

Brand Switching Behavior in Indian Wireless Telecom Service Market

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Abstract

Brand switching is a common problem for all the companies. Brand switching became a topic of discussion in Wireless Telecom Services Industry in India after allowing Number Portability by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). TRAI allowed the Number Portability in 2010 in one state (Haryana) and finally launched it all over India in January 2011. Thus, the topic of the brand switching behavior of the consumers assumed greater significance for the wireless telecom industry. This study examines brand-switching attitude, information sources for brand switching, factors influencing brand switching and brand switching behavior. The study used primary data collected during August–November 2015. A survey was conducted among three consumer groups namely Businesspersons, Employees and Professionals divided equally among the three income groups and between males and females equally using stratified sampling technique. To have a national representation of the sample, six metropolitan cities of India (Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad) were chosen to collect the data

Keywords: Brand Switching; Wireless Telecom Services; Consumer Behavior; India.

Introduction

The markets across world point out the competition in services, is intensifying year by year with the entry of new entrepreneurs and various new brands. The empowered consumer with the support of development in communication and information technology is placed in a better position to choose and decide among the plethora of brands. Companies are trying to keep the existing customer by building a strong brand loyalty. In intensely competitive markets like India with high unpredictability and little product differentiation, brand loyalty is a major element in marketing strategies and tactics (Fournier and Yao, 1997).

Brand loyalty can help a company by creating entry barriers to competitors. Brand loyalty also contributes by giving the ability to respond to competitive threats. Brand loyalty helps in increasing sales, and revenues and the customer's lower sensitivity to marketing efforts of competitors (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alema'n, 1999). Brands can lessen perceived risk, as they can become consistent and credible symbols of product quality (Erdem and Swait, 1998; Erdem et al., 2006; Wernerfelt, 1988). Though the idea of brand loyalty incorporates both attitudinal and behavioral concepts (Dick and Basu, 1994; Baldinger and Rubinson, 1996), few empirical studies included both the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions. Research in this area is divided into two distinct traditions.

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Behavioral research studies (Ehrenberg and Goodhardt, 2000) focused on the observable actions of loyal customers while attitudinal researchers (Dorsch et al., 2000; Patterson et al., 1997) researched commitment to brands and consumer intent to repurchase. Many researchers focused on the engagement levels of customers' display towards a brand, how decisions taken at one moment affect following purchases and consumers' relative spending on brands in a category. Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) suggested two central aspects of brands as determinants of brand loyalty: Brand trust and brand affect. Brand loyalty has a direct impact on the long-term sustainability of a brand (Howell, 2004). Brand switching, on the other hand, occurs because of decline in brand loyalty and growing acceptance of other brands. Brand switching increases the consumer's willingness to try alternative brands. Ehrenberg (1988) is the view that loyalty does not exist and is not a valid concept. The view is also supported by Klein (2001) as well as Trivedi and Morgan (1996) who focus on the centrality of brand switching and state examples where even the most loyal of brand customers change.

The switching behavior could be affected by intrinsic or extrinsic motivations. In the case intrinsic motivations, variety and over choice plays a significant role (McAlister and Pessemier, 1982) and the resultant behavior can be the result of either curiosity (Sheth and Raju, 1974) or attribute satiation (Zuckermann, 1979). Majority brand switches occur not because they are intrinsically rewarding but because they are essential to attaining or avoiding another purchase or consumption (Van Trijp et al., 1996). Because of scarce financial resources, young adults are observed to be easily swayed by such motivations (Dick et al., 1996; Ness et al., 2002). Researchers identified several criteria that affect brand switching behavior. Baltas (1997); Shukla (2004) identified involvement. Price, variety and packaging by Ness et al., (2002); Dick et al. (1996); Veloutosou et al.(2004) and dissatisfaction by Abendoth (2001) and Shukla(2004).

