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Factor Affecting Brand Switching Behavior and Brand Preference towards Mobile Phones in Kathmandu Valley

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Abstract

This study examines the factors affecting brand switching behavior and brand preference towards mobile phones in Kathmandu Valley. Brand switching behavior is the dependent variable. The selected independent variables are price, brand image, product performance, product quality and availability. The primary sources of data is used to assess the opinions of respondents regarding price, brand image, product performance, product quality, availability and brand switching behavior. The study is based on the primary data of 153 respondents. To achieve the purpose of the study, structured questionnaire is prepared. The correlation and multiple regression models are estimated to test the significance and importance of the factors affecting brand switching behavior and brand preference towards mobile phones in Kathmandu Valley.

The study showed a positive impact of price on brand switching behavior. It indicates that affordable price leads to change in brand switching behavior. Similarly, the study showed a negative impact of brand image on brand switching behavior. It indicates that higher the brand image, lower would be the brand switching behavior. Likewise, the study showed a negative impact of product quality on brand switching behavior. It indicates that higher the product quality, lower would be the brand switching behavior. Further, the study also showed a negative impact of product performance on brand switching behavior. It indicates that higher the product performance, lower would be the brand switching behavior. It indicates that easily availability of product leads to decrease in brand switching behavior.

Keywords: price, brand image, product performance, product quality, availability, brand switching behavior

1. Introduction

Brand switching is a consumer switches from one brand to another brand to achieve the satisfaction level (Ashfaq and Samreen, 2015). Switching behavior is a consumer behavior where the behavior of the consumers differs based on the satisfactory level of the consumers with the providers or companies. Switching behavior can be enunciated as the process of being loyal to one service and switching to another service, due to dissatisfaction or any other problems (Sathish *et al.*, 2011). According to Liang *et al.* (2013), core service failure, high price, and ethical problems of service providers were the top three factors that lead customers to switch smartphone. To stop the consumers from switching brands, there are also other factors, other than price, benefits etc. The consumer's emotional intelligence, relationship status and personality factors also play an important role in affecting the consumer switching behavior (Lin, 2010). Lin and Huang (2014) defined that switching cost as the one-time costs that customers encounter in the process of switching from one provider to another, including search cost, learning cost and loss of special treatment benefits.

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Wahab and Norizan (2012) examined the service quality from different dimensions of all services provided by the mobile companies. The study indicated a strong negative correlation between service quality and brand switching. Similarly, Bibi *et al.* (2015) stated that mobile phones are one of the technological innovations which have garnered immense public interest and have gained huge popularity across the globe. The study also revealed that low brand loyalty and loss of exclusive features leads to switch from one brand to another. Likewise, Kumari and Kumar (2016) found that the technical features of the mobile phone and looks, image and resource, entertainment have significant role in the choice of the mobile phone. Further, Zolfagharian *et al.* (2017) argued that switching cost may be a barrier to switching behavior when consumers feel unsatisfied with their existing smartphones, consumer will be more likely to change to a new model when it is launched or when the telecommunication service contract expires. The quality of interaction with the service staff has an indirect effect on the brand and brand switching. Further, Jiang *et al.* (2014) suggested that consumer switching behavior can occur not only from one object (product or service) to another but also across brands and within a brand. In addition, Kuo and Hou (2017) revealed that highly brand committed consumers do not easily switch from one brand to another.

Li Ling *et al.* (2018) investigated the consumer brand switching behavior: Evidence from Malaysian smartphone users. The study found that brand image and product features have significant relationship with brand switching. The study also found that product features have strongest relationship with consumer brand switching behavior. Likewise, Hassan and Islam (2018) examined the factor of consumer buying behavior towards smartphone in Bangladeshi students. The study found that brand image, various features, multiple apps and software using opportunity and after sale service impact students buying decision of smartphone. Further, Manzoor *et al.* (2020) showed that price, brand image, network quality, value-added services, and promotional activities directly influence consumer switching behavior among youngsters. In addition, Singh *et al.* (2023) investigated the brand preference of mobile phone. The study found that price has a positive and significant impact on brand preferences but advertisement, brand image, and brand loyalties have positive but an insignificant impact on brand preference of mobile phone. Likewise, Geleta (2020) explored consumers' mobile phone brand preferences of local made brands to global. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between consumer's local brand preference and global brand preference. Moreover, Hsu and Nguyen (2019) explored the factors affecting customers switching intention among smartphone brand. The study showed that quality is the most powerful factor that causes customers to maintain their current smartphone brands and resist switching.

