Empirical Analysis of Factors Effecting Brand Switching in Telecom Sector of Afghanistan

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Abstract

Telecommunication industry is growing dramatically along with increase in customer base. Given that the market is mature, the firms are in increasing pressure to retain their customers or steal the competitor's customers in order to enhance their customer base. In fact, this has become one of strategies in this competitive environment. With this background, the present study aims to identify relationship between the factors that influence the customers to switch from their particular service providers to others and to access the problems generally faced by the service users and their satisfaction towards the different cell phone (GSM) service providers The study adopted quantitative methodology and population of study was telecom industry's customers. The convenience sampling has been adopted to choose customers for the survey. The questionnaire has been developed for investigation of the factors that influence brand switching in the telecom industry of Afghanistan. Around 100 customers responded to the surveyed. Overall findings revealed that price, service quality, brand image and product feature are significant factors influencing consumers brand switching behavior in telecommunication industry among Afghanistan customers. Product features are the main reason as more the number of features that are being provided by a cellular network service provider, the more customers they can attract.

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Introduction

A customer is loyal towards any brands when there is chance that customer may return to company for making purchase again. In contrast customer may disappear in future if he/she is not loyal towards any brand. In addition, increased knowledge with regards to a brand and satisfactory brand associations enhance the scope of the customer for making a purchase thereby augmenting revenue and sales while lowering the customer's chance to switch brands. Irrespective of the efforts of brands, brand switching, is not an alien concept to organizations. Customers are known to switch brands and almost every customer at some point of time has switched their loyalty from a specific brand to another brand. However, what needs to be explain are the factors that influence customers to switch brands. This is the key objective of this research and it intends to find out factors that influence customers to switch brands.

1.1 Problem Statement

Afghanistan telecom industry could not able to provide quality telecommunication services to customers and this is perhaps due to lack of modern technologies. Various studies conducted elsewhere in Afghanistan showed that almost ninety-two per cent of the customers are not satisfied with the kind of service they provide. Organization performance depend upon customer retention and Afghanistan telecom industry customers switch their brands very frequently (Nai, 2017) therefore, this study focus to identify and verify factors behind brand switching in telecom Industry.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To examine the factors that influence customers to switch telecommunication brands in Afghanistan

1.3 Research Question

1. What are the factors that influence customers to switch Telecom brands in Afghanistan?
2. What is relationship between various factors like price, Trust, switching cost, Brand Image and product feature with brand switching in telecom brands in Afghanistan?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Brand

A brand is said to be an association where the consumer introspects on herself or himself on the basis of experience he or she had while using a product or a service. Trust is created by brands or branding and helps in identifying products and services, and are said to be more of assurance from a psychological perspective rather than a concept that is tangible. It helps in

developing a product image which in essence is a kind of message that is being conveyed or dedicated to the potential customer (Priyadarsini, 2015). A customer's psychological behaviour is what outlines unconscious and conscious components that play a crucial role in establishing an association amongst the customer and the brand (Rajput et al., 2012).

2.2 Brand Loyalty

According to Aaker (2000) brand loyalty is a concept that signifies a positive perception towards a brand which essentially leads to consistent purchasing of the brand over extended periods. Aaker (2000) also argues that in order to evaluate a brand, brand loyalty is a key component especially when the evaluation is being carried out in terms of value offered by a brand. This is mainly because profits can be generated through brand loyalty. The program of brand loyalty within markets is said to convert customers from one-time buyer into customers who come back for repeat purchases for products offered by a specific brand (Palumbo & Herbig, 2000). Said (2014) has defined brand loyalty as an emotion that is positively biased, evaluative and / or a behavioral response tendency in favor of a labeled, graded or branded choice or alternative made by a customer in their capacity as the choice maker, the user and or the agent making the purchase.

2.3 Brand Switching

As a concept, there are several definitions for brand switching where the definitions have been provided by several researchers in diverse settings. According to Mouri (2005) the end of a customer's relationship with a specific service provider and establishing a new association with another service provider is known as brand switching. Customers are free to make a decision to switch brands with service providers where the brand switching decision is driven by several factors. Stewart (1998) defined brand switching behaviour as customers exiting or defecting a particular company.

