

Getting started with RCS

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What is RCS?

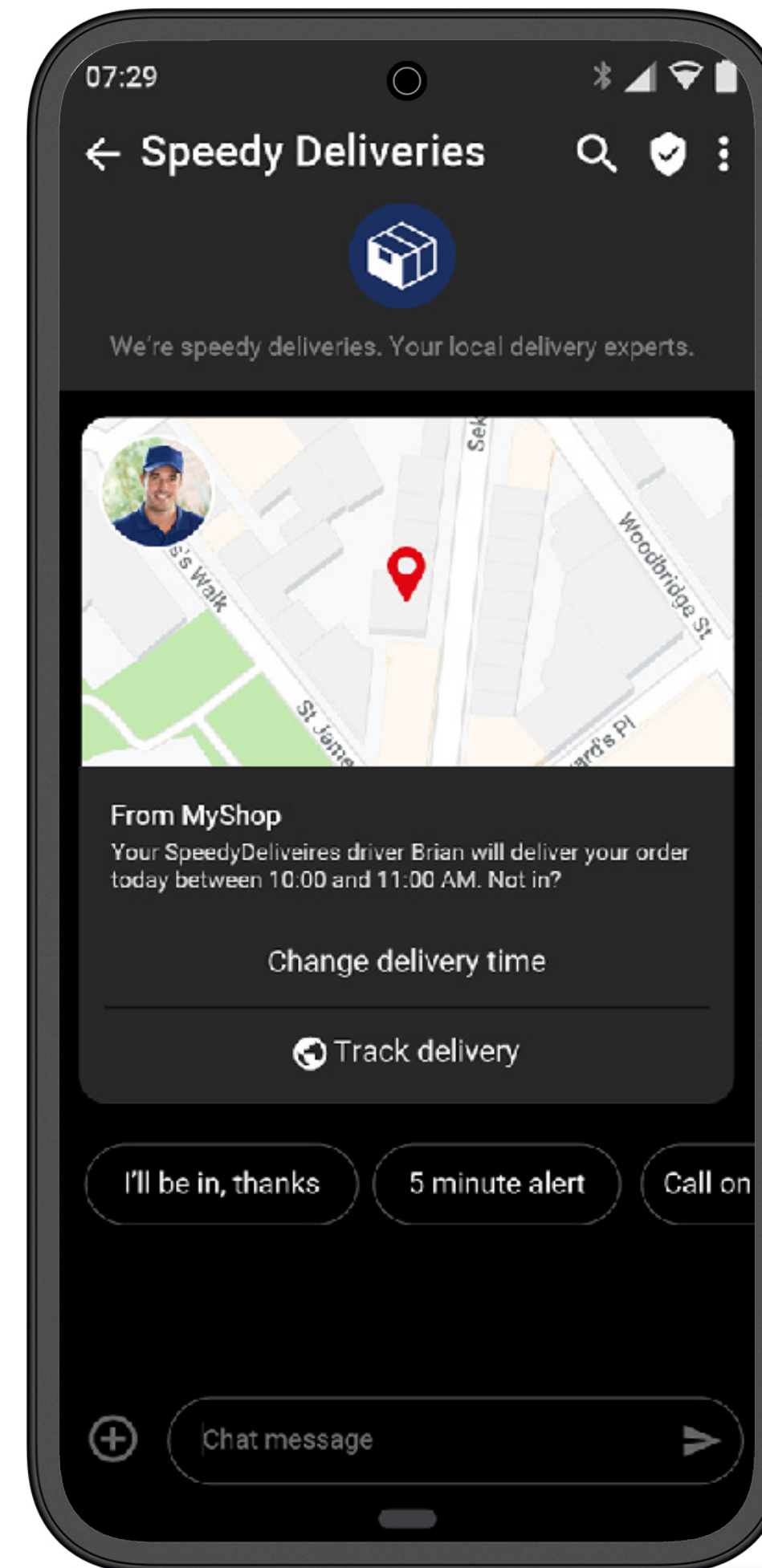
Text messaging has provided an incredible platform from which brands can reach their customers. The ubiquitous reach that connects marketers to every consumer's phone, coupled with a 98% open rate and an average response time measured in minutes provides a channel for driving real-time conversational engagement. However, SMS also comes with its limitations – including a constrained message size, lack of branding, limited media support, and a text-only interface. In order to reach consumers on their mobile devices, brands have filled this gap with apps, push notifications, mobile websites, and email – each of which comes with its own pros and cons.

Apps and push provide a richer experience than text messaging, but you need to market the app and entice users to download it and use it. Mobile web sites deliver rich functionality on smartphones, but don't provide an engagement channel to generate action.

RCS fills the gap between the richness of the app/web experiences and the timeliness and ubiquity of the messaging world. By bringing rich interactions to the default messaging platform, RCS will enable brands to transform the types of conversational interactions with their customers.

As the GSMA describes it, RCS represents the next level of mobile messaging and calling, an upgrade on a global scale. It is a solution which takes traditional voice and SMS and enhances them with instant messaging, chat functionality, photo sharing, live video, video calling, and file sharing across devices on any network and enables new, richer interaction experiences.

And the best bit for consumers is all this new functionality will be embedded in new phones. For users who already have a phone, the next OS update takes care of it.

