CHAPTER-7
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It has been proved over the years that CRM is more than just software used for relationship building with consumers. It is a philosophy of doing business, a way of working, an organizational strategy that drives functional plans and a tool that uses IT to build and enhance relationships. The objective of an organization making use of CRM practices is to enhance its top-line as well as the bottom-line, through improvements in productivity and efficiency.

CRM plays an important role in analyzing the customer base through the use of IT-enabled techniques like data warehousing and data mining. Interpretations of customer usage patterns and past customer behavior can throw light on expected customer moves. This helps an organization in improving revenues as well as profitability over expected lifetimes of their customers. The quantum of revenue earned from customers depends on how much customer data is available with the organization, how much of it is used, and the way in which it is used.

As a result of very fast growth seen in the telecom market in India, many organizations have jumped in the fray leading to a very competitive environment in the telecom space. Of late, however, a fall in the tariffs coupled with a rise in spectrum costs has led to a tighter environment and a possibility of extinction of some uncompetitive players from the market. In such an environment, the emphasis on CRM has increased.

In the competitive telecom sector, right offerings and customized solutions to the potential and existing subscribers can be made on the basis of elaborate customer database and through the use of appropriate technology using a CRM approach. The telecom service providers can thus enter into long-term relationships with the identified and prioritized segments of customers and aim to beat their competitors. A customized and targeted approach, using CRM practices, can go a long way in helping the service providers to improve their margins in a low-tariff market.

The present study has analyzed the perceptions, with respect to CRM practices, of the consumers as well as executives of telecom service providers providing mobile phone services in the Punjab Telecom Circle.
7.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following specific objectives have been pursued for the purpose of the present study:

1. To investigate the various CRM practices being used by the existing telecom service providers in Punjab.
2. To examine the consumer expectations and perceptions towards the CRM practices used by telecom service providers.
3. To analyze the resultant consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction levels.
4. To suggest implications to the telecom service providers.

7.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of the present study, the telecom sector refers to telecom service providers and not the equipment manufacturers. The scope has been limited to the service providers only, as a study of CRM practices holds more relevance in the context of the service sector rather than the manufacturing sector.

The study covers the telecom service providers and their consumers in the Punjab Telecom Circle. The circle has been divided into eleven telecom districts, out of which five telecom districts, namely, Ludhiana, Chandigarh, Jalandhar, Amritsar and Patiala represent around 70-80% of the telecom subscriber base of the circle. Therefore, a study of consumers of these five districts is largely representative of a study of consumers of the whole circle. Punjab has also been traditionally divided into three belts of Majha, Malwa and Doaba. Two telecom districts, namely, Amritsar and Jalandhar represent Majha and the Doaba belts respectively whereas the telecom districts of Ludhiana and Patiala represent the Malwa region. Chandigarh has been included in the universe of study, because it is one of the top five telecom districts of the circle in terms of subscriber base, and is also the capital of Punjab.

The scope of the study has been limited to users of mobile phone services only. Nine telecom service providers providing mobile phone services, namely, Airtel, Idea, Vodafone, BSNL, Reliance, Docomo, Tata Indicom, Videocon (Connect) and Aircel.
450 consumers, based on convenience sampling, have been included in the survey on consumers. The word ‘consumers’, for the purpose of the present study, refers to retail consumers. 108 executives, twelve from each of the nine telecom service providers, have been administered a separate questionnaire meant for studying their perceptions. Front-end executives, who have directly interacted with the retail consumers at some point of time, have been included in the study. The respective questionnaires have been pre-tested on 50 consumers and 30 executives for checking the validity and reliability of various constructs used in the study.

A number of demographic variables like gender, age group, family-income level, educational level and occupation have been included in the questionnaire for consumers. The mobile phone consumers have also been segmented on the basis of ‘type of service’ which means the pre-paid or post-paid service. Comparative analysis has been carried out based on two variables, namely, ‘type of service’ (pre-paid and post-paid) and ‘gender’ (male and female). These variables have been considered more relevant than other variables, on the basis of review of some studies and also on the basis of opinions of academicians and practitioners in the area. Techniques of simple regression analysis, chi-square test, Kruskal-Wallis (H Test), independent and paired samples t-test have been applied to test various hypotheses while analyzing the data. Ranking of statements has been done by using the method of weighted rankings.

7.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY ON CONSUMERS

There are 310 pre-paid consumers (68.9%) and 140 post-paid consumers (31.1%) in the sample. The male consumers are 258 (57.3%) and the female consumers are 192 in number (42.7 %). Most of the consumers in the sample use services of Airtel, Vodafone, BSNL and Idea. This is followed by consumers using services of Reliance, Docomo, Tata Indicom, Aircel, and Videocon. The findings of the survey on consumers are summarized below.

Reasons for Choosing the Type of Service

Most of the pre-paid respondents, irrespective of gender, have stated that ‘Freedom from bills and billing problems’ is the most important reason for choosing the pre-paid service for their mobile phone connection. Around one-third of them have given ‘Monthly expense management’,
and almost another one-third of them have mentioned ‘Lower rates for calls and SMS’ as reasons for choosing the pre-paid service.

On the other hand, most of the post-paid respondents, irrespective of gender, have expressed that ‘Unlimited calls unlike the pre-paid option’ is the most important reason for choosing the post-paid service for the mobile phone connection. Almost one-third of the respondents have cited ‘Wider choice of tariff plans’ and another one-third have mentioned ‘Credit-Payment after usage’ as reasons for choosing the post-paid service.

**Influencers in Selection of the Telecom Service Provider**

It has been found that, irrespective of the type of service and gender, ‘Recommendations of known users’, who act as opinion leaders, have maximum influence in the selection of the service provider. This is followed by ‘Television advertisement’ and ‘Print advertisement’, in that order. According to both the post-paid and the male consumers, ‘Recommendations of salespeople’, ‘Outdoor advertisement’ and ‘Internet advertisement’, in that order, are the other influencers in the selection of the service provider. ‘Outdoor advertisement’, ‘Recommendations of salespeople’, and ‘Internet advertisement’, in that order, have been found to be influencing the decision of both the pre-paid and the female consumers.

**Duration of Service Usage**

Around three-fifths of consumers have been using the mobile phone services of their current service provider for 1-5 years. Almost one-fifth of respondents have been using the services for ‘more than 5 years’ and another one-fifth have been using them for ‘less than a year’.

