

# ATTITUDE OF PROFESSIONALS TOWARDS PROMOTIONAL SMSS: A CASE STUDY IN DHAKA CITY

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## ABSTRACT

Promotional SMSs are easy and cost effective tools for the mobile operators to communicate their customers. Besides the mobile operators and Government, other business houses are also using mobile phones as the channel to promote their product to the customers. Everyday mobile users are receiving a good number of promotional SMS. But when the customers are busy professionals, their attitudes regarding promotional SMS may vary from person to person. This study tries to discover the professionals' attitude towards promotional SMSs in their daily work life. The research has been conducted in the perspective of Bangladesh and the sample size is 500 of Dhaka city. By the term 'promotional SMS', the study included commercial SMSs, operators' offer and government information. The findings of the study show that most of the professionals are disturbed to have promotional SMSs during the work hour since their work is interrupted for this. The findings also reveal that the subscribers want more freedom and power to control the nature of promotional SMSs. They have opinion that the operators should provide provision for a subscriber to control the number, type and time of promotional SMSs.

**Key Words:** Promotional SMS, Customers, Professionals, Attitude.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Promotion is an integrated and comprehensive term that covers the entire range of advertising, publicity, public relations, personal selling and sales promotions. Today, it would be difficult to find a company that does not proudly claim to be a customer-oriented, customer-focused, or ever-customer driven enterprise. Increasing competition (whether for-profit or not for profit) is forcing businesses to pay much more attention to satisfy customers. The state of satisfaction depends on a number of both psychological and physical variables, which correlate with satisfaction behaviours and by communicating values and innovative services of the company. The level of satisfaction can also vary depending on other options the customer may have and other products with which the customer can compare the organization's product. Customer satisfaction has now become a major concern

of the mobile service providers in our country. For communicating customers, companies use different promotional tools. The promotional SMS is one of the easiest and cost effective tools for the mobile operators to communicate with their customers. Besides the mobile operators and Government, other business houses are also using mobile phones as the channel to promote their product to the customers. Everyday mobile users are receiving a good number of promotional SMSs. But, when the customers are busy professionals, their attitudes to promotional SMSs may vary from person to person. This study tries to discover the professionals' attitude towards promotional SMSs in their daily work life.

## 2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

People are taking advantage of cellphone technology at a rapid growing rate through the

use of text messaging. A survey says, 6.9 billion SMSs were sent in 2011 across the globe. That figure was projected to rise to 8 trillion in 2012 (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, 2011). It is not that only the personal users are sending SMSs to their friends, families and concerned people, the business houses are also regularly running their promotional activities through SMS. These types of promotional SMSs are not always accepted gladly by the customers. So the key objective of this study is to identify general attitude of extremely busy professionals towards SMS advertising as well as to evaluate the professionals' suggestions towards commercial SMSs to their cellphones during work hours.

### **3.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY (OR RATIONALE)**

The business houses usually send the promotional SMS throughout the whole day without considering time or person. The main objective of the study is to see how much the promotional SMSs are affecting the attitude of the professionals. Is it hampering the work environment of the person concerned? Or how much is it affecting their performance? The results of this study will help the telecommunication companies to set their policy regarding sending promotional SMS to the customers. The business houses will also get a guide line when and how to send SMS to the customers so that their advertisements are gladly accepted and they are benefited.

### **4.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The specific research objectives are-

**4.1** To discover the attitudes of professionals toward the promotional SMSs coming to their mobile phones during work hours.

**4.2** To analyze the actions of professionals and to see the impact of those promotional SMSs that they perceive to make on their work life.

**4.3** To provide suggestions from the professionals' point of view regarding promotional SMSs.

### **5.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Several studies have been done on the consumer's attitude regarding SMS advertising

