

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE  
ADVERTISING AMONG KENYAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

**BY**

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## **DECLARATION**

This project is my original work and has not been presented anywhere to the best of my knowledge. No part of this report may be reproduced without the prior permission of the author.

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I hereby declare that this project has been submitted for consideration with my approval as the appointed university supervisor

Signature:.....

Date.....

**Supervisor: Dr. Joseph Nyanoti**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this research work to God Almighty, whose grace is always sufficient. I am very grateful for the unaccounted love, prayer, patience and backing of my treasurable spouse, Pauline and our children Moira and Ira. I am profoundly grateful for their motivation, indulgence and faithfulness in reminding me that they are my number one support team.

To my parents, my mother Tabitha, my father Isaac Ratemo who believed that; “Education is the best gift you can give your child!” My brother and sisters, who ignited my life and showed me the importance of education in order to achieve great academic heights and above all manage to live well with people of different economic and socio-cultural backgrounds.

To marketers that it will go a long way to providing new insights.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to explore and conceptualize the factors influencing consumer perceptions towards SMS advertising campaigns and to cognize the usage and insight of Kenyan University students in regard to SMS advertising. The study undertook an exploratory research approach despite the fact that it also embraced both qualitative and quantitative research strategies. In addition, four focus group discussions and a standardized questionnaire were exploited during data collection in a bid to institute the factors, which augment the use of SMS advertising. The outcomes confirm trust, permission, privacy issues, and product brand, value of the product, timing, message length, incentives and flexibility for response and consumer satisfaction as factors influencing the use of SMS advertising among university students. Furthermore, SMS advertising that were not conceptualized for new understandings by previous scholars in this research project were made available in this study. The outcomes of this research project will help marketing managers and policy makers to effectually communicate to the consumers through utilization of SMS advertising for maximum results. This research project gives a lecture on a momentous breach on matters concerning the prevailing facts in regard to social environment of marketing communication by successfully launching the factors influencing the effectiveness of SMS advertising hence making sense between the factors' inter-relationships.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

ICT's - Information and Communication Technologies

KDHS - Kenya Demographic Health Survey

KNBS- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

MMS – Multimedia Message Service

PBMA – Permission-Based Mobile Advertising

SMS – Short Message Service

SoJ – School of Journalism

TV - Television

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

P1 – Participant from group 1

P2 – Participant from group 2

P3 – Participant from group 3

P4 – Participant from group 4

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Overview**

This chapter gives background information to the study and a description of the problem statement that anchors the need for this project report. It also presents background of the study, the objectives of the study, the research questions, justification and significance of the study, scope and limitations, assumptions as well as operational use of key terms.

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized by rapidly developing mobile technologies and an increase in the use of ICTs. These advancements are seen to have delivered numerous new media for the advertising industry especially to consumers thus impacting advertising. The mobile phone is an important and extremely collaborative medium that allows the message recipient to respond to it instantaneously (Barnes et. al., 2005). It has continued to grow day-by-day leaving other applications to struggle in a bid to meet the unbeaten expectations set by Short Message Service (SMS). Furthermore, it appears that users of mobile phone every time convey their gadgets within reach and regard the phone as an important part of their daily lives. Therefore, with important insinuations for communication and information transmission, SMS has developed into a significant role of lives of the people. With the mounting admiration of SMS, a new channel for advertising which are referred to as mobile advertising has been created by communication, where advertisements are sent to mobile phones for commercial purposes. It is proving to be one of the biggest industries in the field of communication with Kenyan mobile phone users registering 37.8 million (Communications Authority of Kenya report, 2016).

Such technological advancements have seen marketing managers and policy makers face numerous difficulties, specifically with respect to real selection of communication vehicles for products advertisement, services or ideas as they compete in getting a share in the market niche. According to Schiffman (2004), communication media are becoming more fragmented; in such a manner that they reach mass audiences through the different platforms while at one go the medium provides new opportunities to the extent of the customers of envisioned reach, in addition to creating it more puzzling. The complexity of it all does not however deny the policy makers an opportunity to face the challenge. The sole purpose of any business is to make profits. With consumers, sending short textual messages to potential buyers of an idea or product has resulted in the recipients reacting in different ways hence different perceptions and attitudes (Schiffman, 2004), both of which should be investigated.

The move to have new technologies has seen new mediums that are used in consumers advertising being provided in what has prompted organizations allowed to improve potential consumers' reach on matters concerning the influence of advertising and frequency. Marketing managers and advertisers in general, are required to be much innovative in advertisements formulation so that they yield. The medium to use in passing the information has to be selected keenly in a bid to gain more attention of the target audience (McQuail, 1997). It is therefore prudent to note that the necessity for creation of new mediums for advertising has created new platforms like short message service (SMS) advertising where messages are sent to potential consumers to lure them into buying the idea, product or service. Advertisers should have it in their mind that understanding the attitude of consumers is critical in effecting the success of this medium.

University students who are slightly above a quarter a million (KNBS, 2014) have not been left out in this debate. This means they constitute a population that in reference to demographics is

a group of interest. They have their own needs and views on technology, which they use more in their day-to-day activities (Scharl, 2005). Studies done in Jordan, South Africa and Turkey suggested that a research be done in a different country with a different culture so as to provide new insights into SMS advertising and look into the success factors.

This study consequently emphasizes on defining the perceptions of the university student consumer in regard to SMS advertisements.

Perception impacts attitudes, which include a countenance of innermost emotional state which replicate whether an individual is constructively or disparagingly inclined to some 'object' for instance a service, a brand or a retail establishment (Schiffman, 2004). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) define perception as "the use of the mind or the senses to comprehend or understanding a person's surroundings". "Consecutively, attitude formation refers to a process where persons show opinions or state of mind in the direction of other ideas, activities, people, products and even objects in their environment." In this study attitude can be demarcated as a feeling of either being favorable or uncomplimentary on the side of a consumer towards an SMS that is sent to him/her by an advertiser.

On matters concerning consumer behavior, an attitude refers to a thoughtful of a reliable favorable or uncomplimentary sensation which is formed by a shopper or a viewpoint due to the evaluation of matters concerning objects which include the object being a store, a product/service offering, brand, price and dealer, vender, advertisement and upgrade. According to Schiffman (2004), an attitude is "a scholarly tendency to act in an unswervingly favorable or uncomplimentary way founded on emotional state and sentiments which emanate from knowledge evaluation of a given object." The consumer decision-making process has a bearing on attitudes. Notably, there is no direct observation of attitudes due to the fact that they are influenced by psychographics that include perception, incentive, and education.

According to Zyman (2002), today's corporations function in environs that are continuously alternating and an increase in competition due to globalization. He suggests that firms should become very mindful of their advertising efforts due to the fact that customers have a superior variety from which they can select products and services. The ability of the consumer to make decisions is thus guided by selected exposure since they look into whatever will satisfy needs. This creates the view that advertising is an investment that values over-communication with consumers, thus ensuring a higher budget for advertising departments than it used to be.

In the University of Nairobi, a number of students rely on traditional advertising instruments that are mounted on the notice boards or areas they can access, the newspaper advertisement and "open-day" events on different campuses. However, not all students go to the notice boards to get information. Those that are eager to be updated on issues and events or in terms of whatever is happening in the university most likely listen to the radio although they like listening to music especially those with smart phones.

For example, few students can afford a television set in their rooms. Those who can access television, rarely pay attention to the advertisements. Conversely, met with the reputation of the mobile phone and the digital age as a communication tool, which nearly every student has, occasionally, students chat through SMS, thanks to the affordable bundles through prepaid subscription. Some can be using Facebook but not all students have phones that can access Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, twitter, viber or generally Internet. Others cannot afford the cheapest mobile phone that can support Internet services. But on the other hand, it is worth noting that mobile phones in this generation can send or receive an SMS without necessarily using the internet.

Also with the changing trend of people shifting to smart phones, mobile phone advertising industry has realized changes to a greater length and opened a new area for research. A



healthier accepting of the matters is precarious to in effect of mobile advertising usage. This will provide a clear platform from which the consumer and the advertiser will have a fair play ground on sharing know-hows. It is especially significant to understand and have knowledge on the perception of the recipients of mobile SMS advertisements.

For subscribers be it prepaid or postpaid mode in all networks available in Kenya; Safaricom, Orange, Airtel and YU line, they are likely to receive information on their phones either through a call, a text or those with a Smartphone, can receive a more complicated graphic just for the purpose of communication. It is vital to insinuate that sometimes telecommunication companies use text messages to pass information to their subscribers be it they requested for it or not.

Information about new promotions, new products within the company services and many more can be channeled to the customer directly using a text. Corporate organizations have also been seen to be partnering with the telecommunication companies so that they can communicate to their customers effectively. For example, Equity Bank is collaborating with service providers like Safaricom to send marketing messages through SMS to the clients. In the University of Nairobi set up, students who are entrepreneurs use mobile phone to send messages to their fellow students creating product awareness that they are selling.

With the advent of mobile advertising, it has seemed to be the one medium that is close to the consumer and mobile phone has proven to be the nearest the consumer can reach many times. Whether one is traveling or at work place, he/she can receive a text and uses minimum time to get the information than in traditional media like newspaper and radio (Mohammed, 2010). The circumstance where accessibility of mobile communication in the least place and at any time, crafts value by way of convenience (Mohammed, 2010). This gifts businesses with the

capability that is exceptional in terms of advertising to selected markets at any time and location.

As much as we are reducing time taken by the consumer getting exposed to know how a certain product should be used, it is prudent to inquire the feelings those SMS advertisements can elicit in the reader's mind since he/she is a potential buyer. For that reason, effectiveness in the usage of mobile advertising needs a greater consideration of these issues.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Technology advancements have changed the way things are done in many aspects in the society including advertising. It is easier for advertisers to reach the consumers more easily now making the platform of SMS a very powerful business communication and marketing tool. At the same time, due to the diverse nature of consumers and their consumption habits, advertisers and marketing managers have always struggled to maximize their reach, and this is seen by the way they are using every means possible to reach their target audience for maximum results. Even as businesses continue sending SMS advertisements by collaborating with service providers, there is concern on matters concerning effectiveness and the potentiality of the tactics used by the business managers and advertisers in SMS advertising (Rettie and Brum, 2001).

The youth (aged between 15 and 30 years old) constitute more than a third of the entire population in Kenya and are seen to be the future focus of a great deal of SMS advertising campaigns (KDHS, 2013). Waldt (2009), points out that in as much as they are investing in every effort to reach their target, advertisers and marketers, end up sending a lot of messages thus triggering perceptions, which are ignited by reactions. It is important to establish whether Kenyan marketing managers are using SMS advertising effectively or not to boost businesses

in the East African regional hub. Information gathered will be important to the advertising industry and its policy makers.

### **1.3 Study Objectives**

The general objective of this study was to investigate perceptions of university student consumers of SMS advertising.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

1. To find out the extent of use of mobile telephone Short Message Service as an advertising tool.
2. To find out the perception of university students towards mobile telephone Short Message Service advertising.
3. To determine factors influencing the use of Short Message Service advertising among university students.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. To what extent is the mobile telephone Short Message Service used among university students?
2. What is the perception of university students regarding SMS advertising?
3. What factors influence the use of SMS advertising among university students?

## **1.5 Justification**

A number of studies done in Jordan, Bangladesh, South Africa and Turkey suggested that a research be done in a different country with a different culture so as to provide new insights into SMS advertising and look into the success factors. The study investigates consumer perceptions towards use of SMS in mobile advertising so as to establish the success factors in its use effectiveness among the population under study. The use of a student sample for this study is justified as experts agree that SMS advertising is an ideal medium for reaching younger consumers (Scharl A., 2005). SMS advertising is more likely to be effective if it is focused and personalized since many consumers would prefer not to be overloaded with messages but is still not that concerned about the time it takes to process the messages. Student consumers are not a left out lot. Also, in as much as messages via SMS are smooth daily, they create a problem of not only associating the activity but also bombarding different cultural backgrounds. These factors indicate a generally positive future for marketing if organizations can make their marketing focused to the individual as mobile marketing delivers a ground-breaking channel for conveying advertising messages to customers via mobile campaigns. The growth of mobile advertising in recent years thus requires that researchers and practitioners embark on a fact-finding mission to establish and understand consumer perceptions of this form of advertising. This underscores the primacy of this study.

## **1.6 Rationale**

The research is going to help the establishment of a clear picture on what the perception of the consumers regarding the use of SMS in mobile phone advertising is especially among university students. Four Focus Group Discussions and a Standardized Questionnaire provide a lucid conceptualization of the holistic picture of the topic of study hence draw findings, generalizations and recommendations. Investigating the message characteristics could elicit a

more effective SMS. The result is going to be useful in the modern advertising because of changing trend of advertising. With the increase of mobile users in the world, the research is necessary to anyone doing advertising in this era.

### **1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The research took place within the University of Nairobi, Main Campus, which is in the Kenyan capital city of Nairobi. The university itself is ranked the best in Kenya and the Sixth in Africa (Webometrics, 2016). As a university in the Kenya's capital city, it has approximately over 84,000 students who come from diverse backgrounds from all over the country and even from foreign countries. This means that the micro culture that is reflected here, most likely reflects itself in all the other universities in Kenya and beyond because even the subjects in the study area are relatively similar in all other African universities.

