

PRODUCT CATEGORY: EAR SPEAKERS

Part A: What are the different segments in the existing market for this product?

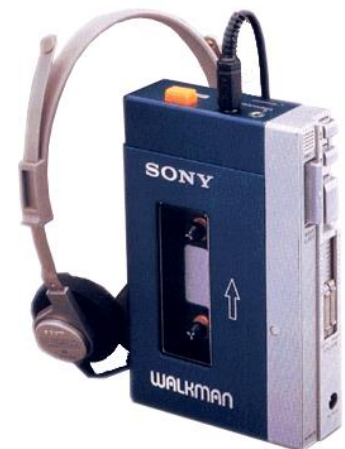
Ear speakers are one of the world's growing industries. In today's society, you can't walk down the street, into a coffee shop, or through the park without seeing someone with a type of listening device in their ear. It's become a form of entertainment for the busy individual who can't spare their sight at that given moment. These ear phones are being used for listening to music, hands-free phone calls, watching videos or movies more privately, for private computers, as a quieter form of entertainment for children, etc.



These devices originated in 1920 by inventor Nathaniel Baldwin. He used an earpiece to listen to audio signals before amplifiers were created (UPI). The invention was sold to the US Navy and although similar, alternative devices were also created, it wasn't until the 1950s when John Koss, a musician, produced the first stereo headphones designed for listening to music (UPI).

As many segments in many industries do, the purpose and intelligence in the devices have grown over time. This is especially true for the past two decades during the technology boom. These devices have become much more practical for the average consumer and it is extremely uncommon not to own such devices. This invention has made personal entertainment available at any location, with respect to the environment and people around you. It allows the consumer to enjoy their music, films, lectures, calls, etc. at a reasonable volume without disturbing their immediate surroundings. Many consumers use music as a motivator, a de-stressor, a mood booster, and something to make the time pass a bit more exciting during an average day.

Ear phones have been a continuous growing market since their birth in the 1920s, but especially since their musical crave in the 1950s. Just like any other market, they have also shown their style, trends, and claimed class among its consumers. In the 1980s, the Walkman was created which allowed society to listen to cassettes on the go. It was the first insight of mobile music (UPI). The market is constantly



finding new ways to improve the current device. We are now seeing trends of Bluetooth, waterproof, and microphone ear phones. According to ReportLinker, "TechNacio's analysts forecast the Global Headphone market to grow at a CAGR of 12.70 percent in terms of revenue of the period of 2014-2019. In terms of volume, the market is forecasted to grow at a CAGR of 4.18 percent." There is no doubt that this industry is going to continue booming for quite some time.

There are multiple segments and consumer needs that these devices fall into. The first being 'on-ear' headphones. The original ear phones created by both Baldwin and Koss were both on-ear. When the Walkman was created in the 1980s, the population mainly carried their source of music with these inexpensive, yet flimsy on-ear headphones. These devices are considered more comfortable, but have trended in and out of style over the past decade, forcing their success numbers to jump up-and-down on the charts. Although comfortable, their original design was easily destructible, and had a bulky-looking style that swayed consumers in the new direction of in-ear headphones.

Similar "over-ear" headphones are still popular in the market place for the consumer who may want to sway with the trends, but doesn't have the financial means to afford the branded product that is currently swarming the market.



These over-ear headphones are also targeted by a very practical consumer who is looking for comfort and may find this style to be preferred to their liking over the rest. The demographics for these types of ear speakers really varies from young to old, and in all financial aspects of the market. The product itself can range from very inexpensive, to costing what the average consumer may see as expensive, approaching \$200 and above.



For the consumer who is looking for comfort and practicality, the demographic would be above 40 years of age, with a lifestyle that doesn't require much use of ear speakers, but only has use for them a handful of times throughout the year while on planes or public transportation. This segment also fits an older consumer who may listen to books on audio and find these speakers to be to their comfort pleasure.

