Socius: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial
Volume 3, Issue 12, July 2026, P 99-108
E-ISSN: 3025-6704
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20597010

Analysis of Huawei's Global Marketing Strategy to Increasing Competitiveness in the International Smartphone Market

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ARTICLE INFO
Article history:
Received 20 May 2026
Revised 25 May 2026
Accepted 30 May 2026
Available online 05 June 2026

Keywords
Huawei, Global Marketing Strategy, Technological Innovation, Consumer Trust, Purchase Intention, Competitiveness.

ABSTRACT
The global smartphone market has become increasingly competitive, particularly in the premium segment where technological innovation and brand reputation play crucial roles. Despite facing U.S. trade restrictions since 2019, Huawei has strengthened its position as a major competitor to Apple, especially in China. This study aims to analyze Huawei's global marketing strategy in enhancing international competitiveness by examining the role of technological innovation in building consumer trust and influencing purchase intention. Using a qualitative literature review approach, this study analyzes academic studies, market reports, and industry publications from 2018–2025. The findings reveal that Huawei's competitiveness is driven by premium positioning, technological innovation, and localization strategies. Innovations such as HarmonyOS, proprietary chipsets, artificial intelligence, and flagship smartphones significantly strengthen consumer trust and purchase intention. In China, consumers increasingly prefer Huawei over Apple due to perceptions of technological advancement, domestic innovation, and stronger national brand attachment. These findings suggest that innovation-driven trust and adaptive marketing strategies are key factors in Huawei's international competitiveness.

INTRODUCTION

The global smartphone market has emerged as one of the most fiercely competitive and innovation-led segments within the international tech industry. The rapid pace of technological progress, growing digitalization, and evolving consumer preferences have heightened competition among key smartphone brands like Huawei, Apple, Samsung, Xiaomi, and Oppo. Recently, competition has increasingly focused on the premium smartphone sector, where technological advancements, ecosystem integration, and brand reputation have become the main factors influencing market competitiveness. As indicated by recent industry reports, China remains the world's largest smartphone market and is pivotal in shaping global smartphone rivalry, especially between local manufacturers and international brands (Reuters, 2024).

In the smartphone industry, Huawei Technologies has become one of the biggest competitors to Apple, especially in the Chinese market. Huawei was founded in 1987 and started by working on telecom infrastructure. Later, they managed to grow into the consumer electronics market as well. In the last ten years, Huawei became a top-tier smartphone brand by spending a lot on research and development, artificial intelligence, camera technology, chip manufacturing, and connecting its software systems together. Huawei's focus on technology helped it compete with Apple in high-end smartphones, especially in China. After facing big problems because of U.S. sanctions in 2019, Huawei was able to get back a lot of its lost market share (Reuters, 2024).

The imposition of U.S. trade restrictions on Huawei represented a major turning point for the company. Limitations on semiconductor access, software licensing, and supply chain integration severely affected Huawei's smartphone business and temporarily weakened its

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competitive position in international markets. Nevertheless, Huawei demonstrated remarkable resilience by intensifying domestic technological innovation, developing proprietary technologies such as HarmonyOS, advancing Kirin chipset production, and strengthening local consumer engagement. This recovery strategy has contributed significantly to Huawei's resurgence, particularly in the Chinese smartphone market, where domestic consumers increasingly perceive Huawei as a symbol of technological independence and national innovation (Reuters, 2024).

The competition between Huawei and Apple in China has intensified. Huawei's Mate and Pura series now compete directly with the iPhone in the premium segment. More Chinese consumers are increasingly choosing Huawei over Apple products.

In consumer behavior literature, purchase intention refers to the likelihood that consumers are willing to purchase a specific product based on their perceptions, attitudes, and trust toward a brand. In the smartphone market, purchase intention is highly influenced by technological capability, perceived product quality, brand credibility, and consumer trust. Previous studies have found that technological innovation positively influences consumer trust and ultimately strengthens purchase intention toward smartphone brands. Specifically, product quality and innovation have been shown to significantly influence Huawei smartphone purchase intention, indicating that consumers are increasingly motivated by functional value and technological superiority rather than solely by brand prestige (Wiwaha & Budiyanto, 2021).

