



CUSTOMER PREFERENCES TOWARDS THE MOBILE NETWORK SERVICE PROVIDER- A STUDY WITH THE SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COIMBATORE CITY

P. Vijay*¹, Dr. V. Krishnaveni²

¹Research Scholar, Dept. of Management, Karpagam University Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India.

²Asst. Prof, Dept. of Management (UG), Karpagam uiniversity, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India.

ABSTRACT

Mobile services were introduced in India in the year 1995. Licenses were issued in 20 circles which were roughly contiguous to the states and for four metros. For the first few years, the mobile services sector saw a lot of turmoil which ended with the new telecom policy of 1999. After that the mobile services took off, but not without hiccups. However in a span of 15 years the number of customers has crossed 900 million marks in 2015. The number of customers' growth per year up to 2015 was exponential in both the GSM and CDMA networks. The whooping growth was attributed not only in the government policies and need of the people but also to the very aggressive marketing schemes and policies adopted by the companies. The telephone services which were considered as a luxury, After few years it has become accessible for all class of people. In the aspect the present study focuses on the customer preferences towards the selected mobile service providers in Coimbatore district. The study is unique in nature by covering the Coimbatore city in five different areas namely East Coimbatore, West Coimbatore, Central Coimbatore, North Coimbatore and South Coimbatore with 100 samples. From each resulted a total of 500 respondents.

Keywords: Mobile services, customer preferences, customer satisfaction, Coimbatore city.

INTRODUCTION

Mobile services were introduced in India in the late 1990s and the population is the main advantage for any market player operating in India. The mobile network service providers are ready to serve their subscribers anywhere at any time to retain the existing subscribers to earn a new subscribers. By knowing the preference and buying behaviour of the consumers the mobile network service providers can develop the promotional method to survive in the competitive market. The healthy competition between the different mobile network service providers create the mobile number portability, value added service, voice message, MMS, SMS, unbreakable signals, scheme changes, easy to recharge, other comfortable and satisfactory service to the mobile network subscribers. Usage of the mobile network by the lower and middle class people increased by reducing the mobile network subscribing tariff form Rs 14 to Rs 1. The Indian government permits the spectrum operators clears signal

clarity issue and develops the subscribers benefit. Everyone in the market is trying to satisfy his customers. Today all the organizations satisfy the customers to attain a competitive advantage. So the business faces the toughest competition from their competitor. It is the main problem faced by the organization. So it turns out to be very important for the organization to identify the customer preferences not just by the services but by reaching beyond the expectations of the customers. So the study attempts to observe the mobile network users preference towards the selected mobile service providers in Coimbatore city.

SUBSCRIBER BASE OF THE MOBILE TELEPHONY

Service Providers	06-07	07-08	08-09	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16
Airtel	37.14	61.98	93.92	127.62	16.2	181.28	188.20	205.39	229.43	254.90
Reliance	28.01	45.79	72.67	102.42	135.7	153.05	122.97	110.89	110.65	103.58
Vodafone	26.44	44.13	68.77	100.86	134.57	150.47	152.35	166.56	183.88	198.04
Idea	14.01	24	38.89	63.82	89.5	112.72	12.61	135.79	157.81	175.07
BSNL	30.99	40.79	52.15	69.45	91.83	98.51	101.21	94.65	93.64	101.11
Tata	16.02	24.33	35.12	65.94	89.14	81.75	66.42	63.00	67.99	61.82
Aircel	5.51	10.61	18.48	36.86	54.84	62.57	60.07	70.15	81.40	87.09

