

Thought leadership

UK: delivering a consistent brand message through a cohesive omni-channel strategy

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In our current precarious economic environment, it is incumbent upon retailers, ever more so, to react to changing shopper needs as quickly and completely as possible. The recent changing face of the high street is testament to the adage 'nothing lasts forever' and retailers have to adapt and develop at a chameleon like rate in order to prosper and indeed survive.

Whilst the phrase 'omni-channel' has been a big topic of conversation around many board tables, the literal translation of this into a customer centric proposition is still lacking in many retail environments. In its simplest iteration, it is the seamless integration of all aspects of the customer experience through whatever channel they may be accessing the individual retailer brand. When dealing with a retailer there should be a commonality of approach, including knowledge and awareness of the retailer you are interacting with at all times. This can be a challenge when each aspect of the customer journey potentially sits within different departments at head office; if there is no-one that takes a holistic view of the shopper experience this can very easily be sensed by the end customer.

The most successful brands, whether retail or otherwise, hold strong brand identity. Careful custodianship is critical to the retailer's on-going success. As a shopper there is now a plethora of choice across both online and offline and the retailers that will succeed are those that understand their customers. At its best, this will come from demonstrable segmentation of the customer target and a different approach being taken where relevant. All the time however, bringing it back to the core brand essence of the retailer whilst subtly adapting to meet differing needs across the socio-demographic base. As a shopper I want the 'hassle' of shopping across channel to be taken away from me. I want to be able to collect in store if I buy online. I want to be able to return in store if I buy online and I want the offers to be relevant to me whatever channel I am shopping across. The sense of frustration that I often feel when trying to get an online price recognized in store will only ever lead me to have negative connotations to that retailer. A retailer that has a flexible, yet consistent policy and that relishes serving me across each medium will in contrast, at the very least have the potential to retain my custom and secure me as a brand advocate amongst my peers.

The investment in generating an omni-channel strategy may seem like a hit to the bottom line and may be 'something we can do without' but this investment will pay dividends as long as the process behind creating a

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seamless shopping experience is well thought through and can be considered truly customer centric.

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