Significant differences have been observed, at 5 per cent level of significance, between the pre-paid and post-paid consumers, with respect to the duration of service usage. Relatively more of the post-paid consumers, as compared to the pre-paid consumers, have been found to be using the services of their current service provider for a longer duration. The percentage of the post-paid consumers using the services for ‘more than 5 years’ has been found to be double than that of the pre-paid consumers. Also, the number of post-paid respondents using the services for ‘less than a year’ has been found to be around one-third of that of the pre-paid respondents.
Significant differences have also been found, at 5 per cent level of significance, between male and female consumers, with respect to the duration of service usage. Majority of the male as well as female consumers have been found to be using the services for 1-5 years. However, the percentage of male consumers using the services for ‘less than a year’ has been found to be more than that of the female consumers where as the percentage of female consumers using the services for ‘more than 5 years’ has been noted to be more than that of the male consumers.

**Monthly expenditure of Consumers on the Mobile Phone Connection**

An overwhelming majority of consumers (85.8%) incur monthly expenditure of less than ₹ 1000 on their mobile phone services. Around one-tenth of respondents have been found to be spending in the ‘₹ 1000-1500’ range per month on the mobile services. A small percentage of respondents have been seen to be having the monthly expenses in the ‘₹ 1500 above’ category.

Type of service-wise analysis has revealed that that there are significant differences, at 5 per cent level of significance, between the pre-paid and post-paid consumers, with respect to the monthly expenditure. Almost all the pre-paid consumers (92.3%), as compared to around three-fourths of the post-paid consumers, spend less than ₹ 1000 on a monthly basis. Of this, most of the post-paid consumers spend in the range of ‘₹ 500-1000’ on a monthly basis whereas a large majority of the pre-paid consumers have a monthly expenditure of ‘less than ₹ 500’ on the mobile phone services. The percentage of post-paid consumers spending in the range of ‘₹ 1000-1500’ has been found as being three times that of the pre-paid consumers in the same category. Similarly, the percentage of post-paid consumers spending ‘₹ 1500 and above’ per month has been seen as being eight times that of the pre-paid consumers in the same category.

Gender-wise analysis has revealed that there are significant differences, at 5 per cent level of significance, between male and female consumers with respect to the monthly expenditure. An overwhelming majority of the female consumers (90.6%), compared to around four-fifths of the male consumers, has been found to be spending less than ₹ 1000 on the mobile phone services. The percentage of female consumers spending ‘less than ₹ 500’ per month has been seen to be much higher than that of the male consumers.
Awareness about CRM

The analysis has revealed that more than three-fourths of the respondents are aware of the concept of CRM either ‘to a moderate extent’ or ‘to some extent’. Around one-tenth of the respondents are aware of the concept of CRM ‘to a great extent’.

It has been observed that the post-paid consumers are more aware about the concept of CRM as compared to the pre-paid consumers. An overwhelming majority of the post-paid consumers (84.3%), as compared to 72.3 per cent of the pre-paid consumers, are aware of the concept of CRM either ‘to a moderate extent’ or ‘to some extent’. Significant differences have been observed, at 5 per cent level of significance, between the pre-paid and post-paid consumers, with respect to awareness about the concept of CRM.

However, no significant differences have been seen, at 5 per cent level of significance, between male and female consumers with respect to awareness about the concept.

Interaction between Consumers and Executives : Modes of Communication and Frequency

Most of the consumers, irrespective of the type of service and gender, have reported that ‘SMS’ is the most frequently used mode of communication by the executives of the telecom service providers. This is followed by ‘Phone’, ‘E-mail’, ‘Direct Mail’ and ‘Personal Visit’ in that order.

Around two-fifth of the respondents have expressed that executives of their telecom service provider interact ‘rarely’ with them. Around one-fourth of respondents, irrespective of the type of service, have mentioned that the executives of their telecom service provider interact with them on ‘monthly’ basis. Almost one-sixth of respondents, irrespective of the type of service, have stated that the executives interact with them ‘once in six months’ and around one-eighth of them have expressed that the executives interact on a ‘weekly’ basis.

There are significant differences, at 5 per cent level of significance, between the pre-paid and post-paid consumers, with respect to the frequency of interaction of executives with them. Almost half of the pre-paid respondents, as compared to just around one-fourth of the post-paid
respondents, have expressed that executives of their telecom service provider interact ‘rarely’ with them. The percentage of post-paid consumers expressing that the frequency of interaction of executives is ‘weekly’ has been found to be more than double than that of the pre-paid consumers. Based on this finding, it can be concluded that the executives interact more frequently with the post-paid consumers than they do with the pre-paid consumers.

However, no significant differences, at 5 per cent level of significance, have been seen between male and female consumers with respect to the frequency of interaction of executives.

**Disturbing Practices of Telecom Service Providers or ‘Irritants’**

It has been noted that most of the respondents, irrespective of the type of service and gender, have reported all the three ‘Irritants’, namely, ‘Not disclosing hidden charges’, ‘Too many reminders of bill or recharge due date’ and ‘Making calls to consumers when average bill goes down’ as ‘disturbing’. However, most of them, irrespective of the type of service and gender, have ranked ‘Not disclosing hidden charges’ as ‘relatively more disturbing’, ‘Too many reminders of bill or recharge due date’ as ‘disturbing’ and ‘Making calls to consumers when average bill goes down’ as ‘relatively less disturbing’.

**Intention of Consumers to Surrender Connection**

Majority of the respondents have expressed that they are not planning to surrender their mobile phone connection in the near future. Around one-seventh of them have stated that they are planning to surrender the connection, while more than one-fourth of them ‘have not decided’ about it.

No significant differences exist, at 5 per cent level of significance, between the pre-paid and post-paid consumers or between male and female consumers, with respect to the decision to surrender the mobile phone connection. It has been seen that almost one-third of consumers of Reliance have indicated their intention to surrender the connection. This is followed by one-fourth of consumers of BSNL, one-fifth of consumers of Idea, one-seventh of consumers of
Aircel, one-eighth each of the consumers of Vodafone as well as Docomo, and a negligible percentage of consumers of Airtel who have showed a similar intention.

It has been further found that most of the consumers, irrespective of the type of service and gender, have ranked ‘Indifferent attitude of company representatives’ and ‘Network problems like inadequate range, low clarity, and call drop’ as the reasons having the highest and second-highest level of influence respectively on the decision to surrender the mobile phone connection. Most of them have ranked the other five reasons, namely, ‘Billing problems such as late receipt, inaccuracy, overcharging’, ‘Lack of transparency in company policy and charges’, ‘Disturbing calls and promotional messages’, ‘Roaming related problems such as high cost, lack of bill clarity’ and ‘Costlier as compared to competitors’ in the order of decreasing influence on the decision.

