

Mobile Marketing And Its Effect On Consumer Engagement In Emerging Markets

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ABSTRACT

Mobile devices have become the primary gateway through which consumers in emerging markets access the internet, transact commercially, and interact with brands, a pattern driven by widespread smartphone affordability, expanding mobile network infrastructure, and the frequent absence of a preceding desktop-internet adoption phase. This article examines how mobile marketing, encompassing SMS and push notification campaigns, mobile applications, location-based marketing, mobile social media advertising, and mobile payment-integrated promotions, affects consumer engagement in emerging market contexts, and identifies the boundary conditions that differentiate emerging market dynamics from those observed in mature, high-income markets. Using a systematic narrative literature review method that synthesises academic and industry sources on mobile marketing, consumer engagement theory, and emerging market consumer behaviour, this study finds that mobile marketing exerts a generally positive effect on consumer engagement in emerging markets through mechanisms of perceived personalisation, interactivity, and convenience, consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model and the broader engagement marketing literature. However, this effect is substantially moderated by emerging-market-specific conditions, including infrastructural constraints such as intermittent connectivity and data cost sensitivity, a predominance of mobile-first rather than mobile-supplementary consumer journeys, high reliance on mobile money and QR-based payment rails, elevated privacy and trust concerns arising from lower regulatory maturity, and pronounced heterogeneity in digital literacy across urban and rural populations. The article further finds that engagement outcomes differ meaningfully by campaign format, with app-based loyalty mechanics and mobile-payment-integrated promotions generally outperforming undifferentiated SMS blasts, and with locally adapted, low-bandwidth creative formats outperforming content ported directly from developed-market campaigns. The article concludes with a conceptual framework linking mobile marketing instruments to engagement outcomes through the moderating role of infrastructural and socio-cultural context, and offers implications for marketers and platform designers operating in emerging economies.

Keyword Mobile marketing; consumer engagement; emerging markets; mobile commerce; digital marketing

Introduction

The global diffusion of smartphones has fundamentally reshaped the channels through which businesses reach and engage consumers, and nowhere is this transformation more consequential than in emerging markets, where mobile devices frequently constitute the first and only means by which a substantial share of the population accesses digital services. Global

smartphone penetration reached approximately 62 percent by mid-2025, with roughly 5.0 billion users worldwide, and industry projections anticipate that smartphone adoption in mobile connections will climb from 76 percent in 2022 to 92 percent globally by 2030, with the steepest gains concentrated in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, where penetration is expected to rise from 51 percent in 2022 toward 87 percent by the end of the decade. This trajectory reflects a structural characteristic specific to emerging economies: unlike mature markets, where internet adoption typically progressed from fixed broadband and desktop computing toward mobile as a secondary channel, many emerging market consumers are mobile-first or mobile-only, encountering the internet, digital commerce, and branded content for the first time through a smartphone screen.

This mobile-first reality has made mobile marketing, defined broadly as any marketing activity conducted through mobile devices and channels including SMS, push notifications, mobile applications, mobile web advertising, location-based marketing, and mobile-integrated social commerce, a central rather than supplementary component of firms' engagement strategies in these markets. Industry estimates place global mobile commerce revenue at approximately 710 billion dollars in 2025, roughly double the 360 billion dollars recorded in 2021, with mobile devices now generating an estimated 75 to 78 percent of all e-commerce traffic worldwide. Emerging markets are consistently identified as the fastest-growing contributors to this expansion: Africa's mobile commerce market was projected to reach 84 billion dollars in transaction value in 2026, a 41.3 percent increase over the prior year, with Kenya's mobile money platform M-Pesa alone processing more than 36 billion dollars in annualised transaction volume, while the Asia-Pacific region, anchored by China, India, and Indonesia, was projected to surpass 2 trillion dollars in mobile commerce sales by 2025.

