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"A critical study to find out the factors determining the preferences of consumers in selecting the telecommunication service provider"

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Abstract

This study intends to find the important factors that are considered while choosing a service provider. The consumers are asked why they have chosen a particular service provider and which factor was important to them while choosing a service provider. This study intends to explore the factors that are important by using exploratory factor analysis. Apart from that the study intends to find if there is any significant difference in the age group of a respondent and his buying preference. It further tries to find if there is any difference between prepaid and postpaid users and the importance given to factors while buying service provider.

Introduction

This study is based on the consumer behavior of the telecommunication sector to understand the buying preferences while choosing a particular service provider in the telecommunication sector. Customers play a very important role in any company. Days are gone when customer was required to be satisfied, today marketers need to go beyond satisfaction that is delight the customer, give him beyond what he expects from the company or the product. Market conditions have become very competitive and companies are trying to capture each other's share by various competitive strategies and tactics.

Similarly, the telecommunication services in India also has a huge level of competition where customers are likely to switch brands due to better and unexpected service and price offers from the competing operators. This research on the topic "A study to find brand switching behavior among young adults in Mumbai Region" is going to investigate brand switching phenomenon in perspective of telecommunication services. In this particular chapter background of study has been

explained.

As of now, India is the world's second-largest telecommunications market with a subscriber base of 1.16 billion and has very strong base. The Indian mobile economy is growing rapidly and will contribute substantially to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) according to a report prepared by GSM Association (GSMA) in collaboration with Boston Consulting Group (BCG). In 2019, India surpassed the US to become the second largest market in terms of number of app downloads.

The liberal and reformist instrumental policies along with strong consumer demand in the rapid growth in the Indian telecom sector. The Government has enabled easy market access to telecom equipment and a fair and proactive regulatory framework, that has ensured availability of telecom services to consumer at affordable prices. This sector is the fastest growing employment generator in the country

The data as per IBEF states that the subscriber base has increased to 1,171.80 million as of October 2020

The Indian telecommunication scenario is characterized by -

- Robust demand:
- Increasing Investment.
- Policy support:
- Attractive opportunities:

Hence it is important to understand consumer behavior in this sector to know which of the factors are important while making a choice towards a telecommunication service provider.

Literature Review

To understand the previous study on this topic, literature was read on Consumer buying behavior in telecommunication service sector, ICFAI

1. J Hidayati* , L Ginting and H Nasution, Department of Industrial Engineering, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia "Customer behaviour for telecommunication service provider, SEMIRATA- International Conference on Science and Technology 2018

This research covers study in Indonesia is open market to telecommunication service provider. It tries to understand customer behavior in order to acquire customer. By knowing customer behavior, company can make strategies to acquire consumers. This study used statistic approach which is conducted in Medan, North Sumatera. The result signified that brand, network and distribution have significant relation to customer preference while choose service provider however it also stated that Tariff, promotion and relation did not have any significant impact on customer behavior while choose service provider.

Gap analysis- A similar study could be done in India to find the factors that are important while choosing a service provider.

2. Singh Abhishek, Factors Influencing Prepaid Consumer Behavior in Mobile Telecom Industry of Bihar & Jharkhand, ICFAI University

This research aimed to to identify major variables influencing a consumer (Prepaid) to switch or be loyal to a specific telecom service provider and then Group them

into factors , Rank the identified factors in order of priority and Devise a formula to generate a discriminant score that will judge the loyalty of a consumer in the prepaid telecom sector.

Independent T test , Annova and Factor analysis is carried with an objective to reduce a large number of variables into manageable smaller factors for further analysis. Principal Component Analysis technique was adopted with Varimax rotation.

This thesis uncovered and evaluated significant new dimensions with the aim of creating and testing a robust, holistic framework for predicting customer churn. The study was undertaken in the Bihar & Jharkhand state for Vodafone operations. The thesis suggested further study post the entry of JIO in other parts of India.

