

SMARTPHONE FEATURES THAT AFFECT BUYING PREFERENCES OF STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study veered into the different Smartphone internal features and availability of aftermarket accessories that may influence buying preference of college students. Anchoring the study on Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) as further articulated Falgoust et al. (2021), it analyzed the different features and capabilities of available smart phones in the market. After market capability like on the go (OTG) feature so that earphone could be conveniently attached highly influence buying preference. Manufacturer-installed features that support active student life like high battery ratings, large storage capability, high-speed processor and larger screen have very high influence on the buying preferences. There is a negligible difference between male and female students on their choice on some specific aftermarket accessories. It is however suggested that accessories should be stylish yet durable enough to withstand frequent use while commuting in public transport. Internal manufacturer-installed features should support programmability to suit mood-changes of young students.

KEYWORDS: *Smartphone, Accessories, Internal Features, Student Preference, Buying Gadgets.*

INTRODUCTION

Smartphones have become popularly indispensable gadget to everyone. They are considered smart in the true sense of the word compared to traditional cellphone decades ago (Smart Communications, 2019). Today's cellphone took the role of computer and made it possible to do a lot with this small hand-held device. As modern technology played a vital role in everyday life a new class of mobile phones that provides integrated functions for socialization, information, entertainment and even as aid to learning (Alson, et al. 2016) was introduced to the market, using marketing strategy through social media, smartphone companies added a lot of features on smartphone that could affect the buying preference of a customer for a specific brand.

Smartphones offered various interactive features in the market for increasingly wider users. Thus, different people would choose various features of smartphones that can meet with their needs and desires. For almost a decade now (Duke et al. 2012), smartphones are featured with wireless connectivity, high camera pixel, application installation, accessory, full programmability, a file management system, wider screen size, high-resolution displays, several gigabytes of storage and location as well as movement sensors. These are primary reasons for 20th century consumers to use smartphones as a gadget that meet their desires and needs in the grinds of everyday life.

The researcher aims to find out the levels influence of most common smartphone features: accessories, battery capacity, storage capacity, speed processing, camera pixel and screen size in the buying preferences of college students in

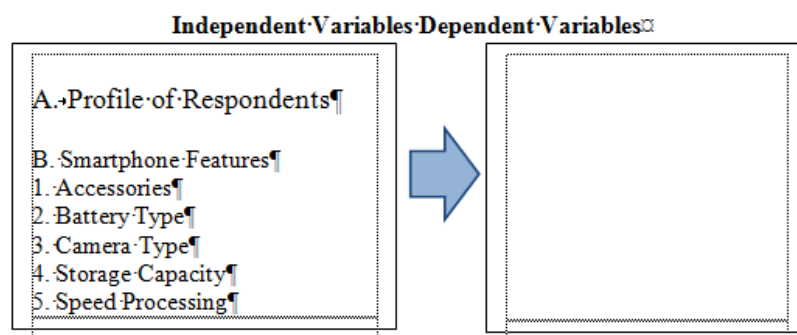
co-educational higher educational institutions. Smartphones now can perform various applications for learning, entertainment socialization, checking and sending emails, navigating through Global Positioning System (GPS) and other applications like Waze and Goggle Maps, dictionaries, note-taking, capturing photos, audio and video recording, and related documents in PDF among others.

Consequently, the findings of this study would be significant in understanding of the brand equity, personality and identity in smart phone industry crucial to their very survival like the Nokia Syndrome and hence, cannot be under emphasized. Moreover, the study would benefit smart phone distributors to come up with better selling techniques of the said product that can be an edge over competitors. It would also provide smart phone companies good knowledge for strategic ways in promoting distinct identity and continuous improvement.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) as further articulated Falgoust *et al.* (2021), and supported by the Expectation Confirmation Theory as explained by Albitoos and Nqa (2022), that once a user experiences using a mobile device confirms expectations, continued use of the device ensued. Mobile devices were crucial part of people's personal, professional and social lives. These assisted them to their daily routines, handling contextual tasks and staying current with their social needs. For consumers like students, to better understand the use of new technology like using smartphones it is inevitable to learn individual intention to predict behaviors toward new technology. It further postulated that the consumer had a personal choice in the media, information, entertainment and technologies they consumed to experience gratifications. Mobility was a key requirement for addressing the needs of mobile users. These users tend to adopt devices with good features as integral part of their lives. It would be worthwhile then to determine smartphone features can affect the buying preference.

THE RESEARCH PARADIGM



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The study utilized quantitative research design using the descriptive survey approach to gather data relating to smartphone features among male and female students. It aimed at describing the factors directly affecting consumer behavior with regards to smartphone buying preferences. Research that adopts the descriptive research design consequently attempts to produce data that is contextual, descriptive in depth and rich in detail.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Fifty-four percent (54%) participants were male, wherein there exist a significant difference in their buying preferences. Age ranges between nineteen to twenty-one years old. Nineteen years old, thirty five percent (35%), twenty years old, twenty five percent (25%), eighteen years, twenty three percent (23 %) and twenty-oneyears old, seventeen percent (17%) respectively. Most active users of smartphone are nineteen years oldas earlier found out in the study of Hanson *et al.* (2011). The competing demands of today's college students towards technology usage with the majority of the participants falling in the 18 to 22 age range

