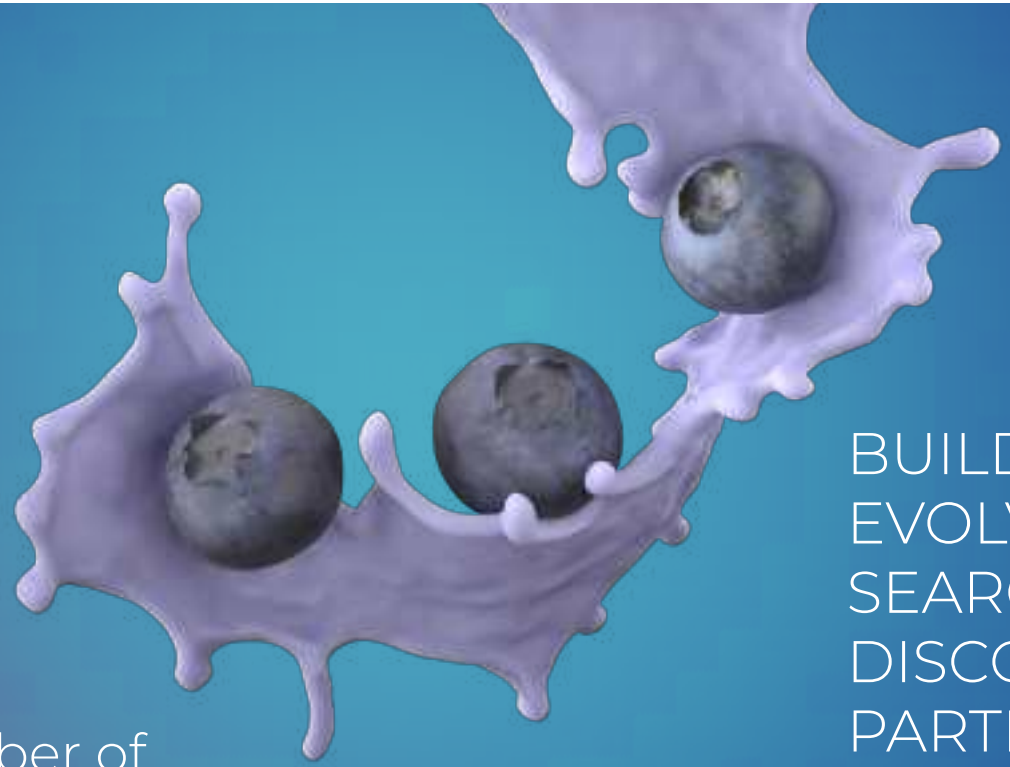

Kroger

BUILDING AND EVOLVING AI SEARCH & DISCOVERY IN PARTNERSHIP WITH EMPATHY

Driving growth
with Explainable AI
Ethical Discovery

eMPATHY.CO
A founding member of
EthicalAlliance.co

info@empathy.co
www.empathy.co

Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking a moment to discover this story. My name is Angel and I am the founder and CEO of Empathy.co.

At Empathy, we continue to think of ourselves as a search and discovery company that resists domestication. We are focused on delivering value to our partners so they can grow, own, and shape their platforms according to their vision.

This case study reflects the journey of innovation and trust we share with Kroger. It shows how imagination flourishes when technology is open, explainable, and adaptable.

The past years have brought forward new milestones: from extending shoppable opportunities to redesigning visual navigation, from enhancing predictive experiences to scaling infrastructure in the cloud. Together, we have built not only new features, but also new ways for shoppers to connect meaningfully with their needs.

Thank you, Kroger, and thank you to everyone who makes Empathy.co possible.

Angel Maldonado

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01

KROGER DIGITAL: AI SEARCH, PaaS & READY-MADE COMPONENTS

Analysis and Insights

Kroger has collaborated with Empathy.co since 2020 to support their digital customer experience, which includes online shopping for pickup, delivery, and home shipping. All Search, Navigation, and Keyword traffic on Kroger's ecommerce sites for both Web and Apps (iOS and Android) is served by Empathy.co. The Platform-as-a-Service, where Kroger runs and operates their Continuous Deployment and Continuous Integration processes, uses Empathy.co Ready-Made Components.

