

Consumer-Related Corporate Social Responsibility and Brand Switching Behaviour of Subscribers of Mobile Network Providers in Akure Metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria

Alo Ebenezer Adebisi (PhD)^{a*}, Alo Solomon Adejuyigbe (FCA)^b, Dada Durotimi Amos (PhD)^c

^{a,c}*Achievers University, College Of Social And Management Sciences, Department Of Business Administration, P. M. B. 1030, Owo, Ondo State, Nigeria*

^b*Olabisi Onabanjo University, Department Of Accounting, Ago Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria*

^a*Tel: +2348034048037, Email: ebenezer_alo@yahoo.com*

^b*Tel: +2348067744713, Email: aloandcompany@yahoo.com*

^c*Tel: +2348060687957, Email: durodada83@gmail.com*

Abstract

In Nigeria, mobile telecom subscribers have suffered untold hardship in terms of poor service quality they receive from their service operators. These are often reflected in the deluge of complaints received by the National Communications Commission (NCC) which include: unsolicited promotion messages, outright truncated calls, mediocre data services, opaque charges, poor audio quality and lines joining, among other complaints. This has made switching a common phenomenon among subscribers of network providers in the Nigeria telecommunications industry. The study examined customer-related corporate social responsibility (CSR) and other factors influencing brand switching behaviour of subscribers of network providers in Akure metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria. The population of the study consisted subscribers in Akure metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria. Primary data was the major source of data collection for the study. Convenience and cluster sampling techniques were adopted to select Five Banks from Akure metropolis while a well structured questionnaire was designed to elicit responses from both staff and customers of the selected Banks.

* Corresponding author

A total of 230 copies of questionnaire were designed and administered on the staff and some customers of the selected banks who were subscribers of four major network providers – MTN, GLO mobile, Airtel and Etisalat, in Akure, metropolis. Descriptive statistics and Logistic Regression model were the techniques used to analyze the data collected. Findings of the study revealed that consumer-related CSR, network signal quality, fair pricing/call charges and promotional strategies have statistical significant effect on the switching behaviour of the customers. The study concluded that customer-related CSR, network signal quality, Fair pricing/Call charges and promotional strategy significantly influence the consumers to switch from one mobile line to another. The study recommended that customer-related CSR should be embraced by the network providers while also embarking on aggressive promotional strategies such as provision of offers and discounts, free data bundle, airtime bonus and so on, at regular interval to target those who influence consumers to switch their networks from one to another, most especially, relatives and friends so as to enhance profitability of their ventures..

Keywords: Customer-Related CSR; Brand Swithing; Corporate Social Responsibility.

1. Introduction

Telephone is one of the major components of modern-day telecommunications in Nigeria. Others include the television, radio and the internet. The term telecommunications refer to the science and technology of transmitting information, knowledge and ideas through verbal and non-verbal means. Murray [1] sees telecommunication as a vital engine for development of any economy and an essential infrastructural component that promotes the development of other sectors including agriculture, education, industries, health, banking, defence, transportation and tourism. According to Murray [1], telecommunication has become indispensable in day-to-day interactions and in times of national emergency or natural disasters. It is a great force at reducing the risks and rigours of travelling. Therefore, the availability of a functional and an efficient telecommunications infrastructure is sine-qua-non for any country that wants to compete in today's global economy [1]. The tremendous growth prospects in the Nigeria telecommunications sector have opened the window for many entrants into the industry [2]. Etisalat, which was licensed to provide telecommunications services in 2007, is a typical example of this development. Also, Airtel (Indian largest telecom company) acquired Zain in 2010 [2]. According to Murray [1], the bids submitted by Econet, Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN), and Communications Investment Limited (CIL) to the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) – the industry's statutory regulatory body – were adjudged successful by the commission; a development that kick-started the race to achieve the regulator's subscriber base of 1.5 million lines within the first five years of roll-out. Econet (now Airtel) was granted licence to commence operations on March 23, 2001. Thus, as at the end of Quarter 3 of 2017, the NCC's list of mobile telephone operators indicating the mobile access codes allocated to them, consisted of seven name which are: (i) Airtel (formerly Econet), (ii) MTN, (iii) NATCOM (nTel), (iv) Globacom, (v) 9mobile (etisalat), (vi) Prestel and (vii) Multilinks [3]. It is a common phenomenon among the mobile telephone users that an average Nigerian mobile telephone user can have more than one mobile line. Invariably, this has contributed to an increase in the penetration rate. Consequently, operators have developed several strategies such as "price war" to expand market share and increase profit. These strategies have led to series of drops in mobile phone installation fees, call rates, free short message services (SMS) and free night calls [2]. Consequent upon the increasing competition in the market, customer loyalty has become a decisive

