

# Exploiting the multichannel mindset



Online and offline channels are converging at a dizzying pace, and it's no secret that brands that are meeting their customers' desire to use different channels interchangeably are

gaining a significant competitive advantage. A study by LivePerson found that four out of five shoppers research online before stepping foot in a shop to buy, and 39 per cent of shoppers across the globe now spend the same amount or more online as they do in store during a typical month. Clearly, retailers are seeing these trends, and need to act now, or risk getting left behind.

The growth of online channels has impacted traditional high street sales, and Samsung reveals that 72 per cent believe investment in the in-store experience is crucial to compete with online. At the same time, more than half of online businesses are planning to increase spending on commerce-related technologies in the year ahead.

But it's not a battle between online and offline.

It's more a challenge of how to blend the two and create a harmonious multichannel experience - we are using different platforms simultaneously to shop, and expect service that is tailored to us.

Retailers therefore need to make sure all these channels are saying the same things, whether in store, online, through mobile, TV or social.

The focus needs to be less on physical stores being relegated into a

secondary role and more on combining the customer journey across multiple channels. It's also important to bear in mind that the same basic needs, such as service received, value for money, convenience, choice and efficiency remain at the heart of what's most important for shoppers, wherever they happen to be shopping.

So how can retailers bridge the gap between online and offline? Tony Heyworth, International Marketing Director at LivePerson, shares his tips...

### **Choice, Consistency or Confusion**

Whatever channels shoppers use, customers like a choice of consistent service options. LivePerson found that 59 per cent of consumers would like more choice in how they connect to brands when browsing and shopping online. In-store customers can and expect to get help immediately - this needs to extend to online. Offering real-time alternatives like Live Chat in addition to traditional methods such as a phone number or an email address, will support customers as they transition from offline to online. In-store customers can and expect to get help immediately - this needs to extend to online.

### **Innovate, Optimise or Die**

It's hard to ignore the shift to mobile, with 1 in 4 shoppers now using their device to research a product whilst in store. Like it or not, consumers are doing their homework on the move in your store ground zero, and far from feeling threatened, retailers should be grabbing this opportunity with both hands. Deloitte calculates that around £15.2bn was spent last year as a result of consumers being guided to a purchase by online information delivered to smartphones.

With this in mind, the phrase 'mobile first' has never been more relevant. Ensuring a mobile optimised or responsive website is in place is the first step towards ensuring a good user experience. When

customers are researching on the move they tend to want answers fast, so adding real-time support, for instance via mobile chat, enables retailers to guide customers toward products and makes a purchase even more likely.

### **Click, Collect or Churn**

Click & collect has seen huge growth, with leading retailers now offering the service, the latest coming from Waitrose, where you can pick up your weekly shopping from high-tech, temperature-controlled lockers... Click & collect purchases are expected to surge to £4bn in the next five years. Giving customers the choice of exactly when and how they buy and collect their goods by bringing online and in-store together, lets retailers cater for different people's preferences and ultimately can help reduce checkout abandonment as a result

This is another example where providing customers with the choice and convenience and offering the best service in every channel to keep us engaged, retailers can significantly increase customer loyalty, drive down abandonment rates, and boost profits.

Source: Tony Heyworth

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