

Summary of Key Retail Trends

1. The growth and development of omni-channel retailing, including services like buy online, pick up in store (BOPIS or click and collect), buy online, return in store (BORIS) and buy online, pick up at curbside (BOPAC) and the development of an “all channels” assortment strategy.
2. Using the Internet to drive initial international expansion and then opening local stores once demand is established.
3. Growing customer engagement, facilitated by the widespread adoption of smart phones and tablets.
4. Enhanced customer service using information technology to support store associates with easier access to product and stock availability information, support for various forms of assisted selling, such as an outfit building capability in fashion retailing and full blown clientelling.
5. Resurgence of customer relationship management as the growth of online sales has reduced the need to provide expensive rewards to capture consumer data, making CRM/loyalty programs more affordable.
6. The development of higher quality private label or own brands reaching quality levels equal to or sometimes exceeding that of national brands. Private label continues to take a bigger market share, compelling national brand manufacturers to develop direct to consumer (DTC) sales channels.
7. Extensive changes in supply chain practice including, but not exclusively, some return of sourcing closer to home to speed up response times to favourable trends, significant improvements in forecasting accuracy due to the application of machine learning, improvements in warehouse automation and developing of better “last mile” home delivery options.
8. The greater use of computer-controlled automation, especially the use of robotics in warehouse operations, the greater use of other forms of warehouse mechanisation and even pilot projects using robots in stores for things like store cleaning.
9. The adoption of RFID technology to improve store inventory accuracy to minimize lost sales and to avoid excess shipping costs for BOPIS orders which can be supplied from store stock.
10. The growing use of advanced technologies like machine learning and artificial intelligence to improve all sorts of processes, such as demand forecasting, allocation and replenishment, providing online shoppers with recommendations such as “shoppers who bought this also bought this”.
11. The development of Covid-19 aware business practices, such as the wider adoption of home delivery due to more home based working, delivery driver contactless home delivery, more cashless payments in store, more curbside pickup, narrower assortments in stores to allow wider aisles, etc.