Lee *et al.* (2015) found that simplicity and interactivity are two significant determinants of mobile phone usability and that interface simplicity is an important precondition for positive interactivity and usability experience. Likewise, Awan *et al.* (2016) examined the determinants of brand switching in mobile service providers. The study revealed that customer satisfaction, customer services, price, service failure, and inconvenience have significant impact on brand switching behavior. Similarly, Bala *et al.* (2015) investigated the factors influencing brand switching of smartphones among university students. The study found that product price and social influence affect the satisfaction of the consumer. Likewise, Tamon and Tumewu (2019) investigated the influence of inconvenience and service quality on brand switching of service provider in Manado. The study showed that inconvenience

and service quality are simultaneously and partially influence brand switching behavior. Similarly, Hadi *et al.* (2019) revealed that the role of customer satisfaction is significant but the effect of the switching cost is considered to be insignificant, elucidating that a satisfied customer will remain loyal even if the switching cost is low.

In context of Nepal, Rai (2021) explored the factors affecting smartphone purchase intention of consumers in Nepal. The study found that the product attributes and product price have significant influence on consumer purchase intention of a smartphone in Nepal. Similarly, Sah (2021) examined the brand preference of professionals towards choosing smartphone in Nepal. The study found that product attributes and price influenced the smartphone purchase decision. Likewise, Rai (2019) showed that there is a significant impact of product features and brand image on consumer buying decision. Further, Rai and Budhathoki (2023) showed that brand personality has no significant impact on purchase intention in the purchasing of smartphone. The study also found that the product attributes and product price have significant influence on consumer purchase intention. In addition, Pandey (2023) revealed that brand image is the vital factor for the customers which force them to switch into another brand. Likewise, Manandhar (2021) revealed that service quality is the most influencing factor that affect the brand switching behavior.

The above discussion shows that empirical evidences vary greatly across the studies on the factors affecting brand switching behavior and brand preference towards mobile phones. Though there are above mentioned empirical evidences in the context of other countries and in Nepal, no such findings using more recent data exist in the context of Nepal. Therefore, in order to support one view or the other, this study has been conducted.

The major objective of the study is to examine the factor affecting brand switching behavior and brand preference towards mobile phones in Kathmandu Valley. Specifically, it examines the relationship of price, brand image, product performance, product quality and availability with brand switching behavior.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: section two describes the sample, data, and methodology. Section three presents the empirical results and final section draws the conclusion.

2. Methodological aspects

The study is based on the primary data. The data were gathered from 153 respondents through questionnaire. The study employed convenience sampling method. The respondents' views were collected on price, brand image, product performance, product quality, availability and brand switching behavior. This study is based on descriptive as well as causal comparative research designs.

The model

The model used in this study assumes that brand switching behavior depends upon brand preference towards mobile phones. The dependent variable selected for the study is brand switching behavior. Similarly, the selected independent variables are price, brand image, product performance, product quality and availability. Therefore, the model takes the following form:

Brand switching behavior = $f(\text{price, brand image, product performance, product quality, and availability})$.

More specifically,

$$\text{BSB} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 P + \beta_2 \text{BI} + \beta_3 \text{PP} + \beta_4 \text{PQ} + \beta_5 \text{A} + e$$

Where,

BSB = Brand switching behavior

P = Price

BI = Brand image

PP = Product performance

PQ = Product quality

A = Availability

Price was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “Price is the most important factor when purchasing mobile phone”, “Affordable mobile phone is necessary for students” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.750$).

Brand image was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “My mobile phone brand image increase my social status”, “Strong brand ensure the best performance than the non-branded mobile phones” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.921$).

Product performance was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “The product I currently use is reliable in terms of its performance.”, “The effectiveness of the product I currently use meets my expectations.” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.859$).

Product quality was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “Quality of mobile phone is an important factor in my decision making”, “My brand offer product with consistent quality” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.782$).

Availability was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “The product I prefer is consistently available when I want to purchase it”, “The product I prefer is restocked in a timely manner when it runs out

of stock” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.886$).

Brand switching behavior was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “Price affects brand switching toward mobile phone.”, “Product performance influence brand switching behavior toward mobile phone.” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.854$).

The following section describes the independent variables used in this study along with the hypothesis formulation.

