

IFRA

Interview with Tanja Hackner, project leader of BILD mobil, Axel Springer

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IFRA: BILD mobil started in October 2007 and has already been enhanced to offer more to its users. How has this service done since users can now access more content and services? Which areas are most visited?

Tanja Hackner: The introduction of BILD mobil has been a sensational success for us. From the start, the USP of the free-of-charge BILD mobil portal was widely accepted. The mobile user has a more intensive relationship with contents and services than the stationary Internet surfer. Consultations of 60 sec. per site and more than 8 minutes per visit surprised us in a positive way in the beginning. The channels most used are news, sport and entertainment, followed by services such as weather and TV programme.

IFRA: Since the beginning of this experience, BILD opted for a very particular business model, different from other newspapers. You offer a BILD prepaid card that allows the user to phone for 10 euro cents, but you also allow them to surf in the mobile website of BILD from their mobiles for free. Has it proved to be successful? Have you sold many cards and do your users surf in your site more than regular newspapers consumers do through their mobile phones?

Tanja Hackner: The oligopol-structured mobile market makes it difficult for every content-offering to reach the user directly. Every MNO (mobile network operator) has its own portal that the user must go through to access BILD mobil. With the BILDmobil SIM Card we have succeeded in enabling a no-charge and therefore also barrier-free access to the portal via a single click. This eliminates any fear on the part of the customer that he will incur high, non-transparent data transfer costs. He has the certainty that he can get the latest information at all times without having to face a nasty surprise at the end of the month. Our consumers have recognised this! The average usage among our direct customers is about 25 percent higher, which is an expression of sensitiveness to cost. If we were to start over again today, that would still be the right way to go.

IFRA: Is your website optimised to be seen properly in all the different browsers (Opera, Opera mini, Safar, Firefox, Nokia browser) and handsets in the market? What technology constraints or difficulties have you experienced when doing that?

Tanja Hackner: We work closely with our service provider, Netbiscuits, for the delivery of BILD content and the development of special applications, such as polls. They gather the content and deliver it to the different receivers in accordance with defined templates.

IFRA: Some publishers have raised concerns about some browsers repackaging content to fit the device in a way that, a) is not nicely laid out, and b) in a way that prevents the paper from knowing the IP address of the user ... What is your experience in this aspect?

Tanja Hackner: An automatic conversion or transformation can only be negative, from the point of view of both brand and content. The brand must control the presentation and therefore the tonality 100 percent. The efforts of the technicians to simplify the process in this respect have only made it worse.

IFRA: For about a year now, the iPhone has been sold in Germany, and since February, the mobile phone of Google. These two handsets have revolutionised the way people consume information on their mobiles thanks to the native applications (to be downloaded or bought through App Store and Market Store). Do you consider creating specific applications for those devices?

Tanja Hackner: The iPhone and all its successors, as well as all future receivers centered around "mobile surfing" are very important to us. Despite this, more than 90 percent of our unique users come to our portal via devices other than the aforementioned. For this reason, we concentrate equally on all types of the top-selling handsets.

What is more, it is almost impossible for the media portals to refinance the iPhone traffic due to the strict blockage policy on the part of Apple in the area of mobile commerce. The question remains as to just how long the media will be able to afford this showcase.

IFRA: What do you think could be the advantages of attracting people directly to your mobile web, instead of having them reading your news through one of the native applications, like the one 20 Minuten in Switzerland or New York Times in the USA has?

Tanja Hackner: BILD is now a multimedia brand. We use all the potentials of the new media environment and supply our content via all possible distribution channels. And each channel has its own value. We do not substitute the printed product, but rather complement it. Our customers can obtain latest information several times daily via the mobile portal, wherever they happen to be. Moreover, additional services, e.g. regional traffic reports or the current weather conditions, are offered.

IFRA: How is advertising integrated into your mobile web? How have advertisers responded to BILD mobil?

Tanja Hackner: Mobile advertising in Germany is a growth industry. More and more advertisers are discovering the usefulness of our mobile advertising platform. We also offer high performance for the advertising spend: targeting the desired audience, taking over of design and realisation tasks as well as conversion rates that were used five to seven years ago for the stationary Internet.

Many industries today use the mobile network in cross-media or mono-media campaigns.

IFRA: What advice would you give those newspapers in other parts of the world that are about to start a real mobile strategy?

Tanja Hackner: The mobile web is a special medium - not only due to the size of the screen but also the conditions of use. Only those who adapt their brand 100 percent to a use on mobile media and bear in mind that mobile phones are consulted around the clock, seven days a week, will be successful.

Interview conducted by Mari Pascual

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Links:

[1] <http://www.ifra.net/community/mobile>