The Effect Of Mobile Advertising Message Content on Consumer Purchase Intention

Nor Hazlina Hashim\(^1\) and Izzal Asnira Zolkepli\(^2\)

The evolution of telecommunications includes the advancement of technology and devices, such as gadgets and mobile phones that provide various avenues for advertising to consumers. Although traditional advertising remains popular, presently, more and more marketers have started to use mobile advertising to execute advertising messages. The high penetration rate of mobile phones has contributed to the increasing use of handheld devices to deliver advertising messages. In particular, Short Messaging Services (SMS) and Multimedia Messaging Services (MMS) have been quite successful. SMS and MMS create a new channel for advertising, through which ads are rendered as a short textual or multimedia message and sent to mobile phones. However, given its limited textual and multimedia presentation, will this medium have the same effect as other advertising channels in generating consumer purchase intention? What do consumers think about SMS/MMS-based advertisements? Can mobile advertising lead to a change of behaviour towards buying a product? A better understanding of these issues is critical for the effective use of mobile advertising. The conceptual framework proposed for this study is derived from the models developed by Ducoffe (1996) and Mackenzie (1989) concerning the attitudes of consumers towards Internet advertising. Based on these models, the perceptual antecedents of entertainment, informativeness, irritation and credibility, which were used to examine the behavioural response of consumers towards accepting Internet advertising and how behavioural response affects the purchase intention of consumers, are put together to explain mobile advertising. By understanding the effectiveness of mobile advertising messages on consumer purchase intention, marketers can better strategize their mobile advertising strategy, which, at the same time, will give clear proof concerning the targeted mobile content that fits the mobile advertising medium.

1. Introduction

The evolution of telecommunications includes the advancement of technology and devices, such as gadgets and android/iOS phones that provide various avenues for advertising to consumers. Although traditional advertising remains popular, presently, more and more marketers have started to use mobile advertising to execute advertising messages. The high penetration rate of mobile handheld devices has contributed to the increasing use of this medium to deliver advertising messages (Tsang, Ho, & Liang, 2004). Via mobile handheld devices, Short Messaging Services (SMS) and Multimedia Messaging Services (MMS), in particular, have been successful for direct targeting of advertising messages. Mobile advertising holds a strong promise for best targeting one-to-one, offering new ways that the existing advertising channels cannot replicate (Vatanparast & Butt, 2010). It is noted that since 2001, more than 100 billion SMS messages were sent out worldwide in a single year (Kearney, 2002), therefore making

\(^1\) Dr Nor Hazlina Hashim, Department of Persuasive Communication, School of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Malaysia. Email: nhashim@usm.my
\(^2\) Dr Izzal Asnira Zolkepli, Department of Persuasive Communication, School of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Malaysia. Email: izzalasnira@usm.my
the growth of mobile advertising an important area of research. One of the issues arising in mobile handheld devices is the limited message presentation, which begs the question as to whether this medium will have the same advertising effect as other media on consumer purchase intention.

Noticeably, research in the area of consumer attitudes towards advertising has been well researched and has led to conflicting findings in that some studies have reported positive consumer attitudes towards advertising, while much of the more recent research found that consumers generally have negative attitudes towards advertisements (Zanot, 1984). Relating previous research to the highlighted issues, on the one hand, previous findings illustrated that irritation concerning the appearance of advertising on mobile handheld device screens led to feelings of dislike towards mobile advertising, while, on the other, some consumers felt that mobile advertising is helpful in giving information pertaining to education, social, business, phone banking, securities and government agencies through SMS or MMS (Wong & Tang, 2008).

Given the differences between consumer responses towards mobile advertising by the earlier research, this conceptual model is proposed to examine the effects of mobile advertising message content (where positive and negative attitudes towards mobile advertising were developed) on consumer purchase intention. The conceptual framework proposed for this study is derived from the models by Ducoffe (1996) and Mackenzie (1989) concerning the attitudes of consumers towards Internet advertising. Based on these models, the perceptual antecedents of entertainment, informativeness, irritation and credibility, which were used to examine the behavioural response of consumers towards accepting Internet advertising and how behavioural response affects consumer purchase intention in mobile advertising, are put together. By understanding the effectiveness of mobile advertising messages on consumer purchase intention, marketers can better strategize their advertising strategy. This conceptual framework will contribute to better business dealings and money transactions for the marketers to increase their advertising returns.

