TELECOMMUNICATION SERVICE DELIVERY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: A STUDY OF TELECOM SUBSCRIBERS IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The objective of the study was to determine the extent to which telecommunication service providers in Nigeria have satisfied the needs of their numerous customers in Ogun State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted as the study guide. Convenience sampling technique was used in which four hundred and twenty three (423) copies of questionnaire were administered to selected telecom service subscribers from three geo-political districts of Ogun State, Nigeria in which four hundred and two (402) copies of the research instrument were filled and returned. Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to analyse the data gathered from the respondents. The study revealed that service quality and customer service have no significant relationship with customer satisfaction, while there is a significant relationship between price and customer satisfaction. The study concluded that satisfied customers will keep patronizing the business entities and tell others about their good experiences, while dissatisfied customers will withhold their patronage and tell others about their unpleasant experiences. It was recommended that telecom service providers must be fully committed to quality service so as to ensure optimal quality service delivery.*

KEYWORDS: *Customer Satisfaction, Customer Service, Price, and Service Quality.*

INTRODUCTION

Establishing a business organization is extremely tasking, while attracting customers is another great hurdle. Running a mobile telecommunication service outfit is not an exception. Customers are the individuals or organizations that buy the products and services of a business for personal use, re-sale, industrial use, production and manufacturing. The expectations of the customers are to get value for their money and to be cared for in the best way by the business organization. Consequently, business organizations have to do everything possible to make their customers happy and make sure they get the best value for their money. By doing this, the firms will experience growth in their customer patronage because existing customers buy more and as well introduce the firms to other prospects (Adegbola, 2010).

Customers are always aiming to get maximum satisfaction from the products or services that they buy. Winning in today's marketplace entails the need to build customer relationship and not just building the products; building customer relationship means delivering superior value over competitors to the target customers (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). Whether an organization provides quality products and services or not will depend on the customers' feedback on the satisfaction they get from consuming the products, since higher levels of quality lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction (Kotler and Keller, 2009). However, the success of a product is determined by the additional services that accompany it.All over the world, customer satisfaction has become a veritable tool for measuring organizational performance and relevance (Usman, 2013). Nigeria has been currently described as one of the fastest growing mobile telephone markets in the world. Since 2001, when the mobile telecommunication operators were licensed, the rate of subscription has increased tremendously and does not show any sign of abating (Egwaikhide, 2012). As at March 2012, the total number of connected (mobile and fixed) telephone lines has increased to 134,913,013 while the active telephone lines stood at 99,145,614.

Out of this number, GSM lines account for 95.35%, CDMA lines account for 4.05% while fixed/fixed wireless lines account for 0.60 % of the aggregate market share (NCC, March 2012 as cited in Emerah, Oyedele, and David, 2013). Despite this remarkable and outstanding improvement in accessibility to telephone services, there is an avalanche of complaints of high call tariffs, poor voice signals, poor reception, errors in connection and poor inter-connectivity with other networks among others. (Emerah et al., 2013). However, Nigerians x-rayed the activities of telecommunications service providers operating in the country, saying they have failed to provide quality service despite having paid over ₦1.8 billion fine in the last two years for poor quality service (Ubabukoh, 2014).

The astronomical growth in the subscriber base of the GSM operators has led to intense competition in the mobile telecommunications market in Nigeria. The competition is exacerbated by the lower switching costs among the subscribers of the various networks, which manifest in the frequency with which the subscribers freely enter and leave the networks. In terms of financial outlay, it costs subscribers as low as N100 to acquire a Subscriber Identification Module (SIM) card and this makes it cheaper for subscribers to traverse from one network to another (Adeleke and Aminu, 2012). The negative effect of this is the inability of the operators to retain and make existing customers loyal. There is also a problem of declining growth in the GSM subscriber base in Nigeria making it more difficult to attract new subscribers and necessitating again the need to retain existing customers. In the light of this intense competition, the major challenge confronting all the mobile telecom operators in Nigeria is therefore the determination and execution of various marketing initiatives that would not only attract new subscribers, but also retain the existing ones who would then become loyal customers (Adeleke and Aminu, 2012).

