

Where traditional and digital meet in the mobile space

By [Clinton Young](#)

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It is funny to me that the future of traditional advertising is digital. Where people believe that digital will someday kill traditional media, I believe that digital is in fact its saviour. With the fast adoption of smartphones, wireless internet and other mobile devices, the emergence of traditional and digital is most certainly happening in the mobile space.



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Firstly though, for digital to truly save traditional, it has to solve a few of the fundamental problems traditional media faces.

The first is analytics: traditional has for far too long gotten away with poor performing campaigns because of no real measurable analytics. The second, more important issue for me is conversion. Having a digital background where everything is tracked and measured has instilled into my very core a results-driven attitude to advertising. If it's not returning on investment on a pre-determined objective, it's a failure.

Although it's not a perfect science, digital does have the ability to measure traditional media through the use of URL calls to action. Separate URLs can be created for different media channels and creative. The analytics can then determine which media and creative is achieving the best results for future optimisation. It's not an exact science, but it is a step in the right direction. This for me is second prize; first prize is determining which media and creative not only got a consumer to my digital platform but also converted at that very moment.

This is key: if you are not familiar with the ZMOT (zero moment of truth) principle I strongly suggest you read up about it as this is where traditional and digital convergence is at its most beneficial... capturing a consumer at their decision-making moment and providing them with the tools to convert - simply and efficiently.

QR and AR

The ability to now see a print ad and convert in that very moment is now a reality through a mobile device, or at least should be. There are a few technologies that facilitate this process, most notably QR (quick response) and AR (augmented reality), but are they really the future? What other methods and technologies should we be looking at?

Let's start with QR and AR, although these are two very different technologies and really perform two distinct actions. In marketing terms their objectives are one and the same. This is to drive consumers to digital platforms from traditional media via their mobile devices and ultimately to convert on a pre-determined action. AR is actually a much broader topic but in context of this article I'll focus on the branded mobile marketing applications of the technology.

AR has a lot of buzz around it at the moment. Its ability to display to the consumer a fun, engaging experience is probably its biggest selling point - [see some examples here](#). It has been used internationally for brands such as VW, Marmite and many more, and is growing in popularity - but for me not in the right way. Most executions are nothing more than gimmicks and do not provide the consumer with any real benefits. Although these gimmicks get some attention at first, the problem is, the effect wears off fast. The gimmicks can also at times get in the way of the most important objective, conversion. I feel there is a future for this technology but marketers need a new approach. I'll touch on this later.

QR codes have been around for several years now, but if you don't know what they are you might have seen their strange-looking black and white pixel-looking images on till slips, print ads and even some product packaging. The idea here is that this code, when scanned by a QR reader on your device, takes you to an optimised web page where you can read more or convert. It sounds great, but there are problems.

Shared issues

Both AR and QR share many of the same issues that stand in their way of becoming bona fide traditional media saviours.

The first being access, because although some devices come with a QR code reader pre-installed, many people don't know it exists, let alone what to do with it - and never mind the devices that don't have the reader pre-installed. AR on the other hand has even less device penetration, as AR requires bespoke apps to read the symbols, so shipping devices with pre-installed AR apps is well nigh impossible. With QR codes at least, any QR code reader will be able to read it. Creating QR codes is also a simple process with many websites providing this service for free.

It's worth mentioning here that there are several apps available that allow for multiple branded AR experiences. They essentially offer the platform for brands to upload their AR content into their system, which then propagates this down to consumers who have their app installed on their device. The issue here once again is there are several apps and consumers will need to have all these apps installed and kept up to date all the time for them to have all the current content. That's not very convenient to the end user.

The second is education. QR has been around for quite some time but has not really taken off. This is largely because the vast majority of consumers don't know what it is, how it works, or what it can do for them. AR faces the same problem. This lack of education around these technologies brings me to my next issue...

