

Latin American Cross Country Analysis on the Smartphone Brand Selection

Abstract

This study endeavors to explore the predictive impact of trust, reputation, familiarity, cognitive, and affective perceptions on consumer satisfaction in the highly competitive smartphone industry. A cross country study based on survey methodology was carried out with a sample in Chile and Mexico. We estimated a predictive model of satisfaction and we analyzed the results by using structural equations. The findings present evidence that reputation is a consequence of customer's trust on the company, as well as the contribution of brand to familiarity, and to reputation. The implications for marketing management lie in the improvement on the factors that influence the smartphone purchase decision.

Keywords: satisfaction, smartphone, reputation, brand perception

1. INTRODUCTION

The huge explosion in the use of mobile technology has triggered an exponential increase in the acquisition of smartphone devices. This type of device is much more than a mobile phone. Through this device, users can access to a great variety of actions in their daily work and personal lives. Users have become increasingly dependent on the smartphone constant flow of information. It is said that users keep their devices no more than 1 meter away, and this is reflected in the fact that their devices are commonly the first objects they touch while waking up and the last before sleeping. Therefore, the role of a smartphone in the users' lives is of great relevance. Moreover, the strong competition in the smartphone's industry is a result of the digital transformation that has led to major retailers face the day to day challenge of maintaining or increasing their respective market shares. So, the decision in

the selection of the most appropriate device is one that must be analyzed to improve marketing strategies and reach / convince a greater number of consumers.

From the point of view of business management, corporate reputation is a consequence of trust placed by the customer towards the company (Walsh et al., 2009) and their perception of familiarity with it (Yang, 2007). In a similar way, corporate reputation is the result of the experience lived by the consumer (Shamma & Hassan, 2009) and of his/her perception of the quality of the products and services acquired (Wang, Lo & Hui, 2003).

The search for new effective forms of communication and interaction between brands and consumers is one of the priorities of marketers. Currently, with all existing digital platforms such as social networks, blogs, brand community pages and the same search engines, to name a few, the company's marketing departments have more alternatives to reach consumers. These platforms serve as brand and reputation builders (Spillecke & Perrey, 2012), where smartphones become the facilitating tools to implement marketing processes.

The present study aims to contribute to the previous literature by providing a reference framework for a better understanding of smartphone's brand trust, and its impact on the stores and distributors brands. Also, the smartphone's brand reputation and the customer's familiarity with the brand, including its cognitive and affective perceptions. Moreover, the relation of the smartphone's brand as customers' satisfaction generators in the context of the mobile device acquisition/selection.

This study endeavors to cover the existing gap in the customer satisfaction literature about the consumer smartphone selection, and determine the impact of the aforementioned factors. From the business point of view this study intends to improve the marketing actions for business decision making in the mobile technology industry. It does not intend to analyze a brand, but the decision processes for the acquisition of this category. For example, brand

selection is dominated by 2 companies, Samsung and Apple. The second section presents the theoretical framework of reference. In the third section, there is a description of the methodology used, as well as the main characteristics of the selected sample. In the fourth section, the analysis of the data is carried out and consequently the structural estimation. Finally, the main findings, conclusions and future lines of research will be presented.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Satisfaction

From the point of view of marketing academic research, satisfaction is the result of the confirmation of consumers' expectations about the brand, also called, "perceived satisfaction". Other studies imply that satisfaction is the result of non-rational processes, "emotional satisfaction" (Russell-Bennett & Rundle-Thiedle, 2004). From this perspective, satisfaction can be considered as an emotional state that occurs as a result of the client's interactions with the company over time (Verhoef, 2003). Satisfaction has a positive influence on post-purchase and repurchase behavior since it implies a general appreciation after knowing a brand (Coil et al., 2007). Customer satisfaction has not only been widely recognized as a determining factor in loyalty (Verhoef, 2003), but also, as has been argued in the business management literature, it is a relevant antecedent to the success of brands (Reichheld et al., 2000). Satisfied customers exhibit greater resistance to the elasticity of prices, thereby increasing the competitiveness of the business, allowing them to enjoy the reduction of their costs and a better reputation (Ganesh et al., 2000). The satisfaction is then, the positive assessment of the benefits obtained by the consumer (Kim et al., 2013).

