ABSTRACT

Now, Indian telecom industry is under heavy competition. The traditional telephone service is offered by the BSNL but at the same time, customers shift their choice to cellular service. The BSNL makes various steps to retain its landline customers.

The BSNL is crossing a crucial situation because surrenders of landline and getting mobile connections are increasing. So the functioning of the landline telecom service has been disturbed very much. The BSNL can not close its traditional tele services because it has huge amount of investment [Rs.82,000 million, Rs. 37,300 per telephone] on this line. In this situation, the BSNL meets loss of income due to surrenders of landline phone connections by the customers and by switch over of the customers to cellular phones. In the light of these problems, the present study has been taken up.

The present research aims to identify the practical problems faced by the landline customers of Salem Telecom District, Tamil Nadu and studies the perception of landline customers and the attractive, discouraging and expectation factors in respect to the landline connection.

Salem telecom district is the geographical area of the present research. It consists of two revenue districts viz., Salem district and Namakkal district. 1,020 sample customers were selected from the two districts. A questionnaire was
constructed to collect the primary data. The data were analysed with the help of percentage and other statistical tools.

Two types of variables are identified for the study such as personal variables and research variables. The personal variables include gender, age, annual income, occupation, area of residence etc. The research variables include Deposit amount, Free calls permitted, Monthly rent, Call rate, Easiness in connection, Billing system, Voice clarity, Customer service, Line/technical fault, Cross talk, prior information and Grace period.

Analytical part of the present study is mainly based on the primary data so that the data are put into analysis with the help of descriptive analysis, (also termed as percentage analysis). The hypotheses framed in the present study are tested with the help of commonly used tools such as Chi square test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

The present study has some limitations as follows: This research does not include the institutional customers of the BSNL landline service in the study area. As the perception of the customers has a chance to vary in passage of time, arising from their experience, a time factor was fixed in this research and the experience of the customers during the one year period (2011-12) has been considered. The customers were requested to disclose their perception from their experience in the one year period. No comparative effort has been made for the landline phone with the cellular phones in this study in respect of call charges, pulse rate etc. As no
metro cities are covered in the study, the findings may not be appropriate to the
metro cities in India.

Findings of the study disclose that the majority of the surveyed customers
(39.8 percent) have the landline connection because of availing free calls by the
BSNL and this is the reason for retaining the landline phone till the date.

At the same time, 28.6 percent of the customers face the line fault as the
technical problem and they are of majority. Likewise, 54 percent of the surveyed
customers point out that the bill has no full information regarding the calls, duration
of the calls etc. They feel that this is the major defect in the billing system.
Moreover, majority of the customers (35.7 percent) feel that the inconvenient
working hours of the BSNL makes difficulty to pay for the bill amount.

In respect of the awareness, the customers have full awareness towards the
rental plans of the landline connection. Majority of the respondents (40.2 percent)
have secured full awareness.

As far as the attitude of the customers is concerned, if call rates increase,
majority of the customers (51.7 percent) surrender their landline connection.

And the study reveals that the most important attractive factor is the number
of free calls permitted by the BSNL.

Line/ Technical fault was ranked first as the discouraging factor.

The respondents ranked one to the ‘decrease in call rate’ as the most
important expectation factor.
Finally, the study discloses that the landline service is desired by the old age, illiterate and rural customers for convenience. The convenience is in the sense of making calls and attending calls without much technical knowledge or strain and it makes the landline phone alive in their houses.

The landline customers of the Salem telecom district have their own likes and dislikes in using the landline service. The study concludes that the BSNL has to devise its marketing strategy very carefully immediately. For, this, the BSNL may use its marketing staff to contact the customers directly. It is the important duty on the part of the BSNL to consider the case of the dissatisfied customers carefully and steps should be taken to convert them as the satisfied customers. Then only, the BSNL can get survival and success in the lines of its traditional telephone.

The present research suggests that the BSNL should take promotional efforts to retain the existing customers. It should attend the customers’ grievances quickly. More number of staff may be used to look after the grievances and complaints of the customers.

There is a wider scope for further researches in the field of landline connections offered by the BSNL. The future research may be held on the extensive way to cover a large geographical area such as state level or national level.