



Boost Engagement Through
Cloud Communication
During Ramadan

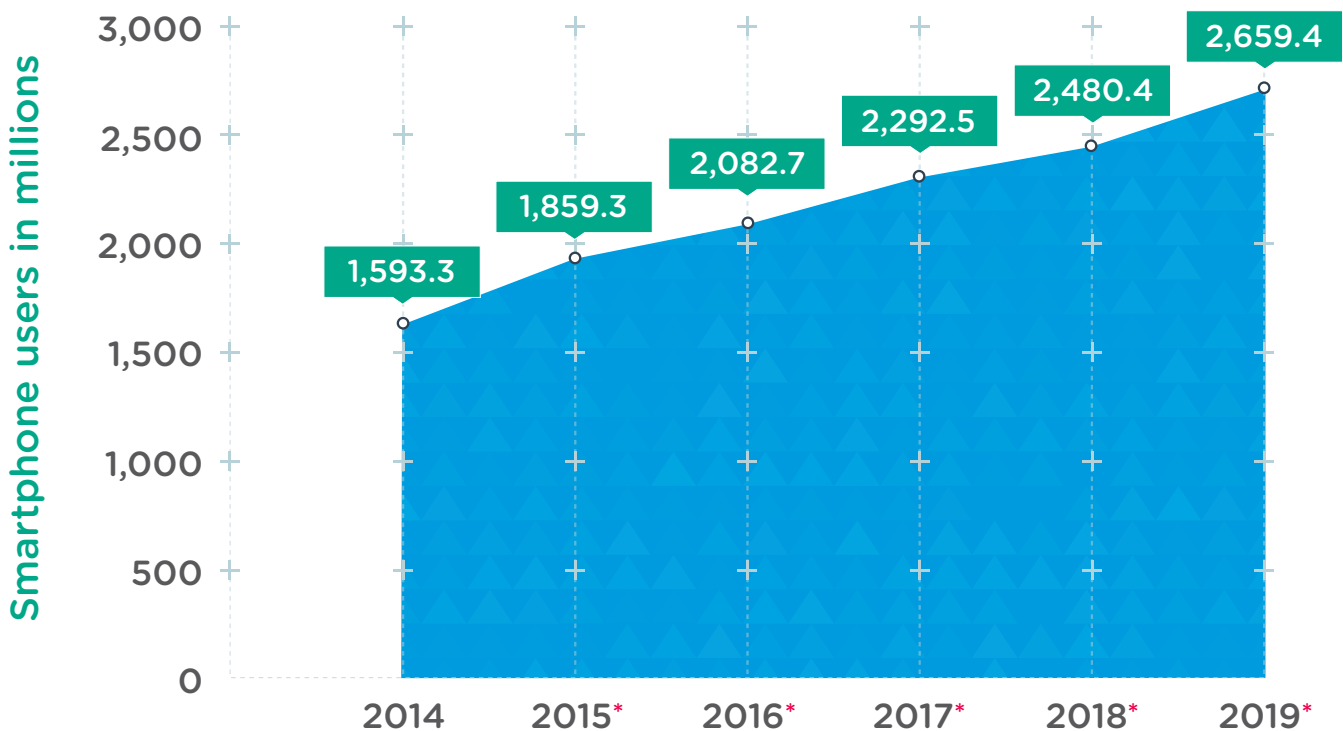
Chapter 1

Opportunities in Ramadan



According to a study, conducted by Forrester Research almost **74% of retailers use SMS** in their business and marketing strategies. Yes, this is the age of online retail, search engine ratings and online promotions. However, all these services have been condensed and accommodated under a single umbrella, Smartphones.

Smartphone usage has made technology a consistent presence. According to data from statista.com, the number of smartphone users around the world is rapidly increasing and it is projected that by **2018** the total number of smartphone users will reach **2.4 Billion**.



[The statistics point towards a smartphone oriented consumer base](#)



Keeping in view the market factors and usage statistics Unifonic has designed user friendly and scalable business solutions which can suit every business. We understand that's SMS is still the preferred mode of communication for every SMART businesses who use this powerful medium to reach their customers. With the latest innovations we have made SMS channel simpler and manageable.

Yes, the internet is the place to market and layout strategies but, what gets you even closer to the pulse of the customer? Unsurprisingly! The ubiquitous SMS is still the best and most guaranteed way to do that.

SMS Marketing in The Holy Month of Ramadan

Mobile Marketing

People are spending more time on their mobile phones than ever before. This new marketing world consists of terms like smartphones, SEO, mobile sites, geolocation, and social marketing. As marketers we have to understand these new types of consumers and how best to reach them. Technologies like geolocation and mobile tagging can help us better understand the mobile consumer and deliver more relevant messages.



