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Determinants of Customer Switching Behaviour in Mobile Telecommunication Industry in South-South Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *The study examined the determinants of customers' switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications industry in South-South Nigeria. The main objective of the study was to explore the factors influencing customers' switching behaviour in the mobile telecommunications industry and in specific terms, determine whether price, reputation, service quality, promotional package and switching cost did have a significant and positive influence on customers' switching behaviour. The unit of analysis comprised 400 mobile telecommunication subscribers drawn from six cities in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The study units were selected using a proportionate stratified sampling technique and the data obtained from the process were analysed with descriptive statistic using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 software. Conceptual hypothesized relationships involving the independent and dependent variables formulated from the research model were tested with multiple regression analysis technique. The findings of the study revealed that reputation, service quality, promotional package and switching cost had a strong and positive relationship with customers' switching behaviour but price and involuntary switching seemed to have the least significant relationship. It showed that those factors were very important determinants of customers' decision to switch from one mobile telecommunications provider to another except price and involuntary switching as earlier stated. The key recommendations from the study were that managers of mobile telecommunications companies should develop proper pricing strategies that were remarkably different in terms of moderate call rates and data charges to prevent customer switching. Secondly, plans could be put in place by management that would encourage the development of trust and confidence through the provision of timely quality services and ensure good network coverage. Finally, managers should ensure that promotional campaigns were aimed at building relationships. In conclusion, it is quite important that managers should have adequate knowledge of the determinants of customers' switching behaviour established in the study so as to put in place preventive measures that will enhance customers' retention of improved sales and profitability. The study made a significant contribution by identifying customers' perceptions of marketing variables* that could affect switching.

KEYWORDS: customer switching behaviour, mobile telecommunication industry, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Customer switching behaviour has become a serious challenge to organisations due to the advent of more telecommunications companies in the industry as a result of the deregulation policy of the Federal Government in 2021. The intense competition arising from this exercise created the need for telecoms companies to seek for ways through which consumers can favourably perceive their products/services in order to enhance sales growth and market share.

The Nigerian telecommunications industry has experienced phenomenal growth in its subscriber base thus making it a highly competitive sector (Oghojafor, Ladi'po, Ighomereho, Oyeniyi & Odunewu, 2014). Customer brand switching in the Nigerian mobile telecommunications involves a partial or a wholesome loss of customers from one service provider to another. It has received much attention in several studies due to its effect on company performance. More worrisome is the ease with which consumers switch from one service provider to another by simply inserting a subscriber identity module (SIM) on their mobile phones. The determinants of customer switching behaviour are the factors or variables that influence their decision to switch from one service provider to another. Nimako (2012) posited that consumer switching behaviour was the process by which a consumer abandoned their relationship with a current service/product provider and replaced it with a competitor's product or service, partially or entirely for a given period.

According to the Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC) (2020) report, a total of 2,460,788 subscribers ported from one service provider to another in December 2020 among the four major GSM operators in Nigeria which comprised MTN Communication Ltd, Globacom (GLO), Airtel and 9mobile. This development may become worrisome to companies which are negatively affected in the industry as it imparts on the profit and revenue streams of such GSM mobile operators. More worrisome in the porting and competitive trend is the ease with and rate at which consumers switch from one service provider to another due to poor service and other reasons. The issue of poor service delivery became disturbing to the extent that the National Communication Commission in October, 2007, issued a letter which ordered three mobile service providers – Celtel, now Airtel, MTN and Glo-mobile to pay compensation to subscribers who suffered losses owing to the deteriorating quality of their services (Isiaka, 2010).

The advent of cellular phones is seen to be a major technological revolution in recent years. Technological advancements such as Global Systems for Mobile Communication (GSM), Code-Division Multiple Access (CDMA), Wireless Local Loop (WLL) and 4G and emerging 5G technology combined with a rise in the number of service providers lead to competition among telecommunications companies. The intense competition has resulted in providing multiple options a vast range of tariffs and combination of products. Besides, the telecommunications industry in Nigeria and the world over has increased in scope in terms of a variety of services such as email, social media, messenger services, video, conferencing, gaming, blogging and on-demand music etc (Cronin & Taylor, 2000; Gunjan & Surinder, 2019).

