Influence of Customer Care Services on Consumers' Patronage of Mobile Telecommunications Networks: A Case Study of MTN

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Abstract

The study examined the nature of customer care and its influence on consumer patronage of telecommunications networks in South-South Nigeria using MTN as a case study. Specifically, the study looked at the range of services offered by the Customer Care Unit of MTN, customers' awareness and perception of MTN customer care service, overall influence of MTN customer care on consumers' patronage and the challenges facing MTN Customer Care Unit in its service provision.The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm formed the theoretical framework. It helped to explain the discrepancies often experienced in a business environment, especially the ones specialising in service ventures like the telecommunications industry. In conducting this study, the mixed method research design was used to generate both quantitative and qualitative data. The survey sample consisted of384 respondents drawn from three states from the South-South geo-political region and five MTN customer care executives were interviewed. The quantitative data were analysed using mean and standard deviation while the qualitative data were analysed with the explanation building model. Findings reveal that MTN customershave relatively good rapport with the customer care staff but the nature of customer care is not fully known by some of these staff.Results also showthat the Nigerian environment does not support excellent customer care services. The study recommends that organisations should understand what customer care is all about and they should recruit employees who are passionate about customer service.Also,Customer Care Representatives should be given access to the various applications used in resolving customer issues, to ensure customer satisfaction and ultimately, consumer patronage, because satisfied customers do repeat purchases and referrals for a business.

Key Words: Customer care services, Customer satisfaction, Consumer patronage, Mobile networks, MTN

Introduction

Communication is one of the cornerstones of any nation's development. In realisation of this, then President Olusegun Obasanjo introduced the Global System for Mobile (GSM) Communications telecommunications services in Nigeria and this has been recorded as one of his greatest achievements in office. Prior to the coming of GSM, what existed were landline phones and Thuraya satellite phones which only the very rich could afford. But the coming of

GSM changed all these. Today, because of GSM, almost everybody, from the wayside mechanic to the university professor, now has access to telephone services.

At inception, government ventured into GSM service provision with the introduction of MTEL, but that did not succeed. Airtel led the pack in terms of private network service provision. Airtel was established in 2001 and began trade as Econet Wireless. It transmuted into Zain, Vmobile, Vodacom and currently, Airtel. Right now, Nigeria has four major mobile telephone service operators, one of which is the Mobile Telephone Network (MTN) Group Limited. MTN, formerly M-Cell, is a South African transnational mobile telecommunications firm that does business in many African, European and Asian countries. Its headquarters is in Johannesburg. It is the biggestmobile network companyin Africa and the eighth biggest in the world. It operates in more than twenty countries and one-third of the firm's earningscome from Nigeria, where it has over30% market share (MTN, 2017).

With all the telecommunication network providers bestriding the Nigerian telecommunications market, competition among these companies is keen. Different strategies are, therefore, deployed to grab a profitable market share. The advent of telephony system as enabled by these telecommunications companies has opened new vista of opportunities across commerce and industry to Nigerians. The customer is the reason for which these companies remain relevant.

As a result of continued human interface, and by reason of satisfaction in the respective product lines of these companies, customers find it compelling, as occasion demands, to remain, change or refer others, hence the need for customer services. Customer servicecoverseverything an organisation does to make customers value its products and services (Machado &Diggines, 2012).

Customer satisfaction canincreaseorganisations' customer base and boost their reputation, (Fornell, 1992; Levesque & McDougall, 1999). According to them, firms in the mobile telecommunications industry need to ensure their customers are satisfied so that they can develop brand loyalty. This is because a firm with a high percentage of loyal customers profits from repeat purchases, willingness to pay higher prices, positive recommendations to potential customers and lower inclinations to switch brands.

Kurtenbach (2000) asserts that customer care refers to service provision to customers prior to, during and subsequent to a transaction. He explains that to be successful in customer services, companies need to consider their customers' experience as paramount because customers rely more on how the company treats them than any other marketing strategy that they could ever employ to satisfy them.

