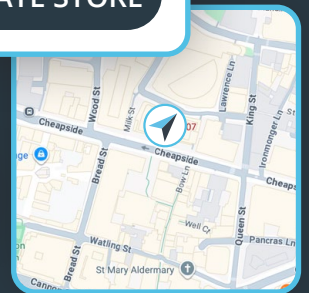
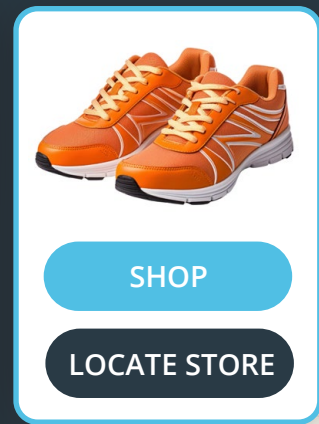
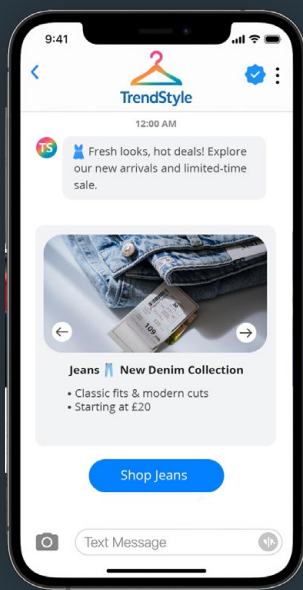


RCS:

The future of business messaging



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The evolution of business messaging

Philosopher Marshall McLuhan's well-known statement about how the medium is the message, which he made to illustrate how changes in the form of communication have the power to reshape society faster than the content itself, has arguably never rung truer than it does today.

From early radio and TV advertising to the introduction of email marketing and SMS marketing, there have been huge advancements in the technology organisations use to communicate with their audiences.

Yet, it is not just the tools used to communicate that have played a role in reshaping society. Society's attitudes have also changed, too. People now expect organisations to communicate with them in a way that is relevant, clear, trustworthy and easy to respond to.

Whilst SMS is still widely regarded as an essential communications channel, its limitations mean that it does not fully align with an audience that increasingly expects more.

However, Rich Communications Services (RCS) is the evolution of SMS; a communications tool that builds on SMS's reach but adds several crucial aspects that customers now require as part of their user experience including branded messages, interactivity and verified sender status.

The result? A channel that enables organisations to send clearer messages, drive stronger engagement and build trust at a much deeper level.

This paper explains what RCS is, highlights why organisations should now be integrating it as part of their communications strategy, and demonstrates how Cymba can help businesses and charities adopt this emerging technology in a seamless, effective and low-risk way.



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The new rules of messaging

An abundance of channels, new technologies and an omnichannel approach favoured by many businesses and charities means that sending messages is never the challenge. Today's challenge is ensuring that messages are recognised, trusted and inspire engagement.

People have become more discerning in their approach to messaging. Not just how they receive them, but also how they interact with them, too.

As a result, a new set of rules has emerged.

Engagement requires trust

In today's environment, if a recipient can't immediately establish who a message is from, then they are less likely to engage with it.

According to Ofcom, half of mobile users said they received a suspicious message between November 2024 and February 2025, and an estimated 100 million suspicious messages were reported to mobile operators in the year to April 2025¹.

Within increasingly risky messaging environments, trust and verification is not only a pathway to engagement, but also a competitive advantage.

Quality, not quantity

Audiences don't want more messages. They want better ones.

Messages that clearly state which business or charity they're from, why they've been sent and include dynamic content such as video, polls or carousels resonate more deeply than unverified, plain text messages.

Media Richness Theory² explains why this matters: communication that includes visual, audio, or interactive elements is fundamentally more effective at conveying meaning than lean text alone.

Frictionless communication is effective communication

People no longer have the time or inclination to enter into complicated flows, be directed to unknown links or put effort into communicating with businesses and charities.

They expect to engage with ease. And the easier it becomes, the safer it feels.

Messaging expectations have changed, and it's the organisations who change to meet audience expectations that will succeed.

Content that's trustworthy, engaging and easy to interact with is today's priority. And it's these three areas that RCS neatly addresses.



People don't want to think of themselves as names and numbers on a database; they want to be communicated with in a real and meaningful way. Whether it's through personalised videos, quick action buttons that allow you to take action in response to something you've seen in the click of a button, or carefully crafted animation, RCS facilitates that."

