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BRAND SWITCHING, BRAND LOYALTY AND PURCHASE INTENTION: EVIDENCE FROM VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Brands play an important role for firms to increase purchase intention. Brand loyalty enhances the relationship between firms and customers, which leverages purchase decisions without comparisons. Moreover, brand switching helps firms gain more customers from competitors because of more value for customers. This study examines the influence of brand switching and brand loyalty on customers' purchase decisions. The research surveyed 373 Vietnamese who had online purchasing activities in the period March 2026 and May 2026, and the analysis was performed with the SEM method and SPSS 25 and AMOS 25 software. The results show that both brand switching and brand loyalty have a positive influence on customers' purchase decision, with brand loyalty exerting the stronger effect. The findings offer implications for firms seeking to strengthen customer retention and safeguard purchase decisions in a competitive market.

Keywords: brand loyalty, brand switching, purchase decision, Vietnam.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive and digitally connected marketplace, brands compete not only to attract new customers but, more importantly, to retain the ones they already have. Brand loyalty as known as the tendency of customers to repeatedly choose a particular brand (Oke, Kamolshotiros, Popoola, Ajagbe, & Olujobi, 2016), and brand switching considered the movement of customers from one brand to another, have consequently become two central concerns for managers and researchers alike (Morgeson Iii, Hult, Mithas, Keiningham, & Fornell, 2020). The proliferation of online information, the abundance of product alternatives, and low switching costs have made customers more willing than ever to abandon a brand after a single unsatisfactory experience, while at the same time turning loyal, hard-to-poach customers into a valuable strategic asset (Abdel Wahab, Diaa, & Ahmed Nagaty, 2023). Understanding the drivers of these two opposing behaviors is therefore a pressing need for firms seeking sustainable growth in the current environment.

Brand loyalty exerts a strong and positive influence on purchase decision (Parris & Guzmán, 2022; V. M. Sang & Cuong, 2025). Loyal customers develop favorable attitudes and emotional

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attachment toward a brand, which lowers their sensitivity to competing offers and to negative information, and increases the likelihood of repeat purchase (Hemsley-Brown, 2023). Because loyalty reduces perceived risk and simplifies the decision-making process, loyal customers tend to shortlist and ultimately select their preferred brand even when comparable alternatives are readily available. As a result, brand loyalty is widely regarded as a key antecedent of favorable purchase decision and of long-term customer value.

Brand switching, in contrast, reflects a weakening of the customer–brand relationship and works in the opposite direction (Kobuszewski Volles, Van Kerckhove, & Geuens, 2023; Mayr & Teller, 2024). When customers encounter dissatisfaction, more attractive alternatives, or unfavorable online reviews, they become inclined to switch, redirecting their purchase decision toward a competing brand (Patel, 2023). Brand switching thus represents both a threat—signaling a potential loss of market share for the incumbent brand—and an opportunity for rival brands to capture that demand. Examining how brand switching shapes purchase decision therefore offers valuable insight into the conditions under which customers move away from a brand they once chose.

From a theoretical perspective, this study makes several contributions to the marketing literature. By integrating brand switching and brand loyalty into the relationship between brand and purchase decision. The study further extends the literature to the context of a developing country, Vietnam, which is a growing economy facing with several competitors.

From the managerial contribution, the findings offer practical guidance for firms seeking to strengthen customers' purchase decision. By clarifying how brand loyalty and brand switching drive customers' purchase decision, the study helps managers design more effective customer-retention strategies. In particular, understanding the buffering role of brand loyalty enables firms to prioritize loyalty-building initiatives that reduce customers' propensity to switch, thereby safeguarding purchase decision and preserving market share.

