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Effects of SMS Message Length, Age, and Gender on Perceptions of Mobile Advertising: A Three-Country Study (U.S., Japan and France)

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ABSTRACT

Mobile advertising has become a major strategy in the marketing world to promote different kinds of business products and services. Revenue from such activities is expected to rise tenfold to about \$24.1 billion by 2015, according to a recent forecast. Tapping into the communication now possible with users via their mobile phones enables advertisers to establish deeply personal relationships between brands and consumers, underscoring the need for effective advertisement design. Additionally, cross-cultural research in information technology and mobile commerce adoption has revealed significant differences among countries in related success factors. Specifically for mobile commerce adoption, the U.S., Japan and France have previously been contrasted; however, there is very limited research on consumers' receptiveness to mobile advertising in different cultures and particularly among mobile users in the U.S., Japan, and France.

We conducted a study with 444 U.S., Japanese and French college students (split evenly by country) to answer two research questions in the context of mobile advertising via SMS: i) How does a mobile advertisement's message length affect the receiving mobile user's perceptions of informativeness, entertainment, and consequent attitude toward the advertisement? ii) Are there age, gender, or cultural differences in the evaluation of SMS-based mobile advertisements?

Results from the PLS-based data analysis of the three country groups show positive effects of longer mobile ad message length on the perceived informativeness and entertainment of the mobile ad, which in turn positively influence both attitude toward the mobile ad and, ultimately, the mobile user's behavioral intention to click through it. No interaction effect between informativeness and entertainment of the mobile ads was found in any of

the three countries. Only women in the U.S. and France report significantly higher levels of entertainment, attitude, and intention to click through the mobile ad than men. Also, age negatively influences attitudes toward mobile ads only among the U.S. users.

From a theoretical point of view, this work contributes to HCI research by providing a deeper understanding of the role of message design in the effectiveness of mobile ad campaigns. Specifically, message length in a mobile ad was examined for its potential impact on the mobile ad's perceived value, and ultimately, on behavioral intention to click through the ad. Also, an expanded model regarding mobile advertising effectiveness was tested in three different countries to validate its universality; the model indicated high explanatory power intention to click through across all three samples in the U.S., Japan, and France (72%, 67% and 63% for attitude; 56%, 45% and 55%, respectively).

Implications for practice include insight for marketers tasked with the design of mobile ads that both utilitarian value (e.g., learning about the advertised brand or product) and hedonic value (e.g., finding the ad humorous or engaging) are important elements for a mobile consumer. Marketers could also maximize value for each audience by tailoring the ad according to local preferences. French data showed they were affected significantly more than the Japanese by the entertainment value of a mobile ad. Additionally, U.S. and French women exhibited more positive attitude and greater intention to click through a mobile ad than men; in light of this, the mobile channel in the U.S. seems to be better suited for female-focused marketing. Furthermore, the negative influence of age on perceptions of a mobile ad was found to be significant in the U.S. sample. Hence, when marketers attempt to reach older users in this market, a more prudent approach is recommended in terms of the design and execution of the mobile ad campaign.