Brand service quality as predictor of brand loyalty: A study of the Nigerian telecommunication industry

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Abstract: The study focused to assess the predictability of certain factors of brand service quality as it relates to brand loyalty of telecommunication subscribers in the Nigerian telecom industry. The empirical analyses was based on MTN Nigeria as a dominant player in the sector. The factors of superior service delivery, unforgettable services received, excellent service experience, good feeling at service consumption and consistency in service quality delivery were tested as drivers against brand loyalty. Survey research vide a structured questionnaire instrument containing a 5- scale likert type questions with 15-items was designed and administered to 565 users of MTN brand of service. Multiple regression statistics (SPSS Vrs 32) was used for analyses at 5% level of significance. Of the five (5) hypotheses tested, only Ho2 (B = .038, t = 1.074, p = .283) & Ho5 (B = -0.042, t = -1.151, p = .250) were accepted as both factors were found insignificant drivers, with Ho5 posting a negative association with brand loyalty. All other three hypotheses (Ho: BSQ1, BSQ3 & BSQ4); (B=.118, t = 3.480, p = .001), (B = .252, t = 6.722, p = .000), and (B = .131, t = 3.858, p = .000) respectively were rejected with significant values. This implies that the null hypotheses 1, 3 & 4 are strong drivers of loyalty in MTN brand of service. Recommendations are to the effect that Brand managers in MTN Nigeria should sustain the factors that are significant and engage a policy adjustment to turn around defects in unforgettable service received and service quality delivery as revealed. This outcome is also in assonance with public observation generally.

Keywords: Brand loyalty, Customer service quality, Good Feeling, MTN Nigeria, Superior services, Telecom sector.

1. Introduction

Modern marketing and sales force activities including policies and competitive strategies are geared towards securing the heart of the customer. The heart of the customer symbolizes a matrix of his thoughts, intellect, emotions and decision making processes including the cues and stimuli leading to his purchase decisions [1, 2]. Securing or capturing the heart of the customer therefore can be akin to capturing the capital city of a country in real-life warfare. This analogy presupposes that once the 'capitol' is captured the entire nation-state is regarded as haven fallen into the hands of the gallant conqueror (the firm; the seller) who now exercise control and legitimacy by right of conquest over the city (the customer). This is the real situation in enterprises' contestations to exercise dominance over viable market segments [2].

When a firm attempts to make a market segment loyal to its brands it provides product/service assortments to cater for taste, preferences and changing trends and purchasing power of various categories of buyers. The opium that attracts the buyers is their quest to attain *satisfaction* on product purchase, consumption and disposal. Customer satisfaction is seen as the *nectar* within the beautiful flower that attracts the butterfly (the customer). Providing satisfaction is the charter and driving mechanism of the marketing orientation. This along with several orientations in recent management

theory evolvement such as market orientation, technological orientation, competitive orientation, etc., all combine to make enterprises successful [3] competitively.

Enterprises that are competitive and are focused towards becoming market leaders and followers (top notch firms) – occupy the commanding heights of their industries and always have policies and programme to 'secure' the customer. Some authors and industry watchers in recent times argue that the art and science of *securing* the customers' heart is akin to 'psychological enslavement' to brands targeted at specific market segment. That enslavement concept truly defines the concept of brand loyalty! Brand loyalty *h*as been seen in various lights by scholars and researchers [4]. A brand is a unique name, term, words, sign, symbol, design, a combination of these, or any other feature that identifies products and services of a company and differentiates them from the competition [5, 6]. Brand loyalty is the degree of affinity, trust and purchase consistency customers exhibit in the purchase, use and disposal of a brand [7]. Several researchers see brand loyalty generally as consisting of both physical and psychological connection customers have for brands of choice [8, 9] so long as it continues to yield requisite level of satisfaction and even excitement [10].

It can be stated therefore that strong brands that makes for customer loyalty exude trust, have unassailable market segments, facilitate competitive edge, establish good corporate image in addition to creating customer satisfaction for long term profitability. Profitability and its sustainability do not come cheap. An enterprise that is competitive and wants to stay on the top must have a programme of brand loyalty and should be deft in harnessing its essential ingredients: superior service, unforgettable service delivery capacity, excellent service experience, the good feeling and consistent value reception by the customer [11, 12] are regarded as precursors to brand loyalty. In competitive enterprises, whether manufacturing or service oriented, the overriding goal of its leaders is to provide that level of brand service quality along with its associated factors that holds a promise of brand loyalty on the short, medium and long run. Therefore, the level of quality at which it is designed, created, targeted and delivered to its market segment are the start points on the roadmap to attaining brand loyalty.