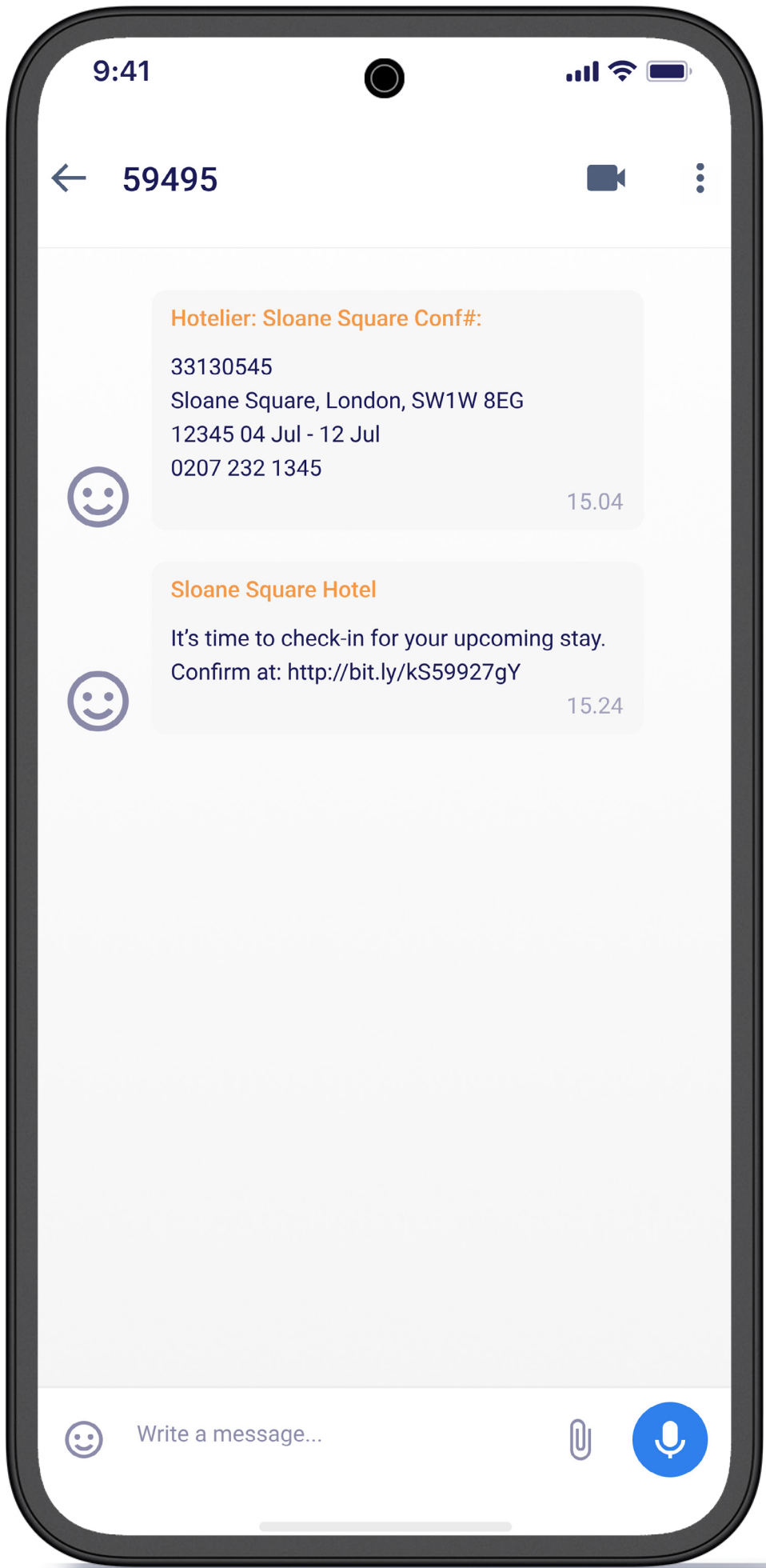


SMS vs RCS

To illustrate this change in the customer experience, consider the interaction presented in Figure 1. This experience shows the enhancements that RCS provides as compared to an existing SMS interaction. The SMS program provides a timely notification to the customer that they can now check-in for their upcoming stay along with all of the relevant information. The RCS experience, on the other hand, provides the same base information in a much more engaging manner – presenting the user with a branded experience.

Additionally, the experience is enhanced through the addition of suggested responses and actions that are presented in the form of chips for ‘Check-In’, ‘Change Room,’ and ‘Contact’. Compare that to the SMS experience where instructional text and a shortened URL are required, or where a user needs to be informed about what to type in response to trigger the next action.

RCS: the new app you won't need to install



Today's experience with SMS

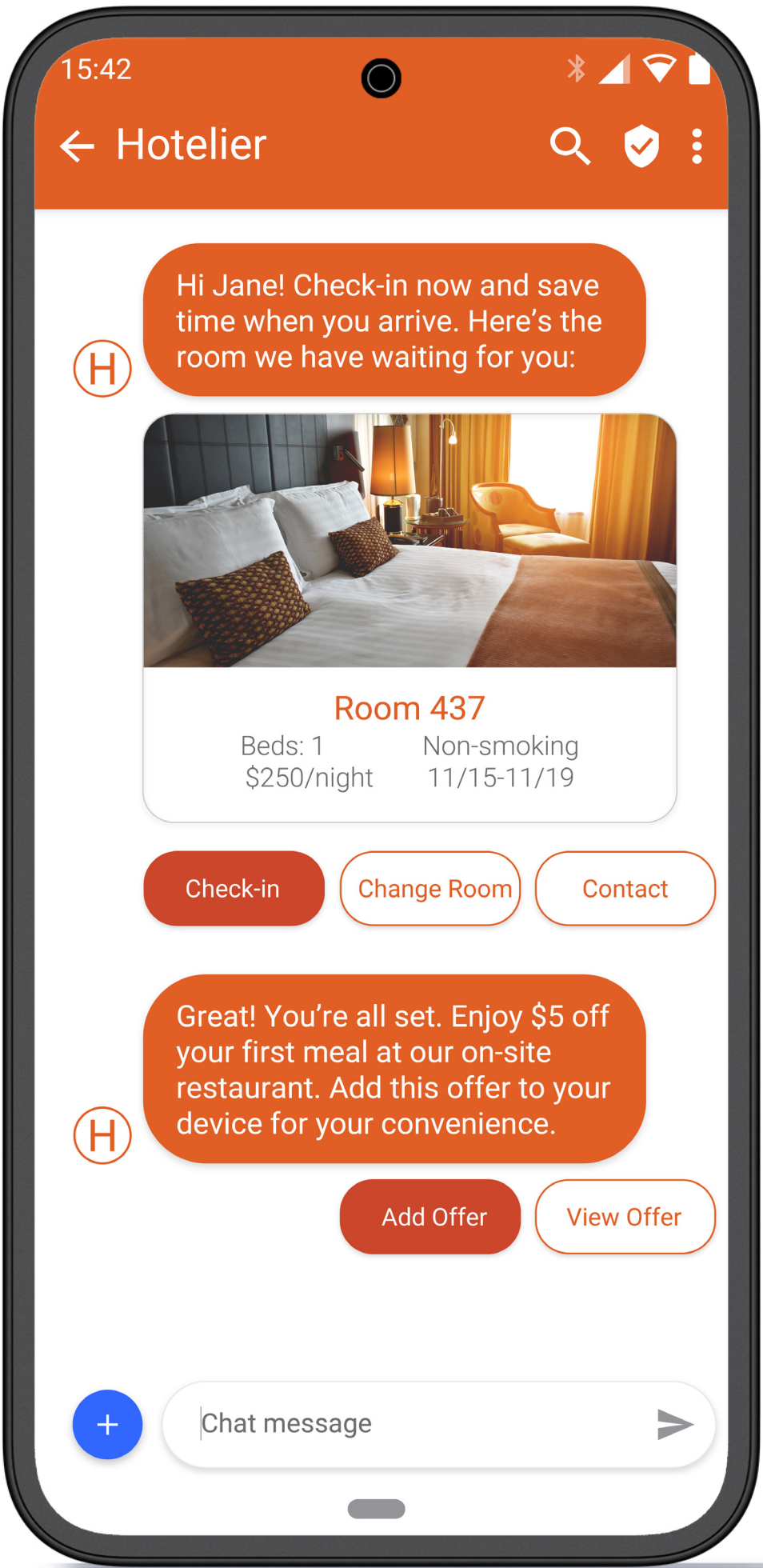
The message comes from the short code 59495 vs the hotel brand

Figure 1: User experience with SMS

The example on the right illustrates some of the new capabilities that are available to brands when using RCS. Brands are starting to leverage these in order to upgrade interactions with their customers. A seasoned digital marketing executive summed it up quite succinctly as a “great way to reduce friction and improve our customer’s experience, all with the technology they know best on their mobile phone.

