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Mobile alerts get young women into stores — where some even buy

Location-based mobile alerts convince a third of women 18 to 34 to visit a store.

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Location-based mobile alerts have led a third of women 18 to 34 to visit a store, according to a recent survey. And 27% of that demographic said that mobile messages have impacted their decision to buy in a physical store.

The poll, conducted from May 17 to 19, surveyed 2,046 U.S. adults 18 and older, including 1,710 who own a cell phone and/or a smartphone. It was conducted by Harris Interactive and commissioned by location-based ad company Placecast. It studied opt-in mobile marketing messages only.

Location-based mobile alerts send consumers a text message or mobile app notification when a consumer is within a predefined area; smartphone-based GPS, Wi-Fi networks or cell phone towers determine location.

Placecast says that, since its first survey on location-based mobile marketing and advertising in the summer of 2009, overall consumer interest in such programs has increased slightly with the number of “somewhat interested” consumers inching up to 28% of all mobile phone owners.

Interest is strongest, Placecast says, among the youngest cell phone owners. 42% of those in the 18-to-34 age group are at least somewhat interested in the messages. Among women in that age

group, strong interest grew to 40%, from 34% in a survey last year. Interest levels between men and women are now about equal overall, Placecast says.

Both men and women are most interested in location-based mobile marketing messages about food. When respondents were asked which categories generated the most interest, groceries came in at 68%, national restaurant chains 64%, and fast food items 50%—taking three of the top four most popular segments for those who are at least somewhat receptive to overall opt-in mobile marketing.

Women, Placecast says, skewed higher than men when it came to interest in offers and promotions for groceries and apparel, while men were more interested in messages about electronics and sporting goods.

According to Placecast, texting is significantly more valued than app-based services. An average of 40% of all cell phone owners say that texting is “extremely” or “very important” to them. Even with the buzz of geo-based social networking apps such as Foursquare and Gowalla, only 7% of men showed as much interest in those social networks as in text-based services, and only 3% of women.

The survey also delved into consumer attitudes about using the location of their phones to trigger opt-in marketing messages. 37% of those who have opted to receive location-based text alerts say such services could be useful, 29% say they would be interesting and an equal 24% say they could be more relevant and innovative.

Regardless of whether consumers choose to act on them, at least most text message alerts will be read. The U.S. boasts a 95% read rate for opt-in text messages, according to CardinalCommerce Corp., an e-commerce and m-commerce technology provider.

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