International Journal of Business & Law Research 9(1):59-66, Jan –Mar., 2021

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Determinants Of Brand Switching Behaviour In Mobile Telecommunication Industry In South-South Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated the determinants of brand switching behaviour in mobile telecommunication industry in South-South zone of Nigeria. In this study, network coverage, sales promotional activities, price, service quality, customer service and switching cost were employed as the explanatory variables, while brand switching behaviour was used as the dependent variable. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of subscribers of mobile telecommunication services in South-South zone of Nigeria. A sample of three hundred and eighty four (384) subscribers was selected using Cochran Method of determining sample size. Three hundred and eighty four (384) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the sampled subscribers of telecom services. Descriptive statistics and ordinary least square regression techniques were employed in analyzing the data with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The study found that network coverage, price, service quality and customer service have significant positive influence on consumer brand switching behaviour in mobile telecommunication in South-South zone, Nigeria; switching cost has significant negative influence on brand switching behaviour in mobile telecommunication in South-South zone, Nigeria; and sales promotional activities have no significant positive influence on brand switching behaviour in telecommunication in South-South, Nigeria. The study recommended amongst others that mobile telecommunication service providers should also monitor and ensure that their network service is always strong in order to discourage their subscribers from migrating to other brands.
Keywords: Brand Switching Behaviour, Network Coverage, Service Quality, Customer Service and Switching Cost

INTRODUCTION
Brand switching behaviour in today's competitive business world is becoming a serious challenge to firms due to consumers' easy access to information about different competing brands of products in the market. Thus, satisfying and creating a favourable impression about the product in the mind of consumer become the priority of any organization. In view of this, companies are constantly trying to build mutual relationships with their customers through delivering better value products and meeting their expectations. To this end, brand switching behaviour has received much attention in recent years owing to its potential to drain a company's overall performance. Brand switching is a situation where a brand loses a once loyal customer to a competitor. In other words, a shopper changes his/her buying behaviour, choosing deliberately to purchase another brand instead of their usual choice (Susanti, 2015). This implies a situation in which someone changes from buying one brand of a product to buying a different brand.
Brand switching behaviour in the telecommunication industry has substantially increased over the years. This brand switching behavior has severely impacted the market share of the firms in local markets. The extent to which the customers are inclined to switch their service provider has become a key factor influencing the market trends in the industry (Kokemuller, 2007). The development of Telecommunication industry in Nigeria is so rapid and gives the investors quick returns on investment more than they could have expected. Nigeria is one of the fastest developing Mobile Telecommunication markets in Africa. Its large number of subscribers makes it Africa's largest

market. Telecommunication has completely changed the rate and way of information dissemination in the whole world. It is the best facilitator and vehicle of worldwide information flow.

Nigeria became one of Africa's most vibrant cellular phone markets with four contending service operators i.e. MTN, Airtel, Glo, and Etisalat (now 9Mobile). The aggressive competition among the nation's four major networks shows that there is a good and vibrant market despite the competitions. The business sector continues to penetrate the market with the provision of value added services as well as internet facilities through different service providers. Global System of Mobile Communications (GSM) framework utilizes Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) cards. This card stores all personal data and contacts, transferring the data, and activating the phone becomes simply a matter of changing the SIM card. The introduction of the global system of mobile communications (GSM) in Nigeria was to expand the measurement of the number of telephones in the country and to make telephone services cheaper and accessible to the common person.

Determinants of brand switching in mobile service providers are important factors that influence switching behaviors and preferences of customers in telecom industry with regard to mobile service providers. So, it appears as a major problem for the mobile telecommunication service providers, to deliver quality service consistently as changes in market compositions and competing characteristics have been surfacing incessantly. Brand switching behaviours of customers are increasing dramatically day by day due to service failure, customer satisfaction, price, inconvenience and customer services and the firms are facing many issues like customer churn, loss of market share, low profitability etc. Based on the foregoing, the study examined the determinants of brand switching behaviour in telecommunication industry in South-South, Nigeria. The determinants of brand switching behaviours such as network coverage, sales promotional activities, price, service quality, customer service and switching cost were employed as the independent variables while brand switching behaviour was employed as the dependent variable.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Brand Switching Behaviour

Keller (2001) defines brand switching as the behaviour customers exhibit when they move from one brand to another. Switching behaviour is defined as defection or customer exit. According to Ganesh, Arnold and Reynolds (2000), switching behaviour refers to the decision that a customer makes to stop buying a particular service or patronizing the service organisation completely. Szymanski and Henard (2001) indicated that studies have shown that satisfied customers are less likely to display switching behaviours. Several authors have examined the dissimilar nature of the companies' customer base in order to analyse the differences between switchers and loyalist (Li, Browne & Wetherbe, 2007). Keaveney (2005) introduced the model of client switch behaviour, and identified casual factors of switching behaviour, namely, pricing, inconvenience, service failures, and service encounter failures, worker responses to service failures, competitive problems, ethical issues and involuntary switching factors.

