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# Game Changers in Fashion & Tech: Decoded Fashion New York



L'Orken Atik

Exploring the theme of Game Changers, the latest Decoded Fashion Summit brought together leaders in retail, marketing, technology and design for two days of lively debate on the intersection of fashion and innovation.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**PERSONALISED POCKET STOREFRONTS** Emerging mobile apps are cutting out the noise of irrelevant retail listings by leveraging advanced algorithms to create personalised pocket storefronts.

**SLOWING THE APP JOURNEY** With consumers becoming more discerning in their app downloads, speakers agreed that brands should focus on creating mobile experiences for their most engaged users, rather than using them to acquire new consumers.

**BOOMING BEACONS** Shoppers now actively expect the retail experience to offer added layers of contextual content. Correlating with this behaviour, the global shipment of BLE Beacons is due to reach 400 million units (\$1bn) in 2020, according to London-based ABI Research.

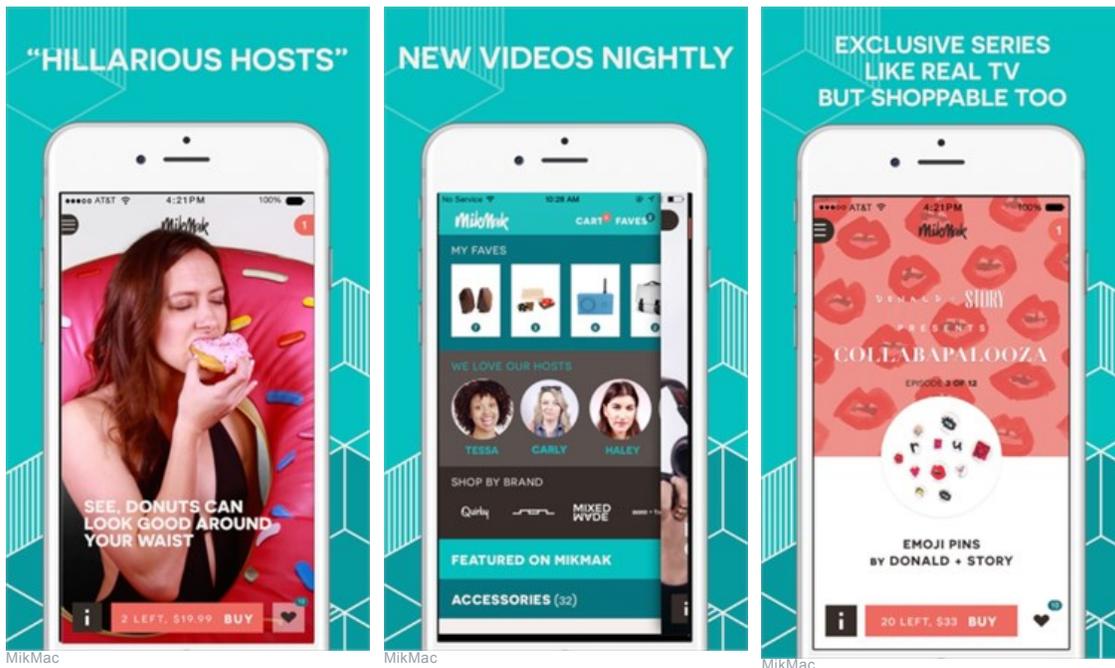
**BEACON CHALLENGERS** As Beacons hit mainstream retail, advanced forms of location-based communications that work without hardware or a network connection are coming to the fore.

**FASHION'S FAST FUTURE** Speakers agreed that quick-response data, coupled with localised 'responsive' manufacturing, could make for a more sustainable business model than that of traditional fast fashion.

**DKNY CHALLENGE** The event hosted the inaugural DKNY Fashion Challenge, in which a shortlist of start-ups battled it out to work alongside the brand on future concepts.

