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Smart technology narrows gap in consumer data for retailers

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By Erica Codey-Rucker | Contributing writer, Retail Customer Experience

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Consumer data is crucial. Consumers, with the availability of smart technology in handheld personal devices, have unprecedented access to product and purchasing information, which makes the competition for their dollars increasingly difficult. It is essential that a business know more about its customer's desires and spending habits.

The use of smart technology in retail environments can increase corporate knowledge of consumer behaviors and simplify the acquisition of important analytic information. Technologies such as informational kiosks and interactive mirror displays, like the MERo, a product offered by interactive digital signage company media mea, are some of the easiest ways to alert a retailer to gaps in consumer data. With these devices and tailored software, businesses can begin to close the gaps by engaging customers in ways that benefit the customers and the business.

"For instance, the act of simply counting customers can be a fully automated procedure using Object Detection [software] which allows the measurement of activity in a given area such as direction in both small and large areas," said Anne Brazell, business development manager, media mea. This offers a more accurate picture of how many clients step through the doors. While this number does not reflect revenue, it can provide valuable information on potential ways to generate new revenue. This software can provide information about customers who not only venture into a business but those that return.

Customers who return to a business are often those who are willing to spend money and find that the business aligns to values and desires they hold. Gathering information about return customers allows a business to develop targeted marketing strategies that increase consumer response, engagement, loyalty and provide greater return on investment (ROI). A business with this information can drastically reduce marketing frequency and costs by having hyper consumer-focused strategies to attract those customers who will most likely spend money with the company.

With this data, a retail business can provide customers with products tailored to their tastes. This can boost consumer confidence in the company and increase the likelihood that the customer will spend money and continue to return with some regularity.

"Most of our analytics software partners do not collect or record any image or video, most of them only collect the anonymous 'meta-data' that describes the size and the demographics of an audience. These data outputs can be integrated into third party systems such as POS, BI, CMS and custom applications in order to provide a more complete understanding of the audience and what actions the business can take in order to improve various KPI's," Brazell said.

Consumer interacts with MERo, choosing items from the store and having them brought to her fitting room.

Tracking consumer behavior with technology such as MERo mirror displays in the garment retail environment allows an interactive experience where the customer provides information to the store and any third party working in conjunction with the store, and receives the instant feedback and satisfaction of having a tailored shopping experience.

With cell phone pairing enabled with the mirror display, the customer can upload photos of themselves in outfits they like, and the store can save the information, including sizes and style references. A customer can also track their own personal buying habits.

"MERo and its AdvanCloud software have proved to be a great tool for increasing the sales of those retailers who sell products that involve some technical information like sunglasses, sports, jewelry, cosmetics, etc. By simply approaching a product, customers can read detailed technical information about the product, that helps them assess if that's the product they are looking for," Brazell said.

Mirror Displays with RFID technology and other RFID-based point of sale technology can offer a customer the ability to view brand content such as fashion shows and product lines that are typically unavailable in a retail environment.

Customers can use the mirror display to choose items from the store and have them brought to the fitting room in the sizes requested. This eliminates the need for the customer to carry product throughout the store. The customer can, without compromising modesty, order new sizes, colors and/or fully accessorize a favored look from the comfort of the fitting room.

The displays also allow the customer to adjust and change lighting, order drinks (where available) and even check out.

Consumer shows how this mirror display with RFID technology allows her to view various product lines.

Increasingly, smart technology including digital display technology is being integrated into the customer retail experience to both benefit the consumer and to provide valuable information to the businesses where it is utilized.

In-store shopping is not going away any time soon and technology helps close the gap between in-store and online, making the customer experience more enjoyable and convenient for today's customer.

■ According to Brazell ,the options that a customer has with MERo are wide-ranging and offer:

- Different views of the items and garments
- Ability to watch videos that offer product information
- Individual product recommendations and group product recommendations to create a complete look
- Product details such as features, composition, washing instructions, available sizes, price, etc.
- Customer ratings and reviews

- Wish lists
- Social media sharing
- Request for assistance to store associates
- A map display of nearby stores when an item is not available at the current store
- Ability to checkout through mobile e-commerce

About the sponsor:
media mea llc is a digital signage development firm, specializing in the fabrication and customization of interactive indoor and outdoor LCD/ LED digital signage displays. media mea is based out of Columbia, SC, USA