

COLUMNS

Why mobile is not a medium

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Last year was breakthrough for mobile advertising: it grew significantly and, for the first time, became more than a budget-rounding error.

Apple continued to lead in mobile applications and announced its coming-of-age mobile advertising with the iAd mobile ad network.

The Android operating system further accelerated the transformation of the smartphone from an early adopter to a mainstream must-have device. And Apple iPad simultaneously disrupted the PC category and created a new channel for publishers.

Dollars and sense

Forecasters predict rapid growth of mobile advertising from an estimated \$5 billion today to \$18 billion by 2015 (Screen Digest), potentially representing 13.5 percent of Internet advertising in the United States and 20 percent in Europe.

At that point, mobile may represent around 5 percent of the total advertising expenditure. Is that it? Does this justify the explosion of investment in mobile communications and technologies?

Mobile is not a medium. Display or even search mobile advertising is not the point.

Over the next five years, the global explosion of smartphone and tablet usage will create a

demand for content and utility that will outstrip the growth of the fixed Web 15 years ago. It is now clear how mobile is accelerating the transformation of news and entertainment started by the fixed Web. Mobile will transform commerce, marketing and advertising with equal speed.

As this transformation happens, mobile will result in the most creative advertising ever.

Silver bullet?

Forget the restrictions of your handset screen size or the software loaded on your tablet. That is thinking about mobile as a medium. Think instead about mobile as providing uniquely personal, always-connected and location-sensitive access to any content and communications, on any format.

Mobile enables us to:

- ☒ Point at passive print advertising and watch videos of the personalities featured in the ads at the same time that we read them (Alfred Dunhill)
- ☒ Visualize and orientate furniture for our homes at the same time that we walk through the furniture store (IKEA)
- ☒ Learn about product nutrition at the same time that we walk down the supermarket aisle (Sainsbury)
- ☒ Visualize products in 3D at the same time that we see them physically (Ford)
- ☒ Interact with billboards in New York's Times Square at the same time that we walk by them in the city (Audi)
- ☒ Play games involving sporting icons at the same time that we consume the products that they endorse (Nike)
- ☒ Check in with brands and content at the same time that we participate in live events (Southern Comfort at Mardi Gras in New Orleans)
- ☒ Mark physical spaces at the same time that we research products (North Face in China)
- ☒ Discover new content and buy related products from shows at the same time that we watch those shows (Entertainment Weekly)

Point is ...

With mobile, every touch point with a consumer is an opportunity to access any content, any application, any game or entertainment that the advertiser has available.

With mobile, what was television advertising as mass media can become immersive video in short- or long-form as targeted direct marketing.

With mobile, print is no longer for passive readership but can be a portal into rich video.

With mobile, outdoor can become a deep interaction with the advertiser and all the other

people at the location.

For some time now, augmented reality technology has held out the promise of an instantaneous real-to-virtual-to-real-world connection on mobile devices that will make us look back on the fixed, PC-based Web with bewilderment about our excitement over the last decade.

With visual search on a mobile device, we will be able to link to an array of visual objects – in print, in real life – and related content in real time.

Of perhaps the greatest significance are the personalization opportunities.

With mobile, access is customized by time (of day, week or season), by location and by individual.

With mobile, we can always recognize existing customers and leverage their history to provide distinctive and personalized content, experiences and offers.

IT IS A mistake to think about mobile as a medium. It is an equal mistake to think about mobile as an aspect of digital marketing.

Mobile's true significance lies in its ability to move us as individuals from traditional advertising to a rich suite of branded content, entertainment and value.

The highest-profile advertising awards show is Cannes, France, and there are no Lions for mobile.

An increasing number of award winners in all categories and not just digital leverage mobile.

One day soon it will be impossible to envisage a Cannes Lions award winner that does not leverage the rich creative potential of mobile.

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