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### CONSUMERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS MOBILE ADVERTISING IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Today the field of advertising is going through fundamental changes. The digitalization has resulted in new types of media such as the mobile phone, which offers richer possibilities to reach consumers and interact with them. Public attitudes toward advertising have been a focus of attention for a long time. Earlier researchers found that consumers have a positive attitude towards general advertising but a few later researchers found that consumers have a negative attitude towards mobile advertising. Therefore, this study identifies the consumer attitudes towards mobile advertising in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study conducted has relied on two main sources, namely secondary sources and questionnaire. The secondary sources helped get a better insight of the consumer attitudes towards SMS advertising in general. The questionnaire helped to get a better understanding of the market that exists mainly in Jeddah, how consumers perceive SMS advertising in context of entertainment, informativeness, irritation & credibility and what are the antecedents that exist for purchase intentions. Based on the obtained result, majority of the Saudi consumers considered SMS advertising to be informative and credible but are not willing to receive SMS advertising in the future.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The high penetration rate of mobile phones has resulted in the increasing use of handheld devices to deliver advertisements for products and services. Short Messaging Service (SMS), in particular, has been very successful. A series of surveys conducted by Kearney [1] indicates that the use of mobile information services and SMS has increased dramatically since 2001. Smartphone have become an indispensable part of our daily lives. Smartphone penetration in Saudi Arabia [2] is at 60. of the population and these Smartphone owners are becoming increasingly reliant on their devices. 66% access the Internet every day on their Smartphone and most never leave home without it.

The rapid technological development has led to the digitalization of media such as the mobile phone, which offers richer possibilities to reach consumers and interact with them. However, in order to fully exploit the potential of the mobile phone as an advertising channel, marketers must understand the unique characteristics related to it and the ways that consumers interact with this channel. Organizations today operate in an environment that is characterized by constant change and an increase in competition as a result of globalization. Zyman [3], suggest that the biggest change in the market place is that consumers have a greater selection with regards to products and services and those organizations should become more conscious of their advertising efforts. Organizations now view advertising as an investment and tend to value over-communication with consumers, resulting in greater budgets for advertising departments than in the past [3].

Smart phones have changed the way consumers shop in Saudi Arabia. Smart phones have become critical shopping tools with 76% having researched a product or service on their device. Smartphone research influences buyer decisions and purchases across channels that 25% of Smartphone users have made a purchase on their phone [2]. Moreover, the research stated that mobile ads are noticed by 93% of Smartphone users and that Smart phones are also a critical component of traditional advertising as 70% have performed a search on their Smartphone after seeing an offline advertisement. This without a doubt proves that Smart phones are helping advertisers connect with consumers. Since the mobile phone is a relatively new channel for advertising, academic research in this field has been, to a large extent, inconsistent and fragmented [4]. Leppäniemi [4] notes that mobile marketing research has mainly focused on studying factors related to the consumer. Specifically consumer attitudes toward mobile marketing have received a considerable amount of attention [5].

During recent years, the popularity of text messaging (SMS) has grown exponentially, which has led to the rise of the mobile advertising phenomenon [6]. Chang and Villegas [7] argue that the mobile phone has tremendous potential for delivering advertisements because of its high penetration rate. In fact, it is the only advertising medium that consumers carry with them almost anywhere they go. The ubiquity of the mobile phone extends the time and space aspect of the traditional mass media advertising [7]. Mobile advertisements can be delivered to consumers without limitations concerning time and space.

Public attitudes toward advertising have been a focus of attention for a long time. Although some earlier literature reported positive attitudes toward advertising, most of the more recent researchers have found that consumers generally have negative attitudes toward ads [6]. At the same time, however, Internet advertising seems to generate positive consumer attitudes [8]. This is because Internet advertising is often thought to be informative and entertaining. Nevertheless, the results of these studies have been contradicting which suggests a need for more profound research concerning attitudes. In addition, current research has mainly focused on the antecedents of attitudes such as entertainment, informativeness and credibility of mobile

advertisements [5]. However, the influence of attitudes toward mobile advertisement on consumer behaviour and especially purchase intentions has been studied less. This study will look into the relationship between attitudes and purchase intentions with the purpose of gaining more understanding concerning mobile consumer behaviour.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology helps in making the strategy or plan of action that links methods to the outcomes. “Methodology” implies more than simply the methods that user intends to use to collect data. It is often necessary to include a consideration of the concepts and theories which underlie the methods.

