INCISIV

Playbook

Building Adaptive Specialty Retail Stores

A Transformation Framework for Experience-Driven Operations

In partnership with

TOSHIBA   **intel**

Is this report for me?

This Playbook offers a structured framework for Specialty Retailers seeking to build adaptive store environments, operations that support distinctive customer experiences while maintaining efficiency and protecting margins.
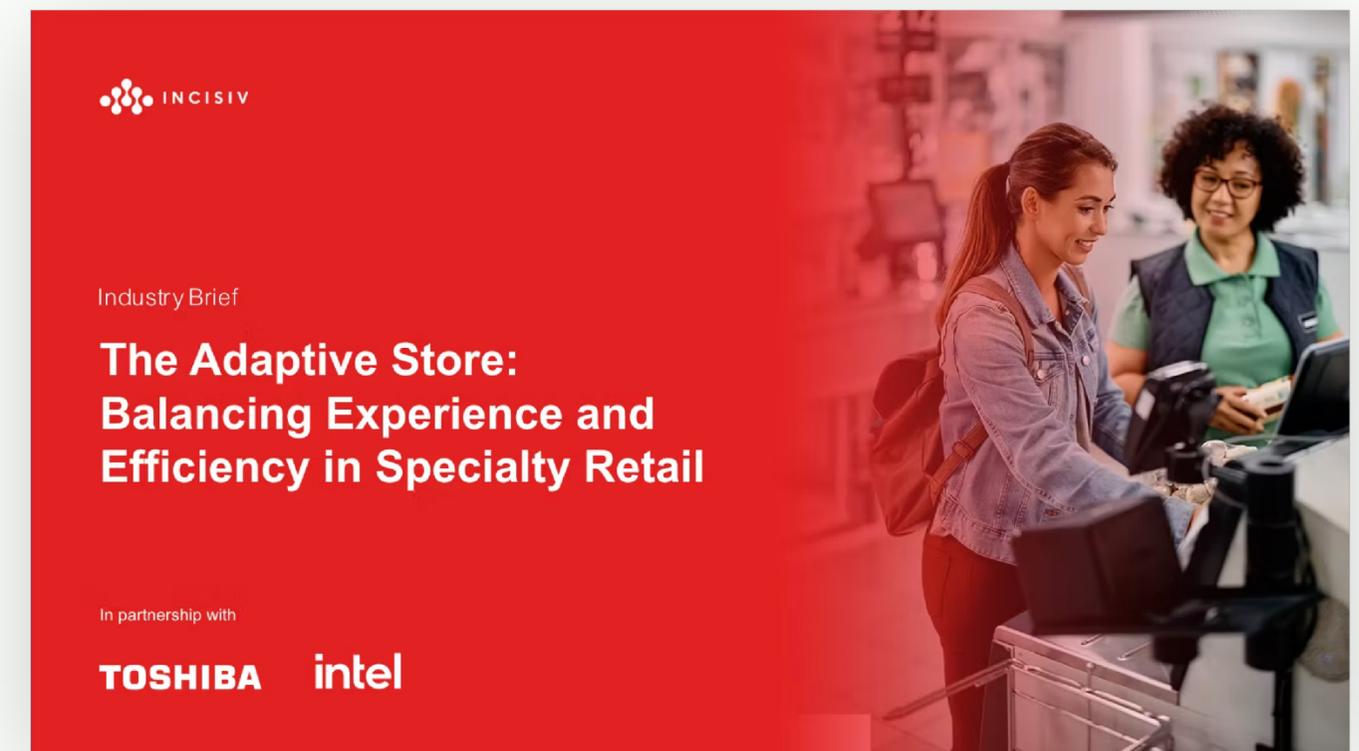
This report will be especially relevant if you are:

- Leading store operations for a Specialty Retailer (softgoods, hardgoods, or mixed goods)
- Responsible for technology decisions that affect store performance and associate effectiveness
- Managing the balance between customer experience investment and operational efficiency
- Evaluating checkout modernization, mobile enablement, or omnichannel capabilities
- Accountable for loss prevention outcomes in an environment of expanding self-service

RECOMMENDED READING

Our companion Industry Brief, **"The Adaptive Store: Balancing Experience and Efficiency in Specialty Retail"** explores three macro challenges reshaping Specialty Retail operations and three strategic responses turning those challenges into advantages.

