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South Asian Journal of Management Research (SAJMR), is a scholarly journal that publishes scientific research on the theory and practice of management. All management, computer science, environmental science related issues relating to strategy, entrepreneurship, innovation, technology, and organizations are covered by the journal, along with all business-related functional areas like accounting, finance, information systems, marketing, and operations. The research presented in these articles contributes to our understanding of critical issues and offers valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. Authors are invited to publish novel, original, empirical, and high quality research work pertaining to the recent developments & practices in all areas and disciplines.

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Editor

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Effect of OTT Video Service Integration on Customer Retention in Indian Telecommunication Industry

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Abstract

The Indian telecommunication industry has reached a 3-player equilibrium with a fixed number of subscribers; hence customer retention has become a critical factor. Over-the-top (OTT) content services refer to the content delivered to digitally enabled users without the use of cable or satellite television via the internet. The purpose of the study is to determine the impact of OTT video service in integration on customer retention in the Indian telecommunication industry and its significance when compared to other retention parameters. The study uses convenience sampling strategy to distribute a self-administered survey to 394 telco (Telecommunication companies) users across India. The model and study's hypothesis were evaluated using assessment modelling methodology, with AMOS evaluation tool. The outcome of the study shows that OTT video service integration by telcos have a significant positive influence on service quality, customer's perceived value, satisfaction and switching costs, thereby positively influencing customer retention. The study suggests that the telcos should be focusing more on OTT platform partnerships. The study fills the gaps in customer switching intention prediction made in literature by adding the OTT services into the mix. The study reveals that the OTT video service integration will be the next focus telcos.

Keywords: Telecommunication, Customer Retention, Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Over-The-Top Video Service Integration.

Introduction

India being the second largest telecommunication market globally, has 1.14 billion subscribers, 90.7% of the market share is held by three major players, Reliance Jio (37.61%), Bharati Airtel (32.42) and Vodafone Idea Limited (20.7%). With total subscribers seeing minimal changes, the focus for the telcos is customer retention. During the financial year 2021-2022, 113.09 million subscribers have submitted their porting requests to different service providers for availing mobile number porting (MNP) facility. There is sufficient evidence that acquiring new customers is more challenging and expensive than retaining existing customers, irrespective of the industrial sector type (Saeed, Hussain, & Riaz, 2011). Customer switching behaviour has become a common practice and a critical issue for the Indian telecommunication firms. In most service contexts, customer switching is associated with negative consequences, such as declining market share and poor profitability (Keaveney, 1995). To control switching, mobile service providers are increasingly relying on contracts that lock in customers for a pre-determined period (Braff & Laogue, 2004). Thus, customer retention is a crucial factor for stability and profitability of the telecommunication firms.

With increasing smartphone, 4G penetration and introduction of 5G technology, Indian wireless subscribers have started consuming content over the top (OTT) via the internet. Over the top (OTT) services refer to the content delivered to the digitally enabled user without the use of cable or satellite television via the internet. As per the study by KPMG in 2019, India's online video market is one of the biggest and profitable markets in the world. The study predicts that India will have more than 500 million online video subscribers by FY 2023, and this would make India the second biggest market in the world behind China alone. As per the study, the internet video traffic is projected to reach 13.5 Exabytes (EB) per month by 2023, up from 1.5 EB per month in 2017; with video contributing 77 per cent of all internet traffic by 2023.

Telcos act as the key distributing partners for OTT players in India, as per the study by KPMG, 87% of OTT content consumers in India use mobile phone as the medium. About 43% of OTT subscriptions taken in India are bundled with telco plan offerings. It is projected that 400 million users will be viewing online videos through telecom bundles by end of 2023 (Lata Jha, 2021). With retention being the primary focus, OTT being the next big revenue generating and customer attracting proposition for telcos, the industry is leveraging on OTT platform partnerships for sustained and profitable business. In this context, the study examines the relationship between OTT video service integration provided by telcos, service quality, switching costs, customer satisfaction, perceived value, and customer retention. The article starts by reviewing the literature and presenting a rationale for the hypothesis's development. The research design and methodology then follow. We next present our findings and discuss those. The last parts of the article deal with our conclusion and any limitations.

Literature Review

The literature on customer retention in the telecommunications industry highlights multiple factors influencing consumer loyalty, especially with the emergence of Over-the-Top services as value-added components. This section presents a synthesis of studies addressing customer retention drivers — such as satisfaction, perceived value, service quality, and switching costs — and explores how OTT video service bundling by telecom operators in India is reshaping these dynamics.

