



## ATTITUDE OF UNDER GRADUATE STUDENTS TO UNSOLICITED SMS ADVERTISING BY GSM OPERATORS

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**ABSTRACT:** *This research was carried out to examine the attitude of undergraduate students to unsolicited SMS advertising by GSM operators, using the undergraduate students of Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State as the case study. Survey method of gathering data was adopted for this paper by distributing well-developed questionnaire to elicit responses from the respondents, the sample size of which was 120. The findings clearly showed that GSM operators' unsolicited SMS advertisements generates unfavourable attitudes and they are mostly unbeneficial, unexciting, confusing, misleading, and irritating. In addition, they are neither of any informational values nor relevant because the messages were not permitted by the subscribers that receive them, which is why they delete them immediately after receiving them. Therefore, sending such unsolicited messages should be discontinued.*

**KEYWORDS:** SMS, GSM, Message, Advertisement.

### 1.0 Background to the Study

Telecommunication in Nigeria received a boost in 2001 with the deregulation of the industry, which allowed private Global System of Mobile communication (GSM) service providers to come into the country to support the existing national operator, the Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL). Two private companies, Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN) of South Africa and ECONET of Zimbabwe, were licensed by the Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC) to operate GSM in addition to NITEL, the country's own telecommunication company. The operations of these two companies increased telephony from 300,000 lines in 2001 to 1,660,000 lines in 2002 (NCC, 2011; Mojaye, 2015). In 2003, another private provider, GLOBACOM Nigeria Limited, entered the market with its mobile service, Glo-mobile. Thus, it is valid to say that mobile telecommunication, popularly called GSM, has improved telephony in



Nigeria after the country has battled with the inefficiency of the only service provider, NITEL, prior to year 2001. Consequently, subscribers can now choose among multiple service providers, due to the successful deregulation of the Nigerian telecommunication industry. Nigeria now has five major service providers; Airtel, MTN, Global com, 9mobile and M-tel (Bamidele, 2002).

One of the most popular and personal communication devices today is mobile phone. It is a communication channel that has features such as availability, high speed and frequency of delivery, the potential for advertising and the opportunities for advertisers to foster personal interactive communication with target audiences (Hymavathi, 2015). Since the introduction of mobile phone usage in Nigeria in the year 2001, mobile phone has become a powerful tool for communication across the country among young and old people. The old people essentially use the device for voice communication while the younger generation has adopted Short Message Service (SMS) as a major means of communicating, socializing and maintaining relationships (Oluwole, 2014). Mojaye (2015) affirmed that a recent trend in mobile telephony is data usage through the Internet and social media by which people cultivate digital relationship with others. Mobile phone has become a useful relationship maintenance device, not only for the youth population but also for all segments of the global population (Hafiz, n.d).

SMS is a global system of text messaging on wireless phone systems. SMS is successful because of its easiness, scope, cost and reliability, which make it a good medium for advertising. SMS advertising can be categorized as traditional advertising, direct marketing or an interactive medium, which permits two-way interaction between advertisers and target audiences (Rebello & Brown, 2009). Sending advertising messages to subscribers of mobile phones through SMS has been an effective way for advertising and promotions because subscribers are expected to carry their mobile phones with them all the time. Subscribers usually have their advertising messages with them on their mobile phones (Murphy, & Scharl, 2004). Information sharing and publicity through this system is arguably one of the most effective methods in the world. As mobile communication allows interaction in an entirely new form, it has also



improved advertisers' chances of reaching their targets. Interactions between mobile network subscribers and advertisersthrough SMS are becoming increasingly rapid and easy (Pavlou& Stewart, 2000). The opportunities provided by this service for direct contact with subscribers of mobile networks are unprecedented (Hoffman &Novak, 1996) asSMS advertising activities via mobile devices give advertisers the chance to build customer relationships in a new dimension. However, some of the SMS advertising may be solicited by subscribers while many others may be unsolicited.

The role of the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) in monitoring and regulating activities of the telecommunication operators with respect to the processing and delivery of advertising messages on mobile telephones cannot be overlooked, especially when such messages are unsolicited. The volume, frequency and conditions of sendingSMS advertisements by GSM network operators need to be carefully controlled by NCC in the interest of subscribers.The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria(APCON) seems to be doing nothing as regards the enforcement of article 80 Section 5 of its Code of Conduct of 2012, which States that "unsolicited messages should not be sent except there are reasonable grounds to believe that the consumers who receive such communications messages will be interested in the subject matter or offer". Article 80, Section 1 of the APCON code also emphasizes that "all advertising and marketing communications directed to the Nigerian market using internet and other electronic media are subject to the laws regulating advertising practice in Nigeria" (APCON, 2012 p.35).

