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Leveraging Wireless Technology for Mobile Advertising

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LEVERAGING WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY FOR MOBILE ADVERTISING[1]

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Abstract

This paper is based on research conducted in cooperation with 12Snap, the leading European mobile marketing company, which has implemented large-scale mobile advertising campaigns with companies such as McDonald's, Nestlé, Microsoft, Coca Cola, Adidas and Sony.

To set the overall stage, we first discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the mobile phone in comparison to other marketing media. Then we propose a framework of different types of advertising campaigns that can be supported through the usage of mobile devices. These campaign types include (1) mobile push campaigns, (2) mobile pull campaigns, and (3) mobile dialogue campaigns. Building on this framework, we analyze different campaigns that 12Snap implemented for different consumer goods and media companies. Drawing from these experiences we then discuss a number of key management issues that need to be considered when implementing mobile marketing campaigns. They include the following themes: (1) the choice of campaign type, (2) the design of a campaign, (3) the targeting of the youth market and (4) the combination of different media types to create integrated campaigns.

Keywords: mobile commerce, advertising, marketing, mobile advertising framework.

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[1] This paper is based on a teaching case study that features the German wireless advertising company 12Snap (see Jelassi and Enders, 2004).

1   INTRODUCTION

The market for mobile phones has expanded rapidly during the past decade and continues to grow fast. In some European countries such as Finland, Sweden, Norway and Italy, the mobile phone has reached almost ubiquitous penetration with levels of 80% and beyond (Economist 2001). In Germany, mobile phones are more widely used than fixed-line connections (Brechtel 2002). In addition to voice communications, German users send out 2.2 billion text messages through their mobile phone every month (Brinkhaus 2002).

The fast spread of mobile phones has created immense profit expectations in the telecommunications industry. Telecommunication companies in many countries have invested large sums of money into acquiring third-generation licenses and building the necessary infrastructure. Yet, as it turns out, it is more difficult to generate revenues than initially anticipated.

In addition to call charges, there are three main revenue sources in mobile communications: (1) **transactions**, (2) **information**, and (3) **advertising**. Transactions are of high interest, yet as of now only to a limited extent, because of the small size of the screen and the clumsy usage of the keypad. With information services (such as weather forecasts or banking services) the crucial issue is the user's willingness to pay for these types of services.

Does mobile advertising have the potential to be a significant source of revenue in the future? First studies on this new advertising medium indicate that mobile advertisement campaigns can be very successful, generating response rates as high as 40%, compared with the 3% response rate generally expected for direct mail and less than 1% for Internet banner ads (Borzo 2002).

Because of the novelty of the technology, using mobile phones for advertising campaigns presents some challenging questions for marketing departments:
- **What are the strategic advantages of the mobile phone in comparison to other advertising media?**
- **What campaign types can leverage these characteristics?**
- **And what critical issues need to be considered when launching a mobile advertising campaign?**

In the remainder of this paper, we discuss these questions drawing on field research conducted in cooperation with the German mobile marketing company 12Snap.

2   ADVERTISING THROUGH MOBILE PHONES

With the increasing number of media types, it has become more and more difficult for marketing managers to find appropriate strategies to target potential customers with their messages. First, while it was possible in the past to capture a large segment of society by placing advertisements with the main TV networks, the rise of private channels has led to a high degree of fragmentation, thereby complicating access to consumers. Similar fragmentation can be observed with other mass-media types such as print or radio. As a result, getting time and attention from their audience has turned into a major challenge for advertisers (Davenport & Beck 2000).

