

Moving to frictionless commerce

By  Danette Breitenbach

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Online retail is part of the much bigger picture of frictionless commerce where online is moving offline and offline to online (O2O). Driving this is time and convenience.



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“The consumer needs you to value their time as a commodity and convenience as the currency and a seamless customer experience will respect this,” says Nicole Willis, The Black Swan Theory Company.

This is not about a simple multichannel offering, she emphasises. “It is much more than that; it is about understanding how people behave in environments and in doing so redefining the online to offline customer experience and distribution model to an integrated retail model.”

Alibaba’s Hemp store is a best in service example of this she adds. “The Hemp stores demonstrate that understanding and sensitivity to their customers time. It is a demonstration of how years of online data can be used to provide the most seamless and best customer experience. It is a step further than O2O and a demonstration of behaviour that makes you are part of your customers' lives.”



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Amazon is another example of an online brand moving into the offline space. “While it is moving into the bricks and mortar space, it is reinventing it because it knows what its customers want before they do and has reset their expectation of what they want. “For example, Amazon Prime started as a music provider and today it is an entire ecosystem of products with more than 100 million members. In the US in certain cities, Amazon will deliver within an hour. The brand offers the best possible experience, so why go anywhere else?” she says.

Moving into the offline space means providing consumers with an experience that is worth their time. "If they are to give you their time, you have to give them something in return and this is an experience," she says.



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Communicating your brand's purpose

To deliver frictionless commerce it necessary to have a believable purpose that is echoed in your customer experience and throughout your communications. The role of brands in people's lives has changed, says Alistair Duff, chief innovation officer, The Black Swan Theory Company. "Telling the story of a brand has led to brands becoming part of the social identity of the consumer. Therefore, purpose is vital for business. Your brand's purpose must resonant with the consumer and if it does not, your brands will die," he explains.

People are not remembering advertisements, he adds and that's why purpose is so important. "If there is a credibility gap, then the consumer will hate your ads as it is in contradiction with what consumers are telling each other. A brand needs to dovetail its activities with its purpose."

Stop running your business around what you think is right and create a customer-centric business model, adds Willis. "Rather focus on customer needs and demonstrate you understand the value of their time."



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In South Africa, we need to understand how to move into frictionless commerce, Willis continues. "To say that our market is less sophisticated than others is not good enough. We have a market with 20 million people with a mobile device and access to data, and they know what their mobile can give them."

Willis and Duff presented at the recent Marketing Mix Shopper Insights SA 2019 conference in Bryanston, Gauteng.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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