



# FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SELECTION OF MOBILE PHONES AMONG YOUNG CUSTOMERS IN MAURITIUS

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## Abstract

*Purpose:* This paper explores the various factors which impact on the selection of mobile phones among young customers. The various constructs such as branding, pricing, mobile phone features, lifestyle, and demographic variables such as age group and gender have been conceptualised into an integrated framework to investigate the factors which can affect the selection of mobile phones. It also investigates the relative significance of these factors in determining the selection of mobile phones in Mauritius.

*Design/methodology/approach:* This paper reviews the determining factors impacting on the selection of mobile phones among young customers. It reports the empirical findings of a customer survey on the various factors impacting on the selection of mobile phones by the questionnaire method. The Mobile Phone Selection Model (MOPSM) is further validated through a survey instrument administered to 150 young mobile phone users. The questionnaires were further processed and analysed with the statistical programme SPSS, via descriptive and inferential analysis.



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*Findings:* The analysis has revealed that young customers have identified pricing as a key determinant when selecting mobile phones. The results also suggest that top-of-mind awareness and perceived brand value are key factors contributing to mobile phone selection. Mobile phone features and young consumers' lifestyles also impact on mobile phone selection. Further examination of the inferential analyses has revealed that significant relationships exist between mobile phone selection and the demographics of the young consumer segment.

*Practical implications:* The various players in the mobile phone industry should attract young customers through an appealing pricing strategy. They should also focus on attractive mobile phone features and the creation of brand awareness, since these two constructs are highly influential among young customers selecting mobile phones in Mauritius.

*Originality/value:* The study is a pioneer work in the field, as Mauritius is still a developing nation. Yet it serves as a roadmap for marketing managers and policy makers to identify the determining factors impacting on mobile phone selection among young customers in similar contexts.

**Keywords:** Determining factors, Mobile phone selection, Young customers, Mauritius

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mobile phones remain an indispensable communication device among youngsters and marketers have identified the techno-centric young customers as the most promising segment of the market for mobile phones. Therefore, focusing on this particularly affluent segment can be the driving force behind fuelling sales and staging success for mobile phone resellers worldwide. In this respect, it is imperative to gain specific insights into the underlying factors impacting the selection of mobile phones among young customers. Similarly, with the increasing ubiquity of mobile phone ownership, mobile phones are no longer perceived as a luxury item or a status symbol, but rather a necessity in people's daily lives (Walsh *et al.*, 2007). Various researchers have studied factors that influence the intention to acquire new mobile phones and factors that influence on mobile phone change among consumers in various countries, such as Finland and the Philippines, amongst others (Liu, 2002; Karjaluoto *et al.*, 2005; Ling *et al.*, 2007; Hakoyama and Hakoyama, 2012). It is important to note that various factors impact on customers' decisions when they are selecting mobile

phones. Hence, the scenario for mobile selection has been dramatically changed over the past few years. There is a desire for high-tech products among young customers (McDougall and Chantrey, 2004; Ericsson, 2010; Dover and Salkowitz, 2011; Vazifehdust *et al.*, 2011) and various authors have stated that marketing is regarded as complex for the youth market (Scottsdale, 2004; Selian, 2004; Moore, 2008; Mohsin Butt and De Run, 2010). Kotler and Armstrong (2010) and Sahay and Sharma (2010) have described the young consumer segment as being typically technologically driven, which in turn represents an attractive and emerging market that is keen to acquire innovative products (Zychowicz, 2009; Akturan *et al.*, 2011).

There are numerous mobile phone players in the telecommunications industry of Mauritius. Indeed, there is fierce competition among the various mobile phone resellers and in turn, the resellers are emphasising value creation and delivery for the end customers. Marketing executives have also become conscious that there are several factors which can influence overall customer selection of mobile phones. To the authors' best knowledge, no academic study has focused on the various factors impacting on mobile phone selection in the context of developing countries such as Mauritius. Specific studies on mobile selection among young customers are almost nonexistent for Mauritius. It is important to note that mobile phone subscriptions were less than a billion worldwide, with the majority of subscriptions from developed countries in 2001. However, by the end of 2010, mobile phone subscriptions had reached five billion worldwide with subscriptions from developing countries outnumbering those from developed countries (Kelly, 2009; Rebello, 2010). This paper provides a deep insight into the factors influencing mobile phone selection among young customers in an emerging country such as Mauritius. Hence, this paper contributes to the empirically scarce literature on mobile phone selection by providing meaningful insights on the different factors likely to influence mobile phone selection among young customers in a developing country like Mauritius.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The primary objective of the research is to explore the factors influencing mobile phone selection among young customers in Mauritius. The main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To investigate the selection of mobile phones among young customers in Mauritius.
2. To assess the relative significance of these factors in determining the selection of mobile phones in Mauritius.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Understanding the intricate behaviours of young consumers

