



BRAND PREFERENCES OF BROADBAND SERVICES A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO COLLEGE TEACHING FACULTIES IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT

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KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

Introduction globally, broadband and mobile has revolutionized opportunities for all. It has started facilitating the health, education, and financial services companies including banks in offering value-added services to its existing customers and has begun to reach a large unbanked population to provide basic financial services. India being the large mobile penetration country and being the third largest Internet user in the world, its mobile value-added services is expected to reach US\$9.5billion in 2015, from US\$4.9billion in 2012.

Internet usage is rapidly growing in urban areas like cosmopolitan cities, semi-urban areas in India. Implementation of I-enabled services by Governmental agencies, educational institutions and commercial sector force users of these services to adopt superior internet access to facilities like: broadband, WiMax in the place of traditional dial-up access.

Over the last few years, the number of broadband subscribers in India has shown a steady growth of over 6.8 million. The proportion of broadband subscribers amongst a base of internet subscribers has grown from a mere 3 per cent in March 2005 to over 40 per cent in September 2008. The number of broadband subscribers reached 5.5crore at the end of December, 2013. However, the growth rate is still too low to enable India to meet the broadband target of 2crore by 2010 set by Government of India in its Broadband Policy 2004. Wireless broadband service, including mobile internet, dominated broadband numbers with over 4crore connections.

Fixed line broadband user base stood at 1.45 crore. On the other hand, till 2004, the broadband market in India is dominated by two telecom public sector companies, viz. BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited) and MTNL (Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited). Their market shares are witnessing sharp decline due to entry of many private players since the beginning of the year 2005, like: Reliance, Tata Teleservices, etc.

India is also witnessing keen price war among the broadband service providers and thereby it has leads to increase in broadband penetration in recent years. Major beneficiaries of broadband internet services are health, education, transport and banking sectors.

In India, BSNL a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) is the dominant player in broadband segment of telecommunication. Broadband user adoption is affected by attitudinal constructs (relative advantage, utilitarian outcomes, hedonic outcomes, social outcomes and service quality), which represent consumers' favourable or unfavourable evaluations of the behaviour during the adoption of broadband services and control constructs (like: knowledge, self-efficacy, perceived ease of use, perceived ease of subscribing broadband, cost, declining cost, facilitating conditions resources and perceived lack of needs), which represent the perceived control over the personal or external factors that may facilitate or constrain the behavioral performance of consumers.

With the fast growing broadband market and rising market competition, broadband service operators are facing serious challenges in business sustainability i.e., in a fast-changing multi-technology and network environment in earning and retaining customers.

Thus, it is essential that broadband internet service operators need to respond promptly to their consumers' need and demand, especially

with every changing technology. This is strategically important for the service providers to retain their consumers satisfied and also to reduce their operational expenditure. As a result, Broadband operators will have opportunity of offering advanced service to improve customer satisfaction both in urban and rural regions of India.

When it comes to brand choice, it is affected by social as well as utility needs and other factors. As a consequence of rising importance of consumer's perception in broadband business and the recent development of information and technology business the researcher strongly believes that there is a scope for detailed research that can focus on analyzing consumers' perception towards their broadband service providers in India. This empirical research work is purely focused on the broadband service users i.e., consumers at Coimbatore District in Tamilnadu.

Prelude

The role of high-speed broadband in transforming the livelihoods of millions can hardly be over-emphasized. Various countries across the world have recognized this potential and have been actively investing in broadband infrastructure as part of the National Agenda. India's telecom sector has created history with its phenomenal growth story and there is no reason why broadband growth would not follow a similar trajectory. The potential of connecting the relatively under-connected rural areas is especially high. The Government of India has taken a commendable step by commissioning the National Optic Fiber Network with an investment of Rs.21,000 crore. The National Optical Fiber Network (NOFN) will connect 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats with a maximum speed of 100 Mbps. Such high-speed Internet access can not only extend connection to the bottom of the pyramid, but also generate skills and employment, thereby delivering empowerment to the rural population. The transformation possibilities are endless. It is now imperative to deliberate on how to create compelling services using this national asset – services that will touch the lives of nearly 90crore rural Indians and empower them socially and financially.

