

FACTORS INFLUENCING MOBILE ADVERTISING ACCEPTANCE: WILL INCENTIVES MOTIVATE COLLEGE STUDENTS TO ACCEPT MOBILE ADVERTISEMENTS?

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***Reviewer's Note:** This study employs an online survey to validate mobile advertising acceptance factors and the types of incentives needed to motivate college students to accept advertisements on their cell phones. Results showed that college students would consider accepting ads on their cell phones if specific cell phone ad delivery conditions were met or free cell phone products and services or monetary incentives were offered.*



INTRODUCTION

To many, a cell phone represents one of the few remaining unspoiled personal spaces they can use to communicate and socialize and still maintain control. Recognizing this, marketers must be sensitive to the consumer's need for privacy and balance this with their own desire to engage the consumer. In order to achieve this balance, marketers must understand the determinants, such as incentives, that drive consumer acceptance of mobile advertisements.

Over the last decade the mobile channel has emerge from obscurity and matured dramatically. In the past five years more attention has been drawn to the idea of using the mobile channel for marketing to consumers, a practice popularly referred to as "mobile marketing." Mobile marketing is used for a number of purposes, including brand building, prospecting, commerce, customer relationship management and advertising (Becker 2005). Research from companies like Windwire 5 and SkyGo indicated that permission-based alerts delivered to wireless phones capture the attention of consumers, drive response and build brand awareness (Yunos & Gao 2003). However, Air2Web (2003) warns of damage to one's brand if proper incentives or rewards are not provided to the consumer for participating in mobile advertising.

Mobile advertising, or wireless advertising as it is often labelled, is an activity that falls within the umbrella of mobile marketing and relates to

use of the mobile channel to deliver advertising messages directly to consumers. Unlike traditional advertising channels where the individual consumer is often anonymous, the mobile channel is extremely personal (Tahtinen & Salo 2003). Marketers can use the mobile channel to reach out and engage an individual directly, but with this capability comes great responsibility.

Mobile advertising can be used with “push” or “pull” marketing strategies to reach consumers. Push mobile advertising refers to the marketer sending unsolicited advertising directly to a consumer’s mobile phone. Pull mobile advertising refers to a consumer responding to and requesting or “pulling” information from the marketer (Dickinger et al. 2004, Barnes 2002). While push and pull models are acceptable forms of mobile advertising, it is important to note that push mobile advertising requires that the marketer gain opt-in approval from the consumer prior to sending the mobile advertisement. The idea of gaining approval from customers prior to engaging them in any form of marketing communication, including advertising, was popularized by Godin (1999). Permission marketing is a common practice today in many forms of marketing. With mobile marketing, however, it is critical because access to mobile consumers is dictated by federal law and industry best practices (MMA Global 2005; Can-Spam Act 2003).

A key question related to mobile advertising is how can marketers motivate consumers to opt in? Brands are starting to engage consumers through the mobile channel, as noted by Netimperative: “Mobile phone users are expected to benefit from a range of incentives as part of the growth of mobile marketing with half of brands sending special offers via the mobile phone and two in five sending competitions. Other incentives will include discount vouchers, free gifts and preferential terms. (Netimperative 2006).

Mobile advertising has great potential to be a powerful medium for marketers, especially those targeting students. “In the United States, the penetration of student mobile phone subscribers is 40% in many junior high schools and 75% in many high schools (NOP World 2005); according to a Student Monitor survey (as cited in Kinzie 2005), penetration is 90% in U.S. colleges” (Thompson 2006). But little is known about what acceptance factors and incentives may encourage students and consumers in general to opt-in and respond to mobile advertising. Many leading firms like Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Proctor and Gamble and The Weather Channel have done mobile advertising trials. Mercedes-Benz recently announced it will shift most of its TV advertising budget in the United Kingdom to interactive mediums, including mobile SMS advertising, and it has established its first permanent mobile