SINCE

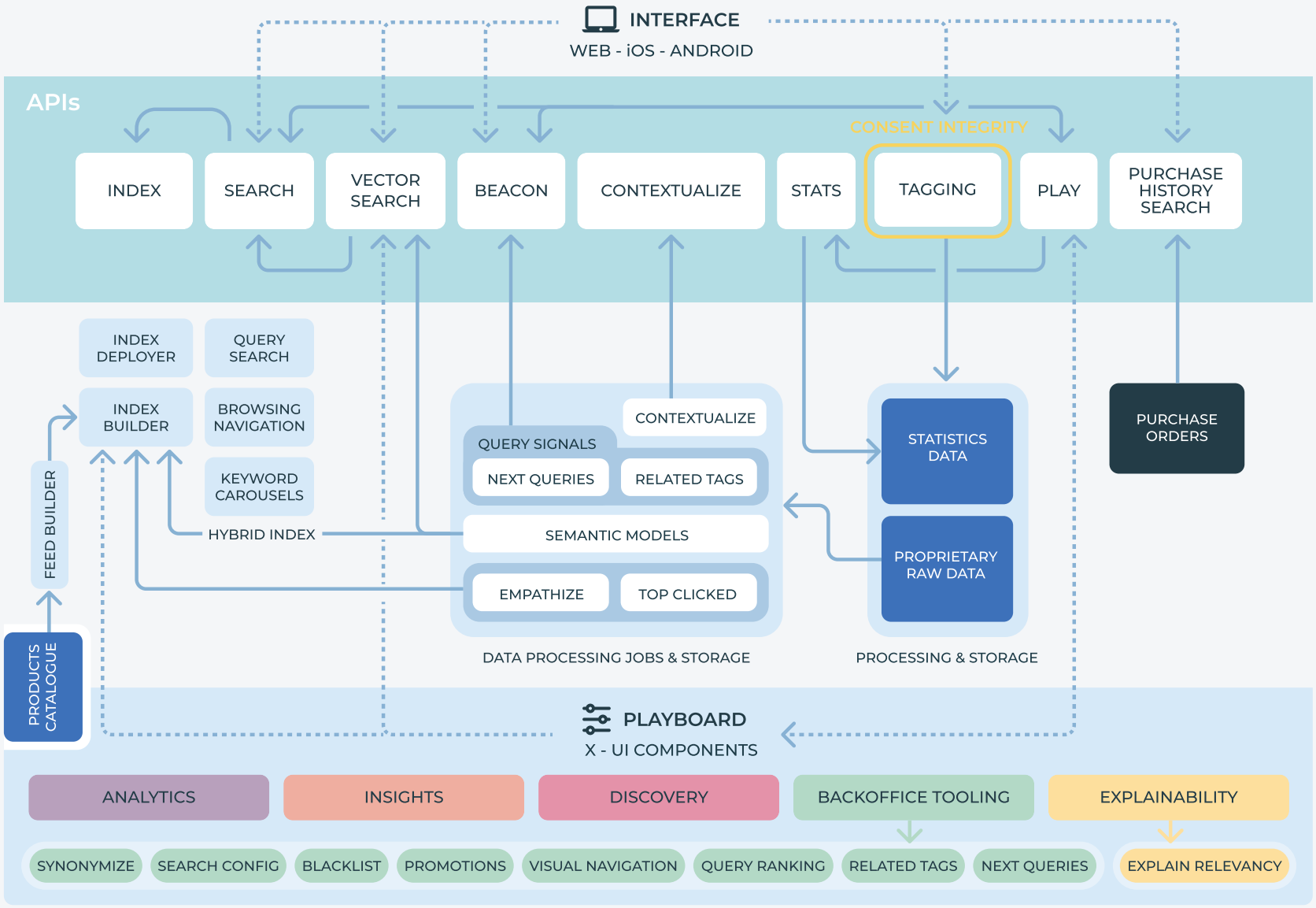
2020





Since 2020, the partnership has been strengthened by Empathy.co's commitment to protecting privacy, enabling transparency, and creating joyful experiences for shoppers and merchandisers alike.

EMPATHY.CO


INTERFACE
WEB - iOS - ANDROID
APIs
CONSENT INTEGRITY
INDEX
SEARCH
VECTOR SEARCH
BEACON
CONTEXTUALIZE
STATS
TAGGING
PLAY
PURCHASE HISTORY SEARCH
INDEX DEPLOYER
QUERY SEARCH
INDEX BUILDER
BROWSING NAVIGATION
KEYWORD CAROUSELS
HYBRID INDEX
FEED BUILDER
PRODUCTS CATALOGUE
CONTEXTUALIZE
QUERY SIGNALS
NEXT QUERIES
RELATED TAGS
SEMANTIC MODELS
EMPATHIZE
TOP CLICKED
DATA PROCESSING JOBS & STORAGE
STATISTICS DATA
PROPRIETARY RAW DATA
PROCESSING & STORAGE
PURCHASE ORDERS
PLAYBOARD
X - UI COMPONENTS
ANALYTICS
INSIGHTS
DISCOVERY
BACKOFFICE TOOLING
EXPLAINABILITY
SYNONYMIZE
SEARCH CONFIG
BLACKLIST
PROMOTIONS
VISUAL NAVIGATION
QUERY RANKING
RELATED TAGS
NEXT QUERIES
EXPLAIN RELEVANCY



