



Online video: The next best thing to in-store shopping?

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Video has proven itself for its ability to create a brand experience on YouTube, Facebook, and other social media platforms. But retailers of all sizes are catching on to the fact that video can be the next-best thing to visiting the store in terms of product education and conversion.

Consumers are increasingly adept at ignoring banner ads, and video is the format that grabs attention. Almost all (96%) shoppers find videos helpful when making purchase decisions online, according to a survey from Animoto, a video marketing consultancy, and 80% say that having a video to show how a product or service works is important.

“Video is the right communication tool to help replace actually being in the store,” Animoto CEO Brad Jefferson told Retail Dive. “Photos got us there for a long time, but now when you go to a website and there’s nothing moving, it starts to feel stale.”

Video extends deeper into sites

The key for retailers is to extend video to wherever it might assist with the sale, down to individual product pages on an e-commerce site. “You need a model that combines quality with scale so that you can cover enough of your catalog,” Craig Wax, CEO of Invodo, a company that specializes in creating online videos in bulk for retailers, told Retail Dive.

Animoto’s consumer survey found that four times as many shoppers would rather watch a video about a product than read about it. And people react to visual stimulation faster than they do text—while only 14% of shoppers can remember the last display ad they’ve seen, 80% can recall video ads they watched online in the last week.

“Ninety percent of people learn best by what they see and what they hear; only 10% learn better by reading,” Wax added. “Traditional websites are pretty text-heavy, and people don’t always have the time or ability to read through all of that.”



Video content should be carefully curated, Animoto advises, to capture and relate the look, function and other specifics of each product. Content should anticipate and address customer questions in a way that's relevant to the consumer.

Animoto client Zappos found that including videos with product listings increased conversion rates at the point of sale 6% to 30%.

Similarly, Ebags.com reported a 130% increase in conversion after a consumer clicked on a video. And Invodo's statistics indicate that consumers who see videos while shopping online are 1.6 times more likely to purchase a product over those who did not view videos.

Video helps small businesses, too

The democratizing effect of high-quality smartphones is helping smaller businesses get in on the act, as well as tools that make it easy to post professional-looking video content to Facebook, YouTube, and other sites. "They are able to create less expensive videos that still deliver the same benefits of increased time spent on sites, increased conversion and increased order value," Jefferson said.

All kinds of videos can attract interest, he added: How-to videos, unboxing videos, demonstration videos, and so-called "torture" videos, in which a product is tested to the point of failure—Blendtec's "Will it Blend?" series being an excellent example. And all can shore up purchase intent by offering a glimpse into the product experience.

"It helps consumers contextualize what the product is really about," Jefferson said. "As online shopping increases, people still want to have that tangible experience, that store experience: 'What does it feel like to use the product? Am I going to like it, or am I going to have buyer's remorse?'"

"That's why the unboxing video is popular," he continued. "It's such a thrill to get a box delivered, and you hope you don't have buyer's remorse when you open it. With an unboxing video, you can go through the experience beforehand."

Videos can also build trust in the overall shopping experience with a particular retailer, and that's crucial to getting people to buy. "People trust websites more if there's video there," Jefferson said. "You see a little bit of what's behind the scenes, and you form a little bit of a relationship with the shopper."

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