

**What's next
for shopping?**

ustwo

Our practical take on how to thrive in retail

We've seen countless predictions for a post-pandemic world, especially relating to retail. While we're keen not to add to the noise, it'd be foolish not to analyse the immense changes in this sector and look at how ustwo can help.

We care about people, so we stay in touch with their changing needs and habits. Living memory can recall few bigger shocks than the Covid-19 pandemic, so we're keeping a keen eye on what it's doing to people's buying behaviours and, by extension, what that means for retailers.

We've watched people embrace a radically digital new world, where they can (and had to) do much more from the safety of home. We've seen continuous change rolling out, and we've kept tabs on what those factors have done to people's expectations as customers.

In the coming pages, you'll find several themes, examples of retailers doing good things and our perspective on how to move forward as retail leaders.



Roll with the punches

Things weren't rosy for retail pre-pandemic and it's been one of the hardest-hit sectors since it arrived, with fluctuating demand, supply chain challenges and – most importantly – negative effects on people both internally (your workforce) and externally (your customers).

However, with every challenge comes an opportunity for learning and positive change. We're interested in what “build back better” means for retail. This three-part study dives into opportunity areas we've spotted, plus our observations of companies that are doing well in three important areas.



Part 1: Commerce starts at home



Part 2: Face it: phygital is a thing now

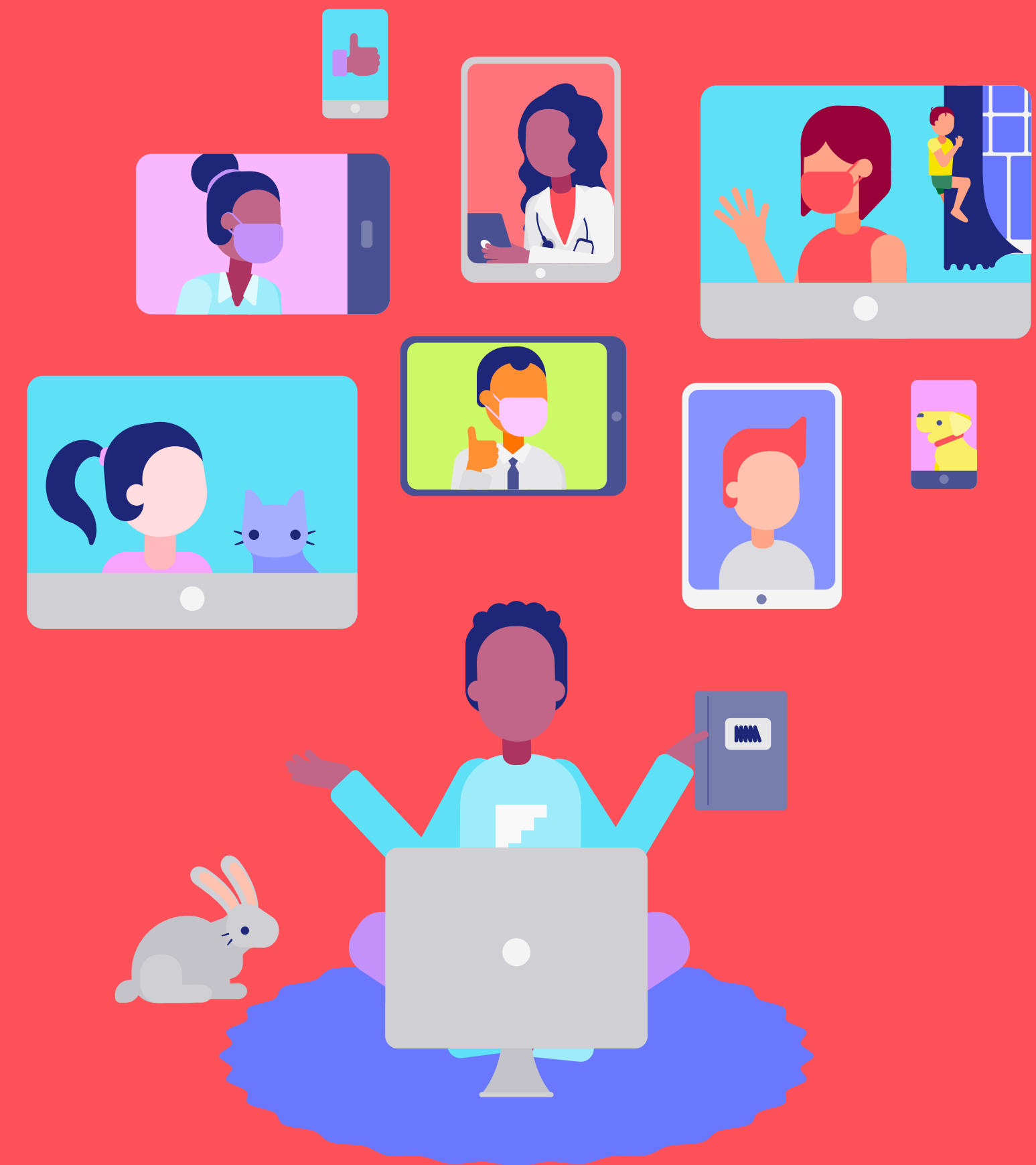


Part 3: Direct-to-consumer's shake-up

Part 1:

Commerce starts at home

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Community is a commercial opportunity – if approached with care.

To become part of a culture, it's important to understand the needs, fears and aspirations of the communities that shape it, and to respect them rather than trying to override them. The recent uncertainty has only deepened people's need to trust and rely on what they know.

We say: Find ways to integrate experiences that just add value to the familiar.

