
Unsolicited Promo Texts and Patronage among Students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education

Gloria Kelly ODEGHA

Press/Bookshop

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Nigeria

odeghagloria@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study seeks to evaluate unsolicited promo texts and patronage among Ignatius Ajuru University of Education students and to find out whether the reception of unsolicited texts by students automatically translates to patronage. The research questions followed as: what are the nature and frequency of unsolicited promo texts received by Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Students? and what are IAUE student's response and patronage to telecommunications unsolicited promo texts? Using Krejcie and Morgan table, the sample size of 372 students was gotten from the population of 20,000 students as given by the IAUE ICT. The study adopts the survey method of research, the instrument of data collection which was the interview schedule and the questionnaire were given to professionals who evaluated them for content validity before its administration, for the purpose of reliability, a pretest of the questionnaire and interview schedule was done before administering them to respondents. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage table. Using the frequency table and percentage to present data, findings revealed that IAUE students frequently receive unsolicited promo texts and that they rarely purchase products promoted via promo texts because of the already build up negative perception of unsolicited promo texts. The researcher recommends that telecom companies should advertise their products using the main stream media to enhance credibility and patronage, also the Federal government through the NCC needs to exert more pressure on telecom companies to stop sending unsolicited texts.

Keywords: Unsolicited, Promotions, Telecommunications Company, SMS, Patronage, Products, Subscribers, Response.

INTRODUCTION

Promotional advertising in the Nigerian Telecommunication industry has become prevalent with the advent of the Global Systems for Mobile Telecommunication (GSM). At the inception of telecommunication operations in Nigeria, subscribers were treated like kings and only received SMS from telecom operators when they want to pass vital information such as network issues, new coverage areas and system maintenance. But over the years, service providers have continued to take advantage of the GSM to forward bulk SMS to millions of their subscribers for their personal benefits and to outdo other competitors. This is done at the detriment of subscriber's interest and privacy. Text message marketing has become an effective way for businesses to alert customers and clients about special promotion and deals. Companies send those coupons and keep customers informed about company news. Ebue (2007, p. 243) stated that "sales promotion can be directed at either the customer, sales staff or distribution channel

members, such as retailers. Sales promotion targeted at a customer is called consumer sales promotion while sales promotion targeted at the retailers or wholesalers are called trade sales promotion.” Examples of strategies used in sales promotion include coupons, samples, text messages, marketing, premiums, point of purchase, displays, contests, and sweepstakes among others

Most of the time, a subscriber receives unsolicited text messages from Telecom Service Providers like MTN, Airtel, GLO, etc. to participate in a promotion or text messages offering thousands of products and services. This form of promotion, if not well managed, can be very frustrating to the receivers. It is in the light of this that the researcher is interested in researching if unsolicited telecommunications promo texts elicit customers’ patronage and how receivers of such messages respond to them. The study will be centered on Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Postgraduate and Undergraduate students. The Institution was first established in June 1971 as Rivers State College of Education in the Catholic Mission’s Stella Maris College, with an initial intake of 116 students, under the headship of Dr. William Maxwell Jnr, a USAID representative then serving in the state. Ignatius Ajuru University was established by the University of Education Law NO. 8 of 2009 of the Rivers State Government passed by the Rivers State House of Assembly on 15th October 2009 and assented to by His Excellency Chief Rotimi Amaechi, the Executive Governor of Rivers State on the 20th October 2009. The institutions has six faculties such as; faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, Business Studies, Natural and Applied Sciences and Vocational and technical Education.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- Examine the type and frequency of unsolicited promo texts Ignatius Ajuru University of Education students receive.
- Find out if unsolicited telecommunications promo texts elicit response and patronage from Ignatius Ajuru university of Education students.

Research Questions

- What is the nature and frequency of unsolicited promo texts received by Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Students?
- What are IAUOE student’s response and patronage to telecommunications unsolicited promo texts?

