Boosting App Installs With Real-Time, Data-Driven Creative for Waze

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Topics

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It's tough out there for an app: One in 4 never even get used after they're installed. Our latest Art, Copy & Code project tested real-time data in app-install ads for Waze, to see if giving a taste of the app's magic would help acquire the right users from the start. Below are four key takeaways.

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t's 7:20 a.m. You've just downed your coffee and are scrambling to get out the door. As you grab your phone to glance at the weather you see an ad—but wait, this is actually useful: It shows nearby traffic conditions and ways you can speed up your commute, giving you a taste of the app's magic before you even download it.

This campaign was the focus of our latest Art Copy & Code[1] project to explore new app install ad formats—making them more relevant and useful for consumers, and better-performing for advertisers.

The Google Play Store alone has more than 1 million apps[2], with more added every day. Winning real estate on phones is harder than ever; one in 4 installed apps never get used.[3] To help app marketers and growth leaders succeed, we hypothesised that letting users experience the benefits of an app before the download-and-install process would improve campaign performance. One of our early test cases: driving installs for Waze[4], the community-based traffic and navigation app. By sharing Waze's real-time traffic updates—right in the ads, during the moments when consumers could most use the information—we saw conversion rates soar 865% over static creative. The data also revealed some unexpected insights.

The Experiment:

- Use real-time data during contextually relevant moments to show users exactly what an app can do, before they even download it.

- Test whether dynamic real-time ads acquire more users than a standard ad with a static image.

The Approach:

- Partnered with Waze, a community-sourced traffic app.

- Exposed real-time traffic updates from the app in mobile display ads, allowing potential users to experience Waze benefits before download, in the moments it would be most useful.

The Results:

The test ads drove fewer clicks, but those who did click were much more likely to follow through and install the app. Because of the quality of engagement, costs per install decreased significantly:

- Click-through-rates fell: -50%

- Conversion (install) rates soared: + 865%

- Costs per install dropped: -51%

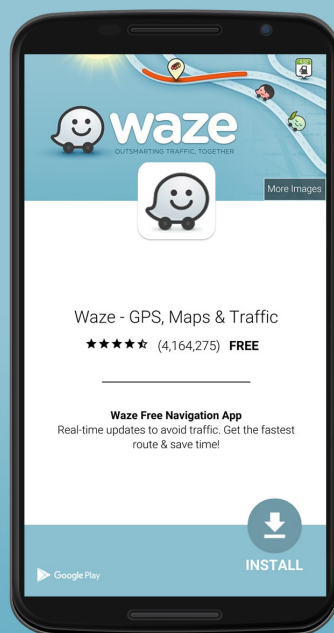Here's a look at what we learned and how marketers can apply these lessons:

1. "Try Before You Buy" Brings More Conversions

The competitive app market is filled with friction points, and ad platforms have evolved to help advertisers succeed through better targeting, ad formats and measurement solutions. However, there is room for experimentation in the ad creative to make units more useful and relevant for end users. Most install ads, while effective, are static images that expose everyone to the same copy and ratings information. While these units drive installs efficiently, the quality of downloads has a huge impact on ROI. High-value users engage 4X more than the average user and account for, on average, 85% of app revenue across retail, sports, communications and music/books categories.[5]

The right users are much more likely to install an app when they've seen its value prior to downloading. In our experiment, creative that featured real-time local traffic updates increased app installs 865% over static creative, and had 51% lower costs per install. While we're exploring ways to scale learnings from Waze and other similar tests, many advertisers are already using Google's new Interactive Interstitials and Trial Run Ads to showcase their apps in compelling ways.

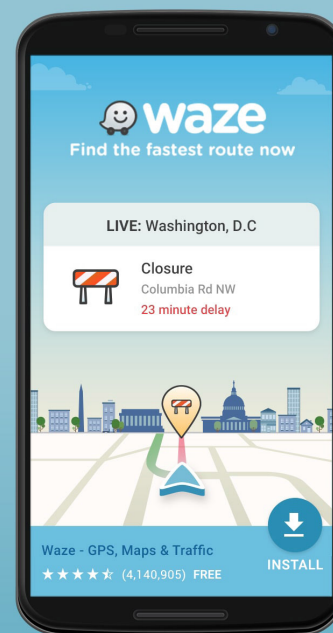## Control Ad

Static Image
Play Store Ratings
Static Copy

**Waze - GPS, Maps & Traffic**
★★★★⯪ (4,164,275) FREE

Waze Free Navigation App
Real-time updates to avoid traffic. Get the fastest route & save time!

