

Brand Personality and Mobile Marketing: An Empirical Investigation

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Abstract—This research assesses the value of the brand personality and its influence on consumer's decision making, through relational variables, after receiving a text message ad. An empirical study, in which 380 participants have received an SMS ad, confirms that brand personality does actually influence the brand trust as well as the attachment and commitment. The levels of sensitivity and involvement have an impact on the brand personality and the related variables to it.

Keywords—Attachment, Brand personality, Commitment, Involvement, Mobile marketing, Purchase intention, Sensitivity, Trust.

I. INTRODUCTION

BRANDING is becoming ever more important as firms face an increasingly global and competitive marketplace [1]. They remain a tool of differentiation according to the type of market and the brand positioning [102]. Many useful constructs and measurements have been developed recently in the branding literature including brand personality, brand community, brand trust and brand attachment [2; 3; 4; 5; 6].

Consumers exploit brands to construct and maintain their identity [7]. The brand acquires though an identity and personality's lines. Contrarily to product attributes which are mainly functional, brand personality tends to have a symbolic function and one of self-expression [8]. The brand personality is an inanimate object associated with personality's lines resulting from interactions that the consumer has with it or through the marketing communication [9]. A well established brand personality influences consumer preference and patronage [10; 11] and develops stronger emotional ties [12], trust, and attachment with the brand [13]. Consumers' emotional attachments to a brand might predict their commitment to the brand and their willingness to make financial sacrifices in order to obtain it [6]. In marketing, trust has been empirically tested as a key factor in the initiation and maintenance of any long-term relation. Trust leads to customer loyalty and commitment [14; 15].

With the notion of one-to-one marketing, which contends that customers should be addressed individually, one at time [16], marketers are increasingly shifting away from mass marketing [17]. The target should be approached in a personalized, interactive and immediate way. "The mobile marketing presents powerful opportunities to reach consumers by allowing interactivity and personalization of the content and message context" [18].

The purpose of this study is to define the individuals profile who, under the influence of the brand personality, are the most susceptible to maintain a strong relationship with it and to buy the product after a short message service ad. This research value the relational approach of the brand personality and the mobile marketing on the purchase intention. The managerial interest is to study the mini message, as a daily mean of communication, adapted to the management of brand equity. The mini message practice becomes a durable phenomenon, targeting different users. Some brands perceive the mobile potential, but do not know how to integrate it into their marketing campaigns. There is little research which focuses on the communication by SMS, the relationship between brand personality and mobile marketing as well as the influence of the mobile marketing on the purchase intention.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Brand and consumer relationships have been the latest research focus in brand research [19]. [20] Compared brand relationships to interpersonal relationships and established a new research direction by pointing out that intimate, permanent, stable relationships can form the interaction between a brand and its consumers. Studies have noted that consumers differ not only in how they perceive brands but also in how they relate to them [13; 21; 22]. Some consumers become so attached to brands that they develop emotional relationship with them.

Brand and brand image are often used interchangeably. Brand image is built by associations about the organization behind the brand, the product, the country of origin, the brand personality, and the brand artifacts. Unlike the other brand image dimensions, brand personality provides the brand with more depth, with a 'soul' that is crucial for the brand image. Brand personality refers to the emotional side of a brand image [23]. It refers more to psychological and human characteristics whereas brand image is about the attributes related with the brand [2].

Existing research has suggested that in some consumption environments, consumers form strong attachments to brands that might predict their commitment to the brand, and their willingness to make sacrifices in order to maintain the relationship [5]. Other key focal areas of research in the relational bonding literature discuss a consumer's involvement and identification within the service consumption process [24; 25].

A. From the Human Personality to the Brand Personality

The trait approach states that personality is a set of traits, defined as "any distinguishable, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from others" [26]. It is a "tendency to show coherent modes of cognition, affect and behavior" [27]. It is about psychological phenomena giving sense to the action and to the human experience.

Based on the premise that brands can have personalities in much the same way as humans, brand Personality describes brands in terms of human characteristics [28; 2; 29; 9]. Brands have been described in terms of human personality lines [30; 31]. Brand personality lines help consumers express their self-concept and experiment symbolic benefits from the possession or consumption of brands [32; 33]. Marketers attempt to differentiate and build preference for their brands not only on the basis of how consumers perceive them functionally but also on the basis of these brand personality perceptions [2; 8]. [13] and [34] persuasively demonstrate the existence of a consumer-brand relationship by highlighting the ways in which brands can be animated, humanized, or to some extent personalized.

