



Amazon.com incorporates online habits into a physical space.

Amazon is offering its customers both the “showrooming” (looking in-store, then buying online) and “webrooming” (searching online, then buying in-store) models.

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Amazon is essentially embracing, and offering to its customers, the “showrooming” (looking in-store, then buying online) and “webrooming” (searching online, then buying in-store) models, which many retailers have battled against. These physical stores serve as tactile showrooms for customers who don’t like delving into the endless rabbit holes that many online portals inevitably become.

One of the biggest advantages of this hybrid model is that it speaks to the growing number of customers who are wary of using their banking details online. That fear, as well as the rise of cyber-crime, are very real.

This year retailers have been warned that the magnetic credit card

Hybrid retail: the best of both worlds

The worlds of online and offline retail are merging. Dion Chang explores the blurred and shifting boundaries of hybrid retail and discovers the future of retail therapy



Dion Chang is the founder of Flux Trends. For more game-changing business trends, visit: www.fluxtrends.com

Amazon raised eyebrows last year when it opened what seemed like a flagship, bricks-and-mortar bookstore in Seattle, USA. The move was deeply ironic, as this was the very same company that had pioneered not only the digital book trend via its signature ereader, the Kindle, but also selling physical books online, which resulted in the closure of many global bookstore chains. The ripple effect was a massive wave of disruption in the publishing industry, as well as in retail.

However, the trend pendulum swings back and forth and earlier this year, Amazon announced that it now intends rolling out many more of these physical bookstores. The strategy isn’t as schizophrenic as it seems, for two reasons: firstly, over the past two years, physical books have returned to favour as a preferred reading format. Secondly,

ecommerce has evolved dramatically into a hybrid model which fuses the convenience of online shopping with the tactility of retail theatre – something we humans still crave.

Amazon’s bookstores are a case study of where hybrid retail’s moving. It hasn’t just opened a bookstore based on a traditional bricks-and-mortar model, but has also cunningly incorporated our online habits into a physical space.

For example, the books are displayed with their covers facing forward, rather than the book’s spines. This resonates with the hyper-visual era we’ve entered and also replicates the way the books are presented online. Amazon’s also fused a data-rich online environment into the stores, so shoppers can see customer ratings, sales totals and popular reads, which includes the algorithmic sales nudge of: “You might

strip which passes through every checkout is the new target of cyber-criminals: your customer’s personal and financial data. Even though your company may have decent cyber-security, these hackers breach your system through patches in firewalls, USB drives and – a surprisingly weak link – inept suppliers’ passwords.

The rapid growth, globally, of another hybrid retail model – click-and-collect – is evidence that retailers understand not only their customers’ concerns about providing banking details online, but also their enjoyment of a hybrid retail experience. Self-automation models in the food and hospitality industries are also pointing to this trend.

Today’s customer wants the best of both worlds – and any good retailer knows that the customer is always right. 🌈