

How to accelerate e-commerce sales through mobile apps

Successful retailers facilitate the growing breed of highly demanding customers by rolling out intuitive and device-friendly apps for smartphones and tablets that connect the customer with the store and employees. So, how retail mobile apps equip and strengthen businesses to achieve more. Read on.



Index

1. **Mobile apps for retailers- Why** 01
2. **Improved decision making abilities** 02
Real-time analytical insights
3. **Improved productivity and efficiency** 03
Easy sharing and collaboration
4. **Keep a tab on your costs** 03
5. **Improved customer loyalty** 04
6. **About Suyati** 05

Mobile apps for retailers- Why

Smartphone, is now a common and inevitable tool in the hands of almost all shoppers, even when they do not directly shop online. **About 84% of them** come to retail shops armed with a smartphone, to compare prices and check product specs in detail. Studies reveal that one in every two millennial shoppers has downloaded a mobile shopping app.

Successful retailers acknowledge this fact, and facilitate this growing breed of highly demanding customers by rolling out intuitive and device-friendly apps for smartphones and tablets that connect the customer with the store and employees. The average shopper looks at their mobile device **about 150 times a day**, giving marketers a good opportunity to use their mobile apps to drive customer loyalty and sales.

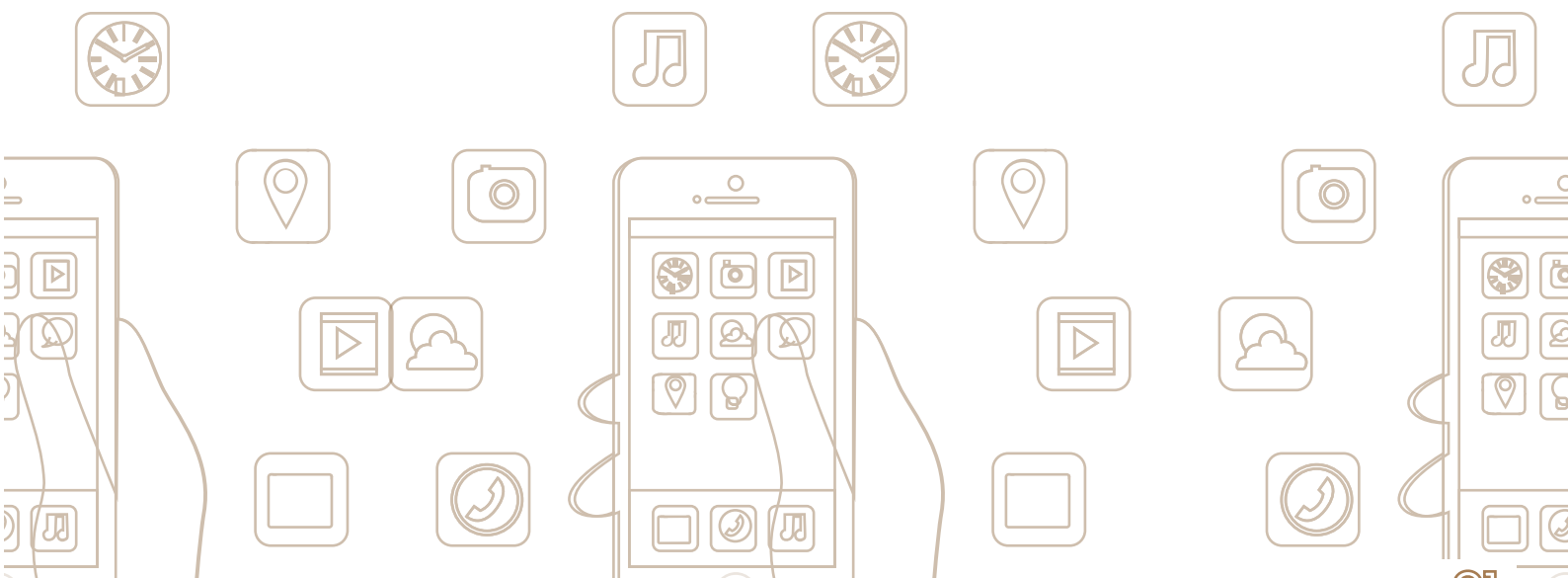
Besides, mobile apps also help retailers in their back-end operations. A mobile app allows retailers to improve productivity and efficiency of their employees, and also offer ready information hitherto locked away in databases or tethered to a desktop PC, throwing open infinite new possibilities.

