



NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

FACTORS BEHIND BRAND SWITCHING IN IRAQ'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

HAYMAN MAMUNDI

MASTER'S THESIS

NICOSIA

2021

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THESIS SUPERVISOR
DR. KAREN HOWELLS

NICOSIA

2021

ACCEPTANCE

We as the jury members certify the “Factors Behind Brand Switching In Iraq’s Telecommunications Industry’ prepared by the Hayman Mamundi defended on 14/06/2021 has been found satisfactory for the award of degree of Master / Phd

JURY MEMBERS

.....
Dr. Karen Howells (Supervisor)

NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING

.....
Prof. Dr. Şerife Zihni EYÜPOĞLU (Head of Jury)

NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

.....
Assist. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Ertugan (Member of Jury)

NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING

.....
Prof. Dr. Hüsnü Can Başer
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DIRECTOR

DECLARATION

I Hayman Mamundi, hereby declare that this dissertation entitled "Factors Behind Brand Switching In Iraq's Telecommunications Industry." has been prepared myself under the guidance and supervision of 'Dr. Karen HOWELLS' in partial fulfilment of the Near East University, Graduate School of Social Sciences regulations and does not to the best of my knowledge breach and Law of Copyrights and has been tested for plagiarism and a copy of the result can be found in the Thesis.

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Name: Surname: Hayman Mamundi

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ABSTRACT

FACTORS BEHIND BRAND SWITCHING IN IRAQ'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

The study was aimed at examining the underlying factors causing brand switching among consumers in Iraq. Such was also accompanied by the need to propose measures that can be used by telecommunications firms to avoid brand switching and boost their competitive position. Data analysis was conducted based on 184 mobile service subscribers' responses in Iraq. Branding switching was regressed against price, switching costs, service quality, trust and brand image. The regression model was estimated using SPSS version 24 and the results of the study showed that price, switching costs and brand image have significant positive effects on brand switching. The findings also showed that improvements in trust and service have a tendency of reducing brand switching. The findings do contribute towards understanding factors responsible for fostering customer loyalty. Such is instrumental in devising strategies aimed at improving customer satisfaction. The study's practical implications are that mobile service providers need to innovate their products and services to ensure that mobile subscribers continuously get high quality and reliable mobile services and products on time. The other practical implication relates to the importance of managing customer relations to avoid losing customers to competitors.

Keywords: Brand image, brand switching, mobile service providers, mobile service subscribers, price, service quality, switching costs, trust.

ÖZ

IRAK TELEKOMÜNİKASYON ENDÜSTRİSİNDE MARKA ANAHTARLAMASININ ARKASINDA ETKİLER

Çalışma, Irak'taki tüketiciler arasında marka geçişine neden olan temel faktörlerin incelenmesini amaçlıyordu. Buna, telekomünikasyon firmalarının marka değiştirmeyi önlemek ve rekabet konumlarını artırmak için kullanılabilecek tedbirler önerme gereği de eşlik etti. Irak'taki 184 mobil servis abonesi yanıtına dayalı veri analizi yapılmıştır. Marka anahtarlama fiyat, anahtarlama maliyetleri, hizmet kalitesi, güven ve marka imajı na göre geriledi. Regresyon modeli SPSS sürüm 24 kullanılarak tahmin edildi ve çalışmanın sonuçları fiyat, anahtarlama maliyetleri ve marka imajı marka anahtarlama üzerinde önemli olumlu etkileri olduğunu gösterdi. Bulgular, güven ve hizmetteki gelişmelerin marka anahtarlamaı azaltma eğilimine sahip olduğunu da göstermiştir. Bulgular, müşteri sadakatini teşvik eden faktörlerin anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunur. Bu, müşteri memnuniyetini artırmaya yönelik stratejiler geliştirmede etkilidir. Araştırmanın pratik sonuçları, mobil hizmet sağlayıcıların mobil abonelerin sürekli olarak yüksek kaliteli ve güvenilir mobil hizmet ve ürünleri zamanında elde etmesini sağlamak için ürün ve hizmetlerini yenilik yapmaları gerektiğidir. Diğer pratik ima rakiplere müşteri kaybetmemek için müşteri ilişkilerini yönetmenin önemi ile ilgilidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Marka imajı, marka anahtarlama, mobil servis sağlayıcıları, mobil servis aboneleri, fiyat, hizmet kalitesi, anahtarlama maliyetleri, güven.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BI:	Brand Image
BS:	Brand Switching
PR:	Price
SC:	Switching Costs
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SQ:	Service Quality
TR:	Trust

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

The telecommunications industry is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Furthermore, one can also reckon that the telecommunications plays a vital role in both economic and social development. It is estimated that by the end of 2017 the telecommunications industry had a market value of US\$1.4 trillion (Use of Tech, 2019). However, the telecommunications industry has been witnessing the introduction of various products and services and this has been causing to switch between brands (Chaarlas et al., 2012). Such an observation is supported by ideas given by Gautam and Chandhok (2011) which revealed that branding switching is inevitable in an industry surrounded by a lot of innovative product and service development. Kotler (2009) concurred with this idea and reiterated that the competitive pressure being witnessed in the telecommunications industry is targeted at cause brand switching among consumers. This is notably true with mobile service subscribers in Iraq who have been noted to switch a lot between service providers as well as mobile phone brands such iPhone, Samsung, Huawei, Honor mobile brands (Ministry of Finance, 2018). However, much of the information on brand switching is considered to be relatively true in developed countries such as the United States of America (Kouser, et al., 2012), United Kingdom (Lees et al., 2005) etc. Meaning that this scenario does not hold much ground when used to explain reasons behind brand switching in Iraq's telecommunications' industry. This study therefore proposes to examine factors behind brand switching in the telecom industry in Iraq.

Statement of the problem

Studies usually consider factors behind brand switching to be the same among consumers irrespective of the nature of the industry and country under consideration (Afzal et al., 2013; Sathish et al., 2011; Zeithaml, 2000). However, this does not always hold in the telecommunications industry which is surrounded by a lot of competitive developments. Such developments are aimed at driving prices down, improve network quality, brand image, offer value added service and promotion offers to lure more customers. These five factors are bound to differ between countries and industries and the major problem is that little has been done to examine how these factors are responsible for causing significant brand switching in Iraq's telecommunications industry. As a result, there is a need to further examine the underlying factors causing brand switching among mobile service subscribers in Iraq. Thus, firms need to enact measures or strategies that curb consumers from switching brands. This requires the implementation of competitive strategies like differentiation and pricing (Kotler, 2009). Hence, mobile service providers' competitive strategies are essential in influencing mobile service subscribers' post purchase behavior and loyalty.

The major question is therefore what are the factors responsible for brand switching in the telecommunication industry. In addition, there are a series challenges that are likely to be faced by are faced by decision makers in understanding their market environment. This is because brand switching is as a result of expectation disconfirmation, utility maximization and stochastic reasons (Lees et al., 2005). Kouser et al. (2012) contends that individuals' ability to purchase a previous brand is not influenced by stochastic reasons. This means that there are other factors which need to be identified and examined as to how they cause brand switching among mobile service subscribers. This study therefore seeks to examine factors behind brand switching in the telecommunication industry in Iraq.

Aim of the study

Thus, the main purpose of this study is to examine the underlying factors causing brand switching among consumers in Iraq. The study also proposes to look at measures that can be used by telecommunications firms to avoid brand switching and boost their competitive position.

Research hypothesis

The hypotheses of this study are mainly attached to the need to examine factors that are behind brand switching in the telecom industry in Iraq. These factors are with regards to prices, network quality, brand image, value added service and promotion offers. As a result, the study proposes to test the following null hypotheses.

- **H₁:** Prices have no significant positive effects on brand switching among consumers in Iraq's telecommunications industry.
- **H₂:** Improvements in network quality have no resultant effect on brand switching among consumers in Iraq.
- **H₃:** An improvement in Iraq's telecommunications firm's brand image no resultant effect on brand switching among consumers in Iraq.
- **H₄:** The ability of telecommunications firms to offer value added service has no resultant effect on brand switching among consumers in Iraq.
- **H₅:** The provision of promotional offers by telecommunications firms has no resultant effect on brand switching among consumers in Iraq.

Significance of the study

The telecommunications industry remains one of the most important sectors in an economy. Hence, understanding the interaction between its market participants is of huge importance. Such enhances understanding regarding strategies that

are needed to enhance its growth and development. More so, branding and brand image are vital for the strategic development of strategies that enhances competitive positions and performance of mobile services providers. Factors governing the competitive forces and their influence on telecommunications companies can be distinctively established and their effects examined. Such should play a crucial in developing a brand switching conceptual framework which can be applied across various platforms and economies.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction

The primary goal for businesses to function is to make profit and ensure customer satisfaction. Drawing from Wu and Shang (2013), the main objective for businesses is to ensure that customers are satisfied and this in turn benefits the business in general. Benefits such as brand loyalty are reaped by businesses that ensure that their customers are satisfied. This also results in limited chances of customers switching to other competing brands. Brand switching occurs when a client of a business is not satisfied with what the company has to offer, this results in negative results for the business when they lose the customer. Brand switching is common in the telecommunications sector because of the many attractive offers that are present in other brands or companies.

Due to the growing need for use of telecommunication services within Kurdish region of Iraq particularly for the purposes of business and personal use. This has resulted in vast competition in the industry with many new companies emerging and offering attractive services and product features (Jan & Matolia, 2019). This in turn has translated to increased brand switching behavior among customers. In today's world the need for high tech advanced technologies puts telecommunication companies on edge to continually develop their products and services so as to retain and attract new customers.

According to Bahadir, Bharadwaj and Srivastava (2015) brand switching in the telecommunications sector is primarily influenced by switching costs. Customers are attracted to low costs that the other brand might have hence brand loyalty decreases as more competing products are available in the market. Therefore,

the author will highlight a number of sources on brand switching and the factors that cause this shift. The chapter will also review previous literature in light of brand switching and the telecommunication industry. The researcher hopes to fill in the gap of what's already been brought forward and what is lacking in this field of knowledge.

The first framework of the chapter will look at brand switching and the concept of brand switching in relation to brand loyalty and multi-brand loyalty. Tangible products and services will be discussed. The second section will point out suggestions by the author highlighting the need to change telecommunications brands and the last but not least section will have a look at the impact of brand switching on telecommunications industry. But first the researcher will look at the telecommunication industry in the Kurdish region of Iraq

2.2 The wireless industry of Kurdish region of Iraq.

The Kurdish region of Iraq has five network service providers operating, namely, Fastlink, Mobitel, Zain, Asiacell and Korek telecom (Demir, Budur & Heshmati, 2021). With such a variety of service providers available, customers can brand switch from one provider to another depending on what influences them to do so. The ministry of communications has easy rules when it comes to telecommunications regulations resulting in increased foreign investment in the sector and a more business centric focus.

Until 2015, Mobitel was the only 3G sole service provider and Fastlink only offering 4G service. With the rise of internet usage in people's daily lives, there is a growing need for a faster and smoother running network service provider and this would likely propel customers to brand switch to a faster network (Demir, Budur & Heshmati, 2021).

Table 1.1: Iraq Mobile market

Iraq Broadband Market			
Company	Launch	Networks	Coverage
SCIS	1999	BFWA, DSL, FTTx	Nationwide
DijlaNet	2003	BFWA, FTTx, satellite	Nationwide
Earthlink	2005	Satellite	Nationwide
Kalimat Telecom	2007	BFWA, FTTx	Nationwide
Newroz Telecom	2007	DSL, TD-LTE	Kurdistan
WeGo (7NetLayers)	2010	WIMAX	Kurdistan
Tel High Telecom	2011	WIMAX, TD-LTE	Kurdistan
Fanoos Telecom	2011	WIMAX	Kurdistan

Source: Demir, Budur and Heshmati (2021)

2.3 The broad band market in Kurdistan region of Iraq.

The broad band market in the Kurdish region is the best as compared to the rest of Iraq. It is characterized by Newroz telecom that was established in the year 2007 (Demir, Budur & Heshmati, 2021). Its system operates both ADSL and LTE network. Other broadband operators can be found in the table below.

