A STUDY ON PERCEPTION OF CONSUMER TOWARDS MOBILE PHONE SERVICES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCES TO CHENNAI CITY

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Abstract
Mobile phone services are becoming more and more significant throughout the world due to technological changes. In today's life mobile phone companies are offering new services to customers daily. The success of the mobile phone service providers depends upon satisfaction level of consumers. So it has become more important for the mobile phone companies to meet the current market conditions and expectations of the customers. Customers perceive services in terms of the quality of the service and how satisfied they are overall with their experiences. Therefore, the perception is to be studied so that their preferences may be known and their desires may be fulfilled. Keeping this fact in mind, the present study has been made to analyse the perception of customers towards mobile phone services. Five major mobile phone service providers Airtel, BSNL, Tata, Vodafone, and Idea have been chosen for the study. The study reveals the high satisfaction level of customers towards mobile phone services.

Keywords: Perception, Service providers, Satisfaction, Customers, Mobile Phone Services.

Introduction
It has been said that the mobile phone have become an integral part of human everyday life. In particular, unlike other technologies, mobile phones are being used without any training in every place and every situation, even on move. This makes it essential that mobile phone interface be built to be intuitive and usable to users. This has been seen as an effective tool in growing and developing economies. This sector has shown impressive growth during the past decade. The rapid growth can be attributed to the various pro-active and positive policy measure taken by the government as well as the dynamic and entrepreneurial spirit of the various telecom service providers both in private and public sector.

Perception is the cognitive process which involves the organism selecting, organizing and interpreting the stimulus. Thus perception is the process of selecting, organizing and interpreting or attaching meaning to the events happening in the environment. According to Robbins, "Perception may be defined as a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to the environment."

Customer perception is the process to assess how customers perceive services, how they assess, whether they have experienced quality service and whether they are satisfied or not. Customer perception is directly related to customer expectation. Due to the dynamic nature of expectation perception of any person may also shift over time, person, place or culture. Customers perceive services in terms of the quality of the service and how satisfied they are overall with their experiences. For understanding customer perception three main features of customer perception should be understood:
Intellectual process: Customer perception is an intellectual process through which a person selects the data from the environment, organizes it and obtains meaning from it.
1. Cognitive and psychological process: Perception is the basic cognitive and psychological process. The manner in which a person perceives the environment affects his behavior. Thus perception of surrounding of a customer also effects customer's actions, emotions, thoughts or feelings.
2. Intellectual & Psychological process: Perception is a subjective approach which differs from person and time to time and according to changing situations.

Mobile Phone Company's Strategies for influencing customer perception are,
1. Measure and manage customer satisfaction and service quality
2. Aim for customer quality and satisfaction in every service encounter
3. Plan for effective recovery
4. Facilitate adaptability and flexibility
5. Encourage Spontaneity

Literature
Azila Mohd (2011), in their research "The influence of perceived privacy on customer loyalty in mobile phone services: An Empirical Research in Jordan "investigated the issue of customer loyalty within the context of mobile phone service subscribers who are directly experience using the services. The analysis shows that privacy was positively significant towards customer loyalty. Base on the results, it can be concluded that the mobile service provider has to ensure their services fully satisfied their customer privacy.

Petzer D. J. and Meyer C. F. De (2011), in their research paper "The perceived service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intent towards cell phone network service providers: A generational perspective" aimed to determine different generations" perceived service quality of services and satisfaction levels with services provided by cell phone network service providers, as well as their behavioural intentions towards these providers. Significant correlation was found between the generations" perceived level of service quality they experience, their perceived level of satisfaction with, and their behavioural intent towards providers.

Leisen B, Vance C,(2001), in their research paper "Customer satisfaction, Globalisation, International Trade, Service Quality, Strategy, Telecommunication Industry" examined the strategic implications of service quality dimensions in relation to customer satisfaction in a cross-cultural study of telecommunication service provision in Germany and the USA. Significant differences were found between the two countries in terms of the relative importance of particular service dimensions.

