

FACTORS INFLUENCING CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN MOBILE NETWORK SERVICES IN MYANMAR

ปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อความภักดีของผู้ใช้บริการเครือข่ายสัญญาณโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่
ในประเทศสาธารณรัฐแห่งสหภาพพม่า

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate how perceived quality, perceived value and brand attitude influence customer loyalty in Mobile Network Services in Myanmar. Survey data were collected from 424 experienced users of mobile phone service in Yangon, Myanmar. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed for analyzing the data. The model fit result revealed that customer service and price structure dimensions of perceived quality, and perceived value had a positive influence on brand attitude, and consequently brand attitude positively influences customer loyalty. A result of this study could be guidelines to design efficient marketing strategies for mobile phone service operators to better attract a growing number of subscribers in Myanmar.

Keywords: Perceived service quality, Perceived value, Brand attitude, Customer loyalty, Mobile Network Services

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์คือ ศึกษาปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อความภักดีของผู้ใช้บริการเครือข่ายสัญญาณโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่ ในประเทศสาธารณรัฐแห่งสหภาพพม่า ซึ่งเป็นการศึกษาอิทธิพลเชิงสาเหตุของคุณภาพที่ผู้บริโภครับรู้ คุณค่าที่ผู้บริโภครับรู้ ที่สอดคล้องต่อตราสินค้าที่ส่งผลต่อความภักดีของผู้ใช้บริการเครือข่ายสัญญาณโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่ ในประเทศสาธารณรัฐแห่งสหภาพพม่า กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในการสำรวจ โดยเก็บข้อมูลจากผู้ที่ใช้บริการเครือข่ายสัญญาณโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่ จำนวนทั้งหมด 424 คน ในเมืองย่างกุ้ง ประเทศสาธารณรัฐแห่งสหภาพพม่า และนำมาวิเคราะห์ด้วยโมเดลสมการโครงสร้างพบว่า คุณภาพมิติด้านการบริการลูกค้าและด้านโครงสร้างราคาของผู้ใช้บริการรับรู้ รวมถึงคุณค่าที่ผู้บริโภครับรู้มีอิทธิพลในเชิงบวกกับทัศนคติต่อตราสินค้าซึ่งส่งผลต่อความภักดีของผู้ใช้บริการ ผลการศึกษานี้จะเป็นแนวทางสำหรับผู้ให้บริการเครือข่ายสัญญาณโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่ เพื่อนำไปใช้ในการออกแบบกลยุทธ์ทางการตลาดที่มี

ประสิทธิผล อันจะทำให้สามารถสร้างแรงดึงดูดให้เกิดปริมาณผู้เข้าใช้บริการจำนวนมากขึ้น

คำสำคัญ: การรับรู้คุณภาพบริการ การรับรู้คุณค่า ทศนคติต่อตราสินค้า ความภักดีของลูกค้า เครือข่ายสัญญาณ โทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่

Introduction

Up till 2013, the telecommunication sector of Myanmar was monopoly owned and operated by government known as Myanmar Post and Telecommunication (MPT). The Myanmar Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) decided to end the banner era in this sector (Myanmar Times, 2015a). As a result of lifting the entry barrier, two foreign operators have entered into Myanmar's telecom sector namely; Ooredoo (Qatar) and Telenor (Norway). Telenor and Ooredoo have contributed multi-million dollar investment into Myanmar, therefore, they becomes key player in this sector. Moreover, liberalization of the telecom sector as well as the succeeding investment in telco-technology infrastructure and mobile network towers tremendously boost the growth of the mobile network and internet penetration (Myanmar Times, 2015b). Myanmar Times reported that there is a highly growth in this sector; according to MCIT, the total numbers of subscriber identity module (SIM) reached 28.1 million SIMs in 2015 which increased by 54.6 percent from previous year. Myanmar came in fourth place trailing India, China, and the United States for net additions of subscribers (Myanmar Times, 2015b). In this competitive environment, companies need to deliver the best product and service in order to gain customer loyalty and capture

more market shares. In this study, the researcher focuses on exploring the factors that influence customer loyalty in the telecom sector of Myanmar. Specifically, this study intends to understand how perceived quality, perceived value, and brand attitude influence customer loyalty. Moreover, an integrated model which investigates the interrelationships among perceived quality, perceived value, brand attitude as well as their effect on customer loyalty is constructed. Consequently, the need for better understanding of these variables will likely to determine the success of new ventures. In the absence of an analysis in customer loyalty, mobile phone service operators can diminish their competitiveness, whereas confronted with competitors who are recognized for excellence in their services.

