



Ofcom

Switching broadband suppliers





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1

Background and key findings

Background and Methodology

Qualitative


- 2 online focus groups:
 - First online session: 14th of March 6:30
 - Second online session: 14th of March at 8:00
- Participants profile:
 - All have switched broadband supplier in the last 12 months
 - All were responsible / involved in this (even when someone else in the household dealt with the switching process)
 - Group 1: MAC process
 - All: I got a code from my old supplier and gave this to my new supplier. My new supplier then arranged the switch for me
 - 9 male / 2 female
 - Age Groups: 18-24 (1), 30-44 (3), 45-54 (2), 55+ (5)
 - UK location: North West (2), Wales (1), South East (1), Yorkshire and the Humber (1), London (2), Scotland (1), East of England (1), West Midlands (1), East Midlands (1)
 - Group 2: NoT group
 - All: I contacted my new supplier to start the switch. My new supplier then arranged the switch for me
 - 3 male / 4 female
 - Age Groups: 25-34 (2), 45-54 (3), 55+ (2)
 - UK Location: Yorkshire and the Humber (2), East of England (2), North West (2), South East (1)

Background and Methodology


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 - All: I got a code from my old supplier and gave this to my new supplier. My new supplier then arranged the switch for me
 - 7 male / 2 female
 - Age Groups: 30-44 (3), 45-54 (2), 55+ (4)
 - UK location: North West (2), Wales (1), South East (1), London (2), Scotland (1), West Midlands (1), East Midlands (1)
 - Group 2: NoT group (excluding the participants who did not meet the requirements – two were unsure whether or not they had got a MAC code so were excluded from the analysis)
 - All: I contacted my new supplier to start the switch. My new supplier then arranged the switch for me
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Objectives

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- The qualitative research is the initial component of a project commissioned by Ofcom on the switching process.
 - The objectives of the pre quant qualitative research were:
 - To provide standalone insight regarding:
 - I. The switching process amongst the two audience groups identified, and specifically exploring
 - II. Break in service
 - III. Double billing
 - The following aspects of the qualitative research would also feed into the questionnaire design:
 - I. Why customers have a break in service
 - II. Difference between previous and new supplier

Key Findings


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- Findings revealed savvy customers; aware and knowledgeable about the switching process, predominantly due to previous experience of switching
 - Consequently, respondents did not experience early termination charges (ETC) and double billing.
 - Most felt that the process was simple (despite initial expectations of it being difficult) and reasonably quick
 - Customers taking the NoT route were more satisfied with the process; equally the MAC group felt that the process was simple after they had received the MAC code
 - Although obtaining the MAC code was not too difficult it did require some time invested by the customer
 - Findings, therefore suggest that minimal time spent by the customer means an easier process. Respondents primary suggestion for improvement referred to time and conducting the process in a shorter period of time with less involvement from the customer (in turn, more interaction between suppliers)
 - A number of respondents did experience a break in service; whereas some were aware that this would occur, for others it was unexpected
 - Overall respondents were more satisfied with their new suppliers as they offered a cheaper, better service



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Switching broadband triggers and needs

Reasons to switch broadband supplier

- 
- The main reason respondents switched was to save money / get a better deal
 - Some respondents felt that comparatively their current supplier was too expensive and better deals could be found elsewhere
 - Packages that included broadband, landline, TV (and occasionally mobiles) were extremely popular:
 - Respondents saw such packages as an opportunity to save money and as a more efficient approach ([a supplier] in particular was often mentioned)
 - These packages were perceived as easier and cheaper because one supplier sources all, meaning there is only one bill
 - Respondents were also prompted to switch suppliers after experiencing various problems with their broadband service. Common problems cited:
 - Slow broadband connection - improving broadband speed was a key driver to switching supplier
 - Some complained of disruption in their internet service, both losing connection and general poor connectivity
 - One respondent experienced poor customer service and, as a direct result, switched suppliers

Information considered when switching to a new broadband supplier

- Minimal time was spent researching alternative suppliers. Majority relied on word of mouth / recommendations from personal sources in choosing a new supplier. Secondary to this, websites (broadband forums, comparison sites, supplier websites) were referred to for advice and information
- Majority didn't turn to their previous supplier for a better offer
 - Some noted that there were no better offers available and that their previous supplier couldn't compete on price or offer better deals
 - Moreover, some respondents were eager to switch and move away from their old supplier. Frustration with poor service meant that even if their previous supplier were in a position to offer alternative deals, respondents were not interested in them and sought other offers elsewhere
- Some contacted potential new providers directly and enquired into the new offers and packages available, as well as to gain information about the switching process

