The four-step strategy to mobile advertising success

By Nicole Liebmann   31 Aug 2017

Mobile's true power in today's world is its ability to provide constant connection and accessibility.

Mobile technology allows every single person globally to bridge the gap between their digital and physical worlds, allowing us to access anything we want at any time, no matter where we are.

In South Africa, the impact of these devices is even more significant. For the majority of South Africans, mobile has now become the *only* way that the Internet is accessed which is why there are so many mobile connections in the region – nearly 80 million in fact, representing 145% of the current population.

When breaking down the usage of devices across the adult population of South Africa, mobile phone usage clearly dominates sitting at 92% followed by TV which currently only 68% of the adult population uses.

At no other time in history have brands had a more direct and constant communication vehicle that can be leveraged to consistently communicate with and engage consumers at large.

But are we taking advantage of this great opportunity in the best ways possible? Or are we simply applying the approaches of media channels past into this quickly expanding space? Mobile does not behave like other channels, and nor do users who won't tolerate the same interruptive experiences. In order to thrive in the mobile system, brands need to consider how best to use this format.

From my perspective, there are four key elements that should sit at the heart of any mobile strategy if a brand wants to deliver truly engaging ads that drive results.

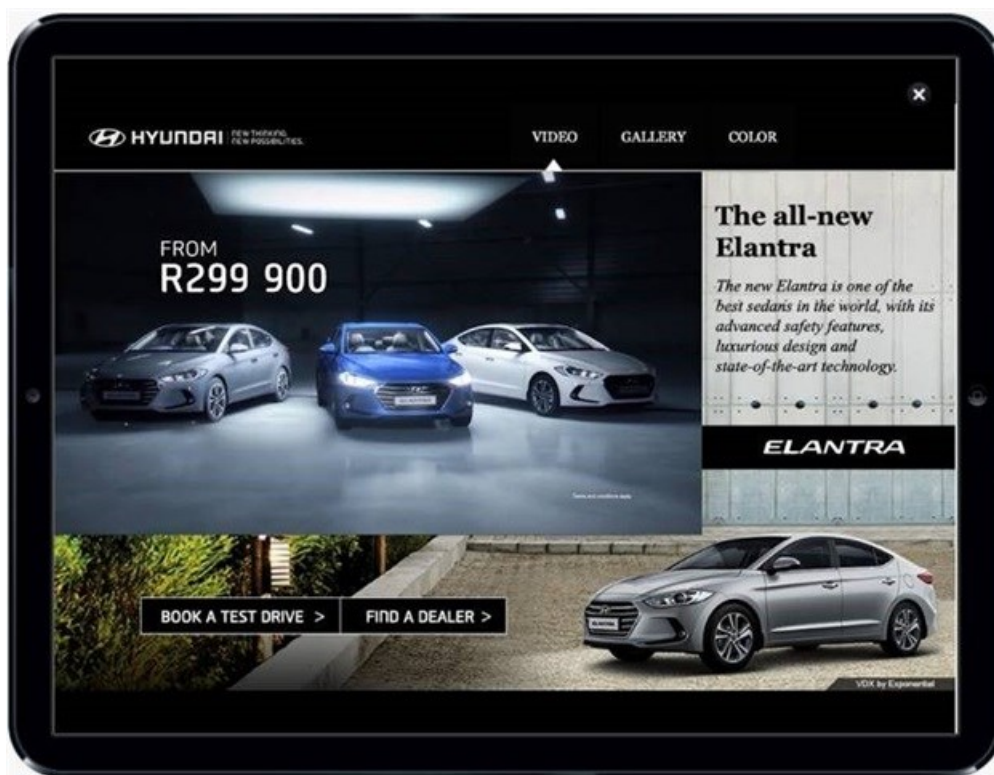### 1. Understanding the consumer journey