As the market has grown, so have the options for over-the-ear headphones. Whether it's for professional use, or just to have the best of the best, brands such as Beats by Dre are really a growing market in the over ear headphones category. These items are more expensive

than some consumers would be willing to spend for ear speakers, however the branding and popularity, along with quality, is important to certain consumers. These consumers fall into a younger crowd, mainly under 35 years of age. Headphones such as these are also popular and used mostly in the music industry. It doesn't matter if you're a million dollar music producer, or a weekend wedding deejay, these headphones are for the professional musician.

The second segmentation of ear phones are in-ear headphones. In the 1980s and 1990s, manufacturers started customizing the headphones to make them more portable and lightweight, but it wasn't until 2001 when Apple started selling them with their products, did the in-ear 'earbud' really hit its market peak. By 2011, 64% of the population were using in-ear devices (Futurescope).



These new devices were much more consumer friendly than what was currently on the market. They are conveniently more compact and manageable than any over-ear headphone previously or currently introduced to the public. It provides a discrete look that can be easily hidden or unseen, drawing less attention to listeners. It provided a perfect solution to the consumer on the go who needed a more practical solution for their daily routine.

Demographics for these products are active consumers who would use these devices during a workout, run in the park, or simply on their busy commuter lifestyle would target these products. Along with the active consumer, these in-ear 'earbuds' became such a consumer commodity that they became inexpensive to produce and can sell at a very low price. You can now find these ear phone in gas stations for just a few dollars. The convenience to obtain and low cost of these earbuds make them appealing to all consumers.

Similar to over-ear head phones, ear buds also come in a variety of options, and can be very inexpensive and practically disposable, to costing the consumer upwards of \$100. These aren't ideal for professional work, but seem to draw a younger crowd who prefers the feel, style, and traveling convenience of ear buds, as well as great sound quality.

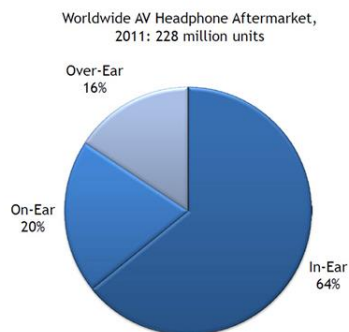
Noise cancelling, performance enhancing ear phones are a third segment in this category. In 2008, musician Dr. Dre released Beats by Dre headphones (Beats by Dre). These over-ear headphones hadn't been seen in years due to the outbreak of the in-ear 'earbud' headphone. With a new product, came a familiar face and industry leader. According to Rasika Iyer, Research Analyst at Futuresource, "Traditional headphones brands Philips, Sony, JVC, Sennheiser and Skullcandy combined accounted for 45% of global headphones shipments in 2012 and in terms of value, Beats by Dre has captured 23% of global revenue" (Ceatec). These branded headphones were promoted by their sound quality. Beats by Dre was the initial

headphone with concern of sound quality, noise elimination, and branding that would sweep the nation and the world. The branding of this new technology was not only a new business for the music mogul Dr. Dre, but also the first of the industry to have made a new product shelf for itself by investing funds into quality. The consumer targeting Beats by Dre products are looking for quality, trending and style in their product over price, convenience, or portability.



The success of the original over-ear headphone prompted the brand Beats by Dre to develop an entire branch of products for consumers from ear-buds to portable speakers. This brand has found a way to target multiple consumers with their various products. Powerbeats provide a type of fastener that allows the device to sit more comfortably in the ear canal without failure of falling out. Beatspro has the sound enhancement for music professionals to provide them with the top-of-the-line devices for their careers (Beats by Dre). All Beats by Dre products are statements for music quality and sound enhancing technology. Their price tags are high, appealing to the trendy, luxury needed consumer.

AV Headphone Market by Type: Worldwide



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Part B: What are the different motivations consumers have to buy ear speakers?

As most marketers will tell you, different consumers have different needs and features they look for in products. This remains true in the category of ear speakers. When shopping for new ear speakers, Consumers Report recommends to “evaluate the sound quality, make sure they’re comfortable, and choose a design suited to your expected use.” Although this is all great advice, it doesn’t necessarily help the needs of consumers looking for something more specific.

