

## Land Line Consumer Problems and Perceptions on Telecom Services A study on Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited

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**ABSTRACT:** The telecom services have been recognized the world-over as an important tool for socioeconomic development for a nation and hence telecom infrastructure is treated as a crucial factor to realize the socio-economic objectives in India. Accordingly, the Department of Telecom has been formulating developmental policies for the accelerated growth of the telecommunication services. BSNL is a wholly owned Government of India undertaking, which provides the largest share of telecom services on fixed line networks in the country. BSNL's land lines which were its main source of income have been coming down due to subscribers giving up land line connections in favor of mobile connections. Whereas in the rest of the world, land line has been able to find value addition through cordless telecommunication systems, the same has not been the case in India; this has affected BSNL's fortunes vary adversely. This article attempts to analyze the BSNL consumer problems and their perceptions about services of the company. A structure questionnaire was designed and conducted the survey of the customers of BSNL, to obtain the result. In majority of the cases consumers are adverse about the services offered by the BSNL.

**Keywords:** Telecommunication, Connectivity, Quality, Penetration, Complaints, Maintenance

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### INTRODUCTION

Telecommunication is one of the prime support services needed for rapid growth and modernization of various sectors of the economy (Sethi, 2006). It has become especially important in recent years because of enormous growth of Information Technology (IT) and its significant impact on the rest of the economy. Telecom is the means of communication of the future and shall form a vital component of India's infrastructure. Communication Technologies are found to be contributing substantially to the development process. The process of socio – economic emancipation is now considerably governed by the quality of Information

Technologies. The role of telecommunications became pivotal in this perspective. This sector has undergone a total transformation throughout the world over the last two decades. Technological advances have revolutionized the Quality and range of services available (Raghuram et al., 2001).

The telecommunications is not a new concept. It began in the mid-1800s with the telegraph, whereby sounds were translated manually into words; then the telephone developed in 1876 transmitted voices; and then the teletypewriter, developed in the early 1900, was able to transmit the written word. Since

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1960s, development of telecommunications has been rapid and wide reaching. The development of dial modem technology accelerated the growth rate during the 1980s. Facsimile transmission also registered rapid growth during this time. The 1990s have seen the greatest advancements in telecommunication sector.

Deregulation and new technology have created increased competition and widened the range of network services available throughout the world. This increase in telecommunication capabilities allows businesses to benefit from the information revolution in numerous ways, such as streamlining their inventories, increasing productivity, and identifying new markets and developing connectivity with customers.

Universal telecommunication services in India' focused on telecom reforms in India, the application of Universal Service and impact on telecom in India, telecom pricing and the role of TRAI (Noll and Wallsten, 2006). Ashok (2004) analyzed the trends in telecom sector in India and the problems and challenges. Welfare implication of telecom tariff reforms highlighted specific advantages of promoting communication among underprivileged sections (Pinaki and Srinivasan, 1999). 'Quality of services in Indian telecom sector: user's perception – an assessment', revealed that the expectations of the telecom users are high among the subscribers of recent times because of their sense of time vs. money value and awareness of their rights. The study concludes that almost 94 per cent of the subscribers are satisfied with the overall quality of services provided by the telecom department. This study also deals with growth, working and types of services provided in macro environment (Chalam, 2005).

Rajneesh (2004) Telecom- IT at the core, that to manage a growing customer base, the operators have to deal with issues of customer network optimization, and increasing cross-holdings amongst exiting customers. Regularity changes have to be brought in to facilitate the service providers to use IT. Most Telecom service providers recognized business intelligence tools as a strategic IT investment and looked for enterprise BI suites that would serve the needs of several different types of users. Entire enterprises software portfolio, including BI, CRM and related applications, made up a market of the size. As far as telecom

service providers are concerned, it was imperative to understand the reasons behind consumer churn and prevent it from happening or at least content it.

