



the dynamics behind these changes. We are seeing an increase from 23% (2013) to 29% (2016) of consumers shopping online on a monthly basis.”

According to PwC, there are several reasons why consumers prefer to shop online, survey respondents indicated they were mainly because of lower prices (40% regionally vs. 36% globally), product selection (31% regionally vs. 21% globally), and convenience (17% regionally vs. 36% globally). Retailers are learning to navigate what is one of the most competitive landscapes in decades, with preferences shifting to online shopping.

The report outlines five key investment areas which PwC says will be top of mind for Middle Eastern retailers making investment decisions in the near future:

1. Mobile

The use of mobile as a shopping and purchasing device continues to surge in popularity. 56% of shoppers using their mobile device as their main tool to purchase items. 43% like to use it to compare prices with competitors, while 33% checked reviews about products and retailers which is up 11% from 2016. Those seeking to grow their online retail presence need to optimize their mobile offering by focusing on designing mobile sites that can be easily navigated to make online mobile shopping an effortless and enjoyable experience.

2. Social customer engagement

For years, large multi-national retailers have been using a variety of technologies to gather data on customer movements in-store. And yet, social media is vastly becoming the most attractive tool for online engagement. Social media is in fact driving customer behaviour with 48% engaging in online promotions and 52% using social media channels to check product reviews.

3. Secure platforms

The risk of cyber breaches and data hacks are affecting all industries across the globe. Online safety continues to be a concern with 62% of consumers worried about having their personal information hacked via their mobile device and 60% only shopping online with companies they feel they can trust. Providing secure platforms for any touch point with customers is a must for retailers. Investing in technology, enhancing security systems, providing maintenance and updates is a crucial element for successful online retail.

4. Loyalty

Customer loyalty is a key priority for any retailer but it is not without its challenges. The evolution of the retail sector means that customers have a vast array of choices when it comes to purchasing products online. 32% of online shoppers remain loyal to their favourite retailers because they trust the brand whilst 48% cite good prices for their repeat purchases.

5. Showroom experience

The region is seeing the rise in online shopping as an attractive and easy alternative to shopping



in-store. For luxury goods, 42% of consumers want to see and touch products preferring to buy high priced items in-store, valuing experienced sales associates with deep knowledge of in-store product ranges.

Taki ended:

“The disruption of online retail is revolutionising the way we shop in the region and therefore must feature heavily at the top of local retailers’ boardroom agendas. The investment areas identified are critical for any retailers looking at their long-term retail strategy and they must quickly learn to develop omni-channels to ensure that both their online and offline strategies are not only aligned, but monetised. In doing so, retailers will be able to create real synergies with their customers exceeding their expectations no matter how and where they shop.”

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