

A Study of Smartphone Features as Antecedents of Brand Affect in Gujarat State in India

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Abstract

The Indian smartphone segment is growing at a as the device has become an indispensable part of the lives of people. Because of the important role that it plays in our daily life, it is expected that some form of attachment or feelings would be experienced by consumers with their brands. The aim of the study is to study whether the features provided in smartphones influence the development of feelings/affect towards the brands. Six features are mentioned by respondents in a pilot survey and using survey data from 215 respondents in two cities in Gujarat, it is found that some features like brand performance, brand image and design have a significant influence on brand affect formation. Marketers of smartphones can keep improving on these significant features so that consumers develop an emotional bond with their brands.

Key Words: brand affect, smartphone features, smartphone, brand image, design, performance

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2023, as per www.statista.com, the smartphone penetration in India has reached 71 percent with an estimated user base of 1 billion. This multi functionality device has become indispensable for most people.

There is also tremendous rivalry in the smartphone market with market shares changing for every quarter. However, Indians continue to spend on

premium brands also because of easy financing options.

Marketers are trying to build emotional connection with their consumers as a means to retain loyalty of customers. One of the ways they do this is by upgrading the handsets by providing the latest and high tech features.

It is therefore necessary to study whether the features provided by marketers including after sales service and the brand image have any effect on the development of positive feelings in consumers for the brands.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand affect

As early as 1997, Richins recognized the important role that feelings and affect play in consumer decision making. Brand affect is the positive feelings that a consumer has for a brand.

Babin and Babin (2001) have found in a retail store context that feelings have an influence on perceived value and purchase intentions.

Jayanti (1995) found that affective evaluations are more accessible in memory than simple evaluations and so influence evaluations positively.

Smartphone features

Several studies have been carried out in different countries to understand the smartphone features which are considered by consumers to be important while purchasing. (Azira Rahim et al 2016, Chow, M. M., 2011, Karjaluoto et al. 2005)

Karjaluoto et al. (2005) found price, brand, interfaces, size as well as services were important factors. Chenjerai Mudondo (2014) identified how social reference group factors influence millennial mobile phone purchasing behaviour.

Bhattacharya, S. and Mitra, S. (2012) identified brand related factors like brand experience, brand attributes and brand personality as influential factors.

In India, Malviya, Saluja, &Thakur (2013) carried out a study in Indore city to understand which smartphone features have an effect on purchase intention as well as actual purchase.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study whether the features of smartphones play a role in the development of brand love in consumers
2. To study the relative importance of the smartphone features in the development of brand affect in consumers

METHODOLOGY

Pilot study

A pilot exploratory study was conducted with 15 respondents to understand what aspects of the smartphone device are considered important when using the devices. Nearly 32 factors were listed. To facilitate further analysis, these factors were divided into categories as follows:

1. Design and build quality – sleekness, slim, color, size, weight
2. Phone performance- processor and RAM, camera
3. After sales service- regular updates, repairs
4. Security features- face recognition, encryption, secure boot
5. Brand image- personality of the brand, reputation, familiarity, country of origin
6. Value for money -Price MRP, offers, discounts, deals

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are studied:

H1: There is a significant difference between the two groups of Design feature in terms of Brand affect

H2: There is a significant difference between the two groups of Security feature in terms of Brand affect

H3: There is a significant difference between the two groups of Performance feature in terms of Brand affect

H4: There is a significant difference between the two groups of Value for money feature in terms of Brand affect

H5: There is a significant difference between the two groups of After sales service feature in terms of Brand affect

H6: There is a significant difference between the two groups of Brand image feature in terms of Brand affect

Sampling

This study is descriptive in nature and involves personal interviews with smartphone consumers in the cities of Ahmedabad and Vadodara in Gujarat.

Convenience sampling was followed. A total of 215 valid responses were received.

Data analysis

Analysis of survey data is done using the independent t-test, in which the continuous dependent variable is Brand affect and the independent variables are the smartphone features each of which has two groups/levels.

The testing is done at a significance level (also called alpha) of 0.05.

Normality test revealed that the dependent variable Brand Affect was normally distributed within each group for all the independent variables.

Homogeneity of variance was assessed by Levene's Test for Equality of Variances. The results show that this assumption is violated for two independent variables viz. Brand image and Performance. Therefore, a non parametric test Kruskal Wallis test was run on the data

The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in Brand affect score between the different groups of Brand image $\chi^2 = 14.623, p = 0.000$, with a mean rank brand affect score of 51.50 for levels of affect and a mean rank brand affect score of 26.35 for high levels of affect.

This test also showed that there was a statistically significant difference in Brand affect score between the different groups of Performance perception $\chi^2 = 14.231, p = 0.001$, with a mean rank brand affect score of 15.50 for low levels of affect and 41.46 mean rank brand affect score for high levels of affect.

FINDINGS

Once the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance was tested, the independent t test was run on the data and the results are discussed below:

Table : 2 Results of Independent t test			
Sr. No	Phone feature	t value	Significance
1	Design and build quality	6.474	0.000
2	Security	2.947	0.211
3	Performance	3.946	0.000
4	Value for Money	1.195	0.237
5	After sales service	1.647	0.118
6	Brand image	3.368	0.001

It can be inferred from the above table that the smartphone features of Design, Performance and Brand image significantly play a role in the development of Brand affect. However, the influence of Security features, Value for Money and After sales service is not significant in the development of Brand affect. This could be explained by the fact that the latter features are experienced by the customers either while purchasing the phone or once in a while during the period of ownership of the phone.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that some features of smartphones do affect positively the development of affect for the brands. However, not all features play this role.

Marketers can use this finding to emphasize those features which have an impact on developing positive emotions for the brand.

LIMITATIONS:

Since this study is carried out in Gujarat state the findings may not be generalizable to the country as a whole.

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