

## For retail brands, digital will drive a return to stores in 2016

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### Landor Looks At 2016 Branding Trends

A new study says 2016 will be the year of the **brand** experience, and not just the **digital** experience. Global **branding** and **design** firm **Landor** sees real, human interactions and authentic interactions with **brands** as a key **marketing** trend.

**Landor** sees good news for brick-and-mortar stores, as consumers will return en masse to the old-fashioned way of shopping, but augmented with mobile, personal, multichannel, and multi-sensory experiences.

Online shopping is supposed to have killed or at least vastly diminished traditional brick-and-mortar retail, which it hasn't and won't, but it is changing what physical retail means. **Landor** says customers once again want in-person interactions in the real world, and that smart **brands** are combining the physical store experience with the agility in terms of information and customization they can get via **digital** channels. **Amazon** just opened its first bookstore in Seattle, where customers can browse books and also read customer reviews.

Trevor Wade, global **marketing** director at **Landor** says that, although **Amazon** is not the first **digital brand** to open a brick and mortar store — she notes that **Warby Parker**, the online eyewear company, has also opened physical store locations — more online **brands** are realizing that consumers want engagement in both the virtual and real world. "Engaging with consumers in the physical world can not only help boost sales but also create customer loyalty. Face-to-face interaction goes a long way," she says. "And with **Amazon** also becoming an electronics manufacturer with its **Kindle** and **Amazon** Fire TV, it makes sense to open a place where customers can try out these products first-hand before making a purchase."

And, **Landor** notes, sensory experience will extend well beyond logo **design**, store layout, and **digital** experience "to create unique worlds for consumers." **Landor** cites **Four Seasons**, which diffuses custom scents throughout its properties; and **Virgin**, which uses personalized screens, on-demand food and beverage ordering systems, and a unique in-cabin lighting **design** as a differentiator.

Engagement with **brand** employees, actual people, is also going to become a point that **brands**

take seriously. **Landor** predicts that next year companies will focus on training employees to be **brand** ambassadors. As the nation considers upping the minimum wage, **brands** are going to tout how well they treat employees.

Wade tells **Marketing** Daily that **brand** agility is key to meeting consumers changing demands. "In today's market that means existing on multiple channels. Consumers want their **brands** to be everywhere they are, and for most shoppers that means being both online and offline."

Wade argues that one should mistake this new focus on the physical, personal experience as **brand**-strategy remorse: **brands** thinking they have maybe gone overboard on focusing on the **digital** experience as the cardinal **brand** experience. "But they are realizing it is about more than just **digital**. **Brands** are still looking for new ways to engage with consumers through **digital** platforms." She notes that **Starbucks** and **Taco Bell**, for example, are now letting customers preorder using an app on their smartphones. "But they will also be looking for ways to connect with them in the physical world. We saw more **brands** trying this over the holiday season, with stores like **Target** and **Kmart** allowing consumers to shop online and pick up their purchases at their local stores."

Packaging is also changing to become an extension of the product. **Landor**, which does a lot of work in packaging **design**, says more **brands** will make packaging tell the **brand** story, something Apple has been doing for years. Example: **Nike** Air in see-through air cushioned packets, making the shoes appear to literally float on air, and **Festina** packaging its waterproof watches in sealed bags of water.

On the industry side, **Landor** sees:

- Banks re**branding** as they face an over-saturated market. "Look for these institutions to reevaluate and restructure what their **brands** stand for as they strive to be more human and trustworthy," says the report.
- **Brands** focusing less on promoting calorie count and more on transparent manufacturing processes to tell an authentic food story, à la **Shake Shack**, which has been talking about where it gets its ingredients.
- Hotel chains, faced with **Airbnb**, creating exclusive experiences around authentic, personalized, local flavor. **Marriott** now has a series of smaller hotels under its Edition chain, for example. **Hilton** has the Canopy collection of hotels in the heart of culturally significant areas.

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