

## **BRAND AND BRANDING STRATEGIES**

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### **Abstract**

*Branding strategies are the action plans that organizations use to differentiate their products, services, and identities from their competitors. Essentially, a brand strategy is your long-term brand, which helps to identify what kind of image you want to build for your customers. Branding often is seen as confusing or not important to top-level executives because it's difficult for them to see the tangible benefits. Operating without a brand strategy is a recipe for accepting anything. Even for a small business, this can be dangerous. Without a brand, a business lacks an identified purpose. And without a purpose, a business can't stand out from the competition. An effective brand strategy gives you a major edge in increasingly competitive markets. But what exactly does "branding" mean? A brand isn't a logo. Or a brand name or product name. In fact, it isn't any one thing. Your brand is everything. It's the perception of your company, products and services in people's minds. It's how people think and feel about who you are as an organisation and what you do. To brand something is when a company or person makes descriptive and evocative communications, subtle and overt statements that describe what the company stands for. Relationship that brands have with people basically changed the process of digitization of the media. A quantitative, descriptive research was conducted for the purpose of this paper. The purpose of this research is, by analyzing the habits of users of smartphones, to create the communication strategy which companies can use in process of branding. The survey was conducted using the on line questionnaire, made and distributed only to those users who use smartphones in the period January-March 2020. The survey was conducted by the method of testing undisguised structured questionnaire on 340 respondents. The questionnaire consisted of eight questions and most of the questions are structured closed. In the initial part of the survey focus was on basic demographic data (sex and age). The next questions are related to activities that most respondents use the smartphone as well as preferences for activities for which users often use smart phones.*

**Keywords:** *brend, branding, social media, marketing, advertising, strategy*

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### **Introduction**

The marketing practice of creating a name, symbol or design that identifies and differentiates a product from other products. Your marketing and branding clearly influence that perception but your brand exists whether you actively market your business or not. If you're out there and people are interacting with your business, you have a brand. Brand is a known identity of a company in terms of what products and services they offer but also the essence of what the company stands for in terms of service and other emotional, non tangible consumer concerns. In literature there are a lot of branding definitions from marketers and visionary leaders to help us understand what branding entails:

A brand is the essence of one's own unique story. This is as true for personal branding as it is for business branding. The key, though, is reaching down and pulling out the authentic, unique "you". Otherwise, your brand will just be a facade. (Paul Biedermann)

Branding is more than a name and symbol. A brand is created and influenced by people, visuals, culture, style, perception, words, messages, PR, opinions, news media and especially social media. (Lisa Buyer) Branding is the encapsulation of a company's mission statement, objectives, and corporate soul as expressed through the corporate voice and aesthetic. (Margie Clayman)

Brands are shorthand marketing messages that create emotional bonds with consumers. Brands are composed of intangible elements related to its specific promise, personality, and positioning and tangible components having identifiable representation including logos, graphics, colors and sounds. A brand

creates perceived value for consumers through its personality in a way that makes it stand out from other similar products. (Heidi Cohen)

A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. The legal term for brand is trademark. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller. If used for the firm as a whole, the preferred term is trade name. (American Marketing Association)

Branding is the art of aligning what you want people to think about your company with what people actually do think about your company. And vice-versa. (Jay Baer)

A brand is a reason to choose. (Cheryl Burgess)

A brand symbol as "anything that leaves a mental picture of the brand's identity. (Leo Burnett)

Branding is an ongoing process of looking at your company's past and present...and then creating a cohesive personality for the company and its products going forward. We do SWOT analysis and go through all the benefits (real and emotional) that the product or service fulfills for its customers. We review the key factors that spurred growth, pricing, corporate culture, key players, and we figure out "who you are", by key players, the president, customer service. Then we create the brand voice first. It's a wonderful process. (Lois Geller)

Attention is a scarce resource. Branding is the experience marketers create to win that attention. (Jeffrey Harmon)

Branding is the representation of your organization as a personality. Branding is who you are that differentiates you. (Dave Kerpen)

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competitor. (Kotler, P.)

