

4 ways brands can incorporate chat messaging into their marketing strategy

By  Wayne Flemming

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Chat messaging has become an effective communication channel between customers and businesses. From Facebook Messenger and WeChat to WhatsApp and in-app chat features, many brands have integrated 'DMs' (direct messages) into their campaigns.

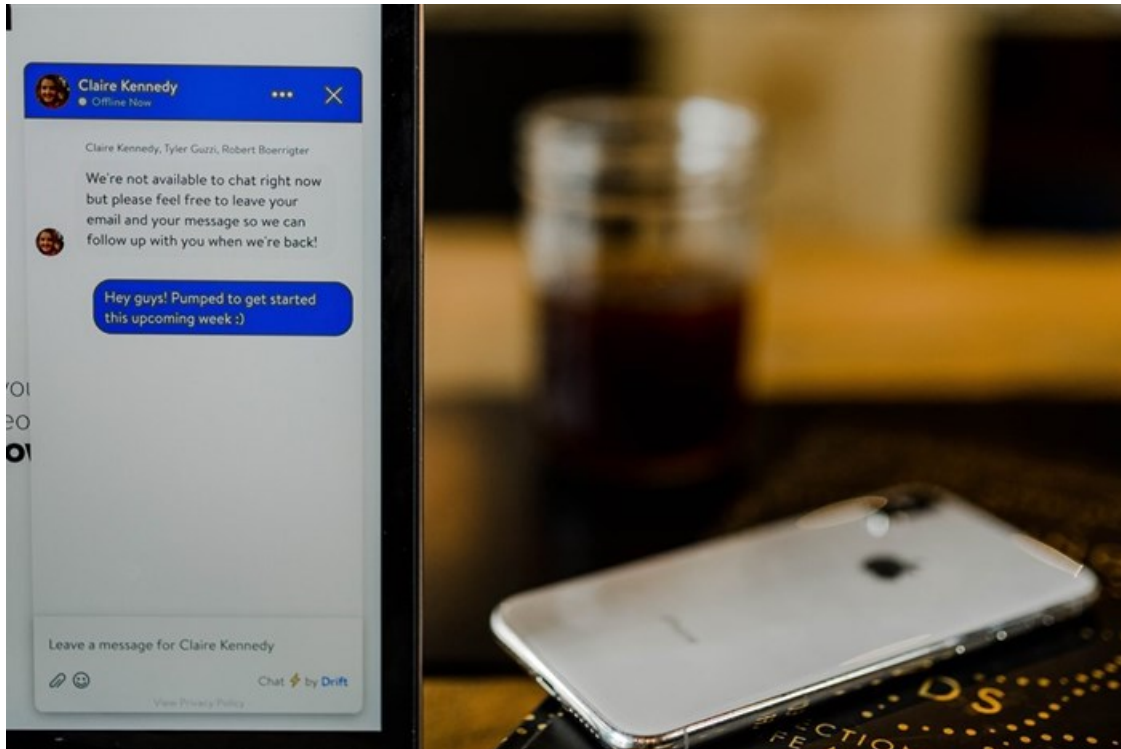


Image credit: Austin Distel on Unsplash.

According to the Quartz Africa report, 48% of South Africans use message services – with WhatsApp being the most dominant and according to Statista – messaging will grow from 2.18 billion users, this year, to 2.48 billion by 2021.



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Research has shown that with the rise of the fourth industrial revolution, customers are becoming more demanding. While the technology we use to communicate has changed, the core values of communication have not. Customers expect helpful, personal and empathic interactions.

The only difference is that we now have those conversations instantly, and this is where the power of conversational marketing lies.



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Ways in which chat messaging can build trust, boost brand affinity and generate successful conversions, include:

Seeding personalised ads

Chatbots are appealing and can perform a variety of functions within the realms of customer service, customer interaction and “top of the funnel” marketing tasks. This gained popularity when Facebook introduced branded chatbots into its Messenger app. This tool has proven to be successful in the creation of personalised ads.



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One way to integrate Messenger into a marketing strategy is by having a friendly and engaging bot gather preliminary information and while the customer waits, personal details can be used to generate personalised advertisements. A messenger app via a chatbot allows customers to enjoy the convenience of accessing help 24 hours a day and they see the ad when they engage with the chatbot.

Quicker responses = more leads

The key to locking down a potential lead using chat messaging hinges on whether the representative can solve a customer's problem and on how quickly they respond. This is especially important considering most customer service calls and complaints are simple to resolve. This is where chatbots come in.



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Because the user is often the one that initiates engagement, chatbots enable brands to catch their customers at the right time.

Global retailer Sephora was one of the first to integrate chatbots into its customer experience – its Colour Match app uses augmented reality to help consumers select make-up colours according to their shade and outfit by simply holding a camera to an image or face, the bot can identify the correct shade of make-up.

But, the most important characteristic of a bot, is that it should appear human. If the chatbot is impersonal and the customer is receiving seemingly generic responses, the result may not be as effective.



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Messenger apps allow marketers to draw on data to segment their audience and understand overall consumer preferences. Kik is one such messaging app that uses large amounts of data to segment users down by demographics.

This method has proven to work well, as Kik reported that “16 million consumers have swapped 500 million messages via sponsored bots.”

“*Feel like chatting about a TV show or roleplaying the zombie apocalypse? It's easy to create your own Public Group!*

Just tap the + menu on the home screen, select Public Groups, then tap the + again to start your own! 📌📌♀️📌

pic.twitter.com/r6kRCpuqrZ— Kik (@Kik) [August 15, 2019](#) ”

Soon, live messaging will generate volumes of chat transcripts – which will include a mixture of curious and annoyed conversations from users. Brands will gather raw data to be used in campaigns.

Here are a few ways brands can use archived chats, according to *Finance Online*:

- Brand messaging: Craft your brand messaging according to the user's most common complaints to position a product as a solution.
- Tailored campaigns: Create campaigns that speak to specific issues.
- Keep your competition close: Identify competitor mentions and craft campaigns to highlight your uniqueness.
- Customer segmentation: Identify patterns in the transcripts that can help you sort customer segments.

Less selling, more helping

To use live chat as a marketing tool, it is important to drive content that is less about a product, and more about solving a problem, building trust and providing help. With 28.99 million active mobile internet users (Statista, 2019) in South Africa, and 61% of South African internet users preferring to complete tasks digitally whenever possible (We Are Social, 2018),

there is an undeniable opportunity to tap into this method of marketing.

Starbucks has introduced a convenient way for customers to order drinks on the go. A chatbot allows patrons to order by voice through Amazon Alexa or via the MyBarista app. It notifies the customer when their order is ready and makes recommendations by gauging preferences and habits based on previous orders.

It is up to innovative marketers to find new ways to use SMS, rich communication services and app messaging.

ABOUT WAYNE FLEMMING

With solid experience in the industry, Wayne Fleming is a business visionary and IMC content creator who describes himself as a "marketing fanatic". His bold thinking is supported by his strong strategy and leadership skills, and he is also a storyteller at heart. As a changemaker, he thrives on disrupting the marketplace which is why he started BrandTruth in 2016 with co-founder Zubeida Goolam - crafting digital and content campaigns that both inspire and drive critical engagement.

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