Academic literature extols the benefits of preventing customers from switching service providers (Ganesh, Arnold & Reynolds, 2000; Keaveney & Parthasarathy, 2001). The authors shared a common view that switching reduced revenues and profits. For continuous service utilities such as mobile telecommunications, the effect of customer switching behaviour is particularly devastating as the firms spread high fixed costs over an installed customer base and departing customer's lower future revenue streams but not fixed costs. Furthermore, it costs more to acquire new customers than to prevent them from defecting (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996).

It is widely known among services marketers that having customers, not merely acquiring customers, is crucial to service firms (Berry, 1980). Thus, satisfying and creating a favourable impression of the product in the minds of consumers become the priority of any organization (Asiagwu, Mojekeh & Anyasor, 2021). As a result, companies are constantly trying to build mutual relationships with their customers through delivering better value products and meeting their expectations. To this end, switching behaviour has received much attention in recent years owing to its potential to drain a company's overall performance.

Consumers of telecommunications products and services in Nigeria vary, so also their tastes, needs and expectations (NCC Press Release, 2020). User satisfaction is very important in today's business world as, according to Deng, Wieand Zhang (2009), the ability of a service provider to create high degree of satisfaction is crucial for product differentiation and developing a strong relationship with the user. According to Hanif, Sehrishand and Adnan (2010), user satisfaction makes the phone users loyal to one telecommunication service provider. User satisfaction can help the brands to build long and profitable relationships with their users (Haughton &Topi, 2007). Although it is costly to generate satisfied and loyal users of a product or service, Anderson, Fornell and Mazvancheryl (2004) noted that it would prove profitable in the long run for the firm to keep them from switching.

Research shows that having customers, service quality (Bitner 1990; Boulding, Kalna, Staelin, & Zeithaml, 1993), relationship quality (Crosby &Stephens, 1987) and overall service satisfaction (Cronin, Brady & Hult, 2000) can improve customers' intentions to stay with a firm. Organizations are faced with issues relating to loss of customers from one service provider to another and the potential factors that make them switch. Service firm executives are also concerned about the negative effects of customer switching on market share and profitability (Rust & Zahorik 1993). At the minimum, switching costs a service firm the customers' future revenue stream. But the loss is even more damaging when other effects are considered. First, the loss of a continuing service customer is a loss from the high margin sector of the firm's customer base because continuing customers increase their spending at an increasing rate, purchase at full-margin rather than discount prices, and create operating efficiencies for service firms (Leichheld & Sasser, 1990). Second, the costs associated with acquiring new customers are incurred. New account setup, credit searches and advertising and promotional expenses can add up to five times the cost of efforts that might have enabled the firm to retain a customer (Peters, 1988). Operating costs rise as the service firm learns the need of its new customer, and the customer learns the procedures of the firm. Executives need research-based knowledge if they are to avoid the revenue-reducing and cost-incurring impacts of customer switching.

Several studies on consumer switching behaviour have identified different determinants of switching but they often conflict on how these determinants behave. For example, Yavas, Benkenstein and Stuhildreier (2004) asserted that poor service quality was the root cause of bank switching, whereas Gerrard and Cunnigham (2004) maintained that price was more influential than service quality when switching banks. Keaveney (1995), Colgate and Hedge (2001), Sahari, Othman, Jakpor and Nichol (2020) also investigated the reason why customers switched service providers but the studies were undertaken in settings outside the Nigerian telecommunications industry. This scenario warrants a context specific study that will contribute in one way or the other to clarifying this ambiguity.