The deployment of GSM system into Nigerian telecoms market was universally embraced and found to be relatively efficient at the inception. With time, operators in the telecommunications industry experienced an unprecedented growth in customer-base which later incapacitated the networks to function efficiently. This explosive growth brought huge revenue to both the operators and government through tax and license fee. As revolutionary as the introduction of GSM may seems to be to the Nigerian economy, many problems still surround the telecommunications sector. Some of these problems include instability in power supply, insecurity of telecoms infrastructure, inter-network connectivity, network congestion, call set-up failure and call drop. All these factors contribute in one way or the other to poor quality of telecommunication services rendered by GSM operators in the country (Adegoke and Babalola, 2011). However, based on the research conceptual model, the following null hypotheses were stated to guide the study:

i.   There is no significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.
ii.   There is no significant relationship price and customer satisfaction.
iii. There is no significant relationship between customer service and satisfaction.
This paper is intended to determine the extent to which GSM operators have satisfied the needs of their customers. For this purpose, this paper is structured into five sections: first section focuses on the general introduction; second section focuses on the review of literature; the third section focuses on the methodology; the fourth section focuses on the data analysis, results, and discussion; while the last section presents the conclusion and recommendations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Conceptual Clarification
Customer satisfaction is often defined in the marketing literature as a customer's overall evaluation of his or her purchase and consumption experience of a good or service. However, perceived service quality refers to consumer's judgment about the performance of product or service. Customer satisfaction is critically important because it reflects subjective customer evaluations of the attribute performance associated with the consumption experience (Namkung and Jang, 2008). Clearly, defining and understanding customer satisfaction can help any company identify opportunities for product and

service innovation and also serve as a basis for performance appraisal and reward systems. It can also serve as the basis for a customer satisfaction surveying program so as to ensure that quality improvement efforts are properly focused on issues that are most important to the customer (Masroujeh, 2009).

Increasing customer satisfaction by increasing customer value is a key issue for every company (Lonial and Zaim, 2000). Customer value is the customer's perception of the attributes they want in the product or service. Products or services create value for customers not by delivering the products or services themselves, but by delivering consequences in their use situations. Customer satisfaction is the customer's positive or negative feeling about the value that was received after the consumption of ideas, goods and services. Thus, if using a product or service yields the desired consequences, then the consumer perceives high customer value. High customer value leads to customer satisfaction (Lonial and Zaim, 2000).

Parasuraman (1988) as cited in Yadav and Dabhade (2013) defines service quality as the degree and direction of discrepancy between the consumer's perceptions and expectations or the extent to which a service meets or exceeds customer's expectations. However, Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, and Wong (1999) refer to price as the amount of money charged for a product or service. It is the sum of all the values that customers give up in order to gain the benefits of having or using a product or service. It is one of the major determinants of a firm's market share and profitability. Zeithaml and Bitner (2003), on the other hand, define customer service as a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customers' satisfaction; that is, the feeling that a product or service has met customer's expectations. It involves a series of comprehensive activities targeted at the satisfaction of customers and customers' perception of a service or product (Egena, 2013).

Empirical Review
The study by Ojo (2010) investigated the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the telecommunication industry with a focus on mobile telecommunication network (MTN) Nigeria. The study revealed that service quality has effect on customer satisfaction and that there is a positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. It was also revealed that it costs to attract new customers than to retain existing ones. However, Goel (2014) found that service quality is positively related to perceived value, customer satisfaction, and post-purchase intention. The positive relationships among service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and post-purchase intention in mobile added-value services offered a great scope to the mobile value-added service providers.
The study by Rahman (2012) found that most of the telecom customers in Bangladesh are highly concerned about service quality followed by corporate image. It also discovered that mobile phone service providers in Bangladesh compete not only for networking quality by a large amount of investment in network quality, network extension and upgrading but also for the acquisition of new customers and retention of old customers by direct and indirect price reduction. Meanwhile, in their study on factors affecting customer satisfaction, Hanif, Hafeez, and Riaz (2010) found that price fairness and customer services contribute to customer satisfaction but comparatively price fairness has a larger impact on customer satisfaction than customer service. The study by Paulrajan and Harish (2011) showed that communication and price were most influential and most preferential factors in selecting telecommunication service provider. Price also plays a significant role in the purchase decision of the telecommunication sector. However, product quality and availability has a significant impact on consumer perception and choice in selecting cellular mobile service provider.