The remaining of the paper is structured as follows. The next section presents a review of related literature and proposes relevant hypotheses. The research methodology is presented in section 3. Section 4 discusses the empirical results. Section 5 concludes and proposes some managerial implications. Finally, section 6 presents the limitations and further research directions.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand switching and purchase intention

Brand switching, the act of customers choosing to move from buying goods or services of one brand to another, may have significant effects on decisions about what to buy in a variety of contexts. This behavior illustrates the competitive dynamics between brands in the marketplace in addition to reflecting the changing nature of consumer preferences (Bhaya & Jassmy, 2017; Jung & Yoon, 2012; H. Sang, Xue, & Zhao, 2018). Although brand switching is sometimes seen as a burden for businesses, consumers can benefit from various positive effects on their purchasing decisions for several reasons.

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First, brand switching is crucial to raising customer happiness because it encourages a process of investigation and discovery within the market. Customers can discover goods and services throughout this process that better suit their changing requirements, tastes, and beliefs. Customers may discover products that offer better quality, and more values by venturing outside of their comfort zones (Chovanová, Korshunov, & Babčanová, 2015; Sarwar, Awang, Habib, Nasir, & Hussain, 2022). The customer can gain more experience and comprehension of the possibilities accessible to them as a result of this process of inquiry and subsequent discovery, which also increases their level of shopping happiness. Engaging with a variety of brands enables consumers to make more informed decisions, ultimately finding products that meet their expectations (Al-Kwifi, Ahmed, & Yammout, 2014; Biraglia, Usrey, & Ulqinaku, 2021).

Second, switching brands improves consumer choices by fostering a competitive market that pushes businesses to innovate and improve their products. Customers are more satisfied as a result of this behavior as it enables them to choose items that better suit their changing preferences (Kazmi, Shahbaz, Mubarik, & Ahmed, 2021). As consumers explore alternatives, they benefit from improvements in quality, technology, and customer service, which makes their decisions more in line with their expectations. To keep their current clientele and draw in new ones, businesses are also compelled by this dynamic to constantly improve their value propositions (Hasan & Sohail, 2021). They do this by emphasizing quality, innovation, and customer experience. In essence, brand switching enhances the buying process by providing customers with a plethora of optimum alternatives from which to choose, hence enhancing the entire market experience for consumers (Abdelwahab, San-Martín, & Jiménez, 2022).

Third, brand switching is essential for improving consumers' decision-making processes in the ever-changing consumer market setting. Because of the rivalry this conduct creates, firms are compelled to improve the quality, creativity, and customer service of their products. Customers will benefit from having access to a wider range of goods that are better suited to their changing requirements and preferences. Through brand exploration and comparison, customers may have a deeper understanding of which items provide the best value, performance, and satisfaction. This informed comparison leads to more satisfying purchase decisions, which ultimately satisfies the consumer because they can buy products that closely align with their expectations.

The above discussion leads to the following hypothesis.

H1: Brand switching has a positive influence on purchase intention.

2.2 Brand loyalty and purchase intention

Loyalty can be defined as the inclination of a consumer to remain committed to an organization, and it can involve both emotional and attitudinal components (Ghorbanzadeh, 2021). Brand loyalty refers to a customer's making the purchase of a brand's goods or service as their top priority, regardless of external factors that may influence their decision to convert (Hohenberg & Taylor, 2021).

Genuinely devoted customers possess such a profound level of loyalty toward a company that they effectively disregard competing firms when making purchasing decisions (Ghorbanzadeh, 2021). The concept of "true loyalty" refers to a psychological inclination that results in good word-of-mouth communication and repeated purchases (Ahmad & Akbar, 2023; Ghorbanzadeh, 2021).

Brand loyalty is a strong factor in determining customer behavior, having a major impact on buying decisions (Cuesta-Valiño, Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, & Núnez-Barriopedro, 2022). This is evident when consumers consistently select a specific brand over rivals due to favorable encounters, contentment, or strong emotional ties. It affects individual purchase decision in many ways (Devereux, Grimmer, & Grimmer, 2020; Zhang, Zang, Zhu, Uddin, & Amin, 2022).

First, strong brand loyal customers are frequently less sensitive to price rises for the goods or services offered by their favorite brand. Their loyalty to the brand may surpass the dissuading impact of increased costs, causing people to keep buying even when less expensive options are available. Because of this devotion, the brand has some price power in the marketplace (Behera, Bala, & Ray, 2021; Yulianto, Sutomo, Palupiningtyas, & Nugraheni, 2022).

