

The Changing Face of Retail

How Can High Street Stores Attract the Online Generation

Executive Summary

This report examines the changing face of retail, exploring the ways in which high street stores can attract in the online generation despite growing competition from e-commerce. Retail stores need to adapt in order to survive, and the way to do that is by creating an immersive experience for consumers.

Introduction

Sales from retail stores are seeing a constant decline; it's predicted by 2028 that over half of retail sales will be made solely online. According to the BBC, on average, 16 retail shops are closing daily, indicating that retailers are struggling to maintain a physical presence on the high street. In order to stay relevant and compete with the growing competition from e-commerce, high street stores need to adapt.

With the uncertainty of Brexit, rising store costs and increasing internet accessibility, to stay relevant and draw in the online generation, it is crucial that retailers offer more than just a store and are, instead, creating an immersive experience for the consumer. In this whitepaper, we take a look at the causes of the decline in physical retail stores and explore ways in which retailers can adapt to drive traffic to high street stores.

The Brexit Uncertainty

At the end of 2018, consumer confidence hit a five-year low. Brexit is thought to be a primary cause of reluctance in spending on non-essential items, with the worst Christmas for the high street since the financial crisis. According to the BBC, in the first half of 2019, almost 3,000 high street stores faced closure. Following this, in July 2019, the sales from UK retailers dropped by 1.3%, making it the worst 12-month average since 1995. In September 2019, John Lewis reported their first-ever half-year loss, with Brexit being one of the factors for the sales decline.

According to Marsh, Brexit could be an opportunity for online retailers, as goods can be sold in the British pound to consumers from the EU at a better cost due to exchange rate fluctuations. However, regarding the supply chain, retailers both on and offline will need to consider the arrangements in place with logistics and distribution providers. It is predicted that imports will become more expensive for both businesses and consumers, due to inflation and increasingly difficult logistics.

There is a lot of uncertainty surrounding the deal that the UK will have with the EU, or whether the UK settle for a no-deal Brexit at present. Until an agreement is concluded, it is difficult to predict the exact effect it will have on the high street.

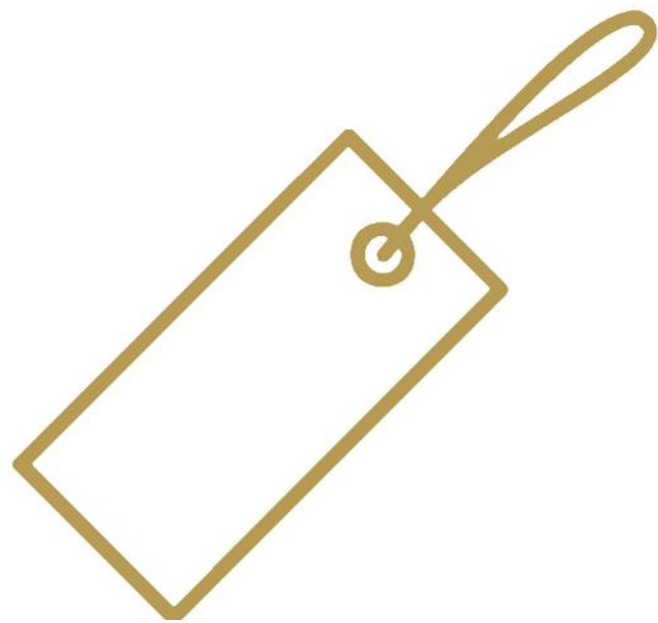


The Causes Of The Decline

Rising Overheads & Property Prices

Another factor contributing to the decline of the high street is increasing costs in overheads and property prices. An article from BBC News found that over the last 12 months, around 29,000 retail units were vacant; this is the highest rate since January 2015. Many companies are opting for online stores rather than physical units so that they can avoid costs such as related to brick and mortar, such as rent, utility bills, wages and security.

