LOST IN THE **SUPERMARKET**

Agile Retail in the Age of Digital, Mobile and Social

Havas PR North America

March 2017

havas pr

ENTRANCE

Digital has changed retail forever, and the impact is just beginning. For brands and businesses, the only solution is to embrace agility and alignment and create the kind of agile marketplace that today's consumers want and need.

**"I'm all lost in the supermarket
I can no longer shop happily
I came in here for that special offer
A guaranteed personality."**

—THE CLASH

havas pr

NO SUCH THING AS E-COMMERCE

Perhaps it is the residual mindset from stocking, showcasing, organizing and displaying physical products. Or maybe it is retail whiplash from the head-spinning impact of digital and mobile on the ways and patterns of consumer shopping. Or it could be the once-bitten-twice-shy trepidation of brands that have wandered into the minefields of social, finding more risk than reward. Most likely it is all of the above. Regardless, digital is an increasingly intractable part of the purchasing decision—and too many brands are falling victim to an approach that is hindering them now and will decimate them moving forward: compartmentalization.

Today, examples abound of brands and retailers who still consider their online, social and mobile experiences as separate entities from retail, brick-and-mortar, on-site purchases. And increasingly, the result is not only lost sales but also eroded brand equity and indelible negative emotional associations that could cost them lifelong customers.

While chains and stores with physical footprints still give lip service to the idea that the shopping experience is changing, it is not. It has, in fact, changed—permanently. What is happening now is an intensification and acceleration of those changes. The companies that still believe a gradual evolution is occurring are most likely those that still email a customer a coupon, then refuse to honor it when the shopper arrives in the store because "that's for the website."

It is time for consumer-facing brands and businesses to recognize that there is no such thing as e-commerce anymore. Or, really, e-anything.

If your partner sends you a text to pick up some groceries on the way home, is that an e-shopping list? If you watch a report on network news, then Google it for more information, are you then consuming e-reporting? Are the people whom you engage with on Facebook e-friends while those you meet after work are brick-and-mortar friends?

As comical as it seems, this is a straight-line analogy to how a lot of leading retailers—even brilliant, powerhouse household names that have distinguished themselves with seamless branding and marketing in the past—approach their digital stakeholder engagement.

That engagement—driven across digital and social platforms, in intricate and concentric real-world and online networks, among individuals, organizations and brands—is more propelled by the principles and practices of public relations than ever before. The historically one-way conversation that echoed out internally from companies and their agencies has metamorphosed into intensely rapid, complex and nuanced ongoing dialogue. Consumers evaluate goods and services (as well as a brand's emotional resonance and relevance) constantly. And at no other moment is this evaluation more powerful than in the moment of truth of a purchase, when shoppers access a digital universe of information, through their phones, right there in the aisle.

At the same time, the kinds of crises that can decimate brand equity and eliminate billions of dollars and years of marketing allocations are delivered across consumer-facing communications platforms instantaneously and globally. That's why, regardless of industry or vertical, many global brands and businesses are realizing that some of their most powerful and critical strategic allies are communications professionals who can deftly and dexterously balance messaging and platform expertise, deep knowledge of audience, and the ability to execute in real time across the multisided chessboard of today's consumer dialogues.

In this white paper, Havas PR North America explores the real-time consumer marketplace, highlights the retail trends and patterns that reveal sound strategy, and underscores the two principles that are fundamental to future retail success: agility and alignment. The brands that most efficiently infuse these traits across all touch points will achieve the reach they have long sought from a digital presence—while also achieving a scalable stability that will let them weather future upheavals.

THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE AND SHOP

For countless brands, recognizing the reality of today's shopping patterns can lead to great frustration. After enormous allocation of resources and countless hours of debate and deliberation to establish singularity and brand equity, many brands might no doubt be stunned by this data from Google:

- Mobile searches related to "best" products increased more than 50 percent between May 2015 and May 2016.[1]
- Most smartphone users (90 percent) say that when they start shopping, they aren't completely sure of the brand they want to buy.[2]
- Less than half (40 percent) of all shopping searches on Google are for broad category queries such as "bedroom furniture" or "women's athletic clothing."[3]

And although these facts might feel like the fall of Rome for even the mightiest brand empires such as Apple and Nike—particularly when they venture further and further from their core competencies, such as Apple Music or Nike's FuelBand—data and surveys reveal a new world of extraordinary opportunity for connection, engagement and sales.