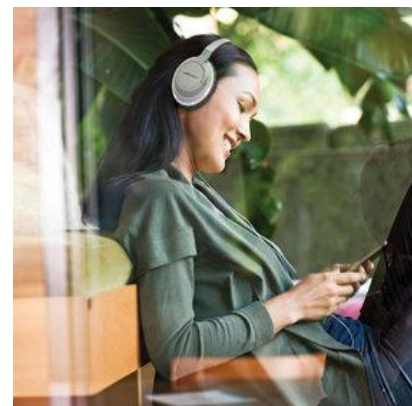
The basic listener who is mainly using ear speakers as a form of passing time listening to music occasionally will generally be looking for an affordable, semi-disposable ear bud. A consumer in this category would generally use ear speakers while working, studying, traveling, etc. that would perhaps consider price over quality. These can be found and bought almost anywhere from grocery stores to gas stations which also gives them appeal

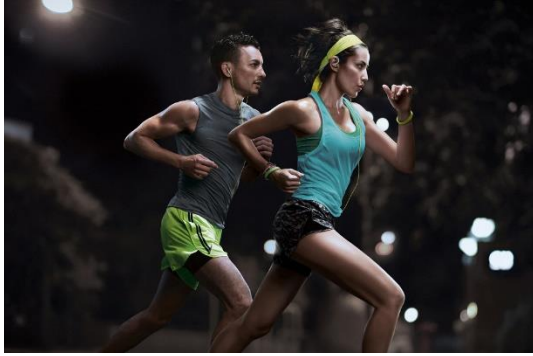


due to their accessibility. These types of earbuds are given away on airplanes and seminars, and are usually included when you purchase a new phone. For example, Apple sells their basic earbuds for \$30, but includes them in any purchase of a phone. According to a study conducted by WashFM, 53% own at least three pairs of headphones and 62% say they’d rather go a day without ANY human interaction than a day without their music.

The motivation behind this basic earbud is simplicity, accessibility, and price. Often times, consumers will have a choice of color as well to personalize the item a bit more. The busy consumer who has no strong needs when shopping for ear speakers will find the simplicity relaxing, the accessibility favorable, and the price reasonable, making these basic buds the best solution.

Comfort is a general category in any type of study and research. A consumer who is a general or common user of an item will buy the basic type until they get more involved. Comfort often becomes one of the most important features that one looks for in a product. Over-the-ear speakers have been known to be the best choice when choosing comfort. Whether it’s listening for long periods of time, for use when traveling or lounging, or simply just because, comfort is a big motivator to most all consumers.





Other consumers are very active and greatly consider their activity level when trying to find out which ear speaker works best for them. These consumers consider how adapting these ear speakers into their daily workouts will work out best and which speakers offer the best features to lessen the hassle. Bluetooth and waterproof speakers are most recommended and used by the consumers that fit into this category. Individuals are able to listen to music, books on tape/ebooks, listen to seminars for motivation, or lectures for work or school. If you were to walk into any gym in America today, you will see the majority of participants wearing some type of device in their ear. Many use it for motivation for their workout and even have playlists of songs that will push them harder and allow them to get more from their exercise workout. These ear speakers are so important to users for their workout, 40% of participants surveyed stated they would skip a workout if they got to the gym and realized they left their headphones at home (WashFM).

Manufacturers are now making waterproof speakers that are able to get wet or even be submerged in water and continue to work safely. These have become popular among swimmer and many Olympians. For the amount of time spent in the water, it is a great investment and will help with the workout. It can also be considered ideal for divers, and even laborers or consumers working outside where they are exposed to the elements such as rain, sleet, and snow.



Bluetooth speakers are among the most popular sold currently, and are becoming the overwhelming leader of the market because they are cordless. Many consumers can relate to the frustrating fact of the annoying cord that seems to always be in the way. Whether you are listening at a desk, or running on a treadmill, when the cord catches an arm or hand and gets pulled out of your ear, it becomes a nuisance. By placing the base around your neck, and inserting the extensions into your ear, you have the ability to listen without being annoyed and frustrated with a cord. These are often battery powered or rechargeable, and fit comfortably. The main motivation behind this is allowing the user to be free of the dreaded cord!





