ผู้บริโภคยุคเจเนอเรชัน Y และความตั้งใจซื้อโทรศัพท์มือถืออัจฉริยะ Apple IPhone X ในประเทศไทย

GENERATION Y CONSUMERS AND THEIR PURCHASE INTENTION OF APPLE IPHONE X SMARTPHONES IN THAILAND

ดุย เลอ*
Duy Le*
ศุภรา คภะสุวรรณ**
Supara Kapasuwan**

* นักศึกษาปริญญาโท หลักสูตรบริหารธุรกิจมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาการสร้างตัวแบบและการพัฒนาธุรกิจ วิทยาลัยนานาชาติ มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล

* MBA Graduate, MBA (Business Modeling and Development), Mahidol University International College

* Email: duybao288@gmail.com

** ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์และปริญญาเอก กลุ่มสาขาวิชาบริหารธุรกิจ วิทยาลัยนานาชาติ มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล

** Assistant Professor and Ph.D., Business Administration Division, Mahidol University International College

** Email: supara.kap@mahidol.ac.th

บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อประเมินปัจจัยต่าง ๆ ที่ผู้บริโภคยุคเจเนอเรชัน Y อาจพิจารณา เมื่อพวกเขามีความตั้งใจที่จะซื้อโทรศัพท์อัจฉริยะ Apple iPhone X ได้แก่ การรับรู้ตราสินค้า ความรู้สึก ว่าตราสินค้าเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของตนเองของลูกค้า คุณค่าตราสินค้า รูปลักษณ์การออกแบบโทรศัพท์และ คุณสมบัติต่างๆ ความคุ้มค่า และค่านิยมทางสังคม ข้อมูลถูกเก็บจากผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามจำนวน 322 คน ผู้วิจัยใช้การวิเคราะห์การถดถอยพหุคูณในการทดสอบสมมติฐาน ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่าค่านิยมทาง สังคมและคุณค่าตราสินค้าเป็นปัจจัยที่มีผลอย่างมากโดยมีความสัมพันธ์เชิงบวกกับความตั้งใจซื้อโทรศัพท์ อัจฉริยะ iPhone X ขณะที่ปัจจัยอื่นๆ ได้แก่ การรับรู้ตราสินค้า ความรู้สึกว่าตราสินค้าเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของ ตนเองของลูกค้า รูปลักษณ์การออกแบบโทรศัพท์และคุณสมบัติต่างๆ และความคุ้มค่า ไม่มีผลอย่างมีนัย สำคัญ

คำสำคัญ: คุณค่าตราสินค้า การรับรู้ตราสินค้า ค่านิยมทางสังคม โทรศัพท์อัจฉริยะ ความตั้งใจซื้อ

Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate the factors that Generation Y consumers may consider when they intend to purchase Apple iPhone X smartphones, including brand awareness, consumers' brand identification, brand equity, product design and features, value for money and social value. Data were collected from 322 respondents by using survey questionnaires. The researchers used multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses. The results indicated social value and brand equity were very influential factors positively related to the purchase intention of iPhone X, whereas the other factors including brand awareness, brand identification, product design and features and value for money were not found significant.

Keywords: Brand Equity, Brand Awareness, Social Value, Smartphones, Purchase Intention

Introduction

The smartphone industry has grown rapidly over the past decade and smartphone companies try to offer the products with exceptional design and advanced features. According to International Data Corporation (IDC), smartphone vendors shipped approximately 1.405 billion units worldwide in 2018 (International Data Corporation, 2019a). The major players in the smartphone industry include Samsung, Apple, Huawei, Xiaomi and Oppo. In 2018, Samsung was the leader with 20.8% market share, followed by Apple (14.9%) and Huawei (14.7%) (International Data Corporation, 2019a). The growth of shipment volumes of smartphones by Huawei and Xiaomi soared by more than 30% whereas Samsung and Apple encountered a slight decrease by 8% and 3.2%, respectively (International Data Corporation, 2019a). In Thailand's smartphone market, as of Q4/2018, the leader in terms of market share was Oppo (22.2%), followed by Samsung (21.1%), Huawei (13.1%), Vivo (12.7%) and Apple (8.6%), respectively (Manager Online, 2019).

