

# Emerging Trends in E-commerce

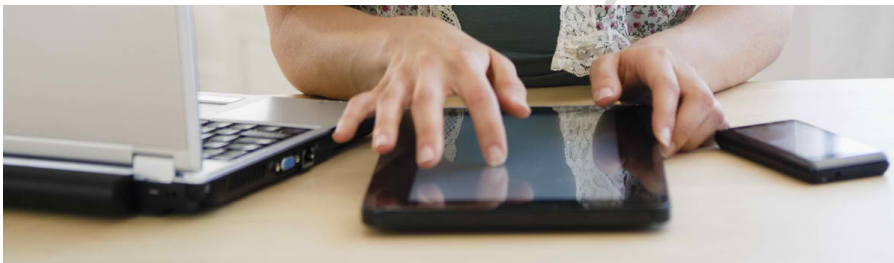
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E-commerce is a reality of modern day shopping experience. In today's world, E-commerce is no longer a luxury for retailers but a necessity. It is not a "nice to have" but a "must have". Well, for most, this is obvious, and for the rest, they're still in 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Customer expectations while shopping online are higher than ever. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for savvy retailers to drive competitive advantage. To be a market leader, companies need to adapt emerging trends in E-commerce to ensure a superior online customer experience.

So what are the important steps for retailers to provide an excellent shopping experience to today's consumers who use multiple devices and visit numerous online sites when shopping?

## 1. Browsing is Fun



Browsing should be compelling and functional on all browsers and devices. Your consumers are no longer using one device or browser for shopping. Potential growth of mobile/iPad in retail E-commerce is enormous. With the current projections, mobile/iPad will exceed desktop numbers in the next couple of years. Consumers expect the site to work seamlessly whether they are browsing through desktop or an iPad or a mobile. Things to look out for - are there features that will not work on an old browser or the latest iPad? Does the shopping interface work on smartphone screens? Responsive websites is the key.

Test the online customer experience using internal staff and mystery shoppers. These test shoppers should be able to intuitively browse products through your website, transact, checkout and process payments without any help. For some latest platforms, like iOS 6 and Android 4.2 Jellybean, advanced features can be enable like using the camera for barcode scanning to doing a virtual makeover for customers in store.

## 2. Streamlined Omni-channel shopping experience



Online shoppers have very little patience for inconsistencies between multiple channels. Not only browsers but also multiple channels of shopping need to be integrated.

A product added in a basket at home is expected to be found in the basket when you go to the store or if you call up the call center. Similarly, buyers should be able to return goods purchased online to a physical store. It is vital that businesses understand the importance of providing a superior omni-channel experience.

## 3. Go Social



Your customers are all over on social websites - Facebook has a user base of 1.15 billion and amazing 699 million daily active users. This is a huge opportunity for retailers to take advantage of.

Using Facebook Connect, various sets of data can be collected about users' daily activity and that can be utilized to approach targeted customers, e.g. by offering promotion on most liked or most commented products, or recommending the same products when these consumers your store. Other social networks like Twitter, Pinterest, Groupon etc are fast catching up and offer great insights to savvy retailers.

#### 4. Compelling Marketing Campaign



To effectively reach consumers, retailers need to develop compelling marketing messages that resonate in physical and digital forms. “Pull browsing” where customers ask for the information is rapidly changing to “push browsing”,

where customers ask for the information is rapidly changing to “push browsing”, where customers are shown information relevant to them based on their browsing or purchase history. For example, a consumer interested in toys is shown ads from various toy retailers whenever he is browsing on Internet. Marketing emails, an effective tool will soon turn into relevant SMS notifications when a customer is standing outside the physical store.

#### 5. Content is King



Keep your website relevant and fresh. Frequent users represent a major share of your sales, and customers will return if they know they are not looking into outdated information. Including blogs and social media and keeping all communication channels active is the key. This will enhance customer engagement and people will be able to identify with you and your products. Building your brand this way will eventually have positive impact on conversion of shopping customers (who are just surfing/comparing) to buying customers (who actually buy from your store).

## 6. Personalization



### Not One Size Fits All...

Combining online and offline data from various channels whether structured or unstructured provides those hidden consumer patterns which were never thought of. These patterns can be used to present personalized recommendations and content

to the online customers. Most online shoppers warmly welcome product suggestions based on their personal preferences, purchases or browsing history. However a few prefer to remain anonymous and do not want their information to be stored. In either case, consumer information needs to be handled with discretion and be sufficiently secured.

## Conclusion

There is a definite shift in consumer attitude and satisfaction when it comes to the Internet – online buying has become part of mainstream shopping and is here to stay. The challenge for companies now centers on providing the best customer experience and ensuring that user experience is seamlessly integrated across all channels consumer is exposed to. Consumers want to easily research and compare products, engage in a discussion where required and have complete clarity when it comes to the total purchase cost as well as flexible delivery and return policies. The challenge is not only to ensure that shopping applications work on each device, but also that they make the best use of the features of each platform.

In the end, you win if the consumer wins.

Is your company ready for these trends in E-commerce that define the present and future of E-commerce?

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