An Assessment of the Influence of Unsolicited GSM Text Messages on the Students of the University of Port Harcourt

Clement A. Asadu

Mobile phone, no doubt, is one essential property everyone owns now. It is assumed that in every ten persons eight have at least a mobile phone. It offers the people the opportunity of staying in contact with friends and relations who are separated by distance. It offers privacy and exposes the user to information that concerns him/her. Unfortunately, mobile phone is losing this attribute to unsolicited text messages. Unknown persons through the use of technology generate messages or advertisement, campaign and notifications to send to people. This practice is on the increase on a daily basis. This paper investigated the effect of the mobile phone unsolicited text messages on the students of the University of Port Harcourt. Two research questions were raised to guide the study. Employing the survey research method, the multi-stage sampling technique was employed. At the first stage the purposive sampling technique was used to select 100 respondents who were on the MTN network among students across ten faculties. Using quota sampling technique, each faculty of the university got 10 samples, while simple random sampling technique was used to select the individual 10 respondents from each faculty. Data were analyzed using simple percentages and tables. The study found that students of the University of Port Harcourt received unsolicited text messages which influenced them greatly.

Key words: GSM* Mobile phone* Students* Text messages* Unsolicited

Background

In his quest to know what happens in his immediate and remote environments, man has invented better, faster, cheaper and effective ways of sharing ideas and information. He discovered that experiences or ideas can be transmitted through writing on farm implement, walls of caves, applying cannon shots, smoke and bush burning, rather than interpersonal or face-to-face approach alone to deliver messages.

With the passage of time, there emerged many ways or symbols for recording history and experiences. For the avoidance of confusion and ambiguity, man harmonized these various writing symbols used in different societies into alphabet so that ideas and information were now represented through the combination of various letters of the alphabet. In the 1440s, the invention of movable type by Johannes Gutenberg revolutionized human communication which led to the mass production (printing) of these information and ideas on pamphlets, books, newspaper and other readable material for mass consumption. Subsequently, the invention of the telegraph (Morse code) by Samuel Morse in the 1830s paved the way for the discovery of fax and telephone.

Telephone which was a wired device used mainly for voice calls and very bulky to be carried about has become miniaturized, wireless and portable through the development in technology. As a matter of fact, technology has changed the status of telephone from family property that is always kept at a central sitting room to wireless hand-held mobile object owned by many people. Khalil, Dongier and Qiang (2009) observed that phone has witnessed an unprecedented increase in access due to wireless technologies and liberalization of telecommunication market. Analogous and crude telephony has given way for digitalized one known as Global System for Mobile (GSM), mobile phone or cell phone. Mobile phone is a short range electronic device used for mobile voice or data communication over a network of specialized base stations known as cell sites (Wilson and Gapsiso, 2009:106).

Ahonen (2008) rightly observed that: “the impact of cell phones to communication is enormous and that communication is shifting away from voice call to cell phone messaging”. [www.jasondaponte] or what is popularly called text messaging. Text messaging is a package or facility on mobile phone that allows the user to generate and send message using alphanumeric buttons on the phone key pad. Text message often called SMS (short message service) is used to send messages to friends or relations known to the sender. But it becomes unsolicited or bulk message when messages are sent to many persons not known to the sender. Unsolicited text
message is that message that comes into our mobile phone from an unknown sender. Such messages are usually sent to many other individuals. It is either sent directly or indirectly. It is direct when the phone beeps to indicate the entrance of a message (this includes MTN flash), while it is indirect when the phone user sees the message when he loads recharge card or checks his credit balance. Most often the message borders on purchase (advertisement), voting a candidate and creation of awareness among others.

This type of messaging is done in such a way that the whole people on the same network get the same information at the same time (or different times depending on one's location and position of the phone i.e. whether it is on or off). Sometimes receivers can be fragmented according to cell sites or areas covered by a particular mast. That is, the message can target the people in a particular street by sending the message to the mast that covers the street. This type usually comes from service provider or mobile phone network owner. Some use computer software to generate random phone numbers and send.