To see, let alone seize, these opportunities demands that brands pull away from internal certainty and self-reverence to better understand consumers. Every marketing leader and pundit who criticizes the selfie mentality should recognize that Brand Me is an extension and continuation of the very branding techniques and traits that have grown less and less effective.

If they do, they will see some inspiring and significant glimmers of hope:

- Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of women who shop for clothing on their smartphone agree that seeing images of products in context positively inspires their decision to buy.[4]
- Three-quarters (76 percent) of people who conduct a local search on their smartphones visit a business within 24 hours; 28 percent of those searches end in a purchase.[5]
- Consumers are buying more than ever before: Mintel's "Online Shopping U.S. 2015" report shows that 69 percent of U.S. adults shop online at least every month and 33 percent do it every week, up from 24 percent in 2014.[6]

More and more, consumers are welcoming, inviting and beckoning products and services into their lives, homes, relationships and digital footprints. But, in keeping with the what-have-you-done-for-me-lately need for assurance in a slow and fragile economic recovery, that invitation comes in the form of a need for service, value and quality. Organizations that think they can lead ego-first with their lifestyle branding will find themselves being bling-blang-blung right out of the conversation.

There is no better evidence of effectiveness than the U.S. Commerce Department report released on Feb. 15, 2017: U.S. retail sales rose higher than expected from December 2016 to January 2017,[7] and consumer prices recorded their biggest increase in almost four years.[8] Over the previous 12 months, reflecting a stronger job market, total retail sales rose a solid 5.6 percent.[9]

As confidence grows, more consumers are willing to spend at restaurants, clothing stores, department stores, electronics outlets and sporting goods retailers. Which they choose to give their money to, though, often depends on how well brands present their offerings in a carefully balanced trifecta of service, engagement and efficiency.

No matter the industry, agility and alignment can drive all three. Here's how.

AGILITY: A WORKING DEFINITION

> **“As stakeholder and business environments become more dynamic, the effective planning period becomes shorter. If we insist on holding to our planning-focused campaign approach and do not recognize the shifting field, we will be setting ourselves and our clients up for failure and frustration.”** —ERNEST F. MARTIN JR., Virginia Commonwealth University

> **“Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.”** —MIKE TYSON

The word *agile* is defined as “1. marked by ready ability to move with quick, easy grace. 2. having a quick, resourceful and adaptable character.”

The word was adopted in the late 1990s by tech developers frustrated with the inherent inefficiency of software creation to define a very specific process of project management. It is a type of planning that delivers collaborative, powerful projects without relying on the sluggish adherence to an overarching plan that could easily become obsolete over the course of the project’s scope.

To do this, teams rely on scrums—specific sets of practices and guidelines that must be followed to ensure flexibility, alignment and coherence. Throughout the process, the focus and emphasis is on consistent creation of deliverables, relying more on trust in process and colleagues than on adherence to a grand plan.

THE CASE FOR AGILE RETAIL

In a world increasingly shaped, informed, connected and controlled by digital technology, it only makes sense to incorporate the best practices of digital strategy and development into all aspects of business. From advertising and traditional marketing and branding to the most cutting-edge public relations and stakeholder engagement techniques, the principles and best practices of agile planning have become intensely relevant.

But to make agility successful requires serious commitment to both planning and analytics. Virginia Commonwealth University professor Ernest F. Martin, a leading voice in agile PR, describes the process as "testing, planning, testing, production, testing, planning, testing, production, testing, etc." At each step and stage of the process, analytics are critical. If it is not measurable, it is not agile.

Few areas have been more disrupted by agility—and stand to continually improve and benefit from it—than the one where branding, stakeholder engagement, purchasing power and analytics intersect: retail.

Today's retailers have more data with which to inform and tailor their stakeholder engagement than ever before. It is a controversial topic, with concerns addressed and explored in the recently released book *The Aisles Have Eyes*, by Joseph Turow.

