The impact of SMS marketing on consumer behavior

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Abstract

The use of mobile phones has become norms around the globe. Emergence of new mobile phones with new application has even created more curiosity among customers. The major use of mobile phone is to make calls to family members, colleagues and friends. As a matter of fact, it seems that major purpose to carry mobile phones is to be engaged in its different applications. Text messaging or prominently called Short Message Service (SMS) has become the necessity of young ones. It has given rise to marketing of different products and services that are within the reach of just few clicks away. Most of the organizations in Pakistan and around the world has made a SMS an important tool for marketing of their products.

This study revolves around the impact of SMS on consumer behavior which includes dependent and independent variables. SMS is considered as independent variable and dependent variables focuses on consumer attitudes, intensions to purchase, and consumer behavior in general. More precisely four independent variables include entertainment, in formativeness, irritation, and credibility. One major reason of text massaging is entertainment, fun for the people as there is no other means that could fast and less expensive. In formativeness is another element that is considered important for consumers' behavior. People are attracted by different advertisement messages that may contains important information for the products and services companies offer. Information may include products applications, performance, design and others. Irritation is an element which make consumers unhappy, dissatisfied and annoyed. Consumers' may feel the messages manipulated, insulting and unwanted. Credibility is the fourth element and is equally considered important for consumers' behavior. People may feel that messages they receive from different companies are not trustworthy, honest and true. This may because consumers perceive brands as inferior quality and rejected. The study has used quantitative approach of over 300 sample size from Rawalpindi, Islamabad. The targeted population is all those individuals that may use mobile phones. People of age group from 21 to 60 years are selected. Data is collected through questionnaires which consists of 5 points Likert scale is used ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The study concludes that SMS marketing have strong impact on consumer behavior if they believe massages entertaining. Most of the consumer feel that marketing messages are very useful and very informative. On the other hand, consumers 'may feel irritating if they perceive messages as misguided and manipulated. Another important element is credibility which mainly focuses on trustworthiness and reliability.

Introduction

1.1 Background

Mobile phone users are growing rapidly in recent times. This growth is not only limited to one country, but it is happening all around the world. According to the 2015 statistics, the mobile phone subscribers registered approximately 4.6 billion in all over the world. Majority of the subscribers belonged from developing countries (The Global Mobile Economy, 2015). However, in Pakistan mobile subscribers reached approximately 114 million registered users till June 2015(PTA, 2015). Rapid changes in technology in all around the world, make people to use new ways for interacting with each other by Short Message Service (SMS).

Companies have realized the key importance of cellular phone usage in business world. They are using cell phone as business channel for enhancement of sales and marketing activities (Barnes & Scornavacca, 2004). Advancement in technology especially in mobile phones, opens new horizons for business (Shchiglik, 2004). The conjunction of cell phones and the internet is establishing new numerous business ventures which creates different and unique opportunities for businessmen and consumers for doing business of exchanging connectivity at higher values (Goi, Ng, 2011). It is only recently, the rapid growth and advancement in cellular industry and other mobile communication devices formed different and unique opportunities in the advertising area. This not only helps the announcement of products and services but also builds relationships with customers (Sultan, 2005). In precise, Short Messaging Service (SMS) has been famous (e.g. Merisavo et al, 2007; Watson, McCarthy, & Rowley, 2013). Each month approximately 350 billion texts exchanged among which 15% messages are Commercial and marketing purposes messages (Grabstats, 2015).

While in Pakistan 302 Billion SMS were exchanged in 2014. Fast growing rate of mobile phone usage and texting appealed to business organizations for using this medium as a business promotion. Consequently, several companies and marketers believe this as a convenient and portable channel for marketing (Wu, Luh, & Shieh, 2007). This type of advertisement is called SMS marketing, where the companies use mobile phone as source of advertising and promotion (Zabadi, Shura, & Elsayed, 2012). Such type of advertisement is a direct source of approaching customers, creating awareness and promoting the business. In other words, it is one of the best sources for a direct connection with customers (Kumar et al., 2016).