In a rapidly changing competitive environment characterised by excessive marketing communications, sophisticated and complex products and decreasing inter-brand, consumers are overwhelmed with product offerings and choice selection (Walsh and Mitchell, 2005). The increasing purchasing power among young customers has considerably fuelled a desire for high-tech products (McDougall and Chantrey, 2004; Ericsson, 2010; Dover and Salkowitz, 2011; Vazifehdust *et al.*, 2011). Indeed, marketing has been found to be exceptionally complex for the youth market (Scottsdale, 2004; Selian, 2004; Moore, 2008; Mohsin Butt and De Run, 2010). Kotler and Armstrong (2010) and Sahay and Sharma (2010) have described the young individual as being typically “techno-savvy” and a “techno-geek”. Various researchers have found that young consumer segments are a particularly attractive and emerging market that is keen to acquire innovative products (Zychowicz, 2009; Akturan *et al.*, 2011).

According to Joshi (2011), established players in the mobile phone market enhance their sales through efficient pricing and product strategies and in this era of cut-throat competition, understanding the continuously changing needs and preferences of the consumer is a basic necessity for resellers (Jethendra, 2010; Kimiloglu *et al.*, 2010). Hence, knowledge of consumer behaviour helps to lessen the adverse effects of wrong decisions (Quester *et al.*, 2007, p.9). In a competitive retail sector, where empowered consumers with higher expectations have multiple choices, only the fittest and those inquisitive to what their customers really want are likely to survive (Berman and Evans, 2010, p.124). In addition, Karjaluoto *et al.* (2005) and Yang *et al.* (2007) have identified various factors influencing mobile phone choice, which include innovative services, multimedia, design, brand, basic properties, price, attractive calling plan package and reference group influences.

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### **Price: a major consideration for mobile phone purchase**

Price is considered a critical factor affecting the choice of mobile phones among young people (Karjaluoto *et al.*, 2005). In a similar vein, mobile phone customers have perceived price as a significant indicator of product quality, whereby high price indicates advanced technology, design and improved features (Kabadayi *et al.*, 2007). Furthermore, Munnukka (2008) highlighted significant positive relationships between customers' price perceptions and their purchase intention. In parallel, a recent survey has described price as a key factor in shaping the future purchase habits of young consumers (Malasi, 2012). Price is, therefore, the most influential factor affecting the purchase of a new mobile phone (Singla, 2010; Worlu, 2011). High price may also be perceived as a reflection of advanced technology, design and improved features and a higher price can trigger repeat purchase of the same mobile brand (Calýk and Ersoy, 2008). It can therefore be assumed that there is a relationship between price and selection of mobile phones by young customers.

Hence, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

*H<sub>1</sub>. Price is a determining factor impacting on the selection of mobile phones for young customers.*

### **The influence of branding for selection of mobile phones**

It has also been found that brand was perceived to be a key attribute in shaping the choice of mobile phones among young customers and Nokia was found to be the leading brand in 2010 with its partnership with Microsoft (Liaogang *et al.*, 2007; Kang, 2012). According to Keller (2007), the success of a branded product depends upon the creation of brand awareness, reaching consumers' minds and pushing them towards preference of that specific brand. The Winter Branding Survey (2006) also revealed that 99.2% of people are more likely to use a brand that came into their mind first. Indeed, there is a positive correlation of customer perceived values and brand awareness in mobile phone purchase (Wang *et al.*, 2009). Thus, higher brand image would lead to a higher level of understanding and purchase intention (Lin *et al.*, 2011). Ultimately, research indicates that trust and familiarity are essential in brand selection (Hablo Global Youth Survey, 2009). Hwa (2011) stated that consumers prefer to buy branded products and services as brands offer quality assurance and generate choices as well as simplifying purchase decisions.

