

Changing Dynamics of Brand Loyalty: Determinants of Mobile Phone Buying Behavior among Youngsters

– Arnab Chakraborty*

Assistant Professor, Amity Global Business School, Amity University, Noida
✉ achakraborty@amity.edu  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5246-506X>

– Mamta Chawla

Assistant Professor, Amity Global Business School, Amity University, Noida
✉ mchawla@amity.edu  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7161-2598>

– Aparajita Dasgupta Amist

Dean, Amity Global Business School, Amity University, Noida
✉ adgupta@amity.edu  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7453-5858>



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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The concept of brand loyalty holds huge importance to the organizations. Most successful organizations were able to create one or more successful brands under their umbrella which provides them brand equity and a loyal customer base, which acts as a competitive edge for a brand over others. In recent times, especially the mobile phone market saw revolutionary changes in terms of technology, foreign investments and new players coming and giving a plethora of options to the buyers. The ultimate gainer is the final buyer, but the phenomenon of brand loyalty has undergone a change among Indians. There is a scuffle among many existing and new players for gaining market share in India and the trend shows an alarming situation for marketers and brand managers. If proven true, it can change the entire trend of traditional branding. The trend of buying of mobile phones among University students, who are the heavy users of smartphones has changed in a peculiar pattern. Hence the research attempts to study the buying behaviour of university students determine the factors influencing brand loyalty among youngsters

Methodology: The study followed a descriptive research design. A questionnaire is devised on Google Forms and administered to the sample elements chosen by convenience sampling method. Hypothesis are tested through SPSS.

Conclusion: Awareness of features and higher risk appetite of youngsters have prompted them to try newer options with superior feature. It has been found that the overall brand loyalty of consumers, in terms of mobile phone buying has reduced considerably and they have become more of value seekers. Quality, servicing and looks. Gender, level of education and peer group were not found to play any role in the brand selection.

Paper Type: Research Thought

KEYWORDS Brand Loyalty | Buying Behaviour | Consumer Awareness | India | Mobile Phone Market

*Corresponding Author (Arnab et Al)

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Introduction:

The huge Indian mobile phone market is luring the global players to encash tremendous expansion through tapping the untouched growing market. The market is flooded with many Indian and global manufacturers in the past decade. India witnessed a revolution in the field of communication technology in the last two decades. The market experienced several ups and down and many brands and products entered, grew, conquered it for some time and out of the scenario now. Naming a few can be Nokia, Micromax, Samsung, and currently Xiaomi.

The pace at which the mobile industry has grown is unparalleled in the world. – India is the world’s largest mobile data consuming nation No 1 in the world. It is estimated in the next ten years the Indian economy will grow from the present two and half trillion to over seven trillion dollars a year and rank among the top three economies in the world. One undeniable fact of the smart phone mobile industry in the last several years is that the Chinese brands are on the rise. XIOMI was founded eight years ago with no prior experience what so ever its rise in the world is almost as fast as Nokias fall. Peter Lau founded one Plus and was considered one of the best received smart phones in the world. While Samsung was still dominant in China selling one out of every five phones and now Samsung contributes only 1% percent of the market share in China.

The face of the Indian mobile user is changing and Bharat comprising of tier 2 and tier 3 and rural India is bringing first time users coming online and in addition mobile adoption is growing across all demographics. The Indian consumers are moving far away from the traditional means of content to more convenient one to one interactions enabled by the mobile it being either gaming, shopping, mobile, video viewing is

now the primary screen for the users. The gender diversity in mobile users shows an improvement, and the smart phone user base which was around 6.2% of the population around five years back has almost increased to 24% in 2018. The mix is significantly changing when it comes to the digital user and this is being led largely by mobile.

Gaming is actually also becoming a very interesting marketing opportunity. In the year 2020 there were around 250 mln plus mobile gaming users in India and in the next two -three years it is expected to increase to over a 100 mn resulting in 300 mn plus users. The pace at which the gaming market is growing is enormous and interestingly the time spent on a daily basis is more than an hour. In the gaming landscape it is interesting to note there is a higher skew of women so where as the average split of users is 73%: 27% male Vs female; gaming has actually 43% in terms of time spent coming from women which is very interesting in mobile usage.

The mobile handset market in India has dynamic competition over the last few years. It saw how Samsung beat Nokia in few years with its dual sim large screen technology Galaxy Series. It saw the time when some of the Indian companies like Micromax, Lava, Intex, Karbonnetc had 54% market share in terms of volume beating the South Korean giant Samsung handsomely.

