THE INFLUENCE OF PUSH, PULL AND MOORING FACTORS ON BRAND SWITCHING INTENTION AMONG GENERATION Y SMARTPHONE USERS IN MALAYSIA

KOO XI MIN

SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

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KOO XI MIN

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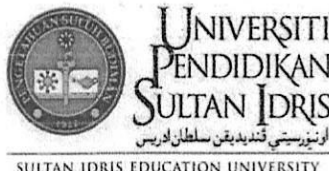
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the factors influencing Malaysian Generation Y smartphone users' intention to switch smartphone brands. Generation Y was selected as the study's targeted respondent because they made up of the majority of smartphone users in Malaysia. The push-pull-mooring model was used to examine the factors influencing brand switching intentions in this study. Price and dissatisfaction were the push factors, variety seeking and social influence were the mooring factors, and attractiveness of alternatives was the pull factor. The data were collected through self-administered questionnaire in Kuala Lumpur. Judgmental sampling was employed whereby samples were purposefully selected based on study criteria and researcher's judgement. Using covariance based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM), the data was analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistic 24 and AMOS 22 through the data collected from 399 respondents. The results showed that push factors of price (β=0.037, $p<0.05$) and dissatisfaction (β=0.036, $p<0.05$) have significant relationship with brand switching intention. For mooring factors, variety seeking (β=0.040, $p<0.05$) and social influence (β=0.106, $p<0.001$ showed a significant relationship with brand switching intention. Pull factor of attractiveness of alternatives (β=0.100, $p<0.001$) also showed significant relationship with brand switching intention. From the results, social influence and attractiveness of alternatives were found to be the factors that showed the strongest relationship with brand switching intention. Other factors, which include price, dissatisfaction, and variety seeking were also found to be factors leading to the switching intention although their impacts were not as significant as compared to the other two factors. This study provides valuable insights to smartphone companies to better comprehend the factors contributing to smartphone users' brand switching intention. Understanding these factors can help firms build brand loyalty, which is essential for long-term success in the competitive smartphone industry. With this information, businesses may make wise decisions to improve various areas of their smartphone products.

PENGARUH FAKTOR TOLAK, TARIK DAN TAMBATAN TERHADAP NIAT PENUKARAN JENAMA TELEFON PINTAR DALAM KALANGAN PENGGUNA GENERASI Y DI MALAYSIA

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menyiasat faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pengguna telefon pintar Generasi Y Malaysia untuk menukar jenama telefon pintar. Generasi Y dipilih sebagai responden sasaran kajian kerana mereka merupakan pengguna majoriti telefon pintar di Malaysia. Model tolak-tarik-tambatan digunakan untuk meneroka faktor-faktor niat penukaran jenama dalam kajian ini. Harga dan ketidakpuasan hati adalah faktor tolak, pencarian kepelbagaian dan pengaruh sosial adalah faktor tambatan, dan daya tarikan alternatif adalah faktor tarik. Data dikumpul melalui soal selidik di Kuala Lumpur. Pensampelan penilaian telah digunakan di mana sampel telah dipilih dengan tujuan berdasarkan kriteria kajian dan pertimbangan penyelidik. Dengan aplikasi pemodelan persamaan struktur berasaskan kovarians (CB-SEM), data dianalisis dengan IBM SPSS Statistic 24 and AMOS 22 melalui data yang dikumpul daripada 399 responden. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa faktor tolak iaitu harga (β=0.037, p<0.05) dan ketidakpuasan hati (β=0.036, p<0.05) mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan niat penukaran jenama. Bagi faktor tambatan, pencarian kepelbagaian (β=0.040, p<0.05) dan pengaruh sosial (β=0.106, p<0.001) menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan dengan niat menukar jenama. Selain itu, faktor tarik iaitu daya tarikan alternatif (β=0.100, p<0.001) juga didapati mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan niat penukaran jenama. Daripada keputusan tersebut, pengaruh sosial dan daya tarikan alternatif didapati merupakan faktor yang mempunyai hubungan yang paling ketara dengan niat penukaran jenama. Faktor lain iaitu harga, ketidakpuasan hati, dan pencarian kepelbagaian juga didapati menjadi faktor pendorong niat pertukaran walaupun impaknya kurang ketara berbanding dua faktor yang lain. Kajian ini membolehkan syarikat telefon pintar untuk memahami faktor penyumbang niat penukaran jenama pengguna telefon pintar. Ini dapat membantu mereka untuk membina kesetiaan jenama yang amat penting bagi kejayaan jangka panjang dalam industri telefon pintar yang sengit persaingan. Dengan maklumat kajian ini, syarikat telefon pintar boleh membuat keputusan untuk menambah baik pelbagai bidang produk telefon pintar mereka.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Attractiveness of Alternatives
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structures
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CA	Cronbach Alpha
CB-SEM	Covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
Chisq	Chi-squared
Chisq/df	Normed Chi-sq
CR	Composite Reliability
CTA	Consumer Technology Association
D	Dissatisfaction
Df	Degree of Freedom
DV	Dependent Variable
GFI	Goodness of fit
GSMA	Global System for Mobile Communications Association
H	Hypothesis
IBM	International Business Machine (IBM)
iOS	iPhone Operating System
IT	Information technology (IT)

IV	Independent Variable
LISREL	Linear Structural Relations
MCO	Movement Control Order
P	Price
PC	Personal Computer
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
PPM	Push-Pull-Mooring
RMSEA	Root Mean Square of Error Approximation
RQ	Research Questions
S	Switching Intention
SAS	Statistical Analysis System
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SI	Social Influence
SME	Small Medium Enterprise
SPC	Simon Personal Communicator (SPC)
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index
TM	Telekom Malaysia
TOL	Tolerance
US	United States
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
VS	Variety Seeking