Factors Influencing Customer Retention

Multiple studies have explored customer retention in telecom, often treating satisfaction, perceived value, service quality, and switching costs as separate, independent variables. Aydin and Ozer (2005) and Jones (2002) highlighted how switching costs, in particular, tend to have a more significant effect than price or quality in preventing churn. Further supporting this, studies by Jones, Mothersbaugh, and Beatty (2000), Heskett et al. (1994), Copacino (1997), and Ladhari et al. (2011) found that higher perceived service quality and customer satisfaction often lead to stronger retention outcomes.

Burnham, Frels, and Mahajan (2003) broke down switching costs into financial, procedural, and relational dimensions, concluding that relational and procedural costs have the strongest influence in deterring customers from changing providers. Similarly, Joseph and Joachim (2009) emphasized that even when service quality is adequate, switching costs often anchor customers within the telecom ecosystem.

Satisfaction and loyalty are tightly linked in this space. Zeithaml et al. (1996) and Bolton et al. (2000) argued that service quality contributes to satisfaction, which in turn increases the likelihood of customer retention. Zhang (2009) added that relationship marketing tactics can improve trust and satisfaction, further stabilizing customer relationships. As Zeithaml (1988) noted, perceived value — how customers weigh benefits against costs — plays a key role in influencing retention, especially when combined with positive service experiences. More recent evidence continues to support this. Nagaraj et al. (2021) suggested that perceived value, service quality, and satisfaction do not act in isolation but reinforce one another. This study, therefore, aligns with an integrated model where all four variables — satisfaction, value, quality, and switching costs — either directly or indirectly affect retention.

OTT Video Services and Telecom Retention

OTT video platforms, once considered competitive threats to telecom firms, are now being repositioned as strategic allies. Sujata (2015) warned that OTT services could erode telco revenue, but more recent research provides a different view. Korzunowicz (2019) and Krämer (2019) propose that telcos and OTT providers can benefit from partnerships, particularly when bundled offerings enhance user engagement. Farooq (2019) also suggested bundling OTT content with telecom data plans as a smart way to monetize both customer loyalty and content delivery.

Bokström and Eriksson (2023) found that OTT subscriptions embedded in telecom plans enhance satisfaction and retention, particularly for young consumers. Singh et al. (2024) used machine learning techniques and found OTT usage to be a major predictor in churn models. Sharma and Harsora (2023) reported that consumers show a stronger intention to stay with providers offering OTT bundles, especially when the content offered is exclusive or highly relevant.

Sharma and Kakkar (2024) also emphasized that bundling increases both the perceived value and emotional satisfaction, creating a deeper brand connection. Sadana and Sharma (2021) further supported this by noting that young consumers feel a stronger sense of value and exclusivity with telcos that offer seamless OTT experiences, which positively affects retention.

OTT Bundling Trends in India

In India, OTT video consumption has exploded in recent years — largely driven by mobile-first usage and falling data costs. According to a survey by Indo Asian News Service, 44% of OTT users access content through telco bundles. Mint projected that by the end of 2025, about half of India's online content viewers would be using telecom-affiliated streaming platforms.

To keep up, major telecom providers have turned to bundling. Reliance Jio offers content via JioTV and JioCinema; Airtel includes Disney+Hotstar; and Vi integrates Hotstar into its Vi Movies & TV app. These strategies are now central to customer retention tactics. Despite the widespread use of bundling, there remains a notable gap in empirical research quantifying how such offerings affect retention. Most studies have focused on the marketing potential or user engagement, but not on the long-term impact on customer loyalty. This study addresses that gap directly by investigating how OTT bundled offers influence retention outcomes in the Indian telecom context.