Mobile advertising differs from traditional media advertising in many ways. Among the two most salient differentiating characteristics are that mobile advertising is interactive and can be used to target an individual (Bauer, 2005). The adoption of this modern device and its growth has been observed to correlate positively and highly with the rate of users' dependence on mobile phones. The device has also graduated from the level of being a status symbol to a tool of apparent necessity. This is because the new generation of mobile phones is not just for talking but alsoloaded with applications for multi-media messaging, Internet access, varied business and official transactions (Oluwole, 2014). Also, the facts that the device is affordable, fast,



personal, immediate, viral and entertaining have increased usage in a spectacular way since its introduction in Nigeria. The high dependence of youths on text messaging and its massive usage could have contributed to the growth of the SMS advertising.

As with other traditional advertising media, subscribers' attitude play important roles in determining the success of the use of SMS by advertisers as a platform for communicating, creating sales and building relationships with the consumers. The acceptance of mobile device by subscribers is influenced by, amongst others, the perceived utility of the content and the perceived risk associated with data security and consumer privacy (Hymavathi, 2015). Advertising research has shown that the effects of advertising activities are influenced by the audience's attitude toward an advertising message, the advertiser and/or the media (Mac Kenzie & Lutz, 1989). These findings were made on mass media advertising (Ducoffe, 1995) and web-based advertising (Ducoffe, 1996). Not much is known about the potential factors that influence audience's attitude toward mobile advertising or subscribers' attitude towards unsolicited SMS advertisements. The number of unsolicited SMS advertising on mobile phone is perhaps worrisome, even when a subscriber tries to prevent them from coming. Many of such messages are virtually of no use to the subscribers. It is on this basis that this study seeks to examine subscribers' attitude to telecommunication operators' unsolicited SMS advertising.

Akinbode (2014), Barwise and Strong (2002) and Tsang, Ho and Liang (2004) observe that the mobile phone is seen as a personal device and as such, advertising messages are expected to meet individual needs and possibly take the form of subscription in order to stimulate a positive response from the subscriber. To subscribe to a message either in form of SMS and MMS means a GSM subscriber has requested for a kind of message as part of an opt-in scheme requiring the consumer to indicate their consent to receive commercial messages and information of interest to them. A mobile device is a possession many people carry with them and text messaging is generally used for one-to-one contact, which is why a more personal approach seems to be required in SMS advertising in order to generate a favorable attitude from the consumer. Intrusion of SMS advertisements into this personal device could lead to irritation, especially



when the mobile phone is seen as an 'extended self' of the consumer. Thus, this study is aimed at examining the attitude of Achievers University students GSM subscribers in Ondo State towards unsolicited advertising messages through SMS as a way to understand the role of SMS advertising on subscribers' perceived value behavior.

### **1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In a competitive industry such as the Nigerian telecommunication industry in which operators jostle over the emerging market, the subscriber is always receiving a clutter of SMS advertisements from different operators. SMS is one of the potential advertising techniques but its effectiveness based on its acceptance has attracted little attention from academics, professionals and market research association, especially in Nigeria. SMS advertising in Nigeria is commonly used by network operators to provide an array of information that often confuse, distracts subscribers and overwhelm them with irrelevant information. SMS advertising is now widely used, yet its primary outcome at times is rejection by subscribers mostly because the advertising messages are irrelevant, of no value to them and they are unsolicited.

Mobile Telecommunication subscribers become irritated when unsolicited SMS advertisements are received on their mobile phones (Ravindra&Rajyalakshmi, 2011). Unsolicited SMS advertisements may be perceived as source of traffic jam on mobile telephones since such SMS may not be needed at the time they are sent to subscribers. Often times, these unsolicited SMS also serve as sources of disturbance and distraction to the subscribers. Depending on the state of a subscriber's emotion and mood, these SMS unsolicited advertisements could lead to annoyance, irritation and aggression, especially if the information received are not useful to them. Therefore, subscribers may react negatively towards mobile SMS advertisements. As the quantity of SMS promotion rises, the subscribers' attitude towards the promotional vehicle becomes worsen as it causes irritation (Barwise& Strong 2002) because such messages are intrusive. Perceived advertising intrusiveness is the extent to which an undesired SMS advertisement interferes with an individual's cognitive process and tasks. Individuals get irritated and thus delete the unsolicited advertising messages.