Table 1.2: Iraq broad band market

Iraq Broadband Market			
Company	Launch	Networks	Coverage
SCIS	1999	BFWA, DSL, FTTx	Nationwide
DijlaNet	2003	BFWA, FTTx, satellite	Nationwide
Earthlink	2005	Satellite	Nationwide
Kalimat Telecom	2007	BFWA, FTTx	Nationwide
Newroz Telecom	2007	DSL, TD-LTE	Kurdistan
WeGo (7NetLayers)	2010	WIMAX	Kurdistan
Tel High Telecom	2011	WIMAX, TD-LTE	Kurdistan
Fanoos Telecom	2011	WIMAX	Kurdistan

Source: Demir, Budur and Heshmati (2021)

1.3 The concept of brand switching

Previous literature defines brand switching as changing from one product or service brand to another company that offers similar products or service. Brand switching is more prominent in tangible products, services can be observed from a psychological view. Quoquab et al. (2014) says that brand switching of smartphones is considered as shifting from one network service provider and substituting it with another. In such a situation the customer prefers the other service providers' products as compared to the one they have left and they have no intent of using the parent organization again.

Brand is switching as defined by Lei, Yuwei, Zhansheng, and Dewall (2017), as shifting from one brand to another voluntarily. Their study focused on the social marginalization and consumer switching behavior defined consumer switching as synonymous to brand switching.

Brand switching entails forming a new relationship or partnership with a new or attractive brand. The customer would have weighed both brands and chosen which one best suit their expectations. According to Wathne, Biong and Heide (2001), switching means letting go the pre-existing partnership with a brand. All the definitions cited above simple point out that one moves on and considers the new brand and what it has to offer. This leaves companies to contemplate what reasons propelled a customer to brand switch.

Previous research has highlighted some reasons why customers move from one brand to another. A notable reason identified by Lei et al (2017) suggest that customers switch because they are process and utility driven. Lam et al. (2010) notes that social movement in addition to practical service boosting were crucial factors that contribute to why customers switch brands.

From a utility driven point of view, Lei et al (2017) suggest that utility measures the level of satisfaction that a customer possesses from the use of a brand which can be a product or service. Therefore, from the utility perspective it is anticipated

that customers are likely to change brands if they foresee that the other brand is more likely to bring better utility or advantages as compared to the pre-existing product or service. This is influenced by the experience with the previous brand which could have been unsatisfactory therefore leading to the brand switch.

Other researchers pose arguments that dissatisfaction is not always the case that contributes to brand switching. For instance, a family member or friend can convince the customer to move to their own brand, or in simple terms that they just do not like the brand. Cultural factors may also contribute to brand switching. Centered on the hypothesis of this notion Lei et al., (2017) suggested that process driven point of view contributes to brand switching.

The Process-Driven Perspective suggest that brand switching is influenced by psychological advantages derived from the use of a new product or service (Lei et al, 2017). Flexibility of choices made by customers over powers the benefits derived from brand switching.

Lam et al. (2010) explain why brand switching as social mobility causes consumers to move on to a new product or service because it bests defines them as an individual. This is grounded on the sociopsychological influences that inspires a consumer to shift product or service. The goal from this perspective is for the consumer to realize their better self or ideal self in contrast to their actual self. Brand switching as a social mobility is mainly common in luxury brands and may not be an important notable factor in the telecommunication industry. Therefore, this research centers on the practical utility perspective of brand switching which looks at the pros customers ponder when they are confronted with the decision to brand switch cellular network providers.

1.3 Disparities between brand switching and multi-brand loyalty

Multi-brand loyalty occurs when a customer likes more brands and is loyal to all in that particular service or category. Jacoby (1971) this can be referred to as

divided loyalty or dual and triple brand loyalty. Other studies point out this concept as polygamous loyalty (Dowling & Uncles, 1997). Nonetheless, research has gone further to distinguish between brand switching and multi brand loyalty.

Quoquab et al. (2014) depict multi-brand loyalty is when a customer is committed to more than one brand within a certain range of available products and service, this is also accompanied by continuous purchasing of different types of brands within a wide range of brands. For, instance a customer can register with different telecommunication companies in Iraq at the same time is considered multi- brand loyal.

Brand switching differs from multi brand loyalty in that there is a cut off with the existing product or service to a more appealing one. A study by Ehrenberg and Goodhardt (1970), outlined that brand switching occurs usually when a loyal client shifts loyalty from brand A to B.

Arguments by Uncles and Dowling (1997), pointed out that this was completely different. The authors consider this as polygamous loyalty and subscribes the behavior of consumers better than brand switching which results from onetime decision to change to another brand. Uncles and Dowling further argue that brand switching is not one hundred percent certain, they insist that the customer will still visit the preexisting brand and that multi brand loyalty is dominant in the telecommunications industry, flights and car rental services. It can be noted that brand switching in the telecommunication industry is great because customers are susceptible to service failures and there is low tolerance of bad services hence they can consider brand switching without hesitating as long as they are guaranteed of receiving good and better service or product.

Qin, Prybutok and Zhao (2010), revealed that in some cultures like China brand switching limited because they are faithful and can endure failures encountered by some brands. This differs in other areas like Ireland where cases of mishaps

happen and customer expectation is not met in terms of poor product features and service quality, then result of brand switching is at its highest level.

Mittal and Lassar (1996) articulate that brand switching is a consequence that comes from consumer dissatisfaction. Supported by Al-Kwafi et al. (2015) approved the claim stating that discontentment to some degree explains why consumers decide to brand switch and the brand loyalty does not necessarily mean satisfaction. Drawing from the literature on the nexus of brand switching and multi brand loyalty, the researcher has identified factors that could lead to brand switching.

1.4 Models of brand switching

There are three basic models of brand switching, these are;

Zero- step model, which depicts that brand switching is not influenced by previous past experiences and behavior (Mittal & Lassar, 1996). For example, buying a new house can be considered a zero-step model because the customers would have previously not owned a house before. This entails that past experience should pose huge significant effects that are capable of dissuading consumers from continuously using the products or services (Qin, Prybutok & Zhao, 2010). In that case, give the second option to reattempt to use the same products would be lined to brand switching. Based on this definition zero step model plays little or no role in the telecommunications industry because customers tend to compare past experiences.

The second model is the Markovian Stochastic Process, which entails brand switching being influenced by past experiences or choices (Rajkumar et al., 2012). The level of customer satisfaction derived from the new brand usage is compared to the old brand. The likely of choosing the same brand again would be referred as customer loyalty. However, if there is a decrease in in the likelihood of choosing the same brand, this would be termed variety seeking.

The third model is called three-choice model, which Milberg, Park and McCarthy (1997) defined as brand switching influenced by level of satisfaction derived from observing pre-existing brand and also substitute brands. In such a case where customer is dissatisfied with current brand expectations they would most likely opt for a substitute.

1.5 Factors affecting brand switching

Afzal et al. (2013) attributes perceived experiences of a product or service to brand switching, these play a crucial role in determining the buying or continuous rebuying of brands by a customer. Literature suggest that price is the most important factor that influences decision made by consumers to brand switch. Therefore, telecommunication companies try to make their brands attractive by offering a fair price in the market in order to lure customers to their brand (Sathish et al., 2011). Other important check points that customers may check include but not limited to network quality, voice clarity, coverage and service quality (Ashraf et al., 2013). Nevertheless, telecommunication companies strive to develop a good brand and formulate good strategies that will enhance their brand position within the brand set available in the market (Sun, Erdem & Keane, 2008).

In order to lure customers to switch brands organizations apply advertising as a strategy to attract customers and have them think that they will gain more benefits by brand switching. A good technique is by comparing prices, however, it important to note that price is not always the best factor to consider, quality also plays a role especially in the telecommunication industry.

1.5.1 Price

In the telecommunication industry, price is the number one factor influences brand switching. Kotler and Armstrong (2010). A number of variables articulated by Yulisetiari et al (2013) are associated with price and these are additional fee,

pricing scheme and pricing structure. Customer may consider one or all these variables with regards to prices. Pricing structure in the sector of telecommunications is largely affected by calling charges (Hasan et al. 2013). The concept of service quality equates high prices to high quality and this entails that an increase in prices is viewed as commensuration to improvements in quality (Sun, Erdem, & Keane, 2008). Thus, quality is what causes consumers to be willing to pay high prices for a particular product or service. However, consumers are observed as willing to pay high prices up to certain levels and any further increase can cause them to switch to other alternatives or substitutes (Sathish et al., 2011). Hence, high prices can be inferred as causing consumers to switch brands. As a result, the following hypothesis will be formulated;

- **H₁:** Price has no significant positive effects on brand switching behaviour among mobile service subscribers in Iraq's telecommunications industry.

1.5.2 Trust

In order to establish a trust worthy relationship, companies must relay a message to clients that portrays trust. The message should be convincing enough and show certain measure put in place so as to ensure customers are satisfied (Chan, To & Chu, 2015). Jain et al. (2017) emphasize that in order build long term relationship with consumers, the most important factor should be trust. Brand loyalty is reinforced by trust and without it customers will often brand switch. Sun, Erdem and Keane (2008) assert that the brand owner should be able to meet the benefits and costs expected by the customers to avoid brand switching. This is an important feature that determines clients' brand switching behavior. This entails that an increase in trust is a synonymous to improvements in customer service, service quality and customer satisfaction (Sathish et al., 2011). Alternatively, consumers will switch brands due to lack of trust which equates to customer service, service quality and customer satisfaction. This, implies that trust is

significantly connected to brand switching and hence, the following null hypothesis can be formulated;

- **H₂:** An improvement in Iraq's telecommunications firm's trust has no resultant effect on brand switching behaviour among mobile service subscribers in Iraq.

1.5.3 Service quality

Every consumer within the telecommunications industry wants to experience the best service. The rise of internet usage means that everything is done online hence a brand that offers the best service quality would be a good enough reason why consumers brand switch (Alfaz et al, 2013). A service is intangible, heterogeneous in nature and cannot be stored like a product. Consumers evaluated service quality when given the chance to interact with service providers. Service quality can be examined by four critical factors (responsiveness, assurance, client perceived network quality, and value added services (Alfaz et al, 2013). Service quality relates to the ability of service providers to provide high quality products that satisfy consumers' needs and wants (Sathish et al., 2011). Hence, the inability of service providers to provide high quality products and services that satisfy consumers' needs and wants dissuades consumers from using their products and this leads to brand switching. Hence, it can be formulated that there is a bilateral link between service quality and brand switching. This can be expressed in the form of a hypothesis as follows;

- **H₃:** Improvements in service quality have no resultant effect on brand switching behavior among mobile service subscribers in Iraq.

1.5.4 Brand Image

Previous marketing literature has regularly discussed the issue of brand image. A good brand image is crucial in both the physical tangible products and intangible services. The success of a brand image is directly linked to the success of the organization in question. Ogungbade (2015) suggests that brand image has a crucial part to play when it comes to brand switching behaviors within consumers.

Afzal et al. (2013) asserts that proper brand management and strategies used to maintain it have the power to increase consumer loyalty to the brand simultaneously. Researcher argue that an excellent brand is more likely to increase satisfaction of the customer and in turn limit brand switching.

- **H4:** An improvement in Iraq's telecommunications firm's brand image no resultant effect on brand switching behavior among mobile service subscribers in Iraq.

1.5.5 Switching costs

There are three main groups of switching costs (Ting, Harith & Zakaria, 2014). They are learning costs, contractual costs and transactional costs. Transactional costs pertain to costs involved in shifting from one service provider to the other, this could entail new subscription in the case of a new telecom service provider. They also include costs incurred when terminating service with the pre-existing brand or service provider (Ayiriwuti et al., 2015). Switching costs are synonymous to transaction costs and an increase in switching costs makes it expensive for consumers to switch brands or products. Hence, the indirect relationship that causes consumers to be loyal to a particular brand is caused by high switching costs which hinder brand switching.

- **H₅:** An increase in switching costs between telecommunications firms has no resultant effect on brand switching behavior among mobile service subscribers in Iraq.

1.4.6 Product features

Customers are likely to brand switch when the preexisting product does not offer features that meet their expectations (Saeed & Shafique, 2019). For example, in the telecommunications industry brand switching may occur when a service provider offers low rate packages that satisfy the customer. Other features that such as voice clarity, low data charges, fast internet speed and coverage can influence brand switching. Providing a variety product features is important in that it makes the brand more attractive and limits switching networks in the telecommunications industry.

1.6 Empirical literature review

Chaarlas et al. (2012) indicated that every company's objective is to gain and maintain customer satisfaction. Staying loyal to any brand is influenced by the consumer post purchasing behavior. Once the product of a specific brand satisfies the consumers' needs they will continue to buy. However, if the product does not cut it they may switch to other brands. Gautam and Chandhok, (2011) observed that telecommunication brand switching rates are higher than any other industry because of the intense competition among cellular network providers. Different factors also affect the choice of a network provider which include extra benefits and value, added services that a network provider offers (Kouser, et al., 2012).

