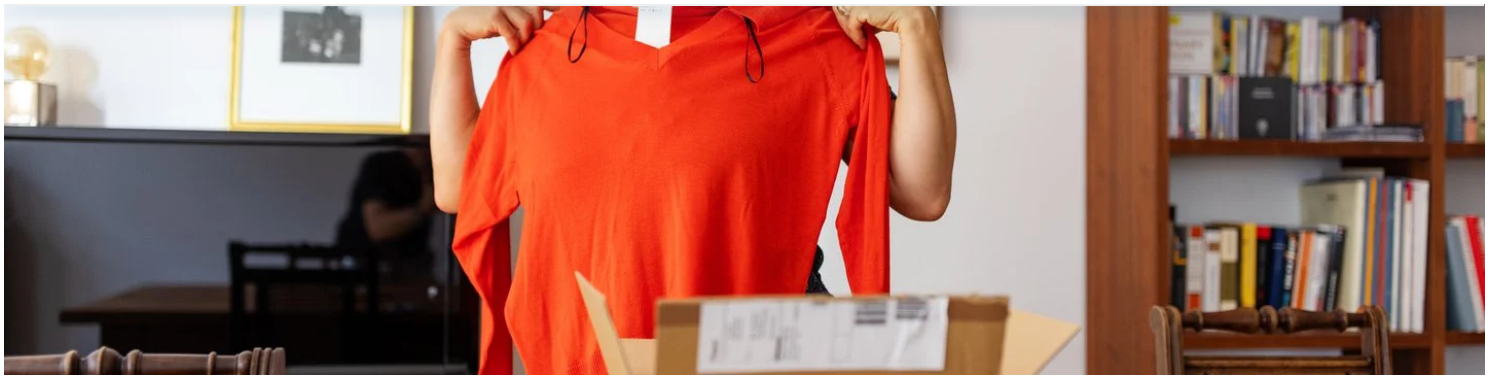
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Could This Trend Make Brick-and-Mortar Stores Even Less Essential?

Nov 03, 2021 by **Nell McPherson**

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There's been much discussion about how the pandemic accelerated the shift from physical retail to e-commerce. But lately, the conversation has turned to the impressive comeback many of the brick-and-mortar retailers that managed to survive have made. People are ready to get back out there and do the things they've been missing. For many, that includes doing some nonessential shopping in person.

Consumer shopping habits are in an almost constant state of flux, perhaps more now than ever. Very few people always want to shop on a retailer's website or in the store anymore. A major marketing goal of retailers right now is meeting consumers right where they are and letting them shop on their terms -- whatever that means from one moment to the next.

And that's what distributed commerce is all about. Let's take a look at this trend and explore the potential implications for real estate investors.

Shop here, shop there, shop everywhere

Do you want to buy products at the point of inspiration? According to a recent *Forbes* article, most people do. So what exactly does that mean?

The "point of inspiration" is anywhere you feel inspired to purchase a product. If you see a pair of jeans you want online, the retailer would love for you to be able to buy them right then and there, even if you don't happen to be on the company's website at the time.

Distributed commerce lets the customer shop their way and makes it as easy as possible for them to buy whenever the mood strikes. Want to order online and ship to your house? Terrific. Want to order online but pick up in store so you can check out something you want to see in person while you're there? Fantastic.

Of course, shopping in-store should be as simple as possible, too. And any shopping method you choose should make it easy to use any kind of store points or rewards you've earned.

Much of this is nothing new. But retailers are better understanding the importance of offering as many shopping avenues as possible while making each one as simple to use as they can. That might mean making sure employees offer to order your size and ship it to you if it's out of stock in the physical store.

It could also mean ramping up retail technological capabilities so you can easily order the dress your favorite celebrity is wearing in an online image. Or the industry may need to get ready for TV commerce so you can do the same while watching your favorite show.

The Millionacres bottom line

People have been shopping both online and in stores for many years now. In that sense, distributed commerce has been around for quite a while. What's new is that retailers are now spending big to streamline their ability to meet consumers across channels, where they're buying. We're getting to a place

where technology is about to take distributed commerce to another level -- essentially, distributed commerce is about to become more distributed than ever.

So what about brick-and-mortar retail? Is all that tech a threat? I don't think so. We've seen too much evidence lately that people truly do enjoy the experience of getting out and going shopping in an actual store. Add to that the fact that some items you just want to see or try on in person before buying, and it seems unlikely that a distributed-commerce explosion will completely replace those experiences.

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