

# Identifying the Dimensions of Switching Barrier experienced in Telecommunication Services

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## ABSTRACT

The competitive telecommunication market environment gives royal preferences to their customers. Subscribers of telecom services are enjoying the liberty to move around and subscribe to any service providers offered in the market. In the meantime, telecom service providers are aware of the importance of retaining a customer. The retention strategy of service providers have sharpened by the introduction of switching barriers. This switching barriers act as an intangible hurdle before customers who wish to change the telecom service provider. The barrier begins with the subscriber's initial intention to switch and continues till it completes the switching process to another service provider. During this journey, the various factors of barrier helps the service provider to pull back the subscriber from switching intention. Thus switching barrier felicitates the service providers to retain subscriber and enjoy the monopolistic advantages in a perfect competitive market environment. This study reviews and identifies the essential factors in creating a switching barrier for telecom service providers to retain customers.

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## 1. Introduction

Service development based consumer behaviours for telecom companies are getting more and more significant in the present market conditions (Chunghun Lee et al., 2015). Marketing performance may have a decrease negative effect if mobile service providers lack in understanding consumer's behaviour in the market (Qi et al., 2009). Mohammad Aamir et al., (2010) observed that the biggest challenge mobile service provider face is to attract and retain a large number of customers for a longer period. The customer intention to terminate or extend the contractual relationship with the mobile cellular service provider is influenced by customer loyalty which is encouraged by customer satisfaction (Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015). The companies are not only focusing towards selling just products, but also focusing to build long term relationships with customers (Zeeshan Ahmed et al., 2015).

If the product fails in the market, it could be assumed that its marketing idea, product and strategy are not focused on customers or designed according to the customer needs and wants (Bhasin, 2010). Consumer behaviour defines a number of factors responsible for how customer decide to buy one product (Bhasin, 2010). According to marketing point of view consumer behaviour is a psychological perception of how consumers feel, think, reason and select between various alternatives like brands, products, services and retailers (Perner, 2006). The consumer switching behaviour touches both customer and companies, as the consumer initiates switching behaviour the long term relationship is restricted for both customer and companies and it even breaks the pre-developed long term relationships (Zikiene and Bakanauskas, 2006). The behaviour of consumers in shifting their attitude from one brand to another brand is determined as consumer switching behaviour (Zikiene and Bakanauskas, 2006). Customer behaviour becomes complex and customer value and preference diversifies when

market matures (Kim et al., 2003). Market reached a decisive point where telecom operators need to change their marketing strategies from the original subsidy-centred to service-centred to prevent customer churning away to competitors (Chunghun Lee et al., 2015). When new companies enter into the market with aggressive marketing strategies customers have high expectations and adopt them immediately (Chunghun Lee et al., 2015). Customer switching mobile service provider is loss for firm's high-margin sector of its customer base (Dapeng et al., 2013).

### Switchover Motivators

Customers have a wide range of services to choice from the market, when services are different and competition is strong, then they make a decision to switch the services easily (Blinn et al., 1991). Keaveney (1995) proposed variables that may lead customers to switch mobile service providers, including impact of price, inconvenience, service encounter failure, competition, core service failures, and involuntary factors. Customers are more sensitive towards service price or service charge henceforth high service price by mobile service providers' quintals customer's switching intention (Dapeng et al., 2013).

*Service Dissatisfaction:* Dissatisfaction quintals customer's intention to switch service provider (Frels and Mahajam, 2003). Carpenter and Lehmann (1985) and Keaveney (1995) defined switching intention as customer initiates to stop using a service or reduce the degree of usage is due to service dissatisfaction.

*Innovation:* Dapeng et al. (2013) identified the importance of innovation in service marketing as a potential area among mobile service providers. Innovation is the key driver of growth in the mobile service industry (Chunghun Lee et al.,

2015). Malhotra and Malhotra (2013) tested the positive relationship between innovativeness and switching intentions in mobile service.

