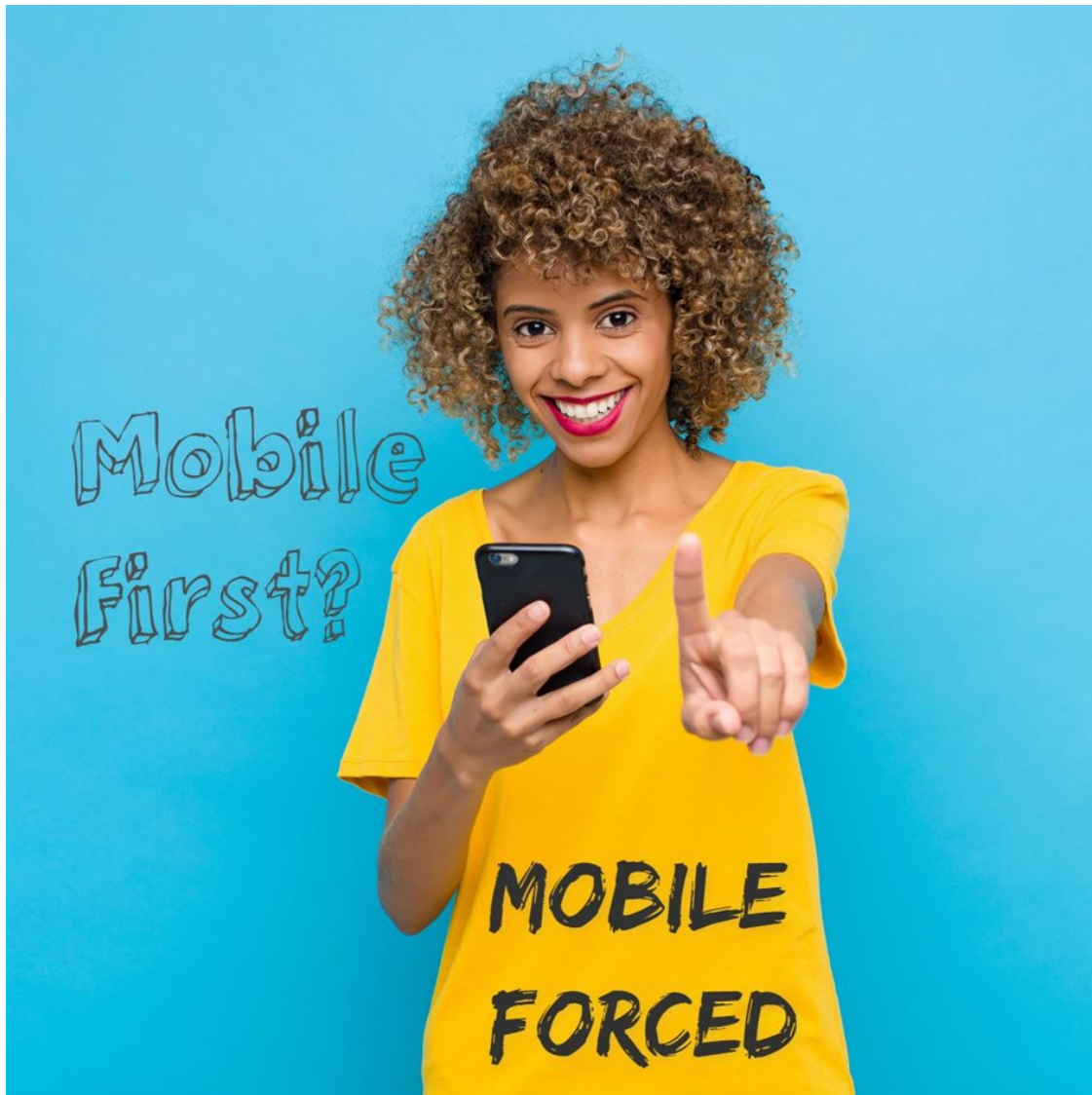


# From mobile first to mobile forced: What SA marketers need to know

Issued by [Mobitainment](#)

3 Mar 2021

South Africans became 'mobile forced' during lockdown. As marketers, when planning our mobile marketing campaigns, we need to learn how to overcome the challenges, leverage the trends and take advantage of the opportunities arising from this 'mobile forced' environment, by enabling the right mobile technology available to us. Let's unpack what the stats are telling us and showcase local solutions that became award-winning campaigns.



South Africa has always been called a 'mobile first' country. In other words, South Africans generally experience the internet on a mobile phone 'first' before they see it on a big screen on a desktop.