Majority of the pre-paid consumers have ranked the reasons as ‘Billing problems such as late receipt, inaccuracy, overcharging’, ‘Disturbing calls and promotional messages’, ‘Lack of transparency in company policy and charges’, ‘Costlier as compared to competitors’ and ‘Roaming related problems such as high cost, lack of bill clarity’ in the decreasing order of influence on the decision to surrender the mobile phone connection. However, most of the post-paid consumers have ranked ‘Lack of transparency in company policy and charges’, ‘Roaming related problems such as high cost, lack of bill clarity’, ‘Billing problems such as late receipt, inaccuracy, overcharging’, ‘Costlier as compared to competitors’ and ‘Disturbing calls and promotional messages’ in the decreasing order of influence on the decision.

Most of the male consumers have ranked ‘Billing problems such as late receipt, inaccuracy, overcharging’, ‘Disturbing calls and promotional messages’, ‘Lack of transparency in company policy and charges’, ‘Roaming related problems such as high cost, lack of bill clarity’ and ‘Costlier as compared to competitors’ in that order of decreasing influence on the decision. Majority of the female consumers, however, have ranked ‘Billing problems such as late receipt, inaccuracy, overcharging’, ‘Lack of transparency in company policy and charges’, ‘Disturbing calls and promotional messages’, ‘Roaming related problems such as high cost, lack of bill clarity’, and ‘Costlier as compared to competitors’ in the order of decreasing influence.
Gap between Expectations and Perceptions of Consumers

The analysis has revealed that a gap exists between the expectations and perceptions of consumers with respect to service quality. The ‘gap mean difference’ between summation of all statements of expectations and those of perceptions has indicated that the consumers perceive service quality to be much below their expectations. The research framework has been validated by this finding.

Dimension-wise mean scores of responses to the statements representing expectations of consumers are around 4 or higher, indicating that majority of them ‘agree’ to the statements. On the other hand, dimension-wise mean scores of responses to the statements representing perceptions of consumers vary between 3.51 and 3.81, implying that most of them are either ‘neutral’ or ‘agree’ to the statements. It implies that a gap exists between expectations and perceptions of consumers for each dimension of service quality, namely, ‘Tangibles’, ‘Reliability’, ‘Responsiveness’, ‘Assurance’ and ‘Empathy’. It has been seen that the biggest gap has been seen in the statements of ‘Assurance’ dimension followed by those of ‘Empathy’, ‘Responsiveness’ and ‘Reliability’ dimensions. The least gap has been noted in the statements of ‘Tangibles’. Differences between the expectations and perceptions of consumers have been found to be significant, with respect to all the statements comprising the five dimensions of service quality.

Type of service-wise analysis has revealed that there are significant differences between the expectations and perceptions of the pre-paid as well as post-paid consumers. The mean scores of responses to the statements representing expectations of the pre-paid as well as post-paid consumers have been found to be more than 4, indicating that majority of the respondents either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ to the statements. The mean scores of responses to the statements representing perceptions of both the pre-paid and post-paid consumers are less than 4, showing that most of the respondents either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the statements. It implies that the service quality as perceived by the pre-paid as well as post-paid consumers is below their expectations. However, the service quality as perceived by the post-paid consumers is better than that as perceived by the pre-paid consumers, since the gap between the expectations and
perceptions is lesser (P-E= – 0.49) in case of the post-paid consumers, as compared to that of the pre-paid consumers (P-E= – 0.57).

Dimension-wise mean scores of responses to the statements representing expectations of the pre-paid as well as post-paid consumers are around 4, indicating that most of them ‘agree’ to the statements. On the other hand, the dimension-wise mean scores of responses to the statements representing perceptions of both the pre-paid and post-paid consumers vary between 3.43 and 3.91, implying that most of them are either ‘neutral’ or ‘agree’ to the statements. It implies that a gap between expectations and perceptions exists for most of the consumers, irrespective of the type of service, with respect to each dimension of service quality.

Gap between the expectations and perceptions of the pre-paid consumers, with respect to the service quality, has been seen to be maximum in case of ‘Empathy’ dimension. It has been found to decrease in cases of ‘Assurance’, ‘Responsiveness’, ‘Reliability’, and ‘Tangibles’ dimensions, in that order. In case of the post-paid consumers, ‘Assurance’ dimension has been noted to be having the biggest gap between expectations and perceptions. The gap has been found to decrease with respect to ‘Responsiveness’, ‘Empathy’, ‘Reliability’, and ‘Tangibles’ dimensions, in that order.

Gender-wise analysis has revealed that differences between expectations and perceptions of male as well as female consumers are significant. Both male and female consumers have been found to have the mean scores of responses to the statements representing expectations higher than 4, implying that majority of them either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ to most of the statements. The mean scores of responses to the statements representing perceptions of male as well as female consumers are seen to be between 3.5 and 4, indicating that most of them either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the statements. It implies that the service quality as perceived by both male and female consumers is below their expectations. However, the service quality as perceived by the female consumers is better than that as perceived by the male consumers since the gap between expectations and perceptions is lesser in case of the female consumers as compared to that of the male consumers.
Dimension-wise mean scores of responses to the statements representing expectations of male as well as female respondents are around 4, indicating that most of them ‘agree’ to the statements. On the other hand, dimension-wise mean scores of responses to the statements representing perceptions of both male and female consumers vary between 3.47 and 3.87, implying that most of them are either ‘neutral’ or ‘agree’ to the statements. It implies that a gap between expectations and perceptions exists for most of the consumers, irrespective of gender, with respect to each dimension of service quality. The maximum gap has been seen in case of ‘Assurance’ dimension for the male consumers. The gap has been found to decrease with respect to ‘Empathy’, ‘Responsiveness’, ‘Reliability’, and ‘Tangibles’ dimensions, in that order. ‘Assurance’ dimension has been noted to be having the biggest gap between expectations and perceptions of female consumers as well. The gap has been found to decrease with respect to ‘Empathy’, ‘Reliability’, ‘Responsiveness’, and ‘Tangibles’ dimensions, in that order.

**Construct of ‘Relationship Strength’**

Based on a study by Mookerjee and Shaines (2000), a CRM framework indicating five psychological steps across relationship stages has been taken for suggesting a construct on ‘Relationship Strength’. These five psychological steps are ‘Switching’, ‘Satisfaction’, ‘Trust’, ‘Commitment’ and ‘Loyalty’ which take the consumers from the relationship stage of a ‘Prospect’ to a ‘Partner’ in the ‘Loyalty Ladder’. Based on these five psychological steps, two statements for each step, leading to a total of ten statements, have been included in the construct of ‘Relationship Strength’.

