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Students notebook computer preferences: Insights to purchase decision

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ABSTRACT

Notebook computers offer convenience to students being easy to carry, using less power than desktops, and having a sleek design, which lets users work or study from anywhere. This is a quantitative study that aimed to determine the marketing student's notebook computer preferences. Furthermore, it aimed to gain insights into the purchasing decisions of marketing students at Capiz State University-Main Campus. The respondents in the study were the two hundred thirty (230) marketing students selected through random sampling. Additionally, the research reveals a range of factors influencing marketing students' purchasing decisions in terms of core technical features, post-purchase services, price and payment conditions, peripheral specifications, physical appearance, value-added features, and connectivity and mobility. Moreover, once consumers have a positive experience with a brand's post-purchase services, there's a high likelihood of them repurchasing that brand when buying another notebook computer. Based on these findings, the researchers focus more on specific features or aspects that have the most significant influence on consumer decision-making, this aims to expand the understanding of marketing students' preferences regarding notebook computers by focusing on the factors that have the most significant impact on their decision-making processes.

Keywords: Notebook Computer preferences, Purchasing Decisions.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's digitally driven world, laptops have become essential tools for students, significantly influencing academic performance, productivity, and overall learning experiences. The choice of a laptop brand is a critical decision for students, as it can affect their efficiency in completing academic tasks and engaging with digital learning resources. Notebook computers offer portability, ease in note-taking, access to online materials, support for multimedia projects, and facilitation of collaborative work, all of which contribute to a more flexible and effective learning environment (Khan & Rohi, 2013). Through digital platforms, students can also maintain relationships with teachers and peers while engaging in self-directed learning. Consequently, notebooks have become indispensable in modern education, promoting an interactive and dynamic approach to learning.

The rapid development of information and technology has further heightened the importance of laptops, attracting both academics and consumers toward advanced computing devices. Computers are increasingly compact, lightweight, and high-performing due to continuous innovations in microchip technology and hardware design (Aksut et al., 2022; Jyotidiwy et al., 2022). In addition to traditional computing tasks, laptops are now integrated into consumer appliances, handheld devices, and entertainment platforms, highlighting the importance of technical features, performance, and connectivity in purchasing decisions. Students generally prioritize portability, performance, and functionality, making notebooks a preferred choice over stationary computers.

The study is anchored in the Differentiation and Consolidation (Diff-Con) theory, which explains how consumers process decision-making by evaluating alternatives and consolidating preferences post-decision (Svenson, 2015; Lind et al., 2020). This theoretical lens is complemented by prior research identifying seven critical factors that influence laptop brand preference: core technical features, post-purchase services, price and payment conditions, peripheral specifications, physical appearance, value-added features, and connectivity and mobility (Brahmbhatt & Acharya, 2015; Candelario et al., 2016; Kanwar, 2012). Core technical features, including processor speed, memory, storage, display resolution, and operating systems, are primary considerations for consumers seeking maximum performance and satisfaction (Mishra & Aithal, 2021; Tampi et al., 2016). Meanwhile, post-purchase services such as maintenance, repair, warranty, and technical support enhance customer satisfaction and influence repeat purchases (Mgondah, 2017). Price considerations and flexible payment options also play a pivotal role in consumer decisions, alongside peripheral specifications, physical design, and additional value-added features like security measures and durability (Tampi et al., 2016; Payment terms | business.gov.au, 2023). Finally, connectivity and mobility, including wireless networking, Bluetooth, and battery performance, are essential attributes driving consumer preference (Candelario et al., 2016; Connectivity, 2022).

Consumer behavior research shows that purchase decisions are shaped by cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016; Ramya & Ali, 2016). Brand preference reflects a positive evaluation of past experiences and often leads to repeated purchases and loyalty (Ebrahim et al., 2016; Yes, 2021). For laptops, key factors influencing brand preference include price, performance, payment flexibility, necessity, and additional features (Uma, 2013; Li et al., 2017). Understanding these determinants is essential for manufacturers seeking to align product offerings with consumer expectations.

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Statement of the problem

Despite the growing reliance on notebook computers among university students for academic purposes, limited research has been conducted to systematically examine the specific preferences and purchase decision factors of marketing students in a Philippine higher education context. At Capiz State University-Main Campus, where notebook computers serve as essential tools for learning, collaboration, and engagement with digital academic resources, understanding what drives students' purchasing decisions is critical for both educators and industry stakeholders. This study aimed to determine the notebook computer preferences of marketing students at Capiz State University-Main Campus and to gain insights into the factors influencing their purchase decisions. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, year level, and estimated monthly family income?
2. What is the level of notebook computer preference of marketing students at Capiz State University-Main Campus in terms of core technical features, post-purchase services, price and payment conditions, peripheral specifications, physical appearance, value-added features, and connectivity and mobility?
3. Is there a significant difference in the notebook computer preferences of the respondents when analyzed according to their demographic profile variables of age, sex, year level, and estimated monthly family income?
4. What recommendations may be proposed for laptop manufacturers, marketers, and educational institutions based on the findings of the study?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design to systematically examine students' preferences for notebook computers at Capiz State University-Main Campus (McCombes, 2019; Hassan, 2023). The research population consisted of 537 BSBA marketing students, with a sample of 230 respondents selected through convenience sampling, ensuring accessible participation (Edgar & Manz, 2017). The instrument used was a survey questionnaire divided into demographic profiles and notebook preference factors, validated by experts and pilot-tested for reliability, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.979. Data collection involved distributing the questionnaire to respondents, who completed it on-site to ensure accuracy. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with preference levels categorized on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "least preferred" to "highly prefer." Ethical considerations were observed, with respondents informed of the study's purpose and assured of confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Notebook Computer Preferences

The findings of this study indicate that marketing students at Capiz State University have a clear set of preferences when choosing notebook computers, with an overall preference level categorized as "Preferred" (mean = 4.09). Among the seven factors analyzed, post-purchase services received the highest mean (4.19), highlighting the critical role of warranty coverage, customer support, and repair options in influencing students' purchase decisions.

