



THE Voice

携帯電話 *Journalism II*

How to choose the best cellphone company for you in Japan

By Shoko Suzuki

There are 3 big cellphone companies in Japan:

[docomo](#), [au](#), and [Softbank](#).

Docomo still holds the biggest share of cellphone market which is 48%, and au holds 28%. Softbank holds 21% according to the Yomiuri newspaper.

You may think docomo is the largest company, but its market share used to be 60% in 2000 so it's very obvious that the number of docomo users has been dropping rapidly.

In terms of vendor, Sharp has the largest market share. In second place are Fujitsu and Toshiba.

The third one is Apple, making this the first time a foreign company has been in the Top Three since 1996.

SMARTPHONES

When it comes to the type of cellphone, smartphones have 79% and "normal" cellphones have only 21% of the market.

There is also strong

competition between the iPhone operating system iOS and the android operating system from Google.

The iPhone quickly became very popular in Japan and now you can see it everywhere, but android phones finally began to grab market share from the iPhone last year.

ANDROID

Now all three companies are selling android phones and 2 of the companies are selling the iPhone.

They all have different price plans, designs, and features.

You can get explanations and pamphlets from each cellphone company, but it can be very confusing and not easy to find out which cellphone company would be the best for you.

So, we hope these stories will help you to choose your cellphone company and the cellphone that will be best for you.



Not everyone has the latest cellphone, but sometimes an older model works just as well if all you want to do is make telephone calls

THE VOICE is the culmination of 15 weeks of hard, confusing, work by the students of the Journalism II class in the Faculty of Education and Human Sciences.

After weeks of ideas, ethics and practice, the members of Journalism II embarked on the ambitious program to produce material for THE VOICE Vol. 2.

They each wrote a first-person story about their own cellphone and then examined the various plans and cellphone models available in the market today.

They also did an excellent job.

Darryl Gibson, Instructor Journalism II

THE VOICE

docomo

By Saho Tajima

As of this writing, docomo is offering four campaigns. They may already be discontinued, but I am sure similar plans will be available in the future too.

The plans were:

1. Those who buy a cellphone with a new contract or model change, 5,040

yen discount every month.

2. Those with a cellphone model from before Jan. 4, 2010, can get cash back.

3. Those who buy an Xi smart phone can get a pocket charger.

4. In addition, those who used a cellphone from other companies and don't change their phone number a 15,750

yen discount.

Prices of cellphones vary by shop. You can get phones at docomo shops, electric shops, and mobile phone shops.

If you are busy, you should buy at a docomo shop because it takes time to buy at electric and mobile phone shops.

But if you focus on price, small mobile phone shops are the best. You must pay a deposit at most docomo shops. Most mobile phone shops don't require any deposit. They also don't force you to subscribe to some extra services.

Nevertheless, prices vary by shop, so the best way is to check shops from docomo shops to small mobile phone shops.

You can choose your best plan from a lot of rate plans. If you buy smart phone, you will join "pakehoudai furatto." You can use the Internet without limit. It costs 5,460 yen each month and docomo

Even if your family doesn't use docomo, you can join "hitoridemowari" and your basic monthly charge will also be half.

I recommend some kinds of cellphones.

1. If you often search the Internet and use application images, I think "GALAXYSILTE" is the best because of its quick response and high-

resolution. It also supports Xi, enabling you to have ultrahigh-speed communication.

2. For women, I think "ARROWS Kiss" is good because of its design. The color is white and pink, the buttons are glitter and gorgeous.

Moreover they are smaller than other designs.



Moshi, moshi

introduces about seven plans depending on the toll charges. If you call for over 18 minutes every day, you should join typeLL. This costs 13,650 yen a month. If you rarely call, you should join typeSS. It costs 1,957 yen a month. You can decide freely.

And you can also choose the discount service "famiwari" or "hitoridemowari". If your family also uses docomo, you can join "famiwari". The basic monthly charge will be half and you can call and send e-mail for free whenever you want.

Now I use an iPhone, but it is difficult to use with one hand because it's too big.

So for a women, compact size can be really useful. There are also a lot of good content and applications for women.

3. If you want to take many pictures, I think "LUMIX Phone" is the best.

LUMIX is famous for cameras and the number of pixels is about 13.2 million. You can also share your photos easily.

I hope this reference information will help you choose the cellphone and price plan that is best for you.

THE VOICE

Softbank

By Runa Murata

Now, three carriers are the biggest in Japan. They seem not so different in prices or services. So I think the most important thing you should think about when you choose a carrier is what kind of cellphone you want to use - an ordinary phone or smartphone; useful or fashionable?

If you want to buy an iPhone, of course you should choose Softbank because it is the major. Now, au also has the iPhone and its price plan is cheaper because of a campaign, but I think you should buy it from Softbank.

Softbank used to be the only carrier for the iPhone in Japan and they had big campaigns so many people changed their carrier to the Softbank to get an iPhone. And their price plan is free among Softbank users so if many of your family and friends are with Softbank I think it will be better if you to choose Softbank even though the free plan has a time limitation.

