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CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS SMARTPHONES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COLLEGE STUDENTS IN SALEM DISTRICT OF TAMILNADU

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Abstract
The present research study tries to explore the perception of college students towards Smartphone in Salem District of Tamilnadu. The main aim of this research is to examine the level of perception towards smartphones among the college students in Salem District of Tamilnadu. For this purpose, the researcher has selected 125 college students who are utilizing smartphone in Salem district and collected their opinion about the affected factors while purchasing the smartphone. Convenience sampling technique has used for selecting the college students. Percentage analysis, mean score analysis and Anova analysis have been used. The research found that majority of the college students who are male, 21-23 aged, Samsung brand and spent 2-4 hours daily have perceived maximum level of perception in using smartphone in the study area.

Keywords : College Students, Daily Usage Hours, Level of Perception, Smartphone, Smartphone Brand.

Introduction

Smartphones can perhaps be considered as the most ubiquitous technology amongst the youth as it allows users to connect to one another socially. Aside voice calls and text messaging; it can be used for personal, educational, business, entertainment and a plethora of other purposes. One of the features that make smartphones very popular amongst youth is the inclusion of social media platforms such as Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, etc. As a consequence, users can take pictures with their built-in camera, record videos and share these with a variety of online social media applications without so much effort. Thus, this has become a symbol of expression amongst the youth.

Over the last few years, smartphones have brought about significant and unprecedented changes in the way humans interact and share information and the number of users worldwide has grown from close to 700 million in 2012 to an estimated 1.75 billion in 2014 (eMarketer, 2014) and these figures are expected to rise particularly in the Middle East and Africa. Gartner (2014) revealed that the sales of smartphones surpassed that of feature phones for the first time in 2013, signifying increased acceptance and use. Probably, this can be attributed to the gradual decline of smartphone prices and growth in market share.

Defining a smartphone is somewhat problematic because a clear cut scientific or industry definition is hard to find but it has often been used as a general term for the kind of phone that has an independent operating system like a PC and could achieve wireless network access through mobile communications networks as cited by Mei et al (2013). It can arguably be described as the converged ultimate in mobile consumer products. Beyond interpersonal communication and interaction among students, there are intrinsic factors that may influence them to adopt technology. For instance, students who often times leave home to attend schools elsewhere will need to communicate with parents, siblings, relatives and friends. Similarly, smartphones will presumably allow students have immediate access to information, communication applications, ability to shop online, mobile banking and entertainment.

India due to its large population is a lucrative market for the Smartphone manufacturers. There is large number of Indian and foreign companies which manufacture and sell these smart phones. The number of Smartphone users in India is rapidly growing. As per research firm e-Marketer, India will exceed 200 million Smartphone users, topping the US as the world's second largest Smartphone market by 2016, largely on the back of growing penetration of affordable smart mobile devices. According to the newspaper Times of India a research firm IDC, has estimated that over 44 million smart phones were sold in 2013 and it would cross 80.5 million units in 2014. According to Economics Times, quoting the US-based firm's Visual Networking Index (VNI) global mobile data traffic forecast for 2014 to 2019, In India, the number of smart phones grew 54 per cent during 2014, reaching 140 million in number and the number of smart phones will grow 4.7-fold between 2014 and 2019, reaching 651 million in number.

Past Reviews

Demographic characteristics refer to the personal characteristics such as age, gender, sex, study level, religion, ethnic group, etc of the smartphone user. Many studies have shown that gender plays an important role in technology adoption (Gefen & Straub, 1997; Morris & Venkatesh, 2000). When men decide to use a technology, their decision is often strongly influenced

by the perceived usefulness of the technology in comparison with others, while ease of use is the major variable influencing women's decisions. Wei and Zhang (2008) just like Nwagwu and Odetumibi (2011) also found that age, gender, level of study influence technology adoption. Pew Internet (2014), reported that smartphone adoption differed greatly across gender and age groups, and surprisingly, with high diffusion among older age groups.

According to Moschis, (1976), "Consumer behaviour is affected by a lots of variables, ranging from personal motivations, needs, attitudes and values, personality characteristics, socio- economic and cultural background, age, sex, professional status to social influences of various kinds exerted by family, friends, colleagues and society as a whole." On reviewing the relevant literature various factors have been found which influences consumer's purchase intension while purchasing Smartphone.

As per Lay-Yee, Kok Siew & Yin Fah, (2013), discussed the feature is an attribute of a product to meet the satisfaction level of consumers' needs and wants, through owning of the product, usage, and utilization of a product. Product features includes hardware and software. Hardware is the description for a device that can be touched physically. The hardware of a Smartphone is the body of the phone itself, size and weight. Colour and design are also considered as hardware as it is the physical appearance of the Smartphone. Software whereas is the general term for computer programs, procedure and documentation. The software of a Smartphone is the operating platform, storage memory, or apps that run the phone.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the socio-economic profile of the selected college students in Salem district of Tamilnadu.
2. To identify the level of perception towards smartphone among the college students.

Methodology

Descriptive research has been used in this research paper. College students have found and selected for collecting their opinion about the perception towards smartphone in Salem district of Tamilnadu. For this 125 college students has selected who are studying in Arts and Science colleges by using judgement sampling technique. The collected opinion of the respondents has subdued into tables by using simple percentage analysis, mean score analysis and Anova analysis.

