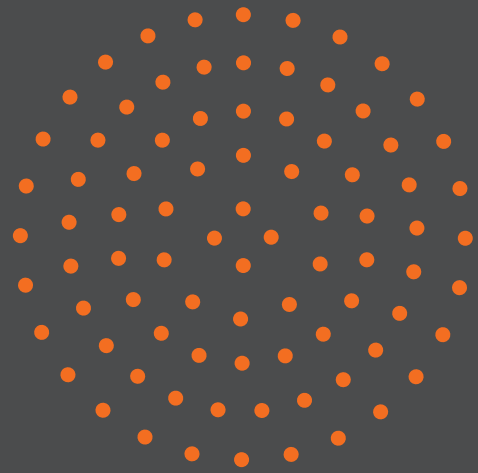


# Unlocking multi-channel marketing with RCS

The evolution of RCS as a top conversational marketing tool



# What's inside



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## An introduction

The digital marketing industry is rapidly growing. Effective marketing communication is becoming more complex, and new communication channels are constantly appearing.

As technology changes, it requires specialization, regulations on data and privacy become stricter, and consumers are more demanding.

In this environment, marketers strive to:

- **Get their message heard** by the right people.
- **Reach** the largest possible part of **their target audience**.
- Offer users **highly engaging content**, which is more likely to result into desirable outcomes.
- Produce **seamless user experiences** that allow interaction.
- Get **insights** that will help **optimize their strategy**.

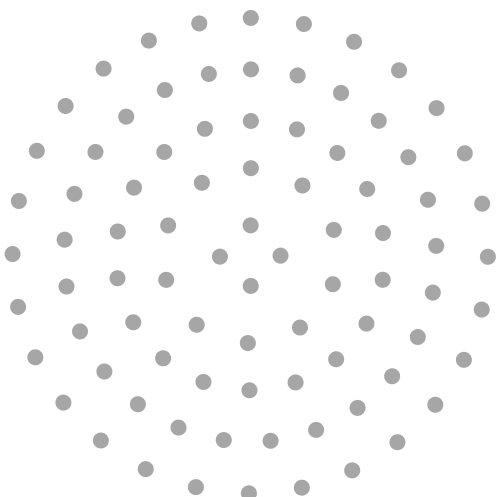


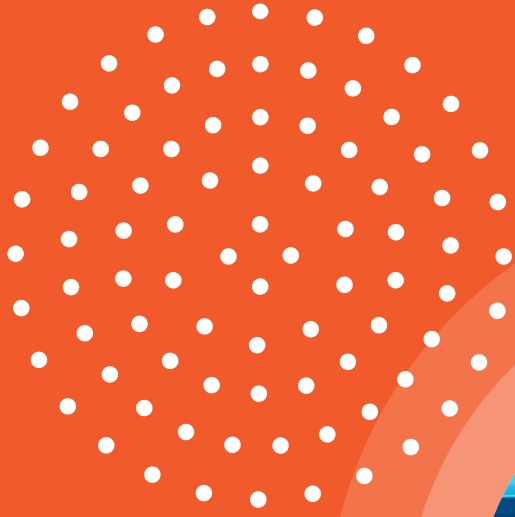
**Rich Communication Services (RCS) is a sophisticated, next-gen native messaging technology for Android phones, which can fulfill all of these goals.**

Audiences are fragmented and not easy to categorize. Enter multi-channel marketing, that allows personalized, communications and responses tailored to the individual user and their habits.

This white paper dives deep into RCS and shows why it is becoming indispensable for the multi-channel marketing strategy of Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), brands, and advertisers.

Check out the USPs of RCS with case studies and data that shows its effectiveness, both as a standalone channel and as a part of a multi-channel campaign, driving revenues and growth.





# 01 Highlights

## Key RCS info to look out for

RCS is an essential communication channel...



**3.8bn**

RCS-capable mobile users worldwide by **2026**



**\$4.6bn**

Global MNO revenue from RCS by **2026**

...with undeniable performance...



**22.2% CTR\***

in RCS messages driving traffic to one food retailer's website



**600 RCS campaigns**

in 12 months for an MNO and its clients, using Upstream's platform as Software as a Service

\* CTR – Click-through rate

Data from Upstream's martech platform, Grow, 2021-2022

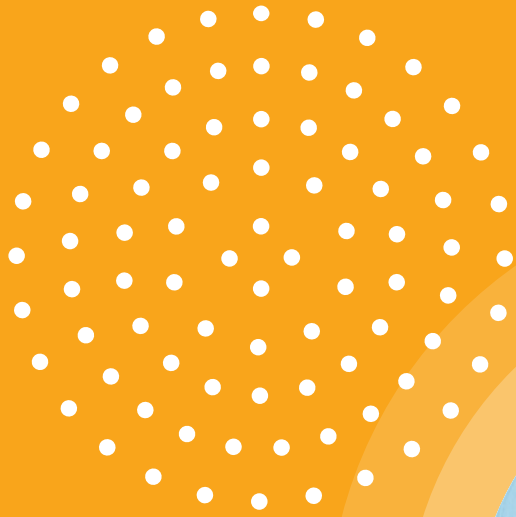
...and a unique combination of features

- ✓ Rich format
- ✓ Full interactivity
- ✓ Simple flows
- ✓ Useful metrics



**One native messaging app with all the capabilities of OTT messaging platforms**

- ✓ MSISDN compatibility
- ✓ User identification
- ✓ Not reliant on 3<sup>rd</sup> party cookies



