

MARKETING

Mobile Web's pervasiveness demands innovation to bring products alive: Wayfair exec

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Image courtesy of Wayfair

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BOSTON An executive from Wayfair at eTail East 2016 explained that mobile Web growth has been persistent, meaning retailers need to focus on creating an optimized and meaningful experience to offset a corresponding drop on desktop.

During the session, "Looking at Mobile Innovation in Retail Today," the executive discussed how consumers are spending an increasing amount of time on mobile Web and it is likely to keep growing. Wayfair needs to keep design in mind to drive sales on the smaller devices, as its products are an emotional buy so the retailer has to make big moves to help customers get as close to the items as possible.

"I think we have seen two things; one of our biggest metrics is our customer lifetime value," said Tom Weisend, director of user experience at [Wayfair](#). "We don't want someone to come in and buy a bar stool and never come back.

"What we have seen is the persistent and what seems to be permanent shift that mobile, especially mobile Web, is the acquisition tool now. As we've seen desktop visits and participation drop, mobile Web has to be there to make up that acquisition."

Mobile design

Designing for mobile can be a tricky ordeal. While there may be a substantial number of users interacting and browsing a retailer's inventory on mobile, it can be difficult to usher in sales.

For Wayfair, this issue is heightened because consumers have an emotional connection to its products. They want to see how it fits into their home and how they feel about the item.

The home goods retailer is always innovating on how to bring its furniture to life on shoppers' mobile devices so they can get an accurate feel as to what it will be like in person. Wayfair is innovating with technology such as a

projected device in which consumers can see a 3D model of products of interest.

Brand experience

Retailers should weave a compelling brand experience on their mobile Web sites, but it needs to be optimized and designed properly. Mobile video can be highly compelling and it does not need to be high-caliber quality, but it needs to tell a story.

For instance, Zappos has a cartoon video on its retail site. The cartoons are not high-quality animation but they weave a story, which makes it compelling for shoppers.

"If we don't have the right experience or if we don't have the right product mix and the whole marketing mix, we are not going to get people to activate they way they would on desktop," Mr. Weisend said.

"Our category is hard to sell some products on mobile like sectionals or mattresses, so what we're really looking at is how do we create the experience that feels better than what they were finding on desktop, and that includes photography and information," he said.

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