

RICA's impact on mobile marketing



By [Eddie Groenewald](#)

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The Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication-Related Information Act (RICA) has come into effect and, apart from the administrative nightmare of having the act implemented, the industry has been left wondering what the implications of the act will be.



RICA requires all SIM cards, prepaid or post paid (current or new ones) to be registered along with the owner's details. This includes providing proof of residence, banking details etc.

Top of mind

Now at the top of everyone's minds is the fact that RICA will assist in crime fighting. The theory is that criminals will no longer be able to just buy a SIM card for a few rand and a mobile phone for several hundred rand and be able to communicate anonymously.

It will also assist the police in locating suspected criminals because, with a court order, the police will be able to have a person's details released to them and they will be able to track the area the person is in, based on which mobile phone tower the person is connected to at the time.

This is a huge step towards improving the law enforcement community's ability to combat crime, but how many people have realised it's also a marketers dream?

Why RICA is important for mobile marketing:

Something which Multimedia Solutions has been highlighting to marketers for years is that mobile is the most measurable of all marketing channels.

The reason for this is that SIM cards' MSISDN number (mobile phone number) is unique. That means when a SMS or MMS is sent to someone, it is sent to a unique number. And when people surf mobile websites (mobisites), their number is identified when they land on the page, which means companies can see exactly how many people are visiting their mobisites - unlike with standard Internet websites.

Real time

Furthermore, reporting happens in real time so marketers can monitor how the campaign is running as it rolls out.

However, the challenge is that, because of the proliferation of SIM Cards in the market, there are around 50 million active SIM cards in the market ('active' meaning used in the last three months) with around 35 million people using mobile phones.

This means that while mobile phone numbers are unique, people on pre-paid SIMs are harder for marketers to speak to because they regularly change their number.

Enter RICA. It is likely that as people begin to register their SIMs, the prepaid churn within the market will begin to slow. This will heighten the value of people's mobile phone numbers to marketers, as people will be more likely to keep their number now that they have to register it and provide supporting documentation for it.

What do people want?

The rise of social media has confirmed a number of things to marketers. People want to be able to quickly find things they are interested in purchasing while ignoring things they don't care about.

Secondly, Internet-based search is becoming a part of everyone's life, with people looking for content they are interested in while ignoring the rest of the information being blasted at them from the mass media.

Thirdly, people are looking for like-minded people who share their interests - hence the rise of social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

Put this all together and one starts to realise as a marketer that the faster you accurately profile and audience your user base, the easier it will be to communicate effectively with them. And if you communicate effectively with them, then they are likely to pass on that information to like-minded people within their social network, increasing the marketer's reach into the market.

And that's why RICA is an important milestone for marketers.

ABOUT EDDIE GROENEWALD

Eddie Groenewald has 27 years experience in the ICT industry, of which more than a decade has been in the Digital Marketing sector. He now focuses on a True Multimedia Offering, ATL, BTL and Digital.

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