

COLUMNS

## Do consumers always know what they want to buy?

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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

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Mobile is now the gateway to consumer experiences in the real world. As consumers consciously integrate mobile into their lives, they are able to demand experiences and purchase any item, regardless of location, in a moment of need.

Forrester Research calls this the mobile mind shift. Retailers have responded to this reality with mobile applications and mobile Web sites that enable intent shopping, either through search that often leads to a filtered selection of products.

Can commerce be driven by intent alone?

Consumers often open shopping apps with a preconceived notion of what they are looking for. Their limited time on these apps is typically spent searching products using specific keywords, or using filters and categories to browse through endless options.

A recent Nielsen study shows that consumers use nearly 30 apps per month regularly. However, 60 percent of smartphone users have fewer than two shopping-specific apps, while 21 percent do not have any, according to Forrester.

To make things worse, consumers only spend 5 percent of their time on mobile using shopping apps, making it difficult for retailers to capture their attention with an app-only strategy.

With this data, shopping purely based on search is too limiting, while infinite choice can be overwhelming, leaving retailers unable to strike a balance between allowing users to easily find what they are looking for, and delighting them with options they might like otherwise known as discovery commerce.

New way to enable commerce

For decades, consumer shopping has been dictated not only through intent, but also by serendipity.

With in-store shopping, consumers discovered products that caught their eye wherever they were.

For example, when loitering around malls or tiny shops, retailers employed visual merchandising to stack the odds of product discovery in their favor.

Recommendation engines enable and replicate in-store discovery, but true discovery that happens outside a store when walking past a store window that beckons you in, for example is so far absent on mobile.

Driving mobile commerce begs as a better strategy one that is discovery-led.

So far, discovery commerce has been inadequately addressed on Web and mobile.

The recent wave of "buy button" announcements from the likes of Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Google intend on moving transactions right to the point of discovery and inspiration. But they still require the user to visit a mobile property with an intent.

Instead, what if consumers were given the chance to discover products and buy from anywhere and everywhere on mobile, particularly from the apps they love to spend time on?

Enabling purchases across thousands of mobile apps is disruptive in how it can change consumer shopping behavior on mobile.

Taking buy buttons beyond these walled gardens of the Internet into thousands of apps, or what we like to call the wild gardens, where consumers spend nearly 80 percent of their time, could enable sales at scale, quickly trumping even wildly popular retail apps or Web sites.

Retailers can enable consumers to discover new products on mobile through buy buttons across thousands of apps.

Along with those buy buttons, retailers can deliver riveting discovery experiences through quick mobile storefronts to users, and bring their products to them.

This experience would seamlessly collapse the point of inspiration and point of transaction for consumers, while accelerating the growth of both retailers and app developers.

Curation, personalization and conversation

Mobile ads have so far been a viable way to reach consumers across multiple apps. However, they have also been a broken proposition for both users and advertisers.

Advertising, when done right, has the ability to help people discover new and amazing things.

Every single ad slot on mobile presents a unique opportunity to bring products that are hidden away in catalogs to consumers in a personalized and curated way for them to discover.

In between news articles, instead of ads, consumers can "walk" across a store window and check out the latest fashion all on mobile. This is a powerful new channel for mobile commerce, opening up every mobile app as a potential retail storefront.

For discovery to be consistent, seamless, truly relevant and inspiring, we believe that creating a discovery experience unique to every user is important, and this requires an understanding of the user.

Retailers and ecommerce merchants can now showcase their catalogs and drive sales outside their existing stores.

ULTIMATELY, WITH THE right guidance from users, retailers can use technology to understand and personalize the consumer's journey across apps, and help them make better decisions over time.

Every day, a retailer has access to more than 4 billion discovery sessions, all of which serve as opportunities to power the joy of discovering amazing things.

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