2.2. Affective Evaluation

The consumer, while experiencing an emotion associated with a physiological change of his/her body, as a response to his/her perceptions, is expected to react later to that emotion

(Martin et al., 2008) through the expression of their feelings (Crilly et al., 2004). The perception of the services received will be different depending on the emotions felt (Mudie et al., 2003). The basic emotions provide information about the consumers' feelings through expressions of positive or negative affect (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005). From the area of consumer psychology, the affective evaluation describes a state of internal consumer sentiment towards an object, person or place (Cohen et al., 2008). From the perspective of marketing, this evaluation will depend directly on the stimuli received in reference to the product (Lee et al., 2008).

According to the theory of subjective pleasure expected, customers of a business when making decisions compare different alternatives based on the associated pleasure that is expected and choose the best with the highest average pleasure expected (Lipshitz & Shulimovitz, 2007). In marketing research, it has been found that emotions evoked by brands directly and positively influence customer satisfaction (Pérez & Del Bosque, 2015). Smartphones have the power to function as tools that, thanks to their content, can produce emotions and affect the consumer (Yeh et al., 2016) as well as the affective experience during the acquisition and consumption of a product or service; it can have a significant influence on the judgment of satisfaction.

H1. Affective evaluation of a smartphone has a direct and positive effect on the user's satisfaction.

2.3. Familiarity

Familiarity is related to the understanding that an individual has of a certain object, based on previous experiences and interaction (Luhmann, 2000). Familiarity plays a fundamental role in the way consumers' judge or evaluate brands or products. In fact, if one

situation is more familiar than another, the individual will perceive less complexity and uncertainty. (Torres et al., 2011).

The familiarity in a smartphone brand/model can become a determining antecedent of the experience of the product, and how it translates this into consumer satisfaction when selecting the product. The services literature argues that familiarity is a forerunner of the hedonic benefit obtained by the consumer (Mandan, Hossein & Furuzandeh, 2013), this is a precedent of affective evaluation. The familiarity obtained through repeated exposure to communication stimuli results in a positive evaluation, favorable for the brand (Patterson & Mattila, 2008).

With the following hypothesis we intend to determine the degree of consumer familiarity on the smartphone based on previous experiences. Since we can assume that consumers are familiarly close to a smartphone brand, this generates an emotional connection of brand satisfaction.

H2. The familiarity of the consumer over the smartphone brand has a direct and positive effect on the user`s satisfaction, the reputation, and the affective evaluation of the product.

2.4. Cognitive perception

The evaluation or cognitive perception of a product corresponds to the analysis that the consumer rationally makes about the characteristics and attributes that the product or service has. That is, cognitive perception has a more tangible connotation than emotional evaluation. However, it is important to point out that it is not entirely objective, but it lies in the perception of the attributes that the consumer has previously received or of which he/she has knowledge and / or expectation to satisfy through the product (Park & Chen, 2007). In the case of smartphone attributes relevant to the consumer, it can be said that they are dynamic, this derived from the high dynamism that technological evolution presents. The

most important thing in terms of cognitive perception for this category of products lies in the optimal functionality of the latest gadgets or apps that actually give life to this product.

As already mentioned, it is a perception that lies in a degree of subjectivity on the part of the consumer and must be analyzed for its subsequent management and to achieve the satisfaction of the mobile phone consumer.

H3. Cognitive perception of the smartphone has a direct and positive effect on the user`s satisfaction

2.5. Reputation

Previous studies have argued that the corporate reputation of a brand can be decisive at the time of making purchase decisions ([Graham & Fearn, 2005](#)). Even further, from the perspective of business communication, corporate reputation is a dynamic concept, which consists of a process of creation and management of the image, which manifests itself in the comparison of the brand with its competitors. Additionally, this reputation will be different, depending on who evaluates it, that is, it is a matter of perception. ([Gotsi & Wilson, 2001](#)). The specialized literature on corporate reputation has shown that its definition can be made through its consideration as an asset of the business, or as an evaluation of it, or as the consumer's awareness ([Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty, 2006](#)). Reputation can be defined as the perception of past actions and the future prospects of a company ([Roberts & Dowling, 2002](#)). In the case of the reputation of the smartphone regarding the consumer, it is essential to take into consideration what the brands have been building over the years they have been in the market, their ability to communicate, their transparency, their human values, the treatment to its employees, its capacity for innovation, the reputation of the CEO, its adaptability to change, and the handling of social and environmental issues ([Weiwei, 2007](#)). In this sense, the mobile telephony brands that have the longest time in the market and that have based on

the aforementioned factors can have a greater impact. All questions of reputation, mainly those obtained by previous actions of the brand, have effects on the rational part of the evaluation of the product / brand / category.