Sometimes, charges are attached to the SMS which are incurred by subscribers who receive messages they never asked for (Hatem. & Ab- Razak, 2015). Even after unsubscribing to such messages, their reception persists to the annoyance of subscribers.

The indignity people feel when addressed by unsolicited SMS advertisements could have influence on subscribers' attitude towards the message, product/service being promoted and the network operator. The success or failure of SMS advertising could thus be based on the attitude of the subscribers, particularly Achievers University students in Ondo State, Southwest Nigeria.

## **1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- (1) To ascertain the attitude of students of Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State to GSM operators' unsolicited SMS advertisements;
- (2) To identify the informational values of GSM operators' unsolicited SMS advertisements to Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State;
- (3) To determine the relationship between high exposure of Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State to unsolicited SMS advertisements and the subscribers' attitude to advertiser's products and services;
- (4) To examine how beneficial the information value of GSM operators' unsolicited messages on the advertisers' products and services to Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State is.
- (5) To determine the opinion of Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State on whether or not unsolicited GSM operators' SMS advertisements should be discontinued.



### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. What are the attitudes of Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State to GSM operators' unsolicited SMS advertisements?
2. What are the informational values of GSM operators' unsolicited SMS advertisements to Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State?
3. What is the relationship between high exposure of Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State to unsolicited SMS advertisements and the subscribers' attitude to advertisers' products and services?
4. How beneficial is the information value of GSM operators' unsolicited messages on the advertisers' products and services to Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State?
5. What is the opinion of Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State on whether or not unsolicited GSM operators' SMS advertisements should be discontinued?

### **2.0 Unsolicited Advertising Messages**

Unsolicited advertising message is identified as an unsolicited piece of information in which the advertiser has the intent of selling products and/or services to the recipient/subscribers (Chang and Morimoto 2003). Solicited information pieces, which are sent to subscribers who knowingly agreed to be added to advertisers' lists are not considered unsolicited advertising messages for the purpose of this study because subscribers' perceptions between advertising communications that are sought differ in comparison to those that are not welcomed.

Unsolicited advertising message is characterized as any commercial electronic communication from advertisers that subscribers did not ask for (Chang and Morimoto 2003). Similar to the definition of unsolicited advertising messages, advertising messages sent by advertisers with the prior consent from subscribers are not



considered unsolicited advertising message in this study. This study will use these definitions to refer to the two methods of direct advertising communication channels.

## **2.1 The Concept of SMS Advertising**

The mobile phones are no longer used for communication alone, the mobile phones or android/ smart phones, are used for browsing the internet for information to ordering of online products, mobile banking and paying of bills. Hence, the mobile phone is set to become the Third Screens after TV and computer. As with other traditional marketing programmers', consumer attitude play an important role in determining the success of using the mobile device by advertisers as a platform for communicating, creating sales and building relationships with their subscribers. The acceptance of mobile device by consumers is influenced by, amongst others, the perceived utility of the content and the perceived risk associated with data security and consumer privacy (Gumeet&Ramneet, 2015).

The increasing penetration rate of mobile phone, with specific characteristics of this medium, such as almost everywhere with the audience, has attracted companies' attention to it as an advertising channel. Mobile devices facilitate highly customized marketing communication in terms of person, time; location and context; so numbers of companies that use this medium for communicating with their customers are increasing. This fact that mobile is personal device and this is user rights to decide how to use it, on the one hand, and growing number of SMS advertising intrude consumers' mobile devices, on the other, has attracted consumers' rights advocators and public policy makers' attention to violation of consumer privacy by unwanted and unrelated SMS advertising that are sent randomly to consumers' mobile numbers (Jong-Hyuok, 2013) .As the mobile communication technology is becoming an indispensable factor in individuals' lives, both individuals and corporations perform their individual transactions and other activities through mobile devices. As the time is ever important in today's age, the functions of mobile devices assist dramatically in establishment of active communication, enabling information flow and making use of the time well. For instance, the individuals can swiftly and practically check their mobile phones, make



transactions from their bank accounts, purchase tickets for various activities, read newspapers, watch TV streams on their mobile phones and buying air time, without any limitation of time or place. This situation, in other words the mobile life style, makes their lives easier on a large scale.

