

THE INFLUENCE OF WORD-OF-MOUTH COMMUNICATION ON CONSUMERS'
PURCHASING DECISION ON MOBILE PHONES

MASTER'S PROJECT
BY
NAWARAT SAPHANUCHART

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication
at Srinakharinwirot University

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AN ABSTRACT

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Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication is widely accepted as a powerful marketing tool, and it also plays an important role in consumers' decision-making when purchasing products and services. The purposes of this study were to explore the WOM source that had the most influence on the mobile phone purchasing decision and to explore four aspects (brand, price, design, and special features) that influence purchase decision. The data was collected using a questionnaire which was distributed to one hundred consumers aged over 15 who had previously purchased mobile phones. The results in this study showed that for the pre-purchase decision process, the majority of the respondents gathered the most information from their 'friends' primarily about 'brand', followed by 'price', 'special features' (multimedia, connectivity, and game), and 'design'. The study also found that 'friends' were the WOM source that had the most influence on the mobile phone purchasing decision. Moreover, 'brand' was the most influential aspect on the decision to purchase mobile phone.

อิทธิพลของการสื่อสารแบบบอกต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่ของผู้บริโภค

บทคัดย่อ

ของ

นวรรตน์ สภานุชาติ

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา
ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อการสื่อสารนานาชาติ

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การสื่อสารแบบบอกต่อเป็นการสื่อสารที่ได้รับการยอมรับอย่างแพร่หลายว่าเป็นเครื่องมือในการตลาดที่มีประสิทธิภาพสูง และยังเป็นสิ่งสำคัญที่มีผลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อสินค้าและบริการของผู้บริโภคอีกด้วย วัตถุประสงค์ของการศึกษานี้เพื่อศึกษาแหล่งข้อมูลการบอกต่อที่มีความสำคัญต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่ของผู้บริโภค และเพื่อศึกษาข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่ซึ่งได้แก่ ยี่ห้อ, ราคา, การออกแบบ, และการใช้งาน ผ่านการสื่อสารแบบบอกต่อที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่ของผู้บริโภคมากที่สุด กลุ่มตัวอย่างในงานวิจัยครั้งนี้คือกลุ่มผู้บริโภคซึ่งมีอายุมากกว่า 15 ปีขึ้นไป ที่ได้ซื้อโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่เป็นจำนวนหนึ่งร้อยคนเพื่อตอบแบบสอบถาม ซึ่งผลการศึกษาพบว่ากระบวนการก่อนการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่นั้น ผู้บริโภคส่วนใหญ่ให้ความสำคัญในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับ 'ยี่ห้อ', 'ราคา', 'ลักษณะพิเศษ' (การใช้งานสื่อบริการ, การเชื่อมต่อ, และเกมส์), และ การออกแบบ จาก 'เพื่อน' และแหล่งข้อมูลนี้ยังเป็นแหล่งข้อมูลที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่มากที่สุดอีกด้วย ผลการวิจัยยังค้นพบอีกว่า 'ยี่ห้อ' เป็นปัจจัยที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่มากที่สุด

The Master's Project Advisor, Chair of Business English for International Communication Program and Oral Defense Committee have approved this Master's Project as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakharinwirot University.

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This Master's Project has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakharinwirot University.

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May....., 2008

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication has been acknowledged as a major influential marketing strategy among mobile phone markets. This is because WOM communication influences consumers' decisions on products and services.

With the fierce marketing competition between mobile phone companies in Thailand, there are scores of new models released every month (<http://siamphone.com>). Accordingly consumers need more information about mobile phones from a trustworthy source to make the right decision before making a purchase.

The number of mobile phone users in Thailand is high and increasing and mobile phones have become as common as wristwatches to own (Pakola; et al. 2007). Consumers make a decision based not just on price (Pakola; et al. 2007) and features like sending text messages, listening to music, watching movies or television, taking pictures, surfing the Internet or even playing mobile games (Decosta. 2006), but also as a result of WOM sources. This is because WOM communication can influence expectations and perceptions during the information search phase of the buying process and influences attitude during the pre-choice evaluation of alternative service providers (Lynn. 1987; Stock & Zinsner. 1987; & Woodside; et al. 1992).

Searching for more information from WOM source, which had direct experiences of products (Edgett & Parkinson. 1993; GFK. 2006), will help consumers in making a decision. Mobile phone markets have been expanding according to the growth of mobile phone users in Thailand (See Figure1). Nowadays, mobile phone models have increased to serve the demand of the markets. This gives consumers more alternatives about brand, design, price, and special features when purchasing a mobile phone.

WOM communication is one of the most powerful and persuasive tools in marketing (Lopez. 2006; Rujinan. 2006; & GFK. 2006). WOM communication is a trustworthy, reliable, and credible source from which most consumers gather information before purchasing. According to Lopez (2006) and GFK Roper Consulting (2006, June), most consumers ask their family and friends for advice or information on the products before purchasing. They rely on their family and friends for information because of trust. Consumers trust WOM sources because those who pass information through WOM communication are perceived to be less biased (Edgett & Parkinson. 1993), and independent from the companies. Such consumers spread information based on their satisfaction of the products. WOM communication has an influence on consumer's purchasing decision on many products. Arpa (2002), ACNielsen (2006), and Rujinan (2006) have concluded that WOM communication influences consumers on purchasing decisions; it assures the results and reduces the risk in purchasing decisions. In addition, WOM influences the Canadian when purchasing mobile phones and planning vacations.

This research is similar to a number of studies exploring the influence of WOM communication on purchasing a variety of products. The present study will focus on the mobile phone. ACNielsen(2006), global Online Survey, conducted a survey about the influence of WOM communication on the car, mobile phone, holiday/vacation decision, and jewelry compared to other influences (conventional advertising, searching the Internet, blogs on the Internet, window shopping, previous experience with the same brand/company, and brand name/reputation). Previous studies fail to focus on mobile phone information (e.g. brand, price, design, and special features), which are important aspects that can influence consumers when purchasing a mobile phone (Karjaluoto; et al. 2005). This research intends to explore the influence of WOM communication on a mobile phone purchasing decision and the aspect of mobile phone information.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the WOM sources (e.g. family, friends, and salespeople, e-mail, online forum, Instant Messaging, blog, and web pages) that influence consumers in the decision-making process to purchase mobile phones.
2. To analyze the mobile phone aspects (e.g. brand, price, design, and special features) conveyed through WOM communication.

1.3 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Which WOM source has the most influence on a consumer's decision to purchase a mobile phone?
2. What influential mobile phone aspect (e.g. brand, price, design, and special features) is conveyed through WOM communication?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study will be beneficial to both mobile phone consumers and business operators. Consumers ask for more information about mobile phones such as brand, price, design, and special features from people who have had direct experience of a mobile phone, which is the most trustworthy and reliable source of purchasing ideas and information (Edgett & Parkinson. 1993; GFK. 2006). This is because the consumers want to get the best product they can to serve their needs. Business operators will realize the importance of the WOM communication behavior of their consumers. For example, consumers can express their experiences about products and services to one another in either a negative or positive way through WOM communication. Business operators will also become aware of the aspects of mobile phone information that convinces consumers to purchase the products. The business operators will then effectively use WOM

communication for promoting their products, expanding markets, and reducing their advertising expenditure.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study explores the influence of WOM communication on consumers' purchasing decisions on mobile phones. The researcher purposively selected one hundred consumers who have purchased a mobile phone. One hundred copies of questionnaire were distributed to participants aged over fifteen at MBK center, Bangkok. The area is famous for being the biggest mobile phone market in Thailand.

1.6 Definition of Terms

The following are the terminologies with their definitions used in this research.

1. **Word-of-Mouth Communication (WOM)** An informal communication or the sum of all comments about a certain mobile phone exchanged among consumers at any time.
2. **Purchasing Decision** The process of buying products which includes recognition of needs, searching for information, evaluation of alternatives, purchasing, and post purchase behavior.

3. Mobile Phone

A long-range, portable electronic device for personal telecommunications over long distances which is connected to the telephone system by radio and can be used anywhere where its signals can be received.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, two main areas are reviewed. The first part provides information on WOM communication as an effective marketing tool. This main area consists of the influential power of WOM communication, WOM communication as a trustworthy source of information, and electronic word of mouth as an online source of information. The second part presents information on mobile phone as a needed tool of communication in Thailand, which includes the increase of mobile phone users that causes market expansion, mobile phone's information as a purchasing influencer, and consumers' decision making.

2.1 WOM Communication as an Effective Marketing Tool

Most of the marketing literature contends that word-of-mouth (WOM) is one of the most powerful and influential communication tools in the marketplace (Silverman. 2001). This powerful tool is defined as "an informal communication or the sum of all comments about a certain product performance, service quality or company that are exchanged among people at any given time" (Charlett; et al. 1995: 42; Rosen. 2000). WOM communication can be characterized as oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a

communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, regarding brands, products or services (Arndt, 1967). WOM communication is powerful because ten experiences by ten people can be forwarded to more than 10,000 people (Silverman. 2001).

Previous studies show the effect and power of WOM communication on consumers' purchasing decision. In addition, WOM communication can be used as an effective marketing tool in various types of product. Consequently, the influential power of WOM communication is reviewed in the following sections.

2.1.1 The Influential Power of WOM Communication

In marketing, the companies sell a product or a service not only to individual consumers but also to networks of consumers. When compared to conventional marketing, WOM communication is thousands of times as powerful on consumers' accessibility and consumers' purchasing decisions (Silverman. 2001).

