Understanding mobile Enterprise Customers’ Switching Behaviour : The Perspective Of Pull-Push Mooring Model And mobile Number Portability

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Abstract

This study aims at finding out the key determinants of switching (churning) behaviour among enterprise customers based on Push-Pull-Mooring (PPM) theory and the influence of Mobile Number Portability (MNP). The role of relationship marketing and innovation in the organisations’ retention and acquisition strategy is also presented. A thorough literature review coupled with two focus group discussions and fourteen in-depth interviews provided the impetus for the design and development of a survey instrument that was then administered through e-mail to enterprise subscribers in Rest of Tamilnadu (ROTN). The paper identifies the Push and Pull factors that cause switching as well as the Mooring factors that impact on enterprise customers’ intent to stay with current in-use Mobile Network Operator (MNO). The study highlights the switching factors that are imperative for an MNO and helps to identify and retain their most valuable customers (from switching-prone to non-switching-prone customers) and to optimally allocate marketing resources.

Keywords: mobile number portability (MNP), mobile network operator, switching, churning, PPM (Push-Pull-Mooring) theory.

Introduction

The telecom sector continues to be a critical force for growth, innovation, and disruption across multiple industries. The Indian telecommunication sector has been witnessing intense competition following several structural and regulatory changes. Structural changes with rapid growth of mobile and internet services and the development of competition have resulted in companies being allowed a greater range of activities, enabling them to become more competitive. Technological changes have made Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) rethink their strategies for services offered to both individual and commercial subscribers. The development of network function, specifically Mobile Number Portability (MNP) has aggravated both individual and enterprise subscriber churn in a big way and further made mobile telecommunications service available at affordable price (service contract tariff plans) to both urban and rural customers.

The MNOs segmented the business customers as large corporates, small medium enterprise (SME), government bodies and public sector undertakings for better focus and services, to move from being a pure mobile service provider to becoming an end-to-end communications solution provider. As businesses get more complex, the enterprise customers look into solutions like healthcare services, cloud services, energy management, Internet-of-Things, mobile applications, enterprise video solutions, M2M etc. from MNOs. The mobile telecommunications service industry recognises an enterprise customer as a company which necessarily has bulk mobile connections, makes annual turnover above Rs.250 crore and may demand any type of end-to-end solutions for their business. For operational purposes, MNOs define bulk enterprise customer as, a company that owns bulk mobile connections in its name and makes payment directly. Department of Telecommunications, (2012) defines bulk connection as 10 or more than 10 mobile connections issued in a company or an
organisation at any given address by all the licensed service providers in the service area. In the matured market environment, it is very challenging for MNOs’ to retain their existing customers rather than acquiring new customers. Customer retention is increasingly being seen as an important managerial issue especially in the context of the saturated or lower growth market.

So, the goal of this study is to understand the key determinants of service switching behaviour of enterprise mobile subscribers with the perspective of Pull-Push-Mooring model, their approach towards MNP, and the role of relationship marketing and innovation in the organisations’ retention and acquisition strategy.

**Mobile Number Portability (MNP)**

Traditionally, customers of mobile telecommunications service were required to give up their number when switching to newer MNO. Consumers were thus hesitant to switch from the current in-use to another competing MNO, thereby inhibiting more effective competition in mobile telecommunications service industry. MNP offers both individual and commercial subscribers the flexibility to retain their original mobile phone number with different service providers (Buehler, Dewenter, & Haucap, 2006) when crossing states across the country (moving telecom circles) or staying with the same operator in another state. Prior to MNP, the subscribers very often do not switch to another operator even if the competitor is offering lower tariff and better services because they do not want to change their number. Changing a mobile number can be inconvenient and can be a problematic experience for users, and can lead to major costs, especially where the concerned phone number has become an important aspect of a consumers identity and connectivity for professional purposes (Consumer Focus, 2009). MNP reduces the costs associated with switching from one MNO to another and thus eases the burden of consumers, induces more competition, and helps the new entrants (Armstrong, 1997) and rewarding MNOs with the best customer service, coverage, and service quality.