The last couple of years are fiercer in terms of completion. Where Samsung is trying to hold on its position and market share, the Chinese companies have captured almost 55% of the large Indian Mobile Handset market. Xiaomi leading the brigade is having 29% of the total market share and came out with flying colors. For the last one year it has tried to hold on its number 1 position and being able to manage it perfectly.

India Smartphone Shipments Market Share (%)	2018 Q1	2018 Q2	2018 Q3	2018 Q4	2019 Q1
Xiaomi	31%	28%	27%	27%	29%
Samsung	26%	28%	23%	20%	23%
Vivo	6%	12%	10%	10%	12%
Oppo	6%	9%	8%	7%	7%
Realme	–	1%	3%	8%	7%
Others	31%	22%	29%	28%	22%

Source: www.counterpointresearch.com

Chinese companies have always fought on the basis of value pricing. In a country where the word ‘Chinese’ is presumed to be a poor quality, dumped and cheap product; these Chinese companies are successful in capturing the market by offering at par quality products with the likes of Samsung and LG. The market dynamics and forced

the South Korean giant Samsung to lower the prices of its existing range of products and to launch new products with good configuration in low price. The examples are Samsung A series and M series mobile launched in the first quarter of 2019.



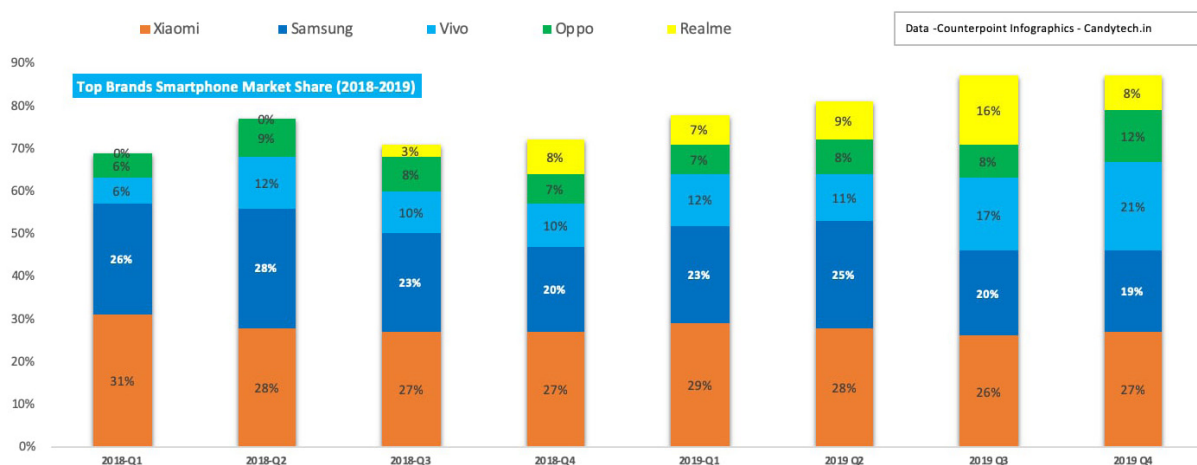
As per a Nielsen report and the Indian express surveys, in 2014 Micromax launched canvas knight which was hugely successful and was original in its concept. They tried to diversify by creating a sub brand ‘Yu’ which was targeted to the premium user in the Rs 20,000 range and then came in Oppo, Xiaomi and Real me they launched their phones at reasonable prices and increased smart phone usage in India. The Chinese players had an advantage because the economies of scale was already there for them in China and they could have the best processor for the least price, where as India would have found it very difficult to match since they were dependent on the Chinese manufacturer’s. Oppo then came into India as a premium player – the first phone they came take on the iPhone. The cost reduction is happening on the duties - for e.g. a phone which costs Rs 100 + duties it will be Rs 110 but because they are manufacturing a part in India they are able to sell the phone at Rs 100/ or even Rs 102/ . The Chinese offered offered specifications a spec driven market offering a 16MP camera or a full HD display under Rs 15,000/ than the Indian players which failed to innovate.

