

Consumer Attitude towards Marketing Practices in Vietnamese Smartphone Market

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate customer attitudes towards marketing activities in the smartphone market in Vietnam. In order to reach this aim, the index of consumer sentiment towards marketing, which is based on the marketing mix paradigm (4Ps), is adopted. The findings show a positive relationship among four components of the marketing mix (including product, price, place and promotion) and customer satisfaction, among which the “product” component has the most significant impact on customer satisfaction. Thus, the study indicates meaningful implications for marketers in the process of enhancing the customer satisfaction level in practice.

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1. Introduction

Advanced technologies and media expansion have increased the number of smartphone purchasing alternatives for customers and has pushed up the competition in the marketplace to a fierce level [1]. That fact has raised to a higher level than ever the concern of companies about marketing operations and their impacts on customers’ purchasing behaviors.

Vietnam is a potential market in the field of technology with 134 million mobile subscriptions and 20 million 3G service subscriptions for 80 million inhabitants in 2012. Besides, Vietnam ranked third in the growing market in South East Asia with an increase of 59 per cent in sales and 36 per cent in market

penetration. From April to June 2013, the top three operating systems accounted for most of the smartphone market in Vietnam, including Android with 82.2 per cent, Windows 15.3 per cent, and iOS 1.6 per cent [2]

The smartphone market in Vietnam has recently gone through a significant development. A growth rate of 266 per cent was recorded in 2013, ranked second in the world 2013 [3]. One possible reason to explain this trend is the outstanding development of technology. However, technological development has also created a harsh business environment in which manufacturers have to catch up with new techniques to attract and keep customers in order to remain competitive in the marketplace. Therefore, it is important for any company in the Vietnamese smartphone market to find the answer to how consumer attitudes react to marketing practices.

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This study examines the elements in marketing practices in which customers are interested and evaluates the efficiency of marketing activities in the smartphone market by using the four P's of Marketing - product, price, place, promotion and analyzes which elements in the marketing practices of an organization influences customers' attitudes. The result of this study can help manufacturers to improve their marketing practices by enhancing the activities of marketing mix elements and by discovering whether better efforts in marketing practices have positive impacts on customer attitudes in the smartphone market.

2. Literature review

2.1. Definition of marketing

There are many different definitions of marketing and the definition keeps changing as a phenomenon. According to Kotler (2012), marketing is "the science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit. Marketing identifies unfulfilled needs and desires. It defines, measures and quantifies the size of the identified market and the profit potential. It pinpoints which segments the company is capable of serving best and it designs and promotes the appropriate products and services" [4]. Besides, the American Marketing Association states that "Marketing refers to the acts of buying and selling in a market. It is an exchanging activity, which brings suppliers and users of goods and services together" [5].

"Marketing is a societal process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering, and exchanging products and services of value freely with others" [6]. It means that marketing includes all activities to transfer the goods from manufacturers or producers to consumers. More importantly, we can define marketing as "the process by which companies create value for customers and build strong customer relationships in order to capture value from customers in return" [7]. It can be seen that it is

a common belief that marketing covers advertising-related activities; however advertising is not the only activity that marketing means.. Overall, marketing is comprehended as being all the activities involved in order to meet customers' needs. In the scope of this study, we only focus on marketing activities in terms of consumer attitudes relevant to the marketing mix (4Ps) such as product, price, place and promotion.

2.2. Marketing mix (4Ps)

Product is the first component of the marketing mix, that is, the goods and services available for target customers. Besides the physical characteristic, "Product" also contains other attributes such as services, quality, and guarantees. "Product" should match the needs and wants of a particular target customer [8]

Price refers to how much the value of a certain product is determined, especially the value that customers receive when they use the product. Simply, "price" is the amount of money a customer must pay for getting the product. Moreover, in the four components of the marketing mix, only "price" concerns the revenue, the others represent costs. That "price" must reflect the position of the product in the market and cover its cost and profit margin [8].

Place refers to how a company delivers or distributes its products to customers. Place involves all the company's projects and activities that target customers [8].