Technological innovation has become one of Huawei's strongest competitive advantages in competing against Apple. Through substantial R&D expenditure, Huawei has continuously introduced advanced technologies such as foldable smartphones, AI-powered camera systems, satellite communication features, HarmonyOS integration, and domestically developed Kirin processors. These innovations have not only strengthened Huawei's product differentiation strategy but also increased consumer confidence in Huawei's ability to deliver premium technological experiences comparable to, or even exceeding, those offered by Apple. Consequently, innovation may function as a critical factor in building consumer trust and stimulating purchase intention among smartphone users.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze Huawei's global marketing strategy in enhancing competitiveness in the international smartphone market by examining the role of technological innovation in building consumer trust and influencing purchase intention. Furthermore, this study seeks to explore why Chinese consumers increasingly prefer Huawei smartphones over Apple devices and how Huawei has successfully strengthened its competitive position within the Chinese premium smartphone market.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Global Marketing Strategy

Global marketing strategy refers to the process through which multinational firms coordinate and implement marketing activities across international markets to achieve competitive advantages while responding to changing consumer demands and local market characteristics. In the highly competitive smartphone industry, global marketing strategy is increasingly important because firms must simultaneously maintain brand consistency and adapt to regional consumer preferences, technological trends, and purchasing behavior.

According to Kotler and Keller (2021), global marketing strategy enables companies to create long-term competitiveness by developing strong brand positioning, integrated communication strategies, product differentiation, and customer engagement in international markets. In technology industries, firms that successfully implement global marketing strategies are more capable of building strong market positions and increasing customer loyalty.

For Huawei, global marketing strategy has become an essential mechanism for maintaining competitiveness in the international smartphone market. Huawei combines technological innovation, premium branding, digital marketing, and ecosystem integration to compete with global competitors such as Apple and Samsung. Furthermore, Huawei adapts its marketing strategy to domestic market conditions in China by emphasizing technological nationalism and local consumer identity, thereby strengthening emotional attachment and market preference among Chinese consumers (Zhang, 2024). Huawei's ability to combine international technological standards with local market adaptation has significantly contributed to its recovery and increasing competitiveness after the U.S. sanctions period.

Technological Innovation

Technological innovation refers to the development and implementation of new technologies, product features, and technological improvements aimed at creating superior consumer value and strengthening market competitiveness. In smartphone industries, technological innovation functions as a major determinant of consumer evaluation because smartphone consumers continuously seek advanced functionality, product performance, camera quality, software ecosystem integration, and artificial intelligence capabilities.

Recent studies emphasize that technological innovation significantly influences consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions in technology-driven industries. Technological advancement contributes positively to perceived product quality, usefulness, satisfaction, and willingness to purchase innovative products (Jamalova, 2024). Smartphone consumers increasingly evaluate products based on technological superiority rather than solely on brand image, making innovation a critical competitive factor in premium smartphone markets.

Huawei strongly emphasizes innovation as a strategic competitive advantage. The company continuously invests in research and development (R&D) to introduce innovative smartphone technologies such as HarmonyOS, artificial intelligence-powered camera systems, foldable smartphones, satellite communication features, and proprietary Kirin chipsets. These technological developments allow Huawei to compete directly with Apple by offering differentiated technological experiences and strengthening product attractiveness among consumers (Qi, 2024). In this regard, technological innovation can be understood as a strategic factor that contributes not only to product competitiveness but also to consumer trust and purchase intention.

Consumer Trust

Consumer trust refers to consumers' confidence in a company's ability to deliver reliable products, consistent quality, and expected performance. In premium technology markets, trust becomes particularly important because consumers often face greater financial risks and performance expectations when purchasing smartphones.

Recent empirical findings suggest that brand trust positively influences purchase behavior and strengthens consumer confidence in technology products. Trust emerges when consumers perceive smartphone brands as reliable, innovative, secure, and capable of delivering superior product experiences (Lorents & Nawawi, 2024). Furthermore, trust mediates the relationship between brand-related factors and purchase intention, suggesting that stronger trust toward a smartphone brand significantly increases consumers' willingness to purchase.

In Huawei's case, consumer trust became increasingly important following geopolitical restrictions and supply chain disruptions resulting from U.S. sanctions. Despite these challenges, Huawei successfully maintained domestic consumer trust in China through continuous technological development and product quality improvements. Huawei's ability to introduce innovative premium smartphones strengthened perceptions of reliability and technological capability, increasing consumer confidence toward the brand. As a result, Chinese consumers increasingly perceive Huawei as a trusted domestic technology brand capable of competing directly with Apple.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to the probability or willingness of consumers to purchase a particular product after evaluating available information, product attributes, and brand perceptions. Within the smartphone industry, purchase intention is influenced by multiple factors, including technological innovation, trust, perceived quality, social influence, and emotional attachment toward brands.