Recent statistical figure states that 6.9 trillion SMS were sent in 2010. However, the expectation was that in 2011 these figures would reach 8 trillion (Global Marketing statistics 2011). This Paradigm shift has grab attention of marketers and companies to utilize SMS as marketing and promotion tool for attracting the customers. Few key reasons for using this medium are cost effective, ease of use and personalize. In recent days most of the companies use it as marketing tool and promote their business to target audience. The increasing diffusion rate of cell phones has resulted to advertisement of products and services enhancement. Mobile texting or Short Messaging Service (SMS), in this regard is very popular and also very much successful. Numerous researches and large number of surveys expressed that mobile information services and messages rapidly enhanced since 2001. The escalating acceptance of SMS has formed a different and unified channel for advertising which stated as SMS marketing.

The advancement in cellular advertisement opened new research areas which need to explore. The existing literature reveals that researchers grab attention on specific topic about customer attitude towards SMS marketing (Lee, 2013), Consumer's attitude towards mobile banking (Luck, E., & Mathews, 2009) and their intentions about SMS usage (Phau & Teah, 2009). However, effectiveness of SMS marketing medium is not tested on large scale. Asia is one of the great markets for companies for business expansion and revenue generation. Regardless of the fact that majority of the organizations spends a lot of money on advertisement, but as a matter of fact, Asia is as seen as market leader in SMS marketing and will continue process for making a strong marketplace (SMS marketing trend, 2011). Current study contains two aims; 1) to identify key factors which makes SMS advertisement effective or not, 2) to examine the attitude of people towards SMS advertisement.

1.2 Problem Statement

The exponential expansion of cellular users in the past decade has enabled businesses to exploit the telecom industry. Consumers are constantly bombarded with advertisements that may or may not be relevant. How consumers perceived these messages (SMS) and how they change their behavior are the key issues that are addressed in this study.

1.3 Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship and connection between SMS marketing and customer perception.

1.4 Research Gap

Since the dawn of the telecom industry, companies have focused on promoting their business and capturing the market share for organizational performance. Owing to this reason the companies adapt numerous marketing strategies and promotional strategies for attracting customer for their business. Swift transformations in technology have equipped businesses to use cellular phones for approaching customers and promoting their business. The existing literature to a considerable extent focused on specific topics about customer attitude towards mobile advertising (Tsang, Ho, Liang, 2004 ;), Consumer's attitude towards mobile banking (Luck, E., & Mathews, 2009) and their intentions about SMS using the medium (McCorkle, Jurkus, Auruskeviciene, & Reardon, 2013). Mostly the customer's intention to purchase, attitude towards advertisement and Mobile SMS marketing with customer perception was investigated on a small scale. This research will help the marketing managers and directors for better strategic decisions about SMS marketing.

1.5 Rationale of the study

The present study is helpful for marketers to explore the key areas of SMS marketing which make it effective and efficient. This will guide and aid a more precise SMS advertising campaign for gaining better results. It is also beneficial for companies to know the attitude of consumers towards SMS marketing in Islamabad/Rawalpindi.

2. Literature Review

Marketing practitioners face a lot of continuous pressure for justifying what they are contributing in organizations from marketing activities (O'Sullivan & Abela, 2007; Lee, 2013). In this current scenario, determining the effectiveness and appropriate usage is crucial for justifying marketers for their activities. Drossos, et al., (2007) describes that different methods and paradigms are generally used for evaluation of mobile marketing effectiveness. Such paradigms consist upon attitude about advertisement, brand and consumer purchase behavior which evaluates the efficiency and effectiveness of SMS marketing and marketing. However, on the other hand, Choi and McMillan (2008) discuss that purchase intention and attitude towards SMS marketing are major determinants for measuring effectiveness of SMS marketing.

Key goal of advertising is described as approaching the target audience for brand recall and enhancing sales (Lee, 2013). For achieving defined goals, marketers develop advertising strategies. Marketers keep two critical factors in their mind: 1) understanding the communication channel to reach the audience (2) understanding the media channel usage behavior by users and audience (Yousafi, 2012). Therefore, organizations need to select an appropriate medium and channel for advertising which will be noticed and responded by the target group (Haghirian et al. 2005). SMS marketing is a great and suitable medium as compared to other mediums and channels. Mobile phone is ease in use and is a personal device compare to other devices which gives freedom to individuals while they are on move. SMS marketing is one of the most favorable and appropriate mediums for approaching consumers at any locations (Grandbairn, Gharibpoor, & Lari, 2012). Credibility and availability are other factors that should be given due importance. Advertisement containing product information which influence on customer's opinion and purchase decision. It also influences on customer perception towards products and services.

