2016 Mobile And App Marketing Trends

Integrating Mobile In Your Strategy As A Key Brand Differentiator

by Thomas Husson
January 25, 2016

Why Read This Report
More than 50% of searches are happening on a mobile device and US consumers spent more time with mobile apps than watching TV in 2015. In India, Flipkart — the largest eCommerce player — has unplugged the desktop Web and only engages with consumers via mobile. How will mobile trends impact brands in 2016? This report highlights the key mobile and app trends that B2C marketers should expect in 2016, and guides senior marketers in making the right calls when crafting their mobile marketing strategies for the coming year.

Key Takeaways

Integrating Mobile In Your Marketing Strategy Becomes A Key Differentiator
While most brands are trying to mobilize their ads, few are going the extra mile: serving their customers in their mobile moments by transforming the entire customer experience. Those who go that extra mile will differentiate their brands via mobile. These leaders will also start measuring the impact of mobile on offline channels and will end up allocating up to 20% of their marketing budgets to mobile.

Lines Between Mobile Web And Apps Will Start Blurring
Consumers will continue to spend their time in fewer apps, turning their attention especially to messaging apps that will progressively become application ecosystems on their own. However, the gap between mobile Web and app experiences will slowly start shrinking and it will be easier to move between these environments.

Mobile Will Enable Brand Innovation With Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, And IoT
Artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and the Internet of Things (IoT) are key technologies going way beyond the mobile space. In 2016, smartphones will activate them and enable B2C marketers to innovate.
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Integrating Mobile In Your Strategy As A Key Brand Differentiator

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Forrester interviewed dozens of vendor and user companies during Q4 2015.

Related Research Documents

2015 Mobile App Marketing Trends
Predictions 2016: The Mobile Revolution Accelerates
Predictions 2015: Most Brands Will Underinvest In Mobile
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Few Brands Embrace Integrated Mobile Strategies To Differentiate

A year ago, Forrester said most brands would underinvest in mobile. This is likely to remain the case in 2016, since too many marketers have a narrow view of mobile as a sub-digital media and channel. This is good news for the 20% of marketers that told us they have the budget they need and the 33% that know how to measure mobile ROI. In 2016, this growing minority of leading marketers will start to fully integrate mobile into their marketing strategies. These mature mobile marketers will measure the impact of mobile across channels, see a clear opportunity to differentiate their brands, and increase their investments in mobile initiatives. In 2016, we expect smart mobile marketers to:

› **Mobilize brand storytelling with sights, sounds, and motion.** Display ads have exploded on mobile devices to the point at which they accounted for over 55% of all display ad clicks in Q3 2015, according to Marin Software. Video is the fastest-growing mobile ad format: We expect tablet and smartphone spend on video advertising to grow by 36.9% annually and to represent 43.8% of total display ad spend on these devices by 2019. Combined with new ad formats on apps like Facebook and Instagram and native feeds or Teads’ inRead, interest among brand marketers to mobilize their video content to tell stories is growing. Streaming music services like Pandora or Spotify have huge audiences of 85 and 75 million listeners, respectively, opening the door to audio advertising. Ad-supported streaming already represents 56% of US streaming revenue.

**Action for marketers: Align branded content with context.** Marketers should make sure they embrace mobile-centric ad formats and follow IAB’s Mobile Phone Creative Guidelines. However, scaling content up and down to adapt to the screen size will not be enough. To really differentiate their brand experience, they must combine context with specific ad creative for the mobile environment, especially for mobile video. Brands should also leverage behavioral in-app data to deliver more contextualized and personalized content following the example of the New York Times, who has an 11-person team to focus on push alerts and in-app notifications.

› **Power mobile moments with deep marketing integration and automation.** In 2016, more advanced marketers will increasingly integrate mobile with their legacy marketing and campaign automation systems. The goal is to deliver visible value into the user’s day and limit intrusive marketing by arming themselves with holistic insights into their brand interactions and context and becoming value aware. In 2016, expect big marketing cloud vendors like Adobe, Oracle, or Salesforce and mobile-centric solutions like Kahuna, Leanplum, or Swrve to provide not just automation to deliver engagements rapidly, but machine learning to derive insights from big data and drive campaign optimization.

