

USSD, a knockout for mobile in Africa =O

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No logos, no graphics, no pretty pictures... just plain text. It's simple, it's fast, it's effective, it's cheap, it's accessible, it's mobile... it's USSD!



USSD, a South African-born marketing technology, has proved to be a "knockout" for marketers in Africa, especially for Boxer Superstores, SA's well known grocery store servicing the low to mid income shoppers from urban to rural areas across South Africa, which created the Boxer Super Shopper Show.

The **Boxer Super Shopper Store** promotion was "lucky number 7" for Mobitainment as it **won Gold at the [Smarties EMEA Awards in London on 10 November 2014](#) in the Cross Media Integration category**. That's seven consecutive years of international marketing awards for Mobitainment.

Why was USSD technology such a "knockout"?

Essentially USSD is a call communicating through text as opposed to voice. It's a method that is cost effective, fast and familiar to the mass market - a "lowest common denominator" tool with unlimited potential for marketers communicating in this sector.

USSD (Unstructured Supplementary Service Data) was first commercialized in South Africa - by Vodacom in 2004. It is a menu-based service that allows bi-directional text-based communication between a user and the service provider's computers. It works with all phones in South Africa and all network carriers. The connection remains open, allowing a two-way exchange of a sequence of data, making USSD more responsive than services that use SMS.

It has become a very popular as a channel for mobile banking, airtime top-up, sending Please Call Me's and entry into competitions. Because of the ability to include free form and multiple choice questions, it is great for profiling and surveys. MMA award winning campaigns that used USSD include [Excella'nt Competition](#) and [AVBOB Funeral Services survey](#), and the recent Boxer Super Shopper Show.

The [Boxer Super Shopper Show](#) shouted out a message across media: from a printed broadsheet to TV, driving the shoppers to purchase the three promotional items of the week, and then allowing them to validate their purchase by entering their Boxer tillslip via USSD to enter the competition. It resulted in over 300% to 1000% increase in sales of the promoted products like chicken pieces, cooking oil and eggs!

"Everything we do is always focussed on our loyal shoppers and by doing this we are able to offer them more value. We continue to evolve ourselves in order to meet, and surpass, our customers' expectations. The self conceptualised Boxer Super Shopper Show clearly shows how those who shop at our tills are also entertained; and win so much more on top of our low prices. Finding the right service provider to bring our one of a kind idea to reality was made possible through a partnership with Mobitainment. Having the Boxer Super Shopper Show attain such prestigious international recognition further endorses the independent judging panel's finding that Boxer remains true to its core - our customers," said Andrew Mills, Boxer Marketing Director.

USSD is a powerful marketing tool the local target market is very familiar with it. It is cheaper for them than SMS, and it works across all phones and network carriers, even in rural areas not covered by 3G. It is like SMS, in that it uses text, but it is a call that communicates in data or text rather than voice, and without imaging... it allowed Boxer to have a conversation with their shoppers and validate their purchase.

Our mobile solution allowed for real-time validation of entries and sales transactions, that were measurable and flexible, allowing us to change the products in the spotlight twice a month and promote them around pay-day.

This is Boxer's most successful campaign on USSD to date. **Suppliers** saw real sales growth and have asked for Boxer to repeat the campaign. **Consumers'** brand awareness and entries increased dramatically and customers were rushing into their closest Boxer store and buying the required products to enter this rewarding competition. While the **store staff** spoke positively about new customers walking through the doors to enter the now famous **Boxer Super Shopper Show which [turned the mobile phone into a "SELL" phone!](#)**

About Mobitainment

[Mobitainment](#) is a mobile marketing consultancy that specialises in reaching the mid to lower income consumer on entry level phones. The company has pioneered the use of a number of technologies to create campaigns that not only produce measurable marketing results for clients, but are also relevant and accessible to the consumer market in South Africa.

As active leaders in the mobile marketing industry, Mobitainment advises both brands and agencies on how best to use and integrate technology to achieve their marketing objectives, grow a data base of consumers and most importantly, to talk to and listen to their target markets.

Headed up by Candice Goodman, who is also the Chair Emeritus of the Mobile Marketing Association of South Africa and heads up their Education & Training committee. Mobitainment has won multiple international awards over the past seven years for the creation of mobile campaigns that are personal, fun and simple. Last year, Mobitainment earned the coveted title of "Organisation of the Year 2013" from the Direct Marketing Association of South Africa showing not only their contribution to mobile, but the importance of mobile as a medium to achieve measurable return on investment.

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