



ADVERTING MESSAGE AND NEGATIVE SWITCHING BARRIER: EFFECTS ON REPURCHASE INTENTION AND WORD-OF-MOUTH

DOI: 10.17261/Pressacademia.2017.722

JMML-V.4-ISS.4-2017(2)-p.335-342

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To cite this document

Hua, C.C., Tho, N.X. (2017). Advertising message and negative switching barrier: effects on repurchase intention and word-of-mouth.

Journal of Management, Marketing and Logistics (JMML), V.4, Iss.4, p.335-342.

Permenant link to this document: <http://doi.org/10.17261/Pressacademia.2017.722>

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Even though previous literature has drawn the attention to explore influential factors on repurchase intention and positive word-of-mouth of customers (PWOM), however, this study instead is the first one to consider the simultaneous impacts of advertising messages and negative switching barriers. In order to clarify the focus for the above purpose, this study will not take into consideration the major factor - service quality - which impacts on the main dimensions of attitudinal loyalty had been proved already.

Methodology: The Structure Equation Model was employed in this study to test the proposed hypotheses with the questionnaires sampled from 289 cell phone users in Vietnam's mobile telecommunication market.

Findings: The study's results indicate that advertising message has a negative impact on repurchase intention as well as on customers' intention of spreading positive word-of-mouth. Regarding negative switching barrier, the results show that it is positively associated with repurchase intentions, but, negatively associated with positive word-of-mouth.

Conclusion: The findings of this study not only contribute to theoretical aspects, but also arise practical issues for Vietnam's telecommunication market. It suggests that mobile carriers in Vietnam should figure out more effective tools to reduce "junk" or "spam" messages in order to enhance loyalty from existing subscribers. In addition, the mobile carriers need to realize the negative switching barrier, which should be considered while making strategies of retaining customers. Under such manner, it then could help cell phone network providers be more profitable in the current intensely competitive environment.

Keywords: Negative switching barrier, advertising message, repurchase intention, positive word-of-mouth, attitudinal loyalty, mobile telecommunication, Vietnam.

JEL Codes: M00, M31, M37

1. INTRODUCTION

Some previous literature exploring consumer behaviors in the mobile telecommunication service market have examined the effects of switching barrier on customer loyalty (Kim, Park, & Jeong, 2004; Aydin & Ozer, 2005; Liu, Guo, & Lee, 2011). However, most of them only emphasized the perspectives of switching cost. Among these studies, Kim et al. (2004) explored in detail the antecedents of switching barrier, which could be composed of switching cost, attractiveness of alternatives, and interpersonal relationships. More recently, some researchers have decomposed the concept of switching barrier into "positive" and "negative" points, and have examined the effects on repurchase intentions and recommendations in different industries (Carrasco & Foxall, 2006; Casielles, Álvarez, & Lanza, 2009). The current study will adopt the second approach to consider the concept of switching barrier, however, the research emphasizes on negative switching barriers which arises objectively from outside of the current service supplier due to that caused by alternative provides or by psychosocial perspectives around existing customers. In addition, to our knowledge, none literature has examined the effects of adverting message on major dimensions of attitudinal loyalty, such as repurchase intentions and positive word-of-mouth, in the mobile telecommunication market sector. Therefore, a combination of exploring the simultaneous impact of negative switching barrier and adverting message on attitudinal loyalty of customer is extremely meaningful, especially in Vietnamese telecom market. It is expected that the current study will not only fill the theoretical

gap, but also sketch the practical picture which can be a reference for the cell phone service providers in the Vietnam's market.

The paper firstly begins with literature review. Related key concepts will be explored in order to develop the hypotheses proposed in this study. The methodologies of questionnaire design and sampling will be presented in the following section. Data analysis and research findings will be addressed in detail, and, discussions and conclusions follows.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Negative Switching Barrier and Key Manifestations of Customer Loyalty

2.1.1. Negative Switching Barrier

Switching barrier refers to any obstacle that might be incurred when customers consider changing current providers. Previous researchers have approached the concept of switching barrier in different ways. For instance, Jones et al. (2000) and Kim et al. (2004) detailed the factors for causing the switching barrier. Based on their findings, switching barrier could be formed by switching cost, attractiveness of alternatives, and interpersonal relationships. These may lead to customers perceive a difficulty to make decision when they consider changing their service providers. Furthermore, as for the mobile telecommunication services, Kim et al. (2004) asserted the corresponding switching cost could include loss cost, adaptation cost, and move-in cost.