We recommend reading the Industry Brief for additional context before diving into the rest of this Playbook.
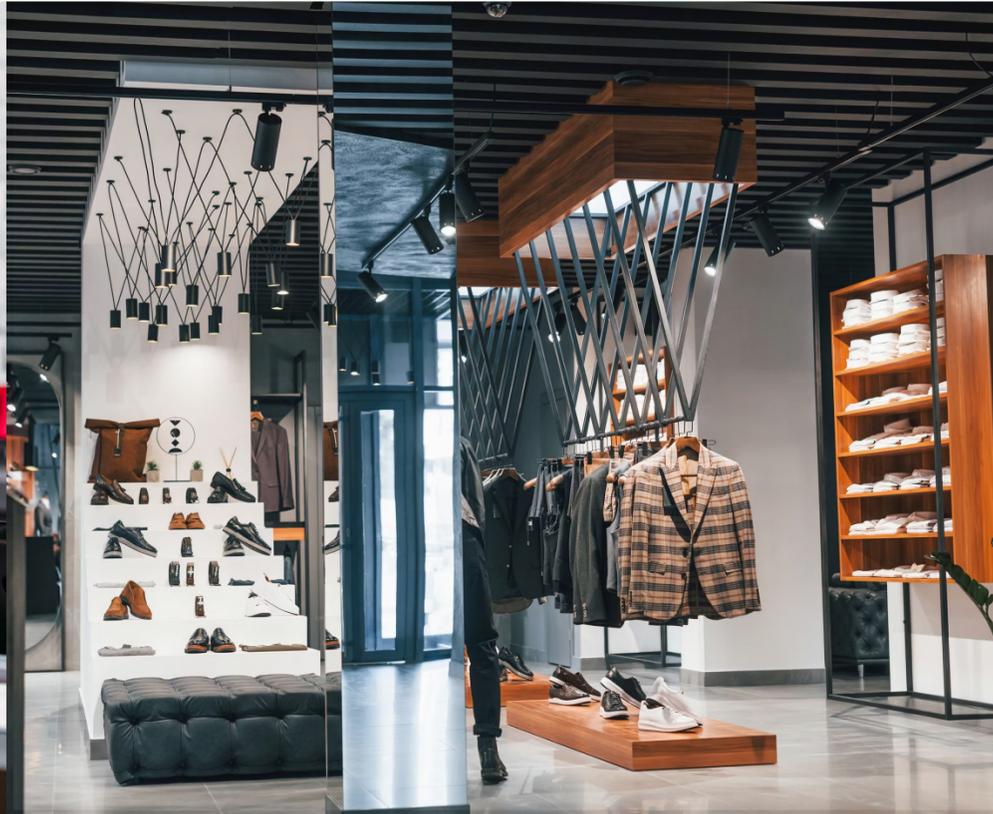

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Industry Brief

The Adaptive Store: Balancing Experience and Efficiency in Specialty Retail

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What's in this report?