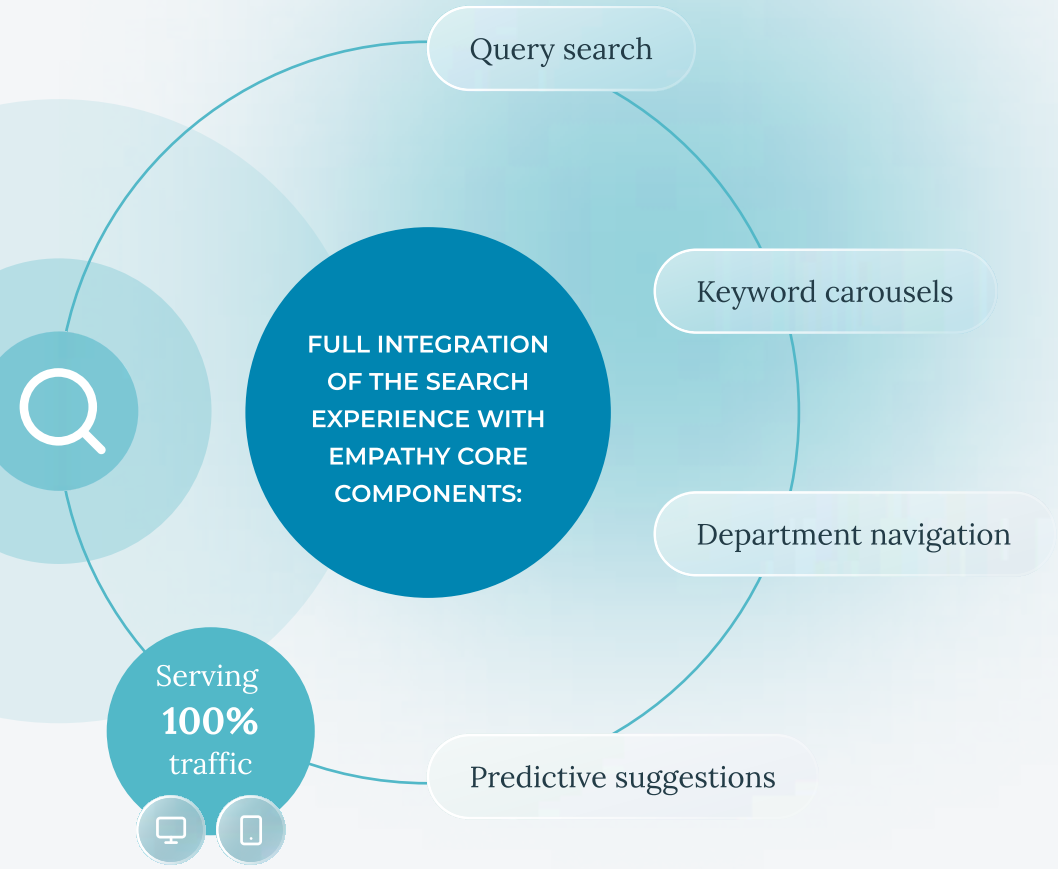
02

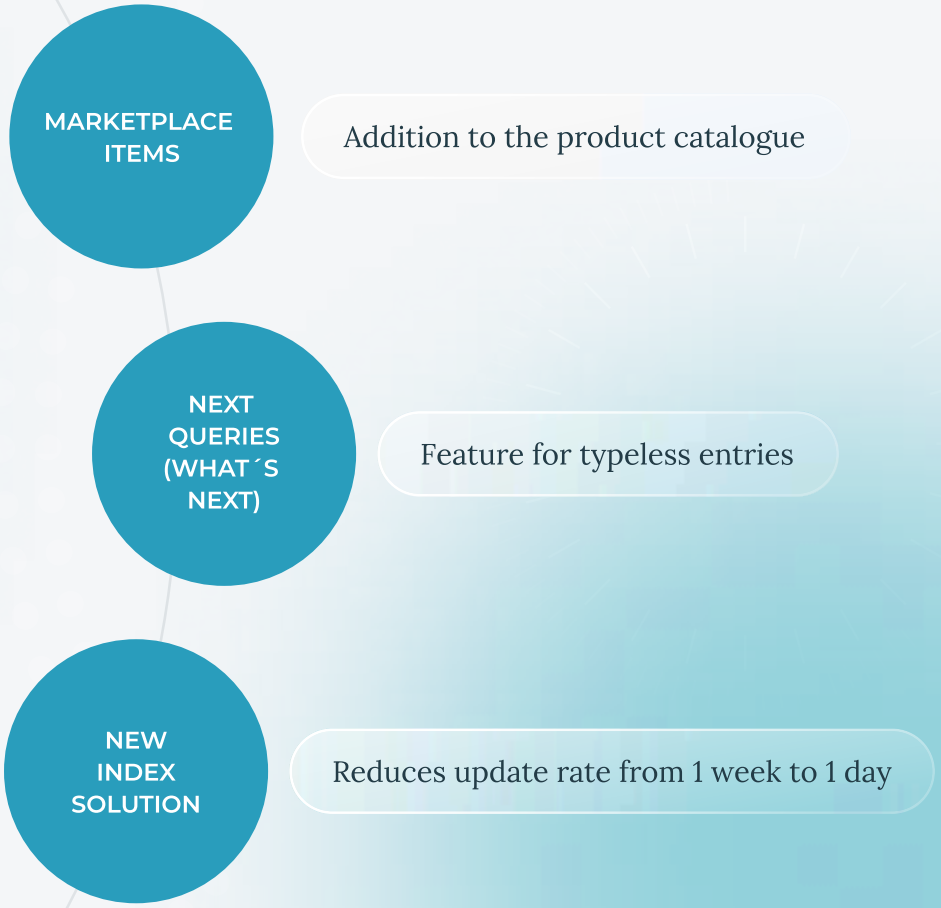
SOLUTIONS TO OWN AND CONTROL EXPLAINABLE AI

