

MOBILE

Gilt exec: Building for mobile-first provides better omnichannel experience

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Gilt promotional image

By SARAH JONES

NEW YORK - Affluent consumers are willing to convert on mobile, but they expect an experience that goes above retail, said a Gilt executive at the Mcommerce Summit: State of Mobile Commerce 2014.

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Luxury Daily

Gilt operates from a mobile-first philosophy, thinking first about how a new feature will look on mobile and then building it for desktop, rather than the other way around to ensure "fast, simple and fun" for consumers. Brands should think of mobile as an integral part of the omnichannel experience rather than an afterthought.

"We started making a shift going to a more mobile-first company about six months ago, to start testing and launching functionality on the mobile devices first," said Jason John, vice president of online, mobile and social marketing, Gilt.com, New York.

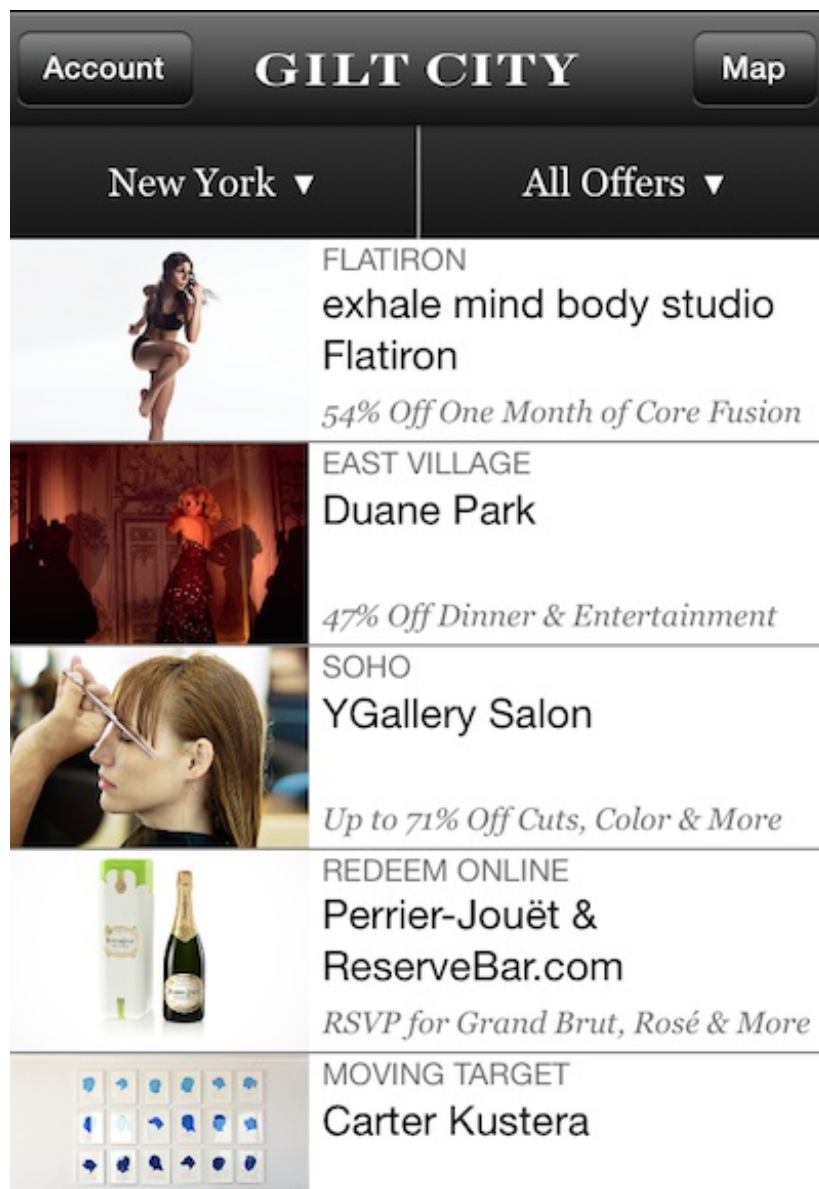
"It's not been easy, that's a major cultural change," he said. "But it's a path we had to take."