H4. Reputation of the smartphone has a direct and positive effect on cognitive perception

2.6. Trust

Trust is a factor that has been analyzed in various contexts of interest to marketing, for the specific case of technological evolution; it is analyzed in models of technological adaptation, because trust in the processes favors rapid adaptation to changes. Trust in the brand translates into a purchase and repurchase (loyalty) of the brand. For the present study, trust has been distinguished as follows: 1) To what extent the smartphone brand and its staff (store) fulfill the obligations and promises made to the consumer; 2) To what extent the smartphone brand and its staff (store) are able to take into account the welfare and personal interests of the consumer, offering the necessary support / advice; and 3) To what extent the smartphone brand and its staff (store) have sufficient capacity, knowledge and domain in their field and specific activities (Atkinson, 2013; Idimudia & Raisinghani, 2014).

Previous studies of the marketing discipline reveal the relationship between familiarity and trust, arguing that familiarity plays an important role in the development of the latter. If the familiarity is based on positive experiences, the individual will probably have more trust in the management of that situation (Torres et al., 2011).

H5. The trust in the smartphone has a direct and positive effect on the cognitive perception and familiarity.

The staff of the smartphone brand store can have a very important impact on the selection of the product and therefore on the reputation and the trust in the brand itself. This trust translates into the main reasons for generating satisfaction, when the brand, through its

reputation and image, is combined with the solutions that the personnel advising the consumers provide, reaching the expectations of the buyer (Idimudia & Raisinghani, 2014).

H6. The trust in the smartphone store has a direct and positive effect on the reputation and trust in the smartphone device.

3. METHODOLOGY

In the present investigation we will use the survey as a technique for obtaining data. The questionnaire was applied to users/buyers of smartphones in Mexico City, Mexico and Santiago, Chile. The scale used is a seven point Likert type (degree of agreement or disagreement). The questionnaire was created for specific use to collect information for this research. It consists of 45 variables, distributed as follows: affective evaluation (5), familiarity (5), cognitive perception (5), reputation (5), satisfaction (5), TM (6), TM store (6) and classification (8). The scales used for each of the constructs are specified in Table 2. The total sample was 1,464 people, of which 710 correspond to the sample from Mexico and 754 to the Chilean sample. 70% of the sample is between 20 and 40 years old; 17% between 41 and 50 years old and the rest are over 51. 53% are women and 47% men of which 73% are single, 21% are married and the rest declare another marital status. 58% work, 36% are students, 3% are housewives and the rest are retired or do not respond. Respondents were asked about their favorite smartphone, the most frequent answer was the Apple brand with 49.2% followed by Samsung with 29%. Table 1 shows the results of this complete question.

Table 1. Favorite Smartphone brand frequencies by country

Smartphone brand	Country				Total	
	Mexico		Chile		Units	%
	Units	%	Units	%		
Samsung	148	20,9	276	36,7	424	29
Apple	443	62,7	278	36,9	721	49,4
LG	18	2,5	36	4,8	54	3,7
Motorola	34	4,8	58	7,7	92	6,3

Nokia	6	0,8	18	2,4	24	1,6
Sony	21	3	34	4,5	55	3,8
Alcatel	4	0,6	8	1,1	12	0,8
Blackberry	4	0,6	7	0,9	11	0,8
Huawei	29	4,1	38	5	67	4,6
Total	707	100	753	100	1460	100

3.1. Analysis of data and results

The methodology to use is the models of structural equations based on the components (PLS). The Consistent PLS algorithm will be used, because this method improves the consistency of the measurement results when reflective measures are used for the constructs (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015).

For the validation of the measurement scales, it is assumed that the observable variables are expressed as a function of the construct, in such a way that they reflect or are manifestations of the construct. Therefore, the latent variable precedes the indicators in a "causal" sense. (Cepeda & Roldán, 2005). Validity attributes are valued (measure what it is desired to be measured) and reliability (it is done in a stable and consistent way).