Strategy & Implementation

2020

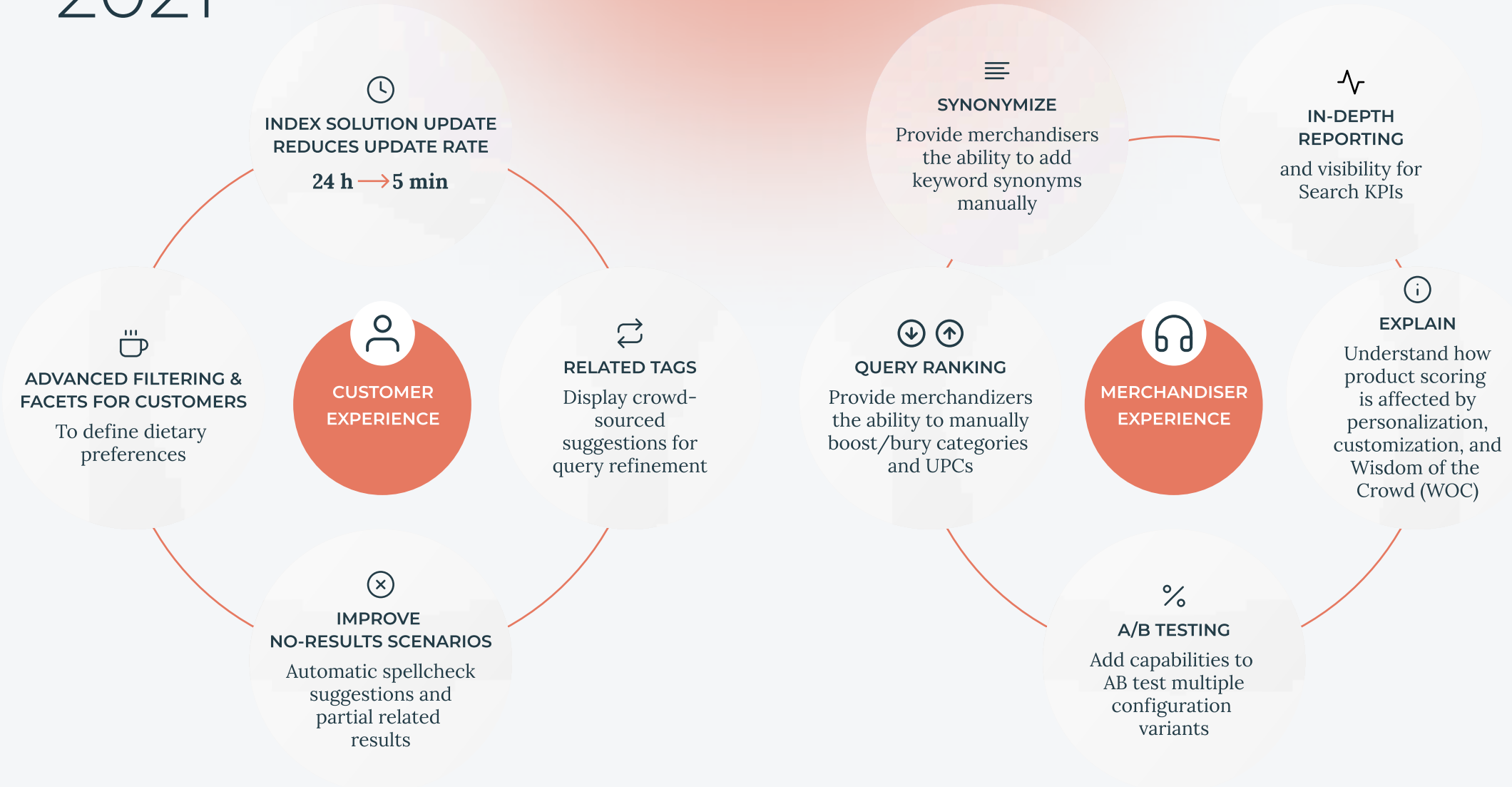
eMPATHY.CO





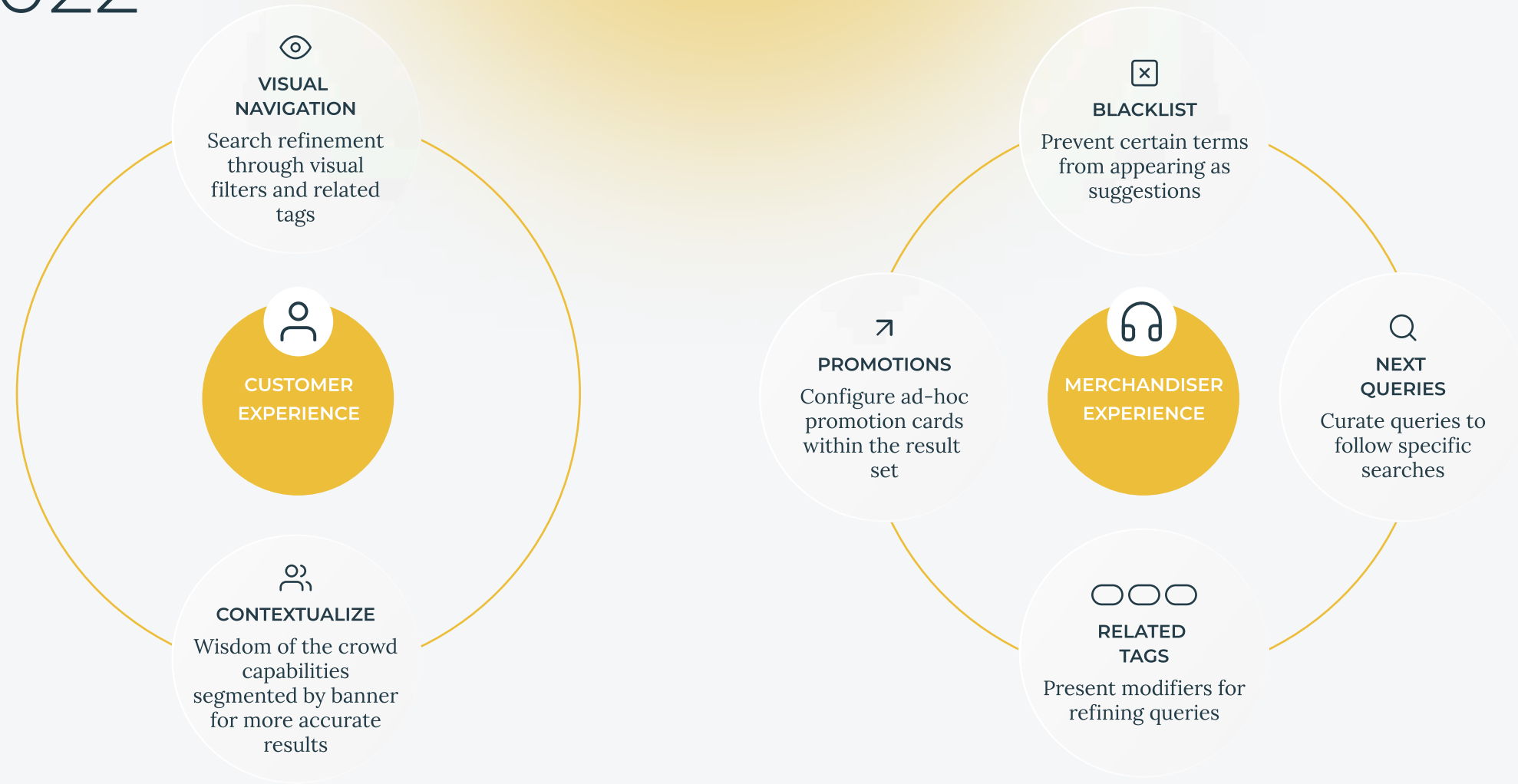
2021

eMPATHY.CO