The factors increasing the influence of WOM communication are information overload skepticism, and connectivity (Rosen. 2000). Due to the large number of mobile phone commercials advertising mobile phone on television, in newspapers, in brochures, or even on stickers on public transport, consumers do not get all the details of all messages. Consequently, consumers will choose only the messages that are concerned with their needs and ignore the others. It is easy for consumers to get information from their family, friends, and

acquaintances. WOM is a more important input to the decision making process when purchasing services, rather than goods (Buttle. 1998).

In recent years, BIGresearch (Moore. 2006), a consumer behavior market intelligence company, released their Simultaneous Media Usage Survey (SIMM VII). 15,000 survey respondents answered questions on the influence various media played in their purchasing decisions. The result showed that WOM has greater purchasing decision influence with people aged 18-34 and 35-54. The research concluded that WOM communication is the most influential marketing tool, according to consumers' purchase of cars, electronics, and apparels.

ACNielsen (2006), Global Online Survey, conducted a survey in 41 countries around the world asking consumers what influenced their final purchasing decision across a variety of product categories. The research found that WOM was an important influence on deciding on holidays/vacations and mobile phones for Canadian consumers than for American consumers but American jewelry purchasers rely more on WOM than Canadian.

In summary, previous research studies mentioned above showed that WOM communication has the most influential power on consumers' decisions on purchasing cars, electronics, vacations, mobile phones, jewelry, and apparels.

2.1.2 WOM Communication as a Trustworthy Source of Information

Consumers usually discuss with each other a product or a service. They will share and suggest information about their past experiences of a product or a service to others. The more products that are provided, the more information the consumers need. The information from trustworthy sources is useful information for consumers to make the best purchase.

GfK Roper Consulting (2006, June 21.) revealed that WOM communication is a global phenomenon. Consumers worldwide cite people as the most "trustworthy" source for purchase ideas and information. In fact, 70 percent of consumers across the globe trust friends, family, or other people when searching for information or ideas on products to buy. Advertising ranks second as a trustworthy source globally, trailed by editorial content and then online.

Lopez (2006) studied the influence of WOM communication on choosing a mobile phone network in Scotland. This previous study examines the role that WOM communication plays in gathering information when choosing a mobile phone network. The result showed that consumers aged between 15 and 24 gather information from their family and friends before making a purchasing decision because they regard their family and friends as their trusted source of information.

The previous studies by Arpa (2002) and Rujinan (2006) revealed that WOM is the most influential factor on consumers' purchasing decisions on beauty treatment and Lasik surgery. This is because the information from WOM communication assures people of the treatment results and provides more details than from other advertising media such as radio ads, print ads, and transit ads. Rujinan added that teenagers seek more information before they make a decision and also spread more information after they use the service when compared with working aged people. Moreover, WOM communication also plays a significant role in making consumers recognize the brand of the service.

In summary, consumers usually discuss and with one another and also gather information about a product and a service that they are considering purchasing from people who had direct experience of it. It appears that WOM sources, especially, family and friends, are the most trusted and reliable sources of information. In the present time, people not only get information from traditional WOM (person to person), but also from electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) which will be reviewed next.

2.1.3 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) as an Online Source of Information

With the advancements of Internet technologies, people have started using the Internet as the medium of their communication. Internet users pass on their experiences and search for information through different applications like online forums, online reviews, Instant Messaging, Blogs, e-mail, and web pages (Armellini & Villanueva. 2006). These

applications create a new type of informal conversation that Nicholas Negroponte termed “electronic word of mouth” (e-WOM). It was defined as all informal communications, made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, directed at consumers through Internet-based technology (Westbrook. 1987; & Hennig-Thurau; et al. 2004).

There are some differences between traditional WOM and e-WOM (Dellarcas; et al. 2004). It is clear that e-WOM is not about interaction between two persons, but rather among a community of individuals who share the same interest. Another difference is about the trustworthiness of the source of recommendation. In traditional WOM, the receiver knows about the source of information (Armellini & Villanueva. 2006). On the other hand, in e-WOM, sender and receiver usually do not know each other.

In conclusion, e-WOM is another form of communication in which people communicate through the Internet by using applications such as Instant Messaging, online forums, blogs, online reviews, and e-mail. People can share their experiences about products and also gather more information from recommendations of others. Therefore, this form of communication will be another powerful source of information in the age of globalization. Consumers seek and use information as part of their rational problem solving for decision-making processes, which will be reviewed in the next section.

2.2 The Decision-Making Process on Mobile Phone

Decision-making is a cognitive process leading to the selection of various alternatives. Every decision-making process produces a final choice. It can be an action or an opinion. It starts when consumers need to purchase or use a product or a service but they do not know what to do. Therefore, decision making is a reasoning process which can be rational or irrational, and can be based on explicit (clear and exact) or tacit (understood without being expressed directly) assumptions (Wikipedia. 2007: Online). This section presents the five stages of purchasing decision process which uses for purchasing a product or service and also presents the mobile phone aspects that influence consumer to purchase a mobile phone.

2.2.1 The Five Stages of Purchasing Decision Process

The five stages of purchasing decision process are need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase evaluation (see Figure 1).

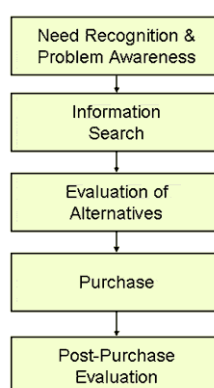


Figure1 The Stage Model of Consumer Purchasing Decision Process (Dalrymple J.D., &

Parsons J.L. *Marketing Management*. 1983:150)

Need Recognition

The buying process starts with need recognition. Need recognition is the first and crucial stage of consumer decision-making process because if the need is not recognized, then the purchase will not happen (Lee.2005). At this stage, consumer recognizes a problem or need (e.g. when consumer need a new mobile phone), or responses to a marketing stimulus. The consumer can be triggered by either an external or an internal stimulus.

Information search

After recognizing the problem or need, consumer search for more useful information about the various alternatives in order to satisfy their need. The stage of information search can be classified as internal and external search. Internal search refers to the process of recalling information from consumer's knowledge or previous experiences with a product or service. While external search refers to the information from the outside environment such as WOM sources (e.g. family, friend, and salespeople) and/or e-WOM sources (e.g. e-mail, online forum, Instant Messaging, blog, and web pages).

Evaluation of Alternatives

After getting information of alternative products or services, the consumers compares among alternatives such as the four mobile phone aspects (brand, design, price, and special features). The capability of solving problems among various aspects is then identified. The

products or services which can fulfill needs or motives, which initiated the decision-making process will be selected. Brand that consumer decided to purchase brand as group purchase option, will be considered during the evaluation process (Hawkins, Roger; & Kenneth. 1998: 150).

Purchase Decision

This stage is the stage where consumer decides to purchase a product or service. Engel, Black, and Miniard (1993) identified purchase decision into three categories: fully planned purchase (the product is chosen before visit the store); partially planned purchase (there is an intention to buy the product but the selection is deferred until shopping); impulse purchase (the product is chosen at the store). In addition, these three purchase types may overlap due to situational factors, such as product promotion, store atmosphere, weather, and others.

Post-Purchase Behavior

The final stage of decision-making process is the outcome of the purchase, which refers to the consumer's post-consumption evaluation of the purchasing decision. The satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the purchase will influence the consumer's decision process for their next similar purchase, especially, at the stage of need recognition and information search.

In this study, the researcher focuses on the second stage of decision-making process, searching for information and the stage of purchase decision. The researcher believes that searching for information is the most important for pre-purchase decision. Related information on products is important for evaluating the products which will affect the decision making process.

The review of previous studies showed that before making a purchasing decision on products, consumers need more information about the products. This causes consumers to gather information from trustworthy and reliable sources such as family and friends. It suggests that WOM communication is more important than advertising in raising awareness of an innovation and in securing the decision to try the product (Sheth.1971). Arpa (2002) reveals that WOM communication has influence over consumers in Lasik purchase decision because WOM communication assures consumers of the surgery result and also reduces the level of perceived risk. Lopez (2006) concludes in the study that consumers gather more information before choosing a mobile phone network from their family members and friends in order to reduce the risk about the confusion of the mobile phone markets. This indicates that the information from WOM source influences consumers in making decision to purchase products and services. Apart from family and friends, young people gather information from other sources such as shopping around, advertising and websites when choosing a mobile phone network.

2.2.2 Mobile Phone as a Needed Communication Tool in Relation to Market Expansion

Mobile phone is a long-range, portable electronic device for personal telecommunication over long distances. Its use is worldwide. The mobile phone serves as a communication tool to make and receive calls as well as send text messages, listen to music, surf the internet and even play mobile games (Decosta. 2006). Very few people in the early days thought about buying a mobile phone but today looking at the cheaper prices, almost every individual can afford to purchase a mobile phone. Virtually everyone carries a mobile phone, including young children (Decosta. 2006).

As evidenced by the fact that mobile phone numbers nowadays are ten digits long, mobile phone use is now widespread in Thailand. At the end of year 2006, people had to add the digit zero eight (08) to the front of their mobile phone's numbers. This shows that the mobile phone network providers have expanded the numbers from nine to ten digits to serve the needs of a larger group of mobile phone's consumers. The mobile phone has become an important part of people's lives. They use it as a tool for their communication. People use a mobile phone in order to connect with other people for business, studies, and daily routines. The mobile phone has now become a part of people's basic needs. Figure2 shows the number of mobile phone users in Thailand.

