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Article

The Interplay of Service Quality, Perceived Value, Satisfaction, and Switching Barriers in Retaining Telecom Customers in Southeast Nigeria

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Abstract
This study investigates how mobile telecommunications customer relationship management (CRM) programmes influence customer retention among selected providers in South East Nigeria. Employing a survey and correlational design, the research targeted a population of 428 GSM subscribers across three states in the region. A multi-stage sampling approach identified knowledgeable respondents who have used mobile services for more than three years. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire and analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient to assess the relationships between CRM programme dimensions and customer retention. Findings indicate that service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and switching barriers within mobile CRM programmes significantly enhance customer retention. Among CRM components, the customer service and support solutions programme exhibited the strongest influence on retention. A strong positive relationship was observed between CRM programme implementation and customer retention, underscoring that retention outcomes for mobile operators are dependent on effective CRM strategies.

Keywords: *Satisfaction, Service quality, Perceived value, Switching barriers, Telecommunication*

Introduction

Over the years, the dependence and overdependence of traditional marketing and mass advertising on the use of middlemen in the distribution channel affected the nature of the relationship that existed between companies and their customers. There was no direct customer contact, and no attempts were made by companies to truly understand their customers' needs and purchasing behaviours. These created a communication gap between companies and their customers. In order to close this communication gap and understand their customers in recent times, companies are adopting customer relationship management programmes as an effective strategy in relationship creation and customer sustainability. The problem is that the adoption of customer relations management programmes by mobile telecommunication service providers has not solved the problem of the communication gap, as witnessed in the traditional era.

Today, most mobile telecommunication customers find it difficult to communicate with mobile telecommunication service providers' customer relations management programmes or to make use of their communication platforms. Even when customers try to make their problems known, it is the same answers programmed in the machine or system that all the customers used to get. Most times, it takes them hours or days to respond to customers' needs (delayed feedback). This has put a very big question mark on their customer relations management programme's ability to retain customers.

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In recent times, traditional advertising is proving to be ineffective, especially in a commoditised and competitive environment, like the telecommunications market, where products and services are personalised to meet individual customers' expectations and needs, using customer relations management programmes. Customer relations management programmes help companies to know their customers, understand their needs and retain them. Companies deliver their services directly to their customers without mediators in the distribution channel, as witnessed in the traditional marketing era (Parvatiyar and Sheth, 2001).

Today, establishing and maintaining good relationships between a company and its customers has become a thing of concern. This is because companies like telecommunication need the patronage and sustainability of their customers to survive competition. This points to the fact that, for effective and continuous patronage of a mobile telecommunication service provider to be realised in a highly competitive market like the telecommunication market, customer retention is necessary. Therefore, telecommunication companies in Nigeria are adopting these programmes as an effective strategy in retaining their customers and making them part of their company. These programmes include sales force automation programmes, self-service programmes, campaign management programmes, reporting and analytical programmes, contact centre management programmes, personalisation engines, customer service and support solutions programmes. These programmes are expected to target customer retention.

The liberalisation and deregulation of the Nigerian telecommunication industry have really affected the nature of the relationship that existed between customers and mobile service providers in the industry. The industry has witnessed tremendous transformation and competition, which has created an environment that allows customers to choose in satisfying their communication needs. International Telecommunication Union (2005) noted that before the euphoria that greeted the GSM reached its peak, Nigerians, even with high rates of GSM phones, the operators created awareness through intensive advertisement and aggressive promotion, to position their services. Mobile telecommunication operators are directing their marketing strategies towards increasing customer satisfaction, loyalty and improving their image through their customer relations management programmes.

The South East Nigeria remains one of Nigeria's major zones, which is made up of five existing states, including Imo, Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu and Anambra. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) (2016), the population of GSM subscribers in South East Nigeria is fourteen million, six hundred and thirty-five thousand, five hundred and fifty-five (14,635555). This shows that South East Nigeria is a fertile ground for the mobile telecommunication market. Mobile telecommunication companies in South East Nigeria are now constantly competing with one another to provide better service in order to retain their customers.

Previous studies have shown the relevant variables in customer retention (Ahmad & Buttle, 2002; Anderson & Sullivan,1993; Fornell, 1992; Ranaweera & Prabhu,2003). These variables include customer perceived value, switching barriers, customer satisfaction and service quality. These variables are seen as determining factors in customer retention. Therefore, the task facing mobile telecommunication network service providers is to inculcate these variables in their customer relations management programmes by making sure that these programmes are customer retention driven.

