

# QR codes: an overview



## Introduction

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A **QR (Quick Response)** or **2D barcode** is a graphical image that stores data both horizontally and vertically.

QR Codes have been specifically designed for use with mobile camera phones and can encode URLs and display them as if keyed into web browsers on suitably equipped mobile devices making them ideal for people on the move.

Most mobile devices come equipped with cameras. This allows them to be programmed (via an application) to scan and decode 2D barcodes by capturing, analyzing and decoding the barcode image. 2D barcodes can contain a variety of information including URLs which can be used to connect directly to any website identified by the 2D barcode as if that URL was typed into the browser by the user.

QR codes are free to use by anyone. Because of their unrestricted availability, many free (shareware) mobile barcode reader applications are already widely available via download for a large number of camera-equipped mobile phones (smart phones) - iPhone, Blackberry, Android, Symbian etc.

*Try typing "QR Code Reader Download" into your search engine for instructions on how to download free reader software for your mobile device.*

QR codes have been used in the far east for a number of years however since they are still quite new in the west, advertisers may need to place descriptive copy next to a mobile code in order to explain what it does. This may include information regarding how to download a reader, how to scan the code, and what the result of scanning the code will be. This will help to facilitate and encourage consumer participation.

The convenience and opportunities that mobile barcodes offers by answering the need for information on the go, interactivity, measurability and traceability; will ensure that the market for mobile barcodes will continue to grow. As major players such as Google, Facebook and eBay begin to offer mobile barcode solutions to their customers, we expect that the adoption of mobile codes will accelerate in all aspects of everyday life.

## Points to consider

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### Placement:

The incorporation of mobile barcodes in the overall design of an advertisement should be given as much consideration and attention as other elements of the design. For example, the appropriate placement so that its function is known and it is easy to identify and scan. Mobile barcodes should be placed prominently on the page, away from folds or other features that might hamper scanning. Mobile barcodes are generally printed in black and white for maximum contrast and they should be given sufficient white border to ensure ease of scanning.

### The viewing experience:

It is important to make sure that the content linked can easily be viewed on the anticipated mobile devices. Where possible it may be worth considering creating a "Mobile Optimized" web site.

The full potential of a QR Code can only be maximized when the consumers are engaged effectively after they scan the code. For example, getting them to play a game, download a coupon, share their ideas, getting their feedback or just encouraging them to sign up for a contest.

### Testing:

Consumers will be deterred from using mobile codes if they have an unsatisfactory experience. So-called 'dead links', where scanning a mobile code does not return any information or the wrong information can be damaging, not only to a given campaign, but to the adoption of mobile code marketing in general. In order to avoid this the codes should be tested in advance using a variety of mobile code applications running on a variety of camera equipped mobile devices.

### Evaluating your campaign:

Appropriate analytics can provide vital insight into the effectiveness of a campaign, including important time, location and device information. The ability to analyze and measure this data can be used to increase the success and ROI of future campaigns and further ensure optimal customer engagement.