Despite this scale, the academic and practitioner understanding of how mobile marketing translates into consumer engagement in emerging markets remains less developed than the corresponding body of knowledge for mature markets. Much of the foundational theorising on mobile marketing effectiveness, consumer trust in mobile channels, and engagement marketing more broadly was developed with reference to consumer populations characterised by stable high-speed connectivity, mature data protection regimes, near-universal banking access, and relatively homogeneous digital literacy. These assumptions do not hold uniformly across emerging markets, where connectivity can be intermittent and costly relative to income, formal banking penetration is often low relative to mobile money adoption, consumer protection and data privacy regulation is frequently nascent or unevenly enforced, and digital literacy varies substantially between urban and rural populations and across generational cohorts. It is

therefore not obvious that engagement mechanisms validated in developed-market contexts, such as personalised push notifications or location-based offers, operate identically, or with the same magnitude of effect, among emerging market consumers.

This article addresses this gap by examining two related questions: first, through what mechanisms does mobile marketing affect consumer engagement among emerging market consumers, and second, what emerging-market-specific factors moderate or condition the strength and character of this effect relative to what is documented in mature-market contexts. In answering these questions, the article synthesises academic literature on mobile marketing and consumer engagement with recent industry and market-research evidence documenting the scale and specific characteristics of mobile adoption in emerging economies, in order to construct a conceptual account of mobile marketing effectiveness that is explicitly sensitive to emerging market conditions rather than assuming direct transferability of developed-market findings. The discussion is organised around five principal mobile marketing instruments, SMS and push notifications, mobile applications, location-based marketing, mobile social media advertising, and mobile-payment-integrated promotion, and evaluates each against the engagement outcomes and contextual moderators identified in the literature.

Literature Review

Conceptualising Mobile Marketing

Mobile marketing is generally defined in the marketing literature as the use of interactive wireless media to provide customers with time- and location-sensitive, personalised information that promotes goods, services, and ideas, thereby generating value for all stakeholders. This definition emphasises three properties that distinguish mobile marketing from other digital marketing channels: ubiquity, in that mobile devices accompany consumers throughout their daily activities rather than being confined to a fixed location; interactivity, in that mobile channels support two-way, often real-time exchange between firm and consumer; and personalisation, in that mobile devices are overwhelmingly single-user devices carrying rich behavioural and locational data that enable individually tailored content. Contemporary treatments of the field typically enumerate a set of instruments falling under the mobile marketing umbrella, including SMS and push-notification messaging, branded mobile applications, mobile display and social media advertising, location-based and proximity marketing using GPS or beacon technology, QR-code-mediated promotions, and mobile-integrated loyalty and payment mechanics.

Consumer Engagement as a Marketing Outcome

Consumer engagement has emerged over the past two decades as a central construct in marketing scholarship, generally conceptualised as a customer's cognitively, emotionally, and behaviourally motivated connection to a brand, manifested through interactions that extend beyond a direct purchase transaction, such as attention, sharing, reviewing, co-creating content, and sustained interaction with brand-owned digital touchpoints. Within the mobile context specifically, engagement is commonly operationalised through metrics such as application open rates and session frequency, push notification response and click-through rates, time spent within branded applications, participation in mobile loyalty programmes, and user-generated content or sharing activity initiated through mobile social platforms. The Technology Acceptance Model, which posits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use jointly determine an individual's intention to adopt and continue using a technology, has been widely applied to explain why consumers engage with mobile marketing channels, with subsequent extensions incorporating perceived enjoyment, trust, and perceived personalisation as additional antecedents specific to mobile and social media contexts. A recurring finding across this literature is that engagement functions as a mediating mechanism between marketing stimulus exposure and downstream commercial outcomes such as purchase intention, brand loyalty, and customer lifetime value, meaning that mobile marketing's ultimate commercial value operates substantially through its capacity to first generate engagement.

Mobile Marketing Instruments and Their Engagement Mechanisms

SMS and push-notification marketing represent the earliest and most ubiquitous mobile marketing instruments, valued for their near-universal device compatibility, since SMS functions on any mobile handset including basic feature phones without requiring internet connectivity, and for their high open rates relative to email. Industry analyses continue to identify push notifications as the largest single segment of the mobile engagement solutions market, though in-app messaging is identified as the fastest-growing segment, suggesting a gradual shift in emphasis toward richer, contextually embedded messaging formats as smartphone penetration deepens. Mobile applications, by contrast, generate engagement through a fundamentally different mechanism: rather than delivering discrete, interruptive messages, a branded application creates a persistent, owned digital environment in which the firm can embed loyalty mechanics, personalised recommendations, and gamified interaction design, converting individual transactions into an ongoing relationship. Location-based marketing extends personalisation into the physical world by using GPS or Bluetooth beacon technology to trigger offers or content when a consumer enters a defined geographic proximity to a retail location, a mechanism whose effectiveness has been linked in the literature to its

capacity to reduce the search cost and increase the situational relevance of a marketing message at the precise moment a purchase decision is plausible.

