

COLUMNS

Delivering ad campaigns to every type of device

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By [Lee Andron](#)

As United States smartphone penetration reaches parity with feature phones, the debate among marketers continues: for which type of phone should mobile assets and campaigns be designed and optimized? Should brands focus on the high ROI and low "wow" factor of humble SMS, or aim to dazzle consumers by leveraging smartphone capabilities such as quick-response (QR) codes, rich media ads and location-based services?

Or, to put it another way: which set of consumers should I overlook in pursuit of the other? Clearly, this is the wrong question to be asking. Instead, brands should be looking for ways to deliver the right experience for every customer they target even if they are on a wide spectrum of device types.

Salient features

A [recent article by Angelo Biasi in Mobile Commerce Daily](#) ("Smart or dumb? Engaging the other 49.7pc of your mobile customers," June 19, 2012) emphasized the importance of feature phones in the mobile marketing mix. This is absolutely right. They are still the most common type of phone worldwide, and can deliver the most popular and effective mobile marketing tactics, including SMS campaigns, mobile Web sites and applications.

But it is also important to know exactly how feature phones fit into your marketing strategy based on the preferences and behavior of your target audience, and how they can be incorporated into more effective cross-platform campaigns that do not leave anyone out, regardless of their device type.

The first thing to understand is that not every feature phone user is alike.

Of the estimated 165 million feature phone users in the U.S., how many actually have data plans? How many of them browse the mobile Web and might click on a banner? How many use search, and would be likely to end up at a brand's mobile site?

Be careful about making blanket assumptions. Depending on the actual makeup of your audience, you may find that your feature phone consumers are nearly as savvy as smartphone users, or that they are strictly voice-and-SMS-only, or anywhere in between.

Get to know your audience. Check your Web traffic logs to find how many visitors are on mobile devices today, based on the top 20 mobile device types that visit your Web site.

In all likelihood, you will find that of that 10 percent to 40 percent of your traffic is mobile, and the vast majority represents WebKit-based smartphone browsers.

It makes clear sense to optimize their experience: smartphone users typically have more disposable income, making them the self-selected ideal consumer. But that does not mean that they are the only customers that matter.

Even if some campaigns are only smartphone-compatible, long lifespan brand sites, online stores and corporate Web sites should all support feature phones.

Keep in mind, too, that SMS campaigns are more likely to engage feature phone users. Sites for these campaigns should definitely support for any of the 6,500 mobile devices on the market.

Asset reach

The ideal approach is to create mobile assets and campaigns that can be delivered effectively on any type of phone.

Cross-platform content creation tools make it possible to create native Android, iOS, Windows Mobile, Symbian, Java and BlackBerry apps, as well as HTML and HTML5 WebApp versions of the content, simultaneously.

While this may mean sacrificing some of the functionality available only on smartphones, feature phones are still capable of delivering compelling app experiences, and are used this way by a surprising number of consumers.

Given the opportunity to achieve near-universal compatibility for your campaign through a single development process, with unified ongoing maintenance, the low-feature, high-reach approach may be a tradeoff well worth making.

And, of course, you are still free to create leading-edge smartphone-only initiatives a high-feature, low-reach approach when specific business objectives call for them.

As an alternative, some tools make it possible to have the best of both world: high-feature experiences for people whose smartphones are capable of supporting them, within the context of a high-reach campaign that serves feature phone users as well.

The first step is to create a universal site that is compatible with the full universe of 6,500 smartphones and feature phones. This site can then be leveraged to create the ultimate smartphone experience as well.

For example, content and forms created for the basic site can be leveraged seamlessly within the enhanced smartphone experience without the need for additional development and maintenance.

BRANDS THAT FOCUS only on the most sophisticated users on the most advanced mobile devices are cheating both themselves and their customers.

Strategies designed to reach a consumer on any type of device will amplify your marketing impact while ensuring that each member of the target audience can access a rich, complete experience. That is where we should be focusing our attention and efforts instead of deciding which set of customers we can live without.

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