

# Factors Affecting Consumers' Choice of Mobile Phone Selection in Pakistan

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## Abstract

The study discusses the factors that affect/motivate Pakistani consumers in their mobile phone choice decision. A sample of 100 people was taken by using the sampling method of Convenience Sampling (or Accidental Sampling). For this particular study four important factors i.e. price, size/shape, new technology features, brand name were selected and were analyzed through the use of questionnaire in registering consumers' perception of these factors. From the analysis it is clear that consumer's value new technology features as the most important variable amongst all and it also acts as a motivational force that influences them to go for a new handset purchase decision. The study also discusses that when selecting between different mobile phone handsets consumers prefer well known brands instead of non familiar brands or Chinese handsets. The study also shows that price does affect consumers' choice for a mobile phone but becomes less important of a factor as we move from low monthly income to higher income earning consumers. From the study it is clear that consumers in Pakistan are well aware of the new technology trends in the mobile phone industry. The study also reveals that male respondents were more interested in the new technological developments in the mobile phone industry as compared to female respondents.

**Keywords:** Nokia, LG, Samsung, Consumer Preference

## 1. Introduction

It started in USA on June 17, 1946 when the very first cellular telephone call was engineered in the city of St. Louis Missouri. But the then system was impractical if we compare it to present day mobile phones because it weighted 80 lbs and cost \$30 US dollars on monthly basis along with that 30-40 cents were also charged on every local area call. The premier economically viable fully automatic mobile network known as the first generation i.e. 1G was initiated in Japan in 1979 from NTT ( i.e. Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation) by at first concentrating just on metropolitan parts of the city of Tokyo. During the next five operational years NTT's service expanded and covered the entire Japanese population and hence became the pioneer nationwide first generation network of the world. World's first ever modern technology based network i.e. Second Generation 2G mobile systems was launched in Finland by Radiolinja in 1991 which operated on the GSM standards and gave rise to for the first time competition in telecom services providers at a time when the already experienced 1G NMT Network of Telecom Finland was challenged by Radiolinja. The year of 2001 saw the first totally commercial launching of third generation i.e. 3G mobile technology and since then mobile phones and mobile phone services have seen an exponential growth throughout the world and surely it can be said that the world has seen a communication revolution because of this technology. Instaphone could be rightly called the pioneer of cellular industry in Pakistan it started its operations in Pakistan in 1991 as an APMS mobile service provider. In 2004 Mobilink became the first GSM service provider in Pakistan and after the introduction of GSM service in Pakistan the industry has seen many new players and tremendous growth. In the beginning the target market comprised of upper class consumers but the industry's rapid growth started after 2000-01 and today it has even penetrated consumers belonging to the lower class. Nokia, Sony Ericsson, Samsung, LG and Motorola at present are the leading mobile phone manufacturers in Pakistan. The telecom sector of Pakistan during the past decade has contributed enormously to the overall development of Pakistan. This particular sector is constantly achieving high growth rates in the country. It is believed to be achieving growth every year despite economic setbacks faced by

Pakistan. During the month of October, 2010 mobile service subscribers in Pakistan exceeded the psychological mark of 100 million (The Express Tribune, 2010). Similarly, it is believed that Pakistan amongst all south Asian regions has the highest cellular penetration rate. According to Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (2010), the market leader is still Mobilink with 30 million subscribers, with Telenor enjoying the second spot having 21 million users, with 20 million users Ufone is in third place, Warid resides in fourth place having 18.14 million subscribers and with 6.48 million subscribers Zong is at the last. Every player in the industry is working hard to expand the services throughout the country and are entering to regions like Azad Kashmir, Tribal Areas and Northern Areas which are still not fully covered. So far five tribal agencies of FATA have been covered. We have chosen the topic of the study because of our personal interest in mobile handsets and the industry as a whole. This research attempts to rank factors affecting consumer's preferences for mobile phones. This study can help advertisers to focus on that attribute more which is ranked highly by the consumers. This research can also help the mobile phone manufacturer/marketer in Pakistan to recognize the potential attribute positioning errors (if any). Utmost effort has been put in to the study in making it accurate and to make it possible to be used as a reference material for similar studies.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Consumer Purchase Behavior