The increase in the national living wage has also had an impact on shop owners. The national living wage is continually seeing an increase as well as the real living wage, which gives employees the pay that they need to live; the real living wage as of October 2019 is £9.00 across the UK and £10.55 in London. The real living wage is independently calculated and not enforced by the government, but over 5,000 UK businesses have opted for this standard.



Increases in wages have left many businesses struggling to maintain staff levels. An example of this is how the online clothes store Boohoo bought Karen Millen and Coast out of administration. According to The Guardian, they plan to keep both of their online stores but are set to close down all of their physical shops, therefore putting up to 1,100 jobs at risk. Other companies that have been forced to make staff cuts include M&S, Debenhams and HMV. Out of all business sectors, the retail industry now has the highest rate of redundancies, says the Resolution Foundation thinktank.

It is understandable why companies are hesitant to open physical stores and would prefer to remain exclusively online. The increasingly high costs that are incurred when running a retail store can be a deciding factor to not opening shops. As retail sales have been in decline, retail stores have been asking landlords to reduce rent, due to the tightening profit margins tightening. In July 2019, Monsoon Accessorize asked landlords to cut their rent. Following suit, after their application was approved, other retail stores began asking for reductions. However, not all landlords were willing to reduce rent prices due to leases already being signed.

However, there is still hope for the high street! Marketing and insights director at retail consultancy Springboard, Diane Wehrle, has stated that she believes shopping will become more of a leisurely experience, with cafes, restaurants and other 'experience-based' storefronts flourishing. Instead of a trip to the high street being dedicated to just shopping, customers can make more of a day of it.

M&S wallis TOPSHOP coast HOBBS PLANET
oasis Phase Eight NEW LOOK DOROTHY PERKINS
LANDS' END® WAREHOUSE VIYELLA kaliko
BANANA REPUBLIC ASOS FRENCH CONNECTION
AUSTIN REED RIVER ISLAND WHISTLES next
EAST EX PRECIS JAEGER © MONSOON

Popular UK High Street Brand and Retailers



10%
of all shops are
vacant in the UK

Physical footfall
decreasing for

4 Yrs straight



Wages in the UK
hit a **11 Year**
High



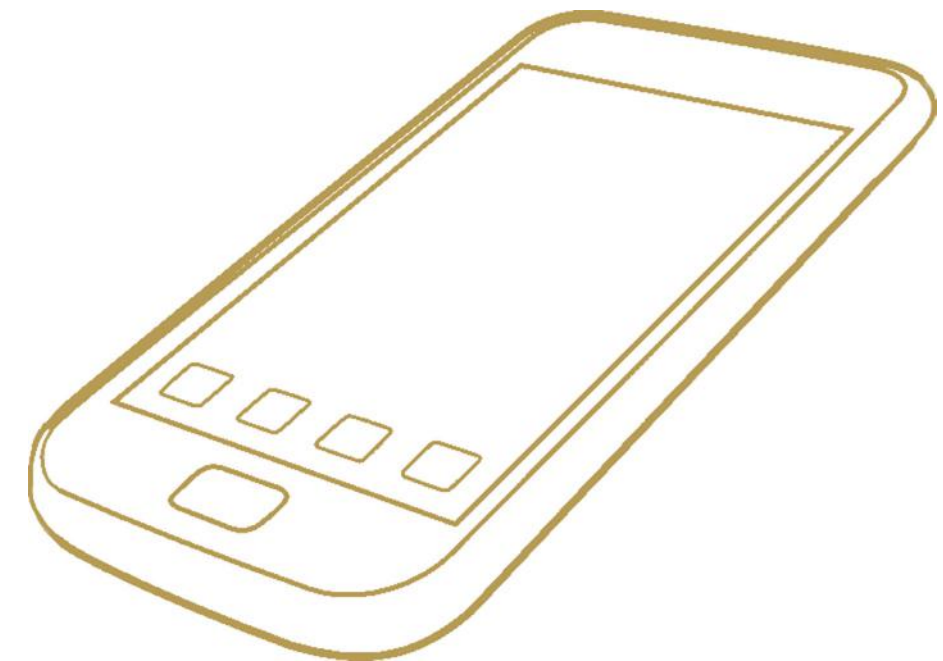
Primark asked
landlords for a
30%
cut in rent (in Feb 2019)

The Online Generation

86% of the UK population use the internet daily, with Millennials, those born between 1982 and 1996, being the largest generation. This market segment primarily shops and spends the most money online, as well as in-store. According to Experian, Millennials make up a third of the UK population, making it crucial to understand the wants and needs of this target audience.

