

A Study of Customer Loyalty towards Samsung smartphone in Yangon, Myanmar*

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Abstract

In Myanmar, with the smartphone consumers are increasing swiftly, there is variety of brands to choose and the loyalty of customer to certain brand turn out to be more and more unpredictable and uncertain. This can lead to confusing in a market which has an effect on the market in ways such as that getting lower expected sale. In addition, the cost to acquire new customers is substantially greater than that to retain existing customers hinges on a stream of interrelated factors. Therefore, in this research, the researcher will concentrate on customer loyalty towards smartphone in order to investigate what factors that actually influencing customer loyalty of smartphone among Myanmar consumers. Descriptive and inferential analysis method was applied to analyze the data. Survey methodology and 420 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents from three branches of Mobile King Shopin Yangon; both male and female aged 18 or above, who are using Samsung smartphone for more than two years. The data was analyzed and summarized by applying the Statistical package for Social Science (SPSS). Pearson Correlation Coefficient Analysis was applied to predict if there was a relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. The study found out that all of the independent variables have a significant relationship with customer loyalty. The strongest significant relationship was revealed between satisfaction and customer loyalty (.761). Secondly, this study found out the second strongest relationship between perceived value and customer loyalty (.642).

Keywords: Customer Loyalty, Smartphone

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Introduction

The development of customer loyalty has become an important focus for marketing strategy in recent years due to large economic profits such as value premiums, client referrals, diminished operating costs, expanded purchases and higher balances associated with holding existing or prospective clients (G winner et al., 1998). In addition, in the marketing literature, acquiring new customers is far more expensive than retaining the existing ones (Dick and Basu, 1994). Thus, marketers are trying to seek strategic approaches to retain their loyal customers. Although there are many factors influencing customer loyalty, it is impossible to conduct a study can examine the influence of all the factors simultaneously. Therefore, this research mainly focuses on examining and analysing the relationship between the selected factors and customer loyalty based on the researcher self-developed conceptual model and composed hypotheses.

Literature Review

A. Customer Loyalty

Oliver (1999) defined loyalty as a deeply held commitment to repurchase or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same-brand set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviors. More specifically, customer loyalty refers to the strength of a customer's intent to purchase again goods or services from a supplier with whom they are satisfied (Ismail, 2002). In addition, Neal et al., (1999) mentioned that loyalty is the proportion of times a purchaser chooses the same product or service in a specific category compared to the total number of purchases made by the purchaser in that category, under the condition that other acceptable products or services are conveniently available in that category. According to the Oliver (1999), the ultimate customer loyalty is a function of perceived product superiority, personal fortitude, social bonding, and their synergistic effects. Customer loyalty develops when customers become satisfied when their expectations and experience are exceeded.

B. Satisfaction

Oliver (1997) defined that satisfaction is the consumer fulfillment response, a judgment that a product or service feature, or product or service itself, provided a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment including levels of under-or over-fulfillment. Customer satisfaction is also generally assumed to be a significant determinant of repeat sales, positive word-of-mouth and customer loyalty. Satisfied customers return to buy more, and they tell other people about

their experiences (Fornell et al., 1996). The definition of satisfaction is a person's approval or disappointment when comparing their opinion of services received with their original service expectations (Kotler, 1991). More specifically, an evaluation rendered that the consumption experience was at least as good as it supposed to be (Hunt, 1977). In addition, satisfaction is a consumer's response to the evaluation of perceived discrepancy between prior expectations and the actual performance of the product as perceived after its consumption (Day, 1984).

C. Trust

Trust is considered a key attribute of a customer-supplier relationship and a pivot of the successful outcomes associated to it that ensures the long-term maintenance of the relationship (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). And Zaheer et al., (1998) found trust to have a critical factor in facilitating closer buyer-supplier relationships by the propensity of firms to exploit one another. According to Mayer et al., (1995), trust is the eagerness of a party to be susceptible to the actions of another party with the hope that the action done by the other will be important to the trustor or grantor, irrespective of the ability of the trustor to monitor or control the other party. More specifically, trust is defined as a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence (Mooreman et al., 1992). Besides, Fukuyama (1995) defined trust as the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behavior, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of members of that community.

