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**OP/ED: Intelligent shopping - the next big thing**

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By Kirsty Dollisson

We work with exploring how new technologies can enhance the point of sale experience by solving customer problems in the most measurable way. But with so many advances out there – what is the next big thing?

Despite all the technologies and avenues available to us, we're still living in an unconnected cross channel retail world. Ebeltoft Group's recent Global Cross Channel Retailing report stated: "Despite the fast growing cross channel trend retailers intent to deliver a well-integrated online and store shopper experience, the study shows that most retailers are immature in their ability to exploit this opportunity. Over time retailers will enhance their capabilities, customised to their market and retail sector."

When it comes to shopping, consumers are still looking for the same things before technology advanced their options: ease, solutions, experience and satisfaction. Time poor and retail astute, we need to be engaged at the point of sale with simple solutions that will leave them feeling satisfied.

The area that captivates us the most is how intelligent technology at the point of sale is seamlessly connecting consumers across all channels, providing them with a deeper, more personalised and connected retail experience.

Intelligent technology starts with solving the customer problem and then works backwards.

Let's take a store experience as an example. What happens if you've run out of stock of the item your customer wants? How can you extend your range to beyond what your customer sees in the store? How can your customer review, share and compare right there and then? If you start with all your customers' problems and work backwards to solve them, you start to see how intelligent point of sale technology can use all channels to enhance the store experience in a personalised and relevant way, providing greater and more measurable sales results.

Powered by its latest and greatest processor, Intel is one company that's reshaping the store experience at the point of sale. By combining the best of bricks and mortar and online experiences, Intel is enabling brands and retailers to offer rich, interactive and personalised visual content at the point of sale, resulting in a more engaged consumer.

Previously, these technologies have been used in an unconnected way. Digital point of sale, for example, is still 'a moving poster'. Kiosks are still information vehicles. But with these new intelligent technologies, the ability to transform hardware into true cross channel vehicles is now possible, enabling us to give shoppers what they really want. And by meeting these needs, retailers are beginning to add loyalty and advocacy to this critical list.

Here are more examples of 'intelligent shopping' experiences:

- Interactive digital retail displays that detect the face and movements of passers-by so retailers can provide intelligent solutions based on age and gender at the point of purchase.
- Virtual displays that allow retailers to expand their product offering via a digital wall.
- Interactive cross channel digital kiosks, which allows consumers to share, compare, access product usage information and even order online or in-store.
- Digital shopping trolleys linked to a GPS system in-store allows retailers the opportunity to show relevant messages based on their customer's location. Consumers can also provide instant feedback.
- Intelligent touchscreens at the point of purchase lets consumers drag and drop items they like into an onscreen basket and then seamlessly transfer the virtual basket with a tap on their phone. This gives consumers the option to checkout via their phone or checkout at a later time.

By equipping the point of sale with technologies that link across all channels, retailers are gaining more data intelligence of what's succeeding and what's not. This enables them to perfect the content mix and deliver a highly personalised solutions-based experience.

Kristy Dollisson is the general manager of TorchMedia.

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