

MOBILE

Schumacher eases design process with trade-first mobile touchpoint

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Schumacher's mobile app

By SARAH JONES

Textile and wall coverings maker Schumacher is connecting interior designers to its wares through a new mobile application.

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The brand's eponymous and only app for iPhone lets accredited members of the trade browse, place orders and keep track of their notes and previous purchases. While many companies are expanding their digital efforts to reach the consumer directly, this app may help more Schumacher textiles and other interior items make their way into affluent consumers' homes.

"The world is moving increasingly in this mobile direction, and the pace of business in general is picking up, and designers' professional experience follows that," said Aaron Buckland, digital product manager at **Schumacher**, New York.

"And of course, we know designers are always on the go, they've always got projects in the works, so being able to quickly find what they're looking for when there is so much out there and have really quick, direct access to information about the products they're using digitally is important to them, and that's feedback we received from designers directly and from second hand feedback from our sales team," she said.

"We pride ourselves on service and we want to be on the cutting edge of that service, and this move toward mobile is inevitable, and it feels familiar to most people on a general professional level, so bringing that to the interior design community just seemed like a no brainer for us."

Design on the move

Schumacher's app follows the same format as its Web site, with some features and information locked except for members of the design trade. While only trade members can access pricing information or place orders, a hands-on homeowner may turn to the app for its catalog of merchandise including fabric, wallpaper and furniture, using the app to keep up with the new styles coming out monthly.

"We definitely want to be and I think this is reflected in our digital presence and our digital strategy we want to be a source of inspiration for end consumers as well and we value so much the design community in general, and that doesn't just include designers, it includes design enthusiasts," Ms. Buckland said.

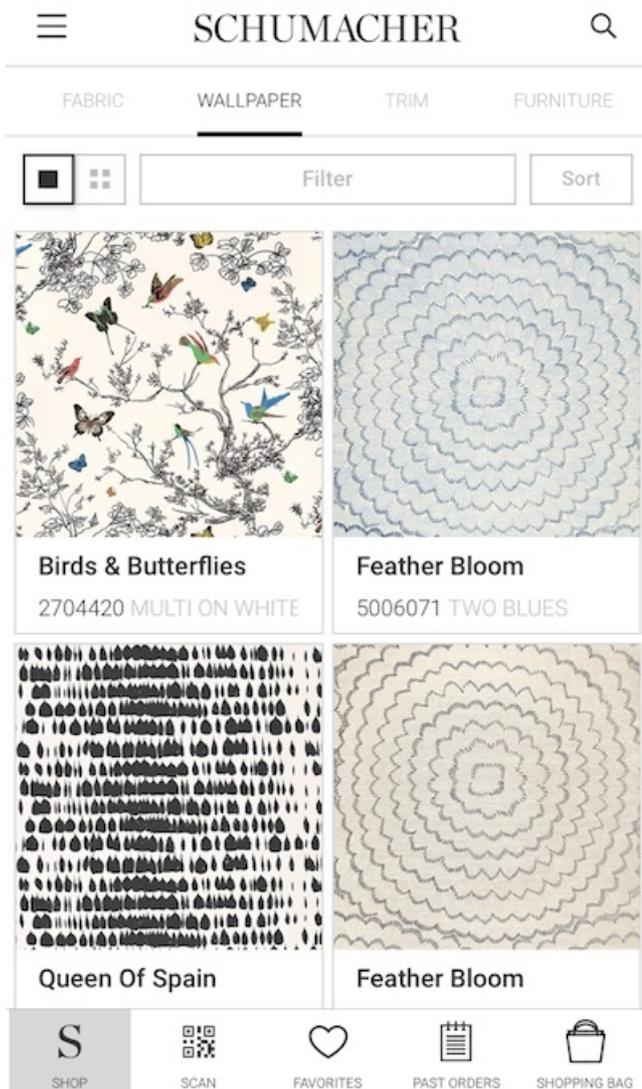
Even without a login, consumers can browse through merchandise, using the app's filtering features to find the

specific look they are seeking.

For instance, when in search of fabric, the buyer can pinpoint a pattern or motif they are looking for, from animal prints to houndstooth. There are also filters for scale of pattern, color, type of textile, style and what application the fabric is for, including upholstery or drapes.

Feedback so far from designers has pointed to the ease of use and speed of the filters.

"I think from a designer's perspective, of course searching for products is a fun and inspirational process, but they have clients who have needs and specific requests, and finding the product that's going to fit the room and help make the room beautiful and perfect for their client is super important," Ms. Buckland said.



Schumacher app

For those with a trade account, the app lets them save favorites and quickly navigate back to them via a permanent button. These favorites carry over to the Web site, allowing signed in users to access their preferred items across devices.

