

Chapter 31

Designing Indulgent Interaction: Luxury Fashion, M-Commerce, and Übermensch

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ABSTRACT

Electronic Commerce (e-commerce) has transformed the retail environment and has become an ever increasingly important channel of the global economy. Within this, fashion retail has been a driving force, with increasing brand growth and profit deriving through Mobile Commerce (m-commerce). While the high-street fashion retailers have been key drivers and innovators in creating engaging and persuasive m-commerce app offerings, the high end and luxury fields have to date been slow to adopt and innovate at a comparable rate. This chapter explores the history and meaning of luxury and branding, in relation to the current state of m-commerce in fashion. Specific reference is given to the current state of m-commerce design in the retail domain between luxury and high-street market levels. Key questions and leading developments in the realm of interaction and User Experience (UX) design are presented along with directions on how to design for luxury m-commerce interactions.

INTRODUCTION

Design may be considered as a holistic field of study and practice on how to directly influence the lives and behaviours society, defined as “a creative activity whose aim is to establish the multi-faceted qualities of objects, processes, services, and their systems in whole life cycle” (International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, 2016). It is therefore interesting how the call for better realisation of the power of integrating design practice and mind sets into corporate entities has been on-going for more than 32 years (Kotler & Rath, 1984), yet has only recently begun to be accepted and verified within the corporate environment (Borja de Mozota, 2003; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2010). While a full appraisal

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of Design Thinking's impact on the business ecosystem lies outside the scope of this chapter, a central concept of this process is the designer's prior intention on how the product or service may be interacted with. Such complex interactions therefore must be approached with careful consideration of psychology, but also the realisation that a design is not a single creation, but an iterative process of creations building upon each other.

A core concept here then is the design of the interactions with the fashion mobile commerce (m-commerce) apps. One of the most fundamental concepts in interaction design is that of constant change and progress that in time comes to eclipse the past developments that in their day were heralded with greatness. Driven by the exponential increase in processing power (G. E. Moore, 1965) and internet bandwidth electronic commerce (e-commerce) has evolved from the rudimentary sites of the early 90's to the highly complex, interactive, and seductive offerings of today's mobile commerce (m-commerce) platforms. To this, it may be tempting to look at the tailored retail focus of apps such as Mallzee's "*super personal*" fashion recommendations (C. Russell in Shaul, 2016), or the charismatic design of the Starbucks (2016) app as the pinnacle of what interactivity and style can provide. However, such a thought would be a close echo of Designer Philippe Starck's (2007) comments that humanity always looks at itself as the 'final man', a pinnacle of excellence in humanity not to be surpassed. However, such a perspective blinds us to development, change, and creating the next evolution. Instead, we should look at what is not great and seductive about current offerings, and reimagine new ways of interacting with our retailers to deliver not only increased functionality, but also exceptional service and emotional connections.

The concept of making certain behaviours within interactions feel emotionally rewarding (or seductive) has existed for many years (S. P. Anderson, 2011), and in a scientific realm, the theory of hedonic and utilitarian motivation for e/m-commerce purchase has been utilised widely (e.g. Parker & Wang, 2016). The question therefore is not '*what is seductive*' in interaction or '*how can interaction be made seductive*', but instead '*why are fashion retail interactions so unexceptional*'. This of course requires qualification. E-commerce, while once mused on as a passing trend (Gilmartin, 2003) has seen tremendous growth of the last decade, with 12.3% of all UK retail (equalling £42.5 billion) in 2015 being handled through e-commerce platforms (Mintel, 2016). Particularly, fashion business is one of the most prominent sectors within e-commerce, with approximately 55% of UK residents having bought "*clothes or sporting goods*" online (Office for National Statistics, 2015); representative of 25% of all e-commerce revenue (Mintel, 2016). However, the fashion market represents diverse market levels, with each level performing to a different extent within the m-commerce and interactive field. Using a common nomenclature (Jackson & Shaw, 2009), the market can be broken down into four levels of:

1. Economy (e.g. Primark, George ASDA)
2. High Street
 - a. Mass Market (e.g. H&M, New Look)
 - b. Mid Level (e.g. Top Shop, M&S)
 - c. High End (e.g. All Saints, Coast)
3. Diffusion (e.g. Marc by Marc Jacobs, Vivian Westwood Red Label)
4. Luxury (e.g. Dior, Marc Jacobs, Vivian Westwood)

An appraisal of m-commerce platforms by market level (Parker, 2016a) reveals that while many of the luxury designer brands have released an app (e.g. Gucci, Hugo Boss, Louis Vuitton) their apps rarely allow for the purchase of items or offer a limited and often introductory level range. Instead, they

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