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A Study on Factors Influencing the Smartphone Purchase Intention Among Delhi University Students

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Abstract

The importance of smartphones as a primary means for accessing information and communicating has influenced the manner in which college students evaluate and purchase them. This is especially true in economies that heavily rely on technology, such as India. The rapid pace of technological advancement, intense competition among different brands, and the increase in reliance on mobile technology have changes how students view and ultimately purchase devices. The purpose of this paper is to explore the determinants influencing college students' smartphone-purchase behavior through an exploration of existing literature pertaining to smartphone purchasing, to assist in developing a more thorough understanding of college students' purchasing intentions regarding smartphones at a large, demographic diverse university on three main determinants: price; product characteristics; and social influences.

This paper is the product of an extensive research effort, combining methods of conceptual research with existing academic literature, reports, and empirical studies on purchasing intention (s) and purchasing decisions for smartphones to determine the conceptual relationship between prices, technology features and social influence(s) on the way that students (like other groups) reach decisions about purchasing smartphones. In addition to building on the prior research, various demographic variables that have been identified in previous studies are discussed as additional contextual elements to better understand student(s)' smartphone purchase decision-making.

This paper aims at analysing how economic factors such as price; technological characteristics (features of products); and social influences (from friends and family) affect university student buyers' purchasing intention for smartphones. Using university as a context and other relevant studies as a basis for analysis, this paper attempts to fill a gap in the existing literature by providing a conceptual view of students' purchasing intention when purchasing in an academic and urban setting. It is therefore concluded that as technology continues evolving and competition grows in the smartphone industry; marketers, technology providers and researchers who research consumer behaviour must be aware of how university students' purchasing intention are likely to change.

Introduction

Smartphones have seen significant growth in their use among college students, especially due to the vast development of the digital economy in India. At colleges like Delhi University, smartphones have become must-have devices for students to use to communicate, for schoolwork and for entertainment. Smartphones provide students with the ability to engage in mobile learning, socialize and conduct digital transactions, all of which are part of their everyday routines. With the rise of low-cost data plans, advancements in technology, and the push for digitalisation, the growth of smartphones has been fast-tracked for young consumers.

The variety of smartphones has made the decision-making process around purchasing a smartphone more complex than ever before. Students now have to consider many different things, including the price, features, and the influence of other people. Price (whether the device is affordable) is still a major driver for student purchase decisions, but things such as the quality of the camera and battery life improve the perceived value of a device. Furthermore, friends and family influence the brand (the group of companies that produce similar types of products) the student purchases and how they behave when considering what will be purchased.

While there has been a lot of research on the individual factors that affect students purchasing decisions regarding smartphones, there has not been any study that has integrated (combined) these factors together to understand how they impact students' overall purchase intentions. This study will focus on how the combination of price, product features, and social influence affect students' willingness to purchase smartphones at Delhi University who come from diverse socio -economic backgrounds.

This study develops a conceptual framework examining how multiple factors interact to influence student intention to purchase smart phones. In addition, it creates a comprehensive framework that illustrates all the relationships between major determinants, as well as illustrating the different types of trade-offs that students face when they make decisions related to their purchase.

Research Problem

Smartphones are extremely important to nearly every single student. However, most research done on purchase determinants of smartphones have been generally piecemeal in their approach. They have focused on either (1) price elasticity, (2) tech preference, (3) social-networking impact, (4) etc., and rarely examine all these perspectives together. In India, there is also a significant lack of research that integrates the economic, technological, and social factors concerning smartphones in a university-type environment, such as Delhi University, with its 70,000+ students, a majority of whom are tech-savvy, price-sensitive, and have an active peer culture. Accordingly, there is no overall model explaining how students at DU weigh (1) price (both cost and value), (2) product features (such as camera quality or storage capacity), (3) social factors (such as peer and/or family advice), when making their smartphone purchase decision.

