URBAN AIRSHIP

The Mobile Surface Area:
A Landscape of Opportunity

Part of our "From Good Push to Great Engagement" series

The Mobile Surface Area: A Landscape of Opportunity

We've established that mobile engagement is crucial to the success of your app and therefore business value and brand, but how and where does mobile engagement happen?

Updates to mobile operating systems and advancements in technology have rapidly created new opportunities and methods to reach new users. In the early 2000s, SMS text messaging began to take off as a common capability with "feature" phones. Once the iPhone and Android OS came along, a well developed app ecosystem emerged. Push notifications entered the scene in 2009, offering an entirely new way for brands to communicate with their app users. A parade of new capabilities have transpired since, including digital wallets, location services, in-app messaging, message centers, and more.
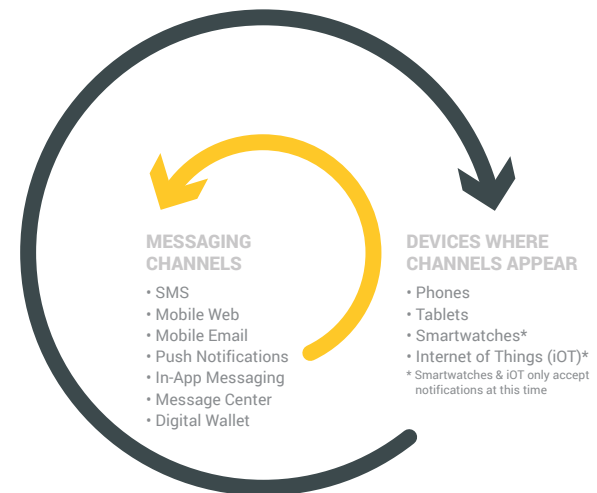
In short, the communication channels to connect with customers has expanded considerably. In addition, the types of devices expanded as well: from phones to tablets to

new types of wearables that make it more convenient for a user to bring their digital life with them.

So where can mobile engagement happen? It's simple — anywhere and everywhere.

As a category, mobile engagement is very broad, spanning communications on smartphones, tablets, smartwatches and other wearables, with experiences both inside and outside of apps.

The mobile surface area:

MESSAGING CHANNELS

- SMS
- Mobile Web
- Mobile Email
- Push Notifications
- In-App Messaging
- Message Center
- Digital Wallet

DEVICES WHERE CHANNELS APPEAR

- Phones
- Tablets
- Smartwatches*
- Internet of Things (iOT)*
* Smartwatches & iOT only accept notifications at this time

We call this combination of channels and mobile devices the mobile surface area. And it's continuing to expand.

LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

When should these different channels be used? It depends on the level of engagement you are seeking. Digital channels that have been adapted for mobile have been around longer, providing broader reach but relatively shallow engagement, while native mobile smartphone channels lend themselves to deeper and sustained engagement. There are opportunities and reasons to use all of these channels.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT CHANNELS ADAPTED FOR MOBILE

Mobile web: As the world has shifted from the desktop to the smartphone, the mobile web has become an important investment area. Mobile web and search activity are typically the first way a customer finds out about your company online. Without a mobile website, you'll struggle to meet customers' needs for content tailored to smaller screens, and your business will be less prominent in search engine results as algorithms like Google's make adjustments to prioritize mobile websites.

Social channels: Your brand likely has a presence across several social channels, such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn, and these can be a great, low-cost approach to engage with fans and broaden conversations. However, posts can be quite ephemeral — the average lifespan of a tweet is pegged at 18 minutes[1]

— and ongoing adjustments to platform algorithms like Facebook's mean you may only reach 2 percent of your audience without additional promotional investments.[2]

Email: Mobile email is a technology in transition — it struggles to get the engagement rates it sees on desktop. According to Yesmail Interactive, mobile devices account for 64.5 percent of all email opens, but desktop conversion rates are 50 percent higher with click-to-open rates at least twice as high for most industries.[3] These differences between email on a mobile device versus desktop will only become more significant as consumers continue to go online more from mobile devices.