or promotional SMS in different parts of the world. The present study intends to discover only a small segment i.e. the professionals' attitude regarding promotional SMSs in Bangladesh. A quantitative research method is designed here. In order to cover the objectives of the study our population is all the professionals of Dhaka city. In a simple definition of profession it is said that a professional is a member of a profession or any person who earns their living from a specified professional activity. But in some cultures, the term is used in a way to describe a particular social stratum of well-educated workers and who are commonly engaged in creative and intellectually challenging work. (Gilbert, 1998, Beeghley, 2004, Eichar, 1989). Thus, the present study considered only such type of professionals, who are involved with the intellectually challenging work. Expressing attitude toward something is a qualitative issue, which can only be expressed duly by the intellectuals. The selected professionals are broadly classified into 10. They are: Doctor, Engineer, Teacher, Journalist, Lawyer, Banker, Civil Service, Businessman, Defense Officer, and Police. Here the sample of 500 professionals has been drawn from different area of Dhaka city. The study was conducted during the period of May to June 2016. The primary data were collected by field survey method using a structured questionnaire. 50 professionals have been chosen from each of the group. It was difficult to get the sampling frame from all over Bangladesh. So an attempt was made to prepare a sampling frame in a limited scope. First of all 10 institutions are purposively chosen where we can have our selected groups of professionals. From these institutions we got our sampling frame. From the given lists of professionals we have selected 50 respondents using simple random sampling.

### **5.1 Data Collection and Analysis Process**

In this study, the probability sampling method is adopted. For the purpose of collecting data both the face to face interview and mail interview was conducted by the researchers. A structured closed ended questionnaire has been developed for the purpose of collecting information. The questionnaire has three parts of questions. In first part the respondents' demographic information has been collected. In the second part, the

questions are asked about the attitudes of the professionals about promotional SMSs. In the last part a 5 point Likert scale have been formed to collect the professionals' opinion regarding the policy for sending promotional SMSs to the people. The collected data is run through SPSS software. The collected data is interpreted using frequency distribution, mean, percentage, and cross tabulation. Weighted average score (WAS) is also calculated for analyzing the data collected in Likert scale.

## 6.0 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study covers only the professionals of Dhaka City. All categories of professionals are not considered due to the complexity of the subject matter. Our research purpose is to explore all the aspects of promotional SMSs, namely, commercial, government information, and operator offer. In the perspective of Bangladesh all the mobile subscribers receive government information, and operator offer. But commercial SMS are usually sent from the business organizations or shops to their customers. As the excluded group such as driver, mechanic, garment worker, operator etc, has lower income and consumption, they have limited access to these customer databases. Hence they are not within our study area.

## 7.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

In the business environment, information technology shapes not only commerce but also the way in which companies implement their marketing strategies. Offering new marketing channels to interact with customers is crucial to increasing sales for a company. SMS marketing or sending promotional SMSs to the cellphones is now one of the major marketing strategies. But we have to know what the actual attitude or behavior of an individual is against these promotional SMSs. Advertisements have a great influence on people's attitude toward advertising (Shavitt et al. 1998). When advertising employs techniques that annoy, offend, insult, or are overly manipulative, consumers are likely to perceive it as unwanted and irritating influence (Ducoffe 1996). Mobile advertising can provide an array of information that confuses and distracts the recipient as well as overwhelms the consumer with information

(Stewart and Pavlou 2002). Consumers may feel confused about the ads and may react negatively. Therefore, we conclude that irritation caused by an incomprehensible mobile advertising message may reflect negatively on the attitude toward the advertisement.

Chowdhury, Parvin, Weitenberner, Becker (2006) in their study show that if mobile advertisers can present mobile ads pleasingly, with appropriate information, consumers will not be annoyed and there is a fair possibility that they will gradually like the ads. Furthermore, credibility, a construct of this study, has found to be the most significant of the factors affecting respondents' attitude toward mobile ads. The researchers hypothesized and validated that the credibility of a mobile advertising message will have a direct positive influence on consumer attitude toward advertisement.

In his study, Kumar (2013) tries to investigate consumers' attitude towards mobile advertising, and constructs a research frame work in order to extract relevant factors affecting consumers' attitude towards SMS based advertisements and users' actual behavior. The results of the study shows that the majority of the respondents are in favour of receiving SMS ads if their preferences are taken into consideration before sending the ads. Those who disagree, have a negative attitude toward SMS ads. The results indicate that a small number of mobile users get angry while getting SMS ads due to inconvenience at times when they are busy, especially during working hours. Thus, the advertisers need to consider the time convenience of the customers while sending the SMS ads. The survey indicates that large number customers feel that SMS advertisements are disturbing their privacy. Their attitude was favourable if advertisements were sent with permission. This implies that permission based advertising may become a major mechanism in the field of mobile phone advertising in future.