The Chinese players emphasis was on the specs market because their focus was the online market - an E.g. a Phone costing Rs 10,000 and a micromax phone at Rs 9090 / and compare the equivalent of Xiaomi and Micromax their offering were much more for the same price. Most of the Chinese companies came into India primarily in the online sale presence and set up their offline later and how they captured the market. New players will come since the market is changing drastically in India, such as Real me has really pulled Xiaomi. The mid-range market in India is still dominated by Realme / Xiaomi / OnePlus / Oppo / Vivo. Although Samsung has gained some market presence with its M-series but largely the Chinese vendors dominate the market. The reason for growth in this market is the aggressive pricing and specs which is offered to the customer. All these

products most of the mid-range products are getting assembled in India for most of the Chinese companies and they get a tax benefit. About 4-5 years HTC came and the J series -and then Chinese manufacturers started giving extremely good specs in the market. And that is how Xiaomi captured the market. Samsung in the current situation of COVID had a huge opportunity to capture the market effectively but their new M series pricing has been unable to do so in the current mid range market. The Indian companies such as Karbon , Spice, Lava, and Micromax have lost its space in the mobile industry in India.

Now, such dynamic market equation gives rise to certain questions in terms on marketing and branding. Is the concept of brand loyalty being a myth for new age customers? I strongly feel the answer is and obvious YES! At least after seeing the current ups and downs in the market share of Indian Mobile handset market one can definitely say that the customers are becoming more and more value conscious. The traditional marketing concepts of Brand Value is not holding anymore where an established brand kept on enjoying the market leadership just because of its brand value. Time has come that the companies start introspecting.

Once in 2014, a company like Micromax is struggling for its existence by the year 2019. What has governed the buying behavior is quite explicit. The customers are looking for quality products offering better features in lesser (or competitive price). Here one should not get confused by the term “lesser price”. A competitive price with greater features and quality will be readily accepted by the new age consumer. It’s the era of awareness, the power of information! Where the reviews of existing users go viral in no time and decide the success or failure of a product. The change in the buying pattern and consumer behavior is such that a new brand named Realme captured 8% of the total Indian mobile handset market in just less than a year. The market share has fluctuated in the market and stood something like this:



Although rise of Chinese Mobile manufacturers is a concern for India in terms of data security. Almost half of the countries personal and financial data is in the hands of Chinese companies. Experts always raise concerns over the scenario that it can be mishandled by the Chinese at the time of any adversaries in bilateral relation between the two countries which were not amiable since 1962 Indo – Chinese war and a large unmarked border in many patches.

Apart from security issues, it's the issue of draining the country's money to Chinese. Foreign companies capturing Indian markets are causing trade imbalance of already skewed Indian Foreign trade equation due to import of fossil fuel. It is in the favour of India in long run if existing and new Indian companies can rise and give a tough competition to Chinese and other foreign manufacturing companies with cutting edge technology, quality products with value pricing.

Scope of the Study:

To decide the success and failure of a new mobile brand, the acceptability of the brand among the youths of a country plays a major role. This study tries to identify the acceptability and brand preference of mobile handsets among the students of Amity University, Noida, and some other private Universities of Delhi-NCR. The reason of selecting University students' buying behavior is that they represent the youth in true sense and studying their buying patterns can help identify the changes in buying behavior of the market. Also, the students in NCR have considerable purchasing power and also, they make up a huge portion of the population.

Even a minute change in the concept of consumer loyalty will have a huge impact on marketing and branding activities of organizations across the globe. Changing in consumer loyalty will not only change the branding but also the advertising communication. In case of widely used commodity like mobile phone, this has more significance. The emotional value concept of the brand is also at stake if the concept of consumer loyalty is changed.

There will be deep rooted changes in the concept of value proposition, as today's consumer is more inclined towards tangible and monetary benefits. This change could be because of increased product awareness and availability of at par quality products with better attributes and benefits to end consumers.

Research Objective:

Broad objective of the present research is to identify determinants of mobile phone buying behavior of university students. More precisely the secondary objective is to explore brand loyalty among them for a technology based product like mobile instrument. The following can be stated as the objective of this study:

- To identify relationship between demographics of university students and their mobile phone buying behavior.
- To explore brand loyalty and brand switching behavior among university students.

Literature Review:

Dewanti, 2011 in his work measured the influence of emotional branding, experiential marketing and brand trust towards consumer brand loyalty. For the research paper a sample of 100 consumers were interviewed and their responses were recorded carefully. Finally, the author concluded that experimental marketing had substantial influence towards building brand trust among consumers. On the other hand, emotional branding had significance influence towards brand loyalty of the consumers.

