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How luxury brands can maximize mobile marketing

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Luxury shoppers are turning toward mobile devices to research and purchase products, making mobile Web site design and search engine optimization must-have marketing strategies for brands moving forward.

A study from Forrester Research Inc. showed that 51 percent of luxury shoppers expect retailers to have a mobile site, 49 percent expect a mobile application and 43 percent expect to be able to make purchases on a mobile site or app.

According to Google, 100 percent of affluent shoppers use a smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop computer. Google's research also shows that 29 percent use either a smartphone or tablet to research their luxury products. Affluent shoppers under 40 use mobile devices at a 39 percent rate, a 34 percent lift compared to the total affluent shopper population.

Luxury brands that want to dominate the mobile market, where roughly one in every five sales are made, need a Web site designed for the mobile experience. Most retailers are not responding to the trend and have failed to adequately provide an optimal mobile experience for users. Econsultancy reports that as of last year, 45 percent of businesses

did not have a mobile site or app.

Responsive design: The gold standard of mobile

Google specifically recommends businesses use responsive design. The reason is that responsive design adapts automatically to the size of the screen, meaning no need for mobile site redirects, lessened chance of broken links and faster loading times. It also means that mobile users can access every feature that's available on a desktop computer, which is a big selling point for consumers.

According to Google, 67 percent of users say they are more likely to make a purchase from a mobile-friendly Web site while on the go.

Luxury brands that decide to use responsive design should focus on creating a layout that adapts toward the limitations and capabilities of mobile devices.

First, because there are no mice, links and images, and text should be large and easy to read. Mobile users should not have to zoom in to access and feature. Using images as links is one option that accomplishes both tasks at once.

Second, create a dropdown menu above the scroll that directly links to the site's most popular features. Doing this allows mobile users to move easily from a product page to other pertinent information quickly and easily, helping increase sales.

Third, go light on text and heavy on images. The size of mobile screens and the fact that many mobile users are using their devices away from home makes reading text difficult. Web sites that include high-quality images and minimal text may see more interaction and response from mobile users.

Luxury shoppers demand high-quality features

Luxury shoppers demand more from retailers and, in turn, demand more from mobile Web sites in the form of features that make the browsing and shopper experience feel as easy and upscale as doing it in person.

Making searching easy: Mobile users do not want to have to click through several links to find a product, reviews, store information or any other content. By creating a deep search function, mobile users can move easily to what they need, reducing confusion and frustration.

Go local: While many luxury shoppers are willing to purchase online, most still want to see the products in person before spending their money. Luxury retailers should include a location finder that makes it easy for consumers to find the closest location. Make sure to include information such as hours of operation, phone numbers and a link that automatically population directions for the user.

Allow for interaction: Ninety percent of consumers say that positive online reviews had a direct impact on their buying decision, according to Dimensional Research. Luxury brands should not only create a way for consumers to read reviews, but also easily write

reviews on mobile devices.

SEVENTY-EIGHT percent of luxury shoppers look online before making a purchase and have twice the smartphone penetration, according to Google.

Luxury brands that ignore the massive mobile use by their consumer base are missing out on potential sales. Luxury brands should use responsive design and include mobile features that affluent shoppers demand to increase consumer satisfaction and mobile sales.

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