CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1   BACKGROUND

Short message service (SMS) is a communication channel that allows the exchange of text messages of up to 160 characters, including spaces, between mobile phones and some other compatible devices. This is a popular technology with global usage growing steadily since it was introduced to the public. Approximately 1.9 trillion text messages were sent worldwide in 2007 and the figure is expected to have reached 2.5 trillion in 2008 before rising to 3.3 trillion in 2009 (Stross, 2008).

Despite the limitation in the amount of characters an SMS can contain, many of its characteristics still make SMS a promising advertising channel. To start with, SMS has the ability to reach a large audience, that is, anyone who has a mobile phone. Meanwhile, since users normally carry their mobile phones with them, SMS ads can reach audience almost everywhere and at anytime. Another advantage is that, knowing three signal towers nearest to a mobile phone user, advertisers can tell where the mobile phone user is and then send e advertisements they think appropriate for the location.

As mobile phone usage worldwide has been growing steadily, SMS ads are likely to reach an increasingly large number of people. Global mobile phone subscriptions passed 3.3 billion in November 2007 and the figure is expected to have reached 4 billion in 2008 (Virki, 2007; Wray, 2008).

While SMS has a high potential from the view of advertisers, the right execution is also needed in order to ensure SMS advertisements will yield desired results. Thus, it is necessary to know how consumers view SMS advertising. The aim of this study is to find out the attitudes toward SMS advertising of Thai mobile phone users. The findings of this study are discussed in the following chapters.

1.2   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The aim of this study is to answer the following research questions.

1.2.1   What is the overall attitude of Thai mobile phone users toward SMS advertisements?

1.2.2   How Thai mobile phone users view SMS advertisements in terms of their informativeness, credibility, entertainment and irritation?

1.2.3   What demographic factors affect the overall attitudes of Thai mobile phone users toward SMS advertisements?

1.3   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are as follows.

1.3.1   To find out the overall attitude of Thai mobile phone users toward SMS advertisements.

1.3.2   To find out how Thai mobile phone users view SMS advertisements in terms of their informativeness, credibility, entertainment and irritation.

1.3.3   To identify demographic factors affecting the overall attitudes of Thai mobile phone users toward SMS advertisements.

1.4   DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Thai mobile phone users refer to Thai nationals who posses at least 1 mobile phone number.

SMS advertisements refer to any text messages being sent to the respondents' mobile phones which the respondents perceived as advertisements. No distinction was made in this study between text-only messages and messages that also contain images, video clips or audio clips (which are called multimedia mobile messages or MMS).

1.5   SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The sample of this study consists of 100 Thai individuals. Although there may be several factors that contribute to consumer attitudes toward advertisements, this study focuses only on factors that have been identified in previous similar studies, which are informativeness, credibility, entertainment and irritation of SMS advertisements.

1.6   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study will be useful for providers of products or services who wish to place advertisements via mobile short messages and for copywriters who wish to prepare advertising messages that meet the audience's preferences.

1.7   ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter includes seven parts; the background, the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, definitions of terms, the scope of the study, the significance of the study and the organization of the study.

The second chapter covers a review of the literature and previous similar studies while the third chapter covers the research methodology regarding the subjects of the study, materials or the instrument used in this study for data collection, the procedures to collect the information and data analysis.

The fourth chapter presents the results of the study and the last chapter consists of the conclusions and discussions of the study, followed by the recommendations for further research.