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Factors effecting choice of Telecom Operator: An empirical evidence from Hyderabad

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Abstract: *The main aim of this paper was to analyse the factors effect selection of Telecom Service Providers (TSPs). Purposive sampling method was used to select the samples and the primary data have been collected from a total of 40 Telcom distributors by using a structured questionnaire. Data have been analysed by using one-sample t-test and ANOVA. Findings of the study reveal that Neetwork coverage, Tariff plans, Value Added Services (VAS), and Customer care services play a significant role in selection of TSPs. Moreover, it was found that the selection of Airtel and Idea were due to wider network coverage and the selection of Vodafone and DoCoMo were due to better tariff plans. Thus, the telecom service providers were suggested to focus more on these parameters to increase their market share.*

Keywords: *Telecom Service Providers (TSPs); Network Coverage; Tariff Plans; Value Added Services (VAS); Customer Care Services.*

I. INTRODUCTION

With the development of information technology, Indian telecom sector has become especially important and has the multiplier effect on the economy by way of contributing increased efficiency. This has made India an emerging economic super power. The growth in demand for telecom services in India is now not limited to basic telephone services. This driven revolution in Indian telecom sector which has major significant contribution in terms of GDP. India has evident speedy development in internet, value added services including mobile telephony. As global perspective changed in terms of economic structure, technology, marketing policies and competition resulting in massive transformation in India's growth.

Due to a fierce competition prevailing among Indian Telecom service Providers, it has become necessary for TSPs to look after the customers' needs and preferences and by revisiting their strengths and weaknesses. Thus, this study was conducted with an aim to analyse the factors effect selection TSPs.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Kumar et al. (2014) carried a study on Telecom Service providers in Silchar and they found that quality of network, customer care, VAS, connection charges (FRC), Ease of availability of the retailer selling recharge coupon, Ease of availability of retailers play important role in satisfaction towards the TSPs.

Kumar and Raju (2014) has carried out in Tier-II cities of Karnataka state with 680 mobile users using stratified random sampling to find out how customers are satisfied with the mobile service providers, especially regarding network, call cost, and customer care service. Findings of the study suggest that 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. Study suggests that mobile service providers should provide awareness on offers and legal information to the users and must provide market- based and customer- based services. 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.

Krishnan and Kothari (2008) examined the antecedents of customer relationships in the telecom sector by taking sample of 100 mobile subscribers from both genders and various age and income groups in Rajasthan. Working definition of antecedents for the study was prerequisites of a customer to enter into a relationship mode. Author identified Seven Desired Value Added Services (7DVAS) as an independent variables namely variety of service, price, advertisements, employee behavior, customer-service, accuracy in billing and timely information. The dependent variable for the study was the preferred telecom brand. Study concluded that the best indicators for brand recommendation are variety of service (value added services) and customer-service.

Khan and Afsheen (2012) study examined those factors which has a major influence on customer satisfaction. Data was collected from 150 students of five universities randomly in Peshawar region and data was analyzed using correlation and regression analysis. Results of the study indicate that customer satisfaction has significant relationship with customer service, price fairness, sales promotion, coverage, signal strength & promotion.

Vikas Gautam and Mukund Kumar (2011) and Shahzad Khan and Saima Afsheen, (2012) have found that customer care services and network coverage plays a vital role in TSP selection. Similarly the previous studies (Rajkumar Paulrajan and Harish Rajkumar, 2011; Makam S. Balaji, 2009; M.Muthuswami, Dr. Thangavel and Dr. Y.L.chaudhari ,2007; Iqbal, A., Zia, M. H., Bashir, S., Shahzad, K., & Aslam, M. W.,2008; Bhukya, R. and Singh, S.,2013;Bansal, V., & Bansal, B,2013) have been conducted on selection Telecom Service Providers and satisfaction towards their services. They found that tariff plans, VAS, customer care services, FRCs (first recharge coupons) and network quality were the important parameters considered before selecting a TSP.

Hence this study considered four major parameters- network coverage, tariff plans, customer care services and Value Added Services (VAS) and carried out to analyse their impact on TSP selection in Hyderabad.

A. Hypotheses of the study

H1: Network coverage plays a significant role in TSPs selection. (H1: $\mu > 3.5$)

H1a: There is a significant difference among various TSP distributors towards the role of Network coverage in selection of TSPs.

