

Digital and Mass-Reach Marketing Adaptation Techniques in Emerging Asian Markets: Key Insights from Sony and Huawei

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigates how effective digital and mass-reach traditional marketing strategies are in the global smartphone industry, with a focus on the Asian market. It uses Sony and Huawei as case studies to evaluate their marketing strategies and examine how each company responds to regional customer behaviour and market trends. **Design/Methodology/Approach:** In our research, we use both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including literature reviews, market data analysis, and a consumer survey done across various Asian nations. **Findings:** The key findings show that digital communication strategies particularly influencer marketing, social media engagement, and mobile app integration capture consumer interest and drive sales more effectively than traditional mass-marketing methods. Huawei's strong digital presence and localized engagement outperform Sony's more traditional and generalized strategies in the region. **Research limitation/Implication:** Research limitations include the focus on two multinational firms and a single market context, which may affect generalizability. Future research should broaden the sample to include local or emerging firms and use mixed-method designs to validate findings in a variety of market environments. **Practical Implication:** Our study's practical implications highlight the need of smartphone manufacturers prioritizing digital tactics adapted to Asian markets' cultural and technological contexts. Companies should invest in social media campaigns, influencer partnerships, and e-commerce collaborations to increase brand visibility and loyalty. **Social Implication:** The study highlights a growing demand among Asian consumers for personalized, technology-enabled brand engagements. This shift reflects broader societal trends toward digital-first lifestyles, indicating that brands have to modify their engagement strategies to remain culturally relevant and consumer-centric. **Originality/Value:** This study addresses a key gap in comparative marketing research by comparing digital and traditional techniques in Asia's smartphone market. It provides actionable insights for global marketers by using real-world case studies and rigorous methodologies.

Keywords: Digital Communication Strategies, Traditional Marketing, Smartphone Industry, Digital vs Traditional Marketing, Sony and Huawei Case Study, Digital transformation

INTRODUCTION

I would like to start my paper with these words from Meghan Keaney Anderson, VP of Marketing, HubSpot, Inc;

‘Don’t push people to where you want to be; meet them where they are.’

This is now an admitted fact that the present era of communication is a transformation from conventional means to digitized; which has unleashed a tech-savvy culture around the globe. This transition can be attributed to the contemporary communication needs of the world in general, and businesses in particular, who aim to present and promote their messages to consumers in an organized and highly effective manner. Yet, before we can jump to any conclusion, there is a need to dive deep into the subject and explore the specifics which spurred this transition and understand the dynamics, rationales, efficacy, and obstacles of this mode of communication.

In writing this paper, the main goal is to explore various digital communication strategies/channels employed in the global smartphone industry and weigh them against traditional marketing channels in various regions of the Asian Market. (By the examples of Sony and Huawei). The object of the paper would include the scope and theoretical aspects of digital (and social) communication strategies in comparison to the traditional mass-reach marketing approach; whereas, the subject would cover the benefits and threats of both the digital means of communication as well as the mass-marketing approach.

Being a strong believer in digitalization, this subject has always intrigued my mind; yet, my most recent read of the book “Positioning the Battle of your Mind” by Al Ries and Jack Trout further captivated my interest and motivation in this subject. (Puri, 2018) The concise rather comprehensive book starts with the notion of “failure to communicate” and profoundly claims that today we have become an over-communicated society, as there is a plethora of marketing information to consume, which a person cannot even remember. While combating the irregularity and ineffectiveness of such kind of marketing tactics, the authors posit and emphasize “positioning”, a new approach to communication which essentially means positioning your product in the mind of the consumers.

As being creative is becoming more and more difficult these days, “positioning” does not require us to create something new or radically different, but to manipulate what’s already there in the mind of the consumer, the reason how it has transformed the role of advertising today. Those who practice positioning are aware of the phrase “less is more” which means that you do not need junk information to penetrate the consumer’s mind; instead, it is crucial to sharpen the message, make it concise and simple to be able to have a long-lasting impact on the consumer’s mind which is already busted with information.

Research Gap

Even though positioning has reshaped the world of communication with its unorthodox yet convincing principles, our goal in this paper is not to proclaim its benefits but also to investigate the threats and difficulties involved in this mode of communication. (Topol, 1996). Despite numerous studies that have explored the advantages and disadvantages of digital communication strategies and mass-reach traditional marketing approaches, there exists a research gap that calls for a comparative analysis of both approaches in the global smartphone industry, specifically in the Asian market. This gap could be addressed by examining the marketing strategies of Sony and Huawei, two leading smartphone companies operating in the Asian market, and comparing the effectiveness of their respective approaches.

METHODOLOGY

To present, support and analyse the literature in my research paper, we would be using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods such as examining scientific journals, articles, and previous researches that follow the subject and logic of our topic and including a consumer survey to strengthen the validity of the arguments presented. In the second chapter, we specifically aim to present numerical statistics and conduct financial calculations concerning various parameters of the global smartphone

industry in general and the chosen international companies in particular. Finally, based on the literature review and statistical analysis, we would aim to find conclusive evidence to accept or decline the hypothesis, that despite the threats, the effective implementation of digital communication strategies acts as a growth factor in the global smartphone industry.

Theoretical Aspects

LITERATURE REVIEW

The rise in smartphone usage by customers presents new opportunities for advertisers. (Loebbecke, 2015) Digitalization is a key industry and cultural movement that has the potential to fundamentally alter how firms function and produce value. 'Born-digital' enterprises are challenging old, pre-digital companies in a variety of industries, prompting many to conclude that a digital transformation is essential for survival. This transformation entails embracing digital technologies and practices to fully capitalize on the opportunities given by digital technology. (Demirkan, H, Spohrer, JC, Welser, JJ, 2016). The goal is for pre-digital enterprises to catch up to and outperform those born digital.

Promotional efforts made via the Internet, social media, mobile phones, electronic billboards, as well as digital television and radio networks, could all be used as part of a firm's digital marketing strategy. (Vial, 2019) Digital marketing is a subset of conventional marketing that employs new digital platforms to position goods, such as downloadable music, and to communicate with stakeholders, such as consumers and investors, about the brand, products, and performance of the organization. Digital transformation has become a key driver of innovation, growth, and success for businesses of all sizes and industries. It involves the integration of digital technologies into all aspects of a company's operations, from marketing and sales to customer service and supply chain management. (Yasmin, 2015) Digital technologies allow organizations to optimize processes, minimize expenses, enhance customer engagement, and drive a competitive advantage over rivals. Ability to collect and analyse vast amounts of data in real-time is one of the most purposeful advantages of undergoing a digital transformation. Organizations are leveraging big data analytics to gain insights into consumer behaviours, demographic trends, and operational performance, or other data-embedded processes that propel operational innovation. It enables businesses to enhance operational paths, develop products with more concise marketing specifications and procedures, and develop individualized functionalities into the customer experience.

