

Will WhatsApp Status Ads Be a Good Fit for Promotions?

ARTICLE | **SEPTEMBER 12, 2019**

eMarketer Editors

Advertising is the core of Facebook’s business, so it was only a matter of time before the company found a place to show ads on WhatsApp. That place will be in Status, WhatsApp’s version of the Stories feature on Facebook, Instagram and Messenger.

But despite advertiser optimism about WhatsApp Status ads, there are some concerns when it comes to consumer privacy on what is, first and foremost, a messaging app. People tend to view messaging apps as more intimate and personal than social networks, so advertisers need to keep that in mind when placing ads there.

“Messaging is a private, often nonpermanent, and sometimes encrypted form of communication where people have a reasonable expectation of privacy,” said Liz Cole, vice president and director of social strategy at Digitas North America, who was interviewed for our new “Global Messaging Apps 2019” report. “Users don’t want to think that brands and marketers may know what they’ve been saying or who they’ve been talking to.”

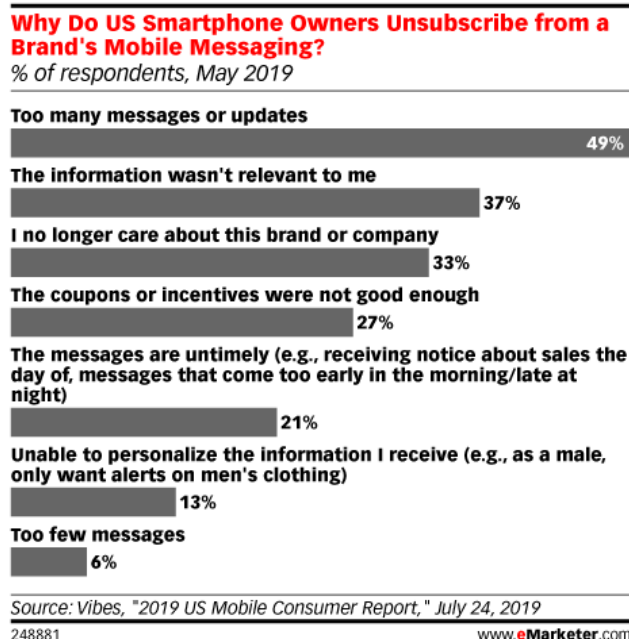
Erika Sheridan, executive director of SCC Media at creative and tech agency Schafer Condon Carter, says that her firm has stayed away from mobile messaging apps — except WeChat — for that very reason. “Our

point of view is that you don't want to seem too invasive. Consumers are used to using those apps to message people privately, and we don't want to rub our targets the wrong way."

Businesses that have started or are looking to start advertising on messaging apps can overcome that challenge by making sure the ad is useful and relevant to the user. For Dunkin' Brands, which is experimenting with Facebook Messenger ads, that means avoiding purely promotional messaging.

"Brands should strive to make sure the content is engaging and provides value to WhatsApp users, vs. being interruptive to their experience with the app," said Melanie Cohn, senior manager of brand engagement at Dunkin' Brands. "They will need to strike a very fine balance, so their Status ads aren't over-the-top promotional and feel out of place."

In a May 2019 survey by mobile marketing solutions and engagement platform Vibes, the second-most-common reason for unsubscribing from a brand's business messaging was irrelevant information, cited by 37% of US smartphone owners. Too many messages/updates was in first place.



Based on what we know so far, WhatsApp users won't be able to "unsubscribe" or opt out of WhatsApp Status ads. However, if Status follows the same format as Stories ads on Facebook's other properties, users will be able to skip over them.

That only heightens the need to personalize the ad content to capture consumer attention. But personalization requires strategic targeting, and for that, advertisers rely on consumer data.

For more on the global mobile messaging app market, check out our latest report. It dives into current opportunities for businesses on WhatsApp as well as the upcoming launch of Status ads and best practices for brands.