The study focuses only on undergraduate student consumers possessing a mobile phone in the School of Journalism, which is one of the 12 schools in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Nairobi, comprising of up to 65% of the student population.

### **1.8 Assumptions of the Study**

The study assumes that university students have mobile phones enabling them receive and send messages even without the internet.

## **1.9 Operational use of Key Terms**

### **SMS Advertising**

Refers to spending in interactive wireless media in order to deliver information that promotes goods, services and ideas to the market (Waldt, 2009).

**Mobile marketing/Mobile Advertising:** Using the mobile phone as a means of conveying commercial content to customers (Barnes, Bauer, Reichardt and Neumann (2005).

**Perception:** is the application of senses or mind to know or understand the surroundings of a person.

**Attitude:** the person's actual feeling or way of thinking about something or someone based on their perceptions.

**Message:** This term will in this study be the information that an organization wants to send out to its customers.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Overview**

The literature review in this chapter presents explanations for the theoretical foundation of the problem being studied and the research that has previously been. The literature is linked to the problem statement even as it seeks to answer research questions. Journals, books, reports, periodicals and internet sources with past studies are used for literature review with theoretical review, critical analysis and research gaps also being discoursed.

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Although a lot of literature exists on consumer attitudes and perceptions on SMS advertising less has been done to establish the relevance of such among university students in Kenya. Given that almost every university student has a mobile phone that can either receive or send messages, advertising agencies have seen such students trapped in between the messages that are really intended the subscribers.

#### **2.2 Advertising**

In his book ‘the advertising Handbook,’ Sean Brierley looks at the reasons why organizations and customers advertise and in what way they commence study of markets; a place they advertise and what methods they use; techniques of persuasion and their effectiveness and ultimately in what way achievement is measured. He points out that that advertisers hedge their bets. Technological progress is said to have improved production techniques hence creating room for mass production of goods and services although this had its demerits like mass unemployment (Brierley, 1995). Producers were forced to source for fresh customers and enlarge their already existing markets all in an effort to boost profit margins. With

manufacturers, they were put in a position to identify the mass medium, which would be used as a conveyor belt (Bovee, 1992).

Advertising existed to provide mass media communication and a channel to the customers as a marketing tool and managing or controlling consumer markets at the minimal cost (Brierley, 1995). He notes that the greater concentration of an advertiser in a market is an indication of the greater power of the advertiser to control distribution, prices and advertising. That to establish difference in the market place, manufacturers went a step forward to give their products added values that competition did not provide. According to Quah (2002), the push model dominates mobile advertising. Through the push model, potential consumers are bombarded with messages that they did not request for from the advertiser.

For organizations that have realized the need to spend on advertising, results have been better especially in brand sales and profitability. They have stimulated consumption to meet the demands of the masses and beyond. Fernandez and Rosen (2000) and Lohse and Rosen (2001) categorize advertising into brand building and directional. Brand building advertising refer to product advertising and is commonly seen in traditional mass media, including television, radio, magazine, and newspaper. Although it is in tandem with the consumer's decision, in such a situation, the route of communication is characteristically one-to-many whereby the route is intended to influence a mass audience through use of tactical intrusion aimed at capturing the attention of users (Barrow, 1990; Rosenberg, 1995). The probabilities of processing of advertisements carefully are depressed by the increase in number of advertisements contending for attention of individuals on a daily basis (Bogart, 1985). Limited time and concentration make it problematic for adequate commitment of attention by the audience to most advertisements even as companies and individuals compete for clients. Mostly, the messages come in their numbers leaving them struggling to get their satisfaction.



Directional advertising refer to the assistance intended for potential buyers to trace fascinating information whereby the communication route is typically one-to-one. This brings an element of interpersonal communication as the participants are involved and can establish lasting relations. It is like a dialogue between two people. The assumption here is that a potential buyer brings him or herself to the advertisements. Advertising in this case is catering to customers' needs (Fernandez, 1995).

In its primary setting, directional medium is designed for carrying advertisements in readiness for consumption by the customer markets. Therefore, attitudes and perceptions regarding the medium here are essentially based on the their relationship with those perceptions toward a specific advertisement. When it comes to a mass medium such as the World Wide Web, which is multi-functional the dynamics are different because of the constructs of the framework involved. The many users have an opportunity to explore the many functions brought about by the medium which might attract a favorable attitude and perception towards the web or otherwise (Fernandez, 1995). The same case applies to the mobile advertising using SMS.

Proponents of advertising argue that all advertising in directional media tends to be goal-related and highly planned. Here, headings can be classified as specific as they serve different needs of the individuals involved. MacInnis and Jaworski (1989) found that the purchase-decision oriented users of directional media experience higher levels of involvement with the content of advertising. This is why they refer to motivation for SMS advertisement and ability of the consumer to rationally think as general determinants of advertising processing.

The study focuses on consumer's perception towards use of SMS in mobile advertisements for university students. In line with this, Ducoffe (1995, 1996) identifies entertainment, informativeness, and irritation as factors contributing to consumers' evaluations of advertisement values and thus attitudes and perceptions toward them. This however does not

cut across audiences as different audiences have different needs and motivations. Any communication calls for the need to understand the target audiences if communication has to realize its purpose (McQuail, 1997). This is why Brackett and Carr (2001) further validate Ducoffe's model and extend the model to include credibility and consumer demographics as greatly aiding consumer evaluation of advertisements.

Many studies have been undertaken to understand the success factors for SMS advertising. The literature of advertising has however covered studies from both advertisers and consumers' points of view. For example, from an advertiser's perspective, each directional advertisement also has a brand building function (MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989) since it has certain qualities such as a symbol or brand name that add to brand recognition. This means advertisers will do whatever it takes to ensure they appeal more to their potential customers.

### **2.3 SMS Advertising**

The debate around 'effective' advertising traces its intensity back to last three or four decades with upsurges in media costs, media crumbling and deteriorating sales. This saw planners and researchers pushed forward as spokespeople in a bid to convince prospective clients (Brierley, 1995). Against this, as technology brought about globalization, new platforms like Short Message Service (SMS) advertising emerged with advertisers taking advantages of its ubiquity. In the recent past, it has proved to be a new way of doing things and an indication that technology might be working in line with its intended purpose. Advertising firms have ensured that messages take a multi-threaded approach for maximum benefits by selling their brands.

Mobile marketing contains SMS advertising and is seen as the cheapest means of advertisements compared to advertising when relayed through traditional medium (Ducoffe, 1995). Just as the name suggests, it involves a mobile telephone in passing commercial

messages. SMS advertising on the other hand brings an element of wireless medium. Although they can be used concurrently, SMS advertising is a component of mobile marketing. It provides the telephone with a means. In line with the study, SMS advertising brings an element of ubiquity since recipients of messages can have such in their phones anytime anywhere.

There has been an unending debate that the means to recipient is through SMS advertising when on the move (Tsang and Spero, 2004). The new mobile phone types and application can attest to that even as it is in line with the fact that fledgling generations have been early adopters than older cohorts in learning on matters concerning usage and adaptation to new technologies (Spero, 2004). For value of advertising to be achieved, messages designed for the different groups should be in line with the needs of the target audience. SMS advertising campaign need to be effectively planned for so as it is low in cost and relevant at all times. The older generation can have their concerns addressed so that they are aware and ready to learn on how to use the new technologies with time. This means that characteristics of SMS advertisements sent to the two groups have to take into account the content to be delivered.

In as much as SMS advertising is better than traditional channels of advertising, academics in the field of SMS advertising maintain that the medium should not be used in isolation (Scharl, 2005). Communication does not operate in a vacuum. The medium used has to assist in ensuring that the message passed through it yield results without which it will be rendered useless.

Earlier studies by Rettie (2001) found that the acceptability of SMS had a bearing on demographics like age, level of income, number of messages received and education. SMS messaging was also purported to be attractive to younger users (Barnes, 2003). The arguments by these scholars are in tandem with Schal, et al., (2005) who maintain that to reach young consumers, SMS advertising is the ideal medium.

## **2.4 Consumer Perceptions**

This can be defined in this study as the consumer's mind use or the senses used in comprehension of the existence and usefulness of an idea, product or service; it is an evaluation of a product, provision or thoughts that are effectively used in satisfying a need. According to Anderson (1994), the general evaluation of goods or services grounded on the total consumption and purchase understanding over time is vital in safeguarding satisfaction of the customer. Perceptions involve the constant consideration of the implications of an action before undertaking it in a specific context. For example, people become full when they have attacked hunger by eating. Animals feel satisfied when they quench their thirst (Bolton, 1998). In the case of the study, a recipient of SMS advertisements will be happy if the message is relevant by addressing the pressing need. For example if he/she has cash and is looking for a laptop and receives an SMS from a seller, most likely, he/she will concentrate or otherwise depending on how the message is crafted.

Out of studies done on SMS advertising, most of them established that advertising of SMS without gaining authorization is the root source of forming negative perception in the consumers mind. In addition, Tsang, Ho, and Liang (2004) stated that, consumers had negative attitude and perceptions concerning SMS messages and establish the messages exasperating and invasive, as those were sent irrespective of permission. This bore the issue about privacy as they felt that their privacy had been intruded and had no control of information. This gives reason why they should understand the need for success message characteristics from the crafting phase to achieve success (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989).

Tsang (2004) also adds that permission- based advertising fluctuates from traditional advertising in that messages about specific products, services, or content are sent only to persons who have openly designated their readiness to receive the message. Service providers

like Safaricom and Airtel have also employed the same whereby prospect consumers subscribe to receive among others ringtones, news and any updates at will. To that end they apply the pull model of messaging as they address issues requested by their customers.

Customers have the right to be informed on whatever event, product, service or idea they might be interested. Gao (2006) outlines informativeness as the aptitude to notify consumers of alternative products for their utmost likely satisfaction. SMS advertisements are informative in nature. They provoke different reactions in the potential buyer's mind hence perception and attitude towards the same (Anderson et al, 1994).

## **2.5 Privacy**

Privacy refers to the precise of a person to control the facts apprehended about them by third parties (Chaffey, 2004). It is an important variable in SMS advertising as confirmed by studies. Dickinger et al. (2005) witnessed that “the placement of marketing campaigns in regard to SMS was the exact effective mean of reaching consumers and that literature available laid a strong emphasis on consumer perceptions toward SMS advertisements. This was grounded on the fact that “mobile phone could not differentiate among spam and genuine communication spontaneously”. They also found that consumers fear registration on SMS-based information services because of privacy concerns. It leads to bombardment, intrusion hence irritation and Permission-based mobile advertising (PBMA) has been regarded as that the calmest way to tackle the privacy issue (Dickinger et al, 2005).

Brand image of a company for example can be severely spoiled in case the customer is broken up in the course of his/ her daily undertakings. The SMS advertisement will not only intrude on one's privacy but also can irritate (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2004). Different researchers have

found that demographics, psychographic needs, interests and purchase data disclosure without consumers' consent as the major privacy violations.

To address the issue of intrusion on consumer privacy, implementation of sound association management programs need to be done by marketers so as to advance customer trust in the brand before customers are likely to respond (Carroll et al., 2007). In addition, improved understanding of consumer behavior is crucial to better craft SMS advertising messages. Therefore, these factors can be presented to scrutinize whether they impact the motives of using SMS as well as perceptions on SMS advertising.

## **2.6 SMS Campaign Features**

Marketers need to have limited marketplaces in order to plan for the campaign in area where there are customers for profitable and cost-effective benefits. However, though marketers constantly try to fix and manage markets, they are, by their very nature, heterogeneous and unstable (Brierley, 1995). SMS usage has a number of ways to advertise like special offers, timely media 'teasers', brand building, products, competitions, polls/voting, services and information wishes are acknowledged as important (Barwise& Strong, 2002). Such features dictate success or failure of SMS campaign depending on how they are addressed.

Much marketer's strategy is absorbed on inspiring prevailing operators and purchasers to consume more owing that advertisers pursue to uphold market share rather than trying to success new consumers to the market. This opens room for text messages to inculcate characteristics so as to maintain a 50% more success in for example building brand awareness than TV (Enpocket (2005a).

SMS campaigns are designed in such a manner that they lure potential clients through creating dialogue. Once the message is received, any action undertaken by the recipient takes into

account the implications of decisions before undertaking such action (Ajzen, 1980). A campaign rotating everywhere the mobile discourse model guarantees the dealer tries to build a long permanent relation with the consumer (Jelassi and Enders, 2004). This has been and remains the driving force for marketers to sell their ideas, products or services. This is especially for mobile phone users who have subscribed to receive messages on an entity.

## **2.7 Theoretical Framework**

It does not astonish that persuasion theories have frolicked part in scholarly research that is centrally based on the impact of advertising, assumed advertising's importance in the domain of persuasion. Over the last 30 years, numerous models of persuasion have existed with insinuations for advertising and marketing. Apart from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) model being attractive to marketers, it is also suitable in this study as it gives them the capability to conclude what components of intentions to target. TRA thus guided the study.

