

Retail Trends: 10 Experts Share Their Predictions for 2017 [Giveaway]

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With a new year comes change. New retail trends. New consumer behavior and demands. New tools and technologies to incorporate. New opportunities.

And with all that is new, retailers are forced to adapt to meet demand and stay ahead of the competition.

To help retailers learn what to expect and how it may affect their business, we reached out to 10 retail experts and asked them:

“What is your prediction for what will change in retail in 2017?”

Our experts talked about data, convenience, [personalization](#), mobile, and digital. While the answers varied, there was one major recurring theme: Retailers *and* consumers are getting smarter.

Without further ado, here are the retail trends our list of experts expect to see throughout 2017.

1. Treat Media as the Store, and the Store as Media

“Media is becoming the store. Retailers will use technology to make every single piece of media — be it social, online, mobile, or conventional — a direct path to purchase. This means providing exceptional content, decision-making tools and commerce software, so that anyone exposed to that media could confidently buy from you on the spot.

Conversely, the physical store is becoming a powerful form of experiential media. Your store should convey a powerful brand story through every touchpoint, provide lots of opportunities for immersive product experiences, and expose shoppers to your entire ecosystem of product experts, purchase channels, added-value services and loyalty tools. If you design your customer experience well, your store is the most powerful form of media at your disposal.”

—Doug Stephens, Founder of [Retail Prophet](#), and Author of [The Retail Revival](#)

2. Customers Will Want to Feel at Home

“Customers are going to continue their search for [unique retail experiences](#) and reward retailers who provide them. Smart retailers will begin to understand that they need to treat their stores as their homes. This means welcoming customers into a warm and inviting — even edgy, if that is how you roll — place in which products aren’t pushed on you.

Undoubtedly, simple product acquisition is best and most efficiently done on the web. Product interaction, product romancing, product becoming a living and breathing thing can only occur in a physical environment where a real human story and dialogue can occur. Almost all online players today are discovering that they also need a physical space to truly touch the customer. As tech makes so much of our lives less human, consumers will crave more personal interactions. For retailers, this will mean a significant upgrade in staff — both in quality and quantity — if it is really going to work. You cannot fake real.”

—James Dion, President and Owner of [Dionco Inc.](#)

3. Convenience Will Be Key

“My prediction for 2017 is the rise of ‘push-button’ products and services. We’ve seen elements of this already: Amazon Dash Buttons or talking to Siri or Alexa to reorder specific products at home; Instacart to easily order grocery services for home/office delivery; UberEats, Postmates, and others to order lunch or dinner with the touch of a button. This is rapidly impacting consumers’ expectations about shopping, payment, and delivery.

Some retailers have even moved past the button and are building sales through subscription services. Trendsend by Evereve, MM.LaFleur, and Stitch Fix are all good examples of these. To prepare, retailers in all segments need to think differently about how they’re enabling shoppers to experience the merchandise and pay.”

—Mara Devitt, Partner at [McMillan Doolittle](#)

4. More and More Mobile

“The gorgeous promise of [mobile retail](#) will evolve and strengthen and become much more relevant to both consumers and retailers as the hiccups and glitches happening now will quickly become memories. Retailer strategies incorporating the mobile device will become much more sophisticated and honed for smooth integration into the overall customer experience.

I think we’ll also see a return to the basics when it comes to providing a rewarding and fulfilling customer experience with the frontline — retail associates in the brick and mortar and customer service online — playing the lead role in crafting that experience.”

—Judy Mottl, Editor at [Retail Customer Experience](#)

5. Investing in the Organization and Employees

“What happens *inside* retail organizations may be the most significant. Companies will start adopting different organizational structures that break down silos and integrate information and systems to facilitate those customer experience improvements.

Companies will also invest more in the frontline employee experience, as they realize paying higher wages and better equipped and engaged employees not only helps them fight the battle for talent, but also improves the customer experience.”

—Denise Lee Yohn, Author of [What Great Brands Do](#)

6. Brick-and-Mortar Stores Will Get Smarter

“The physical store retail format will continue to evolve into smarter environments. Brands will continue to learn how to truly incorporate technology to create a connected store — not just for the ‘concept of it,’ but with the benefit of the consumer at the heart of design.

Store associates will be even more empowered with data and a more personalized understanding of customers (what they like, what they have bought, what they have browsed, etc.), and warehouse logistics teams will be more in sync will real-time, in-store demands.”

—Melissa Gonzalez, Founder, [The Lion’esque Group](#), and Author of [The Pop-Up Paradigm](#)

7. The Rise of Cognitive Commerce

“While data has become more accessible for smaller merchants to utilize and apply to their business strategies over the past few years, thanks to various CRM and POS systems, 2017 will introduce businesses of all sizes to even more accessibility to data that will help them strengthen their business success.

Specifically, I believe that cognitive commerce will become more prominent among businesses to incorporate into their business strategies. This will help them in shaping future consumer conversations, enhancing existing product sell-through, understanding customer personalization better and more. Cognitive conversations lead to cognitive commerce — and that's something any merchant can appreciate.”

—Nicole Leinbach Reyhle, Founder and Publisher of [Retail Minded](#)

8. Look Out for Niche Retailers

“2017 will bring the rise of niche retailers, for both new brands and existing brands. This will lead to smaller store footprints and personalized service with knowledgeable sales associates. This will satisfy the demands from consumers who want a unique and customized service.

Brick-and-mortar stores will remain important and drive that customer experience. Larger, established stores will create more shop-within-a-shop opportunities to leverage niche markets and strategies. This trend also relates to emerging and improved technologies: fitting rooms, product details and sizing, social media, and mobile channels.”

—Courtney Albert, Manager at [The Parker Avery Group](#)

9. Retailers Will Enhance Personalization

“In 2017, retail marketers are going to become more skilled at finding the balance between personalization and optimization, better coordinating the relationships among the retailer, customer and supplier. Retailers will become more focused on how to leverage the various delivery channels to give customers the right messages at the right times to generate the best results.”

—Chen Katz, VP of Sales at [Sagarmatha](#)

10. Expect a Digital Shift, Not Transformation

“Most retailers will have already established a digital presence, but there will be an accelerated shift to mobile and cross-platform interactions. Mobile share of global ecommerce is expected to grow from 40% in 2015 to 70% by 2017, as we see the vast majority of online shoppers start transactions on one device and end on another. Ecommerce will be leading this paradigm shift since it drives change and folds in new technologies that come from the consumer.”

—Arish Ali, CEO at [Skava](#)

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This curated collection of future-focused reads will help prepare you for anything the New Year has to throw at you.

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About the Author

Alexandra Sheehan is a freelance writer/editor and content specialist. She's worked with retailers ranging from Fortune 100 companies to Etsy shop owners, and is always looking for innovative ways to help her clients.



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