E-commerce: the bot as a product advisor and reassurance tool

INTRODUCTION: FROM BRICK AND MORTAR TO E-COMMERCE, A COMPLEX TRANSITION

Internet sales keep on growing year after year, developing on new platforms (20% of revenue generated on mobile phones) and reaching an **increasingly wide audience**: more than 85% of web users make online purchases. All types of products are affected: consumer goods, IT equipment, telecommunication, cars...

However, rising costs and competition are impacting the **profitability of e-commerce sites**, which are roughly 1.3 million in the US! The brick and mortar distribution networks that have been investing in e-commerce in recent years must make up for lost time compared to Pure Players.

The latter are generally more advanced and more agile in terms of customer interaction, but they also face a **differentiation challenge**.

That's the reason why e-commerce sites are constantly looking for ways to innovate in the services and consumer experience they offer. A **major differentiator** is to allow a **two-way communication** with the consumer, similar to the one he could have in store. This means not only pushing information as in traditional channels, but also **learning from them, listening to them and building a relational experience**.

Product search and conversion: what are the trends in e-commerce?

Voice will revolutionize e-commerce. This transformation means referencing your website on this new channel and **being able to respond to customers**.

The drop rate between the product page and the purchase represents the first source of optimisation of the purchase cycle (>65% abandonment of the shopping cart on average).

With **strong seasonality**, responding efficiently to all consumer demands during peak transaction periods implies **adapting its organization**.

The majority of buyers are looking for **reassurance when buying online**.

Conversation with consumers is a privileged way of enhancing a **new brand experience** and to **differentiate oneself**.

The **social dimension** is becoming increasingly important through interactions with the brand on social networks.

With the advent of digital technology and fierce competition, **products references are multiplying** and it is getting difficult for the consumer to make an informed and quick choice.

The solution at the heart of these challenges is to **offer a digital conversational experience to visitors**. While an augmented search engine with natural language comprehension meets part of the need, chatbot allows for a more intuitive and fluid interaction and journey. Both are at the heart of the "**conversational commerce**" success.

Both a **guide for visitors** by offering answers and useful content, and **provider of an entertaining and original experience**, the chatbot can offer interaction:

✔ **At the consumer's initiative** to help him in his search or answer specific questions.

✔ Or **proactively according to criteria** defined and linked to the buying journey.

Conversational bots are directly linked to customer relationship management solutions, CRM, promotion management tools... They are also increasingly intended to be integrated into messaging applications, with Facebook Messenger at the forefront and voice channel.

Chatbot: conversational commerce meets specific uses in e-commerce

Product recommendation

With the multiplication of product references, a key use of the chatbot is recommendation. That means **offering the customer the right product, depending on what they are looking for, their background and their profile.**

Product recommendation is already used with Marketing Automation and customer data analysis. However, emailing is increasingly perceived as intrusive whereas **chatbot offers a less interruptive approach**. A website visitor is more willing to be accompanied and advised.

A chatbot can:

✅ **Suggest products** following previous purchases and customer's interests. These suggestions can for example be complements to a previously purchased product.

✅ And above all **guide the visitor during his search** to find the product that matches his need. The chatbot must then focus on the **use sought by the consumer** and its context.

Being able to contextualize the products offered and provide advice **facilitates the purchasing process** and **creates a differentiating experience**. **Loyalty** can be further strengthened if the chatbot goes beyond the suggestion with recommendations for use.

Reassurance and shopping cart conversion

Reducing **exits from the buying process** is another valuable lever of the chatbot. This requires anticipating the obstacles encountered by the user. The chatbot must act, both proactively and in the event of an expressed question, on the two critical stages for abandonment rates:

✅ **Between the product page and the shopping cart**, to ensure that the product meets the visitor's desired use. It can also advise a more suitable product or even provide a quote.

✅ **Between the shopping cart and the actual act of purchase** to offer incentives to purchase and reassure the user: delivery time, warranty, payment security, after-sales service...

As a proper trustworthy interlocutor throughout the purchasing process, the chatbot will accompany and provide elements of reassurance. It **ensures the conversion funnel flows better** and **avoids abandonment** due to lack of information or fear of errors.
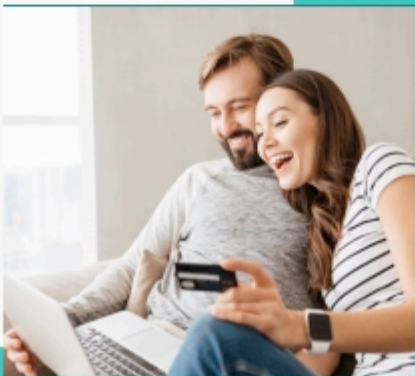
☑ Building the **knowledge base** is an essential step to guarantee user satisfaction and establish a **decision grid** for each product category.

☑ **Identifying specific reasons for abandonment** on your e-commerce site allows you to push the most appropriate elements of reassurance.

☑ In order to suggest relevant products to customers, it is necessary to **identify the "environment"** related to previous purchases, complementary solutions and customer profile.

☑ Defining the **criteria for escalation to an online advisor** ensures a better user experience and allows advisors to focus on exchanges with added value

☑ The chatbot must **understand consumers' natural language**, and integrate the lexicon specific to e-commerce. This is the only solution able to identify the different needs expressed in the **rich language demands are formulated with**.

☑ In addition to the usual departments (marketing, customer relations...), **the botmaster team will benefit from integrating the product managers**. The value of the chatbot is enhanced if it can interact with well-informed consumers.

☑ **Synchronization between the bot and the business/trade is paramount.** Product references evolve rapidly and it is necessary to maintain the scenarios, to adapt when the product base is updated, etc.

WHAT QUANTIFIED RESULTS
CAN YOU EXPECT?

+10%	**+++**	**+40%**	**5**
Conversion rate	An enhanced customer experience	Time freed up for advisors on low-value enquiries	Times more likely to retain a user who interacts with the bot

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