In addition, there are several articles in the literature that examine service switching but they either focus on the switching process in a particular industry or are qualitative in nature. For example, customer switching has been related to perceptions of quality in the mobile telecommunications industry (Rust & Zahorik, 1993), overall dissatisfaction in the insurance industry (Crosby & Stephens, 1987) service encounter failures in retail stores (Kelley, Hoffman & Davis, 1993) and taste, price and switching cost in alcohol beverage industry (Ugwanyi, 2017). However, the industry-specific nature of the studies necessarily limits the generalizability of these findings and leads us to adopt the broader, cross industry perspective endorsed by many researchers such as (Berry, 2000), Keaveney's (1995) work on proposing a customer service switching behaviour model and Lovelock's (1996) work on services classification scheme which are examples of research from the broader, cross industry perspective.

Some of the key factors which have an impact on customer switching behaviour are service quality (including service adequacy and their perceptions of their quality of service) proactive approach of the service providers to minimize switching and retaining customers and various patterns of behaviour exhibited by the customers (Baumann, Boltz, Ebling, Koenig, Loss, Merkel, Niene & Walzehan, 2017; Gunjan & Batra, 2019). Put together, an understanding of the predicting factors responsible for switching behaviour in the Nigerian telecommunications sector will lend a voice to the ongoing debate in the field of consumer switching behaviour especially in a developing economy like Nigeria. Also, this understanding will help to develop a robust and comprehensive conceptual policy framework that is suitable for a typical emerging market with enormous informality, hence, the necessity to carry out an empirical investigation to determine the predictors of consumer switching behaviour in the Nigerian telecommunications industry.

Statement of the Problem

The intense competition as a result of the influx of mobile telecommunications service providers in the telecommunications industry has resulted to a situation where telecoms companies offer services with similar features that warrant subscribers to switch from one service provider to another. This development has a resultant effect on negatively affected companies with respect to a reduction in sales and market share. In a fiercely competitive

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marketing environment such as Nigeria, the survival and performance of any business organization is dependent on the pool of customers it has and is able to retain to sustain optimal profitability and as mentioned earlier, to meet customers' expectation which is central to their satisfaction. Ajala (2017) asserted, that the emergence of three Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) licensed mobile operators, ECONET wireless now Airtel, MTN and Airtel, offshoots of the incumbent operator, NITEL, gave rise to the competition for revenue maximization and market share among the key players in the mobile telecommunications industry.

Interestingly, getting consumers to become loyal to one's brand and moving non-loyal consumers up the loyalty ladder to a point where they become advocates for your brand is crucial to maximizing revenue in the long-run. On the contrary, brand switching seems to undermine profit maximization and many studies have looked into the negative effect of brand switching as well as the factors which may result in brand switching behaviour in various contexts (Ajala, 2017; Asiagwu, Mojekeh & Anyasor, 2021; Chigwendea & Govender, 2021; Masuku, 2015; Wali, Wright & Uduma, 2015). In addition, understanding customers' relationship is crucial for service and product development of a company as the ability to sustain a long relationship between the service provider and the customer is essential since it is easier to hold customers than attract new ones. Therefore, it is important for the companies to develop an understanding of the attributes that influence customers' decisions so as to prevent them from switching. Due to the complexity of customers' minds, there is often not just one single reason for a customer to switch services. The factors that lead to the final decision to switch have to be recognized and companies need to adjust their actions to them.

Arguably, extant literature on switching behaviour abound. (Nimako, 2012; Lim, Yeo, Goh & Koh, 2018; Jam & Matolia, 2019; Bansal & Majit, 2019). However, large chunks of the studies were conducted in other economies of the world thereby making their assertions and findings not totally relevant to a typical developing economy like Nigeria. Therefore, it is expedient to carry out a context- specific study. Although attempts were made to develop switching behaviour models (Keaveney, 1999; Bansal &Taylor, 1999), it is pertinent to note that, to date, no specific set of switching antecedents have been identified. (Bansal & Taylor, 1999b; Keaveney, 1995; Merwe, 2015). This means that a gap in research still exists as empirical studies that investigate predictors of consumers switching behaviour from the Nigerian telecommunications industry perspective are few and under reported hence, the need to study this germane sector of the economy in order to add value to knowledge. Accordingly, the main objective of this study is to empirically investigate the factors which influence customer switching behaviour in the Nigerian Telecommunication industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Switching Behaviour

Product switching stems from customers' change of loyalty from one supplier of product to another similar firm producing the same things. Switching intent is the inclination of a consumer to dismiss their relational bond with one firm to port to another firm producing a similar product (Chuang, 2011). Keaveney (1995) saw consumer switching behaviour as a scenario where a customer favoured another service provider different from their initial supplier. Brand switching among mobile network users is rampant and is a subject of concern because of the economic cost to the suppliers.