The following research hypotheses are derived from the above statements:

*H<sub>2</sub>. Top-of-mind awareness has an impact on the overall choice for mobile phones among young customers.*

*H<sub>3</sub>. Perceived brand value has an impact on young customers' overall choice for mobile phones.*

### **Young consumers selecting mobile phone features**

Mobile phones are equipped with many useful multimedia features, including a media player, camera, web browser, child-location, call-management, bluetooth, speakerphone and voice command (Pakola *et al.*, 2001; Karjaluoto *et al.*, 2005; Mokhlis and Yaakop 2012). Factors that determine the selection of mobile phone by young people include touch screens, built-in cameras, mp3 capabilities, style of ringtones, colours of mobile phone model available and chat or mobile internet applications (Kumjonmenukul, 2011). A recent survey revealed that 17% of mobile phone users use the internet solely on their phone rather than using their computers or other devices (Smith, 2012). Moreover, Becta (2008) highlighted the multi-tasking capabilities by young people who are exceptional mobile game players. Moreover, high resolution colour screens or displays were found to be increasingly essential to camera phones and younger consumers are particularly active camera phone photographers (Curwen, 2010). Accessing mails from the mobile phone has also empowered young consumers; youngsters aged 15–24 years mostly use their mobile phones to listen to music and this preference for mobile music will continue in the future (Yougov, 2006).

From the TAM model, two main beliefs will impact users' intention and use of the technology, namely, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of the technology. Perceived ease of use refers to the extent to which users believe that using the technology is effortless, while perceived usefulness of the technology relates to the extent to which users believe that the technology will be helping them enhance their job performance (Davis 1989; Davis *et al.*, 1989). Thus, ease of use and usefulness of mobile phone features will also influence young customers' selection of mobile phones.

Hence, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

### **Lifestyles of young customers and selection of mobile phones**

Solomon and Rabolt (2004) have suggested that the influence of customers' lifestyle is determined by the product types and brands. Similarly, Lee *et al.* (2009) have pointed out the importance of selecting a mobile that matches customers' lifestyles. Although other people's influence created small impacts on the intention of purchasing a new model, friend's influence is "two-handed", that is, from one point of view, the impact of friend's influence on selection was through word-of-mouth and alternatively, some respondents would prefer buying a different brand other than their friend's mobile brand (Karjaluoto *et al.*, 2005). From a behavioural and psychological perspective, young people use mobile phones to keep in touch with friends and family (Aoki and Dwones, 2003; Haverila, 2011). Moreover, young people all over the world are known to be "leapfrogging over their PC straight to the mobile phone as their first screen for entertainment, communication and social interaction" (Goliam, 2011). Young consumers increasingly consider their mobile phone as an extension of their personality (Matzler *et al.*, 2006) and a particular study among the "Connected Young" concluded that enjoyment or self-gratification was reported as a mobile phone gain (Walsh *et al.*, 2007). Chau (1996) viewed perceived usefulness as long term usefulness where the users anticipate gains in social status with adoption of the technology. In the same respect, the UTAUT model also identified social influence processes such as subjective norm, voluntariness and image as influencing perceived usefulness and determining an individual's use of the technology (Venkatesh and Davis 2000; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003). In mandatory contexts, due to compliance, social influences have a direct effect on intention to use the technology, while in voluntary contexts, social influences significantly influenced perceived usefulness via mechanisms of internalisation and identification or image, towards impacting intention to use the technology.