Turow explores deeply and soundly the practices and implications of retailers' use of data mining, information tracking and predictive analytics. And although there is undoubtedly a drive to understand consumers in-store as effectively as online, some critics and privacy advocates assume that today's consumers are unwitting and unwilling marks.

But the January 2017 U.S. Federal Trade Commission report "Cross-Device Tracking"[10] lays out the many benefits of the practice:

> *Like the ability to link consumers across webpages, the ability of businesses to link consumers across different devices creates both benefits and challenges for consumers. One benefit is that cross-device tracking creates a seamless experience for consumers across their devices, such as when they check email, read a book or watch a movie.*
>
> *A second benefit is improved fraud detection and account security. As more transactions move online, companies can determine if a consumer is using a new device to access an account and conduct additional authentication to ensure the account belongs to the consumer and not an impostor. Financial institutions in particular often use this technique, which can reduce waste and fraud, and lower the likelihood of identity theft.*
>
> *Third, cross-device tracking may enable marketers to provide consumers with a better online experience. Consumers may be frustrated if one particular advertisement targets them many times.*
>
> *Cross-device tracking provides companies with improved metrics that may help them avoid the oversaturation of ads. It also enables them to deliver more relevant ads to consumers who may want them. For example, marketers can see how ads influence purchases on different devices and target advertising to the consumers who are most likely to be interested in the advertisers' products.*

> *Finally, cross-device tracking technology may enhance competition in the advertising arena. Currently, few entities have large user bases with deterministic data (e.g., login information) that they can use to track consumers across devices and serve ads. By leveraging cross-device tracking technology, companies without deterministic data may be able to compete with first-party entities that do, providing insights to clients, forging new advertising models with a better consumer experience and increasing efficiency to benefit those in the advertising ecosystem, including consumers.*

The report goes on to detail consumers' very legitimate concerns about privacy and lack of transparency—including lack of clarity and disclosure in terms and conditions, broader scope and depth of tracking than is understood, information storage security, viewing of private information, lack of control over limitations, and probabilistic tracking that monitors consumers who have not signed in to a service.

The solution to many, though not all, of these challenges is transparency and clearer communication. There is no reason for retailers to shy away from either. Today's consumers, deeply immersed in the public-private balance of social media and online activity, are increasingly willing to sacrifice a certain amount of their information in exchange for a seamless, beneficial and intuitive digital experience, particularly when it comes to purchases. In a real-time world, where consumers perceive benefits and bargains as the fruits of being highly connected, many feel that lack of connectivity equals lack of opportunity.

With transparency, full disclosure and clarity achieved, the next major step in achieving an agile marketplace is alignment.

HYPER-STRESSED AND HYPER-CONNECTED

Creating scalable alignment in an agile marketplace begins with a deep, vigilant understanding of consumers and the real and digital worlds they move through. While data and analytics frame a valuable portrait, brands and retailers must keep human insight at the heart of their engagement.

Today's consumers are anxious, overwhelmed and overloaded. Central to the principle of being of service to stakeholders is recognizing how retail can help them feel more at ease—prepurchase, during the moment of truth of the purchase itself, and in sustaining the halo effect post-purchase.

A digital presence with a well-constructed, seamless UI/UX (within the presence and across platforms and touch points) is a powerful tool to create that sense of ease. It can be the eye of the digital storm that undoubtedly contributes to raised stress levels, while also pragmatically leveraging the knowledge that we are all increasingly addicted to tech.

If any one truth highlights the anachronism of retailers who still compartmentalize their digital and real-world outlets, it is the common image of someone standing in a store aisle, thumbing through Amazon reviews of a product they are considering, or doing a Google Shopping search for a better price, or trying to find a digital coupon with a QR code that can be scanned at the register. Even when they are inside the stores, many consumers are only half present.

Retailers should consider every mobile device in their stores as a window that lets in the gale-force winds of digital shopping. Whether they use that wind power to drive sales or let it ravage them like a hurricane depends on their ability to embrace agility both strategically and tactically. The human, physical interaction of brick-and-mortar retail must successfully interrupt, enhance or inform the parallel digital lives consumers now lead.

