The effect of Network Quality on Customer Retention Among mobile phone users in public Universities of Western Kenya Region

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Abstract
Customers have become more sophisticated and they are enjoying more alternative options of brands, for any organization, either it's a public sector; private sector or semi-public, there is a need to understand what kind of service or products it offers, and for whom. Despite tremendous growth, telecommunication industry has continued to record an increase in the number of unsatisfied subscribers. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of Network Quality on Customer Retention among mobile phone users in public Universities of Western Kenya Region. This study was guided by the social exchange theory which focused on the fundamental principle that humans in social situations choose behaviors that maximize their likelihood of meeting self-interests in those situations. In taking such a view of human social interactions, social exchange theory includes a number of key assumptions for example; social exchange theory operates on the assumption that individuals are generally rational and engage in calculations of costs and benefits in social exchanges. Explanatory research was utilized in this study. The target population of this study was geographically located in Public Universities in Western Kenya Region. A sample size of 250 respondents was sampled from the population. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire. Data collected was analyzed by use of descriptive and inferential statistics; specifically regressions were used to test the hypotheses. There was need to use a multiple regression analysis so as to determine the effects of each of the variables on customer retention. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 17 was used to ease the analysis. Analyzed data were presented in tables. The results reveal that Network quality had negative relationship with customer retention. The study recommends that service providers should identify critical network quality which can help in creating sustainable relationship. The service providers should involve users in designing the appropriate network quality. The study provides new theoretical insight into factors influencing customer retention. Further research should be simulated to other service industries. Future researchers may use other models such structural equations among others to test the hypotheses.
Keywords: Network, quality, customer retention, mobile phone, Users

INTRODUCTION

As the competitive environment becomes more turbulent, the most important issue the sellers face is no longer to provide excellent, good quality products or services, but also to keep loyal customers who will contribute long-term profit to organizations (Tseng, 2007). To compete in such overcrowded and interactive marketplace, marketers are forced to look beyond the traditional 4Ps of marketing strategy, which are not longer enough to be implemented for achieving competitive advantage. This study will strive to identify the number of customers, or percentage of total customers whose experience with their telecommunication service provider's products or services meets or exceeds their expectations.

Organizations both private and public in today's dynamic market place are increasingly leaving anticipated marketing philosophies and strategies to the adoption of more customer-driven initiatives that seeks to understand, attract, retain and build long term relationship with profitable customers (Kotler, 2006,Gronroos,C 1994). This paradigm shift has undauntedly led to the growing interest in CRM initiatives that aim at ensuring customer identification and interactions customization and personalization that unreservedly led to customer satisfaction, retention and profitability (Thompson, 2004, Gronroos et al., 1996; Xu et al, 2002, store, 2000).Organizations are therefore increasingly being more customer-centric and are much interested not just in acquiring new customers, but more importantly, retaining existing customers. This is perhaps because it costs more to attract new customers than retaining the existing ones.

Network Quality and customer Retention

Provision of a reliable service which can satisfy customers, is critical for retaining customers and a tool to protect organizations from customer churn (Brown and Gulycz, 2001). The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction is somewhat reciprocal. Previous research on this relationship can be divided into two

schools of thoughts, one considers a satisfied customer perceived highly about service quality (Brown and Gulycz, 2001), and on the contrary the other argues that service quality leads to customer satisfaction (Antreas and Opoulos, 2003; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Spreng and MacKoy, 1996). Nevertheless both schools agree that there is a strong correlation between customer satisfaction and service quality.

Availability, reliability and stability of the network are key in customer satisfaction. Equally, the extent of signal coverage is an important determinant in customer loyalty. With the onset of money transfer services, real time delivery of transactional messages is now essential. To this extent, measurement of customer satisfaction in relation to network performance is important. SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al (1988) suggested that there is a difference between customer satisfaction and the provider's actual service performance.

Delivering a service performance, which can satisfy customers, is critical for retaining customers and a tool to protect organizations from customer churn (Brown and Gulycz, 2001). Marketing scholars and practitioners equally emphasize on the issue of customer satisfaction or generating loyalty among customers, which helps in maintaining existing cash flows and guarantee stable future (Teas, 1994; Zeithaml et al., 1996). While the manufacturing sector is concerned with the repurchase, most of the services depend on the continuity and thus focus on customer retention (Anderson et al., 1994). In an environment with reduced calling rates such as Kenyan markets, customer satisfaction has now become vital.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
The target population of this study was geographically located in Public Universities in Western Kenya Region. Explanatory research was utilized in this study. A sample size of 250 respondents was sampled from the population. Primary data was collected using a questionnaire. Data collected was analyzed by use of descriptive and inferential statistics; specifically regressions were used to test the hypotheses. There was need to use a multiple regression analysis so as to determine the effects of each of the variables on customer retention. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 17 was used to ease the analysis. Analyzed data were presented in tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Factor Analysis Results of Network Quality
Results show that the 7 items for network quality are sorted and clustered into two components. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Barlett's Test of Sphericity were used. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy indicated a value of (KMO=0.630) indicating that the sample size was adequate for the variables entered into analysis. The Barlett's Test of Sphericity was significant X2=1026.167, df=21, p<0.000, implying that the factor analysis was appropriate for the study and there was relationship among variables. The results are presented in Table 4.5. The results of the principal component analysis indicate that, there are two factors whose Eigenvalues exceed 1. The Eigenvalue of a factor represents the amount of total variance explained by that factor. For Network quality, the first factor has Eigenvalue of 3.584 and the second factor has Eigenvalue of 1.532, the two factors explain 73.091% of the total variance. The first factor explains 51.199% of this variance, while the second variable explained 21.892% of this variance. Varimax rotation tries to maximize the variance of each of the factor, so the total amount of variance accounted for the redistribution over the extracted factor. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation is widely adopted as a reliable method of factor analysis (Malhotra and Galleta, 1999).See Table A1 in Appendix……for total variance explained of network quality

