

Culture as a Catalyst Influencing Consumer Buying Behaviour of Mobile Phone in Koforidua

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Abstract

This paper seeks to establish the relationship between mobile phones and culture in Koforidua. The Koforidua township is in the Eastern region of Ghana and the population is growing at a faster rate. Due to this the usage of mobile phones has also increased and as a result encouraging more people to enter into that business. Communication is very important in our lives and it is impossible for someone to stay a day without communicating with friends, relatives, subordinates, superiors and others. When communicating, some devices help us to rely and send our message successfully to the intended person (the recipient). The mobile phone is one of the devices used by people to transmit messages or information to the recipient. The mobile phone is making communication to be easy, cost-effective and stress free. The population used for the study was 375 and questionnaires were administered and collected within a week. The research covered both men and women in the township, the mixed method of research was used for the study. During the discussion it came to light that gender has influence on the purchase of mobile phones and income can also influence the kind of mobile phone one will buy or use. As a result planners should not ignore these factors but segment the market, produce to suit the targeted customers and the firm will survive in the market.

Keywords: Age, Colour, Culture, Gender, Income, Koforidua

1. Introduction/Background

Consumer purchases are influenced by some factors which enables the consumer to make certain decision. Consumers are exposed to many stimulants which compel them to take certain action. Consumer buying is influenced strongly by cultural, social, personal, and psychological characteristics (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).

Communication is very important in our lives and it is impossible for someone to stay a day without communicating with friends, relatives, subordinates, superiors and others. When communicating, some devices help us to rely and send our message successfully to the intended person (the recipient). The mobile phone is one of the devices used by people to transmit messages or information to the recipient. The mobile phone is making communication to be easy, cost-effective and stress free.

Consumers of mobile phones have different reasons for purchasing the device. Some purchase the mobile phone for prestige, identification or sense of belongingness, and others. In Ghana both children and adults alike are using mobile phones. Some of the mobile phones are complex in nature and others are simple to operate. Apart from voice communication with someone, the mobile phone can be used for sending text messages, pictures, browsing, keeping record, reminder and others. In Ghana now mobile phones are sold basically everywhere including shops, around church premises, in cars/vans, freelance vendors, on campuses, etc.

Kotler & Armstrong (2010) refers to consumer buyer behaviour as the buying behaviour of final consumers-individuals and households that buy goods and services for personal consumption. Consumers in Ghana are exposed to many stimulants that trigger actions from them. Consumer purchases are influenced by cultural, social, personal and psychological factors.

For this research only the cultural factors would be considered. Culture is the set of basic values, perceptions, wants, and behaviours learned by a member of society from family and other important institutions (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010, p.161). Culture influence the purchase of a product and should be considered before designing or packaging a product into the market. The cultural factors include subculture, language, colour, gender, image, artifacts, norms, morals, social class, kinship, etc.

The aim of this paper is to develop an understanding of current mobile phone buying behaviour in the market by investigating how culture, including the above mentioned factors influence purchasing behaviour of consumers.

This research is set to achieve the following objectives;

- To determine whether social class could influence the purchase of a mobile phone;
- To determine whether colours can influence the purchase of a mobile phone;

- To assess the influence of gender on the purchase of mobile phones;
- To identify the sub-culture factors influencing the purchase of mobile phone

For this research two hypotheses were formulated concerning gender and the type of mobile phones to buy or use. The hypotheses were;

Ho: Gender can influence the type of mobile phone to buy or use;

H1: Gender cannot influence the type of mobile phone to buy or use.

2. Literature review

A consumer's culture has been shown to play a critical role in assessing the relationships between "country of design", "country of manufacture", and brand image (Essoussi & Merunka, 2007). The country where a product is produced is very important for decision making. Ghanaian prefer products produced from other countries to theirs. Also, people do not buy just anything at all but things that will bring value to them and those that they attach good image. Gender roles are the behaviours that are viewed as being appropriate for males and females in society (Forbes, 2012). Whilst the prescribed gender roles that were once prevalent appear to have blurred over time, gender has been found to have some usefulness in terms of market segmentation and the establishment of successful marketing strategies. According to Castells et al. (2007, p. 85), "obtaining a mobile phone is a milestone that indicates success, not only financially but also culturally in terms of the integration within society". As people associate with others living in the community with mobile phones then it is prudent for you to own one so that you can conform to the norms in that community. It is real to see someone without a mobile phone in Koforidua and if they do not own it then they use their friends or relatives own. So, facilitating family or friend coordination and intensifying social interaction are the crucial factors for using a mobile phone (Urry, 2007). Developing and building social tiers are important in our community and without the mobile phones it would be difficult to establish instant communication. With other forms of technology for communications the response is not instant unless you are using the facility but we go basically everywhere with our mobile phone.