This suggests that after-sales support is a primary determinant of brand preference. Following closely were price and payment conditions and value-added features (both mean = 4.11), showing that students also consider affordability, financing flexibility, and additional functionalities such as fast charging and high-quality sound systems. Conversely, core technical features had the lowest mean (3.93), although still preferred, indicating that while processing power, storage, and graphics performance are important, they are slightly less decisive than service, cost, and added features.

Other factors including peripheral specifications, physical appearance, and connectivity and mobility were similarly rated as preferred, reflecting the importance of usability, aesthetic appeal, and convenience in students' decision-making. The findings align with previous research indicating that modern laptop consumers weigh both functional and experiential features when selecting devices (De Leon, 2023; Liu & Zhang, 2020; Lee et al., 2020).

Analysis by demographic profiles revealed that preferences significantly varied by age, year level, and estimated monthly family income, but not by sex. This implies that while male and female students share similar priorities in laptop selection, other factors such as maturity, academic stage, and financial capacity influence the weight given to each laptop feature. Younger students or those with lower income might prioritize affordability and post-purchase support, while senior students may value performance and connectivity for advanced academic tasks. These insights provide practical implications for laptop marketers, emphasizing the need for targeted strategies that consider demographic variations, optimize after-sales services, offer flexible pricing, and highlight value-added features to strengthen brand preference and loyalty.

Table 1. Summary of Students' Notebook Computer Preferences

Factors / Indicators	Grand Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Core Technical Features	3.93	Preferred
Post-Purchase Services	4.19	Preferred
Price and Payment Conditions	4.11	Preferred
Peripheral Specifications	4.08	Preferred
Physical Appearance	4.10	Preferred
Value-Added Features	4.11	Preferred
Connectivity and Mobility	4.09	Preferred
Overall Mean	4.09	Preferred

Table 2. Profile Differences (Significant / Not Significant):

Profile Variable	F-value	p-value	Significance
Age	56.782	.000	Significant
Sex	0.818	.368	Not Significant
Year Level	10.419	.000	Significant
Estimated Monthly Family Income	23.128	.000	Significant

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study yield several important conclusions regarding the notebook computer preferences and purchase decision-making behaviors of students. A prominent conclusion is that after-sales support constitutes a critical determinant of student satisfaction and brand loyalty. Given that students highly value warranty programs, accessible customer

service, and efficient repair services, laptop manufacturers and sellers are strongly advised to prioritize and reinforce these post-purchase service dimensions in both their product offerings and marketing communications. Robust after-sales infrastructure not only addresses student concerns about long-term reliability but also serves as a meaningful differentiator in a competitive market.

Beyond technical performance, the study concludes that students adopt a multifaceted approach to evaluating notebook computers, wherein price, aesthetics, and added functionalities figure prominently alongside core computing capabilities. This finding implies that laptop brands must pursue a deliberate balance between performance and affordability, visual design, and supplementary features in order to appeal effectively to the student market. Features such as fast-charging technology, high-quality audio systems, and advanced connectivity options were found to be particularly influential in shaping student purchase decisions, underscoring the importance of value-added specifications in product development and promotional strategies. Flexible pricing mechanisms, including installment plans, discounts, and targeted promotions, are likewise recommended to accommodate students across varying financial capacities.

The study further concludes that demographic characteristics, specifically age, year level, and family income, give rise to meaningful differences in student laptop preferences. This finding carries direct implications for how laptop manufacturers and marketers segment and approach the student consumer base, as a one-size-fits-all strategy is unlikely to resonate across diverse demographic groups. Customizing marketing strategies to reflect these demographic distinctions is therefore recommended as an effective means of reaching and influencing prospective buyers more precisely. Educational institutions may also contribute to informed consumer decision-making by organizing awareness programs or workshops on technology selection, particularly with respect to technical specifications and connectivity features, thereby equipping students with the knowledge necessary to make sound purchasing choices.

Taken together, the conclusions of this study affirm that students seek a holistic balance of usability, aesthetics, affordability, and service quality when selecting a notebook computer. Laptop brands that successfully integrate functional performance with experiential and service-oriented features are better positioned to enhance their market competitiveness and foster sustained consumer loyalty. To extend and validate these findings, future research is recommended to replicate the study across multiple campuses and regions, thereby determining whether comparable preferences are evident among students in different geographical and institutional contexts. Additionally, expanding the scope of inquiry to include other consumer electronics and educational technologies would contribute to a broader understanding of student preferences in technology purchases. Exploring the influence of additional demographic variables, such as field of study, academic performance, and personal technology usage habits, is also encouraged to deepen the theoretical and practical understanding of the factors that shape student technology acquisition behavior. By acting on these recommendations, stakeholders across industry and academia can more effectively align product development, marketing strategy, and educational support with the nuanced and evolving preferences of student consumers.

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