Although dedicated apps can and do align with retailers, they can also be cumbersome and clunky—inadvertently alienating and aggravating consumers at exactly the worst moment, when they are in-store and considering a purchase. It is a challenge that will only intensify in the continuing explosive proliferation of increasingly smart tech. Retailers must make sure an app is not a vanity project and that it offers benefits and efficiency above and beyond what can be achieved through email and social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter. App or no app, though, all consumer-facing brands and businesses should have websites optimized for mobile.

REAL-WORLD RETAIL REALITY AND OPPORTUNITY

At the same time that retailers are aligning their digital presence and platforms, they should look for any opportunities to use their physical spaces to do what digital simply can't achieve. Buying and selling are now at the very center of modern life. Retail can help shape the new dynamics and character of cities and neighborhoods with a vividness and tangibility that online and social simply can't compete with. With local, artisanal and community all highly prized components of engagement today, retailers can look to a best-of-both-worlds approach where their real-world contributions to their physical locations are galvanized, publicized and amplified by real-time digital strategy.

And although small retailers and mom-and-pops might seem to have an edge here—part of the dramatic playing-field-leveling that great digital deployment makes possible—in no way should larger brands consider themselves out of the running. After all, these locations are staffed with people from the cities and neighborhoods. The close relationship between customers and employees offers many chances to increase their customers' skill base and product use, while forging emotional connections and associations to store and brand alike, creating a virtuous circle with major brand and customer benefits.

Think of the innovative success Home Depot has had with its weekly free workshops and courses for budding builders and craft lovers. Consumers can learn new skills from knowledgeable staff, with all the tools needed to tackle their projects readily available for purchase. These how-to's are also available in branded video courses, on Home Depot's website and other platforms. They are optimized for SEO, establishing Home Depot not only as a transactional retailer but also as a source of expertise—a strong example of a brand that bridges lifestyle, practical service and benefit, and competitive pricing.

The same can be seen with PetSmart's dog-training classes for groups or individuals. In a model of efficiency, PetSmart on one webpage directs consumers to the nearest store offering classes, links to an iTunes and Google Play app, offers discounts on classes and appropriate products for new dog owners, and provides expert content on pet ownership. There is no need for data tracking here: Focus and understanding of what motivates a consumer to seek out and land on the page opens myriad possibilities for alignment and connection. This expertise is reinforced with every purchase, as consumers are asked during the checkout process whether they would like to donate $1 to help homeless animals.

A host of other smart retailers—including Dick's Sporting Goods, Guitar Center, Hobby Lobby and Michaels—all use a deft blend of digital content and hands-on, location-centered instruction to align their branding, retail presence, digital presence, stakeholder engagement and community contributions.

THE FUTURE OF RETAIL

When it comes to physical versus online shopping, it is no longer an either/or decision—and brands must be cautious moving forward of creating double binds that polarize consumers into one or the other. In the past few years, at least two dozen large online companies in the U.S. have launched a physical presence to better market their wares, forge closer customer relations, and boost online traffic and sales. These companies include Amazon, Birchbox, Bonobos and Casper.

One of the most impressive and dexterous examples is Warby Parker. The eyeglass retailer, which started online and is now developing a strong network of physical locations, has had an uncanny knack for balancing digital and physical from the beginning. Online shoppers are invited to try up to five different frames, delivered to their homes for free—an offer that is extended by retail locations, which also offer eye exams and no-hassle repairs and exchanges. In addition, Warby Parker has woven CSR into all aspects of its branding. For every pair of glasses purchased, the company gives a pair to someone in need. A nonprofit partner also trains people in developing countries to give basic eye exams and sell affordable glasses within their communities. All these different but complementary branding elements are aligned on the company's digital platforms and extended out to retail locations.

For co-founder and co-CEO Dave Gilboa, the most surprising thing about this approach is that some people find it surprising. As he told *Fast Company*: "When we launched, a lot of people bucketed us as an e-commerce company, but we never thought of ourselves as an e-commerce company. And I think it surprised a lot of people when we started opening these stores." And *The Guardian*: "We also see a halo effect where stores themselves become a great generator of awareness for our brand and drive a lot of traffic to our website as well and accelerate our e-commerce sales."

