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A study on bandwagon consumption behaviour among mobile phone consumers in rural Kerala

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Abstract
Bandwagon effect, refers to the extent to which the demand for a commodity is increased due to the fact that others are also consuming the same commodity. The Bandwagon Effect plays a key role in the sale of mobile phones as it encourages people to do something by either saying or implying that everyone else is doing it too. This paper is an attempt to analyses the existence of bandwagon consumption behaviour among mobile phone consumers in a rural area. The tendency to identify with friends, family, celebrities and other successful people by purchasing the same mobile phone used by them is the main motivating force behind bandwagon consumption and it is a source of pride and self-esteem for the consumer. No significant difference can be found in the bandwagon consumption behaviour with respect to gender, marital status, economic status and monthly family income.

Keywords: bandwagon effect, bandwagon consumption index, mobile phone consumers, consumer behavior

Introduction

Standard consumer theory assumes that atomized individuals exercise choice in an attempt to maximize utility subject to a budget constraint. Conventional consumer theories are mainly interested in drawing a relationship between price and quantity demanded and tsshey ignored other factors influencing consumer behaviour. It was in the remarkable article published in the quarterly journal of Economics in 1950, Harvey Liebenstien introduced the concept of bandwagon effect. In Economics, by the term bandwagon effect, we refer to the extent to which the demand for a commodity is increased due to the fact that others are also consuming the same commodity. It represents the desire of people to purchase a commodity in order to get into "the swim of things"; in order to conform with the people they wish to be associated with; in order to be fashionable or stylish; or, in order to appear to be "one of the boys."

The development of mobile phones and technologies has been an extended history of innovation and advancements cropped up due to dynamic changes in consumers' needs and preferences. Mobile phones have intruded our life and have made their own unique stand.Once considered as luxury they are the closest things to our hearts now. In the current highly competitive mobile phone market, manufacturers constantly fight to find additional competitive edge and differentiating elements to persuade consumers to select their brand instead of a competitor's. There are various studies conducted to identify factors that make companies better than their competitors in influencing the customers purchase decision. The Bandwagon Effect plays a key role in the sale of mobile phones as it encourages people to do something by either saying or implying that everyone else is doing it too. However studies are not conducted with regard to the prevalence of bandwagon effect among mobile phone consumers especially in the context of rural area even though such studies could provide new dimensions to existing theories on consumer behaviour. At this juncture, this study is an attempt to analyse the existence of bandwagon consumption behaviour among mobile phone consumers in a rural area.

Review of Literature

- Leibenstein (1950) [1] firstly defined the bandwagon effect as when consumers demand more (less) of a commodity at a given price because some or all other individuals in the mark*et al*so demand more (less) of the commodity, and on the opposite, when consumers' demand changes reversely with the behavior of some or all other individuals in the market is called the snob effect.By the bandwagon effect, we refer to the extent to which the demand for a commodity is increased due to the fact that others are also consuming the same commodity. It represents the desire of people to purchase a commodity in order to get into "the swim of things"; in order to conform with the people they wish to be associated with; in order to be fashionable or stylish; or, in order to appear to be "one of the boys."
- Bearden *et al* (1989) [2] identified two kinds of susceptibility to interpersonal influences: normative interpersonal influence and informal interpersonal influence. Consumers susceptibility to normative influence refers to the "need to identify or enhance one's image with significant others through the acquisition and use of products and brands, the willingness to confirm to the expectations of others regarding purchase decisions
- Robert Pindick and Daniel Rubinfeld in 'Micro Economics' defines bandwagon effect as follows, "bandwagon effect is a positive network externality in which a consumer wishes to purchase a good because others do it or to be in style or to indulge in a fad. They also state that bandwagon effect often arises in children's toy market (Barble doll and Nintendo games). In fact exploiting this effect is a major objective in advertising and selling clothing."