Hence, it is hypothesized that:

*H<sub>5</sub>. Lifestyle impacts on the selection of mobile phones among young customers.*

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## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILING AND MOBILE PHONE SELECTION

### Age- and gender-related factors and selection of mobile phone

Consumers at different ages have different needs, wants and perceptions, thus, demographic factors highly impinge on consumer buying patterns (Autio, 2005; Gardyn, 2002; Wajcman *et al.*, 2010). Young consumers form relationships with brands (Sahay and Sharma, 2010) and in turn, they set up their brand preferences (Taylor and Cosenza, 2002). Nevertheless, Auty and Elliot (2001) stated that whether a consumer is younger (13–19) or in the older (20–25) age group, the purchase of a specific brand is associated with positive feelings towards the purchase directly proportional to his/her affiliation to a particular social group. Mobile phone purchase by young consumers aged 18–30 involves the consideration of “core technical features’ as well as “value-added features” (Singh and Goyal, 2009). Wei and Lo (2006) stipulated that gender is also a significant predictor of mobile phone use. Marketers of mobile phones might earn much admiration from female consumers by offering a range of mobile phone models matching their looks and style (Singh, 2009). However, the gender gap in mobile phone style selection is narrowing, with girls and boys reporting virtually equal usage (DeBaillon and Rockwell, 2005). However, according to Wilska (2003), young people’s relationship with their mobile phones is consistent with their lifestyle in terms of technology enthusiasm and hence, the traditional gender division in mobile phone styles is becoming more or less the same.

In view of the above, we posited the following research hypotheses:

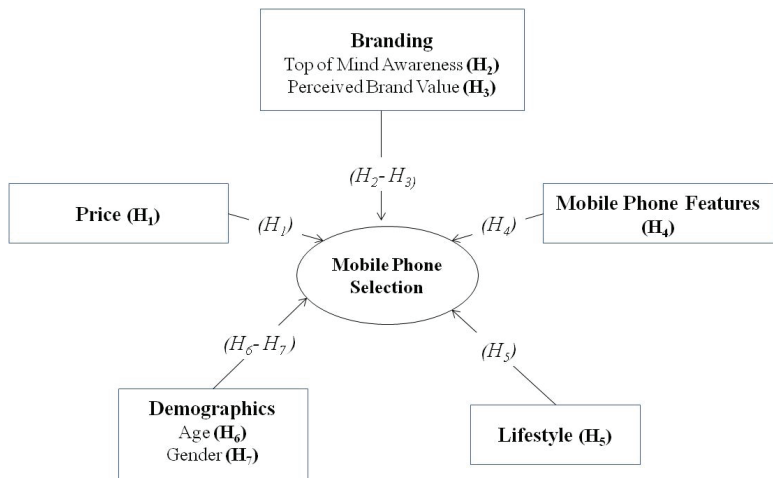
*H<sub>6</sub>. Age has an impact on young consumers’ mobile phone selection.*

*H<sub>7</sub>. Gender has an impact on young consumers’ mobile phone selection.*

The above literature has specified a series of streaming points that are critical in understanding young consumers’ selection of mobile phones and traces the distinctive traits of young consumers along with a number of factors affecting their choice for mobile phone purchase. This part of the paper closes with an emphasis on the scrutiny of young consumers’ behaviour and the factors influencing the selection of mobile phones. A research model for this study is further illustrated in Figure 1.below:



**Figure 1.** Proposed research model for Mobile Phone Selection Model (MOPSM)



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In line with the present study's main objective of investigating the factors impacting on the selection of mobile phones among young customers in Mauritius, a structured questionnaire consisting of several sections was generated. The various sections of the questionnaire relate to a list of 33 attributes related to influences on the shopping experiences of customers and the last part of the questionnaire addressed the demographic characteristics of respondents. The five sections of the questionnaire relate to the importance of perceived brand value for mobile phones and other determining factors towards mobile phone choice. A pilot test with 15 young customers was run prior to data collection for the mobile phone survey in order to guarantee an effective field administration in terms of ambiguous questions and wordings. A few words were modified to avoid confusion among the respondents.

## SAMPLING PLAN

In the present research, the targeted population of the study consisted of young persons in Mauritius. The population sampled were young customers aged between 15–29 years who currently own a mobile phone and are responsible for the selection and purchase of their devices. The sample size of this study amounted to 250 young customers through the probability sampling technique, with a response rate of 60 per cent.

Respondents were interviewed from various target groups, such as college and university students, and young persons who are currently employed in Mauritius.

### **INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

The Cronbach's alpha value for the entire questionnaire was 0.742 and such a high figure suggests that the questionnaire is a good indicator of what the researcher wants to investigate. According to Hair *et al.* (1995), a coefficient of less than 0.6 indicates marginal to low internal consistency and a value of 0.60 or more indicates satisfactory internal consistency reliability (Churchill, 1979).

