

Factors Behind Brand Switching: Evidences from Pakistan

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Abstract– The telecommunication industry of Pakistan is facing strict competition ahead. The dynamic environment is in constant flux. Now subscriber's retention and acquisition has become the center of attention of the service providers. Due to the emergence of number of service providers, customers switching rate is increasing. Customer satisfaction established when brand fulfills the needs and desires of the customers. The present study is focus on identifying those factors that have direct impact on the switching behavior of customers. The data was collected from a sample of 250 people and a self ministered questionnaire was used to collect required data. The Data was collected from the cities of Gujrat, Wazirabad, Lala Musa and Kharian by using convenience sampling technique. Results of this study show that factors i.e., lower call and SMS rate, service quality, value added services, special offers, network coverage and service reliability significantly affect the switching behaviors of the respondents.

Keywords– Telecommunication, Customer, Services, Switching and Quality

I. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan telecommunication services were originated in 1947. Several developments in telecommunication sector were made on consistent basis but from the last two decades innovative changes in the telecom sector have taken place, this is just because of introduction of mobile telephony. This shift had a substantial impact on the subscribers. A new era of expansion and development exposes to Pakistan telecommunication sector.

Pakistan telecommunication has become dominant from the last decade and hosts some of the biggest and most successful multinational companies in the world. Stiff competition is there ahead. A steady change from monopolistic environment to a highly competitive one has seen in cellular markets. The current network service providers are Mobilink, Telenor, Ufone, Warid, and Zong. Because of number of service providers, subscribers have become brand conscious. Research shows that various factors impact the customers to become brand conscious like awareness, satisfaction, loyalty, and sense of belongingness. But sometimes customers are unaware of the reasons for the particular brand preferences.

Today's business environment is in constant flux. So for long run survival in that competitive environment businesses have to develop different strategies. One of the best strategies

is about satisfying the customers that ensure a long term growth of business. The reason behind is once a firm loses its loyal customers it has to incur a cost of acquiring them again in addition to acquiring the new ones. Companies are well aware of benefits of retained customers. The company's core concern is to retain satisfied customers, so they are making keen efforts towards the factors that influence a customer's decision towards brand.

This research has been conducted in the same connection to find out the importance and significance of different factors that influence a person to switch one's mobile phone service. The main purpose of this research study was to investigate the key variables that are having strong influence on customer brand switching. Factors that make people to switch their mobile phone are considered after reviewing of literature and previous studies in the same area. Importance of these factors has been investigated and significant factors have been identified in the result section.

The whole document is organized in a sequence, started from introduction section where the main theme of the research was presented. Then the literature review section where evidences from previous researches were collected. The research methodology section includes how the sample population was selected, how the sample size was drawn, which data collection and data analysis technique was adopted, and finally the data was analyzed by using SPSS. At the last section the results were concluded and future directions were provided.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Saeed, Hussain & Riaz (2011), concluded that the price rates had a great affect on the switching behavior of the customers and a little fluctuation in the price of packages may lead toward other cost effective network. Customers are more concerned about the money which they pay for the service. Khan & Manthiri (2008), accomplished that the important factors are service network and environment. Customer loyalty is very weak in mobile phone. Hence it is highly essential to understand the antecedents of switching and customer loyalty in an in depth manner. Khan, Sheikh & Shah (2012), said that people tend to switch to that network service that provides a variety of low rate packages according to user requirements. Besides low tariffs, mobile phone network service equability which includes clear voice, smooth SMS

