FIVE PILLARS OF MOBILE MARKETING
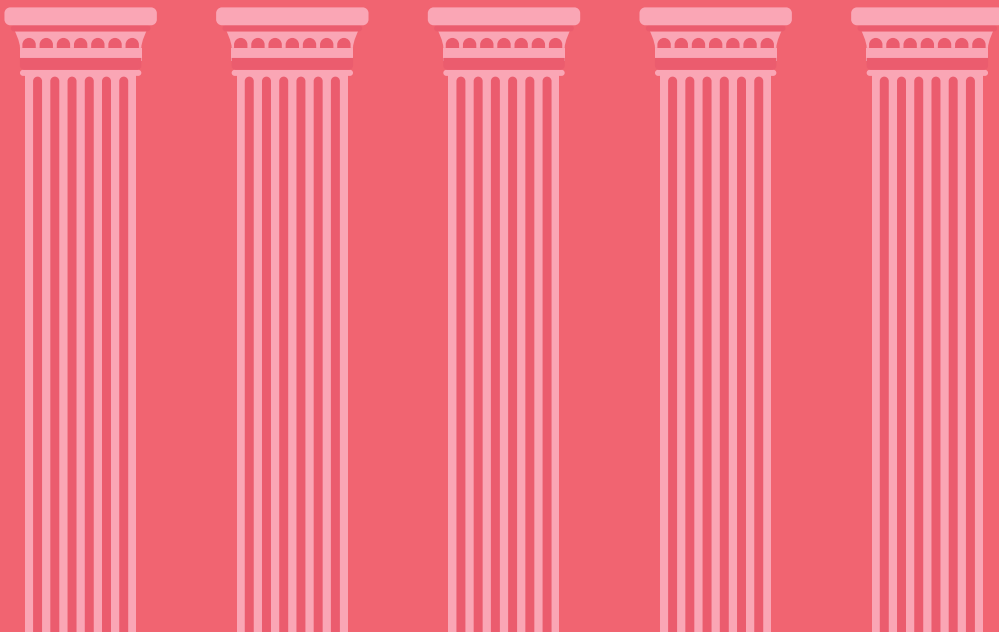
CONTENTS

WHAT IS MOBILE MARKETING?

As you would expect, the most basic explanation of mobile marketing is marketing activities carried out on or for mobile devices or markets – but as the technology develops, so too does the applicable range of techniques and practices.

Uniquely capable of offering time and/or location specific ads and information to consumers as well as vastly increasing the opportunities for personalisation, mobile marketing has become a specialism itself rather than simply a search marketing extra.

The number of mobile devices is growing almost exponentially, and they have already surpassed desktop for digital media consumption. In addition, 2014 saw the Independent reveal that the number of mobile devices had finally outstripped the total number of people (at approximately the seven billion mark).

As a result, there is a vital and growing requirement for brands and search marketing professionals to focus on what their mobile strategy is delivering, and how it can be built or tweaked to make the most of probably the most important development in the search marketing industry since the appearance of the Google search engine.

