



# When an ad's not an ad ... now that's infotainment

AURA Interactive's **Adam Dunne** looks at how the entertainment industry is a chief driver of mobile marketing communications, but warns not to believe all the hype.

Typically most Australians still use their mobile phones for calls, text messaging and the trusty alarm clock. As trends from more advanced overseas markets demonstrate, over the next few years Aussie consumers will embrace the mobile internet and accessing of mobile content. It's happening already but the truth is that it's still early days. While it's easy for our industry to get caught up in the hype of mobile advertising and third screen media, the real consumer usage data proves we still have a long way to go before mobile becomes a mass media channel.

The entertainment sector has been one of the key early drivers of mobile marketing. Music, movies, sports and other lifestyle entertainment industry categories with their easy access to libraries of rich content and information suitable for mobilisation have long been fuelling the growth in consumption of mobile content and development of new mobile technology applications and solutions.

Companies like Hoyts, Paramount, Fox Films, Sony Pictures, Universal, Disney, EMI Music, Sony Music and Universal Music have all embraced the mobile channel and are very active across many of the mobile marketing sub-channels (SMS/MMS messaging, voice, mobile internet and Bluetooth).

It's been exciting to watch a 400% increase in the demand for services over the past two years. Importantly, in the past 12 months we have seen a 200% increase in the number of consumers using their mobiles to access rich movie content. Whether delivered via the BlueZone network or the carriers' portals, the technology aspect aside, the underlying fact is that more people are using their mobile phones to access movie-related video content, music files, lifestyle entertainment services as well as basic consumables like ringtones, screensavers, mobile games and applications.

Improvements to the mobile networks' band-

width and data speeds, improved handset features and the significant growth of Bluetooth penetration (now at 70%), combined with an increased consumer awareness as a result of market education programs, have also helped sustain this growth.

Similarly over the past 2 years, I have deployed hundreds of event-based mobile-centric solutions where entertainment comes in a variety of formats, for a broad range of audiences, in often very different environments, such as music and cultural festivals, concerts, trade shows, exhibitions, motor racing and sporting events.

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Brands like Virgin Mobile, Ford, Samsung, Nokia, Vodafone and Smirnoff are all shifting considerable budgets to leverage the entertainment industry through experiential marketing programs which often integrate the mobile channel. These companies, amongst others, are using the mobile channel to effectively connect and communicate with their target audience in a contextual way before, during and after the events.

Pre-mobile phones, Confucius (450BC) said: "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I experience and I understand."

If creating an emotional connection or engagement between the consumer and brand is the fundamental objective of advertising, we need to realise that going one step further to generate an interaction which creates a positive and memorable experience should be the end goal. I believe the defining measure of a successful campaign is actually the depth of the engagement rather than the reach and frequency.

The concept of "branded content" and "brand-

ed infotainment" is not totally new. But in the mobile space, from a consumer perspective, it's a far more appealing alternative to display ads and sometimes intrusive mobile DM. Over the past 12 months Australian marketers and media strategists have become more adept at using the concept to help their clients and brands leverage their association with cool and interesting lifestyle activities or entertaining content and in the process create an emotional engagement with their target audience. A methodology, if you like, that is firstly focused on entertaining the enduser while passively or subliminally pushing the brand values and marketing messages.

The entertainment industry has been quick to embrace the wireless lifestyle remote control (aka the mobile phone) to build personal one-to-one dialogues with target audiences through mobile content and services rather than just mobile messaging. Quite simply these brands are creating walking and talking brand ambassadors by intrinsically linking their brands to lifestyle entertainment. Whether this is during cultural festivals, secret dance parties or motor racing events, it's this strong association with the entertainment industry and the fun parts of our lifestyle that enhances the end-users' perception of the brand and product. In essence, the end-users passively experience the brand values and subliminally absorb the marketing messages delivered in the context of the event or situation.

We must accept the mobile industry and mobile channel are still in their infancy stages. To some degree sustainable long term business models based around mobile advertising and ad-supported content services are still in the process of being proven. However one thing is for certain, that "ad-supported mobile content" or "branded content and services" is the way of the future and one of the most effective for brands to engage and interact with consumers in a positive and memorable way via the mobile channel. *Adam Dunne is sales and marketing director at AURA Interactive.*