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- Sharma T., Kwatra, G. (2008) Effectiveness of Social Advertising: A Study of Selected Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Edited by David Crowther & Nicholas Capaldi, Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Chapter 15, pp 287-303.

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**A STUDY OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION FOR IDEA CELLULAR IN EASTERN RAJASTHAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Colossal budge in both technology and consumer behavior during the past two decades have taken a contemporary visage. The sustainable profitable growth has lead companies into head-to-head competition. The companies are fighting for customer satisfaction through differentiation. The imperative factors that may be accounted towards customer satisfaction be marketing communication, perceived quality, and customer loyalty. This study investigates the effect of marketing strategies espoused by Idea Cellular and its upshot on the consumers. It also attempts to study the expectations of the customers and the marketing strategies that have been taken by the organization to discharge them. A study of perception of employees has also been made to understand insights and identify factors of customer satisfaction that the organization is focusing on. The study highlights the factors that contribute to the hedonistic escalation in this dynamic competitive world.*

**KEYWORDS**

Customer Satisfaction, Idea Cellular, Marketing Strategies, Telecom.

**INTRODUCTION**

Indian telecommunication sector has undergone a major process of transformation through significant policy reforms and the announcement of National Telecom Policy. Despite of all the challenges, the Indian telecom market has shown exponential growth and is now second largest market across the globe having 919.2 Mn subscribers with the addition of 107 Mn subscribers in the wireless segment during financial year 2011-12. The sector is likely to innovate services and document a sustainable growth. The fostering number of players and intensification of competition has lead consumers to enjoy luxuries of choice and higher bargaining power. The freedom of preference has made market more customers' centric. To bridge the expectation gap, telecom companies are striving for excellence in the way they provide plethora of service to its customers. Customer retention has become gigantic chore for the marketers. The customer – employee relationship has become more ardent.

Idea Cellular is India's first truly multinational corporation. The group operates in 33 countries, and is anchored by more than 132,000 employees belonging to 42 nationalities. It is the 3rd largest mobile services operator in India. IDEA Cellular has been recognized as the 'Most Customer Responsive Company' in the Telecom sector, at the prestigious Avaya Global Connect Customer Responsiveness Awards 2010. Idea's service delivery platform is ISO 9001:2008 certified, making it the only operator in the country to have this standard certification for all 22 service areas and the corporate office. Innovation in Network Infrastructure has also been initiated. Very few studies have been carried out to study the marketing strategies of Idea Cellular and analyze the behaviour of service users in context of their expectations and satisfaction level. Employee's discernment about products and services offered by its organization also plays an important role in sustainability and growth. An effort is being made to study the perception of employees along with customers to identify the factors that are missed out when only customers' responses are analyzed. This paper helps in studying the similarities and differences in perception of marketing strategies adopted to fulfill customers' needs expectations and grow in business.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Drucker (1973)** defined marketing strategies as process of analyzing internal and external environment of an organization. **Cravens (1986)** focused on situation analysis for marketing strategy, while **Kotler (1997)** concluded that marketing strategy is a plan to accomplish organization's objectives. **Lovelock et al (2008)**, stated that it is important for service organizations to differentiate their products in ways that are meaningful to customers as they vary widely in their abilities to serve different types of customers. **Oliver (1980)** defined customer satisfaction as psychological comparison of expectations and experiences. **Parasuraman et al (1994)** suggest that satisfaction is influenced by service quality, product quality and price. **Schiffman and Kanuk (2009)** emphasized on retention of customers through customer satisfaction. They discussed reasons for the same as: Loyal customers buy more products; loyal customers are less price sensitive and pay less attention to competitors' advertising; Servicing existing customers, who are familiar with the firms offerings and processes is cheaper; and Loyal customers spread positive word-of-mouth and refer other customers. **Venugopal et al. (2006)**, the marketing concept holds that in order to achieve organizational goals, marketers must focus not only on external customers but also on its employees and the system. **Nandan S (2005)** conceptualized that marketing communication should be well understood and interpreted by the consumers. He also focused on marketing the brand name instead convincing the consumers of their benefits.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

To study the preference and perception of customers and employees of Idea Cellular regarding marketing strategies and identify factors those are responsible for customer satisfaction.

**HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There are no significant factors in marketing strategies of Idea Cellular that are responsible for customer satisfaction.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There are significant factors in marketing strategies of Idea Cellular that are responsible for customer satisfaction

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This exploratory research is limited to the primary responses of 250 customers and 25 employees of Idea Cellular based in eastern Rajasthan. Respondents were drawn on the basis of convenient random sampling. The research was limited to four districts with 100 respondents from Jaipur and 50 each from Bharatpur, Alwar and Dausa. The employees from sales and marketing department were chosen as respondents from Rajasthan Circle office based in Jaipur City. A structured questionnaire comprising of 14 questions for customers and 13 questions for employees was used to collect primary data. Secondary data has been

collected from magazines, journals and annual reports of Idea Cellular. Parameters of the study are Price based factors, Non-Price based factors, Perception and Preference for Idea Services, Effect of Price Reduction, Marketing Mix factors, Integrated Marketing Communication, Company's focus on marketing mix factors, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Switching Subscribers and Overall satisfaction (Customers).

**RELIABILITY ANALYSIS**

Cronbach's Alpha test was used to check the reliability of two questionnaires and was found to be reliable. Table 1.1 shows reliability score of 0.852 for customers and Table 1.2 shows the score of .897 for employee's questionnaire.