### **STATISTICAL TESTS**

A correlation analysis was done to measure the relationship between the price of mobile phones and participants' intended selection of mobile phones. Factor analysis was developed to assess the relative significance of the features of mobile phone influencing phone selection among young customers. Only factors with eigenvalues equal to or greater than one were considered significant and chosen for interpretation. A variable with factor loadings of 0.40 was considered; that is, items less than 0.40 were excluded. The Pearson chi-square test was also used to determine the association between the two variables, such as brand loyalty towards mobile phones and the different age groups within the 15–29 target population in Mauritius.

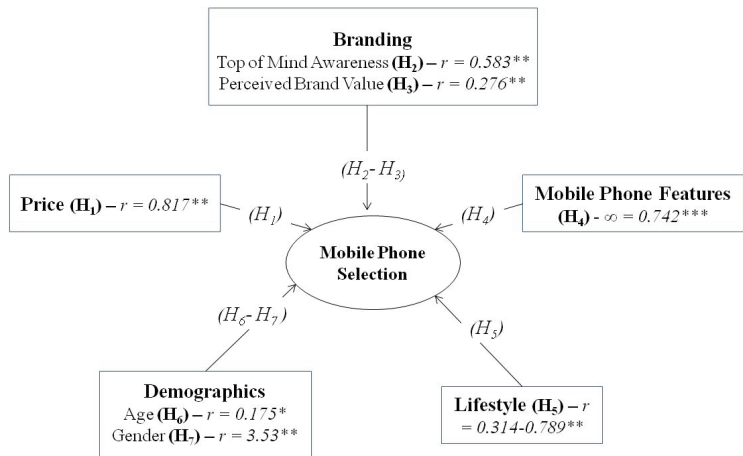
### **EMPIRICAL FINDINGS DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS**

The proposed conceptual model (Figure 2) was tested by using inferential analyses such as correlation, chi-square and factor analysis. The empirical estimates for the main-effects model are shown in Figure 2 below. The results indicate that, from a statistical point of view, the data fit the conceptual model acceptably, although not all the hypotheses were supported fully.

Spearman correlation was used to test the influence of price on mobile phone selection among young customers. It is interesting to note that there exists a positive correlation between current price and

Demographic variables		Per cent
Gender	Male	52
	Female	48
Age	15–19 years	35
	20–24 years	33
	25–29 years	31
Occupational group	Student	57
	Professional	30
	Service worker	8
	Self employed	5
Education	Degree holder	50
	Secondary	27
	Upper-secondary	15
	Diploma	5
Average household income	Postgraduate	3
	Rs 20000–30000	37
	Rs 30001–40000	33
	Rs 10001–20000	16
	>Rs 40000	13
Geographical dispersion	< Rs 10000	1
	Rural	36
	Urban	64

**Table 1.**  
Demographic  
profile of sample



**Figure 2.** Explored  
conceptual  
framework - Mobile  
Phone Selection  
Model (MOPSM)

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p > 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p > 0.06$

the price at which they intend to select their next mobile phone, ( $r = 0.817, p < 0.01$ ), hence, supporting  $H_1$ . It can thus be deduced that the actual price of mobile phones is a major determinant impacting on the selection of mobile phone among young customers. The survey results correspond with Munnukka's (2008) study, which found a significant positive relationship between customers' price perceptions and their purchase intention for mobile phones. It can also be inferred that young people will more or less buy within the same price bracket when selecting a new mobile phone, lower income consumers have a price limit (Karjaluo *et al.*, 2005) and young people have limited spending (Yen *et al.*, 2010). The results also reflect a recent survey by Malasi (2012) asserting that price will remain key in shaping the future purchase habits of young consumers. Hence, price is considered as the most influential factor affecting the purchase of a new mobile phone (Karjaluo, 2005; Singla, 2010; Worlu, 2011).