The advantages of SMS advertisements are personal communication, ability to classify consumers, high feedback rates, increased consumer satisfaction, entering a continuous and strong relationship with the consumers, low costs, ability to reach consumers and self-financing, while the disadvantages are 160-character limit, lack of color, image and motion and risk of spam messages. In addition to these, due to limited communication and presentation of multimedia expressions on mobile devices, it is argued that the SMS is the most preferred advertisement type today together with the developments in mobile technologies; mobile devices affecting corporations' commercial activities and adding new dimensions to consumers' purchase behaviors resulted in the notion of mobile advertising. Such that mobile SMS advertising is a new advertising approach that, makes use of mobile communication technologies in order to go one step ahead in this competitive environment, provide more output with less resources, minimize operational costs by utilizing latest technologies and gain a modern structure Selda and Betül (2015). According to the medium of the advertisement itself, it is possible to group mobile advertisement types in three groups. These are text message SMS - Short Message Service, Multimedia Messaging Service - MMS and Bluetooth.

In today's age however, where the usage of mobile devices as advertisement mediums increase remarkably, there is a strong possibility for these messages being deleted without being read due to corporations sending these messages without any consent or without performing a correct target subscribers' analysis or in other words, creating a strategic planning (Elden, 2009). The first thing that comes to mind as mobile advertising is considered is the bulk SMS delivery. The key aspects of mobile advertising are that they can be utilized to send personalized, informative, remindful or persuasive advertisement messages, depending on the place, date and interests of the consumers through mobile devices. SMS, is the operation where the text messages are sent and received via mobile phone over GSM networks. As both a brand tool and



a stimulus oriented at consumers SMS advertisements are important tools for corporations. However, should the SMS advertisements reach a point where they become irritating for the consumer, this would realize a negative perception and image?

Therefore, subscribers' consent must be taken before sending unsolicited SMS Advertisements. Since consent decreases the level of subscribers' irritation, it is observed as a substantial notion in mobile advertising (Smutkup, Krairit&Khang, 2012). In determination of the success of SMS, factors such as attracting consumers, creating positive images and using these positive images in order to encourage purchase decisions are among the significant criteria. In this aspect, active regulation of SMS is a major factor for convincing purchase decision (Arslan&Arslan, 2012 as cited in Selda & Betül 2015). In addition, ability to connect to web through mobile devices, brings the mobile internet advertisements. Mobile advertisements are divided into three groups. These are short message services (SMS) advertisements, mobile video advertisements and mobile calling advertisements. SMS advertisements containing text messages, are directly sent to the end users by the corporations. Mobile video advertisements contain banners, links or symbols that can be embedded in mobile applications such as maps, games and videos available in WAP or mobile HTML websites. Mobile calling advertising contains text links and sponsored images that user encounters in search results while using mobile phone to search for something (Khan, et.al, 2010).

Advertising communication goals can be parsimoniously Stated as reaching a target audience, increasing brand recall, and increasing sales (Hanley et al 2006; Fortuna to & Windels 2005; Lee Rohm 2006). Developing advertising strategies to achieve these goals centers around two critical factors: (1) understanding the communication channels to reach the audience and (2) understanding the use behavior of these mass media channels by the audience (Dholakia & Dholakia 2004; Fortunato & Dunnam 2004; Heller 2006). Therefore, advertisers need to choose the right medium for advertising so that they will be noticed by their desired target audience and elicit the desired response to the promoted call to- action (Haghirian et al 2005). Globally, the high penetration rate of mobile phones has resulted in the increasing use of mobile advertisements to market products and services.



## **2.2 Attitude Formation in SMS Advertising**

Attitude is a lasting, general evaluation of people (including oneself), objects, advertisements or issues (Solomon, 2013), and it is a mental state used by individuals to structure the way they perceive their environment and guide the way they respond to such environment (Tsang et al., 2004). The evaluation of people is more complex than whether they simply like or dislike an important object. To have a comprehensive view of attitude, the ABC Model of attitude was developed. This model divides attitude into three components: Affect, Behaviour and Cognition, which are referred as the verbs “feel, do and think”. Affect is the feeling of a consumer about an object. Behaviour refers the intention of the consumer to do something. Notice that the meaning of behaviour in this model is the intention, not the actual behaviour. Cognition is what a consumer believes about an object. These three components have a close relationship with each other. Depending on the situation, the relative impact of these components, known as hierarchies of effects, are diversified (Solomon, 2013). Similar to the ABC Model, Aaker, Kumar & Day (2000) break down an attitude into three components: cognitive and knowledge, affective or liking and intention or action components. Cognitive, or knowledge, represents a person’s information about an object. The affective, or liking, component summarizes a person’s overall feelings toward an object, situation, or person. The intention, or action, component refers to a person’s expectation of future behaviour toward an object (Aaker et al., 2000 & TriDinh Le & Bao-Tran Ho 2014).

