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REVIEW ARTICLE

A STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF CUSTOMER’S SATISFACTION TOWARDS CUSTOMERS LOYALTY AMONG MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATION PROVIDERS IN KUALA LUMPUR

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand the effect between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the Malaysian mobile telecommunication services. This sector is highly competitive as new players are coming in, with aggressive price offering, high promotion, better network quality and great customer service. 80 Respondents participated in this study. Out of this five-variable test (Service Quality, Pricing, Switching Cost, and Brand Image) it is found that Responsiveness and Brand Image have a positive relationship on Customer Loyalty. The present study has its own limitation since this research is only conducted in the Kuala Lumpur area. Therefore, the finding of the study is unable to be generalizing for the whole population of hand phone users in Malaysia as the sample size is considered small. In conclusion service providers must be able to understand the effect between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. It will be a great challenge for the service providers in preparing their strategic plan in maintaining customer loyalty, and at the same time expanding their customer base.

KEYWORDS

Telecommunication, Customer Loyalty, Population, Satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Success in delivering good services and to gain customer loyalty does not only depend on sales but also on other factors related to product, service and support. It was during the last decade of the 20th century that relationship marketing began to dominate the marketing field (Gabbianelli and Pencarelli, 2019). During this period relationship marketing became a major trend in marketing and management business. Relationship marketing is concerned about building customer loyalty by providing value to all the parties involved in the relational exchanges, as customer loyalty is the final goal of relationship marketing (Alves et al., 2019). This study investigates three potential subscribers’ decisions related to buying telecommunications products (accepting the purchase price), decision to use the products (satisfied to use the product), and the decision to stay and be loyal to the service provider (Lasi, 2020).

According to Service & Support Professionals Association news (SSPA) that many service providers think an 80% satisfaction rating is a reasonable score but research done shows that at 80% perceive that is consider an average and the service has no point of differentiation and it’s show that the “very satisfied” customers who are truly loyal when everybody else feels indifferent about the provider service and will swap to another provider if they see a cost advantage (Ghazalle and Lasi, 2021). In Malaysia, the mobile telecommunication market has now reached its maturity stage, and as the net return on investments in mature markets could be much higher for retention strategies than for strategies to attract new customers, particularly for companies with an established customer base (Ariffin et al., 2021). Compared to other consumer goods and services, mobile telecommunication services are relatively homogeneous in nature because of technological standards and regulations.


Service providers still try to provide innovative service offerings in the hope that consumers perceive their services as superior and leading in the mobile service sector that abides rules from Federal Communications Commission (FCC, 2022). Customer loyalty is one of the most important elements in marketing and it shows how much the provider can afford to practice the loyalty program among its customers (Lasi and Salim, 2020). Furthermore, customer loyalty will generate positive word-of-mouth and it will be a great advantage to firms as it acts as free promotion to them. Research done by Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission related to customers’ satisfaction found that the satisfaction index has increased from 4.09 percent in 2012 to 4.12 percent in the year 2015 (MCMC, 2017).

This is due to the changes in the strategy, by providing a custom made service and good customer relationship programs. Customer relationship marketing plays an important role in the telecommunications industry. It demands a relationship-oriented strategy in marketing (Medberg and Grönroos, 2020). By understanding and identifying the profile of individual customers, the services providers can therefore suggest appropriate products to meet their needs. Hence, this study is to identify the relationship between Service Quality, Pricing, Switching Cost and Brand Image on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty in Mobile Telecommunication service providers in Malaysia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Relationship Between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty

Service is different from physical products. Compared with physical products, Service is thought to be intangible, heterogeneous, produced and consumed simultaneously, unable to be kept in stock, etc. A widely

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accepted definition of service is proposed by Grönroos in 1990 as: "A service is a process consisting of a series of more or less intangible activities that normally, but not necessarily always, take place in interactions between the customer and service employees and/or physical resources or goods and/or systems of the service provider, which are provided as solutions to customer problems". According to consider service quality is a significant differentiator and the most powerful competitive weapon which all the service organizations want to possess (Farida and Ardyan, 2018).

Definitions of service quality hold the result of an evaluation process where customers compare their expectations about a service with their perception of the service to be received (Jonkisz and Karniej, 2021; Edeling, 2021). Various studies explained that the service quality as a form of attitude of customers on the service provider in a long run and also their overall evaluation. These two constructs (service quality and attitude) are viewed as similar. Attitude is defined as a learned predisposition to respond to an object in a consistently favorable or an unfavorable way. Jonkisz and Karniej developed a service quality measure, SERVQUAL which measure of the overall service quality dimensions (Jonkisz and Karniej, 2021). Hence, in a service context, there are almost a relationship between customer and service provider; such relationship can be used as a basis for marketing (He and Sun, 2020).