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK (Individual Difference Theory)

Alfred Adler was an Australian medical doctor, psychotherapist and founder of the school of individual psychology in 1926. The individual difference theory is relevant to this study because GSM’s subscribers are individuals with different psychological makeup who are bound to have diverse perception, reception and response to promo texts. A single promotion message may push subscribers to purchase, not purchase or act indifferently to the products, depending on their individual differences. Basically information received is limited by individual psychological

differences. The real challenge is to find which stimuli an individual is likely to respond to depending on their personality.

The individual difference theory is a communication theory that proposes that individuals respond differently to mass media messages according to their psychological needs, and that individuals consume the mass media or are exposed to information to satisfy those needs. Nwachukwu, Asak and Asadu (2013, p. 112) state that “the fact that human beings are all different in their psychology makeup provides answers to the human selectivity process. We all have different needs, perceptions, beliefs, values, attitudes, skills and knowledge. Therefore, we react in different ways to different stimuli”. Ndimele and Innocent (2006, p. 244) also postulated that “even if we have the same educational, cultural or even religious backgrounds, or even if we are in the same profession and on the same career level, inside each of us are still individual traits that make us perceive and react differently to same media content”. Because perception is selective, interpretation, retention and response to media messages is also selective and variable.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Sales Promotion: Promotion decisions are those related to communicating and selling to potential consumers. This is aimed at building trail among non-users and persuading customers to try again. According to Okon (1998, p. 17), “Promotion is that component of the marketing mix that is not only concerned with informing prospective buyers about the benefits of a product, but also persuades them to try it”. Promotion comprises a mix tool which include; personal selling, advertising, public relations, sales promotion, etc. George and Micheal (2003, p. 513) explains that “sales promotion involves some form of inducement that provides an extra incentive to buy. This incentive is usually the key element in a promotional program; it may be a coupon or price reduction, the opportunity to enter a contest or sweepstakes, money – back refund, or rebate or an extra amount of a product”.

Hochover (2002, p. 9) defines sales promotion as “the practice of offering temporary additional value to a brand in order to reach specific marketing objectives”. Sales promotion adds value to the product or service. It is done to attract new buyers and retain existing buyers. While advertising appeals to the mind and emotions to give the consumer a reason to buy, sales promotion appeals more to the pocket and provides an incentive for purchasing a brand (George & Micheal, 2003). According to George and Micheal (2003, p. 513) “sales promotion can also provide an inducement to marketing intermediaries such as wholesalers and retailers. A trade allowance or discount gives retailers a financial incentive to stock and promote a manufacturer’s products. A trade contest directed toward wholesalers or retail personnel gives them extra incentive to perform certain tasks or meet sales goal”.

Unsolicited Promo Text

Unsolicited promo text messages refer to text messages of products, ideas, and services supplied to GSM users without being requested for with the aim to increase sales, awareness or public acceptance. Businesses have realized they can reach different clients, with promo texts than they could with older methods of Newspapers, Television and Radio. Because messages are read within a few minutes, companies are latching on to the attention they receive from potential consumers. Businesses have continued to use the text message to supply GSM users with several promotions of goods, services, ideas among others without being asked for.

Consumer's Response

Response refers to one's reaction to information received, event, occurrence, or situation. Once an organization or a business passes a message through a channel to a customer or subscriber, they naturally should expect a response from the receiver. The response whether good or bad which the organization expects is known as the feedback. (Ndimele & Innocent, 2006). Subscriber's response can be purchase, repeated purchase, non-purchase or indifference to the product or services. Consumer response is the positive or negative feedback a company receives about its products, services or business ethics.

Empirical Review

Osho (2015) carried out an empirical survey on Mobile Spamming in Nigeria. The study investigated the prevalence of the spam SMS with focus on Nigeria. To quantify the prevalence, primary data were collected using questionnaire. According to the study, spamming has attained a global dimension and continued to maintain an upward trend, both in sophistication and frequency. So far, it has defied every effort, including technical and non-technical efforts to curb it. The study revealed that all mobile subscribers receive spam SMS daily. This implies an average of 334,857,685 spam SMS received daily in Nigeria. However most are for commercial purposes. Few mobile users report cases of fraudulent spam SMS.