Proponents of Theory of Reasoned Action who include Fishbein and Ajzen hold that attitude impacts behavior over intention. They suggest that stronger intentions have a central effect on increasing effort performing behavior, which further upsurges the probability for the behavior to be achieved. Per se, utmost actions of social significance are under volitional control (Ajzen, 1980). The theory has three major constructs; Attitude, intention and behavior, all linked to designate the psychosomatic progression that acts in arbitrating the relations witnessed among attitudes and behavior of a phenomenon (Tsang, Ho, and Liang, 2004). It is based on the assumptions that human beings are usually quite rational and make systematic use of the information available to them as they are ranked in the highest order.

Young consumers are the future for marketing since they will interact with the environment and the technological changes (Scharl, 2005). They use their rational activity to make decisions

about their lives and even at times look for ways to respond to different contexts. This is why they are at the center of the interest since they are best placed to use new technologies. They are dynamic and exploratory in nature implying that they use their minds to understand their surrounding hence perceptions.

The study focuses on determining consumer perceptions towards SMS advertisements and it is built on the premise that the perceptions towards SMS advertisements will affect both the success of SMS advertising campaigns and the purchase intentions of consumers (Anderson, 2000). It is worth noting that an advertisement does not operate in a vacuum. To eliminate any confusion, the researcher considers an advertisement as a combination of the content or message and the medium or channel within which it is carried. Furthermore, mobile phone as medium is used for both brand building and directional advertising purposes.

## **2.8 Conceptual Framework**

Mobile advertising been divided into push and pull-models (Barnes, 2002). In the pull-model campaign, the marketer send the information while in the push-model campaign, the marketer receipts the initiative to bombard the receiver with messages without permission (Tezinde et al., 2002). Unfortunately, some advertisers manipulate consumers' inattention and cognitive laziness to get their consent (Bellman et al. 2001). The present study thus emphasizes on the need to inquire the feelings SMS advertising can elicit in a university student reader's mind.

One believes that reading SMS advertisements is good for him/her because it enables him/her to purchase, delete and safe. One also believes that it is irritating and intrudes privacy. The decision to read SMS advertisements will be based on the weight given to each of the aforementioned beliefs for example perceptions might be more important than cost. The framework therefore assumes that human behavior is under the voluntary control of the



individual and that people think about the consequences and implications of their actions hence decision to do or not do something.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

Methodology is the process used to collect information and data to systematically and critically inquire about a particular aspect of life (Creswell, 2009). It outlines how research is to be undertaken so as to find out the result of a given problem on a subject matter.

This chapter presents a detailed methodological approach with regards to the study site, research design, study population and unit of analysis, sampling procedure, instruments, and data analysis and processing. The chapter finally presents the ethical considerations, reflexivity, validity and presentation of the findings in relation to the research problem.

#### **3.1 Research Site**

The research was conducted within the University of Nairobi's Main campus. This area has seen a lot of business due to the large population of students who mainly buy fast moving goods. Due to this fact, mobile advertising using SMS has taken advantage of the students to maximize on sales and cut a market niche because it is not easy to reach this population using other mainstream media to create awareness. The businesses here are targeting university students even though there are other categories of people like university staff and other members of the community. The research thus focused on the university student consumer as a point of focus due to their large numbers.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

Nachmias and Nachmias (2007) define a research design as the investigator or researcher's plan of action that is aimed at providing answers to research questions, realization of study

objectives. They further point out that the nature of research design has implications for the manipulations that can be performed on data that is obtained. As such, when designing on the research design for a particular study, one has to look at the aim and objectives of the study to ensure that there is a link to the chosen research design, and more importantly the chosen design must help the researcher realize objectives. Since the study's aim is to explore consumer perception towards mobile SMS advertising, it also aims at making sense of the factors influencing the acceptance of SMS advertising.

The study adopted a mixed method. This would allow for the opportunity to compensate for inherent method weaknesses and capitalize on inherent method strengths. Ultimately, both qualitative and quantitative data work to provide the best understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2009). As such, mixed method aids in triangulation whereby the consistency of findings is examined in order to improve the chances that threats to inferences will be controlled.

Qualitative method was used for exploratory purposes and followed up with a quantitative method with a larger sample to aid the researcher in generalizing results to the population under study.

Four Focus Group Discussions (Appendix I) were formed and a structured questionnaire (Appendix II) both as data collection methods were developed to look at the study from different perspectives. The two helped in coming up with a framework of consumer perceptions towards use of SMS in mobile phone advertising so as to establish the relationship between the constructs of the framework against the dependent variable; acceptance in using SMS in mobile phone advertising in the University of Nairobi student fraternity. The research defined the subject through creating a profile of a group of problems for statistical analysis to evaluate how they affected each other.

While qualitative research attempts to provide an understanding of human experiences, perceptions, motivations, intentions and behavior based on description and observation of a phenomenon in a context (Creswell, 2009), it is usually used in the exploratory phases of the project. As such, when designing on the research design for a particular study, one has to look at the aim and objectives of the study to ensure that there is a link to the chosen research design, and more importantly the chosen design must help the researcher realize objectives. Quantitative strategy is later used to establish the effect of one variable on the other.

Descriptive design is achieved through studies designed to generate data and information that describe current status of organizational programs or projects for example current trends, performance, relationships and practices that exist in relation to the phenomenon being examined or studied (Nachmias and Nachmias, 2007). In this study, descriptive approach was appropriate because of its abilities to capture a diverse range of information pertaining to background, trends and attributes as well as opinions of respondents in relation to the topic.

### **3.3 Study Population**

According to Schloss and Smith (1996), a target population is that from which a sample is selected for the purpose of a study. A sample is a subject of a target population to which the researcher intends to generate findings.

The study targeted university of Nairobi's School of Journalism students (aged between 15 and 30 years) that had mobile phones, which could receive and send messages. Young people constitute more than a third of the entire population, (KDHS, 2014). The use of a student sample for this study is justified as experts agree that SMS advertising is an ideal medium for reaching younger consumers (Scharl et al., 2005: 168).

### **3.4 Sampling**

Kombo & Tromp (2006) describe sampling as the process of selecting units such as people and organizations from a population of interest so that by studying the sample we may fairly generalize our results back to the population from which they were chosen. They argue that a sampling frame is the source material or device from which a sample is drawn; It is a list of all those within a population who can be sampled. In this study, sample population was drawn from the university of Nairobi's Main Campus with a student population of about 30,000.

Best and Kahn (1998), hold that an ideal sample should be large enough to serve as an adequate representation of the population to which the researcher wishes to generalize findings. Brewer and Hunter (1989) add that convincing arguments can be advanced from selecting a few units as opposed to the entire target population or universe. A small enough sample, to be selected economically in terms of availability and cost in both time and finances, is desirable in any study.

The researcher collected data from a sample of 80 young men and women using a semi-structured questionnaire. They had been randomly sampled along university corridors and hostels. The inclusion criterion for this group of respondents was as follows. First, respondents had to be students of the University of Nairobi and secondly, respondents had to own a mobile phone or at one point in their life had received SMS advertising message. The sample size was obtained from sample size calculator, which proposed a margin of error of 9.78% for the 29821 students in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The big margin is compensated for by the four focus groups as this would aid in triangulation (Creswell, 2009).

Four Focus Groups held sessions using a guide. Participants met the same criteria mentioned for the questionnaire.

Participants in the Focus Groups were purposively sampled. A researcher when carrying out a study where specific units of observation with particular traits or characteristics are desirable or required to realize objectives uses purposive sampling (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003).

The 32 School of Journalism students were purposively selected from which their responses were a representation of perceptions of the population under study. The students participating:

- i. Owned a mobile telephone
- ii. Had ever received SMS advertisements
- iii. Had knowledge on SMS and
- iv. Were willing to participate

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

Different data collection methods were employed in order to look at the topic under investigation from all different points of view. The methods include the following;

#### **3.5.1 Focus Group Discussions**

It is generally unwise to conduct only one set of groups (Davis, 1997). The 32 students drawn from the 4 focus groups of 8 each had the same characteristics; which indicated that most likely their views would be representative of their peers in other universities and beyond. The advantages of such Focus Groups are that a variety of perceptions and ideas will be derived and the dynamics of the group will give a rich understanding of the research problem.

Standardized open-ended questions in the direction of a discussion guide were prepared in the light of the perception variables, which were derived from the literature review (such as brand trust, permission, user motives, informativeness, irritation and credibility). They were

developed for the focus group discussion. Probing questions were asked to the participants regarding their answers. A classroom in the university was chosen as the venue for the focus group discussions. Two interviewers conducted the individual focus group discussion in a round table, one leading the questions as a moderator while the other taking notes. Both interviewer and moderator would later transcribe the findings, code, categorize and summarize the data for analysis purposes.

### **3.5.2 Survey Questionnaire**

Data collection was done through a structured questionnaire (Appendix II) which was pre-tested to check the reliability and validity of the method used (Saunders et al., 2009), It was administered to the 80 students selected from the School of Journalism which is one of the 12 schools of the University of Nairobi's College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

A questionnaire was developed based on the explanations collected during the pre-testing period. Trust, permission, product brand, value of the product and consumer satisfaction was adapted from ALhrezat's (2013).

### **3.6 Data Processing and Analysis**

After conducting the study and gathering the data, the next step involved analyzing the data, which generally called for the use of statistical techniques. Data collected was processed and analyzed using the sequential mixed strategy. This provided the researcher with ideal method needed for descriptive explanation.

The qualitative analysis emerging from Focus Group Discussions was transcribed, coded and analyzed according to themes and emerging issues (Lindlof& Taylor, 2011).

Data analysis for the Focus Group involved initially transcribing responses and sorting the data into groups of information, after that, they were read over to get ideas, depth and credibility of the information from participants.

A coding process was then carried out where the data were organized into clusters before any meaning was derived from them (Rossman & Rallis 1998). The themes and categories identified from the analysis were the major findings of the qualitative phase, and would be shaped into a general description of the phenomenon.

The quantitative data obtained from self-administered questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of tables, charts, percentages and bar graphs. The researcher also used computer aided Special Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel to aid in analysis of data.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

On defending the proposal, a certificate of fieldwork (see Appendix III) was issued by the School of Journalism. The study ensured that the subject defined within the scope of the study gave ‘informed consent’ to participation in the research (Lindlof & Tylor, 2002), and that anyone who participated in the research did so on a voluntary basis as well as being able to understand the potential risks and benefits of participation in the research and have the legal capacity to give informed consent. The participants were made aware of the research and its purpose. The final defense of the project saw issuance of Certificate of Corrections (Appendix IV) and a Certificate of plagiarism (Appendix V) to ensure that the project was both corrected as advised by examiners and fell within the below 15% originality report as per the school’s requirement. Ultimately, a Declaration of Originality (Appendix VI) form was filled and certified.



### **3.8 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity in research is the process of continuous reflection about the role of the researcher and how his/her personal experiences, assumptions and preoccupations affect research decisions especially the selection and wording of questions (Etherington, 2004). Reflexivity was applicable in the case of this research considering that the researcher works as a media practitioner who would actively construct interpretations of his experiences in the field, and then question how those interpretations came about.

### **3.9 Data Reliability and Validity**

Data reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results. Validity refers to how well a test measures what it is purported to measure; the appropriateness, meaningfulness and usefulness of specific inference made from test scores (Larry, 2001).

Instrument validity is ascertained in a number of ways. To pre-test for reliability and validity of the research instruments, expert validity views and suggestions of the supervisors were initially incorporated in the questionnaire, which aimed at capturing specific information from the respondents (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

While this research used four Focus Group Discussions, it was thus limited in view of the fact that mobile SMS advertising is more appropriate to young consumers, the outcome of this study would be a fair representation of what it set to achieve in the problem statement.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter covers data analysis, presentation and interpretation. Analysis in this case means: manipulating, categorizing, summarizing and putting in order data to obtain answers to the research questions. It is to reduce data to interpretable form using narrative technique. Presentation (Jwan and Ong'ondo, 2011) is a way of communicating the findings by making claims supported by data so that the reader understands the researcher's logic. Interpretation in this project involves: penetrating for connotation and inference of research results, in order to make inferences and draw deductions and relate to the theory. This research has conducted both qualitative and quantitative analyses in answering the research questions.

This study was aimed at investigating consumer perceptions towards Short Message Service (SMS) advertising among Kenyan university students. The study covered the University of Nairobi's Main Campus with focus on the School of Journalism, which is one of the 12 schools under the college of Humanities, and Social Sciences that commands 65 percent of the population in the top university in the country. This was helpful as it provided the researcher with four focus groups to provide a lucid conceptualization of the issue under study. The students involved were also available and familiar with the researcher.

The students from other fields were engaged through questionnaire to collect data as long as they met the criteria of among others; owning a phone, having received an SMS advertisement and being able to read and comprehend such messages. They were approached at the university's hostels and corridors and requested to fill the questionnaire.

In the exploratory phase, the researcher made use of a participatory approach and adopted four qualitative focus group discussion sessions for 32 School of Journalism students and the researcher at the ACCE Library. Notes from the FGDs were used to paint an accurate picture of findings. The findings in the qualitative phase were presented in narrative format.

