

Antecedents of consumers' brand switching behavior in mobile service provider

Consumers'
brand
switching
behavior

Naresh K. Patel

*Faculty of Management and Information Sciences, Dharmsinh Desai University,
Nadiad, India*

15

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Abstract

Purpose – Switching behavior is predominantly seen in the consumer buying behavior of the mobile industry. This research aims to identify the factors influencing consumers to switch from their present mobile service provider. The consumer of the mobile industry operates in a dynamic and ever-changing environment that is difficult to predict, so this paper aims to focus on these issues.

Design/methodology/approach – The selection of factors was made with the help of qualitative study and quantitative research methods for further findings; with the help of a structured questionnaire, a total of 514 valuable responses were collected to get the results. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) were used to analyze the data.

Findings – The finding shows that technology and edge-on-competition (TEC) and pricing have a negative influence on customer switching behavior. The switching cost (SC) is the most significant factor and has a positive impact, while service encounter failure (SEF) also positively impacts switching behavior.

Research limitations/implications – The findings provide important implications for consumers switching brands if they are finding alternative offers that are cost-effective and SEF from service providers

Practical implications – The study of one of the largest mobile markets is learning lessons for other markets around the world. This study will be helpful for mobile service provider companies in their branding and marketing strategies. This study will also be helpful to practitioners, educators and researchers in understanding the consumer behavior of mobile users.

Social implications – The learning of the largest mobile market will be a great learning lesson for other mobile markets around the world. Consumer behavior will help marketers follow ethical practices and make their strategy so a consumer does not switch brands and remain satisfied with the existing brand.

Originality/value – The study provides unique learning for practitioners, educators and researchers to understand the consumer behavior of mobile users. This will help marketers create factors that stop consumers from switching brands and develop strategies to retain customers.

Keywords Switching behavior; Mobile service; Switching cost; Service inconvenience; Pricing

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Today, modern consumers are increasingly discerning and well-informed about products and brands, thanks to easily accessible technology-driven information. This trend has led to a reduction in consumer loyalty as people readily switch between brands for various reasons. Brand switching refers to when a consumer switches from using one brand's product or service to another within the same category (Farah, 2017; Kumar and Chaarlas, 2011; Zhao and Asiaei, 2022). Although brand loyalty programs are often considered the remedy for this, research indicates that brand switching and brand loyalty are distinct factors influencing consumer choices (Bogomolova, 2011; Appiah *et al.*, 2019; Zhao and Hassan, 2023).



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One significant driver of brand switching is the decline in brand loyalty, allowing other brands to exert influence. Alternatively, some argue that loyalty is an elusive concept that may not truly exist (Baumann, 2012; Ehrenberg, 1988; Shukla, 2009).

The Indian mobile market ranks second globally, with projections indicating a growth of 1.2 billion smartphone users by 2030. With extensive mobile phone adoption and decreasing data costs, an additional 500 million internet users are expected to join.

Reliance Jio disrupted the Indian mobile industry after launching its cellular service in September 2016. This entrant reshaped the market, triggering mergers among top competitors and rendering other providers stagnant. By November 2020, Reliance Jio had garnered staggering 369.93 million subscribers, securing a dominant market position in just three years. This example from the mobile sector holds valuable lessons for other global markets.

Retaining existing customers proves more advantageous than acquiring new ones (Wong *et al.*, 2019; Filieri *et al.*, 2017; Kotler, 2017; Kumar, 2006). Losing customers impacts firms significantly, necessitating investments in customer attraction to compensate for losses (Tesform *et al.*, 2016; Peter, 1987; Reichheld, 1996; Mittal and Lassar, 1998). Loyal customers are more inclined to transact and remain committed even during adverse scenarios like price hikes (Baumann *et al.*, 2012; Keaveney and Parthasarathy, 2001; Zhao and Hassan, 2023).

Prior research underscores the positive impact of customer loyalty while pinpointing reasons for customer attrition (Zhao and Hassan, 2023; Cronin, 2000; Liu *et al.*, 2011; Ahn *et al.*, 2018), including low switching costs (SCs), product dissatisfaction and infrequent usage (Chuah, 2017; Reichheld and Sasser, 1990). Addressing this issue entails enhancing user satisfaction and reinforcing barriers.