D. Perceived Value

Zeithaml et al., (1988) conceptualized that perceived value is based on customer's experience and is seen as a compromise between benefits and sacrifices or between quality and sacrifices which can be divided into financial and psychological sacrifices. In addition, sacrifices originally included monetary sacrifices, such as those related to price and purchase costs, but these have been extended to non-monetary price and the risk of poor performance (Liljander and Strandvik, 1993). Zeithaml and Schechler, (1988) demonstrated that perceived value is composed of all factors: qualitative and quantitative, objective and subjective, that jointly forms a consumer's buying behavior. Additionally, the consumer's assessment of the value that has been created for them by a supplier given the trade-offs between all relevant benefits and sacrifices in a specific-use of situation (Woodruff et al., 1993). Plus, product value for consumer is created when the benefits a consumer gets with a product are greater than long-term costs a consumer is expected to have with a product (Slater and Naver, 2000).



E. Affect

Oliver (1997) defined affect is a set of specific emotions, mood states, and attitudes, which has long played a decisive role in customer satisfaction. Additionally, Chaudhri and Holbrook (2002) suggested that affect is a derivation of a positive response of consumer after its usage. Moreover, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) stated that brand affect as a brand's potential to elicit a positive emotional response in the average consumer as a result of its use, usually related to individual experiences of products and services. In other words, it can be described as consumers' emotional response towards a brand in consequence of having an experience with the brand. Generally, managers have traditionally neglected the emotional and affective component of brands and have focused on their rational and functional constituents (Shaw and Ivens, 2002). However, there is a growing body of literature that stresses the requirement for brands to evoke solid positive enthusiastic reactions (Payne et al., 2009). That is just conceivable if the brand is considered from a comprehensive methodology, where the brand turns into the experience (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

F. perceived Switching Cost

Burnham et al., (2003) defined that perceived switching costs are the customers' perception of the monetary and non-monetary expenses they have to bear when switching from one service provider to another. Jones et al., (2000) also explained perceived switching cost as consumer perception of time, money and effort associated with changing service providers. Hauser et al., (1994) have discovered that substantial switching costs reduce customer sensitivity to perceived satisfaction levels. When switching costs are substantial or the switching processes especially painful, dissatisfied customers are likely to maintain business relationships with existing service providers and resist the dissolution of the relationship (Jackson, 1985). As such, false loyal rather than committed loyal groups may exist, including defectors, mercenaries, and hostages (Jones and Sasser, 1995). In the case of high switching dissatisfied customers, who probably spread negative information, they do not leave because of their perception that switching costs are higher than switching benefits (Zethimal et al., 1988).

G. Corporate Image

According to Nguyen and Leblanc (2001), corporate image is related to business name, architecture, variety of products/services, tradition, ideology and to the impression of quality communicated by each person interacting with firm's clients. On the company level, image has

been defined as perceptions of an organization reflected in the associations held in consumer memory (Keller, 1993). Generally, Dowling (1986) defined as a set of meanings by which the object or an organization is known and through which people describe and relate to it. Moreover, Kotler (1991) stated that the overall impression held in the minds of the public about a firm such as logo of firms, social contribution to the society. Specifically, corporate image is defined as the overall impression left in the customers' mind as a result of accumulative feelings, ideas, attitudes and experiences with the organization, stored in memory, transformed into a positive/negative meaning, retrieved to reconstruct image and recalled when the name of the organization is heard or brought to ones' mind (Dowling ,1986) .