Because of its ubiquity across devices, familiarity will enable the creation of significantly more advanced conversational applications, which brands can use to interact with their customers. This is important because the market is already moving to embrace conversational interfaces as a means to interact with consumers, and with the deployment of the capabilities of RCS, we expect this rate to accelerate.

Firms are embracing conversational interfaces



Today’s experience with RCS

The message contains the hotel’s logo and colors

Figure 2: User experience with RCS

The components of RCS

One of the barriers that stood in the way of businesses using RCS in the past has been the lack of a unified standard that would work across platforms and carriers. To address the problem, the GSMA Standards Committee, RCS providers, operators, and other contributors introduced the Universal Profile (U.P.), which ensures the same core capabilities across different platforms. This guarantees consumers receive a consistent experience regardless of which phone they own or which carrier they subscribe to.

Now, let's take a closer look at the components that are available to businesses for messaging in RCS.

Branding

There are three main elements associated with the branding available in RCS. First, the naming, which appears at the top of the conversation, can contain text and emojis. Next is the coloration of the title bar and the message bubble. Finally, the brand logo, which will appear in the title and in the conversation window, provides a consistent visual reminder of the brand and reinforces the association between the app and the brand's visual identity.

Verified sender

In order to ensure that branding is only applied to messaging apps that are authorized to use that brand, MaaP providers and carriers are working through an approval process. This will ensure that consumers have confidence when interacting with an app that it actually represents the company it purports to.

Rich Cards and messaging content

RCS messages can contain a number of content formats ranging from free form content, such as text and media (images, video, audio), to structured/templated content, such as rich cards and carousels. A key difference between RCS and the media that is supported in MMS has to do with the size and quality of the files that are shared. Limitations that existed on MMS due to how the data was transported do not apply to RCS, leaving brands free to be more creative in how they communicate to their customers.

Chip lists

Another key feature of RCS is the ability to offer a chip list with each message. This is a selection of suggested replies and/or suggested actions associated with each message. When consumers receive a message, they can be displayed a selection of responses that they can invoke with a click. These responses can either trigger a message back to the application or they can trigger an action on the device such as loading the maps app, adding an event to calendar, or starting a voice call. Either way, it makes it easier for the end user to identify next steps in the conversation.

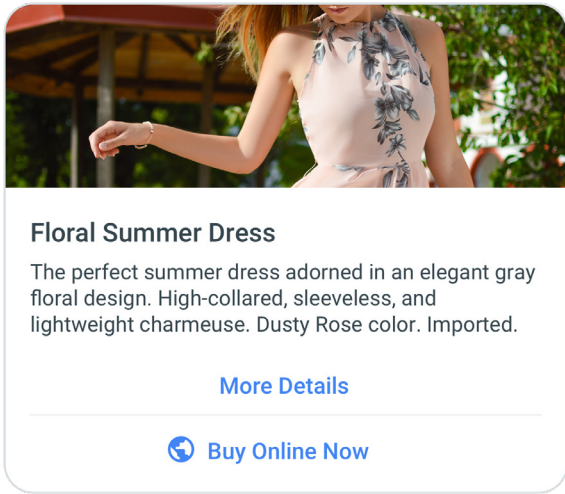
Templated content

In order to ensure that rich content renders consistently across platforms, the UP2.0 standard specifies a number of template displays. The initial versions of the platform will support two specific types – Rich Cards and Rich Card Carousels. Rich Cards combine an image, video, text content, and suggested replies and actions into a single message experience, which can be presented in different sizes (see Figure 3). Rich Card Carousels take that a step further and combine multiple Rich Cards into a single interactive unit, which allows users to scroll through up to 10 cards and select the offer that is best for them.

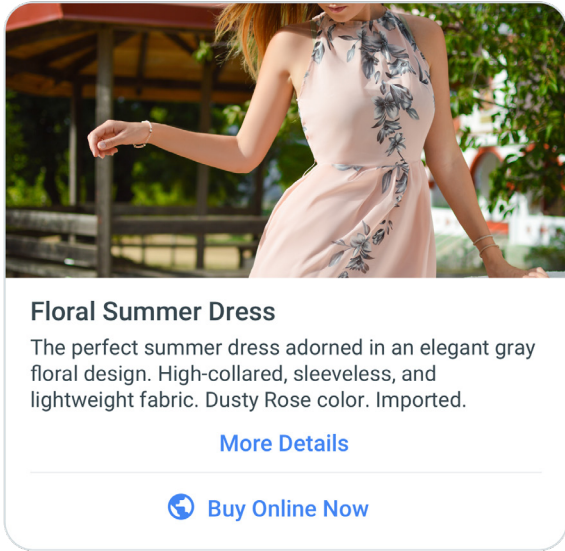
Rich cards

Rich Cards are used to display information to a user in a more visual format than plain text. A Rich Card contains the following fields, in this relative order:

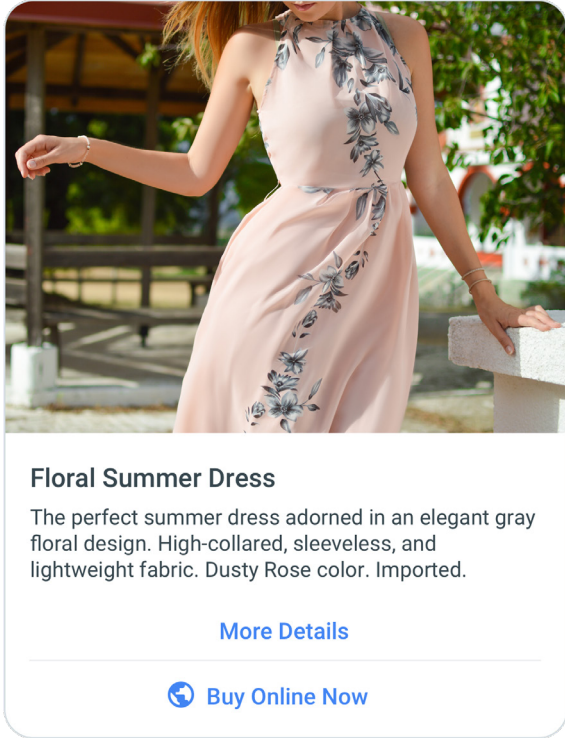
- Image or Video
- Title Text
- Description Text
- List of Suggested Replies
- List of Suggested Action



Short
(112 DP)



Medium
(168 DP)



Large
(264 DP)