## Mobile Shopper: Targeting Intent

When it comes to capturing shopping intent on mobiles, speakers agreed narrowing product choices to create personalised pocket storefronts is the future for the format.



- Anywhere Home Shopping: Dubbed “QVC meets Snapchat” by founder Rachel Tipograph, US-based [MikMak](#) launched in May 2015 as the first mobile video shopping network.

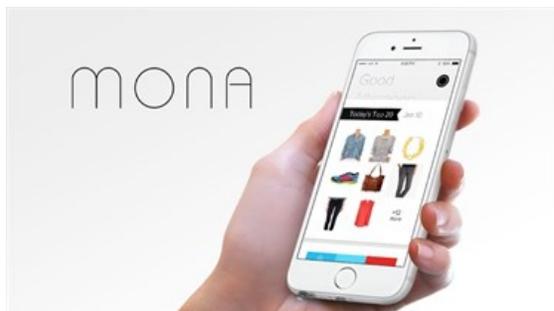
Offering products for under \$100, MikMak’s “Mimimericals” have included a 12-part series that tied in with New York concept store Story’s thematic product offer, along with a dedicated nightly show. MikMac uses smart algorithms to add a contextual layer to content served, which Tipograph believes is crucial to hook users.

For more on shoppable video, see: [Halloween 2015: VR, Vlogs & Geo Tech](#) and [Shoppable Content: Entertainment](#), part of our [Anywhere Retailing](#) Industry Trend.

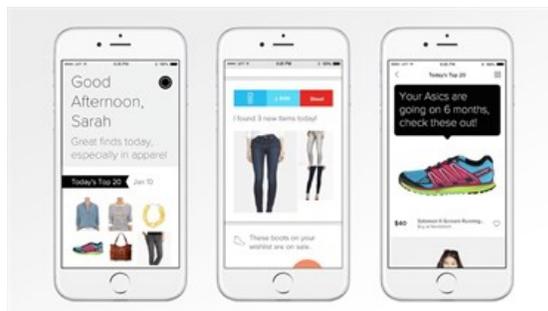


As more companies come into the mobile commerce space, personalisation is not about how you’re going to win – it’s about how you’re going to keep up

ALAN TISCH, FOUNDER & CEO, SPRING



Mona App



Mona App

- Holding Attention: For Christmas 2015, US-based fashion marketplace Spring is launching gift guides personalised to reflect the user’s searches, gender, location and favourite colours. Spring still wants to enable “emotional moments of discovery”, but if a regular user has never searched above \$200, then the app will intuitively stop showing them items over that price.
- Pocket Sales Assistant: “We take the in-store assisted retail experience and put it into mobile,” said Orkin Atik, chief executive and founder of Seattle-based AI shopping app [Mona](#). First highlighted in our [Retail blog post](#), Mona aims to be the world’s most personal mobile retail shopping experience.

To kick-start the process, the app mines a user’s email inbox to understand past purchases, subscriptions and price points. “Our promise is not to show you the perfect product, but to get rid of the noise and clutter,” explained Atik. “We will try to show you 20 products, you give us feedback, and we’ll show you 20 more in real time.” For more on mobile commerce, see [Pocket Personal Shopper: Mona App](#), [Spring Mobile App: Swipe to Buy](#), [Net-A-Porter: Social Commerce App](#) and [Image Recognition E-tail App](#).

## The Connected Store: Experiential Content Hub

As store concepts attune to online behaviours, shoppers now actively expect the retail experience to offer added layers of contextual real-time content and streamlined service. “We see the future of the store being an experiential content hub,” said US designer Rebecca Minkoff.