1.1. Problem of the study & Objectives

The prior studies of Morrison and Crane [13] validated model which was in turn adopted by Chinomona, et al. [14] points to factors of trust, satisfaction, preference, etc. in predicting brand loyalty. It did not go deep enough from these generalized assumptions into the elemental constituents or proxies of brand service quality as revealed from critical x-ray of their validated questionnaire. The gap in this regard has left researchers, industry practitioners and captains aghast as to what ingredients constitute brand service quality itself; thus innovative and forward looking firms have been in the dark on how to formulate policies and competitive strategies to actually ramp up on loyalty levels needs. This challenge has had a drag effects of some sort; it is the intendment of the study to find solution to these concerns.

Granted the above discourses and the quality expectations the study investigation is guided by the following objective statements:
1. To ascertain whether superior services have any influence on customer loyalty to the brand
2. To find out if unforgettable service delivery capacity of firms have any influence on customer loyalty to the brand
3. To investigate if excellent service experience of customers influence their loyalty to the brand
4. To ascertain whether feeling good by customers at service consumption can influence their loyalty to the brand
5. To determine if consistent excellence in service delivery received by customers can influence their loyalty to the brand.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Conceptual Review

2.1.1. The Concept of Brand Service Quality

The concept of brand service quality stems from the notion of associated quality service deployed in driving and promoting the brand. Most organizations aim to produce strong brands; but not all succeed in the race for lack of sustainable competitive strength. Strong brands are themselves market leaders that yield huge value to both company and customers – strong brands are created through a matrix of properly harnessed ingredients that help shape consumer perception positively of the brand. For a brand to meet customer satisfaction perceptually it must have attributes such as unassailable brand name, good quality and design-frame, along with attractive packaging, reliable guarantee and indeed capacity to deliver endearing services [15-17]. The theory on service quality is rich in marketing scholarship. One of the earliest studies on service quality [18, 19] revealed the concept as 'a global Judgment, or attitude, relating to the superiority of the service…, it relates to evaluations of the *outcome* (i.e., what the customer actually receives from service) and *process of service act* (i.e., the manner in which service is delivered). In their pioneering work they operationalized the service quality concept to involve the difference between consumer expectations of 'what they want 'and their perceptions of 'what they get.' It was on this basis that they invented and proposed the service quality measurement scale called 'SERVQUAL.' Services and the level or quality of delivery defines the esteem and value conferred on the brand. In the literature of marketing, services conceptually, are deeds or activities performed in association with sales of products – services have the character of intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability [16, 20]. Services when associated strongly with tangibles are seen as pure-good related; when associated more with intangibles are regarded as pure services. When strong brands are driven with high quality services it positively affects consumer perception and acts as barrier to rivals (protecting brand turf). Additionally Kotler and Keller [21] hold that profit is imparted and possibilities of engaging brand extension and brand stretching become inviting. In addition to these, brand positioning and co-branding activities are strongly enabled. The literature on service quality (SERVQUAL) has expanded the scope and direction of marketing scholarship and indeed marketing theory knowledge development. Earlier studies by pioneers of SERVQUAL [22, 23] suggest that customers at whom brands are targeted must be satisfied – if a customer is not satisfied then the service is of poor quality. But in recent times, scholars like Kotler and Keller [21] suggest that for customers to have the brand name, image and insignia etched in their hearts, brand managers should create good level of 'excitement' and 'excellence experience' for the brand at use. Service quality, more than promotional activities is what creates the perceptual feeling of goodness, unforgettable experience and comparative superiority of service delivery that warrant loyalty to the brand [24]. Many marketing literature have claimed that with high-level service quality, matured brands can receive additional impetus vide positioning and repositioning strategies and can remain longer on the shelf and even reclaim lost market-share on sustainable bases [2]. In the informed opinion of Kapferer [25] to gain market share and leadership, the brand must be: a) able to conjure up a big idea, b) be attractive, c) experienced by people at contact points, d) activated by deeds and behaviours, e) be well communicated, and f) be well distributed. Therefore to meet customer expectations, brand managers have responsibility to ramp-up on series of quality service attributes such as: access, reliability, creativity, security, understanding, responsiveness, courtesy, competence, and communication, among others. Jobber [16] and Kamper [26] to "burn" the brand psychologically into both the mind and heart of the consumer. The literature on SERVQUAL is not settled with respect to number of predictors of brand service quality. While some authors have attempted enlargement of these factors [22, 23] others have reduced them; and some have gone further to dichotomize them into CORE and LESSER predictors.