The app includes a QR code reader, which consumers can use to scan tags, materials and books, Schumacher memos and displays at Schumacher's showrooms. This will unlock additional product information and check stock availability.

Typically the process of picking out a fabric involves physically seeing the product in person and flipping through samples at Schumacher's showroom or with an account executive in their office, allowing the designer to feel the textile and see what the fabric will look like in a particular space. Most of Schumacher's sampling currently has a QR code attached, but going forward all product on display at its showroom, memo samples, product tags on merchandise taken to appointments at designers' offices and each SKU within the brand's books will be labeled with a QR code.

Whereas certain client questions about a particular fabric may have once sent a designer to the phone to call

customer service or their account representative, now they can scan the QR code and retrieve the details almost instantaneously. This will save them time in the long run.

Members of the trade can also place a memo order, reserve items or place an order from the app. Memos can be added to the in-app shopping bag without navigating away from the catalog.



Bedroom designed by Mary McDonald

An American family-owned company, Schumacher has a long heritage of interior design projects. In 1902, when architect Stanford White was remodeling the White House's dcor, he tapped Schumacher to design a lampas fabric. The brand has also decorated the homes of other notable names throughout history, including Cornelius Vanderbilt and Mick Jagger.

"Schumacher, like many home furnishing brands, has most likely decided to create a mobile touchpoint for trade account holders to give them instant access to color schemes and patterns to assist them 'in the moment' or 'real time,'" said Rebecca Miller, CEO of [Miller & Company](#), New York. "The added tool is not intended to replace other sources of interaction with the brand, but to add another opportunity to interact with the brand and gain market share by being where the designer has the greatest need in the moment, therefore supporting the immediacy of the designer who may be with their client needing to make either an immediate decision or to illustrate how a color or pattern might suit their client's needs.

"Since Schumacher does not sell to homeowners directly through its online channels, the importance of having a digital presence will help to build brand awareness, showcase options on how best to use their products, provide new introductions and stimulate a client's desire for their product which may ultimately influence a designer's selection."

Connected catalog

Schumacher's app functions solely as a touchpoint to connect designers and other curious parties to its merchandise, with no content featured. For its first foray into mobile, the brand decided to start with the functional and may build on in the future with more editorial features.

"I think in general our digital presence is, we have this amazing content team and we produce all this great photography and we actually receive so much great content from our clients as well installations, photography that they're sending us from rooms they've designed and I think in general our digital presence is moving more in that direction, so I think everyone will be seeing a lot more of that both on the Web site and the app," Ms. Buckland said.

For sectors that have relied heavily on print catalogs, including home furnishings, mobile offers a way to connect publication to purchasing.

For instance, online home furnishings store LuxDeco is communicating a lifestyle behind its product selection with the launch of its first print Style Guide.

The seasonal publication features tips and inspiration for home makeovers and key items to transform living spaces, presented as more of a magazine than a catalog. Bridging the print medium with the ecommerce retailer, each page is scannable via an accompanying brand mobile application, driving consumers back to LuxDeco's Web site for more information and purchasing ([see story](#)).

Also, department store chain Nordstrom is letting consumers interact with its print catalog through a new scanning feature for its iOS application.

Scan & Shop is a new feature on Nordstrom's The Catalogs app, allowing consumers to bring up the products they like on the physical page and make a purchase from their tablet or smartphone. Creating this digital link between catalog and commerce will help the retailer drive sales, since consumers will be able to more easily find the items that interest them as they peruse the book ([see story](#)).

"Design centers around the world have been undergoing a significant shift from being the 'main' resource for architects and interior designers, referenced as 'To The Trade,' to merely one of many resources," Ms. Miller said. "They now compete with art fairs, flea markets, antique dealers, private estate sales, auction houses, artisanal workshops and the list continues to expand.

"This app will help facilitate the interior design process ensuring a manufacturer, be it fabric, case, upholstery, flooring, wallpaper, etc., be in a position to be 'top of mind' by providing a seamless interaction with the brand and its products as required," she said. "They must make sure their products are available for viewing exactly where the trade finds it most convenient which is more times than not, out in the field or at a client's home."

With added competition, protecting the relationship with trade members is important, as they are the link between brand and end consumer.

"I think it's just important for this industry in general, that arguably it's even more important for us to have a strong digital presence and these really user-friendly and easy digital products that help our clients," Ms. Buckland said. "Because their business is also dependent on our products.

"It's not just their life, it's their business and ultimately affecting their end client, so I think creating a useful and inspirational digital space is a super important initiative for us, especially because we're selling to the trade and more of a B2B model."

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