What is the size of The Mobile Market?

of the world's

4 Billion

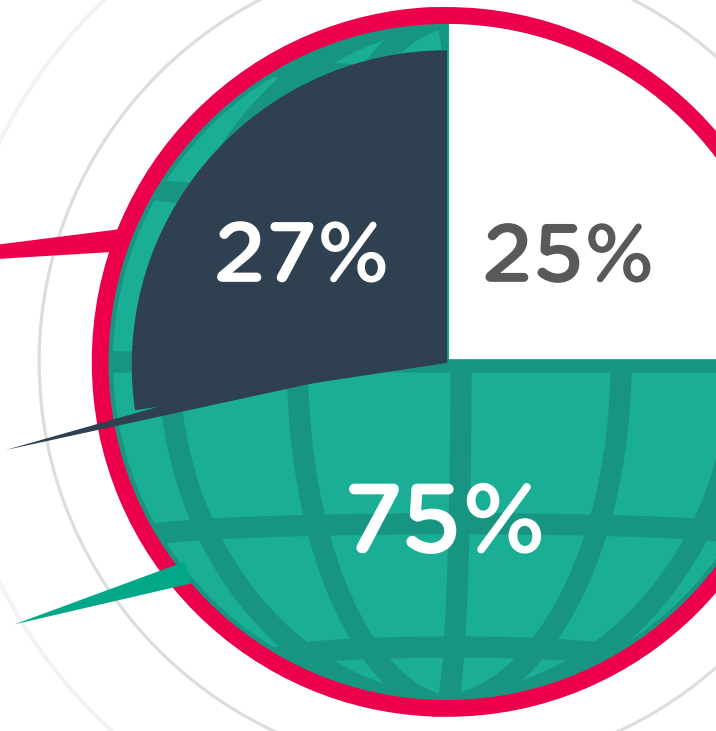
mobile phones in use,

1.08 Billion 

are smartphones and a whopping

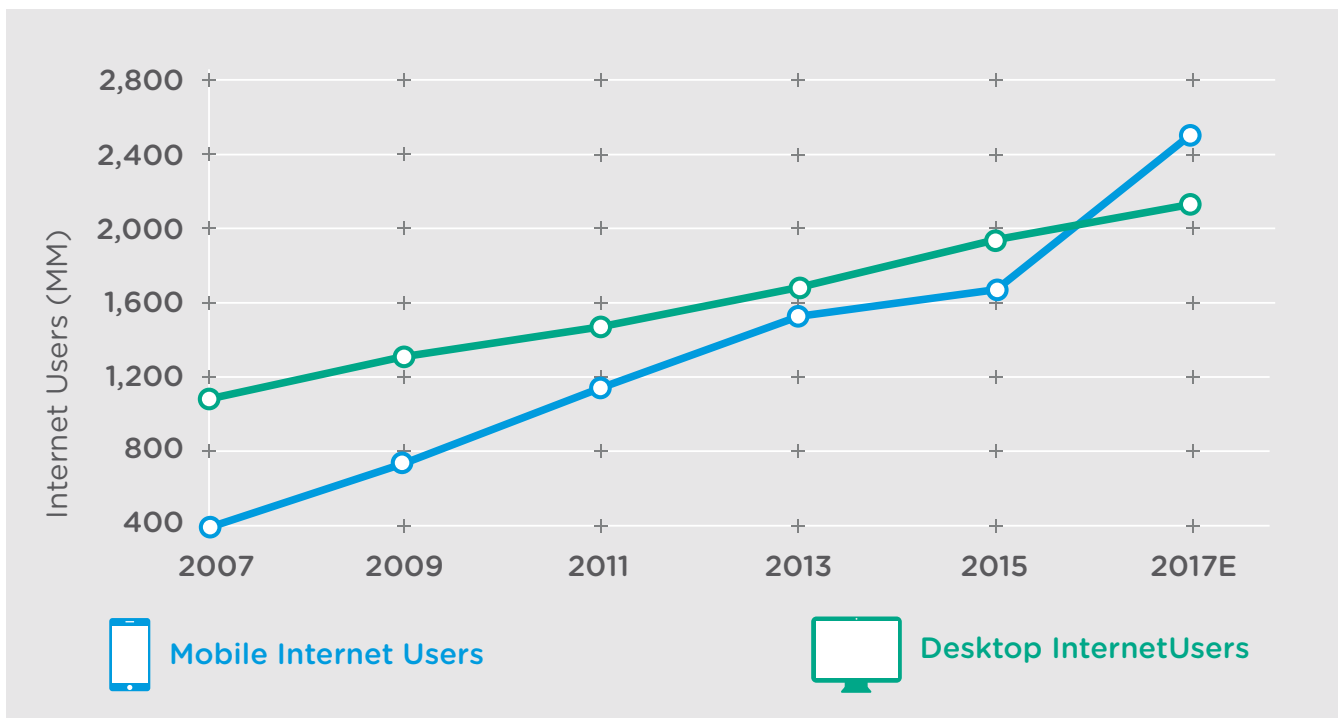
3.05 Billion 

are SMS enabled
(950 million are not SMS enabled)



How fast is

Mobile Internet Growing?





The holy month of Ramadan is fast approaching and this is the time business strategies can cater to the **1.6 Billion Muslims** around the world. If one wants to understand the power of SMS, a recent example would be an SMS system called Megakheir, being employed in Egypt. There are plans to expand the system into other Middle Eastern regions. **“Megakheir”** (literally translated as mega goodness) promotes a better collection of donations by NGOs during the month of Ramadan. Almost **95%** of all Muslim population of the region donates for charity (alms) during this month. The success and reach of this initiative can be measured by the donation figures from **2012 to 2013**. **Megakheir** managed to generate **\$250,000** in the beginning but this figure soon increased by **350% in 2013** when the figure reached a whopping **\$900,000**.

