

COLUMNS

What is sabotaging engagement with mobile marketing messages?

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By A LUXURY DAILY COLUMNIST

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Google the words “mobile,” “marketing” and “fad,” and you may be surprised to still find a slew of references, some as recent as May, to articles whose titles ask whether mobile marketing is a growing trend or a passing fad.

According to the online Oxford Dictionary, a fad is: “an intense and widely shared enthusiasm for something, especially one that is short-lived and without basis in the object’s qualities; a craze.”

Ringing engagement

Hair metal in the 1980s, Beanie Babies in the ‘90s, countless Internet memes in the new century: those are fads in the most literal sense. They explode into the popular culture, enjoy a few months or, at best, a couple of years of widespread popularity and then fade away as consumers turn their ever-wandering attention elsewhere.

At this point, however, I think it is safe to say that there is no chance of this happening with

mobile marketing. That is because no previous technology has disrupted human communication channels as swiftly and completely as mobile devices have.

Checking smartphones first thing in the morning now feels as natural as breathing – and reaching consumers on this medium is just as natural as reaching them through traditional channels such as print or desktop-based Web. It will not be very long either before mobile gets included in that traditional marketing channel bucket.

But for now, the question that marketers are increasingly asking themselves is how to effectively engage customers through these ever-present, always-on devices.

Precisely because mobile is so ingrained in consumers' work and personal lives and because these devices are helping them manage everything from finances to fashion to fitness, mobile marketing messages have to foster customer engagement by adding some real value to their lives as well.

That is because as easy as it is to reach customers through mobile, it is just as easy to turn them off a brand completely if messages are not tailored to individual customers.

The pits

Even the best-intentioned mobile marketing campaigns can hit one or more of the following pitfalls:

- **Irrelevance:** A male millennial consumer is not likely to be interested in messages pegged to, say, the Kardashians or Amanda Bynes' latest meltdown.

Sending messages that speak to each customer's interests is crucial to retaining those customers for any length of time.

When marketing messages offer nothing that adds any value, 60 percent of consumers who receive them will simply unsubscribe. And who could blame them?

- **Excess:** Message bombardment is also surefire recipe for mobile marketing disaster.

There is no quicker and more effective way to infuriate – and drive away – mobile customers than to send them sustained barrages of marketing messages. You could lose 69 percent of them that way, even if the messages are relevant. No one wants to be endlessly reminded to redeem an offer.

- **Bad timing:** What good is it to send a message to a customer during a period of time when he or she is not habitually active on mobile? None at all.

Catching your customers at the times when they are most engaged with their devices is necessary to maximize the opportunity for extended interaction and, perhaps, the desired conversion.

In fact, messages that arrive at the wrong time end up turning 44 percent of mobile consumers off.

- **Wrong tone:** This one can be bit trickier and can take multiple rounds of messaging to

perfect, but it is about remembering who the audience is and speaking its language.

Some audiences like their messaging copy a bit more formal, some a bit more casual.

Nailing down the right tone for an audience segment can go a long way toward building long-lasting engagement.

Clearly, fostering productive engagement with mobile-toting customers is not really as simple as it can appear to be at first.

However, mobile marketers have tools within reach that can help them gauge the impact of their messaging and make sure that each message they send is calibrated to elicit long-lasting interaction and, ultimately, ROI.

Measure, then measure again

When customers interact with mobile marketing messages on their smartphones and tablets, each tap and swipe generates a tiny bit of information that reveals something about how, exactly, every one of those customers wants to be engaged.

Mobile measurement techniques – action analytics, A/B split testing and retargeting – can show any marketer the best way to approach a particular audience segment.

For instance, A/B testing can help marketers try different message wording, tone and length on samples of their target audiences, which has been done with print, radio, TV and desktop Web campaigns for decades.

Messages that drive the highest rates of a desired conversion, be it a registration, a social share or a sale, can be sent to wider audiences for maximum value and ROI.

BRAND INTERACTION with customers over mobile devices is just the new normal.

Measuring the effectiveness of these communications for optimal relevance, timeliness and tone should be a natural part of the process that every mobile marketer uses to build customer engagement that lasts.

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