

Factors Influence Brand Recommendations among Smartphone Users

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ABSTRACT

Voluntary action from customers to recommend the brand is crucial to influence company profit. This study wants to identify the factors that influence brand recommendation among smartphone users. Brand competence, price, and brand image are all under investigation. The sample consisted of students from the Universiti Teknologi Mara. An online questionnaire was distributed to respondents, with 195 data collected and usable. The entire dataset was analysed using SPSS to assess the correlation and regression effect of each variable. The study discovered that brand competence, price, and brand image, has positive correlation with brand recommendation. Regression analysis also indicates that brand competence is the most critical factor impacting brand recommendation. The findings serve as a reference for businesses to encourage customers to engage in brand recommendation and to compete with other competitors.

Keywords: Recommendation, Brand Competence, Price, Brand Image

INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive marketplace, brands are constantly seeking effective strategies to attract and retain customers. Consumers also have become more informed and selective in their purchasing decisions. Instead, brand recommendation has emerged as a critical factor in shaping consumer perceptions and attitudes toward brands. Previous studies confirm that brand recommendation remains one of the most credible and influential sources of information for consumers (Suganya & Bawa, 2024). Brand recommendation refers to the willingness of customers to suggest a brand to others based on their personal experience. It is widely recognized as an outcome of customer satisfaction, trust, and perceived value. Recent research highlights that brand recommendation is a key component of consumer mindset metrics and plays a crucial role in predicting brand performance and long-term success (Pauwels & van Ewijk, 2020; Mecredy, Wright, Feetham, & Stern, 2024). In online context, when consumers recommend a brand, they act as informal marketers, enhancing brand credibility and influencing the decision-making process of potential customers. With the rapid growth of digital platforms and social media applications such as Instagram and TikTok, the impact of brand recommendation has become even more significant. Consumers share experiences online with a broader audience. In fact, empirical studies show that eWOM significantly affects purchase intentions, consumer trust, and repurchase behavior in digital environments (Anastasiei, Dospinescu, & Dospinescu, 2026). Recommendation is also a strategic marketing tool that contributes to customer loyalty and business growth in digital markets (Mofokeng, 2021). Despite the growing importance of brand recommendation, there is still a need to better understand the underlying factors that drive consumers to recommend brands, particularly in the context of digital environments. Therefore, this study aims to examine the determinants of brand recommendation and its impact on consumer behavior, and providing valuable insights for both academics and practitioners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand recommendation

Brand recommendation is a part of customer citizenship behavior (CCB). Brand recommendation is a voluntary action from customers as a reciprocation to the companies. The customer who is satisfied with the brand usually will engage to recommend the brand to other customers (Vigripat & Chan, 2007; Solunoğlu, 2020; Rehman, Zelin, & Hussain, 2025). In an online context, brand recommendation is crucial to influence customer opinion to choose the best brand. The customers prefer to read online reviews and comments from other customers before making a buying decision. In an online context, customers become unpaid brand ambassadors to promote a smartphone brand and often defend the brand against negative reviews (Quaye, Taoana, Abratt, & Anabila, 2022; Vijayan, Jossy, & Varma, 2025). This voluntary action can indirectly protect company reputation freely. Groth (2005) and Yi and Gong (2013) divide CCB into four distinct categories, which are providing feedback, recommendation, helping other customers, and tolerance. However, this study online focuses on one category of CCB, which is recommendation, to see to what extent customers will recommend the smartphone brand to other customers.

Brand Competence: Brand competence is the consumer's perception of a brand's ability to deliver on its promises through skill, efficiency, and reliability. In the mobile phone industry, Apple and Samsung are among the brands that are perceived as highly competent; it lowers the consumer's fear that the device will lag, break, or have software bugs. The competence element indirectly builds trust among the customers, and they intend to purchase the brand (Xue, Zhou, Zhang, & Majeed, 2020; Li & Nan, 2023; Yang, Pathak, & Huang, 2025). Previous research also argues that brand competence is important to influence brand recommendation among the customers (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013; Makatita, Amin, & Surijadi, 2022; Li & Nan, 2023; Khan, Nawaz, Quddoos, & Siddiqi, 2025). Therefore, understanding how brand competence influences brand recommendation is critical for companies in order to develop strong brands. Based on this issue, the following hypothesis was proposed.

