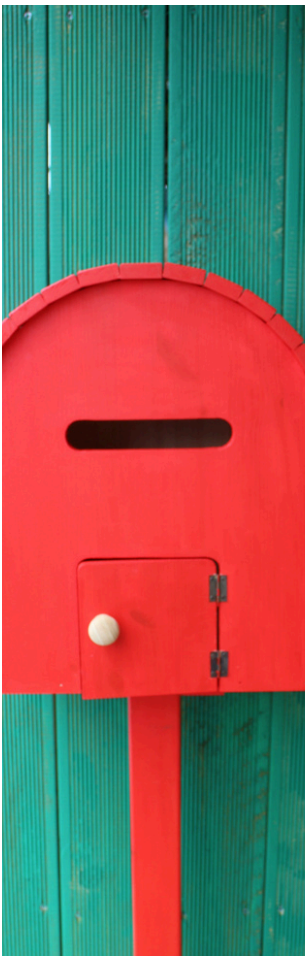
4 quick wins for Middle East Retail CMOs to boost customer reach

Direct7 Networks

www.d7networks.com

20–25%: average email open rates in Middle East retail

Hubspot/Campaign Monitor



8 out of 10 promotional emails never get opened. Customers are overwhelmed with offers and expect communication that is faster, more personal, and delivered directly to the device they use most - their phone.

For Middle East retailers, the challenges are already visible:

- **Email fatigue**: open rates too low to justify heavy investment.
- **Rising expectations**: shoppers expect instant updates and real-time interactions through WhatsApp.
- **Seasonal pressure**: during peaks like White Friday or Ramadan sales, every channel is saturated and many messages fail to reach customers.

Retailers need tools that combine reach, immediacy, and interactivity. Direct-to-carrier SMS and WhatsApp Business messaging already outperform email, and by 2026 they will be essential for any serious retail communication strategy.

This guide presents 4 quick wins that Retail CMOs can apply now to prepare for the seasons ahead.

Quick Win #1 – Use SMS for critical communication

SMS remains the most reliable channel for time-sensitive messages. While emails often go unseen, SMS is opened almost instantly. For Middle East retailers, it continues to be the backbone of essential customer communication in 2025.

✓ **Where SMS makes the difference**

- OTPs and secure login codes for e-commerce platforms
- Order confirmations and delivery updates across GCC logistics networks
- Flash sales or limited-time Ramadan and White Friday offers
- Service alerts such as delivery delays or payment confirmations

✓ **Why SMS works**

- With open rates consistently above 95%, SMS guarantees visibility when every second counts.
- Messages reach customers directly on their phones — no internet connection or app required.
- In the Middle East, where mobile penetration exceeds 95%, SMS ensures universal coverage and immediate attention.

✓ **Tips for CMOs**

- Keep messages short and focused on immediate action.
- Reserve SMS for urgent or high-value use cases rather than daily marketing pushes.
- Track delivery and response rates to optimise timing during peak campaigns.

Quick Win #2 – Use WhatsApp for engagement and sales

In the Middle East, WhatsApp isn't just popular - it's universal. With adoption rates above 85% in markets like the UAE and Saudi Arabia, it has already become the natural space for customer interaction. By 2026, it will be the region's standard channel for conversational commerce. Customers use it every day to communicate with friends and family, and they now expect the same convenience when interacting with brands.

✓ **Best use cases for WhatsApp in retail**

- Promotional campaigns: send personalised offers with higher open and click-through rates than email.
- Cart recovery: remind customers about abandoned baskets with a conversational tone.
- Customer support: reduce pressure on call centres by handling common requests directly in chat.
- Engagement: share images, videos, and rich links to make offers more appealing.

✓ **Why WhatsApp works**

- Open rates often reach 90–99%, with 15–40% click-through, far above any other channel.
- Customers reply instantly, turning one-way promotions into real conversations.
- Retailers using WhatsApp for customer service see up to 25% fewer support tickets during peak campaigns like White Friday or Ramadan sales.

✓ **Tips for CMOs**

- Keep the tone personal and conversational - not broadcast-style.
- Use rich media (images, short videos) to showcase new arrivals or exclusive deals.
- Test timing and frequency carefully: too many messages can lead to opt-outs, while well-timed reminders drive conversions.