A second approach distinguished switching barrier into two categories, including negative and positive aspects (Carrasco & Foxall, 2006; Casielles, Álvarez, & Lanza, 2009). Switching barrier is recognized as negative aspect if customers "have to stay with the relationship" or "are locked into" relationship; on the other hand, switching barrier is acknowledged as positive aspect if consumers "want to stay with relationships" because this relationship bring benefits or value for them (Burnham, Frels, & Mahajan, 2003; Casielles et al., 2009). Unlike positive switching barrier, negative switching barrier arises objectively from outside of the current service supplier due to that caused by alternative provides or by psychosocial perspectives around existing customers (such as from friends, colleagues, or family members). This study adopts the similar approach, and then focuses on examining the effect of negative switching barrier on two main manifestations of customer loyalty – repurchase intention and positive word-of-mouth (Tho, Lai, & Yan, 2017).

2.1.2. Negative Switching Barrier and Two Key Manifestations of Customer Loyalty

The concept of customer loyalty can be approached from either attitudinal or behavioral, or both perspectives. However, the behavioral approach has been criticized because it put too much emphasizes on the behavioral outcomes (such as purchase rate or repeat purchase frequency), and did not take into account the psychological perspective of loyalty (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973; Oliver, 1999; Casielles et al., 2009; Ansari & Riasi, 2016; Tho et al., 2017). On the other hand, attitudinal loyalty focuses more on the psychological explanations of the reasons of customer loyalty (Aaker 1996; Oliver, 1999; Maity & Gupta, 2016). According to Casielles et al. (2009), there are three key manifestations of attitudinal loyalty, including repurchase, positive recommendation, and price tolerance. However, a reasonable price is one of the most critical factors in the mobile telecommunication service market, and can be integrated with other factors to enhance the level of consumers' evaluation towards overall service quality. In addition, with the fact of intense competitive market in the mobile telecommunication, it is impossible for network operators to charge higher price than others. Moreover, Tho et al. (2017) supposed that repurchase intention and positive word-of-mouth are two main dimensions of customer loyalty in the cell phone network sector, and it is suitable to adopt this viewpoint in this study.

Negative switching barriers have been regarded as an antecedent factor which can influence customers' intentions to continue the relationship with current service provider (Carrasco & Foxall, 2006), or to spread positive word-of-mouth to others (Julander & Söderlund, 2003; Casielles et al., 2009). When customers perceive they are "locked into" the relationship with currently service provider due to the existence of negative switching barrier, they are less likely to recommend the products or services to others (Julander & Söderlund, 2003; Casielles et al., 2009). On the other hand, as for the repurchase intention, two above studies pointed out that when negative switching barriers are highly perceived, customers are more likely to stay with current providers. However, because customers are forced to remain with their current suppliers, therefore they are less likely to spread positive word-of-mouth. Thus, two following hypotheses are proposed based on the above arguments:

H1: Negative switching barrier will be positively associated with repurchase intention

H2: Negative switching barrier will be negatively associated with positive word-of-mouth

2.2. Advertising Message, Repurchase Intention and Positive Word-of-Mouth

2.2.1. Advertising Message

Advertising message (also known as short message service-SMS advertising) is a part of mobile marketing that gives business organizations the chance to send messages to consumers through their mobile phone devices (Zhang and Mao, 2008). The revolution of mobile telecommunication has made text message to be the most popular advertising media, because it has been considered an easy major tool to spread advertisement to and interact with consumers (Ranjbarian, Rehman, 2014; Salem, 2016). Moreover, advertising message can create a lot of opportunities for companies to promote their products or services effectively (Aamir, Ikram, Ali, Hasnu, & Zaman, 2013), and persuade customers to purchase or continue using services. In order to attract more customers and keep existing consumers, some companies deliver games, ring tones, and prizes to their subscribers through SMS advertising (Zabadi & Elsayed, 2012). That is because customers often bring mobile device with them at any time, and, advertising message can be personalized or customized in order to reach targeted customers. However, because the content of advertising message is limited in terms of characters and customer's mobile phone device only can store a few messages, therefore subscribers cannot be easy to find out particular advertising messages while they would like to take reference.

2.2.2. Advertising Message and Repurchase Intention

Previous studies have pointed out contradictory results regarding customers' behaviors toward message advertisements. According to Liu et al. (2011), informative advertisements are likely to positively influence both customers' attitudes and purchase behaviors. Receivers will possess positive reactions to message advertisements once they perceive those messages contain useful and appropriate information (Chowdhury, Parvin, Weiteberner, & Becker, 2006; Aitken, Gray, & Lawson, 2008).

