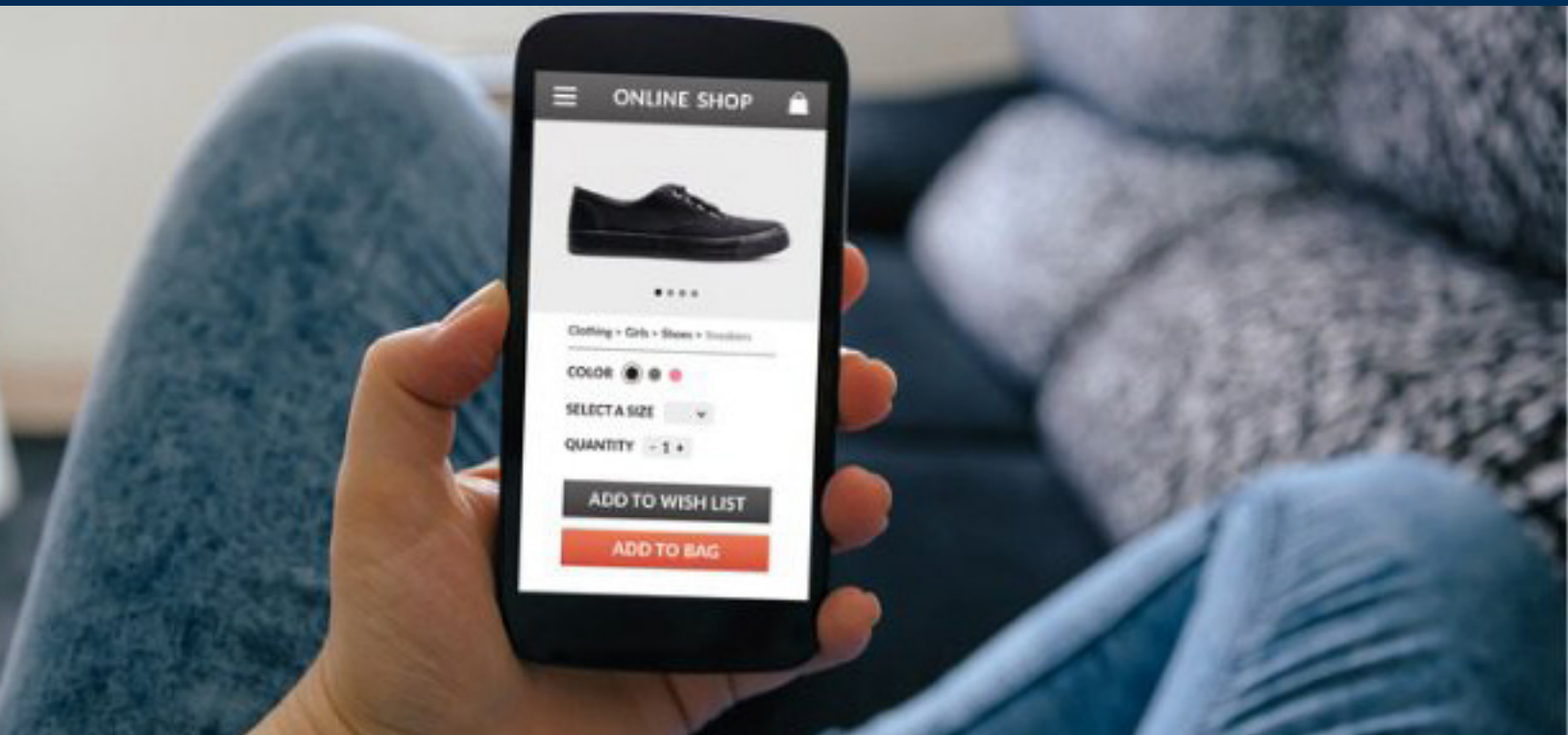# 3 ways to improve the retail app shopping experience

3 ways to improve the retail app shopping experience

By Tim de Paris, CTO, Decibel

Retailer success has long been attributed (in part) to delivering a positive in-store customer experience. When shopping went digital over a decade ago, however, brands were challenged to apply the same customer experience strategies to their digital properties, mainly websites and mobile apps.

Today, consumers have shifted toward buying more products on their mobile than any other device. And on their mobile, consumers prefer shopping on apps more than websites, largely because it's more convenient, faster and easier to store settings. In fact, research from Criteo shows that apps deliver three times more efficient transactions than mobile websites.

With apps poised to become the de facto channel, they can no longer be an afterthought or merely treated as an extension of the website experience. Retailers need to take the user experience into their own hands, as they would for in-store store shopping experiences. If the app shopping experience is less than perfect, brands risk losing customers to digitally-driven competitors, jeopardizing both brand loyalty and revenue as a result.

> *" Retailers must identify and understand digital body language to pinpoint negative experiences and resolve frustrations quickly, just like those in an offline setting would."*

While the notion of having to customize the app experience to ensure it meets expectations may seem daunting, the reality is that most brands already have a head start: the successful customer experience strategies they are already deploying offline.

Applying offline customer experience strategies to apps

Equipped with an understanding of what customers want and how they perceive the brand, retailers can provide optimal, meaningful experiences. In-store retail staff can easily read a customer's body language to determine how customers feel, but brands need this same level of understanding when customers shop on their app.

Traditional analytics for gauging experience — such as heatmaps and survey responses — have nudged brands closer to understanding what happens when a user interacts with digital properties, but these insights don't cut it for apps. Retailers must identify and understand digital body language to pinpoint negative experiences and resolve frustrations quickly, just like those in an offline setting would.

To successfully achieve this goal, and improve the mobile app shopping experience, retailers need to consider the following three tips.

1. Identify problem areas in near-real time and respond quickly

To alleviate challenges that mobile shoppers face, those responsible for digital experiences must first pinpoint different digital behaviors that customers exhibit when encountering an error. For example, multiple device rotations or repeated, sporadic tapping are behaviors that indicate frustration or confusion, typically implying that the shopper is about to close out of the app. Instead, with the right technology, user experience (UX) teams can intervene immediately to either alleviate the challenge at hand or provide compensation — such as a coupon or free product — to save the experience.

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Alternatively, if a customer showcases engagement, the UX designers can identify successful content, and mirror it across other pages within the app.

2. Quantify and benchmark mobile app experiences

The old adage that notes, "you can't manage what you can't measure," holds true even in the digital, mobile app era. After making clear adjustments to the app as behaviors and challenges become known, retailers should measure against their initial score to understand how the mobile app experience has improved over time. As a result, brands can identify the improvements that have been made and the areas to focus on moving forward.

3. Capture experience data that can be used across the organization

Understanding how a customer interacts with the brand, across all digital and offline properties, enables many departments within a company to operate more efficiently. Insights into how customers interact with mobile apps can inform experience strategies for those thinking through in-store displays, for example. It could also help prepare the advertising team for their next campaign. Mobile app experience data serves as a powerful tool to improve not only the app, but the overall brand experience.

Determining a solution

New innovations in understanding the customer experience serve as the critical underpinning that brands need to explore to successfully achieve mobile-app experiences.

To begin measuring shoppers' digital body language and ultimately improving the app experience over time, retailers can look to new technologies, such as digital experience intelligence platforms. Only then can brands ensure consumers are as happy on apps as they have been for decades in brick and mortar stores.

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