This research mainly revolves around the question that “What are the consumer attitudes towards mobile advertisement and how can those attitudes affect the purchase intentions or behaviour?” The research mainly focuses on the antecedents of consumer attitudes. This research hypothesize that mobile advertisements via SMS have limited effect on purchase intentions and that consumers barely regard SMS advertising as informative or persuasive. Some studies highlight the factors influencing the purchase intentions helps this research assume that mobile advertisement does not play a major role while making purchase decisions; rather norms, culture, benefits, prior knowledge and post- purchase reactions play an essential role [5-8] . But, there are some studies highlight there is a significant relationship between purchase behaviour and mobile advertising [9, 10].

Quantitative approach has two strategies or procedures that it follows. They are the experimental designs and non-experimental designs. The experimental designs refer to the true experiments with random group assignment. While, quasi-experiments is use nonrandomized designs. The non-experimental designs can be kind of surveys type. To summarize, quantitative approach uses post positivist claims for developing knowledge, employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data.

### ***Data collection***

Data collection in this research has been done through questionnaire which consists of 13 questions. The medium used to ask questions was surveymonkey.com. The sample size consists of 145 respondents from Saudi Arabia.

### ***Data collection process***

In order to gather information from the general public, a survey was designed online and distributed via emails and social media in order to collect responses from various parts of Saudi Arabia. The questionnaire was sent to the students of Effat University, Arab Open University and to the general public. The questionnaire was designed in such a way that it first inquired about the behavioural aspects of mobile advertisement, transitioning to consumer

attitudes and perception and the final section related to the purchase intentions of the consumers.

**Sample of study**

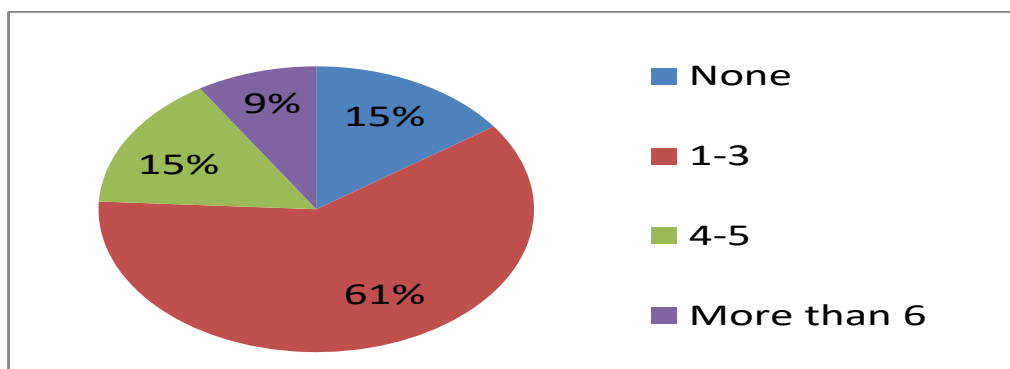
The sample mainly focused on men and women from above the age of 20 till 55. The purpose is to identify the attitude of consumers towards the advertisements they receive on their mobile phones irrespective of their gender. The sample size managed to collect for this research was a total of 145 respondents.

**Result And Discussion**

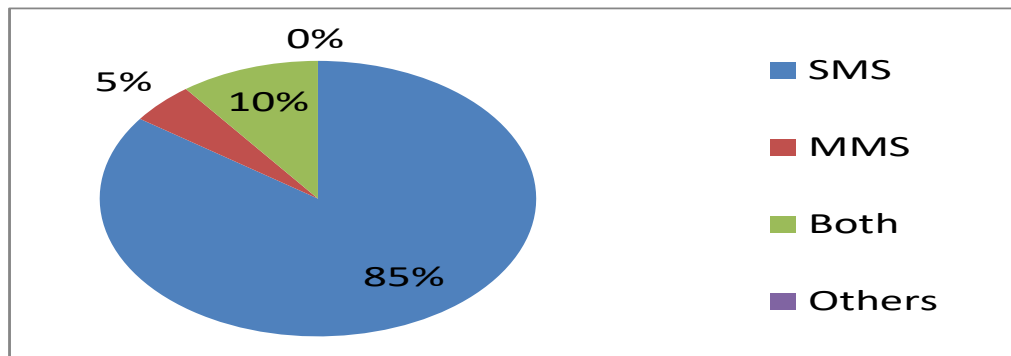
The survey was arranged in such a way that it inquired mainly about their attitudes towards SMS advertising and the influence on the antecedents of purchase attitude. Table 1 tabulate the demographic profile of the respondents. The majority respondents are female by 84.14% and majority respondents are age between 15 to 25 years old by 71.72%. This age range does cover an important demographic range since almost 50% of the Kingdoms population comprises of the youth. Also, majority respondents about 75.17% claim they ever reserved advertisement message. Figure 1 indicates that majority of the respondents about 61% receive 1-3 SMS’s per day. This tells us that SMS advertising is a popular media amongst the Saudi consumers as 85% said that the format of the message was SMS (Figure 2).