**TABLE 1.1: RELIABILITY ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CUSTOMERS**

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.852	72

**TABLE 1.2: RELIABILITY ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EMPLOYEES**

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.897	76

**DESCRIPTIVE PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

A brief description of the profile of customers is as follows: 92% of the respondents belong to the age group of 15-40 years that can be labeled as youth while rest 2% population was in the age group of 40-60 years. The majority of the respondents were students accounting to 41.2 % followed by people who were into service (30%), were self-employed (25.6%) and are housewives (3.2%) as working status. For the educational qualification, respondents belonged to 5 different categories as Under Graduates (41.2%), Graduates (29.2%), Post Graduates (11.2%), Professional (3.2%) and others (15.2%). In the type of connection that the respondents' owned, majority of the connections were pre-paid with 98% and only 2% connections were post-paid. The duration of usage of Idea Cellular services measured to be as Less than 1 month (2.4%), 2-6 months (9.6%), 6-12 months (7.2%) and highest being more than a year (80.8%).

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

**ACRONYMS:** CM to be read as Customer Mean and EM as Employee Mean

**PRICE BASED FACTORS**

**TABLE 2.1: IMPORTANCE OF PRICE BASED FACTORS (CUSTOMERS)**

	Low fixed rental per month	Low pulse rate i.e. Low cost per minute	Rate for the duration of talk i.e. Charge per second	Low call rate for Idea to Idea calls	Low STD rates	Low ISD rates	Low rates for value added services like caller tune, information, etc
Mean	2.56	3.93	4.21	3.85	2.54	1.56	1.87
Std. Deviation	1.600	.762	.674	1.102	1.293	.935	1.137

**TABLE 2.2: IMPORTANCE OF PRICE BASED FACTORS (EMPLOYEES)**

	Low fixed rental per month	Low pulse rate i.e. Low cost per minute	Rate for the duration of talk i.e. Charge per second	Low call rate for Idea to Idea calls	Low STD rates	Low ISD rates	Low rates for value added services like caller tune, information, etc
Mean	3.88	4.08	3.96	3.76	3.68	2.88	3.12
Std. Deviation	.971	.812	.841	1.200	1.145	1.301	1.054

Table 2.1 and 2.2 shows the perception of customers and employees respectively for the price based factors that are of importance while selecting any subscriber. It is evident from the table that customers prefer rates for the duration of talk i.e. charge per second as their priority with highest mean (CM=4.21) followed by low pulse rate (CM=3.93) and low call rates for Idea to Idea calls (CM=3.85). The rest of the price based factors were of less importance to them depending upon their need. On the other hand, employees of the Idea Cellular perceived that all the factors except ISD rates (EM= 2.88) are considered by the customers while selecting services of Idea. Thus, we can say that there is similarity in the perception of both and customers are satisfied with prices offered for various products and services.

**NON-PRICE BASED FACTORS**

**TABLE 3.1: IMPORTANCE OF NON-PRICE BASED FACTORS (CUSTOMERS)**

	Good brand image	Better quality of service	Better customer care	Reliability	Privacy and security	Less Process Time
Mean	3.61	3.90	3.50	3.68	3.45	3.07
Std. Deviation	1.025	.900	1.011	.808	.905	.884

**TABLE 3.2: IMPORTANCE OF NON-PRICE BASED FACTORS (EMPLOYEES)**

	Good brand image	Better quality of service	Better customer care	Reliability	Privacy and security	Less Process Time
Mean	4.32	4.68	4.40	4.40	4.04	4.00
Std. Deviation	.627	.690	.816	.816	.935	.957

Table 3.1 and 3.2 depicts the non price based factors favoured by customers at the time of purchase. Better quality of service has been the most considered parameter by both customers (CM=3.90) and employees (EM=4.68). Reliability (CM=3.68, EM=4.40) has been chosen as the second most important parameter. It is observed that there is difference of opinion in factors good brand image(CM=3.61, EM=4.32), and better customer care (CM=3.50, EM=4.40). However, both have given least importance to privacy & security (CM=3.45, EM=4.04) and less process time(CM=3.07, EM=4.00). In this case too, there is an alignment in the perception of customers and employees related to non-price based factors.

**PERCEPTION AND PREFERENCE FOR IDEA SERVICES**

**TABLE 4.1: PREFERENCE FOR IDEA SERVICES (CUSTOMERS)**

	Network	SMS Rates	New schemes and offers	Customer care	Recharge outlets	Call rates	Value added services
Mean	3.55	3.72	3.79	3.18	3.37	4.31	2.79
Std. Deviation	1.014	.855	.786	.856	.905	.876	.896

**TABLE 4.2: PERCEPTION OF IDEA SERVICES (EMPLOYEES)**

	Network	SMS Rates	New schemes and offers	Customer care	Recharge outlets	Call rates	Value added services
Mean	3.68	3.84	4.16	3.72	4.28	4.32	3.68
Std. Deviation	.900	.746	.746	1.021	.614	.627	.690



It was significant to study the perception of employees and preference of customers regarding the services of Idea Cellular. Table 4.1 and 4.2 recapitulates the same. They both indicated that it is call rates (CM=4.31, EM=4.32) and New Schemes and offers (CM=3.79, EM=4.16) that are precisely perceived and preferred by both. In addition to these, employee perception of SMS rates and recharge outlets i.e good distribution also forms a part of greater satisfaction. While network, customer care, and Value Added Services are not of much importance to either of the respondents.

