

# MarketingDailycommentary

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## Next In Mobile Marketing: 2D Barcodes

by Jeff Weidauer

Twenty years ago, when cellular phones were just beginning to reach the point where the average person could think about getting one, no one was thinking about using them for anything other than talking to someone else. Today there are different classes of mobile phones: "feature" phones, which are primarily for talking, and "smart"phones, which are really pocket-sized computers with voice communication capability.

Recently, the Nielsen Company predicted that smartphones will overtake feature phones by next year. Most business people are already toting an iPhone or BlackBerry; while smartphones started as a business tool, two-thirds of new buyers are personal users. In addition, connectivity is growing; mobile searching is becoming one of the most common uses for these devices.

Marketers-always looking for the "Holy Grail"-have been watching these developments with a keen interest in how best to use smartphones to connect with consumers. One of the newest, and most intriguing, ways is with QR codes. Also known as 2D barcodes, QR (*for quick response*) codes are a way to link online content to a mobile device. There are numerous examples of QR codes in magazine ads, inviting the viewer to scan the code and get more information.

Using the device's camera, the viewer scans the code and is redirected to a website, or a video, or some other

mobile-enabled content. At the same time, information on where and when the code was scanned, and what actions may have taken place afterward, can be collected. This is more robust than typical "click-through" information commonly used in online marketing and allows greater relevance if the marketer chooses to make use of the available information.

As a result, rather than throwing offers at consumers, it's now possible to have a dialogue with them; building and maintaining a relationship that benefits both marketer and consumer over the long term. Engaging consumers in a more effective manner has long been the dream of marketers, and while QR codes are not the grail of marketing, they offer a significant step toward connecting with consumers in a meaningful way, regardless of location, while offering real-time feedback that no other medium-including traditional desk-bound internet advertising-has been able to provide.

The time to invest in this technology is now, while it's growing in awareness. Success will require a change in go-to-market strategy: no longer can one toss out an ad and hope for a response. Connecting at this level will require the ability to provide relevant, engaging content that the consumer wants, rather than the traditional "interruptive" model of advertising. But the rewards for this effort will far outweigh the investment and effort required.



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