Second, loyal clients are less susceptible to being influenced by rival businesses' marketing campaigns and incentives. They are less susceptible to attempts by rival brands to entice consumers away because of their relationship to their favorite brand—whether because of its superior quality, sense of trust, or emotional resonance. Hence, the brand's competitive position is strengthened (Ahmad & Akbar, 2023; Cuesta-Valiño et al., 2022).

Word-of-mouth marketing benefits greatly from brand loyalty since devoted consumers are inherently converted into passionate brand ambassadors. Their recommendations, circulated among their friends and on social media, have a persuasive sincerity that outweighs traditional marketing campaigns (Hohenberg & Taylor, 2021). Potential clients are more likely to believe personal recommendations from individuals they know and respect, which makes this type of marketing not only cost-effective but also very persuasive. Fueled by the sincere happiness and loyalty of its current client base, a brand may greatly expand its reach, draw in new business, and solidify its place in the market through this organic spread of good feedback (Ghorbanzadeh, 2021; Morgeson Iii et al., 2020).

Third, brand loyalty becomes an essential stabilizing factor during economic downturns and market instability, shielding businesses from the worst effects of unfavorable circumstances. Strong brand loyalty among consumers makes them less inclined to change their buying habits, especially in situations when financial constraints would usually force them to choose less expensive options (Wilk, Soutar, & Harrigan, 2021). This loyal customer base guarantees a steady stream of income, serving as a financial bulwark to keep the brand afloat during difficult times. Furthermore, the ability of loyal customers to withstand market swings not only emphasizes the strategic benefit of funding customer loyalty programs but also the inherent worth of developing strong, long-lasting connections with customers (Hasan & Sohail, 2021).

Fourth, loyal customers provide brands with a distinct edge because they allow them to have deep insights into the tastes and behaviors of their consumers, which allows them to provide highly customized and personalized products, services, or experiences. Customers' unique wants and preferences are met, and their total happiness and brand loyalty are greatly increased by this strategic approach (Shukla, 2009). Brands may create a deeper, more emotional connection with their consumers and encourage their loyalty by making them feel genuinely understood and individually appreciated. By differentiating the brand from rivals and strengthening the client's will to stick with it, this degree of personalization improves the customer experience, which ultimately leads to more purchase decision (Foroudi, Jin, Gupta, Foroudi, & Kitchen, 2018; Prasad, Garg, & Prasad, 2019).

Based on the above arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: Customer loyalty has a positive influence on purchase intention.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research model

The proposed research model is shown in Figure 1. The research investigates the impact of brand loyalty on purchase intention. Moreover, this study also highlights the role of brand switching on purchase intention

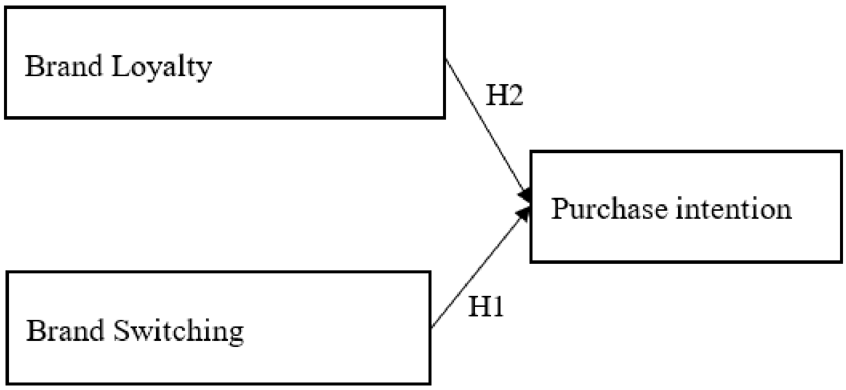

Figure-1 Research model

Source: (Adapted by authors)

3.2 Research design

The current study focused on individuals who actively engaged with the internet. The data collection process involved administering online surveys. The primary objective was to empirically test the proposed model and the associated hypothesis. Likert-type scales, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), were employed to measure the variables in the questionnaires. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 25 and Amos 25 statistical softwares. The research model encompassed three constructs and 15 items. brand loyalty (5 items), brand switching (5 items), and purchase decision (5 items).