Branding switching in services is a growing research area in marketing. Several studies have revealed the factors contributing to customer brand switching behavior. Crosby and Stephen (1987) found that dissatisfaction is the key element in the insurance industry. Kelley, Hoffman, and Davis (1995) found that service encounters failure in the retail industry. Rust and Zahorik (1993) identified perceptions of quality in the banking sector. Further many studies suggested that service quality and satisfaction are related to service switching (Bitner, 1990; Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman, 1996). However, the emphasis is placed on classifying the particular problems, events and non-service factors that may cause services witching (Levesque and McDougall, 1996; Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman, 1996).

Keaveney (1995) uses a generalized model to examine consumer-switching behavior across a broad spectrum of service providers. The Keaveney's (1995) model includes eight factors influencing service switching: pricing, inconvenience, core service failure, response to service failure, service encounter failure, competition, ethics, and automatic switching. However, Mittal, Ross, and Baldas are (1998) pointed out the unique characteristic of switching behavior in particular service contexts such as banking might be masked when generalized models are directly applied. Considering the above research, the researchers wanted to examine (i) brand switching attitude; (ii) information sources for brand switching; (iii) factors influencing brand switching; and (iv) brand switching behavior in the wireless telecom services sector in India, which is fast growing.

Research Problem

Wireless Telecom Services sector is one of the fast growing industries in India. India's telecom network is second largest in the world next only to China. There are 895.51 million telecom connections with 864.72 million wireless telecom subscribers. The overall teledensity in the country is 74.34%. Six companies with a combined market share of 79.49% -Airtel (21.69 %), Vodafone (17.56 %), Idea (14.01%), BSNL (11.66%), Tata DoCoMo (7.65%) and Aircel(6.92%) in the market were selected for this study. All the above six companies are aggressive in their marketing strategies focusing on market expansion to increase their market share. The problem of brand switching is common to all these six companies. The issue of brand switching became intense after introducing Number Portability by the Telecom Regulatory Authority in January 2011. Thus, and the study on brand switching behavior of the consumers assumes greater significance for all the wireless telecom service-providing companies.

The study examines (i) brand switching attitude;(ii) information sources for brand switching; (iii) factors influencing brand switching; and (iv) brand switching behavior.

Methodology

The study is based on primary data. A survey was conducted among three consumer groups identified based on occupation such as Businesses, Employees and Professionals. Further, the sample units are distributed equally among the three income groups and between male and female in each consumer group. This sample study is carried out by using stratified sampling technique. The sample size is 360 for each customer group that is business people are 360; professionals are 360 and employees are 360. To have a national representation of the sample, six metropolitan cities of India - Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad were chosen. The sample is equally divided among all metro cities. Thus the total sample size is 1,080.

Results

Brand Switching Attitude

The studies hows the majority of respondents (55.6%) are showing interest to switch the brand often, and the remaining (44.4%) are not interested in changing the service provider often that is they want to be loyal to the brand.

Table 1: Preference to Brand Switching/ Loyalty

Particulars		Preference to Brand Switching	Preference to Brand Loyalty
Gender	Male	Respondents	289
		Row %	53.5%
		Column %	48.1%
	Female	Respondents	312
		Row %	57.8%
		Column %	51.9%
Location	Delhi	Respondents	109
		Row %	60.6%
		Column %	18.1%
	Mumbai	Respondents	153
		Row %	85.0%
		Column %	25.5%
	Kolkata	Respondents	114
		Row %	63.3%
		Column %	19.0%
	Chennai	Respondents	70
		Row %	38.9%
		Column %	11.6%
	Bangalore	Respondents	80
		Row %	44.4%
		Column %	13.3%
	Hyderabad	Respondents	75
		Row %	41.7%
		Column %	12.5%
Occupation	Employee	Respondents	200
		Row %	55.6%
		Column %	33.3%
	Businessmen	Respondents	166
		Row %	46.1%
		Column %	27.6%
	Professional	Respondents	235
		Row %	65.3%
		Column %	39.1%
Income	Low (<₹ 10,000 amonth)	Respondents	220
		Row %	61.1%
		Column %	36.6%
	Medium (₹ 10,000 - ₹ 50,000 amonth)	Respondents	189
		Row %	52.5%
		Column %	31.4%
	High (>₹ 50,000 amonth)	Respondents	192
		Row %	53.3%
		Column %	31.9%
Total		601	479
Row %		55.6%	44.4%
Column %		100.0%	100.0%

