

Mobile Brand Types and Usage Patterns among University Students in Mogadishu, Somalia

Ahmed Abdi Mohamed Aadan and Abdullahi Mohamud Sharif
Baacil Institute for Research and Development, Mogadishu, Somalia
<https://baacil.com>

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Abstract

The mobile telephone is the principal gateway through which young Somalis access information, financial services and the digital economy, yet evidence on which brands they use, and why, remains scarce. This study examines mobile-phone brand types and usage patterns among university students in Mogadishu, Somalia. A cross-sectional descriptive survey was administered online between February and April 2026 to 302 students via a structured, self-administered questionnaire; data were analysed in Python (pandas, scipy) using descriptive statistics and Pearson's chi-square (χ^2) tests. Samsung was the dominant brand in use (58.6%, $n = 177$), followed by Apple's iPhone (29.8%, $n = 90$) and Infinix (7.9%, $n = 24$), a clear two-brand concentration. Turnover was rapid: 76.2% had owned two or more phones in the preceding three years, and 57.0% had used their current device for a year or less. Most students paid US\$50-\$300 for their handset (69.2% combined). Price (61.9%), brand popularity (60.3%) and features (59.3%) were the leading brand-choice factors, while battery life (65.9%), storage (62.3%) and price (60.6%) were the most valued

attributes. Brand in use did not differ significantly by sex ($\chi^2 = 1.46$, $p = 0.482$) or age ($\chi^2 = 4.73$, $p = 0.578$), and was only borderline associated with level of study ($\chi^2 = 14.51$, $p = 0.069$); price paid was marginally associated with sex ($\chi^2 = 5.92$, $p = 0.052$). The findings position Somali university students as a price-conscious yet brand-aware youth market in which Samsung and Apple compete for a digitally engaged consumer base, offering the first empirical baseline on smartphone brand behaviour in Mogadishu, with implications for retailers, manufacturers, and digital-inclusion policy across the EAC and IGAD regions.

Keywords: mobile phone brands; smartphone adoption; consumer behaviour; brand choice; price sensitivity; Mogadishu, Somalia

Introduction

The diffusion of mobile telephony has transformed the social and economic life of Sub-Saharan Africa more profoundly than perhaps any other technology of the past two decades. Where fixed-line infrastructure historically reached barely one per cent of the population, mobile-phone ownership in East Africa has more

than doubled within a single decade, from roughly 30 per cent to over 70 per cent of adults, and the smartphone has become the dominant means of connecting to the internet (Greenleaf et al., 2025; McCrocklin, 2019). For a youthful continent, where the median age is below twenty and the majority of new mobile subscribers are young people who have grown up with the technology, the handset is no longer a luxury but a fundamental tool for acquiring information, transacting, and participating in public life.

Somalia exemplifies this transformation in an especially concentrated form. Approximately seventy-five per cent of Somalis are under the age of thirty-five, the country offers among the cheapest mobile-data prices in the world, and mobile-money services are used by roughly three-quarters of the adult population (International Trade Administration, 2023). Within this context, the smartphone has become the principal device through which young Somalis study, work, and engage with the digital economy. University students, as early adopters and trend-setters, occupy a particularly important position: their brand choices both reflect prevailing consumer preferences and signal the future trajectory of the national market.

Despite the centrality of the mobile phone to Somali youth, there is a striking absence of empirical research on the brands they actually own and the patterns through which they acquire, value, and replace their devices. A

substantial international literature has examined smartphone purchase behaviour among university students in Malaysia, Jordan, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa (Rahim et al., 2016; Alsmadi et al., 2024; Mugambi, 2017), repeatedly identifying price, product features, brand image and social influence as the principal determinants of choice. Yet none of this work speaks directly to the Somali context, where market structure, purchasing power, and consumer culture differ markedly from those of better-studied economies.