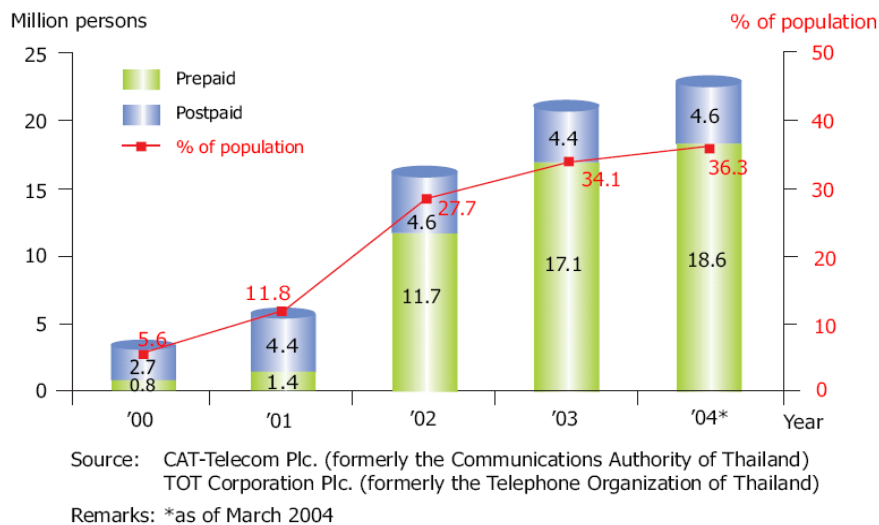


Figure2 The number of mobile phone users in Thailand (2000-2004)

Figure2 shows that the number of mobile phone users is increasing rapidly. Within 5 years, the number of users in year 2004 is approximately 7 times higher than year 2000. This indicates that mobile phone service providers need to provide more products and services to satisfy the demand of the consumers. There will be fierce competition among mobile phone business operators in the market when the number of models has recently increased. So consumers should find more information before making a purchasing decision on a mobile phone.

In the next section, the researcher reviews the mobile phone aspects (brand, price, design, and special features) that influencing consumer's buying decision.

2.2.3 The Mobile Phone Aspects Influencing Purchasing Decision Process

Searching for more information about a product that consumers want to purchase is the best thing to do before purchasing any product. A mobile phone is one of the products that consumers search for more information about regarding brands, designs, prices, and special features. As a result of competitions between brands of mobile phones, there are many handsets, networks, deals and call costs offered for consumers to consider. Buying the right phone that meets the consumers' needs and budget can be difficult (GfK. 2006).

With regard to factors affecting consumers' choice of mobile phones, two studies from Finland, Karjaluoto et al. (2005) explored consumers' choice criteria in mobile phone markets, focusing on factors that influence intention to acquire new mobile phones on one hand and factors that influence on mobile phone change on the other. The factors affecting the choice of a mobile phone were classified into seven categories: 1) innovative services (e.g. browsing WWW, e-mail, UMTS, Java, WAP, new features, and color screen), 2) multimedia (e.g. multimedia, and built-in-camera), 3) design (e.g. appearance, styling, and small size), 4) brand and basic properties, 5) outside influence (other person's recommendation), 6) price, and 7) reliability. It was found that factor "innovative services" and factor "multimedia" are seen as the most important factors that affect the mobile phone choice.

In this present study, the researcher focuses on four aspects of mobile phone purchasing decision which are brand, price, design, and special features. The categorization of

the four aspects based on the factors affecting the choice of a mobile phone (Karjaluoto; et al. 2005). The researcher found that the innovative services and multimedia can be categorized into the same aspect as “special features”. The four aspects of mobile phone information are reviewed as follows.

Brand

Brand is one of many strategies manufacturers employ to communicate with their consumers. Theoretically, consumers themselves find symbolic values or brands helpful in making choices. Symbols or brands make it easier for consumers to make a purchasing decision because they can distinguish brands clearly, in contrast to rational product evaluation, which is hard work and time consuming (Lannon. 1999: 37-50).

The survey by ACNielsen (2006) found that brand reputation on jewelry purchase is more important to Canadian than American on decision making. Similarly, brand loyalty is strong among car buyers. Globally and in North America, previous experience and brand reputation are leading decision influencers in car purchases. The study by Lee (2005), who studied an application of a five stages consumer behavior decision making model: an exploratory study of Chinese purchasing of imported health food revealed that brand name has been proven to be significant in choosing over-the-counter drugs. In other words, consumer will pay much more for aspirin bearing a well-known name, even when they are aware that

government regulations require all aspirin products to contain the same basic formula (Engel, Knapp, and Knapp, 1996). The study by Chimbozal and Mitandwa (2007), who studied measuring the determinants of brand preference in dairy product market, revealed that building the right relationship between the brand and its consumers creates successful brands. Consumers are more loyal and willing to pay higher prices for brands that have greatest equity.

Design

Mobile phone's design is becoming one of the alternatives for consumers. Each mobile phone company has its own design and provides more choices for consumers to choose. In this study the researcher focuses on four mobile phone design's information which are style (flip-flop, slide, twist, and plain), shape (square-slim, square-thick, round, and slender), screen (color-screen, touch-screen, and wide-screen), and color display (red, white, black, pink, gold, and silver). Mobile phone design is one of the important information that will draw consumer's attention to purchase mobile phone.

According to a report by In-Stat/MDR (2002) research institute, color displays are now driving consumers into stores to purchase new mobile phones. The finding that colors display is considered more important choice criteria for consumers than higher data rates or new features. This is quite interesting owing to the fact that other studies reviewed have not mentioned the importance of color display as the main point.

Price

Price is another form of attribute used by consumers to evaluate the product. Price can sometimes be an indicator of quality; with a higher price indicating higher quality (Mowen & Minor. 1998; Siu & Wong. 2002). Consumers perceive that a higher price can be attributed to a higher cost of quality control (Siu & Wong. 2002). Some consumer are highly price sensitive (elastic demand), whereby a high prices may shift consumers to competitive brands (Mowen & Minor. 1998). Therefore price can have a positive or negative influence on consumer purchasing decision. In the past, only well-to-do people could afford a mobile phone, but nowadays, virtually everyone carries a mobile phone, including young children (Decosta. 2006). The price of mobile phone is depending on brands and types (see Appendix B). It starts from low prices to very high prices. It costs about 1,000 Baht up to 45,000 Baht in Thailand.

The study by Pakola, et al. (2007) revealed that consumers' choice of purchasing mobile phone is mostly affected by price. Price was regarded as the most important motives affecting the decision to purchase current mobile phone model for consumers in Finland. Price might have dominated the decision making in the sample more than it does for the whole population, as the average net income in the target groups was relatively low.

Special features

At the present time, mobile phone can be used not only for voice communication but also for many aspects. Firstly, people use mobile phone for multimedia such as taking photos/video, listening to music, and listening to radio. Secondly, use for connectivity such as data transfer (e.g. Bluetooth, Infrared, USB, and mini-USB), connecting to the Internet (browsing WWW), and messaging (e.g. e-mail, MMS, SMS, and Instant Messaging). Lastly, use for playing games. Because of the high technology, mobile phone companies have been developing their products to serve the consumers' needs by offering varieties of mobile phones that consumers can choose.

In conclusion, WOM communication is a powerful and persuasive tool of seeking and forwarding information in the business market. WOM communication influences consumers' decision making on purchasing products and services. Before making a mobile phone's purchasing decision, consumers usually search for more information about brands, prices, designs and special features that they are interested in. WOM communication from consumers with experiences about the products and services, especially, family and friends, is believed to be a trustworthy source of information. Due to the developing of a high technology in the globalization age, the Internet (e.g. blogs, Instant Messaging, online forums, online reviews, web pages, and e-mail) is another way of searching for more information.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter, research methodology, presents four sections: subjects of the study, research instrument, procedures of the study, and data analysis.

3.1 Subjects of the Study

The respondents were one hundred consumers selected purposively. The respondents were consumers who 1) have already purchased mobile phone, 2) aged over fifteen, and 3) gathered information from WOM sources. The researcher selected respondents the age over fifteen because mobile phones are extremely popular among them.

3.2 Research Instrument

3.2.1 A Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. There were two versions of the questionnaire, an English version and a Thai version. In this study, only the Thai version questionnaire was used to collect data because all the respondents were Thai. The questionnaire was designed to find out the influence of WOM communication on consumers' purchasing decisions for mobile phones with closed questions and a rating scale to measure

the influence of the WOM information and the WOM source on the consumers' purchasing decisions. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) was divided into four parts.

Part 1: General Information of the Respondents

In the first part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to provide information regarding their age, gender, occupation, and monthly income.

Part 2: Consumers' Pre-purchase Decision on Mobile Phones

The second part of the questionnaire contained two questions about the pre-purchase decision process. The first question was designed to find out the important aspects of a mobile phone (e.g. brand, price, design, and special features) about which the respondents seek information before making the final purchasing decision. The second question was intended to find out the WOM source from which the respondents gather the most information. The data in this part was presented in charts and analyzed by using percentage. The data was not equal 100% because the respondents were able to give all applicable answers.

Part 3: The Influence of WOM Source on Mobile Phone

The third part of the questionnaire was designed to find out the WOM source that has the most influence on a consumers' decision to purchase a mobile phone and the reasons why the WOM source has influenced them.