Source: TRAI Reports on Indian

TOP MOBILE OPERATORS OF INDIA AS ON JULY 2016

Operators Name	Technology	Subscribers in million	Ownership	Market share
<u>Airtel India</u>	<u>GSM, EDGE, HSPA+, TD-LTE</u>	254.33	<u>Bharti Enterprises</u> (68%) <u>SingTel</u> (32%)	24.38%
<u>Vodafone India</u>	<u>GSM, EDGE, HSPA+, LTE</u>	198.68	<u>Vodafone Group</u> (100%)	19.28%
<u>Idea Cellular</u>	<u>GSM, EDGE, HSPA+, LTE</u>	175.54	<u>Aditya Birla Group</u> (100%)	17.18%
<u>Reliance Communications</u>	<u>CDMA2000, EVDO, GSM, EDGE, HSPA+, WiMAX</u>	101.36	<u>Reliance ADAG</u> (67%) <u>Public</u> (26%)	10.47%
<u>Aircel</u>	<u>GSM, EDGE, HSDPA, TD-LTE</u>	88.26	<u>Maxis Communications</u> (74%) <u>Sindya Securities and Investments</u> (26%)	8.41%
<u>BSNL</u>	<u>GSM, EDGE, HSDPA, HSPA+, CDMA2000, EVDO, WiMAX</u>	88.24	<u>State-owned</u>	8.36%
<u>Tata</u>	<u>CDMA2000, EVDO, GSM, EDGE, HSDPA, HSPA+, WiMAX</u>	59.51	<u>Tata Teleservices</u> (74%) <u>NTT DoCoMo</u> (26%)	5.97%

Source: TRAI Reports on Indian

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study is to establish a platform to examine the customer preferences for the selected mobile networks. The study also extends to understand the factors influencing to use the particular mobile network service.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Zohaib Ahmad and Junaid Ahmad (2014) in their study titled “Consumer Purchase Behavior in Cellular Service Sector” says that the dominant factors quality, price, promotions, and social factors reflects the latest buying behavior of people or not. The study reveals that the

social factor is the most dominating factor which determines the purchase behavior and basically reflects the societal image of the consumers.

Myilswamy, Ratheesh Kumar (2013) find that the postpaid and prepaid customer prefer to use Airtel mobile service because of the features, Rent, Tower coverage, Talk time, Advertisement and Corporate schemes. Finally the study suggests that by paying special attention on these factors develop the business by satisfying the consumers.

Zafar (2013) examines the impact of the mobile service attributes like call rates, service quality, service availability; promotion and brand image of both the gender's purchasing decision. The result reveals that the male and female consumers have different preference in making the purchase decision to the avail mobile service. The study also discovers that the female consumers are tough to satisfy than the male consumers.

Chintan Shah (2012) in his study entitled "Consumer Preferences for Mobile Service Provider" investigates the factor considered by the customers to shape their preference for the mobile service provider. For the study 150 mobile users of Bardoli city are surveyed. The researcher find that the service quality and brand image, service charges and plan, and network quality plays a very important role in preferring mobile service provider.

Jegan and Sudalaiyandi (2012) in their study on the consumer preference and their satisfaction towards the mobile phone service providers find that the call tariffs, network coverage and brand image encourage the consumer's preference and satisfaction.

Raj Kumar Paulrajan and Harish Rajkumar (2011) in their study examine the perception choice in selecting the cellular mobile telecommunication service providers. The result of the study indicates that in selecting the telecommunication service provider, communication and price has a significant impact in choice of the consumer preference nevertheless the product quality and availability has a significant impact in selecting the mobile telecommunication service provider.

Kim et.al (2004) states that call quality, value- added services and customer support are the important factor to be considered by the customers while choosing a service operator.

RESEARCH GAP

There are numerous studies are conducted to assess the service quality, customer satisfaction and customer references to the mobile networks and its various aspects. But the present study is unique in nature because it is conducted especially in Coimbatore city with the aim to identify the customer preference of the selected mobile network service providers and also to analyse the factors influencing to select a particular mobile network by the customers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the Customer's Preference towards the mobile network service provider.
- To study the factors influencing the customers to select a mobile network service provider.

SAMPLING DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

There are two types of sampling methods namely probability sampling method and Non probability sampling method. In the Probability sampling method, there are simple random

sampling method, systematic random sampling method, stratified random sampling method, Area sampling method etc.,. Here in the research the researcher uses the area sampling method. The population for the study included individuals who use mobile network and currently residing at various parts of Coimbatore city (East Coimbatore, West Coimbatore, Central Coimbatore, North Coimbatore, and South Coimbatore). The sample for the main study consists of the customers who use mobile network in Coimbatore city. The first step the researcher contacts the major dealers in Coimbatore City who deals with the mobile network service and obtains the database of the mobile users. All the respondents are contacted directly and the researcher explains the purpose of the study. All of the respondents cooperates with willingness and provided the necessary information. The sampling size consists of 500 mobile network users. Area sampling method is used to collect the data. The Coimbatore city is divided into five areas namely East Coimbatore, West Coimbatore, Central Coimbatore, North Coimbatore, and South Coimbatore. From the each area 100 samples are selected.

