# DETERMINING CUSTOMER EXPECTANCY IN MALAYSIA ON CELLULAR SERVICES

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*Abstract*

*This study focuses on the customer experience of Malaysia's performance of telecommunications services. The penetration rate in Malaysia has gone over 100 percent, meaning that every person in Malaysia has at least one account registered with the provider of telecommunications. The telecommunications industry rivalry has become fierce because there is a small market between players in the industry. This study using a questionnaire to gather data through random sampling. The analysis used a quantitative approach. Using SmartPLS analysis, one hundred and fifty available respondents were given. The findings show that consumers are more concerned with the service's quality and confidence than with the brand's picture and price. Consumer loyalty was not influenced by brand image and price. One of the critical factors is that for almost identical coverage areas, the services and packages offered are around the same price ranges. For their ongoing long-term strategy, the service supplier would use the result.*

*Keywords Telecommunication, Trust, Brand Image, Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality*

## 1.0    INTRODUCTION

Telecommunications is essential for individuals, organizations, and businesses. The telecommunications industry has become a common industry as the chosen telecommunications service provider needs at least one SIM card for internet data and text and make phone calls worldwide. The telecommunications industry remained the largest

industry today, considering its role in facilitating everyone's life. (Minarti & Segoro, 2014). This industry is continuously innovative in every aspect of how consumers can interact with each other, forms of mobile devices, and different services. (Giovanis et al., 2014). Technology, competitors, consumers, and devices are continuously and rapidly changing.

In this digital era, a mobile phone is an indispensable device for everyone. Electronic devices today are more innovative than before in giving a better and more comfortable life for users. Mobile phones and tablets' capabilities have expanded with telecommunications service providers (Phong et al., 2018). The role of a telecommunications service provider is to improve communication for customers. There are wireless and wired communications that provide the domestic and global exchange of network information electronically. Telecommunications service providers offer internet data and services to text and make phone calls according to their customers' needs and demands (Abd-elrahman et al., 2019). For a business that implements an online system for its products and services, telecommunications service contributes to its business growth (Hapsari et al., 2016).

Communication between telecommunications service providers and their existing and prospective customers can strengthen their brand image and customer trust. Hence, telecommunications service providers have to ensure that their customers are well-treated and handled to gain customer satisfaction (Phong et al., 2018). The customer service department manages telecommunications service providers' relationships with their customers, where convenient and reliable telecommunications service must always be available for instant customer satisfaction (Shamsudin, Yazid, et al., 2020). The ability to connect with others through the Internet is essential for customers of the telecommunications service providers.

In this era, having access to telecommunications service saves time and cost. Telecommunications service allows people to interact without distance barriers using a computer, laptop, or any mobile device through any social media app (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp, or WeChat). These social media apps provide an interactive platform for their users to receive voice notes and make video calls similar to face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, telecommunication tools have changed how a business interacts with customers (Abd-elrahman et al., 2019). Customers can connect with the business operators using this technology with the selected telecommunications service provider's help and even have face-to-face interactions to share their concerns. Using this platform, an organization can benefit by having loyal customers and good public relations, as customers would provide positive

reviews. An excellent telecommunications service provider is linked to higher customer satisfaction, attracting more prospective customers to invest.

## 2.0     LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1     CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

As customers prefer to make deals that offer good services and other benefits, customer satisfaction has become the most crucial aspect acknowledged by all businesses, companies, or organizations today (Moghavvemi et al., 2018). Customers' needs must always be prioritized as their business goal to gain competitive advantages through positive customer reviews of the products or services and good customer relations. Businesses should prioritize the essential elements of their management policies (Lau et al., 2019). Most organizations would pursue the basic principle of "customers come first" in developing their business according to the targeted community's characteristics. Moreover, organizations should contribute to better individual lifestyles and community growth by offering the best service.

Therefore, businesses should focus on the relationship between finance, operation, and marketing to create brand loyalty with their customers instead of opting for the conventional business style (Nguyen et al., 2018). Businesses should consider and generate exclusive relations with their customers to gain a loyal customer base and promote electronic word of mouth (EWOM) that contribute to expanding their online business. Businesses can also opt for referral marketing to attract more relevant customers, gain profits, and cover the business costs, such as offering discounts, rewards, or other special offers to the existing customers to bring in new customers (Shamsudin, Nayan, et al., 2020b).

