

MOBILE

Mobile engagement is about more than pushing products: report

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Promotional image for Spring app

By SARAH JONES

Mobile is an increasingly important channel for luxury marketers, with expanding consumer adoption, growing commerce and most digital content being consumed via tablet or smartphone, according to a new report from Fashionbi.

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According to "[Mobile Apps for the Fashion Industry](#): How Brands Can Use Mobile to Influence Consumers' Shopping Habits," while gaming applications account for 74 percent of the total market, non-gaming apps are expected to become the majority by 2017, making room for branded apps. Luxury brands have sometimes been slow to adopt mobile strategies, but this will be key in engaging consumers, especially over the coming years.

"It's a high time now that the brands go mobile, irrespective of their market segments," said Ambika Zutshi, CEO of [Fashionbi](#), Milan. "This was the same argument a few years back for luxury brands to go or not to go ecommerce, and now even Chanel announced its plans to have an owned platform by the end of next year.

"The truth is that till all the 'benchmark' brands do it, the followers won't," she said. "And at

the end, they will get scared of loosing business and will make sudden non-thoughtful decisions and launch — not in the best way — their mcommerce platforms.

"A consumer today is connected 24/7 online, via his mobile phone. In China, it's 30/7. A consumer is inside a brand's store and is already checking the brand's Web site online to see if better prices are offered. Hence, more than just having a mobile-synchronised Web site, it's a high time brands start to give much more than just a product push to the active audience."

