



Irritating buzzwords to explain the fact that people shop online a lot in 2014?

Yes, they might be annoying phrases, but their real message is that people do more than simply use a computer when they shop online.

And that's something that every business needs to consider carefully.

Today it wouldn't be uncommon for someone to click an online advert, get an offer via email or see something on social media that tickles the part of their brain that says "I like that / I want one of those".

- They might do a bit of In-store browsing on the high street, outlet village or shopping mall if it's convenient or perhaps use their mobile to do a little research on their mobile, or seek opinions on this amazing thing you found via social media.
- Go online later that day on their tablet or PC to do price comparisons and check customer reviews of product and seller, and maybe go on to make that purchase online from the comfort and convenience of the sofa.
- Let friends know about the latest bargain with a little social media update from a smartphone.
- Purchases are delivered swiftly to the door, or ready to collect in-store the following day.
- Delighted with an online bargain, it's time to share the overall experience and let fellow shoppers benefit from shared knowledge by leaving ratings and reviews using a tablet.
- Finally get the smartphone out and post a 'selfie' with the new purchases!

Or maybe a completely different combination, but you get the point that the way people buy things has changed and will continue to change.

Big businesses are spending huge sums of money trying to capture these online shoppers, something that is just not feasible for small and micro businesses, but that doesn't mean they should just roll over and die.

Small and micro business owners need to take the time to understand how customers buy in 2014 and look to take advantage by enabling as many ways as possible for customers to interact with them.

There are any numbers of low/no cost ways small / micro business can adapt and get a slice of this online business. A good website need not be expensive, social media accounts are free and help engage with customers, free entries in online directory listings help people find you online, whilst adding ratings & reviews, a shopping cart and online appointment booking can easily be done on a small budget, by adding and integrating 3rd party components.



Figure 1 How customers buy in 2014

Businesses can sign up for a free, search engine friendly local directory listing by visiting www.miquando.com and clicking the Add Your Business link (top right).

Not only do businesses get perhaps the most comprehensive entry available of any local business directory, completely free, they can take advantage of these additional fantastic opportunities:

- Use highly targeted internet advertising to attract new business
- Gain new customers via the built in direct mail facilities
- Build an online reputation by adding the independent ratings and reviews to your own website, quickly and easily and 100% free
- Offer online appointment booking to your customers via Miquando, your own website, direct mailings and even your social media pages
- And more great new free and low cost features being added each quarter