

Six SMS Trends That Will Define Marketing in 2026

Community releases industry outlook as brands shift from one-way blasts to meaningful, two-way relationships

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Today, [Community](#), the leading conversational engagement platform, released its Top 6 SMS Trends of 2026,

highlighting how direct messaging channels are evolving from simple marketing tools into full-fledged relationship layers between brands, creators, organizations, and their audiences



Community Logo

SMS is entering a new era. As email performance declines, social algorithms tighten reach, and



Companies are realizing that two-way engagement delivers higher loyalty, affinity, and lifetime value.”

Jeremy Schultz

third-party cookies disappear, brands and creators are turning to the most personal, most used channel in their consumers’ lives: text messaging. But SMS can no longer be treated like email. Mass blast tactics pushed into audiences’ pockets is losing effectiveness. Today it’s about building trust with an audience that wants to hear from you.

“Direct messaging channels like SMS, MMS and other rich channels are the most personal and valuable communication channels consumers use daily,” said Jeremy Schultz, CEO of Community. “But brands must respect that intimacy. Treating direct messaging like another generic broadcast channel will do more harm than good. The brands that win will use it to create authentic, human communication.”

Below are 6 trends shaping the future of two-way conversational messaging in 2026:

1. Two-Way Messaging Overtakes One-Way Blasts

The most effective SMS programs in 2026 will be conversational. Those that treat SMS like email blasts will see diminishing returns and high opt-out rates. Audiences want to respond, ask questions, and engage in dialogue. Two-way messaging will drive higher loyalty, greater lifetime value, and revenue. MMS and other rich channels will support this shift. The paradigm is

changing: SMS is no longer about reaching people, but engaging them.

2. SMS Emerges as the Primary Source of Reliable [Zero-Party Data](#)

As advertising grows more volatile and third-party tracking fades, owned, consent-based data will become essential. With no algorithms or intermediaries between brands and audiences, every SMS interaction generates clean, trustworthy zero-party data. In 2026, SMS will be recognized not just as a messaging channel, but as one of the most valuable data engines in modern marketing.

3. AI and Automation Become Essential for Scaling Personalization

As audiences grow and expectations rise, AI and automation will be critical to maintaining personalization at scale. Brands will increasingly rely on automated flows, branching logic, conversational assistants, and behavior-based journeys to deliver timely, relevant experiences. Rather than replacing human connection, AI will enhance it, allowing SMS programs to feel smarter, more responsive, and more personal, even as they scale.

4. Trust and Consent Become the Gatekeepers of Deliverability

With iOS updates classifying unsaved numbers as “Unknown Senders,” brands must earn their place in a consumer’s inbox. Organizations will need to give audiences a reason to save their contact card and continue engaging. Programs built on “blast and pray” tactics will suffer declining visibility, while those focused on value, relevance, and relationship-building will stand out as trusted senders.

5. SMS Integrates Deeply Into the Marketing Tech Stack

SMS will no longer operate in isolation. It will serve as connective tissue across CRM systems, loyalty platforms, ecommerce engines, help desks, analytics suites, and engagement tools. Brands that integrate SMS data across their stack will unlock deeper personalization, trigger smarter workflows, and maintain a unified view of the customer journey, transforming SMS into a strategic intelligence layer.

6. The Winners Won't Be 'SMS Platforms,' They'll Be 'Fandom Platforms'

The platforms that gain the most market share will evolve beyond message delivery into fan relationship systems. These platforms will help organizations identify, understand, and nurture their most valuable audience segments across the entire relationship lifecycle, from engagement and intent to loyalty and long-term value. This shift reflects a broader industry move from communication to connection.

“When SMS insight is connected with the rest of the marketing stack, brands can finally deliver the level of personalization they’ve long aspired to, but haven’t known how to achieve,” Schultz added.

About Community

Community is the leading two-way customer engagement platform that activates audiences with

unmatched conversational engagement delivered via text messages. It connects businesses, brands, public figures, and creators with their audiences at scale - building trust, capturing insights, and increasing lifetime customer value. Transforming SMS from a transactional tool into a relationship-building channel, Community enables high-intent engagement through meaningful conversations that inspire action.

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