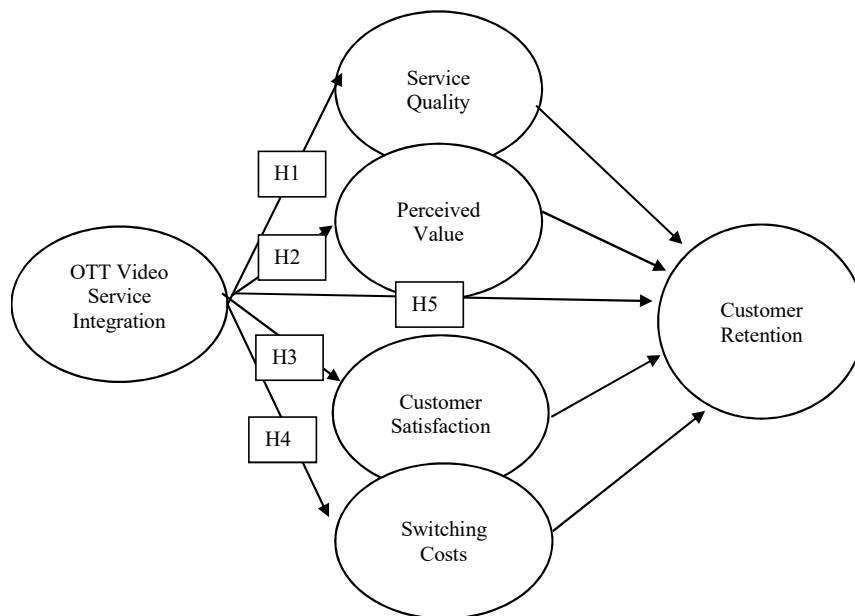
Hypothesis Formulation

As per literature service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction and switching costs have a direct positive impact on customer retention. Also, there is no empirical evidence on impact of OTT video service integration on service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, switching costs and customer retention. Based on the review of relevant literature and qualitative inputs, the following hypotheses are proposed to assess the effect of Over-the-Top video service integration on customer retention in the Indian telecommunication industry. Each hypothesis includes a null and an alternative version.

Table 1 – Hypothesis formulation

Hypothesis	Null Hypothesis (H ₀)	Alternative Hypothesis (H ₁)
H1	OTT video service integration has no significant effect on perceived service quality.	OTT video service integration has a significant positive effect on perceived service quality.
H2	OTT video service integration has no significant effect on perceived customer value.	OTT video service integration has a significant positive effect on perceived customer value.
H3	OTT video service integration has no significant effect on perceived customer satisfaction.	OTT video service integration has a significant positive effect on perceived customer satisfaction.
H4	OTT video service integration has no significant effect on switching costs.	OTT video service integration has a significant positive effect on switching costs.
H5	OTT video service integration has no significant effect on customer retention.	OTT video service integration has a significant positive effect on customer retention.

Figure 1: Proposed Hypothesis Model



Source: Prepared by Authors

Research Methodology

The objective of the study is to primarily get the impact of adding OTT video service integration on customer's tendency to avail mobile number portability (MNP). Data related to the study was collected through structured instruments. The measures of instruments covering all aspects on customer retention in telecommunication industry were extracted from different sources, discussion with customers, experts, and review of literature (Table 1).

The empirical study consists of both qualitative and quantitative phases. The qualitative study included in-depth interview of mobile communication users who stayed loyal, switched, and managers from telecommunication firms. 11 users who switched network, 13 users who stayed loyal for more than 2 years and 5 managers from content and partnership vertical in telecommunication sector were contacted. Qualitative phase of the study along with literature review helped in developing relevant scale items for each construct used in the study.

Following are the 5 constructs used in the study:

- **Service Quality:** Factors which came out during the interviews for service quality were, call quality, network coverage and customer service. As per literature, service quality is customer expectations about service perception and how the service has performed (A. Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991; A. P. Parasuraman et al., 1988). Based on the same research work 5 dimensional SERVQUAL was developed (tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy).
- **Perceived Value:** As per literature perceived value is, get benefits by giving sacrifices, scale for perceived value was adopted from (Woodruff, 1997; Slater, 1997; Zeithaml, 1988; McDougall and Levesque, 2000)
- **Customer Satisfaction:** Scale for customer satisfaction was adopted from Oliver and Swan (1989) and Westbrook and Oliver (1991). Satisfaction for choosing current service as a construct was picked based on the in-depth interview responses.
- **Switching Costs:** Scale for switching costs was primarily based on interview responses, time, effort, and hassle of doing an MNP. Two sub-constructs are based on literature (Ping, 1993; Jones, 2000).
- **OTT Video Service Integration:** Exclusive content apps bundled with the regular plan, Telco based application for content and Ease of bill payment (Single payment for all content and network) were the primary factors that came up during the qualitative analysis.

Based on the interview feedback, insights and literature review we developed a questionnaire for quantitative study. To keep the questionnaire precise, few irrelevant items from the construct were removed. After finalising the instrument that consists of demographic profile, general information and various aspects of customer switching intentions, a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” (5) to “strongly disagree” (1) was employed for each item.

For the survey, as 385 is the recommended sample size for a confidence level of 95%, data was collected from 472 mobile communication users spread across India. After removal of invalid responses, we were left with 394 meaningful responses. The data collected was predominantly from metros in India.