The next section describes the relevant literature from previous studies that suggests variables which are explored in this study, and their relationships as mentioned above, including the theoretical framework for the study.

Objective

The purpose of this study is to investigate how perceived quality, perceived value and brand attitude influence customer loyalty in Mobile Network Services in Myanmar.

Literature review

This section contains three parts. First, all relevant variables are identified, followed by the relationship among these variables and hypotheses of the study. Lastly, a conceptual framework for this study is presented.

Definitions of relevant variables

Perceived value: Zeithaml (1988) stated that perceived value is created from a consumer's belief of a product's benefit. In the study of Davis, Bogozzi & Warshaw (1989), the researcher examined perceived value based on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. McDougall & Levesque (2000) supported that perceived value could be viewed as monetary tradeoff you get what you pay. Sweeney & Soutar (2001) argued that monetary tradeoff should not be only assessment of perceived value; therefore, psychological benefits (such as enjoyment and fun) should be included as well.

Perceived quality: it is defined as the customer's evaluation of a product's entire superiority or excellence (Zeithaml, 1988; Aaker & Jacobson, 1994). The ten dimensions of service quality evaluation were suggested by Parasuraman, Zeithamal & Berry (1985) and developed into the well-known five dimension SERVQUAL model in 1991. The SERVQUAL model has been suggested by most researches to measure perceived service quality (Chen & Chang, 2005; Pakdil & Aydin, 2007; Philip & Hazlett, 1997). Five key dimensions of perceived service quality consist of tangible, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy. As for

telecommunication industry, number of scholars had developed and adjusted the SERVQUAL model for this particular sector. The key dimensions of perceived service quality in the telecom sector adapted for Myanmar are listed and briefly characterized as follows (Kim, Park & Jeong, 2004; Lim, Widdows & Park, 2006; Choi et al., 2007; Santouridis & Panagiotis, 2010)

Customer service: This dimension is evaluated by the courtesy of customer service representatives, the success of problem resolution, and the provision of consistent advice.

Network quality: This dimension is evaluated by the clarity of voice and the area coverage.

Mobile devices: This dimension is evaluated by the quality, the variety and the design of the offered mobile devices.

Value-added services: This dimension is evaluated by the variety of intangible services such as music, news, games as well as ring tones; and their ease of use.

Pricing structure: This dimension is evaluated by the variety of pricing schemes and the degree of freedom to choose pricing scheme.

Brand attitude: Mitchell & Olson (1981) defined brand attitude as an individual's overall evaluation of a product or service on how well it does, and how likely they are to find useful. The consumers' attitude toward brand is formed by consistent consumer preference based on learning and judging all of its elements that produces a comprehensive result (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Shimp & Andrew (2013) supported that a consumer's own perceptions toward

a brand has significant influenced on brand attitude. Brand attitude is also considered as a reliable predictor on consumers' purchasing behavior toward brands.

Customer loyalty: Copeland (1923) stated that loyalty was derived from "insistence" i.e. the extreme extent of consumer's favorable attitude towards certain product such that consumers will not accept any other substitute for that particular product. Customer loyalty is a feeling of attachment to or affection for a company's people, products, or services (Jones & Sasser, 1995) which leads to consistent repurchase or re-patronizes a preferable product/service (Oliver, 1999). A higher level of customer loyalty can be seen from a satisfied customer. Therefore, customer satisfaction and loyalty can be built by delivering superior consumer value with excellent service and quality products (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000).

Relationship of relevant variables and Research hypotheses

Perceived quality and Perceived value

In the study of Dodds (1985), his result indicated that perceived quality had a significant influenced on perceived value and wiliness to purchase. Many scholars also confirmed that service quality plays as a predictive factor in perceived value of customers (Chen & Hu, 2010; Zeithaml, 1988). Likewise, perceived service quality positively influenced perceived value in Malaysia telecommunications industry (Rasheed & Abadi, 2014). Therefore, based on previous studies and the five dimensions of perceived quality, the following hypotheses are explored.

H₁: Perceived quality has a positive influence on perceived value.

H_{1a}: The customer service dimension of perceived quality has a positive influence on perceived value.

H_{1b}: The network quality dimension of perceived quality has a positive influence on perceived value.

H_{1c}: The mobile devices dimension of perceived quality has a positive influence on perceived value.

H_{1d}: The value-added dimension of perceived quality has a positive influence on perceived value.

H_{1e}: The pricing structure dimension of perceived quality has a positive influence on perceived value.

