

The Effect of Switching Cost on Customer Loyalty in Mobile Phone Industry

By

Yung Chieh Yang

楊詠捷

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DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

This senior paper was presented

by

Yung Chieh Yang
楊詠捷

It was defended on

November 18, 2023

and approved by

Reviewer 1: YuJane Chen, Associate Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Reviewer 2: Ren-Her Hsieh, Associate Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Advisor: Shao-Tzu Wu, Assistant Professor, Department of International Affairs

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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Yung Chieh Yang, B.A.

Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, 2024

ABSTRACT

In industries faced with high customer turnover rates, the economic burden is substantial. Philip Kotlers said “acquiring a new customer can be five times more expensive than retaining an existing one”, making the reduction of switching costs a strategic imperative. This research examines the distinction strategies mobile phone brands must be use to know loyalty among two distinct customer segments: switchers and stayers. With an emphasis on the role of switching costs, this study investigates the varying dynamics of customer loyalty within these groups.

I used a quantitative research method by conducting a questionnaire survey on a large sample. I expect to collect 150 questionnaires I eventually collected 182 valid questionnaires. I use regression analysis to examine the effect of switching cost on customer loyalty.

The results demonstrate that switching cost (stayers vs. switchers) has the moderating effect on the customer relationships regarding product quality, convenience, innovation on customer loyalty. Stronger relationships among factors are shown within the stayer-group, rather than the switcher-group.

No matter what the switching costs, brand awareness impacts customer loyalty consistently, meaning that brand awareness alone can sustain customer loyalty. However, conspicuous consumption especially increases customer loyalty among switchers who are attract to the social status associated with certain brands, and this factor is insignificant for stayers.

The contribution of this study is that it analyzes how switching costs moderate customer

loyalty in the mobile phone industry, which is less discussed in the present literature.

Keywords: Switching costs, Customer loyalty, Brand stayers, Brand switchers

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Customer loyalty is the foundation stone for the long-term success of a mobile phone brand. It's more than just a preference for a particular product; it reflects a customer's promise to a brand, which in turn translates into continued purchases, positive word-of-mouth, and resistance to competition's offers. In a saturated market with multiple brands offering similar products, developing and maintaining loyal customers can determine whether the firm can flourish or fail.

In essence, switching costs are the barriers that customers face when considering switching cell phone brands. These costs include both tangible aspects, such as the money spent on buying new devices and accessories, as well as invisible factors, such as the time and effort needed to adapt to a new ecosystem or operating system.

The significance of this study becomes apparent when a real-life example is cited: Apple, best known for its iconic iPhone, is a powerful example of the interplay between switching costs and customer loyalty in the mobile phone industry. Apple's closed ecosystem, encompassing the iPhone, the iOS operating system, the App Store, and other Apple devices like Macs and iPads, has created a unique value proposition for its customers.

Loyalty to the Apple brand is reflected in strong customer retention. In spite of the many alternatives on the market, Apple users tend to show outstanding loyalty, often staying in the Apple ecosystem for many years. This loyalty is rooted in the Apple brand's reputation for quality, design, and user experience, but is also reinforced by significant switching costs. Customers who use the Apple ecosystem who are considering switching phone brands face significant challenges. Not only

would they need to purchase a new device, but they would also need to repurchase apps, adapt to a different operating system, and possibly face compatibility issues with other devices. These switching costs create real barriers so enhance customer loyalty.

This case emphasizes the value of studying the effect of switching costs on customer loyalty. In a market where mobile phone brands are constantly trying to maintain and expand their customer base, understanding switching cost and its impact on loyalty is critical to effective marketing strategies, product development, and long-term brand success. As the mobile phone industry continues to evolve, research on this topic is not only of academic interest, but also essential for firms to build their market position and drive sustained growth.

Motivation

The mobile phone industry has grown quickly in recent decades, with technological advances and brand increase. In this highly competitive industry, customer loyalty is an important factor in deciding success by ensuring repeat purchases and sustainable growth.

The concept of customer loyalty has been widely studied in the mobile phone industry. Studies have examined the factors that influence brand loyalty, including product quality, brand awareness and customer satisfaction. The theoretical foundations of customer loyalty are well established. However, within this broad context, one aspect that is still relatively unexplored is the role of switching costs in moderating customer loyalty.

While existing research recognizes various factors of customer loyalty, few studies have explored the moderating effect of switching cost. For example, past

research has told us that when a product is of high quality, customers tend to repeatedly purchase from the same brand (high brand loyalty). However, when considering switching costs, if switch barriers are low (meaning customers can easily switch to other brands), having a high-quality product may not necessarily retain customers. Therefore, this study aims to explore the interference effects of switching costs, firstly to fill the gaps in previous literature, and secondly to provide some useful recommendations to companies. For instance, in the case of "stayers" (customers who have never changed brands) and "switchers" (customers who like to constantly switch brands), businesses should focus on which factors can help retain customers.

Research Purpose

The main objective of this study is to investigate the moderating effect of switching cost and the strategies and factors that cell phone brands should focus on in order to increase customer loyalty in the cell phone industry, and I will focus on two different customer groups: switchers and stayers. The study aims to reveal how brand loyalty differs between these two groups and how switching costs moderate this relationship. My goal is to survey how customer loyalty differs between those who change mobile phone brands frequently (switchers) and those who exhibit strong brand loyalty and rarely change mobile phone brands (stayers). By examining the factors contributing to customer loyalty within each group, I intend to provide a understanding of the factors driving brand loyalty.

Research Questions

Q1: What kinds of factors can increase customer loyalty?

Q2: What is the impact of switching cost?

Contribution

This study will allow mobile phone brands to understand the difference in brand loyalty between stayers and switchers and how switching costs moderate customer loyalty. The results of the study indicate that for stayers product quality, convenience, innovation, brand awareness positively affects consumer loyalty. For switchers, product quality, brand awareness, and conspicuous consumption positively affects consumer loyalty.

It can be seen that stayers are more focused on the function of the product itself rather than whether it can bring them a sense of superiority. Switchers care about whether the product can show off and whether people know that the brand they are switching to is famous.