Second, different media types require different approaches because of differences regarding their reach or richness. **Reach** is a function of how easily customers, or in this case, participants in advertising campaigns, can be contacted through a given medium. **Richness**, on the other hand, is defined by (1) bandwidth, i.e. the amount of information that can be moved from sender to receiver in a given time, (2) the degree of individual customization of the information, and (3) interactivity, i.e. the possibility to communicate bi-directionally (Evans & Wurster 1997). The communication of rich marketing information, i.e. information that ranks high on all three aspects, has traditionally required physical

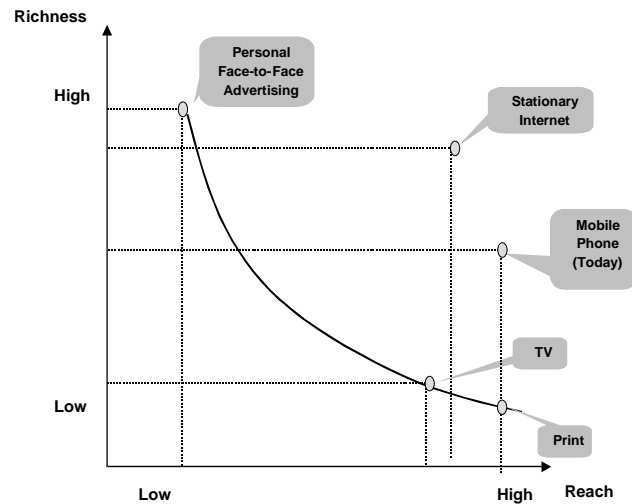proximity to customers and/or channels specifically dedicated to transmitting the information (see Exhibit 1).

Figure 1:   The Trade-off Between Richness and Reach in Advertising (Adapted from Evans & Wurster 1997)

How does the mobile phone fare within the richness versus reach framework? It can serve as a powerful platform to get in touch with end consumers because it simultaneously provides expanded reach and a number of richness advantages vis-à-vis most other media types:

- **Ubiquitous Access:** Mobile phone users always have their phone with them and turned on at almost all times (Balasubramanian, Peterson & Jarvenpaa, 2002 and Magura, B. (2003). This is especially true for teenagers and young users who use the mobile phone to stay in touch with their peers—primarily through SMS (Bughin& Lind 2001). Ubiquitous access becomes especially important in places like buses, trains and subways, airport lounges, etc. The time that people spend travelling is prime time for marketing since it presents a time where people are not occupied with other activities and are thus receptive to other kinds of entertainment. A study by the Boston Consulting Group (Boston Consulting Group 2000) found out that among private users, the categories "having fun" (71%) and "killing time" (55%) belong to the main motivators for using mobile phones—ranking only behind "keeping in touch with friends" (85%).
- **Detailed user information:** While traditional marketing campaigns only have access to very limited customer information, mobile campaigns can draw on extensive and individual information about each user (such as age, sex, usage profile, etc.). This information helps to launch highly targeted campaigns for specific products and services based on individual preferences of the user.
- **Integrated response channel:** The mobile phone presents the opportunity to interact directly with the user and elicit responses through the same medium. This has two advantages. First, it provides the opportunity for rich interaction. The interactivity and ubiquity of the mobile phone opens up the possibility to turn existing traditional media formats (such as the TV, radio, print or packaging) interactive. For instance, companies can contact consumers via TV and then subsequently, stay in touch with each one of them through the mobile phone. Second, the integrated response channel

also allows mobile marketing companies to measure precisely the impact of their campaigns and then to adapt their strategies accordingly—something which is much more difficult to do with traditional marketing media. For instance, a customer buys a product—with a mobile phone number on the packaging—at a retailer, and as s/he exits the store, s/he completes a quick survey of the shopping experience, which is then transmitted immediately to corporate headquarters. This not only allows the consumer the satisfaction of immediate feedback if they had a positive or negative experience; it also allows the company to measure quality control in an extremely timely and cost-effective manner (Carat Interactive 2002).

- **Personal channel:** Unlike other advertising media such as TV, radio or billboards, the mobile phone belongs to only one person. Therefore, it receives much more attention and, if handled properly (see risks below), can be much more powerful than other, less personal media channels. John Farmer, a co-founder of the SMS application and service provider Carbon Partners, points out that the personal character of the mobile phone is especially important to teenagers (Haig 2001): "The mobile phone presents the teenage market with the distinct opportunity to take control of their own communications, free from the previous limitations of the home phone or computer, which were more closely monitored by parents."

