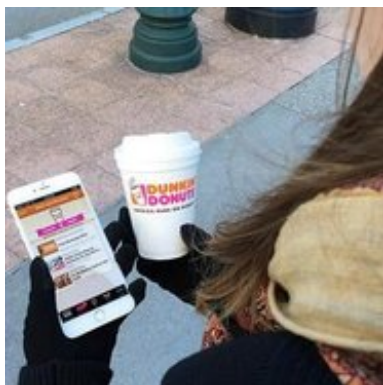


MOBILE

How over-communicating can kill brand loyalty and sever symbiotic relationships

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Dunkin' Donuts offers weekly promotions to DD Perks members

By STAFF REPORTS

By Alex Samuely

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The increased focus on mobile brand loyalty means marketers must refrain from over-communicating and over-targeting, as a symbiotic relationship with the customer is necessary for effective advertising and return on investment.

Consumers' tendency to rely on their mobile devices and bring them everywhere they go makes it easier for brands to reach potential customers with the tap of a push notification or banner ad. However, too much marketing can kill brand loyalty and prevent the user from purchasing a brand's products if they feel they are overstimulated and simply a number in a sea of targets.

"These days, 'brand loyalty' is less about what brands people prefer and more about which brands serve people's needs in the most effective way," said Adam Padilla, president and chief creative officer at [BrandFire](#) LLC, New York. "Great brands form symbiotic relationships with their customers...every contact from them is welcome and offers a

value-add.

“In return, customers purchase more products,” he said. “This symbiosis is the key to successful and rewarding brand/customer relationships.

“Struggling brands over-communicate; they appear desperate and wind up turning off the customers that they are trying to attract. The challenge is finding the sweet spot between communicating and pestering.”

Putting convenience first

Brands can combat customer annoyance by ensuring they are placing convenience on the highest pedestal. Particularly on mobile, users demand a seamless checkout and browsing experience that mimics that of desktop, meaning mdot sites and applications must not host a barrage of pop-ads.

“From the user perspective, convenience is the number one factor in cementing brand loyalty,” Mr. Padilla said. “The best brands to do it are Uber, Amazon, Seamless and Apple.

“Once they have your billing info and preferences on file the user experience is so turn-key and satisfying that there is zero reason to shop anywhere else. The mobile apps are optimized, fast-loading, super easy to navigate and most importantly, clean and simple.”



Starbucks rewards consumers with stars for each purchase

These types of features can also help fight against shopping cart abandonment. Retargeting users who leave a mobile site or app with the products they viewed may be a smart move for some brands, but must be undertaken with significant caution.

“If you have the right data, you can deliver the right message to the right person,” said Ben Hordell, partner at [DXagency](#), Edgewater, NJ. “Nobody wants to feel marketed to, but they do like it when they feel a brand is speaking right to them on a personal note.

“That is where the relationship can grow and loyalty can build. If you are simply blasting your offers to a broad list, you will be off-target most of the time and turn people off.”

Pinpointing personalization

Another factor that may detract from building loyalty is not segmenting the target audience, and offering the same experience to each consumer across all digital platforms. Many brands fall prey to this, suggesting that marketers who truly want to rise above the marketing noise must treat every user as an individual.

This means using personalization to anticipate guests' needs before they ask for them, and offering loyalty rewards to ensure further engagement and purchases. For example, a retailer with frequent customers would do well to curate a list of items it thinks the consumers may like, based on previous purchases, and could send the customized list via email or push notification once a week.

"I always go back to Starbucks," Mr. Hordell said. "The Starbucks customer is a great example of loyalty and their mobile program compliments this.

"Starbucks has a personalized program that offers rewards for repeat visits, gives free drinks on your birthday, knows your music tastes and also offers the ability to pay using the app. The entire program is a great example of rewarding loyalty and providing great value to customers."



Brands such as Uber offer credit card scanners to quickly save payment information

Providing frequent shoppers with a complimentary item after a certain amount of purchases is generally a successful tactic in gaining trust and bridging a long-term relationship.

More importantly, offering a free item that a brand knows its customers will appreciate is an even better solution.

"Brands need to understand that we only let them in our lives to add value and convenience," BrandFire's Mr. Padilla said. "Rather than soliciting, brands need to ask themselves, 'what do my customers need right now? What would make their lives better, easier and more convenient?'"

"Self-reflective questions like that will lead to breakthroughs that allow the brand to become indispensable to their user base," he said. "When Seamless goes down at the BrandFire offices around lunchtime, you would think that there was a national

emergency.

“That is the definition of brand loyalty.”

Final Take

Alex Samuely is an editorial assistant on Mobile Marketer, New York

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