There is a lack of clear definition of brand loyalty (Yehia and Massimo, 2016). Yet there is in total two components of brand loyalty- behavioral and attitudinal. Behavioral loyalty is repeated buying of the same brand in a product category whereas attitudinal loyalty is a conscience positive attitude towards the brand poses by the consumer which reflects into buying intention.

Brand Name and Image- Brand Image defined as concept, feeling and attitudes about a brand (Khundyz, 2018). Three major component of it are functional/ utilitarian, emotional and image-related/ symbolic.

The buying behavior of Indian market is so dynamic and rapidly changing that even a research on the same topic becomes meaningless if the study is a couple of year old. So, there is always a scope of research on this topic, or in other words, there is a research gap that gets created very soon after any research happens. We, as authors of this paper tried to do this study based on this research gap.

Research Methodology:

The study is done by using a survey method where an online questionnaire is administered to the sample. The research is based on a single cross sectional, descriptive type research design where we have tried to describe the changing brand loyalty and buying patterns among buyers.

The researchers have used both primary and secondary data for this study. Secondary data is mostly gathered from internet whereas the primary data is collected by administration of an online questionnaire to the respondents.

The sampling method used for this study is convenience and judgmental sampling. The researchers have used their personal contacts and students as per their convenience and pure judgement. The sample size for this study is 146 respondents.



Analysis & Interpretation:

Following table-1 present demographics of the university students who responded to the google forms. Majority i.e. 68 percent were boys among total 146 respondents. And almost 60 percent were in the Masters. 60 percent were having monthly pocket money less than ten thousand. Out of all 48 percent have bought their mobile in the last one year. Only 17 percent i.e. 25 out of 146 are owning same mobile for more than four years. Interestingly, 38 percent are owning Apple brand and 50 percent wants to continue with the same brand

Table-1. Sample Demographics and Mobile Brand usage Behavior

Characteristic	Group	Cases	Percentages
Gender	Male	100	68.5
	Female	46	31.5
Education Level	Under graduate	61	41.8
	Post graduate	85	58.2
Personal monthly average pocket money/ Income	Less than Rs 5000	39	26.7
	Rs 5001 - Rs 10,000	51	34.9
	Rs 10,001 –Rs 15,000	29	19.9
	More than Rs 15001	27	18.5
How long have you been using current Mobile phone?	For Less than 6 months	33	22.6
	For 6 months to 1 yr	38	26.0
	For 1 to 2 Yrs	30	20.5
	For 2 to 4 yrs	20	13.7
	For more than 4 yrs	25	17.1
Present Mobile Brand	Apple/iPhone	56	38.4
	OnePlus	24	16.4
	Mi	25	17.1
	Oppo	2	1.4
	Samsung	26	17.8
	Vivo	6	4.1
	Other	7	4.8
Next Mobile Brand in the future Will Be	Same Brand	75	51.4
	Different Brand	60	41.1
	Not Sure	11	7.5

In the following Table 2 details of importance is different selection criteria are listed with the responses in percentage. Less than half of the university students consider Price value for money as Most important selection criteria. Almost 60 percentages give importance to design while picking up mobile phone. Whereas, university students have no consensus about importance of promotion (ads and offers) done by different mobile brands. But comparatively 54 percentage of respondent consider offers as an important selection criterion. Interestingly, colleagues and friends doesn't influence selection of mobile phones. But university students have consensus about importance of quality and especially about mobile features. More than 50 percentage assign importance to after sale.

Clearly, the most important selection criteria for university students are features, quality, design and after-sale. Brand name comes after all these criteria by the majority.

Table-2. Mobile Brand preference Criterion of University Students

	Not Important at all	Somewhat Important	not sure	Most Important	Most Important
	1	2	3	4	5
Price – value for money	5.48	3.42	20.55	24.66	45.89
Looks/ product design	0.00	0.68	9.59	30.14	59.59
Brand Name	1.37	0.68	14.38	32.88	50.68
Company advertisements / celebrity endorsing the brand	28.08	20.55	23.97	10.96	16.44
Company offers and Discount	7.53	8.90	28.77	21.23	33.56
Peer Pressure i.e. family/friends recommendation	19.18	18.49	34.25	15.07	13.01
Perception about Quality	0.00	1.37	8.22	27.40	63.01
Various features-storage/ screen resolution/ camera resolution etc.	0.00	0.00	4.10	14.40	81.50
After Sale service/ warranty	0.68	4.11	10.96	28.77	55.48

Hypothesis Testing- Role of Demographics

Hypothesis 1- there is no significant difference based on gender preference for the mobile brand preference

Chi-Square Tests- Gender and Future Mobile Brand preference

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.444a	2	.486
Likelihood Ratio	1.451	2	.484
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.168	1	.280
N of Valid Cases	146		

Pearson Chi-square significance is not less than .05, hence there is no significant relationship between gender and continuing with same brand of mobile in future.

