

Loïc Tallon, Director, Pocket-Proof
The impact of handheld media in marketing and visitor engagement

Introduction

Loïc's presentation is on SlideShare: <http://slidesha.re/i1qZR3#AMADigitalday10>

Loïc Tallon is the founder of an independent design consultancy, Pocket-Proof, specialising in mobile experiences for museums. He works with institutions to shape the strategy and objectives of their mobile interpretation initiatives, and identify the solutions, vendors and implementation strategies that will ensure their strategy and objectives are met. He's co-editor of one of the leading books in the field, *Digital Technologies and the Museum Experience – Handheld Guides and Other Media, 2008*. He has worked with museums and visitor attractions including Louvre Abu Dhabi, Watts Gallery, Shakespeare's Globe, English Heritage, Espace Culturelle Louis Vuitton & Khalsa Heritage Foundation.

Loïc approached the session assuming people were present because they already thought the idea of using mobile devices was a good one, so he didn't tackle the 'why should we use mobile devices at all' and focused on how to do it and how to do it well. His content was based on his own research with museums he's worked with as a basis for his presentation but also included best practice from other museums around the world.

Loïc has been working for five years specifically on mobile devices in the cultural sector: he's working in Abu Dhabi, where the financial climate is very different to what's going on over here, worked with a number of sites in France, including large scale outdoor sites, including developing ways of communicating experiences for people who can't actually visit a site. Writing the book was a challenge, as it was writing about a medium that is constantly changing.

His experience is mainly with museums: once a year he sends out a survey to museums internationally to find out about their use of handheld devices, what they've been doing, what their objectives are, who their audiences are, how they see the future, what kind of research they'd like to see more of. This year, the second year, there were 670 replies, and that is where the statistics in the presentation were from. The responders can be broken down into three categories:

- Museums that are already using mobile media (200+ in that category)
- Museums that are planning to use mobile media (slightly smaller in number)
- Museums who don't use mobile media and don't have any plans to do so

Not all the data is compiled, so the results are from the first two categories: also, the results are skewed towards the US – there was a high percentage of replies from the US, where they seem to enjoy filling in surveys. Museums and galleries were the largest group to reply, but there were also libraries, theatres and cultural centres. Most were medium sized institutions, but it varied. A many of the respondents had less than 1 staff working on digital.

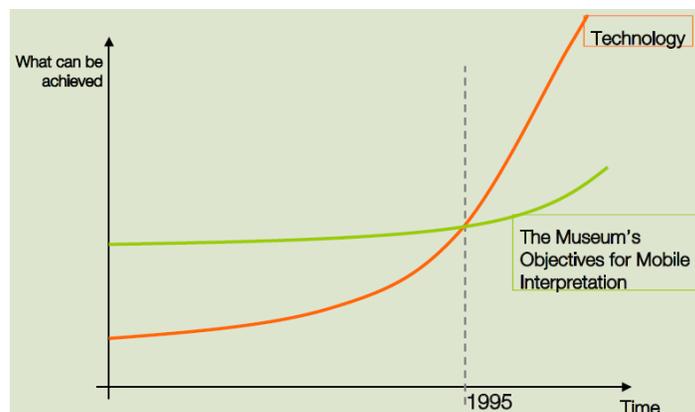
There are some quite mind-numbing stats about mobile, showing what a big field it is:

- In 2009, there were 4.6 billion mobile phones in the world
- In the UK alone, there are 48.5M mobile phone users
 - Of those 48.5M:
 - 28% have smartphones
 - 37% surf the internet via their mobile phone
 - 31% use apps. (compared to 21.5% a year earlier) – a huge growth

And regarding the app market:

- 35m iPad applications were downloaded in the first 65 days of its release
- 16.7m apps are downloaded a day from Apple iTunes
- And in particular, smartphones users aged between 16-24 use ten applications a day on average (compared with five for entire population)

So this is the context. Mobile in museums is not a new thing though – the traditional audio guide has been around for over fifty years, the type you hired out at the start of your visit, so technically there is a lot of experience behind this field. But actually we're not really in that position. What's really happened is that when museums got into mobile technology (radio guide systems), the technology wasn't really there to do what they wanted to do: now the technology has accelerated past the ambitions and the gap is the other way round.



If we get into the world of being able to do whatever we want (money aside), then we have to decide what is worth doing – what is actually going to work for our site.

Some case studies

There are a lot of case studies – mobile guides and projects – done by other museums that are worth looking at for anyone considering mobile guides for their site.

1. Moma created an app – putting their standard audio guide on a different platform. But you can also see what exhibitions are happening, book tickets through it, take photos through the app (and the museum can see those photos, so they have a

record of how people are engaging) and then there's the standard audio and video content. It's a very ambitious application which does a huge amount.

