

# The Curbside Pickup Operations Handbook



**Consider this: In 2019, just 4% of the 500 largest retailers offered online ordering with curbside pickup. By August 2020 – less than half a year into the pandemic – this number increased by 1000% with 121 of the top 500 retailers offering the service at the time.<sup>1</sup>**

Importantly, curbside pickup isn't just a pandemic trend. Yes, its rapid adoption may have at first been out of necessity, given that social distancing requirements and public health measures heavily impacted (and sometimes even completely shut down) in-store shopping.

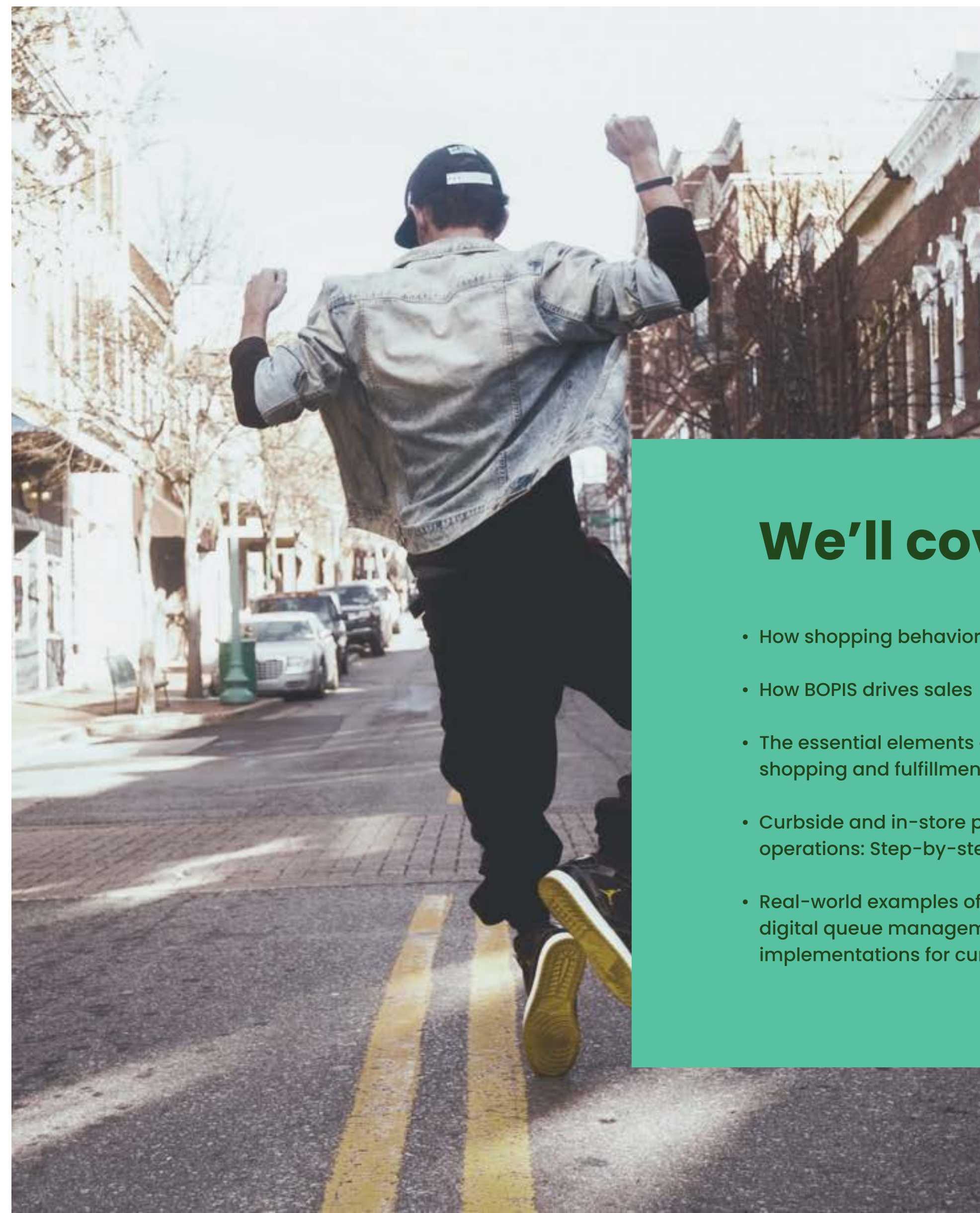
But in an era where convenience and speed are of utmost importance to digitally-native consumers, flexible shopping options like curbside pickup and BOPIS (buy online, pick up in store) will be key to winning business and building brand loyalty. According to McKinsey & Company, over 40% of Americans have tried a new shopping method since the start of the pandemic and nearly 75% of people who have tried curbside pickup or BOPIS want to continue using these services post-pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

**Curbside and in-store pickup is a service that consumers have come to expect.** Beyond fulfilling expectations and driving customer satisfaction, BOPIS is a critical business strategy that has been shown to drive sales. Yet, many retailers have dragged their feet on building out the service because of the (false) perception that pickup operations – curbside, in particular – are difficult to institute, operate, and manage.

With a virtual queue management system, you can set curbside pickup on autopilot, giving customers a flexible and efficient experience that they'll love. Picking up this handbook is a fantastic first step to starting or improving your pickup operations.

<sup>1</sup> Berthene, April. "Nearly 44% of Top 500 retailers with stores now offer curbside pickup." Digital Commerce 360. September 30, 2020.

