MOBILE COMMERCE – THE CHALLENGES

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PANEL REPORT

Only yesterday we were being bombarded with concerns about the new millennium, focusing on Y2K and possibilities of major technological disasters. Now the new millennium is here and one if not the defining feature of this new millennium is the Internet in particular Internet based e-commerce. One after another more and more e-"somethings" are constantly appearing. The newest sensation though, is not an e-"something" rather the mobile Internet, m-commerce or the mobile version of e-commerce. What then is m-commerce and what can mobile commerce do? Concisely, m-commerce has the potential to deliver anything the Internet can offer plus it gives the added advantage of mobility as well as being extremely user friendly.

M-commerce facilitates access to enterprise and commerce applications at anytime, anywhere and anyplace. Much of the literature focuses on business to business(B2B) and business to consumer (B2C) activities, which is essentially no different to e-commerce in general or is it? This is discussed by the panel by trying to compare and contrast what are the key differences

between m-commerce and e-commerce, an m-vision versus an e-vision and m-business versus e-business.

Some of the key findings of the panel discussion include the following:

1. m-commerce identifies the PAN or personal area network
2. case study data highlights that the ubiquitous use of cellular technology makes privacy and data security issues a concern for users and provides, with age appearing to be a significant factor regarding relative tolerance
3. the characteristics that support the delivery of location sensitive and highly personalized user information make it also convenient to another sector not yet considered in e-commerce/e-business discussions; namely; business-to-employee (B2E) activities and communication. It is this B2E aspect that is a truly unique aspect of m-commerce.
4. while e-commerce has brought new ways of conducting business, m-commerce appears to be going a step further and bringing about new ways of how life will be lived
5. we should think of three key aspects when discussing m-commerce: mobility, locatability and greater personalization
6. m-commerce research should be cross-disciplinary including areas of economics, legal issues, marketing , sociology as well as technology

From the panel discussions and input from the audience it became evident that while m-commerce was not a paradigm shift per say, it was indeed an important area that will only continue to be a significant force for business in this 21st century.