Telephone was introduced in India in 1882. Indian telecommunication sector has emerged as a strong growth engine for the Indian economy in the last decade with the country witnessing tremendous growth in wireless sector. The penetration of internet and broadband has also improved. The Government of India approved a project for creation of National Optical Fibre Network for connecting 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats with support from Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).

The wireless subscriber base was 919.17 million as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 in comparison to the subscriber base of 811.59 million as on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2011. It added 107.58 million subscribers in the financial year 2011-12 registering an annual growth rate of about 13.26 per cent. The total subscriber base of wireless services has grown from 165.11 million in March, 2007 to 919.17 million in March, 2012. The subscriber base of wire line subscribers as on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 was 32.17 million as compared to 34.73 million subscribers on 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2011 registering a decrease of 2.56 million subscribers during the year 2011-12. The annual growth rate of Telecom subscribers in India is declining year by year from 2009-10 onwards (table 1).

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2000 by corporatization of the erstwhile Department of Telecom Operations and Department of Telecom Services. The company has taken over the erstwhile functions of the Department of Telecom in respect of provision of telecom services across the length and breadth of the country excluding Delhi and Mumbai. BSNL has a large base of skilled work force of around 2.71 lakh as on 31.12.2011 and is a 100 per cent Government of India owned Public Sector Undertaking. BSNL had 1197.66 lakh Customers as on 31.12.2011. During 2011-12 (up to 31.12.2011), it has added 27.07 lakh customers. As on 31.03.2011, BSNL had 37,963 wired line telephone exchanges with equipped capacity 444.80 lakh lines and customers base 252.25 lakh. The wired line status as on 31.12.2011 is 37,653 telephone exchanges with equipped capacity of 431.24 lakh lines and 230.04 lakh connections.

**Table1: Telecom subscribers in India (in million)**

Year	Fixed	Mobile	Total	Growth (%)
2006 – 07	40.77	165.09	205.87	44.88
2007 – 08	39.41	261.08	300.49	45.96
2008 – 09	37.97	391.76	429.73	43.01
2009 – 10	36.96	584.32	621.28	44.57
2010 – 11	34.73	811.60	846.33	36.22
2011 – 12	32.17	919.70	951.87	09.48

Source: Annual Reports of Department of Telecommunications (2011-12) and Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (2011-12)

### Need for the Study

BSNL is the market leader in fixed line business in the country. It have 84 per cent land line market share in 2008 and the share is declined to 69.9 per cent in the year 2012. The performance of this segment became a cause of concern to the company. The subscriber growth rate is negative for the last few years. From the above statistics, it is clearly establishes that the number of fixed line subscribers decreased year by year. The numbers are evident to infer that things are not seem to be hunky dory as far as the fixed line business is concerned. Over the last three years, more than a million fixed line connections were surrendered by subscribers. On the other hand, private fixed line operators like Tata Tele Services, Reliance Info., HFCL and Vodafone have added close to a million lines. It clearly establishes the fact that BSNL has lost business because many people are opting for a private fixed line connection. Though BSNL is the major player in the Telecommunication Sector, it is facing severe competition from private sector. The monopoly situation enjoyed over the years and the most favorable market conditions of demand exceeding supply in almost all parts of the country lead the company to become insensitive to the customers' specific needs and services. Value added services including customer services became the weakest part of the company against which the competitors are acting seriously to encourage switchovers in their favor. The present study is a modest attempt to study the customer perceptions and their satisfaction in relation to fixed line services of BSNL. The finding of the study will be useful to the management to identify problems

and initiate suitable measures, for further development of the company.

**Objectives:** The specific objectives of the study are:

- ✓ To study the problems faced by the BSNL customers and their complaining behavior.
- ✓ To know consumer perceptions on Maintenance Services of the organization.
- ✓ To study the opinion of the consumers on the service expectations and performance.
- ✓ To suggest suitable measures wherever necessary for the development of the company.

