

Mobile marketing firms bet on alternative strategies

Firms devise new ways to reach customers after Trai's restrictions on SMS marketing

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MyToday.com, an SMS update service provider, recently shut operations due to the new regulations introduced by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) that restrict SMS marketing to those enrolled with the Do Not Call registry. "We regret to inform our services will no longer be available. This is in view of the recent TRAI regulations," announced the company website.

A few, however, have devised innovative ways to cope. Netcore Solutions is to launch phone.cc that allows Indian users to create own message inbox on the Web and block spam belonging to specific categories. It also allows enterprises to send those messages consumers prefer. Girish Nair, CEO, Netcore Solutions, which also owned MyToday.com, said, "We had to shut

MyToday.com as it was not viable. The regulations have impacted promotional SMSes, but these are vital due to their reach and ubiquitousness."

Netcore has begun using e-mails for marketing. It has the technology to track an e-mail, find whether it has been read and the accompanying link been clicked. Nair explained e-mails are preferred, as they help deliver richer data.

MobiQuest, a mobile enterprise platform company, is using new ways like mobile loyalty card and mobile-social media interface for brand and product promotions. It has come with a mobile loyalty platform called M'Loyal that allows brands to build a database of relevant, frequenting customers and tag each customer bill to identify. Vineet Narang, MD, MobiQuest, said, "The regulations are a blessing in disguise. We have created a platform that helps one-to-one communication between the brand and the customer. Points are accrued to a customer when a product is bought." Its platform combines tools across media to analyse purchase patterns and increase repeat purchases for the brand. Mobile coupons are sent to the customer's mobile regularly for redemption at a store counter.

MobiQuest has also introduced an interactive platform dubbed the mobile interactive card. It lets the customer manage all the coupons, loyalty points and offers sent by a brand. Also, transactional alerts and brand promotions are received by it.

SMS Country has started using e-mail to reach out. Nisha Parikh, its head of marketing, informed the company is launching two products for marketing. It is, however, not keen on using mobile coupons, as Parikh believes Indians are still not comfortable with it.

Players are hoping the TRAI norms would be relaxed for companies to operate in a flexible manner.

"We are for a 'brand-based option' in the DNC registry, so companies can reach according to the customer's preference. The intent should be to prevent spam and help create customer-friendly regulations," Nair of Netcore said.

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