

## Social Media Goes Mobile, Two Reports Find

by Enid Burns  
*December 19, 2006*

Social networking and consumer generated media have moved beyond the PC. Separate reports from M:Metrics and ABI Research show a surge of social media activity via mobile handsets. Users are primarily teens and college-age students.

The audience, according to ABI Research, is approaching 50 million members worldwide and is expected to reach 174 million in 2011. "The rapid rise of online social communities -- gathering places such as MySpace and Facebook -- has done more than bring the 'pen pal' concept into the 21st century," ABI Research VP of Research Clint Wheelock said in a statement. He called the trend "a new paradigm for personal networking."

ABI Research sees opportunities to monetize mobile social communities, with fragmented payouts. Money-makers in the space include mobile operators who profit from the data usage and often from monthly subscription fees. Opportunities also exist for sponsorships of special interest communities, such as a music forum recently underwritten by MTV Asia.

On mobile social media platforms, "advertising can be targeted to specific niches with great accuracy," due to the medium's self-profiling nature, the ABI report said.

M:Metrics found while usage in the U.S. is slight, markets in Europe exhibit higher adoption of mobile social media sites.. User-generated content, which includes photo messaging, video messaging, IM, chat, dating and user-created content including video content and ringtones, has a reach of 70 percent among 13- to 17-year-olds.

"Much as teens were the early adopters of PC-based social networking applications, they have proven to be the innovators in the mobile arena," Paul Goode, VP and senior analyst at M:Metrics, said in the data release. Although teenagers and young adults make up only 6 to 10 percent of mobile subscribers, they generate more than their fair share of mobile content."

Uptake of user-generated content and social networking applications over mobile platforms is highest in Italy, where 69.7 percent of 13- to 17-year-olds subscribe to such services. By contrast, 36.7 percent of teens subscribe or participate in the U.S.

Communities like SMS.ac, AirG, and Jumbuck are starting to reach more subscribers, though the largest volume of user-generated content is attributed to phone-to-phone photo messaging. Photo sharing via handsets is a regular activity adopted by 19.9 percent of the U.S. teen market, versus 49.9 percent in Italy. Good attributes higher adoption rates to 3G service in Italy and other European countries.