According to Amr Shady, CEO and co-founder of TA Telecom and the Megakheir initiative, **“We are now in the second half of Ramadan 2014 and already I’d say we’re close to having raised the same amount we did in 2013.”**

This is just the tip of the iceberg and there are endless opportunities. We have listed below a few excellent Ramadan business opportunities which can push your business to greater heights.

Food and catering businesses

Since Ramadan is a month of fasting, food based businesses can benefit from focused “Iftar” (Fast breaking time) deals.



Communicating with potential clients

The entire month of Ramadan sees consistent rounds of offers and deals. Use of internet and television sees an increase during this period. Businesses try to use the enhanced viewing durations and make increased efforts to reach their customers through traditional advertising. Although data on Television usage varies, it is unanimously accepted that Cell phone and particularly smartphone usage sees a tremendous increase. Unaffected by external factors, cell phones enable direct linkage between businesses and customers. While traditional businesses focus on television and internet, your business can acquire an inherent advantage by choosing the unconventional method- Cell phones to connect to customers.

A small hat tip here is that marketing strategies which can focus on social good and charity can make a greater impact.

Choosing the best time to connect

“Iftar” and “Suhoor” becomes an excellent time to connect with audiences. It is during these hours that SMS driven campaigns succeed the most in Ramadan. These are the times for discussions and communication and when users are most relaxed. These times also coincide with discussion on possible purchase and decisions on major purchases are taken with the opinion of the family. During these hours, consumers are normally present with friends or family members and any marketing communication received during this time may lead to discussions with an extended group potentially maximizing the impact.





Making an Impression

During the last ten days, many Muslims give their “Zakat” and “alms”. Money transfers and SMS donation systems during this period are one of the best services that can be offered by any telecommunication company as they provided the much needed convenience. Religious programs and charity initiatives during this period help in shaping a positive image of a brand. Sponsoring religious programs and marketing that focus on the holiness and importance of the month tend to succeed more. Content drives during this month are all about social responsibility and doing good.

Higher Purchase budgets for Ramadan and Eid

Since Ramadan is immediately followed by the celebrations of Eid, the apparel industry can gain a strong foothold by marketing for the predicted shopping spree that is to be expected in the end days of Ramadan. . In culturally rich countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkey, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Yemen, Ethiopia, Indonesia, India, Nigeria, Morocco, Pakistan etc. Special Eid offers and marketing strategies are used depending upon the local culture and traditions of the country. Eid marketing is given top priority during the last two weeks of Ramadan because stores all over are expecting an onslaught of customers during this period. Each country has its own set of expectations from businesses during this time of the month.

If you really want to stand out from the competition, perhaps this Ramadan, you can use SMS marketing strategies in inventive and appealing ways. Remember, **SMS marketing channels** have an open rate of **98% for SMS** as opposed to just **22% for emails**. You can't go wrong with bulk SMS marketing strategies.



Connecting with Mobile Customers

By the end of 2013, there will be more mobile devices on earth than people - cisco, 2013

More people in the U.S. access the web

Via Mobile Devices

than via wireline computers

Got an app for that?



72%

of consumers have a more positive view of a company if it provides a mobile customer service app.

The Mobile Consumer



66%

of consumers now use their smart-phone to make purchase.

Pew Research

50%

have used mobile devices to search for products & services online.

Pew Research

72%

Percentage of generation Y consumers that own a smartphone..

Forrester



Search, Social, Sales

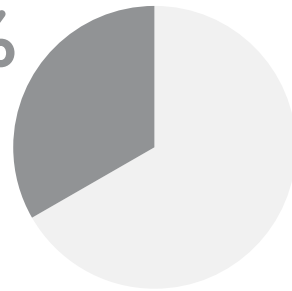


25%



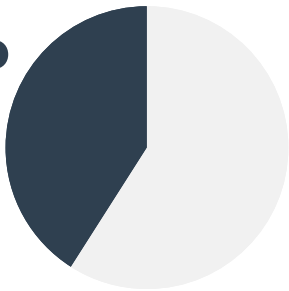
Companies that current have a mobile customer service strategy in place
International Customer Magnet Institute.

33%



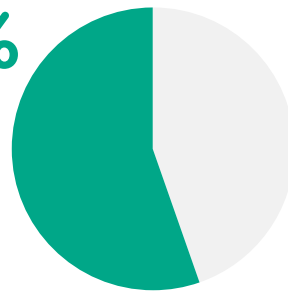
Companies the planning stages of developing a mobile customer service strategy.

40%



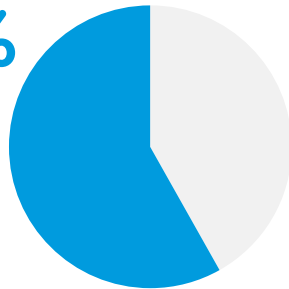
Consumers that will go to a competitors site following a bad mobile experience
Compuware

55%



Companies that said their mobile customers expect the same level of service from mobile as they receive on other channels

57%

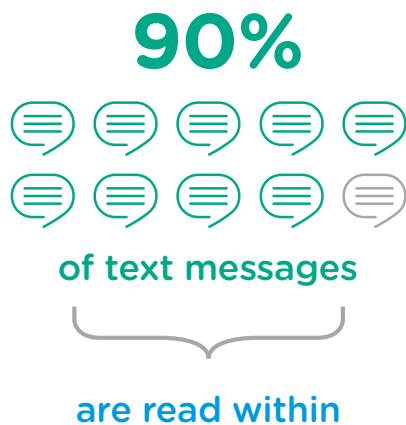


Consumers that say they will not recommend a business with a poorly designed mobile site
Compuware



Chapter 2

Highlighting Your Product



SMS stands for “short message service”, a reminder for businesses about the power of short but targeted messages. Highlighting your product via SMS is a popular strategy because of the sheer immediacy of the response. **90% of text messages** are read within the first **three minutes of receiving it** and as far marketing goes; it doesn’t get any faster than that!

