

The benefits and challenges of appointment-based shopping

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Appointment-based shopping, a new trend in omnichannel retailing, is being closely watched by emerging markets as they anticipate future trends from developed countries.



Source: © 123rf [123rf](#) Appointment-based shopping is best suited for retailers who sell high-end or luxury products, such as jewellery, fashion, or beauty products

This shopping approach allows customers to schedule a visit to a physical store instead of browsing and purchasing products independently.

By providing a more individualised shopping experience, appointment-based shopping is becoming increasingly important for today's consumers.

Driving appointment-based shopping

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of appointment-based shopping, although restrictions have been lifted, appointment-based shopping has allowed retailers to offer personalised shopping experiences.

Customers also expect more personalised offerings. As retailers gather more customer data, customers want to see

retailers use this information to improve experiences and not bombard them with marketing messages.

Customers expect the retailer to use the data gathered through loyalty programmes, websites, and shopping applications guide their appointment-based shopping offerings on an individual level.



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Not a one-size-fits-all

Appointment-based shopping is best suited for retailers who sell high-end or luxury products, such as jewellery, fashion, or beauty products. It is also ideal for retailers who sell products that require a lot of customer attention, such as home furnishings or electronics. Some retailers are also in a better position to implement appointment-based shopping.

For example, retailers with deep customer data would be in a good position to identify the customers who would be attracted to appointment-based shopping offerings.

Similar to what banks have done with private banking – offering the additional personalised services of a private banker – retailers can offer highly customised offerings to selected profitable customers.

Several retailers have already implemented appointment-based shopping in their stores. Neiman Marcus, the luxury department store, allows customers to book a one-on-one appointment with a personal stylist.

Sephora, the beauty retailer, has implemented a similar shopping experience: customers can book appointments for makeup and skincare services or schedule a private shopping session with a beauty expert.

Apple, the technology giant, offers customers individual in-store consultations, product demos, and technical support appointments. Tesla, the electric car manufacturer, allows customers to book a test drive or schedule a private consultation with a sales associate.

Benefits of appointment-based shopping

Adopting appointment-based shopping can benefit retailers in several ways.

1. It allows the management of customer flow and ensure that their stores are not overcrowded, which would improve the shopping experience for everyone.
2. It enables retailers to provide a more personalised shopping experience, thus increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty.
3. It provides retailers with valuable data on customer preferences and behaviours that could be used to improve the shopping experience and increase sales.

The technology behind appointment-based shopping has made it possible for retailers to provide this type of shopping experience. Retailers can use a variety of tools such as appointment scheduling software, mobile apps, and customer relationship management systems to manage appointments and so provide a seamless shopping experience.

These tools also allow retailers to collect data on customers' preferences and behaviours, enabling them to provide even

more personalised experiences in the future.



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Challenges to appointment-based shopping

1. A main challenge associated with appointment-based shopping is ensuring that customers show up for their appointments. Retailers would need to have a system in place to confirm appointments and remind customers of their scheduled appointments.
2. Another challenge is managing the required time and resources to provide a personalised shopping experience. Retailers would need to ensure that enough staff and resources were available to provide a one-on-one shopping experience for each customer. They would need to train their staff how to service customers during an appointment and, ideally, give frontline service employees access to customer data and the right technological tools to make the experience rewarding for both staff and customers.

Appointment-based retailing is an important part of omnichannel retailing. It allows retailers to provide customers with more value by offering a personalised shopping experience.

By allowing customers to book an appointment, retailers could also attract customers back to their brick-and-mortar stores and develop a one-to-one relationship with customers.

With the help of technology, retailers could manage appointments, provide a seamless shopping experience, and gather valuable data on customer preferences and behaviours. However, retailers need to ensure that they have the right systems and resources in place to provide a successful appointment-based shopping experience.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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