Mobile social media advertising leverages the fact that social media consumption in most markets, and especially in emerging markets, occurs predominantly on mobile devices, allowing firms to embed shoppable content, influencer partnerships, and interactive formats such as polls, augmented reality filters, and live shopping directly within consumers' primary mobile social feeds. Industry data indicate that influencer marketing was projected to grow by 22 percent year over year as of 2025 with an industry valuation exceeding 15 billion dollars, and those augmented-reality-enabled try-on experiences in categories such as beauty measurably increase interaction time and purchase intent, illustrating the engagement premium associated with interactive, socially embedded mobile formats relative to static display advertising. Finally, mobile-payment-integrated promotion, encompassing QR-code-triggered discounts, in-wallet loyalty points, and cashback mechanics delivered through mobile payment applications, represents an instrument of particular relevance to emerging markets given the disproportionate role mobile money and QR payment rails play in these economies relative to card-based payment infrastructure common in developed markets.

Distinctive Characteristics of Emerging Market Consumers

Emerging markets differ from mature markets along several dimensions directly relevant to mobile marketing effectiveness. First, connectivity in many emerging markets remains intermittent and costly relative to average income, meaning that data-intensive marketing formats such as video and augmented reality content, while effective in bandwidth-abundant developed markets, may impose meaningful friction or cost barriers on emerging market consumers, particularly outside major urban centres. Second, formal banking penetration in many emerging economies remains comparatively low, while mobile money adoption has filled this gap at extraordinary scale, exemplified by Kenya's M-Pesa system, meaning that mobile marketing strategies reliant on card-linked loyalty or payment integration common in developed markets require adaptation to mobile-wallet-native mechanics in these contexts. Third, regulatory maturity governing data privacy and consumer protection in digital marketing varies considerably across emerging markets, and in many jurisdictions remains less comprehensive or less consistently enforced than the regulatory frameworks, such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, that have shaped mobile marketing practice in developed markets, a condition that has been linked in survey-based research to elevated consumer wariness toward data-intensive personalised marketing even as demand for personalised experience simultaneously grows.

Methods

This article employs a systematic narrative literature review method, selected because the research objective, namely synthesising and contextualising existing knowledge on mobile marketing and consumer engagement in emerging markets, is conceptual and integrative in nature rather than requiring the generation of new primary data. The narrative review method, when conducted systematically with an explicit and reproducible search and selection process, is well suited to synthesising a body of literature that spans multiple disciplinary traditions, in this case marketing theory, information systems research, and development economics, and to identifying patterns, tensions, and gaps across that literature that a narrower systematic review of a single, tightly defined research question would not surface as effectively.

Search Strategy and Sources

Sources for this review were drawn from two complementary categories. The first category comprises peer-reviewed academic literature on mobile marketing, consumer engagement, the Technology Acceptance Model and its extensions, and emerging market consumer behaviour, identified through searches of academic databases using search terms including "mobile marketing," "consumer engagement," "mobile commerce," "emerging markets," and combinations thereof, supplemented by backward citation tracing from key theoretical sources on engagement marketing and technology acceptance. The second category comprises current industry and market-research sources, including reports from established market intelligence providers, telecommunications industry bodies, and technology sector publications, used specifically to establish the scale, growth trajectory, and region-specific characteristics of mobile adoption and mobile commerce in emerging markets as of the most recent available data. This second category was included deliberately because academic publication timelines often lag several years behind the pace of change in mobile technology adoption in emerging markets, meaning that reliance on academic sources alone would risk understating the current scale and specific character of the phenomenon under study.