**EFFECT OF PRICE REDUCTION**

**TABLE 5.1: EFFECT OF PRICE REDUCTION ON SERVICES (CUSTOMERS)**

	The usage remains same	Increased local calls of long duration	Increased STD calls of long duration	Increased Messaging	Increased Internet usage	Suggested Idea to your friends and relatives
Mean	2.79	3.56	3.14	3.38	3.12	3.93
Std. Deviation	1.146	.977	.954	.880	1.119	.905

**TABLE 5.2: EFFECT OF PRICE REDUCTION ON ORGANIZATION (EMPLOYEES)**

	Increased Product Usage	Increased Market share	Increased Consumer base	Increased Revenues
Mean	3.92	4.20	4.16	4.16
Std. Deviation	.759	.816	.746	.898

Table 5.1 elucidates the effect of price reduction on customers spending on products and services offered by the organization. It is noted that with the reduction in prices, customers started making calls of long duration (mean CM=3.56), followed by increased messaging (CM= 3.38) and increased STD calls of long duration (CM=3.14). Being satisfied with price reduction strategy, existing customers of Idea suggested it to their friends and relatives. The employees' perception also follows the same course as customers. Table 5.2 pronounces that with the reduction in prices there has been increase in the market share (EM= 4.20), consumer base (EM=4.16), revenues (EM=4.16) and product usage.

**MARKETING MIX FACTORS**

**TABLE 6.1: IMPORTANCE OF MARKETING MIX FACTORS (CUSTOMERS)**

	Product/ Service/ Offer	Place/ Convenience	Price / Cost	Promotion (Discounts, free gifts, free talk time, advertisements etc.)	People / Employees	Process (Time taken to start the services)	Physical Evidence (the environment of the shop)
Mean	3.82	3.79	4.37	3.90	2.70	2.69	2.58
Std. Deviation	.804	.796	.635	.941	1.015	1.032	1.051

**TABLE 6.2: IMPORTANCE OF MARKETING MIX FACTORS (EMPLOYEES)**

	Product/ Service/ Offer	Place/ Convenience	Price / Cost	Promotion / Integrated Marketing Communication	People / Employees	Process	Physical Evidence
Mean	4.40	3.92	4.48	4.36	4.44	4.40	3.80
Std. Deviation	.913	.862	.586	.490	.768	.577	.707

Price is the biggest motivator while buying any product or service. Table 6.1 and 6.2 depicts the same. Customers and employees both have given importance to the price (CM=4.37, EM=4.48). Promotion (CM=3.90) is considered as second most significant factor by customers while employees rated product (EM=4.40) as the second most imperative factor. Place, People, Process and Physical Evidence have been rated high by employees but their counterpart does not opine the same. The customers found these to be less critical.

**INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION**

**TABLE 7.1: IMPACT OF IMC FACTORS (CUSTOMERS)**

	Advertising	Sales Promotion	Personal Selling	Direct Marketing	Events	Public Relations
Mean	3.46	3.66	3.00	2.74	2.33	2.77
Std. Deviation	1.165	.870	.927	.948	.943	1.261

**TABLE 7.2: IMPACT OF IMC FACTORS (EMPLOYEES)**

	Advertising	Sales Promotion	Personal Selling	Direct Marketing	Events	Public Relations
Mean	4.44	4.32	3.96	4.00	3.64	3.80
Std. Deviation	.583	.748	.790	1.041	.757	1.000

From table 7.1 and 7.2 it is noticeable that advertising (CM=3.46, EM=4.44) and sales promotion (CM=3.66, EM=4.32) has been impactful factors in purchasing decision. Satisfied with the above factors people buy more products and recommend it to others as well. However, personal selling, direct marketing, events, and public relations have not been able to leave impact on customers mind.

**COMPANY'S FOCUS ON MARKETING MIX FACTORS**

**TABLE 8.1: PERCEPTION FOR COMPANY'S FOCUS ON MARKETING MIX FACTORS (CUSTOMERS)**

	Product Mix (product variety, various plans, quality of services)	Price Mix (discounts, allowances)	Promotion Mix	Distribution Mix	Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning
Mean	3.85	3.98	3.93	3.66	3.54
Std. Deviation	.876	.695	.808	.919	.992

**TABLE 8.2: PERCEPTION FOR COMPANY'S FOCUS ON MARKETING MIX FACTORS (EMPLOYEES)**

	Product Mix	Price Mix	Promotion Mix	Distribution Mix	Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning
Mean	4.48	4.48	4.28	4.56	4.40
Std. Deviation	.653	.653	.737	.583	.866

Table 8.1 expounds that company is ably focusing on price mix (CM=3.98), promotion mix (CM=3.93) and product mix (CM=3.85) while distribution mix (CM=3.66) and Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning has been little less propounded. Table 8.2, on the contrary portrays employees belief that customers are getting product because their distribution mix (EM=4.56) is well executed and they make products and services for all kinds of customers (EM=4.40). However, perception related to product, price and promotion mix is relatively invariable.

**CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM)**

**TABLE 9.1: CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP FACTORS (CUSTOMERS)**

	Set satisfactory service standards	Get proper and timely information about the products	Complaints get resolved before the stipulated time	Gives attention to the changing requirement of Customers	Makes product according to the paying capability of the customer.
Mean	3.83	4.00	3.66	3.36	3.28
Std. Deviation	.789	.752	.983	.969	.879

**TABLE 9.2: CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP FACTORS (EMPLOYEES)**

	Set satisfactory service standards	Gives training to employees	Has a customer complaint monitoring cell	Gives attention to the changing requirement of Customers	Makes product according to the paying capability of the customer.
Mean	3.92	3.84	4.28	4.24	3.96
Std. Deviation	.997	.898	.843	.926	1.020

Table 9.1 and 9.2 help us identify the Customer Relationship Management factors that are critical for any organization in this competitive world. From the view point of customers, it is the processes that help provide proper and timely information to the customers about various products, services and offers (CM=4.00). Secondly, it is the service standards (CM=3.83) that have established footing with the customers. Complaints getting resolved before the stipulated time (CM=3.66), giving attention to changing needs of customers (CM=3.36) and Making products according to the paying capability of the customers (CM=3.28) have scored moderately. On the other hand, the employees believe pragmatically on having a customer complaint cell (EM=4.28) and giving attention to changing needs of customers (EM=4.24) to be of high influence. They have given considerable weightage to other factors as well.

**SWITCHING SUBSCRIBERS**

**TABLE 10.1: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CUSTOMERS TO SWITCH FROM IDEA TO COMPETITORS (CUSTOMERS)**

	Network	Price Package (low SMS Rates, low call rates)	Process time	Customer care	Recharge outlets	Advertisement	Value added services
Mean	3.67	3.57	2.70	2.50	2.54	2.77	2.46
Std. Deviation	1.208	.964	.970	.932	1.102	.998	.923

**TABLE 10.2: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CUSTOMERS TO SWITCH FROM IDEA TO COMPETITORS (EMPLOYEES)**

	Network	Price Package (low SMS Rates, low call rates)	Process time	Customer care	Recharge outlets	Advertisement	Value added services
Mean	4.40	3.56	3.36	3.56	3.08	3.04	3.12
Std. Deviation	.707	1.121	1.221	1.121	1.256	1.241	.833

In this belligerent world, customers have copious alternatives to opt for. The introduction of Mobile Number Portability (MNP) has facilitated customers to change subscribers with much ease without changing their numbers. Table 10.1 and 10.2 discusses factors that influence customers to switch from Idea to competitors. Both customers and employees are of same opinion that it is network (CM=3.67, EM=4.40) because of which customers usually switch from Idea followed by low price packages (CM=3.57, EM=3.56). Also employees deem customer care (EM=3.56) as another substantial switching reason. All the other factors: Process time, recharge outlets, advertisement, and Value Added Services by competitors fail to generate impact on customers.

**TABLE 11.1: OVERALL SATISFACTION (CUSTOMERS)**

	Overall satisfaction with Idea products and services	Like to recommend Idea to others	Idea 3G services are better than Airtel 3G services	If given a chance to use Airtel, would use it	Would use Airtel only if the number does not change
Mean	3.95	3.80	3.23	1.90	1.96
Std. Deviation	.795	.908	.852	.873	1.023

Table 11.1 divulges the overall satisfaction of customers with products and services of Idea Cellular. They seem to be highly satisfied (CM=3.95) with the offerings and like to recommend Idea to others (CM=3.80). The above analysis stands as a proof of the same. Regarding 3G services of Idea and Airtel they were of neutral opinion while switching to Airtel was not a part of their preference.

**RESULTS**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There are no significant factors in marketing strategies of Idea Cellular that are responsible for customer satisfaction.

This hypothesis was tested using descriptive as a measure of mean and standard deviation of the responses obtained. The comparative analysis done helped in identifying factors those are responsible for customer satisfaction at Idea Cellular. Based on the results obtained null hypothesis was rejected.

**CONCLUSION**

The current study of marketing strategies adopted by Idea Cellular reveals the factors that help in crafting customer satisfaction. Low-cost pricing strategy has emerged as one of the most powerful factor that satisfies the customers. Better quality of services, reliability, better customer care and good brand image has helped Idea grow in a short span of business. Advertising has become the major tool of building a brand. Advertising and sales promotion reinforces customers about the right choice they have made. The organization is growing due to its ability to focus on its distribution. Customers are unable to judge this aspect of study as they do not form a part of it. The customers are able to get products on time in every corner of the city because of strong distribution network and capability. The development in Information Technology has helped Idea Cellular in exploiting opportunities. The organization is able to develop service standards, complaint monitoring cell and information cell that provides proper and timely information about Idea products and services. According to the study, customers and employees find call rates, new schemes and offers and SMS rates highly relevant to their needs at Idea Cellular. The company is focusing hardly on its product mix, price, mix, promotion mix, distribution mix and STP (Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning) strategy but the major weakness that was revealed during the study was its network. Customers and employees both agreed that it is merely network that churns the customers. By and large, customers of Idea Cellular are greatly satisfied with its services which are evident from the data. 80.8% of the customers have been using Idea for more than a year and are not likely to change their subscriber. They also strongly like to recommend it to their friends and relatives.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- The study is limited to 4 cities of Eastern Rajasthan.
- The responses may be biased for the subscriber customers are using.
- The responses of the employees may be biased for the company they are working for.
- The number of respondents is a small representation of the whole population.