APPENDIX LIST

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1　　　**Introduction**

In this modern era of technology, many technological devices have been invented and introduced to the market. Among all the technological innovation, smartphone is without doubt, one of the sophisticated technologies that has taken tremendous leaps to reach its present success. During the earlier days, the mobile technology was only meant for the purpose of communication, while later on, additional features were included in the technological gadget from time to time, and this bring about the evolution of smartphones (Pothitos, 2016). According to the definition of Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, smartphone is a "a mobile phone that also has some of the functions of a computer, for example the facility to use apps and the internet", (Smartphone, n.d.). On the other hand, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (2022) describe a smartphone as a mobile handset which a person uses as

his or her primary phone device that is equipped with capabilities to carry out Internet-based services and functions similar to a computer. It comes with an operating system which allows users to download and run applications, including those third-party developers' application (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2022). Therefore, it can be concluded that, apart from being a mobile gadget that provide the communication function, smartphone is said to be an improved category of its earlier antecessor, the mobile phone, as it allows a series of integrated services which not only comprises of communication, but also other computing and mobile functions (Pothitos, 2016).

Ever since the introduction of smartphones, the inventions have brought tremendous change in people live in regards with the way they communicate with each other, information searching, organizing their daily lives as well as to have fun in live (Lee, 2014). This unique palm-sized gadget has become a vital tool for many consumers across the globe, and it can be observed that increasing numbers of users have adopted the use of smartphone throughout the years (Sawar, 2013). As of year 2016, it was reported that those who owned a smart device was still less than half of the world's total population, but through the passage of times, the smartphone penetration rate has continued to increase, and it has hit as high as 78.05 percent in early 2020 (Statista, 2021). As for the situation in Malaysia, as reported in the Hand Phone Users Survey 2017 carried out by Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, the mobile cellular rate penetration in Malaysia has reached 131.8% while smartphone penetration alone stood at 70% in the third quarter of 2017; statistically, 1 in 2 Malaysians are smartphone users since year 2014 and as mentioned in the survey, this statistic is supported by Telecommunication Network Service Malaysia Connected

Consumer Study (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2018). Another survey carried out in the following year in 2018 also reported that the users of smartphones continue to rise with penetration rate shooting up to 78% in 2018 (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2019). As from 2018 to 2019 , smartphone penetration rate continues to rise and reached as high as 87.46% (Statista, 2021). As the coronavirus, Covid-19 pandemic hit the globe in 2020, lockdowns have been implemented in many countries to prevent the spread of the virus (Atalan, 2020). In Malaysia, similar preventive measure known as Movement Control Order (MCO) had also been implemented since March 2020 in order to curb the spread of the virus (Yassin, 2020). During this moment of lockdowns, people were being isolated from their friends and loved ones; businesses and schools were being shifted online and many companies required their employees to work from home while maintain easily contactable throughout the working hours; as for most schools, students were required to attend their lessons online (Yanik, 2021). During this period of time, people's dependency towards the smartphone was reportedly to increase, as the sophisticated tool was used heavily by the users not only to stay in touch with their friends and family during the time of isolation, but it was also used heavily to attend work meetings, communicate constantly with their work counterparts as well as to attend school lessons online (Atalan, 2020; David & Roberts, 2021). Hence, the smartphone's role became even more important in people's live due to this COVID-19 pandemic and it is not surprising that the global sales of smartphones has increase from 2020 to 2021 in many countries, as the market starts to recover from the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similar trends are also forecasted in the case of Malaysia market (Statista, 2021). In fact, since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the number of smartphone users in this country increased to almost 100% (The Star, 2020). However,

in 2022, the smartphone market underwent a significant shift, experiencing a substantial decline in shipment. It was the largest ever decline since 2013 (Kharpal, 2023). In 2023, research revealed that there was a recovery of the smartphone market, although the worldwide shipment was still reducing (Canalys, 2023).

As the smartphone market continues to grow intensively over the years, so has the risk associated with it. One of the risks is that smartphone users will have the possibility to switch their smartphone brand. Taking into consideration the number of brands available in the smartphone market, the users' brand switching becomes a huge challenge for the smartphone manufacturers. Furthermore, in this era, consumers are granted with easy access of information about the various products and features that different brands have to offer. This phenomenon further increases the tendency of brand switching. Brand switching can be understood as the tendency of the users to acquire a product brand which is different from the ones he or she previously bought (Aroean, 2012). Such switch in brand may assist a company to acquire new customers (in-switching) or cause it to lose its existing customers to other company (out-switching), (Jung, Han & Oh, 2017). Therefore, in this highly competitive environment, understanding the factors behind the brand switching intention become increasingly important to the business practitioners, as only then, the companies are able to obtain continuous competitive advantage over the competitors. The same applies for smartphone industries because brand switching becomes highly common for the industry especially when this sector is highly affected by the fast-changing technology. Moreover, without a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the brand switching intention among the users, the smartphone companies will end up investing substantial amount of resources into futile and ineffectual factors. While there are vast

numbers of earlier research in relation to smartphone which had been carried out in the past, these earlier studies mainly focused on smartphone adoption (Kim, 2014; Tran, 2018) and smartphone repurchase intention (Leelakulthani & Hongcharu, 2012; Regan & Chang, 2015; Yeh, Wang, & Yieh, 2016). In contrast, and in line of increasing trend of brand switching, this study aims to provide an understanding as to why the consumers choose to switch brand. Therefore, with the aforementioned objectives in mind, the study aims to derive an outcome which are able to bring benefits to the pretensioners in smartphones industry, namely the brands manufacturers as well as the smartphones retailers. It also aims to contribute to the scholarly study in terms on the brand switching intention among smartphones users.