Brian Levin, CEO of Mobliss, a US wireless marketing firm, sums up the advantages (Stone 2001): "When you have a little time to spare, such as in the airport or at the bus stop—then you want to be engaged or entertained. Once you are there, the proximity of this device [the mobile phone] to your face, the intimacy there, is very powerful both in terms of direct response and in terms of branding." At the same time, however, the mobile phone also presents shortcomings and risk factors:

- **Limited media format:** Mobile phones today still have to cope with a very limited set of visual and audio capabilities. In second-generation (2G) phones, screens are typically small, have only low resolution and are typically not in color. Sound effects are also limited due to the small speakers, and text messages cannot be longer than 160 characters. The challenge is then to ensure at this stage that consumers do not expect an identical experience to what they receive through other devices such as TV or PC (Carat Interactive 2002).
- **Private Sphere:** The fact that mobile phones belong to only one person does not only present an opportunity but also a challenge for mobile advertisers. Unlike TV or Internet, the mobile phone is a very personal device to which only family, friends, co-workers and a selected few others will gain access. Thus, unsolicited "spamming" is considered much more intrusive than in other media formats (Carat Interactive 2002).

3   DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE MOBILE ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

One of the main challenges and opportunities for mobile advertising companies is the personal nature of mobile phones. Advertising campaigns over mobile phones are very sensitive and companies who engage in this type of marketing need to be careful not to offend users. Will Harris, global marketing director for Genie, British Telecom's mobile Internet service, emphasizes (Pesola 2001): "Sending unsolicited messages is tantamount to brand suicide. Our business is entirely dependent on the goodwill of our customers."

The mobile advertising industry is trying to protect mobile phone users by establishing guidelines for responsible advertising. The main feature of these guidelines is consent, i.e. consumers agree or opt-in to receive the advertisements. In addition, they must have a clear understanding of what their personal information is being used for, and if they wish, be removed from the advertiser's databases.

As a result, mobile advertisers have to find ways to entice customers to opt into their campaigns. Cyriac Roeding, 12Snap's Marketing Director, explains why many companies have difficulties attracting mobile phone users (Pesola 2001): "A lot of companies make the mistake of coming to this from a technological angle, rather than thinking about what the consumer wants. If advertising is entertaining, if it engages the emotions, it will be accepted."

Although mobile advertising is a relatively recent phenomenon, a number of large corporations including McDonald's, 20th Century Fox and Sony are using this medium in their marketing mix, especially to target young customers. These campaigns differ according to the degree of active involvement of advertiser and recipient (see Exhibit 2). Level of activity refers here to the involvement both advertiser and consumer show throughout the course of an advertising campaign. Traditional campaigns, which still present the most prominent advertisement type, display low levels of activity on both the advertiser's and the consumer's side since they consist of non-interactive, one-way advertisements in form of TV spots, radio or print ads, or posters. Mobile campaigns, on the other hand, show high levels of activity either on the side of the advertiser, the consumer or both. High level of activity on the side of the advertising company implies that the consumer is approached proactively, whereas a high level of activity on the side of the consumer implies that he reacts actively to an advertisement or a newspaper ad, for instance, by soliciting further information via the mobile phone.
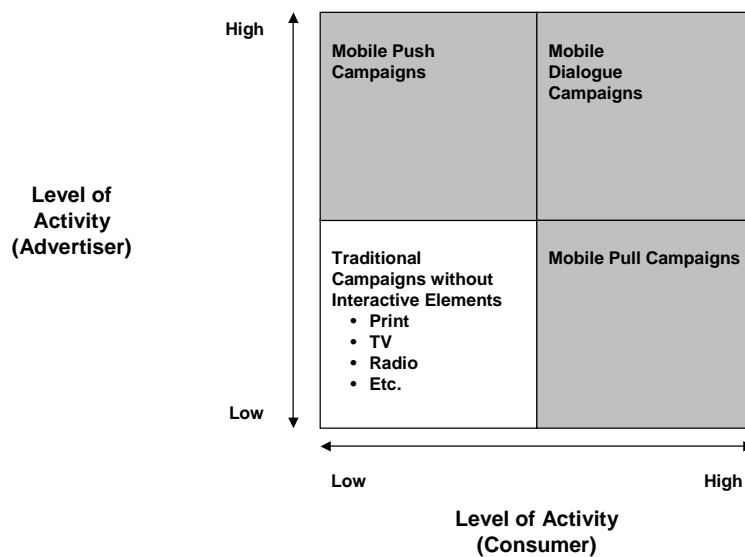

