Mobile is eating the world

Four ways to rethink customer experiences
as mobile-first and mobile-only

by Brian Solis

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Mobile is eating the world

In May of 2015, Google revealed that mobile search had overtaken desktop search.[1] Google's news meant that more people are searching for information on a mobile device now than on their PCs. How people do so, where they go, and what they hope to accomplish is no longer mirroring how they interact on desktops and laptops. This is game changing because it impacts how businesses become discoverable and marketable during these critical moments.

The challenge? Most marketers still manage, create, and invest in campaigns and supporting technology platforms designed for a PC-first world. You may not yet see this important shift in customer decision-making and, as such, you may be missing critical marketing opportunities.

Smartphones are the new PCs. And, this is just the beginning of an entirely new mobile movement in which everyone has to compete on smaller screens. Smartphones will continue to evolve with the latest Android, iOS, et al, devices storming the market. At the same time, tablets, Internet of Things (IoT) devices, smartwatches, smart appliances, and whatever's next are also pushing consumers into a post-PC world. Marketers now have to compete for attention in an entirely different arena, and all of the rules and methodologies are not only different, they're unwritten.

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[1] Jerry Dischler, "Building for the Next Moment," Google's Inside AdWords Blog, May 5, 1015

The very foundation of online and in-app mobile interaction is now entirely different from interaction on a desktop, and it signals significant changes in how people discover, communicate, learn, and act.

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What's key here is that mobile, while it performs like the PCs you're used to, is a different beast altogether. For starters, mobile operates on touch-driven, highly portable operating systems (OS). This means that the platform and how it works is different, and most important, it changes how people interact. As a result, mobile has over the years spawned a new breed of consumer who moves faster, in spurts, with different gestures, behaviors, and resulting expectations. The PC world, on the other hand, is still largely confined to point-and-click parameters with a different type of OS. The two now coexist in parallel universes, but as technology advances, the good ole "one size fits all" marketing strategy no longer applies.

Trying to market, sell, and serve in a desktop-first world no longer works. With that said, investing in mobile-first programs isn't enough either. If you work in marketing or in IT, a shift in perspective is required to see the mobile world for its differences and also its uniqueness. Shift to designing for a world where context, intent, immediacy, and device trump legacy investments and philosophies.

Meet Generation C,
your connected customer

Before we get too far, let's put things into context. In a post-PC era, mobile isn't a strategy or technology; it's a lifestyle. People are changing and so must we.

Did you know that mobile consumers look at their phones on average 1,500 times[2] each week and they spend 177 minutes on their phone each day? With every pinch and zoom, touch and swipe, people are rewiring their brains to find, process, and act in mobile worlds. And as they do, mobile users are learning to expect that every business look, feel, and operate just like their favorite apps.

This is Generation C—otherwise known as your iCustomer. This isn't a generation defined by age, income, education, or other demographics. This is a group that's defined by a digital, mobile, real-time, always-on lifestyle. And, they're nothing like your traditional customers.

[2] Stacey MacNaught,"Tecmark Survey Finds Average User Picks up Their Smartphone 221 Times a Day," Tecmark, 2014

Look at how people use new technology, not at the new technology people use.

iCustomer habits

Mobile is the device that's always with us. This is why your connected customer most often begins their journey on a mobile device. It's always within reach. As a result, mobile is becoming the new mainstream, and the battleground for attention starts on the small screen.

To win in this new frontier, everything starts with getting to know your iCustomers and becoming their BFFs.

At a minimum, iCustomers suffer from shiny object syndrome. They own the latest mobile devices and gadgets. They live an active digital and mobile lifestyle without patience for the pace or ways of yesteryear. You see them every day. They're the people who never look away from their phones while waiting in lines, sitting on the bus or train, going up/down in elevators, eating meals (and taking pictures of their food), texting and walking, taking selfies, etc.

What's important though is that you understand that they're not just wasting time. They're getting things done their way.

Among their daily mobile habits, they…

- Deposit checks by taking pictures on their mobile device.
- Travel using mobile boarding passes.
- Get from point A to point B using Uber or Lyft.
- Research online to purchase in-store (Webrooming) and research in-store while shopping online (showrooming).
- Date via mobile apps.
- See which friends are near them at any moment using geo-location services.
- Think of smartphones as TVs and on-demand content as new TV shows.
- Visit YouTube to find videos of product demos, how-to information, customer experiences and reviews, alternative product use cases, and so on.
- Use apps to find local favorites for restaurants, services, and goods, then visit Yelp or other review sites to gauge peer experiences.