H1: There is a significant relationship between brand competence and recommendation

Price: Price refers to the amount of money charged for a product or service, representing the value that consumers receive after purchasing or using it (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). In a competitive marketplace, consumers tend to select brands that offer high quality, and reasonable pricing (Ameliana, & Huda, 2026). In fact, price fairness plays an important role in determining whether WOM will be positive or negative. When customers believe that a price is fair and consistent with the value received, they tend to spread positive recommendations about the brand. Conversely, if consumers feel that the price is too high or unfair, they may spread negative recommendations, which can harm a company's reputation. This is in line with previous studies that argue that customers who perceive fair prices actively recommend the brand via online review (Fagerstrøm & Ghinea, 2011; Matzler, Teichmann, Strobl, & Partel, 2019; Li, Wei, & Jiang, 2021; Fatmawati, Wijyantini, & Wibowo, 2022). Therefore, the price strategy by the companies is crucial to influence brand recommendation. Based on this issue, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2: There is a significant relationship between price and recommendation

Brand Image: Brand image refers to perceptions that consumers think about a brand. A positive brand image is developed through brand identity, customer experiences, and marketing communications. It is multidimensional in nature, incorporating functional, emotional, and symbolic aspects (Keller, 1993). Key components of brand image include attributes such as product quality, reliability, and emotional connection, all of which shape whether consumers form positive or negative impressions of the brand (Dam, 2020). In a competitive market, a strong brand image helps differentiate a brand from its competitors. Therefore, creating a favorable brand image can attract smartphone users and influence their purchasing behavior. Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between brand image and WOM (Vigripat & Chan, 2007; Ayuningsih & Maftukhah, 2020; Mandagi, Pasuhuk, & Kainde, 2024). Therefore, based on this statement, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H3: There is a significant relationship between brand image and recommendation

Based on the discussions above, a conceptual framework is developed, as shown in Figure 1.

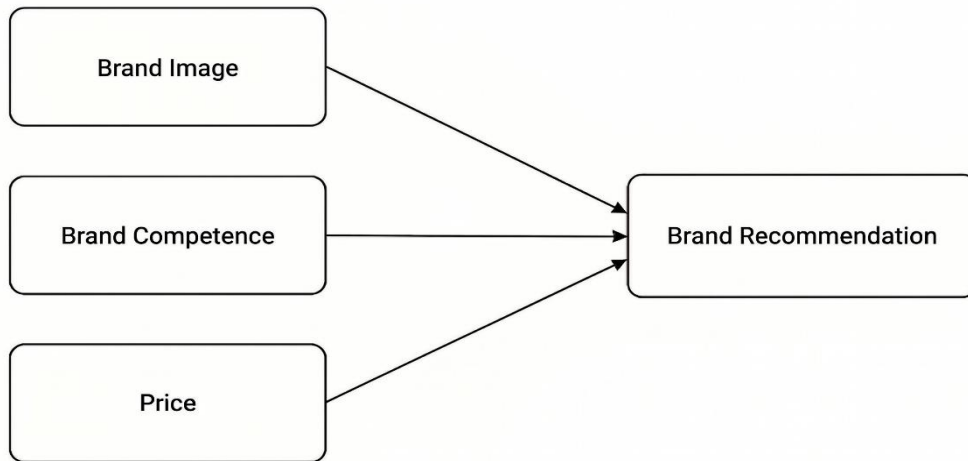


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Factor Influence Brand Recommendations

METHODOLOGY

This study involved 250 students from Universiti Teknologi Mara. Data were collected through online questionnaires and distributed via WhatsApp groups using a random sampling approach. Respondents were selected randomly based on WhatsApp member lists to ensure that the survey was fairly distributed among participants. However, only 195 completed questionnaires were returned and used for data analysis. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to conduct reliability testing, descriptive analysis, pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. In terms of measurement, the questionnaire was adapted from previous studies. The construct of brand competence was adopted from Lau and Lee (1992), price from Taylor, Celuch, and Goodwin (2004), brand image from Kim (2005), and brand recommendation from Groth (2005). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

195 respondents participated in this study by answering the questionnaire via random sampling. Table 1 below lists the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Item		Frequency (n=195)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	98	50.3
	Male	97	49.7
Age	18-24	195	100.0
Level of Study	Diploma	195	100.00
Mobile Phone Brand Name	Samsung	59	30.3
	Xiaomi	23	11.8
	Apple	62	31.8
	Oppo	3	1.5
	Others	48	24.6
Mobile phone duration	Less than 1 years	43	22.1
	1-3 years	98	50.3
	4-6 years	54	27.7

Table 1 shows that the sample consists of 50.3% female and 49.7% male students participating in this study. All respondents are diploma students (100%), with an age range of 18 to 24 years (100%). Regarding smartphone brands, the most commonly used brands are Apple (31.8%), Samsung (30.3%), Oppo (1.5%), Xiaomi (11.8%), and other brands (24.6%). In terms of usage duration, the majority of respondents (50.3%) have been using their smartphones for 1 to 3 years.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis for Research Variables