A number of factors influences an individual or consumers to opt for brand switching. In-store display, availability, quality, reliability, price, promotions, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, tangibility are amongst the list of

influencers (Chaarlas et al., 2012). The most important is the service quality provide by cellular company that influences the consumers' decision to re-buy. Kouser et al. (2012) stressed that good services urge customers to spread the word to one another which translates to increased market share for mobile companies. A quality of service in any telecommunication serve provider is recognized by modernization and VAS (value added services) (Makwana et al., 2014). The providers implement different strategies to increase brand switching to their advantage like marketing their own product and discouraging the competitors. Lowering of a product price is also another way of convincing brand switching to their own cellular network.

Chaarlas et al. (2012) assert that for a service provider to turn brand switching to their own advantage they first have to identify the challenges faced by the market (market environment) and be able to bring the solution to them. The market environment is shaped by stochastic reason, utility maximization, and expectation disconfirmation. The stochastic reasons are geological influenced. Once a consumer relocates their purchases are influenced by the distance between them and any service provider thus affecting the brand switching in their telecommunication sets (Lees et al., 2005).

According to Zeithaml (2000) as cited by Lees et al., (2005) reasons for expectation disconfirmation are when the customer assesses the total brand use experiences and concludes or convinced they need to change a brand. Based on their satisfaction and experiences the consumer then decides. The quality of service, for instance, poor signal in comparison with the amount spent, so due to dissatisfaction from performance the customer might change network providers. In the telecommunication industry utility maximization and the VAS is most commonly used practices. These are known as non-core services. So, it is important for each service provider to provide the consumers with modern technologies which will influence their brand switching decisions Afzal et al., (2013) shared that in customer continuous buying behavior is based on the

perceived experiences. Ashraf et al., (2013) explained that coverage and voice clarity being most important to consumer because according to a research done by Afzal et al., 2012 showed that an unclear video call or voice call is the most frustrating in telecommunication.

Company image is very critical to network provider and is built through proper brand management and the strategies used by companies in order to maintain the brand position in the market (Baohong et al., 2003). Pakistan the cellular networking companies use well advanced sale promotion in order to draw customers. Sales promotions involve premium prizes and coupons. In consumer brand-switching behavior the promotional campaigns aids attracting new customers.

Chaarlas et al. (2012) examined the reasons behind the need to promote customer satisfaction to lure them from other firms. Though it did not much positive influence on brand switching. Chaarlas et al., had a conclusion that even trying to promote consumer satisfaction is responsible for the consumers to quickly switch to the promoted brand. It clearly showed that there are more factors and the studies have to be considered.

In another study by Gautam and Chandhok (2011), it was noted that providing good value for each services will keep customers satisfied. This caused existing customers not to switch from other brands and other customers to switch from other brands. The study also showed the high rate of brand switching in the mobile or network industry this stretches across many countries but differs. This could be a result of different set up or factors such as the economy or the cultural background present from one country to another.

A paper done by Kouser et al. (2012) similarly explored the factors that result in brand switching. These were utility maximization, expectation, marketing and the price of the brand. Therefore, one can deduce that these factors are likely to be the cause of brand switching in Iraqis' telecommunication industry. Ashraf et

al., (2013) elucidated the significance of good quality network, voice clarity and network coverage being most vital to customers. Nevertheless, business image is also of importance to the service provider and emanates from building a strong brand and putting in place strategies that continuously develop that brand.

Alfaz et al (2013), examined the factors that influence brand switching in cellular network providers among a group of university students in Larkana city. Price, service quality, trust and brand loyalty were the major factors contributing to brand switching and customer satisfaction in the university students.

A study by Michael, Morgan and Chekitan (1994) examined different types of factors in the retail sector which contributed to brand switching. These were marketing mix, customer background and changes in situation for the customer. The researchers managed to build a model using the variables and findings revealed that marketing mix had a significant effect in brand switching.

Arshad et al (2014) completed a study on the factors that have an impact on brand loyalty. The study comprised of 200 participants and a linear regression model was used for the study. Amongst the factors considered to be on influence was brand switching, brand credibility, customer satisfaction and service quality. Of the factors included, brand credibility had the most impact because customers expect the brand to deliver what it says it does and that companies should avoid giving misleading claims that cannot be supported upon use of the product.

Jeevananthan et al (2011), conducted a study looking at the factors that cause customers to change service providers. The nexus between changing a network provider and factors like data rates, network coverage, word of mouth influence was examined.

Feng and Zhang (2009), did a study on the influence of advertising techniques on consumer satisfaction and trust which would contribute to loyalty of customers. The study focused on the telecommunication industry. Analysis was done to test the independent variable and dependent variable. Previous research by Kusik (2007), examined the telecommunication sector testing customer loyalty of more than one thousand respondents. Factors examined included trust, image, satisfaction and service quality relationship.

Richard et al (2005), looked at the causes of brand switching from one mobile network to the other. The researchers indicated that a number of factors forced clients to change service providers and these were service quality, rates, technical features and costs of switching. The study further more indicated that the service provider rates was the major factor contributing to brand switching.

A similar study by John et al. (2010), analyzed the determinants of consumer loyalty of mobile customers. The study involved 100 customers with BSNL network service provider who had resistance to change characteristics. Other network providers seemed to offer better quality service but they still remained indifferent to brand switching. Recommendations were made by the researcher to improve service quality and help retain customers by adding more value services to their existing client base of BSNL network service provider.

Brand switching studies have ranged from examining different use of products and services. One unique study by Nagarajan and Jafersadhiq (2019) sought to elaborate more on that. Their focus was on identifying factors that cause switching brands of toiletries. Though quite different from the telecommunication sector, the study brings to light that factors are common across different brands. Further analysis showed that when customer satisfaction increases they become loyal to the brand and in turn recommend the brand to family and friends which influences a brand switching statistics in that area.

Babayev and Najaf (2018) examined how emotional based marketing has an impact of customer brand switching. The researcher came up with a decision model after looking at factors that cause decision making in brand switching and depicted that emotion marketing conducted by companies has a significant impact in customer decision making process on brand switching.

Another study by Basu and Dick (1994), exposed the fact that telecommunication customers encounter switching costs, however, opt to brand switch when presented with lower service fees and better service quality. Such entails that service providers will be in a position to deter subscribers from switching brands when they provide them with high quality products at affordable prices.

Johnston (2013) explored the attractiveness of a brand and its relation to brand switching. The study concluded that attractiveness is the most important factor to brand switching. However, it is important to identify what type of product or service the company majors in. The study highlighted that there is no single formula or model that influence customers to brand switch but it is vital to look at the extent of each factor in a different context so as to improve brand image of the company.

Joseph and Joachim (2009) examined the costs of switching and its correlation with consumer retention, trust and satisfaction in the telecommunication sector of Nigeria. The results of the study revealed that consumer satisfaction have a positive impact on retaining customer and switching costs also contribute to high levels of consumer retention.

A research done by Galb (1999) revealed that switching costs, service provider quality and subscription costs contribute to decisions made by telecommunication companies to set certain rates after observing how customers switch from one service provider to the other. Arora et al (2014), focused on the elements which contribute to brand switching in the telecommunication businesses. Finding of the study indicated that good cost packages, service quality contribute to the ability of companies' ability to retain clients.

Ahmed, Shujaat and Syed (2015) surveyed 500 students from Karachi in order to determine brand switching behavior in the telecommunication industry. the study used regression analysis, correlation tests and ANOVA to ascertain the hypothesis of the study. Results indicated that price, brand image, service quality and marketing activities had an effect on brand switching among the students.

Nikic (2012), examined demographic effects and lifestyle influences on why consumers switch brands. 300 participants were examined and were grouped according to their demographic characteristics. A prevail scale was used to assess each brand used by participants. Results of the study indicated that social benefits derived from use of brand contributed highly to brand switching. Other benefits noted were value for money, quality of brand and emotional benefits. More results showed that women and older customers were concerned about quality benefits as compared to men and younger customers.

Jan and Matolia (2019) aimed to ascertain the correlation between that prompt consumers to shift from one cellphone service provider to the next in Afghanistan. A quantitative methodology was employed and participants of the study surveyed 100 telecom sector customers. Results from the study showed that product features had a significant effect on brand switching in the telecommunication industry of Afghanistan. Suntanto (2016) showed that service disruptions and failure had a high effect on brand switching in the telecommunication industry in Jarkata, while inconvenience had no major effect on brand switching. A similar study by Hussain et al (2016) indicated the same results after testing the impact of price, service failure and inconvenience on brand switching telecommunication services in Larkana Pakistan.

The researcher has deduced the below conceptual framework for the study indicating the effect of independent variable has on the dependent variable.

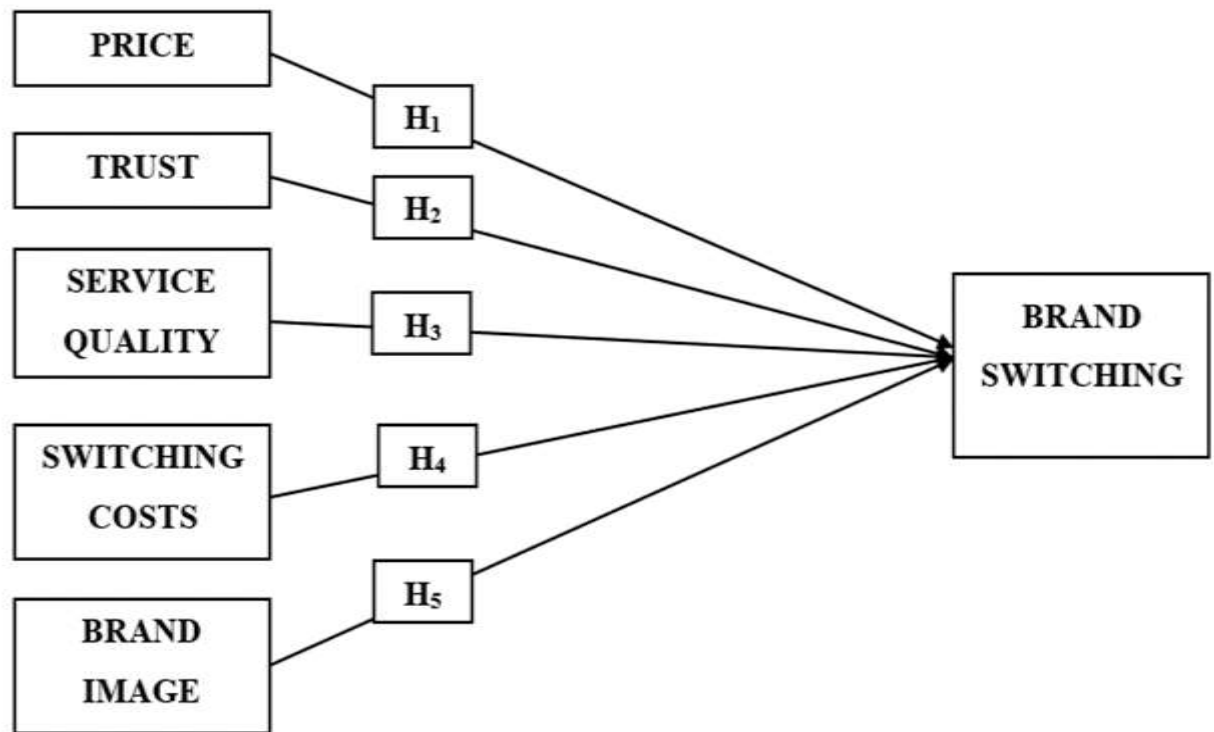


Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Methodology

The study uses quantitative techniques to examine factors behind brand switching in Iraq's telecommunications industry. Such was accomplished using questionnaires that were distributed to various mobile subscribers in the Iraq. The collected findings were coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Subsequently, the coded data was analyzed using a combination of descriptive statistics and regression analysis method. Conclusions and recommendations were derived from the estimated regression model results.