As previously explained, the analyzed construct is of reflective type, for its analysis the factorial loads (Outer loading) of each indicator with its respective construct were examined. As shown in table 2, the indicators of the constructs have loads greater than 0.7, which indicates a good reliability in terms of the items that make up the construct in general (Chin, 1998). Regarding the reliability of the construct, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (Reliability) and the Composite reliability of the construct were used as a parameter. As observed in Table 2, all the scales of measurement of each construct have indexes higher than 0,7. Therefore, evidence of the reliability of the constructs is provided as a measure of the effectiveness of the research (Nunally, 1978). When observing the average extracted variance

(AVE) of the scales of each construct, all share more than 50% of its variance, it can also be concluded that more than 50% of the variance of the construct is due to its indicators.

Table 2. Validity and Reliability measurement scales

Items			Outer loading	AVE	Composite reliability	Cronbach alpha
Affective evaluation (Yeh et al., 2016)	Affe1	Happy	0,948	0,851	0,966	0,966
	Affe2	Content	0,925			
	Affe3	Cheerful	0,908			
	Affe4	Funny	0,910			
	Affe5	Excited	0,921			
Familiarity (Chebat et al., 2005; Gefen, 2000)	Fam1	I find it very familiar	0,759	0,64	0,898	0,897
	Fam2	Is very well known to me	0,810			
	Fam3	This smartphone I am always well informed	0,848			
	Fam4	I always have this smartphone in mind	0,856			
	Fam5	My friends say that I know this smartphone very well	0,719			
Cognitive perception (Park & Chen, 2007)	Cp1	It's more elegant	0,816	0,681	0,914	0,914
	Cp2	Of better quality	0,849			
	Cp3	A more secure option	0,848			
	Cp4	More innovative	0,822			
	Cp5	Of better connection	0,792			
Reputation (Nguyen Y Leblanc, 2001; McKnight et al., 2002)	R1	Has a very good reputation	0,919	0,792	0,95	0,95
	R2	Has a better reputation than similar Smartphone	0,887			
	R3	Is well respected by the people	0,872			
	R4	People talk very well about this smartphone	0,882			
	R5	This smartphone has historically had a good reputation	0,848			
Satisfaction (Kim et al., 2013; Choi & Lee, 2012)	Sat1	I feel very satisfied	0,827	0,687	0,916	0,916
	Sat2	I have had very satisfactory experiences	0,839			
	Sat3	I have achieved very important moments	0,782			
	Sat4	I feel very satisfied by its characteristics	0,845			
	Sat5	This smartphone is ideal for me	0,848			
Brand trust (Atkinson, 2013; Idimudia & Raisinghani, 2014)	TMB1	Acts to my benefit	0,849	0,691	0,93	0,929
	TMB2	Acts in my favor	0,843			
	TMC1	Knows what to do	0,845			
	TMC2	Fixes my life	0,728			
	TMH1	Is very reliable	0,879			
Store trust (Idimudia & Raisinghani, 2014)	TTB1	This store cares about my wellbeing	0,807	0,707	0,935	0,936
	TTB2	This store is put in my place	0,769			
	TTC1	This store knows what it does	0,864			
	TTC2	This store has important skills	0,821			
	TTH1	This store is honest	0,897			
	TTH2	This store is respectful	0,879			

Once the measurement scales of the seven constructs that make up our model have been validated, the hypotheses put forward in terms of causal and predictive relationships are then tested. The results of the structural model (outer model) analyzed allow accepting the hypotheses as can be seen in Figure 1.

