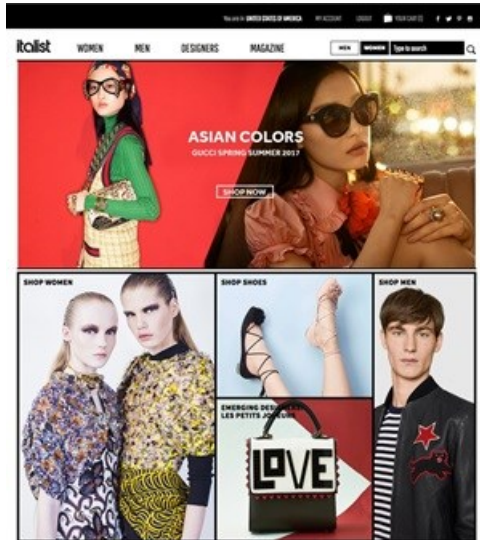


Adopt an omnichannel retail strategy or risk closure

Italist.com CEO, Diego Abba, was one of the opening keynote speakers at the Seamless Africa conference (future of payments, e-commerce & retail) in Cape Town this week. He stated that brands and 'bricks and mortar' retailers need to leverage their in-store assets and move into the world of e-commerce with an effective multichannel approach to sales that offers a seamless shopping experience to customers both physical and online, or face serious sales declines or closure.



“While traditional retailers are feeling the heat, with shoppers’ visits to retail stores declining, online retail is thriving. Stats show that retail sales through digital channels are cannibalising in-store sales. The obvious answer is to combine the physical with the digital, in what is called an omnichannel strategy, combining the live experience of the physical channel with the convenience of anything, anytime of the digital experience.”

One of the key advantages of the physical store is the relevance for a consumer to have the ability to feel and try the merchandise. “Conversely, on the digital front, it is very difficult to substitute the advantage of global reach of buying online and the easiness of finding data on products and peer reviews, to make the best purchase decision.

“Moreover, there is the need to rethink the store network presence in territories and how the physical and digital stores are linked together. What happens in many cases is that the digital has been an add-on to the physical and not a truly integrated distribution model.

Rethinking retail models

“The truth is that omnichannel is hard and requires rethinking the whole supply chain and logistics, in order to serve the physical and digital demands properly, with the eventual introduction of direct-to-consumer fulfilment, while optimising the management of inventory, balancing speed, predictability and reliability with cost. It also requires full utilisation of big data and analytics.”

“In the digital world, the ‘traditional’ way to engage with customers changes completely. The needed focus is on the interactive relationship with the customers that means usually ‘mastering’ social media. Also, it becomes essential to master search tools, starting with the implementation of an optimal Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) strategy and efficient campaigns on vertical search tools.

“It is obvious that in this constant evolving scenario of integration of physical and digital, new retail models will emerge. Our model is to have an unlimited offering, very fast product discovery and zero inventory cost. We do this with our marketplace for established multi-brand luxury retailers.”

In just two years, Italist has acquired a loyal global customer base in over 85 countries offering more than 750 brands.

“This highlights both the site’s credibility and the demand for an online marketplace for luxury goods. South Africa is set to be a great market for Italist, it has only just officially launched here, with an initial average spend of \$800 per customer,” concludes Abba.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>