What plays a vital role behind the high sales of a particular electronic product (cellphones, tablets, etc.), design or technology?

By

Ghulam Mustafa Sheikh
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Internal Advisor : Mahroosh Haider
Gemma Sharpe
Arshad Farooqui

External Advisor :
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Abstract

Innovation and eagerness of moving forward has always been a human nature. Developments and advancements have always been made for a better living. Back in time, tools were being made to replace human effort; the era has developed to a situation where tools are being made to make things and communication work faster than ever before. The question is not about replacing the human effort anymore, it’s now more about how fast and conveniently things can be done.

This particular paper talks about the roots behind the business of the electronic communication products which have entirely changed today’s lifestyle. Cellphones, tablets and other such communication devices have now become the integral part of our lives. Intentionally or non-intentionally, every individual today depends on one of these super gadgets. Every business, every individual and every other profession today require these high-speed communication devices. The research-based compilation helps the reader understand the root tactics behind the high sales of these communicating products. It redefines the concept of “The era of technology” by asking if it’s just the technology which has always screened these products as super communication devices or with the technology, does design play a vital role too? When we talk about design, it covers the product as well as the advertising design for a particular product. Focusing on brands like Nokia, Apple and HTC, this research paper talks about what other factors except price help these brands become super brands. What makes one successful over the other and what helps these brands gain a large customer circle, design or technology?
Introduction

Progress and innovation have always been an integral part of human nature. Humankind has been making efforts for sustainable and easy-living since time immemorial. Developments in tools and technology were gradually made over the years and till current day, the thought of “making it better” is a part of human nature.

If we go years and decades back we see, production companies and industries were busy making machinery and tools which could replace human effort and give a new dimension to working and lifestyles. Today, the concept of ‘inventing the new’ has totally changed and the world is moving at an unbelievably fast pace.

It all started with the invention of a small abacus that eventually led us to this era of electronic products.¹ Today these electronic products like mobile phones, computers, televisions and gadgets are playing a vital role in our lives. Our lives are constantly driven by technology so much so that even a day without it would make us feel handicapped. Most of the tasks that every individual performs in a day are dependent on some or other technology-based product. There isn't a single day without a news headline and there isn't any news which is not transmitted on a television. Not just that but there isn't any news which is not transferred from one place to another through the use of an electronic medium. In other words, the human race today is totally dependent on the electronic products and media. Hence, “Electronics” and electronic products’ have now become a separate category in the world of business, which holds a very large market share. All other businesses (except electronics) are also dependent on one of these electronic

1 The first ever calculating tool invented which was used in arithmetic calculations. It was constructed inside a bamboo made frame with beads inside, used for calculating.
products in one way or the other. So whether it’s a simple mobile phone or a high-speed tower type computer, these electronic products and gadgets have become a part of our everyday lives and are also being used for commercial purposes.

Apparently, technology always has a major part behind the invention of any electronic product. This play of technology helps to add functionality and ability to a particular product and enables it to serve the purpose it has been made for. Therefore in some areas of discussion it becomes a general assumption that the era we’re living in is the era of technology.

My research paper questions as well as redefines the basic notion of this era by asking if it is just the technology that has changed our lives today, Is it just the technology that has made these machines famous as super machines or is there anything else too that’s involved partially or wholly in making these products successful? When it is clear within my research that price as well as the influence of a particular circle is playing an important factor, it will be acknowledged, while the analytical emphasis will remain with the design and technology. It has been observed that regardless of the servings of technology for these electronic products, the companies and the makers behind these products have been seen investing a great amount of money and concentration on the design and advertising of these products.

Except the manufacturing, each company reserves a certain amount of time and money that is spent on how a certain product would look like and how it is going to be advertised. A general perception is that no matter how useful or efficient a particular product is, if it’s not being advertised properly then there is no way it can be made ‘available’ to the consumers.
Therefore one can say that design (whether it’s the product design or advertising) does play some role behind a successful product. Consciously or unconsciously, every time we buy a product we do take its design and color into consideration. This customization of design and color can be seen in almost any product from a refrigerator to a small mobile phone. Each company launches one particular product in different colors. The reason behind this strategy is giving the power of customization to the consumer. Other than that, each product is advertised in a distinctive way hence each advertising strategy has its own impact on the consumers and later, on the parent business.

As an artist, merely staying a consumer / user of a product does not satisfy one’s curiosity. Electronic products like gadgets, mobile phones, etc., have become compulsory for our daily lives and hence occupy a huge business share too. Therefore, this research mainly focuses on the sales factor behind the cell phone market debating on big brands like Nokia, Apple and HTC. It highlights the sellers’-side tactics for these products. It will help the reader to learn about the root strategies behind the high sales of a communication device brand on which their lives are dependent to a great extent. It may be helpful not just to the buyers’ but might also be beneficial to the sellers and advertisers in helping them understand the main cause of high sales rate of a particular product. This research gives a way to an open debate of strategies which can be applied on any specific cell phone brand or other such electronic communicating device product. Focused on comparison between brands like Apple, Nokia, and HTC with respect to; audiences with different levels of technological background and demographics as consumers as well as sellers, this research paper questions if it is actually just the technology (i.e. the functionality and specifications) behind these products’ success, or the group of artists and designers who make it
look appealing, not just through the art of product-design but also through its “advertising campaigns.”

**Literature Review**

Inventions and innovations in such electronic products especially cell phones, laptops and other communicating devices are made every month. Technology-based products change and are upgraded every day. As new designs and technology break into the market, the older ones become obsolete. Therefore, while discussing such a topic one has to keep oneself updated with “what’s new”. The competition between different cell phone brands has become so tough and its business market has become so saturated that each brand seems to be bragging about its new product and how it has an edge over a similar product by various others companies. Blogs and magazines are updated time to time with news and discussions like which brand has what new product or feature to offer. No matter if it’s a magazine spread of an online blog, big brands like Nokia, Apple and HTC are the most highlighted brands (among other cell phone or gadget brands) and have always been the hot topics across the web magazines & articles which cover the latest happenings in technology-based products.