**MNP in India**

MNP is important for an oligopoly structure of telecommunication market such as Indian telecom market where every MNO is slogging to deliver best services to satisfy the immediate subscribers in order to retain existing base and also trying to offer competitive products to attract potential customers. Subsequent to the intra-circle level MNP rollout across India on January 20, 2011, the nationwide inter-circle level MNP has been rolled out across India on July 03, 2015.

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<th>Table: 1</th>
<th>Highlights of Telecom Subscription Data</th>
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<td>Total Subscribers (million)</td>
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<td>Total wireless subscribers (million)</td>
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<td>Active Wireless Subscribers (million)</td>
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<td>Overall Wireless Tele-density* (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban wireless Tele-density (%)</td>
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<td>Rural wireless Tele-density (%)</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>MNP requests since implementation (million)</td>
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<td>MNP as a percentage of wireless subscribers</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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<td>MNP requests - FY basis (million)</td>
<td>6.4</td>
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</table>

Source: Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) - Yearly report

Tele-density: number of telephone connections for every hundred individuals living within an area.

India is currently the world’s second-largest telecommunications market with wireless subscribers of 1,170.18 million by end of March 2017 (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
TRAI, 2018) and has registered strong growth in the past decade and a half. Detailed information on the total number of telecommunication and wireless subscriber addition, the MNP request applications received and other relevant data are shown in table 1. But MNP, the facilitator of consumer switching process has become a critical issue for MNOs, leading to relationship dissolution and the retention of existing customer base has become a very challenging task which resulted in the development of relationship marketing strategies in an already fragmented Indian telecom industry.

MNP And Customer Switching Behaviour

MNP helps subscribers easily make a comparison between the services of different MNOs and reduces the switching costs of customers desiring to switch their subscriptions from one MNO to another that best meet their expectations and improve customer experience (Buehler, Dewenter, & Haucap, 2006). These switching costs include e.g. informing friends, relatives, and business partners about the new number, missing calls from uninformed people, and updating company web pages, brochures, and business cards (Buehler & Haucap, 2004). On the other hand, MNP makes it more difficult for the customers to identify the operators by the prefixes of the phone numbers, which network they are calling to and making it more difficult to find out the actual prices of the calls. Buehler and Haucap (2004) revealed that the ultimate effect of introducing MNP was the abolition of switching costs, that is, the cost of changing SIM card. Several studies have been conducted to examine the consequences of introducing MNP (Buehler & Haucap, 2004), costs and benefits of MNP (Lyons, 2010), the causes and effects of MNP on call rates and service quality (Buehler et al., 2006). In a highly dynamic and competitive business environment, the influence of MNP and the MNOs’ ability to defend and retain its subscriber base has a direct impact on their profitability and effectiveness of companies.

As switching has become a common practice, this paper attempts to identify the fundamental drivers and the main dissatisfying factors which lead to switching, and analyses whether MNP has increased switching intentions in the context of mobile telecommunications service among enterprise (organisational) customers.

Relationship Between Customer Satisfaction And Switching behaviour

The overall customer satisfaction has a significant impact on customer loyalty (Gerpott, Rams, & Schindler, 2001) which in turn influences the customers’ switching behaviour. The switching behaviour is defined as the exit or the customer decision to terminate the contract with a particular service company (Stewart, 1998) or reduce the degree of usage because of service dissatisfaction (Keaveney, 1995). Stewart (1998) states that repeated service failures promote ending of customers’ relationship, whereas the dissatisfaction caused by one-time service failure may not lead to the dissolution of a relationship with the service provider. Customer satisfaction in the business-to-business context is often defined as a positive affective state resulting from the appraisal of all aspects of a firm's working relationship with another firm (Geyskens, Steenkamp, & Kumar, 1999). Two general conceptualisations of customer satisfaction exist in the literature: service encounter or transaction specific satisfaction and overall or cumulative satisfaction (Cronin & Taylor, 1994). While transaction-specific satisfaction may provide specific diagnostic information about a particular product or service encounter, cumulative satisfaction (i.e., the satisfaction that accumulates across a series of transactions or service encounters) is a more fundamental indicator of the firm's past, current, and future performance (Oliver, 2014).