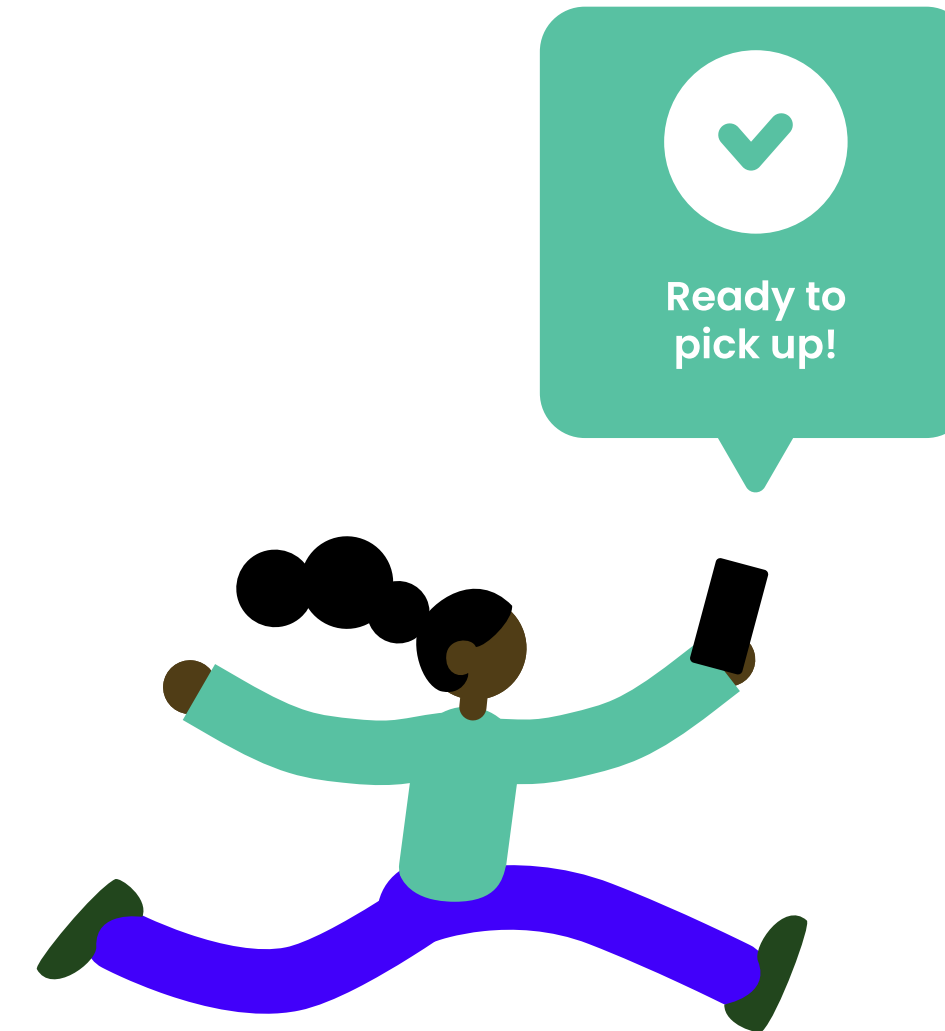
<sup>2</sup> Charm, Tamara, Coggins, Becca, Robinson, Kelsey, & Jamie Wilkie. "The great consumer shift: Ten charts that show how US shopping behavior is changing." McKinsey & Company. August 2020.



## We'll cover:

- How shopping behaviors are changing
- How BOPIS drives sales
- The essential elements of BOPIS shopping and fulfillment
- Curbside and in-store pickup operations: Step-by-step
- Real-world examples of successful digital queue management implementations for curbside pickup

# How shopping behaviors are changing



## Not just a pandemic trend

Even before the pandemic, BOPIS (buy online, pick up in store) was booming. According to a January 2019 Statista survey, 83% of consumers bought items online and picked them up in-store at the counter. 63% of the respondents said they wanted to try curbside pickup.<sup>3</sup>

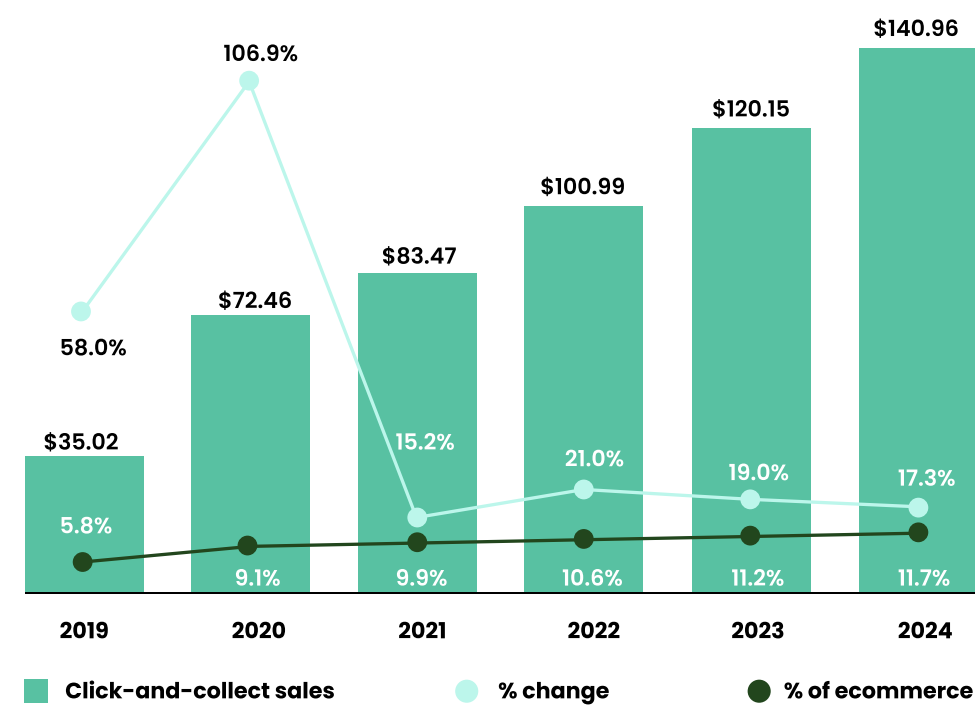
When it comes to the pickup part of BOPIS, there are three core pickup options you can offer customers:

