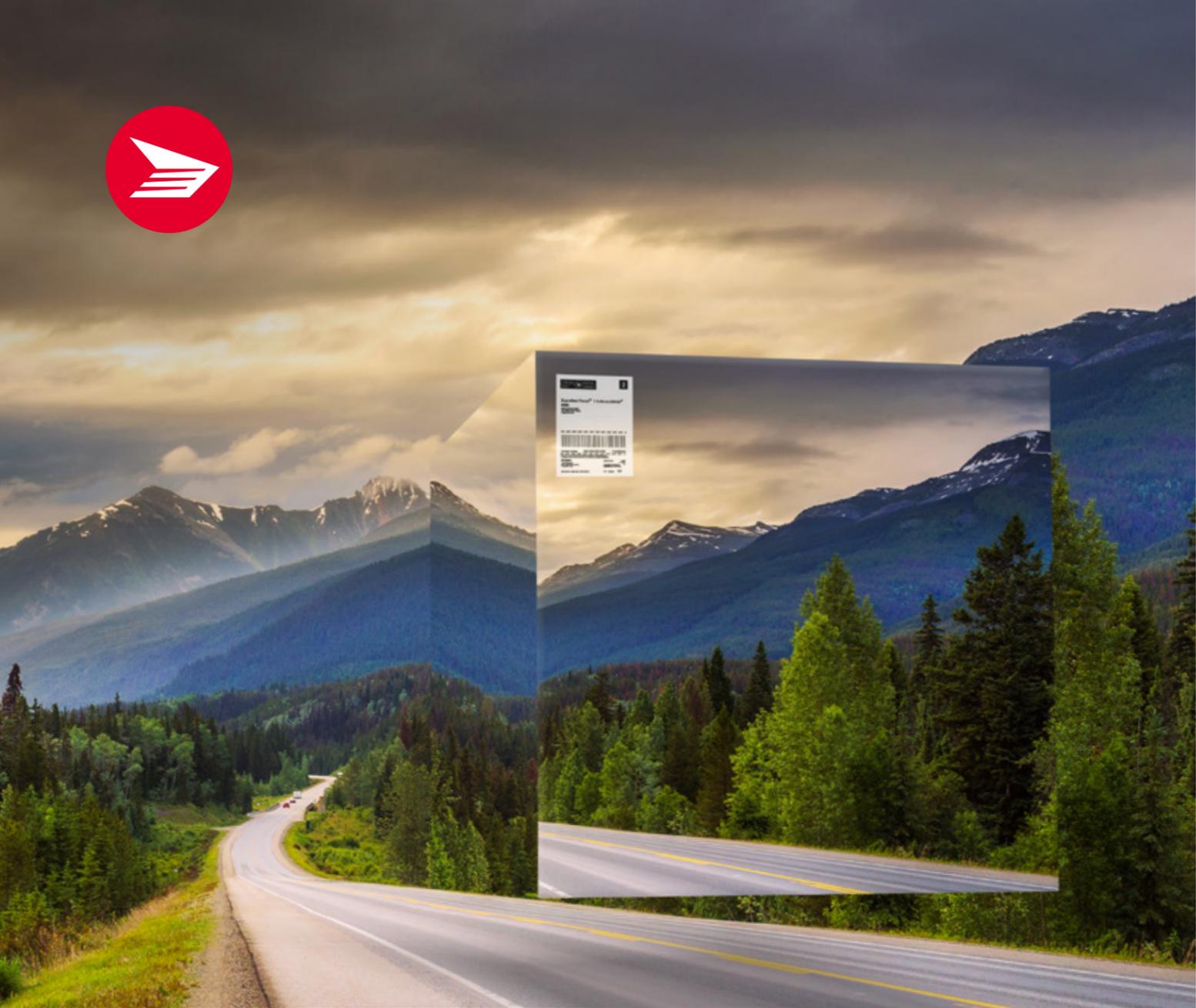


Plus L'Oréal's sustainable revolution // Candy Funhouse's sweet success // The way forward with Lindsay Angelo

Double or nothing

Twin sisters have embraced every challenge in building Loulou Lollipop into a top lifestyle brand.





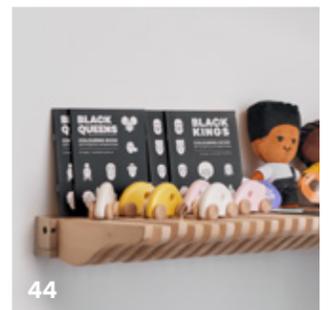
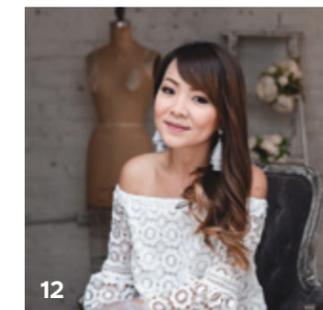
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Ecommerce Insider is published by Canada Post.

CANADA POST
400 HUNT CLUB ROAD
OTTAWA ON K1V 1C1

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LETTER FROM CEO

Building a brighter future



Every Canadian business, whether large or small, plays a crucial role in shaping our economy. That's why we have placed Canadian businesses at the heart of everything we do.

At Canada Post, we do more than just deliver parcels; we're committed to helping businesses like yours grow and succeed – and that's why we're investing in the future of ecommerce.

We've introduced initiatives anchored in meeting your evolving needs – whether it's offering sustainable shipping options, enhancing the returns experience for you and your customers, or bolstering our network to support your growth. We're focused on delivering more. Just as you are continually seeking better ways to serve your customers, we are seeking new ways to better serve your business.

Ecommerce Insider is a big part of that commitment. Each issue offers insights, expertise and inspiration from Canadian ecommerce businesses, for Canadian ecommerce businesses.

In this issue, we celebrate the inspiring journeys, innovative ideas and unyielding determination of women who harnessed the power of ecommerce to build brands and connect with people in new ways. These trailblazing entrepreneurs and leaders who come from diverse backgrounds offer invaluable insights into their strategies, philosophies and challenges.

Together, we're shaping the future of Canadian commerce, and with Canada Post as your partner, you can count on our unwavering dedication to supporting your growth. As we continue to transform, we look forward to enabling your business's success, driving positive change and building a brighter future together.

Doug Ettinger
President and CEO

Double or nothing

Twin sisters have embraced every challenge in building Loulou Lollipop into a top lifestyle brand



Angel Kho and Eleanor Lee admit that they have an unfair advantage over the competition.

There are two of them. That means no matter what challenges the twin sisters have faced, they have always had each other to lean on, learn from and laugh with along the way.

That sisterly teamwork has proven wildly successful as Kho and Lee have built [Loulou Lollipop](#) into a top lifestyle brand – one known as much for its adorable products designed for babies and kids as it is for its companywide commitment to people and the planet.

“We are a brand creating products for the next generation – we owe it to them to work the way we do,” Kho said.

Embracing the learning process

It started with a broken necklace. When her teething daughter yanked the necklace from her neck, Lee began her journey to create something special. Existing teething necklaces were a bit much – too loud, too prone to breaking, too full of unknown ingredients. She wanted a “better, cuter and safer” alternative – but none existed.

Along with her twin sister, they began creating durable teething necklaces made from silicone beads and selling them in their Etsy shop. It was never meant to go much further than the dining room table.

“We were very grassroots. We knew it was a great idea, but it was also a passion project for us. Even at our dining room table, we found joy in the entire creative process,” Kho said.

The buzz grew. Friends and other parents soon discovered the sisters’ creations and clamoured for more. Some local boutiques did as well when the sisters visited on cold calls. Trade shows were also spreading the word. [West Coast Kids](#), a major regional and ecommerce outlet, showed interest early on.

Then there was social media. The company’s Instagram feed was filling up with messages from happy parents who had fallen in love with the brand.

“‘Hey,’ we thought, ‘people like our stuff!’” said Lee, the older twin by two minutes. “Now, we had become the brand that people desired to purchase from.”



We are a brand creating products for the next generation – we owe it to them to work the way we do.

Angel Kho
Co-founder and co-owner, Loulou Lollipop



That's how it happens – the side hustle suddenly moves front and centre.

Today, Loulou Lollipop products are sold in 37 countries, in some of the top global retail chains like [Nordstrom](#) and [Indigo](#). The company has around 25 people working in their head office in Richmond, B.C., along with sales reps all over North America.

Kho and Lee admit they were not exactly ready for all this success at first.

"It was a process of continual learning, researching, asking people – and some Googling," Kho laughed. "We didn't know how to grow our business. Neither of us has a business background. So the whole process, the whole journey has been exhilarating."

Lee agreed, "This is such a rewarding experience. Every day, we are learning something new. Meeting a new challenge. It's a spirit of learning we both love."

Forces for good

The sisters started out by coming up with their own product and design ideas, often guided by putting their own spin on what was popular in the marketplace. As their business grew, however, customer opinions became more important. Kho and Lee started mining social media comments and online product reviews for ideas, then directly asking what items customers would like to see.

It was all very intentional, Lee said.

She continued, "We work collectively, not in isolation, and function as shared minds striving for continual improvement. We listen to our customers' feedback and we aim to create something that aligns with their wants, not just our own preferences. Ultimately, our purpose is to serve them."

As the company has grown, so has the number of products it offers, from swaddles and PJs, to sleep bags and kid cutlery, to bandana bibs and bedding, and beyond. To each, the sisters say they bring the same joy, creativity and commitment to earth-friendly, non-toxic materials.

That last point has proven quite critical for the company, Kho explained.

Loulou Lollipop focuses on having minimal impact on the planet, that starts with the materials used, but also extends deeper, into commitments toward fair wages, ethical business practices and safe working conditions. Expectations around these commitments extend beyond themselves, and apply to their partners as well.