Promotion is the heart of marketing. "Promotion" involves any activities in order to persuade the potential customers to purchase it. "Promotion" consists of the advertising and selling part of marketing. Companies use promotion strategy to let consumers know what they have for sale and help consumers understand products features and value [8].

2.3. Consumer attitudes

Attitudes are defined as "a lasting, general evaluation of people (including oneself),

objects, advertisements, or issues” [9]. The attitude of consumers drives the purchasing behaviors of a product. These behaviors can be illustrated via the marketing activities in companies, such as the 4Ps components of a marketing mix which can show the expectations of customers.

Attitudes are related to favorable or unfavorable evaluative reactions to something or someone, demonstrated by three elements including: beliefs, feelings, and resulting behaviors. When someone questions the attitudes of another person, she wants to know about that person’s beliefs, feelings and extended behaviors along with another person or a group of other persons, events or problems. Taken together, people react with unfavorable or favorable evaluative actions, whether exhibited in beliefs, feelings or extended behavior. Attitudes have two parts, what we are (inside) and what we do (outside); there are connections between thoughts and actions, characters and conduct, private words and public deeds. The first assumption on teaching, self-learning, observing and other influencing things is that our beliefs and feelings determine our resulting behavior. So, if we want to change the way people react, we have to change their hearts and minds.

According to Hawkins et al. (2001), attitudes are generated and developed from environmental practices and environmental stimuli [10]. Kotler (1997) observed that all people have attitudes toward everything from politics to food, music and games [11]. Attitudes can be perceived as feelings and actions of liking, disliking or being neutral to an object or an idea. Berkowitz et al. (2000) illustrated that our values and beliefs form our attitudes [12]. Values are very different from level of specificity. Values could be personal and cultural values. Values influence how consumers think, feel and use individual products.

2.4. Customer satisfaction

Given the definition of consumer attitudes, consumer satisfaction can be easier to comprehend since consumer attitudes have a

great impact on customer satisfaction. Consumer satisfaction is defined as the “activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming, and disposing of products and services” [13]. Specifically, consumer satisfaction is the overall sensation or attitude of a person after purchasing a product. The consumer satisfaction index is measured by consumer expectations about the quality and the value of the product. The better the quality and the higher the value a consumer gets from the product, the greater the benefits a company will gain. However, in the competitive economic market among foreign firms, the quality of the product has become strategically crucial to maintaining a competitive advantage [14].

In addition, satisfaction degrees are identified not only by the product purchased but also by the expectations about the quality of “alternatives” that were not purchased [14]. Furthermore, the higher expectation consumers have about the unselected goods, the lower the degree of satisfaction they will have with the purchased products. Hence, managers still try to find more and more strategies and appropriate decisions in order to get knowledge about customer satisfaction and expectations. Our study also serves this purpose by finding the correlation between consumer attitudes toward marketing activities and consumer satisfaction.

2.5. Relationships between consumer attitudes and marketing practices

It is apparent that the relationships between consumer attitudes and marketing have been researched for a long time. Cui et al. (2012) researched “decomposition of cross-country differences in consumer attitudes toward marketing” [15]. Cui and Chan (2012) researched “Consumer beliefs and attitudes toward marketing: An emerging marketing perspective” [16]. The results of Cui & Chan's

study indicate that consumer attitudes toward marketing in general remain neutral, and perhaps a little more positive for product quality than that for marketing mix variables. Also, consumer attitudes toward these marketing mix variables dramatically influence consumer satisfaction. From previous research, it can be concluded that consumer attitudes toward marketing practices have many applications. Prior research can be expanded to some areas or markets like the smartphone market to find out the relationship between consumer attitudes and marketing practices and give the records and applications to companies to facilitate their marketing process more effectively.

3. Analytical Framework

When examining the customers' attitude towards the marketing activities in the smartphone market in Hanoi, four factors evaluated in this study are summarized as follows:

- The Product component is related to the quality of the product

- The Price component is related to the value that customers receive when they use the product.

- The Place component is related to the distribution of the products to customers such as location and delivery service.

