

COLUMNS

Why mobile conversions lag behind desktop

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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

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Mobile first. We hear it everyday, but mobile conversions still lag behind desktop. Some fault mobile as an inferior advertising medium, but observed trends suggest otherwise.

The discrepancy between mobile and desktop performance is not indicative of a problem with mobile, but rather stems from a transition period in the way consumers perform Internet search and interact with their devices.

Put another way, it is a matter of user experience.

Screening for performance

When the search advertising user experience on phones catches up with or surpasses desktop, improved conversion rates will follow.

Over a six-month period, we monitored click performance on a variety of traffic sources, and analyzed this data by device type. We compared conversion rates for three mobile device types – small screen phone, large-screen phone and tablet – to desktop conversion rates and found that larger-screen mobile devices outperformed smaller screens.

Specifically, large-screen phones consistently outperformed small-screen phones and occasionally outperformed tablets. This data suggests that people are not afraid to buy on their phone – they just do not want to work for it.

The performance data shows that mobile screen size significantly affects consumer behavior, and that users are 31 percent more likely to complete a purchase or form-fill when their mobile device has a larger screen.

Compared to clicks from the same ad displayed on a desktop, tablet clicks convert 86 percent as often, large-screen phone clicks convert 63 percent as often, and small-screen phone clicks convert 48 percent as often.

This shows that user experience is a critical factor in consumer mobile behavior, and that mobile conversion rates will increase as user experience improves.

We are observing a fundamental shift in the way people perform Internet search.

Less than ten years ago, nearly all Internet search occurred when consumers accessed major search engines such as Google and Yahoo through desktop computers.

Now, consumers search on specialized applications and Web sites from a variety of mobile devices.

The fact that screen size is so significant in determining mobile user behavior supports a larger truth: consumers are not afraid of purchasing on mobile.

User behavior is dictated by user experience – specifically familiarity and ease of use.

Long form-fills or complicated purchase funnels might work on a large desktop screen, but more efficient conversion paths are required on smaller mobile screens.

Paging advertisers

Savvy marketers understand that landing pages need to keep up with the changes in user behavior.

Advertisers must optimize their landing pages to specific device types.

Our data shows that people convert less on smaller screens because, at the moment, smaller screens are harder to use.

Consumers follow the path of least resistance, and once mobile landing pages – even on small screens – become as easy to use as desktop landing pages, the conversions will follow.

Advertisers cannot abandon small-screen mobile advertising in the short term because that is where the consumers are. And in the medium term, it looks as if consumers are demanding that their mobile screen sizes get bigger.

But it is important that advertisers take action to this transition period and make their conversion funnel mobile-friendly for consumers.

Optimizing mobile landing pages to mimic the ease-of-use found on desktop will close

the conversion gap.

In the meantime, clicks from mobile ads must be priced lower to compensate for the lower conversion rates.

MOBILE USAGE is only going to increase.

Would you rather give up your mobile device or your desktop? If you forgot one thing in your house, would you rather it be your mobile device or your wallet?

Analysts predict that mobile Internet usage will overtake desktop by year's end, and trends suggest that mobile paid search clicks will overtake desktop paid search clicks by next year.

The opportunity is clear.

Your consumers are spending most of their time on mobile, and they are willing to purchase and convert if the process is simple.

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