Unsolicited text messaging is very much here with us, but we are unconscious of it even though we are influenced by it. During elections, mobile phones are used for campaign. Text messages about a candidate are sent to the electorate with the aim of influencing their voting choice. Supporting this, Pedro Aganbi, an ICT consultant cited by Obiagwu, Olumide and Adiorho (2011) stated that:

With the automated dialing systems, a candidate disseminates campaign speeches through telephones. And mobile phones are more accessible than televisions.... It is an effective means of sending campaign messages to voters. It is inexpensive and can reach any segment of the society.

These days, people are asked to text a particular number to a channel (often represented with figures like 33022, 301133, etc) to take part in a lottery, change their ringing tone, take part in who wants to be a millionaire game show and a host of others. As a result, many youths have their caller's tunes changed to music, motivational talk or prayers; many have also played away huge sums of money through mobile phone lotteries. Khalil, Dongier and Qiang (2009) said that mobile phone now represents the world's largest distribution platform.

Communication through text messaging is peculiar in some ways. Mobile phone is a personal device and as such any message sent through it is expected to get to over 97% of its target audience directly. These messages are not as transient as that of radio and television. Though electronic in nature, it has the features of print. The message cannot be wiped unless the owner wants to do so. The message can as well be printed with the aid of computer. Again a phone user may decide to leave a message in his phone after reading it. If a message enters when the phone is off, it hangs until the user puts it on. Its strength is, in fact, summarized below:

i) It is almost owned by everybody
ii) It is always on
iii) It is always with the owner
iv) It is cheap to procure.
v) It does not require much electric power.
vi) It can adapt to any language

Mobile phone holds the fulcrum of the next communication revolution. That is, the next breakthrough in ICTs is centred on mobile phone. Today, there seems to be a slim gap between mobile phone and computer on the one hand and other media like radio, television, newspaper and magazine on the other. Most phones produced today are not only internet-enabled, but carries radio and television. At best, new mobile phones can be termed mobile media.

Statement of problem

Mobile phone emerged as a personal device for sending and receiving voice calls and short messages between friends/relations separated by distance. Mobile phone is portable, personal and offers privacy. But today, mobile phone is increasingly used to send unsolicited text
messages to phone users prodding them to take or not to take certain actions.

One major setback of the mobile phone is that it is not like any other electronic medium where one can change channel or switch off to evade such disturbance. It cannot be closed like a newspaper/magazine and the reader walks away. Mobile phone is a necessity. One may miss much for switching off one's phone for just a minute in a bid to avoid unsolicited text messages.

With all these, neither mobile phone users nor the regulatory body see these text messages as having influence on the attitude/behaviour of people, which in some circumstances may be negative. This can be seen from the way the whole mobile phone service providers go into lottery, promotion of products, ideas or services. The use and abuse of unsolicited text messages is spreading rapidly with, sometimes, negative implications. In this light, this study sought to investigate how people react to these unsolicited messages as well as whether such messages exact any influence on the recipient.

Objectives of the study
The major aim of this study is to find out if mobile phone messages have the qualities that qualify mobile phone as a mass medium. In addition, the study seeks to find out if cell broadcast from mobile phones have influence on the receiver. Specifically the objectives of the study are to:

1. Know if students of University of Port Harcourt receive unsolicited text messages on their mobile phone.
2. Ascertain if students of University of Port Harcourt are influenced by unsolicited text messages.

Research questions
This study is guided by these questions.

RQ1. To what degree do students of the University of Port Harcourt receive unsolicited text messages on their mobile phones?
RQ2. In what ways are students of the University of Port Harcourt influenced by unsolicited text messages?

ii

Literature Review

Messages are ideas, opinions and information communicated to people over channels of communication. Every message aims to modify and influence attitude, opinion, behaviour or belief. There are a lot of classical researches to prove this. For instance, Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1954) carried out series of researches to prove that information and messages can change people’s attitude. They stated that: “Mass communications are sometimes used to instigate immediate audience action, such as donating money or volunteering to devote time and energy to a task” (p. 89).