- The Promotion component is related to the advertising activities of smartphone companies in Vietnam

In this study, customer satisfaction is evaluated as to whether customers are satisfied with the quality of products, the selling price, the distribution of product and the advertising activities of products.

The analytical framework of this study is summarized in Figure 1.

Four hypotheses of this research model:

- H1: *Product* component of marketing mix has positive impact on *customer satisfaction*

- H2: *Price* component of marketing mix has positive impact on *customer satisfaction*

- H3: *Place* component of marketing mix has positive impact on *customer satisfaction*

- H4: *Promotion* component of marketing mix has positive impact on *customer satisfaction*

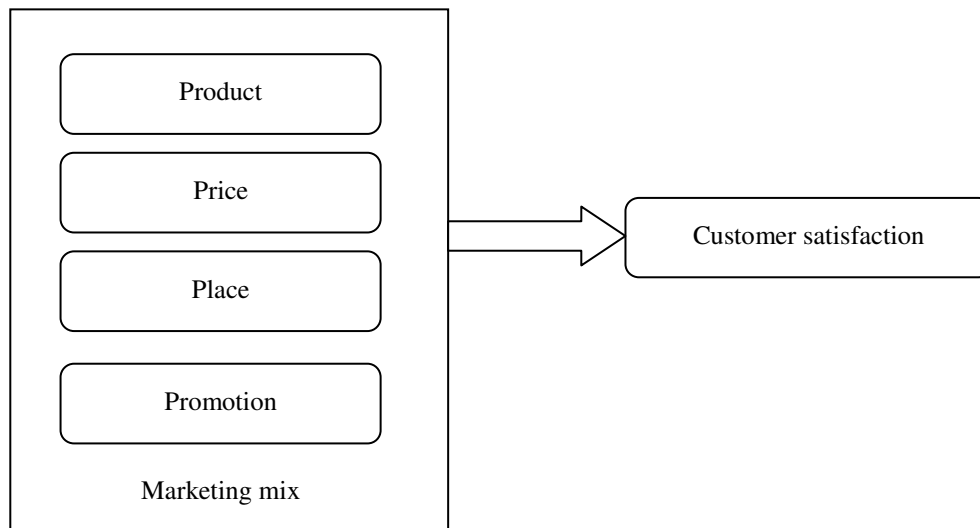


Figure 1: Analytical framework.

4. Methodology

4.1. Sampling and data collection

The questionnaire for this study comprised 36 question items. A questionnaire was built up in Vietnamese, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = strongly agree). Based on Nguyen (2008), there should be at least 5 respondents per one observed variable, which means the study needed to collect a minimum sample size of 180 respondents [17]. The total collectable sample size of this study is two hundred and four respondents from both the online and offline survey. This sample size is enough to do research about the relationship between the consumer attitudes and marketing mix practices of smartphone market, both online and offline. This survey was intended as a summary and representative of the Vietnamese market in smartphone field. Moreover, as representative as possible, the questionnaire was arranged and delivered randomly at residential areas, bus stations and universities. Also, there was a proportional number of questionnaires given through online networks.

After screening the data, there were a lot of missing items, some respondent's answer were the same for all items or the information provided was insufficient. There were some cases in which respondents did not complete all the questions; however, we did not simply eliminate these cases since it is not correct from the statistical point of view. Missing data was carefully analyzed or excluded in SPSS depending on its validity. Hence, it will appear to readers that the number of cases may be slightly different among different tests due to this reason. However, this does not imply that the statistical calculation is not compatible between variables. The statistical descriptions of the sample are presented in the Data Analysis section.

4.2. Measurement instrument

The clean data was put through SPSS software to be analyzed after the questions were encoded and the answers were transformed into quantitative values. Data collected will firstly be tested the scale reliability and validity. Then, regression analysis will be taken to test the relationship between marketing mix practices and customer satisfaction.

