



Digital Presence in Physical Shopping: From a “Benefit-Oriented Approach” to Successful Customer Engagement

13

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Abstract

Customer-centric implementation means that in the course of implementation, the focus is on the target group of customers and we have to concentrate on their senses, i.e., multisensory communication with the customer. This communication must first and foremost be goal-oriented and also beneficial for the end customer. In addition, a holistic approach to implementation is necessary, which takes both the retailer and the end customer into account. This consideration must be applied to the entire customer journey, the individual customer touchpoints, the corresponding customer experiences and the customer engagements to be expected from them. In this chapter, this approach is explained using examples on the one hand and a proven consulting methodology on the other. The developed model makes it possible to develop multisensory experiences in a simple and structured way in order to realize and operate successful, customer-centric implementations with meaningful embedding of technologies along the entire sales process.

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13.1 Customer-Centric Digital Solutions in the Analogue Shopping World

Today we know that the factors of successful shops are manifold and complex. Products, prices and assortments, brands and values, space and competition, strategies and target groups, investments and intended sales successes, etc. must all be taken into account and coordinated in the conception of new shops. In the context of multisensory implementations, the field must be narrowed somewhat in this chapter. The focus here is on the consideration of multisensory experiences through the lens of the customer.

To look at customer-centric, multisensory experiences, the first thing to do is to take the perspective of the customer, and then at the same time to structure and describe these emotional processes into clear events – which actually sounds contradictory in itself: processes and events, or emotions and descriptive structures. However, this is exactly what makes it holistic, as both our right and left brain hemispheres are used for this.

The following examples are intended to illustrate this approach. On the one hand, the customer journey is to be considered as a whole and on the other hand the individual touchpoints. These touchpoints are to be differentiated according to their importance in order to create a successful customer experience that leads to a successful sales transaction and a satisfied customer. The continuing Journey – from sustainable customer care to customer retention in aftersales – is also important, but will not be discussed in depth here. In the following examples, the events from the customer's point of view before and during the purchase will be considered. This mainly with a focus on his emotional and mental expectations. This can create the tools to meet expectations with positive experiences. After all, we all want satisfied customers who are happy to share their positive experiences and become loyal fans.

13.2 The Customer Needs a New Mattress

In the following example, the demand-oriented purchasing process for consumer goods of a customer is differentiated in various phases from different perspectives. The customer's point of view and the customer's expectations are presented. The optimal handling of this is supported by useful technical aids and paired with skilful consulting services from the retailer. The goal is to ensure a positive sales experience and a successful conclusion of the sale. The purchase of a new mattress is chosen as a concrete application example. This can be adapted to any demand-oriented buying process, both for consumer goods and for capital goods.

13.2.1 Events Prior to Purchase

Once the need for a new mattress has crystallized, the customer is primed, meaning their eye is caught wherever sleep products are available, whether in the shop windows on the way to work, in the print media, while strolling through the city or online on the web. Every evening, before going to bed, the topic is more relevant than ever. The customer is mentally set on buying the right mattress at the ideal price, from the ideal retailer – the field of expectation is created and nurtured.

In addition, the corresponding research also takes place – including online, of course. Various online offers show product comparisons with ratings – also those with a corresponding seal of approval from consumer protection; e.g., Kassensturz or Stiftung Warentest. There are also many allegedly neutral comparison sites, including portals that also link to the providers. Different pages are visited and marked to get the right information. Thereby traces are left everywhere and cookies are collected. The online visit the next morning reveals all the sites visited, which know how to use these “crumbs” correctly and now remind the customer of his intention during the day. The test reports are read carefully, the variety of products is reduced by personal values and budgetary restrictions. Now it moves into the product selection, whereby exactly here customer reviews are very important to form one’s own opinion. Now the customer has arrived at his top 5 products, where quality, performance and price are right. The other bases for decision-making and differentiating features are also right, so that other products have been excluded. The customer sees himself as a connoisseur approximately around the questions of sleep mattresses and, at least in the private setting, dares to present to himself well-justified arguments for his Top 5 mattresses. In his head he is ready for the purchase – only in the heart not. How should the customer convince himself with certainty? Order the Top 5 mattresses home to try them out? No, probably not. So the customer goes to the shop that promises him online to have his top 5 mattresses ready to try out in a real shop near him.