traffic, signals or coverage etc, and service reliability play a vital role in consumer retention and switching from one service to another. People heavily focus on lower call rates and SMS rates and chose a cost effective service provider. Mittal (2012), This research shows that cellular service providers concentrate more on tariff rates increasing network stability and setting competitively. Customer satisfaction has positive effects on the customer retention so Mobile operators should shift focus on building corporate image and analyze more carefully the reason for consumers to switch brands in this industry in order to increase loyalty among these consumers. Mburu & Selapisa (2012), concluded from the research that satisfaction is a crucial factor to subscriber's propensity to switch but at the same time the mobile network providers need to study the market factors for adaptation and their ultimate goal should be the satisfaction and convenient. Sathish et al (2011), noted the relationship between switching the service provider and the factors (Customer service, service problem, usage cost, etc.). He noticed that the call rates play the most important role in switching the service provider followed by network coverage, value added service, while consumer care and advertisement plays the least important role. This indicated that the market environment factors play a role in the mobile network switching factors. Islam (2008), examined the relationship between independent variables like switching cost, corporate image, trust and dependent variable like Customer loyalty. He concluded that all the independent variables have certain degree of relationship with the dependent variable but only trust has the strongest relationship with Customer loyalty. In another study of Herrmann et al., (2007), it was concluded that customer satisfaction is directly influenced by price perceptions while indirectly through the perception of price fairness. The price fairness itself and the way it is fixed and offered have a great impact on satisfaction. According to Lommeruda & Sjørgard (2013), telecommunication services are like undifferentiated products. Mohsin & Ernest (2009) recognized the four important components contributing to the customers which are price, network coverage, customer service and ease of usage.

Research objectives:

- To understand the customer preferences in Telecom Industry of Pakistan.
- To study the factors that impact on switching behavior.
- To study the customer satisfaction and understand the current market situations in that particular Telecom Sector.

Scope:

- The present research can be extended to other geographical regions.
- It can be extended to study the usage of mobile services of different age groups and accordingly new plans can be formulated.

- This study can be extended to understand the switching behavior of a particular cellular service provider.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Previously critical review of literature was done to identify those factors that impact customers switching behaviors resulting in switching over to another telecom service provider. Consideration of literature was taken to determine variables from these researches. Some of these variables are selected as the most common considerable variables that might affect customer's satisfaction in this context. After the determination of these variables, a precise self administrated questionnaire was developed.

General public within Gujrat, Wazirabad, Lala Musa and Kharian cities of Pakistan were selected as the population of this study. Targeted respondents were the users of GSM telecommunication services and all the GSM mobile phone operators such as U-fone, Telenor, Warid, Mobilink or zong were taken.

Self administered Questionnaire was used for the data collection which contained a brief description about the purpose of the research. 1st part of the questionnaire consists of some items to know the respondent demographic information such as age, gender, Income, occupation, types of connections etc. A sample size of 250 was taken. 250 questionnaires were floated among subjects using convenience sampling method.

The questionnaire includes both level of satisfaction with existing service provider and the reasons of switching intentions. 5 point likert scale was used, rating from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. This scale was used to measure the preferences of the survey respondents to switch to others. In order to find out the significance of the factors under consideration and their relationships with switching patterns, regression analysis techniques were used. Switching preference was taken as a dependent variable and all other factors were taken as independent variables.

Variables:

Independent variables:

- SMS & Call rates
- Value added service
- Special offers
- Service quality
- Network coverage
- Customer service

Dependent variable:

Customer switching behavior

Hypothesis:

In order to check the nature of relationship between dependent and independent variables, following hypothesis were purposed along with Null hypothesis.

H1: There is a significant relationship between Low SMS & call rates and consumer switching behavior.

Lower SMS and call rates have significant relationship with customer switching behavior. Customer retention is highly depending on lower SMS and Call rates rather than network service and customer service (Saeed et al. 2013; Kouser et al. 2012; Sathish, Kumar, Naveen & Jeevanantham, 2011).

H2: There is a significant relationship between variety of value added services and consumer switching behavior.

Makwana, Sharma & Arora (2014) supports that value added services have a relationship with customer switching behavior. It is referred that variety of value added services by service provider affects the customer switching behavior towards product or services.

H3: There is a significant relationship between different special offers from the service provider and consumer switching behavior.

