

Branding, Awareness and Customer Engagement

As consumer use of the mobile web and mobile search continues to develop rapidly, will 2011 be the year retailers realise a mobile presence is no longer an option, but an essential element in the multi-channel mix? We look to reveal how retailers can really deliver value by including mobile as part of the marketing mix.



With UK consumers more frequently turning to their mobile device as a key information source and point of purchase, now is the time for retailers to ensure they understand the ways in which the channel can build brand awareness, engage consumers and deliver real business value.

Research conducted by Google and the British Retail Consortium (BRC) suggests that mobile for retail has reached a tipping point. In the first quarter of 2011, mobile search increased by 29% year-on-year, while mobile retail-related search traffic soared by 180%. Increased choice of advanced devices, lower prices and more affordable data options are all key drivers in the new wave of mobile web adoption and its rapidly growing usage.

In the UK nearly 22 million people used their handsets to browse mobile sites in March 2011, with a staggering 6.8 million making multiple visits to retailers, according to online market research company comScore.

‘Retail brands can no longer afford to ignore the opportunity a strategic mobile programme can deliver’

Many retailers are failing to take advantage. A survey last year carried out by the Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) found that only four of the top 20 most frequently visited UK retailer websites had mobile-optimised sites. Elsewhere just 3% of businesses have an online presence that can be effectively viewed on a mobile – even a ‘Smartphone’.

Considering the importance and investment that many retailers place on their brand and image, the majority must surely be unaware of the way they are being presented to the mobile audience. The experience can only be described as extremely poor and potentially damaging to the brand.

Most websites:

- don’t recognise what a user wants;
- are full of graphical components that don’t display;
- contain far too much content and are often out of date; and
- include features that don’t work.

On top-of-the-range mobile devices that can view a full web-for-PC site, the typical page of a web-

for-PC site is large and therefore slow to download. Often simple elements like a phone number are hard to find and not usable.

Although a high percentage of usage comes from Smartphones, the majority – some 60% – of mobile web users own lower-end feature phones that are largely overlooked by marketers.

These consumers are typically presented with a web page transcoded by a search engine or mobile operator. Images and content are stripped from the pages, other features such as phone numbers and booking capabilities removed or rendered useless.

‘Brands need to start to take responsibility for the way they present themselves to mobile users’

What is the impact? Research has shown that delivering a positive experience is critical. A single issue will more than likely see a consumer switch to another source to make their purchase.

Why is this so important? Research from Google and Ipsos OTX MediaCT has shown the impact of mobile: those searching via mobile are typically looking for immediately useful information and over 50% are likely to make a purchase, or at least visit the retailer.

From department to DIY stores, computer & electronics retailers to luxury fashion brands, mobile is growing in importance. Searches from mobile devices for brands such as Primark, John Lewis, Debenhams, New Look, Mothercare, B&Q, Currys, Majestic Wines, Gieves & Hawkes and Burberry number tens to hundreds of thousands each month in the UK. Many deliver almost unusable results. ‘Footfall’ and valuable sales are being lost through poor customer experience. This is easy to address.

It is about the customer

What should brands be doing? Keep it simple: think mobile customer and what they may actually want. When consumers are using mobile their needs are typically different; immediacy is often important and an actionable outcome usually a prerequisite.

Managing and presenting content optimised for mobile and that works on any device should be a primary focus. Retailers need to take responsibility for the way their brand is being presented and what is presented – an appealing description for the search engines, landing page content relevant and up-to-date, and features that work.

It is not difficult to identify the mobile device and ensure the content and features are displayed properly, are easily located, a ‘clickable’ size and fully functional.

For most retailers, more focus should be placed on mobile web - getting the basics right and creating a foundation from which they can build. Mobile web will reach the mass market and done well can deliver a great



Figure 1 - Simple but effective optimised mobile site.

brand and customer experience. Applications, or Apps, should not be a priority; they will deliver little value and are likely to be a complete distraction.