13.2.2 Events and Emotions Before and During the Purchase

Now the time has come. The customer has a fixed appointment to combine his technical knowledge with emotional experiences as a mattress connoisseur: the mattress testing is imminent. Upon entering the department, the customer feels a sense of anticipation and reveals himself as a customer who wants to try out the top 5 mattresses reserved online in order to finally experience them. The consultant greets the customer in a friendly manner by name, who feels personally welcomed as a result. The sales assistant leads the customer to the free-standing information terminal, next to which five beds are ready and waiting – each equipped with one of the five mattresses pre-selected online. The consultant invites the customer to try out the beds independently and then to rate them via the digital terminal or mobile phone. This is followed by the consultation. However, this process is not

mandatory. Depending on the affinity to digital, the consultant would also “accompany” the customer during the mattress testing. Either way, the consultant assures each customer that the beds have been freshly prepared and disinfected for them, both to eliminate concerns beforehand and to bring the upcoming experience to a good comfort level. The customer is ready and gets involved. He tries one mattress after the other. During this process, he is invited via loudspeakers to breathe in and out deeply, to let himself fall and feel his body; to smell the surroundings, how fresh this mattress smells and how quiet it is when the customer turns around. In addition, he is invited to fill out each of the help tools, because as an expert he is confirmed in his choice. Right there, he is shown another component that is known but not yet considered: the right bed base. After the mattress test, the consultant joins in and discusses the evaluations with the customer. In doing so, he actively brings in the mattress grid consultation component to again test the top 5 mattresses on the ideal bed frame. This is how the mattress is sold – the bed frame is an important and necessary additional sale. Analogously, as we all know, the right pillows are also important for a healthy sleep. Such items can then easily be tried out on the preferred mattress and should land likewise into the purchase basket. Finally, the wellness aspect with the covers, mattress protectors, down duvets or other bedding is also an important part of the customer experience. They also want to be felt and tried out. This is where the consultant can shine by using the right interactive application to consolidate the customer’s buying confidence through the terminal, which is mostly operated by the customer himself.

All potential additional sales are clearly and completely described in the tools, supplemented with transparent reviews and taken into account in the sales process in the bundle or linked to the first purchase decision. Of course, everything comes with a right of return, including the familiar omnichannel services, such as home delivery – which means true added customer value for beds, mattresses, pillows and duvets. And if required, it is also easy to refer to the instalment payment options, because after all, we don’t buy a bed every day, but we will certainly enjoy it properly every evening, usually for several hours. As is well known, a good night’s sleep in a good bed is said to prolong life.

13.2.3 Guiding Emotions Before and During Purchase

The good feeling results on the one hand from the guided pre-selection of the top 5 mattresses and on the other hand from the competent advice of the dealer on site. So it is also legitimate that the shop shows its dealer margin or its service costs as a surcharge. The customer meets the consultant as an equal, as he knows the prices for his part and has become a connoisseur through his own research. The consultant, for his part, knows the customer’s requirements before the appointment and can optimally prepare the pre-selection in order to then also generate sensible, well-founded and interestingly priced additional sales.

The experiences are predestined to stand out. The multisensory implementation in this case would be the online presence, which takes up the needs structure of the customer, in order to invite him afterwards to try out the products on site.

The atmosphere in the test mattress area is central. Is the light too bright? Are other customers passing by disturbing? Or is the light subdued as if before falling asleep? Is the music quiet and contemplative? Is the scent appealing and has it got recognition value? when the products are delivered to the customer’s home, it should smell as similar as possible. Of course, the store design has to be efficient for the business, but wouldn’t it make more sense to align the warehouse and showroom based on the needs of the customers? And with mattresses in particular, privacy is crucial.

13.2.4 Synthesis of the Purchase Process

To sum up:

- The right message in the right place directs customers.
- The right service and the right staging motivates customers.
- The right product in the right customer context convinces the customer.
- The right product with the optimal customer experience is what the customer buys.

From this perspective, customer requirements and needs can be identified well in advance. Therefore, accompanying the customer already in the process of pre-selection and product comparison becomes very important. For this, the customer journey must be known, as well as the effect of the individual touchpoints.

Analogously, the customer journey in the store must be understood and the individual touchpoints must be used sensibly. The sales consultants must also tune in accordingly and prepare themselves specifically for this.

For example: When I enter the shop, as a customer I can already see on the digital displays that my top 5 mattresses are being tested here. On the in-store radio, I hear customer reviews that praise the experience. The fixed appointment with a consultant and his personal greeting make me feel comfortable, addressed directly and taken seriously – after all, my top 5 mattresses are built.

13.3 Overall View of a Customer Journey

In order to do justice to an overall view, we use the model of an extended customer journey and its intermediate stops (customer touchpoints), which describes the customer experiences on the one hand and customer actions or purchase decisions (customer engagements) on the other. The goal is the meaningful embedding of beneficial technologies in the successful sales process. Whether as an effective individual touchpoint or orchestrated

with other touchpoints, it is important to ensure the necessary bridging between the online and offline worlds. To achieve this, omnichannel and digital store communication concepts must be cleverly linked.