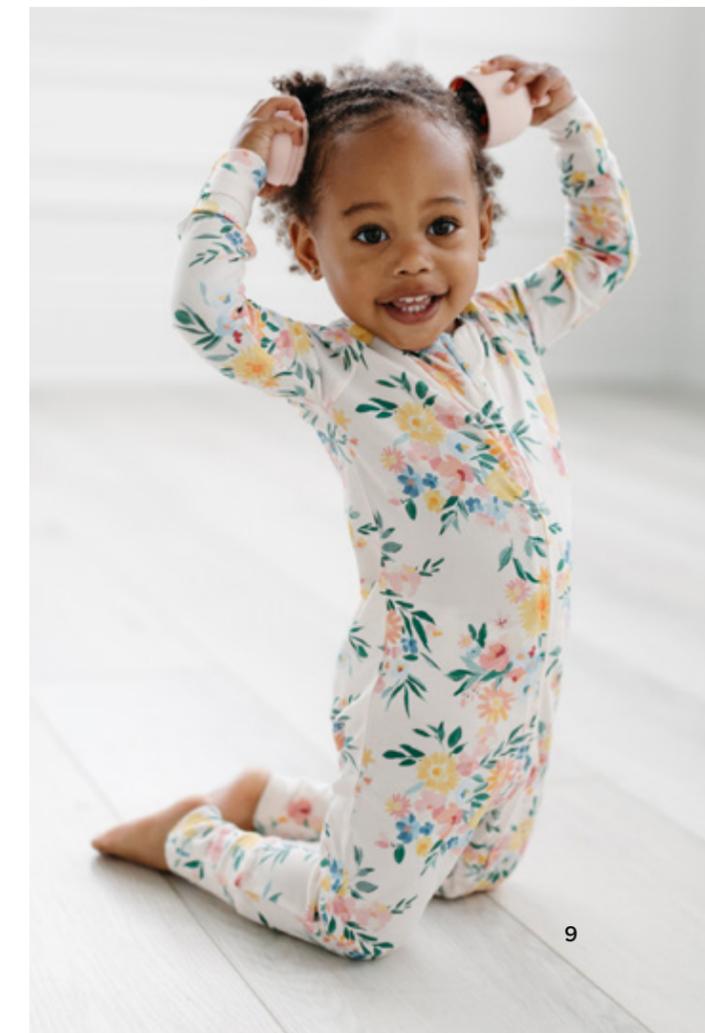
"To us, sustainability is more than a buzzword," Kho said.

Materials are front and centre because they are what customers see, feel and place closest to their child. That's why Loulou Lollipop uses sustainable materials like Tencel (created with a carbon-neutral production process that captures and reuses 99.5 per cent of its water and solvents), silicone (a BPA-free, food-grade plastic alternative derived from sand that doesn't produce harmful by-products) and muslin (a bamboo and cotton blend produced through a highly regenerative growing process).

"Our customers care about quality, the lasting impact of the products, the value they receive and, of course, they like pretty stuff. But high on that list is sustainability – they come to us because they understand our mission and vision for that," Lee said.

Part of that commitment also involves supporting the community, which is why the company donates one per cent of every Loulou Lollipop purchase to a non-profit of the customer's choice.

"It is important to first take care of the planet and people. To us, profit comes last," Lee said. "If we take care of the planet and people, people will come and buy. We know that. We have seen a huge attitude shift in people coming out of COVID. We have seen shoppers commit to making changes in their purchasing."



Building together

Bosses. Sisters. Wives. Moms. Kho and Lee know the inherent challenges that come with those roles co-existing, some fair, some unfair, but nevertheless, they are challenges the sisters have faced together.

“It’s hard. It’s not easy. There is no perfect balance,” Kho said. “Being a woman, being a mom, we will always have that guilt – that feeling we’re not spending enough time with our kids. But sometimes it’s about the quality of the time, about being there 100 per cent when we are together, about making that time count over anything else.”

Both Kho and Lee grapple with the responsibilities inherent in both entrepreneurship and motherhood. Balancing the demands of running a business while managing family obligations create formidable pressures for them.

“We have families at home. But we have a whole team at the company. We are accountable to our work family, too,” Lee said. “Yes, we need to make sure everyone is getting the attention they need. But as a female owner, we also need to take care of ourselves. If we don’t, it is impossible to move forward.”

In the end, despite the challenges and the pressure, the sisters revel in running the business.

“We had challenging moments – those kinds of moments where you felt like giving up,” Kho said. “But we didn’t dwell on it. We just stayed positive and kept pushing forward. Having that positive mindset makes you a better person, a better brand. As the owners, a lot of people look to us. So having that positive mindset, having that growth mindset is so important.”

Lee agreed, “The journey has actually been enjoyable. Without this business, we wouldn’t have faced these challenges and experienced personal growth. We’ve maintained an open-minded approach and harbour curiosity about the things that we were unfamiliar with and needed to learn. We didn’t dwell on difficulties. After all, they are not truly problems but rather stepping stones towards greater achievements.”

loululollipop.ca



Key takeaways

01

Want a growth mindset? Take feedback. Learn from experience. Gain new skills. Seek to continually improve.

02

Sustainable businesses are not only focused on the environment, but include broader concern for society.

03

Customer-centric product development requires actively listening and monitoring how customer needs are changing.

‘Warming up’ ecommerce

Boutique 1861 creates a seamless aesthetic for shoppers between in-store and online worlds



Ecommerce success, Castle Ho decided, was just a matter of warming up the website.

“Stores have a warmth to them. A glow. Websites can be cold,” explained the Boutique 1861 owner. “We needed to make our website warmer, more homey, more vintage – all reflecting what shoppers would find in store. That’s not easy in digital. But we knew we had to do it.”

Today, the Montréal-based brand has done just that – brought the unique, romantic expression of the in-store experience of its five 1861 boutiques to online shoppers. It’s an evolving process, one that continues to this day, but still boils down to a single thing: “The little details always matter.”

Crafting an in-store aesthetic

Ho and fiancé Simon Touzin opened their first boutique in 2008. Lessons learned from a year running that shop – from DIY renovations of a store on a tight budget, to creating a memorable in-store experience that matched their vision, to helping customers find their perfect wardrobe – inspired Ho to open what Montréal shoppers experience today.

Boutique 1861 was born on Sainte-Catherine Street in 2009. That original store has served as the foundation of an in-store boutique empire all physically located in the City of Saints. A second Boutique 1861, this one on Saint Laurent Boulevard, opened in 2012. That was followed by another boutique, La Petite Garçonne, in 2013, then a wedding boutique, Boudoir 1861, and home and lifestyle shop, Maison Garçonne, both in 2016.

To each location in the 1861 boutiques family, Ho brought a consistent aesthetic.

“We want to recall an era where fashion was celebrated. We want to bring back the glamour of eras when women put time and effort into ‘dressing up,’” Ho said. “We want to bring back the fun of being a woman and remind people that you don’t always need an occasion to dress well.”

Think Enlightenment-era Marie-Antoinette. The brand’s products project a vintage feel, one of femininity and romantic expression. Simple and elegant, this boudoir-inspired boutique’s collection of romance-inspired attire offers a one-of-a-kind experience for shoppers who walk through its doors. The experience is more than visual – there are delicate fabrics to feel and understated scents to smell, all things that let you know where you have landed.

As ecommerce became more important, however, Ho knew the challenge was translating that bespoke experience to digital.

Moving the experience online

In 2013, Boutique 1861 decided to go online.

Shoppers had been asking for an online store for years. In response, Touzin took leave from his ad agency job to construct the site. Sure, he admits, he had no idea how to build an ecommerce website, but what he couldn’t figure out on his own, he was certain the internet could teach him.

The pair were building more than a website; they were building an experience.

“We didn’t just want to build a website that sold merchandise. We wanted it to have a feeling,” Ho said. “Ecommerce is already a different world. You come to a store and you see the décor, the clothing, hear the music. You feel the environment. You live the experience. For us, the challenge was creating a website where you feel you were stepping into the store.”

That was not easy. After two months of trial and error – and a few times scrapping days of work to start over to try and get something right – they landed on a site they were comfortable with revealing.

On March 13, 2013, 1861.ca launched. Or so they thought. Following a promotional campaign leading up to the launch, including a lengthy story in the *Montreal Gazette*, “go live” didn’t go smoothly. The site crashed.

“Everything went upside down. We didn’t know what was happening,” Ho said.

It was not a great start, but it was a start. A few hours later, the site was running with a small team managing it from the store’s basement. Sales were slow at first, but the brand knew a big part of its future rested online.



Having a touch of the human experience makes the difference. Even if the package is travelling around the world, we want it to feel like we handed it to them personally.

Castle Ho
Owner, Boutique 1861



Elevating digital

Today, 1861.ca brings products from all of the brand's boutiques together, while delivering an experience as close to in store as possible.

Ho and Touzin sought "the perfect" at every turn through the process – the perfect font, the perfect lighting for photos, the perfect wallpaper for the page. On and on, the same care and concern for "the perfect" they put into the in-store experience were applied online without exception.

Every detail would be inspected.

"I come from the advertising world, so I like things complicated and unique," Touzin laughed. "We were not adhering to typical website design or user experience. But this is what we are going to do. We want something unique for our customers."

Their product photos, for example, are in a different league than many websites. No models, no harsh lighting, no white backgrounds. Ho and Touzin put the clothes into context of the in-store experience. Vintage mannequins. Soft lighting. Interesting backgrounds. It's all there to add to the ecommerce experience.

"Even if something is \$50," Touzin stressed, "I want to shoot it like it's worth \$2,000."

Even today, they remain unafraid to redo something if it is not "it" for them.

"This is a passion project. We were going to do this right," Ho said, pointing out they often reshoot product shots provided from suppliers to make them fit their online look. "We want something that presents every product individually, but makes them look all together."

"We were not – and still aren't – afraid to do things differently. We don't always have to do things the normal way. We are not afraid to say 'Let's try it.'"

Within a year of launch, the website became profitable, in part, because shoppers responded, a fact the team attributes to taking the time to do everything right, Ho said.

"We were building a recipe, figuring out what worked and what didn't, testing out everything. It took years before we saw what we wanted grow, that trust with shoppers who use it."

Bringing digital home

That attention to detail is working. The website has steadily increased in popularity with shoppers and has become a huge part of the boutique experience – no longer requiring Ho and Touzin to speak of an in-store versus online experience, but rather an overall 1861 experience.

"When people come into the store, I want them to feel like a VIP. Online, it is hard to translate that. But it is possible," Ho said. "Our website is one piece of that online, but so are things like the delivery experience."

Order from Boutique 1861 and you'll see what she means. Quality tissue paper, a light, sweet scent, a delicate ribbon criss-crossing your item mimicking the feel of brushing past items in the store.

Then there is the note. With each order, the staff includes a handwritten note, personalized to the purchase or the occasion. That idea took some time to perfect – it's a lot of work to pull off – but it has proven another bridge between in store and online.