Results and Discussion

The following table shows the socio-economic profile of the selected sample college students.

Table No. 1 : Relationship Between Socio-Economic Profile And Level Of Perception

S.No.	Factors	No. of Respondents	%	Mean Score
	Gender			
1	Male	74	59.4	4.2
2	Female	51	40.6	4.0
	Total	**125**	**100.0**	
	Age			
1.	Upto 20 years	67	53.4	3.8
2.	21 - 23 years	44	34.9	4.2
3.	Above 23 years	14	11.7	4.1
	Total	**125**	**100.0**	
	Course Name			
1	UG	60	48.0	4.3
2	PG	36	29.0	3.7
3	M.Phil.	20	16.0	3.5
4	Ph.D.	9	7.0	4.1
	Total	**125**	**100.0**	
	Department			
1	Arts	84	67.4	3.9
2	Science	41	32.6	3.5
	Total	**125**	**100.0**	
	Monthly Family Income			
1	Upto Rs.10,000	15	12.3	3.4
2	Rs.10,001 - 20,000	42	33.8	3.8

S.No.	Factors	No. of Respondents	%	Mean Score
3	Rs.20,001 - 30,000	56	44.4	4.1
4	Above Rs.30,000	12	9.5	3.9
	Total	**125**	**100.0**	
	Period of using the Smartphone			
1	Below 1 year	24	19.4	3.8
2	1-2 years	50	39.7	4.3
3	Above 2 years	51	40.9	4.0
	Total	**125**	**100.0**	
	Daily Time spent			
1	Upto 1 hour	47	37.8	3.7
2	2-4 hours	43	34.6	4.3
3	Above 4 years	35	27.6	4.1
	Total	**125**	**100.0**	
	Brand of Smartphone Using			
1	Sony	13	10.2	3.1
2	Samsung	42	33.7	4.2
3	Apple	15	11.9	3.7
4	Lenovo	23	18.7	4.1
5	Redmi	18	14.2	4.3
6	Others	14	11.3	3.7
	Total	**125**	**100.0**	

It is noticed from the analysis that majority of the college students are male, belongs to upto 20 years, studying UG degree, studying arts department, earn monthly Rs.20001 to 30000 in their family, using the smartphone around above 2 years, daily spent upto 1 hour for using smartphone and using Samsung smartphone.

Further, majority of the college students have perceived high level of perception towards usage of smartphone who male, belongs to 21-23 years aged, studying under graduate, arts department, around Rs.20001 to 30000 earn monthly in their family, around 1 to 2 years using smartphone, 2 to 4 hours daily time spent on using smartphone and using Samsung model of smartphone.

Level Of Perception Towards Smartphone

In order to find the relationship between the selected independent variables of the respondents and their level of perception towards smartphone, the following hypothesis has been framed and tested by using ANOVA test.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between means of perception score of the respondents towards smartphone with respect to gender and age.

Table No. 2 Gender, Age And Perception Towards Smartphone

No.	Variables	Mean Score	SD	'F' Value	'p' Value
	Gender				
1.	Male	4.2	0.24	1.222	0.269^{NS}
2.	Female	4.0	0.25		
	Age				
1	Upto 20 years	3.8	0.25	3.212	0.041**
2	21-23 years	4.2	0.24		
3	Above 23 years	4.1	0.25		

Note : NS – Not Significant; ** - Significant at 5% level

It is determined from the above table that among the two categories of gender, the level of perception on smartphone is recorded at highest among the male respondents. Further, it is explored that among the three categories of age group, the respondents belong 21-23 years are having maximum level of perception on smartphone.

It is identified from the Anova test that the null hypothesis is accepted for gender and rejected for age. Hence, it is found that there is no significant difference in mean score of the respondents with respect to gender and there is a significant difference in mean score of the respondents with respect to their age.

Findings

1. It is found that majority of the college students are male, belongs to upto 20 years, studying UG degree, studying arts department, earn monthly Rs.20001 to 30000 in their family, using the smartphone around above 2 years, daily spent upto 1 hour for using smartphone and using Samsung smartphone.
2. It is observed that majority of the college students have perceived high level of perception towards usage of smartphone who male, belongs to 21-23 years aged, studying under graduate, arts department, around Rs.20001 to 30000 earn monthly in their family, around 1 to 2 years using smartphone, 2 to 4 hours daily time spent on using smartphone and using Samsung model of smartphone.
3. It is noted that male college students have perceived maximum level of perception towards smartphone and the respondents belongs 21-23 years have maximum level of perception towards using smartphone.
4. Anova analysis found that there is no significant different in their mean score based on gender and there is a significant difference in their mean score based on age.

Suggestions and Conclusion

The findings of this study have important implications for college students in Salem district of Tamilnadu. This study reveals a valuable adoption of the innovation constructs specifically with respect to the acceptance of a smartphone by undergraduate arts students and their usage period around 1-2 years and 2-4 hours spent daily in using smartphone. Smartphones have the capability of providing instant information access to undergraduate arts students because they merge and integrate multiple and varied technological functions into a single device that is both versatile and portable. Also, in Tamilnadu, the cost of internet access is still high when compared to other countries and this could be an impediment to adopt the technology. Nevertheless, this research provided empirical support that the technological characteristics of relative advantage and complexity, then interpersonal communication influence undergraduate arts students in Arts and Science colleges in Salem district of Tamilnadu, to adopt a smartphone.

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