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RCOM, E-CUBE VENTURE

Send SMS, Pepsi can will pop out of machine

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Reliance Communications, as part of its mCommerce initiative, plans to launch an SMS-based vending service in collaboration with E-Cube, an embedded software company.

The service will work like this: the user sends an SMS to the mobile number displayed on the LCD panel of the vending machine, whereupon the machine displays the user's mobile number.

The user picks the item that he wants to buy (say, a Pepsi can) from the menu displayed on the LCD screen. The product drops down the chute and the price gets added to the user's mobile bill.

This is to be launched for Reliance Communication's post-paid



customers, sources said. The company is awaiting the approval of the Reserve Bank of India to offer the service on its pre-paid platform too, they said.

Sources say that E-Cube will offer technological infrastructure to the entire vending module, while RCom will be the network provider and customer interface. RCom officials could not be reached for comment.

E-Cube is a global company that offers various mCommerce services, including readers for wireless applications and automatic vending machines.

RCom plans to launch the service through its Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) and Voice Access platforms within the next one year.

As E-Cube has signed a distribution deal with PepsiCo to retail the company's entire portfolio of beverage offerings, the pact would enable RCom to offer PepsiCo products through 500 vending machines to be located at various places across 150 towns, in the first phase.

According to sources close to the development, talks are on to rope in other FMCG brands to expand the product portfolio.