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Heineken New Zealand Uses Beacons to Beckon Consumers

Heineken New Zealand is piloting a solution to engage with consumers when they are near or inside pubs and restaurants, with the help of Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) beacons. Rush Digital has configured 500 beacons and has worked with Darkhorse NZ to install these at more than 120 businesses

around the country, in order to provide the brewery with a smartphone app, as well as content-management software to manage the beacon-related data. The new system, using an app called Heineken LIVE, is a unique concept developed by Saatchi & Saatchi, and is the first technology platform of its kind in New Zealand. The solution enables Heineken to provide consumers with messages and rewards relevant to those individuals' locations.

Rush Digital was founded in 2010 in Auckland, New Zealand, as a software company for video games, as well as enterprise and marketing solutions, according to Danushka Abeysuriya, the firm's CEO. Approximately two years ago, the company began offering BLE beacon functionality with its solutions so that businesses could provide location-based content. "We investigated doing the hardware ourselves," he says, "but we found that a lot of challenges related to BLE come from the software side of things." Since Rush Digital already specializes in software, the company then tested beacons that would work with its solutions.



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After testing three different beacons, says Maher Hatab, Rush Digital's technical director, the firm opted to deploy Gimbal's Series 21 beacons. Each beacon has the capacity for its power to be dialed down to reduce the transmission distance—something Rush was looking for, Hatab says. The company also sought beacons that had a long battery life and

would be easy to service, he adds, such as when batteries needed to be changed. According to Hatab, beacons could be difficult to access at some sites. Therefore, he sought a model that would require infrequent battery changes, and that would be easy to service when batteries needed replacement.

Heineken wanted to be able to tailor the type of content it provided to users based on their locations (such as on a public street as opposed to inside a bar), and it also wanted to control transmission distance, depending on where a person was at any given time. For instance, although a long beacon range was appropriate outside a bar, the beer company wanted a much tighter beacon transmission—within a few meters—when an individual was inside the premises, before an alcohol-related message, such as a coupon, would be sent.

Therefore, Rush Digital designed a system that specified two sorts of beacons: one for indoor use and the other for broadcast messaging, to work around liquor licensing requirements. Broadcast beacons transmit targeted messages as guests walk past a Heineken venue, while those used indoors greet guests upon their arrival, as well as promoting alcohol-based offers and rewarding two types of loyalty points—Heineken Status Points and Venue Status Points.

The Heineken LIVE app, available at the iTunes and Google Play websites, includes a GPS function with geofencing. If an app user enters a specific neighborhood in Auckland, or in another New Zealand city in which the system is installed, that individual receives a general message indicating that there are several restaurants and bars within the area that carry Heineken products and are participating in the pilot. He or she also receives a listing of some events taking place at those venues.

If the individual, while walking in front of one of those businesses, comes within range of the beacon, the app displays a message regarding specials (an offer involving chicken

wings, for instance) available at that establishment. In compliance with regulations, the messages do not refer to any alcoholic beverages, since the transmissions are being received outside of the business' premises.

If the app user then enters the restaurant, his or her phone receives the ID number transmitted by the venue-point beacon installed on the ceiling or directly inside the door. This causes the app to access the cloud-based server, triggering Rush Digital's content-management system to forward messages specific to Heineken, such as beer specials. The user gains status points through the app's use, and the more points that individual receives, the greater his or her status level. The consumer thus becomes eligible for higher-value rewards, like VIP event tickets, helicopter flights for lunch or weekend trips to Queenstown.

Heineken can modify the content in the Rush Digital software specific to each business and beacon.



Heineken
New
Zealand's
Taylor
Green

Taylor Green, Heineken New Zealand's marketing manager, says Heineken LIVE is an example of technology being used to enhance customers' social experiences in a completely seamless and intuitive way.

"Heineken has a passion for innovation and pushing technological boundaries. We worked alongside Saatchi & Saatchi and Rush Digital to develop an app that enabled us to

communicate with customers through their smartphone—a medium that is engrained in their day-to-day lives,” Green says.

“This platform allows Heineken to give on-the-spot recognition to app users who have been out and about in their city,” Green states, “rewarding them with surprise experiences and rewards, as well as updates on events in their area.”

The software also informs Heineken how often individuals receive a beacon transmission in front of a particular business and then enter the restaurant and accept rewards or other promotions.

The system has been up and running since July. The beacons were deployed at businesses throughout New Zealand, with Darkhorse NZ carrying out the actual installation. Rush Digital provided training, as well as an app that allows installers to test beacon range via their mobile phones.

“The whole strategy is going from coarse grain to fine grain,” Abey Suriya says. While at the GPS (geofencing) level, users receive general information about businesses in their neighborhood. The content becomes more specific to a particular business based on status-point beacons, and to a beer sale or reward points once a user is inside a bar, via the venue-point beacons.

“There’s huge potential and demand for Heineken LIVE to be used in cities around the globe,” Green says, “but I’m proud that we developed it locally and launched it in New Zealand first.”

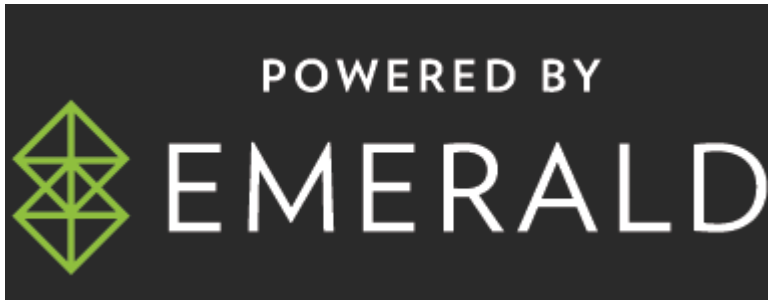


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