

# Could mobile marketing be the key to combating Ebola in Africa?

 By [Craig Rossouw](#)

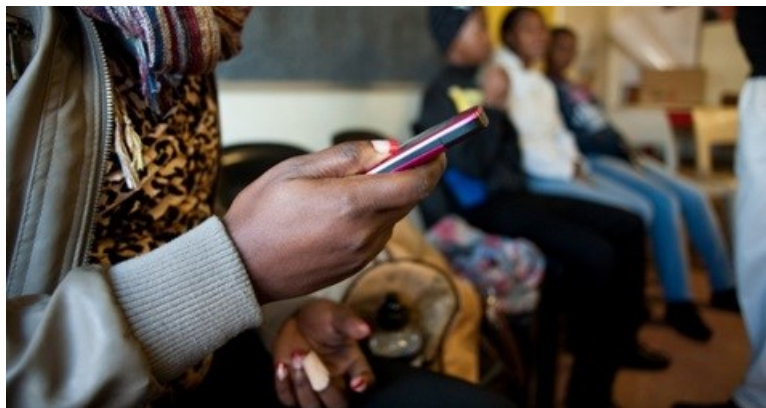
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With approximately [8,000 people infected with Ebola, nearly 4,000 deaths in five West African countries](#) due to the virus, and the whole world on high alert, the question arises: how do we effectively inform Africans about the facts? How do we help those with the virus get response to the rest of the country, place ways of preventing it from spreading, and how do we take action to eradicate this threat? Mobile marketing could be the key.

## Informing Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa is currently undergoing a mobile digital revolution, with [635 million mobile subscriptions forecasted by the end of 2014](#). This in itself could be key in informing sub-Saharan countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and the Democratic Republic of Congo about the Ebola threat.

Feature phones have a larger share of the African market and using [SMS](#) as a means to inform people about the virus could be crucial in ending the scourge of Ebola. Through SMS campaigns, people in affected areas will also have a platform to give vital feedback to authorities and in so doing, possibly prevent the virus from spreading further.



## Responding

Sub-Saharan Africa populations use mobile phones for online activities, showing how technology overcomes weak or non-existent landline infrastructure in the swaths of the world's poorest continent. By using this technology it is possible to monitor where the virus is spreading and direct better resources in particularly hard hit areas.

By informing Africa through bulk SMS services, [USSD](#) (unstructured supplementary service data) can also be included, which could allow certain areas to respond with information such as their location, details of infection within the community. In return, they could get information on medical resources in their areas.

## Prevention

This is [not the first time African countries have experienced an Ebola outbreak](#). Past epidemics have been suppressed rapidly.

The latest outbreak has been labeled by scientists as the deadliest to date. However, all is not lost. By giving people a visual prevention chart, they can monitor the outbreak and also gain valuable information on Ebola. A great way to send out a prevention campaign like this is with [MMS](#) (multimedia messaging services), which will overcome the language barriers

through the use of visuals.

## **Africa takes action now**

Information is key in stopping the pandemic - the more people know about it, the less chances the disease has to infect and kill. But with any action to be taken, there is always an associated cost. Channel Mobile has taken up the fight for Africa with an Ebola campaign called 'Ebola Stops Now!' Donate R20 to this campaign by texting 49277 with your name and a positive message around the pandemic.

### **Quick facts: Six ways to prevent Ebola**

- *Avoid physical contact with people showing symptoms of the Ebola virus*
- *Wash your hands regularly with clean water and soap*
- *Keep away from (fruit) bats, monkeys, dead animals and bush meat*
- *Animal products should be thoroughly cooked before consumption*
- *Inform health authorities immediately in case of contact with expected or confirmed Ebola cases*
- *Only travel to areas where there is an Ebola outbreak in case of urgent need*

## **ABOUT CRAIG ROSSOUW**

Digital Manager, devising strategies, improving usability, design and content is all in a day's work. I also ensure management of the various digital platforms and responsible for online reputation. Social Media SEO Mobile Marketing Content Marketing Blog Event and charity sponsorship's

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