2. Brooklyn Museum: they've created a mobile website. Of course, there are debates to be had about whether websites should be optimised for mobile or whether an app should be created. It's interesting to note that while that what the Brooklyn Museum has done sounds right – the mobile website is more accessible on more devices – when they create an app, it gets more usage.

3. American Museum of Natural History: they've created an app that has a very expensive positioning system, so it can work out where you are in the museum and tell you where to go. Loïc thinks this is pointless. However, arguably more fun and more useful, they have a simple functionality to bookmark an object, say you like it, send yourself an email about it, Tweet about it, put it on Facebook and share it with friends.

4. MOMA: they've released a catalogue for iPad for a recent exhibition. But they looked to how they could transform the traditional coffee table printed catalogue on the new platform and have different interaction and functionality. It's a great example of someone thinking creatively about the possibilities.

5. Museum of London: they created the Streetmuseum app, which is actually quite simple. When you are walking round the city, you can select a location (i.e. places they've got photos of) from their map or your GPS, then when you hold your camera up to the scene, you receive an interposed photo of what it used to look like, with the option of clicking for more information.

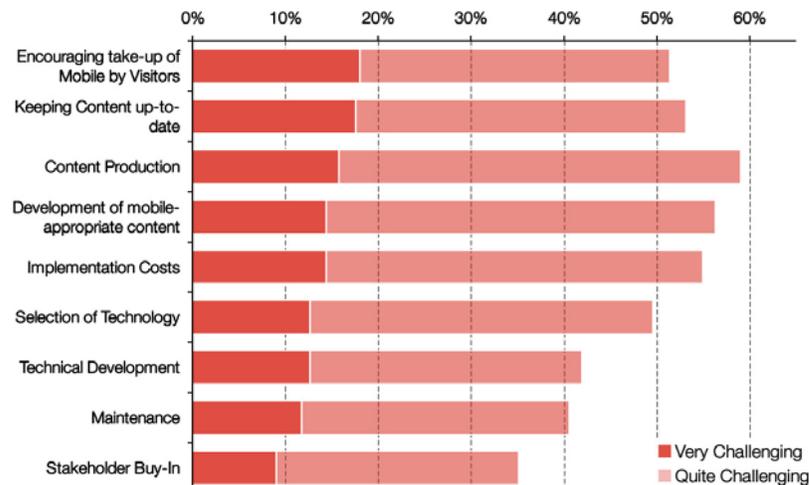


6. The Mercedes Benz: their application is quite straightforward and traditional. They've effectively put the entire museum in someone's pocket, so aimed mostly at people who can't actually go to the museum.

7. Tate: they have an app which is a game, *Tate Trumps*. You pick artworks, and choose which artworks would beat other artworks in a fight – great for children. This is a great example of interactivity.

8. Smithsonian: their MEanderthal app lets you take a photo of yourself, and then turn yourself into a Neanderthal. There is content about why and how you've changed.

It is hard to say which one works, what makes the best impact. You can't just take your traditional audio guide and stick it on an app and think that that will work as a 'museum' that people can enjoy outside the museum. Loïc was interested to note the Tate point that they had a 60/40 split between local and international followers on Facebook and that these people need different type of content. To make one mobile application – or one digital tool at all – that fits all audiences is not possible. Loïc took Tate Trumps out to France to show people he works with there: but of course Top



This is from museums already using mobile apps: note that at the top is getting visitors to use it is the biggest challenge. It cannot be taken for granted that just because it's there and you're excited about it and it's made a good press release that people will actually want to use it. So essentially, his argument is that institutions don't really think about why they should had a mobile application and visitors don't understand why they should use them.

So what defines iPhone users (doesn't have to be by age or socio-demographic)? Target them by motivation. If you decide to target people who play games on their mobile, and (arguably older) people come to the site and don't want to use the app because they don't play games, that's fine – they've understood what it is and that they don't think it's for them. Once you've defined who the audience is and what the experience will be, use focus groups to test it. This is common when building websites, and should become common with mobile applications. Then you can see how they feel about it.