It is an insight and a strategic execution that brands and retailers should note and mirror moving forward. But they should also avoid throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Even though many online brands are putting down physical roots, e-commerce is growing quickly. Though it makes up only about 8 percent of retail sales, its growth rate is staggering: Over five years, its share rose 60 percent, up from 5 percent of total sales. As that growth accelerates, new dominant players will get the chance to outpace industry leaders.

SOCIAL SHOPPING

AND USER-GENERATED

CONTENT

havas pr

For many brands, social shopping has become a holy grail—with good reason. When Pinterest added a "Buy it" button, the site soon had a stunning 60 million shoppable pins.[11] Last year, Instagram drastically extended its ad program, as did Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. For many retailers and consumers alike, social's unique merging of trusted advocacy, participatory interaction and strong visuals is incredibly powerful. (Estimates indicate that 2.5 trillion photos were shared online in 2016.[12]) Nike Women, Victoria's Secret and Walmart are among the many brands that have harnessed their social platforms to great success.

Retailers should note, though, that social shopping is still a code that has yet to be totally cracked. More and more, evidence of a backlash is brewing. Personalized and targeted advertising that pops up in a Facebook or Instagram feed can feel far more invasive and unsettling than a traditional broadcast ad. Not only have brands not fully figured out how to best execute social shopping, but consumers are also far from certain how they feel about it.

What many more *do* feel sure about is user-generated content. When done well, with creativity and humor especially, the results can be astounding. The hysterical and infectious Chewbacca Mom video became the most-viewed Facebook Live video of all time, with more than 50 million views in just one day and 166 million to date (plus many, many millions more on other platforms[13]). In turn, Kohl's, where Candace Payne said in the video she bought her Chewbacca mask, broke a record: The retailer's app flew to the top spot in Apple's U.S. App Store.[14]

YouTube is chock-full of homemade consumer reviews and recommendations, with billions of views logged every day,[15] and video sharing overall is exploding in popularity. Snapchat's most recent numbers show that its users watched 10 billion videos every day (but that was eons ago, in April 2016).[16]

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

One of the most important and critical aspects of building an excellent digital retail experience is often the most misunderstood: It often hinges on excellence in person-to-person interactions between the company and consumers.

No matter how proficient Amazon is at displaying and recommending products, it would not have been nearly as successful and dominant without its focus on efficient delivery and on customer-first service. The Amazon Prime membership offers free two-day delivery, and nonmembers often add items to their orders in order to meet or exceed minimums for free shipping. And not only does Amazon create ease of purchase, but it also has maximized the efficiency of returns. The result is consumers who feel secure in purchasing—and free to openly voice their feelings with reviews that are not only a form of engagement but also a valuable source of information and assurance for other customers.

Also critical to building a great experience is high-level and highly conversational customer service, from brands and retailers alike. Best Buy's Geek Squad has become a valuable and helpful additional purchase, a smart and creative branding technique, and an effective way to minimize the stress of expensive technology purchases while positioning the retailer as an expert across a wide range of electronics.

The same is true of Apple's AppleCare Protection Plan, which, for a nominal fee, allows consumers to extend both the product warranty and 24-hour customer service support for years after purchase. Apple users can go to Apple's Genius Bar in stores or call from home and be walked through solutions until all issues are resolved. Apple support techs are willing and able to speak at length on any Apple product or service, and they are even able to log in to a customer's computer screen to work through any problems in real time. With customer service being one of the most vivid and charged touch points between consumer and brand, Apple has redefined the possibilities in ways that drive sales, reassure brand connection and take the sting out of price increases.

FAIL FAST OR FAIL FOREVER

Of the many benefits of agile planning and execution, few are more intriguing and beneficial than the alchemy it invests in failure—if it is done properly. The ability to fail fast is central to unleashing agile's power. When embodied throughout an organization, that ability can turn the failure that was once stigmatized and avoided at all costs into a strategic asset intrinsic to innovation, creativity, success and breakthroughs.