H2: Tariff plans plays significant role in TSPs selection. (H2: $\mu > 3.5$)

H2a: There is a significant difference among various TSP distributors towards the role of Tariff plans in selection of TSPs.

H3: Customer care plays significant role in TSPs selection. (H3: $\mu > 3.5$)

H3a: There is a significant difference among various TSP distributors towards the role of customer care in selection of TSPs.

H4: Value Added Services plays significant role in TSPs selection. (H4: $\mu > 3.5$)

H4a: There is a significant difference among various TSP distributors towards the role of Value Added Services in selection of TSPs.

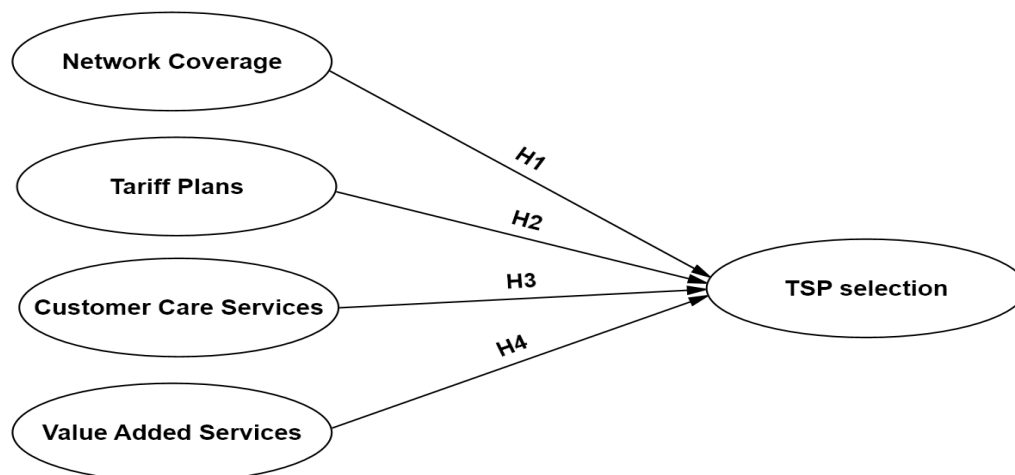


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Data source and selection of variables

Primary data have been collected from the distributors. A total of 4 major telecom service providers were considered for the study which includes- Airtel, Idea, Vodafone and DoCoMO.

B. Universe and Sample Selection

Distributors were approached by purposive sampling method, and each of them was asked to fill the questionnaires comprising questions related to four factors. Responses were recorded on 5 point scale. A total of 40 valid questionnaires were obtained from the various distributors of major telecom service providers.

C. Data analysis tools and techniques

Data have been analyzed by using SPSS 21 version. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the demographic characteristics of the respondents. One sample t-test and ANOVA test were carried out to test the hypotheses.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A. Network Coverage and Selection of TSPs

H1: Network Coverage plays significant role in TSPs selection. (H1: $\mu > 3.5$)

To test this hypothesis, one sample t-test was used and tested against the mean value set above 3.5. Which means, as the responses were recorded on 5-point Likert scale ranging 1= strongly disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree and 5= strongly agree, if mean value is above 3.5 then it can be concluded that Network Coverage plays a significant role in selection of TSPs.

Results are presented in following Tables 4.2.1(a)&(b).

Table 4.2.1(a): One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Choice of company by retailers is due to network coverage.	40	3.78	.698	.110

The Table 4.2 (a) reveals that the mean score of selection of TSP due to Network Coverage was found to be 3.78, which was greater than the test value i.e. 3.5 (agree). It means, it falls in the region between neither disagree nor agree and agree on the 5-point scale and thus it met the above criteria ($\mu \geq 3.5$).

	Test Value = 3.5				
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Result
Choice of company by retailers is due to Network Coverage	2.493	39	.017	.275	H1: Accepted

According to above table, a significant t-value ($t = 2.493$; $p = 0.017$) was found and the mean difference was to be .275. Hence, we can accept the hypothesis (H1) and can be concluded that, Network Coverage plays a significant role in selection of TSPs.

H1a: There is a significant difference among various TSP distributors towards the role of Network Coverage in selection of TSPs.

To test this hypothesis, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse whether there a significant difference exist among the various TSP distributors towards the role of Network Coverage in selection of TSPs. The result of descriptive statistics was shown in the following Tables 4.2.1 (C).