# 02 **RCS** The lay of the land

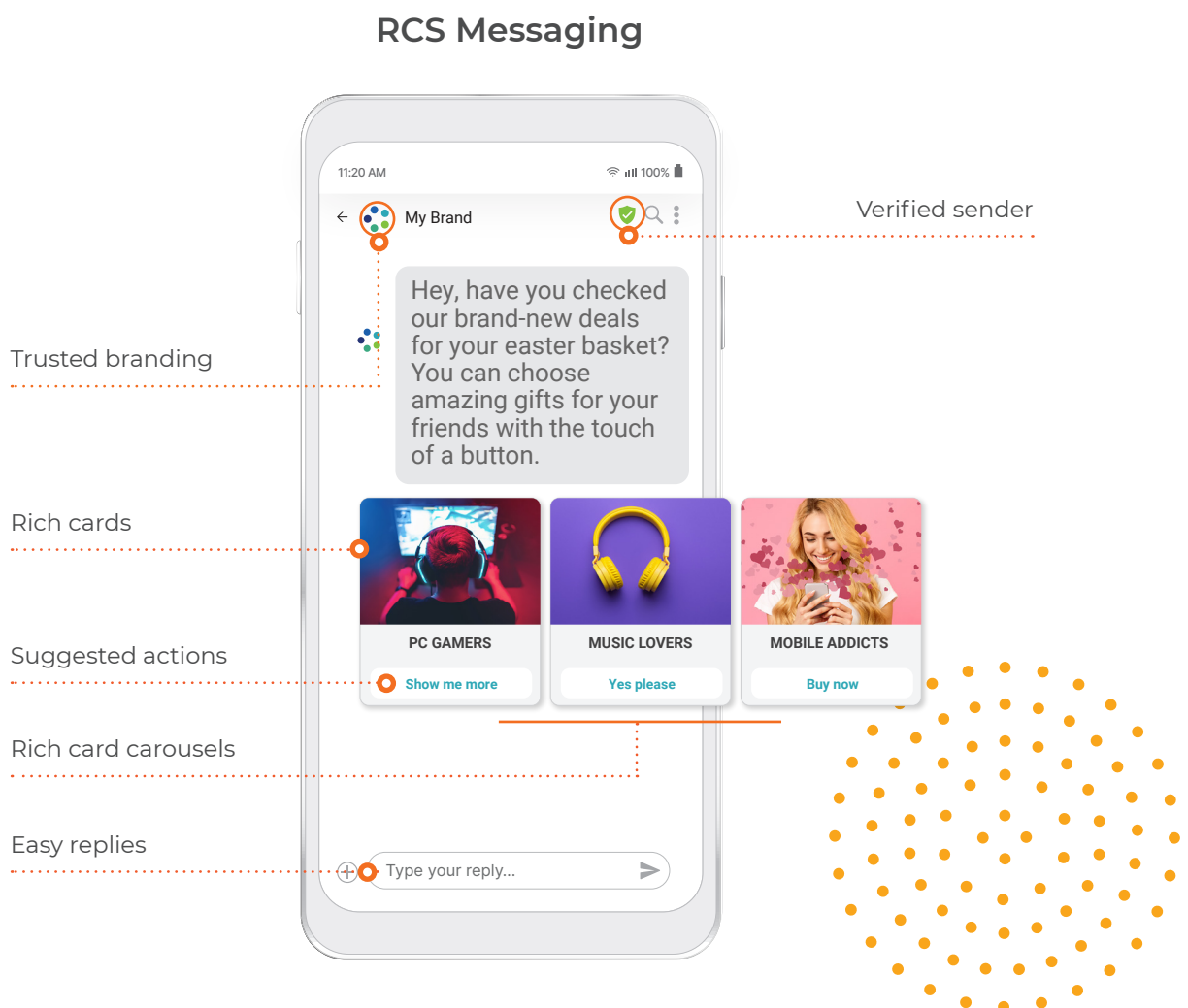
# A marketing game changer channel

Consumers only respond to engaging and exciting interactions from brands, which closely reflect the way they engage with their contacts. In a saturated and highly competitive market, delivering the most engaging user experience possible is key to the success of marketing communications.

It's not just about what you say, it's about how you say it. The demand is for sophisticated communications that add value to the user's experience or offer them unexpected benefits.

## Enter Rich Communication Services (RCS)

RCS is the next generation of messaging for Android phones, introduced by the GSMA (the global association for the mobile industry) in 2007. It was designed to replace SMS as the main messaging channel and has the potential to transform the effectiveness of mobile marketing. The channel started gaining traction in the later half of the 2010s when it was adopted by Google for its Android operating system.

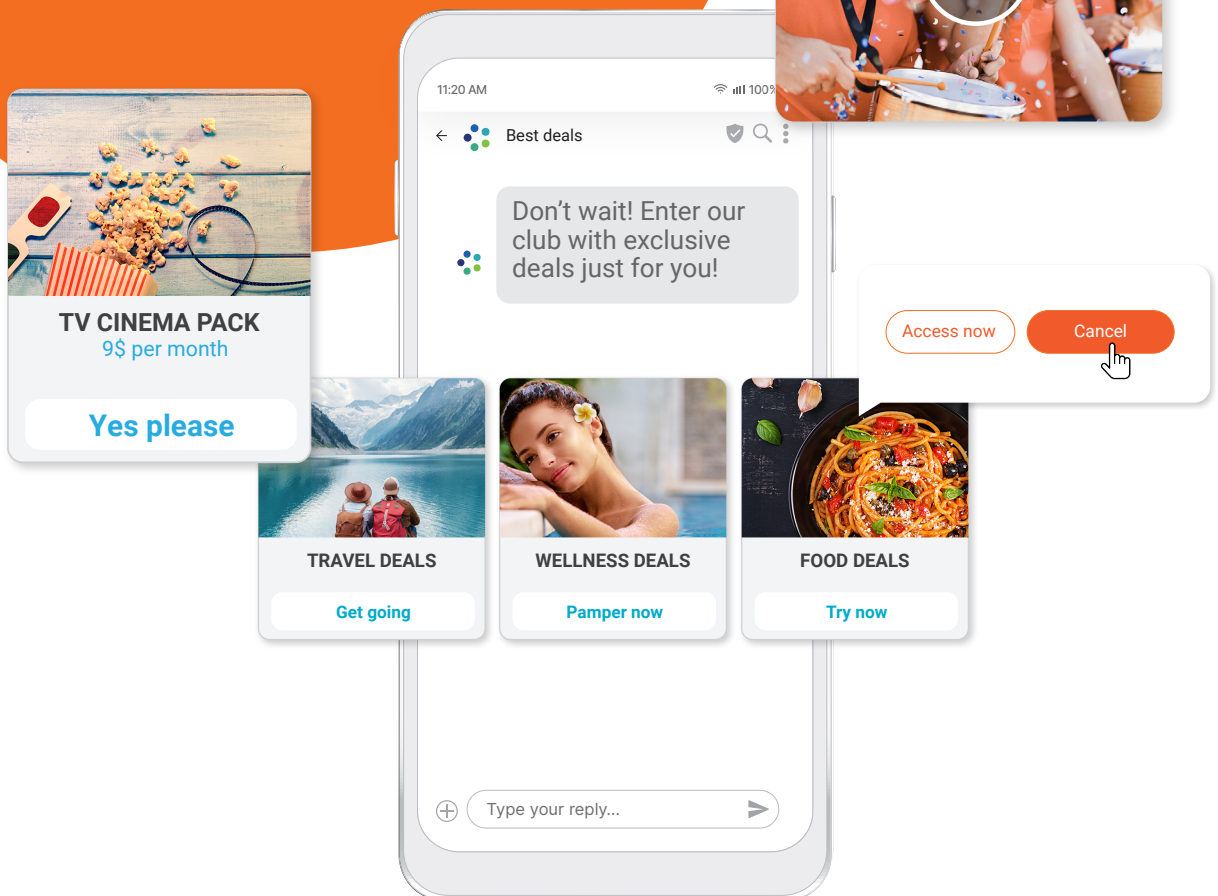
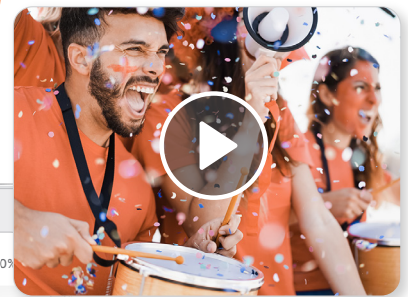


