

5 Last-Minute Tips for Effective 2011 Holiday Mobile Marketing



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The one mobile marketing tactic guaranteed to annoy holiday-focused consumers this year – and what it means for marketers



Sonali Shah: Generic marketing. All consumers tend to tune out if they are delivered an ad that is not relevant to them, unless of course it is highly entertaining. In marketing, the more personalized the message, the more effective is. This is even more important in the case of mobile marketing. The mobile phone is very personal and consumers expect their interactions on it to be very personal and relevant. In addition, the consumer is paying for the delivery of the ad – whether it is via SMS or the mobile Web. This makes consumers especially annoyed when they receive irrelevant messages from advertisers. What it means for marketers: The opt in process for SMS and the app download process for apps are the best opportunities for advertisers to ask customers what products and services they are interested in. Marketers should gather that information and respect it, not just during the holiday period, but always. Building trust is key to effective marketing. Once a consumer receives too many annoying or irrelevant messages, he or she is likely to tune out and ignore future messages. Make it easy for the consumer to personalize your mobile Web site. Offer filters that allow the customer to focus on the category they want (i.e. gifts for kids and gifts for mothers). Big search bar with excellent search capabilities. This is especially important for large department stores that sell many different categories.



Kathryn Koegel: A lot of retailers and manufacturers have gone QR code mad but have not thought enough about whether consumers know what to do with that code and for those who do, how compelling what that code actually leads to is. Nielsen's new data from metering on Android phones, where the phones have the scanners built into them – iPhones do not – shows that only 14 percent of people with Androids regularly use the bar code scanner app. That means a whole lot of people are not there yet and need encouragement – and yes, these codes do leave out a chunk of your potential audience. With so many people in stores, this is an amazing opportunity to get more people to do this by explaining through signage and having store personnel educated to help and promote usage. For those who do scan the codes, is it a unique and valuable experience or something that they will ultimately feel is a waste of their time and discourage them from continuing to engage this way again.



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Jason John: A big frustration will be the lack of parity between products and promotions offered on the desktop to those offered on mobile. Marketers should be up front with any messaging that does not apply to mobile to avoid customer frustration.



Laura Marriott: No tactic in particular, but poor execution mobile marketing initiatives will annoy consumers. Mobile does best when incorporated as component of a fully integrated campaign strategy. For QR codes it is Important to ensure compliance with best practices. Test your campaign, use an open standard, ensure ease of scanning – color, placement, size, utilize an expert solution provider. And, remember, nothing will annoy a consumer more than mobile content that has not been optimized for mobile. Be very concerned about what happens after the scan.



Cass Baker: Shiny objects verses actual benefits. More than ever this holiday season, mobile shoppers will be looking to capture and consume information as easily as possible. Bells and whistles will only distract from this segment's keen desire to learn, select and purchase. For marketers, this means using mobile as a channel to connect with your buyers' needs, and to deliver the right experience as simply as possible.



Checks and balances in place - or is a mobile site or app crash waiting to happen? Are marketers ready for the crush of traffic and enhanced expectations?



Jason John: As with ecommerce, you have to do proper load testing. Although I am expecting a very big holiday for mobile, I do not think the volumes are quite at the level to expect issues for most retailers. I would be prepared for 4x current traffic and order volumes for the holiday.



Kathryn Koegel: With 40 percent of people having smartphones, expect higher activity overall from your mobile Web site. From talking to key ecommerce retailers who are seeing a chunk of their business transitioning to mobile, you have to shift your thinking about where peaks in the season occur and when it even starts: it is no longer Cyber Monday but the first big peak for mobile occurs just after Thanksgiving dinner is served. EBay released some interesting stats around what they are calling “couch commerce.” TV ads are driving people to use both mobile phones and tablets as adjunct devices to get more information on the products they see advertised. If you are advertising nationally, be sure that your mobile analytics staff is aware of when those ads are running and you are able to understand the behavior on other platforms that activity is driving.



Laura Marriott: Important to find the right partners - solution providers, agencies – to ensure the programs/services are developed for high response rates and the provider is ready to ramp, when and if required. Mobile and QR codes have come into their own recently and ensuring you are working with an experienced provider will ensure your campaign runs without a hitch.



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Cass Baker: Smart brands need to anticipate the demand they will see from mobile, and then add 20 percent to their expectation. Mobile marketing and sales is growing faster than we think, and you have got to be prepared for a tremendous spike. In terms of checks and balances, brands need to be able to monitor flow and marketing in real-time to make decisions on-the-fly. This means pulling media down immediately if trends begin to point south. It also means monitoring call centers closely to ensure they are equipped to handle scaling demand from mobile. If you do not have call centers dedicated exclusively to your mobile shoppers and the experience they are looking to have with you, then change your strategy.



Sonali Shah: For most marketers, technology is not their core competency. By working with the right technology providers, they can avoid a crash. Although mobile is still relatively new as a marketing tool, mobile technology is quite mature. In fact, in the first two hours following the Aug. 23 earthquake along the U.S. Eastern Seaboard, Syniverse processed more than 220 million SMS messages, a 15 percent spike from the same period one day earlier without interruption. Less than a week later in the aftermath of Hurricane Irene, Syniverse again supported mobile operators' SMS, MMS and roaming services in the affected areas without any disruption.