As of September 2019, the internet accounts for 18.1% of retail sales. By 2028, it's predicted to account for 53%, with those growing up in the online generation becoming over half of the UK's adult population. What is deterring those consumers from visiting retail stores is the unique, personalised journey shoppers experience online. All generations are seeking an experience when it comes to buying habits, which is not always at the forefront of a retail store.

One of the main aspects which deter the online generation from shopping instore is competitive pricing online. The ease of shopping from anywhere in the world and finding the best deals deters consumers from going into a store, where it's harder and more time consuming to find the best deal.



Although there has been a shift towards those shopping online, it hasn't eliminated the need for brick and mortar stores. According to Divido, 28% of shoppers prefer to see an item in-store before buying and 32% favour paying for something in person.



The Importance Of The Retail Experience

As the percentage of consumers opting to shop online increases, it is crucial to evolve in the ever-changing retail world. High street retailers must stay ahead to ensure they remain relevant and are giving consumers what they want and need. There will always be products that consumers will prefer to find online; however, when consumers require more than just a quick sale, creating an experience in-store will ensure they spend longer browsing and will entice them into visiting a store rather than opting to shop online.

Although online shopping is no doubt growing in popularity, the importance of the physical retail experience still remains. According to research conducted by Amazon, 89% of shoppers said having access to real-time product availability would influence their shopping choices in terms of which stores they would visit frequently. 82% of Millennials still prefer to shop in a bricks and mortar shop but desire interactive elements and a seamless transition between shopping online and instore.

There are still many factors to shopping that you can only experience when visiting a physical store. For example, Forbes found that around 50% of people prefer to shop in-store because they can touch and feel the items. Being able to feel and try items, the consumer can understand the quality of the product. Furthermore, by having this ability, consumers are more likely to purchase an increased number of items, which is known as the endowment effect. By being able to touch the product, the consumer feels a sense of ownership, and therefore, values the item more.

For Millennials, in particular, an immersive experience will encourage them to visit a store by helping to fulfil all the senses. In 2017, Topshop installed a VR water slide into their Oxford Street store, taking consumers on a journey through the iconic street. Alongside the week and a half long feature, Topshop integrated summer elements such as the smell of sun cream, an ice cream parlour and emitting water park noises into the store to create an immersive experience. The campaign increased footfall and generated 6.5 million social media impressions, proving to be a success. More and more retail stores are increasing the interactive elements in their stores, boosting the chance of consumers sharing their experience with peers.

The perfect customer experience will be determined by a retailer's products, demographic and store. To enable the best possible retail experience, it is crucial to understand all three. By understanding the customers' wants and needs, an emotive customer journey can be created.



6.46 mins

The average queue time for people in the UK before leaving.

43%
of consumers

are more likely to spend more with retailers who offer better experiences.



70%

are based on service and how customers feel like they've been buying experiences treated in-store.