factor in the long term business projects [2]. High customer loyalty is the high enter-barriers for the competitor to enter the market. A provider who strives to gain more loyal customers will make high profits. A loyal customer continually patronizes the product or service from the same company and he is willing to pay even higher prices for the quality products and first-class services, thereby increasing sales revenue [2]. In Nigeria, mobile telecom subscribers have suffered untold hardship in terms of poor service quality they receive from their service operators. These are often reflected in the deluge of complaints received by the National Communications Commission (NCC) which include: unsolicited promotion messages, outright truncated calls, mediocre data services, opaque charges, poor audio quality, lines joining, among other complaints [2]. During the second quarter of year 2017 alone, a total of 15,377 such complaints were received by NCC; while in quarter one of year 2018, 13,880 of such complaints were received [3]. This has often resulted into brand switching in an attempt to alleviate or mitigate the challenge of poor services. It is however noteworthy, to observe that as plenty as these complaints may appear, very little is often said in respect of consumer-related corporate social responsibilities of these telecom operators. Whereas, corporate social responsibilities of organizations are an important area of service which also contribute to customers satisfaction, unfortunately, this is often downplayed by operators themselves and have been sacrificed on the alter of other direct services. It is on the ground of this that this study sought to carry out an investigation into consumer-related corporate social responsibility and other factors influencing brand switching behaviour of subscribers of mobile network providers in Akure metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine consumer-related corporate social responsibility and brand switching among subscribers of four selected network providers in Akure metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- (i) Investigate the effect of consumer-related CSR on brand switching.
- (ii) Evaluate the effect of network signal quality on brand switching.
- (iii) Assess the impact of fair pricing/call charges on brand switching.
- (iv) Examine the influence of sales promotional mix strategy on brand switching.

3. Statement of Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study and tested:

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of consumer-related CSR on brand-switching of consumers of network providers in Akure metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: Network signal quality has no significant effect on brand switching behavior of customers of service providers in Akure metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria.

H₀₃: Fair pricing/call charges have no impact on brand switching behavior of customers of service providers in the telecommunications industry in Akure metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria.

H₀₄: Promotional mix strategy has no influence on the brand switching behavior of consumers in Akure metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Conceptual Classifications