A ‘Relationship Strength Score’, based on the mean scores of the five psychological steps, has been calculated. The score indicates the strength of relationship between each telecom service provider and its consumers as perceived by the latter. Tata Indicom, followed by Vodafone, has been found to be having a higher ‘Relationship Strength Score’ than that of its competitors. It implies that most of its consumers are likely to be having a stronger relationship with it, as compared to those of other providers. The consumers of Videocon and Aircel, having small samples, and those of BSNL have been found to be having lower scores as compared to those of their competitors. It indicates that they seem to be having a ‘weaker relationship’ with their
respective service provider, as compared to that between the consumers of their competitors and the respective service providers.

The mean score of responses of the consumers of Airtel to the combination of two statements of ‘Switching’ (MS=2.59) has been found to be lower than that of other service providers. It implies that most of its consumers either ‘disagree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the statements and are less likely to switch over to its competitors as compared to those of other service providers. The mean score of responses of the consumers of Tata Indicomm (MS=4.15) to the combination of two statements of ‘Satisfaction’ has been noted to be higher than that of its competitors. It indicates that majority of its consumers ‘agree’ to the statements and are more likely to be satisfied as compared to those of other service providers. However, its sample is small. Relatively more consumers of Vodafone, as compared to those of its competitors, ‘agree’ that they are satisfied and are likely to continue as subscribers (MS=3.64). The mean score of responses of the consumers of Tata Indicomm (MS=4.10), having a small sample, to the combination of two statements of ‘Trust’ has been again seen to be higher than that of other service providers. It implies that most of its consumers ‘agree’ to the statements and are more likely to trust its offerings as compared to those of its competitors. The subscribers of Docomo (MS=3.64) and Vodafone (MS=3.64) show the next highest mean scores indicating that relatively more of them, as compared to those of other service providers, ‘agree’ to the statements representing ‘trust’. As regards the combination of two statements of ‘Commitment’, once again the mean scores of responses of the consumers of Tata Indicomm (MS=3.55) and Docomo (MS=3.40) have been found to be higher than those of other service providers. It indicates that relatively more of their consumers, as compared to those of other service providers either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the statements representing ‘Commitment’. As regards the combination of two statements of ‘Loyalty’, the mean score of responses of the consumers of Videocon (MS=3.75), having a small sample, has been noted to be higher than that of its competitors. It implies that most of its consumers either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the statements and are more likely to be loyal as compared to those of its competitors. The next highest mean scores have been noted for the subscribers of Tata Indicomm (MS=3.55) and Vodafone (MS=3.39), indicating that relatively more of them ‘agree’ to the statements representing ‘loyalty’, as compared to those of other service providers.
Effect of ‘Perceived Service Quality’ on ‘Relationship Strength’

The variable of ‘Perceived Service Quality’ has been computed as the average of the mean scores of perceptions with respect to all the five dimensions of service quality. Its effect on another variable ‘Relationship Strength’ has been tested through simple regression analysis. Since ‘Relationship Strength’ is expected to be an outcome of the perceptions regarding service quality, it has been taken as the dependent variable and ‘Perceived Service Quality’ has been taken as the independent variable. It has been found that ‘Perceived Service Quality’ predicts or leads to ‘Relationship Strength’.

Satisfaction of Consumers

Mean scores of responses of most of the consumers, irrespective of gender and the type of service, to the statement ‘I am satisfied with the services of my service provider’ have been seen to be lying between 3 and 4. It implies that majority of the consumers either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the statement. It has also been seen that majority of the consumers of Tata Indicom either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ to the statement. However, they are small in number. Relatively larger number of consumers of Vodafone, as compared to those of Airtel, Idea and Docomo, Reliance and BSNL in that order, either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the statement. The consumers of Videocon and Aircel either ‘disagree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the statement.

Attributes of Services

The analysis has revealed that most of the consumers, irrespective of the type of service and gender, have rated ‘Network Strength’ of their own service provider as ‘moderately strong’, ‘Voice Quality’ as ‘moderately good’, ‘Employee Attitude’ as either ‘slightly helpful’ or ‘moderately helpful’, ‘Professionalism’ as either ‘slightly high’ or ‘moderately high’, ‘Technology’ as ‘moderately user-friendly’ and ‘Service Camps’ as ‘slightly effective’, as compared to the respective attributes of other service providers.

It has been found that relatively more of the post-paid consumers, as compared to the pre-paid consumers, have rated ‘Network Strength’ as ‘moderately strong’, ‘Voice Quality’ as
‘moderately good’, ‘Employee Attitude’ as ‘moderately helpful’ and ‘Professionalism’ as ‘moderately high’. On the other hand, proportionately more of the pre-paid consumers, as compared to the post-paid consumers, have rated ‘Technology’ as ‘moderately user-friendly’ and ‘Service Camps’ as ‘moderately effective’.

It has been noted that ‘Network Strength’ has shown the highest score and ‘Effectiveness of Service Camps’ has emerged as the lowest scoring attribute, irrespective of the type of service and gender. It implies that most of the consumers have rated ‘Network Strength’ as a relatively strong and ‘Effectiveness of Service Camps’ as a relatively weak attribute of their service provider.

It has been seen that relatively more male consumers, as compared to the female consumers, have rated ‘Network Strength’ as ‘moderately strong’. On the other hand, proportionately more female consumers, as compared to the male consumers, have rated ‘Voice Quality’ as ‘moderately good’, ‘Employee Attitude’ as ‘moderately helpful’, ‘Professionalism’ as ‘moderately high’ and ‘Service Camps’ as ‘moderately effective’. Almost the same number of male and female consumers has rated ‘Technology’ as ‘moderately user-friendly’.

 Majority of the consumers of Airtel, BSNL, Idea and Reliance have rated ‘Network Strength’ as their strongest and ‘Effectiveness of Service Camps’ as their weakest attribute. Most of the consumers of Docomo have given the highest score to the service provider on ‘User-friendliness of Technology’ and the lowest score on ‘Professionalism’. Majority of the consumers of Tata Indicom have rated ‘Employee Attitude’ as the strongest and both ‘Network Strength’ and ‘Effectiveness of Service Camps’ as the weakest attributes. Most of the consumers of Videocon have given the highest score to ‘Network Strength’ and the lowest score to both ‘Employee Attitude’ and ‘User-friendliness of Technology’. Majority of the consumers of Vodafone have rated ‘Voice Quality’ as the strongest and ‘Effectiveness of Service Camps’ as the weakest attribute. Most of the consumers of Aircel have given the highest score to both ‘Network Strength’ and ‘Voice Quality’ and the lowest score to ‘Effectiveness of Service Camps’.
7.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY ON EXECUTIVES

The findings of the survey on executives of telecom service providers are presented below.