The brand personality is defined through a series of attributes which evoke feelings and behavior. The brand can be extrovert, friendly, conscientious, old-fashioned, modern, exotic, etc. The "Big Five" model of personality structure is built around five factors: extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness and neuroticism [35; 36; 37; 38]. It corresponds to the dominant modeling theory of the lines [39; 40].

Reference [9] (in [41]) underlines that "the perception of personality's traits is deduced by any direct or indirect contact that the consumer has with the brand. Brands are inanimate objects which are associated with personality traits through marketing communications".

Reference [2] developed a brand personality scale on the basis of personality scales from psychology, personality scales used by marketers, and the original qualitative research of a numbers of brands' personality traits. A large number of variables have been mentioned in the literature as influencing brand personality: brand name, brand symbol or logo, celebrity endorser, color, shape, country of origin, price, music, packaging, sales promotions, etc. [9; 42; 43; 26; 8; 44; 2].

Brand personality is a vehicle of consumer self-expression and can be instrumental in helping consumer express different aspects of his or her self [2; 33; 45; 46]. Consumers exploit brands to construct and to maintain their identity [7] and to experience emotional gratification [47; 44]. Conceptually, it has been argued, that a brand personality contributes to the brand differentiation from brands of competitors [44], contributes to brand equity [48; 12] and is able to enhance trust in the brand, brand attachment and the formation of consumer-brand relationships [13].

B. Consumer-brand Relationships

The consumer-brand relationship raises some interesting issues related to trust, commitment and attachment theories. Theoretical contributors argue that consumer's trust in brands is an essential ingredient in order for relationship success [49;

50; 51; 52; 53]. It is whereby one party in a relationship. Commitment is widely recognized to be central to the success of relationship enhancement [13; 14; 52; 15]. Reference [54] suggested that in some consumption environments, consumers form strong attachments to brands that might predict their commitment, and their willingness to make sacrifices in order to maintain the relationship.

Brand trust

The trust is a confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity." It is viewed as a belief, confidence, or expectation about an exchange partner's trustworthiness that results from the partner's expertise, reliability, or intentionality [55]. It is also the consumer's brand perceptions: altruism, honesty and potential performance of the product [56]. To rely, it is to count on information received from another person about uncertain states of the environment and their consequences on a situation of risk [57]. The trust is a central value of the partner relation [15; 58]. In marketing literature, 'brand trust' is variously defined as the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function [59]. It results from the expertise, the reliability and the intentionality [60]. The trust on the relationship consumer - brand is "a psychological variable or more a state of faith or assumption that the brand, as a personified entity, makes a commitment to have a predictable action and conform to his expectations, and to maintain with benevolence this orientation in the duration " [61; 62]. It is an assumption rather than a belief because of its double cognitive and emotional nature [63]. The consumer trusts on a brand when he perceives it as credible, honorable and friendly. The credibility is the evaluation of the brand in terms of expertise and competence as well as according to its capacity to meet the expectations of the customer. The brand is considered honorable when it respects its promises. It is friendly when we attribute it a durable will to take into account and foremost the consumer's long-term interests [63]. The trust can be endowed with a predictive value of the future behavior [14]. Its role on the explanation of the purchase intention is enhanced in various researches [64; 65; 66; 67].

The brand personality is a means of differentiation within a product category and an important factor affecting preference [12]. It arouses feelings and raises the level of trust and fidelity [41]. Researchers proposed that brand personality boosts consumer preference and usage [10], induces emotions in consumers [12], and has a positive relationship with levels of trust and loyalty [31].

Hypothesis 1: the brand personality influences positively the brand trust.

Brand Attachment

Researches in marketing concerning the link individual - brand have evoked the "liking brand" concept [48].

