

Millennials as customers

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In the summer session of the Retail Forum, members heard how retailers are adapting to millennial consumers and their evolving behaviours

The Retail Forum on 3 July heard from **Chris Labrey**, Managing Director UK & IRL, **Econocom** and **Anaïs Veerapatren**, Business Manager UK, **Proximis** on the topic of Millennials as customers. The session was chaired by **Catherine Palmer**.

Millennials as customers

Chris Labray, MD UKI at digital transformation specialist Econocom, explains how retailers can adapt to the mindset of millennial consumers, also described as 'blue dot consumers.'

'They are placed at the centre and the world is shown from their perspective,' says Labray. 'With one click, they expect any product or service to come to them, wherever they are. As a retailer, treating them as such will add significant value to your customers and make you stand out.'

He notes that millennials expect personalisation. 'They want brands to treat them as an individual, with personal details, relevant to them,' he says. 'This generation also craves authentic brands, with a genuine purpose. The human aspect behind your brand, its origin, its big idea are what really matters and what will make a real connection between your customers and your brand possible.'

Contextual communication is also essential. 'This is about anticipating your customers' needs based on who they are, where they are going and what they might need next,' says Labray. 'This is how real value is added.'

Finally, millennials value shareable experiences. Labray notes that, in today's world, ownership as we know it is dead. Millennials want experiences and they want to share those experiences with their family and friends via social media.

He advises that being ready to change and fit in to these blue dot consumers is what will keep your business going. 'It really takes a lot to provide a positive customer experience, and nowadays meeting their expectations is not enough, you need to delight and empower them.'

The New Customer Buying Journey

Anaïs Veerapatren, Business Manager UK at Proximis, expanded upon the buying patterns of this new consumer.

Veerapatren outlines that 20 years ago, retailers had the power. 'People trusted brick-and-mortar shops,' she says. 'There was restricted access to product information, scarce feedback and expectations for counselling from salespeople.'



10 years later, the technologies that we use daily open a world of opportunities for the modern customer. 'It is easy to compare prices, get feedback, complain ostentatiously, ask advice and so much more,' says Veerapatren. 'Experience gained importance over the product and customers regained the power.'

Veerapatren acknowledges that retailers are now at the mercy of customers who have access to an array of products, high customer experience standards and growing expectations. 'The product can be outstandingly unique and the storytelling magnificent but the challenge is truly about offering a unified experience that translates into offering a clear promise which lets the customer know that the product is available however they desire,' she says. 'That has been the vision of Proximis since the beginning.'

Unified Commerce

Unified Commerce is a frictionless customer experience across digital and physical channels, linking the stages of the customer's buying journey, from searching and transacting to the delivery.

Veerapatren says that too many brands still struggle to detangle online and offline to offer the seamless experience that customers demand. Yet, unified commerce can only be achieved through unified data, unified channels, uni-logistics and uni-technology. To get there, it is necessary to go down ecommerce and omnichannel solutions.

Veerapatren concludes that the new customer buying behaviour requires a solution that has been natively designed for the new retail era. 'Unified commerce is unequivocally the only way to offer an effective promise to the customer and ease their overall buying journey.' ■