

## Factors Influencing Consumer Acceptance of Mobile Marketing: A Two-Country Study of Youth Markets<sup>☆</sup>

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine factors affecting consumers' acceptance of mobile marketing across two global markets. Drawing upon technology acceptance and uses and gratifications theories, we develop and estimate a conceptual model of the influences of antecedent factors (including risk acceptance related to the mobile platform and personal attachment related to mobile devices) on behavioral intent related to mobile marketing practice. We further propose that the above relationships are mediated by activities that consumers engage in such as downloading, forwarding content and registering with firms. Focusing on youth consumers, we empirically test the model using data collected in both an established (U.S.) and an emerging market (Pakistan). Findings across these two markets reflect cross-market similarities and differences related to consumer acceptance factors. We draw implications from these findings related to both theory and practice.

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*Keywords:* Mobile marketing; Marketing communications; Mobile and wireless communications; Consumer acceptance of new technology; Global marketing and branding; Mobile privacy

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### Introduction

Increasingly, brand managers view mobile devices as an attractive platform from which to interact with consumers through various forms of marketing communications, including location-based promotions and television-style advertising. Recent coverage in the popular press on the launch of Apple's iPhone and the introduction of Google's mobile platform initiative has focused consumer and industry attention towards the use of mobile devices for marketing communications. Additional reports indicate that firms worldwide are shifting increasing amounts of resources to the mobile marketing platform (Richtel 2006). Recent studies suggest that 90% of

large global brands are planning to initiate mobile marketing practices by 2008, and more than half of these brands plan to devote as much as 25% of their total marketing budget toward mobile marketing activities (Atkinson 2006). Forecasts for global mobile marketing spending range from \$9 to \$19 billion by 2011 (BusinessWeek.com 2007).

This is not a surprise given that global brands including Burger King, MTV, Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, Ford and others have recently initiated mobile marketing programs that enable consumers to search for a nearest restaurant location, receive coupons, access information about new cars, or simply communicate with others. Mobile advertising and promotional campaigns such as these have generated click-through rates up to ten times those of traditional Internet banner ads (Blum and McClellan 2006). Indeed, through increased use of text messaging, location-aware search technologies, and the development of branded mobile networks, global wireless and mobile marketing platforms and applications have begun to create fundamental changes in the ways brands and consumers interact.

The purpose of this study is to examine factors affecting consumers' acceptance of mobile marketing practices across different markets. Drawing upon technology acceptance and

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uses and gratifications theories, we develop and estimate a conceptual model of the influences of antecedent factors (including risk acceptance related to the mobile platform and personal attachment related to mobile devices) on behavioral intent related to mobile marketing practice. We further propose that the above relationships are mediated by activities that consumers engage in such as downloading, forwarding content and registering with firms. Focusing on youth consumers, we empirically test the model using data collected in both an established (U.S.) and an emerging market (Pakistan). In this study, we conceptualize consumer acceptance of mobile marketing as willingness to engage in activities such as receiving marketing or promotional offers or receiving information on where to buy certain products or services via mobile phones. We stress the interactive element of mobile marketing by which it involves both brand-initiated (e.g., delivery of mobile content and promotions) as well as consumer-initiated (e.g., downloading content, purchasing items via mobile devices) activities. The purpose of this study is not to examine consumer acceptance factors through a cultural perspective; rather we are seeking to investigate similarities and differences by focusing on marketing-related mobile activity among specific samples of youth consumers regardless of cultural differences across the two market contexts.

Technology developments in mobile communications have begun to foster new platforms for brand–consumer interaction (Shankar and Malthouse 2007). The Mobile Marketing Association (MMA) defines mobile marketing as “the use of wireless media as an integrated content delivery and direct response vehicle within a cross-media or standalone marketing communications program” (MMA 2006a). One rationale for brands’ migration to mobile communications platforms is that mobile marketing can enable relatively more personal and interactive brand–consumer communication than do traditional marketing communications (Bauer et al. 2005; Sultan and Rohm 2005). Furthermore, mobile marketing strategies can be specific to a consumer’s location or consumption context.

Specific consumer segments—such as the teen market—are using mobile phones increasingly as single-source communication devices (Plant 2006). Such consumers may feel empowered with greater access to social circles, mobile-based content, and information. A recent study conducted in the U.K. suggests that increasing numbers of youth consumers are willing to accept mobile advertising, provided they are given relevant content and sufficient incentives to do so (Openwave.com 2005). Mobile carriers have launched programs targeting young consumers with programs subsidized by mobile advertising (Blyk 2008). Accordingly, brands have also begun to tap aggressively into mobile platforms around the world in order to reach specific consumer segments such as teens and young adults.

On the surface, the future looks bright for the mobile platform as a new way to forge brand–consumer connections, especially among youth consumers who are active on the mobile platform. Yet, it remains unclear to what extent consumers in different global markets will accept and engage

in mobile marketing efforts. Numerous academic studies have noted the challenges confronting mobile marketing communications acceptance, including feelings of intrusiveness as well as trust and privacy concerns among consumers (e.g., Grant and O’Donohoe 2007). Within industry, several brands (e.g., ESPN, Sprite, adidas) have launched mobile marketing efforts only to see sparse successes amidst a number of disappointing results. For example, the global sporting goods brand adidas—through what it referred to as “brand in the hand communications”—has executed mobile campaigns with more success in Europe than the U.S. Evidence from several of the brand’s mobile campaigns executed since 2004 points to several factors driving or limiting campaign performance, namely differing levels of mobile technology and penetration, differing regulatory constraints, and differing levels of consumer acceptance of such mobile marketing efforts within respective markets (Sultan and Rohm 2005).

Hence, the extent to which consumers in global markets will accept commercial mobile marketing efforts remains unclear. Challenges to the growth in mobile marketing penetration relate to personal as well as technology and infrastructure factors. Mobile carriers, advertisers, and policy makers are confronted with the perception of mobile marketing communications as intrusive, annoying, and as posing a threat to personal privacy. Additionally, recent estimates suggest that only a small percentage (five million) of the over two-hundred million individuals in the U.S. with mobile phones possess the third-generation (or 3G) phones necessary for downloading and playing quality video, functions that are central to effective marketing communications (Manly 2006). Yet, despite widespread evidence regarding the significant growth of the wireless market and its emerging role as a marketing communications medium as well as the challenges that the mobile industry faces, there is little empirical research on factors that influence mobile marketing acceptance among consumers across global markets.

This study empirically tests a conceptual model that illustrates factors proposed to influence mobile marketing acceptance among youth consumers and examines how these factors and relationships differ depending on two distinct markets. The contribution of this research is three-fold. First, we develop a conceptual model that investigates the influence of marketing-related and value-based mobile activity—including using mobile devices for information provision, sharing content, and accessing content—on consumer acceptance of mobile marketing practice. These factors are drawn from technology acceptance as well as uses and gratifications perspectives that emphasize the influence of usage factors and motives on behavioral intent.

Second, we examine two additional antecedent factors: perceived risk acceptance and personal attachment related to one’s mobile phone. In this way, we seek to provide a greater understanding of the role of risk acceptance and personal attachment (a construct somewhat unique to mobile devices) to mobile devices in indirectly influencing acceptance of mobile marketing practices among the youth market.

Third, we empirically examine and compare the acceptance of mobile marketing practices across an established (U.S.) and

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