The brand attachment "translates a durable and inalienable emotional reaction to the brand and express a psychological relation" [68]. It is the "psychological variable which explains a global indecomposable vision along attributes, taking the shape of a holistic vision and which expresses an emotional psychological nearness" [68]. It is independent from the

context of purchase [69] and from the brand instrumental value [70]. The consumers can transpose the attachment towards the persons into the brands [6; 71, 72, 68]. A consumer is attached to a brand because of precise meaning profits [68]. It could have strong intensity for a weak proportion of objects [73, 74], of persons, entities [73] or of brands. The attachment is "a durable emotional and psychological relation with the brand which results from the concomitance of friendship feelings and from brand dependence" [74]. It allows predicting certain number of behavior: trust, commitment and brand loyalty [73]. The attachment can be functional or existential. The latter is the only reflection of emotional links that the consumer would have weaved with the brand during years [75]. According to the congruence theory, the consumer becomes attached to the brand among which the personality, the values and the image are in adequacy with his self concept, which means with the image that he made of himself or that he wants to transmit to the others [76].

Hypothesis 2: the brand personality has a positive impact on the brand attachment.

The attachment is a state of psychological link between the customer and the firm. It forms on the long term and constitutes one of the results of a successful relation [77]. The trust loosens on the long term this nearness and the identification with the partner, within a relational exchange framework [15].

Hypothesis 3: the brand trust has a positive impact on the attachment.

Brand commitment

Commitment arises from Human resources [78], extending this concept into the world of products and brands, [79] defined it as an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship. It is will to pursue a relation with an operator [15]. It is a long-term orientation, including the desire to maintain a relation [60]. The brand commitment is translated by the will to prolong a satisfying relation to the long term and by facing the short-term sacrifices [80; 13; 81; 82; 48]. It is a psychological state, or a strong and intense relatively stable attitude, for the preservation of a relation [83] with an object, on the basis of the emotional attachment and the identification to the latter [84; 85]. The commitment towards the brand is "an implicit or explicit intention to maintain a durable relation with a brand" [86]. It is an "emotional or psychological attachment to a brand inside a given product category" [87; 88; 89]. The notion of exclusive fidelity is used to define the commitment [90]. It is about the situation where the brand is considered as the unique acceptable choice for a given product category. The fidelity to the partner [91] strengthens by a process of auto-intensification [92] in [58]. The commitment can result from various motivations [92; 94; 83; 95]. It possesses a double nature: emotional and rational [98; 68; 84]. It is emotional or still affectional, of hedonist essence [58], when it corresponds to a desire to belong to the firm and to adopt its values and its objectives [83; 95]. It is calculative, instrumental or rational, of cognitive essence [58], when the customer adopts a behavior based on an economic decision, rational and arbitrated by the change costs.

Commitment has its roots in identification, shared values, attachment, and trust [99; 100; 15]. Reference [59] has found a positive relationship between trust and commitment for consumer products. Trust would be the cardinal forerunner of consumer commitment, once the consumer has established trust in a brand he is willing to engage in a long-term relationship with it. Relationships characterized by trust are so highly valued that consumers will desire to commit themselves to such relationships [101].

Hypothesis 4: brand trust has a positive influence on consumer's brand commitment.

Commitment plays a critical role in determining resistance to various actions such as brand transgressions and outside attacks to the brand [102, 103]. Change resistance raises the ambiguity between the attachment and the commitment [96; 87; 90]. It underlines the link which can exist between them. Commitment is a psychological attachment to a brand.

The attachment establishes change barrier and proves the consumer's loyalty [80]. We protect and we defend the object, we refuse to abandon it and we develop feelings toward it [97]. It has no direct impact on the repetitive purchase behavior, but indirect through the commitment [68]. The attachment constitutes a factor of emotional brand commitment [68; 85; 98; 48].

Hypothesis 5: There is a positive relation between the brand attachment and brand commitment.

C. Consumer Relationships and Purchase Intention

Purchase intention establishes "an expressed attitude concerning a future choice behavior and of economic decisions" (Marketing Dictionary). A behavioral intention is all the instructions that individuals give themselves to act in a certain way [33]. The purchase intention is the probability of purchase of a product or a given brand [99]. The reciprocal and mutual benefits of consumer-brand relationship provide a solid foundation for the further development of a long-term relationship between consumer and firm. Satisfied customers, who foresee the reduced uncertainty and opportunity cost of staying with the same firm, are more likely to repurchase from that firm.