Furthermore, many businesses today actively use social media as a platform to communicate with their existing and potential customers. Positive customer satisfaction would raise the brand image that creates brand identity and positive brand association (Moghavvemi et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, the quality of advertising can be measured through customer satisfaction. Advertising plays a significant role in introducing new products or services to the market and convincing customers to purchase the advertised products or services (Lau et al., 2019). A recent business strategy is to advertise on the world's largest professional network, LinkedIn (LinkedIn ads). The steps include creating a campaign (by the manager account), determining business objectives in creating brand awareness among the social business community, and

launching the campaign to the targeted audience (Yussoff & Nayan, 2020). This drives awareness and leads in the world's most viewed professional news feed that contributes a substantial impact on business performance.

Finally, by taking care of customer satisfaction, businesses can maximize their effort to maintain and improve the quality of their products and services by introducing some remarkable changes to their facility on the usage of the products or services to make them different from their competitors (Ahmed et al., 2017; Yilmaz et al., 2018). They can also expand their reach to the global market and not limit themselves to the local market only. This also allows them to explore a new market for their products or services while retaining the existing market. In terms of business expansion, organizations can study their customer behavior according to their religion, race, and location because customers are more likely to apply their cultural and religious backgrounds in their daily lifestyle (Hasim et al., 2020). Satisfied customers also play a vital role in widening the products and services' market by convincing potential customers in rural areas to notice new products or services.

## 2.2    SERVICE QUALITY

Service quality is related to customers' perception of the efficiency of how a product or service is delivered concerning customers' expectations. High service quality reflects a business that meets or exceeds customers' expectations when they use the product or service (Hasim et al., 2019). Generally, service quality can be observed through the customer feedback of the product or service received and the delivery system used for the business operation that includes shipping or transport services (Ruzanna et al., 2020). Through customer feedback, organizations can identify satisfied customers and potential customers and the improvements required to provide better products or services.

For a better customer experience, organizations that apply selling and buying activities must provide easy accessibility for customers to acquire the products or services, such as convenient order and booking services (Shamsudin, Nayan, et al., 2020c). This approach also saves time and cost for customers. Organizations that are adequately focused on their products or services' service quality will gain business performance and opportunities through upselling and cross-selling.

## 2.3      TRUST

Trust is critical when customers know the products or services offered and potential customers become more familiar with the products or services. Loyal customers can easily recognize the brand or company (Lindberg-Repo & Grönroos, 1999). There are many ways to achieve customer trust. Advertising is an effective way to gain more customers. Through advertising, customers gain the right product and service quality, which prompts them to purchase. The broadcast media is a popular advertising platform that offers creative opportunities and can reach a wide audience range. Television and radio are two examples of traditional broadcast media that have been long used for advertising purposes.

Besides that, organizations establish their customer service center to assist their customers who encounter problems and provide effective solutions based on these customers' history records (Shamsudin, Rasol, et al., 2020). Less time is wasted as they do not need to undergo the entire process of gathering data from customers during the service resolution process. In addition, service and sales employees in the customer service department are responsible for enhancing communication with customers (Shamsudin, Ramle, et al., 2020). They can gather their customers' profiles in terms of their purchase history and notes on improving the services provided to improve customer relationships and communication efficiency (Zhao et al., 2019). The customer service department has specific programs that allow their business operation to have an efficient schedule automated by follow-up communication with the customers (through phone calls or emails). After all, customers should feel secure and comfortable with the business or company through the customer service department, which eventually leads to customer trust.

## 2.4      BRAND IMAGE

The most significant advantage of having a brand image is that it helps create strong customer awareness of the products and services offered in terms of price, promotion, and others. It is not easy to create a brand without customers' influence (Shamsudin, Hassan, et al., 2020; Shamsudin & Hassim, 2020). For that, advertising is the key to creating a long-lasting brand image, acquiring customer loyalty, introducing a new product or service in the market, and persuading potential customers to purchase a product or service (Liu et al., 2017). Through brand image, customers would know about the products and services offered. Organizations continuously make an effort to maintain and improve their products and services by upgrading the products and services for competitive advantages. To gain a

positive, strong brand image, an organization must take measures on product strategies, such as product design (e.g., product packaging) and company logo, and design strategy, such as customized or standardization in upgrading their current method (Hafez, 2018). Through design strategy, organizations can provide products and services customized for their customers who demand rich and unique features. They cannot be copied by competitors (e.g., copyright, trademark, and patent).