#### **4.1 Findings**

Throughout the discussion, participants perceived relevance and highly targeted messages as the most important factors influencing the use of SMS advertising among university students. It is perceived as boring, invasive and occasionally maddening if the mobile marketing messages are not appropriate to the target spectators. Significance of the communication has been pointed out to be a critical issue for SMS advertising (Deakins et al. 2005). Not all of the mobile marketing campaigns sent by advertising companies were found to be pertinent to the FGD participants. The FGDs revealed that, a lot of the posts were irrelevant to the applicants and did not add up. Messages directed by banks, government agencies and real estate companies were thought as irrelevant and the target market might have been somebody else rather than the university students. On the other hand, some messages were perceived to be relevant and the target audience (university students) found them important.

After sorting out responses to the different FGD questions, main findings were categorized as;

1. SMS advertising
2. Acceptance and ignorance of SMS advertising and
3. Service providers.

#### 4.1.1 SMS Advertising

Focus Group participants received SMS advertisements in their mobile phones although the frequency of such varied from individual to individual. They agreed that SMS advertisements were of significance amid reservations in equal measure. According to participants, relevance and messages that were highly targeted to the audience were the most important factors influencing the use of SMS advertising among Kenyan university students. The discussion found out that that if irrelevant messages were sent to the target audience, then they would be perceived as intrusive and disturbing. For SMS advertising to realize its objective, it has to be relevant in all aspects (Kavassilis, 2003). For example messages sent by organisations like Kenya Revenue Authority were deemed as irrelevant by some discussants.

A participant from group one, for example, said SMS advertisements were a bother very annoying. According to the respondent any message that does not address the immediate needs of the recipient is misplaced hence should be immediately deleted. For example, messages such as those offering bundles and Skiza tunes are deleted because the respondents believe such messages fill their memory cards and phone space hence slow the internet.

Participant 1: "I don't read SMS from a number that I do not have. They should understand us and not send us messages on things like buying plots and laptops coz we cannot afford."

P2: "They waste my time. They text you the obvious and often lack new information."  
"The messages are a nuisance. Why should they advertise without consulting?"

SMS advertising value was identified as the barometer of the success of the message advertised. Success in this case is the realization of the expectations of the advertiser. This can be either by provoking a purchase or proposing a new idea. Although SMS advertising is a new concept, the participants expressed it as something that must be used with care for best results. This can be attributed to message characteristics that take into account the needs of the target audience and to a large extent providing alternatives through responses.

Most participants in the four focus groups agreed that the value of an SMS advertisement played a pivotal role because according to them it remained a good way of marketing products and that companies had made great strides in advertising using SMS and compared to other modes like bill boards. They observed that SMS advertisements would be of value if they served them well due to their being strategic in creating a market niche for organizations and marketing agencies.

Well-crafted messages are usually simple, easy to understand and short. A participant from group three and another from group 4 opined that the way in which messages are written especially to university students should be different since they are well informed.

P3: “The only way an SMS can evoke a need to make a purchase is when it is packaged to meet my need. University students are intellectuals who are most probably learned than the senders of SMS advertisements.”

P4 “The message must be clear and specific so that as I read it I don’t pain myself. You know most university students will be happy if they got an offer on airtime or something for free. When I see a message telling that the service advertised is for free, I’m in sync with it immediately regardless of what is advertised.”

Tied to informativeness is irritation. According to the respondents, university students get irritated when advertisers send them blanket messages that are not really targeted to them. If messages lack ability to make positive impact in the readers’ mind then the advertisers’ efforts are in vain. This brings confusion with them questioning whether the advertiser in question undertook research to establish the needs of the students for maximum results.

Not only is SMS advertising ideal with young consumers (Carrol et al. 2007) but it also has to be appealing enough so that it evokes a need to make a purchase. A participant in Group two (P2) pointed out that messages play a significant role in dictating spending habits for university

student consumers depending on the level of the need created by SMS advertising. The other participants in the other three groups concurred with him.

P2: “If it is creative enough, I can have a second thought. In fact, when it takes into account the target audience, it can evoke the purchase need.”

P2: “Persistence in sending messages might provoke me to give it a try. By the way, messages should be precise, clear, relevant and crafted in an attractive manner and to a large extent allow for feedback.”

Credibility of the source of the message can plough back benefits to the advertiser (Brackett and Carr, 2001). Since the sole purpose of the advertiser is to evoke a need to make a purchase, he/she should demonstrate credibility. A member of group four observed that different brands drive their agenda in their efforts to create a market niche. Some even go to the extent of blatantly lying to the consumer in a bid to lure him/her into buying the idea. This sends a signal to the advertisers that all is not well until something is done for best results.

According to some participants, SMS advertisements were exaggerated and harassed clients. For example after quitting Sport Pesa betting, a participant in group one said she still received messages telling how she could be an overnight millionaire. “This is not practical!” She exclaimed.

For advertising to gain its value, the receiver has to develop regard in the brand and show how the receiver would benefit. Any advertiser in this era is expected to take into consideration the mindset of the prospective receiver of the message (Abdulraheem, 2012). There was an assumption according to participants from group two that the advertisers knew everything pertaining to the needs of the consumers. His opinion was shared across the groups hence reflected the perception of university students in Kenya. Therefore, assuming that messages sent to farmers and musicians might have worked with university students was misinformation because needs were different.

P2: “My friends tell me that even if Safaricom continues to steal their airtime, they have an emotional attachment with it since its advertisements are everywhere; Online, print, radio and television.”

P2: “People like offers, so the messages should come with incentives to lure recipients.”

“Even as adverts should be repetitive enough to create a perception that whatever is advertised is good, awareness creation through social media platforms like Facebook and twitter is critical because most university students are on social media.”

According to the participants, when the SMS was too long, it de-motivated readers. They resorted to not reading through making them not to get all the information packaged in the text. To ensure that they saved themselves from interruption, they deleted. Even as participants maintained that SMS advertising was both good and bad, they agreed that service providers undertake an awareness creation campaign through traditional mass communication channels like radio, television and print media so as to counter growing concerns like privacy intrusion, relevance of messages and benefits therein.

#### **4.1.2. Acceptance and Ignorance of SMS Advertising**

Participants said that they received SMS advertisements, although the amount of messages received per day varied, and that the majority of these advertisements came from their service providers. Real estates, organizations and individuals followed the service providers. When it comes to SMS advertisements, the participants pointed out SMS content as the driver of either acceptance or ignorance of SMS advertisements. They stated that they didn't like receiving these sorts of messages under any circumstances and that they deleted them without reading if the content was of no use to them.

Targeted audiences in this context means the relevant groups of interest who have specific characteristics and perceptions. Participants agreed that sending messages according to customers' different likings increased the effectiveness of the SMS advertising campaign.

Scharl et al., (2005) point out that such customer will reciprocate well to the messages and as a result create more impact of SMS advertising.

Participants were of the view that clear and precise messages could trigger the need for purchase. SMS advertisements that are ambiguous pain the reader and cause confusion. University students according to the participants are busy people who do not have time for lengthy messages that do not add up. For example a member group one said:

P1: "SMSs are too boring and can create a feeling of casualness. They are not credible at times. To me I perceive some messages as fake especially because of the numbers they use. They should perhaps bear the name of the institution. "Some messages are useful, some are not." This was the position of all the participants in the four focus groups.

According to the participants, content advertised by SMS is critical in the acceptance of messages. Whereas the participants accepted receiving advertisements with contents they found met their needs, they deleted those that they thought irrelevant without reading. Perceptions towards the content of the SMS advertisements depend greatly on the brand of the product advertised (Andersson, 2000). It emerged that participant read and saved the messages they received from those brands they had subscribed to. They preferred advertisers reaching them because they regarded SMS advertising as convenient compared to other advertising channels. A group number three member for example said,

P3: "I don't read SMS from a number that I do not have. They should understand us and not send us messages on things like buying plots and laptops coz we cannot afford. Advertisers should package messages in such a manner that they do not give students a second thought. They should know that they are dealing with intelligent people and just bring the point home."

The aforementioned indicates that human beings are rational in nature. They can analyze and interpret messages in line with their different characteristics, which include; social class, level of education and beliefs among others (Tsang, Ho, and Liang, 2004). As the majority in the population, Kenyan youth are best placed in terms of interpreting messages to deconstruct



whatever is sent to them according to the participants. This means, different advertisers should not just shoot in the dark as this may injure their sole purpose of eliciting reactions.

“Not all university students read SMS advertisements,” observed a participant (P1). The understanding here is that advertisers sent messages with a view that all their messages will be acted upon immediately once the consumer reads and digests them. It emerged that university students read specific messages if they have a past experience on the same or if they gave permission to receive such. The messages therefore have to be highly targeted, relevant and of value as per the participants.

According to a participant who shared the same position with others the whole idea of SMS advertising is both good and bad depending on how it is packaged. A participant (P4) posed:

“For example Safaricom Blaze has helped me control my data usage. Perhaps they need to engage consumers prior to the ads. It depends on the receiver’s mood.”

P3 said “You know how university students love money and hence participate in Sport Pesa. It has both negative and positive effects depending on how you look at it. Poorly packaged information can distort good and valuable products for students.”

The first expression the participants use with respect to SMS advertisements was that; the messages were sent to them without consent, were disturbing and irritating. In fact they were annoying. Their view was that the whole process of SMS advertising from the inception of the idea to its execution would be a well-calculated move to ensure it did not intrude on people’s privacy. Participants held that mobile phones are personal gadgets and only for consumption of the owner (Chaffey, 2004). This allows for permission advertising since levels of irritation vary from one person to another. A participant summarized it as follows;

P2: “SMS’s are a bother and in fact very annoying and irritating. Once I hear a ringtone or vibration indicating reception of an SMS such as those offering bundles and Skiza tunes, I delete. They do not concern me. They fill my memory card and slow the internet for no reason. They should understand us and not send us messages on things like buying plots and laptops coz we cannot afford.”

In the reading habit, the repeat frequency and timing of advertisements is another important factor. As the repeat frequency increases, the tendency to read the advertisement gets minimal. The repeat frequency thus appears to be the main determinant in the perception of SMS advertisement as ‘disturbing’ as per a participant from group four;

P4: “It doesn’t matter how many times it is sent. If I don’t trust in the brand because of the bad experience I have about it, the messages will fall on deaf ears. Some of these advertisers like those promoting mCHEZA send the same message three times as if I am not getting it. One time is just enough. When it is sent at such a frequent rate, I find it not only disturbing but unnecessary.”

Another participant, P3, said:

“There is this message on Mshwari that has disturbed my mother for long. Every two days she gets the message asking her to borrow money at a low interest rate. She does not understand what is happening. I finally told her to ignore because defaulting payment might make her blacklisted from borrowing. Otherwise it is a way for Safaricom to make money.”

The participants were in agreement that communication is a two-way process involving a sender and a receiver. If it has to elicit reactions so that a specific purpose is achieved, SMS advertisement should allow for feedback (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2004). According to them, another annoying thing about SMS advertising was that there was always nobody to complain to. Sometimes one was in a meeting and was interrupted by SMS. Participants said, if they were contented with the message, they would go for the product, if not, they deleted the ‘disturbing’ message.

#### **4.1.3 Service providers**

The participants expressed that they received SMS advertisements from different service providers. They were in consensus that Safaricom remained the leading mobile communication service provider in Kenya, followed by other institutions like banks, realtors and individual advertisers. While the issue of competition came into play from service providers like Airtel and Orange, among others, service providers ensured they were credible. They held that if the brand was not well-publicized and elaborated like Safaricom then it had no reputation. They are likely to believe a brand that is more established because they consider it credible. A participant, P2, said:

“The reputation of the brand is critical. They say a brand sells itself as it draws images on the target audience by asking more questions than answers. If the audience is not well aware of what is happening they will withdraw instantly.”

The above expression underscored the need for institutions to invest in branding because discussants believed that consumers were more likely to be hostile to new institutions that they had not heard of.

At times the consumer has no control over what is sent to their mobile phones (Dickinger et al., 2005). The participants were of the view that they had no option but got to know what the message contained before taking any action. According to them, there was an assumption by the advertiser that the consumer would receive the message without questioning. In their own words, human beings have the ability to challenge anything that is not in tandem with their expectations. The participants suggested that they be given an opportunity to respond to whatever messages they receive from the advertiser. They observed that any communication forced down the throats of consumers would be treated with contempt it deserved as it not only violated the right to respond but also unacceptable.

It emerged from the participants that mutual trust between the consumer and the advertiser was key if a product or idea had to realize its intended purpose. Skepticism would work against the product since doubts would take center stage. According to them, no rational thinker would be happy if expectations did not exceed the intention to buy the product. Even when crafting SMS advertisements the advertiser was expected to withhold sincerity so that the consumers did not feel cheated. Advertisers therefore would ensure that they are as sincere as possible and even allow for explanation of concerns if any. For example, a participant, P2, observed,

“Some of these SMS advertisements are not sincere. Maybe they advertise something on price yet the real price is higher. By the way, they do not tell something about giving back to the community but just an indication of how the advertising companies will benefit. Somebody once said, sometimes there is a lie but people cannot be lied to always. There is also need to educate consumers at least to create awareness of a product to be advertised.”