Nokia made a short film by the name “A Connecting people film” in which common people from different professions talk about how mobile phone technology has given the power back to the individuals which was missing for a very long time.\(^2\) Other than that it talks about how the mobile phone industry is affecting politics as well as the economy of a nation. Connecting one edge of the globe to another in just a few seconds, the mobile phone has been a revolutionary

product of the era. Not just that, it has also been the center of focus of the electronic products’ business.

According to an online voting poll via whatmobile.com, consumers in Pakistan seem to be more inclined towards Nokia and Apple’s iPhone than other brands. 3 1070 people voted for Nokia phones and 421 people voted for Apple iPhone when they were asked about which brand mobile phone they already own or would like to buy. 4 Setting our base on a small online pole which targets 74,219 people, we cannot assume accurate results for the entire country but apparently this shows that these two giant brands hold a larger share in the mobile phone business. Apple has always been one of the giant brands in international market. On marketing minds, an article on Apple’s branding strategy helps us understand the branding strategy behind Apple which involves creating innovation, delivering extra-ordinary user experience and interfaces under one brand name. 5 The brand personality is about modern lifestyles, innovation, passion, professionalism and removal of complexity. Clearly, Apple has also mastered in technology based products but this is never spoken about directly in any of their communications with the customers. The touch-sensor based screens of iPhone and iPad have brought in the era of touch-sensor based systems in almost every product where possible. Other brands like Samsung and Sony Ericson have always followed and replicated ideas from the giant brands. This doesn’t

3 WhatMobile is the leading mobile phone information portal which provides Daily updated prices, specifications, Reviews & user opinions of the all the latest mobile phones available in Pakistan’s mobile market.

4 Online voting poll conducted via ‘WhatMobile’ official social networking page. 
[Above mentioned are the results till December 5th, 2011, 1:08 PM]

[Last accessed : January 10th, 2012]
mean that Samsung or other such brands are any not sound technology wise. In fact, there are examples where these brands have launched products with similar specifications technology and lower prices but were still unable to beat the giant brands’ products. The reason behind not being able to beat these giants is debatable.

Apple’s product lineup today offers the iPad, iPhone, iPod, iMac etc. The base behind the branding is about minimalizing complexity and making communication simpler. The product design language Apple has established is apparently quite simple and clean. Each advertising campaign by Apple has a message of a person to person interaction. Tagline like “Think Different”\(^6\) doesn’t highlight their blazing-technology based products directly but focuses on a very personal interaction of the brand with its consumer. This makes the premium products of Apple more appealing and promising to its consumers. Providing possibilities and something for every profession develops a heartfelt connection between the brand and its consumers. Apparently brand-consumer connection is missing in the advertising style of a lot of other brands even though the technology stays somewhat the same. Setting the selling point on just technology is not being that helpful towards the sale of these brands. In this day and age, branding and selling of such electronic products is more about how social and friendly a brand can be.

On the other hand if we have a look Nokia’s products, it is clear that close to Apple, Nokia covers a large market share in mobile phones today as well. In Asian market of mobile phones, Nokia has always been a tough competitor and a big brand.

In a small slide presentation on slideshare™, Keith Pardy and Alastair Curtis share the brand and design, priorities and strategies of Nokia mobile phone company.\(^7\) Nokia has been labeled for having simple and uncomplicated desire to connect. With beginner-user-friendly interfaces, Nokia has now launched various Symbian and java-based mobile operating systems with the idea of simple connectivity translated in visual form\(^8\). Here one can clearly see how the two major brands share the same idea for their strategies of approaching to their consumers. The same big idea is about making the world less complicated and easily approachable via connectivity. The main focus of Nokia’s behind-the-scenes team is to create solutions to serve what is important for today’s lifestyle. In the above mentioned slide-presentation, the strategists define the game-plan which starts with basic observation and is later executed in the form of design which serves the observed needs of the target audience. Unlike Apple, Nokia targets and caters to different categories of audiences. Their products offer a wide range of price bracket as well. Therefore it is important for such a brand to develop and maintain friendly and person to person interaction with its consumers. Except a friendly behavior that a brand could have, Nokia has never ignored

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\(^7\) Keith Pardy - Senior Vice President, Strategic Marketing and Consumer Insights at Nokia Corp., previous to that Vice President and Managing Director of Global Brands at Coca-Cola Co.

Alastair Curtis - Chief designer at Nokia

Keith Pardy & Alastair Curtis, Nokia brand design priorities, *SlideShare*, (Posted: March 26\(^{th}\), 2007)

\(^8\) Symbian is an operating system for mobile phones, specifically smartphones.
Mahmoud Hatem, Symbian OS, *SlideShare*, (Posted: July 14\(^{th}\), 2009)
the technological aspect in their products though the approach towards technology has always been very human.

Strategists in this presentation define their basic rule for Nokia’s branding as “Observe then Design.” All other technology aspects like Geo Tagging, touch sensors, latest applications go hand in hand but unlike other small brands Nokia never sets the ‘specs’ as its major selling point but keeps emotional connection with the consumer as the brand-touch point. On some level this strategy also makes the consumer assume the outstanding technology and functionality as an “obvious” for this brand. Nokia’s campaign of “Beautifully uncomplicated” is another example which explains the idea well.

