

Selling & Merchandising

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Setting out your stall

Gut feel and instinct no longer drive decisions around merchandising. **Sean Fleming** looks at how next-gen retail will move toward data-driven predictions

TIMING IS EVERYTHING in retail. No more so than when it comes to making the sale by getting the right product in the right place in front of the right customer, and at the right time.

At its most basic, the idea of grouping complementary items together, or in close proximity, is one of the most well-trodden paths in any retail environment. Gift items situated between greetings cards and the nearest cash register, for example. There's little science to it, it's just common sense. But

// There's a crossroads where retail, mobile and big data meet and it's changing the whole nature of how retailers present merchandise to the right customer //

unless you happen to be running a very modest retail outlet, the science behind merchandising is exactly where your focus will be.

More than ever before, shoppers are presented with a degree of choice, diversity, options and alternatives, all vying for their attention, day-in, day-out. That competition extends much further than the high

street too. From multichannel to mobile commerce, technology has ushered in a global retail revolution. A retailer's closest competitor might be thousands of miles away. It could be a global e-tailer or niche seller of unique products. But whatever the company, thanks to shoppers' ever decreasing attention spans and the assault on their senses from all sides, you can't afford to give them an excuse to ignore you.

Gathering data on customer behaviour has been commonplace for most of the last two decades. Loyalty cards started the ball rolling in-store but the online space has expanded this, with search and purchase history, along with failed search and abandoned cart info, driving promotions and merchandising by giving retailers invaluable insight into shopper behaviour.

Like the Disney Store and Amazon, many IRUK Top500 retailers work hard to ensure their ecommerce websites are packed with information about the products and services they sell, showing an average of 3.5 product images.

When it comes to search and navigation, 78% enable shoppers to filter by product type, and 65% by price. Such approaches are particularly important when a retailer has a wide range – highlighting the most relevant items is crucial if the shopper is to stay engaged with the process. This is important, says Chris Dunn, operations director at website optimisation

Ten issues to consider

- 1** **SHOW PRODUCTS IN CONTEXT:** By enabling shoppers to visualise the final effect, it's likely that not only will initial sales be higher, but returns will also be lower.
- 2** **HOW DO I LOOK?** Changing rooms are still key. Understanding whether clothes fit and look good is at the heart of making a buying decision.
- 3** **IMAGE IS EVERYTHING:** Clear images show consumers what they can expect. This can reduce returns as well as encourage purchases.
- 4** **MAKE IT PERSONAL:** The importance of relevance cannot be overstated. Waitrose used personalisation as it looked to take its in-store customer service to the web.
- 5** **TRACK SOCIAL TRENDS:** Smart retailers are turning to social media to see what fashion trends are emerging – and what to showcase in the months ahead.
- 6** **ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?** Experience purchases such as holidays or days out are, by their nature, intangible. Present shoppers with reviews and references.
- 7** **BRING ONLINE EXPERIENCES INTO THE STORE:** Apps and kiosks make digital information available in-store. Boots has rolled out a Sales Assist app in its store network.
- 8** **NARROW DOWN THE CHOICE:** Don't let shoppers feel daunted by choice when they visit a site. Help them filter out the noise quickly to find what they want.
- 9** **JOINED-UP SEARCH:** If consumers start their online shopping quests on a search engine, make sure the links they find take them through to the right product page.
- 10** **BE BIG PALS WITH BIG DATA:** Pulling in data from external sources allows retailers to augment customer data with a new dimension of relevance and timeliness.

technology provider and InternetRetailing Knowledge Partner One Hydra. Why? Because analysis of exit surveys shows that shoppers often struggle to find what they want to buy and will often go elsewhere as soon as they hit problems. "We hear that message all the time," says Dunn. "These are people who are already on your site. All they want is a better consumer experience."

Blending online and in-store

There's a crossroads where retail, mobile and big data meet and it's changing the whole nature of how retailers present merchandise to the right customer. Technology is helping retailers offer customers products they are searching for and, while this is

hardly ground-breaking online, its adoption in stores has the potential to open up some interesting opportunities, all as a result of analysing big data.

