



## **DIVING INTO VALUE INNOVATIVE MARKETS: A CRITICAL REVIEW EXPLORING THE ADOPTION OF BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY IN THE TELECOM SECTOR**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In order to have sustainable growth and overcome competition, Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) has emerged as one of the out-of-the-box successful marketing strategies for generating innovative business ideas. Multiple positive outcomes varying from industry to industry have been observed after BOS implementation. This study qualitatively reviews this concept, its origin, underlying principles, and its benefits. Further, it examines the impact of BOS on the overall organizational performance specific to the telecom sector. The paper presents in-depth insights on the innovative applications of BOS in telecom across nations. Along with this, problems and hurdles faced by the organizations due to the adoption of BOS were discussed. Recommendations made to improve the successful adoption of BOS by organizations in general and specific to telecom industries were explored. Finally, this study concludes by addressing the research question, and any limitations faced during this study, based on which further scope of research was suggested. Acknowledging these limitations is essential for interpreting the review's findings accurately and informing future research efforts in the field of BOS and innovation in the telecom sector. The review highlights the transformative potential of BOS in the telecom sector, offering a systematic approach to innovation, market creation, and sustainable growth. By embracing BOS principles, telecom companies can differentiate themselves, create new market spaces, and thrive in an increasingly competitive landscape.

### **Keywords**

Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS), Competitive advantage, Value innovation, Organizational performance, Telecom sector

### **I - INTRODUCTION**

The integration of technology along with other macroeconomics has been responsible for abrupt shifts in market dynamics (Awladthani et al., 2023). Some organizations continue to face difficulties competing with other suppliers in the market (Jain & Jain, 2022). To remain sustainable and to overcome competition, one of the approaches that organizations can adopt in order to thrive is the “blue ocean strategy” (BOS), introduced by Kim and Mauborgne in 2004. It can be described as a plan that allows organizations to establish or enter uncontested market sectors or venture into existing ones while pursuing differentiated products by reducing the competition (Awladthani et al., 2023). Jain and Jain (2022) defined BOS as a “well-defined” process that involves “a series based on managerial decisions which drive customers value higher while the driving cost remains down leading to a series which creates value innovation”. According to Kim & Mauborgne (2005a), the implementation of BOS was necessary for organizations where the technology for industrial production and volume of industries was rapidly growing with supply exceeding the levels of demand, or where the suppliers were permitted to create unique services and goods that have never been created before, or where there was a “shift towards globalization” or where there was difficulty in predicting the economic instabilities occurring internationally.

Thus, BOS has evolved as a strategy where organizations tend to flourish not by fighting with their opponents but by introducing a value innovation in providing goods or services that are advantageous to the client as well as the organization in a disruptive format (Hassan et al., 2022). It was reported to be a tried and tested method for generating innovative business ideas (Jain & Jain, 2022). Besides adding value innovation and competitive advantages (Yunus & Sijabat, 2021), the

various outcomes of BOS include uncontested markets, sustainable development, strategic management or planning, service quality, profitable growth, organizational performance (Alam & Islam, 2017), marketing performance, innovation performance, dimensional analysis, extending boundaries, management of customer relations, business entrepreneurship, adaptability (Awladthani et al., 2023), leadership management (Sadiq et al., 2021), customer satisfaction (Okechukwu et al., 2018), market share (Jain & Jain, 2022; Okechukwu et al., 2018; Turki & Khemakhem, 2022), and better economic returns (Naeem et al., 2022).

Coming to the telecom sector, it stands as a cornerstone of modern society, enabling global connectivity and communication through various technologies and services (Hajar et al., 2022), with the global market size for telecom services estimated at US\$1805.61 billion in 2022 and an expected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.2% till 2030 (Grand View Research, 2024). The telecom companies are offering a wide range of cutting-edge services in an effort to overcome growth saturation in markets (Hajar et al., 2020). From traditional voice calls to high-speed internet access and advanced data transmission, telecommunications play a vital role in connecting people, businesses, and devices worldwide. These telecom services serve as a part of a class of network framework that relies on information and communication technology (ICT) (Okechukwu et al., 2018). In this rapidly expanding industry, innovation is a necessity as it serves as the driving force for sustainable growth by propelling telecom companies to adapt the demands of the consumers, technological advancements, and competitive pressures (Hajar et al., 2020, 2022; Okechukwu et al., 2018; Yadav & Gupta, 2020). The strength-weakness-opportunity-threats (SWOT) analysis of the telecom sector revealed despite having strengths such as being big multinational companies (MNCs) with big consumer base, elevated brand values, vast infrastructure, and strategic alliances, and loads of opportunities in form of strategic partnerships, untapped market, market growth, value added and internet data services, there were some weaknesses such as outsourcing operations, issues with joint ventures, deep debts, and tempestuous market climate (Kalyani, 2016). Threats include the national regulatory framework, novel entrants, etc.

