

COLUMNS

Why retailers should engage customers throughout their entire shopping experience

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By **Todd Sherman**

By the end of the year, more than half of mobile phone users will have smartphones. Even more interesting is that 93 percent of smartphone users use their phones inside the home, according to Google.

Combined with how shoppers use smartphones near and in stores, there is now a real opportunity for retailers to engage customers throughout the entire shopping process, starting at home.

A good way to think about the opportunity is to divide the shopping experience into three separate but connected phases: at home, near store and in-store.

Understanding each of these three segments and then stitching them together offers meaningful value to both shoppers and retailers.

At home

Shopping starts at home as customers make shopping lists to prepare for trips to grocery store.

Smartphones provide the technology foundation for smart, digital shopping lists, which can both help customers make choices and communicate with a retailer's back-end platform.

By using a smart shopping list, retailers can see what each customer is interested in buying.

Retailers then help customers understand what is on sale, highlight specific brands and deliver personalized promotions while the shopper is home making key purchase decisions.

For example, a shopper adds some products to their shopping list by scanning the bar codes of products in their pantry. Other items are added by typing them into the app, starting with category-level words, such as pasta.

The app then presents specific brands and types of pasta for the customer to select.

The shopping list automatically communicates with the retailer's back-end engagement platform, allowing the retailer to seamlessly respond with highly relevant, special offers.

All this before the customer sets foot outside her door.

Near store

As shoppers near the store, retailers can send them alerts with compelling offers to draw them into the store, along with details such as how to get to the store and where to shop. This keeps retailers top-of-mind as shoppers decide

where to shop.

In-store

The exact location of each product from the integrated shopping list is automatically shown on the store's indoor map, along with the most efficient route through the store.

Shoppers easily find and buy what they are looking for, giving customers more time to make additional purchases.

Indoor location technologies help retailers understand exactly where shoppers are inside the store, down to their place in the aisle.

Combining indoor location with knowledge of each customer's interests opens the door for valuable and timely engagement between retailers and shoppers.

Retailers can improve the shopping experience by delivering personalized suggestions for nearby products, product information and special offers.

Leverage loyalty and coupon programs

Integrating shopping applications with loyalty program delivers an even greater personalized experience.

Digital coupons are another convenient way to let customers know about great deals and efficiently drive the purchasing experience.

Better know your customer

For retailers, knowing where customers spend time in the store produces valuable analytics.

Compare what they had on their shopping lists to what they actually bought. Correlate where they spent time in the store with what they purchased. Why did they not buy all the items on their shopping list?

Help customers make better decisions

By engaging with customers in every phase of the shopping process, retailers provide high-value service to customers.

Knowing customer location, both outside and inside the store, their purchase intents and shopping history drive the right messages and helps shoppers make better decisions.

The result is a more enjoyable and efficient complete shopping experience for your customers. That leads to increased sales, higher customer loyalty and greater satisfaction.

Whether creating a new app or enhancing an existing one, engaging with the customer in all phases of the buying process needs to be part of every mobile shopping app.

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