

Effect of Innovative Customer Services on the Experience of End-Users in Telecommunication Industry

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Abstract

Nigerians keeps different Sims cards from telecom service providers due to poor service quality. Network congestions, calls drops, service failure and connections problem are some of the customers experience. Thus, the study examines the influence of innovative customer service on end-users experience in Nigeria Telecommunication industry. Specifically, the study determined the extent to which interactive customer service affect customer satisfaction; evaluate the influence of supportive services innovation on improve customer loyalty. Quantitative method was used and survey design was adopted for this study. Validated structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyse the collated data. The findings revealed that interactive customer service and supportive services innovation are both significant in predicting customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The study concluded that innovative customer service statistically significance in influencing end-user experience. The study recommended that network service providers should improve service quality, imbibed culture of sustainable signal and developing innovative service to meet customers' needs and demands.

Keywords: Innovative Customer Service, Interactive Service, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, Telecommunication Industry, Nigeria.

Introduction

In today's business, customer service has allowed companies to reduce costs while handling the ever-increasing transactions effectively. However, the advent of innovation and the changing profile of customers who are becoming increasingly mobile are no longer reliant on a single communication device (Davis & Heineke 2003). In today's competitive environment, the concept of innovative customer service provision has played strategic roles in improving and managing customers' relationship. When organization or company began to grow, innovation is considered as the term to describe the development and changes resulting to new technologies in the market environment, but it is now used increasingly in the service sector and called service innovation (Alam & Khokhar, 2006).

The outlook of business activities in communication industry has significantly changed and shifted from a high reliance to focus on providing timely and quality service delivery. Customers are the key elements of any business because of their contribution towards business performance. Therefore, in order to provide quality service to customers in this present time, organizations must have appropriate and comprehensive knowledge of

whom they are meant to offer services to, what form of service should be delivered and what they want their end product to be.

Telecommunication companies' customer interaction service has been replaced by a more proactive approach that recognizes the growing user-centricity of customer in communications network. With this paradigm shift, telecommunication companies have moved quickly to respond to this change so as to gain market share, as well as reduce customer churn, by enhancing the experience of who now expect prompt and accurate services anytime and anywhere.

Research has identified a core set of attributes and actions of successful customer service organizations within the market economy regardless of whether these organizations provide goods or services, they recognize that satisfied customers are the key to their success. It is against this background that the study will examine the effect of innovative customer service on end-users' experience in telecommunication industry in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Research Problem

There is poor interactive service rendered by the service industries, thereby affects the customer's network and satisfaction. A supportive service in organization is poor and is not been able to help the existing core services with new ones. Customer loyalty and commitment to their service industry has been decreasing due to the low satisfaction derived from the services rendered. Organizations have not been able to implement creative ideas into productive services to help sustain their business. Customer's networking has been declining in telecom industries as a result of their poor services.

The Nigeria telecommunication industry has experienced phenomenal growth on the size of its subscribers. The poor services characterized by call drop, call breaks, network congestions and internet interruptions where customer's get little or no satisfaction for their money have compelled some users to subscribe to more than one network.

With millions of end-users who are subscribers to these service providers and a variety of products and customized solutions, operational task have become increasingly complex, since trace-to-trace assistance is not an option sometimes and somewhere. In lieu of this, customers who are end-users to these telecom service providers want everything to be super quick. They are not ready to tolerate any delays in their operational processes.

The divergence views in the literature on the variables that constitute innovative customer services has been a serious concerns for researchers and organizational practitioners. Some researchers (Magatef & Tomalieh, 2015; Wereda & Grzybowska, 2016; Romana, et al; 2019; Egbert, et al; 2021; and Fanny, et al; 2021) are of the view that these variables are customer centric while some researchers (Ndubisi, 2004; Ibojo & Bolanle, 2015; Jamaluddin & Ruswant, 2017; Rashid & Rokade, 2019; and Anyionu & Opara, 2021) tagged it as organizational centric variables in identifying suitable and best practices in influencing end-users experience in contemporary business world. These controversial views also form part of the crux for this study.

The need for quick and personalized customer service is recognized as one of the challenges being traced by the end-users with most of the service providers most especially during this Covid 19 crisis. Most telecom service providers receive millions of customer requests everyday now more than ever. With the ever-growing number of requests, the inability to go to physical stores and so many employees mobilizing from home delivery quick and empathetic assistance becomes a problem.

Research Questions

Basically, this research work aims at providing answers to the following questions which are:

- i. To what extent does interactive customer service affect customer satisfaction?
- ii. How can supportive service innovation improve customer loyalty?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this research is to assess the impact of innovative customer services on end-user's experience in telecommunication industry. Specifically, the study intends to;

- i. determine the extent to which interactive customer service affect customer satisfaction;
- ii. evaluate the influence of supportive services innovation on improve customer loyalty;

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between interactive customer service and customer satisfaction.

H₀₂: Supportive service innovation has no significant relationship on customer loyalty.

Literature Review

Customer Interactive Service

Customer interaction is a perception link generated by two or more people who interact with others to achieve a common goal through their reactions (e.g., language or emotion). Schutz (1966) pointed out that customer interaction is demanded by customer's and has three types of requirements: acceptance, control, and emotion. Reichheld and Sasser (1990) stated that the most important intangible asset of a business is the customer relationship. In addition, they argued that business managers must face numerous important issues, including providing high-quality enterprise products and services, retaining existing customer's and generating profits, and maintaining profitability through customer relations and operational growth. To discuss the differences existing between service and manufacturing in a few specific areas, customer interaction with the production process is one of the most often cited (Kotler, et al; 2004).

