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Rich Media For All

 by [Steve Smith](#), 10 minutes ago

MMS continues to be one of the missed opportunities of mobile marketing in the U.S. Now that MMS has become a reflex for most Americans, the basic habit and distribution mechanism needed for penetrating a large share of the market with multimedia is here technically if not always practically. I am hoping this changes in 2010, because there is a massive set of non-smart phones that are capable of accepting rich media and new kinds of direct-to-consumer relationships that the MMS medium makes possible.

"When we go to an ad agency and we have enough people around the table, there inevitably will be someone with a feature phone who says they had no idea their phone supported video," says Jay Goss, senior vice president of Mogreet. His company has been working with Starwood, Reebok and other major brands to leverage the MMS channel to send video ads to people who think they are initiating a simple SMS response to a print, TV or outdoor ad.

If you text "casa" to 21534, for instance you will get a message in return that includes a discount offer for Casa del Mar in Santa Monica as well as a video of their dining room. The interesting thing about this model is that it covers two bases at once, branding and direct response. The video offers a rich media experience than entices the user and embeds the brand but the text and links within the MMS message itself also carries a discount coupon and a call link.

This particular local campaign for Hotel Casa del Mar used in-hotel posters, email, Facebook, Twitter and the hotel's Web site to proliferate the short code. The five-week campaign resulted in 250 coupon redemptions - a redemption rate of 27%. The hotel grew its database of local, highly interested customers it could address again.

It is still a technical feat to get MMS across the major carriers. Goss says Mogreet has relationships with the networks so that it can send "commercial grade" MMS across carriers. The system uses the native video player that is on almost all feature phones now, and since it uses the messaging channel it doesn't require a separate data channel, Goss says. Part of the impact is the novelty factor, to be sure.

"When I get sent a video on my iPhone, that person may be impressed but he was probably already watching video on his phone anyway," Goss notes. "But for the 150 million with ordinary feature phones, we can get our video to all of those guys too."

It is that secondary effect of an MMS campaign - the opt-in - that intrigues me. Imagine if a media brand were able to send to loyal viewers of a show, not only a tune-in reminder, but also a clip of the upcoming episode? When handled well, MMS rich media constitutes a real value exchange for many users and a communications path that is superior to a pre-roll in some respects.

One of my persistent complaints about mobile marketing is that the value exchange is lopsided. Too many brands seem to presume their customers are in love with the brand and want to hear from the advertiser no matter what, no matter when. MMS offers users the ability to opt into something more than alerts. They can opt into an experience, a regular piece of entertainment. That is the sort of relationship with consumer marketers should be aspiring to achieve.



This commentary is insightful. I recommend it to others.



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