

Archive for September 23rd, 2004

9/23/2004

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Barcodes + MMS = The Perfect Promotion?

By Carlo Longino, Thu Sep 23 21:15:00 GMT 2004

A mobile barcode company has combined barcode delivery with MMS, creating a marketing medium with plenty of potential applications.

Scottish company [Mobiqa](#) has been delivering barcode-based event tickets and coupons via SMS for a few years, but has now [added MMS to its capabilities](#). While most recent mobile barcode technology has revolved around using cameraphones to read barcodes then retrieve information, Mobiqa works on the reverse principle. The company's core technology is pretty straightforward: instead of getting a paper ticket to a concert or coupon from a retailer, an SMS with a unique barcode is sent out, and then scanned upon entry or redemption.

The barcodes offer a number of benefits over paper tickets or coupons: they're easy and cheap to distribute, they can be read with existing POS equipment and their use can be better tracked since each consumer has a unique barcode. Adding MMS capabilities is the next logical step, and one that makes a lot of sense for the company. The

examples they cite are based around music: a concert ticket can be sent in an MMS, along with a video or audio clip and a coupon for a discount on the artist's CD, or similar discounts and clips could be sent without the concert ticket.

Of course, there are plenty of advertisers that could manage to muck this up if it's not applied properly. If it's used to spam potential customers, it will be as ineffective as [previous SMS spam "advertisements"](#). But to users who opt in to receive this kind of content (members of a musician's fan club, for instance), it's a strong draw because it capitalizes on their interest both with the targeted content, as well as with a trackable coupon for a product they're (presumably) interested in. And because it uses standard barcodes, like paper coupons, it integrates easily with retailers' point-of-sale systems.

This type of content is also well-suited to viral spreading. If one teenager gets a cool video of a hot artist to their phone, they'll want to share it -- if Mobiqua can add a viral forwarding mechanism that retains the ability to track usage, it would be pretty powerful. There are the underpinnings of a strong mobile marketing medium here -- provided advertisers use it in the right way.