Understanding mobile-brand behaviour among Mogadishu's university students matters for several reasons. For retailers and manufacturers, it identifies which brands command loyalty and which attributes drive purchase. For policymakers concerned with digital inclusion, it reveals the price thresholds and replacement cycles that shape access to the digital economy. And for the wider scholarship on youth consumer behaviour in developing markets, it supplies a data point from one of the least-documented yet most rapidly digitising societies in the Horn of Africa.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following aims. It seeks: (i) to describe the distribution of mobile-phone brands currently in use among university students in Mogadishu; (ii) to characterise usage patterns, including handset tenure, replacement frequency, and price paid; (iii) to identify the device attributes students value most when purchasing a phone; (iv) to

determine the factors that most influence brand choice, including price, brand popularity, features and social influence; (v) to assess the influence of social referents, friends, family, advertising and brand reputation, on brand selection; and (vi) to examine whether brand use and purchasing behaviour vary significantly by sex, age, and level of study.

By pursuing these aims, the study provides the first systematic empirical baseline on smartphone brand behaviour in Mogadishu and situates Somali youth within the broader consumer-behaviour discourse of the East African Community (EAC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region, and to Somalia's ongoing integration into the EAC higher-education system (Issa-Salwe et al., 2024).

Literature Review

This review synthesises recent empirical scholarship on mobile-phone brand choice and consumer behaviour, organised around four themes that emerged from a structured search of the literature, followed by a statement of the research gap that the present study addresses.

Determinants of Smartphone Purchase Decisions

A consistent body of evidence identifies a recurring set of determinants underlying smartphone purchase decisions among young consumers. In a frequently cited study of university students, Rahim et al. (2016) found

that product features, brand name and social influence each bore a significant relationship to purchase intention. Subsequent work has broadened this set to include price, after-sales service, durability and design (Alsmadi et al., 2024; Fulzele & Chirde, 2022). Rakib et al. (2022), studying young customers during the COVID-19 pandemic, confirmed that product features, brand image, price, family and electronic word-of-mouth jointly shape purchase intention. Across these studies a hierarchy is visible in which functional attributes (features, durability, price) and symbolic attributes (brand image, popularity) operate simultaneously, a duality directly relevant to the present analysis of valued attributes versus brand-choice factors.

Brand Image, Loyalty and Price Sensitivity

A second theme concerns the interplay of brand image, loyalty and price. Research on high-technology products demonstrates that brand image exerts an especially strong effect for smartphones, with reputable brands enjoying a psychological-assurance advantage over less-established competitors, an effect documented for Apple in student consumer markets (Shah, 2025). Studies of Generation Y consumers show that brand awareness, brand image and perceived quality drive brand satisfaction and brand love, particularly in the case of Samsung (Diniso, 2026). At the same time, price and value proposition are positively correlated with brand loyalty, indicating that even brand-loyal youth remain sensitive to value (Haba et al., 2017).

Comparative analyses of Apple and Samsung position the former as a premium, ecosystem-driven brand and the latter as a technologically diversified, accessible brand spanning multiple price tiers (Varshney, 2025), a distinction useful for interpreting the two-brand concentration observed in the Somali market.

Social Influence, Family and Advertising

A third theme addresses the social embeddedness of brand choice. Consumer-behaviour research consistently shows that reference groups, parents, family, peers and friends, shape behavioural intention through both informational and normative influence (Rakib et al., 2022). Family influence is found to persist into adulthood, with major purchases such as smartphones frequently discussed with immediate family before a decision is reached. Advertising and social-media exposure further mould youth preferences, with younger cohorts reporting markedly higher susceptibility to advertising than older consumers. In African student samples specifically, brand popularity, sellers' credibility and consumers' socioeconomic status have been shown to exert significant positive effects on smartphone purchase behaviour (Mugambi, 2017; Njigua, 2018).

Smartphone Adoption and Youth Markets in Africa

A fourth theme situates brand behaviour within the structural realities of African markets. The average selling price of a smartphone in Sub-

Saharan Africa stood at roughly US\$120 in 2023, over 30 per cent of monthly income for low-income individuals, yet a cultural shift toward digital engagement is leading youth to prioritise smartphone ownership even at the expense of other spending (Market Data Forecast, 2024). Adoption is projected to reach approximately 87 per cent of connections by 2030 (Ecofin Agency, 2023). Studies across Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia and South Africa report Samsung as the most preferred brand among students, typically followed by Apple and locally competitive brands such as Tecno and Infinix (Mugambi, 2017; Njigua, 2018). These findings establish a regional pattern against which the Somali case can be benchmarked.