2.2. The Concept of Brand Loyalty

Loyalty, whether to a group, country or products and services is a manifestation of strong affect towards a phenomenon on a continuous basis. American Marketing Association [5] conceptualized

loyalty as a feeling of duty or obligation towards a phenomenon - products and services inclusive. For someone to be loyal to a brand he/she should have positive attitude towards it either on account of its active ingredients, image or endearing attributes and value yields. Therefore, loyalty conjures devotion, faith and willingness to be identified with a product or service and be true to it Ekakitie, et al. [27]. It has a lot to do with positive beliefs and attitude on consistent bases. Earlier positions by Izquierdo-Yusta, et al. [28] have statistical connotations in defining the concept. They contends that the degree of customers 'loyalty is measured as the percentage of loyal customers, the percentage of incomes associated with loyal customers and the rise of loyal customers after the implementation of specific marketing program. It is trite therefore that CEOs and their brand managers have responsibility to train [29] and design winning programs to drive their brand into the heart of customers in specific market segments and harvest brand loyalty as a consequence. This has implications for the Nigerian telecom industry.

A high degree of loyalty among telecom customers provide service providers with a series of specific competitive advantages, loyalty have a bonding and binding effect on the consumer. Oliver [30] in conceptualizing brand loyalty averred it is a deeply held commitment to consume products or services both now and in the future. Therefore, the brand that is preferred would have the tendency to create customer commitment that results in manifestation of trust from the customer and it imparts his decision making processes. As Ekakitie [7] noted:

"customers can manifest their loyalty to a brand in several ways – they may choose to stay with a provider, and they may increase the number of purchases or frequency of the purchases or even both; thus generating higher revenue for the brand. They may also become advocates of the brand concerned by playing a powerful role in the decision making of others, thus reducing the brands marketing communications costs."

Brand loyalty has been noted to have several dimensions. Sheth and Parvatiyar [31] categories them as follows:

1. Truly loyal – these includes customers who are willing to seek out a particular service location, or brand.
2. Seriously loyal – includes customers who tend to be more motivated by impulse, convenience and habit, that is if the conditions are right.
3. Latent loyalty – this applies to customers who are loyal simply because they have no other choice
4. No loyalty – obviously there will always be some customers who display no loyalty, affinity to particular company or brand.

The above dimensions have implications for brand managers in the telecom sector in their design, implementation and optimization of brand attributes and dimension as they attempt to capture more of the customers' heart and by extension a greater market share for their brands. A profiling of loyalty levels by the telecom major players is (MTN, GLO, AIRTEL) is needful, it will enable the brand manager measure specific customer sensitivity to the brand – sensitivity helps in measuring the perceptiveness of consumers towards the brand and help in building positive behavior towards the brand. Such profiling can assist too in building brand preference which is the level of affect the consumer has for the brand over others. This can be in terms of its image, performance and/or silent attributes [32] considered dear to the consumer. Consistency in purchase of telecom brand over a long period is a direct evidence of brand superior service delivery. Brand unforgettable service delivery is seen as a manifestation of brand consciousness, devotion and dependability. When customers have good feeling for a brand, they are almost always loyal to the brand [33]. Studies have shown that brand value delivery on a consistent basis is positively associated with brand loyalty and promotes the brand's name which is 'burned' into the consciousness of the customer. Brand loyalty in several studies Abdull Rahman, et al. [34] have been identified as an awesome phenomenon which increases company profitability and provides it with the competitive edge it needs to maintain its market share and even stakeholders continued support.
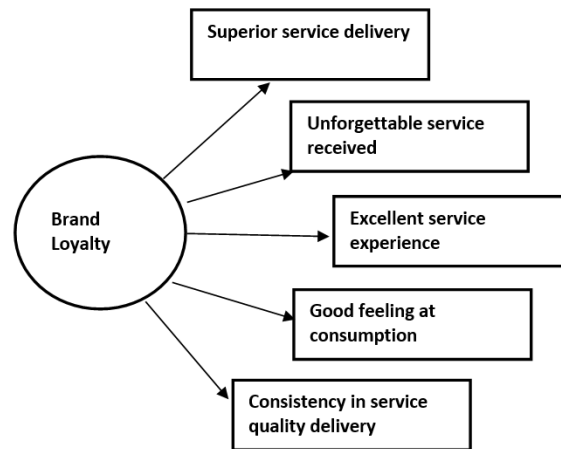
3. Conceptual Model and Hypotheses Development