Considering how expensive it is to acquire new customers and the seeming high turnover of customersexperienced by many businesses, it is expedient to discover what fosters customer satisfaction.Organisationsemploy many strategies to ensure that their potential customers and suppliers are aware of their business. They embark on corporate hospitality and business trips to gain new customers. All these efforts can be nullifiedin an instant by poor customer care.

MTN's Integrated Annual Report (IAR) for 2017 reveals that the company's mission is to make its customers the focus of its business by ensuring that they are attended to properly and given utmost care. By this, the company agrees that the customer dictates the tune of the business. It

provides the following products and services among others: MTN sponsored data, MTN leased circuits, mobile advertising, MTN data hosting, MTN fleet managements (MTN IAR, 2017).

Thisresearch used MTN as a case study to find out the influence of customer care services on consumers' patronage of the mobile telecommunications network with the hope that the results from the study will be beneficial to not only MTN but other businesses in the telecommunications industry and beyond because some of the principles and practices of customer care are universal.

Statement of the Problem

Every business organisation, including MTN, strives to position its services strategically in the minds of its customers and potential customers. To realise this, the use of the Customer Care Unit becomes imperative. The Customer Care Unit of every organisation is responsible for managing the service delivery process while catering to the queries from customers, which arise from the use of the organisation's products or services. The aim most times is to ensure customer satisfaction and improve the chances of success for the business.

There have been debates with regards to the efficacy of a Customer Care Unit in a private organisation. While some say it is just a redundant unit without tangible impact on the company's overall performance as they believe that the general Public Relations Unit handles all its roles, others have argued otherwise, stressing the relevance of the Customer Care Unit in organisations.

The effectiveness of this unit in serving its purpose of existence seems to have not been subjected to enough empirical exploration. Machado and Diggines (2012) established this when they said that the average customer care representative (CCR) does not really understand what customer service is all about. In addition, the attitude of the organisation towards the unit with respect to its performance still seems unknown going by available literature. Besides, the influence of the unit on consumers' choice of the network as well as consumers' perception of the unit is something that requires constant research as the business climate is dynamic and always evolving.Also, although similar studies exist in literature, many of them have been carried out in different places other than South-South Nigeria and hence there is need to find out the perspective of people in South-South Nigeria on this issue. This study, therefore, aims to fill the aforementioned gaps.

Research Questions

1. What are the range of services offered by MTN Customer Care Unit?
2. What is the extent to which the customers of MTN make use ofMTN customer care services?
3. What are customers' perception of MTN customer care services?
4. What is the overall influence of MTN customer care services on consumers' patronage of the mobile network service?
5. What are the challenges that can be identified in MTN Customer Care Unit's operations?

Literature Review

Customer care is a service offered by an organisation that sees to the welfare of customers. It is literally taking care of the customer. Customer care is a relationship between a buyer, a seller and

third party and can influence demand in the market (Adjaino, 2017). Adjaino further explains that when customer care is used in a broader sense, it encompasses all the functions leading to the entire service delivery by an organisation. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that it is a range of functions which companies perform to attract business opportunities for boosting their market share, revenue, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty bearing in mind that there is growing competition in the business field (Asaghar, Muhammad, Seyed, Khaled &Sadiq, 2011).

The range ofactivities related to customer care service is vast. Customers after purchasing products may have doubts about the products, especially the first-time users (Asaghar et al., 2011). In this situation, customer care is an indispensable approach organisations use to dispel such doubts and keep their customers since it is cheaperto retain them than prospecting for fresh patrons. Customer care can also help to initiate interest in a customer and this can be done by establishing good rapport with the customer and maintaining these relationships.

The employees themselves are first the internal customers of an organisation and in a situation where they are not satisfied, they cannot undertake the task of attending to customers very well. So the employees determine how effective customer care services would be. As a result, customer care first addresses the matter of internal customers before gearing up to deliver services to the external customers. The employee is a person who works for another in return for financial or other compensation. When an employee is satisfied with his or her job, customer care service becomes easier to achieve. This is why some organisationsdeploy lucrative incentives and schemes for motivating their employees toward meaningful job performance (Pradhan&Jena, 2017).

