

Switching over to VoLTE

What is the issue?

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- With the VoLTE revolution kick started by the Reliance Jio, Indian telecom players are battling to retain their competitive position in the market.
- Knowing the features and challenges of this new technology thus becomes essential.

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What is VoLTE?

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- Voice over Long-Term Evolution (VoLTE) is a standard for high-speed wireless communication for mobile phones and data terminals.
- Under the earlier LTE, the infrastructure of telecom players only allows transmission of data while voice calls are routed to their older 2G or 3G networks.
- Thus under LTE, one cannot access the 4G data services while on a call.
- On the other hand, VoLTE, a technology update to the LTE protocol, allows voice calls to be 'packaged' and carried through LTE networks.
- This would mean 4G data accessibility even during calls.

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What are the benefits of VoLTE?

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- VoLTE allows **voice** service being delivered **as data flows** within the LTE

data bearer.

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- VoLTE is an Internet Protocol Multimedia Subsystem (IMS) specification.
- IMS enables a variety of services to operate seamlessly on the network rather than having to switch to different applications for voice or video.
- The various benefits of VoLTE thus include:

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1. high definition voice quality, superior to the previous networks.
2. faster, better and wider data connectivity.
3. network would pick up 2G or 3G signals when VoLTE is unavailable, ensuring connection with both voice and data.
4. video calls directly from the mobile number; this could avoid the necessity for applications such as Skype or Viber.
5. as VoLTE counts voice calls as data usage, billing will be in terms of data consumption rather than minutes of usage.
6. better battery life as battery consumption due to switching and searching for a network from 4G to 3G to place a call is not required under VoLTE.
7. VoLTE thus facilitates a range of services such as video calling, file transfer, real time language translation and voice mail services.

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What are the challenges?

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- The service might be limited to mobile phones that are equipped with software to allow VoLTE function.
- Also, there is a possibility for call drops in the initial stages of implementation.
- Due to costs and complexity involved in the infrastructure, mobile phones

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and telecom operators may find it hard for adopting it immediately.

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- Also, the incumbent operators are still dependent on revenue from voice, making them hesitant to switch over to VoLTE.

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- These factors could prove them uncompetitive in the market.

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- From the consumer end, the present free voice calls under VoLTE are not sure to continue with gradual change in pricing plans in future.

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Source: BusinessLine

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