Schutz (1966) claimed that all customers have a need for interaction and that the relationship between a business and its customer, which may be at the initiation, establishment, or maintenance phase, depends on both the business and its customer's compliance with the interpersonal level of demand. Bernard (1970) proposed the theory of stimulus-value-role, in which the customer interaction develops from the stimulus stage to the value stage before finally reaching the role stage. Swift (2001) proposed a four stage cycle of activities with respect to customer relationship management. These stages included knowledge mining, market planning, customer interaction, and analysis and correction.

Importance of Customer Interactive Service

1. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction rests at the heart of every successful business. Learning how to create positive customer experiences while retaining your company's culture is paramount to that success. Each customer interaction not only provides insight into the experience of a particular customer, but also adds another data point to your customer base's satisfaction as a whole.

While you can try and guess what the customer needs from your service reps, only interactions "in the field" can give you the true vision that you need. In some industries, that customer's happiness can ultimately earn and save a company millions.

2. Training Method

Most customer satisfaction centers have call recording, kind of similar to chat transcripts on live chat, and one of the most potent uses for this call recording is to record the best customer service interactions and use them to train the others. If a tough customer comes along and a great resolution come out of the interaction, it can be used as a case study and folded into part of the training program.

One of the greatest things about having an engaged customer base is the fact that those who are engaged will offer suggestions, ideas, and thoughts about every aspect of your company. By having management listen to those ideas, you can find yourself improving the training of your support agents.

3. Customer Recovery

Customer recovery. Nobody likes to hear those words, but it's something which happens to those who have even the best intentions. Put simply, it's the art of calling a mad customer off the ledge of going to another company or screaming at you.

Everybody who's ever been in customer service has faced an irate customer (often on a variety of channels). By listening to that customer's concerns, the rep can save the customer relationship and learn a little bit about how to handle the next interaction better. The best experience, sad to say, is through trial by fire. Through that fire, employees can grow.

4. Employees Motivation

If everyone in your support team is dedicated to improving customer satisfaction levels by learning from customer interaction, motivation will rise because there will be a decrease in the number of angry customers with which to deal. Morale improves and employees motivation increases when they're not feeling like arrows are fired at them in every interaction.

More motivation yields improved customer service, which cycles around so that everyone within the organization benefits. After all, a smile goes a long way to soothing the savage beast.

5. Customer Interaction Data

When businesses are keen to learn from customer feedback and their customer support team, operational procedures begin to change. All of those great practices observed from interactions with customer's become codified within the company culture. These improved operational procedures can always be tweaked and adjusted to yield more success with customer's and within the business. All it takes is the willingness to create and encourage adoption of new practices.

Customer Satisfaction

Schiffman (2007) defined satisfaction as a person's expression of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a service outcome in relation to the expectations. If the performance falls below expectation, the customer is dissatisfied. If performance matches the expectations, the customer is satisfied. If the performance exceeds expectations, the customer is highly satisfied or delighted. Mei-Lien and Green (2010) defined customer loyalty as a deep-held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product in the future despite situational influence and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior and recommending the product to friends and associates. With the fierce competition in the Nigerian telecoms market, operators need to watch switching behaviour of their customer's.

Customer satisfaction (CSat) is a term frequently used in marketing. Today's companies are facing their toughest competition ever. It is generally believed by so many authorities in the field of marketing that companies can outperform competition if they can move from a product and sales philosophy to a marketing philosophy. The answer lies in doing a better job of meeting and satisfying customer needs. There is generally congruence in the conceptual clarification of customer satisfaction by different authorities.

Yi (1993) defined customer satisfaction as a collective outcome of perception evaluation and psychological reaction to the consumption expectation with a product or services. Faris and Neil (2010) defined customer satisfaction as the number of customer's or percentage of total customer's whose reported experience with a firm, its products or its services (ratings) exceeds specified satisfaction goals.

Johnson and Andreas (2006) defined customer satisfaction from the view of how products or services meet or exceed expectations. These expectations as he confirmed are a key factor beyond satisfaction. Kotler and Keller (2016) see customer satisfaction as a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product perceived performance (or outcome) in relating to his or her expectation. They went further to say that if the performance falls short of expectation the customer is dissatisfied. If the performance matches expectations the customer is satisfied. If the performance exceeds expectations the customer is highly satisfied or delighted.

Jobber and Ellis-chardwick (2018) belief customer satisfaction occurs when perceived performance matches or exceeds expectations. They further asserted that expectation is formed through post buying experiences, discussions with other people, and suppliers' marketing activities. They also advised the companies to avoid the mistake of setting customer expectation too high through exaggerated promotional claims since this can lead to dissatisfaction if performance falls short of expectations.

Tools for Tracking and Measuring Customer Satisfaction

Kotler and Keller (2016) describe four methods companies use to track customer satisfaction. For customer-centered companies, customer satisfaction is both a goal and a marketing tool. Companies that achieve high customer satisfaction rating make sure that their target market knows it.

Complaint and suggestion system: A customer-centered organization makes it easy for its customers to deliver suggestions and complaints. Many companies most especially service companies provide forms for guests to report like and dislike.

