

Shifting patterns & switched on retail

Finding the balance between physical store visits and on-line shopping keeps retailers on their toes

Consumer purchasing patterns have become far more complicated over the past 18 months with a plethora of devices and more points of sale as retailers constantly rework strategies that have changed with shoppers needs and desires. Finding the balance between physical store visits and on-line shopping, keeping up to speed with the latest trends, and with seasonal sales already creating a buzz – retailers have to be on their toes to keep pace.

Getting the right mix puts retailers and brands under pressure to seamlessly balance the blend of the in-store experience and the accessibility of ecommerce, bringing customers closer as off-line is on-line and on-line is off-line. So to, as we see a gradual up-tick in seasonal shopping marking the lead up to the holidays with Black Friday and Cyber Monday, at a glance retailers will need to get their supply chains and delivery systems in order; review additional payment options; have a purpose beyond the sale and ensure that a unique, exceptional customer experience is offered.

Take for example the electronics industry that has attracted online sales for quite some time, even before the pandemic shifted peoples shopping habits. As revealed in an article published by www.



datafeedwatch.com electronics is one of the rapidly evolving and highly innovative sectors with £23 billion spent on consumer electronics in 2020, it plays a huge role in the ecommerce sector with 43% of these purchases made on-line. That said, as various waves of the pandemic ebb and flow consumers still want the option to visit a physical store so they can compare different models and test features as opposed to on-line.

make a profit and to attract and retain customers by providing a great experience. The important focus areas for both options should be around data and data analysis, innovation, seamless tech savvy offerings, personalised shopping experiences – a huge one in my book and building relationships with customers and understanding their needs. Dare I say it – these days a store is a store, whether down the street or on your smartphone screen and for

According to Mike Smollan, Chief Growth and Innovation Officer, Smollan, "On-line and off-line stores have the same goal – to sell and



Want to improve your efficiency and profitability?

Integrated retail
management
solution

giving you the edge



Retail



Enterprise



Mobile



Financial
Integration



Loyalty



eStore



eReplenish



Value Adds



Fuel

+27 21 556 2724
webinfo@archsoftware.co.za
www.archsoftware.co.za





retailers and brand owners it's all down to finding the sweet spot."

What does this 'balanced' offering look like? Brick-and-mortar stores where the brand experience is still inherently physical are holding their own as shoppers are more likely to buy products they have seen in person, particularly relevant to big ticket electronic items.

“Customers who pick items in-store tend to buy extra stuff; one-on-one quality customer service increases sales and here's the switch up – physical stores bring greater traffic to a retailer's online store.”

Similarly with on-line, www.thedrum.com suggests creating the in-store retail experience by adopting a personalised approach rather than blanket messaging; allowing for product discovery by promoting items likely to appeal to an individual (here the use of product bundles can be used very

effectively for seasonal promotions like Black Friday); the use of virtual reality to test out products could be a consideration; convenience offered as a matter of course and instead of trying to replicate the in-store experience, take the opportunity to build brand affinity with shoppers in new ways.

As lockdowns and 'opening up' scenarios prevail around the globe, assumptions based on what happened last year as the likes of Black Friday and Cyber Monday worked off a new playing card, may prove

to be tricky. For example, a survey by shopping rewards app Shopkick, noted that 43% of consumers expect to make the majority of their holiday purchases this year in a physical store, up 9% on last year. With this single raised flag careful planning and research is a given.

As we look back to move forward the stats tell a story. The hottest selling products for Cyber Monday 2020 were Air pods, Vtech toys, HP and Dell computers, and Chromecast (Adobe 2020); visits to physical stores during Black Friday were down 49% (Forbes 2020); 47,4% of shoppers preferred shopping on-line (PYMNTS 2020) with on-line sales reaching \$10.8 billion making it the biggest ecommerce selling day of all time (CNBC 2020).

What under-the-radar shopping movements should retailers be of

aware of this year? According to www.thewisemarketer.com – delivery could be the new experiential differentiator to fulfil the 'I want it now' expectation for example Amazon's drone fleet winning getting FAA approval; drive-thru shopping may be a thing as customers will likely expect stores, particularly those in malls, to offer complete curb-to-trunk delivery – Wawa is planning its first drive-thru store in the U.S. and the mobile experience must be optimised for a wider audience with retailers ensuring all their digital experiences are personalised for all age groups.

It seems shoppers will require even less convincing to self-indulge this year with holiday sales predicted to reach nearly \$760 billion this season. Consumers want retailers to meet them where, when, and how they shop, whether on-line or off-line as they continue to purchase goods with exceeding purpose and focus. **SR**