Softbank also has other special phones such as Disney Mobile. The other carriers have no such phone. If you want to enjoy a cute cellphone you should choose Softbank and you can enjoy the world of Disney. Actually, that is the reason why I changed my carrier to Softbank. I wanted to have one I saw in

their TV commercial.

As you can see, Softbank has some special phones the other carriers don't. So, if you have a particular cellphone you want, you should choose Softbank.



Can you hear me now?

By Akiko Murase

When I changed my mobile phone provider from au to Softbank, Softbank still had a monopoly on the iPhone. Then, Softbank started a campaign called Norikae Switchover Discount. It urged me to change my provider. It was aimed at people who would switch to Softbank, keeping their own number or getting a new one. Also, if you switched, you could get gifts and points, for example, for the first seven months you didn't need to pay. It was a big gift to a "no money" university student because I didn't need to pay "big money" up front. And we could get an iPhone very easily. And then Softbank had a promotion for students called White student plan. It

said you didn't need to pay the basic fee for three years if you joined Softbank. Many of my friends switched to Softbank because of this offer.

Softbank has a very good service called Tadatomo in which if my friends are Softbank users, we can call free from 1 a.m. to 9 p.m. So, my friends who used Softbank mobile phones made me switch. Actually, however, Softbank's network is weaker than au or docomo, although they are trying to overcome this problem.

But if we have difficulty, we can contact a special number or visit a nearby Softbank shop.

Softbank supports your communications all across Japan, offering clear sound and high-quality networks.

It is a very good service and the company has many fee plans.

If you visit [My Softbank](#) on your Softbank handset or PC, you can change and add services, view all billing details, change subscription content and more.

And Softbank WiFi spots are available at familiar cafes, restaurants, major train stations and other locations. Softbank WiFi spots are also expanding continuously, an important point for a smartphone user.

Softbank has many unique qualities and the timing is very good, so I recommend you switch to Softbank.

THE VOICE

au

Akiko Maruyamano

I am in charge of explaining the advantages of using the mobile services from au.

First, let me introduce au's good points compared with the other mobile services from some of the other carriers.

For example, compared to Softbank and docomo, I think au has the better coverage.

When we go to very rural areas or even inside a cave and so on, other mobile carriers' cellphones cannot grab any signal. But au's cellphones still do!

Next, au is great for listening to music through its icon-based service called [LISMO](#).

Using this function, we can download music smoothly and forward music data from our computers to our phones.

And, au has won a great honor. It has been named winner of the customer satisfaction prize for two years continuously.

This award is given for six points: "Quality and Area of communication," "The reliability of cellphones," "Image of the enterprise," "Functions and service," "Cost," and, finally, "Correspondence to customers."

This survey was carried out in nine areas and people in all nine areas say au is no.1!

I think au's only unfortunate point is it has a shortage of cellphone designs. Second, let me introduce au's cost.

I think for many people, cost is the most important thing, so I will let you in on an advantageous plan.

It is a well-known fact Softbank users can talk free to each other every day from 1 a.m. until 9 p.m.

Now, au users can also talk free to each other in the same time period, and this plan costs only 980 yen.

Besides, if you want, by paying another 390 yen you can talk 24 hours every day with three people you choose.

I especially recommend this for anyone who has a boyfriend or girlfriend.

It's sure, using this plan, a couple will become even more friendly because there will be no worries about how much it costs when they talk to each other.

Moreover, if you have a family, you can talk with them for free for the whole day with no time limitation.

If now you use another company's cellphone, there is a very profitable plan available from au.

If a docomo or Softbank user changes to become an au user, he or she can receive a discount of 68,280 yen, a very huge amount of money.

Using this money you could even travel abroad. But this plan does have a time limit.

So, people, if au appeals to you, hurry up and take advantage of this great plan.



Even scarecrows pick up signals from au

THE VOICE

Our recommendations

By Shoko Suzuki

I strongly recommend having two cellphones to save

money and use them wisely. Now I have an iPhone4 from Softbank and a normal one from au. The total of my monthly payments is about

7,000 yen, which is not bad and I am satisfied with all the service I get. Also my part-time job is selling cellphones, so I'm pretty confident about choosing cellphones. First, talking about the iPhone, now you can get it from two companies, au and Softbank. Comparing these two companies, Softbank is much better about the iPhone because it has reasonable price plans and better quality of Internet service.

Both companies have almost same price plan for iPhones except for the packet fee. Softbank is 4,410 yen and au is 4,980 yen, so if you continue using an iPhone for two years as required, the difference

is $350 \times 24 = 8,400$ yen. As long as you get the same phone, I think we should choose the inexpensive one.

your bills will be scary. In Softbank price plans, from 1 a.m. to 9 p.m., it's free to talk with somebody using

Softbank phones, but in other situations, it costs 21 yen for 30 seconds and it comes with no free calls.

Unlike that, au has a better price plan for calling. If you choose "plan SS", the monthly fee is 980 yen, which is same as Softbank, but it comes with 25 minutes of free calls and it's also free to call your family members.

