

Zappos.com Differentiates Smartphone and Tablet Customers



AN INTERVIEW WITH:

Aki Iida
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October 14, 2013

Consumers are increasingly turning to their mobile devices more than their desktops. Aki Iida, head of mobile at Zappos.com, spoke with eMarketer's Rimma Kats about best practices marketers should use when taking the mobile-first route.

eMarketer: How do you define the mobile-only customer?

Aki Iida: It depends on how you define mobile, and I think that's one of the more interesting problems that companies are trying to solve. Some companies do not see tablets as a mobile device, whereas others do. In our case, we do look at tablets as a mobile device—the mobile customer can be a tablet or smartphone user. When you look at the mobile-only customer, it would depend on your own definition of what mobile is.

If you're looking at smartphone-only customers, then that's going to be a different segment than those who are using tablets. What we have seen is that customers do go on cross-devices, so they're not just using smartphones. They use tablets, and they also use desktop devices. It's important to have a mobile strategy, but you have to keep in mind that the customer who is using your mobile offerings is also using other devices.

eMarketer: Do you find that consumers are shopping differently if they're accessing your content through a smartphone vs. a tablet?

Iida: Yes, definitely. We have also seen that people tend to spend a little bit of time on the website. It seems like they already have some product in mind. In general, it seems like people already have an idea of what they want to purchase, and they come to Zappos.com and place an order, so they don't really spend a huge amount of time.

“Tablets are more conducive to people doing a passive sort of browsing. And given the times of day they use them, we can see that people are using tablet devices while they are at home.”

On tablets, we see people spending quite a bit of time looking through our products. I think tablets are more conducive to people doing a passive sort of browsing. And given the times of day they use them, we can see that people are using tablet devices while they are at home. We see that the majority of tablet usage is happening at night or on weekends. Those who use desktops and even smartphones have an idea of what they want to purchase.

eMarketer: How has mobile shopping evolved over the years?

Iida: There is definitely a resurgence of people who are using mobile devices and specifically using their mobile devices to purchase. All of this is kind of new territory. If we look back at when the iPad first came out, a lot of people were very skeptical as to how well it would do, and now many have tablets.

eMarketer: Which mobile channels are most effective in reaching your customers?

Iida: I think QR codes are definitely still out there, but I don't know if that's necessarily the attractive solution. Some of the things we are seeing more of are notifications and personification, specifically within apps.

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However, unlike email, where people were a little bit more tolerant about getting messages from companies, mobile devices are very personal. We have to be very careful about tailoring the message and sending the message only to the users who opt in and are willing to interact with that message. You have to be very careful about the type of messaging you do. Once you have it and it resonates with your customer, it can be very powerful. But at the same time, it can also be very dangerous because you could lose customers by sending messages they may not necessarily want.

eMarketer: Many companies still haven't embraced a mobile-first strategy. When are we going to see brands really take on a mobile-first approach?

Iida: The best advice I could give to any company out there is to run some analytics. Find out how customers are getting to your site or how customers are trying to find out about you. It's very simple to implement tracking solutions that will provide you with information that tells you everything down to the resolution size of the devices accessing your site.

I think what's more critical is the resolution that customers are using. What's the screen size of the customers coming to your site? You can

always look at operating systems, too, to figure out if you need to spend more time or invest more on any particular platform. So definitely spend some time looking at your analytics. If you see that about one-quarter or one-third or maybe even half of your customer base is coming to your website using mobile, you definitely need to take a step back and look at the design of your site and then figure out what the next steps are.

Interview conducted by Rimma Kats on October 14, 2013.