CRM Practices of Telecom Service Providers

The analysis has revealed that executives of five telecom service providers, namely, BSNL, Airtel, Reliance, Tata Indicom and Videocon have mentioned that they offer both fixed-line and mobile phone services while those of the other four service providers, namely, Vodafone, Idea, Docomo and Aircel have stated that they offer only mobile phone services.

50.0 per cent of the respondents have mentioned that their organizations have been practicing CRM to a ‘moderate extent’. This is followed by respondents who have stated that their organizations have been practicing CRM to a ‘great extent’ (40.7%), to ‘some extent’ (8.4%) and ‘not at all’ (0.9%). It implies that an overwhelming majority of respondents (90.7%) are of the opinion that their organizations have been practicing CRM either to a ‘great extent’ or to a ‘moderate extent’.

47.2 per cent of the respondents have expressed that their organizations have been practicing CRM for ‘more than 5 years’. This is followed by respondents who have stated that their organizations have been practicing CRM for ‘3-5 years’ (26.9%), ‘1-3 years’ (25.0%) and ‘less than a year’ (0.9%). It implies that a large majority of respondents (74.1%) have mentioned that their organizations have been practicing CRM for either ‘3-5 years’ or for ‘more than 5 years’.

Most of the respondents have mentioned that the most professed objective of CRM of their organization is ‘Attraction of new customers’ (31.5%) followed by ‘Customer retention’ (25.9%), ‘Customer Lifetime Value’ (24.1%) and ‘Customer loyalty’ (18.5%).

49.1 per cent of the respondents have expressed that the CRM function of their organization is headed by a person of the level of ‘Senior Manager/AGM/DGM’. This is followed by respondents who have mentioned that the CRM function is headed by a person of the level of ‘Manager or below’ (46.3%) and ‘GM/VP or above’ (4.6%).
Marketing-Mix of Telecom Service Providers

The mean scores of thirty-two statements representing CRM practices, organized on the basis of 7Ps of marketing-mix, has been found to vary between 3.94 and 4.45. It implies that most of the respondents either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that the various CRM practices are necessary and important. However, the degree of ‘agreement’ and focus attached to each statement is different, as is reflected in the mean scores.

Most of the respondents have expressed that the service providers should focus relatively more on five practices, namely, ‘Their executives should have a helpful attitude’, ‘Billing/balance intimation should be accurate’, ‘They should activate connections within promised time’, ‘Their executives should be knowledgeable about products and services’ and ‘They are expected to block promotional calls after consumers register for the DND (Do Not Disturb) facility’.

The statement ‘Their executives should have a helpful attitude’ has been found to have a higher mean score (greater than 4), as compared to other statements, indicating that most of the respondents either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ to it. It implies that the executives feel that the service providers need to focus most on this practice, probably because ‘employee attitude’ plays a critical role in retaining consumers. The survey on consumers has also revealed that ‘Indifferent attitude of company representatives’ has the maximum influence on the decision to surrender the mobile connection.

Majority of the respondents have stated that the service providers should focus proportionately less on five practices, namely, ‘They are expected to make offers to existing consumers as rewards for continued subscription’, ‘Consumers should perceive value in their tariff plans’, ‘They are expected to make proactive calls to find out about individual consumer problems’, ‘They are expected to hold effective service camps’ and ‘Their executives are expected to display high professionalism’. Most of them ‘agree’ that these practices are important but deserve lesser attention as compared to the other practices.
The statement ‘The telecom service providers are expected to hold effective service camps’ has been noted to be having a lower mean score, as compared to that of other statements, indicating lesser importance attached to it by the service providers. The consumers have also rated ‘Effectiveness of Service Camps’ as a relatively weak attribute, as compared to the other attributes.

The analysis has also revealed that there is a similarity between the perceptions of consumers and executives with respect to ‘billing’. The survey on consumers has suggested that ‘Billing problems such as late receipt, inaccuracy, overcharging’ have a strong influence on the decision to surrender the connection. The survey on executives has validated the point since majority of them have expressed that ‘Billing/balance intimation should be accurate’. Another commonality between perceptions of consumers and executives is with respect to ‘Network Strength’. Consumers have ranked ‘Network problems like inadequate range, low clarity, and call drop’ as the second most important influence on the decision to surrender the connection. Most of the executives also either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that ‘Network Coverage’ should be strong.

The statements representing ‘Physical Evidence’ have been seen as having higher mean scores, as compared to those representing the other Ps of Marketing-mix. It implies that the service providers are focusing more on the aspects like accuracy of billing, ambience and décor of touch point offices, and infrastructure including parking facility and drinking water. The analysis has also revealed that the service providers focus comparatively less on the aspects representing ‘Promotion’ like attractiveness and information content of brochures and other literature, proactive calling, offers to existing consumers as rewards for continued subscription, effective service camps and welcome informational calls after the activation of connection. However, most of the respondents ‘agree’ that these aspects are important.
CRM Efforts of Telecom Service Providers

Since the mean scores of the responses to the statements have been found to vary between 3.92 and 4.42, it indicates that majority of the respondents either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ with the eighteen statements representing CRM efforts. However, the level of agreement and consequently the importance attached to each statement differs, as is reflected in the mean score of the responses to the respective statement.

The statement ‘My organization has the right hardware to serve our customers’ has been found to have the highest mean score (MS=4.42). Mean scores of responses to all other statements, except one, are also more than 4, which indicate that majority of the respondents either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ to the statements. Higher the mean score of a statement, higher the perceived contribution of that statement to the CRM efforts of their organization. Mean score of the statement ‘Our employee training programs are designed to develop the skills required for acquiring and deepening customer relationships’ is the least (MS=3.92) indicating that most of the respondents are either ‘neutral’ or ‘agree’ with the statement. It implies that training programs are either less frequent or not effective enough to develop the skills required for acquiring and deepening customer relationships.

Telecom service provider-wise analysis has revealed that since the mean scores of responses to the statements of all service providers, except Airtel and BSNL, vary between 4.07 and 4.70, most of the respondents of these providers either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that their respective organizations are making efforts towards CRM. The responses given by executives of Aircel have the highest mean score of 4.70, implying that a large majority of them, either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ to most of the statements measuring efforts towards CRM by their organization. This is followed by Videocon, Docomo, Idea, Reliance, Vodafone and Tata Indicom, in that order, whose proportionately smaller number of executives, as compared to those of Aircel, either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ to most of the statements. It has also been found that most of the executives of BSNL and Airtel either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to most of the statements measuring efforts towards CRM by their respective organization.
**Satisfaction of Consumers as Perceived by Executives**

The mean score of responses of the executives to the statement ‘Our retail consumers are satisfied with our services’ has been found to be 4.21. It implies that most of the executives ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ to the statement. Telecom service provider-wise analysis has revealed that most of the executives of Videocon either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ to the statement. This is followed by Idea, Reliance, Airtel and Docomo, Aircel and Tata Indicom in that order, whose proportionately lesser number of executives, as compared to those of Videocon, either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ to the statement. Most of the executives of BSNL and Vodafone either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the statement.

