

Première partie de l'épreuve**The exhilarating world of post-pandemic shopping**

Experts suggest that brick-and-mortar stores are about to get more fun, because they'll be devoted exclusively to entertainment and discovery.

I have exciting news for you. You're going to *love* shopping when the pandemic is over—not just because you've been deprived of it for so long.

5 The pandemic dealt a harsh blow to brick-and-mortar retail, driving revenues down by 14%. But four experts we spoke with believe that this devastating year has forced brands to cut out the most unpleasant parts of shopping, like waiting in line and replenishing staples in your pantry. When stores do finally come back, the savviest ones are going to focus on the delightful, pleasurable parts of shopping, like discovering exciting new
10 products and enjoying in-store entertainment. If you picture sampling new cheeses while watching a string quartet perform, you've got the right idea. The idea of transforming stores into a place of discovery and entertainment is not new. With the rise of e-commerce, consumers can buy almost everything online. Brick-and-mortar stores that didn't offer a fun or innovative experience were probably destined for the dustbin of
15 history, even before COVID-19 hit. That's partly why malls have been dying off, along with department stores like Lord & Taylor.

Over the past five years, new retail concepts started emerging. Many brands invested in creating an immersive shopping experience that wasn't really about selling products at all, since that could happen online. Instead, these stores were about plunging the
20 customer into the world of the brand. The luggage brand Away made it feel like you were visiting a different country when you walked into a store, Japan one week and Sweden the next. Lululemon built out stores equipped with fitness studios, meditation rooms, and restaurants; the clothing racks were almost incidental. During the pandemic, consumers became even more comfortable with shopping online. IBM
25 estimates that e-commerce grew by 20% in 2020, and accelerated the shift from shopping in-store to online by about five years. This means that when life returns to normal, it could be even harder to entice consumers back into physical stores because they've gotten so used to shopping online.

30 “Experiential retail had been a growing trend, but the pandemic will turbocharge it,” says Katherine Cullen, head of industry and consumer insights at the National Retail Federation trade association. “Stakes will be higher for brick-and-mortar stores now, because consumers can buy so many products online.”

35 And they like it that way. According to a 3,500-person survey commissioned by VC firm Coefficient Capital and retail newsletter *The New Consumer*, respondents said they enjoyed online shopping at the beginning of the pandemic, particularly for products in the grocery and pet categories. When stores later reopened, consumers continued to buy these products online. Dan Frommer, founder of *The New Consumer*, points out that these tend to be categories where you know exactly what you want and just need to replenish your supply.

40 While fashion and beauty brands successfully managed to bring customers back into their stores when the lockdowns ended, Frommer believes that customers may ultimately bring the “replenishment” mindset to these brands as well, turning to the internet to restock T-shirts or lipstick shades. “The mindless shopping is going to stay online,” Frommer told me. “The intentional shopping—the browsing, discovery, 45 socializing, learning—will continue to happen in stores.”

In other words, stores will be reserved for all the fun stuff. Welcome to the future of shopping.

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