*Further motivators:* The customer's emotional intelligence, relationship status and personality factors also play an important role in affecting the consumer switching behaviour (Lin, 2010). Variety seeking tendency of customer (Givon, 1984), impulse buying decision by the consumer (Stern, 1962), demographics (Carroll et al. 2002) also initiates switching to another service provider. The annoying behaviour of continuously call or sending text messages to remind customers to pay bill or inform a service may encourage customers to switch to other service providers (Dapeng et al., 2013). Customers feel inconvenience in the product of a service provider such as insufficient number or retail locations, limited methods of bill payments, short hours or operations and limited choices of prepaid phone cards also ignites the tendency of switching (Dapeng et al., 2013).

## 2. Switching Barrier

Migration of customers from one provider to another refers to customer switching (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008). Uncertainties with the new service provider discourage consumers from switching to other service provider (Frels and Mahajam, 2003). This uncertainty acts as a blessing in disguise for retaining existing customers. The cost associated with acquiring new customer, including account setup, credit checks, and promotional expenses, etc can be as much as five times the cost of customer retention efforts (Keaveney, 1995). Hence cellular service providers created a barrier to protect their customers from switching to other service providers. Switching barrier has direct effect on the customer retention and adjusts the relationship between the customer satisfaction and the customer retention (Lee et al., 2001; Jones, et al. 2000). Switching barriers are critical to loyalty. Several switching barriers are engaged by the mobile service providers (Joseph et al., 2010). The level of customer retention is positively influenced when switching barrier is employed (Joseph et al., 2010).

Switching barriers has made its place known in recent marketing research due to its significance in customer retention and profit maximization to service providers (S. Jones et al., 2002). The switching barriers perform as a hurdle before customer to switch service providers (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008). Even when customers are not satisfied with the services, they tend not to switch when a switching barrier exists (Jones et al., 2002). Dong-Hee and Won-Yong (2008) in their research explains that customer lock-in and increased switching cost influences switching barrier, which negatively influences customer switching intention. Customers tend not to switch when high switching cost is applied, even if they are not satisfied with the service delivered. According to C. Julander and M. Soderlund (2003) customers stay with their present service providers with the perception that they are receiving the superior product as service can be termed as 'positive' switching barrier. A customer stay with current service provider because it is too expensive to leave the provider is 'negative' switching barrier. Kim et al. (2005) recognizes the positive role of switching barriers in customer retention in mobile phone service provider industry.

## 3. Switching cost

Switching cost is one of the important characteristics of switching barriers, identified as a contributing factor in sustaining relationships (Minarti and Waseso, 2014). Switching cost is one time cost put before a customer who initiated switch from one service provider to another (Porter, 1980). In simple form the psychological, physical and economic cost a customer embraces in changing a supplier is termed as switching cost (Jackson, 1985). Switching cost are barriers that hold customers within a particular service relationship (Jones et al., 2002). Traditionally switching cost is intended to tie up the customer to the same service provider. In order to reduce the level of customers switching to other service providers, the service providers introduce switching cost strategies (Farrell and Shapiro, 1988; Zauberman, 2003).

In the telecommunication sector there are a number of critical costs that must be considered when switching. These includes the cost of learning any new procedures in dealing with the new service provider and cost of finding new service provider with comparable or higher value than the existing firm, the cost of acquiring new lines, cost associated with breaking long standing relationships with a service provider and the costs of informing others of the change (friends, colleagues and business associates). Apart from these there is time and psychological effort of facing uncertainty with the new service provider (Guiltina, 1989; Dick and Basu, 1994; and Joseph et al., 2010). The initial costs to the customer across all carriers are assumed to be the same when the subscriber makes a purchase decision (M. Chang, 1998). Jawwad Ahmad et al. (2015) put it in plain words that switching cost is the cost involved in switching from one service provider to another service provider. Cost includes time, money, physical and psychological cost, which is associated with the insecurities along with risk associated with switching to an unknown brand. It is classified as terminating an existing relationship to start a new relationship. Seo et al. (2008) elucidated that switching cost plays a considerable role in customer retention, which includes lost and gain cost incurred by the customer when a customer switches between different brands of products or services. Furthermore explained that lost cost is occurred when customer leave a particular service provider, while gain cost is explained as the cost obtained when a customer starts to subscribe to a new service. Organizations can retain customers by increasing loss costs and can attract fresh customers by manipulating gain cost.