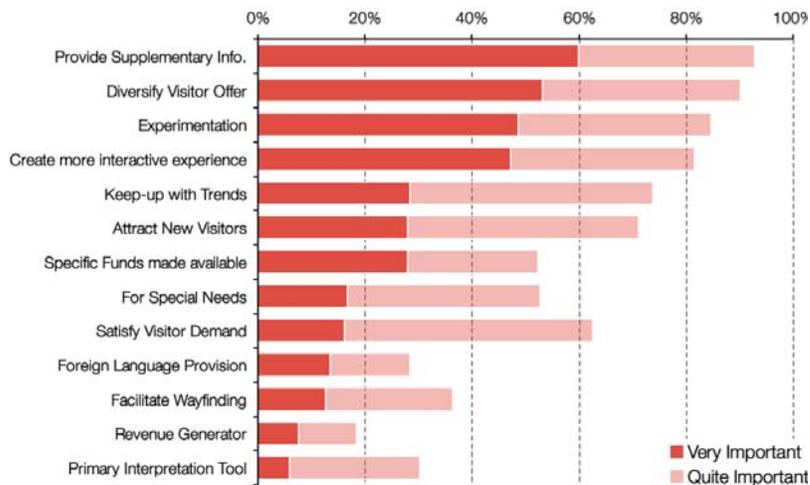
Design brief

Once you've defined the objectives, there has to be a design brief, to have something to measure against. The design brief shouldn't make any assumptions about the mobile technology being an app for iPhone, or an iPad application or a mobile website. You just have to say, this is what we want to do, is mobile technology the way to do that. The decisions examined and made at this stage have a disproportionate effect on the success of the project. The design brief may have to evolve as time goes on, but it is essential to have that document.

3. Focus on the strengths and unique qualities of mobile

When the volcano caused lots of delays last year, Lonely Planet made twelve of their city guides free to download: it was marketed fantastically and they got a lot of coverage. And then people started reviewing them – negatively, with comments such as 'cheap, lazy apps... basically a static book converted to a very large electronic format'. You can guess that Lonely Planet just thought, we should be doing this, and converted their books into pages and pages for a mobile. They didn't think, why are we converting it to mobile and what can we do with mobile technology that is different from the book.

Museums' objectives with mobile tools



These results from the survey are from sites already using mobile tools. The top ones are the things that are suitable to mobile platforms. Providing supplementary information is great on a mobile app, because people can decide what they do and don't want info or extra info about. With the second one, a museum can say, we're just one site, but you can play this game, or share this with your friends.

A few buzzwords to consider:

- Personal
- Digital
- Connected
- Mobile
- Interactive (but keep it simple)

Digital sounds really obvious, but actually a leaflet is mobile, because you can carry it around; a tour guide is mobile, because it comes round with you – so you need to think about things being digital rather than just mobile.

All the case studies above are examples of something digital achieving something that non-digital couldn't have. With the Smithsonian example, you can't to round with a book or even a camera and transform yourself into a Neanderthal. Or with the Museum of London, you can't have that experience on another platform. With the MOMA catalogue, they used interaction to search for content in a way you couldn't do with a paper catalogue. Remember: mobile design is a specialist skill: work with creative teams that have experience in it.

4. Manage expectations

People tend to have high expectations with mobile. Getting the leadership involved is important, and understanding all the issues. People – including from different teams with their own various needs – get very invested and have strong opinions and expectations. This comes back to the design brief, so you can show what has been defined.

In the case studies – Tate, MOMA, Museum of London and Smithsonian: the first two's apps were complicated; the second two had simpler things. At MOMA, they have two people in the team who do the content for mobile – not the technology, just content. They have a different website team of about ten. Another person just does research on platforms. So the team is enormous and they've got about fifteen years of experience. Compare that to the Museum of London: this was their first experience with a mobile platform. They kept it simple, considering what they could achieve and didn't try to do everything in one go. So always consider your organisation's resources and experience and choose the appropriate technology.

5. K.I.S.S. (Keep it simple, stupid)

The more complicated things get, the more chance they have of failing. In the survey, when asking people about their plans and aims for the future, the sites that were not yet using mobile had ambitions that outstripped those of the sites that were already using mobile. It shows that those with more experience have more realistic expectations. Without being pessimistic, the simpler you keep it, the better an experience it will probably end up being for the visitor (for a start, it's more likely to work!). Stick to the design brief and things can always be added later.

6. Don't underestimate content creation

It's amazing how quickly people will decide on what content there should be without considering how to create it. Not the same content works on a mobile platform as the website content. Going back to the challenges graph (above), after the visitor one, the next challenges are all about content, principally keeping content up to date. The geeky stuff, the coding and so, is easy compared to the content. But comparing those results from those already using mobile to those that aren't, the latter see the technical side as being much more worrying. So when approaching doing mobile, focus your thoughts on content rather than technology – content is key for your institution and for the visitor experience.

7. Plan sustainability from the outset

At some point, you'll realise the wrong piece of content has gone up there; or the branding has changed; or the platform needs to change. So this needs to be considered right at the start. For instance, with the Museum of London's app, they can add new photos, but they can't change their own logo if they need to – that's the way iPhone apps work. Make sure the content can be repurposed for other platforms. Many of these considerations are applied to websites these days, so they need to be taken into account with mobile as well. So these are the four key questions:

- How is the brand up-dated?
- How is the new version made available to visitors?
- How is new content up-loaded?
- How can you migrate the experience to a new platform?

