Clive Angel's insights on 'The Internet of Things' ('IoT')

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What is IoT? The term, "Internet of Things", refers to a network of connected devices. Not just the connection between computers, laptops and cell phones and the internet, but of much more.

Your power usage, kitchen appliances, and even your car may be connected together through the IoT. Any electronic device can be connected to another through the internet of things. Security and tracking devices, pacemakers, heart and medical monitors, sporting devices and usage monitoring equipment can all be connected to the internet. In general terms, the Internet of Things involves every device that is connected to the internet. An internet connection is all that is needed for anyone to connect these devices all together. Once connected the network of information that results can be shared and used by product manufacturers, distributors, retail outlets and customers. The benefits to everyone represented by sharing information that is free to access and to use, instantly available for sharing and perfect to reproduce as far as quality and reliability are concerned. The IoT can be a source of significant and reliable consumer insights, feedback and data points which when extracted and analysed using machine learning can help understand consumer behaviour and define business strategy in new and innovative ways.

The Internet of Things ("IoT") results in Free, Instant and Perfect communications:

The IoT creates an environment where everyone with access to a mobile or digital device can leverage the benefits of Instant Service, Free Access and Perfect Quality.

IoT-enabled strategies will help retailers transform the physical reality of traditional instore shopping into a customer-focused digital experience. The *primary* outcome and benefit for each of the relevant users:

- **Business customers** – efficient, cost effective and personalised services driven by a concentrated and strategic "customer-centric focus".
- **Business owners** – increased customer engagement and cost efficiencies resulting in greater turnover at higher margins and therefore "increased profitability".

IoT transforms retail by offering customers a seamless experience:

Online retail is driven by immediate product availability, ease of payment and seamless delivery. In-store shopping needs to

be transformed to deliver the same online user experience by equipping sales personnel and fitting rooms to become consumer service touchpoints – enabled with wirelessly connected mobile devices and capable of offering the users new and exciting interactions and functionality. Some examples of this are as follows:

Equipping customer fitting rooms:

- Customers should be able to identify and request stock items from tablets inside the changeroom at the press of a button.
- 3D sensors installed behind mirrors should allow customers to select, model, style and fit items of clothing and accessories.

Equipping sales personnel:

- To accept and process payments from customers anywhere in the store – this would increase sell through for the retailer while providing customers with immediate service.
- To arrange for customer deliveries with mobile tracking facilities at the point of sale – this would allow customers to continue shopping or with other activities without the hassle of carrying their bags around. The benefit for retailers is customers who don't have to worry about carrying their bags will be likely to purchase more goods per shop.
- To provide instant in-store feedback on a customer's loyalty status and any discounts and/or awards available for use – this would influence purchasing decisions and drive sales while providing customers with benefits would be based on personal history and loyalty points earned and could include free delivery, price discounts, giveaway items.

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