2.4 Factors Influencing Brand Switching

Afzal et al. (2013) opined that brand switching behavior plays an integral role in consumer purchase and repurchase as in day-to-day life consumers are known to more frequently switch brands on the basis of their perceived experiences. According to the most significant factor that drives the purchase decision of customers relate to the price of the product. It is imperative that the service provider enhances the loyalty of their customers by offering services at prices that are fair (Sathish et al., 2011). The significance of service quality, network quality, voice clarity and coverage are aspects that hold much importance for customers (Ashraf et al., 2013). Nonetheless, the image of the organization is very vital to network

providers are this image is developed on the foundations of appropriate brand management and strategies deployed by organizations to maintain the position of the brand in the market (Sun et al., 2003).

2.4.1 Switching Costs

Ting (2014) categorized switching costs into three prominent groups. These groups include; contractual cost, transactional cost and learning cost. Transactional costs would refer to the cost that customers are expected to pay in order to initiate a new association with a new cellular network service provider and would also include costs that are needed to terminate their association with their current service provider. In addition, the percentages in 2007 for those consumers who had never switched brands in the past were comparatively lower than those who had switched brands in the past (Ayiriwuti et al., 2015).

H_0: There is no significant impact of switching cost on brand switching.

H_5: There is a significant impact of switching cost on brand switching.

2.4.2 Price

In the market for every product, including the telecommunication market, price has been determined as the principal factor that stimulates brand switching amongst customers. Three price-related variables were presented by Yulisetiarini et al. (2013) which they believe can influence switching behaviour of consumers. These three variables comprised of pricing structure, pricing scheme and additional fee. Hasan et al. (2013) state that within the telecommunication sector, the pricing structure of organizations is determined by call charges.

H_0: There is no significant impact of Price on brand switching.

H_2: There is a significant impact of Price on brand switching.

2.4.3 Service Quality

Gautam and Chandhok (2011) state that 'service' by nature is intangible and customers are known to avail it concurrently at the time when it is produced and consumed. Service providers are known to deliver service to their ultimate customers. Gronroos (1990) identified five key traits where he provides a distinction between goods and services. These traits include; services are intangible, it is not possible to separate service at the time of production, delivery and consumption, services are usually heterogeneous, services generally are perishable and it is not possible to store it and ownership cannot be transferred while delivering services. Service quality is evaluated by customers when service providers present customers with the opportunity to interact with them. Service quality has been defined by Ghobadian et al. (1994) as the impression obtained by customers with

regards to the superiority or inferiority of service providers and the service they extend.

H_0: *There is no significant impact of Service Quality on brand switching.*

H_4: *There is a significant impact of Service Quality on brand switching.*

2.4.4 Trust

It is necessary that telecommunication service providers communicate a message to their customers which implies that they service provider can be trusted. It must be depicted that they can make sacrifices in order to satisfy the requirements of their customers (Chan & Chu, 2007). Jain et al. (2017) state that in order to develop a long-term association with customers, trust emerges as the most significant factor. Researchers are also of the opinion that trust is a major factor when it comes to defining loyalty of customers. Afzal et al. (2013) suggest that trust building is a procedure where one party should be in a position to meet the expectations of the other party with regards to benefits and costs. It is a significant factor that influences customers' brand switching behaviour.

H_0: *There is no significant impact of Trust on brand switching.*

H_3: *There is a significant impact of Trust on brand switching.*

2.4.5 Brand Image

The concept of brand has been regularly discussed within marketing literature. Building a brand image is not just a significant force that helps in marketing physical products but it is also a key concern for service oriented organizations. According to Ogungbade (2015) brand image can also play a role in influencing brand switching behaviours amongst customers. It is believed that the manner in which customers perceive or develop a mental image of a specific brand and is held in their minds on the basis of customer response either emotional or rational (Lee et al., 2014). According to Ibok and Etuk (2015) an increment in brand identity or image also has the propensity to enhance customer loyalty to the brand concurrently. The authors are of the opinion that a brand image that is positive is expected to meet the expectations of the customer and provide added advantages to customers this would lead to customer satisfaction and restrict them from brand switching.

