

Update December 17, 2007:

Global mobile industry bodies GSMA and OMA commit to drive worldwide mobile barcodes standards

Mobile Codes Consortium (MC2) initiative leads to GSM Association (GSMA) and Open Mobile Alliance (OMA) activities to accelerate mass mobile marketing using 2D barcodes.

MC2, the cross-industry group created to promote unified standards in camera cell-phone barcode reading technology, has brought large scale adoption of mobile marketing closer to reality.

The group, led by global marketing agency Publicis, Hewlett-Packard, Deutsche Telekom, Gavitec, KPN, Neomedia, Nokia, Qualcomm and Telefonica O2 Europe, has persuaded fellow members of the GSMA and OMA, two of the global mobile phone industry's representative bodies, that the time is ripe to work in partnership to set worldwide mobile barcode standards.

This month, the GSMA, the global trade association representing 700 GSM mobile phone operators, and OMA, the leading industry forum for developing market driven, interoperable mobile service enablers, will embark on a landmark exercise, which aims to deliver technology and marketing industry standards for mobile codes. The GSMA is launching a work stream to encourage mobile operators to adopt interoperable business models for mobile codes and raise the profile of this technology within the industry, while the OMA will work simultaneously to specify the technical standards.

Tim Kindberg, of HP Laboratories, co-chairman of the MC2, said: "Barcode reading technology makes it much easier for people with mobile phones to click straight from paper or displays to content and services. You just point the camera and click to connect. This will make the mobile internet much more accessible."

Thomas Curwen, of Publicis Dialog and co-chairman of MC2, said: "Mobile barcodes will make advertising much more efficient. Customers clicking straight from, say a poster, to the Internet on their mobile device – will make traditional display advertising as interactive as banner ads. With the added advantage that advertisers can track measure which ads create the highest click-through rates. "

Curwen added "It is unique for an ad agency to be leading technological change on such a scale – and we are doing this because it will help make us more efficient."

The news follows a nine-month period of lobbying, plan development and recruitment of partners by the MC2 to make standards a reality. Now that the leading industry bodies are driving the standards for mobile barcodes, the MC2 will start alerting the marketing industry that it can start planning now about how it will deploy them. Mobile marketing is now becoming a true reality and the industry needs to be ready.

William "Chip" Hoffman, of NeoMedia, said: "We are creating the mobile equivalent of the Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) for mobile content. A standard technology used industry wide, which, like a Bank-card, allows the consumer-facing mark of instant access

to mobile content, the bar code, to be used regardless of a subscriber's manufacturer or service provider of choice.

The range of potential applications for mobile codes is enormous, and the impact for brands and on consumers is wide-reaching:

- § For years, the ad industry has tried to work out which location or which execution of a campaign performed best in delivering leads. Phone numbers and long URLs have been tried but nothing has been very satisfactory. Mobile codes have much more to offer a marketer: the user can point and click it faster, thereby reducing the effort to respond, with dramatic effects on the results. By simply pointing the camera at a mobile code, the user instantly interacts with the marketing message. At the end of the campaign, marketers can measure "click-through rates" (by time of day, progression through to sale, and even time spent), making paper as measurable as the internet. Instantly, we can know which location or execution generated the highest response and sales.
- § A possible application for a financial services client selling travel insurance might be a poster in the waiting lounge of an airport showing a matrix of 'number of passengers', 'destination' and 'time away'. At the point of departure, the 40% of people who normally leave the UK without travel insurance, could click the corresponding mobile code and get a rough quote online, and even buy, using one of the emerging secure mobile payment systems
- § Or imagine a system that can tell you when your bus is coming, without the need to build and maintain the LED screens at every bus stop (reducing cost and energy usage). A simple mobile code at each bus stop could give you the same info and even the weather forecast!

Torulf Jernstrom, of Nokia, said: "The key advantage of mobile barcodes is that it makes discovery of internet services very easy for the consumer hence a powerful tool for marketers and advertisers. A prerequisite for widespread deployment of this concept is an open, interoperable standard which is now developed in collaboration with GSMA and OMA."

Marcel Annaka of KPN said "Mobile codes will change the way we look at printed media. Printed media will finally become personalised and interactive as Mobile codes enable an extremely user-friendly connection between offline media and the internet on mobile devices"

Curwen added, "Now that we are making real progress, we will now start work with the marketing industry to ensure that their needs are taken into consideration in the developing standards."

Background notes

About GSMA

For more information about the GSMA please see www.gsmworld.com

About OMA

The Open Mobile Alliance (OMA) delivers open specifications for creating interoperable services that work across countries, operators, fixed and mobile terminals. Driven by users' needs and the expanding market for data services, the member companies of the Open Mobile Alliance stimulate the adoption of new and enhanced information, communication and entertainment services. The Open Mobile Alliance includes contributors from all key elements of the wireless value chain, and contributes to the timely and efficient introduction of services and applications.

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About MC2

For more on the Mobile Codes Consortium go to www.mobilecodes.org