Customer satisfaction survey: According to Kotler and Keller (2016) studies shows that though the customer is dissatisfied with one out of every four purchases less than 5 percent of dissatisfied customers will complain. Most customers will buy less or switch suppliers' complaint levels are thus not a good measure of customer satisfaction.

Ghost shopping: Companies can sometimes hire persons to pose as potential buyers to report on strong and weak points experienced in buying a company's competitors product. These 'mystery" shoppers can even test whether the company's sales personnel handle various situations well.

Lost customer analysis: Companies should contact customers who have stopped buying or who have switched to another supplier to learn why this happened.

Measurement of Satisfaction

The heart of the satisfaction process is the comparison of what was expected with the product or service's performance this process has traditionally been described as the 'confirmation/ disconfirmation' process (Vavra, 1997). First, customers would form expectations before purchasing a product or service. Second, the consumption of or experience with the product or service produces a level of perceived quality that is influenced by expectations (Oliver, 1980).

If perceived performance is only slightly less than expected performance, assimilation will occur, perceived performance will be adjusted upward to equal expectations. If perceived performance lags expectations substantially, the contrast will occur, and the shortfall in the perceived performance will be exaggerated (Vavra, 1997).

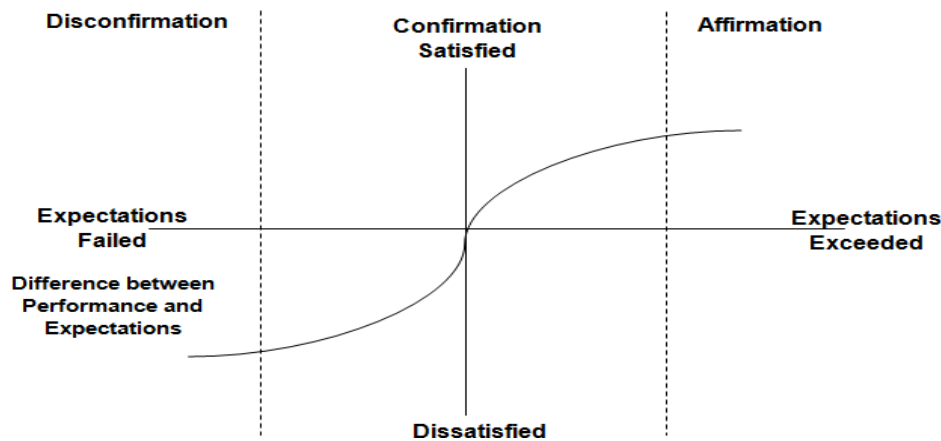


Figure 1. The Satisfaction Function (Anderson, Eugene, et al, 1993)

The above figure shows the satisfaction function between perceived quality and expectations. Performance exceeds expectations, satisfaction increases, but at a decreasing rate. As perceived performance falls short of expectations, the disconfirmation is more.

Satisfaction can be determined by subjective (e.g. customer needs, emotions) and objective factors (e.g. product and service features). Applying to the hospitality industry, there have been numerous studies that examine attributes that travelers may find important regarding customer satisfaction. Service quality and customer satisfaction are distinct concepts, although they are closely related Ivanka, Suzana & Raspor, (1998).

Atkinson (1988) found out that cleanliness, security, value for money and courtesy of staff determine customer satisfaction. Knutson (1988) revealed that room cleanliness and comfort, the convenience of location, prompt service, safety and security, and friendliness of employees are important. A study conducted by Akan (1995) claimed that the vital factors are the behavior of employees, cleanliness, and timeliness. On the other hand, the study by Choi and Chu (2001) concluded that staff quality, room qualities, and value are the top three hotel factors that determine travelers' satisfaction.

Kotler and Keller (2016) beliefs that many customers are systematically measuring customer satisfaction and the factor shaping it. They further wrote that a company would be wise to measure customer satisfaction through customer retention and customer loyalty.

The telecoms market is a subscription market whereby customers subscribe with no initial intention to switch and they are expected to remain loyal until some factors trigger them to switch (Oyeniya & Abiodun, 2010). Mei-Lien and Green (2010) posited that loyal

customers are willing to re-buy products despite the fact that there are competitive alternatives that may cause switching. Satisfaction is a positive feeling experienced by an individual after using a good or a service. In other words, positive or negative mode created throughout provision of services effects on general assessment of the services.

Customer satisfaction is a key factor in future tendency to make a purchase. In addition, satisfied customer probably talks about their positive purchase experience with others. In addition, Selden, L. and Colvin, (2003) showed that there is a mutual relation between customer satisfaction and quality of services. Studying relations between the three concepts of quality of services, customer satisfaction, and loyalty they argued that quality of services and customer satisfaction are significantly related and the same is true for customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Customer commitment is the taking responsibility when things go wrong and talking honorable corrective action to restore confidence in the relationship, customer network it's a means of connects subscribers to their immediate service provider. Excellent customer service is more than what is said to or done for the customers. It also means giving customer's a chance to make their feelings known. Will subscribers be satisfied as a result of the manner in which complaints are handled by the service provider? Does communication and information provision of the service provider determine customer satisfaction? Olowo (2007) posited that the key to building customer confidence in the long-run lies in achieving sustained customer satisfaction and loyalty through:

- i. *Listening to customer's*: For a firm to satisfy its customer's, it must not lose any opportunity to listen to its customers. They can provide useful ideas for improvement in the product.
- ii. *Provide mechanism to hear from the customers*: Provision should be made to encourage customers to talk back to the firm about its services.
- iii. *Response to complaints*: Firms must locate customers help desk nearer to the customer and work to resolve each complaint and inquiry that is received individually and promptly.