METHODOLOGY

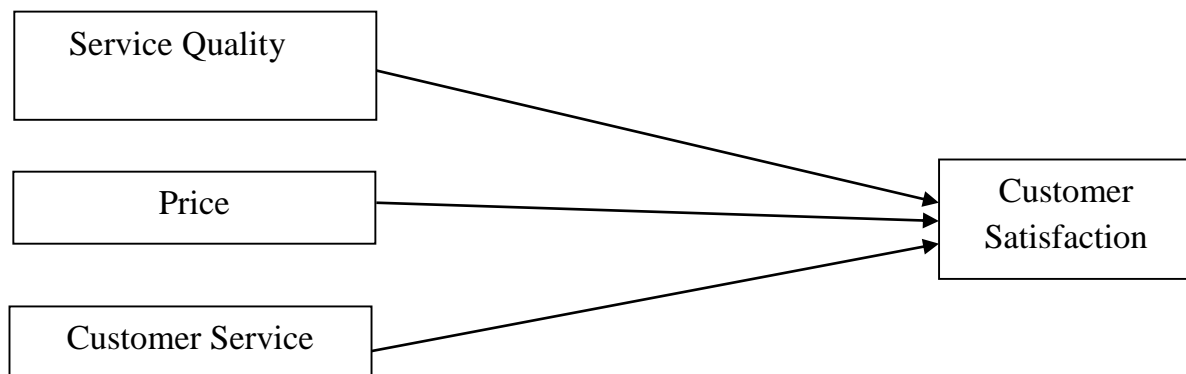Descriptive survey research design was adopted as the study's guide and this was done for three reasons. First, it is capable of obtaining information from large samples of the population. Second, it is well suited in gathering demographic data that describe the composition of the sample (McIntyre, 1999). Third, it is inclusive in the types and number of variables that can be studied; while it requires minimal

investment to develop and administer, and is relatively easy for making generalizations (Bell, 1996 as cited in Glasow, 2005).The population of the study comprises of the entire telecommunication service subscribers in Ogun State, Nigeria. Convenience sampling technique was adopted in this study. For the purpose of this study, convenience sample includes the respondents who are readily available and agree to participate in a study (Latham, 2007). However, the GSM subscribers that cut across the three geo-political districts of Egba, Ijebu/Remo and Yewa/Awori in Ogun State, Nigeria form the working population of the study. However, four hundred and twenty three (423) GSM subscribers from the three geo-political districts of Ogun State, Nigeria constitute the sample size for the study.

The research instrument adopted for this study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire enabled the respondents to understand the intention of the study. It also enabled the researcher to elicit information from the respondents easily (Asika, 2004). The questionnaire comprised of two major sections: Section A (demographic profile of the respondent) and Section B (Research construct items). The questionnaire comprised of ten (17) major construct items. However, modified Likert's interval rating scale with options ranging from strongly agree, agree, partially agree, partially disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree were used as the response patterns on the construct items. The construct items that were designed in line with the research suggestions of Adeleke and Aminu (2012) were adopted in this study.Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment correlation were used for empirical investigation of the study's interest. These methods of data analysis were used with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.

Research Model

A research conceptual model was developed to show the determinants of customer satisfaction in the Nigerian telecommunications industry.

Source: *Researcher's Conceptual Model (2014)*

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Copies of questionnaires were administered to 423 subscribers of telecommunication service in three geo-political districts of Ogun State, Nigeria; out of which only 402 copies were filled and returned.

Table 1:   Analysis of Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval Rate

	FREQUENCY	**PERCENTAGE (%)**
Retrieved	402	95
Not Retrieved	21	5
TOTAL	**423**	**100**

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey (2014)*

The table 1 above shows that 402 (95%) of the respondents filled and returned the questionnaire, while 21 (5%) of the respondents did not return the questionnaire. Thus, the percentage of questionnaires returned is high enough for the generalization of the outcome of this research work.