2.2 Research design

A research design is a detailed blueprint used to direct a research study Price (PR), Trust (TR), Service Quality (SQ), Switching Cost (SC) and Brand Image (BI). These variables were regarded as independent variables which were regressed against brand switching (Jan & Matolia. 2019)

The collected data was analyzed using regression analysis. This is because regression analysis made it possible to determine the effects of prices, network quality, brand image, offer value added service and promotion, and how they affect brand switching (Sale, Lohfeld & Brazil, 2002). As a result, a regression model will be estimated using the following functional form;

Brand switching = F (price, service quality, brand image, switching costs, trust)
 (1)

$$\mathbf{BS} = \alpha + \beta_1\mathbf{PR} + \beta_2\mathbf{SQ} + \beta_3\mathbf{BI} + \beta_4\mathbf{SC} + \beta_4\mathbf{TR} + \mu \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Where α represent a constant and β_1 to β_4 denotes regression parameters and μ represents the error term. This subsequently, results in the formulation and testing of the following hypotheses;

- **H₁:** Prices have no significant positive effects on brand switching behavior among consumers in the telecommunications industry.
- **H₂:** An improvement in telecommunications firm's trust has no resultant effects on brand switching behavior among consumers.
- **H₃:** Improvements in service quality have no significant negative effects on brand switching behavior among consumers.
- **H₄:** An improvement in telecommunications firm's brand image has no resultant significant effects on brand switching behavior among consumers.
- **H₅:** An increase in switching costs between telecommunications firms has no resultant significant effects on brand switching behavior among consumers.

2.3 Population and sampling methods

The study population is composed of various mobile subscribers based in Iraq. The researcher opted to focus on three major mobile services users Korek, AsiaCell and Zain is because these are three the mobile service providers in Iraq. Furthermore, Erbil has a high estimated number of mobile service subscribers in Iraq and hence, any changes in the established brand switching factors will significantly alter their market position and share. Besides, the operational scope of Erbil mobile service providers and subscribers' operational activities confines to the study purposes, and warrants the establishment of valid and reliable insights.

Covid19 caused challenges in accessing information from the entire study population. Hence, convenient sampling was applied. Lunsford (1995) defines convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling technique used to determine the best sample size as per researchers' convenience.

It is estimated that there is a total of more than 1,000,000 mobile subscribers in Erbil (Ministry of Information and Technology, 2020). However, inevitable challenges were observed in accessing information from the study participants due to the limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, convenient sampling was applied in determining the number of study participants required to provide the vital information. Therefore, the study sample was restricted to a convenience sample of 200 participants. As a result, 200 questionnaires were distributed to Korek, AsiaCell and Zain mobile subscribers in Iraq.

2.4 Data collection

Since the study relies on the use of primary data, questionnaires were established as the best possible research instrument needed to provide explanations about factors behind brand switching in Iraq's telecommunications industry. This was essential for maintain control of the research process and keeping research costs low (Malhotra & Birks, 2003).

The questionnaire was composed of both open-ended and close ended questions which were organized into two sections. That is, section A which captured mobile subscribers' demographic details. Section B provided detailed insights of the factors behind brand switching in Iraq's telecommunications industry. The related factors were measured a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree). The questionnaire was developed using related ideas established by previous studies (Al-Kwafi et al., 2015; Lei et al., 2017; Rajkumar et al., 2012; Quoquab et al., 2014). However, improvements were made to accommodate contemporary branding aspects.

The questionnaire was distributed by hand starting from 1st of December 2020 up to the 11th of the December 2020. The administration process was instant to avoid limitations posed by the Covid19 pandemic and hence, data collection was done on the same day,

2.5 Reliability and validity tests

The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using facial validity tests conducted by the supervisor together with the ethical committee. Such was done to ensure that the respondents understood what was required of them to do by the questionnaire. The reliability of the model variables was tested using Cronbach's alpha and the variables has alpha values that were above 0.70 which indicated a high level of internal consistency (McNeill & Chapman, 2005; Williams, 2007).

Facial validity tests were applied to test the validity of the research instrument using 5 mobile subscribers. Such was done to check if the questionnaire contained double barreled questions. Furthermore, the validity test was vital for establishing if the study participants clearly understood the questions asked of them and had no problems answering the questionnaire. All the 5 mobile subscribers indicated that the questionnaire was easy to understand and had no problems. Hence, the researcher proceeded to distributed to questionnaire.

The validity of the study results was established using ANOVA test and F-statistics results provided from the regression analysis. ANOVA test is vital for checking to determine if the regression model does not have outliers and home is homogenous (Malhotra & Birks, 2003). On the other hand, the F-statistics results depict whether the estimated is correctly specified, and reliable deductions can be established (Malhotra & Birks, 2003).

2.6 Limitations and Delimitations

The major limitation is the inability of the researcher to get access to data on prices of mobile services charges levied by telecommunications firms in Erbil. This is mainly due to privacy and confidentiality reasons. As a result, the researcher will have to resort to primary data which will be collected through the use of questionnaires. Besides, the study will be restricted to the study of university students in Erbil, North Iraq and hence the findings of this study may not be generalized and applied to other individuals, industries and countries. It is worthy to note that the researcher will not be able to control the respondents' answers or opinions and hence they might not provide the actual details due to reasons such as being shy, degradation etc. also, the researcher could focus on high income earners but will rather focus on both low and high income earners. This will help provide a much broader understanding of brand switching among university students.

2.7 Ethical standards

As a part of effort to hold to good ethical standards, the study will involve any misleading motives. All the objectives of the study will clearly be outlined to the respondents and the researcher will agree to abide to good ethical conduct. This will include an agreement to keep the results of the study confidential and that they will not be made public without the consent of the respondents. In addition, the researcher will apply for ethical approval before using the questionnaire to collect the information from the respondents. The collected information will be kept with the researcher only and will not be given to anyone other than the researcher's supervisor for academic purposes.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

The study aims to examine factors responsible for brand switching among mobile telephone subscribers in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Data analysis was conducted based on 184 mobile service subscribers' responses in Iraq. The study results were estimated using SPSS version 24 and Table 3.1 shows the demographic analysis of the study participants.

Table 3.1: Demographic analysis of the study participants

Variable	Description	Count	Percentage
Gender	Female	39	21.20
	Male	145	78.80
	Total	184	100
Age group	18-25 years	9	4.89
	26-33 years	87	47.28
	34-41 years	32	17.39
	42 years +	16	8.70
	Total	184	100
Used service provider	Korek	119	64.67
	AsiaCell	48	26.09
	Zain	17	9.24
	Total	184	100
Period of usage	Less than 5 years	6	3.60
	6-10 years	141	76.63
	11-15 years	28	15.22
	16 years and above	9	4.89
	Total	184	100

The mobile service subscribers were composed of 21.2% female subscribers and 78.8% male subscribers. 47.28% of the mobile service subscribers were between the age groups of 26-33 years, 17.39% between 34-41 years, 8.7% above 42 years and 4.89% between 18-25 years. 119 mobile service subscribers use Korek, 48 AsiaCell and 17 Zain. 141 mobile service subscribers indicated that they have been using their respective mobile service providers for 6-10 years, 28 for 11-15 years, 9 for at least 16 years and 6 for less than 5 years. 89% of the mobile service subscribers indicated that they do not intend to switch to other mobile service providers as opposed to 11% of the mobile service subscribers who indicated potential inclination to change their service providers.

3.2 Possible reasons for changing your mobile service provider

The mobile subscribers were asked possible reasons they would consider to change mobile service providers. The suggested reasons ranged from voice and data quality, billing, pricing plans, call center, and in store experience.

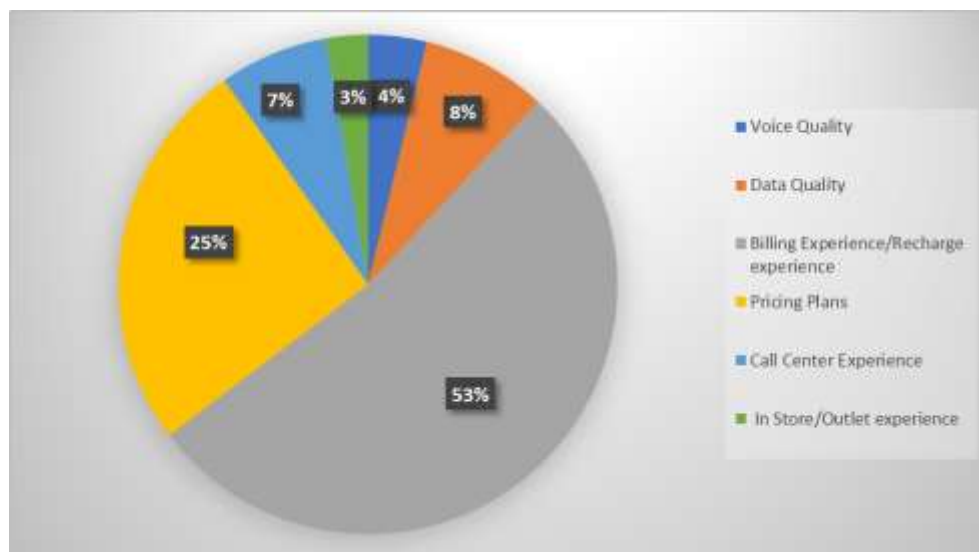


Figure 3.1: Possible reasons for changing your mobile service provider

Figure 3.1 depicts that 53% of the mobile subscribers are willing to change service providers because of billing or recharge experience. 25% related their reasons for switching service providers because of pricing plans, 8% because of data quality issues, 7% because of call center experience, 4% and 3% because of voice and in-store experience.

3.3 Extent of changing service providers

Having established the factors behind the reasons why mobile subscribers would change service providers, the study proceeded to determine the extent to which mobile subscribers change service providers. Figure 3.2 shows that mobile service provider switching is not a common feature among mobile service subscribers. 123 mobile subscribers indicated that they barely change service providers while 23 subscribers indicated that they do change service providers to a low extent. 3 and 8 subscribers indicated that they do change service providers to a high extent and very high extent.

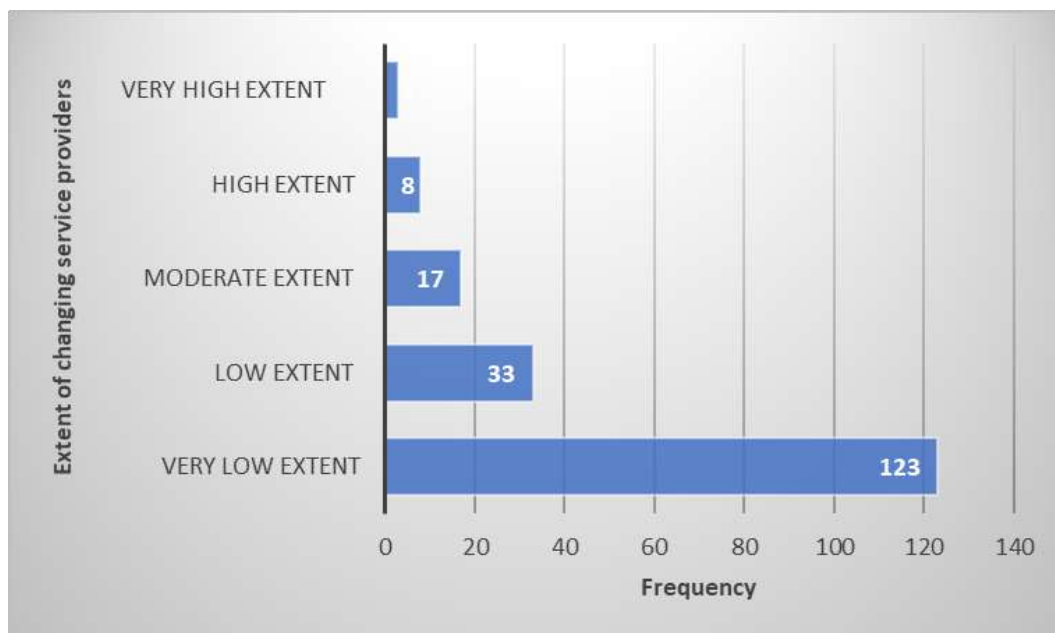


Figure 3.2: Extent of changing service providers

3.4 The provision of high quality international standards and innovative its services

The information collected from the mobile subscribers was essential in highlighting if mobile subscribers offered high quality international services. 96 mobile subscribers were in agreement of the idea that their mobile service provider's offer offered high quality international services. Meanwhile, 88 mobile subscribers disagreed with the idea that their mobile service provider's offer offered high quality international services (see Figure 3.3).

