

Evolving Consumer Relations Marketing in a new Digital World

What is it that all brands want and all advertising agencies promise? We are consumer focused. We produce targeted advertising to the right people, at the right time, a 360-degree solution, or a version of your truth everywhere, every time, always... and our approach is holistically unique.

By [Alex Meiring](#) 8 Sep 2005

You've seen it, you've heard it, and you've said it... so have I.

The traditional marketplace is an extremely cluttered environment, where multiple brands fight it out in multiple channels with one goal only - top of mind awareness. Reach and frequency are the fundamental building blocks for planning the success of advertising campaigns and measurement is somewhat dodgy, used only to impress your superiors rather than as a meaningful strategy.

The shift to digital media made a big difference in reaching the right audience at the right time and conveying the correct message to the correct person - it is a step closer to the dream of truly targeted advertising.

But to many brand owners and marketers, digital marketing and online strategy is still nothing more than the use of traditional A-and BTL norms to point consumers in the direction of an attractive website.

And while a number of marketers are slowly catching up to that wonder of modern communication, the mobile phone, and moving towards mobile marketing, they invariably flounder when faced with the huge cost of personalized campaign development and the character limitations of SMS.

No matter how creative the campaign, it remains difficult to convey any information of any value to consumers within the 160 character limit - and at the same time running the very real risk of "obtaining" a database.

If the information age was about data capture, the post-information age is about finding, extracting and using that data. And now we often have an audience size of one. Everything is made to order for the individual, and information is extremely personalized.

A widely held assumption is that this move to mass individualization results in narrowcasting -you go from a large to a small to a smaller group and ultimately to the individual. This line of reasoning however completely misses the fundamental difference between narrowcasting and being digital. Classic demographics do not scale down to the individual.

In being digital I am me, not a statistical subset. Me includes information and events that have no demographic or statistical meaning - where I go to school, which mall I hang out at, what I do with my time in the afternoon and whom I chat to in the evening have absolutely no correlation or statistical basis from which to derive suitable narrowcasting services. But that unique information about me determines news services might want to receive about events around town, a not-so-famous person, and (for today) the surf-report for Elands Bay.

So, true personalization is now upon us. The post-information age is about virtual acquaintance over time:

machines being able to understand individuals with the same degree of subtlety that we expect from other human beings.

The ability to remember a customer, from one event to the next, is the primary requirement for sustaining an ongoing relationship, and will soon become the motivating factor for a customer to remain loyal to one product, rather than move to a competitor.

Today we are passing through a technological gateway, and most of us are not even remotely prepared. The old system of mass production, mass media, and mass marketing, is being replaced by a totally new one-to-one economic system.

Customized production, individually addressable media, and 1:1 marketing, totally changing the rules of business competition and growth, characterize the 1:1 future. Instead of market share, the goal of most business competition in the new economy is share of customer - one customer at a time. And no demographic sector fits this market profile more so than the M-ager.

Mobile IM is the new phenomenon that hit the South African telecommunications market very recently. Mobile IM uses GPRS as a data carrier and is billed as streams of information rather than pre-quantified packets, as is the case with SMS.

The reality of IM is that users can send 160 characters of text for less than 2c, but are not bound by the 160 characters. They can send anything up to 2 000 characters or more. Mobile IM, like traditional web-based instant messengers, MSN, Yahoo, Skype and others, uses a chat-friendly interface and has all the advantages of the Internet at its disposal.

Mobile IM users tend to be technologically savvy early adopters and are more likely to take advantage of the latest and greatest that the brand world has to offer. And if we look at future global uptake, the growth is seen to be immense.

According to the Radicati Group's recently released report, "Instant Messaging Market 2005-2009," there will be 867 million instant messaging accounts by the end of 2005. By 2009, the research firm has forecasted that there will be 1.2 billion accounts in use.

Now that we have realized a cheaper, more user-friendly alternative to SMS, we have to find applications which will give us a piece of the action.

A South African mobile IM platform with a current user base of 70 000 uses AI to segment its database. Users talk to AI Chatterbots - as they prompt the robots for information about themselves, the robots respond with similar questions. Users are continually exposed to data capture in a friendly, trusting environment.

Tracking the success, or lack of, of your promotional competition, your own geographically targeted advertising, or the percentage uptake on a national campaign becomes as easy as point and click. And you can talk to one, many, or all of the nodes; you can talk to specific age groups, one of the sexes or only 15 year-old girls living in Cape Town; or you can let your robot chat to them - it knows enough about your brand anyway - because you taught it.

M-agers are upwardly mobile youth. According to Enpocket, a global mobile media company, young adults value mobile more than traditional media. They found that for the young adult, the mobile phone is twice as

important as TV, yet only 16% have ever been exposed to advertising or marketing on their mobile phones.

So, in order to maximise revenue, advertisers need to grab young people's attention. By proving their brand has a philosophy of life that the youth market will identify with and buy into - brands that can become co-creators of the next runaway trend.

Buying into a philosophy says something about your own beliefs and the way you want to live your life - thus the brand becomes an extension of you and a reflection of your personality.

MXit Entertainment Technology has recently launched a new communication technology, called MXit. It's a free instant messaging program for mobile phones and runs on GPRS technology.

MXit provides an entirely new way to interact directly with M-agers, which enables them to access relevant brand information that is "always available".

MXit is supported by most new handsets and allows users to text for under 2c per message. It also allows users to send and receive text messages using phones and PCs connected to the Internet, and interacts with online chat communities.

MXit, in association with Samsung™ Mobile, ran a referral competition last month targeting the M-ager market, which proved that this whimsical sector, if cultivated properly, could thrive and grow.

When evaluated, the results exceeded expectations, showing that referrals triggered a 17% spend.

The competition had a reach of almost 40 000 unique users with an average frequency of 50 000 views per day on their mobiles, and generated 5 000 unique impressions on the website within the two week period.

With no external marketing to-date, MXit has grown a database of 70 000 unique users within a three-month period. The user base is currently growing by 1 300 users a day. The community sends more than 3 000 000 messages per day. 19 465 users have downloaded AI robots and the robots are currently engaging in an average 120 000 conversations per day.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alex Meiring is the creative director of MXit Entertainment Technology. Originally from a legal background, he has worked in the world of advertising and IT for the last five years.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>