This study examined the influence of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes on customer's retention of selected mobile telecommunication service providers in South East Nigeria, with six major objectives which include to ascertain whether service quality of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes help in retaining their customers; find out whether customers perceive value of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes help in sustaining their customer's patronage; examine whether the level of satisfaction customers derive using mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes help in retaining their interest; assess those switching barrier factors in mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes that influence customer retention; ascertain mobile telecommunication customer relations management programme that influences customers' retention mostly, and to ascertain whether there is a relationship between mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes and customer retention.

Literature Review

Mbinile (2010) studied service quality and customer retention in Tanzania commercial banks: A case of commercial banks in Dar es Salaam Region. The purpose of the study was to investigate service quality and customer retention in Tanzanian commercial banks. Specifically, the objective of the study was to know more about the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty, customer level of satisfaction, the customers' length of stay with their banks, strategies used by commercial banks to retain their customers, and problems encountered in the implementation of customer retention strategies. The study employed a sample of 164 customers, and data were collected through questionnaires to bank customers and by personal interviews with bank managers from seven commercial banks, namely: CRDB, NBC, KCB, NMB, TPB, ACB, CBA, BOA, and Access Bank. Findings revealed that the overall service quality provided by the commercial banks had a direct relationship with customer loyalty. They also revealed that the level of customer loyalty in banks differs according to the service quality provided.

Kim, Park and Park (2010) studied the effect of switching barriers on customer retention in Korean mobile telecommunication services. The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of the interaction between customer satisfaction and switching barriers on customer retention in mobile telecommunication services. The population of the study was drawn from 350 subscribers of mobile communication. The hierarchical regression analysis was used to analyse the extent to which the factors affect customer retention. The result of the study indicated that among the factors of switching barriers, such as continuity cost and contractual cost, interpersonal relationship, and attractiveness of alternatives are key factors in determining customer retention. The study also showed that continuity cost and

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interpersonal relationship have an adjustment effect on customer satisfaction and customer retention

Alshurideh and Masa'deh (2012) studied the effect of customer satisfaction upon customer retention in the Jordanian mobile market: An empirical investigation. The objective of the study was to ascertain the extent to which customer satisfaction affects customer retention among the three major cellular phone companies in the Jordanian mobile sector. The study adopted a quantitative method to test the study's hypothesis. 500 copies of the questionnaire were distributed with a response rate of 72.8%. A Chi-Square test was used to test the study's hypothesis. The study indicated that customer satisfaction does affect customer retention in the Jordanian mobile behaviour setting. The study also noted that various mobile services provided directly to mobile users, as well as services provided by call centres, also affect customer satisfaction and contribute essentially to customer retention.

Azzam (2014) examined the impact of customer relationship management on customer satisfaction in the banking industry –a case of Jordan. The objective of the study was to measure the impact of CRM on customer satisfaction in the banking industry of Jordan. The population of the study was customers of Jordanian banks operating in Amman city, the capital of Jordan. 528 respondents were selected through a convenience sampling technique. Data was collected through copies of the questionnaire. Data was analysed using statistical analysis. The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between CRM elements represented by service quality, employees' behaviour, customer database, solving customer problems, physical environment, and social network interaction and customer satisfaction as a dependent variable in the services banking industry.

Tauni, Khan, Durrani and Aslam (2014) studied the impact of customer relationship management on customer retention in the telecom industry of Pakistan. The major objective of the study was to examine the relationship between customer relationship management and customer retention. The study used a survey method and regression analysis for testing the hypothesis. A sample size of 60 customers was used in the study. The results of the study indicated that maintaining sustainable relationships with customers can help retain customers and can be beneficial for the companies. CRM and customer retention are significantly related.

Khedkar (2015) looked at the effect of customer relationship management on customer satisfaction and loyalty in his study. The study explored the effect of CRM on factors such as customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The study adopted a descriptive research approach. The data was collected through a survey with a questionnaire as a data collection tool. The sample size of this study was 104. The responses to the questions were given using a five-point Likert scale. The statistical technique incorporated for analysing data is regression and the ANOVA technique using SPSS 16.0. The Hypotheses were tested using Regression Analysis and ANOVA. The findings of the study showed that customer relationship management has an influence on customer satisfaction. The finding also indicated that there is a high positive correlation among the variables considered for the study.

