

Johncom trials mobile barcode communications

This weekend saw the launch of TimesCode, a new communication medium by *The Sunday Times* and *The Times* being tested in a joint promotion with Nashua Mobile. The process is simplicity itself if you have a cellphone with a built-in camera and Internet connectivity – by taking a quick snapshot of the TimesCode barcode, information is sent directly to your handset via the Internet.

TimesCode is a QR barcode technology that is growing in global popularity, with major brands such as Coca-Cola, Xbox, Heineken, and Jameson Whisky, among others, recognising its value as a marketing tool. TimesCode is based on 2D symbol developed by Japanese company Denso Wave in the mid 1990s. The two-dimensional matrix type code is a more complex form of the barcode that enables the storage of high-density information. Japan now uses 2D codes widely with commuters even downloading train schedules by snapping the relevant 2D code.

Doug Mattheus, marketing director of Nashua Mobile, said, "We are extremely pleased to be part of this new technology, facilitating a convergence and crossover of different advertising mediums via the cellular phone."

Mattheus described the launch of the TimesCode as "one of the most exciting" developments in communications. He said that by using TimesCode, consumers can "unlock marketing messages in the palm of their hands".

Range of applications

The potential applications for TimesCode range from marketing a product, to social change communication messaging to education – an opportunity to talk to markets, build brands, send out a call-to-action or educate a targeted audience on a specific subject.

Gordon Patterson, MD of media agency Starcom, said: "I'm really excited to be part of this strategic communication initiative, particularly with such an appropriate client and media partner. When I saw the technology earlier this year in Cannes I knew that it marked a significant paradigm shift not only in print but also in fact for all media and communication platforms. Up until now most media platforms have recognised competitive potential of the cellular platform but could not truly realise or unlock the value. Unlike many technological advances that have more gimmick appeal than true value and sustainability, the advent now of QR (quick response) codes into our mainstream media landscape marks an evolutionary step from which there is no turning back."

For Gisele Wertheim Aymes, GM innovation at Johncom Media, the test drive of TimesCode is directly aligned to the company's strategic vision of constantly innovating to deliver a market first. She said, "TimesCode enables marketers to tap the growing consumer power of mobile users to communicate in a simple yet highly impactful manner. We are leveraging the power of the readership of *The Sunday Times* and *The Times* to bring TimesCode to market and deliver new

multimedia advertising opportunities to our clients".

"There are 30 million cell phone users in South Africa and 83 million in Africa. TimesCode has the potential to provide a direct communication conduit to these markets allowing us to take people into a whole new world of information, 24 hours a day."

Johncom, publishers of *The Sunday Times* and *The Times*, will provide cellphone users with a free reader tool if you SMS the word READER to 31899.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>