Medberg and Grönroos defined service quality as the consumers' judgment about a firm's overall excellence or superiority (Medberg and Grönroos, 2020). The quality of a service is subjectively perceived by customers during interactions with a firm. What happens and perceived by customers in the interaction process will obviously have critical impacts on customers' evaluation of service quality (Varonen, 2020). Due to the peculiar attributes of service, the evaluation of service quality is more complex than evaluation of product quality (Satti et al., 2020). There have been various ways for measurements of service quality proposed by previous researches and literatures.

2.2 Relationship Between Price and Customer Loyalty

Price is the monetary cost for a customer to buy products or services. It is the critical determinant that influences customer buying decision. Customers usually select their service providers strongly relying on perceived price. How much consumers are willing to pay differs due to their different needs and wants. Thus, the price perceptions to the same service products may differ among individuals. Higher pricing perceived by consumers might negatively influence their purchase probabilities (Wince et al., 2022). Oliver suggested that consumers often judge price relating to service quality, and accordingly generate satisfaction or dissatisfaction, depending on the equity principle (Oliver, 1997). According to a study, there are two factors such as price fairness and price acceptance of pricing that contributed towards customer behaviour or how consumers respond to price changes (Satti et al., 2020). This theory has been supported (Kim, 2019).

Fairness has been defined as a judgment of whether an outcome or process to reach an outcome in reasonable, acceptable (Cassia et al., 2021). The level of price acceptance can be defined as the maximum price that a buyer is prepared to pay for a product or services (Rondan-Cataluña et al., 2019). Individuals, who are price conscious, are generally not willing to pay prices for a product if they perceived that the price is not reasonable. Furthermore, the range of acceptable price is relatively narrow for price conscious individuals (Inman et al., 2020). According to the variable charges are the prime importance for the user's decision (Kankam-kwarteng et al., 2022). In telecommunication sector the users not only consider the purchase price and usage charges as criteria for acceptance but also, they will consider from whom the services will be purchase (Nisa et al., 2022).

In general, high-quality services are considered to cost more than low-quality equivalents, especially among those who displayed high level of brand loyalty (Kimura, 2021). Many researchers have pointed out that price perception influences customer satisfaction and trust (Anouze and Alamro, 2020). Customers often switch mainly due to some pricing issues, e.g. high price perceived, unfair or deceptive pricing practices (Kiani et al., 2019).

2.3 Relationship Between Switching Cost and Customer Loyalty

Switching behavior refers to customer's termination of a relationship with

a provider (Kang, 2022). According to a study defined switching cost as costs that deters customers from switching to competitors' product or services (Yin et al., 2021). There are many reasons that might lead to customer switching behavior. Kim proposed that customers change service provider due to time limitation, money constraints, and unavailable access to information, or habit among parties (Kim, 2020). It also suggested critical factors that will cause switch behavior, such as attraction by competitors, inappropriate employee response to service failures, pricing problems, core service failures, service encounter failures, inconvenience, ethical problems, and situation changes (Lasi et al., 2021).

Switching cost incurred when a customer switches from an existing service provider to a new one. It is barriers that influence customer's decision to change service provider. Some researchers mentions the way of marketing information and the interactive atmosphere of the travel apps could affect the experiential satisfaction among generations Z consumers (Tseng et al., 2021). Some researchers argues that the perceived costs of switching can be depending on the type of service (Sánchez García and Curras-Perez, 2020). For utilitarian service, factor would be post-purchase regret, whereas for the hedonic service, factor for switching behavior would be past switching behavior and anticipated regret.

According to switching cost is the cost involved in changing from one service provider to another (Calvo-Porrall and Otero-Prada, 2020). In addition to measurable monetary costs, switching costs also include time and psychological effort involved in facing the uncertainty of dealing with a new service provider. According to it is the sum of economic, psychological cost, and physical costs (Barnes et al., 2021). It includes the psychological cost of becoming a customer of a new firm, and the time effort involved in buying new brand. Hence, switching cost varies from customer to customer (Amami et al., 2022). According to switching cost gives firms some advantage as follows (Parasuraman et al., 2021; Shava, 2021):-

- The cost reduces customers' sensitivity to price and satisfaction level
- Customer perceive functionally homogeneous brands
- In another word even though customer had the opportunity to choose identical brands but They choose to stay loyal and continue to buy the same brand.