In support of this, McQuail (2005) observed, that “we dress for the weather as forecast, buy something because of an advertisement, go to a film mentioned in a newspaper, react in countless ways to media news, to film, to music...” (p.456). It is in the same vein, that McCombs (1994) stated that the media structure and organize our world and audience cognition. In the same line of thought, Baran (2002) wrote that “Television has changed the way teachers teach, governments govern, religious leaders preach, and the way we organize the furniture in our homes” (P.271).

Even though communication can do this, it has also been discovered that the media through which the message is sent helps to increase the influence of the message on the audience. The media here include the conventional communication channels of radio, television, newspaper, magazine and the new media of the internet, mobile phone among others. The popular thesis of Marshal McLuhan, The Medium is the Message (1967) bears testimony to this. In his work, McLuhan contended that the form of a medium used in disseminating a particular message influences how the audience perceive the message. In other words, every medium of communication has effect on the receiver. It is because of this that every campaigner, advertiser or communicator engages in critical media selection to make the message achieve its goals.
An Assessment of the Influence of Unsolicited GSM Text Messages on the Students of the University of Port Harcourt

February, 2014

good message may not have influence on the receiver just because of the nature of the medium through which the message was delivered.

It is because of the media's influence on the people that most countries of the world including Nigeria encourage the media to render some non-profit services which are aimed at encouraging the people to be good citizens. Today, this type of message is sent as an unsolicited text messages to subscribers. This is called public affairs messages or social responsibility function of the mobile phone service provider. Commenting on this, Yan and Napoli (2006) stated that by this, "stations must provide some programming that serves the informational needs of their communities in order to fulfill their public-interest obligations" (p.796). By this, the media send messages that are necessary for the public free of charge. In sum this function can come in the form of:

1) **Surveillance**: Surveillance involves alerting and informing the people of the happenings in the society. Severin and Tankered (1999) observed that "this function of the media involve warning us of unexpected danger such as extreme or dangerous weather conditions" (p.217). In the same vein, Wright (1986) adds that news provides warnings about imminent threats and dangers in the world (Shoemaker and Reese, p.29). Upholding this view, Sambe (2000) submitted that "the media make it possible for the diffusion of knowledge of life in today's world and more than that influence many aspects of our social, political and economic pattern" (p.227).

Unsolicited text message through the mobile phone provides this instant information about any imminent danger in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world. The Finnish government and environmentalists, for instance, decided in 2005 that the fastest way to warn citizens of disaster was the mobile phone network. In Japan, mobile phone companies provide immediate notification of earthquakes and other disasters to their customers free of charge (Wilson and Gapsiso, 2010).

In Nigeria, unsolicited text message was used after the outbreak of cholera in Bauchi and some northern states on September 9, 2010, to inform the people and caution them to stop the spread. MTN sent a message which read: "Prevent cholera. Wash hands with soap after using the toilet, handling dirty objects and before preparing food". Similarly when the campaign for the protection of environment (against climate change) was hot, mobile phone was used to encourage people to plant trees. Again, unsolicited text messages have been used to inform people of accident or emergency in Nigeria.

2) **Mobilization**: The conventional media are used to challenge or encourage the people to take part or not in certain programmes. Communication is used to persuade and convince the people to participate in any socio-political programme. Mobilization entails convincing the people to support a cause, project or any change-inducing issue (Nwabueze, 2004). On the 19th January 2011 MTN sent a message that read: "Remember to exercise your civic responsibility! Register to vote". The message was not sent the normal way message is sent. The message could only be accessed when you check your credit balance. Again, on the 19th of June, 2011, MTN sent an indirect message to all the subscribers which read thus: "Today is World Blood Donor Day. Safe blood saves lives. Donate a unit of blood and save a life today." These messages were sent indirectly. That is, you can only see it when you check your credit balance. Because people are conscious of the money they spend on calls, people check their credit balance from time to time and in that process they get exposed to the message.

