

The Ultimate Guide to Headless Commerce

a new game changer
for Online Stores

Ebook





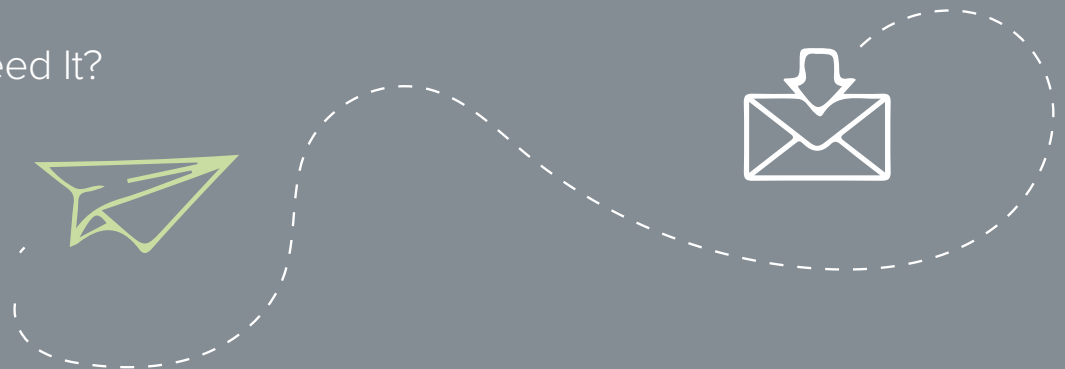
The accessibility of reaching and consuming content through various touch points has left marketers scratching their heads in a constant battle to keep pace with growing customer demands.

People are slowly moving away from the traditional ways of online interactions with the advent of the mobile channel, Internet of Things (IoT), and progressive web applications (PWA). Moreover, Customer Experience has become a pain point for all eCommerce companies, as the main goal here is to offer an agile and preferably hyper-personal Customer Journey. This, unfortunately, requires a huge amount of developer work, especially for large and somewhat outdated online stores.

Here's where Headless Commerce comes to the rescue.

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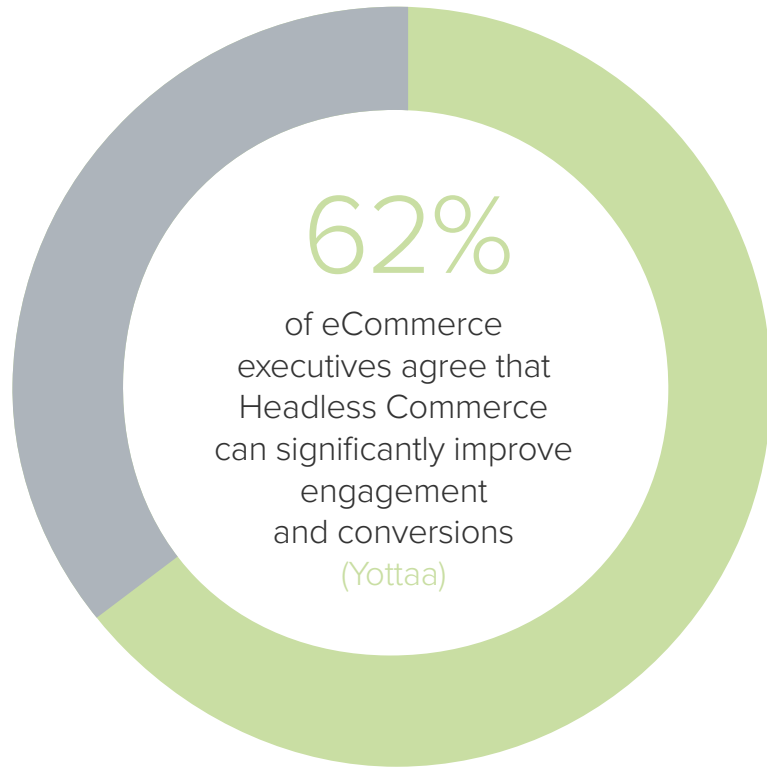
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Headless Commerce in a nutshell

‘Headless Commerce’ has recently become one of the marketing buzzwords, often repeated in many sources, rarely properly explained or understood. Starting with the definition of this mysterious, decapitation-inducing term, Headless Commerce is nothing more than separating the front-end user interface (UI) from the supporting its back-end architecture.