With the more agile mobile devices – such as smartphones and tablets – likely to continue to greatly outsell desktops and laptops, the future of search marketing can be seen right now, in embryonic form, making it important to get ahead of the curve or risk falling behind.
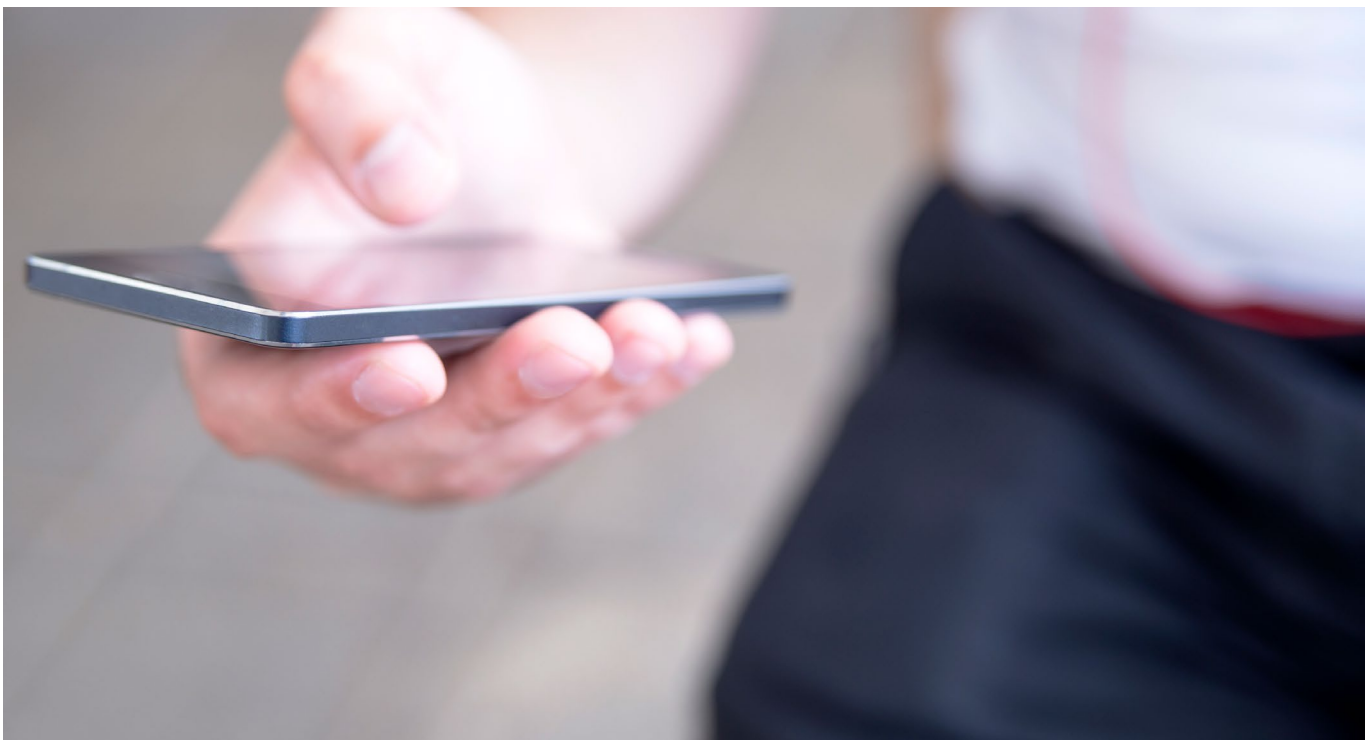
1.

MOBILE FRIENDLINESS

Anyone that can remember WAP could be forgiven for having their suspicions as to the future of mobile internet. With restricted access, clunky interfaces and glacial loading times, its humble beginnings were little more than a gimmick – more akin to teletext than the modern user experience (UX) consumers now expect.

Though the mobile internet experience has slowly improved over time, it began to move at the present rapid pace following the introduction of the iPhone (2007) which featured an integrated web browser that sought to replicate the desktop experience. The device's popularity did more than establish Apple as a major player in the mobile market; it also revealed how unready the web was for this new wave of internet access.

It is somewhat surprising, these days, to find yourself arriving at a site which is not optimised for mobile devices (though they do exist in greater numbers than is really forgivable). Technology has been a major driving force in this – with the advent of larger screens, better resolutions and the progress to the present 4G connection – most businesses and virtually all large brands now have sites optimised for mobile.

Astonishingly, the largest push toward a truly mobile internet, took over eight years from the release of the first iPhone, when in April 2015 Google implemented the mobile friendly algorithm, an update with the specific intention of improving mobile UX.

## GOOGLE'S MOBILE-FRIENDLY ALGORITHM UPDATE EXPLAINED

In an unprecedented move, Google pre-announced that they would be implementing a mobile friendly ranking algorithm set to operate on a page-by-page, real-time basis. The determination of mobile friendliness was to be binary – either a site was or was not mobile friendly; there were to be no shades of grey.

The result of the announcement was a spate of articles predicting various degrees of mobile Search Engine Results Pages related carnage that would become known as Mobilegeddon. Though the outcome of the update was not as bad as had been feared (and even positive for those that had been keeping track of webmaster best practices), there were – and continue to be – casualties of Mobilegeddon, losing traffic and rankings due to poor mobile UX.
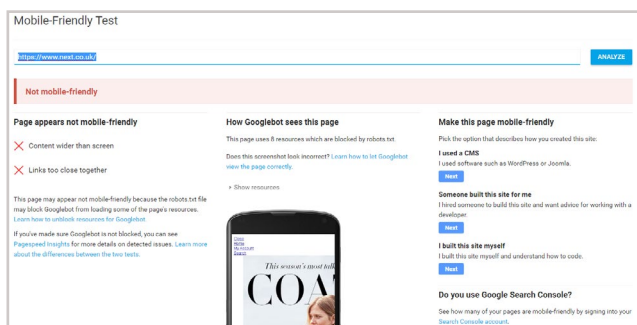
HOW TO BE MOBILE-FRIENDLY

