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EVALUATING THE EFFECT OF CUSTOMER LOYALTY STRATEGIES ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AMONG SELECTED GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS (GSM) SERVICES PROVIDERS IN SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Mobile telecommunication companies in Nigeria have lackluster attitude and approach towards delivering superior customer service, values and satisfaction but, are rather more interested in maximizing profit. The research was conducted to evaluate the impact of customer loyalty strategies adopted among selected Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) services providers in Nigeria on customer satisfaction. The specific objectives of the study are to investigate the comparative impact of relationship marketing strategies on customer satisfaction and also, to evaluate the effect of customer retention strategies adopted among MTN, Glo, and Airtel networks in South Eastern Nigeria). The population of the study is 8,297334; representing the number of GSM subscribers in Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states of South Eastern Nigeria. The sample size is 400 using Taro Yamani sample size determination method. 300 were correctly filled and returned while 100 were not returned. For the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was vetted by the marketing experts based on face validity in terms of relevance to the subject matter, objective of the study, coverage of the content areas, appropriateness of language usage and clarity of purpose. The value of the test of reliability is 0.930 which was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha. Primary data was adopted for the study and data was analysed using ANOVA. Two hypotheses were stated, tested and findings on the effect of customer relationship strategies revealed that the rate of customer relationship marketing strategies is low across the three networks. Also, it was revealed that the rate of customer retention was low for MTN and slightly below average for both glo and Airtel networks. It was concluded that GSM providers have not done enough to improve customer satisfaction through the level of loyalty strategies adopted on their subscribers. The researcher therefore recommends that customer retention and relationship marketing strategies should be boosted.

INTRODUCTION

Convicing customers and proselytizing them to switch to competitors require strategic motivational incentives (Barrios and Lansangan, 2012). According to them, companies have to allot huge outlay to engage promotional strategies that will make them identify, and remain loyal to a given brand having been acquainted with the knowledge that customers are getting more and more advanced and sophisticated in their approach to marketing realities.

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Service quality is sine qua non to the actualization of organization mission (Masood *et al*., 2011). Satisfying customers is becoming very arduous and as a result, "companies are diverting from the routine transaction marketing approach which emphasizes attracting customers and closing sales on them to relationship marketing that lay substantial emphasis on gaining accounts and delivering superior value to them by creating, developing, maintaining and sustaining long-term relationship aimed at satisfying and delighting them" (Kotler *et al*., 2010). Companies emphasizing on attracting customers without the intention of retention, are adopting a leaky bucket approach (Kotler and Armstrong, 2001).

In truism, the cost of attracting customers is five times more than that of retaining them (Barrios and Lansangan, 2012). Mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria may hardly consider it worthwhile to carryout customer research before they package any marketing/marketing communication programmes for their subscribers. This supports the fact that companies in developing countries are still capitalizing on the selling marketing concept approach instead of adopting the most relevant and formidable marketing concept philosophy. They come up with high tariff plan and poor services delivery which make customers to get shortchanged in their business relationship with their services providers. This ugly situation continues to occur despite the fact that one of the current most growing industries in Nigeria and the world is the telecommunication industry. Telecommunication infrastructure engenders social and economic development and seduces foreign direct investment (Zeb *et al*., 2014). Customer lifetime value hinges on the customers' patronage of the goods andservices offered by marketing organizations (Barrios and Lansangan, 2012). According to them, "in a highly competitive sector, the cost of customer recruitment is generally higher than cost of promotions to retain them". It is important for marketing planners to develop strategies of initially attracting customers and engaging them to patronize the products in the long run.

Problem Statement

It costs five times more to attract a new customer than it is to sustain and retain current profitable one (Ghavami and Olyaei, 2006). Marketers understand that every effort invested in marketing communication was aimed towards the attracting new customers and creating superior and lasting value for them (Kotler and Keller, 2006). To them, marketers should not fold their arms justto let the acquired customers turn their back at them because if they do so, they will surely switch over to competitors and by so doing, lose their loyalty and as well, reduce the future expected profits for the company. It is important to point out here that the greatest mistake marketers make is continuous acquisition of new, one-shot customers without considering the effect of their rate of switching to other stores, malls, companies or brands of product. They fall victim of marketing myopia when they fail to acknowledge the fact thata well treated customer will ever remain loyal to the company and even serve as a missionary salesperson for the company no matter what competitors use as a bait to attract him.