- **Curbside pickup:** after a customer makes a purchase online, your in-store staff prepares the items for pickup. Customers then visit your store and pick up their order outside – either at the curb as the name suggests or in a designated area of your parking lot.
- **Click-and-collect:** popular in supermarkets and home improvement stores, this BOPIS process eliminates the need for customers to walk through aisles of products to collect the items they want to purchase. Instead, the customer shops online and then in-store staff pick the items from the shelves and prepare orders for pickup in person.
- **Reserve online, pick up in-store (ROPIS):** similar to curbside pickup, this method allows a customer to reserve an item at your ecommerce store and then visit your store to pick it up. You can give customers the option to prepay online or instead process payment in store, offering the flexibility consumers desire when it comes to important purchases. Unlike curbside pickup, this method requires your customer to enter your brick and mortar location, providing you with an opportunity to increase cart size.

<sup>3</sup> Tighe, D. "Usage and interest in click and collect services of U.S. shoppers by 2019, by format." Statista. December 17, 2021.

Unsurprisingly, the pandemic catalyzed this already popular shopping behavior. In 2020 in the U.S. alone, shoppers spent \$72.46 billion via click-and-collect – a 106.9% increase over 2019. As pandemic restrictions that reduced in-store capacity started to lift, the rate of this growth predictably subsided. But, importantly, click-and-collect sales are projected to sustain double-digit growth rates through 2024, reaching an estimated \$140.96 billion.<sup>4</sup>

**US Click-and-collect Sales, 2019-2024**  
billions, % change, and % of total ecommerce



*Note: includes products of services ordered using the internet (regardless of payment method) for pickup in a store or a locker in a retail or pick hub location; excludes travel and place sales, gambling and other vice good sales.*  
Source: eMarketer, Jan 2021

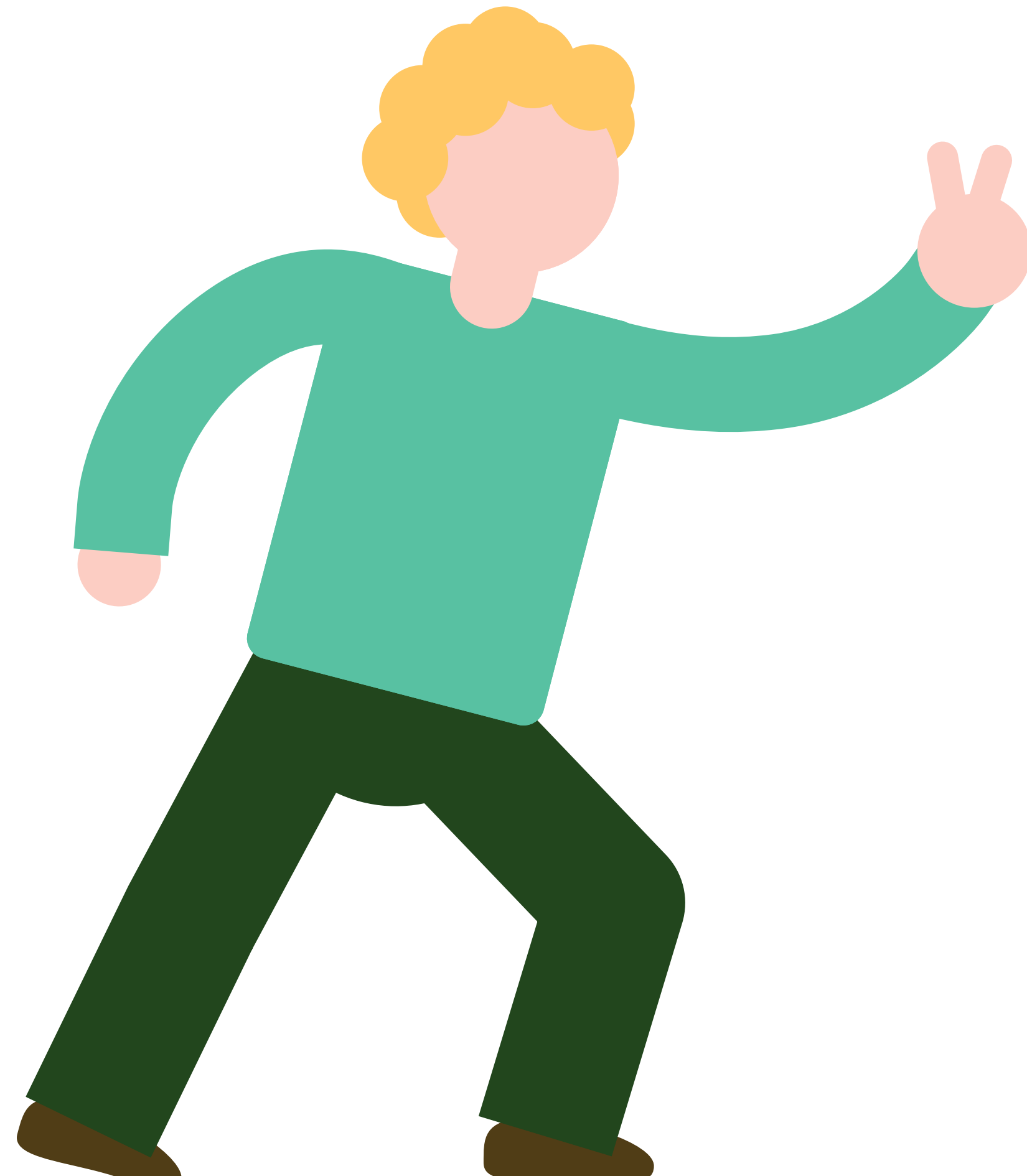
This anticipated growth is logical when you consider the increasing importance of speed and convenience in retail. A digital transformation was already underway before the pandemic began, but as we recalibrated our lives to temporary physical isolation, we had little else to turn to other than our devices. The digital world kept us entertained, stimulated, and connected.