Brand trust and brand commitment have a positive impact on future purchase intention, either directly or indirectly, through consumer relationship willingness. Trusting and committed customers are more likely to repurchase from the same firm [59; 15]. Consequently, relationship marketing practices can help firms to achieve relationship marketing success in terms of repeat purchases of customers by capitalizing on the consumer relationship that is embedded in the existing customers who have trust in and commitment to the brand.

Trust towards a brand reassures the consumer. It allows simplifying his process of choice and reducing the necessary time for the decision-making [108]. It also contributes to subjugate the purchase uncertainty [100]. It generates a globally positive attitude [53], which influences positively the brand evaluation. The more the reliable level granted to the

brand by the customer is important, the more his purchase intention is high [101; 63].

Hypothesis 6: There is a positive relation between the consumer's brand trust level and the purchase intention.

At a higher level of commitment, consumers reveal preference toward a brand, and reflect this preference in brand purchase. The buyer is likely to engage in repeat purchase of that product or brand because he or she has associated good feelings with being a customer of that brand and has their personal identity reinforced [111]. The commitment influences positively the intention to durably maintain a relationship, the desire to invest [112] and the acceptance of short-term sacrifices [71; 34]. It establishes a predictor of the repetitive brand purchase. It is the immediate precursor of the behavioral activity [80]. The commitment translates the existence of a relation between the consumer and the brand [34]. It results from previous purchases and appears during customer's prosper or difficult periods, and even on momentary brand difficulties [80]. The will to pursue this relation is implicitly evoked. The commitment possesses two main behavioral consequences: the intention of buy back in order to maintain the relation [34, 88] and change resistance [102; 51]. By strengthening their relationships with committed customers, firms can prevent them from being poached by competitors.

Hypothesis 7: The brand commitment has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Other key focal areas of research in the relational bonding literature discuss a consumer's involvement and identification within the service consumption process [24; 25]. Consumers have a relationship with many brands in everyday life. The brand sensitivity varies according to the consumer's belief of differentiation [103; 104], the perception of his choice competence and to his involvement towards the product [103; 105]. The perceived competence, or the feeling of knowing how to choose, is also a determiner of the sensitivity [103].

D. Mobile Marketing Enhances Consumer-brand relationship

The interaction between consumers and their mobile phones, together with the ability afforded by mobile advertising to control the viewing environment provides advertisers with an opportunity to build more meaningful brand relationships than at anytime in advertising history [117].

Reference [106] defines mobile marketing as "any form of marketing, advertising or sales promotion activity aimed at consumers".

Reference [107] define mobile marketing as using a wireless medium to provide consumers with time- and location-sensitive, personalized information that promotes products, services and ideas, thereby benefiting all stakeholders.

The Mobile advertising accelerates relationship marketing by providing better interactivity and connectivity it helps serving customers [108].

As an extension of the Internet environment, the high penetration of mobile phones in recent years has created a good opportunity for wireless Internet applications, including

wireless marketing and advertising [109]. Telecommunications operators dedicate an increasing interest to the strategic role of the customer relation and the relational marketing emphasizing the importance to study the consumer's behavior in a global and accumulated post-purchase prospect. Mobile phones are thus regarded not only as delivery platforms, but also as a way to connect the platform with mass media and points of sale, and can therefore be successfully implemented to help lead the consumer to a purchase. Mobile phones are also ideal mechanisms for marketing because of their seamless integration as a direct e-mail channel to the target audience [110].

Today, individuals maintain a hyper – personnel and interactive relationship with their cellular phone [111]. Mobile phones are usually carried everywhere and kept within reach of their owners. They are ideal for use in conjunction with a variety of traditional media tools such as indoor and outdoor advertising and broadcast channels [110]. Mobile advertising relaxes the mobility constraint associated with fixed-line Internet access; it offers direct communication with consumers, anytime and anyplace [112; 109]. The consumer is though approached in a customized interactive and immediate way. The mobile phone is a highly interactive medium that enables the recipient of a message to reply to it immediately [113].

Through the introduction of data services, Short Message Services (SMS), Multimedia Message Service (MMS), Mobile Internet, etc., the mobile phone is rapidly becoming a viable commercial marketing channel [114].

The appearance of the services "opt - in" SMS has the ability to quickly inform the subscribers of the availability of a promotion or of an innovative service. It is an effective medium to generate traffic by motivating a determined target to contact a call center or to visit a point to sell.