In any case, unsolicited text messages of making purchases or voting for a particular candidate is rampart today on mobile phone. This is called advertisement. Advertisement is created from advertising. That is the end product of advertising is advertisement. Advertising is defined by Arens, Weigold—and Arens (2008) as: The structured and composed non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products (goods, services and ideas) by identified sponsors through various media (p.7). Mobile phone is one of the modern media of advertising and it is gaining currency and prominence in Nigeria. Most companies now send text messages to people to buy a product, obtain a particular service or
support an idea, project or political campaign programme.

Victor Ariyibi, a marketing consultant, observed that this method of advertisement is ridiculously cheap and extremely effective. He went further to add:

> Just recently my company needed to put up a quick cheap but result yielding advert to a website for a client, the bulk SMS method was employed and to my pleasant surprise the turnout was mind blowing. The client got lot of calls and responses for weeks. (www.victorarivibi.blogspot.com)

The use of unsolicited text messages is not only because it is cheap, but because the message gets to the target directly. It has become the commonest way of reaching many people at once. The Nigerian Communications Commission's quarterly summary of telecoms subscribers in Nigeria (Jun '10 Mar '11) put the number of mobile phone (GSM) subscribers at seventy six million, five hundred and eighty two thousand, three hundred and seventy four (76,582,374), excluding Etisalat subscribers (www.ncc.gov.ng). With this number, any message sent this way gets to more than half of the Nigerian population.

**Characteristics of unsolicited text messages**

i) Un solicited text messages are usually meant for large and heterogeneous audience scattered in space and time. The members of the audiences are so large that they cannot be assembled at a place at a time. In this number are people with varying background and experience. That is, they differ in their socio-cultural, economic, religious and political background. They are mixed up and do not know themselves individually (McQuail, 2005). They as well do not know the message sender in person. Messages of mainly advertisements and campaigns on mobile phones are always sent to large and heterogeneous audiences who vary in demographic and psychographic make up. The sender does not know the receivers in person nor does the receiver know the sender hence it is called unsolicited text messages. Some call it bulk messages.

As stated above, unsolicited text messages are sent to anonymous audience. The sender does not know who the receivers are. In other words the message is for “to whom it may concern.” By this, it means that the message sender sends the message at random to whoever may have a need for it. It is because of this that some people delete the message after receiving it.

ii) In addition, the effect of unsolicited text message is personal. This is one feature of the new media which has increasingly demassified members of the audience (McQuail, 2005). Unlike radio and television messages sent to everybody and every set once, text messages are sent to individual mobile phone and persons. “The audience member is no longer really part of a mass, but is either a member of a self-chosen network or special public or an individual” (p.139)

**Theoretical framework**

The nature of this work makes it to naturally subscribe to technological determinism and uses and gratifications theories. First, technological determinism came in the 1960s and was made popular by Marshal McLuhan. The theory states that technology of communication shapes the way individuals think, feel and act and how societies organize themselves and operate (www.wongkeenhing.com). McLuhan states that we are living in a new age of technology that has never been experienced before. Technology drives cultural and even social changes in the society (Baran,2002). Human society has always been shaped by the changes in communication technology. For instance, the invention of movable type caused further revolution.

McLuhan suspects that the current technological environment, when looked back upon, will be seen as a major turning point in the history of communication. As communication technology evolves and advances, so is human life as well as culture shaped. Hence, he claims
that television had played a role in rearranging human societies, as distance became less of a barrier of communication.

The invention of mobile phone, no doubt, has caused changes in human society. People are made highly isolated as one does not go pursuing information but information pursuing one. The use of mobile phone for mass dissemination of information has changed the society tremendously. With mobile phones one makes purchases, delivers emergency information and a host of other things.

