

MOBILE

Out-of-home marketing still on the fence with mobile

September 25, 2012



By LAUREN JOHNSON

Equipping out-of-home collateral with mobile can be a great way for marketers to marry online and real-world experiences. However, the combination can be tricky to pull off with mediums including mobile bar codes and SMS.

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According to some mobile experts, the key with using mobile in out-of-home marketing is to integrate it into the campaign's overall initiatives. Simply slapping a call-to-action on a billboard or poster that does not think about the user first does not cut it anymore.

"Mobile can't be added on at the end of a campaign," said David Krupp, president of **Kinetic** U.S., New York.

"We need to think about it not as a standalone at the end – we need to integrate it into a campaign's architecture," he said.

"Mobile needs to be considered from the standpoint of 'what the value of it as part of the overall strategy?' These types of campaigns are more successful and the adoption from consumers is significantly higher."

Pick your channel

Mobile can be great to help marketers elevate posters, billboards and signage. However, it

is not suited for every medium, per Mr. Krupp.

Putting the engagement at eye level with a consumer will most likely yield the strongest results.

Although newer technology such as augmented reality and near-field communication can be effective if used correctly, the purpose always needs to come back to an overall objective.

“Whether it is pushing out content, a sweepstakes, utilizing a bus shelter to do a treasure hunt, making a static ad come to life or using a phone to tag a location or another opportunity with mobile, it needs to come back to the overarching goal that is trying to be achieved,” Mr. Krupp said.

NFC could be particularly interesting with out-of-home marketing by letting users physically interact with marketing by tapping it. However, adoption is still relatively low, especially in the United States.

Additionally, integrating mobile into in-store signage and marketing has strong implications for retailers to leverage an engaged mobile shopper to drive commerce both in and outside of a store.

Mobile challenge

Marketers still take a gamble with incorporating mobile into out-of-home initiatives, though. Compared to other mediums such as television and print that grab a consumer’s attention for a longer period of time, a billboard or poster only has a few seconds to target a consumer.

Given its wide reach, SMS continues to be one of the most effective way for marketers to take advantage of out-of-home marketing.

“When you look at all the different types of mobile marketing, SMS marketing is, hands down, the easiest to implement and has the highest consumer adoption,” said Derek Johnson, CEO of [Tatango](#), Seattle.

“It’s a no-brainer that SMS should be the starting point for advertisers looking to incorporate mobile marketing with their out-of-home marketing techniques,” he said.

“We stress that clients keep things simple when launching a mobile marketing campaign. Advertisers have to realize that a good percentage of consumers are not as familiar with their mobile phones as the technology elite is. If an advertiser ignores this fact, they’re going to quickly alienate a significant amount of their current and future buyers.”

Asking a consumer to text in a keyword to a short code can be effective on certain marketing collateral such as billboards in high-traffic areas. In order for this to work though, the call-to-action has to be simple. For example, copy should only include a few benefits of signing up for the program, and the keyword and short code needs to be easy to remember.

QR dos and don'ts

Marketers plaster QR codes every static medium nowadays. Consumer awareness is gaining traction, but out-of-home remains a tricky place to use them, according to some mobile experts.

"The biggest challenge is probably giving people relevant information that will get them to take action," said Mike Wehrs, president/CEO of [ScanLife](#), New York. "Most outdoor media is not planned around action – but mobile can help deliver on that."

For instance, Bloomingdale's used mobile bar codes on its print ads on phone booths. The code directed users to a video that included an offer that encouraged users to come in-store ([see story](#)).

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The Bloomingdale's mobile-enabled ads

On the other hand, media placed underground is not suited for mobile with a lack of data connections. Nonetheless, marketers do continue to roll out poorly-executed campaigns in these places.

For example, Fox recently used subway ads to promote the new season of the network's show "The New Girl."

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The Fox ads with a QR code in the bottom left-hand corner

The ads featured a tiny QR code that consumers are likely to not see while quickly passing by.

The ad also lacks a call-to-action for why a consumer should scan the code, which is critical to out-of-home marketing, according to Ed Knudson, executive vice president of sales and marketing at [Digimarc](#), Portland, OR.

In July, Digimarc worked with House Beautiful on a campaign to promote the magazine's Kitchen of the Year event in New York's Rockefeller Plaza. The company's technology let consumers scan signage to pin products displayed at the event to their Pinterest boards.

The mobile tie-in gave users an incentive to directly spread the word via social media to friends and family.

"Don't link just for the sake of linking," Mr. Knudson said. "The consumer should feel rewarded for the scan, such as a coupon/discount, sweepstakes entry, buy-now opportunity or to find nearest retail location."

Final Take

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