Atkin et al. (2007) reported that women were significantly more likely to acquire information during a purchase by asking store personnel, reading labels or reading shelf tags, whilst men showed a significant preference for acquiring information by reading books. Women are careful when buying products while men are not. Women can spend a lot of time in the market before they make a purchase but men do not like to spend time in the market due to this they just buy what is at their disposal. Atkin et al. (2007) suggested that such as medals, price and brand name are used by female consumers as risk reduction strategies. Similarly, studies in Australia and New Zealand have reported that females utilize the label style or design to a greater extent than males (Mueller & Lockshin, 2008).

Culture is mentioned in the majority of marketing and consumer behaviour textbooks as a major influencer of consumer behaviour and as one of the essential critical of market segmentation (Jobber, 2007). Cultural issues should be considered by manufacturers of goods and services in the world. When this factor is ignored by manufacturers it will affect their business. Davis et al. (2008) argue that the presence of low task relevant cues (i.e. colours, movement of images, animations, etc.) will influence purchase decision. The colours for a product or a place will influence the action consumer are likely to take. The meanings and the interpretation of colours should be known to manufacturers before they move into the country or market to produce or sell. Without this knowledge the firm would find it difficult to survive and compete. Apart from colours, images and animations used by the firm should be understood and the interpretation and meanings accepted in that country or market.

Academic research has discovered important differences in consumers' cognitive processes and behaviour of three demographic characteristics; age, gender and income (Cooil et al., 2007). Age is a determinant which influences consumers buying behaviour and businesses can use this to segment the market. There are products or services for the youth and others for the adult. Gender can also be used to segment a market and this is especially common in the fashion world. Women preference is different from the men and even with the buying of mobile phones gender can be used to segment the market. Women are noted to prefer small and simple mobile phone while the men do not care about the size provided it can perform the function they needed.

Josiassen, Assafi, and Karpen (2011) Suggest that Consumers of different age, gender and income may differ in their propensity to let these Consumers ethnocentric tendencies affect their willingness to buy. Age, gender and income influence the type of product or service one will consume and marketers should segment the market and produce to suit their target market. When a wrong product or service is sent to the wrong market the product or service would not be purchase by the target market there and due to this the manufacturers should identify the market they wish to

serve, and produce to suit that market. Research has shown that the strength of ethnic culture has a significant effect on consumer purchasing behaviour and that the higher their strength of ethnic identification the greater their propensity to purchase products associated with their culture (Chattaraman, 2008). Manufacturers should understand the culture of the country they enter to do business. If they are conversant with the norms, rituals, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of the country they will be able to satisfy the needs and wants of the people there and become more competitive in the market place. If a product do not conform to the beliefs and norms of the community the people there will refuse to patronize the product in question.

3. Methodology

The population for this research was 6000 and 375 were sampled and given questionnaire to response. The total sample was arrived by using the formula $\frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$, where N is the number of population; e is tolerable error of 0.05.

$$N = \frac{6000}{1+6000(0.05)^2} = \frac{6000}{1+15} = 375$$

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The sample was taken at Koforidua Polytechnic and is made up of both students and staff of the institution at Koforidua in the New Juaben Municipal in the Eastern region of Ghana. The mixed research method was employed for the gathering of the data that is both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were employed. Accidental and quota sampling methods were used to collect the data for the work. Staff of the institution were identified and approached with some questionnaire as well as students of the institution who were given questionnaire on campus to fill. It took the researcher a week to collect the entire questionnaire administered. Due to the nature of the study the survey method was employed.

With the data analysis SPSS version 17 was used. Hypothesis was formulated and tested using the chi-square. The questionnaire was grouped into personal information and information on culture.

4. Discussion of the results

The entire questionnaires administered were retrieved and with the help of SPSS version 17 the results were generated. Tables were generated and used for the analysis. The first discussion is the testing of the hypothesis and the outcome is important for decision making.

Although several statistics are reported in the table below, for the purposes of testing the hypothesis set, only the Pearson Chi – Square value was used.

