

Experience is all

Customer experience counts for everything in retailing. Two separate studies – from Calabrio and Fujitsu – examine the omnichannel experience and discover why shoppers would pick Amazon or eBay first if they had a physical store.

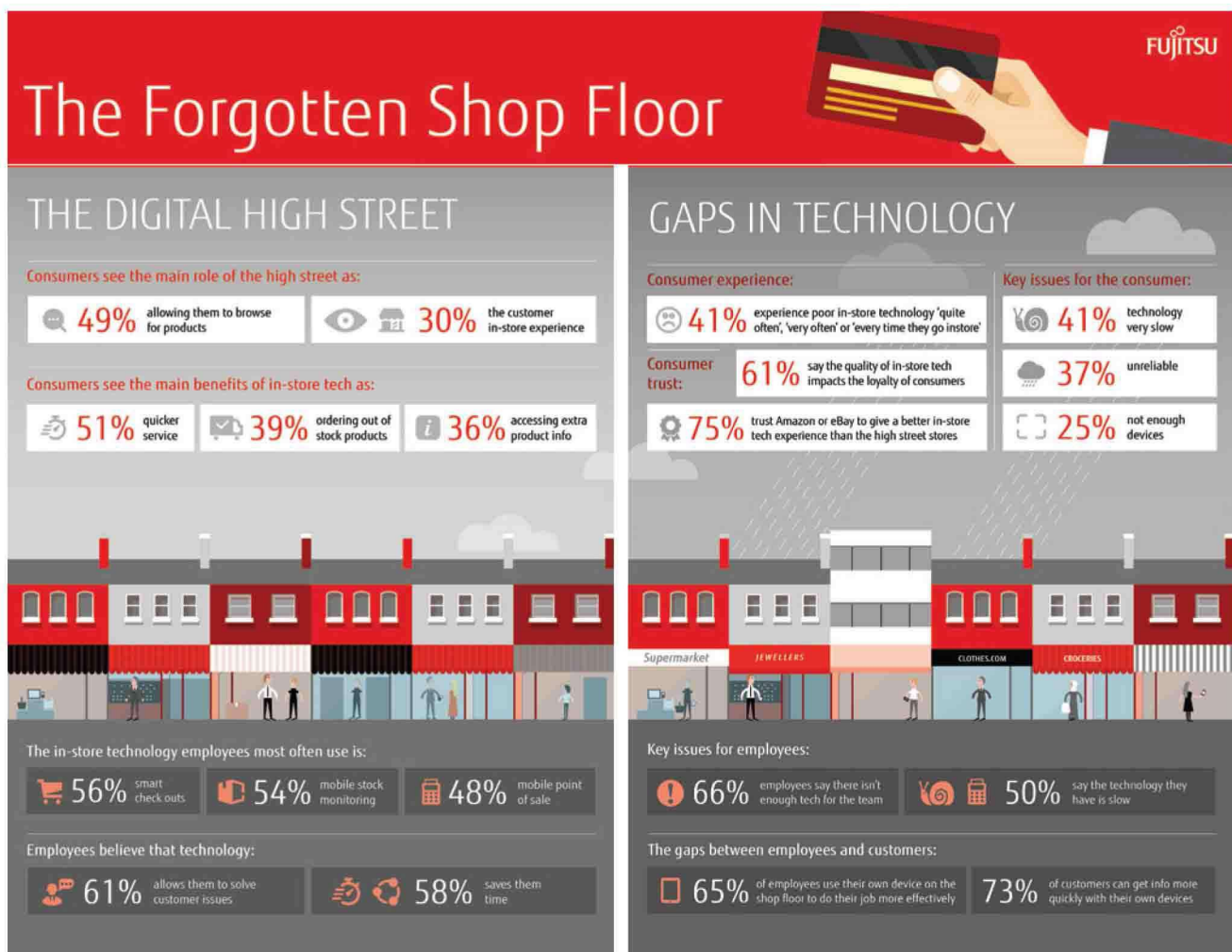
MORE THAN half of senior executives view customer experience as the most important way to differentiate their brand, according to a study by Calabrio. However, the same respondents say that they lack clear leadership and insights. The report, 'Success in The Experience Era: Connecting Customer and C-suite' discovered that UK and US business executives rank customer experience above sales and revenue as their key focus in 2017.