3. Garg Vishal 2015, International e- journal of E-commerce and Management. “A study of the various factors affecting the Consumer Behavior towards Telecom Service Providers in Haryana”

In this research emphasis is placed on customer loyalty and customer retention is the creation and maintenance of long lasting relationships between various telecom service providers and their customers. A very close relationship with the customers and customer care than it generates a number of benefits including customer retention & customer loyalty. The study explains that The significance of all the factors of service quality (like good network, availability of vas, good knowledge of customer care, good coverage in terms of signals and roaming facility, data speed, availability of better data plans and call drops) is very high as compared to other factors. Trust plays a very important role in the study. The study emphasises on good relation to improve positive word of mouth among the consumers. KMO Barlett's test was used and Chi square and mean values were used in this study.

Research Gap

- Previous study has been done on various countries on buying behavior and this study has been undertaken to find out the buying behavior of the consumers with relation to selection of telecommunication service provider in Mumbai region.
- This study intends to find buying behavior in telecommunication service post JIO entry as the market has seen immense competition since then.

Objective of the study

1. To find out if there is any significant difference in age and buying behavior towards importance given to factors while choosing a provider.
2. To find out if there is any significant difference in prepaid and postpaid users and buying behavior towards importance given to factors while choosing a provider. The
3. To find the factors that influence buying behavior in telecommunication services in Mumbai using exploratory factor analysis

Scope of this research

1. The study will be able to throw light on buying behavior with respect to age group of the respondent

- 2.The study will explain the buying behavior of postpaid users and prepaid users
- 3.The study aims to find factors that are most important while making a choice of a service provider which will in turn help the service providers understand the consumer's preferences while making buying decisions
- 4.The study is related to Mumbai Region

Research Methodology

The study has been conducted on 626 respondents' in Mumbai Region. Convenience sampling has been used in this study. The study covers descriptive and inferential analysis of the data. The tool was self-designed by the researcher.

Classification, tabulation and analysis of Data

The researcher tried to classify the data and find out the mean values of importance given to factors.

The table below gives the mean values of importance given to factors when respondents were asked on a scale of 1 – 5 which factor they would give importance to while choosing a provider

Report

	A.1. Which [Networ k]	A.2. [Pricin g]	A.3. [Call Drop]	A.4. [Intern et Speed]	A.5. [Offer s]	A.6. [Value added service s]	A.7. [SMS servic e]	A.8. [Custom er care Support]	A.9. [Roamin g services]	A.10. [Bran d Image]
Mean	4.85	4.19	4.04	4.53	3.69	3.49	3.43	4.16	4.06	3.75
N	626	626	626	626	626	626	626	626	626	626
Std. Deviation	.498	.802	.953	.914	1.200	1.140	1.116	.945	1.067	1.097

Findings

The respondents give most importance **to network, followed by internet speed, followed by price of the service and customer care support.**

- The service providers must work on the aspects by improving on technical aspects like network, speed by adopting better technology.
- Price aspect by giving offers or lower price to attract new customers to their service and better customer care support, handling grievances to retain their existing customers to the current service.

Hypothesis 1

H1- There is a significant difference between prepaid and postpaid users and importance given to factor X

Where X is Network, Pricing, Call drop, Internet Speed, Offers, Value added services, SMS, Customer services, Roaming services, Brand image

H0-

There is no significant difference between prepaid and postpaid users and

importance given to factor X

Where X is Network, Pricing, Call drop, Internet Speed, Offers, Value added services, SMS, Customer services, Roaming services, Brand image

Independent T Test

Group Statistics					
	8. Scheme of Telecom Service	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
A.1. Which factor was important for you while making a choice with respect to your current service provider ? [Network]	Prepaid	477	4.84	.500	.023
	Post-paid	146	4.86	.498	.041
A.2. [Pricing]	Prepaid	477	4.19	.798	.037
	Post-paid	146	4.17	.825	.068
A.3. [Call Drop]	Prepaid	477	3.97	.950	.043
	Post-paid	146	4.26	.933	.077
A.4. [Internet Speed]	Prepaid	477	4.50	.945	.043
	Post-paid	146	4.64	.803	.066
A.5. [Offers]	Prepaid	477	3.74	1.232	.056
	Post-paid	146	3.55	1.089	.090
A.6. [Value added services]	Prepaid	477	3.49	1.146	.052
	Post-paid	146	3.51	1.134	.094
A.7. [SMS service]	Prepaid	477	3.42	1.115	.051
	Post-paid	146	3.47	1.128	.093
A.8. [Customer care Support]	Prepaid	477	4.11	.974	.045
	Post-paid	146	4.33	.831	.069
A.9. [Roaming services]	Prepaid	477	3.98	1.101	.050
	Post-paid	146	4.32	.909	.075
A.10. [Brand Image]	Prepaid	477	3.71	1.134	.052
	Post-paid	146	3.90	.967	.080