₹ = Indian Rupee (1 ₹ = 0.01 USD approximately)

The finding of the study reveals that professionals prefer to change brands of cellular services more often with 65.3 percent followed by employees (55.6%) and businesspeople (46.1%) among occupational groups. If we look at income wise, the majority (61.1%) of the consumers with less than ₹ 10,000 a month prefer to change brands followed by the income group between ₹ 10,000 and ₹ 50,000 a month (52.5%) and to ₹ 50,000 income a month (53.3%) among various income groups. Further, it is also noted that among gender, females (57.8%) outnumbered the males (53.5%) to display preferences to change brands of mobile services. Out of six metro's in India, the interest to switch mobile services often is found in Mumbai consumers (85.0%) followed by Kolkata with 63.3 percent, Delhi (60.6%), Bangalore (44.4%), Hyderabad (41.7%) and Chennai (38.9%). Considering only the people who prefer to change the service providers, it is noted that among gender female stood first with 51.9 percent. Among metro cities, Mumbai is first with 25.5 percent followed by Kolkata with 19.0 percent, Delhi with 18.1 percent, Bangalore 13.3 percent, Hyderabad with 12.5 percent and Chennai 11.6 percent. Among occupational groups, Professionals stood first with 39.1 percent followed by Employee with 33.3 percent and Businessmen with 27.6 percent and in Income groups, the low-income group stood first followed by High and Medium.

Brand Switching Behavior

Against the preferences to change, it was studied to know how many respondents change their service providers during the last one year. It is found that 72.0 percent of the respondents had changed their brand of mobile services while 28.0 percent is continuing the same brand.

Table 2: Brand Switching vs. Loyalty

Particulars			Brand Switched	Brand Loyalty
Gender	Male	Respondents	368	172
		Row %	68.1%	31.9%
		Column %	47.3%	57.0%
	Female	Respondents	410	130
		Row %	75.9%	24.1%
		Column %	52.7%	43.0%
Location	Delhi	Respondents	142	38
		Row %	78.9%	21.1%
		Column %	18.3%	12.6%
	Mumbai	Respondents	162	18
		Row %	90.0%	10.0%
		Column %	20.8%	6.0%
	Kolkata	Respondents	135	45
		Row %	75.0%	25.0%
		Column %	17.4%	14.9%
	Chennai	Respondents	97	83
		Row %	53.9%	46.1%
		Column %	12.5%	27.5%
	Bangalore	Respondents	124	56
		Row %	68.9%	31.1%
		Column %	15.9%	18.5%
	Hyderabad	Respondents	118	62
		Row %	65.6%	34.4%
		Column %	15.2%	20.5%
Occupation	Employee	Respondents	278	82
		Row %	77.2%	22.8%
		Column %	35.7%	27.2%
	Businessmen	Respondents	242	118
		Row %	67.2%	32.8%
		Column %	31.1%	39.1%
	Professional	Respondents	258	102
		Row %	71.7%	28.3%
		Column %	33.2%	33.8%
Income	Low (<10,000 a Month)	Respondents	266	94
		Row %	73.9%	26.1%
		Column %	34.2%	31.1%
	Medium (10,000 - 50,000 a Month)	Respondents	251	109
		Row %	69.7%	30.3%
		Column %	32.3%	36.1%
	High (>50,000 a Month)	Respondents	261	99
		Row %	72.5%	27.5%
		Column %	33.5%	32.8%
Total			778	302
Row %			72.0%	28.0%
Column %			100.0%	100.0%