Great experiences lead to customers become willing to pay an increased

16%
price premium

££££££



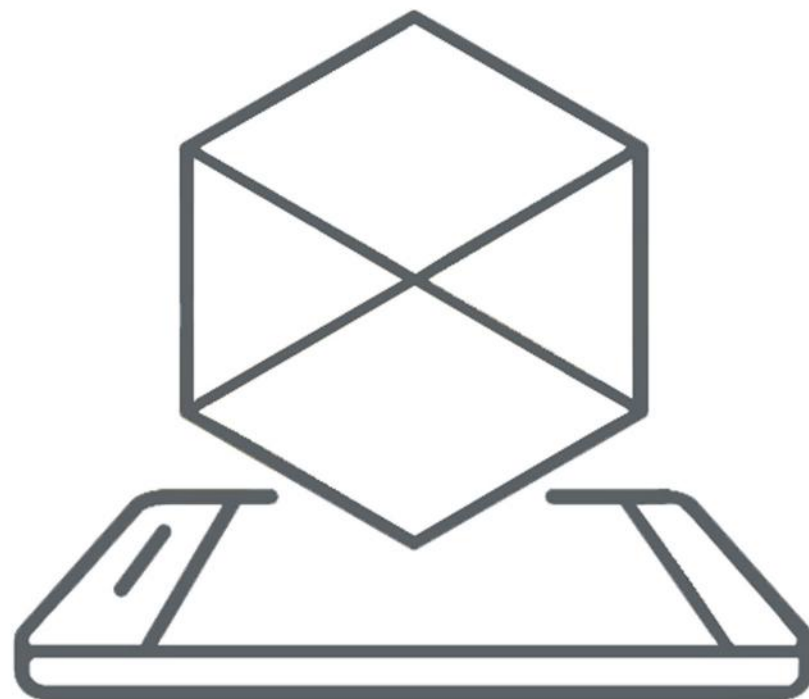
32% Would stop shopping with a brand after one bad experience.
of customers



The Changes Which Retailers Can Implement

Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality

When customers shop in high street stores, they are often greeted by long cashier queues, waiting for a free changing room and just a frustrating experience in general. Artificial intelligence and augmented reality could be the solution to these problems, creating a seamless shopping experience! Artificial intelligence is where computer systems can operate in the same way a human can (i.e. machines and robots) whereas augmented reality is a computer-generated interactive experience of the real-world enhanced by technology.



Case Study A: Zara, Westfield

Rather than only using staffed check-outs, the large fashion retailer Zara has decided to combine online and in-store shopping. At Westfield Stratford City in East London, Zara has introduced a section of the store dedicated to the purchase and collection of online orders. The system works by the customer scanning the QR or PIN code on the e-mail receipt. A robotic arm behind the pick-up point then organises the packages and dispenses them to the customers within seconds. The method means that customers can collect their orders with ease and they can also avoid the charges they would receive for home delivery. Furthermore, bringing the customer into the store to collect their online order entices them to wander around and check out the latest collection; this could result in further sales.

The store has also introduced interactive mirrors that are equipped with radio-frequency identification (RFID). This is a technology that can recognise the item a customer is holding and is able to provide them with outfit suggestions. The smart invention enables customers to view how a complete outfit would look like and can, therefore, increase sales as it encourages the shopper to purchase complimentary items. In addition to this, Zara is remaining up to date with technology as their staff are equipped with iPads. They can advise customers and take payments - the customer can pay using their mobile phone via the Zara app or by using InWallet, its parent company's app. For a truly independent shopping experience, Zara also offers self-checkout systems where customers can complete the transaction entirely on their own, without any human interaction.

Case Study B: Nike + FuelStation, BoxPark Shoreditch

Another company that has decided to introduce artificial intelligence and augmented reality is the international sports brand Nike. In London, BoxPark Shoreditch is a pop-up mall and offers affordable and flexible leases for companies to showcase and sell their goods. Nike decided to feature here with its Nike+FuelStation concept. The store featured some of their products, but that was only a small part of the whole experience. With innovative digital services and physical consumer experiences, the store was hugely popular. Nike included motion sensors, LED walls, augmented reality tools and interactive touchscreen devices that provided customers with information on the products and services they offer.

The store space was designed entirely by the in-house design team at Nike. It fused both futuristic interior design with features inspired by the first-ever Nike store that opened back in 1973. Having an interactive experience like this encourages people to visit and discover what you have to offer as a brand. People love to experience and try new things, and this innovative idea from Nike facilitated that.