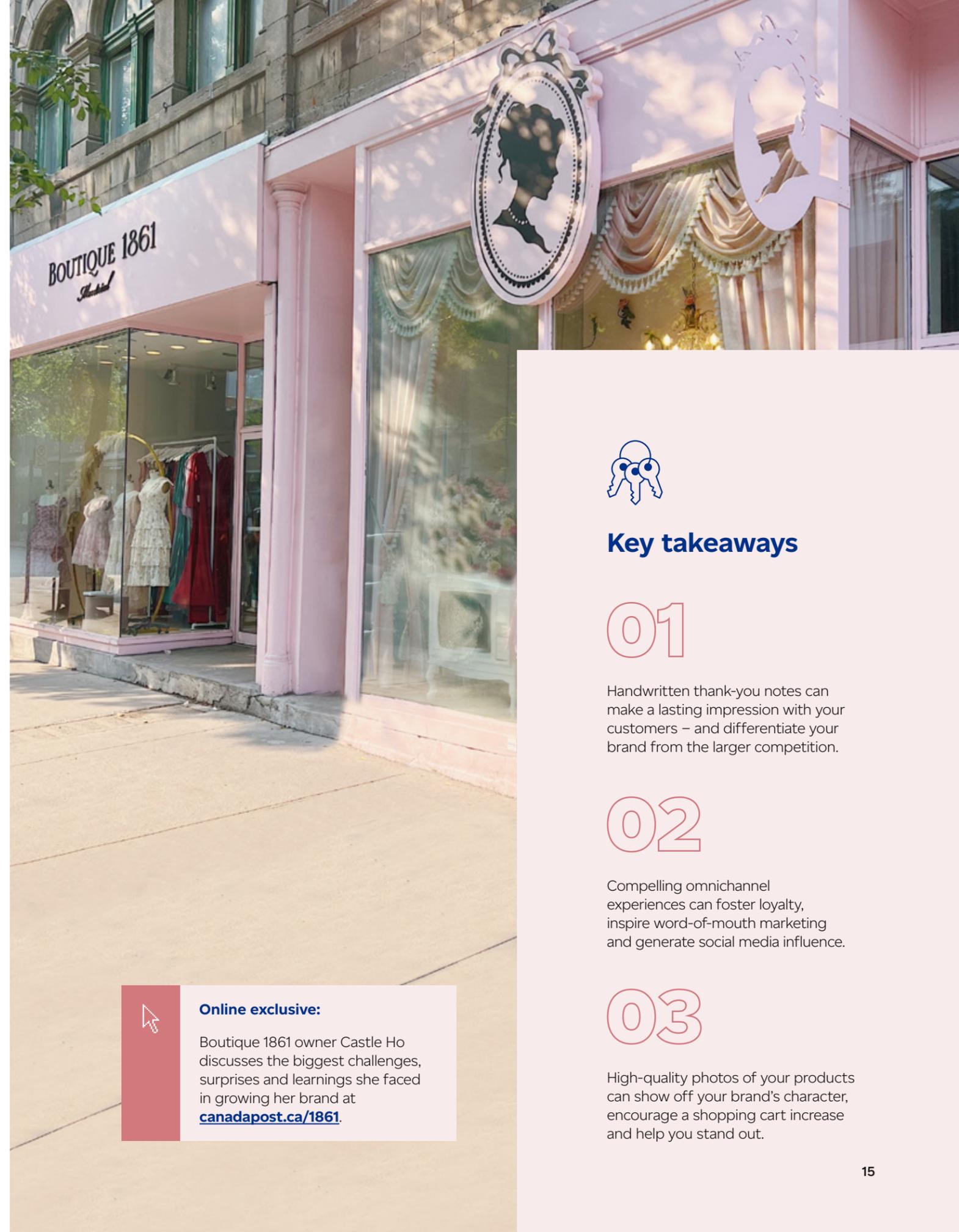
"The ecommerce world is all about technology, all so high tech," Ho said. "Having a touch of the human experience, letting shoppers know there is someone, a person, behind the product, makes the difference. This isn't just a package from a well-known, large online marketplace arriving fast and faceless. There was thought behind our shipment, care taken with it. Even today, that still means a lot."

"Even if the package is travelling across the country, or even around the world, we want it to feel like we handed it to them personally."

Since its first foray online, the Boutique 1861 team has sought ways to make the online experience personal – a process it plans to continue refining as a key part of the overall 1861 boutiques experience for shoppers.

"Our goal is to bring customers to a different universe," Ho said. "It is so nice to see customers walk into the store or log in to the website, step away from their busy lives of work and family, and take that time for yourself to go and shop. We know that is 'me time' that you are taking for you. That is why we always want to make it fun, pleasant – make it a memorable experience."

1861.ca ↗



Key takeaways

01

Handwritten thank-you notes can make a lasting impression with your customers – and differentiate your brand from the larger competition.

02

Compelling omnichannel experiences can foster loyalty, inspire word-of-mouth marketing and generate social media influence.

03

High-quality photos of your products can show off your brand's character, encourage a shopping cart increase and help you stand out.



Online exclusive:

Boutique 1861 owner Castle Ho discusses the biggest challenges, surprises and learnings she faced in growing her brand at canadapost.ca/1861.

‘It’s the only way forward’

Futurist calls on businesses to adopt a regenerative commerce mindset to create true impact

Picture all those conversations you had about sustainability 20 years ago, or about CSR (corporate social responsibility) 10 years ago, or even about ESG (environment, social and governance) last year. Recall all the buzzwords cited and promises made about a better future.

Now realize that no matter how noble the intentions at the time, they still might not be enough.

“Sustainability is no longer cutting it,” Lindsay Angelo explained. “Think of all the macro problems we’re facing, from climate change to global unrest, to social change. It’s going to take more from business and industry to tackle these things. Regenerative commerce is that next wave. It focuses not only on creating sustainable businesses, but also on creating businesses that give back more than we take.

“It’s a huge shift in thinking from net-neutral to net-positive – and it’s the only way forward.”

Thinking about the future

Angelo is an award-winning futurist, growth strategist and speaker. Named a Woman to Watch and Global Innovation Leader, she’s passionate about partnering with purpose-driven professionals and brands to build their “strategic thinking muscles” and craft strategies that drive growth and impact.

She is also one of the foremost thinkers about and advocates for [regenerative commerce](#).



“My thinking is centred around how businesses need to show up in order to solve big problems in the world. The intent of sustainability is just as it sounds – to sustain people and the planet. But that’s not enough at the rate we’re going. We must regenerate in order to solve our bigger problems.

“The sooner we can approach our business models from that mindset, the better we will be.”

A handful of leading-edge brands have formed strategies around regenerative commerce, but it’s largely undiscovered territory among business leaders and consumers.

“We’re still in a nascency of this concept,” Angelo said. “When I talk to people, that’s what excites them. Regenerative commerce is still a largely blank slate. There’s opportunity to rally around the concept, to own it.”

So, what is she talking about when she talks about regenerative commerce? Agriculture provides a good example.

Regenerative agriculture is an approach that feeds millions while also giving back to the ecosystem, the soil and the people that rely on the land. Through the use of crop rotation, managed grazing, biological pest control and other practices both ancient and modern, farming becomes a regenerative industry that gives back far more than it takes away.



“

To truly establish a regenerative approach, it takes radical honesty and candour with ourselves. We need to be clear about what the big issues are and how are we trying to work through them for the betterment of everyone.

Lindsay Angelo
Futurist, Strategist and TEDx Speaker

Now, apply that mindset to a number of different industries. “Modern and innovative businesses, they are looking at regenerative commerce not so much as a silo unto itself, but as the thing that actually drives revenue. They are asking themselves, ‘How do we make impact our bridge to profit?’” Angelo said.

That involves tearing down silos and merging strategic and regenerative planning.

“Part of the challenge with sustainability over the years is that there was not enough shared value with strategic planning. A strategic plan and a sustainability plan were both being developed, but in different functions within an organization. But if we can make regenerative planning the bridge to strategic planning or growth, then the two merge. They become one in the same, just slightly different prisms.”

Leading the way

As is often the case, small businesses and start-ups are leading the way, but Angelo stressed this mindset is aspirationally possible for any industry.

“Regenerative thinking empowers us, empowers our actions. Some businesses and industries will find it more difficult, of course. But we should always stretch ourselves to get there.”

No matter the size of the business, this isn’t an instant switch that gets flipped.

“The earlier you get started the better, of course. But there are small steps you can take before you traverse into a full-blown regenerative business model transformation,” she said. “If you’re an ecommerce player, for instance, take a single product or line and test the regenerative model. Use it as a Petri dish to test the notion of regenerating on a social level and on a planet level. If that works, then you can lift and shift it to other parts of your business.”

Any good regenerative approach involves looking the elephant in the room square in the eye rather than elbowing past it.

“There’s still a tendency in industry to focus on the importance over the existential,” Angelo said. “It’s easier for a social media company to focus on renewable energy of its data centres than it is to focus on its mental health impacts on kids. Or it’s easier for a pharma company to focus on making its packaging renewable than it is to focus on pricing and access to drugs.

“To truly establish a regenerative approach, it takes radical honesty and candour with ourselves. We need to be clear about what the big issues are and how are we trying to work through them for the betterment of everyone.”



Level up your leadership:

To learn more visit lindsayangelo.com or check out her [Strategic Thinking Masterclass](#).



Online exclusive:

Discover how the future of futurism is female (and a whole lot more) at canadapost.ca/futurism.

Femme retail

Understanding trends and preferences of Canadian female online shoppers



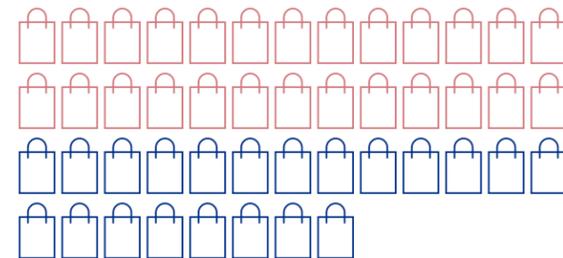
When it comes to Canadian ecommerce, what resonates with women? Canada Post recently surveyed 5,000 Canadian online shoppers, including 2,450 women, to better understand their personal priorities, expectations of the businesses they buy from and the overall online shopping experience they demand.

What they told us will provide you with key trends and insights to better connect with and cater to female online shoppers.