Network Quality Rotated Component Matrix

Scale item	Factor Loadings	
	1	2
Successful in completion		.950
Adequate network coverage		.922
Network clarity		.622
Prompt money transfer	.798	
Ease of connection to other networks	.811	
Network Innovativeness	.700	
Technological Knowledge	.885	
Notes: Eigenvalues	3.584	1.532
Percentage of Variance	51.199%	21.892%
KMO Measure of sampling adequacy .630		
Approx. Chi-Square 1026.167, Df 21, Sig. .000		

Extraction Method: Principal component Analysis

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization
   a.   Rotation converged in 3 iterations

Source: Research Data (2014)

4.8.1 Relationship between Network quality and Customer Retention

In order to test for multicollinearity among the predictor variables, variance-inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance were applied. The multicollinearity statistics showed that the tolerance indicator for Network quality were greater than 0.1, and their VIF values are less than 10. The result indicates that no multicollinearity problem has occurred (Neter*et al.,* 1996; Ott and Longnecker, 2001). The F-statistics produced was significant at 1 per cent level (Sig. F ‚ 0.1), thus confirming the fitness for the model. Therefore, there is a statistically significant relationship between the Network qualityandCustomer retention.

The coefficient of determination R^2 was 49.8per cent. Thus, the CRM practices can significantly account for 49.8 per cent in the relationship. The results shows that CRE ($p < 0.00$), LP ($p < 0.00$) PV ($p < 0.05$) all significantly affect the Customer retention. Based on Table 4.13, it indicated the most important CRM practices that affect the consumer Retention is as indicated above. Network Quality however, was found not to be significantly associated with consumer Retention

Table4.12 Multiple Regression Results on the Relationship between CRM Practices and Customer Retention

Predictor Variables	β	t-value	Std error	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	.626	3.09	.202	.0202		
NQ	.007	.085	.081	.932	.373	2.680
PV	-.637	-2.866	.222	.005	.042	3.933
CRE	-.531	-3.888	.137	.000	.146	6.836
LP	.488	4.224	.116	.000	.213	4.696

Notes: Overall Model F= 35.595, P<0.05, R=0.706, R^2=0.498, adjusted R^2= 0.484

NQ=Network Quality, PV=Perceived Value, CRE=Customer Relational Experience, LP=Loyalty Programs

Source: Research Results (2014)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Hypothesis Ho1 postulates that Network quality has no significant effect on customer retention

From the findings, it was indicated that Beta coefficients (NQ), β =0.007, t=0.085, p=0.932. The Null hypothesis was therefore accepted since its p-value is >0.05. The Network quality was therefore found to have an insignificant effect on customer retention. This results are contrary to previous research findings (Brown and Gulycz, 2001), which suggests that provision of a reliable network quality can satisfy customers which is critical for retaining customers by satisfying them. Similar research findings by (Antreas and Opoulos, 2003; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Spreng and Mackoy, 1996) argues that Network quality leads to customer satisfaction

In conclusion customer relationship management practices in today's business, it make sense to understand how the relationship are executed in practice and how this type of marketing take effect, e.g. influencing long-term relationship building and customer loyalty.

Small businesses and entrepreneurs will find this study vital in understanding and appreciating the importance of the role played by CRM Practices in creating satisfied customers hence retention. Such understanding will enable Small businesses and entrepreneurs to decide which Network quality they can employ in their businesses so as to remain competitive in the face of ever increasing competition. This study will also benefit Small businesses and entrepreneurs in identifying opportunities of starting and successfully operating businesses using network quality

Based on the findings, it is necessary for effective customer care training to be done to enable effective services and provision of what the customers require. Again it is necessary for managers who interact with customers should endeavor to understand perceived value in the network quality. The managers should as well acknowledge that perceived value goes beyond satisfaction and is a powerful tool for customer retention. Future researchers should provide a broad and more inclusive definition of CRM and constructs which may measure the interaction patterns between both variables.

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