A brand is the meaningful perception of a product, a service or even yourself - either good, bad or indifferent - that marketers want people to believe based on what they think they hear, see, smell, taste and generally sense from others around them. (Josh Moritz)

A brand is "The intangible sum of a product's attributes: its name, packaging, and price, its history, its reputation, and the way it's advertised." (David Ogilvy)

"A brand is a singular idea or concept that you own inside the mind of a prospect." Al Ries

"Branding" is what lazy and ineffective marketing people do to occupy their time and look busy. (David Meerman Scott)

"A brand is essentially a container for a customer's complete experience with the product or company." (Sergio Zyman)

While marketers' definitions of branding may differ, what's consistent is the importance of building your brand as a competitive marketing tool. Brands retain their power in today's evolving social media and device indifferent information consumption because they provide a shorthand communication that breaks through the ever-increasing message-laden environment.

Branding is a powerful and sustainable marketing strategy that we use to influence and manage the way people perceive and respond to your brand, and thereby influence their buying decisions.

We do this by (Luminosity.com, 2018): creating an affinity or emotional connection with the consumer, providing justification for paying a premium price for a service or product, creating loyalty to the product or organization and demonstrating the quality and benefits of a service or product and the company behind it. Acquiring loyal customers is what many successful businesses strive for, and that's what the marketing strategy called branding is all about. Here are a few tips to help you get started (Getbambu.com.2020).

**Step 1: Educate Employees & Provide Guidelines** - If you want to achieve a strong and consistent brand identity, then you need to make sure that your employee advocates are all on the same page. Asking your staff to create content can be an overwhelming concept at first, as it means they need to combine writing skills with a deep understanding of your brand persona, and the messages you want to send. If you're hoping to use your employees in your branding strategies as a way of diversifying the content you publish online, it might be helpful to host training sessions, study groups, and workshops where you can educate them on how to use your brand voice successfully on different social media channels and blogs. For instance, one of the most commendable features of the Starbucks employee advocacy strategy is the fact that they call their staff "partners" and deliver comprehensive social media guidelines for them to follow when they're creating content. (Getbambu.com., 2020)

**Step 2: Share the Right Resources & Tools** - Employee advocates have the power to develop emotional, insightful content for your brand – perfect for establishing long-standing relationships with your customers. While offering educational guidance is a great way to get started when you're enhancing your branding strategies, you may also need to offer practical resources and tools that can help workers create and distribute emotive content easily. For instance, if you want your advocates to share your content, but you know they might have problems writing it themselves, then you could always use a tool like Bambu to share curated content on a connected platform for your staff. That way, your employees can simply share relevant content from a list of available creations, rather than having to write something themselves. Just remember that if you're asking your employees to share thoughts about a recent product or service, you should help them to customize their messages with their own voice, so it doesn't sound like an obvious advertisement. (Getbambu.com., 2020)

**Step 3: Motivate & Reward Your Advocates** - Finally, while many of your staff will be happy to talk about your company and take part in social media branding efforts on your behalf, some will want to know what's in it for them. Brand ambassadors, just like any other employee, want to be recognized for the hard work they do for your company-the good news is that rewarding your advocates doesn't have to mean giving them a huge bump in their paycheck. Shout-outs from managers in a team newsletter or small celebrations can be enough to convince your people that an advocacy strategy is worth their time. You might even consider driving some healthy competition among members of your brand advocacy group by posting a monthly leaderboard that showcases who gets the most shares and comments on social media. A good way to start adding advocacy to your branding strategies is to work with people who love social media first, as these people can help motivate other employees. For instance, General Electric used an advocacy pilot that began with 500 employees already engaged on social media to create an army of social sharers. (Getbambu.com., 2020)

There are many types of branding strategies in marketing that will build brand equity, adding value to your company. Coupled with cross-channel marketing, your brand strategy has the potential to grow dramatically and reach well beyond your target audience. Build value from the customers' perspective. There are many different types of brand strategies that vary based on target audiences, marketing campaigns, and budgets. A well-received brand strategy has the potential to build brand equity and solidify its place as an established brand. Some companies employ multiple strategies to increase the odds of a successful campaign. The research is complete, your target audience is defined, and you're ready to roll out your new product launch. But with so many different types of brand strategies, how do you know if your brand will be received well? Businesses looking to build brand equity can take note of these seven different brand strategies and get an idea of what to expect in a successful marketing campaign. (Cmgpartners.com., 2020c)

**1. Name Brand Recognition** - A well-established company will often use the weight of its own name brand to extend to its products. Most often, a company with large name brand recognition can be recognized by its logo, slogan, or colors. Companies such as Coca-Cola, Starbucks, Apple, and Mercedes-Benz are all iconic while featuring multiple subsidiary products featured under the company name.

