The Return to Brick and Mortar in 2022



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Despite the many challenges brought on by the pandemic, consumers are now spending more than ever, with about 31% of Americans making more purchases than even pre-covid levels. This surge is not just a representation of the increasing number of online sales but also a reflection of 63% of Americans stating that they feel comfortable and safe going back to shopping malls and physical stores.

With the lessened restrictions and more consumers ready to do in-person shopping, retailers must ask themselves, what will the future hold for their businesses in 2022, and what strategies must they employ to ensure that their customers want to make an in-store purchase?

Shifting to Omnichannel Strategies

Ever bought something online and then picked it up at the store? This is a clear example of how many companies are seeking opportunities to engage deeper with their customers through omnichannel strategies.

With the proliferation of online tools and shops, brands can take over digital spaces, easing shopping experiences and expanding their reach. Communicating through multiple platforms and channels allows brands to connect and build relationships with their target audience instead of only focusing on selling a product or service. A valued customer can then become a strategic promoter of the brand, and companies can see large growth in sales because of this.

Omnichannel strategies can tackle several communication channels:

- Social Media: Facebook and Instagram are key platforms to create strategic content and start a conversation with your audience. You can aim to engage, convert, and ultimately sell through organic or paid ads.

- SMS and Whatsapp: Ensuring a new or existing customer receives your message is paramount. This is why companies are now more aware of the importance and efficiency of SMS marketing. This ensures that your message is at the forefront of your customer and not easily lost in their inbox. It makes them feel like they’re having a real-time conversation with businesses, and their concerns are addressed.

- Messenger Chatbots: Customers value and take advantage of 24/7 availability to have their questions answered. Companies benefit greatly from this by filtering and cutting down operating time from customer service representatives when boggled down with recurrent issues.

After ensuring that your message is in front of your customer in digital spaces, now you must ask yourself how to make a seamless transition to the physical world and prepare for the return of brick and mortar.

From Digital to Physical

Businesses can leverage the multiple digital channels and spaces to capture valuable customer data and personalize their approach to later extend their shopping experience to actual stores, creating a meaningful connection.

- Flexible Promotions: Businesses can send a QR code with a promotion, discount, or sale based on their client's previous shopping habits, which they can then consume at a store near their location, making it easier for them to complete a purchase. These promotions can also work the other way around where QR codes are strategically placed all over stores, and when they are scanned, they can offer customers any online sale and have the product shipped to their homes or offices directly.

- Pick-Ups: Sometimes, users want the comfort of ordering online, but want to avoid long lines at the register or just avoid contact with other customers altogether – but without having to wait multiple business days for their order to arrive at their house. Curb-side pickups or in-store pickups are ideal for this since they still allow the comfort of choosing an item online while receiving your item directly at the store.

At the end of the day, a business' goal is to help customers complete a sale. Combining online and physical experiences is an excellent way to transition back to brick and mortar without necessarily leaving behind all of the lessons learned from digitization during the pandemic.

As customers trickle back to malls, shops, etc., we need to be prepared to attract, relate, communicate, and retain new and existing customers effectively.

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