

What is Frictionless Shopping and How Can You Deliver It?

With the introduction of the internet, the shopping experience for people around the world has changed considerably, especially over the past decade. One trend that has been growing in popularity is the frictionless retail experience.

Although most shopping trends tend to come and go with the changing times, frictionless retail shopping looks to be here to stay. Furthermore, for business owners who are looking to expand their customer base and improve the overall experience with consumers, this form of shopping is worth researching.

What is the Frictionless Retail Experience?

The overall concept is the connection of buyers and sellers that puts the control in the hands of the consumer. A customer engaging in the frictionless retail experience will be able to quickly find the products or services they want, comparison shop with all retailers or businesses involved, and then make the purchase quickly and easily.

Using the advanced digital technology incorporated into smartphones and with fast internet connections, the consumer is in control when engaging in frictionless shopping. While the concept of comparison shopping has been around for quite some time, the use of smartphones now puts the power into the hands of consumers.

How It Works

This form of shopping is typified by a consumer taking a product off the shelf. Weight sensors indicate to a central computer that the product has been removed. The information about the product is now added to the customer's mobile device, a virtual basket.

Alternatively, a customer using a smart cart can load the items they want, and the information is recorded and sent to their mobile device. When the customer agrees to purchase the items, normally by clicking the accept button after reading the list, they pay using a virtual wallet and can leave the store. All this without having to go through the checkout.

For stores that want to keep the checkout lane, the computer will identify the products in the cart when the customer arrives in the lane. Once the customer accepts and pays for the items with their virtual wallet, they can leave the store. Your virtual wallet stores your credit card or banking information on your mobile device.

Why Did Frictionless Shopping Occur?

The answer can be found right in front of you. The desktop, laptop, and mobile devices have not only created greater access, but the expectation for greater speed in making purchases. Just as people want information instantaneously when searching the web, so too do they want to skip the checkout line and make the purchase right away as well.

The creation of Amazon Go, arguably the first major chain to incorporate frictionless shopping in a big way, has shown the benefits for consumers and retailers. A survey from [Piplsay](#) discovered that most consumers who had shopped at Amazon Go found the checkout experience to be a positive one. And not surprisingly, 57% would like to see that shopping experience at other retail stores.

Walmart has jumped into the frictionless retail experience as well, creating Walmart Pay that allows customers to use their smartphone apps to make purchases. It's safe to say that this trend is bound to grow over time.

Consumer Benefits

The advantages for consumers that engage in the frictionless retail experience start with the speed in which the research, comparison, and transaction can be performed. This means in mere seconds a consumer can identify the product they want to buy, see the price being charged by several companies at once, and then complete the purchase with the business that offers the best price or value.

In addition, this form of shopping eliminates anything that could be considered a negative impact or fails to add value to the experience. This means no longer having to locate loyalty cards, wait for a paper receipt to print, and other hassles that slow down the purchasing process.

For retailers, the implications of changing technology combined with a shopping experience that consumers desire creates new issues along with opportunities. And while the switch from traditional shopping methods to the frictionless retail experience may not seem desirable at first, retail owners know that businesses that do not change with the times are most often left behind. Remember what Jack Welch, the former CEO of GE said, "Change before you have to."

Why Retailers Need to Engage in Frictionless Shopping

It may sound at first that the frictionless retail experience is a negative one for businesses involved. It reduces the direct personal interaction between retailers and consumers. This is important because loyalty cards, special discounts for members, and the like have been at the core of shopping for decades.

This means that for brick-and-mortar retail stores, aligning mobile pay with the inventory to provide access for fast purchases by customers. The challenges are considerable, but the benefits promise to be far greater for store owners who act quickly to take advantage of this trend.

Speed: The faster customers can get through the checkout process, the more customers the store can handle, the bigger the profits for the business. This is arguably the most important factor for retail owners as they can now make a traditionally slow part of the shopping experience run much faster.

Security: Another benefit is the tracking of all items which is connected to the inventory. The more up to date the inventory, the faster the need for replacing items will appear. This means that retailers can save money by instantly ordering products that are being purchased. They can also limit the number of products that do not sell as well.

Cost Savings: With a faster checkout process that is automated, retailers can switch some of their resources from checkout to other areas of the store that need more attention. This cost savings means that more can be put into areas that provide greater benefits to the retail store itself. It also can reduce supply needs such as paper receipts and other items associated with traditional checkouts.

There is no doubt that the frictionless retail experience will spread to more retail stores across the US and around the world. The benefits are considerable, allowing for consumers to select and pay for products instantaneously which improves their overall experience with the store. For retailers, it means opening new opportunities to bolster their branding and lower expenses to maintain their competitive edge.

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About the Author:

Elias Amash, President of GRIP, is an industry veteran with more than 30 years of experience in global sourcing, manufacturing, distribution, retail merchandising, fulfillment, marketing, technology, and operations. He is a trusted partner to hundreds of retailers and has “leveled up” the industry with GRIP’s undying commitment to offering only the highest levels of service to its customers. Amash has published several books: 8 Skills That Pay Off Forever, The Top 10 Most Important Lessons, The Retail Advantage: How to Win the War with Amazon, Retail Survival: Who Lives, Who Dies and Why, The 50 Most Important Lessons in Life, The Future of Retail, Importing from China: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly, and 101 Bright Ideas: Winning Tactics to Increase Retail Sales.

About GRIP:

GRIP was incorporated by Charles Amash in 1980 and has grown into one of the nation’s top suppliers of innovative products to the retail industry. Located just south of Grand Rapids, Michigan, GRIP features a 200,000 sq ft state of the art warehouse facility including a 2,000 sq ft product showroom. GRIP carries a product line of over 1,000 specialty tools, tarps, automotive, cargo control, cleaning, LED lighting, magnetics, outdoors, household items, impulse and general merchandise. GRIP has a proven track record of excellence in supplying retail clients with innovative products, timely fulfillment, and world-class customer support. At GRIP, everything is about earning your business...one customer at a time. It’s about building relationships and

fostering business partnerships that will last long into the future. Our goal is to have Customers for Life. The future at GRIP is exciting and we're hoping that you can be a part of it as one of our many Customers for Life.

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