This paper is organized as follows, where the first section introduces us to the concept of BOS, its definition, and its scope of relevance for the telecom sector. This is followed by the understanding of fundamentals of BOS, analysis on how it differs from traditional competitive strategies, core principles and an overview of the successful applications of BOS in different industries. The next section examines the studies where telecom companies have successfully applied BOS principles to drive value innovation leading to enhanced organizational performance. Following this, the various challenges and limitations associated with implementing BOS for innovation in telecom sector. Finally, this study concludes with the exploration of future trends and opportunities based on the summary of the key findings and insights from the review.

## **II- BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY: FUNDAMENTALS AND ITS BENEFITS**

Within the BOS framework, the market universe may be separated into two main types: blue and red oceans (Awladthani et al., 2023; Jain & Jain, 2022; Naeem et al., 2022). The expression “blue ocean” implies to an undefined and fresh market, where competition is either non-existent or has or has not spread across the entire system, while by red ocean, those markets are inferred where there is fierce competition that exploit the current demands (Awladthani et al., 2023). BOS considered as a reconstructionist strategy differs from red ocean strategy, which is structuralist (Alam & Islam, 2017), depending upon the industry assumption, strategic focus, marketplace, demand, strategic choices, resources, offerings, etc. (Awladthani et al., 2023). BOS believes in creating indisputable market space, identifying and capturing new demands, breaking the value cost tradeoffs, and alignment of organizational activities in quest for low cost effective measures (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005b; Okechukwu et al., 2018). In a simplified way, it is construed that red oceans mean all the existing industries, while the blue ones are referred as “unknown market space” (Ogbogu-Asogwa et al., 2017). Instead of innovation, red oceans are also marred with well-defined and accepted industry

boundaries, saturated markets, imitated products, price wars, and continuous vicissitudes in the buying behavior of the consumers (Naeem et al., 2022; Okechukwu et al., 2018). Due to this, the revenue impact and the profitability is much higher in case of BOS (Alam & Islam, 2017). To achieve this, each strategic component in BOS has to be in correct alignment with the integrated systems to provide any value innovation (Ogbogu-Asogwa et al., 2017). In fact, open innovation mediated the impact of BOS on innovation performance (Shafiq et al., 2018). It can be construed that BOS acts as a “organized tactical method” that makes the competitors outplayed through innovation (Naeem et al., 2022). To successfully transform to blue ocean, it is critical to first shift the mindset from red to blue, followed by introduction of “set of market-creating tools”, and have a humanistic approach involving engagement, explanation, and reassurance from people (Leavy, 2018). To avail maximum benefits of this strategy, it is preferable for businesses to implement the plan as soon as operations begin in order to optimize its effectiveness (Ogbogu-Asogwa et al., 2017).

## II- INNOVATIVE APPLICATIONS OF BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY IN TELECOM

Table 1 summarizes studies examining the successful application of BOS in telecom companies in driving innovation in descending chronological order. All these studies followed a quantitative research design and were spread across globe. From these studies, it has been found to be imperative specifically for this sector as the traditional competition gets immediately eliminated and the innovative market achieves leadership and brilliance (Hersh & Abusaleem, 2016). Value innovation (customer, shareholders, and business uniqueness) leads to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, which can translate to sustainable growth in terms of sales growth, profitability, and market share (Hajar et al., 2022). The significant impact of BOS spreads to resources, assets, skills, competitive advantages (Al Qudah & Hashem, 2018; Hersh & Abusaleem, 2016), attractive industry, strategy formulation along with implementation was validated using the typical E-R-R-C or the E-R-R-I strategy (Naeem et al., 2022). BOS adoption in Saudi Arabian telecom companies significantly contributes to achieve a competitive advantage, with the most powerful relationship coming from the principles of Reconstruct market boundaries and Reach beyond existing demand while the least coming from Build execution into strategy (Hersh & Abusaleem, 2016). In this case, the indicators of competitive advantage included costs, quality, flexibility, delivery speed, and innovation, with tradeoffs between innovation and the others. Similarly, BOS also improved market performance in terms of market share, profitability, retention of consumers and customer satisfaction (Okechukwu et al., 2018; Turki & Khemakhem, 2022).