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Airtel	10	4.20	.919	.291
Idea	10	3.80	.422	.133
Vodafone	10	3.80	.632	.200
DoCoMo	10	3.30	.483	.153
Total	40	3.78	.698	.110

Looking at the above table, we can find that, the mean and standard deviation values for the distributors of Airtel were found to be ($M=4.20$, $SD= .919$), for Idea distributors these were to be ($M=3.80$, $SD=.422$), for Vodafone distributors these were to be ($M=3.80$, $SD=.632$) and for DoCoMo these were to be ($M= 3.30$, $SD= .483$).

Levene's test was conducted to know whether the homogeneity of variances of all the four TSP distributors were equal or not. We found an insignificant Levene's statistics; $F(3, 36) = 1.132$, $p = 0.349$ and hence it met the assumption of homogeneity of variances. It means, variances of all the distributors belong four TSPs were equal.

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.132	3	36	.349

According to ANOVA table, a significant $F(3, 36) = 3.282$; $p = .032$ was found. Which means that all the four TSP distributors were not of same opinion and thus they differ significantly towards the role of Network Coverage in selection of TSPs.. Hence H1a was accepted and can be concluded that there was a significant difference exists among the various distributors of TSPs towards the role of Network Coverage in selection TSPs.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Result
Between Groups	4.075	3	1.358	3.282	.032	
Within Groups	14.900	36	.414			H1a: Accepted
Total	18.975	39				

But to know further, which group of distributors differ significantly towards the role of Network Coverage in selection of TSPs, Duncan post-hoc test was conducted and the results were presented in Table.

Table 4.2.1(f): Homogeneous Subsets

Duncan ^a			
company	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
DoCoMo	10	3.30	
Idea	10	3.80	3.80
Vodafone	10	3.80	3.80
Airtel	10		4.20
Sig.		.109	.198
Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.			

From the results of Duncan Post-Hoc test, we can find that, there was a significant difference exist between the Airtel distributor and other TSPs distributors with a mean difference of 0.40 which was significant towards the role of Network Coverage in section of TSPs.

Finally, Based on the above all results, we can conclude that, the selection of Airtel was more due to Network coverage than the other TSPs.

B. Tariff Plans and Selection of TSPs

H2: Tariff plans play significant role in TSPs selection. ($H_2: \mu > 3.5$)

To test this hypothesis, one sample t-test was used and tested against the mean value set above 3.5. Which means, as the responses were recorded on 5-point Likert scale ranging 1= strongly disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree and 5= strongly agree, if mean value is above 3.5 then it can be concluded that Tariff plans plays a significant role in selection of TSPs.

Results are presented in following tables.

Table 4.2.2(a): One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Choice of company by retailers is due to customer demand	40	3.63	1.125	.178

The Table 4.3 (a) reveals that the mean score of selection of TSP due to Tariff plans was found to be 3.63, which was greater than the test value i.e. 3.5 (agree). It means, it falls in the region between neither disagree nor agree and agree on the 5-point scale and thus it met the above criteria ($\mu \geq 3.5$).

Table 4.2.2(b): One-Sample Test					
	Test Value = 3.5				Result
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	
Choice of company by retailers is due to customer demand	.703	39	.486	.125	H: Rejected

According to above table, an insignificant t-value ($t = .703$; $p = 0.486$) was found and the mean difference was to be only 0.125. Hence, we can reject the hypothesis (H2) and can be concluded that though tariff plans play a role in selection of TSPs but not significantly.

H2a: There is a significant difference among various TSP distributors towards the role of Tariff Plans in selection of TSPs.

To test this hypothesis, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse whether there a significant difference exist among the various TSP distributors towards the role of Tariff plans in selection of TSPs. The result of descriptive statistics was shown in the following Table.

Table 4.2.2(c): Descriptives				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Airtel	10	3.90	1.595	.504
Idea	10	3.40	.516	.163
Vodafone	10	4.30	.483	.153

Docomo	10	2.90	1.101	.348
Total	40	3.63	1.125	.178

Looking at the above table, we can find that, the mean and standard deviation values for the distributors of Airtel were found to be (M=3.90, SD= 1.595), for Idea distributors these were to be (M=3.40, SD=.516), for Vodafone distributors these were to be (M=4.30, SD=.483) and for DoCoMo these were to be (M= 2.90, SD= 1.101).

Levene's test was conducted to know whether the homogeneity of variances of all the four TSP distributors were equal or not. We found a significant Levene's statistics; $F(3, 36) = 6.057, p = 0.002$ and thus it did not meet the assumption of homogeneity of variances. It means, variances of all the distributors belong to four TSPs were not equal.