Part 4: The Influential Information on Mobile Phone Purchasing Decision

In this part, the questions were set up to find out the influential information about four aspects: price, brand, design, and special features. The respondents were asked to rank the three most important aspects. After ranking the important aspects, the respondents were asked to answer parts 4.1 - 4.4.

Part 4.1 Brand and Part 4.2 Price: the respondents were asked the brands of mobile phones they had purchased, the reasons for choosing those brands, and the prices of their mobile phones.

Part 4.3 Design and Part 4.4 Special Features: The respondents were asked to rate the influence of mobile phone information by the five-point Likert scale (1= lowest influence, 2= low, 3= moderate, 4= high, 5= highest). The Likert scale is the method most commonly used by researchers as a tool for data collection because it has proved to yield more consistent results than some of the other methods (Bonifield, Jeng, & Fesenmaire, 1997).

In this study, the researcher measured the level of influence of WOM communication on mobile phone decision making by using the Likert scale and then applied the mean of the standard rating scale of Best (1981) to analyze the level of influence of WOM communication on mobile phone decision making. The range and meaning of the mean are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1 RANGE AND MEANING OF RATING SCALE

Range of Scale	Level of Influence of WOM on Mobile Phone Decision-Making
4.51-5.00	Highest
3.51-4.50	High
2.51-3.50	Moderate
1.51-2.50	Low
1.00-1.50	Lowest

3.3 Procedures of the Study

3.3.1 Pilot Study

Before administering the questionnaire in the main study, the researcher conducted a pilot study on June 21st, 2006 using the designed questionnaire to determine whether the respondents understood all the questions. The questionnaire was distributed to ten respondents who were over 15 years of age at MBK Center, Bangkok. All of the respondents were people who already had mobile phones. It was found that there were questions that confused the respondents and were somewhat difficult to understand; therefore, there was a need for simplification. The researcher removed unclear items and reorganized the questions to focus only on the important aspects of purchasing mobile phones. Some questions were added to increase clarity and simplified by using a table, which also made it easier to evaluate choices.

3.3.2 Questionnaire Conduction

In this study, the questionnaire was given to one hundred purposively selected respondents who had already purchased mobile phones and gathered information from WOM sources. It took approximately 10-15 minutes for each respondent to complete the questionnaire. The researcher explained the purposes of this research to the respondents before giving them the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were distributed to the target group on consecutive Saturdays and Sundays in July 2007 on the fourth floor of MBK Center, the biggest mobile phone market in Thailand. The reason for giving the questionnaire to the respondents on weekends was that most people do not work on the weekends and the researcher could obtain answers from the respondents of different ages and genders.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data gathered from the questionnaire was utilized. Percentages and tables were used for classification of responses with regard to the general information in part one. The tables and charts were used to display the result of four parts to show the influence of WOM communication and the influence of mobile phone information in chapter four. The findings were discussed and summarized with some suggestions and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, research findings and discussion, are presented into three parts: general information of the respondents, consumer's pre-purchase decision, and consumer's purchase decision.

4.1 General Information of the Respondents

This section presents the general information of the respondents in terms of age, gender, occupation, and monthly income (see Table 2). The findings show that the age of the respondents ranged from 15 – 55 years old. More than half of the respondents (53%) were adolescents (aged between 15-24 years old), and the rest (47%) were adults (over the age of 24). More than half of the respondents (65%) were female, and 35% of the respondents were male. Most of the respondents (41%) were students, the rest were government officials (18%), office workers (16%), business owners (11%), housewives (4%), and state-enterprise workers (3%), and others (7%) which includes employees (4%), and unemployed (3%). The findings show that there were more adolescent respondents in this study because most of the adolescents might have more free time to shop at MBK center than the adults.

TABLE 2 GENERAL INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Age	15-24	53	53%
	Over 24	47	47%
	Total	100	100%
Gender	Female	65	65%
	Male	35	35%
	Total	100	100%
Occupation	Student	41	41%
	Government official	18	18%
	Office worker	16	16%
	Business owner	11	11%
	Other	7	7%
	Housewife	4	4%
	State-enterprise worker	3	3%
	Total	100	100%
Monthly Income	Less than 5,000	38	38%
	10,001-15,000	17	17%
	More than 25,000	15	15%
	5,001-10,000	13	13%
	15,001-20,000	9	9%
	20,001-25,000	8	8%
	Total	100	100%

To sum up this section, the majority of the respondents in this study were female, and most of them were students, aged between 15-24 years.

4.2 Consumer's Pre-Purchase Decision

This section presents the pre-purchase decision process, which is the second stage of purchasing decision. According to the five stages of decision-making process (need recognition, information search, evaluate alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase decision), the pre-purchase decision is the process of searching for information before making a purchase decision on a product or service. The researcher also explores the mobile phone aspects and the sources of mobile phone information that consumers use for their pre-purchase decision.

4.2.1 The Information Search for Important Mobile Phone Aspects

This section presents the important mobile phone aspects that consumers seek for more information before making a purchasing decision. In the questionnaire (see Appendix I, part II, question No.5,), the respondents were asked about the aspects of mobile phone that they needed to find more information for pre-purchase decision; therefore, they are able to give all applicable answers. This is because the respondents maybe gathered more information on more than one aspect.

The findings show that the respondents search for more information about 'brand' (60%), 'price' (60%), 'special features' (59%), 'design' (34%), and 'other' (1%). The similarly high response levels for 'brand', 'price', and 'special features' indicate that these three aspects of mobile phones were the most highly researched by consumers for their pre-purchase decision (see Figure 3).

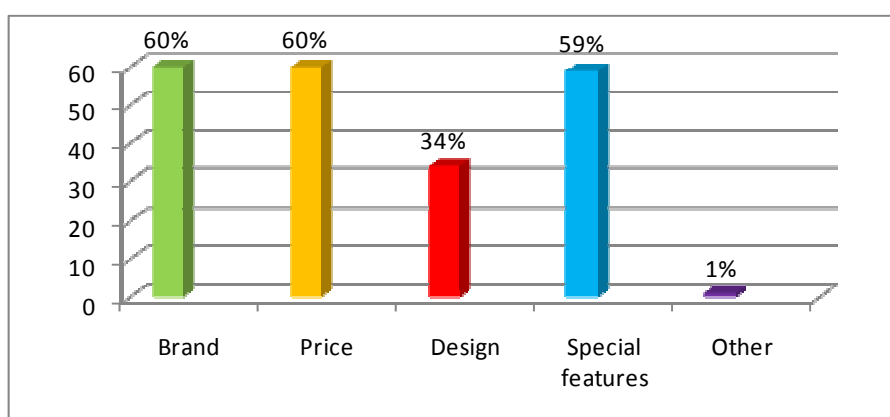


Figure 3 The Importance of Mobile Phone Aspects

Note: The percentages are not equal to 100 because respondents were able to give all applicable answers.

In order to contend in the fiercely competitive mobile phone market, each mobile phone company must produce a variety of phones. The results indicate that 'brand' was an important aspect because 'brand' designates social status and image, but the wide variety of phones offered by a single brand necessitates that other aspects of mobile phones be highly researched by respondents. 'Price' was also one of the most important mobile phone aspects for the consumer because the costs of mobiles phones span an enormous range.

4.2.2 The Source of Searching for Mobile Phone Information

This section investigates the WOM source that respondents accessed to gather information before purchasing their mobile phones. In the questionnaire (see Appendix I, part II, question No.6,) the respondents were asked about the WOM sources that they gathered more information for pre-purchase decision from; therefore, they are able to give all applicable answers. This is because the respondents maybe gathered more information about mobile phone from more than one source.

According to the decision-making process (Dalrymple & Parsons. 1983), consumers gather the most information from WOM sources (e.g. family, friend, and salespeople) and/or e-WOM sources (e.g. e-mail, online forum, Instant Messaging, blog, and web pages). The findings of this study show that friends (50%) were the most important sources, followed by salespeople (47%), family (35%), web pages (28%), online forums (9%), e-mail (5%), instant messaging (4%), blogs (3%), and others (3%), from which respondents gathered information on brand, price, design, and special features. The results show that 'friends' (50%) and 'salespeople' (47%) were the WOM sources that the respondents most used for information search. It can be assumed that because most of the respondents were adolescents, they spent most of their time with friends, and therefore friends were the most accessible source of information (see Figure 4).

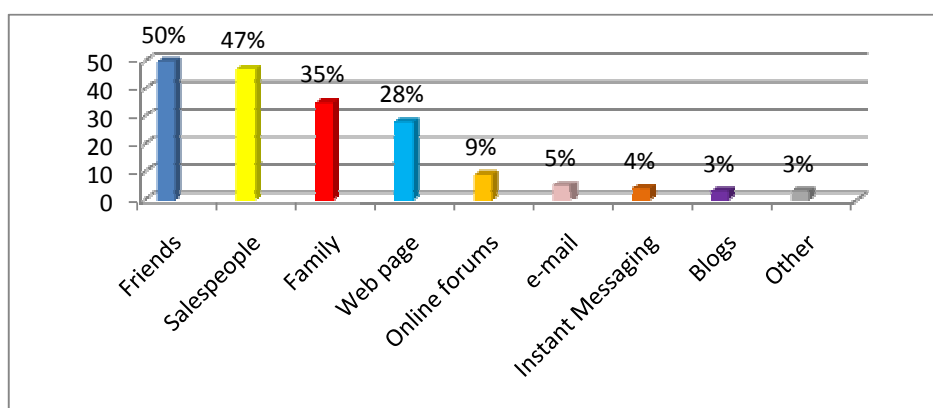


Figure 4 The Sources of mobile Phone Information

Note: The percentages are not equal to 100 because respondents were able to give all applicable answers.