Perceived quality and Brand attitude

Number of studies indicated that perceived quality has positively effect on brand attitude (Batra et al., 2000; Dimofte, Johansson & Ronkainen, 2008; Chi, Yeh & Tsai, 2011). Furthermore, Shah, Tanveer & Azam (2017) examined the direction of association between service quality and customer subscription behavior with attitude's mediation role. They found that perceived service quality positively influenced brand attitude in UAE telecommunications industry. Therefore, based on previous studies and the five dimensions of perceived quality, the following hypotheses are explored.

H₂: Perceived quality has a positive influence on brand attitude.

H_{2a}: The customer service dimension of perceived quality has a positive influence on brand attitude.

H_{1b} : The network quality dimension of perceived quality has a positive influence on brand attitude.

H_{1c} : The mobile devices dimension of perceived quality has a positive influence on brand attitude.

H_{1d} : The value-added dimension of perceived quality has a positive influence on brand attitude.

H_{1e} : The pricing structure dimension of perceived quality has a positive influence on brand attitude.

Perceived value and Brand attitude

Many studies indicated that consumers' perceived value influenced consumer attitude (Homer & Kahle, 1988; Teas & Agarwal, 2000). The improvement of consumers' attitude toward product/service could be from a boost in consumers' perceived value (Leppaniemi, Sinisalo & Karjaluoto, 2006). Moreover, perceived value shown a direct and positive influence on customer brand attitude (Johnson, Herrmann,

& Huber, 2006; Swait & Sweeney, 2000). In the current study, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_3 : Perceived value has a positive influence on brand attitude.

Brand attitude and Customer loyalty

Brand loyalty signifies the degree of attachment that a consumer has toward a brand (Jacobson & Aaker, 1985; Oliver, 1999). Brand loyalty also refers to favorable attitude and behavioral reaction toward brand (Engel & Blackwell, 1982). Previous studies confirmed a positive relationship between brand attitude and brand loyalty (Yoon & Rhee, 2007; Shin et al., 2010). Hence, the last hypothesis is put forward as follows:

H_4 : Brand attitude has a positive influence on brand loyalty.

Based on the above literature review, research framework for this study is presented in Figure 1.

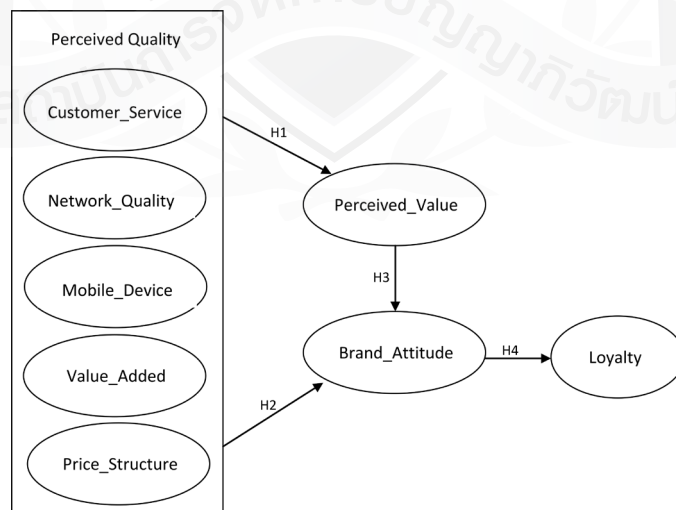


Figure 1 Proposed framework

Methodology

Quantitative approach was used in this study. The target populations of this study were experienced users of mobile phone service in Yangon, one of the largest cities in Myanmar. Convenience sampling method was employed to the target group during October 1st to 31st 2017. The sample size was chosen based upon general guidelines for sample size depending on the number of variables involved in the study. As the instrument used in this study has 23 items (statements). The required sample size should be 10-20 times of total number of items (Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, the minimum requirement of sample size should be 230 samples. A total of 424 samples were corrected which matched the predetermined criterion of at least 230 samples. The questionnaire for the main study contains two parts, which were demographic information section and research framework section with four variables. In research framework part, a total of 23 scale items were used to measure the four variables namely; perceived quality (twelve items), perceived value (four items), brand attitude (three items), and brand loyalty (four items). The measuring scale was five-point Likert response scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Analysis techniques

Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of all variables. The questionnaire's validity was measured using factor analysis. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to simultaneously test the interrelationships of

relevant variables, the validity of the proposed research model as well as research hypotheses.

Data Analysis

This research study used Cronbach's alpha to test scale reliability. The Cronbach's alpha values for all variables were from 0.721 to 0.869. Thus, all constructs of this study were accepted for internal consistency. All factor loadings were between 0.51 and 0.95, which are above the threshold value of 0.50. As a result, the above values indicate high convergent validity for all constructs. In addition, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results for all constructs demonstrated that data fit well with the measurement model (Table 1), and established an essential precondition for the validity of subsequent structural model estimations.

