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Complacency in Customer Service Towards Idea Telecom Products

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ABSTRACT

In this information era, the telecommunication sector plays a significant part in industrial and economic growth. The industry has been assisting delivery of voice and data services at rapidly increasing speeds and thus, has been revolutionizing human communication. As far as the prepaid products market is concerned, there is perfect market growth for telecom prepaid products. It is the pioneering mobile operator to launch resourceful value added services in the Indian telephony market and has continued to be ahead of the telephony market in offering data products. The objective of the study is to know the complacency in customer service towards Idea products and to suggest suitable measures to retain the existing customer base. The study is based on primary data collected by way of administering the questionnaire. The respondents were selected based on simple random sampling method from 45 Recharge retail outlets in and around Chennai. 300 questionnaires were distributed and received 251 complete forms with 83.3% response rate. The primary data were analyzed using percentage analysis and ANOVA single factor with the help of SPSS package. One-third of the respondents were either neutral or dissatisfied about regarding network, SMS rates and 4G performances. This segment may take a decision to shift their demand to product and services of other operators. It is suggested that to increase the level of customer satisfaction, the company has to reduce the advertisement calls/unwanted calls. The Idea cellular should identify this complacency in customer service and try to extend favourable facilities and offers to customers to make them satisfied. This study can be extended to any company providing products and services to end consumers.

Keywords: Customer service, complacency, prepaid, call rates and recharge time.

**Success breeds complacency. Complacency breeds failure.
Only the paranoid survive. Andy Grove, A Hungarian Business man**

1. INTRODUCTION

In this information era, the telecommunication sector plays a significant part in industrial and economic growth. The industry has been assisting delivery of voice and data services at rapidly increasing speeds and thus, has been revolutionizing human communication. Most of the operators provide two options to their customers, to opt for a prepaid or a post paid connection with its own merits and demerits. As far as the prepaid products market is concerned, there is perfect market growth for telecom prepaid products. Normally, a telecommunication operator will fetch 70-80% customers for pre paid and remaining from post paid products. Idea has led the way in initiating customized products for different customer segments. It is the pioneering mobile operator to launch resourceful value added services in the Indian telephony market and has continued to be ahead of the telephony market in offering data products.

The Indian telecommunications industry is growing very fast among world-wide service providers due the conducive regulations of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). This has led the telecom sector to become more competitive and extends an easy accessibility at affordable tariffs to the consumers. During the previous two decades, telecommunication sector has revolutionized the communication means, information sharing and through its remarkable growth assisted millions of people to communicate. Telecommunication services are considered to be the motivating forces for the economic development of the nation. This rapid growth in telecommunication services provides fundamental services to support the rejuvenation of different sectors of the economy. However, Indian Government recognizes this reality and has extended many proposals to extend a responsive environment for corporate in this sector.

The customers are not really buying the products or services; they are really buying the relationship with the company through its promises delivered. If the company does not keep its promises, the customers will leave the company without any prior notice and find some other company which fulfills their promise. When the customer remains silent, it shows that either he is satisfied or he may simply purchase/consume till he finds a better product/service to meet his changing needs. Agitation from customers will be faced by the companies which do not continuously monitor the feelings and needs of the customers in the market. The stage of customer agitation will bring a rise of negative feeling and it will be extremely difficult to get back the displeased customers.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The service quality Gap model reveals that there exists a hidden gap between contentment and optimum level of performance and the gap is complacency gap (Francisca Rosene, 2003). If an organization treats customer service as its heart, then complacency is the eradicator which destroys the entire body system by preventing the blood reaching the heart (Maureen Tazzioli). Disregarding the present customers who are the significant cause for profits will result in customer complacency. This will result in missing of situations to expand markets and customer defection (Gupta and Lehmann 2005). To overcome customer complacency, the organization has to make the customers more active (van Doorn and Verhoef 2008). The organization has to engage the customers by offering special provisions and experiences in addition to main supply of goods and services. The firm has to view the customer complaints as opportunities to learn better and to build a long lasting relationship with the customer. The organizational culture and the thrust for continuous improvement will guarantee the avoidance of customer complacency (Yonyx Company, 2016).

