

Social and mobile get even closer in 2018

 By [Candice Goodman](#), issued by [Mobitainment](#)

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When social meets mobile, we see the best of both in our digital world... Let's explore their journey as their relationship gets even closer as 2018 approaches, and how we can leverage what they offer us as marketers in Africa.



Marketers all talk of South Africa, and Africa, as being 'mobile first', but at Mobitainment we go one step further: we believe marketers must view South Africa and Africa as 'mobile always'.

Why? This year research showed that over 16 million people in South Africa accessed Facebook every month. Over 8.9 million or some 59% of these people who were active monthly, returned to Facebook every day. But here's the stat you need to pay attention to: 97% of the people who were active monthly on the social media platform, accessed Facebook using their mobile phones.

When social meets mobile, we see of the best of both...the meeting of the two greats of digital marketing in South Africa. This is how their courting progressed through the eyes of a marketer:

First, they got the word out through promotion. Conversation followed, because that's what's needed to get the brand and a human to connect, and get to know each other. Personalisation was next - once you know what someone wants, you can create offers that are "especially for you". If people like the experience you give them, they will share it. This fourth stage is about creating those experiences that prompt talk-ability and sharability.

We progress the dating analogy to uncover the latest on how marketers can leverage this powerful combination and get the best of both:

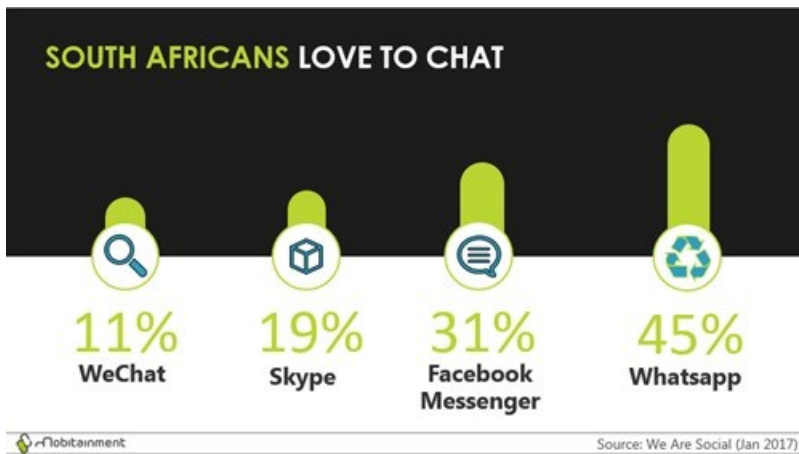
Promotion

For a promotion to work, any advertiser knows that you have to reach your target audience where they are, and increasingly your audience is socialising on their mobile phone. But what can be used as bait to make your offer attractive and to influence behaviour? Here's the latest trend...

People are being attracted more and more by visuals: the most exciting new ad formats include images and videos, but now take into consideration the fact that South Africans are still very data cost sensitive, and are now available to reach the mass market of South Africans, on no data cost platforms, ie it doesn't use your consumer's data to view your video ad or visual ad and click to your offering.

Conversation

How do people who don't know each other get to know each other? By chatting, of course, and South Africans do love to chat.



That said, these are the platforms that brands can use to converse with audiences. There are pros and cons to each of these platforms.

WhatsApp [Owned by Facebook]

Instant messaging application for smartphones

- Pros
 - Reach - a huge number of people use this platform.
 - Ubiquity - most smartphone users, even entry level users, learn how to WhatsApp first.
 - This messaging app enables the transfer of images, video, audio and location.
- Cons
 - Not suitable for a bulk outbound communication strategy.
 - Volumes - There is a limit of 256 numbers on group and broadcast messages.
 - Reporting and impact assessment is extremely challenging because the current platform has no built-in reporting tools.
- Use WhatsApp for specific, lower volume, targeted niche
- Use Case campaigns, with in-bound conversation initiated by the consumer.

Take
Note

In line with Facebook's focus of providing value to users, not necessarily brands, WhatsApp recently announced the launch of Verified Business accounts to assist its users in identifying legitimate brands it has verified. This will enable brands to leverage WhatsApp and create communities of their audience to converse with, but with management controls that keeps the power in user hands. WhatsApp users will be informed when they are talking to a business via "yellow messages inside a chat", and can stop a business from contacting them by using the standard block account process.

WeChat: [Owned by Tencent, of which Naspers is a shareholder]

Enables instant messaging, payment services and commerce

Developer Friendly.

Pros Rich functionality, including payments for m-commerce [mobile commerce].

