

MOBILE

Louis Vuitton, Bloomingdale's master app retention for long-lived mobile experience

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By TRICIA CARR

Luxury marketers that are looking to leverage the brand experience should use mobile applications to do so and encourage repeat usage through personalization, exclusive content and functions that enhance the journey to purchase.

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Marketers that develop mobile apps likely spend time, money and man power to create an on-brand setting on smartphones and tablets. Therefore, marketers should ensure that users return to the app frequently through promoting customer retention.

“Marketing budgets are tight, so the more a luxury app can retain users, the more ROI the brand gets from the investment,” said Scott Delea, managing partner at [Inflexion Interactive](#), Hoboken, NJ.

“In addition, the greater the customer retention, the more likely you are building brand and sales,” he said. “According to research by Localytics, app retention is on the rise, which suggests app developers are getting more skilled at building apps and consumers are getting more selective in the apps they use.”

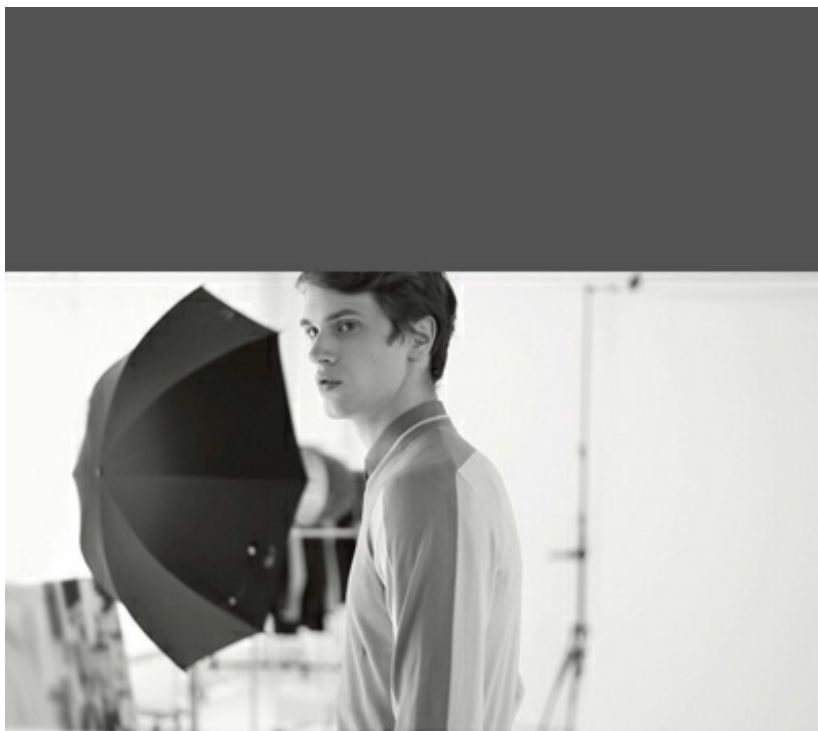
Fun with functionality

One key function of mobile apps that will ensure continued usage is compatibility with both smartphones and tablets.

Next, luxury marketers should use the app to provide new, exclusive content about their brand since the most-loyal consumers will likely be the ones to download it, per Cheryl Sansonetti, marketing manager at [5th Finger](#), San Francisco.

Mobile apps can be used as a platform to release the latest collections or campaigns.

For instance, Ermenegildo Zegna released an app for the iPhone and iPad in June that offered two exclusive products following the live streaming of its spring/summer 2013 show ([see story](#)).



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Zegna Experience app

Additionally, marketers should provide frequent content updates and promotions via their mobile app.

Nordstrom, for example, released its first consumer mobile apps last year for the iPhone and Android devices. They allowed consumers to buy products, curate looks, create a wish list, venture in-store for events and call customer service ([see story](#)).

This year, the retailer updated the iPhone app to include a new Dressing Room feature in conjunction with the release of an iPad app with the same functions ([see story](#)).



Nordstrom iPad app

“We have found notifications can make a significant lift in app open rates,” Ms. Sansonetti said. “Tell your clients about your latest happenings and invite them to open your app.

“Just as important is the app has to feel like your brand,” she said. “The user experience also has to be smooth and quick, and loading speed matters to prevent drop-off.”

Some luxury marketers are using mobile-specific functions such as GPS, augmented reality and on-the-go gaming to increase app retention rates, per Inflexion Interactive’s Mr. Delea.

French fashion house Louis Vuitton targets affluent travelers via its Amble with Louis Vuitton iPhone app meant to spur emotion. It is designed to encourage travelers to save favorite travel destinations and to take personal pictures, notes, videos and sounds along their journey ([see story](#)).



Louis Vuitton Amble app

Optimized for on-the-go

However, all content including video, customization tools or other exclusive content should be optimized for the cross-channel mobile experience.

“Luxury brands need to pay particular attention to the user interface so the act of swiping and tapping are intuitive yet sophisticated,” Mr. Delea said.

Moreover, luxury marketers should take all key functions into account before launching a mobile app experience, per Scott Forshay, mobile and emerging technologies strategist for [Acquity Group](#), Austin, TX.

Consumers are likely to stop engaging with a brand app that does not offer a consistent communication channel or provide personalization.

“Simply publishing an initial app execution in the App Store and, subsequently, washing your hands of it is the most effective way to ensure it never gets used,” Mr. Forshay said.

“Establishing a foundational element in mobility like an app is not the end of the game, but in fact, it is just the beginning of the journey,” he said. “Too many luxury brands do not understand this fundamental reality.

“The luxury consumer expects artistic vision and constant innovation from the brands they most covet.”