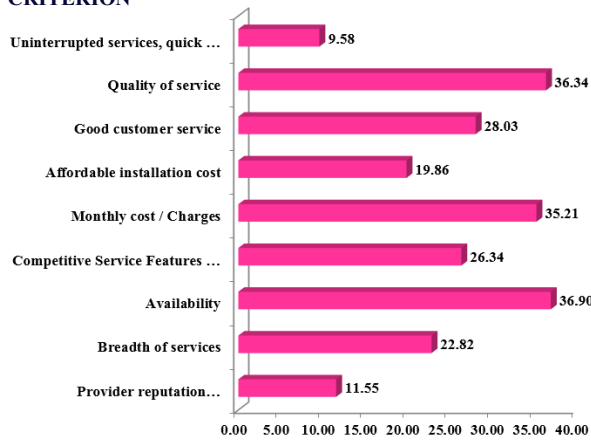
Growth of Telecom Industry in India

Over the past decade, Indian telecom industry has witnessed many positive developments. India has attained the second largest subscriber network after China with the total number of subscribers scaling up to about 900 million and claiming an urban teledensity in excess of 140 and rural tele-density of 40. With an estimated base of 67 million smart phone users in 2013, India also ranks fifth amongst the top countries in this category.

With an increasing smart phone penetration in the country, subscribers accessing internet through mobile devices stand at 176.50 million. India has achieved a lot in telecom in terms of accessibility and connectivity throughout the country. However, lack of quality, healthcare and education and non availability of banking to masses have been major hurdles in inclusive socio-economic growth of the country.

Since mid-2000, online and telephone services have become a mainstay of many sectors and most of them have incorporated these into their core services; thus reducing the cost of physical infrastructure, increasing reach and transforming the delivery of services. Advanced contemporary offerings like tele-presence, e-learning, telemedicine and direct banking are changing the business paradigms across industries and helping to bring down the carbon footprint.

HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHERS' OPINION ON THE BROADBAND SERVICE PROVIDER SELECTION CRITERION



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Broadband Service Provider	TATA			Vodafone			MTS			Tikona		
	Sum	Mean	Rank	Sum	Mean	Rank	Sum	Mean	Rank	Sum	Mean	Rank
Provider reputation / brand reputation	0	0.00	-	6	0.10	7	0	0.00	-	42	3.82	2
Breadth of services	65	1.27	5	54	0.89	4	0	0.00	-	42	3.82	2
Competitive service features (technical competency)	114	2.24	4	120	1.97	2	0	0.00	-	42	3.82	2
Affordable installation cost	176	3.45	2	77	1.26	3	0	0.00	-	42	3.82	2
Good customer service	140	2.75	3	6	0.10	7	0	0.00	-	42	3.82	2
Quality of service	65	1.27	5	28	0.46	6	48	2.40	2	42	3.82	2
Uninterrupted services, quick connectivity, speed etc.,	65	1.27	5	40	0.66	5	48	2.40	2	42	3.82	2
	22	0.43	8	0	0.00	-	12	0.60	4	88	8.00	1

connection. Further, it has been found that 69.44 per cent of the sample subjects have said that they use broadband services for education purposes, 47.30 per cent of the respondents have opined that they have been using broadband services since 2008 and majority i.e. 67.00 per cent of college teaching faculties have installed single user broadband connection through their computers.

This empirical finding of the study is supported with the calculated results of Wilcoxon 'w' test, which indicates that Broadband application usage among the higher education teachers differs according to their demographic and occupational status.

It has been clearly observed that 51.41 per cent of respondents have adopted 3G wireless connection for accessing the internet, 55.20 per cent of higher education teachers are using private ISP (Internet Service Provision) and 56.90 per cent of the respondents have installed moderate speed internet service.

From the empirical data analysis it has been observed that 53.80 per cent of the higher education teachers feel that the broadband services are highly useful for accessing new resources as it is updated from time to time.

Higher Education Teachers' Perception towards Broadband Services It has been found that 36.90 per cent of the respondents have opined that they select broadband service provider based on their instant availability in the market. Thus, the empirical results of Paired 't' test reveal that the reason stated by the higher education teachers for broadband service provider selection differs from one brand to other branded service providers. The study found that 58 per cent (mean score of 2.88) of the higher education teachers are inspired by the responsiveness feature of particular broadband service provider.