Case Study C: Topshop, Oxford Circus

London Fashion Week is adored by many, especially those who love to shop and are fascinated by clothing trends. However, LFW isn't the most accessible show and is often full of celebrities, making it difficult for high street shoppers to enjoy the whole experience. Topshop decided to give five lucky competition winners the chance to go to LFW, but virtually. The winners visited Topshop's flagship store in Oxford Circus, London and were virtually transported to seats with the celebrities at LFW. They all wore virtual reality headsets and got to experience LFW as if they were there. The idea came about because they wanted to open up Topshop's London Fashion Week show to a broader audience. The winners were sat in the window of the store, so passers-by could stop and explore what was going on, and therefore, enticing them to enter.

Creating an unusual and unique experience for shoppers can encourage them to visit the high street store and improve sales. People like to try something new, and by producing these creative ideas, customers are more likely to shop at a retail store, which enhances brand awareness.

Offering Consumers Something They Can't Get Online

Bricks and mortar retail stores can provide customers with something that online cannot, and that's an immersive, sensory shopping experience. In 2019, a new Primark store opened in the city of Birmingham, also claiming the title of the world's largest fashion retail store. Boasting roughly 160,000 sq. ft. of retail space, spread across five floors, the store is not a run-of-the-mill clothes shop.

By identifying and understanding their target demographic, the store implemented experiential additions such as their Disney café and beauty studio. These two additions have been designed to both get people through the door, and to keep them in-store for as long as possible. This new addition presents an opportunity for the Primark brand to widen their scope and appeal to a new and larger audience.

Similarly, the creation of 'The Showroom' in Primark, a space that allows a group of friends or family to try clothes on together while adjusting the lighting and music, is designed to keep shoppers in-store for longer.

In an attempt to bring shoppers through the doors, shops have also started offering exclusive in-store discounts, meaning that customers will have to buy certain products in-store to get the best price. Additionally, shops such as Lush, with its store on Oxford Street, have a history of offering customers products in-store that can't be purchased elsewhere. Not only does this appeal to fans of the brand that have access to the store but can encourage others who may not have made the trip on an average day to visit.

Often humans are drawn to exclusivity and the opportunity to own something that others cannot. This can be seen with limited edition or numbered editions of certain products. The phrase 'limited edition' has the specific intention to capitalise on our fear of missing out. It also suggests that it is something new and never-before-seen, lending the product a sense of immediacy.

Supreme, a clothing brand with only a handful of stores worldwide, has built an entire business on the limited-edition model. Having established a firm fan base in countries such as Britain, the U.S and Japan, their model sees them only create a set number of each product per season. Once the product is sold, there will not be any more made.

For businesses that pride themselves on the quality of their product, shopping instore allows customers to see the product first-hand. For products such as clothing and homeware, it can be difficult for customers to get a good sense of the quality and feel without having it there in front of them. Being able to see the colours, designs and size in person can turn an interested shopper into a customer, as they will be much more confident in their purchase.

To celebrate the rich heritage of the brand combined with the modern requirements of retail, the flagship Whittard of Chelsea store based in Convent Garden puts consumers to the forefront of the store design. With a dedicated tasting area and coffee and hot chocolate room, consumers are given a chance to 'try before they buy', which is not always a possibility online.

Although many consumers are still online-based, it is possible to use a strong online presence to drive foot traffic to a physical store. By leveraging paid-for advertising through social media platforms such as Facebook, businesses can direct their advertising towards a predetermined demographic of people. In this instance, the targeting of audiences that live within a specific radius of the store or stores. Using the store traffic conversions option on Facebook allows for a definitive advertising campaign that focuses on driving footfall to a physical outlet. This could include in-store only promotions, offering free parking or directions to access the store via public transport.



Whittard
CHELSEA 1886

Making It Instagrammable

With the rise of the online generation and the social media age, it's crucial to adapt to trends. Millennials are heavily influenced by what is seen on social media. Instagram launched in 2010 - with Facebook acquiring the platform in 2012 - and has come on leaps and bounds since. Analysis by Statista show that from 2016 to 2018, Instagram usage has doubled, and as of 2019, the platform has one billion active users monthly.