The Short Message Service (SMS) trend led to the appearance of new usages. It is a massive and a powerful support of communication with strong relational power. It is an immediate, automated, reliable, personal, discreet and customized channel [127; 115].

Mobile phones have already become a marketing tool for retailers and manufacturers. The main reasons underlying the high expectations laid to mobile channel refer to its high reach, low cost and high retention rates [114; 116].

III. RESEARCH MODEL

The personality affects the type and the strength of the relation consumer/ brands [117]. It is an antecedent of the relational variables: trust, attachment and commitment. It has a capacity relation through the trust, the attachment and the commitment of the client [118].

The following model (Fig. 1) presents the process leading to the purchase intention after receiving an SMS ad.

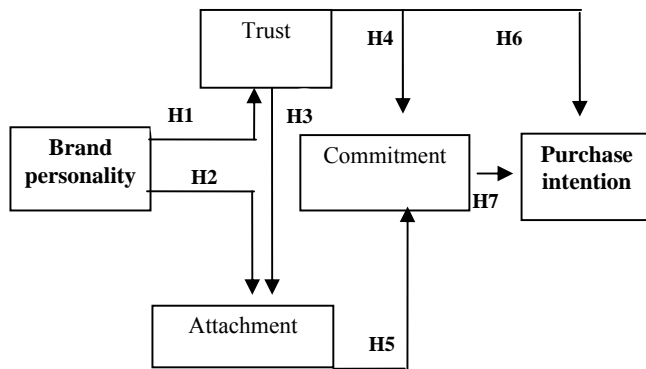


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Sampling and Data Collection Procedure

The investigation was held in Sousse, Tunisia (North Africa, population: 10000). A total of 380 respondents participated in the study.

Data for this research was collected through questionnaire survey. Convenience sampling was used; no particular criteria were employed to select the participants. The only limitation was that participants should have received commercials SMS from “prêt-à-porter” brands. Before the questionnaire was conducted, it was pre-tested on thirty mobile phone users in order to measure the construct the validity of the attitude measurement.

Among the 380 respondents 63.8 % are females and 36.2 % are males. As expected, most respondents were under 30 years of age: around 82.8 % belonged to the age group 20 to 35.

B. Scales of Measurement

The data operationnalisation was done with scales of measurement chosen from the literature. They are presented in the following table.

TABLE I
DESCRIPTION OF SCALES OF MEASUREMENT

Data	Scale of measurement
Brand personality	Aaker (1997): 42 items
Brand trust	Gurvez et Korchia (2002): 8 items
Brand attachement	Lacœuilhe (2000): 5 items
Brand commitment	Cristau (2001): 6 items
Purchase intention	Dussart (1983) : 6 items

V. FINDINGS

A. Measurement Validation

Reliability tests were carried out to ensure that the scales in the questionnaire produced consistent results for the variables. The reliability of the valid questionnaires was assessed by the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient. The results indicated that the Cronbach's alpha of all of the constructs was above 0.80, which shows the high reliability of the scales.

SPSS's Principal Component Analysis techniques were led on various variables from the abstract model to verify the dimensional structure of the data and the items correlations with factors. The factor analysis extracted 4 expected factors:

brand personality, brand trust, brand commitment and Brand attachment, with each item being loaded onto its corresponding factor.

The items of the brand personality are grouped in two factors, sincerity and competence, and hold 74.034 % of the initial information. The alpha of Cronbach is excellent and is 0.8629.

Only the first trust's item is eliminated, due to its weak representation quality. 55.918 % of the explained total variance is maintained, with an alpha of Cronbach of 0.8676. The scale is however unidimensional. The attachment's items have correlations superior to 0.8 with the only one factor resulting from the ACP and present an explained variance of 66.040 %. The Alpha of Cronbach is also acceptable 0.8285.

All the items of the commitment are kept. They explain 56.435 % of the initial information and present a Cronbach Alpha of 0.8061. The last two variables, the sensitivity and the brand involvement, are unidimensionnel and present explained total variances and satisfactory values of Alpha, respectively 63.483 %, 56.912 %, 0.8057 and 0.8444.

