

MOBILE

Burberry launches commerce-enabled iPad application

September 15, 2010



By KAITLYN BONNEVILLE

Burberry launched its “Retail Theatre” for London Fashion Week, letting invited consumers watch the luxury brand’s spring/summer 2011 fashion shows in real-time and place orders via the Burberry iPad application.

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After several months of testing, the concept is being launched in 25 of **Burberry’s** flagship stores worldwide next week. The brand partnered with Verizon to create its Retail Theatre.

“Burberry’s new app is really pushing the retailer into a new level of consumer engagement, and ultimately changing the relationship it has with its core customers,” said Patrick Bouaziz, chief visionary officer at **ILoveVelvet**, New York.

“With this technology, the company is not only maintaining its luxury branding with the exclusivity of this campaign, but is also closing the loop on the lag time that frequently occurs between when a new clothing line is shown at Fashion Week and when a customer can purchase those items,” he said.

“Keeping customers’ interest and fostering a lifetime relationship is crucial to brand success, especially in the current economy.”

In-store consumers will be able to browse the entire Burberry collection on the iPad while

watching the London Fashion Week show, which will be streamed onto 10x10 foot screens with surround-sound.

Breaking the fourth wall

For high-end brands such as Burberry, applications are proving to be one of the most effective ways to reach consumers.

Burberry's Retail Theatre lets the consumer to engage in a familiar, personalized way that creates a one-on-one experience.

According to Mr. Bouaziz, in-store is not simply a place to purchase items, it is also a place to build a luxury brand's future, particularly regarding social networks and store-dedicated events' that are described as "co-designing with the communities."

This type of attention moves consumers from a one-time sale to a life-long brand advocate.

Building an application is a better route than a mobile site because it lets consumers interact with the brand. The experience continues with one-on-one conversations with brand representatives, thus enhancing the experience beyond just the sale.

"This type of customer relationship strategy and new technology is a more consistent way of engaging customers, as it provides a certain level of exclusivity combined with the one-to-one shopping experience," Mr. Bouaziz said.

"Other luxury brands are already adopting this method and Burberry's announcement is further proof that this is the direction in which retail is moving," he said.

Luxury addition

By engaging this type of technology, designer and luxury brands are able to provide their consumers with a unique way to experience the brand. It allows for special features on the consumer's end as well as direct feedback on the retailer's end.

"Ultimately, this technology also provides designers and retailers an opportunity to become personal advisors who can take advantage of each interaction and create a natural, trusting one-to-one dialogue with their customers," Mr. Bouaziz said.

"In my opinion, these new technologies only add to the luxury experience," he said.

"Especially in a luxury environment, customers want a personalized experience — one where sales associates remember them, their purchases and their preferences, and can offer something that's not typically found in an everyday retail environment.

"The advance of these kinds of technologies will allow customers to continue to receive this one-on-one experience with more exclusivity and pizzazz while improving intimacy and making customers feel welcome."

Final Take

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