2. Mobile Advertising

According to the Interactive Mobile Advertising Platform (Zoller, Housen, & Matthews, 2001), mobile advertising is defined as the business of encouraging people to buy products and services using the wireless channel as a medium to deliver the advertising message. Mobile advertising not only enables unique personalized and customized advertisements to be sent (Zhang, 2003), but also engages consumers in dialogues and transactions with the products or services being advertised. Mobile advertising takes on a form similar to web advertising, which includes email, web links, banner ads, sponsorships, and video ads. It uses a form unique to the mobile phone, i.e. SMS or MMS advertising. Mobile advertising messages use an alphanumeric format of up to 160 characters, which can be stored in the user’s mobile handheld device, and reviewed or forwarded to others at a later time. SMS or MMS advertising is diverse in its content; for instance, in addition to sending advertisements, it also delivers special offers, coupon, tickets, teaser ads, and product information requests (Barwise & Strong, 2002).
and MMS technology allows the sending of an advertisement in a single message with the ability to send the message to multiple recipients. As the mobile bandwidth increases, the speed of data transmission to mobile handheld devices also increases. The 3G wireless network allows the latest mobile handheld devices to handle heavy multimedia content, web browsing and e-business messaging services. Given the enhancement of mobile phone features, mobile content can break the traditional advertising, allowing message content to include rich sound, video, and multimedia effects, thereby equipping mobile advertising messages with more choice and creativity (Chen & Hsieh, 2012).

Mobile handheld devices are exceptionally personal to the consumer, and it has been pointed out that the main characteristics of mobile advertising are personalization with high multimedia capabilities and interactivity (Haghirian, Madlberger, & Tanuskova, 2005; Tahtinen & Salo, 2003). Robins (2003) put forth that mobile phones, as a personal identity medium for the consumer, are appropriate for delivering accurately personalized messages. Kim and Jun (2008) indicate that the ubiquity of mobile phone’s is one of the desirable aspects for marketers looking for promotional tools. The ‘personalization’ and ‘interactivity’ characteristics mentioned enable marketers to interact directly and to get consumers engaged in direct dialogue by replying to the message content immediately (Bauer, Barnes, Reichardt, & Neumann, 2005), unlike traditional advertising, which is regarded as non-personal and where the customer remains passive (Ayanwale, Alimi, & Ayanbimipe, 2005).

The achievements of mobile advertising largely depend on consumer acceptance. To date, targeted consumers have not had the opportunity to signal their likes and dislikes over marketing activities that they received via their mobile handheld devices, which places marketers at high risk (Robins, 2003), as they are not sure whether their marketing activities prompt positive or negative reactions from the consumer. According to Ducoffe (1996), attitude towards advertising is influenced by the advertising value. For this reason, the attitudes consumers of towards advertising via mobile devices should be influenced significantly by the value that consumers get from the mobile advertising messages. With the advancement of mobile handheld device technology, mobile advertising acceptance continues to increase (Becker, 2005). However, without a clear picture concerning the elements of mobile advertising that can affect the attitude towards mobile advertising, marketers will have limited aptitude and propensity to utilize mobile advertising (Laszlo, 2009; Pagani, 2004).

There are various studies in the literature that have proposed models for the acceptance of mobile advertising. Roach (2009) proposed that among the factors that influence consumers to accept promotional messages via SMS on mobile handheld devices, client permission, the control that a service provider maintains over a transaction, and the trust that the advertising message has in the advertised brand are the most relevant. Varnali and Toker (2010) developed models to explain the acceptance of mobile marketing, mobile advertising, and SMS advertising. These models describe the decision to accept based upon theories relating to technology adoption (Pedersen & Ling, 2002). In previous research that studied mobile advertising acceptance, the most frequently used

This conceptual paper uses Ducoffe’s (1996) and Mackenzie’s (1989) models of consumers’ attitudes to advertising. The proposed conceptual model concentrates on mobile advertising message content and examines the purchase intention of consumers as an outcome of the positive or negative effect of the mobile advertising received. The section below will elaborate on the proposed conceptual model as well as the hypotheses presented hereafter.

2.1 Mobile Advertising Message Content

The continued development in the area of mobile technologies combined with faster data network gives marketers awareness concerning the richness of advertising content and targeting strategy (Dhar & Varshney, 2011). It gives marketers the opportunity to be creative in their advertising message content. Rodgers and Thorson (2000) explain that the critical features of advertising media and its content can generate a set of behaviour to be performed (i.e. purchase intention). Accordingly, using the models of Ducoffe (1996) and Mackenzie (1989), the following characteristics of advertising message content pertaining to mobile advertising are discussed.

2.1.1 Entertainment

According to Ducoffe (1996), the entertainment portrayed in advertising is significantly related to the advertising value of traditional advertising. McQuail (1987) defines entertainment as the ability to fulfil the audience need for escapism, diversion, aesthetic enjoyment, or emotional enjoyment. Recently, mobile handheld devices with iOS/android have become an important platform for entertainment. Entertainment services in the mobile entertainment industry can use this medium to pass on activities such as watching videos, listening to music and music television, playing games, gambling, watching television, downloading and installing apps. A high degree of pleasure and involvement during the interaction with mobile-based media leads to concurrent subjective perceptions of the positive affect and mood of the consumer (Novak, Hoffman, & Yung, 2000). The consumer's feeling of enjoyment associated with advertisements plays a positive role in developing an overall positive attitude (Shavitt, Lowrey, & Haefner, 1998).