What Are Your Operational Priorities?
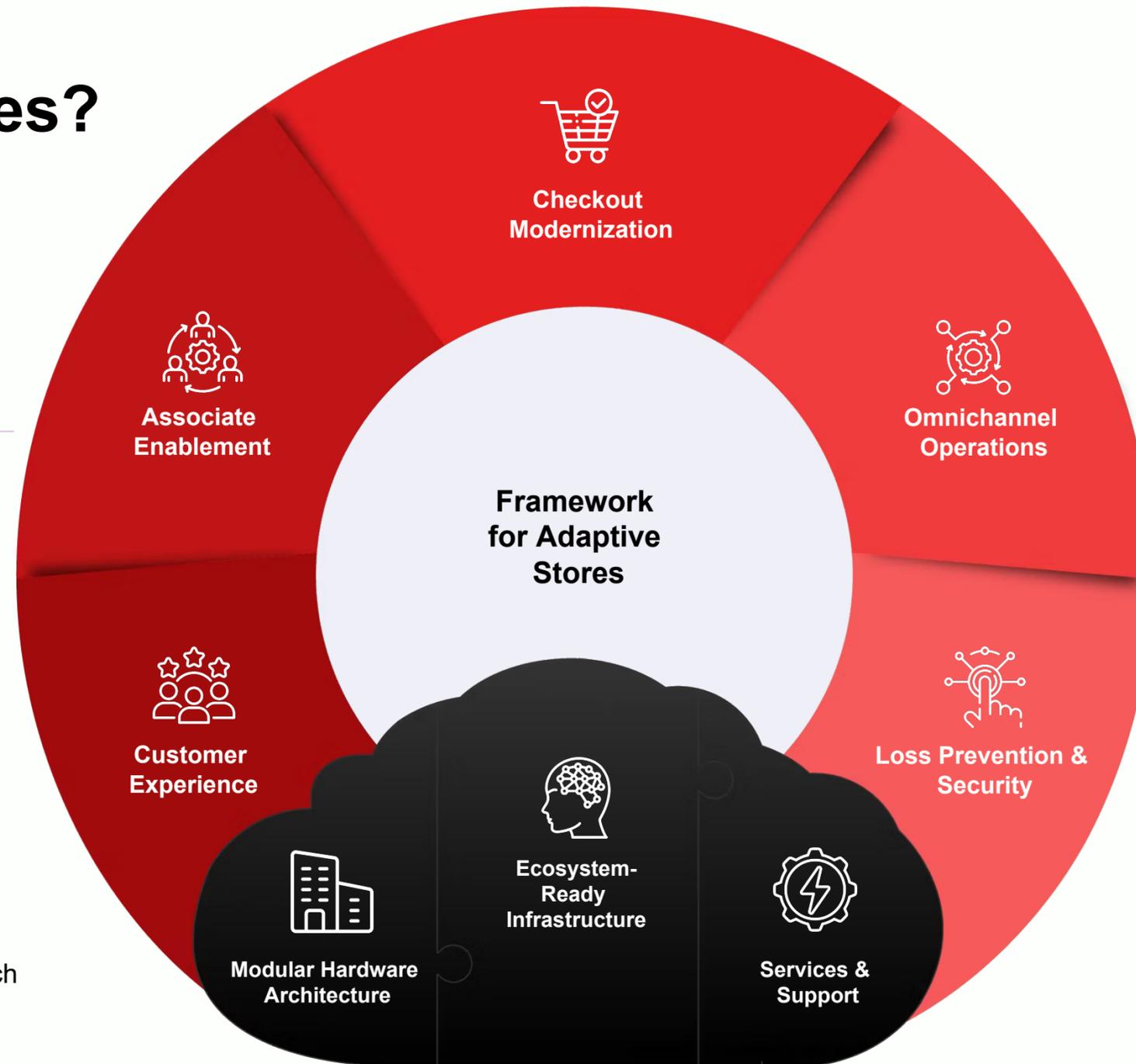
TRANSFORMATION PRIORITIES

Five operational areas where Specialty Retailers are transforming their store environments.

The rest of this Playbook details each of the transformation priorities and technology enablers.

Checkout Modernization

Omnichannel Operations

Associate Enablement

Framework for Adaptive Stores

Customer Experience

Loss Prevention & Security

Modular Hardware Architecture

Ecosystem-Ready Infrastructure

Services & Support

TECHNOLOGY ENABLERS

Foundational technology capabilities required to execute operational transformation successfully.

Help customers move between self-service and assisted experiences.

Specialty Retail shoppers don't follow a single journey pattern. Some prefer efficient self-service while others prefer guided assistance throughout their visit. Adaptive stores accommodate all patterns without friction, allowing seamless transitions as customer needs evolve during their visit.

73% of customers expect seamless journeys across all channels and devices.

SuperOffice

ENTRY AND ORIENTATION

When customers enter your store, make it clear how they can engage. Use visuals, associate positioning, and technology placement to signal that both self-service and assisted shopping are available. Customers should feel they can choose their preferred mode or switch between them mid-visit.

FLEXIBLE ENGAGEMENT

Equip associates to help customers anywhere in the store with everything they need, e.g., inventory access, product information, customer history, and transaction completion. When associates have mobile devices with real-time information, they are ready to provide service at the point of need.

SEAMLESS HANDOFFS

As customers shift from browsing to buying or from self-service to assisted help, information should flow with them. What they've looked at, questions asked, and preferences shared should be available so transitions feel intentional rather than jarring.

Give associates the tools to serve customers anywhere.

Associates are expected to be experts in products, styling, and solving customer problems. Expertise requires access to information and the ability to act on it. When associates can help without leaving the customer, the Specialty Retail experience becomes possible.

Of retail employees who benefit from omni-connected experiences, more than **94%** say they can be productive anywhere.

Accenture

INFORMATION AT THE POINT OF NEED

Give associates mobile devices to access product details, inventory across locations, customer purchase history, and recommendations without leaving the customer. When associates instantly confirm availability or reference past purchases, interactions shift from transactional to consultative.