Another theory that is necessary for this study is the uses and gratifications theory. This theory came in the 1960s when it was a widely held view that the media were all-powerful capable of imposing powerful ideologies on the passive audience to modify his behaviour or action. This theory believes that it is the users of a communication medium that determines its influence by the way they use it. People are exposed to different stations, channels, stories, messages for different reasons. This type of selective exposure and attention is usually informed by audience's earlier ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and world views generally. People avoid information that is unpleasant unless it may have some use or utility, (Severin and Tankerd, 1999).

The uses and gratification theory claims that media do nothing to people, rather people do things with the media. In other words, media influence on people is limited to what people want them to do. By this the audience is not passive but critical and active. Rodman (2003:460) supports this when he wrote that uses and gratifications theory does not see audience as a passive creature whose behaviour is controlled by the media, but he who is actively choose and uses media to meet his own needs. In a similar vein, one researcher in the late 1950s said that:

The communicator's audience is not a passive recipient- it cannot be regarded as a lump of clay to be molded by the master propagandist. Rather, the audience is made up of individuals who demand something from the communication which they are exposed and who select those that are likely to be useful to them....(Severin and Tankerd, 1999).

The foregoing points to the fact that any mass media message must have problem to solve for the audience where this is not possible the audience may switch or out rightly reject the message. That is gratification. LaRose and Staubhaar (2002:37) outlined some likely gratifications people seek to get from the media. They include cognition, learning, information or news; diversion (that is entertainment to get relief from stress) and social utility needs. By this people pay attention to bulk messages on phone because of the benefit they derive therein.

### iii Methodology

The research design employed for this work was the survey research method. For clarity, survey research design involves collection of original data from a large population to that cannot be observed directly (Rubin and Babbie, 2005).

The population of the study comprised the twenty five thousand (25,000) regular students of the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State (commonwealthoforganization.org) across the ten faculties. The reason for using students was because almost all of them have mobile phone and form part of Port Harcourt environment. That is, many of them come to school from many other parts of Port Harcourt. Whatever information we get from them can be replicated in the whole of Port Harcourt. It was not possible to study the entire population of this research. For this reason, the Yaro Yamani formula was used to get sample size of 394 respondents was drawn from the population.

For the purpose of this study, the multi-stage sampling technique was employed. At the first stage the purposive technique was used to select 394 respondents who were on the MTN network among students across the ten faculties. The choice of MTN was based on the
preliminary investigation which found that the majority of the students patronize the network. Osaat (2009:75) remarked that in purposive sampling technique, specific elements that satisfy the set-out criteria are selected. Quota sampling technique was used to select 39 respondents from each faculty of the University. At the end, simple random sampling technique was used to select the 39 respondents from each faculty.

**Results**

**Table 1: Respondents' reception of unsolicited text messages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMS reception</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this table, available data show that 371 respondents representing 96.8 per cent of the respondents said they received messages they did not know the sender, while only 12 respondents representing 3.2 per cent said they never received any bulk message they did not know the sender.

**Table 2: Mode of message reception**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of reception</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directly to the phone</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When checked.loaded.cred</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both ways</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>68.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen above, 34 respondents representing 8.9 per cent of the total respondents got anonymous messages directly on their phone. A total of 87 respondents representing 22.7 of the total respondents got such message when they checked or loaded credit on their phone, while 262 respondents representing 68.4 of the respondents got the message direct and when checking/loading credit on their phone.

**Table 3: Reception of Election Day SMS from MTN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election message</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>74.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, 286 respondents representing 74.7 per cent of sample admitted they received the message that urged them to take part in election from MTN while 97 respondents representing 25.3 per cent of the sample said they did not receive such message.

