

Digital consumers + seamless engagement = an epic experience

By [Simon Holt](#)

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Over the next five years digital technologies will dramatically disrupt how consumers will engage with retail brands well into the future.



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Widespread connectivity, ubiquitous smart devices, apps, social media and online innovation are changing the way consumers engage with brands and their purchasing habits, on everything from groceries to cars, clothing and cosmetics. Whether doing product research, comparisons, or transacting - consumers are going online.

Tech savvy and with smart mobile devices in hand, the digital consumer's expectations are now sky high – and retailers need to understand the evolving ethos of the customer experience to grasp the opportunity if they want to remain competitive and profitable.

The opportunity

Research shows that while consumers are increasingly active online – once they've done research, read reviews and compared prices – most still prefer to complete their purchase in-store. In fact, [90% of all retail sales](#) transactions still happen in a physical store.

However, digital consumers are growing in numbers, rapidly, and it's expected that within five years all customers will expect a digital in-store experience that mirrors their online experience.

Fortunately for retailers, innovative digital retail and store solutions are booming. Such solutions can help create that personal, convenient and digitally infused experience that consumers expect, while also making a store visit more entertaining, theatrical and appealing to the customer – for an epic experience. We call this the new 'digital possible' in retail.

Added to this, these solutions can generate a whole new level of information about inventory and customer behaviour that can be used to dynamically manage operations and drive future sales. Digital experience and data-driven retailing is, therefore, key to the future of the industry.



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Getting it right

Digital retail is not just about deploying a self-service station or front of house plasma screen with an interactive touch face. Behind every great digital store is a great digital infrastructure that ensures the in-store technologies continue to deliver, while the back-office systems run smoothly and seamlessly.

Deploying a sustainable and adaptive, future-proofed, digital retail solution combines core building blocks for managing digital content, merchandise and sales associates – underpinned by a digital store infrastructure that makes it easier to share data and make digital solutions work with existing enterprise applications, all in a secure cloud-based wrap.

Retailers, therefore, need a digital store infrastructure solution that supports all the communications, devices and back office integration – consistently, and to a network of stores – that make up a truly digital store, now and for the future.

Added to this, the digital store infrastructure must provide a sound basis for future developments – including being IoT ready (Internet of Things) and further store technologies yet-to-be-invented – but without compromising on what is already successfully in place. This means a digital platform that can effortlessly support corporate applications, provide connectivity for all and collect/consolidate data from thousands of devices in store, in the supply chain and in customers' hands.



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The (current) lag

So, why do many stores still look and feel like they did 20 years ago?

As with any period of massive change, there needs to be a process of adoption to address and troubleshoot any challenges around legacy systems, silos of data and security. What's more, while it is fairly easy to pilot new technology in a handful of stores, rolling it out at scale is much more complex. And, the speed of change is daunting. No one wants to make a

technology decision today that might limit what the business can do tomorrow.

What retailers need is a partner who not only understands all this, but is itself invested in the technology and digital solutions – one who can assist in overcoming these obstacles and confidently create a digital customer experience that can seamlessly be introduced across the whole store network, regionally or globally.

That's a partner who will help a retailer ensure they are delivering the right customer experience, at the right time, every time, and make it epic; don't you think?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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