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OpenTable Goes Mobile; 1 Million Served

Kelsey Group

This is a logical move, given that arts and entertainment is a big category of mobile content consumption, according to our recently released Mobile Market View study. Already, the company has served 1 million diners through its mobile apps (mostly iPhone). It estimates this accounts for $50 million spent at local restaurants, applying a $50 per-check average.

For this reason and others, Scott Jampol, senior director of consumer marketing, characterizes mobile as a big area of innovation and resource allocation. This comes with an attitude that mobile is not only a logical extension, but also one that squeezes more value out of its trusted online brand. This is an edge that many start-ups entering the mobile space don't enjoy.

Mobile also allows OpenTable to reach incremental users … or reach existing users at incremental times and places (i.e., nights and weekends). To that effect, the company is seeing different rates of conversion and post-click behavior on the mobile device. Time between searches and reservations are decidedly shorter than online, for example.

A different "form factor" for mobile also allows OpenTable to broaden the way the product is used, says Jampol. The mobile device's portability opens up possibilities to use OpenTable as more of a discovery engine than the purely search utility that defines its online product. This is consistent with an overall trend we're seeing in mobile local products.

"If I'm walking out of the San Francisco Modern Museum of Art and I decide that I'm hungry, being able to open my mobile app and see all the places to eat that are immediately around me is compelling," says Jampol.

Long term, the company is thinking in terms of budding mobile local technologies such as augmented reality and voice search. But we're not there yet as an industry, says Jampol. He's focusing on shorter term products and features that pass the "grandmother test," and on making sure mobile users can access OpenTable on all devices, platforms and local apps.