The Mobile-Friendly Test
The easiest method of checking whether or not you're ticking the right boxes is, of course, Google's free Mobile Friendly Test – simply by entering the URL you want to check and hitting the analyse button, the tool will return a verdict on the page's mobile-friendliness.
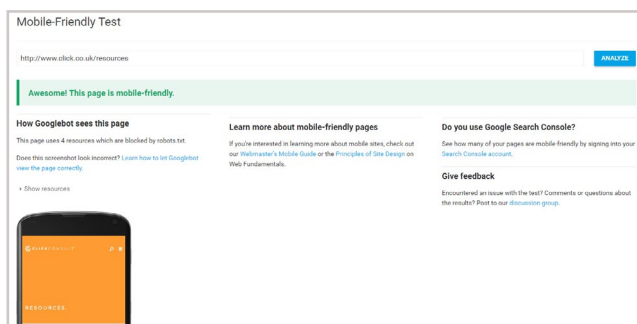
Friendly

Unfriendly

A passing grade from this tool isn't the be all and end all, however, and Google is consistent in making its algorithms increasingly demanding and complex. So while this is a good start, it pays to ensure your quest for the best possible mobile UX should not stop there.

Google Analytics

Keep an eye on your bounce rate. Though the bounce rate for mobile devices always tends to be higher than for desktop, you will need to ensure that the difference is not too extreme. High bounce rates are a good indication that the UX of your site is poor and solutions for excessively high bounce rates on mobile devices should be sought now, before the algorithm's parameters are tightened again.

Device Category	Acquisition			Behaviour	
	Sessions ↓	% New Sessions	New Users	Bounce Rate	Pages/Session
	14,634 % of Total: 100.00% (14,634)	86.01% Avg for View: 86.01% (0.00%)	12,586 % of Total: 100.00% (12,586)	16.26% Avg for View: 16.26% (0.00%)	2.58 Avg for View: 2.58 (0.00%)
1. desktop	7,499 (51.24%)	82.74%	6,205 (49.30%)	8.79%	3.11
2. mobile	6,492 (44.36%)	90.08%	5,848 (46.46%)	25.06%	1.98
3. tablet	643 (4.39%)	82.89%	533 (4.23%)	14.46%	2.39

This view can be found in Google Analytics under the reporting tab, then by clicking: audiences>mobile>overview. The same process for tackling high bounce rates should be employed as would be the case for any similar desktop issues (see our Simple Guide to CRO and Landing Page Optimisation eBook for some hints and tips).

As stated previously, Google's algorithm only increases in complexity and it is unlikely that catching up will be sufficient for long when looking at implementing a mobile-friendly strategy. Therefore, brands and marketers alike will need to begin preempting ranking signals. Keep an eye, during regular competitor benchmarking, on your competition's mobile as well as desktop performance, for example.

In addition, it pays to keep up to date with trends in technology that can have a positive impact on the UX of mobile traffic.

Accelerated mobile pages

Introduced back in October 2015, accelerated mobile pages (AMP) is an open source Google project which, in the words of Google's Vice President Engineering, Search – David Besbris 'aims to dramatically improve the performance of the mobile web'.

This is achieved by paring back elements of the web that have led to the current app reliant situation in which brands operating on mobile currently find themselves. By moving away from JavaScript to open source, lighter elements which though offering the same functionality are easier and quicker to load on mobile devices while retaining the ability to offer ads which do not compromise UX.

As it stands, AMP is geared mostly toward content – as a competitor to Facebook's Instant Articles and Apple News – but while the ideas may be in competition, it makes sense for brands to implement support for all three.

