

Smartphones are converging on all LSMs

By [Andre Steenekamp](#)

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Cheap smartphones are reshaping consumer behaviour in South Africa faster than many marketers realise. Here's how to position your brand at the forefront of the trend and create effective platforms for engaging with mobile customers.

Most marketers understand that their customers in the higher band of the Living Standards Measure (LSM) are digitally enabled and mostly mobile in their behaviour. But fewer don't yet quite appreciate how quickly smart devices that cost R500 or less are sparking a smartphone revolution among people who were previously too poor to access the internet.

Thanks to entry-level Android smartphones and tablets from MTN, Vodacom and other providers, we're seeing smart mobile devices used at nearly every level of the market. Increasingly, a digital customer could as likely be an unemployed youth in a township as a professional working in Sandton. This represents an exciting intersection of opportunity for mobile-savvy brands.



Image via [123RF](#)

Here are a few tips about using this mobile environment to engage your diverse base of customers in an optimal manner.

1. Segment your customer base, smartly

Now that your customers across the LSM spectrum are using similar devices to access digital services, you can gain some back-end efficiencies and manage them using similar platforms. But, at the same time, you should still segment your customer base wisely and use the best tools and channels to reach different segments.

For example, if you're an FMCG company addressing discerning, health-conscious middle-class customers with tinned salmon and poorer consumers with canned sardines, tailor your engagements appropriately. A witty Tumblr blog inviting recipes and a flashy microsite could be a great way to speak to richer consumers, while a campaign targeting *Soccer Laduma's* Facebook and Twitter following could work well for the lower end of the LSM.

2. Remember to optimise the customer journey for a multi-device world

For higher-end consumers, you can probably still assume that they have some access to a traditional desktop or notebook during working hours as well as their smartphone and perhaps even a tablet. They'll be flitting between these devices to do different tasks and use them at different times of the day - so optimise your customer journey appropriately.

Poorer consumers will probably have only their smartphones as their gateway to digital services.

For example:

- Follow users at different times of the day - run retargeting to desktop and tablet devices between 7am and 5pm, run remarketing to mobile users in the evenings between 5pm and 11pm.
- Target desktop users with ads for your mobile apps.
- Engage users on your desktop site after they've been exposed to mobile ads.

- Retarget users with relevant, conversion-focused ads after they've visited your web site.

3. ...But make it easy for customers to complete interactions and transactions from a smart device

Many brands assume that consumers will go to a desktop to fill in a form or complete a complex search, but customers increasingly want to do everything on their mobile devices.

All too often, mobile sites are too slow and clunky for customers to complete a task, with the result that they drop off and never get around to completing an interaction.

What's more, many customers don't want to use work PCs for personal tasks - or even aren't allowed to because of corporate policies - so they prefer to use their smartphones instead. You'll lose fewer customers if they don't need to, for example, switch to a PC to easily book a test drive with your car dealership.

4. Embrace programmatic buying

When you're targeting the low-end of the market, where margins are low and volume is important, you need to contain customer acquisition costs while maximising reach and frequency. Programmatic buying for mobile is the perfect tool for reaching this market. It's smart and targeted, yet it's also affordable and flexible. Programmatic automates media buying to make it more cost and time effective to place targeted ads across multiple channels, allowing the marketer to get more bang for his or her buck.

5. Social and messaging platforms offer great ROI for mobile marketing

The adoption rate of social media platforms and mobile messaging is high in South Africa across all demographics. Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp have all really taken off in the lower end of the market - they're the natural successors to SMS. They're quick, efficient, and relatively bandwidth-friendly (and hence, cheap to use).

Consumers are deeply engaged in these environments, making them a great place to interact with your audience. The owners of these platforms also offer some affordable and flexible advertising solutions with great targeting capabilities.

6. You still need a .mobi site

Responsive Web design is all the rage today, but we believe that the .mobi site still has a role to play. While websites can

claim to be responsive and viewable on a mobile device, there is no keyboard and mouse, so a site primarily designed for a desktop might be clumsy to navigate on a mobile device. Create a user experience that makes sense for the devices your customers use (see point 3.)

ABOUT ANDRE STEENEKAMP

As CEO of 25AM, Andre Steenekamp leads the company's expansion in South Africa's fast-growing digital marketing and advertising space. His 25-year career has seen him work in a range of sales, marketing and management positions for leading traditional and digital publishers and agencies. Steenekamp was appointed to his current role following the acquisition of a 50%-stake in Acceleration Media by Times Media Limited.

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