The study inferred that 43.11 per cent (mean score of 3.88) of the higher education teachers prefer BSNL brand for its service quality. Followed by, 42.44 per cent (mean score of 3.82) of the sample subjects choose Airtel service for its availability and 47.33 per cent (mean score of 4.26) of the respondents prefer Reliance as it offers

Demographic and Occupational Status of the Higher Education Teachers in Coimbatore District From the empirical data analysis it has been observed that 64.60 per cent of the higher education teachers are found to be female, 67 per cent of the respondents are aged between 26-35 years and 70.70 per cent of the higher education teachers in Coimbatore district are found to be M. Phil., degree holders. It has also been found that most i.e. 98.60 per cent of the teaching faculties in Coimbatore district are working in self-financing colleges and 40.14 per cent of the higher education teachers earn below Rs. 20000 per month. ii. Broadband Usage by the College Teachers' The empirical findings of the study revealed that 37.61 per cent of the higher education teachers have reasonable knowledge on broadband services. The results of the ANOVA test complementing the above conclusion by revealing that there exists a close association between the demographic and occupational status of the higher education teachers and their awareness towards broadband usage. Similarly, the elaborate data analysis indicates that 50.56 per cent of the college teaching faculties reside in urban area.

A batch of 37.60 per cent of the college teaching faculties are using BSNL broadband service and 34.23 per cent of the higher education teachers spend between Rs.501 to Rs.1000 per month for broadband

good customer service. Subsequently, 62.77 per cent (mean score of 5.65) of the sample subjects prefer TATA brand 204 as it is easily available. Further, it has been observed that 32.77 per cent (mean score of 2.95) of the respondents are using Vodafone brand for its resource availability. Similarly, 70 per cent (mean score of 6.30) of the sample populations' have said that they prefer MTS brand as it is easily available in the market. It has been also found that almost 100 per cent (mean score of 9) of the respondents are inspired by the features such as uninterrupted services, quick connectivity, speed etc., of Tikona brand. The descriptive data analysis result duly matches with the statistical findings: The results of Multiple Regression model infers that the higher education teachers' perception of broadband usage differs from one brand to other branded service providers.

Multiple Regression Analysis indicated out of twelve variables tested seven were found to be significantly influencing factors, they are: Technical Competency, Security Issues, Functional Qualities, Accessibility, Communication, and Courtesy and Future usage. Another, the results of Multiple Regression model reveal that there exists a close association between the higher education teachers' perception of broadband usage and the application used by them.

Multiple Regression Analysis indicated that out of twelve variables tested seven were found to be significantly influencing factors, they are: Technical Qualities, Technical Competency, Staff Skills & Competency, Responsiveness, Accessibility, Communication and Future usage. Similarly, the result of Independent 't' test declared that there exist differences in the higher education teachers' perception towards public and private broadband service providers.

Broadband has become a key priority of the 21st Century, and it is transformation power as an enabler for economic and social growth makes it an essential tool for empowering people, creating an environment that nurtures the technological and service innovation, and triggering positive change in business processes as well as in society as a whole.

Moreover, it has also been inferred that the selection of the service

providers and the nature of service facilities offered by them greatly influence broadband internet service usage pattern among the sample population in the study region and their level of satisfaction also determined by these features. In short, high broadband speed internet connection is essential pre-requisite to widespread education and for enhancing teacher's quality.

It is suggested to the broadband service providers to offer higher education teacher-centric services for enhancing their usage, also for realizing more market share, be competitive and to realize more profit.

CONCLUSION

Broadband has become a key priority of the 21st Century, and it is transformation power as an enabler for economic and social growth makes it an essential tool for empowering people, creating an environment that nurtures the technological and service innovation, and triggering positive change in business processes as well as in society as a whole. Increased adoption and use of broadband in the next decade and beyond will be driven by the extent to which broadband-supported services and applications are not only made available to, but are also relevant and affordable for consumers.

This study concludes that there exist higher digital divides among the college teachers in the adoption of the broadband internet services. The socio-economic status of individual teachers like: their gender, age, educational qualification, nature of the institution where they are currently working greatly influence their adoption of broadband internet services. Moreover, it has also been inferred that the selection of the service providers and the nature of service facilities offered by them greatly influence broadband internet service usage pattern among the sample population in the study region and their level of satisfaction also determined by these features. In short, high broadband speed internet connection is essential pre-requisite to widespread education and for enhancing teacher's quality. It is suggested to the broadband service providers to offer higher education teacher-centric services for enhancing their usage, also for realizing more market share, be competitive and to realise more profit.

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