FACTORS INFLUENCING BRAND SWITCHING BEHAVIOUR OF MOBILE PHONE USERS AND THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: A LITERATURE REVIEW.

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Abstract

Mobile phone market is one of the most turbulent market environments today due to increased competition and change. Thus, it is of growing concern to look at consumer brand switching behaviour and shade light on the factors that influence the consumer switching between different brands of mobile phones. On this basis, this paper deals with consumers' brand switching behaviour of mobile phone by studying factors that influence consumers to change their mobile phones brand and the mediating effects of customer satisfaction. Using literature review, it was found that although the purchase of a mobile phone is subjective, there are some general factors that seem to influence the switching behaviour of consumers among brands. The studies further show that among other things that influence consumer switching behaviour in the purchase of mobile phones includes reference group and product quality. The study further reveals that customer satisfaction has positive effects on customer switching. Thus, customer satisfaction is considered a positive determinant of how strong is the relationship between the customer and the product provider. The study therefore, recommends that mobile phone marketers should shift focus on building corporate image and analyze more carefully the reason for customers to switch brands in their industries in order to increase loyalty among these customers.

Key words: Brand switching, product quality, reference group, mobile phone and consumers

1.1. Introduction:

In today's competitive world, consumer switching behaviour is becoming more complex due to the fact that consumers have easy access to information about different brands of products. Satisfying and creating a favourable impression about the product should be the priority of any organization. In view of this therefore, companies are constantly trying to build mutual relationships with their customers through delivering better value products and meeting their promises [2].

To this end Consumer Switching Behaviour (CSB) has gained considerable attention among scholars and practitioners in the marketing literature**.** Consumer's loyalty to institutions has been reported to be declining. Report shows that consumers loyalty to institutions, product or service has decline to 30% in 2016 as against 44% in 2012 **(**Cooperative Credit Purchasing Company, 2017) This report was supported by [41], where 67.3% of consumers indicated their intention of switching their brand when next they consider buying a mobile phone device in India. The probability of consumers purchasing the same brand was 0.20. This is mainly because consumers want to save money from their earnings and achieve value for money [15]. Markets are increasingly becoming customer oriented and making it crucial for companies to build a long-term and maintain customers' relationship [31]. For a firm to maintain and keep its current customers, it is important for them to understand why customers switch brand of product as it would help them devise strategies to achieve the desired results.

Since the inception of mobile phone into the country Nigeria in 2001, many global mobile phone companies have flooded the markets. Due to the large entry of mobile phone companies, many smartphone brands have been introduced into the market namely: Apple, Samsung, Sony, Lenovo, HTC, Huawei, LG, Motorola, Nokia, Itel, Blackberry, Tecno, Genee, Infinix and others. Consumers make their decision to opt for a particular brand with lots of considerations on their minds. _Reference from friends or reference group, social status, product quality, product design, and others are some factors that are frequently seen as influencers of consumer's brand switching behaviour in the mobile phone markets.

The purpose of this study is to explore factors that influence consumer's brand switching behaviour of mobile phone users. With the view of ascertaining what influences the brand switching of consumers in regard to the mobile phone they are currently using. Furthermore, the

study examined the mediating effects of customer satisfaction on the consumer switching behaviour in relation to the influence of reference group and product quality.

2.1. Concept of Consumer Behaviour

The concept of consumer behavior and its study is very important in marketing literature because everyone is a consumer of one product/service or the other. Therefore, there is no single definition to the concept. Consumer behaviour is defined as "the process and activities people engage in when searching, selecting, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services so as to satisfy needs and desires", "including the decision processes that precede and follow these actions"[11]. This definition indicates the comprehensiveness of the area and the wide scope it covers. In another definition, [14] described consumer behavior as a series of activities directed toward the acquisition, use and disposal of goods and services. These activities include the decisions that are made before and after the purchase.

Consumer behavior mainly sheds light on how consumers decide to spend their various resources like time, money; and ideas on various products so as to meet their needs and requirements. Consumer behavior encompasses study of what, when, why and where the consumers will buy their products. It also focuses on how often the consumers use the products. It further explains how the consumers evaluate the products after the purchase and the effect of evaluations on their future purchases [40]. These behaviour are influenced by the environment to which the consumer belongs and it also affects how the consumers feel, consider and act. The environmental features for instance are, comments taken from other customers, advertising, packaging, price, and product appearance [16].

