

Unique experiences key for modern shoppers

February 17 2016, by Cristy Burne, Sciencenetwork Wa



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Why ask customers to build their own burger? Or design their own shoes?

Modern day customers are no longer happy to simply purchase a product or service, Curtin University researcher Dr Alisha Stein says; they're looking for a unique and memorable experience as part of their shopping journey.

UWA Associate Professor Sanjit Roy agrees, suggesting the rise of the Internet of Things is driving the use of smart retail technologies (SRT) such as touch screen kiosks, hands-free scanning, shopping assistant systems and mobile solutions to facilitate new retail experiences.

"We call this 'smart retail'," A/Prof Roy says.

A prime example is Australia's fast food industry.

"McDonalds customers use interactive displays in the store to build their own burger and salads...Domino's customers can utilise mobile platforms and web to customise their own pizza," he says.

Australian company Shoes of Prey even allow customers to design their own shoes using mobile and web interactive technologies, he says.

By encouraging customers to co-create their retail experience research indicates retailers can better influence customer behaviours, such as stickiness or loyalty to a particular store or SRT.

Seven types of customer interaction

But before retailers can co-create a customer experience, they need to spend some time "in their customer's shoes," Dr Stein says.

To better understand how customers navigate each individual retail journey, Dr Stein set out to deconstruct shoppers' opinions of a recent online or in-store retail experience.

Dr Stein gathered qualitative data from a diversity of shoppers using the sequential incident technique, which encourages interviewees to retell an event in their own time and words

She found despite the diversity of [experiences](#), each customer experience was comprised of seven shared types of interaction including physical characteristics like a shop's décor or a website's layout (atmospheric).

Other times of interaction included one-way promotion or advertising campaigns (communicative); employee–customer interaction (direct and indirect); any direct customer interaction with technology related to the retailer (technological); customer-customer interactions and product interactions.

Dr Stein says her research provides retailers with a specific list of touch points—or instances of interacting with a customer—that managers can focus on to better manage their time.

"This is really a diagnostic tool that retailers can use to map and improve their customer's experience," Dr Stein says.

More information: Alisha Stein et al. Towards the identification of customer experience touch point elements, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jretconser.2015.12.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2015.12.001)

This article first appeared on [ScienceNetwork Western Australia](#) a science news website based at Scitech.

Provided by Science Network WA

Citation: Unique experiences key for modern shoppers (2016, February 17) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-02-unique-key-modern-shoppers.html>

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