Limits

I will be distributing the questionnaire online, so gender imbalance is a possible limiting factor. If the gender-specific participants in the study are significantly over or underrepresented, this will create a bias in the sample. This may result in underrepresentation of the population as a whole, making it difficult to generalize the results to the whole population. For example, if there are many more female participants than male participants, then the analysis of gender-related issues may not provide a full picture of male perspectives and experiences.

Delimits

To address or reduce gender imbalance, I will promote my survey on as many platforms as possible to attract participants. This can help to increase the diversity of

participants and the representativeness of my sample. If I know in advance that some genders may have less participation, I will use stratified sampling to ensure that there are enough participants from each gender.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Switching Costs

Definition

Porter suggested that switching costs are "onetime" cost¹. Therefore switching costs are the one-off costs that consumers face when switching from an existing company's service or product to another company. Switching costs are defined as the actual or perceived monetary (penalty fees, contractual obligations) or non-monetary costs (time or mental effort) incurred by a customer when switching from one supplier to another.² Customers will evaluate the benefits of switching against the costs of switching when considering whether to switch. If the total cost to the customer is greater than the benefit to the customer, then the customer will not switch.³

In addition, switching costs are not only economic in nature⁴, but there are many barriers for buyers when they think about whether it is worth switching services, such as: search costs, transaction costs, learning costs, customer loyalty, customer inertia, emotional costs, social and psychological risks, etc. These costs are rarely assessed by consumers and only arise when switching.

When switching costs are high or the switching process is particularly painful, dissatisfied customers may maintain their business relationship with the existing service provider and resist the dissolution of the relationship.⁵

Switching Cost Facet Definitions

Switching costs can be divided into three types as follows: 1. Process switching

¹ ME Porter, "Competitive Strategy, New York: Free Press," (1980).

² Alan S Dick and Kunal Basu, "Customer loyalty: toward an integrated conceptual framework," *Journal of the academy of marketing science* 22 (1994).

³ Michael A Jones, David L Mothersbaugh, and Sharon E Beatty, "Switching barriers and repurchase intentions in services," *Journal of retailing* 76, no. 2 (2000).

⁴ Robert M Morgan and Shelby D Hunt, "The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing," *Journal of marketing* 58, no. 3 (1994).

⁵ Barbara B Jackson and Barbara Bund, *Winning and keeping industrial customers: The dynamics of customer relationships* (Jossey-Bass, 1985).

costs: these include the four components of economic risk costs, assessment costs, set-up costs and learning costs.

The economic risk cost refers to the cost of information uncertainty arising from lack of information when a consumer switches to a new supplier ⁶ 2. financial switching costs: these include the following two components: loss of interest cost and financial loss, which involve the loss of financially quantifiable resources ³. relationship switching costs. This type of switching cost involves the loss of psychological or identity-related benefits. This type of switching cost involves psychological or emotional discomfort due to the loss of identity. One academic has extended the switching cost literature to include three types of switching costs: its customer-related costs are habit, effort, time, commitment, expertise, and psychological risk; its firm-related costs are currency, search and learning costs; and its industry-related costs are competition, substitution attractiveness and service type.⁷

Barroso, Carmen and Araceli Picón findings support that the three higher order factors of switching costs reflect the eight lower order factors of switching costs.⁸

The findings confirm that the three higher order factors of switching costs reflect the eight lower order factors of switching costs. Most scholars also suggest that switching costs should be classified into eight categories: 1. Economic risk costs: when consumers already understand that there is insufficient information about the new provider, and consumers seek to accept that the economic risk costs of uncertainty may have negative outcomes. ⁹ 2. Evaluation costs: that is, the time and

⁶ Thomas A Burnham, Judy K Frels, and Vijay Mahajan, "Consumer switching costs: A typology, antecedents, and consequences," *Journal of the Academy of marketing Science* 31, no. 2 (2003).

⁷ Carmen Barroso and Araceli Picón, "Multi-dimensional analysis of perceived switching costs," *Industrial Marketing Management* 41, no. 3 (2012).

⁸ Barroso and Picón, "Multi-dimensional analysis of perceived switching costs."

⁹ William Samuelson and Richard Zeckhauser, "Status quo bias in decision making," *Journal of risk and uncertainty* 1 (1988).

cost of searching and analyzing the decision required by the consumer to make the switch¹⁰

3. Set-up costs: that is, the time and cost of establishing a relationship between the consumer and the new product or setting up the new product for initial use.¹¹

4. Learning costs: that is, the time and cost for the consumer to acquire new skills or knowledge to use the new product, service so that it can be used effectively.¹²

5. Loss of benefit costs: consumers may lose the points they have earned when switching to a new provider and may not be able to enjoy discounts or benefits when becoming a new customer.¹³

6. Financial costs: i.e., the costs incurred by the consumer as a result of changing suppliers, the first cost of switching to a new supplier is bound to be paid, for example, new customer savings or membership fees, resulting in a necessary financial expense¹⁴

7. Personal relationship costs: the consumer's loss of interaction, familiarity and emotion with the previous supplier's professionals, the consumer needs to rebuild the relationship with the new¹⁵

8. Brand relationship costs: Consumers have already established a customer relationship with the original brand or company and have built up an identity from the purchase process. If the consumer switches to another brand company, he or she will lose the brand relationship with the original company and rebuild the customer relationship with the new brand company. If the consumer switches to another brand company, he or she will lose the brand relationship with the original company and rebuild the

¹⁰ Valentina Stan, Barbara Caemmerer, and Roxane Cattan-Jallet, "Customer loyalty development: The role of switching costs," *Journal of Applied Business Research (JABR)* 29, no. 5 (2013).

¹¹ Stan, Caemmerer, and Cattan-Jallet, "Customer loyalty development: The role of switching costs."

¹² Birger Wernerfelt, "Brand loyalty and user skills," *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 6, no. 4 (1985).

¹³ Joseph P Guiltinan, "A classification of switching costs with implications for relationship marketing" (paper presented at the AMA winter educators' conference: Marketing theory and practice, 1989).

¹⁴ Stan, Caemmerer, and Cattan-Jallet, "Customer loyalty development: The role of switching costs."