Table 2 – Profile of Respondents

Respondent Profile	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Female	105	27%
Male	289	73%
Age Range		
<21	43	11%
21-25	119	30%
26-30	100	25%
31-35	77	20%
36+	55	14%
Current Service Provider		
Airtel	133	34%
Jio	173	44%
Vi	88	22%
Residing Place		
Metro	283	72%
Non-Metro	111	28%
Occupation		
Employed	279	71%
Student	115	29%

Source: Prepared by the authors

This study employed a SEM approach to evaluate the model and study's hypotheses, and AMOS 23.0 was the evaluation tool.

Results and Discussion

We conducted exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test for the convergent validity of the items used for each construct. Further, validity and reliability of the measures were assessed through factor loadings (SRW) and variance extracted. Construct's breakdown, mean, standard deviation, factor loadings, communality and Cronbach's alpha values are given in table 2.

Table 3 – Summary of mean, standard deviation, factor loading, communality, and Cronbach's alpha.

Constructs	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Factor Loadings	Communality	Alpha
Service Quality	Data and call quality (SQ1)	3.48	1.207	0.82	0.68	0.842
	Network coverage (SQ2)	3.22	1.445	0.83	0.69	
	Reliability of customer service (SQ3)	3.34	1.445	0.78	0.60	
Perceived Value	Value for the money paid (PV1)	3.10	1.413	0.84	0.71	0.901
	Reasonable price for service (PV2)	3.05	1.359	0.84	0.70	
	Consistency, reliability, and quality expectations met (PV3)	3.31	1.472	0.83	0.69	
Customer Satisfaction	Happy with current service (CS1)	3.24	1.393	0.85	0.73	0.904
	Satisfied with choice of network (CS2)	3.22	1.421	0.86	0.74	
	Recommendation to friends and family (CS3)	3.15	1.449	0.86	0.73	
Switching Costs	Costly to switch (SC1)	2.85	1.241	0.69	0.48	0.826
	Time and effort to switch (SC2)	3.27	1.381	0.78	0.61	
	MNP process is a hassle (SC3)	3.17	1.392	0.76	0.58	
OTT Video Service Integration	Happy with partnered OTT Platforms (OTT1)	3.03	1.268	0.73	0.53	0.789
	Happy with telco-based apps (OTT2)	2.90	1.286	0.76	0.58	
	Easy payment methods (OTT3)	2.99	1.276	0.76	0.58	
Customer Retention	Will stay with the network <12 months (CR1)	3.34	1.460	0.85	0.72	0.952
	Will stay with the network >12 months (CR2)	3.16	1.508	0.81	0.65	
	Will stay with the network >24 months (CR3)	3.13	1.511	0.80	0.63	

Source: Prepared by the authors

As factor loadings of all the items are greater than 0.5 and alpha value is greater than 0.7, demonstrating good internal consistency, we proceed with the structured equation modelling for the suggested model.

With this knowledge we performed a CFA on this model, the fit indices generated suggested that the model is fit. The model's fit indices fall well within the threshold ranges advised by Hair et al. (2010), Iacobucci (2010), and Schumacker (1992). Every measurement in the measurement model complies with the prescribed values. It's displayed in Table 3.

