Chapter 3
Analysis of Mobile Users' Perception Towards SMS Voting

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to study the characteristics of SMS voting adopters in terms of demographic factors as well as to explore the mobile users' perception towards SMS voting. A survey using questionnaires was conducted to gain information and opinions from a convenience sample of 300 Malaysian mobile users regarding their perceptions on using SMS to vote. The findings revealed that approximately two-thirds of Malay respondents use SMS voting. The study's findings reveal that most mobile users in the sample are single and female, and that mobile users like to send their votes using SMS. There is a significant difference between the usages of SMS voting among female respondents. Out of the total respondents, 80 percent perceived that the ease of use factor greatly influences mobile users in using SMS for voting purposes.

INTRODUCTION

The use of mobile SMS to communicate with peers, to download ring tones, java games and picture messages, and even voting is very common for the mobile user in Malaysia SKMM, (2007b). According to SKMM (2007), it is the norm for most Malaysians to carry a hand phone with them everywhere they go (SKMM, 2007). As at 31 March 2007, there were 20,808,797 mobile subscriptions on the six digital networks operating in Malaysia. This kind of culture has encouraged mobile users to try the SMS voting service and subsequently find that it has become the norm for the society to participate in the SMS voting service. Most new mobile users who try SMS voting are influenced by their peers or television/radio programmes. If Malaysian mobile

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consumers are to take up mobile entertainment with enthusiasm it has to be financially viable for the industry players to develop and run, as well as cost-effective for the consumers to access. Mobile users might be motivated to pay the SMS voting charges once they think it will add to their enjoyment of leisure activities and as the service is not too different from what they already use and pay for in other contexts.

The SMS voting service is a very important instant communication tool that can be used to serve several purposes. Companies can use SMS voting for advertising and promotional purposes by which they can obtain instant feedback about their products. Governments can use it to probe and identify people's opinion on a particular issue as well as for conducting elections. Therefore, the findings of the current study are of much value as it is the first 'dot' in the SMS voting research to further understand the characteristics of the SMS voting adopter. In this line, studying an individual's perception of the SMS voting is very important to assess its adaptability and also to assist in providing insights into the development of the SMS voting service in Malaysia. Furthermore, the high number of opportunities to use creative and innovative marketing activities, as highlighted by Haghirian et al. (2008) in mobile commerce (m-commerce) implies that marketers need to gain insights into relevant issues of consumer behaviour in the SMS voting context. Most specifically, this study aims to explore how demographics and mobile consumer behaviour will direct mobile consumer perception towards SMS voting. The mobile consumer perception and behaviour knowledge obtained could be extremely useful for mobile operators and mobile service providers in the formulation of service strategies pertaining to the rolling out of new SMS voting applications and services in the near future. From this, mobile operators and mobile application service providers can refine and target their service offerings to different potential user groups. The mobile service provider can then improve the SMS voting service by enhancing the technology and mechanism used to achieve innovative results. The easy access to SMS voting, provided through mobile services, brings a lot of benefits to the different groups in society. The design of the mobile phone, including the screen and button size, enables the mobile user to enjoy fun interaction with the service. SMS voting can be accessed in anyway and at any time as long as the user has a mobile phone and sim card. In particular the user has direct communication without time or location barriers (Haghirian, et al., 2008). It is very convenient for the mobile user to participate in the SMS voting service as they only need to send the voting keyword to a particular short code and send it through SMS. The hassle of sending the vote keyword through the traditional posting method will be replaced by SMS voting as it is more fun and convenient in terms of sending the vote.

The contributions of this study are twofold. First, it successfully applies the TAM theory in the new mobile application of SMS voting, which is different from the systems examined in prior studies and, therefore, extends its applicability to mobile SMS voting. Second, this study has notable contributions to the Technology Acceptance Model itself by incorporating three additional variables as determinants to individual's behavioural intention to vote through SMS. Furthermore, the concept of SMS voting is rather new in the IS field. Very few studies have empirically studied the adoption of "SMS voting" and applied the concept to mobile application technologies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Knutsen and Lyytinen (2008) classified research on mobile service innovation and adoption into three categories (1) models of technology acceptance, (2) models of service adoption and diffusion, and (3) ensemble models of the macro environment. The current study falls under the second category where the researchers attempted