**2. Individual Branding** - Sometimes a larger company may produce products that carry their own weight independent of the parent company. This strategy involves establishing the brand as a unique identity that is easily recognizable. General Mills, for example, distributes Cheerios, Chex, Cinnamon Toast Crunch, Kix, Total, Trix, and more—and that's just the cereal division. The company also distributes other major brands from every food group.

**3. Attitude Branding** - Ambiguous marketing can often go above the actual product itself in the case of attitude branding. These brands all use strategies that bring to life personality and a customized experience with products and services. NCAA, Nike, and the New York Yankees made Forbes list of "The World's Most Valuable Sports Brands 2015," and are automatically associated with a certain style. Other brands, such as Apple and Ed Hardy, also reflect a customer's self-expression. (Cmgpartners.com, 2020a)

**4. "No-brand" Branding** - A minimalist approach can speak volumes. No-brand products are often simple and generic in design. The most successful company to establish this marketing method is the Japanese company, Muji, which simply translates to "no label." (Cmgpartners.com, 2020b)

**5. Brand Extension** - Brand extension occurs when one of your flagship brands ventures into a new market. Say you have a shoe company that is now making jackets, athletic wear, and fragrances. The brand name carries its own identity to your product mix.

**6. Private Labels** - Store brands-or private labels-have become popular at supermarkets. Retail chains such as Kroger, Food Lion, and Wal-Mart can produce cost-effective brands to compete with larger retailers. (Cmgpartners.com, 2020)

**7. Crowdsourcing** - These brands are outsourced to the public for brand creation, which allows customers the chance to be involved in the naming process, and effectively drives up personal interest in a product.

A brand strategy can be hard to define but encompasses (Marketingland.com., 2020): What your brand stands for; What promises your brand makes to customers, and What personality your brand conveys through its marketing.

As you can see, many of these things are intangible. How do you measure how successful you are at conveying a certain personality? How do you measure if you've successfully stood for what your brand represents, or if you could be doing it better? The one main metric for successful brand strategy is brand sentiment. And just because it's hard to measure, it doesn't mean that you should dismiss it. It may not be as easy to quantify, but it's too easy for analytical CEOs to dismiss the qualitative work involved in branding. (Marketingland.com., 2020)

The designing of experience is a more intuition-based human, empathetic, end-to-end experience. It seems almost trivial, but in a larger company, these two different skill sets would be handled by two entirely different teams that probably don't often commingle, let alone agree on everything. That's how you waste time, money and energy. In a small startup, you might be missing a "creative" angle altogether. (Marketingland.com., 2020)

Branding strategy definitely involves the intuition side of your mind. But you can also use data to guide your direction. One way to understand if your brand is on the right track in its branding strategy is to think of your brand strategy as a story you are telling. A good story is not just something to read on a page - it's an experience. And for something to be an experience, it needs to have a beginning, a middle and an end. At the end of the experience, there must be some kind of change from the beginning. (Marketingland.com., 2020)

What causes a change in a story? Tension. There must be tension between your antithesis and your thesis. In marketing terms, your "antithesis" is your customer's pain point. Your "thesis" is your solution to that problem. The tension, therefore, is the customer's problem itself. This is the core of your entire product-market fit, viewed at a subatomic level. If you don't have any tension there (problems to solve), then you don't have a business, period! So, at the end of the day, brand strategy boils down to one thing: storytelling. Your brand's strategy is its story, its vision, its heart and soul. Your brand's objective is simply its purpose. Knowing why your brand exists, what purpose it has in the world and what it stands for is what defines it from the very start. When you want to define your brand, you'll need to ask yourself some questions (Marketingland.com., 2020): What problem does my brand solve? Who is my ideal customer? Who is my competition? What does my brand make my customers feel? Why do my customers trust me? What is the story behind why my brand was created? If my brand was a person, what would their personality be like?, etc.