To find out more about AMP and how to alter your code to earn your grey lightening bolts, you can read this fantastic article from Smashing.
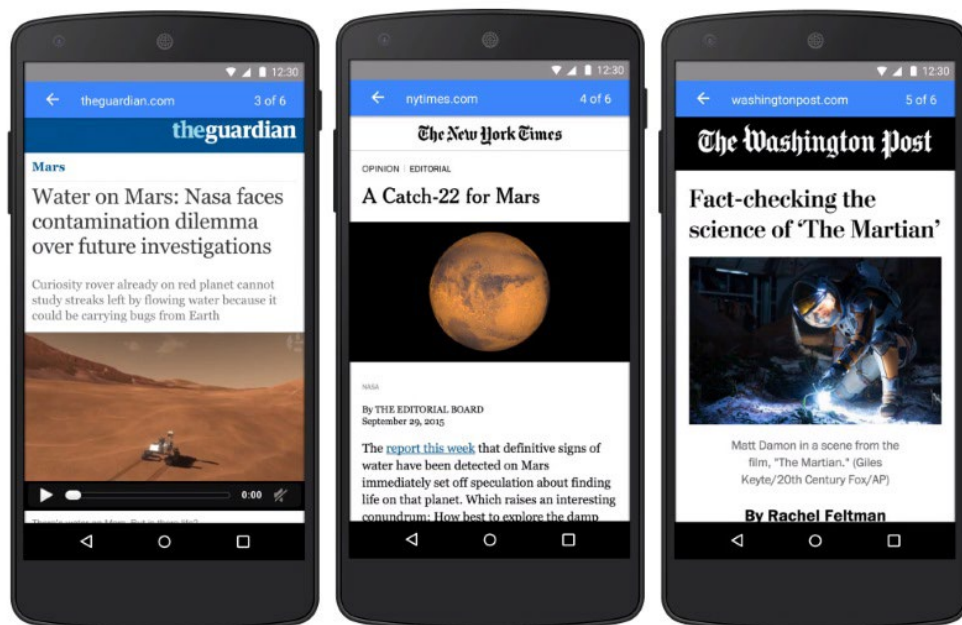
2. TARGETING

One area in which mobile marketing really excels is that of consumer targeting. Just as mobile search has outstripped desktop in terms of raw numbers, the amount of information mobile device owners store on and share through their devices is increasing. Brands have access to an unprecedented amount of data and, therefore, targeting options available to them when considering their marketing strategies.

As with the whole industry, mobile marketing is moving inexorably toward greater personalisation, with the added advantage that, as the majority of the world presently carry their phone with them everywhere they go, they are potentially reachable anywhere they go at any time of the day – but as a quote attributed to everyone from Churchill to Spiderman's Uncle Ben puts it: with great power comes great responsibility.
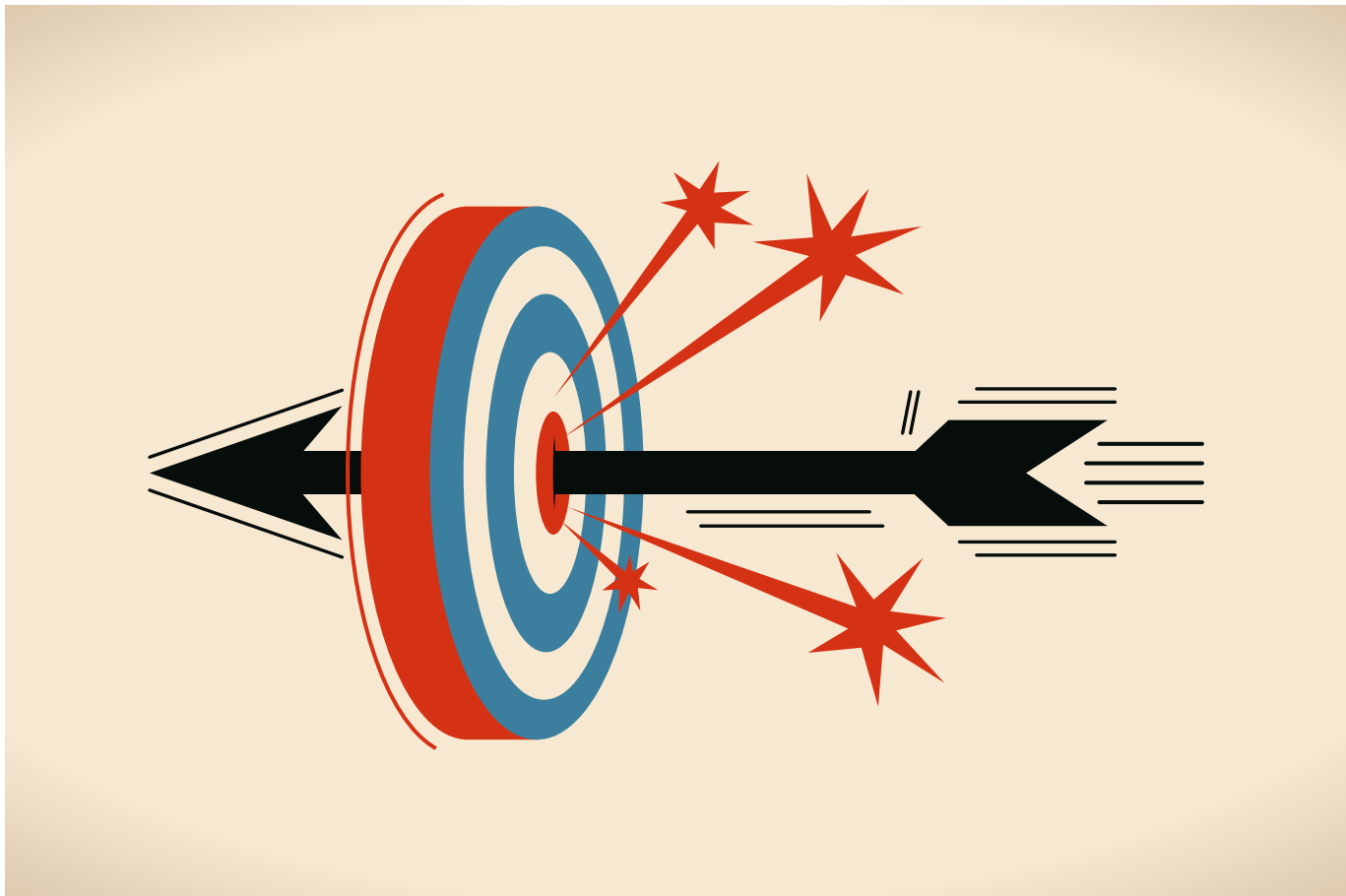
PERSONALISATION