Since lockdown in March 2020, we have seen a new phenomenon emerge: South Africans have become 'mobile forced' because being locked down in their homes, their mobile phones have become their lifeline, connecting them to their loved ones and to what is happening in the world around them.

In turn, SA brands and marketers have also become 'mobile forced' as it became the best, dare I say only, way to reach out and talk to their customers.

It is one thing to know that you must communicate with your customers via their mobile phones, yet the question remains as to how we best leverage the challenges, trends and opportunities for mobile marketing in South Africa, while considering what we need to for the Protection of Information Act (PoPIA).

Let's unpack the answers to some of the most pertinent questions that arise around mobile marketing in South Africa today:

1. How can marketers overcome the challenge of airtime and data costs?
2. How to leverage the trend of instant messaging platforms like WhatsApp Business through chatbots?
3. How to take advantage of the opportunity of video by making it personal and engaging?

## Challenge: Cost of data and airtime?

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I believe the biggest challenge we have seen in the marketplace, which affects the use of mobile media and marketing, is the cost and availability of data, especially during these times.

For a while now, data could cost financially constrained South Africans 100 times more when purchased in small bundles, and during lockdown this issue has only escalated.

With [Covid-19 having changed the way we communicate](#): the more limited access to Wi-Fi at work, schools, community centres or in shopping malls, and the limitations and inconvenience of not being able to physically purchase more when needed, has led many South Africans to not have airtime or data when marketers need them to respond.

To overcome this challenge, let your brand sponsor your customers' engagement by reverse billing their costs. How?

### For web and apps:

Cloud-based technology allows us to eliminate the mobile data cost barrier by enabling the use of the telco 'reverse billing' model.

Basically, we create a mirror image of your site on a reverse billed IP address range (domain) and pull the content from your site to that page. Whomever you want to experience #datafree, can be sent the link to that domain rather than your original one.

It can work for apps, mobile websites and campaign sites. There are some limitations on certain website technologies, but it is currently available in SA across all the major networks, and on Airtel in Nigeria.

Obviously, the more we compress our site's images and videos, the less the brand will have to pay in reverse billed traffic costs. Using AI (artificial intelligence) compression technology, we can substantially decrease the size of your media files by up to 90% whilst not impacting the quality and load times – with the added benefit of allowing you to use more video on your website and improving your Google score and online sales.

### For USSD:

With millions of South Africans **not** on Smartphones, USSD is still a must! Yes, those \*120\* dial codes are still very popular. In fact, we just ran a campaign for a mobile survey on reverse billed web and USSD and 78% preferred dialing the USSD code. The reverse billed USSD codes starting with \*134\* have been in high demand during lockdown as the government and brands use it as a platform for essential communications and engagement. Furthermore, now, as we prepare for PoPIA's 1 July 2021 deadline, providing a 'free-to-consumer' USSD channel is a quick and convenient way to collect, refresh and augment data, consumer profiles and consent (opt-in) for communication.

### For SMS:

The past few years have shown us that having a reverse billed SMS short code as a call to action on your ad, where the consumer does not pay a cent to SMS the brand, generates much more response. We have seen an increase of up to six times the response rate, just because it doesn't need the consumer to have any airtime or data on their phones to send the SMS.

Nowadays, you should even reverse bill your SMS replies. Why? Because the PoPIA Act's Section 69 (direct marketing by means of unsolicited electronic communications) says that you have to offer an easy way to opt-out on each communication, that is free of charge! So, you can offer a reverse billed SMS reply, SMS short code or USSD code to dial to allow them to opt-out.

Two great examples of local award-winning campaigns that ran during lockdown are:

**NIVEA**

**LOVE KNOWS NO DISTANCE OR BOUNDARIES.**  
**#NIVEATakeExtraCare**

**OBJECTIVE**

As one of the world's best-loved personal care brands, NIVEA is all about care and community, even in the face of adversity. When the Covid-19 crisis hit, one of the hardest things was not being able to see vulnerable family and friends, especially elders.

**NIVEA SAW AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO SOME GOOD:**

- Advancing care and community
- Helping people connect

**WHILE DOING GOOD FOR THE BUSINESS:**

- Building NIVEA's brand awareness
- Developing NIVEA's opt-in database

**STRATEGY AND MECHANISM**

- A system of **FREE 1-MINUTE PHONE CALLS** allowed people to call their loved ones.
- Users dialed a **REVERSE-BILLED USSD LINE** and NIVEA sponsored the call.
- They were asked:
  - For some basic demographic **INFORMATION**
  - For **PERMISSION** to be added to NIVEA's communication database
  - To listen to a 20s **BRAND AWARENESS** message
- They could then **TALK FOR 1 MINUTE** absolutely free!