Juan, Yolanda and Fco Javier (2006) researched the impact of customer relationship characteristics on customer switching behaviour with a critical look at the differences between switchers and stayers. They aimed to reveal how relationship marketing acclaimed the relevance of building long-term relationships in enhancing firms' viability and assuring their future profitability. The study obtained a data set from a panel survey (Home Online) of technology users in the United Kingdom and the proposed hypotheses were tested on the fixed-line telephone sector using logistic regression. The results showed that a deep relationship with customers could deter customers' propensity to switch fixed-telephone suppliers.Divine (2014) researched switching behaviour and customer relationship management: the Iceland experience. The article accessed the reason behind customers switching from one supplier to another supplier and explained how long-term relationship building could reduce switching behaviour especially in a competitive market where the tendency of customers to switch from one network service provider was high. The study revealed that long term relationships influenced customers' switching behaviour.

Many authors defined switching in various contexts especially with cognizance to the area of study being researched upon. More specifically, switching behaviour was studied within the context of a physical product business or service business or from a psychological perspective. Quoquab, Yasin and Abu (2014) in their study on brand switching of mobile phone services defined switching as "dropping the existing service provider's service once and replacing it with another at the time of purchasing the SIM card". Within this context, switching is meant to mean that a consumer exits a provider's telecommunications service usage in preference to another service provider with the intent of not patronizing the services of the original service provider. Lei, Yuwei, Zhansheng and Dewall (2017) in their study on social exclusion and consumer switching behaviour saw consumer switching as a term which could be regarded as brand switching, that is, voluntarily moving from an incumbent's offering to a new offering. Al-kwifi and Ahmed (2015) cited Ping (1993) who conceptualized brand switching as discontinuing a relationship with one brand and forging a relationship with a new and more attractive brand. Brand switching has also been referred to as giving up utility of a pre-existing relationship with a brand (Wathne, Biong & Heide, 2001).

All the above definitions point to a single idea of severing ties with a brand and moving on to building a relationship with a new brand. It is left to wonder what gives rise to the predisposition to switch brand. Further research in the area of brand switching showed that consumers switched brands, be it a product or service brand, for different reasons. One of such reasons is the utility-driven and process-driven motives which Lei, Yuwei, Zhansheng and Dewall (2017) discussed in their work. Similarly, Lam, Ahearne, Hu and Schillewaert (2010) posited that social mobility in addition to functional utility maximization were key perspectives from which consumers could exhibit switching behaviour.

The Utility-Driven Perspective: It was derived from the classical economic theory of expected utility (Lei, Yuwei, Zhansheng & Dewall, 2017) which defined utility as the amount of satisfaction a consumer derived from a product or service (Zhao & Freiheit, 2017). The perspective holds the view that consumers are increasingly likely to switch brands if they perceive that a new product or service would bring them greater benefits/utility than the incumbent product/service (Lam, Aheame, Hu, and Schillewaert 2010). Usually, it is based on the previous experience the consumer may have had with the current product or service which would have been found to be unpleasant and unsatisfactory, thus making switching justifiable (Lei, Yuwei, Zhansheng & Dewall, 2017).

By implication, the product or service features and attributes as well as the perceived benefits to be derived could serve as a yardstick to switch brands. However, it can be argued that consumers may switch brands for reasons other than the satisfaction to be derived from a product/service. For example, a consumer may decide to switch to a new fast-food brand because a member of the family or a friend patronizes that brand, or it may be out of sheer dislike for the product or service, or for cultural reasons. Based on the premise of this argument, Lei, Yuwei, Zhansheng and Dewall (2017) proposed the process-driven motive for brand switching. The Process-Driven Perspective: According to Lei, Yuwei, Zhansheng and Dewall, (2017), this perspective suggests that brand switching is a psychological process which provides psychological benefits to the consumer. Consumers are not very concerned with the benefits of the switching decision but tend to demonstrate flexibility in the choices they make.