Usually, consumer behavior is strongly influenced by the culture in which they were raised. Though, [32] opined that consumer behaviors are influenced by other factors apart from culture. These are the social, personal and psychological factors. Social factors are the consumer's wants, learning, motives which are influenced by opinion leaders, person's family, reference groups, social class and culture. Furthermore, a _buyer's decisions can be influenced by personal characteristics such as the buyer's age, occupation, personality, lifestyle, economic situation and so on [18]. [14], concluded that consumer behavior is motived, it involves a lot of activities, is a process, it is different in terms of time and complexity, the roles it play differs in context.

Based on the above therefore, there are so many factors that influences the behaviour of a consumer and their switching behaviour. What the consumer considers important when making a purchase determines whether the consumer will continue purchasing the product or switch to another product/brand.

2.2. Brand switching

Brand switching is a situation where a brand loses once loyal customer to a competitor. In other words, a shopper changes his/her buying behaviour, choosing deliberately to purchase another brand instead of their usual choice. Brand switching is a situation in which someone changes from buying one brand of a product to buying a different brand. Brand switching which is sometimes known as brand jumping is the process of choosing to switch from routine use of one brand of a product to steady usage of a different but similar product [37]**.** Brand switching as ascertained by [19] is the process in which consumers switch from the use of one product to another of the same category.

Furthermore, brand switching is when a consumer or group of consumers switches their allegiance from one brand of a certain type of product to another. This brand switching may be temporary, or it may be long lasting, especially for products that last longer or from which switching away is harder [37]. After analyzing these definitions one can conclude whether switching is a process or decision, it is certain that switching behavior includes ending relationship with one product by stopping purchasing the products and establishing same relationship with another manufacturer of same category.

2.3. Reference Group/Social Factors and Consumer Brand Switching Behaviour

Social factors are societal norms, values that affect the buying behavior of customers like the family members, the role and status of each member in society. It may be noted that family, friends and relatives have positive impact on customer satisfaction thus increasing customer retention. [1] confirms that customers always keep in mind their family members, friends and co-workers when choosing a smartphone. [1] sees reference groups as all group of people who have a direct (face-to-face) or indirect influence on a person's attitudes or behavior. Groups that have a direct influence on a persons' behaviour are called membership groups which includes family members, friends, neighbors, and co-workers, with whom individual interact fairly

continuously and informally. Role consists of the activities that a person is expected to perform and each role carries a status [18]. In general, people choose products that communicate their role and status in society.

Therefore, consumer's behavior is influenced by social factors such as family and friends, social roles and status. The reasons for switching a brand of smartphone can be because one of the family members or co-worker has the same brand. Reference group especially friends had the highest influence on consumers' switching behaviour of smartphones [38]. Family members can also influence the individual buying behavior as while as the switching behaviour. This is because the family forms the environment for an individual to acquire values, develop and even shape his/her personality. A family creates first perceptions about brands of a products for the consumer which subsequently forms a habits [18]. For instance, an individual consumer who has form a brand perceptions when he/she was young, can carry out these same brand selections in the adult life.

Social status reflects the position an individual has in a social groups which can be attributed to money and wealth, education or occupation. This further influence the consumer buying behaviour and that can determine whether the consumer will continue with his/her current brand of product or change that is, switch to another brand that fit his/her role/status in the society. In many societies, status is important and people want the admiration of others. Brand selection often reflects the social role and status of the consumer [20].

2.4. Product Quality and customer satisfaction

Product quality is the collection of features and characteristics of a product that contribute to its ability to meet a given requirement by the user. [34] defines it as a zero error rate that is, the ability to produce a perfect product on the first try. [10] further sees quality as the producer's ability to meet expectations. According to [47] quality is the actual superiority of product and from the consumer's point of view, quality is the perceived quality upon which the consumer base his/her decision on the overall excellence or superiority of the product. Perceived product quality signifies the intangible and tangible perception of consumers towards a product. Perceived product quality is considered a prerequisite to consumer behavioural intention in both goods and services markets. [44] understands quality as a degree to which satisfaction is met, measured by a set of inherent signs. The importance of quality is emphasized by many

researchers as the basis on which firms compete, because customers are always searching for quality, and markets are transformed by quality' [13]. Producers have always struggled to produce high quality products in order to create good perception and experience among their consumers in order to compete with their competitors while maintaining good reputations among the existing customers, as the cost of retaining the existing customers can be less costly than the cost of acquiring new customers [39].

