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Utah Independent Tests New Shopping Cart Device

By Michael Garry

The latest shopping cart device that gives consumers promotional information and allows them to scan products in the aisle is being tested at The Market at Park City, a one-store independent here.

Called the Giving Cart System, the touchscreen device, which sports a 4-inch diagonal screen, is being offered to shoppers as they enter the store. As an enticement to use the device, the store randomly presents "Chime Time" awards to one user per hour with a store gift card worth between \$5 and \$25.

Shoppers can use the Giving Cart to peruse the offers on The Market's weekly flier, scan the bar code of an item to determine its price, or locate an item in the 52,000-square-foot store by calling up a keypad on the screen. As shoppers walk down an aisle, their location will trigger an 8-second ad on the device for an item within a foot of its shelf location. When the device is not being handled by a shopper, it can sit in the shopping cart's cup holder.

The Giving Cart System was developed by Klever Marketing, Alpine, Utah. Klever Marketing purchased the technology and patents for the Giving Cart from VideoCart, one of the first companies to develop a shopping cart device. The Market is the first test site for the Giving Cart.

The ultra-wideband radio-frequency technology used to locate a shopper's position in the store, which includes tags inside the device and readers and antennas on the ceiling, comes from Time Domain, Huntsville, Ala.

The Giving Cart is reminiscent of the Scan It! device available in about 250 Stop & Shop and Giant Food stores. Another shopping cart device, from Springboard Retail Networks, is being tested by Bloom, a division of Food Lion, in one store in Fort Mill, S.C.

Mike Holm, owner of The Market, began testing the Giving Cart System, which includes 50 devices, in September; he plans to conclude the test next month, and will then decide whether to purchase the system. Since starting the test, he has seen sales increases for items promoted through the Giving Cart, as well as an 8% to 10% overall rise in sales throughout the store. "It sparks sales of extra items," he said.

About half of the store's shoppers use the device, mostly during large shopping trips. Greeters supplied by Klever Marketing offer the device to shoppers and explain how to use it. About 75% of shopper comments have been positive, though some “don't want to be bothered with it,” Holm noted. Since The Market does not offer a loyalty program, any shopper can use the device.

Holm said he is able to sell 10 ads per month on the Giving Cart at a rate of about \$75 per ad. These are ads from local vendors, and private label can be promoted on the device as well. Klever Marketing plans to sell CPG ads on the device, though during the test only sample CPG ads have been used, according to Vernon Slack, marketing director, Klever Marketing. Most of the ads are 8-second audio/video spots, though some are static. Klever is currently funding the Chime Time awards but would like CPG companies to do so, Slack said.

Slack acknowledged that Klever Marketing is experimenting to determine the proper audio volume to use during the ads on the Giving Cart. “We have the ability to adjust the volume based on store traffic,” he said.

The Time Domain technology that pinpoints a shopper's location in the store can also be used by CPG companies and retailers to gather intelligence on consumer behavior throughout the store, helping to determine the impact and optimal location of promotions.

Slack said that in the next phase of testing for the Giving Cart, the device will be linked to deli and pharmacy orders, alerting shoppers when they can be picked up; shoppers will also be able to scan and bag items in advance of checkout. In addition, phase two will incorporate a loyalty system and deliver targeted offers through the device. Future iterations of the system will include a place to mount the device on a shopping cart. Slack declined to provide the cost of the device.