Price

Price is an exchange rate that can be with money or goods for the benefits obtained from an item or service and has an influence on the amount/ level of producer profits. If the company charges low prices and provides good services, then switching to others will be reduced, and the customer will be more satisfied (Basari and Shamsudin, 2020). Isa *et al.* (2020) investigated brand switching through marketing mix: the role of brand effect on smartphone users. The study revealed that price and promotion have effects on brand switching towards smartphones. Similarly, Soomro and Ghumro (2013) examined consumer behavior in mobile phone market in Sindh. The study found that brand, price and characteristics of mobile phone are the main factors for purchasing new mobile phone and technical problems are the main cause for changing the mobile phone by users. Likewise, Chattopadhyay *et al.* (2010) observed that product price affects the brand choice of consumers during purchasing. Further, Cahyono *et al.* (2015) explored the influence of brand image, price and promotion on brand switching. The study found that price has a positive and significant influence on brand switching. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis

H₁: There is a positive relationship between price and brand switching behavior.

Brand image

Brand image is the perception consumers have of a brand, shaped by visual identity, messaging, product quality, and customer experiences. Sethi and Chandel (2015) investigated the preference of consumers towards entrance level smart phones. The study found that brand is the most important attribute used as a selection variable while purchasing, followed by Price and Purpose respectively. Similarly, Irfan and Rachmawati (2018) explored the brand image and product price towards purchase decision on Xiaomi smartphone. The result showed that brand image is positively affect the purchase decision. Likewise, Andreani *et al.* (2012) found that brand image has a positive impact on consumer behavior. Based on it, the study develops the following hypothesis:

H₂: There is a positive relationship between brand image and brand switching behavior.

Product performance

Product performance is the effectiveness and reliability of a product in meeting user

expectations, encompassing factors like functionality, durability, efficiency, and safety, crucial for customer satisfaction and market success. Romaniuk and Gaillard (2007) investigated the relationship between unique brand associations, brand usage and brand performance: analysis across eight categories. The study found that customer tries to associate with those brands, which have high and positive brand performance because these brands are well known and have association with such brands show status of the customer. Similarly, Ha and Janda (2014) explored on Chinese automobile. The study showed that positive beliefs of brand personality will result in positive evaluation of product brand in terms of quality. Likewise, Urska (2013) found that the higher match between customer's personality and brand personality contributes to higher satisfaction and loyalty. Based on it, the study develops the following hypothesis:

H₃: There is a positive relationship between product quality and brand switching behavior.

Product quality

Product quality is the ability of a product in demonstrating its function, it includes overall durability, reliability, operation, and product repairs, as well as other product attributes. Individuals use perceived quality to determine whether or not a product or service matches their expectations (Severt *et al.*, 2020). Korry and Suartini (2018) found that product quality has a positive impact in influencing brand switching. Similarly, Sharma *et al.* (2017) explored a multi-analytical model for mobile banking adoption: A developing country perspective. The study found that product quality is major factors to influence customers. Likewise, Irviandra and Trinanda (2020) found that product quality has a significant impact on brand switching behavior. Further, Nikhashemi *et al.* (2017) found that perceived product quality has a positively positive impact on customer satisfaction. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₄: There is a positive relationship between product quality and brand switching behavior.

Availability

Availability refers to the state or quality of being accessible, obtainable, or present when needed or required. Vasic *et al.* (2019) examined the influence of online shopping determinants on consumer satisfaction in the Serbian market. The study revealed that the availability of information has a positive impact on customer satisfaction which will also influence the brand switching behavior. Similarly, Novioleta and Slamet (2020) found that availability of information regarding the product has a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction. Likewise, Vakulenko *et al.* (2022) revealed that availability of delivery options have positive impact on customer satisfaction. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H₅: There is a positive relationship between brand image and brand switching behavior.

3. Results and discussion

Correlation analysis

On analysis of data, correlation analysis has been undertaken first and for this

purpose, Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients along with mean and standard deviation has been computed and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients matrix

This table presents Kendall’s Tau coefficients between dependent and independent variables. The correlation coefficients are based on 153 observations. The dependent variable is BSB (Brand switching behavior). The independent variables are P (Price), BI (Brand image), PP (Product performance), PQ (Product quality) and A (Availability).

Variables	Mean	S.D.	BSB	P	BI	PQ	PP	A
BSB	3.790	0.831	1					
P	3.777	0.689	0.449**	1				
BI	3.282	1.071	-0.638**	0.502**	1			
PQ	3.452	1.09	-0.756**	0.465**	0.756**	1		
PP	3.475	0.984	-0.699**	0.590**	0.771**	0.781**	1	
A	3.756	0.92	-0.802**	0.476**	0.702**	0.810**	0.755**	1

Note: The asterisk signs (**) and (*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent levels respectively.