Utilization of artificial intelligence and machine learning is an essential capability of digital transformation. It enables organizations to automate repetitive tasks, enhance decision-making, and improve operational speed and accuracy. Applications of AI machine learning include enhancing organizational customer support capabilities via chatbots and inventory levels through predictive analytics. Cloud computing is also a critical enabler of digital transformation, as it allows companies to access and manage data and applications from anywhere, at any time. (Todor, 2016) Cloud-based solutions can help businesses reduce costs, improve scalability, and enhance collaboration and agility. However, digital transformation is not without its challenges. It requires significant investments in technology, infrastructure, and talent, as well as a willingness to adapt to new ways of doing business. Companies must also address concerns around data privacy, security, and ethical considerations related to the use of emerging technologies (Pastore, 2000). The digital world is continuously changing, and to preserve a competitive advantage, it is critical to take a complete and professional strategy for digital transformation. Failure to do so on time can result in considerable and long-term loss of competitiveness, as demonstrated by the fall of huge incumbents in the retail business as a result of their slow adoption of digital and analytical methodologies.

Companies with rudimentary online shopping capabilities, such as Ikea, were outperformed in terms of revenue growth and market share by Amazon and Alibaba, which used digital analytics to their advantage. (Kaur, 2017) This trend is visible across industries as companies compete to capitalize on the benefits of digital transformation, which has emerged as a key driver of competitive advantage, if not the primary one. As a result, it is critical to prioritize and invest in digital transformation to stay ahead of the competition and maintain relevance in an ever-changing business landscape.

Digital communication strategies vs Mass-Reach traditional marketing approach in the global smartphone industry in the Asian Market:

The smartphone industry has taken the world by storm, with cutting-edge mobile technologies and the transition towards digital lifestyles driving remarkable expansion. Smartphones have become an essential part of consumers' lives, and their global demand continues to surge. In 2016, smartphone sales surpassed 1.5 billion, indicating that one in every five people on Earth uses a smartphone for personal purposes. (Statista., 2022) With 95.1% of active Facebook accounts accessing the platform via mobile devices and roughly 5.135 billion mobile social users in 2018, smartphones are steadily becoming the primary conduit for internet access. (Int. J. Res. Granth Alayah, 2018)

Asia, spearheaded by countries like China, India, Japan, and South Korea, has emerged as a significant growth engine for the smartphone sector, contributing to a total of over 1.5 billion global smartphone sales in 2021. (Sharma, 2020) As the Asian market continues to significantly contribute to the industry, understanding how market leaders harness digital channels for growth is essential.

Companies like Samsung, Huawei, and Xiaomi have utilized platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WeChat to connect with their target audience, sharing updates on product launches, sales promotions, and customer testimonials. By maintaining an active and influential online presence, these companies foster brand loyalty, generate buzz around their products, and ultimately drive sales. Another strategy implemented by major smartphone manufacturers is content marketing. (Zafar, 2017) By producing valuable, relevant, and engaging content, these companies educate consumers about their products and unique features that distinguish them from competitors. Examples include product demonstration videos, in-depth blog posts, and insightful info-graphics. By offering valuable content, companies establish themselves as an industry thought leaders and build trust with potential customers.

Influencer marketing has also been a prominent strategy used by smartphone manufacturers to reach potential customers. By engaging in partnerships with influencers and opinion leaders, companies can gain access to their broad platform for marketing products, and also leverage their credibility as marketing advocates for the product category. Influencers operate mainly by utilizing their social media accounts (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok) to draw an audience with their engaging content, and foster product placement through credible product reviews or tutorials. For example, in South Korea, Samsung partnered with one of the most admired actors, Lee Min-Ho, and fully utilized his likeness to market products from the Galaxy S20 series.

In the smartphone sector, mobile applications are becoming an increasingly important aspect of digital communication strategies. They are used to improve a consumer's experience, offer after sales service and support, and keep consumers loyal to the brand. For instance, Huawei's "HiCare" application, which offers after sales support and product information, has been downloaded over 50 million times on the Google Play Store. Furthermore, in the Asian hemisphere eCommerce has become an important distribution channel for the smartphone companies, especially online marketplaces such as Alibaba's Tmall, JD.com, and Amazon which have proven to be a popular platform to reach an expanding consumer audience.

Mass-reach traditional marketing strategies use traditional media such as television, radio, print, and out of home media to reach mass audiences. Mass-reach marketing strategies can still be a valuable part of today's marketing environment, as they can reach broad audiences. According to 2021 stats, global advertising spend amounted to 719 billion U.S. dollars suggesting the fresh relevance of traditional marketing methods.

TV advertising and Print advertising had success building brand awareness, driving sales, and influencing purchase decisions in the smartphone market. One of the more popular applications of mass-reach traditional marketing is experiential marketing. Experiential marketing is the creation of experiences for consumers to experience the product, such as product demonstration or an interactive display. This approach has been particularly effective in markets such as South Korea, where consumers value experiences and interaction with products.

In the context of the smartphone business in the Asian market; which is well-known for its high levels of technological skill, digital communication strategies such as social media marketing, influencer marketing, and online advertising allows smartphone companies to reach a larger and more precisely targeted audience than traditional mass media outlets such as television or print ads. Furthermore, digital communication tactics enable more exact metrics for gauging campaign success and may be easily altered based on audience response. Investing in digital communication tactics can be extremely beneficial.

Benefits and Threats of Digital Communication Strategies vs Mass-Reach traditional marketing approach:

Although digital communication strategies offer various benefits like direct targeting of specific audiences, enhancing brand loyalty, and creating hype around products, they also come with risks such as privacy concerns and information overload. (Batinić, 2017) Conversely, traditional marketing approaches allow a broader reach to a diverse audience, but they may not be as effective in engaging customers. Therefore, smartphone companies must weigh the benefits and threats of both strategies to optimize their marketing efforts and achieve their business goals.

Benefits of Digital marketing approach

Wide Reach: Digital marketing allows smartphone companies to reach a larger audience in the Asian market through different digital channels such as social media, search engines, and email marketing.