Table 2Analysis of the Respondents' Demography

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
SEX		
Male	273	67.9
Female	129	32.1
Total	402	100
MARITAL STATUS		
Single	252	62.7
Married	150	37.3
Total	402	100
AGE		
21-30	189	47
31-40	120	29.9
41-50	68	16.9
51 and above	25	6.2
Total	402	100
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION		
WASSCE	46	11.4
OND/HND	72	17.9
B.ED	26	6.5
B.SC	155	38.6
M.SC	75	18.7
Ph.D	28	6.9
Total	402	100
NETWORK OF RESPONDENTS		
Glo	102	25.4
Etisalat	78	19.4
MTN	122	30.3
Airtel	100	24.9
Total	402	100

Source: *Researcher's Field Survey (2014).*

From the analysis of respondents' demography, 273 (67.9%) of the respondents are male while 129 (32.1%) are female. The marital status shows that 252 (62.7%) of the respondents are single while 150 (37.3%) are married. The age distribution of respondents shows that 189 (47%) are within the age of 21-30 years, 120 (29.9%) are within the ages of 31-40 years, 68 (16.9%) are within the age of 41-50 years and 25 (6.2%) are within the age of 51 years and above. The educational qualification shows that 46 (11.4%) of the respondents are SSCE holders, 72 (17.9%) are OND/HND holders, 26 (6.5%) are B.ED holders, 155 (38.6%) are B.Sc holders, 75 (18.7%) are M.Sc holders, and 28 (6.9%) are Ph.D holders.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation

Table 3   **Correlations**

		Customer Satisfaction	Quality Products and Services	Price	Customer Service
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.142	.344**	.154
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.155	.000	.122
	N	402	402	402	402
Quality Products and Services	Pearson Correlation	.142	1	.338**	.290**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.155		.001	.003
	N	402	402	402	402
Price	Pearson Correlation	.344**	.338**	1	.378**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001		.000
	N	402	402	402	402
Customer Service	Pearson Correlation	.154	.290**	.378**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.122	.003	.000	
	N	402	402	402	402

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation for the 3 ordinal scaled variables. The significant level is 0.01.

Hypothesis 1: Quality products and services have no significant relationship with customer satisfaction. From the table it can be seen that the correlation of quality products and services is 0.142 and the significant level is 0.01. The table shows that the p-value is 0.155, which is greater than (>) 0.01. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that quality products and services have no significant relationship with customer satisfaction. This result contradicts the findings of Ojo (2010), Rahman (2012) and Goel (2014) that service quality brings about customer satisfaction in different organizational settings.

Hypothesis 2: Price has no significant relationship with customer satisfaction. From the table it can be seen that the correlation of price is 0.344 and the significant level is 0.01. The table shows that the p-value is 0.000, which is less than (<) 0.01. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that price has a significant relationship with customer satisfaction. This result is in congruence with the findings of Hafeez and Riaz (2010), and Paulrajan and Harish (2011) that there is a significant relationship between price fairness and customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: Customer service has no significant relationship with customer satisfaction. From the table it can be seen that the correlation of customer service is 0.154 and the significant level is 0.01. The table shows that the p-value is 0.122, which is greater than (>) 0.01. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that customer service has no significant relationship with customer satisfaction. This result also contradicts the empirical finding of Hafeez and Riaz (2010) that customer service brings about satisfaction of customers in the services sector.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion
This study discovered that while service quality and customer service have no significant relationship with customer satisfaction price has a significant relationship with customer satisfaction. Delivering superior customer value and satisfaction is the key to build and maintaining strong relationship with customers. Satisfied customers will continue patronising the firm and will tell others about their good

experience while dissatisfied customers will stop patronising the firm and will tell others about their bad experience.

Generally, customers will buy from the firm that they perceive offers the highest delivered value. Meanwhile, the level of satisfaction the customer attains after the purchase of an offer depends on the offer's performance in relations to the buyer's expectation. If the performance of the offer falls short of the customer's expectations, the customer is said to be dissatisfied; on the other hand, if the performance matches his expectation, the customer is said to be satisfied. However, if the performance exceeds his expectations, then the customer is said to be delighted or highly satisfied.

Since delighted customers are less likely to switch to competitors' offer, high satisfaction creates an emotional bond with the brand, not just rational preference. It becomes imperative for the marketers to project the image of their offer to the level that it is really attainable. Any offer that is projected too high beyond what it can accomplish is very likely to result to a disappointment. Therefore, for an organization to be successful, it must raise its customers' expectations and deliver performance to match or exceed those expectations.