Anytime, anywhere

Gilt's consumer base is primarily affluent and young. They are also social media influencers, with 89 percent active on six or more platforms.

The flash sale retailer began from a desktop perspective, and was able to customize the user experience easily, since consumers had to register and provide personal information in order to browse merchandise. It sends 3,000 different versions of the daily email to make sure consumers are seeing relevant flash sales.

Gilt launched its mobile app in 2009, and now has six different mobile platforms, including apps for iPad, iPhone and Android as well as a mobile Web site for Gilt. It has also developed an iPhone app and mobile Web site for Gilt City.



Gilt City app for iPhone

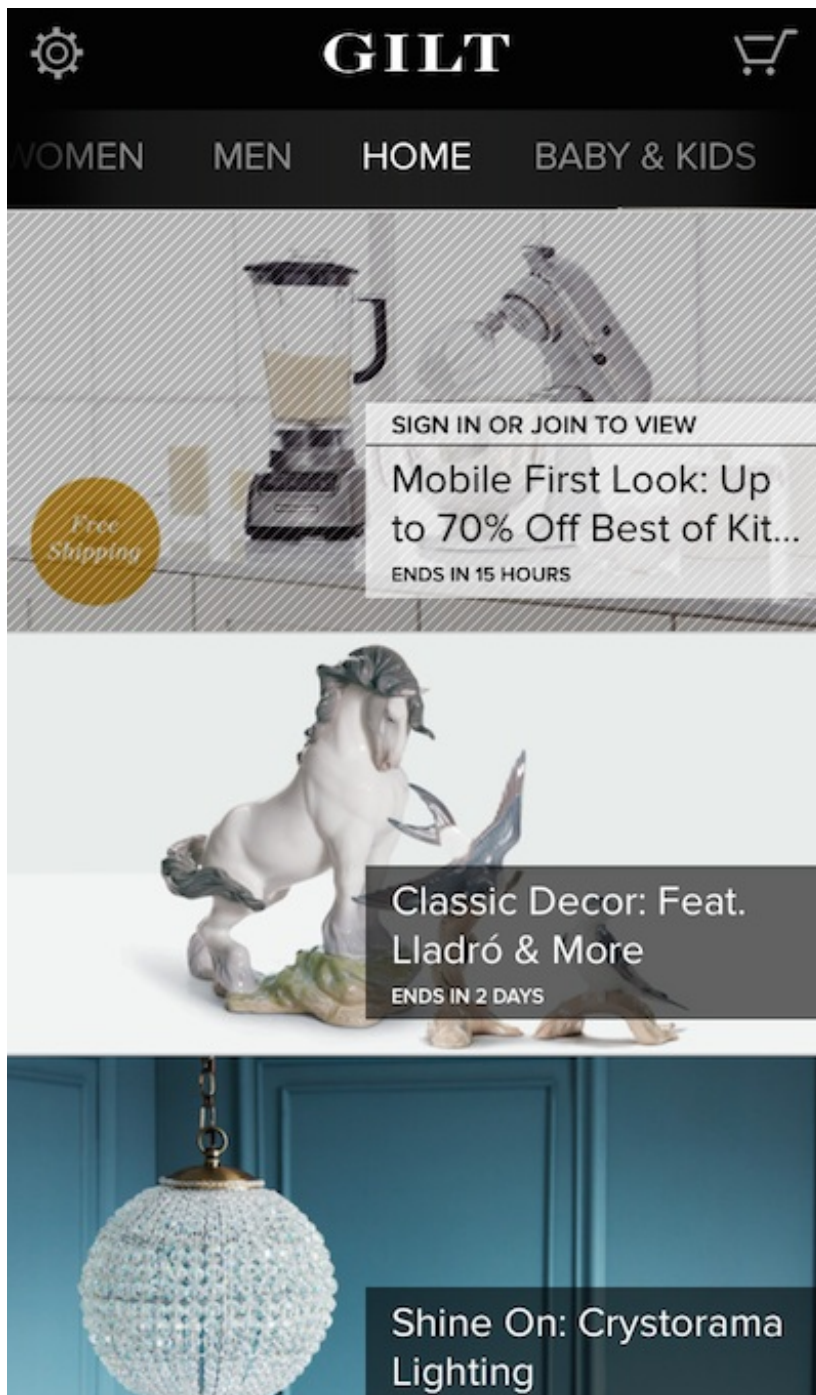
Today mobile purchases constitute 40 percent of Gilt's sales.