However, to avail the full potential of SMS marketing, it is important to get it just right. Importantly, a few common and well known mistakes annoy customers and end up causing trouble for a company rather than generating any sales. There is no universal marketing strategy that can be applied to all kinds of products and businesses, however by adhering to the tips listed below; SMS marketing can be made easy for the customer and businesses alike.

Clear Incentive and Direction

Providing incentives to opt-in and to receive clear information regarding a product goes a long way in ensuring a customer actually responds. Incentives can convert viewers into subscribers and nothing gets it done faster than SMS marketing. If you offer exciting packages, showcase your product, offer VIP memberships and discounts, you can achieve a very high opt-in rate solely with SMS marketing as your marketing medium.

Just like emails, if an SMS requires a response, disclaimers need to be put in place to tell the consumer about any potential data charges. Short keywords and the overall compliance language need to be crystal clear to avoid any hidden charges to the customer causing unpleasant reactions.



SMS Marketing Objectives and Overall Business Goals **are in Alignment**

It's very important to have a strategy that works well with other aspects of your marketing approach. **COCA COLA** spends **70%** of their **mobile advertising budget** on a **carefully crafted SMS strategy**.

Why would one of the largest brands in the world opt for SMS marketing?

There is no mode of business-to-customer communication that is more on point, while **90% of texts** are read within **three minutes**, **98%** are definitely opened. SMS based Call to actions need to be more organized, part of a larger, systematized marketing plan rather than an isolated piece of puzzle that doesn't fit anywhere.

A classic example of this scenario is using text messages as a text CTA to redirect customers to a website and while this might generate temporary traffic, it does little to no good for highlighting your product in the long haul.

The best part about targeted metadata is the product specification and lack of confusion. Your customer joins a list and even that one person becomes a channel of marketing every time they share or discuss your product via social networks.

Recurring **and One-Time Texts**

Just how many messages should be sent out weekly, monthly? There is a very fine line between pestering your customer and keeping them informed and updated. Too many reminders or promotions can annoy a subscriber into opting out. Keeping your SMS short and concise (**160 character in English or 70 character in Arabic at the most**) is also an important factor in keeping your audience engaged. Too much text or too many texts are both bad for a business.

However, at the end of the day, there is no "one size fits all" idea when it comes to these strategies. Sometimes one strategy can work for a business while being a complete disaster for another. These are general tips and not extensive guidelines on which your entire marketing strategy can be based.



Monetary and Non-Monetary Incentives

Yes, monetary incentives can get viewers to opt-in faster than you can say “opt-in”, but it is definitely not the only way. These incentives generate higher traffic but it is not a compulsion to offer such benefits and you can leverage non-monetary incentives just as well. Here are a few examples, A small hat tip here is that marketing strategies which can focus on social good and charity can make a greater impact.

- You can offer a potential customer personalization with phrases like “We will keep you updated on your favorite items.” or “You will be informed as soon as the product is back in stock.” Personalization makes your customer feel special and they know that you will keep them in the loop and this highlights your products and customer service.
- Reminders are an excellent way to accommodate your customer more. By telling them about the progress of their delivery or shipment, you can keep the customer engaged. Alternatively, businesses can keep customers engaged by informing them about health benefits and general freebies, these are two small examples of tricks to ensure dedicated consumer attention.
- Special and/or early access to a facility can help you gain consumer loyalty
- Make your consumer feel special and they will never think of going back to your competition. For example you can offer them better services and/or packages or two services/products in the price of one.



- Freebies and samples are effective tools of establishing a stable consumer relationship and loyalty towards a brand or business. A customer registered for the SMS Service or SMS VIP can feel privileged if he is provided benefits like discounts, promo codes and exclusive free sampling. The ideas need not be limited to sellers of goods only. Service providers can also benefit from the medium. Banks can push for cash backs or discounts on use of their credit/debit cards and consultancies/ fitness clubs/ salons etc. can provide exclusive free minutes or discount packages on their services.

Discounts however are just one of a million marketing tools and many businesses are not up for offering discounts and they are doing just fine in the market by following different tactics. In case there are queries or confusions on your ideal SMS marketing strategy, getting in touch with an expert could be of help.



