

Consumer Preference towards the Services Offered by Mobile Phone Service Providers - A Study with Reference to Salem District

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Abstract:- Nowadays the adoption of mobile phones has been remarkably increasing many parts of the world particularly in India, where almost mobile phones are common as wrist watches. This study was undertaken to find out the Consumer Preference towards the Services Offered by Mobile Phone Service Providers in Salem District. The study mainly concentrates on the six popular mobile phone service providers i.e., BSNL, Airtel, Vodafone, Aircel, Idea and Reliance. To undertake this study a structured questionnaire was developed to collect the required primary data from the 450 consumers. The result of the study implies that network quality, brand reputation and schemes and offers have been the major factors considered by the consumers while selecting mobile phone service providers. This research concludes that consumers ranked first to network quality and second rank to brand reputation.

Keywords: Mobile phones, Service providers, Consumers, Factors.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mobile, wireless or cellular phone - a portable, handheld communications device connected to a wireless network that allows users to make voice calls, send text messages and run applications. India is the fastest growing mobile phone market in the world. The booming telecom industry has been attracting large amount of investments in the country. A mobile service provider (MSP) is a company that offers transmission services to users of wireless devices (smart phones and tablet PCs) through radio frequency (RF) signals rather than through end-to-end wire communication. The Indian telecom market is regulated by Telecommunication Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) which acts as an independent regulator was set up in 1997 by the Indian Government. The mobile service first operator in India is the state-owned incumbent BSNL. Subsequently, after the telecommunication policies were revised to allow private operators, companies such as Vodafone, Bharti Airtel, Tata

Indicom, Reliance, Idea Cellular and Aircel have entered the space in India. Mobile service providers have their own plans, policies, packages and corresponding rates. Although they are offered by various companies, they have only one common purpose. And that is to provide people with telecommunication services so that they could maintain good conversations either for personal purposes or for business reasons. It is consumers' task to think about as to which company can provide him the best service. Consumers demand a mobile phone service provider who offers the widest selection of features and excellent customer service and avoids hidden charges.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

At present, the demand for mobile phone is increasing. There are many players in the mobile phone industry. To market their services, every company is adding many new features. The subscribers are provided with various schemes of mobile phone services. And the market for mobile phone has become very competitive. There is cut throat competition between private players and public sector undertakings such as Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL). Due to poor area coverage, many mobile phone industries lost their market. Non-existence of towers in rural areas resulted in a great loss for many mobile phone industries.

In this backdrop, an in-depth study on the mobile phone services throws insight into their strengths and weaknesses of factors, may suggest enhancements in appropriate areas for better functionality and/or serviceability.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kumar Ratnesh and AmitKansal (2013) have studied the Indian telecom industry by concentrating on mobile service providers, and observed that there is high competition among the players in the industry. All the players were giving special offers and schemes as per the market conditions to maximize their subscriber base. Competition in

telecom industry was heating up, now it's time for Indian telecom players to align up in the new dynamic business environment. According to the results, the most important determinants for consumers' satisfaction and their foster recommendation (positive word of mouth) to others were Customized VASs, Convenience, Network Coverage and Call tariff.

Richard Kipkemoi Ronoh (2014) conducted a study to find out the pattern of wireless technologies' adoption and use among University students in Kenya. The study was aimed to establish an understanding of the usage patterns based on the adoption of technology perspective. The author has provided a very important contribution to the understanding of university students and their mobile phone use behavior. He has concluded that the results of the study would assist in policy development of wireless phone application among university students and allow for respective authority to re-think of how to exploit the technology to benefit the youth for the purpose of learning and motivation.

Leo Franklin L. and Ambika S. (2015) conducted a comparative study on Customer Preference of Mobile Service Providers with Selected Service Providers. They have stated that there is a stiff competition prevailing among the service providers. Since there is a marginal difference between the services rendered by the cellular service providers there is more possibility for the subscriber to switch from one service provider to another based on convenience. They have realized that it is very essential for the mobile service provider to understand the customer preferences and the influence of various demographic variables behind that influence. They have compared the customer preference on mobile communication with reference to service provided by private and public sector.