Ibojo (2015) studied the impact of customer satisfaction on customer retention: a case study of a reputable bank in Oyo, Oyo state. Nigeria. The objectives were to determine the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer retention, and to examine the impact of customer satisfaction on customer retention. A survey research design was used for the study. The total population was 150 customers who were account holders of the bank in Oyo. They consist of high-ranking academicians, students, business individuals with high-level to low-level salaries and wage earners. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire used to elicit information from the target respondents who were customers of the reputable bank in Oyo. The findings of the study showed that the value of 0.717, which reveals that customer satisfaction independently accounts for 71.7% of the variation in customer retention. The study concluded that the effective satisfaction of customers will give room for customer retention.

Melam, Wasin and Sujinda (2015) studied the impact of service quality on customer retention in the Airline industry of Bhutan. The objective of the study was to examine the impact of service quality on customer retention in the airline industry in the context of Bhutan. Random sampling technique was used. The study used 382 respondents as the sample size for the international flights of Drukair Royal Bhutan Airlines. The result showed that service quality has a positive and significant relationship with customer retention.

Animashaun, Tunkarimu, and Dastane (2016) studied customer perceived value towards convenience Stores in Malaysia: The influence on customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention. The main purpose of the study was to measure the CPV dimensions and identify which dimension influences customer satisfaction and, as a result, leads to customer loyalty and retention for convenience stores in Malaysia. A total of 200 customers were sampled, using a blend of explanatory and descriptive research designs and a quantitative research method. The application of descriptive statistics and correlation analysis was intended to explain the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the study, whereas the inferential statistics and linear regression were used to test the hypotheses. The findings of the study showed that economic value has a high influence on customer satisfaction, as well as loyalty and retention. The implication is that customers are highly influenced by the economic perceived value they get from a mobile telecommunication provider.

Jalal (2017) examined the effect of corporate social responsibility, social media marketing, sales promotion, and store environment on perceived value and customer retention in the retail industry. A quantitative research design was used. A questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. Data was collected from customers of department stores in East Coast Malaysia. A total, 278 copies of the questionnaire were analysed using structural equation modelling. The findings indicate that perceived value has a significant positive effect on customer retention.

Mwirigi (2018), customer relationship management and satisfaction of commercial banks’ account holders in Nairobi city county, Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were to establish the effect of value-based CRM, customer-centred organisational configuration and technology-based CRM on satisfaction of commercial banks' account holders and to assess the moderating effect of demographic characteristics and mediating effect of service quality on the relationship between CRM and satisfaction of commercial banks' account holders.

The study was anchored on CRM theory. A cross-sectional research design involving descriptive and explanatory research techniques was used. A sample of 400 respondents was selected using mixed sampling techniques in the study. Quantitative data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, and qualitative data were analysed. The study concluded that CRM has a positive and statistically significant effect on the satisfaction of commercial banks' account holders in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The findings of the study reveal that commercial banks' management should invest more in customer-centred organisational configuration and technology-based CRM because they have a significant effect on account holder satisfaction with commercial banking services.

Shamini and Ragel (2018) examined the effectiveness of switching barrier on customer loyalty mediated with customer satisfaction: the telecommunication industry, Batticaloa. The objective of the study was to ascertain the effectiveness of switching barriers on customer loyalty with regard to customer satisfaction in telecommunication service providers. Data were obtained from a sample of 200 customers, and stratified random sampling was used. The descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis were used to analyse the data. The results revealed that the switching barrier has a significant impact on customer retention.

Diaw and Asare (2018) examined the effect of innovation on customer satisfaction and customer retention in the telecommunication industry in Ghana: customers' perspectives. The objective of the study was to impact of innovation on customer satisfaction and customer retention. The study adopted a quantitative research method to determine the relationship between service innovation and customer satisfaction and retention in the telecommunications service industry in Ghana. Data were collected using a questionnaire from 150 customers of MTN, Vodafone, Tigo-Airtel, Glo, and Expresso. Data analysis tools were employed to assess the relationship between variables. A significant positive relationship was found between innovation, customer satisfaction and retention. The study also found that customer satisfaction is a major determinant in customer retention.

Auniel and Mokaya (2018) studied factors affecting customer retention in commercial banks in Tanzania; a case of Azania Bank, Arusha. The objective of the study was to assess factors affecting customer retention in the banking industry in Tanzania, using Azania Bank in Arusha as a case for the study. This study employed a cross-sectional case study research design. Data was collected using a questionnaire and interview guide. A total of 132 respondents were drawn from a total population of 2500. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used in the data analysis. Findings from correlation results show a positive relationship between service delivery and customer retention, as is the case with customer relationships and customer retention. Also, findings from the regression analysis show that customers treated with respect by bank staff, latest electronic products, and access to banking services anywhere in the country, staff responding promptly to inquiries and valuing customer feedback are significantly influencing customer retention. Therefore, the study concludes that service quality, service delivery, customer relationships and customer satisfaction are positively related to customer retention.