NATIVE MOBILE ENGAGEMENT CHANNELS

SMS/Text messaging: While this messaging service is widely available, and offers the broadest reach to 99.9 percent of handsets globally, its targeting capabilities and response analytics are limited and it requires greater investment to bring in contextual data like location.

According to Tatango, the number one reason consumers opt-in to a commercial SMS program is to receive coupons, making it a great channel to reach discount-conscious consumers.[4]
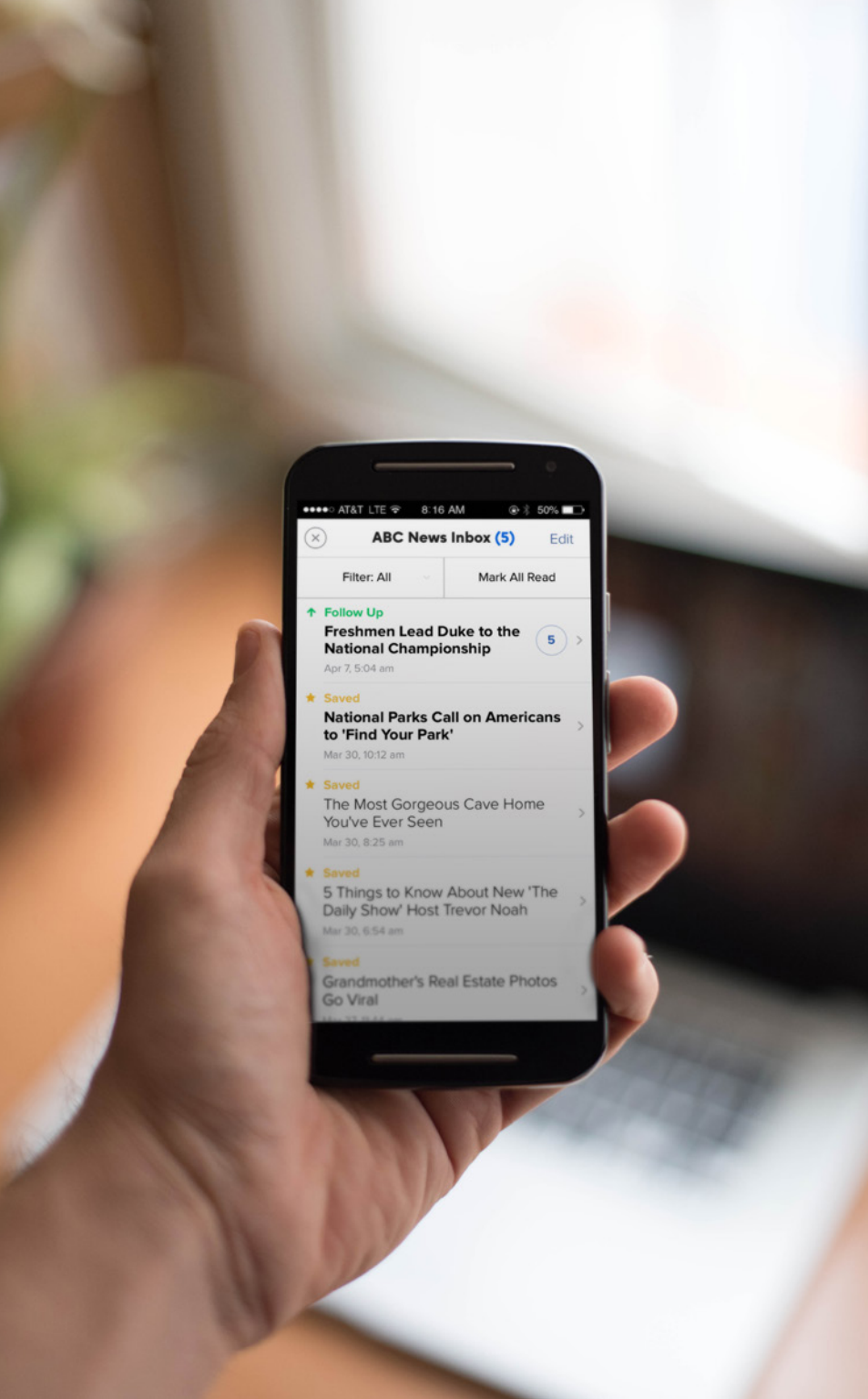
Push notifications: Push notifications have quickly become the leading opt-in communication channel. The Urban Airship Good Push Index study found that on average 43 percent of users request these notifications, suggesting the high value it offers. Delivered to a phone's lock screen or via an onscreen banner alert, push notifications inform users about new information about an app.

