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[TECHNOLOGY]

AUTOMATING RETAIL

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Much has been told, a lot of lessons learnt, now we have already absorbed the nuances of the new normal and are all set to embark the changes. Moving forward, omnichannel retail seems to be the most obvious way of staying relevant and on-track within the retail sphere. Technology adaptation is the most obvious way forward and brands and retailers are adapting to the change faster than before. More than technology, the plan or strategy to adapt to the omnichannel ways of doing business is important and it starts from identifying the right touch points to plugging in the perfect fit technology in order to make the brand easily accessible for the customers. Significantly, omnichannel has a varied meaning for each brand/retailer and the approach to omnichannel also alters across domains. What makes omnichannel a homogenous concept is the end result, which everyone wants to achieve via their omnichannel journey.

Easy discovery of products at multiple touchpoints, doorstep deliveries via a seamless last-mile fulfilment, a uniform connectivity between varied touchpoints, and smooth inventory management are some of the primary asks that brands/retailers wish to achieve with their omnichannel transformation.

In the July issue of IMAGES Retail, we exclusively bring to you some technology innovations and cover the reality of automation in retail, along with the success stories of retailers turning the omni-way. With heart-to-heart conversations, we also try to unfold the new ideas and business plans the new-age retailers are cracking to get closer to their customers. Why them, the traditional retailers are bending it around too and we uncover their brush with technology as well.

A recent survey conducted by the Euromonitor International highlights that 72 per cent of retail professionals (surveyed) owned that COVID-19 accelerated their company's digital transformation by at least a year. Keeping this as a passing thought, it is easier to understand that technology is going to drive retail in the months to come.



Amitabh Taneja

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CUSTOMER 360

There is no here and there, but everywhere when it comes to the customer. Brands and retailers have understood that and COVID has accelerated the process, bringing them closer to their customer base



Omnichannel Focus

The 'Omnicom Intelligence Series' powered by OMUNI has been a 3-part virtual roundtables spanning over June and July. This series stirred the conversation around the new roadmaps and constraints related to transformed e-commerce and Omnichannel retail, given the limitations brought forth by COVID. Here's a brief overview of the sessions.

By IMAGES Retail Bureau

The 'Omnicom Intelligence Series' powered by OMUNI, conducted during June and July of this year saw the retailers and industry experts talking about the role of technology in retail and how almost every brand and retailer today has revamped their marketing strategies in view of the pandemic, to face the new normal. Many brands have been able to fight the tough stress-test forged by the pandemic by adopting to asset light retail model. Models that are light on inventory, light on logistics cost, light on IT spends, light on working capital,

which are made possible through a backend architecture that creates an integrated ecosystem, which enables brands to power Omnichannel use cases/journeys (from store fulfillment of online orders to an endless aisle). Not only that, this adaption allows them to respond quickly and efficiently to changing customer needs and allows them a chance to yield fewer stockouts and markdowns.

To understand the new roadmaps and constraints related to transformed e-commerce and Omnichannel retail, the inaugural session of 'Omnicom Intelligence Series', discussed the necessary changes and themes basis a



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roundtable session. As similar to the first episode of the series, the second and third episode saw debate on two important topics:

- » Thinking Customer Experience Beyond Home Delivery
- » Increasing Profitability by Connecting Online and Offline

CUSTOMER 360

There is no here and there, but everywhere when it comes to the customer. Brands and retailers have understood that and COVID has accelerated the process, bringing them closer to their customer base.

By Anurima Das

The key to a seamless Omnichannel experience is a modern supply chain. This supply chain on the one end extends delivery across mobile apps, websites, social media and stores and on the other connects the orders back to the warehouse, offline stores, and the likes. To create a seamless experience it is very important for brands to map their marketplace presence with much care and expertise. Also brands and retailers need new technologies, including inventory management systems, and new ways of delivering products, Chatbots and the likes to further enhance the experience across channels. Gone are the days when chatbots were being used to do tasks as straightforward as changing passwords. Today the bots are attuned to perform complicated services and can even determine the mood of someone calling the customer service.