Conversely, when success is championed exclusively, often with a monolithic strategic planning process, the result is often a zero-sum game where stakeholders feel they either win or lose—with nothing in between. And that instills in team members a defining sense of fear, caution and hedged bets. Boundaries are never pushed, conventional wisdom is rarely questioned, and modest, incremental progress is the best that can be hoped for.

When colleagues are taught that failure is terrible, who would then raise her hand and suggest a crazy, slightly undeveloped idea that could lead to an amazing breakthrough? Who would give his all to the process of collaboration, when everyone on a team knows that somebody will have to take the blame if their efforts don't pan out? If creative risks—which by their very nature and definition may not work—are punishable offenses, why would anyone take one? That mentality leads to many different things, but excellence is not one of them.

Instead, managers and leaders should take their cues from the agile process, which recognizes the new reality that success comes from innovation. And that innovation is the result of creativity, experimentation and failure. Not only is failure *not* the opposite of success, but it's also often the only way to achieve it.

Agile planning and execution recognizes the value of failure and dares teams to fail quickly and wisely. Employees fail quickly by being bold and unintimidated by challenges, so they try new ideas and apply wild ones early through testing, gauging the results in real time and applying insights to what the results indicate.

They fail wisely by applying their expertise and insights to the analytics and measurement and recognizing why something didn't work and allowing that understanding to inform next steps and revisions. All this happens in short, contained work processes or scrums that repeatedly return to testing and planning, leading to greater awareness and collaboration.

Does this ensure successful end results every time? Of course not.

What it does is create a culture of trust and accountability, as well as a powerful balance of creativity and accuracy. Employees begin to internalize the benefits and best practices of agile execution and will soon be able to spot unexpected wins and avoidable risks as quickly as they appear—no small feat in an always-on, digitally driven world that recently has taken a dramatic turn toward the unpredictable, even unbelievable.

AGILITY IN THE TRUMP ERA

Although the concept and best practices of business agility have been around for decades and increasing in velocity and adoption intensely across industries over the past few years, the United States—and the world—entered a new era in January 2017 when Donald Trump took office. His campaign and election and the early days of his administration contained enough mind-blowing tactical and strategic steps and missteps to fill volumes, which surely they one day will.

For communications professionals and brand managers, there have been fascinating moments of agility—particularly in terms of stakeholder engagement, brand consistency, and the deft use of traditional and social media. But while there is a strong argument to be made for Trump as the president who most wholly embodies the practices of agile, many fear that the main takeaway could prove to be that, without planning, deep understanding of information and data, and open-minded collaboration toward a shared vision, the most recognizable aspects of agility don't lead to benefits. They lead to chaos.

Is the Trump administration chaotic like a fox? Are the sudden about-faces and contradictions and rushed appearances designed to keep competitors and adversaries off-balance and uncertain? Is it a Sun Tzu, Machiavellian approach to governance that deploys the decades of experience Trump has from building his personal brand? Time—or leaks—will tell.

But it is important to recognize one thing in branding, marketing, communications and engagement: Perceptions matter. Trump's dismay at the way his administration, his leadership and his policies are interpreted gives rise to a suspicion that at least some aspects of his agenda are beyond his control. Which is, in fact, the exact opposite of what strategic agility hopes to achieve.

The short scrums, data immersion, collaboration and dexterity of agile have been expressly defined and refined to help ensure that chaos is neither projected nor perceived. Its flexibility is designed for greater control of outcomes, not less. Whether it is his intention or not—and whether his goal is strategic agility or not—Donald Trump and his administration have already impressed upon the business community and brands alike that being agile is not just the next best step; it is perhaps the *only* next step.

The impact he has already had, positively and negatively, on media and news outlets is extraordinary. Will it also affect other industries? Of course. It will affect everything. But in retail specifically, there have already been unprecedented incidents involving Trump.

THE NORDSTROM INCIDENT

Though Boeing and Lockheed Martin—companies with long histories of government contracts—and news channels have all found themselves in the crosshairs of Trump's tweets, many people have found the tweets he has aimed at retailers startling. In early January, when he tweeted "Buy L.L.Bean" to thank Linda Bean, the founder's granddaughter and a Trump PAC donor, it placed the company in a strange and confusing position. The Maine company soon found itself being boycotted for the political activity of just one of its board members. If a positive tweet can cause a PR crisis, imagine what a negative tweet directed at a retailer might do.

