

## Business communications

**Eric Carson** 

# Adverts at the touch of a button

**R**EADING gift guides over the Christmas holidays, I noted that the most 'asked for' items this year were those of the tech kind.

No doubt many of us would have received some sort of digi-gadget just a few weeks ago – a smartphone, a tablet or even a laptop.

It's no surprise then that Ofcom's latest report, a round up of communications in 2013, found that smartphone take-up was exceptionally high in the UK – second only to Spain.

Some 71 per cent of all mobile phone users said they owned a smartphone, compared to the US (61 per cent) and even Japan (37 per cent.)

So, with an increasingly 'mobile' society, comes a growing market, which is set to enhance how businesses promote their goods and services in the future. That is, mobile advertising. This includes all advertising delivered directly to the mobile device, including search and display advertising as well as text messaging formats. For the first time, the UK is now the most active mobile advertising



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This is the first year on record that Japanese businesses have not had the greatest spend per head, lagging behind in second at £7.50.

While online advertising is, to an extent, fully exploited, it seems that businesses now need to consider the 'mobile' variety as an active part of their marketing mix, as the benefits are clear.

For one, the potential audience is immense. With news that we now have the second biggest

smartphone take-up in the world, it's obvious there's a mass market to pursue.

Additionally, these targets are essentially within arm's reach of the advert.

Think about how often consumers check their smartphone, so the results of the advertising

are instantaneous.

Businesses can also measure and track the response of consumers, so they are able to readily analyse buyer behaviour and improve service, where necessary.

And m-commerce, as it's called, is not just limited to text messaging. Mobile adverts can be incorporated into many different smartphone applications, even some of the most popular around.

By business communications standard, as it is still relatively new, mobile advertising is hugely cost effective, compared to other forms of promotional adverts.

According to advertising agency ZenithOptimedia, by 2016, mobile advertising is to account for 7.7 per cent of all ad spend, "leapfrogging radio, magazines and outdoor to become the world's fourth-largest medium."

Therefore, isn't it time your business went mobile?

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## Technology

**Trevor Bingham** 

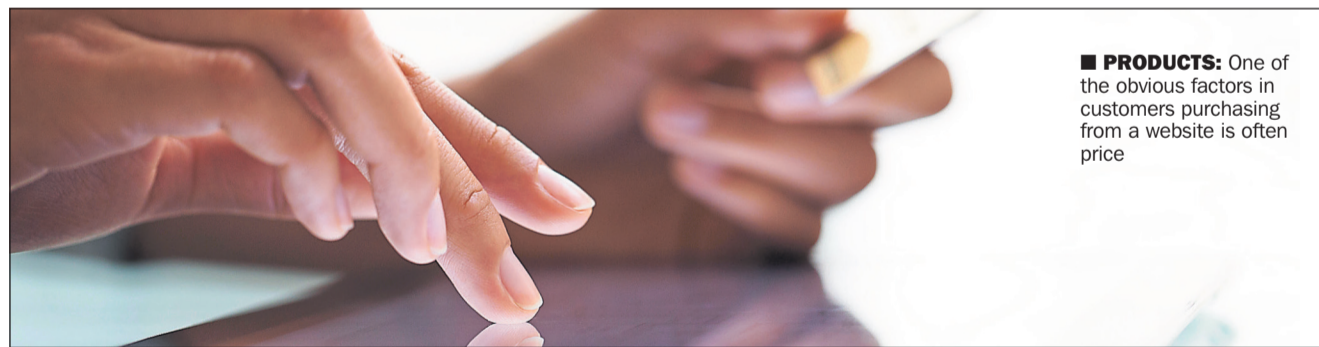
# A slice of e-commerce cake

**B**y NOW we've all heard about the growth in on-line sales and the decline in profits of some well-known high street names over Christmas. So who's not securing a slice of the e-commerce cake? With a digital savvy population using plug and play devices such as smartphones, tablets and ultrabooks with almost instant

boot-up times, coupled with lower levels of brand loyalty, businesses must adapt to the change in purchasing behaviour, whether it's B2B or B2C.

In the early 2000s Blockbusters were given multiple opportunities to buy digital start-up company Netflix for a snip at \$50 million. They failed to see the benefit of enjoying a slice of the e-commerce cake, Netflix became their fiercest competitor and the rest is history.

If you are a distributor, wholesaler or retailer, what you sell now is clearly a starting point in deciding on



■ **PRODUCTS:** One of the obvious factors in customers purchasing from a website is often price

what you might sell online. You may have products or services in your existing product portfolio that have lower profit margins (and don't warrant a huge amount of human intervention or telephone sales time) but would benefit from higher volumes of sales, possibly online?

You may also be considering a completely new target market for your web/online business, in which case research into what this market finds attractive is essential as well as your likely competition. An alternative to this is to use what you know best, your

existing customers. Focusing on existing relationships is undeniably easier to target, reach and in some cases a good introduction into selling online with some quick wins. But don't forget, if this is your primary audience, it is essential not to forget why your customers buy from you in the first place and incorporate this into your online shop.

One of the obvious factors in customers purchasing from a website is often price and although e-commerce sites may have low overheads compared to a high street shop, it's more important in

the long run that potential customers purchase from you as a trusted expert rather than the cheapest. However, if low margin and large quantities is your strategy for success then perhaps those low margin non-technical items are ideal for your e-commerce site rather than take up valuable space in your high street premises.

Many e-commerce sites are also the perfect solution to sell those spare parts that are important as a part of your customer service provision. When customers walk into a shop, a good sales person

can often be successful in converting a passing interest into a sale though their charm, professionalism and product knowledge.

However, on a website these human interactions don't exist so we are left with the important task of creating websites that are better, quicker and more personalised than your competitors. For example can you offer appropriate payment methods (on account or by credit card)? Do you usually recommend complimentary products? What about your customers special pricing, sales history

and order status? So, how do you tell your audience you have a fantastic website?

Making sure your customers can find you easily online is a competitive game to play. Search engine optimisation (SEO) be that organic or via pay per click campaigns (the background shaded areas at the top or right hand side of your web-search) is a good start in online presence.

Additionally advertising (on or offline) is also very effective in driving traffic to your website. For example, offer the option to order online at the bottom of your traditionally posted invoices or advertise your online shop with a link address at the bottom of your emails to customers.

Offering something as simple as a 2 per cent discount on online purchases could not only drive people to your site but encourage them to return month on month rather than picking up the phone.

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