Omnichannel retail is an immersive experience and puts your customer, not your product, at the core. It's about communicating in ways that

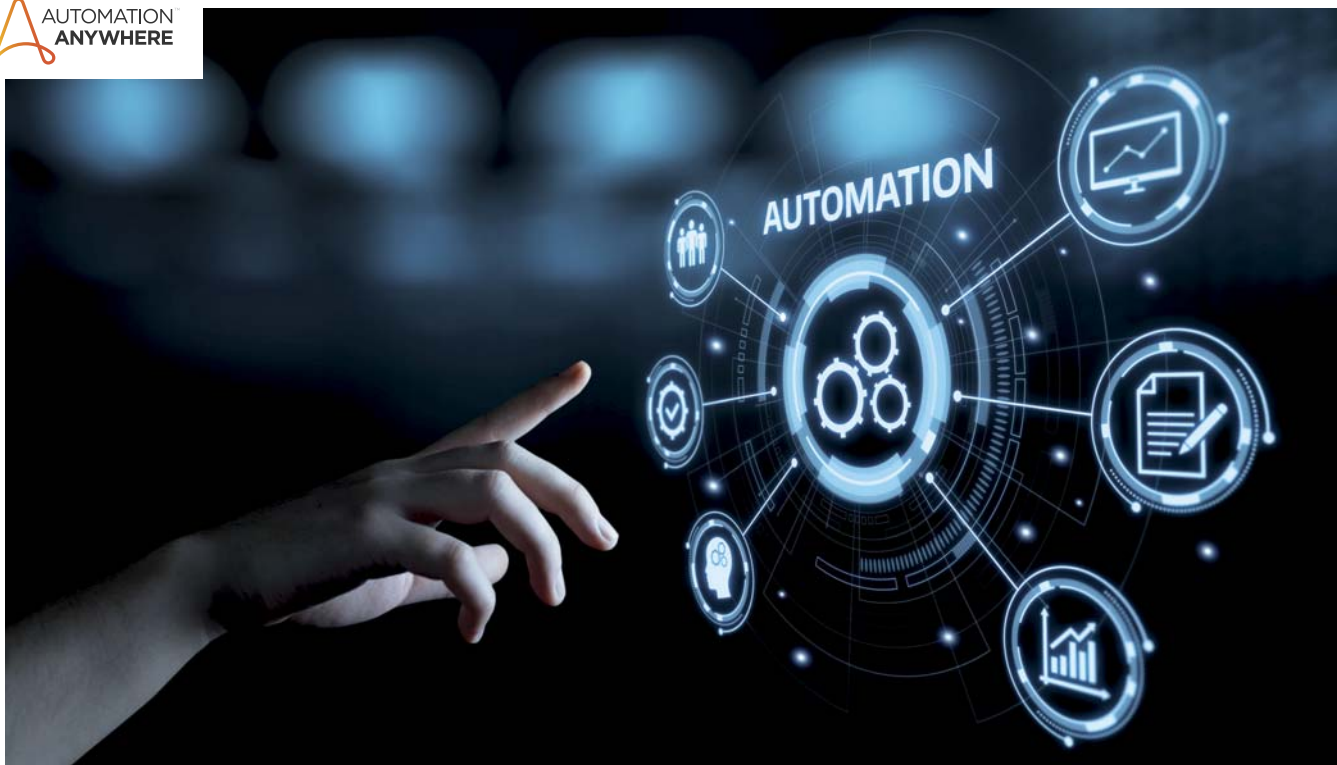


are aligned with why they use a given channel and showing awareness of their individual stage in the customer lifecycle. An Omnichannel approach allows customers to purchase from wherever they are—rather than treating channels as independent spots, in case of multichannel approaches. Omnichannel brings together multiple channels and pays attention to spillover between channels and offers customer

experiences within and between channels.

In a similar vein, Omnichannel removes the boundaries between different sales and marketing channels to create an amalgamated, integrated experience. The distinctions between channels—onsite, social, mobile, email, physical, and instant messaging—disappear as a single view of the customer as well as a single experience

Knowledge Partner



Automating Retail

With omnichannel retail coming under the spotlight, a wide array of touchpoints and channels have now become a must for brands/retailers. Automating varied functions, tasks and connecting the dots to bring in all these touchpoints within one ecosystem is more than necessary now.

The Global Retail Automation Market is predicted to surpass \$19.5 billion by 2024. With automation becoming the buzzword for retail, it is now time to checkout this umbrella term with a little more depth. In simple terms, anything that you set on auto-pilot in your business is regarded as automated processes. This means you set a time and put a process in place and then just let the action take its own course, without any to negligible intervention. In eCommerce and retail specifically, automation runs the gamut today. Multichannel to omnichannel to the traditional retail, automation for everything from order management systems to marketing — and lots in

between makes tasks simpler and seamless.

