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5 things to avoid in mobile commerce this holiday season

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Wilson Kerr

By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

By **Wilson Kerr**

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As consumer confidence in mobile grows, so does mobile-originating traffic to retail Web sites. In fact, according to a June 2014 comScore report, fully 60 percent of digital media time spent online by consumers is originating from smartphones and tablets, a figure that has increased 50 percent over 2013.

In February of this year, an inMobi study showed that only 11 percent of consumers report accessing the Web mostly from a computer. A recent index of 350-plus retailers saw a same-store year-over-year increase in mobile commerce revenue of 102 percent.

Any online retailer that does not yet have a mobile commerce site is now way behind the curve and is potentially losing money every day.

Mobile commerce is hotter than a five-dollar pistol and offers some tremendous opportunities for retailers who are ready to take advantage. But pitfalls also exist.

Here are five things that online retailers should not do this holiday season if they want to take maximum advantage of the mobile revolution that is transforming the retail

landscape.

1. Do not treat mobile as a shrunken version of your main site

While it might be fine for a tablet, serving a resized version of your main site to your smartphone traffic can kill conversion rates and disappoint your customers.

Responsive design has been pitched as a way to display your main site on any screen, but cramming large images and content into the mobile context slows page-load speeds to a crawl, hurts conversions and causes bounce rates to surge.

Responsive design might work fine for content sites, but retailers should not expect a shrink-to-fit approach to satisfy an increasingly savvy mobile consumer base.

Internet Retailer reported in June that, among 12 top-tier responsive mobile sites, the average page-load time was more than 18 seconds.

From the article, “A one-second delay in Web site page load time translates into a 7 percent loss in conversions, according to research firm Aberdeen Group Inc. So if an e-retailer makes \$100,000 a day from its mobile site, a one-second page delay could mean around \$2.5 million in lost sales every year. If that's the case, what does an 18-second page load time mean?”

Adopting a mobile-first methodology means you end up dumbing down your ecommerce site to ensure that pages display fast and well. Throwing out the ecommerce baby with the mobile bathwater is not the answer.

Smart retailers see mobile as just what it is: a separate channel with separate use case scenarios that should be treated as such.

Unshackling your mobile site from your ecommerce site pays off with big dividends, in direct proportion to the size of your mobile audience.

2. Do not over-deliver to your mobile homepage

Why would you deliver all your traffic to the same page universally when that traffic might very well be originating from a link that is very product-specific?

Deep-linking is a must these days, and allows smart retailers to sharpen the path to purchase and reduce friction.

While deep-linking a tweet, Facebook post or even a scanned physical QR code to a product detail page and tracking everything is a great first step, mobile landing pages are an even better approach.

Large brands are using branded, custom-designed mobile landing pages to immerse consumers who are pre-qualified to be interested in a certain item. These pages feature omnipresent “Buy Now” buttons to capture the intent to buy without making the consumer scroll and click all over to purchase the item.

If well designed with an easy path to purchase, mobile landing pages can deliver conversion rates many times the rates associated with normal mobile site traffic, since

they deliver the consumer to the sweet spot of the mobile commerce site.

3. Do not set it and forget it

Simply having a mobile commerce site is not good enough. It is the bare minimum ante. Retailers should always be iterating and tweaking and even fully re-designing mobile commerce sites on a periodic basis to take maximum advantage of this new sales medium.

Again, mobile is not the same as ecommerce and different things work for different reasons.

Evaluating analytics to identify a mobile commerce site's top five friction points and fixing them is a great first step.

Often a pop-up email modal or some other gimmick that works well on the ecommerce site will cause mobile consumers to instantly abandon the site. This is another reason why responsive sites tend to under-perform.

Mobile is different and it should not be assumed that what works on your main site works on mobile.

Test, iterate, re-test and refine the mobile experience to ensure you are always increasing your conversion rate and decreasing your bounce rate.

Do not be afraid to embark on a site redesign.

4. Do not ignore mobile wallets

While most press these days is around in-store mobile payments (think Apple Pay), remember that mobile wallets can also serve as friction-reducing tools for mobile commerce sites, allowing a customer's address and payment information to be auto-filled in.

The checkout process can be a bit tedious on a smartphone, and tools such as Google Wallet and PayPal Mobile Express Checkout allow a customer to pour in their payment information and ship-to address in a single click. The upside of adding this feature can be very significant.

Rockport was the first online retailer to use Google Wallet for its mobile site and has since reported that nine out of 10 consumers who start the checkout process with Google Wallet continue through the process and checkout. When you compare this to an industry average for converted purchases, the upside is beyond obvious.

In 2013, a study by Jumio reported that \$15.9 billion in mobile commerce sales were left on the table for that year due to a 97 percent average cart abandonment rate for mobile.

Sure, things are busy and it takes time to add any new feature, but something that can significantly boost your conversion rate usually comes with a rapid ROI and is well-worth doing.

5. Do not forget your physical stores

Smartphones are in people's hands and are always on. Too often, the commerce team that handles the mobile site and the marketing teams that handle the in-store experience and display are siloed off from one another. These teams should be meeting, talking and finding ways to use in-store mobile engagement to further both their missions.

Consumers in a store are highly pre-qualified to be interested in your products. Mobile engagement can mean the difference between knowing nothing about your store visitors and adding them to your customer logs.

QR codes, NFC and SMS can all be used to deliver a link to an interested consumer that can trigger the launch of a page custom-designed to receive this traffic.

Wilson Kerr is vice president of business development and sales at [Unbound Commerce](#), Boston. Reach him at wilson@unboundcommerce.com.

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