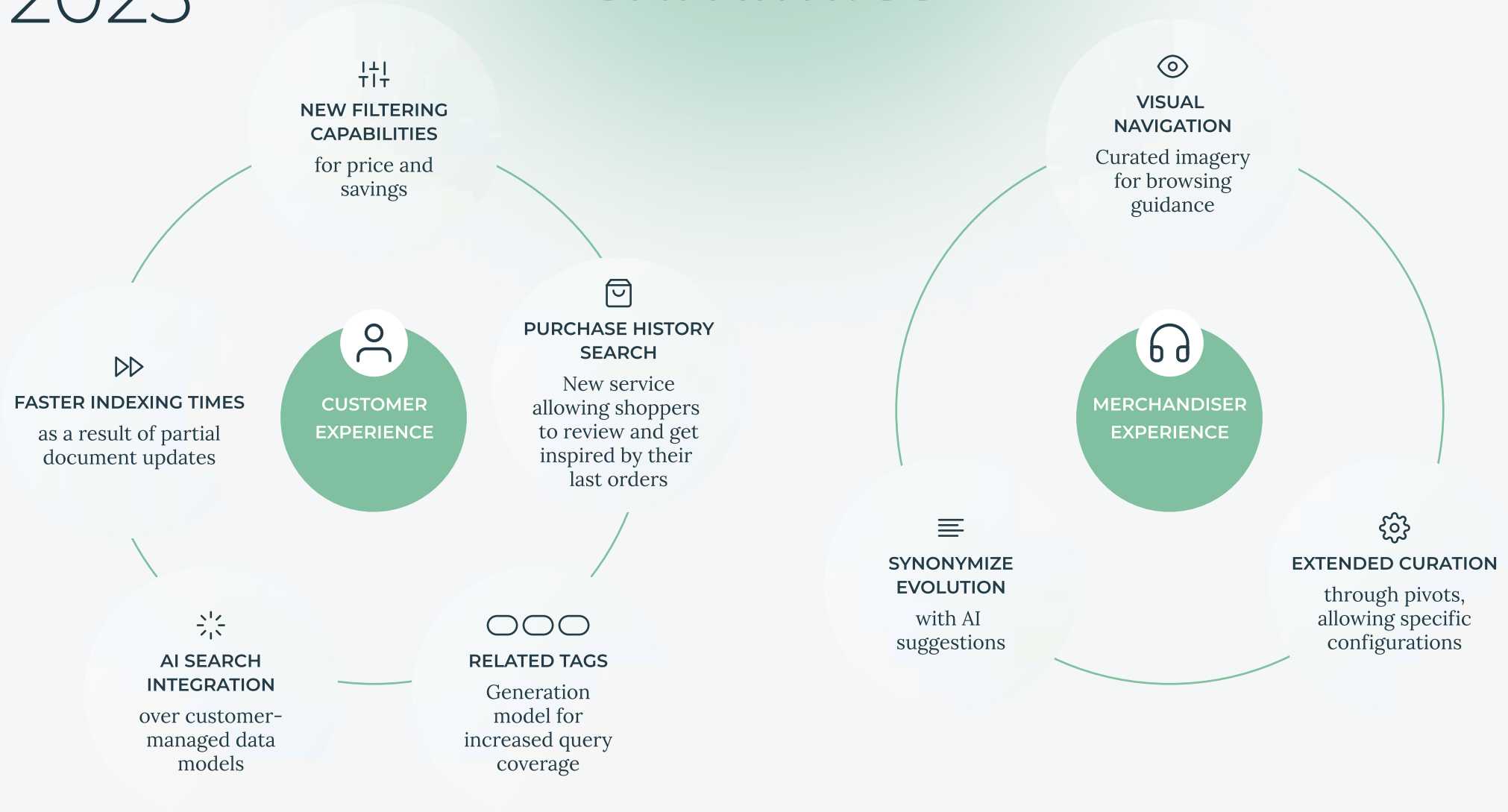
2022

empathy.co



2023

EMPATHY.CO



2024

eMPATHY.CO

ENHANCED FACETS
Color, scent, and flavor for richer product discovery.

