

Stepping out of the shadow of SMS marketing

Mobile marketing has stepped out from under the shadow of SMS-enabled business communications. “The appeal of mobile marketing is that it triggers consumer responses to an advertising or promotional campaign,” says Dr Pieter Streicher, MD of BulkSMS.com, a global mobile messaging provider headquartered in Cape Town.

“It fits well with campaigns using a multimedia marketing strategy. Mobile marketing is able to integrate with print, radio, television, web, and other outdoor channels to enhance brand experiences by capturing consumer’s attention and imagination,” he continues.

Today, with cellphone penetration rates of nearly 90% in South Africa, the mobile channel is fast becoming seen by businesses as the single most effective means to provide brand experiences by interacting directly with consumers with access to a cellphone.

Blanket term

Mobile marketing is a blanket term that describes campaigns which promote brands, products or services using the cellular channel. These campaigns allow a business to interact with consumers by either sending out a bulk SMS to a permission based opt-in database of targeted contacts or providing a channel for consumers to engage with a brand by sending a message from their cellphone to a shortcode. “This is the only personal channel,” as Alex Michael and Ben Slater note in their book *Mobile Marketing: Achieving Competitive Advantage through Wireless Technology*, “enabling spontaneous, direct, interactive and/or targeted communications, any time, any place.”

Streicher goes on to say that while mobile marketing is seen by some as a channel for below-the-line promotions similar to email communications, marketing agencies are now calling it on-the-line interactions to emphasise a mobile call-to-action during an above-the-line campaign or the ability of a consumer to respond directly to an SMS communication.

In addition, the mobile channel also allows a business to track the effectiveness and uptake of a campaign by accessing real-time reporting on SMS responses from consumers. Campaign tracking also provides a business with a clear idea of how their marketing spend is being converted into sales.

“While there is a cost to communicating directly to a targeted consumer segment or individual consumer via the mobile channel, the benefits of this cost per message are the tangible results of qualified consumer interactions and the ability to communicate further with a new customer,” says Streicher.

Examples of mobile marketing campaigns

www.jamble.co.za, a mobile social networking service, drives consumers to its service by advertising to a target market through print flyers, online advertising and radio broadcasts. A consumer responds to Jamble's call to action by SMSing a keyword to a shortcode. An SMS containing a WAP link is then sent the consumer. The consumer then activates this link from his or her cellphone and is automatically directed to Jamble's mobile Internet service. The consumer is then able to browse content or interact with other Jamble users from their cellphone.

Another example of a mobile marketing campaign is www.wavescape.co.za, which operates a surf forecasting service for the South African coastline. Wavescape promotes its SMS and WAP surf reports by means of a weekly email to subscribers, as well as online banner adverts placed on the Wavescape website. Further promotions of these mobile services are done in the press and during an annual surf film festival. Targeted largely at the surfing community, Wavescape's campaigns promotes the ability for a surfer on the road to access waves size and wind information for a surf spot by sending a keyword to a shortcode via SMS.

One mobile marketing strategy adopted by the financial services sector is to offer free information services, such as share prices. This information is pushed to a consumer's cellphone as an SMS. When a consumer requests this service, it allows the company to ask in the service confirmation SMS whether the consumer would like to opt-in to receive further SMS communications about other financial products and services. Consumers who opt-in are then added to the company's permission based marketing database.

Compliance with industry regulations

According to Streicher, "The design and roll-out of any mobile marketing campaign must comply with industry regulations for the advertising of mobile services as well as the sending of commercial messages."

In South Africa, mobile marketing - and commercial messaging in general - are governed by the regulations set out by the industry body, the Wireless Application Service Provider Association (WASPA - www.waspa.org.za). These regulations promote industry best practice, for instance, promotional messages can only be sent via SMS to consumers with a recent commercial relationship with the company. The [WASPA Code of Conduct](#) set out that if the company has not done business with the customer within the previous six months, then the company is required to ask the customer to reconfirm their opt-in to receive further SMS communications.

"The development of best practices within the mobile industry has promoted the industry's growth in SA and has ensured that consumers can interact with confidence with companies and their brands through the mobile medium," concludes Streicher.

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