### RESEARCH METHOD

To pursue the above mentioned objectives, data from primary and secondary sources are necessary. The secondary data has been collected from the Central Office of the BSNL, Ministry of Communications, Government of India and other related Offices and Websites. The primary data has been collected through opinion survey. A structured questionnaire was designed to elicit the information from the sample respondents. Since the universe is large, a sample survey was taken up. A sample of 450 customers was selected using quota sampling. Personal interviews and telephonic interview techniques have been adopted for the purpose of primary data collection.

### Area of the Study

Andhra Pradesh State is selected for a detailed study. Two districts from each of the three regions i.e., Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana were selected based on the number of landline connections of the company. The

districts selected for the study are Visakhapatnam (VSKP), Krishna, Chittoor, Kurnool, Hyderabad and Warangal. From each district, 75 customers were interviewed for the purpose of the study. Appropriate statistical techniques were used for tabulation, analysis and interpretation of data.

#### Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study covers six telecom circles of Andhra Pradesh. Seventy five customers from each circle were selected to collect opinions on telecom services of BSNL. The particulars relating to the age of the respondents are shown in table 2. The telephone users below 21 years of age are excluded from the study. The age of respondents varied between 21 years and 66 years. Majority of the respondents (51.33 per cent) are in the age group of 31 to 41 years. About 35 per cent of respondents are in the age group of 41 to 50 years. Out of the total, 290

respondents representing 64.45 per cent are males. Females constitute 35.55 per cent of the total.

The table also reveals that 42 per cent of the respondents are graduates. A little over 50 per cent of the respondents are post-graduates. The particulars relating to occupation of the respondents, 26.89 per cent of the respondents are businessmen. About 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the respondents are employees. There are 104 respondents (23.11 per cent) who are professionals and 52 respondents (11.55 per cent) who are cultivators. Housewives constitute 13.11 per cent of the total. The annual income of respondents varied between below ₹100,000 and above ₹500,000. The annual income of 31.1 per cent of the respondents varied between ₹200,001 and ₹300,000. About 59.6 per cent of the respondents' annual income varied between ₹100,001 and ₹200,000. The average annual income of the respondents was ₹189,666.67.

Table 2: Respondents demographic profile

n=450

Demographic variables		Respondents	Percentage
Age	<21 years	53	11.8
	21-30 years	231	51.3
	31-40 years	156	34.7
	>40 years	10	2.2
Gender	Male	288	64.0
	Female	162	36.0
Education	Primary	89	19.8
	Secondary	189	42.0
	Graduates	68	15.1
	PG & above	104	23.1
Occupation	Business	121	26.9
	Employees	114	25.3
	Professionals	104	23.1
	Cultivation	52	11.5
	Housewives	59	13.2
Monthly Income (₹)	< 10000	26	5.8
	10001 – 20000	256	59.6
	20001 – 30000	140	31.1
	> 30000	28	6.2

Source: Primary Data

### Relationship with BSNL

An attempt is made in the study to know the length of experience of the respondents with BSNL in relation to fixed line connectivity. The data shown in figure 1 reveals that the respondents' experience varied between one year and more than 16 years. As many as 141 respondents representing 31.33 per cent of the total had BSNL connection during the last 5 years. About 26 per cent of the respondents have more than 10 years of experience with BSNL fixed line connectivity.

The majority of the respondents representing 91.11 per cent are using BSNL fixed line under a price package of ₹500 and below (table 3). The price package of 6 per cent of the respondents varied between ₹501 and ₹1000. Only about 3 percent of the respondents have taken the price package varying between ₹1001 and ₹1500.

An attempt is made to know the average monthly expenditure of the respondents on fixed line telephone. The study reveals that about 59.56 per cent of the respondents incur an expenditure of ₹501 to ₹1000 per month on fixed line connection (table 4). About 20 per cent of the respondents' expenditure was ₹500 and below each per month. The monthly expenditure of 13.56 per cent of the respondents varied between ₹1001 and ₹1500. The average expenditure of the respondents per month on fixed line service was ₹683.33.