Various factors influencing consumer switching behavior have been identified, such as involvement (Baltas, 1997, 2017), price variety, packaging (Zhao and Asiaei, 2022; Veloutosou, 2004) and dissatisfaction (Abendtoth, 2001; Gray *et al.*, 2017; Shukla, 2004). The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) model considers elements like service quality, expectation, perception, disconfirmation, equity, attribution, customer satisfaction index, complaint resolution and repurchase intention in shaping customer satisfaction and loyalty (Shukla, 2009; Baltas *et al.*, 2017).

Reliance Jio exemplifies infrastructure innovation's impact on services by offering cutting-edge features like 4G and VoLTE. The VoLTE technology revolutionized industry standards, introducing perks like free unlimited calling and data, which attracted numerous customers to Jio. Such innovations greatly influence switching behavior in the mobile industry. Given that a significant portion of Jio's customer base switched from other providers, it presents an exciting challenge for companies seeking to lure customers from rival mobile service brands.

1.1 Research gap

The presented literature provides valuable insights into consumer behavior, brand switching and factors influencing brand loyalty in the context of the rapidly evolving Indian mobile market, particularly in response to the disruptive entry of Reliance Jio. However, despite the comprehensive coverage of relevant concepts and prior research, several research gaps remain that merit further exploration:

While the literature acknowledges the evolving consumer demands and increasing brand switching tendencies, there is a potential gap in understanding the underlying dynamics of these shifts. The discussion also focuses on the decline of brand loyalty and the impact of brand switching on firms (Gray *et al.*, 2017). However, there is a research gap in investigating the multi-dimensional nature of brand loyalty (Zhao and Hassan, 2023). While the literature references customer satisfaction as a key factor influencing brand switching, it does not delve deeply into the various dimensions of customer satisfaction that matter most in the mobile industry context. Investigating specific aspects like network quality, customer service and

pricing could shed light on which factors drive or hinder customer satisfaction and subsequent brand switching.

The case of Reliance Jio underscores the impact of technological innovation on consumer behavior. However, there is an opportunity to delve deeper into the mechanisms through which innovation influences brand switching (Cronin, 2000; Liu *et al.*, 2011). The discussion largely centers on the mobile industry, but there might be insights to glean from other industries that have faced similar disruptive forces. Exploring case studies from other sectors could provide a broader perspective on how innovation, brand loyalty and switching behavior interplay.

The presented literature primarily focuses on technological and market-driven aspects, possibly neglecting the influence of cultural and socioeconomic factors on brand switching. While the immediate effects of brand switching are discussed, there is a research gap in exploring the long-term implications for both consumers and brands. Investigating the consequences of frequent brand switching on consumer satisfaction, loyalty and brand reputation could provide valuable insights into the sustainability of this trend.

Addressing these research gaps through empirical studies, quantitative analyses, or cross-disciplinary investigations could contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding brand switching in the evolving landscape of the Indian mobile market.

The paper's structure unfolds as follows: Section 2 provides a literature review and hypothesis formulation, Section 3 details the research methods, Section 4 presents analysis results and findings and Section 5 delves into discussions and implications.

2. Review of literature

2.1 Switching behavior

The seminal work of Keaveney (1995) explains the unique factors affecting switching behaviors like negative customer experience, ethical problems, competition, personal reasons and involuntary switching. This study conveys that consumers have no dissatisfaction with the current brand even though they switch the brand (Bogomolova and Grudinina, 2011). Customers switch the brand for various reasons: customer-driven, personal and other. These uncontrollable reasons cause customer brand switching (Reichheld, 1993). Many customers switch the brands regardless of whether they are delighted (Colgate and Lang, 2001); other studies found that dissatisfied customers continue using it (Ranganathan, 2006).

Customer switching means customers change the existing service provider to another (Temerak and El-Manstrly, 2019; Singh and Rosengren, 2020; Zhao and Hassan, 2023). The belief is that satisfaction leads to loyalty and dissatisfaction leads to switching, but many researchers found it reverse (Chuah, 2017; Ou *et al.*, 2017).

