

Original Research Article

## Determining Customer Preference Glassy of Prepaid Cellular Services Users in Civic Area of Gujarat State

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### ABSTRACT

The study goals to measure and relate the actual preference and superficial expectation level of prepaid cellular services users in Gujarat Telecom Circle. In this study 235 respondents were randomly considered for investigation in civic area of Gujarat State by consisting the variables like; superficial quality superficial value, perceived expectations; repurchase likelihood, Customer complaints and price tolerance. Our research model is based on American Customer Satisfaction Model (ACSM) the collected data conclude customers' high level of perceived expectations, superficial quality and superficial value. The findings also conclude on positive attitude of highly satisfied customers on repurchase likelihood and willingness to pay more money to sustain the services where as customer complaints are negatively correlated with customer satisfaction in Gujarat Telecom Circle. In conclusion, the findings suggest that customers have high expectations that are fulfilled by the mobile phone services providers to some extent in Gujarat Telecom Circle.

**Key Words:** Superficial quality superficial value, perceived expectations, repurchases likelihood, customer complaints and price tolerance.

### INTRODUCTION

Indian cellular service sector is committed to help and to sustain World class cellular infrastructure and deliver the benefits of an affordable mobile communicating service to the people of India. India's mobile teledensity is 75.48 by the end of september2011 (www.trai.gov.in) Gujarat telecom circle has posted 375 million activated mobile connections by the end of September, 2011 (www.trai.gov.in) The sharp rise in mobile phone connections has been driven by existing and new cellular services providers (CSPs) who have aggressively marketed and sold their connections in Gujarat Telecom Circle which is resulted in hike on multiple users in Gujarat telecom circle. The market share of CSPs in Gujarat Telecom Circle is as follows:

Market share of CSPs in Gujarat Telecom Circle September, 2011 (Source: www.trai.gov.in)

The market share of CSPs in Gujarat state is divided into three segments. i.e. market leader, market struggler and market challenger. The private CSPs have a market leadership in Gujarat circle like Bharti Airtel, Vodafone, Idea cellular and lateral entry of Uninor. The state owned company Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited has occupied its position as a market struggler by posting less than 15% market share of the total market.

There are eleven CSPs in Gujarat Telecom Circle but six of them are considered for our study as GSM services providers and have maximum penetration of consumers' minds. Various cities are considered as major cities for sampling

purpose. The study is limited up to the prepaid cellular services with a view to measure the customer satisfaction. The customer satisfaction in prepaid cellular services varies with needs, wants and demands of customers as well as availability of services accordingly. Customer satisfaction generally regarded as customer reaction to the state of fulfillment and customer judgment of the fulfilled state. (Oliver.1997) Customer satisfaction is concerned with the services provided to and perceived by the customers, if there is high matching between perceived and provided services than customer satisfaction level is very high that directly leads to higher customer loyalty for cellular service provider and vice versa. The main determinants for creating high level of customer satisfaction are price, call quality, perceptions, values, network availability and network coverage. All of them, customer's own perceptions are playing key role on creating high level of customer satisfaction. (Zeitharnal & Bitner, 1996)

This study is focused on customer perceptions, actual experience and the after effects. The customer satisfaction level leads high customer loyalty when cellular service provider fulfills his promises towards perceptions of customer that will increase profitability, brand image and also will reduce the costs of marketing activities. It will also lead to minimize customer complaints and ultimately Company's market share will increase.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The reviewed literature for the research work is mainly concentrated on variables like; perceived quality, perceived value, perceived expectations, customer satisfaction price tolerance, customer complaints and repurchase likelihood.

Superficial quality means customer's awareness of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service with respect to its intended purpose, relative to alternatives. Perceived quality is perception by customers which differs from the

concepts like; actual or objective quality, product- based quality and manufacturing quality. Perceived quality is the consumer's judgment about a product's overall excellence or superiority (Zeithaml, 1988) All the Cellular Service Providers (CSPs) are busy to grab maximum market share in India as over all tele-density in cellular services is 73.27 by October, 2011 (www.trai.govin) Perceived product quality is a global assessment ranging from "worst" to "best" characterized by a high abstraction level and refers to a specific consumption setting.