# Why is RCS special?

# #1

## Rich messaging formats

RCS is a messaging technology that provides users with the ability to exchange varied (“rich”) content such as **photos, videos, rich cards, carousels, and pop-up messaging (bubbles).**

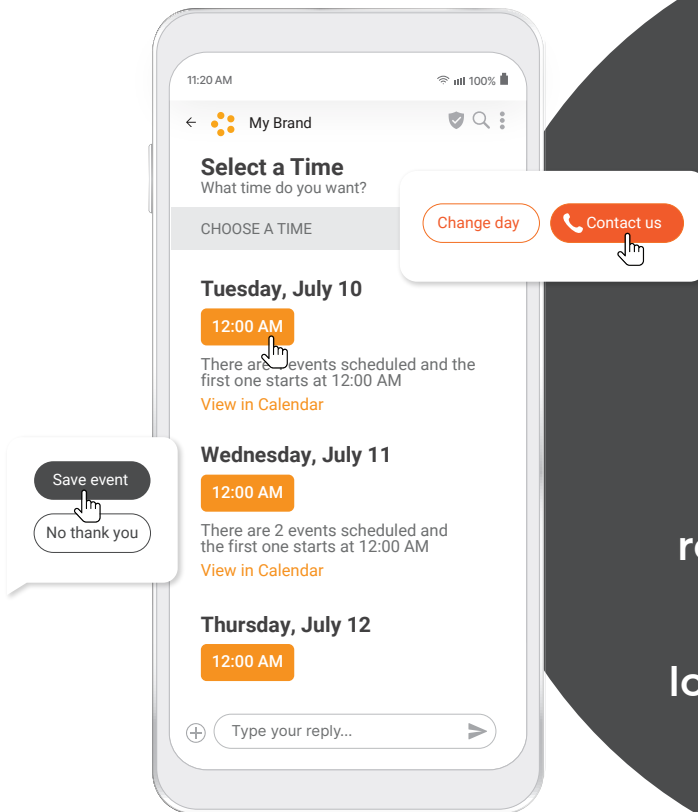




# #2

## Full interactivity for the user

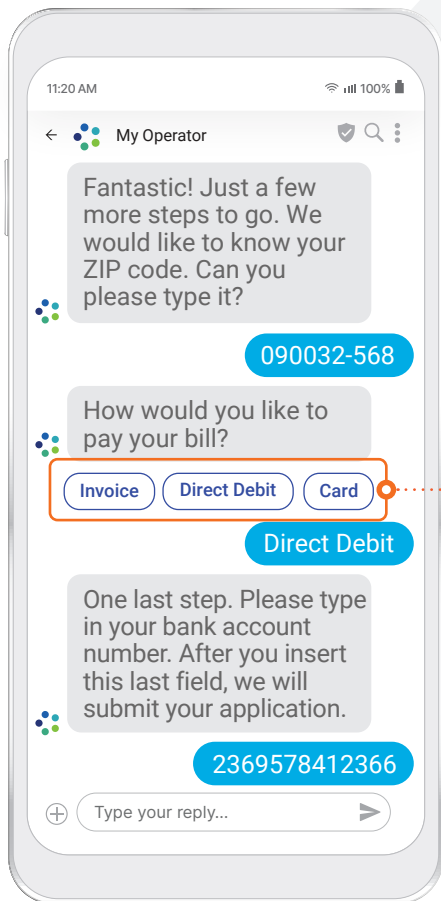
Compared to other marketing channels, RCS supports a wider range of actions for consumers. For instance, they can **respond to messages, save events to their calendar, click to dial, or share their location**, to name just a few.



# #3

## No need to download any third-party apps

In contrast to OTT (over-the-top) messaging platforms such as **WhatsApp** or **Facebook Messenger**, it does not require the user to download a specialized app. Instead, it works natively through the default messaging app of RCS-ready Android smartphones, if the MNO supports it.

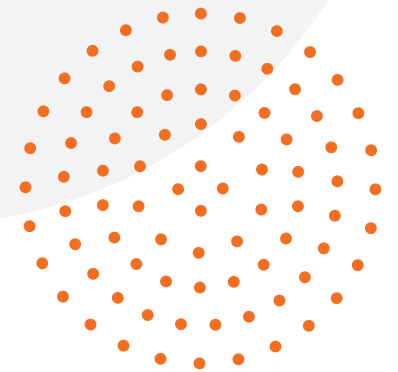


# #4

## Simplified flow for maximum conversions

With RCS, brands can simplify the flow of conversation with customers by providing suggested replies and actions. This boosts customer interactions and increases their engagement.

Suggested replies



# #5


## Clear performance measuring

Marketers can effectively measure the performance of RCS campaigns. Unlike SMS, RCS messages return read receipts, meaning brands can measure the effectiveness of their communications with detailed engagement tracking.

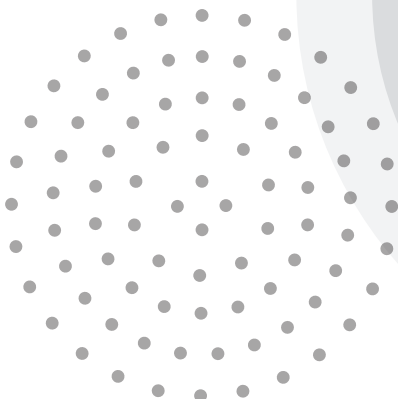


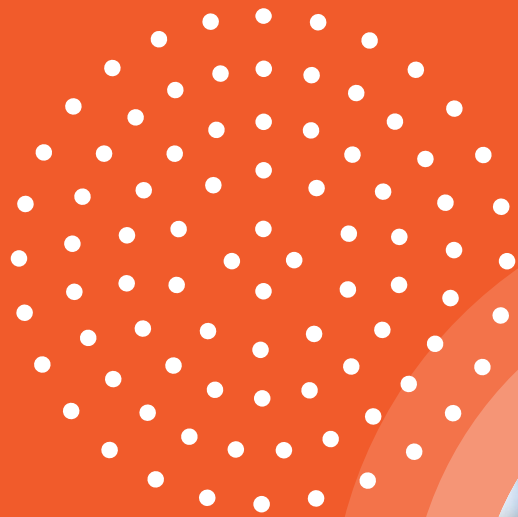
In 2022 there is significant momentum building around RCS from mobile operators, as it proves itself to be an invaluable tool within the multi-channel marketing ecosystem. It can be used in various parts of the funnel to enable sophisticated user interactions.

Additionally, by working through the native messaging environment, RCS is ubiquitous for the entire user base, provided they have a compatible smartphone.



RCS can help build a **complete marketing offering**, enabling brands to offer **richer interactions** which consumers are more likely to respond to.





