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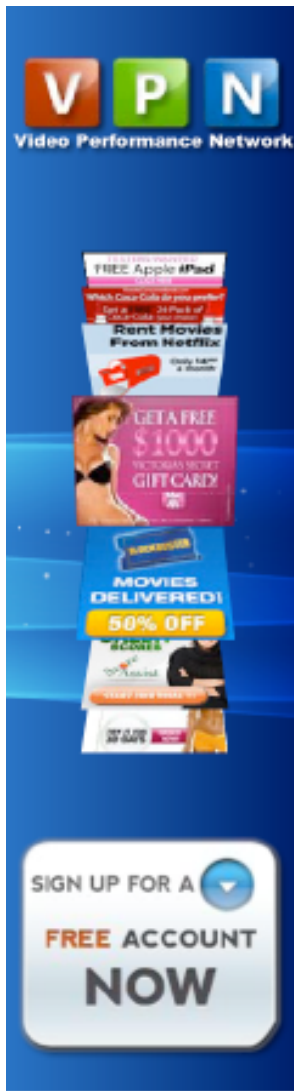
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Think Mobile: Brands Regain Identity Through Apps

Written on

Apr 8, 2010

Author

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ADOTAS – Steve Jobs may not have been at the MediaBistro Think Mobile conference in New York City, but two Apple developments — the iPad and the iAd, which rumor has it will be debuted today during the iPhone OS 4.0 developer meeting — were heavy on the minds of conference attendees from all facets of media and advertising.

Placecast CEO Alistair Goodman actually went so far as to suggest that everyone in digital advertising write thank-you notes to Jobs for introducing the iPhone. As a huge chunk of the online advertising space has turned into a yield game, he said, the iPhone has renewed interest in engaging with the actual consumer.

Certainly the mobile space has transformed how advertisers attempt to reach consumers, most notably through the app. Jennifer Stenger, who works in licensing and business development for mobile markets at the Associated Press, noted that consumers on mobile apps digest 10 times as many pages as online, while Handmark CEO Paul Reddick cited engagement rates 15 times higher than websites.

Mobile Roadie CEO and cofounder Micheal Schneider explained that an app is like tunnel vision for a brand — the user is completely immersed in the app and in effect, the brand. The engagement is unprecedented.

Reddick buoyed this statement by suggesting that the mobile app has give brands back their identities. The power of in-app purchasing is alluring while despite the limited space, in-app ads tend to have click-through rates north of 1%, said Brandon Kraham, senior director of ad sales for AdMob. In-app ads offer impressive ROI along with a wealth of new metrics for brands to measure engagement.

The geotargeting capabilities, Goodman noted, are quite interesting as metrics for marketers and can be overlaid against heatmaps for increased insight.

However, too many brands are suffering from “shiny new app syndrome,” said Rachel Pasqua, director of strategy for emerging technologies at iCrossing.

“Too many brands are getting apps developed just to have an app,” she said. “There’s a lot of rushing to get them out and not enough thought put into them — it’s like the gratuitous use of Flash when it first came out.”

It’s hard to design a relevant app, Goodman agreed, and brands need to think hard about design especially considering that most apps have less than 1,000 users 80 days after launch.

Discovery is a huge hurdle, especially in the labyrinthine App Store, Kraham said. An app can easily become lost in that marketplace, hence why AdMob offers brands the ability to target the iPhone network and advertise an app, pushing a brand into the App Store’s list of the most popular apps.

Also, marketers and advertisers need to approach every platform — while the iPhone tends to be the best for engagement, the number of consumers with BlackBerries is still higher. If you’re just focusing on one platform, Reddick said, you might as well ask, “Which 80% of the market do I want to ignore?”

But the importance of an optimized mobile landing page for a website is not to be underestimated. Sure, the mobile web page is “the lowest common denominator” and not as compelling to browse as an app, Reddick said, but Kraham noted that its something publishers must focus on because a great deal of mobile traffic is still going through the Internet.

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