H. Brand Reputation

Hellier et al. (2003) defined brand reputation as customers' perception of quality associated with the name, which may support the same direction of products/services that company offers to the customer. Additionally, Keller (2008) demonstrated that the proof that the company can keep up and is delivering its brand promise. Also a good brand reputation may represent an important catalyst for fostering customer loyalty. Zeithmal (1988) clarified that perceived quality of product or service is related to the reputation that associated with the brand name. Brand preference refers to a consumer predisposition to choose a particular brand in the presence of other brands. Brand reputation should have a positive effect on brand preference that triggers a long-term consumer response because it modifies brand-product perceptions (Veloutsou and Moutinho, 2009). According to Andreea et al., (2014), a strong brand reputation will enforce the perception that the brand is overall superior in relation with competing brands.

Research Framework and Methodology

A. Research Framework

According to the research purpose and literature reviews discussed, the research presents the conceptual framework in Figure 1. Satisfaction, trust, perceived value, affect, perceived switching cost, corporate image, brand reputation are independent variables and customer loyalty is the dependent variable.

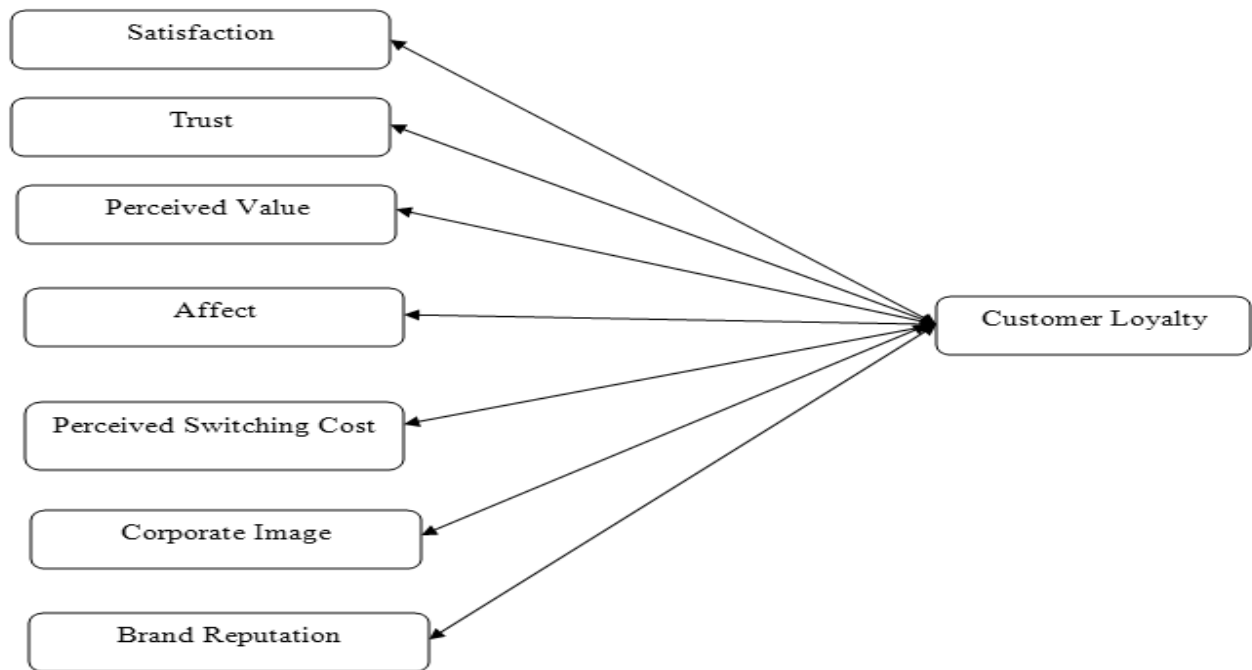


Fig. 1 A Study of Customer Loyalty towards Samsung smartphone in Yangon, Myanmar

Based on the research framework, total seven hypotheses are proposed as follows:

H1_a: There is a statistically significant relationship between satisfaction and customer loyalty.

H2_a: There is a statistically significant relationship between trust and customer loyalty.

H3_a: There is a statistically significant relationship between perceived value and customer loyalty.