In practice, it means that Headless Commerce enables online retailers to adjust, optimize and change their front-end UX, without interference into back-end site functionalities.

● Headless commerce structure



By 2023, prices for B2C digital commerce platforms will be 30% less than in 2019, due to feature commoditization and “headless” implementations.

In a headless commerce structure, the presentation layer, which is generally a theme or template, is decoupled from the eCommerce platform. However, it stays connected with the online store back-end via API. The back-end of the store is in turn connected with the systems like ERPs (Enterprise Resource Planning), PIM (Product Information Management), OMS (Order Management System). APIs are employed to deliver commerce services and pave the way for solid, secure, scalable solutions, which are platform agnostic, highly flexible, customizable and ready for any number of omnichannel integrations.



Commerce API

Commerce Platform



Pricing



Promotions



Cart & Checkout



Catalogue



Customer Profile



Systems of Record

ERP

PIM

OMS

CRM

WCM



FRONT-END / a.k.a. head

The “head” - meaning the presentation layer of the application. Usually implies displayed on-screen graphical interface, but nowadays, we have many more examples such as:

- Social Platforms
- Smart Homes
- Voice devices (Google Home)
- Chatbots
- AR or VR
- IoT
- Wearables (smart bands)
- In-app transactions



BACK-END / a.k.a. body

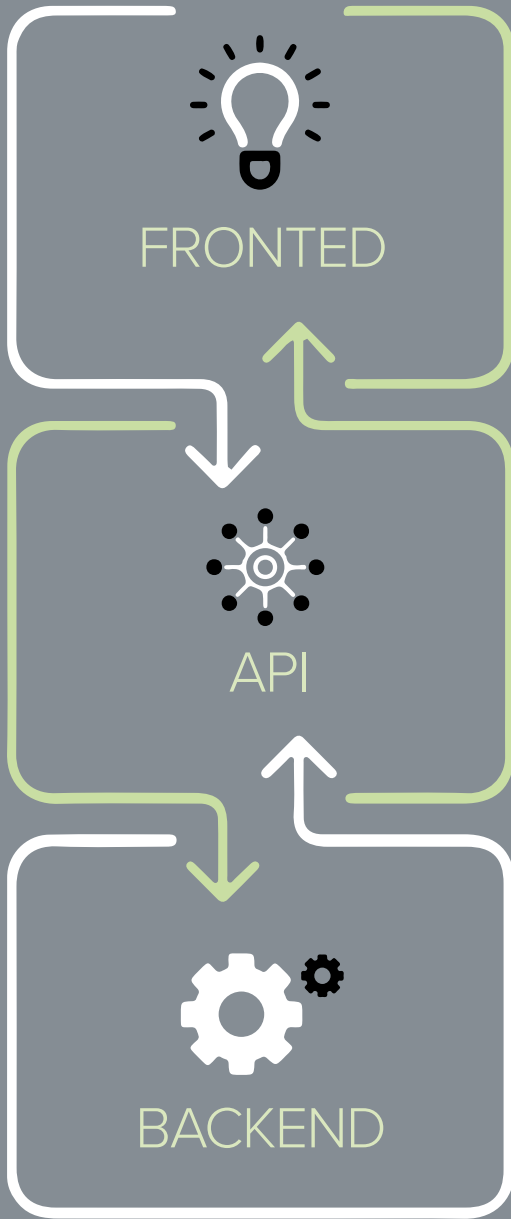
The “body” is the operational side, which contains the logic of the business. It's invisible and responsible for many processes. It can be:

- Infrastructure
- Product Search
- Catalog
- Inventory
- Information about customers
- Order process
- Business user Interface
- Management console



How Headless Commerce works

To put it in the simplest way possible, let's imagine that the online store where we shop consists of two layers - a presentation layer (what we see) and an application layer (what we don't see). A Headless Commerce system works by transferring commands between those two layers via web services or application programming interfaces (API) calls.



