Agency Related Issues Faced By Clients – The Major Cause Behind Brand Switching In Cellular Phone Service Industry

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ABSTRACT- When a consumer is using a product of a brand switches to another brand, brand switching is perceived to have occurred. Higher the degree of competiveness among the brands available to the consumers, higher would be the volume and intensity of brand switching. Because of the severe competition among the cellular phone service providers in India, the volume and intensity of brand switching could be observed to be large and frequent. Hence, a research has been conducted on brand switching among the clients of cellular phone service providers. The research hypothesis that there is an association between the demographic characteristics of respondents and their brand switching was tested with the field data collected through questionnaire and interview schedule, which were redesigned after the pilot study with the consumers who did actually switch over their brands. It was ascertained that the clients do not switch over brands because of 'agency related issue's faced by them.

Keywords: Agency related Issues, Brand Switching, Expectation Disconfirmation, Stochastic Reasons, and Utility Maximisation.

INTRODUCTION

Brand switching is the process of switching from the routine use of one product or brand to steady usage of a different but similar product. In our day-to-day life, it could be observed that some consumers still switch a brand even if they have high satisfaction with the product, while consumers with low satisfaction would not necessarily switch brands. Hence brand switching a complex and complicating challenge for the sustainable development of the service providers.

The mobile phone has, indeed, become an integral part of human existence, used for talking, short messaging, listening to radio, taking pictures and video, playing games, watching video clips, chatting and networking with friends, etc., The mobile phone is more than just a tool for communication; it has become a personal device, a utile-entertainment form. Users of the mobile phone are very conscious of deciding the brand of service providers, keeping in mind their various merits and demerits. In researches relating to brand switching, it is found that consumer satisfaction is the main factor influencing brand switching. Switching costs and product involvement are also important factors influencing brand switching. The influence of vital statistical variables, consumer satisfaction, switching costs and product involvement force consumers

towards brand switching. The success or failure of the cellular phone service providers purely depends on the consumer's satisfaction and with the service they have been rendering and brand switching. Even though the cellular phone service providers provide a satisfactory service to the consumers it is possible that there may be brand switching.

An attempt has been made by the researcher under the title, **"Agency Related Issues Faced By Clients – The Major Cause Behind Brand Switching In Cellular Phone Service Industry"**. This study focuses on the switching behavior of clients due to the various agency issues.

OBJECTIVES

The study has been carried out with the following objectives.
1.   To identify the agency related issues of clients that effect brand switching.
2.   To study the association between the personal dimensions of clients such as age, sex, educational qualification, occupational status, domicile, period of usage, amount spent every month and monthly income of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

HYPOTHESIS

Research Hypothesis

The study has been carried out with the following research hypothesis.
There is an association between the age, sex, educational qualification, occupational status, domicile, period of usage; amount spent every month and monthly income of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

Null Hypothesis

The study has been carried out with the following null hypothesis.
There is no association between the age, sex, educational qualification, occupational status, domicile, period of usage; amount spent every month and monthly income of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study covers the clients of cellular phone services in Tiruchirappalli who switched over brands especially from Aircel Network. The study analyses and evaluates the impact of the agency related issues of clients while leaving one network in Trichy city. The study was conducted during the period - February 2009 to August 2009.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using a sound research design involving,
1. Decisions on universe,
2. Pilot study,
3. Sampling,
4. Data and
5. Statistical tools used, etc.,

Universe

All the clients of Airlink Limited Trichy who switched over their cellular phone brands numbering 185 in total have been taken to be the universe of the study.

Pilot study

The pilot study was conducted and its result was used to:
1. Frame the questionnaire,
2. Determine the sample,

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3. Method of sampling and size of sample and
4. Determine the sources of data.

From the pilot study, the researcher has identified the various agency related issues of consumers namely Agent Not Co-Operating, Agent Not Informing the New Schemes, Service Request Not Attended By Agent, Improper Delivery Of Bill and Bill Collection Not Done By Agent.

Selection of sample

From the total number of consumers of the Airlink Limited Trichy, who switched their brand, 100 consumers were selected as sample through stratified random sampling.