Table 1: Objective 3: To assess the influence of gender on the purchase of mobile phones.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.398 ^a	2	.819
Likelihood Ratio	.398	2	.819
Linear-by-Linear Association	.016	1	.900
N of Valid Cases	375		

Source: field survey, 2012

Table 1 report that with a p – value of 0.819, a Pearson Chi – Square value of 0.398, with a degree of freedom of 2 and with the p - value being greater than 0.05, the significance level selected for the study, we rejected the alternative hypothesis and accepted the null hypothesis which states that gender has an influence on the type of mobile phone

that an individual buys and uses and concluded that indeed being a male or female will be a contributing factor in the kind of mobile phone you will buy or use. This outcome is not surprising because there is the general believe that females seem to be attracted to more fashionable phones and things in life in Koforidua. This agrees with the opinion Forbes (2012) who said your gender will influence the kind of product you will buy and use.

It came to light that the male were about 56.5% while the female were 43.5%. This means that more male responded to the questionnaire than their female counter parts. The male were more because the population at the institution where the research was under taken male dominate.

From the analysis it was evident that 73.6% of the responded were between the age range of 18-25, 16.8% for the 26-33 ages, 5.3% for 34-41 age group, 4.3% for 42-49 age group. From the analysis more of the young people responded to the questionnaire. With the use of mobile phones the youth are at the fore-front. Most of the members of this group are working and willing to buy a mobile phone.

Pertaining to educational background of the respondents, 0.8% was in the senior high school and the vast majority was in the tertiary institution with 99.2%. This also indicates that those in the tertiary institution in Koforidua can use mobile phone but it is prohibited to use it in senior high institutions.

Objective 1: To determine whether social class could influence the purchase of a mobile phone

With the population sampled, 99.2% used mobile phones and 0.8% did not use mobile phones. Majority of the respondents issued with the questionnaires used a mobile phone.

Here consumers of mobile phones were asked whether they would purchase just any phone or one with multi-functions. 65.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that they will buy a mobile phone with multi-functions, 30.9% also agreed that they will go for a mobile phone with multi-functions, 1.9% were neutral, 4% of the respondents disagreed with the assertion that they will buy a mobile phone with multi-functions and 0.8% strongly disagreed with buying a mobile phone with multi-functions. In conclusion, most of the respondents would buy a mobile phone with multi-functions to suit their needs. This also implies that functions of a product are very vital for consumer decision making. Refer to note 1 table 2 for the responses.

Here, the researcher wanted to assess whether residential area have influence on buying of mobile phones among the respondents. From the table 13.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that where they are residing will influence the type of mobile phone they will buy, 16.3% agreed to this assertion, 4.0% were neutral, 33.9% disagreed to the assertion that where they are residing will influence their buying of a mobile phone and 32.3% strongly disagreed that where they are residing can influence they buying a mobile phone. In a nutshell, where the respondents are residing have a minimum influence on buying of mobile phones because the majority think residential area is not important for their decision about the type of mobile phone to buy.

Social class is another factor that could be considered. From the table above the respondents were asked whether their work would have influence on the type of mobile phone they will buy. It came to light that 52.8% said their work will definitely influence the type of mobile phone they will buy and use, 21.6% also said their work can not influence the type of mobile phone to buy and use and 25.6% were not sure of the influence of work on the type of mobile phones they will buy or use. In a nutshell, the work does by people will influence the type of mobile phones they buy or use. Your work will definitely influence the type of mobile phone you will buy or use.

As income is a major determinant influencing buying decision of consumers, the researcher wanted to know whether it could influence the buying of mobile phones. From the analysis, 54.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that their income will definitely influence the type of mobile phone they will buy and use, 28.3% agreed that income can influence their buying decision, 7.2% were neutral about the income, 7.5% disagreed with the assertion that income would influence the type of mobile phone they will buy or use and 2.9% strongly disagreed that their income would influence the type of mobile phone they will buy or use. It can be deduce from the above that income will definitely influence the type of mobile phone to buy or use. So the higher your income, the more complex, fashionable, and more functional mobile phone you will buy and vice versa. This assertion agrees with Josiassen, Assafi and Karpen (2011) that said income will influence the kind of product you will buy or use. Refer to note 1 table 3.

Here, the respondents were asked whether their level of education would influence the type of mobile phone they buy or use. From the analysis, 29.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that their level of education would influence the type of mobile phone they buy or use, 32% agreed that their level of education will influence the type of mobile phone they buy or use, 8% of the respondents were neutral about whether their level of education would influence

the type of mobile phone to buy or use, 17.1% disagreed with the assertion that their level of education would influence the type of mobile phone to buy or use and 13.6% strongly disagreed that their level of education would influence the type of mobile phone they will buy or use. It can be deduce from the analysis that the level of education of people will definitely influence the type of mobile phone to buy or use. In our part here, some people only use their mobile phones to make calls and nothing else and others used it for accessing the internet, sending text messages, reading bible, doing calculations, etc. Refer to note 1 table 4.

