**Apple Marketing Communication in the UK**

**Table of Contents**

[I. Executive Summary 3](#_gjdgxs)

[II. Introduction 3](#_30j0zll)

[III. Literature Review 4](#_1fob9te)

[V. Critical Analysis and Discussion 7](#_3znysh7)

[Target Audience 7](#_2et92p0)

[Brand Positioning 7](#_tyjcwt)

[Media Selection and Communication Mix Management 7](#_3dy6vkm)

[VI. Recommendation 7](#_1t3h5sf)

[Development Areas 7](#_4d34og8)

[Threats Identified 7](#_2s8eyo1)

[Opportunities Identified 7](#_17dp8vu)

[VII. Conclusion 7](#_3rdcrjn)

# II. Introduction

Apple has been known for its speed of innovation and excellent performance. As Heracleous (2012: 58) confirms, Apple's competitive advantage in global markets lies in Quantum Strategy. Indeed, the company was the first to offer various technological solutions that had met customers' expectations. Starting with the ever so popular iPod, and ending with the latest smartphones, Apple has provided customers with advanced answers. However, competition in the smartphone market has increased over the past ten years, and companies like Samsung are catching up, dipping into Apple's market share. Indeed, the UK market has some challenges and unique characteristics that make the competition even fiercer. The author of the current study will focus on these unique qualities of the British customer, market trends, and regulations that would affect the company's performance in the country. While the global market share of Apple is still large, in the United Kingdom, a free market, various substitute products are offered for people who are looking to get the best value for their money. The only way Apple can win the competition is by strengthening the brand's reputation in the United Kingdom and ensuring that it successfully communicates its product's unique selling points. By reviewing related literature, the author of the current study hopes to create a marketing strategy that fully utilizes the existing and available marketing channels for strengthening brand image and loyalty.

IV. Market Environment Review

Morton (2014) conducted research based on smartphone ownership and intentions. One interesting trend needs to be mentioned that will highlight the competitive advantage of Apple over other brands. Questioning smartphone users about their first, second, and third phone, it is important to note that Apple had the highest brand loyalty and customer retention. While 19 percent of respondents stated that they had an Apple phone as their first device, this number increased to 29 percent when asked about the second phones, and 37 percent related to the third phone. 54 percent of respondents said they said they wanted an iPhone. This finding, compared with the main competing smartphone operation system, Android reveals that the reputation of Apple in the marketplace is the strongest. 65 percent of customers had an Android first phone, while only 54 percent as a second phone, and 49 as third.

A recent We Are Apps (2013) study also revealed that iPhone ownership increased in the United Kingdom in the past two years at a slower rate than general ownership of internet-enabled smartphones. This indicates that Apple is losing market share. Blackberry's ownership has actually declined. Therefore, this indicates that Android and Google phones create the greatest threat to Apple's market share. Still, the iPhone is the most popular device in the United Kingdom, with a market share of 32.1 percent, followed by Blackberry at 7.69 percent, and Samsung Galaxy at 5.42 percent. The latest Portio Research document (2012, p. 2) concluded that “smartphone shipments reached 485 million in 2011, and that number will top 655 million in 2012, rising to over 1 billion smartphones per year by 2016”. This means that the market is constantly growing, and there are several opportunities for companies to enter the competitive device marketplace.

As the younger, technologically enabled and competent generation is an important market segment for Apple' iPhone, it is important to review a recent survey that was created by the University of Sheffield (2011) among students related to their smartphone usage habits. 99.6 percent of the respondents owned a mobile phone. A remarkable 27 percent of students owned an Apple phone. This is significant because students usually do not have a high level of disposable income to afford more expensive, high-end brands, still their brand loyalty was significant. In 2011 the market share of Apple was recorded at 28.6 percent, 30 percent of students used iPhone operating systems. Male students were also more likely to own an iPhone than females. This finding is in line with the general statistics that men have a stronger brand preference towards iPhone than women.

It is also important to mention the brand awareness factor that is relevant to a company's marketing strategy. Worldwide, through social media, according to the research of Sysomos (2013, p. 4), “iPhone gets talked about the most in social media with 6,215,118 mentions, accounting for 60% of the overall share of voice”. This means that there is a strong brand awareness globally. Considering that UK customers are active users of social media, this creates endless promotion and marketing communication opportunities for the company.

# V. Critical Analysis and Discussion

## *Target Audience*

In its current advertising campaigns, Apple focuses on upmarket, young people, aged 35 and below. Advertisements mainly feature males and females who utilize the new iPhone in different ways. The marketing targets young people who are looking for great applications on the move, and love innovation. With the slogan “You are more powerful than you think” (Apple iPhone S, 2014), it is evident that the company is aiming to reach the younger generation. Similarly, the ad titled Metal Mastered (Apple, 2014) is aimed at younger audiences who cannot wait for the latest design and technology to come out, and are conscious of appearance.

The latest UK ad, “Parenthood” (Apple, 2014), however, aims at not single people who are busy professionals, but parents. It is an important shift. The company's UK marketing management has most certainly realized that there are customers with already existing brand awareness and loyalty that have already been using an iPhone for years. Their loyalty needs to be maintained, and the product needs to be repositioned to reach a wider audience. Instead of featuring just the “cool apps” that teenagers can download on their iPhones from the Apple store, the company is communicating an important message: the universal value of the phone that can be utilized by anyone. As the owner of the phone selects the downloaded apps, user experiences can be personalized, based on one's circumstances.

## *Brand Positioning*

The brand Apple has a strong positive image. Most UK customers associate Apple with iPhones and iPads, with innovative products. It has been noted previously that the company listens to the market's demand and is proud of its reputation for being the first to solve customers' problem. Several customers in the UK have a positive association with the brand. Customer engagement is high in social media, and the value of word-of-mouth and recommendation advertising is high. The global iPhone site has close to 3.5 million likes. The official iPhone 6 page has already got over one thousand likes. The image created by the company through marketing and media communication is that Apple is an innovative company that works hard to create solutions that make people's lives easier.

## *Media Selection and Communication Mix Management*

Apple currently markets its products through various channels. TV advertisements in prime screening times in the UK are usually scheduled around the launch of a new product. However, collaborative marketing through strategic partners, such as mobile service providers is not to be neglected. As mobile companies know that many customers have a strong brand preference for Apple, companies are the first to let their subscribers know when the new model is available on a pay as you go or contract package.

Internet based branding is also important, and – due to the popularity of the brand – the company benefits from free online media and social network exposure. Press releases and conferences get a lot of media attention, and the communication strategy of the company is in line with the marketing strategy.

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