In organised retail businesses, customer care service is the responsibility of sales persons (Kamal, 2014). Kamal further avers that because front end employees meet external customers and perform customer service roles, their skills affect the store's image in the mind of customers. Gronroos (2000) opines that in view of the vital role customer care service plays in organisations, it is essential to prioritisethe training of employees engaged in it. Ahmed and Rafiq (2002)'s study of internal marketing in which they focused on employee satisfaction supports this. Theyfound that satisfied employeessatisfycustomers better than disgruntled ones. Brady & Cronin 2001 corroborate this finding.

Employees need certain behavioural skills in orderto provide excellent customer service (Singh, 2000). These skills include interpersonal, communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills. It is, therefore, important to improve and develop the capacity of salespersons in these areas because that will facilitate sales(Coll&Zegwaard, 2006).

Theoretical Framework: The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm
The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm(EDP) was propounded by Oliver (1977). He developed the EDP as a tool for studying consumer satisfaction and it hasbecome popular among researchers (Yuksel&Yuksel, 2008). This theory explains the interaction between consumers and customer care representatives.

Drawing on the shortcomings of earlier customer satisfaction theories, Oliver (1977)introduced the EDP as a more beneficial theoretical framework for evaluating customer satisfaction. The model holds that consumers buy products and services with prior expectations of their anticipated performance. Theseprior expectationsform the parametersby which what is purchased is judged. If the outcomes match the expectations, confirmation happens.

Disconfirmation takes place when expectations vary from outcomes as follows:

1. A positive disconfirmation takes place when what is purchased performs better thanthe customer expected.This leadsto satisfaction.
2. A confirmation also takes place when prior expectations match the performance of what is purchased and this equally leads to satisfaction.
3. A negative disconfirmation occurs when the performance of what was bought falls below the customer's expectations. This results in dissatisfaction.

In relation to this study, the EDP gives a vivid picture of what happens in a typical customer care situation, in that the customers already have pre-purchase expectations of how they want to be treated during and after making a purchase, hence the existence of customer care services.

Methodology

The mixed method design was employed for this studyto enable the researchers elicit both quantitative and qualitative data through the use of two different research methods. Combining different methods in one study offersmore insight to the investigators of a research problem (Creswell, 2012). The survey and indepth interview methods were adopted for this research. The survey was used to enable the researcher ascertain the influence of customer care services on customers' preference of the mobile network service, MTN. This was done to get the perspective of the subscribers. The indepth interview, on the other hand, was used to find out the MTN Customer Care Unit angle to the topic under study. To that end, several staff of the unit were interviewed to find out their relationship with customers and the challenges hampering the discharge of their duties.

The population for this study comprised all the active voice subscribers of MTN in South-South Nigeria. The numerical data of active voice subscribers for MTN as given by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) 2017 and a 2017 National Communication Commission (NCC) report present the population figures for states in the South-South as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Population of the Study

State	No. of Subscribers
Akwa-ibom	1,225,050
Bayelsa	510,995
Cross-river	943,066
Delta	2,342,575
Edo	1,399,443
Rivers	2,191,112
Total	**8,318,269**

Therefore, the population for this study is 8,318,269. For the interview, the population was customer care personnel of MTN in Delta State since that is where the headquarters for South-South geographical zone is located. The figures show that there are 21 customer care staff in the office.

According to Ohaja (2003, p. 75), "Sampling is the selection of some members or elementsfrom the population for actual investigation or study." She adds that the selection is warranted by the

impossibility of studying the whole population in most cases. A sample, therefore, is a subset of units from the population being studied" (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2008, p. 96). Multi-stage sampling was used to determine where the sample elements will be chosen from and they were drawn from AkwaIbom, Delta and Rivers States.

For the survey, the Cochran statistical formula was used todetermine the sample size for this study. The formula and the workings are shown below:

$$n_0 = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where n_0 = sample size

z = z value corresponding to chosen confidence level

p= degree of variability and

e=desired level of precision

For a *95%* confidence level with *50% (0.5)* degree of variability and precision,

z = 1.96, p = 0.5, q = 0.5, e = 0.05

$$n_0 = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2} = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025} = 385$$

Population size, N =8318269

$$5\% \text{ of } N = \frac{5}{100} \times 8318269 = 1844$$

Since n_0 *(385)* does not exceed *5% of N (184475),* then n_0 is a satisfactory sample size for *N.*

Hence, the sample size for the survey is 385 people.