1.2   Background of the Study

In the present society, technology has become an integral part of most individuals' life, as people rely highly on the technology especially when communicating with others. The technology of smartphones has provoked a true revolution to our society and has radically changed individual's life. Previously, sending messages required extra effort to be taken and to take good pictures, people must buy a quality camera. Today, the functionalities are effectively incorporated into one, rectangular dynamic innovation that continues to get smarter each day. Smartphones are never found out of reach from people ever since.

The history of smartphone dated way back to the year of 1983, where Motorola introduced the first ever portable mobile gadget known as the mobile phone. The mobile

phone, DynaTAC 8000X which was commonly known as "The Brick" was the earliest ascendant that brought about the revolution of its later descendant (Pothitos, 2016). Fast forward to year 1992, International Business Machine (IBM), invented the first smartphone known as Simon Personal Communicator (SPC). It was later released in the market in 1994. Apart from its telephony function, this smartphone was the first touchscreen phone, and it was equipped with the functions of sending and receiving emails and faxes. Besides that, it also came with address book, calendar, notepad, world time clock as well as a native appointment scheduler (Tocci, 2023). To top it off, it was also equipped with predictive and standard stylus input screen keyboard. Along the years, smartphones continued the evolutionary journey as various technological companies such as Ericson, Nokia, Microsoft and Blacberry came around and introduced their own models of smartphone, each with new additional features. Even though so, the smart gadgets were more popularly used by businesspeople back then. It was not until the year 2007 that the landscape took a huge change when Steve Job introduced the first iPhone to the world (Cook, 2021). Apple's iPhone was a technological device which was aimed at everyday user, and it was innovative in many ways. Unlike other smartphones that was introduced before which needs a stylus for their touch screen to function, iPhone's touch screen surface could be navigated by using finger. The iPhone was also the first device that allow users to browse the web just as they could on a desktop computer (Montgomery & Mingis, 2022). The year 2007 was considered as one of the most influential years for smartphone evolution. Since the first introduction of iPhone which ran on Apple's IOS, the journey of smartphone continues to take on more evolutionary stages and the smartphone industry today has become one of the most competitive industry as different brands began to mushroom in

the market ever since the introduction of Android operating system in year 2010 (Chantel, 2022).

As smartphones went through its journey of evolution, the smartphone industry has also been growing and developing steadily in terms of the number of users. According to Statista (2022), the number of smartphones sold to end users worldwide increased from 122.32 million unit in year 2007 to 1,433.86 million units in year 2021. It can be observed that the sales of smartphone grew aggressively for the first ten years from 2007 to 2017, ever since it was introduced to the individual user's market. This is in line with the data reported by Global System for Mobile Communications Association, where ten years after the smartphone had enter to the market of everyday users, more than half of the populace in the world uses a smartphone in year 2017 (GSMA Intelligence, 2017). Although the global sales of smartphone showed a decline in year 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the usage of smartphone rises dramatically in during the time of pandemic and the sales eventually picked up again in 2021 (Dhapola, 2020; Statista, 2022). Nevertheless, the sales of smartphones are expected to continue rising as market starts to recover from the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Statista, 2022).

On the other hand, similar trends were also observed in the Malaysian market. According to the data reported by Statista, 2022, Malaysian smartphone users increased from 3.14 million in year 2010, to 29 million in year 2021 and the numbers of users is forecasted to be continuing to grow in the years to come (Statista, 2022). In fact, the numbers of smartphone users in Malaysia grew the most aggressively between the year 2013 and 2017. According to the Hand Phone User Survey carried out by Malaysian

Communications and Multimedia Commission, smartphone users have doubled during that five years' time (2013: 37.4%, 2017: 75.9%) (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2018). The penetration rates of smartphone have grown by 7.2% from 68.7% in 2016 to 75.9% in 2017. While in 2021, it was reported that the penetration of smartphone users has reached its history high of 94.8% (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2021). The same survey also revealed that smartphones users was higher among the younger group; with users from the age group of 20 to 34 being the highest, followed by those that fall in the age group of 35 to 49 years old. Furthermore, their findings also revealed that users nowadays especially the younger generation are heavily relying on their smartphone in their daily lives. It is reported that over 80% of the youngsters would feel anxious if they ever left their phone, awakening amidst the night to check their smartphone, and were unable to last an hour to check on their phone after waking up (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2021).

With the increasing numbers of smartphone users and the high smartphone penetration rate, this scenario indicates the market saturation situation in this industry. Furthermore, with the rise of the number of smartphone brands available in the market, the smartphone industry has become extensively competitive. Popular smartphone brands available in the Malaysian market include Apple, Samsung, Huawei, Oppo, Vivo, Xiaomi, and Lenovo. Taking into consideration the number of brands available in the smartphone market, it makes it easier for consumers to switch brand. Furthermore, in this era, consumers are granted with easy access of information about the various products and features that various brands have to offer. This phenomenon further increases the tendency of brand switching. Moreover, even though smartphones are one

of the most brilliant invention of twenty first century, it is undeniable that smartphones have a rather short usable life (Proske, Poppe, & Jaeger-Erben, 2020; Hsiao and Chen, 2015). Most users also intend to change their smartphones regularly which in turn bring up the stiff competition in the smartphone industry (Yeh et al., 2016). In addition, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission also reported that 38.8% users have changed their hand phone in within twelve months' time. The report also revealed that other than reason of damaged and defective devices, people changed their phones because they found that new phones are trendier and were attracted with the new phones' design (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2021). Taking into consideration of the short usable life of smartphone as well as the wide variety of smartphone brands choices available out there in this highly competitive market, the tendency for the consumers to switch brands becomes higher. It became a question as to whether the customer will remain loyal to their original smartphone brand. Therefore, the users' brand switching becomes a huge challenge for the smartphone manufacturers. Because of this, it has become a critical strategy for these smartphone brands to build and secure long term relationships with their customers, especially with today's aggressive competitive marketplace. Various studies in the earlier years revealed that profitability of companies is highly associated with customers loyalty and retention (Hew, Badaruddin & Moorthy, 2017; Nikbin, Ismail, Marimuthu, & Abu-Jarad, 2011). Therefore, it is important for the smartphone companies to know what factors that cause the consumers to switch brand in order to prevent this and keep the customers loyal.