Switching cost is classified as procedural switching costs, financial switching costs, and relational switching costs. These costs were found to be negatively correlated to consumers' intention to switch service providers (Burnham, Frels and Mahajan, 2003). Thus proves the fact that with higher switching cost, the lesser switching. Customer retention is mainly caused due to switching cost (Burnham, Frels and Mahajan, 2003). Switching cost leads to increase in risk and burden of the consumers hence it promotes high dependency on the current service provider (Jones et al. 2000; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Time and psychological effort involved in facing the uncertainty of dealing with new brand (Dick and Basu, 1994). The cost incurred when switching, including time, money, and psychological cost is termed as switching cost (S. Dick and

K. Basu, 1994). The switching cost absorbs the factors such as search, transaction, learning, emotional cost, loyal customer discounts, customer habit, financial, social and psychological risk (C. Fornell, 1992). Literature study on switching cost indicates that consumers will not switch their service providers if they are required to change their mobile numbers as it is inconvenient and financially burdensome (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008). C. Lovelock et al., (2001) clarifies that when financial, search and psychological cost are involved customers will be less inclined to switch. Customers show brand loyalty by the existence of switching cost, where customers might be expected to select from a number of functionally identical brands (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008).

The degree to which a particular customer believes that switching service providers would incur certain cost to him or her is perceived switching cost (M. Allen and E, Andreson, 1992). Dong-Hee and Won-Yong (2008) outlines an attempt to investigate switching cost by asking customers, at what price differentials they would switch. They further elaborates that, the hurdle here is consumers often cannot estimate their non-financial switching cost accurately; hence their answers will reflect their perceived switching cost, which may be different from actual switching cost. Perceived switching cost rather than actual switching cost explains customer's switching intentions. Perceived switching cost created by the service providers can be used strategically to retain customers even when customers are less satisfied with the provider (S. Lee et al., 2004)

Higher switching cost can be used as an efficient customer lock-in tool (Jongus Lee et al., 2005). More customers are locked into the original purchase decision, due to the higher

cost of switching carriers within a particular market (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008). The situation helps the provider to increase the service price without significant loss of subscribers, only if the price does not exceed the cost of switching providers. Here the subscribers are forced to balance switching cost with the benefit of saving money (S. Borenstein et al., 2000). Thus by the generated customer lock-in allows firm to earn above-competitive, monopoly profits (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008). Perceived economic and psychological costs are associated with changing from one alternative to another is defined as switching cost (Jongsu Lee et al., 2005).

The customers are locked-in to the service provider by the most critical factor in switching cost, time (Zauberman, 2003). Jongsu Lee et al. (2005) drew a beautiful description about pre-switching, post-switching and set up cost in relation with mobile switching cost. According to them, the Pre-switching search and evaluation cost occurs when customers spent time and effort to obtain information and evaluate various alternatives service providers. When customers perceive time and effort spent in learning about a new service provider the Post-switching and cognitive cost occurs. Similarly the time, effort, expenses and inconvenience associated with switching mobile service provider is termed as setup cost. For example; changing the previous phone number and informing potential caller about the number change comes under effort, expenses and inconvenience, which is termed as setup cost. Customer commitment is attained through increase in switching cost (Azize et al., 2013).

