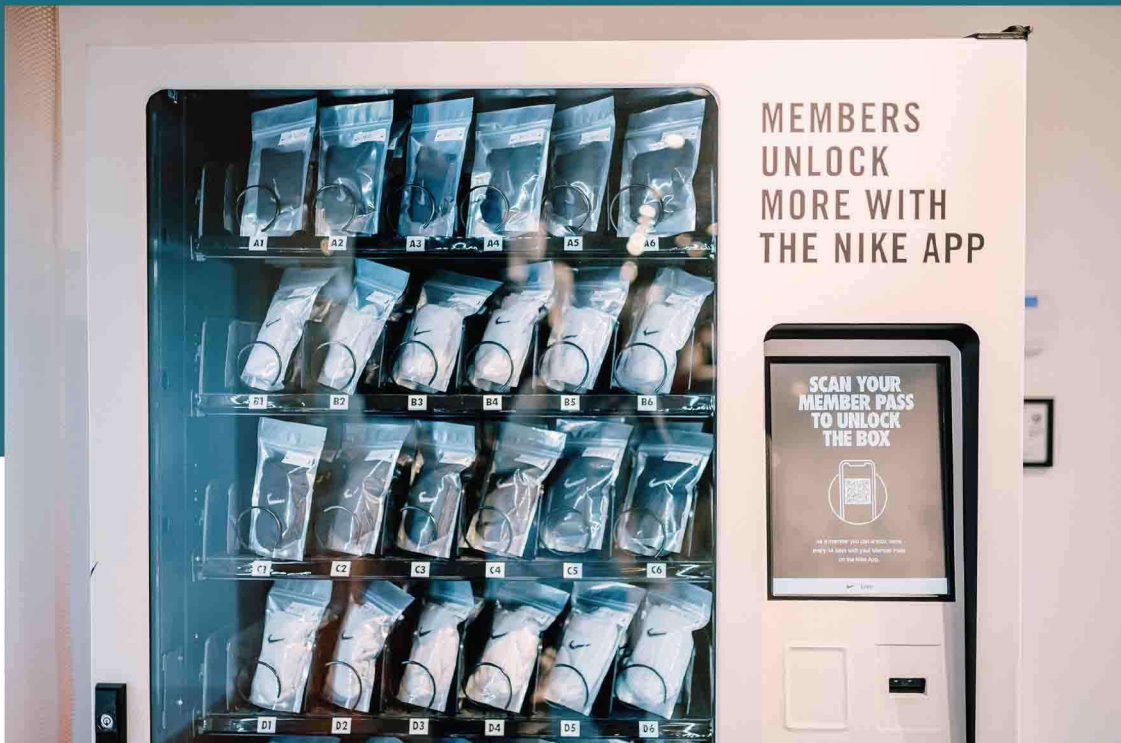


TIME TO GET PERSONAL

Customers expect the same personalised experience across all channels, finds Retail Focus.



Text: Gemma Balmford

Left: Nike Live is a new store concept inspired by, and built as a hub for local NikePlus members.

'Major ecommerce retailers such as Amazon, Netflix and Spotify have all conditioned consumers to expect personalised recommendations, offers, shopping journeys and content,' asserts Dave Stark, CEO of retail technology company, Conversity. 'As a result, the pressure for brick-and-mortar retailers to offer in-store personalisation has never been more significant.'

According to research by Accenture, 91 per cent of consumers are more likely to shop with a brand who recognises them by name, remembers their preferences, and provides them with relevant offers and recommendations. A separate survey by Yoyo and YouGov found that more than half of 18-34 year olds would be willing to share personal data with high street retailers in return for a more personalised customer experience, while BCG suggests that brands that create personalised experiences by integrating advanced digital technologies and proprietary data for customers are seeing revenue increase two to three times faster than those that don't.

Conversity also conducted its own study, which shows that consumers expect consistency of a customer journey across all channels, and they expect personalisation in-store similarly to when they shop online.

Earlier this year, Amazon opened its first Amazon Go check-out free grocery store in Seattle, and with speculation that it could launch in the UK by the end of 2018, Stark believes a new era of retail is coming where personalised, automated product recommendations and innovative shopping experiences become

the norm.

'Alongside innovations such as cashierless supermarkets, we'll see automated recommendations - where data from social media or loyalty cards is leveraged to provide product suggestions in real time while a customer is browsing - soon become a regular feature of the shopping experience,' says Stark. 'This information could also be delivered to salespeople advising customers via a tablet on the shop floor.'

'Customers have come to expect high levels of service in store, and the pressure is on retailers to deliver this,' claim Nigel Collett and James Breaks of design studio the rpa:group. 'If they can adapt each experience to the specific needs of a returning customer, then so much the better. This is when technology becomes a retailer's best friend, because blending data and innovative technologies properly can create the ideal customer experience.'