## 2.5    PRICE

Price refers to the amount that a customer must pay to obtain a product or service. To determine the best price, organizations must consider the possible discounts available for customers, allowances, payment period, and credit terms (Hassan et al., 2020; Shamsudin, Nayan, et al., 2020a). Pricing is an important marketing factor given its influence on the profit gained; getting the right price can bring sufficient profit. Meanwhile, there should be product pricing control for third-party business operators like shopping malls, supermarkets, or hypermarkets. All customers, regardless of their income level, are provided the best and affordable price (Shamsudin, Azmi, et al., 2020). In the case of cross-selling, free products are offered to customers based on their previous purchase. Meanwhile, upselling involves offering premium products of the same product line to customers (Konuk, 2015). With the recent technology (e.g., CRM system), both approaches can be effectively achieved based on the available data, increasing sales productivity. As a result, a highly targeted list of previous customers can be generated for the business operation and campaign.

## 3.0    METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to assess the influence of service quality, brand image, trust, and price on customer satisfaction among mobile telecommunications service customers in Malaysia. For that, an online survey link was developed using Google forms and distributed via Facebook and WhatsApp. The survey involved more than 150 randomly selected Malaysian customers of age 13 years and above across the country. They were required to indicate the level of their satisfaction towards their current telecommunications service provider. The developed questionnaire consists of two parts: (1) Part A focuses on the demographic information of respondents, which include gender, age, education level, income level, type of brand for the mobile device, and many more; (2) Part B consists of items for dependent and independent variables. This study will measure customer satisfaction, service quality, brand image, trust, and price. For the survey, a five-point Likert scale was applied with the endpoints of

"strongly disagree" (1) and "strongly agree" (5). This scale was selected because it was deemed easier for the respondents to understand and select the option that best reflects their opinion for each question.

## 4.0    FINDINGS

## 4.1    ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH MODEL WITH THE METHOD *PARTIAL LEAST SQUARE* (PLS)

This study uses the PLS analysis technique with the SmartPLS Program. From the results of data processing, PLS evaluating the structural equation model can do analysis. In this evaluation, there are two essential evaluations. *First*, evaluating the measurement model *(outer model)* to determine the validity and reliability of indicators that measure latent variables; the instrument validity and reliability test criteria in this study refer to *discriminant validity, convergent validity,* and *composite reliability. Second,* assess the *inner and structural models* to see the relationship between constructs, the significance value, and the *research model's R-square*. Testing the *Inner model* in PLS analysis is done through *bootstrap resampling.*

## 4.2    EVALUATION OF THE MEASUREMENT MODEL

Evaluation of the measurement model or the outer model determines the measurement scales and construct used in the hypothesized model is reliable and valid. It is a crucial stage to determine that the indicators and construct associated with the study is fits for full scales analyses that on the structure model assessment is in line with the data and theory underpinned. Following the standard adopted assessment for this outer model, the stage is to assess internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

## 4.3    DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

Table 4.1 show that the value of the *average variance extracted* (AVE) is more than 0.5. According to Hair, Sarstedt, & Ringle (2017), the *average variance extracted* (AVE) of each latent construct should 0.5 or higher. All constructs showed a satisfactory explanation of more than 50% of variances of its items, ranging from 0.603 to 0.796.

Table 4.1 Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

| No | Construct | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|----|-----------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Brand Image | 0.719 |
| 2 | Customer Satisfaction | 0.725 |
| 3 | Price | 0.796 |
| 4 | Service Quality | 0.603 |
| 5 | Trust | 0.753 |

The discriminant validity was calculated based on Fornell and Larcker (1981). The square root of the average variance extracted (√AVE) for a particular construct should be higher than the subject construct's correlation with any other construct in the model. The result on Fornell and Larcker showed that the square root of AVE of each latent variable criterion whereby the average variance shared between each construct and its measures should be more significant than the variance shared between the construct and other constructs.

## 4.4    CONVERGENT VALIDITY

*Convergent validity* measures an indicator's validity as a constructed measure, which can be seen from *outer loading*. The value outer loading can also be interpreted as the contribution of each indicator to the latent variable. *Outer loading of* an indicator with the highest value means that the indicator is the most robust measure of the latent variable in question. More clearly follows the results of the analysis and evaluation of measurement models for each research variable.