H_0: *There is no significant impact of brand image on brand switching.*

H_6: *There is a significant impact of brand image on brand switching.*

2.4.6 Product Features

Saeed et al. (2013) state that people are more prone to switch their existing cellular network service provider to another service provider if the new service provider is offering an array of low rate packages that ascribe

to the customer's individual requirement. Apart from low tariff rates, service equability in mobile phone networks which comprises of voice clarity, smooth SMS traffic, high speed data services signal and coverage which are considered as product features, reliability in service also plays a key role in customer loyalty and restricting customers from switching cellular networks.

H_0: There is no significant impact of product features on brand switching

H_7: There is a significant impact of product features on brand switching

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
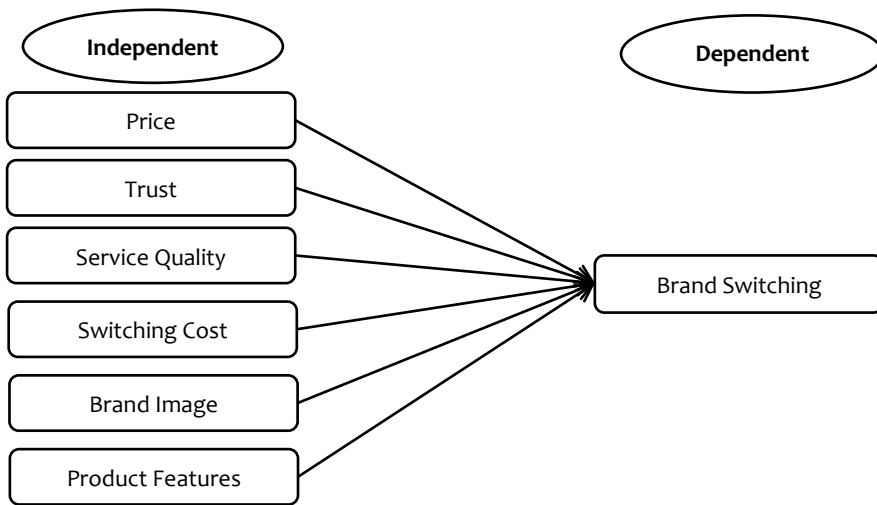
Source: Author's Compilation

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Methodology

The study adopted explanatory method as objective is to identify the relationship between various factors with brand switching. For analysis author used quantitative method to test the hypothesis developed in the study. Since the objective was to determine the factors that already been established from the previous empirical studies, the choice of quantitative and explanatory methodology was justified (Saunders et al. 2012). The population for the study is customers in the telecom industry of Afghanistan while convenience sampling been adopted. The questionnaire has been developed based to identify the relationship between factors that influence brand switching in the telecom industry of Afghanistan. A pilot study is conducted to examine the reliability and validity of the study.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is a detailed blueprint used to direct a research study

towards its objectives (Aaker et al., 1991). O`Leary (2004) research design is a set of the procedure used to decide the specific plans and practice that will be employed in the method, collection and analysis of data. For the purpose of this study, a explanatory quantitative method has been chosen. Quantitative research method encompasses the use of a structured questionnaire, which is designed to obtain a response to some specific aspects of the respondent's behaviour, view, attitude, and demographic features, which can then be presented with accurate and quantifiable approximations. Ghauri and Cateora, (2010). Quantitative research design provides data that is focused on the issue, methodical, valid and dependable.

3.3 Population and Sample

The population of a research study is comprising of the entities or individuals those are directly involved with the objectives and aims of the research. These entities and individuals were customers of telecom industry and recently switch their brand. Group of people from whom the data is to be collected is called population. In this particular research, the population comprises of all mobile phone subscribers of Afghanistan telecom market. All the Telecom service providers have a huge customer base in Afghanistan, so it is not reasonable to collect primary data from the whole population. To resolve this issue and make use of the convenience in data collection procedure, representative part of the population was selected which is called sample. Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher selects a sample as per his or her convenience (Lunsford,1995).