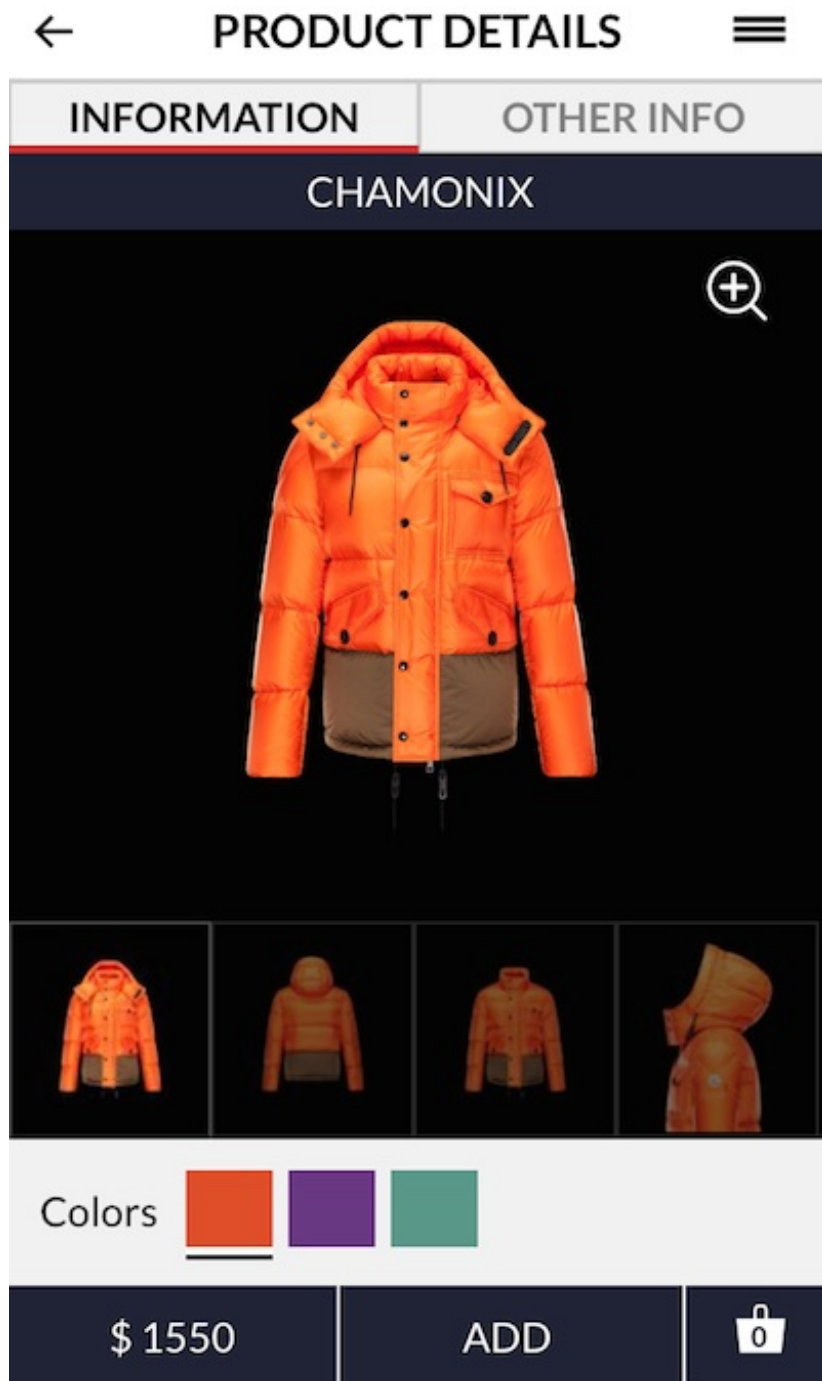
Constant connection

In general, a consumer spends 1.85 hours per day of her time online on a phone or tablet.

China boasts the highest number of tablet users, with 281.4 million, projected to reach 435.5 million by 2018. This is followed by the United States, with 147.1 million users currently.

While Android is more widespread in emerging markets, developed nations favor iOS, often the preferred operating system for luxury apps.

Much debate occurs about the mobile Web versus mobile apps, as brands decide which is right for them.



Moncler recently added a commerce-centric app to its existing mobile presence

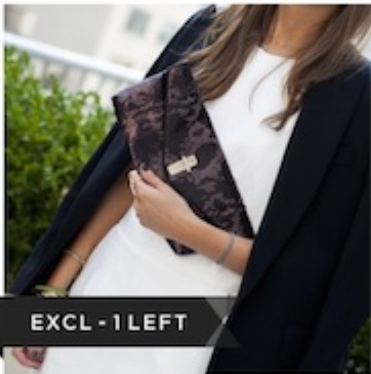
Mobile accounts for more than 40 percent of retailer Web site visits. An app will take upwards of 18 weeks to develop and is more expensive to build than a shopping-enabled mobile site.

However, an app provides a contained branded experience, and in the end a strategy that allows for both is typically best, since consumers can choose how they connect.

If brands do not want to take on developing their own app, another option is to partner with an existing platform.

Oscar de la Renta, Tamara Mellon and Carolina Herrera have all kept stores on mobile app Spring since its launch.

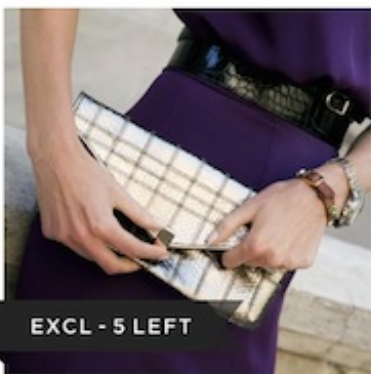
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Tamara Mellon on Spring