Offering in-store wifi is something plenty of retailers have been doing for years – coffee shops in particular. Recent predictions of the end of free in-store wifi demonstrate the challenge retailers have in clawing back any value from providing this service. But by incentivising shoppers to download their app then use it while browsing in-store, retailers can push offers and promotions to on-site shoppers.

Even before retailers get to the point where they have the capability to use push notifications to tell a shopper in the cosmetics aisle about a special offer on a particular brand, with the use of iBeacons, they can start analysing dynamic footfall data. Where do shoppers linger in-store? What do they look at and how can you reposition stock so that merchandise fits with shopper behaviour?

Shop Direct deploys a testing regime to analyse shoppers' online behaviour in order to determine how products should best be displayed. The retail group prioritises high-quality imagery, straightforward descriptions and an easy-to-navigate site, and tests product page elements' performance rigorously. Anything not up to scratch has to go.

According to Jonathan Wall, group ecommerce director at Shop Direct, a fast-failure approach that encompasses personalisation elements is "helping to make our user journey simpler". Personalisation is now being brought to bear in the way shoppers see product gallery pages, product recommendations and homepage content.

Being able to recreate those levels of analysis and intervention off-line will be one of the next big retail battle lines. Electronic price tags are one example of how in-store use of big data can transform the relationship between shopper and merchandise. A time-limited price drop can be rolled out in seconds, then switched off just as quickly. If you have out-of-stock items, maybe you want to direct shoppers toward a particular alternative? Or perhaps you want to change the price of umbrellas if there's a sudden downpour, or take advantage of what's trending on social media?

Whatever it might be, pulling in external data sources and pushing out notifications in-store has the potential to blend the online and in-store shopping experience from the customer perspective.

In summary

Gut feel is out – we all know that. But don't get lazy with data. Since most data will show you what has already happened, the smart move will be to use that to create a superior online and in-store shopping experience.

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Bronto Software, a NetSuite (NYSE: N) company, provides a cloud-based commerce marketing automation platform to mid-market and enterprise organisations worldwide. Bronto is the number one ranked email marketing provider to the Internet Retailer Top 1000, with a client roster of leading brands that includes Vivienne Westwood, notonthehighstreet.com, Björn Borg, Oak Furniture Land and Joseph Joseph. The Bronto Marketing Platform is deeply integrated with commerce platforms such as NetSuite, Magento, Demandware and MarketLive. The company is headquartered in Durham, NC, with additional offices in London, Sydney, New York and Los Angeles.

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Delivering personalised customer experiences for the world's top brands, Certona is the omnichannel personalisation leader. Trusted by more than 500 top ecommerce websites in more than 70 countries, Certona's personalisation platform increases engagement and conversions. The company's Personalised Experience Management platform, powered by the Certona Predictive Cloud, increases engagement and conversions by leveraging one-to-one behavioural profiling, Big Data insights, and real-time predictive analytics to present individualised content, promotional offers and product recommendations across all customer touchpoints.

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Mobify believes that relationships are the new brand and that today, those relationships are built on mobile. The Mobify™ Platform is used by global retailers and Fortune 500 brands to drive hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue every year. Ranked by leading industry analysts as a leader in mobile commerce and engagement, Mobify keeps retailers ahead of the curve by meeting customer expectations for exceptional web, app and mobile experiences.

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Pay4Later's smart technology connects lenders and merchants so that consumers can spread the cost of their purchases. It's the fastest and easiest way to offer finance and is proven to dramatically increase sales and average order values. An entirely paperless process that's mobile-optimised and touch-screen friendly makes it quick and easy for customers and is a great competitive advantage. It's simple for merchants to get started and our flexible, innovative solutions can deliver results in just a few days. Pay4Later was founded in 2008 and is based in London. We provide services to over 1,400 merchants and have a broad panel of strategic lending partnerships which, along with our innovative technology, ensures the highest acceptance rates.

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As a leading global provider of comprehensive ecommerce solutions, PFSweb enables brands and specialty retailers to achieve their commerce goals. PFSweb crafts customised solutions that combine consulting, agency, technology and operations to deliver unique and branded customer experiences, creating 'commerce without compromise'. From creative digital marketing strategies and web development to order fulfilment with high-touch customer care, PFSweb's custom omnichannel commerce solutions are trusted by brands and retailers throughout the world.