Removing the barriers is key

Convenience. Technologies that survive the test of time are those that remove barriers and make users' experiences easier and simpler. Although education can help to achieve this, at the end of the day the technologies need to stand on their own. The more convenient a technology, the more likely consumers will adopt it.

Bearing this in mind, let's look at some other technologies and methods.

Firstly, something that I feel is greatly underused and gets far less attention than it deserves is the modest URL. This is by far the easiest way a consumer can access your digital content from traditional media. The consumer does not need any special apps installed, in most cases will know what a URL is and what it does, and therefore little, if any, additional

education is required. It will take the consumer the same time, if not less, to access their mobile browser, enter the URL and load the webpage, as it would to open their AR/QR app, focus the camera, process and download the information and then display the content.

What is absolutely key here, however, is this URL must take the consumer to an optimised page for the device they are using. With responsive design, it's now possible to create pages that react differently to various devices. This means iPhone, BlackBerry, iPad etc. users can have experiences they are used to on that device. Providing a simple and familiar experience to your customer will no doubt contribute to an increase in conversions.

The technology of the future - NFC?

The second technology I would like to talk about has the potential to change the game completely - and it's NFC or Near Field Communication. Much like Bluetooth, but for the 21st century, this technology allows the immediate transfer of information between two or more devices with or without authentication. This technology has already been part of our lives for several years but in a far more passive state - such as in the little dongle you swipe to open the parking boom at work, or the access card you swipe to open the front door.

The beauty of this technology is its simplicity. At its bare minimum it comprises a transmitter and a receiver. The transmitter is a tiny microchip with a copper wire antenna, so small you will hardly notice it glued between two pieces of paper. The transmitter or reader is a powered device that creates a magnetic field that when within its field it can read or write to the microchip.

OK, so what does this mean in marketing terms? Well, imagine a large supermarket chain distributing a mobile NFC app to its loyalty customers to see promotions in the press. Those customers simply open the app, swipe their device over the promotion and the product is immediately added to their online shopping cart ready for payment and delivery. Although this still means the consumer needs to have the app installed on their device, enough incentive has been provided long-term for them to do so: convenience.

Another example of this could be a music retailer that has its NFC app distributed to its customers. When they see an in-store poster promoting their favourite artist's new album, simply holding their device close to the poster opens their app and starts downloading the album to their device immediately.

What about seeing the latest blockbuster movie poster at the bus stop? Simply holding your device near the poster opens your favourite cinema app and allows you to book tickets there and then or, if you not yet sold, watch the trailer while you wait for the bus.

Probably the best thing about NFC is the fact that this technology will be prevalent five years from now, meaning consumers will not need to be educated. A few large international banks have already rolled out this technology on their credit card products, allowing customers to pay for products by tapping their card on the point of sale device. The London transport system operates almost exclusively on the NFC enabled Oyster card system.

Back to AR

But I digress... I mentioned earlier there is a future for AR. The thing about all this NFC stuff is it's still a few years away from being a reality. AR can do all this now, maybe not with the full connivance of NFC, but certainly more conveniently than the current gimmicks.

All three of the above the NFC examples can be implemented now through AR. The supermarket, music and movie apps only need to recognise the promotions being advertising to do the same actions.

I don't believe that traditional media will die; I don't believe digital will be the killer. I do believe the two need to work together in a truly holistic and integrated collaboration.

Digital is not enemy, it's an ally - ready and waiting to be called up to take its place.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Clinton Young is the creative director at [\[www.basetwo.co.za Base2\]](http://www.basetwo.co.za) and have over 12 years advertising experience. He recently moved back from London after 10 years and have worked with major brands including Skype, T-Mobile, BT, Volvo, Toyota, Mazda, Virgin Atlantic, BlackBerry, Nokia, Samsung, Russell Hobbs and many more. He can be contacted at [\[Clinton.Young@basetwo.co.za\]](mailto:Clinton.Young@basetwo.co.za) or via [\[www.linkedin.com/in/youngclinton\]](https://www.linkedin.com/in/youngclinton).

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