Brand Promotion and Development: Digital marketing assists in obtaining a brand across the globe as it traverses boundaries. What essentially is happening is products are marketed globally through technology and the internet.

Cost Effective: Digital marketing is usually less expensive than traditional marketing forms such as broadcast or print ads. Digital marketing spokesman can assign their budget to be used more efficiently with digital marketing by appropriately choosing the digital media to reach their consumers in a specific country and region.

Targeted Results: Digital marketing allows companies to track and measure how their campaigns are performing. These insights allow companies to understand which marketing strategies are working or did not work, allowing them to optimize or create future recommendations.

Personalized Experience: Digital marketing gives direct communication to clients to provide a personalized experience of providers who are delivering the appropriate messaging and targeted offers.

This supports better customer and brand interactions. Ultimately, digital marketing allows providers to better understand their customers, promote customer loyalty and sales, and repeat units while knowing the user experience has allowed for better navigation.

Better Data Analysis: Digital marketing allows providers to gain a wealth of data to analyse consumer behaviour and preferences as it relates to products or services. For example, in Asia, the marketplace is incredibly competitive, and using collected data will allow for better marketing strategies and products to be developed to appeal to different segments of consumers in this market.

Viral Coverage Benefits: Using social networking sites and sharing buttons on your homepage, your message can be spread easily and to a wider audience. Likes on a single advertisement help to popularize a brand without incurring any extra costs.

Increased engagement: Digital marketing motivates prospects to act. It assists in guiding orders, providing options, allowing customers to choose from a variety of payment methods, and eventually ensuring that the product is shipped to the customer's location at no extra cost. Customers have access to online ads 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Customers may purchase a range of items from the comfort of their own homes. It is also possible to complete the transaction quickly.

Threats of Digital marketing approach

Competition: The smartphone industry in Asia is highly competitive, and there are many already established companies, as well as companies hoping to enter the market. This makes it more difficult for new companies to build momentum with their digital marketing initiatives, as it is a crowded market.

Consumer Privacy Concerns: As digital marketing improves, so are data privacy and security concerns. While consumers are becoming aware of their privacy rights in Asia, companies who do not treat their data ethically will face pushback, and perhaps irreparable distrust from some customers.

Ad Blocking: Ad-blocking capabilities in apps and web browsers are becoming increasingly widely used, particularly amongst younger generations. This complicates smartphone companies' ability to reach target audiences and generate leads through digital space marketing.

Cultural Differences: Asia is a diverse area with disparate cultures, languages, and customs. Digital marketing campaigns that do not take into account the local market may not resonate with consumers and cause audience engagement and conversion rates to drop.

Dependence On Technology: As digital marketing is based almost entirely on technology, disruptions in digital structure will affect its ability to work. Cybersecurity attacks such as hacking, phishing, and malware used to steal sensitive customer data and create brand reputation damage.

Benefits of Mass-Reach traditional marketing approach

Brand Awareness: Traditional marketing channels—such as billboard ads, television and radio ads—can reach larger audiences quickly and are effective for building brand awareness. This is particularly relevant to new smartphone companies attempting to build a presence in the Asian market.

Tangible Presence: Traditional marketing channels create a tangible presence that digital marketing channels lack. For example, billboards and posters in specific geographic locations that are very visible can leave a lasting impression on consumers' minds, thus increasing brand awareness and brand recall.

Credibility: In Asia, consumers often consider traditional marketing channels to be more credible than digital channels, since traditional culture has more of an emphasis on traditional values. Consumers are generally more likely to trust something they see, hear and read through traditional channels.

Familiarity: Traditional marketing channels like television, and radio are part of established consumer behavior in Asia, which consumers utilize today. Furthermore, companies who embrace traditional marketing can leverage the familiarity consumers already have with the "physicality" of marketing. This approach will appeal to a larger audience who may likely not be responsive to a digital marketing campaign.

Emotional Connection: Traditional marketing channels allow companies to develop an emotional connection with consumers by way of storytelling, music and visual elements. Storytelling in the traditional marketing can definitely have traction with consumers, meaningful storytelling and relations with history have deep-valued roots in Asia.

Faster results: As compared to digital marketing strategies, which may take many weeks conventional marketing can have results produced faster or more successfully, if the advertisements are well positioned and appropriate for the market.

Conventional marketing may have a greater level of confidence, which is the number one advantage. Many consumers believe that they can trust offline-based purchases more than online. The amount of online fraud is one factor contributing to people hesitating to trust some amount of the information.

Threats of using a Mass-Reach approach to conventional marketing:

Cost of world-wide or thou traditional marketing: The costs of advertising of television and radio are also extensive, especially for new and small smartphone companies. The costs of creating and placing commercials or purchasing ad space can be very high and not provide acceptable returns.

Limited Targeting: Traditional marketing channels have limited targeting capabilities compared to digital marketing channels. They cannot reach specific demographics or target audiences with the same precision, which can lead to wasted marketing spend and lower conversion rates.

Ad Blindness: Consumers are increasingly tuning out traditional marketing channels, particularly younger generations who are more likely to consume content through digital channels. This can make it challenging or smartphone companies to reach their target audience and generate leads.

Lack of Interactivity: Traditional marketing channels are mostly one-way communication, and consumers cannot interact with the brand in real time. This can limit engagement and the ability to build relationships with customers.

Difficulty in Measuring Effectiveness: Traditional marketing channels can be difficult to measure, and it may be challenging to track the success of campaigns an identify areas for improvement.

To stay ahead in the competitive Asian market, the global smartphone industry must balance the benefits and threats of both digital communication strategies and mass-reach traditional marketing approaches. (Nair, 2011) However, with digital communication strategies becoming increasingly popular, companies should prioritize understanding their target audience, identifying effective digital marketing channels, and constantly evaluating and adjusting their digital communication strategies to achieve their marketing

goals. This approach will provide a competitive edge and help companies stand out in the rapidly growing Asian market.

Future Perspectives: Strategic Managerial Implications in Asia's Evolving Smartphone Marketing Landscape

Anticipating future trends in marketing is essential for strategic decision-making, particularly in Asia's dynamic and culturally diverse smartphone market. As digital technologies reshape consumer behavior and market expectations, managers must proactively adapt their marketing strategies to remain competitive and consumer-relevant. The following section outlines key emerging trends and corresponding strategic implications for marketing executives operating in Asia's smartphone sector.