The studies we discussed above are done on the attitude of the customers on SMS marketing of promotional SMSs. In his study Kumar (2013) took all classes of people as his respondents, i.e. he took village people, urban people, professionals, nonprofessionals everyone. On the other hand Chowdhury, Parvin, Weitenberner, Becker (2006) took only the university students as respondents

in their study. But here in our study our main respondents are the highly busy professionals and we have investigated their attitude towards the promotional SMS during their work hours. And this study has been done on the perspective of Bangladesh.

## 8.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the purpose of presenting and analyzing the findings of the survey, the discussion has been arranged into five parts. First of all, the demographic information of the respondents and secondly, the characteristics of promotional SMSs that the professionals' receive have been discussed. Then professionals' attitude and actions about the promotional SMS has been explored. Here an attempt has also been made to analyze the age and gender impact on attitudes and actions of professionals. Finally, the suggestions of the professionals' regarding the promotional SMSs have been evaluated.

### 8.1 Demographic information of the respondents

The total sample size in this study is 500, where 76% are male and 24% female. The respondents are mostly (30%) from 35 to 40 years of age group and 22% from 25 to 30 years of age group. (Appendix: Table A1). The respondents work for 8.5 hours on an average as the mean value indicates. Both the skewness and kurtosis value indicating that the sample for the study is bell shaped.

### 8.2 Characteristics of Promotional SMS

The sample professionals are asked about the frequency, number and type of promotional SMSs they receive during their work. 62% of the respondents said that they receive promotional SMSs heavily that is 4 to 6 SMS in a day. 48% of the sample professionals responded they always receive SMS during their work hour.

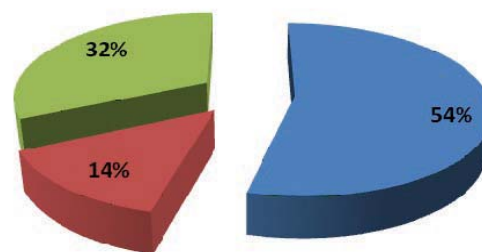
The types of promotional SMSs that the respondents receive most are analyzed in two ways. One is categorizing the commercial and non-commercial SMS. And the other is the specific type of SMS. The respondents' are asked about the type of promotional SMS they are receiving

most. Here they were given three options, namely; operator offer (Telecom operators send SMS for informing different service offers to their subscribers). Government info. (Government of Bangladesh sends SMS regarding different social and public awareness creating messages) and finally, commercial SMS (which are sent by the shops and businesses as part of promoting their products and service for commercial reason).

**Table 8.2.1:** Which type of promotional SMS do you receive most?

Type of promotional SMS	Frequency	Percent
Non commercial	38	76.0
Commercial	12	24.0
Total	50	100.0

■ operator offer ■ commercial ■ govt. info

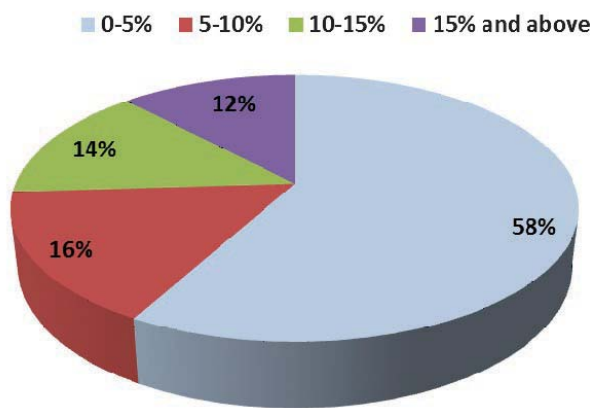


**Fig 8.2.1:** Which type of promotional SMS do you receive most?

Here the results indicate that 76% of the professionals said, the promotional SMS that they receive are mostly non-commercial. Out of this, 54% of the SMSs are sent from their operators regarding any promotional offers, 32% is sent by government. Only 14% of the sample professionals replied that most of the promotional SMS that they receive are commercial.