Figure 3: Rich Cards

The power of RCS for brands



Leverage powerful functionality from existing investments



Deliver rich digital experiences through the ubiquitous SMS messaging inbox



Brands own the conversation with consumers – no 3rd party interference



No learning curve or tech adoption – messaging is second nature



Intuitiveness removes friction from interactions with brands they love



Advanced rich media experiences with no app installs or updates

RCS features in action

Custom branding

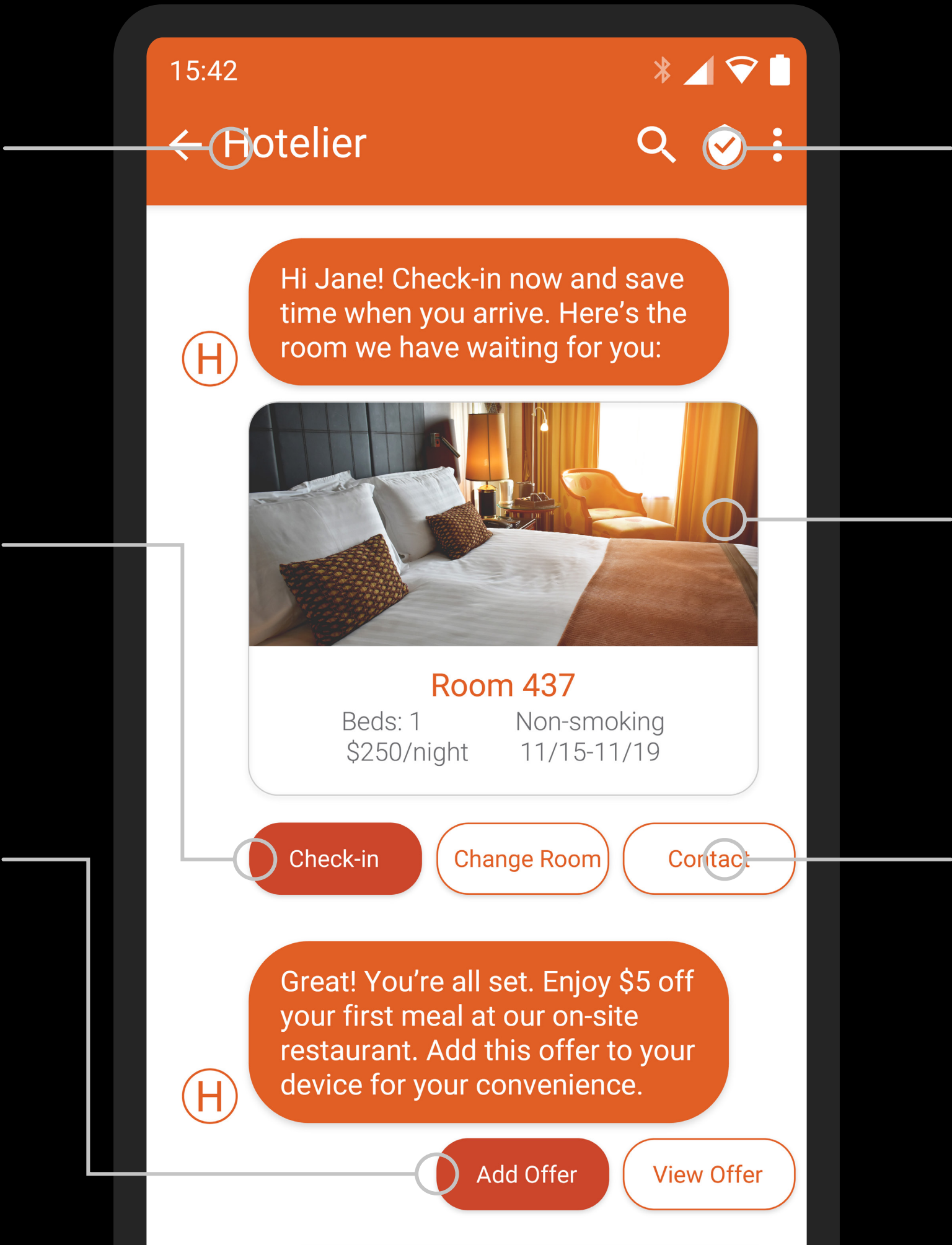
Include name, logo, and colors in messaging

Suggested Replies

Guide customer interactions with single-tap replies

Seamless Experience

Integrate multiple transactions in one interface



Verified Sender

Provide assurance and peace of mind to customers

Rich Media

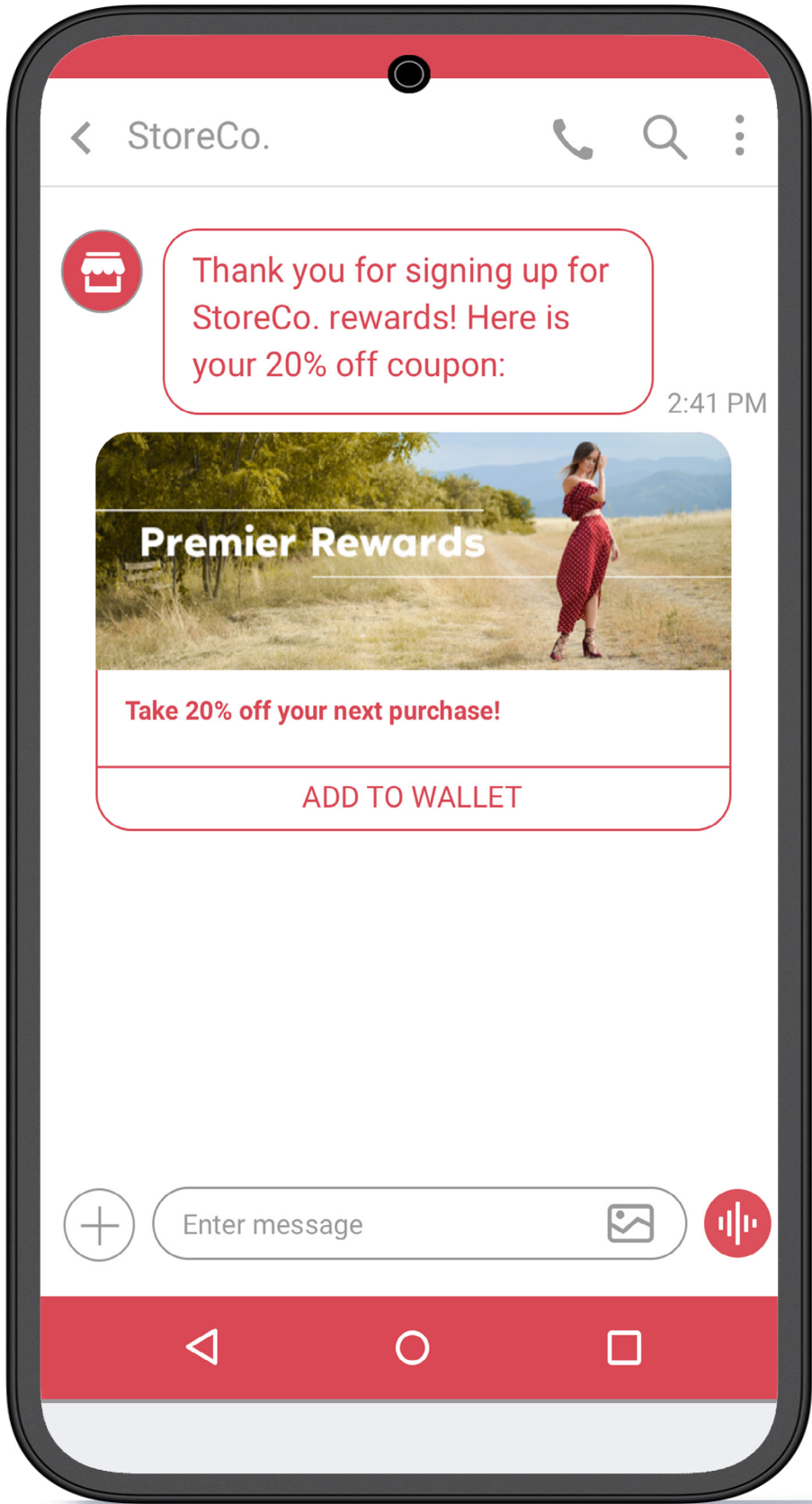
Enhance engagements with images, GIFs, video, and more