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

4. Variables Statement and Hypotheses Formulation

4.1. Superior Service Delivery and Customer Loyalty

The literature on service quality is awash with concepts of superior services, unparalleled services, etc. Berry, et al. [35] within the annals of marketing theory, especially in the study of brand loyalty. A superior service is a deed performed to its zenith [16] not easily found or received in or among competing firms customers. The concept of superior service delivery is akin to high service quality received at consumption for which the consumer is excited and thrilled. When telecom operating firms determine to keep value promised to clients, they are actually aiming to keep their promised covenants which for them is a creed [10]. When promises are kept and value yields are experienced or gained by subscribers it inevitable results in deep level of contentment of services enjoyed. The level of commitment and regard for what has been enjoyed is considered an esteem experience such that in the mind of the customer, the brand is a 'one-stop-shop' center to seek out for high standards of service delivery. Researchers such as Banik and Sinha [36] found a positive association with superior service rendition and customer attachment to strong brand. Attachment is a proxy of brand loyal; loyal customers are, in the words of (Berry, Seiders, & Grewal, 2002) high contributors to revenue levels of firms on a consistent basis.

H_{o1}: Perceived Superior service delivery have no significant influence on customer loyalty.

4.2. Unforgettable Service Delivery and Customer Loyalty

Brands have been regarded in marketing literature as insignia, icons and unique marks [2] etched or burned in products for the purposes of easy identification and affiliation. The historical records of branding signifies a 'burning' of images of sorts into skins of animal to enable easy and unforgettable identification [16]. In this context, the psychological effects of creating brands and representing them with images, illustrations, etc., are processes akin to 'imprinting' unforgettable images into the mind of the customer. When a deed is delivered in such a psychologically unforgettable manner as to imprint a footmark in one's mind; and that footmark has become a source of consistent attraction – in this wise, a memorable carbon imprint – then that service can be termed unforgettable. The magnate that draws the customer to want to relish and revisit the place of that experience can be a subject of interest both to the customer and indeed the firm. Telecom service providers want to make the customer 'remember' their brands hence, MTN would say in the adverts…"Ye'llo everywhere you go"… Marketing Psychologists and researchers relate the customers' capacity to remember such mental images and pathways or

footprint to the 'sensitivity power' [3] to the strength of how strong the experience was made. High sensitivity have a strong relationship with capacity of customers and individuals to remember and this has a correlation with the need to want to repeat the experience [36] and engage in repeat purchase which is a proxy of customer loyalty.

$H_{o2:}$ Perceived *u*nforgettable service delivery *have no significant influence on customer loyalty.*

4.3. Excellent Service Experience and Customer Loyalty

Excellent services are akin to or synonymous with high quality service delivery. To experience high quality service delivery is to be served right, to be fulfilled in the way and manner you were attended to and to be satisfied that service personnel met or even surpassed [10] your need expectations. The experience of high value yield at being served easily makes one a part of the market segment being served; it mean adequate attention, responsive care were furnished at point of purchase [16]. Excellence service experience also connotes that access to where you are seated/standing was good, it means reliable persons attended to you needs/wants and competence was exhibited within a secured environment. As Ekakitie-Emonena [1] had opined, customer loyalty does not come cheap. It comes at the expense of a well-planned and funded program of customer relationship marketing. It also involves good public relations practices with stake holders with the use of reliable and dependable technology: such as payment system, digital driven complaint system, etc., were used in serving and communicating values, assurances to the customer such that the customer is not only satisfied but thrilled and received more than expected in value and satisfaction. Researchers in the field of SERVQUAL metrics [18, 35, 37] all affirm that customers who received excellent services are often satisfied customers and they have a high propensity to be loyal. Jobber [16] opines that when customers are trapped in the loyalty bracket they are highly likely to stay with the brand. In Nigeria, many users of the telecom brand MTN have been observed to have stayed with the brand since year 2000 when the federation of Nigeria, under President Obasanjo (1999 -2007) deregulated the telecom sector to allow rural and mobile telephony to operate in the country. MTN's continued stay in Nigeria despite high cost of operation is a testament to its delivery of value-experience at its service points, all things considered.