The importance of perceived quality derives from its beneficial impact on purchase intentions, although contradictory research findings have been reported in literature. Some of the scholars favor a positive effect of perceived quality on purchase intentions (Carman 1990, Boulding, Staeliu and Zethaml 1993: Parsuraman et al 1996), others report only an indirect effect through satisfaction (Cronin and Tailor 1992) and yet some others argue that both relationships exist However, it is of the note that direct and indirect effect of perceived product quality on purchase intention of it has been found for goods and whereas the single effects have been reported from the studies focused on services. Perceived quality is generally treated as a post -purchases construct (Holbrook & Hirschman 1982; Roest & Pieter's (1997) Some scholars (Rust & Oliver 1994) support the notion that the perceived quality is both a pre- and post-purchase construct as they argue that a previous product experience is not necessary to assess quality. Marketing experts agree on existence of relationship between perceived product quality and purchase intentions. Improved service quality can lead to improved customer perception of the brand's quality (Zhao & Hu 2002), Palkar (2004) proposed that perceived quality is the important factor that has greater influence on the customer satisfaction.

Superficial value means the value of a product based on how much customers want or need it, rather than its real price. It is related to the price dimensions of cellular services. The business is always profit oriented. The global CSPs are in Indian Telecom war with a view to maximize profit. In order to fulfill the basic and expected customer value companies do not have to put so much effort into what they are doing (Gunnar & Malin, 2006) Indian Mobile Service sector is struggling to maintain sustainable growth even though the industry has been successful in providing affordable cellular services. The CSPs are required to increase the switching cost in order to increase lifetime customer value and customer retention by implementing relationship-oriented marketing strategies (Hankel et.al 2006) An intention is to adopt or reject a cellular service appears to be determined to a greater extent by perceived benefits than by perceived barriers (Ancker et.al 2003).

Perceived expectations means making something happen physically because you subconsciously want to happen. It can be said that perceived expectations are the desired factors of services. The cellular service providers are striving to capture maximum market share in India The customers expect CSPs will meet their requirements accurately (Turel & Serenko, 2004) Indian customers are getting various types of services in mobile telecom sector and CSPs are engaged to introduce different packages and as a result, customer expectations level seems high either in new services or packages. New mobile services are seldom perceived as superior to existing alternatives (Heinonen & Anderson, 2003) If customer expectations are low with cellular service providers than customers may be inclined to consider switching more frequently (Lin, 2002) It is needed to concentrate on building trust in mobile sites with structural assurance (You et. al, 2002). If the companies service, complaints and value with the customers in focus, their

expectations can be exceeded (Gunnar & Malin, 2006)

In a general sense, customer satisfaction means the degree of fulfillment perceived expectations and the actual services provided by cellular services providers. Heavy investments are made to maximize customer satisfaction level but only increasing the resources alone to increase levels of customer satisfaction levels Thus there must be other factors leading to improve customer satisfaction as pointed by Gunnar and Malin (2006) that customer satisfaction is achieved through good qualitative and quantitative services. Value-added services offered by CSPs can increase both customer satisfaction and total usage which in turn reduce churn rate, increase revenue and repurchase of entire service in future (Henkel et. al. 2006) Another study says that call quality, value added services and customer support play a significant role in building customer satisfaction for cellular service subscribers and they tend to keep using current service at the level of the customer satisfaction is high that leads to customer loyalty.(Kim et. al. 2004)

There is a little literature on price tolerance; it has gradually received the attention of researchers and managers (Herrmann et. al. 2004) Defines price tolerance as a consumer refusal to change purchasing behaviors prior to the price of a product is increased to the maximum. According to past marketing views, price tolerance is generally listed as one of the dimensions of customer loyalty (Zeithaml, Berry and Parsuraman, 1996) In other words, price tolerance represents a type of customer loyalty behavior. If the customer produces the loyal attitude towards a specific enterprise, price tolerance will increase accordingly.