Bartsch and Viehoff (2010) asserts that entertainment is one of the vital factors in mobile marketing. It is essential that the message sent is concise and funny, and thus immediately captures the attention of consumers. The entertainment element that comes in message content can add value for consumer overall acceptance. As most consumers have a natural playfulness, providing games and prizes via mobile handheld
devices, especially those with android/iOS, yield high participation. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

\[ H_1 = \text{The entertainment element in the message content of mobile advertising influences the behavioural response of the consumer towards accepting mobile advertising messages} \]

### 2.1.2. Informativeness

Ducoffe (1996) defines informativeness as the ability of advertising to inform consumers of product alternatives so that purchases yielding the greatest possible satisfaction can be made. Similarly, the quality of information placed on a company's website shows a direct influence on the customers' perceptions of the company and the company's products. To make the company and product appear resourceful and informative, information can be delivered to the consumer directly. Siau (2003) adds that information via mobile devices must also show qualitative features like accuracy, timeliness, and usefulness to the consumer. The consumer needs quick access to the information he or she is looking for in his/her current use. There is even a need for the information to be delivered automatically to the consumer. Consumers in the new era prefer quick access to information to fulfill their needs and gratification with first-hand information (Kaasinen, 2003). This has given mobile advertising the potential for two-way communication between the company and the consumer.

In any event, consumers want the content of mobile services to be tailored to their interests (Robins, 2003). This ties back to the earlier research done by (Bauer et al., 2005) who mentioned that supplying information is the primary reason why consumers approve of advertising. Information is thus considered as a valuable variable in mobile advertising because recipients usually react positively to the advertisement that transfers knowledge (Varshney, 2003). Therefore, it can be concluded that informative advertising messages are perceived positively by the recipient; hence, it is hypothesized that:

\[ H_2 = \text{The informativeness element in the message content of mobile advertising influences the behavioural response of the consumer towards accepting mobile advertising messages} \]

### 2.1.3. Irritation

In the context of advertising, Ducoffe (1996) defines irritation as offend, insult, or overly manipulative of content. Mobile advertising can possibly provide an array of information that confuses the recipient, can be distracting and overwhelm the consumer with information (Stewart & Pavlou, 2002). Hence making consumers feel confused about the advertising message and react negatively.

When advertising employs an annoying, offensive, insulting or manipulative technique, consumers are likely to perceive the advertising message as an unwanted and irritating
influence (Ducoffe, 1996). Another point of possible annoyance are unwanted messages, commonly known as spam (Dickinger, 2005). Spam intrudes into the consumers’ privacy and stifles consumer acceptance. Dickinger (2005) explains that the irritation caused by an incomprehensible or unwanted mobile advertising message may reflect negatively on the perceived advertising value of mobile marketing. Therefore, it is concluded that irritation caused by an incomprehensible or unwanted mobile advertising message is perceived to have a negative effect on consumer behavioural response.

\[ H_3 = \text{The irritation element in the message content of mobile advertising influences the behavioural response of the consumer towards accepting mobile advertising messages} \]

### 2.1.4. Credibility

Advertisement credibility is defined by Mackenzie (1989), as the extent to which the consumer perceives claims made about the brand in the advertisement to be truthful and believable. According to (Brackett & Carrs, 2001), advertising credibility is significantly relevant to the advertising value of web advertising, while Stewart and Pavlou (2002) defines advertising credibility as the perception of consumers concerning the truthfulness and believability of advertising in general, which refers to the predictability and fulfilment of the implicit and explicit requirements of an agreement. Meanwhile, Smith and Quelch (1996) assert that the credibility of an advertisement is influenced by the company's credibility and the bearer of the message.

Credibility is also influenced by the advertising medium. Charney and Greenberg (2002) found that a message on the Internet achieves less credibility than a printed message unless the message is communicated by a strong brand. There is no empirical evidence on the overall credibility of messages transferred to mobile devices and their influencing factors. Considering the findings cited above, it is concluded that the credibility of a mobile advertising message has a positive influence on the attitudes of consumers towards advertising via mobile handheld devices and on the perceived advertising value of the consumer, as hypothesized below.

\[ H_4 = \text{The credibility element in the message content of mobile advertising influences the behavioural response of the consumer towards accepting mobile advertising messages} \]

### 2.2. Consumer Attitude Towards Mobile Advertising

Attitude is an important concept in research on marketing and information systems. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) defined attitude as a learned predisposition of human beings in which an individual is presumed to respond to an object (or an idea) or a number of things (or opinions). In addition, Kotler (2000) describes attitude as a person’s enduring favourable or unfavourable evaluation, emotional feeling, and action tendency towards
some object or idea. Implying that, under certain conditions, attitude correlates with behaviour, but that this relationship is not always mutual.