Once the right web presence has been created the next challenge is to gain visibility and get consumers to visit.

Get in front of the consumer

It is unlikely that consumers will come directly in their droves. Application stores are a difficult way to gain cut-through but mobile advertising can deliver value if done well and targeting is right.

'Key to awareness is positioning a brand in front of the consumer at point of need'

Key traffic sources such as search engines represent powerful vehicles to increase brand awareness and engage consumers.

Mobile search is very different to desktop, prominence rules are not the same and mobile optimised content has influence. Using a retailer's assets – branch network, brands, and product and service portfolio – in a smart way it is possible to create a significant footprint, deliver reach and provide increased brand visibility.

Optimising, tagging and indexing the site and other relevant content for mobile are important. Done well, your site, brand and products will achieve prominence in search results, getting in front of customers and delivering competitive advantage.

Well created and optimised mobile sites are recognised by search engines. A search engine displaying a mobile symbol next to a result significantly raises consumer confidence and is shown to increase click-through performance.

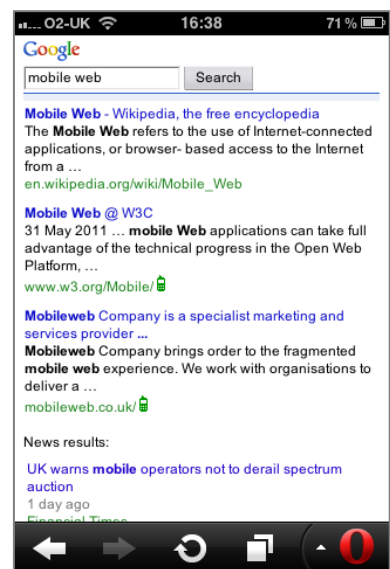


Figure 2 - mobile symbol identifies optimised sites

When a consumer has arrived at your site the next challenge is engagement, turning consumers into customers.

Delivering customer value

The priority is delivering relevant and up-to-date content, ensuring it displays well and quickly. Pages should be rendered to suit the screen without excessive scrolling and content light – customers will pull more information if they feel they need it.

'Consumers will engage and turn into customers if you give them what they are looking for'

Making consumers hunt around for information will put many off. If they don't find what they want first time, it is unlikely they will come back.

Those searching for information on local businesses or services are highly likely to take action. A third will typically make a call, 20% request a map, and opening hours are often important. Features should be easy to locate and simple to use. Contact details for example are too often buried, frustrating consumers that need a retailer's address or to call them for assistance.

For most retailers, the focus should be on driving footfall, delivering a high quality user-experience and converting visits into sales. The site and content should be constructed around these primary objectives.

Meet the needs of consumers and they will engage and turn in to customers. Get this right and mobile can rapidly start to deliver real and measureable returns.

Summary

Mobile represents a significant opportunity for many retailers and has the potential to deliver competitive advantage – now is the time to start investing.

For many, the challenge will be to get the basics right, create the right foundation and stay focused.

Key elements retailers should consider when thinking mobile include:

- Manage the brand and experience
- Focus on consumer needs
- Deliver relevant and up-to-date content
- Ensure functionality on any mobile device
- Develop a foundation to build upon
- Use proven channels to get in front of a consumer
- Track activity to help improve performance and results

Bringing on-board a strategic partner that really understands mobile, can guide through the challenges and help prioritise investment, is likely to deliver the best results for many retailers.

There are market-leading solutions, like the Mobileweb Company m.Discovery platform, specifically designed to support retailers to take advantage of the opportunities that mobile presents.

Mobileweb Company will be creating a series of white papers that will cover topics core to delivering value from mobile, including building a mobile strategy, mobile marketing, customer loyalty, applications and m-commerce.

For more information on future white papers and the Mobileweb Company contact: retail@mobileweb.co.uk or Call +44 20 8123 3339.