Another one said,

P1: “SMS advertisers should devise strategies to make consumers feel they get what is of value. There is no need to give me an offer on internet bundles and you deny me talking time. No giving on one hand while taking more on the other hand.”

In both instances, the participants were complaining and it was clear they were unhappy. If the advertiser cannot make the consumer happy, there is no business. This called for the need for the advertiser to tame these concerns by the consumer so that he promoted trust as this was the only time he/she would be deemed sincere.

It is important to remember that proper timing by service providers is significant in ensuring a large number of receivers of SMS advertisements read the messages. Some messages sent to students literally fall on deaf ears. This means they are not acted upon because they lack certain characteristics, which are key to capturing their attention. Participants were of the view that the advertiser understood their financial situations as some messages are sent to them when they

do not have a penny. They advise that the well-crafted and ‘juicy’ messages be sent them when they open their new semesters. In this they say the advertiser will receive value for money, as he/she will make large sales. For example participants in whom all the students agreed with said,

P2: “Some SMS’s are sent to students when they are broke. The advertisers should not leverage on the gullibility of students. For instance individual students selling laptops and mobile phones should know the moment to advertise especially for regular students who receive government loan at some time to fund their studies.”

P1: “They do not tell something about giving back to the community but just an indication of how the advertising companies will benefit.”

P4: “The kind of products advertised should be student based. The advertisers should do enough research to ascertain the interests of students.”

## **4.2 Interpretation of Qualitative data**

From the Focus Group Discussions, responses to research questions can be interpreted as follows:

### **4.2.1 Extent of use of mobile telephone SMS among Kenyan university students**

Participants indicated that they understood the term SMS advertising although the acceptance of the messages varied. In as much as they liked the idea of SMS advertising, some participants read and saved the messages they received from those brands they had subscribed to. Participants were in agreement that the whole idea of SMS advertising was both good and bad depending on the level of relevance.

The number of times they received messages per day was different. However it emerged that persistence of the message to the consumer could provoke one to give it a try purchase what is being advertised. It was mentioned by the participants that this was very maddening and they deleted messages frequently sent to them even without reading the content. This was debatable as some participants were of the idea that packaging of messages played a pivotal role for the ultimate goal of the message to be achieved. Two group three members said’

P3: “Advertisements should be repetitive. For example Safaricom advertises their product continuously hence creates a perception that whatever is advertised is good. If they are for instance advertising a phone now and again, then I feel it is credible and I would buy if I have money.”

P3: “I have received in the past several SMSs. In fact, it does not matter how many times it is sent. The issue is how it is packaged. At the same time it must have the characteristics of being clear, brief and precise.”

Relevant messages that addressed interests of students would evoke the need to make a purchase as this would make the students feel appreciated. Participants were also of the opinion that the service providers understood their felt needs through research for maximum results.

#### **4.2.2 Perception of university students towards mobile telephone Short Message Service advertising.**

The perception by the participants that SMS advertising was a waste of time and only aimed at disturbing recipients if not well thought out emphasized the need for advertising agencies to move with speed and address the concern. This would mean that majority of university students did not like this mode of advertising indicating that there was more that needed to be done.

They held that human beings were not sitting ducks waiting to be fed with information but rational beings that could raise relevant questions hence the need to provide for permission marketing and a feedback mechanism.

The expression by a member of group two,

P2: “We are intellectuals and not fools. Advertisers should know that we have the ability to keenly interrogate the messages and even look into the kind of language used. They should undertake research to establish our needs first because they want to steal from us,”

was an indication that advertisers should investigate the needs of the intended consumers. They believed that messages would only be informative and useful to university students if they

were engaged and not the information just thrown to them. This is in line with the fact that communication should be a two-way process as it aims at eliciting actions to accomplish a specific purpose. The purpose in this context is provoking the consumer to buy into the idea, product or service advertised.

According to the participants, when the SMS was too long, it de-motivated readers. They resorted to not reading through making them not to get all the information packaged in the text. To ensure that they saved themselves from interruption, they deleted. This is how one participant put it:

P1: “Sometimes, I don’t understand the meaning of short in SMS. I have a conviction it means ‘not long’. If an agency sends me a message explaining where I can buy a plot, the time of leaving for viewing and what I should carry, the message is too long. I don’t even know how it should be done. In the first place the message is misplaced. These advertisers at times are not serious.”

Even as the participants maintained that SMS advertising was both good and bad, they concurred with a group four member who was of the view that that service providers should undertake an awareness creation programme through other media so as to counter growing concerns like privacy intrusion, relevance of messages and benefits therein. They opined that communication should apply a multi-thronged approach for maximum results and that no channel should work in isolation.

P4: “Advertisers should take it upon themselves to use traditional media like television in displaying their products like the latest smartphones and offers. Through this, a larger audience gets to be aware of the products they are selling and the channels they will use. If done with care, many people will buy into the idea and it will not catch them by surprise.”

#### **4.2.3 Factors influencing the use of SMS advertising among university students.**

The four FGDs identified nine factors as influencers of the use of SMS advertisement.

First, participants cited trust as a factor influencing the University of Nairobi students` usage of SMS in mobile phone advertisement. From the responses, trusting SMS advertisements go hand in hand with credibility of the source. They were skeptical about scanty details in a number of SMS advertisements. According to them, when the advertisement raised more questions than answers, it turned away the potential consumers of the product, service or idea advertised.

One participant said:

“I only trust messages from organizations and agencies that I know are credible like Safaricom. Conmen have devised means of luring mobile SMS users to buy their products in return of money. I once fell victim. A lesson learnt.”

“They don’t show anything about giving back to the society,” said another participant.” “These advertisers are self-centered as long as they maximize their profits. Are they human really?”

It was suggested by participants that advertisers should seek permission before they send advertisement messages. Carroll, Barnes, Scornavacca, and Fletcher (2006) argue that, that advertisers have an important role in SMS advertising. Permission based marketing is as well important to the customer and the organization as marketers become more attentive audience and clients receive fewer irrelevant messages. For instance, a younger has not been the target marketplace for grocery spending and therefore might be viewing TV at that time; these communications source great irritation inside this age group as brand image is degraded. If someone is not aware psychologically to receive a text from the marketing team, then some may not even develop an urge to take the message seriously. And this affects the consumer's perception towards the message and service provider as per a participant.



P3: “The question is where did they get my number because I don’t read an SMS from a number that I don’t have. These people are ill mannered!” And by the way who told them that I want to eat greens that evening yet I ate beef at the mess.”

Tied to permission is privacy. Participants were of the view that privacy remained a very important factor when talking about SMS advertising. The participants who felt that SMS advertisers intruded into one’s privacy were annoyed.

P2: “You know I cannot be forced to buy something that I don’t want. Advertisers do not even seek consent but bombard messages into our phones. In any case, a phone should be a personal possession and should be the other person.”

The expression challenges marketing managers to seek consent from their potential consumers. This is an indication that once the consumers feel that there is intrusion to their lives, they will delete the messages as a result of irritation. Marketers should have it in mind that the receiver of the message may not want the message depending on personal reasons.

The brand of the product advertised through SMS proved to influence consumer perceptions according to the participants. They observed that brand affects the attitude and perceptions. If a brand has bad reputation, it cannot evoke a need to make a purchase. The reverse is true. Even if one got numerous well-crafted advertising messages, prior knowledge of the brand will dictate whether he/she will make a purchase or not.

P3: “They say that a brand sells itself. Similarly, where there is light, everybody should see it. If I perceive a brand to be reputable, I don’t care what other people will say but buy the product. For example, I love Samsung phones even as some are said to explode. It is a big company! That’s just me.”

The expression is an indication that consumer perceptions are affected by the brand of the product. A brand that resonates well with their constructs will carry the day. Advertisers should therefore invest heavily in branding.

This notwithstanding, in most cases it would be to induce consumers buy the products SMS advertising creates purchase intentions among customer (Andersson and Nilsson, 2000). If the cost of the product advertised by SMS does not correspond with value of the product then very few people will buy the product if they have to buy. There has to be value for money in business according to the participants. This brings an element of sincerity as participants agree that some advertisements are over-exaggerated. A participant said:

P2: “When they advertise for instance a new phone, the expectations are up there but when you finally buy, you realize there was nothing to bring home. If you calculate, a phone being sold through bonga points is expensive, as it has hidden charges. It is not commensurate with the amount of airtime used. They steal from us!”

Timing of SMS advertising messages is another factor that they mentioned critical in influencing SMS use among university students. Messages sent to students should be geared towards ensuring they are all inclusive for maximum impact. Participants were of the opinion that they should receive messages after classes, specifically at night. This is because some advertisers, which they did not mention, sent them frequent messages most of which they did not read.

“Sometimes you are in class and you receive a chain of messages urging you to play LOTTO so that you get rich. It is irritating because I don’t have fifty shillings on my Mpesa, let alone credit. I delete,” said P1.

Another participant, P2, said:

“I was performing. While on stage, I heard an SMS alert on my phone. This disoriented me as I had it in ringtone. I was embarrassed.”

The expressions indicate that marketers should engage the students to understand not only their needs but also their time preferences.

Participants cited length of messages as influencing greatly the perception towards SMS advertising. They were in agreement that messages crafted should be short, precise and to the

point since they did not have time to read long messages. For example, two participants pointed out:

P2: “University students are mostly busy with assignments. Do they think they have time to waste?”

P1: “When I get an alert and see a long message, I just delete because it will slow my internet speed. Where did the designers of such messages go to school?” Long messages are thus boring and so marketers should work on addressing this while at the same time using simple language.

Due to their dynamics, participants were of the opinion that SMS advertisements should come with incentives for the students so as to lure them into buying of an idea, product or service. Owing to their interests in fast moving goods, advertisers should ensure they provoke them enough by appreciating the students through incentives like gifts and free of charge messages.

“Most students will accept messages that show them what they stand to benefit within the advertisement. For example if a message comes with goodies like organized entertainment and sport activities, free airtime and messages, students will act on the messages.” Said P3.

Participants revealed that university students have a tendency to ask questions. This is in line with participatory communication that they learnt in lecture halls. They held that communication is ideal when it completes the cycle of sender-receiver and so they should be given room for response. SMS advertisements mostly from service providers do not allow for feedback.

P2: “The major disadvantage of these SMS advertisements is that you do not know who to complain to. They do not provide a feedback mechanism so that I express my concern. I don’t know why advertisers assume that they know everything.”

P3: “I find it insincere; you don’t have a person on the opposite side you can respond to. Media consumption is the prerogative of an individual. I should have answers to whatever I want.”

Consumer satisfaction plays a significant role in the acceptance of messages by participants. Marketers and business owners are expected to work towards meeting or even surpassing a customer's expectation (Bolton, 1998). This provides them with a metric that they can use to manage and improve their businesses. From the study, one will not buy something that will not satisfy them no matter how appealing the advertising text might be.

“If I’m contented with something, it means that I have evidence about it. I don’t waste time but go for it,” said P3.

#### **4.3 Analysis, presentation and Interpretation of Quantitative Data**

The result obtained from the analysis of data generated in the study area are provided and discussed in this section. The results were discussed based on the responses given by the 80 respondents who were students that were randomly selected in the corridors and hostels of the University of Nairobi and presented under the following headings: Extent of use of SMS a marketing tool, Perception towards SMS advertising and factors likely to influence University of Nairobi students` acceptance of SMS advertising use.

#### **4.4 Presentation of Findings**

The type of analyzed data was presented in numeric form. Numeric numbers, levels and groups were analyzed through the use of descriptive statistics and the output presented on tables and pie -charts.

#### 4.4.1 Response Rate Analysis

**Table 4.1: Summary of Response Rate**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Returned Questionnaires	80	100
Unreturned Questionnaires	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: author (2016)

The table above shows that all the respondents were involved in data collection thus no questionnaire was found missing, therefore, the response rate was 100%.

#### 4.5 General Questions

**Table 4.2: Gender of the respondents**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Valid	Male	40	50.0	50.0
	Female	40	50.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: author (2016)

There was equality in gender distribution 50 % of the respondents were female, whereas 50% were male respondents; this indicates that there is gender equality in the university of Nairobi as it is reflected from the random sampling of the students.

#### 4.5.1 Age Bracket of the Respondent Age of the Respondent

**Table 4.3: Age bracket of the respondents**

	Age (years)	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	17-18	4	5.0	5.0	5.0
	19-20	52	65.0	65.0	70.0
	21-22	20	25.0	25.0	95.0
	23-24	4	5.0	5.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: author (2016)

5% of the respondents were aged 17 to 18 years. 5% were aged 23 to 24 years, 25% aged 21 to 22, and years while 65% percent were 19 to 20. Majority of the respondents were therefore aged 19 -20 years.

#### 4.5.2 Marital Status

**Table 4.4: Marital status of the respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	69	86.3	86.3	86.3
	Married	5	6.3	6.3	92.5
	Separated	5	6.3	6.3	98.8
	Divorced	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: author (2016)

86.3% of the respondents were single, 6.3% married, 6.3% were separated and 1.3% divorced. This means that most of the respondents were the single, followed by a tie of married and divorced then one who was separated with a 1.3%.