Consumer’s attitude has different elements. A research conducted by Goldsmith and Bridges (2000) includes beliefs, feelings and behavioural intentions towards some objects as the three elements of attitude. The elements are highly interdependent and can influence how consumers react to an object. The three elements, however, differ in each individual.

In any advertising context, consumers are presumed as familiar with advertisements, since they are exposed to ads daily through online and offline media. It is expected that consumers have a relatively stable and consistent attitude towards the advertising messages. However, in the mobile advertising context, not many consumers are exposed to the mobile advertising message, which is presumed to lead to the assumption that their attitude in relation to mobile advertising is less stable and easily changeable. Accordingly, it is expected that their attitude towards mobile marketing will be highly dependent upon their attitude towards advertising in general. Thus, a positive attitude towards mobile advertising may or may not necessarily lead a person with purchase intention; hence, it is hypothesized that:

\[ H_5: \text{The behavioural response of the consumer towards accepting mobile advertising will lead to purchase intention} \]

3. Conceptual Model Framework

As one of the main purposes of this study is to examine the influence of mobile advertising message content on consumer purchase intention, the attitudes of consumers towards such beliefs and purchasing intention is a core issue and central part for the proposed study. The conceptual framework for the study on consumer attitudes towards mobile advertising message content relies on the models developed by Ducoffe (1996) and Mackenzie (1989) based on consumers’ attitudes towards Internet advertising. Figure 1 shows the conceptual research model depicting the perceptual antecedents of entertainment, informativeness, irritation and credibility, which are used to examine the behavioural response of consumers towards accepting mobile advertising and how behavioural response affects consumer purchase intention. Behavioural response and intention are the main constructs taken from the theory of reasoned action proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975)
4. Conclusion and Implications of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of mobile advertising message content by looking at various and related literature on purchase intention. Based on the existing literature, the study proposes a set of hypotheses that establish the foundation for the conceptual model concerning the effect of mobile advertising message content on purchase intention. Hence, the review of the literature shows the dynamics of mobile advertising message content, and identifies the gaps in the literature. This study also gives the opportunity for researchers and marketers to understand the purchase intention behaviour of consumers concerning the effect of mobile advertising message content.

This research interest focuses on the antecedents of consumer attitudes towards advertising via mobile devices. For marketers, as well as media and marketing professionals, the managerial implications of this study are to help them better understand the mechanism and message content that leads to more effective mobile advertising campaigns and raise the purchase intention. Mobile advertising is an unprecedented way of marketing communications. Although mobile advertising acceptance is on the rise, without an unambiguous understanding of the fundamentals affecting consumers response to mobile advertising, mobile marketing and advertising professionals will have limited power to constantly generate positive and effective yields from their programmes.

The theoretical contribution of this paper lies in outlining the key effect of mobile advertising message content. The study derives from the models developed by Ducoffe (1996) and Mackenzie (1989) concerning consumers’ attitudes for which the perceptual antecedents are entertainment, informativeness, irritation and credibility. These four main elements are used to examine the behavioural response of consumers towards accepting Internet advertising and their purchase intention in respect of mobile advertising. It is hoped that mobile advertising will have the same or a better effect in generating consumer behaviour towards SMS/MMS-based advertisements and purchase power.

Overall, it is clear that mobile advertising is going to be the future trend; hence, practitioners need to have a better understanding of the target audience for mobile advertising campaigns and send messages to consumers whereby the language and content of the advertisements should match with the profile and expectations of the target audience. Marketers need to further ensure that they only send relevant information to the targeted consumers, and advertising companies are advised to carefully design their mobile advertising message and plan their mobile advertising campaigns and target groups with due care.
Future researchers should also develop a new scale to measure the overall attitudes towards mobile advertisements that incorporates more traits and items, such as advertising value, as Ducoffe introduced in 1996. Furthermore, special efforts may have to be made to determine what message content contributes to negative attitudes towards mobile advertising and how attitudes can be changed to raise purchase intention. Practitioners may use the findings to design marketing programmes with mobile advertisements that create positive attitudes, more specific needs and desires to the consumers. It is hoped that this conceptual model will initiate new dialogue pertaining to the multiple issues concerning the mobile advertising industry and consumers’ needs amongst researchers, marketers and advertising agencies.

Acknowledgements

This work is funded and supported by Short Term Grant number 304/PCOMM/6312068 awarded by the University of Science Malaysia (USM), Malaysia.

References


