

Mobile is the closest brands can get to SA consumers

 By [Joseph Neusu](#)

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The title of my article is borrowed from a quote in the Mobile Rocks AMPS report for 2013. It is a strong statement that surfaces the pull and effectiveness of mobile as a marketing tool. Though it might sound like a cliché because of its over-usage, statistics unequivocally substantiate the bold claim that media rocks.

According to the 2016 MMA Marketing Report launched on 13 April 2016, mobile's exponential growth has been nothing but phenomenal. In my own view, the highlight of the report is the huge jump in smartphone ownership in South Africa which now stands at over 19 million out of the 38 million adult South Africans with mobile phones. Similar maths shows that this represents 50% market penetration.

“Our research has found that smartphone adoption, and usage, broke away from regular desktop in mid-2014 and continued to accelerate to almost 20 million users in July 2015 and this is expected to grow, with smartphones as the dominant device to access the internet,” stated Nicolle Harding, chair of research and measurement for MMA SA and country manager at Effective Measure South Africa.



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The numbers represent a digital market that is always on and connected. It is a market with a diverse demographic that is economical too. In short, this is a pool of prospective customers with money to spend.

“The phenomenal growth in adoption that we are seeing in mobile devices presents equally pervasive opportunities for marketers, as mobile media and marketing is expected to experience a steady increase in growth in South Africa,” Harding added.

Indeed, opportunities to increase mind share and market share abound in ways that were not hitherto possible. It’s a new world order that enables brands to use mobile marketing to build and maintain brand awareness, expand in new demographics as well as keep valuable customers.

Despite its apparent appeal, mobile marketing is a bit like snake charming. All goes well until there is a fractured relationship between the snake and its handler. Fatalities have been known to happen in these circumstances.

Mobile marketers should always remember that customers they target do not take kindly to have the intimately private spaces invaded by loud advertisements. Customers have the ultimate control of what happens on their phones and they are now embedding filters and ad blockers to stop the noise.

However, there is an interesting paradox in the equation. Whilst customers are averse to advertisements that intrude into their personal moments when they are surfing the net or just chatting with their friends, they still expect brands to reach out to them with information about new products, new benefits as well as loyalty programmes.

The dilemma is how to profitably resolve this tension. One way of going around this challenge is by leveraging innovative mobile ads that are inoffensive by being non-intrusive. It is important for brands to always bear this in mind because done correctly, mobile marketing enhances campaign.

This is light in the dark in the context of questions about the efficacy of digital ads that posed by the challenges of viewability.

To those who might not be familiar with the term, viewability is a metric that is used to measure the extent to which a digital ad was seen by an actual person. This has become a hot issue of late because of the rise in click fraud. To put this issue into perspective, the industry suffers losses of up to \$6bn from fraud by bots.

In order to go around this challenge, marketers can leverage ad formats that have high viewability, that is, that are seen by a real person.

One example of a mobile ad that enjoys producing high ROI is the Swipe Up ad format. This ad type offers high engagement and is also very discreet. What also makes it work very well is that it is displayed on websites with premium content. Users of such websites spend longer on them and have high spending power.

How does the Swipe Up ad format work? The ad subtly slides in only on user scroll and it can be closed by swiping it out. This is a very important feature as the best ad formats give great control to the user by giving them the choice to either engage with the ad or simply dismiss it.

According to Jacky Bosega, the group ad ops manager at Adclick Africa, if there is an ad for the publisher, the unit does not swipe up, and the demand partner can passback if they can’t buy. In addition, the ad can be targeted by device, by geography, by browser, operating system, date and time.

Mobile is such an effective marketing channel that offers wide reach and high engagement, however brands should use the right ad format if they are to gain from their investment. Additionally, brands be aware that mobile’s dominance is the same in all African countries.

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