**MARKETING**

- We used a **COMBINATION** of:
  - social media ads on **FACEBOOK**,
  - **SOCIAL CARDS ON 24.COM** (Parent24, Channel24, and W24) and
  - **DIRECT MOBILE MARKETING VIA SMS.**
- Posts achieved a **REACH OF 1.2 MILLION FOR A BUDGET OF JUST R27 200!**
- A parallel **AWARENESS** campaign on the importance of handwashing achieved a reach of 3 million for a budget of R89 800.
- The real secret was **SHAREABILITY**:
  - When a person received a free call they also received an **INVITATION** to make their own free call.
  - Many people **SHARED THE OPPORTUNITY** without any prompting.
  - The campaign went **VIRAL** on the same day it launched!

**RESULTS**

**DAY 1:**  
**60 000 FREE CALLS**, connecting at least 120 000 South Africans.

**BY DAY 6:**  
**150 000 FREE CALLS** (500% OVER TARGET), connection 1/4 million people.

**THE COST PER CONSUMER ACTION WAS R0.31.**

**NIVEA'S DATABASE GREW BY 158 455 OPT-IN ENTRIES**

**90% OPT-IN RATE**

**THE COST OF NEW DATABASE ADDITIONS WAS R1.08.**

## NIVEA #TakeExtraCare

Connecting loved ones with a free minute call, without needing to use airtime was an essential service to maintain mental health.

Users dialed a USSD string with a loved one's phone number. The USSD system allowed for reverse billing: people could speak to their loved ones for one minute and NIVEA sponsored the call.

NIVEA provided 150,022 unique people with the ability to speak to a loved one, building a permission-based database of over 158,000 and getting over 300,000 South Africans to speak to each other in six days!

**Awards:** Gold Assegai Award 2020 – CRM Programmes, Bronze for Mobile Marketing (in collaboration with [Carat](#) and [The 13th Floor](#))

[View case study with video](#)





### **MyMomentum BabyYumYum Maternity Programme**

The MyMomentum BabyYumYum Maternity Programme is unique; personalised weekly content, reacts to how mommy is feeling with pro-active call, involves birthing buddy, providing tangible benefits (meal voucher, swag bag, home nurse visits), using the following multi-channel mobile centric platforms as 96% of the mommies were on their mobile phones:

- Personalised reverse billed SMS messaging
- Personalised wrap (mobile web-app like message)
- Mobile-first reverse billed web for mommy portal
- WhatsApp Business chatbot

**Awards:** Silver Assegai Award 2020 - CRM Programmes, Leader in Database and Analytics Innovation (in collaboration with [BabyYumYum](#) and [Shandon Business Solutions](#))

[View case study](#)

## **Trend: WhatsApp?**

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We monitor the trends in using WhatsApp carefully.

It was [reported in February 2021](#) that 97% of South African internet users are using chat apps, with 93% having used WhatsApp in the past month. These figures increased exponentially during lockdown. The market research firm [Kantar](#)

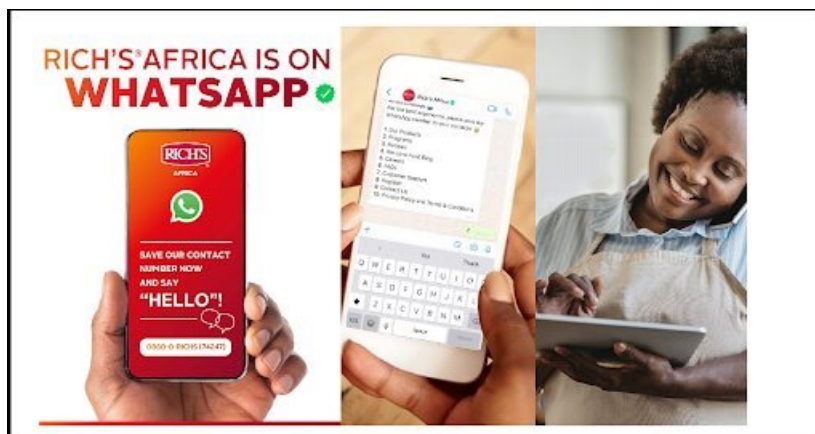
[conducted a survey in April 2020](#) finding that WhatsApp experienced the biggest increase across media channels, with a net 71% increase over the previous month. The usage of WhatsApp may be affected by the recent announcement of their planned new privacy policy, with users being fragmented across other chat platforms like Telegram and Signal, but we believe this to be marginal if at all.