Rise of women online shoppers

Canadian women are shopping online more than ever before. They're comfortable and confident when it comes to making online purchases. As a result, we're seeing large increases in the frequency of their purchases. Young women (ages 18-24), in particular, make more than half of their purchases online.

Average number of purchases a year:



26 Female **21** Male

Top product categories for women:



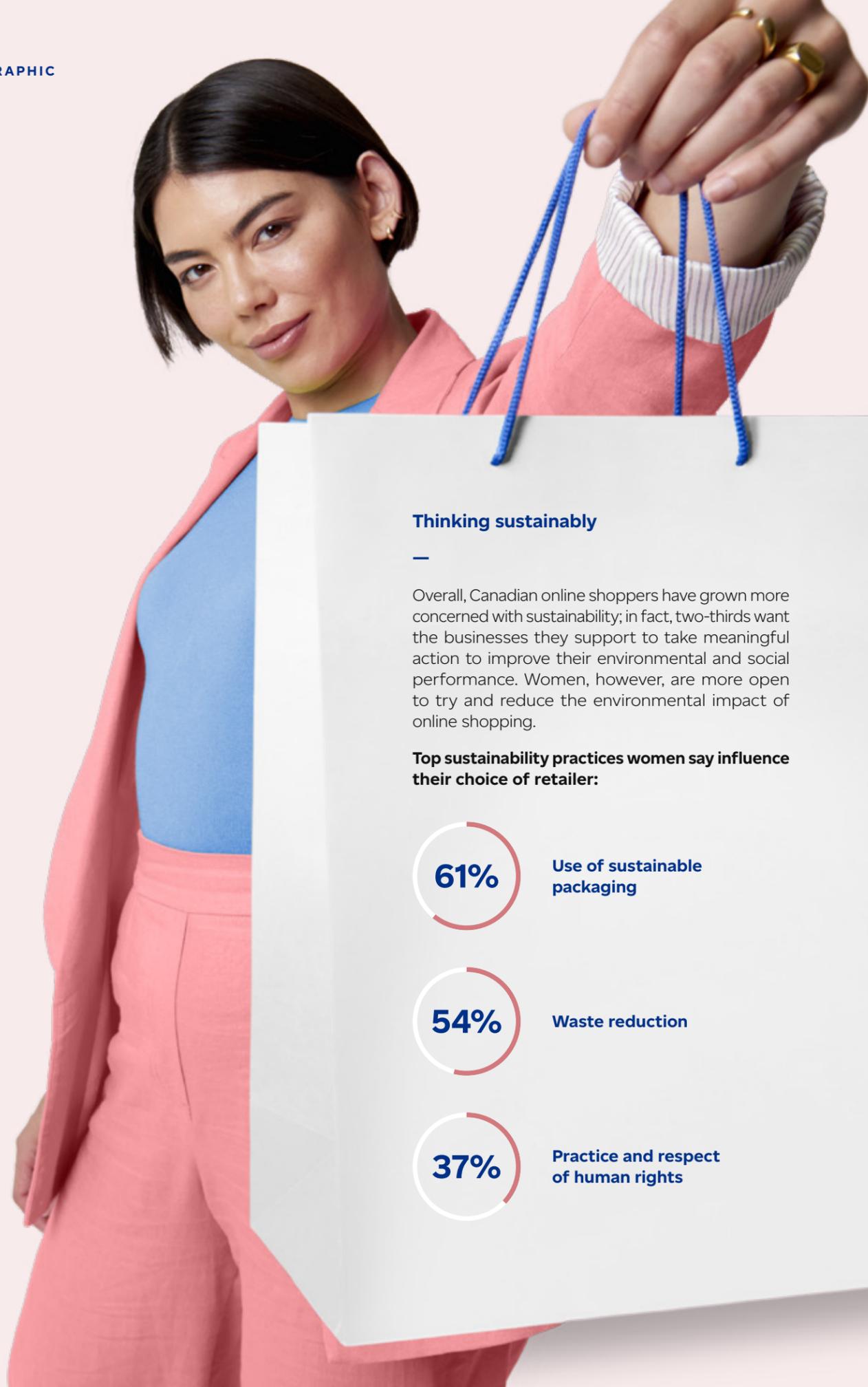
Cautiously allocating their dollars

Female shoppers are being cautious with their purchases, which could indicate they are conscious of financial pressures stemming from inflation and the economy at large. This likely makes them keener on finding deals and promotions as a means of being proactive with rising prices.



Women are adapting their online shopping behaviour in numerous ways to address rising prices and inflation:





Thinking sustainably

Overall, Canadian online shoppers have grown more concerned with sustainability; in fact, two-thirds want the businesses they support to take meaningful action to improve their environmental and social performance. Women, however, are more open to try and reduce the environmental impact of online shopping.

Top sustainability practices women say influence their choice of retailer:



Keen to support local businesses, in person

The post-pandemic shift back to in-person shopping is underway. Two in five Canadian consumers are planning on shopping in store this year to support local businesses.

Ecommerce giants have staked their claim – but nearly half of Canadian consumers (44 per cent) indicated that the biggest barrier to shopping with these retailers is that they would rather support local businesses.

Top reasons women are shopping more in store:



Discover more about Canadian online shoppers

Find more research-based insights and advice to help you optimize your ecommerce strategy by downloading our latest report, *Canadian ecommerce in focus*, at canadapost.ca/ecommercereport.

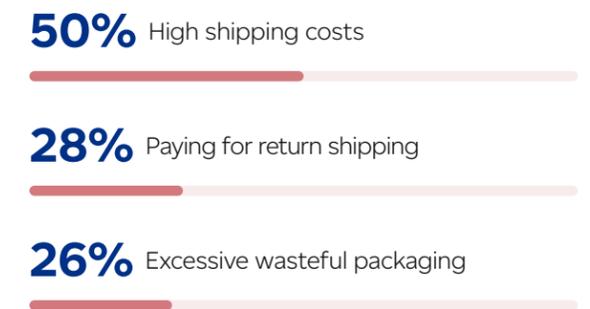
Make purchasing easy

The Canadian love affair with ecommerce isn't going anywhere, as convenience (66 per cent), the ability to compare prices (46 per cent) and access to a wider selection (45 per cent) continue to drive their desire to stay digital.

What women put emphasis on:



What causes frustrations:



Sources:
Canada Post's eShopper Surveys conducted by Phase 5 Consulting Group, May 2022 and May 2023.

Seven steps toward revolution

L'Oréal Canada thinking bigger about what it means to be sustainable

Revolutions are messy – but Maya Colombani thinks they can still be beautiful.

As Chief Sustainability & Human Rights Officer for [L'Oréal Canada](#), Colombani is in the business of fomenting sustainability revolutions in the C-suites of her company, across her entire industry and within the hearts and minds of consumers in Canada and around the globe.

“Everybody is attracted to being sustainable, but that doesn’t mean everybody acts sustainably,” she explained. “My biggest challenge is passing people from conviction to action. It is often not that people don’t want to do so. Sometimes, they don’t know where to start.”

Leading one of the country’s most advanced corporate sustainability efforts, Colombani has witnessed firsthand her industry’s ongoing sustainability revolution. She has plenty of advice for others who would follow.



01 Recognize the challenge

In an industry often associated with glamour and aesthetics, the changes sought by Colombani are about more than appearances; they are about substance.

“I have always had a love affair with nature. So I know how easy it is to convince people to have a better relationship with nature. Everybody wants a beautiful landscape and natural resources. But it is highly challenging and difficult to change habits around what they believe to be right, even if it is not. Everybody wants to be sustainable, but at the end of the day, we are not. If we were responsible and sustainable as a planet, we would not be in the state we are in.”

02 Start from within

No change, especially the magnitude of change Colombani is advocating for in the industry, happens unless there is complete buy-in from the top down.

“Change starts from the top – the president, the C-suite. That is what makes it real. That is what makes it a non-negotiable part of the business DNA.”

In September 2023, Colombani and the L'Oréal Canada Procurement Team were honoured with a pair of Canada’s Clean50 awards, recognizing outstanding individuals and teams who have made significant contributions to advancing sustainability in Canada.

Sustainability cannot be a topic in parallel with other business. It needs to be inside the business. Sustainability is challenging work. It is not about being good. Being good does not exist in sustainability. It is about always improving. We need to realize we are never good enough.”

03 Move beyond basic marketing

The allure of marketing often masks the true impact of beauty products. Colombani stresses the need to step out from empty messages and embrace your true self as a business for the benefit of your customer.

“It’s not about marketing. It’s not about being satisfied with ourselves. It is about being transparent. At the end of the day, people want authenticity. People are tired of marketing messages. They want action. If you want to do good in business, you have to be true and authentic about the good you are doing in society. It is not about promoting yourself; it is about transforming your value chain.”

04 Recognize your responsibility

L’Oréal Canada has had a strong presence in the country for the last 65 years: a head office in downtown Montréal, a plant in Saint-Laurent, Quebec; a sales office in Toronto; and a distribution centre located at the edge of Montréal’s Bois-de-Liesse Nature Park. That kind of size locally, then magnified in countries around the globe, means serious influence.

“When you are a worldwide leader, like we are at L’Oréal, present in more than 150 countries, leadership comes with responsibility to do something bigger than us, bigger than our business – it’s a responsibility to do something good for society.”

05 Embrace transparency and clarity

“Probably the biggest revolution we are creating is fomenting transparency for our customer. It’s not about business. It’s about transparency about our real impact, both environmental and social.”

Across its operations, L’Oréal Canada has committed to sustainable change: [A fragrance disclosure model](#) that lists scent ingredients, their origin and their olfactory values; [Inside Our Products website](#) that informs consumers about the ingredients in its product formulas; and a Transparency Summit focused on [L’Oréal’s Green Sciences commitments](#).

The company’s [Product Environmental and Social Labelling initiative](#), in particular, has shaken up the industry.



“

Probably the biggest revolution we are creating is fomenting transparency for our customer. It’s not about business. It’s about transparency about our real impact, both environmental and social.

Maya Colombani
Chief Sustainability & Human Rights Officer,
L’Oréal Canada

The system provides a product’s Environmental Score, ranked on a scale of A to E, which is the cumulative score of 14 planetary impact factors measured at every stage of a product’s life cycle, from ingredient production, packaging and manufacturing to consumer use, biodegradability and end-of-life packaging disposal. Labels also display key information regarding a product’s social impact, including compliance with the fundamental principles of the United Nations on labour standards and the number of suppliers committed to social inclusion that contributed to the product.