Born digital: Welcome to a multiscreen world

You would think iCustomers have two brains, four eyes, and 20 fingers with all they do on their mobile devices. They thrive in a multitasking, multiscreen[3] world where 91% turn to their phones for ideas in the middle of a task.[4] This is important for you to understand, because iCustomers start their decision-making journeys on the small screen. In fact, 90% of smartphone users say they've used their phone to make progress toward a long-term goal or multistep process while "out and about."[5] And, according to Mobify[6], 90% of consumers will use multiple screens to accomplish their goal.

Mobile apps and equally new devices and interfaces are introducing and fostering new capabilities and more important, new behaviors and expectations among connected consumers. Searching and making decisions about brands and making purchases is rapid fire, happening in micro bursts dozens of times each day.

As a result, mobile consumers have created their own decision-making journey, because today's desktop-process-turned-mobile is outmoded and filled with friction.

It's time to join Generation C and your iCustomers to rethink products, services, and experiences that are "born digital" and "born mobile" without legacy PC philosophies holding you back.

Doing so doesn't simply repackage what already exists as something new. The idea of "born digital and mobile" isn't conceived by groups of strategists or executives who question the logic of a selfie. It is the result of empathy and inspiration to do something extraordinary, contextually and culturally relevant, designed for a new generation and purpose-built to deliver unique and exceptional experiences.

This is an opportunity for brands to create mobile-first and mobile-only journeys and marketing campaigns that are more native, meaningful, culturally relevant, and effective— journeys that meet or surpass how consumers expect to interact. Where to start? **I've outlined four ways I think marketers need to rethink customer experience management to deliver mobile-first experiences.**

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3 "The New Multi-Screen World Infographic," Think with Google, August 2012

4 Consumers in the Micro-Moment, Wave 2, Google/Ipsos, U.S., March 2015, n=5,398, based on internet users.

5 Consumers in the Micro-Moment, Wave 2, Google/Ipsos, U.S., March 2015, based on internet users.

6 Rachel Serpa, "Repaving the customer journey: preparing for the future of multichannel," June 23, 2014, Econsultancy Blog

1

Mediumism is not the message

No matter how ambitious we get with new technology, it doesn't matter. Aligning without a bigger mission or vision for what we are trying to do—something that is going to matter to people—means we are just selling the way we always have. We are not moving in any new direction.

All too often, mobile's role in the digital marketing ecosystem is relegated to a portable version of the desktop web. This isn't going to work any longer. By prioritizing desktop-based web strategies and not innovating for mobile-first and mobile-only experiences, brands are missing critical new moments to engage customers.

Mediumism prevents marketers from absorbing or feeling the culture and nature of engagement and how people interact with information and one another, why, and what makes for incredible experiences.

Even though many marketers are designing for the smaller screen through responsive design and even developing custom apps, they need to think more philosophically about what mobile means to consumers and the role it plays in their personal and professional lives.

I mean who wants or needs another app? Just because you build it doesn't mean they will come.

And, what's the point of a website in a mobile era, beyond being responsive and functional on a smaller screen? Does anyone with a smartphone actually enjoy a mobile website or landing page?

It's time to rethink everything and the role sites, apps, etc., play in the new customer journey.

People want you to design a mobile experience that helps them go through their journey. They want businesses to understand their intent and design content, paths, and outcomes that align with the context of each moment of truth. They don't want generic click paths, marketing-speak, creative gimmicks, or friction-filled experiences.

If consumers don't want commodity content or made-to-fit mobile experiences, what exactly do they want? Finding the answer unlocks your opportunities for innovation, and the second change I recommend will give you a start.

I call this "mediumism," placing inordinate value, time, and resources on yet another platform or channel without understanding its relevance and value to the user.

2

Mobile experiences comprise many real-time micro-moments

To help businesses mobilize, Google recently introduced the concept of 'micro-moments',[7] a new mobile-centered perspective that's reshaping the marketing funnel and ultimately how companies market and sell. CMOs, brand strategists, and technologists must now learn how to capture attention and steer customer experiences in ways that are real-time, fleeting, and intentional.

Doing so will help businesses win the hearts and minds of connected customers in every moment of truth across every device. On the other hand, missing or ignoring these new moments means that brands will miss vital chances to connect.