Independent Samples Test									
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper

A.1. Which factor was important for you while making a choice with respect to your current service provider ? [Network]	Equal variances assumed	.181	.670	-.283	621	.777	-.013	.047	-.106	.079
	Equal variances not assumed			-.284	241.406	.777	-.013	.047	-.106	.080
A.2. [Pricing]	Equal variances assumed	.019	.890	.312	621	.755	.024	.076	-.126	.173
	Equal variances not assumed			.307	233.988	.759	.024	.077	-.129	.176
A.3. [Call Drop]	Equal variances assumed	.915	.339	-3.284	621	.001	-.294	.089	-.469	-.118
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.317	244.200	.001	-.294	.089	-.468	-.119
A.4. [Internet Speed]	Equal variances assumed	8.096	.005	-1.700	621	.090	-.147	.086	-.317	.023
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.853	278.810	.065	-.147	.079	-.303	.009
A.5. [Offers]	Equal variances assumed	1.137	.287	1.595	621	.111	.181	.114	-.042	.404
	Equal variances not assumed			1.702	268.279	.090	.181	.106	-.028	.390
A.6. [Value added]	Equal variances assumed	.217	.641	-.151	621	.880	-.016	.108	-.229	.196

services]	Equal variances not assumed			- .151	242.594	.880	-.016	.108	-.228	.196
A.7. [SMS service]	Equal variances assumed	.178	.673	-.484	621	.628	-.051	.106	-.259	.157
	Equal variances not assumed			-.481	238.350	.631	-.051	.106	-.261	.158
A.8. [Customer care Support]	Equal variances assumed	.410	.522	- 2.417	621	.016	-.216	.089	-.391	-.040
	Equal variances not assumed			- 2.629	277.601	.009	-.216	.082	-.377	-.054
A.9. [Roaming services]	Equal variances assumed	3.210	.074	- 3.444	621	.001	-.345	.100	-.542	-.148
	Equal variances not assumed			- 3.809	286.702	.000	-.345	.091	-.523	-.167
A.10. [Brand Image]	Equal variances assumed	4.542	.033	- 1.798	621	.073	-.187	.104	-.390	.017
	Equal variances not assumed			- 1.956	277.889	.051	-.187	.095	-.374	.001

Independent T test was used and Alternate hypothesis is accepted for **internet speed services** as the P value <0.05 and it is understood that **the postpaid users give more importance to internet speed and brand image**
They are likely to remain more loyal, more conscious as they expect better performance as the postpaid users don't switch very often.

Null hypothesis was accepted for all the other variables like Network, Pricing, Speed, Offers, Value added services, SMS, Customer services, offers, roaming services which means that there is no significant difference between prepaid and postpaid users and importance given to the factors while choosing a service provider

Hypothesis 2

H1: There is difference among different age groups of customers in importance

given to factor 'X'.

H₀: There is no difference among different age groups of customers in importance given to factor 'X'.

Where X is,

- A.1. [Network]
- A.2. [Pricing]
- A.3. [Call Drop]
- A.4. [Internet Speed]
- A.5. [Offers]
- A.6. [Value added services]
- A.7. [SMS service]
- A.8. [Customer care Support]
- A.9. [Roaming services]
- A.10. [Brand Image]