The responsibility for marketers, when considering this unprecedented access to the consumer, is to make the experience unique to the individual. Rather than serve the same content or offers to all consumers, the new wealth of data should be used to ensure that consumers are being targeted with ads/content/offers that are specific, not only to their demographic, but to them individually and to their routine. So, in addition to standard personalisation techniques, thought should be spared for the following:

Location
Whether a brand has physical stores or not, there are few that cannot tailor their advertisements to consumer locations. While bricks-and-mortar stores will obviously find it easier to offer 'store nearby' ads, or location specific offers, Google's (Search Engine Land christened) Possum update showed that the search giants are taking local search very seriously, so you should too – and this can begin as part of a mobile marketing strategy.

Time
Again, with mobile, access to consumers is unrestricted – while we're awake, generally, we're with our phones and that means that more work is required with mobile marketing in the provision of time specific content/offers/ads in order to fit into people's routine.

History and interests
Though there are, obviously, retargeting cookies and methods of segmenting by interests and purchase history, as mobile marketing progresses, these are likely to multiply. Improvements in UX have, whether good, bad or neutral, generally been linked with consumers sacrificing personal data – and this trend is unlikely to change. Consumers want to see things that are relevant to them and brands want to increase their ROI – both of these require the brand to harvest as much consumer data as possible.

With this, as with much of mobile marketing – having a strategy which is occasionally brought up to date is unlikely to be enough for long. A modern mobile marketing strategy needs to be agile and ready to take advantage of a rapidly developing sphere of search marketing.

Communicating
Though the recommendations surrounding inbound marketing remain the same as for desktop, there are additional methods of communication available to mobile marketing professionals which require the same diligent approach – whether that is the use of push notifications or SMS marketing, there must be every effort made to communicate with (rather than at) the consumer.

3. USER EXPERIENCE (UX)

Inextricably linked with all of the other pillars, but still distinct, UX should be a primary concern to anyone looking to develop a new or improve upon an existing mobile marketing strategy. Google, and other large search engine providers, live on the proceeds of adverts. To ensure the maximum advertising return, they need to ensure they grow their user numbers which means they need to ensure a consistently positive UX.

As a result, improving UX and, thereby, retaining market share, lies at the heart of Google's business plan, meaning that it should be at the heart of any brand's marketing strategy (even if we were to ignore the myriad other benefits of good UX). This can be seen, most recently, in the announcement that invasive interstitial ads could now lead to penalties, as well as a host of updates to local search results and algorithm updates.

MAKE IT EASY

The main drive behind UX as a practice is to make it easy for consumers to do what they want and what brands want them to – to make purchases, interact with their favourite brands and share positive results. The best news, as far as this is concerned, is that as mobile technology advances, the technology to help brands accomplish this is growing all the time.

