Bitly for Retail

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Customize

Getting Started Guide:
Bitly for Retail

In retail, every second is a fierce competition for customers' attention, time, and wallets. To keep up and stand out, brands need to reach their audience with the right products and marketing at exactly the right time.

But, marketing tools for retail can be expensive, technically complex, and lacking in analytics. Retail brands need efficient, effective, and user-friendly technology to meet customers across a number of touchpoints.

That's why, every day, retail brands big and small use Bitly to transform the shopping experience and greet customers with exactly what they're looking for. The Bitly Connections Platform offers an entire suite of user-friendly solutions, including short links, QR Codes and 2D Barcodes, landing pages, and analytics—and retail brands use them all!

In this eBook, we'll cover the many use cases for the Bitly Connections Platform in the retail industry. Brands today use Bitly to:

- Enhance every moment of the shopping experience
- Improve their online presence and build brand awareness
- Understand their customers' behaviors and desires
- Make it easy for customers to discover more

Plus, we'll help you envision a start-to-finish customer journey and how to use Bitly at every touchpoint. **Let's jump in!**

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Enhance the entire shopping experience

When shoppers walk through your doors—whether physical or digital—you have a chance to delight them, learn from their behavior, and offer more of what they're looking for. The Bitly Connections Platform helps you create interactive touchpoints from physical window displays and shelves to digital marketing campaigns and social media.

Drive more sales

Don't just present items for shoppers to peruse at face value—make the most of their time in stores with Bitly Codes. Add QR Codes to store displays or hang tags that customers can scan to:

- Browse and order items online in different colors or sizes than what's in stores
- Purchase out-of-stock items online
- Redeem coupons for special offers and discounts
- Review your sustainability practices and manufacturing
- Learn more about sales and limited-time promotions

Include QR Code touchpoints throughout your stores for greater convenience and flexibility for any customer.

> "There's not a lot of incentive for customers to type in a URL while they're standing in the aisle. But with Bitly QR Codes, we were able to easily point people directly to our values and share what makes Daily Harvest special."

Courtney Kociemba
VP of Performance, CRM, and Loyalty at Daily Harvest

Connect with shoppers at home

Keep the conversation going with your customers even after they've made a purchase and taken it home with Bitly 2D Barcodes. In the next several years, vendors across retail will transition from using 1D UPC barcodes as the industry standard to 2D Barcodes like QR Codes. These codes can contain much more information than UPCs to keep up with the evolving needs of the industry.

2D Barcodes (like QR Codes) streamline supply chain processes and improve point-of-sale interactions, but they don't just contain information that retail staff needs. They also enhance customer experiences—through the GS1 link, customers can scan QR Codes right from their smartphones both in stores and at home to explore interactive content experiences.

Retail brands can use QR Codes to offer shoppers ingredient details, step-by-step instructions, video tutorials, or reorder information. Give your customers convenient access to essential information so they can self-serve and keep your brand top of mind as a helpful resource.

Make every purchase (and scan) count

With the Bitly Connections Platform, you don't have to create one-size-fits-all QR Codes. Incorporate your brand elements into every customizable code to stand out and entice shoppers.

Once you've embraced your unique QR Code style, you can start crafting a code for every occasion and touchpoint within the shopping journey—from window displays and racks to checkouts and online experiences.

From there, every Bitly Code placement can help you better understand your audience. Use Bitly Analytics to review the performance of your campaigns from start to finish. Analyze metrics like scan location and your best-performing campaigns over time. Learn which codes and calls to action see the highest engagement so you can remove or adjust ineffective ones.

