

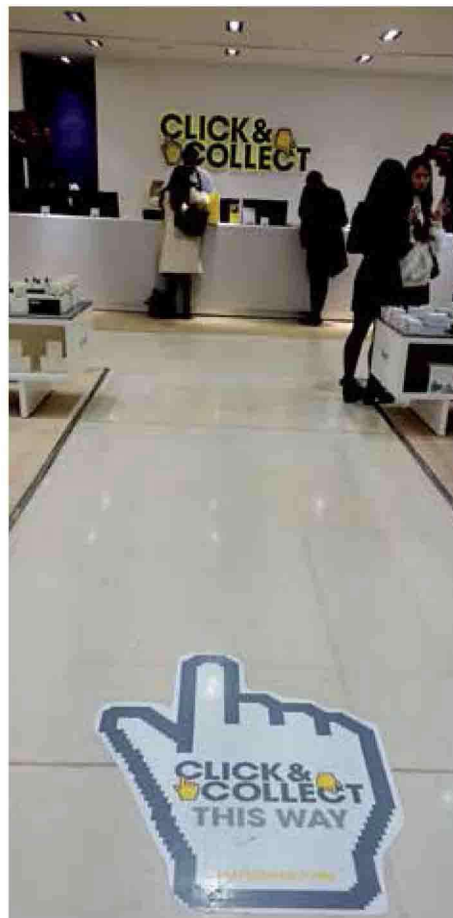
Getting smart for new age shoppers

With the onset of the new age shopper seamlessly shopping between the online and offline channels, store experience strategies and design concepts have had to be rebooted to address the new age needs of the multi-channel smart shopper. Here are 5 key objectives new age store experience designers need to fulfil to stay relevant and help brands succeed.

Retail brands have had to reboot their store experience strategies to deliver the needs of the new age evolved customer who is informed and is simultaneously shopping across channels. With brand loyalty being a passé, the brand needs to present its proposition smartly at its store front and interiors with utmost clarity and comprehensiveness. With the 'shop' no more being contained in the four walls of brick and mortar, techniques used to attract, entice and convert customers are a combination of tricks used in both online and the offline stores at the intersection of the channels. Let's look at five key objectives that are expected to be met in the physical store.

1. The Home Page: The store front, like a home page, needs to clearly communicate what the brand stands for. A mere architectural effort would fall short of the 'least credible info' that a new age multi-loyal consumer needs to be delivered to show interest in the brand and its offerings. Brands need to use a combination of physical and digital elements to deliver the same excitement, surprise and expertise.

2. The product push: This is critical for assisting the customer to make informed decisions hence drawing more focus on 'how to sell' rather than 'what to sell'. This necessitates the store to be very logically laid out and presented for customers to find what they are looking for at the shortest of time (a good website achieves this with three clicks). With a combination of physical 'touch and feel' products and virtual 'insight-loaded' products, stores



have been able to effectively play this role in lesser spaces.

3. Customer recognition: This is a critical piece for the start of customer engagement and both online and offline stores have started using big data to help drive this. Traditionally offline stores have been able to capture data from only about 25% of customers at the cash counters in comparison to 100% from the online channels. With the intersection of the online and the offline in brick and



mortar, stores are able to create and communicate better value to customers to encourage them to give information.

4. Customer assistance: Stores plan and deploy methods to engage with the customer right from the store entrance, leading them into the merchandise offerings, presenting insightful product benefits, offering digital assistance to help make informed decisions, co-creating customization, making available out-of-store convenience services and ending



the journey at the cash counter with personalized offers based on their buying behaviour.

5. Customer intimacy: This engagement is made available to both recognized customers and also unrecognized customers. The former is possible when personal data of the customer has been captured in a previous visit and the latter is for first time visitors where the customer has to give personal information to get the service. Many made-to-measure brands use this engagement technique with the use of both skilled staff and intelligent data.

Many new store concepts testify how new age store design has created immersive in-store experiences using the collaboration of architecture, interior design, visual merchandising, technology,

content creation, psychology, marketing, personal selling and visual arts. This also is a clear indicator of how the role of store design and presentation in the new age of retail is evolving into a multi-disciplinary science and art which no forward thinking retailer of brand can ignore. •

Surender Gnanaolivu