Table 4.3 Outer Loading Each Indicator

| | Brand Image | Customer Satisfaction | Price | Service Quality | Trust |
|------|-------------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| BI1 | 0.835 | | | | |
| BI10 | 0.785 | | | | |
| BI11 | 0.802 | | | | |
| BI12 | 0.854 | | | | |
| BI13 | 0.899 | | | | |
| BI14 | 0.873 | | | | |
| BI15 | 0.861 | | | | |
| BI16 | 0.857 | | | | |
| BI17 | 0.888 | | | | |
| BI18 | 0.867 | | | | |
| BI19 | 0.882 | | | | |
| BI2 | 0.823 | | | | |
| BI20 | 0.871 | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **BI3** | 0.841 | | | | |
| **BI4** | 0.816 | | | | |
| **BI5** | 0.857 | | | | |
| **BI6** | 0.860 | | | | |
| **BI7** | 0.815 | | | | |
| **BI18** | 0.828 | | | | |
| **BI19** | 0.838 | | | | |
| **CS1** | | 0.798 | | | |
| **CS2** | | 0.849 | | | |
| **CS3** | | 0.838 | | | |
| **CS4** | | 0.834 | | | |
| **CS5** | | 0.871 | | | |
| **CS6** | | 0.881 | | | |
| **CS7** | | 0.889 | | | |
| **PR1** | | | 0.885 | | |
| **PR2** | | | 0.887 | | |
| **PR3** | | | 0.891 | | |
| **PR4** | | | 0.906 | | |
| **SQ1** | | | | 0.694 | |
| **SQ10** | | | | 0.822 | |
| **SQ11** | | | | 0.791 | |
| **SQ12** | | | | 0.870 | |
| **SQ13** | | | | 0.782 | |
| **SQ14** | | | | 0.821 | |
| **SQ15** | | | | 0.667 | |
| **SQ16** | | | | 0.738 | |
| **SQ17** | | | | 0.738 | |
| **SQ18** | | | | 0.793 | |
| **SQ19** | | | | 0.822 | |
| **SQ2** | | | | 0.788 | |
| **SQ20** | | | | 0.766 | |
| **SQ21** | | | | 0.795 | |
| **SQ22** | | | | 0.731 | |
| **SQ3** | | | | 0.693 | |
| **SQ4** | | | | 0.755 | |
| **SQ5** | | | | 0.804 | |
| **SQ6** | | | | 0.767 | |
| **SQ7** | | | | 0.785 | |
| **SQ8** | | | | 0.815 | |
| **SQ9** | | | | 0.818 | |
| **TR1** | | | | | 0.890 |
| **TR2** | | | | | 0.869 |
| **TR3** | | | | | 0.854 |
| **TR4** | | | | | 0.844 |
| **TR5** | | | | | 0.880 |

All indicators in each variable have a value *outer loading* above 0.60, which means that the indicators are valid and able to measure latent variables.

**4.5     COMPOSITE RELIABILITY**

*Composite reliability* tests the value *reliability* between the indicators of the construct that constitutes it. The higher values of composite reliability indicate a higher level of reliability, varying between 0 and 1. Results are *composite reliability* said to be good if the value is above 0.70. Test results of *composite reliability of* the measurement model are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Composite Reliability of Constructs

| No. | Construct | Composite Reliability |
|-----|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Brand Image | 0.981 |
| 2 | Customer Satisfaction | 0.949 |
| 3 | Price | 0.940 |
| 4 | Service Quality | 0.971 |
| 5 | Trust | 0.938 |

The test results in Table 4.4 obtained the value of composite *reliability of* all variables above 0.70.  The values of the composite reliability in this study ranged from 0.940 to 0.981. The values between 0.7 and 0.9 can be regarded as satisfactory; all the constructs in this study are considered acceptable.

