DETERMINANT OF BRAND PREFERENCE AMONG YOUNG CONSUMERS OF MOBILE PHONES IN EKITI STATE AND LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The study examined the determinants of brand preference among young consumers in Ekiti State and Lagos state. The population comprised four Universities in Lagos state and Ekiti State while the total population consists of 136,000 in the four government owned Universities in both Lagos State and Ekiti State, Nigeria. The total sample size for this was 382. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency distributions, percentages and frequency tables, were used to summarize and relate variables which were obtained from the study. Simple regression analyses were used to determine the association between the variables and to test the hypotheses, with results for brand popularity ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) and product attributes ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). These results showed that brand popularity has a positive relationship with mobile phone brand preference in Ekiti State and Lagos State. The study concluded that customers will consider brand popularity when choosing a mobile phone; customers consider mobile phone features like durability, reliability and portability user friendliness; and size and color influence the choice the customers made of the mobile phone.*

Keywords: Brand Preference, Mobile Phones, Brand Popularity, Young Consumers.

INTRODUCTION

The development of mobile phones and technologies has been an extended history of innovation and advancements cropped up due to dynamic changes in consumers' needs and preferences. Among these developments, mobile phone devices have the fastest adoption rates among all the technology in the world's modern history (Comer & Wikle, 2008). Nowadays, mobile handsets have become an integral part of human daily life and personal communication across the globe. In the current highly competitive mobile phone market, manufacturers constantly fight to find additional competitive edge and differentiating elements to persuade consumers to select their brand instead of a competitor's. To break the major mobile phone services monopoly, the competing mobile phone providers have resorted to niche marketing strategies targeting the youth. The university students provide a niche market that the mobile phone service providers target. Studies have indicated a range of items as a determinant factor influencing purchase decisions. These factors include price, features, quality, brand name, durability and social factors (Li, 2010). Despite the heavy investment of mobile phone companies on innovative products that attract consumers, it remains unclear whether mobile phone consumers in Ekiti and Lagos States and, in particular, university students consider factors such as pricing, physical features, social factor, media influence, brand image, and post sales services in their purchase decisions. Therefore, the study sought to determine the influence of these factors on choice of mobile phone brand among university students in Ekiti and Lagos States. Nowadays, smartphones have become an integral part of human daily life and personal communication across the globe. Almost everyone possesses a smartphone. Due to its integral nature, one simply cannot live without it. Consumers are have alternatives most times due to some factors that they cannot but concern themselves with.

Comer and Wikle (2008) explained that, nowadays, mobile handsets have become an integral part of human daily life and personal communication across the globe. Moreover, in this current highly competitive mobile phone market, manufacturers constantly fight to find additional competitive edge and differentiating elements to persuade consumers to select their brand instead of a competitor's. The competing mobile phone providers have resorted to niche marketing strategies targeting the youth. The university students provide a niche market that the mobile phone service providers target. Studies have indicated a range of items as a determinant factor influencing purchase decisions. These factors include price, features, quality, brand name, durability, social factors (Li, 2010). Despite the heavy investment of mobile phone companies on innovative products that attract consumers, it remains unclear whether mobile phone consumers in Ekiti and Lagos States and in particular university students consider factors such as pricing, physical features, social factor, media influence, brand image, and post sales services in their purchase decisions. Therefore, the study sought to determine the influence of these factors on choice of mobile phone brand among university students in Ekiti and Lagos States.

Zameer, Saeed and Abass (2012) researched on consumer buying behavior of mobile phone devices; they focused more on the features that have been reviewed by existing writers in urban consumers and rural consumers in Pakistan. The only limitation of this research is that it was done in Pakistan and has not been done in Nigeria and the buying behavior of the two countries will surely be different. Therefore, this research wishes to investigate the determinants of consumer preference of smartphone among young mobile phone users in Ekiti and Lagos States, Nigeria.

The study may provide new insights for young consumers of the mobile phone brands. In detail, it might benefit manufacturers producing new brands of mobile phones and develop insights into whether there is any preference for factors affecting consumer preference among young consumers in Lagos and Ekiti; it might also help marketers to identify and adopt the best ways to build brand image for consumers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Preference

Brand preference is strongly linked to brand choice, that is, what attracts consumers towards a brand, that can influence the consumer decision making or their taste too and activate brand purchase. "Brand preferences can be defined as the subjective, conscious and behavioural tendencies which influence consumer's predisposition toward a brand." Understanding the brand preferences of consumers will dictate the most suitable and successful marketing strategies. One of the indicators of the strength of a brand in the hearts and minds of customers (brand preference) represents which brands are preferred under assumptions of equality in price and availability.

