

RESEARCH

37pc of mobile users blocked ads in Q4: report

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Still from Louis Vuitton mcommerce film

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The use of ad-blocking software, which had been stable for a while, grew 10 percent during the fourth quarter of 2015, driven by increasing use on mobile, according to new data from GlobalWebIndex.

With Apple opening the doors to ad-blocking on iOS devices last fall, the possible ramifications have been a hot topic among marketers. The fourth quarter research suggests that mobile users are gravitating toward ad-blocking, with GlobalWebIndex reporting that 36.7 percent of mobile users have used an ad blocker the pressure is on brands to expand their marketing activity beyond the traditional interruptive approach.

"Ad blocking is an issue," said Patrick Reynolds, chief marketing officer at [SessionM](#). "Ad avoidance is a problem.

"Consumers are increasingly seeking out ad-free or ad-light content," he said. "The hottest shows? Narcos, Making of a Murderer, Billions, F is For Family? Either Showtime or Netflix. Where do you go for the hottest tracks and bands? Probably Spotify. What's one of the few "appointment programs" left? Serial.

"Sound and vision have long been the shock and awe' for advertisers. With content increasingly tucked behind paywalls and incessant political advertising driving more and more consumers to make the switch the interruptive advertising model is clearly challenged.

Room for growth

Ad-blocking is still relatively new on mobile, so it is significant that 36.7 percent of users say they have blocked ads on their mobile device within the past month. The findings from [GlobalWebIndex](#) suggest consumers are looking for ways to improve their mobile experience while not draining their data allowances and battery life.

Overall, another 41.9 percent of mobile users say they are interested in using ad-blockers in the future while just 21.3 percent are not interested in ad blocking technology.

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The findings also point to how younger consumers are at the forefront of the trend with 40.9 of 16-to-24-year-old having blocked ads on their mobile device, 41.8 percent of 25-to-34-year-olds, 34 percent of those between 35 and 44, 24.5 percent of those between 45 and 54 and 20.2 percent of those between 55 and 64.

However, the research also shows that the interest in ad-blocking is wide, with significant room for growth.

Per GlobalWebIndex, at least 70 percent across every single age and gender break say they are either blocking ads already or are interested in doing so in the future.

A global trend

Men are slightly more likely to block ads on mobile, with 39.7 percent of male users having done so compared to 33 percent of female users.

By income group, 42.8 percent of lower income consumers have blocked ads on mobile, 36.3 percent of middle income users have done so and 36.8 percent of those in the top income bracket.

By region, 44.7 percent of mobile users in Asia Pacific have blocked ads, 23.8 percent of Europeans, 22 percent of those in Latin America, 28.2 percent in Middle East and Africa and 27.9 percent in North America.

Direct communication

The findings suggest that mobile content from brands, in-app messaging and other forms of more direct communication with consumers will gain on mobile going forward.

Marketers need to become publishers as well as new media companies, creating content that people share intentionally.

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"Consumers don't trust advertisers anymore, they look to their friends and networks for the endorsements they can trust," said Paul Berry, founder and CEO of [Rebel Mouse](#). "The first attempts from brands to become publishers didn't go very well - they adopted technologies that no new media company would ever touch.

"It's the beginning of a new era for marketing and one that will bring far greater rewards," he said. "The break out stars of marketing will study high growth properties like The Dodo, Higher Perspective and understand how to turn their slogans into an editorial thesis and create content that reaches real audiences and creates movements."

Coca-Cola's new global Taste the Feeling campaign is a great example of how marketers are creating shareable content, with a mobile-optimized microsite offering a way to share an animated GIF that expresses a consumer's feelings in that moment ([see story](#)).

Increasingly, messaging apps such as Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp are offering ways for brands to communicate directly with users, a potentially significant strategy going forward.

"Permission-based engagement, where aperture and personalization are required, is poised to gain even more traction," SessionM's Mr. Reynolds said. "Look for in-app messaging and more direct communication between brands and consumers, with clearly articulated rules of engagement and value props, to pick up the slack."