Apple has positioned itself as a premium brand with products and services that have been known for advanced functions and capabilities at high prices. As a result, Apple targets a specific customer segment comprising well-off individuals who are willing to pay extra for technological products and services with advanced design and features (Karabell, 2018). On November 3, 2017, Apple launched the iPhone X into the smartphone market, marking the iPhone series' 10th Anniversary. The iPhone X design was completely changed with the home button removed and replaced by the facial recognition technology. The iPhone X smartphone comes with the high screen ration in the front face or small bezel frame, creating a remarkable design as well as wireless charging. In addition, it has all new technological features and functions which led to very high costs of research and development for Apple. Owning an iPhone has become one of the status symbols because people tend to perceive that those who use it belong to the high-income group (Bertrand & Kamenica, 2018).

The Generation Y, known as Millennials or Next Generation, are most often defined as those born between 1980 to 2000 (Young & Hinesly, 2012). In this study, the researchers used the more specific interval of 1980-1995 as adopted by Pwc (2013) and focused on Generation Y consumers who were born during the specified period. The Generation Y consumers become one of the largest groups of buyers and users in most industry segments, especially in the fast-growing modern technology segment of smartphones. Generation Y consumers tend to be highly sociable and technologically savvy (Bilgihan, 2016; Young & Hinesly, 2012). They have heavily and rapidly adapted to the technological changes especially the Internet and smartphones, tablets and computers. Hence, Generation Y consumers are known as heavy users of the latest mobile technologies. Generation Y consumers are also active in using social media; therefore, their buying decisions may be affected by their friends in the virtual world and opinions in social media (Ordun, 2015). They concern how others perceive them through their consumption of products or services (Parment, 2014). In addition, according to Chuah, Marimuthu, Kandampully and Bilgihan (2017), Generation Y consumers' value perceptions can be influenced by internal emotions rather than price consideration. They are motivated by customized incentives and their loyalty needs to be recognized (Chuah et al., 2017).

There are several factors that consumers usually consider when making a decision to buy smartphones, for example the knowledge the consumers have about specific brands, the perception or feeling of belongingness with brands, the perceived brand value, product design and features, perceived value for money and the expectation of building self-image in the social environment. This study aims to investigate these factors and the research findings would be useful for smartphone companies to understand what factors are significant and influence consumers' purchase intention so that they can design value propositions later on.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was mainly to investigate the perceptions of Generation Y consumers towards various marketing factors that may impact their intention to buy smartphones, particularly the iPhone X smartphones which are positioned as luxury-lifestyle products. The researchers focused on Generation Y consumers because they tend to demand new innovations to satisfy their needs for information and entertainment and fulfillment of their social lives. The factors that were assessed included brand awareness, consumer-brand identification, brand equity, product design and features, value for money and social value.

Literature Review and Conceptualization of the Research Model

Purchase intention can be defined as a plan or the possibility to purchase a specific product or service in the near future (Dodds, Monroe & Grewal, 1991). Especially in the consumers' buying process model, purchase intention generally occurs after the consumers recognize a problem which leads to a need or want, then they search for information about a product or service they want and evaluate alternatives (Kotler & Keller, 2009; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). When consumers have positive thinking and feeling toward a product or a brand, it will positively impact on their purchase intention, leading to the real purchase action from customers (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). Thus, it is considered to be crucial to examine which factors that lead to customers' purchase intention. This study focused on investigating whether factors such as brand awareness, consumer brand identification, brand equity, product design and features, value for money and social value had influence on the purchase intention of Gen Y consumers toward iPhone X in Thailand.