Precious few retailers can build connections with communities from nothing, but some had a head-start when the pandemic hit. Already in tune with their communities, they could quickly change their sales tactics and provide the support people needed. If this isn't you, start by identifying who cares about your brand, who might care, who should care, and who you'd like to care.

We say: Dive into your retention data to find out what you're doing right by those customers who have stayed, and what has motivated others to go elsewhere. Build on the good things and fix the bad to make the most of the community you've already built.

Covid-19's arrival was the kind of shock that reveals what truly matters to people. It uncovered the complexities of relationships between brands and the two communities who previously kept them in profit: workforces and customers. Common to both groups is a search for purpose, which is key for sustainable engagement.

We say: Understand these people's quest for purpose, then authentically and empathetically connect with them to boost both brand love and sales.

Truly understanding a community doesn't stop at buyer behaviour and demographics — you also have to understand the socio-economic issues that are important to them. We're talking about the big topics: civil unrest, equality movements and environmental concerns, not to mention heightened uncertainty about jobs and financial futures. People will likely welcome action that supports the causes in which they believe but, a word to the wise: once you've decided to step up, backing off if things get uncomfortable won't go over well.

We say: Follow through, work with integrity and shoulder some responsibility, because the way you show up with and for your communities will be something they remember.

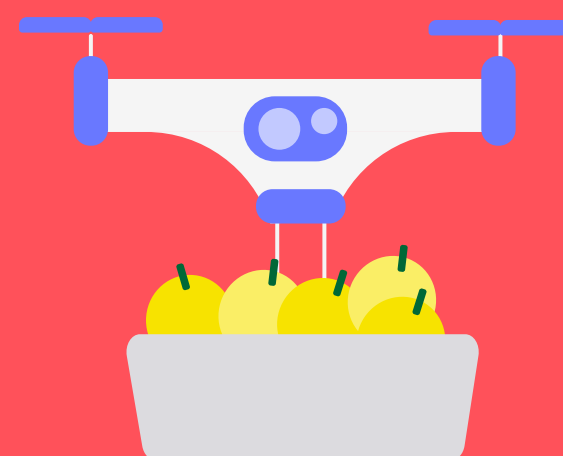
Points of interest

- 71% of global consumers agree that if they perceive a brand is putting profit over people, they will lose trust in that brand forever, according to the 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer.
- Did They Help? is a site documenting brands and celebrities that have contributed positively to Covid-19, listing them as "heroes" and allocating a point per good deed.

1 Local first

Finding out what's happening on your doorstep (whether literal or digital).

Many of us have been spending more time on our home turf than ever before, so retailers need to think first about how they might help their neighbours get what they need and want (maybe even a nice surprise) without needing to leave their immediate surroundings. That might mean digitally facilitating an exchange of skills, partnering with local charity organisations and NGOs, giving over spaces and resources to those who need it most, or making previously physical services available digitally.



Who's been doing it well?

Co-op, UK

We worked with British convenience retailer Co-op to pivot their existing Co-operate platform into an online resource connecting those who needed help in lockdown with those keen to provide it – in just nine days. At the outset of the crisis, the Co-op also announced the 6,500 students who qualify for free school meals at the 25 Co-op Academies would get £20 to spend in Co-op food stores for every week their schools were closed.

IKEA, Germany

The IKEA store in Wetzlar offered its car park to around 800 Muslims from a local mosque so they could perform Eid prayers at the end of Ramadan while safely distanced.

Nike, Global

Nike understands that its “local” community is the array of amateur athletes that engage with its product and performance platforms globally. They launched an ongoing programme that encourages people to compete against themselves in a weekly challenge. Footballer Cristiano Ronaldo kicked off Nike’s Living Room Cup on 5 April, posting a video of himself at home completing 142 ‘core crusher’ sit-ups in 45 seconds and challenging Instagram users to beat him. The Living Room Cup started shortly after Nike launched its Play for the World campaign, calling on sport enthusiasts to ‘play inside, play for the world’ to help stem the spread of Covid-19. The brand also made their Premium Training Club completely free for an indefinite period of time.

2 Pivot

Exploring new ways of working that previously seemed impossible.

Perhaps one of the most frequently heard words in the retail landscape lately, to “pivot” means to turn or twist, like the brand/retail owners who have had to take radical leaps to maintain a version of their business. It’s important to ask ourselves: what learnings are worth taking forward?

Who’s been doing it well?

Burberry, Global

Burberry has launched a video game, B Surf, to promote its monogram summer collection. The game lets players dress up their characters in the brand’s outfits before challenging friends to a surfing race around a track. Burberry’s in-house development team created B Surf as the brand’s first multiplayer game. Players even have the opportunity to win real-life prizes through the game, including a limited-edition monogrammed surfboard and Burberry bucket hats as well as digital prizes such as face filters and AR-themed characters.

Très Bien, Sweden/Global

Fashion retailer Très Bien created the ATELJÉ limited-edition collection, produced entirely from home in the lockdown period. Each item was produced with the support of the brand’s local network in Malmö: they were sewn by the founder’s mother-in-law, labels for the delivery boxes were printed from home, and an ex-member of the brand’s logistics team was recruited as a campaign model to add to a personal feel. Having opened a store in London just as Covid-19 hit, the brand pivoted by offering video store visits via Zoom.

F&B pioneers

In lockdown, pioneering restaurateurs, caterers and grocers found new approaches to service that are still being used and developed as restrictions are lifted. People will get used to this idea of curated convenience — which was already burgeoning with operations like Mindful Chef and HelloFresh — and we’ll see a new food retail model emerging.

3 Pay it forward

Keeping the spirit of generosity and camaraderie alive.

The fact we're all in this situation together has engendered a heartening desire to support others by sharing skills, time, resources and expertise. Many businesses whose operations were on hold have benefitted from crowdfunding and pay-it-forward schemes.