Compared to the two above mentioned brands, HTC is a relatively newer brand and has a totally different story about how it started-off as a smart phone brand. HTC’s roots originate from an engineering company. When HTC was about to launch its first product, iPhone had just launched having a widely spread customer network. Nokia, Motorola and other competitor brands had their product line running since years and had much larger budgets than HTC. The branding strategy that HTC was supposed to follow had to be reliable and strong enough to not

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9 Keith Pardy and Alastair Curtis, Nokia brand design priorities (Slide number 9/47), SlideShare, (Posted: March 26th, 2007), http://www.slideshare.net/whatidiscover/nokia-brand-design-priorities, [Last accessed : 21st January, 2012]

10 Nokia’s outdoor / print campaign in 2006. Source URL: http://www.flickr.com/photos/59435543@N00/280598558/


only make HTC stand next to these giant brands but to make HTC look different and appealing among other brands in the same business.

In an interview featured at Interbrands, John Wang, Chief Marketing Officer of HTC, explains the thought and strategy behind HTC. He explains how HTC’s advertising campaign is simply culture driven. The launch campaign revolves around the idea of being quiet yet being able to create comparatively better than other competitive brands. Mr. Wang wraps it in a few words while saying “When so many brands are bragging about themselves, no one looks different except the quiet guy. And when he finally speaks, everyone listens.”  

The tagline “Quietly Brilliant” comes from the same idea which shows both pride of brilliance as well as sober modesty. Apple on the other hand is anything but quiet. Therefore HTC separates itself from other brands by its advertising strategy. It not only serves the smart phone market in the United States but aims to be a globally recognized brand. This is one of the reasons why HTC does not project itself as specifically a Taiwanese brand.

Other than just the branding and advertising strategy, HTC in contrast with Apple designs handsets for people with different tastes. On the other hand Apple has always been selling and

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14 “Quietly Brilliant” tagline for HTC Brand, unveiled on October 26th, 2009
making look-aliike products. “This is a contrast to a company that wants to do one phone only
and say, ‘This is the one and you are going to love it and if you don’t, there is something wrong
with you,’” explains Wang while talking about HTC’s take on product design in comparison to
its major competitor, Apple. 15

HTC has always kept a focus on the technological aspect too. In fact, with the android based
operating systems HTC has pushed the boundaries to replace the iPhone operating system. It’s
not only about a high resolution screen but HTC also offers a more personal touch to its product.
For instance when a HTC phone rings in a woman’s bag or in somebody’s pocket it would be
louder and as one slides it out, the volume of these smart phones would automatically go lower.
Technologically, HTC seems to compete with Apple quiet well but it seems like the new quiet
brand is still working on its image among the masses.

While discussing HTC’s image among its consumers, Joseph Pai, Chairman of Ogilvy & Mather
(Taiwan) says “Among consumers, HTC needs to create a distinctive identity as more than a
manufacturer.16 Their technology is good. They keep coming out with new products. But they
need to find their own personality.”17 Therefore due to the lack of widely spread advertising
campaigns, HTC in spite of having a competitive technology is still not being able to take over
the market completely which seems to be possible once this brand pays more attention on

16 Joseph Pai is the chairman of advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather, Taiwan Division.
17 Taiwan’s HTC: iPhone’s ‘quiet’ challenger, page 11.
developing its identity. Even though as a sober brand, I personally feel that HTC can project this “being quiet and sober but making brilliant and smart products” strategy in their campaigns.

The war of being better, faster and newer in technology has always been and will always be there among all small and big brands. But the idea of different strategies of marketing and launching a product makes a few of these brands the giant and successful brands. Keeping their brand image premium, these successful brands communicate to the consumers on a very personal level. This brings in the brand-loyalty and gives an image of a promising brand for the consumers. Nokia’s campaign of “The Amazing Everyday” for its Lumia devices is a brilliant example of how branding strategy can deliver a big idea in the form of a simple message in a friendlier tone.18 But if one debates on the strategies used to approach the target audience, it is quite clear that behind each campaign and branding strategy, the idea generators and the artists play at least a partial role. After forming a big idea for each strategy, the visual artists decide on how the idea will be translated and presented visually. Till here, the role of design goes hand-in-hand with the technology behind these flashy products. Not just that, but the very human approach towards the product design of brands like Apple and Nokia, has always been one of the tactics behind the strong brand to customer relationship.

Research Methodology

While talking about a technology which is so close to us as human beings, it is important to get the perspective from the consumers as well as the developers behind it. The end product that is

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being developed is supposed to satisfy consumer’s choice and likeness. Therefore it is important to get an idea of the consumer-side of the market. This requires a qualitative and in-depth research from the users who are actually aware of the functionality aspect and business tactics behind the products they choose. Also, it is important to get a perspective of the brand-side of market. This research will help the readers understand the consumer psyche as well as the sellers’ strategy for a particular product.

Mr. Fazli Azeem has a highly technical background when it comes to technology today. He was Pakistan's first Apple Certified Helpdesk specialist in 2005 and was the highest certified Arena Multimedia Faculty trainer for 6 years. On debating with him on such topics he always seems to be much more interested than the interviewer himself. He thinks that when it comes to selling products like a computer brand or a cellphone brand, most of the time it’s the word of mouth and what’s “in” that matters. Mr. Fazli Azeem has participated in Pakistan's top software competitions and exhibitions, founded the ACM chapter at Karachi University. He then became Pakistan's first SIGGRAPH member in 2003. Mr. Fazli holds great knowledge about the latest revolutions in technology, gadgets, smart phones as well as latest computer systems. He’s not only interested in the functionality aspect of a product but also has great knowledge of how the market behind these products functions, especially in Pakistan. He’s an instructor of computer graphics program as well as handles some big brands of Pakistan as a graphic designer.

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19 Arena Multimedia, Pakistan is an institute which provides professional studies in web and graphics.

