FASHION ON SMARTPHONE - APPS THAT CONNECT WITH CONSUMER

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Abstract- Smartphones are known to drive the digital era fashion. This paper explores the connect between the consumer and the digital fashion. Increasingly customers are banking on their smartphones for a variety of information, which is validated through various studies in the paper. It is established that mobile is emerging as a major retail channel. Retailers are exploiting this by personalising their message and targeting their customers for a sure sale. Mobile apps break geographical barriers, engage customers and give them a seamless buying experience. To stay afloat in the fast changing business environment, retailers have to embrace mobile marketing, else they stand to perish.

Key words: smart phone, mobile, environment, retailers, marketing, customers.

Introduction:

Digital revolution has resulted in a blurred line between the offline and online worlds. Consequently retailers are finding new ways to reach consumers. In the online world, mobile presence in all areas is increasing. Fashion is no stranger to this phenomenon. Consumers are embracing the mobile technology and making online purchases be it grocery shopping, meal shopping or clothes shopping. *e*-marketing has become passé, and mobile marketing is the order of the day.

Mobile marketing is defined as "an interactive marketing tool used inthe promotion activities of goods/services or ideas through mobile phones (smartphones) in a manner that benefits the business and all of its stakeholders". Smartphones are the leaders of mobile marketing. They have become the mediators between the marketers and the consumers. Apps bridge the gap between brick-and-mortar retailers and e-commerce sites.For consumers, apps create a personalized digital environment that is extremely user-friendly.On the marketers' side, apps provide a direct communication channel with their customer as well

as access to real-time, user-level data that helps brands understand their customers' journey.

Background:

Among all licensed apps available on app stores today, 17% cater to fashion or are fashion-related. This includes everything from shoes and outdoor gear to luxury and designer apparel labels.A 2011 survey revealed that clothing and accessories were actually among the second highest mobile-purchased items, next to electronics. 37% of all clothes and accessories were sold through mobile apps.

Consumers are known to use smartphone while shopping. There are various reasons as to why consumers rely on their smartphone for information. A report from Vibes published in September found that 80% of smartphone owners always or often have their phone with them while shopping.Of those consumers, a third (33%) have used their device to lookup a product on a competitor's site while 20% have researched the store's own website.The second most popular activity was looking up a product review (31%), followed by scanning a QR code for more information (27%).Of those who do research other options, 25% left the store and made a purchase from a competitor, representing 6% of smartphone owners overall.

A consumer survey by JiWire shows that the use of mobile in-store is becoming increasingly common.85% of smartphone owners use their devices while in-store.Comparison shopping (49%) and searching for reviews (41%) remain the most popular activities, while 19% purchased on their mobile while in-store.

A survey of 2,000 European consumers conducted by Tradedoubler found that 42% of smartphone owners use their device to compare prices in-store, while 13% claim to have switched stores after finding a better offer elsewhere.

Consumers aged 18-34 are far more likely than older age groups to use their smartphone when out shopping. About 51% of UK consumers check prices and reviews on their device while in-store compared to just 16% of those aged 55+.

A survey of US smartphone owners who use their mobile devices while shopping in-store found that behaviour differs depending on the type of retail outlet.For example, using or requesting a coupon is most popular at grocery stores (41%), department stores (41%), and clothing stores (39%).In comparison, at electronics stores the vast majority of smartphone shoppers read reviews (73%), compare prices with other retail outlets (71%) and scan QR codes to get more product details (57%).

A Swedish study explored the relationship between consumer's attitudestowards mobile marketing and brand loyalty, brand awareness, and brandassociations. The results indicate that pushnotifications as a mobile marketing strategy have a direct relationship (and effect) onthe brand

equity of fashion brands.The study also showed that consumer's attitude towards receiving push notifications from fast fashion brand are more strongly correlated with positive brand associations compared to bridge brands.

Fashion brands on smartphone

In the fashion world, companies like Nordstrom, are enticing the digital customers with their own apps. A customer who downloads the app can browse the product range by department or brand.There's an additional 'style' section featuring editorial and social content. Nordstrom is leveraging the mobile fever by showcasing top items pinned on Pinterest in their in-store displays, this staying one step ahead its mobile savvy customers.Wi-fi networks installed in their stores let smartphone users go online while shopping.

American Apparel's mobile app complements the in-store experience with outfit pairing suggestions, sale information and interactive product labels made accessible via QR codes.

Tommy Hilfiger's app caters to consumers in 17 countries and supports four languages, allowing the users to shop directly from its Instagram feed. Other features of the app include in-store item scanning, which allows app users to scan tags in-store to check product availability and order items directly through the app and enhanced personalization where consumers receive push and geo-fence notifications, allowing them to access wishlists, purchase history and a store locator feature within the app.

Fast-fashion retailer Charlotte Russe allows its users to draw fashion inspiration and instantly buy fashion products while browsing the social media platform, Instagram. The retailer claims that such purchases are 20 to 30 times faster than a typical mobile experience. This is attributed to the apps integration with digital wallet.

ZARA, ranked as the top apparel store in the world in 2013, launched a series of mobile-responsive apps for an Android, Windows, and BlackBerry. This has significantly increased ZARA's sales by 60% in 2013. Customers enjoy a better shopping experience by scanning apparel through the ZARA app to easily get information about items, colors and sizes.

Ralph Lauren,promotes its brand through mobile apps in addition to a mobile-optimized website. These tools have helped the brand link a consumer's mobile experience to a richer in-store engagement.

EyeFitU, the world's first fashion-sizing app, helps the customer to shop clothes in their sizes. EyeFitU brings all of your favourite womenswear and menswear brands together in one place and it ensures customers are finding and ultimately buying their 'actual' sizes. Shopping with EyeFitU can eliminate ill fitting clothes in a consumer's wardrobe. The app is available in eight

different languages on iOS and Android devices. A desktop version is also available.

In India, apps like eBay, Amazon, Myntraetc give the shopper a virtual shopping experience in various product categories. These apps are continuously engaging their customers by giving push notifications and personalised personalization features, like product recommendations and more search filtering options.

Conclusion

With over a hundred million people using smartphones, mobile marketing helps retailers keep in touch their effervescent customers. Apps are a sure way of engaging the customers. 'Fashion is going mobile' – a certainty that retailers cannot ignore in this era   'Generation Z' – the next wave of consumers who virtually live on internet and mobile.

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