The study recommended that guidelines and regulations need to be reviewed to effectively manage SMS spamming in Nigeria. Osho's study is majorly different from this study in terms of its delimitation; Osho surveyed Nigeria as a whole. Another study was carried out by Mark (2015), on the emergence of mobile communication in sub-Saharan Africa: a descriptive analysis of Cameroonian mobile customer's reactions and condition of acceptance of advertising SMS's. The study used the descriptive research method to specify important properties of the consumer's attitude towards advertising SMS's. Respondent's answers were measured using Likert's scale. 430 questionnaires were administered in three major cities of Cameroon (Douaka, Yaounde and Ngaoundere) that represent the social features of the Cameroonian Population.

According to the study, the tolerance of the advertising SMS by the vast majority of Cameroonian consumers depends on the usefulness of advertising SMS's in terms of education, earning and information value. The recommendations were; advertising SMS's would be very important for the communication of companies' offers and services for humanitarian causes and many others. But they would be more interesting if they were not intrusive or if they meet certain conditions as information and/or entertainment. This will be beneficial for companies to reduce the risk of avoidance of advertising SMS's. Marks study differs from this in that it is a descriptive study and also used the likert scale method of analysis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this research, all undergraduate and postgraduate students of the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education served as the research population. According to the office of the ICT director of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, the University has over twenty thousand (20,000) registered undergraduate and postgraduate students in six faculties as follows: Faculty of Education, Faculty of Sciences, Faculty of Vocational and technical Education, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Natural and Applied Sciences and School of

Graduate Studies. The sample size for this research is 377 students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The sample size is based on Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) table for the choice of a sample size.

Table 1: The population and sampling

S	N	S	N	S	N
440	205	1500	306	9000	368
460	210	1600	310	10000	373
480	214	1700	313	15000	375
500	217	1800	317	20000	377
550	225	1900	320	30000	379

Note that N represents the population size while S stands for sample size.

The researcher employed the cluster sampling technique and the multi-stage sampling procedure for the study. According to Ihejirika and Omega (2013, p. 108), ‘in cluster sampling the various elements that make up the population are first sampled and then a final sample is drawn from these’ Firstly, 4 faculties were selected by ballot from the 6 faculties in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, before 3 departments were further selected from the 4 faculties making a total of 12 departments. In the final stage, 31 students were selected from the 12 departments to make up the sample size of 372 students. 372 questionnaires were drafted and administered to students to elicit response from them.

The study adopts the survey research design and used the questionnaire and focus group discussion to elicit information from the respondents. A structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher and given to professionals to check for content validity before it was administered to respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A and B. Section A consisted of the demographic data of the respondents, while section B deals with the research questions. The questionnaire consists of open and close ended questions from which the researcher got information that helped to answer the research questions. A group discussions focusing on ten students was also used to gather information that helped the researcher in the study.

A research instrument can only be reliable if it consistently produces the same result. The researcher did a pretest of the questionnaire and the focus group discussion questions by assigning it to 10 students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. After a space of 1 week, the instrument was re-administered on the same 20 subjects and the results were compared. The questions that didn’t elicit the response the study was set out to find out were dropped, the questions with irregular responses were also dropped while matching responses were collected and used. Analysis of the pretest data helped the researcher to determine its flaws and make corrections before the original questionnaire was assigned to respondents. The initial and retest scores were correlated using Pearson Product Momentum, the reliability index of 0.93 was considered high enough to permit the use of this instrument for research.

The questionnaire was used to gather first-hand information about the subject matter from the respondents. For this research, 372 copies of questionnaire was administered to the respondents and returned within a stipulated time frame through the help of the Student’s Union Executives from the departments selected for the study. A group discussion involving ten participants was also used. The researchers asked the participants some research questions, answers to the questions helped elicit more information for the research work. Data were analyzed using frequency table and percentage. The table presents the research questions and

responses from the respondents while the percentage helps to ascertain the level of the respondent's answers to the research questions and their variables. This helps to present data for easy understanding.