During this time, consumers became “digital-first natives” and relied on self-service channels to satisfy their shopping needs.<sup>5</sup> That’s why curbside pickup, click-and-collect, and ROPIS are here to stay. Shopping behaviors have shifted permanently and retailers offering omnichannel BOPIS services will be well-positioned to win over consumers.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> “Click-and-Collect 2021: Buy Online, Pick-up In Store (BOPIS) Industry Trends.” Insider Intelligence. May 5, 2021.  
<sup>5</sup> Bassett, Laura. “How Retailers Can Satisfy Demand for Instant Gratification.” Retail TouchPoints. May 5, 2022.  
<sup>6</sup> Bassett, Laura. “How Retailers Can Satisfy Demand for Instant Gratification.” Retail TouchPoints. May 5, 2022.



## Consumers are calling the shots



According to Joel Bines, author of *The Metail Economy*, “more than ever, the consumer is calling the shots.”<sup>7</sup> That’s because consumers not only have more choices than ever before, but also more access to information. Social media and technology have made it incredibly easy for consumers to widely share the experiences they have with your brand – the good and the bad – and to influence purchasing decisions.

You don’t have to be an influencer to reach a large audience. Today’s digital landscape makes it simple for anyone to broadcast a message or share an opinion.

“Everyone before now, for the most part, who said the customer comes first was lying. The customer never came first. And the customer knows that,” said Bines, in an interview with Retail Brew. “Now you have to *mean* it. We the customers know that you’re not putting us first because of information and access.”

This open access to information isn’t the only thing putting pressure on businesses to deliver. Consumer expectations are also rising. By focusing heavily on convenience and speed,

digital advertising and ecommerce have conditioned consumers to expect these touches from their shopping experiences:

- According to a 2020 National Retail Federation report<sup>8</sup>, 83% of consumers felt that **convenience was more important** while shopping than five years prior. The COVID-19 pandemic has only strengthened these consumer expectations.
- Over 9 in 10 consumers are more likely to choose a brand that ensures a **convenient experience**.<sup>9</sup>
- According to a PwC survey, 80% of American consumers say that **speed and convenience** are the most important elements to a positive customer experience.<sup>10</sup>

With fierce competition, the stakes have never been higher to deliver a standout customer experience – one that’s aligned with consumer expectations for convenience and speed. Offering convenient, fast, and digital-first shopping methods like curbside and in-store pickup is rapidly going to become a must.

<sup>7</sup> Newman, Andrew Adam. “Consumers are storming the castle.” Retail Brew. February 4, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> “3 ways convenience impacts shopping behavior.” National Retail Federation. February 12, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> “Experience is everything. Get it right.” PwC. 2018.

# How BOPIS drives sales

Flexible shopping experiences like BOPIS aren't just good for consumers, they're also smart for business – from both an operational and a revenue perspective.

BOPIS offerings like curbside pickup are part of a retailer's omnichannel infrastructure, and the customer path to purchase begins online, which takes advantage of consumer shopping trends. Digital shopping has been on the rise for years now and it isn't slowing down anytime soon.

According to Macquarie, ecommerce spending in the U.S. alone reached approximately \$871 billion in 2021 – up 14% from the year prior. And it's not just a pandemic phenomenon: "ecommerce retail sales are expected to continue to increase by an average of 15% annually."<sup>11</sup>

But though consumers appreciate the convenience of digital shopping, the ecommerce channel alone doesn't fulfill their rising expectations for speed and efficiency. Online retailers have been working diligently to reduce shipping times, but the logistics are too complex (and expensive) to meet consumer desire for instant gratification.

Unlike other digital channels, BOPIS offers key advantages of online shopping while encouraging consumers to continue engaging with brick-and-mortar stores. Plus, it's good for business.

According to research summarized in the Harvard Business Review, after introducing BOPIS, retailers experienced a drop in online sales and an increase in in-store sales that added up to **a net increase in overall sales**.<sup>12</sup>

This is because of a number of factors, according to the research:

- A key advantage of BOPIS is that it allows customers to research products ahead of time online and then buy them **without delivery fees**, delays, or inflexible pickup times. In fact, a 2019 Insider Intelligence survey<sup>13</sup> found that nearly half of the people who used BOPIS did so because they didn't have to incur shipping costs.
- BOPIS allows customers **to see which items are in stock**, enabling them to make fewer wasted trips to your store, which improves their overall shopping experience and drives brand loyalty.
- BOPIS is **more profitable** than other omnichannel strategies because of the challenging and costly components of last-mile fulfillment.<sup>14</sup> It gives retailers the opportunity to offer incentives or discounts to encourage customers to choose the BOPIS option.