Quick Win #3 – Combine SMS + WhatsApp for maximum ROI

+15–20%: increase in recovered abandoned carts when retailers use both SMS and WhatsApp

SMS and WhatsApp deliver the best results when they work together. In the Middle East, where mobile usage exceeds 95%, combining the two ensures both reach and interaction. SMS provides instant visibility for time-sensitive alerts, while WhatsApp drives richer engagement through personalized and conversational experiences.

✓ **How the two channels complement each other**

- SMS for urgency: reach every customer instantly during White Friday or Ramadan flash sales.
- WhatsApp for engagement: follow up with rich content, product images, and one-to-one conversations that convert.
- Together: create a seamless journey that starts with immediate visibility and ends with interaction and loyalty.

✓ **Example sequence in retail**

- SMS: "Flash sale starts now. Check your exclusive offer here [link]."
- WhatsApp: personalized follow-up with product image, discount code, and a button to buy.
- WhatsApp: automated reminder if the cart is abandoned, with a short incentive to complete the purchase.

✓ **Why this works**

- SMS ensures the message is seen.
- WhatsApp provides space to continue the conversation and answer questions.
- Combining the two boosts both reach and conversion - especially during high-traffic campaigns like White Friday or Eid promotions.

✓ **Tips for CMOs**

- Do not duplicate content across SMS and WhatsApp. Give each channel a clear role.
- Use SMS strategically to drive customers into WhatsApp, where richer interactions happen.
- Test different flows (promo → support → cart recovery) and measure conversion uplift across both channels.

Quick Win #4 – Optimize support with conversational messaging

25%: reduction in customer support tickets after adding WhatsApp handoffs

✓ **How conversational messaging improves support**

- WhatsApp for FAQs: handle simple, recurring questions (opening hours, return policies, delivery status) directly in chat.
- Proactive updates: notify customers about orders, deliveries, or delays before they contact support.
- Seamless handoffs: when issues require a human agent, WhatsApp allows a smooth transfer without breaking the conversation.

✓ **Why it matters for CMOs**

- Reducing ticket volume lowers costs and allows support teams to focus on complex cases.
- Frictionless experiences build trust and strengthen retention - crucial in markets driven by repeat customers and word-of-mouth.
- During peaks like White Friday, Ramadan, or Eid, proactive updates prevent backlogs and protect brand reputation.

✓ **Practical tips for CMOs**

- Start with proactive updates (order shipped, delivery confirmed) before scaling to automated FAQs.
- Connect support and marketing workflows: a promo campaign can trigger both sales and questions, so channels should stay aligned.
- Measure beyond conversion - track resolution times, satisfaction scores, and re-engagement rates after support interactions.

Turning quick wins into real impact

All these quick wins — SMS for critical updates, WhatsApp for engagement, combining both for ROI, and reducing support with conversational messaging — only work if the underlying infrastructure is strong enough. Otherwise, even the best strategies fail when volumes surge or delivery performance drops.

This is where D7 makes the difference.

- **Reach**: direct operator connections across the Middle East and GCC ensure SMS delivery rates above 97%, without relying on unstable third-party routes.
- **Reliability**: OTPs succeed in 99% of finance use cases with low latency, and the platform maintains 99.9% uptime even during White Friday or Ramadan peaks.
- **Scale**: more than 1.8 million messages per month are already processed across regions without disruption.

- **Engagement**: WhatsApp campaigns through D7 reach 90–99% open rates and 15–40% CTR, far beyond what email can achieve.
- **Speed to market**: simple APIs and fast onboarding make it possible to activate SMS and WhatsApp in days instead of weeks.
- **Support**: 24/7 availability ensures help is there when campaigns are live and the pressure is highest.

For Middle East retail CMOs, these are not technical details. They are the conditions that turn strategy into measurable ROI. Without this backbone, quick wins remain theory. With D7, they become reality.

If you want to see how these quick wins can be applied to your campaigns, book a call with our team. We will walk you through regional benchmarks, share best practices from retail leaders across the GCC, and show how to activate SMS and WhatsApp for your brand within days.

Book a demo