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The app commerce company Poq is a Software-as-a-Service platform that empowers retailers to create highly effective and customised native apps.

Apps that allow them to build stronger brands, sell more products, deepen customer loyalty and deliver relevant content, communications and rewards.

Our platform is the result of years of focus on retail apps and is proven to increase conversion rates and revenue. New code is rolled out every week and major releases delivered every quarter. Clients include the UK's largest brands and department store retailers.

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Qubit is the pioneer in delivering data-first customer experiences. Our digital experience hub integrates analytics, data and experience management with the Visitor Cloud, a customer data platform that connects data across all your brand touchpoints through an elastic customer record. Our infrastructure lets your engineering team extend the custom experiences they are already building, then deliver them at scale using multiple data sources. Qubit is trusted to deliver real impact to the bottom line for the biggest brands in ecommerce, including Topshop, Uniqlo, John Lewis and Net-a-Porter. To date, we have received over \$76m in funding from Goldman Sachs, Accel, Sapphire Ventures, Balderton Capital and Salesforce Ventures.

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Secure Trading is an integrated payments services company – a single point of contact for payment processing, card acquiring, PCI compliance and cyber security services. Our worldwide network ensures that we can deliver tailored solutions to even the biggest international retailers, while our uncompromising focus on customer service is trusted by luxury goods businesses who value their customers. Our payments platform has an unrivalled 100% uptime record, while our multi-acquiring network ensures businesses can operate internationally with ease. We also offer bespoke cyber security services and PCI compliance certification for retail businesses.

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Shopware is a manufacturer of open source ecommerce software and is the market leader in Germany. Founded in 2000, it has more than 100 employees and focuses on the development and support of its core product, Shopware 5 – online shop software for businesses of all sizes. With over 54,000 customers, 2,000 plugins and 1,200 partners, Shopware's features and modular basis allow businesses to grow. The company is 100% owner-operated and equity financed, thus guaranteeing the highest degree of flexibility. Shopware 5 offers new technology for storytelling in online shops and comes with a customisable and fully responsive template.

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Veeqo is an all-in-one multichannel, inventory, order, shipping, point of sale and purchase order management software system for ecommerce merchants. Veeqo automates inventory and order management from Shopify, Magento, Woocommerce, eBay and Amazon. With direct integrations with Royal Mail, DPD, UKmail, Myhermes, DHL, Fedex, USPS, UPS and many more, you can bulk print shipping labels and ship your orders faster.

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CERTONA
Personalise Anytime Anywhere™

Meyar Sheik
CEO & Co-founder



What does your company do?

Certona empowers retailers and brands to create one-to-one personalised shopping experiences across all digital retail channels. Certona pioneered the use of patented machine learning and predictive algorithms, empowering retailers to deliver real-time profiling of individual shoppers across the omnichannel landscape. Within three or four clicks on a site, our personalisation platform can accurately predict shopper intent and the next best action for the shopper to deliver the most relevant, in-the-moment retail experience. As a result, our clients experience a significant increase in customer engagement, conversions and sales.

What is your USP?

What makes Certona different is our sole focus on real-time profiling of the individual shopper and their unique traits. Most providers only focus on segmentation and wisdom of the crowd

// We focus on putting the individual shopper at the centre of the universe and enabling them to browse and shop any time, anywhere //

Meyar Sheik, Certona

but with Certona, retailers can ingest shopper behaviour and combine it with previous history and contextual data (location, time of day, weather, referral source), then serve up the most relevant experience within seconds to a segment of one. Most other providers will ingest that data in 'real time' but may take hours to model it and render

CERTONA IN BRIEF

Delivering personalised customer experiences for the world's top brands, Certona is the omnichannel personalisation leader. Trusted by more than 500 top ecommerce websites in more than 70 countries, Certona's personalisation platform increases engagement and conversions. The company's Personalised Experience Management platform, powered by the Certona Predictive Cloud, increases engagement and conversions by leveraging one-to-one behavioural profiling, Big Data insights, and real-time predictive analytics to present individualised content, promotional offers and product recommendations across all customer touchpoints.

the experience. Certona also offers our clients a support partnership model that is unmatched in the market.

