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Switching Loyalties: Understanding the Dynamics of Brand Switching and Customer Satisfaction in Mobile Services among Students in Assam

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Abstract:

Customer satisfaction is a positive emotional response to a brand or product, influenced by factors like price, variety, quality, and customer service. A satisfied customer is more likely to establish a long-term relationship with the brand, impacting customer retention and brand switching decisions. The study delves into the complex relationship between customer satisfaction and brand switching behavior, with a specific focus on the telecom sector and Assam's student community. It aims to understand how satisfaction levels influence switching decisions, and how switching behavior changes over time. By examining satisfaction levels before and after switching, the research seeks to identify patterns and trends that can inform telecom providers' customer retention strategies. Additionally, the study explores the relationship between satisfaction levels and switching frequency, providing insights into the dynamics of customer loyalty and brand switching.

Keywords: *Brand Switching, Mobile Service, Customer Satisfaction,*

Introduction

Switching behaviour can be defined as the process or decision by which a customer decides to put an end to his/her relationship with one service provider and establishes the same relationship with another service provider. Thus, switching is related to customer dissatisfaction and complaints against service provider, negative service experience and bad service quality, high price, low customer commitment, low reputation, effective advertising competition, low responses to service failure, dissatisfaction, involuntary and low service products ((Chapa, Hernandez and Wang, 2014; Fan and Suh, 2014; Raitani, 2014).

Switching behaviour basically refers to customers abandoning a product or service in favour of a competitor's. 'Customers are King' and business houses are increasingly being customer-centric and are taking up customer-driven initiatives that seek to understand, attract, retain and build intimate long term relationship with profitable customers (Kotler and Keller, 2006; Grönroos, 1994; and Narver and Slater, 1990).

Literature Review

Every service provider's customers are interested in the quality and performance of the service. Some customers can sacrifice low price for better quality. Jun and Bin (2005) found that high quality services become the source of creating customer loyalty. There is a high likelihood to switch when network rollout failure occurs. If the network coverage fails to cover areas that subscribers had anticipated then the subscribers are likely to find another

provider who will meet their needs. Customers are more interested in having their brand with reasonable cost and with good network (Rajkumar and Chaarlas, 2012). Price, Inconvenience (late activation, late response from customer care), and service failure (low signal, interruption) lead to switching to other networks, if switching is considered as dependent variable and price, inconvenience and service failure as independent variables (Saeed, Lodhi, Muhammad, Saeed, Fareed, Sami, Dustgeer, Mahmood and Ahmad, 2013). There is a positive relation between customers' satisfaction and propensity to stay. If consumers are not satisfied with the services of the service providers they subscribed to, they switch to another provider. Thus core service failure is the key switching factor (Boateng, Prempeh and Asumah, 2013). Customer satisfaction is a situation when all the needs of the customer are fulfilled (Oliver 1996). But, customer satisfaction is built with the personal experience when the products and services are purchased or used by the customers (Parasuraman et al 1988). So satisfaction is a happy feeling, a positive emotion or a state when a customer decides to stay with the brand and sometimes even ready to pay more price to retain that feeling of happiness which is received in the form of satisfaction by using the product and service. On the contrary, dissatisfaction can be defined as a state of negative emotions such as anger, hatred, and disgust (Storm and Storm: 1987). Thus, a dissatisfied customer is the one who is under the state of irritation, anger, disgust and hatred. In such a situation he makes a decision to switch to competitor's brand. Moreover, such dissatisfaction and frustration of the customer bursts in the form of negative promotion of the product and service.

A study by Kouser, Qureshi, Shahzad and Hasan (2012) focused on finding the reasons behind the customer's switching behaviour in cellular services sector of Pakistan. It surveyed 480 respondents across the different regions of the country selected on convenience basis. The survey was based on a self-administered questionnaire. The research inferred that customer retention highly depends on Call and SMS rates and then on network service, network coverage and customer service. Using logistic regression and likelihood ratio it is concluded that proposed variables have a significant relationship with the switching.

Mokhtar, Maiyaki and Noor (2011) studied the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction on customer loyalty with regards to mobile phone usage among the postgraduate students of a university in Northern Malaysia. The results showed that both service quality and customer satisfaction significantly affected the level of customer loyalty of mobile phone users in Malaysia.

Customers switch not because of service failure alone, but because the service provider fails to handle the situation suitably (Keaveney, 1995). There is a positive relationship between the trust and the brand switching (Afzal, Chandio, Shaikh, Ghumro, khuhro, 2013). Customers' satisfaction, trust and switching barriers play a major role in customers' retention (Ranaweera and Prabhu 2003). Brand loyal customers do not accept the marketing strategies of the competitors (Dick and Basu, 1994). Ganesen (1994) suggest that trust reduces perceived risk and it also reflects credibility of companies.