I was impressed by [supplier] adverts and a friend recommended them as well

We looked at websites of a few different suppliers to see what the best deal was going to be



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Broadband switching process

Switching journey

My concern was that [supplier] had a quite shocking reputation for moves going wrong quite dramatically

- There was some initial anxiety about switching supplier; primarily due to stories heard about switching or the existing suppliers reputation in this matter
- Equally, some expressed their excitement and relief at the prospect of switching suppliers:
 - Relief evoked due to the poor/expensive service they had endured
 - Excitement about receiving a better service (fundamentally, faster broadband speed) and cheaper service
- Despite initial feelings and concerns, majority felt the process was simple, stress and hassle free, and reasonably quick
 - Overall, respondents were surprised about how easy the process was
 - Though, notably, some respondents also spoke to their suppliers prior to switching to ensure that the switch would be quick and stress free (perhaps suggesting that if they had not gained this reassurance they would not have switched)
 - Many reported receiving help and assistance in switching, especially from their new supplier
 - Specifically new suppliers were praised for being helpful, informative (providing clear instructions) and keeping to schedule

The MAC journey

I contacted my current provider to get my MAC. you need the MAC to instigate the move. No MAC no move

Process after they had decided to switch and chosen their new supplier

- A few respondents still sought further reassurance from their (potential) new supplier about the switch (wanted to ensure that the deal was as they expected, negotiate on the deal, discuss start date), therefore their first course of action once they had decided to switch was to contact their (potential) new supplier. Once they were satisfied with the deal they agreed to switch (although did not actually sign up) to the potential new supplier and then contact was made with their previous supplier.
- Additionally, the first course of action for most involved notifying their previous supplier about the upcoming switch. Primary reason for this contact was to obtain the MAC code
 - Most were aware that they needed the MAC in order to switch supplier
 - Most (5 respondents) were aware of MAC codes from previous experiences of switching/attempting to switch, a further 2 respondents mentioned that they were aware of the MAC code but did not specify how. One respondent was informed to obtain the MAC code by the new supplier and notably, one respondent learnt about MAC codes from the FAQ section on a website
- Overall, obtaining the MAC code was relatively straightforward and most received their code via phone
- However some stated that their existing supplier used this opportunity to persuade them against switching. This part of the process was evidently the most time consuming and the process was considered to be much quicker and painless AFTER they had received the MAC code. A couple of notable comments/experiences:
 - One respondent complained that the call to get the MAC code ended up being quite expensive (due to the time spent)
 - One respondent was inaccurately informed that he would be charged for the MAC code (although in the end this was resolved without payment)

The NoT journey

- The NoT journey appeared to be much smoother, essentially as minimal time and investment was required from the customer as the new supplier carried out most of the work
- The first step taken for most was to contact their potential new supplier
 - Some had general queries and questions regarding the contract and timings
 - Other enquired into the various deals on offer and their availability
 - One commented on checking the credibility of a deal after previously considering it too good to be true.
 - Therefore, this initial point of contact clearly offered the customer some reassurance
- Moreover, respondents relied on their new supplier to inform them on the next steps (both in terms of what was expected of them and what their new supplier would do) and how easy or otherwise the switching process would be
 - Their only role after this initial contact was to book the installation and sign up to the new supplier (via phone or website)
 - Notably, those who switched to Talk Talk generally chose to sign up via their website

*I checked with
[supplier] about
change over
procedure.
Wanted to know
how easy it would
be*

Switching journey with MAC code



Consider switching due to:

- Poor experience (speed, connectivity, customer service, etc.)
- Expensive service (save money)



Still in decision making process

Customer contact new Supplier

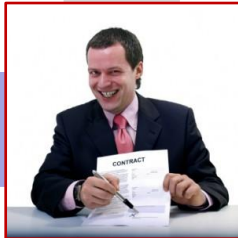
- Sought reassurance about the deal, discuss next steps, establish starting date



Decided on new supplier

Customer contact previous supplier

- Get the MAC code (through post or phone)
- In the majority of cases, the old supplier was very helpful and efficient
- In some cases, the old supplier tried to persuade them to stay



Give the MAC code

- To the new supplier
- Afterwards process was quickly and easy



Process easy and Quickly

Contact (with previous and new supplier) is usually:

- Online
- By phone

Most common procedure

Switching journey with MAC code (once determined new supplier)



Consider switching due to:

- Poor experience (speed, connectivity, customer service, etc.)
- Expensive service (save money)



Customer contact previous supplier

- Get the MAC code (through post or phone)
- In the majority of cases, the old supplier was very helpful and efficient
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Give the MAC code

- To the new supplier
- After this step the process was quicker and more straightforward



Process easy and quick

Contact (with new and previous supplier) usually:

- Online
- By phone

This slide repeats the steps from decision to switch as noted on previous slide

Switching journey (NoT group)



Consider switching due to:

- Poor experience (speed, connectivity, customer service, etc.)
- Expensive service (save money)



Customer contact new Supplier

- General queries about deals/ packages, next steps, etc.
- Sign with supplier via website or phone
- Start date / book installation



New supplier contact previous supplier

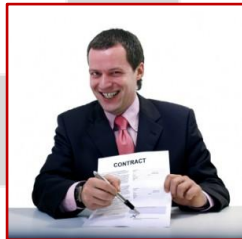
New supplier take care of the switching process



Process easy and quick

Contact (with new and previous supplier) is usually :

- Online
- By phone



Customer contact previous supplier

- This was done by one respondent. Purpose being to simply inform them that he wanted to switch suppliers.

Most common procedure

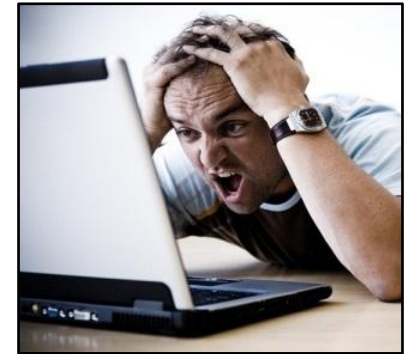


4

Difficulties with the switching process

Break in service

- A few respondents did experience a break in service during or after the switch.
- The break in service lasted from a couple of hours to approximately a week
- Key reasons for the break in service were: delay in receiving the router/ setting up of equipment and technical faults (engineer failing to set up properly)
- Most had been warned about a possible break in service. However a few felt frustrated as they had no pre warning or had been reassured that this would not occur.
 - Experiences with the supplier was varied, with one respondent having to visit a store to pick up a modem (following failed installation by the engineer) and in comparison, another receiving 3 months free connection as compensation.
- In addition to the break in service, a couple also experienced problems with their landline following the switch



We had no service for an afternoon and evening not good news for the teenagers in the family, dog got walked though. we were told there would be no break in service

Extra charges: Early termination charges and double billing

- Double billing only affected one respondent
- None of the respondents experienced ETC (although a couple claimed that their existing suppliers did threaten them with this; but did not see it through)
- Overall respondents were aware of ETC, primarily from previous experiences of switching supplier. Therefore they were careful to avoid charges by consulting their contract / supplier about this prior to switching.
 - For some, this meant delaying the switch till their contract ended

“we knew about charges from previous switches. We will wait until the contract is up before we switch to avoid them”



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Differences between current service and prior service

Difference between previous and new supplier

- Majority seemed more satisfied with their current supplier
- Notable differences between suppliers were:
 - Broadband service
 - More reliable (better connectivity / longer wifi reach)
 - Faster connection
 - Price
 - Cheaper deal / package
 - Consolidated package equalled cheaper overall package (most who switched broadband supplier also switched other services in order to have a consolidated package)
 - Consolidated package also led to more convenience and easier, better billing
 - Better customer service

I understand we will benefit from twice the speed, new service is cheaper and now i have home phone, calls and broadband from one provider

Very little break in connection used to lose it regularly with [supplier]

I feel as if my package is a better deal now, with all my bills going to one place



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Improving the process

Improving the switching process

- Most felt that the process was simple and straightforward. Nevertheless, some said they'd like:
 - More interaction between suppliers. Less interaction from the customers in the process
 - A quicker process (should take less than a week)
 - Specifically a couple asked for:
 - more honest customer service when switching broadband
 - more accurate / precise technical support (e.g. Have a Apple Mac expert)

The switch over for me was perfect, [supplier] explained everything to me and did all the hard communications with my old provider for me

I wouldn't be put off switching in the future. I am now aware of more things to check on and to ask about before making the decision to swap

Whether the caller has any flexibility in the offer they make; ensuring that I am clear in who and where to call for support; asking about any 'hidden' potential charges