Who's been doing it well?

Mayor of London, UK

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, launched a plan urging Londoners to buy goods and services in advance from small businesses to help them stay afloat while they were closed, particularly in hospitality, retail and leisure.

Libro.fm, USA

Libro.fm is an audiobook streaming service which splits sales 50/50 with local bookstores — a partnership made more valuable than ever by keeping those stores' revenue flowing and workers safe since the early days of the virus. Its #ShopBookstoresNow initiative raised nearly US\$75,000 for booksellers, and it was good business for the brand, prompting an 800% increase in traffic to the Libro.fm site, a 200% increase in new memberships, and more audiobook listening than ever before.



4 Odd couples

Making unlikely marriages for everyone's benefit.

This isn't a new idea, (last year we saw Starbucks and McDonalds collaborate on a next gen cup challenge for the good of the planet), but it's now more of a logistical play. Businesses are forging unlikely collaborations that set aside any previous rivalry and help each other stay in the black, while bringing people the goods they need and want — from meal boxes to flowers and even CBD-based stress relief products.

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Who's been doing it well?

Deliveroo, UK

Deliveroo has partnered with CBD brand, Trip, to deliver cannabidiol products to consumers' homes. The partnership allows people across London, Manchester and Leeds to order CBD oils and infused drinks such as cold brew coffee and botanical mixers. Some believe that these adaptogenic products alleviate stress and improve immunity.

Still Life Flowers, UK

Floral designers took a huge hit as the wedding and event industry ground to a halt. Starting off small and local, East London-based Still Life Flowers made a small selection of blooms available to pick up from like-minded local businesses that were also seeking ways to adapt, including Search & Rescue and Kemp Kitchen. Every order included a £2.50 donation to help people affected by the pandemic, through Solace Women's Aid and Hackney Essential's employment scheme.

Hot 4 U, UK

A new delivery and collection restaurant in London is supporting local chefs from previously competing restaurants, St. John, Cub and Silo. Offering a weekly changing set menu for delivery and collection on Fridays and Saturdays, the concept brings together the flavours and expertise of the different businesses while adapting to the challenges of the market.

5 Inside out

Showing empathy and understanding towards employees and advocates.

In the topics above, we've looked at the many ways in which retailers are going the extra mile to help their external communities — their customers — but they must also recognise what needs to be done for their internal communities. While many brands are taking action to support Black Lives Matter and/or environmental causes, there's a lot of work to do in terms of diversifying C-suite and leadership teams, of looking at structures and processes that harm people and planet, and of being proactive to help alleviate the stress caused by the pandemic — both professionally and personally.



Who's been doing it well?

Patagonia, USA

Reaching beyond their apparel brand, Patagonia has shown commitment to activism in a number of areas including climate change and Black Lives Matter, using their voice for peaceful protest and their cash to fund movements in which they believe. Their statements tend to be short, meaningful and transparent. Most importantly, they follow through on their claims.

Lululemon, USA

Taking a holistic view of their community, Lululemon launched initiatives to support its employees, customers and ambassadors through the challenges wrought by the pandemic. For body and mind, they launched online fitness, meditation and mindfulness classes. For financial concerns,

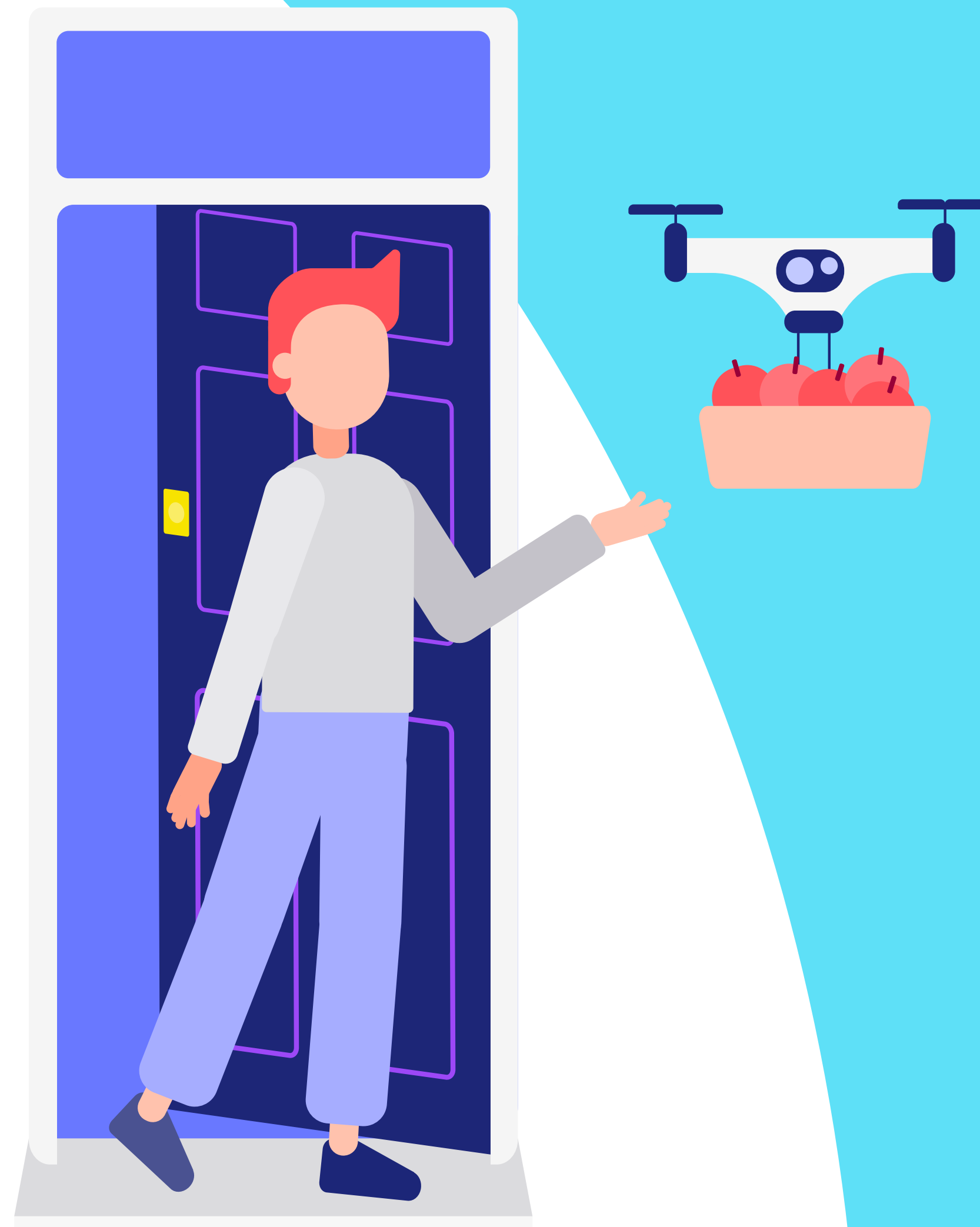
they paid staff fairly for their scheduled shifts plus salary relief for those who had to isolate etc. They also announced a US\$2 million fund to support ambassadors through lockdown.