H4_a: There is a statistically significant relationship between affect and customer loyalty.

H5_a: There is a statistically significant relationship between perceived switching cost and customer loyalty.

H6_a: There is a statistically significant relationship between corporate image and customer loyalty.

H7_a: There is a statistically significant relationship between brand reputation and customer loyalty.

B. Research Methodology

The purpose of this research is to examine the related factors of customer loyalty of Samsung smartphone in Yangon, Myanmar. 420 sets of survey questionnaires with the construct of 5-points Likert scale were delivered to the respondents who are using Samsung smartphone for more than 2 years. The researcher adopted non-probability: judgment, quota and convenience sampling to collect the primary data from the three selected branches of Mobile King Shops in Yangon. The duration of data collection was from April 2015 to May 2015. The researcher has applied descriptive analysis in order to present a demographic profile and general information of the respondents.

Zikmund (2003) stated that descriptive statistical technique is employed to define the features of the population or samples in an investigation. The demographic information includes gender, age, monthly income and education level.

The Cronbach's Alpha was applied to test the reliability of variables of this research. Sekaran (2003) stated that the variables are reliable and can be used as research tool if the (α) value of questions which are being tested for each variable is greater than or equal to 0.6. The detailed reliability value of each variable is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis Value of Variables

Variables	Cronbach 's α	Measurement items
Satisfaction	0.716	4
Trust	0.733	4
Perceived Value	0.646	4
Affect	0.684	3
Perceived Switching Cost	0.784	4
Corporate Image	0.762	4
Brand Reputation	0.718	4
Customer Loyalty	0.723	4



Research Findings

According to descriptive analysis result, the demographic profile of the 420 respondents can be summarized as follows:

- 277 (66.0%) are males
- 154 (36.7%) are aged between 18-25
- 245 (58.3%) has a monthly income below 500,000 kyat
- 171(40.7%) are bachelor degree

Based on the modified conceptual model, there are a total of seven hypotheses were tested in this research. Pearson's Correlation was applied. After analyzing the hypotheses, all the null hypotheses were rejected. The high correlations/coefficients are found between the following variables:

- satisfaction and customer loyalty: $\alpha = 0.761$, $P < 0.01$,
- perceived value and customer loyalty: $\beta = 0.665$, $P < 0.01$,

Managerial Implications

The major objective of this study is to investigate the direct relationships between seven independent variables satisfaction, trust, perceived value, affect, perceived switching cost, corporate image, brand reputation and one dependent variable customer loyalty. Based on the information gathered from the study on factors affecting customer loyalty towards Samsung smartphone in Yangon, Myanmar, the researcher have established several implications that might useful in assisting Samsung Company and domestic dealers and shopkeepers to increase the demand of smartphone and maintain the loyalty among target market.

According to the results, all of the hypotheses have positive relationships. Among them, hypotheses one and threeshow particularly strong positive relationships between the variables (based on the r-value and measure the strength of association by Hussey,1997) which means that satisfaction and perceived valueare the most important factor directly affect customer loyalty towards Samsung smartphone.Thus, the researcher would like to input some suggestion as follows:

The correlation value of hypothesis one ($\alpha = 0.761$) implies a strong positive relationship between satisfaction and customer loyalty. This finding describes that if the consumers are satisfied in using Samsung smartphones and services, then customer loyalty towards Samsung

brand will be high. The result of the researcher is supported by Lin and Wang (2006) who inspected about an examination of the determinants of customer loyalty in mobile commerce contexts.