No one would have to wait long to find out.

On Feb. 8, 2017, Trump lashed out at Nordstrom department stores for deciding, six days earlier, to drop his daughter Ivanka's product line. The decision, which the retailer insisted was based on lagging sales, not politics, inspired this tweet: "My daughter Ivanka has been treated so unfairly by @Nordstrom." Later in the day, White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer said the decision was "an attack on his daughter."

It placed several retailers in precarious positions of vulnerability. Soon afterward, T.J. Maxx and Marshalls (owned by the same company) took steps to minimize that vulnerability by issuing directives to reduce visibility of Ivanka's products: "Effective immediately, please remove all Ivanka Trump merchandise from features.… All Ivanka Trump signs should be discarded." Neiman Marcus stopped selling Ivanka Trump's jewelry and accessories, but as of late March 2017, her clothes and shoes are still sold by Macy's and shoes and handbags by Bloomingdale's.

With a first family that is also a family of brands, led by an outspoken and impulsive president, it is truly new territory for retailers, brands, advertisers and communications agencies, consumers and citizens alike.

EXIT

No business, industry or individual is beyond the reach of today's volatility. Everyone needs to get nimble, to adapt to our new universe.

Havas PR and our CEO, Marian Salzman, know that better than most. We wrote the book on agile communications and published it in January 2017: *Agile PR: Expert Messaging in a Hyper-Connected, Always-On World*. In it, our award-winning agency outlines what brands must do to be agile today in their messaging—moving forward fast, skipping around obstacles, changing direction without losing momentum and stopping on a dime. And we offer up case studies from a wide variety of industries to prove our proficiency.

Our agency also combines our newscrafting expertise with a unique trendspotting capability. Looking for social patterns helps us show clients what's in the air, devise pioneering strategies for their companies and brands, and leverage the trends into future headlines for them.

For those retailers and their executives who don't look ahead and put agility to work, who still cling to an outdated, monolithic, glacial strategic planning mentality, we send our best wishes and mercy. It is those organizations and their shareholders who will be caught most brutally in the spotlight if they are forced to pivot but can't.

And for those retailers that can track the future, navigate an increasingly complicated maze of consumer engagement, move quickly and decisively with balance and focus in real time, and act human, they will be rewarded. Like all industries, retail is evolving at the speed of light. Agility is the key to survival.

ENDNOTES

[1] thinkwithgoogle.com/articles/comparison-shopping-mobile.html

[2] thinkwithgoogle.com/infographics/shopping-micro-moments-mobile-trends.html

[3] thinkwithgoogle.com/infographics/shopping-micro-moments-mobile-trends.html

[4] thinkwithgoogle.com/articles/comparison-shopping-mobile.html

[5] thinkwithgoogle.com/infographics/mobile-search-trends-consumers-to-stores.html

[6] http://www.mintel.com/press-centre/technology-press-centre/nearly-70-of-americans-shop-online-regularly-with-close-to-50-taking-advantage-of-free-shipping

[7] cnbc.com/2017/02/15/us-retail-sales-jan-2017.html

[8] cnbc.com/2017/02/15/us-consumer-price-index-jan-2017.html

[9] cnbc.com/2017/02/15/us-retail-sales-jan-2017.html

[10] ftc.gov/system/files/documents/reports/cross-device-tracking-federal-trade-commission-staff-report-january-2017/ftc_cross-device_tracking_report_1-23-17.pdf

[11] fortune.com/2015/10/05/pinterest-buy-button-expansion/

[12] lsbf.org.uk/blog/news/innovation-technology/trillion-photos-shared-online-2016/98027

[13] hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/chewbacca-mask-wearing-mom-hits-896120

[14] mediapost.com/publications/article/277550/millions-of-us-dont-care-about-chewbacca-mom.html

[15] youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html

[16] bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-04-28/snapchat-user-content-fuels-jump-to-10-billion-daily-video-views

Havas PR North America
200 Madison Ave.
New York, NY 10016

us.havaspr.com
@HavasPR