Share the mic, UK

An initiative facilitated by London agency, Livity, invited a coalition of brands to hand over their Instagram feeds to black voices, with the aim to showcase black creatives and activists in the UK, and to keep momentum behind the Black Lives Matter movement. Participating brands included REN Clean Skincare, Coppafeel!, Freeda Media and Bloom & Wild.

Part 2:

Face it: phygital is a thing now



Phygital's transition from nice-to-have to must-have.

How many times in the past five years have you heard or read about “phygital retail” being the next big thing? More than we can count. It's taken a global pandemic, however, to force our hands into making these much-lauded phygital retail ideas not just a reality, but a necessity.

We say: Get ready to turn the theory into reality.

While the pandemic is not over, many shops are reopening for business with new safety measures and cautious ways of working in place. It's time to reimagine bricks-and-mortar retail to incorporate digital in ways that make people feel protected, and that enhance the experience of going to a shop. How do we seamlessly blend digital and physical in a meaningful way, to create a business fit for an ever-changing future?

We say: Think about how digital can bring new layers of security and joy to your experiences.

As we start to find our feet again, some retailers haven't yet moved on from the triage efforts that stabilised their business through the worst uncertainty. Their customers will soon lose patience if the services don't live up to their expectations of a smooth experience.

We say: Upgrade your gap-plugging services to ensure your customers have the sense that your business knows them, and offers a smooth transition between online and offline. Every time.

Digital brings opportunities to do things very differently, to be there for people when and where they need you. We're talking about things like virtual appointments and live-streaming on social media.

We say: It's time to be genuinely inventive. Get comfortable with experimentation and think about how you can scale those ideas that show promise.

Buyer behaviour

More than 90% of customers say their behaviour has changed since before the pandemic, buying almost exclusively online where possible. According to Forrester research.



1 Connection, not transaction

Reintroducing a personal touch to touch-free experiences.

In uncertain times, we want to feel connected. While the efficiency of online binge-shopping is appealing, many of us crave human interaction and expertise, so retailers are looking at different ways to recreate a more “human” experience — through real people replacing bots as online shop assistants, by sharing designer/maker back-stories, and with enhanced community-building initiatives.

Many of these digital services will likely see growing demand as people want to retain the convenience and inherent social distancing provided by online shopping.

Who’s been doing it well?

Chipotle, USA

On its website, Chipotle offers a new group order feature, enabling customers to share a group order link so that multiple people can order simultaneously to their separate addresses. By catering (forgive the pun) to distributed group meals, the restaurant can engage customers who remain cautious about returning to physical dining spaces, while acknowledging people’s need to be sociable.

John Lewis & Selfridges, UK

John Lewis customers can book one-hour appointments to talk to experts in the nursery, personal styling, and home design departments. Elsewhere, Selfridges is giving customers personalized access to their beauty, style and gifting specialists through their virtual appointments tool.

Suntec City, Singapore

A shopping centre in downtown Singapore recently streamed its first ever live event, Shopfest. Covid-19 had led to the cancellation of the Great Singapore Sale — an annual in-person sales event featuring concerts, food stalls and more. Suntec City filled the void by offering a live event in which shoppers could log on to the Suntec+ app to see new products presented by hosts, then purchase them through the app.

Digital sizing tools

Many clothing shops have chosen to keep their fitting rooms off-limits since they reopened, clearing the path for AR sizing solutions.

For instance, Fit:Match has studios in three shopping centres in Chicago, Dallas

and Los Angeles. Customers can scan their bodies for measurements and are then presented with a digital collection of clothes in their size, from participating brands.

Elsewhere, MySizeID has seen an 800% increase in use since the pandemic began. It’s used by a number of brands like U.S. Polo

Assn to minimise the need for making returns when shopping online.

Seek allows customers to see a 3D rendering of a product before they go into a store, and has seen a 600% increase in demand from retailers since March.

2 Digital storefronts

Creating a flavour of reality in virtual retail.

Once the “essential items only” phase of lockdown was over, many people started online shopping with abandon and their expectations began to rise, with a growing desire for retailers to replicate in-store experience in the virtual world. Retailers are experimenting with new, immersive platforms, 3-D modelling, engaging content, and partnerships with the games industry.