Brand awareness According to Keller (1993), brand awareness is related to the strength of the brand as demonstrated by consumers' ability to identify the brand under different conditions. It is the extent to which consumers show ability to recall a specific brand name by seeing one of the product categories (Aaker, 1991). Brand awareness involves factors like brand name, symbol or logo, advertisement or marketing promotion, among the others. The brand should help customers to recognize the product or service from a specific firm and make it distinct from the others (Keller, 2008). Brand awareness enables companies to gain competitive advantages in the market. If a brand has high brand awareness built through advertisements or marketing campaigns, customers will be more likely to think of that particular brand resulting in an increasing chance of real purchase (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Laroche, Kim, & Zhou, 1996). With the intention of choosing the best product, both existing and potential customers tend to have more confidence when choosing the products coming from a well-known brand (Keller, 1993; Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). The findings of some previous studies indicated a positive relationship between brand

awareness and purchase intention (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000; Rahim, Safin, Kheng, Abas, & Ali; 2016; Yaseen, Tahira, Gulzar & Anwar, 2011;). Based on the previous literature review, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a positive relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention.

Consumer-brand identification Consumer-brand identification can be defined as a consumer's perceived state of oneness or belongingness with a brand (Lam, Ahearne, Hu, & Schillewaert, 2010; Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012). Based on the social identity theory and identity theory, consumers may perceive themselves as sharing the same self-definitional attributes with specific brands because they use the brands to define who they are and establish a sense of belonging to a group of consumers who identify with the same brand (Lam et al., 2010). In other words, identification occurs when consumers have self-categorization in a society with the purpose to strengthen their sense of self and to connect with the groups with the same characteristics in their social environment. Consumers develop brand identification when they perceive brand-self similarity, brand social benefits and memorable brand experience (Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012). In addition, according to Malͦr, Krohmer, Hoyer, and Nyffenegger (2011), actual self-congruence with a brand has a crucial role in generating emotional brand attachment between consumers and brand, especially when consumers are involved with the brands that can help them to achieve high public self-consciousness and self-esteem. The connection between brand and consumers would be enhanced, thus leading to the appearance of brand attachment or even brand loyalty (Malͦr et al., 2011). In this study, the researchers propose the following hypothesis:

H2: There is a positive relationship between consumer-brand identification and purchase intention.

Brand equity Aaker (1991) defined brand equity as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or services to a firm and/or to that firm's customers" (p. 15). A brand may have a positive brand equity if consumers react more favorably to the marketing mix (product, price, distribution and promotion) of the brand than they do to the same marketing mix attributed to a fictitiously named or unnamed version of the product or service (Keller, 1993). The emphasis is on consumers' differential response to a specific brand due to the effect of brand knowledge which can be promoted through efficient marketing campaigns such as sales promotions and advertising (Keller, 1993; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Such knowledge is also generated from customers' experience about the brand. Stronger brand equity will help increase the customers' brand preference, purchase decision, satisfaction and brand loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Cobb-Walgren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995; Keller, 1993, Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Myers, 2003). Therefore,

H3: There is a positive relationship between brand equity and purchase intention.

Product design and features People tend to choose products or services that meet their needs and desires in terms of functionality and design aesthetic. In this study, the products under investigation are smartphones. A smartphone's two major components are hardware and software. The hardware consists of tangible parts that can be touched and seen like body, size, weight, color and design, whereas the smartphone software includes an operating system, user interface, program, and applications. There are a few operating systems that customers can choose such as iOS, Android, and Windows, among the others. The most popular operating systems are Android and iOS with approximately 87% and 13% of the market share as of Q3/2018, respectively (International Data Corporation, 2019b). According to Kim, Gupta and Koh (2011), the design and functionality of digital items have a significant impact on one's social self-image expression and consumers are more inclined to purchase the digital items that are more hedonic than utilitarian. Smartphone design consists of appearance, shape and color. iPhone has been famous for its innovation in terms of trendy design and function. Therefore, the researchers hypothesize that

H4: There is a positive relationship between product design and features and purchase intention.

