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The Anatomy of Mobile Advertising

A guide to the best mobile ad types available.

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The Very Best Mobile Ad Formats

by Cameron Fitchett | Aug 27, 2015 | Guides, Knowledge Base | 0 comments

When we talk about mobile advertising, unfortunately what we actually discuss is too often a little nebulous.

Case in point:

- *"Mobile advertising is putting your message in front of the right consumers at the right time."*

- *"We've noticed that the mobile advertising industry is a bit like the weather."*

- *"Mobile advertising is a tool to get your*

message in front of as many people possible no matter where they are."

Those are actually lines I've written in the past.

Sure, they do serve a purpose – they aren't untrue, per se – but they don't actually demonstrate what mobile advertising *is*, what the end result actually looks like. For anyone unfamiliar with mobile advertising (which is still a fair share), that ambiguity can be unduly problematic.

Frankly, this is a post I should have written a while ago.

Put painfully simple, the product of mobile advertising is **ads on a phone**. 🐦 🐦 That's what you pay for as an advertiser. That being the case, you should probably know what these ads look like and the different forms and sizes these ads can take.

A Tasty Mobile Ad Example

Here is an example of a mobile ad concept we put together for McDonald's:

The unit shows all the classic characteristics you've come to expect from a traditional desktop ad.

This mobile ad features marketing copy at the top, creative of the burger in the center, and a final call-to-action at the bottom – all designed to incite consumer interest and action.

But, of course, there are a few important distinctions as well...

The size and dimensions of the ad are most notable, as they contour to the shape of the mobile device. The ad has also taken the mobile touchscreen of the user ("*Show on Map*") into consideration, understanding that a consumer will have to tap on the call-to-action rather than click.

To this end, the call-to-action is clearly defined and easily accessible by touch.

Also, this mobile ad in particular makes clever use of mobile specific technology. You can see by the copy that the call-to-

action isn't just a generic "**Learn More**" or "**Buy Now**," that leads users to a corresponding mobile website.

No, this ad boasts a "**Show on Map**" call-to-action. It's a feature made possible because of mobile's ability to calculate a user's location using the GPS technology.

This McDonald's ad would be delivered to a consumer's phone and could dynamically show where the nearest McDonald's is in relation to the consumer's location.

It's a neat, useful trick, and just one of the many benefits of advertising on mobile.

The Difference Between Different Mobile Ads

However, not all mobile ads look like this or function in this manner.

The one you see above I would loosely define as **a full-screen, rich media ad**. But mobile ads come in many shapes and sizes and allow an even greater array of functionalities.

Here's a brief primer on five of the most popular kinds of mobile ads and what they look like:

1. Banner

Still the most popular mobile ad format, the banner ad uses an unobtrusive "banner" at the top or bottom of the screen which features relevant text and graphics.

Banner ads rely heavily on brand recognition, with little space to provide detailed information. It's a simple and safe way for a brand to get their name and product viewed by as many people as possible.

2. Native

Native ads are ads that don't really look like ads. Rather, they look like organic pieces of content that fit seamlessly into a user's experience.

The ad format mimics that of the original app format so that the

ad is almost indistinguishable from the content surrounding it. A great ad type for getting consumers to read brand content without disrupting their experience.

3. Video

Video ads are simple in their concept yet complex in their execution. Video ads showcase vidoes (go figure) that play while either a user opens or interacts with a mobile application.

They require a substantial budget, but offer a high level of user engagement.

4. Interstitial

Interstitial ads are interactive ads that display across the entire screen, often while an app is loading or after an app is closed.

Interstitials offer users a chance to partake in high-level engagement with an advertisement's product, often featuring compelling and creative call-to-actions.

5. Rich Media

Interactive, highly dynamic ads that are limited only by the advertiser's creativity (and budget).

Rich media ads specialize in creatively engaging with users to generate high CTR and conversions. Often, rich media mobile ads will make use of mobile-specific technology, like the GPS functionality in the McDonald's ad from above.

Rich media ads receive the consumer attention they do because they're either fun (as in an interactive mini-game) or convenient (as in coupon offerings).

Mobile Ad Sizes and the IAB

Mobile ad sizes have been defined as the above dimensions by the IAB .

Banner ads are either 300✕50 or 320✕50, while interstitials are either 300✕250 or 320✕250 respectively. Rich media and video ads will generally follow the same size guidelines, but will be dynamic and interactive as opposed to static.

Native ads integrate with the app ecosystem, so their sizing will vary depending on where they're shown.

You may have noticed that the bottom row of ad sizes contains labeling like "full page flex" and "adhesion banner." These are creative mobile ad units as defined by the IAB, but just to be clear, they're still just **rich media ads** – just named specifically according to function and features.

These are some of the best mobile ad formats around, and as such I'll be sure to cover exactly what they are and what they can do in a future post.

Which Mobile Ad Type is the Best?

Shrugs

Declaring one ad type the best would be a bit like comparing different kinds of fruit. Each provides its own value depending on the needs of a campaign or fruit salad you're trying to make.

However, I do think there are a few important things to note when selecting the ad unit that's right for your brand:

- **Banner ads are notorious for receiving low interaction rates**, which is partly a product of "banner blindness" or consumers intentionally or unintentionally ignoring the banners that appear at the top and bottoms of the screen.

- that said, banners do continue to have a place in mobile advertising, however, as **they're not very expensive**. Brands looking to get in front of as many eyeballs as possible can use the banner ad as a cheap way to remind consumers of their product or service, regardless of whether the consumer clicks on the ad or not.

- Banners can now also act as a starting point for more comprehensive functionality, such as click- or swipe-to-expand. These units are inexpensive and have lots of available inventory,

but allow brands to launch fully immersive experiences at a fraction of an interstitial's price point.

- If a brand is interested in static ads like the banner ad, **full-screen interstitials do produce significantly higher levels of engagement**. An interstitial campaign might be a solid alternative to the banner for those brands looking to accomplish more than just brand awareness.

- **Rich media is by far the best performing mobile ad unit on the market**. According to a study by the IAB and comScore, rich media ads result in higher user interaction (79% higher) better brand recall (18% more viewers recalled the brand) and better message recall (23% more users remembered the message of the ad), while polling more favorable with consumers (viewers thought rich media ads were 38% more fun and 43% more attention grabbing).

Such is the power of interactive advertising.

New to mobile advertising? Take our full mobile advertising 101 course for free:

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