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MANAGING THE SERVICE QUALITY: COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE BEHAVIOUR AND SWITCHING INTENTIONS OF THE CUSTOMERS

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ABSTRACT

In the present era of competition, one of the most important issues for a telecom industry is know the satisfaction level of customers, their behaviour and their switching intentions with respect to the service providers, as the rapid changing business scenario for the entire transaction activities begins and ends with the customer. Service Quality, customer satisfaction and Customer retention is the primary goal of every business organization as the customer satisfaction affects the customer's loyalty, retention rate and their behaviour whether positive or negative. The present study aims to analyse the comparative influence of service quality of Airtel and BSNL on behaviour and switching intentions of the customers in the telecommunication sector in Himachal Pradesh. The data for the study was collected through a survey consisting a sample of 600 subscribers (300 each Airtel and BSNL) selected on convenient random basis to find out the factors which are responsible for behavioural outcome and switching intentions. The statistical tools applied in the study were factor analysis, skewness, kurtosis and chi-square test. The results indicated that five factors i.e. corporate image, switching costs, poor performance, service promptness and problem solving are the significant contributors for switching intentions of the customers.

KEYWORDS

behaviour, switching intention, telecommunication.

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INTRODUCTION

Telecommunication is one of the fastest-growing industries in India and is the second largest market in the world. The entire telecommunication industry which has become a dynamic service industry in India is facing a tough competition due to liberalization and privatization subject to increasing competition with huge growth potential in terms of subscribers and revenue. The Indian customers are enjoying a wide range of services along with the world's lowest local call rates. The service providers in India are faced with the challenge of reducing customer churn in the ever increasing telecommunication market. Under these circumstances, the success of mobile phone service providers in India mainly depends on service quality which ultimately increase customer base and Service quality will become quality service if it meets the customers' expectations.

Current competitive environment has forced telecommunication companies to focus on service quality related dimensions and have a thorough understanding on the customer's need and the activities that increases the customer satisfaction and help in retaining the customers, in order to efficiently maximize revenue. Thus, in this age of customer's focus, delivering quality service has become an important means of differentiation and path to achieve business success and survival in today competitive environment. However, no business organization can survive without building its customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Likewise no organization can make a healthy living without meeting the needs of its customers. That is what organizations do, they serve people's needs. Delivering of quality service to the customers has become an indispensable factor for success and survival of telecommunication companies. Service quality can be defined as the personal experience of the customer with the service provider. Customers want to avail the different types of services provided by the telecom service providers. Customer satisfaction is an estimate of how well the products or services offered by a firm meet or exceed customer expectation. On the other hand, if the perceived performance exceeds the expectations, customers will be satisfied. If perceived performance is less than expected, customers will be dissatisfied. It is obvious that if customers do not get quality service and become dissatisfied by the provider, they undoubtedly will go elsewhere. So, it is very essential for the service provider to understand the service quality, customer behaviour and reasons for switching of the customers and make efforts to retain the customers and compete the stiff competition in the market.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ahmed et.al (2010) in their study examined the service quality of the mobile service providers and customers' satisfaction and customers retentions regarding SMS in cellular companies of Pakistan. The study focused only the SMS service provided by telecom organizations. The data was collected through structured questionnaire from 331 youngsters from different universities who use the SMS service of any company. Correlation and regression analysis were used to analyze the data. Service quality was measured using five dimensions and its relationship was determined with customer satisfaction. It was found that all the dimension have a significant relationship with the satisfaction of the customers and customers were slightly satisfied from the service quality of SMS service providers in Pakistan.

Nandi and Pattanayak (2015) in their paper focused on the brand switching tendencies of young Indians and effectively analysed the impact of different demographic variables on brand loyalty. The data was collected from 600 young adults comprising of both students and professionals from various reputed colleges and companies in Bangalore and their responses were analysed on SPSS. The statistical tools employed in the study were cross-tabs, chi-square and multiple regression analysis. The study indicated that among various demographic factors, only age had an impact on brand loyalty. Samsung is the most popular brand followed by Nokia, Sony and Apple. Apple has the most loyal base of customers and is one of the aspiring brands. The percentage of switching was highest in case of Karbonn mobile users followed by Micromax. Among the popular brands, Nokia had more switches than Samsung and Sony. The primary reason for switching of respondents was technical incompatibility, new technical and value added features and price offer. The study suggested that the mobile companies should introduce different models with new innovative features and develop specific strategies and action plans taking into account the complex set of factors that influence consumer buying behaviour which helps in improving the satisfaction level of their present customers and make them more loyal.