**Table 1. frequency of author's citations on switching barrier dimensions**

Dimensions	Authors	Year	No. of citations
<b>Switching Barrier</b>	1. Dong-Hee and Won-Yong,	2008	10
	2. Frels and Mahajam,	2003	
	3. Keaveney,	1995	
	4. Lee et al.,	2001	
	5. Jones, et al.	2000	
	6. Joseph et al.,	2010	
	7. S. Jones et al.,	2002	
	8. Kim et al.	2005	
	9. Jones et al.,	2002	
	10. C. Julander and M. Soderlund	2003	
<b>Switching Cost</b>	1. Minarti and Waseso,	2014	25
	2. Porter,	1980	
	3. Jackson	1985	
	4. Jones et al.,	2002	
	5. Farrell and Shapiro,	1988	
	6. Zauberman,	2003	
	7. Guiltina,	1989	
	8. Dick and Basu,	1994	
	9. Joseph et at.,	2010	
	10. M. Chang,	1998	
	11. Dong-Hee and Won-Yong,	2008	
	12. Jawwad Ahmad et al.	2015	

	13. Seo et al. 14. Burnham, Frels and Mahajan, 15. Zauberaman, 16. Jones et al. 17. Morgan and Hunt, 18. Dick and Basu, 19. C. Fornell, 20. C. Lovelock et al., 21. M. Allen and E, Andreson, 22. S. Lee et al., 23. S. Borenstein et al., 24. Jongus Lee et al., 25. Azize et al.,	2008 2003 2003 2000 1994 1994 1992 2001 1992 2004 2000 2005 2013	
<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>	1. Mohammad Aamir et al., 2. Jawwad Ahmad et al., 3. Eshghi et al., 4. Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 5. L. Oliver 6. Zeithamal and Bitner, 7. Anderson and Mittal, 8. Joseph et al., 9. Mohammad Aamir et al.,	2010 2015 2007 2008 1997 1996 2000 2010 2010	9
<b>Customer Trust</b>	1. Morgan and Hunt, 2. Agustin and Singh, 3. Mohammad Aamir et al., 4. Mohammad Aamir et al., 5. Berry, 6. Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 7. Azize et al.,	1994 2005 2010 2010 1995 2001 2013	7
<b>Customer Loyalty</b>	1. Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2. Eshghi et al., 3. Jawwad Ahmad et al., 4. Ahmad and Butter, 5. Marshal et al., 6. Ya- Ching Lee, 7. Smith, 8. Kim and Son, 9. Minarti and Waseso,	2015 2007 2015 2002 2011 2011 2001 2009 2014	9
<b>Customer Retention</b>	1. Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2. Oyeniyi and Abiodun, 3. Eshghi et al., 4. Chunghun Lee et al., 5. Lee, 6. Anderson, 7. Jones et al., 8. Kim and Son, 9. Keaveney,	2015 2009 2007 2015 2010 1973 2000 2009 1995	9
<b>Services</b>	1. Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2. Jawwad Ahmad et al., 3. Chunghun Lee et al., 4. Kim et al., 5. Shin et al.	2008 2015 2015 2004 2011	15

	6. Orhan and Glenn 7. Kim, 8. Kwak and Yoo 9. Shin t al. 10. Taylor and Baker, 11. Coultr et al., 12. Komiak et al., 13. Coelho et al., 14. Azize et al., 15. J. Gerpott et al.,	2015 2005 2012 2011 1994 2002 2007 2012 2013 2001	
<b>Brand Image</b>	1. 1.Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2. Mohammad Aamir et al., 3. Ya-Ching Lee, 4. Jones et al,	2015 2010 2011 2000	4
<b>Price cut</b>	1. Zeeshan Ahmed et al., 2. Gerrard and Cunnninggham, 3. Klein and Jakopin 4. Shin et al. 5. Kwak and Yoo 6. Bansal et al.,	2015 2004 2014 2011 2012 2005	6
<b>Demography</b>	7. Dong-Hee and Won-Yong 8. Melnyk et al. 9. Carroll et al. 10. T. Teo et al. 11. Gilbert et al. 12. C. Ranganathan et al. 13. Revati S. and Padmavathy S 14. Neelam and Pooja 15. Noble et al. 16. Ya-Ching Lee 17. Juan et al.	2008 2009 2002 2004 2003 2006 2005 2009 2006 2011 2009	11