With the popularity of Instagram growing, terms such as Instagram-worthy or Instagrammable are being used more. Brands are not only using Instagram to showcase their brand but are looking to create an Instagrammable interior in their physical stores to encourage consumers to share it with their own followers. According to Shopify, by creating an Instagram-worthy interior, consumers can be encouraged to come into a store, driving more sales and building meaningful relationships between brand and buyer.

CoverGirl's flagship store in New York features interactive elements to create an experience for consumers and to encourage them to take images to share on their own social channels. On their own website CoverGirl says 'with tons of cute spaces for Instagrammable moments and a glam room, you'll definitely want to drop by the beautiful store!'. From virtual greeting to a photo booth, it is clear that CoverGirl has put the consumers at the forefront of their strategy.

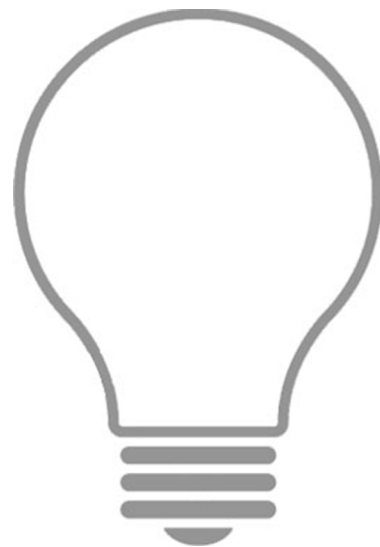
Another company which has excelled when it comes to an Instagrammable interior is Spectrum, a make-up brush company, who have had a successful online business for many years. In order to further engage with their consumers, they opted to open a pop-up physical store in the heart of London. As well as showcasing the products, the store was decorated in vibrant pinks, making it the perfect backdrop for a photo. Covering two floors, the upper floor consisted of a coffee shop which also served vegan cupcakes, in-line with their products which are vegan-friendly.

An experience should be at the forefront of a retail store; it is key for businesses to create a space that consumers want to share, and to do this, it must be immersive. The foundations of a perfect shot require sufficient and good lighting; therefore, it's essential to design a space that is well lit to increase the attractiveness of the space. This is where lighting design comes into play.

Interior & Lighting Design

One area where physical stores have the advantage over online stores is the way in which they design their interior. Online stores are limited to a website, no matter how elaborate, or appealing, the website can only ever be two dimensional. Despite this, customers still prefer to shop online due to the ease and ability to compare prices quickly. This preference means that retailers are having to work harder than ever to attract and retain customers with their physical presence, making any advantage gained an important one.

Although the layout of the shop itself is already an established field, this can be taken a lot further. The interior and lighting design of a shop can be a huge contributor to a customer's positive experience. Lighting within the interior can play a large role in the overall aesthetic of the space. According to Paul Nulty, founder of Nulty, a team of lighting designers with experience in retail, "retail lighting is all about emotionally connecting the customers to the brand, connecting their personal and brand identity into one. Retail lighting is all about the psychology and sociology of lighting design, and if it's done well, a retailer will be able to see this in their bottom line."



When considering the lighting of a space, there are various criteria that should be taken into account. As Paul explains, there are five primary levels of lighting: "Firstly, there is accent lighting that lights up the products in a retail store; then there is ambient lighting - this is low-key lighting in a store to ensure there is enough light. Feature lighting, which is also known as decorative lighting, is the lighting that represents your brand and gives character. Signage lighting is the lighting that comes from all the signs in a retail store, and last but not least, there is audio-visual lighting; this comes from the screens that retailers have inside the store."

For many customers, when walking into a store, they may not immediately consider the lighting design, but that doesn't mean it isn't 'seen'. Each level of lighting is there to serve a purpose, whether to provide decorative lighting or to illuminate a specific space within the store. Although all products should be well-lit, stores should bear in mind that more popular products will perform well when positioned at eye level and have suitable lighting to draw attention to them.