Panigrahi, Azizan and Khan (2018) carried a study to investigate the empirical relationship between Service Quality, Trust, Satisfaction and Intention to customers purchasing Life Insurance Products in Malaysia. The primary data was collected from 215 respondents based on convenience sampling technique and was analysed on five point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis were employed in the study. To measure customer satisfaction, trust and purchase intention, seven key SERVQUAL factors were utilised i.e. tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, helpfulness and problem solving. The results found that tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, problem solving and helpfulness on purchase intention were found significant except empathy and assurance. The findings showed that problem solving and helpfulness are key factors in insurance industry which leads to customer satisfaction and trust, and would full service quality gap and increase competence of agents to perform properly according to the needs of the customers.

The reviews of existing studies and related topics helped in finding out the research gap which provided the valuable information to frame need, objectives of the present study. The substantial work has been done on the service quality, but no study has been confined to assess the behaviour and switching intention of the customers with respect to Airtel and BSNL telecommunication companies, especially in Himachal Pradesh. There exists the research gap among various studies available so far. Hence, the present study has been undertaken on service quality, behavioural outcomes and switching intentions of the customers of both Airtel and BSNL in Himachal Pradesh.

NEED OF THE STUDY

In today’s competitive environment, it has become essential for every business organisation to provide good service quality to its customers. It is only possible if the customers are satisfied. If the customers are satisfied with the services provided by the service provider, there will be strong customer base while on the other hand, if customers are not satisfied they will switch to other service provider as there are many service providers are prevalent in the market. It has been found from the previous studies that customers are dissatisfied on the part of the service providers as a result of which, they are switching from one service provider to another. Hence, there is a need to find out the behaviour of the customers regarding their service provider and to find out the factors which influence them to switch from one service provider to another.

OBJECTIVES

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To assess the level of customer satisfaction.
2. To identify the factors that influence the behaviour and switching intentions of the customers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The primary data has been collected to accomplish the objectives of the study. A sample of 600 respondents i.e. 300 Airtel and 300 BSNL customers has been drawn on the basis of convenient random sampling. Further, two zones were selected and out of each zone two districts were selected and out of each district two blocks were selected on the basis of highest population. (according to the Census2011). The assessment was done on a five point Likert scale and skewness, kurtosis, chi-square and factor analysis have been applied.

SAMPLE SIZE

Sr. No.	Zones	Districts	Blocks	Total No. of Respondents
1.	Shimla	Shimla	Shimla	75
			Theog	75
		Solan	Nalagarh	75
			Solan	75
2.	Kangra	Kangra	Palampur	75
			Nurpur	75
		Chamba	Chamba	75
			Churah	75
			Total	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON BEHAVIOUR OUTCOMES OF THE RESPONDENTS

Behaviour Outcomes	Mean Score		Skewness		Kurtosis		Chi-square		P-value	
	Airtel	BSNL	Airtel	BSNL	Airtel	BSNL	Airtel	BSNL	Airtel	BSNL
Positive response of respondents	3.9933	3.9067	-.945	-1.188	1.229	2.136	246.827	389.933	.000	.000
Strong recommend-ation of service provider	3.7300	3.5567	-.803	-.435	.390	-.406	243.667	179.100	.000	.000
Service Provider is always first choice	3.4300	3.3167	-.292	-.337	-.717	-.545	170.567	176.600	.000	.000
Redressal of their complaints	3.8600	3.8567	-1.512	-1.520	2.786	3.044	405.900	432.300	.000	.000
Switching to other service provider if provides better deal	2.9867	2.9433	.118	.014	-1.154	-.604	50.600	107.100	.000	.000
Complain to external agencies	2.3300	2.4267	.139	-.294	-.020	-.543	198.433	130.027	.000	.000

The descriptive statistical analysis regarding the behavioural outcomes of the respondents as presented in the table 1 reveals that the mean score of responses among Airtel and BSNL has been found higher than the average mean score in all the statements except as far as switching to other service provider if better deals are offered and complaining to external agencies is concerned. The negative value of skewness of Airtel and BSNL in all statements depicts that majority of responses of respondents is towards the higher side of mean value except the statements related to switching to other service provider and complaining to external agencies. The value of kurtosis in case of both service providers shows that distribution of responses is Leptokurtic in the statements positive response of respondents, strong recommendation of service providers and redressal of their complaints whereas it is Platykurtic as far as service provider is always their first choice, switching to other service provider and complaining to external agencies is concerned. The computed value of Chi-square for Airtel subscribers in comparison to BSNL subscribers has been found significant at 1 % level of significance with respect to all the statements of behavioural outcomes. Hence, it can be concluded that the opinion of the respondents differs significantly in both the service providers as far as behavioural outcome of the respondents is concerned.

TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS ON REASONS FOR SWITCHING OF THE RESPONDENTS

Reasons for Switching	Mean Score		Skewness		Kurtosis		Chi-square		P-value	
	Airtel	BSNL	Airtel	BSNL	Airtel	BSNL	Airtel	BSNL	Airtel	BSNL
If less charged for data services	3.2567	3.0667	-.340	-.279	-.958	-.669	87.200	88.600	.000	.000
If offered low call, SMS charges	3.5967	3.4667	-.580	-.423	-.726	-.613	183.133	166.267	.000	.000
If friends, relatives are using particular connection	2.8900	2.6733	.038	.294	-.918	-.788	61.300	51.067	.000	.000
Influenced by advertise-ments	2.5433	2.4567	.226	.329	-1.136	-.999	70.333	55.633	.000	.000
Dissatisfied with the services of service provider in future	4.0933	3.9767	-1.001	-.638	1.176	.667	298.233	288.033	.000	.000
Switch due to Poor roaming network	2.9967	2.9967	.311	10.036	.622	145.036	300.433	418.640	.000	.000
If service provider is slow in responding	3.3867	3.3400	-.597	-.430	-.357	-.591	176.500	194.067	.000	.000
More vas are provided by others	3.0667	3.0100	.135	-.039	-.410	-.354	116.000	113.567	.000	.000
Poor network and call clarity	4.1733	4.0167	-1.136	-.957	1.905	1.324	304.933	274.167	.000	.000
Just for a change	2.0767	2.0300	.817	.740	-.499	-.354	146.100	145.433	.000	.000
Switching does not cost heavy expenses	2.5300	2.4833	.196	.354	-1.275	-.878	87.500	92.100	.000	.000
If there is problem of Billing, activation	3.5967	3.4967	-1.167	-.882	.619	.350	301.767	210.633	.000	.000

The descriptive statistical analysis regarding the switching intentions of the respondents as presented in the table 2 shows that as the mean scores has been found higher in case of both the service providers with regard to all the statements except if friends and relatives are using a particular connection, influenced by the advertisements, switch due to poor roaming network, just for a change and switching does not cost heavy expenses. The negative value of skewness related to the statements charges less for data services, low call rates, dissatisfied with the services of service provider in future, slow in responding to complaints, poor network and call clarity and problem of billing and activation of services, shows that majority of responses of both Airtel and BSNL are towards the higher side of mean value. The negative value of kurtosis of both Airtel and BSNL subscribers depict that distribution of responses is Platykurtic except as far as statements related to dissatisfaction with the services of service provider in future, switching due to poor roaming network is concerned. The value of chi-square for both Airtel and BSNL subscribers has been found significant at 1 % level of significance which reveals that there is a significant difference in the responses of both the subscribers of service providers as far as statements' regarding reasons for switching is concerned.

BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOMES AND SWITCHING INTENTIONS: A FACTOR ANALYSIS

The Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is a statistic that examines the appropriateness of factor analysis. The Kaiser Meyer Olkin measure the sampling adequacy which should be more than 0.5 for a satisfactory factor analysis. The results of the Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO=.807) measure of sampling adequacy and Barlett's test of sphericity with highly significant value clearly indicates the appropriateness of the use of factor analysis.

TABLE 3: KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.807	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2412.412
	df	153
	Sig.	.000**

** Significant at .05 level of confidence

TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED

Table shows how many variables can be combined together to make a single factor. The initial components are the number of the variables used in the factor analysis and is calculated by using principal component method. The eigen values are the variances of the factors and only the factors with Eigen value greater than one are retained. Five factors with Eigen value greater than one are retained out of eighteen variables. The percentage of variance indicates the total variance attributed. The cumulative percentage of variation as shown by these five variables is 56.455 percent.

