


# Is mobile marketing overhyped?

Mobile, schmobile. Mobile marketing's just another buzzword thrown around by your agency, marketing department or publications like this one. Rather than being the next evolution in marketing, it's just a distraction from getting the basics right, and another way for your agency to charge you more.

 By [Vanessa Clark](#) 15 Dec 2011

Well, obviously here at Vomo we don't share this view, but it's easy to see how mobile marketing could be dismissed as a load of hot air.

Firstly it's still pretty hard to measure the impact of mobile marketing, and industry initiatives around the world are still scratching their heads trying to work this one out. Then there are the over-hyped stats, like the number of iPhones in the market. When you do the maths, you realise that contrary to the headlines, this is a very small number indeed in the grand scheme of things.

There's also the issue of desktop web-based practices simply being transplanted lock, stock and barrel onto the mobile device. Take banner ads - pesky on the desktop web, but downright infuriating on the mobile web, taking up valuable real estate. (And not to mention pointing you to an iPhone app, even though you are using an Android handset.)

And probably the final nail in the coffin for mobile marketing is that the characteristic of the mobile phone - that fact that it both personal and portable - that makes it potentially such a good marketing channel, is also its biggest weakness. Get it wrong, and you're screwing up on the device that matters the most to people.

Then there's the list of killer apps that was going to transform mobile marketing forever. From QR codes to augmented real to location-based services, for now, these all seem like damp squibs.

Respectfully we'd disagree that mobile marketing is just a bunch of hokum. Firstly the numbers speak for themselves - with more SIM cards than people in South Africa, if you want to reach someone, the surefire way to get to them is via mobile. Add into the mix that for many South Africans mobile is the primary, and often only, way of accessing the internet.

Then consider that people do actually want to be communicated with via their mobile phones - if companies make it worth their while. According to Google's mobile stats for South Africa, 54% of South Africans don't mind receiving ads on their smartphones if they get rewards or freebies in return.

What we would say, however, is that it's still early days. We need to move past just transplanting desktop-based practices onto a smaller and more mobile screen. Then we need to work out how to best measure the impact of these activities. And we need to stop treating mobile like tactical lego blocks, tacking them onto a marketing strategy at the last minute, and instead look at mobile strategically at the outset of any campaign.

Then let's talk again about whether mobile marketing is over-hyped or not.

## ABOUT VANESSA CLARK

Hi! I'm a freelance journalist, copywriter and editor based in Cape Town, South Africa. I write as a journalist and for corporates and agencies. My specialties are business-to-business technology writing. I like unpacking complex ideas so they are more easily understood - especially when it involves innovation taking place in South Africa, and the rest of Africa. [View my profile and articles...](#)