“We have to change everything we do. In every decision we make, we have to consider if this is the best solution for our business, the best solution for society and the best solution for nature. At the end of the day, nature doesn’t need us; we need nature.”

06 Commit to collaboration

This kind of radical change shouldn’t stop at your company’s front doors. Colombani envisions a collective transformation within the beauty industry – a shift from competitive rivalry to a shared commitment to transparency.

Today, L’Oréal cooperates with all beauty brands to provide the same level of openness with consumers.

“This is a huge revolution – and when you consider we are cooperating with all beauty brands to have the same system of transparency, it is even bigger. For me, that is what a revolution looks like. You twist from a traditional, old-fashioned business mindset of competition and feathering yourself to a business of trust, authenticity and responsibility. That is huge.”

This revolution transcends individual brands, as collaboration becomes a driving force for change across the beauty industry, she explained. This shift emphasizes that the pursuit of sustainability is not confined to individual successes, but rather a joint endeavor to reshape consumer-brand relationships based on trust and shared values.

“Society expects us to work this way. They are ready to change their consumption habits; they are demanding we provide them more information. Which is exactly what we are doing now. Changing our relationship with consumers from a marketing relationship to a relationship of trust and transparency. To me, that is a social revolution.”

07 Know the job may never be finished

In a world inundated with messages, Colombani champions a different narrative. Through L’Oréal’s initiatives, the beauty industry’s sustainability revolution is gaining momentum – but is far from a completed task.

“As the pursuit of authenticity becomes central to business strategies, a new era of beauty emerges – one where products, practices and partnerships resonate with a shared commitment to a better world.”

loreal.com/canada :



Online exclusive:

Read how Maya Colombani and L’Oréal Canada plan to lead Canada into a more sustainable future at canadapost.ca/lorealcanada.

Sweet smell (and taste) of success

Ecommerce helps turn
Candy Funhouse into a corner
candy store for the world



Candy Funhouse lives up to its name, an ecommerce brand offering unique, nostalgic candies from around the world. It brings it all together – the hard to find, the discontinued, the limited edition, the “not available in Canada.” It’s specialty – and a little more. For customers, the brand is all about, you guessed it, fun.

But for Candy Funhouse, its brand is all about reinventing and reimagining what a candy store can be in the 21st century and how ecommerce can sweeten the deal.

Beyond the corner store

Candy stores need foot traffic, and unless you are located in high-traffic, often touristy places like Niagara Falls or Las Vegas, the volume of customers plus the frequency of purchases don’t add up to enough business to support in-store shopping.

But online, the foot traffic is seemingly endless.

Candy Funhouse started off as a brick-and-mortar store in Cambridge, Ont., a store that happened to have a website. Soon, however, online sales surpassed in-person sales and the company quickly pivoted to exclusively online.

Operating out of Co-founder and COO Mo Hejazi’s house, the company scaled quickly, with Canada Post as its sole shipper, physically moving from an in-home operation to a warehouse space, to another warehouse space, to another warehouse space. You get the idea.

While the physical space was necessary to accommodate increased sales, the virtual environment had long been secured thanks to the company’s early embrace of ecommerce.

“A lot of candy stores realized ecommerce was vital when the pandemic hit. But we were early adopters. We had a website for years before that. We had a relationship with Canada Post. We had all the processes in place,” Hejazi said. “When the

pandemic hit, all these other stores panicked and set up their stores quickly. But they didn’t have the SEO, the internet history to be ranked like we are.”

While the company uses social media to drive traffic, its biggest secret is SEO. With 3,500 products and growing, the company ranks for more than 25,000 keywords on Google.

Don’t believe them? Try it. Candy Funhouse will pop up on pretty much any candy search term you can think of.

“It’s really, really important having that real estate at the top or high on the first page of search results,” Hejazi said. “I’m proud to say that through a lot of years of intense work, we’re ranked up there.”

When Candy Funhouse opened its doors to the entire country as an ecommerce brand, it knew Canada Post would help it deliver on that promise.

“It is really important to us that Canada Post ships to every single address, including PO boxes, in the country. Every single one,” Hejazi said.

Nik Maharaj, Brand Partnerships, added, “We have a lot of customers in rural areas, or with physical limitations to getting out, or even customers that don’t have anything other than a gas station or convenience store to get candy. The specialty candy store experience might feel so far away to them. Canada Post has allowed us to connect with those people.”

Hunting down the 'exotic'

In Canada, the confectionary category – which includes chocolate and candy – will generate nearly \$21 billion in revenue in 2023. Break that down and it equates to \$540 spent by every single Canadian last year. That market is expected to grow as well, with analysts saying confectionary revenues will top \$27 billion annually by 2028.

And don't fall into the trap of thinking it's all about Halloween. Candy is big business all year round, Hejazi stressed, especially for a brand like Candy Funhouse.

"Halloween isn't our spotlight moment. Nowadays, Halloween has become a big-box holiday where people buy large quantities of cheap candy. That's not our focus. Where we stand out is that we don't offer just the ordinary. We're not your go-to for basic candy corn, but we are the place that can hook you up with candy-corn-flavoured licorice."

For Candy Funhouse, data shows its main customers are women, between 25 and 35 years old, but Hejazi stressed the appeal is for many who are fans of retro and, especially, the exotic.

Don't know "exotic" candy? Think funky flavours or different versions of your favourite brands. You know Skittles, for instance, but have you tried Skittles Cotton Candy from the United States, or Skittles Fruit Squishy Cloudz from the UK, or Skittles Yogurt from China? And, yes, a virtual customer line has already formed for the release of Kit Kat Churro.

It is perhaps the fastest-growing aspect of the industry, as its popularity with influencers and super fans has exploded thanks to social media.

"We cater to the early adopters of candy. Within our selection of thousands of products, we have something for everyone under that umbrella. So if you're someone who wants to try the newest thing, we are the go-to place for it," Hejazi said. "To be able to say you tried it – whatever it is – is a badge of honour for these customers. That's where the fun of the business is, in procuring all these really cool, weird candies."

Besides individual sales, the company focuses on wholesale, supplying candy stores, hotels, events and candy buffets across the country.

"There are hundreds of reasons. Candy can be added to anything and everything," Hejazi said.

Future outlook

You could argue Candy Funhouse hopes to be the corner candy store for the world.

Beyond eyeing larger warehouse facilities, the company continues its international push. Take a recent partnership with NBA All-Star Giannis Antetokounmpo as a signal to expand further into the United States and beyond.

"We strive to create and honour candy-inspired moments within popular culture to make life a little sweeter for our fans and customers," Maharaj said. "After so much success in Canada, we aim to propel ourselves onto the global stage, starting with our expansion into the United States."

"We want to be that household name across the globe that people think about when they want to experience a little joy."

candyfunhouse.ca ↗



When the pandemic hit, all these other stores panicked and set up their stores quickly. But they didn't have the SEO, the internet history to be ranked like we are.

Mo Hejazi
Co-founder and COO, Candy Funhouse



Key takeaways

01

To successfully scale, businesses need a combination of the right strategy, team, partners and processes in place.

02

Businesses will stay competitive in their niche if they harness the power of SEO by consistently researching and updating keywords to stay relevant.

03

A positive delivery experience can help open new revenue streams and increase brand awareness. Your delivery carrier represents your brand and drives loyalty.

Source:
Statista, Confectionary - Canada, 2023.

New processing centre built for the future of ecommerce in Canada



As ecommerce continues to grow in Canada, the Albert Jackson Processing Centre is poised to become a game-changer for businesses across the country. With its impressive capacity and cutting-edge technology, the facility promises to optimize delivery times, increase efficiency and streamline logistics for Canadian businesses.

“The Albert Jackson Processing Centre is much more than a building – it is a generational investment in the future of our country,” said Doug Ettinger, President and CEO of Canada Post. “This facility will drive our network nationwide and help support the Canadian economy for decades to come. It will solidify Canada Post as our country’s ecommerce delivery leader.”

Fueling the growth of Canadian businesses

The numbers tell the story of the Albert Jackson Processing Centre’s impact on Canadian businesses.

Opened in fall 2023, this leading-edge, zero-carbon building is the hub of the company’s national network located in northeast Toronto.

As Canada Post’s largest parcel-sorting facility at 585,000 square feet – roughly the size of six Canadian football fields – the facility will have the ability to process 1,000 packages per minute and one million packages a day. When you break that down, that’s more than 60,000 packages being sorted per hour – 50 per cent more than the Gateway facility in Mississauga, Ont., previously the company’s largest parcel plant.

With eight kilometres of conveyors and automated sorters that process more than 90 per cent of all packages, a package can arrive, be processed and ready for dispatch to more than 300 Canada Post facilities in less than four minutes.

The \$470 million facility includes more than 150 dock doors, with 600 trucks moving in and out of the facility a day. The yard will hold more than 200 trailers, with another 100 spots for five-ton trucks.

When you add up all the numbers, while the Albert Jackson Processing Centre is located in the Greater Toronto Area, its impact will be felt in every corner of the country.

Committing to sustainability

The Albert Jackson Processing Centre is more than just Canada Post’s largest parcel-sorting facility – it represents the company’s commitment to sustainability and a greener future.

“Canada Post is committed to being the kind of corporate leader Canadians expect us to be, and that means leading on the environment and better reflecting Canadians’ values,” Ettinger said.

Canada Post set a goal of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Announced in June 2022, the plan includes converting to a fully electric vehicle fleet, retrofitting buildings, building net-zero-carbon buildings and sourcing renewable energy for operations.

In April 2023, the company introduced carbon-neutral shipping for all ground, domestic shipments through the purchase of high-quality carbon offsets. It's part of the company's commitment to help businesses and Canadians make sustainable shipping choices.

As Canada Post's first net-zero-carbon building, the Albert Jackson Processing Centre leads the way as the largest industrial project in Canada with the Zero Carbon Building standard designation.

The facility features environmentally sustainable solutions, including rooftop solar panels to generate clean, renewable energy on site; sensor-controlled lighting that dims based on occupancy and daylight; 10 electric vehicle charging stations for employees; and infrastructure to support the future electrification of a five-ton fleet.