The world of retail is changing and buying habits are evolving but, fundamentally, people’s emotional needs are pretty static. The process may be new but we’re still people selling to people — and we must remember that when crafting customer experiences.



Who’s been doing it well?

Yeezy Supply, USA

Kanye West has collaborated with British fashion photographer Nick Knight on an immersive retail environment for Yeezy Supply. The site features waiting rooms for the latest product drops, alongside real-life models who try on outfits for browsing customers. While many existing 3-D models on e-commerce platforms have limited functionality, the Yeezy site allows customers to experiment with styling.

Data point

Global e-commerce sales were 81% higher in May 2020 than in 2019, according to ACI Worldwide Research.

Norfolk Natural Living, UK

When lockdown forced their doors closed, this small beauty shop sought to replicate online the interactive nature of buying beauty products in person. They boosted their online offering to give customers more of what they came to the store for, including better photography that lifted products off the screen, the kind of detailed descriptions they would have had from the shop’s staff, and free samples sent in the mail.

M.A.C, Global

The beauty brand launched a collaboration with The Sims 4 to allow players to experiment with makeup styles within the virtual world.

3 Contactless solutions

Making sure touchless doesn't mean soulless.

One of the biggest issues physical shops are grappling with is how to provide a quality experience with minimum physical contact between people and products. Contactless payments have been around way before this current crisis, but the pandemic has forced retailers to do much more. While contactless tech is efficient and hygienic, it can lack feeling, so they are now looking to fast-track creative solutions that can extend the contactless experience way beyond just payment. Some are experimenting with sensorial, non-tactile elements such as layering sound, lighting and scent.

Who's been doing it well?

Showfields, USA

An in-house app called Magic Wand lets people interact with nearly every part of the Showfields store without touching a thing. Shoppers point their phones at the various brand displays or scan specific items to prompt the app to surface information. They put anything they want in a virtual cart, pay through the app, and their purchases are packaged up and left at one of several pick-up points throughout the store.

Christie's, Global

In business since the 1700s, British Auction house, Christie's, is no stranger to adapting to change. They've launched an augmented reality app that enables customers to browse its sales online. From masterpieces to affordable prints, prospective buyers can even virtually hang a piece of art on their own wall through a truly immersive visual experience — a hyper-real view of every brushstroke.

Cash point

According to a survey by the International Council of Shopping Centers, administered from 3 July to 5 July, more than half of respondents agreed when asked if they've "cut back or completely stopped using cash" and having switched to contactless payments due to Covid-19.

4 Technology's bridging role

Linking online and offline with the right tech solutions.

Retailers are having to get creative, adapt to a new non-linear shopping experience, and accept a drop-off in footfall. Among the responses we're seeing are temporary pop-ups making a comeback, plus museum-like shops and curated showroom models that invest in exclusive brand collaborations, emerging brands, and arts-focused displays designed to create safe but more interactive experiences. Each of these formats needs new technological solutions to help people flit between online and offline without having to think too hard about it, without duplicating steps or having to jump through new hoops.

Curation across channels is going to be very important — shoppers want to move seamlessly and effortlessly between touchpoints, which means retailers need to adopt a unified approach, making sure each brand channel and experience complements the other(s).



Who's been doing it well?

Nike Rise, China

Nike is testing its new store format, Nike Rise, in Guangzhou. The shop serves as a hub for local sports enthusiasts by hosting in-store events and through new app features. The store displays a digital calendar of events, highlighting basketball and soccer matches that staff host locally. Shoppers can register for one-to-one sessions with Nike staffers specializing in things like yoga, running and soccer, and access weekly talks with local athletes and community leaders.

