Mobility is driving advertising

By Tami Sussman   8 Feb 2013

It is widely acknowledged in the ICT industry that Africa has the second fastest growing mobile market globally. Industry analysts have predicted that the number of mobile phone users across the continent will soon reach nearly 800 million.

In addition, the developer community continues to roll out apps for mobile device manufacturers that engage directly with consumers and are designed to keep them connected and on the move.

Quite understandably there has been an increase in interest in mobile advertising and the ability to leverage off this high growth and expected demand.

The statistics provide a compelling case for companies and service providers to seriously consider the investment. Locally, there has been a surge of general activity and interest in Rich Media Mobile advertising - which combines multimedia as part of advert presentation.

This is where Internet companies will begin to differentiate themselves from competition - by offering free, practical and easy-to-use apps. Many of these free apps are used as a mechanism to advertise a brand or company, or at least 'communicate' with the user on some level.

The model allows apps to be made available to users cost free (linked to advertising) or at a cost (with no advertising connected).

The key driving forces

One of the key driving forces behind mobile advertising is the growth in the smartphone market. Although infiltration into Africa is reported to be at around the 10% level, service providers in the market are upbeat about efforts to increase this figure as the continent leverages off advances in broadband connectivity infrastructure.

Mobility is undoubtedly a high-growth market and key business driver going forward. Global social network Facebook recently announced that more people are accessing the website via their mobile phones than from computers.

However, the success of these mobile devices in the market is largely dependent on user experience.

Features and functionality goes hand-in-hand with user experience. As an example, and one that has a direct bearing on the success of mobile advertising, is screen size.

Obviously the screen size of a mobile phone is far smaller than that of a laptop or PC.

Limited advertising space

Advertisers are aware of the fact that the physical dimensions of the phone are such that space is truly limited! And that there is scope to do a lot more on a larger screen - the alternative of using mobile phones to advertise on the scale one would on notebooks/laptops, will only serve to annoy consumers.

It is also generally understood that more people have access to mobile phones than they do to laptops or PCs. This means that advertising firms and website designers will have to adapt accordingly and make provision for this trend going forward.

Having a flexible model that ensures the website can be implemented successfully on the mobile phone. The user should not have to struggle to access the site and it should come across as powerful on the mobile phone as it would on a monitor.

If advertisers and service providers do get it right, there is no question of the potential that lies in the convergence of rich, multimedia advertising with cutting-edge mobile applications and devices. This is certainly one space we have to keep watching!

ABOUT TAMI SUSSMAN

Chief Marketing Officer at the Integr8 Group
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