



## COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES OF SELECTED MOBILE PHONE BRANDS – RETAILERS' PERSPECTIVE

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ISSN: 2249-894X  
IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631 (UIF)  
UGC APPROVED JOURNAL NO. 48514  
VOLUME - 8 | ISSUE - 8 | MAY - 2019



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### ABSTRACT:

Mobiles brands are increasing day by day. There is a cut throat-competition between the brands. This study focused on the product and pricing strategies of selected mobile brands in the opinion of the retailers. The study also covered the perception of retailers, support rendered by the brands in retailing. 300 hundred retailers were involved in the study and they have rendered their opinion on product and pricing strategies.

**KEYWORDS:** *Competitive Strategies, Perception of Retailers, Product strategy, Pricing Strategies, Brands*

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Competitive Strategy is a long term plan for a company in order to gain competitive advantage over its competitors and sustain it for a long term. Competitive strategies support the business to create a defensive position in the industry they play and generate a superior Return on Investment. Competitive strategies comprises of cost leadership, differentiation, cost focus and differentiation focus according to Michael E. Porter. In this study, various strategies that help the company to be competitive in business is referred as competitive strategy. India is presently the second largest mobile phone market in the world and has

recorded strong growth in the last two decades. According to the study conducted by GSM Association with the Boston Consulting Group, it is specified that the Indian mobile economy is growing rapidly and it will contribute to India's Gross Domestic Product widely. Indian market is expected to have more than 180 million mobiles by 2019. Superior performance and competitive advantage are the goals of strategic management. Better performance in the market contributes to competitive advantage. Understanding marketing strategies of the mobile phone companies in the perception of retailers is the focal point of this research study. The product differentiation strategies and pricing strategies of mobile phone companies in the perception of the retailer is studied in this research. An

organisation frame marketing strategies to sustain the business and to gain competitive advantage. Awareness level, customers' knowledge and their background information is very important for a company to make its marketing strategy successful. The consistent match between consumer buying behaviour and marketing strategy helps the organisation to attain competitive advantage and superior performance. Marketing starts with understanding customer needs and effective marketing strategies links customer needs and the strengths of the company. Communication is necessary for individuals, businesses and government to share the information and facts. Communication is an important element in the socio-cultural environment. Smart phones are the recent innovation that supports the communication.

People share information in various formats using their smart phones. Mobile phone sales have increased like anything in the recent past in India. People feel closer to each other when they communicate orally with each other. Mobile phone is an excellent innovation that catered that particular need. Communication revolution started with printing books and continuing with wireless communication now. Higher efficiency and greater productivity are the results of mobile communication system. Like businesses, many other fields like education also got advantage through mobile phones. Many players are in the market of selling mobile phones. They compete with each by increasing the communication features and provide benefits that are sought and unsought by the customers. The communication need horizon of people has expanded by the invention and introduction of mobile phones.

## 1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Kameswara Rao Poranki (2016) opined that severe competition and changing consumer brand preferences for mobile phones are keeping the mobile phone industry vibrant. This study analysed the brand preferences and buying behaviour of customers towards mobile phones by involving 250 respondents to render their opinion. The study was conducted in Hyderabad city. The study identified the favorite brands of the buyers. Nokia was the most preferred brand by the respondents and LG was the least preferred brand by the respondents participated in the study. Students were involved as participants to render their opinion. Price of the mobile phone, brand image and advertisements are the significant factors that influence the purchase behaviour of the customers. Mobile phones that are slim, moderate weight and large in size are preferred by the customers. Respondents prefer after sales service from the mobile brands. Creating awareness through television advertisements and proper distribution are the other significant factors that influence the purchase behaviour of the customers. Dhopeswar (2009) through his research work indicated that the trade agreements and the marketing strategies of the companies enable them to achieve a wider spectrum to reach the market. These companies through proper market strategies try to reach the global platforms to popularise their brands, and to manage the cut-throat competition and get return on investment for their brands. Globalization has also supported the marketers to establish new markets and make their brands available throughout the globe. Effective brand positioning and consistent approach in reaching customers contribute to the success of the brand as global brand. Balanaga K. & Krishnakumar (2011) studied the modern marketing methods that influence the behaviour of the buyers. The study was conducted by involving youth as respondents. The success of marketing strategy depends upon the favorable thoughts and feelings, marketers create about the products, services and brands. When a favorable thought is created about the brand in the minds of the customers, they try the product and go for a repeated purchase. Positive thoughts and feelings about the brand influence the customers; thinking and positive feeling about the market offerings also. Reasons and situations are also get influenced through favorable thoughts created by marketers. Kim & Cho, Yoon C. (2015) in their assessed the impact of causes and consequences of customer satisfaction towards smart phones. Quality of the gadget, design & features, latest technology, pricing, country of origin, and brand image are the variables tested and its influence on customer satisfaction was also tested. The effects of customer loyalty, brand image, corporate image, and country of origin on purchase behaviour were also tested. The results of the research indicated that there is positive relation between the antecedents except the variable corporate image and country of origin of the mobile phone. Reviews conducted for the purpose of the study confirmed that most of the studies conducted on marketing of mobile phones have recorded the opinion of the buyers and understood their buyer behaviour. There are no studies on retailers' opinion on marketing strategies mobile brands.