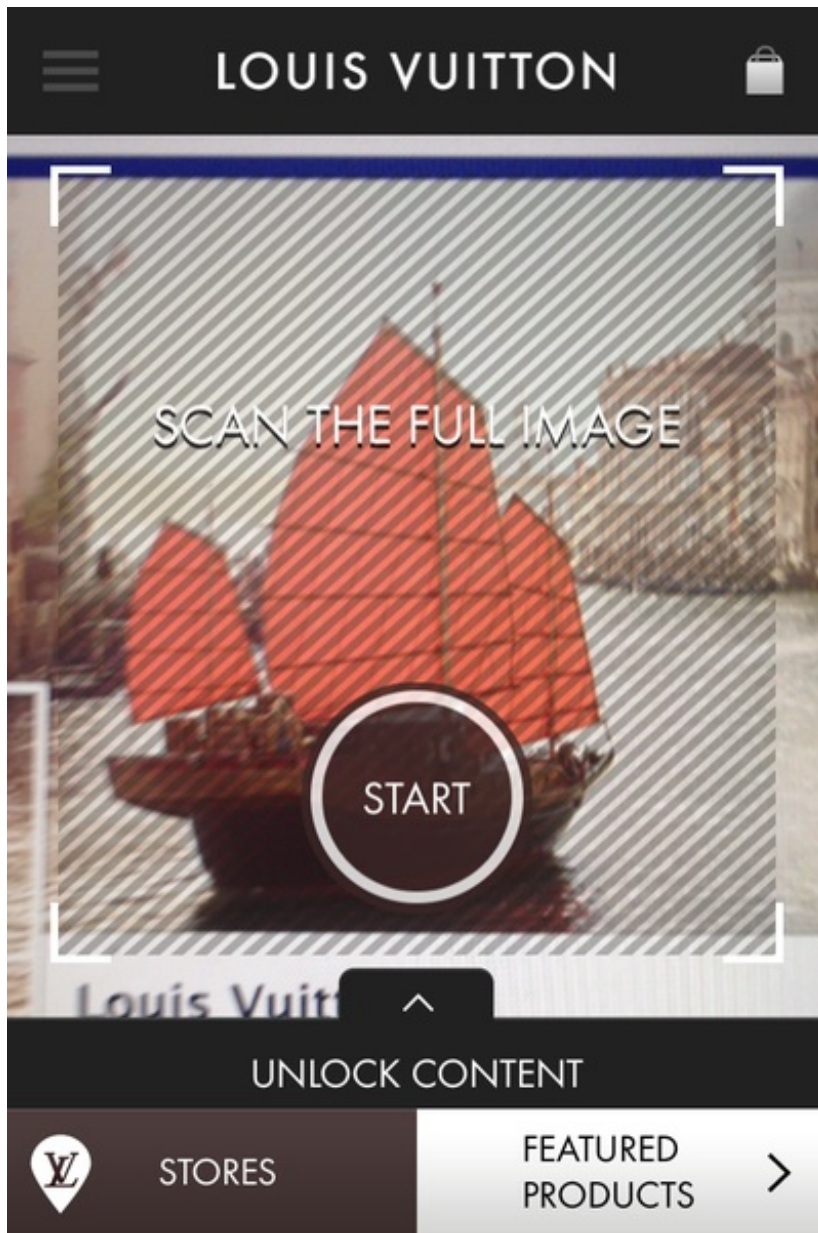
Spring is a fashion and beauty marketplace for both luxury and fast fashion, with each brand managing what products to put up and when. Becoming part of this mobile fashion aggregator allows brands without another mobile-optimized shopping platform to gain sales from consumers on-the-go, while raising visibility for new arrivals for all labels involved ([see story](#)).

A number of luxury brands also have apps that are focused more on engagement than sales, an approach more common among luxury labels than mass market brands.

Dior's content site DiorMag has a dedicated app, where consumers can read articles paired with multimedia in 10 languages. Content is updated consistently, and users can get push notifications when new posts are up.

Gucci also hosts its own branded content on a shoppable magazine, Gucci Style, which updates weekly.

Louis Vuitton's Pass app brings the brand's print advertising to life when scanned with a mobile phone, with some products featured available for purchase ([see story](#)).

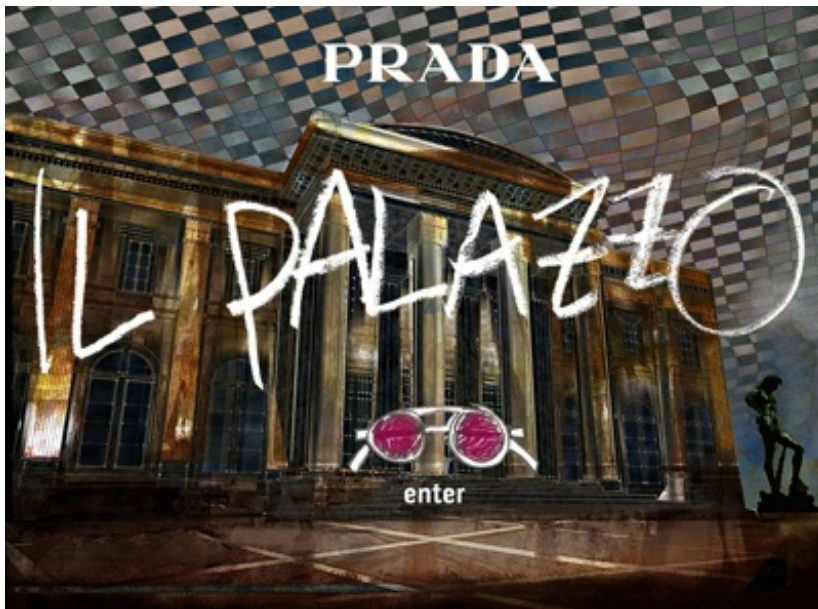


Louis Vuitton's Pass app

French leather goods and scarves maker Hermès shows off its iconic silk scarf collection through a whimsical mobile application that displays the brand's lifestyle while creating awareness among younger consumers. Hermès' "Silk Knots" app uses brisk videos and animated how-to-pictures to teach users the many ways that a silk scarf should be tied ([see story](#)).