Khan, Shaikh and Shah (2012) showed that special offers effect consumer's level of satisfaction it can results in either customer retention or switching to another better service.

H4: There is a significant relationship between service quality and consumer switching behavior.

Baksi and Parida (2011) showed that the service quality dimension is significantly important to influence the switching decision of customer. The satisfactory quality of service leads to satisfaction of customer therefore customer does not think to switch to another service provider.

H5: There is a significant relationship between reliability (consistency of good services) and consumer switching behavior.

Khan, Shaikh and Shah (2012) showed that service reliability (consistent and trouble free service) affect consumer's level of satisfaction it can result in either customer retention or switching to another better service.

H6: There is a significant relationship between network coverage and consumer switching behavior.

Khan, Shaikh & Shah, (2012); Kouser et al, (2012) proved that network coverage affect the customer switching behavior. Poor network coverage, high call & SMS rates force customer to switch from one service provider to another.

H7: There is a significant relationship between customer services and consumer switching behavior.

Sathish et al, (2011); Kouser et al, (2012) proved that there is a relationship between switching service provider and customer service. If service provider gives better customer service than customers will no switch to another service provider.

Frequency Distribution is made for each demographic factor and the variables of the study. The Table-1 shows the frequency distributions of demographic factors. In the study 108 males and 96 females take participation in whole 204 respondents showing 52.9 and 47.1 percent participation respectively.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of demographic Factors

Frequency Distribution of Demographic Factors			
Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	108	52.9
	Female	96	47.1
Area	Rural	60	29.4
	Urban	130	63.7
	Suburban	14	6.9
Age	Less than 20	11	5.4
	21 - 25	169	82.8
	26 - 30	15	7.4
	More than 30	9	4.4

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive Analysis:

Frequency Distribution is made for each demographic factor and the variables of the study. The Table 1 shows the frequency distributions of demographic factors. In the study 108 males and 96 females take participation in whole 204 respondents showing 52.9 and 47.1 percent participation respectively.

Respondents are geographically divided into three areas, 1) Rural, 2) Urban and 3) Suburban. 29.4% respondents belong to rural area, 63.7% respondents belong to urban area and 6.9% respondents belong to suburban area. In this study 4 classes of age are formed which includes 11 (5.4%) respondents have age less than 20, 169(82.8%) respondents have age between 21 – 30 years, 15 (7.4%) respondents have age between 26- 30 years, 9 (4.4%) respondents have age more than 30 years.

Frequency distribution table-2 is also made for the variables including SMS & Call rates, Value added service, Special offers, Service quality, Network coverage, Customer service and Customer switching behavior. SMS & call rates include 5 questions. Table 2 shows that 31.4% respondents are strongly agree with the statements of factor SMS & call rates. 48% responses are in agreement and 18.1% responses are neutral. 2% of respondents are disagreeing with the factor whereas 0.5% respondents are in strongly disagreement. Value added service includes 5 questions. 25.5% respondents are strongly agreed with the statements of factor Value added service. 42.2% responses are in agreement and 19.6% responses are neutral. 12.3% of respondents are disagreeing with the Value added service factor whereas 0.5% respondents are in strongly disagreement.

Special offers include 4 questions. 43.6% respondents are strongly agreed with the statements of factor Special offers. 46.6% responses are in agreement and 8.8% responses are neutral. 1.0% of respondents are disagreeing with the Special offers factor. Service quality includes 4 questions. 30.4% respondents are strongly agreed with the statements of factor features. 55.9% responses are in agreement and 12.3% responses are neutral. 0.5% of respondents are disagreeing with the Service quality factor whereas 1.0% respondents are in strongly disagreement. Network coverage includes 5

