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A Study of the Effect of COVID-19 on Indian Telecom Sector

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Abstract:

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a Pandemic on March 11, pointing to the over 118,000 cases of the coronavirus illness in over 110 countries and territories around the world and the sustained risk of further global spread. After a few days it has infected a large population of the world, and preventing from decease a curfew like prohibition was imposed to the people it is called Lockdown. Due to this lockdown all the activities related to transportation, traditional business and hospitality were interrupted, and other activities like Education, Marketing, Professional and Entertainment have a distinctive change in their way of providing services and working culture.COVID-19 has effected the complete Indian economy. In some sectors of economy, it has an adverse effect but pandemic, as the sales volume of cell phone has not declined, average and total data consumption of the customers has increased distinctively, Work from home plans are launched and accepted by the subscribers, old popular programmes has telecasted and got an immense positive response from the viewers.

Key words: Telecommunication sector, Work from Home Plans, Pandemic, Lockdown.

Introduction:

COVID-19 is one of the worst epidemic,of the last few decades. It has adversely effected a large population of the world and obviously the Indian population also. In the starting of year 2020 some cases were reported in India, but it was the pre-primary stage of the epidemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a Pandemic on March 11, pointing to the over 118,000 cases of the coronavirus illness in over 110 countries and territories around the world and the sustained risk of further global spread.After a few days it has infected a large population of the world, and preventing from decease a curfew like prohibition was imposed to the people it is called Lockdown. Due to this lockdown all the activities related to transportation, traditional business and hospitality were interrupted, and other activities like Education, Marketing, Professional and Entertainment have a distinctive change in their way of providing services and working culture. In this studywe are focussing on the Effect of this Pandemic on the telecommunication sector of India.

Objectives of the Study

Through this study we are trying to understand the effect of COVID- 19 pandemic on the Indian telecom market. The term *telecom market* includes Fixed line telephone services,Cellular services, Broadband Services and entertainment trough television etc. These Objectives will be covered through this study.

- How the Cell phone markethave got effected by the COVID- 19 Pandemic?
- What are the changes observed in Cellular Services and the service provider Companies? and
- What are the effect of this Pandemic on The most important Ingredient 'Customers' or the subscribers of the telecommunication service?

Methodology and Sources of Data:

Data is the base bricks of each and every types of research study. For This study is descriptive in nature.Data is collected from the reliable secondary sources such as government owned websites, websites of the Cellular companies, Renowned Market expert companies, and the data provided in the telecom reports. The primary sources have not used because of the physical distancing concept and the Standard operating procedure directed by the Central/ State governments or any other local authorities.

Limitations of the Study

We are discussing only the points related to effect of the COVID-19 on the sales of cell phone of various brands in Indian market, how the Cellular companies have changed their policies/ Market strategies during the Pandemic, and what changes have occurred in the consumer buying behaviour. The study period is limited to April 2020 to August 2020, and for the comparison purpose it is extended from Jan.2019 to June 2020.

Effect on the Cell Phone Market

To cover the first objective of the study, the data of various companies related to the market share of total sales volume of cell phones from Jan 2019 to June 2020 has been collected and shown below-

Source: MOBILE DEVICES MONITOR – Q2 2020 (Vendor Region Countries)

	Brands	2019Q1	2019Q2	2019Q3	2019Q4	2020Q1	2020Q2
18C	Xiaomi	29%	28%	26%	27%	30%	29%
16C							
14C	Samsung	23%	25%	20%	18%	16%	26%
12C							
10C	Vivo	12%	11%	17%	21%	17%	17%
8C							
6C	Realme	7%	9%	16%	8%	14%	11%
4C							
2C	Oppo	7%	8%	8%	12%	12%	9%
C	Others	22%	19%	13%	14%	11%	8%

From the above data some points could be understood-

- Improved Smartphone Demand after April, May Lockdown Pushes the June 2020 Volumes to Pre-COVID Levels & the Smartphone User Base in India Beyond the Half a Billion Mark.
- Xiaomi captured the Indian Smartphone Market with a 29% shipment share.
- Samsung recovered the fastest, capturing the second spot in the smartphone market with 26%. reaching its highest share in the past two years.
- The companies except clearly mentioned name are categorised as others, and they are continuously losing their market share cut throat competition.
- Online channel share reached the highest ever, contributing almost 45% of sales, and rest 55% share covered by traditional offline channels.
- During the quarter the unique smartphone userbase surpassed 500 million.

As above mentioned data are provided by a website belonging to the organized sector, another unorganized sector is also working prominently, that is market of used/second hand cell phone market. According to the effect of COVID -19 and physical distancing requirements, school, college, and many other institutions are offering online classes/exams therefor a distinctive boom was showing in the demand of second hand /used mobile phones.

Effect on the Cellular Service Provider companies

In the mid of march 2020 Nationwide lockdown was imposed by the central government of India, it was further increased as lockdown 2nd, and 3rd also. In this duration the Work from Home culture was introduced and intensely adopted by the people. As the result of this newly introduced culture and the demand of the customers all the cellular service provider companies were offering work from home data plans for online works requirements. Online Classes, online exam, online meetings, online seminar or webinars are the new trends based on the need of the hour.

