



# Content design of advertisement for consumer exposure: Mobile marketing through short messaging service



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## ABSTRACT

The success of mobile phone-based short messaging service (SMS) commercials as a tool of promotional marketing depends upon the wording, statement, language, presentation – in other words, the overall content of the message. If consumers are not exposed to the mobile phone SMS containing promotional offers, marketers would less likely to achieve any benefits by sending SMS to prospective consumers. This study is aimed to identify and empirically examine the critical variables that can attract consumers to open and read the advertisement on the SMS. To address consumer exposure, the study was designed on the conceptual paradigms of the UTAUT2 with the inclusion of three external constructs: personalization, self-concept, and trust. Through a consumer survey, this study found significant variations from the UTAUT2 to provide new constructs to capture consumer intentions for exposure to the product. By doing so, this study has developed and tested an extended version of UTAUT2, which is named as UTAUT-CEMM (Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology of Consumer Exposure for Mobile Message). It revealed that consumer segmentation and target marketing is the most effective way to communicate with consumers through promotional marketing conducted by the mobile phone SMS. It also suggested that this promotional marketing is valuable only for highly reputable vendors/retailers.

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## 1. Introduction

The short messaging service (SMS) of mobile phones has been actively used by recent marketers to launch a new media in the consumer communication channel structure. It would be either launched alone or paired with existing channels, for promotional activities of different marketers. An SMS containing advertisements or any promotional offers or relational marketing themes through this virtual mobile channel, can be constantly sent to the prospective customers at a minimal price. Consumers can access these commercial messages delivered by the product/service providers from anywhere and at anytime (Kim, Park, & Oh, 2008; Nasco & Bruner, 2008; Rettie, Grandcolas, & Deakins, 2005). Any product/service manufacturer, retailer, or third party can send messages through SMS to millions of prospective customers with minimal

effort, time, and cost in the hope that customers might respond to the intended meaning of the message. However, excess frequency of a message and messages from unknown parties without prior permission can create a negative attitude in customers toward this innovative and dynamic mobile channel of product/service promotional marketing (Pihlström & Brush, 2008). It can be shown that validity, reputation, and trustworthiness of the message through a mobile phone is a crucial issue for its effectiveness (MMA, 2005; Nasco & Bruner, 2008). It can be inferred that the success of mobile phone-based SMS commercials as a tool of promotional marketing depends upon the wording, statement, language, presentation – in other words, the overall content of the message (Durkin, 2013; Kim et al., 2008; MMA, 2005; Nasco & Bruner, 2008). However, if consumers are not exposed to the mobile phone SMS containing promotional offers, marketers will not achieve any benefits by sending SMS to prospective consumers. This current study is exploring this attitudinal aspect of consumers through the experiment for further extension of the extended theory of Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh, Thong, & Xu, 2012).

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Analyzing different kinds of promotional marketing through mobile phone SMS, the researchers Barwise and Strong (2002) conducted empirical studies that revealed that, in terms of content, good advertisements have certain characteristics. The authors noted that effective SMS-based promotional offers are mainly short and straight to the issue (28%), funny or entertaining (26%), relevant for the intended customers (20%), eye catching (13%), and informative about prizes and promotions (12%). Several mobile marketing researchers (Durkin, 2013; Kim et al., 2008; Nasco & Bruner, 2008; Rettie et al., 2005) identified, through empirical studies conducted using behavioral theories, that SMS content is the key driving force for the success of launching this promotional channel with the existing marketing channel structure. They examined many other issues that could contribute to the success of an SMS-based mobile marketing channel – such as permission, timely communication, privacy, relevancy, customization, etc. – and these authors stressed that marketers should be careful in designing the content of SMS. SMS has a great potential value for creating positive attitudes toward mobile marketing, which is supported by the principle of expectation-confirmation theory (ECT) (Oliver, 1980). The whole content of the message conveyed by the mobile phone SMS results from a synergistic and comprehensive picture of the statement based on the wording, presentation, organization, and structure of the message.