3.4 Sample Size

The sample was carefully selected to represent the whole population, and it helped to generalize the findings from the sample to the population, which is the whole purpose of survey research. In this study, about 384 respondents from different telecom industry customers of Afghanistan were asked to respond to the questionnaire. The responses collected were the primary data used in the analysis and findings of the research. However, after the distribution of the final questionnaire, only 100 responded to the study that is 26% of total target population.

3.5 Data Collection

The study adopted primary. Primary data was collected through survey method, which is employed to test hypotheses of the study. The survey is an art of finding out the inner state of mind and opinions of the people who are the subject of study. A survey is defined as an elaborate interview or discussion with individuals about a specific topic of research. Psychologists

and sociologists often use survey research to analyse behaviour. A questionnaire is a tool used in the survey study to collect the data. Malhotra and Birks (2003) stated that the questionnaire survey approach is the most common method of primary data collection and it has advantages as it is simple for administration and the data collected is consistent. Questionnaire survey technique has a great degree of flexibility in data collection, can accommodate diverse questions, ability to entice views because of interactive nature with high response rate, moderate sample control, good quality of data, great potential for examining. Malhotra and Birks (2003).

3.5.1 Questionnaire Structure

For the purpose of this research, a close-ended questionnaire was developed which aims to find the answers to research questions. The questionnaire was adopted after considering research questions, objectives and literature review of research, a gap of the research. In addition, this questionnaire was developed after reviewing the various research journals, analysing the way variables, which are used in the conceptual model, will be measured or structured. The questionnaire uses the closed-ended questions that require the respondents to select from a predetermined set of answers to each question.

The questionnaire uses the Likert scale. The Likert scale range from one (1) to five (5) and the scale is 1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- neutral, 4- agree, and 5- strongly agree. Albaum (1997) noted that the Likert scale is a broadly used rating scale, which needs the respondents to indicate a degree of agreement and disagreement with each of the series of questions. This rating is easy to construct, control and easy for respondents to understand use the scale.

3.6 Reliability, Validity and Pilot Study

A questionnaire pilot testing was conducted to identify errors in the design and instruments'-test is a dry run of a questionnaire to find the degree of agility of the questions and correct the difficulties that respondents face while taking the survey. Pre-testing refers to the testing of the questionnaire on a small sample of respondents in order to find and remove potential problems. The developed questionnaire was pre-tested among 20 respondents. Reliabilities test for all variables were verified, and required changes were made in the questionnaire before the final sampling. From the results of the pre-test, the final version of the questionnaire was developed.

4 Analysis and Findings

Table 1 depicts the reliability analysis with descriptive statistical dealings with each factor. The range of Cronbach's alpha values between 0.7 and 0.731. The factors like, trust, service quality, brand image and brand switching value are greater than 0.6, which specified that strong internal reliability occurs among all factor.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Factors	No. of items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Price	5	3.04	0.72	0.705
Trust	4	2.61	0.74	0.704
Service Quality	5	2.70	0.71	0.731
Switching Cost	4	2.68	0.65	0.7
Brand Image	4	2.85	0.81	0.724
Product Features	2	2.80	0.88	0.71
Brand Switching	5	3.01	0.73	0.700

Source: Output generated from SPSS

Table 2 depicts the mean ranking of the factor price. The statement "A higher price makes me switch to a competitor" and "I am not ready to pay higher price on my network "has first and equal rank with mean 3.31 followed by, the statement "Low price offers from competitive products" has the third rank with mean 3.30, statement "I am happy with price I pay for my service" has the fourth rank with mean 2.71 and the statement "The price I pay for my service is fair and reasonable" has last and fifth rank with mean 2.58 respectively.

Table 2: Mean Ranking of Price

	Mean	SD	Rank
A higher price make me switch to a competitor	3.31	1.061	1.5
I am not ready to pay a higher price on my network	3.31	1.080	1.5
Low price offers from competitive products	3.30	1.243	3
I am happy with the price I pay for my service	2.71	1.131	4
The price I pay for my service is fair and reasonable	2.58	1.084	5

Source: Output generated from SPSS

Table 3 depicts the mean ranking of the factor of trust. The statement "The billing system of the firm is trustworthy "has the first rank with mean 2.74 followed by, the statement "The reputation of telecom service provider is trustworthy" has the second rank with mean 2.69, statement "Telecom service provider is reliable and focused" has the third rank with mean 2.56

and statement "Telecom service provider services process are trustworthy" has the fourth rank with mean 2.43.

