

How mobile and the cloud are Transforming Retail



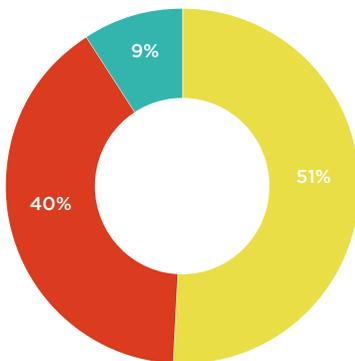
Digital has been changing the face of retail for well over a decade. What started off as tremors is now causing seismic shifts within the industry; new technologies are forcing retailers to overhaul their strategies to appeal to the constantly-connected consumer, whose expectations are greater than ever. Mobile and the cloud are two such technologies, with their impact felt on the shop floor, online and in the office.



Mobile creating seamless, personalised experiences

While many feared that ecommerce would prompt the demise of bricks and mortar stores, 51% of consumers still prefer to purchase clothing and footwear from a physical shop, compared to 40% who would rather buy online¹.

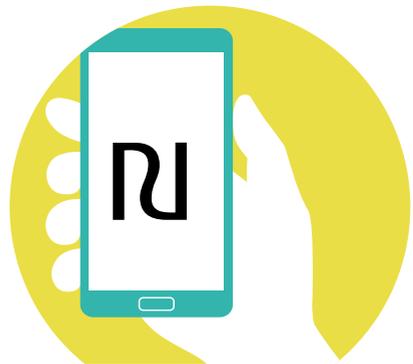
Despite favouring a tangible experience, more than three-quarters of UK shoppers believe retailers aren't doing enough to make in-store shopping enjoyable².



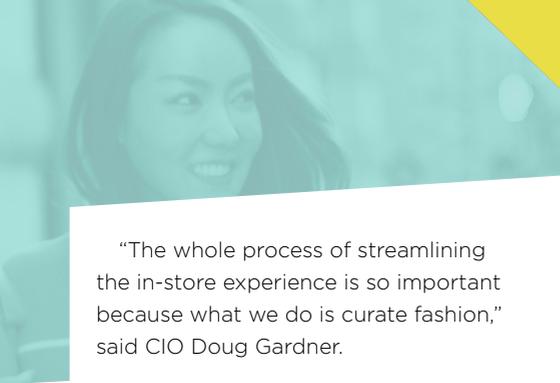
- Prefer buying from a physical shop
- Prefer to buy online
- Other

This is where mobile comes in: fashion stores harnessing the tech address customers' pain points to create more personalised, frictionless and ultimately, pleasant shopping experiences.

Take mobile point of sale (mPOS) solutions. With mPOS, shop employees can complete transactions via handheld devices, freeing them from the constraints of static till points, while relieving customers of their greatest bugbear: queueing.



River Island's rollout of Android devices to our physical stores means that staff can not only complete purchases from anywhere within the store, but also source stock information and place orders. US retailers deploying the tech this year can expect as much as 146% sales growth, with the figure likely to be similar in the UK³.



“The whole process of streamlining the in-store experience is so important because what we do is curate fashion,” said CIO Doug Gardner.

“We want people to come into our stores, and enjoy the physical shopping experience of being in-store with staff, and getting to touch and feel the clothes.⁴”

Mobile is also helping to enhance the shopping experience through personalisation. A point in case is beacon technology, a form of proximity marketing which, when deployed in-store, sends targeted messages to shoppers with their consent. Retailers utilise data on buying preferences and purchase histories to suggest products or send discount coupons. More general, location-based notifications might welcome guests as they enter a store, or send a thank you message when they leave. With 65% of UK consumers feeling that retailers don't really know them⁵, tools like these are helping customers to feel valued, improving relationships and encouraging loyalty as a result.



Physical and digital stores can no longer be treated as disparate entities. They have merged and the bond will only become greater. Consumers now use a multitude of devices and channels as part of their purchasing journey, and it's mobile's job to aid this omnichannel shopping experience, ensuring its seamlessness at every touchpoint.

This year, we're likely to see AI, VR and wearable technology transform the shop floor and retailers trial initiatives such as clicks-to-bricks as they further integrate their online and offline efforts to please the seven in 10 UK shoppers who prioritise convenience⁶. Adopting an agile, mobile-first approach is crucial to success.

The cloud makes waves behind the scenes

Having long relied on outdated infrastructure that fails to keep pace with today's rapidly-shifting retail landscape, more and more brands are moving their core systems to the cloud.



Hosting via the cloud has a plethora of benefits, like streamlined processes, reduced IT costs and faster, more informed decision-making.

What better company to showcase this than River Island? The cloud has been transformative for our brand and business model, enabling us to operate with the speed required to survive in the fashion retail business.

We are now live on Amazon Web Services and our cloud capabilities span product and catalogue management systems, to CMS, CRM and search and merchandising. The cloud allows us to experiment with things like new databases; there are minimal costs involved, while the time from trial to execution has been slashed significantly.

A core part of our digital transformation

involved moving our website to the cloud. This has boosted our digital resilience, with the benefit of helping us better deal with peaks in traffic during events like Black Friday.

The solution was obvious for us. To keep up with our digital competitors, we needed to change the way we do things. River Island is now considered a digital leader in the fashion retail space and we're confident our transformation has raised customer satisfaction levels; whether those customers are browsing our cloud-hosted website or visiting one of our stores. As a testament to our commitment, we've sacrificed our dividend for the past two years so that we can pump as much money as possible into this transformation.

We're expanding our digital and tech teams in Shoreditch and Hanger Lane, West London. So, are you ready to join a forward-thinking retail brand? Find your perfect career with River Island.

EXPLORE MORE

¹ <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/industries/retail-consumer/total-retail/total-retail-categories.html>

² <http://www.vistasupport.com/news-and-events/industry-news/2017/consumers-want-more-enjoyable-retail-experience>

³ <https://www.stratixcorp.com/resource/new-research-indicates-retailers-deploying-store-mobile-successfully-seeing-upwards-146-sales-growth/>

⁴ <http://www.computerweekly.com/feature/CIO-interview-How-River-Island-is-using-cloud-and-mobile-to-fend-off-its-fast-fashion-competitors>

⁵ <https://www.salesforce.com/form/industries/connected-shopper-report-2017.jsp>

⁶ <https://blog.getsavvy.com/convenient-retailing-accelerating-pace-retail/>