Theoretical Framework

Customer-centric model

This work was anchored on a customer-centric model developed by Prescott (1998). The foundation or kernel of this model is centred on customer-centricity. The model is broadly divided into three levels of performance measures, which organisations can use to assess their performance in terms of excellence and satisfaction. At the business level, the company relates to its markets and financial indicators to measure its performance. The centre, which is on the second level, looks at the satisfaction customers get from the company or organisation. At the operational level, companies measure their effectiveness in terms of their response to the quality of their service delivery and their effectiveness in leveraging their customers' data in order to satisfy their needs.

This model is relevant to this study because it focuses on mobile telecommunication service providers providing a positive customer experience to drive profit and gain a competitive advantage. This model looked at mobile telecommunication service providers from the perspective of customers. The customer-centric model puts customers at the centre and makes decisions that ensure their customers are influenced positively. It allows mobile telecommunication service providers to recognise and take advantage of growth opportunities, increase service quality, customer satisfaction, create a unique customer perceived value and increase market share. The purpose of customer-centricity is to find out what customers like and dislike, and to tailor products and services to better fulfil those needs. It also looked at how to give personalised assistance and create strong relationships with customers using customer relations management programmes.

The model provides an integrated view of customers to everyone in the mobile telecommunication company, so that the customer can be serviced effectively. Information about every customer is known in the company. The idea is to have the same information shareable with all in the company. This enables the company to present a uniform face to its customers when called upon to serve customer needs. This is when we can say that customer relations management programmes of mobile telecommunication service providers are customer-centric.

Methodology

The survey and correlation research method was adopted for this study. The population of this study was customers of mobile telecommunication service providers in South East Nigeria. The population of GSM customers in Nigeria, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) (2016), was 14635555. This includes:

State population	**Population**
Abia	3,177,965 Subscribers
Anambra	4,249,792 Subscribers
Ebonyi	796,519 Subscribers
Enugu	3,096,519 Subscribers
Imo	3,315,208 subscribers
Total	14635555

The sample size for this study was 428. The multi-stage sampling technique was used. The questionnaire was used to generate quantitative data. The questionnaire was designed in very simple English for easy comprehension. The instrument was administered with the help of four (4) trained research assistants. The researcher purposely selected only individuals or respondents within the selected households who have used mobile telecommunication service providers for more than three (3) years. They are the ones who participated in the filling of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was face validated to test for clarity and accuracy. Data collected was presented quantitatively using simple frequency tables, percentages and numbers.

Results

Personal Information of the Respondents

Table 1: Frequencies and percentages for personal information of the respondents

Response Options	Frequencies	Percentages
	Sex of respondents	
Male	190	44.39
Female	238	55.61

Source: Survey, 2023

The information presented in Table 1 deals with personal information of the validly sampled 428 respondents. The table showed that most of the sampled respondents were female.

Table 2: Age of respondents

18 to 30 years	152	35.51
31 to 45 years	34	7.94
46 to 55 years	178	41.59
56 years and above	64	14.95

The result here indicated that most of the sampled respondents were above 45 years of age and had probably used mobile phones for at least 10 years, hence, very appropriate for this study.

Table 3: Highest completed education of the respondents

WAEC	102	23.83
OND/Diploma	114	26.56
HND/BA/B.Sc	88	20.56
M.Sc/Phd	96	22.43
Others	28	6.54

The result here showed that most of the sampled respondents have post-secondary school education, which depicts that they have a good educational background suitable for this study.

Table 4: Occupation of respondents

Students	115	26.87
Civil servant	113	26.40
Self employed	122	28.50
Unemployed	78	18.22

The result showed that most of the sampled respondents are self-employed.

Table 5: Mobile telecommunication network provider the respondent is subscribed

MTN	228	53.27
Globacom	87	20.33
Airtel	62	14.49
Etisalat	51	11.92

Source: Survey, 2023

This indicated that most of the respondents subscribed to the MTN network.

Research Question One: Does service quality of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes help in retaining their customers?