## 1.3 NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is helpful to understand the competitive strategies of each brand and its performance in the market. Retailers in Bangalore Urban district were involved in the study and they have rendered their opinion to understand the marketing strategies of the selected mobile brands.

#### 1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study focused on the product and pricing strategies and the preferences of customers on selected mobile phone brands and understood them through the retailers who are handling the mobile phone brands.

#### 1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Based on the research questions mentioned in the previous section, the following objectives are set for the study. The objectives of the research study are as follows.

1. To understand the perception of Retailers towards various mobile brands
2. To study the marketing support provided by selected brands.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of product and pricing strategies of selected brands of mobile phones.

#### 2.1 METHODOLOGY

*Descriptive Research Design* is applied for the study using a structured questionnaire. Respondents participated to render the retailers who are handling multiple brands in having retail stores in Bangalore urban district. 300 retailers have considered as sample and data were gathered from them. Both Primary and secondary data were used for the purpose of the study. Cronbach's Alpha score for this study calculated based on Standardized Items is greater than 0.70 for the variables in the questionnaire and confirms the validity of the tool. Mean score analysis, Garrett Ranking method, T- Test and One-way Analysis of variance were used wherever it is necessary. The scope of the study is limited to Bangalore Urban district only. The study is based on the retailers' perception on the product and pricing strategies of selected mobile brands they are handling in their retail stores. The study compared the strategies of selected brands. The study limits its scope of reviewing marketing strategies to the perception of only the retailers on mobile phone brands in the market.

#### 3.1 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Demographic details of the retailers participated in the study is presented in this section. The distribution of demographic variables of the respondents observed over the factors of "Gender, Marital status, Age, Education, Experience as retailer, Employment Status, Factor enables to be the retailer / dealer of Mobiles, Income.

**Table 1.1 Demographic Details of the Respondents**

Demographic Profile		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	270	<b>90</b>
	Female	30	10
Marital status	Married	204	<b>68</b>
	Unmarried	96	32
Age Group	20 - 30 years	96	32
	30 - 40 years	126	<b>42</b>
	40 - 50 years	66	22
	Above 50 years	12	4
Education	School Level	96	32
	Graduate	186	<b>62</b>
	Post Graduate	18	6
Experience as Retailer	1 - 3 years	78	26
	4 - 7 years	102	<b>34</b>
	8 - 10 years	93	31
	Above 10 years	27	9
Employment Status	Salaried	192	<b>64</b>

	Owner	108	36
Factor enables to be the retailer/ dealer of Mobiles	Promotional Schemes	84	28
	Quality	54	18
	Company Policy	72	24
	Margin	90	<b>30</b>
Income (Annual)	Less than 1, 00,000	66	22
	1, 00,000 to 3, 00,000	174	<b>58</b>
	More than 3, 00,000	60	20
Total		300	100

**3.1.1 Perception of Retailers towards various mobile brands**

The opinion of the retailers on handling mobile brands viz. Samsung, Apple, Vivo, LG, Oppo, Micromax, Lenovo, Xiaomi, Redmi, Motorola, One Plus was analysed.

