

## **MOBILE RETAIL 2021:**

ENABLING BETTER  
BOPIS, ENHANCED  
IN-STORE SHOPPING  
AND AMAZING 5G

# **EXPERIENCES**

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## INTRODUCTION

As the vaccine rolls out, more shoppers will begin to feel safe visiting stores. However, retailers seeking ways to bring consumers back in on a regular basis still need to recognize how the retail landscape has changed, particularly after months of convenient online transactions. Enter mobile technology: smartphones can bridge the gap between online and in-person shopping to offer a next-generation experience that combines the best of ecommerce and brick-and-mortar.

Mobile already is set to play a major role in the great reopening. Even before the pandemic, **45% to 50%** of retailers had planned to prioritize a mobile app or point-of-sale experience in 2020 — and the coronavirus outbreak accelerated those efforts for some, according to **data from McKinsey**. Some of the key capabilities retailers should add or expand on as they develop their mobile strategies include:

- **Enhancing the power of BOPIS (buy online, pick up in-store):** Shoppers have been using BOPIS to combine the most convenient aspects of online and in-store shopping, and the right mobile app can help eliminate the friction-generating frustrations that can appear between order and pickup;
- **Preparing for the great reopening:** Consumers will hold onto the habits and expectations created over nearly a year of online shopping, but their mobile devices can serve as reassuring contactless enablers and convenience-driving tools to ease them back into brick-and-mortar shopping;
- **Powering next-gen experiences with 5G:** The pandemic put a hold on the rollout of 5G-powered retail experiences, but now is the time to explore the new possibilities this technology enables — from expanded AR use cases to entirely new shopping tools that can enable a seamless shopper journey; and
- **Using third-party apps as an introduction:** Not every retailer is ready to dive into the deep end of an omnichannel app that works both in-store and online, but existing tools like Facebook Messenger are readily available and can help them prepare for the next phase in mobile marketing.

## SMARTPHONES: THE NEW GATEWAY TO CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS

A large majority of shoppers (**80%**) would call a retailer if they had an issue or question regarding a purchase, which sets up mobile devices as the top customer communication medium by a significant margin, according to the **CI&T Connected Retail survey**. When it comes to retailers contacting their customers, text messaging is the preferred method to avoid cluttered inboxes, and SMS is perfectly suited for up-to-the-minute updates on deliveries or BOPIS orders.



***“In the U.S. we as consumers have such a strong barrier between retailers and us when it comes to things like text messaging. Just seeing that there is some openness to that was exciting to me, and demonstrates that we’re evolving in terms of our perspective on customer service and how we want to be accessed by retailers.”***

Melissa Minkow, Retail Lead, CI&T





## CONSTANT UPDATES MAKE FOR A BETTER BOPIS EXPERIENCE

Mobile commerce was expected to reach **\$284 billion**, or **45%** of the total U.S. ecommerce market, by the end of 2020, according to an **Insider Intelligence** forecast. While this statistic incorporates all transactions made on mobile devices — including otherwise traditional ecommerce sales — retailers looking to build or enhance a robust BOPIS program should take note, because mobile's portable nature makes it the perfect platform for these services.

Offering BOPIS through a proprietary app is table stakes, but retailers still have a chance to stand out by expanding this function to encompass the entire experience, according to Scott Lachut, President of Research & Strategy at **PSFK**. “Once you log off from your laptop to whenever you get to that physical store, **the mobile experience is the portal that takes you through that entire journey**,” said Lachut in an interview with *Retail TouchPoints*.

With this in mind, BOPIS programs can tap mobile apps to keep shoppers constantly informed, and also to merge their order and eventual trip into a single seamless transaction. Some of the key elements that should be included in this journey are **updates** as the order is prepared; information about how busy the store is during the **chosen pickup window**; and **directions** to help shoppers understand and quickly and safely grab their items when they arrive. This last is a particularly important consideration for retailers hoping to onboard new shoppers who may not be familiar with a store's layout or pickup practices.

### BOPIS CASE STUDY: CRATE & BARREL

**Crate and Barrel** recently partnered with day-of-service mobile communications platform **Glympse** to provide proactive communication for both customers and store employees. The service notifies shoppers when their order is ready and offers pickup instructions, while letting them share their ETA and arrival status with associates to ensure that they are ready with the order. All of these updates are transmitted through mobile devices to maximize convenience.



## THE NEXT NORMAL REQUIRES RETAILERS TO RETHINK THE IN-STORE JOURNEY

Shoppers will be eager to get out of their homes once they receive the vaccine, but bringing them back to their old shopping habits will still present a challenge. Physical retailers are competing with the convenience of ecommerce, continued wariness regarding safety concerns and new routines developed during the year of lockdowns. Together this means **the great reopening will be a process, not an immediate shift**. Mobile technology will be a vital element of the brick-and-mortar resurgence, driven by the fact that digital-driven shopping is here to stay.

