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A study on Factors Affecting Brand Switching Behavior in Prepaid Telecommunication Industry of India : A Qualitative Investigation

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ABSTRACT:

This study investigates the factors influencing brand switching behaviour among customers in Indian telecommunication industry, using a qualitative approach. The findings highlight key factors such as service quality, price structure, and the influence of family and friends as primary drivers of brand switching. The research focuses on mobile service users in western India and suggests that future studies could explore other regions and telecom sectors. The study offers valuable insights for telecom managers to enhance customer retention through improved service quality, competitive pricing, and targeted promotional strategies that consider social influence and innovative branding strategies can lead to win-win situation and can lead to the marketer's goal of consumer delight.

This study intends to study the "Impact of Brand Equity on Purchase Intentions of prepaid mobile"

Key words: -consumer behaviour, customer retention, brand switching, value added services, consumer delight, telecom service provider, switching behaviour, prepaid mobile users.

INTRODUCTION

The telecommunications industry has become an essential part of today's dynamic and interacted world. With rapid technological progress and market globalization, mobile communication services have increased rapidly homogeneous, acute competition among service providers. As a result, getting new customers and, more importantly, maintaining existing people has become an important challenge for telecom operators. In this environment, customers have emerged as a significant discrimination in ensuring satisfaction and loyalty permanent market share and profitability.

Mobile Number Portability (MNP) - Service provider's ability to maintain their phone number when switching to service providers - has increased customers' dynamics further. Users are now more powerful to switch to alternative operators that provide better pricing, better service quality and analog communication solutions. This behaviour of switching from one service provider to another, known as brand switching, has become a centre concern for telecom companies. This is not only the attraction of the customer for a brand, but also promotes customer acquisition for the contestants.

The growing trend of brand switching in the telecom sector can be attributed to multiple factors, including price perception, service quality, confidence, inconvenience, customer dissatisfaction and colleague effects. As the competition increases, it is now not enough for companies to rely on competitive pricing or basic service facilities. Instead, telecom firms must continuously innovate and respond to develop customers' needs and expectations.

Problem statement

In recent years, telecom service users in India have increased the desire to switch to service providers in search of better service quality, pricing and price-added features. Although various studies have attempted to measure customer switching behaviour using quantitative methods, but there is a gap in understanding the inherent psychological and practical factors affecting this trend - especially in the context of India's prepaid telecommunication market. In addition, specific strategies can work to maintain telecommunication provider customers and do not widely discover through qualitative research to discourage brand switching.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to check out major factors that affect brand switching behaviour among prepaid mobile telecom users in India. This focuses on understanding the relationship between customer behaviour and variables such as service quality, price structure, belief and social impact. Unlike prior studies that use mainly quantitative approaches, this research adopts a qualitative functioning to achieve deep insights into consumer perceptions, approaches and motivations.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is directed by the following objectives:

1. To detect psychological and practical factors affecting brand switching behaviour in the telecom sector.
2. Checking the relationship between switching behavior and major service-related variables such as pricing, service quality and colleague effects.
3. To identify the primary causes that drive users to switch from one telecom operator to another.
4. To provide practical recommendations for telecom providers to improve customer retention and satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mobile service providers in southern Punjab are the determinants of brand switching important factors that affect customers' switching behaviour and preferences in the telecom industry about mobile service providers. Therefore, it seems to be a major problem for telecom service providers, especially to provide quality service for mobile telecom service providers, there is frequent changes in market compositions and continuous surfacing in competitive characteristics. Customer brand switching behaviour service failure, customer satisfaction, price, discomfort and customer services are dramatically growing dramatic and companies are facing many issues in consequences such as customers churning, market share, low profitability etc.

2.1. price

There are three components of the concept of value: objective value, perceived non-monetary value, and sacrifice. The objective is not equal to the monetary value (directly, the amount paid for the product) is not equal to the alleged value (ie, the customer's mind understood and recorded), as customers do not always know or miss the real price paid for a product. Price plays an important role in telecommunications market, especially for mobile telecom service providers. The relationship between price and customer loyalty which suggests that customers' satisfaction in the telecom market depends on factors such as attractive call rates, internet browsing fees, price schedule variation and so on. The perception of value fairness plays an important role in any exchange transaction. The feeling of fairness depends on the profit-loss ratio felt by both partners in exchange.

2.2. brand image

The brand concept in marketing literature is often discussed. Brand building is not only an important driving force for marketing of physical products, it is also an important issue for service firm. It is considered as the perception or mental picture of the brand formed and held in the brands of customers through the reaction of customers, whether rational or emotional. Through literature, it suggests that positive brand image more brand equity and preference of customer is due to its market status towards a brand and the high demand of the brand between their social circles. Brand image also helps companies attract other network users and prevent customer switching behaviour for their current customers. According to the increase in brand image or identity, customer loyalty to the brand will also increase. Therefore, it has been concluded that a positive brand image is going to meet the customer's expectation and provide more profit to the customer, which can lead to customer satisfaction and trust.

2.3. Quality of service

The quality of services in the telecom industry is identified through innovation, communication and value-added services. The quality of service is not only an important factor of customer satisfaction in manufacturing industries, but also in service firms. It also shows indirect relations as mediation with customer relationship and quality of services associated with brand loyalty in the possibilities of the telecom industry about cellular services. When customers would not get the quality of service that they were expecting before buying their trust would move which in turn makes the customer dissatisfied and it ends on the other service provider in the customer switch. So it can be concluded to be loss to the current prepaid operator.