**Table 1: Summary of relevant studies reporting BOS in the telecom sector**

Name of the organization/s	Study location	Objective of the study	Findings of the study	Conclusions	Reference
Zain Telecommunications	Iraq	To design a tool to evaluate blue ocean strategy on above-average returns	A significant effect of BOS on above average returns was observed.	Introduction of out-of-the box services and activation of profit analyzing tools has led to higher profits and preservation of environment.	Naeem et al. (2022)
Not mentioned	Yemen	To study the impact of value innovation on firm performance.	Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty mediates the impact of value innovation on organizational performance.	Value innovation is critical for achieving sustainable performance	Hajar et al. (2022)
Asia cell Telecom	Iraq	To harness BOS as a strategy for improved marketing performance.	Significant association between BOS and marketing performance was observed.	BOS was beneficial in maintaining market share and attract new consumers.	Turki & Khemakhem (2022)
Samsung and Xiomi Mobile	India	To understand the strategies adopted by firms to become the top leader in mobile handsets.	Reasons behind the domination of Samsung over others in the Indian market was examined.	The application of BOS lead to increase in popularity of the mobile handsets.	Jain & Jain (2022)
MTN, Etisalat, Globalcom and Airtel	Nigeria	To evaluate the effect of BOS on the market share.	A positive impact of BOS on market share and customer satisfaction was observed,	The application of BOS is a highly accomplished and dynamic process that satisfies consumer happiness.	Okechukwu et al. (2018)
Zain, Umniah, and	Jordan	To examine	E-R-R-I	The	Al Qudah &

Name of the organization/s	Study location	Objective of the study	Findings of the study	Conclusions	Reference
Orange Telecom		the impact of BOS in achieving competitive advantage.	significantly impacted the achievement of competitive advantage	significance of BOS in telecom business was realized.	Hashem (2018)
MTN, GLO	Nigeria,	To study the impact of BOS on value innovation.	BOS had a significant positive relationship with firm's value innovation and the new-demand creation approach positively impacted review and profit growth of the company.	The effective implementation of BOS opens new ways of thinking	Ogbogu-Asogwa et al. (2017)
Not mentioned	Saudi Arabia,	To study the ability of organizations to apply dimensions of BOS	There is correlation between BOS dimensions and competitive advantage.	Application of BOS leads to competitive advantage and creates value.	Hersh & Abusaleem (2016)

#### IV Challenges and limitations faced due to adoption of Blue Ocean Strategies

Despite the adoption of BOS being found to be so beneficial for the organizations, there are certain challenges that all these organizations face (Alam & Islam, 2017; Yunus & Sijabat, 2021). These include, the difficult process of implementation of BOS, high cost of production and marketing, distraction of consumers, uncertainty of superior performance (Yunus & Sijabat, 2021), absence of proof towards supportive theories (Hokianto, 2023), unopposed nature of these markets, inability to distinguish between short- and long-term strategic time horizons, level and imprecise nature of innovation (Alam & Islam, 2017; Hokianto, 2023). The absence of competition in BOS itself has been considered as an impractical situation, with the achievement of imperfect results. Moreover, the validity of BOS depends on erroneous assumptions and beliefs in adequate numbers of Blue Ocean Markets (Alam & Islam, 2017). It is speculated that the successful business model will get imitated and duplicated, making it viable only for a limited period of time (Hokianto, 2023; Ogbogu-Asogwa et al., 2017). In some cases, the absence of differentiation in innovation between BOS and competitive strategy remains inadequate for encouraging the type of creativity required for producing distinctive strategies, potentially limiting creativity to produce strategies. An unfair advantage seems to exist, which questions the execution and implementation and leads to several misconceptions (Hokianto, 2023). Further, practical guidance for implementation of BOS in an efficient and

successful manner is missing (Ogbogu-Asogwa et al., 2017). Moreover, in most of the industries, innovation remains lacking along with improper planning (Awladthani et al., 2023). It can be assumed that the marketing strategies will vary from industry to industry along with the factors driving BOS. Based on this, it can be inferred that there are many risks with the implementation of BOS (Alam & Islam, 2017). In context of telecom companies, organizational hurdles along with limited time and resources seem to impede the implementation (Hersh & Abusaleem, 2016). Apart from this, industry inertia where these industries are often characterized by entrenched business models, regulations, and established players, can create resistance to change and innovation (Yadav & Gupta, 2020).