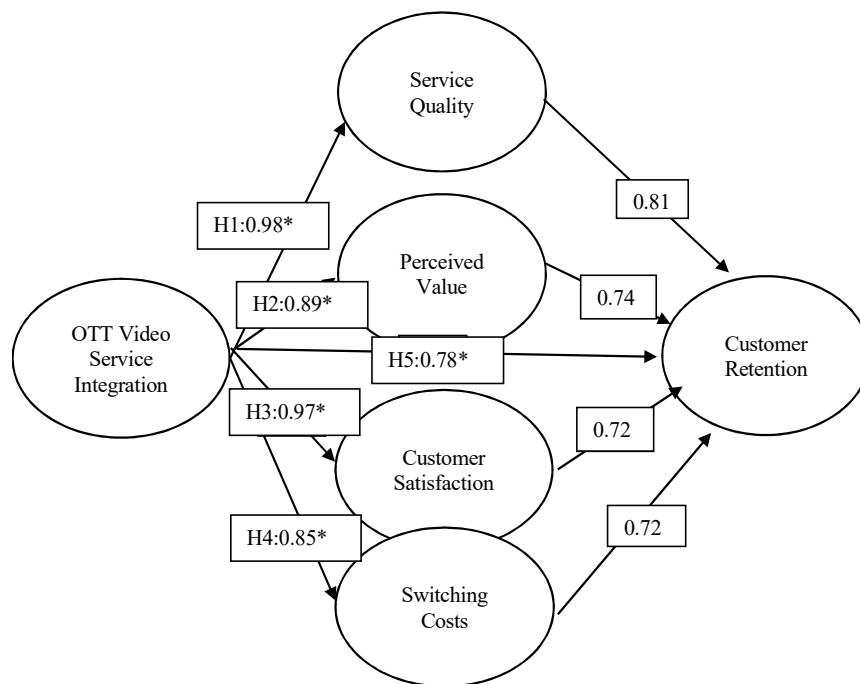
Table 4 – Model Fit

Model Fit	Cut-Off Criteria	Model Statistic
DF	460	120
CMIN/DF	< 4	2.52
GFI	> 0.9	0.92
AGFI	> 0.8	0.88
NFI	> 0.9	0.95
CFI	> 0.9	0.97
RMR	< 0.1	0.07
RMSEA	< 0.8	0.06

Source: Prepared by the authors

Modelling and Testing of Structural Hypothesis

Model suggested during hypothesis testing is constructed using AMOS tool.

Figure 2: Results of proposed structural model

Source: Prepared by Authors

Table 5 – Structural model path analysis

Path			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
ServiceQuality	<---	OTTVideoServiceIntegration	0.98	0.10	10.43	***
PerceivedValue	<---	OTTVideoServiceIntegration	0.89	0.10	10.53	***
CustomerSatisfaction	<---	OTTVideoServiceIntegration	0.97	0.11	11.13	***
SwitchingCost	<---	OTTVideoServiceIntegration	0.85	0.10	10.20	***
CustomerRetention	<---	OTTVideoServiceIntegration	0.78	0.11	10.46	***
CustomerRetention	<---	PerceivedValue	0.74	0.12	10.58	***
CustomerRetention	<---	CustomerSatisfaction	0.72	0.12	10.60	***
CustomerRetention	<---	SwitchingCost	0.72	0.11	10.37	***
CustomerRetention	<---	ServiceQuality	0.81	0.10	10.21	***

Note: *: Significant at p<0.05

Source: Prepared by the authors

The findings indicate that service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, switching costs and OTT video service integration have a positive impact on customer retention (H5). Service quality has the largest

impact on customer retention with a regression weight of 0.81, interestingly OTT video service integration comes next at 0.78. The findings also indicate a positive correlation between service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, switching costs and OTT video service integration (H1, H2, H3, H4). It is found that OTT video service integration has a largest impact on service quality and customer satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study proposes and tests a framework for understanding the relationship between service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, switching costs, OTT video service integration and customer retention. In contrast to previous studies in which relationships linking switching cost to customer satisfaction, customer value and service quality are separately analysed (Aydin and Ozer, 2005; Jones, 2002), this study examines their combined impact of all the parameters. The study resonates with the literature, as the parameters identified have positive association with customer retention (Jones, Mothersbaugh, and Beatty, 2000, Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser & Schlesinger 1994, Copacino, 1997; Ladhari, Souiden, & Ladhari, 2011). On contrary to Aydin (2005) and Jones (2002), as per the current study, switching costs has the lowest impact on customer retention when compared with service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and OTT video service integration.

In the current study, OTT video service integration's impact on customer satisfaction, perceived value and customer retention is very high, which directly results in increasing revenue for the telcos, which is contradictory to findings of Joshi Sujata (2015). The OTT services have been seen as a partnership prospect rather than competition by telcos. As rightly pointed out by Korzunowicz (2019), telcos can work with OTT business and help the OTT companies in going through technology stability and change. The study also supports the finds by Kraemer (2019), telcos should be focusing on partnerships with OTT rather than competing. Telecom companies can bundle their traditional services with OTT services.

OTT video service integration could be the way forward for the telcos to differentiate their product in a commoditised market. It is very evident from the study that the OTT video service integration have a very high impact on all the parameter concerning customer retention, it also has a high direct impact on customer retention. Even though service quality is the highest impacting factor for customer retention, OTT video service integration has a high direct positive impact on service quality too.

Telco content partnerships have been the way forward for the industry, as the average revenue per user (ARPU) for an OTT service postpaid user is two times of a normal prepaid user. Telcos are actively partnering with regional content for better market penetration, (ALTBalaji, Eros Now, Zee5 and Atrangi). Hence it is evident from the study that the OTT video service integration will be a crucial tool for telcos to leverage to counter the customer retention issues.

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