Table 6: Logistic regression result for whether the service quality of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes increases the probability of a customer being retained by the company

Independent Variable	Odds Ratio	Z	P Value
Service quality	1.21	2.53	0.01
Constant	5.66	5.77	0.00
Prob > chi^2		0.00	
Pseudo R^2		0.12 (12%)	

Source: Survey, 2023

The result presented in Table 6 showed that the probability greater than chi^2 was 0.00. This showed that the overall regression was significant. However, the Pseudo R^2 figure of 0.12 showed that only 12% of the changes in customer retention were explained by the service quality of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes. Specifically, on the coefficient of the independent variable, the odds ratio of 1.21 showed that the service quality of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes increases the probability of a customer being retained by 1.21. This implies that the service quality of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes increases the retention of a customer by a mobile telecommunication network provider.

Question Two: Do customers perceive value of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influences their retention?

Table 7: Logistic regression result for whether customers perceive value of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influences their retention

Independent Variable	Odds Ratio	Z	P Value
Perceive the value of customers	1.50	5.64	0.00
Constant	3.06	3.77	0.00
Prob > chi^2		0.00	
Pseudo R^2		0.06 (6%)	

Source: Survey, 2023

Table seven showed that the probability greater than chi^2 was 0.00. This showed that the overall regression was significant. Nevertheless, the Pseudo R^2 figure of 0.06 showed that only 6% of the changes in customer retention were explained by customers' perceived value of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes. In specific terms, the result for the coefficient of the independent variable (perception of customers) increases the probability of a customer being retained by 1.50. This indicates that the perceived value of customers of mobile telecommunication customer relationship management programmes influences their retention by the mobile service provider.

Research Question Three: To what extent does customers' level of satisfaction using mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influence their retention?

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Table 8: Mean, Standard Deviation (SD) for the extent to which customer perception of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influences their retention

Item	Mean	SD	Decision
The extent customers' level of satisfaction using mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influences their retention	3.25	0.62	High Extent

Source: Survey, 2023

The result presented in Table 8 showed the extent to which customers' level of satisfaction using mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influences their retention. Considering the extent of the research question, the study adopted the real limit mean, which is appropriate for it in making decisions regarding the mean. According to this method, means of 1 to 1.4, 1.5 to 2.4, 2.5 to 3.4 and 3.5 and above are classified as very low extent, low extent, high extent and very high extent, respectively. Based on this, the mean here of 3.25 fell in the high extent. It therefore implies that to a high extent, customers' level of satisfaction using mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influences their retention.

Research Question Four: To what extent do switching barriers to mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influence customer retention

Table 9: Mean, Standard Deviation (SD) for the extent switching barriers to mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influence customer retention

Item	Mean	SD	Decision
Extent switching barriers to mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influence customer retention	2.84	0.84	High Extent

Source: Survey, 2023

Table 9 showcases the extent switching barriers to mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influence customer retention. Using the real limit mean decision method, the mean result of 2.84 showed that to a high extent, switching barriers to mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influence customer retention by the mobile network provider.

Research Question Five: Which mobile telecommunication customer relations management programme influences customers' retention mostly?

Table 10: Frequencies, Percentages and Cross-tabulation for whether the mobile telecommunication customer relations management programme influences customers' retention mostly

Item	Frequency	Percentages
Customer retention		
Customer not retained	266	62.15
Customer retained	162	37.85
Total	428	100.00
Mobile telecommunication customer relations management programme influence on retained customers		
Programme for customer retention	Retained customers	
	Frequency	Percentages
Personalization engines	11	6.79
Reporting and analytical programmes	66	40.74
Contact centre management programme	14	8.64
Customer service and support solutions programme	71	43.83
Total	162	100.00

Source: Survey, 2023

The result in Table 11 highlights the mobile telecommunication customer relations management programme influencing customers' retention the most. As seen on the table, 62.15% of the respondents were not retained by their service providers, while 37.85% of the respondents were retained. Among the retained, 6.79% of them said the Personalization engines programme was the reason for their retention, while 40.74% of the retained respondents were retained because of the Reporting and analytical programmes. On the other hand, 8.64% of the respondents were retained because of the Contact centre management programme, while 43.83% of the retained respondents indicated that they were retained because of the Customer service and support solutions programme. Based on the result here, it could be seen that quick service delivery has the highest percentage among the retained customers, though very close to the quality of service. This therefore signifies that the Customer service and support solutions programme was the mobile telecommunication customer relations management programme influencing customers' retention the most.

Research Question Six: Is there any relationship between mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes and customer retention?