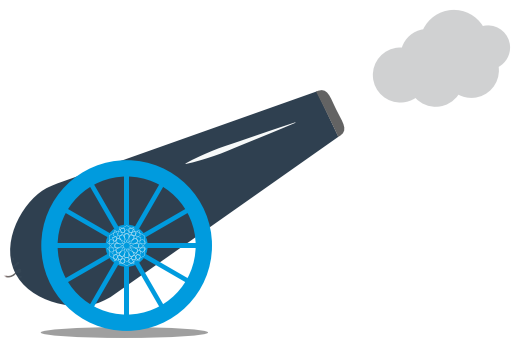
Chapter 3

Marketing Channels Used During Ramadan

The Importance of Ramadan marketing strategies

In countries like Saudi Arabia and many other Middle Eastern states, Ramadan is the month of fasting and abstinence and is practiced in a more traditional Islamic manner. But, this is not consistent; many other countries with Muslim populations like Malaysia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, China etc. have their own cultural flavors thrown into the mix. While the overall practice of fasting, prayer and abstinence remains consistent, the “celebratory aspect”, traditions and eating habits differ greatly. However, any business worth its salt will be focusing on the Muslim population of the world during this time of the year. The lack of physical intake and also abstinence as a whole, demands a very special kind of promotion that must be tailor-made for followers of Islam. Every year, brands rise to the occasion by incorporating Islamic symbols and the ideology of Ramadan into their marketing campaigns to cater to Muslims.

Marketing Channels Used in Ramadan



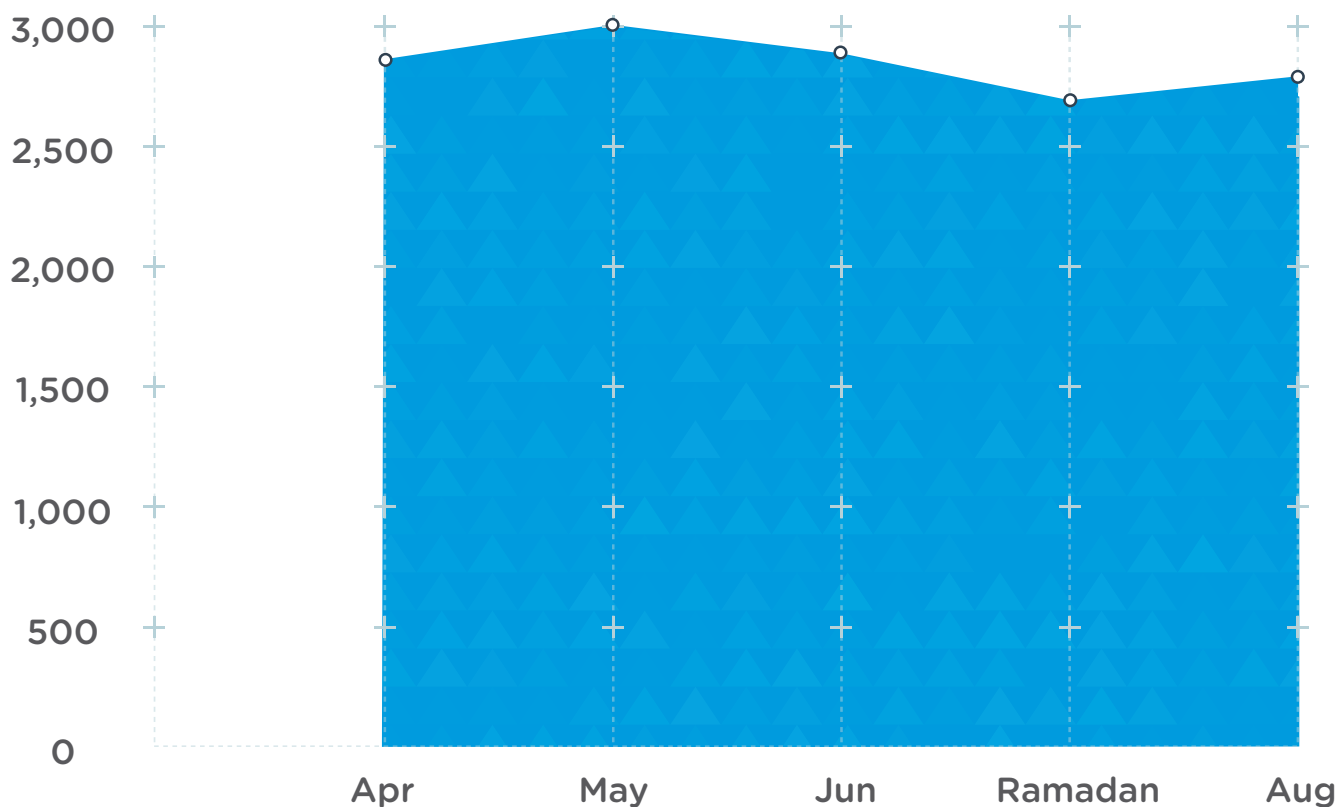
Marketing practices in Ramadan are steeped in a lot of myths. There are assumptions regarding how the Muslim consumers are respond to information output and media. Some of the commonly used channels during the holy month are enumerated below, along with statistical information about their feasibility.



Television Adverts

There is a general misconception regarding television viewing in Ramadan. Many Businesses spend more than **65%** of their advertising budgets on television adverts during the holy month. In the last two years alone, there have been massive spikes in television adverts because the general idea is that television viewing increases during this month. When in reality, it is not completely true and the trend fluctuates.

[According to Google industry perspectives the following chart shows that television viewing actually drops during Ramadan.](#)



According to Ipsos research, TV viewership during the Ramadan of **2013 and 2014** remained consistent. In fact, due to the change in viewing hours there was a decrease in the usual average.