- Nicholas Economides (1997) argues that in network markets, and more generally in markets with network externalities, when firms and consumers interact in more than period, history matters. Both consumers and firms make production and consumption decisions based on sizes of installed base and on expectations of its increases over time. The same underlying technology and consumers preferences and distribution can lead to different industrial structures depending on the way things start. Thus, strategic advantages, such as first mover advantages, can have long run effects. Network externalities and historical events are particularly important in the speed of adoption of an innovation that creates services on a network.
- Ebren F (2009) [4] points out that People with a high level of conformity value tend to make decisions that conform to the expectations of their close social environment, while those with low level of conformity value are likely to focus more on their own personal needs and care less about others' expectation. Her study also confirms the validity of consumer's susceptibility to interpersonal influence scale developed by Bearden *et al* on Turkish population. The absence of significant differences in susceptibility to informational influence among young Turkish consumers suggests that word-of -mouth communications and the use of interpersonal sources of information are important.
- Denrer D Rozario and Guang Yang (2010) [6] found that in-store-displays, advertisements and fashion books and guides were significantly related to CSII. They have re-validated Bearden, Netemeyer and Teel's (1989) [2] 'Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence' (CSII) scale in a population that is different (i.e., Armenian-Americans) from that in which it was originally developed (i.e., Anglo-Americans). They have also shown in their study how CSII relates to a key aspect of consumption-related behavior, namely pre-purchase external information search behavior. They also introduced some additional valuable properties of CSII i.e., it also relates to impersonal sources of influence)and measures only one-half of the puzzle of how consumers are influenced. It appears that the other half of this puzzle of consumer influence comes from impersonal sources, such as in-store displays, advertisements and neutral sources (such as fashion book and guides, Consumer Reports, or online sources, etc.).
- Kastanakis and Balabanis's (2012) [8] study on bandwagon luxury consumption", which examines the psychological factors involved in purchasing mass-appeal luxury products. Their study develops and empirically confirms a conceptual model that shows that bandwagon and snobbish buying patterns underlie the more generic conspicuous consumption of luxuries. In addition to status seeking, the self-concept orientation regulates which of these two patterns is more prominent. Both susceptibility to normative influence and need for uniqueness mediate the influence of self-concept. The modeled psychological constructs explain a large part of the variance in conspicuous luxury consumption patterns and can be used as input in the development of marketing strategies
- Richard Bmckenzie and Gordon Tullock (2012) has put forward the opinion of Becker who stated that people can jump on the bandwagon consumption for certain goods because other people are either on the bandwagon or are expected to make the jump. A sufficiently strong bandwagon effect can mean that price can be positively related to (with in a range) to the quantity of the good consumed. In Becker's words "suppose that the pleasure from a good is greater when many people want to consume it. Perhaps because a person doesn't wish to be out of step with what's popular or because confidence in the quality of a food, writing or performance is greater when a restaurant or a book or a theater is popular
- Amita Maxwell(2014) [9] argues that In case of articles and brands showing positive bandwagon effect, the law of demand does not hold good as with a cut or rise in price the demand may not show changes. Factors leading to positive bandwagon effect are- Fashion Fads and Trends, Impact of Television and Electronic Media, Changes in life style patterns, Awareness and brand consciousness, Increase in real income of consumers, Technological Breakthroughs, Network externalities and Complementary bandwagon effects.
- According to Aysen Berberoglu (2014) [10] "it is very useful to understand the relation of demographic data with consumption habits of the potential customer as well as to understand the level of need for uniqueness when designing the products. In this sense, the higher a consumers need for avoidance of similarity, the higher his or her desire for unique consumer products (Michel *et al*, 2009). So measuring level of similarity avoidance makes it easier to decide how to customize and market the products for the fashion companies. According to the results of the current case, age and gender of the consumers is strongly related with their avoidance of similarity as well as with their monthly spending. This affirms that it is important for fashion companies to produce and serve their products by paying a higher attention to demographic segmentation."
- Wangsiu sunny Tsai *et al* (2014) [12], found that social factors as well as psychological factors on Consumers Need for Uniqueness and susceptibility to normative influence were found to mediate the connection between cultural identification and consumption preferences.
- Van schalkwyk (2014) is of the opinion that Mere ownership or collection of goods may be pleasurable or important to bandwagoners as the need for material resources have a positive relation to bandwagon consumption. These individuals have high belief in their ability to acquire goods which are popular as self-efficacy was positively related to bandwagon consumption. Bandwagoners focus on immediate as they are highly fashion conscious and have a present time perspective.
- Dr. B V Jayanti and Rajani Chandrasekhar (2015) [14] are of the opinion that celebrity endorsement is the proven strategy of ensuring bandwagon effect even among the cultured and educated consumers. Though whether the celebrities really understand what they endorse is debatable, the consumers prefer to follow suit as the famous personality of their liking endorses a specific brand and speaks about it on the screen.

