

A new dimension of customer engagement

While most organisations are contemplating how to develop a meaningful customer engagement strategy, retailers in the US have moved one step ahead and are merging brick-and-mortar and digital strategies. Known as an omni-channel, it is what all organisations that take customer engagement seriously should strive for: true continuity of a brand experience.

Quinton Pienaar, CEO of Agilitude, a Salesforce reseller and customer engagement evangelist, says that adopting an omni-channel strategy is one of the best ways to ensure your customer is at the centre of an organisation's engagement plans: "Internationally, omni-channels are becoming more prevalent as experts predict that retailers will die without them within the next decade. This bold statement makes this concept a vital one to understand and adopt."

Part of understanding an omni-channel is to accept that it is greater than just the business or your consumer, that to be omniscient you need to perceive and understand all things. An ideal Omni-channel should allow a customer to perceive everything and "allow them to own their data and experience, then give them the ability to use it to guide creation and context of every future experience". * The creators of CloudTags, 2014

Supporting this approach, a recent study by Deloitte indicated that consumers would not only rather find information themselves on their smartphones to assist their shopping experience (i.e. looking up prices, item availability, product information, in-store item location) but would also prefer to use unmanned in-store devices such as kiosks and digital display. *7 Omni Channel Trends in 2015

The brands that can best interpret omni-channel data and understand all customers will succeed: "It's all in the data and the smart use thereof," says Pienaar. "If a retailer is going to apply an omni-channel approach, they need to collect as much data as they can from any consumer that engages with their brand. The challenge then is to use this data and manipulate it appropriately. Being able to triangulate will only come later and will be driven by cloud computing."

Pienaar says that life today is continuous, but majority of customer experiences are nowhere near that: "Fact is in life we live and learn and eradicate bad experiences from our memory, remembering only the good. This is true for all customer experience, shaping and guiding our brand favourites."

The ability to have an uninterrupted experience across brands, across format and across devices that is completely tailored does not exist: "This new way of thinking and marketing needs to be addressed if a customer engagement strategy is going to be successful into the future," says Pienaar.

"If an omni-channel approach is adopted, a new dimension of customer engagement and decisions will be born and it will touch on all aspects from price to place," concludes Pienaar.