A good starting point for building a mobile campaign involves developing an in-depth understanding of the mobile consumer journey. Consideration and acknowledgment of this is fundamental, especially in a market where smartphones are the primary form of internet access.
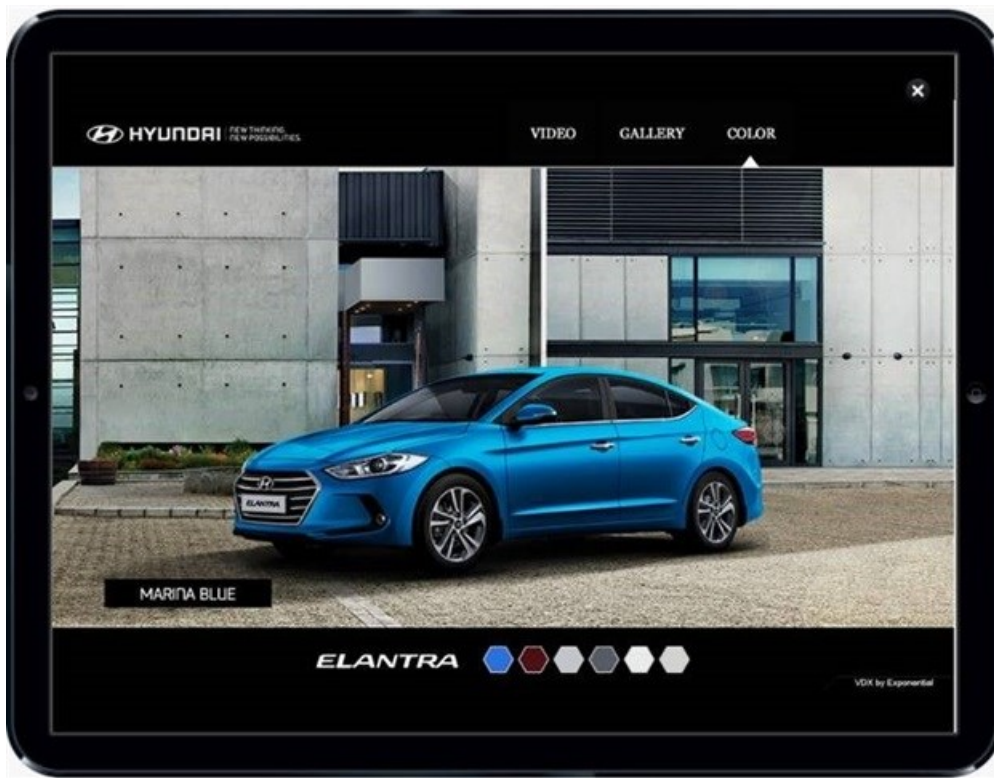
An example of Exponential's VDX creative that drives engagement of brand content and video in a relevant way.

Even in a market where the total hours spent on these devices is higher than most other markets, usage continues to be highly fragmented. This means that there is a far more limited communication window that brands can leverage.

Ultimately brands need to ensure all mobile creative is well thought out to ensure that only the most useful content is included, helping to promote quick and easy consumption. With average session durations across mobile ads hovering around 5 to 10 seconds, it becomes imperative that consumption of information can be done quickly and easily.

An example of Exponential's VDX creative that drives engagement of brand content and video in a relevant way.

As part of acknowledging the consumer journey, it also is a must that advertisers consider the often higher data costs in South Africa and ensure that ads being built for this region are considerate of this. Minimising loads times is not only polite

but also imperative if wanting to uphold a positive consumer journey.

2. Stay relevant

What is true for all advertising is often doubly true for mobile. The mobile screen is a highly personal space, and staying as relevant to a user's interests is critical for brand seeking acceptance into the space.

It is essential that we are showing the *right* ad to the *right* user.

A great way to enhance relevancy is through the employment of smart targeting. A good example of this is the implementation of location, time or behavioural targeting. These targeting variables help to ensure specific elements of the consumer journey are being considered and used to determine what message gets shown to a consumer, and when.

3. Respect and control

In much of digital, ad blocking is 'He Who Shall Not Be Named', but the truth is that it's rise contains lessons which can help us shape better mobile experiences.
Although South Africa has a low amount of ad blocking with only a 13 percent rate of adoption (under half of the current usage in the US and Australia), awareness of the technology continues to rise.

Rather than fear it, we should listen to what ad blocking is telling us about the current state of mobile advertising, and act to cauterize its rise in this market.

AdBlock Plus is a global vendor that provides a robust adblocking solution to many consumers worldwide. Last year when conducting a survey of current users to determine what motivated them to block ads two key themes were uncovered:

1. Consumers want more respect with close to 90% of respondents saying they were using AdBlock Plus because they wanted to block intrusive and obnoxious ads.
2. Consumers want more *control* with over half of all users saying that they were using AdBlock Plus because they wanted to be in control of their browsing experience.

To ensure we build better ads and ultimately mitigate the use of adblockers, we must endeavour to use non-intrusive ad formats that are always user initiated. Providing the user with respect and control over their ad journey is a *must*, even if that involves allowing them to opt-out of the ad experience.