2.1 Entertainment

Entertainment and personnel enjoyment are one of the greatest sources for examining the association of people with SMS marketing and evaluating the attitude and customer perception (Shavitt, Lowery, & Haefner 1998). Entertainment services boost the loyal attitude in customers towards organization. It's also one of the value proposition sources for customers. Majority of the people like to play games, participate in quizzes and other applications for entertainment purposes (Chowdhury et al., 2010). Entertain to customers is a key source of customer attraction which keep them engaged. (Sabokwigina, Malima, & Mpogole, 2013). However, games which plays via texts

messages are another important factor of customer involvement and customer attraction. Bauer et al., (2005) explores in his research that participant perceive positively when they receive an entertaining text from company.

Entertainment now a days is the prime concerns of the companies. Because the organizations believe that when people feel enjoyment and entertainment with their products and their services then their business volume enhances. So, owing to this cause, the company's design SMS marketing contents in such way that customers feel joy and entertainment when they receive from companies. (Venkata Lakshmi & Sachin, 2016). People feelings have strong impact on attitude toward advertisement (Shavitt, Lowrey, & James, 1998). Existing studies show that entertainment is the significant and crucial factor for attitude affecting (Blanco, Blasco, & Azorín, 2014)

2.2 Informativeness

Informativeness is describes as the ability of advertising campaigns which provides the maximum number of products and services choices for their need and guide them for better decision of utilization of products. The maximum benefits can gain through utilizing of Informativeness (Beneke, et al., 2010). The information about products and services are normally available on website of company which directly effects on customer perception towards company and its products (Kaasinen, 2003). However, in SMS marketing sometimes it does not show appropriate quality which may produce bad perception to customers. SMS marketing needs to show quality, relevance, usefulness for customers that matter the most to the consumers. (Siau and Shen, 2003).

2.3 Irritation

SMS marketing's has considerable effects on human behaviors and attitude regarding promotions and advertising (Shavitt et al. 1998). When advertising applies the tactics of annoying, offend, insulting or over manipulative, the customer may perceive as unwanted or irritating. Information which is ambiguous and not clear to customer causes the irritation (Sabokwigina, et al., 2013). Sometime SMS marketing is confusing because of too much information and this causes the disruption and annoying of customers (Stewart, 2002). In response of such advertisement customers annoyed and react negatively. They not only show negative behavior themselves but also become the cause of ill marketing about that company to their friends or colleagues. Mirbagheri.S, (2010) states that unwanted ad, annoying or overwhelm ad negatively impact on the customer attitude. Attitude model was developed by Brackett L.K, (2001) in which he states that there is association between customer perception and attitude towards irritation and advertisement. Existing literature shows that irritating ads and contents have negative impact on customers. Yang, K. C. (2011) states that customers feel embarrassment after getting annoying SMS messages. It further explains that irritation causes negative behavior and negative influence on customer attitude towards SMS marketing (Tsang, Ho & Liang, 2004). Likewise, another study about effectiveness of SMS marketing confirms that irritation causes negative attitude towards advertisement and low purchase intention (Choi, Hwang & McMillan, 2008). It not only causes annoyance but also negative perception towards company (Roser, Schoeni & Röösli, 2016)

2.4 Credibility

Credibility in SMS marketing is expressed as the customer perception of the truth and trustworthiness of advertisement (Pavlov & Stewart 2000). Credibility of SMS marketing states that customer perceives it as truth and reliability of an advertisement (Mackenzie, 1989). Stewart (2002) referred as "probability and contentment of imbedded and categorical necessities of an arrangement". It also influenced by the SMS marketing channel and contents of message. Thakur and Srivastava (2013) directed that a message contains low credibility and low impact on readers until it was published or referred by a strong brand.

Credibility of mobile messages has significant and direct impact on customer's attitude towards organization. It enhances the customer perception towards SMS marketing which may add

value to the customers. Similarly, it has great impact on customer perception. Customer perception enhances when the credibility level of SMS enhances. In the eyes of customers, if they perceive the SMS as credible source then their perception about company become positive (Brody, et al., 2016).