Customer satisfaction with mobile communication services has been related to the mobile internet services usability and applications (Ling, Hwang, & Salvendy, 2006), with instant connectivity and messaging (Park, Oh, & Lee, 2011), mobile e-commerce (Lin & Wang, 2006), and value-added services (Kuo, Wu, & Deng, 2013). Moreover, customer satisfaction positively influences customer retention, while negatively affects customer switching intention (Gerpott et al., 2001; Kim & Yoon, 2004). Hou, Chern, Chen, & Chen (2011) has shown that dissatisfied consumers show greater switching intention than satisfied customers and will actively seek alternatives. If a customer feels dissatisfied with a service provider, because of low service quality or poor service experience, the customer will be much more likely to change to another service provider (Deng, Lu, Wei, & Zhang, 2010).
Push-Pull-Mooring (PPM) Theory

This study intends to completely investigate enterprise customers’ switching behaviour towards an MNO, based on Push-Pull-Mooring (PPM) theory, the human migration literature from anthropology discipline (Lewis, 1982; Ravenstein, 1885), to explain consumers’ switching behaviour. The PPM is one of the most widely used models in human migration research (Lee, 1966; Moon, 1995). People migration and consumer switching behaviours have the clear similarity moving from one place (one product or service) to another (another product or service) (Hsieh, Hsieh, Chiu, & Feng, 2012). The PPM theory has been extended to the studies on consumer switching behaviours in different IT and ITES services (Hou et al., 2011; Hsieh et al., 2012; Xu, Yang, Cheng, & Lim, 2014).

This empirical study adopted Bansal and Taylor’s (1999) service provider switching model for identifying the factors that influence the enterprise customers’ switching behaviour in terms of ‘push effects’ (dissatisfying factors of current in-use MNO), ‘pull effects’ (attractive factors of competing MNO) and ‘mooring effects’ (situational and/or contextual factors that are not being allowed to switch).


Figure 1: Push-Pull Mooring Model

The push effects are the negative factors that push people and motivate to leave away from the origin (Stimson & Minnery, 1998). Push effects are better understood as a combination of indicators or determinants or criteria or factors that give rise to or cause consumers to switch a product or service, making it a formative construct rather than a reflective construct. Quality is common in migration research (Boyle, Halfacree, & Robinson, 2014; Moon, 1995). In mobile telecommunication service industry, the negative factors (e.g., poor network services, poor billing system etc.) are the factors that cause customers’ dissatisfaction with the current-in-use MNO. The pull effects are the positive factors that attract and pull prospective migrants to the new destination (Moon, 1995) and attributes of distant places that make them appealing (Dorigo & Tobler, 1983). Therefore, the positive factors are the factors (e.g., attractive services contract, customised VAS etc.) of competitors that attract other MNOs’ customers and may affect satisfaction. The mooring effects are the personal and social factors that can
act to facilitate or hamper the migration decision i.e., to keep people in the same place despite the push and pull effects (Bansal, Taylor, & James, 2005). In migration theory, the mooring variable has a moderating effect by acting between push-pull variables and the actual migration decision (Lee, 1966). The mooring effects are swayers – they do not cause switching by themselves; they can only mitigate or strengthen the switching decision (Roos, 1999). The concept of migratory cost shares similarities with the concept of “switching costs”.

