

# FOCUS GROUP REPORT

CELL PHONE PREFERENCES OF AFFLUENT YOUNG ADULTS

# 1. INTRODUCTION

- The focus group was conducted as a means to discover what features of a cell phone, in the expensive segment, warranted its purchase
- The agenda was to obtain feedback on the following :
  - What participants **enjoyed most about their current phone**
  - The **features** most important to them when considering a new phone
  - The **price range** they were willing to consider

## 2. BACKGROUND AND METHODS

- The feedback has been obtained from a group of **9 participants**(3 Male and 7 Female).
- The session was held on **May 16, 2017** at the International Center on the UC Davis campus in Davis, California.
- All participants were between **18-25 years** of age and were affluent enough to afford expensive phones.
- All participants were informed about the rules of confidentiality , audio and video recordings as well as the incentives for the session.
- The screening questionnaire accounted for all additional details

# 3. REPORT STRUCTURE

The **major sections** covered in the focus group are listed below. The report will go over the findings in the same order

1. Current usage and purchase preferences
2. Frequently used Applications
3. Important Hardware/Technical specifications
4. Pricing
5. Social Aspects of Technology

## 4. CURRENT USAGE AND PURCHASE PREFERENCES

### Cell Phones owned

iPhone 5S (2) , iPhone 6 (1), iPhone 6S (1) , iPhone 7 (1) iPhone SE (2) , Alcatel Idol 3 (1), Samsung (1)

### Brand-wise

Samsung(1) , Alcatel(1) and Apple(7)

### Operating System-wise

Android(2) and iOS(7)

## 4.1. FAVOURITE FEATURES OF CURRENT PHONE

- Camera, iMessage and Cloud storage were the standard favorites. Battery life, durability, size and social media access were also mentioned.
- Seamless **cross device connectivity** and **Messaging** seemed to be extremely important. These two features were frequently brought up throughout the whole discussion.

*"I like the camera. I like it because it connects to my Mac and music. It's just easy. And I have Apple everything" (F)*

*"I also like the new feature for iMessage where you can just like or heart or do whatever to a message. I can just like it, it shows that I, like, respond, but I don't have to worry about formatting"(F)*

## 4.2. OTHER BRANDS CONSIDERED

- The general consensus was that most of them already had a **clear idea** of what they were going to buy.
- There was a strong sense of brand loyalty in that most of them appeared to want to simply upgrade to newer versions of the same brand instead of considering another.
- An interesting observation was the mention of a **cheaper alternative** (Alcatel Idol 3) to a high end phone (Nexus), with identical features, bought on an on-line platform.

*"I knew going to the store that I was going to buy an iPhone. I was looking at another phone, but I knew that I was going to buy an iPhone since I had the 5S" (F)*

*"I also knew I was going to buy an iPhone. And I've just always had iPhones" (F)*

## 4.3. SWITCHING BRANDS

- Most of the iPhone users seem to have always had an iPhone or switched from Android and never went back.
- A few switched the other way because of battery issues, but still missed the camera quality of Apple.

*"I've had a Android before, but then I got an iPhone, and then I was like, I will never go back. There's no reason to" (F)*

*"I kind of like, I miss the iPhones, though. So the pictures and camera and stuff like that"(F)*



## 5. FREQUENTLY USED APPLICATIONS

- The group rated the apps most important to them by a show of hands. **Messaging**(3), **Social Media**(4) and **Find my iPhone**(6) were the ones that predominantly showed up.
- Find my iPhone seemed to be an extremely important feature, especially given the price you pay for them.
- An observation was made about how **looking for information** was perhaps the most frequently used feature of any phone.

*"I would say looking at information. I didn't realize how much I was so relying on phones until when I went somewhere like overseas and you don't have signal. So when you're like trying to look up a history of the place that you're at or something or where to go, you realize oh, my God. I don't have access to my phone. I have to find Wi-Fi."(M)*

## 5.1. LESS FREQUENT BUT IMPACTFUL APPLICATIONS

- Apps like Gmail, Music, Google Drive, Messenger and To Do lists came up in the context of **studying and easy organization**.
- Although only a few participants mentioned it, it seemed to have a heavy influence on their daily lives and overall convenience.

*"I'm the kind of person that if I don't put what I have to do somewhere, it's not going to stick, I won't do it. So I have an app that helps me with that. So I think that's what I use it for the most."(F)*

*"Or I write notes, I do that a lot in Google Drive, I can look up whatever I wrote in my notes if I didn't bring it with me. So in the class I can still participate."(F)*

## 6. HARDWARE/TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

- The most important technical aspects by show of hands were **Camera**(5), **Battery**(8), **Cloud**(5), **Durability**(4), **Internal Storage**(7).
- Battery Life and Internal storage were of extreme importance followed by Cloud and Camera. These appear to have a fundamental influence on usage.

*"And I like also the cloud-based system where it's this, in a sense where, if I buy or downloaded music in my phone, it will be in my iPad or in my laptop and I really like that." (M)*

*"I like the camera because I don't have to carry my camera around. I can just use it and it'll be, like, quality photos"(M)*

## 6.1. BATTERY LIFE AND REPLACEABILITY

- Battery life also had a significant impact on purchase decisions.

