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INSTORE RETAIL MARKETING: STRATEGIES FOR BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN ONLINE AND INSTORE EXPERIENCES

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Now that shoppers are a few years removed from the COVID pandemic, they're settling into a new comfortable balance between online convenience and in-person shopping experiences with their favorite retailers.

As a result, brick-and-mortar retailers are developing strategies to reach out to and interest shoppers through the marketing channels that their customers favor. Whether it's digital, social media, or print, and regardless of where their journey begins, the ultimate goal is for it to



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culminate with an instore experience.

This integrated multi-channel online/instore planning requires consistency of messaging across all channels and the ability to use AI-powered data analysis to gain valuable customer insights. Retailers can use AI to tailor messaging and product recommendations based on preferences, often in real time. Retailers should also rely on AI-solutions to manage inventory in real-time to ensure stock availability across both online and offline channels.

One of the most appealing aspects of online/instore marketing integration is that it benefits both the retailer and the customer.

FOUR BENEFITS OF ONLINE/INSTORE MARKETING INTEGRATION FOR RETAILERS

1. **Seamless Shopping Experience for Customers** – Retailers recognize that not every customer arrives at check out from the same point of contact. Therefore, attracting their interest requires consistency of messaging content crafted to work best on the platforms they use and optimized for search on each according to key terms and browsing history. Brick-and-mortar retailers can break down the walls between the physical and the virtual, responding to customers with a unified and smooth operation that delivers satisfaction at every contact and improves foot traffic.
2. **Increased Brand Loyalty** – Offering customers more online/instore shopping integration helps retailers keep their customers happy and engaged. Lines blur between the physical location and ecommerce experiences. Stores add AR kiosks or AR mirrors to let shoppers try on items virtually in store and customers pick up on-line ordered items the same day at a physical location. Print packaging and signage bridges digital gaps through QR codes.




Online/Instore retail Agent Offline

marketing lets retailers optimize customer data in real time, deliver useful recommendations and wider inventory choices with AR, and create a frictionless experience that builds trust and repeat business.

3. **Reduced Order Returns** – When retailers offer instore pickup for items ordered online, they can dramatically reduce their shipping and reshelving costs for returned items. Customers have the opportunity to inspect and try on an item in the store and if unhappy with their selection can exchange it for another item in the store. It also lets retailers restock items for resale more quickly and helps them track inventory more accurately. Retailers can also serve as return centers for products purchased by customers online, regardless of whether it's the retailer's product.
4. **Increased Revenue** – When retailers reach customers on the marketing platforms they frequent and create a seamless strategy of communication across more than one channel through the buying journey, they see revenue growth and more impactful engagements. According to CapitalOne Shopping Research, retailers that use 3-or-more marketing channels increase customer engagement more than 250 percent over single channel retailers. The research also reports that when consumers spend \$100 online and then visit the retailer's physical location within 15 days, they spend an additional \$131.

THREE BENEFITS OF ONLINE/INSTORE EXPERIENCES FOR RETAIL SHOPPERS

1. **Convenience and Flexibility** – Shoppers appreciate retailers that make it easy to pick up purchases at times that suit their busy schedules and let them receive their orders faster. When they can buy online and pick up at a physical retail location, or “click-and- Agent Offline”

collect” their purchased items, they have confidence that their order will be complete and waiting for them curbside or in a designated pickup kiosk or area. This offering can lead to increased foot traffic and upsell and cross-sell opportunities for retailers as well.

2. **Customer Confidence** – One-on-one time with a retail associate in store lets shoppers get answers to questions or guidance on product use that online shopping can’t deliver. Consumers visit numerous websites, read online reviews, explore social media, or study catalogs to learn about the products they purchase, and an in-store visit can be the final event where they can physically inspect, handle, and receive guidance and product instruction.
3. **Order Security** – Unfortunately, there are criminals who steal delivered packages from the front porches or doorsteps when customers are at work or away from home. Security measures like door cameras can prove theft, but the item is still gone. Instore pickup eliminates this possibility, and your customer still has the satisfaction of receiving their package quickly. Instore pickups also reduce the possibility of product damage from handling during delivery.

COMPONENTS OF ONLINE/INSTORE RETAIL STRATEGIES

A well strategized online/instore marketing strategy will include and integrate these elements to reach across channels and deliver shoppers to your doorstep:

- Hyperlocalization identifies opportunities to give shoppers product availability with “near me” SEO optimization, a local touch by including maps and directions, pickup location options, availability time notifications, and geo-fenced promotions that are triggered to



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engage customers the moment they walk through your door.