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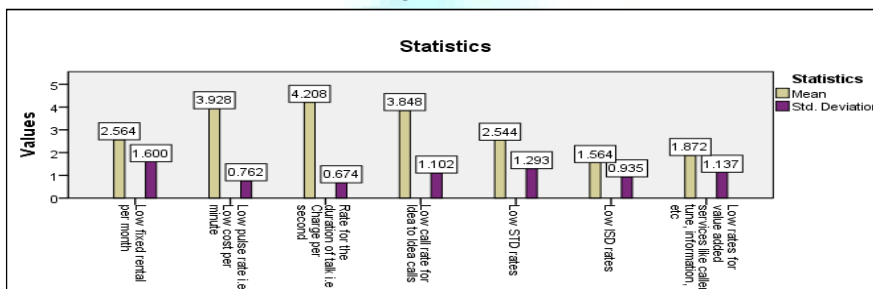
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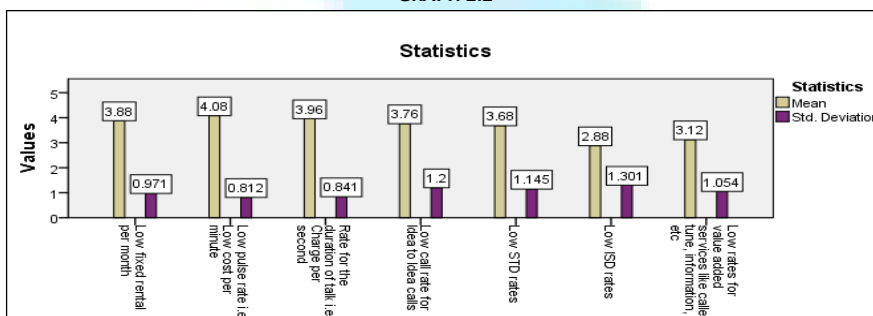
**ANNEXURE**