Based on the PPM theory, the antecedents from previous researches combining both functional as well as technical aspects of service quality on mobile subscriber’s switching were adopted and classified into the research model and shown in figure 1. Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify the factors that influence the enterprise customers’ churning behaviour and the role of MNP in switching decisions.

Literature Review

An extended review of relevant literature on mobile telecommunication service and switching behaviour reveals a variety of potential, and sometimes conflicting, determinants that influence the customers’ intention to switch their current-in-use service providers.

The Push Factors

Many previous studies considered factors causing dissatisfaction as push factors (Xu et al., 2014; Zengyan, Yinping, & Lim, 2009). Relating this to the enterprise customers’ switching behaviour, customers are pushed to switch because of low satisfaction, poor network services, poor billing system, improper employee performance and the like. The term service quality, satisfaction, price, and trust are utilised commonly in the switching behaviour literature.

Many scholars considered the perceived value has direct effects on customers’ satisfaction, repurchase intention, and word-of-mouth (Kuo et al., 2013; Molinari, Abratt, & Dion, 2008; Su, Hsu, & Swanson, 2017). ‘Network service quality’ has been identified as the core service and critical factor to measure customers’ perceived mobile service quality, satisfaction and loyalty (Eshghi, Roy, & Ganguli, 2008; Kim & Yoon, 2004). The billing system criteria that bring convenience and satisfaction to customers are billing timeliness (Seth, Momaya, & Gupta, 2008); accuracy and clarity of billing, and ease of understanding (Pezeshki, Mousavi, & Grant, 2009), the comfortable payment methods, locations for bill payment (Liang, Ma, & Qi, 2013; Ida, 2012) and payment confirmations (Agrawal, Shah, & Wadhwa, 2007). Key Account Managers represent the human interface of the service provider create synergistic partnerships with customers. Diligence, information communication, inducements, sportsmanship, and empathy are identified as the unique dimensions of salesperson service behaviour that are vital in consumers’ evaluation of service quality (Ahearne, Jelinek, and Jones, 2007). The complainants base their evaluations on the perceptions of a variety of customer support systems (e.g., a two-tier system of complaint redressal mechanism), speed of complaint processing, ease of reporting complaint and friendliness when reporting complaint (Seth et al., 2008; Kim, Park, & Jeong, 2004). Moreover, during voice-to-voice service encounters the ‘Call Centre Representative’ (CCR) must possess the behaviours of adaptiveness, assurance, empathy, and authority (Burgers, Ruyter, Keen, & Streukens, 2000); and knowledge necessary to perform the service delivery (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000).

The technology used must be accurate, consistent error-free, (or error levels can be maintained below a specified reliability threshold) user-friendly and reliable (Yang, Jun, & Peterson, 2004). Having up-to-date equipment, thotechnology (Rahhal, 2015) and the degree of personalisation offered by the technology (Bitner, Brown, & Meuter, 2000; Chen & Hitt, 2002) are found as major criteria to measure the tangibility and reliability dimension of service quality. The consumer adoption of VAS is affected by the up-to-date mobile value-added services (Santouridis & Trivellas, 2010; Kim et al., 2004) and the cost of value-added services (Erlandson & Ocklind, 2000). Convenience is evaluated by measuring a sufficient number of retailers or kiosks, sufficient methods and locations for bill payment and ease of subscribing and changing services (Hosseini, Zadeh, & Bideh, 2013; Kugytė & Šlibuptytė, 2005; Gerpott et al., 2001). The concerns over Integrity “the ability to maintain confidence”, security “the
maintenance of confidentiality”, and the risks associated with commercial transactions are critical in consumers’ use of the service provider’s technology can influence customers’ perception of service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malhotra, 2005; Kim & Lim, 2001).