Steve Mathieson, Cymba Product Lead

1. [Ofcom](#), New rules to protect people and businesses against mobile messaging scams
2. [EBSCO](#), Media Richness Theory



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RCS explained

RCS messaging is the next generation of messaging.

An evolution of SMS, RCS enables businesses and charities to deliver on-brand, secure and interactive content directly to their customers' and supporters' phones.

Unlike SMS messages, which are plain text-based and can't be verified, RCS messages carry the verified sender badge and have the ability to be:

- Secure
- Content-rich
- Multimedia-led
- Interactive

For example, RCS message recipients can easily determine who has sent the message, as it is presented in the company's branding and carries the verified sender stamp.

RCS's versatility also means that messages can be interactive through the inclusion of quick reaction buttons, polls and 'buy now' buttons. Its ability to incorporate an array of video-driven content also supports more emotive, longer-form and richer messaging.

As RCS facilitates two-way messaging, reactions to RCS messages enable organisations to build a clearer picture of their audience; from purchase or donation history to location, membership tiers or browsing behaviour, organisations can use RCS messaging to send personalised and more relevant content.

Importantly, RCS does not require a third-party app, which means that multi-media, personalised and secure messages can be sent directly to – and received natively in – the recipient's default messaging inbox.

RCS: the highlights

Read rates

75 – 85%

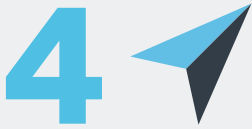
Click-through rates

15 – 30%

Conversion rates

20 – 40%





Why RCS's adoption matters now

A tale of two operating systems

RCS made its debut in 2017, and has been gaining momentum as a channel ever since.

Its use was initially limited to Android users only, following Apple's decision not to support the technology. Given how 54 per cent of smartphone users aged 16 and over reported using an Apple iPhone as their primary device in 2025, compared with 45 per cent of Android users³, it meant that over half UK users could not receive RCS messages.

However, this changed in November 2023⁴ following an announcement by Apple, which stated that it would support RCS. This change came into effect with the release of iOS 18 in September 2024, which enabled iOS users to send and receive RCS messages⁵.

Now that there is parity between iOS and Android in the context of RCS, the technology's uptake is expected to rapidly increase in 2026. Indeed, the penetration rate of RCS in the UK has increased from 35 per cent before Apple's adoption to 70 per cent after⁶.



RCS currently reaches around 50 million users in the UK, covering roughly 74-75 per cent of mobile users. This is a significant portion of the UK, which has grown as a result of Apple's recent decision to support RCS on iPhone. As RCS is now supported on both Android and Apple platforms, it suggests that it's only going one way."

Rich Mullens, Director at Cymba

RCS: 2026 and beyond

Apple's decision to support RCS is a transformative development – and one that will advance the technology at a foundational level.

In the UK alone, RCS traffic grew by around 65 per cent in 2024⁷ following Apple's update, paving the way for future growth as the key platform barrier is no longer present.

By 2029, RCS is expected to account for 18 per cent of global operator business messaging revenue, which would account for a 6 x increase from 3 per cent in 2024⁸.

On a global level, by 2035 the global RCS market is expected to reach \$28.2 billion with an annual compound growth rate of 12.17 per cent⁹.

3. Ofcom, Online Nation, Report 2025
4. The Guardian, Apple agrees to improve texting between iPhones and Androids
5. Ofcom, Vodafone's Business messaging – Review of the A2P SMS termination market
6. Infobip, Key RCS statistics & market insights for 2026
7. Infobip, Infobip research reveals surge in UK brands' adoption of RCS
8. Juniper Research, RCS to Generate 18% of Operator Business Messaging Revenue by 2029
9. Market Research Future, Rich Communication Service Market



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However, this exponential uptake is not solely being driven by the organisations operating commercially in this space. The audience is embracing it, too.

Research suggests that:

88%

Of consumers trust a message more if it's displayed with a verified company badge or checkmark

70%

Of consumers say RCS makes them more likely to communicate with a brand

35x

Customers are 35x more likely to read RCS messages than emails



Through the proliferation of rich messaging, channels such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and RCS Business Messaging mean that when it comes to communication, the customer has the potential to be engaged and empowered like never before."

Spike Bowen, Head of Account Management UK and Ireland, CM.com



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Unlocking potential through RCS

Messaging plays a pivotal role in communication between organisations and their audience. In the UK alone, 90 per cent receive at least one commercial message each week.

Conversely, one survey highlighted how 70 per cent of UK consumers have received scam messages appearing to come from a trusted source, which suggests that brand recognition and verification, both of which are supported by RCS, are now more important than ever.