2.4. Family, friends and relatives

Social factors are social norms, values and realizations are also affecting customers' purchase behavior such as reference groups, family members and every member's role in society and status. It can be noted that family, friends and relatives have a positive effect on customers' satisfaction, leading to increased customer retention. According to [4], customers always keep in mind their family or friends which network are using the network. Any member of the family has that network connection as the reasons for switching the network from one to another. Researchers also suggest that the cellular provider should invest on network coverage, better FNF offers (family and friend package) and finally receive a response from the customer to improve his services to continuously to avoid switching behavior.

2.5. Customer satisfaction as mediator

Customer satisfaction can be defined as evaluations made by customers based on all purchase experiences, disregarding any specific purchase experience. Accordingly, in the current study we will conceptualize customers' satisfaction as the overall consumption perception of customers when using mobile communication services. Service switching intent is the concept of customers' will to replace the current service provider with another competitor; And as a result we define the intention of switching as a negative result of a service company, referring to the possibility of a customer switching to another mobile service provider on another. The success of organizations is completely dependent on customers' satisfaction. Improvement of price, quality services and betterment of good brand image will certainly lead to more and more customers' satisfaction.

2.6. Customer switching behavior

Brand switching occurs when a customer switches his loyalty from one brand of a certain type of product to another. Brand switching behavior is long interested for marketing researchers in modelling brand switching behaviour and provides a useful representation of previous procurement on the current purchases. Customer behaviour is psychological processes that customers do in identifying the needs, identifying the means of resolving these needs and making purchases. Evidence suggests that the price, discomfort and service quality are important factors that affect the brand switching behavior of customers. Companies can maintain long-term relations with customers and prevent their behavior towards switching their brands. Brand switching about cellular companies is becoming very important because both of its aspects are losing their customers while other companies are receiving customers at the same time. But arbitrary behavior in customer's prospects is getting worrying for companies to maintain their customers and reduce the customer's turn rate because long-term customer relationship means long-term profitability. It can be concluded that, when any company loses a customer, they are not only losing future earnings, but also increasing the cost of finding new customers.

2.7. Concept

Based on the above theoretical relationship between the study variables, this research proposed the following four hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1. In the first stage of this study, many components of open customer switching intent are significantly associated with customer satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 2. Customer satisfaction is significantly associated with customer switching behavior.
- Hypothesis 3. Customer satisfaction is significantly associated with customer switching behavior.

Conceptual Framework

Depending on the concept, theory, and thinking results, an analysis between the ideological structure, price, brand image, service quality, family, friends and relatives is a development from the previous study on the analysis of the factors of the business used in this study, which is for the satisfaction of the customer's telecommunications industry for the satisfaction of customers. We can get a quick observation of witch behavior to overall customers with the help of the following Figure 1.

These five measures were considered for the purpose of this study to understand the parameters of customer switching behavior. Three theoretical methods that define the loyalty of the customer in this research are seen from an abstract point of view.

Research Methodology

The research methodology adopts partly descriptive, partly exploratory and also casual.

It is based on the review of literature also including the published research. The data has been collected with the help of Magazines, Newspapers, Research articles, Research Journals, Books, and Research E-journals.

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Significance of the study:

- This study will be a great help to marketing professionals by making them understand their customers better and come up with some effective strategies to deal with them.
- It will also be of great help to other researchers willing to further the study of this concept.
- This study will provide valuable insights to understand why consumers behave the way they do.

Suggestions

- **CREATE BRAND IMAGE BY PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING:**
Social media marketing of skincare companies must be powerful. This will create a good brand image of the company and will boost up the sale of products.
- **SHARE EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE IN ADVERTISEMENTS RATHER THAN ENDORSING CELEBRITIES:**
Firms must focus on sharing experiences of people after using the products in advertisements rather than endorsing celebrities. This will be beneficial in long-run and also it will cost less than endorsing a celebrity.
- **REFERRAL INCENTIVES MUST BE GIVEN TO LOYAL CUSTOMERS TO CREATE BRAND EQUITY:**
Companies must give referral incentives to its loyal customers for referring their brands to their reference groups. Friends play a vital role in purchase decisions so the customers must be motivated through referral incentives when they suggest their product to their friends and other reference groups.
- **WINDOW SHELF-DISPLAYS ATTRACT CUSTOMERS TO MAKE A PURCHASE:**
Companies must keep motivating retail outlets to increase their window shelf-displays so that customers get attracted to buy products.
- **CUSTOMERS ARE INFLUENCED BY PRICE DISCOUNTS:**
Price discounts are one of the sales promotion strategies which influence the most for making the purchase. So companies must keep on bringing some offers for its customer base in order to make them purchase their products.
- **FOCUS ON SHOWING REALISTIC ADVERTISEMENTS:**
Telecom companies must try to show advertisements that are realistic.

Conclusion

Conclusion is being summarized as under:

- Telecom companies must use normal people in their advertising roll outs to have a greater connect with the customers
- When companies launch a new product they must motivate customers to take free trial also promotional incentives should be given to a base of loyal customers and also Friends play a vital role in influencing customers and hence referral incentives should be given to customers who are referring the products to their peer group and friends

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