Data

The researcher used a structured interview schedule as the tool for collection of primary data. The questions were framed in such a way that they could help the analysis of the data collected. The secondary data were collected from books, magazines, journals, previous studies and World-Wide Websites.

Statistical tools used

The researcher has applied relevant statistical tools such as percentage table, chi-square test and one way ANOVA 'F' test to analyze the data collected.

BRAND SWITCHING - A REVIEW

Brand switching is when a consumer or group of consumers switches their allegiance from one brand of a certain type of product to another. This brand switching may be temporary, or it may be long lasting, perhaps for example in the case of products that last longer or from which switching away is harder. Brand switching research would show if a particular competitor was most likely to steal customers away from any particular company and the company could then focus their creative attention on that particular threat to their business.

Sometimes known as brand jumping, brand switching is the process of choosing to switch from routine use of one product or brand to steady usage of a different but similar product. Much of the advertising process is aimed at encouraging brand switching among consumers. Convincing consumers to switch brands is sometimes a difficult task. It is not unusual for customers to build up a great deal of brand loyalty due to various factors like quality, price, and availability. To encourage switching brands, advertisers will often target these three areas as part of the strategy of encouraging brand switching. Price is often an important factor to consumers who are tight budgets. For this reason, advertisers will often use a price comparison model to entice long time users of one brand to try a new one. The idea is to convince the end user that it is possible to purchase the same amount of product while spending less money. Ideally, this means that the consumer can use the savings for other purchases, possibly even a luxury item of some sort. The idea of more discretionary resources in the monthly budget can be more effective in the encouragement of jumping brands. However, price is not always enough to encourage brand switching. When this is the case, comparing the quality of one brand to another is a common approach.

The scope of these studies not only includes the analysis of the factors that affect the consumer's brand choice and switching behavior, but also brand switching behavior itself and the actual process of switching brands. A portion of the shoppers will switch products at least

once when they make their current or subsequent choices. That is, at least one of the three choices will differ from the remaining choices. The area outside the solid circle represents brand switchers.

Reasons for Brand Switching

One of the main challenges for decision-makers is to understand the environment in which they are operating. They can then identify key issues which they need to respond to. Understanding these key issues improves decision-taking and reduces uncertainty. A brand switch occurs primarily because of

1. Stochastic reasons,
2. Expectation disconfirmation and
3. Utility maximisation reason.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The impact of personal dimensions - age, sex, educational qualification, occupational status, domicile, usage period, monthly income, amount spent every month for connection on brand switching because of agency related issues have been ascertained with the help of statistical tools like percentage table, chi-square test and one way ANOVA 'F' test.

Level of Agreement and Brand Switching

The level of agreement on respondents on the impact of agency related issues on brand switching has been analyzed in Table-01

TABLE – 01
LEVEL OF AGREEMENT ON RESPONDENTS ON THE IMPACT OF AGENCY RELATED ISSUES ON BRAND SWITCHING

S. No.	REASONS	AGREE		NO COMMENTS		DISAGREE	
		No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Agent not Co-operating	79	79	17	17	4	4
2	Agent not informing the New Schemes	40	40	49	49	11	11
3	Service request not attend by Agent	41	41	44	44	15	15
4	Improper delivery of Bill	32	32	38	38	30	30
5	Bill Collection not done by Agent	38	38	34	34	28	28

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Source: Field Data

When "Agent not Co-operating" was given as a reason for brand switching, 79% of the respondents agree, 17% have no comments and only 4% of the respondents disagree.

When "Agent not informing the New Schemes" was given as a reason for brand switching, 40% of the respondents agree, 49% have no comments and the remaining 11% of the respondents disagree.

When "Service request not attend by Agent" was given as a reason for brand switching, 41% of the respondents agree, 44% have no comment and only 15% of the respondents disagree.

When "Improper delivery of Bill" was given as a reason for brand switching, 32% of the respondents agree, 38% have no comment and only 30% of the respondents disagree.

When "Bill Collection not done by Agent" was given as a reason for brand switching, 38% of the respondents agree, 34% have no comment and only 28% of the respondents disagree.

Age and Brand Switching

The association between the age and brand switching because of agency related issues have been analyzed and tested in Table-02.

