

Retail Establishments: Monetize your WiFi Service

Today's consumers see affordable, reliable WiFi as a standard feature in most commercial venues, especially retail and hospitality establishments. According to a recent Hotels.com survey, complimentary WiFi is the top factor in selecting a hotel for both leisure and business travelers.



Guests rate WiFi availability higher than other typical criteria such as free breakfast and coffee-makers in the room. Coffee shops, in particular, are as sought after for WiFi as they are for beverages.



Build satisfaction through multiple offerings

Retail WiFi availability displays interesting trends that businesses can leverage. For example, Starbucks' WiFi network began as a paid service, but is now free for all paying customers. Hotels have been following suit, using complimentary WiFi as an opportunity for aggressive marketing to potential customers.

Fortunately for retailers, free WiFi can benefit consumers without becoming a loss-leader for the provider. Beyond the obvious benefits of attracting and retaining customers, venue operators can monetize their WiFi service in a number of ways; this paper describes some of those approaches.

USE A FREEMIUM APPROACH

Free basic service is the beginning, but venue operators can add tiered access, offering paid, premium service. Options for this include limiting the data-rates of the basic access; customers can still browse the Internet and check email, but will need to buy a plan that enables services such as Netflix for streaming high-quality video.

FREE WIFI FOR CUSTOMERS WHO PAY FOR OTHER PRODUCTS

Coffee shops offer a simple example of this: using a voucher-based system that prints login details on the purchase receipt, rather than offering an open SSID with free WiFi for all, ensures that only the establishment's paying customers can use the free WiFi. Hotels follow a similar model, sometimes using a PMS system so that users can login using their last-name and room number on an otherwise free WiFi network.



LEVERAGE SPLASH-PAGES FOR YOUR OWN ADVERTISEMENTS

Splash pages users click through for access give establishments like Hotels the opportunity to advertise daily specials, the Happy Hour at the hotel bar, and other offers - coupons for free drinks or dessert - to entice customers to use more of the paid facilities at the site. This way, though the WiFi service itself is complementary, it stimulates awareness of and interest in the venue's available paid products and services.

LEVERAGE SPLASH-PAGES FOR ADVERTISEMENTS OF OTHERS

Another entrepreneurial approach to splash page advertisements is the inclusion of other businesses' ads. For instance, a mall coffee shop that offers free WiFi could feature neighboring mall stores' advertisements on their click-through splash page. By charging for that service, the coffee shop owner can offset the costs associated with providing WiFi.

ANALYZE CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR FOR BUSINESS OPTIMIZATION

Presence data collected from WiFi reports offers valuable information that can be shared with data-processing and analytics firms to inform user experience improvements. How long do customers stay in the venue - hotel, store, or mall - and in what areas? How many are returning versus new users? Services that anonymizes the collected data for consumer privacy, while keeping the trends and patterns intact, is ideal for this application.



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