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Why Headless Commerce is the Future of Retail

Headless commerce is a modular approach that requires loosely coupled application capabilities to improve flexibility in composing new commerce functionality and experiences to be more responsive to business needs.

Dr Veenu Sharma (/author/Dr-Veenu-Sharma/)
Assistant Professor – Retail and Marketing, Birla Institute Of Management Technology

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A new e-commerce (https://www.indianretailer.com/article/technology/digital-trends/how-e-commerce-players-can-inculcate-smart-buying-habits-amongst-consumers.a7023/) buzzword '**Headless Commerce** (https://www.indianretailer.com/article/technology/digital-trends/how-headless-commerce-improves-customer-experience.a6935/)' is the technology that is making the retail industry grow at an exciting speed. To stay in the competition, brands are focusing upon headless setup, which sounds spooky but a straightforward concept of separating front end and back end functions of retail.

In today's time when we are talking about the rise in online retail, '**Omnichannel** (https://www.indianretailer.com/interview/retail-people/startup/cashify-to-go-omnichannel-to-cater-to-rising-digital-requirements-of-customers.i1840/) in E-commerce' is the expectation of the customer. The customer is looking forward to a seamless experience and flexibility is the driving force towards this new e-commerce model.

Gartner in their recent report 'Hype Cycle for Digital Commerce' defined, "Headless commerce is a modular approach that requires loosely coupled application capabilities to improve flexibility in composing new commerce functionality and experiences to be more responsive to business needs."

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The issue was identified way back in 2013 by Forrester Research addressing the importance of eliminating the silos between inventory and branding in e-commerce with the process of making the purchase.

Joe Cicman, Senior Analyst, Forrester mentioned that brands started realizing the importance of investing in analytics to find and maintain those customers who are clicking the product but dropping it off before the final purchase.

Future-Proofing of E-commerce

E-commerce is prospering and becoming the most powerful driver in retail.

eMarketer in 2019 shared that "e-commerce is becoming a habit of customers' as digital shoppers first hunt their product at Amazon rather than Google."

In terms of development, personalization, and adaptability traditional commerce has reached headless commerce by enabling front-end developers to create an excellent user experience from scratch. To ensure the business is 'future proof' brands need to focus on certain components like headless architecture, having a technology vendor as an experienced partner, having Application Programming Interface (API) for easy integration, and ensuring safety and scalability through cloud-based technology.

Customers have started relying on online shopping for both low and high involvement goods because of the benefits in terms of packaging, delivery, rewards, convenience, exchange/ return policies, and others. Thus, business expansion and customer expectations both are looking forward to managing the digital experience. And, Headless Commerce is helping the brands with complete control over the user experience as per their specific requirements. Updating the site will be no more a tedious task because of the reduction of time and cost of the front end. Similarly, it's going to be easy while designing a promotional campaign for the specific customer and launching a new customer experience because of the availability of customer-specific data at every touchpoint.

Visionary Approach

Brands should have clarity in streamlining the front end and back

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Brands should have clarity in streamlining the front end and back end combined with a maturity on the thought, 'how future-ready they want their business to be?'

Managing traffic across all seasons with continuous monitoring of customer data for solving their queries and protecting data from hackers are few initial factors to be considered before implementing headless commerce. Brands are ready to go headless by being more adaptable in responding to rapidly changing customers' expectations. They have to push the content and ensure smart solutions for the back end by placing Product Information Management (PIM) Software as a centralized data point for the whole organization.

Various brands partially or completely moving towards opting for headless commerce, NIKE is one such popular brand gaining market share with their headless campaign with a mobile-first approach. Target too had unified the customer experience across different devices through a headless approach. A flawless buying experience is the future norm and brands should focus on how to catch up with current as well as cost-effective practices in e-commerce.

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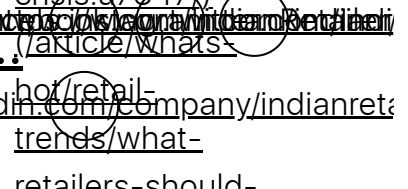E-COMMERCE / By Raghunandan Saraf (/author/Raghunandan-Saraf/)

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