Research on smartphone consumer behavior indicates that trust remains one of the strongest predictors of smartphone purchase intention. Consumers are more likely to purchase smartphones from brands they perceive as secure, innovative, and capable of meeting product expectations. In addition, product quality, technological performance, and innovation significantly strengthen consumers' intention to purchase smartphones (Bringula et al., 2018). Trust and technological perception have consistently been identified as dominant variables affecting smartphone purchase decisions.

Recent smartphone studies also indicate that brand trust serves as an important mediating factor between consumer perceptions and purchase intention. Consumers who perceive strong technological capability and positive brand experiences are more likely to develop trust, which subsequently increases their purchase intention toward smartphones (Lorents & Nawawi, 2024). This relationship is highly relevant in Huawei's context because technological superiority and consumer confidence may significantly influence smartphone purchasing behavior in China.

The increasing demand for Huawei smartphones in China, particularly following the release of flagship products such as the Mate and Pura series, demonstrates how technological innovation and consumer trust contribute to stronger purchase intention. Long queues during Huawei smartphone launches indicate that Chinese consumers increasingly perceive Huawei as an attractive and competitive alternative to Apple, particularly due to product innovation and emotional attachment toward domestic brands.

Competitiveness in the Smartphone Market

Competitiveness refers to a company's ability to outperform competitors through superior value creation, technological advancement, customer satisfaction, and sustainable market positioning. In the smartphone industry, competitiveness depends heavily on innovation capability, ecosystem development, product quality, and consumer loyalty.

Recent studies indicate that technological capability significantly contributes to smartphone competitiveness because consumers increasingly prioritize technological features and ecosystem performance when selecting premium devices. Huawei's competitiveness strategy relies strongly on product differentiation through technological innovation, premium branding, and ecosystem integration. Unlike firms that primarily compete on price, Huawei positions itself as a premium technology company capable of delivering advanced smartphone experiences comparable to Apple (Qi, 2024).

In China, Huawei's competitiveness has strengthened due to increased domestic consumer preference, technological nationalism, and trust in Huawei's innovation capability. Huawei's successful re-entry into premium smartphone competition suggests that innovation-driven trust and purchase intention play a significant role in improving market competitiveness.

Therefore, competitiveness in this study is understood as the outcome of the interaction between global marketing strategy, technological innovation, consumer trust, and purchase intention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative literature review approach to analyze Huawei's global marketing strategy in strengthening competitiveness in the international smartphone market. Data were collected from academic journals, market reports, and industry publications indexed in Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Springer, Reuters, and CNBC, published between 2020 and 2025. The literature selection process used keywords such as 'Huawei marketing strategy', 'Huawei vs Apple China', 'consumer trust smartphone', 'purchase intention', and 'technological innovation'. Inclusion criteria focused on studies discussing smartphone competitiveness, consumer trust, purchase intention, and Huawei's market strategy. Sources irrelevant to smartphone markets or lacking academic credibility were excluded. The collected literature was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify relationships between technological innovation, consumer trust, purchase intention, and competitiveness.

Conceptually, this study argues that technological innovation strengthens consumer trust, which subsequently influences purchase intention and contributes to Huawei's competitiveness. Global marketing strategy functions as a supporting factor that strengthens market adaptation and premium positioning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings derived from the selected literature and market evidence regarding Huawei's global marketing strategy in enhancing competitiveness within the international smartphone market. The discussion focuses on the interrelationship between technological innovation, consumer trust, purchase intention, and Huawei's competitiveness against Apple, particularly within the Chinese smartphone market. Based on the reviewed literature and industry reports, Huawei's competitiveness can be understood as the result of strategic technological investments, localized marketing adaptation, and strengthened consumer confidence.

Huawei's Global Marketing Strategy and International Competitiveness

Huawei's global marketing strategy is a key factor supporting its competitiveness in premium smartphone markets. According to Zhang (2024), Huawei adopts a competitive marketing strategy by positioning itself as a premium smartphone brand capable of directly competing with Apple in terms of technology, product quality, and ecosystem experience. Huawei strategically markets its smartphones not only as communication devices but also as part of a broader technological ecosystem involving wearable technology, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and operating system integration. This strategic positioning enables Huawei to establish stronger perceived value among consumers and strengthen premium brand recognition.