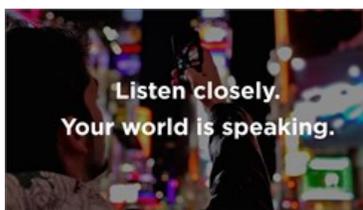


Rebecca Minkoff, Connected Mirror

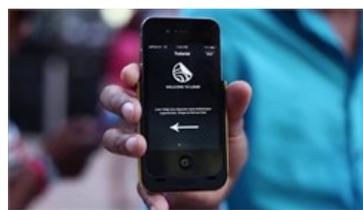
- Responsive Content Drives Sales:** Hyper-connected store strategies are proving to be more than just a gimmick. Uri Minkoff, CEO of [Rebecca Minkoff](#), said the brand’s [RFID](#)-connected fitting-room mirrors (with Minkoff herself providing styling ideas for garments brought in), have seen a 30% increase in customers wanting additional styles, while connected stores have experienced a 50% uplift in sales. For more on the connected store, see [Virtual Added Value](#) – part of our [New-Era Luxury](#) Macro Trend, [Rebecca Minkoff: Hyper-Connected Store](#) and [Future-Facing Fitting Rooms](#).
- Streamlining Service with Beacons:** Doug Gardner, chief information officer at British fast-fashion chain [River Island](#), sees cracking the in-store value proposition of Bluetooth low-energy [beacon](#) technology as rooted in streamlining service over content. “I see a fantastic application for this with our own staff; we can track where they are on the shop floor against where the customers are,” he said.

Gardner added that since launching click and collect two years ago, 50% of online orders are now picked up in store. This is relevant as beacons can also be used to authorise seamless click-and-collect payments – a topic explored in [Sales-Boosting Beacons: Targeted Mobile Marketing](#).

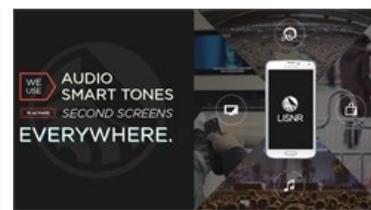
“Our future vision is to have the app on ‘store mode’ that strips it down to make it relevant in context to the store – where say if a customer was in the shoe section on a busy day, they could scan a product and it would trigger someone to bring it out from the back,” he said.



LISNR



LISNR



LISNR

- **Beacon Beater:** Winner of the DKNY Challenge, Cincinnati-based LISNR is a high frequency, inaudible “smart tone” communications tool. It sends data such as offers of video content over standard speakers to an individual’s phone, based on and relative to their location.

Likening the technology to an audio ‘cookie’ that tracks movement, chief executive and co-founder Rodney Williams said its number one advantage over beacons is that it doesn’t require any hardware. While beacons require Bluetooth, LISNR doesn’t need to be connected to anything, nor does an app need to be open as LISNR “wakes it up” within a 3m range of a standard speaker.

Recently awarded \$10m in the second round of funding, Williams would like to see the technology made compatible with Apple Pay or other payment systems.

For more on data tracking, mapping and in-store analytics, see [Data Tracking & Response Monitoring](#), part of our [Future of the Store](#) Industry Trend.

## Branded Apps: Cultivating Affinity

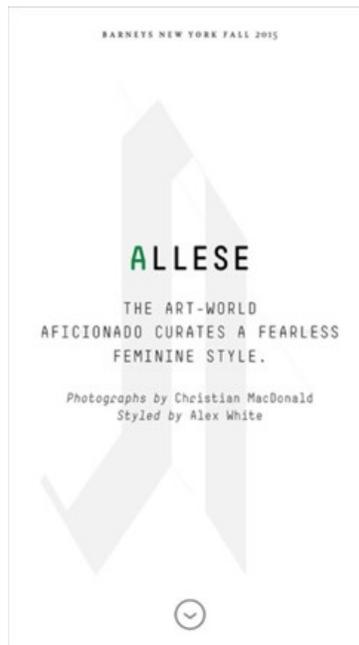
As consumers are not going to download multiple retail apps unless there is a real need, speakers agreed brands should focus on creating mobile experiences for the most engaged users, rather than viewing mobile as a channel for acquiring new customers.