#### 4. Customer Satisfaction

The customer satisfaction depends on how customers perceive service quality (Mohammad Aamir et al., 2010).The switching cost does not relate to customer satisfaction, however the later needs to be upheld to attain customer trust and customer loyalty (Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015). A satisfied customer promotes word of mouth and assists the service provider to gain positive image (Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015). The customer rate a particular telecom service providing brand based on past experience, portrays customer satisfaction (Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015).When a customer compares the actual performance of the product with the expected performance, marks the beginning of customer satisfaction (Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015).Higher level of customer satisfaction is made possible by customized, specific and better-tailored services that meet the customer's needs and expectations (Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015).Enhanced service or customer relationship management can lead to increase customer satisfaction and ultimately will reduce the need to look out for fresh customers (Eshghi et al.,2007).Rating of the brand or service provider based on all encounters and experiences by a customer refers to satisfaction (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008).L. Oliver (1997) elucidates that, customer's reaction to

the state of fulfilment and customer judgment of the fulfilled state could be termed as customer satisfaction. He further describes as it is a pleasant past-purchase experience from a product or service. Customer's own perception of service quality concludes customer satisfaction (Zeithamal and Bitner, 1996).Creating, increasing and securing satisfaction, trust and commitment for a brand are crucial strategies to all service providers as gaining new customer is costly whereas retaining subscribers are profitable (Anderson and Mittal, 2000).Customer satisfaction has positive effects on the customer retention, hence service providers may need to emphasize total satisfaction programme in an attempt to retain customers in the competitive telecommunication market (Joseph et al., 2010).Successful mobile service providers attracts customers by invest heavily on promotion to expand the expectations of customers and assemble all strategies to deliver service performance over and above their expected levels, and so if the expectations matches the performance the customer is satisfied (Mohammad Aamir et al., 2010).

#### 5. Customer Trust

Brand trust is found to increase customers' commitment to the service provider and this weakens customers' switch

intentions (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Trust evolves from the result of prior interaction and past experience (Agustin and Singh, 2005). Mohammad Aamir et al., (2010) expressed the view for building a long term customer relationship by means of customer trust, and added on to recommend for delivery on promises specifically for the factors that mainly contribute to the build-up customers' trust. Trust is one of the major influencing factor for building customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Mohammad Aamir et al., 2010). The main contributors to trust in services marketing are quality of services, increased recognition of the potential benefits for the firm and also for the customers, along with the technological advances (Berry, 1995). Trust leads to commitment as trust creates relationship exchanges that are highly valued (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Trust has defined as customer's psychological state explained in terms of perceived probabilities, expectations and confidence realized by some positive outcomes from service provider (Azize et al., 2013).

## 6. Customer Loyalty or Brand Loyalty

Customer satisfaction and customer trust are the key force in foreseeing the customer loyalty in mobile telecommunication service (Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015). Eshghi et al., (2007) highlighted ideal characteristics like access, clarity, innovation, reliability and trustworthiness for determining the customers' loyalty. The call quality, value added services and customer support provided by cellular service firm leads to customer satisfaction that promotes customer loyalty (Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015). In a competitive market brand loyalty keeps the existing customers from the attraction of new products and services in the market (Ahmad and Butter, 2002). Customer loyalty can be initiated from positive effect of customer satisfaction (Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015). The marketers believe that ensuring loyalty develops good relationships with customers but also reduces the switching behaviour of customers (Marshal et al., 2011). Price, intangible attributes and product deliverables positively affect mobile service brand loyalty and post adoption intentions (Ya-Ching Lee, 2011). Brand loyalty succeeds in reducing marketing cost to the extent that it maintains the repurchasing activity of the existing customers (Smith, 2001). Subscribers who are loyal tend to use the services continuously and recommend the same to others (Kim and Son, 2009). Customer loyalty is the customer's positive commitment towards a brand and is reflected in the consistent repeat purchases (Minarti and Waseso, 2014).