site (Banham 2006). But most mainstream marketers, especially in the United States, have yet to fully embrace the mobile ad medium. This may be partly due to the scant research available on exactly what drives consumer acceptance of mobile advertising. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the growing body of knowledge in the field of mobile advertising by validating cell phone ad acceptance factors and identifying incentives that motivate young adults to accept mobile advertising. Following this introduction is a review of the wireless advertising and mobile marketing literature. The subsequent sections include a review of the methods, a statement of results and a discussion of the findings.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Even with the increased attention mobile advertising is getting, the number of available studies that explain the theory and practice of mobile advertising are quite limited (Leppäniemi 2006; Market Outlook: Consumers 2001). Just a few studies have attempted to look at the general factors that drive consumer acceptance of mobile advertising, and even fewer have looked specifically at the possible incentives that will drive consumer acceptance.

Early academic studies into the practice of mobile marketing and wireless advertising have been theoretical and conceptual in nature. A predominant amount of the academic research into mobile advertising has focused on establishing frameworks and conceptual models to help formulate a

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foundation for the field of study. Given that no specific mobile theory has yet emerged, researchers, in an attempt to build their models, have leveraged theory and practice from traditional and internet models to see if the theoretical lens of those fields will help illuminate the mobile field. The most common theoretical models employed by researchers include Fishbein and Ajzen’s Theory of Reasoned Action, Optimal Stimulation Theory, Roger’s Innovation Diffusion Theory, Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, Technology Acceptance Models, Uses and Gratification Theory, and Theory of Perceived Risk (Wu & Wang 2004; Tsang et al 2004; Okazaki 2004; Bauer et al, 2005).

Out of these theories, frameworks and models a number of factors have been found to be influential to consumers' acceptance of mobile advertising. Leppäniemi (2005) and others categorized these factors into three areas: industry, medium and consumer. Industry factors include technology (devices, networks and standards), transmission time, complexity, the increased use and adoption by practitioners, ease-of-use, compatibility, government regulation and industry guidelines (Leppäniemi & Karjaluoto, 2005; Wu & Wang 2004; Sultan & Rohm 2006). Medium factors consist of marketer-to-consumer interaction, context interaction (relevance, time and location), costs, presence of incentives and permissions (Martin & Marshall 1999; Steward and Pavlou 2002; Barnes & Scornavacca, 2004; Becker 2005; Bauer, 2005). Consumer factors include the consumers' general attitude toward advertising, level of involvement, innovativeness, response to stimuli, trust and perceptions of utility, choice, control and risk. Demographic factors (age, gender, income and education) have also been found to be important control variables to consider when looking at consumer acceptance (Rettie and Brum 2001; Barnes & Scornavacca 2004; Dickinger & Haghirian 2004; Tsang, Ho & Liang 2004; Bauer et al. 2005; Carroll et al. 2005; Haghirian & Madlberger 2005; Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto 2005).

Other researchers offer a variety of factors that effect consumer acceptance to mobile advertising and their willingness to receive mobile advertising. The factors include advertising value and content (Haghirian & Madlberger 2005), entertainment value and information value (Bauer et al. 2005), permission, content, wireless service provider control and brand trust (Barnes, Scornavacca 2004; Carroll et al. 2005). In addition, Krishnamurthy (2001) identifies a few other key factors impacting mobile marketing adoption, including message relevance, personalization, privacy costs, message processing costs and monetary benefits.

Rettie and Brum (2001) found that monetary benefits affected willingness to receive messages, as does Tsang (2004), who notes that "providing incentives can increase the intention to receive SMS-based mobile advertisements" (p7). Tsang, Ho and Liang (2004) examined the link between consumer attitude, intention and behavior in relation to mobile marketing. In their model, entertainment, informativeness, irritation and credibility were seen to shape a consumer's attitude to accept mobile advertising. Similarly, Bauer et al. (2005) found that information and entertainment value significantly contributed to consumer acceptance of mobile marketing. In addition, Barwise & Strong (2002) found that the motivation to accept mobile advertising through the receipt of an incentive was impacted by the age of the consumer.