The respondents revealed the benefits they perceive from BSNL fixed line connectivity when compared to the other private company fixed line connections. As can be seen from table 5, the perceived benefits include economical, low rent, voice clarity, more free calls, reliable service and no hidden charges. Out the total, as many as 192 respondents representing 42.67 per cent of the total revealed BSNL fixed line is 'economical' when compared to the private companies. 'Low rent' is the benefit revealed by 14.44 per cent of the respondents. 'Reliable service' was the benefit identified by 13.33 per cent of the respondents where as 'more free calls' is the benefit revealed by 12.67 per cent of the respondents. There are 11.11 per cent of the respondents who revealed 'voice clarity' as the major benefit from the BSNL while 5.78 per cent revealed that there are 'no hidden charges' in BSNL.

An attempt is made to know the major reason for continuing BSNL fixed line service by the respondents. The study revealed that the statement 'large network connectivity even to rural areas' (score 475) is the major reason to continue BSNL fixed line (table 6). Low rentals was the another major reason secured 261 score. The other reasons identified by some respondents include Public Sector Company, free calls and reliable service.

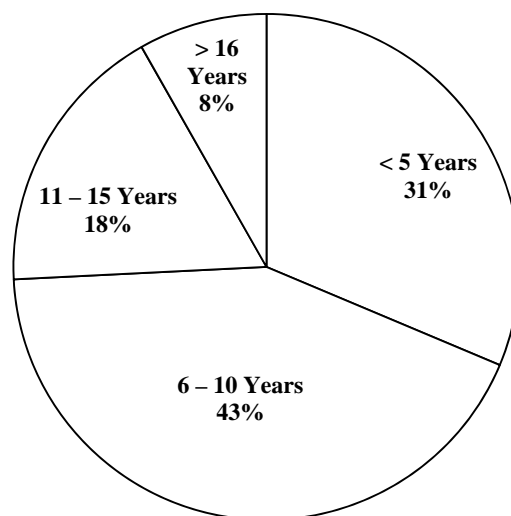


Figure 1: Since how long you are having BSNL connection

Table 3: Details of the price package of the respondents

n=450

Package (₹)	Telecom Circle						Total
	Hyderabad	Karnool	Vijayawada	VSKP	Tirupati	Warangal	
<b>500 &amp; Below</b>	67 (14.89)	69 (15.33)	66 (14.67)	68 (15.11)	71 (15.80)	69 (15.33)	410 (91.11)
<b>501 - 1000</b>	6 (1.33)	3 (0.67)	6 (1.33)	5 (1.11)	2 (0.40)	5 (1.11)	27 (6.00)
<b>1001 - 1500</b>	2 (0.44)	3 (0.67)	3 (0.67)	2 (0.44)	2 (0.40)	1 (0.22)	13 (2.89)

Source: Primary Data

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to the total.

Table 4: Monthly expenditure on land line telephone

n=450

Expenditure (₹)	Telecom Circle						Total
	Hyderabad	Karnool	Vijayawada	VSKP	Tirupati	Warangal	
<b>500 &amp; Below</b>	25 (5.56)	18 (4.00)	25 (5.56)	20 (4.44)	18 (4.00)	15 (3.33)	121 (26.89)
<b>501 - 1000</b>	33 (7.33)	50 (11.11)	43 (9.56)	47 (10.44)	45 (10.00)	50 (11.11)	268 (59.56)
<b>1001 - 1500</b>	17 (3.78)	7 (1.56)	7 (1.56)	8 (1.78)	12 (2.67)	10 (2.22)	61 (13.56)

Source: Primary Data

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to the total.

