

Future Retail Trends

Creating an innovative retail experience is crucial for physical stores today and beyond.

The purchase of products is part of our everyday lives and while traditional retail may be in decline, retailing is not – it just requires transformation into something new. Many retail brands have shut their doors either permanently or temporarily. Leading millions of shoppers to turned to the digital space to make their purchases.

In this post we explore what the store of the future could entail, what kinds of innovations are now taking place, and the new propositions and technologies behind it.

Be Brave.

Retail experiences have historically been built around the premise of customers coming to retailers' owned spaces, whether physical or digital, and visiting these was the only place to be inspired and explore products, make transactions and get advice and support.

This shift to digital has undoubtedly changed the way people shop, and the retailers that managed to survive the temporary shutdown have had to approach business in a new way.

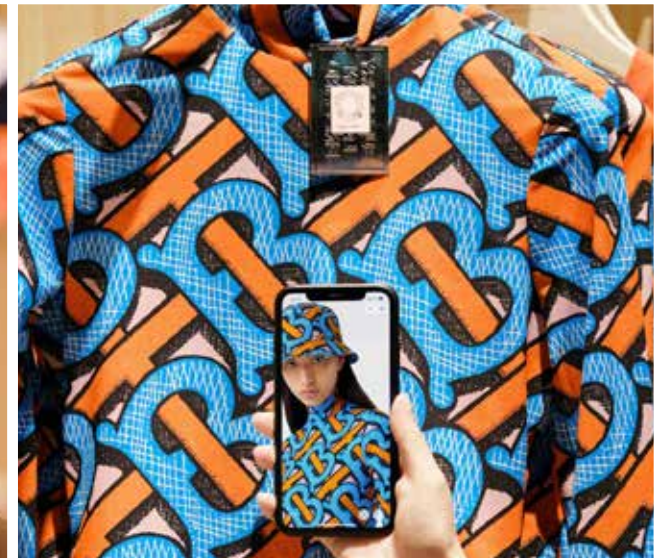
With the rise in popularity of online shopping, retail brands shop owners should implement current retail design trends where suitable.

The key to survival is reinvention

Many retail needs are now being met outside of the stores, with traditional spaces being transformed into experiential destinations serving a purpose beyond shopping.

Increasingly, stores are evolving to become hubs to enable greater convenience, offering customers immersive experiences and new and exciting ways of engaging with their favourite brands.

In-store shopping is still popular, with many shoppers preferring the tactile experience of physically touching and trying on products and having a more personalised, human to human customer experience. A successful adaptation of the modern shopping journey could marry the experience of online shopping with an in-store experience.



Despite concerns surrounding the death of the high street, research estimates that:

stores will still make up over 70% of retail sales by 2025.

Meaning it is more important than ever for retailers to understand how to best utilise their physical spaces.

To engage with customers, brands will need to focus on making their own spaces (physical and digital) attractive by providing what customers cannot find elsewhere: new valued experiences, service propositions, customisations,

partnerships and unique offers or events.

This kind of innovation is not just hard – it requires creative talent and can be risky.

Retailers will need to play a broader role in customers' lives to stay relevant and stand out among other competitors.

The next frontier of retail is going to be owned by those who not only meet the bare minimum, but embrace the new world by integrating a bit of 'edge' into the modern shopping experience.

From
Transaction



To
Interaction

The key today is not in a product but rather, in interaction, improving the selling experience and overall consumer journey, whether on- or offline (or both).

Impactful experiences that engage and entertain consumers.

1. Embrace Storytelling

Brand storytelling is a powerful tool to evoke emotions in your customers and build trusting connections and brand associations.

It is more evident than ever that consumers need the answer to the why. Why should your target customer choose to interact with the brand? What is the brand story, and how is it doing things differently?

Conveying your brand values is more important than ever before as the retail shopping journey has become more than just window shopping, browsing and purchasing products.

Brand storytelling is one of the top design trends this year, with creating a cohesive narrative that links the facts and emotions of your brand seamlessly together, creating a solid foundation to inspire your audience.





Moreover, it is crucial to consider the impact that technology has had on the consumer attention span, with the average consumer only having an attention span of a maximum of 15 seconds!

To combat this by reaching a broader audience and positioning yourself in their memories, retailers must experiment with their storytelling methods through various platforms, including blog posts, videos, social media stories, podcasts, and physical merchandise.