Many of us listen to music throughout the day at our job. In fact, 48% of individuals wear headphones every day at work or school (WashFM). For some, our job requires something more durable that won't constantly be sending the consumer to the gas station to buy a replacement ear speaker. Not only do physically intensive employees find durability as a motivation, so do parents! Any parent in the world will tell you how destructive children can be. Although they do not always do it intentionally, kids seem to be able to find way to go through their share of any item. It's important they have something protective, as well as durable that will last.

What's trending is a popular topic among society, especially in America. The most popular type of ear speaker these days among celebrities and in the media are Beats by Dre. This line of favorable speakers has made its way into many of America's homes. They are on Christmas lists, in giveaways, and most definitely the most well-known brand when it comes to private listening. Not only are there a variety of products to choose from (such as in-ear, over-ear, and portable speakers), they are now becoming customizable. We see our favorite celebrities wearing them around and it instantly comes a want to many consumers. With the ability to now customize them to your liking with

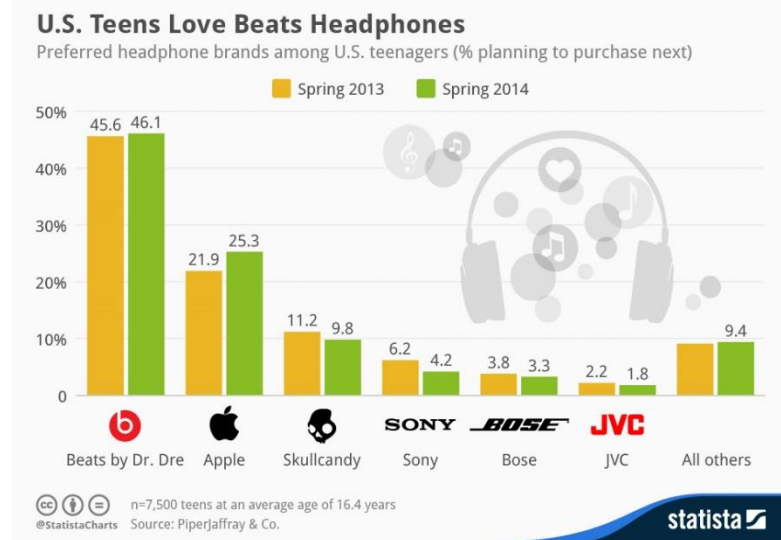


color, materials, patterns, etc., it's now personalized to your liking which allows them to be unique for you. This is a big motivator for consumers as well. As much as we all want something that's trending and hip, we also want to be our own person and be able to have our own taste with the product as well. Beats by Dre has allowed consumers to do this.

Part C: How do consumers learn about that product category? Who are involved in the learning process?

Music is a big part of many people's lives. Whether it's for motivation, coping, or to just enjoy a simple song, many consumers listen to music at least part of their day. Tunes can be listened to in the car, at work, in transit, waiting at the doctor's office, cleaning the house, etc. We can listen on our computer speakers, in our car, on a plane, on Bluetooth speakers, on our phones, as well as the television. There are now apps, such as iHeartRadio, that allow consumers to listen to their favorite radio stations on their phones. With all of this accessibility, individuals also have to be consider of their environment, which often means using personal listening devices to keep their preferred music to themselves. Many people also listen to audio tapes, books, language lesson, etc. which also require the use of ear speakers.

Much of the product category is decided upon by personal preference. Popularity, comfortability, and affordability are all big parts of what allow users to narrow down their