Brand switching is the action of substituting the merchandise or services which have been adopted previously. As opposed to repurchasing goods and services which

implies positive and favorable outcomes to the companies, brand switching signifies negative and unfavorable results (Han, Kim, & Hyun 2011; Keaveney, 1995). Brand switching behavior is vital from two different perspective which are first, switching to the competitor brand, and second, switching from the competitor brand. Switching to the competitor indicates losing existing customers to the competitors, whereas switching from competitors signifies gain in new customers (Jung et al., 2017). Brand switching indicates that the original brand is no longer attractive (Al-Kwifi & Ahmed, 2015). Normally, customer prefers to switch to more attractive brands (Ping, 1993). Keaveney (1995) explained that when consumer switches to another brand, it is because the strategy developed is not able to maintain or motivate existing consumers. Therefore, understanding the different factors of brand switching is essential to create a business strategy (Msaed, Al-Kwifi, & Ahmed, 2017). Shukla (2004) explained that by analysing the cause of brand switching, the manager will be able to repress the decline in customers base and help building a successful company. According to Peter (1987), maintaining existing customer would be more profitable than finding new customers. The company inability to maintain customer will result in a decline in the image of the company (Lopez, Redondo & Olivan, 2006).

In regard to this study, the Push-Pull-Mooring (PPM) theory has been chosen to be applied. The PPM theory was initially adopted in the 'migration' research examining movement between geographic location. It was later being adopted widely in the study regarding switching behavior in the marketing perspective. In the earlier study regarding migration, the original "push-pull" framework was used to describe the movement of customers. The framework indicates that the negative factors push individual away from the original provider, and this is known as the "push effect".

Meanwhile, the positive factors that pull people towards a new provider is known as the "pull effect". However, since it was not explained by this model on how people determine their switching behavior based on their own personal and social context, the "mooring factor" was later added into the push-pull model by researcher and it was expanded as the "push-pull-mooring" (therefore known as the PPM) in order to understand collectively the switching behavior. The "mooring factor" is an additional factor such as social influence, switching costs or other personal and social factors that might moderate or inhibit the decision, in other words, it is the factor that might make the switching decision easier or more difficult (Bogue, 1969; Hsieh, Hsieh, Chiu, & Feng; 2012).

In light of the present trend in the smartphone industry, it is therefore necessary to carry out a study to explore on smartphone users' intention to switch their smartphone brands, particularly in Malaysia context especially when Malaysia has a relatively high smartphone penetration rate in the recent years. Since there is less empirical study in technological product which has dealt with this model, this research attempts to verify the applicability of PPM on understanding consumers' brand switching behavior in terms of smartphone brand selection. In order to attain this objective, factors affecting consumers' brand switching were determined by reviewing past relevant study. Then, the factors were differentiated into push, pull, and mooring factors and a construct model was constructed. Lastly, the relationship between the variables of PPM and customers' brand switching intention were investigated.

1.3   Problem Statement

Over the years, smartphone market has grown extensively and become increasingly competitive. However, the smartphone market is also facing the risk of smartphone users switching brands. Based on a multinational survey carried out by IHS Markit, brand loyalty among smartphone users is very rare (Martin, 2020). Smartphone is also an advanced technological product that always evolve with time and constantly comes with better features and has a short useful life (Downer, 2022). Other than that, with convenient access of product information and the easy availability of smartphone purchase through online and physical stores, it becomes easier for the consumers to switch brand (Bassey, Ewah and Ndu, 2019). Therefore, companies need to pay attention on this issue to understand the reasons of brand switching and in turn, retain the customers' loyalty. Understanding consumers' brand switching behavior is crucial for manufacturers company as well as marketers, as they wish to retain loyal customers. Companies are always trying to build mutual relationships with their customers through delivering better value and fulfilling their promises to the customers, but due to competitive business environment, it is becoming difficult for marketers to do so. The consumer switching behavior restricts both parties to make long term relationships and even it breaks the pre-developed long-term relationships (Ahmed, Gull & Rafiq, 2015). When it comes to brand, study has suggested that consumers are no longer brand loyal. This is especially true in today's diverse new world of growing consumer demands, as well as the cultural shift and changing demographics in the market. Furthermore, among various generations, Generation Y is also categorized as less loyal to a brand compared to the previous generations such as the Generation X and the Baby Boomers (Christensen, 2022). Instead of staying loyal to a brand, consumers are more engaged

towards the experience that a brand has to offer. In most cases, consumers' emotional connection with the brand will be lost once the experiential elements of brand engagement disappear (Llopis, 2016).

Study in regard to smartphones have attracted a recent surge of interest. However, prior studies largely focused on understanding users' early adoption of smartphones (Eze and Lee, 2012; Kim, 2014; Regan and Chang, 2015; Gao, Yang and Krogstie, 2015; Berenguer, Goncalves, Ferreira, Anagnostopoulos and Kostakos, 2017). Hence, to bridge the study gap, this study aims to extend the study in relation to smartphone in terms of post-adoption behavior and decided on analysing on the brand switching intention among the smartphone users.