As an extension of the internet environment, the high penetration of mobile phones in recent years has created a good opportunity for mobile advertising (Bauer et al. 2005; Leppaniemi et al. 2006). There are different synonyms for advertising through mobile devices, such as wireless advertising (Barnes 2002; Krishnamurthy, 2001) or wireless advertising messaging (Petty, 2003). Usually, mobile advertising messages are transmitted via short message service (SMS) (De Reyck & Degraeve 2003). The Wireless Advertising Association (WAA) defines wireless marketing as sending advertising messages to mobile devices such as mobile phones through the wireless network (Krishnamurthy 2003; Petty 2003). Mobile advertising and internet



advertising have many features in common – both are emerging media used to deliver digital texts, images, and voices with interactive, immediate, personalized, and responsive capabilities (Yoon & Kim 2001). Mobile advertising relaxes the mobility constraint associated with fixed-line internet access. One may expect mobile advertising to be more favorable to consumers for location-sensitive and time critical events (Barwise&Strong 2002; Zoller et al. 2001). Since the mobile phone is a very personal device that allows an individual to be accessed virtually any time and anywhere, mobile advertising must be more personalized and may take different forms. Based on different strategic applications, wireless marketing can be permission-based, incentive-based, or location base (Barnes &Scornavacca 2004; Barwise& Strong 2002). Permission-based advertising differs from traditional advertising in that messages about specific products, services, or content are sent only to individuals who have explicitly indicated their willingness to receive the message. Consumers often impatiently ignore the message when interrupted by an advertisement (Barnes 2002; Denk&Hackl 2004; Varshney 2003; Wang & Wang 2005). Therefore, Corporations use communication channels in building attitude and the most important communication channel in recent years is mobile advertisement. At the same time, corporations seek to create positive consumer attitude towards them selves by using these new communication channels. Primary concern which the corporations need to emphasize is the notion of how mobile advertisements are perceived by consumers and what kind of attitude. Attitude, which is a notion that directs consumer behaviors, can be defined in various manners in literature.

Attitude is generally a tendency to form a potential behavior form or a state of readiness to behave, for an individual who is encountering any situation, event, fact or a person. With this definition in mind, it is possible to State that attitude appears in any kind of behavior of an individual. According to another definition, attitude is a tendency of an individual to react positively or negatively to an object, an idea or an environment. It is known that the attitude of individuals have direct effects on their purchase decisions and purchase decisions influence consolidation or alteration of a certain attitude consumers show incentive based advertising provides specific financial rewards to individuals who agree to receive promotions and campaigns (Hanley et al.



2006). For example, mobile phone companies may reward customers with free connection time for listening to voice advertisements or some other incentives. Both permission-based and incentive-based advertising mechanisms are feasible for mobile advertising Humayun et al (2001). In MacKenzie and Lutz(1989), Madlberger, Maria and Haghirian, Parissa, said attitude toward an advertisement is defined as “a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner toward advertising in general”. In this context, it is important to note that attitude toward advertising via mobile devices pertains to subscribers’ attitude toward this advertising type in general and not to the exposure to one particular advertising. In general, attitude are “mental states used by individuals to structure the way they perceive their environment and guide the way they respond to it” (Aaker, Kumar & Day, 1995).

Privacy refers to the degree to which personal information is not known by others (Rust, Kannan&Peng, 2002). Customer privacy has always been a critical issue in marketing, but has assumed a greater significance in recent years with the rise of Internet-based commercial transactions (Rust, Kannan & Peng, 2002). Most consumers are still quite uncomfortable with the concept of mobile business and they are skeptical whether these businesses are feasible and secure (Siau&Shen, 2003). Originally meant to connect the world of business, the mobile phone has been increasingly applied by private households and therewith entered the domestic sphere. Accordingly, the mobile phone has changed its identity: it has lost its internal coherence and its connotations of being a mobile technology (Fortunati, 2001). Consumers regard their mobile phone as a very private item. Mobile technologies are considered “personal” technologies, attached to a particular body or person (Green, Harper, Murtagh& Cooper, 2001). Consequently, they are very sensitive about receiving messages from unknown persons or organizations. Data control by unknown individuals can easily lead to annoyance among receivers (Whitaker, 2001).

