The Influence of Product Knowledge, Product Usability and Price toward Customer Preferences: (A Case of Samsung Smartphone Users in President University)

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Abstract

The growing smartphone industry makes consumers have more choices in determining which products they want to buy, so that the behavior and the reason in determining the choice will be very different from any individual or group. The aim of the research is to analyze the customer's preference on Samsung smartphone by using the perspective of university. This research has 3 independent variables which are product knowledge, product usability, and price with dependent variable which is customer preferences. In this research, researcher used quantitative method and working through questionnaire distributed to 300 respondents consist of students, employees, and lecturers. Construct validity was checked through factor analysis and passed the convergent and discriminant validity. Reliability was checked through Cronbach's alpha and passed (ranging from .688 to .842) , and then Structural Equation Modelling was applied as the method of hypothesis testing. Based on the result of the research, it shows that the most influence factor is product usability, and the second is price. For the product knowledge factor did not have any significant influence toward customer preference of smartphone. It is recommended that Samsung focus more on price and the benefits for its consumers. For future research, it is expected to expand the research to other big cities in Indonesia.

Keywords: Smartphone, Customer Preference, Product Knowledge, Product Usability, Price.

Abstrak

Industri smartphone tumbuh membuat konsumen memiliki lebih banyak pilihan dalam menentukan produk yang mereka ingin beli, sehingga perilaku dan alasan dalam menentukan pilihan akan sangat berbeda dari setiap individu atau kelompok. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis preferensi pelanggan pada Samsung smartphone dengan menggunakan perspektif universitas. Penelitian ini memiliki 3 variabel independen yaitu pengetahuan produk, kegunaan produk, dan harga dengan variabel dependen yaitu preferensi pelanggan. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menggunakan metode kuantitatif dengan menggunakan kuesioner yang dibagikan kepada 300 responden terdiri dari mahasiswa, karyawan, dan dosen. Validitas konstruk diperiksa melalui analisis faktor dan melewati konvergen dan diskriminan validitas. Keandalan diperiksa melalui alpha Cronbach dan lulus (mulai 0,688-0,842), dan kemudian Structural Equation Modelling diaplikasikan sebagai metode pengujian hipotesis. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, diperoleh bahwa faktor yang paling berpengaruh adalah produk kegunaan, dan yang kedua adalah harga. Untuk faktor pengetahuan produk tidak memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap preferensi pelanggan smartphone. Disarankan bahwa Samsung lebih fokus pada harga dan manfaat bagi konsumen. Untuk penelitian masa depan, diharapkan untuk memperluas penelitian ke kota-kota besar lainnya di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Smartphone, Preferensi Pelanggan, Pengetahuan Produk, Kegunaan Produk, Harga.
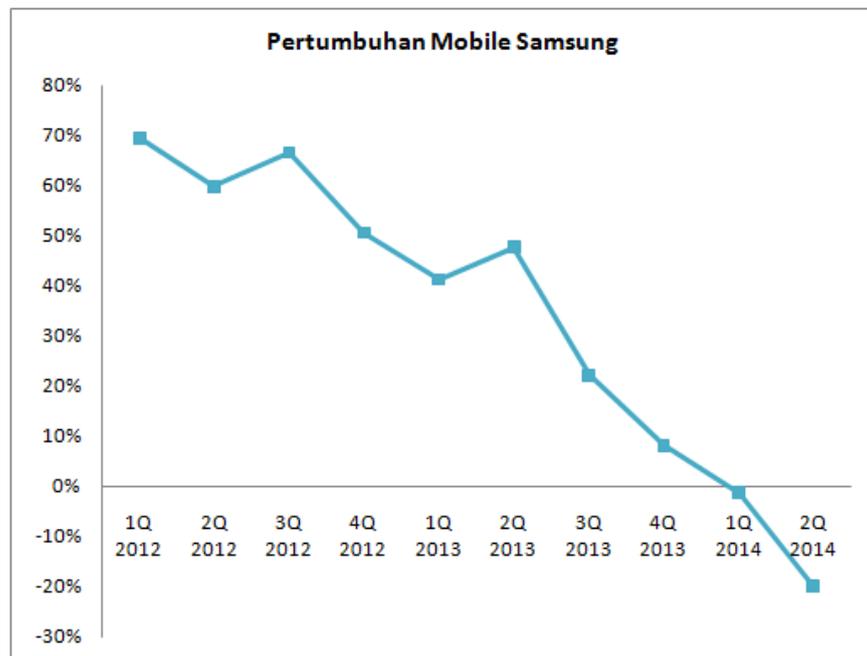
Introduction

