3G or 4G…is there really a choice?

More mobile equipment today is available with "4G" technology but how do we know if we need it, want it, or can even use it, and are we paying more for it? For the average consumer, "3G" and "4G" are relatively mysterious terms in mobile tech talk, yet the manufacturers and service providers assume we all know about it.

To begin with, the "G" stands for the generation of mobile technology that is installed in mobile phones, tablets and cellular networks. "1G" was used in the analog mobile phone, "2G" was used in the digital phone, and in 2003 "3G" brought broadband connection to mobile devices. Now devices like Apple's iPad have been launched "using" 4G technology….but the problem is that not many countries have this system available yet. There has already been a public backlash against Apple claiming false advertising, but is it that or are they just ahead of their time? (This also varies with the either 700MHz or 2100 MHz spectrum bands which are not universally supported.)

 "4G" purports faster internet connectivity, better voice quality, more network capacity for more data per consumer…such terms as HSPA+21/42, WiMAX, and LTE are part of this generation. For example, LTE (Long Term Evolution) is working toward the new standard that will replace 3G whereby the average download speed can be 15.75 Mbps and upload speeds of 1.49Mbps but everything depends on the geographic location and service provider's equipment capabilities. What is certain is that every new generation will be faster and more efficient than the last from the same carrier, i.e. BT, Telefonica (Movistar), DT, and so on. How efficiently our devices work and if we can actually utilize the jazzy new technology we pay for all depends on who our carrier is and where we are physically located. So even though a new mobile device today may include 4G, we are still actually using 3G today….we just have to wait for our service providers to get their act together and get up to manufacturers' mobile tech speed.