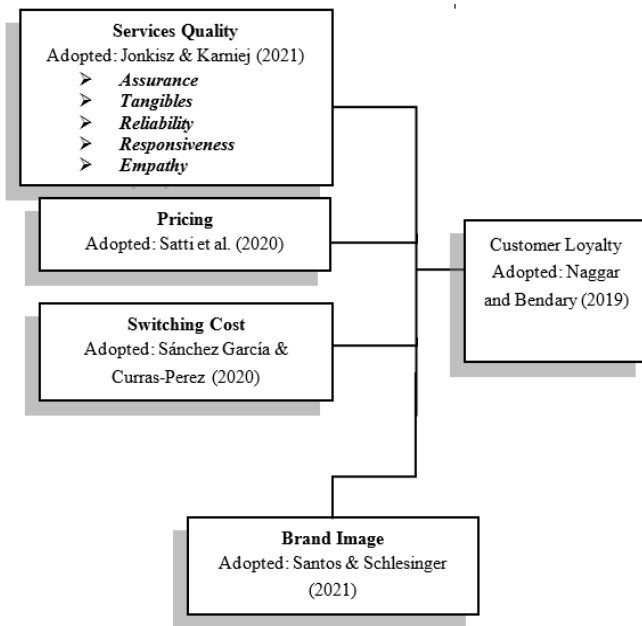
2.4 Relationship Between Brand Image and Customer Loyalty

Brand is defined as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design or combination of these that identifies the maker or seller of a product or services. Brand image was defined as the "perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumers' memory" (Sharma and Jain, 2019). It is thought as the perception or mental picture of a brand formed and held in customers' mind, through customers' response, whether rational or emotional. A brand is not first built and then perceived by the customers. Consumers view a brand as an important part of the product, and branding can add value to a product (Song, 2019).

Brand image is perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand association held in consumer memory. Brand, also referred as corporate image, has been defined as an accumulated attitude (experience based or not) towards the company (Santos and Schlesinger, 2021). Brand reputation has been defined as a perception of quality associated with according (Bigne et al., 2020). On the company level, image has been defined as: "perceptions of an organization reflected in the associations held in consumer memory". It is said that brand equity creates customers preferences for a brand over competing brands (Yu et al., 2019).

The concept of relationship marketing within services displays the importance of one-to-one relationships between businesses and customers as well as relationships between consumers and the brands (Naggar and Bendary, 2019). The development of a brand relationship with customers is based on a series of brand contacts experienced by customers (Singh et al., 2020). Building strong brands is one of the most important goals of product and brand management. Strong brands result in revenue streams, both short term and long term. Civelek and Ertemel defines brand loyalty as a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronise a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing (Civelek and Ertemel, 2019).

3. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK



3.1 Hypotheses

This study identifies the effect of customer satisfaction toward customer loyalty with the relevant attributes of service quality, price, switching cost and brand image. Each service dimension may have different effect on customer satisfaction and what makes them loyal to the services provider. In this relation, overall satisfaction refers to “the consumer’s fulfillment response, the degree to which the level of fulfillment is pleasant or unpleasant” (Lepistö et al., 2022). Mobile service is mainly used for communication purposes and a consumer’s feeling of belonging and satisfied to a certain services provider play a major role for a customer to stay loyal. As we know satisfaction has been widely studied as a predictor of customer loyalty e.g. (Tang, 2019). Customer satisfaction is an important factor for a long-term relationship between a firm and a customer (Wantara and Tambrin, 2019). Consumers’ positive affect towards a service provider is likely to motivate the consumer to stay with the provider and then recommend the service to others (Mntande et al., 2022). Hence, the hypothesis of this study is summarized as show below:

Hypothesis 1: *There is a relationship between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty*

Hypothesis 1(a): *There is relationship between Assurance and Customer Satisfaction*

Hypothesis 1(b): *There is relationship between Tangibles and Customer Satisfaction*

Hypothesis 1(c): *There is relationship between Reliability and Customer Satisfaction*

Hypothesis 1(d): *There is relationship between Responsiveness and Customer Satisfaction*

Hypothesis 1(e): *There is relationship between Empathy and Customer Satisfaction*

Hypothesis 2: *There is relationship between Pricing and Customer Loyalty.*

Hypothesis 3: *There is relationship between Switching Cost and Customer Loyalty.*

Hypothesis 4: *There is relationship between Brand Image and Customer Loyalty.*

3.2 Research Design

The research adopted in this study is a descriptive study where the study is undertaken to describe the answer to question of on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty in Mobile Telecommunication service providers in Kuala Lumpur, Kuala Lumpur users, which of the factors play the most important role to achieve customer loyalty. Cross-sectional study was conducted via questionnaire survey to take a snapshot of the population at points in time as the research is studying based on customer loyalty towards customer satisfaction on mobile telecommunication in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Multiple Regression Findings.

