Enhancing the exchange: Understanding the role of mobile marketing in museum services.

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Abstract

With increased use of interactive and mobile phone technology for the purposes of marketing, service innovation and service delivery research has focused on the ways that technology affects customers and enhances the exchange. Service providers aim to add-value to their service offering, cost-effectively, to realize greater sales volume and greater sales value over a longer customer-lifetime. In relation to museum visitors, little to no research has been conducted on the depth of relational sentiment developed via technology. Technological activities operating in a promotional capacity, attracting visitors, mobile alerts and messaging and information services facilitating and supporting services to both online and onsite consumers, would all appear to add some value and benefit to the customer exchange. Enabling technology and enabled encounters are a relatively new, strategic integration in museums. This research aims to determine what role mobile technology plays in enhancing service relationships and social bonds through the use of mobile phone technology in museums. The paper explores the role of interactive technology specifically focusing on mobile phone technology in the service paradigm of museums.

Introduction

With increased use of interactive and mobile phone technology for the purposes of marketing, service innovation and service delivery, research has focused on the ways that technology affects customers and enhances the exchange. Mobile phones along with other forms of interactive technology are regarded as common practice in some commercial exchange environments and are a key part of an emerging e-service paradigm (Rust and Kannan, 2003). Service providers aim to add-value to their service offering, cost-effectively, to realize greater sales volume and greater sales value over a longer customer-lifetime with positive word-of-mouth communications thus providing a multiplier effect. In relation to museum visitors, little to no research has been conducted on the depth of relational sentiment developed via technology. This research aims to determine what role mobile technology plays in enhancing service relationships and social bonds through the use of mobile phone technology in museums. This paper proceeds by first examining literature related to museums and technology in museums. Second, presenting data and methods, and third, discussing findings and conclusions. The paper explores the role of interactive technology, specifically focusing on mobile phone technology in the service paradigm of museums.
Current use of technology in museum settings

The acquisition of e-customers and the use of m-marketing is difficult and expensive (Leppaniemi and Karjaluoto, 2005; Barnes and Scornavacca, 2004). In museums, service relationships are proposed, with technology and customer’s social needs supporting each other. Technological activities operating in a promotional capacity, attracting visitors, mobile alerts and messaging and information services facilitating and supporting services to both online and onsite consumers, would all appear to add some value and benefit to the customer exchange. Enabling technology encounters is a relatively new, strategic integration in museums.

In the case of museums, the future is proposed to include online chat with museum curators; blogging with the museum mascot, social networking with other interested guests and using technologies that are similarly suited to being integrated with current services (Yeh and Lin, 2005; Hawley 2004). There is consensus on the limited research pertaining to visitor satisfaction and interactive technologies within a non-profit museum format (Yeh and Lin, 2005; Hawley 2004). Different audiences visit cultural venues for differing reasons, ranging from educational visits to socialization, thus increasing the complexity of how technology could be used (Hawley, 2004; Yeh and Lin, 2005; Kotler and Kotler, 1998). Proposition One: Mobile marketing (M-marketing) is expected to increase interactivity by involving the consumer, increasing brand awareness.

The rising prevalence of mobile phone usage has allowed marketers to consider and use mobile communications as a channel to disseminate advertising and informational messages to current or potential consumers. Although not heavily researched, there is some indication that mobile communications are met with skepticism and are seen as an annoyance (Bauer, Reichardt, Barnes & Neumann, 2005). This is the reason that M-marketing should be examined in contexts to ensure that adoption is positive. Proposition Two: Mobile marketing is an annoyance in the museum context.

In particular, SMS messaging has been thought of as a powerful tool to leverage marketing communications to consumers based on figures indicating over 2 trillion messages being sent by the year 2007 (Bauer et al, 2005). Mobile marketing or m-marketing (Mort & Drennan, 2002) is considered in the field of marketing as a powerful tool to reach and personalize content to potentially capture new markets in an immediate and effective manner (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2003; Haig, 2003; Nsyeen, Pedersen & Thorbjornsen, 2005; Bauer, et al, 2005; Grant & O’Donohoe, 2007, Mort & Drennan, 2002). Researchers suggest, due to the popular nature of SMS, it is more likely to be accepted and adopted by consumers in most contexts (Mort & Drennan, 2002). Proposition 3: SMS messages are most likely to be accepted if the content is perceived as relevant and entertaining (Bauer et al, 2005; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2003; Grant & O’Donohoe, 2007), particularly amongst the younger generations (Grant & O’Donohoe, 2007).

