

What were the key shopper trends in 2013?

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Date: Friday 17th January 2014



The start of a New Year always prompts a degree of reflection, and it's no different at Shoppercentric. With shoppers at the core of our business we are always mindful of the emerging trends, and how shopping habits are constantly changing. So I thought it worth sharing with you the changes among UK shoppers that took place during 2013.

(Danielle Pinnington - MD at Shoppercentric)

Christmas is always a crunch time for retailers, and this year was no exception. What is interesting for us, however, is how the shopper trends are often highlighted at Christmas, as shopper behaviour becomes somewhat exaggerated by the sheer amount of shopping done during this period.

There are five key trends we feel are worth focusing on, and building into the planning for 2014:

1. Click & Collect

There was talk early in 2013 about how slowly click & collect was progressing, and whether it really was going to be relevant to the majority of shoppers in the UK. Well Christmas 2013 was when it really took off. John Lewis did particularly well with the introduction of click & collect in their Waitrose stores, and there is no doubt the extra traffic to store benefitted Waitrose themselves, with shoppers either combining their collection with a planned shop, or being tempted to impulse purchase by well-placed seasonal displays.

Other retailers are trialling click & collect at stations, and there are likely to be even more innovations in this area in 2014. So definitely a trend to watch.

2. M-commerce

Asda issued a press release in January which stated that orders by mobile phone were up 200% this Christmas. With the continuing growth in smartphone ownership, and tablets, it is clear that on-the-go shopping is increasingly about m-commerce, not just convenience stores!

The issue facing retailers is to make sure their websites are just as user-friendly when viewed on a mobile or tablet as they are on a pc. In my own experience there remain a lot of frustrations with websites viewed on smaller screens, and all too often I've had resort to turning the pc on just to complete the order! That will clearly change, as more retailers recognise the need to keep up to date with shoppers.

It's also encouraging to note the number of retailers and coffee shops/food outlets now offering genuinely free Wi-Fi. This reflects the changing habits of shoppers, and their desire to use their mobiles or tablets out and about. Yes, it might well mean they find the TV they are in-store to look at cheaper online, but a canny bricks & mortar retailer will be ready to have that conversation with them, and provide the services on the spot that will convince them to pay that little extra to get the TV right now.

3. Multichannel

Lots has been written about multichannel retailing, but the point I'd make here is the opportunity it offers to build stronger relationships with shoppers, or even re-build lapsed relationships. A great online offer can reflect well on a multichannel retailer and remind shoppers why they are a great place to shop, and even encourage them into stores. That is why we are seeing so many online entrepreneurs now looking for high street locations. So, don't just think of multichannel as way of capturing sales, think of it as a way of capturing shoppers hearts as well.

4. Discounters

It wouldn't be possible to write an article on 2013 shopper trends without mentioning the Discounters! This Christmas they presented a very confident persona through their various advertising campaigns. They know they are currently in the ascendancy, with award winning products proving to shoppers that discount does not mean dodgy, and rapid expansion plans increasing their accessibility.

There is a limit to what they can achieve, as most shoppers recognise they can't rely on Discounters to fulfil all their household shopping needs. But that limit has yet to be reached, and as a result the pressure is on the big four retailers to give the middle ground a differentiating positioning that will appeal to shoppers, and better challenge the Discounters. We believe service, environment and range are the winning factors for the middle ground, but there is work to be done to really deliver that difference!

5. Loyalty

Our final trend is around loyalty – does it still exist in this multichannel, hugely competitive retail world? We know shoppers have increasingly big repertoires of retailers – we used to call them promiscuous shoppers when it was a small cohort, but that doesn't differentiate now we all seem to do it!

This is a big challenge for retailers – is a phrase like loyalty even relevant when shoppers have so much choice? Well yes, we think it is, but it has changed over time, and it is something no retailer can take for granted. Loyalty in terms of preference needs that retailer to mean something to the shopper, and that takes effort.

And if there's one final thought to wrap this up, it is that shoppers habits are constantly changing, as they flex their choices in this every changing retail world. To be successful these days retailers need to be completely on the ball in terms of shopper understanding. There is no time for resting on laurels – 2014 will be just as tough!

Link: www.retailgazette.co.uk/articles/13423-what-were-the-key-shopper-trends-in-2013