**PRICE BASED FACTORS**

**GRAPH 2.1**

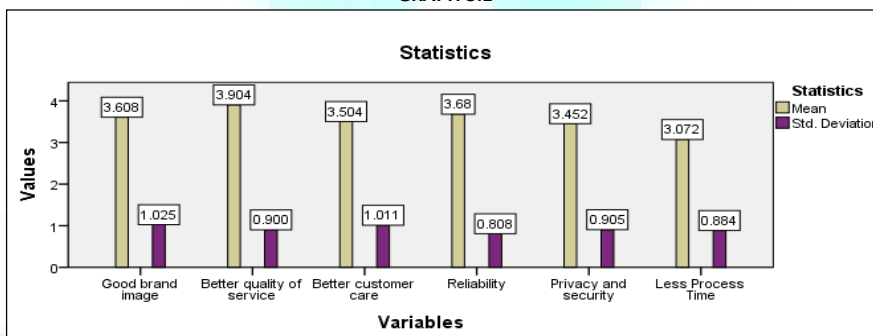


**GRAPH 2.2**

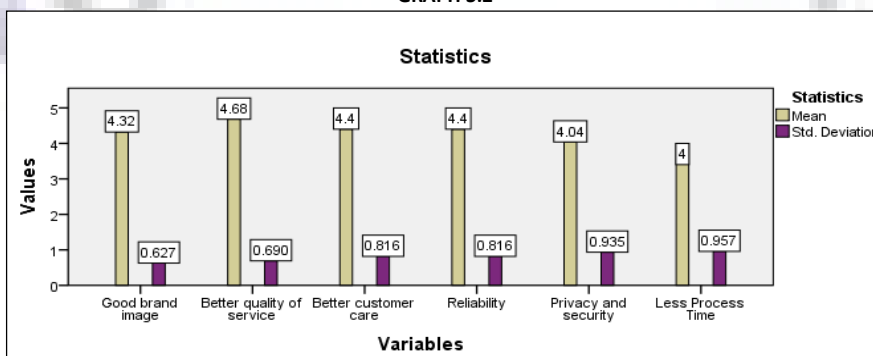


**NON-PRICE BASED FACTORS**

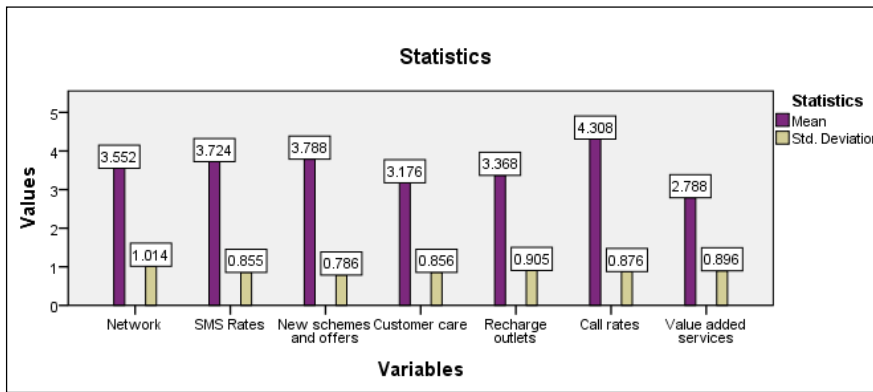
**GRAPH 3.1**



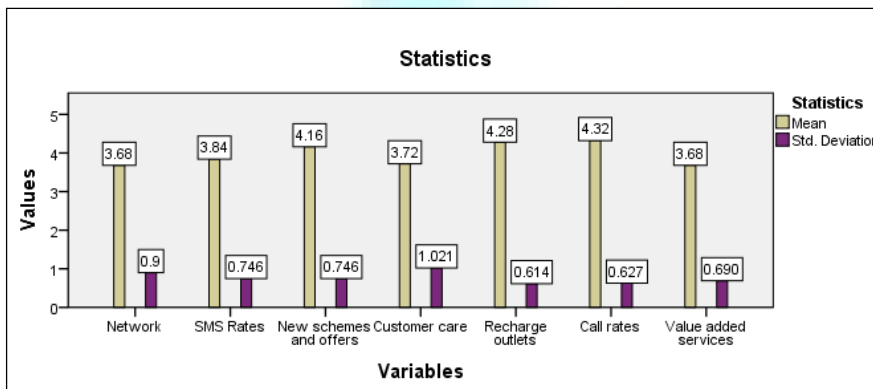
**GRAPH 3.2**



GRAPH 4.1

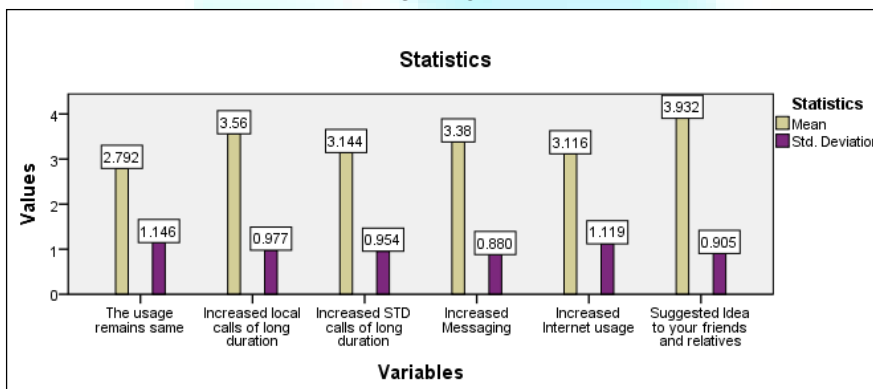


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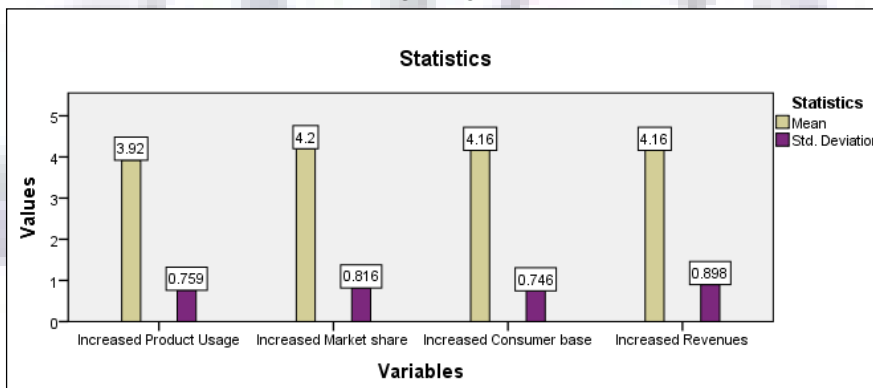


EFFECT OF PRICE REDUCTION

GRAPH 5.1

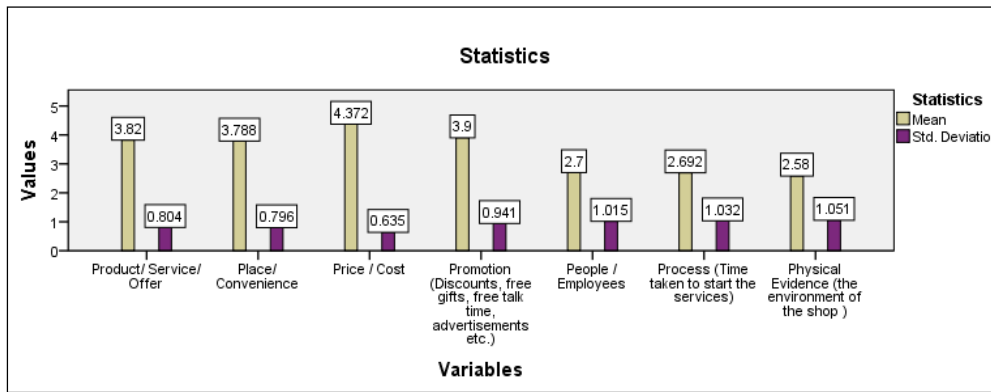


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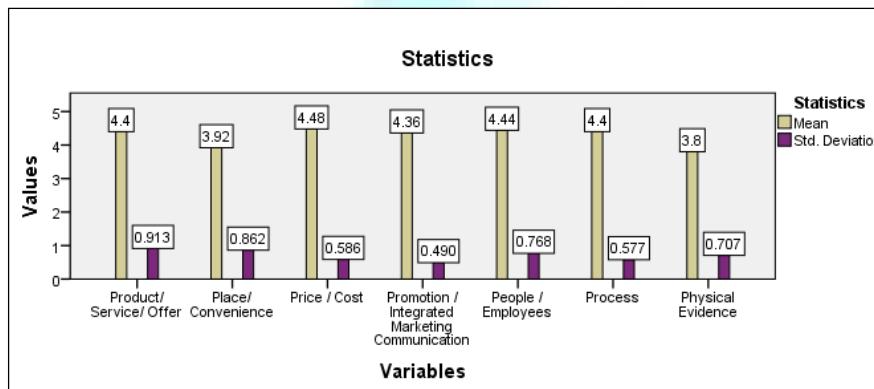