## **V- RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF BLUE OCEAN STRATEGY**

In the light of the above mentioned findings, recommendations suggested for the successful adoption of BOS include reconsideration of the validity and reliability of the analytical tool of BOS, conferring with business experts before implementing the BOS, conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threats) analysis before deciding whether to implement the BOS or not, and then reaffirm the BOS's strong appeal in the cutthroat business environment of today (Alam & Islam, 2017); considering BOS as modern way for achieving creativity and high efficiency, highlighting the significance of the innovation and its functions in generation of new brands and competitively free marketplaces, which leads to newer demands and helps to grow market share, diversification of marketing and introduction of modern systems, reducing the costs, continuous level of follow-ups (Hassan et al., 2022). Along with this, prioritizing value innovation by simultaneously pursuing differentiation and low cost and identification of opportunities to create new market spaces by offering unique products, services, or business models that deliver exceptional value to customers were shortlisted.

Recommendations specifically for telecom companies seeking to leverage BOS for driving innovation (Al Qudah & Hashem, 2018; Naeem et al., 2022; Okechukwu et al., 2018) includes fostering a strategic mindset among leadership and employees by promoting a culture of innovation, forward-thinking, and continuous improvement; encouraging individuals at all levels of the organization to contribute ideas and participate in strategic discussions; investing in understanding the evolving needs and preferences of customers, conducting market research, assuring good quality services, gathering customer feedback, and analyzing trends to identify unmet needs and opportunities for value creation; establishing policies based on the requirements and preferences of the consumer; challenging industry assumptions and traditional norms by questioning existing business models, industry practices, and customer preferences and looking beyond current market boundaries to explore new opportunities for innovation; prioritizing value innovation by simultaneously pursuing differentiation and low cost, and identifying opportunities to create new market spaces by offering unique products, services, or business models that deliver exceptional value to customers; eliminating creating an environment that encourages experimentation, risk-taking, and learning from failure; preserving documents of all of the assets and operations of the organization; removing redundant work measures that have no bearing on the quality of the communications services and substituting them with extra services that generate unexpected profits, getting rid of surplus machinery, tools, and equipment that interfere with their work and provide no benefit to their clients, replacing fields that generate profits greater than those of competitors from regular operations, reducing waste production, substituting present connections, guaranteeing the application of the strategic implementation principles, which comprises of organizational structure, organizational culture, and competent people resources because of their usefulness in helping the business achieve higher returns. Along with this, employees with the autonomy and resources should explore new ideas, test hypotheses, and iterate on solutions. The power of technology and data analytics to drive innovation needs to be harnessed and emerging technologies such as artificial



intelligence, big data, and IoT to develop innovative solutions that address customer needs and enhance operational efficiency to be explored.

## VI CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE SCOPE OF RESEARCH

This study addresses the research question of the study by identifying the key drivers, benefits, and the challenges faced during the adoption of BOS by telecom organizations using secondary scientific data. It was realized that BOS has transformative potential in the telecom sector, that offers a systematic approach to innovation, market creation, and sustainable growth. By embracing BOS principles, telecom companies can differentiate themselves, create new market spaces, and thrive in an increasingly competitive landscape. The telecom sector faces intense competition and rapid technological advancements, making innovation imperative for sustainable growth. BOS offers a systematic approach to innovation, emphasizing value innovation, market creation, and differentiation as key drivers of success. It encourages telecom companies to look beyond existing market boundaries and identify untapped customer needs and market opportunities. By focusing on creating uncontested market spaces, companies can escape competition and unlock new sources of value. Telecom companies can drive innovation by understanding and addressing unmet customer needs, delivering unique value propositions, and enhancing the customer experience. It has also been construed that BOS tends to emphasize agility and adaptability as essential qualities for success in the dynamic telecom industry. Companies must continuously scan the external environment, anticipate changes, and respond quickly to emerging trends and market shifts. By staying agile and adaptive, companies can capitalize on new opportunities and maintain a competitive edge. On the contrary, Implementing BOS in the telecom sector is not without its challenges. Regulatory constraints, technological complexities, legacy systems, and resource limitations can hinder innovation efforts. However, by addressing these barriers proactively and fostering a culture of innovation, companies can overcome obstacles and drive sustainable growth.

While the review provides valuable insights on BOS in telecom sector, this study is limited by the restrictive scope of any review, lack of availability of secondary data, occurrence of potential bias due to the varied perceptions of the sources cited. The review may identify areas for further research or exploration, such as empirical validation of specific aspects of BOS implementation, comparative analyses across telecom companies, or longitudinal studies to track the impact of BOS over time. Future research could address these gaps and build upon the findings of the review.

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