**Table 1.2 Perception of Retailers on mobiles that influence Buyers**

Attributes	SDA		DA		N		S		SA		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Product features	16	5.3	13	4.3	97	<b>32.3</b>	80	26.7	94	31.3	300
Price	13	4.3	14	4.7	113	<b>37.7</b>	76	25.3	84	28.0	300
Design & Look	16	5.3	21	7.0	124	<b>41.3</b>	51	17.0	88	29.3	300
Durability	19	6.3	21	7.0	100	<b>33.3</b>	65	21.7	95	31.7	300
Brand name	8	2.7	2	0.7	117	<b>39.0</b>	84	28.0	89	29.7	300
Warranty & Guarantee	25	8.3	10	3.3	102	<b>34.0</b>	71	23.7	92	30.7	300
Memory capacity	16	5.3	4	1.3	130	<b>43.3</b>	59	19.7	91	30.3	300
Battery Backup	18	6.0	10	3.3	131	<b>43.7</b>	64	21.3	77	25.7	300
Latest model	20	6.7	10	3.3	112	<b>37.3</b>	63	21.0	95	31.7	300
Store location	17	5.7	10	3.3	106	<b>35.3</b>	75	25.0	92	30.7	300
Music / Games (Entertainment)	22	7.3	14	4.7	119	<b>39.7</b>	71	23.7	74	24.7	300
Offers & Discount	18	6.0	9	3.0	122	<b>40.7</b>	65	21.7	86	28.7	300
After sales service	18	6.0	7	2.3	117	<b>39.0</b>	67	22.3	91	30.3	300
New features & facilities	20	6.7	11	3.7	112	<b>37.3</b>	67	22.3	90	30.0	300

Majority of the respondents have neutral opinion with the factors considered. In order to identify the factor which is more influencing the respondent towards perception on various mobile brands Friedman’s test analysis was used. Significant findings related to the perception of retailers

- Majority of the retailers participated in the study handle (sell) LG (78 percent), Samsung (77 percent) and Apple (77 percent) phones in their retail store.
- Redmi, Oppo, Xiaomi, Vivo and Samsung are the five top brands handled by the retailers based on sales.
- Retailers participated in the study opined that Product features, Store location, after sales service are the three major factors that influence the opinion of the customer in deciding and buying a mobile brand.
- Similarly customers prefer to buy mobiles from retailers based a few factors. Among the factors considered, *EMI (payment /Credit options), Store location, Camera (megapixel) are the three major factors that influence the customers to purchase mobile phones.*

**3.1.2 Marketing support provided by selected brands**

Opinion of the retailers on marketing support provided by the mobile companies based on the following aspects is discussed in this section. Eighteen marketing support factors were considered for this research.

**Table 1.3 Retailers’ opinion on Marketing Support Rendered by various Brands**

	SDA		DA		N		A		SA		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Quality products	7	2.3	7	2.3	84	28.0	90	30.0	112	37.3	300
Promotional Schemes	2	0.7	2	0.7	89	29.7	102	34.0	105	35.0	300
Company Policies	7	2.3	11	3.7	91	30.3	95	31.7	96	32.0	300
Margin	6	2.0	7	2.3	101	33.7	86	28.7	100	33.3	300
Credit Period	4	1.3	12	4.0	91	30.3	96	32.0	97	32.3	300
Mode of Payment	3	1.0	6	2.0	79	26.3	100	33.3	112	37.3	300
Company’s sales Personnel Approach	4	1.3	12	4.0	71	23.7	106	35.3	107	35.7	300
Timely delivery	6	2.0	12	4.0	77	25.7	103	34.3	102	34.0	300
Flexibility in order quantity	9	3.0	6	2.0	71	23.7	97	32.3	117	39.0	300
Online shipment tracking	6	2.0	9	3.0	69	23.0	107	35.7	109	36.3	300
Providing necessary training	5	1.7	10	3.3	76	25.3	96	32.0	113	37.7	300
Transaction & Delivery cost	1	0.3	10	3.3	79	26.3	99	33.0	111	37.0	300
Advertisement Support	5	1.7	16	5.3	76	25.3	101	33.7	102	34.0	300
Communication on Promotions, schemes & Product Information	3	1.0	6	2.0	83	27.7	100	33.3	108	36.0	300
Response to queries	6	2.0	10	3.3	76	25.3	98	32.7	110	36.7	300
Grievance handling Mechanism	3	1.0	8	2.7	86	28.7	93	31.0	110	36.7	300
Database Marketing Support	5	1.7	9	3.0	90	30.0	92	30.7	104	34.7	300
Support through Accessories, User manuals & other materials	7	2.3	9	3.0	85	28.3	89	29.7	110	36.7	300