The study further reveals that Employees changed their brands of cellular services more often with 77.2 percent followed by Professionals (71.7%) and businesspeople (67.2%) among occupational groups. Looking at income, the majority (73.9%) of the consumers with less than ₹ 10,000 a month changed their brands followed by the income group more than ₹ 50,000 a month (72.5%) and income between ₹ 10,000 - ₹ 50,000 a month (69.7%) among various income groups. Further, it is also noted that among gender, females (75.9%) outnumbered the males (68.1%). Out of six metropolitan cities in India, people who often changed their mobile services are from Mumbai (90.0%). Delhi (78.9 %), Kolkata (75 %), Bangalore (68.9%), Hyderabad (65.6%) and Chennai (53.9%) follow this. Considering only the people who changed their brands of cellular services, it is found that among gender female stood first with 52.7 percent. Among metropolitan cities, Mumbai is first with 20.8percent followed by Delhi with 18.3 percent, Kolkata with 17.4percent, Bangalore 15.9percent, Hyderabad with 15.2percent and Chennai 12.5 percent. In occupational groups, Employees stood first with 35.7percent followed by Professionals with 33.2percent and Businessmen with 31.1percent and among income groups, the low-income group stood first followed by High and Medium.

Information Sources for Brand Switching

Advertisements are the chief source of information for the customers of mobile services to identify the better service providers and to satisfy their need for brand switching. The study revealed that 73.3 percent consider advertisements as the primary source of information while 18.6 percent of the respondents takes information from friends/ relatives. The impact of information sources like social networking, retailer/salespersons is insignificant. The response was similar to occupation, income groups, gender, and location.

Table 3: Sources of information for brand switching

Particulars			Friends/ Relatives	Advertisements	Retailer/ Sales person	Social Network king	Experts	Others	Total
Gender	Male	Respondents	130	354	9	20	10	17	540
		Row %	24.1%	65.6%	1.7%	3.7%	1.9%	3.1%	100
	Female	Respondents	71	438	2	15	5	9	540
		Row %	13.1%	81.1%	.4%	2.8%	.9%	1.7%	100
Location	Delhi	Respondents	20	150	1	5	2	2	180
		Row %	11.1%	83.3%	.6%	2.8%	1.1%	1.1%	100
	Mumbai	Respondents	0	176	0	4	0	0	180
		Row %	0.0%	97.8%	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	100
	Calcutta	Respondents	30	131	1	11	3	4	180
		Row %	16.7%	72.8%	.6%	6.1%	1.7%	2.2%	100
	Chennai	Respondents	112	45	7	3	3	10	180
		Row %	62.2%	25.0%	3.9%	1.7%	1.7%	5.6%	100
	Bangalore	Respondents	34	130	1	8	1	6	180
		Row %	18.9%	72.2%	.6%	4.4%	.6%	3.3%	100
	Hyderabad	Respondents	5	160	1	4	6	4	180
		Row %	2.8%	88.9%	.6%	2.2%	3.3%	2.2%	100
Occupation	Employee	Respondents	93	218	3	20	12	14	360
		Row %	25.8%	60.6%	.8%	5.6%	3.3%	3.9%	100
	Businessmen	Respondents	66	281	5	1	0	7	360
		Row %	18.3%	78.1%	1.4%	.3%	0.0%	1.9%	100
	Professional	Respondents	42	293	3	14	3	5	360
		Row %	11.7%	81.4%	.8%	3.9%	.8%	1.4%	100
Income	Low (<10,000 a Month)	Respondents	70	269	0	11	5	5	360
		Row %	19.4%	74.7%	0.0%	3.1%	1.4%	1.4%	100
	Medium (10,000 - 50,000 a Month)	Respondents	60	259	8	12	5	16	360
		Row %	16.7%	71.9%	2.2%	3.3%	1.4%	4.4%	100
	High (>50,000 a Month)	Respondents	71	264	3	12	5	5	360
		Row %	19.7%	73.3%	.8%	3.3%	1.4%	1.4%	100
Total			201	792	11	35	15	26	1080
Row %			18.6%	73.3%	1.0%	3.2%	1.4%	2.4%	100

Factors Influencing Brand Switching

Brand switching in wireless telecom services examined price, quality, product features and applications, competitive offer, after sales service, change in income level. Table 4 shows the factors, which influence brand switching.