As every service firm cannot meet absolutely with the expectation of each and every customer's or could be technical limitations but Total Quality Management (TQM) indicates that there will be continuous improvement in each and every

step in order to remove faults and flaws The cellular services providers should have strive to minimize customer's inconvenience by speedily processing customer's complaints through a variety of systems and channels.(Kim et.al. 2004) Palkar (2004) determined that the service support appeared to be an important quality element of cellular service to improve customer satisfaction. As net work dependability reliability and survivability are the main determinants of customer satisfaction (Snow et.al.2000) so it is necessary to make suitable arrangements to control the complaint ratio. In managing relationships with customers and organizations should consider perceptions of justice to improve customer satisfaction; especially after service failure occurrence. Satisfaction; especially after service failures occurs (Smith et. al, 1999)

Repurchase likelihood refers to the intention of customer to purchase the same services often on the basis of requirement. Since a highly satisfied customer is the best marketing tool for any organization so highly satisfied customers result in more positive word of mouth and repurchase intentions (Wengainhem & Bayon 2001) High customer satisfaction level increases the repurchase likelihood of the customer and reduces the customer churn. (Henkel et. al. 2006 Turel & Serenko 2004)

The theoretical frame work of this research is based on American Customer Satisfaction Model (ACSM) which reveals the co-relation of customer perceived expectations, actual experience and after effects. Perceived quality depends on past experience word of mouth and future anticipation of cellular service qualities. Customer can be highly satisfied by matching customer expectations and service quality. It can be said that there is a direct correlation between perceived quality and customer satisfaction. A customer has a mind set for to pay on getting good quality of cellular services Customers are also expecting higher values with relatively low expanses.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research objectives are as follows;

1. To study relationship between customer satisfaction and superficial quality of a customer.
2. To study relationship between customer satisfaction and superficial value of a customer.
3. To study relationship between customer satisfaction and perceived expectations of a customer.
4. To study relationship between customer satisfaction and price tolerance of a customer.
5. To study relationship between customer satisfaction and customer complaints of a customer.
6. To study relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase likelihood of a customer.

### Formation of Hypothesis:

The following hypotheses are formed by considering the above study objectives:

**H1:** There is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and superficial quality.

**H2:** There is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and superficial value,

**H3:** There is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and perceived expectations.

**H4:** There is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and price tolerance.

**H5:** There is a negative relationship between customer satisfaction and customer complaints

**H6:** There is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase likelihood.

A 5 Likert scale survey questionnaire consists of variables specifically, perceived quality, perceived value, perceived expectations, customer satisfaction, price tolerance, customer complaints and purchase likelihood. Cities of Gujarat state were taken into consideration for distributing the questionnaire to 500 cellular services users; randomly the survey questionnaire was distributed through email and in person. We

received back 260 filled questionnaires from the respondents from all the four cities. It is found that 235 questionnaire sheets were maintainable for checking hypothesis as 25 responses found fake or insufficient for due consideration. The accepted model for the research is American Customer Satisfaction Model.

### Findings

The following findings are as the result of data analysis. The major six CSPs are taken into the consideration for the purpose of sampling size. They are; Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited as state-owned company and Airtel, Vodafone, Reliance, Uninor and Idea. Their contribution in Gujarat Telecom Circle in major four cities is as table-1. The findings shows that the highest market is captured by Airtel in Ahmadabad, Vadodara, Rajkot and Surat and lowest is Videocon among the all six major CSPs. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited is state-owned public sector enterprise and struggling for its better occupation in all the four major cities of Gujarat.

**Table-1: Contribution of different CSPs Users in civic area of Gujarat Telecom Circle**

Sr.No	Name of CSP	Respondents	p.c
1	BSNL	53	22.55%
2	Airtel	57	24.25%
3	Idea	61	26%
4	Vodafone	58	64.68%
5	Reliance	6	2.55%
<b>Total</b>		<b>235</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table-2 indicates the percentage of duration of respondents using mobile phone services 53% of the users are using services of the same CSP.47% of the respondents switched from one CSP to another CSP The personal usage observed as 60.38%, 24.30% usages on business purpose. 9.36% usage is on emergency base and 7.66% usage observed as all purposes like; personal, work and emergencies.

**Table-2: Respondents' Period on using Cellular Services**

Sr. No	Period	p.c
1	<2 years	57.45%
2	3-2 years	20.85%
3	3-4 years	9.79%
4	4-5 years	7.40%
5	e" 5 years	4.51%

Table-3 indicates usage of value added services by the respondents. Text Messages usage observed as 89.36%., picture messaging as 42.98%, voice mail as 29.79%, download ring tones as 41 28%, voice activated dialing as 11.91%, wireless and internet as 14.47%, roaming as 10.21%, information services as 31.48% and usage of all value added services observed as 1.28% by the respondents.