TABLE 4: TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sum of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.209	23.385	23.385	4.209	23.385	23.385	2.429	13.496	13.496
2	1.945	10.803	34.188	1.945	10.803	34.188	2.404	13.354	26.850
3	1.564	8.690	42.878	1.564	8.690	42.878	2.102	11.680	38.530
4	1.259	6.996	49.873	1.259	6.996	49.873	1.950	10.831	49.361
5	1.185	6.581	56.455	1.185	6.581	56.455	1.277	7.094	56.455
6	.865	4.804	61.259						
7	.852	4.734	65.993						
8	.743	4.126	70.119						
9	.711	3.951	74.070						
10	.663	3.685	77.755						
11	.647	3.592	81.347						
12	.583	3.240	84.587						
13	.540	2.997	87.585						
14	.532	2.956	90.540						
15	.498	2.769	93.310						
16	.451	2.507	95.817						
17	.384	2.132	97.949						
18	.369	2.051	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Source: Data collected through questionnaire

ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX

To find out the relationship between the variables, the variables are rotated by using varimax rotation. The variables which represents the components of behavioural outcomes and switching intentions are chosen. The results of component matrix report the loading of different variables on identified five factors which have been extracted through factor analysis and are most correlated.

Variables which have been loaded on first factor i.e. **corporate image** includes; strongly recommend services of service provider to friends and relatives, always operator is given first choice, positive about service provider and not shift to other service provider. The first factor explains 23.385 percent of variance.

The second factor i.e. **service cost** represents five variables namely not shift to other service provider even if offered cheap data services, even if friends and family members are using particular connection, if influenced by the advertisements, if offered low call rates, even if switching is not costly and just for a change. The second factor explains 10.803 per cent of variance.

In third factor, **poor performance** includes poor network and call clarity, dissatisfied with the service provider and problem of billing, activation and deactivation and recharge. The third factor explains 8.690 per cent of variance.

The variables which are loaded in fourth factor i.e. **service promptness** is identified with weight on three factors which includes poor roaming network, slow in responding to complaints and variety of services provided by other service provider. The fourth factor explains 6.996 percent of variance.

The fifth factor i.e. **problem solving**; includes seek the help of external agencies like DOT, TRAI and complaint to service provider if any problem is faced. The fifth factor explains 6.581 percent of variance.

TABLE 5: ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX

Statements	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly recommend to friends and relatives	.814	-.005	-.131	-.031	-.049
Service provider is always your first choice	.792	-.071	-.133	.049	-.014
Say positive about service provider	.716	-.103	.017	-.201	-.054
No switching to other service provider	.508	-.283	-.324	.115	.305
No shift even if offer cheap data services	-.168	.696	.318	.002	-.043
Switch if friends, family are using particular connection	-.012	.630	.089	.218	.293
Switch if influenced by advertisements	.066	.607	.093	.108	-.035
No switching if offer low call rates, SMS charges etc.	-.266	.549	.438	-.057	-.029
If switching does not cost heavy expenses	-.170	.542	-.007	.395	-.170
Just for a change	-.142	.540	-.315	.391	-.040
Poor network and call clarity influence to switch	-.089	.074	.746	.139	.067
Switch if dissatisfied with the services of service provider	-.074	.179	.694	.109	.068
Switch if problem of billing, activation and recharge	-.240	.084	.514	.341	-.264
Switch due to poor roaming network	.016	-.034	.295	.693	.054
Switching if operator is slow in responding	-.046	.197	.243	.678	-.086
Variety of services are provided by others	-.036	.290	-.091	.645	.065
Complain to external agencies like DOT, TRAI	.099	.038	.204	-.093	.787
Complain to service provider if face any problem	.362	.036	.233	-.101	-.588

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 10 iterations.

CONCLUSION

The behaviour outcome of the majority of respondents reveal that there is a significant difference in the opinion of respondents of both the service providers as far as statements relating to points about service providers, strong recommendation of service provider and redressal of complaints. Further, the main reasons which influence the subscribers to switch are; high service charges, dissatisfaction with the service provider in future, slow response of complaints and poor network and call clarity.

Corporate image has been found the most important factor for switching followed by service cost. The poor performance of service provider enhances the switching intention of the subscribers. Hence, the service providers must have good corporate image and should focus on the reducing the service cost. Further, the service providers should focus on network connectivity, call clarity, activation and billing problems. Other factors which are found to be important reasons for switching are: service promptness and problem solving. The factor which leads to dissatisfaction among the subscribers is high services charges and network problems which influence the subscribers to switch from one service provider to another. Hence, by making good corporate image and good network connectivity, the service providers would be able to retain their customer base which would ultimately increase customer loyalty.

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