Communication has become one of primary needs of human beings. Thus, many companies are trying to fulfill the needs by launching new products that suit to customers. Hence, it creates fierce competition in the field of information and telecommunications technology at this time. Some brands to be named like Nokia,who was the giant in telecommunication, was conquered by Blackberry which later was conquered by Apple and Samsung. And now more companies are competing like Lenovo, LG, Sony, HTC, OPPO, HUAWEI, etc. But from all the major of brands, Samsung is the most superior smartphone's brand and becoming the market leader in business communication tool. Mahardi (2013) reported that the dominance of Samsung in the Android market can not be defeated. Combined with the other brands sales like HTC, Sony, LG, and Motorola are still less than 25% have not been able to compete with Samsung.

Samsung always make new innovations of their smartphone products with different kinds of colors, specification, application, price and also from the size of smartphone. This is one of strategy by Samsung to still be able to maintain their existence in the global competition of business. This strategy succeeded in making Samsung obtained high interest of customer and their sales continue to increase.

As quated in Kompas.com (2014) , Samsung controlled 30.2% of smartphone worldwide market, compared to 31.9% previously.

Samsung as one of the kings in smartphone business is now experiencing a downward trend in sales for first quarter of 2014. Samsung's declining is suspected to its rapid movement to fill up every segment with price without giving enough feature and technology compare to its competitor especially from China. And this is reinforced by the data cited from CNESIA, on the topic "Samsung Sales Down in First Half 2014" (Setiawan, 2014).

Figure 1
The Growth of Samsung Smartphone

Aravinth (2012) in his research proves that purchasing decisions for smartphone are influenced by products knowledge, product usability and price which part of customer preferences. Hence this research aim is to find out to what extent product knowledge, product usability and price influence customer preference. This research is needed to be done because the study "Getting Right Mobile" initiated by Yahoo and mindshare, today there are about 41.3 million smartphone users in Indonesia and is going to grow rapidly until 103.7 million users in 2017. Therefore, the business communication industries are like a diamond mine.

This research paper is divided into four sections. The first section introduces the background of the problem and research aim. The second section is reviewing some literatures along with the hypotheses and closing with theoretical framework. Section three is discussing the research method used, demography profiles and closing with validity and reliability test result. Last but not least is the fourth section. Results are being discussed and along with recommendations.

Literature Review
Consumer Preferences

Decision taken by a consumer is not merely a decision that is affected by internal factors such as the characteristics of the self-consumer and consumer decision-making process of consumers only but also the existence of external factors also influences consumers in making decisions (Sandhusen, 2000). Further, he named this integration between external factors and internal factors as the Buyer's Black Box. Ravikumar (2012) suggests that the implication of consumer preference in the business can be used to design and evaluate new product and service strategies that will understand how to shape consumer preferences in the market. Hence, Shendge (2012) in a comparative study adds that marketers need to know and understand the customer preferences of each segment, ranging from what they like and do not like, time, quality and quantity of the desired product, and a better quality of service.

The Relationship between Product Knowledge and Customer Preference

As for Turban et al (2001), knowledge contains information that has been organized and processed to provide understanding, experience, further learning, and expertise as used for a particular business problem or process. Whereas according to Housel and Bell (2001) knowledge is something that allows people or machines to solve the problem for some types. While Lin and Lin (2007) defines product knowledge a perception of consumers towards a particular product, including prior experience using the product. Tommy & Richard (2012) argue that knowledge of the product is very influential on the repetition of purchase. Indirectly in the purchase of repetition, obviously consumers have chosen products that they want and establish that they are loyal to the product. In another study by Putri (2009) found that product knowledge is very influential on consumer decisions.