Other than that, in terms of brand switching, most previous studies on information technology (IT) switching mainly concentrated on personal computer (PC)-based IT and software (Chang, Liu, and Chen, 2014; Zhou, 2014; Chang, Wong, and Li, 2017; Wu, Vassileva, and Zhao, 2017; Cheng, Lee, and Choi, 2019). Therefore, considering smartphone is also one of the technological products that underwent a lot of advancement and innovation, this study aims to extend the switching context into smartphone. Moreover, past study mainly incorporated the push-pull-mooring model to understand the switching intention in service industries such as airline service, online gaming service, restaurant, auto repair service, and hotel service (Jung et al, 2017; Sun, 2014; Han & Hyun, 2013; Hsieh et al., 2012; Hou, Chern, Chen, & Chen, 2011). This study aims to extend the scope of existing literature by applying push-pull-mooring in understanding brand switching in smartphone product.

Another reason for smartphone to be chosen for this study is because of its short usage life. As mentioned by Downer (2022), according to a study conducted by the Consumer Technology Association (CTA), the average lifespan or product life cycle of smartphones is around 4.7 years. Other electronics products such as flat screen televisions which have expected useful life around 7.4 years. Meanwhile, for electronics products such as tablets, video game consoles, laptops, and digital camera, their expected useful lives fall between four to seven years . Comparatively, smartphones useful life is rather less. It is due to the constant development of new products, changes in the technology and design that have shortened the useful life of the smartphone (Grigoriou, Majumdar, & Lie, 2018). With such short lifespan of smartphone, it is normal that consumers will change their smartphone throughout their lifetime.

Interestingly, despite the average lifespan of smartphone of around 4.7 years, the average global smartphone replacement cycle is only 21 months, which is less than two years (Singh, 2017, Lu, 2017). In other words, consumers these days do not necessarily change their phone when it is totally damaged. In fact, according to the report by Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, in 2017, 22.4% of Malaysian users change their phone because the new phone is trendier and another 18.8% claimed that they were attracted to the design of the new phone (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2018). In recent days, a smattering of truly innovative, mostly enterprise-focused and business-friendly phones have emerged, which enable users to do amazing new things, and these new innovations might further tempt users to change their smartphone more frequent than before. The constant advancement of technology has brought about various innovation towards the

smartphone such as better camera, water-proof function, wireless charging ability, facial recognition, finger-print sensor, and in the coming years, availability of 5G and foldable phones are expected to be a whole new trend in the smartphone market (Ortiz, 2022). Therefore, it is interesting to find out whether the attractiveness of alternative brand is a strong factor for consumers to switch brands when repurchasing their smartphones.

Other than that, according to Hapsari (2018), customers loyalty has been decreasing. Besides, the consumers might be encountering brand fatigue and become constantly looking for new replacement. The process of looking for new replacement is known as variety seeking (Koschmann, 2017). Consumers preference is always changing in the sense that, a while back, they might have fewer preference and lesser expectations, but as time goes by, they might become more demanding, and their needs and preference change rapidly (Koschmann, 2017). It would become a problem if companies do not address this issue seriously. Moreover, according to Hew et al. (2017), when customers are dissatisfied with a product, the tendencies for them to switch to another brand will be higher. It would be detrimental for the companies if they fail to tackle consumers' demand and preference and fail to constantly keep pace with such change and unable to come out with products that will satisfy and continue to capture the heart of their customers. As such, understanding the dynamics behind brand switching has become a growing concern for smartphone marketers.

According to past studies of non-IT related products and services (Bansal, Taylor, and James, 2005; Zeb, Rashid and Javeed, 2011; Jung et al., 2017), price has always been one of the crucial factors that drive consumers away from the original

brand. However, when it comes to IT products research, not many researchers had included price as part of the study variable. Hence, by incorporating price as one of the study variables, it will help to address the study gap. Moreover, high-end smartphones, especially Apple's iPhone unit sales have declined steadily over five years from 2015 to 2019 due to the steep price increase in their phone models (Gewirtz, 2020). Aside from that, David (2022) reported in the Apple Statistic 2022 that the steady decline in sales within that five years' time was also due to the growing competition in China. This is due to the sea of Chinese smartphone vendors which fiercely introduce the market with cheaper and just as capable budget smartphones, and hence, the strong smartphone vendors like Apple and Samsung are facing much stiffer competition. According to Lu (2017), sales of the latest iPhones in the initial month after launch appeared plain compared to their predecessors. According to Faith and Agwu (2017), consumer have the tendency to choose brand that offer similar product which are lower in price. Hence, with this trend of consumer behavior and the emergence of more alternatives of mid and lower range phones, it will be important to know whether price is a strong factor that cause the smartphone users of those high-end brands to have the intention to switch brand. Furthermore, Generation Y is reported to have higher price sensitivity when making purchase of product (Retail Info Systems, 2015). Hence, this study also aim to find out whether the Generation Y in Malaysia will possess the same tendency when it comes to smartphone brand switching intention.

Furthermore, although social influence has been included as one of the study factors in past brand switching intention and product purchase intention researches (Shah, Husnain, & Zubairshah, 2018; Norazah, 2013; Osman, 2012; Sahay & Sharma, 2010;), the definition of social influence is rather narrow. Hew et al. (2012) stated that

social influence is distinguished into interpersonal influence and mass media. Interpersonal influence comes from family and peers; whereas mass media includes newspaper, television, radio, and so on. However, due to the rise of the internet and social media platforms in recent years, a new sort of social influence has emerged, and it is claimed to impact consumers more than previously (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). This influence is none other than the social media influencer (Alves, Fernandes, & Raposo, 2016). Therefore, to move along with the change of time and to address the gap of study, social media influencer will be incorporated as part of the context of social influence for this study purpose.