¹⁵ Porter, "Competitive Strategy, New York: Free Press."

customer relationship with the new brand company.¹⁶

In conclusion, switching costs can be categorized into process switching costs (economic risk costs, assessment costs, set-up costs, learning costs), financial switching costs (loss of interest cost, financial loss), and relationship switching costs (personal relationship costs, brand relationship costs). The different types of switching costs capture various aspects of the challenges and expenses associated with switching from one provider or brand to another.

Customer Loyalty

Definition

Customer loyalty is a top priority for businesses, as repeat purchases of products and services are essential to organizational success and business profitability.¹⁷ It is important to understand the causes of customer loyalty. There is strong empirical evidence that customer satisfaction is an antecedent of customer loyalty and that there is a positive relationship between these two constructs.¹⁸

Customer loyalty is the continued acceptance, consumption and support of a product or service from a brand when there is a demand for it. Customer loyalty is by repeated and recurring purchasing behaviors, active positive communication, word-of-mouth referrals to others, and enjoyment or satisfaction with the various services or products offered by the company, immunity to potentially strong promotional activities from other competitors, etc.¹⁹ A loyal customer will actively support the

¹⁶ Dick and Basu, "Customer loyalty: toward an integrated conceptual framework."

¹⁷ Roger Hallowell, "The relationships of customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and profitability: an empirical study," *International journal of service industry management* (1996).

¹⁸ Eugene W Anderson and Vikas Mittal, "Strengthening the satisfaction-profit chain," *Journal of Service research* 3, no. 2 (2000).

¹⁹ Christian Gronroos, "Service quality: The six criteria of good perceived service," *Review of business* 9, no. 3 (1988).

business's products and services. In order for a business to survive and make a profit, it needs customers to continue to generate spending. When the cost of maintaining existing customers is much lower than that of new customers, customer loyalty is The importance of customer loyalty is crucial to the sustainability of a business.

Moreover, frontline service workers will have a direct impact. If you can take an active role in caring for your customers right from the start, and if your frontline staff give immediate feedback and behave in a way that doesn't make your customers feel unconcerned, your customers will have a greater sense of trust in your company.²⁰

Whether or not a customer will continue to spend will depend on the level of this trust, which also represents a level of dependency. A high level of dependency leads to customer initiative and increases the likelihood of customer behavior and willingness to introduce products and recommend them to others.

Customer loyalty is generally defined as a consumer who may place emphasis on brand, service, shop, product range or product category, customer loyalty is also commonly defined by three concepts: (1) the basic attitude of loyalty is sometimes guided by the brand relationship; (2) loyalty is mainly displayed by outward actions (i.e., past purchase patterns) (3) purchase stability is influenced by personal characteristics, environmental factors and the context in which the purchase is made.²¹

Customer loyalty is generated by customer satisfaction. Loyalty represents the attitude of consumers towards products and services and is an important factor in their actual purchasing behavior, where reputation is the willingness of a customer to recommend a product to others, indicating a high level of loyalty.²² Loyalty is defined

²⁰ 蘇渝祐, "酒吧的服務品質對顧客滿意度及顧客忠誠度之影響-以台北文華東方酒店 MO Bar 為例," (2020).

²¹ Mark D Uncles, Grahame R Dowling, and Kathy Hammond, "Customer loyalty and customer loyalty programs," *Journal of consumer marketing* 20, no. 4 (2003).

²² Fred Selnes, "An examination of the effect of product performance on brand reputation, satisfaction and loyalty," *European Journal of marketing* 27, no. 9 (1993).

as a combination of consumer attitudes and actions towards a brand, and is measured by the degree of support for the brand and repeat purchases. ²³

Customer Loyalty Measurement

Recently, most scholars have defined customer loyalty from a loyalty-intentional perspective.²⁴ Attitudinal loyalty has a positive effect on the maintenance of a relationship and is eager to maintain the relationship and is sometimes seen as equal to relational commitment²⁵ Attitudinal loyalty includes three periods of cognitive loyalty, Affective loyalty, and conative loyalty, while the fourth period of action loyalty is behavioral loyalty. ²⁶

The other view is an integrated one, in which both act loyalty and attitude loyalty should be highly valued and the two concepts are highly interactive with each other, resulting in positive emotions towards repurchasing. Therefore, comprehensive behavior and willingness to measure loyalty or repurchase loyalty.²⁷

From the above literature, it is clear that most marketing scholars use attitudes to measure customer loyalty, and that attitudes are often strongly correlated with actual actions. ²⁸ Furthermore, as we do not have access to objective purchase information from our customers after the sale, we have adopted a loyalty view.

In addition, since the repurchase intention has the effect of reducing costs and increasing the income of unit customers, it is directly related to the profitability of the business also can retain old customers for the enterprise. Referral intentions can help

²³ Mark P Pritchard and Dennis R Howard, "The loyal traveler: Examining a typology of service patronage," *Journal of travel research* 35, no. 4 (1997).

²⁴ Bee Wah Yap, T Ramayah, and Wan Nushazelin Wan Shahidan, "Satisfaction and trust on customer loyalty: a PLS approach," *Business strategy series* 13, no. 4 (2012).

²⁵ Morgan and Hunt, "The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing."

²⁶ Robert A Westbrook and Richard L Oliver, "The dimensionality of consumption emotion patterns and consumer satisfaction," *Journal of consumer research* 18, no. 1 (1991).

²⁷ Barbara R Lewis and Magdalini Soureli, "The antecedents of consumer loyalty in retail banking," *Journal of Consumer Behaviour: An International Research Review* 5, no. 1 (2006).

²⁸ Geoffrey G Bell, "Clusters, networks, and firm innovativeness," *Strategic management journal* 26, no. 3 (2005).

companies attract new customers and provide a reliable source of information through interpersonal communication. Both customer retention and customer attraction are important for long-term economic success, and neither can be achieved without the other. Therefore, this study considers that after-sales service loyalty intentions include "referral intentions" and "repurchase intentions". Both of these are described in more detail below.

(i) Recommendation of wishes

This means that the customer is willing to recommend the product or service to other customers such as friends, family, or colleagues, and to have them deal with this supplier.²⁹ Consumer referral behavior is an extremely important asset for businesses. This is because when consumers have a positive opinion of a product or service, they usually recommend it to their friends and family. Word-of-mouth recommendation is often an important basis for consumers' purchasing decision. Positive word-of-mouth referrals are another form of advertising for companies and can save them huge marketing costs.

