

Retailers dial into consumers' mobile phones

A surge in Retail initiatives that will encourage customers to receive product information and vouchers via their mobile phones is being predicted by Pierhouse, the software experts for in-store customer marketing.

"The business case for mobile marketing is very compelling as the cost is as low as the price of a text message," claims Adrian Segens, business development director, Pierhouse. "However, Retailers need to significantly boost the volume of mobile telephone numbers they have to populate campaigns which is why we expect much more intensive activity over the next 12 months. In the current climate, Retailers need to strengthen customer loyalty, and the ability to do this by either establishing a mobile loyalty capability straight off, or complementing an existing card-based scheme, is attractive. Early experience in the medium is also important to 'understand' how to effectively engage consumers in the mobile channel and be ahead in exploiting this channel to market."

Segens also believes a key driver to go mobile is the ability to more effectively communicate richer product information, including offers, to help consumers make their purchasing decisions. With 90 per cent of text messages read, against 25 per cent of emails* mobile is becoming an increasingly essential element of the marketing mix.

"To make the most out of new media such as mobile marketing, though, Retailers need to ensure that it becomes an integral part of their campaigns, acting as a bridge between their in-store and online promotional activity and not considered in isolation, which is too often the case," adds Segens. "A common misconception, is that mobile marketing has to be something that involves smart phone applications - it does not."

While MMS messages, iPhone applications and even QR codes do have their place, Segens believes the essence of good mobile marketing is to "keep it simple".

One of the simplest ways of obtaining a customer's mobile telephone number is to create in-store media with a 'text for details' call to action. Customers text the code of the product they are interested in and receive an SMS message with a WAP link which they follow to see full details of the product (price, specification etc) on their phone. This message can also include phone numbers that can be immediately dialled to connect to a Retailer's call centre or links to the company's online ordering service.

Once the mobile numbers have been captured, Retailers can also use the media to send out customised offers.

The largest and most successful mobile marketing application in the UK - the Shop-Scan-Save club with around 30,000 members uses this method. Offers are sent by text to members who can redeem them at any of the 22,000 Retailers that participate in the PayPoint scheme. Research among these shoppers has not only shown that people accept using their phones to receive and redeem coupons, but also that Retailers and brand owners can acquire directly a very detailed level of information from consumers in a cost-effective way.

According to Segens sellers of electrical goods are leading the way in using the “text for more details” method to help customers distinguish between the myriad of products on sale and wine sellers are also seeing it as a real advantage.

Fashion Retailers, on the other hand, are following their counterparts in the US by exploring mobile to deliver vouchers and coupons, attracted by the higher - and faster - redemption rate than for printed coupons, usually less than 48 hours.

As Retailers build up their list of customer mobile telephone numbers, they can also send messages about special offers to help shift slow-moving lines, particularly perishables with a finite shelf life.

“But whether a Retail marketing campaign involves mobile, print, digital or electronic communication it’s important to ensure that it’s accurate and compliant. While this may be obvious, there are numerous examples of campaigns with different prices and descriptions published across various media, where the timing of a print advertisement has not linked with the in-store branding and even where an incorrect picture or company logo has been used,” adds Segens.

“At Pierhouse we have a reputation for innovation. We have partnered with Mobilize Systems and configured our browser-based net tickIT sign and ticketing software to work with mobile phones, as well as with printed, electronic and digital media.”

*Source: Approved Food and Drink campaign

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