Survey findings have also suggested that top-of-mind awareness for mobile phones influences young customers' overall choice, since the initial brand they selected has a positive relationship to the brand that comes to their mind first ( $r = 0.583, p < 0.01$ ). The results can be matched with the Winter Branding Survey (2006) study which found that 99.2% of people surveyed are more likely to use a brand that comes to their mind first, which supports  $H_2$ . Moreover, brand comparison in terms of frequency identified Nokia as the most recalled brand among young customers in Mauritius (41%) followed by iPhone, Blackberry, Samsung, Alcatel and LG. This corresponds to the survey findings of Hakala *et al.* (2012) in their cross-country analysis of top-of-mind brands, revealing Nokia in Finland (98%) and France (41%) being top-of-mind mobile brands. A Spearman correlation was also conducted to test the impact of perceived brand value of mobile phone over mobile phone selection by young consumers. Perceived brand value was found to have a weak positive relationship on mobile phone selection ( $r = 0.276, p < 0.01$ ), hence supporting  $H_3$ . The result corresponds to the findings of Wang *et al.* (2009) who observed a positive correlation of brand awareness and customer perceived values on mobile phone purchase. Brand equity thus positively impacts on the consumer's selection of a specific brand (Moradi and Zarei, 2012).

Moreover, from the Varimax rotated matrix, three factors representing 59.79 % of the explained variance were extracted from the 10 attributes, as shown in Table 2. Only one item with a negative loading was removed.

The empirical estimates for the various mobile phone features impacting on mobile phone selection are shown in Table 3 and the results indicate that from a statistical point of view, the data fit our conceptual model, supporting  $H_4$ . After mythological examination of the factor loadings, the 10 variables were associated with respective dimensions, as shown in Table 2 below.

*Factor 1: Mobile phone as an entertainment technology*

Factor 1 has an eigenvalue of 3.509 and explains 35.094% of the variance. This factor groups five main attributes related to the mobile phone as an entertaining device. Features relating to “3G applications” have the highest loading factor (*Loading* = 0.854), followed by “Wi-Fi” (*Loading* = 0.727). Other attributes that represent the mobile phone as an entertaining tool are “music player” (*Loading* = 0.679), “browsing capabilities” (*Loading* = 0.603) and “camera applications” (*Loading* = 0.577). These attributes have revealed that mobile

Factor items	Loadings	Eigenvalues	% of Variance explained	Cronbach's alpha
<b>Factor 1: Mobile phone as an entertainment technology</b>		3.509	35.094	0.744
3G Applications	0.854			
Wi-Fi	0.727			
Music player	0.679			
Browsing capabilities	0.603			
Camera applications	0.577			
<b>Factor 2: Aesthetic features of mobile phones</b>		1.391	13.907	0.851
Screen display and quality	.838			
Design – (shape, colour and size)	.625			
<b>Factor 3: Mobile phone as a sharing tool</b>		1.079	10.789	0.511
Bluetooth	0.712			
Email	0.659			
<b>Total</b>		5.979	59.790	

**Table 2.** Factor items and loadings

entertainment is an important construct when young people select their mobile phones. Likewise, Experian Simmons Research (2011) revealed the fact that 29% of mobile phone users have viewed the mobile device as a primary tool for their future entertainment needs. In addition, Zulkerfly and Baharudin (2009) found that mobile phones are equipped with numerous additional features that specially draw the attention of younger users for entertainment purposes. For example, the 3G mobile phone technology allows for rapid internet connectivity (Palmer and Hartley, 2009). Moreover, a study of China's youth culture for mobile phones by the Motorola company revealed music as the fastest way into the mind and soul of today's youths (Wang, 2005) and younger consumers were found to be particularly active camera phone photographers (Kindberg, 2005; Haddon, 2008).

*Factor 2: Aesthetic features of mobile phones*

Factor 2 has an eigenvalue of 1.391 and explains 13.907% of the variance. This dimension groups two attributes related to the aesthetic aspects that can influence mobile phone selection. "Screen display and quality" has the highest loading factor (*Loading* = 0.911) followed by "design" (*Loading* = 0.811). This result supports the findings of Karjaluoto (2005), who found that design of mobile phones in terms of appearance, style and size is an important factor explaining the choice of mobile. Likewise, consumers were found to be vocal about the aesthetic aspects of mobile phone devices, with some phones being regarded as cool and funky, or too small, or too shiny (Moore and Rutter, 2003; Katz and Sugiyama, 2005; Geven *et al.*, 2008; Juhlin and Zhang, 2011).