In order to comprehend an individual's choice in a cell phone's selection or any other product, it is imperative to study customer's purchase behavior. A definition of consumer behavior given by **Perner** (2009) "It is the study of groups, organizations or individuals and also the procedures by which they select, acquire, use and dispose products, ideas, experiences or services in order to fulfill their needs and wants and the potential impacts that these procedures have on the consumer and the society as whole". From the perspective of marketing consumer's purchase process can be categorized into a five step problem solving process i.e. 1. Need, 2. information gathering, 3. Evaluating the given alternatives, 4. Purchase activity, 5. Post purchase status (Dorsch, Grove and Darden, 2000). This five step process of decision making is most suitable for a purchase decision that requires problem solving behavior or complex decision making process and not for purchase decisions related to low involvement products. Similarly the purchase decision for a new handset follows the same buying process but in some instances it may also be affected by symbolic preferences linked to some brands. In studying consumer choice behavior it's important to take some general conditions into consideration. Considering the case of the classical problem solving buying process behavior, it is almost always the case that consumers go for information search before taking purchase/choice decision. And it is also common in such behavior that consumers' decision practice is directed by previously made likings for some specific alternatives. So it shows that customers are expected to formulate their selection decision based on the limited information search activity that they conducted (Moorthy, S., Ratchford and Talukdar, 1997) rather than a detailed evaluation of all the possible alternatives (Chernev, 2003). Laroche, Kim, and Matsui (2003) opined that along with information search evaluation of alternatives is an important activity that determines consumer's choice and it is often influenced by "Cognitive Heuristics" or in simple words a buyer choose a particular product provide if it fulfills his perceived values based on his past experiences. In this specific technique of assessment a buyer automatically eliminates a brand that do not meet his set principles and even if it does, it does not have one or two attributes of extreme importance to him even it has all other attributes. In this study the analysis would be limited to consumer's choice as to which product to purchase from a given set of alternatives and whether to purchase or not.

### 2.2 The Status of Pakistan's Telecom and Handset Market

The past decade has seen a telecommunication revolution not just in Pakistan but throughout the world. The telecom industry of Pakistan is estimated to be rising at a rate of 170% annually. According to Pakistan Telecommunication authority 2.7 million subscribers gets added into the industry on monthly basis (Ansari and Khan, 2009). Shariq Syed (2008) suggests that Pakistani mobile phone market has played the most important part in the rise of telecom business in Pakistan. The Pakistan mobile handset market should be given equal credit for the enormous growth of Pakistan's telecom sector along with telecommunication service providers. Competitive rivalry for market share is still intense with the leadership position dominated by Nokia while Samsung benefits from the growing market for very low cost handsets. The gray market remains a key issue with 20%-22% share of total sales estimated for 2008 (Kerr and Harris, 2008). The handsets distribution market is dominated by handful of companies and among them United-Mobiles, Advance-Telecom and Mobile-Zone represent the largest phone distributors. Nokia is the undisputed market share leader of cellular handset market of Pakistan followed by two Korean manufacturers Samsung and LG. Nokia has 48 percent market share but its declining steadily due to competition from other manufacturers and especially from Chinese handsets. Samsung has seen tremendous rise in their market share i.e. having 8% market share in the year 2006, its market share has increased to 30% in 2008 and still going strong. LG is also enjoying favorable growth in market share with its success due to two highly

successful handset models that were LG, KG195 and LG, KG270. Motorola and Sony Ericsson are showing un-impressive performance with just 5% and 1% share in the total Pakistani handset market (Syed, 2008). Demand for mobile phones in Pakistan has surged up their imports highly; it has seen approximately 100 percent increase in-terms of their imported costs during the first month of current financial year 2010-11. The Federal Bureau of Statistics (FBS) Pakistan indicates the import bill of cellular handsets reached 39 million dollars during the month of July as compared to the same month's cost last year which was at US dollars 19.59 million thus showing a growth of 99.15%. Similarly mobile accessories expenditure was 27 % higher as weighed against the month of June which was \$30.8 million. Altogether according to FBS the import of handsets for the year 2009-10 moved up to 215 million US dollars as to US 139 million dollars in the prior year indicating a surge of 54.6%. According to the representative of Karachi Electronic Dealers Association (KEDA) representative 55 percent increase in imports of cellular handsets is due to greater demand of Chinese handsets (**Khan, 2010**). But the branded phone manufacturers like Nokia, Samsung, LG, Sony Ericsson etc have managed to maintain their market share among the masses of the society who still prefer branded sets compared to Chinese handsets. Pakistan's handset market is unique in the sense that it sees a surge in sales just before and after the Eid festival ("Mobile handset import bill up 100 percent", 2010). Mr. Imran Zaki, marketing head at LG electronics reports that demand from the market is constantly increasing day by day particularly in entry stage segments, that includes lowest costing handsets ranging between Rupees 1200 to Rs 2000.