Table 4 points out that quality stood first in switching the service provider with a mean of 3.76 followed by price with 3.61 and product features and applications with 3.60. Out of 22 factors, better products from competitors (3.92) stood first. Competitors are offering additional product features and after sales services of competitive products are better ranked second (3.83) followed by an increase in income level (3.79), response to customer complaints is not satisfactory (3.77) and higher increase in price (3.76).

Price, quality, product features and applications, competitive offer, after sales services and change in income level, were studied to examine switching behavior of consumers in the wireless telecom industry. The data found in Table 4 shows that quality of services is the most influencing factor. The consumers intend to change the brand when the quality of service is not as expected in the existing brand if they found the competitive brand offering better services. Price and product features and applications occupy the next priority in influencing brand-switching behavior. With the price, the consumers react when the increase in the price of the existing product is high, when low price offers are available from competitor services and when there is a perceived mismatch between the change in price and quality of services provided.

The consumer prefers to switch brands when competitors offer additional service features or when they note there are no product improvements in the existing brand for a longtime. The increase or decrease in income levels influences the brand switching behavior of the consumer significantly. An After-sales service is a service factor-influencing brand switching behavior. Other factors that affect brand switching behavior are - no timely after service, no proper after sales service, service centers are not accessible, after-sales services of competitive services being better, response to a customer complaint is not satisfactory, and no customer relationship focus. The competitive offer is the factor though the significant but fairly lesser impact on brand switching behavior. Under this factor the variables such as no promotional offers from existing brand, attractive promotional offers from competitors and declining image of the existing brand against competitors influencing the brand switching behavior.

Table 4: Factors that affect Brand Switching

Attributes	Factors	Mean Score
Price	Higher increase in price	3.76
	Low price offers from competitive products	3.56
	I got a feeling the price changed is more than the quality of the product	3.50
	Mean Score	3.61
Quality	Quality is not as expected	3.48
	It is found that competitive products are of better quality	4.02
	Mean Score	3.76
Product features and applications	No product improvements for a longtime	3.38
	Competitors are offering extra product features	3.83
	Mean Score	3.60
Competitive Offer	No promotional offers from existing brand	3.30
	Attractive promotional offers from competitors	3.62
	Declining image of existing brand against competitors	3.35
	Mean Score	3.42
After Sales Service	No timely after sales service	3.67
	No proper after sales service	3.52
	Service centers are not accessible	3.67
	After sales services of competitive products are better	3.83
	Response to customer complaints is not satisfactory	3.77
	No customer relationship focus	3.47
	Mean Score	3.66
Change in income level	Increase in income level	3.79
	Decrease in income level	3.32
	Mean Score	3.55

When customers are not satisfied with the existing brand, they may change from one brand to another. Table 5 suggests that majority of the respondents (77.1%) do not communicate the dissatisfaction to the service provider, and the remaining respondents are expressing their dissatisfaction with the service to the service provider.

