

MOBILE

## Drive consumers back to apps with aggressive engagement tactics: Forrester

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*Apps are becoming the engine of mobile engagement and commerce.*

By **Michael Barris**



Marketers must expand their mobile engagement strategies beyond their own applications to drive return visits and realize the benefits of an effective app strategy, according to a new Forrester Research report.

Coming on top of a Criteo report showing that apps generate almost half of mobile transactions for some big players and mobile optimized sites can double conversion rates, the research points to how reaching consumers who increasingly expect their needs to be anticipated requires the right blend of data and tactics.

“Marketers not only need a plan for an app, but they also need a plan to drive ongoing engagement by ingesting context and proactively engaging consumers in their mobile moments,” said Julie Ask, vice president and principal analyst for **Forrester**, who co-authored the organization’s report, “Your Customers Will Not Download Your App.”

“They need to find their customers and figure out how to engage them in context regardless of where they are.”

## Lacking sizzle

Most apps simply are not compelling or convenient enough to outweigh the inhibitors of discovering, downloading, installing and customizing them, according to Forrester. Marketers must engage users by developing a mobile strategy that goes beyond owning mobile moments to using them from a broader ecosystem of partners.

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*Developing a mobile strategy from an ecosystem of partners.*

Marketers should go find their customers — on maps, social networks, instant messaging apps, or wherever they may be. The next step is to identify the mobile moments within third-party experiences where consumers will need the marketer's services by mapping out the customer journeys.

Defining the context around the borrowed mobile moments is critical given how consumers become very task-oriented and focused on mobile devices. Even simple native ads or content that is completely out of context will annoy consumers and diminish the user experience within apps.

For example, if they are making a purchase, consumers may want to know the balance on a credit card first. Eat24, for example, offers takeout or delivery food order services within the Yelp app.

To build an ecosystem of partners, marketers should buy or acquire moments in marketplaces. With some ecosystem partners such as Facebook, Apple, or Google, marketers can acquire mobile moments by running campaigns or offering value to drive opt-ins – such as “like” on Facebook or “follow” on Twitter.

Marketers can also buy mobile moments, such as native ads or search terms, as selling advertising is a core business model.

Another tactic is sharing or bartering mobile moments with ecosystem partners. For instance, consumers can book rides with Uber in its standalone app or within a more contextual scenario in Google Maps or the United Airlines app.

Criteo's “Q2 2015 State of Mobile Commerce Report,” which found that apps generated nearly 50 percent of mobile transactions for ecommerce players who prioritized app experience, shows how mobile behavior continues to advance faster than retailers' ability to keep up.

United States mobile transactions now account for more than 30 percent of all ecommerce transactions and are expected to reach 33 percent by the end of the year in the U.S. and 40 percent globally, according to Criteo. Leading the charge are fashion, luxury and travel verticals where one in three transactions are now on mobile devices.

Sites that are optimized for mobile see a 3.4 percent conversion rate – more than double that of non-optimized sites where only 1.6 percent of consumers convert.

Forrester based its data on its US Consumer Technographics Behavioral Study, which tracked smartphone and tablet behavioral panels in the United States. Data was taken from 1,721 U.S. online smartphone owners aged 18 and older from October to December of last year.

Each of the respondents downloaded an application that ran a passive metering technology to measure what people do in their daily lives on their smartphones and tablets.

### **Increasing transactions**

Criteo's work suggests that marketers that haven't already optimized their site need to now as better optimized sites see far more mobile transactions and higher conversion rates.

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*Engaging consumers through a multifaceted approach.*

"The customer purchasing journey has become increasingly complex," said Jason Morse, vice president for mobile products at Criteo. "The use of multiple devices before making a purchase, combined with the rapid increase in purchases made via mobile apps, means marketers need to tailor their strategy to encompass more than just desktop and mobile Web.

"Specifically, having an engaging app experience and connecting seamlessly with consumers across multiple devices are key strategies for driving sales in modern mobile commerce," he said.

### ***Final Take***

*Michael Barris is staff reporter on Mobile Marketer, New York*

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