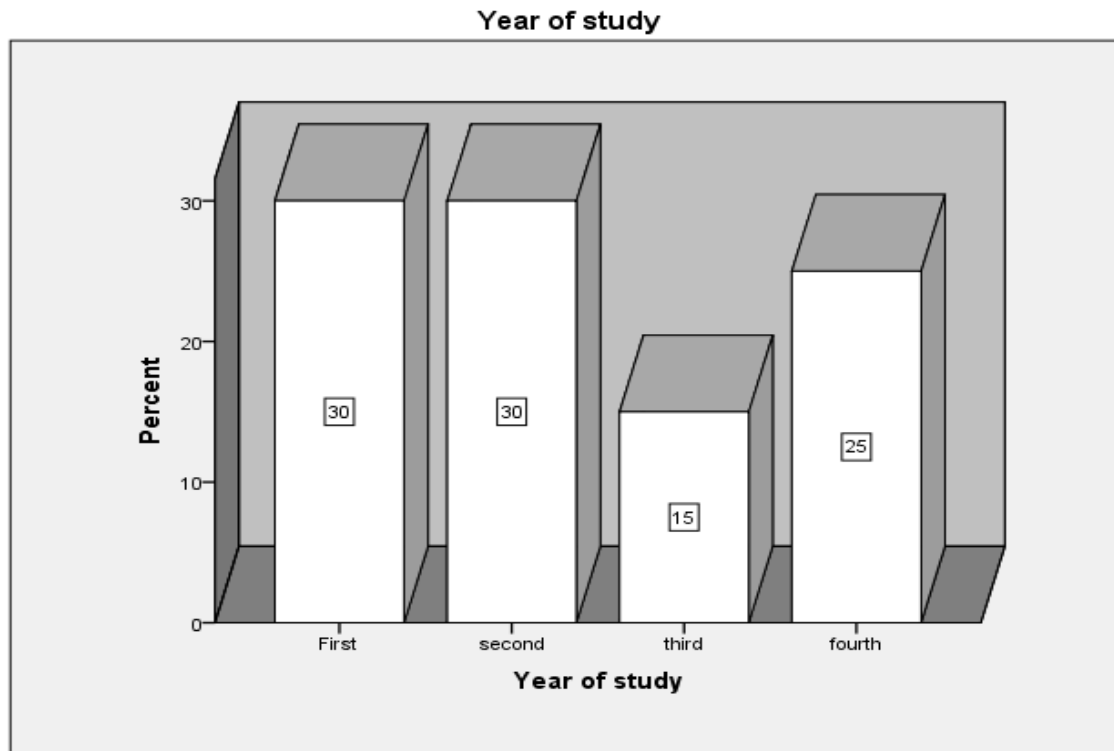
#### **4.5.3 Year of Study**

**Table 4. 5: Year of study of respondents**

Year of Study	Percentage
First	30
Second	30
Third	15
Fourth	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>

Source: author (2016)

Most of the respondents were first year and second year students having the highest percentage of 30% each, followed closely by the fourth years with 25% and the last group being third years with 15%. There were respondents from the “Other” category who include certificates and bridging courses at the time of collecting this data.



**Figure 4.1: Year of study of respondents**

#### **4.6 Understanding the term SMS as a marketing Tool**

##### **4.6.1 Understanding the term SMS**

**Table 4.6: Respondents` understanding of SMS**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Respondents` understanding	80	1	1	1.00	.000
Valid N (List wise)	80				

All the 80 correspondents showed that they knew what was meant by the term SMS advertising.



#### 4.6.2 Reception of Advertising SMS

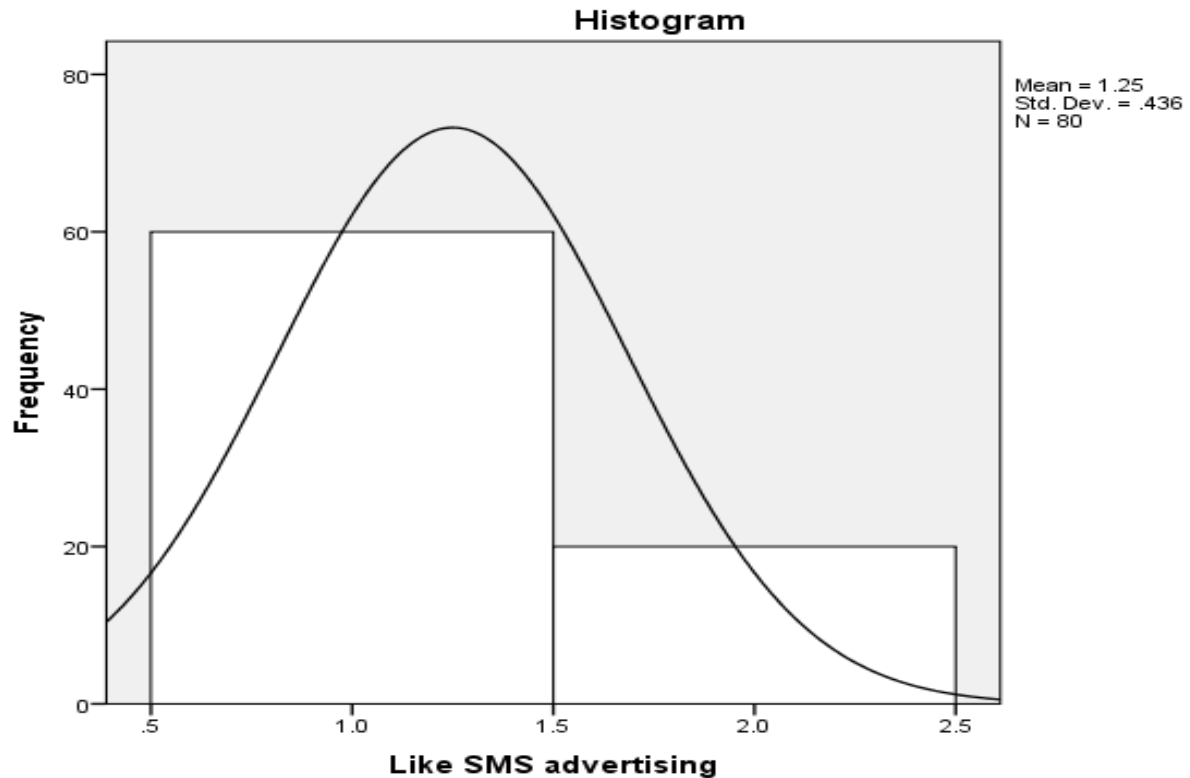
**Table 4. 7: Respondents` reception of advertising SMS**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ever received advertising text	80	1	1	1.00	.000
Valid N (List wise)	80				

Respondents who filled the all questionnaires accepted that they have received an advertising text. This indicates that many of the University of Nairobi students have ever received the advertising text in their lifetime.

#### 4.6.3 Liking the SMS Advertising

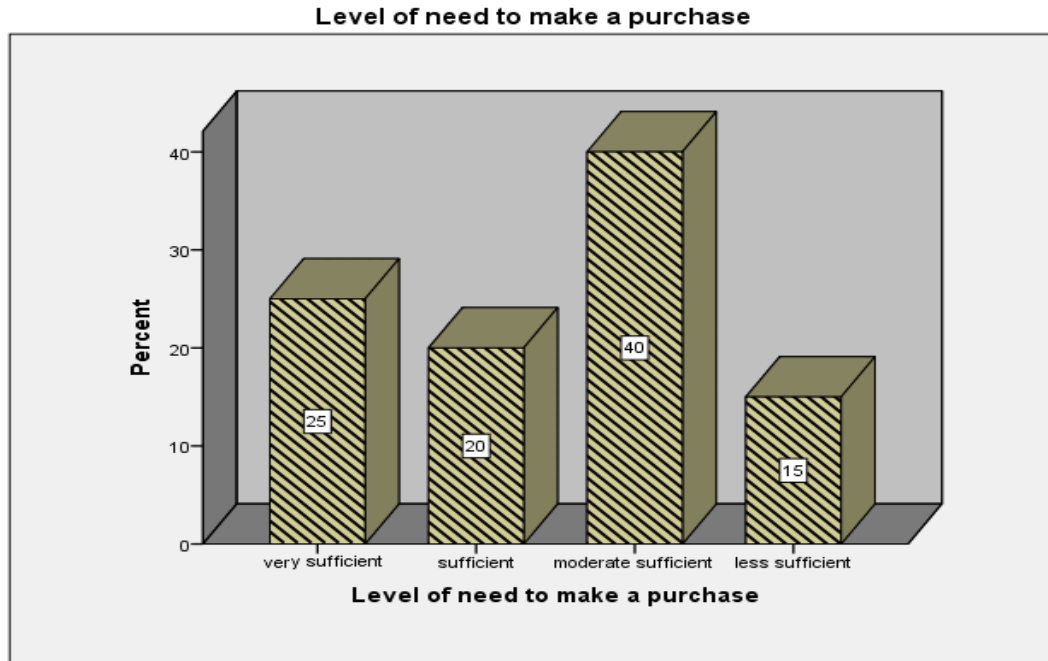
60 respondents indicated liking of SMS and the remaining 20 said they had a negative feeling towards the use of SMS advertising thus affecting the degree of a need evoked to make a purchase.



**Figure 4.2: Liking SMS Advertising**

#### **4.6.4 Level of Need created to make a Purchase**

Out of all respondents, 15% felt that the level of a need to make a purchase was less sufficient. This means that when they received advertising texts, they were really influenced to make a purchase. 20% of the respondents felt that the level of a need created was sufficient to make a purchase and the 25% felt that the level of a need created to make a purchase was very sufficient to make a purchase. The biggest percentage of 40 felt that the level of need created by the advertising SMS was moderately sufficient to make a purchase.

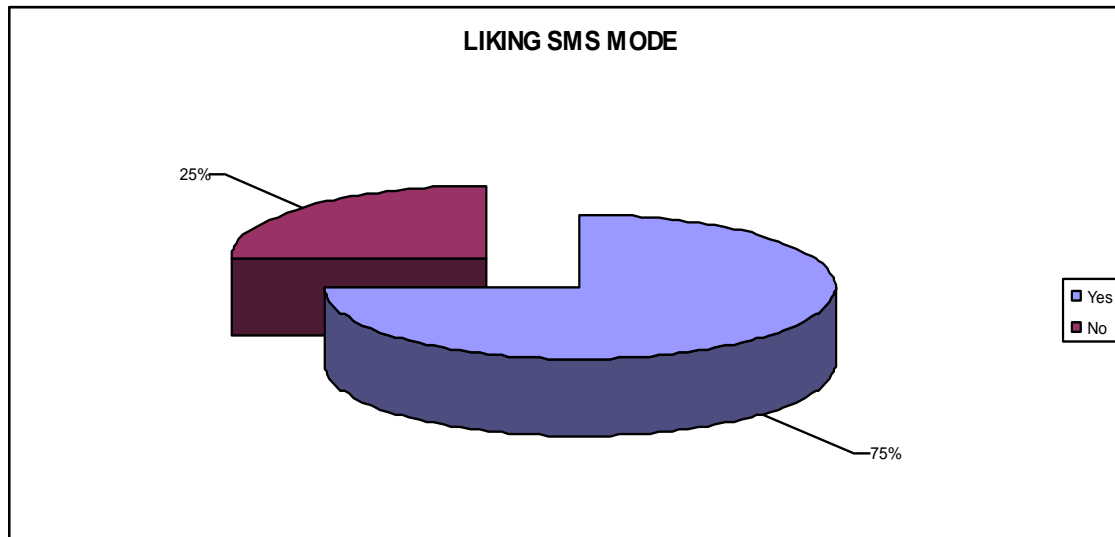


**Figure 4.3: Level of need to make a purchase.**

#### **4.7 Perceptions of university students towards SMS advertising**

##### **4.7.1 Liking SMS Mode of reaching the Respondents**

Figure 7 below, shows the number of respondents who preferred the mode of using SMS to advertise to them and perceived it as the best mode. 75% said they preferred advertisers reaching them through SMS citing convenience compared to 25% who said they preferred advertisers using other advertising channels and even referrals to reach them other than using SMS. Those against SMS advertising pointed out that they were irritated by such messages since they considered them as an interruption and intrusion.