This supports Kotler and Keller (2006) when they made it clear that a satisfied customer will inform one or two of his friends or close associates about it, but if treated poorly, the customer goes about informing hundreds of current and prospective customers. Gan *et al*. (2006) in his study of customer retention in banking industry in New Zealand stated that "loyal clients will also show their resistance to competitors' enticements and be willing to give their current bank both solicited and unsolicited referrals". The pivot of every prosperous business is to retain or sustain customers. It requires truthful and rational communication between the customer and the company offers. If a customer is convinced that he is getting deserved attention, he will be ready to react favourably to the marketer's cross-selling as well as up-selling approaches. However, marketers are more interested in beating about the bush by wasting their resources on single sale. Pursuing one-shot customers rather than being concerned with serving current, profitable customers will not sustain their loyalty and subsequent retention (Kotler and Armstrong, 2001). Telecommunication companies in Nigeria show antipathy as well as apathy towards pulling their marketing communication strategies and other resources together towards acquiring, retaining and building long-lasting value laden customer relationships to improve their lifetime values that will necessitate loyalty. They are not like serious company such as Marriotti, Citibank, Southwest Airline who not only put down their promises on paper but go ahead to delivering the promises. Rather, they open up customer service toll free line without responding to customer questions and worries.

Consequently, the Nigerian GSM (Global Services for Mobile Communications) services subscribers are totally tired of complaining about network failures, cross lines, drop calls, poor internet connectivity, high call tariffs, and general poor customer care services (Oghojafor, 2014; Tajudeen, 2008). These are the complaints that tend to stymie customer frequent purchase and loyalty to any of the network providers in Nigeria as their services are perceived to possess little or no competitive differentiation advantage. However, improving customer satisfaction through customer loyalty programmes posesa serious threat that require urgent attention to restore the image and reputation of GSM services providers that had already been battered in the minds of Nigerian subscribers.

Research Objectives

The research is interested in investigating the effect of customer loyalty strategies on customer satisfaction in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria but, the specific the objectives of the study will include:

1. To investigate the difference in the effect of customer relationship strategies adopted among GSM service providers on customer satisfaction.
2. To find out the difference in the influence of customer retention strategies adopted among GSM service providers on customer satisfaction.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the above research objectives, the hypotheses for the study will include:

1. No significant difference exists in relation to the effect of customer relationship marketing strategies adopted among GSM service providersin Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference extant in relation to the influence of customer retention strategies on customer satisfaction adopted among GSM service providers in Nigeria.

Review of related literature

The researcher discussed the background of the three major telecommunications companies operating in Nigeria and other literature related to customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, customer relationships and customer retention. Mobile telecommunication industry is the most developing industrial sector in Nigeria. In 2001, Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) was introduced in Nigeria and Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN), a South African Company and part of MTN Group, Africa's leading cellular telecommunication company on May 16, 2001, became the first GSM network to make a call following the globally lauded Nigerian GSM auction conducted by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) earlier in 2001. Afterwards, the company launched full commercial operation beginning with Lagos, Abuja and Port-Harcourt. MTN paid $285m for one of four GSM licenses in Nigeria. To date, over US$2.8b has been invested building mobile telecommunications infrastructure in Nigeria. Since the launching in August 2001, MTN has steadily deployed its services across Nigeria. It now provides services in more than 223 cities and towns, more than 10,000 villages and communities and a growing number of highways across the country, spanning the 36 states of Nigeria and Abuja (Federal Capital Territory). The company subsists on the core brand values of leadership, relationship, integrity, innovation and 'can do'. Its overriding mission is to be a catalyst for Nigeria's economic growth and development helping to unleash Nigeria's strong development potential not only through the provision of world class communications but also through innovative and sustainable corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Similarly, Airtel formerly called Zain, Econetand Celtelmade history on august 5, 2001 by becoming the first telecommunications operator to launch commercial GSM services in Nigeria. In 2006, following Celtel International's acquisition of majority stake in the company; it was re-branded Celtel and became an important part of Celtel's Pan-African operations spanning 14 countries. On August 1, 2008, Celtel was re-branded Zain Nigeria following the global acquisition of Celtel International by MTC Group, which transformed to Zain Group. Zain Nigeria has been rebranded Airteland currently covers over 1,500 towns and communities in Nigeria and also scored a series of many other "firsts," in the highly competitive Nigerian telecommunications market.

