Improving the shopping experience on mobiles

February 19 2018

Examples of Mobile Ready Hero Images. Credit: University of Cambridge

Product sales on mobiles continue to grow, but conventional photographs of products often fail to provide key information to shoppers. In response, the Inclusive Design Group at the Department's Cambridge Engineering Design Centre has developed a proof of concept for improved Mobile Ready Hero Images, in collaboration with Unilever.

Mobile Ready Hero Images are designed to speed up grocery shopping

on mobiles.

Dr. Sam Waller, Senior Research Associate in the Inclusive Design Group, explained: "Mobile Ready Hero Images make it easier for shoppers to identify critical product information like brand, product type, flavour/variant and size. While traditional pack photographs can be effective on large desktop screens, different flavours and sizes of products can look identical when these photographs are displayed on mobiles, reduced to the size of a postage stamp. This is especially problematic for older consumers with age-related long sightedness."

Oliver Bradley, e-commerce director at Unilever, said: "To date, Mobile Ready Hero Images have been adopted by over 83 retailers in more than 40 countries worldwide. Magnum ice cream is one of Unilever's billion dollar global brands that has adopted hero images. During an eight-week A/B split test with a retailer, Magnum's hero images led to a sales increase of 24%."

In order to meet retailers' demands for consistent product images across all brands, Unilever commissioned Cambridge to develop a website for hero image guidelines. This contains freely available templates to help brands quickly create improved product images.

Some brands have fast-followed Unilever and created Mobile Ready Hero Images using the Cambridge templates, while others have developed hero images in a completely different way. Some retailers have chosen to accept all kinds of hero images, while others will only accept some kinds of hero images. This results in an inconsistent experience for consumers.

Paul Reid, head of standards at GS1 in the UK, explained: "We spotted the opportunity to improve this situation using our Global Standards Management Process. This involves setting up a working group to gather

agreement between competing brands and retailers, leading to a single, globally applicable set of guidelines for Mobile Ready Hero Images. These guidelines will help brands and retailers make the shopping experience more consistent, and therefore, better."

Dr. Waller explained how Cambridge research will help to inform this process: "Inclusive design can help improve the visual clarity of hero images, making them more accessible to a wider range of consumers. In particular, our SEE-IT method can estimate the proportion of the population who would be unable to discern the critical information from e-commerce images. We are looking forward to contributing our expertise to the GS1 working group to help inform the critical decisions."

"Grocery products are just the start," he added. "We are aiming to improve the e-commerce images used for every product, in every retailer, in every country in the world."

 More information: For more information, see www.gs1.org/standards-development-work-groups#HERO

Provided by University of Cambridge