A Nokia-sponsored survey of 3,300 people across 11 global markets in 2002 found that 86 percent of respondents

agreed there should be a trade off for accepting ads on their cell phones. The study found that the core mobile phone market (ages 16 to 45) is receptive to experiencing mobile marketing in the form of received SMS sales messages (Pastore 2002). More recent studies have found less enthusiasm in the U.S. for accepting mobile ads. An In-Stat survey in 2005 found that only 20 percent of wireless phone users would find some form of advertising on their handsets to be acceptable. Of that group, roughly half were open to having advertisers subsidize the cost of premium services such as directory assistance, ringtones and messaging (In-Stat 2005). A Jupiter Research survey in May 2005 found that 20 percent of consumers say they might be induced to receive promotions if it comes with free airtime, ringtones, games, or a free cell phone (Kharif 2006).

While these studies are very important and help with the foundation of our understand of mobile advertising, marketers should take care before broadly employing their findings given as Karjaluoto (2006) points out "drawing usable generalizations from the few academic studies that are available is a challenge, given that these studies pull from geographically and demographically diverse samples and employ a wide range of potentially unrelated theories and models" (P.3). There is still much to learn.

The purpose of this study is to test and gauge students' level of exposure to wireless advertising, their reaction to receiving wireless advertising and the factors that may influence their willingness to accept ads on their cell phones. Saran, Cruthirds and Minor (2004) developed a short, reliable self-report scale designed to measure the concept of advertising acceptance over cell phones. Their research provided evidence for dimensionality, reliability, and validity. The scale is used in this research study to validate practical acceptance factors for mobile advertising acceptance.

The study employs an online survey to validate mobile advertising acceptance factors and the types of incentives needed to motivate college students to accept advertisements on their cell phones. This study was guided by the following research questions:

R1: Under what conditions would college students consider accepting advertisements on their cell phones?

R2: What types of product or service incentives would be needed for college students to accept advertisements on their cell phones?

R3: How much monetary incentive would college students require to accept advertisements on their cell phones?

METHODS

To answer the research questions, investigators conducted an online survey of students at a Midwestern university. A message was sent via the campus email system to all on-

campus students (N=15,340) inviting them to participate in an online survey about cell phone advertising. Respondents were directed via a link in the email message to an Internet-based survey site to complete the survey questionnaire. No incentives were given to participate.

Each respondent in the convenience sample was asked 20 questions about their cell phone usage habits and exposure to cell phone advertising messages, seven questions about the use of instant messaging on a cell phone (a precursor to receiving ads on a cell phone) and four demographic questions. Ten of the 20 cell phone usage questions were replicated from a cell phone advertising survey conducted at the same university in February 2005. All instant messaging and demographic questions were replicated from the February 2005 survey.

To determine what factors would influence mobile phone advertising acceptance, the Mobile Advertising Acceptance Scale developed by Saran, Cruthirds and Minor (2004) was used in the survey. A question was asked that listed the six scale factors and two non-factor options. Respondents were asked, "Under which of the following conditions would you consider accepting ads on your cell phone?" Response factors were edited from their original version for purposes of clarity and to shorten each factor length. The acceptance factor options in the survey were:

- If I get something free
- Depends on the type of ad
- If I have control over what is advertised
- If I can turn ads off without turning off my phone
- If I am assured no viruses can be downloaded at the same time.
- If I could save the ads to look at later
- Non-factor response options were:
- I won't accept ads on my cell phone
- Don't know

Additional questions were asked in the survey that pertained to the types of cell phone products or services that respondents would accept for free to allow ads on their cell phones and the amount of monetary incentive it would take for respondents to accept ads on cell phones.

RESULTS

Responses were received from 669 students; 72 percent were female, 28 percent were male. Participant age ranges were nearly evenly distributed: 17 percent were 18 years old, 18 percent were 19, 16 percent were 20, 15 percent

were 21 and 11 percent were 22. In response to general questions about cell phone usage and ad acceptance:

- 96% of students reported having a cell phone
- 34% of students (36% of females and 29% of males) reported receiving advertisements on their cell phone. That's up from 24% in February 2005
- 70% of students with cell phones can access the Internet
- 20% received a cell phone ad from a person or business they didn't know
- 33% of students who received a cell phone ad were annoyed to get the advertisement.

