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News Bulletins

Russian Handsets Will Become Mobile Billboards

Wireless telco VimpelCom announced this week in Moscow that it will offer its mobile subscribers a service that sends offers of information and entertainment to their idle cell phone screens.

VimpelCom, which operates under the brand name Bee Line GSM, says its Chameleon service will offer customers who opt in offers in five categories: government and business news; entertainment news; cultural news; quizzes, songs, pictures and games; and sports news. Consumers who click on the offers are charged for the service selected. VimpelCom said in a statement that it tested the system last summer with 2,000 customers and that 40% of them used it. The Interactive Broadcast technology VimpelCom will use is provided by Israel-based Celltick Technologies. Celltick's system has been deployed by about 20 mobile network operators worldwide, Ronen Daniel, senior vice president of marketing at Celltick, tells CardLine Europe. Operators send the offers via the small smart card, known as a subscriber identity module, or SIM, that is required in all GSM phones. VimpelCom has ordered SIM cards with 64 kilobytes of rewriteable memory from France-based smart card vendor Oberthur Card Systems for use with the interactive system, sources tell CardLine Europe. VimpelCom, whose shares are traded on the New York Stock Exchange, has 26.6 million subscribers.

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