Five blunders to avoid on e-commerce sites

By Charles Mburugu   21 Dec 2016

Christmas is usually a lucrative time for e-commerce retailers, offering an opportunity to expand one's customer base, clear out old stock and make higher sales than usual. However, many online stores make some crucial mistakes that end up lowering their conversion rates significantly.

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Here are some of the most common mistakes you need to avoid when selling online during Christmas:

1. Not testing your site

During Christmas and other holiday seasons, it is usually expected that traffic to e-commerce sites will increase significantly. It is therefore very important to test your site to find out if your website is able to handle the high number of visitors anticipated. Find out if the server you are using is up to the task. If your site fails to perform optimally because of the high traffic, customers will simply leave and shop elsewhere.

2. Having a long checkout process

Online shoppers are usually very impatient people. They want to visit a site, find what they are looking for and checkout as fast as possible. Therefore, you need to ensure that your checkout process is as convenient, easy and fast as possible for your customers. Having too many steps will frustrate shoppers and result in shopping cart abandonment. It would be advisable to have not more than two steps in your checkout process. To make things even easier for your customers, allow them to sign in using their social media accounts.

3. Not having sufficient inventory

If you sell out products from your online store in the middle of the holiday season, you might not be able to restock fast enough. As a result, you will end up disappointing your customers and missing potential sales. It is therefore very important to carry out effective inventory control to meet the anticipated demand. Ask your suppliers to make deliveries in sufficient quantities long before the holidays. In case you create your own products, be sure to order materials well in advance. Do not forget 'small things' such as packaging materials, packing tape and sticky labels.

4. Shipping delays

The high number of orders can overwhelm courier services during Christmas. As a result, some customers end up frustrated when their orders arrive later than expected. To avoid this problem, find out in advance if our delivery service can handle the high demand. If they expect delivery to be delayed, you could add a few days to the shipping time. It would also be prudent to contract other courier services as a backup plan. For late shoppers who want their purchases quickly, be sure to include an additional fee for urgent delivery.

5. Unavailable support

Often, visitors to your e-commerce site will have concerns that need to be addressed. If they cannot get answers quickly, they will simply leave and head elsewhere. It is therefore very important to have a well-trained support team that handles customer questions. If your store has customers all over the world, you should consider having support available 24 hours a day. Give customers the option of contacting you via phone, email or different social media platforms. Offering excellent customer support will enhance the reputation of your store and boost your sales significantly.

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