Statement of the Problem

The study of consumer behaviour has always been very interesting to economists and we have so many theories developed by them on the topic. At first all of these theories were solely focused on analyzing the relationship between factors like consumer demand and price, consumer demand and income etc. psychological factors which influenced the consumer was ignored by them. It was economists like Thorstein Veblen and Harvey Liebenstien ho paid attention to these psychological factors. The bandwagon effect introduced by Liebenstein shows the extent to which popularity of a commodity influences its demand. It can actually be found in the relative income hypothesis introduced by Duesenberry. We see the bandwagon consumption behaviour everyday around us. Advertisements take huge advantage of it.A bandwagon appeal makes the consumers believe that they won't fit in if they don't purchase the particular product or they are missing out or falling behind the crowd if they don't have the product. For example Food and drink ads show hip young adults enjoying a product and ignoring the individual who chooses the less popular product. Medical products show consensus by indicating the number of medical professionals who support the product. For example, a cold medicine ad may say, "Eight out of 10 doctors recommend this product" to show product effectiveness. This type of message says buy this product because everyone does. If done correctly, the consumer will purchase the product.

Automobile dealers and cellphone providers give sales and user statistics to indicate why their product is the more preferred. Thus bandwagon effect has a major role to play in the mobile phone market. In fact bandwagon effect is what somehow is responsible for the large sales of Samsung and Apple mobile phones. Thus factors underlying bandwagon consumption behaviour of mobile phone consumers are of vast importance. The present study is an attempt in that direction.

Research Gap

Many scholars have attempted to study bandwagon consumption behaviour. Most prominent among them are Kastanakis and Balabanis who introduced their own scale to measure bandwagon effect. But they remained within the context of luxury goods only and focused mainly on broad psychological factors. There was no attempt made to anlayse the relation between socio-economic Factors of consumers and bandwagon consumption behaviour.Earlier researchers also studied consumers in general and did not concentrate on a particular group of consumers.

Objectives

1. To identify the factors underlying bandwagon consumption behaviour among mobile phone consumers in Varavoor Grama Panchyath
2. To examine bandwagon consumption behaviour with respect to socio-economic characteristics of mobile phone consumers in Varavoor Grama Panchyath

Data Source

Both primary data and secondary data have been used for the present study. Primary data were collected from randomly selected 100 respondents from Varavoor Grama Panchyath in Thrissur District of Kerala. Secondary data on the purchase of mobile phones were collected from published reports like GSM report.

Methods Used

A well-structured schedule has been used to collect data from the respondents. Scale constructed by combining the items of consumer's susceptibility to normative influence scale developed by Bearden *et al* and bandwagon consumption scale developed by Kastanakis and Balabanis was used for measuring bandwagon effect. Bandwagon consumption index was constructed by adding up the values attained for each item in the scale. Factor analysis and Dummy variable regression were used for data analysis

Table 1: Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents

Socio-Economic Characteristic		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	47	47
	Female	53	53
	Total	100	100
Age	Below 25	40	40
	25-50	42	42
	Above 50	18	18
	Total	100	100
Religion	Hindu	81	81
	Muslim	10	10
	Christian	9	9
	Total	100	100
Marital status	Married	63	63
	Unmarried	37	37
	Total	100	100
Economic status	APL	76	76
	BPL	24	24
	Total	100	100
Family income	Below 20000	47	47
	20000-40000	46	46
	Above 40000	7	7
	Total	100	100

***Source*:** Sample survey

Research instruments used in the study

Consumers Susceptibility to Normative Influence Scale

Consumer's susceptibility to normative influence (CSNI) represents the degree to which an individual seeks compliance with a group. There are eight measurement items table in the consumer's susceptibility to normative influence scale which are as follows.

Table 2: items used in CSNI scale

Number	Scale item	Construct/Latent Variable	Source
1	I rarely purchase the latest fashion styles until I am sure my friends approve of them	susceptibility to normative influence	Bearden *et al*
2	I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase.		
3	If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product.		
4	When buying products, I generally purchase those brands I think others will approve of.		
5	I like to know what brands and products make good impressions on others.		
6	I frequently gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy.		
7	If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy.		
8	I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase.		

Bandwagon Consumption Scale

Kastanakis and Balabanis developed a 3 item measurement scale for bandwagon consumption in 2012. The three item scale consists of the measures "a very popular and currently very fashionable product that everyone would approve of its choice", "a product by many celebrities, recognized by many people as a symbol of success", and "a product that is chosen and used by most people as a symbol of achievement".