Moreover, advertising through electronic communications media like telephone, fax or e-mail is prohibited by law in several Western European countries unless the consumer agrees explicitly to receive the message. Privacy issues are therefore very important when using mobile devices in addressing the consumers. This calls for application of permission marketing (Kent &Brandal, 2003; Krishnamurthy, 2000; Tezinde, Smith &



Murphy, 2002). Before receiving advertising messages via a mobile device, consumers need to empower a marketer to send promotional messages in certain interest categories to them. Typically, this is done by asking the consumer to fill out a survey indicating his or her interest when registering for a service. After that, the marketer can match advertising messages with the interests of the consumer (Krishnamurthy, 2001). These processes allow a new kind of interactivity, which often leads to marketers collecting, compiling, and using information about customers (Stewart & Pavlou, 2002).

### **2.3 SMS Advertising through Mobile Devices**

Kotler (2003) defines advertising as “any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor”. SMS Advertising via mobile devices or mobile advertising (in the following abbreviated as advertising via mobile devices) is defined as the usage of interactive wireless media (such as cellular phones and pagers, cordless telephones, personal digital assistants, two-way radios, baby crib monitors, wireless networking systems, GPS-based locators and maps) to transmit advertising messages to consumers in form of time and location sensitive, personalized information with the overall goal to promote goods and services.

There are different synonyms for advertising via mobile devices, such as wireless advertising (Krishnamurthy, 2003) or wireless advertising messaging (Petty, 2003). Usually, mobile advertising messages are transmitted via short message service (SMS) (De Reyck & Degraeve, 2003). Mobile advertising allows marketers to exploit the medium's unique features in order to customize their messages to consumers' attributes. “Good marketing management emphasizes the building of long term relationships” (Houston & Gassenheimer, 1987). Mobile advertising can support these goals in various ways because it allows reciprocal communication processes between marketer and consumers. “As more wireless bandwidth will be available, content rich advertising involving audio, pictures, and video clips can be produced for individual users with specific needs, interests, and inclinations” (Varshney & Vetter, 2002). It is therefore assumed that mobile advertising will be also an important revenue source for mobile operators in the future (Madlberger, Maria, & Haghirian, Parissa, n.d.)



The number of advertising messages received via mobile devices is an important factor that influences the advertising value for the consumer (Haghirian&Dickinger, 2004). Ducoffe States that in formativeness and entertainment of advertising information should decline with repetition because the information will be learned by the audience and thereby lessening its value (Ducoffe, 1995). As the quantity of promotional message rises, the attitude of the individual towards the promotional vehicle also worsens and leads to tedium from consumers' point of view (Ha, 1996); Telli,2007. It is related to how often the consumer receive the SMS, and this can influence the attitude towards mobile advertising as mentioned in Sabokwigina et al (2013) study. In this study they resulted in that increasing of receiving SMS can lead to decreasing the favorable attitude regarding the SMS's advertising.

#### **2.4 Consumer Avoidance of SMS Advertising**

Effectiveness of an advertisement is directly related with consumer responses, since these responses have the capacity to cut or enhance the communication. Avoidance behavior of a consumer is the common way for a negative response for ending the communication and this behavior and/or attitude is a key communicational problem to be solved for increasing the effectiveness. Cheung et. al (2010),said that "to be successful, an advertisement must establish a contact with the consumer in which the consumer consciously attends to the advertisement and is, then, influenced by it." Pietzet. al (2007),Stressed that advertisement needs to stop consumers and hold their attention in likable ways: "Where the eye stops, the sale begins". Because of rising media noise due to competing advertisements and active advertising avoidance by consumers, it has become increasingly challenging for firms to attain this goal (Pieters et. al., 2010). But the problem here is zipping and zapping behaviors which are used to avoid from advertisement. According to Greene, most of the people do not view television for commercials. They have made a conscious choice to see the program, but there are many distractions for even non-zippers/zappers who may be physically present when commercials are aired but are mentally somewhere else as far as commercial perception is concerned reading a newspaper or magazine, talking to someone else, simply "resting" their set attention, etc. (Greene 1988). As to Urban,



when consumers expose to TV commercials, one third watching while the rest are changing channel, tuning of/down the sound or leaving the room. Advertising avoidance can be explained as the conscious effort of consumers to stay away from the stimulus of ads. In other words, users try to do all the activities to reduce their exposure to ad content (Kemal, & Bilge, 2011). They were of the opinion that consumers avoid advertising for four main reasons. First, consumers do not intend to get any information about cheap and frequently used products so they are not interested in these products' advertising. Second, consumers may very much value the media where the ads are issued and may consider the ads disturbing and disengaging. Third, consumers may be loyal to the rival brand of the advertised product and may not want to be subjected to adverse information. Finally, consumers find advertising boring, frustrating and irritating (Kemal & Bilge 2011).

