'The right tech in your stores'

Screen size and privacy issues affect in-store shopper habits, says **Martin Reid**

Martin Reid is an innovation researcher at GDR Creative Intelligence

It's no secret that technology plays an integral role in the average customer journey. According to Deloitte, last year $1.7 trillion of in-store sales in the US were influenced by a digital touchpoint such as a computer, smartphone, wearable, in-store kiosk or digital signage. Although this seems like great news for in-store tech, Deloitte found that 48% of shoppers prefer to check out and make a payment from their own devices rather than use a store's unmanned kiosk (28%) or at the till with a member of staff (24%).

Where does that leave the retailers that spend millions on in-store technology? If more shoppers prefer to use their own devices over the technology that retailers supply, what's going wrong?

Consider how shoppers behaved over 2015's Black Friday weekend. IBM reports that online sales reached $4.5 billion in the US in the first two days, with 34% of purchases made from a mobile phone. Although tablets were less popular for shopping, the average order value of a smartphone shopper's basket inched closer to that of desktops at $140, a 5% increase from last year.

As smartphone screens continue to increase in size, they afford shoppers a better user experience to rival home computers and other large-screened devices. For a useful shopping experience, it would suggest bigger screens result in bigger and better sales. But this paradigm doesn't always gel with the in-store retail environment. Many customers simply don't trust the tech retailers provide or they prefer the privacy of their personal devices. Some even feel disenchanted by in-store screens because of the perceived distance from customer service.

"In order to make [customers] feel comfortable using an automated technology, we try to make it look as easy and fast and seamless as possible," says Ryan Buell, associate editor of the *Harvard Business Review*. "When customers aren't able to see that effort, they appreciate the service that's being delivered less, and they value the service less as a consequence."

With this in mind, retailers need to reconsider what values their in-store technology offer and figure out how best they want to interact with their customers.
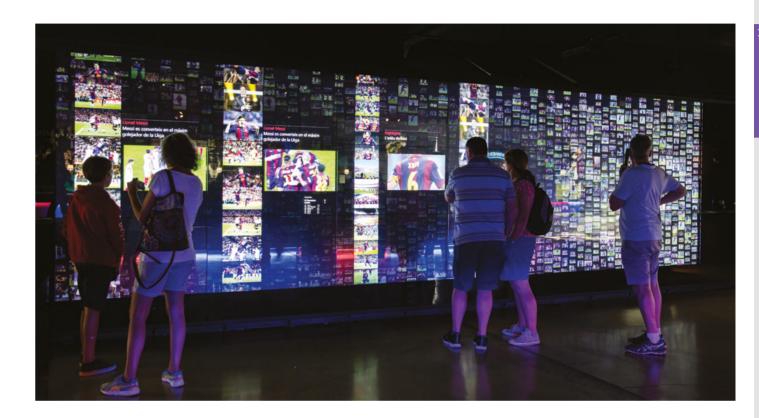
Is bigger always better?

One company has cracked how to get shoppers to interact with in-store technology. Retail gaming company Ksubaka has developed and rolled out thousands of PlaySpots, low key gaming kiosks that are placed enticingly in supermarket aisles of stores in China and Singapore. These kiosks host mini-games relating to many different brands that reward customers with discounts.

"PlaySpots go against all the rules of in-store interactive technology," Giles Corbett, COO of Ksubaka, tells GDR. "There is basic psychology behind these kiosks. PlaySpots are designed so the customer approaches, leans in and gets up close and personal with the screen. The customer instantly gets how to interact cause it's a game. As you experience the game, you learn what the brand is all about."

From the rich data the kiosks capture, Corbett revealed that the PlaySpot network receives around 50,000 interactions per day across three cities. The interactions inevitably drive engagement as anyone can play the game without having to give up personal information first. "The value is placed at the beginning of the customer journey: there's no pressure to download an app or give up any data to take part," adds Corbett.

The private enclosed experience of PlaySpots differs dramatically from the type of engagement

"Retailers need to reconsider what values their in-store technology offer"

provided by the video wall at Football Club Barcelona Museum. Stretching over seven and a half metres, the interactive digital wall allows multiple users to play around and navigate video content on-screen simultaneously through Exipple's Gestoos gesture technology. The screen uses gesture-tracking camera technology to react to individual customer movements, using interaction data and content popularity to inform store merchandise.

Depending on the appropriateness of privacy, discovery and engagement can work well on both big and small screens, but why does retail tech seem to suffer?

Check your tech

"Many touchscreens today don't really work," Germán León, founder of Exipple, tells GDR. "They're expensive, can't effectively capture data and experience many performance issues. Lots of retailers sacrifice quality based on hardware and the transfer of quality elsewhere is poor."

León also founded Imersivo, a retail technology startup currently working with a fashion retailer to provide an end-to-end omnichannel experience.

Using gesture control to facilitate discovery and navigation of products on a large interactive screen, individual customers can drag and drop items from the big screen straight to their smartphones to save a wishlist or proceed to checkout. The transferring solution combines the theatrical serendipity of browsing with the intimacy and care of private shopping.

The solution's software also uses "narrow AI" to gather agnostic visual data that can recommend products based on eye or hair colour, without the creepy factor of saving the customer's identity. The data also gauges a customer's mood to give the bigger picture for what really works. "With most other camera technologies, you can't accurately see the expressions of the users – gathering data is like clicks on a website. With facial expressions captured, you can see the engagement."

If customers value privacy, yet crave the engagement retail technology can afford, brands must find a way to bring the two together while capturing the right sort of smart data in the process. As León puts it: "Many retailers can't separate a moment of intimacy from accurate feedback. Who will really log into a vending machine with their Facebook account?" **GDR**

The video wall at the Football Club Barcelona Museum offers a very public interaction, yet customers still engage with it because it doesn't ask for any private data