Table 11: Spearman's rho correlation result for the relationship between mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes and customer retention

Spearman's rho correlation coefficient	Probability value	N
0.74	0.00*	428

Source: Survey, 2023 / * = Significant at 1%, 5% and 10%

Table 12 depicts the Spearman's rho correlation result for whether any relationship existed between telecommunication customer relations management programmes and customer retention. From the result in the table, the correlation coefficient for the relationship was 0.74. This showed that there is a strong relationship between customer retention and telecommunication customer relations management programmes.

Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis One: $H_{1.}$ Customer retention of telecommunication service providers is dependent on their customer relations management programmes.

Table 12: Spearman's rho correlation result for whether customer retention of telecommunication service providers is dependent on their customer relations management programmes

Spearman's rho correlation coefficient	Probability value	N
0.74	0.00*	428

Source: Survey, 2023 / * = Significant at 1%, 5% and 10%

The hypothesis result presented in Table 12 showed whether customer retention by telecommunication service providers is dependent on their customer relations management programmes. As seen in the table, the correlation coefficient for it was 0.74. This indicated that the relationship was positive. It therefore means that customers being retained by network service providers increases as they increase their use of customer relations management programmes. What this signifies is that customer retention by telecommunication service providers is dependent on their customer relations management programmes. Based on this, the study accepted the alternative hypothesis and concluded that Customer retention of telecommunication service providers is dependent on their customer relations management programmes.

Hypothesis Two: $H_{1.}$ There is a strong relationship between customer relations management programmes of telecommunication service providers and customer retention.

Table 13: Spearman's rho correlation result for whether a strong relationship between customer relations management programmes of telecommunication service providers and customer retention

Spearman's rho correlation coefficient	Probability value	N
0.74	0.00*	428

Source: Survey, 2023 / * = Significant at 1%, 5% and 10%

The result in Table 13 showcases the hypothesis for whether a strong relationship exists between customer relations management programmes of telecommunication service providers and customer retention. As seen in the table, the coefficient of the relationship between customer relations management programmes of telecommunication service providers and customer retention was 0.74. This depicts a strong relationship between customer relations management programmes of telecommunication service providers and customer retention. Based on the result, the study accepted the alternative hypothesis and concluded that there exists a strong relationship between customer relations management programmes of telecommunication service providers and customer retention.

Discussion of Findings

The major aim of the study was to find out the influence of customer relations management programmes on customer retention of selected telecommunication service providers in South-East Nigeria. Companies today are adopting customer relations management programmes in order to understand and retain their customers, especially in the telecommunications market, where products and services are similar and competition among service providers increases daily without limitations. Hence, this study addressed six (6) research questions raised and two (2) hypotheses tested.

4.4.1 Research Question 1: Does the service quality of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes help in retaining their customers?

The research question sought to know whether the service quality of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes helps in retaining their customers. The result from the study showed that the Pseudo R^2 figure of 0.12 showed that only 12% of the changes in customer retention were explained by the service quality of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes. Specifically, on the coefficient of the independent variable, the odds ratio of 1.21 showed that service quality of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes increases the probability of a customer being retained by 1.21. This implies that service quality of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes increases the retention of a customer by a mobile telecommunication network provider. The finding is in line with Mbinile (2010), who studied service quality and customer retention in Tanzania commercial banks: A case of commercial banks in Dar es Salaam Region. Findings revealed that the overall service quality provided by the commercial banks had a direct relationship with customer loyalty. They also revealed that the level of customer loyalty in banks differs according to the service quality provided.

The findings of this study are also in line with Melam, Wasin and Sujinda (2015), who studied the impact of service quality on customer retention in the Airline industry of Bhutan. The objective of the study was to examine the impact of service quality on customer retention in the airline industry in the context of Bhutan. The result showed that service quality has a positive and significant relationship with customer retention.

4.4.2 Research Question 2: Does customer perception of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influence their retention?

This research question sought to know whether customers perceive value of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influences their retention. The result of the finding showed that the overall regression was significant. The Pseudo R^2 figure of 0.06 showed that only 6% of the changes in customer retention were explained by customers' perceived value of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes. The result for the coefficient of the independent variable (perception of customers) increases the probability of a customer being retained by 1.50. This indicates that the perceived value of customers of mobile telecommunication customer relationship management programmes influences their retention by the mobile service provider.

This finding is in line with a study conducted by Jalal (2017), who observed that perceived value has a significant positive effect on customer retention. The findings also showed that social media marketing has an insignificant effect on perceived value, whereas its effect on customer retention is positive and statistically significant.

Research Question 3: To what extent do customers' level of satisfaction with mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influence their retention?

