional email, contacting support, etc.)
- Even if they have provided different email addresses and phone numbers to other channels

Welcome to the age of unified commerce, and it all starts with digital identity.

According to McKinsey's Omnichannel Compendium for Retailers, 64% of retailers believe that 'a well-defined cross- or multichannel strategy' is the top innovation that would drive digital growth.



Delivering consistent experiences

Familiarity reduces friction, and consistency creates familiarity.

Delivering a consistent retail experience requires a consolidated omnichannel view of customer Identity, preferences, and history across all interactions and transactions – and the best customer experiences depend on trusted, unified, and consented data.

Unfortunately, per McKinsey's [Omnichannel Compendium for Retailers](#), 78% of retailers acknowledge that there is no 'single brand' experience across their channels.

“Now, each customer has a single Identity. We give them tailored customer experiences, but that doesn't mean they need three different user IDs and passwords.”

Ramiya Iyer, GVP, IT Digital, Data and Pharmacy, [Albertsons](#)

When data is outdated, or collected without consent, trust and experience suffer and personalisation falls apart. CIAM is the key to acquiring, managing, and leveraging this data. It enables identity resolution, ensuring the 360-degree view for each customer is fuelled by accurate, verified, and consented data.

Equipped with this data, companies can use CIAM to:

- Enable a universal login experience across all your brands – irrespective of the channel or Identity provider the customer decides to use – whether in-person or virtually
- Power consistent, seamless, personalised experiences for customers wherever they engage with your brands – reducing acquisition and retention costs, and maximising satisfaction and revenue
- Observe and influence customers who journey across multiple brands and multiple categories
- Extend loyalty programmes across all the brands under a corporate umbrella – increasing customer stickiness and the rewards for loyalty

Unlocking business efficiencies

Importantly, the benefits of centralising customer Identity management within a single system extend beyond delivering a better customer experience.

For example, implementing a unified Identity solution:

- Enables Identity resolution efforts by making it easier to associate multiple contact details and other data with individual customers
- Simplifies technology stacks by allowing you to retire point solutions within each brand
- Decreases the amount and complexity of integration, since only one CIAM solution needs to be integrated – rather than a multitude of solutions that may represent several different vendors and homegrown utilities
- Improves business processes by making more reliable information available to more parts of the organisation more easily