The privacy is a reason for concern of many people, and many consumers have the fear of losing privacy on their phone as a result of the advertising they would receive on their mobile phone. In the study done by Haghirian & Madlberger (2005), the outcomes of their study revealed that individuals who contemplate privacy very essential are less inclined to feature a high value and a favorable attitude toward mobile advertising. Kemal and Bilge (2011) also stated further that there are different ad avoidance strategies. Abernethy (1991) cited in Kemal, H & Bilge, N (2011) provides two major strategies to avoid TV commercials. The first is physical avoidance that is to leave the room when the commercials start. The second is mechanical avoidance that is to change the channel when the commercials start. Speck & Elliott (1997) give us three strategies for the same purpose. These are: cognitive avoidance strategy, behavioral avoidance strategy, and mechanical avoidance strategy. When using cognitive avoidance strategies, people attempt to ignore advertising. People who use behavioral avoidance strategies easily flip past advertisements. And finally, mechanical avoidance strategies are observed when people try to eliminate ads. Kemal and Bilge (2011) stated that consumers react to advertising stimulus in three different ways: cognitive, affective, and behavioral.



## **2.5 Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored the diffusion of innovation theory. The theory is a renowned attempt in the search for logical explanations of the inclination influence of mobile phone advert and other devices on heavy user. Therefore, the diffusion of innovation theory would be adopted as theoretical foundation to guide this study. The study of the diffusion of innovations in its present-day form can be traced from the theories and observations of Gabriel Tarde, a French sociologist and legal scholar (Rogers, 2003). Tarde originated such key diffusion concepts as opinion leadership, the S-curve of diffusion, and the role of socioeconomic status in interpersonal diffusion, although he did not use such concepts by these names. Such theoretical ideas were set forth by Rogers et al, 2007 in his book, *The Laws of Imitation*. The intellectual leads suggested were later followed up by anthropologists, who began investigating the role of technological innovations in bringing about cultural change. Illustrative of these anthropological studies was Clark Wissler's analysis of the diffusion of the horse among the Plains Indians. As in other anthropological works, the emphasis was on the consequences of innovation. For example, Wissler showed that adding horses to their culture led the Plains Indians, who had lived in peaceful coexistence, into a State of almost continual warfare with neighboring tribes. (Everett M. Rogers et. al 2007)

This theory was introduced by Rogers in 1983. The theory suggests that when a concept is perceived as new, the individual utilizes communication tactics within social systems to arrive at a decision point of either adoption or rejection of the innovation. He uses the term communication channel to describe how the message is communicated; at its most basic it is between an individual who knows about an innovation and one who does not, at the other end of the spectrum is mass media communication channels (Zurbuchen 2005). According to this theory, some attributes of innovation have effect in adoption of innovation. Although, features that were introduced by Rogers include relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trial ability and observe ability ; however other scholars have augmented the list over the years, and added other attributes such as perceived cost and risk, communicability, profitability and social approval ( Zurbuchen 2005).



### 3.0 Research Methodology

The research design adopted for this work is survey research method so as to be able to sample large number of people on the subject matter. The instrument of the study is questionnaire which will be given and retrieved as soon as the respondents are through with the questions within it.

The population for the study is student of Achievers University, Owo, Ondo state, Nigeria. The population is 4,358 students according to the information from the admission office. The sample size used for this work is one hundred and twenty which was selected with the use of simple random sampling technique.

### 4.0 PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Sex distribution of respondents

Sex	Population	Percentage
Male	50	42%
Female	70	58%
Total	120	100%

The table shows that 50 students representing 42% of the total number of the students sampled were males, while 70 students representing 58% of them were females.

What are the attitudes of Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State to GSM operators' unsolicited SMS advertisements?

Responses	Population	Percentage
It generates unfavourable attitudes	116	98%
It is acceptable and welcome	4	2%
Undecided	0	0%
Total	120	100%

The table above shows that majority of the respondents agreed that GSM operators' unsolicited SMS advertisements generate unfavourable attitudes.



What are the informational values of GSM operators' unsolicited SMS advertisements to Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State?

Responses	Population	Percentage
The messages are mostly confusing, misleading and irritating.	112	93%
The messages are mostly useful and helping.	8	7%
Undecided	0	0%
Total	120	100%

The table above shows that majority of the respondents agreed that GSM operators' unsolicited SMS advertisements are mostly confusing, misleading and irritating.