Given how RCS messages incorporate brand identity within every message sent by an organisation, the technology has the power to unlock a deeper level of trust from its recipient. In turn, this is likely to increase confidence in the sender, remove security-led barriers to engagement and foster an environment that supports authentic, two-way messaging.

Evolving with the times

Since 1992, SMS has been the backbone of mobile messaging. Since 2003, it's been a pivotal channel for marketing. However, today's audience expect more than just plain text. They want:

- Clear communication they can trust
- To be engaged with the content they receive
- Easier ways in which to respond to messages

In the 33 years since SMS first launched, mobile messaging has advanced, enhanced and evolved.

RCS represents that evolution and unlocks multiple opportunities for organisations sending RCS messages and those receiving them, whilst increasing engagement levels in tandem with reducing friction and complexity.



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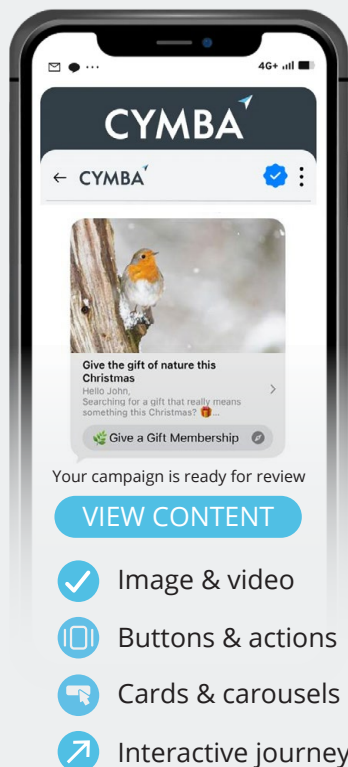
10. [Mobile Ecosystem Forum](#), Business Messaging Customer Survey 2024

11. [Comms Council UK](#)

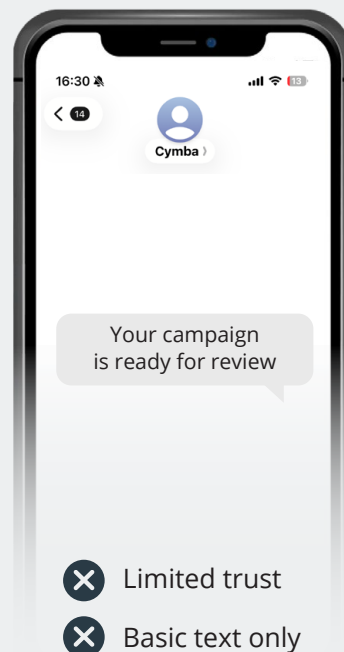
At a glance: RCS vs SMS

Feature	RCS	SMS
Rich media (high quality video, quick action buttons and carousels)	✓	✗
Verified sender status (incorporate branding and security into each message)	✓	✗
File transfer (i.e. PDFs and Word documents)	✓	✗
Read receipts	✓	✗
Typing indicators (see when someone is typing a response/interacting)	✓	✗
Location sharing within the messaging app	✓	✗
Video calls within the messaging app	✓	✗
Group messaging	✓	Carrier dependent
Character limit	Up to 8,000 characters per message	160 characters

Full RCS



SMS (Traditional)



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Cymba's approach to RCS

CYMBA has built an RCS messaging platform based on three key pillars:

 SECURE	 CONNECTED	 ENGAGING
VERIFIED & TRUSTED	NATIVE INBOX EXPERIENCE	RICH, MEASURABLE INTERACTIONS
<p>Verified sender badge Recipients know messages are genuinely from your brand</p> <hr/> <p>Reduced spoofing risk RCS is less vulnerable to spoofing due to its enhanced security features</p> <hr/> <p>Inspire confidence Build trust with every message delivered</p>	<p>Seamlessly integrated RCS's native messaging across Android and iOS means recipients can access your messages via their default message inbox</p> <hr/> <p>Managed within the message Native messaging means that your audience can engage, converse and interact without even leaving the message</p> <hr/> <p>Trackable engagement Measure clicks and interactions - in real time</p>	<p>Actionable rich content Drive conversions with videos, images and carousels</p> <hr/> <p>Interactive experiences Encourage recipient involvement via polls, quizzes and quick action buttons</p> <hr/> <p>Personalised communication - at scale Create tailored, interactive content based on behaviour, location and preference – regardless of your audience's size</p>



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RCS use cases

RSPB

Background:

The Big Garden Birdwatch provides a snapshot of how the UK's birds are faring. It's the world's largest garden wildlife survey, which takes place every year and enables RSPB to establish trends over time.

