



DIGITAL HELPERS

Sven Oberstein

AT A TIME WHEN PEOPLE RARELY LOOK BEYOND THE EDGE OF THEIR DISPLAY, IT COMES AS NO SURPRISE THAT THE FASHION RETAIL WORLD PROFITS FROM SOFTWARE REVOLUTIONIZING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND GETTING PEOPLE TO SHOP MORE – NOT ONLY ONLINE.

A study by IDC Retail Insights recently found that omni-channel shoppers tend to shop more frequently (3x) and spend more on average (3.5x) than single-channel shoppers. A plethora of new apps used by retailers is continuing to blur the boundaries between online and offline shopping.

Take, for instance, virtual fitting rooms. Customers usually cite the opportunity to try things on as the main reason they prefer 'real life' over virtual shopping. However, this reason may soon become redundant due to the rapidly growing number of applications that provide digital fitting solutions. The market-leader in this segment is the London-based **Fits.me**, a virtual fitting room that – with the help of robots – recreates almost every body shape. Users enter their measurements, and the app suggests garments that fit their figure. German retail giant **Otto** has been a customer of Fits.me since its early days.

But how do digital apps enhance purchases from brick-and-mortar stores?

E-commerce platform **Lyst** partners with brands and stores to give their users a wide range of options that go beyond online shopping. Their personalized mobile app provides shoppers with real-time stock and price information for the products on their wish lists, which helps them coordinate their shopping trips.

The app **Knomi** is more aggressive in luring the consumer into the physical store. It works as a virtual guide to luxury items in close proximity to the user's location. Participating stores list their inventory, and consumers receive push notifications on their smartphones whenever they are near the shop, inviting them to check out certain products. The app also features a social component, which encourages users to suggest, share and discuss products with others.

And once the customer is in store and needs advice, there is no need for many sales assistants. **Isetan** has already successfully collaborated with **Sensy**, an app that 'learns' the user's fashion taste and then

works as a stylist, offering ideas through the app and ultimately increasing the in-store sales. Meanwhile, Milanese concept store **M Collective** has introduced touch-screens in the fitting rooms that inform shoppers about the availability of their size and propose styling suggestions for the item that is being tried on.

The growing popularity of these in-store digital aids suggest that many shoppers find it easier to communicate with artificial intelligence than with a fellow human. With this in mind, more and more brick-and-mortar retailers are waking up to the necessity to install Wi-Fi networks throughout their stores to enable the consumer to go online and enjoy an omni-channel shopping experience.

www.fits.me
www.lyst.com
www.knomi.com
www.sensy.jp