Sequel to the launch of MTN and Airtel, Global Communication (glo) launched its services on August 2003, and has been at the forefront of revolutionary changes in the GSM sector in Nigeria, offering both prepaid and postpaid (contract packages) services along with a range of value added services. In the first year of operation, Glo Mobile became the fastest growing GSM network in Africa, achieving a record one million subscribers and covering over 87 towns in just nine months. The subscriber figure at the moment stands above 27 million with coverage extending beyond 50,000 cities, towns, communities and major highways, thus making the company the 2nd largest operator in Nigeria after MTN as well as the 5th largest operator in the Middle East and African region. While rigorously pursuing its expansion strategy, Glo network has earned the identity of the Nigerian innovator. This is because it boasts a wide variety of innovative packages and tariff plans designed to fulfill the needs of a broad spectrum of market segments in Nigeria.

Customer Satisfaction

Though, Giese and Cote (2002) state in their work "Defining Customer Satisfaction", that there is no generally accepted single definition of customer satisfaction, (Nimako *et al*., 2010), as marketing scholars define it from different dimensions and perspectives, Gustafsson (2005) defines it as "a customer's overall evaluation of the performance of an offering to date. Parvatiyar and Sheth (2002**)** observe that "more and more companies are adopting customer-centric strategies, programs, tools, and technology for efficient and effective customer relationship management. They are realizing the need for in-depth and integrated customer knowledge in order to build close cooperative and partnering relationships with their customers". Perhaps that is why no matter how superior a product might be it cannot sell itself except proper communication is directed towards the customer to ensure patronage, loyalty and satisfaction.

The hallmark of every organization's success is customer satisfaction (Angelova and Zekiri, 2011). Virtually every organization's effort and commitment is directed toward ensuring that the myriad of customers' and ultimate consumers' needs and wants are met. Ultimately and pragmatically, these needs and wants are so innumerable that the provision for their satisfaction is very distant owing to the axiom that human needs are insatiable. Basically, organizations try to exploit all avenues towards the fulfillment of its marketing communication claims. Their cardinal aim is to ensure that customer keep coming back, and back … They try to woo and seduce customers to become loyal to their brand in order to permanently retain their patronage. This supports the view of Angelova and Zekiri (2011) that reduced customer worry leads to customer satisfaction and loyalty. Innovative, out of the box, world class, exceptional and cutting-edge service delivery (Zeithaml *et al*., 2006), will go a long way to determining an organization's profitability and competitive advantage in today's ever dynamic marketing environment in which services dominate. Telecommunication giants in Nigeria are not left out of the race striving to outwit one another in order to gain more profitable customers (Hughes, 2006) and the corresponding substantial market share.

Satisfying customer in this twenty first century ever changing marketing environment has become a massive riddle. Angelova and Zekiri (2011) in their research on "Measuring Customer Satisfaction with Service Quality Using American Customer Satisfaction Model (ACSI Model)," discover that "the overall service quality perceived by the customers was not satisfactory, that expectations were higher than perceptions". Customers have grown more advanced with the countless antics discharged and displayed by unscrupulous marketers. "Caveat emptor", had become the credo discussed in many marketing literature. Yet, marketers still deceive unwary customers by surrendering poor service quality to them thereby breaking the "oath of silence", that the customer is the king. The expectations of customers are nowadays very high owing to the high degree of sophistication and experience they have had interacting with marketers over several transaction encounters.

The interactive marketing approach which was highlighted by (Kotler *et al*., 2010; Zeithaml *et al*., 2006) aids the explanation of the pyramid expatiated by Angelova and Zekiri (2011), stressing the indispensability of the communication that binds the front line employees of many service organizations and their customers. According to Angelova and Zekiri (2011), any company that emphasizes more on the top management stands vulnerably distorted to lose its customers to gullible competitors. Furthermore, customer satisfaction is the fulcrum upon which all marketing activities oscillate. Attracting, retaining and growing customers through building lasting customer relationship are the millennium and contemporary dimension to marketing. Delivering customer value and satisfaction and reaping the benefit of long lasting relationship, brand loyalty and retention is indispensable to the extent that if "Company A", fails to offer its customers better services, "Company B", (the competitor) will welcome it in order to take advantage of overthrowing them in the marketing jungle (marketing is a battlefield). Cengiz (2010) evinces that "satisfaction also is based on the customer's experience of both contact with the organization and personal outcome".