It is critical in these times for businesses to proactively communicate with all customers, even those who haven't been in touch recently. A low-data chat platform, like WhatsApp, is still a powerful 'digital democratiser' for brands to remain in contact with their customers and to give feedback and get support.

However, you need to know how to leverage this channel with respect to your customer. We have found the use of a chatbot responding 24/7 to guide the conversation with the customer, allowing them to send and receive images, videos and documents, with extra help on hand by allowing them to break-out to an agent, very effective in various use cases like:

- providing a library of PDFs or documents for the customer's reference
- customer profiling and surveys
- competitions entry mechanics
- till slip verifications for proof of purchase
- even a store locator using the popular pin functionality in WhatsApp.

These award-winning case studies showcase how WhatsApp Business has brought tremendous social benefit to brands during lockdown:



### Rich's Africa WhatsApp chatbot

Rich's is a family-owned food company dedicated to inspiring possibilities. From cakes and icings to pizza, desserts and speciality toppings, their products are used in restaurants, hotels and bakeries around the world.

Rich's developed a WhatsApp chatbot with snackable, on-demand content at a low cost. A tech innovation with almost 12K lines of code, 10 resource files (DLLs), three platform integrations, 396 updatable products and recipes to share their content digitally during lockdown!

**Awards:** Mobile Marketing Association Smarties EMEA Customer Experience – Bronze Winner  
(<https://player.vimeo.com/video/482645002?api=1&autoplay=1> )

[View case study with video](#)



## Business and Arts South Africa Debut Programme

During lockdown, the recruitment of young artists for Business and Arts SA's Debut Youth Programme, seemed impossible. Until we leveraged mobile technology - a WhatsApp chatbot - resulting in increased inclusivity and accessibility, and 207% more, quality applicants in 25% of the time!

Through their strategic partnerships the programme assists artists with everything from ideation to venture implementation, all in their language of choice. They had to record a video and say 'Hi' to the WhatsApp Business chatbot to start the guided conversation to help them through their entry. Help was always at hand with FAQs and allowing them to 'breakout' and chat to a human.

**Awards:** Mobile Marketing Association Smarties SA Business Unusual Customer Experience – Bronze Winner

[View Case Study with video](#)

### WhatsApp Business chatbot demo



SCAN ME

To experience it for yourself, you can either:

- Scan the QR Code
- SMS your name to 32117 (R1/SMS), click on the link in the reply SMS and say Hi
- OR WhatsApp **087 152 0819** and say 'Hi'

## Opportunity: Video + data?

With a [reported 98% of South African Internet users watching videos online before lockdown](#), and the increased viewings on YouTube during lockdown, as [reported by the same Kantar survey in April 2020](#), it was found that YouTube experienced a net 70% increase as a media channel over the previous month before lockdown.

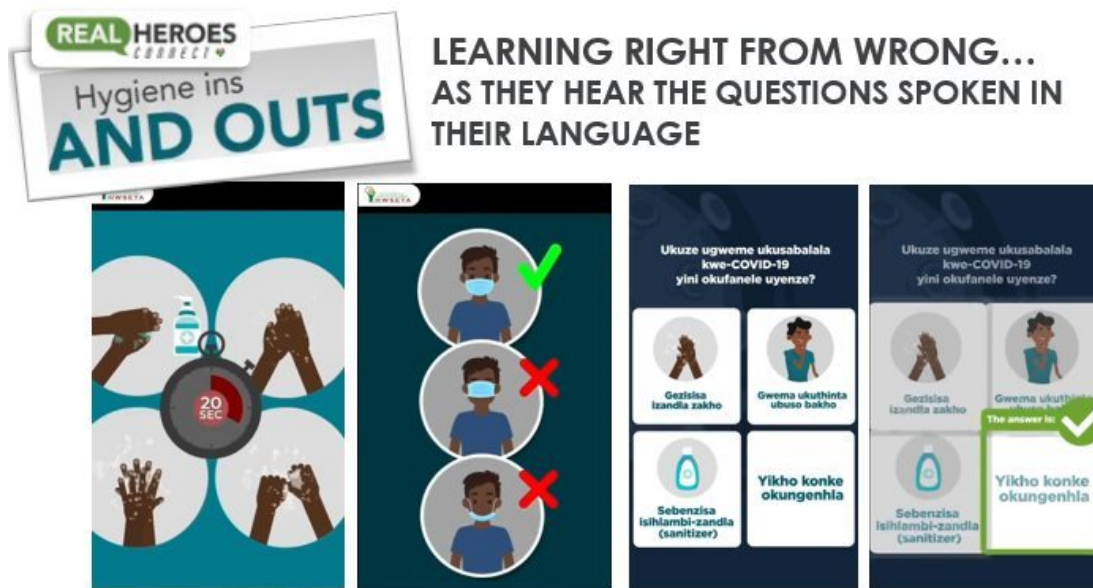
But the opportunity for marketers is in making the video engaging and relevant to the viewer. How? By combining video and data to create a personalised and/or interactive video experience.

