

ADVERTISING

Mercedes-Benz exec applauds responsive design for personalization

November 19, 2013



By LAUREN JOHNSON

NEW YORK – A Mercedes-Benz executive at the Mapping Mobile @ NYU Stern conference last week outlined the company's decision to go the responsive Web route earlier this year with a personalized experience at the core.

During the "Inspiring Connectivity through Mobile Platforms" session, speakers from Mercedes, Time Inc., The NPD Group and McGill University spoke about different ways that marketers are being forced to think with multiple screens in mind nowadays. The Mercedes executive positioned responsive design as a way to serve up customized content, although other marketers insist responsive does not go far enough in enabling customized mobile experiences.

Sign up now

Luxury Daily

"As a company, what do we want? We want everything," said Derek Johnson, supervisor of digital marketing platforms at [Mercedes-Benz USA](#), Montvale, NJ.

"We want an easy-to-use, useful site that is extremely sophisticated and is very fast, which is very hard to accomplish, and there is always pretty much a compromise, no matter what solution you're going with," he said.

"What we believe in is responsive Web design, and you all probably know what responsive Web design is, but the way I looked at this is personalization for your device.

One code base that sniffs out your device and says, ‘I will optimize the content and functionality of our Web site to make sure that you’re having an optimal experience from where you’re sitting.’

Kicking mobile into gear

To create this personalized mobile and desktop experience, Mercedes rolled out a responsive site this summer.

Although the company puts a mobile-first focus on the design, the site still has to have features similar to a desktop site.

One of the benefits of the responsive design is the focus on images since strong graphics are a staple in automotive marketing.

Research has shown that roughly 56 percent of U.S. consumers own a smartphone, although Mr. Johnson estimated that Mercedes’ demographic is closer to 85 percent adoption.

According to Mr. Johnson, leads are a key metric for Mercedes in determining mobile’s impact for car salespeople.

At the same time, the proliferation of devices has made it more difficult than ever for marketers to prioritize their efforts.

“People started to get, I think, a little bit lazier – your tablet was across the room from you, and you didn’t go and get it, you pulled your phone out of your pocket,” Mr. Johnson said.

“But as I noted in 2010, iPad debuted, the world changed for us again – what do we do? We had a mobile site and we had a desktop site, but what do we do with tablet users?” he said. “How are they different? What do they want?”

“Most of us said, let’s just take our desktop site and do a few little optimizations to make sure the tablet user was happy. That was OK for a year or two – a lot of people are still doing this. It’s not working anymore.”

□

The Mercedes mobile site

Publish on mobile

David Katz, director of audience ad products at **Time Inc.**, New York, spoke about the need for advertisers to find ways to marry up content and data on mobile.

Time Inc.’s audience is spread across 102 million users in print, 50 million Web users and 28 million mobile users.

The challenge for advertisers is that a publisher’s print and digital readership does not always match up.

Although more advertising is become automated and data-driven, but the goal is still the

same. Tracking and attribution is still a challenge, but is something that advertisers are working hard to fix.

As an example of an advertiser that wanted to target a specific group of consumers, Infiniti worked with Time Inc. and Apple on an iAd campaign that used a piece of content to allure consumers to click on an ad.

Eighty-four percent of consumers opened the advertising portion of the ad, which then correlated to a high click-through rates with consumers that played around with the car, per Mr. Katz.

Native advertising has been a hot topic for publishers including Time Inc. as a possible evolution of branded content.

In fact, Time Inc.'s People brand was one of three publishers earlier this year to test native advertising units from Sharethrough. Pepsi, Sauza Tequila and Cruzan Rum were among the launch brands that ran campaigns using the technology ([see story](#)).

When asked about how native advertising fits in with Time Inc.'s portfolio, Mr. Katz explained that it is key that the ad does not feel intrusive to consumers and matches the audience of each individual brand.

Despite the rise in programmatic and native advertising, there is still a big untapped opportunity for marketers with data.

“There’s a lot more that can be done from an analytics space to figure out how to leverage things in the future as well,” Ms. Katz said.

□

The Mapping Mobile @NYU Stern panel

Date on mobile

A professor from [McGill University](#) also spoke on the panel about how marketers and researchers are getting a grasp on mobile.

One of the key issues brought up is the freemium model that applications such as Spotify and Match.com use to offer consumers exclusive content in exchange for buying a subscription.

Interestingly, many of these companies are not seeing a majority of users switch over to premium, paid services even though a majority of revenue comes from premium users.

For example, Jui Ramaprasad, assistant professor at McGill University, Montreal, explained that 20 percent of Spotify’s users are premium users. Ninety percent of the company’s revenue comes from these premium users.

Similarly, online dating sites are luring consumers into paid models with social-focused features since the majority of social activity now takes place on mobile devices.

Additionally, the growth of sites such as Match.com on mobile lets consumers access

services whenever they have a few minutes.

McGill University did a study to get a better understanding of how a mobile app from a dating site affects usage and behavior, particularly around social engagement.

The study found that women online daters that used a mobile app increased log-in activity 59 percent compared to desktop-only users. Men online daters logged in 77 percent more as a result of downloading a mobile app.

Additionally, women viewed 15 more profiles when using a mobile app from a dating site, and men viewed 37 more profiles.

Surprisingly, mobile messages were 70 percent longer for women and 5 percent longer for men compared to the messages sent from a desktop.

Mobile users are also accessing content more frequently throughout the day.

For advertisers, this means that they should potentially be more focused on hitting consumers at specific times throughout the day.

“Social engagement is key for these freemium models to monetize,” Ms. Ramaprasad said.

“What we really do see is that with mobile adoption, social increases and messages increase, which benefits the members and platform,” she said.

Final Take

Lauren Johnson is associate editor on Mobile Marketer