

COLUMNS

Why search position matters in mobile

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By **John Federman**

This is the year for mobile commerce as it is being embraced by retail chains, Web-only retailers and ecommerce sites.

Retail giants such as Walmart and Target have made significant investment in social and mobile this year.

At the recent Mcommerce Summit organized May 12 in New York by Mobile Commerce Daily, a senior Target executive was vocal in the retailer's position stating that "if you think about the mobile device, it's about being wherever your consumer is and that becomes connected and that is really powerful."

Setting store by

Recent statistics from the Shop.org State of Online Retail report confirm that 91 percent of retailers have a mobile strategy in place.

Retailers know that consumers are using smartphones and tablets throughout the path to purchase for research, comparison and purchase.

With retailers investing in mobile, what are the implications for product marketers?

It is more important than ever to vie for premium placement, in-store, on retail sites and, now, mobile.

The proliferation of smartphones and tablets, and improved quality of mobile networks has given shoppers instant access to descriptive and comparative product information from any touch point along the path to purchase. And most of the activities begin with some sort of search.

As such, marketers need a strategy in place to ensure that their products are seen within the smaller form factor of the phone.

Now, more than ever, manufacturers need to be aware of how they can enhance their mobile presence and drive premium placements as shoppers are researching or potentially buying.

It used to be that if a marketer wanted to get its products in front of a customer in-store, it would use the tried-and-true approach of manufacturer-sponsored displays, such as end caps, eye-level shelf displays and interactive kiosks.

Mobile has now made its way into the store in the form of QR codes and iPad-based displays. But that is just half of the equation.

According to just-released research from the e-tailing group, there are still obstacles, in that 49 percent of shoppers find smartphone usability awkward, 36 percent are concerned about credit card security and 31 percent are frustrated by connection speeds.

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So it is not surprising that shoppers may do the pre-purchase work on their mobile device, but still go to a retail web site or physical store for purchase.

The other challenge for the product marketer is the form factor itself.

Mobile search is surging, but the ability to get your product seen has never been more challenging.

It has never been more important to develop a prominent presence across every touch point that the consumer is accessing, whether it be PC, tablet or smartphone manufacturers need to be at the top of search queries.

Imprint

If you liken premium position to a digital end-cap of sorts, or top-shelf position, securing that top spot allows consumers to engage with your brand at the point of purchase. It builds awareness. It drives further searches. It drives clicks. And, ultimately, affects purchase.

Now think about this.

Securing premium position on-site, in-store and on mobile devices is imperative to a sales-driven strategy.

Recent research from Google tells us that 70 percent of shoppers are researching product information while in-store. Now who would have seen that coming?

Imagine an in-store consumer who is trying to make a purchase decision on a printer. That consumer takes out her mobile device, searches for printers, reads ratings and reviews, product descriptions and compares brands and prices.

If you are a printer manufacturer, would you not want your printer to show up in the top results?

One of the huge benefits for marketers is that mobile is a highly targeted platform.

It is hard for a marketer to obtain a more targeted audience than a location-aware, ever-connected research tool such as the smartphone.

As in any product marketing strategy, it is important to remember that position matters especially with the emergence of the shrinking form factor.

So, marketers, make sure you are considering each channel as you build out the mobile aspects of your marketing strategies.

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