STORE-WITHIN-A-STORE & MISSION-BASED DISCOVERY
Brand -and mission- led assortments surfaced through carousels and shoppable TOPs.

BUY AGAIN IMPROVEMENTS
Expanded labels across all previously purchased items.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

VISUAL NAVIGATION REDESIGN
Modernized UI for clearer, more intuitive browsing

PERSONALIZED PREDICTIONS
Expanded Top Picks for You carousel in the predictive layer.

TOPS 2.0 & REPORTING
More powerful promotional configuration with performance insights.

PRODUCT LISTS
Create, rank, and reuse curated product sets across promotions.

ADVANCED QUERY CONTROLS
Pinning, pivots, and fulfillment-based ranking.

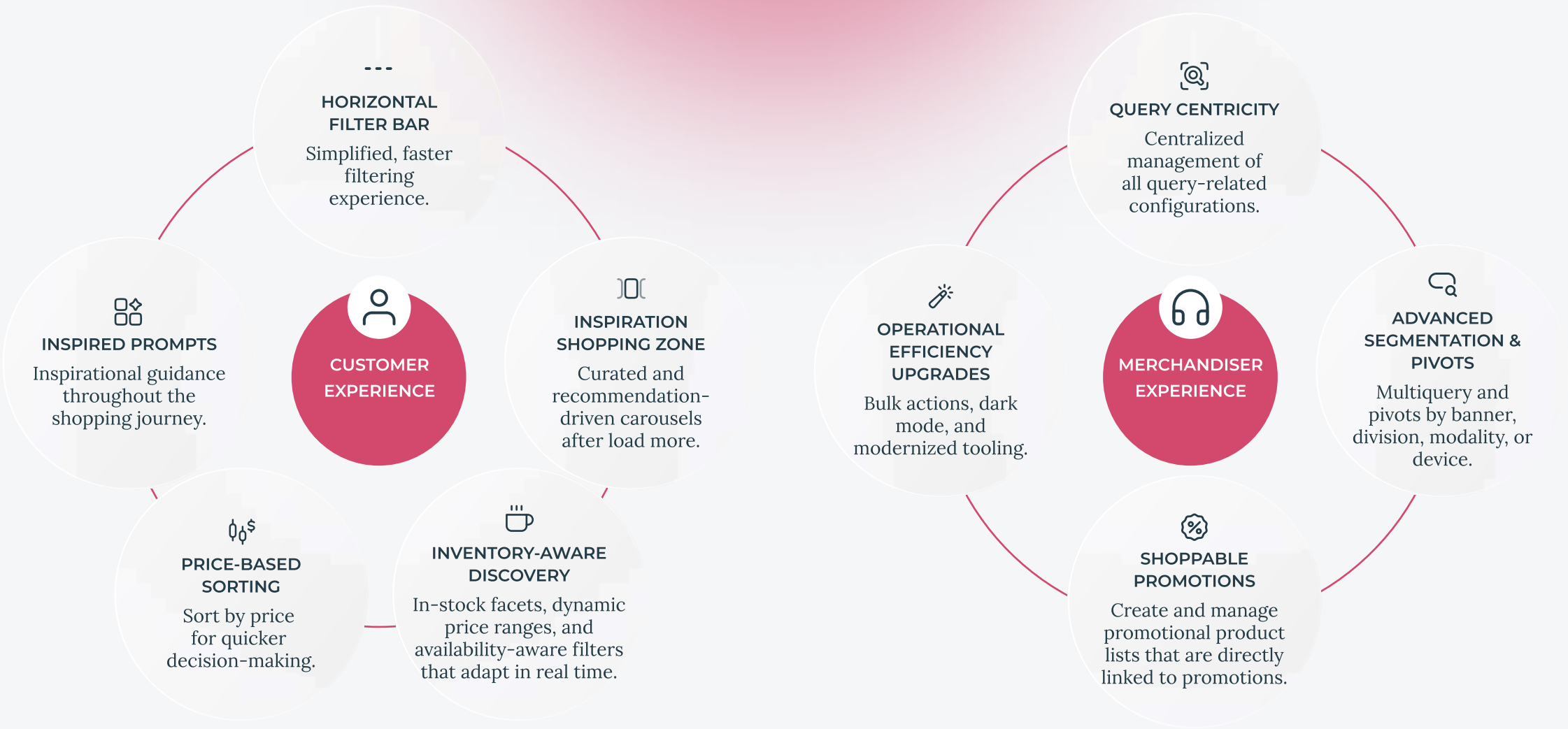
MERCHANDISER EXPERIENCE

EXPLAIN 2.0
Improved transparency into ranking and search behavior.

