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Nightowls and the dark ages of online retail

A research note from The Yonder Digital Group, July 2017

Online retailers are out of sync with shoppers

More and more shoppers are favouring the web over visiting bricks and mortar stores for a range of reasons such as greater choice, ease of access and even opening times; but latest research commissioned by Yonder Digital Group reveals that the majority of online retailers are failing to provide their customers with the shopping experience they demand just at the time of day when they are most likely to shop.

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The research found that more than half of UK consumers shop online during weekdays (53%), perhaps driven by the fact shops are closed on the high street by the time they get out of work

27% prefer to shop online during the weekend saving themselves long walks through crowded shopping malls in search for sometimes very specific items

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26% of shoppers prefer to shop online after 8.30pm, perhaps because this time coincides with them finally settling in to watch some TV

Many UK consumers may even be shopping on their 'second screen', a smartphone or tablet computer for example, as they watch their favourite show

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Unfortunately, though, 72% of online retailers provide no live query handling online or over the telephone after 8.30pm leaving the majority of their potential customers unable to make a query about a non-standard service for example

Combining automated webchat and live customer service at a point when customers are most likely to need it such as peak shopping times doesn't have to be expensive; in fact, if analysis is carried out to understand exactly at which stage of the journey to purchase customers are most likely to call on each of customer experience tool, it is possible to rationalise the service and clearly measure the contribution of each tool to generating revenues

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It is evident that the industry has not analysed shopping times accurately otherwise online retailers would not be forfeiting customers at their peak shopping time and leaving them unable to check delivery options or ask about bulk buys for example. In fact, the very real risk is that night owl shoppers will not wait until morning to make a specific query when a live agent is available, but will simply defect to an online retailer that does provide them with live query handling when they need it.

Couch shopping on the rise in the UK

In our time-poor society it is hardly surprising to find that one in three Brits spend more money during their night-time shopping sprees than they did five years ago.¹ Squeezed by the demands of a hectic work-life and personal pursuits, more and more people are choosing to shop from the comfort of their homes rather than traipse the high-street in search for a unique item. Add to this the increase in portable devices such as tablet computers and smartphones as well as high-speed internet available almost everywhere, and it becomes clear why couch-shopping is so much more popular now than just a few years ago.



According to the latest reports 87% of UK consumers bought at least one product online in the last 12 months, and data from the Office for National Statistics shows online sales increased by 21.3% during 2016 and should reach 30% by the second half of 2017.² But are online retailers monetising this hugely profitable, and growing, market as well as they could?

1. Barclaycard, Longer nights, TV shows and rise of on-demand service fuel 'Vampire Economy', 27th October 2016
2. GuruFocus, UK Online Shopping and E-Commerce Statistics for 2017, 4th March 2017

When are consumers most likely to shop online?

In order to establish just when UK consumers are shopping online, Yonder Digital Group commissioned research canvassing the opinions of 2,000 UK consumers and discovered that most shopping is carried out after 8.30pm. Unfortunately, this is typically a time when online retailers no longer provide live customer service online or over the telephone, highlighting there is an important mis-match between customer demand and industry standard.

Time of Day	Age Range						
	TOTAL	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Between 6am and 1pm	13%	4%	10%	12%	17%	17%	18%
Between 1pm and 6pm	34%	26%	34%	32%	31%	37%	43%
Between 6pm and 8.30pm	27%	40%	30%	29%	23%	24%	21%
Between 8.30pm and 10pm	20%	22%	20%	22%	22%	18%	14%
Between 10pm and midnight	5%	7%	5%	4%	6%	3%	3%
After midnight	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%

The effects of 'second screens' on online shopping

One key factor driving the high intensity of shoppers at this time of day is 'second screen' viewing; recent research shows that **75%** of UK consumers use a smartphone or another connected device while watching TV.³ This means they are ideally placed to view an advert, for example, or a product placed on their favourite TV show and immediately order it on their device. This figure actually rises to **93%** in the under 25 age bracket, indicating that evening shopping is set to increase as new generations gain more spending power and their purchasing habits become engrained.