Quoquab, Mohd and Abu (2014) with specific reference to mobile services, defined switching as "dropping the existing service provider's service and replacing it with another at the time of purchasing the SIM card". Within this context, switching is meant to mean that a consumer exits the usage of a provider's telecommunications service usage in preference to another service provider with the intent of not patronising the services of the former service provider. Brand switching occurs when the consumers switch to other brand of products which is similar and within the same category of products (Kumar & Chaarlas, 2011).

Determinants of Brand Switching Behaviour

Network Coverage: Network coverage means the geographical area in which a wireless network provider offers cellular service for mobile phone (GSM) users. Network coverage is also defined as the ability to connect with one phone to another anytime at any place (Kabir, Alam & Alam, 2009). Coverage is usually expressed as a percentage of the resident population who could use cell phones outside their own home (Boohen & Agyapong, 2011). The network coverage is the more important in telecommunication industry than call rate (Siddiqui & Javed, 2012). Regular network failure makes the subscribers to switch to other brands.

Sales Promotional Activities: Sales promotion is a direct inducement that offers extra incentives to channel members to enhance or accelerate the product's movement from manufacturer to consumer. This definition embodies the key features of sales promotion. Sales-promotion techniques, such as free samples, competitions, premiums, coupons and price incentives provide extra incentives to achieve immediate sales. These are often referred to as value-added techniques, because they provide immediate and tangible added value to brands (Du Plessis *et al*., 2010). The purpose of sales promotion is to influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers by accelerating purchasing or consumption, thereby providing them with an incentive to react quickly to the promotional offer. These incentives are usually offered for a limited time only; and they thus create a sense of immediacy, where consumers have to make a decision quickly (Du Plessis *et al*., 2010).

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2010), sales promotion objectives vary widely. Sellers may use consumer promotions to increase short term sales or to help build long term market share. Objectives of trade sales promotion include getting retailers to carry new items and more inventory, getting them to advertise the product and give it more shelf space and getting them to buy ahead. Sales promotion for the sales force, Kotler (2012) states that the objectives include getting more sales forces support for current or new product or getting sales people to sign up new accounts. Sales promotions are usually used together with advertising, personal selling in an integrated marketing communication framework. Consumer sales promotions are usually advertised and can add excitement and adding power to advertising. Trade and sales force promotions support the personal selling process.

Price: Price is the amount of money being charged or in exchange for a product or service (Kotler, 2012). Consumers are likely to look for a lower price range product or substitute product to purchase (Kunal & Yoo, 2010). Price has been considered to be a signifier of quality in service businesses (Wilson et al., 2012). There are three components to the concept of price: objective monetary price, perceived non-monetary price, and sacrifice (Zeithaml, 2008). The objective monetary price (simply put, the amount of money paid for product) is not equivalent to the perceived price (that is, the price as understood and recorded in the mind of customer) since customers do not always know or remember the actual price paid for a product. The perception of price fairness plays an important role in any exchange transaction. Price plays a vital role in telecommunication market, especially for the mobile telecommunication service providers.

Service Quality: Service quality has been defined as the degree and direction between customer service expectations and perceptions (Newman, 2001). Service quality as a multi-dimensional construct is commonly based on customer judgements about service supplier and customer interactions and services itself (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Chidambaram and Ramachandvan (2012) defined service quality as the overall evaluation of a particular service firm that results from comparing that firm's performance with the customer's general expectations of how firms in that industry should perform. From customer point of view, quality means fitness for use and meeting customer satisfaction. Service quality is important aspect that affects the competitiveness of business.

Customer Service: Customer service is the provision of service to customers before, during and after a purchase. Sokefun (2011) define customer service as a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction- that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation. Customer service may be provided by a person (sales and service representative), or by automated means called self-service through the use of modern technology. Customer service is organizational ability to supply their customer's wants and needs (Chinunda, 2014). Providing excellent customer service is the ability for an organization to constantly and consistently exceed customers' expectations. Atalik (2009) states that the success of any organization lies in the hands of their customers, therefore quality customer services are of essence to the organization because when customer is satisfied with the products or services, then an organization is assured of great profits in all ramifications. It is only customers who can put up or down the reputation of the company. A good customer experience results in repeat venture to the same business. Customer service is the most important difference between one firm and its competitors. The only firm which survives in business is the one which gives good customer service (Chilembwe, 2014).