Integration of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning: AI and machine learning technologies will continue to improve, which will have a significant impact on how smartphones are marketed in Asia. Predictive analytics, automated content delivery, and intelligent customer support systems like chatbots powered by AI will be critical for understanding what customers want and how to address their needs in real time. Managers should invest in AI-powered customer relationship management solutions to improve operational efficiency and deliver highly customized marketing.

Rise of Voice Search and Conversational Marketing: As Asia's mobile-first customers increasingly use speech-enabled gadgets and digital assistants, voice search will transform the region's SEO and content marketing strategies. Conversational AI will enable brands and people to communicate in a more natural and human manner. Content must be optimized for natural language processing, and digital interaction techniques should be tailored to regional languages, dialects, and cultural contexts.

Expansion of Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR): In the highly competitive Asian smartphone market, AR and VR technologies will provide an innovative way to stand out. These tools will help brands increase consumer engagement by providing immersive retail experiences and virtual product trials. To strengthen the brand-customer interface, managers should consider strategically engaging with AR/VR developers and implementing immersive experiences into both online and in-store channels.

Sustainability-Driven branding The awareness of environmental issues among urban, millennial, and Generation Z consumers in Asia is growing, which will require more emphasis on sustainability. Smartphone brands will not only need to use eco-friendly manufacturing and packaging, but they will also need to systematically communicate this through their advertising. Managers will need to embed sustainability in their brand storytelling and value propositions to attract ethical consumers and build loyalty over time.

Balancing Hyper-Personalization with Data Privacy The desire for high levels of personalization from Asia's digitally active population in mobile phones and apps must be balanced with consumer concern about their data privacy and regulatory compliance. Strategic marketing leaders will need to prioritize privacy and pursue secure personalization tools. Building trust by being transparent and ethical in the way they govern their data will also be important for ensuring customers are in trust of the brand.

The Evolution of Influencer Marketing in Local Contexts Influencer marketing in Asia is still evolving as it is as much about authenticity than hierarchical popularity. or shift from macro-influencer marketing to micro- and nano-influencer marketing who authentically and genuinely connect to specific communities. Managers should look to work with localized influencers who authentically engage with area values and language, local cultural trends. Strategic focus should change from reach to relevance and cultural affinity of audience trust.

Seamless Omnichannel Integration Across Markets: Asian customers are demanding unified experiences across the digital and physical realms. Consistent, seamless client journeys is a strategic imperative for smartphone brands in a multichannel ecosystem. Managers must pay attention to the consistency of communication, branding, and overall experience across online, retail, social, and support systems.

The future of smartphone marketing in Asia will be shaped by rapid technology advancement, evolving customer expectations, and increasing digital sophistication. Managers need to anticipate these changes and consider how they align their marketing capabilities in the Asia region. Those firms that leverage the advancements in AI, with immersive technologies, sustainable marketing practices, and hyper-local engagement channels and methodologies can develop resilient marketing frameworks that drive deeper consumer engagement and sustainable competitive advantage in Asia's turbulent change.

Analytical Overview

In this chapter, we will explore the current state of the global smartphone industry in the Asian market, including market size, trends, key players, and challenges. By the end of this analysis, you will gain valuable insights into the industry's opportunities and challenges in the region, and how smartphones will continue to transform our lives in ways we never thought possible.

Although cellular handsets have gradually integrated more features since their launch, mobile communications supply chains, like those in the wider electronics industry, have been increasingly disaggregating throughout national and corporate boundaries (Li, 2009) Nokia, Ericsson, Motorola, and NTT DoCoMo are large integrated industries that invented cellular connectivity technology, installed infrastructure equipment such as base stations, manufactured key components, and designed, produced, and delivered their smartphones.

Vertical integration is still present in the industry, as evidenced by Samsung's development of smartphones, display features, memory, and other parts, as well as Apple's designs of its own software processor chips and operating system. However, these operations are often carried out as part of a large global network spanning the computer, semiconductor, communications, software industries, and consumer electronics. (Makrides, 2020) Newcomers like Huawei, Oppo, and Xiaomi will take advantage of the global supply chain, the transparent existence of cellular and wireless mobile communications, and Google's popular Android operating system to break into the market and take market share away from incumbents.

Apple's iPhone, which uses its own iOS operating system and A-series application processors, has the highest sales and profit margins in the industry. Meanwhile, over 1000 firms, including Samsung and Huawei, are developing products focused on Google's Android operating system, Qualcomm, and other processors. (Kretschmer, 2020). In terms of the operations in the supply chain that Samsung and Huawei conduct internally while sourcing outside, they are more heavily regulated than most other smartphone manufacturers. Apple, for example, controls both the App Store and also the operating system, giving it more leverage over its platform, customer relationships, and revenue generation. Google owns the Google Play store, which is used by the vast majority of Android users, and it earns money from downloads, content sales, and subscriptions, while Huawei and Samsung don't.

Evolving nature of demand/market

Cell phones have evolved from analogy to digital over the last 20 years, from simple phones being used for voice communications to smartphones used mostly for data communications and also for applications.

While there were prior models of smartphones, the launch of the Apple iPhone in 2007 marked a major shift in the industry, as it established the dominant design for such devices (Dedrick, et. al., 2011).

From 123.9 million units sold in 2007 to 1,471 million in 2016, the smartphone industry has expanded significantly (IDC, 2017). The industry's overall shipments increased from \$52 billion in 2007 to \$425.2 billion in 2015 (Table 1). As the market becomes saturated, growth slowed significantly in 2016, with just \$418 billion in shipments. Whereas in the past, developed economies like the United States, Europe, and Japan, as well as the massive China market, the majority of smartphone market growth now comes from developing nations, led by India.

From 2007 to 2011, the average selling price of a smartphone stayed around \$425, before dropping to \$283 in 2016. (Table 1). Before 2011, performance improvements in semiconductors, networking, and other technologies were used to boost mobile capabilities while keeping prices steady. Even as the capacities of smartphones have continued to grow, competition has pushed down prices and margins.

Table 1: Worldwide Sales in industry, smartphones (2007-2016)

Top2 Firms	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Shipments/Total	59%	56%	59%	49%	38%	49%	46%	39%	38%	35.8%
Value/Total	57%	50%	51%	47%	50%	64%	65%	63%	65%	59%
Top20 Firms										
Shipments	99%			98%					85%	84%
Value	98%			94%					93%	94%

Since 2007, the industry has had two dominant companies at any particular time (Table 2). However, the market's early pioneers, Nokia and Blackberry (formerly RIM), have almost vanished, with Apple and Samsung taking their position with 35.8% of shipments and 65 percent of revenues in 2015 (Top Two Firms in Table 1), though their proportion has fallen to 59 percent of total shipments in 2016. Their sales shares are almost double their portion of exports, indicating that they will charge higher rates. Perhaps more surprising is the fact that Apple was reported to have captured 91% of operating profits in the third quarter of 2016, despite declining revenue (Kharpal, 2016).