While it is impractical for every brand to become multimedia content producers, most brands will have a special connection with the interests and lifestyles of their consumers which can be harnessed through content marketing to develop lasting relationship with consumers.

With mobile phones increasingly linked to bank accounts, the ability to buy directly through mobile is becoming easier all the time and it will become ever more important to ready eCommerce sites for a future of secure, one-click purchases or other forms of easy to use mobile payment methods. Just as mobile has gradually overtaken desktop for search volume, it is likely that the same will eventually happen for sales – so long as brands allow it and maximise their site's potential, better serving mobile customers.

MOBILE UX TIPS

Don't fall foul of software bloat
Though the rule has fallen out of fashion in recent years, the 80/20 rule still bears consideration when setting your website up to better serve mobile consumers. Are all of the various functions on the site/app used regularly, and could their efficiency be improved or could they be removed to improve speed or ease of use?

Make it easy to stop and start
Mobile users may not always be able to give you their full attention from start to finish – so plan for interruptions and make it easy for consumers to return to your site and pick up where they left off.

Nothing is ever finished or ever perfect
No matter how much time is spent on the end product, no app or site is ever 100% completed – technology and usage are always subject to changes, so it pays for brands to ensure that they are dynamic and able to change with their consumers and the devices being used.

Keep it simple
Mobile users tend to be time-poor and, just as they should be able to stop and start their progress to conversion, it should also be made as easy as possible for them to get from intention to outcome. Try to reduce the steps as much as possible, remaining intuitive without becoming confusing.

Plot your mobile journeys
Just as desktop users can fall into different personas and levels of intention and therefore require the planning of specific routes to conversion, the same is true of mobile users. Gather as much data as you can (restricting Analytics to mobile results for example) to see what your mobile consumers are doing where and then facilitate that with your UX design.

4. SOCIAL

While many things about mobile technology may change, they have remained a method of communication, from voice only, through texting to the myriad of apps now available; the mobile phone is a social device. This means that the best mobile marketing strategies require a social aspect in order to be truly successful.

This is not only applicable to brands practising content marketing, however. People like to communicate and like to share and – with the tools available to them – they will do so. Therefore, in addition to making shareable content, social buttons and ease of sharing should also be built into eCommerce sites and offer campaigns.

SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE

By ensuring that your products and services are easily shareable, you can allow consumers to pass on deals to interested friends, share great deals across their social media accounts and increase the reach of your offers and campaigns.

MAJORITY OF ORDERS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA COME FROM FACEBOOK

An average of 85% of all orders from social media belong to Facebook. They dominate some industries such as Photography, Sports & Rec, and Pet Supplies by nearly 95%.

Industry	Percentage
Photography	98%
Sports & Rec	94%
Pet Supplies	94%
Dropshipping	93%
Jewelery & Watches	92%
Clothing & Apparel	87%
Food & Beverage	86%
Home & Garden	83%
Web Design	81%
Health & Beauty	81%
Music & Movies	80%

Percentage of social orders originating from Facebook (by industry)

Long-term orders growth (quarterly)

Orders growth by network (2013)
▲79% ▲122% ▲129% ▲152%

AVERAGE ORDER VALUE

Polyvore surprised us by sitting in the top spot with an impressive $66.75 average over 436 orders (Q3 2013).

$66.75 $65.00 $58.95 $55.00 $52.96 $50.75 $46.29 $44.24 $40.00 $37.63

Shopify

As the above shows, the amount of time spent online through mobile devices is growing – and growing fast. This means that any mobile marketing strategy needs to ensure that it is catering to the strengths of mobile devices, and one of their main strengths is peer to peer communication.

SOCIAL ADVERTISING AND BUY IT NOW

The other main trend in mobile use is the volume of time spent on social apps. With a study from Flurry revealing that, of the time consumers spend on mobile, 34% is spent on social apps, there is a convincing argument to be made for increasing ad spend across social media.

While the ad offerings of some social platforms are still in their infancy, the ability for brands to reach their desired audiences is increasing every year, with social platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Snapchat and a host of others already offering brands the chance to advertise on their platforms.

The benefits of social advertising across platforms are that social media platforms are data harvesters and targeting options tend to be pretty comprehensive. With a mobile strategy specifically in mind, however, this targeting capacity is augmented by the sheer volume of time that consumers spend on social media via their mobile device.