These are why I suggest having 2 cellphones, the iPhone from Softbank and a normal phone from au. The



With two phones, you don't need to share quite so often

Everybody says the reception of Softbank phones is very poor, but it really doesn't matter as long as you are in a city, such as Yokohama. In fact, Softbank has the faster Internet service. The maximum speed of Internet access that is officially announced by Softbank is 14.4 Mbps, and au is 3.1Mbps.

However, the only weakness of Softbank is that if you make phone calls so often,

android phone is pretty good, however at this moment, the iPhone is the best in smart phone market from every aspect, for example the number of applications, speed of response, or easiness to handle. I'm sure that if you take my suggestion,

you can take advantage of each phone and company without spending too much of your money.



Not every phone is a cellphone

THE VOICE

Why I think the iPhone is the way to go

By Saho Tajima

I have used an iPhone4 since October. Before that, I used a cellphone from docomo.

Here are some the reasons I changed my phone.

First, brand name. iPhone is the first smartphone product and is designed by Apple, which a specialist in

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I

comput

ers, so I

thought

the

iPhone

would

be best.

Second,

cost. An

iPhone

costs

about

5,000

yen a

month,

but

other

smartph

ones

cost

about

10,000 yen a month, meaning the iPhone is much cheaper.

Third, diffusion rate. The number of people using iPhones is increasing.

When I bought my iPhone, Softbank had the monopoly and people using Softbank cellphones can talk for free

to other Softbank users except between 9 p.m. and 1 a.m. I thought this was a good service. Whenever you want to call someone using Softbank, you can call him or her without paying any more money.

And, if many more people use the iPhone, then it is even better.

Forth, promotions. When I bought

for changing providers. If you are a student, you can get another 10,000 yen off as a student discount.

Softbank also as other services such as mimamori, which I could get for free. I gave mimamori to my mother, so I can her for free.

Fifth, system and functions. The iPhone is better than other

cellphones

on these

points, I

think:

Reaction,

speed and

application

s.

It is often

said that

Softbank's

coverage

area is not

very good,

but if you

can get a

WiFi

signal, you

can use

your

iPhone

even

outside the



Get an iPhone and maybe you can look super cool too

my iPhone, Norikaewari and Gakuwari were available. If this was not the case, I wouldn't have bought the phone. If you used a cellphone from another company, you got 20,000 when you buy an iPhone from Softbank. This is the discount

signal area. WiFi can also connect to the Internet.

An iPhone with Internet enabled cost about 10,000 yen per month, but even then it is a good price.

For these reasons, I recommend you get an iPhone.

THE VOICE

Runa says, "Get an iPhone!"

By Runa Murata

Now, I'm using an iPhone. I got it in August and I really like it because not only is its design cute, it is very useful. The iPhone is one of the smartphones from Apple and its original model was released in November 2007. It is most specialized for using the Internet. For example, you can use Google, Yahoo! and YouTube by using an iPhone. It is said that iPhone is the most suitable tool for users who use the Internet very often. However, I didn't want to use the Internet so much, so that is not the real reason that I bought an iPhone. I was looking for an iPod because mine had broken. So I went to a volume-sales outlet where I noticed that it

would be cheaper to buy an iPhone than to buy an iPod. There was a campaign that if a person changed her phone to the iPhone, they could get some cash back. At that time, many friends bought the iPhone because of this campaign and finally I joined them. When I started using it, I found it very useful. All you have to do is to take the iPhone with you every time and you can listen to music,

take good quality photos and use the Internet easily.

The iPhone is so useful that once you've started to use it,

you can't imagine a life without it anymore.

So I recommend you buy an iPhone too.

For me, it's au all the way

By Akiko Maruyamano

The chance to change my phone came because I had lost mine.

I left my phone at a restaurant and it was gone. So, I went to a cellphone shop - an au shop.

That shop had three types of cellphones for people who had lost their own phone.

I chose one from three.

There are three reasons why I choose my cellphone and I'll introduce them.

First, and this is the most important reason, is cost.

My cellphone was the cheapest of the three offered.

These days, all cellphones have minimum abilities.

Cost is influenced by the "plus alpha" factor, for example, design and weight, how thin, quality of picture and so on.

But I think those are unnecessary factors for cellphones.

In my lifestyle, it is enough to be able to contact reliably with others.

My second reason for choosing it is the solar function.

My cellphone has a big solar panel and can make energy by bathing in

in even weak sunlight.

Because of this ability, I can charge my battery very easily. This function is best demonstrated when we are outdoors.

I think there are many people who insist the solar function does work on rainy days, but usually people are not active outside on rainy days, so it is not a problem.

You also have power in cases of emergencies.

For example, in an accident on a ship or mountain you can still call for help from a rescue party.

After the Tohoku earthquake, it was almost impossible for others to charge their phones because there was no electricity.

The third reason I got my phone is waterproofing.

Now, our cellphones are indispensable for us and on rainy days and in typhoons older phones that get wet are worthless.

And, I think au is by far the very best provider.

They have many rate plans and we can get a phone for little money.

Please try!



Sunshine and a cellphone with a solar panel, great!