

Using Multivariate Testing to Optimize Mobile Sites

3 Ways to Increase the Effectiveness of the Mobile Channel

Opportunity Abounds

With nearly three billion mobile device owners worldwide, 75 percent of whom have access to the Internet, a huge opportunity exists for marketers to



deploy and optimize mobile content. In fact, leading digital measurement firm comScore, Inc. has reported that the number of people in the U.S. using their mobile device to access news and information on the Internet daily more than doubled from January 2008 to January 2009 to more than 22 million mobile users. Those who use the mobile Web on a monthly basis also increased, to more than 63 million.¹

The most popular mobile sites are entertainment, news, weather, maps, and local information sources. Moreover, social networks are the fastest-growing category, with a whopping 427 percent increase year-over-year from January 2008. That's all great, but with more than 220 different commercially available mobile devices in the U.S. alone, how can mobile content and commerce providers possibly hope to discover what works best in serving their mobile customers? How do they find out what their mobile users prefer?

Introducing Testing

Even with the different technical requirements of mobile devices, it is possible to easily and effectively increase mobile engagement through a technique known as testing. Common methods for running controlled experiments on both websites and mobile sites range from simple A/B testing to sophisticated multivariate testing. In A/B testing, one or more new versions of a page or single element compete against the original (control) version. For example, two new versions of a headline might compete against the original headline.

Multivariate testing, on the other hand, is like running many A/B tests concurrently, where there are multiple elements being tested at the same time. For example, two alternate product images, plus two alternate headlines, plus two alternate product copy versions create a total of 27 possible combinations (including the original control versions).

Mobile optimization using A/B and multivariate testing has been proven as one of the most effective and immediate methods to increase visitor engagement, mobile application adoption, and content consumption. Here are a couple of tips to get you started:

1) Test Your Campaigns

With relatively little in the way of best practices for the nascent mobile channel, it can be difficult to know beforehand which content, user interface element, or aesthetic will be most effective with your audience. Make sure you test your mobile offerings before launching them so you can discover which content your users prefer on their mobile devices.

Discover what works by testing elements such as image size, image choice, specific words or phrases, placement, design, graphical elements, headlines, colors, variations in functionality, or dynamic content.

What's important to understand about mobile multivariate testing is that it not only shows you which combination of elements your visitors prefer, but it reveals which *individual elements* influence visitor behavior vs. those that do not. For example, did variations in product image influence visitor behavior more, less, or the same as the copy?

Understanding how each mobile site element influences the visitor experience is the essence of a "test-learn-repeat" process that marketers can use to prove (or disprove) the effectiveness of new ideas and continually improve their mobile site's ability to achieve—and exceed—their marketing goals.

Use mobile multivariate testing as a marketing strategy for learning how to better influence and persuade visitors to:

- interact with a mobile brand, content, and functionality
- adopt mobile site features in order to get information on the go
- click-through to mobile ads and geo-aware offers
- register for mobile accounts
- download digital products such as ringtones, wallpapers, apps, etc.

2) Continuously Improve

Use mobile multivariate testing as a platform for continuous improvement. The testing process reveals not only what works and should be implemented, but also what doesn't work and should be avoided.

Every new mobile idea, whether content, functionality or campaign related, should be put to the test to determine if it helps or hurts the visitor experience.

While some new ideas encourage engagement, others fail—sometimes significantly. But even with these failures, there is definable knowledge gained over what to avoid the next time. The ability to test a new idea and “look before you leap” is an unmistakable advantage that breaks the constraints on mobile marketing innovation.

Only once a solid testing capability is in place, and the impact of any change able to be quantified, can marketers truly optimize their mobile site's effectiveness.

3) Test Non-Intrusively

When you are looking for a mobile multivariate testing provider, look for one that will enable you to non-intrusively test all mobile device users without JavaScript. The majority of mobile devices still do not support JavaScript, making it impossible to use script-based testing solutions to present content variations, or track user behavior. The result is that you may be unable to test and target segments of your audience who don't have the newest mobile devices.

Solutions available on the market enable you to non-intrusively test multiple variations of your mobile user's experience to understand what content delivers the optimal response—helping you persuade your mobile users to make purchases, register for new accounts, or adopt self-service functions—without JavaScript or intrusive site changes.

SiteSpect's Mobile Web Optimization technology solves the problem of device compatibility because it is the only multivariate testing and behavioral targeting platform that works with all mobile devices. The SiteSpect solution does not require JavaScript and is able to test and track behavior across any type of content, including WML, HTML, CSS, streaming media, and more.

The SiteSpect optimization approach is unique in that no changes are made to the actual content being tested. In addition to working seamlessly with any mobile device, site architecture, or content management system, SiteSpect's solution eliminates the need for ongoing IT involvement before, during, and after running tests. This capability enables mobile site operators to non-intrusively test

variations of any content and track visitor behavior, revealing which versions are most engaging and persuasive. As a result, mobile marketers are empowered to achieve their goals of increased engagement, interaction, conversions, registrations, and end-user adoption. At last, mobile marketers are able to focus on achieving optimization goals and derive an unprecedented level of data accuracy, all while saving precious time, money, and resources.

About SiteSpect, Inc.

SiteSpect enables web marketers to optimize website and mobile web effectiveness through multivariate testing and behavioral targeting. By testing variations of landing pages, product descriptions, search results, and buy-flows, SiteSpect allows marketers to fine-tune every aspect of their website on a segment-by-segment basis. As the first and only non-intrusive solution available, SiteSpect empowers marketers to optimize their sites without the need for ongoing IT involvement. SiteSpect's patent-pending technology is used by some of the world's largest and most successful online businesses, including Cabela's, iProspect, Overstock.com, ShopNBC, and VEGAS.com. For more information, visit www.SiteSpect.com or call 617-859-1900.

¹ comScore News Release, “Mobile Internet Becoming A Daily Activity For Many,” March 16, 2009.

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