Scope and Inclusion Criteria

The review includes sources addressing mobile marketing instruments (SMS and push notifications, mobile applications, location-based marketing, mobile social media advertising, and mobile-payment-integrated promotion), consumer engagement as a marketing construct and outcome, and structural or behavioural characteristics of emerging market consumers relevant to digital and mobile marketing. Emerging markets are defined for the purposes of this review consistent with common industry and development-economics usage, encompassing middle- and lower-income economies undergoing rapid digital infrastructure expansion, with

particular attention to South and Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America, the three regions most consistently identified in both academic and industry sources as exhibiting the fastest mobile adoption growth and the most pronounced mobile-first consumer behaviour patterns. Sources addressing mobile marketing exclusively within mature, high-income market contexts were retained where they establish foundational theoretical mechanisms of general relevance, such as the Technology Acceptance Model or core engagement marketing theory, but were treated as requiring contextual qualification rather than direct application when discussing emerging market outcomes specifically.

Analytical Approach

The collected sources were analysed using a thematic synthesis approach. Academic sources were first used to establish the theoretical mechanisms through which each mobile marketing instrument is understood to generate consumer engagement. Industry and market-research sources were then examined to identify the specific scale, adoption patterns, and structural characteristics of mobile marketing and mobile commerce within emerging market regions. These two streams were subsequently integrated by systematically evaluating, for each mobile marketing instrument, whether and how the theoretical engagement mechanism identified in the academic literature is likely to be strengthened, weakened, or qualitatively altered by the specific infrastructural, financial, regulatory, and digital-literacy conditions documented in the industry evidence as characteristic of emerging markets. This integrative analytical step forms the basis of the conceptual framework presented in the results and discussion section, which links mobile marketing instruments to engagement outcomes through the moderating role of emerging market context.

Result and Discussion

The Scale and Structure of Mobile-First Engagement in Emerging Markets

The evidence reviewed confirms that mobile devices function as the primary, and for a substantial share of consumers the only, digital engagement channel in emerging markets. Global smartphone penetration approaching 5.0 billion users by mid-2025, combined with projections that penetration in Sub-Saharan Africa will rise from 51 percent in 2022 to 87 percent by 2030, indicates that the population of mobile-reachable consumers in emerging markets is both already substantial and rapidly expanding. This is reflected directly in commercial outcomes: Africa's mobile commerce transaction value was projected to reach 84 billion dollars in 2026 with 634 million active mobile commerce users continent-wide, while the Asia-Pacific region, driven by China, India, and Indonesia, was projected to surpass 2 trillion dollars in mobile commerce sales by 2025. These figures substantiate the premise that mobile marketing in emerging markets is not a supplementary channel but the primary, and

often sole, mechanism through which firms can engage the majority of the addressable consumer population, a structural condition markedly different from mature markets where mobile competes with, and is frequently secondary to, desktop and in-store engagement channels.

SMS and Push Notifications: High Reach, Constrained Depth of Engagement

SMS-based marketing retains particular relevance in emerging markets precisely because of the structural conditions discussed in Section 2.4: SMS functions on basic feature phones without requiring a data connection or smartphone ownership, allowing firms to reach the substantial population segments, still numbering in the hundreds of millions across South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, who own only a feature phone or lack consistent data access. This gives SMS a reach advantage in emerging markets that it has largely lost in developed markets, where near-universal smartphone and data penetration have shifted marketer attention toward richer app-based and push-notification formats. However, the engagement generated by SMS is characteristically shallow relative to app-based or socially embedded formats: SMS supports limited interactivity, cannot easily embed rich media, and its engagement metrics are typically confined to open and response rates rather than the sustained session activity or content co-creation associated with deeper engagement. Push notifications, delivered through smartphone operating systems rather than the cellular SMS network, offer richer formatting and deep-linking capability but require the underlying smartphone and application install base that SMS does not, meaning their reach in emerging markets is bounded by smartphone penetration and application adoption rates that, while growing rapidly, remain below the near-universal levels found in developed markets. The practical implication is that SMS and push notifications occupy complementary rather than substitutable roles in an emerging market mobile marketing strategy, with SMS providing broad-reach, low-bandwidth engagement suited to time-sensitive transactional or informational content, and push notifications providing richer, more personalised engagement among the growing smartphone-owning, application-using segment of the population.