Table 1: Encoding questionnaire

No	Label	Explanation
PRODUCT (Product Quality)		
1	P1	The quality of most products I buy today is as good as can be expected.
2	P2	I am satisfied with most of the products I buy.
3	P3	Most products I buy are worn out too quick.
4	P4	Products are not made as well as they used to be.
5	P5	Too many of the products I buy are defective in some way.
6	P6	The companies that make products I buy don't care enough about how well they perform.
7	P7	The quality of products I buy has consistently improved over the years.
PRICE (Price of Products)		
8	Pr1	Most products I buy are overpriced.
9	Pr2	Businesses could charge lower prices and still be profitable.
10	Pr3	Most prices are reasonable considering the high cost of doing business.
11	Pr4	Competition between companies keeps prices reasonable.
12	Pr5	Companies are unjustified in charging the prices they do.
13	Pr6	Most prices are fair
14	Pr7	In general, I am satisfied with the prices I pay

No	Label	Explanation
PLACE (Location and delivery service)		
15	R1	Most retail stores serve their customers well.
16	R2	The close distance to the store encourages me to visit the store more often
17	R3	I find the retail store very well-organized and modern
18	R4	Most retail stores provide a good range of merchandise.
19	R5	Retail stores make it easier for customers to see the products
20	R6	When I need assistance in a store, I am usually not able to get it.
21	R7	Most retailers provide a good delivery service.
PROMOTION (Advertising activities)		
22	Ad1	Most advertising provides consumers with essential information.
23	Ad2	Most advertising is very annoying.
24	Ad3	Most advertising makes false claims.
25	Ad4	If most of advertising were eliminated, consumers would be better off.
26	Ad5	I enjoy most ads.
27	Ad6	Advertising should be more closely regulated
28	Ad7	Most advertising is intended to deceive rather than to inform consumers
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION (How satisfied you with...?)		
29	S1	I was satisfied with the Product strategy of Vietnam smartphone companies
30	S2	I was satisfied with the Price strategy of Vietnam smartphone companies
31	S3	I was satisfied with the Place strategy of Vietnam smartphone companies
32	S4	I was satisfied with the Promotion strategy of Vietnam smartphone companies
No	Label	Explanation
IMPORTANCE (Importance weight, How important to you is...?)		
33	I1	How is the quality of most products available to buy important to you?
34	I2	How are the prices you must pay to purchase most products important to you?
35	I3	How are the physical locations of the stores at which you buy products important to you?
36	I4	How are the promotions you read, see, and hear important to you?
37	Reverse _item	It is the reverse question after transform (using 6 – Item)

5. Data analysis

5.1. Data description

Based on the statistical result, the largest number of participants were undergraduate students, (155) who accounted for 78% of all participants. That is understandable because this questionnaire was distributed on online networks, at universities, and bus stations where the participants were mostly students. The

smallest group consists of 8 people who represent master students, employees and officials, corresponding to 5% of the respondents. 35 others share a proportion of 18%.

Concerning the gender of survey respondents, the survey data indicates a large disparity. There are 131 female respondents representing 66.16% of respondents, being double to the number of male survey participants (67 people or 22.84%).

The group of 20 to 30 year-old participants has 136 people (69%). It is followed by the group of less than 20 years olds (53 people, 27%). 3% and 1% are the proportion of groups 30 to 40 years old and over 40 years old, respectively. It indicates that most of the survey respondents are young people with age varying from 20 to 30 years old.

5.2. Reliability analysis

The measurement test was started with reliability analysis of the measurement scales. The PRODUCT scale was tested first with Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.880 (greater than 0.6). It means that the answer of the PRODUCT scale is internally consistent. The Corrected Item-Total Correlations of all items is greater than a value of 0.3. The highest Corrected Item-Total Correlations value of 0.776 is P1, and the lowest Corrected Item-Total Correlations value is P4 with 0.542. So, all items of the PRODUCT scale are acceptable, and will be analyzed in the next step.

The same reliability analyses are run to test the Price scale, Place scale, Promotion scale, Customer Satisfaction scale and Importance scale, showing a similar result which allows all items of the PRICE scale, 6 items of the Promotion scale (except Ad7), all items of the Place scale, Customer Satisfaction scale, and Importance scale to be examined in the next step.