The intensified competition in the telecom industry has made the service providers to take new and emerging initiatives to customers. The new initiatives include celebrity endorsements, discount coupons, loyalty rewards, and business solutions and talk time services. The business people and youth are considered to be the most targeted segment for telecom market (Muthukumar et. al. 2015). Through benchmarking of performances, the service providers always emphasize to form a continued trustworthy relationship with customers and make efforts to earn based on their loyalty (Mitra Debnath 2008). Liberalization and globalization has influenced the telecommunication sector and forced them to retain the existing customer in order to maintain their market share (Shabinullah Khan A. and Abbas Manthiri A. 2011). Corporate reputation and endurance depends upon increasing the revenue by decreasing the marketing expenses and positive word-of-mouth by consumers. This is possible due to the augmented level of customer satisfaction which ultimately increases the market share (Devendra Kumar Pandey, Anil Vashisht 2015). Younger generation and employed category have most possible use of SMS in mobile services (Matti Leppaniemi and Heikki Karjaluo 2008). Quality in network, emotions, promotional efforts, service quality at shops and call centres were considered as most significant by the customers while valuing a mobile service (Orose Leelakulhanit, Boonchai Hongcharu, 2011). When customer-company relationship is strengthened, the customers will enhance their knowledge in the company's products and results in a greater costs of switching (Simon J Bell et. al. 2005). Pricing strategy and the subsequent change in demand has a prospective impact on the subscription and revenue to a telecom operator (Samanta SK, Woods J and Ghanbari M, 2008). Increase in GDP growth, personal income, level of knowledge and urbanization leads to a remarkable growth of telecom industry in India. The customers in India is highly sensitive to pricing strategy of telecom operators (Ramachandran TV, 2005). Though customers of cell phone services are satisfied with the prevailing services, they always expect extended services from the providers (Kalavani 2006). Women customers have an addictive use of mobile phones and associated with fashionable and impulsive purchase behaviour (Wilksa, 2003). Quality in call service and customer service has a considerable influence on the level of customer satisfaction (Shahzad Ali Gi and Muhammad Waqas 2014). Clarity in call service, reasonable price and user friendly play a robust influence on the retention of customers in Pakistan cellular industry (Jawaria Fatima al., et. al., 2010).

3. OBJECTIVE AND STATISTICAL TOOLS USED

The objective of the study is to know the complacency in customer service towards Idea products and to suggest suitable measures to retain the existing customer base. The study is based on primary data collected by way of administering the questionnaire. The respondents were selected based on simple random sampling method from 45 Recharge retail outlets in and around Chennai. 300 questionnaires were distributed and received 251 complete forms with 83.3% response rate. The Cronbach's Alpha 0.78 is considered as acceptable and assures the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The primary data were analyzed using percentage analysis and ANOVA single factor with the help of SPSS package.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Idea Cellular, division of the Aditya Birla Group is one of the players in the telecom industry in India and has contributed in the growth of mobile telephony, predominantly in rural India. Subscriber base as on December 31, 2014 is 150,536,058. Idea Cellular is sixth biggest mobile operator on the basis of number of subscribers in single nation operations in 2014 as per GSMA (Groupe Speciale Mobile Association,