When focused targeting and an engaged audience are combined, the opportunities for mobile focused marketing becomes clear. It also leads, however, to the necessity to have a consistently engaged branded presence across social media platforms.

BRAND INTERACTION

Social media is, of course, a very public sphere. This is something many brands have learned, to their cost, over the last decade. Whether it's JP Morgan's ill-fated Q&A or Waitrose's well and truly trolled call to finish the sentence 'I shop at Waitrose because…'

With the increased accessibility of social platforms for the mobile user, a complaint or query is only a couple of taps away at any time of the day or night and, while it is beyond the scope of most brands to man social media 24/7, it is more necessary than ever in the age of mobile for brands to have a thoroughly thought through social strategy.

This includes:

Maintaining visibility – whether you chose to post a few times a day or a few times a week, there should be a plan as to the overarching schedule which, though it can be supplemented by ad hoc posts and sharing of audience relevant information from both the brand and external sources, should be maintained wherever possible.

Maintain a consistent tone across channels – this should be the same voice as that used in all other marketing. A consistent tone builds trust with consumers and also reduces the likelihood that posts will receive attention for the wrong reason.

Consider the possible repercussions – PR was a lot easier in the days before instant responses were possible and it is increasingly important that brands consider the landscape as a whole before going public with a PR campaign (think Starbucks and the quickly tax avoidance themed #spreadthecheer).

Think once, think twice, then just don't hijack the hashtag – however amusing it may seem, it will almost certainly backfire, like the (almost certainly unintentionally) insensitive co-opting of the #WhyIStayed domestic abuse hashtag by DiGiorno Pizza (you had pizza).

Don't feed the trolls – this is a point that can probably collectively sum up the rest, but brands should really know when to and when to not respond to criticism on social media. An inexpertly handled piece of criticism is music to the ears of the many near-professional level trolls that live under the bridges of social media.

5. ADAPTABILITY

The core principle of mobile marketing is adaptability (in fact, Adobe's digital marketing blog features plenty of articles such as this, lauding adaptability as the 'secret weapon in every marketer's toolbox'). Despite the fact that we have witnessed phenomenal change in mobile technology over the last decade, we are nowhere near the end of the road. As mobile technology advances and global coverage increases, mobile is likely to become the predominant technology for all basic consumer activities.

For this reason, brands need to be eternally vigilant and always ready for changes as they come. Whether this is ensuring that web-dev departments are encouraged to regularly train in the latest industry developments, or ensuring that the agency to which your site development and UX is outsourced are always looking for ways to improve performance, all brands need to be dynamic in their approach.

If there's one thing marketers can be certain of, to paraphrase Shelley, it's uncertainty – and this is true to a previously unseen level in mobile marketing. What works with today's technology may be obsolete with the next iteration of handset, and the same is true from year to year with mobile consumers, whose demands and expectations are constantly evolving.