The results of this study are supported by Edgett & Parkinson (1993); GFK (2006); and Lopez (2006) who found that 'friends' are the most favorable source of information because consumers can easily ask for suggestions or ideas from them at their convenience. 'Salespeople' are also found to be one of the important sources from which consumers gather information because salespeople are considered experts who know specific details and information about the products.

E-WOM sources in this study had less importance than those WOM sources because people are accustomed to more traditional forms of WOM. However, in the near future e-WOM will be an important source of information. This is because e-WOM sources are easy to access as a result of the proliferation of personal computers. 'Web pages' were the e-WOM source that

28% of the respondents in this study used for more information about mobile phones. It can be assumed that e-WOM is useful in the information search because consumers can view pictures and gain more specific mobile phone information via different web pages. Consumers can also send e-mails, use Instant Messaging, write blogs, or use online forums to research mobile phones.

4.3 Consumer's Purchase Decision

This section presents the most influential WOM source in the mobile phone purchasing decision, the reasons for WOM sources' influence on the consumer's purchasing decision, and the most influential mobile phone aspects in the consumer's purchasing decision.

4.3.1 The Most Influential WOM Source in the Mobile Phone Purchasing Decision

This section presents the WOM source those most influenced consumers in the mobile phone purchasing decision. As mentioned in Arpa's (2002) study, WOM influenced consumers' information search. The findings reveal that 'friends' (44%) had the most influence on the respondents' purchasing decisions, followed by 'family' (26%), 'salespeople' (15%), 'web page' (10%), 'online forum' (3%), 'e-mail' (1%), and 'other'(1%). Moreover, it was found that 'blogs' and 'instant messaging' do not have any influence on the respondents' purchasing decision (see Figure 5).

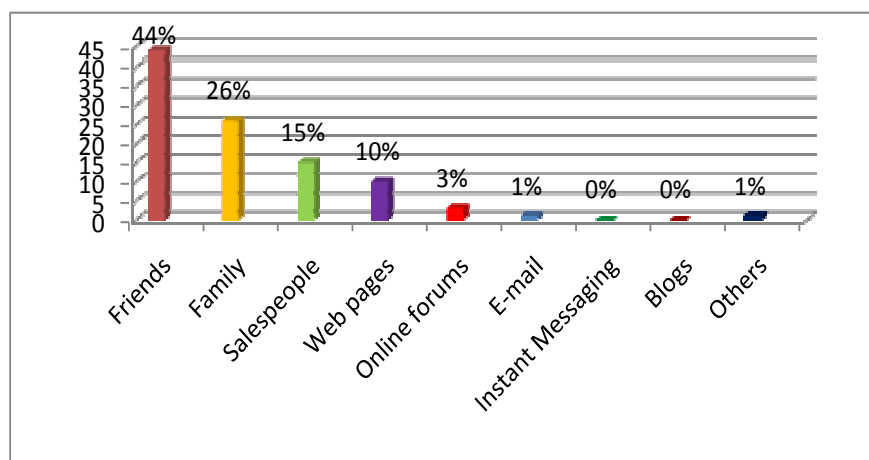


Figure 5 The Influenced WOM Source on a Mobile Phone Purchasing Decision

It is interesting that 'friends' were the WOM source from which most respondents gathered information and also the source that most influenced respondents to purchase their mobile phones. The results indicate that friends are the most powerful and persuasive source that influence a consumers' decision to purchase a mobile phone, most likely because of the need of consumers to be accepted by their social group. Peer pressure thus creates a tendency for groups of friends to use the same mobile phones and other products. Family also had an influence on the respondents' decision; this may be attributed to the fact that the majority of respondents may get their income from their parents, so they may ask for permission or money from their parents to buy their mobile phones. Although the respondents seek more information about mobile phone aspects from salespeople, this source had less influence on the purchasing decision. It can be concluded that the respondents in this study were most highly influenced by friends, a result that is similar to the conclusion of the study by Lopez (2006).

4.3.2 Reasons for the WOM Source's Influence on Consumer's Purchasing Decision

This section explores the reasons a WOM source influenced a consumer's purchasing decision. More than half of the respondents (55%) stated that 'direct experience' was the main reason for a WOM source to be the most influential in the decision-making process. 22% of the respondents gave the reason that they accessed certain WOM sources because they are 'trustworthy', 15% said that they viewed the source as 'well-rounded', and 8% stated that the source provides clear information (see Figure 6).

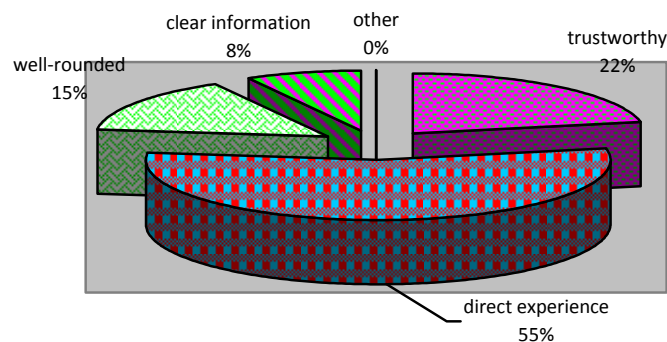


Figure 6 The Reasons WOM Source Influence Consumer's Decision to buy a Mobile Phone

The results of Arpa's (2002) study showed that 'direct experience' from former consumers had the most influence on Lasik surgery consumers. This is because Lasik surgery is a new technology for sight restoration, so WOM is the most readily available source of information that consumers can access in order to reduce risk. It can be possible to assume that not only the high risk products that consumers need recommendations from former users

but on mobile phone purchase decision as well. Many products or services are provided under many brands and for a variety of prices for consumers. In addition, consumers tend to remain loyal to their initial purchasing decisions for products. Therefore, most consumers rely on information from source who had direct experiences with the products in order to ensure that their decision will serve them in the long run.

4.3.3 Influential Mobile Phone Aspects in Consumer's Purchasing Decision

This section presents the mobile phone aspects which are price, brand, design, and special features (multimedia, connectivity, and game) that influence consumers' purchasing decision for mobile phones. The respondents were asked to rank three aspects in order of personal preference. The data was analyzed by using the mean (\bar{X}) to identify the rank of each aspect. In order to find the mean (\bar{X}), the researcher sum up a raw data of each aspect. Then the mean of each aspect was ranked from the highest (most important) to the lowest (least important). The results are shown in Figure 7.

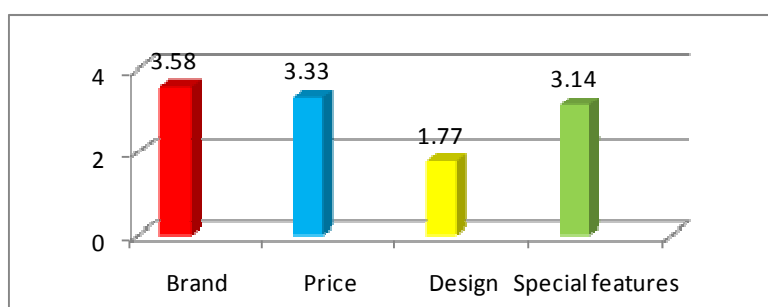


Figure 7 Influential Mobile Phone Aspects

The findings show that 'brand' was ranked first (3.58), followed by 'price' (3.33), 'special features' (3.14), and 'design' (1.77). The results show that 'brand' was found to be the most influential aspect in the respondents' purchasing decision, and this suggests that brands cultivate trust and loyalty in their consumers. 'Design' was the aspect that had least impact on the purchasing decision of the respondents.

The results of this study were consistent with those of the study by Lee (2005) and the study by Chimboza and Mutandwa (2007) that brand was the important aspect on consumer's decision making on products. The results by Lee (2005) found that brand names are important in the consumer purchase decision of aspirin. Consumers are willing to pay more money for aspirin under a well-known brand, even though it has the same basic formula as cheaper brands (Engel, Knapp, and Knapp, 1996). Chimboza and Mutandwa also supported that consumers are generally more loyal and willing to pay higher price for the product, and have a closer relationship with the brands that had the greatest equity. On the other hand, the findings of this study were inconsistent with those of Pakola, et al.'s (2007) study. This is because they found that a consumers' choice of mobile phone is mostly affected by 'price' which was regarded as the most important motive affecting the decision to purchase current mobile phone models for consumers in Finland.

4.3.3.1 Brands of Mobile Phones

This section presents the popular mobile phone brands that the respondents have purchased (see Figure 8). The findings show that 'Nokia' was the brand that most of the respondents (79%) purchased, followed by 'other brands' (12%), Samsung (3%), Sony-Ericson (3%), Motorola (2%), and LG (1%).

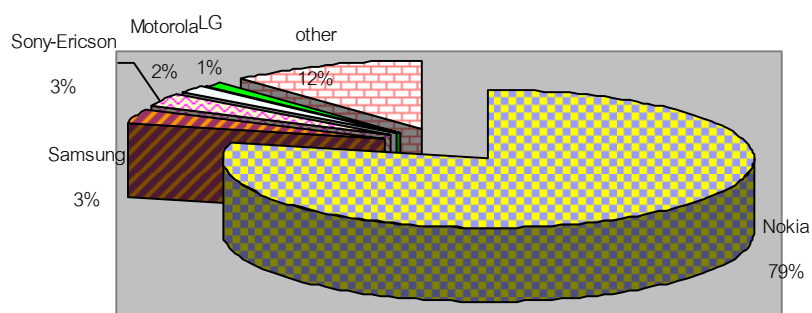


Figure 8 Brands of Mobile Phone

'Nokia' claims to be the most popular mobile phone brand in Thailand because it provides many mobile phone models (see Appendix III) that are attractive to consumers. The results of this study support this claim that Nokia, whose brand is accepted for more than ten years (<http://www.nokia.co.th>), is the leading mobile phone brands in Thailand. Moreover, Nokia shops for post-purchase service are readily available in Thailand, which increases convenience for the consumer everywhere.

