

Features

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Reaching Today's Customer

Craig Ruvere



At the height of the pandemic, necessity altered consumers' purchasing behaviors, as much of the country struggled with unforeseen circumstances brought about by stay-at-home orders, quarantines and shutdowns to keep each other safe.

Pictured: When retailers purchase HC's decorative planters, they'll have access to the full library of product and lifestyle photography for catalogs and websites, like the one pictured here for the 24-in. Deck Rail Planter (available in white, chocolate, clay, black, sandstone and warm gray).

But as time passed and restrictions eased, a return to normalcy was inevitable. However, the purchasing behaviors of consumers brought about by the pandemic, which many organizations assumed were temporary, transformed the behaviors of today's

consumers.

The Emergence of the Hybrid Shopper

According to a 2022 Shopper Experience Index study, shoppers who started purchasing online in 2020 and 2021 are most likely to remain there. However, a new breed of shopper is emerging—one that relies on online product research to guide their purchasing decisions before traveling to brick-and-mortar stores. This new purchasing behavior is known as hybrid shopping.

Additionally, with widespread shortages and shipping delays throughout many global industries, hybrid shoppers were more willing to cross-shop other brands when the products they were initially looking for weren't readily available.

Therefore, the emergence of the hybrid shopper has made it more challenging for organizations to remain relevant while differentiating themselves from their competitors in the market. As a result, more than ever, ensuring your digital presence is up to date and relevant is critical to your overall success.

Online Reviews & Social Media Inspiration

Reviews have become the most effective content required to influence purchases for hybrid shoppers highlighting quality, value, satisfaction and even customer service. Reviews should feature a unique comment with specific examples based on the product or service received, not just a star rating, to ensure authenticity.

While today's shoppers rely on online reviews, they've also come to expect superior photography touting the beauty and utility of the products they're interested in purchasing. Those can be used on the website and in social media.

According to the Shopping Experience Index, "69% of shoppers have been inspired by social media to purchase through another channel, with ease as the top reason for doing so." Therefore, businesses must ensure they're capturing customers' attention on the appropriate social channels they use while enabling the buying process to continue seamlessly and painlessly from the social media in question.

Original Content Shows Thought Leadership

Today's consumers want to do business with thought leaders who understand the importance of delivering relevant, timely and applicable content over self-promotion. Therefore, original and thoughtful content creation is the most significant differentiator to your digital presence.

Here are some questions to consider when it comes to your website and content creation:

- Do you have an SEO strategy rich with relevant keywords your customers are searching for?
 - Are you updating your content and other resources regularly? Frequency is critical for content creation.
 - Does your current content establish your credibility in the industry through originality?
 - Have you optimized your Google My Business page (or need to create one)?
 - Is your website mobile responsive? Is it a user-friendly experience that's quick to load and easy to navigate?
- Have you checked how it performs on multiple devices?



Today, an organization's digital presence can no longer be an afterthought, as the hybrid shopper now uses a combination of traditional and digital mediums to help drive their current purchasing behaviors. **GP**

Craig Ruvere is the marketing communications manager at The HC Companies.

Reach him at cruvere@hc-companies.com and visit hc-companies.com.