The following guest article has been written for InternetRetailing by Nuzhat Naweed, VP Customer Experience at Zalando SE. Nuzhat joined Zalando SE in 2015. Since joining, she has been responsible for enhancing the customer experience through various products including the Fashion Store app. Nuzhat has dedicated her time at Zalando to ensuring that Europe's leading fashion platform is a forerunner in the mobile industry, impelling the company to be an early adopter of key trends in mobile development and user experience. Prior to joining Zalando, Nuzhat worked as Head of Technology, Digital Experience at ASOS and headed up Digital at BBC Worldwide.

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Where Will Mobile Take The Fashion Industry?

The fashion industry is at its strongest in five years, with mobile and social media being the main drivers of this substantial growth. *Nuzhat Naweed,* **VP Customer Experience at Zalando, examines where mobile will take the fashion industry.**

ACCORDING TO GlobalWebIndex, mobile phones capture 50% of time for 16-24 year olds globally, with 90% of mobile data traffic set to be from smartphones by the end of 2021. We've seen that Zalando orders via smartphone have increased by 90% year-on-year, merely highlighting the power consumers can have in the fashion world, with a clear shift from desktop to mobile. Staying ahead of the game in mobile is therefore very important – how do we see the fashion industry adapting to the new demands set by changed consumer behaviour?

Future fashion apps will be perceptive, dynamic, and offer more personalised options than ever before, with a clear need for instant gratification for the consumer.

They'll connect with the customer on an intimate, inspirational level, and be the first point of call when it comes to the ultimate shopping experience. Being at the forefront of the customer journey will be paramount, and every approach should cater to the individual – not the masses.

Fashion is personal, and from a technological standpoint, so is your smartphone. Fashion and mobile make the perfect pairing: Both are fast paced, trend oriented, evoking touch as a powerful tool of perception. The demand for instant gratification off the catwalk is a clear example of this, with Burberry and Tom Ford making their collections available immediately for interested customers. This urge to instantly shop for trends pushes traditional fashion houses to keep up with the world's newly normalised digital speed, which fashion apps can leverage perfectly.

Emotions play a huge role in how customers act and react to fashion, leading to strong loyalty and a deep personal connection with a given brand or trend, with 90% of all purchasing decisions being made subconsciously. By providing content that is personalised and catered to the individual, you tap into emotional reactions that help customers present themselves to the world and, most importantly, create the self they want to be.

With the Zalando Mobile app, we use machine learning to ultimately help us inspire and personalise fashion journeys, trending Zalando styles, and a rich collection of data that consumer behaviour provides us with. As a mobile-first company, with more than 65% of site visits via mobile devices, we are continuously invigorating our mobile presence with the emotional and personal in mind: Redesigned filters have been introduced with great success, new and improved search, product recommendations and brand recommendations all enhance the interactive experience. The emotional connection is further promoted through a collection of delightful experiences suitable for mobile, such as scrollable lookbooks, video and app-exclusive content and promotions.

SHOPPING AND PAYMENTS MADE EASY

Brands should be concentrating on revamping their mobile experience for frictionless shopping with mobile fashion apps making browsing, shopping and payments as seamless as possible. PayPal, Apple Pay, Google Wallet, and N26 have all been engineered to be as innovative as can be when it comes to mobile transactions, thus the experience of browsing and adding to cart should be just as creative and contemporary.

It's also important to remember the fashion app requirements that all mobile customers
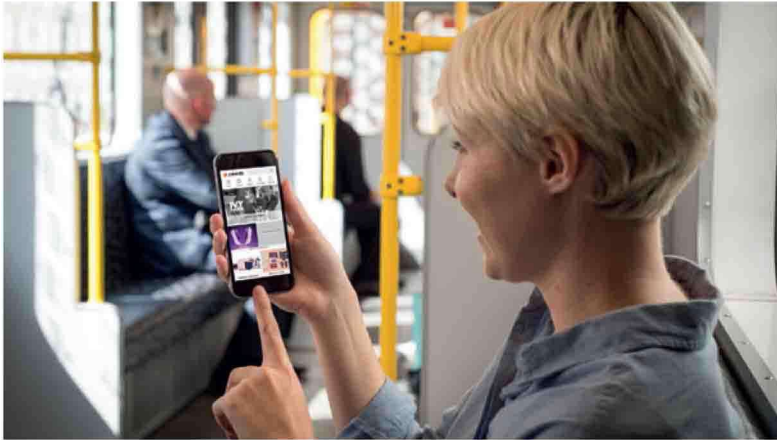
crave: speed, service, and social media engagement. Looking at the UK as an example market, smartphone penetration among the 16-24 age-range is at 88%, with the 25-34 age bracket not far behind at 84%. A third of internet users see their smartphone as the most important device for going online, while only 22% of the population felt that way in 2014. Whilst in the US, analysts predict a 210% increase in mobile payments over the upcoming years.

We strive for the Zalando Mobile app experience to be as frictionless as possible, meeting the aesthetic expectations of our fashion-savvy customers by removing the barriers of their user journey, but also meeting their delivery and post purchase experience expectations. Customers can choose how they wish to browse our wide assortment via different swipe preferences, while shopping convenience is addressed by way of the return process being available to mobile in a number of markets. We are continuing to invest in a number of convenience levers. On the payment front, it is vital for our customer base that innovations in mobile payment technologies, such as one click payment

options like Apple Pay, currently available for UK Zalando customers, remains a priority.

THE RISE OF BIG DATA AND MACHINE LEARNING

In the film Clueless, the lead actress has a digital wardrobe which helps her pick outfits by advising on whether items go together. The clothes are then put on an avatar to show how the outfit will look. Will a wardrobe such as this ever be realised?

Tributes and replicas of the wardrobe definitely exist, with users reportedly using avatars with 92% accuracy of their own body shape. While the AI technology required isn't there yet, companies are already on their way to researching the potential connection between smart applications and our sense of style as well as the need for style advice.

The possibility for these applications is endless: Smart apps could deduce distinct items from photographs and where to order them online, and match these items to your own style profile. These apps could also distinguish whether or not they're your taste, if each item is suited to you, or whether you should consider different styles. It could ultimately give you taste and size suggestions, which is just one of the incredibly innovative approaches that AI could have to fashion.

To answer the question of where mobile is taking fashion, all you need to do is look into your pocket. Our app customers spend longer on the Zalando app and visit us up to 6 times more than on other channels, as well as interact with their wishlist 2-4 times more. This kind of interaction cannot be ignored. Ensuring the customer experience is personal and intimate will become a priority for fashion and smartphone brands, with mobile providing the perfect gateway for personal connections.