

Focusing on the Customer Journey in a Multi Channel Retail Landscape



Interview with: Prof. Harald Eichsteller, Professor for International Mediamanagement, Dean of Master Programme Electronic Media (M.A.)

"Retailers need to be open for all kinds of innovations and be curious about what their customers might like," says Prof. Harald Eichsteller, Professor for International Mediamanagement, Dean of Master Programme Electronic Media (M.A.) "Today, it is not really about what channel you connect to customers with, but about the customer journey and experience. That is what helps build customer loyalty," he elaborates.

The Chairman at the **marcus evans Multi Channel Retailing Summit 2013**, in Heiligendamm, Germany, 20 - 22 October, Prof. Eichsteller talks about **multi channel retailing**, switching to omni-channel retailing and achieving customer loyalty.

How is omni-channelling different from multi channel retailing?

Omni-channelling takes us one step further. A decade ago e-commerce was regarded as a separate channel. Channels were almost competing against each other. Then retailers started campaigning through multiple channels and it was less and less important which channels the customer was actually purchasing from.

With omni-channelling, we are now considering the customer journey as they switch back and forth between channels, find the product online but buy it from a shop or buy online and return it to the shop. It is about how the channels accompany the customer throughout the whole customer journey.

How can multi channel retailers better engage customers on all channels?

There are different types of customers in different situations, so engagement can happen through different ways. Firstly, it is the product that engages customers. Some of that can be through price campaigns, discounts or offers. But much more efficient is the engagement of customers on an emotional level.

Emotionalisation decreases price sensitivity, builds brand loyalty, inspires cross and upsellings and brings enthusiastic customers to recommend their favourite products.

What role can social media play in multi channel retailing?

Social media is helping in appealing to the customer's emotional side. You become a fan of a brand or store, and a relationship is built up and maintained through Facebook for example. Retailers can deliver individualised information to customers, offer customised products to fans, previews of new products and so forth.

There is a lot of potential on the imagery side too, where retailers can create whole worlds of emotional pictures through platforms like Pinterest.

Is social media translating to more customers?

I am convinced it is paying off by creating customer satisfaction and loyalty with the effects described before. And cross selling and recommendations show up on the positive side of the balance sheet. These effects go much further than just people clicking on the purchase button in Facebook.

How can we guarantee customer loyalty in this business landscape?

By building a brand. Brands are always connected to a promise, and if you keep that promise, surprise and emotionalise people, they will become loyal. Combining retail brands with superior customer experience in stores with product brand can achieve a very strong

impact through social media and with loyalty tools like coupons, cards, customised services, etc. There is a lot of room for deepening relationships in the new combined offline and digital age, so strong brands will become even stronger and can play solely on their content.

Is the actual message conveyed also important?

It is not so much the message but having someone real sending it, such as your favourite salesperson in the store sending you her ideas on what would suit you and what is fashionable.

Many companies complain that they spend a lot of money on getting Facebook set up, but are not sure about the benefits. The simplest way would be to have real, authentic people, and let them talk personally.

Social media is not just another channel for sales messages. The message is not very important, but it must be personal.

Social media is not just another channel for sales

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Please note that the Summit is a closed business event and the number of participants strictly limited.

About the Multi Channel Retailing Summit 2013

This This unique forum will take place at the Grand Hotel Heiligendamm, Bad Doberan, Germany, 20 - 22 October 2013. Offering much more than any conference, exhibition or trade show, this exclusive meeting will bring together esteemed industry thought leaders and solution providers to a highly focused and interactive networking event. The Summit includes presentations on omnichannelling and the customer journey, understanding markets, reinforcing customer loyalty and driving retail success.

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