Voice Call Out

Ensure customer satisfaction with every interaction

How brands can get started

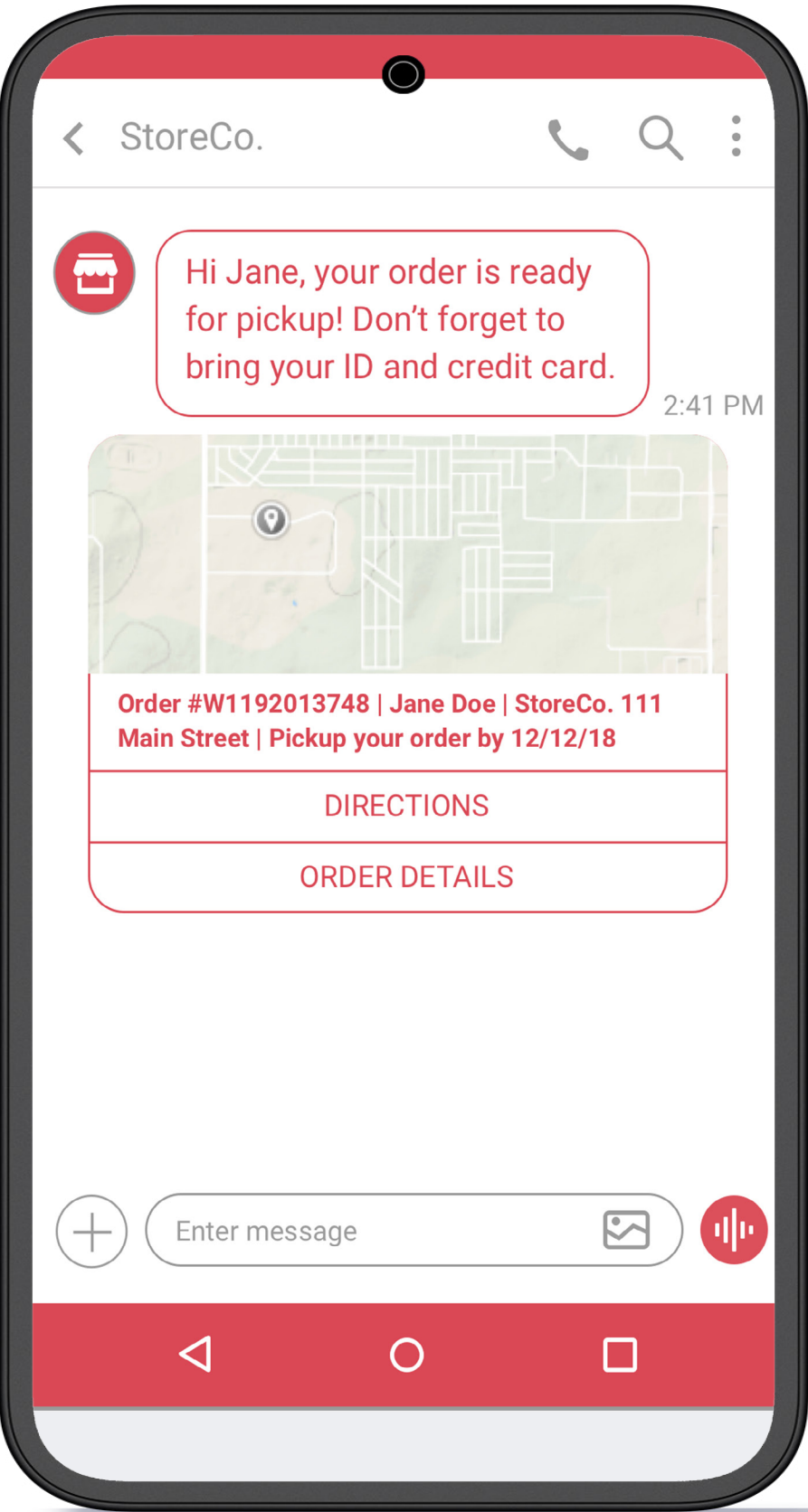
While the process of developing, deploying, and refining RCS has certainly been a challenge for industry stakeholders, it’s actually relatively easy for brands to get started using RCS for mobile engagements with their customers. At Webex, we’re helping lead the way in the deployment of RCS messaging applications and have identified several use cases for brands to enhance engagements with customers using RCS.