Table 2: Shift in Top 2 Firms by year (based on the value of shipment)

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Nokia	Nokia	Nokia	Apple	Apple	Apple	Samsung	Apple	Apple	Apple
Blackberry	Sony	Apple	Nokia	Samsung	Samsung	Apple	Huawei	Samsung	Samsung

There is currently no single player who is more successful than the others in all three business segments. Even though Nokia, Huawei, Apple, and RIM seem to have succeeded in combining all three segments into a single device, they do not have a monopoly on all three markets. Nokia's conventional hardware technology and proprietary operating system are strong, but the content market is small. Apple and RIM have good operating systems and software, but their hardware technology is lacking. Software developers concentrated solely on software development, while hardware manufacturers continued to invest in hardware R&D. The business with a competitive edge in all these market segments will be declared as the winner.

Digital Communication Strategies in the Global Smartphone Industry in the Asian Market by the example of Huawei:

Huawei is a Chinese technology giant that has transformed itself from a low technology domestic business to a high-technology global company in the telecommunications industry.

In the late 1980s, Huawei began as a small telecommunications company in China. But thanks to the windows of potential that opened up in China's telecommunications industry, Huawei was able to grow rapidly and maintain its lead in the industry. (Jena, 2016) The company's strategic choices to seize these windows of potential during the development of the industry determined its success in moving ahead of incumbents and ultimately becoming a leader in both the domestic and international markets.

Huawei's success is not only due to its technological innovation but also to its market-seeking approaches. The company developed its approaches in tandem, accumulating skills in both technologies and marketing, which became the firm's core comparative advantage in the international market. Huawei developed its FSAs over time based on its technical and marketing capabilities, leading to its strategic pursuit of brand building.

In terms of technical capability building, Huawei went through three main phases of growth. In the first stage, the company developed its manufacturing capability largely by copying and improving existing AMNE technologies. During the second stage, Huawei actively learned and consumed mainstream and new advancements, improving its digital switching technology and developing large-capacity, operator-level digital switches. (Dedrick, 2017) The third stage saw Huawei leading the global telecommunications industry's technical future by developing innovative performance on the generation technologies in 3G and 4G. As a result of its successful digital communication strategies, Huawei is now one of the largest smartphone manufacturers in the world. According to Statista, Huawei's smartphone sales in Asia-Pacific amounted to over 39 million units in the second quarter of 2021 alone. The company's strategy of focusing on both technology development and market seeking has been crucial to its success in the Asian market.

One of the key factors that have enabled Huawei to succeed in the Asian market is its ability to adapt to local market conditions. There is a clear recognition on the part of the company for the demand for customized products and services to cater to customers in different countries across Asia. For example, in India, Huawei needed to provide inexpensive smartphones that were technically capable to meet the price sensitive Indian market. This approach helped the company achieve one of the top smartphone brands in India. In addition, the emphasis on innovation has been an important aspect of Huawei's digital communication strategy in the Asian market. Huawei has a long-standing history of investing in R&D, which has enabled it to develop advanced products and technologies to outpace its competitors. For example, Huawei is a leader in 5G technology and invested millions in developing and testing 5G networks in the Asia region. As well, Huawei's growth in the Asian market can also be credited to its strategic partnerships with local companies. The company has partnered with numerous Asian companies to develop products and technologies, exchange knowledge and experience, and to expand the company's footprint in the region. In Japan, Huawei partnered with Japanese telecommunications company SoftBank to develop a device that provided a range of innovative products and services in the Japanese market. As of 2021, Huawei continues to be one of the a significant player in the global smartphone market, while still having a substantial presence in the Asian region.

Table 3: Huawei market share in India

Year	Trending Product	Market Share (%)
2016	Nova	<1%
2017	Honor series	1%
2018	Honor series	3.4%

Huawei has a methodic, gradual globalization plan to build joint ventures and strategic alliances using local firms as sales representatives. This gave Huawei vital experience to navigate changing windows of potential as the company expanded its range of technical capability, and enabled some urban market success.

Huawei has clearly given consideration to using cloud-based services and service-oriented processes as a means to achieving its digital communication objectives. Clearly Huawei's digital communication strategy in the Asian market includes a significant investment in research and development. (Guo, 2019). The company filed an impressive total of 87,805 international patents as of 2018, making it one of the most prolific companies in the world. Huawei has also been a member of over 400 standardization groups related to various technologies and has submitted close to 60,000 standardization proposals in total.

Huawei's efforts have paid off, with the company's revenue increasing from CNY 108.5 billion in 2008 to CNY 858.8 billion in 2020. Huawei has also made strides in the 5G technology space, with over 500 specialists working on the standardization of 5G and the company playing a leading role in the "5G Infrastructure Public Private Partnership" (5G – PPP) initiative.

To sum it up, Huawei employs a fast-penetrating new product marketing strategy, employing low prices and aggressive advertising efforts to achieve the goal of rapidly capturing market share and allowing international customers to embrace domestic goods in the shortest time possible.

Huawei has gained a lot of customers' confidence by offering hardware appliances and communication

solutions to a lot of telecom companies. Moreover, the company's Research and Development department employs a huge staff of 80,000 people (45 percent of its total workforce) and spends 14.6 percent of its annual revenue on R&D. (2016).

Mass-Reach Traditional Marketing Approach in the Asian Market by the example of Sony:

Sony Corporation, a renowned Japanese electronics manufacturer, made its entry into the mobile handset market in the early 1990s through collaborations with Qualcomm and Siemens. (Rajesh, 2015) Although their partnership with Siemens played a crucial role in Sony's growth and contributed significantly to the development of later smartphone models, the company faced challenges in the area of intellectual property rights, which hindered its growth in the CDMA business.

To overcome these obstacles, Sony sought a partner for GSM and W-CDMA technologies and entered into a joint venture with Ericsson in the early 2000s. This partnership was a strategic move as Ericsson's strengths in mobile telecommunications, operator relations, and infrastructure business complemented Sony's expertise in 22AV technology, product design, planning, and brand knowledge. Sony has leveraged local events like Miss India 2008 and football games in England's premier league to promote its gaming products for the PS3, PS4, and PSP. (Jin, 2019).