Dixit Sanjay, Shukla Harish et. al.(2008), in their study "A Study to Evaluate Mobile Phone Dependence Among Students of a Medical College and Associated Hospital of Central India" tried to find out the prevalence of monophobia in the Indian scenario considering the tremendous increase in the number of mobile phone users in the past decade. The result of the study shows that this disorder is equally prevalent among the study group irrespective of gender. No statistically significant association was observed in relation to gender, place of stay and academic sessions with monophobia score.

Karthik ,(2009), in his research," Customer Satisfaction on Mobile Service Provider Networks" aimed at understanding the customer satisfaction in mobile service providers to find out the customer satisfaction level in mobile service provider players in the market and to know the customer perception towards other mobile service providers, this survey was done in twin cities. From the analysis it was found that the choice of mobile handset and services cannot be separated if the customers are classified in to eight group each with some special requirement service wise and handset"s attribute wise.

Catoiu Iacob, Gardan Daniel Adrian, (2010), conducted a research on the topic, "Romanian Consumer Perception towards Mobile Marketing Campaigns". The qualitative research was regarding future trends of mobile marketing and mobile media. According to findings the perception of the Romanian consumers towards specific mobile marketing techniques is influenced primarily by perceptions towards mobile services in general, and there are still no brand images being associated with this new advertising channel. Yet there is consumers' willingness to use new communication channels if the messages are highly personalized and with a great extent of addressability depending on user characteristics.

Haque Ahasanul, (2011), in their study "Choice Criteria for Mobile Telecom Operator: Empirical Investigation among Malaysian Customers " investigated the choice criteria for a mobile phone operator in the Malaysian Mobile Telecom market by the customers. The outcome of this research shows a comprehensively integrated framework in which to understand the vibrant relationships among several dimensions of service quality, price, and brand image to have a handful idea on the consumers" perceptions.

Rahman Dr.Muhammad Sabbir,(2012), in his study "Service quality, corporate image and customer"s satisfaction towards customers perception: An exploratory study on telecom customers in Bangladesh" aimed at the determinants that are significantly influencing telecom customer"s perception in Bangladesh. The results of the statistical analysis reflected that most of the telecom customers are highly concerned about service quality followed by corporate image.

Objective of the Study
The main objectives of the study are:
1. To identify the different perception and expectation of customers towards mobile phone services.
2. To inform and guide manufacturers about the quality of services a consumer wants and how he can be satisfied.
3. To know what helps them to set priorities for the usage of mobile phone services.

Methodology
The primary data for the study has been collected from 121 respondents on the basis of 32-item Standardized Questionnaire. Generally, 5- point Likert Scale was used but some general questions may also be included. Besides, personal interview with the respondents were held to validate the information. Studies undertaken in the past were also be consulted by the researcher. Simple statistical tools & techniques were used to analyses the responses will collect from all types of questionnaires in order to draw the inferences. The elementary statistical tools like simple arithmetic mean and percentages were applied in carrying out the analyses. The data has been analysed using SPSS statistical package version 20.

Consumers of cellular phones are large one spread ever length and breadth of the country so we are constrained to limit our study to only five cellular service providers i.e., Airtel, BSNL, Tata, Vodafone, Idea. A sample of 121 respondents on random basis includes consumers from different service providers. For the present study respondents were drawn from the various service providers located at Chennai in Tamil Nadu State.

Limitation of the Study
The limitations related to the present research work are:
1. Due to the limited resources, time and money, the universe of the study has been restricted to the Chennai district in Tamil Nadu.
2. Only 5 mobile phone companies have been covered- Airtel, BSNL, Tata, Vodafone, Idea.