13.3.1 The Customer Journey Simplified in Four Areas

The customer journey begins at home (“At Home”), whether in front of the large screen of the TV or computer or on the small screen of the tablet or mobile, whether watching TV, surfing online or reading the news (see Fig. 13.1). The customer forms his first opinion via these screens; whether passively by absorbing information or by actively researching and obtaining information. In the so-called “Out of Home,” i.e., away from home, he perceives further information, advertisements and other such things. In search of a certain product he visits shops. In front of the shop (“At the Store”) his attention is greater, because he wants to go to this shop. The greatest attention is “Instore” or at the product. This cycle

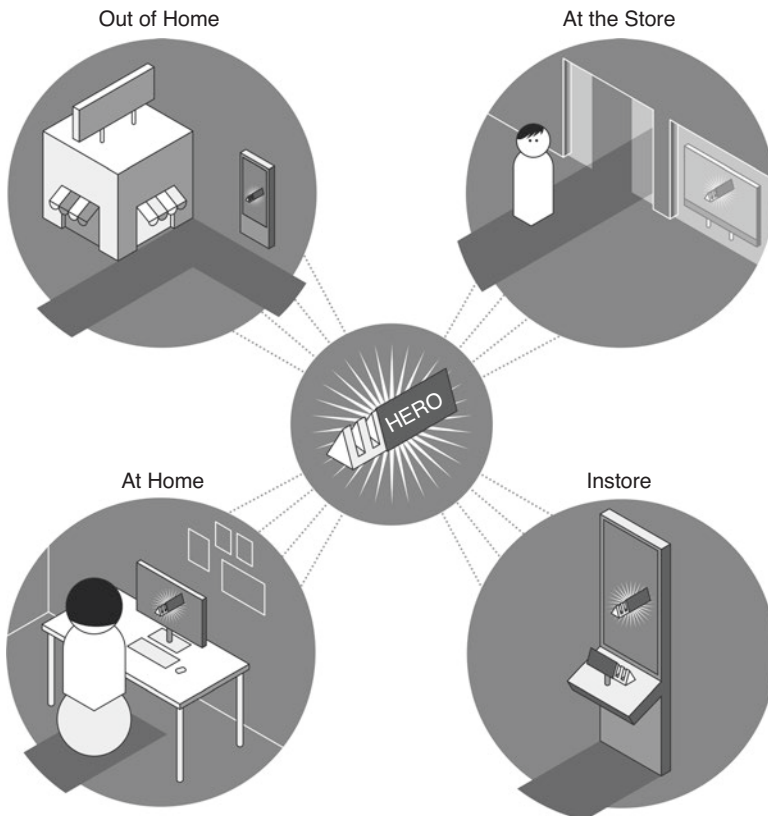


Fig. 13.1 Customer journey simplified into four areas. (Courtesy of © screenFOODnet 2020. All Rights Reserved)

repeats itself until the product is purchased; then the cycle repeats itself to confirm the purchase or in terms of after-sales activities.

13.3.2 The Extended in-Store Customer Journey

The so-called extended in-store customer journey, i.e., the customer journey that the customer experiences during a visit to a brick-and-mortar store, is composed of the different experiences at the respective touchpoints (see Fig. 13.2). These touchpoints should in turn trigger certain actions in the customer, i.e., certain customer engagements. It is therefore becoming increasingly important to orchestrate these optimally. In order to enable the necessary flexibility in addressing the customer and to coordinate the touchpoints with