However, Ranjbarian & Rehman (2014) noted that most of the empirical researches had revealed the negative consumers' attitudes towards receiving mobile advertising message, because it might cause perceptions of irritation. In addition, since consumers might be forced to receive message advertisements much often than ever (Salem, 2016), it'll be probably generated negative behavioral outcomes. Moreover, overlapping and confusing information provided by message advertisements might annoy customers. Therefore, it may consequently lead to negative impacts on purchase intentions. Furthermore, Stewart & Pavlou (2002) and Ahmadi, Masrour, & Khaksar (2013) argued that cell phone users may be annoyed by many irrelevant and distracting information from message advertisements as an intrusion into their privacy, as a consequence, they will show negative attitudes and repurchase behavior. Also, mobile phone subscribers may perceive message advertisements are risky because they sometime contain unexpected ads, game invitations, even phishing attacks via their cell phone (Tho et al., 2017). Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H3: In the mobile telecommunication service, the more advertising messages customers receive, the less likely they intent to repurchase

2.2.3. Advertising Message and Positive Word-of-Mouth

Positive word-of-mouth of advertising message, in this study, can be defined as consumers spread message or positive words to others. The willingness for customers to spread positive word-of-mouth depends on whether cell phone users consider the messages received valuable or risky. Positive word-of-mouth is a result of consumer's tendency to share their thoughts regarding to the services or products they use based on the advertising messages they encountered. When mobile subscribers perceive advertising messages which related to the services they use are useful, then they may forward the message to others or recommend services to others. The positive recommendation services among customers and message forwarded by them are extreme benefits for mobile network providers. Because advertising messages which are forwarded by friends and positive recommendation from others may gain more trustworthy than advertisements coming directly from advertisers (Almossawi, 2014; Maisam & Mahsa, 2016). In addition, friends or relatives do not forward messages unless they themselves have read and recognize that it has value worthy enough to be forwarded to others (Almossawi, 2014).

Contrariwise, advertising messages can be perceived as intrusive, annoying, or risky (Tho et al., 2017). Most cell phone users concern about receiving risky messages, such as unexpected ads, game invitations, or phishing attacks. In these cases, customers will express negative attitudes to advertising messages and want to block incoming ones. Therefore, customers will not spread positive word-of-mouth when provider's services/products are considered in highly risky circumstances, and they may spread negative word-of-mouth instead (Tho et al, 2017). From the above opinions, it seems there is a negative relation between advertising messages and word-of-mouth more likely to happen rather than positive one. Therefore, we proposed the following hypothesis:

H4: In the mobile telecommunication service, the more advertising messages consumers receive the less likely they spread positive word-of-mouth about provider's services to others

Based on literature review and hypotheses development mentioned above, the theoretical framework is proposed as shown in Fig. 1 below:

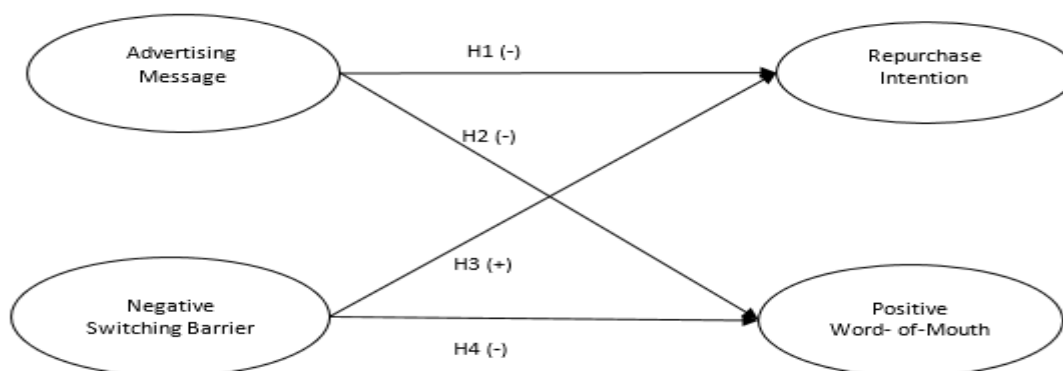


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to launch the hypotheses testing proposed in this study, the following research methodology was employed.