Moreover, especially for high-risk customers who provide services where word-of-mouth recommendations can more decisively influence future purchase decisions than advertising or other sources of information controlled by marketers,³⁰ reputation perception is an important factor in word-of-mouth recommendations.

Referring to the above definition, this study defines willingness to recommend as the possibility that a customer would be willing to recommend the company and its products or after-sales services to friends, family, and other customers.

²⁹ Peter C Verhoef, Philip Hans Franses, and Janny C Hoekstra, "The effect of relational constructs on customer referrals and number of services purchased from a multiservice provider: does age of relationship matter?," *Journal of the academy of marketing science* 30 (2002).

³⁰ Thorsten Hennig-Thurau, Kevin P Gwinner, and Dwayne D Gremler, "Understanding relationship marketing outcomes: An integration of relational benefits and relationship quality," *Journal of service research* 4, no. 3 (2002).

(ii) Willingness to repurchase

It means the likelihood that the customer will engage in future repurchasing activity³¹ and the potential for the customer to continue using the product at the previous consumption rate. Repurchase intention is a causal relationship, that is consumers have certain expectations for the purchased products or services, if the actual performance is not as good as expected, it will affect the subsequent behavioral intentions.³² Customer repurchase is the main goal of relationship marketing, and sometimes it is even regarded as relationship marketing itself.³³

In the past, many studies considered repurchase intentions as dependent variables, and found that service quality and repurchase intentions willing to be positively correlated³⁴ and that customer satisfaction affects willingness to repurchase but other scholars have argued that satisfaction to willingness to repurchase is non-linearly correlated, with disrupting variables existing.³⁵

Research Framework

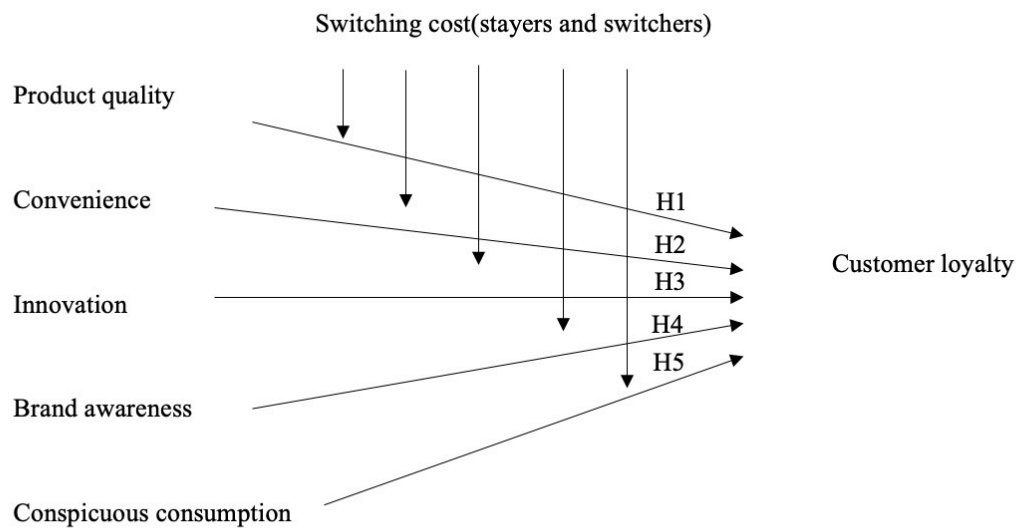
³¹ Kathleen Seiders et al., "Do satisfied customers buy more? Examining moderating influences in a retailing context," *Journal of marketing* 69, no. 4 (2005).

³² Valerie S Folkes, "Recent attribution research in consumer behavior: A review and new directions," *Journal of consumer research* 14, no. 4 (1988).

³³ Thorsten Hennig-Thurau, Mark B Houston, and Gianfranco Walsh, "Determinants of motion picture box office and profitability: an interrelationship approach," *Review of Managerial Science* 1 (2007).

³⁴ Valarie A Zeithaml, Leonard L Berry, and Ananthanarayanan Parasuraman, "The behavioral consequences of service quality," *Journal of marketing* 60, no. 2 (1996).

³⁵ Seiders et al., "Do satisfied customers buy more? Examining moderating influences in a retailing context."



This framework can find out why people stick with certain brands or switch to others.

Hypotheses

I choose product quality, innovation, convenience and brand awareness, and conspicuous consumption as independent variable and investigate the causal relationships between independent variables and customer loyalty. I also investigate whether switching cost can change these causal relationships.

Product quality is the result of the gap between the actual products and the alternatives within a specific industry. It can also be shaped by how customers perceive quality within the market.³⁶ In a highly competitive and price-driven market, such as the mobile phone industry, product quality emerges as the foremost determinant for brand selection.³⁷ Nevertheless, satisfying customers' quality

³⁶ Neil Hardie and Paul Walsh, "Towards a better understanding of quality," *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management* 11, no. 4 (1994).

³⁷ Mohd Rizaimy Shaharudin et al., "Purchase intention of organic food in Kedah, Malaysia; A religious overview," *International Journal of Marketing Studies* 2, no. 1 (2010).

expectations can be challenging due to their diverse and inconsistent interpretations. These variations in quality perspectives are influenced by economic, technological, social, and cultural factors.³⁸

Past researchers have found that product quality has a direct influence on repurchase intentions, performance, customer loyalty and satisfaction.³⁹ Because product performance higher than customer expectations and the product is durable Thus I believe that better product quality will keep a high degree of customer satisfaction, which can encourage customers to make their next buy.

Economic risk costs can change the causal relationship between product quality and customer loyalty by acting as a moderator. For stayers, economic risk costs are high. Because stayers uncertainty about the quality of other brands. For switchers, economic risk costs are low. Switchers think product quality of each company is similar.

H1: The positive effect of product quality on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.

Smartphone convenience is various features, functions, and integrations that a smartphone offers, aiming to provide users with a efficient, and great experience. Smartphones coupled with downloadable apps offer consumers the ability to shop conveniently and efficiently across various channels while providing a high degree of flexibility and personalization.⁴⁰ The design and technological innovations in the mobile phone industry revolve around the central purpose of increasing this

³⁸ Lalit Wankhade and BM Dabade, "TQM with quality perception: a system dynamics approach," *The TQM magazine* 18, no. 4 (2006).

