

COLUMNS

When it comes to mobile shopping, customer location is everything

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When ecommerce retailers made their first forays into mobile marketing, they obsessed over getting their desktop sites to work on smaller screens. Now we view nonresponsive mobile sites as rudimentary. But in the not-so-distant past, that is what most companies relied on to reach consumers on tablets and smartphones.

Research shows that tablet and smartphone users are five times more likely to navigate away from sites that are not optimized for mobile than from those that are.

With mobile-optimized sites also earning 160 percent higher conversion rates than non-optimized ones, developing an effective mobile experience is a no-brainer.

But it is not enough just to offer mobile-ready sites. You need to deliver a seamless experience across all browsers and applications, and seamless does not mean identical.

Customers have different motivations and expectations based on the platforms that they are using at a given time, so you must anticipate their needs across screens.

For instance, the immediacy of mobile lends itself to impulse purchases. Customers are more likely to hit "Buy Now" and follow through on their smartphones than when they are sitting at their desktops and are comparing prices in five different tabs.

The best way to harness the power of mobile is by using location data to send targeted content to your customers and inspire them to buy.

Location is everything

Mobile devices offer you a perpetual connection to your customers. Whether they are buying online or in-store, mobile boosts sales significantly.

In fact, mobile usage influenced \$1 trillion worth of sales in the United States in 2015, with 78 percent of local mobile searches converting to purchases.

What is more, Google recently found that user intent is more powerful than demographics when it comes to effective marketing.

It is all about focusing on the "micromoments" of the shopping journey and identifying customers' mindsets at different contact points.

Where consumers are or have been physically when searching for goods on mobile devices provides incredible insights into where they are on their purchase journeys and who they are in the moment.

Location data helps you tap into that ongoing customer connection and provide them with offers that make sense for their circumstances. Let us look at the three key reasons location works so well:

1. It is an easy, non-creepy way to personalize your content. Consumers understand that sharing their locations with trusted retailers enhances their shopping experiences. They want those up-to-the-minute promotions and notifications of in-store events.

In fact, 81 percent of mobile shoppers are inclined to share personal data to access deals and perks. Because people are familiar with this exchange, they are no longer freaked out by companies knowing when they are within a 10-mile radius of a store.

2. It positively affects the in-person experience. Knowing that a customer is shopping in-store instead of at home helps you deliver the experience they expect in that context. Shoppers have different goals when they are wandering the aisles than when they are browsing from their couches.

Marketing Land found that 48 percent of smartphone users like to research product data while they are in the store, so highlighting reviews on your product pages is important.

When they are not in the store, you will want to emphasize general information, enticing imagery and intuitive browsing.

Every marketing strategy should begin with the desired customer experience so that you can use the right technology to achieve that end.

3. It helps you meet and exceed customer expectations. Shoppers demand convenience and simplicity.

Services such as same-day delivery allow customers to stipulate when and where they want their packages delivered. Your mobile experience should provide them with the information and tools they need to guide them toward a purchase.

Location data lets you facilitate simple, easy interactions.

MOBILE KILLED the marketing funnel. The dominant model once showed consumer behavior following a linear, logical progression from awareness and consideration to purchase, loyalty and advocacy.

Mobile permanently fractured and fragmented that pattern into hundreds of fleeting, intent-driven moments. Customers now expect you to understand their needs and be present in these moments.

Consequently, mobile has made the purchase path less linear and more complex. But it has also created increased opportunities to reach consumers with relevant messages. And the most important indicator of intent, immediacy and context is location.

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