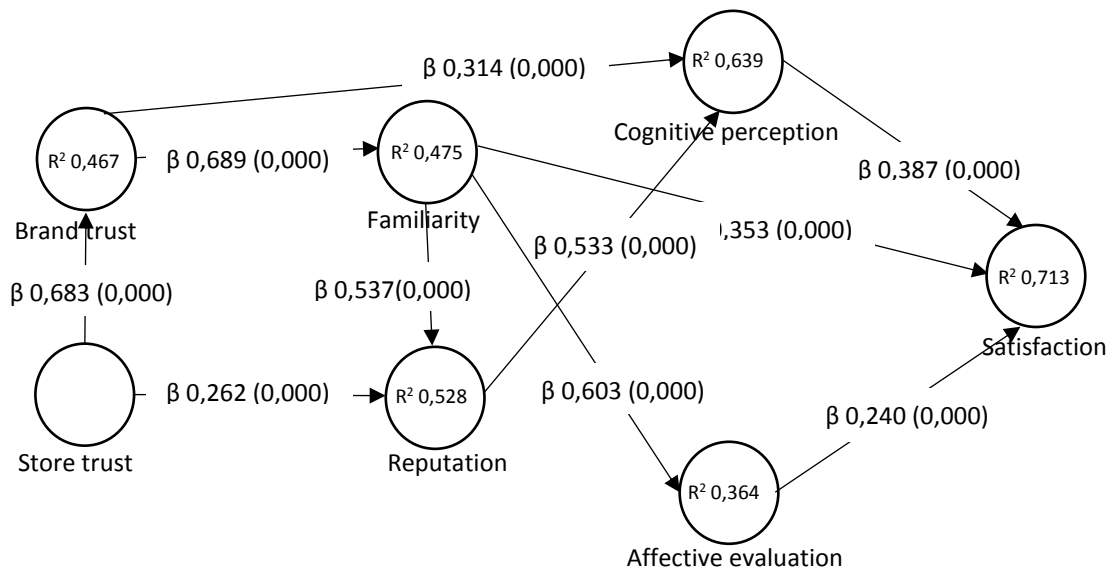
All path coefficients obtained are positive and significant. The strongest relationship is the trust in the store about the general brand trust with a value of 0.683, and the impact of this trust on the familiarity of the brand with a value of 0.689. At the same time, familiarity with the brand has an impact of 0.603 on the affective evaluation, an impact on the reputation of 0.537 and on the satisfaction of 0.353. The trust in the store also has an effect on the reputation with a value of 0.262 and the trust in the brand on the cognitive perception with a value of 0.314. The affective evaluation impacts the general satisfaction of the consumer in a 0.240, which is also impacted by the cognitive perception with a 0.387.

The structural model analyzed presents the following R^2 values: Affective evaluation 0.364; familiarity 0.475; cognitive perception 0.639; reputation 0.528; trust 0.467; and satisfaction 0.713. Trust is moderately explained at 46.7% by trust in the store; the reputation at 52.8% through trust in the store and familiarity; the affective evaluation at 36.4% by familiarity; familiarity at 47.5% for trust; cognitive perception at 63.9% for trust and reputation; and satisfaction is highly explained at 71.3% directly by cognitive perception, familiarity and affective evaluation and indirectly by all the constructs included in the model.

With the intention of determining the predictive relevance of the model, we followed the Blindfolding procedure to estimate the values of Q^2 . Values were obtained for Model-dependent constructs greater than zero, so we can assume that the model has predictive relevance.

Additionally, the goodness of fit calculation was carried out using a SRMR measurement with a value of 0.037, and an NFI value of 0.892, with which we can say that the composite model fits properly (Henseler, 2014).

Figure 1. Structural model



4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As observed in the data analysis, we found that the satisfaction generated in the acquisition of a smartphone mobile phone is explained by several factors which are derived from the search of the device to purchase, as well as previous knowledge of the brand and experiences generated by it. The contribution of this research lies in understanding, in the dynamic context of the smartphone, how to explain the satisfaction of the selection process of the ideal device for each consumer. To this objective, the analysis has shown evidence that

trust in both the brand directly and in its customer service staff contributes positively and significantly to the brand's familiarity and reputation which, in turn, have a positive and significant effect on moderate cognitive and affective perceptions and finally translate into consumer satisfaction.

The reputation is a consequence of the trust placed by the client towards the company (Walsh et al., 2009) and of their perception of familiarity with it (Yang, 2007). Satisfaction can be a consequence of the reputation of the brand, analyzed from different perspectives (Jin, Park & Kim, 2008; Loureiro & Kastenholz, 2011; Helm et al., 2010; Helm et al., 2009; Helm, 2006; Wallin, 1994), in the present study we analyzed the indirect effect that reputation has on satisfaction, using cognitive perception as a channel which is positive and contributes to the predictive power of the model regarding the construct satisfaction.

The implications for marketing management lie in the improvement and optimization of the factors that affect the decision on the mobile equipment to be acquired, due to the fact that the competition and competitiveness of a growing number of members of the industry, forces each player to compete with better conditions. The technical improvement of the products is not enough, but the image, reputation, familiarity and affective and cognitive perceptions, not always derived from the objectivity on the part of the client, are those that determine the purchase decision.

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