Meaning of Mobile Phone

A mobile phone is built on a mobile operating system with more advanced computing capability and connectivity than a feature phone. The first mobile phones combined the functions of a personal digital assistant (PDA) with a mobile phone. Later models added the functionality of portable media players, low-end compact digital cameras, pocket video cameras, and GPS navigation units to form one multi-use device. Many modern smartphones also include high-resolution touch screens and web browsers that display standard web pages as well as mobile-optimized sites. High-speed data access is provided by Wi-Fi and mobile broadband. In recent years, the rapid developments of mobile app markets and of mobile commerce have been drivers of mobile phone adoption (Ilyas & Ahson, 2006).

Consumers

A consumer is a person or group that intends to order or which uses purchased goods, products, or services primarily for personal, social, family, household and similar needs, which is not directly related to entrepreneurial or business activities. A consumer can be either an individual or group that purchases or uses goods and services solely for personal use, and not for manufacturing or resale. They are the end users in the sale of distribution.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design. Descriptive research design describes behavior, attitudes, values and characteristics (Kothari, 2004). The use of descriptive survey research design allowed the factors affecting mobile phone users to be examined. A survey was preferred because it permits accurate estimation of the population parameters and subsequent

generalization (Churchill & Brown, 2007). This design was considered versatile for it allowed the use of questionnaires and collection of data in a relatively short period (Longnecker, 2008). The design permitted the use of quantitative analysis, thus providing empirical evidence on the factors of choice of mobile phone brand. According to Mangan and Lalwani (2004), quantitative research allows for numeric analysis of data.

Population

According to Burns and Bush (2009), population is defined as the entire group under study. It is composed of two groups which are the target population and the accessible population. Population was defined by ErlindaDionco-Adetayo (2011) as the entire group of people, events or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. In respect to this research work, the population for this study will comprise four universities in Lagos States and Ekiti State.

The total population for this study is shown below:

Table 1: Population for the Study

S/N	Institution	Population
1	Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti	25000
2	Federal University OyeEkiti	26000
3	Lagos State University, Ojoo	35000
4	University of Lagos, Akoka	50000
	Total	136000

Sample Size

The sample size for this study will be arrived at by using the Krejcie and Morgan (1979) sample size table. The model of the sample is as shown below:

$$n = \frac{x^2 NP[1-p]}{e^2[N-1]+x^2 p[1-p]}$$

n = sample size

N = population size

e = acceptable sampling error

x^2 = chi-square of degree of freedom 1 and confidence of 95%=3.841

p = proportion of population [if unknown, 0.5].

The total sample size for this study was 382

Method of Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using descriptive as well as inferential statistics. Descriptive data was in the form of means, frequencies and percentages. Factor analysis was used to determine the influence of price, social factors, perceived product feature, image, media and post sale services on the choice of mobile phone brand. Descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages and frequency tables were used to summarize and relate variables which were obtained from the study. Hierarchy regression analysis was used to determine the association between the variables and to test the hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Factors Determining Choosing of Smartphone

The interview questions on the factors considered when choosing a mobile phone as a young consumer were on psychological factors, social factors, cultural factors, personal factors and economic factors; the youth consumers were asked accordingly and there were responses to the questions raised. The psychological factors revealed that sixty-four (27.4%) of the respondents showed no to psychological factors while one hundred and seventy (72.6%) showed that their reason for the action was based on psychological factors. Social factors indicated that sixty (25.6%) of the respondents did not agree with social factors while one hundred and seventy-four (74.4%) of the respondents said yes to the social factors that determined their reason for buying the particular phone.

Cultural factors revealed that one hundred and eighty-two (77.8%) respondents did not consider cultural factors for purchase of smartphones while fifty-two (22.2%) of the respondents considered cultural factors for buying smartphones. Personal factors showed that ninety-three (39.7%) of the respondents declined to yes, while one hundred and forty-one (60.3%) of the respondents asserted yes for personal factors in the purchase of a smartphone. Economic factors showed that thirty-three (14.1%) of the respondents indicated no for economic reasons while two-hundred and one (85.9%) of the respondents indicated that their reason for taking decisions for buying a particular phone was based on a harsh economic situation.