³⁹ José Augusto Rosa Bastos and P de M Gallego, "Pharmacies customer satisfaction and loyalty—a framework analysis," *Documento de Trabajo* 1, no. 08 (2008).

⁴⁰ Ajax Persaud and Irfan Azhar, "Innovative mobile marketing via smartphones: Are consumers ready?," *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 30, no. 4 (2012).

convenience for users.

The results of AT Subiyantoro's study proved that convenience has a significant positive impact on customer loyalty.⁴¹ The advantages of cell phone convenience are that the system is easy to learn and flexible to use, as well as that the system easily fits the user's needs and is easy to use by the general public. Due to the above advantages, convenience will make customers loyal.

Set up costs can change the causal relationship between convenience and customer loyalty by acting as a moderator. For stayers, set up costs are high. Stayers think change to new phone will cost a lot of time. For switchers, set up costs are low. Switchers know how to quickly back up their data to the new phone.

H2: The positive effect of convenience on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.

Innovation is a specific tool for entrepreneurs, which can use change as an opportunity to develop into different businesses, or provide different businesses, or provide different services.⁴² Therefore, as long as the way of creating value of existing resources is changed, it can be called innovation, so innovation is a field that can be learned and practiced. Some scholars further explained that any product, service, or process created by the manufacturer itself can be called innovation.⁴³

When a company produces innovative products, customer satisfaction increases and customer loyalty to their products rises.⁴⁴ Innovation can improve the efficiency

⁴¹ Agung Tri Subiyantoro, "THE EFFECT OF SERVICE QUALITY, CONVENIENCE, PRICE, PRODUCT QUALITY, ON SATISFACTION AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY FUNDING PT BANK MANDIRI IN SURABAYA," *Int. J. Econ. Bus. Manag. Res* 5, no. 9 (2021).

⁴² Peter F Drucker, "The discipline of innovation," *Harvard business review* 63, no. 3 (1985).

⁴³ Michael Tushman and David Nadler, "Organizing for innovation," *California management review* 28, no. 3 (1986).

⁴⁴ Dorothy Leonard-Barton, "Core capabilities and core rigidities: A paradox in managing new product development," *Strategic management journal* 13, no. S1 (1992).

and let mobile phone chip upgrade.

Learning costs can change the causal relationship between innovation and customer loyalty by acting as a moderator. For stayers, learning costs are high. Stayers think to learn a new system is difficult. For switchers, learning costs are low.

Switchers think system upgrade will make phone smoother.

H3: The positive effect of innovation on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.

Brand awareness is a very crucial factor that consumers will first associate with brands they know or have seen before among so many brands.⁴⁵ Also it can be described as the ability of customers to identify and distinguish a brand in different contexts, and that brand awareness symbolizes the strength and status of a brand in the minds of consumers. It is the basis or reference for consumers to make purchase decisions, so products with low brand awareness may be less likely to be considered in the purchase process.⁴⁶

Stronger brand awareness can lead to greater customer purchases and higher customer loyalty.⁴⁷ For customers, increased brand awareness enhances their pride in their chosen brand, which in turn increases their loyalty. In their view, it is a constant reminder of why they chose the brand in the first place and how it fits their values and needs.

Brand relationship loss costs can change the causal relationship between brand awareness and customer loyalty by acting as a moderator. For stayers, brand

⁴⁵ Muhammad Asif et al., "Impact of brand awareness and loyalty on brand equity," *Journal of Marketing and Consumer Research* 12, no. 1 (2015).

⁴⁶ David A Aaker, "Measuring brand equity across products and markets," *California management review* 38, no. 3 (1996).

⁴⁷ David A Aaker, "The value of brand equity," *Journal of business strategy* 13, no. 4 (1992).

relationship loss costs are high. They are not sure if the brand awareness of other brands is higher than the current brand. For switchers, brand relationship loss costs are low. Switchers want to try more brands that have high brand awareness.

H4: The positive effect of brand awareness on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.

Some scholars have argued that it is not enough for people to have wealth and power, but that these things must be made visible, thus defining conspicuous consumption as a type of luxury product that people buy to show off their social status, wealth and power.⁴⁸

One scholar has further developed the class theory, suggesting that when people are well off, they will flaunt their wealth and status in a highly ostentatious manner, thus making themselves the envy of others through the purchase of conspicuous goods, even if the product itself has no practical use.

In addition to satisfying basic needs, consumers may now prefer certain products and brands in order to be appreciated by others and to enhance their position. This is why the author argues that conspicuous consumption affects loyalty.⁴⁹

Benefit loss costs can change the causal relationship between conspicuous consumption and customer loyalty by acting as a moderator. For stayers, benefit loss costs are high. Stayers don't care what other people think. For switchers, benefit loss costs are low. Switchers want to be recognized for their status.

H5: The positive effect of conspicuous consumption on customer loyalty is

⁴⁸ Oswald Veblen, "An application of modular equations in analysis situs," *The Annals of Mathematics* 14, no. 1/4 (1912).

⁴⁹ Fatih ELİBOL, "THE EFFECT OF CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION ON BRAND LOYALTY AND THE MEDIATING ROLE OF REFERENCE GROUPS," *Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi* 21, no. 50 (2023).

stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will explain the research design, data collection, measures. This chapter will enable the reader to better understand the design, analysis methods and directions of the study.

Research Design

This study used quantitative approach to explore the factors affecting customer loyalty and statistical analysis to answer my research questions. The research design included the distribution of a questionnaire which collected data on various aspects such as basic information, the frequency of consumers switching brands, and factors affecting consumer loyalty.

I have used quantitative research because quantitative methods can use statistical analysis techniques such as regression analysis to identify relationships between variables. This will help me to determine which factors have a significant impact on

customer loyalty and the degree to which they affect it.

Data Collection

I am using quantitative research and then I am collecting the questionnaire through google form to make it easy for the participants to take this questionnaire. At first, I sent the link to my family members and asked them to share it with their friends to fill in the questionnaire, and then I put it on social media programs such as Facebook and Instagram. I also organized a raffle to attract people to fill out the questionnaire, and I eventually collected 182 valid questionnaires. e degree to which they affect it.