eCommerce

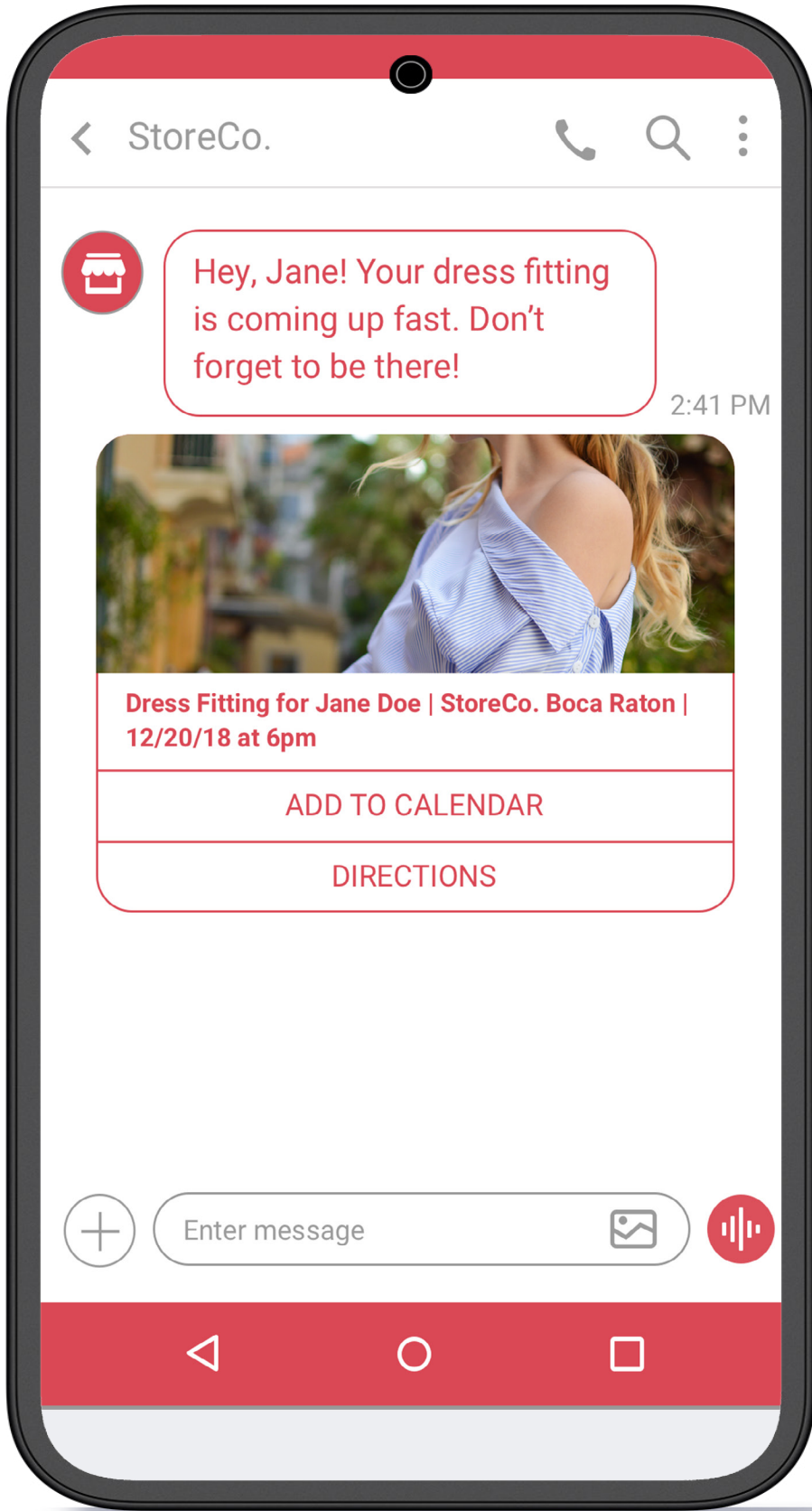
RCS will enable brands to facilitate true conversational commerce with their customers. With features like rich cards, carousels, and integrated payments, customers will be able to browse, view, and purchase goods without ever having to leave their text messaging app.





Order-ready notifications

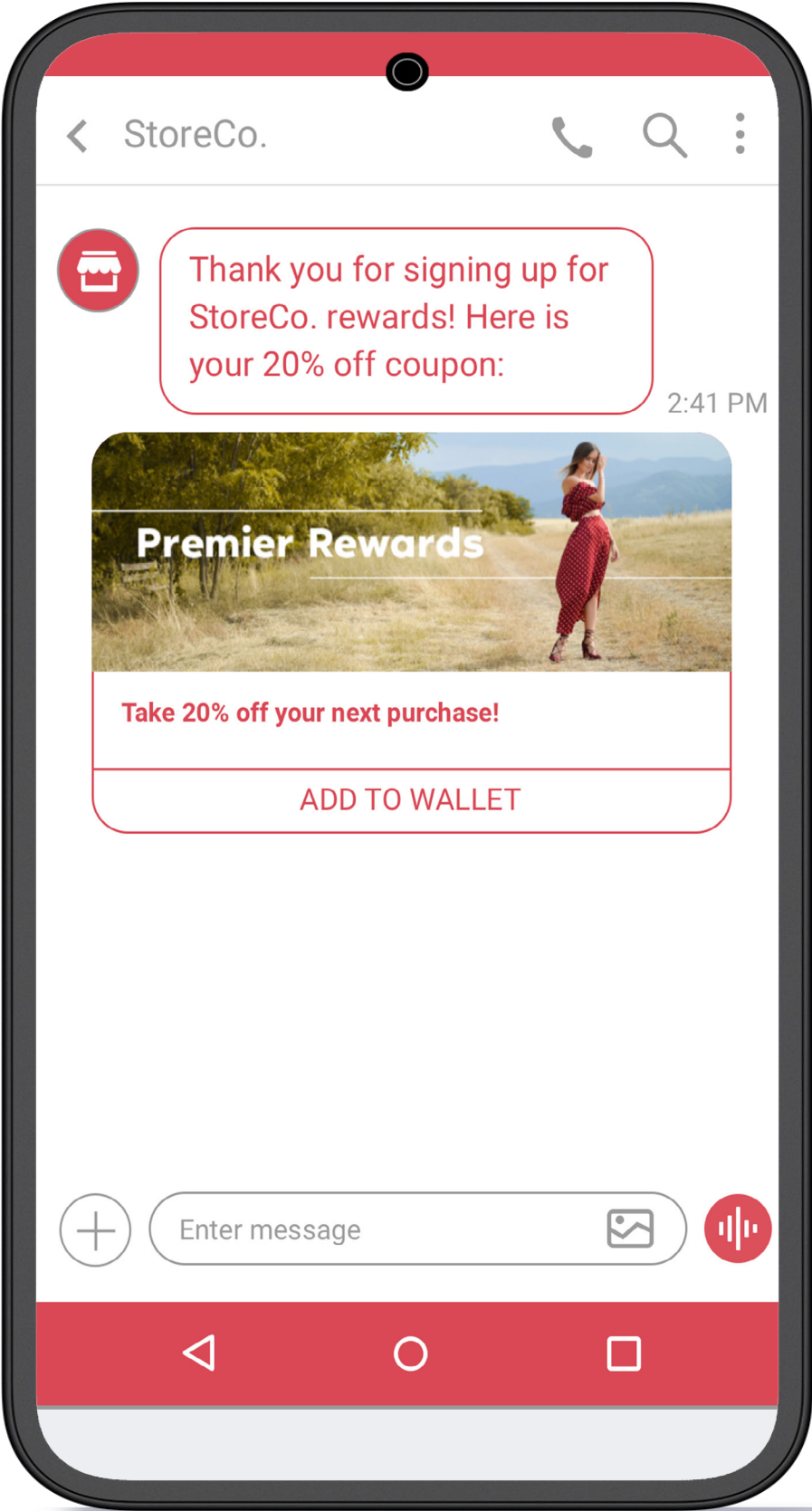
From Buy Online, Pickup In-store notifications to order delivery updates, this use case has been traditionally SMS-based but can be enhanced through rich media and suggested actions with RCS.