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 Sample and Sampling Techniques*

A sample of 100 people was taken by using the sampling method of Convenience Sampling (or Accidental Sampling). In Convenience Sampling (also known as opportunity or grab sampling technique) a sample is taken from the population which is at convenience or in other words which is close at hand and it is a form of non-probability sampling method. Since lack of financial resources, time constraint and a study conducted by a single researcher, convenience sampling was adopted as the population sampling technique for this particular research.

#### *3.2 Survey Methodology*

In order to test the hypothesis a questionnaire was designed to find out as to what are the factors that determine the choice of a mobile phone selection in Pakistani consumers and to study which factors are valued the most and how much effect does demographic differences have in mobile phone preference amongst consumers belonging to diverse demographic sets. A sample size of 100 respondents was taken by using Convenience Sampling method. Most of them were circulated amongst the students of Institute of Management Sciences and Edwardes College Peshawar, some of them were also distributed amongst the employees of Accountant General Office Peshawar. The hypotheses were tested by asking different relevant questions regarding the pre-determined hypothesis and results were processed using SPSS software by using frequency distribution tables and cross tabulation. Based on the results of the questionnaire and its analysis various conclusions were derived and recommendations were given so as to how better market mobile handsets to consumers of Pakistan.

#### *3.3 Hypothesis Formulation*

H1: When choosing between different mobile phone models, consumers prefer well-known brands.

H2: Price has a direct effect on consumer's mobile choice decision.

H3: New technology features increases consumers' motivation to acquire new phone models.

### **4. Analysis and Results**

On the basis of past research on the topic under study hypothesis were developed and to test these hypothesis a questionnaire was designed and distributed among 110 respondents amongst which 100 questionnaires were useable. Among the total 100 respondents 61 of them were male and 39 of them female. For demographics Gender, Age and Income level were selected. The majority of the respondents were university students of Institute of Management Sciences Peshawar belonging to different BBA, MBA and MS programs, college students of Edwardes College were also a part of the study while questionnaire were also circulated amongst staff of Accountant General Office Peshawar. The respondents belonged to three different age i.e. 15-25, 26-35, 36-50.

#### *4.1 Demographics*

***When respondents were asked do you own a mobile phone?*** A total of 96% respondents had mobile phones while 4% still were a segment that did not own a mobile phone indicating that this 4% can also be a market worth capturing. The overwhelming amount of respondents having a mobile phone shows that nowadays cell phones have become a must have accessory for nearly everyone.

***When asked do you see chinese mobile phone as replacement for current well known brands?*** 66% percent respondents believed that they are not any threat for the present brands indicating that famous brands still have a

strong following but 34% of the respondents were seeing them as the replacement for the present established brands, but no one in the study possessed a Chinese mobile indicating that it was just a matter of perception and people were still brand loyal to the present brands because their actions did not reflect their perception.

**When asked how many mobile sets do you use/have at present?** 62% respondents had a single mobile handset while 24% had two mobile phones, 5% had three phones and 9% had four or above. These are important findings because they present an opportunity for mobile handset providers to study why people carry multiple handsets and how by understanding their reasons one could target them with their products.

**When asked which company's mobile handset do you have?** 73% of the respondents had Nokia handsets indicating that Nokia is by far the market leader followed by Samsung having 18% of the respondents using it while Sony Ericsson once a dominant player in the market just had just three respondents owning its handsets while Motorola was struggling with two votes. 4% people under study used other brands that were HTC, iPhone and LG.

**When asked which factor to you is the most important in purchasing a mobile phone for yourself?** Out of the four factors selected for the study by the help of past research "New Technology Features" was the most important reason to purchase a mobile phone for 47% of the respondents while followed closely by 37% respondents preferring "Brand Name" indicating them to be brand conscious. Surprisingly just 10% of the respondents valued Price as the most motivating factor which shows the fact that in purchasing a mobile phone not great many people in Pakistan rank price as the determining factor in a mobile phone purchase decision. 6% of the people took size/shape as the most important factor for them in purchasing a mobile phone.

**When asked how often do you buy a new mobile phone for yourself?** 38% respondents do not buy a new handset for themselves until their present set stops working and is of no use to them while 36% purchase a new set for themselves every year. 12% of the respondents buy a new set for themselves every six months. 14% of the people who were studied showed that they are motivated to buy a new set for their selves only when a new model of their present set arrives in the market which shows that they are brand loyal.

**When asked do you prefer Chinese mobiles over the branded ones?** This question's findings indicates that 89% people do not see Chinese mobile phones dominating and replacing the current brands which is consistent to the results of the previous question as well in which 66% respondents did not see Chinese mobile as replacements for the familiar brands. It is also obvious from the results of the above question that maximum number of the research subjects believed the branded mobiles are here to stay and are not under any impending danger from Chinese phones hence consequently proving hypothesis H3.

