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Unilever is testing a new mobile phone coupon technology at a New Jersey ShopRite



The days of searching for, clipping, storing and remembering coupons for certain Unilever products are over at the ShopRite in Hillsborough, N.J., *SN* has learned.



New mobile phone technology aims to offer customers a new convenient form of value.

Beginning today, coupons for Ragu pasta sauce, Dove body wash, Hellmann's mayonnaise, Lipton iced tea and Breyers ice cream can be redeemed simply by holding up a cell phone at checkout. No loyalty card is necessary.

It's all part of a first-of-its-kind test among ShopRite, Unilever and mobile marketing firm Samplesaint, Chicago.

Once a shopper registers for the free service by completing a member profile at samplesaint.com, they can browse and select coupons directly from their iPhone, Blackberry or other mobile phone that has text messaging and Internet capabilities.

After coupons are selected, users receive a text message with a link that takes them directly to their offers. They then redeem the coupons at checkout by having the cashier scan the barcode on the

coupon image that appears on their phone's screen. The coupons are credited the same way as paper coupons.

"They literally hold up their cell phone and the cashier will scan the coupon barcode," Marc Shaw, Unilever's director of integrated marketing, told *SN*.

To make it even easier to get the savings, ShopRite shoppers can get the coupons directly in-store by text messaging a number found on shelf talkers under each participating item. Once the text message is sent, the mobile phone user immediately gets a text in return with a link to Samplesaint's secure mobile site, where they can view and select offers. "There's no fuss, no mess, no downloads," said Lawrence Griffith, Samplesaint's founder and chief executive officer

Along with the five Unilever items, the test includes coupons for two ShopRite private-label products: fruit juice and frozen vegetables.

The Hillsborough store is promoting the new service via in-store point-of-sale materials, email notifications and in-store sign ups.

ShopRite declined to comment pending completion of the test.

The deal makes Unilever the first consumer packaged goods company to offer "scanable" coupons with rich product images and corresponding UPC barcodes on the screen of a mobile phone, according to Samplesaint. Samplesaint is also exploring other manufacturer and retailer partnerships.

COUPON CONTROL

A big plus for partnering CPG marketers is that the mobile site gives Samplesaint full control over how the coupons are used, said Griffith.

"We can prevent fraud because the coupons can't be forwarded or reused post-scan," he said.

What's more, the technology is user-friendly for retailers because they don't have to change their point-of-sale systems or get additional software, Griffith said.

Shaw of Unilever described the test as a way to offer a convenient form of value, while meeting the needs of today's busy consumer.

"We want to be where consumers want us to be so that we can have a good conversation with them," he said. "The days of us just 'pushing' to them are over."

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