To start, this research commences by reviewing switching cost ,other factors affecting customer loyalty This initial step serves to lay the groundwork for the research. The literature sources includes google scholar, journal articles, papers, and other materials procured from both libraries and online databases. This research focused on Taiwanese as research population. Allow to gain complete data collection, the researcher collected 182 respondents of the questionnaire to analyze. The online tool that the researcher used to make the survey was Google Form. In the questionnaire, I created 48 questions.

Moreover, the primary data for this study is gathered through an online questionnaire administered via google form. The reason I chose google forms is because it's convenient, free, and can be accessed from any device with an internet connection, with no need to buy or install special software.

This study examines the relationship between the five components that influence customer loyalty when choosing a mobile phone brand. The main target population for this study is consumers with actual shopping experience. This includes university students, colleagues, friends and relatives, and respondents referred through

colleagues, friends and relatives.

For the purpose of this study and the research questions, I referred to other question projects used in studies on customer loyalty. I selected the appropriate project and modified some descriptions to create a questionnaire to explore the consumer attitudes of brand switchers and brand stayers. The questionnaire was designed using closed-ended questions to ensure clear scope, ease of response, and ease of statistical analysis.

The questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on demographic variables and mainly collects background information of the respondents such as gender, age, job and average monthly income. The second part is the survey on consumers' cell phone brands and the number of switching brands, which aims to gain insights into consumers' purchasing behavior and trends by investigating the brands they have used in the past and the number of times they have switched brands. The third section is the Consumer Loyalty Influence Rating Scale, which consists of items related to the CLIRS. I used a "Likert scale" with options such as "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree", "Neutral", "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree". When analyzed in SPSS, the scores were 5,4,3,2,1.

Measures

In this research, the author used a "Likert scale" with options such as "Strongly Agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree", "Neutral", "Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree".

Dependent Variables

A measurement of the questions asked by Hsiang-Hsi Liu.⁵⁰ Respondents will

⁵⁰ 劉祥熹, 涂登才, and 羅建昇, "從關係價值與關係品質觀點探討品牌形象對消費者滿意度與忠

answer the following questions. Scored on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 1: Customer loyalty

Customer loyalty
1. The next time I need to purchase a phone, I will still choose this brand.
2. I am willing to introduce this brand of phone to my friends and family.
3. I am willing to advertise the advantages of this brand to other people.
4. Even if the price of this brand's phone is higher, I will still prioritize choosing this brand.
5. In the future, if necessary, I am willing to buy other products offered by this brand.

Independent Variables

A measurement of the questions asked by Icek Ajzen.⁵¹ Respondents will answer the following questions. Scored on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 2: Product quality

Product quality
1. The quality of the phone I use is excellent.
2. The phone I use makes me feel secure.
3. The phone I use is made of high-quality materials.
4. The phone I use is comfortable to use.
5. The phone I use is durable in quality.

誠度之影響-臺灣筆記型電腦產業為例," *管理學報* 27, no. 3 (2010).

⁵¹ Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen, "Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research," (1977).

A measurement of the questions asked by NM Suki.⁵² Respondents will answer the following questions. Scored on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 3: Convenience

Convenience
1. Having a phone from this brand is like having both a phone and a computer.
2. This brand's phone saves me time and energy at work.
3. I'd rather carry this brand's phone than a laptop.

A measurement of the questions asked by DH Henard.⁵³ Respondents will answer the following questions. Scored on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 4: Innovation

Innovation
1. The brand I use often is the first to bring high-tech products to market, often setting industry trends.
2. The new products from the brand I use are often innovative and well-received by customers.
3. Compared to other mobile phone brands, the brand I use releases more innovative products.
4. The new products from the brand I use often compete well against other mobile phone brands.

⁵² Norazah Mohd Suki, "Students' dependence on smart phones: The influence of social needs, social influences and convenience," *Campus-Wide Information Systems* 30, no. 2 (2013).

⁵³ David H Henard and David M Szymanski, "Why some new products are more successful than others," *Journal of marketing Research* 38, no. 3 (2001).

A measurement of the questions asked by E Severi.⁵⁴ Respondents will answer the following questions. Scored on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 5: Brand awareness

Brand awareness
1. I have always been aware of the brand I am currently using.
2. I always remember the logo of the brand I am currently using.
3. The brand I am currently using has a good reputation.
4. The brand I am currently using is a leading brand.

A measurement of the questions asked by A O'cass.⁵⁵ Respondents will answer the following questions. Scored on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 6: Conspicuous consumption

Conspicuous consumption
1. To attract the attention of others, I will buy a specific brand.
2. I hope others can see me getting a new phone.
3. To let others know what kind of person I am, I will buy a specific brand.

Moderating Variables

A measurement of the questions asked by MA Jones⁵⁶ and TA Burnham.⁵⁷ Respondents will answer the following questions. Scored on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 7: Switching cost

⁵⁴ Erfan Severi and Kwek Choon Ling, "The mediating effects of brand association, brand loyalty, brand image and perceived quality on brand equity," *Asian Social Science* 9, no. 3 (2013).

⁵⁵ Aron O'cass and Hmily McEwen, "Exploring consumer status and conspicuous consumption," *Journal of consumer behaviour: an international research review* 4, no. 1 (2004).

⁵⁶ Jones, Mothersbaugh, and Beatty, "Switching barriers and repurchase intentions in services."

⁵⁷ Burnham, Frels, and Mahajan, "Consumer switching costs: A typology, antecedents, and consequences."

Switching cost
1. Switching to another brand would cost me a lot of time and require me to adapt to the new brand.
2. The cost of switching to another brand is too high.
3. Generally, switching to another brand is inconvenient.
4. I worry that the service from other phone brands may not meet expectations.
5. If I try to change the brand of phone, I might encounter poor service.
6. Switching to a new brand might involve hidden costs/fees.
7. Switching to a new brand might lead to some unexpected complications.
8. I don't know what difficulties I might face when switching to a new brand.
9. Learning the features offered by a new brand of phone takes time.
10. Getting used to the operation of another brand is not easy.
11. Switching to a new brand of phone requires time to complete the setup steps.
12. Changing brands involves a complicated setup process.
13. Switching to a new phone system involves a lot of procedures.
14. I like the public image of the brand of phone I use.
15. As a consumer, I support the brand I use.
16. I care about the brand name I use.