Switching Cost: Switching cost is defined as a one-time cost which a customer will incur in an attempt to switch from one product supplier or service provider to another (Gray, D'Alessandro, Johnson & Carter, 2017). Similarly, Wathne et al. (2001) also viewed switching cost as "the perceived cost of switching to a new supplier of a product or a service and it is meant to discourage a customer from exploring the offering of alternative suppliers. Lee and Neale (2012) stated that switching cost are penalties or inconveniences of some sort meant designed by service providers to hold on to consumers. Colgate and Lang (2001) viewed switching cost as "the cost of changing to a new service provider which includes monetary, time and psychological cost. Switching cost has been dubbed to be an effective way to discourage consumers from switching to a new brand but it has its advantages and drawbacks.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on theory of planned behaviour developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991. Consumers always consider the implications of their actions before they decide to engage in whatever action they feel better to be engaged or not engaged in (Ajzen, 1991). The theory states that the behavioural intention is the antecedent of any behaviour. This intention is determined by three considerations; behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs. The behavioural belief is an individual's positive or negative belief about performing a specific behaviour and the subjective values or evaluations of these consequences. An individual's intention to perform certain behaviour will be determined by how he or she evaluates it positively. Attitudes are determined by the individual's beliefs about the consequences of performing the behaviour (behavioural beliefs), weighted by his or her evaluation of those consequences (outcome evaluations). The attitude toward the behavior refers to the degree at which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question.

Theory of planned behaviour further provides a framework to examine the influence of attitudes on behaviours. For example, if an individual believes that the outcome of the behaviour is positive, she/he will possess a positive attitude toward performing it. That is when the customer believes that the final result of the switching action is positive, he/she will have a positive attitude towards switching. The central factor in the TPB model is the individual's intention to perform a given behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Liang, Ma and Qi (2013) ascertained that, attitude is the most important determinant of a customer's switching intention, attitude was influence by subjective norms, and switching intention was influenced by satisfaction which in turn influences significantly the switching behaviour of customers. The more an individual believes he/she possesses the necessary resources, abilities and opportunities necessary to influence behaviour, the more likely he/she will intend to and actually perform the behaviour (Qi, Zhou, Chen & Qu, 2012).

Empirical Studies

Islam, Pasha and Rahman (2016) investigated the factors of brand switching of the telecommunication industry in Barisal City, Bangladesh. The study found that customer service quality, value added service, internet facility and promotional offer are responsible for telecommunication brand switching with the exception of call rate and network coverage. Zahra, Hira and Iqra (2015) investigated the factors behind brand switching using empirical evidences from Pakistan telecommunication industry. The study focused on identifying those factors that have direct impact on the switching behavior of customers. The study established that 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.

Nwakanma, Udunwa, Anyiam, Ukwunna, Obasi and Bubagha (2018) investigated the factors influencing telecommunication subscribers' decision to port among network providers in Nigeria. The study found that service quality, network coverage, call rate/tariff/price and promotion have significant influence on subscribers' decision to port among network providers in Nigeria. Quah, Santhi and Ravindran (2018) investigated consumer brand switching behavior among Malaysian smartphone users. The finding of this study was that brand image and product features had significant relationship with brand switching. It is found that product features had strongest relationship with consumer brand switching behaviour in purchasing smartphones. However, price and sales promotion was found to have no significant relationship with brand switching.

Onyeagwara and Agu (2017) investigated the drivers of customer switching behaviour in Nigerian Banking Industry. . It was discovered through the study, that service quality, price and involuntary actions significantly drive switching behavior among bank customers in Imo State. It was equally revealed that reputation and promotion do not significantly drive switching behavior among bank customers in Imo State. Olatokun and Nwonne (2012) investigated the determinants of users' choice of mobile service providers in the Nigerian telecommunications market. The result revealed that paths to call rate, service quality and service availability were more significant in the users' choice process than promotion and brand image.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research design and was carried out in South South Nigeria. The study made used of primary source of data. The population of the study was the consumers of telecommunication services in South-South Nigeria. Cochran formula for sample size determination was applied to arrive at sample size of 384. The sample size was distributed equally among the states and purposive sampling technique was used as the sampling technique for the research. Two locations (one in urban area and one in rural areas) were selected from each of the state that makes up the South-South region. Asaba and Burutu were selected for Delta State, Benin and Irrua were selected for Edo State, Yenegua and Amatu in Ekeremo LGA were be selected for Bayelsa State, Port Harcourt City and Afam, Oyigbo LGA were selected for Rivers State, Calabar and Ugebu were selected for Cross River State while Uyo and Mbak were selected for Akwa Ibom State. The sample size were distributed equally to the 12 towns selected for the study. Questionnaire was used to generate the data needed for the study. The data generated were analyzed using ordinary least square regression technique.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Ordinary Least Square Regression technique was employed to test the effect of independent or explanatory variables on the dependent variables. The result is presented in the tables below.