03 Now is the time to  
add RCS to your mix

# Becoming accessible to billions, with access to first party data

Half the world's population is predicted to have RCS by 2026<sup>1</sup>

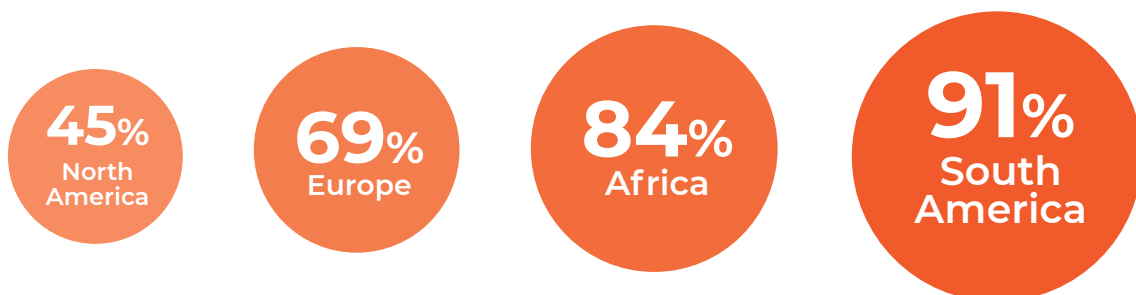
Momentum for RCS has been building steadily over the past decade. In 2022, there are an estimated **1.2 billion RCS-capable subscribers globally** – predominantly in Latin America, North America and Asia Pacific.

## Regions with a high number of RCS capable users, in 2022



Going forward, RCS can be expected to play a larger role in emerging markets where Android mobile phones are prevalent<sup>2</sup>.

## Android penetration



<sup>1</sup> Juniper Research, "RCS vs OTT: why 2022 is a crucial year", February 2022

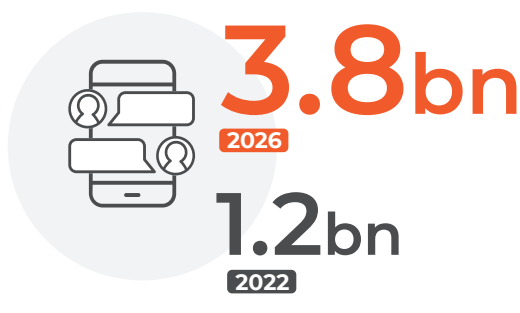
<sup>2</sup> StatCounter, "Mobile Operating System Market Share", Accessed 8.04.2022

Global uptake will continue to grow steadily, thanks to support from more and more operators and phone manufacturers.

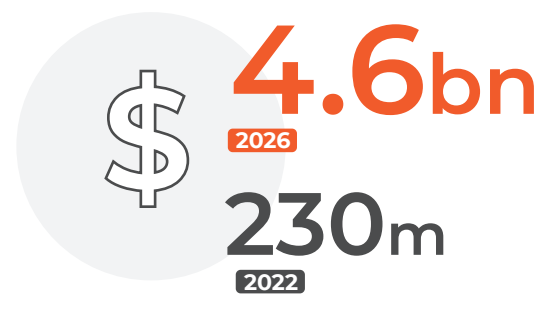
For example, Samsung confirmed in 2022<sup>3</sup> that it has integrated RCS capabilities into all its new phones by default. In 2020<sup>4</sup>, Google rolled out RCS via its Google Messages app worldwide, with just a few countries still lacking support<sup>5</sup>.

By 2026, it is predicted that RCS will be accessible to 3.8 billion mobile users and that global operator revenue from RCS will reach \$4.6 billion (from \$230 million in 2022).

### RCS capable subscribers globally



### Global operator revenue



### No third-party cookies – No problem

What makes RCS particularly interesting for marketers is its compatibility with MSISDN (Mobile Subscriber Integrated Services Digital Number, as mandated by the GSMA). MSISDN compatibility allows MNOs to verify the identity of subscribers using RCS services, and to better route traffic without using third-party cookies. Brands using RCS can tap into the potential of accurate first party data, making it easier to create assertive campaigns, personalized for their customers and their needs. This makes RCS valuable to any multi-channel marketing strategy.



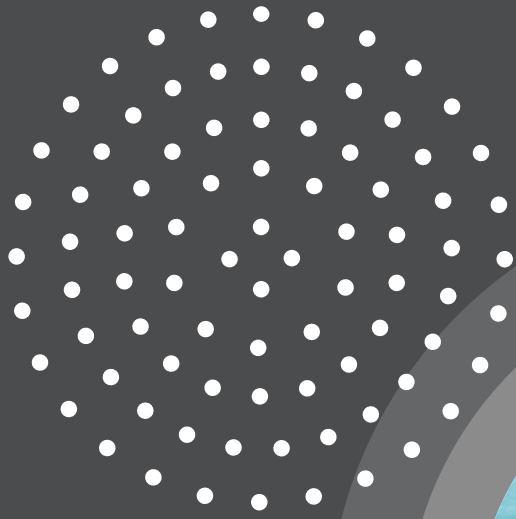
**With third-party cookies expected to be completely phased out within the next few years, leveraging RCS opens up the possibilities of the first-party data world.**

It is the perfect moment to use RCS to improve brand marketing campaigns to drive new revenues, with mobile operators becoming an indispensable marketing partner for enterprises.

<sup>3</sup> The Verge, “Samsung’s Galaxy S22 phones push Google Messages and the good news of RCS”, February 2022

<sup>4</sup> Techradar, “Google releases RCS messaging globally”, November 2020

<sup>5</sup> Androidcentral, “Every country and carrier that supports Google RCS”, October 2021



# 04 Future-proof your business with RCS

## Putting RCS to work for you

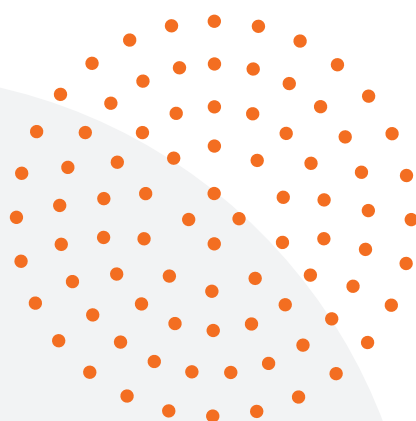
RCS can help companies **increase revenues and customer loyalty, and improve monetization by enabling the creation of richer marketing campaigns**. It has one of the highest engagement and interaction rates within omni-channel marketing. By combining the rich features of OTT platforms with the ubiquity and broad user base of SMS, RCS campaigns perform better than those that just use OTT, email, or SMS on their own.

Multimedia communications featuring imagery, video and interactive components – which offer consumers more meaningful ways to interact and respond – are easy to roll out with RCS. They have strong applications in a range of cases. They can augment e-mail, SMS, or social marketing campaigns with highly effective calls to action that are more likely to lead to conversions

With e-commerce on the rise, RCS brings all the engagement potential of the internet into the user's messaging environment, enabling end-to-end transactions. Many mobile operators and enterprises globally have already successfully accessed the benefits of RCS to surpass their marketing goals.