HYPHOTESES 1 (H1): There is a relationship between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty

Hypothesis 1a (H1a): There is a relationship between Assurance and Customer Loyalty.

Based from the multiple regression table it is found that there is relationship between Assurance and Customer Loyalty as assurance value of $p = 0.00$ ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis 1a is accepted as there is a significant relationship between assurance and Customer Loyalty.

Hypothesis 1b (H1b): There is relationship between Tangibles and Customer Loyalty

Based on the multiple regression table it is found that there is no relationship between Tangibles and Customer Loyalty as tangibles value $P = 0.051$ ($p > 0.05$) therefore, hypothesis H1b is rejected as there no significant relationship between Tangibles and Customer Loyalty.

Hypothesis 1c (H1c): There is relationship between Reliability and Customer Loyalty

Based on the multiple regression table that I found there is no relationship between Reliability and Customer Loyalty as tangibles value $P = 0.072$ ($p > 0.05$) therefore, hypothesis H1c is rejected as there no significant relationship between Reliability and Customer Loyalty.

Hypothesis 1d (H1d): There is relationship between Responsiveness and Customer Loyalty

The results that shown in table above indicates that the combination of the variables is significant $p = 0.132$ ($p > 0.05$). it shows that responsiveness emerges the important factor that make customer loyalty with service. Good respond from the customer’s service staff able to make customer to be loyal to the service providers. Therefore, based on the multiple regression tables it is found that there is no relationship between Responsiveness and customer loyalty as tangibles value hypothesis H1c is rejected as there no significant relationship between Responsiveness and Customer Loyalty.

Hypothesis 1e (H1e): There is relationship between Empathy and Customer Loyalty

Based on the multiple regression table that it is found there is no relationship between Empathy and customer loyalty as tangibles value $P = 0.268$ ($p > 0.05$) therefore, hypothesis H1d is rejected as there no significant relationship between Empathy and Customer Loyalty.

HYPOTHESIS 2 (H2): There is relationship between Pricing and Customer Loyalty

Based on the multiple regression table that it is found there are relationship between pricing and customer loyalty as tangibles value $P = 0.00$ ($P > 0.05$) therefore, hypothesis H2 accepted as there is significant relationship between pricing and Customer Loyalty.

HYPOTHESIS 3 (H3): There is relationship between Switching Cost and Customer Loyalty

Based on the multiple regression table that it is found there are relationship between Switching cost and customer loyalty as tangibles value $P = 0.01$ ($P > 0.05$) therefore, hypothesis H3 accepted as there is significant relationship between Switching Cost and Customer Loyalty.

HYPOTHESIS 4 (H4): There is relationship between Brand Image and Customer Loyalty

Based on the multiple regression table that it is found there is no relationship between Brand Image and Customer Loyalty as tangibles value $P = 0.017$ ($p > 0.05$) therefore, hypothesis H4 is rejected as there no significant relationship between Brand Image and Customer Loyalty.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The research found that most of the respondent are female with 47.4 percent and 52.5 percent are male respondents. The target age group is from 18 to 47 years old, the most of highest respondents is at the age of 18 till 24 years old with 71.2 percent. Majority of the respondents are Malay with 46.3 percent follow by other 45.0 percent, Indian 5.0 percent and Chinese with 3.8 percent.

In term of religion Islam is the highest with 67.5 percent follows by the Christian 22.5 percent, Hindu 5.0 percent and Buddhist 3.8 percent and the others is 1.2 percent. The highest education level in this study are from the secondary level which is Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia and Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia with 38.8 percent follow by Diploma level with 22.5 percent, Degree level 18.8 percent, Postgraduate level 2.5 percent and Certificate or others level at 7.5 percent. Majority of the respondents are working at the private sector with 45.0 percent follow by Students with 31.2 percent, self-employed with 15.0 percent and the rest is by the government sector with 8.8 percent. The average monthly incomes of the respondents are from 0 to 5999 with the highest income is below RM1000 with 73.8 percent.

