

COLUMNS

Playing to the strengths of devices, platforms and consumer behavior in 2015

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A couple of years ago, I engaged in a somewhat heated argument with a mobile industry peer. His position was that tablets are not mobile devices, because they act more like computers than mobile devices.

My position was that tablets are mobile devices, because they meet the definition of "mobile" untethered, portable, capable of receiving a Wi-Fi signal and carried around by users for the same kinds of activities as smartphones.

What I have come to realize and admit, however, is that not all mobile devices are created equally, nor are they used similarly.

On the watch

Yes, today's consumers can do just about everything on both a smartphone or tablet, whether it is researching a product, booking a hotel room, paying a bill, texting or Skyping an after-school latchkey child at 3 p.m. or watching the latest CNN video.

But not everyone does everything on both, nor do they want to.

That concept truly crystallized for me earlier this month at *Mobile Marketer's* Mobile Women to Watch Summit 2015, where marketers talked about the smartphone-only and tablet-only marketing campaigns they were developing. It was a full recognition that consumers use each device for different reasons and purposes, and therefore mobile marketing campaigns should be executed and delivered accordingly.

No longer is there an expectation that anything and everything "mobile" should be part of the larger mobile experience and fully suited to "mobile marketing." That type of thinking is clearly shifting, as marketers have begun developing campaigns and content based on the nuances and different behavior surrounding smartphone and tablet usage.

Like me, mobile marketers have recognized that content and marketing delivered to smartphones versus tablets versus Web sites versus mobile applications should honor format and utility, whether consumers are shopping for cars, mobile checking-into a resort, renewing a pharmacy prescription or redeeming a mobile coupon in-store.

And those nuances will continue evolving as new mobile devices, wearables and invisibles enter the market.

Same avenue, different vehicle

The smartphone versus tablet differences are obvious: smartphones are smaller and fit easily into a pocket or purse,

whereas tablets are larger and, although portable, do not stuff into pockets quite so easily. Their screens though are easier to view and easier to navigate.

Smartphones are also more commonplace: 90 percent market penetration versus 40 percent or thereabouts for tablets, according to [Pew Internet Research](#), with tablets forecast to outpace sales of laptop computers soon.

Smartphones also lend themselves to more business use, while tablets are chosen for more personal activities, according to the [International News Media Association](#).

The differences are in the details, as data from [Forrester Research](#) highlights differences in where and how smartphone and tablet use varies: Only in the living room are tablets (72 percent) used more frequently than smartphones (67 percent)

In the car: 74 percent smartphones versus 18 percent tablets

Traveling: 68 percent smartphones versus 48 percent tablets

Public transportation: 51 percent smartphones versus 15 percent tablets

Outdoors: 74 percent smartphones versus 26 percent tablets

Restaurants: 65 percent smartphones versus 30 percent tablets

At work: 58 percent smartphones versus 20 percent tablets

Children use them differently too, in a pattern that shifts with age, according to [eMarketer](#): the younger set is more amenable to tablets for obvious educational, entertainment and usability reasons, while older children and teens shift toward smartphones as they age.

Marketers already understand the need to optimize their Web sites to function seamlessly and easily in the mobile environment, and this new data about how and where consumers rely on smartphones versus tablets should provide a foundation for fresh thinking about "niche" mobile marketing.

The next evolution involves format-specific mobile campaigns that are tailored to the unique characteristics and uses of each device, whether it is a smartphone, smartwatch or tablet.

[Lexus](#), for example, created a tablet-only video campaign two years ago that brought magazine ads to life by placing an iPad behind the page in a magazine, and [Lufthansa](#) tailors content differently for its mobile app for smartphones and tablets.

Indeed, as mobile devices continue to dominate viewing as we know it, and as mobile marketing becomes more nuanced, marketers and developers will have to understand which part of mobile makes for sense for each initiative, campaign, batch of content, interface and promotion.

Here is how I see the key differences playing out over the coming year:

Mobile workhorses: Smartphones remain the utilitarian workhorses of the mobile environment, able to do it all: browse, email, text, snap, sketch, scan, work, change the thermostat settings at home and whatever else. Their smaller screens mean that marketing messages need to be more compact and compelling, their visuals created and sized for the handheld spaces in which they operate.

Good editors of words and images will learn to create the most impact with the fewest parts rather than cram as much as possible onto a small screen, simply because the smartphone needs the cleanest, least-cluttered interface to deliver an on-target, at-a-glance message.

Smartphones will continue to be the devices that open doors to consumers' interests and mobile activities, with tablets providing the larger indoor spaces in which they can continue to play, shop, engage, interact, learn and be entertained.

More visual/entertaining tablets: Just as utilitarian but larger, tablets adapt more readily to leisure activities and formats and more visuals, primarily because of the larger screen size more like a small TV than a larger smartphone. They lend themselves to more visual marketing and content videos, games, interactive content, miniature books and the like.

With many newsrooms decimated and still trying to figure out the digital revolution and monetization of content, tablets could provide the perfect platform for modern-day journalism as a platform primed for interactive coverage,

photo and video essays, long-form journalism, investigative reporting and a reader-informed content-feedback loop. Just ask USA Today.

Smartphone users who tend to snack on news will find deeper insights and more enriching content on tablets. Again, just ask USA Today.

OF COURSE, not all marketing will be based on a "work for smartphone/play for tablet" kind of mindset.

But as mobile marketing evolves to meet consumers' changing mobile behavior, each niche will develop its own unique tactics, strategies and preferred buckets of content based on where consumers live, work, play and pay attention to the world through whichever mobile device accompanies them on their journey.

That is, at least until the next hot mobile fill-in-the-blank device comes along.

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[Meet Ms. Horwell at the Mobile FirstLook: Strategy 2015 conference in New York Jan. 14-15 where she will emcee](#)

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