DATA ANALYSIS

Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted to examine the stability and reliability of the questionnaire. According to the scholar DeVellis and Lee Joseph Cronbach, Cronbach's alpha is also known as alpha reliability and the acceptable number of reliabilities should obtain 0.7 or above. In this paper, Cronbach' Alpha is 0.939, which is higher than 0.7, it means that the questionnaire is credible.

Table 8: The Reliability Test

Test variables	Cronbach's α	Result
Product quality	0.915>0.7	High Reliability
Innovation	0.852>0.7	High Reliability
Convenience	0.633<0.7	Acceptable Reliability
Brand awareness	0.809>0.7	High Reliability
Conspicuous consumption	0.917>0.7	High Reliability
Switching Cost	0.920>0.7	High Reliability
Customer Loyalty	0.893>0.7	High Reliability

Source: the author sorted

Statistical Results

Table 9: Correlation Matrix

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations							
Variable	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5
1. Product quality	21.4505	3.27139					
2. Innovation	16.0769	2.96473	0.707**				
3. Convenience	11.2363	2.30402	0.442***	0.605**			
4. Brand awareness	17.4780	2.48466	0.787**	0.667**	0.413**		
5. Conspicuous consumption	7.6154	3.81555	0.184**	0.037	0.308**	0.183*	

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001
*N=182

Source: the author sorted

Table 10: The Result of Hypothesis Tests

Path	Stayers (n=46)	Switchers (n=136)	Hypothesis	Result
	Coefficients	Coefficients		
PQ → CL	0.704***	0.495**	H1	Support
CV → CL	0.198**	0.232	H2	Support
I → CL	0.236**	0.165	H3	Support
BA → CL	0.676***	0.644***	H4	Partial Support
CON → CL	0.169	0.324*	H5	Not Support

Note: PQ = Product quality, CV= Convenience, I= Innovation, BA= Brand awareness, CON= Conspicuous consumption, CL= Customer loyalty

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Source: the author sorted

H1: The positive effect of product quality on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.

For stayer, product quality positively influences on customer loyalty ($\beta=0.704$, $p<0.001$). However, compared with stayers, for switchers, the significant effect of product quality on customer loyalty ($\beta=0.495$, $p<0.01$) is weakened. Therefore, The positive effect of product quality on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers than for switchers. H1 is supported. Good product quality increases customer loyalty and enhances the attractiveness of the brand to consumers. When a brand continues to provide high-quality products, it can attract consumers to continue to purchase. However, the strategy of providing high-quality products is less attractive to switchers (customers who like to try new things and frequently change brands).

H2: The positive effect of convenience on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.

For stayer, convenience positively influences on customer loyalty($\beta=0.198$, $p<0.01$). However, compared with stayers, for switchers, the significant effect of product quality on customer loyalty ($\beta=0.232$, $p>0.05$) is weakened. Therefore, The positive effect of convenience on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers than for switchers. H2 is supported. Convenience product increases customer loyalty and enhances the attractiveness of the brand to consumers. When a brand continues to provide convenience products, it can attract consumers to continue to purchase. However, the strategy of providing convenience products is less attractive to switchers.

H3: The positive effect of innovation on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.

For stayer, innovation positively influences on customer loyalty ($\beta=0.236$, $p<0.01$). However, compared with stayers, for switchers, the significant effect of product quality on customer loyalty ($\beta=0.165$, $p>0.05$) is weakened. Therefore, The positive effect of innovation on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers than for switchers. H3 is supported. innovation increases customer loyalty and enhances the attractiveness of the brand to consumers. When a brand continues to provide innovative products, it can attract consumers to continue to purchase. However, the strategy of providing innovative products is less attractive to switchers.

H4: The positive effect of brand awareness on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.

For stayer, brand awareness positively influences on customer loyalty ($\beta=0.676$, $p<0.001$). However, compared with stayers, for switchers, the significant effect of product quality on customer loyalty ($\beta=0.644$, $p<0.001$) it does not show that the positive effect is stronger for stayers. Brand awareness increases customer loyalty and enhances the attractiveness of the brand to consumers. When a brand's brand awareness is high, it can attract consumers to continue to purchase. This hypothesis supports the idea that brand awareness has positively influences on customer loyalty, but it does not show that the positive effect is stronger for stayers. H4 is partial support.

H5: The positive effect of conspicuous consumption on customer loyalty is

stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.

For stayer, conspicuous consumption not positively influences on customer loyalty ($\beta=0.169$, $p>0.05$). However, compared with stayers, for switchers, the significant effect of product quality on customer loyalty ($\beta=0.324$, $p<0.05$) is stronger. Therefore, The positive effect of conspicuous consumption on customer loyalty is weakened for stayers than for switchers. conspicuous consumption increases customer loyalty and enhances the attractiveness of the brand to switchers. When a brand continues to provide conspicuous consumption products, it can attract switchers to continue to purchase. However, the strategy of providing conspicuous consumption products is less attractive to stayers. This hypothesis supports the idea that conspicuous consumption has positively influences on customer loyalty for switchers, but it does not show that the positive effect for stayers. H5 is not support.

Table 11: Hypothesis supports Table (N=182)

Number	Hypotheses	Result
H1	The positive effect of product quality on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.	Support
H2	The positive effect of convenience on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.	Support
H3	The positive effect of innovation on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.	Support

H4	The positive effect of brand awareness on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.	Partial Support
H5	The positive effect of conspicuous consumption on customer loyalty is stronger for stayers rather than for switchers.	Not Support

Source: the author sorted

CONCLUSION

The main goal of this study is to understand the moderating effect of switching costs and find what and factors mobile phone brands should focus on to increase customer loyalty in the cell phone industry. A key part of this exploration is based around two different customer groups: switchers and stayers.