- AI-personalized and timed communication delivers tailored messaging to customers at the ideal moment in their shopping journey and provides shoppers with relevant information that can anticipate needs based on behaviors to increase order value and retain customers.
- Multi-channel marketing delivers content that shoppers find helpful and reaches them on several touchpoints as they explore product options and make their purchasing decisions. This can include email-to-store promotions, social media to physical conversion, and instore digital integration.
- AR integration into online/instore multichannel marketing enables brands to let customers preview products in 3D before arriving at the physical pickup location. Shoppers can model clothing, try out new makeup shades and inspect items in detail while retailers personalize the entire experience with in-store journey mapping and recommendations.
- A multichannel marketing platform like Marketing.com's DOT® that efficiently manages and optimizes customer data and coordinates all facets of digital, print, and social media communications.

TWO CUSTOMER JOURNEYS. SAME DESTINATION

Here's how two customer journeys might look when retailers deploy multi-channel, multi-platform marketing strategies personalized with AI data.

INTEREST STIRRED

Customer A's interest in a product is aroused when an ad appears on her preferred social media platform. The ad is personalized to reflect her browsing history, and the content can include video and other



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interactive elements to spur deeper engagement and eventually lead her to the retailer's website.

Customer B receives a personalized direct mail postcard in his mailbox at home that has been customized using information gained from past experiences or demographic profiling with innovative variable data print technologies. The mailer has photos and graphics that reflect the household's lifestyle, a QR code that directs to a personalized landing page, and a coupon that contains a special code that can be used either instore or on the retailer's website for special offers.

SEARCH OPTIMIZED

Customer A uses apps on her mobile device to help her visualize products and make more informed decisions. She's embraced AR as a way to see how a product might look in her home or as a way to virtually try on clothing. Her experience and the choice of products she sees have been tailored on past search behavior and shopping preferences.

While searching on his laptop, Customer B shares his email to join a retailer loyalty program and to receive promotional emails. Shortly thereafter, he receives a personalized email from a local retailer triggered to coordinate with discounts patterned around his search habits and profile. The emails contain links to customized landing pages with product videos or other engaging content announcing a limited, in-store promotion.

SELECTION MADE WITH CONFIDENCE

Customer A had been a little reluctant to buy clothing and shoes online and, the few times she had, the result was disappointing. Items had to be returned. She'd also heard reports from neighbors that packages had been stolen when delivered to an empty household. Now, after using AR to find and order the items she wants on her mobile device, she's confident.

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arranged to stop at the store on her way home from work. That way she can physically inspect and try on her items knowing they will be there waiting.

Customer B always has a hectic Wednesday after work, depositing and picking kids up at sports and music practices. Before leaving work, he goes online to place an order for a meal with a favorite local restaurant to be picked up at a time that's convenient for him. He also knows that even though the kids are picky eaters, and his order contains special dietary instructions, there will be no misunderstandings because the order was verified by return confirmation by both text and email.

CONVENIENT INSTORE PICKUP

Customer A arrives at the retail establishment and upon entering receives a text notification with pickup location and instructions, as well as promotional offers available instore to complement her order. A strategically placed printed poster grabs her attention, and she purchases an item that she unexpectedly finds on sale at the checkout counter.

Customer B arrives at the restaurant and finds everything ready and prepared just as requested. He picks up some beverages and an impulse dessert before heading home. The cashier places a printed menu in his take-away bag.

ATTENTIVE FOLLOW UP

Customer A receives a 'Thank You' text shortly after getting home that also asks her to rate her experience with the retailer, who will post her comments on online review platforms. There's also a BOGO offer created around her shopping habits that she can print or use with her mobile device. After unpacking, she notices that the retailer's shopping bags are attractive and made from quality, sustainable materials. She

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sets the bag aside for future use.

As Customer B lays out the meal, his family watches a brief video about the restaurant's food sourcing that they access through a QR code on the menu. The customer later gets an email in his inbox from the restaurant thanking him for his patronage and sharing a coupon for 20 percent off his next purchase. A few days later he receives the same offer on a direct mail postcard.


As you can see, there are many touchpoints along a shopper's journey when retailers can coordinate digital and social media channels with print and use AR to enhance the experience and bring customers through their doors. Develop a strategy that is flexible and adaptable to the lifestyles of your shoppers to increase both online and instore engagement.

Marketing.com has the experience and experts to help you create a successful online/instore multichannel marketing campaign. Contact us today. (<https://www.marketing.com/contact-us/>)



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