Next, the consequences of brand switching are detrimental to companies. In the short run, brand switching will cause a company's sales to drop, while in the long run it will affects its' market share. As for smartphones industry, the impact will be even more concerning. With the short usable life of smartphones and the fact that consumers have the tendency to change smartphones often, the competition in the smartphone industry has become fierce. Ultimately, with consumers choosing to switch brand when they repurchase their smartphones, smartphones manufacturers are struggling with dwindling sales (Hew et al, 2017). Smartphones industry is never stagnant and always changing. Back in 2007, Nokia used to lead the market with about 50% of the smartphone market share. Since 2009, the smartphone market has changed drastically. Since it was first launched in January 2007, Apple's iPhones have been sold more than 1.2millions over the last decade (Montgomery & Mingis, 2022). Alongside competing with Apple is its all-time rival, Samsung. Apple and Samsung have remained among the top five smartphones sellers in the world since 2009 causing Nokia's market presence decreases significantly to 3% in 2013. While Apple invests heavily on the

iPhone, which is the primary revenue source of the company; Samsung's Galaxy, first launched in 2009, is the main line of the company's smartphone products. While both of the giant smartphones' vendors continue to become the stiffest rival of each other, many other smartphones companies began to emerge. Among the most notable smartphones brands that emerged were China's Xiaomi, Oppo, Huawei as well as Taiwan's Lenovo. Given the facts that the smartphone industry is rapidly changing and there is no guarantee of securing the top spot or any other spot in the market share ranking, it is very much important to understand what cause customers to choose to stay with one brand and what make the customer switch brands. For the leading smartphone vendors, this study will help them to further understand what are the main factors that will be able to attract non users to switch to their brand. Meanwhile, it helps the other mediocre players in the industry to understand the reason they lose their market share and what they can do to prevent existing users from switching to another brands.

In conclusion, this study addresses the gap in our existing knowledge of what causes brand switching in the fast-growing smartphone industry. Consumers' brand-switching behavior, or the non-sustainability of consumer loyalty to a brand, brings huge losses to affected companies. Thus, the investigation of factors behind consumers' brand-switching is very important. Marketers and manufacturers need to find out about the vital factors as to why consumers switch brand. This is important as it allows them to come out with competent strategy to reduce customers' brand switching. This in turn help them to retain or even increase market share as well as achieve competitive advantage (Ghasrodashti, 2018).

1.4   Objectives of the Study

The general objectives of this research:

This study is aimed to understand the factors affecting switching intention among Generation Y smartphone users in Malaysia.

The specific objectives of this research are:

i.   To investigate the relationship between push factor of price and switching intention.

ii.   To investigate the relationship between push factor of dissatisfaction and switching intention.

iii. To investigate the relationship between mooring factor of variety seeking and switching intention.

iv.   To investigate the relationship between mooring factor of social influence and switching intention.

v.   To investigate the relationship between pull factor of attractiveness of alternative and switching intention.

1.5   Research Questions

This research will seek to answer the following questions:

RQ1   Does push factor of price has a significant relationship with Malaysian Generation Y smartphone users' brand switching intention?

RQ2   Does push factor of dissatisfaction has a significant relationship with Malaysian Generation Y smartphone users' brand switching intention?

RQ3 Does mooring factor of variety seeking has a significant relationship with Malaysian Generation Y smartphone users' brand switching intention?

RQ4 Does mooring factor of social influence has a significant relationship with Malaysian Generation Y smartphone users' brand switching intention?

RQ5 Does pull factor of attractiveness of alternative has a significant relationship with Malaysian Generation Y smartphone users' brand switching intention?

1.6 Research Hypothesis

Based on literature research, this research hypothesizes that:

H1 Push factor of price has a significant relationship with Malaysian Generation Y smartphone users' brand switching intention.

H2 Push factor of dissatisfaction has a significant relationship with Malaysian Generation Y smartphone users' brand switching intention.

H3 Mooring factor of variety seeking has a significant relationship with Malaysian Generation Y smartphone users' brand switching intention.

H4 Mooring factor of social influence has a significant relationship with Malaysian Generation Y smartphone users' brand switching intention.

H5 Pull factor of attractiveness of alternative has a significant relationship with Malaysian Generation Y smartphone users' brand switching intention.

1.7   Conceptual Framework

IV (Independent Variables)   DV (Dependent Variable)

Push factor: Price (H1)

Push factor: Dissatisfaction (H2)

Mooring factor: Variety Seeking (H3)

Mooring factor: Social Influence (H4)

Pull factor: Attractiveness of Alternatives (H5)

