
Shop in the Name of Love: A Qualitative Analysis of Fashion Mobile Design Features

Briana M. Martinez and Laura McAndrews, University of Georgia, USA

Keywords: Mobile design, atmospherics, mobile apps, retail

Branded mobile apps are downloadable software to a mobile device in which the brand identity is predominantly displayed usually through the combination of the name of the app and the brand logo or icon (Bellman, Potter, Treleven-Hassard, Robinson, & Varan, 2011). It is predicted that the annual downloads of apps will reach 268 billion by the end of 2017 (Gartner, 2013). However, it is important to note 20% of the apps downloaded are only used once (Smartbear, 2014). Despite this, mobile apps constitute more than 50% of time spent on digital media (Lipsman, 2014). Thus, mobile app development is vital to apparel companies as most are actively engaged in creating mobile strategies for potential growth in this new retail channel. Atmospherics are vital in the study of fashion mobile apps as research has shown atmospherics to affect the likelihood of use and other behavioral outcomes (Eroglu et al., 2001) and can account for up to two thirds of in-store purchases (Hausman & Siekpe, 2009). However, much of the research into atmospherics has centered around high task relevant cues, focusing on the influence of factors, such as usability, ease of use, and information seeking tendencies, but little research has been devoted to low task relevant cues, which are mobile design features. Magrath and McCormick (2013) found four mobile design features that captured the design elements of mobile apps for the fashion retail industry (a) multimedia product viewing (b) informative content (c) product promotions and (d) consumer led interactions, but these dimensions have not been extensively researched for fashion mobile apps.

The aim of this study was to investigate mobile design features, specifically (a) to explore the features that drive consumer purchase and decision-making and (b) to identify which features were most prevalent in current fashion mobile apps. To achieve the objectives, a qualitative interview approach was taken to understand the phenomena of fashion mobile apps. Seven women, between the ages of 18-22, enrolled in a southeastern university in the U.S. were purposively chosen as each had experience with shopping on mobile devices, expressed a heightened interest in fashion, belonged in the millennial generation, and displayed evidence of their smartphones being an essential part of their daily lives. Shopping purchase tendencies in the sample ranged from every other week to 4 times a year; however, all participants mentioned browsing on a weekly basis. Data were collected through 50 minute semi-structured interviews in February 2017. Data collection was framed by Magrath and McCormick (2013) mobile design features (a) multimedia product viewing (b) product promotion and (c) consumer led interactions. Unique themes were generated and interpreted.

In exploring mobile design features, three themes categories emerged (a) Show it Off!, (b) Sale! Sale! Sale! and (c) Buy this too! These themes aligned with the mobile designed features described by previous researchers. The first theme, Product showing, aligned with the mobile design feature of multimedia product viewing. In this theme, participants discussed their experiences with product images and videos, as well as their wishes for more features that would

allow them to see more of the product. Dawn, a 21-year-old avid app shopper, recalled the importance of multiple images when shopping for formal wear stating, “I’m definitely a person where I take it [product images] into consideration, like some dresses they have a cute front but the back maybe go[es] down too low. ...I’m like well it might go too low for how short I am.” Crystal, a 20-year-old intensive research first shopper, stressed the need for more retailers to have video functions noting, “I much prefer the video [be]cause it’s like moving, and with the picture you don’t know if the model has to sit or stand in an awkward position to make sure the garment looks well...so seeing the video is a lot more ensuring.” The second theme, Sale! Sale! Sale!, aligns with the mobile design feature of product promotion. Participants discussed their experiences with using features such as promo codes, discounts, and the love of free shipping. While participants did not go searching for promos, when encountered, they made the most of them, “it was 50% off your entire order...So I ended up ordering like I think 4 dresses after that.” The third theme, Buy This Too! pairs with the mobile design feature consumer led interactions. Participants shared their views toward suggested items and product reviews, Crystal’s love of reviews influenced whether or not she would purchase an item stating, “I love them [customer reviews]. If a single review says the product is not worth it, I’ll move on. I won’t even give it a chance.”

The findings of this research help to shape the understanding of the design aspects of current fashion mobile apps. First, this research gave an opportunity for current mobile shoppers to reflect on their experiences and why they shop the way they do. Second, retailers who target millennials could utilize these findings to cater their mobile design features to aid in the shopping decision process. Finally, these findings could give aid to future research into the understanding of the atmospheric conditions of fashion mobile apps. Therefore, future research opportunities should focus on a more detailed analysis of the features that constitute the atmospheric condition of mobile apps beyond high task relevant cues.

References

- Bellman, S., Potter, R. F., Treleaven-Hassard, S., Robinson, J. A., & Varan, D. (2011). The effectiveness of branded mobile phone apps. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 25(4), 191-200.
- Eroglu, S. A., Machleit, K. A., & Davis, L. M. (2001). Atmospheric qualities of online retailing. A conceptual model and implications. *Journal of Business Research*, 54, 177-184
- Gartner. (2013). Gartner says mobile app stores will see annual downloads reach 102 billion in 2013 [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/2592315>
- Hausman, A. V., & Siekpe, J. S. (2009). The effect of web interface features on consumer online purchase intentions. *Journal of Business Research*, 62, 5-13.
- Magrath, V., & McCormick, H. (2013). Marketing design elements of mobile fashion retail apps. *Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management*, 17(1), 115-134.
- Smartbear. (2014). The state of Mobile Retrieved from <http://www2.smartbear.com/rs/smartbear/images/smartbear-2014-software-industry-survey-testing.pdf>