2.5 Customer Perception

Perception is defined as the sequence of customer exposure and attention which is construed separately in marketing procedure (Hawkins, & Mothers Baugh, 2010). Moreover, it is also clarified by Kotler and Armstrong (2001) that perception is the procedure of collecting, selecting, organizing and translating the information into meaningful form for better understanding. However, customer perception describes that how a customer sees the action and reaction towards SMS marketing (Kotler et al. 1998, p. 187). Another perspective about customer perception is described as the behavioral response of customer towards a company (Jones, 2007). Consumer perception also expresses that, it is an Image and impression which is created by company through SMS marketing and market offerings. It captures a specific place in the mind of customers. It is affected by advertising, social media and other channels" (Business Dictionary, 2015).

Customer perception is the initial and the most practical step in customer purchasing decision processes. The perception process consists upon three main elements which are 1) exposure, 2) attention and 3) interpretation. As the information receives, it splits into four elements 1) collecting, 2) selecting, 3) analyzing, 4) interpreting (Alcheva et al. 2009; Datta, & Vasantha, 2016). Information received from different sources and mediums effects customer exposure. Knowledge about productd and company enhance the customer exposure and customer become more knowledgeable (Palani, A., & Yasodha, P., 2012). So, marketer need to carefully choose the medium and information. After receiving information, customer selects information according to his needs and requirements. They ignored other information and pick only relevant information. Customer expectation and past experiences help them towards selection of information (Smutkupt, et al., 2012). After careful selection of information, the customer organizes the selected information and make an image into mind about the products and company (Datta, & Vasantha, 2016). The next and last step of perception is interpretation of selected and organized information. It implies the perception of customers towards organization and products. This step further leads to decisions about product testing, purchasing and experiencing.

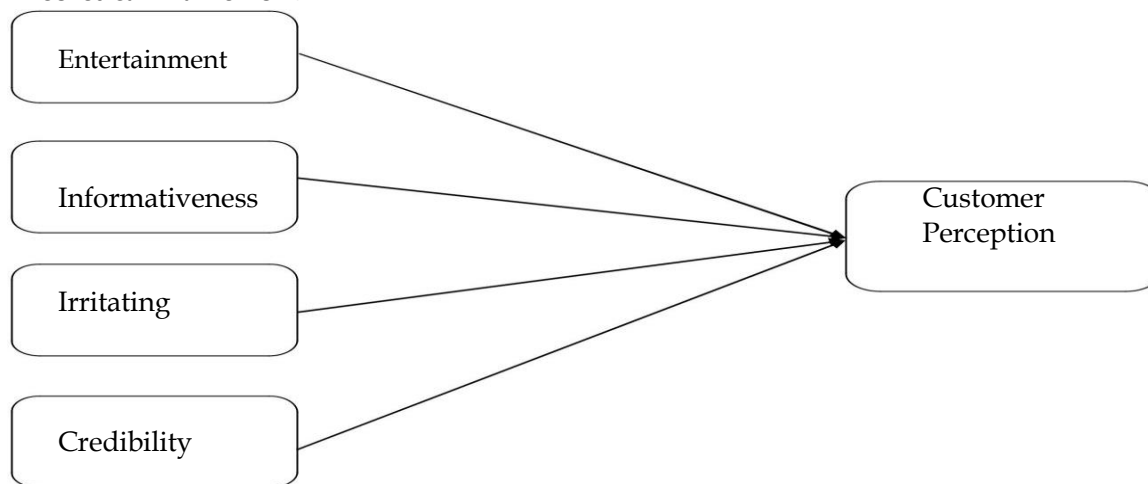## 2.6 Theoretical Framework

Figure 1 Research Model

Research Hypothesis
H1. Entertainment will positively effect on customer perception.
H2. Informativeness will positively effect on customer perception.
H3. Irritation will negatively effect on customer perception.
H4. Credibility will positively effect on customer perception.

Research Methodology
3.1 Research Design
The study is quantitative in nature and examines the effect of SMS marketing on customer perception.

3.2 Population
The target population for this research is all the mobile phone users of two cities Rawalpindi and Islamabad between the age of 20 and above.

3.3 Sampling Plan
300 individuals are selected for the study. Furthermore, convenient sampling technique is used for the data collection.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures
The data is gathered by the use of self-reported research questionnaires from 300 mobile users from twin cities (Rawalpindi and Islamabad) in Pakistan.