Table 1 Summary of the Regression Result

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.240[a]	.558	.440	4.568	2.037

a. Predictors: (Constant), Network Coverage , Customer Service , Service Quality , Switching Cost , Price , Sales Promotional Activities

b. Dependent Variable: Brand Switching Behaviour

Source: SPSS 21.0

Table 1 show that R^2 which measures the strength of the effect of independent variable on the dependent variable have the value of 0.558. This implies that 55.8% of the variation in brand switching behaviour is explained by variations in network coverage, sales promotional activities, price, service quality, customer service and switching cost. This was supported by adjusted R^2 of 0.440. In order to check for autocorrelation in the model, Durbin-Watson statistics was employed. Durbin-Watson statistics of 2.037 in table 1 shows that the variables in the model are not autocorrelated and that the model is reliable for predications.

Table 2 Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	474.920	7	67.846	33.252	.002[a]
	Residual	7740.252	372	20.863		
	Total	8215.172	379			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Network Coverage , Customer Service , Service Quality , Switching Cost, Price , Sales Promotional Activities

b. Dependent Variable: Brand Switching Behaviour

Source: SPSS 21.0

The F-statistics value of 33.252 in table 2 with f-statistics probability of 0.002 shows that the independent variables has significant effect on dependent variable. This shows that network coverage, sales promotional activities, price, service quality, customer service and switching cost can collectively explain the variations in brand switching behaviour in telecom industry in South South Nigeria.

Table 3 Coefficients of the Regression Result

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	14.211	2.688		5.288	.000
	Network Coverage	.107	.045	.121	2.387	.007
	Sales Promotional Activities	.057	.050	.060	1.146	.252
	Price	.221	.057	.019	3.376	.000
	Service Quality	.167	.051	.168	3.251	.001
	Customer Service	.080	.049	.083	2.628	.004
	Switching Cost	-.094	.072	-.067	-2.299	.005

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Switching Behaviour
Source: SPSS 21.0

Network coverage has a t-statistics of 2.387 and a probability value of 0.007 which is statistically significant. Therefore, conclude that network coverage has significant positive influence on brand switching behaviour in telecommunication in South-South Nigeria. Sales promotional activities have t-statistics of 1.146 and a probability value of 0.252 which is statistically insignificant. We therefore concludes that Sales promotional activities have no significant positive influence on brand switching behaviour in telecommunication in South-South Nigeria.
Price has a t-statistics of 3.376 and a probability value of 0.000 which is statistically significant. Hence, price has significant positive influence on brand switching behaviour in telecommunication in South-South Nigeria. Service quality has a t-statistics of 3.251 and a probability value of 0.001 which is statistically significant. We conclude that service quality has significant positive influence on brand switching behaviour in telecommunication in South-South Nigeria.
Customer service has a t-statistics of 2.628 and a probability value of 0.004 which is statistically significant. Hence, customer service has significant positive influence on brand switching behaviour in telecommunication in South-South Nigeria. Switching cost has a t-statistics of 2.628 and a probability value of 0.004 which is statistically significant. Hence, switching cost has significant negative influence on brand switching behaviour in telecommunication in South-South Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the determinants of brand switching behaviour in telecommunication industry in South-South Nigeria. Data were sourced from the telecom subscribers in South-South Nigeria. These data were subjected the empirical analysis and the following were discovered. The study found that network coverage, price, service quality and customer service have significant positive influence on brand switching behaviour in telecommunication in South-South Nigeria. The study also found that switching cost has significant negative influence on brand switching behaviour in telecommunication in South-South Nigeria. The study further found that sales promotional activities have no significant positive influence on brand switching behaviour in telecommunication in South-South Nigeria. The study concludes that network coverage, price, service quality, customer service, and switching cost have significant influence on brand switching behaviour while sales promotional activities have no significant positive influence on brand switching behaviour in telecommunication in South-South Nigeria.
The study recommends that telecom service providers in South South Nigeria should mount more mast to ensure wider coverage of their services. They should also monitor and ensure that their service is always stable in order to discourage their subscribers from switching to other brands. Since sales promotional activities were found to have no impact on brand switching behaviour, telecom service providers should spend less in promotional activities and channel these resources in ensuring that they provide quality services. The quality of the services rendered by telecom service providers should be enhanced in order to minimize the incidence of switching to other telecom brands by their customers. Telecom service providers should design an effective and efficient customer service system that will ensure the customer needs and expectation are met. Service providers should direct their frontline

employees to be attentive and courteous when dealing with customers especially those that have complaints about services received and explain the importance of apologies and explanations to them.

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