**Figure 4.4: Percentage that liked the SMS mode reaching them.**

#### **4.7.2 Frequency of reception of SMS advertising**

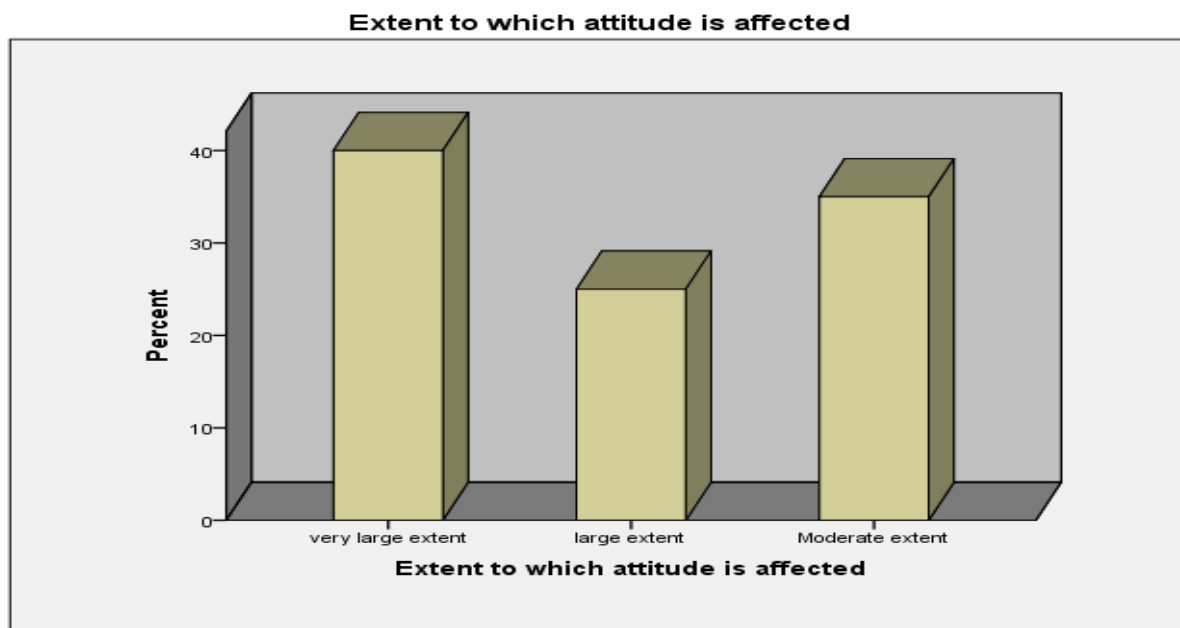
**Table 4.8: Frequency of receiving a text per week**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	16	20.0	20.0	20.0
	2	8	10.0	10.0	30.0
	3	8	10.0	10.0	40.0
	4	24	30.0	30.0	70.0
	5	24	30.0	30.0	100
	<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	

The respondents got advertising messages different number of times in a single week with the highest percentage being a tie of 30% for those respondents who received 5 times a week and 4 times in a week. It was followed closely by 20% who said that they received advertising text once in a week and the followed by another tie of 10% who received texts two and three times in a week respectively.

#### 4.7.3 Extent to which Length of a Single SMS affect the consumer attitude and perception

From data presented in Figure 8 below, length of a text affects the consumer perception towards the use of SMS in advertising. This shows that 40% which is the bigger percentage believes that length impact perception to a very large extent. Followed by 35%, which believe that it moderately affects the attitude/perceptions and last percentage is 25 %, which believe that the length of SMS affects it by a large extent.



**Figure 4. 5: Extent to which length of advertising SMS affect attitude.**

#### 4.8 Factors likely influence consumer perceptions towards SMS advertising.

##### 4.8.1 Trust on SMS Advertising Messages

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Valid</b>	Yes	52	65.0	65.0	65.0
	No	28	35.0	35.0	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**Table 4.9: Trust on advertising messages**

The respondents gave their feelings about trusting SMS messages. 52 of them with a 65% majority said they trusted SMS advertisements as 28 of them with 35% were on the contrary.

#### 4.8.2 Giving Permission to receive SMS Advertising Messages.

**Figure 4. 6: Giving permission on text.**

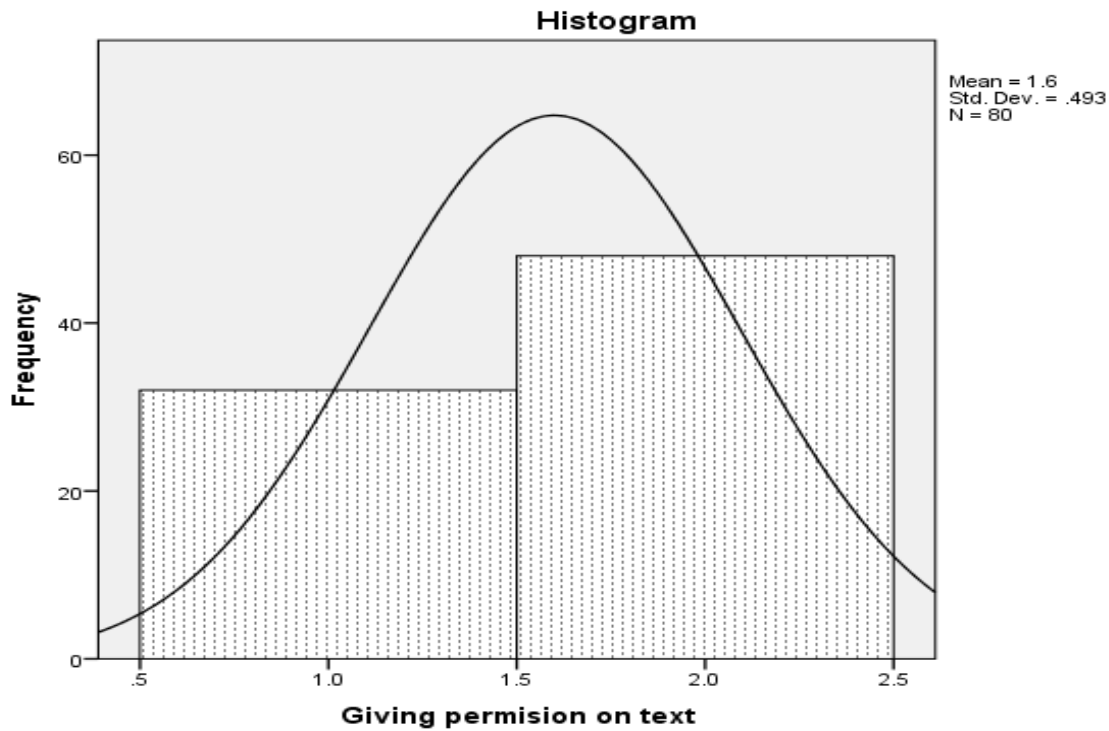
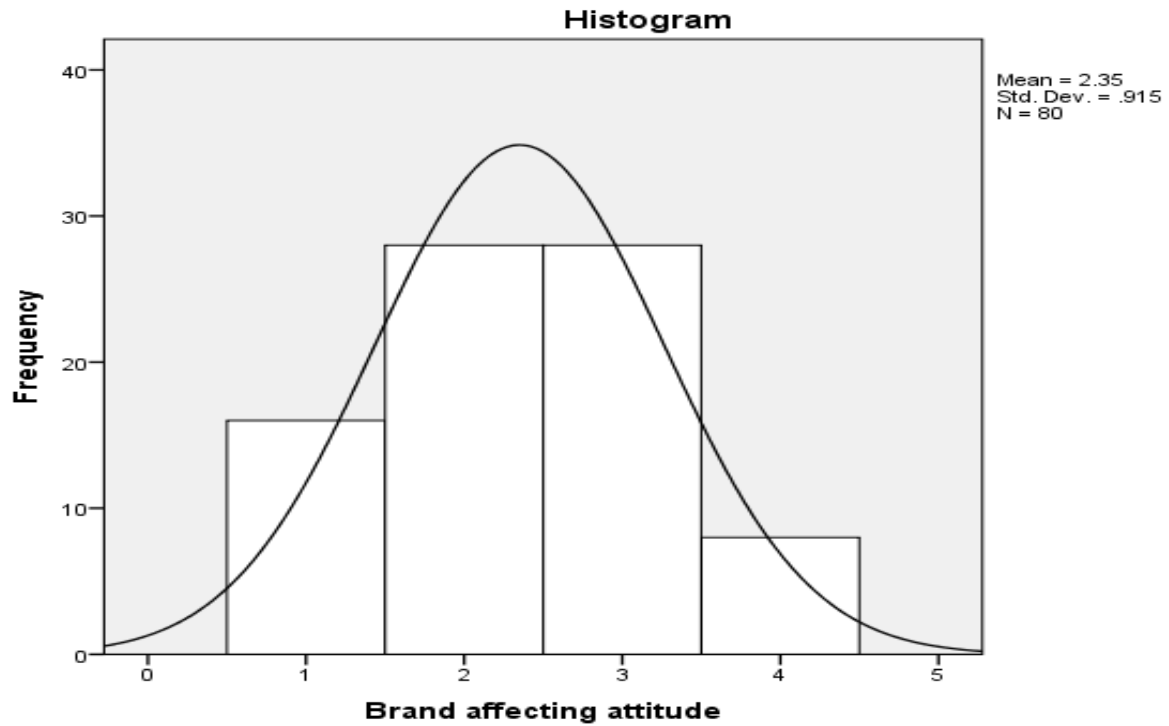


Figure 4.6 paints a picture of the majority of the respondents with 60% indicating that they didn't give permission to receive advertising texts from the advertiser and the marketers. At the same time 40% of the respondents indicated at least they gave permission to receive text from the organizations and individuals that they had subscribed to.

#### 4.8.3 Brand Effect

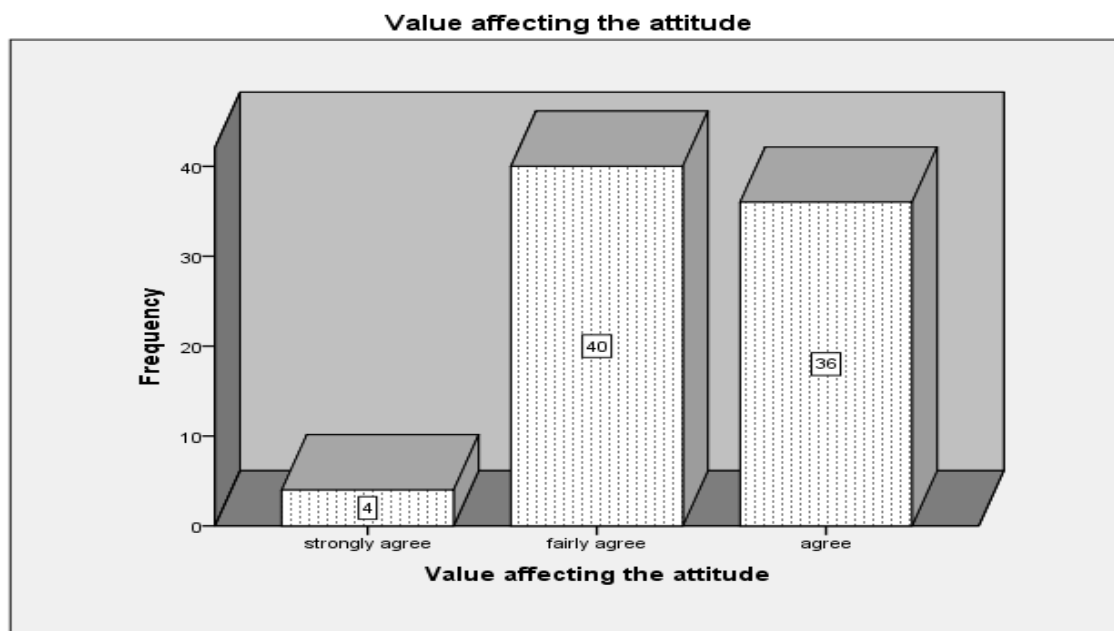
Out of 80 respondents 8 of them with a 10% said they did not agree that brand of the product affects consumer attitude, 28 of them with 35% agreed with the statement and other 28 also fairly agreed with the statement. Lastly 16 respondents strongly agreed that the brand of the product affected consumer attitude. Generally cumulative percentage of 90% agreed that brand affects the attitude hence perception.



**Figure 4. 7: Effect of Brand**

#### 4.8.4 Value of the Product

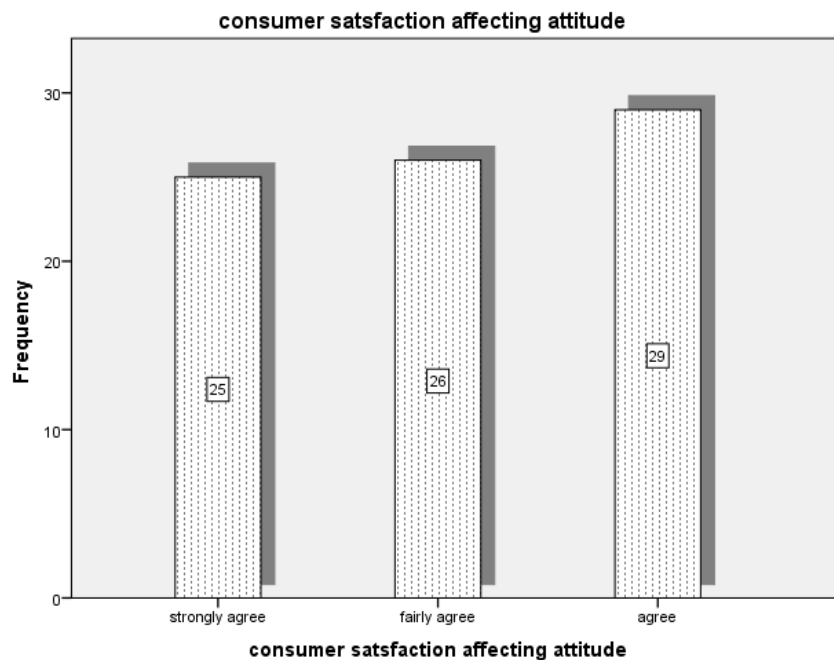
**Figure 4.8: Value affecting Consumer attitude.**



From figure 4.8 above, out of the total 80 respondents, only four of them strongly agreed that value of the product affected consumer attitude. 36 of them agreed and the other 40 fairly agreed. This means that all respondents agreed that attitude is affected the value of the product.

