

COLUMNS

Multiplication of mobile devices and what it means for marketers

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If you were to take a look back a few years in the past, you would find a different story of how many computers were in a household than today.

Back then, it was usually just the primary income earner and maybe the spouse each had a computer for work and maybe one old computer lying around for personal use such as storing pictures and sending emails.

Now fast-forward to today and look at the clear and obvious trend of multiplication of computer devices in a home. Each person now has multiple devices in the home work laptop, a tablet, a smartphone, an e-reader, an iPod, and so on.

Soon, everything we own will include a computer interface.

My car, for instance, has a computer, my furnace will have one soon, and my DVR is one.

At some point, these devices will all learn to integrate with each other too, but more on that later. The future will radically shift with everyone going from two to three devices to 25-30 devices that we use to interact with the environment around us.

What will new devices do for you?

To think about how the future is going to shift, let us take a simple example: a digital thermostat.

Lots of people have these in their homes and use them to program their temperature in the home or office.

Honestly, the thermostat as it stands now is pretty dumb. New devices will learn your patterns and set the temperature for you. Or figure out how to interact with the other devices in your home such as locks and security systems.

Several factors are driving this proliferation of devices including miniaturization, technology transfer from mobile phones and price reductions due to volume manufacturing. But there are other less obvious appliances that will experience a shift in the coming years.

Vacuums, stoves, ovens, dishwashers will all have a computer interface that will perform tasks such as talking to the water company's computers to learn when to operate at the least expensive times.

Your alarm clock will be integrated with your Outlook and Google Calendar to know when to wake you up. Your workout programs will be recorded, and uploaded to your trainer or doctor to measure your progress.

What does this mean for mobile commerce?

Well, essentially everything is going to be run off your mobile phone or tablet in coming years.

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You will be able to log in to your appliances from your smartphone and "talk" to them and manage their settings. As everyone moves to multiple computers, mobile commerce is really going to explode.

Marketers will now have more ways than ever before to reach people. Imagine you will log in to your vacuum and notice that its filter needs to be replaced.

Then you see an ad for cheap vacuum filters on your mobile, so you click on the ad and in one step you purchase those filters with your Google Wallet. Easy as 1-2-3.

The edge-point for all this future change is the mobile phone.

Even now, my brother has a cool setup in his house where his Sonos system is operated wirelessly with his iPad and iPhone. He just picks up his tablet, and chooses what music he wants to play in each room of his house.

Mobile commerce can take advantage of this trend by offering coupons for downloading the newest MP3's for each genre or something similar.

FOR MOBILE COMMERCE, the options are endless.

The people that we can look to for where the next big thing lies are those early adopters. They are going to be the biggest drivers in the multiplication of mobile devices in the home, and they are going to be the biggest targets for mobile commerce as they adopt more technology.

For now, we still have to order vacuum filters the old-fashioned way from your laptop sitting on the couch but the future is coming and marketers should take heed to take advantage of new trends.

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