

Physical stores are for shoppers not purchasers

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It's easy to get carried away when discussing the influence of online retail. After all, less than 20% of all retail sales come from digital channels ¹ and of those, nearly a fifth come through one retailer ². Despite what you hear, physical retail, bricks and mortar is still the major player, but this doesn't mean we shouldn't heed the lessons learnt in eCommerce in our physical stores, far from it. Here at Haygarth we believe we need to in fact widen our horizons and take learnings from throughout the digital spectrum, leveraging those behaviours that now inspire all areas of our lives to provide a retail experience that perfectly aligns with today's customer motivations.

For most of us, our world is digitally-led. We use technology to facilitate, communicate and entertain, seamlessly navigating between the physical and digital worlds without thinking. From instant gratification to curated and personal, the digital world sets our expectations. It inspires and defines our hopes and dreams, and provides feedback as to how well we are living up to these ideals. This is a world where everything has a value to be weighed up against our own desires. A world where everything is immediate and accessible. A world where shopping is as much about realising ambitions as it is buying products.

Despite this, it can be tempting for traditional retailers to fixate on the frictionless purchase experience offered by the online fulfilment giants, focusing on the final few steps rather than the journey as a whole. But there is a reason we talk about shoppers rather than purchasers, and that's because the act of buying encompasses far more than just the final transaction. Whilst the online world allows for instant and continuous movement between touchpoints and across spheres of influence – from blog to style guide to social group to retailer – bricks and mortar provides the opportunity to meet customer needs on a deeper and more tangible level in one self-contained environment. By focusing on the shopping journey – inspiration, relevance, participation – rather than the destination – purchase – physical retail spaces can add value on their own terms rather than trying to compete with the convenience of online.

By shifting focus from the transaction, retailers can offer environments that reflect the fundamental motivations of today's shoppers. From Instagrammable installations to lifestyle classes and cultural curation, best-in-class bricks and mortar retailers are offering genuine customer value based on behaviours honed in the digital sphere. To ensure we are meeting customer needs across the path-to-purchase, Haygarth look to provide retail experiences to meet three core drivers:

- Revelation – Providing culturally relevant knowledge or expertise to increase brand equity and aid discovery of products
- Recommendation – Curating choice based on personal need, trends or popularity to assist selection and provide confidence to purchase
- Recognition – Delivering socially valuable moments to extend store or product experience into wider channels

This ambition to integrate pop culture and lifestyle trends with shopper behaviour and preferences, allows us to elevate retail stores to be far more than just warehouses full of goods. Instead we look to harness the natural emotion of the purchase journey, capturing and fuelling it by providing valuable moments which transcend merely choosing products. We believe that every aspect of the in-store experience, from display and communications, to engagement and staff, should align with our shopper's motivations in order to facilitate moments of desire.

After all, no matter the extraordinary lengths that online retailers go to to reduce the time from purchase to fulfilment, they will never be able to match the feeling of physically holding an item in your hands, metaphorically and literally taking ownership of it, and walking from a store with the satisfied glow of the perfect purchase.

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/retailindustry/timeseries/j4mc/drsi>

² <https://www.globaldata.com/amazon-to-account-for-one-fifth-of-uk-online-spend-by-2024/>