The research question sought to examine the extent customers' level of satisfaction with mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influences their retention. The result presented in Table 8 showed the extent to which customers' level of satisfaction using mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influences their retention. The study adopted the real limit mean, which is appropriate for it in deciding the mean. According to this method, means of 1 to 1.4, 1.5 to 2.4, 2.5 to 3.4 and 3.5 and above are classified as very low extent, low extent, high extent and very high extent, respectively. Based on this, the mean of 3.25 fell in the high extent. It therefore implies that to a high extent, customers' level of satisfaction using mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influences their retention.

The findings of this study are in tandem with a similar research conducted by Ibojo (2015), who studied the impact of customer satisfaction on customer retention: a case study of a reputable bank in Oyo, Nigeria. The objectives were to determine the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer retention, and to examine the impact of customer satisfaction on customer retention. The findings of the study showed that the value of 0.717, which reveals that customer satisfaction independently accounts for 71.7% of the variation in customer retention. The study concluded that the effective satisfaction of customers gives room for customer retention.

In the same line with the above findings, Diaw and Asare (2018), who examined the effect of innovation on customer satisfaction and customer retention in the telecommunication industry in Ghana: customers' perspectives. The objective of the study was to impact of innovation on customer satisfaction and customer retention. The study found a significant positive relationship between innovation, customer satisfaction and retention. The study also found that customer satisfaction is a major determinant in customer retention.

Also creating a balance, Mwirigi (2018) studied customer relationship management programmes and satisfaction of commercial banks' account holders in Nairobi city county, Kenya, to establish the effect of value based CRM, customer centred organizational configuration and technology based CRM on satisfaction of commercial banks' account holders and to assess the moderating effect of demographic characteristics and mediating effect of service quality on the relationship between CRM and satisfaction of commercial banks account holders. The study concluded that CRM has a positive and statistically significant effect on the satisfaction of commercial bank account holders in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The findings of the study reveal that commercial banks' management should invest more in customer-centred organisational configuration and technology-based CRM because they have a significant effect on account holder satisfaction with commercial banking services.

Research Question 4: To what extent do switching barriers to mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influence customer retention?

The research question sought to determine the extent switching barriers to mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influence customer retention. The finding in Table 9 showcases the extent switching barriers to mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influence customer retention. Using the real limit mean decision method, the mean result of 2.84 showed that to a high extent, switching barriers to mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes influence customer retention by the mobile network provider.

In support of the finding is Kim, Park and Park (2010), who studied the effect of switching barriers on customer retention in Korean mobile telecommunication services. The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of the interaction between customer satisfaction and switching barriers on customer retention in mobile telecommunication services. The result of the study indicated that among the factors of switching barriers, such as continuity cost and contractual cost, interpersonal relationship, and attractiveness of alternatives are key factors in determining customer retention. The study also showed that continuity cost and interpersonal relationship have an adjustment effect on customer satisfaction and customer retention.

Furthermore, Shamini and Ragel (2018) are on the same finding as the above researchers. They examined the effectiveness of switching barrier on customer loyalty mediated by customer satisfaction: the telecommunication industry, Batticaloa. This objective of the study was to ascertain the effectiveness of switching barriers on customer loyalty with regard to customer satisfaction in telecommunication service providers. Their result revealed that the switching barrier has a significant impact on customer retention.

Research Question 5:Whichmobile telecommunication customer relations management programme influences customers' retention mostly?

The above research question was designed to determine which mobile telecommunication management programme influences customers mostly. The result in Table 11 highlights the mobile telecommunication customer relations management programme influencing customers' retention the most. As seen on the table, 62.15% of the respondents were not retained by their service providers, while 37.85% of the respondents were retained. Among the retained, 6.79% of them said the Personalisation engines programme was the reason for their retention, while 40.74% of the retained respondents were retained because of Reporting and analytical programmes. On the other hand, 8.64% of the respondents were retained because of the contact centre management programme, while 43.83% of the retained respondents indicated that they were retained because of the customer service and support solutions programme. Based on the result here, it could be seen that reporting and analytical programmes have the highest percentage among the retained customers, though very close to the Customer service and support solutions programme. This therefore signifies that customer service and support solutions programme was the mobile telecommunication customer relations management programme influencing customers' retention the most.

Research Question 6: Is there any relationship between mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes and customer retention?

This research question sought to establish whether there is any relationship between mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes and customer retention. The finding from Table 12 depicts the Spearman's rho correlation result for whether any relationship existed between telecommunication customer relations management programmes and customer retention. From the result in the table, the correlation coefficient for the relationship was 0.74. This showed that there is a strong relationship between customer retention and telecommunication customer relations management programmes. Result obtained from Azzam (2014), who examined the impact of customer relationship management on customer satisfaction in the banking industry –a case of Jordan, revealed that there is a significant relationship between CRM elements represented by service quality, employee's behavior, customer data base, solving customer problems physical environment; and social network interaction and customer satisfaction as a dependent variable in the services banking industry. Another study by Tauni, Khan, Durrani and Aslam (2014) on the impact of customer relationship management on customer retention in the telecom industry of Pakistan also indicated that maintaining sustainable relationships with the customer can help retain customers and can be propitious for the companies. CRM and customer retention are significantly related.

Hypothesis 1 (one) result presented in Table 12 showed whether customer retention by telecommunication service providers is dependent on their customer relations management programmes. As seen in the table, the correlation coefficient for it was 0.74. This shows that the relationship was positive. It therefore means that customers being retained by network service providers increases as they increase their use of customer relations management programmes. What this signifies is that customer retention by telecommunication service providers is dependent on their customer relations management programmes. Based on this, the study accepted the alternative hypothesis and concluded that Customer retention of telecommunication service providers is dependent on their customer relationship management programmes.

Also, the data generated from the test of hypothesis 2 (two) is in agreement with the result obtained in the study. The result in Table 13 showcases the hypothesis for whether a strong relationship exists between customer relations management programmes of telecommunication service providers and customer retention. As seen in the table, the coefficient of the relationship between customer relations management programmes of telecommunication service providers and customer retention was 0.74. This depicts a strong relationship between customer relations management programmes of telecommunication service providers and customer retention. Based on the result, the study accepted the alternative hypothesis and concluded that there exists a strong relationship between customer relations management programmes of telecommunication service providers and customer retention.

Finally, Auniel and Mokaya (2018) summarised the findings of the study. They studied factors affecting customer retention in commercial banks in Tanzania, a case of Azania Bank, Arusha. The objective of the study was to assess factors affecting customer retention in the banking industry in Tanzania, using Azania Bank in Arusha as a case for the study. This study employed a cross-sectional case study research design. Data was collected using a questionnaire and interview guide. A total of 132 respondents were drawn from a total population of 2500. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used in the data analysis. Findings from correlation results show a positive relationship between service delivery and customer retention, as is the case with customer relationships and customer retention. Also, findings from the regression analysis show that customers treated with respect by bank staff, latest electronic products, and access to banking services anywhere in the country, staff responding promptly to inquiries and valuing customer feedback are significantly influencing customer retention. Therefore, the study concludes that service quality, service delivery, customer relationships, perceived value and customer satisfaction are positively related to customer retention.

Conclusion

Customer retention has become an issue in recent times, especially in a commoditised and competitive industry like the telecommunications industry. The liberalisation and deregulation of Nigeria's telecommunication industry have given mobile telecommunication customers the power to choose networks that satisfy their communication needs. Today, companies are adopting customer relations management programmes in order to know their customers, understand them and make them part of their company. The study sought to examine the influence of customer relations management programmes on customer retention of selected telecommunication service providers in South East Nigeria. The study discovered that service quality, customer perceived value, customer level of satisfaction and switching barrier factors of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes increase customer retention. It was also observed that customer service and support solutions programme of mobile telecommunication customer relations management programme influences customers' retention the most. The study established that there is a strong relationship between mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes and customer retention.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

i. Companies should channel their customer relations management programmes towards customer retention by taking into consideration factors like the service quality, the value customers would gain using their services, the level of satisfaction customers would derive using their customer relations management programmes, and switching barrier factors that would discourage customers from subscribing to other network service providers.

ii. Service companies or organisations should mostly depend on their customer service and support solutions programmes as the best customer relations management programmes that influence customers mostly.
iii. Service quality is one of the determinants of customer retention. Therefore, companies, especially service delivery ones, should prioritise their service quality to retain their customer now that services are similar and the level of competition is high.
iv. Mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes should influence customer retention in a way customers will find it difficult switching to another service provider. These programmes should be channelled towards adding value in commensurate with the customer's financial commitment.
v. The findings indicated that there is a strong relationship between customer retention and mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes. Therefore, companies and organisations are expected to uphold effective relationships with their customers by making sure that their customer relations management programmes are relationship and customer-retention-oriented.
vi. Customer retention of telecommunication service providers is dependent on mobile telecommunication customer relations management programmes. Service companies should analyse their customer relations management programmes to make sure they are customer retention-oriented. They should measure and evaluate their customer relations management in terms of customer sustainability.

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