Once you answer these questions, you can begin to choose things like logo colors and font, your motto or tagline and other marketing elements to communicate your brand's overall story. Customers identify with specific brands for a variety of reasons. Good products or services at a good price are common reasons, but what drives customers goes beyond that. For example, environmentally conscious consumers might be willing to spend a little bit more to buy from green companies that commit financially and otherwise to reducing carbon footprints. Don't lose sight of your primary focus. If you manufacture widgets, your company needs to be about manufacturing widgets, but you also can be about more than just that. Determine what that is, then communicate to customers why it is important to you. If it is important to them too, you might gain their business. Developing a brand strategy can be one of the most difficult steps in your overall marketing plan, but it is important because your brand identity is communicated frequently and consistently in multiple ways throughout the life of your business. Consider six tips for creating your brand strategy: (Thebalancesmb.com., 2020)

**1. Why Branding Is Important** - Customers identify with specific brands for a variety of reasons. Good products or services at a good price are common reasons, but what drives customers goes beyond that. For example, environmentally conscious consumers might be willing to spend a little bit more to buy from green companies that commit financially and otherwise to reducing carbon footprints. Don't lose sight of your primary focus. If you manufacture widgets, your company needs to be about manufacturing widgets,

but you also can be about more than just that. Determine what that is, then communicate to customers why it is important to you. If it is important to them too, you might gain their business.

**2. How To Define Your Brand** - By defining what your brand is you create the foundation upon which all other components are built. Your brand definition serves as your measuring stick in evaluating marketing materials and strategies—from what your office looks like to what your ad says to the color and font of your business cards to the design of your website.

**3. Determining Your Brand's Objectives** - Critical to effective brand management is the clear definition of the brand's audience and the objectives that the brand needs to achieve. Ask yourself two key questions to help determine your brand objectives (Thebalancesmb.com., 2020): What is it that you want your brand to do for your company? What do you want others to know and say about your products or services?

**4. Focusing on Your Target Audience** - The power of your brand relies on the ability to focus. That is why defining your target market will help to strengthen your brand's effectiveness.

The key is knowing who your target market is. Zero in on your target audience by asking yourself (Thebalancesmb.com., 2020): How old are they?, What is their income range?, What are their occupations?, What other interests do they have?, etc.

**5. Discovering and Crushing Your Brand Barriers** (Thebalancesmb.com., 2020). When creating your brand strategy for a product or service it is important to perform a careful analysis to spot potential barriers. These barriers are also known as market conditions, and they can keep your product or service from being successful.

**6. Brand Packaging and Identity** (Thebalancesmb.com., 2020). Branding is as identifiable to your customers as your face is to friends and family. It's how people see you in the marketplace. Is yours saying what it should? Your company image is all about the appearance of your packaging. What is your company image saying (i.e., conveying) to the marketplace? If your packaging doesn't uniquely represent your business, change your packaging.

New media occur in various forms (Buzzle, 2012): Internet, podcasts, e-books, blogs, Internet TV, e-mail, mobile phones and so on and offer the possibility of unlimited and constant interaction through which users can create, share and exchange content, and in terms of the brands, they are the starting point for a new era in personal interaction and contribute to the transparency of the companies (Mangold and Faulds 2009). They introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between businesses, organizations, communities, and individuals. (Kietzmann, Jan; Kristopher Hermkens, 2011). Social media differ from traditional or industrial media in many ways, including reach, frequency, usability, immediacy, and permanence. Social media operate in a dialogic transmission system. (Pavlik & MacIntoch, John and Shawn, 2015). This is in contrast to traditional media that operates under a monologic transmission model (one source to many receivers). Social media are computer-mediated tools that allow people or companies to create, share, or exchange information, career interests, ideas, and pictures/videos in virtual communities and networks (Buettner, R. 2016).

In the process of branding used different types of m-marketing communication tools, but hereinafter will be analyzed applying (Unique Content Solution, 2013): Multimedia Messaging Service, Push notifications and SMS marketing and advertising.

1. Multimedia Messaging Service- are delivered in much the same way as text messages, but they can include multimedia objects (images, audio, video, etc.). MMS messages are often in the form of slides, so that multimedia purposes are divided into sequences and broadcast by the script and the timing of the publisher. MMS interactive marketing is a form of advertising, where creativity plays a very important role, because this way marketers can send more creative and personalized messages (Becker and Arnold, 2010, p. 25), where: (a) Recounting the story with interesting pictures, sound and video to delight, entertain, inform and engage potential customers; (b) Integrating links to mobile websites in messages to the service secretaries interactive voice (IVR call services), applications and other outlets, the viewers can get more information; and (c) Offering attractive coupons with images, sound and video.

