Chapter 6.4
V-Card:
Mobile Multimedia for Mobile Marketing

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the use of mobile multimedia for marketing purposes. Using V-Card, a service to create personalized multimedia messages, as an example, the advantages of sponsored messaging are illustrated. Benefits of employing multimedia technologies, such as mobile video streaming, include an increased perceived value of the message and the opportunity for companies to enhance their product presentation. Topics of discussion include related projects, as marketing campaigns utilizing SMS and MMS are becoming more popular, the technical infrastructure of the V-card system, and an outline of social and legal issues emerging from mobile marketing. As V-card has already been evaluated in a field test, these results can be implemented to outline future research and development aspects for this area.

INTRODUCTION

The chapter presents the use of mobile multimedia for marketing purposes, specifically focusing on the implementation of streaming technologies. Using V-card, a service for creating personalized multimedia messages, as an example, the advantages of sponsored messaging are illustrated. Topics of discussion include related projects, as marketing campaigns utilizing SMS and MMS are becoming more popular, the technical infrastructure of the V-card system, and an outline of social and legal issues emerging from mobile marketing. As V-card has already been evaluated in a field test, these results can be implemented to outline future research and development aspects for this area.

Euphoria regarding the introduction of the universal mobile telephony system (UMTS) has evaporated. Expectations about new UMTS services are rather low. A "killer application" for 3rd generation networks is not in sight. Users are primarily interested in entertainment and news, but only few of them are actually willing to spend money on mobile services beyond telephony. However, for marketing campaigns the ability to address specific users with multimedia content holds an interesting perspective.

Advertisement-driven sponsoring models will spread in this area, as they provide benefits

to consumers, network providers, and sponsors. Sponsoring encompasses not only a distribution of pre-produced multimedia content (e.g., by offering wallpapers), Java games, or ringtones based on a product, but also mobile multimedia services.

Mobile multimedia poses several problems for the user. First, how can multimedia content of high quality be produced with a mobile device. Cameras in mobile telephones are getting better with each device generation; still the achievable resolutions and framerates are behind the capabilities of current digital cameras. Second, how can multimedia content be stored on or transmitted from a mobile device. Multimedia data, sophisticated compression algorithms notwithstanding, is still large, especially when compared to simple text messages. External media, such as memory cards or the Universal Media Disk (UMD), can be used to a certain degree to archive and distribute data. They do not provide a solution for spreading this data via a wireless network to other users. Third, editing multimedia content on mobile devices is nearly impossible. Tools exist for basic image manipulation, but again their functionality is reduced and handling is complex.

Kindberg, Spasojevic, Fleck, and Sellen (2005) found in their study that camera phones are primarily used to capture still images for sentimental, personal reasons. These pictures are intended to be shared, and sharing mostly takes place in face-to-face meetings. Sending a picture via e-mail or MMS to a remote phone occurred only in 20% of all taken pictures. Therefore, one possible conclusion is that users have a desire to share personal moments with others, but current cost structures prohibit remote sharing and foster transmission of pictures via Bluetooth or infrared.

V-card sets out to address these problems by providing a message-hub for sublimated multimedia messaging. With V-card, users can create personalized, high-quality multimedia messages (MMS) and send those to their friends. Memory constraints are evaded by implementing streaming audio and video where applicable. V-cards can consist of pictures, audio, video, and MIDlets (Java 2 Micro-Edition applications). Experience with mobile greetingcards show that users are interested in high-quality content and tend to forward them to friends and relatives. This viral messaging effect increases utilisation of the V-card system and spreads the information of the sponsor. Haig (2002, p. 35) lists advice for successful viral marketing campaigns, among them:

- Create of a consumer-to-consumer environment
- Surprise the consumers
- Encourage interactivity

A V-card message is sponsored, but originates from one user and is sent to another user. Sponsoring companies therefore are actually not included in the communication process, as they are neither a sender nor a receiver. V-card is thus a true consumer-to-consumer environment. It also can be expected for the near future that high quality content contains an element of surprise, as it exceeds the current state of the art of text messaging. Interactivity is fostered by interesting content, which is passed on, but also by interactive elements like MIDlet games.

Additionally, Lippert (2002) presents a "4P strategy" for mobile advertising, listing four characteristics a marketing campaign must have:

- Permitted
- Polite
- Profiled
- Paid

"Permitted" means a user must agree to receive marketing messages. With V-card, the originator of the MMS is not a marketing company but another user, therefore the communication itself is emphasized, not the marketing proposition. Legal aspects regarding permissions are discussed detailed below. Marketing messages should also be "polite," and not intrusive. Again, the enhanced