Table 3: Mean Ranking of Trust

	Mean	SD	Rank
The billing system of the firm is trustworthy	2.74	1.050	1
The reputation of the telecom service provider is trustworthy	2.69	1.002	2
The telecom service provider is reliable and focused	2.56	.988	3
Telecom service provider services process are trustworthy	2.43	1.008	4

Source: Output generated from SPSS

Table 4 depicts the mean ranking of the factor of service quality. The statement "Telecom service provider network is wide" has the first rank with mean 2.76 followed by, "I am satisfied with the service and no intention of switching brands" and "Telecom service provider respond quickly to 2 complaints" has first and equal rank with mean 2.75, statement "Telecom service provider provide quality service" has the fourth rank with mean 2.71 and the statement "I think Telecom service provider has a reputation for quality service" has last and fifth rank with mean 2.50 respectively.

Table 4: Mean Ranking of Service Quality

	Mean	SD	Rank
Telecom service provider network is wide	2.76	1.006	1
I am satisfied with the service and no intention of switching brands	2.75	.947	2.5
Telecom service provider respond quickly to 2 complaints	2.75	1.091	2.5
Telecom service provider provide quality service	2.71	.998	4
I think Telecom service provider has a reputation for quality service	2.50	1.049	5

Source: Output generated from SPSS

Table 5 depicts the mean ranking of the factor switching cost. The statement "It is difficult to compare the current company with others" has the first rank with mean 2.79 followed by, the statement "I do not have sufficient time to understand the information of other communication service companies" has the second rank with mean 2.77, statement "I worry that the service provided by other communication service company might not match my expectation" has the third rank with mean 2.68 and statement "If I switch to other communication service company, I will lose the accumulated benefits in current" has fourth rank with mean 2.46

Table 5: Mean ranking of Switching Cost

	Mean	SD	Rank
It is difficult to compare the current company with others	2.79	1.122	1
I do not have sufficient time to understand the information of other communication service companies	2.77	1.024	2
I worry that the service provided by other communication service company might not match my expectation	2.68	.994	3
If I switch to another communication service company, I will lose the accumulated benefits in the current	2.46	.947	4

Source: Output generated from SPSS

Table 6 depicts the mean ranking of the factor brand image. The statement "I am convinced brand is a leader in its field "has the first rank with mean 3.10 followed by, the statement "I feel brand is socially responsible" has the second rank with mean 2.85, statement "I am convinced brand is very advanced" has the third rank with mean 2.76 and statement "I am convinced brand is committed to gender equality" has the fourth rank with mean 2.70.

Table 6: Mean ranking of Brand Image

	Mean	SD	Rank
I am a convinced brand is a leader in its field	3.10	1.087	1
I feel the brand is socially responsible	2.85	1.140	2
I am a convinced brand is very advanced	2.76	1.084	3
I am a convinced brand is committed to gender equality	2.70	1.078	4

Source: Output generated from SPSS

Table 7 depicts the mean ranking of the factor product features. The statement "Extra product features offering by Competitors" and the statement "The product improvements for a long time" has the fourth rank with mean 2.74.

Table 7: Mean ranking of Product Features

	Mean	SD	Rank
Extra product features offering by Competitors	2.86	1.101	1
The product improvements for a long time	2.74	1.060	2

Source: Output generated from SPSS

Table 8 depicts the mean ranking of the factor of brand switching. The statement "The reason for changing brand is usually because dissatisfaction of the previous brand "has the first rank with mean 3.14 followed by, the statement "I am usually attracted by advertisement" has the second rank with mean 2.04 and last statement "I usually change to another brand because it is a high level of product with relative higher price" has last and fifth rank 2.88

Table 8: Mean Ranking of Brand Switching

	Mean	SD	Rank
The reason for changing the brand is usually because of the dissatisfaction of the previous brand	3.14	1.172	1
I am usually attracted by the advertisement	3.04	1.024	2
I am usually stimulated by promotion	3.01	1.150	3
I usually change to another brand because of its reasonable price and good value for money	2.94	1.141	4
I usually change to another brand because it is a high level of product with a relatively higher price	2.88	1.081	5

Source: Output generated from SPSS

Table 9 represents the normality test using the Skewness and Kurtosis Test. The data are taken into account as normal if the Skewness and Kurtosis lies between -1.96 to +1.96. so it shows the data is normally distributed.