Pop Up Grocer, USA

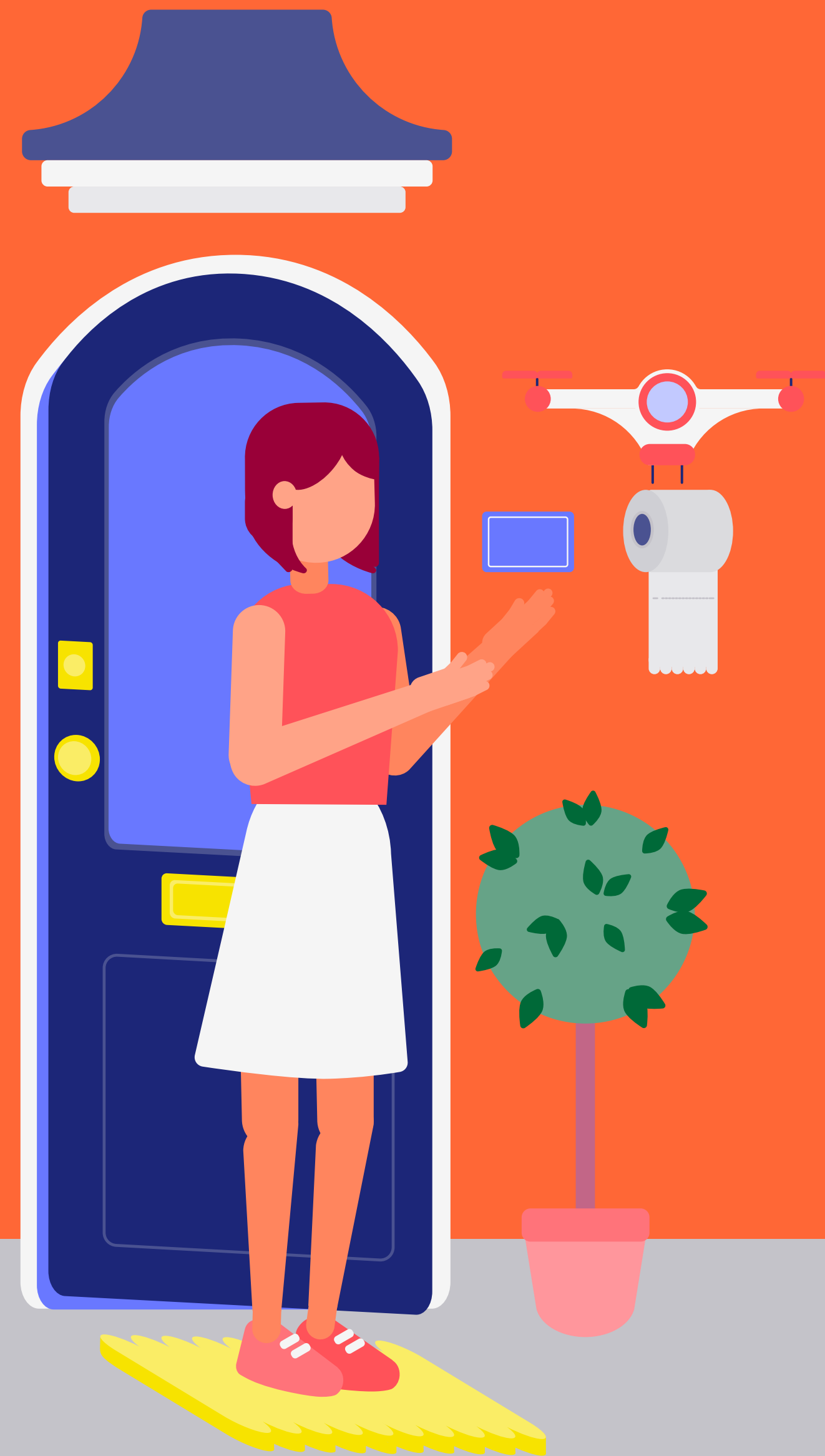
Pop Up Grocer is a traveling pop-up grocery store, showcasing hundreds of products from 150+ of the most innovative food, beverage, home, pet, and body care online brands today.



Part 3:

Direct-to-consumer's shake-up

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An essential, fresh look at an established approach.

Direct-to-consumer (DTC) is not a new retail model, but Covid-19 has demanded that both online-native innovators and old school bricks-and-mortar giants take a fresh look at it. Retailers of all shapes, sizes and models need to strive for a stable level of engagement and loyalty, to be responsible for (and with) their customer relationships, and to seek to diversify when it makes sense and promises rewards. New DTC strategies to help retailers achieve these goals are emerging.

We say: Look at your DTC options with fresh eyes and an innovation mindset.

Many DTC brands have reported astronomical sales growth during the pandemic – even those that were planning some kind of physical outpost before lockdown have been able to quickly adapt.

There is a whole social rabbit-hole of DTC debate on Twitter on how best to proceed as a start-up but it is not just new players exploring these rules of behaviour.

We say: Start thinking about DTC not as a stop-gap but a robust, long-term offering.

With half of customers shopping on digital channels for products they've never bought online before, the opportunities for DTC are expanding daily. It's important to note that if, as a big organisation, you're moving from B2B to DTC, then your existing systems won't be fit for purpose.

We say: Investigate new digital strategies and think through the entire digital journey.

Buyer behaviour 2020

- People's purchasing behaviour has transformed during the pandemic. A new confidence has emerged in ecommerce, with many expanding their online shopping across multiple categories.
- Half of customers are shopping on digital channels for products they've never bought online before, with a particular focus on necessities. Among these items, consumers are primarily buying groceries, household products and children's toys. According to Forrester research.

1 Big B&M players adapting

Changing even the longest-standing operations.

Large-scale corporations with a raft of bricks-and-mortar stores or outlets/franchises — particularly in the food and beverage category — have had to reimagine themselves, fast. Nobody is immune from the effects of Covid-19, and that includes giants that may previously have seemed infallible.

Who's been doing it well?

PepsiCo, USA

PepsiCo quickly cut out the middleman (bricks-and-mortar vendors) by launching two new websites: PantryShop.com offers items such as cereals, snacks and protein bars, that can be ordered in bulk at an affordable price, and Snacks.com sells snacks that can be bundled in customizable packs and sent straight to your door.

Kraft-Heinz, UK

Heinz to Home website met the needs of Brits desperate to get their beans and ketchup in lockdown, and helped frontline workers with less time to shop. The site has now expanded its services to offer subscription options.

Walgreens, USA

When the Walgreens Alliance realized that customers' expectations were about to change, it created a new digital strategy. It accelerated pipeline projects including free delivery on all purchases from Walgreens online, letting shoppers in 14 cities across the US access a variety of health and wellness and other convenience products via Postmates' on-demand contactless delivery service. It also launched an 'order ahead' digital drive-thru experience, several Covid-19 testing locations in 49 US states and an 'Ask a Pharmacist' service.

2 Eco-logistics

Remembering the planet while catering for people.

With so much of our shopping moving online, fresh scrutiny has fallen on the physical and digital impact on our planet. Digitally storing and processing vast amounts of data places hefty demands on our energy supplies, while packaging generates waste and recycling concerns, and both domestic and international shipping obviously raise emissions.

With Greta Thunberg's efforts still hitting headlines worldwide, people are eager to see evidence that retailers are working to reduce the environmental effects of their DTC operations. Even when elbow-deep in a human crisis, it's still critical to minimise the negative impact DTC business has on our planet — and people will remember and develop loyalty to those that do it successfully.