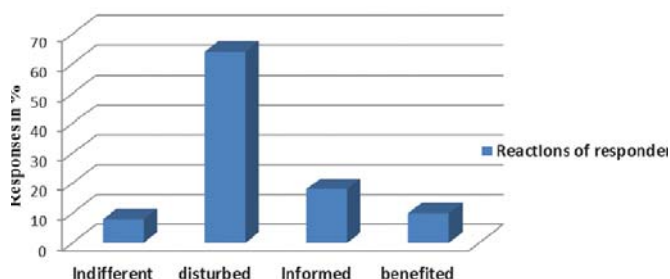
### 8.3 Attitudes of professionals towards promotional SMS

The attitudes of professionals were evaluated on the basis of overall results and on gender perspective as well. Respondents were asked about the percentage of work hour they think is interrupted for the promotional SMS.



**Fig 8.3.1:** What percentage of daily work hour do you think is interrupted by the promotional sms?

The above figure shows that 58% of the professionals think that 0-5% of their work hour is interrupted by the promotional SMSs. This percentage of interruption is basically expressed on the basis of the professional’s judgment. They interpreted these percentages on the basis of the duration (in minutes) that they think the SMSs divert their job focus. For example; if 5% of 8 hours is interrupted i.e.;  $480 \text{ min} * 5\% = 24 \text{ minutes}$

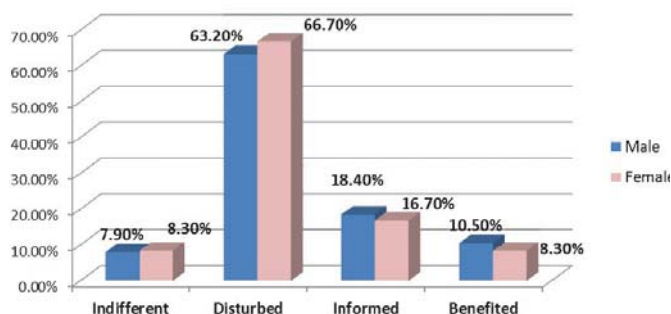


**Fig 8.3.2** How do you react to the promotional sms?

In the above figure we can see that majority (64%) of the respondents feel disturbed with the promotional SMSs they receive during work hour. Whereas it is also interesting to notice that 18% of sample professionals find these SMSs informative, 10% found them beneficial and only 8% of the respondents are indifferent about promotional SMSs. These interpretations also reflect that 36% of the professionals think that these promotional SMSs are not disturbing to their work life.

### 8.4 Attitudes of professionals from Gender Perspective

**Gender differences in reaction with promotional sms**



**Fig 8.4.1:** How do you react with the promotional SMS?

The above data shows that nearly similar percentage i.e.; 63.2% of male and 66.7% of female respondents are disturbed with promotional SMSs. However, the male respondents are more likely to see the positive side of promotional SMSs. 18.4% of male respondents find the SMS informative. 10.5% of male respondents also mentioned these SMS to be beneficial which is higher the rate of female professionals’.

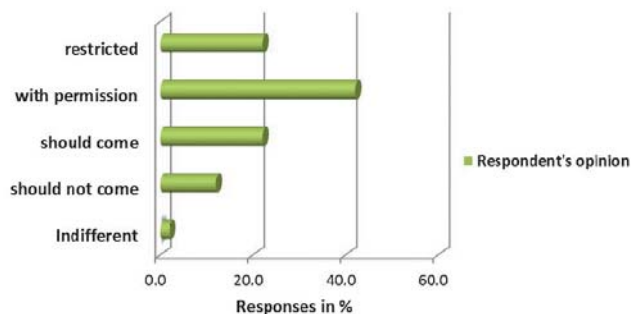
**Table: 8.4.1** Professionals’ action while receiving promotional SMS

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
Not Noticed	% within Gender	7.9%	0.0%	6.0%
	% of Total	6.0%	0.0%	6.0%
Noticed and Deleted	% within Gender	39.5%	16.7%	34.0%
	% of Total	30.0%	4.0%	34.0%
Noticed and Ignored	% within Gender	39.5%	75.0%	48.0%
	% of Total	30.0%	18.0%	48.0%
Noticed and shared	% within Gender	2.6%	0.0%	2.0%
	% of Total	2.0%	0.0%	2.0%
Noticed and Responded	% within Gender	10.5%	8.3%	10.0%
	% of Total	8.0%	2.0%	10.0%
<b>Total</b>	% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	<b>% of Total</b>	76.0%	24.0%	100.0%

In order to understand the attitudes of professionals about the promotional SMS during work hour, it is also important to analyze what actions they take while they receive SMS. It is found from the study that 48% notice and ignore these SMSs. 34% of the professionals notice and delete them. 10% and 2% of the professionals respond and share respectively. This implies that these promotional SMS gains the attention of only 12% of the professionals.

