

## **GENDER SPECIFIC SWITCHING BEHAVIOR**

<sup>1</sup>JINIABRAHAM, <sup>1</sup>OM SHANKAR, <sup>2</sup>Dr UMA V.R

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Christ deemed to be university, Karnataka

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Commerce, Christ deemed to be university, Karnataka

### **ABSTRACT**

Switching costs are those cost which is identified with finding new products. Due to globalized environment the consumers have more choices among them to switch the products which they are using in daily life. For switching product consumer incur switching cost which include their time and money spent. Though there many choices available still the consumer spends time, efforts and cost in order to search the appropriate product. This paper mainly focuses on how genders switch the products and what are the factors that influence them to switch to another. The study is conducted using qualitative data. Data was collected through depth interviews. Interviews were conducted across the genders. It was observed that there exists substantial difference among genders in the kind of product they switched and the time they took to make their decisions. Also, there is a difference on the sources they relied while switching.

**Keywords:** Switching behavior, Switching cost, Product, Gender.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The development of internet and web-based technology has paved way towards availability of immense data for the consumers. These days the consumers have plenty of choices with them due to globalised environment. Therefore product switching has become very common today. However, despite data availability the consumer has to spend good amount of time and money to search for the product which he/she feels would satisfy his/her desires. The time and money spent by the consumers to search for alternate product is normally referred to as switch cost. Before the advent of technology consumers were in need of information. Post digitalization and globalization, consumers are overloaded with too many information that even today switch cost is incurred to a larger extent. This tendency to switch is widely prevalent among the youngsters.

From the organizations point of view, it is important that consumers are satisfied and stay loyal with them. Further, the organization incurs huge losses, when their loyal customers switch to other products. Therefore it is pertinent for the organization to understand that switching from

one product to another does not come free of cost for the customers also. Therefore the organizations need to understand this and fix high switching barriers so that the customers do not switch. They need to identify the different kind of products the consumers switch, the frequency of switching and how do they decide to switch.

Purchase preference varies across genders and so is the switching behavior. It is important for the marketers to understand the pattern of switching behavior across genders as it would help them in customer retention. Strategies have to be developed exclusively for different genders. Hence, switching patterns exclusively for men and women will have to be mapped for better formulation of strategies.

The study focuses on the men and women in the age group of 20 – 25. This a crucial age when men and women start their careers and start earning. This is the time that they make purchase decisions on their own. They decide whether to adopt a product/brand or to switch. Therefore the decision to stay loyal starts from this age group.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In this tech savy age, search behavior is normally influenced not only by search cost but also by search engines provided by different web portals (Nanda Kumar, 2004-2005). The faster and efficient the search engines are, the lesser is the switch cost. Consumers are in constant search for information to enhance their beliefs. However, if the switch cost is more than the expected utility of the product then they are less likely to switch (Fernando Branco, 2012) for instance, the likelihood to switch more often is very less in case of expensive products like automobiles and funitures (A.V.Muthukrishnan, 2003) and higher the switching cost, greater the loyalty (Jun-Gi Park, 2014). Hence, it can be seen that there exist a positive relationship between the switching cost and loyalty. Organizations should try to build loyalty among its users. For instance, a study conducted in China among the Cloud Storage Service providers observed that the perceived usefulness and disconfirmation expectation plays a vital role in retaining the consumers. When the perceived usefulness is positive and when it outperforms the actual expectations then the users become satisfied which in turn makes them loyal customers (Brenda Reyes Ayala & Shen, 2016).

In case of intangible products, switching behavior is influenced by dissatisfaction experienced by the consumers from the service providers. They tend to spread negative information through word of mouth (Larry Neale, 2012) which in turn affects the organization as such. Price also plays a major role in switching. This is more so with the case of insurance products (Posey, 2003) where the contract will have to be renewed annually. The insured constantly searches for information as to which insurer would cover his/her risk at a lower price.

Constant switching of products affects the revenues of the organization. With plethora of products and information available it is pertinent that the suppliers retain their consumers in the best possible way. However, there are very few studies that focus on particular age group. Further, not many studies have focused on gender specific switching behavior. It should be understood that product preference varies significantly among the genders. Men and women exhibit different switching behaviors for different kinds of products. More to say, Men and Women exhibit different switching patterns for different kinds of products. This study is an attempt to fill this need gap.