20 Association for Computing Machinery's

21 Special Interest Group on GRAPHics and Interactive Techniques
Mr. Azeem after spending all these years in the field which depends on latest technology of the day, is being able to see and tell us the story behind-the-design. Holding a highly technical background he can debate on almost all the big computer and cell phone brands like Apple, Dell, Nokia and Android-based HTC phones.\(^2\)

To understand the tactics from the brand’s side it is necessary to find out how the brand strategy functions and what tactics are used behind selling a particular product. Adeel Hashmi is the communication manager as well as a public relations expert for Nokia, Pakistan. Mr. Hashmi has been the force behind Nokia's marketing programs and business strategies in Pakistan. Mr. Hashmi holds great knowledge about branding of cellular brands and other technological products in Pakistan. He has been working for Nokia’s existence in Pakistan since a long time now. An interview with him could help one understand how a brand markets and sells a particular product in a diverse market such as Pakistan and which factor amongst the two, design and functionality of a particular product plays the more important role in its sales.

Except just the brand development side and the consumer side, the sellers and promoters of a brand play a vital role between the manufacturer and the consumer. Mr. Jamil Askari has been running electronic products’ showrooms in Karachi Electronics Market since a long time. He has a fair idea of business of cell phones, tablets and laptops to even larger electronic products. Karachi electronics market is one of the busiest commercial markets in the city. With more than a thousand shops the market is situated near Saddar, Karachi. It is one of the oldest and largest

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\(^2\) Fazli Azeem, interviewed, February 5\(^{th}\), 2012 [Interview was conducted via email]
markets of electronics’ products in Pakistan. Mr. Jamil owns a couple of cell phones and laptop showrooms in the market and has a great experience of how the business of such electronic communicating products works in the city. A brief discussion with him may help one understand not only the market tactics but also what consumers look for while choosing a particular product. If it’s really the technology behind the product that attracts the customer or, is it the design of a particular product that they are attracted by.

**Findings and Analysis**

From the cellphone business and market point of view, Mr. Fazli explains how HTC is making some good business among other android based phones in international market but still too technical for masses in Pakistan.\(^23\) The Apple iPad, however, remains the world’s leading tablet device. In comparison to Apple tablets, Android-based HTC tablets are still too slow right now as Mr. Fazli Azeem mentioned.\(^24\) He further explains how by security point of view HTC is much securer than the Apple iPhone but according to the online voting carried by “whatmobile" Nokia still holds a larger market than the other two.\(^25\) Except just price, one of the other reasons of Nokia covering a larger market than Apple iPhone is the drastic change in Apple’s strategy and business. After Steve Jobs with Tim Cook, Apple promised delivering the same quality in their products as it was delivering with Jobs. But according to Mark Guarino’s publication in

\(^{23}\) Fazli Azeem, interviewed, February 5\(^{th}\), 2012 [Interview was conducted via email]

\(^{24}\) Apple iPad first launched on 17\(^{th}\) September, 2010 in China.

\(^{25}\) WhatMobile is the leading mobile phone information portal which provides Daily updated prices, specifications, Reviews & user opinions of the all the latest mobile phones available in Pakistan’s mobile market.
AXcess News, sales of iPhone fell about 17 percent after Steve Jobs. This means that the loss of one of the greatest CEOs of the world gave Apple a tough time. Since Apple has always been a giant competitor it also brought a major twist in the local as well as international market of cellphones across the globe.

A closer view on these three major cellphone brands Apple, HTC and Nokia, one can clearly see that in terms of technology and specifications HTC has an edge over others because of its security, cross-system application support and Nokia because of its appeal to masses. “I would prefer the lowest powered android device over the highest powered Apple product, simply because of the customization ability that every brand has aside from Apple” says Mr. Fazli Azeem. The reason of such a review while comparing the two brands could be Apple’s strategy too, which tends to know more than their consumer. After talking about how consumers are usually made to buy a particular brand or product. He mentioned about another circle of consumers- the smart ones. He said “I can see behind the design, it does not fool me.” When asked about Apple’s cellphone products (i.e. iPhone) he clearly preferred an Android-based HTC device over any iPhone. Contradictory to Apple’s approach, Mr. Fazli as an advanced-level customer in terms of technology based projects explains “I am a technically qualified consumer and I know better about what I want and will not accept Apple’s dictatorship about what I want”. I personally think that here Apple’s strategy of dictating their customer becomes its own weakness. This strategy can be clearly seen when Steve Jobs says about Apple’s branding point of view, “You can’t just ask customers what they want and then try to give that to them.”

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27 Padovani Stephanie, Why Steve Jobs was wrong, Book more brides, n.d. http://www.bookmorebrides.com/why-steve-jobs-was-wrong/
Apple’s market is highly dependent on its brand loyalty too but a lot of technically sound consumers wouldn’t like to be dictated as Apple wants them to. On the other side Nokia does not dictate its consumer about what to buy. The advertising language or Nokia has always been friendly towards its consumers.\textsuperscript{28} Other than that, the high sales of Nokia in Pakistan could also be a reflection of what Keith Pardy and Alastair Curtis mentioned in the presentation on Nokia’s branding strategies.\textsuperscript{29} The basic backbone of the strategy is always “observe then design” which does not mean to ask the customer what they want but to design what they would want to have.\textsuperscript{30} Steve Jobs translated the same idea in Apple’s strategies and seemed to be designing an ideal product. But Nokia applies this idea in a more friendly way. The mass appeal could also be because of making products for everyone and making communication simpler as Nokia mentions in their presentation.\textsuperscript{31}

Other than that, Mr. Jamil has a totally different perspective about the business tactics in the cellphones’ market. It gives one a clear view-point about how one customer circle can be totally different from the other.\textsuperscript{32} He divides the consumer audience into two basic circles. One, as Mr. Jamil defines, is the consumer-circle which buys a particular product just because it serves the purpose in cheaper prices. This particular consumer circle is less concerned about the brand they choose. The major concern is if the product serves the purpose or not. Apparently, this consumer

\textsuperscript{28} For example, Nokia’s tagline “Connecting people” by Ove Strandberg, used since 1992

\textsuperscript{29} Keith Pardy & Alastair Curtis, Nokia brand design priorities, \textit{SlideShare}, page 8.