Table 5: Benefits from BSNL fixed lines connection compared to private company fixed line connection

n=450

Particulars	Telecom Circle						Total
	Hyderabad	Karnool	Vijayawada	VSKP	Tirupati	Warangal	
<b>Economical</b>	30 (6.67)	32 (7.11)	29 (6.44)	39 (8.67)	30 (6.67)	32 (7.11)	192 (42.67)
<b>Low rent</b>	12 (2.67)	14 (3.11)	9 (2.00)	11 (2.44)	9 (2.00)	10 (2.22)	65 (14.44)
<b>Voice clarity</b>	8 (1.78)	5 (1.11)	10 (2.22)	8 (1.78)	12 (2.67)	7 (1.56)	50 (11.11)
<b>More Free calls</b>	12 (2.67)	10 (2.22)	11 (2.44)	4 (0.89)	9 (2.00)	11 (2.44)	57 (12.67)
<b>Reliable service</b>	11 (2.44)	9 (2.00)	10 (2.22)	8 (1.78)	9 (2.00)	13 (2.89)	60 (13.33)
<b>No hidden charges</b>	2 (0.44)	5 (1.11)	6 (1.33)	5 (1.11)	6 (1.33)	2 (0.44)	26 (5.78)

Source: Primary Data

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to the total.

**Table 6: Major reason for continuing BSNL fixed line service** n=450

Particulars	Score
Large Network connectivity even to rural areas	475
Low rentals	261
Public sector company	048
Free calls	045
Reliable service	071

Source: Primary Data

### Opinion on Maintenance Services

Telecom customers take fixed line connection generally to continue the service for a long period. During the period of service, the customers expect uninterrupted service. Maintenance of service is the responsibility of the service company. The service personnel will take care of the maintenance of exchanges, distribution line and junction boxes besides attending to customers' specific maintenance problems. A failure or deficiency in maintenance service may affect seriously the customer quality perceptions of the service. The problems such as line dead, supplementary sounds or line disturbances, input /output clarity, etc., will cause inconveniences to the customers. It is necessary, therefore, to demonstrate high level of efficiency in the maintenance of services to satisfy and retain customers. Keeping this in view an attempt is made, to know the maintenance problems faced by the respondents and their opinion on the maintenance services provided and performed by the company.

The data presented in table 7 shows the maintenance problems of the respondents. Frequent line failure is the problem for 41.57 per cent of the respondents. The vast majority of the respondents representing 82 per cent of the total disagreed to the statement 'voice clarity is poor'. The statement 'supplementary sounds are often disturbing', was confirmed by 36.22 per cent of the respondents where as about 50 per cent of the respondents disagreed to the statement. For the statement 'frequent wrong call', only 14.23 per cent gave the agreement where as more than 73 per cent of the respondents were disagreed to the statement. The statement 'poor response to the complaints' was rejected by 61.56 per cent of the respondents while 32.43 per cent agreed to the statement. Out of the total, 78 per cent of respondents rejected the statement 'discourteous

behavior of contract employees'. The statement 'make temporary adjustments on complaints', was agreed by 43.11 per cent of the respondents whereas 46 per cent of the respondents disagreed the statement.

An attempt is further made to obtain rating of the respondents on the overall maintenance service of BSNL. The data presented in table 8 shows that 16 per cent of the respondents rated the maintenance service as very good. As many as 135 respondents representing 35 per cent of the total rated that the maintenance services as good. The rating of 91 respondents representing 20.22 per cent is average. Out of the total, 122 respondents representing 27.11 per cent rated the services as poor and 30 respondents representing 6.67 per cent rated the services as very poor. It can be inferred from the above that the majority of the respondents rated the maintenance service of the company as either good or very good. However, the voice of the others cannot be ignored as the percentage of the respondents who rated the service as average; poor and very poor is also significant.

The data relating to opinion of the respondents on behaviour of maintenance staff of the company are presented in table 9. The table reveals that majority of the respondents strongly agree to the statement 'the maintenance staff are courteous' and its score is 1596 secured first rank. The majority of the respondents disagreed to the statement 'the maintenance staff are objective' it got low score of 1345. The statements 'reactive' and 'friendly behaviour' are get 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> ranks respectively. It can be inferred from the above, that there is inconsistency in the interactive behavior of maintenance staff with customers. The maintenance staffs of the BSNL are large in number and there is a possibility of differing behavior patterns in customer interactions.