Research Gap

Taken together, the literature offers a mature understanding of the determinants, social dynamics and structural context of smartphone brand behaviour, but almost exclusively in markets outside Somalia. The Horn of Africa, and Mogadishu in particular, remains a notable blind spot: despite exceptionally high youth proportions, very low data costs and near-universal mobile-money adoption, no published study systematically documents which brands Somali university students use, how they acquire and replace them, or which factors drive their choices. The present study addresses this gap by providing the first empirical, chi-square-tested baseline of mobile-brand types and usage

patterns among university students in Mogadishu, Somalia.

Methodology

Research Design

A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was employed. This design is appropriate for collecting data at a single point in time and for systematically describing patterns in the attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions of a defined population (Creswell, 2014).

Setting and Study Period

The study was conducted among university students in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. Data were collected online between February and April 2026.

Study Population and Sampling

A total of 302 university students were recruited using a systematic sampling approach, based on availability and willingness to participate. The sample comprised students drawn from foundation through to final-year (Year 4) levels of study.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising sixteen items distributed electronically via Google Forms. The instrument was reviewed for clarity and cultural appropriateness, and was presented bilingually in English and Somali. It covered the following domains: (i) sociodemographic

characteristics (sex, age, level of study); (ii) the brand and model of the phone currently in use; (iii) usage patterns, including handset tenure, number of phones owned in three years, and price paid; (iv) device attributes valued at purchase and factors influencing brand choice; and (v) attitudinal items measuring the influence of brand popularity, price, friends, family, advertising and brand reputation.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using Python (pandas, scipy). Descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages, were computed for all variables. Multi-select items were disaggregated using binary indicator coding. Free-text brand-and-model responses were normalised into brand families (e.g., Samsung, Apple, Infinix). Bivariate associations between categorical variables were assessed using Pearson's chi-square (χ^2) test of independence, with $p < 0.05$ as the threshold for significance. Cross-tabulations were produced for brand in use and price paid by sex, by age, and by level of study. Where expected cell counts fell below five, results were interpreted with appropriate caution.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted under the Baacil Institute research programme [OWNER: confirm whether reviewed/approved by the Somalia Researchers Association (SRA) or an institutional ethics committee]. All participation was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained prior

to data collection, and respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Data were used solely for research purposes.

Results

Sociodemographic Characteristics

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic profile of the 302 respondents. The sample was approximately balanced by sex, comprising 157 male (52.0%) and 145 female (48.0%) students. The majority were aged 21-25 years (53.3%, $n = 161$), followed by the 15-20 group (32.8%, $n = 99$), with smaller proportions aged 26-30 (10.6%, $n = 32$) and 31 years or older (3.3%, $n = 10$). Respondents were distributed across all levels of study, the largest single cohort being Year 2 (26.8%, $n = 81$). This profile is consistent with a predominantly young, mid-undergraduate university population.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 302)

Characteristic	n (%)
Sex	
Male	157 (52.0%)
Female	145 (48.0%)
Age group	
15-20	99 (32.8%)
21-25	161 (53.3%)
26-30	32 (10.6%)
31 years and Above	10 (3.3%)
Level of study	
Year 0 (Foundation)	35 (11.6%)
Year 1	55 (18.2%)
Year 2	81 (26.8%)
Year 3	62 (20.5%)
Year 4	69 (22.8%)

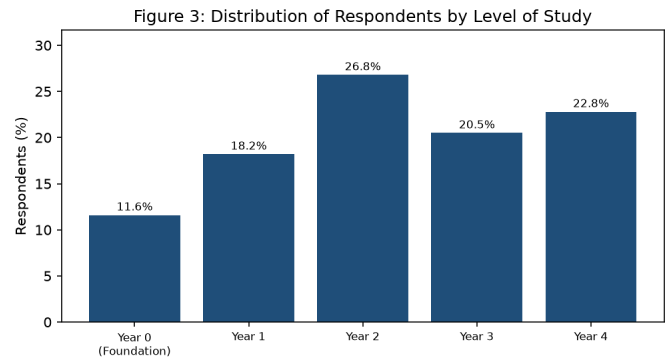


Figure 3. Distribution of respondents by level of study.