4. Embrace rich media

Simply – rich media allows brands to build better ads.
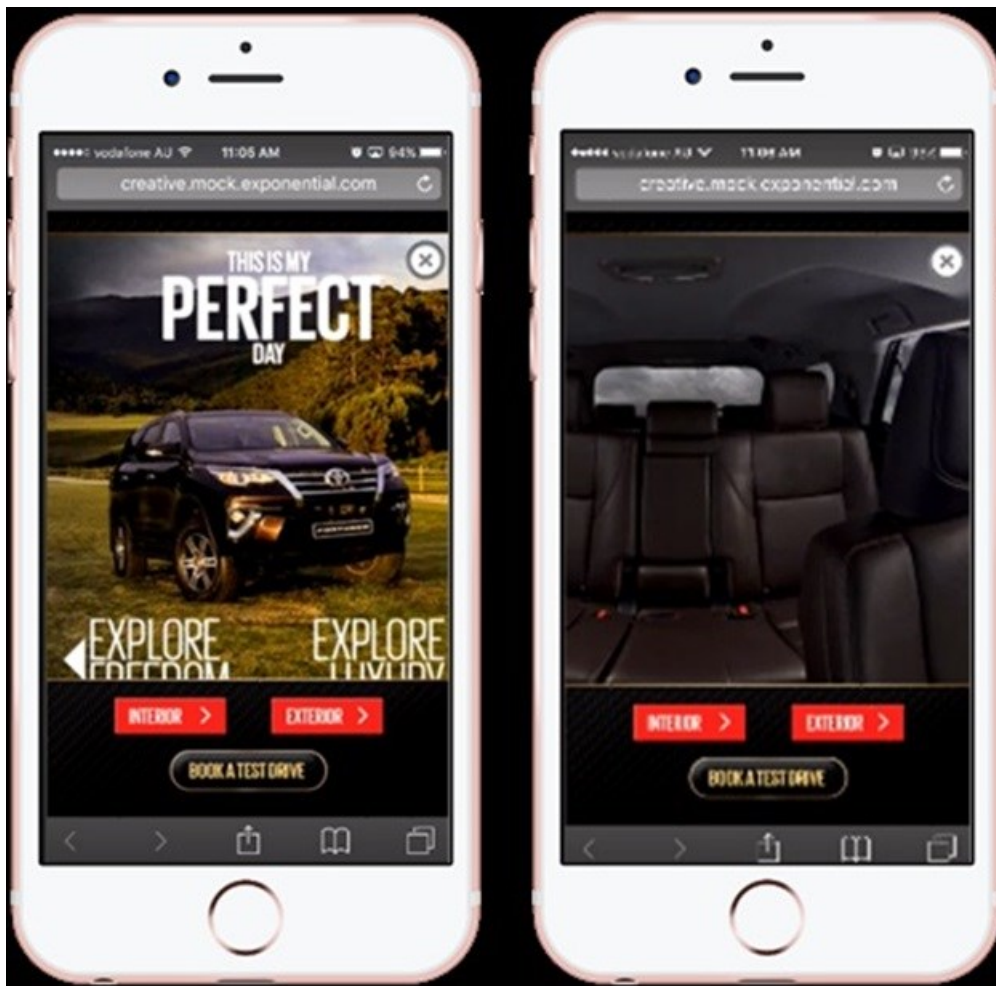
An example of Exponential rich-media mobile creative that incorporates 360-image interactivity.

Rich media enables for higher quality units to be built and for the addition of complex visuals, videos and bespoke elements of interactivity to be easily included in mobile creative whilst maintaining a low file size – something that is vital in markets like South Africa where the cost of data is still high.

Embracing rich media also allows a brand to leverage many of the native and often unique functionalities of these devices like swipe, tap and shake which all promote an organic movement through mobile ad experiences.

When looking at the results generated by mobile campaigns that used rich media at Exponential over the last 6 months, the impacts of rich media clearly stand out. Compared to the 0.35% CTR industry average for standard ads, rich media campaigns enjoyed CTRs ranging from 1.5% - 2.5%. With results like these, it becomes easy to see the positive impacts of rich media.

As the mobile advertising industry continues to develop in South Africa, it is the responsibility of both advertisers and publishers to help develop high quality mobile units. I truly believe that the South African mobile advertising ecosystem have a unique opportunity to work together to maintain the low adoption of ad blocking in the country and if we stick to the four pillars outlined above, advertisers will reap considerable rewards!

ABOUT NICOLE LIEBMANN

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