

Tablet Shopping Growing, But Retailers Must Keep Up

Contributed by eMarketer

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One in five Americans will use a tablet by the end of 2012

For millions of Americans the tablet is their personal, no-pressure salesperson. "But while consumers are increasingly eager to use tablets to shop, most retailers are failing to meet their expectations," said Catherine Boyle, senior analyst and author of the new report, "Tablet Shopping Fuels Couch and Pillow Commerce."

"Tablet users want to interact, inspect, even 'play' with products through their device, and retailers that deliver an immersive, fun experience are the most likely to see their tcommerce sales increase."

In just over 12 months, tablet ownership has expanded beyond the early adopter set to include nearly all population groups. To reflect this rapid growth in tablet adoption and purchase intent over the past six months, eMarketer has raised its estimate for the number of tablet users in the US. The new forecast projects that the triple-digit growth seen in 2011 will carry through 2012, fueled primarily by the popularity of Apple's iPad and Amazon's Kindle Fire, as well as by an expanding selection of low-priced tablets.

eMarketer projects more than 20% of US consumers "nearly 70 million Americans" will use a tablet by year's end, and in three years' time half of all internet users will be armed with them.

Of this growing population of tablet owners, more than half reported shopping on their tablets at least once per week and 12% shopped daily, according to data released by rich media marketing platform provider Zmags in January 2012.

"Tablets are the boutiques of the online shopping world. Their tactile nature encourages consumers to hold the device close to their bodies. In turn, the tablet delivers a personal, even intimate, shopping environment that enables consumers to connect on a deeper level with what they see on their screens," said Boyle.

That deeper connection is what differentiates tablet shopping experiences from those on other digital platforms. If a website experience on the tablet falls short of expectations, retailers are likely to feel it in the bottom line "35% of tablet owners surveyed by Compuware in February said poor web experiences on the tablet made them less likely to visit that website on any platform. Nearly the same percentage said they would be less likely to purchase from that company in general.

According to Boyle,

"Retailers without a defined tablet strategy are leaving money on the table. Ignoring the growth of tablet shoppers is unwise when optimization and experimentation are low-risk, high-reward propositions."

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