The findings relating to the reasons for purchasing mobile phone brand show that 'various function' was the main reason that most respondents (39%) purchased the brand they cited in the previous section (see Figure 9). Respondents stated that they purchased 'Nokia' because this brand provides various functions of special features. Another reason the respondents (32%) gave was the 'reputation of the brand' that they have purchased, followed by the respondents previous use of the brand (13%), the 'trustworthiness' of the brand (10%), and 'other' reasons (6%).

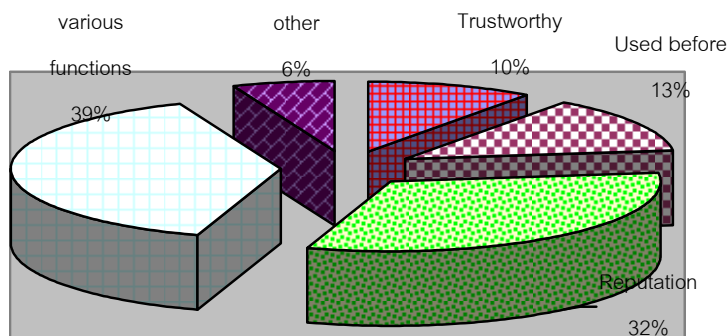


Figure 9 The Reasons for Purchasing a Particular Mobile Phone Brand

4.3.3.2 Price of Mobile Phones

This section presents the price that the respondents in this study paid for their mobile phones (see Figure 10). The findings reveal that the majority of the respondents (38%) paid 5,000-10,000 baht for their mobile phones while 32% of the respondents paid 10,001-15,000 Baht, 20% of the respondents paid less than 5,000 baht, 6% of the respondents paid 15,001-20,000 baht, and only 2% of the respondents paid 20,001-25,000 baht or more than 25,000 baht for their mobile phones.

The previous data revealed that most of the respondents were students who may not be able to afford a high cost mobile phone. Thus, the cost of 5,000 – 10,000 baht was reasonable for most of them. There are many mobile phone models in the price range of 5,000-10,000 baht that provide various functions that serve the consumers' needs. This indicates that consumers can get high-technology mobile phone for the price 5,000-10,000 baht.

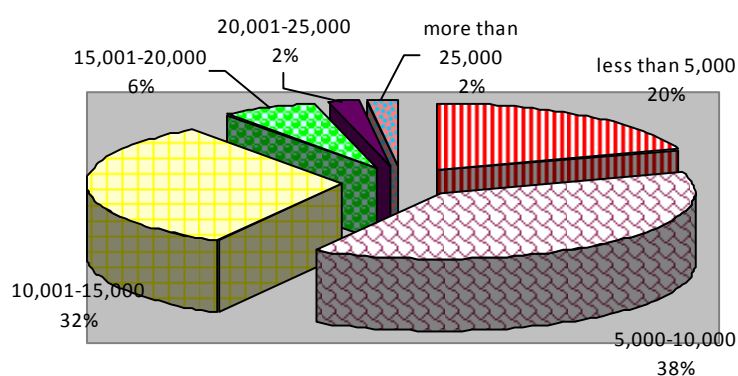


Figure 10 Price of Mobile Phone

4.3.3.3 Design of Mobile Phones

This section reveals the level of influence of mobile phone design including style, shape, screen, and color display (see Table 3). The findings show that the design features that had high influence on the purchasing decision were 'color-screen' (4.00), 'black color' (3.80), and 'plain style' (3.61).

TABLE 3 DESIGN OF MOBILE PHONE

	Details	Mean	Level of Influence
Style	Plain (no cover)	3.61	High
	Flip-flop	2.30	Low
	Slide	2.20	Low
	Twist	2.09	Low
Shape	Square-slim	3.42	Moderate
	Square-thick	2.65	Moderate
	Round	2.01	Low
	Slender	1.77	Low
Screen	Color-screen	4.00	High
	Wide-screen	2.92	Moderate
	Touch-screen	2.50	Low
Color Display	Black	3.80	High
	Silver	2.42	Low
	White	2.40	Low
	Pink	1.90	Low
	Gold	1.87	Low
	Red	1.60	Low

This result is consistent with In-Stat/MDR, Research Institute's (2002) finding that color displays are now driving consumers to purchase new mobile phones. This result suggests that from the six choices for mobile phone color (black, silver, white, pink, gold, and red), 'black' is the color that most likely to be used by all age and genders. Many mobile phone companies are currently producing 'color-screen' mobile phones for the mobile phone markets; therefore, they are popular among respondents. In addition, from four mobile phone styles (plain, slide, flip-flop, and twist), the 'plain style' is the most common style provided by mobile phone companies and is also the style that most respondents in this study use.

4.3.3.4 Special Features

This section explores the level of influence of special features, which include multimedia (such as 'listening to music', 'taking photos & video', 'listening to radio', and 'watching movies'), connectivity (such as 'data transfer', 'messaging', 'browsing Internet'), and games.

The findings shows that special features that had high influence on the mobile phone purchasing decision were listening to music (3.99), taking photos & video (3.67), and data transfer (3.62), while 'messaging (e.g. e-mail, MMS, SMS, Instant Messaging)' (3.38), 'browsing Internet (WWW)' (3.10), 'listening to radio' (2.69), and 'watching movies' (2.68), had moderate levels of influence. 'Games (2.39) had low influence on consumers' purchasing decision (see Table 4).

TABLE 4 SPECIAL FEATURES

	Details	Mean	Level of Influence
Multimedia	Listening to music	3.99	High
	Taking photos & video	3.67	High
	Listening to radio	2.69	Moderate
	Watching movies	2.68	Moderate
Connectivity	Data Transfer (e.g. Bluetooth, Infrared, USB, mini-USB)	3.62	High
	Messaging (e.g. e-mail, MMS, SMS, Instant Messaging)	3.38	Moderate
	Browsing Internet (WWW)	3.10	Moderate
	Games	2.39	Low

This result is consistent with Karjaluoto; et al.'s finding (2005) that multimedia is the most important factor affecting the choice of mobile phone. This result suggests that multimedia capabilities and connectivity such as 'data transfer' were important special features that influenced consumers' purchasing decisions, whereas games had less impact on consumers' purchasing decision.

The table shows that most special features functions had moderate to high levels of influence; only games had low influence on decision-making. This implies that consumers use utilize most special features, except games. However, a few respondents bought mobile phone specifically because they like to play games on their mobile phones for leisure.

In summary, the consumer's purchase decision process is based on the source of information which most highly influenced consumers to buy mobile phones. In this study, 'friends' were the WOM source that had the most influence on respondents to buy mobile phones. The respondents trust 'friends' because they had 'direct experiences' with mobile phones that they can share with the respondents. The most important aspect of mobile phones was 'brand', followed by 'price', 'special features', and 'design'. 'Nokia' was found to be the most popular brand among respondents, and most respondents purchased phones at prices between 5,000-10,000 baht. 'Plain' style, 'black' color display, and color screen were the design that attracted respondents in high level of influence. Moreover, multimedia ('Listen to music', 'taking photo & video') and data transfer capabilities (e.g. Bluetooth, Infrared, USB, mini-USB) also had high levels of influence and attracted consumers to buy mobile phones.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the main findings of the study with reference to the research questions and presents the limitations of the study and recommendations for further studies.

5.1 Conclusion

Word of mouth (WOM) communication is an effective and powerful marketing tool for spreading information on products or services. Due to the growth of the mobile phone market, mobile phone companies produce more and more mobile phone series every month to meet consumer demands (see Appendix III). Therefore, consumers need recommendations about products or services from the trustworthy sources to inform purchasing decision process. This study investigates the WOM sources (family, friend, salesperson, e-mail, online forum, instant messaging, blog, web page, and other) and mobile phone aspects (brand, price, design, and special features) that have the most influence on mobile phone purchasing decision process.

With regard to the consumers' pre-purchase decision for mobile phones, the results reveal that among the four mobile phone aspects, the respondents consider 'brand', 'price', and 'special features' to be the most important areas of research for their pre-purchase decision.

'Friends' and 'salespeople' were found to be the most important WOM sources from which this information was gathered.

With regard to the research question No.1, the results reveal that friends are not only good sources of pre-purchase information but also the most influential WOM sources in the consumers' final purchasing decision. On the other hand, salespeople are only relied upon as sources of information and not as influences in the mobile phone purchasing decision. Most of the respondents explained this preference by stating that they were highly influenced by the direct experiences of their sources with the products. This is because a friend or family source shares experiences and both positive and negative opinions of products with less bias than a salesperson would (Arndt, 1967; Edgett & Parkinson. 1993).

Regarding the research question No.2, 'brand' was ranked first as the most influential aspect mobile phone information in the final purchasing decision, followed by 'price', 'special features', and 'design'. The brand 'Nokia' was found to be the most popular brand among the respondents. Most respondents recommended this well-known brand because it provides various functions and has a good brand reputation. In addition, most of the respondents paid 5,000 – 10,000 baht for their mobile phones.

