

THE ROLE OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES ON SEAMLESS SHOPPING EXPERIENCE IN APPAREL M-RETAIL: A CASE STUDY OF TOPSHOP

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Abstract

Introduction

As mobile apparel retail websites and apps grow in popularity, and apparel retailers in the UK are leading in e-commerce, insight into the psychology and behaviours of shoppers using these mobile interfaces has become more important. Retailers need to develop an understanding about mobile consumers' behaviour in m-retail, their experience, attitudes and expectations. Mobile fashion consumers seem to use websites on their smartphones despite the wide range of mobile apps available. A case study will help to establish whether the same mobile apparel apps are communicating in the same way through different operating system platforms. The analysis of mobile app reviews will help to gain insight into consumers' behaviour, expectations using mobile channel, and identify key factors required for seamless shopping experience. This is the first study focusing on critical issues of fashion m-retail's environment based on mobile fashion consumers' behaviour and shopping experience.

Method

The qualitative research design was utilised and the content analysis of mobile app reviews for iOS and Android OS was conducted in chronological order. App reviews were analysed in terms of navigational, technological, organisational and motivational factors and design features from retailer's and consumer's perspectives.

Dataset

The primary data for this study were gathered over a period of six months. The dataset contains 1,313 reviews of Topshop mobile apps for iOS and Android OS. These reviews were retrieved for analysis from Apple Inc.'s App Store and Google Inc.'s Google Play, and span from July 2010 to April 2014.

Findings

Results from the data suggest that retailers did not meet consumers' expectations so far, and are at the risk of missing great opportunities from this mobile revolution. Cluster analysis of the data from Topshop mobile app reviews, utilizing NVivo 10, was used in developing the 6 most commented problems of Topshop mobile apps. The results suggest an association between a specific behaviour of reviewers, such as exit points from the app, and some app problem areas. Apparel consumers expect to be able to shop using multiple channels and to receive "a great mobile shopping service". Nine mobile fashion consumer types were identified - Impulse shoppers, Addicted shoppers, Style conscious consumers, Sustaining returners, Occasional shoppers, Bargain hunters, Convenience seekers, Connected browsers, Bored commuters - based on motivations to use mobile apps. Appropriate marketing strategies can be developed, guided by the specific mobile fashion consumer type's shopping journey. Apparel retailers can better define their target consumers and more effectively tailor mobile interfaces to meet customer needs.

Conclusions

This case study demonstrates the key factors that influence consumers to avoid mobile apps and the reasons for consumers' dissatisfaction with mobile channel. This study will provide a valuable contribution to the area of m-commerce in the UK and offers recommendations for future improvements needed to satisfy consumers' needs for seamless shopping experience.