MARKETING MIX FACTORS

GRAPH 6.1

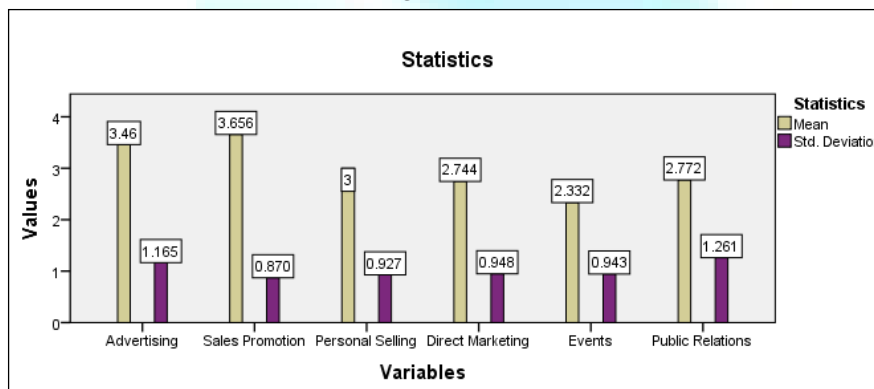


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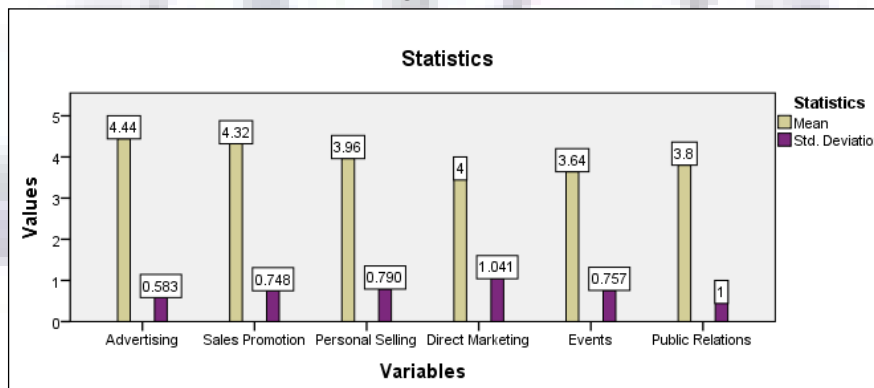


INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

GRAPH 7.1

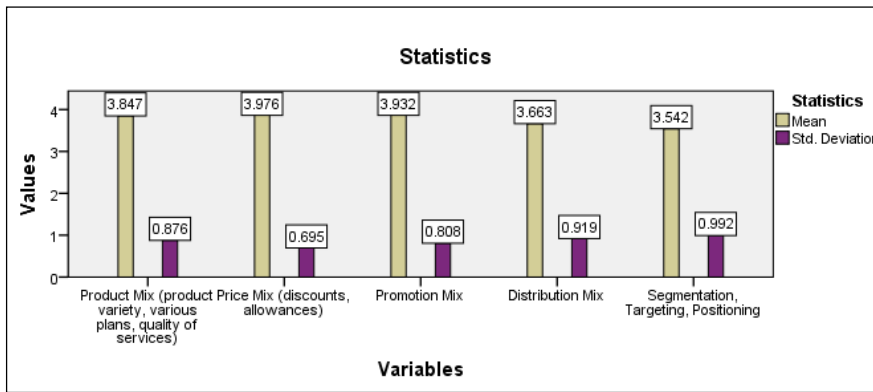


GRAPH 7.2

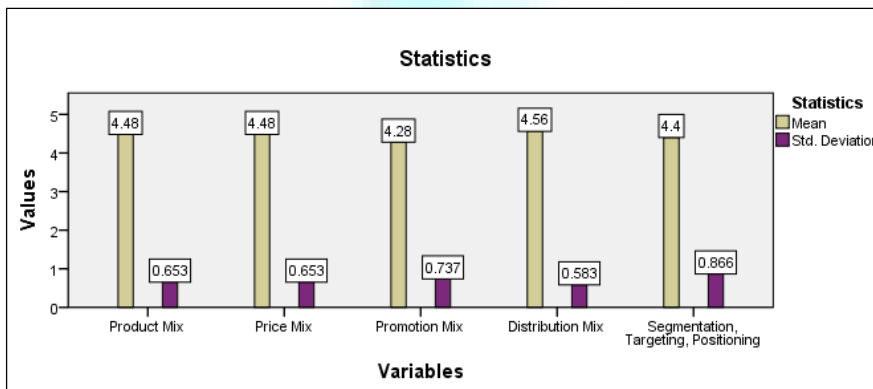




GRAPH 8.1

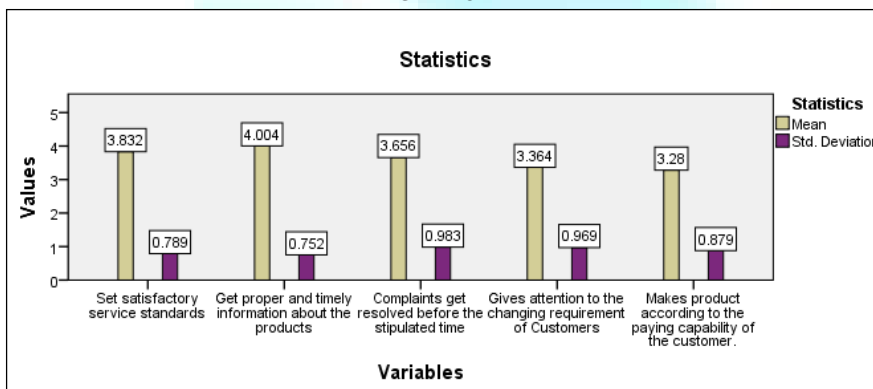


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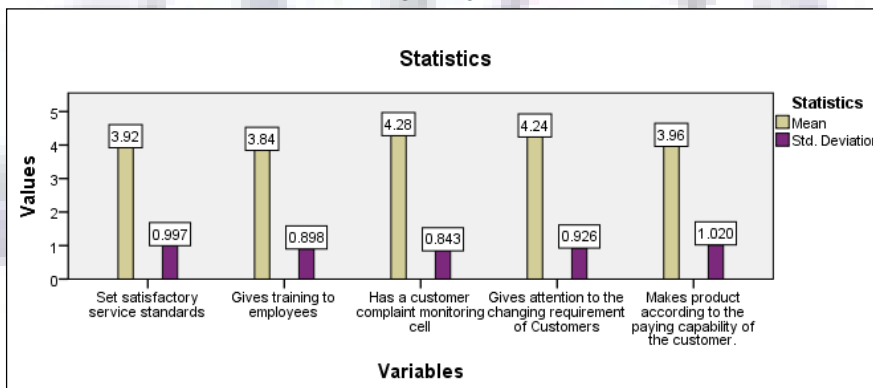


CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM)

GRAPH 9.1

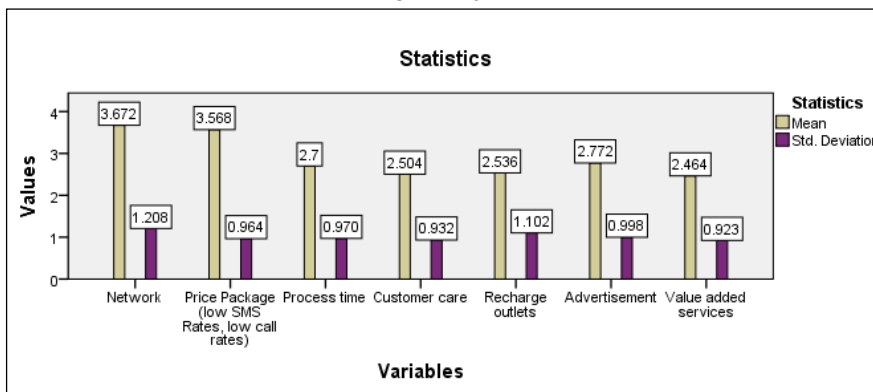


GRAPH 9.2

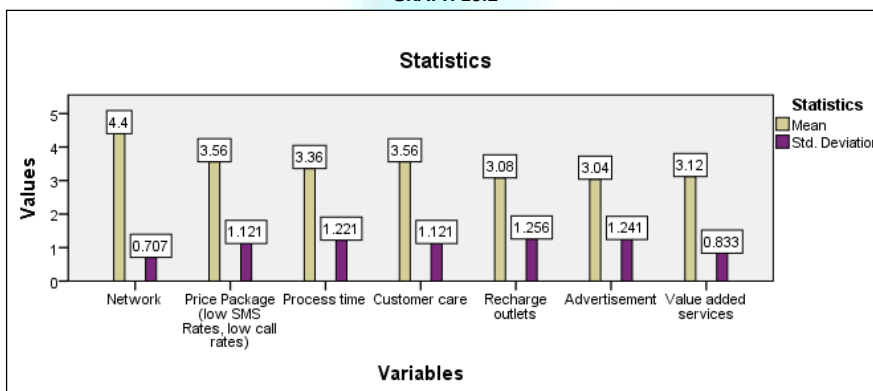


SWITCHING SUBSCRIBERS

GRAPH 10.1

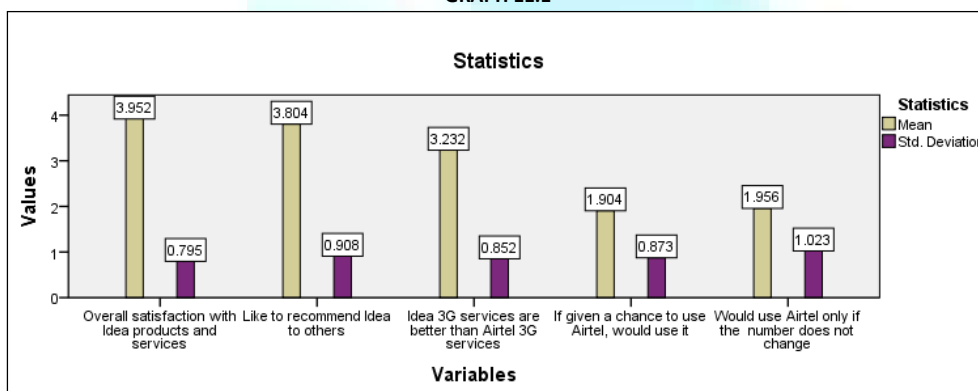


GRAPH 10.2



OVERALL SATISFACTION (CUSTOMERS)

GRAPH 11.1



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