Figure 2:   *Mobile Advertising Framework*

Through the built-in response channel, mobile phones are suitable both for push and pull campaigns. According to the mobile advertising framework, mobile campaigns can be categorized as follows:

- **Mobile Push Campaigns:** Push advertising is categorized as messages that are proactively sent out to wireless users. Companies use databases with existing customer profiles, which can be proprietary or purchased externally, to address their target groups (Carat Interactive 2002). Because of the sensitivity of the mobile phone, it is important to ensure that all members of the database have beforehand agreed (i.e., given their opt-in) to receive mobile advertising. In addition, for the success of a campaign, it is essential to ensure that the selected target group from the database is interested in the specific advertising, which requires extensive profiling of the database (Pearse 2002). Doing so avoids the alienation of uninterested users, while at the same time maximizing the impact of the advertising budget on those targeted.

- **Mobile Pull Campaigns:** Applying a pull approach, advertisers use their traditional marketing media mix such as TV, radio, print or packaging to promote an interactive mobile campaign. For instance, a telephone number on a French fries box might invite a customer to participate in a raffle

for free food through his mobile phone. By calling, the consumer gives the "opt-in"—an explicit consent to the campaign—and can then participate.

- **Mobile Dialogue Campaigns:** Dialogue campaigns differ from the above-mentioned campaign types in their duration and the intensity of interaction between advertiser and customer. While simple push and pull campaigns tend to last only two to four weeks and center around one single theme such as a raffle or a game, dialogue campaigns last several months and include various different themes that build on one another. Their goal is to establish a long-lasting relationship with consumers as to generate extensive insights into consumer's preferences. A mobile horoscope service, for instance, allows the advertiser to capture the birthday of the consumer, which can then be used for sending out personal birthday greetings later on. The in-depth consumer information serves then to distribute mobile coupons—for instance, a free candy bar as a birthday present—, to introduce new products or to do market research in a very targeted fashion.

Building on this framework, it is now possible to categorize the actual implementations of mobile advertising campaigns (see Exhibit 3).

	Push Campaigns	Pull Campaigns	Dialogue Campaigns
Set-up	Targeted SMS to user in existing database • Company-owned database • Database from external provider	Advertisements for mobile campaigns through other media types, e.g. • Flyer or "on-pack" ad • TV ad	Continuous interaction between advertiser and user
Opt-In	Need to have explicit "opt-in" prior to sending out SMS	Users "opt-in" by calling the phone number	Generation of "Opt-in" either through pull or push
Scope	Single theme • Game • Raffle • Etc.	Single theme • Game • Raffle • Etc.	Multiple themes during the course of a campaign • Different games • Greetings
Length	Short duration (2-4 weeks)	Short duration (2-4 weeks)	Extended duration (several months)
Implemen-tation	• Wella Hair Fashion • Sony • 20th Century Fox • Adidas	• Nestlé KitKat Chunky • Toyota	• McDonald's