Purchase power

Luxury marketers can also use mobile apps to enhance the shopping experience which can in turn increase app usage for this function.

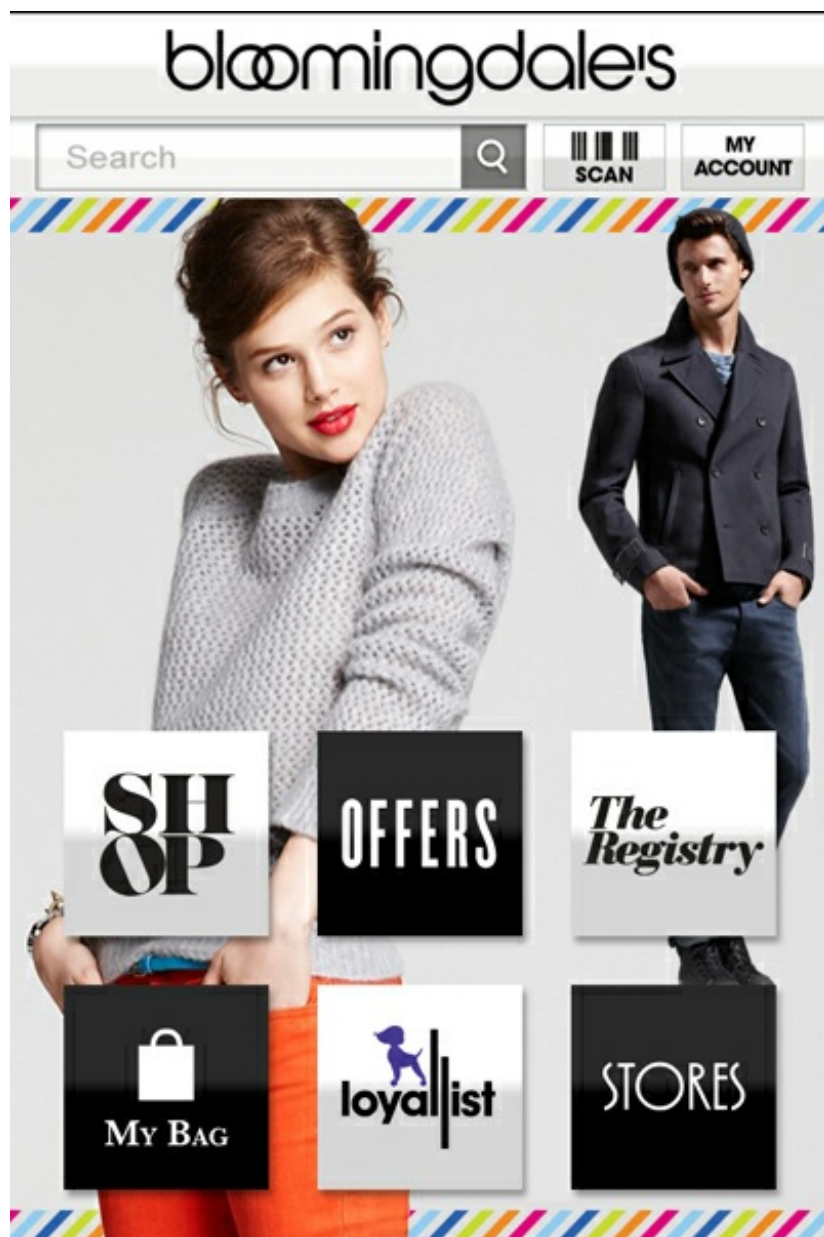
Apps that include access to research tools such as an in-store bar code scanner can work in this way, per Inflexion Interactive’s Mr. Delea.

For example, department store chain Bloomingdale’s released iPhone and Android apps earlier this year to let fashion-savvy consumers shop the latest trends as well as check

prices and read product reviews.

Bloomingdale's Big Brown Bag mobile app lets users locate the nearest location to learn more about in-store events and special offers.

Also, an in-store bar code scanner lets customers view additional product details and read customer reviews ([see story](#)).



Bloomingdale's app

“Brands such as Bloomingdale’s are using their apps as a virtual salesperson by providing the ability to shop, research and participate in their loyalty program which increases app retention,” Mr. Delea said.

The essence of the luxury brand experience is the in-store environment, per Acquity Group’s Mr. Forshay.

Therefore, a GSP store locator and click-to-call functions are essentially mandatory for a luxury brand app, but luxury marketers should move beyond these functions to impress users.

“Integrated commerce capabilities are also table stakes for luxury brands, facilitating purchases for shoppers in ways that are device-optimized and functionally simplistic,” Mr. Forshay said.

“Additionally, in-app push notifications, whether editorially scheduled or geo-fenced, create the powerfully proactive communications channel necessary to synchronize consistent off-premise and on-premise interactivity between consumer and brand,” he said.

Screen to screen

There is room for growth among luxury marketers in terms of the multi-screen mobile approach.

In fact, the existence of a multi-screen approach is lowest among luxury retailers, per 5th Finger’s Ms. Sansonetti .

Most online shopping happens while customers are at home sitting on their couch with their iPad. Therefore, luxury brands need to work to capture these users via their apps.

Furthermore, browsing traffic is increasing daily on smartphones.

“Consider looking into responsive design,” Ms. Sansonetti said. “Using this technology, you can capture all these shoppers on any size device by displaying your site optimally from one build.

“The luxury market is among the highest in ownership of smartphones and tablets,” she said. “Keeping these users engaged and opening your app increases the amount of times customers view your product, and that increases your conversions and keeps loyal customers loyal.”

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