

COLUMNS

## Image tips from Tinder to solve mobile's biggest problem

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By **Jeff Hunt**

The proliferation of ecommerce gives us a level of convenience, control and flexibility that has revolutionized both the retailer and the consumer. But with all we have gained, we also have to consider what we have sacrificed: Information.

Information is central to every decision we make. Without enough information, doubt creeps in and we lose purchase confidence. This tragic, but common scenario echoes retailers ongoing concern of abandoned shopping carts.

When I think about where the future of retail is heading mobile I realize that this truth is only compounded. Mobile commerce gives us an even greater degree of convenience and flexibility, but at expense of comprehensive information.

For this reason, desktops are still the preferred method of online shopping.

Picture that

UPS reports that 43 percent of mobile users prefer computer-based shopping versus mobile, because they cannot get clear product images. To optimize for limited screen space and processing power, mobile retailers must prioritize information that the customer finds most valuable, namely imagery.

Visual information is fundamental to our general understanding of a product. We would never go into a store and blindly purchase an item. The same holds true for mobile commerce.

If retailers can successfully communicate their products and their brand through imagery, then long-worded details that clutter mobile Web sites become superfluous.

I realize that what I have laid out may seem like common sense. But then why do images on mobile devices continue to be such a problem?

The challenge is that many retailers do not have a designed mobile strategy with user experience at its core. That is not to say that all retailers need to invest in a mobile application or multiple sets of images, but they need to give the best product presentation optimized for mobile devices.

Retailers looking to create a tailored mobile experience need to take a step back and evaluate how mobile consumers shop.

When on a desktop, the user has access to a full keyboard, a mouse and a larger browser with multiple tabs.

When on a mobile device, the user is dealing with a smaller screen and one free hand, making typing or precision clicking difficult.

In the bag

The inherent differences in mobile and desktop shopping have innovative retailers taking note and optimizing mobile sites with simplified navigation, larger imagery or expanded touch targets for easy clicking.

Case in point: eBags taking a tip from Tinder.

Unless you have been living under a rock or happily married, you should be aware that Tinder is today's hottest dating app.

Tinder users swipe potential matches right for hot and left for not, based on one fundamental element: an image. With more than 10 million active users, its uncluttered, easy-to-use interface appeals to a fast-paced, ADD mobile mindset.

eBags was quick to realize that the design principles that make Tinder successful as a functional app and attractive to a mobile audience could be applied to optimize its mobile commerce Web site.

Faced with tens of thousands of SKUs, eBags needed to create a solution to easily display its products on a mobile site without sacrificing usability or product discovery. Tinder was the answer.

eBags crafted eBags Obsession to allow users to easily navigate through eBags' 12,000 handbags by swiping right for love it and left for leave it. Products are saved so that users can easily go back and make a final purchase decision perhaps on a desktop computer.

Like Tinder, eBags Obsession showcases the only information-rich element needed: imagery. It found that it could use a clean product image with a standard white background to prompt an immediate decision about a product, while removing the clutter.

Filters give users the flexibility to set parameters, such as pricing limitations or color options. And an intelligent algorithm collects 100 data points to refine options and personalize the experience.

The result speaks for itself. After rolling out the mobile commerce feature for just two days, eBags Obsession users were engaging with an average of 76 product images and converting at a rate of 10 percent.

THE KEY TAKEAWAY here is that retailers looking for mobile success need to focus on the shopping experience.

Using a mobile device, whether on a train heading to work or waiting for a friend at a coffee shop, is much like skimming through clothing racks at a department store my limited attention needs just the right information to make an immediate decision about whether I like a product or not.

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