Ultimately, customers seek satisfaction from every purchase they make. And customer satisfaction with a purchase will definitely depend on the product's real, actual and core performance relative to the customer's expectations. If the products performance falls short of expectations, the customer will be dissatisfied. If the performance equals or matches customer's expectations, the customer will be satisfied. But if peradventure, the product's performance exceeds the customer's expectations, the customer will be delighted (Kotler and Armstrong, 2001). According to them, "expectations of customer are based on his past buying experiences, the opinion of friends and associates, and marketers' and competitors' information and value propositions". Practically, the inability of the marketer to match his offering's performance with the expectation of the customer, results in dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction is referred to as dissonance (satisfaction theory) in the marketing literature and according to Aigbavboa, and Thwala (2013) the theory of "cognitive dissonance", propounded by Lewin and modified by Festinger postulated that consumers make comparative evaluation of their perceived expectation of a product with its actual and overall performance benefit.

If the consumer's expectations fall short of the product performance no matter how marginally, the consumer definitely feels a kind of dissatisfaction. Both authors call dissonance negative disconfirmation while satisfaction is positive disconfirmation. Another theory of satisfaction mentioned by Aigbavboa, and Thwala is the "Assimilation theory", which posits that a consumer can reduce his level of expectation from a product to balance with its performance. However, the "Contrast theory", according to them is the direct opposite of the assimilation theory of satisfaction as it widens the gulf between a consumer's expectations from performance; thereby causing more product dissatisfaction. They equally observed two other theories of customer satisfaction; the "Assimilation-contrast theory" and the "Negative theory". While the former supports the fact that when the level of performance is marginally related to expectation, the consumer could symmetrically experience satisfaction by lowering his expectation. And on the contrast, when the gap between performance and expectation are very significant, dissatisfaction becomes inevitable. The latter (negative theory) posits that when the magnitude of a consumer's expectation is substantially high, he will definitely experience dissonance (never be satisfied). Additionally, the theory of "Expectancy Disconfirmation", can evaluate customer satisfaction by mapping the discrepancy between the expectation of the customer and the performance of the product (Elkhani and Bakri, 2012), as illustrated from the diagram below.

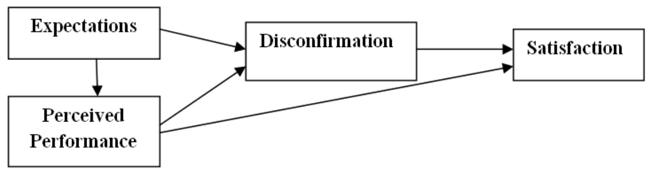

Figure 1. First EDT Model (Elkhani and Bakri, 2012), www.seminar.utmspace.edu.

Diagrammatically represented are expectation, perceived performance, disconfirmation and satisfaction. According to the two scholars, expectation simply means what consumers anticipate to obtain or benefit from a product based on a priori knowledge. On the other hand, perceived performance indicates the actual or core product delivery or benefit after usage. Disconfirmation is the difference between the former and the latter. While satisfaction ultimately confirms the equilibrium between expectation and performance. Teas and Palan (2003) share their opinions on disconfirmed expectations theory.

Customer loyalty

Bobalca (2013) defines customer loyalty "as a behavioral result of consumers' preferences for a specific brand from a set of similar ones. Loyalty is a commitment to continue to make business with a company, on the long term, is a state of mind, a set of attitudes, beliefs or desires"."Customer loyalty has long been a topic of high interest in both academic and practice, and a loyal customer base has been found to be beneficial to the firm" (Ganiyu *et al*., 2012). Underpinning the above statement, Rai and Mehda (2013) submit that the relevance of customer loyalty to a company has equally lent it credence in the academic parlance as well. Customer loyalty is the psychological attachment a customer has in relation to a company's products, services, employees and other attribution to the company (Churchill and Halpern, 2001). Kotler and Armstrong (2001) assert that "highly satisfied customers produce several benefits for the company. Satisfied customers are less price sensitive, talk favourably to others about the company and its products, and remain loyal for a long period". Supporting the above assertion by Kotler and Armstrong (2001), Kocoglu (2012) enumerated the following as the attributes of a loyal customer-