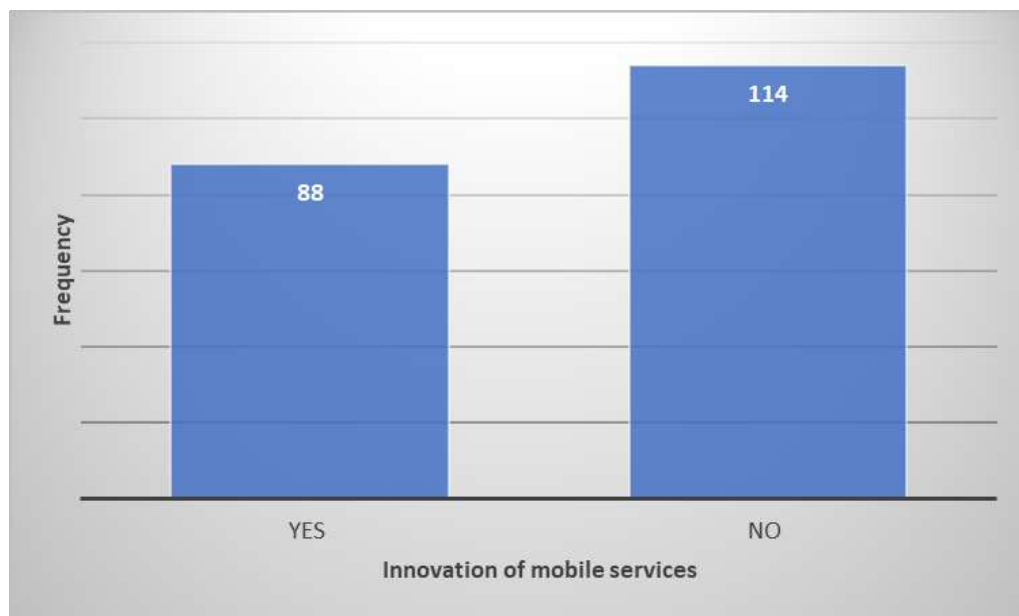


Figure 3.3: Provision of high quality international services

Meanwhile, Figure 3.4 shows that 70 mobile subscribers were in agreement of the idea that their mobile service providers constantly innovate their products and services each year. On the other hand, 114 mobile subscribers disagreed with the idea that their mobile service providers constantly innovate their products and services each year.

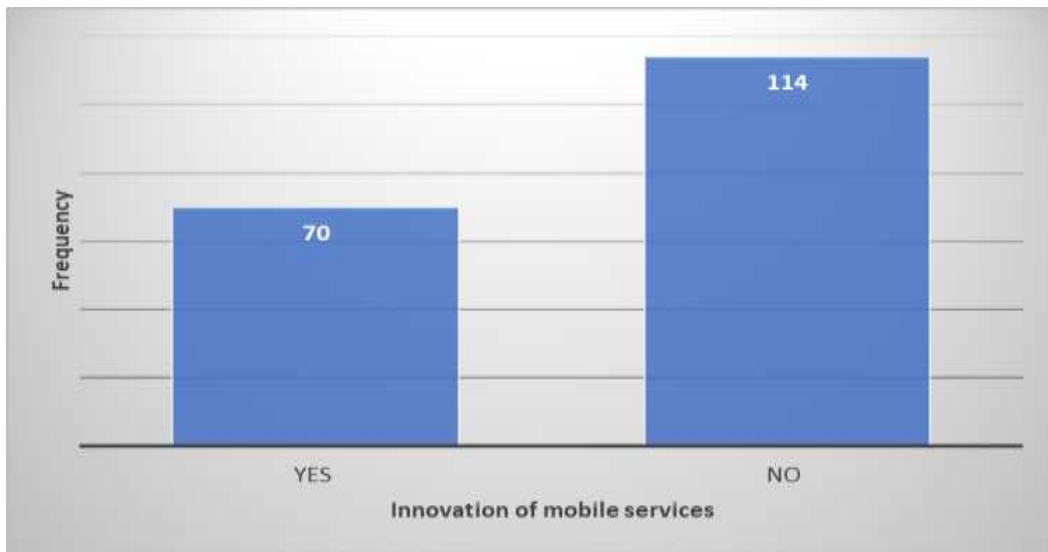


Figure 3.4: Innovation of service by mobile service providers

3.6 Questionnaire responses

Percentages were used to analyse the questionnaire responses relating to the factors causing brand switching among Erbil mobile subscribers. The analyzed responses were presented as follows;

3.6.1 Price as a determinant factor of brand switching

When the mobile subscribers were asked if a higher price makes me switch to a competitor, 16.3% of the indicated that they strongly disagree that an increase in price dissuades them from using the affected mobile services. Such suggest that brand loyalty and customer-loyalty related cause mobile subscribers to remain loyal. 7.6% of the mobile subscribers disagreed, while 20.1% indicated that they will not switch to other mobile service providers in the event that mobile subscription prices have increased. On the other hand, 19% responded by agreeing that they would switch to other prices mobile service providers when prices increase. 37% of the mobile subscribers strongly agreed that they will definitely switch to other mobile service providers when mobile subscription prices increase.

When the mobile subscribers were asked if they are not ready to pay a higher price on their network, 18.5% of the mobile subscribers strongly disagreed while 3.3% disagreed. This possibly suggests that the quality of services provided does not match the asked prices, and hence, mobile subscribers will be reluctant to pay a higher price on their network. 23.9% were not sure if they were not ready to pay a higher price on their network. Meanwhile, 6% agreed while 48.4% strongly agreed that they are not ready to pay a higher price on my network. Again, this connotes the mismatches between the quality of services provided and mobile subscription prices.

In question 12, when mobile subscribers were asked if low price offers enhance the competitiveness of mobile services and products, 15.2% strongly disagreed, while 11.4 disagreed. This entails that they do not consider price offers to play an essential mobile in improving the mobile service providers' competitiveness. 7.6% of the mobile subscribers were not sure if price offers aid in improving the mobile service providers' competitiveness. On the other hand, 17.4% agreed, while 48.4% strongly agreed that price offers aid in improving the mobile service providers' competitiveness. Thus, the overall results imply that a lot of mobile subscribers believe that price offers are essential for improving mobile service providers' competitiveness.

In question 13, when the mobile subscribers were asked if they were happy with the price they pay for mobile services, 6.5% strongly disagreed, while 4.9% disagreed. That is, they were not were happy with the price they pay for mobile services and further suggests the need to improve the quality of services provided by the mobile service providers. 14.7% of the mobile subscribers were not sure if they were happy with the price they pay for mobile services. However, 25% agreed, while 48.9% strongly agreed with the idea that they were happy with the price they pay for mobile services. Thus, several mobile subscribers can be said to be happy about the price they pay for mobile services. That is, they bare highly

satisfied with the price they are paying for mobile services provided by the mobile service providers.

In questionnaire 14, when asked if the price they pay for mobile services is fair and reasonable, 2.2% strongly disagreed, while 9.8% disagreed that the price they pay for mobile services is fair and reasonable. 36.4% were not sure if the price they pay for mobile services is fair and reasonable. Only 34.5% strongly agreed and 17.4% agreed that the price they pay for mobile services is fair and reasonable. This exhibits that a relatively high number of agreed in overall that the price they pay for mobile services is fair and reasonable.

In questionnaire 15, when asked if the price paid by service users reflects the quality offered by the firm, 3.3% strongly disagreed, while 8.2% disagreed that the price paid by service users reflects the quality offered by the firm. 25.5% were not sure if the price paid by service users reflects the quality offered by the firm. Only 37.5% strongly agreed and 25.5% agreed that the price paid by service users reflects the quality offered by the firm. This exhibits that a relatively high number of agreed in overall that the mobile service providers are providing them with high quality services commensuration with the price they pay for mobile services.

When the mobile subscribers were asked if the prices charged by Erbil mobile service providers are lower than those charged in other countries, 3.3% of the indicated that they strongly disagree that the prices charged are lower than those charged in other countries. Such suggest that mobile services fees charged mobile subscribers in Iraq are relatively expensive at international level. 6% of the mobile subscribers disagreed, while 24.5% indicated that they were not sure if the prices charged by Erbil mobile service providers are lower than those charged in other countries. On the other hand, 39.7% responded by agreeing that prices charged by Erbil mobile service providers are lower than those charged in other countries. 26.6% of the mobile subscribers strongly agreed that prices charged by Erbil mobile service providers are lower than those charged in other countries.

3.6.2 Trust as a determinant factor of brand switching

In question 17, when the mobile subscribers were asked if the telecom service provider's services process are trustworthy, 6% of the mobile subscribers strongly disagreed while 7.6% disagreed. This possibly suggests that the mobile services provider has some trust issues, and hence, mobile subscribers may be willing to switch to other mobile service providers. 27.2% were not sure if the telecom service provider's services process is trustworthy. Meanwhile, 35.3% agreed while 23.9% strongly agreed that the telecom service provider's services process is trustworthy. Again, this connotes that the mobile services providers provide mobile services on time and as expected by customers.

In question 18, when the mobile subscribers were asked the telecom service provider is reliable and focused. 6.5% of the mobile subscribers strongly disagreed while 6.5% disagreed. This possibly suggests that the quality of services provided does not reliable services and is not focused towards providing satisfactory services to customers, and hence, mobile subscribers can opt to switch to mother mobile service providers. 34.2% were not sure if the telecom service provider is reliable and focused. 20.1% agreed while 32.6% strongly agreed that the telecom service provider is reliable and focused. This entails that there is a relatively high level of reliability observed regarding the provision of expected services on time by the service providers to customers.

In question 19, when mobile subscribers were asked if the reputation of the telecom service provider is trustworthy. 13% strongly disagreed, while 26.6% disagreed. This entails that they do not consider the service providers as trustworthy but as having a bad reputation. 10.3% of the mobile subscribers were not sure if the reputation of the telecom service provider is trustworthy. On the other hand, 12.7% strongly agreed, while 29.3% strongly agreed that the reputation of the telecom service provider is trustworthy. Thus, the overall results imply that mobile service providers have a good reputation of providing good

services on time and can be trusted regarding the provision of stated service both on time and of mentioned quality.

In question 20, when the mobile subscribers were asked if the billing system of the firm is trustworthy, 13% of the indicated that they strongly disagree that the billing system of the firm is trustworthy. Such suggest that some consumers are being over-charged for using certain mobile services. 26.6% of the mobile subscribers disagreed, while 10.3% indicated that the billing system of the firm is trustworthy. On the other hand, 20.7% responded by agreeing that the billing system of the firm is trustworthy. 29.3% of the mobile subscribers strongly agreed that the billing system of the firm is trustworthy.

In question 21, when the mobile subscribers were asked if the telecom service provider has of long been trustable by a lot of people, 8.7% of the mobile subscribers strongly disagreed while 10%% disagreed. This possibly suggests that the service providers have of long being having trust issues, and hence, mobile subscribers can be forced to switch to other mobile service providers. 23.9% were not sure if the telecom service provider has of long been trustable by a lot of people. Meanwhile, 6% agreed while 48.4% strongly agreed that the telecom service provider has of long been trustable by a lot of people. Again, this connotes the telecom service provider has of long been trustable by a lot of people.

In question 22, when mobile subscribers were asked if additional services changes are delivered on time as announced, 3.3% strongly disagreed, while 9.2% disagreed. This entails that the has time delivery problems and can delay providing expected services. 28.3% of the mobile subscribers were not sure if additional services changes are delivered on time as announced. On the other hand, 26.1% s agreed, while 33.2% strongly agreed that additional services changes are delivered on time as announced. Thus, the overall results imply that a lot of mobile subscribers consider mobile service providers as capable of providing expected services on time.

In question 23, when mobile subscribers were asked if the service provider does not always change its position on service matters, 7.6% strongly disagreed, while 8.7% disagreed. This entails that the mobile service providers do not always adhere to their words, and can back track on their promises. 25.5% of the mobile subscribers were not sure if the service provider does not always change its position on service matters. On the other hand, 22.3% strongly agreed, while 35.9% strongly agreed that the service provider does not always change its position on service matters. Thus, the overall results imply that a lot of mobile subscribers believe that the service provide mobile services as promised and can be trusted concerning their ability to keep their promises.

3.6.3 Service quality as a determinant factor of brand switching

In question 24, when the mobile subscribers were asked if the telecom service provider provides quality service, 10% of the indicated that they strongly disagree that the telecom service provider provides quality service. Such suggest that the service providers do not always provide high quality services and this can trigger brand switching behavior among customers. 10.9% of the mobile subscribers disagreed, while 10% indicated that the telecom service provider provides quality service. On the other hand, 20.1% responded by agreeing that the telecom service provider provides quality service. 37% of the mobile subscribers strongly agreed that the telecom service provider provides quality service. This can dissuade mobile subscribers from switching to other mobile brands. High quality services causes customers to be loyal to the service providers.

In question 25, when the mobile service providers the telecom service provider responds quickly to complaints. This possibly suggests that the mobile services providers have good customer care and hence, mobile subscribers will be reluctant to switch to other mobile brands because of the high quality services they are obtaining from their respective service providers. 23.9% were not sure if the telecom service provider responds quickly to complaints. Meanwhile, 6% agreed while 48.4% strongly agreed that they mobile service providers responds

promptly to customers' complaints. Again, this implies good customer relations and care strategies adopted by the mobile service providers.

