



Customer Satisfaction of Mobile Users: An Empirical Study

KEYWORDS

Customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, call cost, customer care services

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ABSTRACT *The breathtaking growth of the telecom companies in India over the last twenty years has created history. Customer satisfaction must be continuously appraised, especially after customers have been using the service for a period. These factors should be taken into consideration in order to formulate strategies for customer satisfaction, which directly leads to high customer loyalty for mobile service providers or vice versa. A firm can reap many benefits from high customer satisfaction level: they get a higher market share and become capable of keeping and maintaining customers. Keeping this in mind, the study has been carried out in Tier-II cities of Karnataka state to find out how customers are satisfied with the mobile service providers, especially regarding network, call cost, and customer care services.*

Introduction

The booming revolution in the Information Technology sector has changed India's telecom market significantly. India has shown tremendous growth in the past few years in terms of mobile services (Matti Leppaniemi and Heikki Karjaluoto, 2008). Mobile phones are a vast improvement over the telecommunications technology of the past, and have now become an important asset in today's busy life. Mobile phones have become a necessity in today's competitive environment to meet the challenges of the emerging global economy.

The breathtaking growth of the telecom companies in India over the last twenty years has created history. The economic resurgence of the early 1990s brought around a paradigm shift in the overall business scenario in India. With the arrival of private telecommunication companies in India, the industry observed the introduction of mobile phones in the Indian market, which became extremely popular amongst the Indian masses. Customer satisfaction is a personal feeling of either pleasure or disappointment resulting from the evaluation of services provided by an organization to an individual in relation to his/her expectations (Heejin Lin, Richard Widdows, and Jungkun Park, 2006). Service providers frequently place high priority on customer satisfaction, because it is seen as a prerequisite to customer retention. As a positive outcome of marketing activities, high customer satisfaction leads to repeat visitation to stores, repeat product purchases, and word-of-mouth promotion to friends, while low customer satisfaction has been associated with complaining behaviour (Hyung Seok Lee, 2010).

A satisfied customer often stays loyal longer, and is likely to patronize the firm in the future (Purva Kansal, 2013). Customer satisfaction can be conceptualized as either transaction-specific satisfaction or cumulative satisfaction. Transaction-specific satisfaction is a customer's evaluation of his or her experience and reactions to a specific company encounter. Cumulative satisfaction refers to the customers' overall evaluation of patronage experience from inception to date.

Customer satisfaction must be continuously appraised, especially after customers have been using the service for a period. Different factors have different influences on customers. These factors should be taken into consideration in order to formulate strategies for customer satisfaction, which directly leads to high customer loyalty for mobile service providers or vice versa. A firm can reap many benefits from high customer satisfaction level: they get a higher market share and become capable of keeping and maintaining customers.

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) indicates how much the customers are satisfied and how well their expectations are met. This construct evaluates an overall satisfaction level of the customers, fulfillment of their expectations, and the company's performance versus the ideal provider. Increasing customer satisfaction has been known to directly influence the companies' market share, which leads to improved profits, positive recommendation, and lower marketing expenditures, greatly affecting the corporate image and survival. Customer satisfaction, as a process, is defined as an evaluation between what was received and what was expected, emphasizing the perceptual, evaluative, and psychological processes that contribute to customer satisfaction (Kumiko Aoki and Edward J. Downes, 2003). However, it is noted that the progression of satisfaction concentrates on the antecedents to satisfaction rather than satisfaction itself. Customer satisfaction for some organizations is the key to success; the reason being to check the ability of their service to satisfy as many customers as they can, so that they can be the market leaders in their respective fields. Many organizations followed the strategy of customer satisfaction and became living legends, e.g. AT&T, Vodafone, Orange, Nokia, Sony, etc. All companies mentioned here are innovators and market leaders in any one or two of their products and services. Based on the above discussion, customer satisfaction can be defined as a customer's overall experience to an evaluation of the service.

Keeping this in mind, the study has been carried out in Tier-II cities of Karnataka state to find out how customers

are satisfied with the mobile service providers, especially regarding network, call cost, and customer care services.

Objectives

1. To study the level of customer satisfaction regarding mobile services.
2. To analyze the call cost and customer care of the mobile users.
3. To generate suggestions to improve the present mobile service market.

Research Methodology

Study Area

This study has been carried out in the Tier-II cities of Hubli-Dharwad, Mysore, Mangalore, and Belgaum of Karnataka state, India.

Sample size and Technique

The disproportionate stratified random sampling techniques were used and 680 samples of mobile users. The base for selection of the sample size is proportionate to the total subscriber 2012 of Karnataka (source: TRAI). It comes to 100 samples for each city, but for this study was considered more than the required sample. The distribution of respondents in each Tier-II cities was as follows: Hubli-Dharwad – 200, Mysore – 180, Mangalore – 150, and Belgaum-150. The set parameters used in selecting the respondents were, namely, Tier-II cities, income less than Rs.20,000/- per annum, daily wage earners, construction workers, and people who have migrated from the village to the city.

Methods of Data Collection

The primary data for the study was collected directly from the target respondents through a structured questionnaire and personal interviews. The 5- point Likert scale introduced in the questionnaire pointed to highly satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied, and highly dissatisfied regarding customer satisfaction to mobile service network, call cost, and customer care services. The mobile service providers in Karnataka state are BSNL, Idea, Airtel, Tata Docomo, Vodafone Reliance, and MTS. The secondary data for the study was collected from different sources such as technical and trade journals, articles, newspapers, magazines, internet, periodicals, books, reports, and publications of associations related to mobile phone service providers.