Analysis and Data Interpretation
The data for the present study was collected from121 respondents were selected from the total population of consumers of top five cellular service provider companies through standardized questionnaire. The item-wise mean scores of the total sample are presented in Table-1.Since the questionnaire used a five- point scale, average scores of 3 and around indicate a moderate tendency on that dimension existed in all the companies. Scores around 4 indicate a fairly good degree of satisfaction among the consumers. In order to make interpretations easy, the mean scores were converted into percentage scores using the formula:**Percentage Score= (Mean Score-1) x 25**

This was done assuming that a score of 1 represents 0 per cent, a score of 2 represents 25 per cent, a score of 3 represents 50 per cent, score of 4 represents 75 per cent and a score of 5 represents 100 per cent. Thus, percentage scores indicate the degree to which the particular dimension exists in that company of the ideal 100.Further, it is explained that mean score of 1 indicates „extremely low" satisfaction and 5 indicates „extraordinarily high" satisfaction on that dimension. Scores around 3 indicates „average", whereas mean score of 4 indicates „high degree" and 2 indicates „low degree" satisfaction on that dimension.

The mean scores for each item could theoretically range from1.0 to 5.0 where 1.0 indicates extremely low degree of satisfaction and 5.0 indicates extraordinarily high degree of satisfaction on that dimension. Scores around 3 indicate an „Average" degree of satisfaction on that dimension giving substantial scope for improvement. Scores around 2 indicate a low degree of satisfaction on that dimension. Scores around 4 indicate a high degree of satisfaction where most of the consumers have positive attitudes to the services provided by their service provider. Mean scores around 4 are indicative of a satisfaction level of a desirable level. The same interpretation could be offered to the overall mean score across all items (computed by adding mean scores on all 32 items for that company and dividing by 38). Similar interpretations could be offered for percentage scores. A mean score of 1 corresponds to 0 per cent, 2 corresponds to 25 per cent, 3 corresponds to 50 per cent, 4 corresponds to 75 per cent and 5 corresponds to100. It is certainly desirable for service providers to have percentage scores above 50 on each item as well as overall. Companies having percentage scores above 60 are indicative of reasonably good service providers. An overview of the item-wise mean and percentage for all the 32 items as classified in three parts mentioned above are given in the Table-1. The description of the items is given in Annexure-1. A scrutiny of the mean scores explains that onvarious items (18 items) the mean score was more than or equal to 3.36 which indicate that good services are provided to the consumers by these companies. In all 16 items showed a mean score > 3.36 which have helped in creating customer satisfaction in the five main companies (overall mean score > 3.36).

(a) High Mean Value Items (Mean> 3.96): A close scrutiny of the table shows that updating of new pricing scheme (item no.13) was assigned highest weightage in with mean score of 4.03, followed by item no. 8 and 9 i.e. „Free call service provided to same operator" and „Facility of long duration recharge" (Mean=3.98), it indicates that consumers are attracted most by the new pricing schemes launched by the service providers if timely updated. Long duration recharge facility also gives them relax in their busy schedule. The consumers also enjoy the free call facility using the same service operator. In all, the consumer is highly affected by the money spent by him for availing services.

(b) Mean Value >3.76 but 3.96: In the study, a mean score of 3.95 was assigned to item no. 7 „Different Value added schemes" which means the consumers not only buy the talk time but they want some other extra facilities too for consideration of money. Further, item no. 24 (Mean=3.94) „Advice of family/ friends while selecting a service", item no. 2 (Mean=3.93) „Prompt response of queries", item no.10 (Mean=3.86) „Cheap roaming facility." Similarly, a mean score of 3.78 was allotted to item no. 5 „Selection of lowest price scheme". Consumers of different services are very rational and they compare their services with the money spent for them. They want comparatively greater utility of their money and to do this they take advice of their family and relatives.

(c) Mean Value >3.56 but 3.76: In the table, a mean score of 3.69 was obtained by item no.25„Use of own knowledge while selecting schemes"; item no.23 (Mean=3.6) „Advice of service provider for selection of scheme" indicate that the consumer consults his service provider for selection of a scheme according to his requirements. After evaluating the alternatives provided by the service provider he makes his own decision. Similarly item no 1(Mean=3.68) „Explanation of new features added", item no. 14(Mean= 3.67) „Best price match" and item no 11(Mean=3.61) „Proper billing system" shows that consumers want to be analytical in nature in terms of services and their explanation.