Test Applied – One Way Anova

Descriptives

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
A.1. [Network]	Up to 20 Years	197	4.89	.355	.025
	21-30	188	4.83	.530	.039
	31-40	74	4.77	.653	.076
	Above 40	167	4.84	.526	.041
	Total	626	4.85	.498	.020
A.2. [Pricing]	Up to 20 Years	197	4.15	.831	.059
	21-30	188	4.27	.797	.058
	31-40	74	4.22	.815	.095
	Above 40	167	4.13	.765	.059
	Total	626	4.19	.802	.032
A.3. [Call Drop]	Up to 20 Years	197	3.93	.901	.064
	21-30	188	4.28	.935	.068
	31-40	74	3.97	1.006	.117
	Above 40	167	3.93	.967	.075
	Total	626	4.04	.953	.038
A.4. [Internet Speed]	Up to 20 Years	197	4.63	.862	.061
	21-30	188	4.65	.783	.057
	31-40	74	4.41	1.059	.123
	Above 40	167	4.33	1.003	.078
	Total	626	4.53	.914	.037

A.5. [Offers]	Up to 20 Years	197	3.72	1.177	.084
	21-30	188	3.94	1.110	.081
	31-40	74	3.32	1.415	.165
	Above 40	167	3.55	1.170	.091
	Total	626	3.69	1.200	.048
A.6. [Value added services]	Up to 20 Years	197	3.57	1.055	.075
	21-30	188	3.48	1.247	.091
	31-40	74	3.27	1.138	.132
	Above 40	167	3.51	1.108	.086
	Total	626	3.49	1.140	.046
A.7. [SMS service]	Up to 20 Years	197	3.56	1.041	.074
	21-30	188	3.37	1.183	.086
	31-40	74	3.22	1.138	.132
	Above 40	167	3.46	1.102	.085
	Total	626	3.43	1.116	.045
A.8. [Customer care Support]	Up to 20 Years	197	4.23	.847	.060
	21-30	188	4.34	.878	.064
	31-40	74	4.00	1.123	.131
	Above 40	167	3.96	.999	.077
	Total	626	4.16	.945	.038
A.9. [Roaming services]	Up to 20 Years	197	4.13	.954	.068
	21-30	188	4.09	1.063	.078
	31-40	74	3.95	1.237	.144
	Above 40	167	3.98	1.117	.086
	Total	626	4.06	1.067	.043
A.10. [Brand Image]	Up to 20 Years	197	3.95	.957	.068
	21-30	188	3.88	1.170	.085
	31-40	74	3.46	1.137	.132
	Above 40	167	3.51	1.086	.084
	Total	626	3.75	1.097	.044

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
A.1. [Network]	Between Groups	.917	3	.306	1.231	.297
	Within Groups	154.361	622	.248		
	Total	155.278	625			
A.2. [Pricing]	Between Groups	1.981	3	.660	1.028	.380
	Within Groups	399.776	622	.643		

	Total	401.757	625			
A.3. [Call Drop]	Between Groups	15.374	3	5.125	5.778	.001
	Within Groups	551.706	622	.887		
	Total	567.080	625			
A.4. [Internet Speed]	Between Groups	12.925	3	4.308	5.265	.001
	Within Groups	508.936	622	.818		
	Total	521.861	625			
A.5. [Offers]	Between Groups	25.189	3	8.396	5.965	.001
	Within Groups	875.535	622	1.408		
	Total	900.724	625			
A.6. [Value added services]	Between Groups	5.008	3	1.669	1.286	.278
	Within Groups	807.466	622	1.298		
	Total	812.474	625			
A.7. [SMS service]	Between Groups	7.523	3	2.508	2.025	.109
	Within Groups	770.292	622	1.238		
	Total	777.815	625			
A.8. [Customer care Support]	Between Groups	15.335	3	5.112	5.858	.001
	Within Groups	542.718	622	.873		
	Total	558.053	625			
A.9. [Roaming services]	Between Groups	3.169	3	1.056	.927	.427
	Within Groups	708.761	622	1.139		
	Total	711.930	625			
A.10. [Brand Image]	Between Groups	26.828	3	8.943	7.664	.000
	Within Groups	725.793	622	1.167		
	Total	752.621	625			

Interpretation:

From the above table we can observe that p value is significant for factors call drop, Internet speed, Offers, customer care support and brand image. The difference is significant between different age groups in call drop, Internet speed, Offers, customer care support and brand image.

