

The Rebirth of the Retail Web Site

Transactional, user-friendly web sites will experience a resurgence driven by a compelling need to integrate retail outlets and remote channels. No longer can web sites, stores or catalogues be viewed separately. Customers naturally use whatever combination suits their particular needs or circumstances. Whilst they may have a preference of shopping method, the range of options gives a degree of choice, convenience and control at the point the customer requires it. Match this with consistency, and the multi-channel retailer has all the ingredients for a good customer experience.

Those retailers with a combination of web, catalogue and store are recognising that their customers will dip in and out of each channel, at various stages of their buying behaviour, and that their average order value is significantly higher than customers who shop from just one. The key to measuring this “halo effect” is to track and match customer touch points as they flit about, across, in and out of channels, tracking what they are doing and what the end result is.

Any retailers sitting on the fence will soon be faced with a compelling case for developing a multi-channel offer, backed up by database management capability and probably a paper catalogue as well. Existing retailers who threw up a site just to have a presence will be revisiting it to check out its usability and how engaging it is for customers.

Critical to this rebirth is the ability to integrate effectively with the EPOS transactional data captured, or not as the case may be, in-store. It is essential to track an enquiry on the web, to an order over the phone, to a return in the store, as just one example of the sort of combinations customers may use, and retailers will need to deal with. Having established this capability, not only will customer behaviour be trackable, but also it can then be modelled and manipulated for highly effective campaigns, both in terms of cost and response rates.

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