Table 1: Multiple Regression on the Customer Loyalty

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Beta (B)	Sig.
Customer Loyalty	Assurance	.903	.000**
	Tangibles	.239	.051
	Reliability	.190	.072
	Responsiveness	.218	.132
	Empathy	.160	.268
	Price	.485	.000**
	Switching Cost	.279	.001**
	Brand Image	.208	.017
R2:	.221		
F Value:	22.082		
Sig. F:	.000		

Base on the Summary Regressions Result Table 1 indicate that there are only three variables that are significant to Customer Loyalty that is Service Quality Assurance, Price and Switching Costs, this significant level indicates the combination of the variable significant predict the independent variable ($p < .000$). The ANOVA result showed that $F = 22.082$ is significant at 0.000 level. The significant level indicates that the combination of these variable significant ($p < .000$) predict the dependent variable. Model summary in Table 1 indicate that 0.221percent of the variance (R2) in customers' loyalty were significant. This indicated that the combination of the predictors significantly predicts to Customer Loyalty.

The result shows us that the factor that contributing the effect of customer satisfaction and how loyal the customer to the telecommunication service provider is Service Quality Assurance, Price and Switching Cost. Both the demographic factor (age and occupation) influences loyalty. The highest respondents are from the age of 18 till 24 years old with 44.59 percent. Other factors that contribute to loyalty is the Price with the increase of expectation from the young adult, and what make them loyal to service provider. We can see from the current trend that youngster is loyal to certain brand image e.g Maxis, Celcom, DiGi, or U-Mobile.

The brand image has become a determination for them to be loyal. According to brands that consumer is highly involved with are not necessarily brand that evoke the strongest experiences (Mntande et al., 2022). Price war doesn't lead to customer loyalty even though the service provider provides a better package and reasonable price. Similarly, switching cost does not determine customer loyalty due to the influence by the advertisement made by the service provider.

Widely used as a demographic variable to characterize adoption of technologies between two or more consumer group. From this study the age group from 18-24 years old used prepaid as compared to postpaid services as long the service from the provider is good. Young adults are more focused on brand image which indicated status. They are willing to be loyal to the same service provider. In Brand attachment, customer delight is characterized by arousal and positive effect; it can be considered the affective component of satisfaction.

Price war will lead to customer switching to other provider as long it will benefit them even for a shorter period of time. With the launch of mobile number portability services recently it makes it easy for the customers to retain their mobile number although they are using another services provider. In terms of Switching Cost customers especially young customers do not care less on the switching cost as long as they can swap services provider. This factor in fact have been increasing, this is due to the younger generation has no commitment; they can choose any service provider that they felt suit their needs. For professionals, corporate and

young adults they will remain with the same service provider, due to the corporate package offered are better and able to make them loyal to the provider. In addition, commitment fees that they need to pay is high if they switch providers.

6. CONCLUSION

Malaysian telecommunication services are one of Malaysia fast growing sector and have be becoming the most highly developed sector. Accusations of poor quality network services have been a major reason why customers are lost among the providers. With the high levels of advertising spent by operators to gain market share and the battle to get new subscribers, the rapid growth of the pre-paid mobile segment has also increase it competition in the market. This services it not only sold by the service provider or they authorize dealers but are now sold by variety of outlets including petrol stations, banks and retailers. As we known the pre-paid market is driven by convenience and has placed greater logistical constraints on the operators.

The changing landscape of the Malaysian mobile market has witnessed the restructuring of the main players in that market. The government has been a strong supporter in rationalization on the overcrowded market and with the significant merger between Telekom and Celcom took place, it is creating a lot of interest. At the same time, Maxis acquired Time dotCom's mobile unit. These changes resulted in the number of operators being effectively reduced from five to three. By December 2008 Maxis Communications had a mobile subscriber base of 11.1 million, with Celcom in second place on 8.8 million, while DiGi was number three with 7.1 million subscribers. New operator, with its exclusively 3G offering, was trailing the field with just 200,000 subscribers at the time.

As competition is increasing among the companies especially in the mobile market today and this market has become extremely competitive and the service provider are moving aggressively to attract customer by offering attractive promotion and service therefore the service provider should take the necessary action for them to know the effect what make customer satisfied in able to retain customer loyalty in the telecommunication service, Finally, this research will encourage further study and useful guidelines for these type of researches.

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