When consumers reach for their devices to search in those moments, it's typically done on a smartphone, experienced through a smaller screen, and navigated through natural and native swipes, pinches, zooms, and clicks. Interestingly, micro-moments fill voids or lulls in time or complement simultaneous activities (read: multitasking); for instance, when someone is waiting in line, traveling or commuting, walking, dining or enjoying a drink, shopping in a store, relaxing, waking up, or laying down to sleep.

Micro-moments happen on the fly, and as a result, they've fractured the traditional customer journey into dozens or hundreds of real-time, intent-driven moments. This, according to Google, happens billions of times per day, and marketers at large must join in to engage and earn relevance.

For the most part, users are not jumping to websites, they aren't looking to chat with salespeople or experts, and they definitely aren't willing to drop everything they're doing to visit a physical location or get in front of a PC.

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[7] Think with Google's Micro-Moments

iCustomers live online, all the time, and their expectations of immediacy and relevance are unprecedented. They want to take instant action and they want instant gratification based on personal agendas and goals.

Since they can take action on any need or curiosity at any time, the customer decision journey has splintered into hundreds of tiny decision-making moments at every stage. Each moment becomes a beacon on the mobile-centered customer journey map.

As a marketer, think of split-second interactions you can deliver your customers. How can you allow them to interact with your brand in micro-moments?

What are mobile micro-moments and why are they important?

In short, micro-moments open windows of "in-the-moment" opportunities when someone searches for something top-of-mind using the closest device to them. They are incredibly rich in context and intent. It's what happens in these short bursts of actions that shape consumers' impressions or next steps. Essentially, micro-moments unfold through a variety of common "I want" scenarios that help people take steps or make decisions, such as:

I want to learn...

I want to buy...

I want to know...

I want to go...

I want to do...

10 best practices for delivering micro-moments

Strategists, marketers, and technologists at large must compete for the moments that now matter

1 **Identify key mobile-moments** and what happens in them: Why, where, and how people search for information and how they form a new customer journey map.

2 **Understand their goals** and aspirations for doing so.

3 **Use search insights** to identify new trends or find patterns of intent that you might not be addressing.

4 **Surface the context** of the search, the moment in which it takes place, and the behaviors and expectations that define it.

5 **Run an audit** of your current content, marketing, and media efforts. Are you present in the right places with the right information in the right context?

6 **Learn how information** is presented in each moment and understand which content formats would be ideal (and optimized) for easy discovery and consumption on the right device at the right time, every time.

7 **Map the data flow** to and from the device and discover ways to meet or exceed consumer expectations through technology, content, and engagement.

8 **Orient a single view** of the customer and all of the moments you need to guide their journey.

9 **Empower teams** to test and iterate using new approaches, engagement strategies, and also new KPIs and methodologies to win in mobile moments.

10 **Invest in technology** that commits your company to being "there" in mobile moments—comprehensively and consistently—to inform, engage, and empower people to make decisions and take actions their way.

3

Brands must rebrand for a mobile audience

Mobile changes everything about the idea of brand. In fact, iCustomers are often more loyal to their need in the context of their specific mobile-moments than a particular brand or product. This was the jaw-dropping news that Google confirmed in a recent study.[8] Turns out that iCustomers are attracted to those brands that best address their needs in-the-moment. Immediacy and relevance trump loyalty, and this has either dire or promising news for every business.

Here's the thing: iCustomers begin their journey in a brand-agnostic manner, even if brand affinity already exists. For example, 90% of smartphone users are not absolutely certain of the specific brand they want to buy from when they begin looking for information online. And, 65% look for the most relevant information regardless of the company providing it. [9]

This means that in mobile moments, intent and context count for everything. If you don't have information that's engaging, useful, and quickly discoverable, you lose out on conversion opportunities.

For example, Google learned that one in three smartphone users has purchased from a company or brand other than the one they intended to because of information provided in the moment they needed it.

Why? Because people don't want to be sold or persuaded. They want to be informed, engaged, and empowered. So much so, that 73% of consumers say that regularly getting useful information from a company is the most important attribute when selecting a brand. Google also learned that more than half of smartphone users have discovered

a new company or product when conducting a search on their smartphones. Businesses that get it are literally swiping sales from competitors.[10]

If your brand isn't useful, consumers will not only move on (and away from you) in mobile moments, they actually might not ever come back. Mobile is the new playing field for brands, one that offers discovery and engagement (and then consideration) and as many customer journey maps as there are mobile customers.

As a marketer, you must now outline and invest in a series of contextual and intentionally rich mobile journeys, with content and support that meets customers in their domain when, where, and how they unfold. More so, each mobile-moment must connect consumer intent and context with the desired outcome on any device—but explicitly for mobile.