What is the relationship between high exposure of Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State to unsolicited SMS advertisements and the subscribers' attitude to advertisers' products and services?

Responses	Population	Percentage
They find unsolicited SMS advertisements of no informational values and relevance because the messages were not permitted; therefore they delete the messages immediately after receiving them.	115	96%
They regard unsolicited SMS advertisements as having immense informational values and relevance, and are therefore willing to continually receive them.	4	3%
Undecided	1	1%
Total	120	100%

The table above shows that majority of the respondents find unsolicited SMS advertisements of no informational values and relevant because the messages were not permitted; therefore they delete the messages immediately after receiving them.



How beneficial is the information value of GSM operators' unsolicited messages on the advertisers' products and services to Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State?

Responses	Population	Percentage
Not beneficial or exciting	115	96%
Highly beneficial and exciting	4	3%
Undecided	1	1%
Total	120	100%

The table above shows that majority of the respondents found GSM operators' unsolicited messages on the advertisers' products and services not beneficial or exciting.

What is the opinion of Achievers University undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State on whether or not unsolicited GSM operators' SMS advertisements should be discontinued?

Responses	Population	Percentage
Unsolicited GSM operators' SMS advertisements should be discontinued	118	98%
Unsolicited GSM operators' SMS advertisements should continually be allowed	2	2%
Undecided	0	0%
Total	120	100%

The table above shows that the opinion of the majority of the respondents indicated that unsolicited GSM operators' SMS advertisements should be discontinued.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

The research has shown clearly that GSM operators' unsolicited SMS advertisements generates unfavourable attitudes and they are mostly unbeneficial, unexciting, confusing, misleading, and irritating. In addition, they are neither of any informational values nor relevant because the messages were not permitted by the subscribers that receive them,



which is why they delete them immediately after receiving them. Therefore, sending such unsolicited messages should be discontinued.

## **5.1 CONCLUSION**

This study has established the premises that unsolicited SMS advertising generates attitudes that are unfavourable to the advertisers – network operators – and the products/services they promote through SMS. Such resultant unfavourable attitudes include the dispositions that the messages were confusing, misleading and irritating, which made them delete the messages immediately after receiving them. Such attitudes are generated because the messages were not permission-based and more importantly because of the high frequency of exposure to the messages. Subscribers found unsolicited SMS advertisements of no informational values and relevant, which also influenced their attitudes towards SMS advertising. Surprisingly, undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State did not always find participating in unsolicited text-to-win SMS advertisements exciting, indicating that sales promotional motivations may not generate subscribers' favourable attitudes towards SMS advertising. It was therefore found that unsolicited GSM operators' SMS advertisements should be discontinued. It can be concluded based on the premises derived from the findings of this study that unsolicited SMS advertising generated unfavourable attitudes among tertiary institutions' undergraduate subscribers in Ondo State because they were not received based on permission, they were received in high frequency and they were of no informational values and relevance to the subscribers.

## **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study hereby recommends that:

1. GSM network operators in Nigeria should make SMS advertising permission-based. Seeking the permission of subscribers on the kind of messages to subscribe to, when to receive such messages and the form in which the messages are to be received would generate positive attitudes and minimize waste of advertising resources on the part of the operators.
2. GSM network operators should reduce the frequency at which they send unsolicited messages. The practice of exposing subscribers to numerous unsolicited



advertisements leads to advertising clutter as subscribers become confused about which of the messages to act on. This confusion often makes them delete the messages, thereby the communication process ineffective and wasteful.

3. The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) needs to step up its role in monitoring and regulating the activities of the telecommunication operators with respect to the processing and delivery of advertising messages on mobile telephones, especially when such messages are unsolicited. The volume, frequency and conditions of sending SMS advertisements by GSM network operators need to be carefully controlled by NCC in the interest of subscribers. Issue of operators charging subscribers for unsolicited SMS and failing to timely stop such SMS on the request of subscribers need to be critically considered by the regulators.
4. The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) needs to review article 80 Section 5 of its Code of Conduct of 2012, which States that “unsolicited messages should not be sent except there are reasonable grounds to believe that the consumers who receive such communications messages will be interested in the subject matter or offer”. Determining who would be interested in what kind of message leaves a lot of gaps for the network operators to exploit unethically. This section of the code should indicate subscribers’ permission as a condition of sending advertisements through SMS rather than an assumption of subscribers’ interests.
5. Subscribers should not be in a hurry to delete unsolicited messages because some of them may be useful to them. Some messages contain information about product use, network or brand information, daily living health tips, news about the society to mention a few.

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