*Factor 3: The mobile phone as a sharing tool*

Factor 3 has an eigenvalue of 1.079 and explains 10.789% of the variance. This factor groups two attributes that relate to the sharing aspect of mobile phone features. "Bluetooth application" has the highest loading factor (*Loading* = 0.712) followed by "email" (*Loading* = 0.659). Hein *et al.* (2011) highlighted the mobile phone as "a natural participant in interactions", allowing for instant access and spontaneous sharing via Bluetooth, which ultimately enhances relationship building. Similarly, Cheverst *et al.* (2005) studied the Bluetooth technology as a form of interaction with display among students aged 18–32 and found that majority of them (above 75%) were contented and engaged with Bluetooth phone interface. Email was also found in the UK to be a way through which the mobile phone has empowered the young (Yougov, 2006). Srivastava (2004) has stated that mobile phones integrated with

email applications have enabled employees with the choice to “take their office with them or leave it behind”. It can thus be deduced that except for games, all the other examined features have an influence on the choice of mobile phones by young customers, hence supporting  $H_5$ . This may be supported by the fact that young consumers find innovative services, multimedia and design prominent for mobile phone choice (Liaogang *et al.*, 2007).

It can thus be inferred that the lifestyles of young customers are considered important based on the empirical findings (*r values ranging from 0.314 to 0.789, p < 0.01*) for the selection of mobile phones, which supports  $H_5$ . This finding is supported by Lee *et al.* (2009) who stated that the importance of selecting a mobile that matches customers’ lifestyles is crucial. In assessing the behaviour of young people using mobile phones on culture and lifestyle, Kumjonmenukul (2011) observed that young peoples’ choice is determined by the latest fashionable and trendy models of mobile phones on a regular basis. It is important for them to stay in touch with their friends and family ( $r=0.413, p<0.01$ ). It can thus be assumed that young customers are more family- and friend-oriented individuals. Likewise, Dwones and Aoki (2003) pointed out that young people need their mobile phone to keep in touch with family members and friends. In a similar context, Wei and Lo (2006) found that people who were less socially connected take a mobile phone as a symbol of fashion and status rather than for social purposes. Likewise, empirical evidence has further demonstrated that the mobile phone is an entertaining device among young customers. In common with Venkatesh and Davis (2000) and Venkatesh *et al.* (2003) these findings confirmed the significance of social influence processes

**Table 3.**  
Correlation analysis  
– lifestyle influences  
on mobile phone  
selection

Lifestyle statements	Next mobile phone selection
Mobile phone allows me to stay in touch with my friends and family.	0.413
I can entertain myself with music, games, photos and internet applications from my mobile phones.	0.314
Mobile phones enable me to be socially connected “24/7” on social networking sites.	0.789
My mobile phone brand reflects my personality.	0.656
Advanced functions in the mobile phones do reflect my appreciation of technology.	0.658

on perceived usefulness of technology, which in turn impacts on young customers' intention to use mobile phones.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC RELATED FACTORS AND MOBILE PHONE SELECTION**

Surprisingly, age was found to have a positive weak relationship with mobile phone selection ( $r = 0.175, p < 0.05$ ), indicating that the selection of mobile phone does not vary across different age groups within the young Mauritian consumer segment, hence supporting  $H_6$ . Therefore, the findings are in conflict with various studies (Auty and Elliot, 2001; Eric and Bright, 2011). Furthermore, from the outcomes of surveys, it is interesting to note that a positive relationship exists between the variables gender and mobile phone selection ( $r = 0.353, p < 0.01$ ), showing that  $H_7$  can be accepted. Hence, though the gender gap in mobile phone style selection is narrowing, with girls and boys reporting virtually equal usage (DeBaillon and Rockwell, 2005), Singh (2009) asserted that marketers of mobile phones might earn much admiration from female consumers by offering a range of models matching their looks and style.

### **MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Mobile phone retailers should recognize the strategic importance of understanding customers' overall decision process when they are involved in the selection and purchase of mobile phones. Hence, successful mobile phone sellers must adopt a tailor-made marketing mix strategy to influence mobile phone selection among young customers, which will in turn lead to enhanced sales for mobile phones among young customers in the context of Mauritius. Indeed, the survey findings have presented various managerial implications for mobile phone resellers regarding crafting and designing appropriate marketing strategies that would appeal to young customers while they are selecting their mobile phones.