Test different QR Code placements, messaging, or even code designs and compare their performance across stores. Based on your findings and campaign performance, refine your strategy to drive more scans, more visits, and more sales.
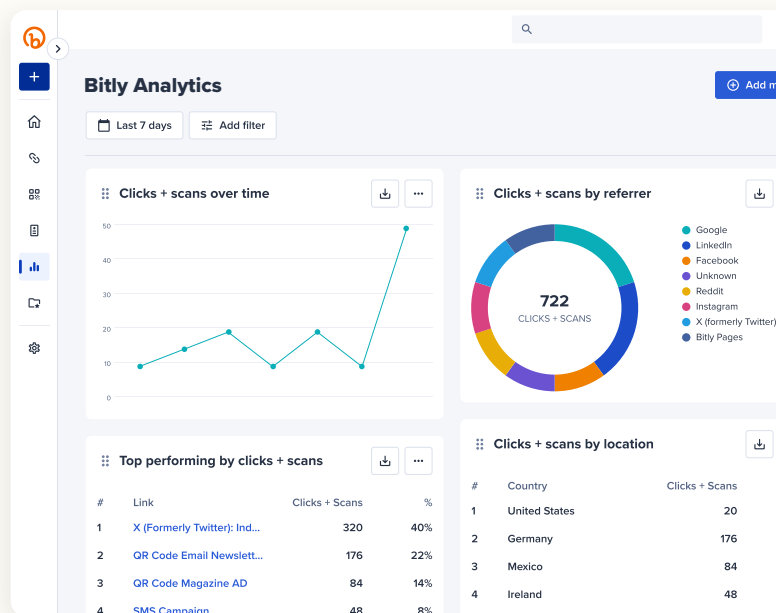
What to know about the 2D Barcode transformation:

GS1 Global, the not-for-profit organization that oversees global standards for barcodes, has announced the retail industry's upcoming transition from traditional UPC barcodes to 2D Barcodes like QR Codes by 2027.

Retail brands can prepare for this transition now by taking steps like these:

- Learn more about 2D Barcodes, including the types and real-life retail use cases.
- Explore retail's transition to 2D Barcodes.
- Read up on how QR Codes can boost purchases.
- Start using QR Codes to connect with your audience now, in-store on displays, and in your marketing campaigns.

Have more questions? Bitly is here to help! Don't hesitate to reach out and connect with us about all things 2D Barcodes.

Strengthen your online retail presence

In 2023, online sales made up 27% of purchases in the $5.3B retail industry, according to the National Retail Federation. While in-store shopping still makes up the lion's share of business at just under three-quarters of sales, e-commerce should play an essential role in your retail strategy, no matter what you sell.

Bitly Links and Bitly Analytics help you strengthen your e-commerce experience, whether you offer online ordering options or just use your online presence to connect with customers.

Build brand awareness

With Bitly Links, you can create branded, memorable short URLs to send via email or text or share on social media.

You can even promote a snappy short link on physical advertisements—shoppers will remember a simple link that ties to your brand identity, and they'll be more willing to type it in than a long, convoluted URL. Plus, a branded link looks clean and doesn't take up much space on your ads.

A custom short link boosts brand recall in every interaction, reminding customers of the quality and exciting offerings they expect from you while driving higher click-through rates and engagement. Bitly helps you do it all at scale, whether you're sending order updates to thousands of customers or creating links for influencer marketing campaigns.

Keep offers fresh

Short links are a versatile tool for ensuring you send audiences to the latest and greatest merch you have to offer. Instead of sending clicks to a static location (or even an error message when something has changed or expired), you can adjust and adapt each short link at any time to keep all your URL destinations up to date.

For instance, update a branded short link to an old promotion or out-of-date merch to ensure that, if someone clicks, they still arrive at a relevant or similar offering. That way, you don't lose the traffic altogether, and you can entice them to stay and shop awhile.

Bitly 101

You can customize every part of your QR Code in the Bitly Connections Platform!

- **Patterns:** Choose from nine preset QR Code patterns.
- **Corners:** Elevate your QR Codes with ten unique corner styles.
- **Color:** Bring your QR Codes to life with vibrant colors. You can choose colors for the code itself, the background, and the outer and inner corners.
- **Frames:** Make your QR Codes pop with a host of attention-grabbing frame options that entice people to scan your codes.
- **Logos & Icons:** Upload your logo for ultimate brand recognition or choose from one of several social media icons

An added bonus? Bitly seamlessly integrates with tools you already use like Canva. Connect your accounts to easily drag and drop Bitly Codes (and short links) into your designs.

You can create new QR Codes within Canva or easily insert any of the 50 most recently created codes from your Bitly account. All Bitly Codes created in Canva can be accessed again within the app or your Bitly account, so you can reuse the same codes on multiple designs!

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Hot Topic recruited millions of Stranger Things fans to join the Hellfire Club—and purchase merchandise that connected them to the show—by sharing branded Bitly Links on social media. The links featured Hot Topic's trusted custom domain (hottopic.me) and an instantly recognizable custom back-half (/hellfire).