Brand Switching Intention
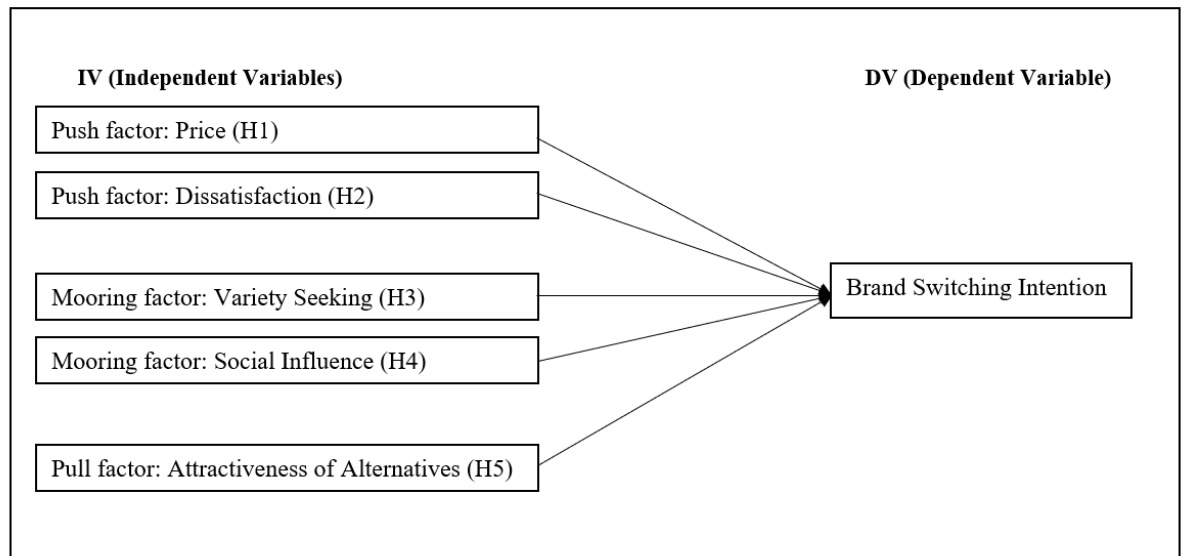
Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework of Research

The above proposed conceptual framework reveals the purpose of the study on how the different factors affect brand switching intention of smartphone users. Relationship between five independent variables (IV) and dependent variable (DV) will be tested.

1.8   Significance of the Study

Brand switching could bring detrimental impact to companies if they fail to understand the reasons why the consumers choose to switch brand. Nowadays, there are numerous different brands of smartphones available in the market, namely Apple's iPhone, Samsung, Huawei, Oppo, and Vivo to name a few, and the list goes on. Given such abundance of choices, smartphones users are tempted to switch brands from time to time. It is important to find out the factors behind such brand switching behavior among smartphones users. The result of this research will be benefiting practitioners in

smartphone industry, especially smartphones manufacturer brands as well as smartphone retailers.

This research provides beneficial insights to existing and new players in the smartphone industry as it helps them to understand better what factors play major roles in affecting the switching intention among smartphones users. This could help them to look for ways to attract new users and ways to retaining the current customers. This study also provides an insight to researchers, smartphone manufacturers as well as retailers on, and how all the five factors which include price, dissatisfaction, variety seeking, social influence, attractiveness of alternatives and contribute to such switching intention. By understanding which factors are the strongest reasons for the users to switch brand, the smartphone companies are able to come out with future plans and strategy to prevent the loss of customers. This is also important for marketers as this will help them to reconstruct and tailor their marketing strategy to cater consumers. It helps the business, manufactures to make further improvements, and used marketing strategies to increase the sales of smartphone.

1.9   Limitations of the Study

Although numerous efforts are done to improve on the comprehensiveness of this study, there are still some limitations worth to be noted. First of all, the target respondent of this research focus primarily on young adults of Generation Y between the age of 20 to 34 during the time of the survey was carried out. Therefore, the result generated cannot represent the users of all age groups in the entire smartphone market. This is because according to Hsieh et al. (2012), the switching intention of the older cohorts might be

different from the younger consumers. Moreover, consumers behaviour including their purchasing decision is influenced greatly by age and lifecycle (Madhavan & Chandrasekar, 2015). Therefore, further research should consider to analyse the differences in switching intention portrayed by younger and older smartphone users.

Secondly, it is the limitation that arises from the sampling method. This research has adopted the judgmental sampling method where only Malaysian smartphone users between the age of 20 to 34 are selected. Theoretically, judgmental sampling does come with advantages such as it enables the researcher to directly choose the target population of interest. Therefore, since only individuals who fit the criteria are included in the sample, this will increase the relevance of sample to the population of interest. However, it also comes with a few drawbacks. For example, judgmental sampling is highly prone to researcher's bias no matter what type of method is being used to collect data. The idea that a sample is created in the first place relies on the judgment of the researcher, as well as the researcher's personal interpretation of the data. When the judgments are either poorly considered or ill-conceived, then this problem becomes a significant disadvantage that can provide roadblocks in the way of a final result. There is no randomization involved and there will be bias in the information. Moreover, since in judgmental sampling technique, the members of population being studied do not always have equal chances of selection, therefore the process of sampling may generate inaccurate results.

Other than that, another limitation of this study is that only quantitative method was included as the survey approach and there was no qualitative input such as conducting interviews with the respondents. Quantitative approach involves "close-

ended" questions being administered in the survey. Answering such close ended questions limits the respondent to provide detailed answers and opinions. Close ended questions come with limited choice of answers and are unable to provide all possible answers for all the respondents. On the other hand, if the questions come with more choices of answers, it can create confusion instead. Furthermore, misinterpretation of questions is also possible, and this may cause to respondents to choose the wrong answer.

1.10   Operational Definition

The operational definition of this research study is presented in as follows.

Push Factors

In the earlier studies, a push factor is described as a reason for switching based on the characteristics of the existing place, which has a negative influence on the quality of life at the existing place (Lee, 1966; Moon, 1995). Meanwhile, later in marketing context, push factor can be defined as the negative factors that reduces customer satisfaction and ultimately lead them to switch brand (Jung et al., 2017). In this study, push factor is defined as the negative factor that reduces youth satisfaction owning smartphone and lead them to switch brand. The factors incorporated under the push factors for this study are price and dissatisfaction which will be further presented under the following sections.