For the interview, the 5 most senior Customer Care Unit staff in the South-South headquarters office in Delta State were purposively selected to serve as the representative sample due to their experience on the job.

The survey instrumentwas the questionnaire, 385 copies of which were distributed to the respondents and 384 were filledwith only minor discrepancies andreturned. Hence, the analysis for the survey was done based on the 384 copies which gave a return rate close that was approximately 100%. The questionnaire items were presented in the Likert-scale form and the instrument was administered by one of the researchers with the aid of two trained research assistants. This method made it easier to meet one on one with the respondents and make clarifications where necessary. This also helped to improve the return rate of the questionnaire.

The interviews with 5 senior customer care executives were conductedphysically, face-to-face at different MTN offices in Asaba, Delta State. The data for the study were analysed through descriptive statistics, namely,frequencies,percentages, mean and standard deviation, presented in graphic form with the aid of tables.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The sample consisted of 128 respondents (33.3%) from AkwaIbom State, 127 (33.1%) from Delta State and 129 (33.6%) from Rivers State. When asked how they accessed MTN customer care service, 252 (65.6%) said it was via phone calls, 54 (14.1%) indicated emails, 40 (10.4%) mentioned the MTN App, while 37 (9.6%) and 1 (0.3%) indicated MTN branches and office outlets respectively.

Research Question One: What are the range of services offered by MTN Customer Care Unit?

The indepth interview was used to elicit answers to this question. From the findings, the major services offered by the Customer Care Unit of MTN include: issue resolution; sales of products

and services like subscriptions, data bundles, Wi-Fi devices like the Hynet-Flex, sim registrations, welcome back, sim blocking and retrieval, data management, providing information on MTN's latest products and services, customer welfare, amongst others. The third intervieweementioned "misreshopping", which is a situation whereby the customer care representatives (CCRs) visit other networks to find out what is obtainable there. The first interviewee added doing follow-up checks on customers and visiting other branches and outlets to see if customers are being well attended to.

The CCRsgave their various reactions to the assertion that the average CCR does not quite understand what customer care is all about. The first interviewee agreed on the basis that some got the job without understanding what the job requires and if they would be able to measure up to its demands. The second interviewee also supported this position by stating that some CCRs have personality issues which they often bring into the business. The third introduced the Nigerian factor into the matter and insisted that the Nigerian environment does not support customer service.She gave some instances where customers have refused to co-operate with the CCRs and this often makes it difficult for the CCRs to perform optimally. The fifth CCR agreed to the assertion and also gave some instances. He said that on one occasion, he raised his voice on a customer and expressed the view that customers are not always right.Only the fourth CCR opposed that assertion that CCRs do not understand what customer service is all about. He disclosed that during recruitment and training, CCRs are exposed to what the job is all about.

MTN customers in Nigeria are close to 50 million and the challenge of reaching out to them has been curbed as a result of the various customer care touchpoints available on social media, walk-in centers, outlets, MTN branches and the MTN customer care dialing number, 180. At the branch, MTN tries as much as possible to manage crowds. According to the second interviewee,an example was during the introduction of National Identification Number (NIN). MTN had to bring some National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) officials to itsbranches to assist customers in getting their NIN registration doneeasily.

Research Question Two: What is the extent to which the customers of MTN make use of MTN customer care services?

The survey was used to elicit answers to this question.

