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**Headline: Singaporeans expect retailers to adopt unified commerce to enrich their shopping experiences**

## **Singaporeans expect retailers to adopt unified commerce to enrich their shopping experiences**

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the retail sector to its core and forced an abrupt change in Singaporeans' shopping habits and expectations. New data released by **Adyen**, the global payments platform of choice for many of the world's leading companies, reveals that consumers in Singapore were quick to adapt, adopting online channels at a rate well above the global average. While restrictions are easing, consumer behaviours and expectations have changed permanently, and retailers will need to evolve to stay competitive in the new normal.

The **2020 Agility Report**, commissioned by Adyen, interviewed over 25,000 consumers across 16 countries, including more than 1,000 in Singapore, to understand what people expect from shopping and dining experiences today. It found that the pandemic led to a mass migration to online channels, with around half (49%) of the Singaporeans surveyed saying they shopped more online than prior to the pandemic, more than the global average of 33%. However, while many consumers moved to online alternatives, 72% of Singaporeans are looking forward to shopping in an offline store for pleasure again, higher than the global average of 55%.

**Warren Hayashi, President, Asia-Pacific, Adyen comments:** "Singaporean consumers are agile and will find ways to shop that work for them. While restrictions are easing, and people are returning to offline stores, shopping behaviours and expectations will not be the same as what they used to be. With many impressed with how the retail sector adapted quickly to offer new services online, expectations have increased as a result and consumers want online options to stay. To thrive, retailers will need to maintain or exceed these new expectations and adopt a seamless, omnichannel approach."

### ***Consumers moved online during the pandemic to continue shopping***

According to Adyen's research, most (59%) Singaporeans prefer to shop in a physical store. However, despite this, many turned to online alternatives during the pandemic to continue shopping. Apart from using websites, 64% also used shopping apps more during this period than previously, especially amongst 18 to 34-year olds (71%).

While there is a preference for shopping offline, there's some hesitance about going back despite restrictions easing, with 75% still avoiding shopping in store for non-essential items. The most common reason has been the close proximity to strangers (57%), with those over the age of 55 being the most concerned (63%). Other common reasons include Singaporeans watching how much they spend due to economic uncertainty (50%), as well as not wanting to stand in length queues (46%).

### ***New consumer expectations in Singapore***

Findings from the Agility Retail Report point to consumer behaviours having changed permanently. Despite this, Singaporean consumers remain loyal. The report found that 53% would shop at retailers they deem as important heritage or traditional brands to see them survive, and 65% would visit physical stores near them because they want them to stay open.

While loyalty is there, expectations of retailers who moved online to offer ecommerce offerings have changed, and they will need to maintain these experiences to sustain loyalty. According to the research, 87% of Singaporeans believe that if retailers can sell across multiple channels during the pandemic they should adopt the same flexible approach permanently.

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The need to maintain and offer these online offerings moving forward is especially important as more than half (54%) of the Singaporeans surveyed said they plan to shop more online despite the easing of restrictions, significantly higher than their global (36%) and Hong Kong counterparts (47%).

***The wants of Singaporeans: The new normal retail experience is unified***

To capitalise on these new customer behaviours, retailers will need to focus on delivering seamless and secure omnichannel experiences through unified commerce. The demand is there from consumers, as the majority (87%) of Singaporeans believe retailers should maintain a cross channel approach following the pandemic, even when stores open again.

Additionally, retailers should also offer the following to cater to the new demands and expectations of Singaporean consumers:

1. **Contactless payments for hygiene:** For payment experiences, most Singaporean consumers want choices and prefer cashless and contactless options as they are concerned about hygiene (72%). In fact, they are more concerned about this than their global (54%) and Hong Kong (59%) counterparts. Retailers can cater to this by reducing person-to-person contact by offering solutions such as self-checkout with mobile apps or kiosks.
2. **Ease of use critical:** Customers want ease of use, so ahead of the busy shopping peaks of Christmas and Chinese New Year, retailers would be wise to implement the right technology that will help customers easily navigate their online offerings. If not, 83% of Singaporeans said they would not shop with a retailer whose website or app are difficult to navigate.
3. **Improving loyalty:** Retailers should consider changing how they currently offer their loyalty and rewards programmes, as 82% of consumers believe those being offered to them can be improved. Two options for consideration would be making the program available through an app or linked to the customer's credit card. Connecting a loyalty programme to an app would also be beneficial to the brand, as 56% of Singaporeans believe there's currently not enough advantages to download a retailer's app.

**Chen Yongchang, Head, Research & Consulting, Institute of Service Excellence at Singapore Management University comments:** "Prior to the pandemic, we were already observing a steady increase in the proportion of consumers shopping online. The Agility Retail report by Adyen supports the notion that this trend has not only accelerated, but has also fundamentally changed customer expectations, attitudes and behaviour towards digital technologies and contact-less payment systems. Retailers need to consider deploying some form of omni-channel digital strategy to stay relevant and to tap into these shifting consumer behaviours and consider leveraging technologies to redesign service processes to meet these new demands."