ASSESSING THE AISLES

Recovery Solutions and Store Layout

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In June 2021, Scala issued the retail benchmarking report, **_Recovery Solutions and Store Strategies._** Produced in partnership with WBR Insights, the report features survey responses from 100 retail brands based across Europe. Looking at areas of investment focus for retail brands as well as strategies for retail recovery, the report covers a variety of topics including the deployment of technology, attitudes toward omnichannel, optimising the car park and store layout. This short solution report uses data and expert commentary from _Recovery Solutions and Store Strategies_ to explore digital solutions which could be applied to a key topic highlighted in the larger piece of research. The full retail benchmarking report is available for download. Other short solution reports, one exploring the way the car park can be optimised to better serve retail brands and the other looking at the ways in which sensors and signage can create a competitive customer experience, are also available.

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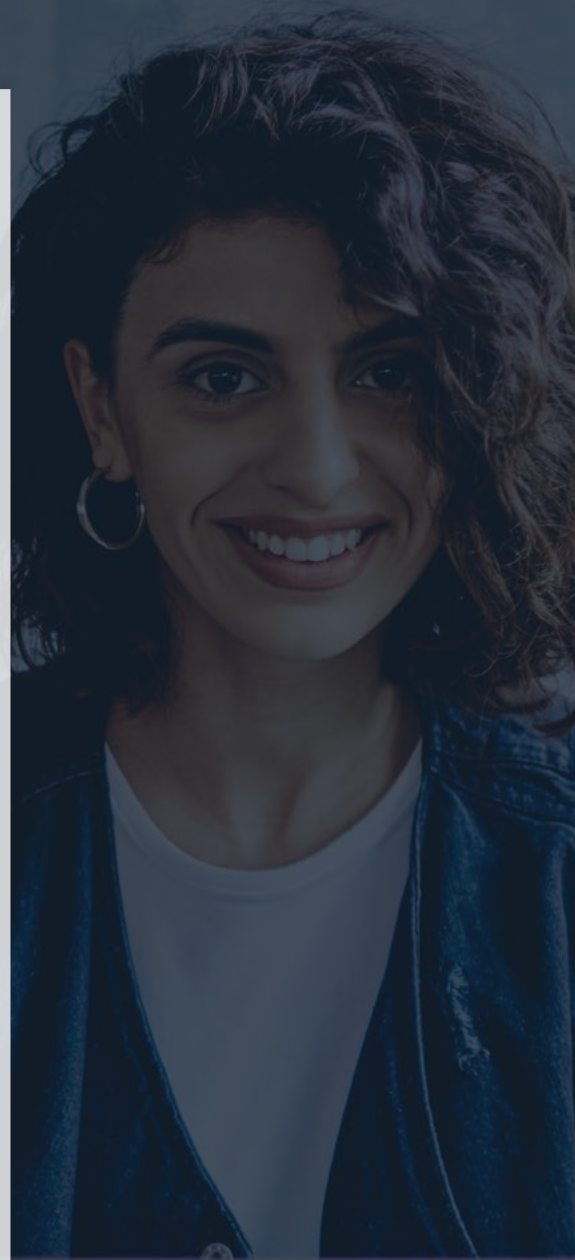
55%

of those that responded to our retail benchmarking report Recovery Solutions and Store Strategies told us that their brand is planning on changing the layout of their stores in the next year. Areas that are due for investment include the introduction of occupancy management systems, refreshing store signage, creating more space for the fulfilment of online or in-app orders, increasing the space for stock storage, reducing display space, and increasing self-service points-of-sale

How can integrated digital solutions can help brands make the most of their existing footprint? What technology can be employed to offer shoppers a safe, convenient and enjoyable experience? An experience that takes into account the behaviours and expectations of shoppers, the requirements of health and safety regulations and an unpredictable future?

Occupancy Management and More

Occupancy and crowd management is a major theme to emerge from the Recovery Solutions report. Unsurprisingly as businesses emerge from lockdowns, many are looking at ways that they can best prepare themselves for any future capacity regulations and also assure shoppers of their safety while in store.

> *Introducing more in-store signs will help us gain more control of safety and security."*
>
> — Retailer responding to the Recovery Solutions report

During 2020, many retail brands dedicated staff and a 'clicker' to count those in store but moving forward, businesses are interested in a more elegant solution. Sensors can monitor entries and exits for a count and through integrated signage, let those waiting in line to enter know the numbers in store and how long the wait may be. This technology can also update a store app or website in real time. By using a technology such as Intellicount, businesses can free up crucial resources by removing staff from doorways and, through monitoring entry and exit data, deploy team members more effectively.