Value for money Consumers' perception about utility of a product is based on the way they compare the benefits (product quality and product outcomes) and the costs, which include monetary (price) and non-monetary (time and effort) considerations (Li & Green, 2011). When customers purchase and use smartphones, they may perceive the value for their money by evaluating the product performance compared with the perceived costs, which include monetary payment and nonmonetary sacrifices such as time consumption, energy consumption, and stress. In general, consumers assess the perceived value of a product relative to competitors' offerings or the consumers' past experience. The brand with a high-quality image or high perceived quality could increase the willingness of consumers to pay for a premium price (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). In some cases, consumers may not be concerned about price per se if they really want a specific product (Kim et al., 2011), indicating that the perceived intangible value may outweigh the monetary cost. Therefore, it is hypothesized that

H5: There is a positive relationship between value for money and purchase intention.

Social value A product may impact how consumers are perceived by the social environment (Parment, 2014). Gen Y consumers who usually show high self-image awareness may choose a preferred manufacturer brand with a good reputation. Kim et al. (2011) stated that the social self-image expression of a digital item has a strong influence on consumers' purchase intention. In the online social networking, the consumers' self-expression is viewed by others. Consequently, some people try to express themselves on a social network with products that increase representation and articulation. Gen Y consumers get more interested in shopping based on emotional involvement (Chuah et al., 2017; Parment, 2013). As a result, they may purchase and use products that can help them to define who they are. They want to express themselves by using the image of products they use and are likely to choose the retailers, products or brands considered as a leader in the industry (Ordun, 2015; Kim & Jang, 2014). Gen Y consumers'

purchase decisions are also influenced by the peers' perception because they would like to be referred as "cool" by their friends and social media (Ordun, 2015; Rahim et al., 2016). Therefore, it is hypothesized that

H6: There is a positive relationship between social value and purchase intention.
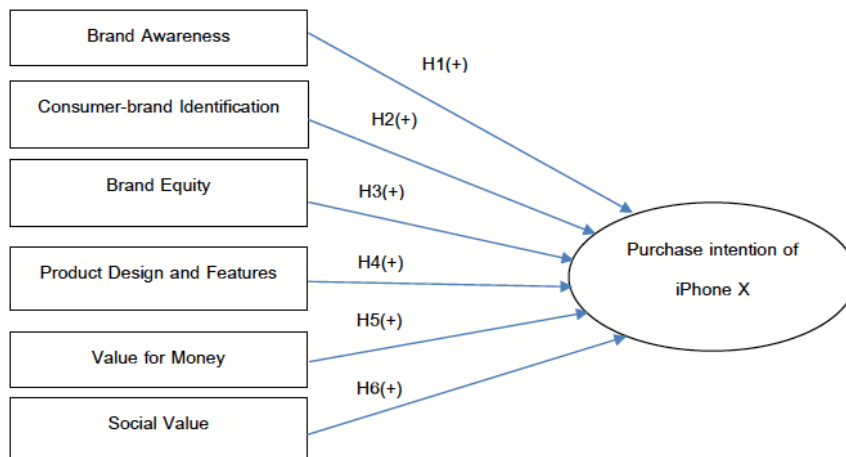

Figure 1 Conceptual Model

Research Methodology

The target population in this study was Gen Y consumers due to their active involvement with technological advancements and devices as they have grown up with the rapid technological development and innovation, the Internet and social networking (Parment, 2013). The sample size was determined according to VanVoorhis and Morgan (2007) who suggested that the minimum number of 10 participants per predictor variable should be obtained for regression analysis with six or more predictors. In this study, the survey questionnaire contained 27 predictor variables; therefore, the minimum sample size was 270 participants. The researchers used convenience sampling and distributed questionnaires in community areas and shopping malls in urban areas in Bangkok such as Siam Square and Thonglor and in a suburban area which was Salaya, Nakhon Pathom, where Gen Y consumers (defined as people who were born between 1980 and 1995 (Pwc, 2013)) could be approached. A total of 322 usable questionnaires were obtained, including 120 respondents from Siam Square, 120 from Thonglor and 82 respondents from Salaya.