Web



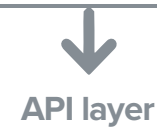
Mobile



Social commerce



Marketplace



Products



Pricing



Promotions



Order



Customers



Headless Commerce vs traditional commerce



Front-end development

Traditional commerce

- Limitations associated with designing, and updating the system
- Time-consuming editing of the database, code and front-end platform

Headless Commerce

- Removing the front-end platform allows developers to make changes through API calls, without interfering with the back-end



Adjustability and customization

Traditional commerce

- When the front-end is tightly coupled with the back-end, it is almost impossible to introduce flexibility and personalization
- When editing, there is a need to change multiple layers of code

Headless Commerce

- With the front-end detached from the back-end, there are endless possibilities for customization



Why Headless Commerce is important from eCommerce point of view

Layers problem

If you can imagine any eCommerce platform in traditional terms, you would see two parts that are sewn together:

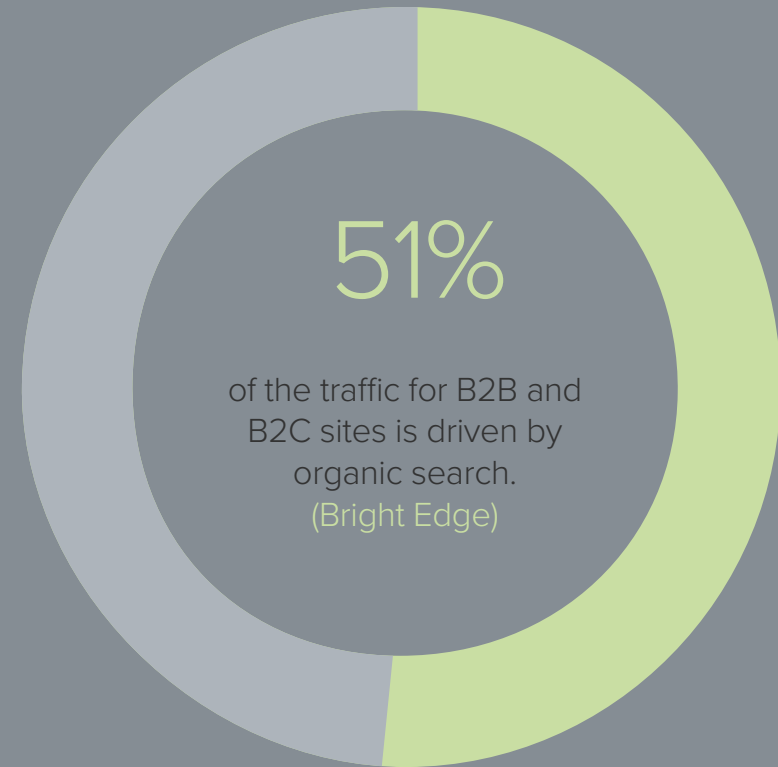
- the layer where you can manage the operation of the entire portal and the details of a specific product, the so-called “interior” of the site. A big blob of invisible to the human eye processes, warehouse, product database and its details, management panel, data about names, prices, descriptions, and so on.
- the layer on which customer information is displayed; in other words: it is everything the user sees, the graphical interface, the so-called “facade” of the site.

For years, this model worked well for many online stores because, well, it was easier to manage everything from one panel. However, with the growing needs of customers, the desire to streamline processes, and simply wanting to stay current, eCommerce platforms had to come up with something new. That’s why companies should have a good head on their shoulders and use the full potential of headless power.

● Migration to a different platform

Until now, migrating a site to another platform (e.g. Magento to Shopify) has strictly involved messing up with the site's URLs, often resulting in a loss of visibility from Google's point of view, and thus a loss of organic traffic that comes from nothing more than months of creating valuable content. Losing that traffic would be a really low blow.