Moreover, it has been suggested that SMS messaging is the most popular form of mobile marketing in the younger generation (Heinonen and Strandvik; 2005). Proposition 4: The younger generations are more likely to adopt, appreciate and use mobile technology.
Heinonen and Strandvik (2005) suggest due to the personal nature of a mobile phone, consumers only like to receive messages from personal permitted contacts and see others as an invasion of privacy (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2005; Mort & Drennan, 2002). M-messages often result in consumers feeling they are being tracked or watched by the organization responsible for the message (Leppaniemi and Karjaluoto, 2005; Yunos, Gao and Shim, 2003). Albeit consumers often opt in to m-messages, this issue of privacy invasion remains a constant issue in the endeavor for m-messaging approval (Leppaniemi and Karjaluoto, 2005; Kavassalis, Spyropoulou, Drossos, Mitrokostas, Gikas and Hatzistamatiou, 2003). Proposition 5: Consumers see mobile technology as an Invasion of privacy.

In an attempt to overcome the perception of this invasion of privacy, it has been suggested that levels of acceptance are said to increase if the mobile marketing message was permitted by the consumer in a ‘pull’ fashion rather than ‘pushed’ by the organization (Heinonen & Strandvik, 2003). Proposition 6: Levels of acceptance increase if the mobile marketing message was permitted by the consumer in a ‘pull’ fashion rather than ‘pushed’ by the organization.

Interactive concepts of edutainment and entertainment will enhance service provision (Pierroux, 1998) and provide a means to reach, communicate, attract and retain potential consumers (Yeh and Lin, 2002). Text messages in a commercial sense are more likely to be viewed if the information provides entertainment and offers an option to cancel permission based messaging. In this sense, richer media formats such as Multimedia messaging could appear as the preferable option to provide entertainment; however consumers can perceive such messages as costly and are less likely to download (Jenkins, 2006; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2005; Mort & Drennan, 2002). Proposition 7a: Richer media formats are the preferable option to provide entertainment; however consumers could perceive such messages as costly and less likely to download under this assumption. Proposition 7b: Richer media are seen as costly and consumers are unlikely to download under this assumption. These propositions have not been tested in a museum setting. It is therefore important we understand the role mobile technology could play in enhancing visitation and repeat visitation and do not embark on using this technology if it will not be greeted positively.

**Data and Method**

This study aims to examine the role of mobile phones in visitor interaction with the museum. This study is directed at this technologically efficacious Y gen 18—39 segment (Heaney, 2007), as they have the potential to adopt mobile technology, are users and owners of mobile technology and are the growth consumers of museum for the future. A set of 22 consultant customer interviews (Eisenhardt, 1989) were conducted to gain description of a typical museum offering, their mobile phone usage and ownership and the need and attitude toward interactive mobile technology in a museum experience. A mall intercept technique was used in a popular metropolitan museum precinct to gather interested participants for research. These were later contacted. The scripts were the unit of analysis (Hubbert, Sehorn, & Brown, 1995),
and responses were examined for frequency, strength of response and analyzed to develop theory using a conceptual map (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Findings and discussion

Four clear groups user groups were found in those interviewed, including those who use and own mobile phones and embrace all applications; those who use and own mobile phones and embrace both applications such messaging and phone usage; those who use and own a mobile phone and embrace only phone usage (no messaging) and those that own but rarely use any services. This final group appears to embrace no or limited technology of any sort. It is evident these groups could be segmented based on technology readiness (Grant & O’Donohoe, 2007), adoption (Bauer et al, 2005) and involvement with technology (Jenkins, 2006) and each have differing opinions on the role of mobile technology in a museum setting. These groups could form the basis of consumer research for the future as this usage appears to impact perceptions of mobile usage in museums. Propositions 1 and 7a were rejected, with all others supported by the candidates interviewed. These will be discussed in the following section.