TABLE – 02
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN AGE OF RESPONDENTS AND AGENCY RELATED ISSUES FOR THEIR BRAND SWITCHING

S. No.	Agency related issues for Brand Switching	Age				Statistical Inference
		Below 20yrs (n=14)	21 to 35yrs (n=29)	36 to 45yrs (n=33)	46yrs & above (n=24)	
1	Low	7 (50%)	19 (65.5%)	24 (72.7%)	15 (62.5%)	$X2=2.320$ Df =3 $P > 0.05$ Not Significant
2	High	7 (50%)	10 (34.5%)	9 (27.3%)	9 (37.5%)	

P means table value = .054
Source: Field Data

Result

Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the research hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no association between the age of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

Sex and Brand Switching

The association between the sex and brand switching because of agency related issues have been analyzed and tested in Table-03.

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TABLE – 03
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SEX OF RESPONDENTS AND AGENCY RELATED ISSUES FOR THEIR BRAND SWITCHING

S. No.	Agency related issues for Brand Switching	Sex		Statistical Inference
		Male (n=73)	Female (n=27)	
1	Low	43 (58.9%)	22 (81.5%)	X2= 4.416 Df =1 P > 0.05 Not Significant
2	High	30 (41.1%)	5 (18.5%)	

P means table value = .243
Source: Field Data

Result
Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the research hypothesis is

rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no association between the sex of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

Educational Qualification and Brand Switching
The association between the educational qualification and brand switching because of agency related issues have been analyzed and tested in Table-04.

TABLE – 04
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS AND AGENCY RELATED ISSUES FOR THEIR BRAND SWITCHING

S. No.	Agency related issues for Brand Switching	Educational Qualification				Statistical Inference
		SSLC (n=10)	HSC (n=23)	Graduate (n=35)	Post graduate (n=32)	
						X^2=5.083

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					Not Significant
2	High	5 (50%)	11 (47.8%)	12 (34.3%)	7 (21.9%)	

P means table value = .028
Source: Field Data

Result

Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the research hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no association between the educational qualification of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

Occupational Status and Brand Switching

The association between the occupational status and brand switching because of agency related issues have been analyzed and tested in Table-05.

TABLE – 05
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS AND AGENCY RELATED ISSUES FOR THEIR BRAND SWITCHING

S. No.	Agency related issues for Brand Switching	Occupational status		Statistical Inference
		Working (n=73)	Non-working (n=27)	
1	Low	44 (60.3%)	21 (77.8%)	$X^2=2.654$ Df = 1 $P > 0.05$ Not Significant
2	High	29 (39.7%)	6 (22.2%)	

P means table value = .243
Source: Field Data

Result

Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the research hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no association between the occupational status of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

Domicile and Brand Switching

The association between the domicile and brand switching because of agency related issues have been analyzed and tested in Table-06.

TABLE – 06
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN DOMICILE OF RESPONDENTS AND AGENCY RELATED ISSUES FOR THEIR BRAND SWITCHING

S. No.	Agency related issues for Brand Switching	Domicile	Statistical Inference

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		Urban (n=72)	Rural (n=28)	
1	Low	46 (63.9%)	19 (67.9%)	X^2=.140 Df = 1 P > 0.05 Not Significant
2	High	26 (36.1%)	9 (32.1%)	

P means table value = .674
Source: Field Data

Result

Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the research hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no association between the domicile of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

Period of Usage and Brand Switching

The association between the period of usage and brand switching because of agency related issues have been analyzed and tested in Table-07.

TABLE – 07
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PERIOD OF USAGE BY RESPONDENTS AND AGENCY RELATED ISSUES FOR THEIR BRAND SWITCHING

S. No.	Agency related issues for Brand Switching	Period of Usage			Statistical Inference
		Less than 1yr (n=23)	1 to 2 yrs (n=34)	Above 2yrs(n=43)	
1	Low	14 (60.9%)	21 (61.8%)	30 (69.8%)	X^2= .759 Df = 2 P > 0.05 Not Significant
2	High	9 (39.1%)	13 (38.2%)	13 (30.2%)	

P means table value = .336
Source: Field Data

Result

Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the research hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no association between the period of using of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

Amount Spent Every Month for Connection and Brand Switching

The association between the amounts spent every month for connection and brand switching because of agency

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related issues have been analyzed and tested in Table-08.