In question 26, when mobile subscribers were asked if they are satisfied with the service and no intention of switching brands, 8.2% strongly disagreed, while 18.4% disagreed. This entails that mobile subscribers have intentions to switch services due to lack of satisfaction obtain from their respective service providers. 7.6% of the mobile subscribers were not sure if they would switch to other mobile service providers because of poor satisfaction problems. On the other hand, 27.8% agreed, while 38% strongly agreed they would switch to other mobile service providers because of poor satisfaction problems. Thus, the overall results imply that poor service quality resulting in poor satisfaction would cause customers to switch to other mobile service providers.

In question 27, when the mobile subscribers were asked if the Telecom service provider's network covers a lot of areas, 5% strongly disagreed, while 15% disagreed. That is, they were not happy with the network's coverage as some of the areas are out of coverage. This is an issue that can trigger mobile subscribers to switch to other mobile brands. Furthermore, this further suggests the need to improve the quality of services provided by the mobile service providers by improving network coverage. 10% of the mobile subscribers were not sure if they were happy with the mobile network services. However, 35% agreed, while 35% strongly agreed with the idea that there are some areas that are out of reach and consumers in those areas can experience some network problems. Thus, several mobile subscribers can be said to be happy about the mobile network coverage services. That is, they are highly satisfied with the price they are paying for mobile services provided by the mobile service providers.

In questionnaire 28, when asked if the telecom service provider has a good reputation for quality service, 12% strongly disagreed, while 18% disagreed that the quality of services provided by the mobile service providers are of not good quality. 30% were not sure if the quality of provided services matches their

expectations. Only 15% strongly agreed and 25% agreed that the quality of provided services matches their expectations and matches the service providers' quality reputation. This exhibits that a relatively high number of agreed in overall that the quality of provided services matches their expectations and matches the service providers' quality reputation.

In questionnaire 29, when asked if the service provider offers extra product features as compared to its competitors, 13% strongly disagreed, while 27% disagreed that there are no additional products provided by their current and respective service providers. Such is sufficient to persuade them to switch to other service providers 10% were not sure if they were obtaining any additional products provided by their current and respective service providers. Only 25% strongly agreed and 25% agreed that they were obtaining any additional products provided by their current and respective service providers. This exhibits that a relatively high number of agreed in overall that mobile service providers attempt to provide more services to their customers so as to foster loyalty. Such moves serve as a platform on which service providers compete with other service providers. In addition, this can enhance customer satisfaction and foster both loyalty among the customers.

In question 30, when the mobile subscribers were asked if there are little or no incidences of service disruptions, 30% of the indicated that they strongly disagree that there is considerable amount of time lost through service disruptions. Hence, this potentially indicates that mobile service providers attempt by all means to ensure that service users are well connected to mobile services at all the times and costs. 20% of the mobile subscribers disagreed, while 15% indicated that they were not sure if there is considerable amount of time lost through service disruptions. On the other hand, 20% responded by agreeing that there is considerable amount of time lost through service disruptions. 15% of the mobile subscribers strongly agreed that there is considerable amount of time lost through service disruptions.

In question 31, when the mobile subscribers were asked if they would switch to other mobile service providers because of poor satisfaction problems, 25% strongly disagreed, while 15% disagreed. That is, they were happy with the services provided by their respective service providers. Additionally, they might be loyal to the service providers due to reasons related to quality and high customer satisfaction. Therefore, they will not switch brands in the event that they have experienced some service disruptions. 15% of the mobile subscribers were not sure if they would to other mobile services in the event that their current service providers have experienced service disruptions. However, 25% agreed, while 25% strongly agreed with the idea that they would to other mobile services in the event that their current service providers have experienced service disruptions. Thus, a relatively equal number of mobile subscribers can be said to be partially happy and unhappy about their mobile service providers, and hence, any potential service disruptions can either cause them to remain loyal or persuade them to switch service providers. That is, they bare highly satisfied with the price they are paying for mobile services provided by the mobile service providers.

In questionnaire 32, when asked if customers can access customer care services using many different languages, 2% strongly disagreed, while 4% disagreed that the mobile services are not accessible in many different languages. 14% were not sure if the mobile services are not accessible in many different languages or not. Only 30% strongly agreed and 50% agreed that the mobile services are not accessible in many different languages. This exhibits that a relatively high number of agreed in overall consider that the mobile service providers attempt to cater of all the social and ethnic groups' distinct language needs and preferences. This can dissuade mobile subscribers from switching to other service providers.

In questionnaire 33, when asked if the services offered match customers' expectations, 15% strongly disagreed, while 20% disagreed that the services provide by the mobile services providers are not matching their expectations.

Such can be attributed to poor quality and other related concerns falling below their expectations. 15% were not sure if the services provide by the mobile services providers are not matching their expectations. Only 25% strongly agreed and 25% agreed that the services provide by the mobile services providers are not matching their expectations. This exhibits that a moderately high number of mobile subscribers were partially agreeing and disagreeing about their expectations being met by their service providers. Hence, any improvements in service delivery can improve customers’; expectations and dissuade them from switching brands. On the other hand, a further decline in the quality of service provided can persuade customers to switch service providers

In question 34, when the mobile subscribers were asked if the service offered are of high international standards, 3% of the indicated that they strongly disagree that they are obtaining high quality services of international standards. These findings denote that customers may opt to switch service providers in search of those service providers that can provide them with high quality services of international standards. Thus, brand switching tendencies are high when customers perceive the quality of services provided as falling below international standards. 5% of the mobile subscribers were not sure if service providers were and can provide them with high quality services of international standards. On the other hand, 17% responded by agreeing that service providers were and can provide them with high quality services of international standards. 60% of the mobile subscribers strongly agreed that service providers were and can provide them with high quality services of international standards. Therefore, such high numbers of customers indicating that they are obtaining high quality services of international standards may demonstrate high or strong levels of customer loyalty. It is such loyalty that can trigger them to shun other mobile service providers, thereby dissuade them from switching brands.

In question 35, when the mobile subscribers were asked if the services are certified by the telecommunications board, 23% of the indicated that they strongly

disagree that the mobile service providers are registered with the related boards. Such disagreements could be an expression of lack of satisfaction of customer grievances. Therefore, mobile subscribers may be opting to switch service providers in such cases. Furthermore, the quality of services provided could be below par and failing to meet their expectations. 7% of the mobile subscribers disagreed, while 15% indicated that they were not sure if the mobile service providers are registered with the related boards. On the other hand, 15% responded by agreeing that the mobile service providers are registered with the related boards. 40% of the mobile subscribers strongly agreed that the mobile service providers are registered with the related boards. These findings indicate in overall, that there is a relatively high provision to high quality services by the mobile service providers matching their quality expectations.

The provided brand switching determinants results indicated that there is a relatively high tendency for mobile subscribers to switch brands when certain conditions were not met. However, there is a relatively high agreement among mobile subscribers that they are reluctant to switch brands because of reasons related to brand and customer loyalty.

3.6.4 Switching costs as a determinant factor of brand switching

In question 29, when the mobile subscribers were asked if they switch to another communication service company, they will lose the accumulated benefits provided by the current service provider, 3% of the indicated that if they strongly disagree that they switch to another communication service company, they will lose the accumulated benefits provided by the current service provider. Such suggest that brand loyalty and customer-loyalty related cause mobile subscribers to remain loyal. 20.9% of the mobile subscribers disagreed, while 20.1% indicated that if they switch to another communication service company, they will lose the accumulated benefits provided by the current service provider. On the other hand, 36% responded by agreeing that if they switch to another communication service company, they will lose the accumulated benefits provided by the current service

provider. 20% of the mobile subscribers strongly agreed that if they switch to another communication service company, they will lose the accumulated benefits provided by the current service provider.

In question 30, when the mobile subscribers were asked if they worry that the service provided by other communication service company might not match their expectation, 10.5% of the mobile subscribers strongly disagreed while 11.3% disagreed. This possibly suggests that the quality of services provided by all mobile service providers matches the asked prices, and hence, mobile subscribers will be reluctant to switch to other mobile service providers. 46.9% were not sure if the service provided by other communication service company might not match their expectation. Meanwhile, 6% agreed while 25.4% strongly agreed that the service provided by other communication service company might not match their expectation. Again, this connotes the mismatches between the quality of services provided and mobile subscription prices.

In question 31, when mobile subscribers were asked if they do not have sufficient time to understand the information of other communication service companies, 15.2% strongly disagreed, while 11.4% disagreed. This entails that they do not complete information about the service provided as well as the mobile service providers' operational activities. 7.6% of the mobile subscribers were not sure if they do not have sufficient time to understand the information of other communication service companies. On the other hand, 17.4% agreed, while 48.4% strongly agreed that they do not have sufficient time to understand the information of other communication service companies. Thus, the overall results imply that a lot of mobile subscribers should be provided by the mobile service providers with sufficient time to understand the information of other communication service companies.

In question 32, when the mobile subscribers were asked if customers can access customer care services using many different languages, 6.5% strongly disagreed, while 4.9% disagreed. That is, they regard the mobile service providers as

incomparable in both the quality and time of service provided. 14.7% of the mobile subscribers were not sure if it is difficult to compare the current company with others, while 48.9% strongly agreed with the idea that it is difficult to compare the current company with others. Thus, several mobile subscribers can be said to be incapable of comparing the current company with others. That is, they might not be having sufficient information and time to compare both the quality and time of service provided by the mobile service providers.

In questionnaire 33, when asked if the services offered match customers' expectations, 4% strongly disagreed, while 11.6% disagreed that the switching process involves a lot of paper work. 16.0% were not sure if the price they pay for mobile services is fair and reasonable. Only 55% strongly agreed and 17.4% agreed that the switching process involves a lot of paper work. This exhibits that are paperwork complexities that may prove to be costly and time consuming to switch to other mobile service providers. Hence, mobile subscribers may be reluctant to switch to other mobile brands.

In questionnaire 34, when asked if The service offered are of high international standards, 3.3% strongly disagreed, while 8.2% disagreed that it takes time to have the service running after switching to it. 25.5% were not sure if it takes time to have the service running after switching to it. Only 37.5% strongly agreed and 25.5% agreed that it takes time to have the service running after switching to it... This exhibits that a relatively high number of agreed are not willing to switch to other mobile service providers because it is time consuming to switch to other mobile service providers.

In question 35, when the mobile subscribers were asked if the services are certified by the telecommunications board, 7% of the indicated that they strongly disagree that it requires more time and effort for me to start learning how to access and use the new services offered by other service providers. Such suggest that using a new mobile service does not always require a lot of time and effort. 3% of the mobile subscribers disagreed, while 43.5% indicated that it requires more time

and effort for me to start learning how to access and use the new services offered by other service providers. On the other hand, 20% responded by agreeing that it requires more time and effort for me to start learning how to access and use the new services offered by other service providers. 26.6% of the mobile subscribers strongly agreed that it is time consuming and requires stern effort to learn how to use new mobile services. Hence, they can be reluctant to switch to other mobile service providers.

3.6.5 Brand image as a determinant factor of brand switching

In question 36, when the mobile subscribers were asked if they are convinced that the brand is committed to gender equality, 16.3% of the indicated that the brand is committed to gender equality. Such suggest that mobile service providers undertake initiatives to promote gender equality. 7.6% of the mobile subscribers disagreed, while 20.1% indicated the brand is committed to gender equality. On the other hand, 19% responded by agreeing that the brand is committed to gender equality. 37% of the mobile subscribers strongly agreed that the brand is committed to gender equality. Hence, the mobile service providers can be said to be implementing services that attempt to satisfy both male and female subscribers.

In question 37, when the mobile subscribers were asked if they were convinced brand is very advanced, 5.5% of the mobile subscribers strongly disagreed while 16.3% disagreed. This possibly suggests that the mobile lacks innovativeness and that their expectations are not being met one way or the other. As a result, they might be persuaded to switch to other mobile brands. 13.9% were not sure if they were not ready to pay a higher price on their network. Meanwhile, 16% agreed while 48.4% strongly agreed that they were convinced brand is very advanced. Again, this entails that the brand meets consumers' expectations regarding innovativeness and technological needs.

In question 38, when mobile subscribers were asked if they feel that the brand is socially responsible, 1.2% strongly disagreed, while 25.4% disagreed. This entails that the mobile service providers are not fully committed towards fulfilling their corporate social responsibilities. 3.2% of the mobile subscribers were not sure if they feel that the brand is socially responsible. On the other hand, 41.8% agreed, while 28.4% strongly agreed that they feel that the brand is socially responsible. Thus, the overall results imply that a lot of mobile subscribers consider mobile service providers are not fully committed towards fulfilling their corporate social responsibilities.