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Factors

Frequency Distribution of Factors			
Items	Category	Frequency	Percentage
SMS & Call rates	Strongly Disagree	1	.5
	Disagree	4	2.0
	Neutral	37	18.1
	Agree	98	48.0
	Strongly Agree	64	31.4
Value added service	Strongly Disagree	1	.5
	Disagree	25	12.3
	Neutral	40	19.6
	Agree	86	42.2
	Strongly Agree	52	25.5
Special offers	Disagree	2	1.0
	Neutral	18	8.8
	Agree	95	46.6
	Strongly Agree	89	43.6
Service quality	Strongly Disagree	2	1.0
	Disagree	1	.5
	Neutral	25	12.3
	Agree	114	55.9
	Strongly Agree	62	30.4
Network Coverage	Strongly Disagree	1	.5
	Disagree	2	1.0
	Neutral	32	15.7
	Agree	96	47.1
	Strongly Agree	73	35.8
Customer Service	Strongly Disagree	2	1.0
	Disagree	1	.5
	Neutral	25	13.3
	Agree	111	53.9
	Strongly Agree	65	31.4
Customer switching behavior	Strongly Disagree	1	.5
	Disagree	3	2.0
	Neutral	31	16.7
	Agree	97	46.1
	Strongly Agree	74	36.8

questions. 35.8% respondents are strongly agreed with the statements of factor Network coverage. 47.1% responses are in agreement and 15.7% responses are neutral. 1.0% of respondents are disagreeing with the Network coverage factor whereas 0.5% respondents are in strongly disagreement. Customer service includes 4 questions. 31.4% respondents are strongly agreed with the statements of factor features. 53.9% responses are in agreement and 13.3% responses are neutral. 0.5% of respondents are disagreeing with the factor Customer service whereas 1.0% respondents are in strongly disagreement. Customer switching behavior includes 5 questions. 36.8% respondents are strongly agreed with the statements of factor Customer switching behavior. 46.1% responses are in agreement and 16.7% responses are neutral.

1.0% of respondents are disagreeing with the Customer switching behavior whereas 0.5% respondents are in strongly disagreement.

Reliability Analysis:

Reliability analysis has been done after the data collection. Cronbach's alpha was checked for every variable and also for the whole Instrument. The following table-3 represents the values of Cronbach's alpha for each variable and for whole instrument.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

Factors	Cronbach's alpha Value
SMS & Call rates	0.618
Value added service	0.818
Special offers	0.601
Service quality	0.612
Network coverage	0.716
Customer service	0.826
Customer switching behavior	0.743
Overall reliability of instrument	0.868

The values of obtained Cronbach's alpha are within the sets limits showing the reliability of data.

Regression Analysis:

Regression analysis is run over SMS & Call rates, Reliability, Value added service, Special offers, Service quality, Network coverage Customer service (Independent Variables) and Customer switching behavior (Dependent Variable). Model summary shows that the R square value is 0.752. which shows that 75.2% variations in Dependent variable (Customer switching behavior) is caused by the independent variables (SMS & Call rates, Reliability, Value added service, Special offers, Service quality, Network coverage Customer service). The value is somewhat close to 1. It is concluded that this model of regression predicts 75.2% accurately.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.867 ^a	0.752	0.748	0.273

a. Predictors: (Constant), SMS & Call rates, Reliability, Value added service, Special offers, Service quality, Network coverage Customer service