Brand Switching as Social Mobility: Lam, Ahearne, Hu and Schillewaert (2010) viewed this perspective as a shift from the functional utility maximization perspective. They explained that consumers switched brands as a way of expressing themselves. It hinges on the social identity theory and takes into cognizance the socio-psychological factors that motivate a consumer to switch brands. In essence, it means that in an attempt for consumers to achieve their ideal self or move away from their actual self to the ideal or ought self, they would switch brands. Although this school of thought may play a huge role in the aspect of luxury products and services, it may not be a very influential factor in consumers' disposition to switch fast food brands. Hence, this study also focused on the functional utility dimension of brand switching which examines the perceived benefits consumers consider before making the decision to defect to a new brand/service provider.

The Effect of Switching Behaviour

Keaveney and Parthasarathy (2001) and Reichheld (1996) found that customer switching behaviour reduced firms' earnings and profits. Additional profits are lost because the initial investment on the customer (e.g., consulting or advertising costs) are wasted and further costs are required to obtain a new customer (Colgate, Steward& Kinsella, 1996). In Reichheld and Sasser's (1990) work, customer defection was seen as having a stronger ability to impact on revenue than on scale, market share, unit costs and other factors that were usually associated with competitive advantage. Customers tend to behave unfavourably such as switching service providers, if a service provider's performance is inferior (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996). Furthermore, customer switching can bring negative word-of-mouth advertising which can hurt a service provider's reputation and image (Diane, 2003).

The competitive mobile telecommunications industry is concerned with customers' switching behaviour as it normally reduces a service provider's market share and profit (Ennew & Binks,1996), Garland (2002), Trubik and Smith, (2000) and Rust and Zahorik (1993) studied the financial implications of customer retention and found that there was a strong relationship between customer loyalty and profitability in personal retailing. Since it is hard for service providers to meet all customers' requirements, customer defection rate is quite high in some countries. For example, customer defection rate among the United States' service providers was 20 percent in 1997 & 1998. Europe had similar defection rates in the1990's (Rongstad, 1999). Colgate (1999) investigated the New Zealand mobile telecommunication industry and found that the annual switching rate was 4 percent, and a further 15 percent of personal retailing customers intended to switch service providers. In order to minimize the negative effects of defection and enhance long-term relationships with customers, researchers focused their attention on various factors that stimulate customers to switch service providers (Matthews & Murray, 2007).

Determinants of Customer Switching Behaviour

This research evaluated the determinants affecting customer switching behaviour in the Nigerian telecommunications industry. Although other factors exist, the literature and preliminary research, mentioned above, revealed that the significant variables of concern were, price, reputation, service quality, promotional package, involuntary switching, switching cost and demographic characteristics. The variables were explained more below.

Price (Call Rate)

Price is the amount of money being charged or exchanged for a product or service (Kotler, 2012). Consumers are likely to look for a lower price range product or substitute product to purchase (Kunal & Yoo, 2010). Price is considered to be a signifier of quality in service businesses (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner & Grember, 2012). There are three components in the concept of price: objective monetary price, perceived non-monetary price and sacrifice (Zeithaml, 2008). The objective monetary price (simply put, the amount of money paid for product) is not equivalent to the perceived price (that is, the price as understood and recorded in the minds of customers) since customers do not always know or remember the actual price paid for a product. The perception of price fairness plays an important role in any exchange transaction. Price plays a vital role in the telecommunications market, especially for the mobile telecommunications service providers.

Zhang and Feng (2009) suggested that "price is the monetary cost for a customer to buy products or services." Therefore, price is an important determinant that will reflect the customer's purchasing decision. Price competition in the mobile phone sector is becoming very intense, whereby it plays a vital role, particularly for mobile phone service providers (Kollmann, 2000; Reena, 2012). Price is determined by various factors which include the willingness of the buyer to pay and accept mark-ups, the legal environment, intensity of competition, etc. Due to the importance of cost and service charges, customers are most likely to commit to a company that provides cheaper services (Mokhtar, Maiyaki & Noor, 2011).