Table 4.2.2(d): Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Choice of company by retailers is due to customer demand				
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.	
6.057	3	36	.002	

Since the assumption of homogeneity of variances not met, an adjusted F-test such as Welch statistic was applied. The results of Welch statistics were presented in the table

According to Welch table, a significant $F(3, 18.841) = 7.296; p = .002$ was found. Which means that all the four TSP distributors were not of same opinion but differ significantly towards the role of tariff plans in selection of TSPs.. Hence H2a was accepted and can be concluded that there was a significant difference exists among the various distributors of TSPs towards the role of Tariff plans in selection TSPs.

Table 4.2.2(e): Robust Tests of Equality of Means

Choice of company by retailers is due to tariff plans				
	Statistic ^a	df1	df2	Sig.
Welch	7.296	3	18.841	.002

a. Asymptotically F distributed.

Further to know which group of distributors differ significantly towards the role of tariff plans in selection of TSPs, Games-Howell post-hoc test was conducted and the results were presented in Table.

Table 4.2.2(f): Post Hoc Tests and Multiple Comparisons

	(I) company	(J) company	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Games-Howell	Airtel	Idea	.500	.530	.783	-1.10	2.10
		Vodafone	-.400	.527	.871	-2.00	1.20
		DoCoMo	1.000	.613	.390	-.75	2.75
	Idea	Airtel	-.500	.530	.783	-2.10	1.10
		Vodafone	-.900*	.224	.004	-1.53	-.27
		DoCoMo	.500	.384	.579	-.63	1.63
	Vodafone	Airtel	.400	.527	.871	-1.20	2.00
		Idea	.900*	.224	.004	.27	1.53
		DoCoMo	1.400*	.380	.014	.28	2.52
	DoCoMo	Airtel	-1.000	.613	.390	-2.75	.75
		Idea	-.500	.384	.579	-1.63	.63
		Vodafone	-1.400*	.380	.014	-2.52	-.28

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

From the results of Games-Howell test, we can find that, there was a significant difference exist between the TSP distributors of Vodafone and the other TSPs distributors with a mean difference of more than 0.90 which was significant towards the role of tariff plans in selection of TSPs.

Finally, Based on the above all results, we can conclude that, the selection of Vodafone was more due to Tariff plans than the other TSPs.

C. Customer Care and Selection of TSPs

H3: Customer care plays a significant role in TSPs selection ($H3: \mu > 3.5$).

To test this hypothesis, one sample t-test was used and tested against the mean value set above 3.5. Which means, as the responses were recorded on 5-point Likert scale ranging 1= strongly disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree and 5= strongly agree, if mean value is above 3.5 then it can be concluded that customer care plays a significant role in selection of TSPs.

Results are presented in following tables.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Retailers chose particular company due to customer care services	40	4.25	.670	.106

The Table 4.3 (a) reveals that the mean score of selection of TSP due to customer care services was found to be 4.25, which was greater than the test value i.e. 3.5 (agree). It means, it falls in the region between Agree and strongly agree on the 5-point scale and thus it met the above criteria ($\mu \geq 3.5$).

	Test Value = 3.5			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Retailers chose particular company due to service quality	7.081	39	.000	.750

According to above table, a significant t-value ($t=7.081$; $p=0.000$) was found and the mean difference was as high as 0.750. Hence, we can accept the hypothesis (H3) and can be concluded that, customer care services plays a significant role in selection of TSPs.

H3a: There is a significant difference among various TSP distributors towards the role of Tariff Plans in selection of TSPs.

To test this hypothesis, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse whether there a significant difference exist among the various TSP distributors towards the role of customer care services in selection of TSPs. The result of descriptive statistics was shown in the following Table.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Airtel	10	4.30	.949	.300
Idea	10	4.40	.516	.163
Vodafone	10	4.40	.516	.163
DoCoMo	10	3.90	.568	.180
Total	40	4.25	.670	.106

Looking at the above table, we can find that, the mean and standard deviation values for the distributors of Airtel were found to be ($M=4.30$, $SD=.949$), for Idea distributors these were to be ($M=4.40$, $SD=.516$), for Vodafone distributors these were to be ($M=4.40$, $SD=.516$) and for DoCoMo these were to be ($M=3.90$, $SD=.568$).