Mobile-Phone Brand in Use

Table 2 presents the distribution of mobile-phone brands currently in use, derived from normalising 64 distinct model responses into brand families. Samsung was overwhelmingly dominant (58.6%, $n = 177$), followed by Apple's iPhone (29.8%, $n = 90$) and Infinix (7.9%, $n = 24$); all remaining brands (Huawei, Xiaomi/Redmi, Honor, Oppo, Motorola, Tecno and others) together accounted for fewer than 4% of respondents. The market is therefore highly concentrated around two brands, which jointly account for 88.4% of devices in use. This two-brand concentration mirrors the regional pattern reported across African student samples, in which Samsung leads and Apple follows (Mugambi, 2017).

Table 2. Mobile-Phone Brand Currently in Use (N = 302)

Brand	n (%)
Samsung	177 (58.6%)
Apple (iPhone)	90 (29.8%)
Infinix	24 (7.9%)
Huawei	3 (1.0%)
Xiaomi/Redmi	2 (0.7%)
Honor	2 (0.7%)
Oppo	1 (0.3%)
Motorola	1 (0.3%)
Tecno	1 (0.3%)
Other	1 (0.3%)

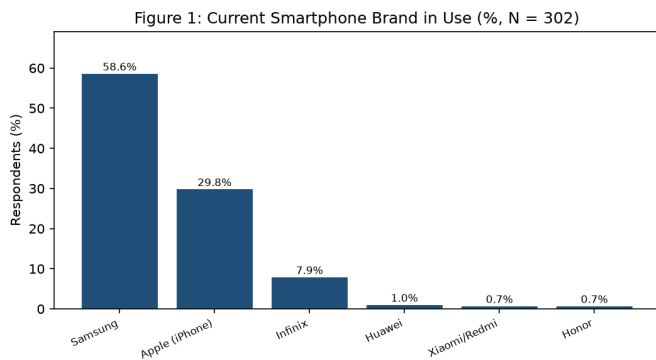


Figure 1. Current smartphone brand in use (%).

Table 3 cross-tabulates brand in use by sex. The chi-square test indicated no significant association ($\chi^2 = 1.46$, $p = 0.482$), with Samsung and Apple commanding comparable shares among male and female students. Brand in use was likewise statistically independent of age ($\chi^2 = 4.73$, $p = 0.578$) and only borderline by level of study ($\chi^2 = 14.51$, $p = 0.069$), suggesting that brand choice in this population is largely demographic-neutral.

Table 3. Brand in Use by Sex (column %)

Brand	Male	Female
Apple (iPhone)	44 (28.0%)	46 (31.7%)
Other brands	16 (10.2%)	19 (13.1%)
Samsung	97 (61.8%)	80 (55.2%)

Usage Patterns: Tenure, Replacement and Price

Table 4 presents usage patterns. Most respondents had used their current device for a year or less, combining those with the phone for 6 months to 1 year (40.1%, $n = 121$) and less than 6 months (16.9%, $n = 51$), a combined 57.0%. Handset turnover was high: only 23.8% ($n = 72$) had owned a single phone over the previous three years, whereas 49.0% ($n = 148$) had owned

two and a further 27.1% had owned three or more. On price, the modal band was US\$151-\$300 (37.4%, $n = 113$), followed by US\$50-\$150 (31.8%, $n = 96$); 9.3% ($n = 28$) reported paying US\$1000 or more, consistent with the premium iPhone segment. Together these patterns describe a young market characterised by frequent device replacement and mid-range spending.

Table 4. Mobile-Phone Usage Patterns (N = 302)

Characteristic	n (%)
Tenure of current phone	
Less than 6 months	51 (16.9%)
6 months to 1 Year	121 (40.1%)
1-2 years	68 (22.5%)
More than 2 Years	62 (20.5%)
Phones owned in past 3 years	
1	72 (23.8%)
2	148 (49.0%)
3	56 (18.5%)
more than 3	26 (8.6%)
Price paid for current phone	
Less than \$50	5 (1.7%)
\$50 -- \$150	96 (31.8%)
\$151 -- \$300	113 (37.4%)
\$301 -- \$999	60 (19.9%)
\$1000+	28 (9.3%)

Table 5 cross-tabulates the price paid (collapsed into three bands) by sex. The association was borderline ($\chi^2 = 5.92$, $p = 0.052$): male students were somewhat more concentrated in the lower price band ($\leq$ US\$150) while female students were marginally more represented in the upper band ($>$ US\$300). Price paid did not vary significantly by age ($\chi^2 = 10.74$, $p = 0.097$). These results indicate that spending is only weakly patterned by demographic background.