**Table 1.** Demographic profile of respondents

Criteria	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Female	122	84.14
	Male	23	15.86
<b>Age group</b>	Under 15	0	0
	15-25	104	71.72
	26-35	26	17.93
	36-45	12	8.28
	46-55	3	2.07
	Above 56	0	0
<b>Ever received advertisement message</b>	Yes	109	75.17
	No	36	24.83

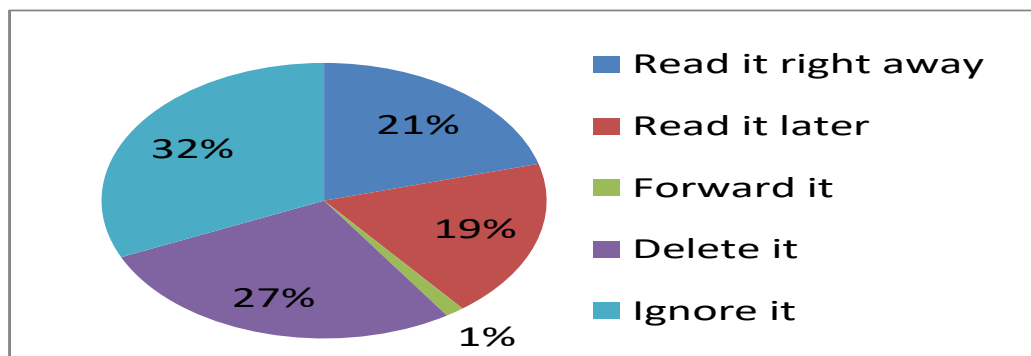


**Figure 1.** Respondent’s answer on “How many advertisement messages do you receive on your mobile phone per day?”



**Figure 2.** Respondent’s answer on “What was the format of the messages that you received?”

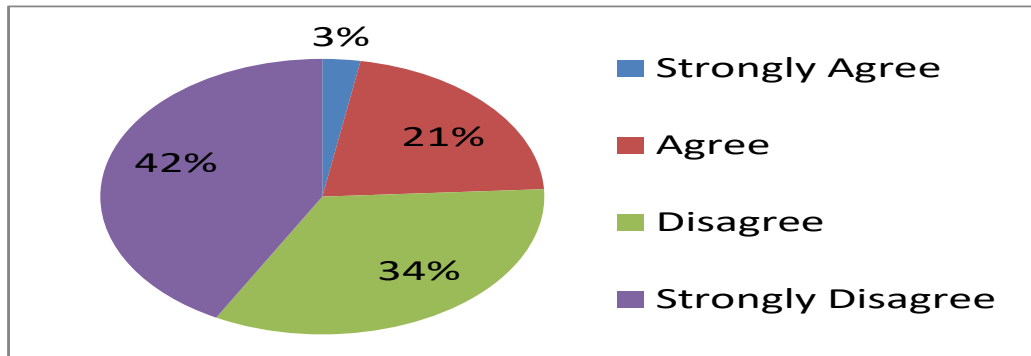
The concept of SMS advertising is not new to the Saudi consumers and figure 3 shows that a high percentage of respondents ignored the SMS as soon as it was received. About 32% decided to ignore the SMS followed by 27% deleting it without even reading. On the other hand, 21% of the respondents read the SMS right away, with an additional 19% who read the SMS later. Unfortunately, only 1% of the respondents bothered to forward the SMS’s.