**Action for marketers: Define a mobile engagement strategy and select a partner.** Marketers must work with mobile engagement automation solutions that can crunch context and customer information in real time to allow them to engage with customers proactively in their mobile moments, generating a clear competitive advantage. Use Forrester’s vendor landscape on mobile engagement automation solutions to take the right steps to define your mobile engagement strategy and select the right strategic partner.
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See a new equation emerge: Mobile * Offline > Digital. In 2016, mobile’s role in influencing sales will reach at least 30% of US retail sales, while fears of showrooming are vanishing. Mobile wallets are a good example of how mobile can change the in-store game by offering a combined checkout experience. “While it is still the early days for mobile wallet marketing, 100% of the retailers we work with see clear incremental revenues by mobilizing their coupons and loyalty programs and personalizing offerings in-store,” said Mark Tack, VP marketing at Vibes, a mobile marketing platform solution. Mobile’s ability to augment offline channels will accelerate significantly: from second-screen TV campaigns à la Shazam, to QR codes, to access branded content or to pay for goods, to in-store beacons to capture offline data on how people navigate a store.

Action for marketers: Use mobile to transform the offline customer experience. It is now time for marketers to stop thinking of mobile as a sub-digital media or channel. Use journey mapping and ethnographic research to add mobile in your customer journey and understand where mobile will add value.

Find mobile attribution solutions maturing to support cross-channel planning. Among the various options available to attribute in-store purchases to mobile ads, almost two-thirds of US marketers still consider mobile coupons as the most effective method for attributing in-store purchases to mobile ads. In 2016, several mobile marketing vendors such as 4Info, adjust, AppsFlyer, Kochava, Tapad, and Tune (but also Criteo, or even Facebook) will make progress in cracking mobile attribution. “I believe a deterministic approach to attribution, relying on direct mobile activity, really enables marketers to optimize their marketing mix,” Peter Hamilton, CEO of Tune, told us.

Action for marketers: No more excuses — it’s time to measure across channels. With the myriad probabilistic and determinist solutions today, there is no better time to measure the impact of mobile. Beyond scaling mobile coupons initiatives, marketers should test new attribution solutions to prove and scale customer life-cycle engagement. Mature B2C marketers should track and measure the impact of mobile on other online and offline channels, fostering cross-channel planning thanks to mobile attribution. Bridging the cross-device chasm is a difficult exercise that requires marketers to make deterministic matching and customer identification strategic priorities.

Finally integrate mobile into their marketing mix, increasing mobile investments. Based on a robust cross-media attribution modeling approach, the Mobile Marketing Association (MMA) SMoX research analysis, along with campaigns from AT&T, Coca-Cola, MasterCard, and Walmart, has proved that most marketers are under-investing in mobile and that the optimal allocation of mobile in the overall marketing mix (not just in digital) ranges from between 8% and 20%. “In 2016, I know a number of CMOs at top leading US brands that are allocating up to 20% of their budgets to mobile in their overall marketing mix and to capture the competitive advantage of being a first mover,” Greg Stuart, the CEO of the Global Mobile Marketing Association, told us.
**Action for marketers: Align mobile success metrics with business outcomes.** Most marketers still live with a mismatch between marketers’ top mobile objectives (improve customer engagement, increase customer satisfaction) and the metrics they follow to measure success (active users, time spent, traffic, and app downloads). To be in a better position to evaluate the ROI of mobile marketing, marketers should make sure mobile serves broad business objectives, and they should measure the full impact of mobile on the broader marketing mix (TV, radio, Internet, etc.).