5.3. Exploratory factor analysis

A factor analysis was conducted of each of the 4 constructs to assess its construct validity. A principal component analysis was performed on the scale using a Varimax rotation that shows the factor loadings for the scale. After performing the principal component analysis

with Varimax rotation, items were identified for reduction or removal. From the Rotated Component Matrix table, any items that had a factor loading of less than 0.5 were removed. The KMO value for this study of 0.841 (higher than 0.6) confirms the adequacy of the sample. The result of the factor analysis reveals that the 27 item scale is divided into 4 dimensions which have an Eigen value of greater than 1. The Eigen value of 1 or greater is usually retained.

As in Table 3, the cumulative of variance for these four dimensions is 59.063%, which means that these four dimensions account for 59.063% of the total variation. Then, the rotated component matrix shows the grouping of the items under each factor. It shows the factor loading for each item on the questionnaire that all are above 0.5.

The components of marketing mix – PRODUCT, PRICE, PLACE, and PROMOTION - include 28 variables. After making a reliability analysis, there is one unreliable item which is rejected. Therefore, the number of variables with good international consistency is narrowed down to 27.

In the KMO and Bartlett's test, the KMO value measuring the sampling adequacy is equal to 0.841, which is greater than 0.5, with Sig. being 0.000. These numbers show that the validity of data used for the analysis is good.

Using the Principal Component Analysis and Varimax with the Kaiser Normalization rotation method, 4 components are extracted with values greater than 1 eigenvalues. The eigenvalues of each component, ranging from 1 to 5, are 4.179, 3.847, 3.494 and 3.323, respectively. And the cumulative of variance is 59.063%, which means the four components serve as 59.063% of the marketing mix variance.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.841
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2.147E3
	Df	351
	Sig.	.000

Table 3: Rotated component matrix

	1-Product	2-Price	3-Place	4-Promotion
P1	.853			
P2	.835			
P3	.783			
P4	.690			
P5	.726			
P6	.695			
P7	.729			
Pr1		.745		
Pr2		.720		
Pr3		.846		
Pr4		.746		
Pr5		.621		
Pr6		.674		
Pr7		.758		
R1			.760	
R2			.743	
R3			.699	
R4			.697	
R5			.394	
R6			.695	
R7			.765	
Ad1				.792
Ad2				.789
Ad3				.745
Ad4				.642
Ad5				.704
Ad6				.625
Eigenvalues	4.179	3.847	3.494	3.323
Cumulative % of Variance	15.476	29.725	42.667	54.974

Item R5 - Place scale - has a factor loading of 0.394 in component 3 and 0.679 in component 5. This represents a great difference between the two components. As the factor loading in component 3 of item R5 is less than 0.5, this item is rejected from the data. The data is put in the reliability and factor analyses for the 2nd time and the result turns out that the Corrected Item-Total Correlation value for items Ad1, Ad2, Ad3, Ad4, Ad5, and Ad6 – are

all greater than 0.3 (0.671, 0.677, 0.597, 0.520, 0.66, and 0.503 respectively). This means the marketing mix scale now includes 26 items, and is divided into 4 groups: PRODUCT, PRICE, PLACE, and PROMOTION.

Similarly, after running the factor analysis, both the CUSTOMER SATISFACTION scale and IMPORTANCE scale include 4 items in 1 component.

Then, correlation analysis is taken to test the relationship between dependent variable (customer satisfaction) and independent variables (marketing mix components). The result showed that there are positive Pearson correlation between CUSTOMER SATISFACTION and the 4 dependent components – PRODUCT, PRICE, PLACE, and PROMOTION, which proves a positive linear relationship between independent and dependent variables (Table 4).

5.4. Regression analysis

In Table 5, the summary indicates that the Adjusted R Square has a value of 0.186 which means 18.6% of the variance in customer satisfaction can be explained by independent variables, namely PRODUCT, PRICE, PLACE, and PROMOTION. Three components, namely PRODUCT, PROMOTION, and PLACE are accepted as they have the standardized coefficients (Beta) values of 0.241, 0.162, and 0.201, respectively, associated with small Sig.

values which are all smaller than 0.05 (0.000, 0.018, and 0.003, respectively). However the PRICE component is rejected as it has a standardized coefficients (Beta) value of 0.109 and the Sig. value is 0.098 (greater than 0.05).