In short, BOPIS is a win-win for businesses and consumers alike. Given its rising popularity, offering this shopping method is a no brainer. But just like last-mile fulfillment logistics in delivery, the "pickup" portion of buy online, pick up in store can be tricky to manage.

A virtual queue management system like [Waitwhile](#) is a digital-first approach that will make the BOPIS process – including curbside pickup, in-store pickup, and click-and-collect – simple to operate.

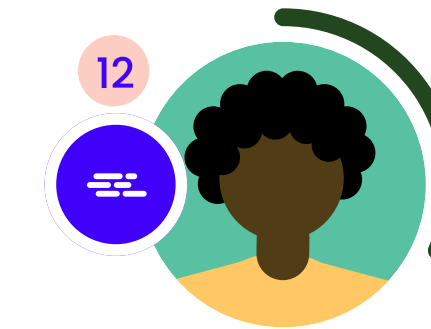
In the next section, we'll cover the essential elements of BOPIS shopping and fulfillment and then provide a step-by-step guide for how you can leverage a digital queue management system to bring ease, convenience, and delight to the process.

<sup>11</sup> "The retail trends driving a new age in customer experience." Macquarie. May 2, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Ketzenberg, Michael & Dr. M. Serkan Akturk. "How 'Buy Online, Pick Up In-Store' Give Retailers an Edge." Harvard Business Review. May 25, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Magana, Gregory. "Almost 70% of US consumers use BOPIS." Insider Intelligence. February 22, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Barnes, Jim. "Why Retailers Should Actively Nudge Consumers to Buy Online, Pick Up In Store (BOPIS)." Forbes. January 8, 2021.



# All about BOPIS operations

## The advantages of a BOPIS strategy

The beauty of BOPIS (buy online, pick up in store) and the reason why it's attractive to consumers and retailers alike is that it offers flexibility.

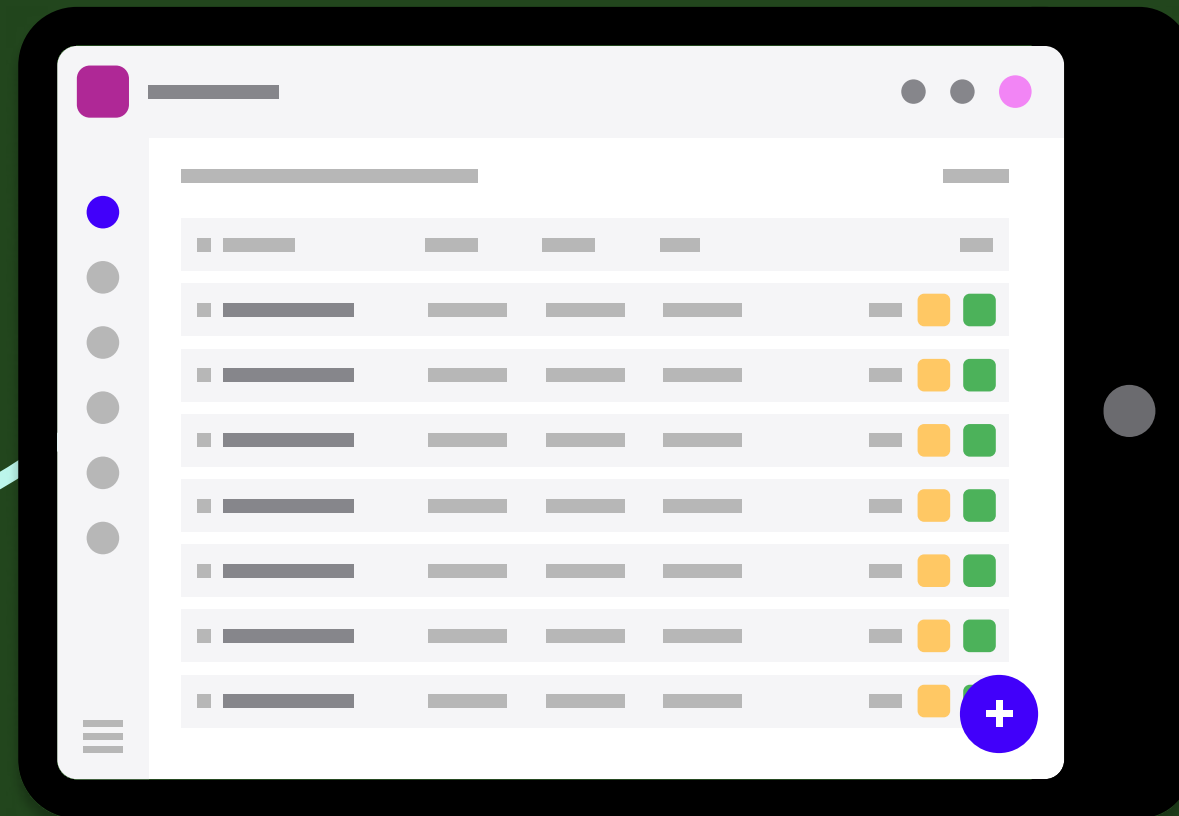
For shoppers, this means that they have several options for how to get what they want fast. A consumer can research product(s) online, confirm stock availability, complete their purchase online, and then pick up their items in-store at a time that's convenient for them. This shopping experience provides the instant gratification consumers now seek and saves money on both ends of the transaction by removing shipping costs.

