

## From Omni-channel to ‘Mono-channel’

**For decades businesses have been living dual lives: one physical, one digital. And they have structured their businesses accordingly. With increasing numbers of digital natives reaching maturity, it’s now time to adopt a ‘mono-channel’ mindset.**

When the internet first enabled us to shop online, it gave retailers a new channel to consider: e-commerce.

It was a brave new world, with new rules that nobody entirely understood. Retailers knew that the old physical world wasn’t going anywhere anytime soon, but also that this new digital world called for a fundamentally different approach to business. The result was a parallel evolution of offerings that were stitched together, in the end, by a brand.

This omni-channel approach was characteristic of a generation that had grown up without the iPhone, to whom the digital represented an ‘alternative way.’ But over time, as these people became comfortable with both ways, the lines have blurred, and the distinction has become more of a disturbance than a benefit.

At the same time, a new generation of digital natives, Gen-Z, has come into the market with no experience of life without digital. Businesses now find themselves designing for a large and growing segment of customers who grew up swiping, tapping and pinching screens while simultaneously engaging in real-world experiences.

The time has come to move on from the omni-channel approach because physical versus digital is a meaningless distinction for today’s young people—a generational market even larger than the Baby Boomers. They live in a mono-channel world where they engage with both physical and digital space simultaneously. They are only concerned about technology when they don’t have

it—almost like oxygen, it must be ubiquitous and always accessible.

The same principles apply to all, beyond digital natives. Every person experiences the world holistically, not in silos. We don’t enter a room and observe the light fixtures separately to the ceiling—we take in the space, the people in it, and their behaviors, all at once.

That means any boundaries companies assert to suit their internal mindset will introduce friction and dissonance, and the experience will suffer. On the flip side, the convergence of physical and digital space presents companies with tremendous opportunities for new kinds of engagements that can deliver unprecedented value for customers.

To take advantage, companies need to wire themselves to think in mono-channel so that they can integrate digital and physical experiences seamlessly. That way the relative strengths of the two realms can augment—not oppose—each other, as complementary elements of a holistic experience.

The task for every consumer-facing business is, in one sense, unchanged: it’s to be as valuable as possible. In the world we now live in, that means offering customers experiences that are useful, memorable—and entirely seamless. Experiences of extraordinary quality, delivered like they were the most obvious thing in the world.

These are the experiences that will win hearts and minds. And ultimately, the market.