Price

Price is the amount of money required, expected or paid in exchange for a product (Suki, 2013). According to Jung et al. (2017), high price is considered as one of the push factors that caused customers to leave their previous service provider (Jung et al., 2017). In this study, price is regarded as the high price which becomes one of the push factors that cause Generation Y smartphone users to switch to another brand.

Dissatisfaction

According to Hew et al. (2017), if customers are not satisfied, they will actively look for alternatives and most cases, the brand switching of unsatisfied users is always higher that those satisfied customers. Meanwhile, dissatisfaction is described as a negative emotional feeling of customers after exposure to the goods and services provided by the company (Jung et al., 2017). In this research, dissatisfaction refers to Generation Y smartphone users' negative emotional feeling that arise after they find that their smartphones' performance does not meet their expectation. Dissatisfaction normally arise when users encounter issues such as overheating of the phone, quick battery drain, phone freezing and apps crashing, connectivity issues, low storage space and easily cracked screen (Axworthy, 2023).

Mooring factor

In the earlier study, Moon (1995) defines the mooring factors as cultural and spatial elements that provide the experience psychological well-being. In the marketing

context, mooring factors includes personal characteristics and social elements that lead to group decisions involving a person or the environment (Jung et al., 2017). In this study, mooring factors refer to personal preferences and social element that affects smartphone users to switch brand. The factors included as mooring factor for this study are variety seeking and social influence which will be presented as follows.

Variety seeking

Variety seeking can be defined as personal preferences to look for different experiences (Aroean, 2012). On the other hand, according to Peng, Zhao, and Zhu (2016), variety seeking happens because consumers have the tendency to look for new stimulation in buying products through innovative variation and choices of products, as well as the change in experience in using a product. In this research, variety seeking is the personal preferences of Generation Y smartphone users to look for different technological experiences and more innovative features that smartphones can offer. Variety seeking in this study context include the desire for new innovations, features and functionalities, design, and curiosity in exploring different technologies (Hossain, Nurunnabi, Hussain, & Saha, 2019)

Social influence

Social influence can be described as the change in behavior, intentionally or unintentionally, where one person causes in another. It is further distinguished into interpersonal influence and mass media. Interpersonal influence comes from family and peers; whereas mass media includes newspaper, television, radio, internet and so on.

(Hew et al., 2012). On the other hand, social media influencer can be defined as a third-party endorser who creates and shapes consumer attitudes through the use of blogs, tweets or other social network media sites. (Gulamali and Pearson, 2017). For this study purpose, social influence includes the influence from family and peers, newspaper, television, radio, internet and social media influencers who have influence over the Generation Y smartphone users.

Pull Factor

In earlier study, as according to Basal et al. (2005), pull factors are regarded as the beneficial factors that attract or lure a person to new destination. On the other hand, pull factors are considered as the positive factor from other providers which attract potential customers to switch brand (Jung et al., 2017). For this study purpose, pull factor is considered as the positive factor from other smartphone brands which attract the smartphone users to switch brand. The factor incorporated as the pull factor in this study is attractiveness of alternatives which is presented as follows.

Attractiveness of alternatives

Attractiveness of alternatives is when customers feel that the alternative companies are able to offer better and nicer goods or services (Jung et al., 2017; Hou et al. 2011). In this study, attractiveness of alternatives is regarded as the situation where the smartphone users feel that alternative smartphone brands are able to offer smartphone with more attractive smartphone features, better prices, attractive promotional offers compared to their current brand (Rakib, Pramanik, Amran, Islam, & Sarker, 2022).

Brand switching intention

Brand switching denotes exchanging or replacing an existing provider with another provider(Jung et al., 2017). Similarly, Chang et al. (2014) defined brand switching intention as the user's intention to exchange or replace to another brand. In this study, brand switching intention is the tendency to exchange or replace the smartphone brands.

Generation Y

According to Christensen (2022), Generation Y is defined as the generation of people who were born between 1976 and the early 2000s. Steiner (2016) defined Generation Y as those who were born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s. Moreover, Lau (2018) stated that Generation Y are defined differently according to countries. For example, Generation Y from the United States are those who were born between 1981 to 1994; meanwhile in Malaysia, Generation Y refers to those who were born between 1985 to 1999. The birth years of Generation Y for this study were narrowed due to the following reason. According to Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (2019), those who aged between 20 to 34 (born between 1985 to 1999) contributes to the highest percentage of Malaysian smartphone users. Therefore, for this study purpose, which is related to the brand switching in smartphones, Generation Y is narrowed down to those who are born between 1985 and 1999 to better fit the targeted respondents of this study.

1.11   Dissertation Organisation

This research is organized systematically into five chapters. In Chapter One, the discussion includes the background of study, problem statement, research objectives with the questions of the study, research framework, hypotheses and operational definition of the study, significance of the study, as well as the scope and limitation of the study. In Chapter Two, a detailed literature review is discussed regarding the factors influencing the brand switching intention.   Subsequently, Chapter Three discusses about the methodology used in this research which include instrument development, data collection and the analysis procedures. It then follows by the presentation of findings of the data collected in Chapter Four. Lastly, Chapter Five discusses about the findings of the research and also the implication of the findings. Limitation of the study as well as suggestion for future direction for future research are also discussed in Chapter Five.

1.12   Chapter Summary

In a nutshell, Chapter One aims to provide an overview of the research study. It provides the preliminary understanding on how the research study is going to be conducted. It discussed on the research background, problem statement, research questions, research objectives, research framework, hypotheses and operational definition of the study, significance of the study, as well as the limitation of the study. This study also aims to produce results which might be useful for further studies and references to other researchers.