RESULT

A total of 372 copies of questionnaires were administered on the respondents. Out of this number, 361 copies were returned, giving a return rate of 97.6%. However, of the copies returned, 7 copies (1.8%) were wrongly filled and so not useful for the analysis of the study. Thus, the data presentation was based on 354 copies (95.8%) of the questionnaire which were properly filled and returned.

Table 2: Sex Distribution of the respondents

Sex	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	152	42.93
Female	202	57.06
Total	354	100

Data presented in table 2 show that there were more female respondents than males; this is so because there are more female students in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.

Table 3: Distribution of respondent's age

Age range	No. of Respondents	Percentage
16-20	106	29.94
21-30	156	44.06
31-40	61	17.23
40-above	31	8.75
Total	354	100

Data presented in table 3 indicate that a higher percentage of respondents were between the age of 21-30 years. On the average most undergraduate and graduate students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education are of this age.

Table 4: Distribution of respondent's marital status

Marital status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Single	259	73.35
Married	79	22.31
Divorced	9	2.54
Widowed	7	1.97
Total	354	100

Data in 4 shows that more respondents are single because most students are single.

Table 5: Distribution of respondent's educational level

Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Undergraduate	253	71.35
Postgraduate	101	28.53
Total	354	100

Data from table 5 shows that more respondents were undergraduate students, because there are more undergraduate students than graduate students.

Research Questions

Table 6: The type of telecom service providers used by respondents

Service providers	No. of Respondents	Percentage
MTN	86	24.29
GLO	79	22.31
Airtel	54	15.25
Etisalat	56	15.81
All of the above	79	22.31
Total	354	100

Data in Table 6 shows that MTN seems to have the highest network usage in Nigeria.

Table 7: The number of times respondents receive unsolicited promo texts daily

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Once	13	3.67
Twice	46	12.99
Thrice	58	16.38
Four times	85	24.01
More than four times	152	42.93
Total	354	100

Table 7 indicates that respondents receive unsolicited promo texts frequently.

Table 8: The influence of unsolicited promo texts on the respondents buying decision

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Purchase	74	20.90
Do not purchase	126	35.59
Delete without reading	82	23.16
Ignore	72	20.33
Total	354	100

Table 8 indicates that most respondent hardly purchase on receiving unsolicited promo texts.

Table 9: The value respondents derive from receiving unsolicited promo texts

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Entertainment	67	18.92
Information	119	33.61
Financial gains	37	10.45
All of the above	55	15.53
None of the above	96	27.11
Total	354	100

Table 9 shows that most unsolicited promo texts carry informative value.

Table 10: The dysfunctions of unsolicited promo texts on respondents

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Distraction	104	29.37
Intrusion	75	21.18
Deception	59	16.66
Takes data space	49	13.84
All of the above	67	18.92
Total	354	100

Table 10: indicates that most unsolicited promo texts are distractive in nature.

To examine respondents further on their purchase of products on receiving unsolicited promo texts and their general response to unsolicited promo texts, they were asked open-ended questions as a follow up. From the open-ended questions that the researchers used to prod the respondents further, the respondents attributed the seeming reluctance to purchase products and services to the following factors which they saw as challenges:

Respondent 1: unsolicited messages can be very frustrating, you run to get your phone thinking it is a bank alert only to see a message urging you to subscribe to something.

Respondent 2: One of the reasons I delete without reading is because I could click on something and the next thing I see is deduction of credit.

Respondent 3: you cannot even differentiate their messages form scammers these days so I hardly read them.

Respondent 4: My privacy should be considered too, I get irritated at the distractions those messages come with especially in very important meetings.

Respondent 5: I take advertisements on Tv, radio or newspaper more seriously than text messages.

