

Location, location, mobile - ignore this opportunity at your peril

 By [Warren Mbss](#)

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Africa holds unlimited potential for brands that value the power of strategic mobile marketing: With its 620 million mobile connections, Africa surpassed Latin America in September this year to become the second largest mobile market after Asia Pacific. I recently attended the [ad:tech New York Digital Marketing Conference](#) and here are some insights from the global event and how local marketers can apply them to Africa's rapidly growing mobile audience.

The recurring theme of the ad:tech event was undoubtedly the focus on the potential presented by the rise of so-called SoLoMo marketing - the acronym for Social, Local & Mobile marketing. This takes advantage of the ability to reach a clearly identified and connected demographic in a manner that few other marketing channels can match.

This is best demonstrated in the retail sector, with case studies highlighting that the smartphone has become an indispensable tool for US shoppers. One study indicated that two-thirds of shoppers use their smartphones to compare prices, while more than half of the audience use their phones to locate a store or check for discounts and special deals.

Location-based information

And, while these user patterns reflect the extent to which buying power and decision-making now lie squarely with the consumer, the reliance on location-based information offers an equally compelling marketing opportunity.

The opportunity for marketers in South Africa, and in Africa to a similar extent, lies in the tremendous growth of mobile penetration - particularly the smartphone.

This view is supported by figures presented by Vodacom, MXit and Google at this year's Mobile Media Mind Blast Conference, which showed that mobile is the primary screen in developing markets. Similar stats from Nielsen show that more South Africans use mobile phones (29 million) than radio (28 million), TV (27 million) or personal computers (6 million).

While smartphones may currently only account for about 15% of SA's mobile subscribers, their usage patterns closely mimic those of users in developed nations. Research by Google shows that 81% of SA smartphone owners use their smartphones in a store, and 79% in restaurants.

Lessons for marketers

Based on this research and international trends, the lesson that marketers should be applying in their campaigns is to lay greater emphasis on the opportunities that exist in location-based marketing.

Success is obviously still heavily dependent on using a comprehensive and accurate marketing database, but marketers who ignore the power of location-based messaging do so at their peril. In local markets, this may currently still be restricted to broadcast messages to users in a specific locality, but the opportunities to send a specific message to users at precise locations, such as shopping malls, could soon become a reality.

Aside from the exciting technological innovation that can be applied in location-specific push notifications to smartphones, campaigns also have a clear and simple revenue model by which shopping mall tenants foot the bill of such messages. The value to consumers is similarly clear, as they are able to receive targeted, on-demand information related to stores or products and services in which they've expressed an interest.

It will be those brands with the foresight to see this potential that stands to benefit over their competitors, who still have their heads stuck in the ground.

ABOUT WARREN MOSS

Warren Moss is the founder & CEO of Demographica, a full-service specialist agency focusing on Business to Business (B2B) and niche consumer markets. What makes Demographica unique is the fact that anthropology (the study of human societies and cultures and their development) is at the heart of all of their strategies. Warren and Demographica have been recognised by winning some major business and marketing awards. Warren is also currently the Chairman of the Direct Marketing Association of South Africa.

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