PLAYBOARD USABILITY UPGRADES
In-tool communications and restyled inputs.

2025

EMPATHY.CO



THE PLAYBOARD

At Empathy.co, the backoffice tooling platform used to configure Search & Discovery is the Playboard. It gives merchandizers detailed control over their ecommerce experience, providing invaluable insight into how shoppers interact and engage with their store and catalog.

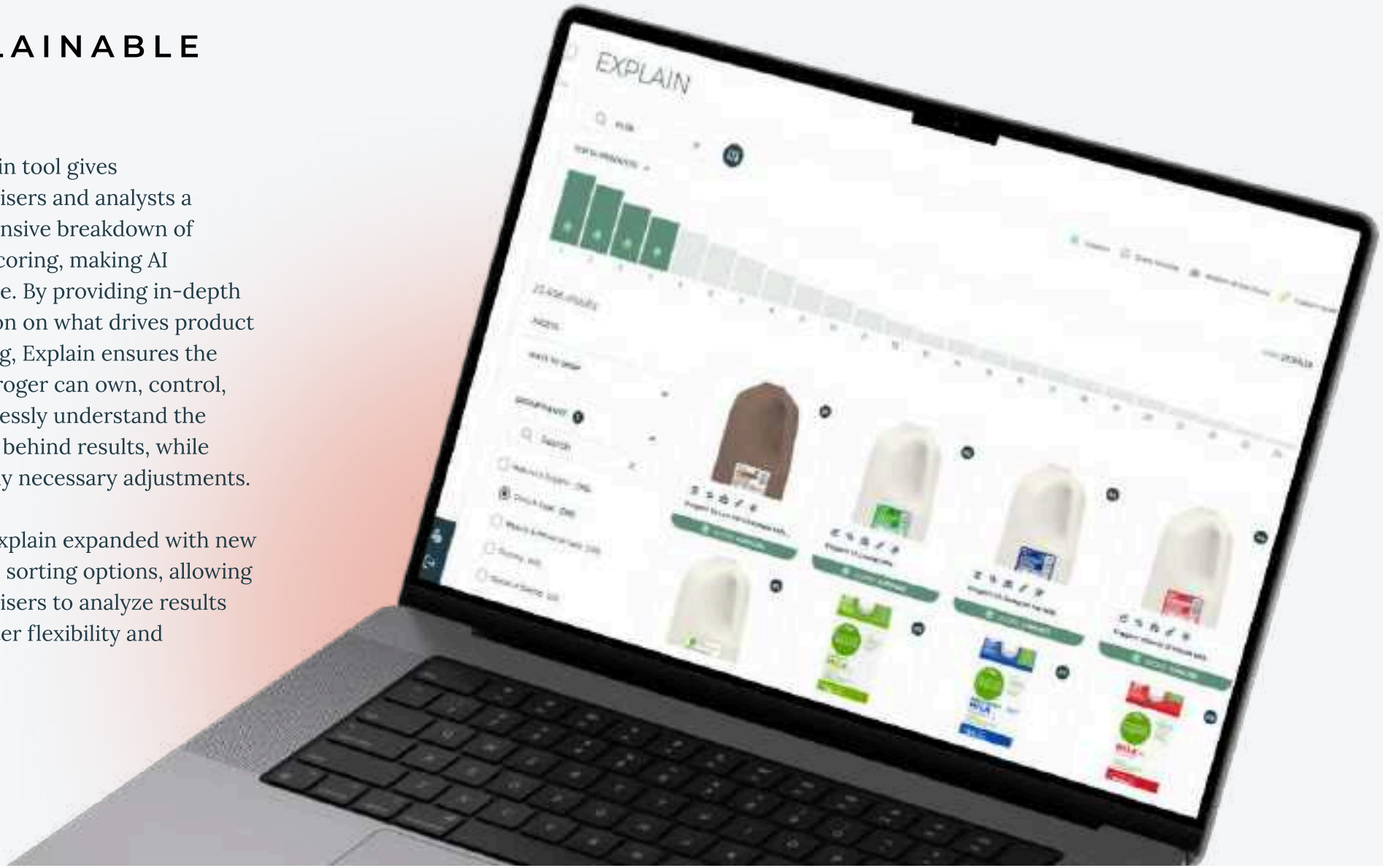
Over the course of Kroger's partnership with Empathy.co, the Playboard has continued to evolve, bringing merchandisers new configuration tools and shoppers a more intuitive search and discovery experience. In 2025, updates ranged from interface restyling and dark mode to new communications features, nutritional attributes, scheduled filters, and expanded capabilities in Visual Navigation.



EXPLAINABLE AI

The Explain tool gives merchandisers and analysts a comprehensive breakdown of product scoring, making AI explainable. By providing in-depth information on what drives product positioning, Explain ensures the team at Kroger can own, control, and seamlessly understand the reasoning behind results, while making any necessary adjustments.

In 2025, Explain expanded with new filters and sorting options, allowing merchandisers to analyze results with greater flexibility and precision.



CHALLENGE

Give Shoppers Granular Control over Search Results.



As shoppers engage with long lists of products, it becomes harder to maintain inspiration and keep the browsing experience fresh. Without relevant recommendations beyond the first set of results, shoppers may lose interest or abandon their search.