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**The Divide Between Mobile Web And Apps Starts To Fade**

Consumers spend 78% of their mobile time in apps, while web browsing only accounts for 22% of time spent on mobile. And apps offer the best-of-breed user experience, offer personalized value, load much faster, offer send and push notifications, and are easier to integrate with device sensors, right? Well, not so fast. In 2016, we expect a few trends challenging the established divide between mobile Web and mobile apps:

1. **The experience gap between mobile Web and apps will slowly decrease.** First, Apple (with Web Markup) and Google (with App Indexing) recognize that more people are using browsers to discover apps, and have therefore turned the Web into a dominant component in their app store algorithms. Second, fast-loading pages such as Facebook’s Instant Articles or Google’s Accelerated Mobile Pages aim to turn the slow experience of rendering web pages on mobile into a seamless, rapid process. Third, push notifications are slowly moving to the mobile Web with Google’s recent support of push notification for web browsers. Lastly, Google announced in July 2015 the launch of Eddystone — an open software platform — allowing beacons to send out encoded links to smartphone browsers in addition to apps.

2. **The mobile app install war will continue but will be less and less relevant.** Facebook’s early bet on the importance of social app discovery made it the de facto leader for paid acquisition campaigns. As anticipated last year, Google started to catch up in this space by announcing universal app campaigns in May 2015 and, more recently, Google App Previews to stream an app before downloading it. Despite fierce competition and because marketers with deep pockets still want their apps to stand out from the crowd, the cost per install (CPI) has increased to $1.53 in October 2015, according to Fiksu, a mobile marketing platform. However, in 2016, this level of new user acquisition cost will not be sustainable for a growing number of marketers. As Jérôme Perani, head of mobile at Altice Media, told us: “The CPI on Facebook can run as high as £5 for us if you don’t invest in hypertargeted campaigns during special events; this is simply too expensive.”
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**Action for marketers: Invest in app analytics and master ASO.** To stop wasting money, marketers should use app data (post-install attribution, engagement, retention, and lifetime value) to model how much they can afford to pay to acquire a new app user. Then, if it still makes sense, you can use many different app store optimization (ASO) tools — like Mobile Action, Mobile DevHq, AppAnnie, Sensor Tower, or Keyword Planner — to identify what keywords can help your app stand out in application stores. In reality, it is still more effective to partner with a mobile marketing agency to understand the specific ASO tactics for App Store versus Google Play. According to Rubi Cohen, VP marketing at Moburst, a mobile marketing agency, “Because of deep linking and app indexing, ASO will start merging with SEO in 2016.”

3. **Few apps will get most of users’ time, and messaging apps will morph into platforms.** On average, UK and US consumers use an average of about 25 apps per month. However, the average smartphone owner spends more than 88% of his time on just five downloaded apps (see Figure 1). When observing the distribution of all US and UK smartphone minutes spent on apps in each market, messaging and social media apps make up a sizable chunk of all the app time spent on smartphones — not gaming, as is commonly assumed (see Figure 2 and see Figure 3). Messaging apps like WeChat or Facebook Messenger will increasingly morph into marketing and commerce platforms and emerge as alternative ecosystems to Android and iOS as brands look to serve existing customers in context and developers flock to platforms with large audiences.

**Action for marketers: Create a strategy for “borrowing” mobile moments.** In 2016, smart marketers will borrow their way to customers’ home screens by partnering with one of the small number of apps that command the majority of consumers’ mobile prime time. Don’t just think media buys, but embed your services in other apps like hotel group AccorHotels is doing by seamlessly integrating Uber’s car sharing service in its customers’ journeys. For example, if you are a global brand investing in China, you must deeply understand the WeChat phenomenon and how it can be used to reinvent consumer relationships and a social CRM platform.
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**FIGURE 1** Average Smartphone Owners Spends 88% Of Their App Time In Just Five Downloaded Apps

Distribution of time spent across most time-consuming apps for the average US smartphone owner

- **App 1**: 46%
- **App 2**: 19%
- **App 3**: 11%
- **App 4**: 7%
- **App 5**: 5%
- **Apps 6-24**: 12%

**Popular time-consuming apps:**
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Facebook Messenger
- YouTube
- Gmail

88% of time spent on apps by all US smartphone owners are in the top five.