Table 3: Items used in bandwagon consumption scale

Number	Scale Item	Construct/Latent variable	Source
1	I will buy a popular and currently very fashionable product that everyone would approve of its choice	Bandwagon consumption	Kastakanis and Balabanis
2	I will buy a product used by many celebrities		
3	I would by a product that is chosen by many people as a symbol of success		

Items of these two scales were combined together and adapted in the context of the present study.

Rating Scale

A bipolar scale was used and each selection on the scale was represented by a score: 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree as illustrated in the following table.

Table 4: Bipolar Scale Used In Measuring Instrument

Strongly disagree	Dis agree	Niether Agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis can reduce the set of statements to a concise instrument and at the same time, ensure that the retained statements adequately represent the critical aspects of the constructs being measured.

Table 5: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.717
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	136.280
	df	45
	Sig.	.000

It may be noted that the value of KMO statistic is greater than.5 indicating that factor analysis can be used for the given set of data. Further, Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant as indicated by the p value corresponding to the chi-square statistic

The p value is 0.00 which is less than 0.05, assumed level of significance. Sample size is of 100 which is 10 times greater than the number of variables (statements).All these justify the use of factor analysis for this study.

Table 6: Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component		
	1	2	3
Variable1	.542	.348	-.206
Variable2	.564	.116	.240
Variable3	.563	.340	-.268
Variable4	.361	.727	.135
Variable5	.295	-.217	.621
Variable6	.564	-.045	-.291
Variable7	.480	-.489	-.515
Variable8	.558	.023	.194
Variable9	.585	-.424	.133
Variable10	.666	-.223	.182

In order to interpret the results of the above table, a cut off is decided. Now we use 0.6 as a cutoff point, the variable corresponding to factor 1 having a factor loading above 0.6 is variable 10, acceptance of the choice of mobile phone by others. The variable corresponding to factor 2 having factor loading above 0.6 is variable 4, tendency to identify with others by using the same mobile phone they use. The variable corresponding to factor 3 having a factor loading above 0.6 is variable 5, is consideration of the opinion of friends while making mobile phone purchase.

Naming of the components

Factor 1 could be named as tendency for social identification. Factor 2 could be named as then need for social approval. Factor 3 could be named as peer group influence

Now these factors are used as independent variables and variance in bandwagon consumption index explained by these factors are as follows

Table 7: variance explained by the factors

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.793	27.929	27.929	2.793	27.929	27.929
2	1.296	12.960	40.888	1.296	12.960	40.888
3	1.013	10.129	51.017	1.013	10.129	51.017
4	.949	9.492	60.509			
5	.887	8.868	69.377			
6	.803	8.032	77.409			
7	.687	6.873	84.282			
8	.618	6.181	90.463			
9	.518	5.181	95.644			
10	.436	4.356	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

All three factors explain a total of 51.017 percent of the variations in the bandwagon consumption index. The percentage of variation explained by the first, second and third factors are respectively 27.929, 12.960, and 10.123.

Bandwagon consumption behaviour and socio-economic characteristics

To see if there is any variation in bandwagon consumption with respect to socio economic characteristics ANOVA model is used

Gender and Bandwagon Consumption Behaviour

To analyse the bandwagon consumption behaviour with respect to gender the following ANOVA model is used $Y_i = \alpha + \beta D_i + u_i$ where Y_i = bandwagon consumption index, D_i= 1 for male and it equals 0 other wise.

The regression results are as follows

Table 8

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	35.704	.526		67.834	.000
	Gender	-.769	.776	-.100	-.991	.324

The estimated model is $\hat{Y_I}$=35.704 – 769 D_i. When D_i=1, $\hat{Y_i}$=35.704 - 769=34.935, this gives the bandwagon consumption index for males and When D_i=0, $\hat{Y_i}$=35.704,this gives the bandwagon consumption index for females

Marital status and bandwagon consumption behaviour

To analyse the bandwagon consumption behaviour with respect to marital status the following ANOVA model is used $Y_i = \alpha + \beta D_i + u_i$, Where Y_i = bandwagon consumption index,D_i= 1 if the respondent is married and it is equals 0 otherwise. The regression results are as follows.