$H_{o3:}$ *Perceived excellent service experience have no significant influence on customer loyalty.*

4.4. Good Feeling and Customer Loyalty

To feel good is a sentiment that is associated with customer satisfaction – feeling good is a stimulus response from perceived exquisite services delivered and consumption experience which the customer is ever willing to pay for in exchange. This same feel good response fuels the action to engage in repeat purchase over time. When customers feel good they are delighted and excited about what they are have just received and are in no doubt content with the experience and would want to associate positively with that experience for as long as is practicable, all things being equal [18]. The point of intersection between the service delivered and the contentment of consumers is the region of 'feel good' which the recipient would be delighted to seek continuous reception of that level of quality service delivery. Kotler, et al. [2] citing LL. Bean's CEO, a merchandizing firm in USA:

> "if our products/services meets your expectations then we are happy and urge you to come again; but if it doesn't, please tell it to us, don't go elsewhere and complain to other people, we will be ready and willing to remedy and deliver to your expectations".

This no doubt connects with customers and is a stimulus and a propeller of good feelings and its expectation at every transaction occasion. Ekakitie and Orannye [3] aver that strong stimulus of delightful experience from consuming a service has strong association with customer loyalty. Customer loyalty is therefore the end product of all programs designed to relate with and keep the customer in a continuous state of value yields in a mutual way.

$H_{o4:}$ Perceived good feelings *have no significant influence on customer loyalty.*

4.5. Consistency in Service Quality Delivery and Customer Loyalty

Service quality has become an opium of some sorts in the annals of marketing theory studies – it resonates with the character and attribute of reliability of service delivery. Consistency is the attribute of constancy of service delivery and delivery expectations. It speaks to the fact that at any time the customer comes in he/she expects to receive the same level of quality of service received in prior transactions. In most service oriented firms a service not delivered to quality expectations leaves a dissonance in the mind of the customer [38]. It doesn't matter if the customer complaints about it or not. Although he/she might not complain aloud and might not even leave, the expectations that a dip such as this will not be repeated can be rife in their minds. Firms and the CEOs should watch out for such a feeling by observation through spy cameras…thus a frown, a resentful chuckle, a breath exhaled in frustration, etc. are telling stimulus that something is awry. Smart managers and client relations officers must look out for this and engage service recovery program [36] immediately. Consistency in service quality and its delivery are like a Siamese twins with customer loyalty. Should there be service failure that goes remedied, customer loyalty will go south and drifts become noticeable. There is a strong association between consistency, constancy, reliability of service quality delivered and the loyalty of customers [18, 35]. Perceptually, consistency resonates with customers in their expected repeat purchase actions over time.

H_{o5}: Perceived consistency in service quality delivery have no significant influence on customer loyalty

5. Methodology

The study methodology is grounded in survey research easily adaptable to primary data collection. The research instrument, the questionnaire, was targeted at customers and users of MTN Nigeria mobile service telephony providers in Nigeria. The study instrument captures 11-item questions in Likert-scale types to determine which attributes of brand service quality that might influence loyalty of customers to the MTN brand. The questionnaire was scaled into 5-choice types of level of disagreement and agreement with the attribute being measured with 1 being strong disagreement and 5 being strong agreement in ascending order with the questions posed. The study tested the five (5) attributes of the MTN brand service quality (superior service delivery, unforgettable services delivered, excellent service experience, good feeling at consumption and consistency in service delivery) as it relates to the perceived customer loyalty of their brands and range of available services such as voice, SMS services, data transactions and their experiences and what perceptually evokes their loyalty to the brand in Nigeria. The service provider was chosen amongst the three players in the Nigerian telecom industry (MTN, AIRTEL & GLO) because of its dominance as market leaders and number of registered clients across the country, MTN accounting for about 55% of users of registered users [39]. Targeted respondents where a mix of student population in Nigerian universities, public servants and business persons. Thus a total 565 respondents (usable questionnaire) were sampled across randomly selected institutions in Southern Nigeria. Data analysis tool deployed was the Factor Analysis use to ascertain respondents' statements and the KMO measure and Bartlett's test confirms the suitability of the dataset. All tests were conducted at 5% level of significance.