**Table 4: Response to bulk messages**

The respondents were asked if they do what the unsolicited text message asks them to do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response to unsolicited SMS</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>77.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response, 27 respondents representing 7.0 per cent of the sample said they do what the message asks them to do always. Sixty one respondents representing 15.9 per cent of the sample said they do not attempt doing what the message asks them to do while 295 respondents representing 77.1 per cent of the sample admitted they sometimes do what the message asked them to do.

Table 5: The dominant idea in the unsolicited text messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant issue in the unsolicited messages</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making purchases</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take part in a programme</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notices</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows that 260 respondents representing 67.8 per cent of the sample admitted that making purchases dominate the unsolicited text messages they got. One hundred and nine respondents representing 28.4 respondents said that taking part in a programme dominated the bulk messages they received while 14 respondents representing 3.8 per cent of the sample said notices dominated the unsolicited text messages they received.

Table 6: Status of respondent's caller tune?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of caller tune</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this table, it can be seen that 318 respondents representing 83.0 of the sample admitted they had changed their ringing tones to a special one while 65 respondent representing 17.0 said they did not change their ringing tones.

Findings

At the end of the data analysis, two major findings were made:
I. The study revealed that the students of University of Port Harcourt received unsolicited text messages
II. The study also showed that unsolicited text messages from the mobile phone influenced the receivers since majority of them have changed their ringing tones and agreed to have applied to take part in certain programmes and shows.

Discussion

The present study assessed the effect of unsolicited text messages on mobile phone (GSM) users in the University of Port Harcourt. However, the findings of the study reflected that the messages from the mobile phone like other mass media of communication were received by not a few persons. This can be justified in the analysis where 286 respondents representing 74.7 admitted that they received unsolicited text messages on taking part in the 2011 general elections. It was, however, found out that people living outside Port Harcourt received the same message. This goes to corroborate what McQuail (2005) said in the literature that mass communication messages get to large and heterogeneous audience.

Messages through the mobile phone have influence on people. This can be seen on the number of respondents who admitted they sometimes do what the unsolicited text message asks them do and make purchases through the mobile phone. In addition, a large number of the respondents have changed their caller tone. This indicates the influence of the mobile phone on...
the user as indicated in the literature by McQuail (2005) and Baran (2002). This is in line with how advertising through the conventional mass media affect buying choice and boosts sales. Caller tones as a matter of fact are either sold by MTN itself or some marketers who use automatic dialling system to generate random phone numbers and send message about purchasing special tones. Arens, Weigold and Arens (2008) highlighted in the literature where they said that advertising messages are about products, ideas and services.

With these revelations, it is no longer debatable if mobile phone unsolicited message has influence on the receiver. By this study, the mobile phone can be exploited like any other mass medium. Since the advent of the mobile phone and its introduction into Nigeria, it has overtaken radio as the most ubiquitous medium of communication. There is hardly any Nigerian adult that does not have at least one mobile phone set. It is a known fact that the field of communication is in a state of flux. These findings go to support what Marshall McLuhan proposed that the medium is the message. He said that the medium rather than the content should be the focus of study. McLuhan's insight was that a mass medium affects the society in which it plays a role not by the content delivered over the medium, but by the characteristics of the medium itself (http://en.wikipedia.org).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Unsolicited text messages through the mobile phone are taking the centre stage in message delivery. On a daily basis people receive message from either the service provider or unknown sender to do one thing or the other. This message is usually directed at large, heterogeneous, scattered and anonymous audience. Mobile phone has many subscribers and as a ubiquitous medium, it has an immeasurable influence on the users. This can be seen in the people's responses above. In addition, it may be because of this influence of the mobile phone on the people that the National Communication Commission (NCC) asked mobile phone service providers to stop running lottery on mobile phones.

Based on the foregoing, the study recommended that the federal government through the NCC should start to encourage mobile service providers to utilize this medium in sending immediate and urgent messages to members of the public. Similarly, NCC should start mapping out strategies on how to regulate the mobile phone as an influential mass medium.

References


