

COLUMNS

Merchandising and the mobile shopper

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Mobile shoppers are either a retailer's dream, or their worst nightmare.

These shoppers are in your store aisle, looking at your products, but they are surfing your competitor's site looking for a better deal. What are you doing to help them purchase from you, right then and there? What are you doing to help them jump into your boat?

High touch

The statistics are staggering.

Close to 50 percent of all consumers in the United States are using their mobile device to research and browse products.

Just less than 60 percent use their device while shopping and of those mobile shoppers, 70 percent are visiting a store's site while in the store! This is a strong indication that consumers want to interact with products.

Are you providing these mobile shoppers with interactive tools and product content to remove any obstacles to purchase?

Do you offer mobile product selectors to help them choose the correct product based on their needs?

Are you giving them mobile demos to show how the products work?

Are you enticing them to buy from you right now with mobile coupons?

Your choices are: do nothing and risk losing them, or do something to keep them.

The choice is obvious.

Brands know that allowing a customer to touch a product gives them a sense of "ownership" and tends to increase the likelihood of purchase.

The same could be said of interactive product content.

By allowing a mobile shopper to interact with a product, you are increasing the odds of purchase.

No waffling

Let us look at three scenarios where retailers and brands can help the fish, er, mobile shopper, jump in the boat:

A shopper is setting up a computer network in his home and is not sure which type of router he needs. He is in the networking aisle and sees an aisle violator that reads: "Setting up a wireless network? Scan to learn more."

The shopper scans the QR code with his mobile device and is presented with a router product selector that asks

questions such as, "How large is your home?" and, "Will you be using high bandwidth applications like streaming video or online games?"

These questions help narrow the list of appropriate choices and identify the correct product for his needs, making him much more comfortable with the purchase decision and, more importantly, driving the sale.

Next, we have a shopper in the small appliance aisle comparing two waffle irons.

One waffle iron has a QR code on its packaging which links to an informative demo that shows the product being used, customer testimonials and images of different types of waffles that can be made with the product.

The other waffle iron is just sitting there on the shelf, doing nothing. Which product do you think will end up in her shopping cart?

Finally, we have a shopper who has found the right cordless hammer drill for his needs and is debating whether to buy it or not. He has used a mobile product selector to choose the product, viewed a mobile demo to see its features and, while trying to decide, an instant mobile coupon appears on his mobile device.

Offering a dollars-off discount while a shopper is in-store will almost certainly help him decide to open his wallet.

High-quality mobile content provides both short-term and long-term benefits.

The short-term benefit is obvious: buyer hesitation is greatly reduced and sales increase.

To explain long-term benefits, let us think about the shopper buying the waffle iron. She was reaching out to the brand, wanting more information, and the brand delivered with an engaging mobile demo.

When this shopper encounters that brand in the future, chances are good that there will be additional affinity attached, which provides an incredible competitive advantage.

Snack byte

Mobile content needs to be interactive because of how it is being used on the go.

It is unlikely that someone will want to wade through a 6-minute video while standing in a store aisle, so give information in snack-sized pieces and let the shopper choose what content she wants and needs.

Even though shoppers research products before they make a purchase, they still shop when they are in the store.

Maybe they think they need Brand X, Model Y, but in the store, they might find a better, more suitable product. Are you providing them with enough mobile content to assist them, and potentially upsell them?

Today's consumers are multichannel shoppers, and if one channel disappoints, they will abandon the others.

If the product information you provide a mobile shopper helps them choose the right product, they will probably buy from you again, and in your other channels.

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