Table 5. Price Paid for Current Phone by Sex (column %)

Price band	Male	Female
\$151-\$300	56 (35.7%)	57 (39.3%)
> \$300	39 (24.8%)	49 (33.8%)
≤ \$150	62 (39.5%)	39 (26.9%)

Device Attributes Valued at Purchase

Table 6 reports the device attributes respondents valued most when buying a phone (a multi-select item; percentages exceed 100%). Battery life was the single most-valued attribute (65.9%, n = 199), closely followed by storage (62.3%, n = 188) and price (60.6%, n = 183); camera quality was cited by 53.6% (n = 162) and design by 30.1% (n = 91). The prominence of battery life, storage and price over aesthetic considerations reflects a pragmatic, function-led orientation typical of price-sensitive youth markets in developing economies (Rakib et al., 2022).

Table 6. Features that Matter Most when Buying a Phone (Multi-select, N = 302)

Feature	n (%)
Battery life	199 (65.9%)
Storage	188 (62.3%)
Price	183 (60.6%)
Camera	162 (53.6%)
Design	91 (30.1%)

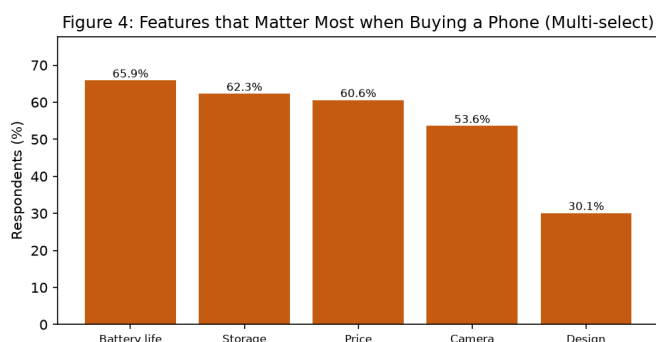


Figure 4. Features that matter most when buying a phone (multi-select).

Factors Influencing Brand Choice

Table 7 reports the factors most important in choosing a mobile brand (multi-select). Price was the leading consideration (61.9%, n = 187), narrowly ahead of brand popularity (60.3%, n = 182) and product features (59.3%, n = 179); social influence, though substantial, ranked lowest of the four (36.1%, n = 109). The near-parity of price, popularity and features echoes the determinant hierarchy identified by Rahim et al. (2016), in which functional and symbolic attributes operate together in shaping youth purchase intention.

Table 7. Most Important Factors in Mobile Brand Choice (Multi-select, N = 302)

Factor	n (%)
Price	187 (61.9%)
Brand popularity	182 (60.3%)
Features	179 (59.3%)
Social Influencer	109 (36.1%)

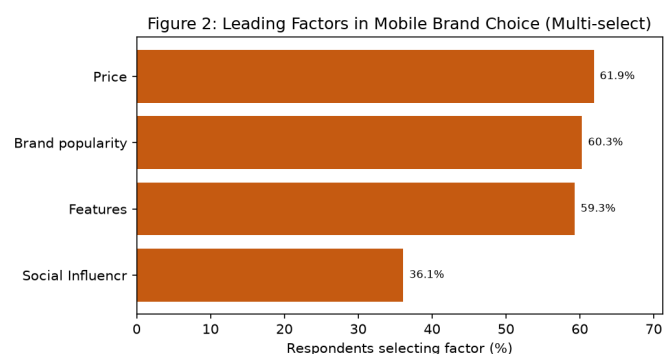


Figure 2. Leading factors in mobile brand choice (multi-select).