There are three factors behind the influential product knowledge to smartphones: 1) Operating system; 2) Mobile applications; 3) Mobile phones appearance (Gerogiannis, Papadopolou, and Papageorgiuo, 2012). Other than that smartphone users are also looking for and want to get all the new features, especially in mobile applications (Hwang, 2012). Wilardi (2013) in his research on the influence of product appearance in purchasing an Ipad, the results showed that the product appearance has an influence on purchasing decisions about 33.3%. This shows that the appearance of being one of the factors that are taken into account in the purchase of electronic products, especially smartphones.

> *H1: Operating system has positive influence on product knowledge.*
> *H2: Mobile Application has positive influence on product knowledge.*
> *H3: Product Appearance has positive influence on product knowledge.*
> *H4: Product knowledge has positive influence on customer preference.*

The Relationship between Product Usability and Consumer Preferences

Usability is usually described as a tool or application that supports a process of study design in the science of information technology, whether it's for real products (products that can be seen), and not real (Web, Software, etc.) Usability is a very important element that provides the ease of product information

(Horrocks, 2009). Whereas Nielsen (1993) defined usability as a quality attribute that can describe and measure how easy to use an interface, the intention is to increase the ease of use. Nigel (2005) argues that reasons behind why sales are increased product usability due to: 1) Increase competitive advantage by offering a product or service information by "image" is easy to use; 2) Increased levels of customer satisfaction with the product repeat purchases and recommendations to others for free; 3) Increased the rating of products in terms of usability in a product review.
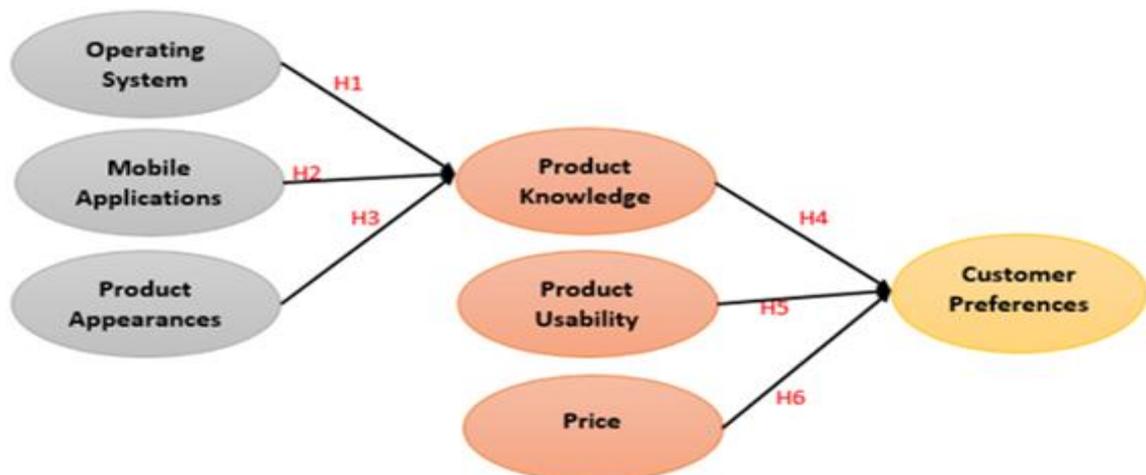
H5: Product Usability has positive influence on customer preference.

The Relationship between Price and Customer Preference

Prices are always closely connected with money. Price is the only component that generates revenue, while other elements (production, distribution and promotion) is an element of the cost. Price is the total of all the values that consumers exchanged in order to obtain the benefit (of) having or using a product or service (Kotler & Armstrong, 2011). Thus, manufacturers should always keep abreast of the market and should know the position of the company and the overall market situation, so that the company can set prices appropriately in order to succeed in marketing their products. Hill and Jones (2013) revealed that the purpose of fixing the price by a company is to make a profit on the market segment (market skimming), market penetration, and add profit to the cost of production. Seen from the standpoint of consumers that prices are often a barometer and is associated with benefits that can be perceived on a particular product. If the perceived benefit increases, then its value will increase and will create maximum customer satisfaction (Tjiptono, 2001). If the price is set by a company is not in accordance with product benefits, then it can lower the value of the products, so that consumers can make choices to other products. On the contrary, if the price is set by a company in accordance with the benefits received, then the value of the product will increase consumer choice and can be.

