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Case study - The Los Angeles County Fair

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October 27, 2010



The Los Angeles County Fair's mobile Web site

Name and city and state of marketer

The Los Angeles Times' Los Angeles County Fair

Name and city and state of agency or marketing services firm

Gumiyo, Los Angeles

Short code and keywords used

Participants were invited to text the keywords FREETICKETS or MUSIC to a common short code.

Objective and tactics

The LA County Fair mobile program consisted of a content-rich mobile Web site that included automatic device detection and redirection for smart phone users who entered or clicked the fair's Web site address at <http://www.lacountyfair.com>.

In addition, the fair tested a number of short code promotions that included free admission ticket giveaways, daily concert ticket giveaways and fair merchandise coupons.



The Los Angeles County Fair

Not only did the project demonstrate the natural tendency for events and organizations of its type to generate mobile traffic and increase interactive touch points with on-site patrons, the project also pointed the way to new promotional opportunities for fair vendors and sponsors.

On the SMS front, the fair's marketing staff tested a few strategically placed short code calls-to-action on signage at the main fair entrances, on the fairgrounds, and in advertising.

While limited in scope, these promotions succeeded in collecting nearly 1,300 unique opt-in mobile numbers to which the Fairplex can direct promotions and alerts in the future for any of the 500 other events hosted on its 543-acre Pomona grounds.

Unique to these SMS promotions was the added requirement for a valid email address to qualify for ticket giveaways.

This increased the remarketing value of the SMS program by enabling the Fairplex to use it as a means for growing their existing email database, an important component of the organization's overall marketing efforts.

Participants were invited to text the keywords FREETICKETS or MUSIC to a common short code.

An automatic SMS bounce-back invited the participants to reply with a valid email address in order to qualify for the daily giveaway.

A second bounce-back message confirmed the entry while making it possible to receive exclusive offers from the Fairplex

in the future via SMS or email.

The results of these SMS tests coupled with the ability to use text messaging to ask for email addresses point to the clear advantages of combining mobile text marketing with other advertising channels

Strategy

The Los Angeles Times is proving mobile to be a powerful component to an overall advertising campaign.

The primary goal was to gauge the demand for mobile content and to test SMS marketing programs among the estimated 1.2 million attendees while ensuring that valuable information and promotions were easily accessible via mobile devices.

Results

As predicted, the mobile site began receiving a great deal of traffic as soon as smartphone device detection and redirection was implemented.

Opening weekend, and the two days leading up to it, saw more than 100,000 smartphone page views from over 30,000 unique visitors.

In fact, smartphones accounted for more than 8 percent of total page views on the LA County Fair Web site.

Even more profound was that over the course of the month-long fair the mobile site hosted more than 110,000 unique visitor sessions—nearly one in seven of the total online visits.

While these statistics clearly illustrate the demand for mobile-optimized content, other interesting insights were gained.

The LACF traditional Web site typically sees traffic spikes during the middle of the week, presumably the result of fair-goers planning their visit.

Conversely, the mobile site hosted dramatic traffic peaks on the weekends, the inference that this is traffic generated from on-site fair-goers.

By comparing daily attendance numbers with data on peak mobile traffic days, one can estimate that approximately 5-6 percent of visitors who were on the fairgrounds interacted with lacountyfair.com— not an insignificant number.

Interestingly, this engagement was entirely organic and not the result of promotion of the mobile site on the fairgrounds.

This creates remarkable promotional opportunities for fair events, vendors, and sponsors who can interactively engage and target consumers in a captive physical environment.

Lessons learned

In summary, mobile presents clear advantages as a marketing channel for events, theme parks and fairs.

Consumers have a natural tendency to refer to their mobile devices to look up promotions, schedules, announcements, and other information when physically on-site.

By extending this opportunity to its vendors and sponsors, the Fairplex and other similar organizations have powerful new tools to drive foot traffic and influence the behavior of a captive audience.

Quotes

"We had a strong belief going into this project that the LA County Fair's target audience was perfect for mobile," said Jeff Von Molt, senior account executive for the LA Times. "Not only are we working with a captured audience who is already out and about, this audience is predominantly under the age of 35 and ethnically diverse—perfect for mobile-focused efforts."

"Once again we see the proof points justifying the inclusion of smartly integrated mobile components to an overall

marketing campaign," said Rich Abronson, vice president of marketing at Gumiyo, Los Angeles. "Not only do consumers naturally seek out content on their mobile devices, but that activity presents a real opportunity for organizations like the LACF to explore new advertising for their vendors."