College Students Annoyed By Mobile Ads

Contributed by eMarketer
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Marketing messages are not welcomed on studentsâ€™ most intimate device

Fully 100% of college students in the US have a mobile phone, and they use them constantly to communicate and connect.

As such, mobile marketing becomes more difficult among this group because they see the devices as so personal.

A Ball State University study of a primarily female group of college students found that a majority of them had seen ads on their phones, including 51.2% of smartphone or touchscreen phone users and 61.3% of feature-phone users. Text ads were most prevalent.

Their reactions to ads were highly negative. More than 40% were annoyed to get an ad, compared with just 1.2% who were pleased and 17.6% who were neutral.

Even more dramatic, nearly three in 10 said they were less likely to purchase a product after seeing a mobile ad for it. Slightly fewer reported their purchase intent was unchanged, but only a small number said mobile ads encouraged them to purchase.

A substantial minority of respondents (44.3%) would not be induced to receive mobile ads under any circumstances, but 37% were willing to accept them for something free in return. Free ringtones and music were the most popular exchange.

In addition, almost two-thirds of all respondents said ads would be OK if they got paid to see them, and the largest segment of that group wanted at least $1 in return for each ad viewed.

Even the prospect of coupons failed to excite about one-half of students.

Among students who were interested in such deals, discounts for sit-down restaurants, cinemas and fast food were the top choices.

Students have softened little in their attitudes toward mobile marketing since Ball Stateâ€™s previous research.
In 2009, the Participatory Marketing Network found that even targeted text ads from companies they had relationships with were a turnoff for college students.

Still, college students are an attractive target for mobile marketers who know their audience is always on.
Non-advertising marketing efforts like sponsored or branded apps may be seen as less intrusive or inappropriate, though about only half of the group has smartphones so far.

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