Katleho E. Thokoa and Kalebe M. Kalebe (2015) conducted a study on "Students' Satisfaction with Mobile Phone Services at National University of Lesotho". They have selected the sample of 100 students of National University of Lesotho using non-probability convenience sampling technique. Their results showed that the students to the extent of 37 per cent of the samples have switched from their first service provider to another. Higher call charges and poor network quality were the major reasons for switching from one service network provider to another.

Sarmin Sultana (2015) carried out a study on factors affecting the consumer brand choice preference towards new package of cellular phone. The aim of the study was to identify the factors that affect consumer brand preference and choice towards a new package of a cellular phone and also to identify the factors that influence the acceptability and attractiveness of a new mobile phone package. The researcher has conducted a survey on 80 respondents in the different area of Comilla. Multiple Regression Analysis and Discriminant

Analysis were used to analyze the data. The results of the study indicated that there were some factors that affect the customers brand preference on new package of cell phone such as SIM price, Call Rate, Network Coverage, F & F numbers, F & F call rate, Bonus talk time, SMS charge, free internet browsing, after sales service, etc. Consumers in Comilla region are not highly satisfied by using existing brands. It is also found that rural respondents were mainly using low price and simple functions cell phone.

Arun Prasath R. and Vijayadurai J. (2016), in their study on 'A Study on Consumer Attitude towards mobile Phone Service Providers in Tamil Nadu' examined the consumers' attitude towards various services offered by mobile service provider. They found that prepaid SIM card was bought by majority of the respondents. Value added services in Airtel and Vodafone have satisfied the respondents to a greater extent.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is undertaken with the main aim of assessing the consumer preferences towards the services offered by mobile phone service providers. The following objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the prominent factors which influence the choice of mobile service provider.
2. To offer suggestions to solve the problems.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is mainly based on the primary data obtained through structured questionnaire from 450 sample respondents selected from the mobile phone service providers in Salem District under convenience sampling method. The study mainly concentrates on the six popular mobile phone service providers i.e., BSNL, Airtel, Vodafone, Aircel, Idea and Reliance. The data obtained for the present study have been analysed by using Garrett Ranking Method.

VI. STATISTICAL TOOLS USED FOR ANALYSIS

To analyse the level of preference among the mobile phone service providers, the data were collected from the different types of respondents based on the factors such as brand reputation, network quality, tariff rates which were studied by means of Garrett Ranking analysis. This technique was used to ascertain the ranking position of the mobile related factors that influence the consumer's preference.

VII. FACTORS CONSIDERED WHILE SELECTING THE PARTICULAR MOBILE PHONE SERVICE PROVIDER

The sample respondents were asked to rank the factors considered by them while selecting the particular mobile phone service provider. In this regard, the researcher

has identified eight factors generally considered by the mobile phone users while selecting the particular mobile phone service provider. The factors included in the analysis are as follows:

1. Brand Reputation
2. Network Quality
3. Service Quality
4. Availability of dealer
5. Schemes and Offers
6. Tariff rates

7. Value added services and
8. Advertisement

Using the Garrett Ranking Method, the responses given by the respondents were assigned scores as 8 for the first rank, 7 for the second rank, 6 for the third rank and so on. Based on the responses given by the sample respondents for each of these ranks, the total scores for each of these factors have been computed and furnished in the following table:

TABLE 1 . Factors Considered While Selecting The Particular Mobile Phone Service Provider

Factors	Ranks	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	Total Score
	x	79	67	59	53	46	40	32	20	
Brand Reputation	f	87	66	73	60	54	34	30	46	24506
	fx	6873	4422	4307	3180	2484	1360	960	920	
Network Quality	f	88	96	67	62	38	37	29	33	25439
	fx	6952	6432	3953	3286	1748	1480	928	660	
Service Quality	f	39	90	84	53	54	49	46	35	23492
	fx	3081	6030	4956	2809	2484	1960	1472	700	
Availability of dealer	f	71	34	27	44	75	65	75	59	21442
	fx	5609	2278	1593	2332	3450	2600	2400	1180	
Schemes and Offers	f	82	67	49	58	45	51	51	47	23614
	fx	6478	4489	2891	3074	2070	2040	1632	940	
Tariff rates	f	26	41	50	55	58	69	79	72	20062
	fx	2054	2747	2950	2915	2668	2760	2528	1440	
Value added services	f	18	23	54	52	82	98	66	57	19849
	fx	1422	1541	3186	2756	3772	3920	2112	1140	
Advertisement	f	39	33	46	66	44	47	74	101	19796
	fx	3081	2211	2714	3498	2024	1880	2368	2020	