As part of the charity's campaign to ensure maximum uptake amongst its members, it had been using SMS to issue reminders to the UK public to take part, submit their findings and discover the results.

In 2022, they decided to pilot RCS.

The challenge:

Anecdotal evidence suggested that SMS wasn't generating high enough engagement, as the short links weren't securing the level of click-throughs required by the charity.

Using RCS, Cymba introduced imagery and quick reaction buttons across RSPB's campaign outreach.

The result:

Response rates increased by 54 per cent*. The charity has since used RCS every year for its Big Garden Birdwatch campaign, and has subsequently rolled out RCS across other campaigns including its Christmas gift promotion.

RSPCA

Background:

The charity wanted to increase its revenue through Gift Aid claims, which required supporters to complete an online form.

However, SMS wasn't engaging the level of people it required due to the perceived risks associated with clicking on unrecognised short links.

Additionally, RSPCA wished to increase the amount of supporter information it held and secure consent from members around receiving communication on future campaigns.

The challenge:

Supporters receiving SMS messages weren't clicking through to the Gift Aid form page as the links weren't viewed as trusted or secure, which was costing the charity in missed Gift Aid revenue.

Incorporating RCS as part of its outreach, Cymba was able to boost trust by demonstrating verified sender status. It also made the transition to the Gift Aid form, from the recipients' devices, frictionless through the inclusion of quick reaction buttons and imagery that supported the message.

The result:

Click-through rates increased by 54 per cent*, Gift Aid revenue increased and the charity was able to secure consent from recipients for future marketing campaigns. RSPB is now planning to adopt RCS across additional campaigns throughout 2026.



The transition from standard SMS to RCS was remarkably smooth, allowing us to immediately upgrade our campaign with branded imagery and interactive buttons without any technical friction. It has effortlessly become a core part of our Big Garden Birdwatch strategy, providing a more modern experience for our supporters."

Chris Madden, Senior Direct Marketing Manager at RSPB



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Picking the right partner

Businesses and charities that decide to integrate RCS messaging into their communications mix are making a strategic shift in the way they engage with their audience – but getting it right is imperative.

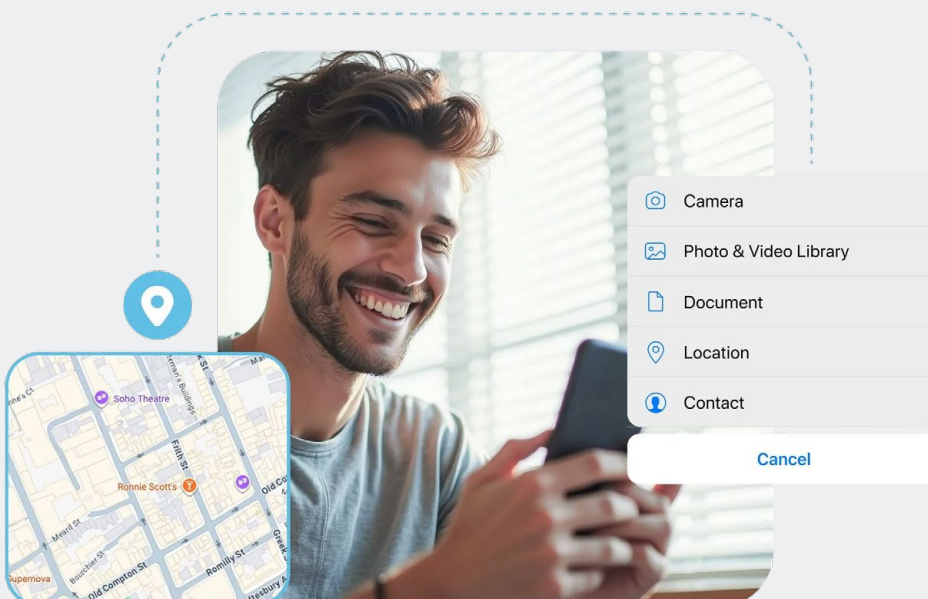
New channels always bring new challenges, so choosing an RCS platform provider is the first step in the process.