“What people were doing specifically at the height of COVID was using digital as a way, especially if they weren’t replacing their in-store shopping with digital completely, to **take over a bigger chunk of how they prepare to go shop**,” said Lachut. That includes “checking inventory, seeing what safety protocols were available, if there were contactless payments and other things supplementing what could happen in the context of that store experience. When you think about that from the standpoint of mobile, it becomes an even bigger piece of how people are looking to utilize that tool within the context of their physical shopping experience.”

Safety and convenience will be major motivators for getting shoppers back in stores. Mobile apps can directly enhance safety by **enabling contactless checkout** without the need for in-store devices; offering **wayfinding** to control traffic; and by simply **reiterating mask protocols** upon request. Contactless checkout works double duty as a convenience driver, and a well-made app can help shoppers quickly compare and contrast brands, or offer in-store suggestions, to help them find the right product, eliminating the need for prior research.

### IN-STORE EXPERIENCE CASE STUDY: NIKE

**Nike** is known for its innovative in-store experiences, and its mobile tools are no different. The Nike App enhances the online experience by speeding up the BOPIS process with directions and checkout options, but takes it one step further by adding tools to make in-store browsing more convenient as well. Some of the highlights include:

- **Scanning QR codes** for more information about products displayed on mannequins;
- The ability to **contact in-store associates** directly through the app; and
- **Priority access** to in-store events and sessions.



## 5G IS POSITIONED TO ENABLE THE NEXT GENERATION OF RETAIL EXPERIENCES

Retailers may finally be able to take full advantage of in-store 5G in 2021, which will significantly increase the amount of data mobile devices can process. Worldwide 5G network infrastructure market spending almost doubled in 2020 to reach **\$8.1 billion**, according to projections from **Gartner**, priming this long-awaited technology for its future role as the foundation of next-generation experiences.

From a retail operations standpoint, 5G will allow for near-seamless transfers of data and information without any lag, according to Lachut. This will simultaneously benefit customers with more engaging experiences and enhance store operations by making real-time decision making even easier. Some of the key possibilities enabled by 5G include:

- Personalized digital signage;
- Enhanced augmented and virtual reality applications;
- Video and pattern recognition of shoppers; and
- Enabling interactive apps on shoppers' phones.

With the post-COVID environment in mind, enabling contactless experiences will be an obvious candidate for a 5G overhaul. More advanced AR capabilities in particular can bring tools that have mainly been associated with ecommerce into the store without disrupting the browsing experience, letting shoppers experience the best of both worlds.

"One of the challenges in the COVID era is people being a little bit squeamish, particularly about trying on clothes and things like that," said Lachut. "AR presents opportunities to virtually test out products, whether that's trying out clothing or seeing what a piece of furniture looks like in a physical environment, and there are other ways to utilize that technology to enhance the store experience. Right now the problem is just ensuring that the experience gets delivered seamlessly without having to make the consumer wait."

### MOBILE INNOVATION CASE STUDY: SHOWFIELDS

New York City's **SHOWFIELDS** has always put an emphasis on experience, and the space is taking it to the next level with the **Magic Wand** app. This tool drives home the part-retail space, part-art exhibition nature of SHOWFIELDS. Shoppers interact with "magic" NFC [near field communication] tags throughout the store by simply tapping their phones on Magic Wand icons. From there they can access information on more than 60 brands and artists, add products to a favorites list or enable contactless checkout within the app, among other capabilities.





## **DON'T BE AFRAID TO LEVERAGE THIRD-PARTY APPS TO LAUNCH MOBILE EXPERIENCES**

Developing a great mobile app can be a daunting task, especially with the standards that have been set by large retailers with years of experience. However, every retailer can at least dip their toes into mobile communication through existing platforms like Facebook Messenger. The capabilities won't be nearly as robust as with a proprietary app, but these apps can help retailers understand how shoppers want to interact with their brand as well as what capabilities will be important for their own app.



***"The likelihood that it's on somebody's phone is near 100%. It's a familiar and very easy UI that we're using every day. It supports multimedia, so you can share video and imagery and even next-level things that you can sort of pour into the context of the chat experience. It's a way that we're comfortable asking for information or receiving information."***

Scott Lachut, President of Research & Strategy, PSFK

This approach also can help retailers get used to the future of mobile shopping: chat commerce. Countries like China are years ahead of the U.S. on this front, but American consumers are slowly opening up to the benefits this provides. Chat commerce can help both in-store — eliminating the need to hunt down an associate — and online by providing fast answers to complicated questions, and it represents the future for retail mobile apps.

"I think we're getting to a point where we're slowly but surely going to be ready for chat commerce as opposed to where we are now, which is more about notifications after we place the order," said Minkow. "I would say in terms of touch points and helping consumers with digital assistance, I expect to see a lot more."

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201.257.8528

[info@retailtouchpoints.com](mailto:info@retailtouchpoints.com)



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bryan Wassel, Associate Editor

Bryan covers the retail industry at large, with a focus on contextual marketing, technological innovation and omnichannel developments.