The average smartphone owner spends almost half their total app time in one app.

Base: 1996 US online smartphone owners (18+)

Note: Preinstalled (native) email and messaging apps are not included in the analysis.

Source: Forrester’s US Consumer Technographics® Behavioral Study, August 2015 To October 2015
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FIGURE 2 Time Spent On Apps Is Concentrated Among A Few Apps In The US

Distribution of total minutes spent on apps by all US smartphone owners (+18)

- 15% Facebook (+5%)
- 5% YouTube (-1%)
- 5% Maps (0%)
- 4% Gmail (+1%)
- 4% Stocks (+1%)
- 2% WhatsApp
- 2% Twitter
- 2% AppStore
- 2% Yahoo Mail
- 2% Pandora
- 3% Instagram
- 1% Hangouts
- 1% Fitbit
- 1% Pinterest
- 1% Snapchat
- 1% Google Maps
- 1% eBay
- 1% Google Drive
- 1% Amazon
- 1% Snapchat

Note: Preinstalled (native) email and messaging apps are not included in the analysis.

Source: Forrester’s US Consumer Technographics® Behavioral Study, August 2015 To October 2015

Base: 1996 US online smartphone owners (18+)
FIGURE 3 Time Spent On Apps Is Even More Concentrated In The UK

Distribution of total minutes spent on apps by all UK smartphone owners (+18)

(%) = Percentage point difference from 2014

- 1% Google Drive
- 1% Skype
- 2% Candy Crush Saga
- 2% Yahoo Mail
- 2% Weather
- 2% Instagram
- 2% Netflix
- 2% Amazon
- 2% Snapchat
- 2% BBC News
- 2% AppStore
- 2% Twitter
- 3% FB Messenger
- 3% eBay
- 3% Gmail
- 15% Facebook (+2%)
- 9% WhatsApp (-4%)
- 6% YouTube (0%)
- 4% Maps (+1%)
- 5% Stocks (+3%)

Base: 907 UK online smartphone owners (18+)

Note: Preinstalled (native) email and messaging apps are not included in the analysis.
Source: Forrester's UK Consumer Technographics® Behavioral Study, August 2015 To October 2015

In 2016, Mobile Enables Brand Innovation With Adjacent Technologies

While it is still the early days for technologies like AI, VR, and IoT, all of them will rely on smartphones for some of their connectivity and as a key enabler of these new innovative experiences. In 2016, in particular, we expect:

› Artificial intelligence and voice-based personal assistants to inspire more conversational apps. Digital platforms will accelerate their efforts in improving voice-based anticipatory agents such as Amazon Echo, Google Now, or Microsoft Cortana. By leveraging contextual data and AI — and sometimes human curation as for Facebook M — these services will predict customers’ needs, offer a new human-to-machine interface and prompt a conversational approach. While we expect developer API access and customer usage to be very limited in 2016, these players will offer a
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glimpse into the next generation of app experiences. Opening up these platforms like Apple Siri to app developers could be a catalyst for brand innovation. “I think it will be very interesting to look at market innovations combining messaging and AI in 2016,” David Hewitt, vice president, global lead for mobility strategy at SapientNitro, confirmed to us.

**Action for marketers: Experiment early and learn from innovative startups.** While still in its early days, AI and anticipatory intelligent agents will move beyond mobile to be used in connected cars or connected homes and could supplant marketers’ own apps. It is key to prepare now for the next wave of brand innovation by experimenting early and keeping a close eye on the numerous innovative startups such as Snips, who is planning to put AI in every connected device, having recently released a predictive address keyboard aggregating and suggesting addresses in any app that needs one. Marketers today can already learn from advanced players like Lark and how they have leveraged AI and mobile analytics to deliver a personalized fitness coaching assistant.