Furthermore, Huawei demonstrates strong market adaptability through localization strategies. Although Huawei operates globally, the company modifies marketing communication and branding approaches according to domestic market conditions. In China, Huawei integrates national technological identity into its marketing communication, allowing consumers to perceive Huawei not merely as a smartphone brand but also as a representation of China's technological advancement and innovation capability (Qi, 2024).

This localized marketing strategy appears particularly effective in strengthening Huawei's competitiveness following U.S. sanctions. Despite geopolitical restrictions, Huawei successfully rebuilt domestic demand by emphasizing technological independence, domestic innovation, and premium quality. Market evidence suggests that Huawei's localization strategy significantly contributed to renewed consumer enthusiasm toward Huawei smartphones in China, strengthening the company's ability to compete directly against Apple (Reuters, 2024).

The findings suggest that Huawei's global marketing strategy relies on a combination of premium positioning, technological branding, and market localization. Such strategies enable Huawei to maintain relevance within highly competitive smartphone markets while simultaneously strengthening emotional attachment among domestic consumers.

Technological Innovation as Huawei's Primary Competitive Advantage

Technological innovation remains Huawei's primary competitive advantage. Huawei continuously invests heavily in research and development (R&D) to strengthen technological capabilities and differentiate itself from competitors. According to Qi (2024), Huawei's technological strategy focuses on introducing premium smartphone innovations such as HarmonyOS integration, proprietary Kirin processors, foldable smartphone technologies, artificial intelligence-powered photography systems, and satellite communication capabilities. These innovations significantly contribute to Huawei's ability to maintain competitiveness despite supply chain restrictions and geopolitical challenges.

The launch of Huawei Mate 60 Pro represents a significant example of innovation-driven competitiveness. Following its release, Huawei successfully attracted considerable market attention due to the device's advanced chip technology and premium performance capabilities. Reuters (2024) reported that Huawei experienced a substantial increase in smartphone demand after the release of its flagship smartphone series, indicating positive consumer responses toward Huawei's technological innovation.

In addition, technological innovation strengthens Huawei's differentiation relative to Apple. Although Apple continues to maintain strong ecosystem integration and brand loyalty, Huawei increasingly competes through technological novelty and hardware superiority. Huawei's emphasis on smartphone photography, artificial intelligence integration, and foldable smartphone technology creates differentiated value propositions that enhance market attractiveness.

The literature further suggests that technological innovation influences consumers' perceptions regarding product reliability and quality. Consumers increasingly perceive technologically advanced smartphones as offering greater utility, efficiency, and long-term value (Jamalova, 2024). Therefore, Huawei's continuous investment in innovation contributes significantly to increasing market competitiveness and strengthening brand preference among consumers.

Technological Innovation and Consumer Trust

The findings indicate that technological innovation significantly contributes to the development of consumer trust toward Huawei smartphones. In technology-intensive industries, trust emerges when consumers perceive products as reliable, innovative, and capable of delivering consistent performance.

Several reviewed studies emphasize that consumers are more likely to trust smartphone brands demonstrating continuous innovation and premium technological quality (Lorents & Nawawi, 2024). Huawei's investments in artificial intelligence, operating systems, smartphone performance, and premium hardware create stronger consumer confidence regarding the reliability of Huawei products. An important finding emerging from this review concerns Huawei's resilience following international sanctions. Rather than weakening consumer confidence, Huawei's response to technological restrictions appears to have strengthened trust among Chinese consumers. Huawei's ability to independently develop HarmonyOS and improve domestic semiconductor capability contributed positively to perceptions of technological independence and reliability.

This trust-building process is particularly important because smartphone purchases involve high financial and functional risks. Consumers typically seek brands perceived as technologically dependable before making purchasing decisions. Consequently, Huawei's technological innovation not only improves product performance but also strengthens long-term consumer trust. The reviewed evidence therefore suggests that technological innovation functions as an important antecedent of consumer trust. The stronger Huawei's technological capability, the greater the likelihood that consumers will perceive Huawei as a trustworthy premium smartphone brand.