Table 2: Responses on the Extent Customers Use MTN Customer Care Services

Items	N	X Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1. I am aware of MTN Customer Care Unit	384	3.31	0.82	Accepted
2. I contact MTN customer care	384	2.94	0.96	Accepted
3. I contact MTN customer care frequently	384	2.47	1.01	Rejected
4. MTN customer care responds to my calls always	384	2.62	1.11	Accepted
5. MTN customer care responds to my calls promptly	384	2.41	1.07	Rejected

Data in the table above reveal that respondents partly use MTN customer care services. This is because they agreed to being fully aware of the MTN Customer Care Unit, contacting MTN customer care and MTN customer care responding to calls always. They, however, disclosed that they do not contact MTN Customer Care frequently and MTN customer care does not respond to their calls promptly. The reason for the question on awareness is because customers cannot use what they are not aware of. The majority of the MTN users agreed they know about the company's customer care services but do not contact them often. The reason for this could be due to the various applications online for self service because the question on how they contact MTN customer care revealed that most of them rarely visit MTN branches but prefer to either call, send mails, or use the mobile app.

Research Question Three: What are customers' perception of MTN customer care services?

The survey was also used to elicit answers to this question.

Table 3: Responses on Customers' Perception of MTN Customer Care Services

Items	N	X Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1. MTN customer care reps respond to issues on time	384	2.77	.93	Accepted
2. The customer care services provided by MTN are not satisfactory	384	2.53	.95	Accepted
3. MTN customer care reps attend to customers request with negligence	384	2.49	1.05	Rejected
4. Interactions with MTN customer care are often appealing, engaging and interesting	384	2.92	.94	Accepted
5. MTN customer care seldom provide appropriate solution to customers' challenges	384	2.67	.94	Accepted
6. MTN customer care has enabled me to overcome the challenges associated with the use of company's products and services	384	2.75	1.83	Accepted
7. MTN customer care are attentive and reliable	384	2.80	.97	Accepted
8. MTN customer care appear motivated and passionate about human relationships when interacting with customers	384	2.80	.94	Accepted
Valid N (listwise)	384			

Data in the table above reveal that respondents have a positive perception of MTN customer care services. This is evident in the sense that respondents agreed to all items except when they said that the customer care services provided by MTN are not satisfactory.

Research Question Four: What is the overall influence of MTN customer care services on consumers' patronage of the mobile network service?

The survey was used to find answers to this questions.

Table 4:Responses on the Overall Influence of MTN Customer Care Services on Consumers' Patronage of the Mobile Network Service

Items	N	X Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1. MTN customer care has enhanced the ease with which I use services provided by the company	384	2.89	.92	Accepted
2. MTN customer care has increased my use of MTN services	384	2.74	.90	Accepted
3. MTN customer care has enabled me to overcome the challenges associated with the use of the company's products and services	384	2.64	1.03	Accepted
4. MTN customer care services have built my loyalty to the company's product and services over the years	384	2.64	1.00	Accepted
Valid N (listwise)	384			

The table above shows that the respondents all agreed to MTN customer care having influence on their overall patronage of the mobile network service. This is evident in the high acceptance rate of the items. They agreed that customer care has made it easier for them to make use of MTN services and has built their loyalty to the company.

Research Question 5: What are the challenges that can be identified in MTN Customer Care Unit's Operations?

Thesurvey andindepth interview were used to elicit answers to this question.

Table 5: Challenges Facing MTN Customer Care Unit's Operations

Items	N	X Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1. Too much delay in their response time	384	3.04	1.84	Accepted
2. General poor network challenge that makes them unreachable	384	2.74	.92	Accepted
3. Discontinuity of ongoing interaction	384	2.78	.94	Accepted
4. Unfriendly user interface of the MTN Services App	384	2.73	1.03	Accepted
5. Inability to solve mobile recharge issues e.g	384	2.68	1.05	Accepted

through the bank				
6. Challenges with dialing 180	384	2.74	1.02	Accepted
7. Limited options in the mobile app	384	2.71	.94	Accepted
8. Inability of customer care representative to ho beyond the strictures of their company's bureaucratic process	384	2.59	1.06	Accepted

The table above shows that the respondents have challenges in their use of MTN customer care services– they agreed to all the items. First, there is the challenge of reaching the CCRs especially via calls. There are also network hitches which interrupt ongoing interactions and warrant the customer calling again with little or no chance of speaking with the same CCR he or she was on call with before the truncation. Coming to the MTNApp, sometimes, it may be difficult to understand what a particular icon on the app is solving. Also, most of the recharges done online are charged from banks. So it becomes difficult for a CCR to attend to such issues.Usually, they would refer customers to the bank and this is stressful for the customer. In dialing 180, which is the customer service line of MTN, there is the challenge of receiving a prompt answer. Sometimes, the customer has to wait for many minutes before speaking with a CCR and customers are not often patient. Good customer care should enable customers to be attended to as soon and easily as possible. The last item in the table reveals that CCRs are often limited in their service to customers. This is referred to in MTN as limitation of access.