TABLE II
SCALES' DIMENSIONALITY

	Dimensions	KMO	variance	Cronbach alpha
Brand personality	1 sincerity	0.794	46.192	0.8629
	2 competence		74.034	
Trust	Uni-dimensional	0.833	55.918	0.8676
Attachment	Uni-dimensional	0.784	66.040	0.8285
Commitment	Uni-dimensional	0.777	56.435	0.8061

B. Hypotheses and Discussion

The dependent and independent variables being metric, simple and multiple regressions were applied. The moderating effect of the brand sensitivity and the involvement on the relation between the brand personality and the dependent variables trust and attachment was also verified by the regressions.

The relation brand/consumer is associated with only two dimensions of the brand personality: sincerity and competence. The hypothesis H1 which stipulates that the brand trust is positively influenced by the brand personality is confirmed. The test t is significant for both extracted dimensions ($\beta = 0.421$ and 0.388 ; $T=9.632$ and 8.881 ; $p=0.000$). When the customer judges the brand sincere, he estimates on a rational and cognitive way and believes consciously and durably on its integrity (Gouteron, 2006). The sincerity and the competence are, for a “prêt à porter” brand, personalities lines which develop a reliable feeling for the individuals having received an advertising SMS. A brand perceived as sincere develops, in time, relations more stable and more intense than the existing brands [118]. The relation concerning the positive influence of the sincerity ($\beta = 0.197$; $T=4.164$; $p=0.000$) and of the competence ($\beta 0.102$; $T=2.191$; $p=0.029$) on the attachment was also significant. The hypothesis H2 is thus confirmed. The more the brand

personality is positively perceived, is considered sincere and competent, the more attached the customer to the brand.

Additionally, the trust's influence on the attachment tested in H3 was confirmed ($\beta = 0.464$; $T=9.033$; $p=0.000$) as well as the influence of the brand trust and the commitment ($\beta = 0.396$; $T=8.032$; $p=0.000$). Trust and commitment are considered to be central constructs of relationship marketing. There is a positive relationship between trust and commitment (H4 confirmed).

The positive effect of the attachment on the brand commitment ($\beta = 0.350$; $T=7.107$; $p=0.000$) was also verified in this empirical analysis. These results show that the trust and the attachment are the main antecedents of the commitment. Trust is a determinant of relationship quality [52].

The regression confirms the hypothesis H5 according to which the brand trust affects positively the purchase intention ($\beta = 0.225$; $T=3.955$; $p=0.000$). The test t is significant for H7 ($\beta = 0.356$; $T=6.256$; $p=0.000$). The commitment thus possesses an impact on the purchase intention. This relation is translated by a positive brand attitude [34; 15] and preference, the will to continue using it or even the resistance to competition. It also influences the efficiency of the communication. The committed customers are less permeable to other brands commercials [119]. The commitment is preliminary determiner of the decision-process.

VI. CONCLUSION

The growth of mobile advertising has opened a new area for research [109]. The objective of this study was to estimate the interest of the brand personality on the Tunisian's customer purchase decision through relational variables, after receiving an ad SMS within the framework of a campaign of mobile marketing. An inquiry, with 380 individuals receiving a SMS on behalf of brands of "prêt à porter" "clothing, was realized.

Mobile phones have the potential to be ideal personalized tools [133] for providing an opportunity for marketers to send an offer at the right time to the right consumer [134]. Mobile phone is a new direct marketing device that provides direct access to consumers and interacts with them in a very personal way. The results show that the brand personality influences the trust and the attachment as well as the commitment. The more the consumer perceives the brand as being sincere and competent, the more he trusts it, what generates his attachment and his commitment. The levels of sensitivity and involvement modify the impact of the brand personality on the consumer behavior. The consumer purchase intention increases after receiving a SMS announcing a new collection, a period of sales...

As with any empirical study, our study is characterized by certain key limitations that must be evaluated before making further implications or generalizations about the results.

The scale of the personality of the used brand is not completely adapted to the Tunisian context. Some items were not understandable by certain members of the sample. A specific tool of measure must be thus developed.

The conclusions elaborated above not only deliver valuable implications for marketing practitioners but also reveal some

major directions for future research on mobile marketing. It would be interesting to identify the mobile phone users, their demographic characteristics and their attitudes toward mobile shopping,

The risk perception and the permission marketing issues should be analyzed as well. In this context it will be necessary to thoroughly survey consumers' main sources of risk perception and also reveal how consumers prefer to provide permission and profile information.

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