Table 4: Sale of Sony Mobiles in Pakistan

Year	Urban Sale	Rural Sale
2016	1.53%	2.73%
2017	1.33%	2.9%
2018	0.5%	1.3%

Sony Mobile's smartphone strategy has emphasized the incorporation of noncompetitive and non-monetary resources. The corporation prioritizes open-source projects or features that are not a primary source of revenue or a competitive advantage. Sony Mobile has a complete approach to innovation, including open innovation (OI) and the use of objective metrics to assess the creative potential of its products before and after the introduction of open-source projects. Furthermore, the company collaborates extensively with specialized local resources, engages with direct rivals and stakeholders to identify and address major concerns, and considers co-creation with third parties to be an important component of its product development process.

Sony Mobile places a high value on automating test processes to increase efficiency and set professional standards. By doing so, the company can assure that its products are of the greatest quality and suit the needs of consumers. (Munir, 2018) Sony Mobile is a market leader in the Asian mobile phone market due to its creative approach and excellent use of traditional marketing channels. In this highly competitive and dynamic business, the company's commitment to OI, cocreation, and test automation assures that it can continue to fulfil the increasing needs of its clients.

Sony aimed to expand its traditional marketing based mass media exposure to reach a wide audience in the Asian region and across traditional media platforms including television, radio and print. The company worked with local distributors and retailers in Asian countries to increase market presence, Sony

has planned localization including, creating regional content and offering production in local languages to accommodate market tastes.

TV commercials are one of the ways Sony deploys mass reach traditional marketing in the Asian market. TV commercials form a major means for mass reach and the company invests significant time and efforts in creating good commercials to market its various products and services (Hegde, 2019). In addition to TV commercials, Sony places significant importance on print media to market and promote its products and services in the area. Print advertisements have been used to potentially reach local audiences as newspapers and magazines throughout the area run print advertisements designed by the company. Financial Calculations and analysis of Sony and Huawei in the above context, the financial analysis of both the companies has:

Gearing ratios:

- Debt to equity ratio (Total debt/Total equity)
- Debt ratio (Debt/Total assets)

Table 5: Sale of Sony Mobiles in Pakistan

Year	2015		2014		2013	
Company	Sony	Huawei	Sony	Huawei	Sony	Huawei
Total Debt	2460789	175100	1474949	141811	1359451	112162
Total Equity	6724339	414652	4789535	330408	4436390	295537
Total assets	27507843	982971	23039343	876854	20981586	858661
Debt to equity ratio	36.59%	42.22%	30.79%	42.91%	30.64%	35.95%
Debt ratio	8.94%	17.81%	6.40%	16.17%	6.47%	13.06%

Over the last three years, Sony's debt to equity ratio has risen from 30.64% to 36.59%. This shows that that the company is placing more reliance on debt financing and signifies that the company is financing its assets with more debt. These trends are concerning not just for the company, but investors and all stakeholders should pay close attention because, clearly, the company seems to be taking on more financial risk as it is adds more leverage.

Also, Huawei has increased reliance on debt financing as shown by the increases in debt to equity and debt ratios over the last three years. And while it is not entirely clear that this is also indicative of major increased financial risk, management should still be vigilant in its debt levels and cash flow.

Profitability ratios

- Return on capital employed (PBIT/capital employed)
- Gross profit margin (Cost of sale/sales)

Table 6: Sale of Sony Mobiles in Pakistan

Sony has a consistently high gross profit margin, indicating a healthy profit from sales. However, its return on capital employed has been fluctuating and suggests that the company is not utilizing its capital efficiently. It may be beneficial for the company to review its capital utilization strategies and identify areas for improvement. Huawei has a higher return on capital employed and gross profit margin compared to Sony over the three-year period.

Efficiency ratios:

- Total assets to sales (Total assets/sales)
- Current ratio (Current assets/current liabilities)

Table 7: Sale of Sony Mobiles in Pakistan

Year	2015		2014		2013	
Company	Sony	Huawei	Sony	Huawei	Sony	Huawei
Total assets	27507843	982971	23039343	691394	20981586	858661
Sales	8998661	636807	8259885	891368	8665687	858833
Current assets	4715017	213593	5735145	185460	5246612	154768
Current liabilities	7353604	175864	6240443	154114	6079815	116869
Total assets to sales	3.05	1.54	2.78	0.77	2.42	0.99
Current ratio	0.64	1.21	0.91	1.2	0.86	1.32

Over the last three years, Sony's total assets to sales ratio has been consistently going up, so they seem to be getting more efficient. However, the total current ratio is going down so perhaps they are having trouble satisfying their short-term obligations. They may need to manage their debt and short-term cash flows a bit better.

Huawei's total assets to sales ratio has been fluctuating over the past three years, with a large increase in year three and their current ratio is fairly stable, suggesting that they are investing in assets to grow their business while maintaining a relatively solid liquidity position to meet their short-term obligations.

In Asia, traditional marketing tactics may no longer be able to provide the opportunity to take hold of young, tech-ready audiences, given the meteoric rise of digital marketing. For this reason, companies like Sony have had to shift to digital media and marketing in order to remain competitive and reach a larger target audience. They can now borrow from television commercial approaches combined with social media engagement, mobile applications, and other digital media platforms to create tailored campaigns that engage their audience and maximize return on investment. To thrive in the highly competitive Asian market, Sony must constantly examine and change their marketing tactics in response to changing market conditions and consumer behaviour. Sony can position itself as a leader and prosper in the long run by staying on top of developing trends and technology and investing in both traditional and digital marketing

channels. (Koh, 2019)

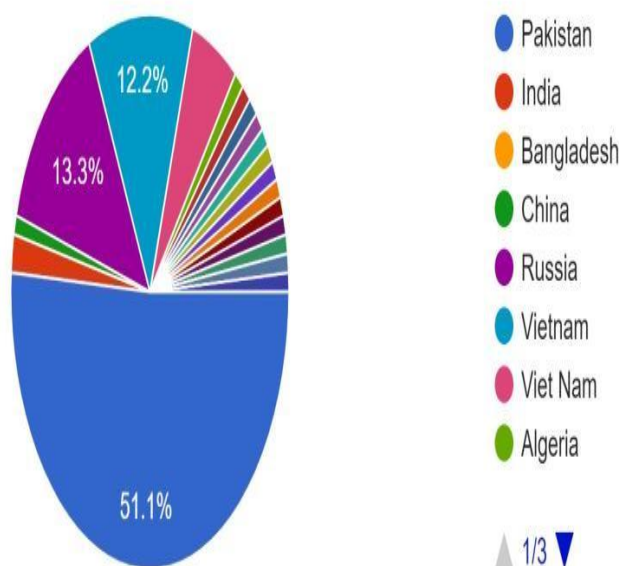
Consumer Survey

As part of our analytical research to determine and strengthen the validity of the arguments presented above, a qualitative analysis was done to evaluate customer priority and approach while purchasing a smartphone. A questionnaire was created and distributed among people, realized over some time, taking into account people's opinions shared on a particular digital virtual forum (social network).