For retailers, BOPIS is an ideal strategy for a number of reasons. Importantly, it gives you more flexibility with your inventory, since it merges both online and in-store stock.

From a logistical standpoint, this allows you to fulfill orders from either your stores or a distribution center – whichever is faster. As mentioned above, BOPIS also simplifies your shipping operations by reducing shipping volume and allowing you to send bulk shipments to your brick and mortar stores or pickup locations. Lastly, it drives qualified foot traffic to your store, providing opportunities to make more sales.

There are three core pickup options you can offer customers, which were covered earlier:

- Curbside pickup
- Click-and-collect
- Reserve online, pick up in-store (ROPIS)



# The 5 steps to digital queue management for pickup operations

We've talked about how BOPIS offers consumers the flexibility, convenience, and expediency they desire and how this omnichannel strategy is advantageous for businesses. Though the shopping and fulfillment process is relatively straightforward, the ease that consumers expect with BOPIS can fall apart during the pickup process.

A virtual queue solution like Waitwhile allows you to put your pickup operations on autopilot. Whether you're running with curbside pickup, click-and-collect, ROPIS (or any combination of the three), digital queue management makes the process simple, transparent, and efficient.

**Here's how it works, step-by-step.**



## STEP 1 The Purchase

The journey to your brick-and-mortar store begins in the realm of ecommerce. A customer makes a purchase online on your website or via social commerce. During checkout, they can select which pickup option works best for them.

For items that are available in stock, same-day pickup is usually expected. If you'll need to ship any item(s) in the order either to a store or pickup location, be sure to clearly communicate this on the product landing page so there are no surprises during checkout.

At this point, make sure you collect your customer's **preferred communication method** and contact information. The transaction is the beginning of the pickup process, so you'll want to establish a clear line of communication throughout.

Depending on how you want to structure your pickup operations, you may want to offer your customers the opportunity to schedule their pickup time at this stage. In [Waitwhile](#), you can **manage both appointments and virtual waitlists** from one command center.

To schedule a pickup time, customers will need to simply choose any open time slot from your calendar, which is automatically managed by the platform.

If you want to give your customers as much flexibility as possible – or if you don't want to offer appointments for whatever reason – simply process their order and then send them pickup instructions after the next step.

When assessing queue management solutions for pickup operations, be sure that the platform you choose is able to seamlessly integrate with all of the different tools that are powering your ecommerce and in-store operations. [Waitwhile](#) connects with over 1000 apps and is built on an open API, so you can plug it directly into your existing ecosystem.

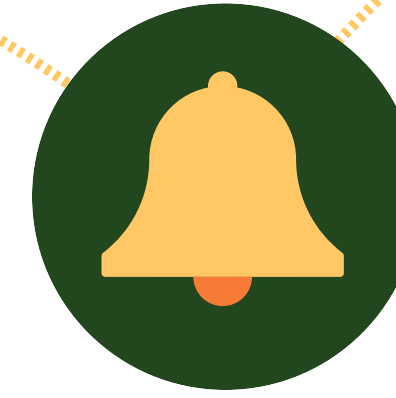




## STEP 2 Fulfillment

You fulfill the customer's order either by shipping inventory to a store/pickup point or by collecting the item(s) in-store. Because you got your customer's contact information during checkout, you can easily **message them using SMS or email** through your queue management system.

This will come in handy if there are any hiccups or bumps in the road. If an item is unexpectedly out of stock, for example, you can quickly text or email the customer to let them know and offer a comparable replacement. They can simply reply back to ask questions or resolve the issue.



## STEP 3 Notification

Once the order is ready, you can ping your customer via text or email with the click of a button in your queue management platform. Because you can pre-program specific messages, you can **automate** tedious processes like these.

If the customer has scheduled a pickup time, send them clear instructions on where to go and what to do when they arrive.

For all other customers, this is a great point to let them join a **virtual waitlist**, which allows guests to join your queue online and wait from anywhere. That way, once they arrive at your store, they don't have to waste any time waiting in a physical line.

Instead, they can simply show up right when it's their turn or they can spend that time browsing your sales floor (and perhaps even grabbing a few more items). With a virtual waitlist, guests will be given accurate AI-powered wait time estimates and regular updates so that they can time their arrival right as their turn is coming up. If they need more time, they can simply text or email your business directly and your queue management platform will automatically reorder them in the queue.

Some businesses prefer to geofence their virtual waitlists to reduce no-shows. If that's what you want to do at your store, be sure to communicate pickup instructions to your customers so that they know what to do when they arrive.



#### STEP 4

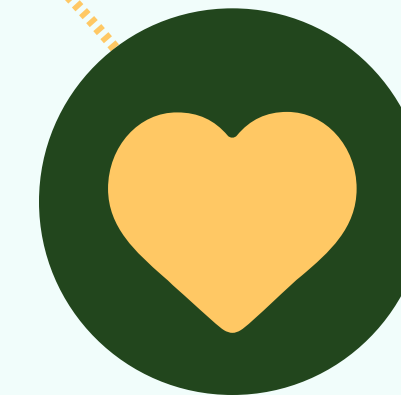
### Pickup

When the customer arrives on site to pick up their order, you can offer a **number of ways to check-in**. For ROPIS and click-and-collect, guests can check-in via text message, email, at a kiosk, via QR code, or by speaking to one of your staff members. You can offer any number of these check-in options depending on your vision for your customer experience.