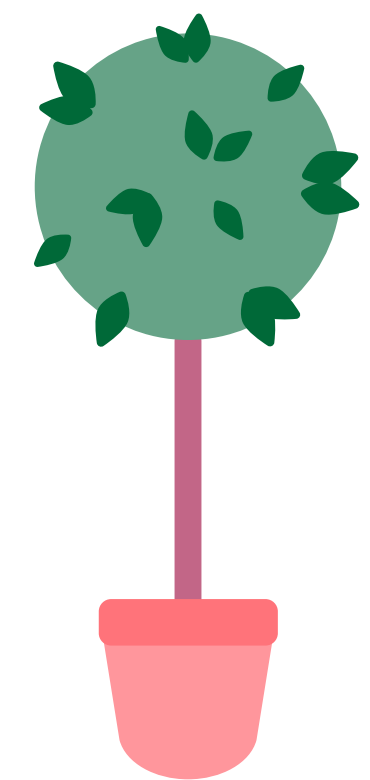
Who's been doing it well?

Organic Basics, Denmark

Danish underwear brand Organic Basics has created a low-impact website. Offering customers a sustainable online shopping experience, the platform runs on green energy from Denmark's windmills when available. Following ten key principles for reducing data wastage, the website compresses user data and minimises data transfer, while using limited images and no videos.

Bsclly, USA

The new direct-to-consumer clothing brand ethically manufactures premium basics in Los Angeles and Portugal using quality fabrics, and mails them out in fully sustainable packaging, including boxes made from sugar cane and acid-free tissue paper.



3 Safety in pre-sale

Choosing slower fulfilment to avoid excess stock.

While the current economic uncertainty continues, no retailer wants to be lumbered with excess stock and the costs that come with it, so the pre-order model is becoming more appealing — both for those who started out DTC and those who have pivoted to it. Taking orders before products are ready and managing customers' expectations accordingly eliminates the financial risk of speculatively ordering stock.

The camaraderie we mentioned earlier in the report is also showing itself in some retailers' messaging, as they find that honesty is the best policy when it comes to earning people's respect and loyalty. Those people who can afford to make non-essential purchases are more likely to do so with those that show the real, human side of their business.

Who's been doing it well?

July, USA

Despite launching during a pandemic, the new air conditioning disruptor, July, garnered a 20,000-person waiting list. When the virus first hit, the company implemented a monthly slot-based programme starting with a waiting list, so every month, a set of slots would open up and be filled by those on the list. When summer arrived and slots rolled out, the company sold US\$300,000-worth of units in the first 10 days for the July fulfillment.

Canoo, USA

Electric vehicle Canoo has a "gamified waiting list", whereby subscribers can improve their position on the list by earning points for successful referrals and completing surveys as well as buying Canoo merchandise and apparel.

4 Subscription Models

Guaranteeing regular revenues by promising discounts and privileges.

New DTC brands have often found it tricky to earn loyalty and sell memberships, but grooming products like Estrid have seen it work effectively. The key is “easy exit”: the knowledge that they can cancel at any moment makes people more relaxed about taking out a subscription in the first place. Those that do it well find they can build a relationship of trust and an understanding of mutual benefit with their members.



Who's been doing it well?

Italic, USA

Selling premium goods from fashion to kitchenware, Italic is reshaping its business to become members-only. It launched a US\$99 annual membership deal in lockdown, which gives its members access to 1000+ quality items from the same manufacturers as top brands, at cost.

Beauty Pie, UK/Global

When the pandemic took hold, subscription service Beauty Pie offered its customers discounts and payment holidays. Existing members were not charged when their memberships renewed in March and April, and annual membership prices will be discounted by 20% when they renew. A small 'project shoestring' charge was added into the price of all products to “help us pay some of our overheads and you'll still be saving up to 80%”. The transparency of the email communication explained why and how this could be achieved and rewarded its members' loyalty in difficult times.

5 Decentralised DTC

Sharing infrastructures that support small businesses.

Lockdown has motivated people to experiment with alternative ways of accessing and exchanging products, and an increase in “Etsy-type models”, in which a number of smaller operations band together to share infrastructures. A wave of decentralised retail concepts are emerging, which will further transform the e-commerce landscape.