Table 1 reveals that price is positively correlated to brand switching behavior. It indicates that increase in price leads to change in brand switching behavior. Similarly, brand image is negatively correlated to brand switching behavior. It indicates that higher the brand image, lower would be the brand switching behavior. Likewise, product quality is negatively correlated to brand switching behavior. It indicates that higher the product quality, lower would be the brand switching behavior. Further, product performance is negatively correlated to brand switching behavior. It indicates that higher the product performance, lower would be the brand switching behavior. In addition, availability is negatively correlated to brand switching behavior. It indicates that easily availability of product leads to decrease in brand switching behavior.

Regression analysis

Having indicated the Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients, the regression analysis has been carried out and the results are presented in Table 2. More specifically, it shows the regression results of price, brand image, product performance, product quality and availability on brand switching behavior towards mobile phones in Kathmandu.

Table 2

Estimated regression results of price, brand image, product features, product quality, service quality, and availability on brand switching behavior

The results are based on 153 observations using linear regression model. The model is $BSB = \beta_0 + \beta_1 P + \beta_2 BI + \beta_3 PP + \beta_4 PQ + \beta_5 A$ +where the dependent variable is BSB (Brand switching behavior). The independent variables are P (Price), BI (Brand image), PP (Product performance), PQ (Product quality) and A (Availability).

Model	Intercept	Regression coefficients of					Adj. R _{bar} ²	SEE	F-value
		P	BI	PP	PQ	A			
1	0.366 (1.476)	0.907 (14.050)**					0.564	0.548	197.395
2	1.832 (13.150)**		0.907 (14.050)**				0.589	0.533	218.420
3	1.567 (13.064)**			-0.644 (9.429)**			0.712	0.445	377.472
4	1.260 (10.051)**				-0.728 (2.972)**		0.743	0.421	439.820
5	0.706 (5.966)**					-0.821 (6.845)**	0.826	0.347	720.631
6	0.463 (3.272)**	0.525 (7.365)**	-0.375 (8.159)**				0.792	0.379	579.778
7	1.729 (5.982)**	0.370 (3.541)**	-0.238 (2.757)**	-0.024 (2.604)**			0.696	0.458	174.838
8	1.292 (10.500)**	0.370 (3.518)**	-0.238 (2.757)**	-0.140 (2.855)**	-0.728 (2.972)**		0.754	0.411	234.399
9	0.499 (4.043)**	1.629 (4.166)**	-0.366 (3.450)**	-0.238 (2.575)**	-0.017 (0.188)	-0.533 (6.978)**	0.842	0.330	405.781

Notes:

- i. Figures in parenthesis are t-values.
- ii. The asterisk signs (*) and (**) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent level respectively.
- iii. Brand switching behavior is dependent variable.

Table 2 shows that the beta coefficients for price are positive with brand switching behavior. It indicates that price has a positive impact on brand switching behavior. This finding is consistent with the findings of Soomro and Ghumro (2013). Similarly, the beta coefficients for brand image are negative with brand switching behavior. It indicates that brand image has a negative impact on brand switching behavior. This finding is not consistent with the findings of Irfan *et al.* (2018). Likewise, the beta coefficients for product performance are negative with brand switching behavior. It indicates that product performance has a negative impact on brand switching behavior. This finding is not consistent with the findings of Romaniuk and Gaillard (2007). In addition, the beta coefficients for product quality are negative with brand switching behavior. It indicates that product quality has a negative impact on brand switching behavior. This finding is not consistent with the findings of Korry and Suartini (2018). Further, the beta coefficients for availability are negative with brand switching behavior. It indicates that availability has a negative impact on brand switching behavior. This finding is not consistent with the findings of Vakulenko *et al.* (2022).

4. Summary and conclusion

Brand switching is a consumer switches from one brand to another brand to achieve the satisfaction level. Switching behavior is a consumer behavior where the behavior of the consumers differs based on the satisfactory level of the consumers with the providers or companies. Switching behavior can be enunciated as the process of being loyal to one service and switching to another service, due to dissatisfaction or any other problems. To stop the consumers from switching brands, there are also other factors, other than price, benefits etc.

This study attempts to examine the factor affecting brand switching behavior and brand preference towards mobile phones in Kathmandu Valley. The study is based on primary data of 153 respondents.

The major conclusion of this study is that price has a positive impact on brand switching behavior. However, brand image, product performance, product quality, and availability have negative impact on brand switching behavior. The study also concludes that price followed by availability and product quality are the most influencing factors that affect the brand switching behavior.

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