How would you describe your company's vision?

We focus on putting the individual shopper at the centre of the universe and enabling them to browse and shop any time, anywhere, with each shopper having a highly personalised and contextually relevant experience.

What are you doing currently in the ecommerce/multichannel market?

Certona currently offers a robust suite of omnichannel personalisation solutions that empower retailers to transform the way they engage with their customers. Certona improves the shopping experience with data-driven solutions for search and discovery, content engagement, product recommendations, mobile, in-store, email and contact centre personalisation. In 2015, Certona drove 11% of our clients' revenue. By creating a unified, hyper-personalised omnichannel experience, we enable retailers to create the ultimate individualised shopping experience.

What new functionality does your latest version give to retailers?

Our latest release provides cutting-edge product discovery solutions, such

as advanced search capabilities with predictive search term suggestions and visual product recommendations. Certona also offers clients a Product Finder and Gift Finder solution that presents a series of lifestyle questions, resulting in the best product recommendations based on their explicit interests and preferences. This tool not only allows the consumer to efficiently find products that best meet their interest, but it also allows retailers to build robust shopper profiles to personalise the overall customer experience for that specific shopper.

What is your market positioning and what gap are you filling among the UK competition? How does this compare to your competitors?

We're all about empowering merchandisers and optimising online merchandising. What's unique about Certona versus our competition is the blending of the art and science approaches to digital shopping experiences. The art of merchandising relies on professional insights and intuition but by marrying that with the science of data-driven insights, predictive modelling and anticipatory targeting, retailers can create relevant, personalised consumer experiences while meeting business initiatives. Another differentiator is our high-touch partnership and client support

model. We match every client with a dedicated account manager who actively analyses performance, suggest testing and optimisation strategies as well as building a roadmap to omnichannel personalisation success. Our team has expertise in all verticals and is passionate about helping clients to maximise ROI. We're not a set-and-forget black box solution. Exceptional client support is part of the reason Certona has a 95% client renewal rate and why we have been chosen as a Top Personalisation Provider by the IR500 Guide the last eight years.

Who are your customers?

Certona's powers individualised customer experiences for over 500 top ecommerce websites across 47 countries. Our platform currently delivers 40bn personalised experiences per month and generated \$4bn in client revenue in 2015. A few of our valued customers include Pier 1, GameStop, Uniqlo, Petco, Forever 21 and Puma.

What do you see as challenges in the coming year and what are you doing to meet those challenges?

The digital commerce industry is experiencing rapid growth due to ever-increasing consumer demand. One thing Certona can help retailers do better is understand consumer behaviour, preferences and interests in a more holistic, unified fashion. By connecting consumer behaviour data across channels, retailers can take advantage of the mobile shopping momentum to bridge convenience through click to collect. By leveraging physical stores, retailers can deliver convenience and easier fulfilment to shoppers.

Customer case study – Farfetch

With a large catalogue that represents over 100,000 products, global fashion community Farfetch wanted to expose more product variety and provide a better shopping experience by delivering personalised recommendations on Farfetch.com.

Automated, predictive personalisation was key to this endeavour, while also allowing Farfetch the flexibility to address merchandising goals specific to their business model. These included exposing the available product variety via Farfetch.com and protecting boutique adjacencies to ensure that recommendations made sense from both a brand and boutique perspective, as well as the customer perspective.

Certona worked closely with Farfetch to implement personalisation that would support the complexities of their unique business model. Through a series of A/B tests and best practices guidance, an optimal strategy was created for balancing automated personalised recommendations leveraging Certona's predictive behavioural technology with business rules that aligned with Farfetch merchandising goals.

Following Certona's best practice guidance and optimisation techniques, personalisation performance has significantly improved in terms of shoppers interacting and purchasing recommended products.

Farfetch saw:

- 125% increase in conversion
- 10% increase in average order value
- 28% increase in items per order

Farfetch continues to work with Certona on further optimising the experience throughout the site as well personalising email campaigns.