**Table-3 VAS Service Usage by Respondents**

Sr. No	Value Added Service	No of Respondents	p.c
1	Text Messages	210	89.36%
2	Picture Messages	101	42.98%
3	Voice Mail	70	29.79%
4	Down Ring tones	97	41.28%
5	Voice activated dialing	28	11.91%
6	Wireless Internet	34	14.47%
7	Roaming	24	10.21%
8	Information Services	74	31.48%
9	All	3	1.28%

Table-4 indicates daily usage of mobile phone services by the respondents in context to incoming/outgoing calls, SMS sent/received and total consumption as calls per day. 10.64% of entire sample consume Rs 100 per month for mobile services. 20.43% consumes Rs.200 per month and 69% respondents consume Rs.300 or more per month 17.69% of total respondents would like to switch over from prepaid services to postpaid mobile phone services and the rest of t h e respondents would like to sustain the entire service. 27% of the total respondents have made calls or visited the customer care centers for complaints purpose. 87% out of them received prompt response from the customer care centers.

**Table-4 Cellular Usage by Respondents**

Sr. No	Total Calls per day	Outgoing calls(p.c.)	Incoming calls (pc)	SMS sent	SMS Received	Talk time (minutes)
1	<10	62.55%	49.79%	37%	33.2%	25.53%
2	11-20	20%	24.68%	27.66%	27.83%	27.66%
3	21-30	10.64%	14.89%	11.69%	11.91%	19.57%
4	31-40	4.26%	6.81%	11.36%	12.17%	10.21%
5	>40	2.55%	3.83%	12.30%	14.89%	17.03%

Table-5 indicates the results of correlations. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed.) Hypothesis H1, H2 and H3 of the study shows that actual customer satisfaction has significant correlation with perceived expectation (0.585\*\* p <0.01), perceived quality (0.567\*\* p < 0.01) and perceived value (0.517\*\* p <0.01)

Repurchase likelihood is significantly correlated with customer satisfaction (0.482\*\* p <0.01). Price tolerance is significantly correlated with customer satisfaction (0.497\*\* p <0.01) Customer complaints are negatively correlated with customer satisfaction -0.102)

**Table-5: Correlation Results**

Sr. No	Variable	Mean	S.D.	ACS	PE	PQ	PV	RL	PT	CC
1	ACS	3.726	0.300	I						
2	PE	3.675	0.332	0.585**	I					
3	PQ	3.579	0.351	0.567**	0.515**	I				
4	PV	3.524	0.288	0.517**	0.469**	0.517**	I			
5	RL	3.556	0.320	0.482**	0.541**	0.499**	0.579**	I		
6	PT	3.401	0.222	0.497**	0.432**	0.453**	0.436**	0.509**	I	
7	CC	2.512	0.575	-0.102	-0.034	-0.034	-0.030	0.041	0.004	I

Table-6 indicates on regression results. Customer Satisfaction is the dependent variable and standard error of the estimate is considered as 0.220. R2 is 0.468 and adjusted. R2 is 0.461. significance is zero and F=67.286. Perceived Expectations B-value is 0.307 whereas B-value of constant is 0.958. Perceived Expectations: t-value is 4.766 whereas t-value of constant is 4.766. Perceived Expectations: p-value is 3.33E-06. whereas p-value of constant is 3.33E-06. Perceived Quality: Beta value is 0.242 whereas B-value of constant is 0.958. , t-value is 4.696 and t-value of constant is 4.696. And p-value is 4.56E-06. whereas p-value of constant is 3.33E-06. whereas B-value of constant is 0.958. Perceived Value: B-value is 0.219. Then Perceived Value: t-value is 3.395 whereas its p-value is 0.0004. Significance of all the variables is zero. Repurchase likelihood R2 is 0.233 F is 69.985 adjusted R2 is 0.229 significance is zero. Its standard error of the estimate is 0.194. Repurchase likelihood Beta value is 0.514 t-values is 8.366 and p-value is 5.69E-15. Price Tolerance: R2 is 0.233 and adjusted R2 is 0.244. F is 75.778 significance is zero whereas standard error of the estimate is 0.194. Price Tolerance: Beta value is 0.369 and constant is 2.086. Its t-value is 8.705 and constant value is 13.163. Price Tolerance: p-value is 6.12E-16 and its constant value is 6.73E-30. The customer complaints as dependent variable

give the results as its R2 is 0.010 and adjusted R2 is 0.006. F is 2.408. Significance is zero. Customer Complaints:

Its standard error of the estimate is 0.5734. B-value of the same is -0.195 and 3.326 of its constant. The t-value of customer complaints is -1.552 whereas t-value of constant is 6.907. The p-value of customer complaints is 0.1221 whereas p-value of constant is 4.76E-11. Significances of customer complaints is 0.122 whereas constant is 0.000. The rest of the relevant values are mentioned in table- 6.