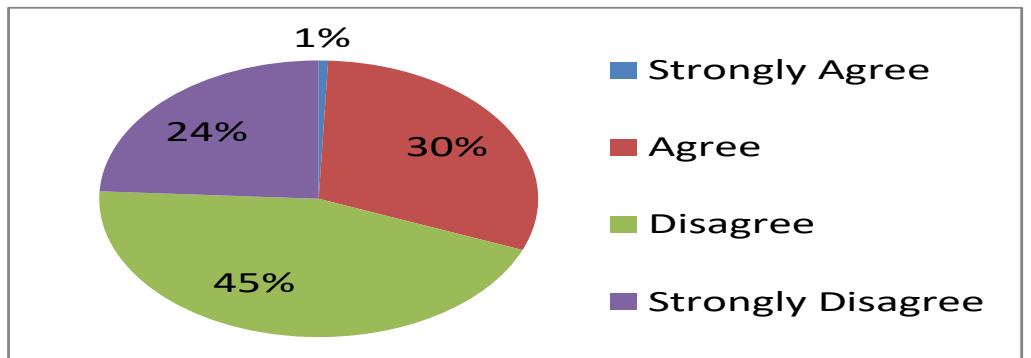
**Figure 3** Respondent’s answer on “What do you usually do when you receive the advertisement message?”

Figures 4 and Figure 5 measured the entertainment aspect of the SMS advertising. This study had hypothesized that SMS advertising is more irritating to consumers than it is entertaining and the results clearly prove that the hypothesis was correct. Figure 4 shows 42% and 34% of the respondents claims strongly disagree and disagree respectively that they are enjoyable and entertaining for that receiving mobile advertisement. Figure 5 shows that 30% and 43% strongly disagree and disagree respectively that receiving mobile advisements is pleasant for them. Figures 6 shows the measured irritation aspect of SMS advertising in the Saudi consumers. The consumers of Saudi Arabia considered SMS advertising more irritating (73%) and is manipulative than informative (77%) in Figure 7. Figure 8 and Figure 9 indicate that SMS advertising was considered annoying and disturbance by more than half of the

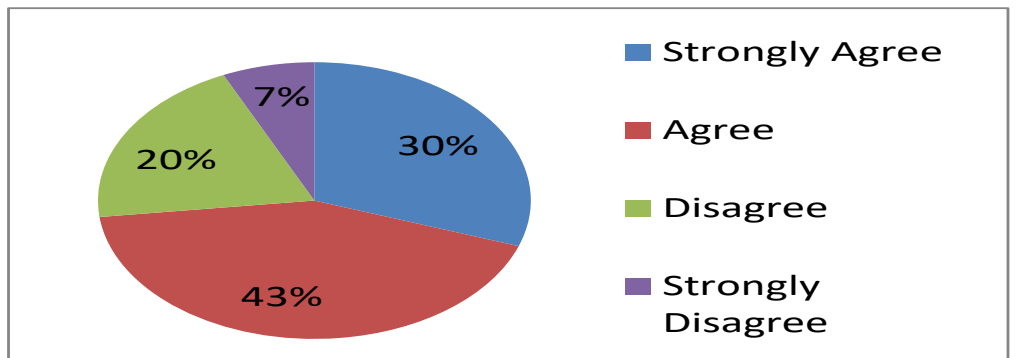
respondents. These results were not unexpected as previous studies did mention that consumers have a negative attitude towards mobile advertising.



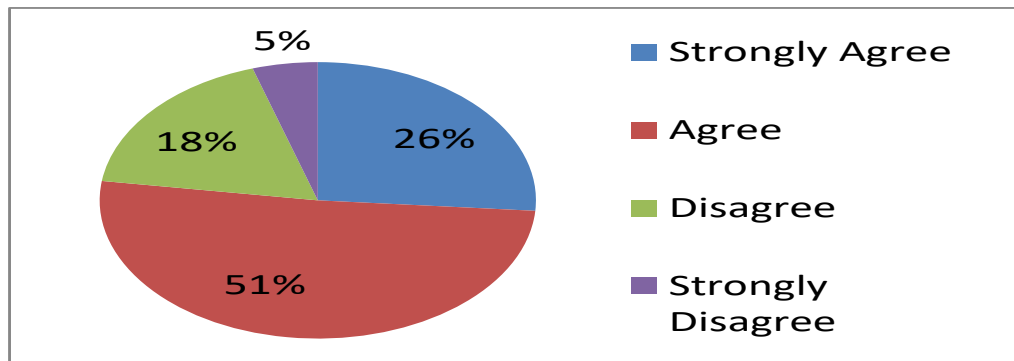
**Figure 4** Respondent’s answer on “I feel that receiving mobile advertisement is enjoyable and entertaining”