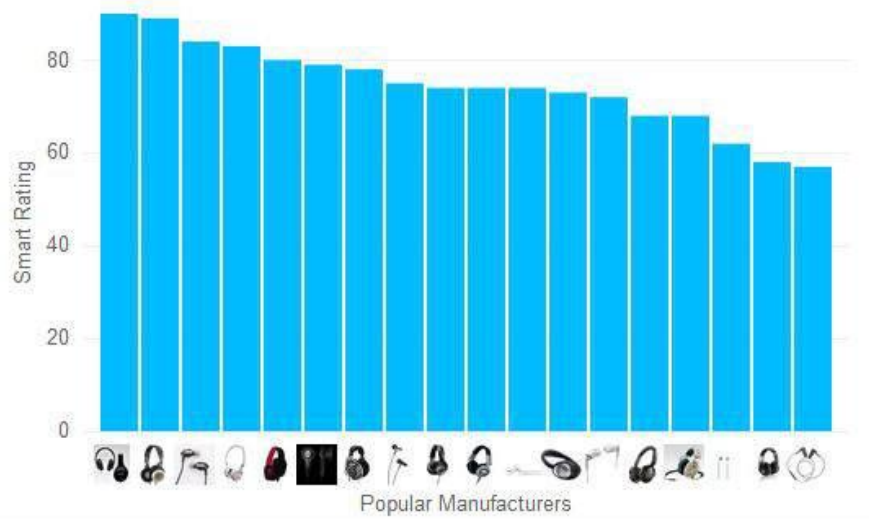
search. Once they have decided which listening device suites them most properly (whether it be over-the-ear or on-the-ear headphones), the consumer will then need to pick which brand and details fit them best. Many consumers will use the web to research items before purchase and ear speakers are no exception! As you can see from the FindTheBest chart, there is research being done to decifer which products are popular and

how their rating ranks among the competition.

Consumers report is a great source for online research before buying an item, mainly during the learning process for the consumer. It is a great reference because it does break the topic down into categories before going into descriptions.

Another huge influence in all aspects of marketing, is social media and celebrity influence. The Beats by Dre headphones were instantly made popular because they are created and endorsed by famous musician, writer, and rapper, Dr. Dre. On the other hand, you might go with a basic pair of on-the-ear ear buds that Apple supplies with their products because you saw your favorite celebrity wearing them and you want to be just like them.

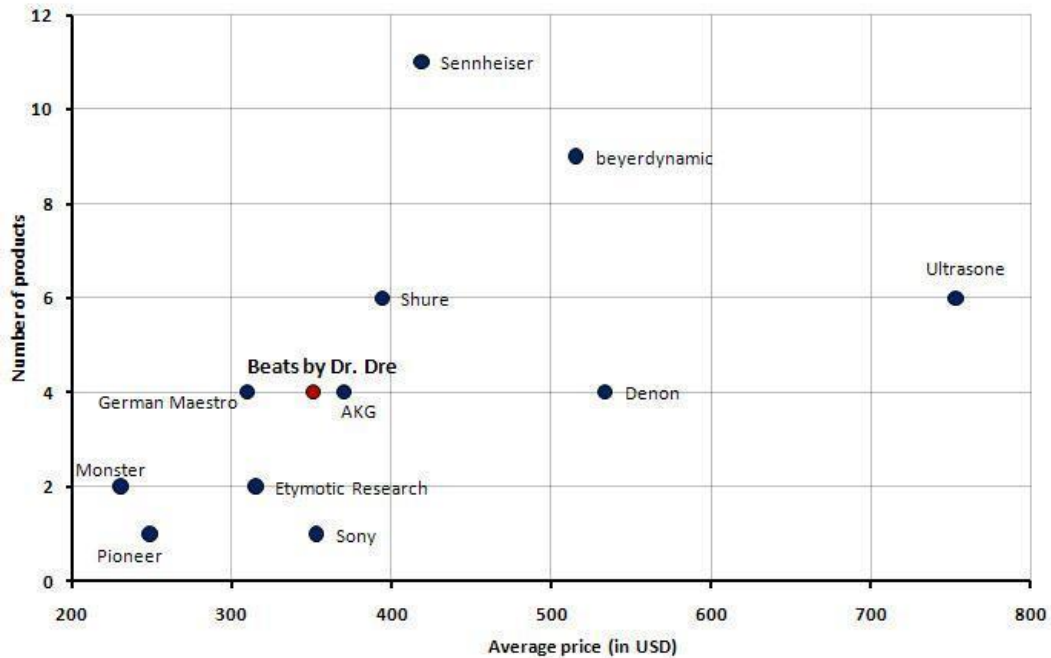
Average Headphone Quality for Popular Brands



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Branding is a large part of the speaker industry. The name and quality of a product can be directly correlated. This has a way of letting consumers make an assumption and many companies will fail or succeed in this department. These brands can intrigue consumers to do further research about the product brands they are seeing in the marketplace, and promote them to learn more about the product before making a decision. By producing and marketing a diverse range of products, the companies have a better chance of targeting more audiences. Especially in technology, price also has a correlation with quality of the product. If you spend \$5.00 on a set of ear buds, most consumers wouldn't expect them to last very long, have durability, or good sound quality. To spend \$100 for the same product of a different brand, means consumers expectations are much higher and the product is expected to perform in a much higher scale.