SOLUTION

Facets & Filters



Empathy.co introduced the new Inspiration Shopping Zone in September 2025. This feature surfaces You May Also Like suggestions and curated carousels that re-energize the shopping journey.

RESULT

Streamlined Search Results, Determined by Shoppers



Shoppers now enjoy a more engaging and personalized browsing experience, discovering new products and ideas without breaking their flow. This fosters deeper interaction, encourages exploration, and strengthens overall satisfaction with Kroger's online store.



03

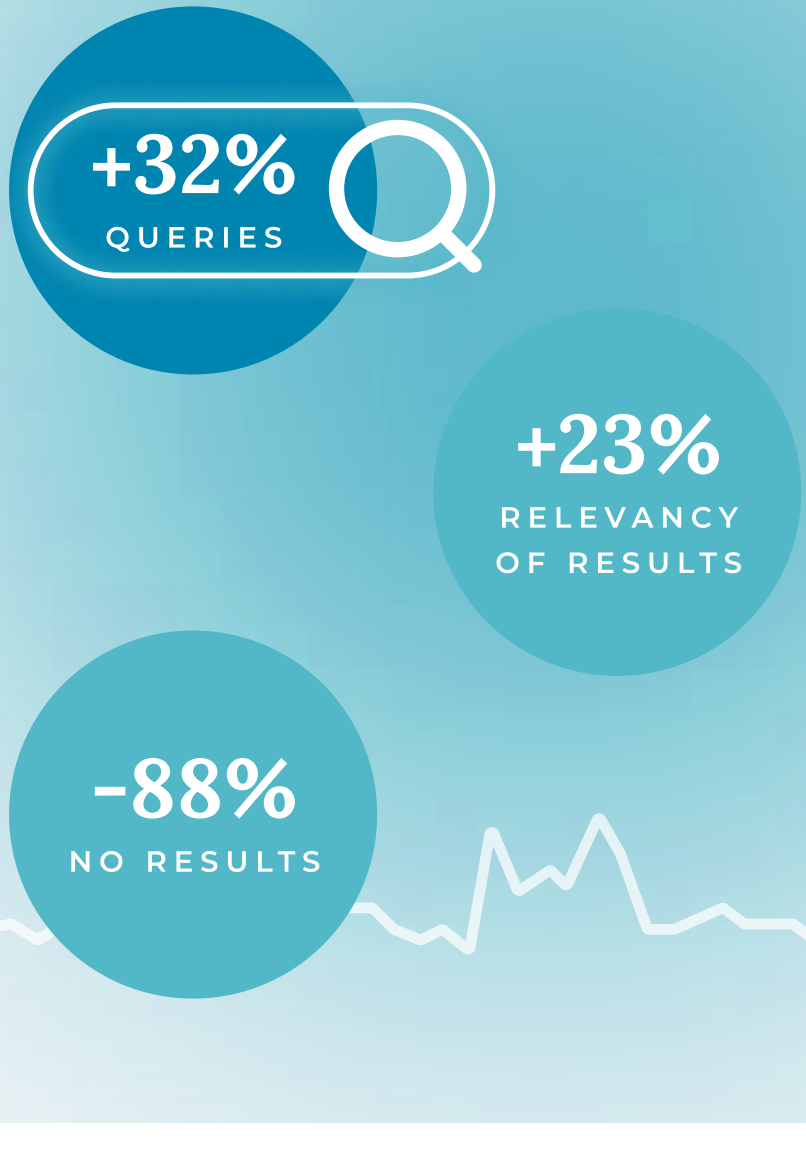
KROGER'S PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Results & Key Metrics

Kroger's collaboration with Empathy.co has proven extremely productive and beneficial, with measurable improvements across queries, clicks, success counts, and Add2Carts, while No Results dropped significantly. These gains have translated into stronger engagement and revenue growth from search and navigation.

Considering the evolution since the pandemic boom, 2025 marks a new level of maturity and resilience in digital performance.

**Data June 2020 vs June 2025*





04

DEDICATED TEAMS FOR COMMITTED COLLABORATION

ELEVATING SEARCH WITH INNOVATION

Search has evolved with innovations that make discovery faster, smarter, and more engaging. A redesigned Visual Navigation, horizontal filters, and facets like Color, Scent, and Flavor give shoppers intuitive ways to refine. “Buy Again” labels, Top Picks, and an Inspiration zone add personalization, while backend upgrades boost speed and reliability.



PURCHASE HISTORY

Having teams from Enterprise AI Search made for Commerce designated to work specifically with the grocer gave them the agility necessary to serve their customers as their online store continued to grow. The introduction of the Purchase History tool is a good example of strong collaboration with the customer problem at the forefront.



EMPOWERING INSIGHTS AND CONTROL

The Playboard has evolved into a powerhouse for product and query management, delivering deeper insights and sharper tools for decision-making. With Explain now offering downloadable data, advanced filtering, and product analysis, merchandisers and analysts gain clarity on shopper behavior like never before. Query Ranking and Centricity features make it possible to rank, pin, and pivot queries, while new Product List tools allow centralized management, ranking, and bulk actions.

Visual Navigation has also matured, with multi-query support, multiple carousels, and an Image Builder to streamline creative management. On top of this, enhancements like Dark Mode, Calendar 2.0, and a redesigned menu elevate usability, making the Playboard not just a backend tool but a refined user experience for those driving retail innovation.