Supportive Service Innovation

Several themes ideas are emerged from the innovation phenomenon. Innovation accelerates the growth and performance of company. Innovation is divided into different categories on the basis of nature of innovation for both product and service (Wang, Wallace, Shen, & Choi, 2015). A classification of service improvements is given by a few writers with the aid of which service innovation are grouped into radical innovation (for example predominant innovations, begin-up companies, and new services for the market that are currently being presented) and incremental innovation (e.g., carrier line extensions, carrier enhancements, and fashion adjustments) (Johnson et al., 2006).

According to Wang et al; (2015) provider innovation exists in three modes, along with the enterprise version, carrier product, and provider procedure. In earlier studies service innovation conceptualized and investigated from three views, based on previous works

(Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Salunke et al., 2013). These views are assimilation, demarcation and synthesis (Combs & Miles, 2001; Witell et al., 2016). New technologies are introduced in service innovation and considered as extension of product innovation (Droege, et al; 2009), from an assimilation attitude; the concept of service innovation is explained with goods-dominant logic (GDL) (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), on this angle. The spell, in which value-in-alternate used as value is created by a firm and customer's; its passive receiver. Service is developed in such a way that value of service is rooted in its unit of output or price in trade. (Edvardsson & Olson ,1996), as it is visible. It is argued by the advocates of this angle that the ideas evolved in GDL may be applied without problems in provider contexts due to the similarities between items and offerings and the offerings zone becoming technology-extensive (Gallouj & Savona, 2009). For this reason, service innovation on this angle by and large makes a specialty of technical service innovation; it leads to technical catalog of products (Miozo & Soetie, 2001). Service innovation is labelled as an incremental and discontinuous dichotomy by Olsen and Sallis (2006).

The distinctiveness of service sectors is acknowledged by the demarcation attitude and non-technological varieties of innovation are focused (Sundbo et al., 2007). Scholars who followed this perspective they argued that it should be presented separately from GDL and it should be focused to make it unique (Fitzsimmons & Fitzsimmons, 2000) due to the specific characteristics of offerings (for example intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability and inseparability). More over, service innovation is characterized as less radical and mostly incremental and informal (Edvardsson & Tronvoll, 2013). The development of latest procedures or strategies are emphasized by the service innovation in this angle, the necessity for client integration and involvement of business data and non-technical elements which includes frontline personnel' abilities (Hipp & Grupp, 2005; Nijssen et al., 2006).

Customer Loyalty

Over the past two decades, many companies have moved sequentially from focusing on quality to focusing on Customer's Satisfaction and then on loyalty as in panacea of the day. In response to this argument, companies satisfy and retain their customers to survive or prospects in today's volatile competitive business environment. As most agree on loyalty matters much more for business.

Lovelock and Wirtz (2011) defined customer loyalty as the loyalty that is used to describe a customer's willingness to continue patronizing a firm over the long term and recommending the firm's products and services to friends and associates. In addition to this Heskett (1994) defined customer loyalty as when loyalty represents the repeat purchase and refer the company to other customers. Also, Bloemer and Kasper (1995) as cited in Kheng, Osman, Ramayan and Rohim (2010), viewed loyalty about commitment as, loyalty is interpreted as true loyalty rather than repeat purchasing behavior, which is the actual rebuying of a brand, regardless of commitment. Similarly, Gremler and Brown (1996) cited in Kheng, et al (2010) viewed customer loyalty as the degree to which a customer exhibits

repeat purchasing behavior from a service provider, possess a positive attitudinal disposition towards the provider and considers using only this provider when a need for this service exists.

On the other hand, Zikmund, et al; (2003) claimed customer loyalty refers to a customer's commitment or attachment to a brand, store, manufacturer, service provider or other entity based on favorable attitudes and behavioral responses such as repeat purchase. Oliver (1999) also contends that customer loyalty is a buyer's overall attachment or a deep commitment to a product, service, brand or organization. Succinctly put, the definition of customer loyalty presented above describes three points (Oliver, 1999).

1. Customer's willingness to continue patronizing a firm over the long term,
2. Recommending the firm's products and services to friends and associates.
3. The customer exhibits repeat purchasing behavior from the service provider.

Uncles and Hammond (2002) conceptualized customer loyalty as something that customers may exhibit to brands, services, stores, product categories, and activities. Here, they used the term customer loyalty as opposed to brand loyalty as this is to emphasize that loyalty is a feature of people rather than something inherent in the brand. Bose and Rao (2011) defined customer loyalty from a business context, as customer commitment to do business with a particular organization which effects in repeat purchase of goods and services of the organization.