Get your Hellfire Club t-shirt
hottopic.me/hellfire

Drive app downloads and engagement with deep linking

When your app is on a customer's phone, you're already boosting awareness just by being on their home screen. And when you share notifications and messages with exclusive special offers inside, that's when the sales really roll in!

Across your online channels, mobile deep linking can encourage users to download or open your app when they click to review your merchandise or make a purchase. Create Bitly Links as mobile deep links that either direct shoppers to a specific page within your app or guide them to the app store to download your app. Then, you can use those downloads strategically to encourage users to return, explore the latest offerings, and make their next purchase.

Capture data from every click

Each time a customer clicks or types in a short link, they give you information about their interests, favorite offerings, and even their geographic location. This data is a short link's superpower. To use short links to execute data-driven campaigns, retail marketers need to keep close tabs on their click statistics:

- Which campaigns are working best?
- Which physical ads are converting into sales via short links?
- Which calls to action work better in certain regions?
- Which referring channels are bringing the most visitors to your online shop?

You can find answers to these questions using all the data available in Bitly Analytics—no need to involve a data scientist or IT expert!

Once you've reviewed and analyzed the results, you can adjust link destinations in your campaigns, change messaging going forward, and add links at high-engagement touchpoints.

Short links also make it easy to manage your UTM parameters. Create tracking links and measure your campaigns to gain valuable audience insights and target your customers more effectively.

Bitly 101

With Bitly, you can easily find the perfect domain to use for all of your short links. A **branded link** is a shortened URL that uses a brand name—or a word or phrase closely tied to the brand—to associate the company with the shared information.

Some examples of branded links include:

- Bitly: **bit.ly**
- New York Times: **nyti.ms**
- Huffington Post: **huffpo.com**
- LinkedIn: **lnkd.in**

Branded links help build awareness and recognition, are a powerful way to promote specific products or services, and can help improve the customer experience.

With Bitly, you can:

- **Replace the "bit.ly" in your links with a custom domain.** Search for, select, and set up a complimentary custom domain in minutes.
- **Create custom back-halves** by inserting your own words at the end of a link and give audiences a preview of what they're clicking.
- **Use auto-branding** so any link shortened by a third party automatically uses your domain.

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Reach shoppers in real time via text

SMS marketing is a go-to tactic many marketers use to effectively reach and engage with their audiences, boasting open rates of over 50%. But simply opening a message isn't enough to drive engagement or sales—you want shoppers to take action by clicking to browse offerings or pick out their next purchase.

A branded short link can make or break clicks from your audience. A link with a known domain in a compact, trusted format is much more likely to drive traffic, rather than prompting them to delete it or even mark it as spam. Don't risk low-engagement SMS campaigns with unbranded or long links. Reinforce your brand identity in every text with a Bitly Link that uses your custom domain and call to action.

Connect your tech stack to Bitly

No matter what tools are already in your tech stack for reaching retail audiences online, Bitly integrates seamlessly. Use our popular integrations with some of the biggest names across:

- Customer relationship management, such as Salesforce and HubSpot
- Design, including Canva and Adobe
- Social media management, like Hootsuite and Buffer

Connect your tools to make creating and publishing short links and QR Codes that much easier.

Don't see your favorite tools in our integration marketplace? The Bitly API has you covered—send your developer to our API documentation to set up custom connections to any of your tools for engaging customers online.

> "We wanted to create the best possible experience for our customers so that when they receive a communication from us, they know it's trustworthy and secure."

Phil Gergen
Chief Information Officer at Koozie Group

Make it easy to discover more

Turn your social media profiles, posters, in-store displays, and more into the next step for shoppers who are ready to browse and make a purchase. With Bitly Pages, you're not just building a landing page—you're creating a jumping-off point for customers to explore more from your business.

Instead of simply sharing a universal link to your website's homepage, craft a customized journey for your audience. By creating personalized landing pages, you can build stronger relationships with your customers.

Create a branded landing page

If you've ever struggled to pick just one link, destination, or call to action to share with your customers, then you know exactly how powerful a landing page can be. Instead of simply linking to your homepage or one specific offering, you can share a wide range of links and content for shoppers to explore next.