TRANSACTION FLEXIBILITY

When associates have mobile POS capability, sales don't require a trip to the register. Associates complete transactions on the floor or wherever customers prefer. This eliminates handoffs that break the selling experience and enables queue busting during peaks.

REDUCED ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

Time spent on administrative tasks is time unavailable for customers. Intuitive systems, guided workflows, and task automation free associates to focus on high-value interactions. This includes streamlined onboarding and simplified processes that don't trap experienced staff.

Offer flexible checkout that fits customer needs and protects margins.

Checkout is key to the Specialty Retail experience. Modernizing it means expanding options to meet customer preferences:

- Self-service for independent shoppers
- Mobile checkout for assisted sales
- Optimized fixed lanes for high-volume periods

Each option must fit your brand aesthetic and include appropriate loss prevention measures.

87% of retailers are modernizing payments to improve customer experience.

KPMG

BRAND-APPROPRIATE SELF-SERVICE

When customers want to checkout on their own, make sure self-service stations fit your store's look and feel. Choose compact, design-forward options that complement your aesthetic. Consider innovations like computer vision ans sensors to provide frictionless security.

MOBILE CHECKOUT CAPABILITY

Give associates mobile POS with integrated payment so they can close sales where relationships are built. During peak periods, mobile devices let you add transaction capacity wherever congestion occurs without installing additional fixed checkout lanes.

SEAMLESS CHECKOUT LANES

Fixed checkout lanes remain essential for certain transactions. Make sure systems are easy to use and intuitive to reduce wait times. In Specialty Retail, checkout technology should blend into your brand environment, not stand out.

Connect digital and physical channels for seamless experiences.

Customers move instinctively between digital and physical touchpoints. They research online and buy in store, browse in store and order for delivery, buy online and return in person. Connecting these touchpoints in and out of the store creates consistency so that customers experience your brand the same way, regardless of where or how they engage.

Companies with strong omnichannel engagement strategies retain an average of **89%** of their customers, while those with weaker strategies only retain about **33%** of their customers.

invesp

REAL-TIME INVENTORY VISIBILITY

Give customers accurate inventory information wherever they interact: on the floor with associates, on your website, or at a kiosk. Keep store systems updated in real time and share that information across every channel.

CUSTOMER CONTEXT CONTINUITY

When customers identify themselves through loyalty programs or mobile apps, make sure associates can see their purchase history and preferences. Connect POS and mobile systems to customer data platforms so context flows across every touchpoint.

CROSS-CHANNEL TRANSACTION FLEXIBILITY

Customers expect buy online pickup in store, buy online return in store, ship from store, and endless aisle. Make sure store systems handle these workflows efficiently and associates have tools to execute without friction.

Protect margins without creating friction for customers or associates.

As retailers expand self-service and deploy more in-store technology, integrated loss prevention enables them to scale with confidence. Embedded security, operating quietly in the background, protects revenue without interruption while empowering associates and keeping the customer journey smooth and consistent.

80% of retailers are investing in computer vision to detect 'missed scans' at self-checkout.

Gitnux Self-Checkout Statistics Report

MONITOR IN REAL TIME

Utilise computer vision, edge computing-enabled cameras, and sensors to track behaviour from the floor to checkout. Real-time awareness enables immediate actions to prevent theft. Exception reporting helps teams maintain visibility across all transaction points.

SECURE EVERY TRANSACTION

Protect every transaction point with secure hardware design, encrypted communications, and payment security integration. Make sure mobile POS devices maintain the same security standards as fixed lanes to protect your business and customers.

RESPOND QUICKLY TO EXCEPTIONS

When exceptions occur, give teams the ability to investigate and respond efficiently. Provide auditable transaction data, video integration for context, and workflows that help professionals act quickly without disrupting store operations.

Deploy the right technology for each store zone without compromise.

Modular hardware architecture lets retailers configure systems for specific contexts: compact kiosks for quick transactions, full-featured POS for busy lanes, mobile devices for floor service. This flexibility enables customer experience transformation, associate enablement, and checkout modernization without one-size-fits-all compromises.

Retail platforms lose **$1-2 million** per hour during peak seasons due to system failures.

ET Brand Equity

MATCH HARDWARE TO CONTEXT

Different store zones require different configurations. Checkout modernization may include compact kiosks for self-service, full POS for assisted lanes, and all-in-one units where space is limited. The key is deploying the right form factor without fragmenting systems.

FIT YOUR BRAND AESTHETIC

Technology is part of the customer experience in Specialty Retail. Hardware that complements your brand supports seamless journeys. Customizable finishes, mounting options, and signage ensure devices reinforce the store environment, blending in where they should and standing out where they add value.