Now that we have separated fact from fiction let's move on to why such huge chunks of budget is taken up during this month. Advertising and branding costs are a **150%** higher during the month of Ramadan than any other month of the year.

Is this the best use of an advertising budget?

Debatable and most probably not! But, let's move on to other channels of marketing.



Mobile Marketing during Ramadan

According to current statistics, the target audience in UAE and Saudi Arabia spend **73%** of their total screen time online during the month of Ramadan. Mobile usage takes up almost **35%** of this screen time.

Saudi Arabia has the second highest figure for “time spent on a mobile device” and more than **90%** of the country’s population is on their smartphone while watching television.

Another interesting factor to notice here is that during Ramadan, mobile advert engagement spikes by **10%** and even click through rates see an increase of **33%**.

Television is popular but the statistics show that any smart business shouldn’t focus on television adverts alone to get their product across. Internet usage on smartphones has seen a phenomenal growth rate in the MENA.

Brands and businesses are increasingly trying to engage their audience through their cellular devices in the month of Ramadan and try to continue this relation beyond this period.



Mobile isn't coming soon It's already here

In many countries, consumers use mobile devices as their primary access point for social networks, and the US is quickly catching up.

250%



Mobile page views on LinkedIn are up 250% in 2013

50%↑



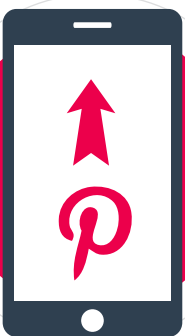
More than half of Youtube views come from mobile devices

2015



Global shipments of tablets exceeded personal computers in 2015

60x



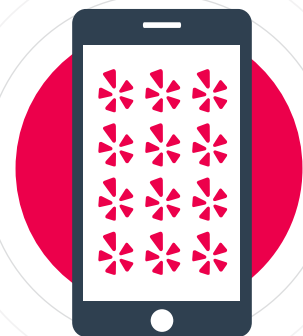
Mobile Pinterest usage increased 60X last year.

79%



Mobile Twitter users 79% more likely to be on Twitter several times a day.

59%



59% of Yelp searches come from mobile.



Mobile Users Share twice as Often

Mobile users share content more often than desktop users, so they can extend content's reach while boosting engagement.

SMS and MMS bulk marketing strategies have reached new heights of success during the month of Ramadan, due to the excessive recorded usage of mobile devices. Not only are these strategies cheaper, they are far more successful in generating reviews, customers and traffic.

Content Marketing

The phrase "Content is KING" should be at the core of every marketing strategy. Viewers and subscribers now are perennially on the lookout for something of "value". If you add great value to your product, it drastically improves your image, rating and revenue. Marketing has become more "data-driven" than ever before. Consumers like to be informed, which explains why reviews and product details drastically increase the chances of a product's selling capacity.

Everything from PPC (Pay per Click) to Email marketing is driven by good content. If your content doesn't stand out and make a statement right from the get-go, be assured, it's going to be delegated to the trash folder or marked as spam (consumers can be mean that way)!



Chapter 4

SMS and Voice Effectiveness



And the Winner is?

It is not easy to draw a simple conclusion about which among the two is the better approach.

Do voice messages generate more leads and traffic as opposed to SMS strategies?

The answer cannot be a simple “YES” or “NO” because the effectiveness of both resources have shown different results in different markets. While in most developed countries, SMS strategies were successful based on their immediacy and lack of detail, effectiveness of Voice messages depended greatly on the listener’s patience and capacity to listen to the voice message till the end. More than **10%** got bored before the shortest of voice messages ended and never got to the end. While the **160 odd characters** of an SMS were too short and to the point to ignore. Many consumers in the developed regions of the world were not so keen on voice messages.

Similarly in developing countries where the illiteracy rate is much higher, a larger market was tapped by voice messages. Due to this tool a whole market was opened up to promotion and advertising that could not be reached with [SMS marketing](#).

For effective targeting, promotions which demand an immediate or urgent response should be delivered via SMS. But when product or service promotions are involved, visual and audio content adds personalization and THAT makes a huge difference. Many health and fitness niches have found SMS marketing to be more fruitful when conducting researches and surveys as opposed to voice messaging. While for instructions, products and reviews that might consist of lengthy text content, consumers preferred voice messaging.



How cell owners prefer to be contacted

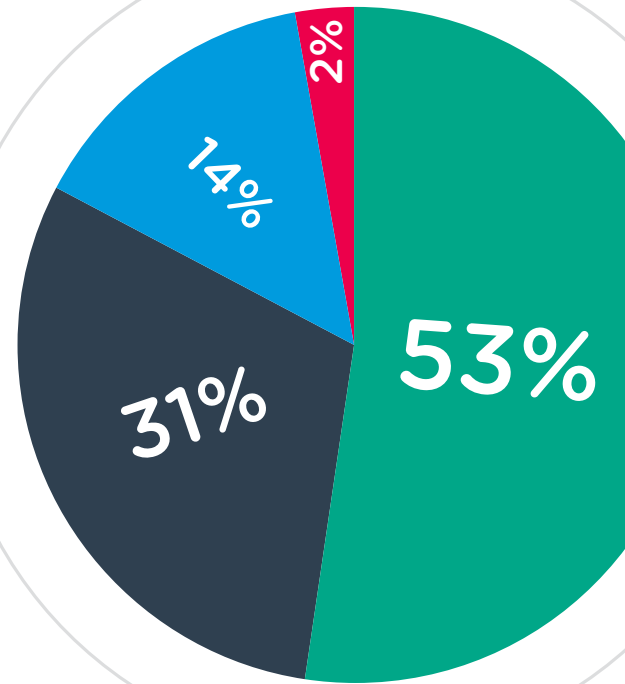
based on adult cell phone owners who use text messaging