Objective 2: To determine whether colours can influence the purchase of a mobile phone

With this analysis, respondents were asked whether colour is a determinant pertaining to their purchase of a mobile phone. With this question 19.7% of the respondents strongly agree that colour will definitely influence their purchase decision, 32.8% agreed that colour will influence their purchase decision, 14.1% were neutral, 21.3% disagreed that colour will influence their purchase and 12% of the respondents strongly disagreed that colour will influence their purchase of mobile phone. In a nutshell, colour could influence the purchase of mobile phones among people in Koforidua. This assertion agrees with Davis *et al.* (2008) that said colour will influence the kind of product you will buy or use.

Objective 4: To identify the sub-culture factors influencing the purchase of mobile phone

Again the respondents were asked whether their religion can influence purchase of mobile phones. 1.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that their religion could influence their purchase decision, 6.1% agreed that their religion could influence their purchase decision, 8.5% were neutral, 42.7% disagreed that their religion could influence their purchase of a mobile phone and 41.6% strongly agreed that their religion could influence their purchase of mobile phones. This indicates that majority of the respondents disagreed about the assertion that religion could influence the purchase of a mobile phone. Religion is not a requisite for the purchase of mobile phones among the respondents. Refer to note 1 table 5 for the analysis.

At this point, respondents were asked whether language could influence their buying of a mobile phone. Here, the focus was on the English language. 6.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that the English language could influence their purchase of a mobile phone, 2.1% of the respondents agreed that the English language could influence their purchase of a mobile phone, 2.1% were neutral, 24.3% disagreed that the English language could influence their purchase of a mobile phone and 64.5% strongly agreed that the English language could influence their purchase decision. In a nutshell, the English language is not a major determinant for buying a mobile phone and the people may buy or use mobile phones in any language.

Also, the respondents were asked whether their denomination have influence on their purchase of mobile phone. 4.8% said definitely yes it does and 95.2% responded no to the question. In conclusion denomination does not influence the buying of mobile phones. Planners could ignore it when designing a mobile phone for the people in the town.

Again the researcher wanted to assess the importance of colours in relations to the purchase of mobile phones. From the analysis, 10.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that colour will definitely have influence on them buying mobile phones, 25.1% agreed that colour can influence their purchase decision, 13.1% were neutral, 33.1% disagreed to the assertion that colour can influence the type of mobile phone they will buy and 17.9% strongly disagreed to colour influencing their purchase of a mobile phone. In conclusion colour can influence the type of mobile phone one will buy and use. Due to this manufacturers should identify the colours that appeals to consumers and produce to suit them and also the meaning of those colours to them. This assertion agrees with Davis *et al* (2008) that said colour will influence the kind of product you will buy or use.

As symbols have meanings and very important for consumers of products and services, the respondents were asked whether symbols would influence their buying decision. From the analysis, 7.7% of the respondents strongly agreed that symbols on the mobile phone are very important for them buying the mobile phone, 9.1% agreed that symbols will influence their purchase decision, 13.6% were neutral, 42.9% disagreed that symbols will influence them buying a mobile phone and 26.7% strongly disagreed to the assertion that symbols would influence the type of mobile phone they will buy and use. In conclusion, symbols will not influence the type of mobile phone the respondents will buy and use. This may be due to the insufficient knowledge of the type of symbols used and also most of the mobile phones are not produce in the country.

Family members have influence on the type of products or service we patronize. The respondents were asked whether their relatives would have influence on the type of mobile phone to buy or use. From the analysis, 6.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that their relatives would have influence on the type of mobile phone they will buy

or use, 14.7% agreed to the assertion that their relatives will have influence on the type of mobile phone they will buy, 14.4% were neutral to this question, 32.3% disagreed with the assertion that their relatives would have influence on them pertaining to the purchase of a mobile phone and 31.7% strongly disagreed that their relatives can influence the type of mobile phone they will buy or use. It can be concluded that relatives have minimum influence on the type of mobile phone one will buy or use. This also means that it is the respondents who make their own decision pertaining to the type of mobile phone to buy or use.

The respondents were asked whether the size of the mobile phone would influence their buying decision. 60.8% of the respondents said the size of the mobile phone would definitely influence the type of mobile phone they will buy or use, 25.3% said the size will not influence the type of mobile phone they will buy or use and 13.9% were not sure whether the size of the mobile phone can influence their purchase decision. In a nutshell, the size of the mobile phone will influence the type to buy or use.