DURABILITY AND SERVICEABILITY

Hardware operates in demanding environments with high volumes and peak stress. Proven durability, field serviceability, and lifecycle support minimize downtime that disrupts customer experience. Reliable operational systems keep journeys moving and associates effective.

Evolve your software strategy without replacing your infrastructure.

Independent Software Vendor (ISV) ready infrastructure supports software evolution without infrastructure replacement. Specialty Retailers need tailored platforms for POS, inventory, clienteling, and omnichannel operations. Hardware validated across multiple ISVs enables associate enablement and omnichannel operations transformation while preserving flexibility to change software partners.

67% of companies identify integration complexity as a primary obstacle to adopting new software solutions.

Market Research Biz

BROAD ISV COMPATIBILITY

Validated integrations across leading Specialty Retail ISVs reduce deployment risk and implementation time. Production-proven compatibility means software choices drive associate enablement, omnichannel operations, and checkout modernization without infrastructure constraints.

OPERATING SYSTEM FLEXIBILITY

Specialty Retail software runs on Windows, embedded systems, and Android for mobile. Operating system flexibility lets retailers select best-of-breed applications for clienteling, inventory management, and mobile POS based on capabilities.

INTEGRATION WITHOUT VENDOR LOCK-IN

Hardware that integrates with the ISV ecosystem without proprietary lock-in eliminates fragmentation while preserving evolution flexibility. Open architecture supports technology changes as priorities shift without forced infrastructure replacement.

Minimize downtime affecting customer experience and operations.

Comprehensive services prevent downtime that disrupts customer experience and associate productivity. Proactive monitoring catches issues before they affect operations, while rapid response resolves problems in hours, not days. Lifecycle support from design through deployment to operations maximizes technology investment value across all transformation priorities.

Network downtime costs retailers **~$5,600** per minute (more than $300,000 per hour), making proactive monitoring and rapid response non-negotiable.

Gartner

PREVENT PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY HAPPEN

Proactive device monitoring and incident detection catch issues before they affect operations. Remote resolution tools predict and prevent hardware failures that disrupt customer journeys, keeping checkout lanes and mobile devices operational.

RESPOND QUICKLY WHEN ISSUES OCCUR

Response time matters when problems occur. Service partners with geographic coverage matching your store footprint respond in hours. Clear escalation paths minimize revenue loss during critical checkout or system failures.

SUPPORT THE FULL LIFECYCLE

Lifecycle support spans design, implementation, and ongoing operations. Comprehensive services maximize investment value as you transform Customer Experience, modernize checkout, and enable associates. Complete journey support reduces complexity and accelerates transformation.

Toshiba Global Commerce Solutions: Built for Specialty Retail

Toshiba is a proven global leader in retail technology, uniquely qualified and positioned to help Specialty Retailers build adaptive store environments. We are RETAIL, with modular hardware that fits your brand, ISV-ready infrastructure that integrates with your software partners, and comprehensive services that keep stores operational.

Start now. Create Your Tomorrow.

Ready to transform your stores in and out?
Connect with Toshiba: commerce.toshiba.com

Building Adaptive Specialty Retail Stores
An Incisiv Playbook, in Partnership with Toshiba and Intel

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ABOUT INCISIV

Incisiv is a peer-to-peer executive network and industry insights firm for consumer industry executives navigating digital disruption.

Incisiv offers curated executive learning, digital maturity benchmarks and prescriptive transformation insights to clients across the consumer and technology industry spectrum.

www.incisiv.com

ABOUT TOSHIBA

Toshiba Global Commerce Solutions empowers Retail to thrive and prosper through a dynamic ecosystem of smarter, more agile solutions and services that enable Retailers to resiliently evolve with generations of consumers and adapt to market conditions. Supported by a global organization of devoted employees and partners, Retailers gain more visibility and control over operations while enjoying the flexibility to build, scale, and transform Retail experiences that anticipate and fulfill consumers' ever-changing needs.

To learn more, visit commerce.toshiba.com and engage with us on X, formerly known as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

ABOUT INTEL

Intel is an industry leader, creating world-changing technology that enables global progress and enriches lives. Inspired by Moore's Law, we continuously work to advance the design and manufacturing of semiconductors to help address our customers' greatest challenges. By embedding intelligence in the cloud, network, edge and every kind of computing device, we unleash the potential of data to transform business and society for the better.

Find more information about Intel at https://www.intel.com.