

Four Reasons Why It's Time to Go Mobile

By Jessica Hawthorne-Castro

At first, mobile advertising was folded under the same umbrella as social media, QR codes, and various other direct-to-consumer methods that surfaced during web 2.0. But as the number of smartphone-toting consumers grew to enormous proportions—roughly three-quarters of Americans (77 percent) now own a smartphone, up from 35 percent in 2011, according to Pew Research—mobile has taken on a life of its own.

Since the launch of the iPhone in

2007, mobile technology has disrupted the marketing and advertising world in ways that no one could have predicted just 10 years ago. According to eMarketer, mobile will be the main driver of digital advertising growth in 2017, accounting for more than 70 percent of digital and more than one-quarter of total media outlays. Growth will remain in double-digits for at least the next few years, the forecast says, with mobile ad spending expected to surpass TV in 2019.

Unfortunately, many marketers and their agencies are sticking to their old ways of treating mobile as an offshoot of other, more traditional advertising



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mechanisms. Winning marketers, on the other hand, view mobile as an entity that can stand on its own. To successfully navigate mobile's complicated path and stay ahead of the curve, agencies must grab it by the horns right now. Here's how:

Marketers need to put themselves in front of consumers from the time they wake up and check the latest news on BuzzFeed until they use their phones to turn off the living-room lights before bed.

Know that customization and personalization trump broad-based marketing efforts. No one wants to face the reality that the mall they've visited since they were a child is now filled with random pop-up stores and more than the necessary number of nail salons, but the truth is that bricks-and-mortar retailers are slowly going the way of the 8-track tape. As more retailers board up stores, the need to reorient marketing efforts is critical to remaining viable. Retail will continue to prevail, but only as a branded experience where consumers have a compelling reason to visit the store.

Customization and personalization work well in this environment. Amazon and other online retailers excel at serving the needs of "mission" shoppers—people who know what they want and desire a broad selection, value, and efficiency. In the same vein, bricks-and-mortar retailers such as Primark, H&M, Zara, and Target have been able to succeed by serving consumers who want compelling, branded experiences and effective ways to discover what they'd like to purchase both online and offline. Agencies must accept the fact that the personalized shopping experience is going to win, and that's why mobile and digital will continue to excel as they offer an increasing number of customized options, content, and campaigns.

Make the frictionless transaction a priority. The massive popularity of ride-sharing services such as Uber and Lyft have turned common sense on its head, as complete strangers spend car time together on their way to a specific destination. The same goes for

strangers who share their dwellings with one another via Airbnb, and those who fund each other's genius ideas on Kickstarter. These brands all strive to create frictionless systems that allow, for instance, a driver and rider to share a ride and then rate each other on the experience. The motivation for good behavior is strong for all participants and serves as the modern-day form of peer pressure. Marketers can borrow a page from these peer-to-peer transactions in their quest to develop frictionless, personalized mobile experiences for their customers.

Leverage the fact that mobile behavior is nonlinear. "We used to consume media in a linear fashion—we would start watching an appointment-to-view TV show, and sit there until it finished, because there was 'nothing else on,'" writes Econsultancy blogger Ben Davis. "Likewise, we would purchase the day's newspaper and read it over the course of the day. The internet has disrupted this model, and we now consume media in a nonlinear fashion, finding what we want, when we want it (as browsers)."

This reality presents challenges and opportunities for marketers. To harness the nonlinear landscape, they need to put themselves in front of consumers from the time they wake up and check the latest news on BuzzFeed until they use their phones to turn off the living-room lights before bed.

Users consume information on their own schedules, and marketers can take advantage of that fact by presenting relevant content that encourages them to come back and look. This will provide visibility when consumers want

to engage with content that is credible and relevant to them. With more people moving quickly (and unpredictably) among devices throughout the course of the day, agencies must be able to tell compelling stories that unfold in a logical and engaging way.

Mobile users keep marketers honest. Marketing in the age of the consumer has turned the tables; consumers know they have the right and the power to control a marketer's message. As such, they're keeping marketers honest with their social presences to engage with a brand on their terms, time, and/or device (or not). They don't want mobile messaging that isn't relevant or has minimal impact to them. However, if they purchase a product, have a positive experience, and continue to get mobile messaging that offers value, a consumer will react positively and will likely evangelize the brand.

A recent Gartner study, *How to Market*, highlights the value of elevating the customer experience. "Expand your mobile marketing strategy by identifying mobile messaging approaches that both serve your marketing objectives and meet customer needs," writes author Charles Golvin.

Marketers rely on mobile messaging as a brand extension, and their customers are receptive to this messaging as long as they are provided with (and receive) contextually relevant messages.

As mobile continues to expand and morph, marketers won't be able to ignore its evolution for much longer. And while branded bricks-and-mortar retail will continue to be relevant, the need for customized, personalized advertising messages will grow exponentially. The agencies that take time to figure this out, test the options, and tweak their clients' campaigns will come out winners. The rest may take the same route as companies such as Circuit City, Blockbuster, and Borders—companies that just couldn't innovate fast enough to maintain their relevance to consumers. ❧