

# Mobile moves: Key trends to watch in 2014

 By [Dr Pieter Streicher](#)

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As with almost every other sector under the 'technology' banner, the mobile industry is evolving at a rapid pace, and is constantly iterating to meet the demands of an increasingly large and sophisticated market.

At BulkSMS.com, we keep a close eye on the changes that affect the end user, as well as the trends that we believe are shaping the industry. Looking to 2014, here are some of the topics that will undoubtedly impact the mobile services that have become such a ubiquitous part of our daily lives.

## 1. Mobile billing - Double opt-in becoming the norm

During December, mobile operators MTN and Cell C introduced double opt-in systems, following the example of rival (and market leader) Vodacom. This system is designed to reduce the possibility of consumers inadvertently signing up for mobile services. This system also eliminates the possibility of consumers being fraudulently billed by third parties.

Once both MTN and Cell C implement the double opt-in system we foresee that complaints relating to mobile subscription services will be significantly reduced. Take Vodacom, for example. The Wireless Application Service Providers' Association (WASPA) receives around 180,000 unsubscribe requests per month - and in October, a mere 16,000 were related to Vodacom.

Since installing the double opt-in system in December 2011 Vodacom-related complaints have been consistently low in comparison to the other networks - proving that the system is highly effective in reducing the problem.

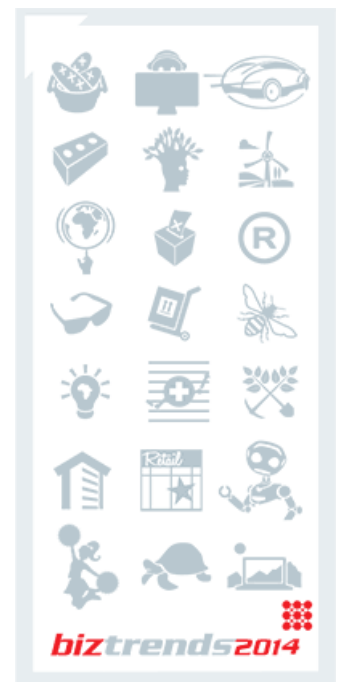
It must be noted, however, that while the system will reduce consumer complaints, it will not eliminate all of them. The reason being that some subscription services are disguised as lottery type competitions. These services inevitably dupe some users who are lured by the prospect of winning a prize of some sort.

## 2. SMS as an authentication service

Following in the footsteps of the major banks, more businesses are beginning to use SMS messaging as a means of authentication - the most obvious use being one-time passwords (OTPs). These have proven to be an effective way of ensuring internet banking is secure by making it difficult for hackers who would have to compromise two separate channels in order to breach the system.

Now, any business with an online service can make use of this mechanism, requiring only the consumer's mobile number as a means of identification. This strategy can eliminate the costs and risks associated with using other means of authentication, while simultaneously speeding up the authentication process - something which is undoubtedly an attractive prospect for any business.

Broadly speaking, there is a definite shift taking place in the uses of SMS - increasingly, SMS is moving to 'high value' messaging - of which authentication is an example, with 'low value' messaging - everyday, social messages, for example - becoming the domain of platforms such as WhatsApp, SnapChat and Blackberry Messenger. Essentially, SMS is moving toward a more functional, business-oriented role.



### 3. SMS and the mobile web

Finally, we are beginning to see SMS being increasingly combined with the mobile web in order to provide a more efficient and interactive service. For example, SMS messages relating to an invitation can contain a link to a website on which the recipient can simply click on in order to RSVP.

Therefore, instead of having to reply to an SMS, users can simply follow the link and perform the necessary action directly online. This type of service is the inevitable result of a general move toward the mobile web and consumers' increasing appetite for mobile-friendly data services.

As both companies and consumers become more and more dependent on mobile messaging, one can be certain that building on best practice mobile technology and business innovation will ensure that SMS messaging remains a communication channel of choice. As we move into 2014, we will be keeping a close watch on anything that spells change in the South African mobile messaging market.

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### ABOUT DR PIETER STREICHER

Dr Pieter E Streicher is MD of wireless application service provider Bulksms.com (www.bulksms.com). He also sits on the management committee of the Wireless Application Service Provider Association (WASPA). Email him at [news@bulksms.com](mailto:news@bulksms.com)

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