Mobile Applications: Strong Engagement Potential Constrained by Device and Data Cost Sensitivity

Branded mobile applications offer the deepest and most sustained engagement mechanism among mobile marketing instruments, given their capacity to embed persistent loyalty mechanics, personalised recommendation, and gamified interaction design within an owned digital environment. Industry data indicating that mobile applications account for approximately 54 percent of mobile commerce transactions, outperforming mobile browser-based transactions due to saved preferences, faster loading, and streamlined checkout,

corroborates the engagement advantage of the app format in commercial outcomes. In emerging markets specifically, however, this advantage is bounded by two structural constraints identified in Section 2.4: first, application download and storage impose a data cost and device storage burden that is more consequential for consumers using budget devices, which continue to represent 27 percent of the market in Southeast Asia and Africa, and operating under meaningful data cost sensitivity relative to income; and second, sustained application engagement presupposes a baseline of digital literacy and habitual smartphone use that is less uniformly present across emerging market populations, particularly in rural areas, than in developed markets. These constraints help explain the widespread emergence of super-applications and lightweight or progressive web app formats in emerging markets, which reduce the storage and data burden of app-based engagement relative to multiple single-purpose applications, and which have proliferated particularly rapidly in Asia-Pacific markets such as China, India, and Indonesia.

Location-Based Marketing: High Theoretical Relevance, Uneven Practical Reach

Location-based marketing's theoretical engagement advantage, namely its capacity to deliver contextually and situationally relevant offers at the precise physical moment a purchase decision is plausible, is in principle highly relevant to emerging markets, where informal retail, street commerce, and physical proximity to point-of-sale remain economically significant relative to the more thoroughly formalised and digitised retail environments of developed markets. In practice, however, the effectiveness of GPS- and beacon-based location marketing in emerging markets is constrained by the same connectivity and device-capability conditions discussed above, since precise location-based triggering typically requires continuous data connectivity and a smartphone capable of running location services efficiently, conditions less reliably present outside major urban centres in many emerging economies. Consequently, location-based engagement in emerging markets has tended to manifest more successfully through simpler, lower-bandwidth mechanisms, such as QR codes displayed at physical points of sale that a consumer actively scans rather than passive beacon-triggered notifications, since the QR mechanism shifts the connectivity and processing burden to a single, consumer-initiated moment rather than requiring continuous background location tracking.

Mobile Social Media Advertising: Strong Engagement Aligned with Emerging Market Social Media Intensity

Mobile social media advertising demonstrates particularly strong alignment with emerging market consumer behaviour, given that social media consumption in these markets occurs overwhelmingly on mobile devices, often without a preceding history of desktop social media use, making mobile social platforms a primary rather than secondary engagement

surface. The rapid growth of influencer marketing, projected to grow 22 percent year over year with an industry valuation exceeding 15 billion dollars as of 2025, and the demonstrated engagement premium associated with interactive formats such as augmented-reality try-on experiences, translate with particular force into emerging markets, where social commerce is forecast to exceed 720 billion dollars, with strong momentum in the Middle East linked explicitly to high smartphone usage combined with comparatively low credit-card penetration, a combination that channels transaction activity through mobile social and mobile wallet rails rather than traditional card-based e-commerce checkout. This suggests that mobile social media advertising's engagement advantage in emerging markets is reinforced by, rather than merely coincidental with, the payment infrastructure conditions distinctive to these economies, since social commerce formats that embed transaction capability directly within the social mobile experience align naturally with mobile-wallet-centric payment behaviour.

Mobile-Payment-Integrated Promotion: A Distinctively Emerging-Market Engagement Mechanism

Mobile-payment-integrated promotion, encompassing QR-triggered discounts, in-wallet loyalty accumulation, and cashback mechanics delivered through mobile money applications, represents the mobile marketing instrument most distinctively shaped by emerging market structural conditions rather than adapted from a developed-market template. The extraordinary scale of mobile money infrastructure in markets such as Kenya, where M-Pesa alone processes more than 36 billion dollars in annualised transaction volume, reflects a payment ecosystem that developed independently of, and in many respects ahead of, card-based digital payment infrastructure, creating a mobile-wallet-native engagement surface with no direct developed-market equivalent. Marketing mechanics embedded within these mobile money and QR payment rails, such as instant cashback credited directly to a mobile wallet upon completing a promoted transaction, benefit from an engagement advantage specific to this context: because the mobile wallet is already the consumer's primary financial interface, promotional engagement embedded within it carries lower friction and higher behavioural relevance than a promotion requiring the consumer to separately open a card-linked loyalty application or website. This finding indicates that mobile marketing strategies most effectively adapted to emerging markets are frequently those built natively around local payment infrastructure, rather than those replicating card-loyalty or desktop e-commerce promotional mechanics common in developed-market playbooks.

