

Online, Bricks & Mortar and the rise of the Experiential Shopper

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The Retail landscape is once again shifting. As bricks & mortar stores and online are continually evolving and learning to live together so we are entering a new age – the Age of the Experiential Shopper. Experiential Shoppers are Millennials, also known as Digital Natives or Generation Me. As they enter their prime shopping years, retailers need to learn how to attract these new best friends who are tech-savvy, impatient, demanding and social. Deborah Loh, Marketing Manager at Eurostop explains.

Despite the rise of online shopping the physical store is still an important part of the consumer's journey, but now Experiential Shoppers expect a whole lot more. Those retailers agile enough to adapt the in-store experience to meet the wants and needs of this new generation will gain a serious advantage over competitors.

Meeting Customer Expectations

While the terms multichannel and omnichannel have been bandied about for years, the customer is blissfully unaware of either. For them, they just expect a consistent brand experience at every touch point, with convenience at the core.

Whether this is being able to access a feature rich online presence from whatever device they happen to be using at the time and for the online experience to be mirrored in-store and vice versa. Retailers like the John Lewis Partnership are now taking this issue so seriously that they are hiring Brand Experience Managers for new stores.¹

Changing consumer behaviour is driving an evolution in stores. Increasingly we are seeing highly successful online retailers, the likes of Amazon and Missguided opening physical stores that extend their brand onto the High Street and beyond. Currently, bricks and mortar still dominates UK Sales, but these retailers are looking to close the gap between the High Street and the solely online retail experience, while extending the range of customer touchpoints with the brand. Certainly using data intelligence for customer loyalty, and disruptive technologies to drive footfall, caters for a millennial audience and enhances the brand, while offering the convenience of alternative fulfilment options and the physical product experience.

Inspiration and Entertainment

The former pure-play etailer Missguided last year opened two new stores² in the UK. The visual experience in store doesn't disappoint and is a 3-D extension of the online brand persona. However, Missguided has taken a large leap forward, no longer is a shop just a shop, but an inspiring and entertaining place to be. There is pop culture reflected in the décor, and a general sense of fun, that keeps customers coming back for more because it's simply a fun place to hang out with friends – and that is exactly what the retailer wants. Excited customers, sharing the experience with their friends, online and on social. The constant stream of live fashion inspiration on large digital displays brings the digital and physical worlds together.

Retailers and their brands are no longer limited by geography; consumers have endless choice and

information at the touch of a screen. All the more important for retailers to stand out from the competition and increase sales opportunities in bricks and mortar, harnessing technology to build a personalised and engaging relationship with their customers.

Know your Customer

Ecommerce has a wealth of digital analytics, enabling retailers to mine their data to get insights into customer preferences and shopping behaviour, and adjust their interfaces, marketing and individual promotions accordingly. For example, notifying customers of offers that they are likely to be interested in, based on previous browsing and buying history.

The promotions must be seamless across physical and digital because the consumer of today expects nothing less.

Convenience is key and retailers need to determine the preferences of their demographic. For example, if their customer base interacts largely on mobile and engages on social, they need to ensure they have a slick app with built in social sharing to the right platforms. As ever, it is just good retailing, know your customers, how they like to shop, what they want to buy and understand their lifestyles and the communities that they live in – making intelligent use of the emergent technologies can really work to enhance the connected experience.

Going Mobile – Customer Assisted Selling

Experiential Shoppers have grown up with smart phones, they live hyper-connected lives with their devices constantly to hand. They are accustomed to getting what they want, when they want and this urgency also applies to expectations of their in store experiences. They want product information instantly, and they certainly don't want to queue up to pay. Shops need to harness technology to take the POS to the shopper – customer assisted selling. Retailers also need to provide effective training for staff, which again can be helped by clever use of technology. Having self-service points in store, and staff with mobile apps with live product, stock, content and upsell information enables retailers to engage customers.

There are so many ways that new and disruptive technology can be used to enhance the in store experience. If retailers can look to embrace the unique selling proposition of their physical presence, get imaginative with technology to entertain, inspire, engage and provide a personalised customer service at all brand touch-points that is highly attractive to the Experiential Shopper, they will not only survive in the High Street, but thrive.

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About Eurostop

With over 25 years' experience, Eurostop provides a range of products and services to help retailers of all sizes in the fashion, footwear and lifestyle sectors manage their business. Founded by retailers Eurostop demonstrates time and again its deep understanding of the issues that retailers face every day.

Eurostop solutions manage EPOS, stock control, merchandise, fulfilment, warehouse picking and packing, and footfall. To ensure that retailers get the best out of the systems and keep on top of their business, Eurostop provides a range of easy to use analysis and reporting tools. Eurostop systems integrate with all the major ERP and e commerce platforms, providing customers with a truly best in class approach.

People use Eurostop's systems in over 30 countries worldwide, and are supported from operations in London, Singapore, Shanghai, Xiamen and Hong Kong. High profile customers include: ANTA, Aquascutum, DAKS, Erke, FatFace, Help for Heroes, Joseph, Marks & Spencer, Missguided, Pavers Shoes, Pretty Green, Pentland Brands Plc, Trespass and many more.

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¹Retail Week

(<https://www.retail-week.com/department-stores/john-lewis-hires-brand-experience-manager-for-new-store/7023545.article>)

²Missguided blog (<https://blog.missguided.co.uk/our-world/missguided-westfield-store-tour/>)