**Table-6: Regression Results**

	Beta	p-value	t-value	significance
constant	0.958	4.766	3.33E-06	0.000
PE	0.307	5.815	2.02E-08	0.000
PQ	0.242	4.696	4.56E-06	0.000
PV	0.219	3.595	0.0004	0.000

R2= 0.468 Adjusted R2= 0.461  
Standard Error of the Estimate= 0.220  
F= 67.286 Significance.= 0.000  
Standard Error of the Estimate= 0.220

**Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction**

	Beta	t-value	p-value	Significance
Constant	1.640	7.133	1.125E-11	0.000

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the last eleven years, Indian mobile phone revolution has truly changed the socio-economic landscape by promising and providing world best cellular services by posting 632.08 million GSM connections by the end of Nov.2011. (www.coai.in) Gujarat circle has posted 37.8 million GSM connections and occupied maximum MNP requests among the all telecom circles

(22.38 millions) by the end of October, 2011. The major CSPs in Gujarat are Airtel, BSNL, Vodafone, Idea and Uninor. The people of Gujarat use their cellular services for the purpose of business, personal use and emergencies. The respondents considered from the four cities which have different perceptions, opinions and remarks on using cellular services due to regional cultural issues.

The findings conclude from data analysis that customers have a high level of perceived expectations (0.585\*\*,  $p < 0.01$ ) with CSPs in cities. The customers are using cellular services on the basis of their purposes and requirements. Customers having a substantial level of perceived expectations are satisfied easily by the cellular services providers.

The customers have also a high level of perceived quality (0.567\*\*,  $p < 0.01$ ) in the cities of Gujarat state. The urban telephony needs excellent network coverage and the best sales after services. The consumers of Gujarat are regarded as price-conscious consumers as a result they may have a high level of perceived value (0.517\*\*,  $p < 0.01$ ) in terms of money. It is also observed from the study that there is a slight difference in perceived value both in prepaid and post-paid cellular services users. It is also observed from this study that post-paid customers are more loyal to company as compared to prepaid cellular users. In addition to this, post-paid customers are more satisfied with their services in comparison to prepaid cellular services users because of some technological constraints. The customers who are highly satisfied with the services with the cellular services would like to repurchase the same cellular services (0.482\*\*,  $p < 0.01$ ) as the level of satisfaction increases. The customers who are highly satisfied would like to pay more (0.497\*\*,  $p < 0.01$ ) to sustain the cellular services in comparison to prepaid cellular services users because of some technological constraints. The customers who are highly satisfied with the services with the cellular services would like to

repurchase the same cellular services (0.482\*\*,  $p < 0.01$ ) as the level of satisfaction increases. The customers who are highly satisfied would like to pay more (0.497\*\*,  $p < 0.01$ ) to sustain the cellular services in cities of Gujarat state. Customer complaints are reported as negatively correlated with customer satisfaction (-0.102) which reveals that the customer is highly satisfied so the customer will less used to complain to all cellular services providers in cities of Gujarat stateside.

#### **Implications:**

Gujarat state is so called as the land of business and occupied its special status among the all states of India. The mobile phone industry has changed the lifestyle of Gujarati people. This study reveals the perception of cellular users in context of value, quality and overall expectations and at the same the effectiveness of customer satisfaction on price tolerance, customer complaints and repurchases likelihood of Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Rajkot and Surat. The cellular services providers in Gujarat circle can be benefitted with this study to realize the perceptions and level of satisfaction on repurchase likelihood, customer complaints and price tolerance. That leads to higher customer loyalty.

#### **Future Research and Limitations of the study:**

This study has consists four cities of Gujarat state for sampling as urban area which can be extended for all the cities by considering a larger sampling size. The sample size is (N=235) considered as randomly in four cities which is very small as compared to the entire population and cellular users in Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Rajkot and Surat. There can be done further research by considering a larger sample size with a view to generalize the results.

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