WEIGHTED AVERAGE RANK ANALYSIS

It is an important tool used to assess the priority of the different category of the respondents on the various aspects relating to the study. Based on the consolidated opinion of the respondents the average rank is calculated and the final rank is affixed using the criteria “Higher average is the priority”. The analysis is performed on the following factors: Customer’s preference towards the mobile network service provider and factors influencing the customers to select a mobile network service provider. The results are presented with the suitable interpretations.

CUSTOMER’S PREFERENCE TOWARDS MOBILE NETWORK SERVICE PROVIDER

The following service providers considered in the study

BSNL, Airtel, Idea, Tata, Vodafone, Reliance, Aircel

Table 1: Customer’s preference towards mobile network service provider

Weights	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Total	Weighted average	Rank
Rank	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII			
Service providers										
BSNL	70	68	82	52	83	72	73	500	70.78	V
	490	408	410	208	249	144	73	1982		
Airtel	90	80	72	55	63	58	82	500	74.17	I
	630	480	360	220	189	116	82	2077		
Idea	80	95	75	43	65	57	85	500	73.96	II
	560	570	375	172	195	114	85	2071		
Tata	82	63	81	73	65	74	62	500	71.21	IV
	574	378	405	292	195	148	62	1994		
Vodafone	75	73	65	77	38	81	91	500	70.10	VI
	525	438	325	308	114	162	91	1963		
Reliance	76	83	53	65	80	81	62	500	72.10	III
	532	498	265	260	240	162	62	2019		
<u>Aircel</u>	57	63	72	82	85	88	53	500	69.60	VII
	399	378	360	328	255	176	53	1949		

Source: Primary data

The above table shows the various mobile network service providers and the respondents are asked to rank the service providers. Based on the rankings given by the respondents, weights

are given to ascertain of the mostly preferred mobile network service provider. It is seen that the Airtel ranked first by the respondents with the score of 74.17, Idea is ranked second with a score of 73.96, Reliance is ranked third with a score of 72.10, Tata is ranked fourth with a score of 71.21, BSNL is ranked fifth with a score of 70.78, Vodafone is ranked sixth with a score of 70.10, The lowest priority is given to Aircel and ranked seventh with a score of 69.60. It is concluded that the majority of the respondents have given top preference to Airtel, Idea and Reliance networks in preferring the network service providers.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CUSTOMERS TO SELECT A MOBILE NETWORK SERVICE PROVIDER.

The following factors considered in the study

Network coverage, Tariff rates, Value added service, Reliability, Customer care service, Promotional offers, Service quality

Table 2: Factors influencing the customers to select to mobile network service provider

Weights	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Total	Weighted average	Rank
Rank	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII			
Factors										
Network coverage	75	43	70	90	87	50	85	500	69.25	VI
	525	258	350	360	261	100	85	1939		
Tariff rates	80	56	76	65	78	64	81	500	70.67	IV
	560	336	380	260	234	128	81	1979		
Value added service	73	72	83	50	84	68	70	500	72.00	II
	511	432	415	200	252	136	70	2016		
Reliability	63	57	70	87	88	85	50	500	70.17	V
	441	342	350	348	264	170	50	1965		
Customer care service	62	82	75	80	63	64	74	500	71.85	III
	434	492	375	320	189	128	74	2012		
Promotional offers	65	75	40	85	87	76	72	500	68.92	VII
	455	450	200	340	261	152	72	1930		
Service quality	80	90	75	52	60	61	82	500	73.82	I
	560	540	375	208	180	122	82	2067		

