RESEARCH

12pc of brands enable consumers to view store inventory via mobile: L2

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Baselworld 2014 app for smartphones and tablets

By JOE MCCARTHY

Consumers tend to use smartphones to assist in-store purchases rather than for mcommerce, but many brands have been slow to implement simple features that can maximize this tendency, according to a new report by L2.

Sixty-five percent of brands studied in the report offer geolocation for nearby stores and 44 percent have responsive mobile Web site designs. Researching products, comparing prices and checking inventory are all favorite mobile activities that tend to generate in-store traffic.

"A brand's 'mobile moment' is contingent on two factors," said Colin Gilbert, lead researcher of L2′s report, New York. "Mobile device usage among its core customer set and how effectively the brand caters to those mobile users.

"Most brands face the same macro trend," he said. "Thanks to mobile devices, we now spend twice as much time connected to the Web than we did three years ago. But more often than not, we don't spend that time interacting with brands, because the mobile experience they offer does not align with our needs and wants.

"Six times as many brands support mobile checkout versus local inventory status. Local search is poorly optimized. Only half of brand emails are optimized for the small screen. Meanwhile, many brands still adopt a narrow view of mobile that does not extend beyond the App Store."

"The Mobile & Tablets Intelligence Report" examines the performance of 126 brands across fashion, jewelry, beauty and retail and "aims to assess the pace of investment and identify examples of innovation."

Coaxing vs. yoking

According to comscore.com, the average amount of time consumers spend on smartphones has grown by 237 percent since 2010. Tablet usage has exploded 1,040 percent, while desktop usage has tapered to 7 percent growth.

Hermes silk knot app

Consumers now spend more time on smartphones than on desktops, but the behavior exhibited differs on both. At least for the time being, consumers do not show the same enthusiasm for mcommerce as they do for desktop ecommerce.

Instead, consumers use smartphones for the steps leading up to a purchase and are 4.8 times more likely to convert in-store than on their phones.

"Influencing" sales has become the chief pursuit of front-running brands. SMS or push alerts, user-generated content, scanning features and deploying benefits through tracking are shaping up to be effective tactics.
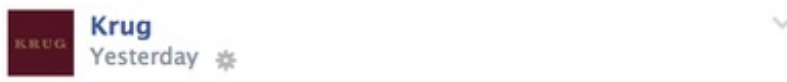
Krug champagne ID app

For example, push notifications elicit a 540 percent increase in daily app opens, according to Cellit.

"There are numerous tactics, each with varying levels of ROI," Mr. Gilbert said. "Brands can invest in SMS alerts to advertise special offers, driving customers from the sidewalk

into a nearby store.

"Brands can ensure that user reviews and ratings, which elicit more trust than merchandise descriptions, are easily accessible on mobile properties," he said.

"Brands can invest in apps that allow users to retrieve information on products as they browse the racks, complementing the efforts of sales associates and combating the showrooming trend. There are numerous opportunities, but limited investment thus far."

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L2 video for Mobile + Tablet report

Leading the way

Several of the brands studied have enhanced their mobile options to reflect this doctrine of influence.

Piaget launched 10 new mobile sites in 2013 that constantly broadcast concierge contact options, click-to-calls, email service and other customer service. Tourneau offers a "find in store" function that allows consumers to check product availability in 35 locations.

Other brands have are missing out on crucial influence functions such as Saks Fifth Avenue, which fails to carry user reviews to its mobile site.
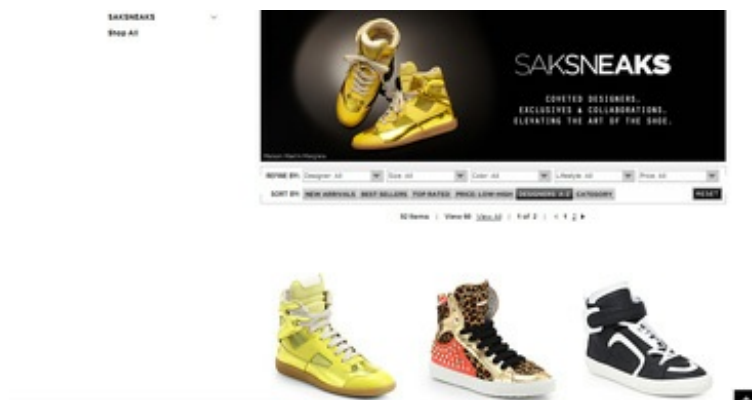
Saks Sneaks

Although mcommerce may always sit second-class to influence, many brands are ensuring that the experience is seamless.

Louis Vuitton cut the clicks required for mobile checkouts from 20 to five by implementing PayPal.

Some young brands may be able to reconfigure operations so mobile always comes first, but many luxury brands have far too much history to overhaul strategy.

"I believe the idea of 'mobile-first' is outdated," Mr. Gilbert said. "It applies more to new platforms that are deciding how to allocate scarce resources among competing priorities.

"The brands L2 examined are not starting from scratch," he said. "They have sunk immense cost in existing infrastructure that takes time to adapt to a changing ecosystem. At a minimum, a brand's digital experience should be device agnostic — it should work

on all screens.

"We're not there quite yet. Over time, brands should tweak that experience to align with the user behavior exhibited on each device class. It's a long road ahead."

Final Take
Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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