Table 2: Summary of the Results from Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statistical Method	Sig. Level	Correlation/ Coefficient	Result
H1 _a : There is a statistically significant relationship between satisfaction and customer loyalty.	Pearson Correlation	0.000	0.761	Reject H1 _o
H2 _a : There is a statistically significant relationship between trust and customer loyalty.	Pearson Correlation	0.000	0.495	Reject H2 _o
H3 _a : There is a statistically significant relationship between perceived value and customer loyalty.	Pearson Correlation	0.000	0.642	Reject H3 _o
H4 _a : There is a statistically significant relationship between affect and customer loyalty.	Pearson Correlation	0.00	0.259	Reject H4 _o
H5 _a : There is a statistically significant relationship between perceived switching cost and customer loyalty.	Pearson Correlation	0.00	0.511	Reject H5 _o
H6 _a : There is a statistically significant relationship between corporate image and customer loyalty.	Pearson Correlation	0.00	0.336	Reject H6 _o
H7 _a : There is a statistically significant relationship between brand reputation and customer loyalty.	Pearson Correlation	0.00	0.421	Reject H7 _o



Regarding previous researchers' statements and the finding of this study, the researcher would like to suggest that Company should focus to improve the customer satisfaction; for instance, by offering free product testing and support for unfriendly users, and services. Moreover, another simple suggestion is that company should concentrate more in research and development (R&D) to offer unique and premium quality products and services to get higher satisfaction of the customers. Thus, Samsung Smartphone Company is suggested offering creative and innovative products and services to the consumers. Therefore, the research about the marketing high-technology products in emerging markets and the researcher indicated that the high satisfaction towards great technology products will develop the loyalty of these products.

The correlation value of hypothesis three ($\alpha = 0.642$) implies a strong positive relationship between perceived value and customer loyalty. This finding described that customer's perceived value can play a very significant role in achieving customer loyalty. The researcher would like to suggest that Samsung Company should concentrate to increase perceived value; for example, giving a strong guarantee to the consumers and showing stand behind their products such as long-term guarantee and free services. Furthermore, another suggestion is that endorsing the products with outstanding persons such as celebrities, film stars, athletes and so on because some customers think that famous people wouldn't want their name associated with a particular product. Therefore, the research about the marketing high-technology products in emerging markets and the researcher specified that customer loyalty of these products will be developed by the high perceived value of consumers.

Company should insist on these elements by offering creative and innovative products, long-term guarantee and free services as well as maintain high ethical standards. In other words, obtaining desired quality products and services is, of course, a primary reason for customers to choose and thus customer loyalty can be generated. Therefore, satisfied and perceived customers often become loyal, repeat customers, which are extremely valuable assets for a business. It costs much less to serve a current customer than to attract a new one through marketing methods.

Limitations And Further Study Directions

In order to improve and develop on the findings, various additional researchers can conduct this study. This investigation will help the smartphone industry. Also, the researcher would like to recommend other future researches based on this study.

First, this research considered seven variables, thus, other variables which can influence customer loyalty could be explored. They include perceived service quality; which was supported by Qayyum et al., (2013) who studied an analysis of the antecedents of loyalty and the moderating role of customer demographics in an emerging mobile phone industry: brand equity and resistance to change which was supported by Taylor et al., (2004) who studied the importance of brand equity to customer loyalty: and performance quality which was supported by Selnes (1993) who studied an examination of the effect of product performance on brand reputation, satisfaction and loyalty. These four variables could be included in future studies to achieve a more comprehensive framework for analyzing customer loyalty on other branded smartphones.

Second, this research collected data only from only three Samsung branches of Mobile King which may not apply the result to other geographic area in Yangon in Myanmar. Hence, further studies can be done in other cities. This may provide a better and more precise analysis of the research and may get a different result in different area.

Third, this study focused only on one branded products, Samsung smartphone. So further studies should include some other brands such as Apple, LG etc. or other types of branded products, such as laptop computers for example, Acer , Toshiba, Dell etc.

Fourth, this research focused on customer loyalty towards Samsung smartphone who are using for more than two years. Future researchers can investigate other independent factors that may affect customer purchase intention towards Samsung smartphone for customers who have not used the smartphone before.

Finally, further studies could be carried out to investigate the actual influential factors on customer loyalty. In this way, a more comprehensive investigation of the consumers' intentions and actual behavior of loyalty can be observed.



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