The variables of service quality factors measured are coded and expressed in questionnaire as below stated:

BSQ1 = Superior service delivery
BSQ2 = Unforgettable services received
BSQ3 = Excellent service experience
BSQ4 = Good feeling at consumption, and
BSQ5 = Consistency in service quality delivery

BL = Brand Loyalty (this was proxied in the questionnaire to include: continuous usage, strong commitment to brand, willingness to patronize brand even when prices increase willingness to defend brand and recommendation of brand to others)

$CL = B_0 + \beta_1 * BSQ1 + \beta_2 * BSQ2 + \beta_3 * BSQ3 + \beta_4 * BSQ4 + \beta_5 * BSQ5 + \epsilon$

6. Results Presentation

Using multiple regression on the above stated sample the following results were captured as statistical outcome of the variables.

First, the table 1.0 model summary

Table 1.
Model summary.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. error of the estimate
1	0.635[a]	0.404	0.398	0.612785075031777

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), BSQ5, BSQ2, BSQ4, BSQ1, BSQ3

6.1. Model Summary

The R value (.635) indicates a moderate positive correlation between the predictor variables (BSQ1 to BSQ5) and customer loyalty.

The R Square (.404) suggests that approximately 40.4% of the variation in customer loyalty is explained by the combined effects of BSQ1 to BSQ5.

Adjusted R Square (.398) slightly adjusts for the number of predictors, indicating a consistent explanatory power.

Table 2.
ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	142.186	5	28.437	75.730	0.000[b]
	Residual	209.908	559	0.376		
	Total	352.094	564			

Note: a. Dependent variable: V36
b. Predictors: (Constant), BSQ5, BSQ2, BSQ4, BSQ1, BSQ3.

6.2. ANOVA Table

The ANOVA F-value (75.73) and its significance level (.000) indicate that the model is statistically significant overall in service quality and loyalty assessment. This means that, collectively, the dimensions of service quality (BSQ1 to BSQ5) have a significant impact on customer loyalty.

Table 3.
Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
		B	Std. error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.507	.096		15.639	0.000		
	BSQ1	0.118	0.034	0.184	3.480	0.001	0.380	2.635
	BSQ2	0.038	0.035	0.057	1.074	0.283	0.385	2.600
	BSQ3	0.252	0.037	0.378	6.722	0.000	0.337	2.967
	BSQ4	0.131	0.034	0.176	3.858	0.000	0.512	1.952
	BSQ5	-0.042	0.037	-0.060	-1.151	0.250	0.386	2.589

Note: a. Dependent variable: V36.

6.3. The Multiple Regression Equation

$$\widehat{CL} = \widehat{\beta_0} + \widehat{\beta_1}BSQ1 + \widehat{\beta_2}BSQ2 + \widehat{\beta_3}BSQ3 + \widehat{\beta_4}BSQ4 + \widehat{\beta_5}BSQ5$$

$$\widehat{CL} = 1.507 + .118BSQ1 + .038BSQ2 + .252BSQ3 + .131BSQ4 + -042BSQ5$$

This regression equation explains how different service quality dimensions (BSQ1 to BSQ5) impact customer loyalty (CL), with a baseline loyalty level of 1.507.

1. BSQ1 (Superior Service Delivery: 0.118) moderately enhances loyalty, showing that perceived quality of service matters.

2. BSQ2 (Unforgettable Service: 0.038) has a small, positive effect, indicating that memorable service alone may have limited influence.
3. BSQ3 (Excellent Service Experience: 0.252) has the strongest positive influence judging by its associated t-6.722, a very strong influence
4. BSQ4 (Good Feeling at Consumption: 0.131) have the second strongest positive impacts, suggesting that a high-quality experience and positive feelings significantly boost customer loyalty, and
5. BSQ5 (Consistency in Quality Service Delivery: -0.042) has a minor negative effect, suggesting that consistency alone does not strongly drive loyalty.

In summary, customer loyalty is most influenced by an excellent service experience and positive emotional responses (good feeling).

7. Hypotheses and Interpretation of SPSS Results

Each hypothesis examines whether a specific dimension of service quality (BSQ1 to BSQ5) significantly influences customer loyalty. The null hypotheses (Ho1 to Ho5) propose that there is no significant effect of each service quality dimension on customer loyalty.

7.1. Coefficients Table 3

Each coefficient represents the unique impact of a service quality dimension on customer loyalty while controlling for the other variables.

