

The Fusion of Mobile: Transforming the Delivery of Today's Hospitality Experience

Mar 15, 11 | 12:09 am



By Lisa Miniter and Brenda Fields

Mobile has truly gone global on several fronts, and within the U.S., the rapid ascendancy of today's mobile audience has hit critical mass and in particular, with the ever-consuming "high touch, high gloss" usage smart phones that deliver to nearly 60MM owners.

Consequently, for hoteliers, the power of harnessing mobile's convenience and relevance has been nothing short of transformative in aiming to meet a new range of heightened expectations today's affluent guests demand and by extension, streamline a new layer of operational efficiencies that span on and off property services for staff and guests.

How more specifically, this relates to the concern of hoteliers, is leveraging the growing consumption patterns of smart phones' usage, as an "always on" device increasingly relied upon by frequent travelers before, during and after their trips; with marketers' never-ending quest to efficiently source more timely and tactical ways that enrich **and** monetize the overall guest experience while meeting multiple goals in eCommerce, eCRM and brand management.

Beyond the critical mass gained to validate the impressive reach in overall smartphone ownership, specific to the coveted business traveler segment, 77% of frequent business travelers use mobile for a range of trip planning (PhocusWright 2010); thereby supporting another point of credibility within the arsenal of utilizing mobile's extensive "hand held" capabilities, to seriously evaluate from an investment **and** strategy standpoint, for integrating within hotel's (overall) sales, marketing and revenue management.

Thus, whether considering a specific facet unique to mobile (e.g. SMS campaigns, mobile web site) or crafting a comprehensive strategy that integrates a native app, web site, mobile messaging and social media, the transformative role of one-touch mobile technology truly resides within the "DNA" of today's frequent traveler and by extension, affluent lifestyle segment.

In fact, for the first time with 4th quarter/2010, the U.S. volume of mobile phone sales surpassed PC sales. (Gartner Group)

As for timing, with giving serious thought to what defines core deliverables that comprise a customized multi-channel (mobile-powered) program, this article broadly outlines key fundamentals in understanding integration of mobile's empowering role within various hospitality disciplines, though not the specific goals of each hotel, which would warrant deeper evaluation.

However, considering that by end of 2011, smart phones will escalate to 73MM U.S. owners, whether topically exploring or having in-depth evaluation on the advantages of mobile-powered hospitality, the multi-dimensional usage of "hand-held" communications clearly defines the sweet spot of helping today's desirable business and leisure traveler segment stay organized; in particular, with the highly sought expenditures (the predominantly smartphone-reliant) 25-52 age traveler group clearly deliver. (comScore 2010)

The New Balancing Act: Integrating a Mobile Strategy With Clearly Defined Purpose:

Upon selecting a mobile platform partner, the following provides a brief scope of core fundamentals, before setting clear objectives and benchmarks:

Mobile Web Site (optimized to span any internet-enabled device)

Native Apps: For a richer, more customized experience, doesn't always require internet access, as with a mobile web site. (e.g. iPhone, Android)

Multi-Channel Messaging: Integrate SMS, MMS, eMail, Social Media (FaceBook, Twitter) to drive range of promotions, develop new layer of mobile (guest) opt-ins, etc.

Mobile eCRM: Build an "interactive" database of highly qualified mobile opt-ins; include segmenting hotels' lists in accordance to guest preferences, loyalty clubs, sw eeps, alerts, F&B specials, spa deals, etc.

Mobile Advertising: Serve and track range of ads, from click to call, video or form-launched, whether placed in-app, in site or with SMS-launched landing pages for special deals, VIPs, happenings, etc.

Mobile Audience Analytics/Dashboard: Analyze and eventually monetize, a new layer of highly credible guest metrics that span range of (mobile-related) behavior and booking patterns.

Implementing the Mobile Process:

Within the realm of outlining a formal approach in mobile development, implementation and optimization phases through your platform partner, a key initial point is to pay close attention to what ultimately conveys the *the end result*. In particular, the user experience that lands within the comfy confines of a smart phone, which your guests will expect to easily navigate, for frequent usage.

Another key point is supporting hotel's signature brand attributes to what already exists online, with your web site or other media channels, since mobile isn't just about "repurposed" densely designed content in a small screen. It's truly a *magnified version* of your brand's market position!

As for the following, it provides a very broad parameter of what to address when beginning to formalize process of evaluating tactical ways that fit mobile's unique capabilities into your (overall) goals:

Are you dealing with mobile as a basic communications device (e.g. SMS) for online communications or looking for a robust build out of mobile solutions that span hotel's key disciplines?