Point them toward special promotions, new arrivals, limited-time or special edition products, or even clearance items. You can also take them to how-to videos or tutorials, details about your sustainability or manufacturing practices, or brand partnership content.

With Bitly, you don't just get to choose your own adventure when it comes to which links you share. Your landing page is also a canvas for creativity. Customize each element to remind customers of the unique look and feel of your brand—they'll be excited to click through and see more of what you have to offer!
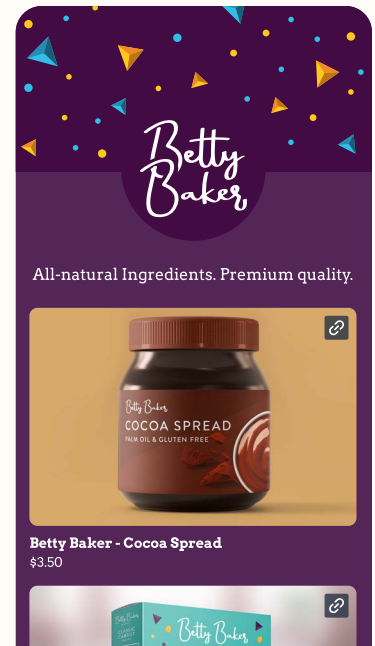
Bitly 101

With Bitly Pages, you can create mobile-friendly landing page destinations for your short links and QR Codes to...

- Showcase content
- Convert audiences
- Track performance

...all in one place!

Save time and effort by utilizing pre-made templates. Our **pre-made templates** help you create high-quality, engaging landing pages in minutes—**no coding required!**

Take advantage of plug-and-play flexibility for **customization features**—like colors, fonts, and layouts—to suit your brand's look and feel.

Make Bitly Pages more engaging with **diverse layouts** and formats, and create **visual diversity with images and YouTube videos** to showcase your brand, product, or message. Best of all? Your landing pages are **mobile-optimized** to connect with your audience wherever they are.

Utilize metrics like total views and clicks, link activity over time, views by device and location, and referrers to see which touchpoints are driving the most traffic.

You can even create multiple landing pages for different purposes—create one for your social media bios, one to promote a special seasonal offer, and one to share more about your business!

- **Multiple landing pages:** Create and manage multiple Bitly Pages from one account.
- **YouTube embed:** Embed YouTube videos directly within a Bitly Page for a seamless playback experience.
- **Image grid:** Add up to 9 images in a 3x3 grid.
- **Image carousel:** Add up to 10 images in a horizontally scrolling container.
- **New layout options:** Choose from 8 preset layout options to give you more choices when building your landing page.
- **Templates**: Use pre-built templates in various layouts and styles with stock content to help you effortlessly create your landing page's foundation.
- **Bitly Page performance:** Track and analyze all of your connections in one place so you can make more informed decisions about how you're connecting with your audience.

Set your own schedule with Bitly Pages

Your landing page isn't a set-it-and-forget-it tactic; it's a dynamic tool that you can adjust, grow, and change as your business needs do, too. Add links when you have new items to promote and easily remove them when they're no longer relevant. This flexibility is particularly valuable in the retail industry, where the need to keep customers engaged and coming back for more is always a top priority.

When scheduling links to go live on your Bitly Page, you can take your project management and promotion skills to the next level. Schedule links to go live and disappear on specific dates and times during product releases or live events—that way you can focus your attention on other tasks when it counts.

Learn from your analytics

Like with every tool in the Bitly Connections Platform, your landing page gives you valuable info about your current and potential customers. Every click helps you gain a clearer picture of which links (and products) are most interesting to your audience, so you can shape your messaging and your offerings to match what they want to see.

Every landing page you create gives you deeper insights into your shoppers' behaviors, allowing you to connect more effectively and boost sales along the way. It's all possible with Bitly!

> "Whether it's a new release that's coming out or an exciting event taking place, the flow of information in the music industry is non-stop. I wanted to find a way to make it as simple and easy as possible to share news with our online community."

Carrie Colliton
Co-Founder of Record Store Day

See how the Connections Platform works across the buyer's jouney

With the Bitly Connections Platform, you can enhance every interaction throughout your customers' shopping journey and gather helpful data points to grow your retail business. From the first time a potential customer hears your brand name to their ongoing loyalty and advocacy, Bitly's platform is here to help.