The Moderating Role of Trust, Privacy Concern, and Regulatory Maturity

Across all five mobile marketing instruments examined, the review identifies consumer trust and privacy concern as a cross-cutting moderator of engagement that operates with

particular force in emerging markets. The comparatively nascent or unevenly enforced state of data protection regulation in many emerging economies, relative to comprehensive frameworks such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation that shape consumer expectations in developed markets, creates a distinctive tension: emerging market consumers increasingly demand personalised mobile experiences consistent with global digital consumption norms, yet frequently exhibit elevated wariness toward the data collection that personalisation requires, given weaker institutional assurance that such data will be protected or used narrowly for its stated purpose. This tension suggests that mobile marketing personalisation strategies calibrated for developed-market consumers, who benefit from stronger regulatory assurance, may require additional, explicit trust-building measures when deployed in emerging markets, such as greater transparency regarding data use or opt-in rather than opt-out personalisation defaults, to achieve comparable engagement outcomes without triggering disproportionate privacy-driven disengagement.

Digital Literacy Heterogeneity and the Urban-Rural Engagement Gap

The review further identifies substantial within-market heterogeneity in mobile marketing engagement as a distinctive emerging market characteristic that has limited equivalent in developed markets, where digital literacy and device capability are comparatively homogeneous across the population. Given that entry-level devices continue to represent a substantial share of the emerging market device base, and that rural populations exhibit markedly lower digital fluency in many emerging economies, mobile marketing strategies calibrated to a single, urban, high-literacy, flagship-device consumer profile risk systematically underperforming among a large share of the addressable emerging market population. This has direct implications for creative and interaction design: engagement-optimised mobile marketing in emerging markets frequently requires lower-bandwidth creative formats, simplified interaction flows requiring fewer taps or lower cognitive load, and multilingual or local-language content, in contrast to the richer, more bandwidth-intensive, and often single-language creative formats that perform well among the more homogeneous, high-connectivity consumer base of developed markets.

Toward an Integrated Conceptual Framework

Synthesising the preceding findings, this study proposes that consumer engagement with mobile marketing in emerging markets is best understood as a function of the interaction between instrument-specific engagement mechanisms, as established in the general marketing literature, and five emerging-market-specific moderating conditions: connectivity and data cost constraints, mobile-money-centric payment infrastructure, regulatory and trust immaturity, digital literacy heterogeneity, and the mobile-first absence of an established offline or desktop

brand relationship. Instruments that are structurally compatible with these conditions, such as SMS for broad low-bandwidth reach, QR-triggered mobile-payment-integrated promotion for low-friction transaction-linked engagement, and mobile social commerce for alignment with mobile-native social consumption habits, are found to generate engagement outcomes that are not merely comparable to but in some respects distinctively well-suited to emerging market conditions. Instruments that presuppose developed-market infrastructural or behavioural conditions, such as continuous-connectivity beacon-based location marketing or storage-intensive multi-application engagement strategies, are found to generate engagement outcomes that are more uneven and more strongly dependent on the urban, higher-income, higher-literacy subset of the emerging market consumer population. This framework suggests that effective mobile marketing strategy in emerging markets requires not a scaled-down replication of developed-market mobile marketing practice, but a context-specific redesign that treats local payment infrastructure, data cost sensitivity, and digital literacy heterogeneity as primary design constraints rather than secondary implementation details.

