

MOBILE

In-store, mobile convergence essential for luxury retail

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Luxury marketers need to use mobile to complement their in-store marketing strategy because affluent consumers demand immediate convenience, connection and communication.

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The use of mobile provides immediate information, extra content and can help to solidify a buying decision. Luxury brands that implement a strong mobile presence as part of their in-store experience will surely benefit.

“As an entirely unique communications medium, mobile must be viewed as much more than simply a scaled-down version of a retailer’s ecommerce presence on a smaller screen,” said Scott Forshay, regional sales director at Digby, Austin, TX. “There are ways in which shoppers will want to engage with brands through mobile devices that simply don’t have online equivalents.

“Concepts like location, location-based check-in, and QR code scanning don’t exist online, which immediately limits retailers who tie their mcommerce presence to their Web site at a strategic long-term disadvantage,” he said.

Why brands should do it

Mobile has unique capabilities that other channels cannot implement. It is not about business-to-consumer, it is about consumer-to-business.

The change is based on consumer demand for efficiency and effectiveness. This is specifically relevant for affluent consumers, who not only expect, but demand efficiency and effectiveness from luxury brands, especially in-store.

Because luxury consumers pay a premium for high-end products, they expect a seamless, positive experience across all media channels, including mobile and in-store.

Ways to implement

One way that luxury brands use mobile while in-store are through the use of push-notifications in branded applications or via SMS.

Push-notifications can be used to offer special sales or promotions happening in-store.

Also, brands can use the unique capability of using a consumers' GPS through an application, such as Foursquare. This can notify the store if a consumer is inside of it or near it, and prompt them to check-in.

When consumers are actually in the store, a lot of brands use bar codes for customers to access product descriptions, video content or customer reviews to help confirm purchase decisions, according to Mr. Forshay.

However, it is important to not overwhelm customers with notifications or have too many mobile check-points throughout the store, which can be confusing.

Mr. Forshay said that most luxury brands have not yet passed the “mobile as a brand showcase approach,” that is, rich imagery and streaming runway content in-store.

These are aesthetically consistent with a branding experience, but the experience is incomplete because this technique does not serve as a way to close a sale, or provide shoppers with anything useful in-store.

“In today’s economic climate, with reductions in staff becoming the norm and increased customer expectations of efficiency, luxury marketers are faced with a challenge: how best to get more, with less, from the in-store experience without sacrificing the brand essence,” Mr. Forshay said.

“Regardless of the approach any brand considers appropriate for them, the less marketers view mobile as a scaled-down version of their Web presence, and the more they work to creatively conceive unique applications specific to the value-added elements of the mobile medium, the more the medium will evolve into a mobile concierge for shoppers,” he said.

“This will provide increased utility and efficiency in their time-starved worlds, and only then will the true value of mobile be realized.”

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