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Making Sense of the Mobile Marketing Landscape

The online marketing universe is filled with discussion about mobile as an emerging direct digital marketing channel. Despite all the discussion, we see that many marketers are very unclear about what mobile marketing *really* means, or they have very different working definitions. This is justified because the term "mobile marketing" generically describes marketing interactions with an individual through the technologies found on their mobile device. The more technologies found, the more ways to describe "mobile" marketing. To combat channel confusion, I recently began including a high-level breakdown of the subdivisions within mobile marketing in discussions with our clients as we devise mobile strategies. The goal is to understand these tactical opportunities and create an outreach strategy based on objectives and audiences, not based on technologies themselves. Our clients find this useful, and perhaps you will, too. (see chart at the end of the article)

SMS and MMS

After voice, SMS – *aka* text messaging – is the most common tactic within mobile marketing. Nearly all US consumers have a mobile phone of some sort, and nearly all mobile phones feature SMS technology. More and more carriers offer low cost "all-you-can text" plans. This means it's possible that SMS exceeds *Internet access* when it comes to the broadest possible reach in digital channels.

▼ DID U KNOW ? ▼

Remember to make a plan and work the plan. The man, who chases two rabbits, catches neither. Confucius

SMS – and it's more-interactive cousin MMS – are components of permission-based direct digital marketing. SMS is addressable to an individual based on their mobile phone number. But because SMS messages are sent across private networks operated by wireless carriers like Verizon and AT&T, permission is required from the consumer to interact with them via SMS or MMS. Permission is also required from the carriers, which provides some challenges when navigating the red tape.

Mobile Web

Mobile Web describes mobile-browser-friendly web experiences. The iPhone is a bit of a game-changer in that its browser technology is great at rendering everyday websites in a way that makes functional interaction possible. To interact with the rest of the mobile-browsing consumer universe you'll likely need to develop a mobile-friendly Web alternative. This should include simpler code standards as well as streamlining content and design. Though getting better, mobile browsers still leave a lot to be desired and are not equipped to support a lot of interactive functionality we take for granted on the web.

Mobile web can support direct digital marketing tactics like SMS, MMS and even emails that contain a mobile-friendly version viewable as a web page. Mobile web pages should be developed for universal functionality across mobile browsers and devices so the experience is consistent for the greatest possible consumer base.

Apps

Apps have been made famous by the iPhone and the App Store. Apps are simply a custom-developed, downloadable application that is specific to a particular mobile device.

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So, an iPhone app can only be downloaded and used on an iPhone, a BlackBerry app only on a BlackBerry, Palm apps only on a Palm, and so on. Apps are fantastic for providing a very rich user experience that far exceeds what may be possible with a mobile-browser-friendly web page. Apps do not need to account for the shortcomings of mobile browsers in supporting interactive functionality. But, because apps serve a dedicated audience only, the rich functionality and consumer experience possibilities must be balanced against the relatively limited audience of all mobile devices that can use the app.

Mobile Advertising

This category itself can be subdivided many times. Simply stated mobile ads fall into a couple of categories: mobile banners and mobile search. Each is a spinoff of the established online ad channels, with virtually the same roster of ad partners creating alternatives for consumers browsing and searching the Internet through their mobile browser.

Additionally, ads are often placed in popular apps simply because this is where eyeballs can be found, in a highly interactive and controlled environment.

Emerging and Location-Based Technologies

I use the term "emerging" carefully because this is viewed relatively speaking. There are mobile-tagging technologies, such as 2D matrix codes, which are becoming mainstream in Europe and Asia, and other well-established technologies such as Bluetooth, GPS and RFID now finding homes in mobile devices. I have discussed 2D code

technology in earlier posts.

What these technologies have in common is enabling more advanced interactions through mobile devices, including interactions that incorporate the user's location into the marketing equation. We'll be covering these technologies in more detail in future posts on the Lunch Pail.

Other

This is my helpful catch-all category for miscellaneous media specific to, or consumable on, a mobile device. Whether this is downloading ringtones and wallpapers or playing video, music, or games, there is an array of opportunities for branded content and advertising.

Many astute readers will note that "voice" is not included in this breakdown. Right or wrong, the most commonly used technology on the consumers mobile device, voice, is not commonly understood as "online" or direct digital marketing. I hope this breakdown of the mobile marketing channel provides clarity and sparks ideas

▽ DID U KNOW ? ▽

"Advertising in the final analysis should be news. If it is not news it is worthless."
Adolph S. Ochs

SMS/MMS	Mobile Web	Apps	Mobile Ads	Other
• Opt-in, direct digital marketing • Greatest reach, most ubiquitous	• Mobile browser friendly sites and pages • Information & interaction • M-commerce	• iPhone, Blackberry, Palm, etc. • Silo'd audience • Rich experience	• Mobile search • Mobile banners • SMS subscriptions • Apps	• Video • Games • Music • Ringtones & wallpaper • Downloads

Emerging/ Location-based	• 2-D codes • GPS	• RFID • Bluetooth

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