Demographic related factors	Mobile phone selection
Age	.175*
Gender	.353**

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**Table 4.**  
Demographics  
and mobile phone  
selection



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Empirical results have shown a positive significant relationship between price and the next selection of mobile phones among young customers ( $r = 0.817, p < 0.01$ ). The results concur with those of Munnukka (2008), Karjaluoto *et al.* (2005) and Yen *et al.* (2010), who have advocated that price is a determining factor for mobile phone selection among young customers. Hence, mobile phone resellers should present an attractive and appealing pricing strategy to the emerging youth market in mobile phones. For instance, mobile resellers can provide attractive credit facilities to young customers.

The empirical findings provide a greater insight into seemingly established relationships between top-of-mind awareness and the overall selection of mobile phones among young customers of Mauritius ( $r = 0.583, p < 0.01$ ). It is also interesting to note that there is a positive weak relationship between perceived brand value and the selection of mobile phones among young customers ( $r = 0.276, p < 0.01$ ). Research by Kotler and Armstrong (2010) and Jones *et al.* (2010) have also highlighted that a powerful brand can highly influence the selection of various products and service offerings. Hence, it is crucial for mobile phone resellers to capitalize on effective branding strategies whereby they carefully manage their mobile brands to create a distinctive place in the minds of the young customers of Mauritius.

It is also interesting to note that the findings of the present study have highlighted the mobile phones as an “entertainment tool” (*Loadings ranging from 0.577 to 0.854*), an “aesthetic tool” (*Loadings ranging from 0.625 to 0.638*) and a “sharing tool” (*Loadings ranging from 0.657 to 0.712*) among the young customers. These findings are in line with previous studies that have revealed the mobile phone as an entertaining device (Zulkefly and Baharudin, 2009; Palmer and Hartley, 2009); a fashionable device (Moore and Rutter, 2003; Katz and Sugiyama, 2005) and a sharing device (Srivastava, 2004). Therefore, mobile phone manufacturers should offer various attractive features to better appeal to the young customers who represent a worldwide emerging market. This is because existence of these attractive features, which are compatible with the values, needs and experiences of potential users, will impact the perceived ease of use and usefulness of the technology, and consequently enhance the young customers’ intention to use the mobile phones (Davis *et al.*, 1989; Venkatesh 2000; Venkatesh and Davis 2000; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003). Indeed, mobile executives should optimize product differentiation strategies for mobile phones when they

are customizing the product for young customers. In this respect, policy makers in the mobile industry will be in a better position to retain the loyal young customers of mobile phones in the near future.

### **CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The present study has highlighted the need for a rigorous re-examination of how young customers are involved in the selection of mobile phones in Mauritius. Customers are putting greater emphasis on perceived brand, price and mobile phone features when selecting phones. Hence, it is highly recommended that mobile resellers develop a deep understanding of the factors influencing mobile phone selection in order to customise their marketing strategies to the young customers who represent an emerging market for mobile phones in Mauritius. Indeed, the research results form practical tools for the policy makers and the various players in the telecommunication industry in Mauritius.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The present study has outlined the various factors impacting mobile phone selection among young customers of Mauritius. The study has some potential limitations, as the focus was on investigating the factors involved in mobile phone selection from the perspective of young customers in Mauritius; the underlying perceptions of mobile resellers and executives have not yet been tapped. The paper has some serious conceptual limitations; some of the specific constructs influencing mobile phone selection were predetermined and the model has only been validated among customers from an emerging country like Mauritius.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

In this respect, research should extend to mobile resellers and policy makers in the mobile sector in order to allow a comparative analysis of the factors impacting on mobile phone selection among young customers in Mauritius. Likewise, a more integrated conceptual model relating to the various factors impacting mobile phone selection among young customers can be proposed and validated in order to overcome the conceptual limitations of the present study and the research can be extended to other emerging countries such as the Seychelles and Rodrigues.

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**Ms Yasodaree Ponnusami**, degree holder in management, is currently collaborating on various academic and consultancy projects as research assistant at the University of Mauritius. She is responsible for coordinating

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