Aligned with current technology research, in particular mobile phones, some candidates suggested that using mobiles as a tool may enhance the technical quality of the experience (4) with others diametrically opposed (16). Those opposed did not see mobile phones as an accessory and only as an emergency form of telecommunications. This finding rejects proposition one, that mobile marketing is expected to increase interactivity by involving the consumer increasing brand awareness. Coupled with this, respondents (16) suggested that advertising and promoting at this level was disturbance, and they preferred only contact from their personal permitted contacts. This supports and accepts proposition two.

Furthermore, supporting Heinonen and Strandvik (2005), this group of candidates found mobile marketing to be an annoyance; in general services and in the consumption of a museum service. They suggested SMS reminders and promotions would interfere with “lives” and “plans” and would be seen as an invasion of privacy (supporting proposition eight) however some consumers suggested that in a rare and limited event there might be some advantage for SMS messaging in gaining quick and preferential ticketing. This offering is a weak acceptance of proposition three that suggests SMS as the preferred method of mobile technology.

Moreover, many concerns (16 candidates) existed with respect to the privacy and protection of phone numbers. These candidates (16) were concerned that others, including both individuals and firms could gain access of phone numbers and details and use them for other purposes such as “m sales stalking”. This concern would stop many candidates from sharing their numbers with museums. This advances the findings of Bauer et al, (2005) who found that candidates had concerns when sharing mobile numbers with firms supporting proposition seven. The candidates who suggested that mobile phone technology would enhance the experience and improve quality was the entire younger end of the demographics ranging in age from 18-24. This finding supports the work on youth demographic and technology readiness suggesting that different demographic groups and generation are technologically
ready and likely to positively respond to M-marketing (Bauer et al, 2005; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2003; Grant and O’Donohoe, 2007) supporting proposition four.

The most popular application was messaging and the least popular was using mobiles to access downloads and media, rejecting proposition six and accepting proposition three. Candidates who were mobile phone loyalist said they would use downloads, however the costs were prohibitive. Interestingly, one of the four ‘non-loyalists’ thought that if costs of downloads could be passed back to the museum they would use downloads however at this time the cost of access via ISP to downloads outweighed any benefit to enhancing the experience. This supports the concept of the firm managing and owning the channel costs and advances the issues raised by Heinonen and Strandvik, (2005). They (18) suggested that if firms are intending on using technology to reduce costs, any costs related to the technology must not be passed on to the consumer directly and obviously.

Most other candidates skeptically and cynically saw using downloads as a way of redirecting marketing and promotional costs back on the consumer and felt this was unfair and costly. As offered by Heinonen and Strandvik, (2005), (12) candidates supported the customer’s preference for customer pull strategies rather organizational push strategy when m marketing was used accepting proposition five. Finally, consumers (16) suggested mobile phones and their use offered little to enhance the museum experience and improving satisfaction with the museum visits. This supports the theory that technology is an enabler of creating atmosphere and efficiency (Klassen, Russell and Chrisman, 1998) but is not a direct and substantial predictor of enhancing satisfaction or gaining consumers repeat visitation.

**Conclusion**

This study offered insight into the nature of the judgments concerning mobile phone use in museums. The themes of annoyance breach of privacy and costs were raised as negatives, with no specific advantages offered. It is evident there may be an opportunity for mobile provider alliance in M-marketing with providers managing privacy and security and developing some form of cost reduction for downloads of a mass marketing type. Consumer concerns over excessive cost and privacy do appear to outweigh M-marketing advantages in this context. The concern of consumers that increased costs are shifted from the firm to the consumer, could provide an opportunity to develop strategic alliance with ISP’s to offset costs and shift download costs back to the firm. Under current conditions in this context, consumers see minimal value in mobile phone marketing other than updates alerts and reminders. This paper has focused on m-marketing within the museum context and the findings from this study will inform a major empirical study to validate and offer recommendations for managerial implications. It is suggested future research pertaining to the general m-marketing consumer could also be undertaken to enhance and provide additional emphasis within this area of research.
References


