

SMS delivers better retail experience



By [Charles Stretch](#)

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Although customers use their phones in stores for much, from managing shopping lists, browsing for recipes, price comparisons, additional product information and shopping on the go whenever they need to, they remain fickle and retailers need to prioritise mobile over more traditional forms of communication.



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Customer first, technology second

When it comes to mobile marketing, retailers should consider their customer first, and then the technology. Businesses should start with the basics to help build trust with their customer base. Review your web analytics to understand how your customers are using their mobiles while interacting with your brand. From here you can make informed decisions about which mobile marketing tool to use to best connect with consumers.

The toolbox

Build geofences where your customers are - not where you want them to be. Your potential customers might not be in your vicinity, so target high footfall locations near you. These are better geofences than your location, when you know where your customers are, you can send via SMS highly targeted content. In your message to drive action be brief, be relevant, be local and encourage a prompt action. Moreover, it does not have to be a discount, it can be an exclusive experience, a sample - do not cheapen your brand.

Utilise short codes and keywords

We have all seen the use of keywords and short codes in competitions. Use them in-store to engage customers for on the spot discounts, vouchers to incentivise signing up to receive information on products/services. With the knowledge that the consumer in store is already engaged with your brand, you can use the opportunity to build a relationship with them and offer a better service.

Like-gating and digital vouchers

Targeted and secure digital vouchers give retail brands the ability to connect to the mass digital market. So, when you send a digital voucher via SMS to a subscriber include what is called a 'Like-Gate' URL. This forces a Facebook user who has not already liked your page, to like your page before they can see particular content. This way you can link SMS with your social media efforts.

SMS for debt collection

Retailers who operate store cards and accounts can contact hundreds or thousands of customers in one day using SMS. By including payment details on reminder SMS' administration and payment tracking is much easier. Now the debtor can

receive a personalised message, with all the correct details and reference numbers at their fingertips when they go to make a payment. This leads to fewer problems in the form of wrong or missing reference numbers and misallocations in company accounts.

When the costs of this are compared with the success rate of writing letters or phoning as many people in a day, it is clear where the greatest ROI lies.

The challenge for retailers is to ensure they deliver value to customers at every stage of their journey - however, whenever and wherever they choose to shop and even when handling the less enjoyable experience of paying store card debts.

ABOUT CHARLES STRETCH

Charles Stretch, is the managing director of SMSPortal. Established in 2002, it has grown to be a large bulk SMS provider sending 100 million SMS a month. Contact him on charles@smsportal.co.za.

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