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ABSTRACT

A tremendous opportunity emerges for marketers to push effective advertisements to target audiences. One forecast suggests mobile advertising will represent one-fifth of the global Internet advertising revenue by 2011, generating \$14.4 billion of revenue. Hence, the need for knowledge advances in this fairly young area is warranted. In addition, there have been a number of cross cultural studies in I.T. and mobile commerce adoption with researchers finding significant differences among countries in related success factors. Specifically for mobile commerce, both the U.S. and Japan have been studied. Hence, it is plausible that consumers' receptiveness to mobile advertising might also be different across cultures and particularly between mobile users in the U.S. and Japan.

A study of 148 U.S. and 148 Japanese college students was conducted 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?

A PLS-based data analysis of both country groups offers support for the positive effects of mobile ads' message length on the perceived informativeness and entertainment of the mobile ad, which in turn positively influence both attitude toward the mobile ad and the mobile user's subsequent intention to click through it and learn more about the advertised brand. No interaction effect for informativeness and entertainment of the mobile ads was found in both countries. Only in the U.S. did women report significantly higher levels of entertainment, attitude, and intention than men, and did age negatively influence the attitude toward the mobile ad.

Implications for both theory and practice are discussed, including an expanded model regarding mobile advertising effectiveness with high explanatory power for both the U.S. and Japanese samples (72% and 67% for attitude; 56% and 45% for intention respectively).

From a theoretical point of view, this work contributes to advertising research by providing an initial 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 (here, informativeness and entertainment), and ultimately, on behavioral intention to click through the ad. Also, the model was tested in two different countries to validate its universality.

With respect to advertising value, marketers are charged with the task of designing mobile ads that add both utilitarian value (e.g. they learn something new about the advertised brand or brand item promoted) and hedonic value (e.g. they find the mobile ad humorous or engaging) in the reached mobile user's mind. Also, interestingly, the effect of attitude on intention was significantly larger for the Japanese compared to the U.S. sample. A strong predictor of whether the receiving party would in fact click through the received advertisement to learn more indicates that paying attention to what consumers perceive as favorable regarding mobile advertising is critical. Additionally, for the U.S. sample women may perceived greater informativeness and entertainment in a mobile ad than men; in light of this, the mobile channel in U.S. seems to be better suited for female-focused marketing campaigns. Furthermore, the 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.

As with all studies, there are limitations associated with this study such as the scenario-based research design. As such, findings reported come with the caveat of generalizability, and increasing external validity can be sought after through future research.

Keywords

Mobile advertising, message length, informativeness, entertainment, attitude, culture