Commerce

4 Effective Ways Retailers Can Appeal to the Endemic Consumer

KEY TAKEAWAY

In the current endemic market, shoppers are concerned with much more than product quality. To break through the noise of today's saturated retail landscape, marketers must pivot their strategies to accommodate evolving consumer behaviors.

There's no denying the fact that the pandemic has forever altered the retail marketing landscape. In addition to accelerating the growth of e-commerce, it's transformed consumer behavior and changed what shoppers expect from their favorite businesses and brands. As COVID-19 becomes endemic—meaning it's no longer spreading wildly but still a very real part of our daily lives—consumers are demanding more simplicity, empathy, and personalization than ever before. Successful retail marketers must remain agile and adapt their strategies to appeal to these ever-evolving mindsets.

If your sales are plateauing and your business is failing to grow, it may be time to tweak your marketing tactics to better appeal to the endemic consumer. But just what does that entail? Here are some strategies to help you connect with this growing group of modern shoppers.

Embrace Social Shopping

Most recently, shopping via social media has exploded, particularly among Gen Zers and Millennials glued to TikTok and Instagram. Combining the power of community and customer engagement with in-app purchasing and precise targeting, social shopping reaches endemic consumers on the platforms where they spend most of their time.

With nearly three quarters of all consumers now shopping on more than one channel, omnichannel marketing has become a necessity for retailers. Brands need to reach audiences wherever they are, whenever they are there, and provide a seamless buying experience across the various shopping platforms their customers visit.
It’s also content- and network-driven, enabling audiences to discover and purchase items in a highly authentic and individualized way. For example, rather than receive targeted ads and shopping suggestions from big-name brands or anonymous e-retailers, users are introduced to items via shoppable posts created by their favorite influencers or enthusiastic recommendations from other users in their feed. In fact, according to a report from Hootsuite, more than half of online brand discovery now happens in social feeds.

98% of consumers say they plan to make at least one purchase through social media in 2022, and 68% say they already have. - Sprout Social

Social commerce is also highly appealing to younger consumers eager to engage in immersive experiences powered by innovations like virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR). Sprout Social reports that over 85 percent of current AR and VR users are already shopping on social media, with 32 percent being Gen Zers and 30 percent being Millennials.

Push for More Personalization

While personalization is nothing new in e-commerce, the endemic consumer expects it on a deeper and more tailored level than most other audiences. As the popularity of social commerce makes clear, these shoppers are most interested in buying from brands they feel they have a genuine connection with. They also have no patience for sifting through off-the-mark shopping suggestions and other unrelatable content, which means marketers must be maximizing their personalization strategies and leaning heavily into AI and automation to do so.

72% of consumers say they now only engage with marketing messages that are personalized and tailored to their interests. - SmarterHQ

So if you’re not leveraging automation to power data-driven personalization efforts, it’s time to get started. Dynamic creative optimization (DCO) is a highly effective type of programmatic ad tech that gives marketers the ability to optimize creatives in real time based on data collected while the ad is being served. The result is a hyper-personalized experience tailored to users’ needs at that exact moment in time, based on data signals such as location, gender, device, shopping preferences, previous purchases, and other essential shopping behavior.
When the pandemic first hit, smart brands quickly responded with empathetic messaging that acknowledged the scary and unprecedented situation we were all suddenly in. Recognizing their customers’ fears and feelings of uncertainly, they provided information about how they planned to keep customers safe while also offering compassion with “we’re all in this together” and other comforting sentiments. This relatable, humanized tone immediately struck a chord with consumers in early 2020 and continues to do so two years after the country’s first COVID-19 panic.

Endemic consumers are attracted to brands that have a human voice and tone and speak as openly about their company values as they do their services and products. Being vocal about issues that matter to your customers, such as sustainability, inclusivity, and diversity, deepens customer engagement and can help foster brand loyalty. Transparency around data collection and other marketing practices is essential for establishing security and trust with the endemic consumer.

**Humanize Your Brand**

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**Nine out of ten consumers say they will stop buying from brands that lack transparency. - ZDNet**

Additionally, brands can further humanize their voice by incorporating user-generated content (UGC) into their marketing strategies. Encouraging buyers to review products and leave feedback on social media, for example, gives potential customers the chance to discover and learn about a brand organically from the peers in their network. In addition to boosting sales, this simple social promotion levels up customer engagement and allows loyal customers to deepen their connection with their favorite brands.
According to a recent global survey from Siegel+Gale's World's Simplest Brands, 76 percent of shoppers say they are more likely to recommend a brand that delivers simple experiences. That number is up from 64 percent in 2018, supporting the fact that the endemic consumer prefers retailers that make shopping simple and satisfying across all of their channels.

So if you haven’t updated the mechanics of your e-commerce site in a while, now’s the time to do so. Start by streamlining key processes such as search, checkout, and returns. You can also optimize your site for mobile and develop a user-friendly interface that includes clear navigation, easy access to standard pages, and AI-enabled chatbots.

Adding satisfying shopping incentive services such as Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) can also help attract endemic consumers while boosting your bottom line. RBC Capital Markets estimates that having a BNPL option can increase conversion rates from 20 to 30 percent and up the average order value by 30 to 50 percent.

Consumers made nearly $100 billion in retail purchases using BNPL programs in 2021 — up from $24 billion in 2020 and $20 billion in 2019. - Forbes

Finally, because 49 percent of consumers say unanticipated shipping costs are the main reason they abandon their shopping carts, it’s essential to make sure all extra fees associated with your customers’ orders are laid out simply and clearly prior to purchase.
**In Summary**

In the current endemic market, consumers are concerned with much more than product quality. Brand voice and company values are just as important, as are the ease and relevance of the shopping experience and the level of connection the customer feels to the brand. To break through the noise of such a heavily saturated market, retail marketers must pivot their strategies to appeal to these mindsets and capture the attention of the endemic consumer. You must also be willing to embrace omnichannel marketing, especially new and innovative platforms such as social commerce.

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