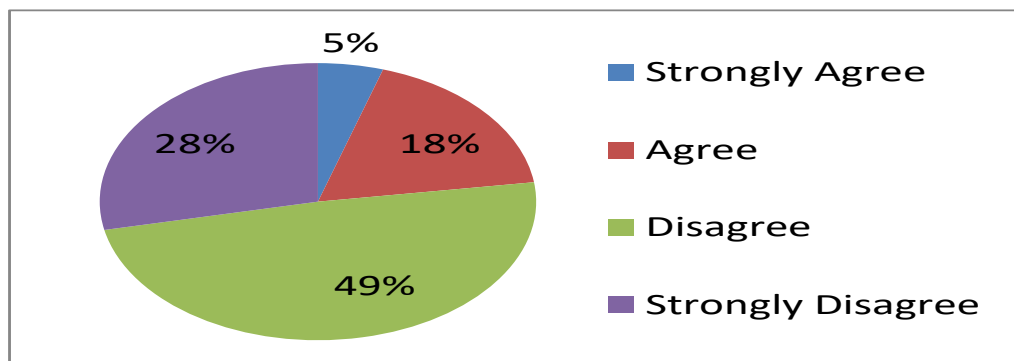
**Figure 5.** Respondent’s answer on “I feel that receiving mobile advisements is pleasant”



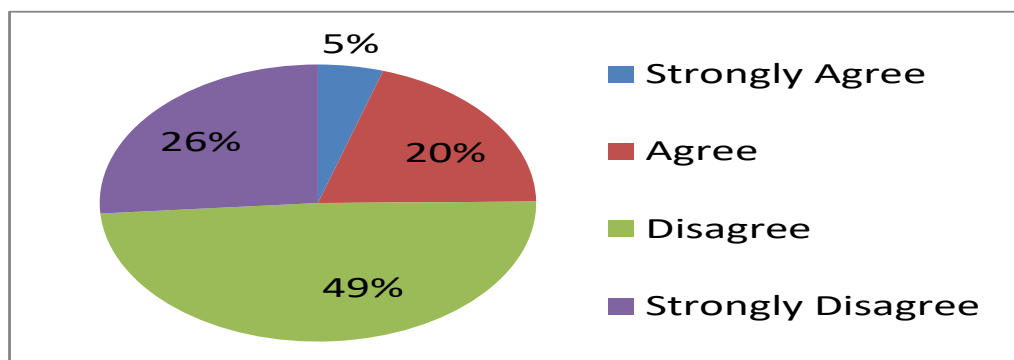
**Figure 6** Respondent’s answer on “I feel that mobile advertising is irritating”