For curbside pickup, guests can let you know they're here via text message, email, or using a QR code. We recommend having clear signage at your pickup points in addition to sending instructions to your customers via text message or email at the Notification stage.

Once they are checked in, your staff will get an alert in the queue management platform. You can send an automated message to confirm the guest's arrival and as in the previous steps, customers can message you directly if there are any questions or concerns.

Then, because of the structure provided by your digital queue management platform up to this point, the **handoff** of the order takes just a few minutes (or less). For ROPIS and click-and-collect, staff can hand item(s) directly to the customer or you can tell the customer specifically where they can pick up their order (if you're using lockers, for example). For curbside pickup, staff can deliver the order to a customer outside or to their car – you'll know exactly where the customer is waiting based on earlier communications.



#### STEP 5

### Departure & Follow-Up

Once the pickup is complete, you mark the guest as "served" in your virtual queue management platform and it'll log important data about the visit, such as total visit time, automatically feeding that information into an **analytics dashboard**. Any notes your staff may have taken about the customer will also be logged to their profile so you can keep track of preferences and other important details.

To keep the conversation going post-visit and generate repeat business, you can also **automatically deploy customer communications** via text or email from your queue management platform. You'll be able to thank your customer for coming as a nice personalized touch, send them a promo to use next time, encourage them to leave a review or fill out a survey, or solicit feedback to improve your operations.

# Examples of successful curbside pickup operations





# Best Buy Canada

Founded in 1966 by Richard M. Schulze and James Wheeler, Best Buy is a multinational consumer electronics retailer committed to enriching lives through technology. In Canada, Best Buy relies on Waitwhile for queue management and curbside pickup at over 160 retail locations.

**5.5M+**

customer served

**169**

stores on Waitwhile



## The Challenge

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, consensus on the best way to manage public health and safety was hard to come by. Retailers with stores in multiple jurisdictions had to conform to a variety of local guidelines, not all of which aligned. For instance, laws across Canada required physical distancing, but some areas further instituted curfews.

Best Buy Canada suddenly needed a single solution to manage the new retail regulations that was safe, scalable across its 169 stores, and flexible enough to adhere to the specific mandates of local governments.

A clear solution that would limit in-store crowding was curbside pickup. But stores needed an intuitive method for customers to safely let their local Best Buy know that they'd arrived so that employees could bring their order out to the "curb" (or parking lot).

## The Solution

Best Buy turned to Waitwhile to help institute a safe and seamless shopping experience for their customers. The company implemented Waitwhile in two ways:

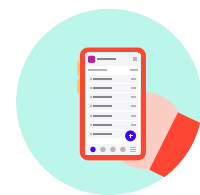
### 1. Curbside pickup

Best Buy locations quickly found that the best way to manage curbside pickup was by sending customers an email and/or text notification when their order was ready. This notification included important details such as the store's hours of operation along with a button customers could use to check in upon arrival.



#### Park your car

In designated pickup area with order details ready



#### Check in online

You can use the link in your "Ready for pickup" email



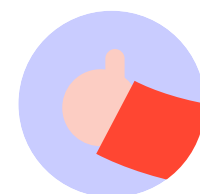
#### Wait in your car

A Brookfield team member will come to verify your order and check your ID



#### Pop your trunk

We'll place the item in your car for you



#### Check your order

Check your order and you're good to go!

### 2. Virtual waitlist

To further aid with capacity management, Waitwhile's virtual waitlist feature allowed Best Buy to invite customers to join in-store queues for specific services remotely – with any device.

During the height of the pandemic, this allowed stores to safely adhere to capacity and social distancing restrictions while offering customers the flexibility to wait from anywhere. Today, customers can save their spot in line, get accurate wait time estimates, browse different parts of the store while they wait, and be notified via text message when it's their turn.

"If they needed to go into appliances or into the mobile section to sign up for a mobile phone, or even Geek Squad services, they could easily do that with Waitwhile. We encouraged customers to follow that process and it ended up being very successful," said Ashley Sims, Product Manager & Product Owner at Best Buy Canada.

**"With over 3 million customers queued through Waitwhile, we've already given them over 140,000 days back. It's been seamless!"**

**Cliff Stefanuk**

Product Manager, Best Buy Canada

## The Result

After implementing Waitwhile, Best Buy surveyed their customers and discovered that customer sentiment around the new experience was incredible.

"The verbatims that came back directly from customers spoke to the ease of use, the experience, and how safe and comfortable they felt from the curbside pickup experience," said Cliff Stefanuk, Product Manager & Product Owner at Best Buy Canada.

In addition to making customers happy, Waitwhile was able to help Best Buy adhere to the disparate guidelines of local governments. Local bylaw enforcement officers who did location check ups even commented on the excellence of the Best Buy setup.

"The feedback from government bylaw officers was exceptional, and our staff and associates loved it as well. They loved that Waitwhile was so easy to use," said Cliff Stefanuk. "It was very easy for us to put it into practice. We went to pilot, people picked it up right away with very minimal training materials, and then we were able to scale that out on a national level quite quickly."

Given the rave reviews from both customers and staff, Best Buy Canada sees Waitwhile as integral to its vision to be a national leader in delivering exceptional customer service. "It's transformational," said Cliff Stefanuk. "Waitwhile has elevated our business in a way that's kind of transformed how we operate – all for the better. I don't think we would be able to offer what we offer without the partnership with Waitwhile."

