

COLUMNS

## How mobile has shrunk the world

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A phone, a map, a calculator, a compass, a camera, a digital diary, a video recorder, a gaming device, a music player, a laptop, a GPS device, a flashlight.

There was once a time when a phone was a phone, and you had a different device for all those other needs. But not anymore.

Today, all these individual gadgets have merged into one – a smartphone that is so commonplace and next-to-your-skin it could be considered an extra limb on your body.

Smell the coffee

Welcome to the M-economy, where mobile adoption has overtaken all other forms of communication, especially among African American and Hispanic communities. We can now, settle bills and make transactions.

In 2012, Starbucks invested \$25 million with Square to allow customers the choice to pay for their coffee with their mobile devices.

This mobile twist provides terrific opportunities for brands and marketers across the globe.

Thanks to this small, one-in-all device, consumers today have become more mobile-

centric, me-centric and present-centric. They want everything now, delivered at one place – on their handsets.

A desktop consumer can wait for the discount couple to arrive in his inbox.

But a mobile consumer, lined up in a queue at the Apple store, cannot wait. He has to redeem the coupon now and get out of the store, as fast as he possibly can, because time is of essence here.

More than a third of adults are inclined to make a purchase in a store if they can find a coupon for an item on their mobile phone, according to a recent survey conducted by market research agency Ipsos. This trend is particularly noticeable among younger adults (54 percent).

Did you know?

That nearly half of all emails are now being accessed through mobile devices? And that nearly half of your marketing emails are also being read on smartphones?

Any surprise then that personal cloud services such as Dropbox, Skydrive and iCloud are doing brisk business, making data available to consumers-on-the-go - whenever, wherever they may happen to solicit it?

New wireless technologies such as LTE and Wi-Fi are whetting their appetite further, thereby making geography completely redundant.

Very soon, we are likely to have more personal interactive assistants such as Apple's Siri when augmented reality (AR) applications mature from mere gaming tools into real navigational help.

The Google Now app, for instance, is not just an alarm service. It also helps mobile consumers navigate real-time traffic snarl-ups, when they leave their homes for that crucial business meeting or an all-important first date.

Mobile is not a device. It is an experience

Statistics by eMarketer reveal that when consumers interact with mobile media:

- ☒ 82 percent believe it is a good way to learn about new products and brands
- ☒ 80 percent are influenced to investigate a product or service
- ☒ 71 percent change the way they think about a product or service
- ☒ 65 percent are influenced to possibly purchase a product
- ☒ 43 percent of local mobile searches result in store visit
- ☒ 22 percent made a purchase

Consider Mercedes Benz's Mbrace Concierge app. It does everything from dispatching driving direction to making dinner reservations for mobile consumers.

Heard about “It’s My Choice” program that lets mobile consumers re-schedule postal deliveries if they are going out?

There are numerous examples of technology being co-opted for awfully simple and specific tasks to gain more me-time.

Let us face it – living without your smartphones is not an option anymore. Imagine how would you feel if you were to lose yours? Panic? Sadness? Anger? Frustration?

Smartphones have begun to rule the world, really.

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