

Speaker says technology can enhance shopping experience

By LAURA CARROLL LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Retail is changing, perhaps faster than you think.

In front of a standing-room-only audience at RECon, the International Council of Shopping Centers' annual convention, keynote speaker Randi Zuckerberg told the retail real estate industry that nothing replaces the experience of walking into a store.

Zuckerberg then gave examples of how technology can help make shops more appealing to a younger crowd that is used to engaging with devices. Like, you know, creating a virtual pop-up store that users can access via their smartphones at a certain place during a certain time. Or maybe doing something similar to what is done in South Korea, where subway walls are littered with QR codes that link to products for sale.

Talk about stopping by the store on the way home from work.

As the former marketing director for Facebook, Zuckerberg knows something about selling to younger consumers. These days, she owns Zuckerberg Media, a firm she founded after getting bit by the entrepreneurial bug at the startup of her brother, Mark.

"There's a new type of consumer out there who wants luxury some of the time and is willing to pay for it," she said.

To capitalize on that, many websites offer services, such as temporary personal assistants, that previously weren't accessible by the masses.

"Think about in your businesses if there are little things you can add," Zuckerberg said.

Technology offers countless ways of engaging a customer, she said. Online retailers, such as Modcloth, often add new inventory every day, instead of by season, to keep their customers seeing new items.

Ever wonder what those young folks are doing on their cellphones all the time? Chances are they're checking in on a site such as Yelp or Facebook, often to get a prize or badge for patronizing a business.

"People seem to be very motivated by applying game mechanics to everyday activities," Zuckerberg said.

And while mobile is everywhere, some companies are innovating beyond payments. Think about scanning a QR code on a pair of jeans to have your size delivered to the dressing room.

"The companies that are doing it best are doing one thing and just nailing it," Zuckerberg said.

Like Starbucks and Chase, she said.

Zuckerberg then noted that retail, especially, should be able to use the cloud to its advantage.

“Shouldn’t a site be able to learn me? Why am I seeing the same homepage as everyone else?” she asked.

RECon is in Las Vegas through Wednesday.

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