Social media arguable plays the biggest role in today's marketing world. The various networks, accessibility and the constant "in your face" mentality of the entire social media industry is enough to consider it a large factor in any decision made. By seeing what your friends, family, followers, or fans are interested in, the user themselves becomes interested in it all as well.

A report done by the NY Times discussed the pros and cons to listening to music in the workplace. It was mentioned that there is little research performed to prove that listening to music can alter your work ethic, concentration, and efficiency levels. It was noticed that employees in an office setting both prefer and do better listening to music while they work, or they do not care for it and it has a negative effect on their output. While noise canceling ear speakers do promote concentration, studies did show that the best music to listen to is that with no lyrics, or that include calming sounds to prevent distraction.

Ultimately the decision making process is left to the specific consumer and trusted they'll make the decision that will fit their needs. As a reputable brand, it is hopeful that consumers will do their research and find out what product is best for them before making a purchase, but that is not always the case. Consumers are influenced by branding, popularity, specific likeability, and pricing, however, all of those factors don't always become considered if a consumer is in an impulsive buying mood.

Part D: What are the predominant attitudes in the marketplace about these products? Create a list. How do family and other social groups influence consumers' attitudes and usage of this category of products? Mention dominant pre-existing beliefs.

In today's society we constantly see personal ear speakers being used. Whether the purpose is to pass the time quicker, to listen to a new album our favorite artist just released, to continue listening to the audio book on tape we are unable to step away from, ear speakers can be seen as an essential part of our daily lives. Look in any gym bag, purse, office desk, or vehicle console, and you won't be surprised to find a set of the users preferred ear speakers.

Ear speakers may be seen as a trend in the younger generations, but marketers have developed ear speakers that fit the likes and needs of older generations as well. Along with age and generation, popularity/trendiness, activity level, health awareness, and professional influence also have predominant attitudes in the ear speaker marketplace.

Ear buds, or in-ear speakers, are predominantly seen being used in the younger generations. They are lightweight, easy to travel with, and conveniently priced for the 18-25 age group.

Older generations tend to prefer something more practical and comfortable, versus trending and popular. Consumers above age 40 are likely to prefer over-the-ear speakers, as opposed to in-ear speakers. The main reason is comfortability. There is also a health awareness that over-the-ear speakers prevent, and the damage in-ear speakers can do to the ear drum and hearing loss also have the older generations concerned, and therefore using over-the-ear speakers.



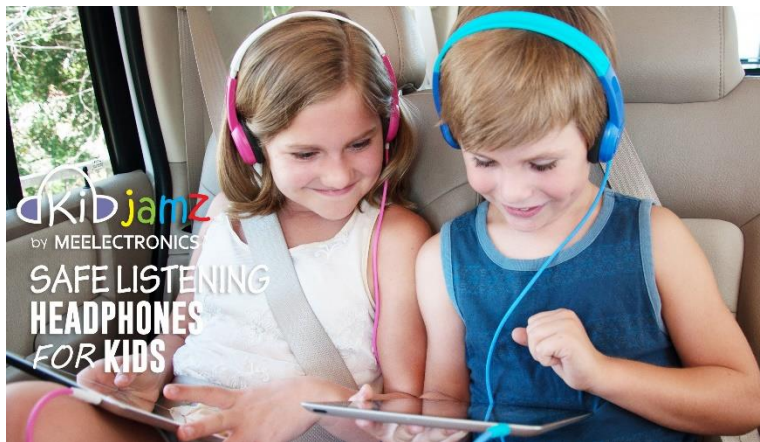
Many of these inexpensive in-ear speakers come in multiple colors which allow the consumer to personalize their purchase. Sports teams, designers, brands, and media personalities have also found a way to market in the ear bud industry. Consumers are more prone to spend a couple extra dollars to be stylish or supportive. By simply adding color to the cord, plastics, and packaging, retailers and manufacturers can market to all consumers and create a niche towards categories such as age and gender.