Another factor that stores should be considering is the customer journey, both physical and emotional. When a potential customer moves around the store, the products that they see should subtly influence how they think and feel. For a more managed approach, stores can use objects such as furniture or displays to direct customers around their store, ensuring that they encounter various checkpoints. The use of shop 'speed bumps' can also be used to break up the flow of products by introducing a small selection of other items, whether discounted or from a different range. This break will be vital to engaging customers for longer and lighting can be used to underpin the importance of this barrier.

Depending on the size and nature of a particular location, lighting can also be used to create a breakout area for those either accompanying the shoppers into the store or for those that want to test a specific product, such as reading the first few pages of a book or trying on shoes. A lower, warmer level of lighting could be used to create a safe place for shoppers, somewhere in the store they can have some personal space to form a bond with a particular product and the brand.

In early 2018, Liberty London, the iconic department store worked with a group of university students studying visual merchandising and branding. With the constant change of retail, students were asked to pitch an idea in order to keep retail at the forefront of the industry. Liberty London is continually putting their consumers at the forefront of their interior design to create a sensory experience. Staying true to the original heritage of the brand but modernising the interior to ensure they remain relevant, in February 2019 Liberty London's annual sales increased by 8%, year on year. They want to ensure their customers experience a journey when in the only physical store, and this is achieved through their interior design.

“ The store is no longer a beginning and an end point, but rather a gateway to a brand's entire ecosystem. ”



95%
of people

are influenced by the exterior of shop/store



86%
of customers

would pay more for a better retail experience



12% for stores with a new
increase in sales lighting scheme

46%
of customers

identify the environment as a key element of a meaningful shopping experience

More and more, people are looking for an experience in everyday life, and a retail store is the perfect place to offer this. A retail space can be designed to guide customers on a journey, either of themselves or of a brand. Showcasing the heritage and timeline of a historic brand can offer customers a more immersive brand experience, making them feel part of something. The interior design and lighting of the store is a vital part of this process, as the brand story that is being told should feel authentic to customers, not forced.



LIBERTY
LONDON

Conclusion

Although the shift towards e-commerce is apparent, visiting a retail store is and will always remain essential. However, the way retail stores are presented and what consumers expect is changing. Technology is shaping the future of retail, and rather than technology replacing a retail space, brands should be incorporating technological elements into their physical strategy. To create an immersive experience, to increase footfall and sales, brands should first re-evaluate their store design and ensure consumers are the forefront.

The key element which has been mentioned in each section of this white-paper is customer experience. Interior design plays a crucial role in creating an experience. Insufficient lighting can have detrimental effects on a consumer's store journey, which could show in the average spend per customer. The amount and style of light can affect the tone and mood of the store, which could deter consumers from shopping in-store. Opting for vintage lights, modern chandeliers or dome lighting helps to emit a more intimate feel which would make consumers feel at ease.

It is now more important than ever to adapt retail interiors to stay ahead of the online generation. It's essential to create not just a store for browsing but to create an experience which will help draw the online generation in.

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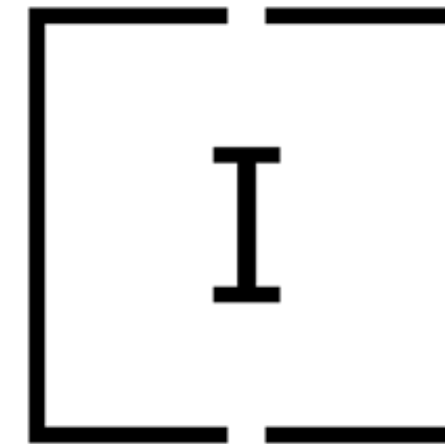
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About Industville



Industville is an award-winning designer and manufacturer of vintage-inspired industrial lights and furniture. Using high-quality raw materials, we pride ourselves on bringing authentic hand finished products to our customers. We've worked with a variety of homeowners, interior designers and distinguished retail, leisure and hospitality companies around the world, such as Tissot, Watchfinder, Next, Costa Coffee and Café Nero.