London) Intelligence Report. Though the company is flourishing, there exists a discontentment among customers. The customers leave a company because of the poor performance it renders. The customers prefer to switch to another company because of entice of new incentives, gap between promises given and actual delivery by existing company, tiring experience and lack of personal attention in existing company. They are incredulous of being loyal to the company because they feel that they have been charged higher prices and receiving very few benefits. As a result they do not find themselves committed to the existing company. The fast invigorating market makes the companies to think over the complacent consumers because these consumers will not reveal their already made decisions till they leave the company. The discontented will not express their views and will not become challenging customers. The companies should collect market information frequently to read the mind set of complacent customers before they leave the organization. Hence, the study aimed to analyse the complacency in customer service and to find the reasons for complacency among customers.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Idea Cellular belongs to Aditya Birla group which is first multinational company in India. It is a pan-India integrated GSM operator extending 2G, 3G and 4G services, and possesses its own NLD (National Long Distance) and ILD (International Long Distance) operations, and ISP license. Idea stands one among top three mobile operators in India, with annual income in excess of USD 5 billion and 19% market share in revenue. With almost 200 million subscribers, Idea's pan-India network covers more than 400,000 urban and rural communities in the country. The company is promoting its network infrastructure to make high speed mobile broadband services to reach more than a billion people in the country. Idea perform the fastest 4G roll-out in the country in 2016 - with one broadband site being set up for every ten minutes - carrying the overall tally of Idea sites to nearly 230,000 and a fibre network of over 1.28 lakh kms. By March '17, Idea 4G services will be stretched to 20 circles covering 94% of its revenue market.

The complacency among the customers may threaten the endurance of the company. The customers may shift from the company where they feel complacency to the company which they feel will fit their needs better. Complacency among customers reveals that the companies are not valuing the customers and do not make considerable efforts to satisfy the customers. It is always very intricate to attract customers and it is also very difficult to retain the existing customers. Customers with complacency will not stay for a long time with loyalty and they will be waiting for a time to shift their demand to other companies in which they can be best fit. If a company wants to satisfy the customers with complacency, they should reward the customers with best resourceful products and service in all situations. Complacency in serving the customer signifies that the company is no longer valuing the business of the customer and this is highly enough for a customer to change his attitude to the competitors.

Complacency in customer service is not a disorder in itself but it is a feeling which will enter into the company without any prior intimation and its knowledge. This unpredictability of experiences in customer service results in a huge problem and even threatens the reputation of a company. The irate customers may popularize their feeling of complacency in the social media and its repercussions may be unimaginable. The seriousness of complacency in customer service is extensive than the damages faced due to the customers' explicit complaints regarding poor service. When the employees do simultaneous and repeated service based on their successful past records, they believe that they are doing the best to the customers and their

services are in a contented form at the subsequent levels. But the customers expect the best service from the company even at their first contact with the company and they do not forget the bad experience with the company quickly.

Table 1
Socio-economic profile of the respondents

<i>Age (years)</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
Under 18	44	17.5	Male	127	50.6
19-28	29	11.6	Female	124	49.4
29-38	65	25.9	Total	251	100.0
39-48	77	30.7	<i>No. of members in family</i>	<i>No of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
Above 48	36	14.3	Less than 3	103	41.0
Total	251	100.0	3-6	102	40.7
<i>Occupation</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>	Above 6	46	18.3
Business	53	21.1	Total	251	100.0
Government employee	78	31.1	<i>Monthly Income (Ra)</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
Private employee	46	18.3	Below 15,000	66	26.3
Student	41	16.3	15,000-20,000	60	23.9
Others	33	13.1	Above 20,000	82	32.7
Total	251	100.0	NIL	43	17.1
			Total	251	100.0

Source: Primary Data

From the above table it is evident that 17.5% of respondents are less than 18 years of age, 11.6% are in the age group of 19-28 years, 25.9% are in the age group of 29-38 years and 30.7% are in the group of 39-48 years and 14.3% above 48 years of age. 50.6% of respondents are male and remaining 49.4% are female. 21.1% of the respondents are doing business, 31.1% are Government employees and 18.3% are private employees. 16.3% are students and 13.1 are professionals, self-employed, house managers and the like. Only 41% of the respondents have less than three members in their family and the rest have more than three members. 26.3% of the respondents are earning below ₹15,000 and 23.9% are earning between ₹15,000-20,000. 32.7% are earning above ₹20,000 and a segment of the respondents who belong to students and house managers category do not possess any income.