Table 9: Test of Normality

	N	Mean	SD	Maximum	Minimum	Skewness	Kurtosis
Price	100	3.04	0.59	4.60	1.80	0.38	0.12
Trust	100	2.61	0.74	5.00	1.00	0.27	1.21
Service Quality	100	2.70	0.71	5.00	1.00	0.58	1.26
Switching Cost	100	2.68	0.65	4.00	1.00	-0.31	-0.03
Brand Image	100	2.85	0.81	5.00	1.25	0.38	-0.02
Product Features	100	2.80	0.88	5.00	1.00	-0.03	-0.55
Brand Switching	100	3.01	0.73	5.00	1.60	0.49	-0.24

Source: Output generated from SPSS

4.1 Hypothesis

4.1.1 Correlation

H_0: There is no relationship between Price, Trust, Service Quality, Switching cost, Brand image, Product Features and Brand Switching

H_1: There is a relationship between Price, Trust, Service Quality, Switching cost, Brand image, Product Features and Brand Switching

Table 10: Relationship between Price, Trust, Service Quality, Switching cost, Brand image, Product Features and Brand Switching

		Price	Trust	Service Quality	Switching Cost	Brand Image	Product Features	Brand
Price	r-value	1						
	p-value							
Trust	r-value	.136	1					
	p-value	.177						
Service Quality	r-value	.131	.578**	1				
	p-value	.193	.000					
Switching Cost	r-value	.176	-.001	.294**	1			
	p-value	.080	.996	.003				
Brand Image	r-value	.243*	.266**	.344**	.134	1		
	p-value	.015	.007	.000	.185			
Product Features	r-value	.209*	.133	.210*	.040	.279**	1	
	p-value	.037	.188	.036	.695	.005		
Brand Switching	r-value	.273**	.134	.234*	.172	.337**	.440**	1
	p-value	.006	.184	.019	.087	.001	.000	

*Source: output generated from SPSS *p<0.01, *p<0.05*

The relationship between Price, Trust, Service Quality, switching cost, Brand image, Product Features and Brand Switching is reported in table 16. The above findings revealed that price (r=0.273, p=0.006<0.01), service quality (r=0.234, p=0.019<0.05), brand image (r=0.33p=0.001<0.01) and product feature (r=0.440, p=<0.000<0.01) which are less than significant level 0.05, hence there is an association between price, service equality, brand image and product feature are positive signs and brand switching and therefore the study conclude hypothesis.

> *H1: There is a relationship between Price, Trust, Service Quality, switching cost, Brand image, Product Features and Brand Switching is accepted. 4.2 Linear Regression.*

4.2 Multiple Linear Regressions

The association between Price, Trust, Service Quality, switching cost, Brand image, Product Features and Brand Switching is depicted in table 11. From the findings, reveals that the only factor Product Features (β=0.288) is a positive impact on Brand Switching in addition, 28% of the variation in brand switching is dependent on price, trust, service quality, switching, brand image and product features (R-square=0.278). Hence there is an association between Product Features and brand switching and conclude that the hypothesis,

Table 11: Association between Price, Trust, Service Quality, Switching cost, Brand Image, Product Features and Brand Switching

	Unstandardized Coefficients		R-Square	t value	p value
	Beta	**SE**			
(Constant)	0.829	0.459		1.806	0.074
Price	0.166	0.116		1.437	0.154
Trust	-0.014	0.110		-0.124	0.901
Service Quality	0.064	0.122	0.278	0.526	0.600
Switching Cost	0.103	0.107		0.965	0.337
Brand Image	0.159	0.088		1.803	0.075
Product Features	0.288	0.078		3.705	**0.000****

Source: output generated from SPSS **Dependent Variable: Brand Switching, *p<0.01**