**Comparison of Perceptions of Consumers and Executives**

The analysis has revealed that the consumers and executives have given the same rankings to the five modes of communication used for interaction with consumers. In both cases, ‘SMS’ has emerged as the most frequently used mode of communication followed by ‘Phone’, ‘E-mail’, ‘Direct Mail’ and ‘Personal Visit’ in that order.

It has been found that the consumers as well as the executives have rated ‘Not disclosing hidden charges’ as ‘relatively more disturbing’ practice or ‘Irritant’, as compared to the other two practices. The practices, namely, ‘Too many reminders of bill or recharge due date’ and ‘Making calls to consumers when average bill goes down’ have been rated by both consumers and executives as ‘disturbing’ and ‘relatively less disturbing’.

It has been seen that the perceptions of the consumers and the executives differ with respect to the frequency of interaction of executives with consumers. Most of the consumers have mentioned that their service provider interacts ‘rarely’ with them, in comparison to a negligible percentage of executives, who have stated that their organization interacts ‘rarely’ with consumers. Around one-third of the consumers have expressed that the service provider interacts with them on a ‘weekly’ or a ‘monthly’ basis, in comparison to almost three-fourths of the executives, who are of the opinion that their organization interacts with the consumers on a ‘weekly’ or a ‘monthly’ basis.
It has been noted that most of the executives either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ to the statement ‘Our retail consumers are satisfied with our services’, as compared to majority of the consumers, who either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the statement. It implies that most of the consumers do not seem as satisfied with the services of their telecom service provider as has been perceived by majority of the executives.

Telecom service provider-wise analysis has revealed that the mean score of responses of the executives to the statement, namely, ‘Our retail consumers are satisfied with our services’ is relatively higher (4.21) as compared to the mean score of responses of the consumers to the same statement (3.52). It implies that a gap exists between the perceptions of executives and those of consumers with respect to the statement. The gap has been noted to be negative in all cases, except that of Tata Indicom, since the mean scores of responses of the executives have been found to be higher than those of the consumers. Most of the consumers of Tata Indicom either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ to the statement, as compared to majority of its executives who ‘agree’ to the statement. The highest negative gap between the perceptions of executives and those of consumers has been seen in case of Videocon. Most of its executives either ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ to the statement, as compared to majority of its consumers, who either ‘disagree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the statement. Negative gap has also been noted between the perceptions of consumers and those of the executives of Idea, Reliance, Airtel, Docomo and Aircel. Most of their executives either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ to the statement, as compared to majority of their consumers who either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to it. Most of the consumers as well as the executives of Vodafone and BSNL either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the statement, with the mean scores of responses of the executives being higher again as compared to those of the consumers.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE TELECOM SERVICE PROVIDERS

Based on the findings of the survey on consumers and executives, general as well as specific recommendations for service providers are presented as follows.
7.5.1 Recommendations Based on the Findings of the Survey on Consumers

**Focusing First on Existing Consumers**

It is important for any organization to delight existing customers before earmarking huge resources for prospective customers. It has been observed that ‘Recommendations of known users’ have maximum influence on the decision to select the service provider. Based on this finding, it is recommended that the service providers need to concentrate first on their existing consumers and build better relationship with them. A positive word of mouth through them spreads faster and can do great wonders in attracting new subscribers in a cost-effective manner.

**Focusing More on the Pre-paid Consumers**

Though the post-paid consumers generally contribute more to the revenue, the pre-paid consumers, being higher in number, contribute more to the size of subscriber-base. The telecom service providers need to give special attention to the pre-paid consumers. It has been found that majority of the pre-paid consumers have monthly expenses less than ₹ 500 while a large majority of the post-paid consumers spend greater than ₹ 500 on the mobile phone service. It is recommended to the service providers to make suitable offerings to the pre-paid users which can increase monthly revenues from them.

Relatively more of the post-paid consumers, as compared to the pre-paid consumers, have been seen to be using the services of their current service provider for a longer duration. The percentage of post-paid consumers using the services of the current service provider for ‘more than 5 years’ has been found to be double than that of the pre-paid consumers in the same category. Also, the number of post-paid respondents using the services for ‘less than a year’ has been found to be less than one-third of the pre-paid respondents in the same category. Based on this finding, it is recommended that the service providers can offer better service and other schemes to the pre-paid consumers to increase their duration of usage.

It has been observed that the pre-paid consumers, as compared to the post-paid consumers, are less aware about the concept of CRM. Therefore, the service providers need to do activities
which will increase awareness in the pre-paid consumers about the concept of CRM, its practices and usefulness to them.

It has also been observed that the executives interact more with the post-paid consumers than with the pre-paid consumers. It is, therefore, recommended that the service providers need to increase interaction with the pre-paid consumers focusing first on the users contributing higher monthly revenues to the organization.

**Focusing More on Female Consumers**

The analysis has revealed that an overwhelming majority of female consumers are spending less than ₹1000 on the mobile phone service on a monthly basis. The percentage of female consumers spending ‘less than ₹500’ per month has been seen to be much higher than that of male consumers. It has been noted that the female consumers tend to spend less than their male counterparts on the mobile phone services. It is, therefore, recommended that the service providers should devise customized tariff plans for the female consumers to make them increase their usage.

**Increasing the Frequency of Interaction of Executives with Consumers**

It has been seen that around two-fifth of the consumers have expressed that executives of their telecom service provider interact ‘rarely’ with them. It has also been noted that the executives interact less with the pre-paid consumers than with the post-paid consumers. Based on this finding, it is recommended that the executives of telecom service providers need to increase the frequency of interaction with consumers. At the same time, they need to ensure that the interaction is meaningful and done at the appropriate hour of the day so that it does not cause any disturbance to consumers.