By not touching the back-end layer and only operating on the front-end, there's no risk of losing valuable organic traffic, which can take 4-6 months to build from scratch unless you're a giant company. After all, eCommerce isn't just about ads - it's also about building traffic through content.





The top benefits of Headless Commerce

Like every system, Headless Commerce is a sword that cuts both ways. Here are the main advantages.



● Facilitated omnichannel selling



With the expanding range of new technologies and smart devices, where each one is based on a different system, it is very expensive to make a website compatible with each one. Without headless architecture, customizing a site for every possible screen is almost like fighting windmills.

A headless architecture allows the site to send consistent personalized content across all channels by being compatible with all the devices.



● Customized and personalized Customer Experience



Customers are picky creatures, and they appreciate the change from time to time. With a headless approach, you can always offer them a consistent omnichannel experience while introducing new elements; widgets, CX enhancers, live chats, layouts, and so on.

You can do all of that without interfering with the online store's performance, as everything can be done through API calls working between the front-end and back-end.



● Easy update process

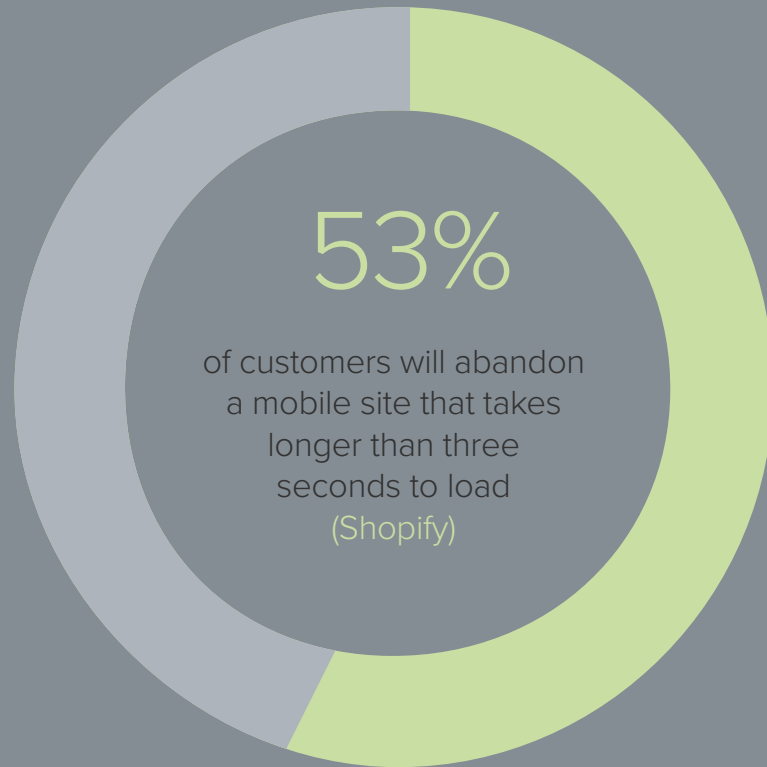


Update...

Like almost any project, User Experience (UX) can simply become unsatisfactory after a while of its existence. However, updating it in a traditional commerce model can be a really nasty job. To the rescue comes Headless Commerce.

With a decoupled front and back-end layer, there is no need to apply any changes to the back-end. This means that web designers and even marketers can keep the UX up to date.

● Fast loading



It is pretty self-explanatory. By decoupling the front-end from the back-end, the application's "thinking" process will be significantly shortened, so pages should display much faster than in the traditional model.

● Enhanced time-to-market



Without having to make changes to the back-end (which can be time and resource-intensive), companies start from a much better position to update their front-ends according to customer needs and the latest trends. In this way, using Headless Commerce will always allow you to deliver new experiences quickly and accurately.

● Increased security



The front-end and back-end layers are usually hosted on different servers, which can help a lot in maintaining high-security standards. Moreover, their addresses are often different from the address of the website itself.