Mutual commitment is the basis for relationships. Likewise, the process through which customer's become loyal to a company and its product or brands has been extensively discussed in literature. Originally, repeat purchasing was seen as loyalty. But repurchase is not sufficient confirming brand loyalty, so that brand attitude becomes essential to the repurchase decision and loyalty more similar to the concept of commitment. The loyalty towards a product or brand is a key to superior performance. Consequently, effort should be made to build this loyalty by providing superior benefit promoting the company values, such as green marketing activities in order to establish an image as a trustworthy company (Morgan and Hunt, 2004). Customer loyalty may be regarded as the result of customer retention deals with influencing the customer. Suppliers define customer retention as activities to build up relationship with customer's, including content opportunities, barriers to a change of supplies or creating customer preferences for the suppliers, for example based on technology and materials. When regarding relationship between suppliers and customer's, customer loyalty is defined and evaluated in terms of the amount and the quality of transaction between both parties, such as the degree of customer penetration or the climate of the relationship. On the contrary, customer declare themselves loyal to a company through feelings and perception of satisfaction, positive attitude and particular preferences for the company, meaning that customer's are willing to repurchase.

Possible economic effect of customer loyalty are that loyal customer may bring more certainty into the business, signifying more stability within the customer relationship. Habitual purchase decisions, apparent customer immunity towards competitors activities and a higher tolerance of mistakes express stability, whereas increased customer feedback,

which is more intensive from loyal customers, may be achieved by certainty. Loyal customers are more willing to answer questionnaires, give feedback and work together with a company on satisfaction programmes and are even more prepared to complain. They can also be addressed more often on a personal basis and their relationship is more trustful, so that agreements tend to be more reliable. But disadvantages of more certainty due to loyalty might be that companies become too reliant on these customer's and inflexibility may lead to failures to adapt to shifts in market structures or failures to respond to changing market segments. Customer loyalty might also have positive effect on the growth of the company, when activities are centered on retaining existing customer by exhausting their potential and by gaining new customers through positives recommendations and word-of-mouth. Additionally, customer loyalty leads to more profitability through cost saving and revenue increases. Such cost saving and revenue increases. Such cost savings can be realized by improved amortization of acquisition costs and the avoidance of costs when getting new customers, whereas increased in revenues are more difficult to achieve. Loyal customer may be less susceptible to price change and might even accept higher prices, for instance, green customer's accepting higher prices for environmentally friendly products, as will be mentioned later on. In addition, loyal customers will probably bring additional revenues through their cross-buying activities.

Underpinning Theory: Assimilation-Contrast Theory

This study is underpinned by the Assimilation-Contrast theory been propounded by Anderson, 2000 and supported by the theories of cognitive dissonance and American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) theory. The suitability of the underpinning theory is anchored on the fact that the theory explained the concept of End-user's experience vividly by explaining the experience that occurs as a result of comparing services performance against expectations.

Empirical Review

Mahajan and Bose (2018), investigate the positive impact of recent economic growth has been observed in many countries and consequently it has lifted millions out of poverty and improved standard of living for the middle-class. However, there has been some costs associated with this development. Social inequality and youth employment have worsened; women are still paid less wages for equal work as compared to men, and the environment has deteriorated in a variety of ways. This indicates that the progress being achieved is not the progress desired; maybe there are flaws in the process of development and hence arises the need for discussing sustainable development. Business organizations are considered as a significant stakeholder with a potential to contribute to sustainable development. In this background, the present paper focuses on the concept of business sustainability and challenges for implementing the business case for sustainability. It is observed that majority of the business organizations do not have much details on how their organizations plan to adopt a sustainable business strategy- apart from investing in Corporate Social

Responsibility (CSR) activities. It is suggested that more collaboration among business, government and academia, and a systematic change for facilitating business to achieve sustainable development through political will, public intention, and most importantly- the top management commitment are primarily needed.

Umunnakwe and Gyu-Bae (2019), examines the major antecedents of customer loyalty for mobile operators in a developing country in Africa especially in Nigeria. This study tests 5 hypotheses about the relationships among service quality, customer satisfaction, trust, and customer loyalty. Design and methodology, in order to collect the sample data, online survey was conducted via email and social media network. The samples were collected from 415 random respondents. The statistical analyses were done for both assessing the reliability and the validity and testing 5 hypotheses of this study. SPSS version 21 was used for empirical analysis. It was revealed that service quality has a significant effect on customer satisfaction and service quality has a significant effect on trust also. Customer satisfaction has a significant effect on trust and customer satisfaction has a significant effect on customer loyalty also. Trust has a significant effect on customer loyalty. All of 5 hypotheses were supported. Conclusively, the results of the study show that it is important for marketing managers to manage service quality, customer satisfaction, and trust for improving customer loyalty in mobile service industry. This study also provides some implications for mobile service managers about the importance of customer retention and customer loyalty.

Hadi, et al (2019), carried out a research on the current scenario in the hyperactive corporate world, and specifically in the telecom sector, renders companies to compete concurrently on two fronts: Expansion of their customer base and the retention of their current customer's. In order to explore and examine the latter concept, the current study hypothesizes the effects of sustainable service quality on customer loyalty with a mediating role of customer satisfaction conceptualized through the reciprocity theory. The study also considers the suggested moderating role of switching cost by theorizing the Apostile model. Pertinently, the satisfied customer may not be loyal if the switching cost is low, since the dynamics of the switching cost provide a useful insight into the phenomenon of retaining the customers through customer satisfaction. The research opts for explanatory study where data were conveniently collected. The study has used the PROCESS macro model 4 and 14 to analyze the data. Findings reveal that the role of customer satisfaction is significant but the effect of the switching cost was considered to be insignificant, elucidating that a satisfied customer will remain loyal even if the switching cost is low. It means that sustaining service quality longitudinally did not affect customer loyalty in the presence of a low switching cost. With a view to complement the study, managerial implications of a switching cost have also been discussed.