H6: Price has positive influence on customer preference.

Figure 2
Theoretical Framework

Source: A framework for factors affecting mobile users' switching intentions (Rodrigo, Luis, Jorge, 2013)

Method

This research applied quantitative method. Quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon (Babbie, 2010; Muijs, 2010). In demographic side, from 300 respondents gathered both gender were almost equal in numbers. Male respondents were 149 (49.6%) and the female respondents were 151 (50.3%). For age group, the respondents were divided into 6 categories where for less than 19 years old there were 98 (32.7%), the age 20–30 consist of 154 respondents (51%). For the age 31–40, there were 26 respondents (9%), the age 41–50, there were 16 respondents (5%), the age 51–60, there were 4 respondents (1%), and the last was for greater than 60 with 2 respondents (0.7%). Based on occupation category, it was found that 213 (71%) respodents were student, 36 (12%) respondents were lecturers, and the last was 51 respondents (17%) from staff or employee. The smartphone that respondents' use came from 9 different brands of smartphone with 118 respondents (39%) used Samsung, Apple users were 74 (25%) respondents, 21 (7%) respondents used Sony, the total respondents of LG were 12 (4%) respondents, for Lenovo there were 16 (5%), 11 (4%) respondents used OPPO, HTC users were 10 (3%) respondents, for Asus users were 20 (7%), and others smartphone were 18 (6%). Respondents who changed their smartphone was divided into 4 category. Less than 1 year were 40 (13%) respondents, 98 (33%) respondents changed their smartphone within 1-2 years, 83 (28%) respondents changed their smartphone within 2-3 years and more than 3 years, there were 79 (26%) respondents.

Before proceeding to data analysis, data need to be confirmed on their validity and reliability (Table 1). For face validity was done by confronting to experts judgement and some literature review on past researches. Construct validity was done by applying Factor Analysis with three criteria to be passed before matching the cut off value of factor loading more than .44. The first criterion is KMO-MSA and Bartlett's Test for factor Operating system and Product appearance was 0.852, which means greater than 0.5. Meanwhile, the resulting significance of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was 0.0001. The second criterion is communalities after extraction. Communalities reflect variance in the extraction column with structured data. Communalities after extraction showed an average value of more than 0.5 (ranging from .688 to .842).The third one is Total Variance Explained shows above 60% (74.829 %). Hence the data are eligible for further analysis. For Product Usability and Price have also passed the criteria (KMO-MSA = .837, sig = .0001; Communalities ranging from .587 to .786; Total Varianced Explained = 65.398%). As for Customer Preference variable has also passed the criteria (KMO-MSA = .764, sig = .0001; Communalities ranging from .519 to .716; Total Varianced Explained = 64.968%).

Table 1
Validity and Reliability Test

		Factor Loading	Reliability
Operating System	Q1	.862	.843
	Q2	.765	
	Q3	.829	
Product Appearance	Q10	.746	.809
	Q12	.857	
	Q13	.777	
Product Usability	Q14	.705	.774
	Q15	.857	
	Q16	.796	
Product Price	Q19	.697	.793
	Q20	.776	
	Q21	.780	
	Q22	.720	
Customer Preference	Q23	.846	.819
	Q24	.825	
	Q26	.720	
	Q27	.827	

The next test is Reliability by applying Cronbach Alpha which has to be greater than 0.6 and all variables have passed the test with Cronbach Alpha ranging from .774 to .843. For construct validity there are two conditions need to be observed, convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is to find out whether the questions constructed are really measuring the construct variable and only to the construct variable. Under rotated component matrix, it is clear that all the constructed questions are only measuring the constructed variable and no questions were found to construct other variable which means there was no discriminant problem. Hence data are good for further analysis which is Structural Equation Modelling.