Consumer Trust and Purchase Intention Toward Huawei Smartphones

The findings further indicate that consumer trust positively influences purchase intention toward Huawei smartphones. Purchase intention increases when consumers perceive smartphone brands as technologically advanced, reliable, and capable of meeting expectations.

Research findings by Bringula et al. (2018) and Lorents and Nawawi (2024) indicate that technological trust and perceived product quality significantly contribute to smartphone purchase intention. Consumers tend to purchase smartphones from brands they believe will provide superior performance and long-term product satisfaction.

Huawei's recent market recovery in China further illustrates the relationship between trust and purchase intention. Following the release of Huawei's flagship smartphone series, Chinese consumers demonstrated exceptionally high enthusiasm toward Huawei products. Several reports documented long queues of consumers waiting to purchase newly released Huawei smartphones, indicating increased purchase intention and stronger consumer confidence in Huawei's products (Reuters, 2024).

The phenomenon reflects a shift in consumer perception. Historically, Apple dominated premium smartphone preference due to strong prestige and ecosystem integration. However, Huawei's technological resurgence and continuous product innovation increasingly influence consumer willingness to purchase Huawei products instead of Apple.

In addition, emotional factors also influence purchase intention. Many Chinese consumers increasingly support Huawei due to perceptions of national technological pride and domestic innovation capability. This emotional attachment strengthens purchase intention beyond purely functional product considerations.

The findings therefore indicate that purchase intention toward Huawei smartphones is influenced by a combination of technological trust, innovation capability, perceived product superiority, and emotional attachment toward domestic technological advancement.

Huawei Versus Apple: The Shift in Consumer Preference in China

One of the most significant findings identified in this study concerns changing consumer preference within China's premium smartphone market. The reviewed literature and market evidence suggest that Huawei increasingly challenges Apple's dominance through innovation, localization strategies, and stronger consumer trust.

Market reports indicate that Huawei experienced rapid growth in smartphone shipments following the release of the Mate and Pura series, while Apple experienced slower growth in several periods during 2024 (Reuters, 2024). Huawei's market resurgence suggests that premium smartphone competition in China increasingly depends on technological innovation rather than solely brand prestige.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of consumers queuing for newly released Huawei smartphones represents a notable behavioral shift. Historically, long queues were primarily associated with iPhone releases. However, Huawei flagship launches increasingly attract significant consumer enthusiasm, reflecting changing purchase intention patterns and stronger confidence toward Huawei products.

The reviewed findings indicate that Chinese consumers increasingly perceive Huawei as a technologically innovative domestic brand capable of competing directly with Apple. Technological advancement, trust, and emotional attachment toward domestic innovation collectively contribute to Huawei's increasing competitiveness within China's premium smartphone market.

Overall, the findings suggest that Huawei's competitiveness against Apple is not merely the result of product improvement but rather a strategic combination of technological innovation, global marketing adaptation, consumer trust, and increased purchase intention. These factors collectively strengthen Huawei's ability to compete effectively within international smartphone markets.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, Huawei's competitiveness in the international smartphone market, particularly in China, is strongly influenced by the integration of global marketing strategy, technological innovation, consumer trust, and purchase intention. Huawei successfully strengthens its competitive position against Apple through premium positioning, ecosystem integration, and localized marketing strategies that align with Chinese consumer preferences. Moreover, Huawei's continuous investment in technological innovation, including HarmonyOS, proprietary chipsets, artificial intelligence-powered features, and premium smartphone technology, has strengthened perceptions of product quality and technological superiority. These innovations not only differentiate Huawei from competitors but also contribute significantly to building stronger consumer trust toward the brand.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that consumer trust plays an important role in increasing purchase intention toward Huawei smartphones. Chinese consumers increasingly perceive Huawei as a symbol of domestic technological advancement and innovation, contributing to stronger emotional attachment and willingness to purchase Huawei products. This phenomenon is reflected in the increasing market demand and consumer enthusiasm during Huawei smartphone launches, where many consumers prefer Huawei over Apple in several premium market segments. Therefore, Huawei's success in competing against Apple demonstrates that innovation-driven consumer trust and adaptive global marketing strategies represent critical factors in strengthening competitiveness within the international smartphone industry.

Future studies are encouraged to employ quantitative methods or mixed-method approaches to empirically examine the relationship between technological innovation, consumer trust, purchase intention, and competitiveness using consumer survey data.

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