Wherever a consumer goes to shop, digital signage is likely to be part of the experience. According to a study from research firm Deloitte Digital, a customer’s interaction with digital technology, including digital signage, influences 36 cents of every dollar spent in a retail store, or about $1.1 trillion. That number is projected to climb to 50 cents out of every dollar, or $1.5 trillion of the $3 trillion in overall sales.

But digital signage is more than just a fancy replacement for static signage. The widespread availability of the Internet and the increasing prevalence of mobile technology have prompted retailers to conduct business in a variety of ways. Digital signage is becoming a key way for retailers to tie those multiple ways of doing business into a seamless omnichannel experience.

Customers want relevant information to help them make a buying decision. Digital signage and interactive displays — along with self-service kiosks, point-of-sale systems, tablets and the customer’s own smartphone — can serve as touchpoints to provide that information.

“Consumers are learning, comparing, socializing and buying across all available channels and digital touchpoints, and they are doing it on their terms, when they want and how they want,” said Andy Bowden, Senior Marketing Manager for HP Digital Signage Solutions.

“Retailers need to make the store experience as engaging, interesting and interactive as the shopping experience on the Web,” he said.

Out of many, one

Although some retailers view e-commerce as a threat to their brick-and-mortar locations, those fears likely are overblown. From the customer’s point of view, e-commerce and brick-and-mortar businesses are no longer discrete. And shoppers expect a retailer’s product offerings to be the same across the various shopping channels.
“Retailers who don’t offer a seamless experience that traverses the digital and physical domains are at a disadvantage,” said Nikki Baird and Brian Kilcourse in an August 2014 RSR Research study, “Omni-Channel 2014: Double Trouble.” “For consumers, it’s just shopping, redefined.”

That doesn’t mean that brick-and-mortar stores are fading away in favor of an online-only experience.

In fact, for every $1 that consumers spend online, they will spend nearly $5 in physical stores, based on previous online research.

According to RSR, a trend is continuing among retailers toward more complex paths-to-purchase that blend the digital and physical shopping experience — making a discussion of a single selling channel nearly irrelevant.

In an omnichannel environment, the line between the brick-and-mortar channel and the online one is blurred, if not eliminated. Customers flip through a store’s inventory via a self-service kiosk and see their selections displayed on digital signage. Shoppers can check inventory for pickup at that store or a neighboring one or have their selections shipped directly to their homes.

In-store digital displays can serve as a way to educate customers about the retailer’s latest products and services, ensuring that messaging between the various channels and across multiple locations remains consistent. Excessive inventory levels of a particular item can automatically trigger promotions on digital displays to help move those items.

Customers can text a number displayed on an in-store digital display to have coupons delivered directly to their mobile phones, or snap a picture of a QR code displayed with a particular promotion to access additional information.
As a customer flips through a virtual catalog via a self-service kiosk or interactive display, those screens can easily suggest product pairings to help boost revenue, while displays at the point of sale can suggest last-minute impulse items.

And digital signage can promote a store’s Facebook page or Twitter feed, continuing the conversation even after the customer has left the store.

**Endless variety**

Take, for example, the cyclist’s store pedal in Littleton, Colo. Co-owners Bill Nagel and Andy Chrisman always are looking for ways to differentiate their operation, engage customers and increase revenue. The store competes with more than 20 other bike shops within a 10-mile radius, and anything Nagel and Chrisman do to gain a competitive edge can spell the difference between success and failure.

After discussing ideas with representatives from HP Digital Signage Solutions at the last National Retail Federation trade show, Nagel decided to deploy digital signage throughout the store.

One of the first things a customer now sees when walking into the shop are two HP 47-inch LCD digital signage displays, placed one atop the other. The top display streams videos and information about local biking groups. Customers watch it for entertainment and to learn about community events.

Beneath that is an HP LD4720tm LCD Interactive digital signage display, where customers can individualize their purchase orders by interacting with digital vendor catalogs.

“We have a lot of products on our retail floor, but we can’t stock every item in every possible variation,” Nagel said.

“With the interactive display, we can design the whole bike right in front of the customer,” he said.

“They can pick the color and other features, with the latest information about options. They see the bike they want the way they want it. It really helps boost sales.”

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**About the sponsor:**

HP Digital Signage Solutions provides information in an attractive format that entertains, informs and engages for a unique experience that gets results. HP, along with the company’s industry-leading partners, can supply and deploy a complete solution to meet a company’s business needs with a comprehensive digital signage solutions portfolio. HP has worked with its partners to provide certified hardware configurations optimized for smooth and reliable operation.