The data collection process was conducted across four major urban centers in Vietnam, specifically Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho, and Da Nang, employing an online survey distributed through Google Forms. The data-gathering phase spanned a period from March 2026 to May 2026.

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3.3 Research method

In order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the attributes of the participants, descriptive statistics were utilized in this research. In order to evaluate the dependability of each variable, Cronbach's reliability coefficients were applied (Cronbach, 1951). In addition, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed in order to assess the construct validity, which included both discriminant and convergent validity (Hair, Black, et al., 2019). In addition, the researchers employed structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine and evaluate the offered ideas. The structural equation modeling (SEM) technique combines the measurement model and the structural model in a unified analysis, offering a more resilient method for empirically investigating the theoretical model (Hair, Black, et al., 2019, p. 699). The empirical analysis was conducted utilizing the software applications SPSS 25 and AMOS 25. Moreover, the Hayes Process Macro was utilized to estimate the moderating effect (Hayes, Montoya, & Rockwood, 2017).

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Sociodemographic profile of the sample

A total of 389 responses were collected for the study from individuals residing in four major urban centers in Vietnam, namely Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho, and Da Nang. After data screening to eliminate incomplete or unqualified submissions, the final analytical sample comprised 373 valid responses.

Table 1 presents an overview of the sociodemographic characteristics of the analytical sample, encompassing variables such as gender, age distribution, employment status, and income levels. Regarding gender, the sample is relatively balanced in terms of gender, with a slight skew towards female respondents (52.55%) compared to males (47.45%). The majority of participants fall within the age range of 25 to 29 (45.31%), followed by those aged 30 to 35 (28.42%) and 18 to 24 (26.27%). This suggests a focus on young to middle-aged individuals in the study.

Regarding job distribution, the largest group in terms of employment status is employees (42.36%), followed by students (34.58%) and self-employed individuals (23.06%). This indicates a diverse representation of different occupational backgrounds in the sample. Finally, concerning income, a significant portion of the participants earns between 300 and 600 USDs per month (31.64%), while 27.35% earn between 600 and 900 USDs per month. The lowest income bracket (under 300 USDs/month) constitutes 17.43% of the sample, and 23.59% earn 900 USDs/month or higher.

In general, the demographic profile suggests a diverse sample that captures a range of age groups, employment statuses, and income levels. This diversity can be beneficial in obtaining a more representative understanding of the target population and enhancing the generalizability of the research findings.

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	177	47.45

	Female	196	52.55
Age	From 18 to 24	98	26.27
	From 25 to 29	169	45.31
	From 30 to 35	106	28.42
Job	Student	129	34.58
	Employee	158	42.36
	Self-employee	86	23.06
Income	Under 300 USDs/month	65	17.43
	From 300 USDs/month to under 600 USDs/month	118	31.64
	From 600 USDs/month to under 900 USDs/month	102	27.35
	From 900 USDs/month or higher	88	23.59

Table-1 Demographic profile of the sample

Source: Field Survey – SPSS Processing

4.2 Hypothesis testing results

Table 2 presents Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the four constructs, all of which surpass the recommended threshold of 0.8, indicating a high level of internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951). Moreover, the composite reliability (CR) values for all four constructs exceed the criterion of 0.7, demonstrating that the observed variables exhibit reliable internal consistency (Hair, Babin, & Anderson, 2019). Furthermore, the convergent validity for all constructs can be established, as evidenced by the average variance extracted (AVE) scores exceeding the recommended value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019).