**A personalised video** can include the viewer's name, embedded in the image of the video, as well as spoken in audio, together with personal information like policy details and amounts unique to them.

**An interactive video** allows the viewer to click on hotspot buttons in the video or enter personal info, which can then determine the course of the next scene of the video. This becomes extremely powerful for lead generation, as you educate your prospect, pre-qualify their interest and gather their contact details as well as permission to contact them, all within video.

These videos can be sent at key moments to drive customer engagement (welcome videos, loyalty programmes year in review, cross-sales and customer service) and are extremely useful to educate your customer and thank them for their time with a reward.

This is a great award-winning example of how interactive videos were used to educate South Africans about protecting themselves and others around Covid-19 – provided ‘data free’ to the consumer:



### Real Heroes Connect

Funded by the Health and Welfare Seta to educate SA on how to take action and flatten the Covid-19 curve, we created nine interactive mobile videos for the Real Heroes Connect Series: zero-rated, gamified, with in-video quiz voiced in four languages to transcend communication barriers.

**Awards:** Mobile Marketing Association Smarties SA: Mobile Video – Silver Winner, Business Unusual Brand Purpose – Silver Winner, Social Responsibility – Bronze Winner Assegai Awards 2020 – Leader in Craft Awards - Most Effective Use of Content

(In collaboration with [Talent Brand](#), [TTRO](#) and [Blue Magnet](#)).

[View case study with video](#)





## FedHealth 'Made For You'

In 2019, medical aid FedHealth launched their revolutionary new flexiFED medical aid packages. Although the changes were designed to give their customers more choice, flexibility and save them **big**, they just weren't understanding how it worked and were getting frustrated! So, they sent out an email and SMS, directly to each one, personally, with a video made just for them!

Fedhealth. Personalised video. Made for you, one member at a time.

Awards: Bookmark Awards 2020 - Bronze Best Use Of Data, Craft Bronze In Excellence In Software, Coding and Technical Innovation (In collaboration with [TCHM Marketing and Advertising](#))

[View case study](#)

## Top take-aways

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Here are our top three key take-aways to enable technology for this mobile forced audience to:

1. **Overcome the challenge of cost of airtime and data?** Reverse bill to sponsor the costs of your mobi-sites, apps, USSD, SMS short codes and SMS replies.
2. **Leverage the trend of instant messaging platforms like WhatsApp Business?** Use a chatbot to optimise your business communications.
3. **Take advantage of the opportunity of video?** Combine Video + data to create a personalised and interactive video experience that is engaging and collaborative.

## Meet Candice Goodman

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Candice Goodman was awarded the DMA's Direct Marketer of the Year in 2016 and is currently a non-executive board member of the Direct Marketing Association. She is also on the Education Committee of the IAB. Goodman headed Education at the Mobile Marketing Association of SA for over five years, and was on the MMA Advisory Board as chairperson, as well as the first Certified MMA Mobile Marketer in South Africa.

She founded mobile marketing technology enabler, Mobitainment, in 2006, winning multiple awards over the past 14 years. Mobitainment earned the coveted title of "#1 Technology Provider in Africa, #4 in EMEA, and #8 globally" from the MMA



Global in 2018.

## About Mobitainment

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Mobitainment is a mobile technology enabler, translating technical skill into business solutions and marketing results. Collaboration, integration, relevance and personalization are the keys to mobile marketing success, allowing marketers to build long-lasting, loyal relationships with these on-the-go consumers.

Our focus is to deliver happiness to our clients by offering dedicated care, service and expertise, so that you can deliver happiness to yours!



▪ **What What a successful Kasi campaign** 13 Dec 2023

▪ **From mobile first to mobile forced: What SA marketers need to know** 3 Mar 2021

▪ **Real Heroes Connect: A technology game-changer that will touch thousands of lives** 22 Jun 2020

▪ **Today's tech tips marketers can use to save the shopper money** 14 Oct 2019

▪ **Introducing the first-ever single-brand rewards programme in South Africa - Royco Rewards** 3 Dec 2018

### Mobitainment



Mobitainment is a Mobile Marketing technology enabler, translating technology into marketing results...  
Turning the mobile phone into the SELL phone!

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