Additionally, the Albert Jackson Processing Centre provides support for employees by creating a workplace that includes ergonomically designed work centres and equipment, six fully enclosed rest pods throughout the plant, a multi-faith room, a wellness-fitness centre, gender-neutral washrooms and skylights on the roof and exterior walls to bring in natural light.

Journeying into a sustainable future

Canada Post's commitment to sustainability will help businesses reach their sustainability objectives.

By prioritizing sustainable shipping solutions, businesses can improve their brand reputation, save costs, access new markets and have a positive impact on the environment. As consumers become more environmentally conscious, partnering with Canada Post can demonstrate a business's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and making sustainable choices.

The Albert Jackson Processing Centre will be at the heart of that effort for years to come.

"As Canadians increasingly rely on ecommerce, the ability to effectively deliver goods to every community will be integral to our country's future," Ettinger said.



Let's get started!

We're ready to fuel your business's growth. Find out how by getting in touch with one of our ecommerce experts at canadapost.ca/nextlevel.



Honouring the legacy of Albert Jackson

While the Albert Jackson Processing Centre will help transform Canada Post for the future, its name pays respect to the past.

Born in 1858 in the United States, Albert Jackson fled to Canada as a child. In 1882, he was hired to be a letter carrier in Toronto, but faced significant racial barriers in his workplace. He was initially barred from working, before winning the right to do the job he was hired to do.

Jackson served as a letter carrier for almost 36 years in Harbord Village until his death in 1918.

A few of her favourite things

JB Skin Sävvi roots its success in forming long-lasting customer (and, yes, a few famous) relationships

Jennifer Brodeur's favourite things are the lasting relationships she built along the way – relationships, the JB Skin Sävvi founder says, that provided a foundation for the brand's success.

An entrepreneur for “way too many years to count,” Brodeur created Max+ in 2003. The groundbreaking LED light therapy device caught the eye of none other than Oprah Winfrey. The former talk show host later introduced the device to other famous friends, including former U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama.

“Miss Winfrey gives me the best introductions to the best people,” laughed Brodeur, who has worked up close and personal with these women on their skin care.

In 2016, Brodeur was ready to launch JB Skin Sävvi – pronounced “savvy” – after 13 years of dedicated research to create the skincare brand. Her flagship Peoni line, in fact, was launched on Nov. 3, 2016, in Oprah's Favorite Things.

“That was kind of crazy,” Brodeur said. “It was never something I necessarily wanted, desired or expected. When the day came and it was certain that it was going to happen, I remember thinking to myself, ‘This is gonna be a huge game-changer!’ And it was. It completely changed my whole career and life.”

There are few people – and even fewer brands – unfamiliar with the Favorite Things phenomena and its impact.

From 1996 until 2010, Oprah's Favorite Things ran as a highly anticipated segments on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, where audience members at the taping of the episode received items from that year's list for free.

Once the popular television show ended, Favorite Things lived on in the December issues of *O, The Oprah Magazine* and then online. No matter where it appeared, fans followed – and purchased the selected items. It became known as the Oprah Effect, an outsized bump brand experienced when tapped by the famed daytime host.

In 2016, JB Skin Sävvi (then known as JB Skin Guru) found itself among 102 products on the list, ranging from scented fire starters (“an evening of pure coziness”) to a travel pillow organizer (“Never touch that grimy seat-back compartment again”). When it came to JB Skin, Oprah and team selected the Peoni cleanser, toner and cream. The entry read:

“This new skincare line – started by my facialist, Jennifer Brodeur, a true skin guru – is free of toxins, artificial fragrances, and gluten. Get ready to glow!”

Twenty-six words. That was all it took.

Initially, Brodeur planned on a quiet rollout of the line, a small Canadian tour with events in Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver. Favorite Things changed those plans the day it came out.

Beyond the list itself published on Oprah.com, there was the annual media coverage of the list, an announcement treated by outlets around the world with all the attention of the elevation of a new pope, with stories spotlighting each product.



It's very easy to meet people, but it's the longevity of that relationship for me. Getting your foot in the door is one thing, but staying and being relevant and thriving are completely different things.

Jennifer Brodeur
Founder, JB Skin Sävvi



“The day it came out – the very day – we had so many PR and media requests from all over. In Times Square, I was on one of those giant billboards with my product. Somebody sent me a picture and I passed it on to my mom – she thought I Photoshopped it,” Brodeur laughed.

“It was just a whirlwind, a full year whirlwind where everyone who didn’t want to see you wants to see you. Suddenly, every door is wide open.”

The ramp-up in business was as exciting as it was terrifying.

“When you go that fast, it’s daunting,” Brodeur stressed. “We went from 0 to 100 – we grew 30 per cent and then 50 per cent. That’s a very hard thing because you have nothing to base yourself off of. There are no studies on this. I remember being out of stock at some point and people were upset, but how was I supposed to guess we would increase our sales by 50 per cent? Nobody is prepared for that.”

In a short time, she and her small team flattened a steep learning curve on everything from production to making products “Amazon ready to go,” the retail megasite where brands on the list were made available.

Throughout the monumental effort, JB Skin Sävvi, at first, survived, then began to thrive. Not satisfied with short-term success, however, Brodeur looked for ways to build the brand sustainably. Building deep, meaningful relations with clients proved to be her differentiator.

“There are so many skincare brands in the world and so many good ones. What makes you better than another one?” she explained. “Of course, you can’t name-drop. That’s not the way to go. But when your client name-drops you in her magazine and tells people that you’re her person and your products are her choice, then it changes the conversation. There’s a big difference between telling people ‘I do this for her’ – and I don’t do that, maybe it’s a Canadian thing – and having her say it.”

A year and a half later, the brand’s Lumi and Le Masque collections landed [on the pages of Vogue magazine along with Obama](#). It was another out-of-the-blue dream come true for the brand.

“Being in Quebec, being Canadian, I never thought something like being in *Vogue* was even possible. And to have not only that, but to have Mrs. Obama partake in the piece and talk about the brand, it’s something special,” Brodeur said. “I always joke and say the Favorite Things was like my first Oscar and then the *Vogue* piece was my second Oscar. I figure after that, I’m happy with anything else.”

Although that article landed only a handful of years ago, it’s a different world today. Her Favorite Things and *Vogue* appearances were organic finds. No paid advertisement. No pay-to-play. No influencer or market affiliation.

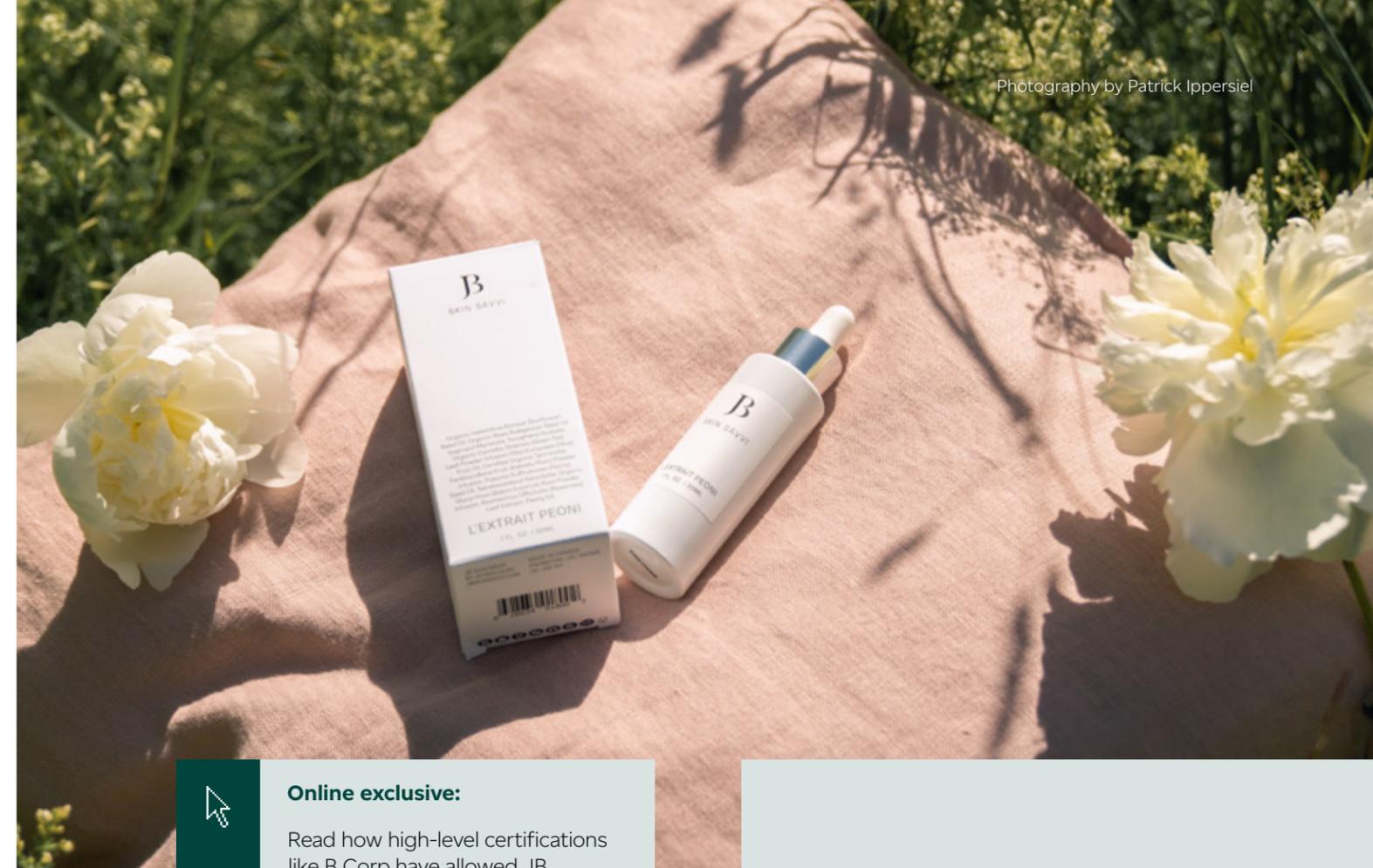
“Today, everything has changed. I don’t think we could do what we did unless we had really, really heavy pockets.”

That made them more meaningful to Brodeur, the brand and its customers.

“When the person you work with talks about you and endorses you to people, those testimonials have a very different impact than when you’re trying to sell yourself.”