**Significant findings on Marketing Support rendered by Brands to Retailers**

- Among the factors considered, the Friedman test confirmed that mode of payment, Flexibility in order quantity and online shipment tracking are the major factors that influenced the retailers.
- Retailers have strongly agreed that they get good marketing support for all the activities except margin and timely delivery of goods.

**3.1.3 Effectiveness of product and pricing strategies of selected brands of mobile phones**

For the selected brands, the product and pricing strategies are compared and the results are indicated in Table 1.4 and Table 1.5. The product and pricing strategies of the brands in the opinion of the retailers are thoroughly studied and the significant findings are discussed in this section.

**PRODUCT STRATEGIES**

The features of the mobile phones viz. camera, video (screen) clarity, design & look , screen size (display), memory (internal ram), battery backup, storage (external), operating system (OS), GPS / Bluetooth, shatter proof screen, internet, accessories were considered for the study and the opinion of retailers towards these features were studied and the findings are presented as follows.

- Customers prefer to buy Vivo mobiles for the features viz. camera and accessories.
- LG mobiles are bought by the customers for its video clarity. Design & look, Storage (External), Operating System (OS), GPS / Bluetooth, Shatter proof screen are the features preferred to buy Xiaomi brand.



- Screen size (display), Battery backup are the features liked to buy Motorola brand. Battery backup and camera clarity is the reason to buy Samsung brand.
- Camera, Video clarity, Design & look, Battery backup are the features that influenced customers to buy Apple brand.
- *There is a significant difference between the product features of various brands and its influence on the preferences of the customers.*