Activity level also has a big say in what ear speakers consumers choose. Individuals exercising will often prefer to wear in-ear speakers because they are lightweight and easy to use while constantly moving. Fitness fans have also grown fond of a more updated type of in-ear speaker that fits better within the ear. It is less prone to fall out and can be more comfortable as well. They fit easily into a gym bag and aren't expensive to replace if broken, missing, or just simply dirty.



Popularity and trending styles always play a big part in any type of product being sold. Currently, the Executive series in the Beats by Dre line are ranked at the top of the list by Forbes Magazine (Forbes). The entire brand of Beats by Dre has been very popular and taken a huge chunk of the marketplace over the past several years. There is no doubt this is a huge competitor in the marketplace that isn't going anywhere, anytime soon.

As in any category in the market, health awareness also takes place in the ear speaker industry. There have been many recent studies that have proven that in-ear speakers not only do damage to the sense of hearing, but also to other parts of the ear as well. The design of these speakers pushes ear wax deeper into the ear, causing blockages and build up that can lead to hearing loss and other health concerns. A study conducted by NCBI found that 21.2% of in-ear speaker users have some type of impaired hearing from the speakers.



Volume and sound quality also play a part in hearing loss. Osteopathic.org stated if you can't hear anything going on around you, the volume is too high and will likely cause hearing damage. In the past two decades, impaired hearing has increase, specifically over the younger generations who are likely using in-ear speakers, and who have the volume too high for too long of a period of time. Parents

consider this heavily when purchasing ear speakers for their children, who will hopefully be conscious of this once they become their own consumers.

An article recently posted by The Guardian website listed a new concern in health pertaining to ear speakers. Although we already know volume is an issue, specifically with hearing loss, it's also ending lives. Pedestrians wearing ear speakers who have the volume turned up too high are not aware of many things going on around them (in some ways, this is intentional), and are being struck by vehicles or other objects causing them great bodily harm. As dangerous as it is to text and drive, it has become similarly dangerous to listen while walking or exercising. In many busy neighborhoods and cities, pedestrians don't always pay enough attention and cause great accidents in doing such. It's important to always be able to hear what is going on around you. Related to this, drivers who use ear speakers will likely not hear emergency vehicles around them that need the right-of-way, or other drivers using their horn as an attempt to get the drivers attention.

Professionalism is something some consumers will consider when making a decision on the purchase of ear speakers. There are two different ways consumers will consider professionalism when making a purchase; how it will appear and function or operation within their workplace environment, and in another sense, how it will make them their job easier, more efficient, and get them farther in their respective industry.

In the first sense of professionalism, many employee listen to music while they are working, if their job allows it. Music is played in many offices, but it is often difficult to find a genre of music that all employees care for, so it is not uncommon to allow each employee to listen to their own preference of music on their individual computers. The Wall Street Journal did an article about ear speakers being used in the work place and found that many employees work more efficiently while listening to music. It helps improve focus and productivity throughout the work day.

Secondly, there is a multi-billion dollar industry focused around music. Whether a producer, writer, artist, or musician, quality ear speakers play a huge role in your daily life and even your rate and potential of success. It is crucially important to hear the sounds and the



beats of the music, as well as the voice singing the song. Quality ear speakers can make a huge difference in this context of the industry and it's important for individuals within the industry to commit and invest in their future.

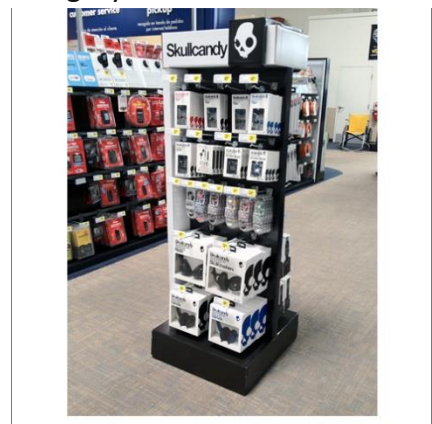
Part E: What kind of rules do consumers use to make purchase decisions about buying and using this category of products? Elaborate on their decision making criteria and processes.