Methodology

This study examines the Impact of Innovative Customer Service on End-users' experience in Nigeria Telecommunication Industry. It is a survey research method, and therefore

adopted the use of questionnaires in eliciting information from the respondents. The sample size for this study was 384 Globacom customers in Ilorin West Local Government, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study employs the use of questionnaires as instrument for data collection. The items were measured on a 5 – point likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Primary and secondary data were used. Primary data was obtained with the aids of questionnaire. The use of questionnaire was employed to gather relevant information from the respondents. The secondary source was obtained from related journals and articles. Data was analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics involves frequency tables and percentages while the inferential statistics involves the use of correlation analysis.

Results and Finding

A total number of three hundred and eighty-four (384) copies of the questionnaire were distributed. Out of all, sixteen (16) copies of the questionnaires were not properly filled while twenty (20) were returned unfilled and as such treated as voids; leaving the available copies to be limited to three hundred and forty-eight (348). Information gathered were analyzed to show the descriptive and inferential statistics at significance level (α) of 0.05 in relation to the objectives and hypotheses set in chapter one of the study using the measures of central tendency (Mean and Standard Deviation) for the descriptive aspect and correlation (spearman rank) analysis to check the existing relationship between the dependent and independent variables with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Return Rate

	No. Distributed	No. Returned	% Returned	No. Not Returned	% Not Returned
Respondents	384	348	90.63%	36	9.37%
TOTAL	384	348	90.63%	36	9.37%

As shown in Table 1, questionnaire distribution demonstrates an approximately 90.63% response rate. The researcher was able to gather 348 out of the 384 questionnaires distributed to the various Globacom customer in the study area (Ilorin West Local Government, Kwara State).

Data Analysis

Analysis Demographic Questions

In order to achieve the main purpose of this study, the researcher found it useful to find out the general information of the respondents. The general information of the respondents included gender, age, marital status, and educational qualifications of the respondents.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

S/N	Variable	Levels	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	159	45.69
		Female	189	54.31
2	Age	Below 20	20	5.75
		21-30	49	14.08
		31-40	165	47.41
		41-50	59	16.95
		Above 50	55	15.81
3	Marital status	Single	158	45.40
		Married	169	48.56
		Others	21	6.04
4	Educational Qualification of the Respondents	SSCE	23	6.61
		NCE/ND	59	16.95
		HND/Bsc.	178	51.15
		Postgraduate	88	25.29

Source: SPSS Extracted Computations, 2022

Table 2 shows personal information of the respondents across the gender, age, marital status and educational background of the respondents. First, respondents were classified on the basis of gender given the fact that gender could have influence on customer loyalty. The analysis indicates that 159(45.69%) of the respondents were males while 189(54.31%) of them were females. This suggests that both gender groups are fairly represented in the study.

Furthermore, they were classified on the basis of their age distribution. Here, analysis revealed that 20(5.75%) of them were within the age below 20 years, 49(14.08%) of them were within the age bracket of 21-30 years of ages, 165(47.41%) of them were within the age bracket of 31-40 year, 59(16.95%) of them were within the age bracket of 41-50 years of ages while 55(15.81%) of them were within the age bracket above 50 years.

They were further classified on the basis of their marital status. 158(45.40%) of the respondents were single, 169(48.56%) of them were married while 21(6.04%) of them fell in other category.

Similarly, 23(6.61%) of them had SSCE educational qualifications, 59(16.95%) of them had NCE/ND qualifications, 178(51.15%) of them had HND/Bsc qualifications while 88(25.29%) of them had postgraduate qualifications.

Descriptive Statistics of Major Variables

Analysis of Research Question One

To what extent does interactive customer service affect customer satisfaction?

Table 3: Customer Satisfaction (n =348)

SN	Responses	$\bar{X}$	SD	Rank	Remark
1	Innovative customer service always assist in improving customers' satisfaction	3.73	0.50	4 th	SA
2	Effective innovative service makes customer to stay longer	3.56	0.49	3 rd	SA
3	Innovative customer service enhances repeat purchase	3.61	0.47	1 st	SA
4	The satisfied customer will recommend the firm's product and services to friends and associates	3.46	0.55	5 th	A
5	The satisfied customer will be willing to patronize the firm consistently	3.42	0.48	2 nd	A
Cluster Summary		3.56	0.50		SA

Key: $\bar{X}$ = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, SA = Strongly Agreed (3.50-3.99); A = Agreed (2.50-3.49) D = Disagree (0.50-1.49); SD = Strongly disagree (1.50- 2.49); N=Neutral (< 0.49) and n = number of respondents (348).

Table 3 shows the central tendency for the mean rating of the responses of the respondents on customer satisfaction. The mean values of the responses were calculated. The data presented in Table 4.2 reveals that the mean ratings of the three (3) responses of the respondents as shown in the table ranged from 3.56 to 3.73 which fell between the boundary limit of 3.50– 3.99 on a 5-point rating scale. This indicated that the 3 identified items are "Strongly Agreed" by the respondents to be their perception on customer satisfaction. The mean values of the remaining 2 items, specifically items 4 and 5 were 3.46 and 3.42 respectively which are within the boundary limit of 2.50 – 3.49 on a 5-point rating scale. This implied that the remaining 2 items are "Agreed" by the respondents to be their perception on customer satisfaction. The ranking of the items was made based on the standard error values. The Item with the least Standard Deviation (SD) is ranked 1st while that with the highest SD is ranked 5th (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th) respectively.

