

International roaming segment heats up as Airtel, Jio eye Vi's post-paid users

By Urvi Malvania, ET Bureau • Last Updated: Jun 13, 2023, 12:54 AM IST

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Synopsis

All three have ramped up efforts to attract higher paying postpaid customers as they look for ways to increase average revenue per user (ARPU) in the absence of headline tariff hikes, they added. "With international travel picking up (after the pandemic) and given Vi's vulnerability, both Airtel and Jio are making efforts to drive value for postpaid users using lucrative and simplified international travel packs," Rohan Dhamija, head (India & Middle East) at Analysys Mason, said.



[International roaming](#) services are turning into a battleground for private Indian telecom operators as [Bharti Airtel](#) and [Reliance Jio](#) eye the postpaid customer base of cashstrapped [Vodafone Idea](#), which is desperately trying to protect it, analysts said.

All three have ramped up efforts to attract higher paying postpaid customers as they look for ways to increase average revenue per user (ARPU) in the absence of headline tariff hikes, they added. "With international travel picking up (after the pandemic) and given Vi's vulnerability, both [Airtel](#) and Jio are making efforts to drive value for [postpaid users](#) using lucrative and simplified international travel packs," Rohan Dhamija, head (India & Middle East) at Analysys Mason, said.

Airtel and Jio have launched competitively priced international roaming packs in recent months, with focus on pricing as well as convenience and flexibility. While Airtel introduced a single travel pack for 184 countries, Jio offers features like inflight calling and data packs for international travellers.

In response, Vi recently announced unlimited international roaming packs in 29 countries including the top travel destinations around the world. While postpaid customers are not easily swayed by competitive pricing, offering them flexibility and convenience in services like international roaming, coupled with attractive pricing can help Airtel and Jio grab a share of Vi's postpaid customer base, analysts added.

"The new international travel packs have helped us attract new postpaid users as well. This customer segment looks for convenience, security and flexibility, which the new international roaming packs provide," an Airtel spokesperson told ET.

Vi has traditionally had a stronghold on its postpaid customer base and boasts of a larger share of postpaid customers than its peers. Estimates peg that less than 5% of Jio's 430 million user base is postpaid while for Airtel, roughly 6% of its current customer base is postpaid. On the other hand, almost 10% of Vi's subscriber base is postpaid.