This means that the future of marketing starts with identifying these new moments, defining what and where they are, what's driving them, what's expected, and how to make each matter.

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[8] Micro-Moments: Your Guide to Winning the Shift to Mobile, Google, 2015

[9] Consumers in the Micro-Moment, Wave 3, Google/Ipsos, U.S., August 2015, n=1,291 online smartphone users 18+

[10] When Path to Purchase becomes Path to Purpose, Google/TNS/Ogilvy, U.S., June 2014

4

Map context-driven, mobile customer experiences

If you don't deliver marketing and content with intent or purpose, you've contributed to a cluster funnel experience.

The mobile mindset has exposed a dated, cumbersome, disjointed PC-based customer experience. But, to be honest, that experience wasn't defined to be anything but a technology twisted cluster funnel. The problem is that there are too many cooks in the customer journey kitchen, and we're missing a mobile chef!
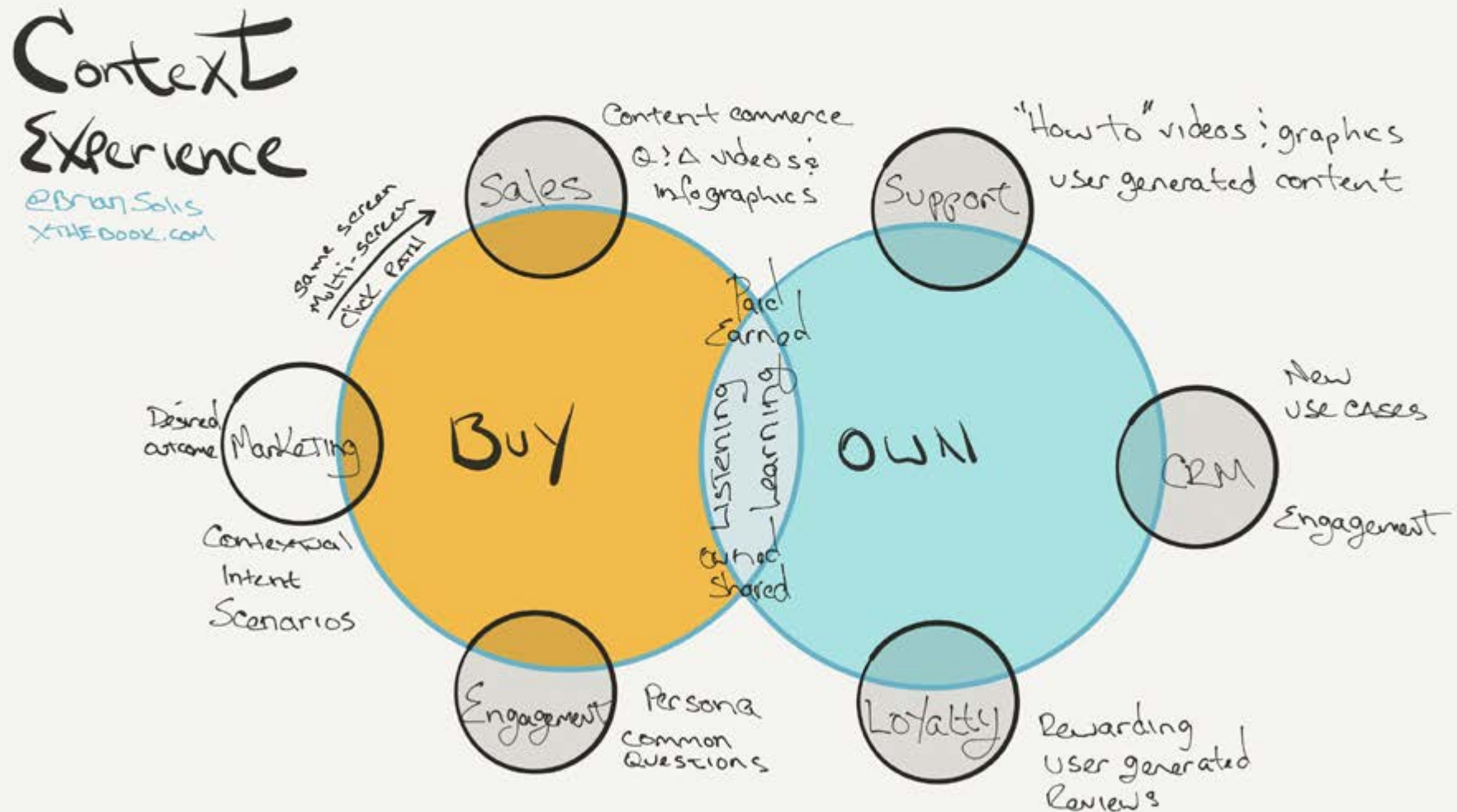
Today, in most marketing departments, one group designs creative marketing campaigns while others develop content for disparate groups (service, support, sales, etc.), while entirely different teams architect touchpoints such as click paths, landing pages, and email transactions. Each group, in their own way, strives to pull people into and support them through the cluster funnel. However, these groups don't typically work with one another, let alone understand iCustomers. Thus, the content customers see, the touchpoints that greet them, and how they're lead throughout the journey is not mobile-optimized and thus filled with friction.