Reference [4] defined corporate social responsibility as the recognition of the need for business entities to balance profit making objective and the impact of activities that lead to such objective. According to [5], corporate social responsibility is viewed as a company's verifiable commitment to operating in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner that is transparent and increasingly satisfying to its stakeholders [6]. posited that CSR includes issues relating to business ethics, community engagement, global warming, water management, the management and use of natural resources, and human rights; describing it as concept which requires organisations to demonstrate a close and good relationship with the society in order to get sustainable development and to survive in this competitive world. The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has generated a lot of debates among scholars in literature. It has been argued by a school of thought that CSR is a distortion of the corporate objective of firms. However, adherents of this school of thought believe that "if enterprises undertake certain social responsibilities or obligations during the pursuit of commercial activities, they can consolidate their relationship with society and thereby enhance their brand image, achieve free advertising, expand their sales volume and higher high-quality staff [7]. The summation of rational for CSR as articulated in the literature is that for corporations to secure the continuous extraction of resources, continuous provision of goods and services, continuous sale of such goods and services at a profit, and by extension, continuous making of wealth for its shareholders, the firm must contribute to ensuring that the society is consistently in a stable and conducive state by engaging in social responsiveness. This study on the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is premised on the backdrop of the stakeholder theory, which demands that businesses should carry-on their economic operations in the most ethical and moral manners, such that the overall interests of the environment and the society at large will be critical factors to be considered in formulating and implementing business policies. Thus, CSR consists of initiatives embarked upon by a corporation to influence the society and the environment within which it operates, either as a way of enhancing its image in the eyes of its stakeholders or stimulating acceptability and patronage of its products/services or both. The study by [8] investigated the effect of CSR on consumer buying behaviour. It was found that a substantial and an identifiable consumer population exists that take into consideration a company's social responsibility in its purchase decisions, and concluded that CSR can indeed play an important role in building a long-term relationship with consumers [9]. investigated the impact of CSR on customer satisfaction in the telecoms industry of Bangladesh using factor analysis. The result of the study concluded that there exists a strong and positive correlation between different variables of service quality (a proxy of customer-related CSR) and customer satisfaction, which in turn engenders brand loyalty and discourages brand switching. The implication of this finding is that if a subscriber is satisfied with the quality of service received, there is no incentive to brand switching. The study by [10] of four focus groups consisting of graduate students in the age group of 21-25, hypothesized that demographic factors have an influence on the evaluations of different attributes related to mobile phone choice. Specifically, gender and social class will impact on the evaluations of

the attributes as men belonging to higher social class seem to be more technology savvy'. Results showed that women mainly seemed to use their phone for voice services thus considering the brand of the phone as the main decision variable, whereas men utilized the enhanced features and network services such as email, making those important decision variables. In the study conducted by [11], it was found that 69% of the respondents were willing to buy from companies that practice CSR, while 53% were willing to even pay premium price for the goods/services of such companies. The findings of [12] indicate that fulfilling CSR has a positive impact on the evaluation of corporate activities by consumers, which in turn engenders positive effect on their current purchasing behavior and future purchase intention. Subscribers, who are fast becoming increasingly concerned about the CSR obligations of firms, are fast becoming increasingly responsiveness, especially if such CSR initiatives are of intrinsic nature.

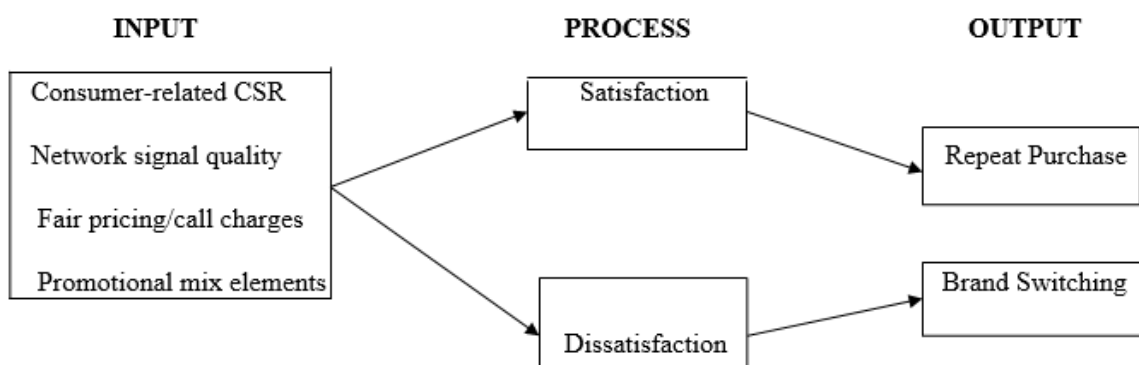


Figure 1: Input-Output Philosophy of Brand Switching

Source: Researchers' Conceptualisation (2019).

