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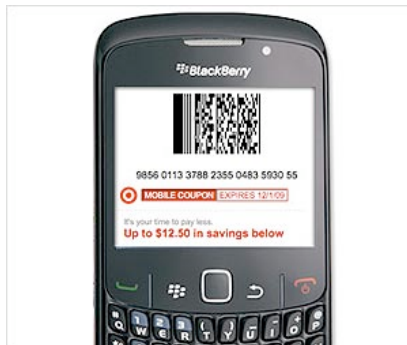
Home > Mobile Marketing Daily > Wednesday, Mar 10, 2010 > MoBlog

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MoBlog

Don't Rush Move to Mobile Coupons

by [Mark Walsh](#), Wednesday, March 10, 2010, 4:24 PM



Target last month said it was the first major retailer to let shoppers nationwide access gift card accounts from smartphones, and have the barcode scanned at checkout. On Wednesday the company said it had another first among retail chains: offering scannable mobile coupons directly to customers that they can redeem via barcode at checkout.

People can opt-in to the program through Target.com on the PC or on phones at m.target.com or by texting COUPONS to 827438 (TARGET). After opting in, customers get a text message with a link to a mobile Web page with a variety of special offers.

Target may be the first big box store to go national with mobile coupons but other retailers and marketers are also embracing the technology as coupons in general enjoy a recession-fueled resurgence and consumers increasingly use their mobile phones for m-commerce. JCPenney, for example, last fall began testing scannable coupons at stores in the Houston area and Yahoo has partnered with Coupons Inc. to allow brand advertisers to distribute coupons via Yahoo Mobile.

Other companies from The Wall Street Journal to Sprint have included promotional barcodes in ads. But marketers shouldn't get caught up in the recent hype surrounding mobile coupons or 2D barcodes. They don't have to follow on the heels of the mobile "firsts" announced by the likes of Target.

In a forthcoming report, Forrester Research points out that only a few percent of consumers so far are participating in mobile promotions. Because the market is still inchoate, analyst Julie Ask says other companies shouldn't necessarily feel extra pressure to keep pace with Target. But she advises marketers to start laying the groundwork with pilot programs and testing toward the longer-term goal of engaging customers with mobile coupons. Get it right before you go big.

This commentary is insightful. I recommend it to others.
2 people recommend this article.

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 [T Klepp](#) from [Storyz](#)
commented on: March 14, 2010 at 7:34 PM


Thom, I could not agree more with your comments. I do believe the advice "get it right before going big" is sound, but saying you should not worry when one of the biggest retailers on the block is going full steam sounds like terrible advice.

 [Thom Kennon](#) from [Wunderman](#)
commented on: March 11, 2010 at 6:26 AM


Sorry, but this is why some of us continually decry Forrester's lack of "getting out much". Their reports, analysis and - in this case - potentially wrong-headed and dangerous recommendations - should be taken with a huge grain of (\$2,500 a report?) salt...

Who gains by giving such specific advice to a marketing audience that effectively says: "Don't worry, your competition is trying new and potentially cut-thru ways with which to garner share of (your!) customer using some pretty sexy and currently available marketing technology. Its ok. There's always email..."

Crazy, bad or at least non-productive advice in my book.

 [Lisa Foote](#) from [MixMobi](#)
commented on: March 10, 2010 at 9:25 PM

Good article, but test and explore early or be left at the starting gate watching your competitors lap you. This is moving too fast to wait.

 [chris vinson](#) from [Vinson Advertising](#)
commented on: March 10, 2010 at 9:05 PM

Sounds like good advice. We don't want to have our smaller retailers implement mobile coupons yet. We'll let others work out the bugs. But we don't want to be behind when this explodes into the market place, and it will.

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