Mindtree

Welcome to possible

Mindtree's Virtual Assistant (VA) to retail stores

Striking a balance between a completely automated and human assisted service for the retail industry

In retail shops, customers often seek assistance in locating a product or getting detailed information about a preferred product. With the advent of the digital era, however, retailers often find themselves in a fix trying to get an ideal mix of technology and the human factor. While having a human touch is important, globally consumers are increasingly looking for a better digital buying experience.

Key challenges for retailers

It is important for a retailer to understand the needs of a shopper and exceed their expectations. More than just a transaction, shopping is more of an experience. A good store experience is what would bring a shopper back to the store willingly.

Among all the other challenges, following are the key ones that summarize a retailer's situation:

- How to better empower consumers for more informed shopping decisions?
- How to enhance consumer shopping experience digitally?
- How to drive brand engagement and in-store sales?

Possible solutions

A retailer applies one or a combination of the alternatives listed below, to address the challenges:

- Train store assistants
- Set up kiosks
- Increase customer to store assistants ratio
- Provide virtual assistance
- Provide printed brochures

Each option has its own pros and cons. Thus, it is on the retailer to choose what is best fitted to his offerings. One important factor here is to understand what a consumer wants and what best answers his / her questions.

Mindtree evaluated each possible solution against four parameters, i.e, human touch, automation, cost of implementation and complexity of implementation. The first two parameters are the desirable ones whereas the last two are the ones that a retailer likes to minimize. Figure 1 below shows how each solution fares against different parameters.

Relative effectiveness of different techniques to assist customer
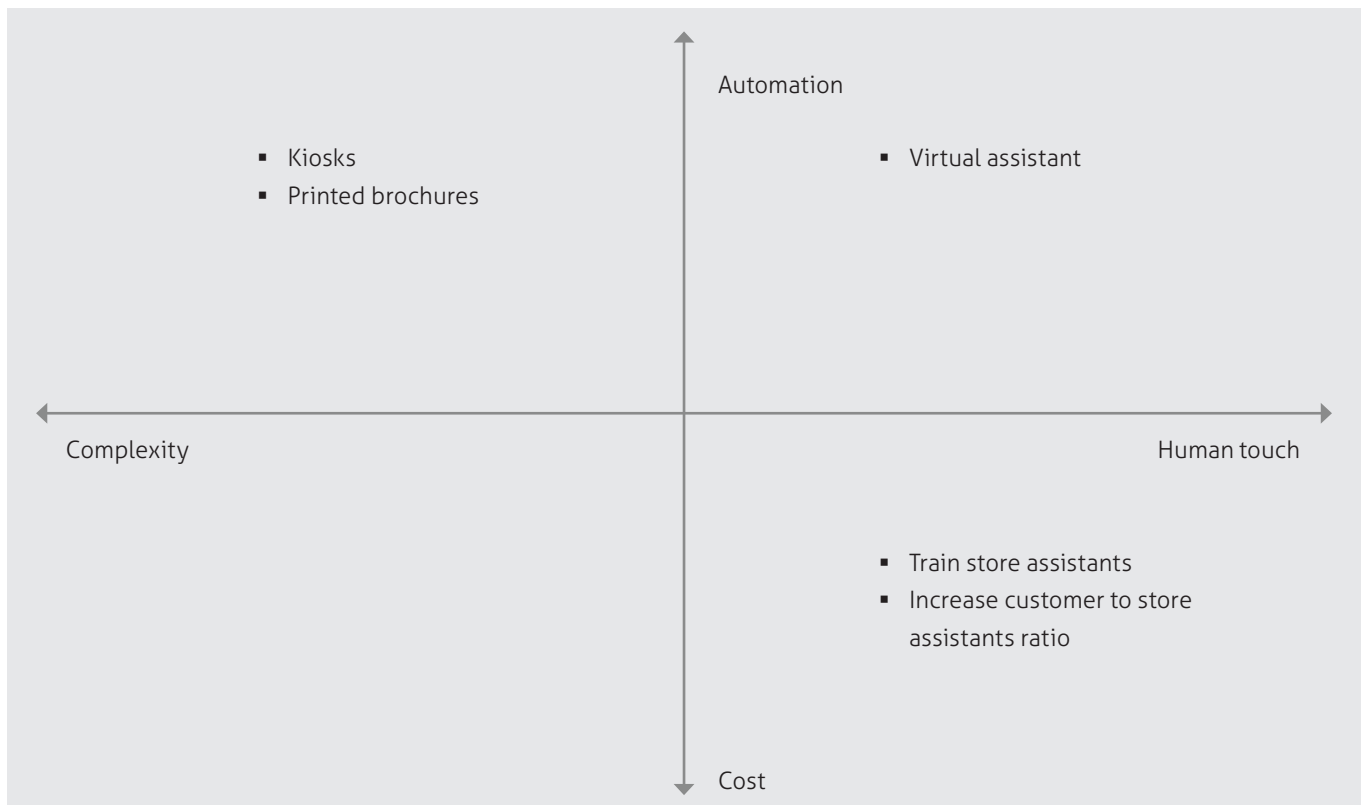

Figure 1

Consumer research shows that the new world consumer prefers self service over store assistants. In its customer experience research for 'retail shopping results', Cisco states that self service and automated shopping experiences are growing in value amongst consumers. 61% of the respondents say that they are willing to shop in a completely automated store and 42% say that they prefer to shop in an automated store. Thus, control and speed are driving the use of self service shopping / buying.