Result and Discussion

From Figure 3, the value of standardized coefficient of regression between operation system of Samsung smartphone and customer preference is -0.29. It means that operation system has influence towards customer preference as big as -0.29. The other factor that has standardized coefficient toward customer preference is product appearance from Samsung smartphone, which has 0.22 coefficient of regression. It indicates that product appearance contribute 0.22 to customer preference. The third is product usability of the smartphone which has contribution 0.78 coefficient of regression toward customer preference. The last factor that has standardized coefficient toward customer preference is price of the Samsung smartphone, which has 0.41 coefficient of regression and indicates that price contribute 0.41 to customer preference.

Model fit of SEM (Table 2) shows that all the full model of SEM is acceptable although two of them show the mediocre evaluation. Actually mediocre in SEM means that it still acceptable as long as the value is not so far from the cut value. The result is that for Chi Square, the value is 0.0001, less than < 0.05 which means the model is good. The cut value of CMIN/DF is ≤ 2.00 and the result is 2.366, so it is categorized as mediocre. Besides that for the cut value of GFI is ≥ 0.90 and the result is .906, still it's above the minimum and consider as good. AGFI has the result 0.869 and not pass the cut value which is ≥ 0.90, so it is considered mediocre. For RMSEA has good evaluation since the result is .068, less than the cut value which is ≤ 0.08. The cut value of CFI is ≤ 0.95 and the result is .944, so it is categorized mediocre. And the last is TLI that has the cut value ≥ 0.90 and the result shows .930 that shows good evaluation.