R1: Conditions for acceptance of ads on cell phones clustered the acceptance factors into four distinct percentage response ranges. When asked, "Under which of the following conditions would you consider accepting ads on your cell phone?"

- 29% If I get something free
- 23% If I can turn ads off without turning off my phone
- 22% If I am assured no viruses can be downloaded at the same time
- 16% Depends on the type of ad
- 14% If I have control over what is advertised
- 4% If I could save the ads to look at later
- 51% I won't accept ads on my cell phone.

(Respondents could select multiple conditions.)

R2: What types of product or service incentives would be needed for college students to accept advertisements on their cell phones? When asked, "If you would accept cell phone ads by getting something free, what types of free products or services would you accept?"

- 45% Free ringtones
- 37% Free minutes
- 29% Free music
- 28% Free gifts
- 27% Free upgrades
- 25% Free access to the Internet
- 38% Don't know

- 5% Gift certificates, money, won't accept ads

(Respondents could select multiple products and services.)

R3: How much monetary incentive would college students require to accept advertisements on their cell phones? Respondents were asked two questions pertaining to monetary incentives. First, they were asked, "Would you accept advertising on your cell phone if you were paid to accept each ad?"

- 66% Yes
- 34% No

Given the option of accepting ads on their cell phones (Q17), more than one-half of respondents said they would not accept ads under any conditions. The choice of this factor was not influenced by any option to receive incentives or free gifts for participation. Q19 asked respondents a nearly identical question as Q17 but added the option of being paid to receive cell phone ads. The conflict in responses between Q17 and Q19 to accept cell phone indicates the opportunity for incentives to be used to motivate young adults to accept ads.

Those who responded that they would accept ads if they were paid were then asked (Q20): "If yes, how much money per ad would it take for you to accept ads on your cell phone?"

- 4% 5¢
- 9% 10¢
- 28% 25¢
- 35% \$1.00
- 24% More than \$1.00

DISCUSSION

This study tested college students' level of exposure to wireless advertising, their reaction to receiving wireless advertising and the factors that may influence their willingness to accept ads on their cell phones.

Four important findings emerged from this study:

- 29% of college students surveyed said they would accept ads on their cell phone if they got something free
- 51% of students said are not willing to accept advertisements on their cell phones, even if they get something free
- 66% will accept cell phone ads if they are paid to accept ads
- Adult youth, especially college students, are more willing to

consider accepting ads on their cell phone than cell phone users in general

College students are acknowledged to be early adopters of new digital technologies and the heaviest user cohort of cell phones. As marketers attempt to enter the mobile marketing field many of their initial efforts are being targeted at college students who view their cell phone as a personal device (Tahtinen & Salo 2003) and are reluctant to allow ads to be delivered to their phones. This study found, however, that college students are willing to accept ads on their cell phones, especially if they are given monetary incentives.

Marketers are testing various incentives in an attempt to find out under what conditions college students would consider accepting advertisements on their cell phones. Using the Mobile Advertising Acceptance Scale, this study found three factors that could impact the level of cell phone ad acceptance. The first factor involved the use of an incentive: "If I get something free." Two other factors involved no incentives: "If I can turn ads off without turning off my phone" and "If I am assured no viruses can be downloaded at the same time." These two factors are more dependent on cell phone and cellular provider operational issues than marketer incentives, but marketers should consider these issues when developing cell ad messages and customer service communications.

Three Mobile Advertising Acceptance Scale factors received low response rates of between 4 to 16 percent. These factors should be considered secondary in importance to marketers as compared to the incentives and operational factors chosen. "Depends on the type of ad" with 16 percent response and "If I have control over what is advertised" at 14 percent both relate to the opt-in provisions of mobile marketing campaigns as popularized by Godin (1999). When a consumer gives prior permission, or opts in, to receive a cell phone ad, they tacitly agree to the type of ad they will accept and agree to give control, at least temporarily, to the marketer. These factors will lose relevance in the future as more consumers opt in to mobile marketing campaigns. The factor with the lowest response at 4 percent, "If I could save the ads to look at later," indicates that respondents are not interested in using their phones as recording devices for ads or don't expect the ads to be of enough creative or informational value to save.