The same survey shows that customers still desire personal customer service as well. What it means for a retailer is that they cannot completely replace the value that human touch generates with an all in all automated device. Thus, having a combination of technology with human touch is the ideal solution.

Mindtree's Virtual Assistant (VA) comes closest to meeting the consumer's expectations. It is a solution which allows a customer to interact with a Customer Service Representative (CSR) via video chat and also avail a host of facilities which are available on the screen. Customers can browse through a menu which can have a catalogue of items which are present in the store, promotions, product information and so on. They can browse through the menu with simple and easy hand gestures which are intuitive. The solution consists of a glass in the shape of a human figure and a wooden box on which the gesture sensor is placed. The glass cut out acts as a screen on which the image of the assistant and the menu is projected. This creates a sense of curiosity in the customer and acts as an attraction factor.

Our VA solution offers self service and also gives them a wonderful experience. This provides last mile accessibility to consumers and can be placed in both multi-brand and single brand showrooms.
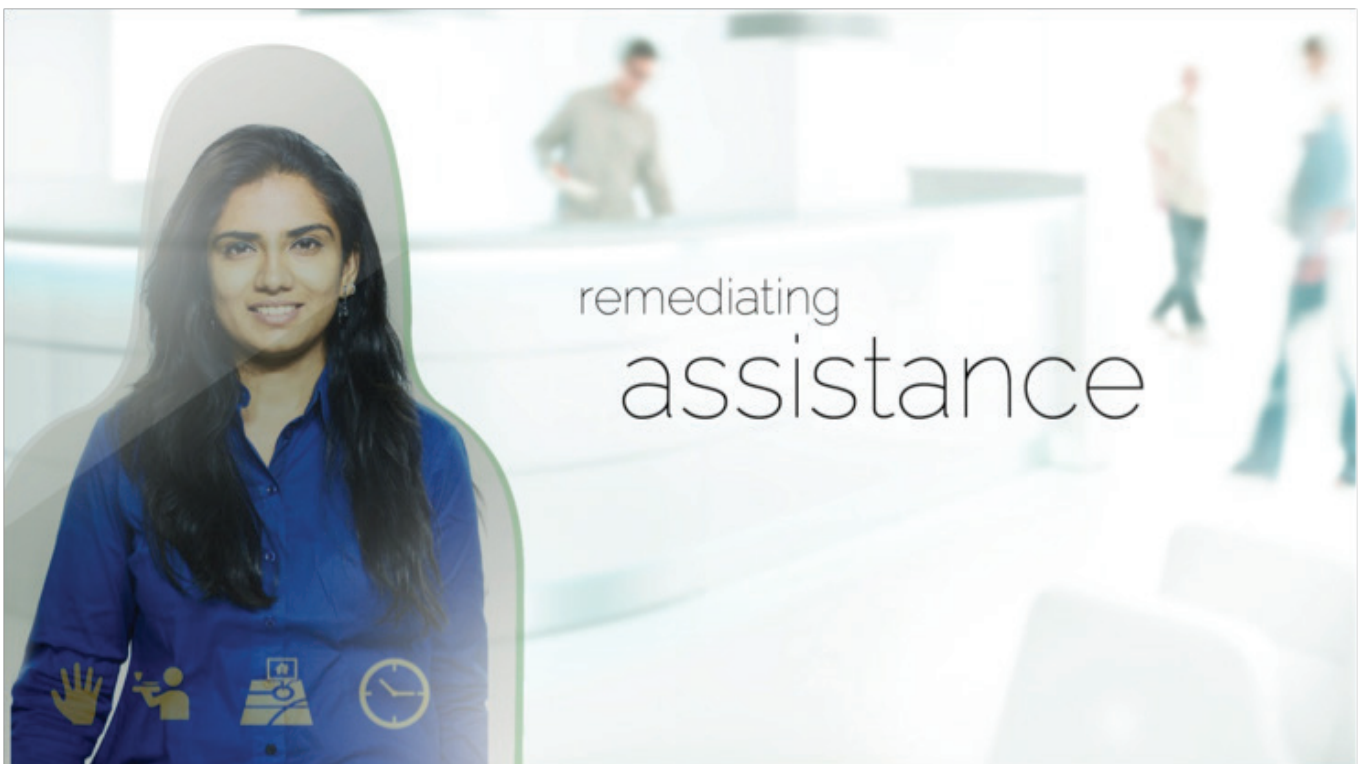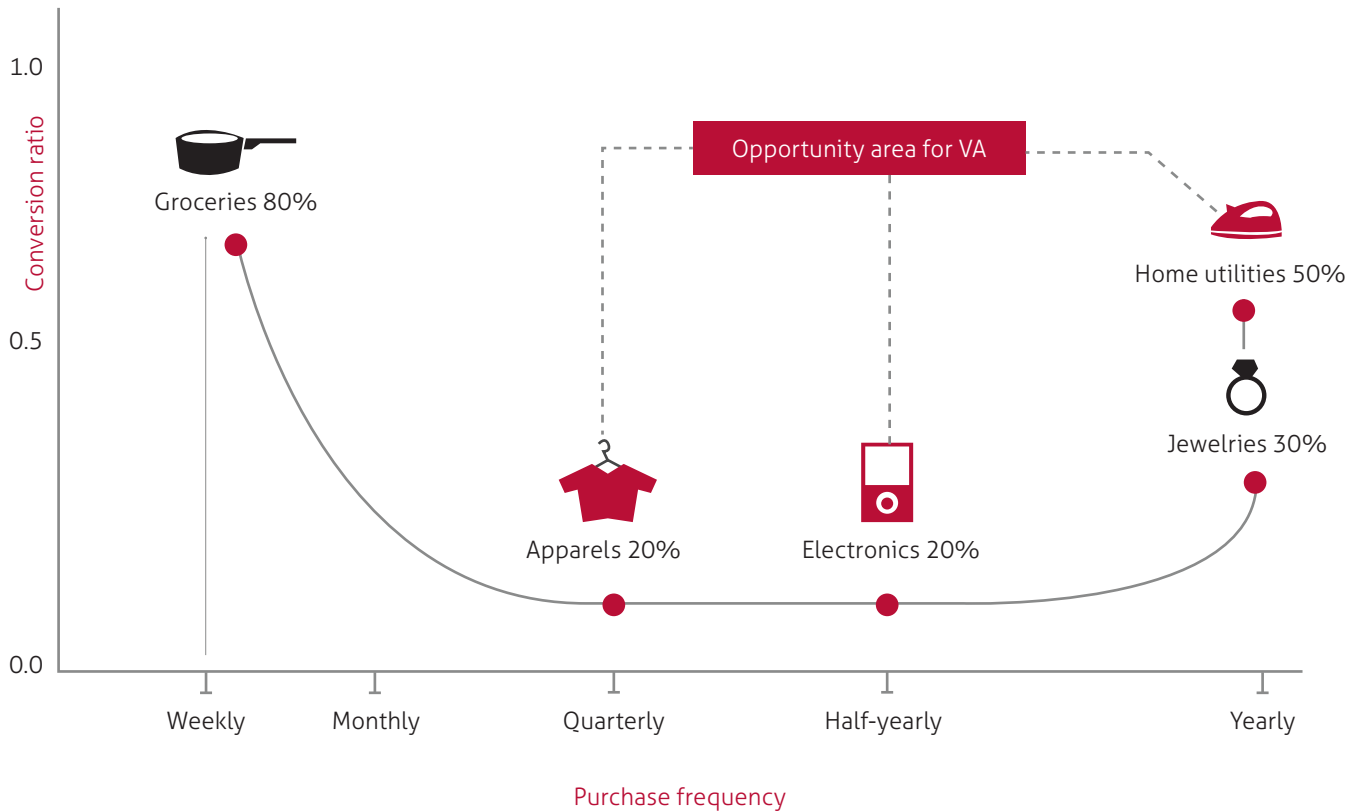

Figure 2: Mindtree's Virtual Assistant (VA)

Places of fitment

Mindtree's VA finds its utility at various places of customer interaction due to the curiosity that it invokes in the customers. A highly technical product, where know-how is required, it can play an important role in attracting and educating a customer. The following heat map gives us an idea about the fitment of the solution for various product categories.

Groceries 80%

Opportunity area for VA

Home utilities 50%

Jewelries 30%

Apparels 20%

Electronics 20%

Conversion ratio

1.0

0.5

0.0

Weekly   Monthly   Quarterly   Half-yearly   Yearly

Purchase frequency

References

Cisco customer experience research for retail shopping results and global data.

http://newsroom.cisco.com/documents/10157/1142732/Cisco+Customer+Experience+Report+for+Retail+Overview

http://www.deloitte.com/assets/Dcom-Venezuela/Local%20Assets/Documents/VE_CB_conversion_Ene07(1).pdf

About Mindtree

Mindtree is a global information technology solutions company with revenues of over USD 430 million. Our team of 12,000+ experts engineer meaningful technology solutions to help businesses and societies flourish. We enable our customers to achieve competitive advantage through flexible and global delivery models, agile methodologies and expert frameworks.