Figure 3:   Taxonomy of Mobile Advertising Campaigns

3.1   Push Campaigns

Wella, a German manufacturer of hair care products, developed a push campaign, which featured a "mobile kiss". Wella sent an SMS to members of an externally acquired database offering them to send a kiss message to their friends, who received a voice file with a kiss sound. This was followed by an SMS revealing who had sent the kiss and also providing details on how to return the kiss or send it on to someone else. The maximum number of kisses sent by one person was 160. Other components of this mobile campaign included an SMS quiz and a free kissing-lips logo for the mobile phone .[i]

Sony launched a push campaign in the U.K. that integrated e-mail, Internet and traditional print media to promote a new PC-compatible MiniDisc Hi-Fi system. The campaign, which was based on MiniDisc Island —an online, interactive adventure playground– had the objective of driving large

numbers of users to the website. Through an initial SMS 100,000 participants from a database of 14 million permission-based, profiled users were selected and invited to enter a competition to win a stereo system and the PC Link product. Interested participants replied via SMS and were mailed a winning number, with which they could then go to the website to see if they had won. Throughout the course of this campaign, 18% of those originally contacted responded to the initial SMS. When contacted with the winning number, over 9% logged on to explore the online adventure game and see if their numbers had come up.

The movie producer **20th Century Fox** launched a push campaign in partnership with the mobile phone operator Vodafone to advertise the U.K. release of "Planet of the Apes"—a post apocalyptic movie where the apes rule over the humans who struggle to survive. The campaign, which started two weeks prior to the U.K. release of the movie, targeted the two million 16-24 year old Vodafone customers. They received messages, which invited them to survive a variety of challenging interactive voice response and text games—with names such Ape S-cape and Ape@tak, where callers are asked questions relating to the movie and have to shoot down apes using the keypad when they hear a roar of an ape.

The sports article manufacturer **Adidas** used interactive betting game for the Soccer World Cup 2002 to promote its products in Germany. Users bet on games and received immediate notification after the game about how they did, how they ranked overall within the betting competition and if they had won a prize such as a shirt from the soccer idol Zinedine Zidane or a personal meeting with the German national soccer team.

3.2   Pull Campaigns

Nestlé used a mobile pull campaign to promote the 'KitKatChunky' chocolate bar in Germany. The campaign, which lasted two weeks, complemented the overall marketing presence consisting of TV and radio spots and the website www.chunky.de. The campaign worked as follows: an SMS offered community members the opportunity to win a one-year supply of KitKatChunky if they called a specified number. Then, callers were shown the face of a taxi driver who also appears in a 'KitKatChunky' TV commercial, and two other new characters on their screen who were presenting riddles to them. An automated voice then explained: "*Each of the three protagonists names a number which makes him shut up. Once you have discovered the number, push the appropriate button on your mobile and a 'KitKatChunky' is stuck in his mouth and you go on to the next round*." In the first round, 400,000 users were identified to receive a kick-off SMS at the beginning of the campaign. In the following rounds, only those players who had actively opted-in in the previous round received an SMS. In order to maximize the number of responses, users received alert messages the day before the ad's TV premiere and again 30 minutes before the TV show in which the questions were sent. This illustrates to what extent different media types—here the TV and the mobile phone— can be interlinked, using the respective strengths of each medium, to generate a seamless and entertaining marketing experience for the end user.

The car manufacturer **Toyota** also launched an interactive TV pull campaign during the Soccer World Cup 2002 that displayed a quiz question at the bottom of the TV screen. The question asked viewers to find the license plate number of the Toyota shown in the TV ad and to send this number in via SMS. Within seconds they received notification whether they had made it to the final drawing. In addition to having the chance to win a prize, all callers also received a Toyota ring tone for their mobile phone.