Table 9

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	35.200	.709		49.615	.000
	maritalstatus	.214	.848	.026	.253	.801

The estimated model is $\hat{Y_i}$=35.2 +214$D_i$andWhen D_i=1, $\hat{Y_i}$=35.2 +.214=35.414,this shows the bandwagon consumption index for married respondents. When D_i=0, $\hat{Y_i}$=35.2, this shows the bandwagon consumption index for unmarried respondents

Bandwagon consumption behaviour and Economic status

To analyse the bandwagon consumption behavior with respect to economic status the following ANOVA model is used $Y_i = \alpha + \beta D_i + u_i$, where Y_i = bandwagon consumption index, D_i= 1 if the respondent belongs to APL category and D_i = 0 other wise (if the respondent belongs to BPL category).Regression results are as follows

Table 10

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	35.120	.777		45.202	.000
	Economic status	.307	.897	.035	.342	.733

The estimated model is $\hat{Y_i}$=35.120+.307 D_i.When D_i=1, $\hat{Y_i}$=35.12 +.307=35.427,this shows the bandwagon consumption index for respondents who belong to APL category.When D_i=0, $\hat{Y_i}$=35.120,this shows the bandwagon consumption index for respondents who belong to BPL category

Bandwagon consumption behaviour and Monthly family Income

To analyse the bandwagon consumption behavior with respect to family income the following ANOVA model is used $Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 D_{1i} + \beta_2 D_{2i} + u_i$, Where Y_i = bandwagon consumption index D_{1i}= 1, if respondents belongs to the monthly family income category of RS 20000-40000and equal to 0 otherwise.,D_{2i}=1,If respondent belongs to the monthly income category of Above RS 40000 and equal to 0 otherwise. Regression results are as follows.

Table 11: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	34.965	.522		66.954	.000
	20000-40000	1.184	.776	.153	1.526	.130
	Above 40000	-1.512	1.346	-.112	-1.123	.264

When $D_{1i}=1$, $\hat{Y_i}=34.965 + 1.184=36.154$, this gives the band wagon consumption index for respondents who belong to the income category of RS 20000-40000.When $D_{2i}=1$, $\hat{Y_i}=34.965-1.512=33.450$, this gives the band wagon consumption index for respondents who belong to the income category of below above RS 40000.When $D_{1i}=0$, $D_{2i}=0$, $\hat{Y_i}=34.965$, this gives the band wagon consumption index for respondents who belong to the income category of below RS 20000

Findings

Three factors which determine bandwagon consumption were obtained from the factor analysis. They are, the tendency for social identification, need for social approval and peer group influence. Three factors extracted from the factor analysis together explain 51.017 percent of the total variation in bandwagon consumption. Tendency of individuals identify with people around them by using the same mobile-phone they use (tendency for social identification) explains 27.929 percent of the variation in bandwagon consumption. Respondents are reluctant to purchase a new mobile phone until others approve of their choice. The desire for Social approval explains 12.960 percent of the variation in bandwagon consumption. Opinion of friends play a major role while making the purchase, there for Peer group influence explains 10.129 percent of the variation in bandwagon consumption. Women tend be badwagoners than men even though by a narrow margin as the bandwagon consumption index obtained for women is 35.704 and for men is 34.935.Bandwagon consumption behavior is more prevalent among married respondents as their bandwagon consumption index is 35.414 compared to unmarried respondents whose bandwagon consumption index is 35.2 Bandwagon consumption behavior is a bit more visible among APL category as their bandwagon consumption index is 35.427 compared to BPL category whose bandwagon consumption index is 35.12.Bandwagon consumption Index obtained for the respondents who belong to the family income category of RS 20000-40000 is 36.514, respondents who belong to the family income category of below RS 20000 it is 34.965.For those who belong to the category of above RS 40000 it is 33.450.Respondents who belong to the income category of RS 20000-40000 tend to exhibit bandwagon consumption behavior slightly more than respondents with family income of more than RS 40000.

Conclusion

The tendency to identify with friends, family, celebrities and other successful people by purchasing the same mobile phone used by them is the main motivating force behind bandwagon consumption and it is a source of pride and self-esteem for the consumer. No significant difference can be found in the bandwagon consumption behaviour with respect to gender, marital status, economic status and monthly family income. Thus the phenomenon of bandwagon consumption behaviour among mobile consumers in Varavoor Grama Panchayath can be considered as purely psychological. However bandwagon consumption index of women and married respondents are slightly higher than that of men and unmarried respondents. Middle income category tends to exhibit this bandwagon consumption behaviour compared to low income and high income category.

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