5. Methodology

The population of the study consisted subscribers in Akure metropolis, Ondo State, Nigeria. Primary data was the major source of data collection for the study. The primary data were gathered from respondents (subscribers) from five selected banks at Alagbaka area in Akure metropolis through a well structured questionnaire designed to elicit responses from both staff and customers of the Banks. Convenience and cluster sampling techniques were adopted to select Five Banks from Alagbaka area in Akure metropolis. A total of 230 copies of questionnaire were designed and administered on the staff and some customers of the selected banks who are subscribers of four major network providers – MTN, GLO mobile, Airtel and Etisalat, in Akure, metropolis. This is as depicted in Table 1. The administration and collection of the questionnaire was made possible through the assistance of a teller from each selected bank. The selection was based on the population of staff and customers' patronage (subscribers) in each of the selected Banks. A total of 215 copies of the questionnaire representing 93.48% were returned and analysed. The 5-Point Likert Scale of agreement ranging from, Strongly agree (1), Agree (2), Undecided (3), Disagree, (4) and Stronglydisagree (5) were used for the rating of the quality of the services of the various network providers. The statistical analyses employed in the study were frequency tables,

percentages and the logistic regression model. The frequency tables and percentages were used to analyse the demographic characteristics of the respondents while the logistic regression model was employed to establish the relationship which existed between consumer-related CSR, network signal quality, fair pricing/call charges, promotional mix strategy and brand switching.

Table 1: Selection of Respondents from Five Banks in Akure metropolis

S/N	Banks Selected	Number of Staff	Number of Customers	Total
1.	First Bank Nigeria Limited	20	30	50
2	Access Bank Plc	16	19	35
3.	Guaranteed Bank Plc	15	25	40
4	Wema Bank Plc	16	19	35
5	Polaris Bank Plc	12	18	30
6	United Bank for Africa Plc	15	25	40
	TOTAL	94	136	230

Source: Researcher' Computation, (2019)

5.1 Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Table 2 shows the age distribution of respondents. Most of the respondents were in the age range 21-25 and 26-30 years. They accounted for over 50% of the respondents. The distribution of respondents by age shows that young individuals are more attracted to innovations more than the older ones who may want to remain in their traditional frame of mind. This is the reason young and middle age respondents have been found using mobile telecommunication more than the elderly ones.

Table 2: Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age of the Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
21 - 25 years	71	33.0
26 - 30 years	56	26.0
31 - 35 years	40	18.6
36 - 40 years	38	17.7
41 years and above	10	4.7
Total	215	100.0

Source: Researcher's Computation, 2019.

Data obtained from the respondents in Table 3 showed that about 55% of the respondents were male, while 45% were female. This suggests that more males were sampled and perhaps more males were willing to fill the

questionnaire than female.

Table 3: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	118	54.9.
Female	97	45.1
Total	215	100.0

Source: Researcher’s Computation, 2019.

Interestingly, the data presented in Table 4 below shows that all the respondents for this study were educated. The Table reports that 37.2%, 33.5% and 29,3% of the respondents certificate, NCE/ND, HND/BSc and Higher degrees as their respective level of education attained.

LEGEND:

NCE/ND – National Certificate of Education/ National Diploma

HND BSc – Higher National Diploma/Bachelor of Science

Table 4: Educational level of the Respondents

Highest Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
NCE/ND	80	37.2
HND/BSc	72	33.5
Other Degrees	63	29.3
TOTAL	215	100

Source: Researcher’s Computation, 2019.

Table 5: Kinds of Networks Used by the Respondents

Network Used by Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
MTN Only	52	24.2
GLO Only	43	20.0
ETISALAT Only	11	5.1
AIRTEL Only	38	17.7
MTN and GLO	13	6.0
MTN and ETISALAT	10	4.6
MTN and AIRTEL	14	6.5
GLO and ETISALAT	07	3.3
GLO and AIRTEL	10	4.7
MTN, GLO and ETISALAT	08	3.7
MTN, GLO and AIRTEL	05	2.3
MTN, GLO, ETISALAT and AIRTEL	04	1.9
Total	215	100.0

Source: Researcher’s Computation, 2019.