The 2014 EKN Mobility in Retail report states that mobile apps considerably help retailers attain operational efficiency, with **77% of retailers** believing store operations will benefit the most from mobility strategies. When highly efficient sales associates, armed with cutting edge relevant information, meet the demands of highly engaged customers instantly, there is a **123% uptick** in sales revenue.

In short, mobile apps help businesses:

- Improve the ability of business executives to make better decisions
- Enhance their productivity
- Keep tab on costs
- Boosts customer loyalty

In the coming sections of this white paper, we will analyze in detail, how mobility equips and strengthens the Retail sector to accomplish the above advantages.



Improved Decision Making Abilities

Thomas Husson, Vice President and Principal Analyst at Forrester Research remarks: “Mobile is becoming not only the new digital hub, but also the bridge to the physical world. That’s why mobile will affect more than just your digital operations — it will transform your entire business.” True to form, mobile apps help store managers and executives make faster and better decisions relating to planograms, merchandising, promotional strategies, pricing, inventory or anything else. Equipped with a smartphone, a store manager may refer to real time information and take action on-the-spot, without waiting to go back to the office and refer to the information in the desktop or laptop.

Real-time analytical insights:

The real time analytical and other insights offered through the smartphone help the store manager eliminate inefficiencies and optimize the available resources. The store manager may:

- *Adjust product positioning based on environmental and other factors. For instance, on a rainy day, the store could position umbrellas prominently in front, or near the check-out counter.*
- *Make promotional strategies in real time, based on shifts in sales trends, changes in the environment, and other factors. For instance, managers to decide to offer a discount, or shift the product to a more visible location, to counter the slow movement of a highly perishable commodity, and try to clear the stock before the end of the day.*
- *Optimize the allocation of sales executives and other resources in real time, based on footfalls at different sections and hourly rush. For instance, managers could allocate more staff to food section during lunch hours and shift them to other sections in the evening hours.*
- *Monitor sales volumes in real time, to fix issues on the spot and minimize loss of sales. For instance, if milk accounts for 60% of all sales, and in the last one hour sales, milk accounted for only 20% of sales, it could indicate something wrong. The store manager could immediately get on the act and see if the most popular brands are out of stock, whether there is something wrong with the labeling or pricing, or anything else.*
- *Monitor inventory levels in real time, and manage the supply chain to reduce both stock out situations and inventory glut.*
- *Keep track of inventory and take expired products off the shelves immediately, to avoid potential customer health or safety issues.*
- *Track Wi-Fi signals to make on-the-fly tweaks to campaigns based on what works in a particular geographic location. For instance, movie theaters and other establishments with time-sensitive inventory that go to waste at a particular time can track down users in the vicinity and send a coupon.*

Store managers may also compare how their sales relate to other outlets with similar space, layout and climate, and pin point deficiencies, or ape best practices. For instance, a potential problem may be low availability of merchandise, which is in high demand in the other store.

Improved Productivity and Efficiency

Mobile apps make it possible to share the right information with the right people at the right time, thereby empowering store associates and boosting their productivity.

Collaboration and sharing made easy:

- *Mobile apps offer quick access to documents, such as promo checklists, employee evaluation forms, customer service survey results, corporate communications from management, store contests, special events, training videos, and more. Such information keep employees stay updated, improving their performance and commitment.*
- *Managers may deliver proactive alerts to employees, on the most relevant KPIs, what products should be pushed to consumers, and promotions that drive the greatest revenue, all these on hourly basis, thus enabling them to optimize their efforts.*
- *Employees may access planogram setups, promotional details, markdown information, additional product specs, and more in real time, making them capable of reacting and responding in real time, with full confidence.*
- *Sales associates can access and share all sales and customer data, from sales performance and inventory availability to high-priority tasks.*
- *A mobile CRM app keeps track of tasks, contacts, opportunities, projects, calendar, and emails, making coordination easy.*

In the absence of mobile apps, the employee may have to rely on VPN or manually follow up with their supervisors, losing precious time to close the sale, that impedes their productivity.

Mobile apps may also be used for gamification, to improve productivity. A leader-board based on accomplishments pertaining to goals for the day can kindle healthy competition among employees and drive productivity, while infusing the exercise with a “fun” element at the same time.

Keep a tab on your costs

Mobile apps help retailers reduce cost and keep expenses from spiraling out of control.