3.1. Questionnaire

A self-completion questionnaire was used for survey. Four new items were created to measure the construct of advertising message. In addition, three items (NS1, NS2, NS3) were selected from previous studies (Aydin & Ozer, 2005; Casielles et al., 2009), and one new question was created in this study (NS4), which were used to evaluate the concept of negative switching barrier. In order to measure the concept of repurchase intention, three questions were selected and synthesized from previous studies (Kim et al., 2004; Eshghi, Roy, & Ganguli, 2008; Casielles et al., 2009; Nasir & Mushtaq, 2014; Zhang & Feng, 2009). Lastly, three items were used to assess the concept of positive word-of-mouth, two of them were synthesized from previous studies (Kim et al., 2004; Eshghi et al., 2008; Casielles et al., 2009; Nasir & Mushtaq, 2014)

3.2. Sampling

This study used the samples which were collected via offline method. First, the pilot study was conducted to pretest through a group of 30 cell phone users to validate the wording, phrasing and relevance of questionnaires. Afterwards, the finalized questionnaires were delivered for data collection during three days of the Vietnam's national exam for college entrance in 2017, from June 22 to 24, in fifteen locations situated in Nghe An and Ha Tinh province. A total of 289 valid questionnaires were collected for analysis then. The respondents were using the systems provided by Viettel (40.1%), Vinaphone (31.8%), MobiFone (26.0%), and others (2.1%). These results are consistent with the real market share in Vietnam where three first major operators, which mentioned above, dominate the market with around 95 percent.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Reliability of research measurement was validated by using the value of Cronbach's Alpha (α) and Composite Reliability (CR). As shown in Table 1, the Cronbach Alpha calculated for each item, and the composite reliability (CR) were both exceed the threshold of 0.7. Hence, measurement reliability was approved.

Convergent validity refers to the degree to which two measures of constructs that theoretically should be related, are in fact related. Convergent validity was checked by using the value of average variances extracted (AVE) and consider the loading of items. As shown in Table 1, all constructs have the average variance extracted (AVE) values greater than the recommended value of 0.5. In addition, item loadings of all constructs are exceeding the critical value of 0.6. Thus, it can be said that convergent validity was satisfy.

Table 1: Reliability Test

Scale/items	Item loading	Cronbach' Alpha (α)
Advertising Message (CR =0.87; AVE = 0.62)		0.867
AM1: I receive advertising message from network provider very frequently	0.69	0.845
AM2: I have been convinced to continue using this cell phone network by provider's advertising messages	0.85	0.805
AM3: My decision to repurchase is influenced by network provider's advertising message	0.86	0.806
AM4: I trust on network provider's advertising message	0.75	0.861
Negative Switching barrier (CR =0.78; AVE = 0.52)		0.785
NS1: I would have to dedicate a lot of time, money, and effort to find the best option to meet my need	0.66	0.741
NS2: I would have to inform my friends or relatives about the change of number	0.66	0.747
NS3: I would be concerned if people (ex-friends, ex-colleagues, or clients) dial my previous number but could not reach me	0.81	0.670
NS4: My family members do not want me to change to other providers	0.75	0.768
Repurchase intention (CR =0.84; AVE = 0.63)		0.837
RP1: I intend to continue using current network in the long run	0.75	0.787
RP2: This mobile phone network is my best option	0.88	0.737
RP3: If I were to choose a mobile phone provider today, I would choose my present service provider again	0.75	0.800
Positive WOM (CR =0.89; AVE = 0.75)		0.897
W1: I would recommend this mobile phone network to others	0.86	0.855
W2: I always praise this cell phone network when anybody who seeks my advice	0.86	0.840
W3: I have only positive things to say about this cell phone network	0.87	0.863

4.2. Discriminant Validity

The discriminant validity test was used to assess the extent to which constructs or latent factors are distinct and uncorrelated. The rule of discriminant validity is that observed variables should relate more strongly to their own construct than another construct. The AVE method (average variance extracted method) was employed to test discriminant validity in this study. Accordingly, if the average variances extracted (AVE) by the correlated latent variables is greater than the square of the correlation ($CORR^2$) between the latent variables then discriminant validity was satisfied (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 2: Discriminant Validity Test

AVE/CORR ²	1	2	3	4
1. Advertising Message	0.62			
2. Negative Switching Barrier	0.03	0.52		
3. Repurchase Intention	0.59	0.33	0.63	
4. Positive WOM	0.16	0.11	0.05	0.75

Model fit indices: Chi-square = 157.605; Df = 71; Chi-square/df = 2.220; p-value =0.000
GFI =0.926; AGFI =0.891; CFI =0.956; RMSEA = 0.67
Note: The values in diagonal row are AVE

Table 2 shows all pairs of constructs (advertising message & negative switching barrier; advertising message & repurchase intention; advertising message & positive WOM; negative switching barrier & repurchase intention; repurchase intention & positive WOM) satisfy the discriminant validity. In addition, the results also exhibit that the model has acceptable goodness-fit-indices (Chi-square = 157.605; Df = 71; Chi-square/df = 2.220; p-value =0.000; GFI =0.926; AGFI = 0.891; CFI = 0.956; RMSEA = 0.67).