The Table 5 below shows the kinds of network used by the respondents sampled for this study. It is possible there are other network providers in the country, but only MTN, GLO, Etisalat and Airtel were the network selected for this study. Meanwhile, it is evident from the Table that MTN is mostly used by the respondents followed by GLO then by Airtel while Etisalat has the least users.

5.2 Test of Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study and tested:

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of consumer-related CSR on brand-switching of consumers of network providers in Akure, metropolis, Ondo State Nigeria.

H₀₂: Network signal quality has no significant effect on brand switching behavior of customers of service providers in the telecommunications industry in Akure, metropolis, Ondo State Nigeria.

H₀₃: Fair pricing/call charges have no impact on brand switching behavior of customers of service providers in the telecommunications industry in Akure, metropolis, Ondo State Nigeria..

H₀₄: Promotional mix strategy has no influence on the brand switching behavior of consumers.

6. Logistic Regression

In order to test the aforementioned hypotheses, this study employed logistic regression technique to examine whether a significant relationship existed between consumer-related corporate social responsibility and brand switching with respect to Network signal quality, fair pricing/call charges and Brand Image. The logistic regression model is given as equation below:

$$\ln \left\{ \frac{\text{prob}(\text{switching})}{1-\text{prob}(\text{switching})} \right\} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 C - RCSR + \beta_2 NSQ + \beta_3 FP + \beta_4 PMS$$

Where;

C-R CSR = Customer –Related Corporate Social Responsibility

NSQ = Network Signal Quality

FP = Fair Pricing

PMS = Promotional Mix Strategy

Where; $\ln \left\{ \frac{\text{prob}(\text{switching})}{1-\text{prob}(\text{switching})} \right\}$ is called a logit and defined as the log of the odds that customers will switch from a particular network to the other, $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ and β_4 are called the coefficients of the logistic regression model. They measure how much the logit changes based on the values of the predictor variables associated to these

coefficients. Therefore, the hypotheses stated above are equivalently stated mathematically below:

$$H_{01}: \beta_1 = 0 \text{ vs } \beta_1 \neq 0$$

$$H_{02}: \beta_2 = 0 \text{ vs } \beta_2 \neq 0$$

$$H_{03}: \beta_3 = 0 \text{ vs } \beta_3 \neq 0$$

$$H_{04}: \beta_4 = 0 \text{ vs } \beta_4 \neq 0$$

DECISION RULE: The decision rule is such that if the p-value is less than the 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the corresponding alternative hypothesis. Otherwise, the null hypothesis is sustained.

Table 6: Results of the Logistic Regression

Predictor Variable	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	P-value
Intercept	1.426	0.210	0.0001
Customer-Related CSR	-0.174	0.056	0.0020
Network Signal Quality	-0.234	0.061	0.0001
Fair pricing/Call Charges	0.009	0.055	0.0086
Promotional Mix Strategy	-0.110	0.063	0.0082

Source: Computer Printout, 2019.

Customer-Related CSR = 0.0020

Network Signal Quality = 0.0001

Fair pricing/Call Charges = 0.0086

Promotional Mix Strategy = 0.0082

Significant at 0.05 levels

The logistic regression model is:

$$\ln = \beta_0 + \beta_1 C - RCSR + \beta_2 NSQ + \beta_3 FP + \beta_4 PMS$$

$$\ln = 0.0001 + 0.0020\beta_1 + 0.0001\beta_2 + 0.0086\beta_3 + 0.0082\beta_4$$

The researcher examined the influence of Customer-Related CSR, Network Signal Quality, Fair Pricing/Call Charges and Promotional Mix Strategy on the switching behaviour of customers. The logistic regression technique was employed to examine these relationships. The p-value of the logistic regression model for the relationship between Customer-Related CSR and switching behaviour of customers was 0.002. This was less