#### 4.8.5 Consumer Satisfaction towards the Product Advertised by SMS

25 respondents with 31.3 % strongly agreed that consumer satisfaction affects the consumer perception greatly, followed by 26 who constituted 32.5 % fairly agreeing and the majority 29 with 36.3% agreed with the statement. Generally all the respondents agreed that consumer satisfaction influenced attitudes.



**Figure 4.9: Consumer satisfaction affects attitude and perceptions.**



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The summary of key findings is presented in this chapter as well as the conclusions of the study. They attempt to give answers to specific questions that were examined. The chapter also grants recommendations for possible actions and suggestions for further research.

#### **5.1 Summary**

The main objective of this study was to investigate the consumer perceptions towards the use of Short Message Service Short Message Service (SMS) advertising among Kenyan university students. From the findings, the study revealed that advertisers should take into consideration the interests of university students and even all audience types before sending them advertising messages. Message characteristics dictate the kinds of reactions to SMS advertising. Through this, advertisers will ensure that they tame the perceptions of the population under study and realize value for money.

The study also sought to assess perception of university students towards SMS advertising. It emerged that marketers did not take into consideration the expected reaction of message receivers so that they lure them into buying their ideas, products or services. As revealed in the focus group discussions, the study provided valued understandings about SMS ethos of communications organisations in Kenya.

Ultimately, the study outlined trust, permission, privacy issues, brand of the product and advertising value, timing of messages, message length, affect for incentives, and flexibility of response and consumer satisfaction as the driving factors behind the success of SMS

advertising among Kenyan university students. From analysis, it is obvious that mobile marketers should inculcate the aforementioned factors in their advertisements without which their campaigns will not be effective. For any communication to realize its objectives, the researcher found that participation that provides a feedback mechanism would favor maximum results for both parties. The reverse is true.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The findings indicate that consumer perceptions toward SMS advertising strongly depend on message characteristics, which need to be developed carefully. Advertisers cannot only rely on the fact that an advertising message sent through mobile devices will be read and remembered automatically. This is because recipients of such messages are mostly rational in nature and can react either favorably or unfavorably. From the study, it is clear that Kenyan university students understood the extent of use of SMS advertising and its role in general, they were aware that there exist perceptions towards SMS advertising among themselves and factors likely to influence the use of SMS advertising among university students. This is going to be important for marketing managers and advertisers in general as new insights have emerged in the study. It is evident that a large number of people trust SMS advertising more especially when they are aware of the source of the message. Permission based advertising has also been noted for maximum results. This will reduce intrusion into privacy of the customers or potential customers. Brand too affects the consumer perception in that no person would like to spend money in a place he/she knows would not get value for his or her money. From Focus Group Discussions, apart from those factors gathered from questionnaires; timing of messages, message length, affect of incentives, flexibility of response and consumer satisfaction emerged as also key among factors identified to influence consumer perceptions towards SMS advertising.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

From the findings, the ability of SMS advertisements to inform about a product, idea or service depends greatly on how the message is crafted. Marketers should take great care when launching marketing campaigns, as there are ways to strengthen the acceptance of such advertising messages. It is in the mind of the sender to ensure the message yields maximum results after the receiver decodes it. This informativeness allows for the synthesis of the constructs of the message that provoke the need to make a purchase.

In this technological edge, the researcher recommends that advertisers should be using SMS advertising to reach their clients and prospective clients. However, as they are using this kind of channel to reach them, they should bear in mind to use easy to understand language, clear and brief texts. Advertisers and marketers should get permission from the contacts they might use to send messages in a bid to minimize interruption, as recipients will be psychologically prepared. Advertisers should brand their text in such a manner that it is recognized instantly. Marketers or advertisers should divulge all details including hidden charges for them to buy trust with the consumers. Credible brands like Safaricom that has rich profile are trusted and they do well.

Producers of the product should make sure that consumer satisfaction is met so that even if they receive an SMS advertisement on the same product they can positively respond. This will happen when they will be sure that they will be getting value for their money when purchasing that particular product. Consequently, this will create a brand that the consumers will identify them with.

Future research should attempt to determine how consumers of different sectors of the economy and cultural settings differ in their perceptions on SMS advertisements. Kenya is a diverse country in terms of different sectors of economy and a study that highlights differences in consumer perceptions towards SMS advertisements based on sectorial differences could be valuable. This may yield rich data because different audiences have different interests.

Future researchers should also focus on the advertiser so as to understand what goes through his/her mind when crafting SMS advertisements. This might provide insights, which can be weighed in line with the perceptions of the consumers so as to create an ideal marketing strategy. Producers of the product should make sure that consumer satisfaction is met by creating an early awareness so that even if consumers receive a text on the same product they can positively respond (Jelassi and Enders, 2004). This will happen when they will be sure that they will be getting the value for money when purchasing that particular product hence the success of SMS advertising.

Since this study has identified factors influencing use of SMS advertising for university students, future research should explore how SMS advertising can be integrated with other forms of media. This will provide further insights in this technology that keeps changing day by day.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**Location.....FGD No.....**

1. What is your opinion about the concept of SMS advertising?
2. Describe your experience of the use of SMS advertising?
3. To what extent can the use of SMS advertisements evoke a need to make a purchase?
4. What components of SMS advertising drive consumer perceptions?
5. How does the brand of the product advertised by SMS advertising affect consumer perceptions towards the product?
6. How does consumer satisfaction affect perception towards the product advertised by SMS?
7. What should advertisers do to influence acceptance of mobile SMS advertising among university students?

## **APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **Introduction**

The researcher is a Masters student from the University of Nairobi- School of Journalism and Mass Communication. He seeks to establish consumer perceptions towards Short Message Service (SMS) Advertising among Kenyan university students.

The respondent is requested to give correct and independent response. The information gathered will be treated confidentially and will only be used for the purpose of this study.

Note: Kindly do not write your name anywhere on this paper.

### **Instructions:**

Kindly respond to all questions in both sections by ticking in the boxes provided or writing in the spaces provided. Feel free to ask anything that you don't understand or requires clarification.

The questionnaire is divided into 4 sections.

**Note: (Tick the appropriate box or fill the space provided as the case may be.)**

### **Section A**

#### **Bio data**

1. Gender Male ☐ Female ☐

2. Age bracket

17 – 18 years ☐ 19 - 20 years ☐ 21- 22 ☐ 23 – 24 years ☐

Over 25 years ☐

3. Marital status

Single ☐ Married ☐

Separated ☐ divorced ☐

4. Which year are you currently?

First [ ] Second [ ] Third [ ] Fourth [ ]

5. Others [ ]

## **Section B**

### **Extent of use of SMS as a mobile advertising tool.**

1. Do you understand the term SMS advertising ?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

2. Have you ever received an advertising text?

Yes [ ] No [ ] If yes, where from

Retail seller [ ] Wholesaler [ ] Manufacturer [ ]

3. Do you like SMS advertising Yes [ ] No [ ]

Give a reason(s) .....  
.....  
.....

4. Up to what level did the text evoke a need to make a purchase? Very sufficient [ ] Sufficient  
[ ] Moderately sufficient [ ] Less sufficient [ ]

## **Section C**

### **Perception towards SMS advertising.**

1. Do you like the mode of using SMS advertising to reach you Yes [ ] No [ ]

Kindly give reason(s) for the answer

above .....

2. How many times do you receive advertising SMS in a week? .....

3. To what extent does the length of advertising SMS affect your perception?

Very large extent [ ] Large extent [ ] Moderately extent [ ] Low extent [ ]

## **Section D**

### **Factors likely to influence University of Nairobi students' use of SMS advertising.**

1. Do you trust SMS advertising messages? Yes [ ] No [ ]

2. Did you give permission to receive that text? Yes [ ] No [ ]

Brand of the product advertised by SMS advertising affects consumer attitude and perception towards the product.

Strongly agree [ ] Fairly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Fairly disagree [ ] Strongly disagree[ ]

4. Value of the Product advertised by SMS affects consumer perception and attitude towards the product.

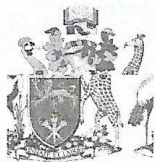
Strongly agree [ ] Fairly agree [ ] Agree [ ]

Disagree [ ] Fairly disagree [ ] Strongly disagree[ ]

5. Consumer satisfaction affects consumer attitude towards the product advertised by SMS.

Strongly agree [ ] Fairly agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Fairly disagree [ ] Strongly disagree[ ]

## APPENDIX III: CERTIFICATE OF FIELDWORK



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION**

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Kenya

**REF: CERTIFICATE OF FIELD WORK**

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners' meeting held on 8/7/2016 in respect of M.A/Ph.D final Project/Thesis defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the student can be allowed to proceed for field work.

Reg. No: K50/73891/2014

Name: RATEMO. CALEB DIRA

Title: CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS SHORT MESSAGE

SERVICE ADVERTISING AMONG KENYAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Dr. Joseph Nyanoti  
SUPERVISOR

Dr. Samuel Siringi  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

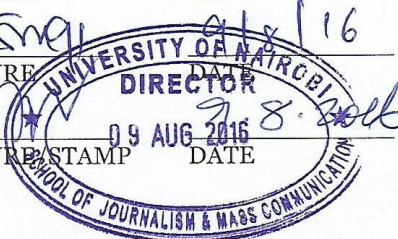
B. Nethi Nethi  
DIRECTOR

[Signature]  
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9/8/16  
DATE

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## APPENDIX IV: CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTIONS



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**  
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Kenya

**REF: CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTIONS**

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct. 2016 in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis Proposal defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project can now be prepared for binding.

Reg. No: KSO/M3891/2014

Name: CALEB OIRA RATEMO

Title: CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS SHORT MESSAGE

SERVICE ADVERTISING AMONG KENYAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS.

Dr. Joseph N. Nyanjira  
SUPERVISOR

[Signature]  
SIGNATURE

10/11/16  
DATE

Dr Samuel Siringi  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

[Signature]  
SIGNATURE

10/11/2016  
DATE

[Signature]  
DIRECTOR

[Signature]  
SIGNATURE/STAMP

10.11.2016  
DATE



## APPENDIX V: CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

11/10/2016

Turnitin Originality Report

Turnitin Originality Report

CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE ADVERTISING AMONG  
KENYAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS by Ratemo, Caleb Oira Reg. No: K50/73891/2014

From Mass media and Technology (MA Communication theory)

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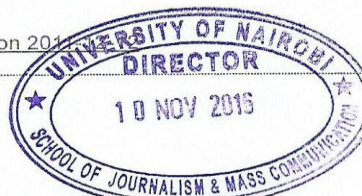
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### **sources:**

- 1 1% match (Internet from 15-Feb-2014)  
<http://www.keyana.ae/wp-content/uploads/Attitudes-of-young-consumers-towards-SMS-advertising.pdf>
- 2 1% match (Internet from 06-Aug-2008)  
[http://melody.syr.edu/hci/amcis02\\_minitrack/RIP/Wang.pdf](http://melody.syr.edu/hci/amcis02_minitrack/RIP/Wang.pdf)
- 3 1% match (Internet from 18-Apr-2010)  
[http://project.hkkk.fi/helsinkimobility/papers/Mobile%20Enterprise\\_2\\_2.pdf](http://project.hkkk.fi/helsinkimobility/papers/Mobile%20Enterprise_2_2.pdf)
- 4 < 1% match (Internet from 29-Nov-2012)  
<http://libproject.hkbu.edu.hk/trsimage/hp/07013930.pdf>
- 5 < 1% match (student papers from 21-Apr-2010)  
[Submitted to Hong Kong Baptist University on 2010-04-21](#)
- 6 < 1% match (publications)  
[Direct Marketing: An International Journal . Volume 3. Issue 2 \(2009-05-31\)](#)
- 7 < 1% match (student papers from 12-Dec-2011)  
[Submitted to Texas A&M University - Commerce on 2011-12-12](#)



## APPENDIX VI: DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

### UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

#### Declaration of Originality Form

This form must be completed and signed for all works submitted to the University for examination.

Name of Student CALEB OIRA RATEMO

Registration Number KSO/73891/2014

College C.H.S.S

Faculty/School/Institute SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

Department SOS

Course Name MA IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES

Title of the work CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE ADVERTISING AMONG KENYAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

#### DECLARATION

1. I understand what Plagiarism is and I am aware of the University's policy in this regard
2. I declare that this \_\_\_\_\_ (Thesis, project, essay, assignment, paper, report, etc) is my original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for examination, award of a degree or publication. Where other people's work, or my own work has been used, this has properly been acknowledged and referenced in accordance with the University of Nairobi's requirements.
3. I have not sought or used the services of any professional agencies to produce this work
4. I have not allowed, and shall not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his/her own work
5. I understand that any false claim in respect of this work shall result in disciplinary action, in accordance with University Plagiarism Policy.

Signature 

Date 10/11/2016