It was evident that 17.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that their peers will influence the type of mobile phone they will buy, 29.9% of the respondents also agreed that their peers can have influence on the type of mobile phone they will buy, 17.3% were neutral about the influence of their peers on their purchase decision, 18.4% disagreed with the assertion their peers can influence the type of mobile phone they buy and 16.8% strongly disagreed that their peers can influence the type of mobile phone they will buy or use. In conclusion, peers can influence the type of mobile phone one will buy or use.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Market segmentation is prerequisite of business planners. Culture is a variable under segmentation that is used to segment the market into sub-units. This research was set out to achieve these objectives; to determine whether social class could influence the purchase of a mobile phone; determine whether colours can influence the purchase of a mobile phone; assess the influence of gender on the purchase of mobile phones and identify the sub-culture factors influencing the purchase of mobile phone. With this research the respondents were selected from Koforidua Polytechnic and fortunately all the questionnaires were retrieved. During the research it came to light that more males and youth responded to the questionnaire and were educated. Most of the respondents contacted used mobile phones and were willing to part-take in the research.

It also came to light that religion and language were not very important factors influencing the purchase of mobile phone and due to that the respondents were not ready to accept any rules from religious authority pertaining to the type of mobile phone they will buy. They also said they will not buy a mobile phone which does not appeal to them and are concerned about the colour of the mobile phone to buy because colour has influence on the type of mobile phone they will buy or use. Apart from these, the income level of the consumer is also a vital determinant for the purchase of a mobile phone and the educational level also influence the type of mobile phone to buy or use and due to this manufacturers cannot ignore it.

Furthermore, where someone is working can also influence the type of mobile phone they will buy or use. Work side colleagues definitely have influence on the type of mobile phone to buy and use at the work place and apart from that your peers can also determine the type of mobile phone to buy or use because you always mingle with them so they can help you to make a decision pertaining to the type of mobile phone you should buy or use. For the purchase of mobile phones relatives and symbols were not identified as very important variables pertaining to the purchase of a mobile phone. The irrelevant of the symbols may be as a result of the products not being produce in the country and relatives would only have influence on the purchase of mobile phone only when the relative is the one financing the purchase decision.

To strive and be successful in this era of intense competition and consumer sophistication firms should be mindful of the cultural factors influencing the purchase decision of the consumer. It is recommended that firms producing products to Koforidua should be mindful of the colours they are going to use and understand the reason why consumers purchase a product. Secondly, the firms can use work side colleagues or peers of people to promote their products because this group is of great importance to the manufacturer of a product. Thirdly, manufacturers should also consider the income and educational levels of consumers of mobile phone before they produce the product to their target. Lastly, manufacturers should not just produce anything at all but instead consider the size of the mobile phone and the functions it can perform. A big mobile phone with no function would not be bought by the educated but vice versa.

5.1 Limitations and future research

The research was limited to Koforidua and among the factors influencing consumer buying behaviour only culture factors were considered. This would not give the real picture of why consumers purchase mobile phones. Furthermore, the population should be increased to cover more people so that the research will represent the views of most consumers of the mobile phone.

A further research could be conducted on the other factors influencing consumer buying decision in the country pertaining to the purchase of mobile phones.

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Notes

Table 2: Whether consumers of mobile phones would purchase just any phone.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	245	65.3	65.3	65.3
Agree	116	30.9	30.9	96.3
Neutral	7	1.9	1.9	98.1
Disagree	4	1.1	1.1	99.2
Strongly disagree	3	.8	.8	100.0
Total	375	100.0	100.0	

Source: field survey, 2012

Table 3: To assess whether income is a major determinant influencing the buying decision of consumers

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	203	54.1	54.1	54.1
Agree	106	28.3	28.3	82.4
Neutral	27	7.2	7.2	89.6
Disagree	28	7.5	7.5	97.1
Strongly disagree	11	2.9	2.9	100.0
Total	375	100.0	100.0	

Source: field survey, 2012

Table 4: Your level of education would influence the type of mobile phone you will use or buy

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	110	29.3	29.3	29.3
Agree	120	32.0	32.0	61.3
Neutral	30	8.0	8.0	69.3
Disagree	64	17.1	17.1	86.4
Strongly disagree	51	13.6	13.6	100.0
Total	375	100.0	100.0	

Source: field survey, 2012

Table 5: Religion influence on purchase of mobile phones

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	4	1.1	1.1	1.1
Agree	23	6.1	6.1	7.2
Neutral	32	8.5	8.5	15.7
Disagree	160	42.7	42.7	58.4
Strongly disagree	156	41.6	41.6	100.0
Total	375	100.0	100.0	

Source: field survey, 2012