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Surveying cell phone-Web users

With nearly as many people in Japan accessing the Internet through cell phone handsets as personal computers, major advertisers and new media companies have recently come together to create a new way to measure the audiences at cell phone-friendly Web sites.

Some 40 companies — including Kao Corp., Coca-Cola (Japan) Co. and Matsushita Electric Industrial, as well as Internet-related firms like database service provider Nifty Corp., cell-phone Web site operator DeNA Co. and market research firm NetRatings Japan — have set up a study group aimed at laying the foundations for a method of quantifying the audiences at cell phone-Web sites.

"If we can conduct audience surveys targeting cell phone users, as we now do for PC users, the growth of the mobile ad market will accelerate," said Mobile Internet Capital

Inc. President Ikuo Nishioka, head of the study group.

Issues related to cell phone-based ads, such as ease of use, regulations and technologies, will be discussed from the viewpoint of both cell phone users and advertisers.

The study group plans to submit a report to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications as well as cell phone carriers by next August, calling for the introduction of an audience metric for cell phone-Web sites.

As of the end of last year, 72.87 million cell phone subscribers accessed the Internet on their handsets, compared with 78.13 million people who used PCs, according to the Internal Ministry. Despite the near parity in size, the market for cell phone-based advertising was estimated at ¥62.1 billion that year, compared with the ¥600.3 billion market for all Internet ads.

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Subscriptions: ¥6,300/6 months per user (Japan)

¥6,000/6 months per user (outside Japan)

Corporate users: group subscriptions available (min. 5 users)

