

The 6 Essential In-Store Experiences That Your Customers Want to See



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With society being so heavily invested in convenience, why do consumers continue to support brick and mortar retailers?

One word: experience.

Shoppers were itching to get back into retail stores following the initial wave of lockdowns, and 2021 has provided strong sales numbers for many retailers. With delivery options still widely available, consumers clearly valued the experience of getting out of the house and into retail stores.

Based on our State of Consumer Behavior 2021 report, the in-

store experience is a defining advantage of brick-and-mortar retail. 90% of shoppers are likely to return to your store if their in-store experience is positive – and especially if the experience is one-of-a-kind.

As 2022 approaches, the normalcy that in-store retail experiences provide will continue to appeal to shoppers. And yet it's the retailers who provide in-store experiences that fall outside of the norm who will win the repeat business of their customers.

As McKinsey explains, successful retail experiences are not standardized but instead personalized to the greatest possible degree. Retailers must provide a full array of specific experiential offerings to serve every possible segment of their shopping base.

Here are the six types of in-store experiences that retailers should offer.

1. Self-service experiences

When shoppers choose one retailer over another, they give great weight to the convenience of each respective store. Per our State of Consumer Behavior 2021 report, 25.5% of shoppers see convenience as the most important factor in where they choose to shop.

Delivering a convenient shopping experience means giving the consumer options. Self-service offerings, by and large, provide customers another option within your store, and greater choice generally promotes a more convenient shopping experience.

When the cashier-led checkout line stacks up, a self-checkout kiosk can relieve the bottleneck. When in-store staff are overstretched, virtual shopping assistants are increasingly filling employees' shoes in a way that empowers customers by answering product-specific questions to showing competitor pricing and more. Self-service experiences are a relatively

low-cost way to improve the convenience of your stores.

2. Click-and-collect experiences

The secret is out: Shoppers can save time by purchasing items through retailers' websites and apps, then picking those items up curbside or in-store. These are generally known as click-and-collect experiences. Deloitte cites click-and-collect experiences as one of the most resilient post-pandemic retail trends. BBC touts click-and-collect as the possible future of shopping.

Like self-service experiences, click-and-collect experiences are generally convenience-driven. Shrinking the time between a shopper's purchase and the product's availability for pickup is the next frontier in click-and-collect experiences.

While you can embrace a massive advantage over e-retailers through your click-and-collect experiences, you must mind the details. Unifying your inventory between your stores and digital platforms is a must. This will protect you from unexpected shortages and dreaded order reversals.

3. Immersive experiences

A feature of your store is "immersive" if it draws the shopper closer to your brand, capturing their attention for even a moment. Something as simple as an interactive digital display can speak to the shopper in a way that they find immersive.

When we think of immersive retail though, many think of ultra-creative, non-replicable experiences. Nordstrom's in-store spa services are just one example of a retailer truly going for it in the category of immersion.

To be clear, not every immersive experience has to place you in the running for a creative retail award. However, you should give thought to whether specific experiences in your

stores are providing talking points, memories and immersion for your customers.

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4. Brand-building experiences

Brand-building experiences are a form of brand-experience marketing. The goal of this type of marketing is “to establish a deeper emotional connection and higher brand affinity” between your retail organization and your shoppers.

Free live events, in-store displays featuring your charitable partners and sponsored televised entertainment may all qualify as brand-building experiences. These experiences have the distinct purpose of spreading awareness and affinity for your retail organization.

5. Revenue-focused experiences

A revenue-focused experience is not intended to make your customers feel good. It may not always be especially immersive or reflective of larger brand principles. A revenue-focused experience drives the customer to buy, plain and simple.

A vibrantly-displayed “buy one, get one” offer on a digital display screen is a revenue-focused experience. So are “items we think you’d like”-style upsells in your digital storefronts.

Revenue-focused experiences allow your customers to buy what they want as quickly as possible. Deployed effectively, your revenue-focused experiences will compel shoppers to buy even *more* than they thought they needed.

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6. Informational experiences

We live in a world where shoppers are constantly bombarded with information about the latest products, deals and retail experiences. This flurry of information is useful in some respects, but also puts the onus on your organization to provide usable information to shoppers in a clear, accessible way.

Retailers have become clever in the way they deliver information to shoppers. Phones have long been a tool for the in-store shopper to check product reviews before purchase. Retailers who can sync their apps with the in-store shopping experience may provide unparalleled convenience and ultimately reduce staffing costs.

Something as simple as a digital display can provide everything a shopper hopes to know about a product, and ultimately convince them to toss that product in their basket. Shoppers want information. The more digestible you can make that information, the more likely you are to secure repeat business.

Conclusion

The fact is, the “retail experience” is actually a puzzle comprised of many experiences, conjoined together into one seamless experience – if everything goes right, that is.

No single customer comes to your store for one single experience. A strong product inventory does little good in light of hour-plus checkout times. Customers may buy items online and pick them up in-store for convenience, but they also expect friendly customer service when they arrive for their items.

The six in-store experiences we’ve featured are critical pieces of the retail puzzle. Give these experiences the

attention they deserve, and your shoppers will have little reason to cast an eye towards your competitors.

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