Beauty retailer Sephora is one company that is embracing data to deliver a personal in-store experience. The global cosmetics chain came out on top of Sailthru's inaugural Retail Personalization Index, which ranks retailers on customer experience and personalisation.

'Sephora was the top ranked brand because of their advanced approach to personalisation across all channels, including in-store,' explains Marielle Habbel, general manager (EU) of Sailthru. 'What the Sephora team does so well is use digital channels to both drive online purchases and drive to retail stores >



This page: Nike by Melrose features a number of digitally led service offerings, designed to match the needs of neighbourhood consumers. It also uses the new Nike App at Retail service, allowing Nike Plus members to reserve product to in-store digital lockers, and scan product barcodes to learn more.

through a number of advanced features like augmented reality apps layered with product recommendations and calls to action to book an in-store consultation.'

Brands that are leading the way in data-driven personalisation have a very deep view of their customers, claims Nathan Watts, creative director at retail consultancy, Fitch. 'These brands build loyalty by offering truly useful or convenient services to its customers, and in turn, the customer is willing to give up it's data, and so creating a virtuous circle.'

One of the most effective methods of capturing customer data is through customer apps, says Watts, as demonstrated with Nike's new Nike Live store concept, which is powered by insights gained from NikePlus member activity and buying patterns across the brand's suite of digital touchpoints. The first store - Nike by Melrose - opened in July and is a uniquely curated home for NikePlus members and the style, sport and speed-obsessed consumers of LA. It offers city-specific styles, all of which is determined by Nike digital commerce data, to serve local NikePlus members exactly what they want, when they want it.

'Nike Live stores are specifically designed to be a service hub for local NikePlus members,' said Heidi O'Neill, president, NikeDirect at the opening of Nike by Melrose. 'We're thrilled to be opening up Nike by Melrose and bringing the best of Nike products and offerings selected for this community. As well as being the first Nike Live destination, we will also test services that can then roll out to other Nike stores, combining digital features with a unique physical environment to create the future of Nike retail.'

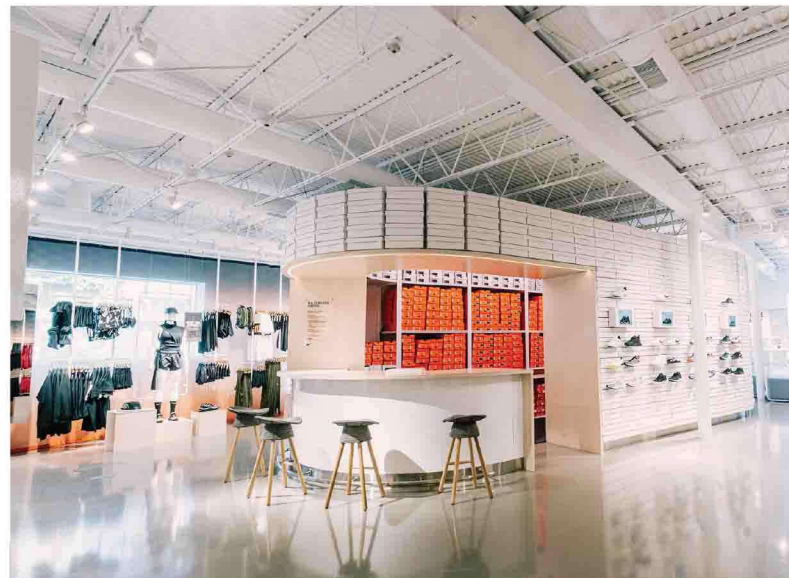
The store concept was created to unite digital and physical shopping experiences for Nike's consumers, and to further personalise the NikePlus member in-store journey. It uses Nike's new Nike App at Retail Service, which allows NikePlus members to reserve product to in-store digital lockers, scan product barcodes

to learn more and access new features and content in their Nike App homepage.

Personalised experiences are becoming increasingly important, as consumers become more accepting of - and expectant of - the overlap between digital and physical worlds, claims Justin Bowser, chief operating officer of software-as-a-service company HTK. 'Everything is personalised these days, why should shopping be any different?'

There are a number of tools that brands can use to augment and personalise the in-store shopping experience, with the most impactful ones being those that engage the store associate, who can then engage the consumer, believes Habel.

'Staff remain the most effective tool in delivering personalised experience,' agrees Watts. 'Although a complete stranger lacks the background info on you (data), a well-tuned, attentive empathetic human can usually get to the right solution more quickly and effectively, for now.' **RF**



'STAFF REMAIN THE MOST EFFECTIVE TOOL IN DELIVERING PERSONALISED EXPERIENCE'

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