Airtel Positioning (And Repositioning)

MKTG 037

This case was written by A. Neela Radhika, under the direction of A. Mukund, ICFAI Center for Management Research (ICMR). It was compiled from published sources, and is intended to be used as a basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a management situation.
AIRTEL – POSITIONING (AND REPOSITIONING)

“With these launches, we will create an Airtel user’s community that will have a better depth of service availability than all competition.”

- Sunil Mittal, Bharti’s CMD, commenting on the launch of Airtel’s new logo, in June 2002.

FROM ‘TOUCH TOMORROW’ TO ‘LIVE EVERY MOMENT’

In late-2002, Bharti Cellular Ltd. (Bharti), India’s largest cellular telephone company released a television commercial (TVC), which despite using the ‘oft-repeated’ celebrity endorsement route was unusual in terms of its celebrity selection. Instead of using the usual movie stars/sports celebrities, it chose one of the country’s most successful music composers, A.R Rahman (Rahman) to promote its brand.

The campaign attracted considerable media attention because this was the first time Rahman had agreed to do a television commercial and also because, Rahman had been paid Rs 10 million¹ for the campaign, a sum usually unheard of, for celebrity endorsers in India. The campaign received brickbats as well as bouquets in the media, both for the selection of Rahman and the TVC’s execution. However, Bharti claimed to have scored an ace in terms of getting Rahman to compose five exclusive symphonies downloadable as ring tones for Airtel users.

The TVC was a part of the brand repositioning and restructuring efforts for Airtel, as part of which, Bharti changed the brand’s tagline in early-2002 from ‘Touch Tomorrow’ to ‘Live Every Moment.’ The company also decided to undertake a comprehensive brand building program for the company and chose the slogan ‘Unlimited Freedom’ for the same. Commenting on these changes, company sources said, “Airtel’s brand identity and campaign will now have a new younger and international look and feel that builds on the earlier positioning.”

Bharti’s massive media expenditure plans were no surprise, considering the fact that it was the largest cellular telecom company in the country – reaching over 600 million people in 16 (out of 29) states of India. The company posted revenues of Rs 8.48 billion and a net loss of Rs 1 billion in the financial year 2000-01. The Airtel brand (and the pre-paid card service brand, Magic) had top-of-the-mind recall amongst cellular phone users and enjoyed a leadership position in most markets. Industry observers primarily attributed it to Bharti’s strong brand building and positioning strategies.

¹ In November 2002, Rs 48 equalled 1 US $.

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Airtel Positioning (And Repositioning)

BACKGROUND NOTE

Sunil Bharti Mittal (S.B. Mittal) laid the foundations of the New Delhi based Bharti Group in the 1970s with a small bicycle-parts business. In 1985, he entered the telecom business by establishing Bharti Telecom Limited (BTL) that manufactured telephonic equipment. In the same year, BTL entered into technical collaboration with Siemens AG (Germany) for manufacturing electronic push button telephones. BTL also signed an agreement with Takacom Corporation (Japan) for manufacturing telephone answering machines. Over the years, BTL tied up with leading telephone equipment manufacturers from countries such as South Korea and US.

The group entered the telecommunication (telecom) industry during the early-1990s (Refer Exhibit I and II for a note on the Indian cellular telephony industry). Bharti Tele-Ventures, a part of Bharti group, offered various telecom services such as fixed line, cellular, V-SAT and Internet services. The operations of Bharti Tele-Ventures were run by four wholly owned subsidiaries. These were Bharti Cellular Ltd. (Cellular), Bharti Telenet Ltd. (Access), Bharti Telesonic Ltd. (Long Distance) and Bharti Broadband Networks Ltd. (Broadband Solutions). The flagship services of the Bharti group included Airtel (cellular), Mantra (Internet Services) and Beetel (telephone instruments).

In 1992, Bharti entered the cellular market by launching services in Delhi. Over the next few years, it also entered other telecom circles. In the early 2000s, Bharti invested heavily in the acquisitions and alliances to expand its cellular market in India. As a part of this, Bharti acquired JT Mobile (Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka), SkyCell (Chennai) and Spice Cell (Kolkata). It even announced plans to acquire Usha Martin, the leading cellular service in Kolkata. It also entered into collaborative agreements with BPL to gain seamless access in Mumbai, Maharashtra, Chennai, Delhi, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Bharti launched Airtel as a post paid cellular service in Delhi in November 1995. Over the next few years, the company redefined the way cellular services were being marketed in the country. This was made possible due to its innovative marketing strategies, continuous technological upgradations, new value added service offerings and efficient customer service. Initially confined only to the Delhi circle, Airtel’s services were soon extended to many other places.

Through the Airtel brand, Bharti set many benchmarks for the Indian cellular industry. It was the first cellular operator to set up cellular showrooms. The company opened its first showroom ‘Airtel Connect’ in Delhi, in late-1995. Airtel Connect was a one stop cellular shop where customers could purchase handsets, get new connections, subscribe to various value-added services and pay their mobile bills.

Bharti was also the first cellular company to install a second mobile switching center in April 1997. The company was the first to provide roaming cellular services and other value-added services such as Smart mail, Fax, Call hold, Call waiting and Information services (Refer Table II).

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2 The Indian telecom market was divided into 21 ‘telecom circles’ (circles), which in turn, was divided into three categories ‘A,’ ‘B,’ and ‘C’ based on their size, density (population) and importance. Category ‘A’ comprised Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu; ‘B’ comprised Kerala, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal; ‘C’ comprised Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Assam and North East. Cellular licenses were separately issued for in the metros of Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai and Kolkata.

3 The central switch that controls the entire operation of a cellular system. It is a sophisticated computer that monitors all cellular calls, keeps track of the location of all cellular-equipped vehicles traveling in the system, arranges hand-offs and keeps track of billing information. By operating multiple switching centers, cellular service providers can increase the efficiency of their operations significantly.
Bharti was the first company to launch an online e-commerce portal that enabled customers to make online payments. It also provided them with information regarding cellular services and the features of handsets manufactured by various companies, along with their price. On account of such initiatives, during the late-1990s, Airtel was named the ‘Best Cellular Service’ in the country, and won the ‘Techies’ award\(^4\) for four consecutive years (1997-2000).

However, it was not very easy for the company to build Airtel brand. The tariff rates charged by the government were quite high. Cellular players have little choice but to impose high call charges on their customers. Airtime rates were as high as Rs 16 per minute as against Rs 1.20 for landline communication.

Thus, all players targeted the premium sector, which could afford the rates. Airtel was also positioned in the premium category, aimed at the elite class of the society. Though industry observers felt that this limited its market and that Bharti could have focused on increasing customer awareness (by explaining to them the various advantages of cellular phones), Bharti thought otherwise. As per a company source, the strategy might not have worked as the value delivered by cellular phones during that phase did not match the cost.

\[\text{TABLE II} \]

\textbf{AIRTEL SERVICES}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice Based Services:</th>
<th>Call Management Services:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voice Mail</td>
<td>Call Line Identification (CLI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call Conference</td>
<td>Call Wait/Hold/Divert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dial a Service</td>
<td>Others:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMS Based Services:</th>
<th>Others:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SMS Games</td>
<td>STD/ISD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Messaging</td>
<td>Airtel Roaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Services</td>
<td>Airtel Roaming Lite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net 2 Cell</td>
<td>32K Sim Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Messenger</td>
<td>Easy Roam East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Chat</td>
<td>Traffic Update</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringtones and Logos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Peep</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flash &amp; Blink SMS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernacular SMS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.cai.airtelworld.com

During the late-1990s, many international players such as ‘Orange’ announced plans to enter the Indian market. The global telecom market was getting saturated and these companies were searching for countries with untapped potentials to increase their markets. India being one of the fast developing nations with a vast population base was being seen as a high potential market.

Apart from international players, many domestic players also entered the segment. This increased the competition in the sector. In the light of these changes, Bharti realized the need for repositioning Airtel to increase its market share. Rather than focusing on the value (delivered by the services), the company chose to address the visual benefits delivered to the customers. In the words of Hemant Sachdev (Sachdev), Director (Marketing), Bharti Group, “Instead of the value-proposition model, we decided to address the sensory benefit it gave to the customer as the main selling tack. The idea was to become a badge value brand.”

\(^4\) Techies awards are given to the best companies, technologies and products in the IT and Communication industry in India. These awards were instituted in 1996, by the group that publishes three IT magazines - Computer World, PC World and Informations Communications World.
REPOSITIONING AIRTEL

The above realization led to the launch of the ‘Leadership Series’ campaign, which featured successful men and women with their deluxe cars, carrying laptops and using cell phones. A company source said that the campaign was aimed at positioning Airtel as an aspirational brand, which was meant for leaders and celebrities. The surveys conducted after the launch revealed that people began associating three core benefits with the Airtel brand – Leadership, Performance and Dynamism. Other supportive values associated with the brand-included courtesy, politeness and efficiency.

The campaign was reportedly successful and resulted in a marginal improvement in Airtel’s performance. By 1999, Bharti had become the leading cellular player in Delhi (its major market) with a subscriber base of over 0.38 million. However, the growth was still much below the company’s expectations.

Meanwhile, as the competition in the sector intensified, the government also decided to reduce tariff rates. As a result, the players made all efforts to extend their horizons to reach customers across all sections. Essar, the nearest competitor of Airtel, began offering tariff plans, schemes and services that were identical to that of Airtel. Much to Airtel’s chagrin, Essar’s subscriber base began nearing that of Airtel.

In early-2000, in its attempt to understand the customer’s psyche, Airtel conducted many brand-tracking exercises. These exercises revealed that though the Leadership campaign had been effective, it failed to attract more customers, as it had failed to add an emotional dimension to the brand. Analysts perceived the brand to be distant, efficient and cold. In words of Preet Bedi, Director, Lowe India, “The brand had become something like Lufthansa — cold and efficient. What they needed was to become Singapore Airlines, efficient but also human.”

The surveys also revealed that the concept of leadership was itself undergoing a transformation. The public increasingly perceived leaders as people who worked with a team to achieve common objectives rather than those who dictated terms to their subordinates. The surveys indicated that 50% of the new subscribers bought a cellular phone service brand on the basis of suggestions made by their friends, colleagues or family members. On account of this information, Bharti realized that its existing customer base could be used to promote the brand and expand its market (as these customers could endorse the brand) and thus focused on building a close relationship with them.

According to company sources, these brand-tracking exercises helped it realize the fact that in a business where customer relationships were of paramount importance, lacking an emotional or humanized touch was a major weakness. Hence, to gain a competitive advantage, Bharti decided to humanize the Airtel brand. Commenting on the decision, a senior executive of Essar said, “The leadership series was okay when you were wooing the crème de la crème of society. Once you reached them you had to expand the market so there was need to address to new customers.”

In August 2000, Bharti launched its new ‘Touch Tomorrow’, which aimed at strengthening its relationship with its customers. Bharti’s advertisement expenditure for the year amounted to Rs 450 million. The advertisements spanning the print, electronic and outdoor media (for these campaign) featured cellular users surrounded by caring family members. Commenting on the rationale behind the new campaign, Sachdev said, “The new campaign and positioning was designed to highlight the relationship angle and make the brand softer and more sensitive.”

According to company sources, the new positioning was aimed at developing a strong relationship with the customers. Sachdev said, “Mobile telephony is taken for granted – in one of our researches, consumers have described mobile telephony as being ‘kept close to the heart.’ What is
adding a new dimension to the cellular category is the advent of new features like roaming, SMS, and the Net, which are taking communication beyond voice to data and video. This has tossed a challenge: how to bond with consumers.”

Explaining the need for repositioning, Sachdev said, “Airtel was perceived as a premium brand. The new positioning is intended to add warmth to these attributes.” In line with the company’s objectives, the new TVCs and advertisements focused on highlighting Airtel as a brand that made it possible for customers to derive all benefits of cellular telephony.

The new commercials developed for this campaign reflected humane, aspirational, family-centric and softer brand values while promising easy reach. Bharti also created a new logo for the Airtel brand, which had red, black and white colors with ‘Airtel’ enwrapped in an eclipse. The tagline ‘Touch Tomorrow’ was placed below in a lower case typography to convey a warm and informal style (Refer Figure I).

**FIGURE I**
THE NEW AIRTEL LOGO AFTER THE TOUCH TOMORROW CAMPAIGN

The campaign was first rolled out in the states of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Chennai. As a part of this campaign, Airtel also shifted its focus from SEC, audiences to SEC B audiences. The company also increased its Touch Point network (Airtel’s shop-in-shop points at various departmental stores and lifestyle establishments).

In line with its repositioning efforts, Bharti also revamped the entire Airtel network including Airtel Connect centers. As a part of this, Bharti focused on giving a contemporary look to Airtel Connect centers with e-kiosks, facades, collaterals, signages and merchandising material. It also changed the color scheme of these outlets by adopting a coordination of red, black and white to give the outlets a soothing, soft but classy look. The dress code at these outlets was also changed. Men wore black trousers and a white shirt bearing the Airtel logo with and a red tie. While women sported red tops and black trousers with ivory, chiffon scarves.

While the Touch Tomorrow campaign was still running, Bharti announced a major brand restructuring exercise at the corporate level. This was done in order to facilitate its entry into new areas of the telecom sector and establish itself as a global telecom brand. In early-2000s, Bharti unveiled a three-tier Airtel brand architecture that was aimed at defining every service with a special brand name and place them under a mother brand (Refer Table III). Commenting on the new brand architecture, Sachdev said, “All convergent technologies in the sphere of telephony will be a part of the new brand architecture.”
TABLE III

THE THREE-TIER BRAND ARCHITECTURE OF BHARTI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST TIER</th>
<th>SECOND TIER</th>
<th>THIRD TIER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Airtel</td>
<td>• Airtel Basic Telephone Services</td>
<td>• Airtel Freenet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mother Brand)</td>
<td>• Airtel National Long Distance Services</td>
<td>• Airtel Long Distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Airtel Broadband Services</td>
<td>• Airtel Tango</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Airtel Mobile Services</td>
<td>(Internet Mobile)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ICMR

Commenting on this initiative, Sandeep Goyal, President, Rediffusion DY&R (Brand Communications), said “An Equity Research undertaken by ORG-MARG and quarterly Brand Track studies by IMRB have given us insight into the needs of tomorrow’s consumer. The new branding initiative takes into cognizance the findings that consumers consider Airtel as a brand of the successful people and a preferred address.”

As a part of the restructuring efforts, the basic telephone services of Bharti were brought under the Touchtel brand and the National Long Distance (NLD) telephony under the ‘IndiaOne’ brand. Though the cost of creating new brands was high, the company was inclined to create independent brands for its various services. The Bharti brand and Magic (the prepaid cellular brand) were not included in the Airtel brand architecture, and they continued to operate as distinct brands. According to company sources, the new structure was aimed at positioning Airtel as the power brand with regional sub-brands reflecting customer needs in various parts of the country. Bharti felt that a single brand name for all cellular operations might not always work in the urban markets, which were heading towards saturation.

Moreover, as a more towards product segmentation, the Internet-Interface services (WAP⁵) offered to cellular users were brought under the brand name ‘Tango’ in 2001. Commenting on the launch of Tango, a senior Bharti official said, “The idea was to bring Internet and mobile in perfect harmony.” However, Tango was not as successful as Bharti had expected it to be. The company sources mainly attributed this to the limited utility and inefficiency of WAP services. Soon the company discontinued the advertisements for Tango. However, the brand was retained for the company’s permanent Internet connectivity (GRPS⁶) services (on its cellular phones).

Bharti also decided to introduce a tariff plan (specifically) to attract the youth. The service, called Youtopia, planned to cash in on the fact that with reduced tariffs, cellular phones would become accessible to teenagers. By targeting youth in the age-group 14-19 years, Bharti planned to expand the customer base, which was presently limited to the older age groups. Youtopia was a clear deviation from Airtel’s earlier positioning as a brand for older people symbolizing dignity and power.

Youtopia offered lower tariff rates (at Re 0.25 for 30 seconds) at night. Special merchandising exercises were also undertaken. For instance, a special portal was created, where young people could buy or bid for goods. The company also announced plans for providing customers with various other services such as music download facilities, and SMS (Short Messaging Service) rates.

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⁵ Short for the Wireless Application Protocol, WAP is a secure specification that allows users to access information instantly via handheld wireless devices such as mobile phones, pagers, two-way radios, smartphones and communicators.

⁶ Short for General Packet Radio Service, a standard for wireless communications which runs at speeds up to 115 kilobits per second, compared with the more commonly used GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) systems’ 9.6 kilobits.
at affordable prices. According to the analysts, the company’s repositioning strategies paid back well as Bharti became the leading player in most of the circles (it operated in) across the country in early-2002.

REPOSITIONING AIRTEL – ONCE AGAIN!

Due to consistent marketing efforts, the Airtel and Touch Tomorrow campaign became very popular. Therefore, Bharti’s decision to withdraw this campaign (Touch Tomorrow) in 2002 came as a surprise to many. The new campaign was accompanied by a change in the logo as well (Refer Figure II). The idea behind the new logo was to give Airtel a younger look. The logo (with new design and colour pattern) symbolized innovation, energy and friendliness.

![FIGURE II](source: www.rayandkeshav.com)

As part of its restructuring and repositioning exercise, Bharti unveiled a new brand architecture that replaced the three-tier architecture. The proposed two-tier architecture was categorized under two heads – wired and wireless. All the wireless products were placed under the Airtel brand, which also included Tango, Freenet and Magic. According to company sources, the objective of this new architecture was to establish Bharti as a global telecom company.

The company reportedly allocated Rs 1 billion for media coverage and other brand building activities. Commenting on the new brand identity of Airtel, a Bharti spokesperson said, “Airtel’s brand identity and campaign will now have a new younger and international look and feel that builds on the earlier positioning of ‘Touch Tomorrow,’ injected with renewed energy and heightened optimism.”

According to a Cellular Operator’s Association of India (COAI) report, the cellular market in India was one of the fastest growing market of the decade. As per the report, there were over 8.17 million cellular subscribers in India and the number was expected to grow to over 12 million and 120 million by 2003 and 2008 respectively. With such high potential, almost all the players were seen focusing on their positioning, advertising and promotional efforts and on building strategic partnerships. Bharti was also making efforts to retain its position as the market leader (Refer Exhibit III for a note on Bharti’s moves on the strategic level).

However, it still remains to be seen whether the latest round of repositioning and the strategic partnerships would help Airtel sustain the competition and retain its leadership in the market. The shift to Live Every Moment from Touch Tomorrow had nevertheless, proved that Bharti is consistently on the lookout for best marketing strategies for Airtel.
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Examine the circumstances in which Bharti launched Airtel and trace the brand’s initial days in the backdrop of the emerging cellular telephony market in India. In the light of the ‘Leadership’ campaign, analyze why Airtel and other cellphone brands were seen as premium-end offerings.

2. Explain the reasons behind the ‘Leadership’ campaign being replaced by the ‘Touch Tomorrow’ campaign. Also critically comment on the company’s decision to replace ‘Touch Tomorrow’ with ‘Live Every Moment.’

3. Do you think Bharti has not been giving enough time for one positioning plank to prove effective before moving on to the next? What are the merits and demerits of frequently changing a brand’s positioning?

4. In the light of the intensifying competition in the Indian cellular telephony market and the fact that almost all players have begun focussing strongly on the marketing front, what should Bharti do to ensure that it retains its market leadership position?
EXHIBIT I

A NOTE ON THE INDIAN CELLULAR TELEPHONY INDUSTRY

The basic concept of cellular phones originated in 1947 in the US, when researchers at Bell Laboratories got the idea of cellular communications from the mobile car phone technology used by the police department of the country. However, it took over three decades for the first cellular communication system to evolve. The public trials of the first cellular system began in Chicago during the late 1970s and the first commercial cellular telephone system was launched in Tokyo. The cellular telephone services were introduced in the US in the early 1980s, and gained popularity in a short span of time. By the late 1980s, cellular services had become popular in many developed countries across the world. Over the years, there was an improvement in both the number and quality of services offered on account of dynamic technological advancements.

There were mainly two types of cellular services offered by operators – post-paid and prepaid. Post paid cellular services, also called billing card services, require the customers to pay for the cellular services utilized by them at the end of a specific period (generally every month). These services also include fixed rental charges for the services provided. Prepaid cellular services require the customers to pay in advance for the services they are to use. These cards were available in different denominations, and the customer could choose one, keeping in mind his/her call requirements and budget. The services were withdrawn when the customers exhausted the call time they were entitled to.

Since its emergence in 1992, Indian cellular telephony industry was fragmented. The Cellular Operator’s Association of India (COAI) became a representative of cellular operators in the country. Under the government policies regarding private licensees, the license ownership was fragmented, which disallowed many operators from operating in more regions.

However, with analysts forecasting high potential for cellular market in India, many national and international companies entered the cellular services market in India during the late 1990s. During this period, the major players focused on acquiring or merging with other existing players (license holders). Many players entered into alliances or agreements following which they gained access to other regions. Such alliances and agreements between the players helped the players extend the reach of their services across multiple regions. Technological advancements in the sector also enabled the companies to reach across larger distances. According to analysts, consolidation amongst players led to the creation of an extensive regional and near national coverage and increased ability to offer advanced technology based cellular services.

During the late-1990s, the cellular phone services began gaining popularity, especially in metros across the country. In 1999, pre-paid cards were also launched in the country to further increase the penetration of cellular phones in the market.

In the early 2000s, almost all leading players focused on their marketing, positioning, advertising and promotional strategies to expand their reach. Hence, competition became severe. In late-2002, the competition in the cellular market intensified (further) with the state-owned BSNL launching its cellular services. In an attempt to survive competition from BSNL (which had an extensive reach, well laid infrastructure and strong financial muscle) and increase their market shares, almost all the major players were seen entering into strategic partnerships or agreements with other players.

Source: ICMR
## EXHIBIT II

### POST-PAID & PRE-PAID CELLULAR BRANDS IN INDIA (LATE 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telecom Circle</th>
<th>Post-Paid Brands</th>
<th>Pre-Paid Brands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>Airtel, Reliance Telecom, Escortel</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>Airtel, Idea, Hutchison, Dolphin</td>
<td>Airtel Magic, Idea ChitChat, Hutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>Spice Communications, Airtel</td>
<td>Spice, Airtel Magic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>Escotel, Aircel, Airtel</td>
<td>Escotel, Airtel Magic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP West</td>
<td>Escotel, Airtel</td>
<td>Airtel Magic, Escotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP East</td>
<td>Aircel, Koshika telecom, Escortel</td>
<td>Koshika, Aircel and Escotel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>RPG Cellular, Airtel, Reliance telecom</td>
<td>RPG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>Fascel, Idea, Airtel, Celforce</td>
<td>Fascel, Idea ChitChat, Airtel Magic, Celforce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kolkata</td>
<td>Airtel, Usha Martin, Hutchison</td>
<td>Airtel Magic, Hutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumbai</td>
<td>BPL, Hutchison Max, Airtel</td>
<td>BPL, Hutch, Airtel Magic</td>
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<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>BPL Mobile cellular, Idea, Airtel</td>
<td>Airtel Magic, Idea ChitChat, BPL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>Idea, Airtel, Hutch Essar</td>
<td>Idea ChitChat, Airtel Magic and Hutch</td>
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<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>Spice Communications, Airtel, Hutch Essar</td>
<td>Spice, Airtel Magic, Hutch</td>
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<td>Chennai</td>
<td>RPG Cellular, Airtel, Hutch Essar</td>
<td>Airtel Magic, RPG, Hutch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>BPL Cellular, Escotel Mobile, Airtel</td>
<td>BPL, Escotel, Airtel Magic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>BPL Mobile, Aircel, Airtel</td>
<td>BPL, Airtel Magic, Aircel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ICMR
In the early-2000s, Bharti also entered into various joint venture agreements with leading telecom players in the world such as SingTel, Singapore-Warburg Pincus, Sweden, Mauritius, USA-Telia, International Finance Corporation, USA and New York Life International and Asian Infrastructure Fund. During the period, the company was operating in seven circles across the country and had also acquired licenses to operate in another eight circles. The operations in the additional eight circles were scheduled for launch in mid-2002. In its attempts to extend its market, in mid-2002, Bharti also acquired Spicecell Ltd., which was previously a part of Modicorp Group.

In September 2002, Airtel also tied up with Escotel to share the cellular infrastructure in their common circles. According to an Airtel source, this tie-up was aimed at saving capital, operational expenses and time required for launching their services in common circles. By late-2002, Airtel was operating in Delhi, Chennai, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Kolkata, Mumbai, Punjab, UP (West) and planned to launch services in Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

By 2002, the Group was engaged in various businesses through joint ventures with various companies. The operations of the group were classified under the following heads – Bharti Cellular (Cellular Operations), Bharti Telemet (Basic Services), Bharti-BT Internet (Internet Services), Bharti BT (VSAT and WAN Services), Bharti Telesoft (Telecom Software Development), Bharti International (JV’s in Global Markets), Bharti Televentures (Telecom projects) and Bharti Telecom (Telecom Equipment Development).

Source: ICMR
ADDITIONAL READINGS & REFERENCES:

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