Table 4: Interactive Customer Service

SN	Response	$\bar{X}$	SD	Rank	Remark
1	Interactive service innovation in the telecommunication industry guarantee customer retention	3.41	0.59	5 th	A
2	The customer interaction develops customer ability to repeat purchase of service	3.48	0.55	4 th	A
3	Interactive service innovation guarantee customer commitment	3.51	0.53	2 nd	SA
4	Interactive service innovation assist in building customer relationship	3.47	0.49	1 st	A
5	Customer interaction improves service innovation	3.54	0.54	3 rd	SA
Cluster Summary		3.48	0.54		A

Key: $\bar{X}$ = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, SA = Strongly Agreed (3.50-3.99); A = Agreed (2.50-3.49) D = Disagree (0.50-1.49); SD = Strongly disagree (1.50- 2.49); N=Neutral (< 0.49) and n = number of respondents (348).

Table 4 shows the central tendency for the mean rating of the responses of the respondents on interactive service innovation. The mean values of the responses were calculated. The data presented in Table 4.3 reveals that the mean ratings of the three (2) responses of the respondents as shown in the table ranged from 3.51 to 3.53 which fell between the boundary limit of 3.50– 3.99 on a 5-point rating scale. This indicated that the 2 identified items are “Strongly Agreed” by the respondents to be their perceptions on interactive service innovations. The mean values of the remaining 3 items, specifically items 1, 2 and 4 were 3.41, 3.48 and 3.47 respectively which are within the boundary limit of 2.50 – 3.49 on a 5-point rating scale. This implied that the remaining 3 items are “Agreed” by the respondents to be their perception on interactive service innovations. The ranking of the items were made based on the standard error values. The item with the least Standard Deviation (SD) is ranked 1st while that with the highest SD is ranked 5th (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th) respectively.

Analysis of Research Question Two

How can supportive service innovation improve customer loyalty?

Table 5: Customer Loyalty (n =100)

SN	Response	$\bar{X}$	SD	Rank	Remark
1	Customer loyalty enhances customer satisfaction in telecommunication industry	3.43	0.59	5 th	A
2	The innovative customer service in the telecommunication industry enhances consistent patronage	3.31	0.55	4 th	A
3	Customer loyalty in the telecommunication industry represents the repeat purchase	3.58	0.53	3 rd	SA
4	Customer loyalty is a buyer's overall attachment or a deep commitment to a product or service brand	3.40	0.49	2 nd	A
5	Customer loyalty guarantees repeat patronage and reduce customer turnover	3.42	0.47	1 st	A
Cluster Summary		3.43	0.53		A

Key: $\bar{X}$ = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, SA = Strongly Agreed (3.50-3.99); A = Agreed (2.50-3.49) D = Disagree (0.50-1.49); SD = Strongly disagree (1.50- 2.49); N=Neutral (< 0.49) and n = number of respondents (348).

Table 5 reveals that the mean ratings of the responses of the respondents on items 3 was 3.58 which fell within the boundary limit of 3.50 – 3.99 on a 5-point rating scale. This indicated that the identified item was “Strongly Agreed” by the respondents on customer loyalty. The mean values of the remaining 4 items, specifically items 1, 2, 4 and 5 were 3.43, 3.31, 3.40 and 3.42 respectively which are within the boundary limit of 3.00 – 3.49 on 5-point rating scale. This indicated that the remaining 4 items were “Agreed” by the respondents to be their responses on customer loyalty.

The cluster mean value of 3.43 which fell within boundary limit of 3.0 – 3.49 infers that the respondents agreed that the identified 5 items were items that measure customer loyalty. The standard deviation values of the 5 identified levels in the table ranged from 0.47 to 0.59 indicating that the responses of the respondents are close to one another.

Table 6: Supportive service innovation

SN	Supportive service innovation	$\bar{X}$	SD	Rank	Remark
1	Effective customer service as a form of supportive service innovation enhances customer satisfaction	3.53	0.56	5 th	SA

2	Up to date upgrade of supportive services innovation helps to build customer loyalty	3.37	0.48	3 rd	A
3	Information and educating the customers about the company's service enhance customer satisfaction	3.48	0.52	2 nd	A
4	Provision of warranty and guarantee build customer's confidence	3.50	0.54	1 st	SA
5	Periodic maintenance of equipment maintenance of equipment guarantee customer services	3.62	0.59		SA
Cluster Summary		3.50	0.54		SA

Key: $\bar{X}$ = Mean, **SD** = Standard Deviation, **SA** = Strongly Agreed (3.50-3.99); **A** = Agreed (2.50-3.49); **SD** = Strongly disagree (1.50- 2.49); **D** = Disagree (0.50-1.49); **N** = Neutral (< 0.49) and **n** = number of respondents (348).