\textsuperscript{30} Keith Pardy & Alastair Curtis, Nokia brand design priorities, \textit{SlideShare}, page 8.

\textsuperscript{31} Keith Pardy & Alastair Curtis, Nokia brand design priorities, \textit{SlideShare}, page 8.

\textsuperscript{32} Mr. Jamil interviewed on 25\textsuperscript{th} February, 2012 [Interview was conducted in-person]
circle in Pakistan entertains a larger business market. The other circle, Mr. Jamil explains about is the brand-specific consumer-circle. Consumers from this circle would choose a brand either because of its specifications or a beautifully appealing design. The area of city which Mr. Jamil’s business caters to has a very high number of electronic products’ consumers. He explains that a lot of times a consumer will only look for a product with reasonable prices. This means that the brand which can cater to the masses with a widely spread price range wins such a consumer circle. But another thing that he mentions is that with this price range the consumer wants specifications too. A lot of people, as he mentioned in a brief interview are more concerned about the specs a particular cellphone has to offer. Nokia on the other hand also lets the consumer choose from a variety of cellphone skins unlike the iPhone or HTC. This gives the consumer the power to customize the design (to a certain extent) which reflects Nokia’s strategy of designing for people. Through a detailed discussion it was clear that Nokia manages to provide specifications with design customization in cheaper prices than HTC or iPhone. “iPhone has a different target market” explains Mr. Jamil, “There are fewer customers who ask for iPhone than the number of customers who ask for a Nokia Phone”. The overall sales of the two brands (from a particular) market might be the same since iPhone is sold lesser than Nokia phones but then the prices are higher too. But what makes Nokia successful is the freedom of customization with lower price range. No doubts about Apple’s hardware architecture and high performance but a large chunk of the target market looks for customization in a particular product. This customization is not only in terms of design and color but of security settings when it comes to such technology based devices. The comparison of security customization was well explained by Mr. Fazli Azeem while talking about HTC over Apple, he discussed how the HTC with android based platform allows customization and allows users to remove CarrierIQ and all
privacy invasive pre-installed software and features unlike Apple which has no such option, they know everything about their users. 33 This may also be one of the reasons for Apple’s surety on about what to develop for their consumers whom they already know through transparent privacy settings. While ending the long discussion with the teacher of digital arts and a techy consumer, Mr. Fazli clearly explains how he would buy an Apple product only for testing or development but never for personal usage.34

This gives an idea about how important specs and functionality of the product is. Except just a decent design or smashing technology, a lot of times what a customer may ask for is the power of customization. The power of customization on the functionality (security settings aspect) still takes over the power of customization of design for most of the consumers at least. From what Mr. Fazli Azeem explained about his pick of a particular product, one can assume that a smart consumer, who understands what he’s paying for, looks into the functionality aspect first and the beautiful product design later.

According to how Keith Pardy explained Nokia’s brand strategy, Nokia manages to bring across a line of products. Ranging in all price brackets with competitive functionality aspect, it holds a larger market in Asia than in Europe. There could be several reasons for having such high sales in the cellphone business. One of these reasons is a more friendly approach towards its consumers. But mainly its providing all possible functions of any other brand in lower prices.

33 Carrier IQ is pre-installed mobile intelligence software which tracks and delivers smartphone users’ reports to the manufacturers.

34 Fazli Azeem, interviewed, February 5th, 2012 [Interview was conducted via email].
Nokia as explained by Mr. Fazli Azeem is not making any thing that its competitors are not making. It’s just about bringing the same functionality and fun in a lower price bracket. Nokia not only brings the touch censor aspect in its products but also brings a look of Microsoft Windows 8 design theme in its latest Nokia 800c (also known as Lumia 800c). According to the product reviews on phonegg.com and Cnet reviews, Lumia 800c is built in comparison to iPhone 4S with the same 8MP camera and almost the same specifications. Nokia therefore proves that it can be as competitive in this business as other Apple products. From a design perspective Nokia has clearly come a long way and has placed great emphasis on its product design after the Nokia N8 and further. Hence when the technology aspects remain constant (or close) between the two brands, the design and brand loyalty comes in play.

While discussing such a business, where price factor, design and technology is updated so rapidly. It is important to get a clear perspective from sales management people in this particular industry. Mr. Adeel Hashmi, the force behind Nokia’s sales, gives a clear view of what Nokia has been doing in order to achieve a very high number in terms of sales across the globe. Mr. Adeel being one of the Nokia’s ambassadors seems to highly support Nokia. In a very brief discussion regarding cell-phone business one can easily tell how he does not consider any other brands even close to Nokia. He doesn’t get into any detail about what other competitor brands might be doing. If asked about possible strategies or market share other brands may hold, Mr. Adeel Hashmi tries to ignore and skips to the point on how Nokia is doing in market share and strategies. He seems to be very confident and proud on Nokia’s strategy and business in all terms. He claims Nokia to be the most successful brand globally. About market strategies, he defines how Nokia makes product for everyone in all price ranges. From a low end device to a
high end smart phone device, he claims Nokia to cater all sorts of consumers. Nokia, as Mr. Hashmi defines is the whole package cellular brand. With all price ranges and maximum specs.

“Nokia achieved one of the most significant milestones in its history with the sale of its 1.5 billionth Series 40 mobile phone. With a vision to bridge the digital divide and to connect the next billion people, Nokia continues to put together compelling devices that offer something unique and exciting with an unmatched value and ease of internet connectivity even on its low-end phones.” says Mr. Hashmi.35

Contrary to what Mr. Fazli Azeem had to say about HTC and Nokia, Mr. Hashmi totally goes in favor of Nokia without any consideration of what HTC might be doing. He takes Apple as Nokia’s competitor in high-end smart phones. In Business phones, he explains, RIM Blackberry as Nokia’s key competitor. I personally think that because of being and working in Nokia’s industry since years now, Mr. Hashmi prefers not to go into other brands’ business tactics. No doubt Nokia does cover a larger market across the country but Apple’s iPhone does entertain a very large market share globally. When asked about design strategy while making a Nokia product he explains:

“Mobile phones today have become so much more meaningful to the end-consumers that the phone’s looks play a major role in purchase decision especially for the youth. It’s like most people make a personal style statement with the mobile phone they carry with them. Nokia has a team of dedicated

35 Mr. Adeel Hashmi interviewed on 8th April, 2012 and 17th April, 2012 [Interview conducted on email].
designers who work on the product design to ensure that Nokia phones offer a
perfect blend of style and convenience.”

