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4 Secrets To Boosting Retail Revenue By Catering To Foreign Tourists

By *Amitaabh Malhotra, Omnyway*



Tourism is big business in the U.S. In 2016, [75.6 million international visitors](#) came to the United States and collectively spent \$244.7 billion across the country. For many tourists, the U.S. is considered a shopping destination for luxury goods. Why? Mostly because they may not be able to get those brands or products back home, or what they get there may be more expensive. Sometimes, the visitor may come from a country where fake goods are widespread, making it even more attractive to buy authentic goods in the U.S. that can

also serve as a keepsake of the trip. As a result, most tourists spend serious time and money shopping when they travel here to the U.S.

Tourists represent a huge opportunity for retailers, but figuring out how to attract those shoppers into stores can be tough. Traditional marketing and advertising won't work since they are technically outside of the regular outreach channels.

So how can retailers capture the tourist dollars? Here are four secrets that have shown promise.

Pick The Right Communication Channel

Ever visited a country that you are unfamiliar with and don't speak the language? It's amazing how dependent you become on tour guides to take you where you want to go. The tourists coming here face the same challenge. Retailers can overcome these barriers by embracing multilingual social media channels that are popular in the countries the tourists are visiting from, like WeChat, Weibo, WhatsApp, Line, Yandex, etc. Reaching out to customers on these platforms is a smart way to make them aware of what stores, brands and products are around and allows tourists to have two-way communication with the merchant in their own language.

They Are Here For The Deals — So Push Them Hard

Travelers to the U.S. tend to be deal hungry and triggered to take advantage of any offers they can get — in fact, most are not used to getting such deals from brands in their home countries. However, before the era of mobile devices and social media, there was no easy way for retailers to deliver these offers and deals to them. The smart thing to do is to segment and target using multilingual social media platforms, allowing extension of personalized offers to travelers that are contextually relevant, thereby significantly increasing the chances of conversion.

Payments Are Not Just Cash Or Card Anymore

Many tourists rely heavily on cash when they come to the U.S. because they do not have a credit card that is accepted in the U.S. market, often because they are not eligible to get one. This limits their spending power. Meanwhile, mobile payment mechanisms are extremely popular and mainstream in countries like China and India. A retailer that can offer a wider range of payment options, including ones that they are comfortable with and already set up to use, can stand out in the market. Not only will they attract more tourist business, but they will also enable those customers to spend more.

Pickup, Deliver, Ship — Make Them Want To Buy From You

The last thing a tourist wants to do is lug packages around town during a visit. And while they may be excited to shop, that doesn't mean they want to spend hours trekking around to find the items they are looking for, particularly if they know exactly what they want. Retailers can appeal to the tourist market by offering flexibility on pickup and delivery options. For example, if a visitor can pre-order online in their own language, using the payment mechanism they like, and then simply pick it up in-store when they arrive, that's a convenient and low-stress experience — and fits well into the limited time the tourists have at each location. In addition, allowing a customer to request delivery to their hotel room, or even an airport destination, has tremendous benefits. Retailers can go even further by allowing customers to purchase products and have them shipped directly back to their home country.

Far too many retailers leave a lucrative customer pool untapped by ignoring the unique needs of the tourist market. Each of these capabilities is an impetus for eager-to-spend tourists to buy more.

Amitaabh Malhotra is the chief marketing officer of [Omnyway](#), an integrated platform for payments, loyalty rewards and offers that encourages consumers to use their mobile phone for all aspects of the buying journey.

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