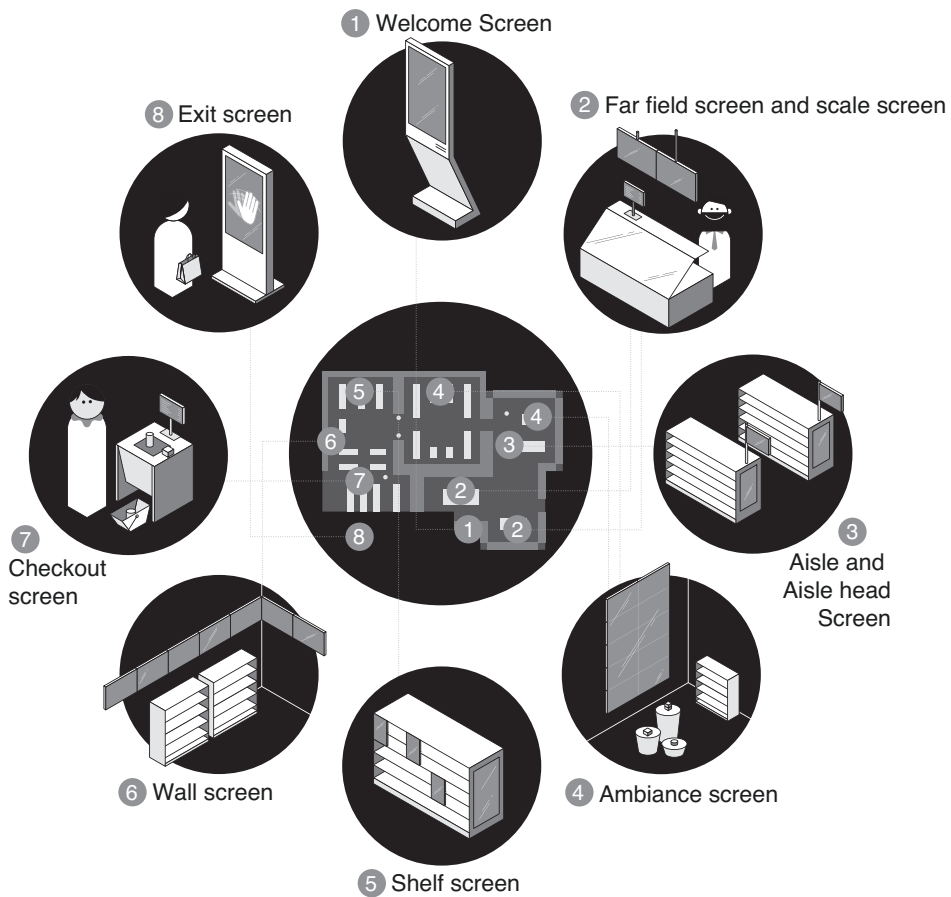


Fig. 13.2 Extended customer journey – In-store customer touchpoints. (Courtesy of © screen-FOODnet 2020. All Rights Reserved)

each other, technical solutions must be placed in a clever and benefit-oriented manner. Touchpoints at the entrance, so-called welcome screens, greet customers in a dynamic and friendly manner, especially when they are used to control the entry of people, e.g., in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic. Touchpoints for orienting customers are, in the best case, dynamic and replace traditional floor displays or are developed into modern interactive wayfinders and product finders. Ambient screens are designed to engage customers emotionally and inspire them in each department. Aisle, gondola and wall screens are to draw attention to specific products and offers. Product screens are to provide customers with interactive advice. The exit screen bids the customer a friendly farewell and wishes them a safe journey home. Any number of touchpoints are needed depending on the intention and benefit. Which touchpoints are placed and operated where with which benefit is explained in the following section.

13.4 Methodological Approach

Over the past 20 years, screenFOODnet Digital Signage Retail Services AG has successfully implemented and commissioned a wide range of multisensory touchpoints in various customer projects. One thing has been clearly recognised over all these years: Every retailer is unique with its concerns. Nevertheless, a pattern has been identified that distinguishes successful touchpoints from others. These patterns have been collected as insights and have matured over time and evolved into a proven methodology that has been established as part of the consulting model. At this point, an excerpt of this method is briefly presented.

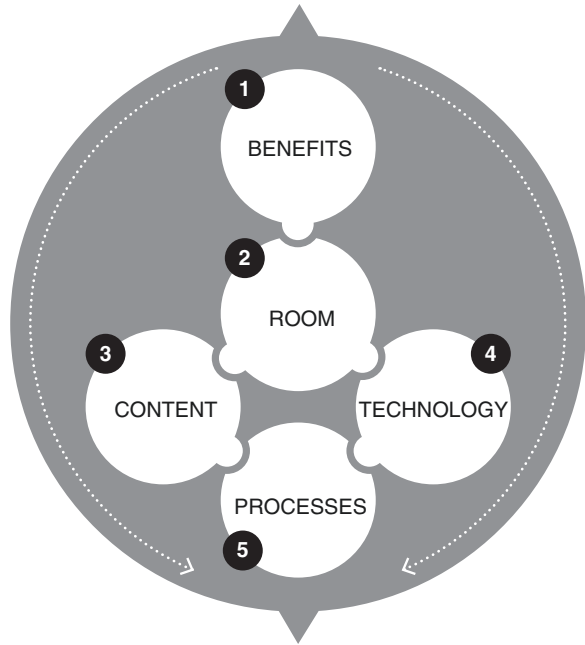
One thing first: Touchpoints are successful when the end customer uses them repeatedly because they bring him something. Furthermore, touchpoints are successful from the retailer's point of view if they fulfill or even exceed the business case. That's why we're talking about projects here, which have to be approached holistically.

The uniqueness of each individual retailer fundamentally influences the configuration of optimal digital in-store communication. It is therefore important that the goals, ideas and requirements correspond to the retailer. The customer benefit of the digital touchpoint is the focus of all questions. The customer here is the end customer, i.e., the user who has this multi-sensory experience at the touchpoint itself.

Therefore, a holistic perspective must be adopted when considering the five topic areas (cf. Fig. 13.3). This is best ensured by the participation of interdisciplinary participants in workshops, who contribute the basic requirements for "their" individual and suitable multisensory solution. The work should be benefit-oriented in order to examine the projects from a wide variety of perspectives.

