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Mobile marketing strategy: Are brands aligned with their customer experience?

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Jeannette Kocsis

By **Jeannette Kocsis**

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It is hard for marketers to know where to focus when it comes to mobile. So many views, so little time to read and digest them.

Decisions need to be made on whether to focus on SMS, mobile applications, mobile Web sites, mobile advertising, mobile content formats, some or all the above. But the reality is that marketers need an overarching mobile strategy that is part of the greater customer experience across all brand access points.

Pain points

Brands that win at connecting with customers make the customer experience seamless. Consumers are getting savvier, and their patience wears thin when they experience breaks in their mobile experience with a brand. Some examples are:

A long load or processing time which can result in abandonment, even within the first few seconds

Uncoordinated or delayed communications, particularly between SMS, mobile alerts and email, degrade trust in the brand. For example, a "shipment received" SMS message when the package is signed for is more appreciated than an email the next day, since being in the moment is critical to that type of communication

Call-to-actions to download an app already installed is annoying and often avoidable

Reminder ads in-app within minutes of browsing a product might be too soon for consumers, since they just interacted with the brand. Marketers need to use the power of retargeting wisely

Marketers might be unaware of what the device is doing to be helpful, such as intercepting the user when she clicks on an email and driving her to their app, instead of the planned mobile Web experience

Beyond creating a seamless approach, an overarching strategy considers the entire customer experience, anticipating the actions that customers take and then understanding when the device is diverting the user from the planned experience.

This needs to include all mobile channels, and how those channels intercept with multichannel marketing plans.

Some best-practice tips to consider when planning a mobile channel strategy:

Mobile apps: Apps can handle complex activities with ease, and many users prefer them over the mobile Web. Apps allow customers to access information offline as well.

The ability to create an app experience specific to device, such as Apple iOS, Android or Windows, offers even more opportunity to create an effective user experience.

Mirror the usage of personalization or profile data between the Web and the app, and make sure that relevant user-initiated changes apply across all channels.

Mobile Web: Having a mobile Web site is table stakes today. Every clicked email or ad needs a mobile-friendly destination.

The level of effort you take, whether you choose responsive design or a mobile-friendly option, should be tied closely to your conversion goals: sales, engagement or registration, for example.

Mobile search: With mobile search now at 51 percent of all searches performed globally, according to StatCounter, understanding the mobile click-through experience cannot be understated. But it is more than just a mobile-friendly landing page.

It is the full engagement path that a user might take, from browsing for a product to locating a nearby store or writing a review.

SMS/MMS: Text is a communication preference for many, much more so than phone calls or email. And many of those users switch seamlessly between Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter or a variety of other channels, even when messaging the same person.

For marketers, it is not that cut-and-dried. Relevance is the key to good SMS programs, which may take some research and testing to find the right ones.

Mobile advertising: Whether a big brand or a local company, mobile advertising can be very relevant.

One important thing to remember is that conversion rates in mobile, particularly on smartphones, can be lower, according to Monetate. But this does not mean it is not impactful. It likely means that the user is viewing the ad when she is not ready to buy, or she intends to buy on a tablet, desktop, over the phone or in-store.

Marketers need to look at the big picture, and may need to change their mobile success goals from conversion to engagement, at least in the short term.

UNDERSTANDING HOW customers interact with your brand in mobile channels is the first step.

Creating the right experience requires a sound strategy and testing plan. But consider your overall customer experience strategy before you jump into specific mobile channels and tactics, or go back and evaluate them now to ensure the alignment between channels.

Jeannette Kocsis is a Kingston, NY-based mobile marketer, with more than 20 years of digital marketing experience. Reach her at jkocsis@gmail.com.