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Multi-device holiday merchandising: Creating personalized product discovery journeys

October 11, 2016



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While the peak holiday season is still a few weeks away, it is never too early for consumers to start shopping and, therefore, for merchandisers to start planning.

Holiday shopping gets busier and more competitive every year, as consumers are faced with increasing options for researching and making purchases.

A multichannel, multiplatform retail experience is absolutely essential for staying a step ahead of the competition and maximizing sales opportunities.

In the current ecommerce world, a solid, multi-device strategy is a must-have. Customers are increasingly turning to mobile shopping experiences first.

In fact, mobile traffic outpaced desktop traffic every day of last year's peak holiday shopping season, including on Cyber Monday.

Understanding how to optimize your customer's mobile experience should be a top priority.

Mobile search is key

The key to creating a superior mobile shopping experience begins with the understanding that mobile search matters. Search is the primary mode of product discovery on mobile.

Mobile search result pages have the highest exit rates, often due to imprudent product planning and placement.

A common error is lack of variety and relevance in the first few search results above the mobile screen fold, which tends to discourage the shopper from further exploring the site.

Differences in mobile shopping trends versus desktop shopping trends for the same retailer can also have a tremendous effect, such as if the most popular and top-performing products for each device type differ.

The key here is to zero in on device-based product discovery and merchandising trends, and leverage these to tailor the shopping experience across different segments of visitors.

For example, we recently deconstructed some powerful trends governing the customer shopping habits of a major retailer.

In this case, we discovered that customers shopping on mobile tended to view and purchase lower price-point items than customers shopping on desktop or tablet.

In addition, we noticed that screen size dramatically impacted the likelihood of purchase.

Using these insights, we constructed separate, device-optimized search results for different segments of shoppers.

We delivered a greater percentage of lower price-point products to mobile shoppers, as well as ensured that product images were optimized for smaller screens.

The result was a 41 percent increase of conversions on mobile, with a 23 percent increase in average conversion across all devices.

Duration and average order value

Another interesting opportunity that we have observed is in identifying the sweet spot of duration time and average order value.

In our studies, we have observed that the highest average revenue per visit was generated by users who spent between 10 minutes and 30 minutes on the site. This created an entire new segment for us to personalize the user shopping experience while maximizing retailer revenue.

We began delivering higher-value products to the search results of users spending at least 15 minutes on the site.

Going local

Another major trend that retailers should tap into is going local capitalizing on the high purchase rates of consumers searching for products with intent to buy locally.

Local smartphone searches convert 2.5 times higher than smartphone searches without local intent.

Google's consumer research reports that 56 percent of mobile searches on the go have local intent.

Fifty percent of local-mobile product searchers visit a bricks-and-mortar store within 24 hours, versus 34 percent of desktop and tablet users.

How would you leverage local to capture this mobile traffic?

One way could be to easily integrate in-store inventory information into your product search results.

For example, you could not only deliver actual in-store pricing information, but the precise aisle or location within the store where the product is located.

Imagine how powerful this could be for the mobile shopping experience where consumers can benefit from the flexibility of online browsing coupled with the immediate gratification of local availability.

Personalization to different segments

Beyond mobile, however, are some bigger-picture strategies that speak to personalization at every level for your customer.

If you can customize and tailor the shopping experience to different segments of your customer base, you can increase the likelihood of engagement and purchase.

For example, fall and winter fashion trends are not the same across the United States. A customer living in Southern California likely will not need the same ski parka as a customer in Vermont.

CONTEXT IS a key driver, and device choice is part of the context that contributes to different product discovery journeys.

In this respect, segmentation is critical to your merchandising strategy.

Just as one-size-fits-all is not an optimal fashion strategy, it is not optimal for multi-device merchandising.

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