

RESEARCH

Shopping app sessions grow 174 percent: report

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Consumers are spending more time in shopping apps

By CHANTAL TODE

Sessions in shopping applications increased by 174 percent in 2014 compared to a 76 percent increase for overall app usage, according to a new report from Yahoo's Flurry Analytics.

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Calling 2014 the year that retail came to mobile in big way, Flurry Analytics' research shows that the shopping category increased by 220 percent on Android alone. Strong usage growth for utilities and productivity apps as well as messaging and shopping apps points to how consumers are integrating apps into their everyday lives.

"This stunning growth of the use of shopping apps this year is an opportunity for retailers and brands to stay more connected with their consumers and engage them during shopping," said Simon Khalaf, Yahoo's vice president of Flurry Products.

"Also, mobile allows the retailers to capitalize on the impulse buying aspect of consumers in a way that e-commerce never could," he said.

App happy

Taking a sample of Android devices in the United States, Flurry plotted engagement with

shopping apps by ZIP code, calling the ZIP code where the most activity happened between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. as “Home” while activity outside of this area was labeled “Away.”

The analysis showed that users are shopping on their phones when they are out and about during the day, with shopping app use spiking during the morning commute hours and lunchtime.

Mobile shopping then spikes again around 8 p.m. at home, with some consumers shopping into the early hours of the morning.

Encouraging retailers to adjust to the new reality of a multitude of stores in every consumer’s pocket all the time, Flurry points to the success that some retailers have seen with their mobile apps. For example, Target saw 68 percent of time spent on its mobile properties in 2014 take place in app vs. the mobile Web, up from 21 percent in 2013, according to data from comScore.

“Growth in the use of shopping apps is driven by much better retailer apps that were launched early in the year,” Mr. Khalaf said. “Prior to 2014, many retailers simply shrunk the size of their online Web site to fit a mobile screen versus creating a uniquely mobile experience for their customers.

“Better apps from retailers that focused on helping consumers throughout the stages of shopping, especially in store, drove more usage of shopping apps in 2014,” he said. “We expect the growth rate to increase as more retailers and shopping apps optimize their experiences for mobile.”

Focus on loyalty

In past years, apps showed strong growth in the games and entertainment categories. The strong growth in 2014 across shopping, productivity and messaging apps underscores how apps are becoming more and more a part of consumers’ everyday lives.

Growth in games sessions continues, but that growth has slowed from 61 percent in 2013 to 30 percent in 2014. The same is true for Music, Media, and Entertainment: the growth rate has slowed to 33 percent from 79 percent last year.

In 2014, Flurry Analytics tracked 2.079 trillion app sessions - a mind-boggling number. On December 31, Flurry record 8.5 billion sessions, a new single-day record.

“For retailers to capitalize on the mobile trend, they need to focus on loyalty and repeat use,” Mr. Khalaf said. “Every app user is a customer! Not a visitor.

“Retailers should stampede to get their apps on people's devices and then use loyalty and smart notifications to continuously engage their customers,” he said.

Final Take

Chantal Tode is senior editor on Mobile Commerce Daily, New York

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