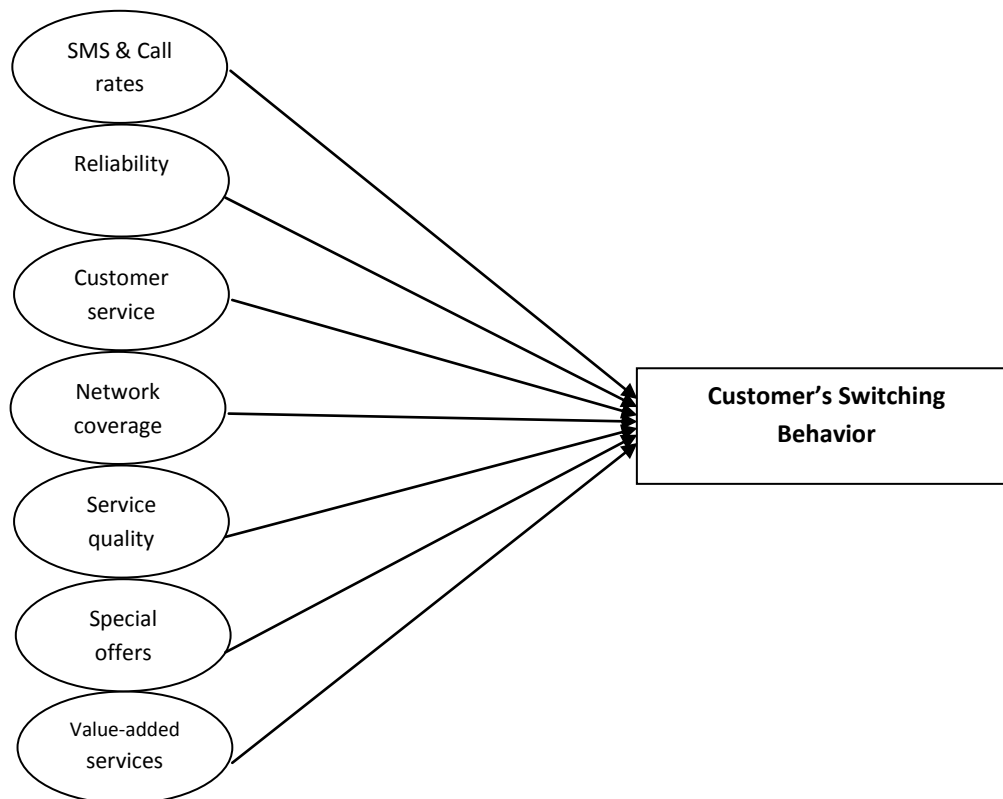
Table 5: ANOVA^b

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	116.482	7	16.640	223.314	0.000**
Residual	38.450	516	0.075		
Total	154.931	523			

a. Predictors: (Constant) SMS & Call rates, Reliability, Value added service, Special offers, Service quality, Network coverage Customer service

b. Dependent Variable: Customer switching behavior
(** Sig atv 5%)

Theoretical framework:



In the following table ANOVA the value of F is 222.314 and the significance level is 0.000. The significance level set in this research is 0.05. For the model to be good for prediction the p-value must be less than 0.05. Here in this model the value of p is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 showing that model is good for prediction.

The following Table 5 of Coefficients shows coefficient of Beta which is the rate of change between dependent and independent variable are presented in tables with their standard error, t-value and significance level. The coefficient table states the value of β for constant is .353, whereas the value of β coefficient for SMS & call rates is 0.445 indicating positive relationship. This also shows that 0.445 unit impact of SMS & call rates on Customer switching behavior (dependent variable) is due to the single unit change in SMS

& call rates (independent variable). The value of beta for Reliability is 0.390 which also shows that 0.390 unit impact of Reliability on Customer switching behavior (dependent variable) is due to the single unit change in Reliability (independent variable). The value of beta for Value added service is 0.101 which also shows that 0.101 unit impact of Value added service on Customer switching behavior (dependent variable) is due to the single unit change in Value added service (independent variable).

The value of beta for Special offers is 0.260 which also shows that 0.260 unit impact of Special offers on Customer switching behavior (dependent variable) is due to the single unit change in Special offers (independent variable). The value of beta for Service quality is 0.206 which also shows that 0.206 unit impact of Service quality on Customer

