Mobile-Based Advertising in Japan

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INTRODUCTION

The Internet-enabled mobile handset has rapidly achieved worldwide penetration. Combining personal telephony and sophisticated technologies, the mobile Internet has opened new opportunities for offering a diverse range of services, including interactive advertising. In Japan, D2 Communications offers various forms of mobile advertising services delivering promotional information from advertisers.

For example, Message F (Free) delivers text-based information to a designated inbox of registered users, who are exempt from the normal packet transmission charges. It can enable highly effective communication due to its ability to target selected demographic segments by region, gender, age, and so forth. In July 2005, D2 Communications began an image attachment service for users of Message F, supporting the transmission of images, logos, and other visual effects, up to 8KB (192 × 192 pixels in JPEG or GIF), as well as text.

This was to be enhanced further in 2006, when Japanese broadcasters began mobile digital broadcasting. The major carrier, NTT DoCoMo, already announced the development of the 3G FOMA(R) P901iTV, which will be “DoCoMo’s first mobile handset to receive terrestrial digital broadcasting signals, in addition to conventional analog signals” (NTT DoCoMo, 2005). Therefore, leading mobile advertisers will take advantage of three basic elements in PC-based interactive advertising in mobile devices: static, animated, and broadcast images.

Pull-Type Advertising

In pull-type advertising, messages are displayed to users who voluntarily enter sites (Andersson & Nilsson, 2000) and decide whether to access further information. Consequently, wireless advertisers must improve consumer response and acceptance (Carat Interactive, 2002) because users are unlikely to click banners unless they believe that the content will prove useful, credible, and valuable. Consumers’ acceptance, and their perceptions of the delivered content of wireless advertising, are crucial (Carat Interactive, 2002).

In this vein, D2 Communications offers a pull-type advertising platform called “Tokusuru Menu” (which means “beneficial menu” in Japanese), which provides various text banner ads for promotional campaigns, discount coupons, presents, and so forth. This service requires no registration, and any mobile users can freely access it by selecting No. 4 on the i-menu of an i-mode phone (one of DoCoMo’s official sites). Then, they can click and go to the detailed information site. As a result, click-through and call-through rates (almost 15%) are much higher than those of the wired Internet (2-3%) (D2 Communications, 2003; Mizukoshi, Okino, & Tardy, 2001). This popular site attracts an average of 3.5 million people monthly.

Push-Type Advertising

Message F (Free)

This push advertising delivers selected promotional information from advertisers, exclusively to users who have opted in to receive the service. It is delivered to a designated

Figure 1. Tokusuru menu

Figure 2. Message F