

5 ways retailers can create shopper-first experiences in 2022

In the World Retail Congress' end of year review 2021 digital business transformation leaders at Publicis Sapient have defined the five core trends shaping the future of retail into 2022, along with what brands should focus on to become organisations that put shoppers first.



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1. Get ahead of costly returns

It's estimated returns volume will grow to more than \$1trn in merchandise annually over the next several years. Considering that an estimated 15% to 40% of ecommerce orders are returned (nearly three-times the rate of brick-and-mortar returns), retailers risk leaving even more on the table if returns aren't managed effectively.

A profitable returns management system requires retailers to consider how they can use data to improve customer experience alongside operational efficiency.

According to Publicis Sapient data, 62% of customers are dissatisfied with their ability to try on or try out products online. Understanding customer buying habits and providing robust product information from the get-go can help consumers make better purchase decisions and reduce the likelihood of returns from the start. Improved customer experience may prevent unnecessary returns from happening, but operational efficiency is what will ultimately mitigate cost when returns do inevitably happen.

Visibility and predictability into the supply chain across vendors, transport providers, distribution, stores and dealers are key to ensuring returns are routed to the right places at the right time.

2. Become the go-to destination for shoppers

Shoppers want to interact with brands that offer convenient shopping experiences.

The future winners of retail will be those that build a connected ecosystem of related services, expanding their reach while also branching out into new categories that complement their own suite of products and services. Identifying the best opportunities for expansion begins with understanding unique customer journeys and how to be relevant in the moments that matter.

Retailers must dive deep into their data to create a holistic view of their customers and how their shopping experiences change over time. As needs change, retailers can offer highly personalised recommendations for products or services at just the right moments, becoming reliable destinations for shoppers to find what they're looking for.

An industry to watch is health and wellness. Increased reliance on telehealth prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic presented an opportunity for retailers to enter the market through partnerships and experiences that make it easier for people to manage their health in innovative ways.

3. Expand payment options to capture hearts and wallets

As retailers look to expand their ecosystem, some are considering offering financial services or partnering with financial services companies to expand their payment options. According to Publicis Sapient data, one-third of customers want more cash-back opportunities tied to their favourite brands along with instalment pay options, loyalty programme or credit cards offered by retailers. Through data, retailers are unlocking a large customer base that is either underbanked or has no current banking relationships but still needs financial services like loans, advice, or payments.

4. Connect online and in-store experiences for seamless shopper journeys

Brick-and-mortar retail isn't going anywhere, but the instore experience will certainly be more digital than it is now. Retailers should view stores as an opportunity to provide experiences that differentiate their brand from the rest. Digital-first concepts that move beyond the transactional are a way to keep shoppers engaged while strengthening brand awareness.

By seamlessly integrating data across web, mobile, storefront and inventory channels, retailers can digitally expand their physical footprint while providing the connected, personalised experiences that shoppers want.

This could mean introducing new ways to interact with products through augmented or virtual reality, reconfiguring floor space to accommodate a growing audience of buyonline-pickup-in-store shoppers or making payment easier through mobile checkout services.

5. Dive deeper into data through monetisation

Retailers have a wealth of customer data – but are they doing enough with it? By creating a media network, retailers can transform their marketing strategy to deliver highly personalised messaging while creating new revenue streams through strategic partnerships and shared campaigns.

According to Publicis Sapient research, 37% of ecommerce shoppers would like personalised offers based on spending preferences and 31% want personalised content or advice to help them shop.

Retailers must also remain transparent, making clear distinctions between paid promotions and organic results as people browse for the products.

The World Retail Congress takes place this year in April in Rome, Italy.

Read the full report [here](#)

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