Portable Portals for M–Commerce

Irvine Clarke III
James Madison University, USA

Theresa Flaherty
James Madison University, USA

INTRODUCTION

In the new decade, the call for information technology will be information, anytime, anyplace, and on any device. Accordingly, e-commerce is poised to witness an unprecedented explosion of mobility, creating a new domain of mobile commerce. Mobile commerce, or m-commerce, is the ability to purchase goods anywhere through a wireless Internet-enabled device (e.g., cellular phone, pager, PDA, etc.). Mobile commerce refers to any transaction with monetary value that is conducted via a mobile network. It will allow users to purchase products over the Internet without the use of a PC. Non-existent a year ago, m-commerce is now the buzzword of the marketing industry (King, 2000).

Over the past few years, e-commerce has become increasingly reliant upon portals to attract and retain users. Portals are the preferred starting point for searches that provide the user easily customizable architecture for finding relevant information. Portals provide the valuable gateways for getting users to their desired destinations. Today, about 15% of all Web page view traffic goes through the top nine portals, making them some of the most valuable land on the Web (Monohan, 1999). This heavy traffic flow gives the Web-based portal a unique position in corporate e-commerce strategy—with even greater potential influence for mobile applications. For mobile devices, these portals take on increased significance, as consumers are unwilling to spend long periods “surfing” on these inherently less user-friendly wireless devices. By the year 2006, 25 million people are expected to be dedicated wireless portal users (Carroll, 2000).

As m-commerce success will likely depend upon maintaining consumer utilization of these gateways, the companies that leverage the unique characteristics of wireless devices will gain exploitable advantages in the mobile marketplace. Due to current technological limitations and varying mobile consumer behavior patterns, portals developed for mobile devices must emphasize differing characteristics than conventional Web-based portals. As such, many portals may be unsuited for application in the mobile world.

“Traditional portals are not providing information that is specific enough for the user of a mobile portal. They are not able to incorporate location-specific information nor do they have the data and knowledge of each customer that the mobile operator has.” (Durlacher Research, 2000, p. 65)

BACKGROUND

Mobile devices have been the fastest adopted consumer products of all time with, last year, more mobile phones shipped than automobiles and PCs combined (Chen, 2000). By 2003, there will be 1.4 billion mobile phones worldwide, and half will be Internet-enabled (Zabala, 2000). “The wireless world is a parallel universe almost as large as the Net, and the two are beginning a fascinating convergence,” said Swapnil Shah, director of Inktomi Europe, a search engine and caching solutions company (Rao, 2000, p. 1). It is predicted that this emergence of mobile commerce will happen even faster than the development of e-commerce—in roughly the time between the invention of the first Web browser and now (Schenker, 2000). “If you look five to 10 years out, almost all of e-commerce will be on wireless devices,” says Jeff Bezos, chief executive and founder of Amazon.com (McGinity, 2000, p. 1).

The potential of m-commerce is considerable for those willing to develop mobile-specific business models. However, as m-commerce matures, current mobile operators will rely less upon usage fees and increasingly derive revenues from content and services. Additionally, m-commerce is going to bring about a massive change in the way users consume products and services. As Cindy Dahm, European director for Phone.com, stated:

“It is key that commerce companies recognize m-commerce as a completely unique service. Cell phone users are more impatient than Internet users. The paradigm here is not surfing; all services for the mass market have to be pitched at users in such a seamless way that they need not even be aware that they are accessing the Net.” (Rao, 2000, p. 2)
Related Content

On a Design of Narrowband FIR Low-Pass Filters
www.igi-global.com/chapter/design-narrowband-fir-low-pass/13998?camid=4v1a

Semantic Web Uncertainty Management
www.igi-global.com/chapter/semantic-web-uncertainty-management/14084?camid=4v1a

IT Governance Mechanisms in Public Sector Organisations: An Australian Context
www.igi-global.com/chapter/governance-mechanisms-public-sector-organisations/20633?camid=4v1a

Visualizing Knowledge Networks and Flows to Enhance Organizational Metacognition in Virtual Organizations
www.igi-global.com/chapter/visualizing-knowledge-networks-flows-enhance/54561?camid=4v1a