

“A review of literature on consumers’ online purchase intentions.”

(Akar and Nasir)

The article spoke to some key points about understanding today’s consumer. One of the first things that stuck out to me was the idea that the online consumer has no time or location constraint. Think about that for a moment...

How then, do you create a strategy that targets a consumer that doesn’t have those barriers? It’s important to understand how they think, what they need, and their online behavior. One of the key dimensions mentioned in the article was “trust.” Why is it one of the most important dimensions? Online customers need to be able to have something tangible to hang their trust on. When they go into a physical store, they can trust that this is a legitimate business. How does this work online? Many use resources, friends, and review websites. Other ways a company can instill trust by creating a website that is easy to navigate, reliable, has good information, and is aesthetically pleasing. It’s similar to walking into a store that isn’t appealing to the senses, would you purchase from there? Branding as we learn in marketing courses is about the whole pie, which includes design, packaging, and presentation.

Another way to earn trust is to encourage your customers to talk about you. Give them a platform to speak, whether positive or negative, and have someone ready to respond to those criticisms. This shows a human side and ability to acknowledge and respond to issues in order to create satisfaction.

So, what does today’s consumer look like? How do we understand them? There are some general characteristics that we can arrive at, which include internet knowledge, attitude and resourcefulness. For the most part, we can assume the online consumer has knowledge and is comfortable with technology, and in many cases, speak the language better than we do. How can we get to know the online consumer better? There are many ways in which this can happen. Tracking the number of visitors to your site, blog, or page can be a starting point. Using analytics can help determine what the customer is looking for, who they are, how did they get there, and are they your target audience? It’s amazing what a bunch of number and graphs can tell you! You can determine what campaigns connect with your audience, if its attracting them or not. There is so much more here and will discuss it later on in the semester, but this is just one aspect of understanding the customer. The other is to engage with them, actively seek out conversations, engage them in surveys, or make them feel a part of the company growth.

There is great opportunity in the world of consumer behavior and understanding the customer. (Also a great career opportunity as well) The key is to understand *your* consumer by first understanding the general community, then condensing it down and applying it into your strategies.