For Brodeur, the authenticity of these opportunities built from long-term relationships trumps the recent trend for short-term transactions.

“When the whole influencer world started, we were solicited daily by people – pay this person, do this, do that. But I never understood. I’ll pay this influencer for today and then tomorrow morning she’ll be talking about another product. It didn’t make any sense to me,” she explained.



Online exclusive:
Read how high-level certifications like B Corp have allowed JB Skin Sävvi to be clear about its intentions as a sustainable brand at canadapost.ca/getsavvi.

“How does the end user or the consumer, how do they see credibility in that? We never really pursued that. A lot of people said to me that that decision was going to be the demise of my business, that there was no way we could sustain this because you need the influencers. Now, I joke that because we took the time to build long-term relationships, we had the two most influential women on the planet.”

She continued, “It’s very easy to meet people, but it’s the longevity of that relationship for me. Getting your foot in the door is one thing, but staying and being relevant and thriving are completely different things.”

jbskinsavvi.com



Key takeaways

01

Authentic brands build deep, meaningful relationships with customers by being transparent, consistent and customer-focused.

02

Loyal customers are great advocates. They spread positive word-of-mouth about your business and can help you raise awareness and increase acquisition.



Breathing new life

Souris Mini treasures creating joy through its clothing from one generation to the next

At the birth of her first daughter in 1987, Annie Bellavance dreamed of dressing her in beautiful, snuggly clothes that would also be long-lasting. But at the time, all she discovered was kid fashions that were either boring or unsuitable for child's play.

Unable to find what she wanted, Bellavance decided to create her own wardrobe for her child.

"I was altering most of the pieces I'd buy, adding patches, colourful fabric inserts, fancy buttons," explained the Souris Mini founder and brand manager. "I was trying to bring childlike joy to the clothes they wore."

The passionate fashion designer was pleased with her work, and so were fellow parents at her daughter's daycare who noticed and started inquiring if Bellavance could design items for their children.

It didn't take long for the orders to multiply, inspiring Bellavance to visit other daycares with her collections. She visited a different centre each weekday. Parents wrote down what they would like, adding their own specifications, such as "it must be easy to wash"; "fabric that dries fast"; "patches on the knees and elbows."



On and on, the special requests continued.

"During those two years, I took note of all those comments. It was a fantastic market study, done right in the field, defining the exact profile of the people to target," Bellavance said. "I had in my hands a comprehensive picture of the unsatisfied needs and expectations of my future clientele. My niche was defined in black and white."

Nearly 35 years later, Bellavance continues to inject colour and joy into the lives of children thanks to a brand commitment that puts just as much emphasis on the next generation as it does on the current one.

Opening its doors

In 1989, Bellavance and her husband, Steeve Beaudet, took her fashions out of the daycares and into stores, launching Souris Mini.

At first, the brand's collections were sold in well-known Quebec retail outlets like Frisco, Clément and Petit Bateau. In 2002, the company opened its first Souris Mini boutique in Québec City. It was an instant hit and led to further growth.

Today, Souris Mini operates 18 stores in Quebec with its collections sold in other retail stores across Canada and the United States. The company also boasts a vibrant ecommerce site, which includes a [second-hand re-commerce platform](#).



Durability. Quality. Creativity. Everything else falls into place when you have those three things.

Annie Bellavance
Founder and Brand Manager, Souris Mini

Every piece, Bellavance explains, revolves around a companywide commitment to provide customers with clothing that will "live many lives."

Admittedly, that can be a difficult pursuit when dealing with children's clothing. Kids aren't the easiest on their clothes. But Bellavance has put that commitment at the heart of her brand. She trusts her customers come to Souris Mini, in part, because of three key traits of the brand: Durability. Quality. Creativity.

Everything else, Bellavance explains, falls into place when you have those three things.

Embracing family traditions

In many Quebec households, Souris Mini is part of family traditions. Those original fashions are still out there. Now adults, the children who used to wear the brand 10, 20, even 30 years ago now dress their own sons and daughters, or nephews and nieces, in it.

The brand, Bellavance points out, is akin to another family member. In fact, Souris Mini has designed a brand that considers the users of its product almost from day one.

Through its philanthropic program, [My First Beanie](#), the company contributes thousands of free beanies to newborns. To acknowledge this gesture, the new parent or their family is free to make a donation, whereupon 100 per cent of the funds received through this program are committed to the purchase of equipment that improves the care offered to children in the participating hospitals.

Since its inception in 2009, My First Beanie has delivered more than 226,000 beanies to children and raised nearly \$1 million.

“Souris Mini loves to be an important part of children’s lives, from school and day camp, to travel and so on. We want to be there for them and their parents,” said Nancy Gagnon, Client Services and In-store Operations Manager.

Bellavance agreed, “It is important to us to let children be children. That’s what Souris Mini stands for – long-lasting fashionable clothes for kids that facilitate joy and play.”



Creating new life

What would a popular brand be without its own fan club? Check your favourite social media platform. There, you will find accounts and pages dedicated to Souris Mini, where you can exchange snowsuits, babywear, sweaters, skirts or pants, because, with no surprise, those items haven’t worn out through the years.

While on-mission for the brand, the informal solution wasn’t perfect.

“We love the passion, but we needed to provide a better framework for our customers, protect people from possible fraud and facilitate the reselling-buying process,” Gagnon explained. “We knew we needed our own free re-commerce platform, hosted on our website.

“Souris Mini Second Hand is a safe and collaborative resale platform that connects second-hand sellers and buyers of the beautiful Souris Mini community. This is our goal. We want to create a movement of solidarity and exchange to allow people to make fabulous finds and to recycle for the good of our beautiful planet.”

On Souris Mini Second Hand, accessed by a single link on the company homepage, buyers purchase knowing their items are official, Gagnon said. The Souris Mini team reviews every ad to identify those that do not comply to Second Hand’s criteria of transparency and respect.

“This marketplace is so secure that the risk of a financial loss or a fraudulent sale is near to none,” she continued.

For sellers, they get the price they want, paid out in the form of a Souris Mini gift card. Souris Mini takes no sales fees from the transaction; in fact, the company offers a 10 per cent bonus of the total amount as thanks for using the platform and contributing to its mission.

“By supporting the fundamental principles of the circular economy, we are taking our social and environmental commitment further. It’s our way of fighting the polluting effect of fast fashion,” Gagnon said.

sourismini.com ↗



Key takeaways

01

Many successful businesses start with a creative individual who identifies a gap in the market and develops innovative products to solve that problem.

02

Re-commerce programs create value and drive innovation, bringing retailers one step closer to a fully circular supply chain while driving customer loyalty.

Embracing the power of ‘we’

Meaningful connections with customers are all part of the fun for Zuri & Dre

In the world of toy manufacturing, one Montréal-based brand is working closely with its customers to change the industry. Zuri & Dre, founded by Danielle Murrell Cox, isn't just about colouring books, plush dolls, home décor and accessories; it's also a celebration of diversity and the indomitable spirit of community.

Recently, Zuri & Dre was named a winner of the [Canada Post Tales of Triumph](#) contest in the Customer Connection category, an award recognizing small businesses that go the extra mile to create meaningful connections with customers.

Originally with dreams of launching her own design agency, Murrell Cox generated social media buzz thanks to diverse avatars she created in her minimalist style and posted online. Based on that positive feedback, she penned two popular colouring books, *Black Queens* (2017) and *Black Kings* (2018), both celebrated for their representation and positive affirmations.

“The Zuri & Dre brand was born from the love of art and diversity found in the colouring books, coupled with the help and feedback of the community,” Murrell Cox said.

Today, Zuri & Dre is well known for its series of plush dolls featuring Zuri and Dre, among other characters. Murrell Cox is proud that her creations are cuddly and squeezable, not hard plastic dolls with supermodel dimensions or superheroes from far off worlds.

“We represent the everyday. We represent you and me. We represent your aunt and uncle, your neighbour down the street, a family friend.”

That relatability has resonated with shoppers. The brand's biggest support, in fact, comes from women of colour who were part of a generation that didn't have things like this as a kid. Some of these women want something better for their kids; others order the dolls for themselves.

“We're helping some adults heal their inner child, one plushie at a time,” Murrell Cox said.

“People kept reaching out to me to say they love it. That made me believe it could go somewhere. Young Danielle, little me, would have loved to have something like this. To have something that looked like me at home, something to hold onto, something to talk to, maybe I would not have felt so insecure about what I looked like when I was a kid. Young Danielle is proud.”

That community built around the brand and its products has grown since launch and continues to offer feedback on products as well as inspiration to keep going. Murrell Cox's greatest joy, in fact, comes from the fact that her toys have become part of kids' bedtime routines and daily lives.

“That is what keeps me going.”

As the brand evolves and moves forward, that intimacy with its community remains key.

“As a consumer, you always want to know what you're buying into, who you are buying into, and I feel our transparency helps consumers do so,” Murrell Cox said. “I am a team of one. But I am still comfortable saying ‘we’ because of my customer connections. The brand wouldn't be where it is without them.”

zurianddre.com ↗



 [Hear more Tales of Triumph](#)

Discover more about all the finalists and winners of the 2023 Tales of Triumph contest. Visit canadapost.ca/inspiringtales.

Lighting the way

Marée Chandelles builds brand around commitments to creativity, community, sustainability – and even a little fun

You don't need to burn the candle at both ends to create a successful brand.

Just ask Audréanne Goulet and Marie-Pier Bourgault, co-founders of Marée Chandelles, a successful Quebec-based lifestyle brand that has kept customers burning with desire for their candles for the last 8 years.

The pair has not only built a successful business, but kept it grounded in the company's original commitments to creativity, community and sustainability – and even a little fun.

Pouring their heart into it

Goulet and Bourgault met by happenstance when both were in their early twenties. Neither were looking to start a business. They simply were looking for a way to have fun. They landed on candle making as their weekend activity.

"It was relaxing for us, like having a drink on the patio," Bourgault said.

Each purchased a candle-making starter kit for about \$60. After conducting research into what materials would be the best to use for their candle creations, the pair landed on soy wax over paraffin.

At the time, toxic fumes and environmentally harmful manufacturing processes were already getting a bad rap. Soybeans, a renewable resource grown without pesticides or genetic modification, lit the way toward sustainability and environmental responsibility – something Goulet and Bourgault could get behind.