## 7. Services:-service quality, value added services.

Service quality is an important indicator to evaluate a telecom service provider (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008). They further define it as; service quality derives from customer's overall impression of the efficiency and service of the organization. Jawwad Ahmad et al., (2015) express that the call quality, value added services and customer support provided by cellular firm result in customer satisfaction that increases customer loyalty. It is important for telecom operators to understand how consumers behave in the market to offer differentiated services (Chunghun Lee et al., 2015). Kim et al., (2004) found that call quality, value-added services and customer support were significant among South Korean customers. Shin et al. (2011) found that price and quality stands

out among call and service quality, price, discount calls. Orhan and Glenn (2015) studied improved quality of communication service, the unlimited mobile internet use and increased mobile internet speed. Mobile Internet (Kim, 2005). Kwak and Yoo (2012) conducted the first study evaluating customer preferences for 4G technology. Video on demand, increased number of broadcasting channels, data rates, quality of communications services, service and supplementary services were taken as 4G attributes to conduct study among South Korean customers. Shin et al. (2011), Kwak and Yoo (2012) studied service quality. There is a link between service quality and satisfaction (Taylor and Baker, 1994). Certain degree of price difference can be afforded by the customers as long as they are provided with high quality service by the present mobile service providers (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008). Providing various different services using customization directly corresponds to the need of the consumers becoming essential to the telecom companies due to the pressure packed competition in the market (Chunghun Lee et al., 2015). It is conformed in the previous studies that there is a positive impact on customer's trust and satisfaction due to customization (Coultr et al., 2002; Komiak et al., 2007; Coelho et al., 2012). Lately in mobile service industry wide array of value added services, such as call-divert and internet facilities to each subscriber is now becoming standard (Azize et al., 2013). In the context of mobile services, service quality has been evaluated by call quality, value-added services, pricing structure, mobile devices, procedure convenience and customer care support (J. Gerpott et al., 2001).

When customers are sensitive to product attributes such as quality, the uncertainty of selecting new service provider will decrease price sensitivity and customers will behave as if brand-loyal (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008). These efforts reduce the switching intention and uplift the switching barrier for customers.

## 8. Brand Image

According to Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015 perceived quality of customer is influenced by corporate image. One among major factors influencing customer loyalty and satisfaction of mobile phone service provider's is corporate image (Mohammad Aamir et al., 2010). In a fierce competition branding allows firms to differentiate their brand by promising continued survival and growth (Ya-Ching Lee, 2011). The possibility of a customer switching service provider in the light of the distinguished image of the available alternatives is low (Jones et al, 2000).

## 9. Price cut

The customer's intention from switching to other brands could be demotivated by the use of promotions and price cuts (Zeeshan Ahmed et al., 2015). Switching initiates are the results of high price by the service provider (Gerrard and Cunnningham, 2004). Klein and Jakopin (2014) found that pricing is the most important attribute provided by a mobile phone service provider. Shin et al. (2011) investigated the preference of discounts by the mobile service users. Kwak and Yoo (2012) identify data rates as an attributes to make an impact in market. High price perception by the service providers

significantly motivates switching intentions in the market (Bansal et al., 2005). Constant innovation in the price range will motivate the customers to retain in the current service provider.

## 10. Customer Retention

Telecommunication service provider not only has to be competitive in satisfying customers but also has to retain its existing customers (Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015). Customer retention is positively affected by customer satisfaction and switching cost (Oyeniyi and Abiodun, 2009). Retaining an existing customer is easier than finding a new customer (Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015). Due to the growing competition day-by-day the importance of customers' acquisition, maintenance and retention the elements of customer relationship management (CRM) has been evolved by service providers (Eshghi et al., 2007).

Subsidies only aids the customers who want to change their mobile service, differentiated services that include distinguishing characteristics in services give benefits to existing subscribers in comparison with competitors'. As a result, differentiated services are more effective than subsidies for the customer retention (Chunghun Lee et al., 2015). The mobile phone service providers should retain customers by giving focus on satisfying customers through establishing trust (Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015). The telecom companies alter their marketing strategies from fresh customer acquisition to existing customer retention as the market reaches maturity level (Lee, 2010). Customer satisfaction is an important factor in customer retention (Anderson, 1973; Jones et al., 2000). To effectively expand customer retention and continued usage, an investigation of post-adoption variations in a business to business context is critical (Kim and Son, 2009). When the market is at saturation stage, companies focus on defensive marketing strategies, because existing customer retention is more effective than new customer acquisition (Chunghun Lee et al., 2015). The cost associated with acquiring new customer, can be as much as five times the cost of customer retention efforts (Keaveney, 1995). Customer satisfaction can generate customer retention, which leads to sustainable competitive advantage in the market (Jawwad Ahmad et al., 2015).