**When asked do you believe cell phone is a "status symbol"?** Very often things of necessity become things of luxury showing one's Status in a society and mobile phones to some extent do become symbols of an individual achievement/status. 57% respondents replied negatively to it and did not agree to the notion that mobile is a status symbol while 43% replied positively indicating that a considerable number of individuals still take mobile phones a sign of Status and achievement.

**When asked in what price range does your current mobile phone lie?** The respondents had mobile phones from diverse price ranges with majority i.e. 29% of them had handsets in the price range of 11000 to 15000 rupees, 20% in the range of 6000 to 10000 rupees and 24% in the range of 2000 to 5000 rupees. While 12 respondents owned a mobile phone worth more than 25000 rupees.

**When asked does a new model of your mobile phone motivate you to buy a new set for yourself?** This question was asked to know how brand loyal customers are to their present brand and whether they are motivated by the new models with new technology features of their present handsets or not. 69% of them do get motivated while 31% replied negatively. The results of this particular questions also proves H3 hypothesis which says that features that are new in a mobile phone as compared to other sets of rival companies increases customers' drive to acquire them.

**When asked rate price in order of importance to select a new mobile phone?** Likert scale was developed to study as to how important price is to a Pakistani consumer in purchasing a mobile phone. Most of the respondents agreed that for them price is an important factor in mobile handset purchase decision, 23% respondents slightly agreed to it, 19% agreed while 18% highly agreed. Only a few disagreed to it while 21% were neutral to it. The above question also answers and tests Hypothesis H2 and the results show that a plain majority do agree that price does affect them in their purchase and choice of cell phones thus supporting the Hypothesis H2 in result.

**When asked a mobile phone is just a device for communication and that's it?** The answer had a split mandate only a slight majority replied positively while many disagreed to it. While 24% of the respondents were indecisive.

## 5. Conclusion

The study discusses the factors that affect/motivate Pakistani consumers in their mobile phone choice decision.

A sample of 100 people was taken by using the sampling method of Convenience Sampling (or Accidental Sampling). For this particular study four important factors i.e. price, size/shape, new technology features, brand name were selected and were analyzed through the use of questionnaire in registering consumers' perception of these factors. From the analysis it is clear that consumer's value new technology features as the most important variable amongst all and it also acts as a motivational force that influences them to go for a new handset purchase decision. The study also discusses that when selecting between different mobile phone handsets consumers prefer well known brands instead of non familiar brands or Chinese handsets. The study also shows that price does affect consumers' choice for a mobile phone but becomes less important of a factor as we move from low monthly income to higher income earning consumers. From the study it is clear that consumers in Pakistan are well aware of the new technology trends in the mobile phone industry and are techno savvy. The study also reveals that male respondents were more interested in the new technological developments in the mobile phone industry as compared to female respondents.

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**Demographics**

**Gender**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid male	61	61.0	61.0	61.0
female	39	39.0	39.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Age Range**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 15-25	78	78.0	78.0	78.0
26-35	17	17.0	17.0	95.0
36-50	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Income/pocket money per month**

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
2000-5000	37	37.0	37.0	37.0
6000-10000	37	37.0	37.0	74.0
11000-15000	19	19.0	19.0	93.0
16000-25000	6	6.0	6.0	99.0
40000+	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	100.00	100	100	

**Q.1. Do you own a mobile phone?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid yes	96	96.0	96.0	96.0
no	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Q.2. Do you see Chinese mobile phones as replacements for current well known brands?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid yes	34	34.0	34.0	34.0
no	66	66.0	66.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Q.3. How many mobile phones do you have/use at present?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	62	62.0	62.0	62.0
2	24	24.0	24.0	86.0
3	5	5.0	5.0	91.0
4 and above	9	9.0	9.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Q.4. Which company's mobile phone do you have?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Nokia	73	73.0	73.0	73.0
sonny ericsson	3	3.0	3.0	76.0
motorola	2	2.0	2.0	78.0
samsung	18	18.0	18.0	96.0
Other	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Q.5. Which factor to you is the most important in purchasing a mobile phone for yourself?**

	Frequency	Percent	Validity of Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
brand name	37.0	37	37	37
Price	10	10.0	10.0	47.0
new technology features	47	47.0	47.0	94.0
size/shape	6	6.0	6	100
Sum=	100.0	100	100	