3.5 Measuring Instruments
This study is about measuring the impact of independent variables on dependent variable. These are outlined below:

3.5.1 Independent Variable
There are four independent variables in the study which includes Entertainment, Informative, Irritating and Creditability. For measuring these variables, the standardized instruments are used and is adapted from Ducoffe"s (1996), Tsang, Ho, and Liang, (2004). These instruments are used in different researches later on. Five-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) is used for present research.

3.5.2 Dependent Variable
Customer Perception is considered as dependent variable. Research questionnaire is adapted from Roach. G (2009) for measurement of customer perception.

3.6 Data Analysis
The collected data is analyzed by SPSS-21 for better understanding of the results and responses of respondents. Frequency distribution, Cronbach alpha, Correlation and Regression analysis are used for data analysis.

Data Analysis and Results
4.1 Demographic Analysis
4.1.1 Demographics
It is clearly stated from the results that there is no significant relationship found between demographics variables and their impact on other main variables. Demographic analysis is done for better understanding of description of respondents. The total number of the sample is 300. Convenient sampling technique. Out of 300 questionnaires, 290 are accepted.

Table 4. 1   Gender

Description	Frequencies	%age
Gender		
Male	240	82.8
Female	50	17.2
Total	290	100

The research data is collected from 290 respondents. The table indicates that majority of the data is collected from males. However female also participate in this research. The percentages of respondents stated as 82.8% males and 17.2% females.

Table 4. 2   City

Description	Frequencies	%age
Gender		
Rawalpindi	150	51.7
Islamabad	140	48.3
Total	290	100

In this study the 51.7 % respondents belong to Rawalpindi while 48.3 % respondents are from Islamabad.

Table 4.3   Marital Status

Description	Frequencies	%age
Marital Status		
Single	165	56.9
Married	125	43.1
Total	290	100

The table describes that marital status of study sample's respondents. It expresses the majority respondents are single. 56.9% respondents are married while remaining 43.1% are single.

Table 4.4   Age

Description	Frequencies	%age
Age (in years)		
21-30	232	80
31-40	46	15.9
41-50	12	4.1
Total	100	100

The table describes that majority of respondents belong to 21-30 years" age category. While small number of respondents are belonging to 41-50 years and above. The numerical values indicate that 80% are 21-30 years category, 15.9% are 31-40 years and 4.1% belong to 41 and above

Table 4.5 Research Instruments Reliabilities

Sr. No	Questionnaire	Item scale	Reliability
1	Entertainment	3	.784
2	Informative	3	.757
3	Irritating	4	.845
4	Credibility	4	.697
5	Customer Perception	3	.784

The table states the reliabilities of instruments which shows that all the instruments are highly reliable. The Entertainment scale reliability is .784, Informative scale reliability is .757, Irritating reliability is .845, Credibility instrument reliability is .697 and customer perception reliability is .784.

4.2   Correlation Analysis

The correlation test is used to identify the relationship among variables. A positive sign states the positive relationship, while negative symbol shows the negative relationship. The value ranges between -1 to +1. In case of 0 it stated the no relationship among variables.

Table 4. 5 Correlations   Correlations

		Entertainment	Informative	Irritating	Credibility	C. perception
Entertainment	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
Informative	Pearson Correlation	.517**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		1		
Irritating	Pearson Correlation	.314**	.308**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		1	
Credibility	Pearson Correlation	.312**	.301**	.715**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		
C. perception	Pearson Correlation	.409**	.378**	-.451**	.426**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.6   Entertainment and Customer Perception

Variable	Customer Perception Correlation coefficient (r)	P value
Entertainment	0.409***	.000

The table shows correlation between entertainment and customer perception is (r= .409, p<0.05). The tabulated values express that there is straight and positive association among variables.

Table 4. 7   Informative and Customer perception

Variable	Customer perception Correlation coefficient (r)	P value
Informative	0.378***	.000

Table shows the correlation between informative and customer perception which is (r= .378, p<0.05). The tabulated values express that there is positive and significant relationship found between the variables.

Table 4. 8   Irritating and Customer perception

Variable	Customer perception Correlation coefficient (r)	P value

Irritating	-0.451***	.000

From the table, the correlation between irritating and customer perception is (r= -.451, p<0.05). The tabulated values express that there is negative relationship found between the variables.