Table 2: Factors Determining Purchase of Smartphone

	Frequency	Percent
Psychological Factor		
No	64	27.4
Yes	170	72.6
Total	234	100.0
Social Factor		
No	60	25.6
Yes	174	74.4
Total	234	100.0
Cultural Factor		
No	182	77.8
Yes	52	22.2
Total	234	100.0

Personal Factor		
No	93	39.7
Yes	141	60.3
Total	234	100.0
Economic Factor		
No	33	14.1
Yes	201	85.9
Total	234	100.0

Table 3 below shows the operating system interview which revealed that thirty-six (15.4%) of the respondents preferred to use IOS while one hundred and ninety-eight (84.6%) of the respondents like IOS in their smartphones. The android interview showed that seventeen (7.3%) of the respondents did not prefer android phone while two hundred and seventeen of the respondents preferred android phone.

Table 3: Operating System of Smartphones

	Frequency	Percent
IOS		
No	36	15.4
Yes	198	84.6
Total	234	100.0
Android		
No	17	7.3
Yes	217	92.7
Total	234	100.0

Attribute of Smartphone Product

Table 4 below reveals the interview regarding inclination of customers towards well-known brands or cost-effective options when selecting a mobile phone. It reveals that sixty (25.6%) of the respondents declined while one hundred and seventy-four (74.4%) of the respondents agreed that brands or cost-effective options were considered in the process of purchase.

The interview revealed that nineteen (8.1%) of the respondents did not consider camera quality while two hundred and fifteen (91.9%) of the respondents considered camera quality before purchasing a smartphone product. Sixty-six (28.2%) of the respondents did not prioritize battery life before deciding on the mobile phone while one hundred and sixty-eight (71.8%) of the respondents prioritized battery life when deciding on the mobile phone before purchase. One hundred and twenty-one (94.4%) of the respondents chose a smartphone with a larger screen size or a compact one for portability while thirteen (5.6%) of the respondents did not. One hundred and ninety-seven (84.2%) of the respondents preferred touch screen functionality or physical buttons on a mobile phone while thirty-seven (15.8%) of the respondents did not. Two hundred and twenty-seven (97%) of the respondents opted for a mobile phone with expanded storage while seven of the respondents did not care about the storage size.

Table 4: Attribute of Smartphone Product

	Frequency	Percent
Brands		
No	60	25.6
Yes	174	74.4
Total	234	100.0
Camera		
No	19	8.1
Yes	215	91.9
Total	234	100.0
Battery Quality		
No	66	28.2
Yes	168	71.8
Total	234	100.0
Screen		
No	13	5.6
Yes	221	94.4
Total	234	100.0
Buttons		
No	37	15.8
Yes	197	84.2
Total	234	100.0
Storage		
No	7	3.0
Yes	227	97.0
Total	234	100.0

Table 5 shows the brand of phones of the youth in public tertiary institutions in Ekiti; it reveals that forty-four (18.8%) had iPhone products while one hundred and ninety (81.2%) did not. Thirty-six (15.4%) of the respondents did not use Techno products while one hundred and ninety-eight (84.6%) of the youth used Techno products. One hundred and one (43.2%) of the respondents did not use Infinix products while one hundred and thirty-three (56.8%) of the respondents used Infinix smartphone products. Sixty-seven (28.6%) of the respondents did not have Samsung products while one hundred and sixty-seven (71.4%) of the respondents used Samsung smartphone products.

Table 5: Brand of Phone

	Frequency	Percent
Iphone		
No	44	18.8
Yes	190	81.2
Total	234	100.0
Techno		
No	36	15.4
Yes	198	84.6
Total	234	100.0

Infinix		
No	101	43.2
Yes	133	56.8
Total	234	100.0
Samsung		
No	67	28.6
Yes	167	71.4
Total	234	100.0

Brand Popularity on Mobile Phone Brand Preference among Young Consumers

To test this hypothesis, the respondents' scores on two variables of brand popularity on mobile phone brand preference among young consumers in Ekiti and Lagos were computed and subjected to simple regression analysis. From Table 4.2, the R (correlation Coefficient) gives a positive value of 0.890; this indicates that there is a very strong and positive relationship between brand popularity and mobile phone brand preference among young consumers in Ekiti and Lagos. The R^2 is a portion of the total variation in the dependent variable that is explained by the variation in the independent variables. From the results obtained, R^2 is equal to 0.792; this implies that brand popularity brought about 79.2% variance in performances in Ekiti State and Lagos State; this is further proven by the adjusted R^2 that shows the goodness of fit of the model which gives a value of 0.791, implying that when all errors are corrected and adjustments are made, the model can only account for 79.1% by brand popularity. The remaining 20.9% are explained by the error term in the model as shown in Table 8.