2. A Minimalist, Sustainable Approach

Sustainability was an emerging trend before the pandemic, but it came into public focus during the event. Consumers want to invest their time and money in brands that show care for the environment and human ethics, and one way of communicating this is through minimalism.

52% of consumers choose brands that “align with their personal values while standing for something bigger than just their products and services”.



The world's first in-store recycling system is now installed at H&M in Stockholm.





This context unlocks opportunities to offer users new ways to shop by creating curated products or services in line with their social, economic, and environmental values.

Rather than fully stocking shelves and rails with every piece of product to try to push sales, taking a neater, more sophisticated approach will yield better long term results.

Using space as an opportunity to create an inviting interior experience can capture attention and lead the customer down a more enjoyable journey. Furthermore, the more space there is in a retail setting, the higher the perceived value of the merchandise is by the consumer. In a nutshell, less is more when it comes to stocking your store in 2021.

3. Incorporating Technology

Technology is a necessary advancement to incorporate into the modern retail environment, and there are many avenues that retailers can harness.

For example, Nike's House of Innovations combines touch-free browsing and purchasing, AI fitting and expert services; & Other Stories smart vending machines serve as an interactive hub featuring a large touchscreen that allows users to explore products in greater detail, alongside in-depth visual storytelling; and HEMA Stores act as a mini fulfilment centre for online orders, while enabling customers to scan and pay for items as they shop and enjoy an in-store robot-enabled dining experience.



4. Home-Like Comfort

Millions of people spent the last year predominantly indoors, shopping from the comfort of their couches, it is beneficial for brands to harness this as a chance to mirror this feeling and create similar levels of comfort in their stores.

The future of stores will primarily be to deliver “what Amazon can’t” in the form of elevated experience, brand story and provenance, infused with emotion and garnished with high-value, data driven human interaction.

Consumers can find everything on-line, so the in-store experience must give them something that is much better.

Stores must be relevant, engaging, and fresh. The goal is not only to make the customer feel as comfortable as possible but also offer something in store that they cannot experience on-line. That might be more than just the physical environment, natural lighting, materials, selection of goods, etc, but something more intangible, staff interaction, the way it smells and feels, the seasonal changes, activities, the brand story, provenance, authenticity. All culminating in an experience that is rooted in the emotional connection and as consumers we expect brands to have a cohesive emotional experience. Taking on a human-centric approach at every touch point in a retail store is crucial especially when we move toward a blending living approach (on-line and in store).

Retail brands that can identify and deliver personal benefit and enhance customers’ lives will be the ones that achieve greater success.

The emotional currency of the brand experience is crucial. According to the Harvard Business Review, connecting emotionally across the brand experience generates 52% more customer value. It's also been scientifically proven that emotional experiences imprint better in our memory.



5. Pop-Up Retail

Pop-up retail/marketing is becoming an industry in and of itself, permanent spaces that allow for rotating brand representation and pop-up locations are becoming increasingly common.

This shift speaks to the enduring nature of experiential marketing, as consumer attention requires more focus in the face of choice-heavy in-person and online shopping experiences.

Pop up shops give brands a chance to Be Brave and test their offerings in different areas and among varying demographics. This experiment can provide valuable insights regarding the direction of their business, which products are most popular, and how to disperse the offerings based on factors such as location.

With 85% of shoppers saying they are more likely to purchase after attending an event, it is no surprise that some brands are shaping their propositions to offer something other than products.





In our opinion there is great value in the concept of creating these perishable experiences through pop-ups. Not only from the consumers' perspective, although undoubtedly it creates a far more rewarding experience, but also from a designers' perspective too.

Placing an emphasis on the creation of brand experiences to be enjoyed in the here-and-now opens up a whole host of new ideas, new materials, and new approaches. Tapping into a hugely under-utilised toolbox of ideas surrounding how to evoke an emotional connection and appeal to all of our senses.

Pop-ups are the place for retailers to make mistakes, learn, evolve & test. It allows brands to be agile and innovative to their base and gives them permission to behave in a different way that is more creative and playful.

The concept of pop-ups often capitalises on consumers' fear-of-missing-out (FOMO) mentality. Today's audience is constantly looking for the next best thing, and pop-ups are a way for retailers to talk about and share their business with others at a time when experiences are a far greater currency than simple in-store transactions.

We believe that this is not so much a 'trend' but more as an evolution.

At BRAVE Environments, we make real emotional connections with customers a possibility by helping brands stop selling and instead start helping their customers buy.
Ready to Be Brave and get started with your brand's innovative retail design experience?
Get in touch with us today!

Be...

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