

Widespread adoption of SMS for business

The use of SMS for business purposes shows widespread adoption within the South African market, according to a pilot study commissioned by BulkSMS.com in July 2006. The study, conducted by Webchek using its SMS channel, compared the experiences of Internet savvy South African consumers who are also mobile phone users.

Ninety five percent of respondents reported receiving business communications via SMS, while 75% received email communications for business purposes.

Key findings were that respondents received on average:

- 3 - 4 relevant business SMSes per week,
- 35 relevant business emails per week,
- six irrelevant business SMSes per week, and
- seven irrelevant business emails per week (note that most PCs have spam filters installed, while most mobile phones not)

Sixty one percent of respondents were happy to receive business communications via email, and 50% of respondents were happy to receive business communications via SMS.

The other findings from the research are:

- Overall, users report lower volumes of business communications via SMS than email but more respondents report having received business communications via SMS.
- The financial services sector use SMS more than email to send business communications.
- After financial services, the retail sector makes the most use of SMS for business communications.
- Thirty five percent of respondents reported receiving internal work communications via email while 15% received the communications by SMS.
- Less than 15% of all respondents receive fewer than six business SMSes per week.
- More than 30% of respondents receive more than 50 business emails per week.
- More respondents received irrelevant business emails than SMS communications.
- Respondents do not like receiving irrelevant advertising messages from businesses.

"In our experience at BulkSMS.com we have seen huge growth over the last two years in the use of SMS as business communication tool compared to SMS as marketing tool. This research establishes that this is a characteristic of South African market trends," says Dr Pieter Streicher, MD of BulkSMS.com.

According to Streicher, the use of SMS will continue surpass email as a business communication tool for three reasons:

1. SMS is a ubiquitous communication medium as more people have access to cell phones than the Internet or email.
2. SMS is immediate as a text message arrives nearly instantaneously on a targeted user's cell phone.
3. SMS generates less spam due to the fact that the cost of SMS is kept above a certain threshold. Most spam is eliminated as the sender pays for the communication.

The study is the first in a series tracking the prevalence and nature of SMS spam in South Africa. Respondents for this research were drawn from a small representative sample. The sample included prepaid and contract mobile phone users from three major urban areas.

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