With over 20 years of experience in mobile messaging, Cymba helps organisations adopt RCS with confidence. We do this by:

- Working with our clients to secure verified sender status
- Developing their rich media offering by facilitating video, interactive buttons and carousels across their communications outreach
- Ensuring that their RCS messaging ecosystem connects with their CRM and payment platforms so that every campaign is measurable, manageable and efficient

Working to data privacy rules and within regulatory frameworks, Cymba's team of RCS messaging experts can:

- Advise on messaging and features to ensure that RCS messages resonate with their intended audience
- Test and refine campaigns to maximise engagement
- Track, analyse and measure a wide range of variables, from clicks and conversions through to purchases and donations



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The future of business messaging is here

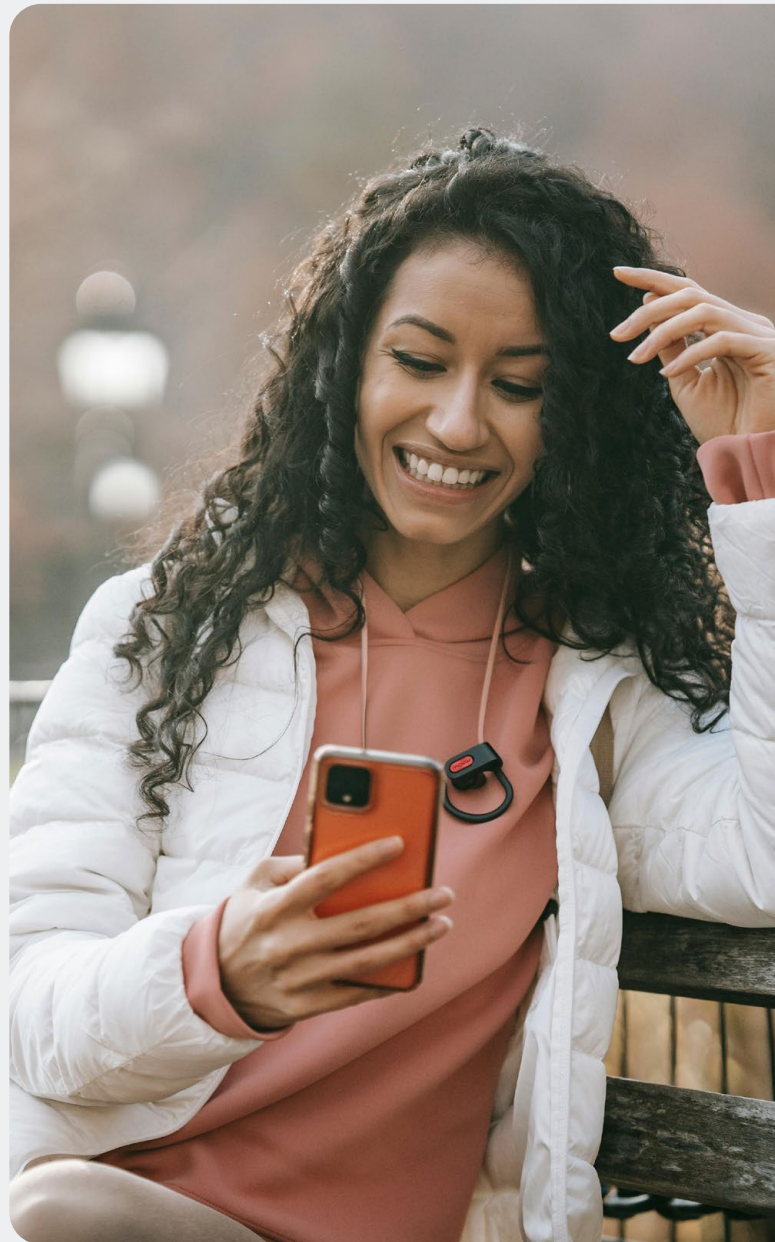
RCS messaging is the next generation of business messaging – a point that has only been reinforced by Apple’s recent decision to support it.

It’s not a concept, or a technology in its infancy; it’s the natural next step for organisations – whether they’re businesses or charities – to take in order to provide a richer experience for their customers and supporters.

From an audience perspective, RCS messaging allows organisations to communicate in a way that can be trusted, interactive and engaging. From the organisation’s perspective, every interaction can be measured and used to inform future campaign messaging.

The tools are available, the world’s two major operating systems support it, and the audience craves communication in a way that SMS alone can no longer support. Moreover, verified and branded messaging is quickly becoming the expected standard, not simply a nice to have.

RCS messaging is the evolution of SMS, and organisations that embrace it today will be the ones who cut through the noise, earn trust and succeed tomorrow.



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Is your organisation RCS-ready?

Let us help you find out

Book a short RCS discovery session by contacting Cymba
on [0845 0829622](tel:08450829622) or texting CYMBA to [88008](tel:88008)* and we'll call you back.

CYMBA 