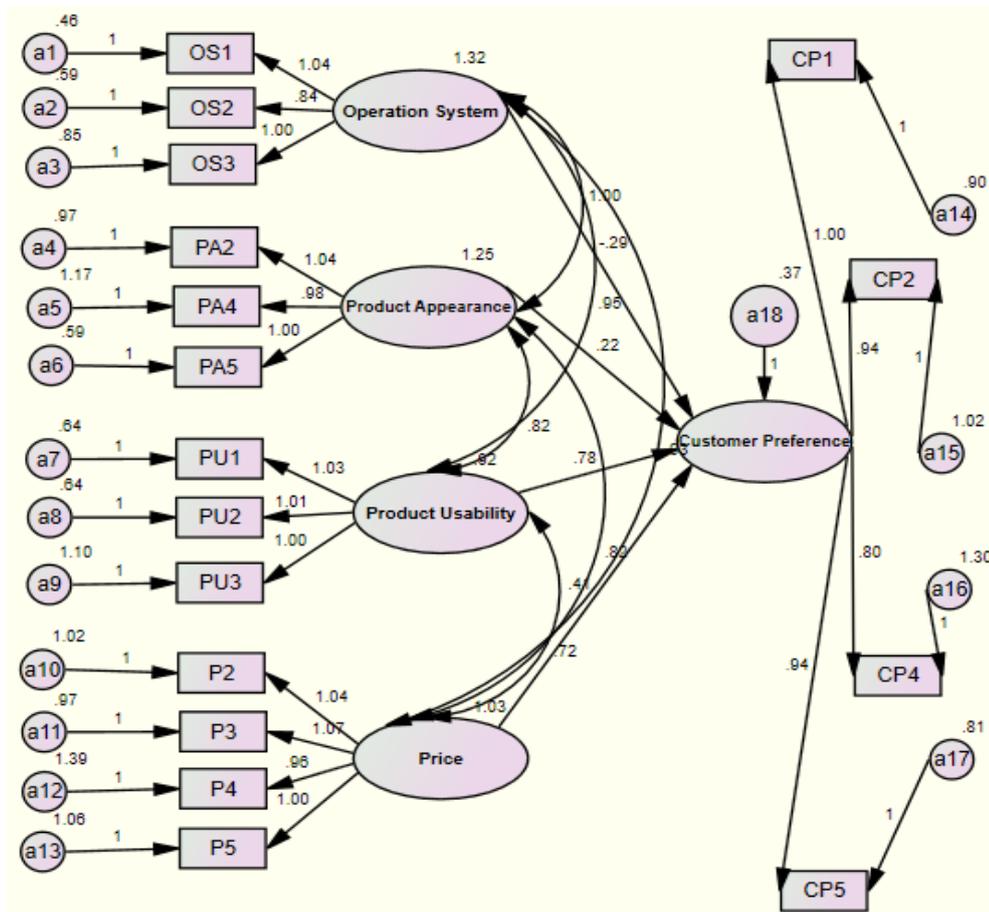**Table 2**
Model Fit of SEM Full Model

Criteria	Cut of Value	Result	Evaluation
Chi Square	P < 0.05 (small expected)	.000	Good
CMIN/DF	≤ 2.00	2.366	Mediocre
GFI	≥ 0.90	.906	Good
AGFI	≥ 0.90	.869	Mediocre
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	.068	Good
CFI	≥ 0.95	.944	Mediocre
TLI	≥ 0.90	.930	Good

Table 3
Regression Weight Analysis

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Customer Preference	<---	Operation System	-.293	.178	-1.648	.099
Customer Preference	<---	Product Appearance	.219	.113	1.940	.052
Customer Preference	<---	Product Usability	.780	.202	3.865	***
Customer Preference	<---	Price	.414	.135	3.066	.002

Regression Weight Analysis (Table 3) shows the relation between construct variable which give value of CR that bigger than 1.96 with P smaller than 0.05, the sign of *** in P means that it is smaller than 0.05. Operating system toward customer preference show CR value is -1.648 which mean smaller than 1.96. CR value of product Appearance variables toward customer preference is 1.940 which mean the data is bigger than 1.96 and the significant is 0.0001. The CR of product usability toward customer preference is 3.865 it is also bigger than 1.96 and the significant is 0.0001. The last is price toward customer preference the CR of this data is 3.066 it is also bigger than 1.96. The result of data CR is 1 from 4 that influencing customer preference smaller than 1.96 it is the data of operating system. From the result of table, it can be said that exogenous variables give significant impact to endogenous variables. Operation System has influenced customer preference with 29.3%. Product appearance has influenced customer preference with 21.9%. Product usability has influenced customer preference with 78%. And the last factor is price has influenced customer preference with 41.4%.

Figure 3
SEM Model

The Previous research conducted by Atminingsih (2012), she found that the selection of the operating system for android or blackberry is not a measure of consumer behavior in buying a smartphone. They are more likely to care about the displays and usability of the smartphone. The results of this study show the same thing that the operating system has no effect on consumer choice in buying a smartphone. But research Atimingsih (2012) said that usability of products is affecting the behavior of consumers in buying a smartphone, so the hypothesis is in accordance with the results of this study on product usability that have a positive effect on consumer choice in buying a smartphone.

Besides, the results of this research show that the product appearance has no effect on consumer choice. On contrary, the research on consumer behavior on smartphones by Yu-Jui (2012) found that the design of the product, price, appearance, brand, and product performance impact on the smartphone purchase decision. But not all of the studies Yu-Jui (2012) in contrast with the results of this study. Such price and performance of the product (equal to usability of products) influence the purchasing decisions of smartphones. And it's in accordance with the hypothesis was tested that the product usability and price have positive effect on consumer choice in buying a smartphone. In another study by Susanto (2013) argued that the price is one of the factors that influence purchasing decisions smartphone products.

Addition to the results of this study also supported by Vikram and Ramanathan (2015) who stated in his journal that the reason people buy a smartphone is the features for their daily activities, which means it usability the smartphone itself.

Managerial Implication

The growing smartphone industry make consumers have more choices in determining which products they want to buy, so that the behavior and the reason they are in determining his choice will be very different from any individual or group. The results of this research, show that there are two factors that can contribute positively to the level of the selection of smartphones, they are product usability and price. To get the right choice, consumers today are more concerned with the price and the benefits they get from the products they use. The choice will be adjusted to the needs and ease they can. For the company such as Samsung of smartphones, knowledge of the factors that influence consumer choice becomes very important, seeing market competition and consumer awareness of the brand have started to decrease.