Levene's test was conducted to know whether the homogeneity of variances of all the four TSP distributors were equal or not. We found an insignificant Levene's statistics; $F(3, 36) = 1.1448$, $p = 0.245$ and hence it met the assumption of homogeneity of variances. It means, variances of all the four group of TSP distributors were equal. Hence ANOVA was carried out.

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.448	3	36	.245

According to ANOVA table, an insignificant F (3, 36) =1.291; $p =.292$ was found. Which means that all the four TSP distributors were of same opinion and thus they differ significantly towards the role of tariff plans in selection of TSPs..

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.700	3	.567	1.291	.292
Within Groups	15.800	36	.439		
Total	17.500	39			

Hence H3a was rejected and can be concluded that there was no significant difference exists among the various distributors of TSPs towards the role of customer care services in selection TSPs.

D. Value Added Services and Selection of TSPs

H4: Value Added Services plays a significant role in TSPs selection (H4: $\mu > 3.5$).

To test this hypothesis, one sample t-test was used and tested against the mean value set above 3.5. Which means, as the responses were recorded on 5-point Likert scale ranging 1= strongly disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree and 5= strongly agree, if mean value is above 3.5 then it can be concluded that Value Added Services play a significant role in selection of TSPs.

Results are presented in following tables.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Retailers choice was due to Value Added Services	40	3.98	1.000	.158

The Table 4.2.4 (a) reveals that the mean score of selection of TSP due to Value Added Services was found to be 3.98, which was greater than the test value i.e. 3.5 (agree). Thus it falls in the region between neither disagree nor agree and agree on the 5-point scale and thus it met the above criteria ($\mu \geq 3.5$).

	Test Value = 3.5			
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Retailers chose particular company due to Value Added Services	3.005	39	.005	.475

According to above Table 4.2.4(b), a significant t-value ($t = 3.005$; $p = 0.005$) was found and the mean difference was to be .475. Hence, we can accept the hypothesis (H4) and can be concluded that, Value Added Services play a significant role in selection of TSPs.

H4a: There is a significant difference among various TSP distributors towards the role of Value Added Services in selection of TSPs.

To test this hypothesis, one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse whether there a significant difference exist among the various TSP distributors towards the role of Value Added Services in selection of TSPs. The result of descriptive statistics was shown in the following Table.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Airtel	10	3.80	.919	.291
Idea	10	4.20	.789	.249
Vodafone	10	4.40	.516	.163
DoCoMo	10	3.50	1.434	.453
Total	40	3.98	1.000	.158

Looking at the above table, we can find that, the mean and standard deviation values for the distributors of Airtel were found to be (M=3.80, SD= .919), for Idea distributors these were to be (M=4.20, SD=.789), for Vodafone distributors these were to be (M=4.40, SD=.516) and for DoCoMo these were to be (M= 3.50, SD= 1.434).

Levene's test was conducted to know whether the homogeneity of variances of all the four TSP distributors were equal or not. We found an insignificant Levene's statistics; $F(3, 36) = 2.295, p = 0.094$ and hence it met the assumption of homogeneity of variances. It means, variances in all the four groups of TSP distributors were equal. Hence ANOVA was carried out for the analysis.

Table 4.2.4(d): Test of Homogeneity of Variances					
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.		
2.295	3	36	.094		
Table 4.2.4(e): ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.875	3	1.625	1.716	.181
Within Groups	34.100	36	.947		
Total	38.975	39			

According to ANOVA table, a significant $F(3, 36) = 1.716; p = 0.181$ was found. Which means that all the four TSP distributors were of same opinion and thus they do not differ significantly towards the role of Value Added Services in selection of TSPs. Hence H4a was accepted and can be concluded that there was no significant difference exists among the various distributors of TSPs towards the role of Value Added Services in selection TSPs.

V. FINDING AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings of the study reveal that network coverage, tariff plans, customer care services and value added services play a significant role in selection of telecom service providers (TSPs) and thus this findings were in line with the findings of previous studies. It is obvious that the most of customers choose a TSP which has a wider network coverage since it was related call quality. Hence, TSPs should focus more on providing quality of network for their subscribers. In today's competition era, it became a heavy task for TSPs to attract new customers and simultaneously retaining them. These problems can be overcome only by providing better customer care services, competitive tariff plans and various range of value added service. Thus, Telecom service providers are suggested to focus much on these parameters to attract new customers and retain existing subscriber base.

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