From the above table it is evident that 92.8% respondents are using smart phone. Two-thirds of the respondents are using 3G handsets and the rest are using 4G handsets. 56% of the respondents are using prepaid and the remaining are using post paid. 95% of the respondents are recharging 3G and 4G data cards. Nearly two third of the respondents are using 3G services due to maximum number of offers made under this scheme. 32.3% of the respondents recharge monthly and 32.3% respondents recharge fort nightly. 24.3% recharge weekly and 11.2% recharge daily. Majority of the respondents are recharging there mobile either monthly or fort nightly. This is so because respondents are above the age of 28 years and employed earning above ₹15,000. Nearly two third of the respondents are using 20+ text message per month because of availability of internet services with various applications.

Table 2
Mobile usage profile of the respondents

<i>Phone type</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>	<i>Type of band set</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
Smart phone	233	92.8	3G	152	60.6
Normal phone	18	7.2	4G	99	39.4
Total	251	100.0	Total	251	100.0
<i>Type of SIM</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>	<i>Type of data recharge</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
Prepaid	141	56.2	2G	13	5.2
Post paid	110	43.8	3G	154	61.4
Total	251	100.0	4G	84	33.5
<i>Recharge interval</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>	Total	251	100.0
Monthly	81	32.3	<i>Text duration</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
Fort nightly	81	32.3	2-7 per week	5	2.0
Weekly	61	24.3	8-20 per week	87	34.7
Daily	28	11.2	20+ per week	159	63.3
Total	251	100.0	Total	251	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 3
Operator usage profile of the respondents

<i>Operator Based on SIM</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>	<i>Operator Based on data</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
Idea	53	21.1	Idea	61	24.3
Vodafone	82	32.7	Vodafone	13	5.2
Airtel	50	19.9	Airtel	73	29.1
Aircel	33	13.1	Aircel	55	21.9
BSNL	17	6.8	BSNL	31	12.4
Reliance	16	6.4	Reliance	18	7.2
Total	251	100.0	Total	251	100.0
<i>Operator Based on voice call</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>	<i>No. of prepaid connections</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
Idea	78	31.1	Only 1	66	26.3
Vodafone	119	47.4	2-3	80	31.9
Airtel	37	14.7	4-5	45	17.9
Aircel	17	6.8	Above5	60	23.9
Total	251	100.0	Total	251	100.0
<i>Source of Awareness about Idea</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>	<i>Period of Usage</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
News Paper	20	8.8	Less than one Month	16	6.4
Word of Mouth	3	1.2	2-6 Months	99	39.4
Hoardings	60	24.5	6-12 Months	71	28.3
Advertisement	167	66.5	More than 1 year	65	25.9
Total	251	100.0	Total	251	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The above table depicts the operator currently used for SIM by the respondents as (21.1%) Idea, (32.7%) Vodafone, (19.9%) Airtel, (13.3%) Aircel, (6.8%) BSNL and (6.4%) Reliance in their mobile phones based on adequacy of network coverage of different service providers. As the data card is concerned 24.3% respondents are operating Idea, 5.2% Vodafone, 29.1% Airtel, 21.9% Aircel, 12.4% BSNL and 7.2% Reliance. It is clear that Airtel is closely competing with Idea cellular which is to be taken care of by the Idea cellular management. Of the total respondents 31.1% are operating Idea operator for Voice Call, 47.4% Vodafone, 14.7% Airtel and 6.8% Aircel. The respondents who are using Vodafone are slowly increasing a threat in the market by Idea's closest competitor. Of the total respondents 26.3% are using single prepaid connection, 31.9% are using 2-3 prepaid connections. 17.9 are using 4-5 prepaid connections and 23.9% are using more than 5 connections. 66.5 % of the total respondents are aware of Idea Cellular by Advertisement, 24.5% by hoardings, 1.2% through word of mouth and 8.8% by News paper. Majority of the respondents are aware of Idea Cellular by advertisements and the respondents are not willing to pass positive word of mouth about Idea cellular. Thus, Idea cellular is in a position to create awareness through the pushing strategy. 6.4% of the respondents are using Idea Services for less than one month. 39.4% respondents for 2-6 months, 28.3% for 6-12 months and 25.9% for more than a one Year. Majority of the respondents are using Idea Services for a period of less than six months because of interrupted coverage of network.