Users' posts were specifically considered to obtain a sufficiently accurate better understanding of the reasons why an increasing number of people enjoy Huawei products, leading to the company's success in Asia. A total number of 90 respondents from various countries of origin participated in the survey and the major findings are presented below in the shape of charts and graphs.

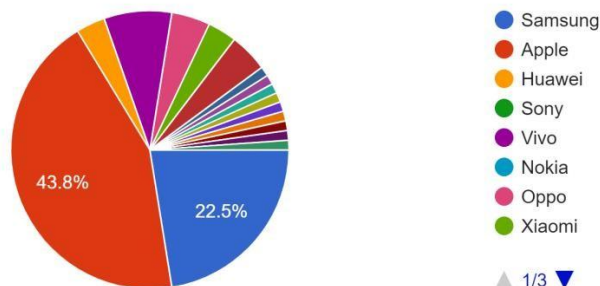
Country of Origin

90 responses



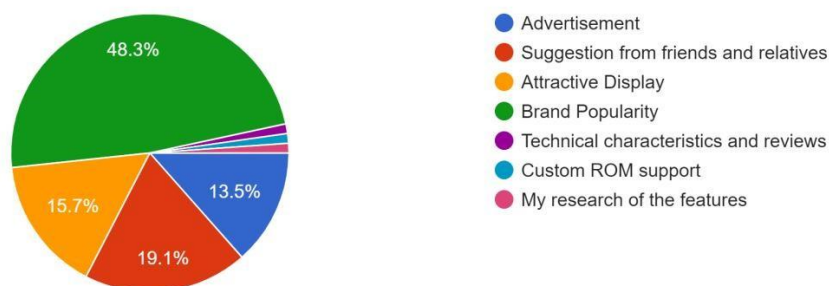
Which mobile phone brand do you use?

89 responses



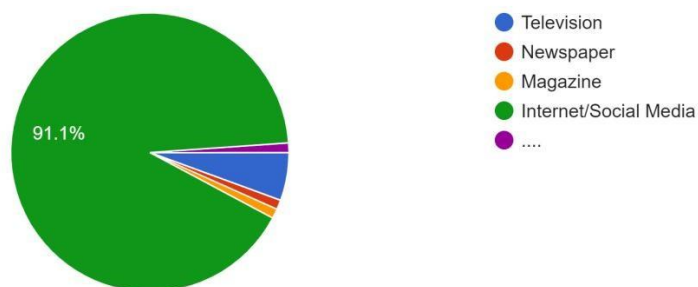
Which of the following offer attracts your purchase?

89 responses



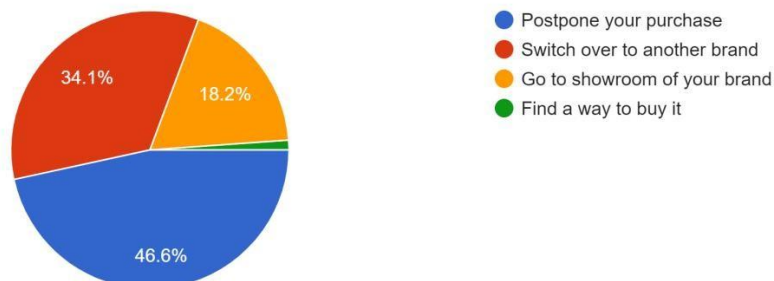
Which medium of the advertisement influence your purchase?

90 responses



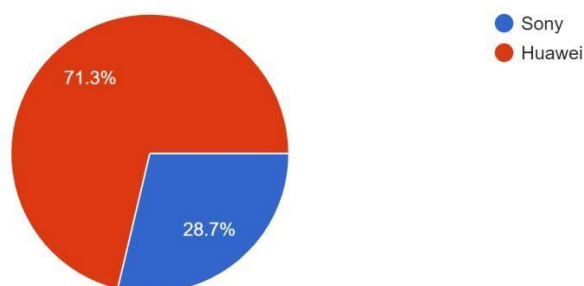
If your preferred brand is not available for purchases then what will you do?

88 responses



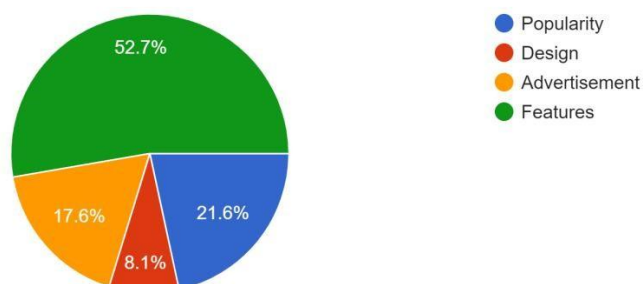
Which phone would you consider to buy if you have two choices?

87 responses

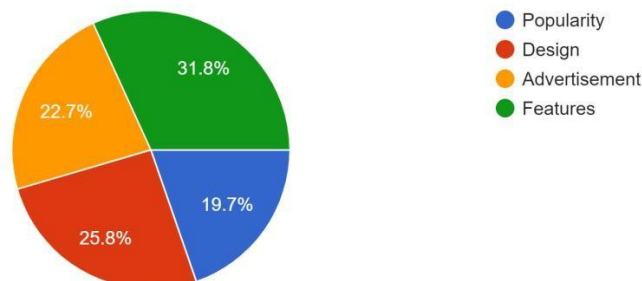


If Huawei, then why?