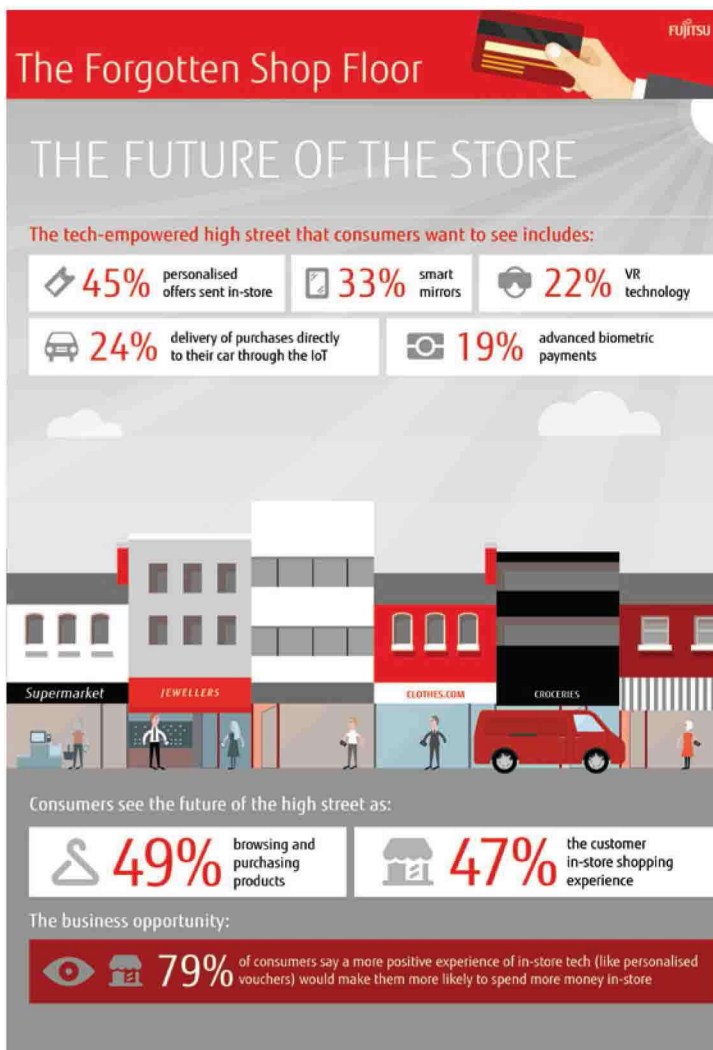
Meanwhile, 'The Forgotten Shop Floor' by Fujitsu claims that technology in UK high street stores is failing to match the online shopping experience and customers are demanding

“UK and US business executives rank customer experience above sales and revenue”

better. In fact, 4 in 10 consumers are frequently disappointed by in-store technology. While the benefits of investing in better digital tools are clear (61% would choose one retailer over another based on the quality of in-store technology), doing nothing is simply not an option: three quarters of shoppers would choose Amazon or eBay over traditional high street names if either had a physical store.

Shoppers are demanding a more digital high street experience; almost half say in-store tech today is slow (42%), over a third say it is unreliable (37%), while a quarter say there simply isn't enough to handle demand. As a result, three quarters say they can access more





information than retail employees and 73% say they can get it quicker, leaving two thirds (65%) of employees using their own devices to try to bridge the gap.

“Today the next wave of digital disruption is happening in-store. Ecommerce has altered our expectations of the high street and we now expect physical channels to reflect digital ones and be engaging, personalised and hassle-free,” said Rupal Karia, MD, Retail and Hospitality, Fujitsu UK & Ireland. “The digital pace of change is faster than ever. Consumers will embrace retailers who can give them the experience they want, before they know they want it. The message is clear: consumers are prepared to spend more with the retailers that deliver digital, and leave those that don’t.”

Despite today’s digital shop flaws, retailers

are making progress with the digital store, with 98% of employees embracing the tech introduced so far. For those that are willing to implement technology, there are economic benefits; nearly six in 10 (58%) consumers say they have chosen to buy a product due to a better in-store technology experience, while 79% say a better experience would make them likely to spend more money.

In future the brick and mortar store is unlikely to disappear with consumers envisaging a store of the future where technology is used to deliver an even more complete and compelling experience:

- Almost half (45%) would most like to see personalised offers sent to them while they are in store;
- One third (33%) would most like to see smart mirrors displaying additional information about products;
- 24% of consumers would want stores to be able to deliver goods directly to a connected car, while 22% would prefer augmented reality displays.

“Despite the gloomiest predictions, the high street continues to hold a place in UK shoppers’ hearts,” continued Karia. “The store holds more and greater opportunities than ever, but only for retailers that are prepared to embrace the digital pace of change. The clock is ticking and technology, customers and competitors are poised to move forward. Retailers must embrace digital now to secure their place in the future of the high street.”

One retailer which is embracing technology in store is Specsavers. The company’s Global CIO Phil Pavitt comments: “Since the rise of ecommerce, retailers have focused too much on digitally enabling their customers online rather than their employees in-store – and it’s time for that to change. At Specsavers, our aim is to use digital to deliver exceptional retail theatre for customers in our stores, by equipping our team with fast, powerful and engaging technology. But it’s not just what you use, it’s how you use it. No one store can outdo the entire high street: whether you’re a coffee shop or a jeweller, it’s about picking the three best technologies for you and then really making them work for customers and colleagues. With Amazon and other disruptors on the horizon, it’s up to every retailer to move ahead on their digital journey, or be left behind.” 