Respondent 6: I do subscribe when my friends testify. I must ensure someone else had tried it though.

Respondent 7: I never used to take such texts seriously until I won the MTN foundation project to my community just by answering some questions correctly vai text messages and yes I purchase.

Respondent 8: their puzzle and games can be entertaining though, I usually look forward to their Akpos jokes even though they are unsolicited.

Respondent 9: I do not read, never purchased and Respondent 10: I always call customer care to ensure I stop receiving.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that respondents have negative response for telecom's unsolicited promo texts and barely purchase goods and services on receiving such texts.

DISCUSSION

Question 1: What is the nature and frequency of unsolicited promo texts received by Ignatius Ajuru University of Education students?

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education students receive unsolicited promo texts on new product advertisements, festive messages, data subscription messages, reward games, questions and puzzle messages. Unsolicited promo texts carry educative function, they have the ability to inform and educate the respondents about new trendy news on politics, global world, histories and geographies. Unsolicited promo texts are also interactive especially the question and answer games, puzzles and quiz. They also entertain through jokes and hilarious gist. This finding is in accordance with Safari (2015) "a customer has to be offered something that is above and beyond the core product service, rather than just being offered something that is an everyday aspect of the trade. Furthermore, the promotional offers must include benefits not inherent in the product or service. This includes the intangible benefits".

From the study, there is a high bombardment of unsolicited promo texts as most respondents attested to receiving unsolicited texts more than four times daily. Osho (2015) states that "Spamming has thus attained a global dimension and has continued to maintain an upward trend, both in sophistication and in frequency and that "an average of 334,857,685 spam SMS are received daily in Nigeria". Okonji (2016) also added that sometimes, a single subscriber may receive more than 12SMS in a day. The more subscribers delete unsolicited promo texts, the more they receive them. Philip Kotler (2001) stated that the rapid growth of sales promotion has created a situation of promotion clutter similar to advertising clutter. Consumers might start tuning out, in which case coupons and other promotion media will weaken in their ability to trigger purchase. Manufacturers will have to find ways to rise above the clutter, for instance by offering larger coupon redemptions values or using more dramatic point of purchase displays or demonstrations.

Question 2: What are Ignatius Ajuru University of Education student's response and patronage to telecom unsolicited promo texts?

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education students react negatively to the reception of unsolicited promo texts. A very high percentage of students delete unsolicited promo texts without reading them, only very few forward the messages to others, while others call their customer care centre to stop sending SMS. Kotler (2001) is of the opinion that marketers have to work hard to attract customers notice. Even noticed stimuli do not always come across in the way the senders intended as consumers have the tendency to twist information into personal meanings and interpret information in way that will fit our preconceptions.

The individual difference theory supports the findings as it states that individual react differently according to their psychological makeup. Basically the information received by respondents is limited by individual psychological difference.

The study also shows that a great chunk of respondents do not purchase products on receiving unsolicited promo texts while 20 percent of the respondents affirm to have purchased

from receiving unsolicited promo texts. Businesses should be wary of the frequency and variety of their promotions. If no customers redeemed your promo the first time you sent it out, texting it five more times over the course of two weeks is not going to suddenly make the incentive a big hit. Subscribing to unsolicited texts by receivers depends on its usefulness, such value ranges from education, interaction, entertainment, information and financial benefits.

Ebue (2001) added that sales promotional activities are designed to break down brand loyalty, this is because sales promotion has an element of immediacy and its benefits are immediate. Mark (2015) is of the view that advertising would be more interesting if they were not intrusive or if they meet certain conditions as information and/or entertainment.

CONCLUSION

The study has been able to evaluate unsolicited telecommunications promo texts and patronage using the responses of some selected students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education as case study. The study adopted the survey design methodology whereby the type, frequency and nature of unsolicited promo texts received by students, responses and patronage to the unsolicited texts were all explored using the Individual Difference Theory as the theoretical framework. The conceptual review of the study centered on promo texts as a tool for generating sales.