BSQ1 (Superior Service Delivery)

$B = .118$, $t = 3.480$, $p = .001$

This positive and significant effect suggests that perceived superior service delivery positively influences customer loyalty. Thus, we reject Ho1.

BSQ2 (Unforgettable Services Delivered)

$B = .038$, $t = 1.074$, $p = .283$

This effect is not statistically significant, indicating that unforgettable service delivery does not significantly impact customer loyalty. Thus, we fail to reject Ho2.

BSQ3 (Excellent Service Experience)

$B = .252$, $t = 6.722$, $p = .000$

The positive and highly significant effect shows that an excellent service experience significantly enhances customer loyalty. We reject Ho3.

BSQ4 (Good Feeling at Consumption)

$B = .131$, $t = 3.858$, $p = .000$

This positive and significant effect suggests that a good feeling during service consumption positively influences customer loyalty. We reject Ho4.

BSQ5 (Consistency in Service Delivery)

$B = -0.042$, $t = -1.151$, $p = .250$

This effect is not statistically significant, indicating that perceived consistency in service quality delivery does not significantly affect customer loyalty. We fail to reject Ho5.

7.2. Collinearity Statistics

Tolerance and VIF values indicate no significant multicollinearity issues among the predictors (all VIF values are below 3).

8. Discussion of Results

Having presented the result, we attempt to discuss each in the following sequence with respect to the hypotheses presented.

Hypothesis 1: First the BSQ1 which has a positive association (B.118) with the customer loyalty) and which measures the impart of superior service delivery was hypothesized not to have any significant

influence on customer loyalty. The outcome is a negation of the statement. This means the First hypothesis is rejected:

H₀₁: Rejected (Superior service delivery significantly influences customer loyalty).

The import of the rejection suggested that superior service delivery of the brand service provider MTN is key and customers are endeared to the service they receive or consume in the telecom market where the brand is competitively engaged. It also suggested that superiority of service delivery serves as a good attraction (B = .118, t = 3.480, p = .001) to customers and hence drive them towards loyalty to the brand [17, 40]. Scholars like [29, 41] suggest that when services are top notch and customers are satisfied the tendency to be loyal is very high to the brand. Authors like Kotler and Keller [10] also hold the view that superior service quality delivery is good to secure the customer for gaining life time transaction that is mutual.

Hypothesis 2: The degree of association between (BSQ2 – unforgettable service experience and customer loyalty) is indicated in table 3 to be positively associated with the dependent variable of customer loyalty (B=038). This level of association though weak but is positive.

However, the hypothesis statement that perceived unforgettable services received has no significant influence on customer loyal turns out to be true. Indeed (B = .038, t = 1.074, p = .283) clearly suggest that despite the positive association the factor is not a significant influencer and does not drive customer loyalty. This makes the rejection of the hypothesis inevitable. The implication outrightly imply that the hypothesis statement is accepted as true, meaning unforgettable services received has not led customers of MTN to be loyal to the brand.

H₀₂: Not rejected (Unforgettable service delivery has no significant impact).

Although many researchers in the SERVQUAL domain have alluded to positive memory imprints on customers' minds at consumption of good quality service [42] the study outcome suggest otherwise. The rejection of this hypothesis is supported by the weak association earlier with customer loyalty earlier incidented. Whereas studies by Damar, et al. [12]; Berry, et al. [35] and Parasuraman, et al. [17] had long established strong customer experience (unforgettable services received) as a good influencer of loyalty, a minority of studies (including this) suggest otherwise. The probable reason is that in the dynamic Nigerian telecom market, the service provider, the MTN brand, has competitors that equally provide delightful and unforgettable services, thus the study accept the hypothesis statement as true.

Hypothesis 3: Hypothesis 3 statement is measuring the influence of (excellence service experienced from consumption) and customer loyalty. The nature of association with the dependent variable is (B.252) positive. This indicate that the more excellent services is increased the more customers become loyal by same margin. The hypothesis was inferring no significant level of association, this outcome suggest otherwise.

H₀₃: Rejected (Excellent service experience significantly influences customer loyalty).

This rejection is on the strength of (B = .252, t = 6.722, p = .000) in table 3 above. It reveals that both the beta coefficient, positive, and the t-indicator being 6.722 has a strong influence on customer loyalty. Indeed the t-indicator has the highest figure in the table under reference, hence there is a perfectly significant influence. It is on this count that hypothesis 3 was rejected. Several scholars such as [43, 44] found excellent services a precursor to customer loyal. Also, writers like [2] underscore the strong association between excellent quality services and customer patronage. Thus, as [18, 37] reports, the better the quality of services rendered, the more the customer is persuaded to stay.