Keaveney's model was based on 45 various services, and to generalize the same on one service may not be appropriate, so specific variable impact on mobile service providers required further specification and testing of proposed variable is desirable (Keaveney, 1995; An and Noh, 2009; Levesque and McDougall, 1993; East *et al.*, 2012; Mittal and Lasser, 1998). For this study, the researcher identified factors specific to mobile user switching behavior by doing exploratory research through interviews of industry experts and added SC (Lee *et al.*, 2001) and changes in Technology (Lee and Murphy, 2005). The variable, employee responsiveness to a service failure, is merged with service encounter failure (SEF) from the input received from an expert through exploratory research.

2.2 Service inconvenience

As per the research findings of Keaveney (1995), 21.6% of consumers switched the service providers because of service inconvenience. Service inconvenience (SI) is defined as long

waiting time for consumers, shorter operation time and location of service providers (Keaveney, 1995; Suleiman Awwad and Awad Neimat, 2010; Aslam and Frooghi, 2018). Kassim and Ramayah (2016) suggested that the ease of use and customer convenience can change customer attitudes towards the brand. Levesque and McDougall (1993) found that the inconvenience of location is an essential factor for consumer brand switching behavior. Colgate and Hedge (2001) also investigated that long service times and inconvenience of location are the primary influencers for the customer to switch the brand. The impact of SI on consumer switching behavior is shown in Figure 1 and the hypothesis is as under.

H1. Service Inconvenience has a positive impact on customers' propensity to brand switching behavior.

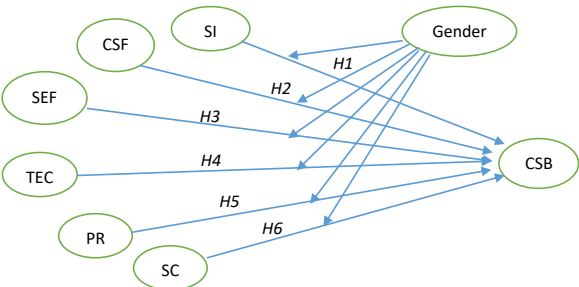
2.3 Core service failure

The customer feels dissatisfied with services due to core service failure. Zhao and Hassan (2023). Several studies have identified a strong relationship between customer dissatisfaction due to core service failure and switching behavior (Wong et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2001; Bolton and Bronkhorst, 1995). Core service failure means the service fails to meet the expectation of customers (Tesform et al., 2016; Michel, 2001). The core service failure is also defined as customer issues and services (Ahmad, 2002). The quality of interaction with service staff has an indirect impact on brand switching through service quality and satisfaction (Valenzuela, 2014; Zolfagharian et al., 2017). The impact of service failure on consumer switching behavior is shown in Figure 1 and the hypothesis is as under. Service failure is responsible for switching the service provider, but it also spreads negative word-of-mouth and affects other existing customers or potential customers (Malhotra and Malhotra, 2013; Aslam and Frooghi, 2018).

H2. Core service failures have a positive impact on customers' propensity to brand switching behavior.

2.4 Service encounter failure

The second most important factor responsible for brand switching is SEF (Tesform et al., 2016; Keaveney, 1995). When service providers do not entertain the customer's complaints or treat them in a manner that hurts them, service encounter failure. SEFs are related to the human factor in the firm. When employee treats the customers in an impolite, uncaring and



Note(s): CSB-Customer switching behaviour, SI-Service Inconvenience, CSF-Core Service Failure, SEF-Service Encounter Failure, TEC-Technology and Edge on Competition, PR-Pricing, SC-Switching Cost

Source(s): Figure by author

Figure 1.
Research model

unresponsive manner might cause dissatisfaction amongst customers. The primary reason for these human errors are an employee's incompetence and lack of knowledge, which cause customers were switching the brand (Tax *et al.*, 1998). Building a strong customer orientation in employees increases their job satisfaction and commitment and helps build customer loyalty (Todd Donovan *et al.*, 2004). On average, 40% of the customers who suffer through a terrible service experience stop using the service without complaining (Martilla and James, 1977). The impact of SEF on consumer switching behavior is shown in Figure 1 and the hypothesis is as follows.