Table 4
Opinion regarding Idea services

<i>Coverage satisfaction</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>	<i>Frequently used customer Service</i>	<i>No of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
Yes	174	69.3	Call rates	58	23.1
No	77	30.7	Data rates	73	29.1
Total	251	100.0	Network	67	26.7
<i>Usage of customer care service</i>	<i>No of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>	Value add services	53	21.1
Yes	197	78.5	Total	251	100.0
At times	54	21.5	<i>Reasons for call customer care</i>	<i>No of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
Total	251	100.0	Value add services	41	16.3
<i>Ratings of customer care</i>	<i>No of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>	Information regarding new schemes	114	45.4
51-75%	104	41.4	Other queries	75	29.9
76-100%	147	58.6	Complaints	21	8.4
Total	251	100.0	Total	251	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The above table depicts that 69.3% of the respondents are satisfied regarding to the network coverage of Idea and 30.7% are not satisfied revealing the problems faced in the network coverage in remote areas. 78.5% respondents approach customer care for knowing about the upcoming offers. 23.1% of the respondents frequently use the customer service to know about call rates, 29.1% for data rates, 26.7% for network and 21.1% for value add services of Idea Cellular. Nearly three-fourth of the respondents feel Idea's customer service is good and rank above 75% level. 16.3% of the respondents approach customer

care to know about value added services, 45.4% for new schemes, 29.9% for other queries and 8.4% for complaints.

Table 5
Opinion regarding level of satisfaction towards Idea services

<i>Satisfaction towards 4G</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>	<i>4G speed performance</i>	<i>No of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
Yes	126	50.2	Satisfied	145	60.7
No	07	2.8	Neutral	70	27.9
To some extent	118	47.0	Dissatisfied	36	12.6
Total	251	100.0	Total	251	100.0

<i>Recharge response time</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>	<i>Easy sharing Internet</i>	<i>No of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
Satisfied	139	54.1	Satisfied	108	43.0
Neutral	74	29.5	Neutral	106	42.2
Dissatisfied	38	16.4	Highly Satisfied	37	14.7
Total	251	100.0	Total	251	100.0

Source: Primary Data

From the above table it is evident that 50.2% of the respondents are satisfied regarding Idea 4G and 2.8% of the respondents are not satisfied with Idea 4G. Nearly half of the respondents are satisfied towards 4G only to some extent. 27.9% of the respondents do not opine about the speed performance of 4G. 16.4% of the respondents are dissatisfied regarding recharge response time and 29.5% respondents are neutral. 46.6% respondents are satisfied regarding recharge responses time. Nearly 30% of the respondents are not willing to express their opinion for the response time taken by the company for recharging the card. Similarly, 42.2% of the respondents are neutral towards the services offered through easy sharing internet. Approximately 30% to 40% of the respondents are neutral expressing no opinion towards the services of Idea Cellular. Nearly 15% of the respondents express their dissatisfaction towards the services. The respondents who reveal their dissatisfaction may shift their business to the nearest competitor and it could be explicitly inferred by the company. But the segment which is neutral and not expressing their views are considered to be susceptible and this segment cannot be assessed about their shift in business. This complacency may endanger the future prospects of the company.

Table 6
Reasons for dissatisfaction

<i>Reasons for dissatisfaction</i>	<i>No. of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage to total</i>
Poor customer service	22	8.8
Poor quality in long distance coverage	90	35.9
Telemarketers/unwanted calls	139	55.4
Total	251	100.0

Source: Primary Data

From the above table it is evident that 8.8% of the respondents dissatisfied regarding poor customer service. 35.9% of the respondents dissatisfied regarding quality in covering the long distance and remote

areas. 55.4% respondents dissatisfied regarding the network in the remote places are feeble and expensive. The telemarketing calls causes biggest dissatisfaction and negative opinion among the respondents.