› **Virtual reality will start opening up experimental opportunities for brands.** Facebook’s Oculus, Google’s Cardboard, Samsung’s Gear VR, or Sony’s PlayStation VR will all be commercially available during 2016 and will get cheaper and cheaper. Reach on these new platforms will be initially limited because it will take time to build a significant installed base. For example, we estimate that Oculus will sell 1 million units globally in 2016 and that Microsoft could sell more than 1 million HoloLens headsets in its first full year once it’s officially on the market, pending product pricing and availability. “I think VR is a way to deliver a differentiated experience upper in the funnel — a massive wow factor — for example to help people plan their trips or experience products visiting virtual high-street stores,” Ross Sleight, chief strategy officer at Somo, a technology innovation agency told us.

**Action for marketers: Experiment with innovative agencies to deliver new experiences.** While the primary use cases will be for immersive gaming and entertainment environments, innovative marketers at retail, automotive, travel, or hospitality companies should work on prototypes with their agencies. VR will enable them to connect in new ways with consumers in the discovery and explore phases of the consumer life cycle. To avoid confusion with AR or mixed reality, marketers should use Forrester’s evaluation matrix to choose the right technology.

› **IoT’s opportunities hype will expand to the consumer space.** In 2016, the growing adoption of wearables and smart home products will start opening new opportunities for B2C marketers. While independent of mobile, these early experiences will all be directly connected to smartphones via companion apps. Usage of connected objects will remain niche but will create interesting opportunities for brands to create more intimate relationships and differentiate customer experiences. Few brands though will be in a position — like Disney’s MagicBands or Royal Caribbean International’s Quantum of the Seas — to fully scale such differentiated experiences.

**Action for marketers: Lead or at the very minimum join IoT pilots or projects.** Don’t let technology management executives, product owners, or designers define the future of your relationship with consumers without you taking the lead. Focus your energy on what IoT means to the relationship with your customers and on how it could help you reinvent your consumer brand.
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Supplemental Material

**Survey Methodology**

Forrester’s Q3 2015 Global Mobile Executive Online Survey received 215 complete or partial responses from professionals from our ongoing Marketing and Strategy Research Panel. The panel consists of volunteers who join on the basis of interest and familiarity with specific marketing and strategy topics. For quality assurance, panelists are required to provide contact information and answer basic questions about their firms’ revenue and budgets. Forrester fielded the survey in Q3 2015. Respondent incentives included a summary of the survey results. Exact sample sizes are provided in this report on a question-by-question basis. Panels are not guaranteed to be representative of the population. Unless otherwise noted, statistical data is intended to be used for descriptive and not inferential purposes.

Data from Forrester’s Consumer Technographics® Behavioral Study, August 2015 through October 2015 in this report comes from Forrester’s US Consumer Technographics® Mobile Audience Data, our ongoing smartphone and tablet behavioral tracking panels in the US. Data is taken from US online smartphone owners (18+) and a subset of US online tablet owners (18+). Forrester uses ResearchNow’s passive meter tracking technology on an ongoing basis to capture and record all smartphone behaviors and, for a subset of the panel, tablet behaviors. The behavioral tracking panel in the US is weighted to be representative of online smartphone owners. Each of the panelists
downloaded an application that runs a passive metering technology to measure what people do in their daily lives on their smartphones and tablets. Panelists are monetarily incentivized on a monthly basis for their participation.

We track behavior on iOS and Android supported devices for apps that communicate with web servers, with the exception of preinstalled (native) email and messaging apps. We collect URL website data from native web browsers that come pre-installed on a user's smartphone/tablet at the truncated URL level. For non-native (downloaded) web browser apps, we do not collect URL behavior.

We apply data cleaning rules to eliminate outliers including: individual session cleaning, extremely heavy user sessions, minimum usage sessions, and extreme user daily aggregated single app usage and total app usage. We remove certain native applications that are part of the back end process.