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Is the holiday mobile marketing - creative, offers and list - synced with the marketer's branding and customer outreach messaging - or will dissonance cause trouble in last-mile execution?



Jason John: Hopefully we are moving away from channel vision and toward brand vision. Mobile will be a key component of the ecosystem this holiday and should be treated as such.



Kathryn Koegel: Too many mobile execs I talk to - off the record of course - complain that they are in charge of new initiatives or innovation and that what they do is siloed from larger marketing initiatives. This is a huge challenge as obviously what the store is promoting in their circulars and TV is also likely things that people will be looking for on the mobile Web or through an app. Mobile should not be a separate promotional channel but one that is fully integrated into all retail marketing efforts.



Cass Baker: The holiday period is not the time to do marketing that is focused on building a relationship. Folks want to buy the products they are researching on their mobiles. It is all about delivering the right experience that makes it easy to research, compare and purchase your product with confidence. Confidence that they are buying something of high-value, in the simplest possible manner. That is what they expect from mobile and that is what will drive last-mile conversion - high value goods, top-notch experiences and ultimate simplicity. We are not looking for flash and fancy downloads this season. We are looking for deals, steals and quick experiences.



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Laura Marriott: Marketers have deep expertise in launching integrated campaigns across all digital and traditional media – however, with any new media element, there is the potential for execution challenges. Ensuring that campaigns are tested from start to finish will help to ensure high consumer adoption rates and high levels of consumer satisfaction. For QR codes, marketers must test to ensure the QR codes that they are printing, resolve to the correct content and that content is optimized for mobile.



Sonali Shah: Mobile marketing is essentially marketing and should adhere to many of the same marketing principals used in newspaper, TV, radio and Internet advertising. The list must be targeted, the offer must be attractive, and the ad must be creative enough to attract the consumer's attention. In the case of mobile, the list and offer are most important, given the limited amount of space with which to be creative (160 characters in an SMS or a small corner of a mobile Web page). Although mobile is still a relatively new medium, the larger brands and retailers are getting much better at using mobile as an extension of their existing marketing.



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Post-holiday mobile marketing: what pieces need to be in place to continue the customer dialogue beyond this season?



Jason John: The best opportunity we have as marketers is to create a good experience this season and that will organically create repeat customers beyond. Button up the planning and make sure to map out customer flow to ensure a good experience.



Cass Baker: Brands need to remember why they are investing in mobile marketing. You are investing here because it is where your top consumers expect you to be. You are there to give them the experience they are looking to have. As a result, make sure you are building mobile-optimized campaigns that ensure you are capturing the right permissions to email and text with your consumers moving forward. Continuing the dialogue beyond this season depends on your ability to interact with these folks when and where they are looking for you.



Sonali Shah: Mobile presents an ideal opportunity to build marketing databases. Offering a holiday promotion is an effective way to get consumers to provide their phone numbers and opt into future marketing messages. Marketers must then use target those consumers with targeted offers throughout the year. Integrate all your databases so that you have a consistent view of your customer and can offer promotions across various mediums.



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Kathryn Koegel: Because so many people are in stores at this time of year, the holidays pose an amazing opportunity to get in front of people and turn them on to mobile marketing. This can be through store personnel, on-receipt information and signage. Do not have an SMS outreach plan? Solicit mobile numbers for opt in campaigns and tell the consumers benefits and reward them for doing so. Embark on location-based SMS programs in 2012 if you have not already done so – you need their permission first, but holiday 2011 is a great opportunity to start the dialogue.



Laura Marriott: Make a plan and set goals for continued engagement before and during your campaign. Leverage analytics to understand who's engaged with your holiday campaign and develop strategies to continue to engage after the campaign is over.



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Which mobile ploy will be a game-changer this holiday season?



Kathryn Koegel: What will not: check in-based programs. Too much work, too little gain. Simplest ideas with broadest appeal will work best. More so than an app, a mobile-optimized site that is simple, has a prominent search box, merchandise that synchs to larger marketing campaigns but clearly drives the excitement of the retail experience and drives in store. Augment your optimized site with appropriate search advertising to drive to it since people are often looking for key merchandise and want to know local availability.



Laura Marriott: QR codes. We have seen quadruple digit growth in scans over the past year at NeoMedia. Perfect vehicle for retailers and brands to connect in real-time to information seekers and deal-hunters. QR codes have become pervasive and one can not look through a magazine, turn on the television or walk down the street, without seeing extensive use of QR codes in media.



Cass Baker: Local mobile marketing will be the game-changer this season. Whether it is coupons to a brand, the ability to search for a product in a local store, or comparison shopping through bar codes, this is the era of the highly informed consumer. This season, we will find heavy segments of consumers who will not even walk into a retailer until they know what is available there and at what price. Retailers who are not investing in mobile as part of their holiday marketing mix may be at risk of significantly lower store traffic, because this year's foot traffic is happening via mobile, not via brick-and-mortar.



Sonali Shah: I do not think that there is any one game changer this holiday season. It will all be about using various mediums in a cohesive manner so that consumers get the information that is most relevant to them in the manner that is most useful for them.



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