I personally think that Nokia’s advertising design as well as product design is simple yet
beautiful. According to how Mr. Adeel Hashmi projects Nokia’s advertising campaigns, they
capture and put forward the core idea behind Nokia’s existence. These campaigns connect to the
targeted audience emotionally rather than just talking about the technical specifications.

Nokia’s products promise convenience. Through a wide range of products (in terms of prices),
Nokia is able to target both, the masses and the high-end customers. Through its ad campaigns,
Nokia manages to connect to both types of audiences in equally decent manner. Apple on the
other hand even after having a great edge on technology can still target a specific market only.
The strategy behind Apple is always about telling the customer and tending to know more than
the customer. Whereas with similar or slightly lower specifications. Nokia communicates on an
emotional level to its consumer. The product designs as well as the graphic user interface both
remain simple and convenient. The customization that Nokia offers in its product design, HTC,
Apple or other brands are not even close to it. It’s clear that the consumer goes for more
customizable and convenient-to-use products. Here Nokia’s simple and convenient user interface
with similar specifications (or close) to what other brands have to offer takes over the cell phone
market for the masses. Functionality aspect remains almost constant across different brands. But
Nokia manages to give a cleaner, simpler look to its brand image which therefore is more
reliable and easy to use.
HTC, in spite of being a newer brand (than Nokia or Apple) managed to win some market share because of its different strategy and approach. HTC, following a totally different advertising strategy by being “Quietly Brilliant” and providing high-end technology with software customization like removal of Carrier IQ makes it in the market. Compared to its competitor Apple, where every cellphone product looks somewhat the same, HTC has managed to design for everyone. High-end cellphones which HTC has launched come with touch censors and with keypad too. It always offers some kind of customized options and every cellphone model HTC has launched has a completely different look and feel to it from its other parallel model. John Wang, CMO of HTC explained it quite well while comparing HTC with other competitive cellular brands. “This is a contrast to a company that wants to do one phone only and say, ‘This is the one and you are going to love it and if you don’t, there is something wrong with you’” explained Wang. Therefore one can clearly say that that Apple iPhone had its era till the first iPhone launch. Other competitive brands, keeping an edge on design customization and offering somewhat the same specifications in slightly lower prices have gradually started taking over the cellphone business. Nokia’s new line of Lumia 808 with 41 megapixels camera is another tough competition in the market of smartphones. On the other hand Nokia’s new Asha series never cease to provide its consumers a package of decent looking product design and specifications in lower prices. Except that, newer brands like HTC which have the strength to offer competitive technology, with the help of different product design options, and strategies like “Quietly Brilliant” have managed to give Apple products a tough time in last few years. Hence through advertising strategies and beautiful product design, these brands manage to have an edge over other brands which master the technology half but lack in design customization. Advertising here plays a vital role too in connecting the brand with its consumers. Either the advertising strategy

36 Taiwan’s HTC: iPhone’s ‘quiet’ challenger, *U-Force Mobile*, http://www.u-forcemobile.com/313
is about staying decent and quiet or about being friendly, but brands like Nokia and HTC have really managed to pull a large number of customers through these advertising tactics and different user friendly design options.

Conclusion

After conducting a thorough primary and secondary research, it is quite clear that the world of such electronic gadgets and cell phones is being updated very rapidly. Every other day, one or the other competitive brands launches a new product. The war of making it better and faster seems to be never ending. However, through the research and its analysis, it becomes clear that different audiences respond differently towards the various types of cellphones and/or gadgets available and what they have to offer. The debate is not about which brand makes it in the market but about which strategy among the two (design or technology) gives edge to a particular brand over the other.

Giant brands like Apple, Nokia or HTC, which cover most of the chunk in this business never depend solely on one of the two mentioned factors (design or technology) for their success. Through research it is quite evident that it’s the hand-in-hand play of both high-end technology as well as brilliant design. Therefore one can come to the conclusion that the success and purchase of a particular cell phone, tablet and other such devices does not solely depend on either technology or design. Both have significant roles and it is hard to say which is more important in pushing a certain product forward. Apart from these, there are other factors as well that affect the sales of a particular product such as pricing and affordability, target markets and
influence of a particular circle. But it’s the design surplus value that makes a buyer choose one specific product with a better design over the other. Technology and specifications stay somewhat the same across different platforms and brands.

Brands like Nokia and HTC reserve a large amount of money and time which is spent just on how a particular product will look like or will be advertised. For any successful cellphone or other such gadgets’ company, it is neither just great design nor technology but a nice combination of both.
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Mr. Adeel Hashmi interviewed on 8th April, 2012 and 17th April, 2012

[Interview conducted on email].

Appendices

My first interview was with Mr. Qazi Fazli Azeem, a computer graphics’ instructor at Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture:

In a particular cellphone or other such communicating product (among brands like Apple, Nokia, Dell or HTC) what appeals to you first? Is the design (both advert + product) that appeal and matters to you more or the specifications behind it. When I'm talking about design i mean the product design as well as the advertising campaigns design behind making a product popular.

Its neither the design of the product or the features, its the amount of money spent in marketing an image-based product to the masses. In a way it can be interpreted as the design of the product and its relation to the adverting campaign, making the product desirable to its target market.