The first part of the survey solicited the respondents' demographic information such as gender, age, marital status, education level, monthly income and occupation. The second part consisted of 7-point Likert scale measurement items (ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7)), including four items measuring brand awareness, four items measuring consumer-brand identification, four items measuring brand equity, five items measuring product design and features, three items measuring perceived value for money, four items measuring social value and three items measuring purchase intention.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Out of 322 respondents, 44% were male and 56% were female. Most of the respondents were 30-33 years old, held a bachelor's degree and worked as employees in private companies. Most of the respondents earned an income between 20,001-40,000 Baht per month. The majority of the respondents (71%) were single while 26% were married.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristics		Number of respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	143	44.41%
	Female	179	55.59%
Age	22-25 years old	71	22.05%
	26-29 years old	85	26.40%
	30-33 years old	95	29.50%
	34-37 years old	71	22.05%
Marital Status	Single	230	71.43%
	Married	85	26.40%
	Others	7	2.17%
Educational Level			
Below bachelor's degree		45	13.97%
Bachelor's degree		224	69.57%
Master's degree or higher		53	16.46%
Occupation			
Student		29	9.00%
Business owner		33	10.25%
Self-employed		36	11.18%
Private company employees		158	49.07%
Government officers		53	16.46%
Others		13	4.04%
Monthly Income			
Less than 10,000 Baht		5	1.55%
10,001-20,000 Baht		33	10.25%
20,001-30,000 Baht		144	44.72%
30,001-40,000 Baht		124	38.51%
More than 40,000 Baht		16	4.97%

The researchers then performed reliability analysis to assess internal consistency of the measures and also conducted correlation analysis. The internal consistency of all measures was confirmed since all the Cronbach's alphas were higher than 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). There was a significant positive association between four predictor variables including consumer-brand identification, brand equity, product design and features and perceived value, and purchase intention. Descriptive statistics indicated that the level of brand awareness was rated the highest, followed by consumer-brand identification, product design and features and brand equity, respectively. The respondents rated

value for money and social value at a moderate level, with the mean scores of 4.25 and 3.90, respectively. The level of purchase intention was rated very low with an average score of 2.82. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics, Correlations and Cronbach's Alphas

	AWR	IDT	EQT	DAF	PV	SV	PI	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	α	Items
AWR	1	0.53**	0.41**	0.29**	0.11*	0.08	0.01	5.63	0.84	0.82	4
IDT		1	0.62**	0.44**	0.31**	0.26**	0.10	5.10	0.78	0.82	4
EQT			1	0.47**	0.26**	0.32**	0.23**	4.74	0.78	0.84	4
DAF				1	0.32**	0.33**	0.17**	4.86	0.81	0.85	5
PV					1	0.38**	0.12*	4.25	0.79	0.81	3
SV						1	0.38**	3.90	0.89	0.89	4
PI							1	2.82	1.07	0.91	3

Note: AWR: brand awareness, IDT: consumer-brand identification, EQT: brand equity, DAF: product design and features, PV: value for money, SV: social value, PI: purchase intention.
* $p < 0.05$, two-tailed.   ** $p < 0.01$, two tailed.

The researchers then used the mean scores of each construct in multiple regression analysis. Outliers, heteroscedasticity of residuals and multicollinearity were also examined to ensure that violation of assumptions underlying multiple linear regressions was not present and the estimate of the regression coefficients was not biased. The results of the regression analyses are summarized in Table 3. The regression model with purchase intention as the dependent variable was statistically significant at the significance levels of 0.01 (F-statistics = 10.273, p-value = 0.000) and explained about 16.4% of the sample variance of the respondents' purchase intention (R^2 = 0.164).