### 1. From mobile to online, boosting e-commerce traffic and sales

With consumers largely interacting on their mobiles, retailers are increasingly looking to mobile marketing to reach them more effectively. Putting RCS in the mix allows for more interactive calls to action, which can drive awareness, traffic, and sales.





FMCG | BRAND AWARENESS

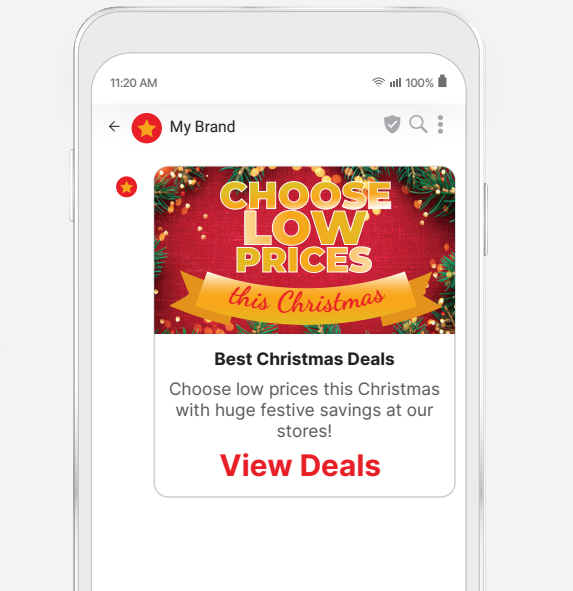
CASE STUDY

## Driving traffic to the online store

A popular food retailer in South Africa wanted to **maximize digital traffic for its online store**. However, its campaigns to date had struggled to reach a mass audience via digital touch points. To help the retailer engage its customers, Upstream introduced the retailer to RCS via an operator in South Africa. This allowed the company to **increase traffic to its online store** by creating a highly interactive RCS campaign using rich media – such as rich cards and carousels – to encourage customers to go the retailer’s home page to view current deals.

**12k**  
clicks in two weeks

**22.2%**  
CTR



## 2. Enhancing branding and running offers and promotions

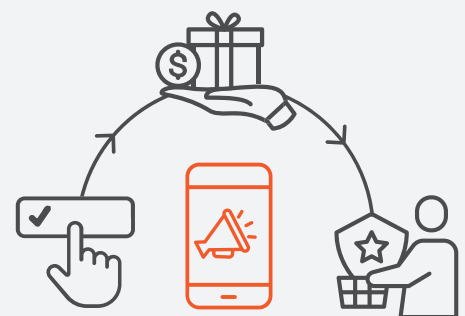
The richer features of RCS allow messages to be designed with fully customized colors and logos making your brand stand out. Using a distinct sender ID via RCS allows consumers to tell that the communication comes from a trusted brand, while they can also opt-out of unwanted conversations more easily.

FMCG | BRAND AWARENESS

CASE STUDY

## Attracting users to a new rewards and loyalty program

A multinational consumer goods company relaunched its popular rewards and loyalty platform in South Africa with a new name. Its objective was to increase sign-ups to its loyalty platform – which offers customers cash back and money-off rewards – and increase customer loyalty. By partnering with Upstream, the company has been able to boost digital traffic to the sign-ups branded page by leveraging RCS communications to engage customers with rich video and animated ads.



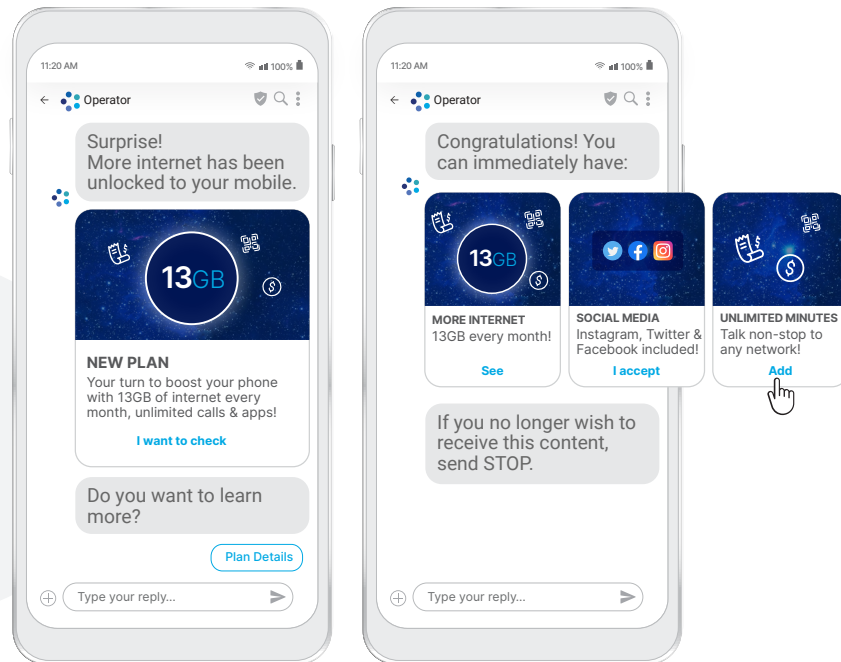
### 3. Tailored campaign building

RCS use cases are only limited by the imagination of marketers. There are numerous other applications, including:



#### Plan migrations for MNOs

To simplify and encourage the customer migration process to higher value plans, mobile operators can create RCS campaigns offering smart and seamless flows. This allows customers to complete the migration entirely within the messaging app environment, rather than switching between multiple channels and platforms.



#### TELCO | PLAN UPGRADES

CASE STUDY

### Migrating users to new plans



A mobile operator wanted to migrate its users from their existing plans to newer, more personalized bundles. Upstream provided them with dynamic RCS content that dramatically increased campaign results compared to their previous static campaigns.



**116%**  
increase in migrations  
using a gif over a static  
image weeks

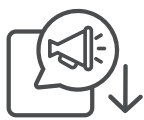


**>7%**  
conversion rate (2x higher  
than SMS) through RCS  
automated retargeting messages



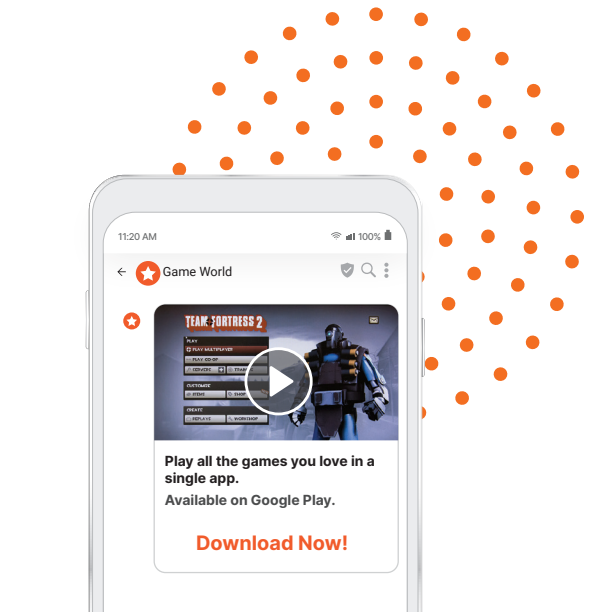
## Upselling core and digital services

Brands can also offer their customers new subscription plan suggestions, custom plans, or digital services in a fully branded and trusted environment via seamless upselling flows.



