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A Sneak Peek into the Mobile Future

by Susan Kuchinskas, August 2006 issue

Tomorrow's mobile marketing apps are brewing in labs today

How irresistible are you, exactly? Oh, and hey does your breath smell?

These are burning questions for anyone making the scene, so Procter & Gamble turned to wireless marketing company Flytxt to create a campaign for Crest Whitening Plus Scope Extreme Toothpaste that would score with people on the go.

Hot-to-trot scenesters could check their "Irresistibility IQs" from mobile phones in this summer promotion, which also tied into a TV, print, and Web campaign. Ads on bar napkins and bathroom signs invited party animals to text the words "IQ" or "Extreme" to C-R-E-S-T.

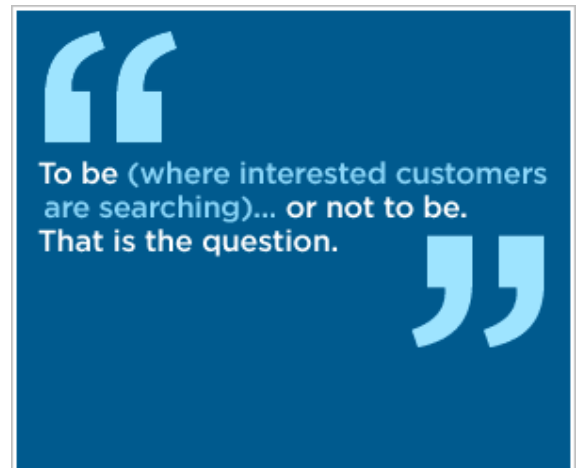
"We wanted to reach consumers in a place where they are really thinking about fresh breath, in an intense social situation, so it made sense to connect with them through mobile phones," says Kevin Buss, interactive product manager for P&G Oral Care. "This campaign reaches them in places where they're receptive to the message. It's a fun way to interact with the consumer."

When mass marketer P&G gets behind a trend, you know it's about to go mainstream. Agencies say this is the year mobile marketing will take off, so we headed to the labs to see what they're brewing for the mobile future.

Art Lovers' Communion

Social networking is the craze du jour, with MySpace and other social sites moving to mobile. The iheartart (iheartart.com) application is a community site that brings together people, camera phones, and the Internet. The idea is to let people immediately share reactions to art, whether in a museum or on the street.

It was developed by a multidisciplinary research group of faculty and graduate students from the Digital Media Graduate Program



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at the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts at Georgia Tech, in collaboration with interactive agency Nurun/Ant Farm Inter-active. (See related story on page 34.)

The Web site acts as the focal point, hosting photos taken with camera phones, sent by participants directly from their phones. The Web server recognizes the phone number, so that when a user next visits the site and logs in, the photos are available in a personal gallery. Users can add tags or additional comments and send the photos to friends.

"There are art lovers all around the world. They look at something that inspires them, makes them feel a certain way. The idea was to give people a place to commune, connect, and share," says Michael Koziol, executive vice president, North America at Nurun.

Koziol says iheartart has potential travel and tourism applications: A cruise company or destination marketer could host a version as an alternative to brochure-ware sites, letting travelers post snapshots and thoughts about their vacations.

Marketing Attack!

Sharkbites (sharkbit.es) lures passersby to an in-store or display window installation where they can play a game with wireless phones. A wide-screen TV shows a fish tank with a shark circling voraciously. Users text "bait" to the Web server, and then fish bearing their names appear in the tank. The shark begins to hunt and devour the fish; the last survivor swims to the bottom of the tank to claim a prize.

Summer Lauren Bedard, who designed and built Sharkbites as her thesis project for the Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, says she'd love to see the game installed at a surf shop, or in a movie theater, where audience members could play it while waiting for the show to start.

"Cell phone interactivity is a personal and memorable experience," Bedard says. "It's easy to forget a radio ad, but you won't forget participating in a virtual shark attack."

Hey, You're Qute!

If social networking is off the hook, Q121 (q121.com) wants to be the place where hotties hook up. It's a Web/mobile community that invites members to download and post photos, video, music, and ringtones. They can also play games, form or join groups, and rate others' photos.

Q121 President Andrew Stollman says that nearly half of all members download content to their phones, averaging 6.2 items each month. One goal is to tie brands into this content. Columbia House, BMG, Nickelodeon, Kaplan Higher Education, and the Los Angeles Lakers have already run campaigns on Q121.

"The younger the skew, the harder it is to tie brands into content," Stollman says. "[We offer] a big, active audience that, because they're getting services and content for free, are willing

to accept advertising. Reaching them directly on their cell phones is a unique opportunity."

You Are Here

Tagging is the ability to let users apply keywords to photos or other content, making it easier to search. ZoneTag (research.yahoo.com/zonetag/) aims to make tagging work better by automatically suggesting tags based on the location where a mobile photo was snapped.

The application, developed by Yahoo Research Labs-Berkeley, can automatically tag camera phone pictures with the location, based on the cell phone tower being used. It also lets users upload the pictures to the Flickr photo-sharing service. The Yahoo Research Labs-Berkeley is a partnership between the Internet media giant and the University of California at Berkeley's School of Information Management and Systems.

Says research scientist Mor Naaman, "For the people who already understand the value of tags, we'll make it easier for them." In turn, making tagging easier will encourage more people to tag, improving the metadata for the whole system, he says.

ZoneTag is still in the research project stage, but Naaman says that in the future, it might be used as a way to get information: A traveler could take a photo of an interesting building and send it to ZoneTag in order to find out its name and the architect, or it could be tied into Yahoo's local search so that someone could find nearby restaurants or upcoming events at the location.

The In-Store Click

Paperclick is a new technology from NeoMedia (neom.com) and The Valley Group that connects marketers with consumers at the point of sale.

When consumers use a camera-enabled phone or personal digital assistant to click on a "smart code" printed on the point-of-sale material, they're taken directly to the marketer's mobile Internet site, where they might find instant coupons, promotions, product information, and even mobile payment.

While the idea of mobile coupons isn't exactly new, NeoMedia CEO Martin Copus says Paperclick acts as a mobile Internet gateway. "Whatever a marketer would want to put out on a Web site, you could access immediately," he says. That could include playing a video clip, offering a magazine subscription, or linking directly to product specs.

Paperclick is expected to go live by the end of 2006. Copus says, "This gives huge immediacy and ability for retailers to speak to consumers at the moment of purchase."

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