Addressing the first research question - What kinds of factors can increase customer loyalty? The findings denote that switchers attach importance to product quality, brand awareness, and conspicuous consumption . This group is not significantly cared by features like convenience or innovation. A key takeaway is their prefers to the latest brands, driven by the conspicuous consumption. Essentially, for switchers, the charm in the brand's ability to offer quality and societal recognition. Stayers evaluate their choices wider of factors. Unlike switchers, stayers more care about product quality, the convenience of usage, innovative features, and brand awareness. Their decisions aren't mainly in showcasing their purchases but rather on the comprehensive value the brand offers.

Turning to the second research question - What is the impact of switching cost? Switching costs act as a moderator in the relationship between the factors studied and customer loyalty. A moderator affects the strength or direction of the relationship between two variables.

When switching costs are high, customers are more likely to remain customer loyalty due to the considered difficulty or expense involved in changing brands. This enhances the retention power of product quality, convenience, and innovation that customers value and that contribute to their continued patronage of the brand. In contrast, when switching costs are low, customers find it easier and less risky to switch to other brands. This reduces the influence that product quality, convenience,

and innovation have on customer loyalty because customers are not deterred by the costs of trying alternatives.

Unlike the other factors, brand awareness seems to have the same impact on customer loyalty regardless of the level of switching costs. This suggests that once customers are aware of a brand, their probability of remaining customer loyalty does not change significantly based on the switching costs.

Conspicuous consumption is more effective in enhancing customer loyalty among customers who are switchers, possibly because these customers are seeking to maintain or enhance their status by associating with brands that are recognized as status symbols. For stayers, conspicuous consumption does have the insignificant effect on customer loyalty.

APPENDIX A

手機偏好調查問卷

親愛的先生/小姐:

這是一份學術研究問卷,主要目的是探討「消費者對於手機滿意度和轉換成本
的調節作用」。

在此希望能耽誤您幾分鐘的時間,依您的真實感受填寫問卷,所有回答將以不
記名方式進行,絕不會對外公開,敬請安心填答及參與。感謝您在百忙中抽
空填答此問卷,您的協助將使本研究更具貢獻,非常感謝您的寶貴意見。

敬祝 事事順心,心想事成!

文藻外語大學 國際事務系

指導老師: 吳紹慈 教授

學生: 楊詠捷

第一部分: 您的基本資料

1. 性別:

男生 女生

2. 年齡:

- 16~20 歲 21~25 歲 26~30 歲 31~35 歲 36~40 歲 41~45 歲
 46~50 歲 51~55 歲 56~60 歲 61~65 歲 65 歲以上

3. 工作:

- 學生 服務業 商業 製造業 軍公教 家庭主婦 金融業
 農林漁牧 其他:_____

4. 教育程度:

- 國小 國中 高中/高職 五專 大學 研究所含以上 其他:_____。

5. 平均每月生活收入(新台幣):

- 10,000 元以下 10,001 元~20000 元 20,001 元~30000 元
30,001~40,000 40,001 元 ~50,000 元 50,001 元~60,000 元 60,001
元~70,000 元 70,001 元~80,000 元 80,001~90000 元 90,001 元
~100000 元 100,000 元以上

第二部分: 手機品牌轉換頻率

1. 目前所使用的手機品牌

iPhone Samsung OPPO Google Sony 華碩 小米 其他

2. 前一次使用的手機品牌

iPhone Samsung OPPO Google Sony 華碩 小米 其他

3. 近五年轉換品牌的次數

1 2 3 4 5 5 次以上

第三部分：手機品牌滿意度調查

	產品品質	非常不同意	不同意	有點不同意	普通	有點同意	同意	非常同意
1	我所使用的手機品質優良							
2	我所使用的手機使用上令人感到安全							
3	我所使用的手機使用優良的材質製造							
4	我所使用的手機使用上令人感到舒適							
5	我所使用的手機使用上品質耐用							
	方便性							

1	擁有這個品牌的手機就像同時擁有手機和電腦一樣							
2	在工作時，這個品牌的手機為我節省了時間和精力							
3	我更願意攜帶這個品牌的手機而不是筆記本電腦							
	創新							
1	在創新方面我所使用的品牌經常是第一個將高科技產品推向市場，常能成為產業的先趨							
2	我所使用的品牌新產品，經常是很新穎且深受顧客好評							
3	與其他的手機品牌對手相比，我所使用的品牌推出較多創新的產品(和服務)							
4	我所使用的品牌新產品經常能與其他的手機品牌對手競爭抗衡							
	炫耀性消費							
1	為了能吸引他人注意，我會購買特定品牌							
2	我希望他人能看見我換新手機							
3	為了能讓別人知道我是個甚麼樣的人，我會去購買特定品牌							
	品牌知名度							
1	我一直都知道我目前所使用的品牌。							
2	我一直記得我目前所使用品牌的標誌。							

3	我目前所使用的品牌具有良好的名聲							
4	我目前所使用的品牌是領導品牌							
	消費者忠誠度							
1	當我下次再有購買手機的需求時，我依然會選擇這個品牌							
2	我願意介紹親朋好友購買這個品牌的手機							
3	我願意向其他人宣傳這個品牌的優點							
4	即使這個品牌的手機價格較高，我依然會優先選擇這個廠牌							
5	將來若有需要，我願意購買這個品牌提供的其他產品							

第四部分：轉換成本

	轉換成本	非常不同意	不同意	有點不同意	普通	有點同意	同意	非常同意
1	這會花費我很多時間並且努力適應新品牌。							
2	轉換到另一個品牌成本太高了							
3	一般來說，換到另一個品牌很麻煩							
4	我擔心其他品牌的手機的服務無法達到預期效果。							

5	如果我嘗試更換品牌的手機，我可能會遇到糟糕的服務。							
6	切換到新品牌的手機可能會有隱藏成本/收費。							
7	切換到新品牌的手機可能會導致一些意想不到的麻煩							
8	我不知道在切換到新品牌的手機時我最終會遇到什麼困難。							
9	學習一個新品牌的手機提供的功能，需要花費時間。							
10	習慣另一個品牌的操作方式不容易。							
11	換新品牌的手機需要時間去完成設置步驟。							
12	更換品牌涉及繁雜的設置過程。							
13	切換到新手機的系統要辦理很多手續。							
14	我喜歡我所使用手機品牌的公眾形象。							
15	作為消費者我支持我所使用的品牌。							
16	我關心我使用的品牌名稱							

本問卷到此結束，再次感謝您的協助！

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