Let's explore how QR Codes and 2D Barcodes, short links, landing pages, and analytics from Bitly can help you reach and connect with your customers. Plus, we'll unpack how stellar retail brands have built better processes, enhanced engagement, and uncovered consumer behavior with the Bitly Connections Platform.

Meet Leah—a San Francisco native and savvy shopper who loves finding new retail brands, both online and in stores. She recently discovered her next favorite shopping destination: SF Living Shop. SF Living isn't a real store, but it could be a clothing, homewares, or specialty goods location with both online offerings and brick-and-mortar locations.

Let's follow along on Leah's journey to becoming SF Living Shop's next biggest fan—and see where she encounters Bitly-powered campaigns along the way.

Promotion

Leah typically learns about her new favorite retail brands from a couple of key sources online and in the wild:

- Through ads she sees during her commute to and from work
- On her TikTok and Instagram feeds—from her favorite influencers and through ads targeted just for her

Both of these channels come into play when she encounters SF Living Shop for the first time. While walking to work, she first sees a billboard and flyers for the brand, each featuring a Bitly Code, and scans for quick and easy access. She checks out some popular merchandise and also finds a store location that's nearby.
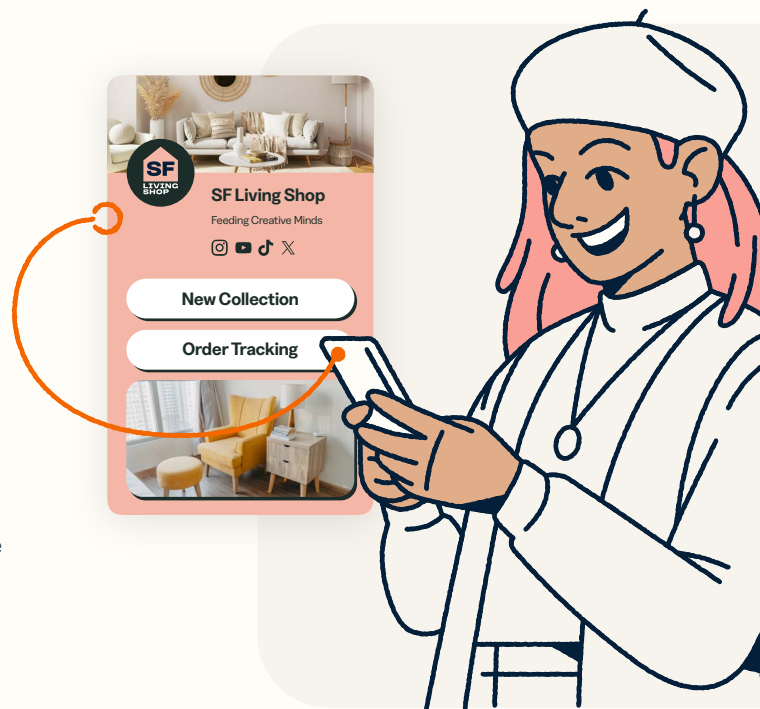
Bitly in action

When health-forward brand Daily Harvest launched products in Kroger stores across the United States, they greeted shoppers with Bitly Codes, placing them on clings on freezer doors. They used the codes to promote their sustainability efforts—as an incentive to scan, Daily Harvest donated $5 to support farms with each scan.

Intrigued by what SF Living has to offer, Leah stops by the store on her way home from work a few days later. As she browses their in-store selection, she encounters more QR Codes—in this case, 2D Barcodes—on product packaging. She scans them to learn more product information, like where and how the product was made.

Leah's not ready to purchase during her first in-store visit—yet. But, just a few weeks later, she sees a TikTok from one of her favorite influencers who redecorated their space with prints, furniture, and plants from SF Living. The video shares a Bitly Link to a limited-time collection and discount code, which is enough to convince Leah it's time to make her first online purchase.

The team at SF Living Shop gets data from every short link click (and QR Code scan) which tells them where their audience is located and which campaigns are most effective so they can invest their budget strategically.

Bitly in action

Convenient, feline-friendly cat food brand Smalls engages fans with trusted influencers, running 10 to 20 campaigns at once. When they needed trackable URLs for partners to share with their audiences, they turned to Bitly Links. The small startup team saves hours with short links created at scale and gains valuable data on every campaign to make smarter, data-driven decisions.