In question 39, when the mobile subscribers were asked if they are convinced that the brand is a leader in its field, 6.5% strongly disagreed, while 4.9% disagreed. That is, they were not they are convinced that the brand is a leader in its field. 14.7% of the mobile subscribers were not sure if they are convinced that the brand is a leader in its field. However, 25% agreed, while 48.9% strongly agreed with the idea they are convinced that the brand is a leader in its field. Thus, several mobile subscribers can be said to be they are convinced that the brand is a leader in its field. That is, they fully informed of the mobile service providers capacity to provide required mobile services satisfactorily compared to other mobile service providers.

In questionnaire 40, when asked if the service brand is associated with high status quo among mobile subscribers in their country, 2% strongly disagreed, while 10% disagreed that the service brand is associated with high status quo among mobile subscribers in their country. 16% were not sure if the service brand is associated with high status quo among mobile subscribers in their country. Only 54.9% strongly agreed and 17.4% agreed that the service brand is associated with high status quo among mobile subscribers in my country. This exhibits that a relatively high number of agreed in overall tend to obtain reputable, and top class mobile services as compared to other mobile service providers.

In questionnaire 41, when asked if the brand has been in existence for a long period, 10% strongly disagreed, while 11.5% disagreed that the brand has been in existence for a long period. 15.5% were not sure if the brand has been in existence for a long period. Only 47.5% strongly agreed and 15.5% agreed that the brand has been in existence for a long period. This exhibits that a relatively high number of agreed in overall that the mobile service providers are providing them with high quality services commensuration with the price they pay for mobile services.

In question 42, when the mobile subscribers were asked if other firms and service providers are associated with this brand, 19.3% of the indicated that they strongly disagree that other firms and service providers are associated with this brand. Such suggest that mobile services providers are not cooperating with other firms due to reasons such as poor brand performance, image and reputation. 10% of the mobile subscribers disagreed, while 33% indicated that other firms and service providers are associated with this brand. On the other hand, 33.6% responded by agreeing that prices charged by Erbil mobile service providers are lower than those charged in other countries. 7.1% of the mobile subscribers strongly agreed that other firms and service providers are associated with this brand.

In question 43, when the mobile subscribers were asked if the brand is well known through the country, 15.2% of the indicated that they strongly disagree that the brand is well known through the country. Such suggest that some of the mobile are not famous and mobile subscribers do not know them. 15.8% of the mobile subscribers disagreed, while 17.4% indicated that they were not sure if the brand is well known through the country. On the other hand, 19% responded by agreeing that the brand is well known through the country. 32.6% of the mobile subscribers strongly agreed that the brand is well known through the country.

3.7 Descriptive analysis of the model variables

Descriptive statistics were computed for all the model variables to analyses magnitude of concentration and dispersion. That is, using their mean and standard deviation to analyses both the independent variables and dependent variables.

3.7.1 Descriptive analysis of price as a brand switching factor

Mobile subscribers were established to have been significantly concerned about the price charged for mobile services by mobile service providers (mean=4.38, standard deviation=1.38). This possibly entails that high prices make it unaffordable to use certain mobile telephone services. This can also be supported by established findings showing that mobile subscribers are willing to switch brands in the course of being charged high prices (mean=4.14, standard deviation =1.47).

Table 3.2: Descriptive analysis of price as a brand switching factor

Price	Mean	Std. Dev
A higher price makes me switch to a competitor.	4.14	1.38
I am not ready to pay a higher price on my network.	4.38	1.47
Low price offers from competitive products.	3.77	0.82
I am happy with the price I pay for my service.	3.63	0.79
The price I pay for my service is fair and reasonable.	3.38	1.36
The price paid by service users reflects the quality offered by the firm.	2.84	1.35
The prices charged are lower than those charged in other countries.	3.27	1.99

Slightly moderate reactions or perceptions were related to domestic prices being competitive as compared to international prices (mean=3.27, standard deviation =1.99), prices being fair and reasonable (mean=3.38, standard deviation =1.36), mobile subscribers being happy of prices they pay for mobile services mean=3.63;

standard deviation=0.79), and competitive products being sold at a lower price (mean=3.77; standard deviation=0.82).

3.7.2 Descriptive analysis of trust as a brand switching factor

Factor elements behind the reasons why mobile subscribers switch brands were linked to mobile subscribers offering trustworthy services (mean=4.06, standard deviation =0.98). This is a major element which influences consumers' decisions to continuously buy products and services. Such is connected to mobile services providers offering focused and reliable services (mean=4.03, standard deviation =0.84). The mobile subscribers can be established to have indicated to have been experiencing billing issues (mean=3.40, standard deviation =0.59). Such shows that billing problems or ineffectiveness were dissuading mobile service users from continuing using the services and hence, would be willing to switch to other service providers. Similar contentions can be inferred regarding suggestions revealing that mobile service providers do to some extent change service matters or their position (mean=3.76, standard deviation =0.92).

Table 3.3: Descriptive analysis of trust as a brand switching factor

Trust	Mean	Std. Dev
The telecom service provider's services process are trustworthy.	4.06	0.98
The telecom service provider is reliable and focused.	4.03	0.84
The reputation of the telecom service provider is trustworthy.	3.61	0.75
The billing system of the firm is trustworthy.	3.40	0.59
The telecom service provider has of long been trustable by a lot of people.	3.88	0.71
Additional services changes are delivered on time as announced.	4.01	1.30
The service provider does not always change its position on service matters.	3.76	0.92

3.7.3 Descriptive analysis of service quality as a brand switching factor

Table 3.4 reveals that mobile service quality issues affecting mobile subscribers were mainly linked to customers being able to access customer care services using many different languages (mean=4.38; standard deviation=1.24), customer satisfaction (mean=4.33, standard deviation=0.82), being able to quickly respond to complaints (mean=4.26, standard deviation=1.47), limited incidences of service disruptions (mean=4.14; standard deviation=1.16), services offered matching customers' expectations (mean=4.16; standard deviation=0.84), covering numerous areas (mean=4.03, standard deviation=0.79), and having a good reputation for quality service (mean=4.00, standard deviation=1.03).

Table 3.4: Descriptive analysis of service quality as a brand switching factor

Service quality	Mean	Std. Dev
The Telecom service provider provides quality service.	3.74	1.38
The Telecom service provider responds quickly to complaints.	4.26	1.47
I am satisfied with the service and no intention of switching brands.	4.33	0.82
The Telecom service provider's network covers a lot of areas.	4.03	0.79
The Telecom service provider has a good reputation for quality service.	4.00	1.03
The service provider constantly makes product improvements all the time.	3.98	1.11
The service provider offers extra product features as compared to its competitors.	3.82	0.69
There are little or no incidences of service disruptions.	4.14	1.16
Customers can access customer care services using many different languages	4.38	1.24
The services offered match customers' expectations.	4.16	0.84
The service offered are of high international standards.	4.02	0.96
The service are certified by the telecommunications board.	3.78	0.83

3.7.4 Descriptive analysis of switching costs as a brand switching factor

Switching costs can be observed to be highly linked to the idea of time to subscribers being not capable of understanding the information provided by their

service providers (mean=4.33; standard deviation=0.82). This depicts poor customer relations management which leads to customer satisfaction. Table 3.5 also shows that switching costs tend to be high when subscribers are not convinced that other service providers will offer them the best services as compared to their previous service provider (mean=4.26; standard deviation=1.27). Such reflects the innovativeness of the service providers to be ahead of its competitors. Moreover, switching costs were observed to be high when subscribers are not capable of comparing the firm with other service providers (mean=4.0; standard deviation=0.79). This possibly indicates high quality services being offered by market participants and hence, forcing quality standards to increase. Switching costs also high when mobile subscribers consider switching as being associated with a lot of paper work (mean=4.00; standard deviation=1.03).

Table 3.5: Descriptive analysis of switching costs as a brand switching factor

Switching costs	Mean	Std. Dev
If I switch to another communication service company, I will lose the accumulated benefits in the current.	3.74	1.38
I worry that the service provided by other communication service company might not match my expectation.	4.26	1.47
I do not have sufficient time to understand the information of other communication service companies.	4.33	0.82
It is difficult to compare the current company with others.	4.03	0.79
The switching process involves a lot of paper work.	4.00	1.03
It takes time to have the service running after switching to it.	3.98	1.11
It requires more time and effort for me to start learning how to access and use the new services offered by other service providers.	3.82	0.69

3.7.5 Descriptive analysis of brand image as a brand switching factor

The subscribers indicated that brand image is most likely to cause significant changes in their brand switching behavior through to the idea of the brand having been in existence for a long period (mean=4.10; standard deviation=1.33). This depicts brand loyalty which is positively associated with high levels of service quality and customer satisfaction. Brand image can be observed to be highly linked Table 3.6 also shows that switching costs tend to be high when subscribers consider the brand to be very advanced (mean=4.06; standard deviation=0.92). Such reflects the innovativeness of the service providers to be ahead of its competitors. However, brand image was observed to be high when the firm provides reliable high quality service associated with this brand (mean=4.02; standard deviation=1.06). This possibly indicates high service quality and hence, forcing quality standards to increase. Brand image is also high when mobile subscribers are convinced brand is a leader in its field (mean=4.00; standard deviation=1.08).

Table 3.6: Descriptive analysis of brand image costs as a brand switching factor

Brand Image	Mean	Std. Dev
I am a convinced brand is committed to gender equality.	3.84	0.74
I am a convinced brand is very advanced.	4.06	0.92
I feel the brand is socially responsible.	3.33	1.02
I am a convinced brand is a leader in its field	4.00	1.08
The service brand is associated with high status quo among mobile subscribers in my country.	3.96	1.24
The brand has been in existence for a long period.	4.10	1.33
Other firms and service providers are associated with this brand.	4.02	1.06
The brand is well known through the country.	3.26	0.746

3.7.6 Descriptive analysis of brand switching

Factor elements behind the reasons why mobile subscribers switch brands were linked to dissatisfaction of the previous brand. (Mean=4.18, standard deviation =1.37). This is a major element which influences consumers' decisions to continuously buy products and services. Such is connected to mobile services providers offering services at reasonable prices (mean=4.08, standard deviation =0.92). The mobile subscribers can be established to have indicated to have been attracted by competitors' promotional offers (mean=3.61, standard deviation =0.75). Such shows that competitors are increasingly engaging on competitive practices of luring customers from other service providers. Similar contentions can be inferred regarding advertisements launched by competitors (mean=3.88, standard deviation=1.18). In general, the mobile subscribers to have been highly concerned by the high prices charged for high quality brands (mean=4.01, standard deviation=1.28), and failure by mobile service providers to offer innovative services (mean=4.02, standard deviation=1.03).

Table 3.7: Descriptive analysis of brand switching

Brand switching	Mean	Std. Dev
I usually change to another brand because it is a high level of product with a relatively higher price.	4.01	1.28
I usually change to another brand because of its reasonable price and good value for money.	4.08	0.92
I am usually stimulated by promotion activities offered by other providers.	3.61	0.75
I am usually attracted by the advertisement activities offered by other providers.	3.88	1.18
The reason for changing the brand is usually because of the dissatisfaction of the previous brand.	4.18	1.37
The service provider does not always offer innovative services.	4.02	1.03
It offers additional services and promotional offers that are not provided by other brands.	4.06	1.12

3.8 Correlation coefficient tests

The present study employed the Pearson correlation coefficient test to determine how brand switching and established factors were correlated. The results show that the entire brand switching factors roles were positively correlated with each other, and brand switching. A high significant positive correlation of 0.854 was found to exist between brand switching and price. This entails that an increase in the price of mobile services offered is associated with an increase in brand switching. Another high and significant positive correlation of 0.748 was noted to exist between of service quality (SQ), and trust. Brand switching was highly and positively correlated with brand image by 0.820 suggesting that brand improvements by competitors draw mobile service users from other service providers.

Table 3.8: Correlation coefficient test

		PR	TR	SQ	SC	BI	BS
PR	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
TR	Pearson Correlation	0.854**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000					
SQ	Pearson Correlation	0.650**	0.748**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000				
SC	Pearson Correlation	0.354**	0.365**	0.372**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000			
BI	Pearson Correlation	0.344**	0.420**	0.490**	0.430**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
BS	Pearson Correlation	0.480**	0.556**	0.634**	0.380**	0.820**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Price , TR = Trust, SQ = Service Quality, SC = Switching Costs, BI = Brand Image, BS = Brand switching

Costs will possibly fall and revenue per unit increase increases due to an increase in opportunities in the format economies of scale, mass production etc. A low positive correlation of 0.344 was linked to the connection between brand image (BI) and price (PR) at 0.01 level. This entails that an improvement in brand image is associated with an increase in the price of mobile services offered.