ZIPPY'S

# Zippy's

Zippy's, an iconic dining institution in Hawaii, has been using Waitwhile to keep both guests and staff safe while dishing up the delicious favorites its customers love across all 22 of its locations.

Zippy's grew from simple beginnings in 1966, when brothers Francis and Charles Higa started their first restaurant on King Street in Honolulu. Through their hard work and vision, Zippy's has become a Hawaiian staple.



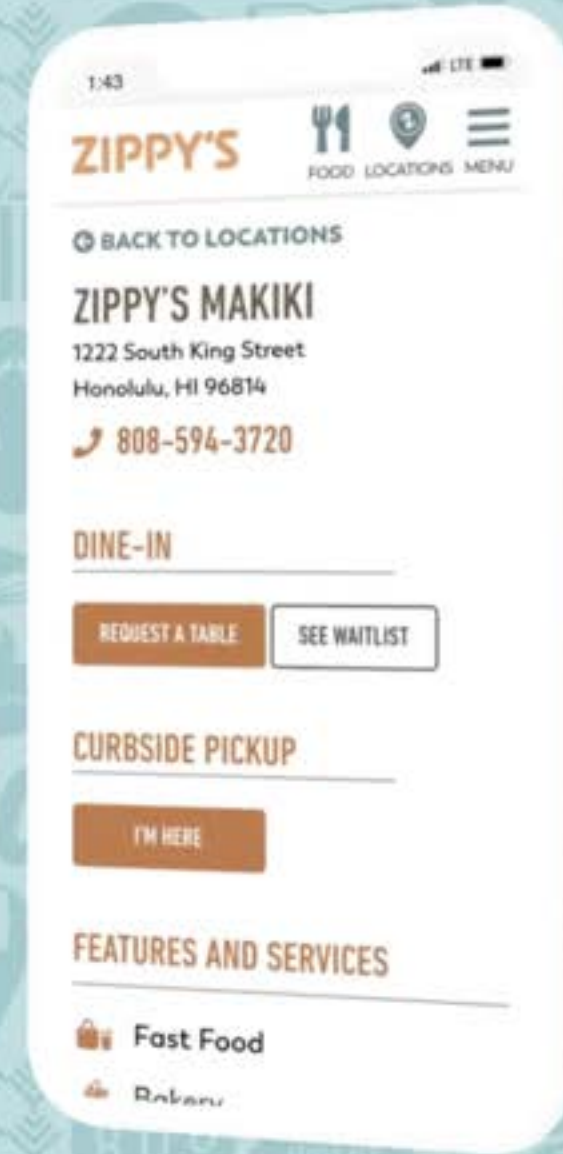
## The Challenge

Zippy's never took reservations. "We're a diner. Diners don't take reservations. People expect to be able to walk in and get a table", says Kevin Yim, VP of Marketing.

But once the pandemic hit, state safety regulations made it impossible to allow the crowds to keep gathering and waiting outside of Zippy's 22 locations the way they'd been doing for decades. Zippy's needed a simple, scalable way to allow guests to line up virtually and wait from the safety of their cars.

For pickup orders, Zippy's needed a way to remotely communicate with their customers that was simple and fast.

## Click on "Join Waitlist"



### The Result

Zippy's staff was able to understand Waitwhile's platform almost immediately with virtually no training. And if there were any questions, Zippy's felt they could always rely on Waitwhile's "very responsive and knowledgeable support team." According to Yim, "out of everything our staff had to suddenly learn how to do, learning to use Waitwhile was the easiest."

Once the staff became expert users, they went about introducing Waitwhile to their loyal customer base. "We are a community partner. We are not just a place to eat. Our staff are like family to many of our seniors. It felt good to be able to introduce new technology to less tech savvy people, and the seniors ended up feeling good about themselves."

Zippy's was able to keep both guests and staff safe, while providing the comfort and delicious food the community had grown to rely on. Its online ordering app has been a runaway success with high customer adoption and a great deal of repeat business.

**"95% of the feedback about our online ordering process is about how easy it is. It's been called magic. And that's thanks to Waitwhile," said Yim. He believes that curbside pickup and "virtual waitlists are here to stay. No one is going to want to stand in a regular line when there's a much more convenient way of doing it."**

### The Solution

Zippy's used Waitwhile in two different ways: To allow diners to line up virtually, keeping customers and staff safe, while staying in compliance with state regulations. And also to offer curbside pickup, which in combination with their newly launched online ordering app ended up largely transforming the way people ordered food on the island.

In both cases Zippy's used Waitwhile's two-way messaging to communicate with customers and keep them informed about their status.

"We had no idea how many people we'd have coming in during a pandemic. We staggered the number of locations we opened based on demand," said Yim. "So we needed a flexible solution that wouldn't lock us in." Waitwhile's flexible pricing allowed Zippy's to upgrade or downgrade based on their actual number of visitors, and this sealed the deal.

# Curbside pickup your customers will love.

With Waitwhile, your curbside pickup and BOPIS processes become instantly delightful and efficient. Through automated, personalized, and virtual-based queue experiences, Waitwhile lets customers wait from anywhere and track their status in real-time online – while helping businesses automate customer flows, communicate with guests, and reduce wait times with machine learning.

Used by thousands of companies across every industry around the world, Waitwhile has saved 150+ million customers more than 10,000 years of waiting in line.

[Schedule demo](#)

[Or learn more >](#)