**Making Optimum Use of the Modes of Communication for Consumer Interaction**

The analysis has revealed that most of the consumers as well as executives have reported that ‘SMS’ is the most frequently used mode of communication, followed by ‘Phone’, ‘E-mail’, ‘Direct Mail’ and ‘Personal Visit’ in that order. This implies that ‘SMS’ is a preferred mode of
communication of both the consumers and executives. It is possibly due to wider reach, greater cost-effectiveness and higher efficiency of the mode as compared to that of the other modes. It is, therefore, recommended that the service providers should continue to make effective use of ‘SMS’ and ‘Phone’, and at the same time, explore why other modes are not used as frequently. They should explore specific benefits of other modes and increase their usage in relevant situations. For example, ‘personal visit’ can be given greater importance, especially in the case of high-revenue consumers. It is also suggested to the consumers, particularly those with higher monthly billing, that they should insist on personal visits, wherever necessary, to ensure faster solution of problems.

**Minimizing the Impact of Disturbing Practices or ‘Irritants’**

It has been noted that majority of the consumers as well as executives feel that ‘Not disclosing hidden charges’, ‘Too many reminders of bill or recharge due date’ and ‘Making calls to consumers when average bill goes down’ act as ‘Irritants’ to the consumers. However, most of them have rated ‘Not disclosing hidden charges’ as ‘relatively more disturbing’. Based on this finding, it is recommended that the service providers need to reduce the disturbance to the consumers arising out of these ‘Irritants’. They need to ensure transparency in the billing system and market communication so that the consumers are not bothered about ‘hidden charges’. They also need to reduce the number of reminders of bill or recharge due date and the number of calls when average bill value goes down.

**Changing the Attitude of Executives**

It has been found that most of the respondents have ranked ‘Indifferent attitude of company representatives’ as one of the main reasons to surrender the mobile phone connection. The telecom service providers, therefore, need to put a lot of energy in developing a caring attitude and other soft skills in the customer-interacting executives, more so after the launch of ‘Mobile Number Portability’. The executives need to be sensitized to empathize with consumers, express concern and extend all possible help in solving their problems proactively. It is also suggested to the consumers that they should escalate the problem to higher authorities before taking the final decision to surrender the mobile connection.
Managing the Gap between Consumers’ Expectations and Perceptions

Significant differences have been observed between the expectations and perceptions of consumers, as reflected in all statements comprising the five dimensions of service quality. It implies that a gap has been seen between consumers’ expectations and perceptions with respect to service quality. The service providers need to work towards reducing this gap. It can be done by managing the expectations in a better manner or by improving the customer experience leading to better perceptions of service quality. Expectations can be managed through effective customer communication and the customer experience may be enhanced through better CRM practices. The objective of decreasing the gap is to increase the satisfaction level of consumers. For example, the highest gap seen in the ‘Assurance’ dimension can be reduced by making the executives more knowledgeable, accessible and empowered. Similarly, the next highest gap in the ‘Empathy’ dimension can be decreased by sensitizing the executives to consumer needs, training them on complaint management and making them proactive.

Improving the ‘Perceived Service Quality’ to Increase ‘Relationship Strength’

The ‘Perceived Service Quality’, calculated as an average of the mean scores of the five dimensions of service quality, namely, ‘Tangibles’, ‘Reliability’, ‘Responsiveness’, ‘Assurance’ and ‘Empathy’, has been found leading to ‘Relationship Strength’ between consumers and their respective service provider. The service providers need to constantly work towards improving the experience of consumers leading to a better perceived service quality and hence a stronger relationship with them. The service providers need to understand consumer behavior and implement best CRM practices to achieve this objective.

On the basis of ‘Relationship Strength’, it has been observed that the service providers need to move consumers from the first psychological relationship stage of ‘Switching’ to the higher stages of ‘Satisfaction’, ‘Trust’, ‘Commitment’ and ‘Loyalty’ in that order. It is, therefore, recommended that they first show value to consumers to stop them from switching over to the competitors, satisfy them on the service quality and then take measures to inculcate trust, commitment and loyalty in them.
7.5.2 Recommendations Based on Findings of the Survey on Executives

It has been found that an overwhelming majority of the executives are of the opinion that their organizations have been practicing CRM either to a ‘great extent’ or a ‘moderate extent’. Based on this finding, it is recommended that the service providers should continue to focus on CRM practices. Also, an overwhelming majority of respondents have stated that the CRM function of their organization is headed by a person either of the level of ‘Manager or below’ or that of ‘Senior Manager/AGM /DGM’. It is, therefore, recommended that the service providers need to increase focus on the CRM function by letting a more senior person head the function. Other recommendations based on the findings from the survey on executives are given below.

**Focusing on Specific CRM Practices**

The analysis has revealed that majority of the executives either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that the CRM practices are necessary and important. However, the degree of ‘agreement’ and focus attached to each statement, as reflected in the mean scores, has been noted to be different.

Most of the executives have expressed that the service providers should focus more on the five practices, as mentioned earlier in the summary of findings. Based on this finding, it is recommended that the executives should develop a helpful attitude, provide accurate billing, activate connections within the promised time, increase their knowledge about products/services and block promotional calls when consumers register for the DND (Do Not Disturb) facility.

Majority of the respondents have stated that the service providers focus to a lesser extent on the practices, namely, ‘They are expected to make offers to existing consumers as rewards for continued subscription’, ‘Consumers should perceive value in their tariff plans’, ‘They are expected to make proactive calls to find out about individual consumer problems’, ‘They are expected to hold effective service camps’ and ‘Their executives are expected to display high professionalism’. Most of them ‘agree’ that these practices are important, but relatively lesser attention is generally given to the practices than that offered to the other practices. It is, therefore, recommended that the service providers should make offers to the existing customers, provide value in tariff plans, make proactive calls to resolve problems, hold service camps effectively and inculcate high professionalism in their executives.
Making More Efforts Towards CRM

The analysis has revealed that majority of the respondents either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ with the statements representing CRM efforts. However, the level of agreement, and consequently the importance attached to each statement, differs as reflected in the mean scores of responses to the statements.

It has been found that the statement ‘My organization has the right hardware to serve our customers’ shows the highest mean score of responses, as compared to those of the other statements. It implies that ‘right hardware’ contributes the most to the CRM efforts, as perceived by the executives. Based on this finding, it is recommended that service providers should continue to focus on employing the ‘right hardware’.

The mean score of responses to the statement ‘Our employee training programs are designed to develop the skills required for acquiring and deepening customer relationships’ has been noted to be the least. It indicates that most of the respondents either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the contribution of ‘training programs’ to the CRM efforts of their organization. It is, therefore, recommended that service providers should make training programs more frequent as well as effective in order to develop the skills in their executives for acquiring and deepening customer relationships.

Based on low mean scores of other statements, it is also recommended that the service providers need to understand the needs of their key customers, develop sales and marketing expertise to succeed in CRM, make individual customer information available at every point of contact and develop the right technical personnel to provide technical support for the utilization of computer technology in building customer relationships.