	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha
Brand Loyalty	0.815	0.869	0.821
Brand Switching	0.739	0.854	0.885
Purchase Intention	0.714	0.838	0.834

Table-2 Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for latent constructs

Source: Field Survey – SPSS Processing

The overview of discriminant validity for all constructs is presented in Table 3. All four constructs exhibit a square root of the average variance extracted, as indicated by the bold diagonal parts, which surpass their correlations with any other variable. This observation confirms the discriminant validity of four constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

	Brand loyalty	Brand switching	Purchase decision
Brand loyalty	0.781		
Brand switching	0.284	0.725	
Purchase intention	0.265	0.213	0.733

Table-3 Assessment of discriminant validity among constructs

Source: Field Survey – SPSS Processing

Table 4 displays a concise overview of the outcomes of the hypothesis testing conducted by structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis. It includes the findings about the direct effects, as well as the results of investigating the moderating effect utilizing the Hayes Process Macro. The model fit indices (χ^2/df: 1.825; GFI: 0.948; TLI: 0.941; CFI: 0.929; RMSEA: 0.037) demonstrate a good model fit, according to the recommended threshold values (Hair et al., 2019).

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient	Result
H1	Brand loyalty → Purchase intention	0.236***	Supported
H2	Brand switching → Purchase intention	0.131**	Supported

Table 4: Hypotheses testing results

Notes: ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05

Source: Field Survey – SPSS Processing

Firstly, brand loyalty has a positive impact on purchase decision (β = 0.236, p = 0.000), providing strong support for H4. The finding indicates that customers who have more brand loyalty will have more capabilities in purchase decision. When customers become loyal to a brand, they tend to carry out the purchase (Ahmad & Akbar, 2023). Subsequently, loyalty is a high level of customers' satisfaction, which means customers will have more intention to make purchases with loyal brands (Yim, Tse, & Chan, 2008).

Secondly, brand switching has a significant and beneficial impact on the choice to make a purchase. This is supported by substantial evidence (β = 0.131, p = 0.000), confirming the validity of hypothesis H3. The findings corroborate the assertion that an increase in customers' brand switching behavior has a beneficial impact on their purchase decisions.. In fact, when customers are dissatisfied with old brands, they want to find other brands to satisfy their needs. Additionally, by changing brands, consumers can find out new characteristics of the goods, a better quality of the product, or any features they have not had before. This exposure can improve their purchasing experience and satisfaction (Chovanová et al., 2015).

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The crucial contribution of this study is to find out how brand switching and brand loyalty affect purchase intention in Vietnam. Data was collected between March 2026 and May 2026. The result revealed that brand loyalty and brand switching have a positive influence on purchase decisions,

The research findings suggest several managerial implications. Firstly, firms should invest in developing membership programs to enhance brand loyalty. Creating such initiatives not only helps strengthen brand loyalty but also significantly strengthens the level of a consumer's involvement and identification with the brand. Through membership programs and providing exclusive rewards and privileges, consumers are made to feel like a part of a certain circle of people. It makes their brand experience more holistic and have less motivation to switch brands.

Secondly, businesses must adopt customer relationship management software to keep all customer-related data that would help them make well-informed decisions that are customized to the specific needs of the customers. This approach would help organizations learn more about the profile of each of their customers ranging from demographic information to their behavior patterns. As a result, it helps organizations to produce strategic recommendations that focus on the exact needs of the customers to raise their satisfaction levels.

6.0 LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES

In this study, some limitations are potential for future research. Firstly, Vietnam, a developing country with a large consumer market, offers a great opportunity for investigating brand loyalty and brand switching. Expanding the sample size is important to make the study more reliable and provide a clearer picture of the theme.

Secondly, acknowledging the variety of factors affecting customers' purchase decisions highlights some research gaps. Future works should find and measure other factors to further develop the models to better explain consumers' behavior. These conclusions can improve marketing and product development strategies.

Finally, the current research focuses on four main economic areas in Vietnam (i.e. Ho Chi Minh, Ha Noi, Da Nang, and Can Tho), which may lead to bias toward urban cities. Thus, future studies should be conducted in other areas such as Vung Tau, Hai Phong, etc. to have a comprehensive view of the research topic in the context of Vietnam.

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