A reporter who asked Jobs about the market research that went into the iPad was famously told, "None. It's not the consumers' job to know what they want." Which isn't to say that he doesn't think like a consumer--he just thinks like one standing in the near future, not in the recent past. He is a focus group of one, the ideal Apple customer, two years out. As he told Inc. magazine in 1989, "You can't just ask customers what they want and then try to give that to them. By the time you get it built, they'll want something new."
Advertising and 'word of mouth' sells electronics, nothing else. Consider that the latest pc computers come with intel i7 processor and up to 8 gb ram for around a lakh rupees. The latest Apple computers (for over 2 years) were 4gb ram with intel core 2 duo processors, they only recently introduced laptops with i7 processors. Speed and performance wise, pc beats apple silly, its the image, the 'ease of use' and the lack of viruses that attracts people towards apple computers.

Personally, I have a highly technical background. I was a computer science student at the department of computer science at the University of Karachi for 2 years before i went to another university and graduated as Pakistan's first BS multimedia undergrad in 2006. I have participated in Pakistan's top software competitions and exhibitions, founded the ACM chapter at DCS-KU, became Pakistan's first SIGGRAPH member in 2003, became Pakistan's first Apple Certified Helpdesk specialist in 2005, am one of Pakistan's first multimedia artists who have exhibited animations at leading art galleries (Amin Gulgee Gallery, Ghandhara Art Space), was the highest certified Arena Multimedia Faculty trainer for 6 years, I am South Asia's first and only self-Advocate for Autism Spectrum Disorders and Asperger's Syndrome and spread awareness and train people using multimedia, social media, video and websites. I was a key member of the consortium (Pakistan Software Export Board, NCA, UET and IVS) that won funding for the first World Bank funded mlab South Asia to create mobile app/game design training and infrastructure in Pakistan (details soon). The reason all this is being referenced is that I can see behind the design, it does not fool me, I buy a product for its practical features, not because its the 'in' brand that everyone is buying. I would prefer the lowest powered android device over the highest powered Apple product, simply because of the
customization ability that every brand has aside from Apple. With Apple products, they assume that they know better than me (the consumer) about what I want. I disagree with Apple, I am an technically qualified consumer and I know better about what I want and will not accept Apples dictatorship about what I want (reference the Steve Jobs quotation above). I find Apple's marketing highly offensive, disturbing and a result of the dumbing down of the world by corporate methods. Apple products have no privacy issues; they know everything about their users. The Android platform on the other hand allows customization and allows users to remove CarrierIQ and all privacy invasive pre-installed software and features. Apple may be the best thing for the masses, but I am not from the masses, neither will I ever be from the masses, and would buy an Apple product simply for testing or development, never for personal usage. I choose to make a statement by being what I am and not using Apple.

Dell is a mee-too consumer brand. They don't make anything that others don't make, they just make it well priced and consumer friendly (dealership, warranty, deals etc). Dell has never innovated and only take what their innovative competitors sell and make it cheaper. I use it and advise it simply because of its price and warranty (laptops in Pakistan etc.), but not for anything else. Dell also has high range laptops such as xps and alienware which are above the range of common Pakistan consumers. Dell streak android phones and other items failed in Pakistan simply because there were high prices compared to HTC, Samsung and competitors.

Google is a leading tech company, their own android products may be too techie for the masses, but the HTC and Samsung versions of the android products have really been amazing, beating
Apple products all over the world. As far as phones go, HTC is the best company in the world for Android Phones but Apple's iPad remains the world’s leading tablet device, the Android tablets are simply too slow in performance right now.

For me, features and technical ability is more important than the look, function over form. I would not buy something that looks good but does not hold any practical value

My second interview was with Mr. Jamil Askari. He has been running electronic products’ showrooms and shops in Karachi Electronics Market since a long time. He has a great experience of how the business of such electronic products works in the city.

Question: Among all electronic products you deal in, what makes the most business for you?

Answer: Mobile phone market in saddar is the busiest and biggest market among all other electronic product markets nearby.

Question: Since how long have you been working here?

Answer: Approximately 25 to 30 years. Before this we had shops of refrigerators and Televisions and just one shop of mobile phones. Later I sold two of those shops and bought this one in Star Market.

Question: What different cellphone brands do you deal in?
Answer: we have all different brands and models available here and on our other shops. Nokia, Blackberry, HTC, iPhone and Q-Mobile.

Question: Which one sells the most?

Answer: All brands have their selling market by the grace of God.

Question: No but which ones are the top selling brands in the market. I am sure there must be some specific ones which are sold more than the others?

Answer: Nokia has a very old made selling market iPhone too has lot of demand.

Question: What about HTC?

Answer: HTC is a newer brand than iPhone. Apple has computers, iPods, etc. Apple and Nokia are bigger brands.

Question: What do people ask more fore, iPhone or Nokia or other brands?

Answer: Nokia sells a lot. Because Nokia has cellphones of all prices. I can show you a phone for as low as Rs. 2000/- to a very high priced phone too. iPhone sells lesser than Nokia but still has a good selling and re-selling value.

Question: Why is that so?

See there are different types of customers. Now you might buy an iPhone or Nokia’s expensive phone too but the person who earns 10,000/- per month cannot afford it. He will ask for Nokia’s C101 in a lower price range of Rs. 5000/-
A lot of times we have customers who will come and ask us to show a cellphone which has a camera, mp3 player and other basic functions regardless of which brand it is. All they would ask for is a list of specifications. They tell us their price range and that’s it.

A lot of customers say that they would only buy Nokia. No matter how much I will try to convince them to buy another brand, they would only go for Nokia. Same with iPhone, a customer who has come to buy an iPhone will only buy that and will never see Nokia’s any model with same specifications.