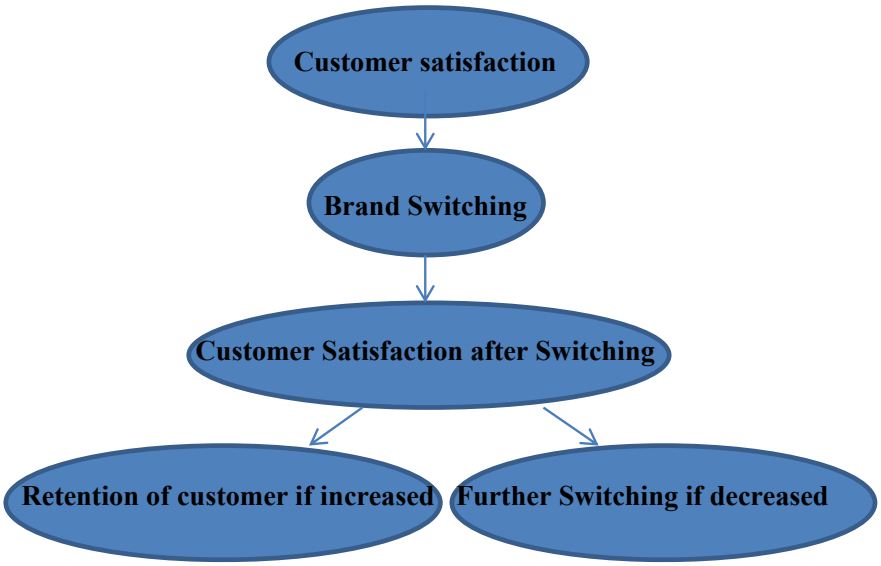
Customer satisfaction and service quality are general and vague terms which could mean different things to different customers. Therefore, network coverage acts as an important

variable of study within the larger variable of customer satisfaction and service quality. This variable becomes all the more significant in the regions were communication facility is inadequate and infrastructure is under developed as in the case of Assam in the rural areas. Given a situation of low network coverage of competitors, a service provider can attract the customers of his competitors by providing good network coverage.

The review establishes the strong relation between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer retention. Scholars agree that good and satisfactory service quality retains customers while poor quality leading dissatisfaction becomes a major factor in switching.

Research Gap and Model

The gap that has been identified from the review of different research work is the lack of research on measuring the level of satisfaction after switching the service provider. The empirical study to address this gap is the need of the hour. Because consumers' satisfaction after switching is the key factor that will decide the long term relation of the consumer with the service provider. It is valuable to understand the switching behaviour of the customer and his further switching decision.



Objectives

1. To assess customer satisfaction before and after switching.
2. To examine the relationship between frequency of switching and the level of satisfaction.

Methodology

To achieve the above mentioned objectives primary data were collected through consumer survey. . Sample of 420 students were selected with convenience method from 60 different educational institutions Furthermore, the researcher took the help of secondary sources in order to design the primary research. It provides the baseline to compare the primary data for the study.

The present study was conducted at different districts of Assam. Educational institutes from different parts of the state were selected at a random basis for the survey. Primary survey was conducted in the educational institutes of 18 different districts of Assam. These include Cachar, Barpeta, Kokrajhar, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Kamrup, Kamrup Metro, Sonitpur, Morigaon, Baksa, Nagaon, Darrang, Bongaigaon, Lakhimpur, Tinsukia, Nalbari, Golaghat and Sivasagar.

Analysis:

For the survey the respondents were asked to agree with the given statement for every variables in five point likert scale (strongly agree/ agree/ neither agree nor disagree/ disagree/ strongly disagree and highly satisfied/ satisfied/ neither satisfied nor dissatisfied/ dissatisfied/ highly dissatisfied). Accordingly variables were defined with the value that ranges from +2 to -2, where +2 represents extreme positive response i.e. highly satisfied and -2 represents extreme negative response i.e. highly dissatisfied. Descriptive statistics were applied to analyse the data. Relationship testing was done with the help of ANOVA, chi-square test, and multiple regression analysis.

Customers' Satisfaction : Measuring the level of satisfaction is most important to identify the switching behaviour of the customers. To measure and analyse the level of satisfaction of the switcher, eight different variables were presented and respondents were asked to respond with their level of satisfaction in five point likert scale for each variable in two different time period, before switching and after switching. The variable adopted for the study are (i) price (ii) value (iii) network signal (iv) network coverage (v) technology (vi) number of alternative plan (vii) response towards complained (viii) festive offers.