With respect to the responses regarding the actions taken by the male and female professionals we have identified a mentionable difference. Most of the female respondents (75%) ignore the promotional SMS whereas male respondents were found to share and respond to the promotional SMS.

**8.5 Professional’s opinion regarding promotional SMS for the telecom policy maker**

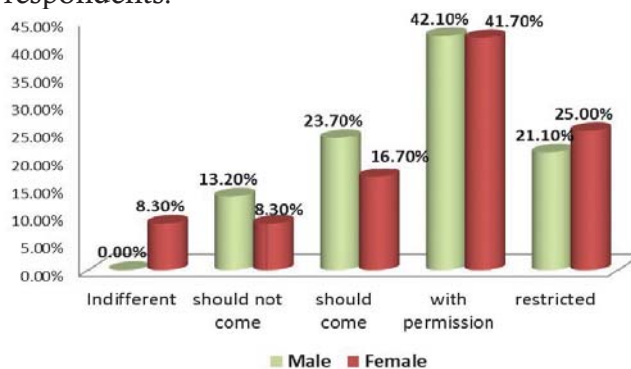


**Fig 8.5.1** Respondent’s opinion regarding the promotional sms

Most of the sample professionals (42%) opine that promotional SMSs must be sent to the people

with their permission through the concerned operators. 34% of the respondents gives their opinion in favor of restricted use of these types of promotional SMSs to their mobile phone.

Here we have also tried to see whether the opinions of professionals regarding the promotional SMSs vary on the basis of gender differences. Both male and female respondents think that such type of SMSs should be sent with permission of the subscribers in order to avoid the negative attitude on consumers. Male respondents are more likely to support the opinion that the promotional SMS should come. Whereas, more female respondents support the opinion of the restricted use of promotional SMSs to their subscribers than male respondents.



**Fig 8.5.2** Gender differences in Rospondent’s opinion

The sample professionals were given a set of six suggestions where they had to rate each of them in a 5 point likert scale. Point 5 was given to highly agree and 3 for neutral and 1 for highly disagree.

**Table 8.5.1:** Professionals' suggestions regarding the promotional SMS

Aspects	Weighted Average score
1. Subscriber should be given the control on the limit of promotional SMS	4.42
2. The outlets providing the cell number must take permission of the user of the mobile.	4.16
3. The operators may provide provision for a subscriber to control the type of promotional SMS.	4.16
4. The operators may provide provision for a subscriber to control the time of promotional SMS.	4.14
5. The operators may provide provision for a subscriber to control the number of promotional SMS.	4.08
6. Promotional SMS should be stopped.	2.68

The above table shows that the sample professionals agree with the suggestions of subscriber's authority to control the limit, type, time and number of promotional SMSs. They also agree that in case of commercial SMSs, the outlets must take the permission of their customers for sending promotional SMSs while they collect information about the customers. They think it is their right of privacy of using personal numbers for commercial reason. On the other hand, the data also reveals that the professionals do not suggest promotional SMSs to be completely stopped.

## 9.0 CONCLUSION

Promotion is not only a means to persuade people but is a good source of communication and information. Signs that consumers are changing their media habits are well established and there is extensive evidence of a decline in traditional media usage. Marketers are shifting expenditure away from traditional media and investing in newer media options, which are often untested. The rise of consumer generated media has turned consumers into content creators. Consumers now expect greater control over what, when, where and how they are exposed to corporate communications. Hence the study gives a guideline for the businesses either the telecom operator or other commercial organizations for developing their promotional policy through mobile phones. It can be interpreted from the analysis of the results that majority of the respondents are disturbed and irritated to receive promotional SMSs. They think that their work is interrupted for such SMSs. But if the business

houses or operators consider time and quantity of the SMSs, they do not have problem receiving those. However the study suggests that more responsibilities lie on the operators, through whom different types of promotional SMS are sent to the subscribers. Considering the busy lifestyle of urban people and the development of ICT in Bangladesh mobile advertising is an easiest way to reach the target people. Therefore carefully designed promotional SMS policy can be used for the mutual benefits of both the businesses and their consumers.

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