The indepth interview was also used to elicit answers to this research question. In a situation where there is no clear policy and the CCR needs to make a judgement call, most of the interviewees said they will use their discretion to handle the customer's issue rather than ask the customer to go and return some other time. They would get the customer's contact and try to help out in whatever way they can. The fifth interviewee referred to this as "turnaround time".

Furthermore, when asked to state the challenges in the discharge of their services, the interviewees gave the following answers:

1. Limitation of Access: This is a major challenge for them because every one of them pointed to this particular issue. This, they said,affects them on daily basis and it is a situation whereby they cannot access a particular application that would have helped them to resolve an issue. They said that the organisation deals with cadres which translate to a hierarchy with the result that only those in managerial positions can have access to certain applications. So most times, while trying to attend to an issue, they get stuck because of this limitation of access.
2. Impatience on the part of customers: They mostly refer to this as the Nigerian factor considering the Nigerian environment and how difficult it is to effectively discharge their duties without customers interrupting them. Some of these interruptions come in the form of violence, not queuing up and incoherent explanations.
3. Network Hitches: Sometimes, this makes it impossible to attend to customers because most of the resolutions have to be done using internet connections. Also, some of these network issues come directly from NCC interference. The NCC sometimes limits network coverage of telecommunications companies to restrict them from breaching certain rules.

4. Added Responsibilities: Most of the NCC policies being brought up are additional responsibilities for the CCRs because they have more processes to pass through before attending to a customer, e.g. the introduction of NIN, proper capturing and matching of names.
5. Crowd Management: This is a major challenge because MTN has a huge customer base and most times organising these customers can be very difficult. As most of the interviewees said, everybody wants to be attended to at the same time and this is not possible because the organisation deals with priority access. This is a situation whereby the aged, disabled and nursing mothers are considered first before others.
6. Aggressive customers: Some customers are rude and come with the intention to fight. To this, the fifth interviewee said that customers are not always right. He stated that some customers slap the CCRs, one even came with acid and this shows the extent to which customers can go to get what they want. Some do not even listen to explanations but would exhibit aggressive behaviour.
7. Remuneration: The second interviewee said they work more than their pay and also mentioned poor working environment as a challenge.

All the interviewees indicated that customer care is a flexible job as against the rigidity that is taught. They agreed that they could bend the rules as long as this does not affect the organisation. They said that the business demands that one should be flexible so as to carry customers along because even the management would not want any customer to be lost in the course of a service encounter. They emphasised the need to be flexible to accommodate some customers especially the aged who cannot be sent back to come another day. Flexibility is needed to ensure that customers are satisfied and not left grumbling and leaving the business environment with grudges and dissatisfaction. The first interviewee said that if one customer leaves the business, fifty other people would leave because that one person's report is able to change the minds of the other fifty people. This is a very delicate aspect of the business.

Also, the question on a customer who after meeting multiple agents has not received the needed help was answered on the basis of first understanding the issue at hand because without proper understanding of an issue, no resolution can be proffered. So the CCRs said they would also call on the attention of their colleagues or escalate to the supervisor who has more access to certain applications used for working. They further said that this is where good relationship with colleagues comes in because they could help out in such rare cases. When a customer is having technical issues, the best way to help such a one is to consult other departments like the network or engineering departments who would have better views on how to resolve such issues. Another way is to make use of mails. According to them, this makes resolution of issues faster since those at the up line cannot see such mails and ignore them.