Table-1. Satisfaction with the Current Service Provider

Variable	N	Mean
Satisfaction with current service	422	0.88

Mean value of the satisfaction level of the switchers with their current service provider shows that they are satisfied.

Table-2. Satisfaction on 'Price' before and after Switching

Variable	Satisfaction	N	Mean
Price	**Before switching**	420	0.25
	After switching	420	0.88

It has been seen in the above table that customers' satisfaction regarding price is increased. The mean value of satisfaction on price which was 0.25 before switching has increased to 0.88. Thus to verify if satisfaction has been increased actually after switching, group t test is performed.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference of satisfaction with respect to price among the switchers' before and after switching.

Table-3. Group t-test between before and after Switching period for 'price'

Group	T	Df	Sig.
Satisfaction before and after switching	-11.68	419	.000

There is a significant difference of satisfaction on price before and after switching ($p=0.000<0.05=\alpha$). Hence, null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis was accepted. It was observed from the mean value that level of satisfaction is more after switching.

Similarly, in table 4., satisfaction regarding all the other seven variables are analysed. The table has contained descriptive statistics and the t test results which were conducted to test the significant difference of switchers' satisfaction before and after switching.

Table-4.t Test for Satisfaction before Switching and after Switching on Various Variables.

Variable	Satisfaction	Mean	t	df	Sig.
Value	**Before switching**	0.02	-12.44	419	0.000
	After switching	0.65			
Network signal	**Before switching**	-0.05	-12.94	419	0.000
	After switching	0.72			
Network coverage	**Before switching**	-0.09	-13.705	419	0.000
	After switching	0.73			
Technology	**Before switching**	0.38	-6.414	419	0.000
	After switching	0.69			
No. of alternative plan	**Before switching**	0.11	-9.568	419	0.000
	After switching	0.61			
Response towards complaints	**Before switching**	-0.07	-11.512	419	0.000
	After switching	0.57			
Festive offers	**Before switching**	0.13	-8.635	419	0.000
	After switching	0.58			

It is noticed that customers' satisfaction for all the variables has increased after switching and p value of t test also reflects the same (for all variables, $p=0.000<0.05=\alpha$). But one major observation is that mean values for variables like 'network signal', 'network coverage' and response towards complained was negative. It means customers were dissatisfied with services on those variables. After switching there is huge change in the level of satisfaction on those variables.

To find out the influence of all these variables on the overall satisfaction of the customer after switching a multiple regression analysis was carried out.Before the regression test regression assumptions were tested.

The first assumption of multiple linear regressions is normality. That requires the errors between observed and predicted values should be normally distributed. This normality is

checked with predicted probability (P-P) plot. In P-P plot a diagonal line with little bit deviation is seen. Thus, normality of data can be assumed since there is no drastic deviation.