*"If I could have a phone that I charge like once a week . That would be ideal. That would be so ideal."(F)*

- Another view point was regarding easy to replace parts versus having to replace the entire device when something goes wrong

*"I think lot of people remain with Samsung or Android because, everything in the iPhone is internal, so it's like if something goes wrong you have to replace the whole thing, which is super expensive for some people."(M)*

## 6.2. FAVOURITE FEATURE VS POOR PERFORMANCE

- Most of the participants would **not buy a poorly performing phone** even it had the feature they most desired.
- For instance, one participant said that if the phone had a great camera but was a poor performer, she would prefer to get a DSLR instead.
- It was mentioned that there were several ways to get reviews on phones, with pros and cons, so no one is likely to buy a phone that has more cons than pros.

*“Now a days reviews affect sales so much its just like sales would go down instantly if everyone just says, 'Don't buy it. Don't buy it.' Just like the Samsung exploding. Everyone knew. You all don't want to buy that phone. Nobody wanted to but a Samsung and sales just went down because of that.”(M)*

## 7. PHONE PRICING

- By a show of hands, **5 out of 9** felt that their phone was worth it and the price they paid got them good value.
- Those whose phones were paid for by parents or family seemed to strongly resonate.

*"Well most of like my phones and stuff have been paid for by like my parents. Luckily they have been willing to do that. Um so price is really like whatever they're willing to pay."*

## 7.1. SPENDING PREFERENCES

- The price range specified by participants varied a lot. Some mentioned that they would pay **\$700-\$900** for an iPhone, albeit on a **payment plan**. Payment plans appeared to play a crucial role.
- Another specified that he would prefer to pay up front, around \$500.

*"I will say accessibility to payment plans because I wouldn't be using any of these phones if I didn't have access to a payment plan." (M)*

*"I pay about \$60 a month and that's just because it's a lot because if I want a phone may as well pick the best one and then you're just paying that amount instead of in one lump sum."(M)*

*"I'd rather pay it in a lump sum just to get it out of the way." (M)*

# 8. SOCIAL ASPECTS OF TECHNOLOGY

## 8.1. EASE OF COMMUNICATION

- The major positive aspect brought out was **staying connected** across time zones or in cases where face-to-face communication was not an option.
- Participants felt that seeing social media snippets helped them feel like they were a part of that person's day and kept them **updated** about the person's life.

*"All my friends are back on the east coast, because I'm not from California. Staying in contact is so hard because like the time difference but if I can like go on Snapchat, I can kind of like scroll through and like and tap through their day basically and see what they're doing. And so like, I feel like I'm kind of connected" (F)*



## 8.2. SOCIAL DISCONNECT

It was agreed that while technology helped you connect with those far away, in the process you often ignored those close to you, leading to an increasing lack of local interaction

*"We can connect to people who are far away from us and then it becomes a problem with even people who are close to us."(F)*

*"But at the same time, I don't know, maybe domestically, when we're like always messaging each other, it's actually hard for us in my generation, it's actually hard to like maintain proper conversation or make an initiative to meet the people" (M)*

## 8.3. REAL VS SOCIAL MEDIA PERSONAS

- Another major drawback appeared to be a conflict between your real life versus your social media persona.
- It was implied that people might judge your life by what you post and if your posts conveyed a generally happy picture, people might **shy away from reaching out to you.**

*"In a way, like, I get a few people, like, they just don't, like, reach out to me anymore just because they think I have so many new friends in Davis or whatever, but it's just I don't really post boring stuff. Nobody wants to see me studying. Of course, I post stuff like I'm going hiking or something like that and they're just like, 'Wow, you're always doing something.' So people refrain from contacting me or something. Some friends are just like, I'm way too intimidated to like reach out to you" (M)*

## 8.4. HAMPERED COMMUNICATION

- Many felt that messaging has become the communication norm these days, and while quick, it seems to have taken away the **emotional depth** and **meaning** of a conversation.
- It also seems to have hindered having real calls and conversations.
- It was mentioned that virtual socialization often seems to make people **immune to social interactions** and less likely to reach out and make contact.

*"I think since we're constantly kind of being like, bombarded with, not just like socialization, but like information too, I think it's really easy to become, kind of just desensitized to everything that you see."(F)*

*"I just think like it would be a lot more in depth rather than if I'm just texting someone. So you don't get like the full emotional connection."(F)*

*"Nowadays, like, if someone just texts you or something and when they call you and they're like, 'What is it?' And it's like, 'Oh, nothing. I just wanted to call you', and they're like, 'You could have told me that, like, over text. You know, like, it's weird to give people calls now.'"(M)*

## 9. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- **7 out of 9** participants had an iPhone while **2** had Android phones
- The most important **technical features** appear to be Camera(5), Battery(8), Cloud(5), Durability(4) and Internal Storage(7)
- Most **frequented applications** were Messaging(3), Social Media(4) and Find my iPhone(6).
- Other applications of significance were Gmail, Music, Google Drive, Messenger and To Do list apps.
- The average **price** participants were willing to pay for a phone was around \$500 - \$900. Many relied heavily on **payment plans** involving \$25-\$60 per month.
- Social advent of technology seems to point towards deteriorating personal interactions and an increased hesitation to reach out/communicate

# 10. LIMITATIONS

- Qualitative research **is not generalizable** to the entire population since the selection of participants is done in accordance with screener criteria, to obtain a homogeneous sample
- The majority of participants had an iPhone, leading to some features being heavily concentrated. The results could be different for a sample consisting of expensive phones across other platforms.

# 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- If further research is possible, then a **quantitative approach** should be considered.
- Several areas such as important features, applications, price points and technical aspects need to be quantified to give generalizable results.
- The true impacts of technology on young adults can be further explored, to perhaps provide features that promote more **responsible smart phone usage**.