The Pull Factors

The attractiveness of alternatives means the service quality, image, and reputation of the competing service providers, who are expected to offer more suitable or superior services than those of the current in-use service provider (Kim et al., 2004). Corporate image is likely to play a major role in customers’ choice decisions unless competing services are perceived as virtually identical on performance, price, and availability (Andreassen & Lanseng, 1997). In a business buying situation, customers are expected to prefer stronger brands to minimise their risks (Roberts & Merrilees, 2007; Webster & Keller, 2004) as brand image increases purchase confidence (Romaniuk & Nenycz-Thiel, 2013) and reduced search and transaction costs (Kotler & Poeratsch, 2007). Customers are more likely to perceive companies with good reputations by several interrelated features—credibility, reliability, responsibility, and trustworthiness (Fombrun & Van Riel, 1997), as well as perceived quality and prominence (Rindova, Williamson, Petkova, & Sever, 2005), which can enhance customers’ expectation of corporate capability in providing excellent products or services, and integrity in fulfilling formal contracts or announced promise.

Economic variables are critical in migration models (Bogue, 1977). It is appropriate to consider pricing issues in the models of mobile subscribers' churning intention. The competitiveness of telecommunication service providers is offering enough choice of pricing plans to customers (Eshghi et al., 2008; Kim et al., 2004). Business consumers have heterogeneous preferences, and the complexity and multidimensionality of the cellular service offerings need to cater to these heterogeneous preferences (Fibich, Klein, Koenigsberg, & Muller, 2017). In business-to-business context, the buyers’ WOM concerning the selling firm is characterised as the buyer’s favourable recommendation to other buyers about the company (Swan & Oliver, 1989). The influencers are very likely to communicate and recommend to other members of buying centre by virtue of their involvement in the product category (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2001).

Mooring Factor

Switching cost was tested as the mooring factor in many prior studies (Bansal et al., 2005; Hsieh et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2014). The high cost of switching has a direct and positive impact on switching behaviour. Migrants might abandon the migratory intention due to the high expenses (Boyle & Halfacree, 1998). Jackson (1985) defined switching cost as the psychological, physical and economic costs a customer faces in changing a supplier. These costs make switching service providers more difficult or costly for customers. Burnham, Frels, and Mahajan, (2003) provides a comprehensive categorization of switching costs dividing them into three dimensions: procedural – involving economic risk, search and evaluation and learning costs, financial – involving the loss of financial benefits and relational – involving psychological or emotional discomfort resulting from breaking bonds of affection with the provider’s staff or with the service brand.

Methodology

The nature of the larger study requires the collection of both primary and secondary data. Primary data is of paramount importance for this study due to minimal published literature (e.g., Thaichon, Sharma, Raina, & Kapoor, 2016; Kugyte & Šliburyte, 2005) on choice criteria influencing the selection of MNO and various determinants that causes customers’ switching intention, specific to enterprise mobile telecommunications service customers. In-depth experts interviewing on a one-to-one basis (Seidman, 2013) and focus group discussion evaluation research method over open-ended questionnaires was adopted because of their adaptability and ability to probe and investigate (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Four semi-structured in-depth interviews with industry experts and six interviews demographically representing the ownership categories were conducted with a clear plan then reconstructed the details and conducted structured in-depth interviews to judge the...
applicability of instrument items following a schedule of pre-prepared questions in a specific order. To the nature and complexity of the research topic and objectives, the data saturation, for the most part occurred by the time analysed fourteen structured interviews with enterprise customers and developed the codes later. The focus group methodology was adopted from Powell and Single, (1996), and composed of enterprise customers of leading MNOs who share key characteristics pertinent to the study; one focus group consists of the key persons of proprietorship and partnership firms and the other composed of enterprise customers of leading MNOs who share key characteristics pertinent to the.