Table 7: Maintenance problems

n=450

Particulars	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Frequent line failure	30 (6.67)	157 (34.89)	69 (15.33)	174 (38.67)	20 (4.44)
Voice clarity is poor	22 (4.89)	48 (1.67)	11 (2.44)	286 (63.56)	83 (18.44)
Supplementary sounds are often disturbing	18 (4.00)	145 (32.22)	63 (14.00)	214 (47.56)	10 (2.22)
Frequent wrong calls	34 (7.56)	30 (6.67)	54 (12.00)	319 (70.89)	13 (2.87)
Frequent instrument mall functioning	18 (4.00)	30 (6.67)	56 (12.44)	330 (73.33)	16 (3.55)
Poor response to the complaints	13 (2.87)	133 (29.56)	36 (8.00)	261 (60.00)	7 (1.56)
Discourteous behaviour of contact employee	15 (3.33)	34 (7.56)	50 (11.11)	333 (74.00)	18 (4.00)
Make temporary adjustments on complaints	26 (5.78)	168 (37.33)	49 (10.89)	201 (44.67)	6 (1.33)

Source: Primary Data

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to the total.

Table 8: Opinion on maintenance services

n=450

Particulars	Telecom Circle						Total
	Hyderabad	Karnool	Vijayawada	VSKP	Tirupati	Warangal	
Very Good	11 (2.44)	13 (2.89)	16 (3.56)	11 (2.44)	11 (2.44)	10 (2.22)	72 (16.00)
Good	18 (4.00)	24 (5.33)	20 (4.44)	31 (6.89)	19 (4.22)	23 (5.11)	135 (30.00)
Average	13 (2.89)	9 (2.00)	19 (4.22)	15 (3.33)	15 (3.33)	20 (4.44)	91 (20.22)
Poor	27 (6.00)	23 (5.11)	18 (4.00)	13 (2.89)	26 (5.78)	15 (3.33)	122 (27.11)
Very poor	6 (1.33)	6 (1.33)	2 (0.44)	5 (1.11)	4 (0.89)	7 (1.56)	30 (6.67)

Source: Primary Data

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to the total.

Table 9: Opinion on the behavior of maintenance staff

Behavior	Score	Rank
Courteous	1596	1
Empathetic	1355	5
Reactive	1548	2
Objective	1345	6
Active	1420	4
Friendliness	1426	3

Source: Primary Data



### Customer Complaints

An attempt is made to study the reactions of customers when they are grievous over the service provided by the company. The data presented in figure 2 reveals that 151 respondents representing 33.56 per cent complain their grievances orally to the company authorities. As many as 102 respondents representing 22.67 per cent express their displeasure to the service maintenance personnel. A little over 17.33 per cent of the respondents revealed that they make a formal complaint to the company. Out of the total, 6.22 percent of the respondents revealed that they file a case in the customer court and 8.44 per cent of the respondents revealed that they switchover to another company. However,

about 11.78 per cent of respondents revealed that they will not complain any one even when they are grievous.

The study revealed that out of the total, 229 respondents representing 50.89 per cent made complaints either in oral or written form. The issues of the customer complaints include line dead, wrong call, voice clarity, instrument malfunctioning, disconnection without adequate reason and cross talk. The data presented in figure 3 reveals line dead is the major problem which leads the customers to complain. The second major problem was wrong calls. Wrong calls, disconnected without adequate reasons, instrument malfunction and cross talk are the other issues identified by the respondents.

