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How to use mobile bar codes in direct response marketing

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What do you get if you cross a mobile phone camera with a marketing campaign? An unstoppable direct response mechanism, of course.

Mobile devices are an essential part of everyday life. British regulator Ofcom tells us that mobile device penetration stands at 92 percent in Britain.

According to analyst firm Frost & Sullivan, mobile device penetration in the United States will exceed 100 percent this year.

Code language

With words such as Nomophobia – the fear of being out of mobile phone contact – and FOMO – fear of missing out – creeping into common parlance, combined with the rise of smartphones and mobile tablets, it is increasingly evident that people are relying on their mobile phones to do more than simply make phone calls.

People are using their phones to plan their social lives, read and share news stories and, of course, shop for goods and services.

Furthermore, there is an increasing expectation amongst consumers that with mobile

devices they should have the world at their fingertips.

So, why should brands not maximize this opportunity and help consumers access whatever they want whenever they want it?

One effective way for brands to instantaneously communicate with consumers is by introducing mobile bar codes into their marketing campaigns as a direct response mechanism.

Direct response marketing is the part of any marketing campaign that is designed to solicit specific and quantifiable response from consumers, taking the idea of a call to action to the next level.

The major advantage of using mobile bar codes as a direct response mechanism is that communication can be established directly between the brand and the consumer, facilitating a dialogue that is advantageous for both parties.

Mobile bar codes have garnered much media attention recently as they have been popping up everywhere, from billboard ads for new television channels to soft drink cans and e-tickets – the uses of mobile bar codes are almost limitless.

There are numerous ways in which mobile bar codes can serve the needs of brands, and by including them in marketing collateral, advertisements, product packaging, editorial content or even projecting them onto buildings, consumers are enticed to engage and interact with a brand in a way that suits them.

Essentially, mobile bar codes are a marketer's dream. They are a great direct response mechanism, enabling a much closer and targeted relationship between a brand and their target audience.

Mobile bar codes facilitate this dialogue between the brand and the consumer by immediately relaying the response rates and user data back to the brand in real-time.

This is in contrast to other forms of direct marketing where the customer is contacted by email or regular mail, telephone call or SMS, and response rates are reported back to the brand after the fact.

When brands include a call to action in their ads, usually a phone number, a search term, URL or SMS short code, the resulting response rates can be much lower than with mobile bar code scans.

The search term, short code or URL can easily be recalled or entered incorrectly, for example, or put off until another time, reducing the immediacy of the interaction and negating the chance of the consumer acting on impulse.

Moreover, by including a mobile bar code that is scanned then and there, valuable intelligence on location and time of day is fed back to the brand, together with demographics and other opt-in information, providing them with useful contextual guidance that they can use to further tailor the interaction.

For brands, therefore, it is beneficial to use mobile bar codes.

Bar none

Given that the response rates for mobile bar codes can be broken out by channel, demographics and location, brands can allocate their marketing budget to the most profitable areas.

This in-depth analysis not only enables brands to predict ROI, but to also get a clear picture of the target consumer, which in turn facilitates the building of a close relationship.

Furthermore, since all the communication is between the brand and the consumer, this cuts out the middleman and makes it a cost effective way of communicating with consumers.

Adoption rates of mobile bar codes have increased dramatically over the last year. This dramatic increase indicates that mobile bar codes are starting to be recognised as an effective and efficient way for brands to engage with their target audience.

But it is still early days and more can be done to educate brands and consumers.

However, as we see more of the big names such as Bloomingdale's, Calvin Klein and Nine West incorporate the codes into marketing collateral, this education will continue apace. Mobile bar codes are clearly a direct response mechanism that is here to stay.

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