The proven screenFOODnet consulting methodology creates a common understanding of all parties involved for the future solution. In joint workshops, we develop the basic requirements, enable the transfer of knowledge to the retailer (stakeholder) and create the definitive concept. This also includes the formulation of ideas from the customer or the

Fig. 13.3 ScreenFOODnet advisory model. (Courtesy of © screenFOODnet 2020. All Rights Reserved)



development of completely new approaches. This can be cross-group as well as brand-specific – but also cross-touchpoint or touchpoint-specific. Here we focus on “inclusion.” This means that many employees from as many different departments as possible come together to develop the most holistic solution possible.

In these holistic projects, we focus on five thematic areas in the course of the consultation, which are worked out sequentially one after the other (cf. Figure 13.3).

These five topics are interrelated and interdependent. If this procedure of consistently working through these five points is applied, it results in more successful projects: on the one hand, for the end customer in the shop when using the multisensory touchpoints and on the other hand, for the retailer in achieving his goals.

13.4.1 Benefits: Identification of the Goals and Benefit Requirements (of the Retailer) Aligned with the Target Groups (End Customers, Consumers)

What is to be achieved? What exactly does the retailer want to achieve? Alignment with the strategic objectives of the retailer is just as important as alignment with the benefit requirements of its end customers. If the retailer wants to sell more mattresses, he must understand the customer. That is, he must know the customer’s expectations, emotions and intentions. And the retailer must know how best to deal with them in order to generate true

value for the customer. A benefit that the customer will get precisely from this retailer and precisely from this experience.

Many typical goals from the retailer's point of view are: More revenue through more sales and through larger shopping baskets, less effort through efficient, effective and closing-oriented consulting, shorter sales cycles with effective sales closings, etc. For the customer, his true benefit is to get the right product at the best price – which in process terms stands as a counter movement to the retailer's benefit. But at closing, the benefit should be congruent for both the customer and the retailer. Therefore, it is important to identify and record the true benefit and the goals.

13.4.2 Space: Definition of the Spatial Conditions and Points of Contact with the End Customer Based on the Customer Journey and Its Embedding in the Multisensory Concept

What is the space like in which the aforementioned goals and benefits are to be achieved? Where does the customer come from, where does he go and where does he decide what and why? Or, in other words, how is the customer journey structured, what are the customer touchpoints? For example, starting with the initial need to buy a mattress in one's own bed at home, through the perception of all the possibilities of bedding online and offline and its product discovery/narrowing down, to the visit to the store – i.e., before the store, in the store, in the department, at the product and at the conclusion of the purchase, in order to end the journey happily in bed at home for the time being. What are the customer experiences and what spatial requirements must be met in order to proceed in a goal-oriented manner in the sense of multi-sensory? For example, when buying a mattress on the sales floor, i.e., where the purchase decision is made, the following points must be taken into consideration: appropriate privacy, adapted lighting conditions, soothing music, pleasant scent, visible and correct hygiene, inviting and practical interior design (materialisation, furniture, technical equipment, etc.) in order to meet the user-oriented requirements. Here, from the bedside table, accessibility to the consulting or self-counselling tools should also be made possible, which can be easily integrated into the sales conversation at any time, whether a tablet, a touch screen attached to a flexible arm or a gesture-controlled digital display on the ceiling above the bed.

13.4.3 Content: Determination of the Content Requirements as Well as the Influencing Parameters and Existing Source Data for a Successful Customer Experience and a Clear Customer Engagement, as Part of the Multisensory Concept

“Content is King” is often said – but “Context is Emperor” is becoming more and more true. Therefore, it is important to understand in which context the content is addressed, to

whom and what is being pursued. Where is what communicated in a benefit-oriented way? Which data (source data) is already available in the company and can be used via interface? When are supposedly general messages and information to be differentiated from personal messages to the customer? When can the customer be subtly addressed personally without violating (perceived) privacy? Which advertisements are appropriate when, where and how? For example, when buying mattresses, it is particularly important that the customer's expectations are also met with appropriate content, i.e., that his pre-selection is addressed. In doing so, the salesperson can expand the customer profile on-the-fly in order to then also recommend the appropriate bed frame, the corresponding pillow and other additional products. Thus, content would be appropriate at the entrance, which gives the customer the feeling that he is in the right store with his expectations: whether through strong statements from customers, confirmation of competence through the number of satisfied customers or by showing the mattresses selected by the customer with the purchased additional products up to the customer welcome to the consultation appointment and customer guidance to the respective department, where the sales consultant is already waiting for him.

