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Why mobile should be part of your holiday retail strategy

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Consumers are increasingly spending more time on mobile, especially in retail environments. They are using smartphones in a utilitarian fashion to gain product information, find your store and interact with your brand once you get them in the door.

By the end of this year, the number of smartphones on the planet could exceed the number of humans, and by 2016 there could be upwards of 10 billion smartphones – that is 1.4 mobile devices per capita – and it is not just wireless carriers who are cashing in.

Smartphone users are no longer simply talking and texting, they are using their mobile phones to make retail purchases, research products, get coupons and connect with their favorite brands.

According to a recent study by IT services provider Cognizant, nearly 83 percent of top retailers already provide at least one mobile offering for their customers on-the-go and, unfortunately, those brands that do not already have a mobile offering have fallen behind the industry “standard.”

So why should your brand step up its mobile marketing game and reach this new generation of consumers? Here are five benefits of developing a mobile strategy for your

retail brand:

1. Fight showrooming. Showrooming is the idea retailers are seeing a decline in revenue because people want to touch and feel the merchandise in the store, but then buy online at a discount price.

Creating a mobile presence allows your business to be top of mind for your on-the-go customers searching for the best deals.

As a retailer, you can leverage these deal-seekers to your advantage by making the hunt more thrilling than actually saving a buck – think mobile incentives, games and flash deals.

2. Incentivize customers. A recent survey by Sybase shows that 62 percent of consumers would be willing to make a purchase on their mobile device if they were given incentives such as coupons, discounts and gift cards.

With the average American enrolled in 18 brand loyalty programs, this is your chance to jump off the bandwagon – no membership card required.

3. Drive foot traffic. With the rise of online discount sites and general ecommerce, getting your customer in the physical store is the hard part. Use flash deals, coupons and location-based incentives to get them through the door.

4. Gamify the experience. Ever notice how you are getting points for everything these days? Check-in on foursquare when the mayor's in the house – +5 points.

What is it all mean? That people love a challenge. If you have a large following, consider adding a friendly customer competition to your mobile offering.

5. Improve customer satisfaction. Shopping is no longer limited to in-store purchases and interaction with sales associates, it is a whole new wild online retail world out there.

Use the diversity of mobile platforms and offering to your advantage – set your customer's shopping experience apart from the rest, be the most personable, helpful, fun and accessible you can be.

NOW THAT CONSUMERS have more shopping options than ever before, retail competition is at an all-time high and it is time for your brand to embrace the new way consumers are interacting with retailers online.

And with the latest developments in mobile platform technologies, creating a mobile presence could be just a few weeks away – just in time for the holiday season.

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