Cons The reach of WeChat is low in SA. The medium hasn't taken off in other African countries, aside from Nigeria

Messenger Chat Bot [Owned by Facebook]

Originally Facebook Chat, Messenger was launched as a standalone app in 2011. The service supports video and audio calling, text chat, voice recorded messaging, the creation of groups and more.

A most viable option for South Africa, which in our opinion includes the best of both worlds, is in a Facebook Messenger Chatbot. It has reach, ubiquity, the ability to include images, is developer friendly, can be measured and tracked for reporting purposes, and is supported by Facebook for commercialisation.

A chatbot is basically a computer program written to mimic real-life interactions and conversations, to help provide information and help potential customers find what they need from the brand. It's very effective for customer service and lead generation through profiling, education and pre-qualification. But an untapped potential for South African marketers is the reach and trackable engagement it can give a brand's promotional competitions.

As smartphone penetration increases in Africa, so the use of a chatbot becomes more viable as an entry mechanism, acting as an alternative to an SMS short code or USSD mechanic. It is more natural and has more of a conversational tone, with the added advantage of being able to respond with images, and work cross-country on the same platform and code.

The most exciting news is that 2017 will culminate in bringing us the opportunity to aggregate these chats into a single platform, managed, not on a single mobile phone, but through an online web interface, on a desktop, if need be, by a team of administrators— storing, sorting, tagging and reporting on the conversations you are having with your customers on Facebook Messenger, SMS, Live Chat and even Whatsapp. Giving brands the opportunity to use the simple chat, through automation, for customer service, registration, automated and assisted self-help, quote requests, complaint management, automated FAQs, competition entries, automated surveys... invited to start the conversation through a link in an SMS or email.

Personalisation

If you follow trends in digital marketing you will know that the era of mobile video and hyper-personalisation has arrived.

Personalised video allows you to dynamically create and distribute concise and completely unique videos customised for your individual customers, to explain complex information in a captivating way, viewable on any internet enabled device. By integrating a customer's personal profile and data into the video, it makes the message more compelling, and you will see a high response level from customers.

There are multiple applications for personalised video, which is applicable to any scenario where a brand needs to communicate with customers in a concise and innovative way. A great example of this is for a customer's insurance renewal, or to welcome new customers, promote special offers, cross sell or up sell services based on previous purchases. Personalised video is also great for loyalty programmes, annual reports and specific customer milestones like anniversaries or birthdays.

Sharability

The two words that epitomise social media are 'like' and 'share'. To use a dating analogy, at this stage of the relationship the brand and customer have met, chatted, and interacted personally. The brand has given them a memorable experience. The customer likes what they see and wants to share the news.

We can create these memorable experiences by using Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality or Mixed Reality on mobile phones. But what do these terms mean in lay terms?

Augmented Reality [AR] – look through your mobile phone to augment, or add to the reality that is in front of you with additional images and sound.

Virtual Reality [VR] – the phone is placed inside a visor-type device that produces a 3-dimensional image, which is seen as an alternative or virtual reality. Any motion of the head is picked up by the phone, so that a realistic environment is presented all around you.

AR, in particular, gives your brand the power to create a “wow” experience for your audience, something they will *like*, something they can *share*.

We are not only talking about mobile gaming here. There are so many touch points it can be used to augment your consumer’s experience with your brand along the path to purchase and consumer journey. It works because it uses bite-size entertainment and people are involved, and then these experiences get shared through social media. It can be used to mobilise and trigger your audience watching TV, viewing a poster, seeing it on-pack while shopping, or from a point of purchase like their till slip, to invite them to play along. We can already show you so many great South African examples already for retail, media and advertising, education, internal communication, product demos and promotions, and of course entertainment.

Making social, mobile... all ways

We have explored the relationship of social and mobile marketing, as a follow up to their meet ‘n greet (See our white paper in [SA Social Media Landscape 2018 – Executive Summary](#)), and have seen how their journey and relationship gets even closer as 2018 approaches.

When social meets mobile, it is definitely the best of both in the world of digital... with huge opportunities for marketers in Africa. As Africa is not only mobile first, but “mobile always”, marketers need to explore the use of social and mobile in all ways possible... with 11 years of experience of enabling mobile technology, Mobitainment are at the forefront to make these technologies work for your brand, and are here to hold your hand on this amazing journey.

ABOUT CANDICE GOODMAN

Candice Goodman is the DMA's Direct Marketer of the Year 2016. She has headed up Education at the Mobile Marketing Association of South Africa for the past five years, and was on the Mobile Marketing Association (MMA of SA) Advisory Board as Chairman, was the first Certified MMA Mobile Marketer in South Africa and is on the Education Committee of the IAB.

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