

# We know where you are, now shop

## New technology keeps tabs on habits — and location

By **Matthew Lysiak**  
Special to amNewYork

It is a scene straight from a science fiction novel.

Imagine walking down Fifth Avenue and as you approach 66th Street getting a text message for 20 percent off a made-to-order dress shirt at the Brooks Brothers just around the corner.

Well, the future could be now if Acuity Mobile, a mobile marketing content provider, gets its way. That's because the cyber-marketer now has the technology to use a cell phone user's location, the time of day and spending habits to deliver customized marketing messages directly to cell phones for users who download the application.

But while some tech-savvy speculators are count-

ing on phone-ads to be the greatest marketing tool since Google AdSense, others worry that this kind of targeted advertising crosses the privacy threshold and runs the risk of further alienating an already over-commercialized consumer-base.

The secret to balancing innovation and annoyance is respecting the consumer, according to Acuity CEO Gregg Smith.

"Unlike other annoying pop-up ads that focus on the ... advertiser, we create a positive experience for the consumer," said Smith. "The content arrives only when the downloaded application is running on the user's phone, and the offers are specifically targeted to the individual receiving them."

The cell phone advertis-



New technology could pair people with nearby sales through their cell phones. (iStockphoto)

ing may represent an untapped market waiting to explode, because unlike more traditional mediums like television and print, cell phones are with their owners wherever they go.

"You have the perfect storm now with the wireless networks being built

out with ubiquitous coverage and speeds to get information," said Smith. "Just as cable television started off as an ad-free medium that migrated to an ad-supported

revenue model, you will see wireless fall into this pattern."

Not everyone is a fan of customized ads. Some groups want to altogether end people monitoring.

"If you can be tracked for the purpose of advertisements, you can be tracked for anything," said the Electronic Privacy Information Center Associate Director Lillie Coney.

Still, another group that often advocates on behalf of consumers over privacy issues sees no harm in the ads — as long as it's consensual.

"I don't see any privacy issues, because users are voluntarily agreeing to install and run the application," said the Libertarian Party's Serf City Editor Jim Lesczynski.



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