Consumer who switch or switchers are customers who have no loyalty to any specific product [27]. According to [23], switching behaviour results in 'the loss of the future revenue for a firm. Poorly perceived product quality contributes to dissatisfied customers who not only would stop being loyal to that product but also entice other patrons away from the product [12]. On the other hand, high perceived product quality can retain and attract both current and new customers and even draw customers of low quality competitors to their own favourite products [30]. [23], ascertain that perceived product quality can create customer satisfaction is considered as a prerequisite for customer loyalty which has a positive impact on reducing switching behaviour of consumers.

2.5. Customer Satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction can be seen as the evaluations made by customers based on all the purchase experiences, disregarding any specific purchase experience made previously. It can be used to describe the real product experience a customer had whether it has met or exceeded expectation. The more it exceeds the customer's expectation, the higher the satisfaction. In the context of consumer switching behaviour, customer satisfaction is the factor that leads to long term customer retention because unsatisfied customers have very high switching rate [40]. [40] ascertained that the feeling of accomplishment of inner desires is called satisfaction and it has a direct effect on customer loyalty. If the product fulfills the needs and demand of the customer, customer will become satisfied and will be converted to loyal customer. Similarly, customer satisfaction is described as the degree of customer's feeling towards a product or service [25]. Customer satisfaction remain as the core fundamental basis of marketing strategy and act as a main driving factor for organization success. [6] concluded that cumulative customer satisfaction is the evaluation made based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a product over time which is based on previous transaction-specific satisfaction. The basis for customer

retention is to enhance customer value offers, which leads to customer delight. It is the delighted customer who is retained [7].

In summary customer satisfaction may be viewed as, an emotion (an effective response to product offers), meaning the extent to which the customer is happy with the product experience, how happy the consumers are with certain mobile phone brands. It is also viewed as a fulfilment of achievement of relevant goals. This entails the extent to which the product offers met or exceeded customer needs. That is the extent to which customers are able to fulfill their communication goals by the use of the mobile phone device. Satisfaction may also be viewed as a state, which is concerned with the level of reinforcement or arousal, the extent to which it drives the customer towards acceptance or avoidance [33]. That is, an individual feeling of pleasure or disappointment as a result of comparison between the products perceived performance and expectations after purchase [17]. [17] further added that if the product (mobile phone) performance falls short of expectations, the customer is dissatisfied. If it matches expectations, the customer is satisfied. Then if the performance surpasses expectations, the customer is highly satisfied or pleased. Expectations may come from past buying experience, "friends and associates" advice, and "marketers and competitors" information and promises [17 and 25]. Therefore, a marketer should be very careful to raise the expectations of their customers, because it will end up with the customer being disappointed or it will not attract enough buyers.

Organizations' success is totally dependent on the customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction has positive effects on the customer switching. So mobile phone marketers should shift focus on building corporate image and analyze more carefully the reason for customers to switch brands in their industries in order to increase loyalty among these customers. This is because any bad product feature most probably experienced by a customer, will result into customer's dissatisfaction and lead towards brand switching. Thus, customer satisfaction is considered a positive determinant of how strong is the relationship between the customer and the product provider. Furthermore, dissatisfied customers are more likely to switch brand in search for what satisfies them in product provided by other competitors and can influence company's revenues more than satisfied customer [5]. Customer satisfaction in the product sector can be measured by the performance of the product and more related to the tangible aspects.

2.5.1. ***Customer Satisfaction and Brand Switching***

Customer satisfaction has the largest attention when it comes to customer retention and brand switching. It is a subjective concept and is subject to different interpretations. It is mainly a mental comparison between expectations and the perceived performance after a specific purchase [36]. A study conducted in Korea concluded that customer satisfaction can be considered as an attitude and judgment, meaning that the customer will compare the encounter with the expectations and can have different encounters in different areas of product leading to dissatisfaction [21]. In the same line, [29] concluded that customer satisfaction is vitally important to the success and profitability for any company. It is consider a part of the company assets and heavily involved in determining the revenue and profits.

Customer satisfaction in the product sector can be measured by the performance of the product which can be related to the product's tangible aspects. [28] identified customer satisfaction as one of the major factors of consumers switching brands and described it as a multidimensional. Therefore, lacking satisfaction in an area of the business could lead to dissatisfaction with the whole product, hence, brand switching.

Based on the previous literature reviewed, customers always compare their expectations with the actual product performance if the customers are not satisfied they will look for other alternatives, including switching to the competitive brands. The impact of different variables on customer satisfaction has been researched and became an important subject when related to marketing techniques and strategy. In different countries around the world, lacking customer satisfaction induce the customer to change their brand. Therefore, investigating factors influencing brand switching behaviour of consumers and the mediating effects of customer satisfaction is vital.