The following hypothesis is set to study the impact of age and gender of the respondents on the level of satisfaction towards services of Idea cellular.

H₀: Age and gender do not influence the level of satisfaction towards services of Idea cellular.

Table 6
Association of age and gender with the level of satisfaction –ANOVA Single factor

<i>Age and service factors</i>			<i>Gender and service factors</i>		
<i>Service factors</i>	<i>P Value</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Service factors</i>	<i>P Value</i>	<i>Result</i>
Network coverage	.000	Rejected	Network coverage	.008	Rejected
SMS rates	.000	Rejected	SMS rates	.031	Accepted
New schemes and offer	.002	Rejected	New schemes and offer	.073	Accepted
Customer care	.000	Rejected	Customer care	.000	Rejected
Recharge outlets	.475	Accepted	Recharge outlets	.062	Accepted
Call rates	.000	Rejected	Call rates	.037	Accepted
<i>Age and Performance factors</i>			<i>Gender and Performance factors</i>		
<i>Performance factors</i>	<i>P Value</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Performance factors</i>	<i>P Value</i>	<i>Result</i>
After sales service	.001	Rejected	After sales service	.000	Rejected
Recharge time	.118	Accepted	Recharge time	.000	Rejected
4G Speed	.000	Rejected	4G Speed	.002	Rejected
Idea easy Sharing	.000	Rejected	Idea easy Sharing	.045	Rejected

Source: Primary Data(@ 5% level of significance)

The above table depicts that age of the respondents influence majority of the service factors. As the outlets of Idea cellular are available in considerable number in all living areas, the respondents do not differ in their opinion on the basis of age. Nearly half of the respondents are under the age of 39 years and earning a maximum of ₹20,000 per month. Hence, they consider other factors namely, network coverage, SMS and call rates, new offers and service extended by customer care as major influencing factors as these involve money outflow. This customer segment also consider about 4G speed, easy sharing and after sales service extended. But they are ready to bear with the inconvenience of waiting time for recharging. Irrespective of the gender, they have same opinion about the SMS and call rates, new schemes and recharge outlets. But they do differ in their opinion about the network coverage and customer care service. They also opine that 4G speed, easy sharing, time taken for recharging and after sales service are influencing in making their choice of selecting the operator.

6. MAJOR FINDINGS

Mainly Idea Cellular has to concentrate in avoiding the telemarketing and unwanted calls. They have to improve their customer care ratings and must come up with segmented offers to the customers. The respondents consider 4G speed, easy sharing, network coverage, time taken for recharging and after sales service as decision criteria for selecting the operator. The study reveals that one-third of the respondents were either neutral or dissatisfied about regarding network, SMS rates and 4G performances. This segment

of customers was complacent because of their rigid preference for the particular products. Therefore it becomes necessary that these customers should be retained as they would contribute to the growth of the organization. The causes of complacency in a customer service can be different for each person as everyone has different goals, needs and values. This segment may take a decision to shift their demand to product and services of other operators.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The challenging task for any organization is to identify complacent customer present in the total customer base. This complacency in customer service could not be easily identified by the company as they were the present customers. But there is a risk of shifting their business at any point of time. The Idea cellular should identify this complacency in customer service and try to extend favourable facilities and offers to customers to make them satisfied. The cost of acquiring a new customer is higher than the cost of retaining an existing customer. To attain sustainable competition advantage, Idea cellular should give priorities in customer retention and maintain customer base. The favourable packages can have an impact in the form of positive word of mouth to their friends and relatives. Idea Cellular should also watch the closest competitors Vodafone and Airtel. It requires strategic thinking and innovation on the part of Idea Cellular to draw its customers' attention and retain its position in the market.

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