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Coke scans campus

Big card promo gives out instant prizes by using bar code device

By Kate Fitzgerald

COCA-COLA CO.'s Coke Card promotion gets an early start today on dozens of major college campuses, where students will be the guinea pigs for a new promotion technology.

People armed with portable bar code scanning devices will rove the campuses, giving students the chance to instantly win various Coke-related prizes and merchandise, such as hats and T-shirts, by swiping one of the free Code Cards through the scanner.

The device, called the Mobile Scanning System, can

read thousands of bar codes quickly. Developer Gold Media Group says this is the first major effort using bar codes for accurate, mobile, massprocessing of instant-win prizes at events.

'MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES'

"Marketers are asking for fast, accurate systems to deliver instant-win prizes on-site at events through mobile technologies... we have several more major promotions in the works to be announced later this year," said Mark Jabara, a principal of Gold Media Group, Wichita, Kan.

The new system was designed for promotions involving instant-win prizes through stick-on badges, tickets, game pieces or cards given away at events. Each card also can be connected to individual data provided by attendees for follow-up marketing efforts and database

generation, Mr. Jabara said.

The \$75 million Coke Card promotion officially kicks off in April, when more than 55 million of the free cards, good for discounts and prizes, will be distributed nationwide via direct mail, restaurants, events and on-site campus Coke-Card promotions (AA, March 16).

On the eve of the promotion, Coca-Cola decided to "seed" the effort with an early push at college campuses, said company officials.

Student Advantage, Boston, is executing the on-campus Coke Card promotion at several dozen campuses nationwide. Student Advantage last week announced its merger with Collegiate Advantage, the agency originally handling the promotion.

A pioneer in in-store promotions involving electronic games and instant-win technology, Gold Media Group

has designed interactive and electronic promotions for a variety of marketers including Tandy Corp.'s now-shuttered Incredible Universe electronics stores and Philadelphia-based West Coast Video.

WEST COAST VIDEO PROMO

West Coast Video received "great response" to its promotion last holiday season inviting anyone who bought a videocassette to swipe it through a bar code scanner device to instantly win prizes and video-related merchandise. The "talking box" promotion also quoted different lines from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer films each time the device was used by a consumer.

"People really liked the hands-on aspect of a promotion that had immediate results, with an entertaining twist that made it different from other promotions," said Amy Blitzer, national promotions manager for West Coast Entertainment Group.

Gold Media Group says its promotions cost 5% to 15% more for marketers to execute, but participation rates average from 5% to 20% --significantly higher than promotion industry contest participation rates, which can be as low as 1% and still be called successful.

"What's unusual about our promotions is the fact that people actually see others winning," Mr. Jabara said, "so they know it's possible to win and they are more inclined to give it a try."

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