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Price	5.00	0.000
Competence	4.45	0.380
Brand image	4.88	0.124
Recommendation	4.71	0.120

Table 2 illustrates descriptive analysis for research variables. The mean for price is 5.00, brand competence (4.45), brand image (4.88), and recommendation (4.71). This result shows the high level of respondent agreement across all variables.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Result

Research Variable	R-Value	P- value	Decision
Brand Competence	0.233	0.001	H1 is supported
Price	0.148	0.039	H2 is supported
Brand Image	0.383	0.001	H3 is supported

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

Correlation analysis was run to examine the relationship between the research variables. This study found that all the research variables positively correlated with brand recommendation. The R-value for brand competence is ($r= 0.233, p<0.05$), price ($r=0.148, p<0.05$), and brand image ($r=0.383, p<0.05$). This indicates that all these variables show a moderate and low relationship with brand recommendation

Table 4: Regression Analysis Result

Variables	Unstandardized beta	Standardized Beta	P- Value
Brand competence	0.486	1.536	0.001
Price	0.001	0.002	0.826
Brand Image	1.566	1.618	0.001
R	0.988		
R square	0.977		
F	2705.215		

Based on table 4, the regression results show that brand image and brand competence has significant positive effects on recommendation. The brand competence shows the highest β value, which is ($\beta =1.536, p<0.05$) followed by a brand image ($\beta =1.618, p<0.05$). However, price does not have a significant effect on recommendation ($\beta= 0.002, p>0.05$). This indicates that brand competence is the most significant factor that affects brand recommendation among handphone users. Besides, based on the R square result, all the research variables (brand competence, price, and brand image) contribute 97.7% in brand recommendation. Which is highly significant and the model is fit as the F statistic is 2705.215 ($F\geq 1$) and the p - value is 0.001 and less than ($p\leq 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

This study is a guideline for smartphone companies to always provide superior brand quality. In a competitive market, brand competence is the most important factor that will affect brand recommendation. Customers who

are satisfied with brand performance are more eager to share their experience with others. In fact, they will share their experience online; any positive comment and recommendation will influence other customers' options before they buy a preferred mobile phone brand (Hwang, Kim, & Kim, 2022; Suo & Huang, 2024; Yang, Pathak, & Huang, 2025). Consequently, unique product innovation drives sustainable business growth. By staying ahead of the curve, a brand maintains its relevance and continues to attract customers despite shifting market dynamics.

Besides, brand image is also a key determinant to create a positive positioning in the customer's mind. In the market, products can be similar; however, brand image can differentiate a company beyond functional benefits. In the real market, Apple Inc. is not just selling devices; this company focuses on selling innovation, simplicity, and status. Moreover, customers who perceive the brand to have a positive brand image are likely to recommend brands to other customers (Kim & Lee, 2024; Fauzia, 2024; Canta Honores & Barcellos-Paula, 2024; Chang, 2025). Therefore, brand image plays a significant role in shaping consumer responses to eWOM and influences their willingness to share brand-related information. In the mobile phone market, price also plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' willingness to recommend a brand. Price is not only a monetary sacrifice but also a cognitive cue that influences recommendations among the smartphone users (El Haddad, Hallak, & Assaker, 2015; Fagerstrøm & Ghinea, 2011; Fatmawati, Wijyantini, & Wibowo, 2022; Ferdiansyah, Diposumarto, & Muharram, 2025). Therefore, companies need to ensure that the price is in line with the quality of the product. This is because consumers who perceive pricing as fair also are more likely to develop positive behavioral outcomes and share positive experiences with the brand.

Limitation

This study only focuses on brand recommendations among students at Universiti Teknologi Mara. Therefore, the result cannot be generalized to other mobile phone users in Malaysia. The data collection via social media platforms such as Facebook may enhance the generalizability of the findings in the Malaysian context. Therefore, a future study can add a broader sample from different age groups, regions, or user types. The research variables, such as satisfaction and brand love, also can be explored as potential factors that can influence brand recommendations, particularly in how they affect consumer behavior across different demographics and social media usage patterns.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, brand recommendations are a key advantage to compete with other competitors in the mobile phone industry. Strong brand competence can influence customer trust, encouraging consumers to endorse a product's reliability and effectiveness. However, competence alone is not sufficient; a positive brand image adds identity, prestige, and emotional connection that motivates customers to become loyal advocates. At the same time, price serves as the final evaluative factor, shaping how customers interpret overall value. When pricing is appropriately aligned, it reinforces the sense of value for money, making customers more confident in recommending the brand and sharing their positive experiences with others. Therefore, the company must actively engage with the customer to motivate them to engage in brand recommendation. In fact, a customer's reaction in an online context can indirectly influence other customers to choose the company brand.

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