**Figure 7.** Respondent’s answer on “Mobile marketing is more manipulative than it is informative”

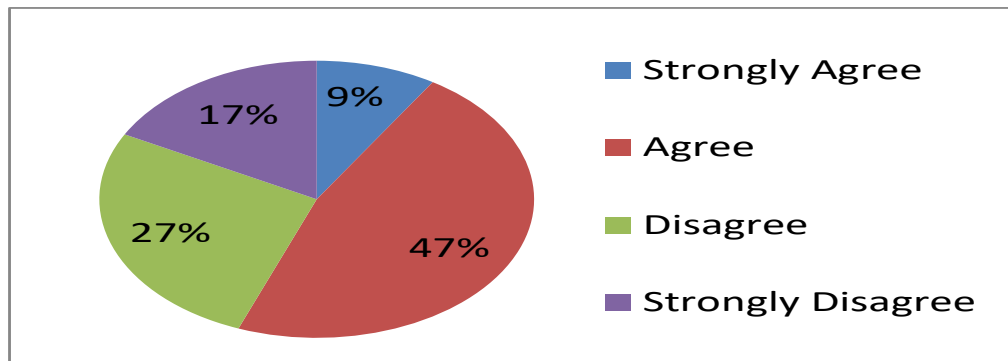


**Figure 8** Respondent’s answer on “Contents in mobile advertisements are often annoying “

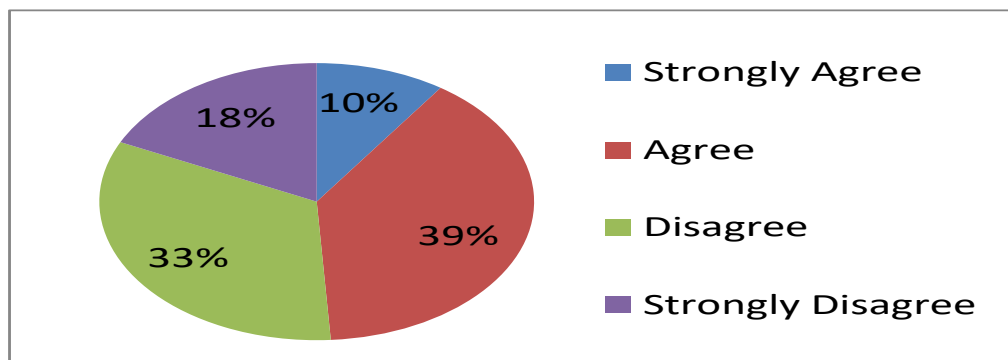


**Figure 9** Respondent’s answer on “Mobile marketing is disturbing”

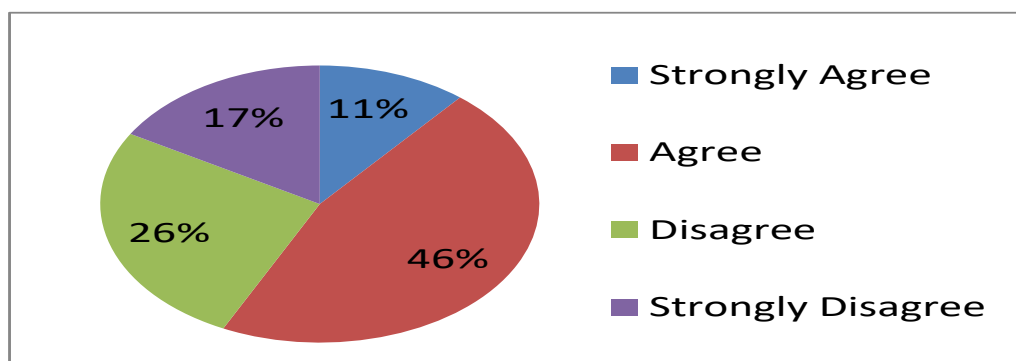
Furthermore, the two other elements of the framework were measured, informativeness and credibility. Figure 10 shows that the consumers considered SMS advertisements useful and a good source of timely information. Figure 11 shows nearly half of the respondents feel the mobile advertisements provide the information they need. Moreover, about 11% and 46% strongly agree and agree respectively that mobile marketing helps them keep up-to-date about products and services that they are interested in (Figure 12).



**Figure 10.** Respondent’s answer on “I feel that mobile advertising is a good source for timely information”



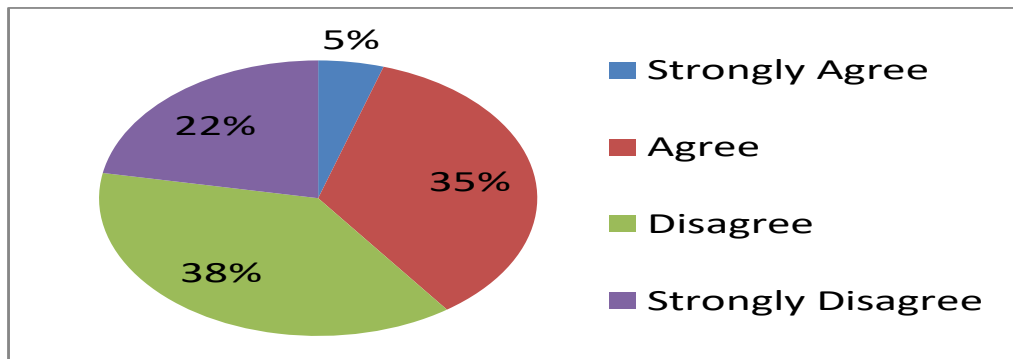
**Figure 11** Respondent’s answer on “Mobile advertisements provide the information I need”



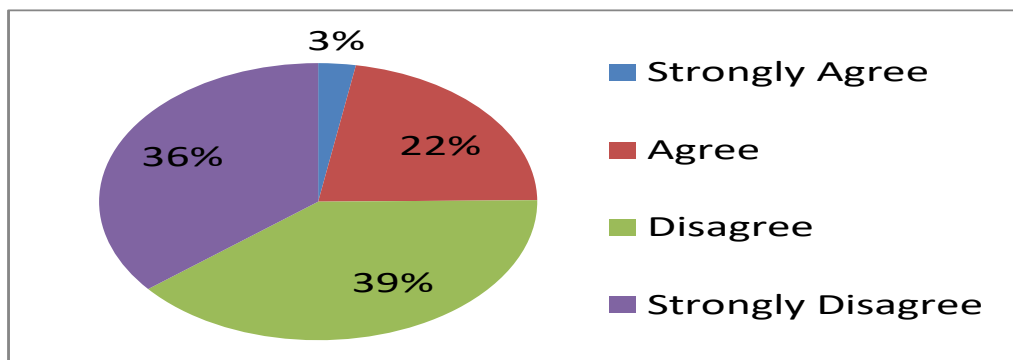
**Figure 12.** Respondent’s answer on “Mobile marketing helps me keep up-to-date about products and service that I am interested in”