On mobile, personalization has become more of a challenge, since consumers can download the app and shop across different devices without signing in.

The number of different apps make maintenance difficult, but the retailer relies on its in-house team of 100 engineers that are being trained to all be able to work on mobile.

Getting a consumer to connect with a brand across multiple channels lifts their lifetime value to a brand. Gilt sticks to the motto of “fast, simple and fun” when designing the mobile experience to get consumers to want to come back to its apps.

To provide incentive for consumers to connect with them on mobile, Gilt creates unique experiences that can only be accessed through an app. For instance, “Mobile Exclusives” presents flash sales for mobile consumers only and “Mobile First Looks,” where mobile consumers get an exclusive preview of a sale one day ahead.



Gilt app

Gamification is also incorporated into the mobile experience through interactive features. By pointing the device’s camera at a color, a curated selection of items matching that color appear for the consumer.

Gilt has also created a way for its customers to virtually try on eyewear by snapping a

photo of themselves and then swiping frames over their image.

The retailer's marketing drives home the messaging of "Gilt on the go," with mobile devices incorporated into ad campaigns, showing that consumers can shop anywhere, anytime.

Gilt has designed its mobile purchase path to take two minutes total, from opening the app to the sale. Consumers shopping on mobile often don't have an abundance of time, so the retailer is trying to incorporate more personalization into its apps.

Mr. John said that when building apps, a brand needs to understand how consumers are using it and where mobile fits into the purchase funnel. For instance, if consumers are mostly opening an app to use a store locator, that feature should be prominent rather than buried.



Jason John

Conversion doesn't necessarily have to happen on mobile.

Gilt finds that purchases made on its desktop site are still generally slightly higher than those made on mobile. However, consumers visit the app and buy products more frequently on mobile.

Partner platform

Luxury brands have looked to Gilt as a platform for reaching engaged consumers.

For instance, footwear label Stuart Weitzman celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its signature 5050 Boot through a digital pop-up shop with online off-price retailer Gilt Oct. 17 – Nov. 5 to reach a global audience while experimenting with a new ecommerce tactic.

The digital format allowed Stuart Weitzman to build product awareness on a scale that bricks-and-mortar locations were not able to match. The label's digital pop-up approach may become a trend among other online retailers looking to set themselves apart from competitors ([see story](#)).

Others have used the flash sale site's data collection capabilities to bolster their own personalization efforts.

Italian linens brand Frette promoted a contest with Gilt Home through the luxury home goods site's social media and email list that requires consumers to sign up for brand emails to be entered.

Frette and Gilt Home, in collaboration with La Perla and Kate Somerville, offered gift cards and brand products as prizes for signing up for the four brands' email lists. Consumers had a greater chance of winning if they get their friends to sign up with multiple social media touch points for further interaction ([see story](#)).

Gilt is constantly being pushed to innovate by its consumers.

"Convenience just isn't enough," Mr. John said. "It's not good enough anymore to just put your content, to just put the products you're selling up on a mobile device.

"You have to have some uniqueness, you have to have some entertainment factor to what you're doing, or else people are not going to keep coming back," he said.

"You're not necessarily up against competitors as much as you are up against what people in this mobile world are conditioned to do."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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