Call

Text

It depends

Don't know/refuse



Source: The Pew Resource Center's Internet & American Life Project, April 26 - May 22, 2011. Spring Tracking Survey. n-2-277 adult internet users age 18 and older, including 755 cell phone interview. interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.



Chapter 5

Fun Practices that Work

Fun Facts about Mobile Usage and Us

Before we delve into the details of how to make an SMS marketing strategy that is both creative and produces great results, let us study some important facts that can aid any marketer in making a kick-ass [SMS marketing strategy](#).

150times

14hrs

5%opt-out rate

70%people

10times

22%of the time

90seconds

- On an average a person looks at their mobile **150 times** in a day!
- Smartphone Users have their mobile devices within an arm's reach for **14 hours** in a day.
- While the email listings have a higher drop-out rate, SMS marketing campaigns face a less than **5% opt-out rate**.
- More than **70% people** prefer mobile coupons to other options.
- SMS coupons have a higher rate of being redeemed, almost **10 times** more than that of mail or newspaper coupons.
- SMS coupons are shared with at least one social media friend or connection **22% of the time**.
- The response time for an SMS is much lower, with the average user taking only **90 seconds** to respond.

[In light of these stats, it comes as no surprise that more and more marketers are trying to tap the deep pool of SMS based marketing.](#)





75%

of people prefer receiving ads via SMS. SMS is the most effective marketing medium for sparking consumer action.

15%

of people prefer receiving ads via mobile internet.

10%

of people prefer receiving ads via mobile apps.



83%

of people receiving mobile coupons would like 2 messages per month.



The Average Response Time



90 SEC

for a text message.



2.5 Days

for an email.





Customer Service 101

Text/SMS Short Message Service

Engagement rates with SMS messages are **6-8 time higher** than those of proactive email communications.

Lack of Adoption
80% of consumers report that they **have not been texted** by their favourite brands




Did You Know

SMS is used regularly by 75% of all Americans.



Start offering customer service via SMS

Adding SMS as customer service channel expands your customers' options to include a channel that doesn't require mobile data.


 **The Best Solution** integrate and strategically coordinate your messaging channels. For example, whether you communicate via SMS or email may vary based on topic, length or time of day.

Load Time Abandonment
40% of consumers will abandon a mobile website link in a text if it take **more than 3 seconds** to load, and 47% expect it to load within just 2 seconds.



Test links for load-time on all types of mobile devices.

The average click-through rate for links included in SMS messages is 19% compared to 4.2% for email.

 A 1 second delay in loading (or 3 seconds of waiting) decreases customer satisfaction by around 16%.



Too Many Texts

More Americans receive unwanted text messages (68%) than eat breakfast (60%).



If clients haven't opted-in, you can't text them.

Make sure you're communicating with clients via their preferred channels. doesn't require mobile data.

Did You Know

Typically, SMS messages should not be sent after 9 PM or before 11 Am.



The Best Solution

Proper analytics are the key in making improvements to SMS marketing promotions; businesses should pay particular attention to opt-out rates.





Strategies that are **Game Changers**

We have established that SMS marketing is a huge resource and it can do wonders for a business. Now let us discuss what is important in formulating these strategies and which of these can be a game changer for any business involved.

Above-and-**Beyond Value**

SMS marketing can provide greater value by the utilization of approaches like "positive disruption." Exclusive offers give the consumer a sense of importance and chances are this "positive disruption" will give higher opt-in rates. It is important to avoid repetition. A golden rule is, never send similar content. If the information can be found elsewhere in your promotions, it won't create the sense of exclusivity for your consumer. Consumers are religiously connected to their mobile devices and SMS promotion should mirror that sentiment.

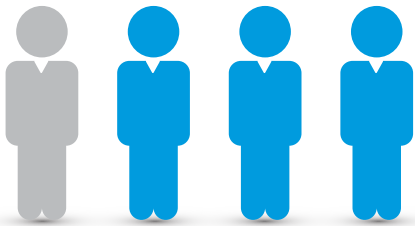
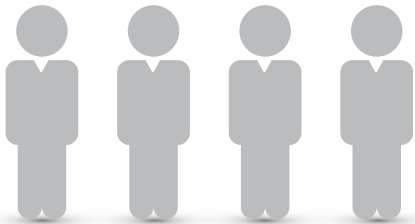
What are you **saying?**

Marketers are often so concerned with what they want from consumers and how they should react, that there is no actual conversation between the business and the consumer. So it is important to step back and consider what the consumers' needs from the business. It is the knowledge of these needs and the questions that follow where an expert team can make a lot of difference. A few such queries are- What kind of content does the consumer look forward to? What should be avoided in messages? What kind of information would the consumer prefer? Are you boring the consumer with irrelevant data? These are important questions and only the consumer can answer them.