TABLE – 08
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN AMOUNT SPENT EVERY MONTH FOR CONNECTION BY RESPONDENTS AND AGENCY RELATED ISSUES FOR THEIR BRAND SWITCHING

S. No.	Agency related issues for Brand Switching	Amount spent every month for connection				Statistical Inference
		Below Rs.300 (n=15)	Rs.301 to Rs.600 (n=31)	Rs.601 to Rs.900 (n=17)	Rs.901 & above (n=37)	
1	Low	8 (53.3%)	21 (67.7%)	8 (47.1%)	28 (75.7%)	X^2= 5.259 Df = 3 P > 0.05 Not Significant
2	High	7 (46.7%)	10 (32.3%)	9 (52.9%)	9 (24.3%)	

P means table value = .189
Source: Field Data

Result

Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the research hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no association between the amount spent every month for connection of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

Educational Qualification and Brand Switching

The One Way Anova between the educational qualification and brand switching because of agency related issues have been analyzed and tested in Table-09.

TABLE – 09
ONE WAY ANOVA DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS AND AGENCY RELATED ISSUES FOR THEIR BRAND SWITCHING

Educational Qualification	Mean	S.D	SS	Df	MS	Statistical Inference
Agency Issues						F = 1.714
Between Groups			1.156	3	.385	
G1 (n=10)	1.5000	.52705				
G2 (n=23)	1.4783	.51075				
G3 (n=35)	1.3429	.48159				
G4 (n=32)	1.2188	.42001				
Within Groups			21.594	96	.225	

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G1 = SSLC / **G2** = HSC / **G3** = Graduate / **G4** = PG
P means table value = .026
Source: Field Data

Result

Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the research hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no difference between the educational qualification of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

Monthly Income and Brand Switching

The One Way Anova between the monthly income and brand switching because of agency related issues have been analyzed and tested in Table-10.

TABLE – 10
ONE WAY ANOVA DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MONTHLY INCOME OF RESPONDENTS AND AGENCY RELATED ISSUES FOR THEIR BRAND SWITCHING

Monthly income	Mean	S.D	SS	Df	MS	Statistical Inference
Agency Issues						F =1.084
Between Groups			1.240	5	.248	
G1 (n=10)	1.3000	.48305				
G2 (n=6)	1.1667	.40825				
G3 (n=10)	1.3000	.48305				
G4 (n=2)	2.0000	.00000				
G5 (n=29)	1.4138	.50123				
G6 (n=43)	1.3256	.47414				
Within Groups			21.510	94	.229	

G1 = Below Rs.1500 / **G2** = Rs.1501 to Rs.2000 / **G3** = Rs.2001 to Rs.2500 /
G4 = Rs.2501 to Rs.3000 / **G5** = Rs.3001 to Rs.4000 / **G6** = Rs4001 & above
P means table value = .366
Source: Field Data

Result

Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the research hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no difference between the monthly income of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

Duration of Usage Period and Brand Switching

The One Way Anova between the duration of usage period and brand switching

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because of agency related issues have been analyzed and tested in Table-11.

TABLE – 11
ONE WAY ANOVA DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DURATION OF USAGE PERIOD OF RESPONDENTS AND AGENCY RELATED ISSUES FOR THEIR BRAND SWITCHING

Duration of usage period	Mean	S.D	SS	Df	MS	Statistical Inference
Agency Issues						F = .371
Between Groups			.173	2	.086	
G1 (n=23)	1.391	.4990				
G2 (n=34)	1.382	.4932				
G3 (n=43)	1.302	.4647				
Within Groups			22.57	97	.233	

G1 = less than 1 yr / **G2** = 1 to 2yrs / **G3** = 2yrs & above
P means table value = .343
Source: Field Data

Result
Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the research hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no difference between the usage period of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

Amount Spent For Every Month and Brnd Switching
The One Way Anova between the amount spent for every month and brand switching because of agency issues have been analyzed and tested in Table-12.