Table 3 Results of Regression Analyses – Estimates of Relationships

Measurement	Y = Purchase Intention		
	Unstandardized beta coefficient	Standard error	p-value
Brand Awareness	-0.08	0.08	0.31
Consumer-brand identification	-0.09	0.10	0.38
Brand Equity	0.23*	0.10	0.02
Product Design and Feature	0.05	0.08	0.57
Value for Money	-0.05	0.08	0.50
Social Value	0.42**	0.07	0.00

* $p < 0.05$, two-tailed.   ** $p < 0.01$, two tailed.

According to the regression analysis results in Table 3, the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention was not significant at the level of 0.05 (b = -0.08, p-value = 0.31), so Hypothesis 1 was not supported. In addition, there was no significant relationship between consumer-brand identification and purchase intention at the level of 0.05 (b = -0.09, p-value = 0.38); therefore, Hypothesis 2 was also rejected. Next, the positive relationship between brand equity and purchase intention was found at the significance level of 0.05 (b = 0.23, p-value = 0.02). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported. The higher the level of assessment in terms of brand equity, the greater the likelihood for the consumers to intend to purchase iPhone X. Fourthly, there was no significant relationship between product design and features and purchase intention (b = 0.05, p-value = 0.57). As a result, Hypothesis 4 was not supported. The fifth predictor variable which was analyzed was the perceived value for money. The results indicated that the relationship between value for money and purchase intention was not significant at the significance level of 0.05 (b = -0.05, p-value = 0.50). Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was not supported. Finally, the regression results indicated that social value had a positive effect on purchase intention at the significance level of 0.01 (b = 0.42, p-value = 0.00). Consequently, Hypothesis 6 was supported.

Conclusion and Managerial Implications

In this study, the researchers examined the relationship between brand awareness, consumer-brand identification, brand equity, product design and features, value for money and social value, and purchase intention of iPhone X among Generation Y consumers in Bangkok, Thailand. The findings indicated that brand equity and social value had a significant positive impact on Gen Y consumers' purchase intention of iPhone X, whereas brand awareness, consumer-brand identification, product design and features and value for money did not matter. Interestingly, although Gen Y consumers rated the brand equity of iPhone X higher than its social value, when it came to their purchase intention the positive effect of the social value was higher than that of brand equity. The results were consistent with the previous studies (Parment, 2014; Kim et al., 2011; Ordun, 2015; Kim and Jang, 2014), which showed that Gen Y consumers were likely to buy the products that could help them to express themselves and make other people in the social environment perceive them in a positive way. Moreover, brand equity is also one of the factors that influences the Gen Y's purchase intention toward iPhone X or smartphone products. Similar to the findings of previous research on brand equity and purchase intention (Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995; Myers, 2003), this study showed that brand equity had a positive and significant influence on Gen Y consumers' purchase intention of iPhone X. In this case, Apple has a high level of brand equity based on their specific assets.

On the other hand, although Gen Y consumers rated a high level of brand awareness, consumer-brand identification and product design and features and a moderate level of value for money of iPhone X, these factors were not influential enough to make them intend to purchase the product. We suspect that there might be other important factors which impact purchase intention, such as affordability and availability of various alternatives offered by other competing brands as reasonable substitutes. Due to high competitive intensity among smartphone manufacturers, the smartphone market is recently full of devices offering attractive design and advanced features, which can make consumers unable to feel much difference about the technological changes enough to pay a premium price for iPhone X.

The findings of this study provide two major implications for smartphone manufacturers and distributors who want to attract Gen Y consumers to purchase their products. First, they have to ensure that their product offerings can enhance the consumers' self-image in the social environment. The greater Gen Y consumers perceive that a product enables them to achieve favorable perception by others, the higher the tendency for them to purchase that product. Secondly, it is crucial for the companies to invest in measurement and management of brand equity. Companies should conduct marketing activities that can increase and sustain brand equity of their products. They should focus on differentiating from other brands to stand out in the market, especially in terms of perceived quality and new innovation which help Gen Y consumers to fulfil their needs and wants and express their characteristics.

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