2. Push notifications allow companies to send personally tailored and timed messages to deploy many customers or less targeted, depending on the message you want to convey. Thus customers can be categorized according to their location, device they use, or their level of commitment. In terms of marketing, push notifications are a good tool for creating brand awareness of and contact with customers. (Unique Content Solution, 2013). Push notification is a feature that allows you an application to notify mobile phone users about new messages or events without the need to open the application. Incoming message can be

received even for applications that are not currently open. In this regard push notifications are similar to text messages that appear on the phone screen (Warply, 2013). This method was originally presented to the iPhone in 2007, and later more phones on the Android platform. The most effective part of this type of mobile advertising is that it is cheaper than other techniques for mobile advertising and causing no interruption of existing active applications on the user's phone.

3. SMS offer marketers a channel not only to start a conversation with customers, but also to get additional information about their views and opinions. Text communication can be divided into three mobile levels: informative, promotional and relationship management with customers. All three levels have an important role for the further continuation of the conversation with the client (Ohe next web, 2013). The effectiveness of SMS marketing is conditioned by the existence of a mobile website where customers right from their mobile device may access (Pitney Bowes, 2015). According to research by eMarketer and ComScore, still the largest number of respondents, 78%, its smart phone used to send text messages, 54% use it to download applications, 53% used a search engine, 39% accessed the social network or blog, 33% played a game and 28% listened to music. (Ohe next web, 2013). According to research conducted by SlickText, in the UK ,almost 99% of respondents read the text SMS messages on his phone in the first 5 minutes after you get with an average response time of 90 seconds (SlickText, 2013).

### Research Methodology

A quantitative, descriptive research was conducted for the purpose of this paper. The purpose of this research is, by analyzing the habits of users of smartphones, to create the communication strategy which companies can use in process of branding. The survey was conducted using the on line questionnaire, made and distributed only to those users who use smartphones, in the period January - March 2020. The survey was conducted by the method of testing undisguised structured questionnaire on 340 respondents. The questionnaire consisted of eight questions and most of the questions are structured closed. In the initial part of the survey, the focus was on basic demographic data (sex and age). The next questions are related to activities that most respondents use their smartphone on, as well as preferences for activities for which users often use their smart phones.

### Analysis of survey results

According to the analysis, the survey included 340 respondents, of which 31 were excluded because of incomplete answers. Of the other respondents, most of them were 56% male and 44% female.

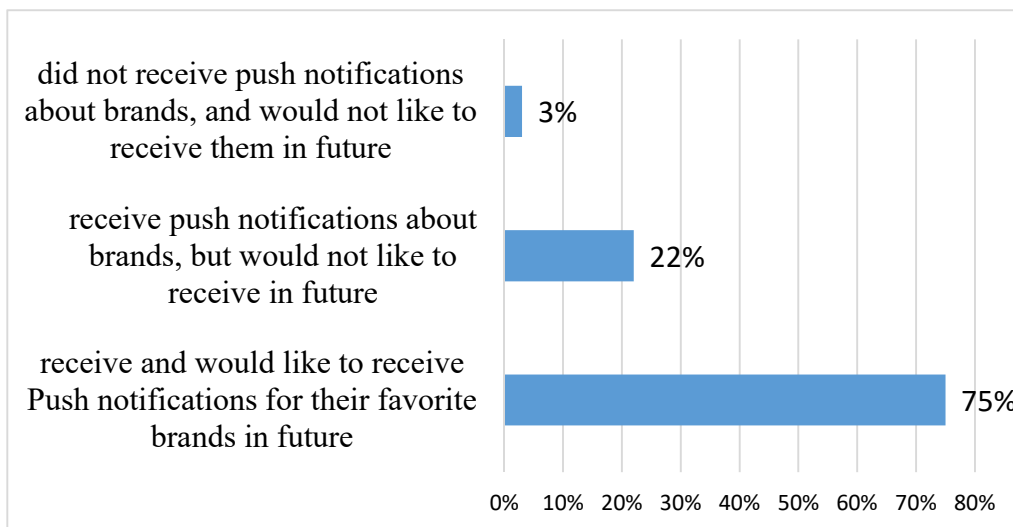
Most of the respondents in this study were aged 30 to 45 years, 54%. The age category of respondents 18 to 30 years represent 30% of respondents, age category of 46 to 60 years represent 15%, and quite insignificant portion of respondents representing 1% of the age group above 60 years. According to the survey, respondents used their smartphones most often to make calls, 43%, then to check the social networks, 32%, 17% search the Internet, and 8% of the respondents used their phones for other activities (eg., downloading mobile applications photography, listening to music, etc.).