13.4.4 Technology: Evaluation of the Most Suitable Technology Components as Well as the Coordination of the Source Data to be Connected and Definition of the Integration into the Already Existing Infrastructure, Taking into Account the Existing Company and IT Guidelines

Technology does not only mean the hardware that has to be procured in the context of the space, the content and the use, but also the software and its connection, as well as the network technology and IT security, etc. So not all technology is the same. The main reason for this statement is the defined benefit. Should something short-term be created here, which can be procured cheaply and can then also be easily dismantled and disposed of, or is a fixed installation necessary, which is operated sustainably? In most cases, the trade believes that it can procure the necessary technical components for a specific purpose. However, this is critical, as it is a question of an infrastructure that must meet the need for flexibility and stability, as the product range is constantly changing. At the latest, after a technical component has been put into operation, the flexibility of the technology is put to the test or its limitations are recognized. A fitting comparison is the family car, which is procured for the family purpose, but can still be used alone or with other passengers. Thus, technology must be well considered and procured in a way that is appropriate for its use – especially considering the investment volume. When buying a mattress, for example, it is important to ask the right question. How does the interactive surface come about and does it meet the requirements (benefit, space and content)? Is the tablet suitable for the customer experience? Can this technology be cleverly secured from tampering, both physical and digital? Or does it need a TV-like touchpoint that can be operated remotely via remote

control or even gesture control? How does the consultant intervene and bring important decision-making arguments into the sales conversation? Or how is a customer served who does not want to control the technology himself? Where does this data come from and how is it linked? How is it automatically transferred to the screens of the touchpoints? How is the customer's selection transmitted to the checkout at the end of the transaction? But questions around the handling on the shop floor (configuration, cleaning, maintenance) have to be clarified as well.

13.4.5 Processes: Integration into the Existing Processes as Well as Possible Definition of New Processes for a Smooth and Secure Process, Taking into Account the Existing (IT) Guidelines and the Existing Organization

The processes described here are to be understood very broadly, since not only the processes in the course of procurement and commissioning are explained here, but also in relation to the holistic operation by all involved stakeholders. We are talking about the content, the technical and the spatial processes, which have to be defined in order to function properly during operation. In terms of content, this means how is the content maintained and how does it get to the touchpoints and when – automated as much as possible, of course, where it makes sense. How is the technology operated, monitored and maintained in case of failures? How is this technology cleaned by the cleaning specialists? How is it prepared by the sales staff and consultants and used in a target-oriented manner? How is the success measured? And how can possible optimizations be derived and implemented? For example, when buying mattresses, the aspect of processes should be integrated early in the customer journey, as the initial contact will mostly be made online. The use of cookies should embed the customer in the sales process (sales funnel) so that they can specifically compare and select the products to be tried out during a consultation appointment in the store. Likewise, the processes must function seamlessly for the customer, i.e., from fixing the appointment, getting directions to the branch and customer guidance to the department, to the correct customer greeting and the mattresses prepared for trial lying. The appropriate additional products must also be ready, both virtually and physically correctly embedded into the sales presentation. The sales staff must be instructed in new processes, as must the cleaning staff.

13.4.6 From the Five Building Blocks to the Overall Concept

Based on the compiled information, the overall concept is created, which serves as the basis for a target-oriented digital in-store communication solution and prescribes the exact requirements of the corresponding multisensory touchpoints.

It is important that, analogous to online marketing, a continuous measurement of success takes place. What does that mean? Every well-planned multisensory application pursues goals that must be measured. This is the only way to optimize it iteratively. Therefore, the five steps can also be discussed and optimized again when looking at the KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). In this way, this cycle of the methodology can be run through several times in order to optimize step by step.

Every multisensory application must create added value for the customer and the retailer, so that the set goals can be achieved in each case. Integration into the existing retail environment and consideration of existing processes are a matter of course. Last but not least, a successful customer experience is the sum of the experiences in the context of the coordinated customer touchpoints on his way (customer journey). Seen in this light, the formula applies: $PKE \times CT = CEI$.

PCE stands for the number of positive customer experiences. CT stands for the number of customer touchpoints. CEI stands for Customer Engagement Index and is a number that describes the customer interaction to be used as a success factor in the overall design. Thus, this value can also be compared well in the project iterations and optimizations.

13.5 Acting Skillfully Instead of Reacting

The proverb translated from Latin “Forewarned is forearmed” does not, in my opinion, describe it to: clearly as it is used in French: “Mieux vaut prévenir que guérir,” which translates to: we are better off taking precautions and measures in advance rather than suffering afterwards and slowly recovering or recovering from it. This describes the situation we encounter with most brick-and-mortar retailers in relation to the online channel. This is because most brick & mortar retailers failed to take early precautions to avoid today’s difficulties as much as possible. It would have been so much easier to recognise the growing importance of online retailing much earlier and to have invested there for the long term, rather than trying to fix this today as a painful problem in the short term. Looking back, we can say that we neglected customers for the most part. We failed to look closely and question what consequences a globalized digital world would bring to retail if we put the customer at the center.