3.3   Dialogue Campaigns

Extensive dialogue campaigns are still a rarity because of the novelty of the mobile phone as an advertising medium. In Germany, **McDonald's** launched a mobile dialogue campaign with a focus on interactive mobile games and an evaluation of McDonald's products. The campaign targeted mobile phone users who were informed through in-store flyers placed in McDonald's restaurants. By

activating the service (active "opting-in"), participants received automatic messages when music CDs or vouchers were raffled off. In addition, they also received SMS promotions of McDonald's products. The goal of the campaign was (1) to increase in-store traffic, (2) to build a McDonald's customer database of mobile phone numbers, and (3) to increase overall brand awareness. Following this initial pull activity, registered users continued to receive other services such as horoscopes, which in turn allowed McDonald's to capture the users' birthdays and to send them personalized birthday greeting subsequently. An additional part of the campaign was a viral activity: McDonald's sent the Christmas greeting "Rockin' Rudi" to users who could then forward it to their friends. The recipient then listened to a taped version of the "Rockin' Rudi" song in combination with a short message from the sender and from McDonald's.

4   OUTLOOK AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

There are plenty of opportunities in mobile advertising for companies that thoroughly understand how consumers can benefit from these types of services. The new technology won't be very useful, however, if companies simply use their existing advertising approaches and translate them to the mobile world without addressing the specific characteristics of this new medium (Nohria & Leestma 2001).

The different innovative types of mobile advertising campaigns mentioned above offer many useful benefits—for instance, highly targeted advertising and interactivity—to those companies that want to add a mobile component to their advertising approach. They also illustrate the difficulties and challenges that are associated with this new approach. Therefore, before embarking on mobile advertising campaigns, managers, need to carefully address the following questions.

4.1   Which campaign type should we employ?

For starting a mobile advertising campaign, there are two basic options: push or pull. A push campaign requires an extensive database of customers. Some companies such as telcos or retailers have built up these types of databases in the past through CRM efforts and can now tap into them. However, they always need to keep in mind the personal nature of the mobile phone when doing so. "Spamming" existing customers with unwanted SMS is a sure way to alienate them. Another option is to buy existing profiles from other companies. MTV, for instance, markets its permission-based database through an external mobile advertising company to other companies that want to target the attractive youth market. These companies benefit since they can tap into an extensively profiled, permission-based database of their target group while MTV generates additional revenues.

Setting up a pull campaign is not as sensitive regarding the opt-in, since consumers themselves decide whether they want to participate when they see the advertisement printed on a poster or watch it on TV. Here, the challenge is much more to create compelling advertisements that have the desired pull effect to entice consumers to call in and participate.

4.2   How should we design attractive mobile advertising campaigns?

The challenge for any mobile marketing company is to create enough interest within the target group to justify the required investment. Based on the campaigns we have analyzed, four key success factors need to be considered when launching a mobile advertising campaign (Brand & Bonjer 2001):
- **Interactivity:** just like the Internet, the mobile phone allows advertisers to solicit immediate feedback when contacting recipients. Since the mobile phone is usually always turned on, the inherent interactivity of mobile phones should be integrated in mobile marketing campaigns where possible. The interaction can have many different facets: the number pad can be used to answer riddles or mental agility can be tested through reaction tests. A mobile marketing campaign, which

does not integrate interactivity, would be the equivalent to the broadcasting of a slide show on TV. It would leave a main asset of the medium untapped.

- **Entertainment:** interaction is only fun for users if they find the advertisement exciting. Therefore, mobile campaigns need to combine advertising and entertainment in such way that users are willing to lend their time to an advertisement. In this respect, the creation of mobile campaigns is similar to more traditional campaigns on TV, for instance. TV viewers watch advertisements mainly because they are entertaining. Ideally, they don't just watch them but they also talk about them to friends thereby creating a viral effect in which the message is passed on by people other than the original sender—as was the case in the Wella and McDonald's campaigns. Therefore, the inclusion of entertaining elements such as a game or a story ought to present an integral part of a mobile marketing campaign.