Moreover, as brands enter high-growth phases, retail automation becomes even more integral to business operations. “Automation has a very wide meaning or scope and there is no single yardstick to measure brands’ readiness for automations. Different organisations take different approaches to bring automation practices in play. One thing that could remain common though is the future vision and working backward to achieve that. Breaking future vision into milestones and tasks (automations) and building on that vision. Few would do POC first, bring automations next and then scale the business, and some would first scale the

business and then bring the automations as per the complexity and challenges. Many growth companies might get caught up in scaling the business first and bring the automations in parallel. No easy or right answer on when to bring the automations in the brand’s journey. There are many factors to be considered in this decision-making like time to market, TAM, future expansion plan, risk appetite, organisation’s evolution journey, fundamental thought process etc. As long as the fundamental thought process, direction & empowerment is there to solve the problems by embracing the automations and technology, people on the job usually know what should be done & when,” Amit Gupta, CTO, Rebel Food brings into light.

"Post-pandemic Home Lifestyle & Design is About Creating Comfortable, Personalised, Inspiring Spaces"

– Dipali Patwa

Fabindia brings to the customers Interior Design Solutions (IDS) service, offering experts' help on-ground to ensure that the visitor walk away having made the most informed purchases.

By Sandeep Kumar

Fabindia unveiled its first ever home & lifestyle concept store at Khan Market, New Delhi in the month of June. Spread across 1900 sq. ft., the store is created and curated with a vision to offer a holistic lifestyle experience. The store also provides a set up for the work from home concept, which is the need of the hour and is preferred by a majority of the consumers. Through its newly launched Interior Design Solutions (IDS) service, Fabindia is offering experts' help on-ground to ensure that the visitor walk away having made the most informed purchases.

In an exclusive interaction with IMAGES Retail, **Dipali Patwa, Group Head of Brand, Community & Digital, CMO Fabindia** talks about the new trends of retail, changing consumer behaviour, challenges and roadmap for the industry ahead.

Tell us about the new 'Concept store' of the brand that was launched recently? Tell us about the idea, concept and strategy behind the launch

Home is where the heart is, and creating flexibility and adaptability in one's own home has now become the new norm. Fabindia's rich heritage of textiles and traditions has always been at the forefront of this particular category. Embracing the work from home, schooling from home, shopping



Indian Shoppers Overwhelmingly Vote for Convenience of Digital Wallets: Report

The findings from the Global Digital Payments study, analysed the changing payment preferences of consumers across nine geographies, including India, in the past 12 months. The survey, which mined the views of 13,000 global shoppers, also found that 69 per cent of respondents will shop more frequently at retailers that accept digital payments.

IMAGES Retail Bureau



The acceleration of all things digital has made Indians turn to digital and contactless payments, digital wallets, digital gift cards, and QR codes as the pandemic reshaped consumer behaviour, a new survey from global payments provider, Blackhawk Network found.

The report also stated that online shopping will continue to reign supreme – mobile wallets, digital gift cards, rewards, and loyalty points, have brought a paradigm shift at all levels.

The findings from the Global Digital Payments study, analysed the changing payment preferences of consumers across nine geographies, including India, in the past 12 months. The survey, which mined the views of 13,000 global shoppers, also found that 69 per cent of respondents will shop more frequently at retailers that accept digital payments.

India has emerged as a forerunner in mobile commerce adoption in comparison to its global counterparts. The survey revealed that 54 per cent of the respondents will spend more money if they can use digital payment methods. Frequent online shopping is a trend that is seeing no downfall in 2021, with India ahead of other countries. The survey observes that 93 per cent of Indian respondents prefer using digital wallets regularly as compared to their global counterparts' average of 55 per cent. 94 per cent of Indian shoppers reported that digital wallets have made shopping easier and the vast majority (98 per cent) have shopped at an online-





Drunken Monkey Records Double Growth, Opens 50 New Outlets During the Pandemic

With the largest bouquet of smoothies in the world to suit every taste palate, Drunken Monkey is focused on its agenda of providing healthy and functional products.

By IMAGES Retail Bureau

Founded in 2016, Drunken Monkey is the only Indian smoothie bar-chain with a pan Indian presence. Headquartered in Hyderabad, the brand has grown exponentially since its launch and the

consistent success and growth of the brand can be gauged from its growth from four smoothie bars in Hyderabad in the first year, to 100 + outlets in 50 + Indian cities in 2021.