	Age Range						
Time of Day	TOTAL	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
On weekdays	53%	4%	10%	12%	17%	17%	18%
At the weekend	27%	26%	34%	32%	31%	37%	43%
I don't shop online	20%	40%	30%	29%	23%	24%	21%

3. Google, Google Consumer Barometer Report, 2017

Online retailers absent after dusk

UK consumers quite clearly reveal that they mostly shop online on weekdays **(53%)** and **26%** do so after 8.30pm when they are back from work, their family duties have been mostly carried out and they finally having a bit of me-time. As common as this scenario may seem to the regular consumer it has clearly not been properly analysed by online retailers as **72%** do not have live query handling options for consumers shopping after dusk, in addition to this, reports show that most cart abandonment takes place between 8pm and 9pm.⁴ These results clearly show that online retailers are missing an important trick and failing to provide optimal customer service during the busiest online shopping hours.

After-hours shoppers won't make do with automation

As disgruntled consumers find that online retailers are unable to respond to their non-standard queries such as those relating to bulk buys, or alternative delivery methods, it is likely they will vote with their feet and simply take their custom to retailers that can provide live telephone or online agent support 24/7. A perceived saving in agent fees is therefore dramatically annulled by the loss of revenue caused by not meeting customer expectations. Online retailers that have not addressed the issue and hope to get by at their busiest time of day with only automated query management systems need to get in line with customer demand and start providing support when they need it, or face losing out to competitors.

4. Econsultancy, Nine case studies and infographics on cart abandonment and email retargeting, 25th September 2013

Statistics show that around 60% of baskets filled by shoppers online are abandoned, costing the industry up to £1bn in lost sales each year in Britain⁵



Yet previous research by Yonder Digital Group has also shown that having access to the full range of communications channels – automated and human – to resolve queries, encourages customers to stay loyal and even increase their spending (84%). Conversely, more than two thirds say they will walk away if left unsatisfied. These results show a clear correlation between availability of excellent customer service and particularly live agent interaction and sales outcomes.

Savvy online retailers, however, are taking a step further than simply providing support to customers after 8.30pm. By investing in deep analysis of the customer journey, online retailers are able to clearly see which are the critical points at which customers typically require live agent support online or over the telephone. By focusing on existing customer data gathered from a range of touchpoints it is easy to see when customers are most likely to visit an ecommerce site, fill and then abandon baskets, look for answers to their questions and, failing that, try to get in touch with live agents

5. Marketing Sciences, How can online retailers learn from abandoned baskets?, 1st July 2015

Strategic timing is key

By clearly analysing which customer experience tools are used by customers at each time of the day and stage of the customer journey, businesses can not only boost the presence or visibility of each touch-point at a critical time, but can measure their effectiveness clearly relating each tool to baskets that convert to sales and to revenues.

Be present when it counts

Identifying these key moments and aligning support so that it is concentrated at those times of the day ensures that purchases are actually carried out and that retailers are not driving customers to the competition.

Enable query resolution across channels

Today's multichannel customers expect to be able to enjoy the full shopping experience across all channels and at a time of the day that suits them and having access to support and help with resolving their queries is a critical part of that experience.



The Yonder Digital Group

Today, consumers are increasingly concerned not just with purchasing products but also with the experience and interactions they have with brands. As a result, four out of five companies now consider customer experience as their competitive differentiator to drive revenue growth.

Yonder Digital Group leverages over 20 years operational experience in customer service delivery and technological innovation. We service clients across a range of industries with our 24/7/365 omni-channel, multi-lingual approach rooted in expert analysis of customer behaviour and optimising returns from every brand touchpoint.

Yonder boasts 700+ seats across two UK contact centres-of-excellence powered by cutting edge technology, data analytics, tools and insight. Our proof-of-concept incubation services can help you nurture the development of new channels and innovations such as live chat, self-serve, automated knowledge management, chatbot and webRTC, all of which we provide as off the shelf solutions.

We are not however limited to automating the customer contact process, and champion the use of highly trained live brand ambassador agents where appropriate to blend the experience of human to human contact with the very latest digital technology. Yonder can help you revolutionise your customer experiences by making brand interactions seamless, meaningful and memorable and drive a measurable ROI alongside uplifts in revenues and customer satisfaction.

If your customer contact provision is currently under consideration, or you are actively looking at ways to reduce customer effort and operational costs whilst increasing revenue and customer satisfaction, we would welcome the opportunity to come and meet with you.



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