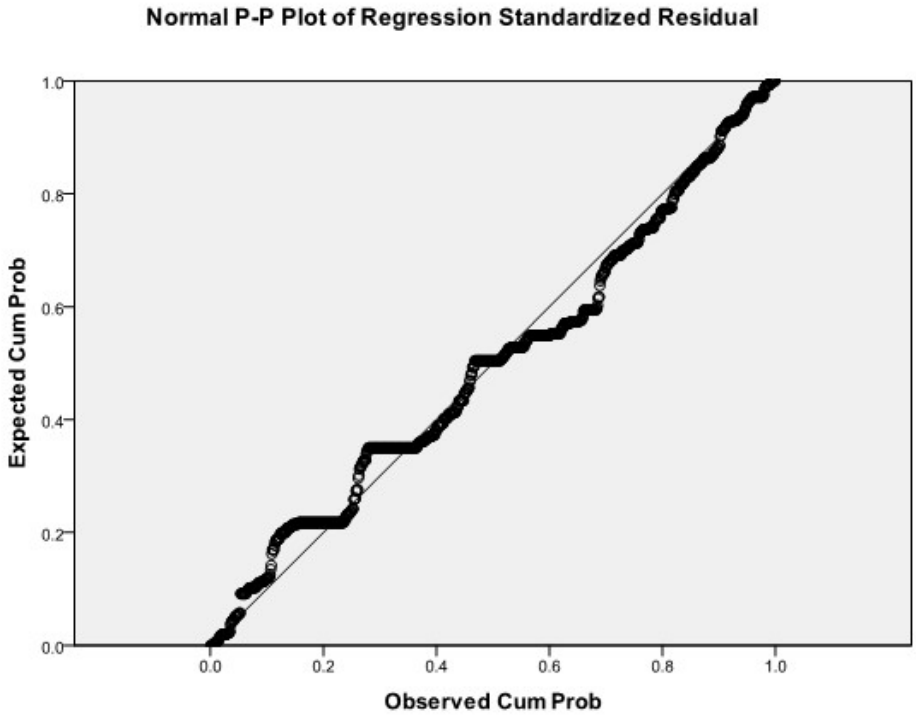


Fig. 4.1. Normal P-P plot for Regression Standardised Residual

The next assumption of multiple linear regressions is homoscedasticity. It requires the variance around the regression line to be same for all values of the predictor variable. This assumption is tested with scatterplots. The data in the scatterplot can be seen that there are points equally distributed above and below on X axis, and to the left and right on the Y axis. Thus data set is homoscedastic.

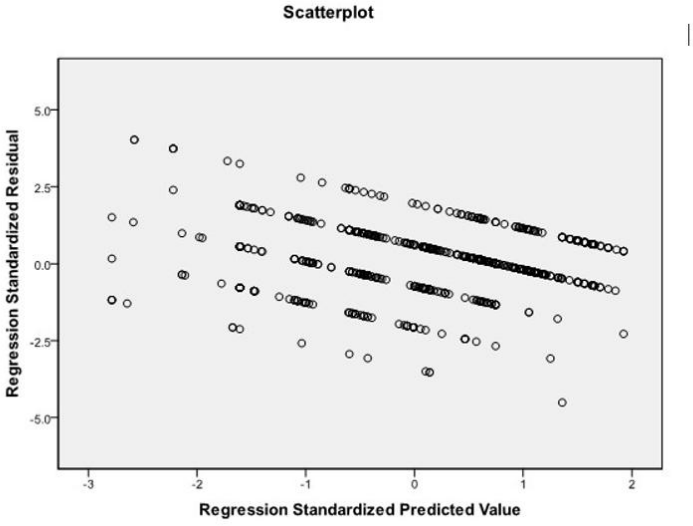


Fig. 4.2.Scatterplot for Regression Homoscedasticity

The last assumption of regression is no multicollinearity that assumes that independent variables are not highly correlated with each other. It is checked with variance inflation factor (VIF) values. These values can be seen in the coefficient table of regression analysis (table-4.41.). Each value is below 10, indicating that assumption is met.

Null hypothesis: there is no influence on overall satisfaction and by individual satisfaction of all variables

Table-5. Model Summary

Model		R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
dimension0	1	.418[a]	.175	.159	.511

Here, $R^{2=}$ .175 which implied that 17.5 per cent variation in the dependent variable (overall satisfaction) is explained by the independent variables (satisfaction on individual variables)

Further ANOVA was conducted to test the goodness of fit.

Table-6. ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	22.770	8	2.846	10.904	.000[a]
	Residual	107.278	411	.261		
	Total	130.048	419			

P value in the ANOVA is a significant value which and regression model is good fit for the data..

The coefficient table below indicates the role played by the individual variables to determine the dependent variable.

Table-7. Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.571	.043		13.192	.000		
	Price	.125	.039	.175	3.253	.001	.693	1.444
	Value	.039	.038	.057	1.023	.307	.643	1.555
	Network signal	.118	.041	.175	2.903	.004	.553	1.809
	Network coverage	.036	.039	.055	.934	.351	.589	1.698
	Technology	.036	.038	.049	.968	.334	.795	1.258
	No. of alternative plan	.021	.038	.030	.566	.571	.730	1.370
	Response	-.001	.035	-.001	-.021	.983	.700	1.430

	Festive offer	.043	.033	.069	1.314	.190	.734	1.362

The coefficient table above revealed that only two variables called 'price' and 'network signal' can significantly explain the dependent variable. B value for price means if there is any increase in satisfaction on price after switch, overall satisfaction will be increased by .125 times. Similarly for network signal overall satisfaction will be influenced by .118 times.

Thus, multiple regression was conducted to predict the satisfaction after switch from different types individual variables. These variables statistically switching tendency, $F(8, 411)= 10.904$, $p<.05$, $R^{2=}$ .175. But only two variables added statistically significantly to the prediction, <.05.

FrequencyofSwitchingandtheLevelofSatisfaction

Frequency of switching is the number of times a customer is switching in a time period. The table below shows the frequency and satisfaction before and after switching. The study finds that higher frequency of switching is associated with lower satisfaction and lower frequency of switching is associated with higher satisfaction. It implies that those who switched often seem to experience less satisfaction even after switching. Therefore, they keep on switching from service provider to service provider.