The types of product or service incentives needed for college students to accept advertisements on their cell mirrored findings from other mobile market researchers (In-Stat 2005; Kharif 2006). Free ringtones and air time minutes were the most popular incentives, followed almost equally by music, service upgrades, gifts and access to the internet. This broad range of acceptable incentives, while not all inclusive, should give marketers many options to test with potential audiences. And as newer generation cell phones,

so-called 3G phones, reach higher adoption rates, incentives can become more digitally sophisticated, like music, TV, video downloads and movie previews. Those incentives could have a higher perceived value from consumers than minutes or ringtones.

How much monetary incentive would college students require to accept advertisements on their cell phones? It is not surprising that being paid to accept cell phone ads ranked high on the scale of acceptable incentives for college students. But the degree of acceptance between product and service incentives and monetary incentives was significant. While only 29 percent of respondents would accept ads in exchange for something free, 66 percent would for money. Yet, no research was found indicating that marketers are considering or testing monetary incentives. The range of money needed to accept ads may also indicate an opportunity for marketers. Four in ten respondents to the monetary incentive question would accept 25¢ or less per ad delivered; 59 percent would require \$1.00 or more per ad delivered. For marketers, considering a small monetary incentive may be a viable option depending on the cost of a product or service incentive. This could be done per call or per a select time period and give flexibility to the marketer and consumer. The cellular providers have the billing capabilities to administer per-call ad incentives and would need to be participants in the incentive process.

Limitations

This study employed a convenience sample of student at a Midwestern university. The cultural differences and technology usage patterns of respondents may not represent students from across the U.S. Respondents were 72 percent female and 88 percent White/Caucasian. Cell phone usage is highest among African-American and Hispanic consumers (Telephia 2006). Our study included only 4 percent African-American and Hispanic respondents, under representing both groups in the sample.

Future Research

This study focused on consumer's acceptance of wireless advertising. It did not, however, consider the implications of the advertising medium, such as SMS, mobile internet, voice, MMS, mobile email or Bluetooth. Future studies should consider the implications of acceptance across all the different mobile technologies.

Researchers could also examine which product or service promotions may be most effective in the mobile channel? Events, mobile content, retailer location mapping, local search, games, music, TV and video downloads are all areas that can integrate with mobile advertising.

Anecdotally, many people's first reaction to mobile advertising is to consider it spam. Most do not consider the positive impact of permission marketing on the cell phone ad experience. Longitude studies should be conducted to understand the current state of cell phone ad acceptance and to track changes as permission-based cell ad exposure increases.

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Researchers acknowledge the assistance Ball State University graduate student Lindsy Pryor in the research and development of this paper.

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APPENDIX
Results of Cell Phone Usage Habits and Exposure to Cell Phone Advertising Questions
 Some questions include results from February 2005 cell phone advertising study for comparison.

Q1 Do you have a cell phone? (N=641)

	<u>11/05</u>	<u>2/05</u>	<u>+/-</u>	
%	96	97	-1	Yes
	4	3	+1	No

Q2 Have you ever received an advertisement on your cell phone? (N=615)

	<u>11/05</u>	<u>2/05</u>	<u>+/-</u>	
%	34	25	+9	Yes
	64	75	-11	No
	2	0	+2	NA

Q3 If yes, what type of advertisement was it? (Check all that apply. N=604)

%	30	Text message
	.5	Link to Internet
	1	Visual advertisement
	2	All types
	67	NA

Q4 Can you access the Internet from your cell phone? (N=615)

%	70	Yes
	30	No

Q5 Do you use your cell phone to access any of the following sites or services? (Check all that apply. N=429)

I have done this					
%	18	Buy a product or service	%	8	Entertainment or concerts sites
	4	Check your horoscope		3	Find a location with a GPS phone
	9	News sites		1	Play fantasy sports
	7	Sports sites		2	Video clips
	17	Weather sites			