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

As seen in Table 3, the findings supported all proposed hypotheses, the absolute t-values of all hypothesized paths are greater than 1.96 with corresponding p-values are less than 0.05. In addition, the evidences also showed the model possessed goodness-fit indices (Chi-square = 715.327; DF = 336; Chi-square/df = 2.129; GFI = 0.901; AGFI = 0.846; CFI = 0.902; RMSEA = 0.065).

Table 3: Structure Parameter Estimates

Hypothesis/Path	Standardized Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Result
H1: Advertising Message -> Repurchase intention	- 0.261	- 4.072	***	Significant
H2: Advertising Message -> Positive WOM	- 0.194	- 2.552	0.01	Significant
H3: Negative Switching Barrier-> Repurchase intention	0.209	2.505	0.01	Significant
H4: Negative Switching Barrier -> Positive WOM	- 0.229	- 2.206	0.02	Significant

Chi-square = 715.327; DF = 336; Chi-square/df = 2.129; GFI = 0.901; AGFI = 0.846; CFI = 0.902; RMSEA = 0.065
 Note: *** significant at 1% level

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings show that advertising message has a negative impact on repurchase intention (coefficient = - 0.261, $p < 0.01$). Also, as hypothesis H2 was supported (coefficient = - 0.194, $p < 0.05$), advertising message affects negatively significant, although the parameter is weak, on positive word-of-mouth. Available literatures have found that the relationships of behavioral outcomes with advertising message might be negative or positive. Indeed, there was a contradictory affirmation between different researchers. According to Liu, Sinkovics et al. (2011), it is likely to positively influence customer's attitude and purchase behavior. However, Ranjbarian & Rehman (2014) noted that most of the empirical researches had revealed the negative consumers' attitudes towards receiving mobile advertising message, because it might cause perceptions of irritation.

Advertising message can result in negative impacts on customer repurchase intention as well as on word-of mouth recommendation, which reason could be too many message advertisements every single day (Salem, 2016). Consequently, customers feel their privacy would be violated, abused and harassed by mobile operators that send irrelevant texts to them (Bamba & Barnes, 2007). In addition, advertising messages may disturb consumers and interfere in their everyday important activities. In this situation, advertising messages can be perceived as intrusive, annoying, or risky (Tho et al., 2017). As a consequence, customers will show negative attitudes in term of repurchase behavior (Stewart & Pavlou, 2002; Ahmadi et al., 2013). Similarly, since cell phone users are confronted everyday with more risky messages rather than useful ones, they may spread negative instead of positive word-of-mouth to others. As a matter of fact, due to the market structure of Vietnamese mobile telecommunication service has not been stable yet and the regulations or legal frameworks for the market have not been efficient until now, cell phone users in Vietnam have received many unwanted advertising messages, game invitations, even phishing attacks every day.

As shown in Table 3, negative switching barrier has a positive significant impact on repurchase intention and negative influence on word-of-mouth. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Casielles et al., 2009; Julander & Soderlund, 2003), which have confirmed that when customers are "blocked in the relationship" with provider due to negative switching barrier, they will be less likely to make recommendations to others. In regard to repurchase intention, subscribers seem to be forced to remain with their current service provider. That is because it might incur various types of monetary loss, time waste, effort, and even psychological disturbance if switching to other providers. This is the reason why negative switching barrier are positively associated with repurchase intention (Casielles et al., 2009; Julander & Soderlund, 2003).

In conclusion, this is the first study which aims at examining the effects of negative switching barrier and advertising message on two manifestations of customer loyalty (repurchase intention and positive word-of-mouth). In order to focus on this purpose, the study did not take into account the factor of service quality, which have been confirmed its influence on the attitudinal loyalty. The findings indicate that advertising message has a negative impact on repurchase intention as well as on positive word-of-mouth. Regarding negative switching barrier, the results show that it has positively significant impact on repurchase intention. However, it has a negative association with positive word-of-mouth. The empirical analysis results presented in this study provides evidences, both on scientific as well as practical aspects, to suggest that mobile carriers in Vietnam should figure out more effective tools to reduce "junk" or "spam" messages in order to enhance loyalty from existing subscribers. Moreover, the mobile carriers need to realize the negative switching barrier, which should be

considered while making strategies of retaining customers. As a result, it then could be more profitable for cell phone network providers in this intensely competitive environment.

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