It is one of the fastest-growing smoothie chains in India that delivers

the best blended natural-fruit smoothies, smoothie bowls and juices in over 200 special combinations, ranging from all-natural detox smoothies, including meal, avocado, veggie and protein.

Brand Journey

The venture was started by Samrat Reddy, with a goal to make smoothies a part of the Indian lifestyle and culture. "We have always been a country that consumed a lot of fruits, but it is just in the last 2 decades with increasing urbanisation and shift to busy life that the majority of Indians have shifted from natural and healthier food to processed options. There has always been more than enough coffee and tea joints across the country, but the culture of smoothies was not yet fully prevalent in India. The search for fruit-based, natural, and healthy drinks has made its way up by 50 per cent. This trend shows the increasing inclination of Indians towards health-based food and beverages," informs **Samrat Reddy, Founder and Managing Director, Drunken Monkey.**

Marketing Strategy

For Drunken Monkey, the product quality and taste has been their strength and reason for the growth. All the products are created from 100 percent natural fruit, locally sourced, freshly made on order, with no added sugar and no artificial flavours.

"We never felt the need to raise external funding or capital for our growth. We have grown organically through the strength of our product and customer base. We have about the largest varieties of smoothies (200) in the world to suit every taste palate. The brand is very much focused on its agenda of providing healthy and functional products," says Reddy emphasising on the growth of the brand.

Business Growth During the Pandemic

The brand did have to change their strategies during the pandemic as during the lockdown the offline outlets were not getting maximum sales. The online



Onboarding to Fulfillment

E-commerce is fast becoming a game changer for retail and Primarc Pecan Retail Pvt Ltd, India's only end-to-end e-commerce service provider is offering a galore of business solutions.

By Anurima Das

Headquartered in Mumbai-headquartered Primarc Pecan partners with brands across geographies to increase scope of their online business: providing Ecommerce management services, fulfilment solutions and digital marketing. The company, presently handles Marketplace Management for over 70 brands, for different services in this domain which includes market places & D2C. The organisation offers its e-commerce management expertise to help brands reach a much larger potential customer base across online marketplaces like Amazon, Flipkart, PayTM, Snapdeal, Myntra, Nykaa and others.

Primarc started out as one of the earliest prominent sellers on Amazon; when Amazon arrived in India, in 2013. They ventured into e-commerce with toys, and followed it up by entering into categories like: HPC (Health & Personal Care), Gourmet & Pets. "The experience we gained on the way helped us advance faster and more strategically, partnering with more and more marketplaces, increasing our reach in the digital world. The idea of expansion of the organisation to other marketplaces was to gain experience and add more expertise to our fold. This was then remodeled as a service offering to our brand Partners," mentions **Ankur Dayal, CEO & Co-Founder - Primarc Pecan.**

Empowering Brands

Working towards realising their vision for the organisation: to be a one-stop-shop for brands online, Primarc ventured into operations, sales and marketplace management and assisted clients with their online growth as well. As a part of this vision, 2017 saw Primarc Pecan venture into the digital marketing space. The aim here was to help clients manage traffic not only within the ecosystem of marketplaces but also outside of it. The journey which began in 2013 as toy retailers has now transitioned to being known as one of the largest and probably few end-to-end e-Commerce service providers.



Social Commerce:

Formulating Benefits of Better Customer Engagement and Retention

Social Commerce enables brands to promote their products and services and also build a deep relationship with its customers. It also opens up two-way communication opportunities to showcase their products frequently through updates in regular social media feeds.

By Kappu Jaykumar, Senior Director – IT, Lowe's India

Social Commerce is one of the fast-growing trends in retail. Social Commerce is the ability with which customers to complete their purchase of a product while browsing their favourite social media website. For example, a customer scrolling through their favourite social media page gets intrigued by a product they

come across! How cool would it be if they get to know about the product and buy it right away while on the platform? That is the possibility social commerce brings –making shopping a part of social interactions! People spend an average of two hours or more on social media interactions. They take inspiration from people outfits, places they travel, food they eat, or even how

they decorate their homes. Hence it is only a natural extension for the social media platforms to enable customers to buy the products that inspire them. On the other hand with social media platforms, enabling the purchase experience, it allows them to understand the customer behaviours better, thereby increasing engagement with better targeting.

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Lulu Mall, Thiruvananthapuram