- **Emotion:** the inclusion of emotional elements—such as visual sequences or music clips in TV ads that aim beneath the conscious understanding of the viewer—has long presented a valuable marketing tool to sublimely reinforce the intended message with consumers. In mobile marketing, however, text, especially if shown on a small mobile phone display, can hardly carry this emotional dimension. Here, just like with TV advertising, it is necessary to leverage the admittedly limited resources of the mobile phone to create "emotion". This can be achieved through the combination of voice and sound. For instance, music jingles such as a short sequence of the soundtrack of the movie "Titanic" can be used as the opening for a partner test or an activity aimed at single people. Again, it is not primarily the technology that drives the quality of any given campaign but instead the creative combination of different effects that ultimately determines its success.

- **Incentive:** the offering of incentives such as product samples increases the willingness of consumers to participate in interactive mobile games. The prospect of winning a prize is especially important due to the above-mentioned opt-in nature of mobile marketing campaigns, as it provides the potential participants with a direct and tangible incentive to participate in a mobile marketing campaign. However, although instant-win competitions are effective in driving volume, they are less suitable to generate a long-term relationship with consumers, since they do not offer incentive to return (Cowlett 2002).

The overall goal of combining these four factors is to create a game, an image or a jingle that, despite the limitations of the small screen and tiny ring tone of the mobile phone, is so compelling that it is no longer seen as an ad, but takes on a value of its own.

4.3   How should we target the difficult to reach youth market?

Addressing the lucrative youth market gives marketers a perennial headache, since they do not only vary in their habits, interests and attitudes and are swayed by rapidly changing fashion trends. They are also hard to pin down, since they don't primarily watch three or four TV stations anymore as it used to be the case in the past. Instead, their media usage is fragmented between hundreds of TV stations, radio, magazines, newspapers and the Internet. One thing is generally guaranteed, though— they almost certainly carry a mobile phone and consider SMS an intrinsic part of their lifestyle since it allows them to stay in touch with their peers in a cost-effective and entertaining way (Cowlett 2002).

Mobile campaigns can leverage the characteristics of this new youth market effectively. Viral effects, used in the McDonald's and Wella campaigns, fulfil the desire to communicate with peers in a fun way. Teens enjoy quizzes or greeting cards they can pass on to friends, because this type of promotion focuses on using the mobile phone for what it was made to do— communicate with other people (Centaur Communications 2002). In addition, viral elements help to expand significantly the group of recipients beyond the database of the company conducting the campaign and it increases the impact since marketing messages sent from a friend are, because of their personal nature, much more effective than those sent directly from the company itself (Haig 2001, Kenny & Marshall 2000). The communication from consumer to consumer helps to generate "buzz"—explosive self-generated demand— where people share their experiences with a product or a service amongst one another (Dye

2000). At the same time, this approach helps to lower costs since users themselves target new consumers.

4.4   How should we combine the mobile phone with other media types to create integrated campaigns?

Because of its limitations regarding screen size, sound and handling, the mobile phone is not suitable for stand-alone campaigns. Instead, it should be used to extend the presence of a company into an additional channel (Carat Interactive 2002). Doing so, the mobile phone plays the role of the natural glue between other media types because of its ubiquitous nature: it is handy and turned on when watching TV, looking at a billboard on the subway, buying groceries at the supermarket or listening to the radio. All the campaigns mentioned above make extensive usage of this cross-linking of different media types, leveraging the unique strengths of each. It's not only other media types that benefit from the integration of the mobile in multi-channel advertising campaigns: tangible support mechanism from other media types that have been around for years—such as a flyer or an in-store promotion—give mobile campaigns higher legitimacy, because they have a physical component (Enders & Jelassi 2000).

From a market research perspective, the inclusion of mobile components in advertising campaigns has the added benefit that it allows to measure directly the effect of different advertising approaches. Take for instance a TV advertisement that is aired on different channels and broadcasting times, or a billboard advertisement placed in different locations that asks viewers to participate in an SMS contest. Based on the measurement of actual response rates in different channels or locations, it becomes possible to steer placement more effectively than via traditional indirect measurements.

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