It is essential to recognize the importance of this gap in understanding how integrated views can help guide marketers and researchers to identify which variables are the most important, as well as how the different variables interact with one another. For example; can a student trade camera quality for a more affordable price? Is the recommendation of friends enough to outweigh any concerns regarding price? The challenge is to systematize the way in which these dynamics are conceptualized. The other point necessary to keep in mind is that demographic factors (i.e., family income, gender, field of study) may act as moderators for any of these influences. Unfortunately, the majority of existing studies looking at youth's adoption of smartphones do not analyze these aspects of variability. Therefore, the research problem is the absence of a multi-dimensional examination of DU students' purchase intentions of smartphones that considers the interaction between price, product characteristics, and social

influences through a proper theoretical lens.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the effect of **price** on purchase intention of smartphones among Delhi University students.
2. To examine the role of **social influence** (peer and family impact) in students' smartphone purchase decisions.
3. To evaluate the impact of **product features** (e.g. camera, battery, storage) on students' purchase intentions.
4. To compare the **relative importance** of price, social influence, and product features in driving purchase intention.

Literature Review - Price

Price is one of the main elements of economics that drives how people behave when making a purchasing decision. For students, who often find themselves on tight budgets, they are typically very sensitive to price. When it comes to purchasing a smartphone, young people consider affordability to be one of the most important criteria. The purchase intention of many students in India (where they have limited disposable income) is also affected by how fairly priced, and how much perceived value, they feel is being offered when purchasing a smartphone. Value-for-money is a primary driver of price perception. An expensive smartphone can still be perceived as value-for-money because of its functional capabilities and performance level being greater than what would otherwise be expected from that price point. Conversely, if a smartphone is priced less than what would be expected based on how it functions, that smartphone can also be considered value-for-money.

Price sensitivity is also affected by the financial access channels available to students such as financing through an EMI plan or promotional offer or being eligible for a coupon. Students are less likely to make an impulse buy if they know they will have access to the flexibility of different payment options even for higher-priced smartphones than if they just see the prices change because of a temporary promotional offer or the introduction of a new model.

In general, price has a direct effect by reducing the intent to purchase and an indirect effect by affecting the perceived value of the product, the availability and utilization of promotion, and the ability to afford the product. By examining these dynamics, we can learn much about what factors related to price students at the University of Delhi consider when making their selection of smartphones.

Social Influence (Peer & Family Impact)

One of the most impactful aspects of purchasing decisions regarding smartphones among college students is social influence. As peers often help shape students' preferences within the university setting, many times it is friends and classmates who provide suggestions for products as well as give guidance to make smart product selections.

When a particular smartphone brand is popular among members of a group, it creates a bandwagon effect, causing others in the group to adopt a similar smartphone .Social media amplifies social influence because it continues to expose students to trends, reviews, and endorsements from influencers. As a result, students may choose a smartphone based on personal preferences and what they see in their social circles as socially acceptable or desirable.

Family also plays a role in decision-making, particularly if parents are financially tied to the students' purchases. Family members tend to focus on reliability, brand reputation, and long-term value. The influence of social influence is not always equally experienced. While it will typically have a strong influence on the decision-making processes of individuals when there is uncertainty, individual preferences and limitations created by cash budgets will also serve to limit the effectiveness of social influence.

Overall, through a majority of social influences that affect a person's intention to purchase tend to have a positive yet contextual impact upon the likelihood of making a purchase.

Product Features

Smartphone product features are some of the key technological attributes of the phones and are therefore a key element in how the consumer evaluates them. Product features can come in the form of hardware specifications, including battery life, storage capacity, camera quality and performance of the processor, as well as how easy-to-use the software is and the design elements of the phone.