## 11. Demographics and switching intentions

The study on customer's switching intentions based on demographics (age, gender, and education) has received little attention recently (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008). Gender difference in decision making may affect brand attitudes and loyalty (Melnyk et al., 2009). Carroll et al. (2002) illuminated that young mobile customers use mobile services to satisfy their social and leisure needs, reinforcing group identity and add values to their lifestyles. The researchers also found that more educated customers view mobile devices as lifestyle-related tools as well as task-oriented technologies. This attitudinal shift might influence customer's switching intentions and hence it is understood that young and more educated subscribers tend to show higher intention to switch than older subscribers. Studies show that young, well-educated and richer population tend to be early adopters of new technologies than non-adopters; males are more likely adopters of new technology than female customers (T. Teo et al., 2004). Gilbert et al. (2003) found that

female customers tend to show more techno-phobia and anxiety towards mobile technologies. This anxiety is likely to discourage females from switching from one carrier to another. Male subscribers are more prone to switching carriers and age is negatively linked to switching intention (C. Ranganathan et al., 2006).

Gender, occupation status and education qualification has no impact over the choice for mobile service providers in Indian context (Revati S. and Padmavathy S, 2005). Almost half a decade later Neelam and Pooja (2009) contributed that lower age group of male population are highly in use of mobile services than female counterparts in India's fast growing telecom sector. Perceived usefulness, social interaction and intangible attributes for female and on other hand convenience and perceived usefulness are drives for male mobile subscribers (Noble et al., 2006). Uniqueness, assortment and social interaction are important factors for female to form loyalty, whereas information attainment, convenience are important factors for male mobile service subscribers to form loyalty (Ya-Ching Lee, 2011).

## 12. Conclusion

Switching barrier gives advantage for the service provider to retain the customers. The customer's side of coin is perplexed with the risk factor, so choosing a new service provider caused by the current service provider. Hence there is an urgent need for reducing the switching barrier in the market, to provide customers the right to effectively utilize the alternatives. Government intervention is required to assess the market condition and to lift the tied-up situation of consumers. Joseph et al. (2010) pointing out the possibility of research in the role of government policy in creating and removal of switching barriers.

Dong-Hee and Won-Yong (2008) elucidated that consumers are reluctant to switch their service providers if they are required to change their mobile numbers as it is inconvenient and financially burdensome. Researchers suggested that Mobile Number Portability (MNP) have potentially important effects on lowering switching cost and barriers (Buehler et al., 2006). Number portability allows subscribers to retain their phone number even if they change service providers. The prime purpose of introducing mobile number portability is to reduce the subscriber inconvenience associated with switching providers and to lower switching cost (Jongus Lee et al., 2005). MNP would allow customers to take full advantage of the choices that are available in the more competitive telecommunication market. Customers' choosing their service providers without switching cost, facing the hazards of changing their phone numbers is proven to be the greatest advantage. (Dong-Hee and Won-Yong, 2008).

This literature study has made its way to highlight the importance factors building switching barriers kept by mobile service providers. The luxury exercised by the service provider in gaining monopolistic competitive advantage in the highly competitive open market has to be regulated to exercise the genuine market environment for customers. Evaluating the reduced switching cost resulting from number portability helps in determining the effectiveness of Government's decision to adopt the service (Jongus Lee et al., 2005). Telecom

Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) introduced MNP within last decade and it received with huge positives in the market. Removal of roaming barrier is also an effective tool by TRAI in reducing the switching barriers. Hence further study encourages identifying the customers' behavioural pattern on mobile number

portability freedom given by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). These are expected to ease the barriers kept by the service providers and liberate customers to exploit market potential.

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