Q6 Do you ever use your cell phone to download/purchase any of the following? (Check all that apply. N=429)

I have done this					
%	65	Ringtones	%	29	Wallpaper or screensavers
	6	Music		0	Movies
	.2	Movie Previews		21	Mobile video games
	0	Music videos		1	Sporting event video highlights
	.2	Mobile gambling		.2	Adult content
	0	TV shows		0	Books

Q7 Do you ever use your cell phone to send/ receive any of the following? (Check all that apply. N=615)

I have done this:				
	<u>11/05</u>	<u>2/05</u>	<u>+/-</u>	
%	82	68	+14	Text message
	24	14	+10	Instant message
	11	0	+11	Send/receive Email
	31	0	+31	Photo message
	4	0	+4	Video message
	12	10	+2	Vote: TV/contest
	2	1	+1	Respond to cell ad

Q8 Have you ever received a cell phone advertisement from a person or business you know? (N=658)

	<u>11/05</u>	<u>2/05</u>	<u>+/-</u>	
%	14	8	+6	Yes
	83	92	-9	No
	3	0	+3	NA

Q9 If yes, what type of business? (Check all that apply. N=86)

%	3	Local retailer
	77	Cell phone provider
	6	Partner of cell phone provider
	1	Adult content provider
	9	Other

Q10 Do you recall the name of the business or product? (N=95)

	<u>11/05</u>	<u>2/05</u>	<u>+/-</u>	
%	64	4	+60	Yes
	31	96	-65	No
	5	0	+5	NA

Q11 Have you ever received a cell phone advertisement from a person or business you don't know? (N=655)

	11/05	2/05	+/-	
%	20	26	-6	Yes
	75	74	+1	No
	5	0	+5	NA

Q12 If yes, what type of business? (Check all that apply. N=132)

%	14	Local retailer
	49	Cell phone provider
	15	Partner of cell phone provider
	2	Adult content provider
	20	Other

Q13 Do you recall the name of the business or product? (N=134)

	11/05	2/05	+/-	
%	19	5	+14	Yes
	78	95	-17	No
	2	0	+2	NA

Q14 If you have received a cell phone advertisement, how did it make you feel? (N=639)

	11/05	2/05	+/-	
%	33	92	-59	Annoyed to get
	1	0	+1	Pleased to get
	8	8	0	Neither
	59	0	+59	NA

Q15 If you have received a cell phone advertisement, has it made you more likely or less likely to purchase a product from the business? (N=125)

	11/05	2/05	+/-	
%	2	1	+1	More likely
	55	67	-12	Less likely
	42	32	+10	Neither
	1	0	+1	NA

Q16 If you have received a cell phone advertisement, are you concerned about how the business got your cell phone number? (N=125)

	11/05	2/05	+/-	
%	30	36	-6	Very concerned
	48	46	+2	Concerned a little
	19	18	+1	Doesn't concern
	2	0	+2	NA

Q17 Under which of the following conditions would you consider accepting ads on your cell phone? (Check all that apply. N=669)

%	29	If I get something free
	16	Depends on the type of ad
	14	If I have control over what is advertised
	23	If I can turn ads off without turning off my phone
	22	If I am assured no viruses can be downloaded at the same time
	4	If I could save the ads to look at later
	51	I won't accept ads on my cell phone
	7	NA

Q18 If you would accept cell phone ads by getting something free, what types of free products or services would you accept? (Check all that apply. N=669)

%	37	Free minutes
	27	Free upgrades
	25	Free access to the Internet
	45	Free ringtones
	29	Free music
	28	Free gifts
	38	Don't know
	5	Gift certificates, money, won't accept ads

Q19 Would you accept advertising on your cell phone if you were PAID to accept each ad? (N=628)

%	66	Yes
	34	No

Q20 If yes, how much money per ad would it take for you to accept ads on your cell phone? (N=415)

%	4	5¢
	9	10¢
	28	25¢
	35	\$1.00
	24	More than \$1.00
	1	Won't accept ads for any price