Many of the rules consumers use to make purchase decision can directly correlate with their predominant attitudes towards that product. I believe this to be true in any industry for any product, and ear speakers is no exception.

In today's society, it can be said that using ear speakers is not even a choice to the consumer. Because of the popularity, easiness, and familiarity in the product, it's used everywhere. What choice can be made is what type of ear speaker the consumer prefers to use. When choosing from a variety of products, rules such as brand loyalty, familiarity, price, and quality all come into consideration.

Brand loyalty is something all consumers and marketers are familiar with. This is something that has been continuing to be a set rule in any purchase decision from brand of aluminum foil to an expensive car. Placing two comparable household items next to each other on shelves, it wouldn't be odd for the consumer to immediately go straight to one without even looking or considering the other product. Cost and sales also rarely has no effect on their purchase decision. They are loyal to their brand, it's what works for them, and to get that consumer to switch, will have to be a very convincing marketing pitch. Many companies have even gone as far as shipping free samples of their product to the consumer's home in hopes that it will get the household to switch to using their product.

As a consumer, finding a specific brand that fits your likes and needs is important and can be difficult. If you find that brand, you usually stick with it. You may be willing to pay a little more for better quality or for a feature that greatly appeals to you. On the other hand, you may pick a brand because that's what everyone else has. This isn't considered brand loyalty, but falls more into the popularity/trending category which we will discuss later.



When considering ear speakers, brand loyalty plays a big role. This product is one that can greatly vary in price range and quality alike. While some consumers would rather spend

more and get better quality, there are still brands that are very affordable that consumers will pick over another. Skullcandy is a popular in-ear speaker that sells for \$5-10 in many common stores. This brand has won over many consumers with its likeability, availability, price, and color option. On the other end of the spectrum, Beats by Dre have gained much of the market with the name and branding along with the popularity among celebrities. Both of these brands have a big market and share hold within the ear speaker industry.

Type of ear speaker is another rule consumer will use when making a purchasing decision. Over-the-ear, in-ear, wireless, etc. are all very different types of ear speakers and we can safely assume there is a preference with each consumer. Whichever type they prefer, there is a vast variety of brands, price, quality, etc. to choose from. This decision is based purely upon preference of the consumer. Although other factors may also persuade the consumer, the type of ear speaker is something that will commonly be left up to the consumer themselves.

Price is a rule that falls within all industries and categories of products sold. The price of a product and the budget of a consumer have to align for the product to even be considered amongst its competitors. Ear speakers can be bought at the gas station for \$4.99, or exclusively at a corporate store for \$200+. The range in these prices will force consumers to evaluate which speaker is best for them.

Spectrum of Price-Driven Buyer Values Based on Behavior



Most consumers have an idea of what they are looking for in an ear speaker. Price and quality directly correlate with each other and can most definitely be a deciding factor in these decisions. If someone is willing to spend more than they normally would on a set of ear speakers, they want to make sure they are going to get a good, quality pair of speakers. This can lead to research and investigating which brand and type is best for the price. Main competitors will generally take precedence, but consumers should always do proper research for their own preferences when shopping for any high-priced item.

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As mentioned previously, children are using ear speakers more and more, especially when traveling in the car. In past generations, children this young haven't exposed their ears to this type of direct sound and the health concerns and effects have parents wondering if it's safe,

and what the safest brand and type of ear speaker to get for their children. In the same respect, many health conscious individuals are aware of the devastating harm that these speakers can do your hearing ability as well as the health of your ear/inner ear. This decision rule can be a difficult one to get past, seeing as most speaker manufacturers don't necessarily consider that a main objective when creating and developing their product.

These are all rules that consumers will consider when making a purchasing decision. Research is always important, even when making a brand loyal decision. There may be products released you are not aware of that may be perfect for your needs. With all of the tools in today's society to provide us with information, consumers are able to make the best decision possible for their needs and price range.

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