H3. SEF has a positive impact on customers' propensity to brand switching behavior.

2.5 Technology and edge on competition

The competitors identify and create the factors that encourage the customer to switch the brand (Yani-de-Soriano and Slater, 2009) and increase their market share (Colgate and Lang, 2001; Ahmed and Al-Kwafi, 2014; Shukla, 2004). Product involvement impacts the readiness to switch, which means consumers would like to experience the new product brands and find out if they match their products (Sidhu, 2005). Mobile service providers offer more and more services and benefits, making the market more competitive and increasing brand switching. New technology evolution in the mobile service provider industry makes competition more rigorous, makes their offers more attractive and increases brand switching (Al-kwafi and Yammout, 2013; Sidhu, 2005). Brand switching is highly dominated by high technology product features that have capabilities to achieve competitive advantage (Suleiman Awwad and Awad Neimat, 2010; Pookulangara *et al.*, 2011). New and latest technology products will attract and retain customers (Sidhu, 2005). The companies that cannot maintain the pace of technological change lose the market share, and their customer base switches to competitors (Malhotra and Malhotra, 2013). The service provider offers the latest technology products, which customers value to reduce brand switching and increase loyalty.

Brand leadership and differentiation have been achieved through product and process innovation (Malhotra and Malhotra, 2013). The Jio is a live example of infrastructure innovation in its impact on services with the latest, innovative, and next-generation services like 4G and VoLTE. The impact of Technology and edge on competition on consumer switching behavior is shown in Figure 1 and the hypothesis is as under. We try to understand customers' perceptions of the innovativeness of their mobile service providers and its impact on their switching behavior.

H4. Technology and edge on competition (TEC) positively impact customers' propensity to brand switching behavior.

2.6 Price

One of the most crucial determinants for brand switching is price (Zhao and Asiaei, 2022). Customers usually are price conscious in their purchasing behavior (Levesque and McDogall, 1993; Beckett *et al.*, 2000; Mortimer and Weeks, 2019). The finding of Lee and Murphy (2005) indicates that price is the topmost factor for brand switching compared to service and loyalty programs (Aslam and Frooghi, 2018). Anderson (1996) found the importance of price tolerance in addition to satisfaction when predicting customer switching.

Varki and Colgate (2001) suggest that price plays an essential role as an attribute of performance and may impact customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions. The customer who gets price competitively competitive from an alternative brand triggers the brand switching, particularly from a private brand (Govender, 2017). According to Dick *et al.* (1996), a low price strategy can increase switching between brands, and thus, a low price store stagey can influence this kind of behavior. Colgate and Hedge (2001) also found that price is one of

the essential factors in brand switching behaviors in New Zealand and Australia. The impact of price on consumer switching behavior is shown in [Figure 1](#) and the hypothesis is as follows.

H5. Price has positive impact on customers' propensity to brand switching behavior.

2.7 Switching cost

SC is a cost that customers incur if they change their mobile service provider. First-time SC has been considered by [Fornell \(1992\)](#) in Marketing ([Tesform et al., 2016](#); [Jones and Sasser, 1995](#); [Chuah et al., 2017](#); [An and Noh, 2009](#); [Bansal et al., 2005](#); [Steven et al., 2015](#)). SC is one of the vital factors to determine the competitiveness of the market. High SCs make it difficult for the consumer to change service providers irrespective of whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied ([Temerak and El-Manstrly, 2019](#); [Zolfagharian et al., 2017](#)). High SCs make customers insensitive to satisfaction ([Chang et al., 2017](#); [Klemperer, 1987](#); [Farah, 2017](#); [Valenzuela, 2014](#)). The SC is divided into three types: transactional cost, learning cost and artificial cost. Transactional cost is the financial loss incurred due to the change of the present service provider to a new service provider. Learning cost incurred to learn the usage of the newly acquired service. The last one is called artificial or contractual cost, which a service provider deliberately creates. The impact of SC on consumer switching behavior is shown in [Figure 1](#) and the hypothesis is as under.