In all these aspects we can observe that **younger age groups give more importance than older age groups**

Factor analysis applied on the variables to find the relevant factors that are important while choosing a provider. Exploratory factor analysis was applied on the data to find the extract factors using Varimax rotation.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.820
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1740.806
	df	45
	Sig.	.000

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy is 0.820 which signifies that the sampling

adequacy is good.

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.756	37.564	37.564	3.756	37.564	37.564	2.563	25.631	25.631
2	1.251	12.512	50.076	1.251	12.512	50.076	2.196	21.960	47.591
3	1.132	11.317	61.393	1.132	11.317	61.393	1.380	13.802	61.393
4	.871	8.714	70.108						
5	.637	6.367	76.475						
6	.594	5.944	82.419						
7	.547	5.468	87.887						
8	.481	4.807	92.694						
9	.411	4.110	96.804						
10	.320	3.196	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component		
	1	2	3
A.1. Which factor was important for you while making a choice with respect to your current service provider ? [Network]	.098	.106	.848
A.2. [Pricing]	.131	.491	.302
A.3. [Call Drop]	.257	.449	.444
A.4. [Internet Speed]	-.012	.751	.315
A.5. [Offers]	.272	.842	-.103
A.6. [Value added services]	.611	.563	-.184
A.7. [SMS service]	.712	.290	-.060
A.8. [Customer care Support]	.662	.169	.359
A.9. [Roaming services]	.766	-.102	.302
A.10. [Brand Image]	.700	.175	.073

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

The exploratory factor analysis was run on SPSS and three factors were extracted which have Eigen value more than 1 and explain 61.23 percent of the variance. Varimax rotation as applied and the factors extracted can be explained as follows-

1. **Network**
2. **Value for money**
3. **Service aspects and Perception**

Hence it can be said that any service companies needs to ensure that these three factors are given importance by the customers by choosing a provider.

Most important factor being Network which has an Eigen value of 3.756, followed by Customer Value with eigen value of 1.251 and service with eigen value of 1.132

Limitations of the study

- The study is with respect to Mumbai region only
- The study was limited to find the importance given to factors while choosing a service provider.
- Utmost care has been taken to avoid biased responses.

Scope for further study

Further study could be done in any part of the country as this study is done with respect to Mumbai region.

The study found out significant difference between marital status and importance given to factors however further study could be done on other demographic factors as well.

Also as the study was conducted during the Covid lockdown, the preferences were very strongly for Network and speed with many people working from home. however, post lockdown preferences may change and studies could be done post lockdown as well.

Conclusion and managerial implications

The younger users give more importance to factors such as call drop, Internet speed, Offers, customer care support and brand image as younger consumers are either students or newly employed and are more conscious of the above services.

Hence the service provider can create schemes for younger students with respect to speed and offers.

The service provider can also tie up with Institutions for internet facilities for further branding of their service.

As the younger population gives more importance to factors such a brand image, more advertising strategies and positioning should be done to attract the youth.

In addition , the telecommunication sector which is undergoing a very turbulent competitive time after the entry of Reliance Jio, the other service providers need to take care that their aspects of Network, services are very important along with that its more important that the customers gain value. Value is the benefit that a consumers get – the price that a consumer pays for the service.

Its now important that the benefits exceed the price unlike the earlier times where certain providers enjoyed the privilege of charging a high price. Today after the JIO

strategies, expectations have increased highly and to survive and acquire more customers the companies will have to deliver beyond expectations at all levels as it's the era of survival of the fittest today in this sector.

The factor analysis which reduces factors that suggested that out of 10 factors 3 factors were extracted using the Varimax rotation which pointed towards Network, Customer Value and Service aspects and image as the main factors. The KMO Barlette tests measure of sample adequacy is 0.820 which suggests that the sample is adequate and the P -Value is 0.000 which signified that the model was working. The companies need to concentrate heavily on network which is the prior requirement of all the respondents. The consumers are also looking out for added value in this age of competition as JIO has entered the market and has been providing free data and many other benefits.

Apart from that serviceability is what customers look at at any point hence aspects such as customer care, additional services, perception of the company or what people think about the company in terms of service carries a lot of importance.

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