The mobile phone market employs many strategies to draw the attention of consumers thus the results of this study might help the companies to compete in the market. This study found that a plain style, a 'color-screen', and a 'black' color display were the designs most

highly favored by consumers. Special features that allow consumers to listen to music and take photo and video with their mobile phones also have high levels of influence on the mobile phone purchasing decision.

In summary, WOM communication is an effective marketing tool that influences a consumers' decision to purchase a mobile phone. The most influential source of information was 'friends', and this source was also the most persuasive in the consumers' final purchasing of mobile phones.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are:

5.2.1 In this study, the subjects were one hundred Thai respondents who were shoppers at MBK Center in Bangkok. The results may not be applied to the decision making on mobile phone of consumers in other provinces such as in rural areas from different parts of Thailand.

5.2.2 This study explored four mobile phone aspects which are brand, price, design, and special features on the consumer's pre-purchase decision. The results may not be enough for consumers. According to the research by Karjaluoto; et al. (2005) other aspects such as accessories, gift vouchers, and innovative services may also be necessary for consumers.

5.2.3 According to the five-stage decision making process, namely, recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post purchase, this study focused on two stages of the whole process only which were pre-purchase decision and purchase decision. The results of this study may lack some important information from each stage of the process. This was because each stage yielded different outcomes. During the first stage, for example, the companies might have already known how the consumers recognized the product. In addition, at the third stage, the companies might have already known how the consumers would evaluate the choices of products. Finally, at the final stage, the companies might have already known what kind of feedback they would receive from their customers. Therefore, it might be useful for mobile phone companies to improve their strategies to meet the needs of their consumers.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

The researcher recommends the following studies.

5.3.1 In order to explore the decision making on mobile phone, further studies should select the respondents from many shopping centers such as The Mall, Big C, Lotus, and Carrefour. Those shopping centers are famous shopping centers in Bangkok and also in other big cities in Thailand so they may have a variety of consumers, which may be applied to the

consumers in a big city in Thailand. The study should explore on many groups such as children, adolescents, young adults, and adults in order to see the different ideas of each group towards mobile phone decision making. The result will enable companies to successfully promote their products by using the attractive products that meet the needs of certain target consumer group.

5.3.2 According to the growth of mobile phone models, the consumers may have more aspects which may affect their purchasing ideas. Thus, of four mobile phone aspects may not be enough information for consumers to make decision on purchasing mobile phones. Thus, further studies should explore more on other aspect as well such as accessories, gift vouchers, and innovative services.

5.3.3 An exploration of the five-stage decision-making process on mobile phone should be conducted. The study should focus on all five stages from the first stage to the last stage (need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post purchase) in order to find out the important information from each stage of the process. The result will enable companies to find out the important key to apply for their marketing strategies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is a part of Mater's Project, "The Influence of Word-of-Mouth Communication on Consumers' Purchasing Decision on Mobile Phone", Srinakharinwirot University. It is designed to explore ideas concerning the influence of WOM communication on consumers' purchasing decision on mobile phone. Your answers would be a very valuable contribution to this research and the information will be kept confidentially. The questionnaire is divided into three parts.

- Part 1: General Information of the Respondents
- Part 2: Consumers' Pre-Purchase Decision on Mobile Phones
- Part 3: The Influence of WOM Source on Mobile Phone
- Part 4: The Influential Information on Mobile Phones' Purchasing Decision

Please put a tick (✓) in the box or the space provided according to your own personal details and the alternatives which match your choice.

Part 1: General Information of the Respondents

1. Ageyears old
2. Gender
 - Male
 - Female
3. Occupation
 - Student
 - Government official
 - State-enterprise worker
 - Office worker
 - Business owner
 - Housewife
 - Others (Please specify).....
4. Monthly Incomes (Baht)
 - Less than 5,000
 - 5,000 – 10,000
 - 10,001 – 15,000
 - 15,001 – 20,000
 - 20,001 – 25,000
 - More than 25,000

Part 2: Consumers' Pre-Purchase Decision on Mobile Phones

5. What important mobile phone aspects do you search for before making a purchasing decision?

(You can choose more than one answer)

- Price
- Brand
- Design
- Special features
- Other (Please specify).....

6. Which WOM source do you gather more information about brand, price, design, and Special features from?

(You can choose more than one answer)

- Family
- Friend
- Retailers/ Salesperson
- E-mail
- Online Forums
- Instant Messaging
- Blogs
- Web pages
- Other (Please specify).....

Part 3: The Influence of WOM Source on Mobile Phone

7. Which of the following WOM source has the **most** influence on your mobile phone purchasing decision?

- Family
- Friend
- Retailers/ Salesperson
- E-mail
- Online Forums
- Instant Messaging
- Blogs
- Web pages
- Other (Please specify).....

8. Why WOM source has an influence on purchasing mobile phone?

- Trustworthy
- Direct experiences
- Well-rounded about mobile phone
- The clearness of information
- Other (Please specify).....

Part 4: The Influential Information on Mobile Phones' Purchasing Decision

9. Which were the three most important aspects that influence you to purchase mobile phone? (Enter a rank of 1, 2, 3 where rank 1 is the most important) Please rank only three boxes.

_____ Price

_____ Brand

_____ Design

_____ Special features

_____ Other (Please specify).....

Part 4.1: Brand (You can choose more than one answer)

10. What brand of mobile phone have you purchased?

Nokia

Samsung

Sony-Ericson

Motorola

LG

Other

11. Why do you choose this brand?

The trustworthy

Have been used before

Brand reputation

Various functions

Design

Other

Part 4.2: Price

12. How much does your mobile phone cost?

Less than 5,000

5,000 – 10,000

10,001 – 15,000

15,001 – 20,000

20,001 – 25,000

More than 25,000

Part 4.3: Design

13. Which were the details of mobile phone design that influence you to purchase mobile phone? How would you rate them? Please tick (✓) in the rating scales boxes.

Details		Rating Scales				
		Highest	High	Moderate	Low	Lowest
		5	4	3	2	1
1. Style	Flip-flop 					
	Slide 					
	Twist 					
	Plain (no cover) 					
2. Shape	Square-slim 					
	Round 					
	Square-thick 					
	Slender 					
3. Screen	Color-screen					
	Touch-screen					
	Wide-screen					
4. Color Display	Red					
	White					
	Black					
	Pink					
	Gold					
	Silver					

Part 4.4: Special features

14. Which were the details of special features that influence you to purchase mobile phone? How would you rate them?

Please tick (✓) in the rating scales boxes.

Details		Rating Scales				
		Highest	High	Moderate	Low	Lowest
		5	4	3	2	1
1. Multimedia	<i>Watching movies</i>					
	<i>Listening to music (MP3)</i>					
	<i>Listening to radio</i>					
	<i>Taking photos & video</i>					
2. Connectivity	<i>Data Transfer (e.g. Bluetooth, Infrared, USB, mini-USB)</i>					
	<i>Browsing Internet (www)</i>					
	<i>Messaging (e.g. e-mail, MMS, SMS, Instant Messaging)</i>					
3. Games						

Suggestions/ Comments

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

แบบสอบถาม

แบบสอบถามนี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของสารนิพนธ์ นิสิตระดับปริญญาโท มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ หัวข้อ อิทธิพลของการสื่อสารแบบบอกต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่ของผู้บริโภค โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาอิทธิพลของการสื่อสารแบบบอกต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์มือถือ คำตอบของท่านจะเป็นประโยชน์ต่อการวิจัยในครั้งนี้ ขอขอบคุณที่ให้ความร่วมมือในการตอบแบบสอบถามแบบสอบถามประกอบด้วย 4 ตอนดังนี้

ตอนที่ 1: ข้อมูลทั่วไป

ตอนที่ 2: การหาข้อมูลก่อนการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์มือถือ

ตอนที่ 3: อิทธิพลของการสื่อสารแบบบอกต่อ

ตอนที่ 4: อิทธิพลของข้อมูลที่มีผลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์มือถือ

คำชี้แจง โปรดทำเครื่องหมายถูก (✓) ลงใน () หน้า ตอบที่ตรงกับท่านมากที่สุด

ตอนที่ 1: ข้อมูลทั่วไป

1. อายุ ปี
2. เพศ
 - ชาย
 - หญิง
3. อาชีพ
 - นักเรียน-นักศึกษา
 - ข้าราชการ
 - พนักงานรัฐวิสาหกิจ
 - พนักงานบริษัท
 - ธุรกิจส่วนตัว
 - พ่อบ้าน/ แม่บ้าน
 - อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ).....
4. รายได้ต่อเดือน (บาท)
 - ต่ำกว่า 5,000
 - 5,000 – 10,000
 - 10,001 – 15,000
 - 15,001 – 20,000
 - 20,001 – 25,000
 - สูงกว่า 25,000

ตอนที่ 2: การหาข้อมูลก่อนการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์มือถือ

5. ท่านหาข้อมูลเพิ่มเติมเกี่ยวกับเรื่องใดก่อนการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์มือถือ (เลือกได้มากกว่า 1 คำตอบ)
 - ราคา
 - ยี่ห้อ
 - การออกแบบ
 - ลักษณะพิเศษ
 - อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ).....