Suggestions from expert interviews and focus group led to a few changes and a little modification to increase the clarity in the questionnaire. Next, a pilot study involving 30 enterprise customers was conducted using the modified questionnaire. Consequently, the questionnaire was prepared in Microsoft Excel and sent as an attachment to the respondents’ e-mail addresses. The population being studied belong to the enterprise customers of leading MNOs in rest of Tamilnadu. The questionnaires were sent to 1150 email addresses in which 62 emails were undelivered. The response rate for fully completed questionnaires was 15.57 percent in the first attempt. A first reminder e-mail was sent to participants, with the aim of motivating participants to complete the survey, which improved the response rate to 25.30 percent. Later a second reminder was sent to the individual that improved the overall response rate to 32.35 percent. In addition to this, the overall uncompleted response rate was around 6.26 percent. Out of 372 fully completed questionnaires, 314 questionnaires were found to be eligible for this study as 58 of the respondents haven’t migrated to any other competitive MNO from the inception of current in-use MNO’s services. Thus, the primary data was collected following convenience sampling from enterprise customers in rest of Tamilnadu (ROTN).

Analysis and Findings

The reassessment of relative strengths of the current in-use brand and competing brands occurs in two major circumstances - dissatisfaction with the customer’s own provider; and new information about the competing brands (Svendsen & Prebensen, 2013). This exploratory study revealed that no single determinant alone could influence the switching intention because all determinants are perceived to be important. The important push and pull churning determinants for different ownership types of enterprise customers and the Mooring factor are listed in Table 2.

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<th>TABLE 2</th>
<th>Push, Pull and Mooring Factors – Ownership Type: Cross tabulation</th>
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<td><strong>Factors</strong></td>
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<td>Pull Factors</td>
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<td>Mooring Factor</td>
<td>SWITCHS</td>
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Nine determinants were identified as push factors namely: poor network services, poor billing system, poor customer account services, poor customer support & complaint handling, poor customer help services, poor technology experience and its adaptation, lack of customised VAS and lack of convenience and lack of security & confidentiality. Four determinants were identified as pull factors namely: positive perception of competitor reputation, positive perception of competitor brand image, positive word-of-mouth (recommendation or referral) to switch and attractive services contract from a
competitor. The finding of Mooring factor i.e., the switching cost (financial cost, procedural cost, relational cost) is consistent with previous studies (Nimako, & Ntim, 2013; Hou, Shang, Huang, & Wu, 2014).

According to the results from prior interviews, users who choose to stay with their service provider regard it as having relatively good network services, customer account service, billing system, and customised value-added services, and found to be satisfied with the offerings. Therefore, these factors are conceptualised as push factors in this study. Moreover, an optimal multiple services contracts are offered under three-part tariffs to the customers which potentially influence the relationships.

The potential antecedents of switching an MNO for enterprise customers are poor network services, poor billing system, and customer account services. The factor ‘network service’ contributes maximum (approximately 46.5%) as a reason for switching an MNO. Keaveney (1995) have also found similar result as ‘core service failure’ is the biggest critical determinant for the switching of a service provider. The customer account service was considered the most important among the customer encounter factors.

The cross-tabulation (Table: 3) between the association with past MNO and the choice of opting MNP shows that 41.40% of enterprise customers opted for MNP for switching and 26.43% of customers didn’t opt for MNP for various reasons, irrespective of the availability of MNP services.

Few reasons identified are: misuse of the mobile number by the employee, receiving unsolicited calls frequently etc. Few important mobile connections may be retained by them, as these contact numbers are shared with many important customers, business partners and others. This could be one of the reasons for using services of multiple MNOs. The finding also supports Lyons (2010) who tested MNP’s impact on mobile telephony retail prices and found that MNP reduced average prices when the switching process was rapid (less than five days) but not when it was slower.

It is found that every respondent surveyed use services of multiple MNOs. 32.17% of the respondents didn’t opt for MNP as they all had already switched to another MNO well before the introduction of MNP. It is observed that the higher level of perceived satisfaction of the services rendered and the relationship marketing efforts shown by the MNO reduced the customers’ switching behaviour, i.e., the service provider created switching barriers to retain their customers satisfied and loyal (Kim et al., 2004; Gerpott et al., 2001). In line with Jones, Mothersbaugh, & Betty, (2002), this investigation showed that when the level of customer satisfaction is identical, the level of customer loyalty can vary depending on the magnitude of the switching barrier.

