

## Mobile Community AirG Hits 20 Million User Mark

by Tameka Kee

*Friday, Oct 5, 2007 6:00 AM ET*

AIRG, THE VANCOUVER-BASED COMPANY THAT powers mobile communities across providers like Verizon, Vodafone and Virgin Mobile, announced that it reached the 20 million user mark.

According to new data from Juniper Research, that means the company is connecting brands like Pizza Hut, Dunkin' Donuts and Axe to about half of the entire global user base for mobile chat and dating services-- as the research firm is pegging the number of consumers who use those services worldwide to hit just over 40 million this year.

Juniper is also forecasting global revenues from the mobile chat and dating services market to exceed \$1 billion by 2010--and companies like AirG that provide the technology, community platforms and ad-serving capabilities make it easier for service carriers, content providers and advertisers to increase their piece of the pie.

"It's such a fragmented marketplace, because there are so many different data plan price points and carrier business models--but we've been able to pull different brands, markets and networks together effectively and bring it to scale," said Frederick Ghahramani, AirG's founder.

Part of AirG's success with mobile marketers stems from the fact that the company can provide rich data on user demographics (age, location, gender and phone type) as well as attitudes and opinions through interactive surveys.

For example, through a series of short, WAP-based surveys of more than 30,000 U.S. community members, AirG found that nearly 60% of users either had to share a PC or didn't even own one--highlighting the mobile Web as their primary channel for access to online information and social networking activities.

Some 75% of respondents preferred chatting on the phone to watching TV, about a third of users spent \$80 or more per month on their mobile bill--and on average, users spent nearly an hour per day in one of AirG's hosted or carrier-branded communities.

According to Ghahramani, this is valuable time that brands can use to connect with consumers--if they're willing to look beyond prevailing mobile marketing research and opinions that focus only on the always connected, affluent early adopters.

"There is a tremendous opportunity to reach a clearly defined market of mobile social network users--we call them 'Generation G' in-house," said Ghahramani. "And without being pejorative, it's the 18- to-30-year-olds with service-type jobs--like the night security guard, or Starbucks employee who are connected to their mobile phone--not a white collar worker who checks their TD Ameritrade account or uses eBay via their desktop."

Data from a recent AirG survey found that 54% of its U.S. mobile community members described themselves as “urban”—with 43% who considered themselves middle class, followed closely by 37% who said that they were working class. AirG also boasts a fairly multicultural user base, as a third of members are Caucasian, 30% are Latino and 21% are African-American.

“The market is in a frenzy over new devices like the iPhone, but the reality today is that the mass-market consumer is using \$0-\$100 handsets to access mobile services,” added Ghahramani. “Seeing past the hype associated with niche audiences like the digerati and technophile early adopters has been a crucial part of what has enabled AirG to achieve its scale of 20 million customers.”

*Tameka Kee can be reached at [tameka@mediapost.com](mailto:tameka@mediapost.com)*