The two-hundred seventy-two (272) students-respondents from board-courses were mostly from technical courses of Engineering and Architecture which comprised fifty-nine percent (59%). The remaining forty-one percent (41) belonged to a combination of ten other courses

In the study most smartphone users were male students. This conformed to the research of Bisen and Deshpande (2016)that male scored more significantly higher than female asheavy users ofmobile devices. Male students preferred to use customized applications which were easily available on their smartphones and thus substitute the fundamental basic need of interaction. Even for daily communication, information sharing about academic projects or for sharing advanced academic research assignments. Male students were also found out to use communication applications in smartphones like Facebook Messenger and Whatsapp rather than the traditional person-to-person contact. Lastly, males were also interested in health-related applications, games and sports with the use of smartphones compare to female.

Respondent-students agreed that accessories particularly on the ready availability of earphone as the strongestsmartphone features affect their buying preference.Smartphone consumers spent a lot of money for accessories. Indeed, in the Mobile Accessories Report in USA (2016) stated that smartphone industry is expected to drive an aftermarket accessories market valued at 20 billion dollars for 2017alone. Looking ahead the forecast for 2022 is a larger market, for smartphone accessories were expected to be 38 billion dollars. This report was earlier proven by Alson and colleagues in 2016 that in a technologically rich world, mobile phone can be used in listening to music and watching videos in which earphones were very functional. Smartphone suitable for an attachable on the go (OTG) with available power bank and tempered and siliconprotective glasses were also considered highly desirable. Smartphone with a stylish case was also sought by some consumers.

Smartphone features that is manufacturer-installed that strongly affect the buying preference is battery type. Smartphone with the current highest rating available in the market 6,000MAH (Mega amperes) and above battery life are highly preferred. In theearlier study performed by J.D. Power and Associates (2012), satisfaction with smartphones was greatly impacted by battery performance and specifically the length of the battery life before recharging is required. It was further found out that satisfaction with battery performance for smartphone ownership increases, so does the demand for manufacturing of the said features. Furthermore, this clearly suggested the need for a big capacity and powerful mobile phone battery that can help the mobile device scrape through daily usage. The performance capabilities and the efficiency of the battery were based on severalfactors: the battery's (MAH) rating being the most important feature had always been synonymous with longer battery life.

Another manufacturer-installed smartphone features that affect the buying preference is the camera pixel. This study confirmed that camera pixel that had twenty (20) mega pixel (MP)and higher strongly affect the buying preference. Smartphones that can be used to collect video and images for creating digital narratives or stories for use as curriculum

resources in which higher megapixel and lens resolution that could easily capture details of the information are also sought.

Storage capacity is another manufacturer-installed smartphone feature that moderately affect their buying preference. Smartphones that can store up to 256 GB(Gigabytes) and higher strongly affect the buying preference. Kim and Colleagues (2013), earlier affirmed that storage performance on mobile devices is important for end-user's experience and its impact is expected to grow due to several reasons. Storage was a significant contributor to application performance on mobile devices, faster networks, computing function and I/O interconnects. These required bigger storage capacity to run several tasks and perform intensive functions.

A fast-phased daily student life consequently requires a Smartphone that has a faster processor. A 5GB and more of RAM for penta-core processor strongly affect the buying preference of college students. There are pedagogical roles that mobile devices play in education, most research has used mobile devices primarily as a sort of reinforcement tool to stimulate motivation and strengthen engagement, and secondarily as a content-delivery tool. Smartphones with large speed processor will be advantageous to handle and perform several instructions and applications. Although students are conscious about the size of the smart phone screen, they considered better visibility, appearance and the current pad of phones with bigger screens can offer. A 5.7 inch-screen and bigger was preferred. Indeed, the study done by Kilter & Armstrong (2007), indicated that college students preferred to purchase mobile phone due to its physical appearance like screen size that could offer better menu organization.

Six (6) indicators of smart phone features that may affect the buying preference of college students showed that accessories particularly earphone ranked first. Battery type, storage capacity, screen size, speed processing and camera pixel respectively followed. Jessica Dolcourt (2013), earlier empirically discussed why higher camera pixel is not desirable for slim smartphone as it limits the sensor size and moving up the megapixel ladder without increasing the sensor size can degrade the photo quality by letting in less light than it could get with slightly fewer megapixels.

Smart phones that perform with wireless connectivity, a built-in web browser, application installation, full programmability, a file management system, multimedia presentation appeal on students for study purposes. Some high-end accessories and screen size that could give support to perform intensive programs and applications thrilled student-consumers.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Male students prefer accessories that can make them the full use of their smart phones while on the move with outmost privacy than female.
2. Earphone is the most preferred after-market accessory by students.
3. Higher ratings speed processing and capabilities of manufacturer-installed features are always sought by student-consumers.
4. Higher camera pixels are not always preferred for it technically hinders other applications considered very useful for student lifestyle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Mobile companies may produce quality and affordable (wireless) earphone connectivity.

2. Manufacturer-installed features may have higher ratings and capacities to cope up with the demands of young and active consumers.
3. Academic officials and professors may create programs and guidelines for the maximum use of smartphones in the classrooms.

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