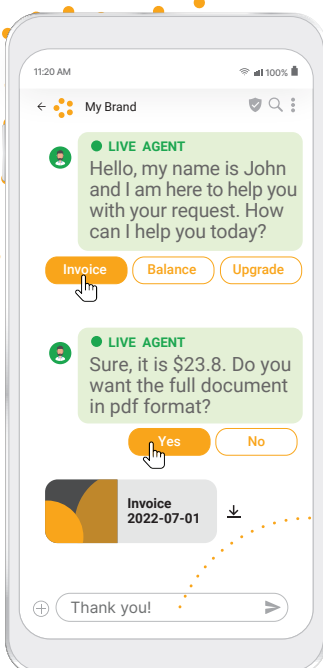
## App install campaigns

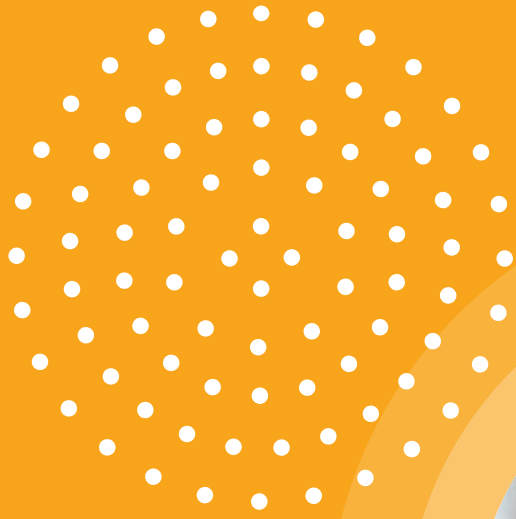
To increase uptake of their apps – and the loyalty of their customer base – mobile operators, app publishers, and advertisers can launch RCS campaigns that encourage users to download an app. RCS allows for quick and engaging communication with an easier way to interact with direct actions to download the app from the Google Play store with the touch of a button.



## Improving customer care

RCS allows conversations with automated conversational agents (chatbots) and/or human agents that can resolve customer issues within the messaging environment. Consumers can respond to surveys, give real-time updates, or start a conversation with a salesperson or chatbot.





# 05 **A game-changer** for multi-channel marketing strategies

# RCS pushing multi-channel campaigns to new heights

It is an extremely crowded marketplace, with consumers being bombarded with a high number of messages every day. In 2022<sup>6</sup>, people are sending and receiving an average of 333 emails per day. In 2021, 83% of mobile users received at least one SMS from a business<sup>7</sup>. Brands that want to stand out from the crowd need to use channels that more effectively encourage user interaction and engagement.

Upselling core and digital services is essential for MNOs to increase average revenue per user (ARPU). Campaigns featuring RCS offering new plan suggestions, upgrades, or customized offerings allow more deeply customized and well-branded messages.



<sup>6</sup> Statista, "Daily number of e-mails worldwide 2025", October 2021

<sup>7</sup> MarketHire, "48 Surprising SMS Marketing Statistics for 2022", April 2021

## Driving plan upgrades through a multi-channel strategy




A leading mobile operator in Brazil wanted to move users to the next spending tier by moving them from pre-paid to contracts. Above all, it wanted its campaign to be cost-effective and not reliant on call centers or stores.

### Our solution

Upstream introduced a multi-channel strategy to engage customers through a range of channels that were both rich media and text based, including RCS, SMS, and email marketing.

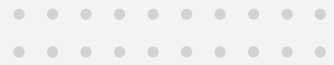
- Throughout the campaign, the operator used **RCS alongside other channels** to ensure a high engagement rate and a seamless user experience that encouraged clicks and conversions.
- Upstream also built advanced **multi-channel automated re-targeting** to address subscribers who had **dropped out of the funnel**. Campaign results were analyzed on an ongoing basis to identify those channels and messages most likely to convert undecided buyers.
- Based on this analysis, it was obvious that the more channels introduced into the campaign's channel mix, the higher its performance. **The automatic re-targeting** campaign increased the **effectiveness of a multi-channel approach**, which allowed the operator to reach users through their most preferred channel at the right time.
- Ongoing flow optimization determined the most **seamless** and **friction-free user journey**.



**Automated re-targeting messages allowed the mobile operator to follow up with users at the **right moment**, via the **best performing channel**, without any manual effort.**

TELCO | PLAN UPGRADES

CASE STUDY



**1** User enters the plan upgrades flow  
User selects a postpaid plan & advances to next step

**2** User drops off  
User stops the data input & exits the flow

1 hr later

**3** Retargeted via RCS  
User returns to the web flow

**4** Purchase completed



Still thinking about it?  
You are only one click away from getting the many benefits of Pro Plan.

**Pro Plan**  
Internet that never ends  
+ Instagram, Twitter & Facebook free for 3 months  
+ unlimited calls  
[I want it!](#)

**76%**

higher campaign effectiveness\* for RCS vs SMS retargeting messages

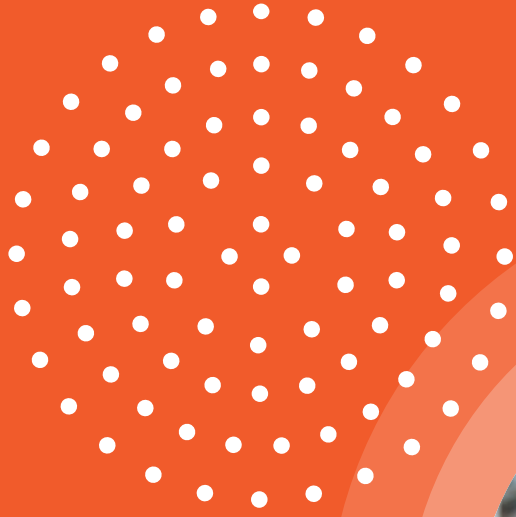
What we achieved

**785k** plan upgrades in 6 months

**137%** higher CTR for RCS over SMS

**37%** higher conversion rate for RCS over SMS

\*Orders per impressions



06 Tap the RCS riches  
fast with “Grow”



# Limitless RCS campaigns along with any mobile and digital channel via our martech platform

Upstream is one of Google's official messaging partners enabling RCS, and is recognized as one of the key players in the RCS ecosystem by the GSMA<sup>8</sup>. In Brazil, one of the leading RCS markets globally, Upstream is the biggest RCS sender.

