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PRESS RELEASE

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Romancing your phone

Romance has not died in the digital age. It seems to be blossoming according to a recent online survey about South African's romantic mobile habits.

In the spirit of Valentines Day, BulkSMS.com conducted a dipstick survey using a new media channel in January 2011. Of the fifty-one South Africans who responded, the majority were from the Western Cape and the remainder from Gauteng and the Eastern Cape. All respondents were aged between 18 to 50 years.

"BulkSMS conducted a similar survey in 2009 and the parallels are in line with what we expected, especially with the growing popularity of social media and the smart phone. The results of both surveys go some way to confirm that mobile phones provide an intimate medium to communicate with a loved one," said Samantha Young, marketing manager at BulkSMS.com.

Two key findings emerged from the survey. Firstly, irrespective of age, people still prefer calling the person they are romantically involved with rather than sending a message. Secondly, people are becoming more dependent on their phones and are more likely to return home to fetch their mobile than go on a date without it. Some of the other findings are:

- *First dates arranged by calling:* In 2009, 57% of respondents arranged their first date by phone call, 2% did so face to face and 19% preferred texting. The 2011 results were somewhat different in that 41% preferred arranging a first date over the phone, 41% preferred face to face and 16% sent SMS text messages.
- *The preferred communications method:* we have entered 2011 at a time where social media and instant messaging has taken off. This is shown in the survey results: the preferred communication method is still phone call with 69% in both 2009 and 2011, texting has increased from 17% in 2009 up to 25% in 2011, and instant messaging (for example Mxit, Facebook chat, Skype) has increased by more than 10% - from 7% in 2009 up to 19% in 2011.
- *Most people do not take romantic calls during a work meeting:* 52% of 2009 respondents and 70% of the 2011 respondents had never taken a romantic call in a meeting. 24% (2009) and 14% (2011) indicated that they took the call in a work meeting without realising it was a romantic call. 19% (2009) and 14% (2011) stated that they had, but that it was an emergency and 5% (2009) and 4% (2011) said that they often took romantic calls during a meeting.
- *Some people can't live without their cellphone:* When asked whether they would rather return home to collect their phone and be late for a romantic engagement than go without their mobile phone for a few hours, 55% of the 2011 respondents said that they would. This is up from 19% of the 2009 respondents. 2% of the 2011 group and 7% of the 2009 group said that they would leave it but would spend the night wondering who was trying to contact them.
- *Texting is being used to end romantic relationships:* In 2009 71% of respondents said that they would not use text messaging to dump someone and 15% indicated that they may consider doing



so. However, no-one had dumped someone using SMS. In 2011, 22% of respondents had dumped and 14% had been dumped by text message. We did not ask the same question for Facebook users in the 2009 survey, but did in the 2011. 6% of respondents had publicly either broken up with or had a relationship end by someone using a social media site.

These results show that respondents are more comfortable with using digital technology and mobile phones to interact romantically. Despite, the growth in social media and SMS messaging those surveyed tended to prefer the intimacy and privacy of a phone call when contacting their loved ones.