TABLE – 12
ONE WAY ANOVA DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AMOUNT SPENT FOR EVERY MONTH BY RESPONDENTS AND AGENCY RELATED ISSUES FOR THEIR BRAND SWITCHING

Amount spent for every month	Mean	S.D	SS	Df	MS	Statistical Inference
Agency Issues						F = 1.776
Between			1.196	3	.399	
G1 (n=15)	1.4667	.51640				
G2 (n=31)	1.3226	.47519				
G3 (n=17)	1.5294	.51450				
G4 (n=37)	1.2432	.43496				
Within Groups			21.554	96	.225	

G1 = Below Rs.300 / **G2** = Rs.301 to Rs.600 /
G3 = Rs.601 to Rs.900 /
G4 = Above Rs.900
P means table value = .194
Source: Field Data

Result
Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the research hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there is no difference between the amount spent every month of the respondents and brand switching by clients because of agency related issues.

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FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

Findings

After the analysis and interpretation of the field data, the following findings were derived from the study.

The various agency related issues faced by consumers namely Agent Not Co-Operating, Agent Not Informing the New Schemes, Service Request Not Attended By Agent, Improper Delivery Of Bill and Bill Collection Not Done By Agent were the reasons for switching the brand among respondents. While testing the hypothesis, the personal dimensions such as age, sex, educational qualification, occupational status, domicile, usage period, monthly income and amount spent every month by the respondents had no impact on brand switching.

Clients have not switched over their brands because of agency related issues. Hence, it would be performed that the brand switching would be happened because of other issues

like as anticipated income, technological changes, business agent of the service providers, professional or business needs, etc., were hugely responsible for their brand switching.

Suggestions

Though external factors are very complex and cannot be precisely identified influencing the decision making of the consumers, their anticipated income, technological changes, business agent of the service providers, professional or business needs, especially advertisement outlay and competition among producers to push up their product and psyche of the clients may be concluded influencing the decision making process. Hence the service providers should concentrate more on the external issues.

The cellular phone service providers are good in its network connection and in providing new schemes to their customers to keep them always in connection. They are providing a good service to the customers. This would help them to have a good rapport between the clients. However the company could make the brand according to the expectation of the customers. Always consumer's satisfaction would make the brand successful.

Conclusion

The Indian cellular phone networks have been coming up with new features every day. An innovation is happening in the mobile network technology every day. According to this study, the customers are more interested to have their brand with reasonable cost and with good network. The customers need to know frequently about the various facilities that the company is providing and about the new schemes that they offer through Advertisement, SMS, Calls, etc.

The Brand Switching is not mostly influenced by personal dimensions such as Age, Sex, Educational Qualification, Occupational Status, Domicile, Period of Usage and Amount spent every month for connection. The conclusion drawn from the study is that the external factors around the respondents are hugely responsible for their Brand Switching.

The cellular phone service providers can provide the customers good quality network to make the customer use the same network all through their life. The cellular phone service providers could facilitate with the immediate service to the request suggested by the customers. Also the company could introduce new schemes to attract the customers. If all these would happen, then the cellular Phone network may prevent or minimize brand switching.

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Mr. Rajkumar. R, the aspiring young talent of the Department of Commerce, St. Joseph's College, Trichy, pursues his Doctorate Degree as a full-time Research Scholar in the field of Brand Management. His credentials start from his pursuit of M. Com degree at Loyola College, Chennai, M.Phil at St. Joseph's College, Trichy, further extended to his desire to attain the doctorate in commerce. He excels himself with the publication of 15 papers at national and international journals in various branches of commerce and management as feathers added to his cap.

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Dr. LJ. Chaarlas is the Head of the Department of Commerce, St. Joseph's College, Trichy at present. He has been serving the department as the Associate Professor of Commerce for more than two decades. A humble teacher, with an utmost love and understanding for his students and research scholars, he excels in various subjects such as Income Tax, Accountancy, Marketing, Human Resource, Finance, Business Ethics, and Corporate Social Responsibility etc. He also dedicates himself to the noble cause of training the young minds in various fields of Social Skills, Technical Skills and Employability skills.

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