The survey results show that very few of the respondents use their smart phones for purchase, 64% (mostly buying tickets for trips, sports equipment, bookings in hotels, etc.), against a 46% percentage of respondents who do not purchase through their smartphones.

According to the survey, most respondents, 43%, are neutral on whether web pages they visit are optimized for mobile devices. However, many of the respondents, 32%, claim that web pages they visit are optimized for mobile devices, while the percentage of those who disagree with this statement is 20%. A small percentage of those who strongly agree is 3%, strongly disagree 2%.

Most of the respondents included in the survey (75%) receive and would like to receive Push notifications for their favorite brands in future. 22% of respondents receive push notifications about brands, but would not like to receive, and 3% of respondents did not receive push notifications about brands, and would not like to receive them in future;

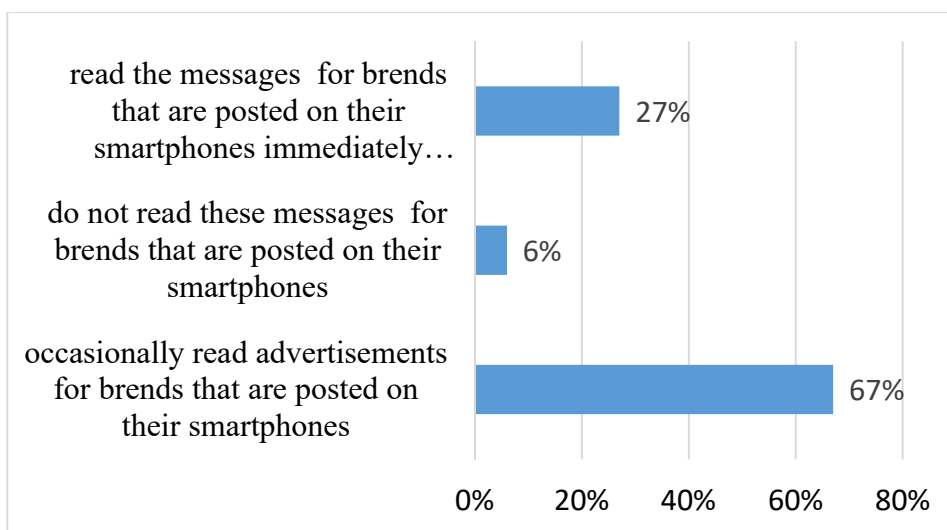
Figure 1. Push notifications for favorite brands



Source: Own research January - March 2020

Research has shown that 3% of the respondents don't receive and would not like to receive notifications on their smart phones. Much of the respondents, 22%, received but would not like to receive notifications on their smart phones and most of respondents, 65%, receive and would like to receive notifications on their smart phones.

Figure 2. Response to the received advertisements for brands



Source: Own research January - March 2020

According to the survey responses to advertising messages they receive, most of the respondents 67% occasionally read advertisements that are posted on their smartphones, 6% do not read these messages, but only 27% of respondents read the messages immediately after receiving. Mobile marketing offers wide opportunities and ways of targeting consumers, especially when talking about targeted advertising in Republic of North Macedonia, because there are already companies that provide this service. This is one more reason for Macedonian companies, which still haven't done it, to optimize their websites for mobile devices in 2020. The skepticism among companies about this innovative approach must be overcome through education and information about the benefits of this kind of advertising.

## Conclusion

Given the results of the research in this paper, we can draw the following conclusions:

According to the survey, respondents most often used their smartphones to make calls 43%, then to check the social networks 32%, 17% search the Internet, 8% other activities (eg., downloading mobile applications, photography, listening to music, etc.).

The survey results show that very few of the respondents use their smart phones for purchase 64% (mostly buying tickets for trips, sports equipment, bookings in hotels, etc.), against a 46% percentage of respondents who do not purchase through their smartphones.

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