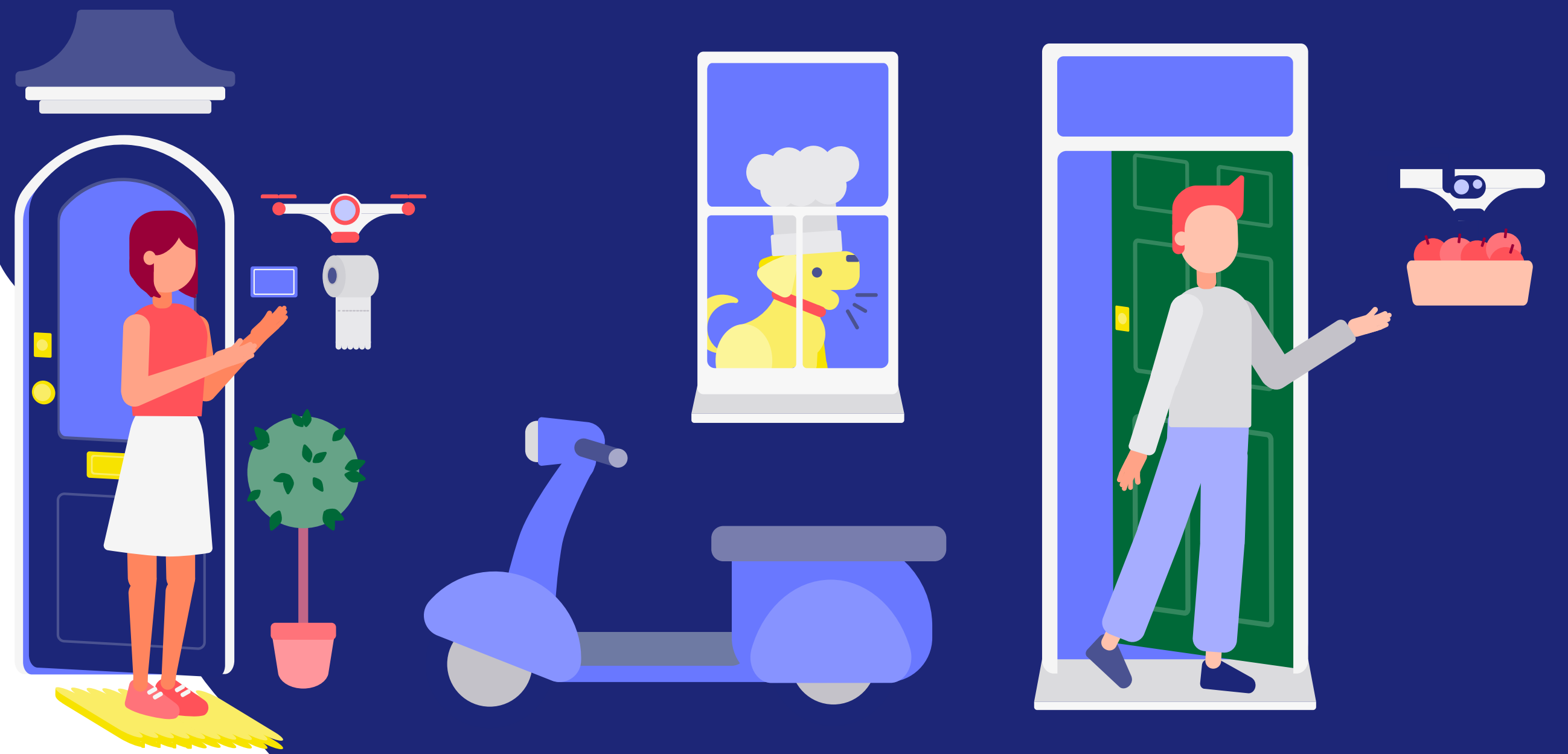


Who's been doing it well?

Splitcha, Global

Mitigating the need for building a brand website or contracting with a payments service, Splitcha's network extends into several countries across Europe, as well as Canada, Australia and India. It gives individual sellers from these countries a platform, while shoppers can buy speciality items from overseas without excessive shipping costs. The retail network also benefits individual shoppers by letting them earn credit based on the use of their local bank account on behalf of international customers. Providing a service for both businesses and consumers, Splitcha can be used to buy, deliver or gift products within their country of origin, without the need for international shipping costs or time constraints.

No. 1 takeaway: engagement and loyalty for the win



Driving engagement and loyalty is the core goal common to our three themes, and should be at the heart of any retail innovation – especially in the radically digital world we now live in.

To earn reliable engagement with your brand during this bizarre and difficult time, you simply must be both trustworthy and responsive. That means you need to listen to your customers, understand their new contexts (financial, emotional, and environmental) and spend time getting to the root of how they see the risks associated with Covid-19 and how they want to deal with them.

Our focus is always on people first, so this is instinctively how we think. Here are some thought-starters that put people at the middle of your business:



1 Understand new customer values

Without the confidence that you know and understand what's important to your customers, you can't be sure that any solution you work on is worth the effort (or money). While research projects may sometimes feel like a luxury in terms of time and money, they could well prevent you making costly mistakes as they'll uncover people's context and decision-making habits, and reveal what you can realistically do to offer them something they'll value.

When people feel a bit uncomfortable, they turn to the companies they feel they can trust to deliver what they need — those that communicate honestly and transparently, and that treat them as real people rather than wallets.

2 Community

Once you understand your communities, (customers, employees, locals), you can find ways to support them, supply solutions for their needs, and ultimately find new commercial opportunities that brace you for whatever the future brings. If you show, in tangible ways, that you're willing and able to step forward and support your communities in good times and bad, they will likely treat your business with the same spirit.

Numbers of interest

- Some 48% of Brits currently say they feel uncomfortable visiting an enclosed retail space like a shopping centre.
- In June 2020, 13% more people in the US and UK, and 8% more French consumers rated click-and-curbside-collect as attractive, as compared to March.

3 Convenience and ease

Is your service fast, easy to use and reliable? If not, customers will find another that is, so look for ways to get creative with your fulfilment operations and streamline the customer experience. While some people will always enjoy wandering around the shops, many will stick to their new online shopping habits — particularly with retailers that pay close attention to reducing the environmental impact of their delivery methods. Prepare your business to be robust and agile enough to handle an ecommerce-heavy future.

Written in the stats

- 43% want to see greater support from retailers for local communities.
- 71% of global consumers agree that if they perceive a brand is putting profit over people, they will lose trust in that brand forever.

4 Being different

It's that old chestnut, the USP. Are you offering people a differentiated digital experience they can't get anywhere else? Explore how you might create an in-store experience that people simply can't get from their sofa, giving them a genuinely great reason to come back. Seek ways to connect with people on a more "human" level (both online and offline) to boost your relationship with them and keep them engaged with your brand. Aim for emotion and joy, without forgetting the utility aspect that makes life easier.

5 Core values

Yes, the ability to pivot smartly is important during these tricky months but, as you look for new ways to operate and keep your profits healthy, never lose sight of the things that made people engage with your brand in the first place. Stay true to what you believe in, be vocal about it and show you mean it by taking positive, public action.

Let's talk

If you think ustwo could help you,
please get in touch:

hello@ustwo.com



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