All variables were simultaneously tested as proposed in the initial research model to establish whether the model could predict customer loyalty in Mobile Network Services in Myanmar. This test would determine the model's GOF (Goodness-of-fit), and the hypothesized paths between variables.

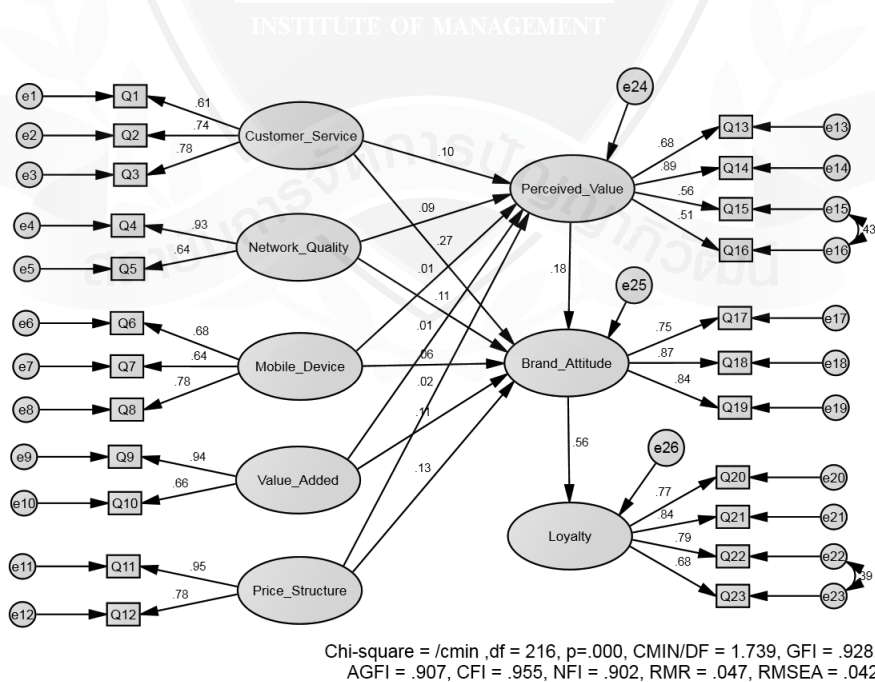
The proposed model generated a ratio ($\chi^2/df = 1.739$) that was below the threshold of 3.0. The values of GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, RMR, and RMSEA were 0.928, 0.907, 0.955, 0.902, 0.047, and 0.042, respectively (Table 1). Thus, analysis of the overall fit statistics demonstrated that the fit of the proposed structural model was good, and it provided a reasonable level of overall fit with the real world data. The full SEM presents in figure 2 below.

Table 1 Goodness-of-fit measures of all constructs

Goodness-of-fit Measure*	Criteria	Perceived quality	Perceived value	Brand attitude	Brand loyalty	Perceived quality and Perceived value	Perceived quality and Brand attitude	Proposed model
Chi-Square Value (χ^2)		66.304	0.222	0	0	225.462	153.762	375.616
P-Value		0.016	0.638	/	/	0	0	0
df		44	1	0	0	100	83	216
χ^2/df	< 3	1.507	0.222	0	0	2.324	1.853	1.739
GFI	> 0.9	0.973	1	1	1	0.937	0.950	0.928
AGFI	> 0.8	0.953	0.997	/	/	0.912	0.927	0.907
CFI	> 0.9	0.984	1	/	/	0.932	0.965	0.955
NFI	> 0.8	0.954	1	/	/	0.888	0.927	0.902
RMR	< 0.08	0.047	0.002	/	/	0.073	0.053	0.047
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.035	0	/	/	0.056	0.045	0.042

Source: Author's calculation

*As recommended by Hair et al. (2010), Holsie (1995), Hu & Bentler (1999), Steiger (1990)

**Figure 2** Full SEM model

The hypothesized paths were checked with the help of standardized path coefficients and their respective critical ratios (t-values). The results showed that the customer service dimension ($\beta = 0.346$, t-value = 4.653, $p < 0.001$) and price structure dimensions ($\beta = 0.117$, t-value = 2.078, $p < 0.05$) of perceived quality indicated positively impact on brand attitude;

perceived value dimension ($\beta = 0.241$, t-value = 3.275, $p < 0.001$) showed positively influence on brand attitude; brand attitude dimension ($\beta = 0.402$, t-value = 9.932, $p < 0.001$) presented positively effect on users of mobile phone service loyalty in Yangon, Myanmar. Hence, research hypotheses H_{2a} , H_{2e} , H_3 , and H_4 were supported. These results are shown in Table 2.