Appointment reminders

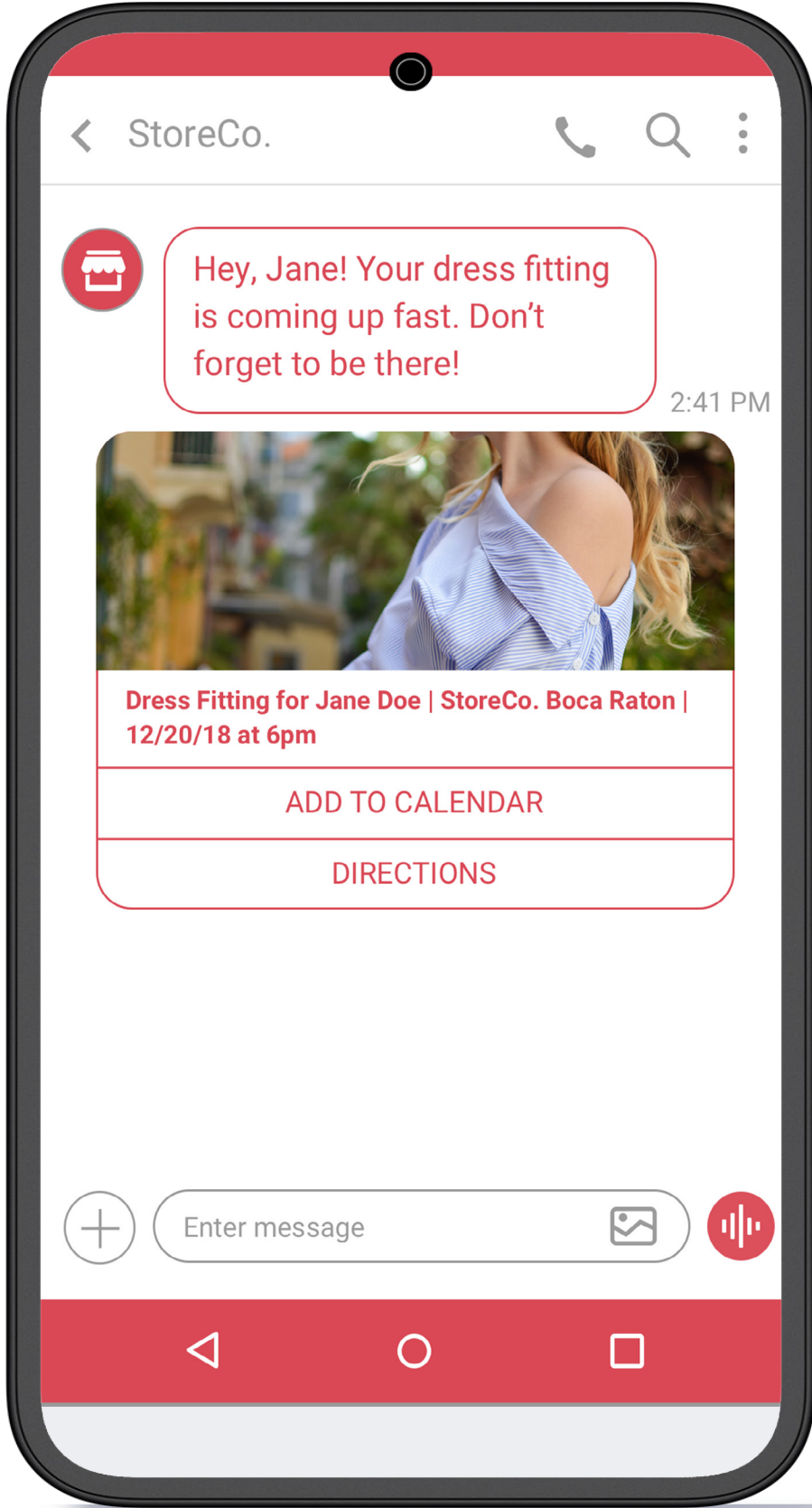
The ability to deep link or integrate with other applications such as a calendar app and maps helps improve the customer experience of planning and arriving to appointments.





Coupon / Offer delivery

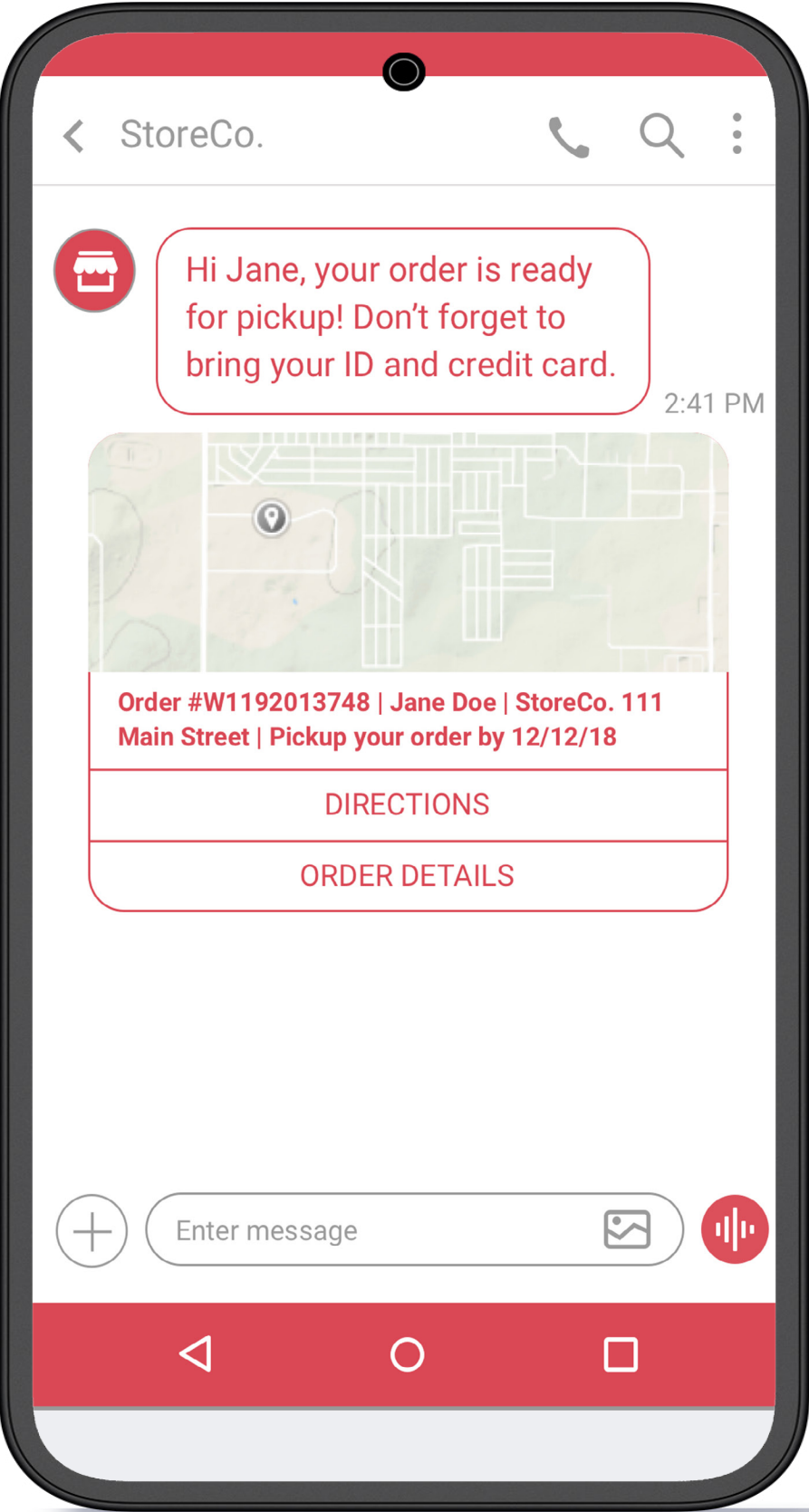
By enabling customers to scroll through products in rich video and images, save offers to mobile wallet, or complete a purchase from the messaging stream, RCS helps brands conduct true conversational commerce right in the messaging inbox.



