

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents (1) a summary of the study, (2) a summary of the findings, (3) discussions, (4) conclusions, and (5) recommendations for further study.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

5.1.1 Objectives of the Study

The three main objectives of this study were (1) to find out the overall attitude of Thai mobile phone users toward SMS advertisements, (2) to find out how Thai mobile phone users view SMS advertisements in terms of their informativeness, credibility, entertainment and irritation, and (3) to identify demographic factors that affect the overall attitudes of Thai mobile phone users toward SMS advertisements.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials and Procedures

The subjects of this study were 100 individuals who own at least 1 mobile phone and live, work or study in Bangkok. They were chosen using the convenient sampling technique. The material used for collecting data was a self-administered questionnaire.

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part asked the respondent his or her demographic and personal data. The second part was designed to solicit the respondent's overall attitude toward SMS advertisement and how he or she views SMS advertisements in terms of their informativeness, credibility, entertaining characteristics and irritation.

The data was collected over a two-week period, from February 14, 2009 to February 28, 2009. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 16.0.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of this study are summarized as follows.

5.2.1 Overall Attitudes of Thai Mobile Phone Users toward SMS Advertisements

The respondents in general hold negative attitudes toward SMS advertisements. The respondents were undecided whether SMS advertisements were useful. They were not pleased to receive SMS advertisements and would not be willing to receive SMS advertisements in the future.

5.2.2 Perceived Informativeness of SMS Advertisements

The respondents were undecided whether SMS advertisements were informative. They found most SMS ads irrelevant to them but were undecided whether SMS advertisements provided them with information useful in making purchase decisions. However, the respondents agreed that SMS advertisements provided them with up-to-date information.

5.2.3 Perceived Credibility of SMS Advertisements

The respondents were undecided whether SMS advertisements were credible. They were undecided whether SMS ads contained reliable information, but found that SMS advertisements usually hid facts and that most SMS ads came from unreliable sources.

5.2.4 Perceived entertainment of SMS Advertisements

The respondents were undecided whether reading SMS advertisements were pleasing. They were undecided whether SMS ads usually contained humor and whether SMS ads were fun to read. However, they disagreed with the idea that reading SMS ads was pleasing.

5.2.5 Perceived Irritation of SMS Advertisements

The respondents in general found SMS ads irritating. They felt they were always disturbed by SMS ads and that SMS ads made them unable to concentrate on

work. The respondents also felt that their privacy was violated by SMS advertisements.

5.2.6 Overall Attitudes toward SMS Advertisements among Different Demographic Groups

The overall attitudes toward SMS advertisements were found to be negative in nearly all different genders, age groups, income groups and educational levels. The only exception was found in the group of respondents with education levels below bachelor degree, in which the overall attitudes were found to be neutral.

5.3 DISCUSSION

5.3.1 Overall Attitudes toward SMS Advertisements

The results of this study indicate that Thai mobile phone users in general hold negative attitudes toward SMS advertisements. The finding is in line with those of Rettie & Brum (2001) and Tsang et al (2004). The reason might be that, apart from being perceived as the causes of irritation, SMS advertisements also fail to illicit trust from mobile phone users and fail to provide them with the feeling of entertainment.

5.3.2 Perceived Informativeness of SMS Advertisements

The results of this study indicate that Thai mobile phone users are indifferent as to whether SMS ads are informative. However, informativeness is the only aspect of SMS advertisements that received some positive responses in this study. While the respondents were undecided whether SMS ads contained essential information about the advertised products/services, they agreed that SMS advertisements provided them with up-to-date information. This is in line with the finding by Bucklin (1965) that one of the most important reason consumers would listen to advertisements is that ads provide them with information.

5.3.3 Perceived Credibility of SMS Advertisements

The results of this study suggest that Thai mobile phone users SMS neither trust nor distrust SMS advertisements. This might be because, while SMS is used as

an advertising channel by many large, well-known companies, SMS advertisements are also sent by many smaller, less-known firms. As a low-cost advertising channel, it is not a surprise that SMS advertising will attract companies that want to advertise their products but have limited budgets. It is also common for mobile phone users to receive SMS ads from unfamiliar businesses convincing them to download erotic images or send premium-rate SMS to participate in a lucky draw. All this might have reduced the perceived credibility of SMS advertisements in general.

5.3.4 Perceived Entertainment of SMS Advertisements

The results of this study indicate that Thai mobile phone users are indifferent as to whether SMS ads are entertaining. This could be due to the fact that each SMS can contain only a maximum of 160 characters, including spaces. After key information is typed in, there will be probably very little room or no room at all left for humor. Meanwhile, a short message normally contains only characters on a plain background, making it incomparable in terms of vividness to ads on television, websites, or even magazines.

5.3.5 Perceived Irritation of SMS Advertisements

The results of this study indicate that Thai mobile phone users generally find SMS advertisements irritating. This is in line with previous studies (Tsang et al, 2004; Chowdhury et al., 2006). This might be because some mobile phone users regard their mobile phones as very personal devices and thus sending SMS advertisements to their mobile phones can be perceived as an intrusion into their private areas. Another reason may be that sometimes mobile phone users have no idea how their mobile phone numbers are obtained, leading to privacy concerns when SMS advertisements are sent to them from unfamiliar businesses. Even in cases where the numbers were obtained directly from the mobile phone users, frustration can still arise for they were not informed that it would lead to SMS advertisements being sent to them.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicate that the overall attitudes toward SMS advertisements of Thai mobile phone users are negative, and negative attitudes prevail in nearly all different demographic groups. Apart from being perceived as causes of irritation, SMS ads also fail to obtain trust from consumers and to provide them with the feeling of entertainment, although SMS advertisements are credited for containing up-to-date information.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.5.1 Because of the limitation of time and resources, the sample of this study consists of only 100 individuals who live, work or study in the Bangkok area. Further study should include a larger number of respondents and cover a broader range of locations.

5.5.2 As a result of using the convenient sampling technique, the sample in this study was female-dominated and subjects aged 21-30 years old alone accounted for nearly 70% of the sample. It is recommended that a quota sampling technique be used in further research.

5.5.3 In this study, no distinction was made between short messages sent from providers of products and services the respondents were not familiar with and from those where the respondents were already customers. Some respondents did not regard short messages from those they were already customers of as advertisements. Such distinction might be made in further research.

5.5.4 Newer devices nowadays can handle mobile short messages that contain images, sound clips or video clip. Due to the more vivid presentation, this type of mobile message may lead to a higher level of perceived entertainment. However, no distinction was made in this study between such messages and text-only SMS. Such distinction might also be made in further research.