

Mobile Marketing Gets Kickstart Michael Becker, President, MettaTech

Watch out, America--here comes mobile marketing. A recent, little publicized technical agreement has cleared the way for pervasive advertising, and your cell phone may never be same again.

Mobile marketing--marketing to individuals via their mobile phones, wirelessly enabled PDAs, and smartphones--has been a market driving force in Europe and Asia for some time. Over 350 billion mobile messages, commonly referred to as SMS, are exchanged across the globe annually. A handful of global companies, including Coca-Cola, Cadbury Candy, Masterfoods, and McDonalds are running mobile marketing campaigns. Coca-Cola, in fact, reached over 7 million customers in China over a span of 13 weeks last year, during its "Coke Cool Summer" promotion. Mobile marketing campaigns, experts contend, increase brand awareness, event attendance, customer loyalty, revenues, and can help companies develop customer profile databases.



Ad campaigns--like this one featuring M&M candies--push the boundaries of how consumers will use their handhelds' mobile messaging features.

Reprinted with permission from Masterfoods, Switzerland and Minick "Magic Of Movies," Switzerland Mobile Marketing Campaign March '03

The United States has long trailed Europe and Asia in mobile marketing. According to Peter Fuller, Executive Director of the Mobile Marketing Association, there were three main reasons behind this lag. The first obstacle was addressed July 2001 when the six largest wireless carriers enabled text messaging interoperability across networks. And, according to Fuller, the second impediment is no longer an issue either, since two-thirds of the 150 million mobile phones in the U.S. now support two-way messaging and all new phones sold today support it. The last piece of the puzzle was just implemented when the Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association (CTIA) selected NeuStar to manage the national Common Short Code (CSC) Registry. CSCs are 5-digit codes that enable and uniquely identify mobile marketing campaigns.

With the technical pieces in place, U.S. marketers are preparing themselves to begin mobile marketing--particularly to the financially significant and technically savvy Gen Y segment. A recent study from Telephia notes that the number of these 18-24 year olds using SMS doubled to 45% since last year. Sarah Autrand, President of the Silicon Valley American Marketing Association notes, "Generation Y, around 76 million strong, is one of the key markets for mobile marketing. If you're targeting Gen Y, you should invest in the mobile channel sooner rather than later. It is unlike any other channel, the mobile channel enables an intimate two-way, one-to-one, relationship with the customer regardless of time or location." This much is true: Mobile marketing is here, and it's going to change the way marketers and consumers interact once again.

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