> *H2: There is a significant impact of Price, Trust, Service Quality, switching cost, Brand image and Product Features on Brand Switching is rejected.*

5. Discussion

5.1.1 The Factors that Influence Customers to Switch Brands

The study analysed the factors of brand switching in telecom service provider communication industry of Afghanistan. Maximum 73 per cent of the participants were male while 35 per cent were females with the age group of 26 to 35 years. Majority, i.e., 56% of participants have done a bachelor's degree, and 87% were employed. Overall, the findings revealed that price (r=0.273), service quality (r=0.234), brand image (r=0.337) and product feature (r=0.440) which are less than significant level 0.05, hence there is an association between price, service equality, brand image and product feature are positive signs and brand switching.

5.1.2 Impact of Service Quality on Switching Brands

In order to understand the effect of service quality on brand switching behaviour of customers, the analysis was carried out to examine the relationship between these factors. The findings revealed that service quality (β=0.239) is a positive impact on brand switching. Therefore, there is an association between Service Quality and brand switching in the multivariate analyses. However, the significant moved off when the analyses were carried out in multivariate analyses. In the study by Aslam and Frooghi (2018), it was observed that around 21% of customers were influenced to switch brands mainly because of poor service quality. The similar findings were provided by Sathish et al. (2011)where the author had highlighted factors that influenced consumers to switch brands. The findings of their study indicated that there was a close association between brand switching and factors such as; frequent network issues, poor network coverage, call dropping which essentially translates into poor service

quality. One of the ways to ensure customer loyalty is by offering high-quality services. Their research findings also suggested that within the telecommunication sector, quality of service was recognized by value-added services, communication guarantee and innovations in the technology for telecommunications.

5.1.3 Impact of Brand Image on Switching Brands

In order to understand the effect of brand image on brand switching behaviour of customers, the analysis was carried out to examine the relationship between these factors. The study findings indicated that brand image has a significant and positive impact on switching brands. Our findings are in similar to the findings by Ibok and Etuk (2015). An increment in brand identity or image also has the propensity to enhance customer loyalty to the brand concurrently. Similarly, Balmer (2009) implied that there is an association that exists between an image formed by an individual about an organization and that individual's behavior towards it. On similar lines, Minkiewicz et al. (2011) through their quantitative study within the leisure services sector observed that there was a positive brand image that was associated with customer satisfaction. However, the significant moved off when the analyses were carried out in multivariate analyses.

5.1.4 Impact of Trust on Switching Brands

The findings revealed that the trust (β=0.132) was not a significant factor that predict switching brands in Afghanistan customers. However, our findings are in contrast with the finding by Xue and Liang (2005). The author studied the impact of trust with regards to customer loyalty, especially within the telecommunication sector. Findings from their study indicated that trust was made up of four key components such as; communication, relation contact of partners, experience and brand loyalty. The authors added that when there exists a relationship based on trust between the customer and the telecom network service provider, it acted as a force that preserved the relationship between the two parties.

5.1.5 Impact of Price on Switching Brands

Price has been determined as the principal factor that stimulates brand switching amongst customers. In line with that notion, the findings revealed that the price (β=0.338) is a positive impact on Brand Switching. Therefore, there is an association between price and brand switching. Although our findings in multivariate analysis were found to be insignificant but still price as an independent factor found to influence the brand switching. The findings of the study are similar to the study findings by Munnukka (2005). The findings of his research revealed that a drop-in price of cellular services tends to draw customers. Simply said, any alterations in price can influence

customers to switch brands within the telecommunication sector. However, in contrast, Rajkumar and Chaarlas (2011) of a different opinion that their findings indicated price was not always a factor that influenced brand switching amongst customers. The authors elucidated that customers who tend to be more conscious in terms of quality are open and willing to pay high prices to obtain high-quality services. The authors were of the opinion that price as a factor for brand switching only influenced customers who had a restricted income or modest means

5.1.6 Impact of Product Features on Switching Brands

The present study findings reveal that the only factor product features (β=0.288) are a positive impact on Brand Switching in the multivariate analyses. This finding corroborates the findings Khan et al. (2012). As per their study, they found that the more the number of features that are being provided by a cellular network service provider, the more customers they can attract. This is because people are more prone to switch their existing cellular network service provider to another service provider if the new service provider is offering an array of low rate packages that ascribe to the customer's individual requirement. The key features include low tariff rates, service equability in mobile phone networks which comprise of voice clarity, smooth SMS traffic, high-speed data services signal and coverage which are considered as product features, reliability in service also plays a key role in customer loyalty and restricting customers from switching cellular networks.