- Makes regular purchases
- Purchases across product and service lines
- Refers others
- Demonstrates immunity to the pull of the competition

Satisfying customers is really an uphill task as customers demand superior products and services from marketers. The resultant effect of customer satisfaction is loyalty which comes to fruition as a result of hard work from the marketer by initiating numerous loyalty programmes aimed at retaining the customer. Donnelly (2009) is of the opinion that the tourism industry will suffer a set back if customer loyalty is not built through establishing effective customer experience. Customers want absolute value for their money and that is why they experience dissonance any time the benefit or performance of a particular product falls short of expectation. Marketing is currently at the age of cut-throat competition and the development, growth and survival of any goal actualization oriented company depends on how much and how far it could carry its numerous customers along by delivering over and above its stated promises.

In his words, Uncles *et al*. (2002) explains that the "two aims of customer loyalty programs stand out. One is to increase sales revenues by raising purchase/usage levels, and/or increasing the range of products bought from the supplier. A second aim is more defensive, by building a closer bond between the brand and current customers it is hoped to maintain the current customer base". Of course when a subscriber of a telecommunication services continue to use the same line or network without switching to other available networks, the company's revenue will continue to appreciate. This revenue appreciation relates directly with the company's overall profitability as well as the customer lifetime value. On the contrary, the revenue will depreciate the moment the customer is not attracted and retained through a deliberately planned loyalty programmes. And this leads to the decrease of the overall profitability and lifetime value generated from the customer's purchases. Li and Green (2011) state that customer loyalty yields revenue for organizations. As customers become loyal, they have a kind of stickiness with the company. They keep patronizing the organization and in so doing, improve its lifetime value with the organization.

Emphatically, when customers become more loyal, they become more profitable as they are not willing to take switch their patronage to competitors. Loyal customers lead to improved revenue, increased market share, share of heart, share of mind (Kotler *et al*., 2010) and profitability, as well as improved image and reputation for the firm. The other side of the coin is so detrimental for the fact that disappointed customer never become loyal but rather hostile and revolutionary. They go about criticizing the company before their friends through word-of-mouth, as well as through the popular social media network. Paavola (2006) enunciates nine loyalty categories such as inherited loyalty, compulsive loyalty, reasoned loyalty, ethical/political loyalty, suspicious loyalty, routine loyalty, loyalty as a game, social loyalty and image-based loyalty. Additionally, Jumaev, *et al*. (2012) express a four –stage loyalty model in which a customer is cognitively (cognitive loyalty) attracted to buy a product based on his perceived expectation about the product benefits. The affective loyalty ensures consumer's likeness and repeated satiability with the product after consumption. The conative loyalty is concerned with the consumer's confidence and trust that the product is consistently reliable. While lastly, the action loyalty is the power of the consumer to avert and circumvent all obstacles put by competitors to woo him over.

Relationship Marketing

Customer relationship has become the crux of marketing science (Rust and Chung, 2006). "Relationship marketing involves creating, maintaining, and enhancing long-term relationships with individual customers as well as other stakeholders for mutual benefits" (Belch and Belch, 2001). Mollah (2014) defines relationship marketing as a "strategy to attract, maintain and enhance relationship with customer". Managing the relationship between a company and its present and future customers will ensure a resounding success and support between them (Gebert *et al*., 2002). According to them, good management of this relationship will garner a substantial competitive advantage for the company. Kocoglu (2012) defines customer relationship management as "a business strategy that aims to create in enterprise the information technologies which will help the management system listen to the customers, be customer-based and offer the customers perfect products and service, and aims to make the whole staff in the enterprise able to conduct customer-based team work". There is a paradigm shift from exchange through transactional marketing to relationship marketing owing to the fact that consumers have gone much more knowledgeable of marketing environments and its dynamism.