6. ท่านสอบถามข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับโทรศัพท์มือถือจากแหล่งข้อมูลของการบอกต่อแหล่งใดก่อนการตัดสินใจซื้อ (เลือกได้มากกว่า 1 คำตอบ)
- บุคคลในครอบครัว
- เพื่อน
- พนักงานขาย/ตัวแทนจำหน่าย
- อีเมลล์
- กระทั่ง (Online Forums)
- สนทนาแบบแชท (Instant Messaging)
- บล็อก (Blogs)
- เว็บไซต์ (Web pages)
- อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ).....

ตอนที่ 3: อิทธิพลของการสื่อสารแบบบอกต่อ

7. แหล่งข้อมูลการบอกต่อแหล่งใดต่อไปนี้มีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์มือถือของท่านมากที่สุด (เลือกตอบเพียง 1 ข้อเท่านั้น)
- บุคคลในครอบครัว
- เพื่อน
- พนักงานขาย/ตัวแทนจำหน่าย
- อีเมลล์
- กระทั่ง (Online Forums)
- สนทนาแบบแชท (Instant Messaging)
- บล็อก (Blogs)
- เว็บไซต์ (Web pages)
- อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ).....
8. เพราะเหตุใดแหล่งข้อมูลในข้อ 7 จึงมีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์มือถือของท่าน (เลือกตอบได้มากกว่า 1 ข้อ)
- มีความน่าเชื่อถือ
- ให้คำแนะนำจากประสบการณ์ในการใช้โทรศัพท์มือถือ
- มีความรอบรู้เกี่ยวกับโทรศัพท์มือถือ
- ให้รายละเอียดข้อมูลได้ชัดเจน
- อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ).....

ตอนที่ 4: อิทธิพลของข้อมูลที่มีผลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์มือถือ

9. ท่านคิดว่าข้อมูลสำคัญที่มีผลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์มือถือของท่านคืออะไร กรุณาเลือกเรียงลำดับความสำคัญของข้อมูลต่อไปนี้ 3 ลำดับโดยใส่หมายเลข 1, 2, และ 3 ในช่องว่างหน้าคำตอบของท่าน (หมายเลข 1 คือลำดับที่สำคัญที่สุด)
- _____ ราคา
- _____ ยี่ห้อ
- _____ การออกแบบ
- _____ ลักษณะพิเศษ
- _____ อื่นๆ (โปรดระบุ).....

ตอนที่ 4.1 ข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับยี่ห้อ (เลือกได้มากกว่า 1 คำตอบ)

10. ท่านซื้อโทรศัพท์ยี่ห้ออะไร

- Nokia
 Samsung
 Sony-Ericson
 Motorola
 LG
 อื่นๆ

11. เพราะเหตุใดท่านจึงตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์มือถือยี่ห้อนี้

- ความน่าเชื่อถือของยี่ห้อ
 เคยใช้มาก่อน
 เป็นยี่ห้อยอดนิยม
 มีลักษณะพิเศษที่หลากหลาย
 มีการออกแบบที่สวยงาม
 อื่นๆ

ตอนที่ 4.2 ราคา

12. ท่านเลือกซื้อมือถือราคาประมาณเท่าไร

- ต่ำกว่า 5,000
 5,000 – 10,000
 10,001 – 15,000
 15,001 – 20,000
 20,001 – 25,000
 สูงกว่า 25,000

ตอนที่ 4.3 การออกแบบ

13. จากข้อมูลข้างต้น รายละเอียดของข้อมูลมีผลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์มือถือของท่านในระดับใด โปรดเลือกระดับอิทธิพลในช่องด้านขวามือของข้อมูล

รายละเอียดข้อมูล		ระดับของอิทธิพลที่มีผลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อ				
		มากที่สุด	มาก	ปานกลาง	น้อย	น้อยที่สุด
		5	4	3	2	1
1 รูปลักษณะของตัวเครื่อง	ฝาพับ 					
	ฝาเลื่อน 					
	หมุนรอบ 					
	ธรรมดา(ไม่มีฝาครอบ) 					

2	รูปทรง	สี่เหลี่ยมบาง 					
		กลมมน 					
		สี่เหลี่ยมหนา 					
		เรียวยาว 					
3	ลักษณะจอแสดงผล	จอภาพสี่					
		หน้าจอสัมผัส (Touch-screen)					
		จอภาพกว้าง (Wide-screen)					
4	สีของตัวเครื่อง	แดง					
		ขาว					
		ดำ					
		ชมพู					
		ทอง					
		เงิน					

ตอนที่ 4.4 ลักษณะพิเศษ

14. นอกเหนือจากการใช้งานพื้นฐาน (โทรออก-รับสาย) รายละเอียดของข้อมูลต่อไปนี้ มีผลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อโทรศัพท์มือถือของท่านในระดับใด โปรดเลือกระดับอิทธิพลในช่องขวามือของข้อมูล

รายละเอียดข้อมูล		ระดับของอิทธิพลที่มีผลต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อ					
		มากที่สุด	มาก	ปานกลาง	น้อย	น้อยที่สุด	
		5	4	3	2	1	
1	มัลติมีเดีย (Multimedia)	ดูหนัง					
		ฟังเพลง(MP3)					
		วิทยุ					
		ถ่ายรูป/ถ่ายวิดีโอ					
2	การเชื่อมต่อ	ส่งผ่านข้อมูล (เช่น Bluetooth, Infrared, USB, mini-USB)					
		หาข้อมูลทางอินเทอร์เน็ต (WWW)					
		รับ-ส่งข้อความ (เช่น อีเมลล์, MMS, SMS, สนทนาแบบแชท)					
3	เกมส์						

ข้อคิดเห็นและข้อเสนอแนะอื่นๆ

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Appendix II

Mobile Phone's Price in Thailand (May, 2007)

				
8800 Sirocco Gold ราคา 45,590 บาท	02 Atom Life ราคา 32,900 บาท	Nokia N95 ราคา 28,990 บาท	Samsung i600 ราคา 18,900 บาท	Nokia N76 ราคา 18,100 บาท
				
Nokia E65 ราคา 16,300 บาท	Samsung Z720 ราคา 14,900 บาท	Samsung F300 ราคา 14,900 บาท	Motorola E6 ราคา 13,900 บาท	LG Shine ราคา 13,900 บาท
				
Nokia 5700 ราคา 13,500 บาท	LG Black Label II ราคา 11,900 บาท	Sony E. K550i ราคา 9,900 บาท	LG KE600 ราคา 9,900 บาท	Samsung X830 ราคา 9,900 บาท
				
Sony E. W200i ราคา 5,990 บาท	Y3 Miami Pink ราคา 5,800 บาท	Nokia 3110 Classic ราคา 5,620 บาท	i-mobile 516 ราคา 4,990 บาท	i-mobile 315 ราคา 3,990 บาท
				
Nokia 5070 ราคา 3,940 บาท	Samsung C300 ราคา 2,990 บาท	Samsung C250 ราคา 2,990 บาท	Samsung C260 ราคา 2,590 บาท	Samsung C140 ราคา 1,990 บาท

Source: <http://www.siamphone.com>

Appendix III

Models of Mobile Phones in Thailand
(October 2007 - January 2008)

โทรศัพท์มือถือเปิดตัวใหม่ ประจำเดือน มกราคม 2008 (บางรุ่น ยังไม่มีวางจำหน่าย)
- ราคามือถือ + รุ่นที่วางจำหน่ายแล้ว



Samsung F490



Samsung F250



LG KG370



LG KG288



LG KG285



Sony Ericsson
W760i



Sony Ericsson
W350i



Sony Ericsson
Z555i



Gigabyte qSmart
i350



ASUS P550

โทรศัพท์มือถือเปิดตัวใหม่ ประจำเดือน ธันวาคม 2007 (บางรุ่น ยังไม่มีวางจำหน่าย)
 - ราคามือถือ + รุ่นที่วางจำหน่ายแล้ว



Porsche Design
P9521



Glofish M800



NEX 900 2 SIM



WellcoM W920
Black



WellcoM W350



Glofish X800



Glofish X600



Glofish X500+



Glofish M700



Samsung D880
Dual Sim



Nokia 3110
Evolve



i-mobile 613



i-mobile 520



GNET G8286



HTC Touch Elfin



Hutch C2905

โทรศัพท์มือถือเปิดตัวใหม่ ประจำเดือน พฤศจิกายน 2007 (บางรุ่น ยังไม่มีวางจำหน่าย)
- ราคามือถือ + รุ่นที่วางจำหน่ายแล้ว



WellcoM W110



HTC Touch
Cruise



i-mobile 519



Mio A702 GPS



LG KS20



Samsung E210



Nokia N82



Nokia 8800
Sapphire Arte



Nokia 8800 Arte



i-mobile 518



GNET G777i DVD



GNET G414i



Sony Ericsson
W890i



Sony Ericsson
W380i



Sony Ericsson
K660i



WellcoM W920



i-mobile 904



Vertu Ascent Ti

โทรศัพท์มือถือเปิดตัวใหม่ ประจำเดือน ตุลาคม 2007 (บางรุ่น ยังไม่มีวางจำหน่าย)
 - ราคามือถือ + รุ่นที่วางจำหน่ายแล้ว



Motorola RAZR2
V8 Luxury



Motorola W377



Motorola W213



Motorola W180



Motorola W160



HTC P3400



O2 Orbit



Samsung G800



Samsung Armani



Motorola U9



Motorola V6
MAXX Ferrari



Sony Ericsson
K630i



WellcoM W819



ASUS P750



ASUS P735



ASUS P527



SCUD ST88



Hutch C163



Hutch C5320



Hutch C2288



Source: <http://www.siamphone.com/catalog/index.htm>

VITAE

VITAE

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