It could be that it is a legitimate decision just to take the application offline.

Going back to the survey, it showed that a priority for organisations was to bring the content development in-house. It's a huge benefit.

Remember that project launch is not the finish line and that there is a lot to do afterwards. Evaluation needs to be done and there'll be other things that need to be done –updating content, marketing the app and so on.

8. Test and evaluate throughout development and implementation

Bringing in the focus group is a great thing to do at that early stage – rather than after the launch finding out that nobody's using it. Google Wave for instance was very clever, but they didn't really consider what the motivation would be for using it, what people would actually do with it. Having a beta version is great, as lots of people will play around with it and give opinions, but don't the amount of work and time that will be needed between the beta version and the final version.

What to evaluate against: consider all these points, as they are all things that can be measured. So to summarise:

1. It's not about the technology: it's about the experience
2. Define the objectives and audience
3. Focus on the strengths and unique qualities of mobile.
4. Manage expectations.
5. K.I.S.S. (Keep it simple, stupid!)
6. Don't underestimate content creation.
7. Plan sustainability from the out-set.
8. Test & evaluate throughout development and implementation.

Questions

Loïc asked if anyone had a mobile application or tool at the moment.

The National Gallery has a Love Art app. It was free to download at first and was very popular: it's not free any more and uptake has fallen off in comparison. So they have a challenge now of getting people to pay for it.

Loïc talked about a comparison between The National Gallery and the Louvre: The National Gallery had about 150,000 downloads, two thirds of which were free ones over a very short space of time. The Louvre made a free app, which came out at the same time as the Apple shop opened there: they've had about 1.7 million downloads. The content of the Louvre's app compared to The National Gallery's is not great, but there is something about the idea of having the Louvre on your iPad and it's well advertised by Apple. The National Gallery had a team who'd been working on audio guides for years (with out forty hours of audio, as there is a guide to every painting), and when it came to make an app they had an existing relationship with a developer, and right at the start someone responsible mobile. Based on figures of downloads, the Louvre's looked more successful, but The National Gallery's experience is so much better.

Question from Charlotte Wilson, Audiences UK

She asked what the Louvre's download numbers were like relative to visitor numbers and if Loïc knew what proportion that was of visitor numbers.

The Louvre has about 8 or 9 million visitors a year. There was a phase with the web when we looked at how many hits we were getting as if that was meaningful, whereas of course some of those hits would just be people coming to the site by mistake. Now there are ways of measuring engagement with websites: you can look at how long people stay on and so on with great metrics. There is not the same ability with mobile. So people are still using take-up rates as a measurement of success, rather than the quality of the experience and whether it is engaging people. There are a lot of projects (shown in the research) without any measures for success except numbers using it. With the Louvre app, and all iPhone apps, it is hard to measure how people are using it.

Charlotte commented that it would be interesting to be able to measure take up at the Louvre and the National Gallery in relation to visitor numbers, to give the download figures some context. But Loïc said he thought it was more interesting to measure against what the objectives were. The Louvre has created this mythology about being the greatest gallery in the world, and they've managed to transfer that to their app, making it a must-have app just because it's the Louvre's.

Question

There's always an issue about the difference between visit figures and visitor figures: so of the people who are downloading The National Gallery app, people might be returning to it again and again – and it could be generating visits, where the Louvre one might just be used once.

Loïc agreed with that: it is impossible to measure though. You can measure externals like people Tweeting about an app, and for iPhone apps, you can measure updates, which are only downloaded if people are still using the app. Hopefully in some years time, there'll be conferences the different ways of measuring all of this.

Question from Elizabeth Woledge, Lecturer in Shakespeare Studies, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

At her organisation, the reasons from the management for not doing anything like an app are that you can't put a good business case together, it'll either be cheap or free to download, there won't be huge take up, so then there's no money forthcoming to develop an app. There are some free tools: are they any good or is this a hiding to nothing?

Loïc: there are some free solutions, but it depends on what is meant by good. The answer is yes, but it's about how you pitch it to the public. It's dangerous to think about creating an app for the sake of it.

Elizabeth: she has a specific project in mind, where things relating to that project are things that the Trust doesn't own, so it would give them a chance to collaborate with other institutions to get back-up materials.

Loïc: define what you want to do; talk to the people with these free applications. Also, there are many developers who want to create their first app, and particularly

their first one for the cultural sector. So once you've written down what you want, you can approach people and say this is what we need, is that something you can do for us. And raising sponsorship for mobile applications tend to be easier than for other types of project, as people are carrying round the sponsor's brand in their pocket.