Table 5: How many chose to communicate dissatisfaction

Particulars			Communicated the dissatisfaction to the seller	Did not communicate the dissatisfaction to the seller
Gender	Male	Respondents	144	396
		Row %	26.7%	73.3%
		Column %	58.3%	47.5%
	Female	Respondents	103	437
		Row %	19.1%	80.9%
		Column %	41.7%	52.5%
Location	Delhi	Respondents	23	157
		Row %	12.8%	87.2%
		Column %	9.3%	18.8%
	Mumbai	Respondents	0	180
		Row %	0.0%	100.0%
		Column %	0.0%	21.6%
	Kolkata	Respondents	29	151
		Row %	16.1%	83.9%
		Column %	11.7%	18.1%
	Chennai	Respondents	110	70
		Row %	61.1%	38.9%
		Column %	44.5%	8.4%
	Bangalore	Respondents	61	119
		Row %	33.9%	66.1%
		Column %	24.7%	14.3%
	Hyderabad	Respondents	24	156
		Row %	13.3%	86.7%
		Column %	9.7%	18.7%
Occupation	Employee	Respondents	88	272
		Row %	24.4%	75.6%
		Column %	35.6%	32.7%
	Businessmen	Respondents	103	257
		Row %	28.6%	71.4%
		Column %	41.7%	30.9%
	Professional	Respondents	56	304
		Row %	15.6%	84.4%
		Column %	22.7%	36.5%
Income	Low (<10,000 a Month)	Respondents	91	269
		Row %	25.3%	74.7%
		Column %	36.8%	32.3%
	Medium (10,000 - 50,000 a Month)	Respondents	103	257
		Row %	28.6%	71.4%
		Column %	41.7%	30.9%
	High (>50,000 a Month)	Respondents	53	307
		Row %	14.7%	85.3%
		Column %	21.5%	36.9%
Total			247	833
Row %			22.9%	77.1%
Column %			100.0%	100.0%

On observation of customers who are not communicating their dissatisfaction with the services to the provider based on their occupation, most are employees with 75.6 percent, followed by businesspeople (71.4%) and professional with 84.4 percent. Concerning income groups, respondents from the low-income group (74.7%), medium income group (71.4%) and high-income group (85.3%) are not communicating their dissatisfaction of the brand to the producer. In the case of gender, both males (73.3%) and females (80.9%) are not expressing their displeasure to the service provider. The same is also true in metropolitan cities -Mumbai (100.00%), Delhi (87.2%), Hyderabad (86.7%), Kolkata (83.9%), Bangalore (66.1%), and Chennai (61.1%)also do not communicate their dissatisfaction to the service providers.

Considering the people who do not communicate their displeasure to the seller or producer, it is found that among gender female stood first; among occupational groups, Professionals stood first followed by Employee and Businessmen; among Income groups, the High-income group stood first followed by low income and medium income group. The means of communication are in Table 6. It reveals that e-mail is the primary source of communication with 56.7 percent followed by oral communication (23.9%).

Table 6: Communication channels for conveying dissatisfaction on brands

Particulars		Oral	Email	Telephone	Others	
Gender	Male	Respondents	26	87	18	13
		Row %	18.1%	60.4%	12.5%	9.0%
		Column %	44.1%	62.1%	54.5%	86.7%
	Female	Respondents	33	53	15	2
		Row %	32.0%	51.5%	14.6%	1.9%
		Column %	55.9%	37.9%	45.5%	13.3%
Location	Delhi	Respondents	5	14	2	2
		Row %	21.7%	60.9%	8.7%	8.7%
		Column %	8.5%	10.0%	6.1%	13.3%
	Mumbai	Respondents	0	0	0	0
		Row %	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
		Column %	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Calcutta	Respondents	10	11	8	0
		Row %	34.5%	37.9%	27.6%	0.0%
		Column %	16.9%	7.9%	24.2%	0.0%
	Chennai	Respondents	37	43	20	10
		Row %	33.6%	39.1%	18.2%	9.1%
		Column %	62.7%	30.7%	60.6%	66.7%
	Bangalore	Respondents	7	48	3	3
		Row %	11.5%	78.7%	4.9%	4.9%
		Column %	11.9%	34.3%	9.1%	20.0%
	Hyderabad	Respondents	0	24	0	0
		Row %	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
		Column %	0.0%	17.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Occupation	Employee	Respondents	16	55	11	6
		Row %	18.2%	62.5%	12.5%	6.8%
		Column %	27.1%	39.3%	33.3%	40.0%
	Businessmen	Respondents	27	53	19	4
		Row %	26.2%	51.5%	18.4%	3.9%
		Column %	45.8%	37.9%	57.6%	26.7%
	Professional	Respondents	16	32	3	5
		Row %	28.6%	57.1%	5.4%	8.9%
		Column %	27.1%	22.9%	9.1%	33.3%
Income	Low (<10,000 per Month)	Respondents	24	33	19	15
		Row %	26.4%	36.3%	20.9%	16.5%
		Column %	40.7%	23.6%	57.6%	100.0%
	Medium (10,000 - 50,000 per Month)	Respondents	16	81	6	0
		Row %	15.5%	78.6%	5.8%	0.0%
		Column %	27.1%	57.9%	18.2%	0.0%
	High (>50,000 per Month)	Respondents	19	26	8	0
		Row %	35.8%	49.1%	15.1%	0.0%
		Column %	32.2%	18.6%	24.2%	0.0%
Total		59	140	33	15	
Row %		23.9%	56.7%	13.4%	6.1%	
Column %		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

