



Online retail isn't stealing real-world sales – ultimately, retail only exists as one entity, says **Chris Bishop**

Never mind the omnijargon – today it's just retail

“ You don't need to appoint a head of multichannel. Or ebusiness. Or e-retail. People need to stop thinking about online versus mobile versus in store.

BHS, Austin Reed and the rest didn't collapse because they failed at digital. They collapsed because they failed at retail.

As we all know, if you silo your thinking you risk destroying your whole business – especially if you are still discussing internally how “online retail is stealing market share”.

However, at every retail conference I attend or speak at, the same old debates arise about what focus a retailer should put on their web business, or the surprisingly never-ending trend of having to help marketers sell the need for joined-up digital and in-store thinking to their senior team or board.

Rather than chasing the next omnibingo Scrabble term or the new multititle, let's become more aligned and more inclusive to all of our colleagues.

Does that mean online isn't important?

No. We're just way beyond the point where the web can be seen as additional channels that need managing separately. So let's all please move on with those that are resistant to change – whether you work in luxury retail or not.

Digital in 2016 is not just about having an ecommerce-enabled website, or an app or a mobile site.

It is about seamlessly integrating the entire shopping experience, bridging the gap between the physical and virtual worlds.

Consumers don't see themselves as multi or omni anything, they simply want to choose the most convenient way to shop at any particular moment. They are becoming less patient and more demanding. They expect retailers to provide a connected and on-demand shopping experience – anytime, anywhere.

Digital channels are key to these new customer experiences, but they are part of an organic whole.

Online retail is continuing to expand; experts are forecasting more than 18% growth in Europe for 2016 alone. But total retail spend is also on the increase from £13.3 trillion last year to a projected £13.7 trillion in 2016.

Smart brands realise that all of their real estate (digital and physical) are assets that can work together to drive customer satisfaction and profitability.

Mobile has changed everything. It now accounts for one third of retail sales in the US, but it also feeds into the customer buying cycle in unexpected ways.

Today there are 34 times more “find my nearest” requests made on mobile than there were in 2011, data from Google shows.

Mobile is the operating system that makes the consumer more knowledgeable about the product they are about to buy. In 2015, YouTube users in North America spent 100 million hours watching ‘How to...’ videos on their handsets, while in the same year 82% of consumers in the US turned to their smartphone for advice before making an in-store purchase.

Mobile is the tool that facilitates purchase in the physical world, as well as being a retail channel in its own right.

In fact, in a rapidly converging world, we're likely to see mobile integrating even further with the physical shopping experience, not merely replacing it.

In less than five years I'm certainly of the opinion that payment via mobile devices will end the need of cash tills in stores, creating efficiencies for both shoppers and retailers.

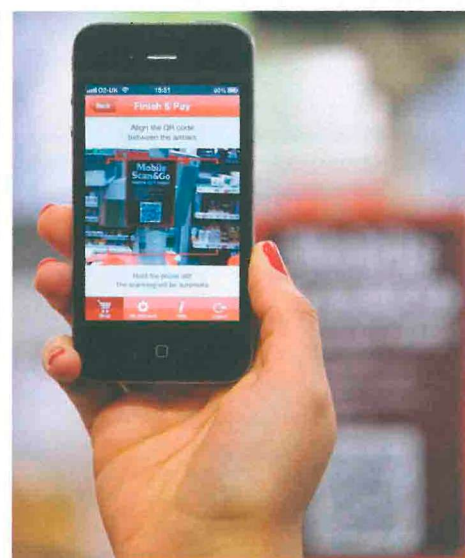
The bricks-and-mortar store isn't dead. However, the convenience store is. Physical retail is no longer a convenience.

People no longer pop to the shops because it's the simplest thing to do. Online is now by far the easiest way for consumers to transact.

Instead, with luxury brands leading the way, bricks-and-mortar stores are becoming destinations in their own right.

They are offering location-specific experiences that enhance customer relationships and build loyal communities in unique ways.

And it's easy to see how digital experiences



can be built around those communities, to help evangelise brands and create further real world and online sales.

But in the end... it's just retail

All the industry buzzword jargon about omnichannel retail is missing the point and I feel is causing as much of a problem as the change in consumer behaviour.

As a whole we should make terms such as omnichannel, multichannel and retail redundant before the individuals in those roles are.

We should all be focused on one thing: creating great customer experiences that support and complement each other to build profitability.

So, never mind the omnijargon and let's start talking about retail; what makes consumers tick and what makes them buy – wherever and whenever.

That's really the way to help the retail sector continue to grow.

Chris Bishop is founder and chief executive of 7thingsmedia