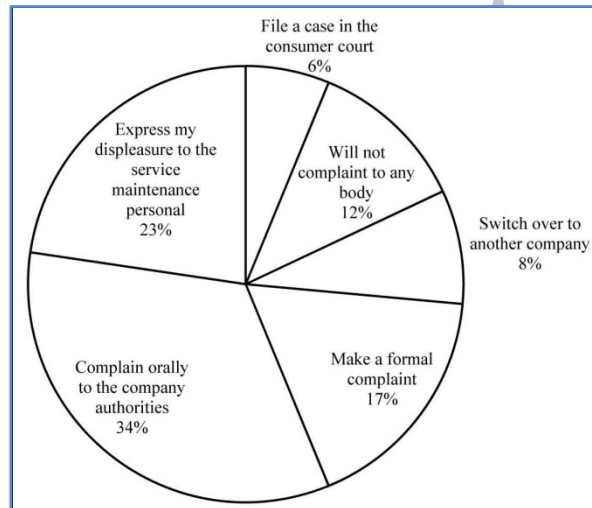


Figure 2: If you are grievous with the services provided by the company, how do you react

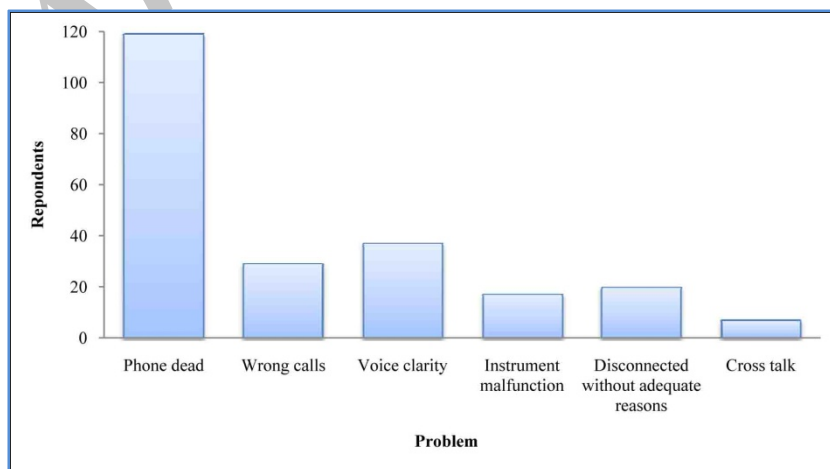


Figure 3: Issues of customer complaints

The respondents were asked to reveal whether they have participated in the Customer meets organized by the company (figure 4). The study revealed that only about 19 per cent have participated in customer meets organized by the company. The major reasons revealed by the respondents for not attending the customer meets include unawareness of the schedule of customer meets, disinterest and time, energy and transportation costs.

The data presented in figure 5 reveals that 'no interest' is the reason for about 49.77 per cent of the respondents who have not participated in customer meets. 'Unawareness of the schedule of customer meets' is the reason for 34.89 per cent of the respondents. Some respondents revealed that attending meeting involve time, energy and transportation costs and therefore they prefer not to attend such meets.