We calculate all behavioral metrics at the month level and average equally across months for the date range specified. All data displayed has a sample size of more than 30 participants. We do not deem any data with a sample size of fewer than 30 as statistically representative of a general population.

Endnotes

1 For more information on the mobile mind shift and the effects of a sophisticated approach to mobile experiences, see the “Predictions 2015: Most Brands Will Underinvest In Mobile” Forrester report.

2 Source: Forrester’s Q3 2015 Global Mobile Executive Online Survey.


4 For more information on the full scope of mobile ad strategy opportunity for marketers, see the “Executive Q&A: Five Key Questions To Kick Off Your Mobile Video Advertising Strategy” Forrester report.


7 For more information on IAB’s Mobile Phone Creative Guidelines, check out the following website. Source: “Mobile Phone Creative Guidelines,” IAB, 2015 (http://www.iab.com/guidelines/mobile-phone-creative-guidelines/).

8 For more information on the importance of separating mobile video ad strategies from TV campaigns, see the “Don’t Rerun Your TV Commercials For Mobile Video Ads” Forrester report.


10 For more information on the top 15 mobile trends, see the “Predictions 2016: The Mobile Revolution Accelerates” Forrester report.
For more information on the emerging landscape of mobile engagement automation, see the “Vendor Landscape: Mobile Engagement Automation Solutions” Forrester report.

In the US, more than 30% of sales will have a mobile cross-channel component, meaning consumers will use mobile at some point throughout the purchase life cycle, from product research to in-store interactions. Source: Forrester Research Web-Influenced Retail Sales Forecast, 2015 To 2020 (US).

Source: Interview with Forrester on December 17, 2015.


Source: Interview with Forrester on December 2, 2015.

For more information on cross-device targeting and measurement, see the “Bridging The Cross-Device Chasm” Forrester report.

For more information on the MMA's SMoX study, check out the following website. Source: “SMoX Study,” Mobile Marketing Association (http://www.mmaglobal.com/smox).

Source: Interview with Forrester on November 24, 2015.

Source: Forrester’s Q3 2015 Global Mobile Executive Online Survey.


For more information on customers’ direct engagement with a mobile app or site, see the “Master Your Customers’ Mobile Pathways” Forrester report.


In an interview with Forrester on December 10, 2015, Rubi Cohen, VP marketing at Moburst, a mobile marketing agency, listed five key differences between ASO on Google Play versus Apple App Store: 1) Meta keywords are very important for App Store but don’t exist in Google Play; 2) Google Play allows up to seven images, App Store only allows for five; 3) Most important graphic for Google Play is feature graphic — doesn’t exist in Apple; 4) Apple ASO can only be updated with new versions, Google Play can be updated at any time; and 5) Google Play has built-in A/B testing platform.

Source: Interview with Forrester on September 25, 2015.

For more information on the emerging technology of cognitive systems and engagement, see the “Cognitive Engagement: A New Force Of Creative Destruction” Forrester report.
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31 For more information on delivering life-changing mobile moments through Forrester’s IDEA cycle, see the “Case Study: Win Customers With Mobile Analytics” Forrester report.

32 We previously estimated that if Microsoft had a reasonably priced HoloLens available to consumers at the outset of 2016, it could sell as many as 1.8 million of them in the same year. We still believe it could sell more than 1 million units in its first full year once it’s officially on the market, however it’s waiting for product pricing and availability. For more information on the HoloLens and the impact of devices that follow it, see the “Brief: Microsoft HoloLens Changes Everything With The Next Natural Computing Interface” Forrester report.

33 Source: Interview with Forrester on November 16, 2015.

34 For more information on choosing the right augmented reality or virtual reality device through Forrester’s Evaluation Matrix, see the “Augmented And Virtual Reality Should Be Part Of The Innovator’s Toolkit” Forrester report.

35 For more information on the Internet of Things technologies and how they can be incorporated into a winning business technology agenda, see the “Bridge The Broken Internet-Of-Things Promise” Forrester report.
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