3.9 Model summary

Table 3.9 shows that 88.3% changes in branding switching are attributed to changes in mobile service price, trust, service quality, switching costs, and brand image. Such entails that 11.7% changes in branding switching are attributed to variables outside the model. An insignificant difference of 0.015 exist between R-squared and adjusted between R-squared and shows that the estimated model does not have specification issues.

Table 3.9: Model summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
0.910 ^a	0.883	0.868
Predictors: PR, TR, SQ, SC, BI		

PR = Price, TR = Trust, SQ = Service Quality, SC = Switching Costs, BI = Brand Image

3.10 Analysis of variance

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was computed to test the validity of the estimated regression model. Based on the established findings showing that the F-statistics is significant at 1%, it is therefore inferable to contend that the estimated model is correctly specified.

Table 3:10: Analysis of variance

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	88.576	5	17.715	176.405	0.000 ^b
	Residual	36.519	179	0.204		
	Total	136.765	184			

3.11 Estimated impact of factors causing brand switching

Insights provided by Table 3.11 shows that price has a significant positive effect on branding of 0.926, which is significantly high. This implies that mobile telephone subscribers are strongly willing to change service providers on the condition that their service provider has started charging exorbitant prices. This can be supported by insights given by Kotler and Armstrong (2010) which shows that consumers are easily dissuaded from using a particular brand when it becomes unfordable for them. Thus, hypothesis one claiming that prices has a significant positive effect on brand switching is acceptable at 5%.

A moderately negative and significant effect of 0.572 was established to exist between trust and brand switching. In terms of probability or tendency, the results imply that an increase in subscribers' trust in the service providers reduces their chances of switching to other brands by 57.2%. Such aligns with study findings established by Alfaz et al (2013) showing that trust enhances consumers' confidence in the product or services' ability to effectively serve their intended purposes or maximize their utility.

Table 3.11: Estimated impact of factors causing brand switching

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.423	0.080		-3.147	0.002
Price	0.926	0.43	0.124	1.095	0.023
Trust	-0.572	0.039	0.839	2.869	0.003
Service quality	-0.749	0.047	0.701	20.016	0.001
Switching costs	0.683	0.053	-0.052	-1.559	0.552
Brand image	0.172	0.047	0.701	20.016	0.000
Dependent Variable: brand switching					

An increase in service quality reduces mobile subscribers' chances of switching to other brands by 74.9%. These results are similar to claims made by Chan and Chu (2007) showing service quality enhances customers' satisfaction and hence, prevents consumers from switching brands. Thus, we can accept hypothesis three and assert that service quality has a significant adverse effect on brand switching.

The findings refuted the assertion made by Ogungbade (2015) that an increase in switching costs causes consumers not to switch their brands and retain their relationship with service providers. This possibly indicates that the mobile subscribers were totally dissatisfied about the quality of services provided by their service providers. Hence, subscribers were automatically convinced that switching brands will provide them with the desired quality level and satisfaction. Similar deductions can be made about the relationship between brand image and switching costs in which an improvement in brand image enhances subscribers' potential chances of switching brands by 17.2%. Thus, this potentially indicates that competitors are increasingly providing high quality, satisfying and trust worthy mobile services (Ayiriwuti et al., 2015; Ting, 2014).

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

4.1 Conclusions

The study was aimed at examining the underlying factors causing brand switching among consumers in Iraq. Such was also accompanied by the need to propose measures that can be used by telecommunications firms to avoid brand switching and boost their competitive position. Brand switching has been a common activity among various products and services offered by service providers in Iraq. However, this has been distinctively different from mobile services offered by mobile service providers. The study depicted that mobile telephone subscribers are strongly willing to change service providers on the condition that their service provider has started charging exorbitant prices. Mobile subscribers are easily dissuaded from using a particular brand when it becomes unfordable for them. Alternatively, prices can be inferred as having a significant positive effect on brand switching.

Trust enhances mobile subscribers' confidence in the product or services' ability to effectively serve their intended purposes or maximize their utility. An increase in subscribers' trust in the service providers reduces mobile subscribers' chances of switching to other brands. This is significantly linked to high service quality and trust equates to high levels and efforts placed by service providers to deliver quality products on time and standard when needed by mobile subscribers. This provides further support to existing findings contending that trust is essential for maintaining brand loyalty.

It can be inferred that an increase in service quality reduces mobile subscribers' chances of switching to other brands. Such findings have been noted to be similar to claims made by previous showing service quality enhances customers' satisfaction and hence, prevents consumers from switching brands. Thus, alternative hypothesis three is valid and it can be asserted that service quality has a significant adverse effect on brand switching.

This study's findings showed that mobile service competitors are increasingly providing high quality, satisfying and trust worthy mobile services. Such relates to the notion that an increase in switching costs causes consumers not to switch their brands and retain their relationship with service providers. Hence, this entails that mobile subscribers were totally dissatisfied about the quality of services provided by their service providers. Moreover, mobile subscribers were automatically convinced that switching brands will provide them with the desired quality level and satisfaction. Similar deductions can be made about the relationship between brand image and switching costs in which an improvement in brand image enhances subscribers' potential chances of switching brands.

The findings do contribute towards understanding factors responsible for fostering customer loyalty. Such is instrumental in devising strategies aimed at improving customer satisfaction. The study' practical implications are that mobile service providers need to innovate their products and services to ensure that mobile subscribers continuously get high quality and reliable mobile services and products on time. The other practical implication relates to the importance of managing customer relations to avoid losing customers to competitors.

4.2 Recommendations

The study findings depicted strong evidence of potential significant probable factors that can cause mobile subscribers to switch brands. As such, the study recommends the following;

- Mobile service providers should ensure that their products and services are competitively priced. Such can involve using price differentiation for various services and products in accordance to quality, target market or product features.
- High quality products together with other ancillary products and services of high value must be offered to mobile subscribers so as to ensure that switching costs remain relatively high. This is will dissuade subscribers from switching brands and requires strategies like promotional offers, after sales services, customer relations management, etc.
- Mobile service providers need to devote huge attention towards improving their brand image. Such efforts can include product differentiation, packaging and advertising so as to enhance the image of the brand and consumers' perceptions of the brand.
- Customer relations management strategies must be deployed to enhance trust and service quality. This includes providing subscribers with the required information on timer and responding to their queries.

4.3 Suggestions for future studies

The study sample was restricted to 184 participants due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Future studies can increase the number of participants so as to ensure that the results reflect the exact situation faced by mobile service providers in the Kurdistan of Iraq. There is also a need to limit the study to a specific group of mobile subscribers like university students who are increasingly using mobile services. Such is important for customer segmentation activities and comparing findings with other related customer groups in other markets and countries.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Research questionnaire

STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE



Dear Respondent

This questionnaire is in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the MSc in Marketing at Near East University. It seeks to **establish 'Factors behind Brand Switching in Iraq's Telecommunications Industry'**. This study is strictly for academic purposes. Kindly note that all the information given herein will be treated with total confidence.

Kindly take time to complete the questionnaire by providing information in the given spaces.

Thank you very much for your valuable time.

Researcher

Hayman Mamundi, MSc Student
Department of Business administration
Near East University
E-mail: hayman.mamundi@gmail.com

Thesis Supervisor

Dr. Karen Howells
Department of Marketing
Near East University
E-mail: karen.howells@neu.edu.tr

SECTION A: RESPONDENT PROFILE

Please tick where appropriate ✓

1. What is your gender? Please tick where appropriate.

Male ☐

Female ☐

2. What is your age group? Please tick where appropriate.

18-25 years ☐

26-33 years ☐

34-41 years ☐

42-49 years ☐

50 years and above ☐

3. Which mobile service do you use? Please tick where appropriate.

Korek ☐

Asia Cell ☐

Zain ☐

4. How long have you been using the above indicated mobile service? Please tick where appropriate.

less than 5 years ☐

6-10 years ☐

11-15 years ☐

16 years and above ☐

5. Do you have intentions of switching to another mobile service provider?

Yes ☐

No ☐

6. If you intend to change to another mobile service provide, what are your possible reasons for changing your mobile service provider? Please tick where appropriate.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Voice Quality | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Data Quality | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Billing Experience/Recharge experience | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pricing Plans | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Call Center Experience | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In Store/Outlet experience | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7. To what extent do mobile service subscribers change from one service provider to another in your country? Please tick where appropriate.

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Very low extent | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Low extent | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Moderate extent | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| High extent | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very high extent | <input type="checkbox"/> |

8. Does the mobile service provider offer you high quality services of international standards that meet your expectations?

- | | |
|-----|--------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9. Does the mobile service provider constantly innovative its services every year?

- | | |
|-----|--------------------------|
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> |

SECTION B: FACTORS AFFECTING BRAND SWITCHING

This section seeks to obtain information about the factors affecting brand switching. Please indicate the extent to which to agree or disagree by ticking on only one number option for each of the items or statement on the table below:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

	Price	1	2	3	4	5
10	A higher price makes me switch to a competitor.					
11	I am not ready to pay a higher price on my network.					
12	Low price offers from competitive products.					
13	I am happy with the price I pay for my service.					
14	The price I pay for my service is fair and reasonable.					
15	The price paid by service users reflects the quality offered by the firm.					
16	The prices charged are lower than those charged in other countries.					
	Trust					
17	The telecom service provider's services process are trustworthy.					
18	The telecom service provider is reliable and focused.					
19	The reputation of the telecom service provider is trustworthy.					
20	The billing system of the firm is trustworthy.					
21	The telecom service provider has of long been trustable by a lot of people.					
22	Additional services changes are delivered on time as announced.					
23	The service provider does not always change its position on service matters.					

	Service quality					
24	The Telecom service provider provides quality service.					
25	The Telecom service provider responds quickly to complaints.					
26	I am satisfied with the service and no intention of switching brands.					
27	The Telecom service provider's network covers a lot of areas.					
28	The Telecom service provider has a good reputation for quality service.					
29	The service provider constantly makes product improvements all the time.					
30	The service provider offers extra product features as compared to its competitors.					
31	There are little or no incidences of service disruptions.					
32	Customers can access customer care services using many different languages					
33	The services offered match customers' expectations.					
34	The service offered are of high international standards.					
35	The services are certified by the telecommunications board.					
	Switching costs					
36	If I switch to another communication service company, I will lose the accumulated benefits in the current.					
37	I worry that the service provided by other communication service company might not match my expectation.					
38	I do not have sufficient time to understand the information of other communication service companies.					
39	It is difficult to compare the current company with others.					
40	The switching process involves a lot of paper work.					
41	It takes time to have the service running after switching to it.					
42	It requires more time and effort for me to start learning how to access and use the new services offered by other service providers.					

	Brand Image					
43	I am a convinced brand is committed to gender equality.					
44	I am a convinced brand is very advanced.					
45	I feel the brand is socially responsible.					
46	I am a convinced brand is a leader in its field					
47	The service brand is associated with high status quo among mobile subscribers in my country.					
48	The brand has been in existence for a long period.					
49	Other firms and service providers are associated with this brand.					
50	The brand is well known through the country.					
	Brand switching					
51	I usually change to another brand because it is a high level of product with a relatively higher price.					
52	I usually change to another brand because of its reasonable price and good value for money.					
53	I am usually stimulated by promotion activities offered by other providers.					
54	I am usually attracted by the advertisement activities offered by other providers.					
55	The reason for changing the brand is usually because of the dissatisfaction of the previous brand.					
56	The service provider does not always offer innovative services.					
57	It offers additional services and promotional offers that are not provided by other brands.					
58	The services offered do not meet international standards and expectations.					

ETHICAL APPROVAL



BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMALAR ETİK KURULU

27.11.2020

Dear Hayman Ahmed Hamd Saeed Mamundi

Your application titled “**Factors Behind Brand Switching in Iraq Telecommunications Industry**” with the application number YDÜ/SB/2020/845 has been evaluated by the Scientific Research Ethics Committee and granted approval. You can start your research on the condition that you will abide by the information provided in your application form.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Direnç Kanol

Rapporteur of the Scientific Research Ethics Committee

Note: If you need to provide an official letter to an institution with the signature of the Head of NEU Scientific Research Ethics Committee, please apply to the secretariat of the ethics committee by showing this document.

SIMILARITY INDEX

FACTORS BEHIND BRAND SWITCHING IN IRAQ'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

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