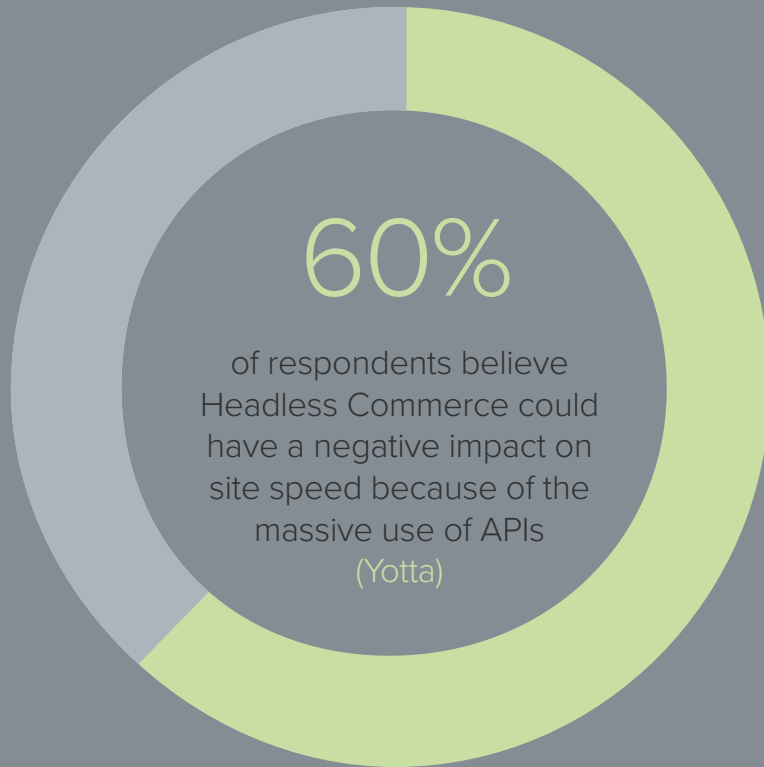
Higher security prevents the risk of system failure, which in a non-headless approach is often caused by a lack of access to any of the layers.



The biggest challenges of decapitation

Headless Commerce could be described in all superlatives, but unfortunately, it also has its drawbacks.

● The massive use of APIs



One of the main challenges would be to build a clean and clear UI, without any additional elements. Without unnecessary information and no content overload, there will be no danger of overusing APIs.

● Even more technologies to manage



For large companies with resources ready to spend, implementing a headless approach can be a savior. Mixing and matching technologies, testing options, and seeing what works best for your customers is a good thing because that's how you're able to find the best solution.

On the other hand, introducing many new technologies and processes for small businesses can really be a headache, often not worth the waste of resources.