Users also experience financial costs when they switch to an alternative MNO. It is observed that financial switching costs negatively influence the switching intention. However, currently, most MNOs do not charge their customers though the fee is very marginal (TRAI cuts the porting fee to Rs. 4 from Rs. 19). Switching cost can be a barrier to changing service providers irrespective of the positive attractiveness of service contract tariff plan from a competing MNO. It is identified that the attractiveness of alternative service contract along with push factors play an important role to influence the switching behaviour for proprietorship and partnership firms.
The technique of TURF Analysis (table 4) was used to assess the top three combinations of the various identified factors that most induce the switching behaviour of enterprise customers.

Findings suggest that attributes related with reputation and brands matter even in rational B2B switching decision-making processes, specifically the private ltd and public ltd enterprise customers who have a large number of employees and annual turnover. Similarly, the importance of reputation and brand image are relatively less for companies which have fewer employees and make a lesser turnover. The results provided an insight similar to Gale (1994) that a customer choosing between two options, that otherwise seem about equal in terms of product and service specifications, might prefer the stronger brand.

Wide geographic spread (direct or indirect presence in terms of local/national/international levels) and a similar range of services offered by the service provider are desirable for customers. The enterprise customers who have national and/or international operations (need for national and/or international roaming service) are concerned over the convenience of MNOs’ geographical spread either directly by their own network operations or through another service provider’s network. The enterprise customers who have limited operations within the state or region are not much concerned about national and/or international roaming services and the brand image. But they are more critical about the reputation of the MNO on service and price factors. It was also found that the enterprise customers rarely utilise the customer help-care services as the Key Account Manager (the company representative) is the single point contact and facilitates links between parties. The interesting finding is that all enterprise customers had experienced billing-related problems and exposed to the customer support-grievances handling system.

**Discussion**

Nowadays, customer churn has become the main concern for firms in all industries (Neslin, Gupta, Kamakura, Lu, & Mason, 2006), and companies are being challenged to deal with this issue. As the market matures, consumer value and preference diversify and consumer switching behaviour become complex (Kim, 2008). The offer of quite similar services, the adoption of MNP and the presence of low switching costs made the MNOs direct their marketing strategy towards attracting new customers and also retaining their existing subscriber base.

Similar to Gerpott et al., (2001) three factors that were identified to be the main drivers for customer satisfaction are the perceived value of – network quality, price, and customer service. The billing system is directly related to actual customer churn decisions. The ‘Network service quality’ that comes from the base infrastructure of MNOs is clearly important to both individual and enterprise (commercial) consumers as it serves as the minimum requirement for positive overall customerservice perceptions. The MNO which effectively handles its customers’ complaints creates satisfied and more likely loyal customers and maintain its customer relationships. The customers’ perception of service quality can be influenced by the use of MNOs’ technology as the customers are very concerned over the risks associated with security of commercial transactions and misuse of user information. Moreover, the adaptation of up-to-date and reliable technology by MNOs’ enhances the performance of network services, billing system, VAS, security, convenience and customer encounters. The Key Account Managers should role-play as a partner and consultant to enterprise customers to better serve them providing a comprehensive solution.

An enterprise customer with negative experiences of a brand supposedly forms negative associations with that brand which triggers its switching intention and creates negative word of mouth.
However, the consumer MVAS provided by MNOs can be classified into four types, namely information, communication, transaction (M-Commerce), and entertainment, and this classification applies to almost all the providers (Kuo et al., 2009). Today, most or all MNOs are capable of integrating technology in providing customised VAS series (e.g., corporate ringtone, vehicle tracking, meter reading, location-based services etc.) to meet the enterprise customers’ requirement as this factor is perceived to be an important service quality of an eligible MNO.