From the above table it could be realized that the total score of Brand Reputation was 24506 while the Network Quality had the total score of 25439. Service Quality has got the total score of 23492 and the total score of Availability of dealer was found to be 21442. It is learnt that 23614 was the total score of Schemes and Offers. Tariff rates have been given the total score of 20062 whereas the total score of Value added service was computed to be 19849. The total score of Advertisement was found to be 19796. It denotes that the total score 25439 was observed for Network quality as indicated by the highest number of respondents ranked this factor as the first ranked factor. The highest number of 101 respondents has ranked the Advertisement as the eighth factor considered for selection of mobile phone service provider resulting thereby the lowest total score of 19796 for Advertisement.

The total score of each of these factors have been divided by 450, being the total number of respondents and the mean score of each of these factors have been found accordingly. On the basis of the mean ranks, the factors considered while selecting the particular mobile phone service provider have been assigned the overall ranks.

TABLE 2 . Ranking Of Factors Considered While Selecting The Particular Mobile Phone Service Provider

Factors	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank
Brand Reputation	24506	54.46	II
Network Quality	25439	56.53	I
Service Quality	23492	52.20	IV
Availability of dealer	21442	47.65	V
Schemes and Offers	23614	52.48	III
Tariff rates	20062	44.58	VI
Value added services	19849	44.11	VII
Advertisement	19796	43.99	VIII

According to the Table 2, the first rank was assigned to the Network Quality while the second rank was given to the Brand Reputation. Schemes and Offers have been the third ranked factor whereas the fourth rank was assigned to Service Quality. Availability of dealer was ranked as the fifth factor considered while selecting the particular mobile phone service provider. The sixth ranked factor according to the total score and mean score was found to be the Tariff rates while Value added services have been the seventh ranked factor considered while selecting the particular mobile phone service provider. The eighth rank factor indicated by the total score and mean score was found to be the Advertisement. It denotes that the mobile phone users consider Network Quality, Brand Reputation and Schemes and Offers while selecting the particular mobile phone service provider as the most important factors than any other factor.

VIII. FINDINGS

The following are the major findings of the study

1. It is found that out of eight identified factors considered by the consumers for selection of mobile phone service providers, Network Quality has been the first ranked factor while Brand Reputation has been the second ranked factor and Schemes and Offers have been the third ranked factor for selection of mobile phone service providers according to the sample respondents.
2. Advertisement has been found to be eighth ranked factor for selection of mobile phone service provider as ranked by the sample respondents.
3. It implies that Network Quality, Brand Reputation and Schemes and Offers have been the major factors considered by the consumers while selecting mobile phone service providers.

IX. SUGGESTIONS

- Since the Network Quality has been the prime factor considered for selection of particular mobile phone service provider, it is suggested that the network quality shall be improved by the mobile phone service providers by laying high tech optic fiber

cables and establishing more towers in order to improve the network signals.

- The service providers should ensure excellent roaming facility to attract and retain the segment of travelling consumers outside the state.
- The aggressiveness in promoting attractive SMS and Internet packages will help service providers to attract and retain the students and younger age groups.
- Adequate Network facility should be developed by the mobile phone service provider to avoid network connectivity problem. High frequency towers to be provided to avoid link failures and better clearance.
- Service operators should promote more sales promotion schemes with various alternatives of payments and other packages.

X. CONCLUSION

The present study clearly points the eight success factors of mobile phone service providers. Due to competitive pressure, the Indian MSP market is flooded with variety of plans and service quality. It should be enhanced by the mobile operators to increase the level of the consumer and to develop good image in the mind of the consumer. Network related problems such as poor connectivity and low coverage force the consumers to choose according to their preference. Mobile service provider market is on booming stage and it should come out with the different plan and scheme with low service charges, availability of plans as per requirement and tariff. From the above discussion, this study concludes that consumers ranked first to network quality and second rank to brand reputation. Service operators should create an emotional relationship with the consumer through innovative plans and enhance their services quality and brand image, better connectivity and goodwill with the consumer because the consumer always want more from their operators.

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