

RETAIL

## Mobile can tie together multiple digital retail experiences: Forrester

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*With digital devices in every part of people's lives, mobile can serve as the digital hub. Image credit: Forrester*

By DANNY PARISI

In the coming digitization of all areas of commerce, mobile will serve as the hub for experiences that branch out into wearables, virtual assistants and more, according to a new report from Forrester.

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Forrester's "The Future of Digital Experiences" report takes a deep-dive into what the retail marketplace will look like in the future with Google Home, Amazon Alexa and Apple's newly announced Siri product becoming major parts of consumers' commerce journeys. What Forrester found was that no matter what new devices come, mobile will continue to serve as an anchor point between all parts of a consumer's digital life.

"We see mobile as the central choreographer for all digital interactions," said Michael Facemire, vice president and principal analyst at **Forrester**, New York. "Today it's the place where you go to perform the entire interaction, but in the future the mobile device will simply represent you in your ecosystem.

"For instance, if I sit down in the driver's seat of my car, the large display in the middle console will be a better place to interact with brands, but my phone will be the digital authentication for that interaction," he said. "Additionally my phone may store my shopping/driving/interaction preferences that influence the interactions on other ecosystem devices.

"For luxury brands, the devices or screens that we interact with will be nicer and more available, but the model won't change."

### Mobile anchor

In the current market in the United States, a majority of customers are what Forrester calls "shifted," meaning that they expect to be able to get any and all services they desire through their mobile device and not be required to switch to desktop.

But despite this, only 43 percent of brands believe that mobile is an enabler of experience transformation, and the same percentage are willing to spend to make mobile worthwhile.

This is the wrong approach. While much has been made about the growing number of new digital channels, most

notably the category of "virtual assistant," things such as Amazon Alexa and Google Home, mobile devices will still be the anchor that holds them together.



*Wearables are one part of the new digital landscape. Image credit: Forrester*

Forrester views mobile as the catalyst for delivering other virtual experiences. For example, consumers might search for a product on one device, set a reminder to purchase it on another and use a third to find the product again while shopping for it in-store.

The anchor among these three is the mobile device, which is a constant companion to the consumers unlike a virtual assistant or connected appliance, which is left at home, or a connected car, which cannot be brought in-store.

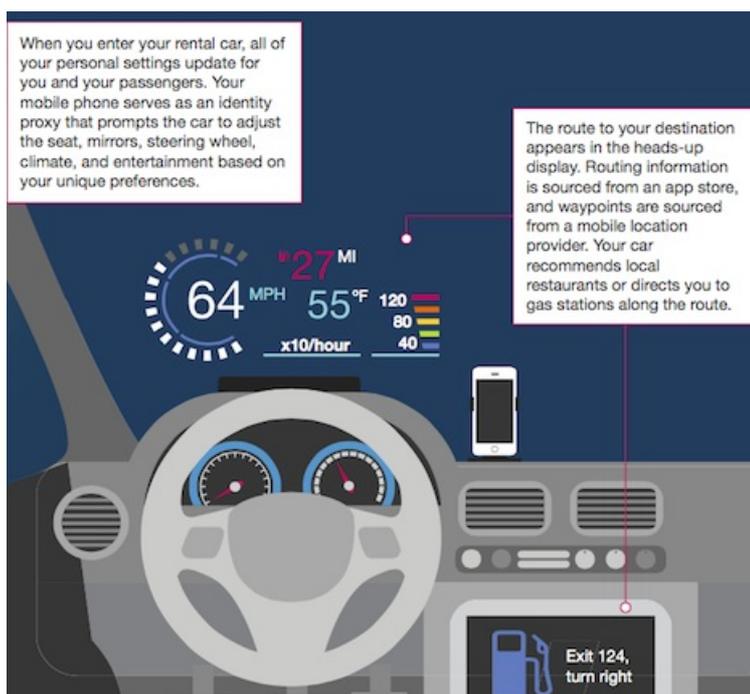
Additionally, mobile allows brands and retailers to make their digital experiences more contextual, using cues like location and geodata in order to make virtual experiences more personalized for consumers.

#### Digital landscape

To achieve this goal of using mobile as a key anchor point between more specific digital experiences, brands and retailers need to understand that simply having a bare-bones app is not enough.

A Google executive at the Mcommerce Summit: State of Mobile Commerce 2016 pointed to several truly transformative brand applications but said the majority of marketers, even some really big ones, are struggling to attract and engage users ([see story](#)).

In other words, simple apps are boring. Consumers want something transformative and valuable to add to their daily mobile consumption habits.



*Connected cars. Image credit: Forrester*

For luxury brands, virtual assistants can be helpful tools. Some have even begun incorporating features that seem

perfectly catered to sectors of the luxury world, such as Amazon Echo's new fashion advice feature.

Consumers who purchase the new Amazon Echo will have the ability to receive fashion advice in regard to their outfits through the device's camera and its artificial intelligence solution. Fashion designers will likely have an avenue in the future to further connect with consumers through this feature ([see story](#)).

In luxury, customers expect a high-quality experience and mobile can be the gateway to providing those types of experiences in a number of positive ways.

"The biggest takeaway is the art of the possible for delivering amazing, highly personalized experiences is growing every day we move forward into the future," Forrester's Mr. Facemire said.

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