Finally, the discussion on the extent of attention MTN pays to its Customer Care Unit revealed that MTN works closely with the unit. The company provides the necessary working tools or apparatus it needs. The fifth interviewee mentioned that the CCRs are the face of the organisation as they give the management reports on the needs of the customers. A typical example is the introduction of MTN Awuf. He said that they discovered that customers love freebies and suggested to the management for provision of such in one of their tariff plans and the management bought the idea.

Discussion of Findings

Mascio (2010) posits that howwell employees understand customer care service determines how well they do their work. However, since the concept lacks a unified and concrete definition, this understanding is subject to different interpretations and this we see by the various interpretations the five interviewees gave to their understanding of customer care. Therefore, the findings support Mascio's position that a customer care representative would treat a customer according to his understanding of the job. The second interviewee's assertion that some CCRs have personality issues which they often bring into the business also affirms Mascio's position.

The first interview question was coined from the assertion of Machado and Diggines (2012) who said that the average customer service staff does not quite understand the real meaning of customer care. Four out of the five interviewees agreed to this assertion. Kurtenbach (2000) explains that companies who excel in customer services consider their customer's experience as paramount. Kurtenbach's views emanate from the popular view that customers are always right and should be given the utmost preferential treatment. The fifth CCR went against this view when he said that customers are not always right and this means he does not see the customer as the king as most scholars have repeatedly affirmed. This draws attention to Singh's study on the importance of internal customers and the behavioural skills they need to play their roles in delivering customer service (Singh, 2000).

Companies put their customers before profits at inception, and those businesses that continue to satisfy their customers will climb to the top and hold on to a greater share of the market (Kabu&Soniya, 2017). The organisation determines to a large extent how customers would perceive them. For instance, MTN has given subscribers the perception that the company is everywhere although this is not really true. It did this through its various advertisements with the slogan, "MTN, everywhere you go" and customers are trooping to the network with the belief that MTN is indeed everywhere in the country. Even so it is with customer care relationships. The study reveals that customers perceive MTN customer care to be active, attentive and relational. This is in agreement with Sulaimon (2016)'s view that customer care is the provision of services to patrons prior to, during and following sales. The customers in this study seem to have a good rapport with MTN customer care services regardless of the several challenges they encounter in dealing with them.Most customers agreed that MTN customer care has influenced them greatly in their use of MTN services and overall preference of the brand.

Conclusion

Without customer satisfaction, there can be no consumer patronage. It appears that customers are with MTN because of the nature of products and services they offer which may be better than what other networks provide. Although this was not fully explored in the study, it came across in the interviews and informal discussions with respondents that customer care services do not seem to be the only connection or attachment to the brand.
Although the interviewees mentioned that the organisation pays attention to the unit, interactions and information gathered reveal the reverse. The CCRs all stated a host of challenges hampering them from discharging their duties effectively and some of these challenges could have easily been settled by the organisation if it truly pays attention to the unit. The question then is: how can the CCRs proffer solutions when they are incapacitated?
Recommendations
Based on the findings of the study, four recommendations are hereby made:

1. Organisations should understand what customer care is all about because thisis able to keep them ahead in view of the competitiveness vividly seen in the telecommunications industry. They should also employ capable hands who are passionate about customer service and not those who give eye service. They should grow customer confidence and enjoin CCRs to studytheir customers so that they can envision theirexpectations and challengesand be ready to respond satisfactorily.
2. Organisations can also help to enlighten individuals on how to comport themselves especially in public places.For example, just like they send messages to customers, like for new tariff plans, MTN can sensitise its customers through sms and further enlighten them on how to relate with theirCCRs.
3. Every CCR should be given access to applications that can help them to easily solve customers' issues. Such access should not be limited because customers are always needing attention. The management should ensure that CCRs do not get stranded in the course of relating with customers. Where some of these bureaucratic controls cannot be adjusted, CCRs can apply personal qualities like friendliness, courteousness and reassurance to calm customers down until they can be fully attended to.
4. Customers should put all facts together before coming to lay complaints. Most of the violence during service delivery arise from misunderstandings either from lack of proper explanation or not checking their transactions properly before coming to the branch to fight with a CCR.

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