From this perspective, one could argue that these mistakes are being repeated right now in the 20s. Online channels are served as silos. The understanding of omnichannel is limited to a linking of the purchasing processes between the stationary trade and the online trade – around the topics of products & specifications, variants & alternatives, prices & price comparisons, availability & deliverability, customer ratings & comments, etc. However, the customer-centric view is mostly oriented towards processes and less towards customer sensations & emotions. There is hardly any online retailer that exploits the full potential of both worlds, although the advantage is clear: “Research online and try in-store.” This means that any omnichannel customer journey that doesn’t end in a sustainable sale – although the customers would be fundamentally convinced if they could just

touch the product – must now necessarily be transformed into a multisensory experience. Optimally, this is done seamlessly, for example, by pointing out that the products are available to try out, compare, test, etc. in the store around the corner. In addition, a consultation with an expert would be arranged on request, so that the customer can see for themselves the products that can be experienced and get professional expert support in trying out the products. These experts could also be brought in via digital channels (e.g., video conferencing). As a consequence, not only the store concept needs to be rethought and realigned accordingly, but also the product procurement processes and the sales processes need to be holistically realigned. Last but not least, the sales staff, who must be à jour, appropriately trained and mentally interested, in order to actively support the customer emotionally and professionally.

13.5.1 Generic Example

Year after year, new products come onto the market that did not exist before. On the one hand due to the technical possibilities (miniaturization, networking, digitalization, etc.), on the other hand due to the entrepreneurial development of companies (innovation management, startup mentality, business development, etc.). Old problems are solved in a new or different way, which also replaces and displaces old products.

What is the biggest benefit here? For the manufacturer? For the retailer? For the end customer? Many of these products and solutions require appropriate explanations and explanations, i.e., concrete advice. Most of these products do not yet have experts. And in the case of new products, real customer testimonials are also rather rare. From this point of view, trust through personal and positive experience with the product is the most important sales argument.

Where would be the ideal space to experience these products? Only virtually online? Or also physically offline on site, i.e., in a stationary shop? How and what content is needed here to meet customer requirements; to make the product haptically tangible? Of course, most new products are launched in such a way that online explanatory and test videos show the advantages. Many of these go in the direction of “commercial presentations” and encourage customers to buy online immediately – but this often doesn’t work. None of these videos invites the customer into the store to try out the product immediately.

Which technical requirements have to be fulfilled in order to meet the demands of manufacturers and retailers? The technical possibilities today make it possible to mention the nearest shop that has the products available in the course of the solutions/products presented online in order to invite the customer to try out these products on site. The online frequency should not only be measured in the form of conversions in sales deals, but also in the form of conversions in customer visits to the stores. In order to measure these KPIs sustainably in the stores, the corresponding multisensory customer experiences must be created via new digital touchpoints – and thus also, a completely new shopping experience.



Fig. 13.4 Product platform with digital support tools. (Courtesy of © screenFOODnet 2020. All Rights Reserved)

What would such a touchpoint in the room have to look like in order to meet the user requirements? Which content-related and technical requirements would have to be met? How would the processes have to be defined in order to ensure flawless operation? The idea is to present the desired product on an appropriate pedestal (see Fig. 13.4). There, the customer can touch, try out and test the product. In addition, the customer can interact via a multisensory digital interface. Initially, via a touch screen, later via augmented reality (AR) glasses. Sensors detect movements and gestures, cameras and microphones allow video conferences with experts etc.

On the one hand, the customer can be passively multimedia-streamed by the product – with digital content around the product. Whether with video from the screen and audio shower, where the sound is only audible to him, or via AR glasses, which have integrated video and audio – both increase the emotional experience.

On the other hand, by touching the (virtual) touchscreen, the customer can easily and quickly bring the information he wants onto his screen. This way, the necessary information from the online visit is shown. Further information is available from the product itself. For example, personal advice is provided by the connected expert via video call, who is

also already expecting the customer at the booked appointment. This consultant is optimally prepared as the customer's online data is available to him.

Now, every step is documented in real time and immediately evaluated to ensure an ongoing review of the KPIs, to be able to derive improvement measures and to guarantee regular optimization. How far an analysis can go is individually limited and also regulated by the data protection of the respective legislation. Nevertheless, biometric data could be used to recognize the customer, with his explicit consent. Thus, the customer would continue his "online" session "offline," thanks to facial recognition or recognition of his fingerprints on the touchscreen.