It was observed that among occupation groups, the principal means of communication is email for employees (62.5%), businesspeople (51.5%) and professional (57.1%). The second means of communication is oral communication among occupational groups. The same was found among age groups, i.e. the primary vehicle of communication is email in case of low income (36.3%), medium income (78.6%) and high income (49.1%) followed by oral communication. It was found that email is the media for 60.4% male respondents and followed by oral communication with 51.5% female respondents.

Even the same was found in the case of location wise, i.e. the principal means of communication is email for Delhi (60.9%), Kolkata (37.9%), Chennai (39.1%), and Bangalore (78.7%) and followed by oral communication with Hyderabad (100%). Marketers know that it is tough to get a new customer. So retaining a customer is easy by maintaining a relationship with the customers, which saves time, cost and efforts of the marketer. In this context, it is critical to know brand loyalty of each mobile network. Table 7 shows the brand loyalty and brand switching from one brand to another.

Table 7: Brand Loyalty among mobile networks

Network	Airtel (%)	Idea (%)	Vodafone (%)	BSNL (%)	DoCoMo (%)	Aircel (%)
Airtel	76.20 (L)	13.89	7.31	0.93	1.67	0
Idea	21.85	60.74 (L)	12.5	3.98	0.93	0
Vodafone	19.81	15.74	48.43 (L)	10.28	5	0.74
BSNL	12.78	6.48	6.02	74.35 (L)	0.37	0
DoCoMo	22.87	13.43	5.65	10.28	46.11 (L)	1.67
Aircel	34.72	13.8	6.3	8.98	1.39	34.81 (L)

It reveals that customers are more loyal towards Airtel mobile network (76.20%). The second place is occupied by BSNL (74.35%) followed by Idea (60.74%) and Vodafone (48.43%).

Conclusions

The study shows that majority of the respondents (55.65%) have the intention to switch brands, and 43.33 percent of respondents have changed their service providers during the last year; while 56.67% are continuing with the same service provider. Advertisements are the chief source of information for the consumers of mobile services to identify the better service providers and to satisfy their desire for brand switching and the impact of information sources like social networking, retailer /sales persons are insignificant. Price, quality, product features and applications, competitive offer, after sales services and change in income level, were influencing brand-switching behavior significantly in the case of mobile services. The quality of services is the most influencing factor, followed by price and product features and applications influencing brand-switching behavior. The consumer prefers to switch brands when competitors offer additional service features or when they found that there are no product improvements in the existing brand for a long time.

It is interesting to note that majority of the respondents (77.10%) do not communicate the dissatisfaction of the service to the service provider. Creating avenues to listen to the voice of the consumer or increasing efforts to make the user talk freely with the service provider might increase the consumer involvement and increases the brand loyalty. Offering free minutes or discounts to take few simple surveys about the customer satisfaction about the service could be a good beginning.

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