### **OBJECTIVE**

The main objective of this paper is:

- To identify the different kinds of products that are normally switched by the Men and Women Consumers in the age group of 20 – 23.
- To find out the most influential source that leads to switching decisions.

### **METHODOLOGY**

For the purpose of the study, interviews were conducted across the genders. The survey was conducted among 30 respondents in the age group of 20 to 23. The respondents in this interview comprised of 22 women and 8 men. The interview schedule comprised of questions relating to the product the respondents switched during the last month. This question also forms the inclusion criteria to be a part of the survey. Therefore if the response has been that no products were switched then they would not form a part of this survey. The other questions that were included were how they were influenced to switch. This question was particularly included to find out whether internet plays a major role in their decision making process. Also question on the time taken to make the switching decision was also included in the survey instrument. This question was included to find out if genders exhibited different switching patterns for different kinds of products.

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

<b>Women</b>	<b>Source of Information</b>				<b>Time taken to Switch</b>
Products Switched	Word of Mouth	Advertisement	Tried Randomly	Samples	
Cosmetics	8	4	2	1	Most of them said within 1 week
Watch		1			Within one week
Toothpaste		1			Within a day
Electronic Gadget	1	1			3 to 4 weeks
Automobiles	1				1 month
<b>Men</b>	<b>Source of Information</b>				<b>Time taken to Switch</b>
Products Switched	Word of Mouth	Advertisement	Tried Randomly	Samples	
Cosmetics	1	1	1		1 month
Watch					
Toothpaste		1			Within one hour
Electronic Gadget	1		1		2 to 3 days
Automobiles		1			1 month

Source: Authors' Research

According to the interview conducted it's proven that women mostly switched cosmetics. Further most of their decisions to choose alternate products were through word of mouth. They trusted their peers and reference group better when compared to other sources of information. And most of them just took a week to switch the product. Therefore the switch time was only a week in the case of cosmetics. On the contrary they took around 3 to 4 weeks to switch in the case of Electronic Gadgets. We find contradicting results among the men and women consumers. Among the men, it is noticed that they took a longer time to switch cosmetics but when it came to Electronic gadget the time taken was very less. Further as the sample size of men was less, it was also difficult to find out as to which source of information actually influenced their decisions to switch. However, it is important to understand that men and women exhibit different switching behaviors.

## CONCLUSION

Switching behavior is commonly said as the changing of products from one product to another. With the study done, it can be concluded that most of the women switch their products in the field of cosmetics when compared to men, while there is no specification for men in a particular field.

The main factors that influence switching behavior of a customer is cost, time, money and quality. The consumers normally switch their products due to influence of the products of other brands through web portals and etc., but according to the study, it has been found out that most of the customer switch their products by getting information about the product through word of mouth. It can also be said that quality is important to cause a switch in behavior when it comes to cosmetics. Also customer prefer good quality product at low cost.

Switching cost has a significant bearing on customers' switching intentions. Consumer value is been repeatedly conceptualized as being multi-dimensional and has a great impact on customer's perception of switching costs. Henceforth consumers are assumed to be having heterogeneous switching behavior

## REFERENCES

- A.V.Muthukrishnan, R. Z. (2003). *Consumer Sequential Search: Not Enough or Too Much?* , 22, 18.
- Brenda Reyes Ayala, F. X., & Shen, W. (2016). Understanding chinese see users' switching behavior of cloud storage services. 35 (2).
- Fernando Branco, M. S.-B. (2012). Optimal search for product information. *management science*, 58 (11).
- Jun-Gi Park, K. P. (2014). *A firm's post-adoption behavior:loyalty or switching costs?* , 112 (2).
- Larry Neale, R. L. (2012). Interactions and consequences of inertia and switching costs. *journal of services marketing* , 26 (5).
- Nanda Kumar, K. . (2004-2005). Consumer search behavior in online shopping environment. *E-service journal* , 3 (3).
- Posey, L. L. (2003). Switching Cost, Competition, and pricing inthe property/ casualty insurance markets for large commercial accounts. *Journal of insurance issues*, 26 (1).