**Table1.4 Product strategies of Retailers towards Various Mobile brands**

Product Features		Brands												ANO VA	P
		Sams ung	Appl e	Vivo	LG	Opp o	Micr oma x	Leno vo	Xiao mi	Red mi	Motor ola	OnePl us	Othe rs		
Camera	Me an	3.38	3.40	<b>3.88</b>	3.52	3.79	3.36	3.22	3.33	3.76	3.40	3.56	3.30	9.06	0.001**
	SD	1.31	1.23	1.11	1.23	1.14	1.29	1.27	1.22	1.15	1.26	1.19	1.27		
Video clarity	Me an	3.31	3.82	3.60	<b>3.86</b>	3.49	3.35	3.45	3.74	3.35	3.48	3.45	3.80	7.80	0.001**
	SD	1.27	1.13	1.2	1.17	1.27	1.23	1.28	1.24	1.28	1.29	1.27	1.18		
Design & look	Me an	3.41	3.63	3.59	3.55	3.38	3.68	3.69	<b>3.74</b>	3.61	3.41	3.37	3.52	3.13	0.001**
	SD	1.34	1.23	1.3	1.3	1.26	1.19	1.2	1.21	1.24	1.27	1.3	1.26		
Screen size	Me an	3.60	3.60	3.49	3.81	3.59	3.82	3.58	3.41	3.53	<b>3.89</b>	3.58	3.79	4.54	0.001**
	SD	1.26	1.28	1.29	1.15	1.25	1.12	1.28	1.23	1.23	1.11	1.27	1.14		
Memory	Me an	3.55	3.36	3.46	3.82	3.45	3.57	3.54	3.43	3.46	3.74	3.53	<b>3.91</b>	5.67	0.001**
	SD	1.29	1.28	1.23	1.15	1.28	1.2	1.26	1.28	1.26	1.19	1.24	1.07		
Battery backup	Me an	3.67	3.83	3.34	3.43	3.74	3.65	3.68	3.59	3.43	<b>3.89</b>	3.53	3.83	6.23	0.001**
	SD	1.23	1.16	1.29	1.24	1.15	1.2	1.31	1.27	1.27	1.13	1.27	1.13		
External Storage	Me an	3.36	3.40	3.54	3.74	3.50	3.58	3.42	<b>3.82</b>	3.70	3.77	3.53	3.42	4.96	0.001**
	SD	1.34	1.23	1.27	1.21	1.26	1.23	1.25	1.11	1.19	1.19	1.24	1.24		
Operatin g System	Me an	3.57 <sup>c</sup>	3.75 <sup>c</sup>	3.52	3.57	3.45	3.79	3.37	<b>3.96</b>	3.62	3.95	3.43	3.39	8.55	0.001**
	SD	1.26	1.2	1.25	1.26	1.25	1.16	1.28	1.05	1.22	1.09	1.3	1.23		
GPS / Bluetooth	Me an	3.37	3.85	3.40	3.62	3.36	3.90 <sup>d</sup>	3.56	<b>4.06</b>	3.52	3.34	3.33	3.92	14.08	0.001**
	SD	1.27	1.17	1.31	1.24	1.27	1.09	1.22	1.05	1.32	1.27	1.22	1.15		
Shatter proof screen	Me an	3.39	3.84	3.50	3.88	3.54	3.77	3.58 <sup>c</sup>	<b>3.88</b>	3.46	3.73	3.49	3.44	6.80	0.001**
	SD	1.29	1.16	1.24	1.13	1.24	1.16	1.23	1.16	1.3	1.18	1.26	1.24		
Internet	Me an	3.62	3.67	3.65	3.65	3.44	3.77	3.62	3.41	<b>3.77</b>	3.56	3.62	3.66	2.35	0.007**
	SD	1.28	1.2	1.23	1.2	1.29	1.17	1.27	1.27	1.15	1.29	1.23	1.23		
Accessories	Me an	3.72	3.60	<b>3.81</b>	3.53	3.69	3.40	3.73	3.50	3.79	3.65	3.49	3.53	3.61	0.001**
	SD	1.19	1.27	1.12	1.24	1.17	1.24	1.15	1.23	1.13	1.21	1.3	1.21		

