

**DETERMINANTS OF LOYALTY AND THE EFFECTS OF SWITCHING COST
TOWARDS MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICE PROVIDERS IN
MALAYSIA**

By

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ABSTRACT

Customer loyalty has been a highly sought after topic among academicians and industry practitioners to enable growth and competitiveness enhancement. This research investigated the challenges plaguing the mobile telecommunication industry, namely fluctuating revenue despite growth in the number of users, sliding average revenue per user (ARPU) and reduced repeat purchase, in addition to scarcity in analysing switching cost's mediating effect. These impose serious concerns that link to dwindling customer loyalty. This research also compared the preferences of postpaid and prepaid users pertaining to satisfaction, trust, service quality and switching cost towards customer loyalty. This study utilized a quantitative approach where the stratified systematic random sampling was employed and data was collected in the Klang Valley over a time frame of 105 days. The instrument used was a self-administered questionnaire whereas structural equation modelling (SEM) was exercised for statistical analysis. The findings revealed that service quality and switching costs were the driving forces of loyalty while service quality, too, advocates switching cost. Moreover, service quality and loyalty were found to be the only constructs mediated by switching cost. Satisfaction and trust were however, found not to predict loyalty and switching cost. In fact, there were no mediating effects of switching cost on satisfaction and loyalty relationship, similar to trust and loyalty relationship. Meanwhile, service quality and loyalty relationship were found to be important among postpaid users, contrary to prepaid users. The overall findings affirmed service quality as the key component of customer loyalty and switching cost; likewise they clarified that loyalty does not need to transpire in a continuum manner. These outcomes are immensely valuable to practitioners for strategizing and executing tailor-made plans while enhancing knowledge pertaining to switching cost and customer loyalty.

Keywords: customer loyalty, switching cost, service quality, mobile telecommunication industry

ABSTRAK

Kesetiaan pelanggan merupakan topik yang kerap mendapat perhatian dalam kalangan ahli-ahli akademik dan pengamal industri untuk pertumbuhan serta peningkatan daya saing. Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini mengkaji cabaran-cabaran yang membebankan industri telekomunikasi mudah alih, iaitu penguncupan ARPU dan penurunan pembelian semula, serta ketandusan dalam menganalisis kos pemindahan sebagai pengantara. Kesemua cabaran ini dilihat berkait rapat dengan penurunan kesetiaan pelanggan. Selain itu, kajian ini cuba untuk membandingkan kecenderungan pengguna pasca bayar dan pra bayar mengenai kepuasan, kepercayaan serta kualiti perkhidmatan dan kos pemindahan terhadap kesetiaan pelanggan. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif iaitu persampelan rawak sistematik berstrata dan data diperolehi dari Lembah Klang dalam tempoh 105 hari. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah borang soal selidik sendiri manakala permodelan persamaan struktur (SEM) telah digunakan untuk menganalisis data secara statistik. Dapatan kajian ini memaparkan bahawa kualiti perkhidmatan dan kos pemindahan merupakan penggerak kepada kesetiaan, di samping itu, kualiti perkhidmatan juga menyokong kos pemindahan. Tambahan pula, kualiti perkhidmatan dan kesetiaan hanya menjadi pengantara kepada kos pemindahan. Sebaliknya, kepuasan dan kepercayaan didapati tidak signifikan terhadap kesetiaan dan kos pemindahan. Malah, kos pemindahan tidak mempunyai kesan perantara terhadap hubungan kepuasan dan kesetiaan, perihal yang sama didapati dalam hubungan antara kepercayaan dan kesetiaan. Sementara itu, hubungan kualiti perkhidmatan dan kesetiaan dilihat amat penting kepada pengguna pasca bayar berbanding dengan pengguna pra bayar. Secara keseluruhannya, dapatan kajian mengesahkan bahawa kualiti perkhidmatan merupakan komponen utama dalam kesetiaan pelanggan dan kos pemindahan, dan turut menjelaskan bahawa kesetiaan pelanggan tidak perlu berlaku secara berterusan. Hasil kajian ini amat berharga kepada pengamal industri dalam membentuk strategi dan merangka pelan yang bersesuaian serta menambahkan pengetahuan terhadap kos pemindahan dan kesetiaan pelanggan.

Kata kunci: kesetiaan pelanggan, kos pemindahan, kualiti perkhidmatan, industri telekomunikasi mudah alih

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Customer loyalty topic has attracted much interests in the past, prompting multi-definitions in the quest to understand the crux of it. Nevertheless, it was Oliver (1999), who gave a more meaningful understanding to loyalty by highlighting the multi-facets of loyalty while defining it as ‘a deeply held commitment to repurchase and repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in future causing repeat purchases,’ despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to influence switching behaviour. Loyalty is obviously of greater interest among academicians and practitioners for, its proximity to profitability (Chadha & Kapoor, 2009; Cheng, Lai & Yeung, 2008) especially in highly competitive markets because acquiring customers alone is viewed as not a guarantee of long-term success (Brunh & Grund, 2000; Cheng et al., 2008), but gaining customers loyalty would surely encourage continued patronage as loyal customers will not hesitate to pay premium prices, eventually promoting the business while fostering a firm’s survival (Aydin & Ozer, 2005; Cheng et al., 2008). In a highly competitive industry such as mobile telecommunication, one of the ways to maintain a profitable business lies in offering products that fit the customers’ tastes and preferences, skewing the offerings to each category of customers such as postpaid and prepaid is deemed more beneficial as each group have shown a tendency to behave differently (Galperin & Marsical, 2007; Shrivastava & Israel, 2010). Furthermore, one must also be sure that these offerings are done and delivered better than competing providers, to ensure that the company

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