Haque, Anwar, Yasmin, Sarwar, Ibrahim and Monen (2015) also suggested that, generally, a price dominated mass market led to customers having more choices and the chance to compare price packages of different providers. Kollmann (2000) noted that the income of the total minutes of calls made would determine the success of the commercial basis for network providers. It should be noted that the success of the telecommunications provider does not depend only on sales but rather on actual total minutes used by subscribers' mobile phones. This indicates that there are two potential subscriber decisions. One is the decision to accept and buy the telecommunication device (e.g., mobile phone) and the other is to accept the charges for using the product (service from a provider). In this regard, (Kollmann, 2000) suggested a pricing policy for the success of service providers to give consumers free of charge mobile phones. On the other hand, Reena (2012) noted that variable charges were the most significant factors in the end-users' decision to subscribe to a service. Additionally, Kollmann (2000) supported the view by stating that price, in particular, played an important role in the decision to prescribe to a mobile communications service provider. Moreover, price perception among consumers of the same products may be diverse. Nevertheless, there is an opinion that some consumers are more interested in the place they purchase their product as opposed to price or charges of service plans. Thus, price and the service providers (where the service is purchased from) are important elements of value in the minds of the consumers. Companies should, therefore, maintain and continue to offer a higher value in order to attract new customers and avoid the risk of customers switching to competitors, that is, to sustain customer loyalty (Lee & Murphy, 2005).

It is a non-disputable fact that service providers are expected to compete in both price and quality of service, especially in a competitive market. Price refers to the amount of money charged for a product or service, or the sum of the values that customers exchange for the benefits of having or using the product or service (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014). Service providers are expected to meet the consumers' requirements and expectations in price and service quality (Melody, 2001). Presently, due to breath taking competition in the Nigerian telecommunications market, telecommunications service providers tend to offer innovative services as well as at a competitive price/rate just to attract new customers and retain old ones.

Kollmann (2000) observed rightly that price played a vital role in the telecommunications market, especially for mobile telecommunication service providers. The price mentioned here is not only limited to call rate, but also covers the price of recharge vouchers, SMS charges, the internet charge (data), and so on. Clearly, a network with a cheaper price has a high tendency of subscribers switching/porting to it. Offering a high service quality and having extensive network coverage are not sufficient to attract and retain customers in the telecommunications market, hence, offering the services at an attractive and affordable rate is equally necessary to achieve a competitive advantage/gap in the market. Service Providers in Nigeria should charge tariffs which are fair and acceptable to their subscribers, taking into cognizance their price sensitivity and effects (Nimako, 2012; Nsiah & Mensah, 2014; Nwakanma, Udunwa, Anyiam, Ukwunna, Obasi & Bubagha, 2018).

Reputation (Image)

Reputation is described as a social identity, an important and intangible resource that can significantly contribute to a firm's performance and its survival (Rao,1994; Hall, 1993; Formbrun & Shanley, 1990). Rust, Zeithaml & Lemon (2001) and Aaker (2005) defined reputation as brand equity or customer equity, and combined with the credibility and faithfulness of the firm. Reputation is a key asset to firms as it is valuable, distinctive, difficult to duplicate, non-substitutable, and provides the firm with a sustainable competitive advantage (Wang, Lo, & Huit, 2003; Hall,1993). Furthermore, Gerrard and Cunningham (2004) identified reputation as one of the factors that caused customers to switch in the market. They referred to reputation as the integrity of a service provider and the perceived financial stability. The reputation construct evaluates the underlying image of the company. Image refers to the brand name and the kind of associations customers get from the product/company (Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998). Martensen, Kristensen and Gronholdt (2001) indicated that image (reputation) was an important component of the customer satisfaction model. For the companies, showing professionalism, reliability, innovation, public responsibility and adding esteem to its customer are the components of image.

