



**Phone:** +27 (0)21 528 3420

**Fax:** +27 (0)21 552 2848

**Website:** [www.bulksms.com](http://www.bulksms.com)

4th Floor South Lobby  
Boulevard Place Heron Crescent  
Century City 7441 South Africa

## **PRESS RELEASE – SOUTH AFRICA**

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#### **Taking the next steps with mobile marketing**

*By Dr Pieter Streicher, MD at BulkSMS.com*

Here at BulkSMS.com we speak a lot about the importance of having mobile included in your marketing mix, and especially SMS thanks to its reach, pervasiveness and acceptance by consumers across all demographics. We remind marketers to include mobile marketing at the planning stage to maximise the benefits of the channel, and not simply tack it on at the end.

That's all very well, but what are the next steps? How do you effectively use SMS to bridge the gap between offline marketing activities and online, permission-based engagement with your customer base? How do you harness the reach of mobile marketing to feed your CRM database and springboard into ongoing engagement across multiple channels?

This article takes a look at how you can deploy mobile marketing in a retail context, specifically using SMS shortcodes, to elevate your marketing efforts from passive interaction to true customer engagement.

#### **Shortcode shortcuts your acquisition path**

SMS shortcode campaigns are one of the simplest, yet most effective ways to transform a static channel such as a point-of-sale promotion, in-store posters or on-pack special offers into the start of an immediate conversation with the customer. Grab the customer on the spot when they literally have the product in their hand and allow them to enter a competition, access a discount on the product, give their feedback or sign up for future value – all via an SMS shortcode and keyword.

You'll have gained quite a lot from that simple SMS: the customer's cell phone number, product information (e.g. the barcode of the product they are buying) and other information such as their names. This is a very valuable kickstart to profiling your customers and beginning to market to them using appropriate channels and messages.

Don't forget to send a response to the SMS immediately with a thank you. Customers expect it and appreciate it, and if you design your campaign cleverly you can use this as an opportunity, if you haven't already, to get permission to continue communicating with the individual.

Remember though, you need to get explicit approval for each communication channel. The Consumer Protection Act is going to enforce that you need to be able to show evidence of the client opting in for marketing communications. The good news is that by using a shortcode, you'll have this data archived automatically.

Please also follow the WASPA (Wireless Application Service Providers' Association) guidelines on how to present the cost of the SMS and the terms and conditions of the promotion. It's important to abide by the regulations to avoid sanction, and you'll also create a safe environment where the customer can confidently interact with you, with full knowledge of the costs of engagement and how their information will be used.



Finally, SMS shortcode campaigns are highly scalable and easily ramped up or down according to your budget and requirements. Make sure your SMS shortcode provider offers you a free reply SMS per incoming message – this allows you to reply to the customer as a matter of course and not worry about chalking up a large bill. SMS shortcode campaigns can be effectively used by a mom and pop store right up to a nationwide brand.

### **Activating retail campaigns**

In the retail context, SMS activated campaigns have been successfully deployed for well-known household name brands by Habari, a below-the-line marketing agency. By incorporating best practice mobile marketing strategies, Habari enabled on-pack promotions that used SMS competitions, complementary brand incentives, or channel tie-into stimulate customer engagement and retail sales.

In store-promotions were used to point customers to specially-marked products which incentivised them to send an SMS to a shortcode and enter into a competition to win a prize that matched or complemented the product on offer to build the brand. An alternative strategy was to run SMS campaigns that were specific to the retail chain where a customer shopped. This not only created channel tie-in but allow a brand to understand consumer purchasing behaviour. In each case, the aim was to convert a purchase into an on-going customer interaction using the mobile channel.

Noting these examples, with some planning and a clear idea of the information you would like to capture and how you plan to continue engaging with customers, SMS shortcode promotions and competitions are an immensely effective customer acquisition tools and ways of kick-starting campaign engagements.