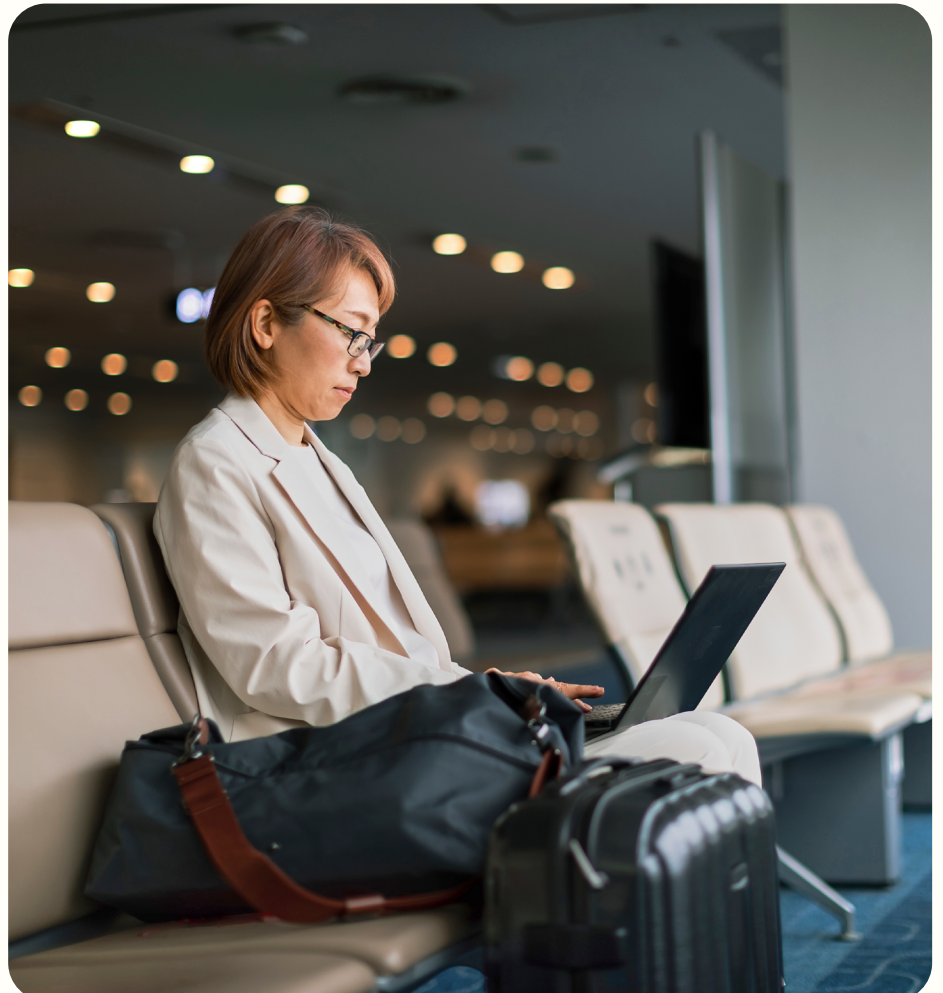
How to get started

Because CIAM sits at the heart of customer-facing systems – serving as an input into market analysis and influencing acquisition, conversion, and retention efforts – it aligns with marketing and customer experience departments.

At the same time, CIAM directly impacts security and privacy, putting it squarely in the sights of CISOs, CIOs, and compliance officers.

And – fundamentally – CIAM is a set of technology solutions, causing it to fall under IT organisations or even CTOs (when properly regarded as an enabler of digital transformation).

To find the right balance between the quality of customer experience and system security in the context of desired use cases, customer types, data types, and retail-specific factors, leaders across these functions should work together to implement CIAM.



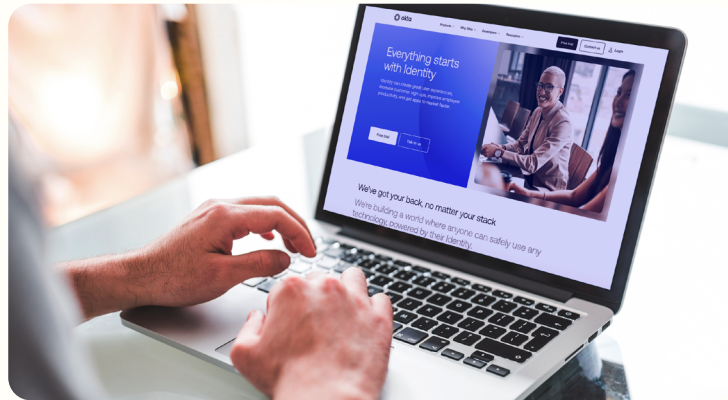
Here are some suggestions for getting started as you look to power consistent, multi-brand, omnichannel experiences:

- **Start thinking about Identity flows as conversion flows**
Well-designed Identity flows make it easy for customers to interact with your brand, leading to increased signups, easier logins, reduced cart abandonment, and greater lifetime revenue.
- **Deploy social login and SSO to get customers in the door**
Enable customers to sign-up or log in with a couple of clicks using their accounts with other third-party services, like Facebook, Google, or Apple.
- **Encourage passwordless authentication to secure accounts and lower friction**
Passwordless authentication, like passkeys, that use biometrics or the device PIN offer strong phishing resistance and a great user experience.
- **Implement a progressive profiling strategy**
Allow a customer to create an account with only basic information, then gradually ask for more details as the relationship grows.
- **Integrate your CIAM system with your CDP**
Customer data platforms can be invaluable within the larger marketing technology stack, but they need reliable data – integrating your CIAM system with your CDP helps to ensure data is associated with real customers and makes it easy to combine the zero-party data captured during the sign-up process with the first-party analytics data generated elsewhere.

Find out more about CIAM's role in retail

This mini guide is one of a five-part collection, each of which focuses on a different application of CIAM within the retail space.

Discover the rest of the series on the landing page link below.



Estimate the revenue gain of using a Customer Identity solution

Visit [this page](#) to calculate how Okta can help your retail business improve customer conversion rates and increase profitability.

Discover more about Identity management with Okta

Building and maintaining an effective Identity solution – one that empowers and enables your business, rather than holds it back – is a huge undertaking.

Okta is the World's Identity Company and is helping retailers all over the world deliver exceptional digital experiences and understand their customers better, all whilst keeping their data safe.

Visit [okta.com](https://www.okta.com) to learn more.

About Okta

Learn more at: www.okta.com Okta is the leading independent provider of Identity for developers and the enterprise. The Okta Identity Cloud securely connects enterprises to their customers, partners, and employees. With deep integrations to over 7,000 applications, the Okta Identity Cloud enables simple and secure access for any user from any device.

Thousands of customers, including 20th Century Fox, Adobe, Dish Networks, Experian, Flex, LinkedIn, and News Corp, trust Okta to help them work faster, boost revenue and stay secure. Okta helps customers fulfil their missions faster by making it safe and easy to use the technologies they need to do their most significant work.

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