Fendi asks for user-generated designs for its iconic handbag via its myBaguette app, while Karl Lagerfeld shares his personality through branded emojis in emotiKarl.

Prada's first mobile app, Il Palazzo, took iPad users through a virtual palace filled with its artistic projects.



Prada's Il Palazzo app

Other apps from luxury brands including Mulberry and Ralph Lauren are a different way to discover content and shopping also accessible on a mobile site.

While some watch and jewelry brands have product-focused apps, most keep listings to their mobile sites. Apps are instead used for special content, typically surrounding one particular product.

Chopard's Happy Sport app lets consumers customize their version of its watch, while Jaeger-LeCoultre helps owners set their watches' moonphase complications without a trip to the boutique through its mobile application ([see story](#)).



Jaeger-LeCoultre Moonphase app

Longines allows exploration of its brand timeline dating back to the 1800s via mobile, and Blancpain uses its main app to focus on the new timepieces making strides in technology through video and other content.

"Luxury brands are putting their bets on the apps rather than the mobile sites, trying to convey only one idea through their app, not to make it much complicated," Ms. Zutshi said. "Plus, a mobile site is nothing but a condensed version of the desktop Web site that has been optimized for smaller screens but makes it very hard to use, in general, as luxury brands at times — especially, the Watch brands — have too much data to be displayed or easily browsed on a mobile site.

"Plus, as mentioned in Fashionbi's latest marketing research on Mobile Apps for the Fashion Industry, for the luxury market segment, the main features of apps are all about conveying brand's heritage and craftsmanship in addition to the product catalog, but the brands also focus on the utilitarian needs of the mobile consumer while consistently communicating value," she said. "Some brands aim to engage consumers through education or entertainment, such as Vacheron Constantin's 'Sound of Time' app, which offers videos and gaming for the Patrimoine Contemporaine Ultra-Thin Calibre 1731. Likewise, Van Heusen's Monaco V4 app is more of an experience of 'making of a watch

and its features', with amazing 3D rotation effects.

"A few brands' apps like Tiffany and Cartier are more of product-based where one can choose and buy products, of course with all the customization features available. Hence, the opportunities are immense, it's up to a brand manager what sort of relationship he wants to build at first with the customer - a fun/entertaining one, a heritage-communicating one or simply product focused."

Social commerce

Social media platforms are making it easier for brands to translate the content they produce into sales with new commerce options.

In July 2014, Facebook introduced a buy button, and a month later Twitter introduced its own in-tweet purchasing program, with Burberry as one of the first adopters.

This past March, Tumblr rolled out its own buy feature, which appears at the bottom of a post.

Department store chains Neiman Marcus and Nordstrom are expanding their mobile commerce capabilities as launch partners for Pinterest's upcoming Buyable Pins feature.

Available for iPhone and iPad, Buyable Pins enables consumers to purchase items they admire without leaving the Pinterest application. This enables brands to generate sales as their followers are engaging and discovering pins on the app ([see story](#)).

Regardless of how brands choose to reach consumers via mobile, the experience has to be authentic to its character.

"The best strategy is, undoubtedly, to create an App that best suits the brand image," Ms. Zutshi said. "If the brand is historical and launching an app for the first time, it is better to start off with communicating the heritage and refined manufacturing stories and later engage in fun features.

"It is also utmost essential to communicate to the audience in their local languages," she said. "Brands like Moncler are already already providing content in multiple local languages, which is a great strategy by such a premium brand. But some brands have been doing it wrong.

"For instance, Blancpain launched an amazing mobile Web site app in China for a limited period offering special benefits to the local audience, with all the information regarding the same on the brand's storefront in multiple locations across the country. Great app, super mobile compatible, great image and description and easy to browse but all the communication was written in English and the app was too heavy to download.

"Such kind of glitches should be double-checked for, not to let them happen, otherwise it really turn the users off and a disappointment may lead to lower brand image and reputation."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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