

MOBILE

82pc consumers want to engage retail brands via mobile: study

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By RACHEL LAMB

Approximately 82 percent of consumers want to engage retail brands via mobile and social channels if they believe that it would improve future expectations, according to a study by EmpathicaInc.

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Consumers are striving to communicate with brands, and most of them are using mobile to do so. However, most consumers feel that brands are either unresponsive or do not care about their needs or wants.

“I think the key finding of our most recent study is the level of desire that consumers have to influence their shopping experiences,” said Gary Edwards, chief customer officer of [Empathica Inc.](#), Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.

“The message for all marketers is a simple one: consumers want to be heard,” he said. “For marketers who are already listening, there needs to be more focus on transparency in assuring customers that their voices are not only heard but acted on.

“This indicates a desire by the average consumer to play an active role in ensuring that the brands they frequent are meeting their expectations and the new communication technologies such as mobile and social are, in fact, accelerating this trend as well.”

Scanning for buyers

Affluent consumers are more likely than non-affluents to have smartphones and the ability to interact with a brand while they are shopping.

Therefore, it would be in a luxury brand's best interest to be where the customer is.

More than one-third of respondents visited a brand's Web page using a mobile phone, and 55 percent of them are willing to "like" brands on Facebook.



Courtesy of Burberry

In addition, 89 percent of consumers who shared a positive experience with a brand on social media in the last three months "liked" a brand on Facebook, whereas 36 percent of those who have not shared a positive experience with a brand on social media in the last three months "liked" a brand on Facebook.

The problem is that most customers want to engage with brands and feel like it is a one-way street.

Approximately 62 percent of respondents felt that brands do not monitor online

conversations and only 30 percent believe that brands do anything to act on the feedback they receive, the study said.

“The most surprising finding was that even though consumers are showing a willingness to engage in a dialogue with brands, most do not feel as though brands share that sentiment,” Mr. Edwards said.

“From a consumer perspective, you can imagine if this trend were to continue, there is the potential for quite a lot of frustration building,” he said.

Listening caps

Price comparisons are the most frequent in-store mobile action, followed by scanning a QR code and writing a review.

However, brands that ignore the use of mobile technology in customer or guest experience will miss key opportunities to connect with a large pool of potential brand advocates, Mr. Edwards said.

Brands should start to engage with consumers via mobile and social in ways while they are shopping to build a relationship. Some have already gotten a head start.

For example, Gucci is pushing its Bamboo and I-Gucci watch collections via an in-store display with Samsung’s new transparent viewing screens and offer browsing opportunities with a digital shop-in-shop section with QR codes ([see story](#)).



Gucci's QR code site

In addition, other marketers including Kiehl’s, Stella McCartney and Neiman Marcus are using QR codes and other mobile calls-to-action in-store to engage consumers.



Kiehl's in-store efforts

However, brands need to listen to what consumers want. Since mobile is a real-time medium, this is the optimal way to do so.

“Luxury purchases are special, and the experience surrounding them must feel like an occasion,” Mr. Edwards said. “Consumers want brands to acknowledge their special occasion and one way to do that is to respond to and acknowledge their suggestions for how to make their experience better.

“For brand marketers, the new emerging technologies around social and mobile present a powerful tool to reach back to consumers much as consumers are using them to reach out to them,” he said.

Final Take

Rachel Lamb, associate reporter on Luxury Daily, New York