In addition to communicating occupancy numbers and wait times, signage can also communicate key safety messages to customers, reassuring them of their safety in store and reminding them of the measures that they can take to protect themselves and the other shoppers. Using a QR code, in-store or street-facing signage can be used for shoppers to 'check in' to a location. QR codes on specific aisles or beside specific products can also be used to unlock more information on products, suggest complementary items or begin a self-service sales transaction.

Fulfilment, Sales and Display

40% of respondents said optimising ways to purchase, receive and return items was the area in which their organisations felt they had the greatest opportunity to increase sales and customer satisfaction. If this is a goal for a significant number of stores, how will this focus on fulfilment impact store layout and how could technology ensure the required return on investment?

61%

Fulfilment

of those interviewed are planning to invest in their click and collect offering while almost half (48%) are looking to dedicate more space to warehouse and fulfilment space for online orders. This desire seems to be driven by the increase in online spend during periods of lockdown with stores appreciating the evolution of shopper habits over the last year.

Click and Collect

The fulfilment of click and collect orders has huge scope to become a more automated process utilising in-store digital signage. Whether it be through entering a code on screen, at a fulfilment locker or using a personal device to access an order without touching a public screen, the in-store click and collect process can be made more automatic. Using this type of digital solution frees up staff time and store space. Indeed, the customer may not even need to enter the store if a brand has access to a convenient external location such as a car park or a dedicated fulfilment space such as a dedicated locker section in a shopping centre. You can read more about unlocking the potential of the car park in our **Sales Spark in the Car Park** solution paper.

Self Service

Self service stations or 'smart shopping' via a store-provided or personal device to pay for goods is one way that retailers will be looking to increase opportunities to make sales. Some retailers may use a combination of app, camera, sensor and signage technology to launch a full 'Just Walk Out' solution as demonstrated in the bricks and mortar Amazon Fresh locations. This technology can be employed to various degrees to ensure that customers have a choice of how they purchase. QR codes displayed through shelf edge technology could be scanned to allow payment via phone with the item delivered to the customers home or made available for pick up at a selected time.

Display

The employment of QR codes and end of aisle or shelf-edge displays can offer varied and creative potential 'display' space for brands and create more opportunities for sales. Endless aisle technology, utilised on digital signage or via a customers personal device, means that full product ranges can be explored without items having to physically be in store. There is also the potential for perceptive and proactive personal recommendations on products through the displays or a customer's personal device. Digital signage can also help to make the most of stock in store through effective use of dynamic in-store promotions. By utilising a digital shelf-edge or end of bay solution, different promotional campaigns can be

scheduled across the day to appeal to those shoppers in store at different times. Promotions can be triggered by anonymous, in-store demographic data or by news events, weather forecasts or social media trends. All this can be done from a headquarters or locally. The use of a digital solution such as this minimises the resource wastage traditionally caused by repricing items or changing over promotional paper signage.

Signage for Safety, Sales and Staff

As mentioned previously, street-facing signage (an investment priority for 55% of interviewed retailers) can communicate occupancy and safety messaging to customers. Street-facing signage can also provide an opportunity for sales. Through use of a QR code, customers outside of the store can find out more information on displayed products such as the sizing available in the particular store or complementary items available. Products could even be purchased from the shop window through street-facing signage in a true 'window shopping' technology solution.

As brands reconfigure their footprint, digital signage can also play a role in wayfinding. A touch screen can be used by shoppers to search for the product they want with the item location displayed. Integrated with a store app, appropriate permissions granted and sensor integration, signage could show animated icons to help a customer find items on their shopping list. Touch screens could also help shoppers call staff for assistance or be used as a way for shoppers to share their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the new store layout.

Installed correctly, store signage, whether street-facing, located in aisle, at service points, in the stock room or the staff room should be flexible enough to offer versatile brand communications, minimising waste and making the most of any sales opportunity, even during times of restriction such as the lockdowns of last year.

Conclusion

A significant number of retail brands are planning to reassess their branch layout to better meet the needs of customers. An occupancy management solution can help brands effectively deploy staff and resources and, when integrated with a digital signage solution, communicate and reassure shoppers. As brands look to reconfigure their footprint, they should look to an integrated digital solution that can optimise aisle space while also offering the opportunity to communicate with customers and increase sales options. A suitable, scalable technology solution will increase the available touchpoints for customers, offering more flexible and convenient possibilities for shoppers and ultimately deepening brand loyalty.

Fundamental to the success of any new digital investment or implementation is finding the right technology partner. Retailers should look to find a technology partner who understands the potential of their business and are able to power digital implementation in the future with a sound strategy and deep knowledge of the process to mitigate risk and optimise for future inclusions or growth. Scala is a proven, trusted technology partner with an integrated hardware, software, services and support solution powering digital solutions across retail brands of all types. Talk to a Scala solutions expert today to discuss business goals and how an integrated solution could benefit your brand.