The interactions, whether alone or with the consultant, could also be continuously analyzed. Certain keywords are immediately recognized by speech recognition. On the one hand, these are used for statistical evaluation, and on the other hand to mark the sequence within the ongoing video recording of the sales conversation, in order to conduct market research easily and efficiently afterwards. Sales conversations can also be optimized, analogous to a hotline conversation, which is also recorded in most cases today – with the purpose of improving the service.

But most important are the end customers, who learn and experience new things in the shop, discover new advantages and personal benefits, know exactly where the products are now available and buy them right away.

The customer informs himself online and buys offline, which underpins the urge for shopping experiences. The customer benefits just as much as the retailer and the manufacturer. Digitally accompanied transactions allow structured measurement and optimization. Manufacturers can improve products based on these insights. The optimizations in turn delight the end customers with better shopping experiences. And the positive experiences of customers are a new currency for retailers to measure their success – in addition to sales figures. Because then the customer likes to come back because he remembers the good experience.

13.5.2 Example b8ta (beta)

One company that already practices this form of shopping in the USA is B8ta (<https://b8ta.com/>). They sell these platforms to the manufacturers and advise the customers on behalf of these manufacturers (cf. Fig. 13.5). At these digital consulting tables, they collect data and feedback, optimise the consulting sessions and exploit the data for the manufacturers. For a long time, only advice was given and not actively sold. That is, customers were advised in the shop to find the best price online and buy there. Today, Beta operates its own online shop, which makes a large share of sales with the deals made by the consultants on the sales floors of the more than 20 shops (as of May 2020). (b8ta 2019).



Fig. 13.5 b8ta shop in Santa Monica. (Courtesy of © b8ta 2020. All Rights Reserved)

13.5.3 Bonprix “Fashion Connect Store” Example

Furthermore, the implementation of the company Bonprix (<https://www.fashion-connect.store/de-de/>) is also very successful, because the customers were strongly involved in the development and conception of the new Bonprix concept over several years. This means that true customer benefit could be understood and implemented very well, so that this implementation also brings a benefit to the retailer. Customers select their products from those displayed on the sales floor and add them virtually to their digital shopping cart on their mobile phone by scanning the barcode. In this way, the customer can shop at her leisure or add the desired products to her shopping cart while these products are being prepared in a fitting room. The customer is then invited to try on these clothes in her size in the changing rooms. Behind a wardrobe door, the customer finds her clothes – almost like at home. If something doesn’t fit, the customer can simply hang the garment back up and close the wardrobe door, as well as digitally request another size. In the background, an employee exchanges the garments. Comfortable shopping, without lugging. Comfortable trying on without leaving the changing room. And easy payment via the app, without having to queue at the checkout. (Bonprix 2019) Cleverly implemented (cf. Fig. 13.6).

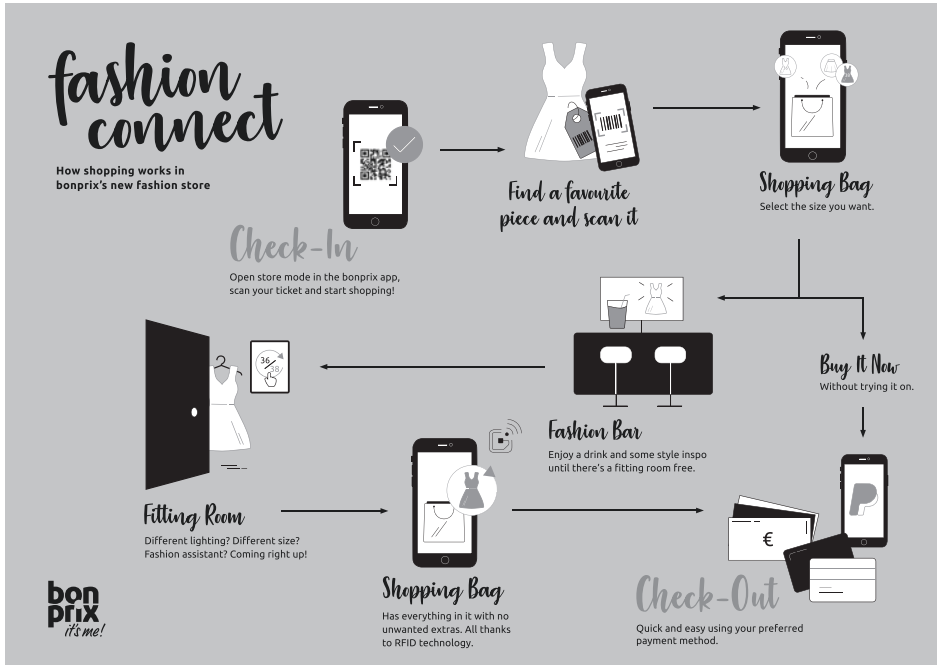


Fig. 13.6 Instructions fashion connect store by Bonprix. (Courtesy of © bonprix 2020. All Rights Reserved)

References

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