

MOBILE

IBM exec: Cognitive capabilities can identify consumer patterns, drive sales

May 12, 2016

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Cognitive capabilities are entering the mobile mainstream

By STAFF REPORTS

NEW YORK An IBM executive at the MMA Mobile Marketing Leadership Forum May 10 said that leveraging cognitive capabilities on mobile devices can improve audience segmentation and uncover previously unseen patterns, helping brands tap into consumers' shopping predilections.

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During the "One Perfect Experience, a Billion Times a Day: Unleash the Power of Mobile in the Cognitive Era" session, the executive highlighted up-and-coming mobile trends that marketers should begin implementing into their holistic strategies now. Additionally, he posited that only true one-to-one mobile engagement can differentiate brands from their competitors and consequently drive sales, meaning that mastery of omnichannel targeting tactics is utterly crucial.

"By looking at your own records and turning cognitive onto your own databases, you can see patterns that weren't there before," said Josh Rochlin, global mobile engagement SME at **IBM Commerce**. "The only real way to engage your consumer successfully is to know as much as possible about that consumer as an individual, or in some cases, as a type."

Mobile's evolving landscape

The traditional definition of mobile strategy has changed, as it no longer pertains to sending targeted mobile messages to on-the-go consumers entering a store or a sports stadium. Nowadays, individuals are interacting more with their smartphones at home than in other areas, choosing to browse daily news, social media accounts and even retail sites on their personal devices while lounging on the couch or enjoying a morning coffee.

This means that marketers can no longer think of mobile as a way of hitting passersby with offers for nearby bricks-and-mortar locations.

"We've come to realize over time that if that's the way we think about mobile, we're missing an opportunity, because the consumer today is distracted like never before," Mr. Rochlin said. "Things are changing and moving so rapidly."

For many consumers, mobile is the most convenient device with which to browse or shop.

"Today, your consumer is going mobile first literally because it's easier," Mr. Rochlin said.

Brands must also recognize that the average user is overloaded with a barrage of content. One way of ensuring that a company does not overstep its welcome on consumers' smartphones is to think about what types of ads or content users regularly encounter.

Personalized content helps foster long-lasting customer loyalty

Marketers must figure out how they will differentiate themselves and their products or services, since so many companies can now reach the same consumer.

One solution is to offer experiences based on predilections, rather than general assumptions.

For example, when travelers land at San Francisco International Airport and open the Delta or United app, they should see flight updates and weather information corresponding to their location instead of a general information page.

This strategy can also be carried over to sales-driving initiatives. If a consumer lands at San Francisco International Airport and researches Avis car rentals, for instance, Avis could potentially lock in a sale by sending him or her a suggestion to visit Napa Valley for the weekend if the weather is nice.

Another option is leveraging cognitive capabilities to learn more about that particular traveler's activity preferences. If a brand knows that consumer is an avid skier, it can send a 20 percent-off car rental coupon to his or her smartphone, alongside a message saying that the car already has a ski rack on top of its roof.

The inevitable rise of IoT

Mr. Rochlin also predicted that Internet of Things-based devices such as Amazon Echo will transform mobile commerce. When an Amazon Echo owner informs his or her device to place ketchup on the shopping list, for instance, it will add the product to the owner's list located within the Amazon app.

Therefore, Amazon owns not only that individual's shopping list, but his or her predilections toward certain items.

Tone analysis is another aspect likely to be explored more heavily in the near future, as brands must ensure they understand customer sentiment. Smart devices should be able to tell if a customer request needs to be rerouted to a representative well-versed in dealing with complaints, or if it will be a pleasant call that could be transferred to a new employee with less customer service experience.

Amazon Echo is just one of the smart devices transforming the mobile landscape

While the Internet of Things may seem daunting to many marketers, the key is to empower themselves so that they know what their Amazon Echo, WeChat, WhatsApp, Snapchat, etc. strategies are.

"The thing that stands in the way of successful marketing is not technology, it's lack of imagination and execution," Mr. Rochlin said.

However, the most paramount marketing tactic for brands is to invest in a platform that orchestrates a holistic engagement strategy. Marketers need to be able to avoid sending the same customer a 20 percent-off coupon by SMS and a 30 percent-off coupon via email.

Consumers' increasing digital savviness means that brands must think about their channels holistically. Many mobile users engage in comparison pricing during their shopping trips and receive their information from a slew of platforms.

"It is a challenge and it's an opportunity," Mr. Rochlin said. "You're now dealing with the most empowered consumer we have ever seen."

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