Comparison of the Work from Home Plans Available in India.

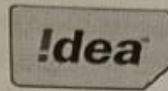


Image Source: www.republicworld.com

At present the 4 companies are providing cellular services in the Indian telecom market – named Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), AIRTEL, JIO, and the alliance of Vodafone-Idea (which is now known as Vi). The all companies are offering work from home plan, and some similarities and variation are there. The brief analysis is given below.

BSNL Work from Home Plans

BSNL customers can apply for the Work@ Home plan and connection over the phone. The broadband plan is offering up to 10 Mbps down speed and the is 5 GB data provided per day. But, the data speed will be reduced to 1 Mbps once the user exhausts his data limit. The plan is valid across all circles, including the Andaman and Nicobar circle.

Airtel Work from Home plans

Broadband plans of Airtel start from Rs 799 which is a basic plan that provides users with 100 Mbps of 150 GB data. If a user requires more data to work from home effectively then they can opt for the entertainment plan of Airtel with 300 GB data per month for Rs 999 with 200mbps speed of.

Jio Work from Home plans

Reliance Jio recharge for Work from Home comes at Rs 251 with 2GB of 4G data per data for 51 days. A SIM Card user of this telecom company can find the pack under the 'Work from Home' tab on the Reliance My Jio app. The pack does not provide unlimited calling or voice calls or free SMS.

Vodafone Idea Work from Home plans

Vodafone Idea has revised its old prepaid plans of Rs 249, Rs 399, and Rs 599. These packs will offer double data to the users with an additional 1.5GB high-speed data to support work from home for all the people practising self-isolation. This means that the plans will provide 3GB data per day. The Rs 249, Rs 399, and Rs 599 plans with 3GB data per day are valid for 28 days, 56 days and 84 days respectively.

Analysis

From the above mentioned description it is clear that service provider companies are offering their work from home plan through broadband connections and mobile phone connections, and the validity providing by the companies are 28days, 51days, 56days and 84 days respectively. data speed is minimum 10 Mbps to maximum 200Mbps. The data limit offering per day are 1.5GB, 2GB, 3GB and respectively with a price tag of 249 to 999 on the basis of data limit and data speed.

Effect of the COVID-19 on Consumer Behaviour

According to the article published on 30th July 2020 in Financial Express, written by the Rishi Ranjan Kala -Covid-19 and the ensuing lockdown opened the flood gates in terms of huge demand for data as concept of work from home (WFH) became a reality. In last roughly four-and-a-half months beginning March, India's data consumption grew at a scorching pace with demand on OTT and VoD platforms rising by a whopping 947% compared to what it was in February, with indications that the rally is far from over. Ericsson's mobility report (June 2020) projects average traffic per smartphone to hit 25 GB a

month by 2025 with additional 410 million smartphone users expected to be added during the same time.

Another report published in ET Telecom website on 15th June 2020 says that, the new finding replanted four factors promoting consumers leap to a virtual life, *the first-factor is high-speed broadband services*. It was found that approximately 38 percent of respondents upgraded broadband plans for higher data usage plans and interestingly, unlimited plans accounted for over 40 percent of the total upgrades. *The second factor* driving the adoption of a virtual life is evolving *content consumption habits* as the survey found 90 percent of respondents spending more time on digital activities such as content streaming, e-learning, infotainment and social media. *The third factor is online education or e-learning* gaining steam in contemporary India as e-learning emerged as the third most-performed digital activity in the past weeks. Nearly 59 percent of respondents affirmed they are learning online whereas, about 50 percent of consumers said they prefer learning on EdTech owing to the convenience of being able to access all the study content in one place. *The end factor is the cashless ecosystem* and the initiatives taken to move towards a cashless economy. The report found nearly 38 percent of respondents started using digital payments for the first time.

A report of business Standard dated 9th may 2020 says that the data released by Nielsen and the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) shows that internet usage has grown sharply in cities over the last one month, touching 54 per cent. In other words, every second individual in cities is using internet, says the study. In rural areas, internet penetration stands at 32 per cent, while the national average is 40 per cent. The smartphone is the preferred device through which internet is being accessed, with time spent on smartphones boosting up to nearly four hours per day from three hours and 22 minutes daily before the pandemic began.

Conclusion:

After a large discussion it is very clear that the COVID-19 has effected the complete Indian economy. In some sectors of economy, it has an adverse effect but in some other sectors the effect is favourable. Indian telecom sector got positive impact from this pandemic, as the sales volume of cell phone has not declined, average and total data consumption of the customers has increased distinctively, Work from home plans are launched and accepted by the subscribers, old popular programmes has telecasted and got an immense positive response from the viewers. Web series are launching by entertainment industries and viewing by the customers through internet enabled devices, it also increases the data consumption nationwide.

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