74 responses



If Sony, then why?
66 responses



RESULTS

Results obtained depict that the majority of people; 51.1 % from Pakistan, 13.3% from Russia, and 12.2% from Vietnam fulfilled the questionnaire. Other than that people from India, Bangladesh, China, Algeria, and Ecuador also participated in the survey. With 43.8% of users, Apple was the top priority of the audience, with 22.5% users of Samsung. Among the factors that influence the choice of people while opting for a smartphone, quality was most emphasized by people of all these countries; setting aside the price, features, brand, design, shape, and color. Interestingly, 48.3% of the users chose brand popularity while 13.5% chose advertisement as the most desired medium that attracts their purchase. In another question, ironically, 91.1% of the poll answers selected Internet/social media as their most valued medium of advertisement, neglecting other sources such as Television, Newspaper ads, and Magazines and thus fortifying the importance of the digital world. If the preferred brand is not available to the audience, then 46.6% would postpone their purchase, while a good majority of 34.1% would switch to another brand and 18.2% would visit the mobile franchise to purchase their favourite brand. When people are confined to choosing between Sony and Huawei, 71.3% chose Huawei while 28.7% chose Sony. In light of our survey, the underlying reasons and the driving force behind Huawei's success and choice can be attributed to its Features, Popularity, and Advertisement. The answers to the same question for Sony were quite vague and mixed as almost the same percentage was allocated to Features, Popularity, Advertisement, and Design, making it difficult to determine and highlight one or two key success components of the brand.

Findings of Research on Digital and Traditional Marketing Strategies in the Global Smartphone Industry:

Innovation has become a crucial factor for any enterprise seeking success in today's competitive climate. Our research focused on examining the digital and traditional marketing strategies employed by Sony and Huawei in the Asian market, and their impact on their respective smartphone sales. Sony's traditional marketing approach, which relied heavily on celebrity endorsements and flashy product launches, did not effectively resonate with Asian consumers. In contrast, Huawei's digital communication strategies, such as influencer partnerships and online community building, helped the company gain a strong foothold in the Asian market. The findings suggest that digital marketing has been a driving force in the success of both companies, but their approaches have differed significantly. Businesses and customers have benefited from digital marketing in a variety of ways. (Alkhawajah, 2019) There are both positive and negative consequences. Marketers have been able to illustrate a wide variety of goods by using responsive websites thanks to the use of e-commerce. This has resulted in lower marketing, transportation, and

packaging costs. Thanks to digital marketing, there is even more price transparency, alterations, and e-Trailers. Due to expanded market coverage, the place portion has also been changed. In terms of comprehensive information, interactive sessions, FAQs, and other aspects of promotion, digital marketing has an impact. (Low, 2007)

Huawei, a global brand in smart technology and ICT has achieved long-term success by providing high-quality products. The company invests significant resources in researching emerging opportunities to develop market-ready technical devices. Huawei has surpassed Apple to become the second-largest smartphone manufacturer, trailing only Samsung. Customers have praised Huawei smartphones for outperforming other phones in terms of quality and camera capabilities. In terms of consumer preference, our research shows that Huawei is the preferred brand due to its design, price, and customer-friendly features. Aesthetics play a role, with terms like "display," "thin," "grip," "sweet," and "colour" indicating consumer preferences. The visual design of smartphones affects people's emotional reactions. Smartphones are still used as fashion accessories in addition to communication tools. Quality is another important factor influencing consumer perceptions of smartphone brands, with key indicators including "long-lasting," "battery," and "camera." Pricing is another important determinant of smartphone demand, and Huawei's flexible pricing strategy and e-commerce presence, which includes occasional discounts, have contributed to the company's success. Brand loyalty is ranked fourth on the list, driven by factors such as "assistance," "confidence," and "trend." Understanding the determinants of brand loyalty is critical in the fast-increasing and intensely competitive smartphone sector, and Sony's lack of competitive strategy, innovation, and high price point has resulted in a downturn in its marketing efforts in Asia.

Our study concludes that Huawei proved itself a strong competitor in the smartphone industry by working hard on its innovation, pricing, brand loyalty, and also on quality like camera, battery, etc. On the other hand, Sony continues to compete with big players in the smartphone industry like Apple, and not working properly on its innovation, along with a high pricing strategy. This withdraws its customer to leave Sony and opt for brands like Huawei which worked very hard to prove itself in the market, especially in the Asian market.

Recommendations for existing and new companies

The implications of this study are substantial for companies operating in this industry, as the findings offer valuable insights into the most effective marketing approach for capturing and retaining customers in the region. By discovering the important areas that impact purchasing behaviours within the Asian market, this research provides an avenue for smartphone manufacturers to construct effective and targeted marketing campaigns that initiate a sale and grow market share. Our findings provide a roadmap for firms looking to make informed decisions around marketing approaches, and also to use the unique opportunities presented by the dynamic Asian market, particularly using the smartphone. In conclusion, existing and new firms must focus on the development of strong and effective digital marketing strategies to promote their smartphones in the Asian market. Such strategies could include crafting an engaging social media campaign, using influencers to reach the target audience, and partnering with popular mobile apps and games.

Although traditional marketing methods, such as print advertisements, billboard advertising, and television commercial advertising are still effective in the Asian region, our findings suggest that companies are better served to use digital communication strategies in the Asian region where targeted strategies have more impact on the global smartphone business. (Grădinaru, 2020) It is strongly recommended that companies use digital marketing approaches such as social media advertising, influencer marketing and search engine optimization in their smartphone promotional activities. Our research also emphasizes the importance of retail marketing techniques in providing customers with a personalized product experience. As a result, we recommend that firms cooperate with Asian merchants

to promote their smartphones and allow buyers to check them out firsthand. By implementing these digital communication techniques and forming relationships with shops, smartphone makers will be able to develop a strong brand presence in the highly competitive Asian market, thereby extending their client base and attaining long-term success.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

Other organizational skills, such as leadership, organizational culture, and management practices, are essential in EMNEs' persistent catch-up in the global market, though they are not the subject of our research. These considerations should be taken into account in future research. Since this study is limited by a single case, its generalization and discriminant validity must be supported by research in similar situations in other countries/industries. Firm-level heterogeneity during newcomer firms' catch-up should also be investigated in the future study, that is, to analyse the catching-up consequences of several firms in a sector, or to apply the organizational strategies of potential paradigms to other industries or countries with different market conditions, institutional arrangements, and technical regimes.

Future research can investigate the firm-level heterogeneity during newcomer firms' catch-up in the smartphone industry. This involves analysing the catching-up consequences of several firms in the sector and applying the organizational strategies of potential paradigms to other industries or countries with different market conditions, institutional arrangements, and technical regimes. Our study is limited by a single case; it may be necessary to conduct a second review on the same subject to evaluate the findings of this study with those that might emerge from a qualitative methodology (such as in-depth interviews) to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

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