

Mobile comes into its own



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Mobile is now mainstream. Mobile technology has come into its own over the past few years, emerging from being a new technology to a mature one, with mobile websites (mobisites) and mobile communication being seen as mainstream channels to communicate with people. Here are some examples of this and how things will evolve in 2011 in the mobile and particularly the mobile marketing sphere.



1. Mobile statements:

This was one on the highlights of 2010 in terms of mobile technology. Instead of delivering statements via email or post, many companies have begun sending statements via MMS.

The advantage of MMS is that it is cheaper than posting statements and more direct than email, which often gets blocked by corporate firewalls or ignored by users amid the masses of email they receive every day.

With financial institutions, retailers, broadcasting companies and more now using mobile statements in South Africa, in a short space of time mobile statements have become a phenomenon in the mobile space.

2. Advanced mobile statements:

Mobile statements started out as what their name implies - a statement of an account received via MMS - but they have developed from there. MMS have multiple slides allowing statement information to be accompanied by marketing slides or information about the company.

Mobile statements are therefore been used in a similar way to how physical statements included brochures, but they are far more cost-effective and the uptake in readership is far higher.

3. The use of mobisites:

Mobisites have run in parallel to traditional websites in many companies. However, there is a growing recognition that they are useful for users on the go as they load quicker and provide faster access to information from a mobile phone.

Some people might have expected mobisites to fade away as smartphone browsers improved, but their usability and easy access to information have made them extremely successful.

Media companies across the world have adopted mobisites and locally we've not only seen the media companies do the same but retailers, ticketing companies, entertainment companies and more are following suit.

M-commerce is coming into its own here as mobisites offer payment options.

Furthermore, in an African context, the cost of browsing on a mobile website is so much cheaper and faster than browsing a traditional website on a mobile phone, making mobisites an attractive alternative for people in lower LSM brackets to browse on.

Mobile advertising aggregators such as BuzzCity and InMobi are showing growth of around 20% in impressions,

which gives a good indication of growth in the industry.

4. MMS:

The use of MMS campaigns continues to grow in SA and there is no sign of it slowing down.

Companies are increasingly using MMS to drive traffic directly to their mobisites. This provides a key indicator for the success of campaigns because companies can now track how many people followed the call to action from the MMS and visited the mobisite via the mobile phone number.

Video MMS also is growing and will gain more traction in 2011 as more companies use actual video clips in MMS to communicate with consumers, employees and so on.

5. Smartphone apps:

Last year saw the introduction of the iPhone 4 and a number of handset manufacturers releasing Android-based devices. The iPhone app store, together with the Android market, opened people's eyes to downloadable applications for their phones.

This made many people familiar with the concept of buying an app (mobile commerce), ads being served adverts in free apps (mobile advertising) and the power of an application customised for mobile viewing. In fact, many adverts in apps take users through to mobisites, opening the concept to them of accessing content on their phones from a mobile website.

App downloads will increase this year, with more people using mobile apps and with a greater degree of services delivered to people through them. Many companies will add mobile apps to their traditional websites and mobisites as a way to communicate with people.

6. Social media explodes:

Social media has had a huge uptake in terms of mobile access. Facebook now has over 500 million active users globally or around 25% of the people on the Internet in total.

Of that, 200 million people (40 % of Facebook users) actively use Facebook from their mobile phones or around 10% of the world's population, according to the company. In SA, Facebook estimates there are 3.35 million users. If the 40% ratio applies (although it is likely higher) that is 1.34 million active Facebook mobile users in SA.

Then you have other channels like Twitter, Foursquare and instant messaging applications like Skype, Windows Live (MSN) Messenger and integrated applications such as Nimbuzz and Fring. *[A newcomer on the block is mobile social networking platform Motribe, which last night, Thursday, 20 January 2011, reached [over half a million registered users](#) after launching in only September 2010 - managing ed]*

Combine user stats together off all these apps and it represents a substantial portion of the population in SA and highlights why companies should look to use mobile channels to reach people.

Furthermore, social media and instant messaging (IM) intensify people's dependency on their phones because they are using their phone far more to communicate with people. This elevates the importance of mobile marketing to a whole new level because of the impact communicating with people on their mobile phones now has.

Companies are increasingly looking to spread content from their mobisites through social media channels in order to increase readership and awareness.

7. Database diversification:

One of the key things about knowing who people are and where they are situated is that messaging can be more specific in a mobile context. Databases can then be segmented via province or even cities and towns to send out mobile messaging based on where people are to direct them to local branches, as opposed to giving out a national call centre number, for example.

This can be developed further to communicate with people based on their interests or preferences, making mobile messaging even more effective.

8. All about content:

With so many people accessing mobisites, the demand for content becomes critical. More people are on the mobile web for longer and they crave new content to read, apps to download, music to listen to, etc.

Mobisites will need to be updated regularly to keep people coming back for more.

9. Integration integration integration:

Mobile integrates extremely well with other media forms, too, such as mobile messaging with TV advertising, for example.

In 2011, we'll see mobile become far more integrated within companies' marketing strategies, being used as a support to other campaigns or as the lead in a campaign with other channels backing up the mobile element.

And that's just the beginning. With the commercial launch of DVBH in this country, mobile is also being integrated on a technological level. The concept of watching a music video through mobile TV and then choosing to download the song to your phone as a ringtone or video ringtone or full track download for your music player on your mobile phone is not as far off as some might expect.

10. Mobile recession proof?

The global economy has been hit by recession and budgets are being cut across the board. But mobile technology is proving resilient because it's cheaper to communicate with, the mobile user base is extremely active and it's more measurable.

While traditional media continues to consolidate and battle for advertising revenue, expect mobile spend to increase in 2011.

11. Positioned to connect:

The power of mobile lies in the fact that it is viral and it's interactive. Mobile messaging has become multimedia-rich with MMS and it's captivating. People's interest can then be captured and a call to action can be made to respond via short code SMS, mobisites, call centres, even by going into a retail store.

Most people's phones are within reach 24/7 and as soon as that phone rings it receives the person's attention. The mobile phone therefore provides a captive audience to connect with and companies need to carefully use this fact to build a sustainable relationship with their customer bases.



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Eddie Groenewald has 27 years experience in the ICT industry, of which more than a decade has been in the Digital Marketing sector. He now focuses on a True Multimedia Offering, ATL, BTL and Digital.

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