- **Direct Versus Distributed:** “A brand should have a destination for focusing on its most loyal 40% of customers...” said Nitin Mangani, founder and CEO of mobile commerce platform [Predict Spring](#). “You don’t want to just be a blip on some broader, catch-all mobile shopping platform.”

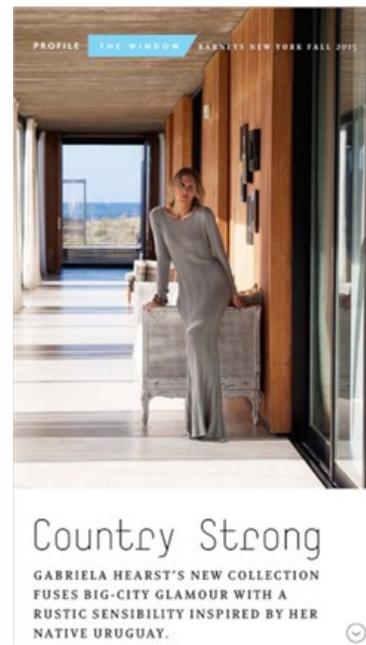
Hector Muelas, chief image officer at DKNY, echoed this sentiment. “We are a platform-obsessed industry, but we need to move from this view to understand behaviours; we need more of a point of view.”



Barney's The Window



Barney's The Window



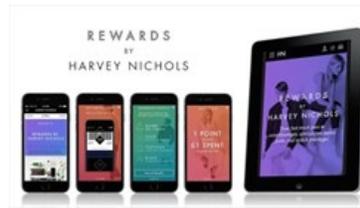
Barney's The Window

- **Counterintuitive Sell:** “More check [Barneys](#) on their phone than go in-store all week,” said Matthew Woolsey, executive vice-president of Digital at the New York department store. In September 2015, it launched a mobile version of its shoppable Windows magazine. Separate from the main Barneys app, according to Woolsey, the company is happy to interrupt the checkout flow with long-form content in order to build an even deeper affinity with the brand.
- **Hyper-Local Mobile Loyalty:** In June 2015, British high-end department store Harvey Nichols launched a mobile-only strategy for its “agile, experiential and personalised” loyalty programme.

Kerem Atasoy, head of digital, said the company chose to partner with British digital gaming agency [Ustwo](#) for the app, as it had more of an insight into user experience over a digital luxury agency. “The app is Harvey Nichols in your pocket and it is structured around experiences to drive you back in-store,” said Atasoy.



Harvey Nichol Rewards



Harvey Nichol Rewards



Harvey Nichol Rewards

The brand also recently used the app for a playful, disruptive, hyper-local campaign targeting the customers of local rival department store Harrods by matching their Harrods loyalty points if they came and shopped in-store at Harvey Nichols.

For more on mobile-first loyalty, see [Redefining Customer Loyalty for Digital Natives](#) and [Harvey Nichols' In-Store Reboot](#).

## Future Fast Fashion: Sustainable Manufacturing



**Fast fashion gets a bad rap... but it actually makes sense as a business model**

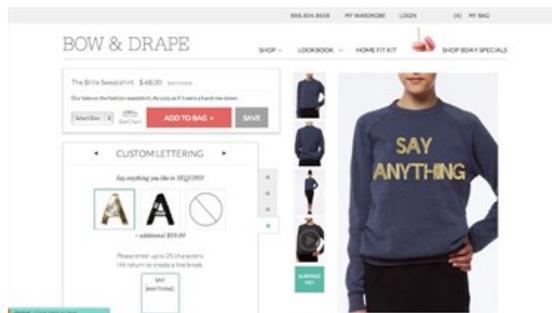
Yael Aflalo, CEO, REFORMATION

Sustainable US fashion brand [Reformation](#) releases new products every week so as to learn what products people like, as opposed to waiting for a seasonal calendar. "The best way to combat the volatility of the fashion consumer is to be fast – get them more of what they like quickly," said chief executive Yael Aflalo. "Sustainability, like technology, should just be part of the tools and cogs of a company – much like HR and finance is."

