

COLUMNS

Bringing in a new era of mobile engagement

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By **Mihael Mikek**

Under discussion is the industry's focus on mobile video advertising, what marketers should do today to improve mobile advertising engagement and how creating a mobile-first mindset is key for continued success

Mobile advertising is changing the way brands reach consumers. Marketers have been ready to take advantage of this powerful channel for some time now, but until recently, have hung on to traditional methods.

After numerous false starts, mobile ads are poised to become the single most important advertising channel, or certainly the only true competitor to the nearly \$67 billion spent annually on television ads in the United States.

Digital ad revenue is growing

Digital video ad revenue has tripled over the past few years to \$2.8 billion, according to the Interactive Advertising Bureau, and shows no signs of stopping.

Gartner is forecasting that online advertising will more than triple by 2017 and that "video will show the highest growth."

So why is this happening? It is actually quite simple.

Mobile rich media and video ads are finally outgrowing the old paradigm of digital display because mobile devices with touch interfaces are becoming the first real "TV alternative" for advertisers.

The use of ineffective click-to-site banners continues to decline. Brand advertisers are embracing more compelling and richer new ad formats, designed for touch using device-specific user experience opportunities. And along with the rise of these formats we are also seeing a big shift in measurements to engagement-driven performance metrics.

Mobile ads do work

Mobile ads work uniquely well to complement other marketing channels, including television, online and social media.

Consider that more than one-third of consumers now use multiple connected devices, such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and TVs simultaneously.

This breakthrough creates an unprecedented opportunity for advertisers, which they can address with more device-agnostic and integrated campaigns.

In other words, advertisers can reach the connected consumer through behavioral patterns rather than through specific devices.

The key to improving mobile advertising engagement is to focus on the customer experience.

Mobile users are notoriously savvy and impatient. Your ad has to run smoothly, open quickly and make itself useful or entertaining immediately. The more contextual and targeted it is, the more effective. If it plays as entertainment or education, you can even hook in consumers who religiously choose to skip through advertising.

Video is going to play an increasingly important role in building brand presence and engaging consumers, not just on mobile devices, but across screens over all connected devices.

Brands want a great looking display video ad which plays consistently across various devices' screens, media properties and operating systems. They want an ad that displays an engaging, interactive brand experience and provides consolidated, trackable, and reliable results.

At the same time, brands need to bring their ads to market in a cost-effective and scalable manner. This can be accomplished by instituting a mobile-first mindset.

Creating a mobile-first mindset

Mobile advertising experienced triple-digit year-over-year growth in 2013, for the third year in a row.

Brands are finally coming onboard with the post-desktop PC model and following consumers' eyeballs to where you will always find them these days: staring down at a variety of connected devices. Because of this, businesses that take a mobile-first mindset moving forward will be the most successful.

It is clear that the lines between television and the Internet become less distinct as users move easily across screens for entertainment, information, socializing and purchasing.

To successfully reach out to today's connected generation, global brands must continue to think about how users first see and experience their brands from a mobile device, whether it be a smartphone, tablet, or other connected device, as opposed to the traditional television, laptop or desktop PC.

There are several reasons why using a mobile-first mindset makes sense, with the most important being the incredible reach offered by the mobile medium.

To be successful with a mobile-first campaign, brands must execute common strategies across multiple screens that epitomize the majority of rich media user engagements.

As brands continue to experiment with this mobile-first mindset, we will see significant changes in how brands and consumers engage through technology moving forward.

Industry in transformation

Over the past few years, I have seen the entire mobile ecosystem go through a rapid transformation.

From an environment controlled by the mobile carriers and their on-deck partners, to the rise of app-Internet world, advertising has played an important role in the evolution of this ecosystem.

Mobile advertising, which not long ago was considered the least important monetization strategy for media owners, has now become the number one driver of revenue for every company that is still relevant in today's digital ecosystem.

The industry has moved from enablement and scalability challenges to performance and automation.

Significant progress has been made, particularly in the areas of media selling, buying optimization and scalability.

However, many challenges and upside potential remain on improving the quality, relevancy and effectiveness of advertising on mobile platforms.

Digital brand display advertising is beginning to unite under the HTML5 umbrella.

HTML5 is a key technology that will enable the industry to transition to truly platform and screen agnostic and, more importantly, real-time optimized digital display with better user experience and consistent tracking capabilities.

As brand advertising dollars finally move into digital and with it into this increasingly complex ecosystem of display advertising, advertisers require simplicity, consistency and reliability with a single, simple-to-use HTML5 platform offering responsive design and common metrics across screens for measuring success.

Consumers are ready and the technology is finally in place, thanks to industry innovators who are developing the

technology to make cross-screen digital display advertising more successful than ever before.

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