

COLUMNS

How the mobile phone is the conduit for the multiscreen era

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Today's consumers are multiscreen junkies. We shift from one device to another, consuming information from all available screens for the same task. Often, starting a search on a smartphone, moving to the desktop, and eventually winding up with a tablet.

If we happen to be watching our favorite television show, we often pick up our smartphones to access more information on the program being watched. Timely, engaged and relevant.

But when you are on the go, there is just one device you can fall back on and that is your smartphone. This gives mobile an edge over all other mediums.

Billions served

In the past two decades, mobile has become our personal butler we cannot imagine life without one.

From lifestyle, convenience to perceived luxury, smartphones have become an essential part of our lives. One estimate has it that more than 4 billion of the 6 billion people on Earth are now armed with a mobile phone, with a quarter acquiring it in just the past two years.

In certain developing markets, where Internet penetration is still poor, mobile is their main access tool and smartphones are quickly overtaking the sales of desktops in these markets.

Online engagements automatically expand when two-screen consumers graduate on to become three-or-more screen addicts.

In the West, at least, smartphones now account for more than half of all mobile subscriptions. Nearly 100 million U.S. consumers are now armed with a smartphone.

Big amount of engagement comes from search functions

Smartphone users are information hoarders. We want to get our information now and fast.

Not surprisingly, according to a recent Google study, "90 percent of people move between devices to accomplish a goal and action, whether that's on smartphones, PCs, tablet."

Smartphones have emerged as game-changers

One wonders if this will eventually lead to the demise of the desktop?

At least 40 percent of mobile phone users use their smartphones to access the Internet, according to a recent study by the Pew Research Center.

Already, 40 percent of multiscreen consumers use their smartphones to communicate via social networking sites. Sixty-eight percent use it to send and receive emails, while 60 percent use it for mobile search, much like a desktop. Mobile is also a highly personalized device

Sitting next to you 24/7, it is usually the first device you unconsciously reach out for when you want to access additional content.

For instance, *The Walking Dead*, a U.S. horror television drama series used a Web app that can be downloaded on hand devices. Viewers are asked questions and led to related content, even as an episode is being aired on TV, which is a clear leap ahead of SMS feed-ins.

The app is timed to individual scenes, pulling the audience deeper into the horrors of the show. This is a great use of mobile integration.

Mobile video is also more sticky and addictive than conventional TV

Mobile video has, at times, become more popular than traditional TV viewing.

Whether you are watching a short video clip on YouTube during that long train commute, or watching a Netflix original series in bed, or playing a game with your child at home wirelessly, mobile provides an entertaining and immersive experience.

The biggest advantage with mobile is the ability to access unlimited content, while you are on the go

Look at the way smartphones are changing our buying and commuting habits.

When a person needs directions, she does not bother a passerby like back in the day. Instead, she simply accesses her GPS services and keeps it moving.

According to the Google Shopper Marketing Agency Council and M/A/R/C Research, 84 percent of smartphone users use their devices to research and compare products before making their final purchase in-store.

THE BOTTOM LINE is that the mobile device has completely changed the way we consume media.

We are accessing multiple screens in multiple ways, but the constant is the mobile handset now and into the foreseeable future.

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