Hypothesis 4: The measure of good feeling at customer consumption and patronage of the MTN service brand also lies in the level of association good feelings has with the dependent variable, customer loyal. As indicated in table 3, the association is positive (B .131); again, as with hypothesis 3 above, the association strength is strong. This explains why the succeeding narrative is valid.

H₀₄: Rejected (Good feelings at consumption significantly influence customer loyalty).

From table 3 above the hypothesis attempt to measure the degree of influence and level of significance thereof that the factor of good feeling at service brand consumption/usage, it purported

that it has no influence. This again is false as the indicator (B = .131, t = 3.858, p = .000) a perfectly significant influence of good feeling and hence great predictor of the model. This makes the rejection of the hypothesis logical. As a matter of fact, both hypothesis 3 & 4 post a handsome level of influence in the model. It is therefore true that the good emotions and sensitivity towards service brands received can be supportive of customer loyalty [3]. Outcomes of studies [40, 44] also indicate that the better services are provided, the more customers emotions and attachment to the brand are enhanced [36, 45].

Hypothesis 4: The factor under consideration is the level of consistency of the brand service. In the table 3 above, there is both a negative association between the factor of consistency in service delivery and customer loyalty. As a matter of fact, both indicators (B -.042) and (t -1.151) are of same nature. Thus the outcome suggest there is lack of consistency in service delivery in the MTN brand by the service provider. It must however by mentioned that this level of inconsistency is not significant.

$H_{o5:}$ Not rejected (Consistency in service quality delivery has no significant impact).

The hypothesis 5 was stated in the negative direction to the effect that perceived consistency in service delivery is not a significant influencer of customer loyalty. As observed in table 3 (B = -0.042, t = -1.151, p = .250) we can see that despite the negative statistics, we can resolve that the level of consistency deficit is not significant hence the hypothesis was accepted. This means that MTN the service brand provider does sometimes deliver inconsistently, the level is not high enough to warrant a strong dissatisfaction from its customers hence customer loyalty to the MTN brand is not strongly affected. The acceptance of this hypothesis is reflected in the similar studies of Liang and Fu [46] and Hoskins and Griffin [47] that despite slight customer worry on service consistency deficit, most customers still display loyalty to their brands, thus making it a brand of choice. A large number of researchers agree that in very sensitive industries (pharmaceutical, space, etc.,) a 1% observation of clinical deviation can lead to heightened rejection and dwindling of patronage level.

9. Conclusion

The findings imply that certain service quality dimensions (superior service delivery, excellent service experience, and good feelings at consumption) are significant predictors of customer loyalty, while others (unforgettable service and consistency) do not have a significant influence. This suggests that focusing on creating excellent service experiences, superior delivery, and positive customer emotions during consumption can be key strategies for enhancing customer loyalty. This is has a lot of implications for the telecom industry in Nigeria, especially its major or market leader MTN.

10 Recommendation

Two important issues of policy import come recommendable in the study:

1. MTN as a service provider need to sustain and even increment its current level of superior service delivery, excellence services being experienced by its customers, good feelings at serve brand use.
2. Although, the factor of unforgettable service revealed positive association, it nonetheless did not translate into a significant factor. Brand managers should engage competitive strategy adjustment.
3. The factor of inconsistency in service delivery should be attended to not only for the negative association posting but for it not being a significant predictor; it needs a turnaround to become competitive driver.

11. Gap in Literature

There are no major gap in literature other than the fact that the study addressed itself to telecom service providers only and literature reviewed was not expanded to other industries. The study limits itself to theory of SERVQAL, branding and customer loyalty in the Nigerian telecom sector.

12. Contribution to Knowledge

Extant expositions have been made in the study as far as furthering knowledge is concerned. First, the literature on Nigeria's telecom industry has been expanded and better information provided on its competitive nature. Second, the factors of excellent service experience and good feeling (affect for the brand) by subscribers at service brand consumption has been revealed as areas of competitive strength that MTN can optimized for better market share and profitability. This is also in addition to improving and sustaining level of superiority of service delivery among other rivals in the industry.

Transparency:

The author confirms that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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