

# Ringling up sales on smartphones

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New shopping apps to provide convenience, deals, but lots of ads, says marketing professor Photo: Dreamstime

As the holiday season and "Black Friday" approach, consumers will be looking for deals in the still struggling economy. Online shopping has become popular with many customers, and now a new technology enables them to make purchases on their mobile phones. In this Q&A, Gloria Barczak, professor of marketing in the College of Business Administration, looks at the advantages and disadvantages for consumers using these shopping applications.

**How do shopping-related smartphone applications bridge the customer service gap between customer and retailer?**

Smartphone applications make it easier and potentially faster in this [holiday season](#) for customers to shop and purchase items of interest. By so doing, the apps can help improve customer satisfaction because customers don't have to wait for a sales person to ask questions, go to a store that doesn't have the product in stock, or wait in a long line to check out. Also, by including sales or deals in the app, customers using the app may perceive that they are special and therefore become more loyal to the store.

## **What are the positive and negative aspects of shopping applications?**

Positive aspects of [shopping](#) applications include price-comparison shopping, information and notification of deals and specials, ability to search for a specific product and which store has it, and ability to pre-order items. Applications provide store locations and have an overall convenience factor.

Negative aspects of shopping applications include the time it takes to search and the advertisements users may have to view on the app.

## **How might this technology be used by retailers in the future?**

In the future I think we will see more store specific apps offering previews of upcoming sales, mobile coupons, special sales only for those using the mobile app, and maybe even suggestions for gift or self purchases based on past purchase behavior (similar to Amazon, Barnes & Noble, etc.). Overall, the apps will expand to provide greater convenience for the consumer, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and hopefully loyalty to a particular retail store.

## How do you think shopping applications will affect Black Friday and holiday shopping?

According to an October 2010 U.S. Mobile Consumer Briefing by the Mobile Marketing Association, nearly 60 percent of mobile consumers will use their phone for holiday shopping and planning. At least 13 percent expect to use their phone for gift purchases. Given these survey results and the lagging [economy](#), I would expect that more [consumers](#) than ever will be using their mobile phones to do price comparison shopping in order to find the best deals on holiday gifts on [Black Friday](#) and during the entire holiday shopping season.

Provided by Northeastern University

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