For more about Reformation's commitment to sustainability, see [Reformation: Fashion Recycling](#) and [America's First Sewing Factory](#).

- **Fast Fashion, Made to Order:** Knitwear start-up [Appalatch](#) showcased its made-to-order, 3D-printed sweaters, which are sustainably sourced and made in America. Founder Mario DeGuzman told Stylus his vision is to scale up the service for the mass market. "If a customer orders a jumper online, we could knit it to order and send it directly from our factory – eliminating over-ordering, and reducing material and transport costs and carbon emissions."
- **Custom Creations for a Lasting Relationship:** The trend for in-store customisation – engendering a lasting connection to a product and, ultimately, a brand – continues to grow apace.

Grant Barth, chief merchandising officer at Levi's, told how its new Williamsburg, Brooklyn store - due to open this December – will offer 1940s and 50s-inspired custom chain stitching in-store.



Bow and Drape



Bow and Drape

Aubrie Pagano, CEO and creative director of custom US apparel company [Bow & Drape](#), said the brand is rolling out six Christmas season shops at US department store Nordstrom that will offer the (almost) instant customisation of products from sweatshirts to Siracha hot sauce. Customers will receive a text once the product is ready.

For more on rapid manufacturing, see: [Hybrid S/S 17: Future Manufacturing](#), [Knyttan x Christopher Raeburn](#) and [Fabric Futures: 3D Printing](#). For more on customisation in-store, see: [Macy's One Below Gen Z/Y Playground](#), [Innovative HQ: Converse, Boston and Experimentation & Co-Creation](#).

## Smart Fabrics: Products that Talk

The Internet of Things (IoT) is reinventing the product experience as demand for a more subtle, yet deeply personalised and contextualised brand interaction grows.



- Fluid Products:** A finalist in the inaugural DKNY start-up challenge competition, New York-based creative technology firm [+Rehab Studio](#) showcased its colour- and pattern-shifting smart surface. With the help of micro LEDs, shoes and apparel can be transformed at the tap of a smartphone or click of a heel.

The concept is envisaged as a series of products paired with contextual downloads such as a colour-changing heel that takes the wearer from day to evening, or sneakers that change to match another wearer.

- Quantified Products:** Runner up in the DKNY Challenge, wearable technology expert [Sabine Seymour](#)'s smart fabric is tackling how brands can leverage data. "By adding a sensor to fabric and connecting it to the Internet of Things, we are creating 'Intel Inside' meets Goretex," Seymour told Stylus.

The washable sensor is built into the fabric to track a wearer's biometric and environmental data. This information is then sent via Bluetooth to a single proprietary platform. "We are a data broker," said Seymour of the software, which means any brand can integrate the sensor into a product.

- IoT In-Store:** Sid Jatia, vice-president of direct-to-consumer digital at US athletic wear brand [Under Armour](#), gave an insight into how this data might be used in-store. The brand's Chicago flagship features technology and a 'fitness bar' centered on its [UA Record](#) – a platform that aggregates cross-device fitness data from 150 million users. Jatia envisions a near future where a UA Record user walks in and an associate might say: "You did your personal best last night – well done."

For more on products with smart sensors, see [SXSWi 2015: Soft Tech, Smart Surfaces](#) and [Ultra-Thin Wearable Monitors Health](#)

## FUTURE INSIGHTS

### UNDERSTAND BEHAVIOURS

Personalised AI apps such as Mona and branded chatbot functions (such as Kik, mentioned in our [Advertising Week 2015](#) report) are growing in sophistication. Consider how your platform can deliver personalised results based on sentiment and natural language, as opposed to pure product search.

### PERSONAL SERVICE & CONTENT

The micro-location function of beacons or LISNR means both the customer and vendor can be armed with the necessary information to make a face-to-face exchange as seamless as possible. Consider how this would change the dynamic of a busy shop floor with multiple devices and requests.

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