The company has developed its martech platform, Grow, to help its customers launch multi-channel marketing campaigns, including RCS, along with e-mail, SMS, and more. **Grow is a multi-channel technology-enabled performance marketing platform built for mobile operators, advertisers, and brands that maximizes actions, simplifies user experience and makes campaigns more efficient.** Within a single environment, users can design, orchestrate, deliver, and monitor versatile and innovative campaigns, employing RCS messages in conjunction with almost any other marketing channel.



**The platform also offers advanced capabilities that enable faster and more informed decision making, with deep insights, analysis, and audience management.** These capabilities also allow the implementation of high conversion strategies, incorporating user identification, targeting, and retargeting across different channels.

<sup>8</sup> GSMA Future Networks, "The RCS Ecosystem", Accessed 20.4.2022

To help manage the complexity of multi-channel campaigns and boost their effectiveness, Grow brings powerful automation capabilities that deliver scale while drastically decreasing effort.

For instance, marketers using Grow can set up retargeting campaigns that are automatically triggered by certain user actions across multiple channels. For those looking to further reduce operational overheads, Grow offers a managed service for end-to-end campaign management from Upstream's team of experts.

**Leading platform in mobile engagement and marketing automation.**

**gr::w**

CRM Awareness Campaigns / 1. Plan Upgrades

ADD NODE

Recently used

- RCS
  - Text
  - Image
  - Video
  - Rich Card
  - Carousel
- SMS
  - Text

Workflow: Text SMS → Timer → Rich Card RCS

External connect

Total Users (All Channels): 140.6m

Avg. Engagement (All Channels): 24.5%

Channel	Percentage
SMS	30%
RCS	25%
Web	14%
Email	11%
WhatsApp	7%
MMS	7%
Captive Portal	4%
Viber	2%

Total Users (RCS): 23.6m (42.5% Engaged Users)

10.2m Engaged Users

Smartphone Message: Hello #{msisdn} - 50% OFF! UPGRADE YOU PLAN & GET A BRAND NEW HANDSET 50% OFF! Get 10GB + 100mins only for 35 euros. I want it | Learn more

## Seamlessly running multiple campaigns

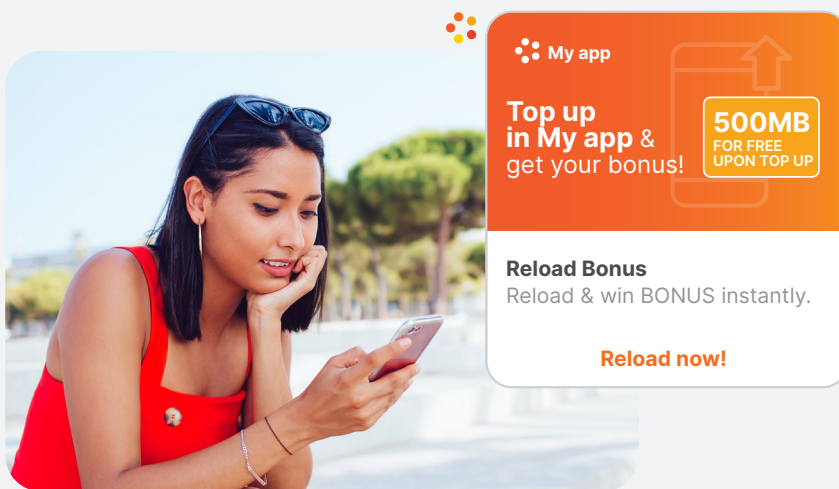
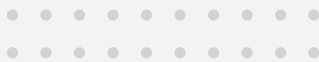


A leading mobile operator in Brazil, running a dynamic marketing calendar, wanted to run multiple RCS campaigns both for its own services and on behalf of various enterprise clients. The goal of these campaigns was to increase awareness and overall traffic by sending users to the MNO's portal for maximum conversions. However, this campaign was creating unwanted overheads for the operator and straining internal marketing resources. To overcome these challenges, the operator selected Upstream and Grow as their managed service solution.

### Our approach

Using the Grow managed service drastically streamlined the operator's campaign management and allowed the team to run more than **76 campaigns** targeting a range of customer segments in a single month.

These included enrollments to a college, credit card sales, downloads, and subscriptions to a music app, and the operator's own recharge services, among many others.