It is claimed similar to Thaichon et al., (2016) findings that, though the benefits of price plan (service contract tariff) were similar across providers, some participants believed that their familiarity with the brand name or their perception that the brand is a global brand had an influence on their choice of the service provider. The majority of the participants shared the view that the positive perception of brand reputation and image are essential for service provider choice decisions and unimportant while switching. The CSR activities of an MNO do not have any influence on customers’ choice decision when choosing a service provider. However, as claimed by Thaichon et al., (2016)they believed that the CSR activities of an MNO would enhance their view of that MNO’s brand. And although organisational buyers consider service and other more intangible aspects in their buying decisions, brands tend to be secondary when compared with price, technology, logistics and product features (Zablah, Brown, & Donthu, 2010).

Service bundling imparting different levels of usage requirement at an optimal price level may hinder switching by making it more difficult for consumers to compare services. Similar to Deng et al., (2010) the results demonstrate that satisfaction has great mediating power between its determinants and customer loyalty. The satisfied customers probably reflect a higher degree of positive evaluations and successful usage experiences of the factors that are closely related to their satisfaction with loyalty.

Many other factors also intervene in customers’ switching decisions apart from the ones discussed in this work. Aspects such as the level of satisfaction (Ganesh, Arnold, & Reynolds, 2000), trust between the parties (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) and the perceived quality of the service (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996) all intervene in the process of switching suppliers, and these relational constructs are expected to differ between customers (Ganesh et al., 2000). The low barrier to switching is the main reason for the intense competition in mobile telecommunications service industry. This induces the enterprise customers to switch their MNO. Peters (1987) shows that it can cost five times more to acquire a new customer than to retain an old one. Consequently, retaining the current customer base is much more attractive than searching for new customers. Due to the high costs of attracting new customers, the MNOs raise different barriers to encourage customer retention, such as increasing switching costs and/or developing new barriers and/or ties to customers in an effort to lock-in customers into an existing contractual relationship (Burnham et al., 2003).

Managerial Implications

The outcome of this study provided a concise integrated framework to help MNOs better understand the factors influencing enterprise customers’ switching behaviour. TRAI’s report (Ref: Table-2) clearly shows that the Indian mobile telecommunications industry has witnessed high switching rates after the introduction of MNP. Due to this, many MNOs try to acquire new customers through price competition, which might deteriorate the firms’ performance as well as services infrastructure. Such competition might be vulnerable to smaller companies with low capital which cannot compete against major corporations (e.g., exit of MTS, Telenor, Videocon, Airceland the entry of Reliance Jio in India). Thus, the results of this study and proposed model offer a deeper understanding of Push-Pull-Mooring factors that influence enterprise customers’ switching behaviour and provide MNOs with a tool for identifying and capitalising on the strategic opportunities for increasing retention of profitable customers and attracting new customers. As a result, MNOs will be able to mitigate the influence of Push-Pull-Mooring factors and successfully establishing, developing and maintaining successful customer relationships over time within their respective target markets.
Conclusion

One of the factors that contribute to customers' satisfaction is the rate of introduction of innovative technology, products, services, and process. Most research and practice assumes that relationship marketing efforts generate stronger customer relationships that enhance seller performance outcomes, including sales growth, share, and profits (Morgan & Hunt 1994). Customer relationships supported by sophisticated IT systems increases the effectiveness of the innovation process and customer experience and satisfaction.

The purpose of this article was to examine enterprise customers’ switching behaviour towards the adoption of MNP when switching an MNO, and to construct specification in the PPM framework. The perceived usefulness and approach towards MNP appear considerably favourable among enterprise customers. Nimako and Ntim, (2013) claim that about 67% level of misspecification exists in the application of the PPM framework in the customer switching behaviour literature. As the misspecification of the PPM effects may result in adverse consequence of the choice of reflective versus formative measurement perspective does matter from a practical point of view.

References:


