

Employees' Perception of Innovating Markets through Blue Ocean Strategy: A Study of Reliance Jio



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DOI: 10.26573/2025.19.3.4

Volume 19, Number 3

September 2025, pp.181-193

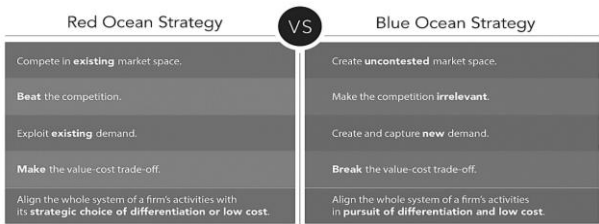
This study explores employee perceptions of Reliance Jio's application of the Blue Ocean Strategy in the competitive Indian telecom sector, specifically focusing on the city of Mysore. The research investigates how Reliance Jio successfully disrupted a saturated market through innovative pricing, product differentiation, and service delivery. By creating a new, uncontested market space and breaking traditional value-cost trade-offs, Jio repositioned itself beyond conventional industry boundaries. The study employed a structured questionnaire based on four key Blue Ocean Strategy constructs: Uncontested Market Creation, Elimination of Competition, Breaking Value-Cost Trade-offs, and Gaining from Cost Differentiation. Responses from 125 employees across various outlets in Mysore were statistically analyzed using weighted average methods, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Results show strong internal validation of Jio's strategic approach, with high employee agreement across all four constructs. The calculated Blue Ocean Strategy Index (6.12) strongly aligns with employee perceptions and the company's strategic direction. Employees view Jio as a leader in market innovation and cost-efficiency. The findings affirm that Jio's transformational strategies are effective externally and well-understood and supported internally, highlighting the importance of employee perception in sustaining strategic advantage through innovation and differentiation.

1. Blue Ocean Strategy

Blue Ocean Strategy is a business concept that emphasizes creating new, uncontested market spaces rather than competing in saturated markets. The term was coined by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, professors at INSEAD, in their 2005 book titled *Blue Ocean Strategy: How to Create Uncontested Market Space and Make the Competition Irrelevant*. The strategy encourages organizations to simultaneously pursue differentiation and low cost, thereby creating "blue oceans" of opportunity instead of "red oceans" filled with intense competition. It focuses on value innovation—offering greater value to customers while reducing costs. The core idea is to look beyond existing demand and industry boundaries to unlock new customer segments. Blue Ocean Strategy has been widely adopted across industries for its practical framework that enables long-term growth and profitability. It pushes

companies to challenge traditional assumptions and break free from competitive rivalry by redefining market space in innovative and customer-focused ways.

Blue ocean strategy is simultaneously pursuing differentiation and low cost to open up a new market space and create new demand. It is about creating and capturing uncontested market space, thereby making the competition irrelevant. It is based on the view that market boundaries and industry structure are not a given and can be reconstructed by the actions and beliefs of industry players.



2. Telecom Sector

The telecom sector is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the world, as it is immensely capable of serving the people directly and indirectly. Apart from providing business and job opportunities to the people, the telecom sector also contributes 8.2% to the country's GDP. The industry plays a vital role in international commerce; hence, it is an accepted necessity in industrialized nations. Wireless services have a significant impact on the growth of the telecommunication networks, and these services are used increasingly for mobile communications.

Various players (Hutch, Vodafone, Birla Comm. Ltd., TATA, and Bharti Airtel) entered the market. All these players followed different business models to perform their operations. They competed in the existing market space called “Red Ocean”. Red oceans refer to the market space with well-defined and accepted boundaries. Competitiveness is the key characteristic of the space. In this space, a company must outperform rivals to seize a higher market space. Despite the lower revenue due to the high competition and corresponding price war, most companies succeeded in capturing their own market share. However, the entry of a new competitor was challenging as the telecommunications market was already saturated, and the scope for the new player to capture the market space was minimal. It was in this scenario that Reliance Communications decided to enter the market with its new network named Reliance Jio.

3. Reliance Jio

Reliance Jio Infocomm Limited, a subsidiary of Reliance Industries Limited, revolutionized the Indian telecom industry with its commercial launch on September 5, 2016. Founded by Mukesh Ambani, Jio entered the market with a disruptive strategy offering free voice calls and extremely affordable data plans, dramatically shifting consumer expectations and industry pricing.

Before its official launch, Jio began beta testing for Reliance employees in December 2015. Within six months of its public debut, Jio acquired over 100 million subscribers, making it the fastest-growing telecom operator in the world at that time.

Its customer base crossed 200 million by mid-2018, and by 2024, Jio had surpassed 450 million subscribers, becoming the largest telecom operator in India. It revolutionised the whole industry with its cost leadership approach.

Jio's aggressive data pricing, broad 4G network coverage, and bundled digital services led to a price war, forcing competitors to lower tariffs and consolidate. This disruption caused significant market shifts, including mergers like Vodafone-Idea and the exit of smaller operators.

As of 2024, Reliance Jio holds around 39–40% of the Indian telecom market share in subscribers and revenue. Rapid rise transformed it into a digital ecosystem leader, offering broadband, enterprise solutions, and digital apps beyond telecom services.

Understanding the current state of the business and its slim chances of surviving, Reliance Jio adopted a marketing approach known as the "Blue Ocean strategy." The aggressive pricing introduced by Reliance Jio services helped to increase its customer base. As its customer base rapidly expanded, other players like Vodafone, Idea, and Bharti Airtel suffered losses. Jio's launch offered free data to its customers at high speeds and provided customizable plans for low tariffs. Some of the other significant developments due to the launch of Reliance Jio in the telecom sector include increased consumption of online content, a large number of user acquisitions, and improved broadband internet availability.

Further, Jio's pricing, marketing, and product differentiation strategies revolutionized the entire market. It came up with not only advanced technology, but also with free and faster services in all areas of the telecommunications sector. The one-stop solution offered by Jio for data, voice calls, messaging, news, and entertainment enabled it to achieve a competitive advantage in the market. Because of the drastic effect of Reliance Jio's pricing strategies, its competitors were forced to introduce rate cuts and new offers. These offers, however, enhanced the popularity of Jio. The initial free offers provided by Reliance Jio amassed a phenomenal subscriber base within a record time. In this backdrop, the present study examines the impact of the blue ocean strategy implemented by Reliance Jio to capture the market.

4. Review of Literature

The present section reviews the studies that examined the impact of the launch of Jio on the Indian telecom sector and the impact of blue ocean strategies on capturing the market.

Gochhait and Tripathy (2016) conducted a case study on Reliance Jio as a game changer in the telecom industry with its predatory pricing. They reported that the tariff plans announced by Reliance Jio will affect the profitability and sustainability of the existing telecom service providers. Based on the secondary data on market share and subscription, the researchers reported that Reliance Jio cannot be involved in predatory pricing; however, its behavior and manner of entry into the telecom market can undoubtedly be considered as predatory.

Joy and Bahl (2018) also conducted a study on the impact of Reliance Jio on the telecom industry. They adopted an exploratory research approach with secondary data from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). They found that the various marketing, operational, and functional strategies adopted by Reliance Jio enabled them to build a loyal and satisfied customer base.

Yadav and Gupta (2018) studied the impact of the disruptive innovation introduced by Reliance Jio on the Indian telecom sector. They probed into the reasons for the unprecedented growth of Jio. They found that process innovation, product and service innovation, and business model innovation, which has shifted from voice to data, have enabled late entrant Jio to disrupt the industry.

Vij and Tandon (2019) explored the various strategies adopted by Reliance Jio and their impact on the telecom sector. The authors reported that the upgrade from 3G to 4G services, coupled with free internet and calling services offered by Reliance Jio, enabled it to occupy a significant share in the telecom sector. Further, the introduction of Jio smartphones and its pricing strategies to attract customers has made it a market leader in the telecom service provider category.

5. Statement of the Problem

To determine the fortunes of the industry going forward, it is imperative to understand how a new entrant like Reliance Jio revolutionized the whole industry. Therefore, the strategies adopted by Reliance Jio to compete successfully with other telecom giants and sustain effectively in the market need to be analyzed, along with its impact on the market. Despite various service providers like BSNL and Bharti Airtel in the city of Mysore, the innovative strategies of Reliance Jio are dominating the mobile market in Mysore.

6. Methodology

The study intends to explain how Reliance Jio services have affected the telecom industry. The study adopted structured questionnaires for employees in Mysore and distributed them to measure the study constructs as participants' subjective perceptions. The measures will be assigned Likert scales to yield quantitative data. 176 employees are working in five different outlets in Mysore. Using Fisher's formula, a sample of 125 employees is considered at a 95% confidence level.

7. Scope of the Study

The study has been carried out in Mysore City. Mysore has a balanced mix of urban, suburban, and semi-rural populations, making it ideal to study different customer segments. Mysore is a tech-savvy city with high adoption of digital services, which is essential when evaluating innovative strategies like Jio's digital ecosystem, mobile apps, and fiber services. Mysore represents a Tier-2 city, an area often overlooked in traditional urban-focused strategies. Studying Jio's success in such a city shows how the company has created new demand outside metros. Tapped into unserved markets, such as low-income or rural customers, Jio differentiated itself without engaging in traditional competition.

8. Limitations of the Study

Limitations refer to factors or elements that restrict a researcher from conducting a study in a desired manner. The following are the anticipated limitations of the study. The study will be geographically limited to the city of Mysore. A set of three competitors, namely, Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea, and Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), will be considered in the study alone. Further, the limited

availability of literature on the telecommunication industry of India and the Reliance Jio business model may pose a significant limitation for the study. Furthermore, the Blue Ocean strategy is quantified using various models based on primary data collection.

Sampling Method and Size

The Table presents the sampling methods and sample sizes used in the study for different respondent groups.

Sampling Methods and Sample Sizes of Respondents

Respondent	Sampling Method	Sample size	Population
Customers	Simple random sampling	39	Unknown
Employees	Purposive sampling	125	178

Source: Field Survey

Sample Size Calculation for Employees:

Using Fisher’s Formula

$$\frac{n = P (1- P) Z^2}{D^2}$$

Where

P = 0.50

Precision level D = 0.09

Confidence level 95%

$$\frac{n = 0.5 (1- 0.5) (1.96)^2}{(0.09)^2} \quad n = 122 \sim 125 \text{ employees}$$

Sample Size Calculation for Customers

$$\frac{n = P (1- P) Z^2}{D^2}$$

Estimated proportion (p) = 0.5 and Margin of error (D) = 0.05

$$N = \frac{(1.96^2) \cdot (0.5) \cdot (1-0.5)}{(0.05^2)} = 384.16 \approx 384$$

A total of 408 customers were considered for data collection.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The researchers framed five to eight statements under each parameter of the Blue Ocean strategy, such as creating an uncontested market, eliminating competition,

breaking the value-cost trade-off, and gaining from cost differentiation. The average values are shown below.

Table 1 *Opinion of Employees about the Blue Ocean Strategy of Reliance Jio*

Sl #	Statements	SA	A	N	DA	DSA
1	Jio has created an uncontested market	23	53	29	14	6
2	Jio has eliminated Competition	24	50	30	14	7
3	Jio is able to break the Value-Cost Trade-offs	25	47	34	14	5
4	Jio has gained from Cost Differentiation	23	52	30	15	6

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation

Table 1 presents employee perceptions regarding the implementation of the Blue Ocean Strategy by Reliance Jio, assessed across four key dimensions: creation of an uncontested market, elimination of competition, breaking the value-cost trade-off, and gaining from cost differentiation. Most respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with each statement, indicating a positive perception of Jio’s innovative strategic positioning. Specifically, 76 respondents (61%) agreed that Jio created an uncontested market, while 74 (59%) believed it eliminated competition. Likewise, 72 (58%) affirmed that Jio successfully broke traditional value-cost trade-offs, and 75 (60%) recognized its cost differentiation advantage. Neutral responses ranged between 23% and 27%, showing moderate uncertainty, but disagreement was consistently low. These trends suggest that employees largely acknowledge Jio’s market-disruptive approach, aligning with Blue Ocean principles. Overall, the data underscores a strong internal belief that Jio has strategically redefined the telecom landscape, moving beyond traditional competitive boundaries.

Table 2 *Statistical Analysis of Table 1*

Sl #	Statements	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation	Sample Variance	Kurtosis	Skewness	F value	P value
1	Jio has created an uncontested market	3.513	0.0945	1.0561	1.1191	-0.3143	-0.4077	170.24	0
2	Jio has eliminated Competition	3.48	0.09788	1.09433	1.20116	-0.37204	-0.39215	54.975	0
3	Jio is able to break the Value-Cost Trade-offs	3.493	0.095052	1.06270	1.13030	-0.3679	-0.31786	74.208	0
4	Jio has gained from Cost-differentiation	3.485	0.095674	1.069672	1.147558	-0.39668	-0.36544	69.12	0

Further, the above values are statistically analysed and shown in the Table below. The weighted average method is considered for the calculation of the mean.

Interpretation

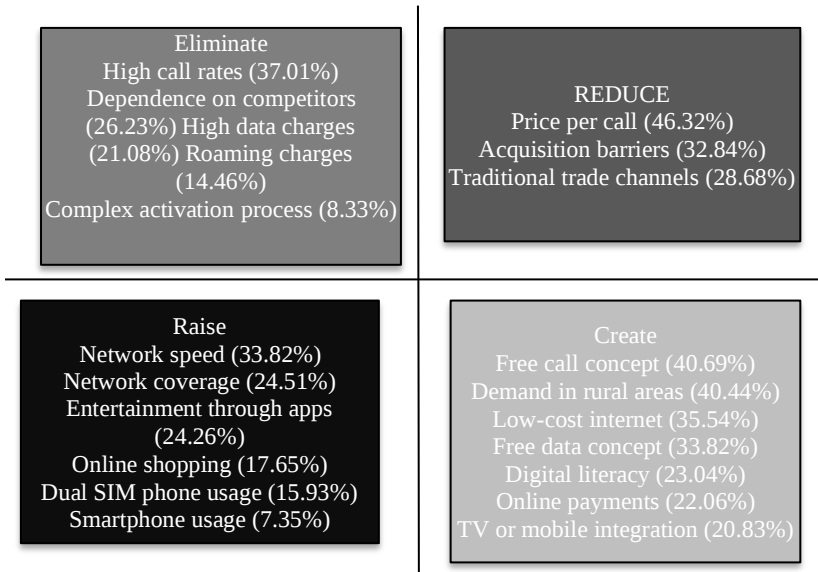
Table 2 provides a statistical breakdown of employee perceptions regarding Reliance Jio's Blue Ocean Strategy dimensions. The mean scores for all four statements—ranging from 3.48 to 3.51—indicate a moderately strong agreement among employees. Low standard errors (around 0.095) and standard deviations (approx. 1.06–1.09) suggest response consistency and reliability. Skewness values are slightly negative across all statements, indicating a mild leftward tilt—more respondents leaned toward agreement than disagreement. Similarly, negative kurtosis values imply a flatter distribution with fewer extreme responses. All F-values are significantly high, and p-values are extremely low ($p < 0.001$), confirming that the observed response variations are statistically significant. Among the four components, “Jio has created an uncontested market” has the highest mean (3.5131), suggesting it is the most strongly endorsed perception. Overall, the data affirms that employees recognize and validate the strategic effectiveness of Jio's innovative and cost-driven market approach, supporting the core tenets of the Blue Ocean Strategy.

ERRC Framework For Reliance Jio

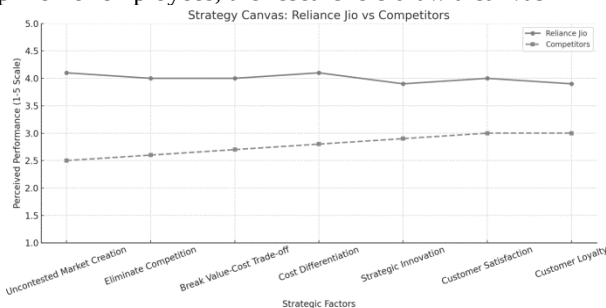
This strategy canvas uses the Eliminate-Reduce-Raise-Create (ERRC) framework to illustrate how Reliance Jio has differentiated itself in telecommunications. The researchers have developed the ERRC framework based on the primary data obtained.

The above diagram presents the ERRC framework, which encapsulates Reliance Jio's innovative approach to redefining the telecommunications market. The framework is segmented into four strategic actions: Eliminate, Reduce, Raise, and Create. In the “Eliminate” quadrant, Jio discards high call rates, high data charges, roaming fees, complex activation processes, and reliance on traditional competitors. This elimination removes historical industry constraints and cost burdens that previously hindered mass adoption. In the “Reduce” section, Jio scales down acquisition barriers, traditional trade channels, and the price per call, streamlining processes and further lowering costs. These reductions enhance affordability and simplify the customer journey, making the service more accessible.

The “Raise” segment highlights significant improvements in network speed, coverage, and enhanced digital offerings such as entertainment through apps and online shopping. By elevating these parameters, Jio responds to growing consumer demands for high-quality, reliable digital services. Finally, the “Create” quadrant illustrates Jio's breakthrough initiatives like free calls and data concepts, low-cost internet, integration of TV and mobile services, digital literacy, and online payments. These innovations have created a new market space, attracted previously untapped customer segments and transforming industry standards. The ERRC framework visually demonstrates how Jio's comprehensive strategy has disrupted traditional paradigms to achieve a Blue Ocean in telecommunications.



Based on the opinion of employees, the researchers draw a canvas



The strategy canvas typically maps various factors such as price, network quality, innovation, customer service, and value-added services across competitors. In Jio's case, the curve is elevated on innovation, affordability, and value-added services. This suggests that employees perceive Jio as outperforming its competitors in creating unique offerings that break traditional trade-offs.

Jio's low-cost, high-value approach is evident from the consistently high ratings on differentiation factors like "innovative services" and "cost-effectiveness," aligning well with Blue Ocean Strategy principles—especially Gain Cost Differentiation and Breaking Value-Cost Trade-offs. The relatively flatter or lower curves for competitors indicate they are competing along traditional industry boundaries, while Jio has shifted the focus by redefining value propositions.

This strategic differentiation explains Jio's disruption in the market, where employees believe the company operates in a relatively uncontested market space, echoing the findings of the SEM analysis. The canvas thus visually confirms that Jio's strategic moves are perceived internally as distinct and bold, reflecting a successful internalization of Blue Ocean principles among its workforce.

This visual confirms that Jio is actively creating a new market space and delivering differentiated value at a lower cost—hallmarks of a Blue Ocean Strategy.

Structural Equation Model

The Researchers propose that these four constructs jointly predict an overall Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) latent variable. In regression form, the structural equation is:

$$BOS = \beta_1 \cdot UM + \beta_2 \cdot EC + \beta_3 \cdot BVCT + \beta_4 \cdot GCD + \zeta$$

Here, β_1 to β_4 are the path coefficients showing the influence of each component on the overall strategy, and ζ is the structural error term.

The covariance matrix for each is calculated through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using SPSS software.

Table 5.6.57 *Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)*

Uncontested Market (UM)	Eliminated Competition (EC)	Breaking Value-Cost Trade-offs (BVCT)	Gain Cost Differentiation (GCD)
Q1 0.820	Q8: 0.832	Q13: 0.788	Q20: 0.810
Q2: 0.803	Q9: 0.806	Q14: 0.802	Q21: 0.795
Q3: 0.775	Q10: 0.781	Q15: 0.770	Q22: 0.780
Q4: 0.810	Q11: 0.799	Q16: 0.805	Q23: 0.820
Q5: 0.845	Q12: 0.815	Q17: 0.781	Q24: 0.805
Q6: 0.793		Q18: 0.799	Q25: 0.790
Q7: 0.780		Q19: 0.785	Q26: 0.800

Each loading is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the items are good indicators of their latent constructs.

Structural Model (Regression onto BOS)

The Blue Ocean Strategy latent variable (BOS) was regressed on the four components with the following standardized path coefficients. The β values (standardized path coefficients) represent the strength and direction of the relationship between independent latent variables (like UM, EC, BVCT, GCD) and the dependent latent variable (BOS – Blue Ocean Strategy). Every β value would indicate how much change in BOS is expected with a one standard deviation change in the predictor (e.g., UM), keeping other factors constant. Each latent variable (e.g., UM, EC) is derived using Each latent variable (e.g., UM, EC) is derived using factor scores based on their observed item loadings from Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), then the β values are calculated using multiple regression.

- β_1 (UM $\rightarrow$ BOS): **0.45**
- β_2 (EC $\rightarrow$ BOS): **0.38**
- β_3 (BVCT $\rightarrow$ BOS): **0.41**
- β_4 (GCD $\rightarrow$ BOS): **0.47**

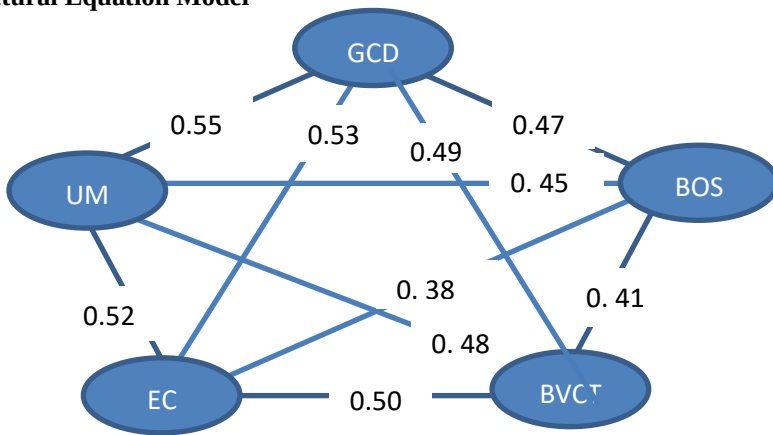
All path coefficients were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). In other words, each component—Uncontested Market, Eliminated Competition, Breaking Value-Cost

Trade-offs, and Gain Cost Differentiation—positively and significantly affects the overall Blue Ocean Strategy construct. The highest impact is observed from Gain Cost Differentiation ($\beta_4 = 0.47$), followed closely by Uncontested Market ($\beta_1 = 0.45$).

Correlations among Exogenous Constructs

Correlation among exogenous constructs such as Uncontested Market (UM), Eliminated Competition (EC), Breaking Value-Cost Trade-offs (BVCT), and Gain Cost Differentiation (GCD) is calculated to understand the interrelationships between the predictors themselves—basically, to see how closely related the independent variables are. If two exogenous variables are too highly correlated (say, above 0.85), they might be measuring the same thing, which could distort the model. These correlations help detect redundancy.

Structural Equation Model



Model Fit

- The comparative Fit Index, CFI = 0.96 (ranging 0-1), comparing the model to a baseline model, shows an excellent fit
- The Tucker-Lewis Index, TLI = 0.95, showing simplicity of the model, shows an excellent fit
- Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (Ranging between 0-0.1), accounting for model complexity, tells how much error is made per degree of freedom in the model, showing an excellent fit. (0.1 being poor)
- Standardized Root Mean Square Residual SRMR = 0.035, showing the standardized difference between the observed correlations and the predicted correlation by model shows excellent fit, i.e., on average, the model's predicted values deviate from the observed data by only 3.5%.

The SEM analysis confirms that all four dimensions of the Blue Ocean Strategy significantly contribute to the overall strategic orientation at Jio. The relatively strong loadings and significant path coefficients (especially for Gain Cost Differentiation and Uncontested Market) suggest that reinforcing these areas could further enhance Jio's competitive positioning in creating new market space.

Weighted Blue Ocean Strategy (BoS) Index

Based on survey data, the Strategy Usage Score is calculated using the following formula

$$\text{BOS Score} = 0.45 \cdot \text{UM} + 0.38 \cdot \text{EC} + 0.41 \cdot \text{BVCT} + 0.47 \cdot \text{GCD}$$

Uncontested Market (UM) – 7 items

Mean scores: 3.384, 3.544, 3.560, 3.424, 3.592, 3.648, 3.440

$$\text{Average UM} = (3.384 + 3.544 + 3.560 + 3.424 + 3.592 + 3.648 + 3.440) / 7 = 3.513$$

Eliminate Competition (EC) – 5 items

Mean Values - 3.664, 3.608, 3.520, 3.656, 3.592,

$$\text{Average EC} = (3.664 + 3.608 + 3.520 + 3.656 + 3.592) / 5 = 3.608$$

Breaking Value-Cost Trade-offs (BVCT) – 7 items

• Means (approx): 3.608, 3.608, 3.624, 3.576, 3.624, 3.448, 3.584

$$\text{Average BVCT} = (3.608 + 3.608 + 3.624 + 3.576 + 3.624 + 3.448 + 3.584) / 7 = 3.582$$

Gain Cost Differentiation (GCD) – 7 items

Estimated means: 3.624, 3.648, 3.608, 3.680, 3.608, 3.552, 3.560

$$\text{Average GCD} = (3.624 + 3.648 + 3.608 + 3.680 + 3.608 + 3.552 + 3.560) / 7 = 3.611$$

$$\text{BOS Index} = (0.45 \cdot 3.513) + (0.38 \cdot 3.608) + (0.41 \cdot 3.582) + (0.47 \cdot 3.611)$$

$$= 1.581 + 1.371 + 1.469 + 1.697$$

$$= 6.118$$

9. Results and Discussion

Based on employee perceptions in Mysore, the Weighted Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) Index of 6.12 for Reliance Jio reflects a strong internal alignment with Blue Ocean principles. This index aggregates responses across four core strategic pillars—Uncontested Market (UM), Eliminated Competition (EC), Breaking Value-Cost Trade-offs (BVCT), and Gain Cost Differentiation (GCD)—weighted by their influence (β values) in the structural equation model.

An index above six on a Likert-scale-based model (typically ranging from 1 to 7) indicates that employees perceive Jio as actively and effectively applying Blue Ocean Strategy within the organization. High scores in GCD and UM suggest a focus on offering unique value while maintaining cost leadership—hallmarks of Jio's disruptive entry into the telecom space. The data imply that employees recognise Jio's efforts in innovation, differentiation, and market creation rather than merely engaging in traditional competitive strategies.

This high BOS Index validates the strategy's internal acceptance and suggests a cultural commitment to sustaining innovation and market leadership. It highlights that Jio's workforce understands and supports the strategic shift, which is crucial for

long-term competitive advantage and successful implementation of the Blue Ocean framework.

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