

COLUMNS

Going mobile is no longer enough

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By **Heather Menery**

We cannot deny that the smartphone is an extension of ourselves, a staple in our daily lives. We spend more time with our phones than any other piece of technology. And yet, less than a decade ago, many doubted that mobile advertising should be a key area of investment and ad-tech players are still playing catch up because of this belief.

Most people certainly never believed that the smartphone would be a mechanism to drive purchases or, at the very least, feature ads that could influence purchases at a later date.

But 2016 is here, and the current generation will only continue to demand more out of mobile.

Why it matters

This younger generation will provide information in exchange for a free market to view pictures, videos and relationship statuses. They will make purchases, even big ones, on their mobile devices and will choose to share their most intimate moments on their smartphones versus their laptops.

These consumers will bounce from game to news to gossip column to WebMD as fast as you can say Snapchat. They need not be loyal to any one publisher, because their mobile search results produce a wide variety of options to answer their questions.

As this generation has been given the luxury of choice, it is more important than ever for an ad to be relevant, especially on the platform where these users are most engaged.

With so much data now available to marketers, it is crucial that they understand the different types of data to create the best and most relevant user experience. Otherwise, these consumers will choose to go elsewhere.

If a marketer understands the buying behavior of a particular user, this not only leads to a more positive user experience it ultimately may lead to a purchase. Can intent data signaling a potential decision to purchase be an important component of mobile advertising?

Baby and bathwater

Let us use a real-life example.

It is Thursday night at 7:30 p.m. I have the television on and I am scrolling through a premium news application. Mobile advertising's initial charm was that the experience was uncluttered: one ad per page. This is no longer the case.

We have seen so many recent examples of publishers that have disregarded the user experience in favor of creating a desktop-like experience masqueraded as a mobile one. This was my experience tonight: political ad, three ads in a row for a fancy keychain, and an "adhesion" unit asking me to download Hotels.com. Now.

But wait: a 300x250 emerges featuring dancing bubbles and a beautiful bouncing baby boy with a prominent Johnson & Johnson logo.

Do Johnson & Johnson know that I have a nine-month old? Do they know how much easier my life has been since introducing a bath with bubbles? Do they know that I searched for "safe baby bath products" several times in the past month? Do they know that I used the last of my Babyganics bottle and just texted myself "buy bubble bath" because my phone was closer to me than a pad of paper? Do they know how much bubble bath I have bought in the last month?

I do not know the answers to all of these questions. I do know that my behavior on my mobile device may have offered certain clues or signals that I am indeed a mother who believes very much in the soothing nature of a baby bubble bath before bedtime.

I am not certain if the brand chose to read these signals or if this was a coincidence that ultimately may lead to a purchase.

There is a great deal of data available to marketers today. Some data is more valuable than others. Accurate demographic data, for instance, will soon be table stakes as purchase and intent-based data becomes even more valuable.

If I know someone has bought products in my particular category, can I get them to buy more of my products? And can I use this data to reach users on the platform where they are spending so much of their time?

The answer is yes.

MARKETERS SHOULD align themselves with partners that have access to the right type of data to ensure that their ads are relevant, turning over more of their dollars to people-based advertising versus contextual spend and spray-and-pray-type models.

This may sound like an obvious statement, but there are still hurdles to understanding customers' behavior, especially purchase behavior, as users jump from device to device.

So while marketers cannot control the aesthetics of a publisher's page and the number of ads being shown, they can control the type of people they reach based on their past purchase decisions and potential to buy even more of those types of products.

Mobile advertising is still not perfect, but, at the very least, let us be relevant.

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