Figure 13 and Figure 14 shows that about 40% said that they used mobile advertising as a reference for purchasing or 61% that they will probably buy the product or service mentioned in the text message or take part in the event respectively. Figure 15 and Figure 16 indicates that 51% consumers felt that the SMS’s were credible if it were sent by the mobile network operator and only 38% of the respondents will trust if the SMS contained a company number respectively. Figure 17 shows that only 38% of the respondents will trust the mobile advertisements.

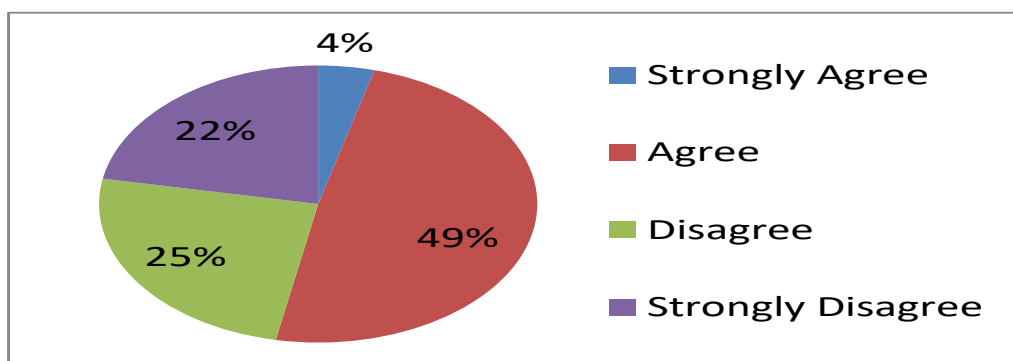




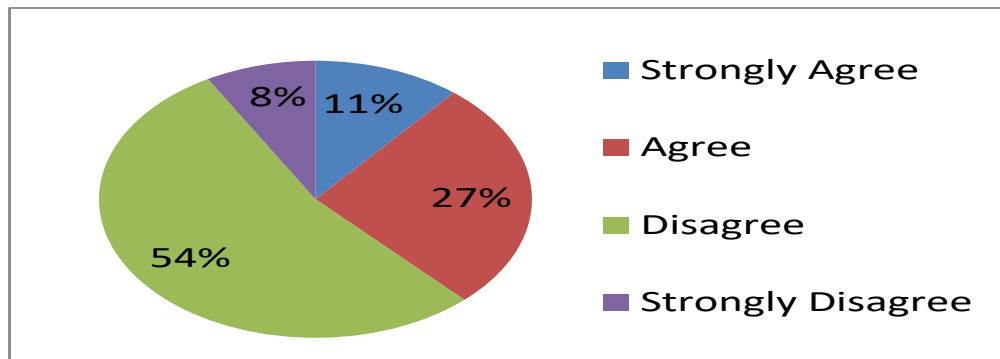
**Figure 13** Respondent’s answer on “I used mobile advertising as a reference for purchasing”



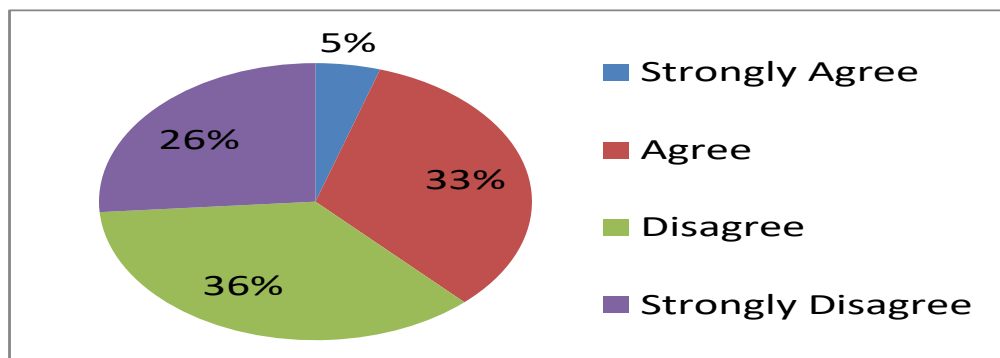
**Figure 14.** Respondent’s answer on “I will probably buy the product or service mentioned in the text message or take part in the event”