Future Research

Since the questionnaires were distributed only surrounding President University area so, for the future research, it would be better if the respondents coming from other universities as well or for a change among employees as they have their own privilege to buy for they have the purchasing power. It is also recommended to change the place of research to big cities in Indonesia such as Surabaya, Medan, Bali, Semarang etc. since they have people with purchasing power as well.

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PPENDIX 1
Research Questionnaire
The Influence of Product Knowledge, Product Usability and Price
Toward Customer Preference

Hello, we want to ask your willingness to fill this questionnaire. This questionnaire is intended for users of smartphones, which is purposed as research data for our thesis. Thank you for your willingness.

Please check (√) one option only.

1. Gender
   ☐ Female ☐ Male

2. Age
   ☐ ≤ 19   ☐ 41 - 50
   ☐ 20-30   ☐ 51 – 60
   ☐ 31-40   ☐ > 60

3. Occupation
   ☐ Student ☐ Lecturer ☐ Staff / Employee

4. What smartphone that you use right now?
   ☐ Samsung   ☐ Lenovo
   ☐ Apple   ☐ OPPO
   ☐ Sony   ☐ HTC
   ☐ LG   ☐ ASUS

5. Have you use Samsung Smartphone?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. How much usually you spend for buy smartphone?
   ☐ < IDR 2,000,000   ☐ IDR 6,000,000 - 10,000,000
   ☐ IDR 2,000,000 - 3,000,000   ☐ > IDR 10,000,000
   ☐ IDR 3,000,000 - 6,000,000

7. How long usually you change your smartphone?
   ☐ < 1 year   ☐ 2 – 3 years
   ☐ 1 – 2 years   ☐ > 3 years

Please check (√) in the box for each statement to show how much you agree or disagree with it! 1 (Strongly Disagree); 2 (Disagree); 3 (Slightly Disagree); 4 (Moderate); 5 (Slightly Agree); 6 (Agree); 7 (Strongly Agree);.

	PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Operating System								
1	Samsung smartphone has a high quality performance / high-quality							
2	Samsung mobile operating system has met the standard mobile smartphone							
3	Samsung smartphone operating							

	system is easy to be updated							

Mobile Application

1	Samsung Mobile has an interesting feature							
2	Samsung smartphone features easy to learn and understand							
3	The Samsung smartphone has a complete application (radio, games, music, pictures)							
4	Features in Samsung smartphone that I use provide considerable benefits in my daily activities							
5	Overall, I am satisfied with the existing features in the Samsung smartphone that I use							

Product Appearances

1	The Samsung smartphone has a clear display							
2	Samsung smartphones have variant models and attractive design							
3.	The Samsung smartphone has a main menu that goes well when it's used							
4	Samsung smartphones have wide range of colours							
5	Samsung touch screen smartphone ultra-responsive, a way quick to move from one menu to another menu							

	PRODUCT USABILITY	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
1	Samsung smartphone that I use in accordance with the benefits that I get							
2	Samsung smartphones is very easy to use							
3	Samsung smartphone is a multifunctional mobile phone (become a remote, flashlights)							
4	Samsung smartphone provide a different experience for me in the usability of their products							

	PRICE	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**

1	Price is an important factor in determining the choice of buying a Samsung smartphone							
2	The price offered by Samsung in accordance with the acquired facilities.							
3	Price of Samsung which is relatively more expensive show higher quality.							
4	The resale price of Samsung Smartphone is high							
5	I am satisfied with the price offered by Samsung							

CUSTOMER PREFERENCES		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	I decided to buy a Samsung smartphone after evaluating several alternatives.							
2	I chose Samsung smartphone based on self-motivation							
3	I chose a smartphone based on motivation or advice of a friend							
4	I chose a smartphone to suit what I need							
5	I have a particular preference towards the brand Samsung Smartphone							