

COLUMNS

Finding opportunity in the chaos of mobile advertising

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L'Oreal Makeup Genius

By **Phil Schraeder**

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Consumers increasingly live in a mobile-media ecosystem. That is certainly already obvious to you both anecdotally and personally as a consumer in fact, there is a good chance you are reading this on your phone right now.

But there is also plenty of data to back that assertion up. For instance, in the first three months of 2016, according to data released by Nielsen this summer, time spent online using a smartphone rose to an average of an hour and 39 minutes per day. That is more than twice what it was two years ago.

For consumers, a smartphone can represent familiarity and comfort. One neuromarketing study even showed that smartphones activate the part of the brain associated with feelings of love and compassion.

For marketers, though, a smartphone can represent chaos and uncertainty.

Conversations I have with agencies, brands and publishers about mobile marketing increasingly seem marked by anxiety.

But at the same time, consensus is forming around some of the imperatives of the shifting mobile landscape.

I had the pleasure of speaking with two great minds on the topic at a recent Modern Marketing Summit (MMS): Rachel Weiss, vice president of digital innovation and entrepreneurship at L'Oral, and Bob Walczak, global CEO of Light Reaction.

Here, I have boiled down some of the key points we discussed on stage:

Now is the time to tackle cross-device tracking

As I noted at MMS, we recently conducted a mobile-focused survey of 300 agency representatives for a wide range of brands in telecoms, entertainment, finance, travel, retail and automotive, and found that only one in five say that they are focused on cross-device targeting.

Time and time again, we're hearing questions such as "What does that even mean?"

Basically, you want to be able to not only reach consumers across devices, but know when a given consumer is on a given device.

As Mr. Walczak put it, "When you can start tracking a user from device to device, then you can optimize on targeting the audience."

Understand the device-usage environment for your consumer

"The way that you are psychologically interacting with your device is very different within different environments," Ms. Weiss pointed out.

A consumer's psychological state might be more receptive to brand messaging, for instance, when she is at home in bed leisurely consuming content on her phone versus checking messages on the fly between meetings at work.

"We don't think about [mobile advertising] as advertising," Ms. Weiss said. "In our brands, we think about it as an experience. We try and think about how can the device be the center of an experience that is specific, useful and adds value to our portfolio of brands and to your consumer."

Indeed, L'Oral's Makeup Genius mobile application, which released version 3.3 in September, has become a global phenomenon, with millions of downloads in countries around the world. The multilingual app lets women virtually try on makeup.

Understand the reasons for mobile content consumption

As Mr. Walczak summed it up, "Mobile is either time-wasting or time-saving. Time wasting is still 80 percent of usage of the mobile device, while time saving is the efficiency game of looking up information, reading news and content. And then, how do you engage the time-wasting or time-saving user?"

In the words, it is a mistake to think of mobile marketing as just targeting a consumer with a device in hand. You need to study and evaluate why your customers are consuming certain sorts of content at different times for different reasons.

For instance, targeting a customer with a free shipping offer when she is already demonstrably in a buying mood for example, while researching products on the mobile Web makes sense. But that same free shipping offer could be unwelcome in, say, a mobile gaming environment where any kind of out-of-context ecommerce messaging might just interrupt the fun and the time-wasting.

Understand the risk of last-click attribution

Ms. Weiss' advice about thinking of a cross-device campaign as a unified series of experiences, rather than simply being device-targeted, came up again when we talk about last-click attribution.

As Mr. Walczak defined it, "Last-click attribution is giving all the credit to the brand or the advertiser or the platform that drives that last click."

On desktop, marketers have gotten better at tracking the customer path to purchase for instance, figuring out if an email offer or a display ad led a customer on the path to purchasing an item in an ecommerce setting.

But without a firm grasp of cross-device targeting, you may be overestimating or underestimating chances are, underestimating the importance of mobile in your target consumer's media-consumption journey.

Stay tuned for the great messaging convergence

"There is a gold rush about to happen on [Facebook] Messenger," Ms. Weiss said, "which is going to change the game, and then the conversation around mobile will be very different in itself."

Ms. Weiss sees a coming convergence of disparate mobile functions within Messenger for instance, gaming, shopping and customer service/care that previously might have been handled in different apps or the mobile Web.

With more utility all in one place, "I think it's going to open up a whole new piece of attribution and measurement that does not exist in this moment." Ms. Weiss said.

BY THE END of my conversation with Ms. Weiss and Mr. Walczak, I had a better sense of how important it is for agencies, brands and publishers to look at mobile marketing not as a daunting, device-centric challenge, but a consumer-centric range of experiences that are as rich and varied as desktop consumption ever was.

A mobile device is not just a shrunk-down canvas for content it is a helper, a playmate and a constant companion.

That is a subtle shift in point of view, but it is an important one.

After all, to consumers, smartphones are deeply personal. That is how marketers need to think of them, too.



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