Collaboration and sharing made easy:

- *Real time analytical data pinpoints incidences of shrinkage, under-staffing, missed opportunities, and other highlights, allowing retailers to take effective counter measures soon, before the problems escalate and dent the bottom line.*
- *On-premises solutions require extensive capital outlay, when a cloud based system can do the same thing for virtually no costs. Business processes such as payroll that require extensive solutions can now be delivered in a much simpler and easier way using mobile apps.*
- *Intuitive features such as video conferencing and photo sharing facilitate seamless communication and collaboration, at a fraction of the cost compared to alternatives. It also saves considerable time executives would otherwise have to spend on travel.*

- *Mobile apps delivered through BYOD spares retailers the need to invest in an array of PC terminals or laptops in the store, and also save on related training costs.*

Improved Customer Loyalty

Today's customers are highly demanding. Personalization, or dealing with them on an individual basis, is the key to retaining their attention, and securing a slice of their wallets. According to Dr. Marshall Fisher, Professor, Wharton School of Business, about 50% of shoppers prefer expert advice on what to buy when they enter a store, and 67% of shoppers feel in-store employees could be more helpful.

Retail mobile apps also allow salespersons to tap into a loyal customer's profile, sales history, preferences, and other details, get automated product recommendations, and deal with them on a personalized basis. Sales associates, in turn, can input client notes, and view real time inventory availability, without having to follow up and make the customer wait.

At the customer end, a mobile app catering to loyalty rewards program, with special deals for customers who download the app offers a win-win proposition for the business and customer alike. The retailer gains valuable information about customers, to better business and offers, besides increasing engagement. The customer feels more appreciated and valued, besides getting better offers.

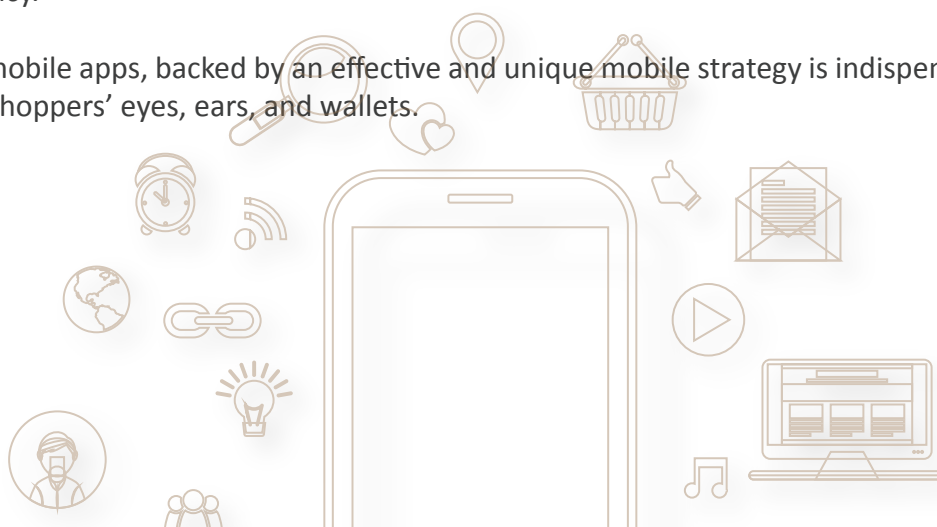
The customer oriented app has the potential to:

- *Catch the customer's attention during pockets of free time, when they have nothing better to do, such as during the morning commute in the bus or train, waiting in a line, waiting at the doctor's office, and more.*
- *Geo-target push notification makes it possible to present users with real time ads, deals and notification in the store at their vicinity.*

Internet Retailer estimates 61% of consumers prefer brands that offer a captivating mobile experience, compared to brands that don't. More than that, 40% of customers will move to a competitor based on a bad mobile experience.

Reijo Pold of Telefonica UK opines "The future of mobile is incremental innovation with a transformational impact." In today's age of hyper-competition retailers have no option but to innovate further in the mobile space, in a bid to tap into its transformational potential, and increase their potency.

Powerful mobile apps, backed by an effective and unique mobile strategy is indispensable in the battle for shoppers' eyes, ears, and wallets.





About Suyati

Suyati provides marketing technology and integration services for companies that wish to combine the best of breed solutions and create a unified approach to customer acquisition. This unified digital marketing approach requires system integration between various CMS and CRM platforms, and a slew of eCommerce, Marketing Automation, Social Media Listening, email and social marketing, and customer service systems. Our specialized knowledge in Salesforce, open source and .Net based systems enables us to build effective custom integrated solutions for our clients.

Suyati's custom technology solutions have been deployed in companies in the US, Western Europe and Australia, and have helped many enterprises leverage the web/cloud/mobile technologies to acquire customers through integrated digital marketing. Suyati is based in Chicago with product engineering capability out of the US and India.

Get in touch: services@suyati.com

For details, visit: www.suyati.com



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