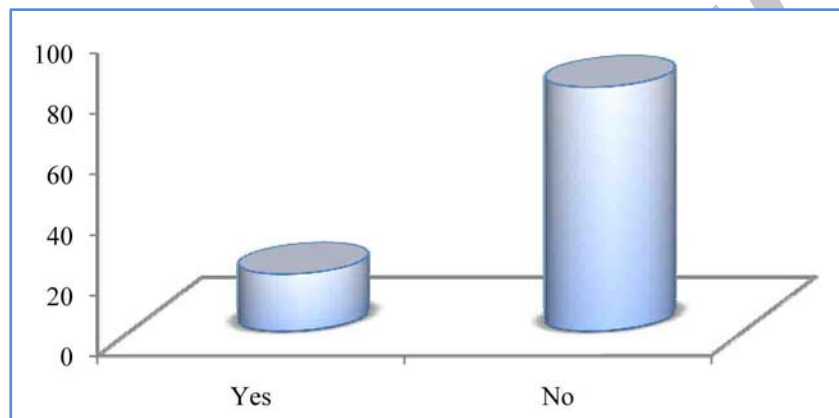


Figure 4: Have you ever participated in consumer meets organized by the company

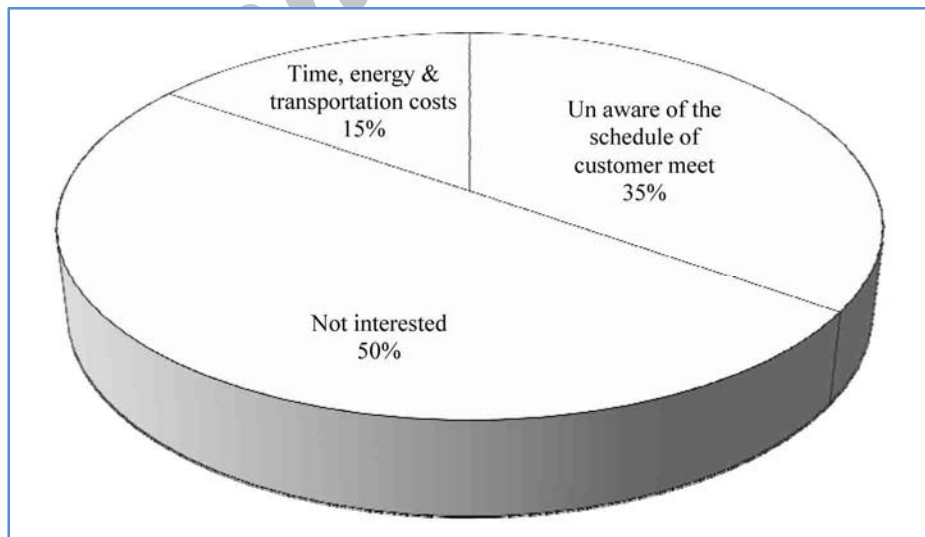


Figure 5: Reasons for not attending customers' meets

## **RESULTS**

- ✓ The majority of the respondents are using BSNL fixed line under a price package of ₹ 500 and below.
- ✓ The study reveals that more than 50 per cent of the respondents incur an expenditure of ₹ 501 to ₹1000 per month on fixed line connection.
- ✓ BSNL fixed line is 'economical' when compared to the private companies revealed by 42.67 per cent of the respondents.
- ✓ The statement 'large network connectivity even to rural areas' is the major reason to continue BSNL fixed line.
- ✓ Frequent line failure is the problem for 41.57 per cent of the respondents.
- ✓ The vast majority of the respondents disagreed to the statement 'voice clarity is poor'.
- ✓ More than one-thirds of the respondents confirmed 'supplementary sounds are often disturbing'.
- ✓ A little over one-fourth of the respondents felt that the services of BSNL are poor.
- ✓ The majority of the respondents disagreed to the statement 'the maintenance staff are objective.'
- ✓ Half of the respondents made complaints either in oral or written form. Line dead is the major problem which leads the customers to complain.
- ✓ The study revealed that only about 19 per cent have participated in customer meets organised by the company.
- ✓ 'No interest' is the reason for about 49.77 per cent of the respondents who have not participated in customer meets.

## **CONCLUSION**

BSNL needs to focus on frequent line failure, supplementary sounds or line disturbances, poor response to complaints and temporary solutions to the maintenance problems and take measures for rectification. The opinion of the respondents with respect to behavior of maintenance employees, functioning of instruments and voice clarity is quite encouraging to the company. The maintenance staffs of the BSNL are large in number and there is a possibility of differing behavior patterns in customer interactions. The variance in the behavior is more likely to take

place when the employees are not properly trained and directed. As the maintenance employees are the customer contact employees, their role in shaping consumer quality perceptions and image building cannot be overemphasized. Taking the respondents opinion in to consideration, it is suggested that the maintenance staff shall be given training on interactive skills and social behavior. Customer meets are important for the company to get direct feedback from the customers and also to clarify them on various issues, technical as well as managerial. The company should make efforts to involve as many customers as possible in the process. The findings of the study establish the fact that the customers are not communicated effectively about the details of customer meets and also efforts are not directed to persuade the customers to participate in such meets. It is suggested, therefore, that the company should communicate through telephone as well as other media and persuade customers to participate actively in the meets. The company should organize the meets in such a way that the participants shall involve in the process, issues are discussed objectively and follow up is taken care of by the company effectively.

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