SMS advertising: emerging as a new medium

Mahbuba Kanij

CELL phone subscribers have become a new window for advertisers to send their messages to their target customers through SMS. Today's consumers are mobile - and today's marketing must reflect that. With the two-way SMS Marketing account, one can build powerful interactive marketing campaigns that drive results. SMS advertising reaches target customers directly. So, its reach is very high and quite near to 100%. Very few of the existing media are so successful. Moreover compared with some mass media it is very cost effective. SMS is a service that is generally priced low and in a few cases, offered free of charge.

SMS is a single short message up to 160 characters that can be sent from one cell phone to another. The Internet can also be used to send SMS. MMS also can be sent on words, numerals, alphanumeric, or image format.

The first SMS is believed to have been sent in December 1992 from a personal computer to a mobile phone on the Vodafone GSM network in the UK. According to a BBC news report, SMS in its 21st century form took shape only in the mid-1990s.

The traditional media used by advertisers such as TV, newspaper, radio, magazine, billboards, transports, spot TV, email, mail and so on are mainly mass media, except email and mail. But SMS is really a customized media, because through this media a message can be sent directly to target markets, in a way that customers want.

Why SMS is best?

-From the speech of Major General Manzurul Alam (retd), chairman of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (BTRC), more than 33 million people in Bangladesh hold a mobile phone at the end of 2007, so the opportunity is as large as the size.

-Over 90% of the users enjoys using and receiving an SMS at least once in a month.

-The cost of using SMS is very low.

-As a direct medium it is more effective than Internet (e-mail). As the ratio of mobile phone users and Internet users are 32.37 million/ 450,000.



-Compared to the expensive television its reach is very high. For instance, if a private university wants to send information about its new program it can easily send it to the students who have appeared in HSC exams as it is not so difficult to get information about mobile phone users when mobile phone companies have already completed the registration of cell phone users.

-SMS advertising is delivered timely

-SMS can target a mobile audience on 12-24 hours per day.

-Response device is already present.

-SMS/MMS is personal.

-From university to grocery shop and automobile to real estate businessman every one can benefit from SMS advertising.

-Even an advertiser can use SMS junction, which is a free, wireless service, keeping one in touch - whenever and wherever. With SMS junction, a mobile phone is more than a phone. It can be used to exchange text and voice messages with groups and individuals. SMS junction also sends anybody up-to-the-second information on the events, places, and people s/he is interested in - all on her/his mobile phone.

The popularity of SMS led to the evolution of an entirely new vocabulary, which was a shorter, abbreviated form of the local language. This was essentially due to the limited space that a mobile phone offered. Thus, 'See you later' became 'C U L8R,' and 'Are You Okay?' became 'R U OK?' Smiles (or emotions) as used in messenger services on the Internet helped add the personal touch that SMS was often accused of lacking. SMS advertising is evolving as an extremely desirable method of target marketing for a range of market groups ranging in age from late-teens to middle aged. In many cases SMS advertising can be integrated into planned advertising campaigns to leverage response rates, or new campaigns can be built with SMS text messaging as the primary mechanic.

Data source: Internet

(The writer is a Lecturer of Marketing, Northern University Bangladesh, E-mail: mkneetu81@yahoo.com)