**4.6     TESTING OF INNER MODELS AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

The following table showed the outcome of the direct hypotheses. The result shows that two hypotheses out of four are positively supported. Brand image and price have a direct effect on customer satisfaction. On the other hand, service quality and trust do not have a direct effect on customer satisfaction.
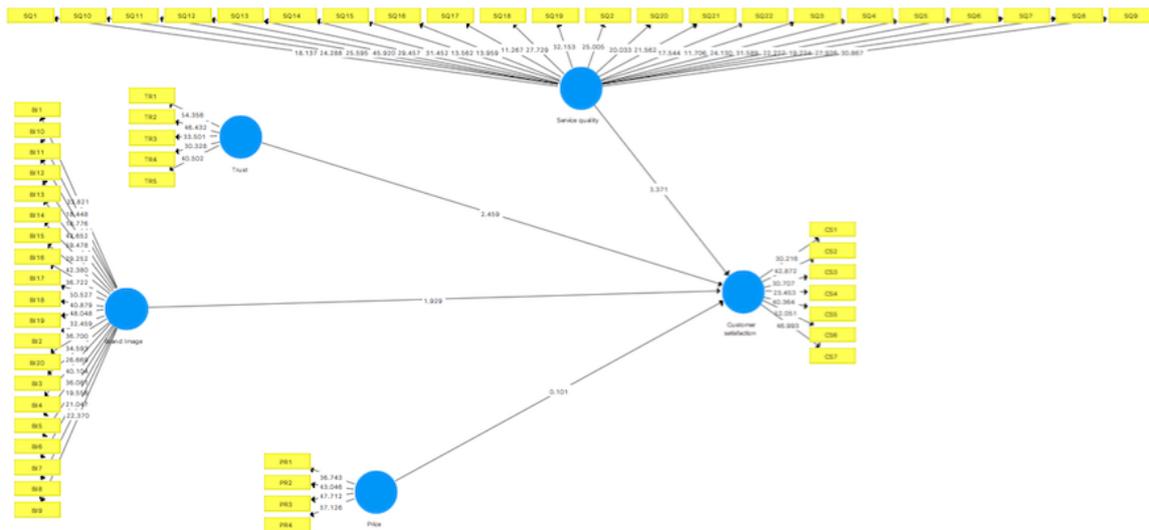
Table 4.5 Assessment of the relationship

| Relationship | Original sample (β) | T -Statistics | P-Values | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Image -> Customer Satisfaction | 0.202 | 1.929 | 0.054 | **Not Supported** |
| Price -> Customer Satisfaction | 0.008 | 0.101 | 0.920 | **Not Supported** |
| Service Quality -> Customer Satisfaction | 0.403 | 3.371 | 0.001 | Supported |
| Trust -> Customer Satisfaction | 0.266 | 2.459 | 0.014 | Supported |

Table 4.5 explains the relationship between brand image, price, service quality, trust, and customer satisfaction. The value of the path coefficient for brand image to customer satisfaction was ( 0.202, which is considered medium magnitude identification. Cohen (1988) indicates the magnitude of the path coefficient as small (0.02), medium (0.15), and large (0.35). The t-value and p-value show that the relationship between brand image and customer satisfaction is not significant because the value t-value is 1.929. The p-value is 0.054, which is less than the cutoff of 1.96 *p*-value that is more than 0.05.

The value of the price's path coefficient to customer satisfaction was ( 0.008, which is considered a small magnitude. The t-value and p-value show that the relationship between price and customer satisfaction is not significant because the value of the t-value is 0.101, and the p-value is 0.920.

For service quality to customer satisfaction, the path coefficient value was ( 0.403, which is considered large. The t-value and p-value show that the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction is significant because the value t-value is 3.371, and the p-value is 0.001. The result is significant and supported because of the *t*-value of more than 1.96 and the *p*-value of less than 0.05.

The result of the relationship between trust and customer satisfaction showed that the relationship is significant. The path coefficient value for trust and customer satisfaction was β 0.266) considered medium magnitude. The t-value and p-value show that the relationship between trust and customer satisfaction is significant because the value of the t-value is 2.459, and the p-value is 0.014. The result is significant and supported because of the *t*-value of more than 1.96 and the *p*-value of less than 0.05.

From that result, this had confirmed that the relationship between brand image and price towards customer satisfaction is not significant and not supported. In contrast, the relationship between service quality and trust towards customer satisfaction is significant and supported.

## 5.0    DISCUSSIONS

The results show that only service quality and trust are positively related to customer satisfaction. The other two dimensions, which are brand image and price, were not significantly towards customer satisfaction. Mobile customers in Malaysia have more bargaining power since there are more than four major cellular providers that actively provide services. The competition has led to a less fair price among their services. As such, the price could no longer be a significant concern among customers because all service providers are competing to provide the best services. The prices offered are basically at par between one to another.

At this moment, all service providers have a powerful brand positioning in Malaysia. Each of them is trying hard to win customer choice through many creative advertisements and attractive packaging. Most of the service providers already exist in the market for more than ten years. They have somehow developed the right brand image since the market inception. It is essential to know that customers are more concerned about service quality than the brand image. Service quality has been reported as positively towards customer satisfaction. Indirectly, it means that service providers must not take for granted their prominent branding

and long establishment to attract customers to retain in their services. Most customers stay longer in the lifecycle because of trust. Trust is so essential that it may block the competitor from pinching them through any acquisition campaign. Based on the results, service providers should take notes on customer expectations and requirements to lead and sustain in the industry.

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