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Customers conduct 10 online checks before contacting supplier



Kitchen (and bathroom) consumers are starting to carry out a number of online checks before they make contact with a supplier, and if you do not measure up digitally, you are going to miss out on a lot of future business, warned Philipp Riederle at the [MHK Group's 39th Convention](#) on Friday 29 March, held in Berlin's Estrel Congress Centre.

If you have not heard of Philipp Riederle before, it would certainly be worth your while to visit his website, as what he has to say about retailing makes for not just interesting but also essential reading for kitchen or bathroom specialists that want to do business in the 21st century. At the ripe old age of 24, he supports more than 400 companies internationally to help them understand the digital generation and modern working environments.

If you were born in the 1960's or earlier you are in the unique position of being part of the 'analogue generation' living in a digital world. This has never happened before and it will never happen again. Those born in the 1980's have not experienced analogue technology (apart from in a second-hand

fashion from their parents), and their world is digital. It's not new to them, it has always been that way.

So why is this important to today's kitchen and bathroom specialist? It is because these 30-something consumers are of an age when a major purchase such as a new kitchen or bathroom starts to feature on their wish-lists. And gone are the days when research will be limited to thumbing through a few magazines and asking a friend where they bought their new kitchen or bathroom.

Good consumer advice in the past had been to visit three kitchen (or bathroom) showrooms, but Riederle argues, today's digital consumer will thoroughly check out potential future suppliers online before making contact with any of them and, that first future contact is likely to be online as well.

Will the local specialist retailer still have a role in the future? Yes, says Riederle. "But", he stressed, "for a consumer decision we spend time beforehand with an average of ten different sources of information."

Philipp Riederle talks about the digital generation at MHK's conference

The specialist retailer has to succeed in luring the 'digital natives' online, offering an added value that was worth the time spent researching online. For example, an online kitchen planner. "With such a planner, we get a feel for the possibilities and the budget," explained Riederle. "And when we've played enough, we'll hand our planning over to the professionals."

The digital generation decides, for example on the basis of evaluation portals, (Company websites, retailer websites, retailer Facebook posts, Twitter feeds, Instagram accounts, YouTube, blogs, etc.) who finally gets the job and whether it is worthwhile to make contact with a company says Riederle. Only if enough information is collected, will they contact a kitchen or bathroom specialist, and then preferably via an online appointment.

"Digital natives are impatient", admitted Riederle, "and since they are well informed, it would be important for the retailer to have answers to the many questions ready – for example, why the refrigerator would be 20 percent cheaper online."

However, when the kitchen or bathroom specialist does do business with digital natives, it will find them to be very loyal customers, contrary to what is commonly assumed. And they will also share their good experiences with their 500 Facebook friends. "Unfortunately, the bad ones too," Riederle added.

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