than the significance value (0.05), hence, the null hypothesis that there is no significant effect of consumer-related CSR on brand-switching of consumers of network providers in Akure, metropolis, Ondo State Nigeria is rejected. It can therefore be inferred that consumer-related CSR has statistical significant effect on the switching behaviour of the customers. The alternative hypothesis is accepted. The finding from this study is supported by the study conducted by [9] to investigate the effect of CSR on consumer buying behaviour which found that a substantial and an identifiable consumer population exists that take into consideration a company's social responsibility in its purchase decisions, and concluded that CSR can indeed play an important role in building a long-term relationship with consumers. The p-value of the logistic regression model for the relationship between network signal quality and switching behaviour of customers was 0.0001. The p-value for Network Signal Quality (0.0001) was less than the significance value (0.05), hence, the null hypothesis that Network signal quality has no significant effect on brand switching behavior of customers of service providers in the telecommunications industry in Akure, metropolis, Ondo State Nigeria is rejected. It can therefore be inferred that the quality of network has statistical significant effect on the switching behaviour of the customers. The alternative hypothesis is accepted. The finding is supported by [13] who opined that service quality has significant influence on switching. The finding is further supported by [14] that good network quality creates an impression of superior services in the minds of customers which do not allow them switch over other brands". The finding therefore concludes that there is a significant relationship between network signal quality and consumers' switching from one network to another in the telecom industry. The result of the logistic regression for the effect of Fair pricing/call charges on the switching behaviour of consumers in the telecommunications industry showed that the p-value for fair pricing/call charges (0.0086) is less than the significance level (0.05), the null hypothesis that Fair pricing/call charges have no impact on brand switching behavior of customers of service providers in the telecommunications industry in Akure, metropolis, Ondo State Nigeria is rejected. Hence, we conclude that fair pricing/call charges have significantly impacted the customers to switch from one mobile line to another. The logit regression for the relationship between promotional mix strategy (sales promotion, advertising and personal selling) and switching is 0.0082. The p-value for promotional mix strategy (0.0001) is less than the significance level (0.05). The null hypothesis that promotional mix strategy has no influence on the brand switching behavior of consumers is also rejected. Hence, it can be concluded that promotional mix strategy (sales promotion, advertising and personal selling) adopted by the network providers have statistical significant effects on the switching behaviour of the customers. Therefore, promotional mix such as advertising, sales promotion and personal selling are essential ingredients that could assist network providers retain existing customers and attract new ones. The finding is supported by [15] who opined that a customer who buys a brand actually buys not only the functions of the product or service but also the fulfillment of emotional needs which are possible explanations for increased sales resulting from promotional mix strategy. The finding is also supported by the research conducted by [16] that during promotion, brand-switching accounts for more than 80% of sales increase.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the primary data collected for this study, it can be concluded that telecommunications industry in Nigeria has become very competitive. Consumers, especially the younger ones, are constantly trying to keep up with the 'best' network service with minimum cost, hence they constantly switch networks service providers. It

can therefore be concluded from the hypotheses tested using logistic regression model that brand switching from one network provider to another is rampant among consumers of network providers in Nigeria. Moreover, most of the respondents switch service providers in response to good customer-related social responsibility, network signal quality, avoidable fair pricing/call charges and promotional strategy (such as sales promotions, advertising and personal selling). This is evident from the results of the logistic regression which showed that customer-related CSR, network signal quality, Fair price/Call charges and promotional strategy significantly influence the consumers to switch from one mobile line to another. In the light of the findings and conclusions from the study, it is recommended that customer-related CSR, network signal quality, avoidable call charges are important factors which influence brand switching. Therefore, network service providers should embrace the importance of customer-related social responsibility as an important area of service which contributes in no small measure to customer satisfaction and loyalty. Network Providers also need to encourage aggressive promotional strategies such as provision of offers and discounts, free data bundle, airtime bonus and so on at regular interval to target those who influence consumers to switch their networks from one to another, most especially, relatives and friends. On the final note, it is recommended that network providers should offer a quality network signal, fair pricing, additional benefits such as free airtime, free data plan, free text messages and so on to customers in order to retain existing ones and attract new subscribers.

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