The unstandardized beta coefficient of brand popularity is 0.482 with t = 29.707 and (p = 0.000 < 0.05). These results showed that brand popularity has a positive relationship with mobile phone brand preference in Ekiti State and Lagos State. This suggests that the customers considered associate brand and brand popularity when choosing a mobile phone. The study confirmed the work of the lookers, the discount-seekers, impulse customers, need based customers, new customers, dissatisfied customers and loyal customers. Mokhlis and Yaakop (2012) found that the new innovative features impact strongly on the choice of mobile phones among university students.

From Table 6 discussion in objective one, and by F-Stat. p-value < .05, it showed that the null hypothesis, brand popularity does not significantly affect mobile phone brand preference in Ekiti State and Lagos State, is not true; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Based on this, we accepted the alternative hypothesis that brand popularity has an effect on mobile phone brand preference in Ekiti State and Lagos State.

Table 6: Brand Popularity on Mobile Phone Brand Preference among Young Consumers

Variable	Coeff.	Std. Error	t-value	Sig.
Constant	0.417	0.034	12.187	0.000
Brand Liability	0.482	0.016	29.707	0.000
R	0.890			
R Square	0.792			
Adj. R Square	0.791			
F Stat.	882.488(0.000)			

Dependent variable: *Mobile phone brand preference*

Product Attributes on Mobile Phone Preference among Young Consumers

To test this hypothesis, the respondents' scores on two variables of product attributes on mobile phones preference among young consumers in Ekiti State and Lagos State were computed and subjected to simple regression analysis. From Table 10, the R (correlation coefficient) gives a positive value of 0.715; this indicates that there is a strong and positive relationship between product attributes on mobile phones preference among young consumers in Ekiti State and Lagos State. The R^2 is a portion of the total variation in the dependent variable that is explained by the variation in the independent variables. From the results obtained, R^2 is equal to 0.512; this implies that product attribute brought about 51.2% variance in mobile phone brand preference in Ekiti State and Lagos State. This is further proven by the adjusted R^2 that shows the goodness of fit of the model which gives a value of 0.509, implying that when all errors are corrected and adjustments are made, the model can only account for 50.9% by product attribute, while the remaining 49.1% are explained by the error term in the model, as shown in Table 10.

The unstandardized beta coefficient of product attributes is 0.870 with t = 19.452 and (p = 0.000 < 0.05). These results showed that product attributes have a positive relationship with mobile phone brand preference in Ekiti State and Lagos State. This implies that customers think mobile phone features like durability, reliability, portability, user friendliness, size and colour influence the choice the customers make of the mobile phone. The work is in line with the work of Karjaluoto et al. (2005) that price, brand, interface, and properties tend to be influential factors affecting the actual choice amongst mobile phone brands.

From Table 7 discussion in objective two, and by F-Stat. p-value < .05, it showed that the null hypothesis, product attribute does not significantly affect mobile phone brand preference in Ekiti State and Lagos State, is not true; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Based on this, we accepted the alternative hypothesis that product attribute has an effect on mobile phone brand preference in Ekiti State and Lagos State.

Table 7: Product Attributes on Mobile Phone Preference among Young Consumers

Variable	Coeff.	Std. Error	t-value	Sig.
Constant	0.486	0.059	8.223	0.000
Product attribute	0.527	0.034	15.586	0.000
R	0.715			
R Square	0.512			
Adj. R Square	0.509			
F Stat.	242.927(0.000)			

Dependent variable: *Mobile phone brand preference*

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that customers consider associate brand and brand popularity when choosing a mobile phone; customers think that mobile phone features like durability, reliability, portability user friendliness, size and colour influence the choice they make of the mobile phone; and the role played by family, culture and opinion leaders influence the brand of mobile phone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study has highlighted the need for a rigorous re-examination of how young customers are involved in the selection of mobile phones in Lagos State and Ekiti State, Nigeria. Customers are putting greater emphasis on perceived brand, price and mobile phone features when selecting phones.

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