

What SXSW 2016 means for mobile marketers

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In Austin, it's perfectly normal to eat nachos for breakfast – a reflection of the city's motto: "Keep Austin Weird".

Given this context **SXSW** Interactive makes an awful lot of sense.

An event that started out as a music festival in the 1980s, has now grown to showcase everything from musical gloves, to dog walking apps, as well as panels debating industry issues such as encryption and surveillance as the new technological battle ground, or gender diversity, for instance.

In among the weird and wonderful, however, there are some significant trends for marketers, especially from a mobile perspective.

Despite concerns growing within the industry that the **innovation** in the smartphone market is stalling, heading out to events like **SXSW**, it's hard to take this seriously. So here's a few moments from this year's event that got me thinking about mobile.

"Your Brain on Virtual Reality"

Of course, VR was everywhere at **SXSW**. But it's great to see it getting attention outside of the technology and **marketing** industry. The "Your Brain on Virtual Reality" panel saw VR **designer** from Unello **Design** come together with scientists from the likes of the University of Texas to discuss the impact of VR on our lives, brains and physiology.

It's this that makes me think it's short-sighted to discuss the end of **innovation** in mobile. We're on the brink of technology going mainstream that will see us slotting our phones into headsets and entering a world that is more immersive and engaging than anything we've ever seen before.

It's a technology that is more than likely to have as big an impact on the **advertising** industry as the iPhone back in 2007, if not more so. The opportunities will be huge for **brands** of course, but the broader impact on society as a whole is set to be huge.

“That Snapchatter Makes More Than You”

Early **Snapchat** investor Bessemer Venture Partners joined United Talent Agency, Re/code and Taryn Southern, a **YouTube** star and video blogger, to discuss the business of online talent.

What struck me about this panel is that it had mobile at its core, with direct **brand** engagement being the cornerstone of the potential to monetise platforms like **Snapchat**. Southern, in particular, expressed concerns over what constitutes a ‘view’ across platforms.

Facebook counts a view after just three seconds, **YouTube** after 30 seconds, where Vine counts each loop. We have the same issue in online **advertising** where standards need to be set.

Especially as the volume of premium mobile-video inventory expands, we should be getting ahead of this trend and ensuring that we’re clear on what we’re delivering and what **brands** are buying.

FourSquare

FourSquare founder Dennis Crowley was outside **SXSW** playing the actual game of **FourSquare** to promote the app. It currently has around 50m active users, which lags behind other **social** networks – but it benefits from an incredibly engaged mobile audience.

Its user base is made up of the kind of people who want to continually log their location, and broadcast it to hundreds of other highly mobile-centric individuals in their **social** network.

More than this, it also discussed in a recent Wired article that it has spent the last 18 months building an ad-targeting and location data business, the fastest growing of which is Pinpoint, which crucially brings location data from a variety of apps together for targeting.

It’s data like this that makes mobile such a rich environment for **brands**, especially when we’re connecting with users like those of **FourSquare** who interact second by second with apps and **brands** online.

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