For this reason, one of the most important aspects of any mobile strategy is that it should be adaptable and dynamic and that brands should acknowledge that no mobile strategy is ever finished.
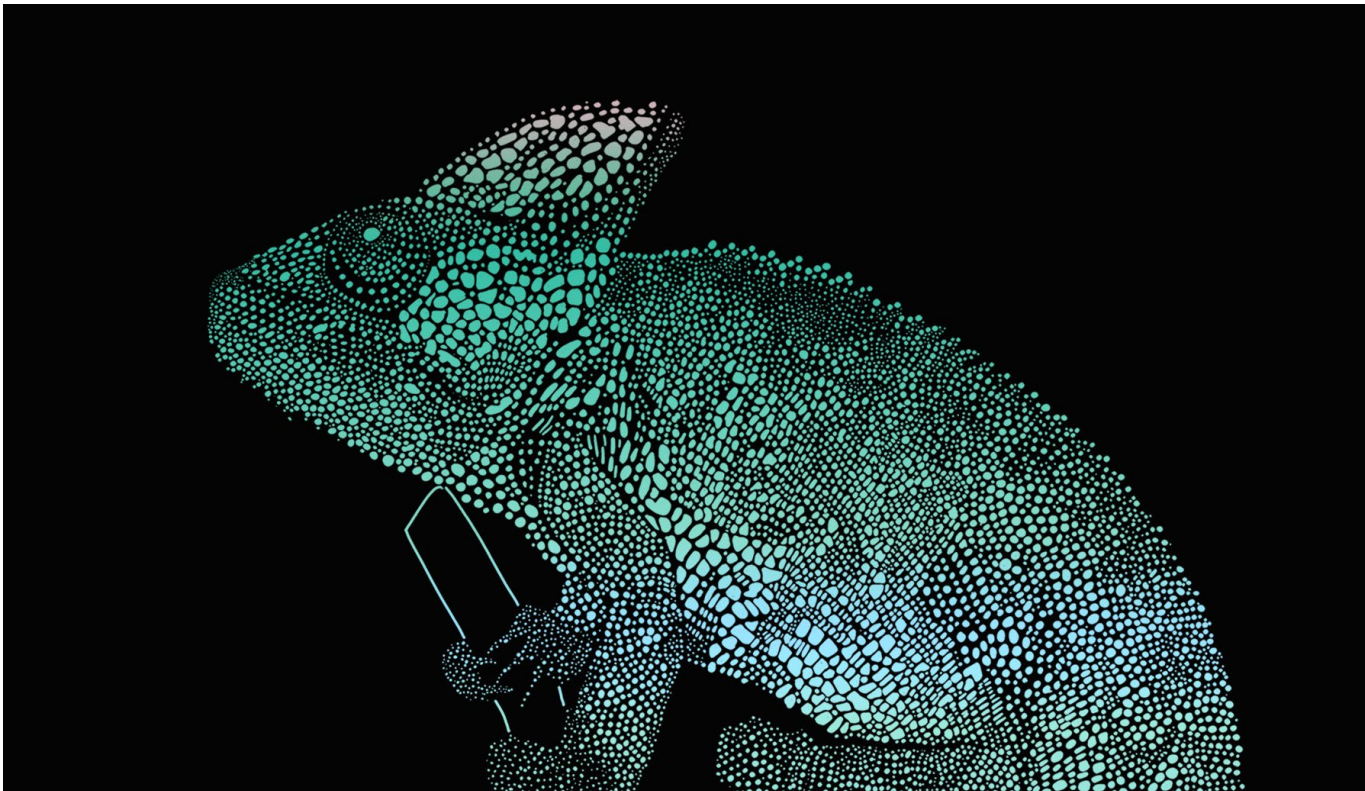
CONCLUSION

Mobile is not simply the future of search, it's the future. Reliance on desktops outside of the workplace will continue to diminish in coming years – as consoles begin to gain parity with PCs for gaming and mobile phones and tablets begin to eclipse them for everything else. This is going to drive Google and other search engine providers, as well as providers of operating systems (OS), to focus intently on the mobile market with new products and updates to services.

As we've seen over the past half-decade, the trends for both interaction and eCommerce have been in the ascendent and it's unlikely to change. Instead, the internet will become ever more mobile oriented. It therefore makes a lot of sense for brands to be in at the ground floor, following developments closely, rather than being surprised when the change eventually comes (as many were at the moment of the mobile friendly update).

Regardless of your brand's industry, you can reasonably expect that its future will come to depend upon the mobile internet. Though it is unlikely that desktops will, at least for the foreseeable future, be replaced in the workplace – even B2B brands will find that the prevalence and advancement of mobile technology is meaning that more and more decision makers will be researching purchases via mobile devices.

In short, if you are not optimising for mobile search – very soon, you won't be optimised for search at all.
Matt Bullas, Click Consult Founder and CEO

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ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi-award winning search agency and winner of the FSB's Digital and Social Media Business Award 2016. Working with SMEs, we turn social media and content marketing into measurable returns on a brand's budget.

Our website features a comprehensive resource page, full of useful eBooks and actionable insights. We also write a blog, where you can find an abundance of search marketing tips.

If you're feeling social, get in touch on Google+, Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

To find out how we can help you to grow your business and strengthen your search profile with social media, call us today on

0845 205 0292

WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY

"From the outset of the project, Click Consult clearly understood our business objectives and formulated a search strategy that would help to deliver commercial results across key product areas. They have been professional in their approach, shown great attention to detail and the results achieved to date have been thoroughly impressive. We are looking forward to a successful future partnership."
LloydsPharmacy Online Doctor

"Click have really stepped up to the plate when it comes to performance marketing, their tenacity and desire to help us as a company improve is second to none. They're always offering up the best in cost per lead performance, which is seeing our ROI on digital marketing grow exponentially as our relationship goes on. Brilliant project planners, superb project delivery and results to boot, what more could you ask for?"
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