Hypothesis 2- there is no significant difference based on education level preference for the mobile brand preference

Chi-Square Tests- Level of Education and Future Mobile Brand preference

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.260a	2	.533
Likelihood Ratio	1.261	2	.532
Linear-by-Linear Association	.985	1	.321
N of Valid Cases	146		

Pearson Chi-square significance is not less than .05, hence there is no significant relationship between undergraduate and post graduate university students in continuing with same brand of mobile in future.

Conclusion:

The study shows that the consumer is ready to buy mobile phone which offers the best features and having better

looks and design. Thereafter, the consumer buying behavior is guided by factors like peer pressure, brand and value for money. So the concept of brand loyalty is becoming weak in case of buying behavior of mobile phone is the market of Delhi NCR. Although a considerable number of respondents shown interest to repurchase Apple brand but being a different brand category in a different price level altogether makes it insignificant. When it comes to the brands offering value for money products, consumer brand loyalty is somewhat not important anymore.

Keeping the findings in mind, it can be concluded that rapid flow of information, technological changes and online buying platforms has made the new age consumer more concerned about the overall value offered by a product. He/she is less concerned about the brand loyalty and more concerned about the features and benefits. This change in buying pattern has to be understood by the mobile phone manufacturers and they should try to provide maximum value to its customers to sustain the cut throat competition in Indian Mobile Handset market.

As because of ongoing geo-political tensions between India & China and, there is a rise in anti-china sentiments. Also, the banning of 59 Chinese apps and data security concerns, it will be tough to predict the future of these mobile brands. But one thing can be surely noticed that consumers are more than ever open to change their brand to newer and refreshing brand choices offering better value for their money.

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Annexure 1

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Reviewers Memorandum

Reviewer’s Comment 1: The study is descriptive in nature. The findings of the study are based on both primary and secondary data thus making the results more reliable. The use of advanced tools and consideration of use of the factors that affect brand loyalty would have intensified the research.

Reviewer’s Comment 2: The findings of the study are restricted to Delhi NCR region and hence the author cannot go for complete generalisation of the statement. The buying power also plays an important role in case of brand loyalty which could have been considered. However the author has made good attempts to meet the objectives of the study,.

Reviewer’s Comment 3: The author leaves immense scope for further research and also adds a good source for further literature. The author has used basic tools for analysing the data and has fetched good results for the hypothesis developed. The author has concluded with brand loyalty becoming a bygone concept. This leaves implications to the advertisers to improve their branding concept further.



Arnab Chakraborty, Mamta Chawla and Aparajita Dasgupta Amist
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Editorial Excerpt

The article has 7% of plagiarism which is the accepted percentage as per the norms and standards of the journal for the publication. As per the editorial board's observations and blind reviewers' remarks the paper had some minor revisions which were communicated on a timely basis to the authors (Arnab, Mamta and Aparajita) and accordingly all the corrections had been incorporated as and when directed and required to do so. The comments related to this manuscript are noticeably related to the theme "**Changing Dynamics of Brand Loyalty: Determinants of Mobile Phone Buying Behavior among Youngsters**" both subject-wise and research-wise. The study brings to light the buying behaviour of university students and to determine the factors influencing brand loyalty among youngsters. The findings of the study are interesting as the author concludes that the concept of brand loyalty is diminishing. This leaves a good scope for comparative and contradictory studies which can further improve the argument on brand loyalty. Overall a good paper leaving scope for further research. After comprehensive reviews and editorial board's remarks the manuscript has been categorised and decided to publish under "**Research Thought**" category

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The acknowledgment section is an essential part of all academic research papers. It provides appropriate recognition to all contributors for their hard work and effort taken while writing a paper. The data presented and analyzed in this paper by (Arnab, Mamta and Aparajita) were collected first handily and wherever it has been taken the proper acknowledgment and endorsement depicts. The author is highly indebted to others who had facilitated in accomplishing the research. Last but not least endorse all reviewers and editors of GJEIS in publishing in a present issue.

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