

The rise of mobile - What it means for brands

By  Nick Hodge

16 Nov 2017

James Cameron was right - in the 21st century machines would take over the world. Only it would not be six-foot-tall cyborgs, but five to 10-inch screens doing the conquering. Users consuming rich content on mobile devices, both on their own as well as while sitting in front of the TV is the new normal. This means that advertisers have to work harder than ever to attract and retain potential customers' attention, as the competition has become formidable and unrelenting.



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Global stats show how this is playing out in advertising spend: TV is down while short form online video, typically found on YouTube and Vimeo, is up. On average, people watch 28.8 minutes on the small screen per day, and South Africa has not been excluded from this trend. If anything, the heady rise of mobile locally and the fact that an entire generation here has leapfrogged landlines, only makes it more viable. Even as 27 million South Africans actively [use mobile internet](#), that figure is only set to rise, particularly as mobile data becomes more affordable.

Success in the palm of your hand

With increased competition comes greater opportunity, and this is certainly true of mobile. Not only is it where the audience can be found, with mobile's audience doubling that of desktop, your average person is spending almost three hours per day on their device. Also, worth noting is that mobile ad spend is projected to hit \$27.2bn this year. Quite frankly, if a brand is not advertising on mobile, they're missing out on a massive revenue opportunity.

So where do brands turn? Considering that smartphone usage is now on par with that of TV at 69%, the natural choice is to do a better job of engaging viewers on their mobile devices. This is not as easy as it sounds. Firstly, brands need to be mindful of the fact that mobile users are not going to spend more than a few seconds on a single activity. Thus, it's imperative that any mobile interaction, whether it be watching a video or logging into a site, is clean, fast, and above all, simple for the end user.

Secondly, brands need to take into account how viewing habits have changed. The TV may have once been the king of rich media delivery, but today, more than 50% of all video views take place on a mobile device. 77% of viewers also consume media on multiple screens simultaneously.

Peak performance

If a savvy brand is leveraging digital video, and actively engaging an always connected audience, multi-screen viewing can actually work to their advantage. More particularly, it means that audiences are using a channel through which they can be reached during television ad breaks and programmes themselves.

Despite being an ideal medium to reach end users on mobile, the caveat is that advertising in digital videos destined for online consumption (shorter is better), is not enough. Rather, to really leverage the wealth of opportunity, brands need to have a better understanding of the importance of performance, and push for measurable results, more than they are doing currently.

Having 10 million views on an online advertisement is well and good, but there is little point if it merely amounts to a disinterested end user being forced to watch an ad that has no relevance to them. Mobile advertising should translate into real interaction e.g. signups and downloads that convert into actual business. As important as it is to have a targeted audience that a brand wants to reach, at the same time this should not become a limit. Venturing outside of a brands' initial targeted demographic yields even better results when conversion monitoring is brought into the mix.

Challenging preconceptions

The final piece of the puzzle in how best to leverage mobile, are the clients themselves. I find that clients that allow us to test new audiences and expand on their current strategy often yield ten times the benefit that we would otherwise have achieved using a predetermined strategy based on any preconceptions.

Consider this example: one would assume that Facebook would be the go-to destination to reach most consumers. In South Africa however, Facebook reaches 29% of the South African population, or 16 million handsets, with 97% of that used by brands, according to the SA Social Media Landscape 2018 report.

Clearly, reaching a rapt audience through their mobile is an exciting arena where brands should be playing. The question is whether they are playing the game to win, by securing more business, or missing the opportunity that mobile advertising brings.

ABOUT NICK HODGE

With over 13 years' experience as a marketer, Nicholas Hodge (38) brings a deep knowledge of digital media plans, and insight on digital extensions to integrated advertising programs.

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