

TRENDS

## Strategies That Win: How These Brands Are Understanding the New Consumer

By Charlie Carballo (<http://footwearnews.com/author/charlie-carballo/>) / August 15, 2017 9:04PM



FN Platform panel on understanding consumer behavior.

Trying to understand the consumer has never been more challenging — as technology, global costs, business infrastructure and ever-changing shopping patterns have shifted, some heritage brands, e-commerce power players and rising start-ups are successfully navigating the unpredictable waves in tandem.

During the FN Platform panel today in Las Vegas on embracing new consumers, representatives from Axel Arigato, Zappos.com, Keds, United Nude International and BBC International LLC waxed on strategies that are giving them the edge — and newfound knowledge along the way — as they thrive amid a volatile market.



**FN Platform panel on understanding consumer behavior.**

To stand out in a market of heritage brands, Keds refined its message to one consumer. “We’ve taken our 100-year-old brand and focused on women, which we believe gives us a greater point of difference,” Gillian Meek, president, explained. “One of the greatest ways in meeting her and finding her is in the social media space. Our consumer is a young woman building her sense of style. You really have to be specific.”

High-speed Internet access — now at the touch of a mobile device from around the world — yields opportunities to meet the customer around the clock, said Andrew Kiernan, COO, United Nude International.

“Right now we are focusing on efficiency, immediacy and fluidity — the experience — how they get from A to B and why,” Kiernan shared. “The consumer is buying 24 hours a day, but in our business we weren’t serving them 24 hours. They didn’t have the ability to chat online 24 hours, so we’re doing that.”

Similarly, Zappos.com remains competitive by serving consumers on their terms.

“It’s about when they want it, how they want it and what price,” shared Eileen Tetreault, senior director of fashion strategy. “We want to give it to the consumer before they know they want it. That’s the real challenge — what the consumer wants or needs and doesn’t know yet. Also, focusing on the customer experience.”

Experience is the operative word when it comes to customer service and consumer growth — both at brick and mortar stores and online platforms. “New customers expect to get 110-percent service wherever they are,” added Albin Johansson, CEO, Axel Arigato. “It depends on the packaging, how the website looks, how you’re treating the customer and the product. There’s simply not room to not be the best at everything anymore. You have to look at the customer’s journey.”