NEW TECHNOLOGIES, BUSINESS MODELS AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE – THE OXFORD RETAIL FUTURES CONFERENCE 2012

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The Oxford Institute of Retail Management (OxIRM) is currently working on a research project that focuses on innovation and emerging information technologies in retailing. Sponsored by Intel, the project reflects the need to analyse and discuss the future of traditional ‘bricks and mortar’ retail stores, which are threatened by the growing success of online retailers. The latter’s sales are increasing, with online sales and communication channels replacing traditional retail and services. Many store-based businesses are struggling to compete with the online environment, their potential failure has wide implications, both for the retail diversity of town and city centres and for employment prospects in local job markets. Changes in the retail environment are particularly visible in the UK, where traditional high street retailers such as HMV and Woolworths have been unable to compete with online rivals.

Despite the changing character of retail, it seems unlikely we are witnessing the death of the traditional store. However, the current period of transition calls for solutions that cross existing boundaries between the online and in-store experience, such as the adaptation of new digital technologies to more traditional ‘bricks and mortar’ shopping environments. This was the theme of the Oxford Retail Futures Conference, a new event organised by OxIRM held at the University of Oxford in December. The conference was primarily for academics, with researchers from Canada, Cyprus, France, Germany, India, Italy, Malaysia,
Monday 10th December

The conference began with an informal dinner held at Green Templeton College. The unique role of Colleges within the University of Oxford was explained to participants. There are thirty-eight independent, self-governing colleges at Oxford. Each college has its own Governing Body, comprising the Head of House, known as the Principal in Green Templeton, and a number of Fellows, most of whom also hold University posts. The collegiate system enables academics and students from different subjects and year groups, cultures and countries to come together to share ideas in a smaller, interdisciplinary community, in contrast to their membership of the Business School. During dinner the participants had the opportunity to meet and discuss topics for the following day.

Tuesday 11th December

The second day was designed to be highly interactive, with moderated panel discussions facilitating the exchange of ideas. Accepted papers were grouped into major themes, each the subject of a panel discussion. The three themes were:

- Multichannel and In-store
- Mobile Technologies In-store
- Customer and Supplier Relationships

Following introductory remarks by Richard Cuthbertson and Wojciech Pietrowicz, Jonathan Reynolds began with an account of the technological innovations and discoveries impacting the retail environment in the 19th and 20th Centuries. This was an excellent opportunity to remind the audience that technological change and process development are not new phenomena, and that retailers have had to respond before, adjusting their business models accordingly.

The first panel, Multichannel and In-store, discussed the links between various retail sales channels. Presentations covered topics such as cross-channel strategy, key drivers and technology-related issues in

Panel One: Multichannel and In-store

- Channel Switching Behaviour and Customer Satisfaction in Multichannel Companies
  - Peder Inge Furseth, BI Norwegian Business School, Norway

- Understanding the Key Drivers of and Technology-related Issues Associated with Going Multichannel: Preliminary Findings from an Exploratory Study in the UK Retail Sector
  - Julie Lewis, Carley Foster and Paul Whyall, Nottingham Trent University, UK

- Perceived Risk Dimensions and Practical Barriers in Acceptance of Online Shopping
  - Parikshit Pachorkar, Manjusha Nalavade and Mahwish Khubir Kalyani Ravindra Sapkal, College of Management Studies, India

- The Emergence of Relationship-based Retailing—A Perspective from the Fashion Sector
  - Luciano Batista, University of East Anglia and Irene Ng, University of Warwick, UK

- Cross-channel Strategy and Retail Business Model Changes: A Case Study on China’s Suning Appliance Company
  - Lanlan Cao, Rouen Business School, France

Panel Two: Mobile Technologies In-store

- The Use of Mobile Phones by Customers in Retail Stores: A Case of Poland
  - Maja Kiba-Janiak, Wrocław University of Economics, Poland

- Mobile Digital Engagement: Creating an Immersive Online Shopping Experience for M-commerce
  - Patsy Perry, Stefano Padilla, Heriot-Watt University, UK

- Mobile Device Behaviours and Shopping Activity: A Case Study of Young Canadians
  - Tony Hernandez, Ryerson University, Canada

- Engineering the Value Network of the Future Retail Customer Interface and Marketing
  - Yoonne Hulschbach and Key Pouschinski, We_mobile Research Group, University of Augsburg, Germany

Panel Three: Customer and Supplier Relationships

- Business Process Modelling for E-Business Development in Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)
  - George Papageorgiou and Christos Dimopoulos, European University Cyprus, ELI Research Center, Cyprus

- Sharing of Resources within Organization of Joint Transport Processes in ECR Poland
  - Mariant Hajdul, Institute of Logistics and Warehousing, Poland

- The Use of Technology to Enhance the Customer Experience in Fashion Retailing
  - Marta Blazquez, Complutense University, Spain

- Retail Shopper Marketing between Individual Customer Information and Digital Channels: The Case of the Promotional Flyer
  - Cristina Ziliani, University of Perugia, Italy

- Blogs as E-Commerce Sites: Will they Sustain the Online Retail?
  - Erne Kasim, Sri Pattam Abdul Kadir Jaltani and Abdul Kadir Othman, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

- Multichannel Strategy and Service Innovation: The Importance of Seamless Integration of a Company’s Distribution Channels
  - Peder Inge Furseth, BI Norwegian Business School, Norway

Conference speakers and their research topics

Source: ORFC, 10-11 December 2012, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford
multichannel retailing, barriers and risk perceptions among online customers, channel switching behaviour, and customer satisfaction. The consensus was that the online and traditional channels currently may be competing with each other (sometimes within the same company), but are likely to merge in the future, with the physical store potentially serving as a ’hub’ where additional services such as post-sales customer support are offered. Various scenarios for future development were discussed, together with the success of ‘click and collect’ and the continuing expansion of home delivery.

The second panel, emerging mobile technologies in-store, included presentations on mobile device behaviour and shopping activity among young Canadians, as well as on the use of mobile devices in-store by Polish customers.