15%



25%



Let us consider this example, almost **15%** of consumers prefer receiving financial alerts via SMS and around **25%** consumers prefer receiving travel alerts. This kind of data keeps a marketer close to the pulse of the consumer.

Don't disturb the Consumer

No one likes to be woken up in the middle of the night for anything short of an emergency. The best way to murder your own SMS strategy is by sending promotional messages at odd hours. It is advisable to not send any kind of SMS after **9 PM** and before **11 AM** to avoid annoying your consumers. To truly know your consumer, try to get them to provide you a time period of the day and preferred hour for sending the promotion because it reflects that you care for your consumer and would prefer not to disturb them. [This is just one more reason why so many businesses opt for expert teams that excel in cloud communications.](#)

Timing is everything!

Consumers can be very difficult and stubborn when it comes to their needs and demands. This explains why quick responses and timing of those responses can make a world of difference. If you're not at the top of your game, the consumer will get their information from elsewhere (most likely your competition). Consumers expect an answer to their query on their terms, it doesn't matter why you're not available, simply that you aren't makes the difference. Better response times have been appreciated for small and large-scale businesses alike. So when a query pops up, respond, fast!



Value first

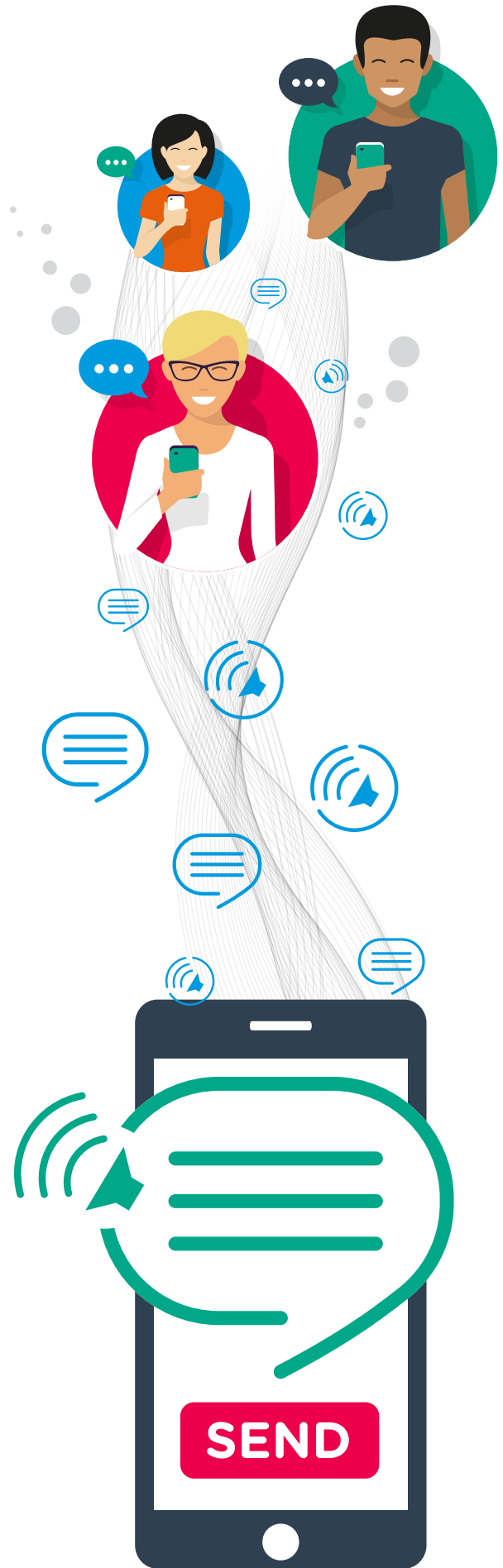
In SMS marketing your major focus should always be providing value first and capturing data second. Get to know your customers before you send them requests related to their preferred communication hours and other such data. Try to show them where they benefit before where you do. Data collection should be conducted slowly and should be combined with high-value messages to avoid irking the consumer.

Personalization

Once you have access to data based on a person's browsing patterns and what kind of products they are searching more often, you can personalize your SMS strategy for them. If a person likes to browse through endless collections of shoes, may be they would be more interested in the discounts you are offering on your next sale. Perhaps they can be invited to an exclusive offer because you know they love shoes so much. This kind of personalization maintains a high level of engagement from your consumers.

Tailor the Mobile Experience for Mutual benefit

When setting up an SMS strategy, try to optimize the consumer experience by linking to mobile sites, preferably social media sites. [If you can't manage it yourself, get it done by an expert but don't make your consumers work; avoid sending anything that might require emails, retrievals or printing.](#) If information is required, social logins are the best route because not only do consumers prefer that but this gives you access to a world of data that can aid your understanding of the consumer.



All these techniques and data can be best utilized with a provider that understands cloud communications and how these strategies are to be worked and planned out. So choose a provider that can provide and manage a system for you that is easy to understand and access. Getting in touch with a professional business SMS Solutions provider is your gateway to the world of personalized consumer communication.

This Ramadan you have already taken the right step by deciding to venture to personalized consumer engagement. Do not stop now and take the plunge to the simple but highly effective mode of mobile phone based personalized marketing to maximize your business and take it to greater heights.





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