(d) Mean Value >3.36 but   3.56: Variables contributing higher than overall mean value of 3.36 including item no.4 (Mean=3.53) „Selection of scheme after evaluating alternatives‟ shows that the customer is a rational buyer, item no. 28 and 29 (Mean=3.44 and 3.47 respectively) „Satisfaction with songs and radio facility respectively‟ indicates the customers satisfaction with these two particular services and item no.16 (Mean=3.42) „The impact of ambassador image while selecting services‟ tells the service providers that the selection of Brand Ambassador should be a careful process. Item no.

3&12 (Mean=3.41) „Satisfactory billing system of post-paid services‟ and „attention of service provider towards complaints of consumers represents the customers satisfaction with post-paid services as well as their grievance redressed. However, variables contributing less than or equal to overall mean value of 3.36 including item no.26&27 (Mean=3.36) „satisfaction with Customer care facility and Internet facility respectively‟.

Item no. 21,18,20,19 and 31having mean values 2.92, 2.74, 2.71, 2.62 and1.83 respectively are all related to problems faced by customers while using services like „Cross talk‟ , „Difficulty in connection while in roaming‟, „Problem of message sent but not delivered‟ , „Problem of busy network‟ and „Range of mobile network‟ respectively. The customer do not seem to be loyal to a particular service provider in Item no. 32 (Mean=2.04) „Loyalty of customers‟.

Table 1: Item-wise Mean, SD & Percentage of the Total Sample

Items	Means	Standard Deviation	Percent
1	3.68	0.87	66.94
2	3.93	0.68	73.35
3	3.41	1.06	60.13
4	3.53	0.8	63.22
5	3.78	1.09	69.42
6	2.81	1.12	45.25
7	3.95	0.86	73.76
8	3.98	1.11	74.38
9	3.98	0.91	74.59
10	3.86	1.07	71.49
11	3.61	1.08	65.29
12	3.41	0.97	60.13
13	4.03	0.85	75.83
14	3.67	0.98	66.74
15	3.26	1.14	56.41
16	3.42	1.26	60.54
17	3.33	1.21	58.27
18	2.74	1.12	43.39
19	2.62	1.32	40.5
20	2.71	1.14	42.77
21	2.92	1.11	47.94
22	2.76	1	44.01
23	3.6	0.84	64.88
24	3.94	0.99	73.55
25	3.69	0.86	67.36
26	3.36	0.9	58.89
27	3.36	0.96	59.09
28	3.44	0.97	60.95
29	3.47	1.05	61.78
30	3.26	1.13	56.61
31	1.83	0.99	20.66
32	2.04	0.95	26.03
TOTAL	**107.38**	**32.39**	**1884.15**
AVERAGE	**3.36**	**1.01**	**58.88**

Conclusion and Suggestions
The following conclusions can be drawn from the above study:
- The consumers are highly satisfied with the long duration recharge facility which saves their valuable time Item no.9.

- The free call facility given to the customers having same mobile service connection is the main attraction for them which facilitates them long talk having minimum cost (Item no.8).
- Price is a very considerable factor for selecting any service like cheap roaming facility, lowest price scheme, different value added schemes and different features added with existing price level. So the price should be fixed very carefully.
- The customer is a rational buyer who does not select any service randomly but the selection is done with the advice of friends and family after evaluating all alternatives.
- The extra facilities provided like songs, radio and internet are only for their comfort but they do not form any base for selecting a particular service provider.
- The service provider should concentrate on the problems which are to be faced by the consumers like busy network, range of mobile connectivity, cross talk, message sent but not delivered etc. so that the customer's loyalty may be maintained.
- The service provider should take regular feedback from the consumers to have their suggestions   and   try to implement them.

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