**~80%**  
average delivery rate,  
reaching up to 90%  
on certain campaigns

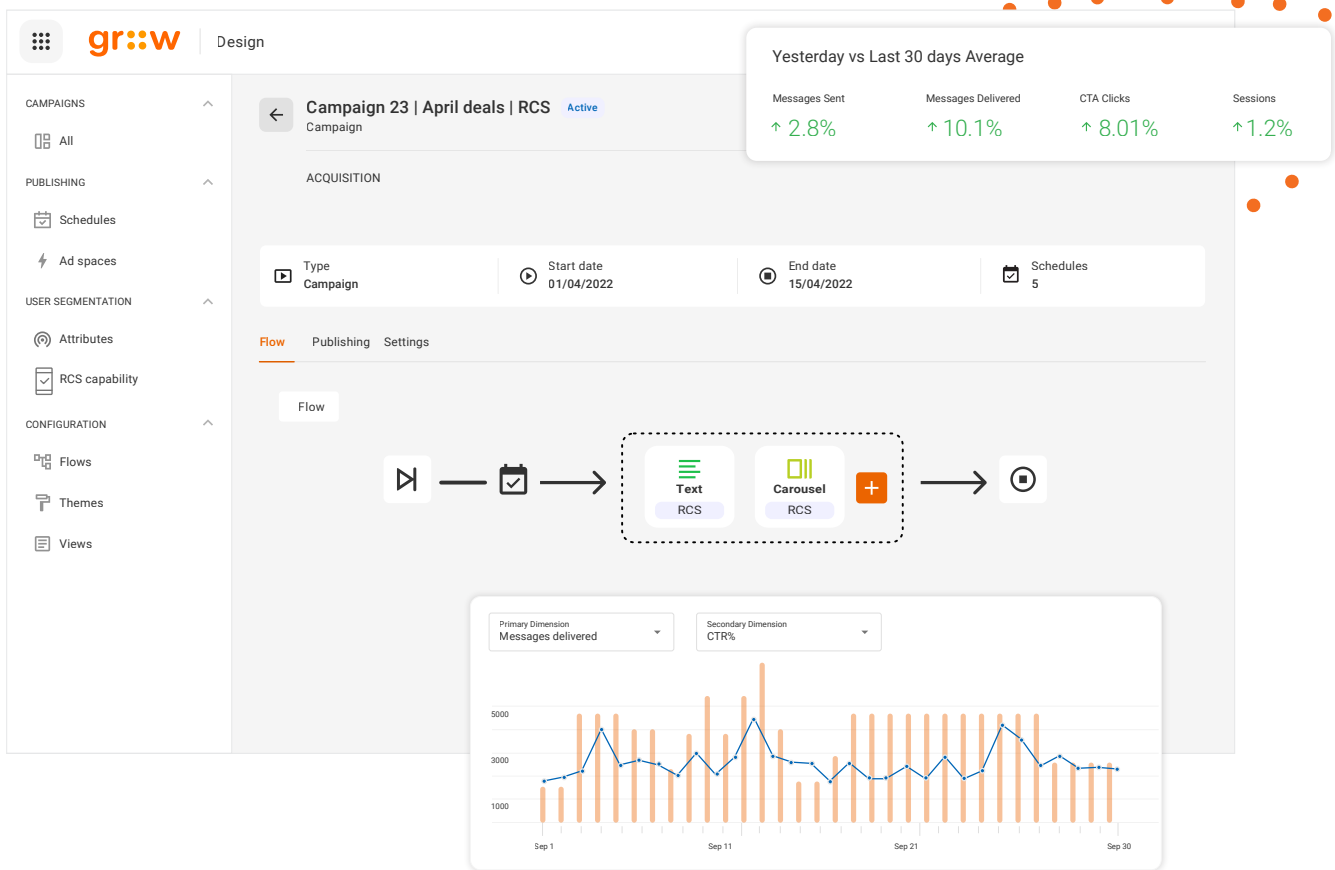
**2.78%**  
average CTR

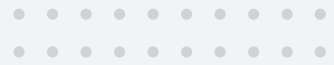
**705,326,885**  
communications  
sent out

**548,120,607**  
communications  
delivered

Despite the platform's advanced capabilities, it is also available as Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), it is extremely user-friendly, and does not require any coding expertise.

It requires little-to-no training for the in-house marketing team, with no need for a developer or technical person with programming or design knowledge to get involved. Training and support sessions are available for users who need to unlock the more advanced capabilities of the platform with confidence.





## End-to-end management for all campaigns via one SaaS platform

A leading MNO in Brazil was searching for a unified marketing platform to manage all of its RCS campaigns and create a better experience for customers. However, it was concerned about scalability and operational complexity.

### A custom technology solution

The solution came in the form of Upstream's mobile marketing automation platform, Grow. This gave the company the ability to handle limitless RCS campaigns (MNO core offerings, advertising, and value-added services) through one user interface, accessible via a web browser. The latter meant that no complex installations or setups were needed.

Grow's SaaS user model was invaluable to the operator as it could build and automate all of its marketing campaigns with minimal complexity. Grow was complementary to the operator's existing marketing automation platform, which managed SMS and e-mail but did not have the ability to integrate with RCS.

Upstream's solution can work seamlessly with other existing martech tools to help customers optimize their marketing efforts.

A complete manual and training session also helped the MNO increase its expertise on how to use the platform, leverage best-in-class reporting for all of its campaigns, and perform copy and creative optimizations for every communication sent via RCS.



**An SaaS offering to create, manage, and run effective multi-channel campaigns via a single platform.**

### What we achieved

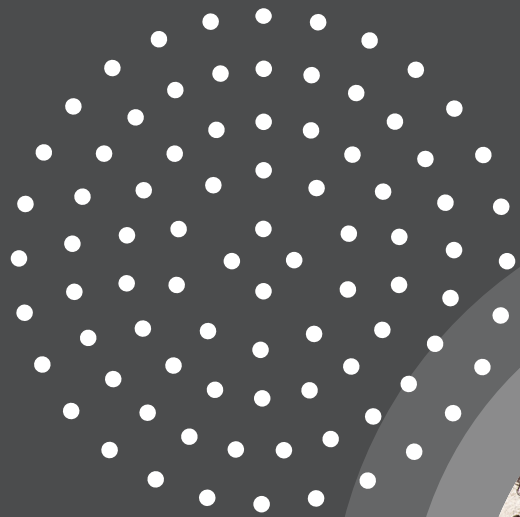
**>600** campaigns run

**>164m** messages sent

**84%** average delivery rate

Up to **7%** CTR on VAS related campaigns\*

\*3.5% average CTR



# 07 Outlook

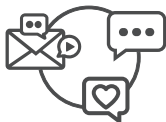
# Tapping into a rich resource that can amplify your marketing comms

The number of RCS users worldwide is increasing and is set to reach billions over the next few years. Major operators and brands can't miss the chance to align themselves behind the technology, as the success of RCS campaigns to date has proved.

Customers appreciate the targeted, personalized, two-way, and transparent communications that the RCS platform affords.



**MNOs have the most to gain** from RCS, as it is a channel connected directly to mobile users via their MSISDN, a resource MNOs are solely in charge of. The upcoming demise of third-party cookies by Google only reinforces this position. Operators can now augment their efforts to engage with mobile users to promote their own services, but, more importantly, they can become **a major marketing partner for brands**, tapping into a solid, future-proof revenue stream. Global operator revenue from RCS is expected to skyrocket over the next few years.




Operators, advertisers and brands can turbo-charge the **effectiveness of their multi-channel marketing campaigns through the many advanced RCS features**. Operators building their own RCS capabilities and adding RCS to their conversational marketing mix gain a competitive edge. **“What technologies and platforms do I need to design, deliver, and report on my RCS campaigns?”** is the question for marketers to answer now.



Upstream's mobile marketing automation platform, **Grow, enables acquisitions and conversions at scale, in a simple and easy-to-use interface**. With one platform you can have a clear view of users' flow, in any level of the funnel, apply different tactics for each level, optimize results, and have no worries about the validity of the acquisitions reported.

With Grow available both as a managed service, ready to plug and play, or as an SaaS solution controlled in-house, Upstream's martech platform is already delivering top results making the most of what RCS has to offer.



**Grow enables you to deliver well-orchestrated marketing automation and campaign optimization.**

## About Upstream

**Upstream is a leading technology company in mobile marketing** in some of the most promising and rapidly growing markets in the world. It is the go-to partner for companies across industries seeking to achieve digital growth.

Upstream's proprietary mobile marketing automation platform, Grow, combines innovations in the field of marketing automation, multi-channel digital communications, data collection and analysis, user identification, and security from online advertising fraud. These capabilities create personalized experiences for end consumers leading to higher customer engagement and satisfaction, and better monetization.

Through the platform, all the different communication channels are controlled via a single UI. Any company deploying Grow is guaranteed a high ROI, paying for actual results based on the goals set. Grow is available both as a managed service and as SaaS.

Upstream currently works with **over one hundred MNOs** and e-Commerce, Insurance, Banking, Education, Retail and FMCG **companies across Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and South-East Asia.**

For more information on how you can leverage RCS and other mobile and digital channels to drive customer acquisitions and engagement, visit: <https://www.upstreamsystems.com> or send an email to [global-sales@upstreamsystems.com](mailto:global-sales@upstreamsystems.com)