Table 6: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	0.353	0.048		0.356	0.022**
SMS & Call rates	0.445	0.024	0.473	18.575	0.000**
Reliability	0.390	0.025	0.429	15.534	0.000**
Value added service	0.101	0.022	0.132	4.651	0.000**
Special offers	0.260	0.021	0.379	12.829	0.005**
Service quality	0.206	0.026	0.337	13.252	0.001**
Network coverage	0.236	0.020	0.407	4.315	0.003**
Customer service	0.115	0.024	0.316	11.614	0.040**

a. Dependent Variable: Customer switching behavior
(** sig at 5%)

switching behavior (dependent variable) is due to the single unit change in Service quality (independent variable). The value of beta for Network coverage is 0.236 which also shows that 0.236 unit impact of Network coverage on Customer switching behavior (dependent variable) is due to the single unit change in Network coverage (independent variable). The value of beta for Customer service is 0.115 which also shows that 0.115 unit impact of Customer service on Customer switching behavior (dependent variable) is due to the single unit change in Customer service (independent variable).

The regression equation from these statistical results can be drawn up like this:

$$\text{Customer switching behavior} = \alpha + \beta X_1 + \beta X_2 + \beta X_3 + \beta X_4 + \beta X_5 + \beta X_6 + \beta X_7 = 0.353X_1 + 0.445X_2 + 0.390X_3 + 0.101X_4 + 0.260X_5 + 0.206X_6 + 0.236X_7 + 0.115X_8$$

(X1= SMS & Call rates, X2 = Reliability, X3= Value added service, X4= Special offers, X5= Service quality, X6= Network coverage, X7= Customer service)

To accept any hypothesis, P value must be less than 0.05, so from table it is concluded that P-values of variables: Service Quality, SMS & call rates, Reliability Switching Behavior, Network Coverage, Special Offers by cellular service providers, Customer Service and value added services are less than 0.05 which means that these variables have a significant relationship with the customer Switching Behavior.

Null hypotheses are created along with alternate hypotheses. For the rejection of null hypotheses there must be p-value greater than 0.05. So for this study, 7 null hypotheses are produced along with their alternate hypothesis. According to results described above all the alternate hypothesis are supported because their p-value is less than 0.05. All the variables were significant at 5% level of significance.

V. CONCLUSION

Mobile phone service provider's market is highly competitive now as number of service providers exists in the market. To deal with such a highly competitive environment and to gain sustainable competitive advantage, they are focusing on introduction of more and more products and services. Firms are very well aware that retaining existing customers is more profitable than attracting new ones. It's a big challenge now for the service organizations.

This research study has shown that independent variables SMS & Call rates, Value added service, Special offers, Service quality, Network coverage, Customer service play very important role in making customer satisfied. Each independent variable influences dependent variable. Since services are available at very low rates, affordable by everyone, and switching cost or subscription charges to new services are likely negligible, people can easily switch to other service or use various SIMs at the same time.

Customers use multiple SIMs and service providers to satisfy themselves. If service firms offer lower call rates to its customers they will prefer it, but if call rates become higher, they will switch to other networks. Some networks offer lower call rates and some offers lower SMS rates. Customers use both networks SIMs to gain advantage of lower call rate from one network and lower SMS rate from another network. By the statistical results of this research, customers are focusing more on lower call and SMS rates. Customer select call rates and SMS rates according to their preferences, but the main driver behind this is cost effectiveness. They can easily switch to other service providers because of low cost strategies adopted by others.

If the customers are provided with variety of good services i.e., courteous behavior of sales person or complaint officer, value added services and a good service quality then they feel emotional attachment with their brand of cellular company. Companies can give sense of belongingness to their customers by prompt solution of their complaints. Hence customers will be more committed.

Moreover low tariffs, mobile phone network service equability which includes clear voice, smooth SMS traffic, signals or coverage and service reliability (consistency in providing good service) play a vital role in consumer retention. Value added services (free minutes, free SMS, extra balance, prizes, fun messaging, news alerts, tunes, internet, mobile banking) also play a very important role in long run customer retention.

Customers are also giving much importance to the customer support services. Mobile phone users have daily interaction with them. At last, network coverage has much impact on switching intentions because all the cellular companies are not providing almost same level of network coverage. It can be concluded that if any firm wants to be successful over longer period of time then it has to make its customers satisfied to their level of satisfactions.

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