

THE RISE OF AN APPARATGEIST: FACTORS AFFECTING BANGKOK-BASED CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION FOR SMART PHONES

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Abstract: *Mobile phones are devices that some of us cannot do without. Indeed, for some of us, a growing legion, it is impossible to imagine a day in our lives without a mobile phone beside us. So, in our era of Internet and Social Networking, the introduction of Smartphones into the mobile industry was bound to happen. Smartphones have brought about changes around us in our daily lives like no other device in our contemporary era. The purpose of this research is to better understand consumers' taste for Smartphones by studying different factors affecting consumer intention to purchase a Smartphone over other mobile phones and study the main factors leading to this change in purchase intention. The dependent variable for this research is Purchase Intention and the independent variables are Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Brand Image, Price, and Product Knowledge. These factors are based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the concept of marketing mix, and Kotler's Buyer Decision Process. Five hypotheses were developed. Descriptive Research was used, applying the Survey Techniques and under Quota Sampling Methods. 400 questionnaires were collected from selected outlets in Bangkok Metropolitan. The results show that Brand Image is the main factor that is considered when a consumer intends to buy a Smartphone. Following closely is the Price factor.*

Key words: *Smartphone, Purchase Intention, Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Usefulness, Product Knowledge and Brand Image.*

1. Introduction

The mobile phone industry is a highly competitive and fast-evolving industry. Although the global mobile market keeps growing, competition among the leading companies keeps increasing as well. To maintain their competitive edge, it is therefore necessary for companies to understand from a customer's perspective the factors influencing the purchase of their products. Once mere computational devices, they have developed into an expression of lifestyles (Castells, 2006). This study aims to investigate consumers' intention to purchase a Smartphone.

Personal Computer Magazine (PCMAG) defines a Smartphone as a cellular phone with built-in applications

Rabi Singh Thokchom is a graduate from Assumption University, Bangkok. He also finished Bachelors in Engineering from J.N.T.U.C.E.H, India. and internet access. Smartphones provide digital voice services and text messaging and additional features such as emailing, web browsing, still and video cameras, mp3 (Moving Picture Experts Group Layer-3) player, video viewing to name

a few. The four main features in a web enabled phone are Voice, Messaging, Web browsing, Personal Information Management (PIM) functionality, and Miscellaneous. The major players in the Smart phone market are Apple, Research in Motion (RIM), High Tech Computer (HTC), Samsung, Google, Motorola, Sony Ericsson, and Lucky and Goldstar (LG). The most successful brands among these various companies are Apple Iphone, which created a revolution in the history of Smartphones, Blackberry by RIM, and the latest Galaxy tab by Samsung. The major types of Smartphones are PDA, 3G, Android and Touch screen.

Livingstone, A. (2004), argues that in the near future, people will use Smart phones more than computers to access the internet. According to a March 2011 article in the Bangkok Post, 137 million units of Smart phones are projected to be sold in the year 2011 alone. It is estimated that by 2015, 54% of all mobiles sold in Asia will be Smart phones. In 2010, there were approximately 66 million mobile phone users in Thailand (Thailand Business News, 2010)

To conduct this study, various consumers based in the Bangkok metropolitan were surveyed in selected mobile marts in Bangkok. This research seeks to answer the following questions:

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