Table 6 shows the central tendency for the mean rating of the responses of the respondents on supportive service innovation. The mean values of the responses were calculated. The data presented in Table 4.5 reveals that the mean ratings of the three (3) responses of the respondents as shown in the table ranged from 3.50 to 3.62 which fell between the boundary limit of 3.50– 3.99 on a 5-point rating scale. This indicated that the 3 identified items are "Strongly Agreed" by the respondents to be their perception on supportive service innovation. The mean values of the remaining 2 items, specifically items 2 and 3 were 3.37 and 3.48 respectively which are within the boundary limit of 3.00 – 3.49 on a 5-point rating scale. This implied that the remaining 2 items are "Agreed" by the respondents to be their perception on supportive service innovation. The ranking of the items were made based on the standard error values. The value with the least Standard Deviation (SD) is ranked 1st while that with the highest SD is ranked 5th (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th) respectively.

Test of Hypotheses

Test Statistics

$$\text{Spearman Rank Correlation} = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d_i^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Where:

n is the number of observation (sample size)

d_i= difference between the two ranks of each observation

Decision Rule

Reject H₀ (null hypothesis) if the P-value is less than 0.05.

Hypothesis One (1)

H_{01} : there is no significant relationship between interactive customer service and customer satisfaction.

Table 7: Existing relationship between interactive customer service and customer satisfaction

Correlations			customer service	customer satisfaction
Spearman's rho	customer service	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.781
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.02
		N	348	348
	customer satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	.781	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.02	.
		N	348	348

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 (2-tailed)

Source: SPSS Computation

Decision Rule

From the result contained in table 7, P-value (0.02) is less than 0.05. We reject the null hypothesis and therefore conclude that there exists relationship between interactive customer service and customer satisfaction. The relationship existing between the two variables (customer satisfaction and customer service) is positively strong (0.781). By intuition, the better the customer service of the organization the higher the satisfaction of the customer with the organization's product/service.

Hypothesis Two

H_{02} : Supportive service innovation has no significant relationship on customer loyalty.

Table 8: Existing relationship between supportive service innovation and customer loyalty

Correlations			Supportive service innovation	customer loyalty
Spearman's rho	Supportive service innovation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.684
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.01
		N	348	348
	Customer loyalty	Correlation Coefficient	.684	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.01	.
		N	348	348

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 (2-tailed)

Source: SPSS Computation

Decision Rule

From the result contained in table 8, P-value (0.01) is less than 0.05. We reject the null hypothesis and therefore conclude that there exists relationship between supportive service innovation and customer loyalty. The existing relationship is as well positive and strong ($r=0.684$).

Discussion of Findings

Experiences of Nigeria telecommunication end users can be affiliated to their perceptions on service delivery and satisfaction with such service rendered. Findings from this study revealed that satisfaction of telecommunication end users covers the overall evaluation of their experiences, excitements and reactions with the company on temporary basis or specific encounter. The result with value 0.781 contained in table 7 clearly shows that there is an existing relationship between customer satisfaction and customer service. The existing relationship is strong, positive and explains the general view that overall customer satisfaction is dependent on customer service. By this, the key element influential of customer satisfaction was the consumers' individual perceptions regarding specific service feature of the telecommunication industry.

Subsequently, in the current scenario observed, there exists a relatively strong relationship ($r=0.684$) between supportive service innovation and customer loyalty. A collective efficiency of supportive service innovation; particularly an improvement on service rate is apprehensive in attaining an improved customer loyalty. Thus, the result contained in table 8 clearly shows that innovation is an inducement to achieving and attaining customer loyalty. In fact, it is necessary for Nigeria telecommunication industries to improve services and increase their qualities through innovation, as customer needs are increasingly diverse and innovation could be used as a competitive advantage over other competitors in the same market terrain.

Conclusion

The hypotheses were supported indicating strong relationship between service innovation and customer in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria. The findings in the study show strong support for the application of interactive customer service; supportive service innovation, to enhance customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. It is therefore imperative for telecommunication industry executives to improve performance on each construct that leads to having an improved customer satisfaction in bridging the existing gaps of competitiveness in the industry.

Recommendations

At the end, the following recommendations are therein made:

- i. Management of the telecommunication industry should improve upon their service quality offered to their target customers. This is because, quality service plus customer appreciation service result to customer loyalty patronage.

- ii. The telecommunication industry should imbibe the culture of building sustainable signal and service that are more reliable to meeting customer needs and demands.
- iii. The industry should be involved in developing innovative ideas that can induce their choice of patronage among the targeted customers.
- iv. Telecom service workers must be dependable and devoted to the guaranteed service code, suitable service delivery constantly and competent consumer complaint resolution procedure for preventing of consumer inconveniences as well as condensed needless company damage.
- v. There is need for the conduct of periodic market research by the management of the telecommunication industry to have robust understanding about changes in the market, to get feedback on customers' satisfaction, the size and nature of growing market.
- vi. To promote customer satisfaction, the telecommunication industry should strive to acquire an in-depth knowledge of those products/services related attributes which are deemed as paramount importance to subscribers.

Suggestion for Further Studies

This study focused on the innovative customer service and end-users' experience in Nigeria telecommunication industry. The study examined the importance of innovative customer service variables (interactive service innovation and supportive service innovation,) on end-user's experience variables. The study suggests further studies in the research topic be carried out using more innovative variables that can lead to the generalization of the result and finding in the not only service industry as in this research work but in almost all the spectrum of business endeavors.

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