The mobile marketing researchers reviewed the entire content of SMS (Nasco & Bruner, 2008; Rau, Zhang, Shang, & Zhou, 2011). For instance, Nasco and Bruner (2008) analyzed the effect on consumers of presentation modalities of different contents conveyed through mobile phone SMS. But this research was not focused on exploring the different properties of the content of solely promotional marketing SMS that can influence consumers to notice the advertisements. Many seminal papers (Pihlström & Brush, 2008; Xu, Liao, & Li, 2008) addressing the content of mobile phone SMS examined consumer attitudes toward content such as weather reports, sports, games, ring tones, music, commercials, etc. Nevertheless, to the best of our knowledge, no present literature explicitly focuses on the different issues of content that can draw customer attention toward an SMS promotional offer. This area has potential merit for analysis as one of the significant characteristics of SMS in that an SMS can be barred or erased by potential customers without accessing the message (MMA, 2005). If consumers are not exposed to the mobile phone SMS containing promotional offers, no matter what the intended meaning of the message, marketers will not have any means to contact customers, and ultimately those efforts of sending SMS will be fruitless. Hence, understanding the issues regarding the content of SMS for mobile marketing that attract consumers to the message is the primary goal of marketers; this will help them develop a successful marketing strategy (Rau et al., 2011). In this connection, this research is engaged in identifying issues for the content of mobile phone-based SMS to help persuade the customers to respond positively to promotional marketing. In this context, it is intended to examine the possible extension of UTAUT2 model for consumers' behavior against mobile phone based promotional marketing. This research has potential to contribute to the existing literature about mobile marketing. Companies attempting to design attractive mobile marketing through SMS for a promotional offer can get insight into content issues that drive and promote consumer attraction to the SMS. It is important to understand what drives customers to be exposed to persuasive material in promotional marketing (Nasco & Bruner, 2008). Academics can also benefit from the outcome of this research and get insights into consumer behavioral attitudes, perceptions, and responses to the stimulus in the structured SMS of a mobile phone-based promotional offer.

In the next section of this article, paradigms of model development for behavioral conceptualization are discussed in the light

of the synergism of psychological and marketing theories and mobile marketing literature. The following section then explains the methodology employed by this research. Then the analysis of empirical study for cause-effect relations is illustrated. The implication of this study is explained in the next section, highlighting the contribution of this study to practitioners and scholarly community. The last section outlines the conclusion noting future research directions and the limitations of this research.

### 1.1. Conceptual development for content of SMS for consumer exposure

Researchers (Bagozzi, 2007; Koenigstorfer & Groeppel-Klein, 2012; Park, Roman, Lee, & Chung, 2009; Wu, Zhao, Zhu, Tan, & Zheng, 2011; Yang & Zhou, 2011) conducting studies on different kinds of technology adoption have relied on a technology adoption model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) as the theoretical underpinning. Several researchers (Shareef, Kumar, Kumar, & Hasin, 2013; Shareef, Archer, Fong, Rahman, & Mannb, 2013; Yang & Zhou, 2011) are also motivated to shed light on the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) to conceptualize psychological behavior for technology acceptance. The recent trend of mobile marketing and consumer behavioral attitudes toward SMS commercials were also investigated in the light of TAM and TPB by many researchers (Yang & Zhou, 2011). However, several researchers claimed that issues related to consumer attitude are not fully covered by the conventional constructs of TAM and TPB (Dwivedi, Shareef, Simintiras, & Weerakkody, 2016; Mallat, 2007; Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006). Other researchers also support the view that in complex consumer behavior, where the effect of the psychological determinant is predominant, traditional conceptualization of the constructs extracted from TAM and TPB cannot predict enough variance of the dependent construct. Other studies (Martins, Oliveira, & Popovič, 2014; Weerakkody, El-Haddadeh, Al-Sobhi, Shareef, & Dwivedi, 2013) have utilized UTAUT (Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology) to study technology adoption. This present study looked at understanding consumer exposure to mobile phone-based SMS commercials through UTAUT2.

The UTAUT2 model for consumer behavior indicated a causal relation between consumer acceptance of market phenomenon; there are seven significant determinants to explain user acceptance and usage: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, price and value, and habit. This current research is attempting to understand a specific stage of consumer behavior regarding acceptance of mobile phone-based SMS commercials – whether consumers, after getting access, will view and read (consumer exposure) the message based on the content design of the commercials.

#### 1.1.1. Social influence (SI)

Researchers on consumer behavior for mobile marketing like Mortimer et al. (2015) from cross-cultural examination in Australia and Thailand identified that social influence can be an important predictor for consumers to accept this mobile technology driven marketing. Shedding light on TPB, we can also find logical underpinning that many issues like image, trustworthiness, motivation can be driven by social influence to accept this dynamic and newly invented marketing method. Therefore, this current study illustrates that social influence (SI) can pursue consumers attitude to be exposed to mobile phone based advertisement through SMS

**H<sub>1</sub>.** Social Influence has a positive influence on consumer exposure to SMS commercials due to their content.

**H<sub>1a</sub>.** Social Influence has a positive influence on developing consumer trust to SMS commercials due to their content.

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