At the start, each candle was made in Mason jars in the founders' kitchens (to the point of breaking one of their ovens). The products proved to be a hit with friends, so they continued to invest in the business by pouring any profits right back in.

"We have never splurged and have always operated by reinvesting our profits, which today makes us completely financially independent entrepreneurs," Goulet said. "It is thanks to the \$60 we each invested (and to an enormous amount of work and research) that we are the owners of a prosperous and appreciated Quebec company."

Today, the Marée Chandelles online shop is brimming with carefully selected products, largely candles, but also a range of products carefully designed around well-being and relaxation.

From the kitchens, the company moved into Bourgault's basement, then to a small commercial space. The company now occupies a 5,000-square-foot workshop in in Trois-Rivières, where its candles are handmade. Each one is created, poured, labelled and packaged by the Marée Chandelles team.

Since 2015, sales have tripled. The company now distributes to more than 250 stores across Quebec and has a team of 12 people.

The company has built its brand on creativity and renewal of its products. That's why in addition to its seven regular candles, the company generates excitement among its customers by designing seasonal collections.



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Audréanne Goulet
Co-founder, Marée Chandelles

Values that burn bright

Nothing can hold a candle to the values that have guided the company's growth since its inception: caring, a community and customer focus, with an eye for quality down to the smallest detail.

Its products are made in an eco-responsible way, and are all handmade in Quebec. The company reaches into its community for a lot of its work.

"We offer original and elaborate visuals and fragrances that are sometimes out of the ordinary. We have also done several collaborations with illustrators from here to create our labels, and it is certainly something we will repeat in the future," Bourgault said. "We stand out for our authenticity, our proximity to the community and our rather unparalleled customer service."

For the last few years, Marée Chandelles produced a charity candle in honour of their friend, Caroline, who died of cancer. *Imbued with hope* is a lemon-scented candle – their friend's favourite – with 40 per cent of its proceeds donated to the Canadian Cancer Society.

Its values, deeply rooted in the culture of Marée Chandelles, line up with research showing that today's Canadian market considers staff well-being (71 per cent), transparent and trustworthy management (67 per cent), and sustainable and ethical product sourcing (65 per cent) before placing an order.

Lighting the way for buyers

Communications reflect the company's values of caring, community and customer focus, and quality at all levels – creating a bond of trust that enriches the buying experience.

"Good communication is very important to us," Bourgault said. "It brings the community together and fosters a sense of belonging, whether for partners, staff or customers, and satisfaction naturally follows." Goulet and Bourgault are late millennials whose empathetic approach resonates with younger generations.

"We are very close to our customers, and take the time to answer all their questions, whether by message or during our trade shows," Goulet said.



"We always take the time to personally answer questions on Instagram and Facebook and show our appreciation by putting a thoughtful note (never the same one!) or a little gift like a sample or matches in every package we send."

Bourgault agreed, "It's why we put our trust in Canada Post. Having your own business always comes with its share of risks, and you have to dare to take them. You have to trust your instincts. It's really important to feel that your business partner has the same vision as yours, or at least that the communication channel is open and easy. This avoids unpleasant surprises along the way."

Working together. Moving forward.

There has been real joy found in the two friends building a business together.

Bourgault is patient, rational and in control of situations. She has a calming effect on Goulet and she always manages to make Goulet see all the facets of her ideas. When Goulet gets too carried away, Bourgault brings her back to earth if necessary.

"Basically, she's a bit like my conscience – or my second mother," Goulet said.

Bourgault laughed, "What makes us strong is really our complementarity. What I admire about her is almost the complete opposite of what she said. Audréanne is such a determined woman. If she has an idea in mind, I guarantee you she will go through with it. No matter the pitfalls or the refusals, she will persist and will succeed. She is also extremely attentive, both in the private and professional spheres."

The pair are excited to see what the future brings and will be informed by what they learned along the way to continue growing into the future.

"The key is to persevere and not to be discouraged by refusals or obstacles, because there will certainly be some," Goulet said. "It's constant work starting and running a business, and you have to give 100 per cent. We had to feel that our foundations were solid before we dropped everything and committed ourselves full time, but when we decided to invest ourselves entirely, we evolved rapidly."

mareechandelles.com ↗



Key takeaways

01

Don't be afraid of failure. Recognize and embrace it as a stepping stone on the path to entrepreneurial success.

02

By carefully listening to your target audience, the people around you, staff and business partners, you can prevent many tactical errors.

03

Your brand can be more than just a place to buy products. Build it into a place your customers can gather and enjoy the growth that results.

Source:
Canada Post's 2022 eShopper Survey conducted by Phase 5 Consulting Group, May 2022

Inclusive femininity

Lingerie Emma is on a mission to deliver style, confidence and comfort to all women



Téa Long and Tyo photographed by Donat Boulerice

It was truly love at first sight. At 12 years old, Emma Dunn entered a lingerie shop for the first time. Totally charmed by the delicate femininity of the world, she told her mom she'd love to work in the shop on weekends and school holidays.

Though young, she had found her passion. When the owner of her favourite boutique decided to retire, Emma, with the help of her parents, decided to make her dream a reality.

Only 14 at the time, Dunn already had a vision of opening her collection to women who were not "perfectly shaped" – meaning anyone outside the supermodel dimensions often associated with the industry.

"At that time, fancy underwear was made for a stereotypical profile; fashion was certainly not inclusive," she explained. "As a young teenager with strong curves, I found that utterly unfair."

Now 20 years later, [Lingerie Emma](#) is considered a role model company when it comes to diversified and inclusive feminine lingerie. From fine lingerie in sizes 30AA to 56N, clothing and swimwear to travel apparel and postmastectomy wear and forms, the product range is extensive.

Making believers of all

"People said I was too young, that I'd be 'playing store,' and that I would eventually have enough of it and move on, not understanding my commitment and passion for lingerie," Dunn said.

To make it work, while balancing her high school studies, Dunn hired a bra fitting specialist and worked in the boutique on off days and in the evening. Between school and work, she squeezed in meetings with suppliers in downtown Montréal, a trek she made by scooter.

She ran the Vénus lingerie boutique in L'Assomption, Quebec, until rebranding and founding her own brand in 2004.

"I went to the 'University of Life' with that job," she laughed.



Photo by Debbie Barrette

Prioritizing collections from Quebec and Europe, Lingerie Emma employs 18 people and was awarded the SME Growth and Development Award by BMO in 2016. The company also received the Reference Shopping Top 5 award, the only lingerie store in North America to have obtained this recognition.

Dunn's mission has been the same since the beginning: To dress all women, regardless of their shape, with a personalized approach of unparalleled expertise, to make a difference in their daily lives.

Well known for offering bras that fit "like a glove" and its exceptional in-store consultation service, the company operates out of a 7,500-square-foot space in Repentigny, Quebec, since 2008 and launched a vibrant ecommerce site in 2018.

"Although underwear is essential, people don't naturally shop online for it," Dunn said. "But woman work and lack time, so online sales have become essential. Rather than a growth opportunity, getting into ecommerce was the normal continuation of my commitment towards offering an inclusive and caring service."

When launching its online boutique, Dunn wanted to ensure the customized in-store experience translated to the digital world.

When it comes to inventory and selection, it's all there on the site – more than 20,000 items that can be filtered by brand, size, colour, need or even with an eco-conscious value in mind.

The personalized service offered in store is made possible online thanks to a thorough purchase history by client and printed birthday cards mailed to recognize and emphasize a tightly knitted community.

Personal connections

Dunn describes her notion to appeal to all body types as “pretty avant-garde” when she launched, but as her own in-store shopping experiences revealed just how challenging it could be for any woman to find her perfect fit.

“Fashion was not very inclusive. But just because you don’t fit the body standards dictated by the fashion industry doesn’t mean you only have to wear beige and bags,” she laughed. “All women have the right to be beautiful and flirtatious.”

Through the years, customers have confided in Dunn about how she has helped them feel beautiful, self-confident and accomplished. It’s part of the value she hopes to bring to the lives of every customer who walks (or clicks) into her store.

“Human relationships have always captivated me. I believe nothing can bring together women of different horizons quite like lingerie does,” Dunn said. “Lingerie is like the foundation of a house. Correctly measured and well done, it can redefine the silhouette, enhance the fit of clothing and shape the entire look.”

Lingerie Emma also supports many social and charitable causes, including the Fondation Le Chaînon, which provides assistance and shelter to women in distress. Dunn takes pride in providing undergarments for the women using this service.

“Lingerie has its own unique way of making a woman feel strong, beautiful and feminine. Our action aims to bring to those women an opportunity to empower themselves and rebuild their trust,” she said.

Exploring her meaning

As a good listener with a mindset on helping women look their best, as well as her flair for finding garments that light up the face of the woman wearing them, Dunn naturally developed an interest in offering specialized items to her growing customer base. Those items have expanded over the years, as needs and desires of women have evolved, including ways to support breast-feeding mothers, trans individuals and, especially, women who had a mastectomy.



Gabrielle Threlfall photographed by Donat Boulerice

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Rather than a growth opportunity, getting into ecommerce was the normal continuation of my commitment towards offering an inclusive and caring service.

Emma Dunn
Founder, Lingerie Emma

“My slogan of dressing all women took on its full meaning with my service dedicated to women who have undergone a mastectomy,” Dunn said.

During her father’s treatments with colorectal cancer, he heard stories from women with breast cancer who told him about how the treatments, aftereffects and surgeries affected them. He suggested that his daughter use her skills to help.

Today, Lingerie Emma embraces women affected by breast cancer, helping them reconnect with their femininity, to feel beautiful and comfortable in their new body. To do this, the store offers a personalized shopping experience to women who have undergone a total or partial mastectomy.

“These postmastectomy products were typically available in medical stores that did not provide the fitting expertise or female experience of a high-end lingerie store. We changed all that,” Dunn said. “I knew we could help restore the confidence and well-being of these women.”

And it’s all part of the company mission.

Dunn continued, “Quality of service is really what makes the shopping experience unique. Many retail store owners tend to buy merchandise they like for themselves. But that’s not necessarily what will sell best. Listening to my customers, studying it, truly helped me define my niche.”

lingerieemma.com



Key takeaways

01

Some of the strongest leaders listen to their inner voice and practice resilience, refusing to be swayed by discouraging opinions on their journey to success.

02

Personalization can offer powerful opportunities for businesses looking to transform their customer experience and create a tight-knit community.

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