**Q.6. How Often do you Buy New Mobile for Yourself?**

	FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID %age	Cumulative %age
Within Six Months.	12	12.0	12.0	12.0
Within a year.	36	36.0	36.0	48.0
When new model of your present set arrives.	14	14.0	14.0	62.0
When the last one stops working.	38	38.0	38.0	100.0
	100-0	100.000	100.000	

**Q.7. Do you prefer Chinese mobiles over the branded ones?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	11	11.0	11.0	11.0
No	89	89.0	89.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Q.8. Do you think cell phone is a “status symbol”?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	43	43.0	43.0	43.0
No	57	57.0	57.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Q.9. In what price range does your current mobile phone lie?**

	Occurrence	%age	Valid %	collective Percentage
2000-5000	24	24	24	24
6000-10000	20	20.0	20.0	44.0
11000-15000	29	29.0	29.0	73.0
16000-25000	15	15.0	15.0	88.0
25000+	12	12.0	12.	100
	100.000	100	100.00	

**Q.10. Does a new model of your mobile phone motivate you to buy a new set for yourself?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	69	69.0	69.0	69.0
	No	31	31.0	31.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Q.11. Rate price in order of importance to select a new mobile phone?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	highly agreed	18	18.0	18.0	18.0
	agreed	19	19.0	19.0	37.0
	slightly agreed	23	23.0	23.0	60.0
	neutral	21	21.0	21.0	81.0
	slightly disagreed	9	9.0	9.0	90.0
	disagreed	7	7.0	7.0	97.0
	highly disagreed	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Q.12. A mobile phone is just a device for communication and that's it?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	highly agreed	18	18.0	18.0	18.0
	agreed	5	5.0	5.0	23.0
	slightly agreed	15	15.0	15.0	38.0
	neutral	24	24.0	24.0	62.0
	slightly disagreed	11	11.0	11.0	73.0
	disagreed	12	12.0	12.0	85.0
	highly disagreed	15	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

**Cross Tabulation Analysis**

**Gender \* Which company's mobile do you have? Cross Tabulation**

		Which company's mobile do you have?					
		nokia	sonny ericsson	motorola	samsung	other	Total
Gender	male	48	1	1	11	0	61
	female	25	2	1	7	4	39
	Total	73	3	2	18	4	100

**Gender \* Which factor to you is the most vital factor in purchasing a cellular phone for yourself? Cross Tabulation**

		Which factor to you is the most essential in purchasing a cell phone for yourself?				
		brand name	price	new technology features	size/shape	Total
Gender	male	21	6	32	2	61
	female	16	4	15	4	39
	Total	37	10	47	6	100

**Age Range \* Which factor is most important to you in purchasing a mobile phone for yourself? Cross Tabulation**

		Most important factor?				
		brand name	price	new technology features	size/shape	Total
Age Range	15-25	28	9	35	6	78
	26-35	8	1	8	0	17
	36-50	1	0	4	0	5
	Total	37	10	47	6	100

**Gender \* Does a new model of your mobile phone motivate you to buy a new set for yourself? Cross Tabulation**

		Does a new model of your mobile phone motivate you to buy a new set for yourself?		
		Agreed	Disagreed	Sum total
Gender	Male	44	17	61.0
	Female	25	14	39.0
		69	31	100.00

**Gender \* In what price range does your current mobile phone lie? Cross Tabulation**

		In what price range does your current mobile phone lie?					
		2000-5000	6000-10000	11000-15000	16000-25000	25000+	Total
Gender	male	17	15	16	8	5	61
	female	7	5	13	7	7	39
	Total	24	20	29	15	12	100

**n what price range does your current mobile phone lie? \* Which factor to you is mainly essential in purchasing Mobile set for yourself? Cross Tabulation**

		Vital Factor?				
		brand name	price	new technology features	size/shape	Total
In what price range does your current mobile phone lie?	2000-5000	10	4	10	0	24
	6000-10000	6	4	9	1	20
	11000-15000	16	1	12	0	29
	16000-25000	5	1	7	2	15
	25000+	0	0	9	3	12
	Total	37	10	47	6	100

**Monthly income/pocket money? \* Which factor to you is the most important in purchasing a mobile phone for yourself? Cross Tabulation**

		Which factor to you is the most important in purchasing a mobile phone for yourself?				
		brand name	price	new technology features	size/shape	Total
Monthly income/pocket money?	2000-5000	15	3	18	1	37
	6000-10000	13	6	15	3	37
	11000-15000	6	1	10	2	19
	16000-25000	2	0	4	0	6
	40000+	1	0	0	0	1
	Total	37	10	47	6	100

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