Attitudinal and Social Influences on Brand Choice

Table 8 summarises the attitudinal items. Opinion on whether popular brands offer better quality was divided, with the largest group neutral

(27.5%, n = 83) and agreement (38.4% combined) only modestly exceeding disagreement (34.1% combined). Brand popularity was rated very or extremely important by 37.1% of respondents. Among social referents, brand reputation exerted the strongest pull, 38.8% reported it influenced them very much or completely, followed by family (30.8%) and advertising (30.1%), while friends' opinions were the weakest influence (25.9% very much or completely). The pre-eminence of brand reputation over peer opinion is consistent with evidence that, for high-technology goods, institutional brand signals outweigh immediate peer pressure (Shah, 2025).

Table 8. Attitudinal and Social Influences on Brand Choice (N = 302)

Item / response	n (%)
Popular brands offer better quality	
Strong Disagree	57 (18.9%)
Disagree	46 (15.2%)
Neutral	83 (27.5%)
Agree	76 (25.2%)
Strongly Agree	40 (13.2%)
Importance of brand popularity	
Not importantt at all	40 (13.2%)
Slightly important	83 (27.5%)
moderately importantt	67 (22.2%)
very importantt	90 (29.8%)
Extremely importantt	22 (7.3%)
Influence of price	
not at all	51 (16.9%)
slightly	66 (21.9%)
moderately	85 (28.1%)
very much	63 (20.9%)
completely	37 (12.3%)
Influence of friends' opinions	
Not at all	75 (24.8%)
Slightly	74 (24.5%)
moderately	75 (24.8%)
very much	63 (20.9%)
completely	15 (5.0%)
Influence of advertising	
Not at all	56 (18.5%)
Slightly	66 (21.9%)
Moderately	89 (29.5%)
Very much	64 (21.2%)
Completely	27 (8.9%)
Influence of family	
Not at all	70 (23.2%)
Slightly	52 (17.2%)
moderately	87 (28.8%)
very much	65 (21.5%)
completely	28 (9.3%)
Influence of brand reputation	
Not at all	43 (14.2%)
Slightly	50 (16.6%)
Moderately	92 (30.5%)
Very much	76 (25.2%)
Completely	41 (13.6%)

Discussion

A Two-Brand, Price-Conscious Market

The most striking finding is the concentration of the Mogadishu student market around two brands: Samsung (58.6%) and Apple (29.8%)

jointly account for 88.4% of devices in use. This pattern aligns closely with student-market studies elsewhere in Africa, where Samsung consistently leads and Apple follows (Mugambi, 2017; Njigua, 2018). Yet it coexists with pronounced price-consciousness: price was the single most important brand-choice factor (61.9%) and one of the three most-valued attributes (60.6%), and most respondents spent between US\$50 and US\$300. The Somali market thus resembles the broader Sub-Saharan pattern in which youth prioritise smartphone ownership despite handset prices that represent a substantial share of income (Market Data Forecast, 2024).

Functional Pragmatism over Aesthetics

Students valued battery life (65.9%), storage (62.3%) and price (60.6%) far above design (30.1%). This function-led orientation is characteristic of price-sensitive youth markets and echoes the determinant hierarchies reported by Rahim et al. (2016) and Rakib et al. (2022), in which tangible performance attributes dominate purchase intention. For a market with low average incomes and frequent device replacement, durability-adjacent attributes such as battery life and storage plausibly serve as proxies for value-for-money.

Brand Reputation and the Limits of Peer Influence

Among social influences, brand reputation (38.8% high influence) outweighed family

(30.8%), advertising (30.1%) and especially friends' opinions (25.9%). This ordering supports the proposition that, for high-technology products, institutional brand signals provide psychological assurance that exceeds immediate peer pressure (Shah, 2025; Diniso, 2026). It also nuances the general consumer-behaviour expectation that reference groups dominate youth choice (Rakib et al., 2022): in this sample, the abstract reputation of the brand mattered more than the concrete opinions of friends.

Demographically Neutral Brand Behaviour

The chi-square analyses revealed that brand in use was statistically independent of sex ($\chi^2 = 1.46$, $p = 0.482$) and age ($\chi^2 = 4.73$, $p = 0.578$), and only borderline by level of study ($\chi^2 = 14.51$, $p = 0.069$), while price paid was marginally associated with sex ($\chi^2 = 5.92$, $p = 0.052$). The near-absence of demographic patterning suggests that Samsung and Apple compete for a broadly homogeneous student consumer rather than capturing distinct gender or age niches. This contrasts with some international findings of gender-differentiated value perceptions (e.g., Haba et al., 2017) and may reflect the strong, uniform appeal of the two dominant brands in this particular market.

