



The Expert's View

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There's A Shopping App for That

Wendy Liebmann, founder of WSL Strategic Retail, explains how smartphones are getting shoppers off the couch and into locations where presentation can again have impact on buying decisions.

By Wendy Liebmann

Just when we thought shoppers would never leave their laptops, a glittering opportunity is emerging for retailers and beauty packagers to bring the cyber shopping decision back to the physical store through mobile technology. People are making their purchase decisions in-store again, but this time with their iPhones. These tech-savvy shoppers are seeking out flash sales and bargains through new shopping apps, social media sites and other digital promotions that are making the shopping experience more interactive, engaging and fun.

WSL Strategic Retail's recent From Buzz to Buy 2.0 annual trend report found that, for the first time in a long time, retailers are getting ahead of the trend by introducing new mobile apps that create exciting, useful and entertaining promotion-driven experiences in store. Retail's digital innovators are harnessing the power of Facebook and Twitter to drive growth in traffic by offering 'member only' shopper rewards and deals even as consumers are browsing the shelves or strolling through the aisles of their favorite stores.

The most cutting-edge businesses are using mobile technology to maximize shopper engagement at every point of contact and integrating it into sales service. They're recognizing that, when it comes to shopping and tempting customers to get out their wallets, there's always an app for that! Indeed, according to our survey, which included 1,702 respondents recruited from an online panel of shoppers 15 years and over, shopping apps now rank among the top five categories downloaded, with nearly half (46%) of those who download apps choosing a shopping-related one. A year ago, shopping apps didn't even rate in the study. Today, they follow games, social media, and music apps.

Even better news for retailers, shopping apps are now being used in stores by shoppers looking to receive in-store alerts to deals and sales (35%), reading QR codes or bar codes for product information (33%), and helping them to navigate the store (28%).

Social Networking Sites (SNS) such as Facebook and Twitter also have a significant role to play in fostering customer loyalty. Shoppers expect to find deals and rewards when they "like" a brand or store: a strategic social media presence can have an enormous impact on customer traffic. Members searching for discounts or coupons increased 31% over last year's findings, while those looking to gain exclusive member-only benefits rose by 50%.

But perhaps the biggest news for the beauty and packaging industry is the fact that smartphones are getting shoppers off the couch and into locations (yes, the physical store) where presentation can again have impact on buying decisions. Approximately half of all smartphone owners use their device while shopping in-store. That's up 21 percentage points from last year's survey. It has become a significant game changer in the way retailers do business. More than half of those who use their mobile for shopping are comparing prices (56%), taking pictures of products (53%), and finding coupons and discounts (46%).

The implications and opportunities for how beauty products of the future are packaged and displayed both in store and in the digital space are immense. And hugely exciting.

AUTHOR BIO: Wendy Liebmann is recognized as one of the innovators of shopper insights. In 1986, Wendy founded WSL Strategic Retail's to "get marketers out of their ivory towers to meet their shoppers on the selling floor," whether that floor is real or virtual. She is frequently called upon by the media to provide insight into the state of retail and shopping, and is a recognized speaker, regularly addressing business and educational organizations around the world.