

Everyone Is Talking About Mobile Social Networking

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Big opportunities. Big challenges.

eMarketer forecasts that mobile social networking will grow from 82 million users in 2007 to over 800 million worldwide by 2012.

Worldwide Mobile Social Network Users, 2007-2012 (millions)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Mobile phone subscribers*	3,078	3,417	3,697	3,894	4,150	4,275
Mobile Internet users	406	490	596	757	982	1,228
Mobile social network users**	82	147	243	369	554	803
Mobile social network users % of mobile phone subscribers	2.7%	4.3%	6.6%	9.5%	13.3%	18.8%

*Note: *data for 2007-2010 from European Information Technology Observatory (EITO), March 2007; **registered users (identified by their mobile number) who create, edit and view personal content using their phone*

Source: eMarketer, April 2008

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“This population will comprise current online social networkers who are extending their digital lives to mobile as well as a growing number of mobile-only social networkers,” said John du Pre Gauntt, eMarketer senior analyst and co-author of the new report, *Mobile Social Networks*. “Early reports suggest strong user demand for mobile social networks.”

For example, MySpace recorded over 7 million unique visitors to MySpace Mobile in the US in the six months since launch. “It wasn’t until we rolled out m.myspace.com that we got a sense of how powerful demand was for MySpace on cell phones,” Brandon Lucas, senior director of mobile business development for MySpace, told eMarketer.

Facebook claimed 4 million unique registrations. Mobile-only social networking players such as airG, Mocospace, myGamma and itsmy.com all reported several million users soon after launch.

“Along with the rapidly growing audience, marketers are drawn to mobile social networking because it creates a unique context in which to promote their goods and services,” said Debra Aho Williamson, eMarketer senior analyst and co-author of the report. “It goes beyond simply linking people with digital content by adding the immediacy of sharing with friends—a very powerful marketing proposition.”

“Even if only a tiny percentage of the 3 billion worldwide mobile phone users take up mobile social networking,” said Ms. Williamson, “the potential advertising inventory reaches mind-boggling levels.”

“Marketers, online social network sites, mobile carriers and mobile content providers all face enormous challenges to reach that potential,” cautioned Mr. Gauntt. “Marketers are trying to determine which digital marketing techniques and ad units are relevant for the mobile social networking environment.”