As a result, the regression function is as following:

$$\text{CUSTOMER SATISFACTION} = 1.532 + 0.241 \text{ PRODUCT} + 0.162 \text{ PROMOTION} + 0.201 \text{ PLACE}$$

Interestingly, statistics of the marketing mix assessment in the smartphone market in Hanoi based on the Linkert scale shows that customer's perception of the marketing mix is slightly different. The fact that the PROMOTION factor is the not the strongest influential factor on customer satisfaction does not mean it cannot be the most obvious component from the customers' point of view (as shown in Table 6: PROMOTION is the most prevailing component (3.3386), followed by PRODUCT (3.2683) and PLACE (3.1508)).

Table 4: Correlation analysis

	CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	PRODUCT	PRICE	PLACE	PROMOTION	
Pearson Correlation	CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	1.000	.321	.192	.299	.269
	PRODUCT	.321	1.000	.164	.152	.194
	PRICE	.192	.164	1.000	.166	.062
	PLACE	.299	.152	.166	1.000	.267
	PROMOTION	.269	.194	.062	.267	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	.	.000	.003	.000	.000
	PRODUCT	.000	.	.011	.016	.003
	PRICE	.003	.011	.	.010	.194
	PLACE	.000	.016	.010	.	.000
	PROMOTION	.000	.003	.194	.000	.

Table 5: Regression analysis

R				0.449		
R ²				0.202		
Adjusted R Square				0.186		
Significant level				0.000		
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.532	.243		6.304	.000
	PRODUCT	.167	.046	.241	3.623	.000
	PRICE	.077	.046	.109	1.662	.098
	PLACE	.147	.050	.201	2.962	.003
	PROMOTION	.122	.051	.162	2.396	.018

Table 6: Assessment on marketing mix on Smart-phone market in Hanoi

	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean Score
PRODUCT	1.71	4.71	3.2683
PLACE	1.67	4.67	3.1508
PROMOTION	1.50	4.75	3.3386

6. Discussions

The result of this study shows several implications for marketers in marketing practices to guarantee the satisfaction of customers in the Vietnamese smartphone market. Firstly, the Vietnamese manufacturers should improve the product quality to meet the customer's demand as the PRODUCT has the strongest influence on customer satisfaction. Secondly, the manufacturers and retailers should understand their target market and fulfill the customers' specific desires so that the marketers in Vietnam can predict the attitude of their current and potential consumers. That is fundamental for them to make decisions concerning whether to keep the same or adopt different marketing strategies including promotion, advertisement, price, product quality and retail fields without the fear of getting negative feedback. Thirdly, the manufacturers and retailer can change the content of the promotion strategy to enhance customer satisfaction by reducing unnecessary information, concentrating on promotion

campaigns for targeted customers. Last but not least, managers may change the price strategy effectively and efficiently although this PRICE factor is not valid; this doesn't mean that it has no impact on customer satisfaction. No matter how other components can raise the customers' perception of the company and the product, there is only one factor contributing to the company's revenue. We need to find effective strategies and policies to attract as many customers as possible in the Vietnamese smartphone market.

7. Conclusions

This study aims to present a deep understanding of Vietnam's smartphone market, through which connections among varied factors are affirmed. The examined variables in the case are consumer satisfaction and the marketing mix. The existence of relationships among these variables are well recognized in the light of Index of Consumer Sentiment toward

Marketing as a basis to confirm the possibility that marketing activities may have positive impacts on customer satisfaction.

Nevertheless, there are still some noticeable limitations in the paper. Due to the geographic focus and the sample size, which did not allow the survey to access customers' information from all parts of Vietnam, the conclusion might not be entirely the same in further studies. In order to access a better outlook of the case, analysis of a larger sample needs to take place. Also, future researchers may want to revise the questionnaire design to obtain a higher degree of fitness for Asian consumers specifically.

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