But Nokia has a very good re-selling value. In local market, people always like to buy new modeled phone and as a new model comes in, they would sell their old phone put in some more money and buy the new phone. This is one of the biggest advantages Nokia has. Other than that, Nokia Asha Series has beautiful phones, it has everything, Bluetooth, 3 to 5 megapixel camera, fm radio, mp3 support. And the prices are comparatively lower than the old N-Series. Each phone comes in 2 to 3 different color options. In Pakistan, our dealers take any two color options first, run them for 4 to 5 months and then bring in other color options.

Question: What about iPhone?

See iPhone only comes in white or black. The screen resolution and camera iPhone has is comparatively better I tell you. But still iPhone customers we get is only about 30% to 40% other than that, either people go for Nokia or China mobile phones.

Now China mobile phone companies have further killed iPhone to an extent. How? Young people who would buy iPhone or such smart phones for show off now buy China’s copy for it. iPhone’s copy is available for Rs. 7000/- with a VGA camera so a lot of people would rather buy it in that lower price than buying the original.
Question: How much does advertising sell a particular phone?

Answer: Companies only advertise phones in which they can save more and make more business. Nokia Asha series is being advertised a lot. So a lot of customers who don’t even know the model number often come and tell us to give them that cellphone which they saw in a TVC. Nokia has put huge banners here on this building and they change it with their new phones ‘banners after every few months. So a lot of people refer to these banners too.

Thank you Mr. Jamil.

My third interview was with Mr. Adeel Hashmi. He is the communication manager as well as a public relations expert for Nokia, Pakistan and Afghanistan at Nokia Mobile Phones.

Question: Which Cellphone brand do you use?

Answer: Nokia.

Question: Dream cellphone brand? or which brand do you think is the most successful globally? And Why?

Answer: Nokia is the most successful brand globally simply because it carries mass appeal. It offers the widest product portfolio at different price points. Nokia has to offer something for just about everyone. With different product categories that promise a unique experience, Nokia targets masses as well as niche segments in equally sophisticated ways, carefully responding to consumer preferences in variety of segments. From high-end smartphones to low-end devices, Nokia offers a complete and rich mobility experience offering a range of winning operating systems, bundle of optimized features, refined internet connectivity, different form factors
(Touch, QWERTY), variety of content and above all reliability that has been the hallmark of Nokia brand.

At the start of this year, Nokia achieved one of the most significant milestones in its history with the sale of its 1.5 billionth Series 40 mobile phone. With a vision to bridge the digital divide and to connect the next billion people, Nokia continues to put together compelling devices that offer something unique and exciting with an unmatched value and ease of internet connectivity even on its low-end phones.

Also Nokia is considered the most eco-friendly mobile phone brand in the world. With its extensive sustainability strategy, Nokia has achieved many feats in terms of environment excellent. Nokia is the only mobile phone brand to offer an extensive world-wide mobile phone recycling program. The program was also successfully launched in Pakistan last year.

Question: iPhone vs. HTC? Why?
Answer: Nokia all the way.

Question: Nokia vs. Other Big Cellphone brands? How and what's the competition?
Answer: Nokia has a variety of competition in the market primarily due to the versatility of our product portfolio. In high-end smartphones, Apple is Nokia’s key competitor. In high-end business phones, RIM Blackberry is Nokia’s key competitor. In mid-range and low-end phones, Nokia faces competition from Samsung, LG and other branded Chinese phones. Nokia always appreciates healthy competition; it continuously raises the industry bar for quality and novelty.
However, Nokia takes pride that we have the right solution at right price points for everyone. We are constantly pushing boundaries to offer something new, fun and exciting to our consumers. The real Nokia experience is not just about the device, it’s about the whole package. Nokia services and apps are an integral part of all Nokia devices. At the same time, Nokia offers real value for money. With our new devices, we are offering beautiful design backed by compelling solutions coupled with affordable price tags. We are offering internet on increasing number of devices, even the ones at lower price points. That opens a whole new world of opportunities for a vast majority of people.

We are connecting people in new & better ways in every sense of the word.

All Nokia devices are further complimented by the reliability factor. All Nokia phones come with authentic Nokia warranty covered by its nation-wide Nokia Care network.

Question: What makes Nokia a successful brand or a "brand of the masses"

(i) Price Factor? (Please explain)

Answer: Lowest cost Nokia phones are available at the price of approximately PKR 2,000 and above. These phones are further backed by Nokia’s high-quality and reliability. All Nokia phones are available with authentic Nokia warranty covered by the Nokia Care network. By launching more feature-rich phones at affordable prices, Nokia is opening doors to new opportunities for the masses. The stunning Nokia Asha range is a prime example in this context. The Asha series phones are not just a beautiful sight to behold but also bring form factor
(QWERTY, touch) along with variety of features such as easy web access, apps, music and much more at highly affordable rates.

(ii) Design (Product design and advertising? (Please explain how)

Mobile phones today have become so much more meaningful to the end-consumers that the phone’s looks plays a major role in purchase decision especially for the youth. It’s like most people make a personal style statement with the mobile phone they carry with them. At Nokia, we don’t just focus on making aesthetically appealing mobile phones but also pay great attention to the phone’s functionality. Nokia has a team of dedicated designers who work on the product design to ensure that Nokia phones offer a perfect blend of style and convenience. For this reason, every Nokia phone might carry a different look but comes with a level of familiarity that promises ease of use and convenience.

In a few words, Nokia ads are simple yet beautiful. Depending on the target audience, each Nokia ad captures the essence of the brand, successfully depicts device USPs (Unique Selling Points) and connects with the target audience on emotional level. Advertising certainly plays an important role in creating mass appeal for Nokia phones and highlights product benefits.

(iii) Technology, Functionality, Specification (Please explain)

Nokia aims to offer technology that is familiar and easy to use yet offers an element of surprise and excitement to the end users. Nokia packs different levels of technology, functionality and
specifications according to the phone’s category to satisfy varying consumer tastes, needs and expectations. At the end of the day, Nokia phones are about real value for money. Every Nokia phone brings a unique mobility experience and makes the consumer’s life more meaningful.