Source: Primary data

The above table shows the various features and the respondents are asked to rank the features Network coverage, Tariff rates, Value added service, Reliability, Customer care service, Promotional offers, Service quality. Based on the rankings given by the respondents, weights are given to ascertain of the feature considered while preferring mobile network service. It is seen that service quality ranked first by the respondents with the score of 73.82, Value added service is ranked second with a score of 72.00, Customer care service is ranked third with a score of 71.85, Tariff rates is ranked fourth with a score of 70.67, Reliability is ranked fifth with a score of 70.17, Network coverage is ranked sixth with a score of 69.25, The lowest priority is given to the Promotional offers and ranked seventh with a score of 68.92. It is concluded that the majority of the respondents have given top preference to the Service quality, Value added service and Customer care service in preferring the network service providers.

FINDINGS

- It is found from the study that the majority of the respondents have given top preference to Airtel, Idea and Reliance network and least preference to Aircel in preferring the network service providers.
- It is found from the study that the majority of the respondents have given top preference to service quality, Value added service and Customer care service and least preference to Promotional offers in preferring the network service providers.

SUGGESTIONS

- It is found from the study that the majority of the respondents have given top preference to Airtel, Idea and Reliance. Hence it is suggested that the other service providers (BSNL, Vodafone, Tata, and Aircel) have to focus on improving their service quality, responsiveness, attractive offers, customer care service and impactful advertisement in order to widen their subscriber's base and capture more customers and market share.
- It is found from the study that the majority of the respondents have given top preference to the service quality. Service quality of the network plays a vital role. Hence it is suggested that the operators have to maintain proper service quality in the call connectivity, Fulfilling their expectation, value added service offered by them including mobile data, caller tune, dry run, playback etc. Especially special attention must be given for providing on time customer care connectivity which may save customer time and able to process their request by the service providers on a need basis.

CONCLUSION

The Indian mobile telephony market has grown at a rapid speed in the last decade. Declining the call tariffs and favourable regulatory policies have led to a tremendous increase in the subscribers' base. Proper identification of the Customer preferences will facilitate the favourableness towards the various mobile service providers. Continuous research on consumers will enhance the customer satisfaction. The present research focuses on the study of customer preferences with the special reference to the mobile network users in Coimbatore city. The study has been carried out to find out the most preferred mobile network service provider and the factors influencing to use the particular mobile network service. The results revealed that, Airtel, Idea and Reliance are the most preferred mobile network service providers. Service quality, Value added services and customer care service are the most influencing factors in the selection of a particular mobile network service provider. If these suggestions are considered by the respective mobile network service providers and it would certainly help to improve the service quality of the mobile network service providers and also it improves the level of satisfaction of the mobile network users.

REFERENCES

- [1] Shah C. Consumer Preferences for Mobile Service Providers: An Empirical Study in Bardoli. *International Journal of Marketing and Technology* 2012; 2(8): 269-288.
- [2] Jegan, Sudalaiyandi. Consumer Behaviour towards Mobile Phone Services in Kovilpatti, Thoothukudi District (India) - A Case Study. *International Journal of Current Research* 2012; 4(4): 261-265.

- [3] Kim M, Park M, Jeong D. The Effects of Customer Satisfaction and Switching Barrier on Customer Loyalty in Korean Mobile Telecommunication Services. *Telecommunications Policy* 2004; 28(2): 145-159.
- [4] Myilswamy, Kumar R. Consumer Preference Utilizing Mobile Communication Service Providers in Coimbatore District. *International Journal of Business and Management Invention* 2013; 2(9): 1-5.
- [5] Paulrajan R, Harish R. Service Quality and Customers Preference of Cellular Mobile Service Providers. *Journal of Technology Management & Innovation* 2011; 6(1): 38-45.
- [6] Muhammad Zeeshan Z. The Impact of Mobile Service Attributes On Males' and Females' Purchase Decision. *Management & Marketing Challenges for the Knowledge Society* 2013; 8(4): 669-682.
- [7] Ahmad Z, Ahmad J. Consumer Purchase Behavior in Cellular Service Sector of Pakistan. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management* 2014; 16(5): 62-75.
- [8] <http://www.medianama.com/2016/08/223-active-mobile-connections-india-declined-1-5m-may-2016-trai>