INSTALL

Test Ad

- Live Traffic Incident Feed
- Location Aware
- Time Aware

waze
Find the fastest route now

LIVE: Washington, D.C

Closure
Columbia Rd NW
23 minute delay

Waze - GPS, Maps & Traffic
★★★★⯪ (4,140,905) FREE

INSTALL

## 2. Be There in the Right Moment

Nobody needs a traffic update when they're in for the night. Target ads for the time and place that people are most likely to be seeking your brand or information. Understand the moments that matter to your brand, then be there and be useful. Google Trends data, not surprisingly, shows large mobile search spikes for "traffic" during morning and afternoon rush hours. Knowing that people discover apps in many more places than just app stores[6], we seized on those moments. Using dayparting, along with interest- and geo-targeting, we reached commuters in key cities with display ads when they were likely to be checking traffic, news, and weather apps in the Google Display Network. To further highlight how new and relevant the information would be to the user, the ads changed to reflect the time of day—a sunny background for mornings, a sunset for the evening drive-time.
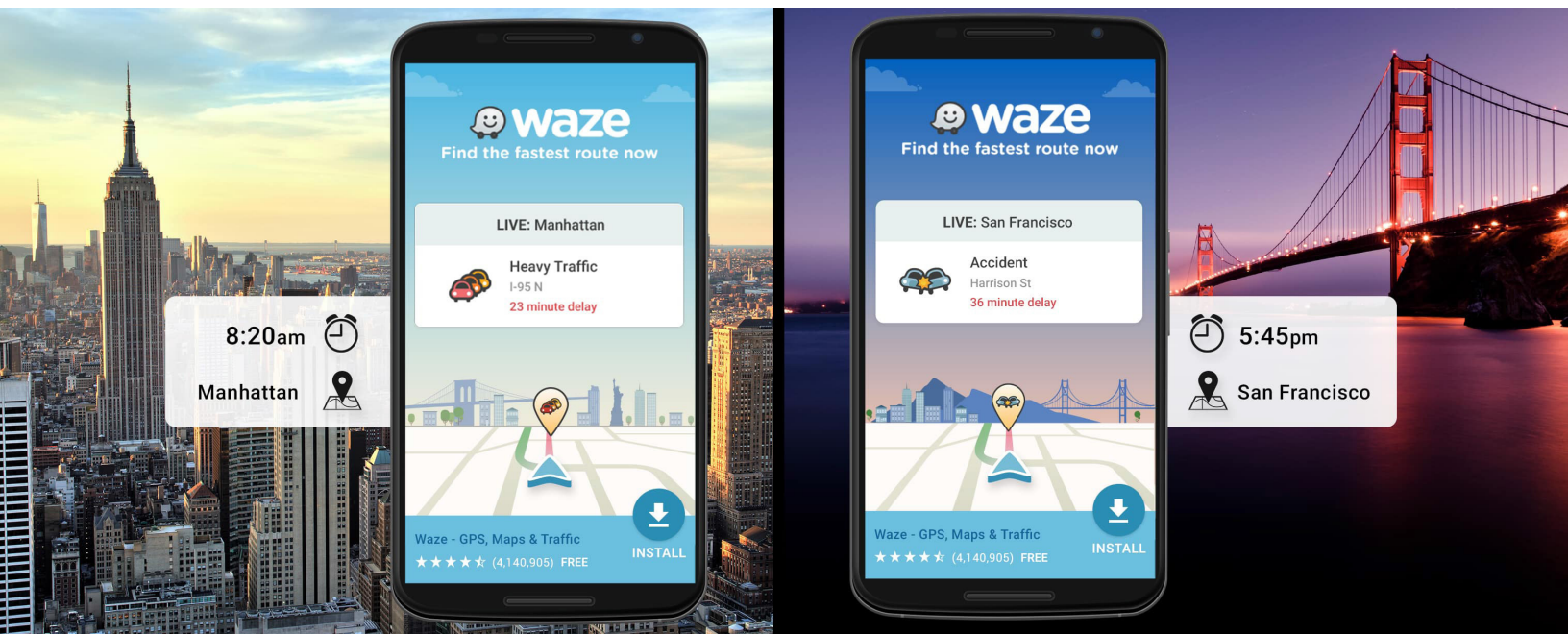
3. Be Local, Be Specific

One surprising finding from our tests: Hyper-local ads that told of a specific traffic incident like, "Standstill Traffic on Princes Street," outperformed ads that were more city-wide, such as "Live Traffic Reports in Edinburgh." We learned that even though a user might go nowhere near Princes Street, the hyper-local ads better showcased the kind of specific, granular information Waze could offer on a city, thus highlighting the app's unique value. In efforts to be useful to your target audience, make sure you are really showcasing what your brand can do for them.

Traffic Stats
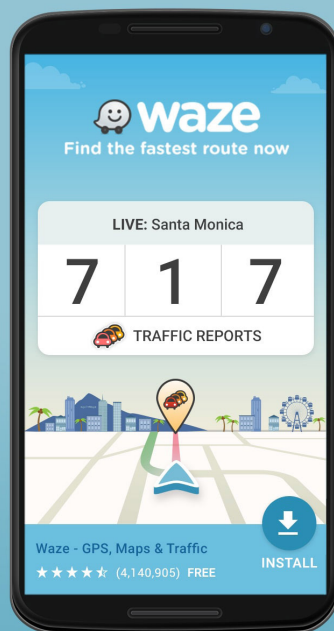
Specific Traffic Incident
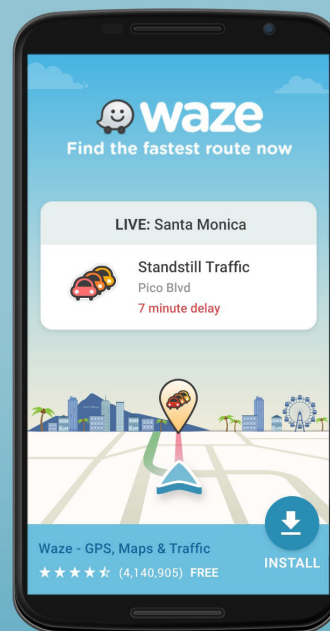
4. Build for Scalability

