



GOING DIGITAL

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WHY INVESTING IN DIGITAL CAPABILITIES WILL HELP BRICKS AND MORTAR SURVIVE

With a world in and out of lockdown, there is near-constant upheaval in the retail industry being allowed to open one day and close the next. It is becoming clearer that those businesses which are able to adapt to the changing circumstances, and keep things running under lockdown conditions will not only be the ones with the best chance of survival, but who will be best placed to thrive in a post-Covid world.

According to new research from shopper engagement agency Velocity Worldwide, the retail sector must scale up its digital capabilities if it is to attract people back to brick and mortar stores.

In a survey of more than 2,000 UK consumers, the company found that 52% of people would visit a shopping destination more frequently if they could pre-book their shopping trips. Consumers also want retail destinations to report on live store queue times in order to motivate customers to make regular trips.

Feeling safe while shopping was the top priority

for shoppers, with the next most important consideration being able to find out that the products they are looking for are available in store in advance of their shopping trip, to encourage them not to simply shop online.

Following the findings, Velocity has launched Darius-Q: an advanced reservations app for shopping malls and retail brands, which is designed to reduce queue times for shoppers, regulate visitor numbers, help retailers with track and trace, and increase the amount of time and money shoppers spend in stores.

Velocity Worldwide CEO Enda McShane said: "The retailers who are investing in this space now and preparing for the future are the ones who are going to be in the strongest position during the recovery phase."

He also noted his expectation that this Christmas is going to make or break a lot of retailers, and in order to reclaim lost footfall, shopping centres, supermarkets and retail brands need to take

VELOCITY'S DARIUS-Q APP IS DESIGNED TO HELP REDUCE QUEUE TIMES FOR SHOPPERS



VELOCITY WORLDWIDE
CEO ENDA MCSHANE



the uncertainty out of the physical shopping experience.

“Queues are set to be one of the biggest barriers and by offering customers the option to reserve and plan their shopping trip in advance, they will provide the security that many shoppers want in order to visit physical stores,” he added.

Seeing continued success in the retail technology world is Mallcomm, which recently helped Savills launch its “Savills Insights” platform in Italy. Provided by the global proptech company, the insights app provides instant two-way communication between stores, customers, staff, and management in real time.

The platform, which can be adapted to the specific needs of each location it is deployed in, was launched in Centro Leonardo shopping centre, Rome. Tenants are now able to communicate with the centre team in a much more efficient way and many core centre functions will be streamlined as they are digitised.

“We have been working on developing Savills Insights, adapting this digital shopping centre property management tool to our Italian market,” said Yashar Deljoye Sabeti, head of marketing at Savills. “The traders involved will benefit from this tool on a daily basis. In a context in which, unfortunately, the contact between people must be safeguarded, we believe that an app that

digitalises most of the daily and vital functions of a shopping mall is an additional help for the stores of Centro Leonardo.”

And in Brazil – one of the world’s worst Covid-hit countries – Iguatemi recently launched its Iguatemi 365 platform, taking aim at the lockdown-generated footfall issues by amalgamating physical and digital.

Via a single ‘shopping centre’ marketplace, customers can browse and buy multiple national/international brands, complete their transaction in one payment and opt for purchases to be collectively delivered to home or to a 365 shopping centre pick-up point. Products can be exchanged in-store.

Created in partnership with application programming interface (API) specialist firm Sensedia, the collaboration helped identify, create and deliver a new ecosystem that could “overcome historical data/architecture issues while withstanding a high number of retail brand data-flow integrations.”

APIs were able to give the platform flexibility to integrate numerous different ‘front-end’ store systems while enabling it to grow and evolve as new brands and services join, as well as supporting the single back-office function.

In addition to simply shopping, the multi-channel service gives customers more ways to connect with brands, enabling them to monitor their whole purchase journey with fast delivery times and exchange facilities, while retailers can quickly showcase new products.

Since launching, it has added over 270 exclusive lifestyle and fashion brands to its e-commerce platform, with approximately 15,000 products. The company said that more are soon to join, and with the business expanding its proposition across another 10 Brazilian shopping centres, it has yet to reach full potential, Iguatemi says.

Platforms such as Darius-Q, Savills Insights and Iguatemi 365 are all examples of how retail technology can thrive under global pressures – and with continually shifting consumer attitudes, it is only increasingly likely that retailers will have to become fully digitally integrated in order to survive the pandemic.