What is the mobile value-proposition for aligning your guest's expectations with the brand's key attributes?

Extending new distribution channel of mobile-only "special" deals/bookings or save guests time with more personalized services, e.g. pre-arrival requests with ordering room service via mobile, right off the plane.

Looking to strategically build a new channel of CRM? Leverage guest data (e.g. email database) to a new influential channel that's geo-targeted, custom-labeled in mobile-powered communications.

Social media is also accelerating growth of mobile in hospitality, if actively managing your social media, extend with multi-channel integration of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, as examples; with easily navigated presence in hotel's mobile site and/or applications.

Aiming to influence buying behavior such as upsell/cross sell when guests are on-property, with range of amenity-rich specials, specific to guests' profiles and seasonality.

It's the New Fusion: Reach, Targeting, Engagement, Viral, Transactions, All Ensnared in the Palm of Your Guest's Hand!

Considering that consumer consumption patterns are rapidly shifting and "one touch" functionality clearly reigns in the confluence of defining today's mobile-powered "fusion"; via myriad of streamlined guest and booking services, the time is now to begin process of investing in what truly defines a transformative shift in "on demand" customer expectations with efficiently-derived yields for ultimately, integrating a robust range of multi-channel (mobile-powered) solutions centralized within one automated platform.

Toward that end, mobile and in particular, smartphone's integral role within today's affluent lifestyle segment has clearly gained rapid ascendancy; and harnessing the "fusion" of mobile's core characteristics through a reputable mobile platform provider is a key step in quest to craft a "plan of action" that seamlessly integrates within your hotel's (overall) sales and marketing plan.

About Lisa Minter:



Lisa Minter is a 15+ year travel industry veteran with specialized expertise in building and selling a range of multi-media platforms in the publisher, digital and mobile sectors; primarily from a sales, partnership strategy and business development standpoint. From luxury lifestyle and niche travel sectors to pure play mobile hospitality platforms that

integrate content, data and multi-channel messaging, her deep industry knowledge and expertise spans a range of progressive sales/marketing disciplines, within domestic and international hospitality. Lisa can be contacted at: 203/847-9147 (office); 203/856-2678 (cell); lisamini@optonline.net.

About Brenda Fields:



Brenda Fields specializes in sales and marketing solutions for hotels and conference centers, applying the formulas for success she developed over the years to assist owners and operators in achieving target revenues through cost effective, well-founded strategic plans and through creating and sustaining strong brands.

She brings a unique perspective and an ability to fully understand each client's challenges, honed from over a two decade-long record of unparalleled success in the hospitality industry. Industry leaders and innovators ranging from Ian Schrage to real estate developer Harry Macklowe have benefited from Brenda's distinctive combination of strengths: to analyze and manage every detail of an assignment while never taking her eye off the bigger picture.

With a "who's who" roster of clients, Brenda has worked with a number of industry leaders and real estate investment companies including Starwood Lodging Corporation, Vornado Realty Trust and Planet Hollywood, Choice Hotels International, John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company, Olympus Real Estate Corporation, Pew Charitable Trust Foundation, and Dolce Hotels and Resorts. Her consulting practice for independent properties has included a wide range of clients such as The Kitano Hotel, New York; Woodlands Resort and Inn, Summerville, South Carolina; Mondrian Hotel, West Hollywood, CA; and as well as clients in international locations, i.e. Costa Rica, England, and Germany.

Brenda is a member of the invitation-only, International Society of Hospitality Consultants; was named one of "The Top 25 Most Extraordinary Minds in Sales and Marketing" by HSMAT; is Past President of Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International's NYC Chapter; and is a published author and is a member of the Editorial Board of *Hotel Executive.com*. Brenda can be contacted at brenda@fieldsandcompany.net; 518 789 0117 or by visiting www.fieldsandcompany.net.

Related articles

- A Few Key Learnings from 2010
- Are you ready for the downturn?
- Brenda Fields named President of HSMAT's Big Apple Chapter
- Global marketing: Does one size fit all?
- Group Business: Tips to Impact Revenues Despite the "AIG" Effect
- Revenue Management: Things to Know to REALLY Maximize Revenues
- Social Media: Tips to Get Them at 'Hello'
- The Art and Science of Killer Sales Prospecting
- Winning in a Reset Economy: Three Steps to Success
- "Thriving" not just "Surviving" in a Depressed Economy: Tips for the Independents

Email this article to a friend ShareThis

<< PreviousNext >>