\* Significant at 5 %; \*\* Significant at 1 %

**Table1.5 Pricing Strategies &Retailers' Opinion towards Various Mobile brands**

Brand		Price factors							
		Value for the product	EMI / Credit facilities	Discount	Offers	Competitive pricing	Free service	Free Warranty/ Guarantee	Free Insurance
Samsung	Mean	3.74	3.77	3.74	3.75	3.79	<b>3.94</b>	3.73	3.63
	SD	1.06	1.08	1.09	1.05	1.08	1.03	1.11	1.13
Apple	Mean	<b>3.90</b>	3.75	3.71	<b>4.06</b>	3.70	3.66	3.67	3.78
	SD	1.01	1.10	1.08	0.94	1.08	1.12	1.09	1.06
Vivo	Mean	3.75	<b>3.86</b>	3.87	3.72	3.58	3.81	3.92	3.83
	SD	1.08	1.09	1.04	1.07	1.08	1.13	0.97	1.04
LG	Mean	3.88	3.61	3.76	3.84	3.86	3.66	3.75	<b>4.01</b>
	SD	1.11	1.06	1.05	1.07	1.05	1.18	1.06	0.97
Oppo	Mean	3.66	3.64	<b>3.91</b>	3.66	3.81	3.79	3.83	3.99
	SD	1.15	1.14	1.07	1.09	1.09	1.14	1.04	1.01
Micromax	Mean	3.54	3.71	3.81	3.90	3.86	3.66	3.72	3.84
	SD	1.18	1.16	1.05	0.97	1.07	1.15	1.10	1.06
Lenovo	Mean	3.70	3.53	3.72	3.86	3.72	3.68	3.92	3.79
	SD	1.11	1.19	1.10	1.04	1.13	1.13	1.04	1.07
Xiaomi	Mean	3.69	3.63	3.67	3.99	3.87	3.68	3.69	3.84
	SD	1.17	1.10	1.12	0.99	1.07	1.11	1.07	1.07
Redmi	Mean	3.66	3.74	3.68	3.81	3.80	3.72	3.70	3.83
	SD	1.20	1.10	1.09	1.07	1.02	1.09	1.03	1.11
Motorola	Mean	3.79	3.84	3.75	3.67	3.77	3.82	3.66	3.76
	SD	1.08	1.08	1.10	1.06	1.03	1.06	1.07	1.14
OnePlus	Mean	3.59	3.74	3.80	3.84	3.79	3.68	<b>3.93</b>	3.65
	SD	1.12	1.06	1.08	1.04	1.10	1.11	1.02	1.15
Others	Mean	3.85	3.85	3.70	3.78	<b>3.91</b>	3.70	3.63	3.72
	SD	1.10	1.06	1.05	1.07	1.06	1.03	1.12	1.09
ANOVA	F	3.06	2.64	1.40	4.09	2.11	1.90	3.26	3.33
	P	0.001**	0.002**	0.163	0.001**	0.017*	0.035*	0.001**	0.001**

\* Significant at 5 %; \*\* Significant at 1 %

### Pricing Strategies

To study the effect of pricing strategies, *value for the product*, *EMI / credit facilities*, *discount*, *offers*, *competitive pricing*, *free service*, *free warranty/guarantee*, *free insurance* are the pricing factors considered. The major findings regarding the pricing strategies are considered in this section.

- *Value for the product*, *Offers* are the pricing factors that influence customers to buy Apple brand.
- *EMI / Credit facilities* are the major influencing factor in buying the brand Vivo.
- *Discount* is the major influencing factor for Oppo.
- *Service availability* is the major influencing factor for Samsung.
- *Warranty/Guarantee* is the major influencing factor in buying the brand Oneplus.
- *Free Insurance* is the major influencing factor for LG.
- *There is a significant difference between pricing strategies of various brands and its influence on the preferences of the customers.*

## SUGGESTIONS

- Mobile phone companies should make their brands easily available to the customers by appointing proper marketing channel.
- Retailers should be trained and motivated by the companies in regular intervals to give equal importance to their brands.
- They should also be trained to identify the gaps in the brands and they should be encouraged to bring it to their notice.
- The study revealed that product features, store location, after sales service are the three major factors that influence the opinion of the customer in deciding and buying a mobile brand. These factors should be given more importance. The other factors like creating awareness, brand building, increasing the durability of the product are also equally importance in marketing the mobile phones.
- Store location that are convenient to shop influence the customers. Retailers should make the customers aware about the store location and the products (mobile brands) they are dealing with.
- Retailers should be provided with a good marketing support through valid strategies of the companies. Quality products, promotional schemes, company policies , margin, credit period, mode of payment, company's sales personnel approach, timely delivery, flexibility in order quantity, online shipment tracking, providing necessary training for after sale, transaction & delivery cost, advertisement support, communication on promotions, schemes and product information, response to queries, grievance handling mechanism ,database marketing support, support through accessories, user manuals & other material are the strategies considered for this study. Many retailers have endorsed all these are significant for them at various situations.

## CONCLUSION

Mobile phones have become an unavoidable device in everybody's life. Many players have started selling smart phones and try to make customers life easy. This study on competitive strategy on mobile phones recorded the opinion of the retailers, how various mobile manufacturing companies have formulated the competitive strategies to manage its brands. Retailers have strongly opined that product features, brand name, store location are the significant factors in the sales of mobile phones. The other peripheral factors should also be given importance to support the significant (primary) factors. Customers prefer to buy quality products if it is available conveniently with the monthly installment option. The study completely took the help of retailers in understanding the preferences of customers towards the purchase of mobile phones.

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