Data for the study were generated from a group discussion and copies of the questionnaire which were administered on the sample of the study. The findings indicated a very high usage of telecommunication services by the students. It has been revealed in the study that students of Ignatius Ajuru University of Education frequently receive unsolicited messages (promo texts) from their service providers. Most of these are about new product ads, festive messages, data subscriptions and games. The study also notes that most of the messages were mostly persuasive and informative in nature. The data at our disposal also reveal that the recipients of these unsolicited text messages i.e. Ignatius Ajuru University of Education students are not comfortable receiving these texts since, according to their responses, such texts are highly distractive, intrusive, and deceptive and occupies the user's phone data space. Notwithstanding, the study asserts that students also derive functional values like entertainment, information and financial gains from unsolicited promo texts.

The study observes further that students rarely patronize products promoted through promo texts because of the already built up negative presumptions about promo texts. Often times, they ignore the messages or even delete them hastily without reading them as a result of the monotony and boredom associated with reading repeated and unsolicited text messages from the various telecommunication companies operating in Nigeria. The obvious lack of a formidable task force to monitor the excesses in the operations of telecommunication companies in Nigeria creates an enabling environment for the telecom companies to constantly flood the message box of mobile phone users with unsolicited text messages. These findings are in alliance with the individual psychology theory that juxtaposes that individuals have different psychological makeup and bound to have diverse perception, reception and response to messages received. Their perceptions of unsolicited promo texts have led to their lack of purchase response.

There is a very a high frequency of unsolicited promo texts reception by Ignatius Ajuru University of Education students, as the students receive more than four unsolicited promo texts on daily basis. Such messages bothering on data subscription messages, reward games, questions and puzzle messages and that the unsolicited promo texts received are usually informative, expressive and persuasive in nature.

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education students respond negatively to unsolicited promo texts and barely purchase on receiving them. The point we have been labouring to put across in the study is that the consistent flooding of subscribers' mobile phones with unsolicited promo texts by telecom companies in Nigeria constitutes a major infringement of the rights of telecommunication service users in the country. Whereas we acknowledge the multiplicity of benefits and advantages of the telecom services in a developing country like Nigeria, it must be stated unequivocally that telecom service providers have not been sincere and transparent in their treatment of their subscribers in Nigeria. Apart from intermittent network failure without apologies, subscribers of telecom services in Nigeria pay huge amount of money just to secure air time. The issue of unsolicited promo texts therefore arises as one of the numerous disservices meted on telecom service users in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are considered useful:

- There is the need for telecom service providers to advertise their products using the mainstream media to enhance credibility and believability of promo texts. This would in turn enhance patronage. Deceptive promo texts with unrealistic promises should be scrapped as they dissuade receivers from participating in the promo. Such promotions are damaging to the image of the organizations. Distractive and intrusive promo texts also irritate the receivers.
- The study also recommends that customers who feel uncomfortable with unsolicited promo texts should take proactive steps in registering their protests. Such steps should include forwarding their complaints to the code 7726 or call telecom customer's service to make report when wrongly charged for receiving texts. Subscribers must read carefully and be cautious of what button to click on when they receive promo texts because a wrong click on an unsolicited text poses the risk of the customer losing some money. There should be stipulated punishment for offenders which must be strictly followed to ascertain that offenders are used as deterrent to others. Against this backdrop, the researcher recommends the indefinite suspension of such a telecom company or a huge fine that can atone for the inconveniences unleashed on their customers.
- The need for the Nigerian Communication Commission to organize awareness campaign programmes to sensitize both the telecom companies and their subscribers cannot be over emphasized. Such campaigns should be targeted at providing tips that would lead to the eradication of unsolicited promo texts in the Nigerian communication industry. In course of such programmes, subscribers would be educated on how to channel their complaints about unsolicited SMS. In a parallel vein, the telecom companies would also be furnished with details bothering on the consequences of sending unsolicited text messages to their subscribers.

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