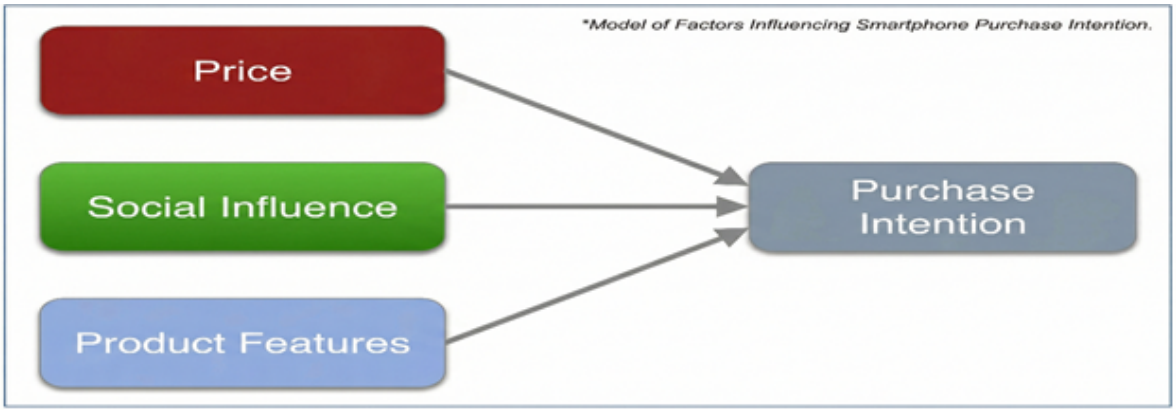
A student tends to use their smartphone for different purposes, including for academic work, social interaction, and entertainment. As a result of this, product features such as long battery life, high quality cameras and sufficient storage space are very important for this user group. All of these characteristics improve the usability of the devices and also have an impact on their perceived value. Smartphone manufacturers have increased their use of and the availability of cutting-edge technological features in their smartphones because of the intense competition in this market. This has also raised the expectations of students, and feature comparison is now a critical part of how students make a decision on which smartphone or smartphone service to use.

In summary, when the product features of a smartphone are improved, it increases the attractiveness of that smartphone and has a positive impact on the purchase intention of the consumer. Additionally, the relative importance of each feature to the user will differ depending upon the user's normal use of their smartphones and their own personal priorities.

Purchase Intention

The likelihood of purchasing something is termed purchase intention and therefore is a predictor of actual behavior. Purchase intentions are influenced by attitudes about the product (including things such as price or features), subjective norms (how our peers influence us), and how much control we think we have over being able to buy the product.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) looks at how our attitudes about aspects of a product (such as price and features) and the subjective norms we perceive in society (the social influence) and our perceived ability to purchase/use the product all work together in forming our intentions. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) relies on the perceptions of usefulness we derive from the features of the product or service when creating our purchasing intention. Functional (useful) and social factors play a role in the formation of students' purchase intentions; however, the strength of these factors cannot be generalized by context or individual motivations but can be established in each situation.



Research Methodology

This is conceptual study (no new surveys or experimental data collected). Utilized extensive reviews of existing academia, industry reports, and/or relevant empirical studies besides "consumer behavior" research in/from purchase of mobile phones. Combination of insights from prior research used to form a coherent theoretical understanding of the relationship between price, product features, and social influence as it relates to the smartphone buying intentions of students. While we analyzed a number of published studies conducted globally and in India to identify greater constructs and propose associations among them, our focus is on building a theory and not measuring them. This coincides with a conceptual research methodology in which secondary sources are synthesized and then added to rather than gathering new data.

Relationships among Variables

Price → Purchase Intention: We hypothesize a generally positive effect of perceived value and a negative effect of high cost. A reasonable price enhances intention by improving perceived affordability. If students see the price as fair for the features offered, they are more likely to intend to buy. Conversely, if the price is deemed too high relative to their budget, intention decreases. Price also enters as price sensitivity: students who are highly price-sensitive may forgo additional features or brands to stay within budget.

Social Influence → Purchase Intention: It is assumed that there is a generally positive relationship between social influence and purchase intention (i.e., when friends and/or family have recommended a model and/or brand, the purchase intention of the student will be increased; additionally, social (i.e., seeing numerous peers with a particular phone) can be positively impactful on purchase intention). An example of this is a popular influencer promoting a specific phone, which may produce a normative pressure for students to purchase the phone; however, the strength of this social influence can vary depending on the strength of the individual's preferences (e.g., if a student has a set budget and a defined feature that they would like to attain, the student may disregard the phone choices of their peers for those reasons).