2.6. Reasons for Brand switching behaviour

Brand switching can also occur based on extrinsic incentives which are sales promotion, advertisement, that persuade the consumer to change brand through the promotions made by the manufacturer especially when the sales promotion alter purchase patterns [9]. [8], concluded that consumer's reasons for switching is attributed to: customer's characteristics which are more or less directed to the connection with the marketer or product. Consumers also switched when the manufacturer/marketer concerned failed to provide the consumer with perceived product quality

and customer satisfaction. [43; 45; and 22] ascertained that, reference group or social factors is considered as a factors that influence consumer switching most in the mobile phone market.

Other reasons as developed or model in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) by [3] includes:

Normative belief: ones desire for prestige, esteem, popularity or acceptance. Normative beliefs constitute the major determinants of subjective norms (views of referent group e.g. family and friends or peers) and are concerned with the likelihood that an individual or group of individuals can be influenced by either family or relation when performing an action or behaviour. Generally, people are motived to comply when they perceive social pressure to do so [3]. For the purpose of this paper family, friends, and co-workers are the reference groups which are likely to influence consumers' brand switching behaviour.

The Perceived Behavioural Control which eventually influences the behaviour of a consumer is the factor which is within the domain and control of a consumer and thus facilitates his behaviour. Consumer knowledge of a brand is vital in decision making. Familiarity and expertise are the components that help the consumer in search for the brand or product. The attractiveness of the opportunity to inspect and expand number of alternatives is dependent in part on the consumer's ability to sort efficiency through information search.

The Perceived Behavioural Control influences behaviour directly or indirectly. Specially, control relating to individual's perception of the availability of knowledge, resources and opportunities required to perform the specific behaviour [48].The theory of planned behaviour as depicted below, postulates that behavioural intention is the direct antecedent of the actual behaviour.

Behavioural intentions are regarded as a summary of motivation needed to do a particular action or behaviour and an index of how well or hard people are willing to try and perform the action [35]. Clearly, intentions can be changed over time. The longer the time interval, the greater the likelihood that unforeseen events will produce changes in intentions, and it follows that accuracy of predictions that will usually decline with interventions of time of measurement and observations [3]. According to the model, a person's attitude toward performing an act has an indirect relationship to behaviour, and is based on the summed set underlying salient beliefs associated with the attitude and the evaluation of these beliefs by consumers.

Subjective Norm: Subjective norm is the second component of behaviour and it represents the consumer's perceptions of what he/she thinks about what the referent wants him/her to do. It is a function of two subcomponents: the associative normative beliefs, which reflects the consumer's perception of what the referent thinks about whether he/she should or should not perform the action or behaviour; and the consumer's motivation to comply with the referent which can be the consumer's or individuals' culture [36]. [48] ascertained that consumers' selection of brand is influenced by the belief that people in the same group or culture with them use that brand. Subjective norms suggests that behaviour is instigated by one's desire to act as others act or think and hence will reflect consumer perception of whether brand-switching behaviour is accepted, encouraged and implemented by the consumer's circle of influence.

2.6. Theoretical framework

2.6.1. Theory of Planned Behaviour

Consumers always consider the implications of their actions before they decide to engage in doing whatever action they feel better to be engaged or not engaged in [3]. The theory of planned behaviour states that the behavioural intention is the antecedent of any behaviour. This intention is determined by three considerations; behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs [3]. The behavioural belief is an individual's positive or negative belief about performing a specific behaviour and the subjective values or evaluations of these consequences. An individual's intention to perform certain behaviour will be determined by how he or she evaluates it positively. Attitudes are determined by the individual's beliefs about the consequences of performing the behaviour (behavioural beliefs), weighted by his or her evaluation of those consequences (outcome evaluations). The attitude toward the behavior refers to the degree at which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question.

The theory of planned behaviour is an extension of the theory of reasoned action, suggested by [3]. The theory of reasoned action states that the immediate antecedent of behaviour is the behavioural intention to perform the behaviour. The intention to perform the specific behaviour is affected by the belief that performing the specific behaviour will lead to a certain outcome [24]. The beliefs are affected by the attitude towards the behaviour and subjective norms. While attitude is considered as a function of the sum of the perceived values of

expected outcomes of the behaviour; Subjective Norms (SN) are a function of the sum of perceived social pressures or beliefs of others and perceived behavioural control (PBC) represents the collective effects of individuals' perceptions of both internal and external enabling factors (time, money, knowledge and others) that determine the ability to actually perform the behaviour. The theory of reasoned action loses application when the theory is applied to behaviors' that are not fully under volitional control. The Theory of Planned Behaviour took into account all behaviour that are not under volitional control and that behaviours are located at some point along a continuum that extends from total control to a complete lack of control [3]. Control belief refers to perceived presence of factors that can influence a person's ability to perform the behaviour. People are not likely to form a strong intention to perform an action if they believe that they do not have the resources or opportunities to do so.