Table-8. FrequencyofSwitchingandtheLevelofSatisfaction

Frequency of switching		N	Mean (Satisfaction)
Half yearly		13	.23
Yearly		27	.78
In two years		69	.88
Once in a while		311	.92

To establish the relation between frequency of switching and the satisfaction level chi-square test was carried out.

Null hypothesis: There is no association between frequency of switch and level of satisfaction.

Table-9. Chi-square Test and Fisher's Exact Test for Frequency of Switching and Satisfaction Level

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	41.470	12	.000	
Likelihood Ratio	25.708	12	.012	.007
Fisher's Exact Test	28.016			.002

N of Valid Cases	420			

Although P value in the chi-square test accepts the association between the frequency of switching and the level of satisfaction, but inference cannot be drawn with Pearson's chi-square as its expected count is more than 20 percent. Thus, to see the relation Fisher's Exact test is taken for consideration and p value ($p=.002<\alpha=0.05$) of the test reject the null hypothesis. This clearly signifies that there is an association between frequency of switching and the level of satisfaction i.e. higher the frequency lower is the level of satisfaction, lower the frequency higher the level of satisfaction.

Table-10. Frequency of Switching and Satisfaction Level before and after Switching

	Half yearly (Mean)		**Yearly (Mean)**		**In two years (Mean)**		**Once in a while (Mean)**	
Factors	**Before**	**After**	**Before**	**After**	**Before**	**After**	**Before**	**After**
Price	.15	.00	.15	.81	.42	1.04	.23	.89
Value	.08	.31	.07	.85	.32	.88	-.05	.59
Network signal	.31	.38	.04	.56	.20	.67	-.12	.76
Network coverage	-.08	.31	.00	.52	.09	.72	-.13	.77
Technology	.23	.62	.44	.33	.45	.83	.37	.70
Number of alternative plans	.38	.23	.22	.56	.14	.64	.09	.62
Response towards complaints	.00	.23	-.26	.11	-.10	.54	-.05	.64
Festive offers	.46	.62	.33	.44	.16	.68	.10	.57

The above table shows the disaggregated data for individual variables on the level of satisfaction before and after switching. Based on the individual variables affecting switching behaviour, the study finds that there is not much difference or improvement in satisfaction for individual variables before and after switching for frequent switchers. However, for those with less frequency, the level of satisfaction for individual variables is higher after switching especially for Network Signal and Coverage.

Findings:

Customer satisfaction is measured in two different time periods; satisfaction before switching and after switching the service. In general, it is found that customers' satisfaction level has been improved after switching. Analysis for all the variables have also depicts the same picture. Satisfaction related to (i) price (ii) value (iii) network signal (iv) network coverage (v) technology (vi) number of alternative plan (vii) response towards complaints and (viii) festive offer, have found to improve after switching.

A major observation is that satisfaction related to 'network signal', 'network coverage' and 'response towards complaints' were negative. It means customers were dissatisfied on these

variables before switching. After switching there is huge change in the level of satisfaction with respect to the same variables.

Although the satisfaction level of individual variable has been increased, but the overall influence on the level of satisfaction after switching is significantly explained by only two variables i.e. 'price' and 'network signal.' All the other variables could not prove their significant influence on increased level of satisfaction after switching.

When level of satisfaction is compared with the frequency of switch, then it has been found that satisfaction level of frequent switchers has hardly been improved after switching. On the contrary, satisfaction level has been improved for those who are switching occasionally.

Conclusion:

The analysis of the study showed that customer satisfaction has been improved after switching on various variables. Some of the variables like 'network signal', 'network coverage' and 'response towards complaints' have shown a remarkable improvement of satisfaction after switching, which implies that these are the main areas of dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction with the earlier service provider is the main reason of switching. Moreover, overall satisfaction is mostly influenced by 'price' and 'network signal'. Thus a special attention should be focussed in these two areas. Another conclusion is that there is a negative relationship between frequency of switching and the level of satisfaction. The statistics proves that higher the frequency of switch lower is the level of satisfaction. Those who have switched frequently have hardly shown improved mean value for the satisfaction, rather it has shown a reduced mean value for some of the variables. Thus present study can conclude that the service provider should focus more on the occasional switchers as because they are switching with a valid reason. If problems of these customers are addressed timely then they can form the group of loyal customers.Customer retention strategies should also focus on those who have not switched for at least two to three years. Like those who have subscribed one year get a discount on their total annual subscription package. This would lead to deeper brand loyalty.On the other hand, the main reasons for staying with the same service provider are related to satisfaction, brand loyalty and same service quality across the service provider. Therefore the managers must monitor the need and satisfaction of the customers to sustain a long term relation with their customers.

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