Product Feature → Purchase Intention: If a product has several or all the right tech features, it will attract more people to buy it. For instance, if a student wants a phone mainly for taking photos and social media, he/she would be more inclined to purchase a phone with a excellent camera. A student that needs a long-lasting battery will also have this same level of intent. Also, someone that wants to use a phone mainly for apps, video, photos etc., will want as much memory/storage as possible on the phone. Ultimately, more features (and therefore utility) result in an increased likelihood of buying the product.

Limitations

1. Limited Scope of Research: The results are specific to university students at Delhi University and may not apply to older adults or younger teenagers who have different needs and ways of making decisions.

2. Limited Focus on Context: The study deals only with students at Delhi University and doesn't deal with differences based on geography or culture in India. The nature of students at DU (i.e., urban, competitive, and diverse) makes it unreasonable to generalize results to rural colleges or other types of schools.

3. Use of Secondary Data: The model is based solely on secondary data (i.e., published literature and reports), and therefore carries potential publication bias. In addition, unpublished information/rapidly changing market conditions may influence some of the relationships in the model.

4. Exclusion of Other Factors: The research study does not include all factors that may have an effect on how consumers make decisions about smartphones (e.g., brand image, after-sale service, marketing communications). Therefore, while these factors may be significant, they are outside of the three key drivers for consumers' smartphone decisions.

5. Rapidly Changing Market Conditions: The market for smartphones is changing rapidly (i.e., new product features, price competition, and government regulation such as tariffs on phone components). The relative importance of the key drivers for consumers' smartphone decisions can also change dramatically based on changes in the market, so this model may need to change often based upon the differences in market conditions.

Future Scope

1. Conducting Empirical Validation: To empirically validate the relationships outlined above, surveys or experiments can be conducted on actual students at Delhi University to test the proposed relationships. For instance, researchers can measure how changes in price, and/or peer recommendations, quantitatively impact a student's intention to purchase a smartphone.
2. Incorporating Additional Variables: Variables such as brand image/reputation, quality of after-sale service, availability of financing, and brand loyalty can be added to the model to extend its range. For a student, variables such as student discounts and EMI options may be particularly relevant.
3. To conduct Comparative Studies: The framework could also be applied to conduct comparative studies between other universities in India (for example, IITs or state colleges) in order to compare their respective results. Cross-cultural comparisons (for example, between urban and rural campuses) would provide greater insight into the impact of context on the factors being studied.
4. Conducting Longitudinal Research: The intention and behaviour of students can also be studied longitudinally to examine how these change over time, particularly as new smartphone technologies emerge. For example, the emergence of 5G technology, as well as new features utilizing artificial intelligence, will affect the relative importance of technical attributes and price to students.

Conclusion

As smartphones are now essential for students' studies as well as connecting with others, it is critical to understand what drives their intention to buy these devices. This conceptual paper brought together three important factors – price (defined by both how much students could actually afford to pay for a phone and what they think about the kind of value they get from a phone) and how much both family and peer influence affect recommendations and social norms for purchasing a particular model of a phone; and technical (the various features of the phone such as the camera, battery and storage capability). The findings showed that both of these are important contributors to a student's final decision to purchase. Additionally, it found evidence for trade-offs or compromises that students make when deciding on what phone to buy. For example, there were many instances in which students having a high-quality phone with all of the latest features were willing to sacrifice purchasing a phone (based on its cost) to keep to a strict budget; and in some cases, when the student is trying to decide between two different models of phones based on their perception of the quality of the phone, social forces may have played a key role in determining which model of phone they ultimately purchased.

The research findings indicate that there are many factors beyond just one alone that will contribute to an understanding of how students in India intend to buy smartphones. In order to understand the purchase intention of students, all three dimensions must be looked at together, along with the context of an ever-changing economy for digital devices. By looking at all three dimensions with the availability of evolving smartphone technology and changing market conditions, stakeholders will be able to determine what students prefer when creating products to market to them, thus better serving this large group of consumers.