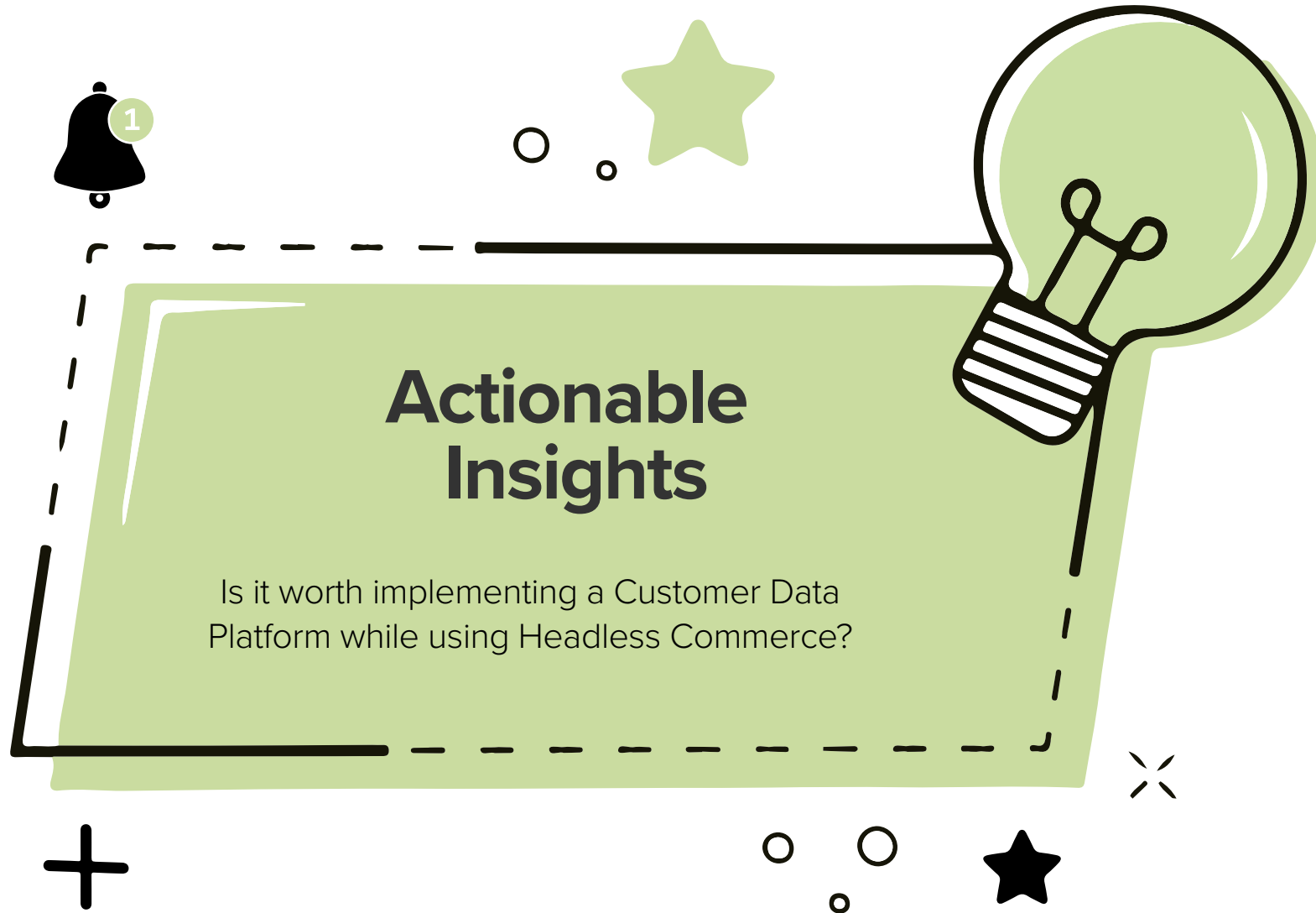
Headless Commerce: Do You Really Need It?

While Headless Commerce solves many problems, such as an ever-growing base of new devices, it also creates a mass of different kinds of issues.

Headless Commerce is the technology of the future, main callers so to say, who want to sell in omnichannel and on all possible devices. For companies that care about the best possible Customer Experience and impeccable content marketing, this will be the perfect solution.

Would you lose your head over Headless Commerce?

Appendix 1



As stated before, the biggest challenge for an eCommerce using Headless Commerce will be to cut all the additional stuff from the website, to provide seamless, not overloaded API flow, without unnecessary banners or pop-ups. That's exactly where CDP comes in handy.

CDP's role is to leverage the power of artificial intelligence and machine learning to extract the most important information from customer data. Dynamic segments allow content to be tailored to a single user, and advanced technology replicates this information for all consumers who are similar in some way (hi there, Dynamic Segments). This allows you to limit the elements on the page to only the most relevant ones, which directly translates into reducing the number of plugins by using only one comprehensive Customer Data Platform that performs most of the processes like:

- Create AI-based recommendation frames that display the most relevant offers at the right time through the use of algorithms,
- A/B/X Testing & Optimization allows you to test all dynamic content to make it even more relevant to your audience. What's more, these are not fixed elements, but dynamically adapt to the audience in real-time,
- CDP has all the behavioral data of your customers while giving you access to multiple communication channels such as email, Google Ads, social media scheduling, and web pushes. Thanks to the fact that it is a single platform, everything goes from one API instead of several. This ensures less load, while still using the data you already have.

If you want to learn more about
other Customer Data Platform
benefits, visit

www.salesmanago.com

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