TPB further provides a framework to examine the influence of attitudes on behaviours. For example, if an individual believes that the outcome of the behaviour is positive, she/he will possess a positive attitude toward performing it. That is when the customer believes that the final result of the switching action is positive, he/she will have a positive attitude towards switching. The central factor in the TPB model is the individual's intention to perform a given behaviour [3]. [32], ascertained that, attitude is the most important determinant of a customer's switching intention, attitude was influence by subjective norms, and switching intention was influenced by satisfaction which in turn influences significantly the switching behaviour of customers. The more an individual believes he/she possesses the necessary resources, abilities and opportunities necessary to influence behaviour, the more likely he/she will intend to and actually perform the behaviour [35]. Consumers are susceptible to interpersonal influences which had been accommodated in the theory of planned behaviour.

The model is depicted in figure 2.1 below).

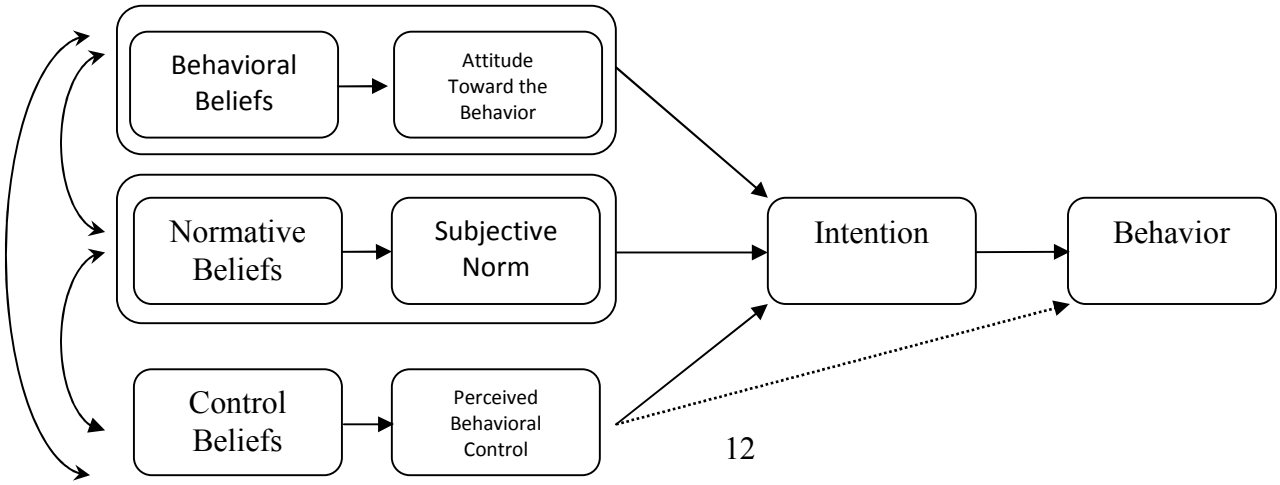


Figure 2.1. Decomposed Theory of Planned Behaviour [3]. Organizaional Behaviour and Human Decision Processes 50(2) pp., 179-211

