

MOBILE

How luxury retailers can take on showrooming threat

January 29, 2013



By ERIN SHEA

Luxury retailers should incorporate mobile touchpoints to reduce showrooming behavior among shoppers or risk being left behind, experts say.

**Sign up now
Luxury Daily**

The in-store experience and showrooming - when shoppers look for the same item from another retailer with their mobile device - is constantly evolving with the speed of technology as marketers look to keep up with what their consumers expect. Although some luxury marketers tend to be resistant to change, mobile seems to be the way of the future and many retailers are striving to make a home for mobile in the in-store experience.

"Wise marketers are embracing the idea of mobile devices in the hands of shoppers rather than fearing it," said Jeff Hasen, chief marketing officer of **Hipcricket**, Seattle. "A winning formula is transparency and superb customer service."

"Retailers are providing Wi-Fi, free or otherwise, because it is what consumers want," he said.

"Anything less will make many [consumers] go elsewhere."

What the customer wants

First and foremost is the customer experience in-store. This is especially true for luxury retailers, since luxury customers have come to expect outstanding service.

"To succeed at what I call moments of trust touchpoints between brands and consumers, retailers must deliver sterling customer service," Mr. Hasen said. "For luxury retailers, the expectations are heightened and the service must be as well."

Mobile apps and technologies can help retailers provide excellent customer service and further engage with a customer.

On the other hand, mobile technologies can also allow a consumer to quickly become more informed before making a purchase in-store.

"Mobile phones and apps can help users browse, get detailed information in store, check inventory, as well as allowing retailers to better service customers' needs," said Melody Adhami, president and chief operating officer of [Plastic Mobile Inc.](#), Toronto.

Mobile can help retailers connect with customers after the in-store experience as well.

"Retailers can continue to connect with their customers post purchase, garnering valuable feedback or providing additional information about new items and promotions," Ms. Adhami said.

"Mobile can be a very powerful customer service tool, especially when dealing with luxury brands that want to offer a more intimate, personal experience," she said.

Retail innovations

A few luxury retailers have started to make use of mobile technologies in their stores, both for the sales associates and for the consumers.

For instance, department store chain Nordstrom launched its first mobile application in November that combines commerce, customer service and cross-channel engagement.

The Nordstrom app allows consumers to buy products, curate looks, create a wish list, venture in-store for events and call customer service ([see story](#)).

Also, department store chain Bloomingdale's rolled out an iPhone and Android application to allow fashion-savvy consumers shop the latest trends, as well as check prices and read product reviews.

Via the app, consumers can also locate the nearest location to learn more about in-store events and special offers. The app is available for free download in Apple's App Store and Google Play ([see story](#)).

However, other retailers are making mobile touchpoints available in POS systems to enhance the service the sales associates are able to offer and allow them to spend more time with the customer.

Department store Barneys New York gave in-store shoppers a more personalized checkout experience through a partnership with Infinite Peripherals that equips sales associates

with mobile point-of-sale devices at its flagship location.

Barneys is one of the first retailers in the United States to use the Infinea Tab modular system that turns an iPad into a one- or two-dimensional bar code scanner and magnetic stripe reader so that sales associates can checkout customers at any location on the sales floor.

Sales associates at Barneys' Madison Avenue location can conduct a customer checkout from anywhere in the store through the point-of-sale hardware and software application ([see story](#)).

"This allows the retailer to stay with the customer during their entire purchasing experience," said Jeffrey Scott, CEO and vice president of sales and marketing at Infinite Peripherals, Orange County, CA.

"Customers go to the Internet to purchase, they go to the physical locations for the experience," he said. "Waiting in a long time to make a purchase is a very bad customer experience."

"The POS fixed station as we know it will disappear and showrooms will decrease in size."

Final take

Erin Shea, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/CadkusyxJzE>

© Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.