Table 4. 9   Credibility and Customer perception

Variable	Customer perception Correlation coefficient (r)	P value
Credibility	0.456***	.000

Table shows the correlation between credibility and customer perception which is (r= .456, p<0.05). It expresses that there is positive and straight connection found between the factors, as the credibility increased the level of customer perception also increased.

4.3   Regression Analysis
Regression analysis is stated as the impact of independent variable (IV) on dependent variable (DV). Hypothesis is accepted or rejected on the basis of beta values.

Table 4. 10 Regression Analysis

	Coefficients				
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.821	.243		7.503	.000
Entertainment	.186	.060	.168	3.115	.002
Informative	.101	.050	.108	2.016	.045
Irritating	-.272	.033	-.385	-8.304	.000
Credibility	.329	.047	.334	6.979	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customer perception

4.3.1 Entertainment and Customer perception
Correlation table clearly mentions that there is a positive relationship found between Entertainment and Customer perception. However, the table of regression indicates the impact of Entertainment on customer perception which means that Entertainment has positive effect on Customer perception. The tabulated value (b=.186) is significant at (p=0.002) which shows that Entertainment has positive impact on customer perception.
Therefore, hypothesis is approved and accepted.
H1: Entertainment has positive and significant effect on customer perception. (Accepted)

4.3.2   Informativeness and Customer perception
Correlation table clearly mentions that there is a positive relationship found between Informativeness and Customer perception. However, the table of regression indicates the impact of Informativeness on customer perception. It is reflected that Informativeness has positive impact on Customer perception. The tabulated value ((b=.686) is significant at (p=0.002) which showed that Informativeness has positive impact on customer perception.
H2: Informativeness has positive and significant effect on customer perception. (Accepted).

4.3.3 Irritating and Customer perception

Table indicates that there is an inverse relationship found between Irritating and customer perception. Furthermore, the regression table states that the impact of Irritating on

Customer perception is negative. This is clear from tabulated values (b= -.272) which is significant at (p=0.000). It shows the negative impact of Irritating on customer perception. Hence hypothesis is approved and supported.

H3: Irritating has negative and significant effect on customer perception. (Accepted).

4.3.4 Credibility and Customer perception

There is a positive correlation found between Credibility and customer perception in correlation table. The regression table indicates that Credibility has positive impact on customer perception. The value is (b=.329) significant at (p=0.000) which means that impact of Credibility has positive on customer perception.

Therefore, hypothesis is approved and supported.

H4: Credibility has positive and significant effect on customer perception. (Accepted).

Table 4. 11 Hypothesis Acceptance detail

Sr. No	Hypothesis Detail	Status
1	Entertainment has positive and significant effect On customer perception.	H1 Accepted
2	Informativeness has positive and significant effect on customer perception	H2 Accepted
3	Irritating has negative and significant effect on Customer perception.	H3 Accepted
4	Credibility has positive and significant effect on Customer perception.	H4 Accepted

Summary, Findings, Conclusion Recommendation and Limitations

5.1   Summary

This research aim was to evaluate and investigate the SMS marketing effects on Customer Perception: The researchers investigated the four key indicators (Entertainments, Informative, Irritating and Credibility). These indicators were most important for customer perception towards mobile's advertisement. 300 research respondents were selected for this research from twin cities Rawalpindi and Islamabad. After careful collection and analysis of data, the study results express that three major factors that are of significant and have positive impact on customer perception. However, one factor negatively impacts on customer perception. It means that for motivating respondents these three factors are the crucial factors. Customer perceives positively when they feel that SMS marketing is informative, credible and entertaining. However, if the SMS marketing is annoying or disrupting then it caused the negativity which ultimately has a negative impact on customer perception.

5.2   Findings / Conclusion

Most respondents confirmed that entertainment has straight and positive effect on customer perception which states that entertainment is the one of key indicators which directly influenced on customer perception.

Several respondents indicate that informative is another important indicator of customer perception. Majority of the customers feel that SMS marketing is informative and useful.
Credibility has a positive effect on customer perception, and customer feel that SMS is one of most credible sources.

Moreover, some respondents describe that sometime SMS marketing become annoying and irritating for them. Which negatively impact on customer perception.

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