



# MOBILE'S TIME OF REDEMPTION

MOBILE COUPONS AND QUICK RESPONSE CODES ARE SET TO TAKE OFF AS ADVERTISERS LOOK FOR CHEAPER AND TRENDIER CALLS TO ACTION IN TOUGHER ECONOMIC TIMES, WRITES LIA TIMSON.

The growth of mobile internet access and services thanks to the iPhone and other 3G handsets has pushed savvy marketers to test more mobile ad campaigns and interactive sales promotions.

The two-dimensional Quick Response (QR) Code, until now exclusive to Telstra, is set for a marketing boost of its own when other carriers begin promoting their QR-enabled phones. These use the camera to read and understand the square boxes appearing on outdoor posters and print media.

QR Codes summarise complex promotional information and make phones open a webpage automatically. It is estimated there are two million QR-ready handsets in use in Australia. The free pre-installed reading software first developed in Japan is widely used in Asia and is gathering popularity in the UK and US. But it is yet to become the norm for digital campaigns here.

Sony Ericsson used QR Codes last year in conjunction with Telstra and Sneaky Sound System to promote its W760 Walkman. Jacob's Creek included it in an integrated campaign earlier this year and Lion Nathan has integrated it into a fully interactive campaign for its web series "6 beers of separation".

"We're expecting it to ramp up when Vodafone and Optus start to promote it," says Bill Obermeier, former brand & marketing chief at Telstra, now chairman of Publicis-owned digital marketing consultancy Myne.

"We're predicting there will be a lot more uptake, with 10% to 15% of all phones enabled by the end of the year," he says.

Mobile coupons will also take off,

says Myne partner Simon Morgan. First touted as a great way to deliver concert and cinema tickets, the barcoded coupons have been largely forgotten by advertisers who struggled with implementing reliable means to track them at point of sale.

People are beginning to make more considered decisions than what ringtone to download.

But Morgan says if the enquiries he's been getting from agencies and advertisers in the last few months are any indication, coupons will become a much more popular direct marketing tool this year.

"We've been doing a lot of research on the coupons and methods [of redemption]. The barrier to marketers using them has not been consumer acceptance; it's been the training of staff at point of sale."

Morgan says coupons work best when brands control the redemption point as is the case with national store and cinema chains. But FMCG marketers would still find it challenging to convince supermarkets and general retailers to accept such promotional tools.

Morgan says the cost of including a QR Code or coupon in a

mobile campaign is negligible. The important thing is to have a linkable mobile internet page that matches the desired user experience, and have an integrated back-end database to collate analytics.

Richard Mergler, chief executive of mobile technology provider MIA, says consumers weren't ready for coupons when first introduced.

"The mobile generation is less than 10 years old. Now that they are older, they are beginning to make more considered decisions than just what ringtone to download, and mobiles are their device of choice."

Coupled with data speeds rising, data costs dropping and a proliferation of cool mobile applications, this means consumers will be more willing to use mobile-driven response mechanisms, he says.

Other mobile applications are also gaining track, with NAB recently launching an ATM locator that allows people to find the nearest ATM to where they stand.

Dr Marisa Maio Mackay, research director at m.Net, agrees QR Codes and coupons are emerging applications as mobile searches drive internet usage.

"What we are seeing is people searching in a quick and effective manner. They use the mobile phone for specific quick information, as opposed to PC searches where they want lots of information," Dr Mackay says.

This bodes well for tools that allow users to go directly to the content they need. But she warns advertisers to use the medium appropriately.

"The mobile phone is not a place to create a new brand, but to tap into existing behaviour. It is a powerful channel, but just another tool to communicate with users." <



Sony Ericsson [top] and Lion Nathan [above] are two marketers that have added QR Codes to their advertising.