Through a solution like Urban Airship, you can target your push notifications to increase the relevance of your messages. Our studies show that by including segment attributes like location, in-app behavior, message preferences and more, apps are able to achieve a four to seven times higher response rate than non-targeted or broadcast push notifications.

In-app messages: In-app messages are simple, text-based notifications that appear inside your app via a banner on the top or bottom of a user's screen. Because these messages are delivered in your app, there isn't an opt-in process, allowing you to reach the majority of your app audience. For this reason, they are a great complement to push notifications. We recommend using in-app messaging for new feature updates, reminding users to complete tasks and other service-related benefits.

Message centers: A message center inside your app reaches all app users and can help drive people back into your app through badge counters on your app icon. Think of it as an easy-to-author content publishing platform that allows you to send the latest offers, promotions and rich content to your audience, without having to either update the app or stop users in their tracks. It's ideal for communications and messages that are not time-sensitive as it gives users the power to catch up on your content at their convenience.

Mobile wallets: Mobile payments are definitely on the rise, with the latest investments from Apple and Google. But, mobile wallets are more than payments. Users can download wallet items such as a boarding pass, ticket, loyalty card, gift card or coupon, to their Apple Passbook or Google Wallet for easy access — no app required — as well as receive expiration and location-aware reminders sent to their device home screen.

Wallet content can be updated and changed effortlessly over time, personalized to your user, and distributed through various communication channels like push notification, text or email.

Location: Location is not a messaging channel, but it is uniquely mobile context that's ever-present.

And that's what makes location a game changer. With proximity data, your brand can bridge the digital and physical experiences for your customers. More broadly, customers' current locations as well as their historical locations can be layered on to each of these native mobile engagement channels, reaching users in a certain time zone, particular ZIP code, or even a specific aisle of your store.

Location provides the insight necessary to connect with your audience in the moments that matter most.

OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE MOBILE SURFACE AREA

Each channel offers an opportunity for engagement in the mobile surface area. If a brand has yet to create an app, SMS/text, mobile web and digital wallet are good channels to begin driving engagement with your customers.

If a brand has already created an app, push notifications (including those with interactive buttons), in-app messages and rich in-app content offer exceptional ways to drive greater engagement and advance both users' goals and your business's. Response rates to these native mobile channels trounce those of traditional marketing channels. This means that notifications, in-app messages and

message center are prime channels within the mobile surface area poised for broader adoption. They build long-term value for both the brand and all of its users, opted-in or not.

You can also amp up your mobile engagement strategy by reaching users across additional mobile devices, such as smartwatches, especially considering use cases where a quick glance to the wrist is more appropriate than causing users to dig for phones in pockets or purses.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE ENTIRE MOBILE SURFACE AREA

When brands combine these different channels to build a unified communication strategy, users will take notice.

Brands that realize the opportunities to engage across different channels will create more meaningful, valuable and higher-impact relationships with customers.

SOURCES

1. Blog, "When Is My Tweet's Prime of Life? (A Brief Statistical Interlude.)" Bray, P., YouMoz, 11/12/2012. https://moz.com/blog/when-is-my-tweets-prime-of-life

2. Blog: "Facebook Zero: Considering Life After the Demise of Organic Reach" Manson, M., Social@Ogilvy, 03/06/2014. http://social.ogilvy.com/facebook-zero-considering-life-after-the-demise-of-organic-reach/

3. "YesMail's Email Marketing Compass: A Year In Review – Best Practices for Holiday Season Planning" http://www.yesmail.com/resources/email-benchmarks/yesmails-email-marketing-compass-year-review-best-practices-holiday-season

4. Blog: "Why Do Customers Opt-in to SMS Marketing?" Johnson, D., Tatango, 11/04/2014. http://www.tatango.com/blog/why-do-customers-opt-in-to-sms-marketing/