Kotler *et al*. (2010) opine that most marketers who fail to recognize that consumers need cutting-edge services will end up losing all their current and potential customers to newly "customer obsessed" companies who know how to booster customer confidence and trust by leveraging on improving customer lifetime value. Customers have become much more inquisitive and demanding and therefore desire superior customer value which includes available quality products and services. They are no longer interested in purchasing their goods from the same market with every other customer. They want different packaging, segmented market, differentiated offering through holistic customization of their myriad of needs and wants. Reinartz *et al*. (2004) support the above comments by noting that companies are becoming less product oriented to becoming more customer oriented. Lombard (2011) observes that organizations have become knowledgeable of the relevance of customer relationship management which will attract customer loyalty and improve customer lifetime value.

There are important reasons why customers like to embark and sustain their relationships (Bolton *et al*., 2000). In the telecommunication industry especially those who operate in Nigeria and some other developing countries of Africa, some of their strategies of sustaining a long term relationship with their customers include-addressing customer complaints, offering customers compensation for poor services, giving customers information on services adjustments, attending customers ceremonies, appreciating customers for patronizing them, tendering apology for poor services, etc. When these practices are performed to its fullest, customers are bound not to churn. Most international companies recognize the importance of holding their customers to a very high esteem. The major reason for this is to ensure that they do not churn to their competitors whom they thought have a better offer for them. According to Geib *et al*. (2005), churn management is vital in pinpointing customers who might want to switch to other companies. Moreover, the "commitment-trust theory" of relationship marketing (Hunt, *et al*., 2006) reassures that consumers evolve relationship with marketers solely for the expected values and benefits derived from the product. Similarly, they opined that firms embark on relationship marketing to gain competitive advantage over other firms. This underlies the basis of "resource-advantage theory" of relationship marketing as noted by (Hunt *et al*., 2006). According to this theory, firms with larger resources over their competitors stand a great opportunity to gain superior comparative cum competitive advantage over and above others with less resources. Tavana *et al*. (2013), observe the "life cycle model", as well as the "Swift model" of customer relationship management. Hillebrand *et al* (2011) discovers through the "institution theory" that a firm is affected by the environment in which it operates and in his findings stated that "institutional theory has much to offer to the investigation of the effectiveness of marketing practices".

Customer Retention

Customer retention is the absolute commitment a customer has for a company/or a brand that encourages him to repurchase that product (Boohene *et al*., 2013). It is indispensable in the life and continued survival of all responsible organizations (Khan, 2013). Telecommunications operators must attract and retain customers if they must remain viable in the ever competitive business world. "Customer service executives know that churn matters. In an increasingly saturated market, retaining customers is critical to long term growth and profitability" (Taylor, 2010). Wilson *et al*. (1995) statethat "retaining customers is good for a firm's economic health. Customer retention can have a direct influence upon profitability as Bain and Co. has shown that a five- point improvement in customer retention can lead to an increase in profits from 25% to 80%". It has been generally observed that customer satisfaction is the zenith of customer retention (Anorld *et al*., 2010). "A bird at hand is worth more than a million in the bush" is a popular age long adage'. Anorld *et al*, (2010) note that "a firm's focus on customer acquisition enhances its radical innovation performance but hinders its incremental innovation; a firm's strategic orientation toward customer retention has the opposite effects". Focusing on attracting 'one-shot' customer without adequate and deliberate plan to retain or sustain them through appropriate customer relationship programmes will sound absolutely myopic for many organizations.

Many companies suffer from high degree of customer switching or customer defection. Kotler and Armstrong (2001) observe that "attracting customers without retaining them is like adding water to a leaky bucket". Unfortunately, most companies that anchor their marketing and marketing communication strategies on attracting more and more customers without adequate channel for retaining them have already been overtaken by those who lay emphasis on customer retention. Instituting customer loyalty programmes (Lewis, 2004) such as granting short term discount to customers will improve retention. Gustafsson *et al*. (2005) inform that customer loyalty is synonymous with customer retention and also mentioned customer satisfaction, affective commitment and calculative commitment (relationship commitments) as the core drivers of customer retention. According to Gustafsson *et al*. (2005), affective commitment is more emotional and dependent on an individual's personal touch with the company and its offer while the calculative commitment is more economic oriented and dependent on core product benefits that prevents switching. When attractive loyalty programmes are focused on the customers, it becomes a great barrier to defection. Kotler and Armstrong (2001) observe that retained customers will evangelize more for the company, pay higher prices for the company's products, stick with company during crisis period, trust and believe in the company more and will be very difficult to be convinced by competitors. In his research, Khan (2002) uncovers that the overall results of the Grand hotel are far better than the Park Inn hotel due to fact that the customers are much happier with provided services. He denotes that customers are more likely to be retained when they are offered excellent services than just the quality of food as the case of Park Inn hotel indicates.

