

COLUMNS

Getting the retailer's app ready for Black Friday

November 17, 2014



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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

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Ah, Black Friday, the beloved post-Thanksgiving frenzy synonymous with the ritual of waking up early to wait in line, fight the crowds and make questionable decisions in the name of nabbing the season's best deals. But that is all changing, as mobile shopping becomes the modern twist on tradition.

Application developers and retailers with companion mobile apps, brace yourselves for what is expected to be the single biggest day for mobile shopping yet – and it is right around the corner on Nov. 28.

If the current mobile payment war among Apple Pay, Google Wallet and CurrentC is not proof enough of the rising reliance on mobile for shopping and purchasing, just take a look at last year's record-breaking numbers for Black Friday.

Tabulating

Firstly, let it be known that tablets, aka "phablets," emerged as the browsing device of choice.

Last year, Black Friday tablet users spent an average of \$132.75 per order compared to smartphone users who spent \$115.63, a difference of 15 percent, according to IBM Benchmark real-time reporting unit.

Further, the report confirmed that mobile traffic accounted for nearly 40 percent of all online traffic, an increase of 34 percent over Black Friday 2012.

Mobile sales reached nearly 22 percent of total online sales, an increase of nearly 43 percent year-over-year.

For any skeptics still out there – let us call it denial – the fact that people increasingly use their mobile devices to shop and make purchases can no longer be contested.

So how can mobile commerce app makers get prepared to capitalize on the holiday shopping surge?

Seamless transaction experience

Do everything you can to prevent your mobile shopper from giving up.

I am always surprised by how many app makers seem to skip the critical process of QA/QT.

Perhaps you tested the user experience at app launch but have not tested the checkout process since. Now is the time to do a little shopping via your app to identify and fix any bugs, delays or potential confusion during the shopping process.

Promote app early

Holiday shopping kicks-off on Black Friday due to the jaw-dropping one-day sales, but gift list making and product research by consumers begins now.

If you are a retailer, let it be known that your mobile app is optimized and ready, and can make holiday shopping an enjoyable, easy experience.

Feature your mobile app in a prominent area of your online site, and begin running campaigns to encourage mobile users to download your app early. There are big rewards for planning ahead.

Be charitable

Exemplify the spirit of giving by choosing a relevant charity and committing a portion of all purchases on Black Friday to the organization.

Promote your charitable activities via a mobile campaign. Notify the charity that they may help promote your app across their social media channels.

Novel ad formats

When planning a mobile campaign, try exploring some of the unique and original ad format options to help your campaign rise above the clutter and engage audiences.

Banners are a mobile mainstay, but users can be desensitized to seeing them.

Full-screen interstitials have clear advantages due to its size and placement in an app.

However, there are other novel experiences with which to capture attention – such as floating ads that offer an immersive game-like experience as users try to pop the branded bubbles to reveal more content.

Audio ads are a fun twist, as the user hears the ad message – their app usage is not disrupted – and is prompted to shake the device to engage further with the ad content. The gyroscopic element adds an unexpected element of surprise for a refreshing take on mobile ads.

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