

Digital Shoppers R Us

Written by Cheryl Pearson-McNeil
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Remember back in the day when Yellow Pages encouraged everyone to: “Let Your Fingers do the Walking,” to quickly and efficiently thumb through its pages to locate any business or service imaginable? Which really came in handy when we were in the market for anything from pizza to electronics to specialty shoes to a plumber (this catchy phrase, by the way, is cited by AdAge.com as an Honorable Mention in the listing of “The Top 10 Slogans of the 20th Century”). We have become spoiled rotten, since the not-so-long-ago heyday of the Yellow Pages – including the very people who work in the techno-wonder companies that keep upping the ante and changing the game, as well as those who track all of the subsequent trends in consumer behavior. Because as consumers, all of us need or want something – food, shelter, clothing, electronics, entertainment, etc. You name it.

But, our fingers still do the walking, alright – on our phones. According to new Nielsen mobile research, in addition to talking and texting, American smartphone owners are whipping out these handy little devices and trolling retail apps and websites to shop, research products and product reviews, compare prices, find retail locations and redeem coupons. “Mobile shopping has reached scale and is only going to grow as smartphone penetration continues to rise,” according to John Burbank, Nielsen’s president of strategic initiatives. Here’s what Nielsen data shows:

- During the 2011 holiday season, the top retail apps and websites combined – Amazon, Best Buy, eBay, Target and Walmart – reached nearly 60% of smartphone owners.
- Both men and women prefer retailers’ mobile websites over mobile apps; though men are more likely to opt for the apps over women.
- Female smartphone owners prefer Target and Walmart mobile websites, while Best Buy skews male. Amazon and eBay appeal to both.
- While we, as shoppers, still use traditional forms of marketing like direct mail and newspaper ads, we are nearly twice as likely (60%) to read a retailers’ email than those colorful paper circulars in the stores (30%).
- More than 30% of shoppers are actively researching online while shopping (talk about advanced multi-tasking).
- 31% of ALL purchase decisions (both consumer packaged goods, e.g. packaged food, beauty and personal care, baby care, household cleaning products; and Non-CPG categories, e.g. consumer electronics and technology, entertainment items and content, etc.), involve some online or mobile activity.
- Digital shoppers spend 27% more per household per trip.

Shoppers cannot be classified simply as either digital or not. There are specific shopper

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segments, based on our attitudes toward experimentation. Nielsen Category Shopping Fundamentals Research breaks it down: 55% of shoppers are defined as “Occasional Trialists.” These are middle-class people aged 50-59 who either live with a spouse or a partner and usually keep up with what’s going on; although they don’t go out of their way to try every new thing. The second group is the “Trendsetters” (27%). This is a more affluent group between 25 – 49. They have children or teenagers in the household and love to keep ahead of what’s happening; love to try the newest, latest and greatest and telling others all about it. Lastly, we have the “Satisfied & Sedentary” (18%). These folks are 60+, less affluent and live alone. The S&S crowd knows what they like and don’t feel the need to keep up with new things. Any of those sound like anyone you know?

Know what all of this means? Well, yes, shopping can be crazy-easy: like taking your store right of your pocket. But, it also means that retailers from your local grocery store to the biggest chains must think even more outside the box in getting your attention and your business, as the options for penetration and awareness are almost endless. It means they are going to have to hone in with even sharper, laser focus on you as an individual consumer – your likes, dislikes, preferences. Retailers are going to have to work harder and more creatively for your business and your loyalty. They have to woo you. Because you have infinite choices; more than ever before – no matter what kind of shopper you are.

Ah, power. Use it wisely.

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