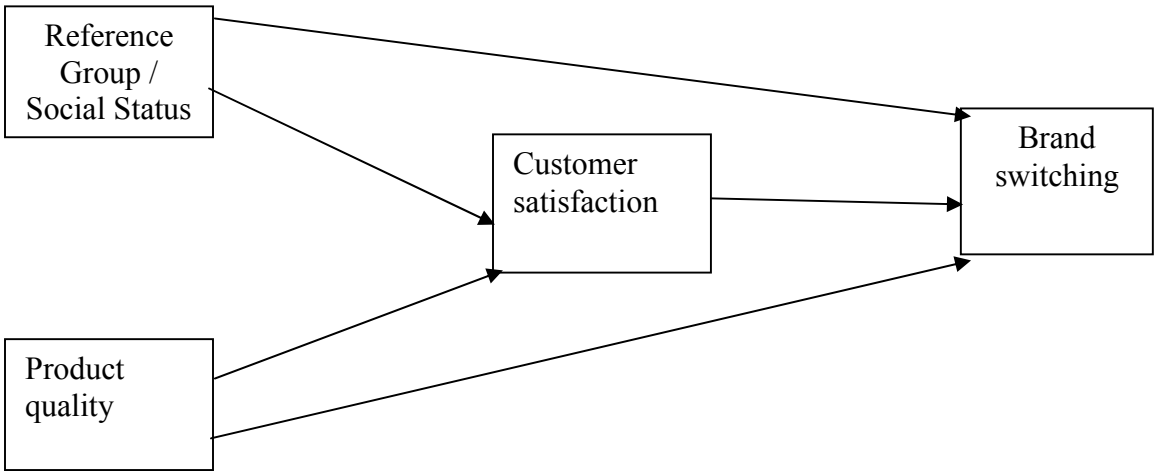
3.1. Methodology:

Based on all of the literatures reviewed, the study aims at investigating factors that influence brand switching behaviour of consumers in mobile phone markets. The study considered consumer's reference group/social status and product quality with the mediating effects of customer satisfaction. The logic of this is that each variables that is reference group/social and product quality affect the customer's overall customer satisfaction. Hence, the customer's overall customer satisfaction is the variable affecting brand switching.

4.0. Resuslts and discussions of findings

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to ascertain factors influencing consumer brand switching behaviour of mobile phones users and the mediating effects of customer satisfaction. This section presents results of findings of the study as set out in the study. The discussions of the study can be build using the model below depicting five relationships between the variables as shown in figure 4.1 below.



Source: developed by the authors.

Figure4.1: Model of the study depicting factors influencing brand switching behaviour, the mediating effects of customer satisfaction.

The relationships can be explain thus:

Brand switching behaviour of customer is affected by consumers' reference group/social status and quality of mobile phone users. Thus, customer satisfaction can mediate between product quality and consumer reference group/social status and brand switching behaviour. Lastly customer satisfaction directly affects brand switching behaviour of mobile phone users. Therefore, it can be deduce from the study model that customer satisfaction is based on two key factors- reference group/social status influence and product quality. Customer satisfaction therefore, based on the literatures reviewed depends on the influence of reference group/social status and the product quality.

Social factors like the family members, the role and status of each member in society affect what they buy and consume. It may be noted that family, friends and relatives have positive impact on customer satisfaction thus increasing customer retention, as noted by [1] customers always keep in mind their family members, friends and co-workers when choosing a smartphone because they have a direct influence on a persons' behaviour and with whom individual interact fairly on a continuous and informal bases. Product quality which is the collection of features and characteristics of a product contribute to the product ability to meet the consumer's requirement. That is, the ability of the firm to produce a perfect product on the first try and to meet customers' expectation [34]; [10]. Product quality therefore, is the degree to which satisfaction is met, [43]. The product quality issue has been emphasized as the basis on which firms compete, and the means by which markets are transformed [13].

Thus, the possibility of the customer to switch depends on customer satisfaction as it relates to the factors under study, influence of reference group/social status and the product quality. The combination of product quality and reference group influence leads to customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Customer dissatisfaction leads to customer complaints. The quality and promptness of addressing these complaints affects the customer's brand switching behaviour positively or negatively. Customer satisfaction customer is very important when it comes to the business or firm's success and profitability. Customer satisfaction is consider as part of the firm's assets and highly involved in determining the firm's revenue and profits.

5. 1. Conclusions:

The results of the study indicated that product quality plays a significant role in customer satisfaction and usage of a product. The literature further reveals that any improvement in product quality can enhance customer loyalty and hence customer retention. Product quality has been found to be the most influential predictor of customer satisfaction. The study confirmed that product quality can increase customer satisfaction both directly and indirectly.

The study still confirms that, reference group/social factors, are also considered as another factor that influence consumer brand switching in the mobile phone market. This is because, people choose products that communicate their role and status in society. Therefore, it can be concluded that consumer's brand switching is influenced by social factors such as family, friends, co-workers, social roles and status. The reasons for switching a brand of smartphone can be because one of the family members or co-worker have the same brand.

Lastly, the study established based on the literatures reviewed that customer satisfaction is considered a positive determinant of how strong the relationship between the customer and the product provider is and is a good mediator. Because dissatisfied customers are more likely to search for what satisfies them in products provided by other competitors and can influence company's revenues more than satisfied customer

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