5.1.7 Effect of Switching Costs on Brand Switching in Telecom Industry of Afghanistan

Switching costs pertain to costs that customers are supposed to bear at the time of switching their cellular network from one brand to another. In order to understand the effect of switching costs on brand switching behaviour of customers, the analysis was carried out to examine the relationship between these factors. However, surprisingly, switching costs were not significantly associated with brand switching in the telecom industry of Afghanistan. Our study findings are in line with a consumer opinion survey that was carried out in the United Kingdom indicated that in 2007 only around 7% of the fixed line, 6% of mobile and 22% of internet users who had switched brands believed that there was any difficulty in switching. However, in contrast to the study by Thakur et al. (2013) are of the opinion that the existence of switching costs makes it expensive for customers to switch brands. Several researchers had concluded that when switching costs were higher, it prevents customers from switching brands.

5.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.2.1 Conclusion

Overall findings revealed that price, service quality, brand image and product feature are significant factors influencing consumers brand switching behavior in telecommunication industry among Afghanistan customers. Product features are the main reason as more the number of features that are being provided by a cellular network service provider, the more customers they can attract. For instance, if one service provider is offering several features which are not being provided by an individual's cellular service provider, all for the same price that the customer is currently paying, then the scope of brand switching is very high. Therefore, telecommunication industry in Afghanistan need to concentrate on features such as low tariff rates, service equability in mobile phone networks which comprises of voice clarity, smooth SMS traffic, high speed data services signals and coverage which are considered as product features, reliability in service also plays a key role in customer loyalty and restricting customers from switching cellular networks.

5.2.2 Discussion on Findings

The present research was carried out to answer the research questions and also to fulfil the objectives developed for the study. The specific objective is to identify the factors that influence the switching of brands in the telecommunication industry in Afghanistan, specifically the factors that influenced the customer satisfaction. Based on the study findings, it was revealed that all features except trust and price, service equality, brand image and product feature showed to influence the switching of the brand. However, in the multivariate analysis, such findings vanished and only product features found to highly influence the brand switching among Afghanistan customers. This shows that customer expects high product features than the price, service quality or nor the image. Similarly, they are not interested in the brand image or trust, and infect, trust is not the problem among these customers. The obtained result of the study shows that mobile telecommunication companies need to work on enhancing their overall features of the product in order to retain their customers and earn a competitive advantage.

The hypothesis that there is a relationship between price, trust, service quality, switching cost, brand image, product features and brand switching is accepted as the P values are significant in this instance. The same findings are reflected in the study conducted by Prasad and Kumar (2016), Ting (2014), who state that costs associated with switching influence brand switching behaviour amongst customers. Whereas, the findings from the

study by Yulisetiarini et al. (2013) indicates that price also influences brand switching behaviour. At the same time, Afzal et al. (2013) are of the opinion that price and service quality does influence brand switching behaviours. The findings from a study by Jain et al. (2017) resonates with the findings from this study and implies that trust can influence brand switching. While Ogungbade (2015) also found that brand image has a positive impact on brand switching as is proven by the hypothesis in this study. Further, in terms of product features, the study by Saeed et al. (2013) revealed that the product features offered by a competitor can influence brand switching.

5.2.3 Recommendations

The topic of this study holds much importance, especially to the telecom service providers. As the findings of the study would shed light on the factors that influence for switching in this competitive era thereby help those to retain the customers by offering value features thereby it would make them loyal. Although there are several factors, only six factors have been accounted for in the study, and therefore, more factors need to be studied in order to develop a better strategy. Further only perceived factors are captured, and it would be interesting to study the expected factors thereby the future study can conduct the gap analysis to understand the difference in the perceived and expected. The sample is limited to cities, and therefore future study may concentrate on other areas of Afghanistan.

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