Mobile Ads Drive Purchases On PCs

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Smartphone, tablet owners prefer to fire up a PC to purchase after seeing a mobile ad

One way to view smartphones is as a direct-response tool that consumers carry around in their pockets. Viewing an outdoor ad, for example, smartphone owners can act immediately via mobile to show interest or make a purchase.

Yet while this behavior does occur, research shows that smartphone and tablet users who see ads on their mobile devices are more likely to act on those ads via the desktop.

July research from Nielsen indicated that 22% of US smartphone users had made an online purchase via PC after seeing a mobile ad, more than quadruple the percentage who had purchased on their phone. Notably, tablet users were even more likely to buy something on a PC after seeing an ad on their device.

Given that tablets have a large-enough screen size and are more commonly used at home than out and about, usersâ€™ reasons for switching to the desktop to make a purchase suggest discomfort with mobile purchases, even when the individual isnâ€™t on the go, or the possibility that retail sites are not well-optimized for tablet viewing or utilization.

Some smartphone and tablet users did report taking direct action on their mobile devices, such as clicking to view full product offerings. Tablet users were more likely than smartphone users to report interacting with ads in any way.

One of the unique offerings of mobile advertisingâ€"the ability to deliver highly targeted ads based on locationâ€"fails to appeal to many users, especially older ones. While 45% of 13- to 17-year-olds surveyed said they thought location-based ads were more useful than traditional ads, the percentage hovered around one-third for respondents ages 18 to 44 and dropped significantly among those over 45.

Itâ€™s not surprising that older users might be more cautious about a form of advertising often seen as intrusive or insecure, but a failure to see location-based offerings as useful does not bode well for direct-response mobile advertising.

Still, as offerings continue to get more sophisticated and marketers increase their fluency with mobile targeting and relevance, ad spending on mobile devices will rise rapidly. eMarketer estimates such spending in the US will reach $2.6 billion this year, rising to nearly $11 billion by 2016.

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