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If you love something, let it go mobile: Mobile marketing and mobile social media 4x4

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Abstract Social media applications—including collaborative projects, micro-blogs/ blogs, content communities, social networking sites, and virtual worlds—have become part of the standard communication repertoire for many companies. Today, with the creation of increasingly powerful mobile devices, numerous social media applications have gone mobile and new entrants are constantly appearing. The purpose of this article is to take account of this evolution, and provide an introduction to the general topic of mobile marketing and mobile social media. Herein, we define what mobile social media is, what it is not, and how it differs from other types of mobile marketing applications. Further, we discuss how firms can make use of mobile social media for marketing research, communication, sales promotions/discounts, and relationship development/loyalty programs. We present four pieces of advice for mobile social media usage, which we refer to as the 'Four I's' of mobile social media. Finally, we conclude by providing some thoughts on the future evolution of this new and exciting type of application.

1. Mobile marketing and mobile social media: The new revolution

How many of your friends own an iPad? When was the last time you met someone who did *not* have a mobile phone? And how would you feel if you had to exchange your Blackberry or Android for, let's say, a Nokia 3310—one of the most popular 2G phones, suitable only for making calls and sending text messages? Over the past decade, mobile devices such as cellular phones and tablet computers have

become such an essential part of our lives that it is hard to imagine functioning without them. Once upon a time, people needed a dime and a public phone to arrange meeting times and places with friends. Now, however, this methodology seems as ancient as dinosaurs and black and white television. Indeed, 90% of Americans own a mobile phone, with one-third of these being a smartphone; that is, a hand-held computer capable of multiple functions in addition to placing calls. In this environment, it should come as no surprise that three out of four U.S. companies are either planning to or are currently engaged in mobile marketing.

The first mobile device capable of offering location-based services—and, therefore, capable of supporting

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mobile marketing—was the Palm VII, a PDA introduced by Palm Computing in May 1999. It allowed users to obtain zip code based weather and traffic reports, and Web browsing for an impressive $300 per MB of transmitted data. Two years later, in December 2001, NTT DoCoMo launched the first commercial location-based service on GPS with features such as a friend finder, a restaurant guide, and a mapping tool. But it is probably safe to say that the mobile marketing revolution only truly came to pass with the June 2007 launch of the iPhone. Since then, over 100 million iPhones have been sold worldwide, giving users access to more than 250,000 applications which allow them to read books (Kindle app), to research information (Wikipedia app), to make restaurant reservations (Open Table app), and to keep in touch with their friends (Facebook app).

After the iPhone exploded onto the scene, companies such as Gowalla (founded in 2007) and Foursquare (founded in 2009) appeared on the landscape, specializing in a new form of mobile marketing called *mobile social media*. Soon thereafter, these were followed by specialized applications of leading Internet companies, including Google Latitude (2009) and Facebook Places (2010). Today, the pure player Foursquare is generally considered to be the market leader in the area of mobile social media, with nearly 10 million registered users and a growth rate of 30,000 per day. In essence, Foursquare allows one user to notify others about his or her location by 'checking-in' at a certain place. Mobile social media differ from traditional social media applications in important ways, and the purpose of this article is to highlight those differences and their implications for companies. In honor of Foursquare, we are structuring this article in Foursquare, four square, 4^2, 4x4 parts:

- A definition of mobile marketing and mobile social media (Section 1);

- A discussion of the business use of these applications (Section 2);

- Four pieces of advice on mobile social media usage (Section 3); and

- A discussion of future—and not so future—trends and challenges (Section 4).

1.1. Mobile marketing: What it is, and what it's not

Mobile social media belongs under the wider umbrella of mobile marketing applications. For the purpose of our article, we define *mobile marketing*

as any marketing activity conducted through a ubiquitous network to which consumers are constantly connected using a personal mobile device. Mobile marketing therefore requires three conditions. The first of these is a 'ubiquitous network,' a term first coined by Mark D. Weiser (1991), chief scientist at Xerox PARC in Palo Alto, California. Contrary to common belief, a ubiquitous network is not necessarily one single network, but rather a combination of different networks. A user can, for example, be connected at home through a wireless LAN, switch to 3G when leaving the house, and log into a WiMAX network at work. The important factor is not the network itself, but that the switch or 'handshake' between different networks happens in a smooth and invisible way. The second condition entails the user having constant access to this network. For a mobile phone this stipulation is almost trivial, since many people rely so heavily on their phones that they wouldn't dare leave home without them. For other devices—such as tablet computers—constant access depends more on the user than on the technology itself, as it requires a conscious decision to not switch off the device but instead keep it connected 24/7. The last condition involves use of a personal mobile device. A *mobile device* is any tool that allows access to a ubiquitous network beyond one specific access gate. The most common example of a mobile device is a mobile phone, but a netbook also counts if it can access different types of wireless networks (e.g., WLAN, 3G, WiMAX). For mobile marketing to make sense, this mobile device needs to be personal; that is, not shared with anyone else. This requires that each household member has their own device and that each device can be identified uniquely, as through a built-in SIM card.

1.2. Mobile marketing: Classification of mobile marketing applications

Within this definition, we use two variables to differentiate between four types of mobile marketing applications: (1) the degree of consumer knowledge and (2) the trigger of communication. Regarding the degree of consumer knowledge, the use of a personal device allows companies to customize their messages to each individual user, similar to the idea of one-to-one marketing (Peppers, Rogers, & Dorf, 1999). It is, however, important to realize that this technical ability for personalization does not imply that all mobile marketing needs to be—or even should be—on a one-to-one basis. Also, we can differentiate between the degree of consumer knowledge of the network operator (e.g., the mobile phone company or Internet service provider) and that of the initiator of the mobile marketing