Recommendations
Based on the analysis and findings, the following recommendations were made:

i. Telecommunication firms should offer more quality products and services that will communicate the merits of their products and services in the minds of consumers and influence their attitudes towards them.

ii. Complaint and Suggestion Box System help a customer-oriented organization to serve its customers better. Telecommunication firms' employees should be well trained on how to handle customers' complaints and provide solutions to them immediately. Customers should be treated like 'kings' and 'queens'.

iii. Telecommunication firms should carry out the customer satisfaction survey periodically to investigate customers' expectations and to elicit suggestions on how they can serve their customers better. Many customers will not complain but at the right time switch brand. Therefore, responsive and proactive organizations measure customer satisfaction directly by conducting periodic surveys either through in-house research personnel or through contracted third party agencies. This could be done by sending questionnaire or phone calls to recent customers randomly to solicit information on their experiences with their offers.

iv. Telecommunication service providers should remain absolutely focused in customer acquisition and retention. This becomes imperative in as much as all operators suffer from churn; the market swings from one operator to the other depending on where the prices get dropped. The surest way to stop this anomaly of divided loyalty is to create a lot of values for customers whereby they don't churn, and making sure that those customers stay with respective telecommunication service providers that can offer value-added services on sustainable bases.

v. Telecommunication service providers should have clear and established procedures for analysing customer needs and expectation, as meeting such needs and fulfilment of those expectations are few of the greatest hallmarks of customer services.

vi. Of paramount importance is customer care. Telecommunication service providers should continue to work smarter on customer care to make sure that customers are delighted at every opportunity that is available to interact with them.

vii. Nevertheless, the telecommunication service providers should make it a point of duty to compensate subscribers for non-delivery of SMS and voice messages or 'barren calls' recorded most especially when there is network congestion.

viii. Finally, telecommunication service providers must be fully committed to quality service so as to ensure optimal quality service delivery.

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APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE
September 24, 2014.
Dear Sir/Ma,
I am conducting a research study on Telecommunication Service Delivery and Customer Satisfaction: A Study of Telecom Subscribers in Ogun State, Nigeria.
Please kindly help me in filling the questionnaire. Information gathered will be used for the purpose of this study only.
Your response will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Onigbinde, Isaac Oladepo
Odunlami, Samuel Abimbola.

SECTION A
BIO DATA OF RESPONDENTS
1. **Sex**
   Male (   )   Female (   )
2. **Marital Status**
   Single (   )   Married (   )
3. **Age**
   21-30 (   )   31-40 (   )
   41-50 (   )   51 and above (   )
4. **Educational Qualification**
   WASSCE (   ) OND/HND (   ) B.Sc (   ) M.Sc (   ) Ph.D (   ) Others Please Specify (   )
5. **Which network do you use?**
   Glo (   ) Etisalat (   ) MTN (   ) Airtel (   )
SECTION B
Please tick as indicated:
SA- Strongly Agree A- Agree PA- Partly Agree PD- Partly Disagree D- Disagree SD- Strongly Disagree

S/N	CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	SA	A	PA	PD	D	SD
1.	Overall I am satisfied with my service provider						
2.	The services rendered by my service provider are close to what I expect						
3.	As a result I am loyal to my service provider and consider it a first choice of GSM firm.						
4.	I will recommend my GSM network to friends.						

S/N	QUALITY PRODUCTS AND SERVICES	SA	A	PA	PD	D	SD
5.	My GSM network is wide and extensive						
6.	Call clarity on my network is high						
7.	The rate of call failure on my network is substantial						
8	Satisfied customers make repeat purchases and tell others about their experience.						

S/N	PRICE	SA	A	PA	PD	D	SD
9.	Telecommunication firms set prices based on customers' perception of the value of their products.						
10.	The price/tariff I pay commensurate with the quality of service I receive on my network.						
11.	A higher price/tariff will make me switch to a competitor						
12.	The price of a product is determined by the cost of production.						
13.	Economic recession affect the price of goods and services.						

S/N	CUSTOMER SERVICE	SA	A	PA	PD	D	SD
14.	I consider prompt and quality customer service as one of the most important considerations in the evaluation of a network.						
15.	I am not happy with the long delay I experience each time I make call to my network's customer care to make enquiry or lodge complaints.						
16.	Employees of my service provider are courteous and friendly in handling my grievances and complaints.						
17.	My network's reputation for good service is not cheering and has been a source of concern to me.						