Ordering

Leah places her first order from SF Living Shop online, excited to receive her items. She signs up for SMS messaging with SF Living to receive order status updates throughout the process. She gets texts when her order is confirmed, when it ships, and when it arrives at her doorstep. The messages come with a branded Bitly Link from their domain: SFliving.shop. That way, she knows each link is secure and trustworthy.

She also has the option to save on shipping with in-store pickup. SF Living sends her a custom QR Code with her order details, so a staff member simply has to scan it and can identify her order right away.

When Leah makes future in-store purchases, SF Living uses Bitly products to connect with her and other shoppers on receipts. The store prints QR Codes on each receipt that links to special discounts for the next visit and send SMS messages with short links that share digital recipes, too.

Bitly in action

Koozie Group sends thousands of daily order updates to its customers via SMS using Bitly Links. Customers can instantly view their order status via these secure links without having to sign in, and Koozie Group stays confident that its branded short links are trustworthy for customers.

Loyalty

After Leah's first few orders, she's totally bought in on all the SF Living hype—but the retail shop still works hard to delight loyal shoppers and ensure they stick around for years to come.

Once Leah made her fifth purchase, SF Living sent an automated SMS text with a Bitly Link inviting her to join the store's loyalty program and download its app. From there, she can browse new selections and app-exclusive items while earning points with every purchase. SF Living takes advantage of mobile deep linking, so every text message takes customers like Leah straight to a specific page within the app.

As a loyalty program member, Leah is the first to receive short links to sign up for special events and sneak previews of upcoming products. This exclusive access makes her feel special and keeps her happy as a clam.

Plus, now that she's one of SF Living's biggest fans on social media, she knows she can easily tap the link in the brand's social media bio any time to explore their latest product drops and get inspired for her next in-store visit.

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Customer Experience

SF Living is always looking for new ways to make its products and shopping experiences better for valued customers. Leah receives a short link to customer surveys via email at key milestones like when she:

- Signs up for their loyalty program
- Makes her first purchase
- Hasn't visited SF Living in a while

SF Living uses this data to improve its offerings, but the store also uses analytics to learn how often surveys are opened and to understand which campaigns are driving purchases. SF Living reviews clicks and QR Code scans regularly to improve its web experience and boost more online sales.

With instant digital connections like short links, QR Codes, and landing pages, you can stay in touch and support shoppers like Leah throughout their journey with your retail shop. As you get to know your customers through Bitly Analytics, you can recommend the right products for them and craft delightful experiences that don't just drive sales, but also build audiences full of raving fans.

Bitly in action

Rad Power Bikes uses Bitly Codes to strengthen customer experiences at every turn. Guests can scan, no matter their needs, from joining a waitlist for upcoming products to simplified scheduling for rentals and support. These touchpoints put convenience and customer satisfaction first.

/feedback

Customer Feedback

4.8/5

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

Overall Rating

372
New Reviews

Create meaningful and measurable experiences

Across every interaction, retail brands strive to create relationships that go beyond simple transactions. Striking the right chord with customers as they browse your products, engage with your content, and learn your story, can make all the difference in turning passive shoppers into loyal brand advocates.

But, in order to do so, you need to give shoppers convenient, accessible, and direct touchpoints throughout their journey where they can easily interact with your brand. Then, you can make the most of the data they provide each time they click, scan, or buy, so you can make improvements along the way.

The retail industry moves fast. If you don't keep up with your customers (and their desire for products and experiences that meet their needs), you won't see them stick around for long. Luckily, that's where Bitly can help!

For retailers of all sizes, the Bitly Connections Platform helps you engage current and future customers wherever they are. It makes it simple and easy for customers to connect directly with your brand, discover more about your products, and make purchases across multiple touchpoints. By turning every interaction into an opportunity to showcase the value your store brings to the table, you unlock endless possibilities for growth.

Ready to get going? Start making more meaningful connections today with the Bitly Connections Platform.

Ready to put the Bitly Connections Platform to work for your retail brand?

Let's get started

Your Connections Platform

Go to Links	Go to QR Codes	Go to LandingPages

Today's stats

ENGAGEMENTS	LINK CLICKS	QR CODE SCANS	LANDING PAGES CLICKS
342	1589	745	239

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