Empirical Underpinning

There is a significant relationship between service quality of telecom providers and customer satisfaction (Omotayo and Joachim, 2013). Loke *et al*. (2011) found out that there is a significant positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Ahmad *et al*. (2015), in their study on "Customer Loyalty Framework of Telecommunication Service Market", submit that there is a positive significant relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty. This was revealed by the result of the correlation between customer satisfaction and loyalty which is 0.74. Oyatoye *et al*. (2013), in their study discover that customers of telecommunication prefer lower call tariff to ensure their loyalty. This is contrary to the submission by Oghojafor *et al*. (2014), who stated that sales promotional strategies impact on customer satisfaction more than price reduction. Moreso, the study conducted by (Ogunnaike *et al*. (2014), on "Evaluation Of Customer Service and Retention; A Comparative Analysis of Telecommunication Service Providers", "show that with effective customer service, customer loyalty and customer satisfaction and customer retention can be achieved".

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researcher employed survey method by administering structured questionnaire to gather primary data from subscribers of MTN, GLO AND AIRTEL in South Eastern Nigeria. The scope of the study covered customer satisfaction and loyalty strategies (customer relationship and customer retention). The population of the study is 8,297,334. A sample size of 400 was determined using Taro Yamane's sample size determination method. Content validity was used to determine the validity of the instrument by giving to marketing experts who modify and made the necessary correction so that the instrument can measure what it ought to measure. The value of the test of reliability is 0.930 which was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha which indicated that there is internal consistency of the instrument. Out of the 400 questionnaires, 300 were correctly filled and returned. Analysis of data was done using ANOVA data analyzing technique with the aid of Excel.

Hypothesis 1

H1: There is no significant difference in the effect of customer relationship strategies on customer satisfaction adopted among GSM services providers in Nigeria.

Interpretation: The output of the analysis include treatments and block Statistic and the ANOVA table. The treatment statistic reveals the overall average customer satisfaction in respect of responding to complaints, informing about service adjustments, appreciating customers, apology for poor

ANOVA Table 1. ANOVA Table on the Analysis of the Effect of Customer Relationship Strategies (loyalty variables)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
10	Anova: Two-Factor Without Replication						
11							
12	SUMMARY	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
13	Responding to Customer complaints	3	7.5	2.5	0.04		
14	Service Adjustment Information	3	11.1	3.7	0.61		
15	Appreciating Customers	3	11.4	3.8	0.07		
16	Apology for poor services	3	4.5	1.500	0.070		
17	Compensation for poor quality services	3	4.1	1.367	0.003		
18							
19	MTN	5	14	2.8	2.145		
20	GLO	5	12.4	2.48	1.002		
21	AIRTEL	5	12.2	2.44	1.193		
22							
23							
24	ANOVA						
25	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
26	Rows	16.16	4	4.04	27.00	0.000107	3.84
27	Columns	0.39	2	0.19	1.30	0.324278	4.46
28	Error	1.20	8	0.15			
29							
30	Total	17.75	14				

Source: Data Analysis (Microsoft Excel Output)

ANOVA Table 2. ANOVA Table on the Analysis of the Influence of Customer Retention Strategies (loyalty variables)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
11	Anova: Two-Factor Without Replication						
12							
13	SUMMARY	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
14	Free airtime	3	3.8	1.27	0.093		
15	Free Calls	3	10	3.33	0.043		
16	Uninterupted Internet Services	3	11.8	3.93	0.693		
17	Free Messgaes	3	8.6	2.87	2.403		
18	Cheaper Call Rates	3	9.8	3.27	0.013		
19	Millionnaire Promotion	3	13.5	4.50	0.310		
20							
21	MTN	6	15.4	2.57	1.507		
22	GLO	6	21.6	3.60	1.868		
23	AIRTEL	6	20.5	3.42	0.978		
24							
25							
26	ANOVA						
27	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
28	Rows	18.30	5	3.66	10.56	0.000971	3.33
29	Columns	3.65	2	1.82	5.26	0.027447	4.10
30	Error	3.47	10	0.35			
31							
32	Total	25.41	17				