H6. SC has a positive impact on customers' propensity to brand switching behavior.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Data collection

First, exploratory research was conducted to address the contemporary issues related to consumer brand switching in the mobile market. The marketing and brand managers of mobile companies were interviewed. Then the depth literature review was conducted to develop theoretical background and methodology, exploring the research in the area and concepts to validate the variables of primary research. Keaveney has done pioneering work in service switching behavior (1995), which is the foundation of this study. The survey method was adopted for this research, which was widely used and accepted as an efficient tool for this kind of consumer study ([Andreassen, 2000](#); [Lee et al., 2001](#); [Malhotra, 2009](#)).

The primary research was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. A pilot questionnaire was designed and administered to 28 young adults. Also shared with few experts from industry and academia, it helped outline many potential areas, and the same has been filtered. The data were collected in-person, and an online survey was conducted via email and social media. More than 561 questionnaires were administered. Forty-seven responses were removed due to incompleteness and outliers, resulting in 514 valid responses with an overall 91.62% response rate. The correlation of independent variables was checked, and there was no multicollinearity found as the variance inflation factor (VIF) value was less than the threshold limit in coefficient analysis.

3.2 The sample

The sample was selected randomly chosen from the consumer who had changed their mobile service provider within the last six months, and no other bias was kept for the selection of sample. The sample frame was maintained that the consumer must have subscribed to a new mobile service within the last six months. Total 514 valid samples were collected. As per the requirement of structural equation modeling (SEM), the minimum sample value is 400 for analysis ([Bagozzi and Yi, 1988](#)). Out of the total sample, 54.6% male respondents and 43.4%

female respondents participated in the study. The majority of the respondents were from 18 to 25 years (62.7%), while the 26 to 35 age group, 18.2% and 35 to 45, were 11.9%. A total of 80.6% of respondents had graduate or higher qualifications.

3.3 Construct validation

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to check the common method bias (CMB) in the dataset, and the variance was less than 50% of the threshold limit, so there is no evidence of CMB (Jarvis *et al.*, 2003). In any field research, the most critical part of knowledge development is to draw causal conclusions (Viglia and Dolnicar, 2020).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to establish the validity of the construct with the help of AMOS 22.0. A two-stage approach was used; in the first part, a standardized regression coefficient was obtained by estimating the second part's measurement model for estimating the structural model (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988). CFA will help to check the construct validity through the maximum likelihood method. The model is called fit if we get a normed chi-square value that is chi-square/degree of freedom (DF), between 2 and 5, the comparative fit index (CFI) should be above 0.9, the normed fit index (NFI) should be above 0.9, and a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) value should be less than 0.08 was considered an indication of proper fit and values above 0.10 indicated poor fit (Pallant, 2007; Pradeep *et al.*, 2021; MacCallum *et al.*, 1996).

It is observed that the aforesaid criteria such as chi-square (CMIN) = 540.591, DF = 254, CMIN/DF = 2.327, goodness-of fit-index (GFI) = 0.924, adjusted goodness-of-fitness index (AGFI) = 0.902, NFI = 0.908, CFI = 0.948 and RMSEA = 0.047 are very close to the recommended level. Many authors raised their doubts about applying only chi-square to test the goodness of fit, so it is recommended to use a comparative model fit. As shown above, the values of GFI and RMSEA are satisfactory and represent absolute fit to the model (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988).

Cronbach's Alpha (α) was computed in SPSS 22 for testing the reliability of scales of each latent variable as shown in Table 1. An alpha value of 0.6 was recommended for the survey-based research threshold (Hair *et al.*, 2009). The values of Cronbach Alpha reveal that all the alpha values ranging from 0.71 to 0.86 were higher than the cut-off. These statistics signal scales' internal consistency.

As shown in Table 2, standardized estimates of all the items for their respective constructs are significant and are above 0.5. All the values of average variance extracted (AVE) were above 0.5, which indicated that convergent validity was achieved (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). All the squares of interconstruct correlations were lower than their respective square roots, proving discriminant validity.