Discussions and results:

Customer satisfaction towards mobile service Network

Customer satisfaction is focused on the services as provided to and perceived by the customers; if there is high similarity between the perceived and provided services, then the customer satisfaction level is very high (Joseph Omotayo Oyeniji and Joachim Abolaji Abiodun , 2010).

Table 1: Customer satisfaction towards mobile service Network

Satisfaction Level	Hubli-Dharwad	Mysore	Mangalore	Belgaum	Total
Highly satisfied	33(16.5)	15(8.3)	10(6.7)	21(13.9)	59(8.6)
Satisfied	106(52.5)	101(56.1)	96(64.0)	121(77.3)	324(47.7)
Neutral	15(7.5)	22(12.2)	13(8.7)	16(10.0)	66(9.7)
Dissatisfied	12(6.0)	8(4.4)	26(17.3)	32(20.0)	78(11.3)
Highly dissatisfied	34(17.0)	25(13.9)	19(12.6)	19(12.0)	77(11.2)
Total	200(29.4)	180(26.4)	150(22.0)	150(22.0)	680(100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 depicts that 32.94% of the respondents were satisfied and 26.18% of the respondents were dissatisfied. Nearly 20% of the respondents were highly dissatisfied with the mobile service networks.

Customer satisfaction towards call cost

The increase in technology has required mobile operators to provide new features to retain their existing customers. The service providers should bring the relationship between service quality and perceived value into focus. They should be curious about customer satisfaction (Hsaiao-Hui Wang, Eunice: Chen, Chao –Yu, 2011).

Table 2: Customer satisfactions towards call cost

Satisfaction Level	Hubli-Dharwad	Mysore	Mangalore	Belgaum	Total
Highly satisfied	55(27.5)	21(11.7)	09(6.0)	05(3.3)	89(13.0)
Satisfied	46(23.0)	102(56.7)	74(49.3)	66(43.7)	288(42.3)
Neutral	22(11.0)	36(19.9)	13(8.7)	19(12.7)	90(13.2)
Dissatisfied	67(33.5)	09(5.0)	20(13.3)	52(34.0)	148(21.7)
Highly dissatisfied	10(5.0)	12(6.7)	35(23.3)	09(5.9)	66(9.6)
Total	200(29.4)	180(26.4)	150(22.0)	150(22.0)	680(100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 shows that 42.35% of the respondents were satisfied with the call cost. About 21.76% and 13.24% of the respondents were dissatisfied and neutral, respectively. Also 13.09% and 9.56% of the respondents were highly satisfied and highly dissatisfied, respectively.

Customer satisfaction towards customer care

In today's competitive mobile service industry, customers have many options available. Factors that enable a telecommunication company to attract and retain a customer should be studied seriously (Gloria K.Q. Agyapong, 2011). Mobile service providers should start searching for effective and creative ways to attract, retain or foster a stronger relationship with their customers.

Table 3: Customer satisfactions towards customer care

Satisfaction Level	Hubli-Dharwad	Mysore	Mangalore	Belgaum	Total
Highly satisfied	22(11.0)	10(5.6)	06(4.0)	16(10.7)	54(7.9)
Satisfied	15(7.5)	26(14.4)	18(11.9)	40(26.7)	99(14.5)
Neutral	56(28.0)	28(15.6)	30(19.9)	20(13.3)	134(19.7)
Dissatisfied	75(37.5)	96(53.3)	63(41.9)	66(43.7)	300(44.1)
Highly dissatisfied	29(14.5)	20(11.1)	33(21.9)	08(5.3)	90(13.2)
Total	200(29.4)	180(26.4)	150(22.0)	150(22.0)	680(100.0)

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 indicates that 44.56% of the respondents were dissatisfied. Around 19.71% and 14.56% of the respondents remained neutral and satisfied, respectively. Remaining 7.94% and 13.24% of the respondents were highly satisfied and highly dissatisfied, respectively.

Findings

- Majority, i.e., 32.94% of the respondents were satisfied with the mobile service network.
- It is evident that 42.35% of the respondents were satis-

fied with the call cost.

- From the analysis, 44.56% of the respondents were dissatisfied with customer care.
- The factors, which influence customer satisfaction are service quality, customer care services, network call cost, mobile internet, Value Added services offers, and M-Commerce applications.

From the analysis, it is evident that majority of the respondents were satisfied with the mobile service providers' network and call cost.

Suggestions

From the study, these suggestions have been structured.

- Service providers must provide market- based and customer- based services.
- The call cost and tariffs should be reduced and the same intimated to the customers.
- Mobile service providers should provide awareness on offers and legal information to the users.

Conclusion

Customer satisfaction largely affects customer loyalty to a company. When a customer is pleased and satisfied by the services offered to him, he remains a customer and uses even more services of the same company (A. Shabinullah Khan and A. Abbas Manthiri, 2011). The firms must try their best to achieve higher customer satisfaction, and to improve their service quality. The findings of this study will prove beneficial for mobile phone designers, researchers, and most important to the mobile phone users themselves.

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