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Mobile Firm Aims to Capture Off-Deck Ad Dollars

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Cell phone operators have spent years sowing their mobile decks with content and services in the hopes of pleasing subscribers while bringing in revenue, including from ads. Some have obstructed off-deck surfing, partly because they can't monetize that behavior beyond the incremental connection charges collected from subscribers.

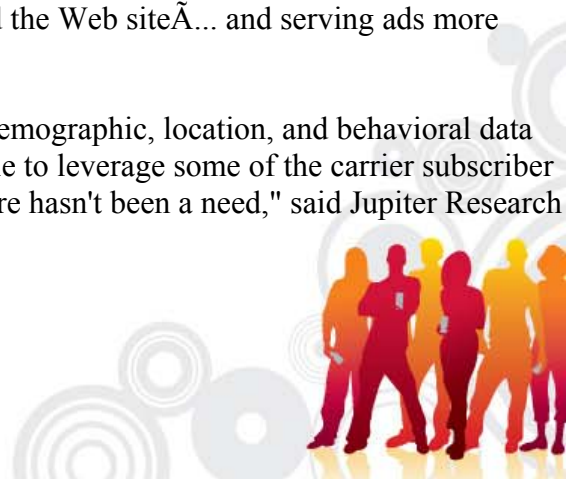
A new advertising solution from Bytemobile, dubbed Unison Advertising Module, aims to generate revenue from off-portal browsing with the placement of a banner ad at the top and bottom of every page. Installed on the carrier's network, the product purports to optimize Web sites for mobile devices through a process the company calls "content adaptation."

"It provides the operator with the ability to monetize this new off-portal [experience]," said Amy Leahy, director of marketing at Bytemobile, who added the service "now enables adaptation of two million-plus Web sites."

Leahy insists sites already designed for a mobile audience will likely not get additional ads. "In no way are we changing the advertising that's already on some of those sites. If it's a mobile specific site, and there's already advertising on there, we're not adding any."

Ads from adapted sites will appear intact but won't always work, especially when Flash and other technologies not conducive to mobile are present. "We are putting a frame around the Web site... and serving ads more targeted to the mobile user," she said.

Sitting on the carrier's network allows Bytemobile to target ads by demographic, location, and behavioral data without requiring customers to install anything. "They look to be able to leverage some of the carrier subscriber data that hasn't been well mined, if at all, by the carriers because there hasn't been a need," said Jupiter Research





Analyst Neil Strother. "If that helps carriers unlock that data and add a little more relevant targeting, I think that could be a good thing for advertisers. And if it isn't abused it could be a good thing for consumers as well."

Ads are sold by the carriers or an agency, and Bytemobile handles ad serving. It's up to carriers to decide whether ad revenue from the endeavor will subsidize mobile Web access for subscribers.

Bytemobile said a number of carriers are testing the ad-supported service, though no commercial deployments are set yet. The firm provides various other products and services to about 85 operators, including Sprint, AT&T, Alltel, Vodafone, T-Mobile, Orange, China Mobile, and NTT DoCoMo.