Construct	No of items	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha (α)
Service inconvenience (SI)	4	0.76	0.90	0.80
Core service failure (CSF)	5	0.71	0.88	0.71
Service encounter failure (SEF)	5	0.79	0.94	0.86
Technology and edge on competition (TEC)	5	0.68	0.94	0.86
Pricing (PR)	5	0.76	0.92	0.82
Switching COST (SC)	5	0.67	0.89	0.76
Customer switching behaviour (CSB)	6	0.79	0.91	0.82

Source(s): Table by author

Table 1.
Construct reliability
and convergent
validity

To determine how distinct the various constructs or variables in a study are from one another, a discriminant validity table is used. The square roots of the AVE (Long, 1983; Pradeep *et al.*, 2021) for each construct are commonly shown on the diagonal, along with the correlation coefficients between each pair of variables. A construct's degree of differentiation from other constructs in the study is shown by the amount of variance in a construct that is explained by its indicators, or AVE.

The diagonal values in this table relate to the square roots of the AVE for each construct. The table demonstrates that there is little correlation between any two constructs, demonstrating that they are distinct from one another. For instance, ST AND RSF and SI have the highest correlation coefficient of 0.69, which is lower than the square root of the AVE for both constructs. Based on this table, it indicates that the discriminant validity of these constructs is sufficient overall.

4. Results

The structural equation model was used for further data analysis. The causal relationships were tested as per the hypothesis proposed. The proposed conceptual model contains observed indicators, and SEM validates hypothetical constructs (Kline, 2016; Kautish *et al.*, 2022a, b). The analysis was done using AMOS 22. The maximum likelihood estimation method was used to compute the estimates, considering customer switching behavior (CSB) as the dependent variable. The chi-square value for this structural model is 1659.79, with a DF of 360, the chi-square to DF ratio is 4.611, CFI of 0.82, AGFI of 0.77, NFI of 0.78 and CFI of 0.82. With this, the RMSEA value is 0.084, which suggests an acceptable model fit of this complexity tested for the proposed theoretical model (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Hair *et al.*, 2009).

The structural model of CSB suggests that construct TEC and construct pricing (PR) negatively influence CSB as got regression weight negative as indicated in Table 3. The construct SC has the most significant factor of customer satisfaction as the regression weight is 0.90. The study has shown to a certain extent; there is also a positive relationship between CSB and the construct SEF as the regression weight is 0.19. Thus, it may be hypothesized that customers in general also consider SEF necessary while evaluating CSB. The other construct, SI, has a negligible impact on CSB and core service failure (CSF) also negatively impacts switching behavior.

The above Table 4 indicates gender-based analysis. Service Inconvenience has a negative impact on switching behavior, while a female has a positive but meager impact. SEF and core service failure have a positive impact on both males and females. Factor TEC has an impact on males. Pricing has shown a negative impact on both males and females. SC has a significant impact on male and female both.

Table 2.
Discriminant
validity table

Construct	SI	CSF	SEF	ST_AND_RSF	PR	SC
SI	0.87					
CSF	-0.15	0.84				
SEF	-0.22	0.66	0.88			
ST_AND_RSF	0.69	-0.34	-0.23	0.82		
PR	0.54	-0.10	-0.01	0.59	0.87	
SC	0.03	0.48	0.50	-0.04	0.07	0.81

Note(s): Diagonal values are square root of AVE
Source(s): Table by author

5. Discussion and implications

5.1 Policy implication

Consumer switching behavior carries significant policy implications for both marketers and regulators, impacting market growth and brand management. From a business perspective, such behavior often signals customer dissatisfaction with a particular product or service. Consequently, companies should take proactive measures to address the root causes prompting customers to switch. These measures might encompass enhancing product quality, optimizing customer service, or revising pricing strategies.

This study's policy implications primarily revolve around the consumer switching behavior within the mobile service provider sector. Furthermore, such behavior can also influence competition policy. The degree to which consumers switch between brands can serve as an indicator of the competitiveness within the market. A healthy rate of switching may suggest a robust competition, which is generally beneficial for consumers. Conversely, limited or absent switching behavior might indicate barriers to entry for new businesses, potentially hindering fair competition.

