

Omni-Channel Retailing & Hospitality

Providing a Seamless Approach to Consumer Experience

Omni-Channel marketing is an approach which aims to design seamless consumer experiences across all marketing channels—social networks, e-commerce, catalogs, flyers, smartphones, TV and radio, in-store digital signage, traditional brick-and-mortar, or any other channel a consumer might tap into. And it is becoming more important for merchants in retail and hospitality to remain competitive. From the point of view of the consumer, there is no difference between these channels. A shopper will be checking out products; price and feature



Showrooming – The ability to comparison shop right from the sales floor, checking recommendations and prices from the convenience of a smart device, has turned the table of power from the merchant to the consumer. But merchants can level the field, simply by installing digital displays with content-rich information next to the product. This shift from the consumer’s small display to the merchant’s full-size display can give the merchant more control—if the content is right!

Endless-Aisle – A digital display on an end cap can feature products not carried in the store. If the consumer can interact and complete the transaction from the store with delivery to their home, an endless-aisle can be an effective boost to in-store sales.

comparing with a smartphone from inside the store (a phenomenon known as showrooming), looking at a friend’s recommendations on Facebook, watching TV commercials, and looking for a deal in the store. They’ll expect to be able to place orders online and handle returns at the brick-and-mortar location. They’ll want easy access to continuous inventory, which can be managed by providing an endless-aisle display in-store. If the business owner is not ready with the right products and policies, and they can’t deliver a consistent experience across the myriad of marketing channels, the business risks being left behind. And it’s a moving target as well; new technologies are putting tools into the consumer’s hands at record pace. No longer is the merchant calling the shots—the market belongs to the consumer.



Savvy Shoppers Spend More

Research shows that the more knowledgeable a customer is the more they spend, from 15-30% more. The majority of omni-customers are reviewing before purchase, and using a smartphone and checking things out after viewing print and TV ads. Everyone is looking for a deal, particularly as the economy has put the squeeze on disposable income. Shoppers are even researching small ticket items. Deals can come all forms, from mobile ads to in-store promos. A key is having all the channels unified and able to deliver economic value consistently and seamlessly to the customer, no matter where they begin their product search.

Why should a business care? Here's a good reason: the "new" markets (social media, email and mobile) are huge and their value will almost triple between now and 2016. Another reason is that the competition is already doing it. To outpace the competition requires an active and thoughtful omni-channel campaign, as well as a commitment to investing in technology: digital signage displays, table-top and interactive touch computers, internet, and software development.

Steps to Success

Plan, practice, measure and stay flexible. Look for the proof of economic value to the consumer, create a roadmap and once defined, begin a careful implementation. Follow what the customer is doing, and move in the same direction, while testing the success or failure of each campaign. Keep in mind that data and content are critical. Content development should have the goal of increasing customer engagement with the brand. Experts recommend that businesses start by looking inward. Building internal collaboration between departments instead of pockets of information is a good way to begin. Once information is being freely shared, content and context can be developed that spans departmental boundaries. And make sure the in-store sales force is up to speed; they should be equipped with access to real-time data and be expert at answering customer queries.

Personalize It!

Build interactive, customer-facing technology that invites the customer to participate. In-store this can be done with interactive displays. Encourage game-playing and gesture-based technology; the customer should enjoy the

process so much that they forget there is a marketing campaign behind it. Digital signage can create endless-aisles, but retail infrastructure has to allow for in-store ordering and home delivery as well as for online ordering and in-store returns. Personalized coupons can be sent to mobile subscribers; indeed customers who opt in to such communications are good friends; they'll be "like" -ing your promos on social network sites which will spread brand awareness by word-of-mouth advertising. Listen to the customer as well—from soliciting interactive feedback applications on table-top displays, to watching comments on Facebook. The bottom line is that retailers need to encourage shoppers by understanding them, their behavior, and how and when to contact them. Customers will say what they like and more importantly what they don't like, so that the business owner can adapt.

Customer Demand is Driving Digital Signage Integration

Even though the majority of purchases are still made in traditional brick-and-mortar stores, keeping the experience fresh and building brand loyalty is the key to long term profitability. Integrating interactive digital technology with smart omni-channel campaigns, providing consistent experience and consistent branding, and personalizing the shopping experience will keep customers engaged, and go a long way to building sales and loyalty.

Advantech Provides Expert Platforms for Retail and Hospitality Applications

Advantech's UTC-series touch computers are a great platform: UTC-532 and UTC-520 offer interactive displays, real-time data, and can deliver personalized content with flair. The systems are stylish, and designed to fit upscale environments. Data can be delivered to them from a local data server or from cloud-based storage extending the merchant's reach to global levels.

UTC-series touch computers enable retailers to deliver a powerful message, with mixed content to immerse shoppers and engage them in a fun and informative way. UTC-532 and UTC-520 both support a variety of peripherals allowing them to be completely customized to fit specific environments. They are a great tool for retailers to promote brand awareness, and deliver customized retail and hospitality applications.





The Bottom Line

In order to stay ahead of the game in retail and hospitality involves a lot more than having a great product. Today's smart merchants are listening to their customers, studying their behavior, and designing applications to deliver personalized content, in real-time, that is interactive, informative and engaging. Building customer loyalty requires thinking outside the box; meeting the customers with a consistent message, look and feel on whatever channel they choose to query. It also means bridging the brick-and-mortar world with digital applications in-store so that the entire shopping experience is a seamless one. Digital technology in-store is a means to reaching this goal. Lastly, realizing that omni-channel marketing is a fast-pace, evolving strategy is important: knowing the customer and keeping in-sync with them is as important as keeping stock on the shelf.

For more information about omni-channel trends and technology, the UTC-series of touch computers, or more information about the complete range of Advantech services and solutions, visit www.advantech.com or contact a local sales representative.