Source: Data Analysis (Microsoft Excel)

services, compensating customers for poor quality services, relationship strategies (loyalty variables) irrespective of any particular network provider to be approximate 2.5, 3.7, 3.8, 1.5 and 1.37 respectively. The 2.5 mean value represent low relationship in responding to subscriber's complaints; 3.7 and 3.8 indicate slightly below average relationship performance in service adjustments information and appreciating customer. Also, we could observe that the GSM services providers scored very low rate in their apology for poor services delivery and compensation for poor quality services with mean of 1.5 and 1.3 respectively.

Strategies loyalty variables Decision

Since the F Statistic of the treatment variables is greater than its F critical value (27 > 3.84), we conclude that there are significant differences in the average customer satisfaction among responding to customer complaints, service adjustments information, appreciating customers, apology for poor services, compensation for poor services as customer relationship strategies (loyalty variables). Furthermore, the F Statistic for the block variables is less than its F-critical value (1.30 < 4.46). We therefore establish that customer satisfaction in respect of customer relationship strategies among MTN, glo and Airtel is the same. Put in another way, there is no significant difference in the average customer satisfaction in respect of customer relationship) adopted among GSM services providers in Nigeria. We therefore accept null hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2

H2: There is no significant difference in the influence of customer retention strategies on customer satisfaction adopted among GSM services providers in Nigeria.

Interpretation: The output of the analysis include treatments and block Statistic and the ANOVA table. The treatment statistic reveals the overall average customer satisfaction in respect of free airtime, free calls, uninterrupted internet service, free messages, cheaper call tariff, and millionaire promotion as customer retention strategies (loyalty variables) regardless of the network provider being approximated 1.27, 3.33, 3.93, 2.87, 3.27 and 4.5 respectively. Where 1.27 represents very low retention impact by free airtime, free calls (3.33), uninterrupted internet services (3.93), and cheaper call tariff (3.27) demonstrate slightly below average retention impacts; while free messages (2.87) is that of low impact and millionaire promotion (4.5) depicts average impact on customer retention.

Decision

Since the F Statistic of the treatment variables is greater than its F critical value (10.56 > 3.33), we conclude that there is a significant difference in average customer satisfaction in respect of free airtime, free calls, uninterrupted internet service, free messages, cheaper call tariff, and millionaire promotion as customer retention strategies. Furthermore, the F Statistic for the block variables is greater than its F-critical value (5.26 > 4.10). We therefore establish that the average customer satisfaction in respect of customer retention strategies adopted among MTN, glo and Airtel is significantly different. Put in another way, there is a significant difference in the average customer satisfaction in respect of customer retention strategies adopted among GSM services providers in Nigeria. We therefore do not accept null hypothesis.

Findings

It was revealed that the mean customer satisfaction in respect of the adoption of customer relationship strategies by MTN is 2.8, glo is 2.48, while Airtel is 2.44 indicating that the rate of adoption among the three networks are the same (low). It was also revealed that the mean customer satisfaction in respect of the adoption of customer retention strategies by MTN is 2.57, glo is 3.60, while Airtel is 3.42 indicating that the rate of adoption among the three networks respectively varies. Oyatoye *et al*. (2013), in their submission observed that customers of telecom service prefer lower call rates which is one of the variables evaluated in this work under customer retention. Also, related to the above is the findings made by Petzer *et al*. (2009), when they stated that a significant difference exist between medium and large hotels in their ability to retain guests who stay for leisure purposes.

Conclusion

There is no significant difference in the impact of customer relationship strategies on customer satisfaction adopted among GSM services providers. Also, there is a significant difference in the impact of customer retention strategies on customer satisfaction adopted among GSM services providers. This indicates that retained customers show evidence of being satisfied at least relatively. It is in line with (Kocoglu, 2012).

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that the relationship strategies (responding to customer complaints, service adjustment information, appreciating customers, apology for poor services, and compensation for poor services) should be boosted. Customer retention services (free airtime, free calls, uninterrupted internet services, free messages, cheaper call rates and millionaire promotion), should be improved. This would be more beneficial to the network providers as revenue would be boosted as it would cost more to acquire more new customers than to retain current ones.

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