

MOBILE

Sotheby's enables mobile bids in upscale auctions

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By PETER FINOCCHIARO

British auction house Sotheby's launched commerce-enabled applications for iPhone and iPad to let consumers bid on luxury items right from their mobile devices.

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Luxury Daily

Auction enthusiasts can use the application to browse current and upcoming auctions, view items and log-in to their Sotheby's.com accounts to place absentee bids. The application is available for free in Apple's App Store.

"This mobile application will help Sotheby's extend its reach and connect with their customers at a regular frequency," said Patrick Bouaziz, chief visionary officer at ILoveVelvet, New York. "As Sotheby's is known for its auctions and selling one-of-a-kind pieces, this should help the high-end organization promote and preview these items as well as enhance its overall brand.

"This specific application also allows the opportunity for mobile users to bid on current auctions – giving them a direct link to the auction house from anywhere at any time," he said. "In addition, with most mobile applications of this nature, Sotheby's has a chance to tap into its customer base to receive real-time feedback on changing wants and needs, allowing the company to meet market expectations."

I Love Velvet did not develop the application for Sotheby's, but agreed to speak as a third-party source.

London-based Sotheby's was not available for comment by press time.

Sotheby's is a 266-year-old auction house that specializes in auctioning off artwork, jewelry, antiques and other luxury goods.

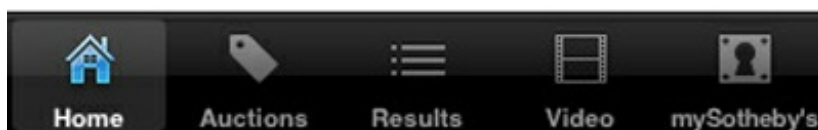
Going once ... going twice ...

The Sotheby's iPhone and the iPad applications include nearly identical functionality.

The homepage lets users choose between sections devoted to upcoming auctions, auction results and Sotheby's departments focused on different types of auction items, as well as a directory of other services offered by the auction house.



- › UPCOMING AUCTIONS
- › AUCTION RESULTS
- › DEPARTMENTS
- › SERVICES



The Sotheby's iPhone application homepage

A persistent navigation bar along the bottom of the screen lets auction-goers toggle between the homepage, the auctions section, a results page that shows who won what, a video section and personal account information.

Users can also click on a magnifying-glass icon at the top of the screen to search for auctions by using keywords.

The Auctions section organizes upcoming and ongoing events in chronological order, and consumers can click on each item to find out more about the events and browse the catalogues of available items.

Some auction catalogs include appraisals of the items, and allow mobile users to organize searches by

Individual item pages let consumers look through catalog notes, key contacts and condition reports.



A Sotheby's product page on the iPad

Consumers with free Sothebys.com memberships can log in to track auctions. Listings selected by users are available available for offline viewing in the mySotheby's section.

Members can also make absentee bids, letting them attempt to acquire items while away from the physical auction site.

Auctions hit mobile

Mobile has been developing as a medium for conducting auction bids for a couple of years.

In fact, an eBay executive said last year that mobile bidders were more likely to win auctions on the brand's platform ([see story](#)).

Additionally, tech startups such as Wasplit have been developing platforms capable of enabling auction bids through mobile channels such as SMS ([see story](#)).

However, Sotheby's target customers who have a different set of expectations than those frequenting mobile experiences by mainstream behemoths such as eBay.

Therefore, the auction house should remember to keep the user experience rich in order

to match the application's design with the brand's values.

“Organizations need to consider its customer bases needs and how various features will align with overall product or marketing strategy,” Mr. Bouaziz said. “Especially for luxury brands, applications should reflect the exclusivity and intimacy that is offered at every brick-and-mortar location, and in the case of Sotheby's, direct interaction is also a key capability.

“This balance comes from providing a rich mobile platform with dynamic features and content that will draw in new customers as well as retain and foster the relationship with life-long advocates,” he said.

Final Take

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