The Waze campaign began with 10 simple ads (one for each city.) Through dynamically updating units it served more than 16 million variations over the three-month testing period, all from one zip file of code. We created templates that let us A/B test numerous elements including copy, imagery, animation, button styles, and more. Along the way, we were surprised by some of the small tweaks that affected performance. Our takeaways: Use templates to scale creative, make no assumptions, and test rigorously to understand what works and what doesn't.
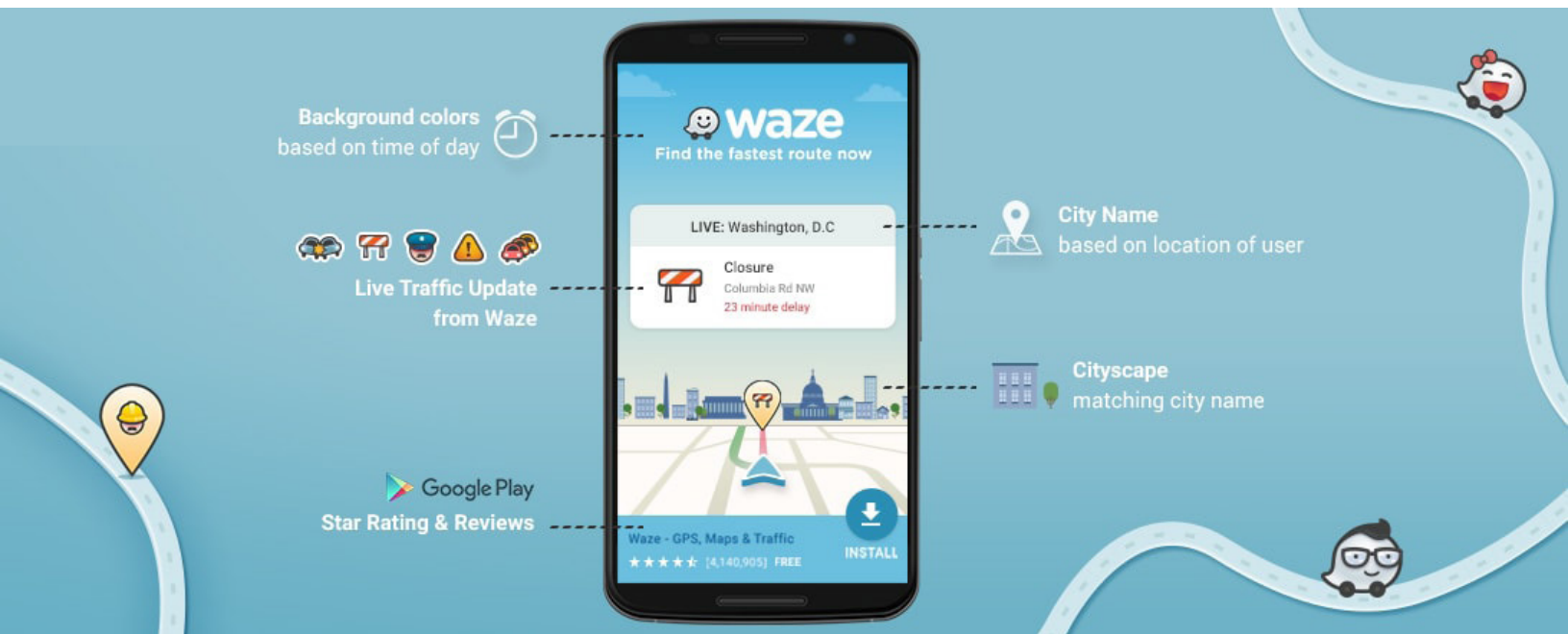
Conclusion:

It's a competitive climate for apps, filled with friction points: from getting noticed to getting installed to getting integrated into a user's routine. App marketers should zoom in their focus, target the right user at the right time, and demonstrate the app's value in useful and relevant ways.

Sources

1 Google's Art, Copy & Code initiative explores new creative ideas in digital advertising.

2 Google Internal Data, Global, 2016.

3,6 Google/Ipsos, Mobile App Marketing Insights, "How Consumers Really Find and Use Your Apps," US, May 2015.

4 Google acquired Waze in 2013.

5 "Radium One Mobile Data Report Finds High-Value Users Drive 85% of App Revenue ," US, Mar. 2016.