**Figure 15.** Respondent’s answer on “I would trust the mobile advertisement that contains company number”



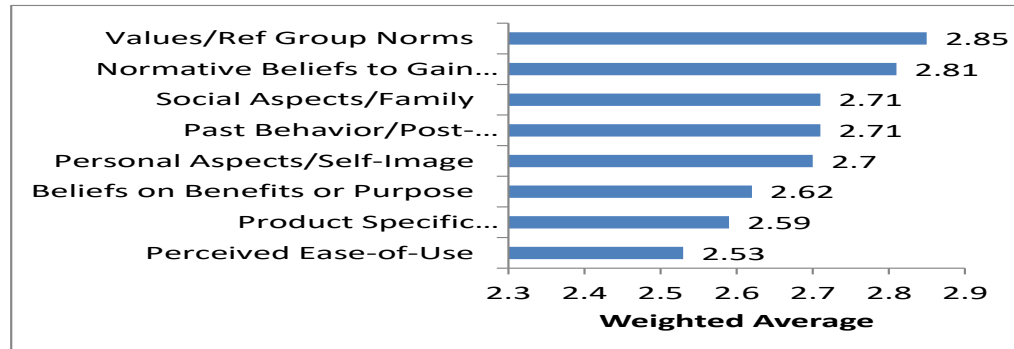
**Figure 16** Respondent’s answer on “I trust mobile advertisements sent by a mobile network operators”



**Figure 17.** Respondent’s answer on “I trust mobile advertisements”

Based on the survey result, although the Saudi consumers consider SMS advertising to be irritating they also reckon that it is informative and credible. Nearly 40% said that they did use SMS advertising as a reference for purchasing which shows that mobile advertisement does affect the purchase intentions to some extent and that the Saudi population trusts mobile advertisements. Figure 18 shows the ranking of the antecedents according to the total weighted average. The results show that the most influencing factor for purchase attitude is the values/reference group norms with the weighted average of 2.85 while the least influencing factor is the perceived ease-of-use with the weighted average of 2.53.

This concludes that consumers in Saudi Arabia consider the norms or values very important while making a purchase decision. Followed by the beliefs to gain social recognition which proves that social recognition is an essential part to the Saudi consumers and that they believe is an important factor while making a purchase decision. On the contrary, perceived ease-of-use of the product, product awareness or the benefits and purpose of the product are to the lower end on the influencing scale. Surprisingly, the most prime factor, past behaviour/Post purchase reactions were ranked at the fourth position in line with social aspects/family. This roughly proves that the Saudi consumers care more about the society or their recognition due to the products they use. In addition, about 57.24% of the respondents would like to receive the advertisement message in future. While, about 42.76% refuse to receive the advertisement message in future.



**Figure 18.** Respondent's rating the antecedents on the relative influence on their current purchase attitude

The hypothesis had formed before conducting the research work was that mobile advertisements via SMS have limited effect on purchase intentions and that consumers barely regard SMS advertising as informative or persuasive. The results of the research showed that the hypothesis was partially accurate, as SMS advertising had limited effect on the purchase intentions but at the same time SMS advertising was considered informative. But this result cannot be applied as a general statement mainly due to the demographics of the respondents, as the majority of the respondents consisted of females with a total of 84%.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to investigate the influences of attitudes towards mobile advertisement and the relationship between consumer behaviours and especially purchase intentions as they had not been studied much about. This research helped in identifying why the Saudi consumers behaved negatively towards SMS advertising and to what extent were those advertisement useful in making a purchase decision. The results showed that majority of the Saudi female consumers considered SMS advertising to be informative and credible but are not willing to receive SMS advertising in the future. The main reason for not wanting to receive SMS ads in the future is that they believe it is irritating and disturbing. Apart from the consumer attitude towards SMS advertising this research found out that the fundamental antecedent for making a purchase decision are the norms and value of reference groups or the people they surround themselves with. It is important that the product they are considering to buy helps in making them recognizable in the society. Product benefits or the ease-of-use were not considered essential.

## Acknowledgments

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