Loyalty

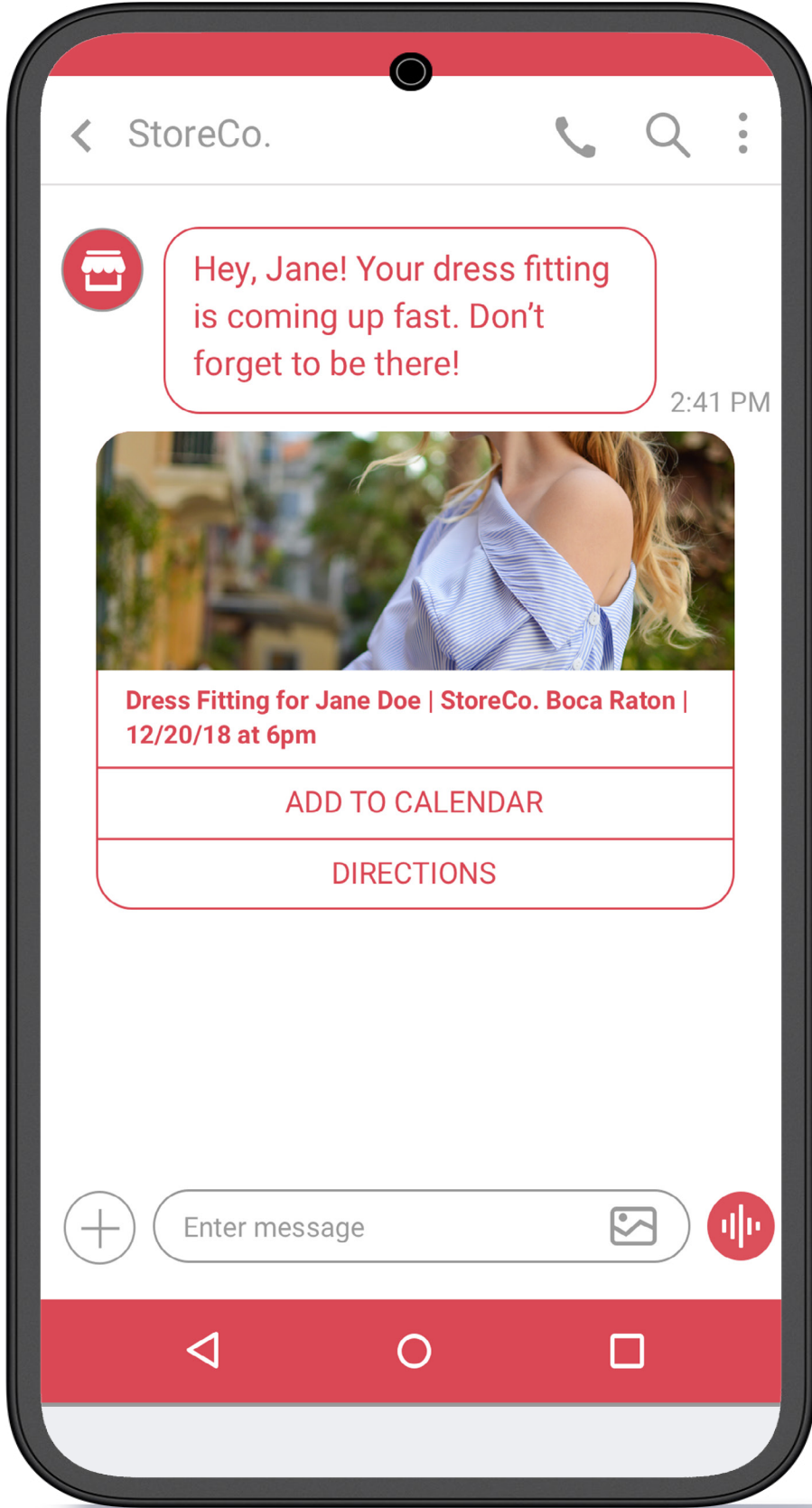
63% of people find loyalty signups to be lengthy and inconvenient. RCS' app-like features make signing up easier and engage customers far more than SMS.





Customer Service

Customers want to have transparency when dealing with an issue or expressing a concern. The ability to track a claim, send a profile of a service agent, or complete a survey shows that the customer is valued.



Abandoned cart

Sending a notice to the customer about having items in their cart allows for higher rates of completed sales. The implementation of RCS makes the process of abandoning a cart to completing a transaction simple.



What to expect from your RCS campaign results

In a recent survey of customers who engaged with RCS, 80% said it was easy to use and 59% said they would shop more often.



Increased measurability

Because of these interactive features, consumers are able to take multiple paths within an RCS engagement—giving brands a much deeper understanding of the intent and habits of their customers. With RCS, brands can measure these interactions across every action—similar to an app or website session.



Higher engagement

In our early in-market RCS trials, Webex has found a significant increase in customer engagement compared to traditional SMS. The session length of RCS engagements is longer and click-through rates have also increased.



Lift in conversion

With suggested replies and actions, brands are able to help guide the end-user through the RCS workflow. For brands that have begun piloting RCS in-market, leveraging this functionality has led to higher conversion rates than traditional marketing channels.

Summary

RCS is ushering in new disruption in mobile not seen since the app store opened, enabling brands to develop rich mixed-media contextually relevant conversations with their customers. Here are a few of the benefits.

For Brands

- Enable powerful functionality from existing infrastructure
- Leverage the ubiquity of native messaging clients
- Brands own the conversation with consumers

For Consumers

- No learning curve—messaging is second nature
- Frictionless engagements with the brands they love
- No app installs or updates



See how RCS can help you develop relevant conversations with customers.
Speak to our experts to find out more or book a demo now.