Previous scholars have extensively investigated consumer switching behavior (Kumar and Chaarlas, 2011; Bogomolova, 2011; Keaveney, 1995) and have identified various factors that drive consumers to switch. Notably, technology and pricing have emerged as critical factors influencing brand retention and mitigating brand switching. Consequently, this study offers valuable insights into consumer behavior, market competition dynamics and the effectiveness of regulatory measures.

5.2 Theoretical contributions

This study represents a significant theoretical advancement in our comprehension of consumer behavior, particularly in the context of brand switching. It augments the existing body of knowledge within the domain of consumer behavior with several noteworthy contributions:

Path	Hypothesis	Coefficient	t-values
SI → CSB	H1	0.03	0.791*
CSF → CSB	H2	−0.04	−0.901*
SEF → CSB	H3	0.19	4.67***
TEC → CSB	H4	−0.38	−7.146**
PR → CSB	H5	−0.09	−2.378*
SC → CSB	H6	0.90	9.387***

Note(s): Relationship significant at *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Source(s): Table by author

Table 3.
Standardized regression weight

Path	Male		Female	
	B	S.E.	B	S.E.
SI → CSB	−0.02*	0.11	0.01*	0.02
CSF → CSB	0.01*	0.13	0.04*	0.12
SEF → CSB	0.02	0.06	0.11	0.11
TEC → CSB	0.19**	0.05	−0.23**	0.14
PR → CSB	−0.01*	0.10	−0.19*	0.09
SC → CSB	0.23	0.11	0.12	0.10

Note(s): Relationship significant at *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$

Source(s): Table by author

Table 4.
Gender-based analysis

The study discerns and explicates the factors that wield substantial influence over consumer switching behavior. Notably, it elucidates that SCs and SEFs have a discernible impact on consumer decisions to switch brands, aligning with the works of [Narteh \(2013\)](#), [Vyas and Raitani \(2014\)](#) and [Pradeep et al. \(2021\)](#). By recognizing the intricate interplay of various factors, including technology and pricing, in retaining consumers within a brand, this research underscores the complexity of consumer behavior. This underscores the need to consider a multifaceted array of determinants when analyzing brand loyalty and switching. The study emphasizes the significance of timely complaint resolution mechanisms provided by companies. It reveals that the failure to address consumer complaints promptly can be a primary driver for consumers to switch service providers, corroborating the findings of [Colgate and Hedge \(2001\)](#).

The research sheds light on the phenomenon of silent churn, where a significant proportion of dissatisfied customers switches brands without formally voicing their grievances. This unvoiced discontent underscores the paramount importance of effective customer service and the potential impact of unaddressed service issues. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the study challenges the prevailing notion that price competition is the primary driver of brand switching. It underscores the growing significance of value-added services and innovation as key determinants in retaining customer loyalty, in line with the findings of [Colgate and Hedge \(2001\)](#) and [Pradeep et al. \(2021\)](#). In a rapidly evolving mobile service market, the study highlights the essential role of technology and maintaining a competitive edge in retaining consumers. This underscores the dynamic nature of the industry and the need for service providers to stay ahead in technological innovations. The research elucidates that core service failures are central catalysts for consumers switching service providers. Furthermore, it points out that such failures can have a cascading effect by generating negative word-of-mouth, thereby impacting both existing and potential customers. This finding aligns with the work of [Malhotra and Malhotra \(2013\)](#).

In summary, this study contributes significantly to the theoretical understanding of consumer behavior, particularly regarding brand switching. It not only identifies and explains influential factors but also challenges existing assumptions about the drivers of brand switching in a dynamic market. This research enriches our theoretical knowledge, providing valuable insights for academia and industry practitioners alike.

5.3 Managerial implications

This study provides valuable insights for mobile service providers and stakeholders across various domains. It is especially relevant for marketers seeking to refine their branding and marketing strategies. Additionally, educators, practitioners and researchers keen on delving into the intricate dynamics of mobile user behavior can benefit from these findings.

