

COLUMNS

Responsive design and the future of mobile commerce

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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

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Responsive design is a proven way to create compelling customer experiences across devices especially mobile and to increase customer engagement and sales.

Consider International Military Antiques (IMA), the leading retailer of pre-1945 military collectibles, which saw a 179 percent increase in mobile revenue and a 163 percent increase in mobile transactions after going responsive. What better way to engage with consumers than through design and development that responds to their behavior and context?

Merchants must provide fluid digital experiences that automatically adjust through responsive design. The benefits will directly affect their bottom line, not to mention avoid the repercussions of Google's move to optimize searches for mobile-friendly sites, commonly known as "Mobilegeddon."

Here are a few other ways that responsive design is shaping mobile's commercial future.

Mobile, the Great Unifier

Efficiency and simplicity are deeply ingrained in the consumer mentality when it comes to mobile. But frictionless experiences are still playing catch-up to those expectations, particularly in mobile commerce.

It is a problem considering that mobile has far and away the farthest-reaching impact on a consumer's purchasing journey, acting as the conduit between bricks-and-mortar and desktop interactions and arming consumers with information and the opportunity to purchase at every step.

Nearly 80 percent of consumers digitally interact with brands before they walk into a store and virtually all bring their mobile devices with them in-store. In response, merchants need to facilitate consumers' channel surfing behavior.

In the same way that online influences offline sales, online is still used in-store prior to purchase to allay any fears of a better deal or to validate the right product.

Mobile offers unique opportunities for merchants to bridge the divide between their channels to become a true unifier with responsive design as a foundational step in this process.

Contextual commerce

Providing relevant information at key points in the path to purchase can mean the difference between a won and lost customer.

A clunky and difficult mobile checkout experience can turn off even the most motivated buyer. But offer the right information paired with simple one-click buying and a customer can quickly move from inspiration to purchase before she hesitates or loses interest.

Merchants need to capitalize on every mobile moment, whether that is using iBeacons in-store to engage customers with unique offers or streamlining or completely eliminating the checkout flow by adding buy buttons into channel marketing efforts such as Pinterest's Buyable Pins.

Mobile can facilitate engagement in a personalized way that, quite literally, reaches customers where they are. A great example of this is how brands such as Starbucks use geofencing to push discounts to customers in close proximity to a given retail location.

True omnichannel experience

The Holy Grail of the commerce industry, omnichannel is still more quest than commonality. Many retailers have not unified and optimized every touch point with their customer to create a holistic experience.

Technology siloes remain the main barrier to growth for many retailers, and while responsive design is not a silver bullet to achieving omnichannel success, it can go a long way in preserving a consumer's continuous experience with a merchant's brand.

Of course, this is only part of the omnichannel equation, and does not touch critical factors such as a unified view of inventory or shipping.

For these remaining pieces of the puzzle, retailers need to look elsewhere, to technologies that can efficiently streamline fulfillment orders and offer shipping solutions such as those that have brought many dozens of doughnuts to hungry Krispy Kreme fans in Australia.

But that is for another time. It starts with mobile and, in short, online retailers need a flexible platform that enables them to create and refine mobile experiences at pace with their business.

TO THESE retailers, some advice: Take the time to analyze mobile traffic patterns, create device priority lists, and review your information architecture and content to allow your teams to move faster and deliver on the mobile promise on which many businesses have failed to execute.

Responsive design is an important step toward capitalizing on the many opportunities that mobile commerce offers.

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