Rapid Replacement and Digital Engagement

That 76.2% of students had owned two or more phones in three years, and 57.0% had used their current device for a year or less, points to a dynamic, fast-cycling market. Such turnover is

consistent with Somalia's exceptionally low data costs and high youth engagement with mobile money and the digital economy (International Trade Administration, 2023), and signals both a continuing replacement demand for manufacturers and a recurring affordability challenge for digital-inclusion policy.

Conclusion

This study provides the first empirical examination of mobile-phone brand types and usage patterns among university students in Mogadishu, Somalia. Drawing on a survey of 302 students analysed with descriptive and chi-square methods, it establishes that the market is highly concentrated around Samsung (58.6%) and Apple (29.8%), that students are simultaneously brand-aware and markedly price-conscious, and that they value functional attributes, battery life, storage and price, above aesthetic ones.

On the positive side, the findings reveal an engaged, digitally fluent youth consumer base with clear preferences and a healthy replacement demand (76.2% owning two or more phones in three years). Of concern, however, is the affordability ceiling implied by the dominance of the US\$50-\$300 price bands, which may constrain access to the higher-specification devices increasingly required by the digital economy, and the demographically undifferentiated competition that leaves little room for locally tailored brands.

These results call for coordinated action by universities, manufacturers and retailers, and by national and regional policymakers within the East African Community (EAC), IGAD and the wider Arab League framework, to ensure that affordable, fit-for-purpose devices remain within reach of Somali youth as the country deepens its digital transformation.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be borne in mind when interpreting these findings. First, the study was confined to Mogadishu and respondents were recruited on the basis of availability and willingness to participate, a non-probability approach that limits generalisation to all Somali university students or to other regions. Second, brand-in-use responses were free-text and required normalisation into brand families; a small number of garbled or ambiguous entries (fewer than 3% of the sample) required interpretive coding, which may introduce minor classification error into Table 2 and the associated bivariate tests. Third, all usage measures (tenure, price paid, attribute importance) are self-reported single items, and no validated purchase-behaviour scale was used. Fourth, the design is cross-sectional, so reported associations describe co-occurrence rather than causation. Fifth, several bivariate cells were small (e.g., the 31-years-and-above age band, $n = 10$, and the Year 0 foundation level, $n = 35$), so results for age and level of study should be read with appropriate caution.

Future research should replicate this baseline across multiple Somali cities and non-student populations, validate brand-in-use responses against device metadata rather than free text, and use multivariate models to identify the joint drivers of brand choice beyond the bivariate associations reported here.

Recommendations

For manufacturers and retailers: Given the dominance of Samsung and Apple and the strong weighting of price, battery life and storage, brands should compete on value-for-money mid-range devices that maximise these functional attributes. Retailers should offer financing and trade-in schemes that match the rapid replacement cycle observed in this market, and emerging brands such as Infinix should target the under-served sub-US\$150 segment with durable, long-battery handsets.

For universities: Institutions should recognise the smartphone as the primary computing device of their students and design digital-learning provision, platforms, content and assessment, to be fully functional on mid-range Android and iOS handsets, and to keep pace with the integration of emerging technologies such as AI-enabled tools into curricula more broadly (Hirsi & Sharif, 2026). Universities can also negotiate institutional purchase or financing partnerships to widen device access among lower-income students.

For the government and regional partners: Policymakers within the EAC, IGAD and Arab League frameworks should treat affordable device access as a pillar of digital inclusion, particularly given the digital-skills gaps documented even within Somali government institutions (Hussein & Sharif, 2025), alongside Somalia's already low data costs. Measures such as reduced import duties on entry-level smartphones and support for device-financing models would help close the affordability gap implied by the prevailing US\$50-\$300 spending bands.

For future research: Subsequent studies should extend this baseline to multiple Somali cities and to non-student populations, incorporate longitudinal tracking of replacement cycles, and employ multivariate models to identify the joint drivers of brand choice beyond the bivariate associations reported here.

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