One central takeaway is that consumers are prone to switch brands when they perceive more cost-effective alternatives or experience service failures from their current providers. This resonates with the observations of [Bogomolova and Grudinina \(2011\)](#), who emphasized that brand switches can occur irrespective of customer satisfaction levels. Consequently, it becomes paramount for mobile service providers to not only maintain competitive pricing but also excel in service quality to retain their customer base. Importantly, this study emphasizes that the mobile market has transcended the traditional price-driven competition. The concept of value pricing, as illuminated by the findings of [Malhotra and Malhotra \(2013\)](#), is now more pertinent. Therefore, mobile service providers should prioritize the delivery of value-added services and innovations that align with their users' preferences. SCs emerge as a significant factor and encouraging customers to commit to extended subscription plans and higher investments can help reduce brand switching. This aligns with insights from [Ehrenberg](#)

(1988) and Shukla (2009), which suggest that brand switching is driven by an array of factors beyond loyalty programs and customer satisfaction. Factors such as employee empathy, response time and addressing customer inconveniences play pivotal roles in influencing brand switching.

Echoing the findings of Lee *et al.* (2001), this research underscores that service failures can trigger brand switching among mobile service providers and lead to negative word-of-mouth. Hence, organizations are advised to actively measure the voice of the customer to gain insights into what satisfies or dissatisfies consumers, allowing them to proactively prevent brand switching. Furthermore, staying current with new and cutting-edge technological products is vital for retaining customers. Organizations that fail to keep pace with technological advancements risk losing market share. This underscores the necessity for organizations to remain technologically competitive. It is important to note that these findings challenge previous research that heavily emphasized the influence of price on brand switching. In today's mobile market, consumers consider a broader spectrum of factors, including value-added services and cost advantages, when making their choices. Consequently, mobile service providers should tailor their strategies to address this evolving consumer landscape effectively.

5.4 Limitation and future research

This study offers valuable insights into the factors influencing the switching behavior of mobile users, making a substantial contribution to the existing knowledge base on consumer behavior. While the research has provided significant findings, particularly within the context of the mobile sector, it lays the foundation for further exploration and collaboration among various stakeholders. Nevertheless, several limitations have been identified, which pave the way for potential avenues of future research:

Although the mobile industry is inherently global, it operates within diverse cultural contexts. Future studies could benefit from a cross-cultural approach to better understand switching behavior variations across different regions and cultures. Including data from multiple countries would provide a more comprehensive perspective for future research endeavors. Conducting longitudinal studies to examine the factors affecting switching behavior over time can be insightful. This would allow for the confirmation of existing findings and the identification of evolving trends or shifts in consumer behavior patterns within the dynamic mobile industry. While this study focuses on the mobile sector, it would be valuable to test the developed framework on other services and products. This cross-industry analysis could help researchers gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of consumer behavior and identify commonalities or differences in switching determinants.

Access to big data from companies or agencies could significantly enhance research capabilities and provide genuine insights into consumer behavior. Analyzing extensive datasets could uncover nuanced patterns and correlations that may not be apparent through traditional research methods. The emerging trend of dual SIM card usage in the mobile industry presents an intriguing area for further investigation. Exploring how consumers manage and make decisions regarding multiple service providers within a single device could yield valuable insights into contemporary mobile user behavior.

In conclusion, while this study offers substantial contributions to our understanding of switching behavior in the mobile sector, it also identifies important directions for future research. By addressing these limitations and exploring these avenues, researchers can continue to advance our knowledge of consumer behavior and its implications for businesses and industries.

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About the author

Dr Naresh K. Patel is the Dean and Professor at Faculty of MIS, Dharmsinh Desai University, Nadiad. He has experience of more than 2 decades of academic experience. Seven candidates have completed, and eight are pursuing Ph.D. under his supervision. He has been awarded the achievers award for the "best faculty" and recipient of the prestigious Full Bright scholar. He has conducted several Executive Development Programs at various forums and given consultancy for Wellspun, IndiaZen (NDDb), Police Dept, Municipal School Teachers and Agriculture Dept. He has published 50 research papers in journals of repute and is also a reviewer for many Journals. Naresh K. Patel can be contacted at: nareshpatel13@yahoo.com

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