To engage iCustomers and deliver a mobile, delightful, and productive experience, you must know their preferences, understand their behaviors and expectations, and more so, learn to engage them when, where, and how they want, in the context of the moment and their desired outcome.

Context marketing takes advantage of the entire customer journey

Customer wants to...

INTENTION

STATE / STAGE
Discovery
Research
Decisioning
Service / support
Loyalty

PERSONA
Who
Preferences
Values
Culture

CONTEXT MARKETING FOR iCUSTOMERS

EXPECTATIONS
Immediacy
Utility
Direction
Entertainment

SCREEN
Mobile
Wearable
PC

TIME AND PLACE
Engagement threshold
Bandwidth
Window

CONTENT: FORMAT AND FUNCTION
Infographic
Video
Landing page
Chat
Form

The context experience as Brian sketched it on his own mobile device

Context Experience
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A context marketing strategy looks at customer behavior, intentions, expectations, platforms, and corresponding technology trends, and designs a content infrastructure to meet people in the moments and on the screens in culturally relevant ways to:

Answer questions specific to the context of the moment and the outcome

Provide necessary information in each moment of truth

Deliver infotainment and entertainment directly and indirectly related to your space

Facilitate desired transactions that are native to the screen

Continually deliver value by sharing insights, innovative use cases, hacks, et al.

Introduce customers to relevant user-generated content, reviews, and experiences

The entire context ecosystem is something that then requires leadership and strategy to understand and address the needs of customers throughout their lifecycle. The right content connects with people in meaningful ways at the right time in the right place to help them take their next step or get closer to their goals. This is why content strategy is more important than ever before and why it must be tied to a larger-scale mobile context marketing effort.

Context marketing ultimately shapes customer journeys throughout every moment of truth, contributing to the sum of the overall customer experiences. Your canvas is much more expansive than ever before, spanning (and weaving together) web, mobile, social, display, and physical touchpoints in productive, value-added, and engaging means.

The most effective context marketing strategies are human-centric and focus on understanding customer...

- intentions
- questions
- past interactions
- devices
- behaviors
- frustrations
- expectations
- values
- goals
- activities

Readying your business for mobile

Most customers (86%) have said that they would pay up to 25% more for a superior experience.[11] That alone should serve as a catalyst to change.

Everything starts by first studying your consumers' behavior, expectations, objectives, preferences, and values. Then you must study the role technology plays in all of this and how they interact with other companies. Doing so unlocks innovation in user experience and ultimately every aspect of engagement, from product development to marketing to service and support to customer relationship management to corporate culture.

When all of these experiences add up, a brand is not just created, it's co-created through the experiences you design and the experience people have and share.

Mobile, social, and the real-time web have changed everything. The good news is that brands that learn, adapt, and engage will earn relevance and loyalty. All it takes is understanding customer context, intent, and desired outcomes to add value to each mobile-moment.

[11] Colin Burke, "100 Customer Service Statistics You Need To Know," InsightsSquared, April 22, 2015

Next step

For practical advice on mastering the mobile experience, download our eBook "How mobile leaders connect with customers in context."

It maps out seven steps for mobile success and includes case studies from Sitecore customers who have identified and delivered effective mobile micro-moments.

About Sitecore®

Sitecore is the global leader in experience management software that enables context marketing. The Sitecore® Experience Platform™ manages content, supplies contextual intelligence, and automates communications, at scale. It empowers marketers to deliver content in context of how customers have engaged with their brand, across every channel, in real time. More than 4,600 customers—including American Express, Carnival Cruise Lines, easyJet, and L'Oréal—trust Sitecore for context marketing to deliver the personalized interactions that delight audiences, build loyalty, and drive revenue.

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