Relationship of relevant variables and the research hypothesis

Table 2 Summary of testing hypotheses

Hypothesis path	Standardized coefficient (β)	C.R. (t-value)	Results
H_1			Rejected
a. Customer service $\rightarrow$ Perceived value	0.093	1.597	Rejected
b. Network quality $\rightarrow$ Perceived value	0.070	1.290	Rejected
c. Mobile devices $\rightarrow$ Perceived value	0.010	0.181	Rejected
d. Value-added $\rightarrow$ Perceived value	0.006	0.149	Rejected
e. Price structure $\rightarrow$ Perceived value	0.015	0.391	Rejected
H_2			Partially supported
a. Customer service $\rightarrow$ Brand attitude	0.346**	4.653	Supported
b. Network quality $\rightarrow$ Brand attitude	0.117	1.567	Rejected
c. Mobile devices $\rightarrow$ Brand attitude	0.077	1.104	Rejected
d. Value-added $\rightarrow$ Brand attitude	0.108	1.490	Rejected
e. Price structure $\rightarrow$ Brand attitude	0.117*	2.078	Supported
H_3			
Perceived value $\rightarrow$ Brand attitude	0.241**	3.275	Supported
H_4			
Brand attitude $\rightarrow$ Customer loyalty	0.402**	9.932	Supported
Model Goodness-of-Fit Statistics: $\chi^2 = 375.616$ ($p < 0.000$); $df = 216$; $\chi^2/df = 1.739$; GFI = 0.928; AGFI = 0.907; CFI = 0.955; NFI = 0.902; RMR = 0.047; RMSEA = 0.042 Note: cut-off t-value is 1.96 (* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$)			

Source: Author's calculation

Discussion

The current study shows a positive relationship between the customer service dimension of perceived quality and brand attitude among users of mobile phone service. This result implies that customers are concerned about courtesy and creditability of staffs as well as ability to solve customers' request. In addition, the price structure dimension has a significant influence on brand attitudes which implies that varieties of pricing schemes and degree of freedom to pick an option that fits customer need are important elements. Additionally, perceived value is a benefit – cost comparison when consumers utilized of products/services. For users of mobile phone service, offering a good value for money and exceed customers' expectation are noticeable in formation of brand value. This result also indicates that brand value has a significant on brand attitude. The consumers' attitude toward brand is formed by their learning and judging of product/service toward that mobile phone service provider.

Lastly, brand attitude may be a good predictor for customer loyalty. Customers who have a favorable impression towards particular provider may prefer that provider, say positive things about this carrier to others, and recommend this provider to others. Users of mobile phone service with positive brand attitude are thus a critical factor in the success of mobile phone service provider.

Conclusion and recommendations

The main purpose of this paper was to

investigate how perceived quality, perceived value and brand attitude influence customer loyalty in the telecom sector in Myanmar. This study provides an in-depth theoretical perspective examining customer loyalty in mobile phone service of Myanmar and the reasons behind customer loyalty. An integrated structural equation model was created to explore the antecedent variables of brand attitudes to aid in interpreting customer loyalty. This study found that the customer service and price structure dimension of perceived quality have positively impact on brand attitudes. This finding was aligned with several scholars (Kim, Park & Jeong, 2004; Lim, Widdows & Park, 2006; Santouridis & Panagiotis, 2010). The result suggests management of mobile phone service provider to closely monitor the quality level of customer service. Management should evaluate its service quality with their customer regularly by collecting the feedback from customers as well as the comments from staffs who work closely with customers. Staffs should also be provided with training class in order to enhance their service skills. In addition, customers pay attention on pricing schemes. Management should come up with variety of pricing plans and service packages to server different need of customers such as unlimited call between 7am to 5pm for working group users; unlimited call between 9pm to 6am for young users. Moreover, the service provider should maintain their customers' value perceptions in term of offering product/service at good value for money. As result indicated that brand value has a significant on brand

attitude which aligned with Johnson, Herrmann & Huber (2006) and Swait & Sweeney (2000). Management has to ensure positive consumers' perception which will have a significant impact their attitude toward brand. Finally, an integrated marketing strategy that aligned with the inter-relationships among all the relevant variables in the proposed model of this study should be developed with the intention of understanding customer loyalty and obtaining favorable brand attitudes as confirmed by Yoon & Rhee (2007).

Although the study collected a large sample data, the data was collected only in Yangon. A future study could be expanded to other big cities in Myanmar. The possibility of generalize the results to other countries need to be verified.

A future study should extend the framework by adding other factors that influence customer loyalty such as brand image, trust as well as brand awareness.

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