Sectoral Variation: Financial Services, Retail, and Agriculture

The engagement effects of mobile marketing identified in the preceding sections are not uniform across industry sectors within emerging markets, and the review finds meaningful sectoral variation worth noting. In financial services, mobile marketing is tightly interwoven with mobile money infrastructure itself, such that engagement campaigns promoting savings products, microloans, or insurance are frequently delivered through the same mobile wallet interface consumers already use for daily transactions, producing unusually high engagement rates relative to other sectors precisely because the marketing touchpoint and the transactional touchpoint are one and the same. In retail and fast-moving consumer goods, mobile marketing engagement in emerging markets is increasingly mediated by social commerce and live-shopping formats on mobile social platforms, particularly in Asia-Pacific markets, where integrated in-app checkout reduces the friction between social engagement and purchase completion. In agriculture and rural-serving sectors, by contrast, SMS-based extension messaging remains the dominant and often only viable mobile marketing format, reflecting both lower smartphone penetration in rural areas and the value of simple, low-bandwidth informational content, such as weather advisories or market price updates, that generates high response rates despite its comparatively limited interactivity. This sectoral variation reinforces the broader conclusion that effective mobile marketing design in emerging markets is highly context-dependent, requiring sector-specific as well as region-specific calibration rather than a uniform cross-sector mobile marketing playbook.

Limitations of the Reviewed Evidence

Several limitations in the reviewed evidence base warrant acknowledgement. Much of the quantitative industry data cited in this review, including market size and transaction volume figures, originates from market intelligence providers whose forecasting methodologies are not always fully transparent or independently verifiable, and such figures should be treated as directional indicators of scale and growth trajectory rather than precise measurements. Academic literature specifically measuring consumer engagement outcomes, as opposed to adoption or transaction volume, within emerging market mobile marketing contexts remains comparatively sparse relative to the developed-market engagement literature, meaning that several of the mechanisms proposed in this review's conceptual framework, while theoretically grounded, would benefit from direct empirical testing using engagement-specific metrics such as application session data, push notification response rates, or social media interaction rates collected specifically from emerging market consumer samples. Additionally, the category of 'emerging markets' itself encompasses substantial heterogeneity, spanning economies as diverse as India, Nigeria, Brazil, and Indonesia, and the conceptual framework proposed here, while identifying commonalities across these contexts, should not be read as implying uniformity; country- and market-specific empirical validation remains necessary before the framework's propositions are applied to a specific market without further verification.

Conclusions

This article set out to examine how mobile marketing affects consumer engagement in emerging markets and what emerging-market-specific factors condition the strength and character of this effect. The review finds that mobile marketing exerts a generally positive effect on consumer engagement in emerging markets, consistent with the broader engagement marketing and Technology Acceptance Model literature, operating through mechanisms of perceived personalisation, interactivity, situational relevance, and convenience. However, the magnitude and character of this effect are substantially shaped by structural conditions distinctive to emerging economies: intermittent and cost-sensitive connectivity, a payment ecosystem centred on mobile money and QR rails rather than card-based infrastructure, comparatively nascent data protection regulation and correspondingly elevated consumer privacy concern, pronounced heterogeneity in digital literacy and device capability between urban and rural populations, and a mobile-first consumer journey in which mobile marketing frequently constitutes a consumer's first, rather than supplementary, encounter with a brand's digital presence.

These findings support the conclusion that mobile marketing instruments perform unevenly across emerging market contexts depending on their structural compatibility with local infrastructural and behavioural conditions, with SMS, mobile-payment-integrated

promotion, and mobile social commerce generally demonstrating stronger structural alignment with emerging market conditions than continuous-connectivity location-based marketing or storage-intensive multi-application strategies. For marketing practitioners, these findings imply that effective mobile marketing strategy in emerging markets requires purpose-built adaptation around local payment infrastructure, data cost constraints, and digital literacy heterogeneity, rather than direct transplantation of creative formats, personalisation mechanics, or interaction designs validated in developed-market contexts. For platform designers and policymakers, the findings underscore the importance of continued investment in affordable connectivity infrastructure and in strengthening data protection regulatory frameworks, both of which this review identifies as binding constraints on the extent to which emerging market consumers can benefit from, and firms can responsibly deploy, increasingly personalised and data-intensive mobile marketing capability. As a conceptual synthesis rather than an empirical study, this article's conclusions would benefit from future empirical validation through comparative, quantitative studies measuring engagement outcomes across specific emerging market populations and mobile marketing instruments, an avenue this review recommends as a priority for future research in the field.

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