Focusing on Consumer Satisfaction

The analysis has revealed that most of the consumers either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to the statement ‘I am satisfied with the services of my service provider’ whereas majority of the executives either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ to the statement ‘Our retail consumers are satisfied with our services’. It implies that the consumers do not seem to be as satisfied with the services
of their service provider as the executives perceive them to be. It is, therefore, recommended that the service providers need to identify the gaps in the perceptions of executives and consumers and then act suitably to increase the satisfaction levels.

7.5.3 Recommendations for Specific Service Providers

Based on the observations of the study, a few recommendations applicable to some specific service providers are given below. Since the study pertains to a limited number of consumers chosen on the basis of convenience sampling, it is suggested that the service providers may carry out further research before using this feedback. It is recommended that some service providers, as mentioned below, need to focus on a few aspects of CRM.

Churn Management

Churn management refers to proactive management by service providers to prevent their consumers from surrendering the mobile connection. It has been noted that almost one-third of consumers of Reliance have indicated their intention to surrender the mobile phone connection. This is followed by one-fourth of consumers of BSNL, one-fifth of consumers of Idea, one-seventh of consumers of Aircel, one-eighth of consumers of Vodafone as well as Docomo, and a negligible percentage of consumers of Airtel who have expressed a similar intention. It is, therefore, recommended that the service providers, particularly Reliance, BSNL and Idea, need to identify the reasons why more of their consumers intend to surrender the connection as compared to those of other service providers. They need to take proactive steps to stop their consumers from doing so. The experience of ‘Mobile Number Portability’ has also shown that service providers like BSNL have taken greater hits in terms of their consumers moving to other telecom service providers.

Relationship Strength

Tata Indicom and Vodafone have been found to be having higher ‘Relationship Strength Scores’ than those of other service providers. It implies that most of the consumers of Tata Indicom and Vodafone feel that they are more satisfied, more likely to continue with subscription despite having other options, trust the offerings more and have greater faith in the
consistency of performance of their service provider, as compared to those of the competitors. They have a greater desire to maintain the relationship with the service provider, are more committed to it, have a greater tendency to recommend it to others and buy another connection themselves from the same service provider. On the other hand, Videocon, Aircel and BSNL have been noted to be having lower ‘Relationship Strength Scores’ as compared to those of other service providers. The implication is that most of their consumers are lesser satisfied, lesser likely to continue with their subscription despite having other options, have lesser trust in the offerings of the service provider and have lesser faith in the consistency of performance of its service, as compared to those of the competitors. They also have a lesser desire to maintain relationship with the respective service provider, are lesser committed to it, have a lower tendency to recommend it to others and have a lower inclination to buy another connection from the same service provider, as compared to those of other service providers. It is, therefore, recommended that the service providers with lower ‘Relationship Strength Scores’ need to take steps to prevent consumers from switching over to competitors. They also need to focus more on improving the levels of satisfaction, trust, commitment and loyalty amongst their consumers.

**Attributes of Services**

The analysis has revealed that the mean scores of responses of majority of the consumers of seven service providers, except those of Docomo and Reliance, with respect to ‘Effectiveness of Service Camps’, have been found to be lower than those of the other attributes, thus rating it as their weakest attribute. An implication is that the concerned service providers need to hold ‘Service Camps’ which are more ‘effective’ in terms of achievement of the objectives, rather than just holding camps for the sake of it.

Most of the consumers of five service providers, except those of BSNL, Docomo and Tata Indicom and Vodafone, have given higher mean scores to ‘Network Strength’ as compared to those of other attributes. Majority of the consumers have also rated ‘Network problems’ as the second-most important reason to surrender the mobile phone connection. It is, therefore, recommended that ‘Network Strength’ should continue to be a focus area of the service providers.
**CRM Efforts**

The telecom service provider-wise analysis has revealed that most of the executives, except those of Airtel and BSNL, either ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that their respective organizations are making efforts towards CRM. Majority of the executives of BSNL and Airtel either ‘agree’ or are ‘neutral’ to most of the statements measuring efforts towards CRM by their organization. Based on this finding, it is recommended that BSNL and Airtel need to work towards improving the perceptions of their respective executives with respect to the efforts towards CRM made by the organizations. They can do so by focusing on the relevant practices of CRM and updating their executives on the progress, leading to a greater depth of relationship with their consumers.

The importance of building and sustaining relationships with the consumers cannot be overemphasized. It has been observed that most of the telecom service providers covered in this study attempt to develop and maintain long-term relationships with their consumers and other stakeholders. The organizations which are able to deliver superior value to their consumers, as a result of more meaningful CRM practices, are likely to score over their competitors. These organizations will be in a position to garner a higher share of the wallet of their consumers in a dynamic business environment. It has emerged from the study that CRM is not just a philosophy, but a way of doing business. Relevant CRM practices help businesses in developing a cutting edge. Good relationship management with the consumers prevents the latter from switching over to competitors, satisfies them and develops trust as well as commitment in them. The ultimate objective of all CRM efforts is to make the consumers loyal towards the organization, which is the key to sustained growth in revenues and profits for the business. It can be concluded from the study that the service providers need to continually understand the changing expectations and perceptions of the consumers to keep the perceived service quality at a high level. The recommendations are expected to help the service providers in developing the right customer relationship strategies in order to achieve their business objectives.
7.6 SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The present study has provided an insight into CRM practices of telecom service providers in the Punjab Telecom Circle. However, scope for further research remains. Some of the avenues for further research are discussed below.

The scope of the study is limited to the geographical boundaries of Punjab Telecom Circle. A study of more than one circle or an inter-circle study can provide a better glimpse of the telecom environment in Indian context. The global perspective can be seen through a study of telecom service providers of more than one country. The scope of the present study is also limited to mobile phone services only. Fixed-line phone services can be studied in a similar manner. Similar research can also be carried out in the manufacturing sector or service industries other than telecom.

The gap between consumer expectations and perceptions with respect to the five dimensions of Service Quality as in the SERVQUAL scale, namely, Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy has been analyzed in the present study. Expectations and perceptions with respect to more service quality dimensions can be studied in future. The intermediate gaps, called gaps 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the conceptual model of service quality given by Parasuraman et al (1985), may also be taken up in future research.

Comparative analysis has been carried out based on two variables, namely, type of service and gender. Other demographic variables may also be used in future research to see their impact on the analysis. The concept of ‘Relationship Strength’ can be further explored by including more statements in the construct. Alternate constructs representing the strength of relationship between consumers and service providers can be suggested and the effect of ‘Perceived Service Quality’ on them can be tested.