

How to use your phone to maximize holiday shopping

25 November 2010, By Jennifer Waters

If you want to be a smart shopper during the holidays, don't leave home without your smart phone.

Retailers have ramped up their Internet sites and [interactive software](#) to make it easier for [mobile-phone](#) users to search for deals, find coupons and comparison-shop. At the same time, [software applications](#) and social media have become feeding frenzies for consumers to share their finds, seek another opinion or just get directions.

That will come in handy for the nearly 60 percent - up 25 percent from last year - of all mobile-phone users who will be armed and ready with their devices when they hit shopping centers and malls this year, according to a recent study for the [Mobile Marketing Association](#). And that doesn't even include making phone calls.

"Holiday shoppers are always in a time crunch, and in this economy, they're in a budget crunch too," said Jacqueline Rosales, executive vice president at Luth Research, which conducted the holiday-intentions survey of 1,000 adults for the group. "Both of these factors have them relying on their mobile phone more than ever as a tool for finding bargains, the right gift and the quickest way to get to a particular merchant."

Some 64 percent of respondents said they would check their phones before even going to a store while 28 percent said they would be looking at their phones while waiting in line for the cashier.

Many major retailers have smart-phone applications in which shoppers can browse weekend sales circulars and promotions, create "favorites" lists and find the nearest stores.

That makes the mobile phone - next to money - a crucial shopping tool this year. Here's how your mobile phone can help you shop this year:

-Comparison shopping. Few things have proven more popular than price-shopping apps. You can compare prices right on the spot with apps from RedLaser, PriceGrabber, TheFind, Scandit and ShopSavvy. By pointing your phone at the product's bar code, you can compare the prices in the stores to those online and at nearby stores, read reviews and even add items to a wish list.

-Deals finding you. "Checking in" by using your phone is a hit with the 18-year-old to 25-year-old set, who use sites such as Foursquare, Brightkite and Facebook. Now consumers can get deals when they do the same thing. For many, if the application is on, GPS technology will pick up when you're near a retailer and spit out coupons when you walk in the store - even without checking in. Women's apparel retailer White House/Black Market is among the first retailers to jump on the location-based mobile marketing that works on all cell phones. Consumers who opt into the FashionAlerts program will get text messages when they're near a store and automatic alerts about in-store deals, new products and even fashion tips. J.C. Penney customers who use sites like Foursquare to check in will see a \$10 off \$50 purchase coupon on their phones. Penney's customers can also use their phones to make purchases directly from the apps or view their JCP Rewards accounts.

-More apps to work with. Applications like ShopSavvy will find deals while location-based Shopkick will alert partner retailers - Macy's, Best Buy, Target, Wet Seal and the Sports Authority, for example - that you're in the store. The app will direct you to deals you might like based on your purchasing habits and send text messages with coupons or deal alerts.

-Nabbing shopping rewards. If you've got time on your hands, you can collect rewards points by walking into stores like Best Buy, Target, Macy's, American Eagle and the Sports Authority with a

Shopkick or CheckPoints app open. Check in and then take the time to scan products for even more rewards.

-Communicating with others. Not sure that coat looks good on you? Many of the same apps that let you comparison shop also let you share the information with your friends via Twitter or Facebook.

-E-gifting. Sears and Kmart are the first retailers to bring out a Facebook [app](#) that lets you give gift certificates in real time. The eGift cards are available in \$5 increments up to \$25 and can be purchased through the retailers' Facebook pages. Once the purchase is processed, it shows up on the recipient's Facebook wall. "It's immediate and available right then to be redeemed," said Susan Ehrlich, president of Sears financial services. "It's a very seamless process."

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