

Building trust in a digital world

 By [Greg Chen](#)

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South Africans rely on mobile phones to stay connected, making this a critical channel for businesses looking for effective ways to communicate with customers and staff. To successfully leverage mobile marketing, businesses need to build trust from the beginning of the customer relationship, particularly as phishing and identity fraud becomes commonplace.



Source: www.pexels.com

Recent statistics from [Datareportal](#) show that just under two-thirds of South Africans (64%) have access to the internet, while mobile connections are equivalent to 168.5% of the total population. Consumers have also shifted their habits and are increasingly relying on mobile devices to manage their online experiences – from shopping to managing bills to investing.

For example, online shopping has boomed in South Africa as a result of the pandemic, with a 66% rise in sales last year according to [World Wide Worx](#), and has doubled since 2018 to reach more than R30bn. With an estimated 38 million consumers able to access the internet, over 36 million people also use their mobile devices to connect.

Despite the growth in multiple digital channels and social media platforms, SMS marketing remains the best way to communicate with customers, as SMS delivery has a reliable broad and data-free reach. However, with phishing on the rise, consumers and businesses alike are also increasingly wary of cybercrimes and will not act on a message that appears unsafe.

Building trust through SMS solutions

People are concerned about the quality and safety of links sent to their mobile devices, about spam messaging, and are often unsure how a company got their details. This has had an impact on the individual threshold for responding to corporate messaging and marketing over the past year.

Businesses must ensure that their messages are trusted, this can be achieved by using reputable SMS platforms, sending trustworthy, branded links and personalised SMS messages that create safe digital spaces for payment and engagement. This allows companies to create ecosystems that thrive thanks to simple, seamless and effective communication.

This trend is reflected in extensive [research](#) released this year, that found personalised text messaging to be the preferred way for brands to connect to customers – and a preferred method for customers – as it allows for two-way conversations, share offers and rewards, and provides customer support.

Personalised text messaging is convenient, with consumers able to initiate and respond to chats on their schedule, and brands who use it show that they value their customers and respect their time. Businesses are able to customise offers based on consumer preference, while those on the receiving end appreciate a more tailored experience and greater intimacy with a brand who knows their name.



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How to build consumer trust

Here are some pointers to consider for enterprises who want to build consumer trust and achieve a good return on investment via SMS solutions:

1. **First party data:** For customers to trust the marketing content they receive via SMS, it is essential for businesses to only contact customers who have opted in to receive this information. Not only is the part of the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), but customers will trust business SMSs more when they are familiar with the brand and expecting communications from the company. As such, businesses and the SMS marketing services they use should only use first party data and never purchase databases.
2. **Data encryption:** When using SMS as a way of business marketing or customer engagement, enterprises must be sure that they are using text message marketing software that ensures all the customers' personal information is safe. This can be done through encryption technology.
3. **Personalisation:** This makes all the difference in building trust. Rich media content personalisation allows customers to see the value in offers and deals that are curated to suit their individual buying habits or preferences. In addition, the in-depth understanding of customer habits and requirements underpins the relationship and adds a second layer of authentication in the communication transaction.

Enterprises that want to communicate across multiple audiences and demographics in South Africa and reach their target audience via digital communications need to leverage the accessibility of SMS. But to do this effectively, they have to cut through the digital noise by using safe, trustworthy text messaging marketing services. Doing so will help to build engagement and repeat business.

ABOUT GREG CHEN

Greg Chen is the CEO and co-founder of Mbbiz. He has a long history in the South African mobile space and is passionate about the role technology can play in engaging the country's people across the spectrum

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