The Importance of Reputation

Intensive competition offers customers greater varieties and choices in the market. Thus, reputation is identified by firms in the services sector as an essential part of their competitive strategies. The intangible characteristic of reputation forces researchers to analyses reputation and other elements. For example, reputation was analysed by economists as relating to product quality and price (Shapiro, 1983). Product quality and services produce benefits not only by lowering costs, but also by increasing competitiveness through the establishment of a good reputation and the attraction and retention of customers (Wang, Lo & Hui, 2003). In addition, reputation can enhance customer loyalty especially in the mobile telecommunications industry where quality cannot be evaluated accurately before purchase (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001; Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998; Barich& Kotler, 1991). Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) concluded that reputation could be regarded as a critical strategic tool to predict the outcome of the service-production process, and as the most reliable indicator of the ability of a service firm to satisfy a customer's desires. Barr (2009) stated that a mobile telecommunication's reputation had a strong effect on a customer's choice after investigating 7,500 customers in the United States.

Barr's (2009) results showed thirty percent of customers who deliberately excluded a mobile telecommunication when the service provider had perceived financial instability or practised questionable ethics. Weigelt and Camerer (1988) noted that positive reputation was a strategic tool that could be used by mobile telecommunications to earn additional profits. Positive reputation can provide a halo effect for the firm as it positively influences customers' evaluation, increases future profits, acts as a barrier to imitation, links to intention to purchase a service, and strengthens the competitive capability of firms (Anderson, Fornell & Mazvancheryl, 2004; Formbrun & Shanley, 1990).

Service Quality

Service quality is defined as the degree and direction between customer service expectations and perceptions (Newman, 2001). Service quality as a multi-dimensional construct is commonly based on customers' judgment about service suppliers and customers' interactions and services (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996). Chidambaram and Ramachandvan (2012) defined service quality as the overall evaluation of a particular service firm that results from comparing that firm's performance with the customer's general expectations of how firms in that industry should perform. From a customer's point of view, quality means fitness for use and meeting customers' satisfaction. Service quality is an important aspect that affects the competitiveness of a business.

Latest information has brought to notice that the perception of quality related to products or services is mainly a vital competitive variable among the world of business and it is why contemporary business era is known to be "Quality Era" (Peeler, 1996). In his explanation of service quality, Gronroos (2000) discussed the three dimensions of output which were technical quality, service performance quality and organization's mental picture. Also, Harrison (2000) made some explanation for the dimensions of physical quality, interactive quality and organizational quality as three dimensions of service quality. Even though service quality was categorised into two, that is process quality and output quality, but the information was inadequate. Ten dimensions of service quality were pointed out in their most important studies. But, progressive studies, showed that there was a serious connection among the dimensions (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996). Therefore, they made a combination of the dimensions and used the fivefold dimensions of Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy and Tangibles as the foundation for measuring service quality which is called SERVQUAL. In their studies, it was highlighted that SERVQUAL was a durable and consistent range of measurement for service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithml & Berry, 1994).

Telecommunications industries widely make use of SERVQUAL even in a diverse environment that has to do with culture, and it has proved to be highly reliable and valid (Sureschander, Rayenden & Anantharaman, 2002). A research carried out in South Africa on mobile telecommunication by Vander-Wal, Pampallis and Bond (2015) utilized SERVQUAL with a few modifying characters. The result of the modification of the instrument was 0.95 scale reliability. As they researched on the quality of service in telecoms, the criterion, a good service quality, was related to reliability, availability, security, assurance, simplicity and flexibility (Ward & Mullee, 1997). The features of service quality in telecommunications are:

Call Quality

In the United States in 2008, a survey of 22,052 users of wireless phones was carried out. The directory of the satisfied Wireless Phone Users showed that a vital scope of service quality was part of customer satisfaction with links to call quality, among others (Customer Satisfaction Index, 2009). Also, Australian Communications and Media Authority, ACMA (2008), undertook a qualitative and quantitative research study on consumer satisfaction. The details of the study were that the highest levels of dissatisfaction with mobile phone services were issues such as drop-outs, interference and poor call quality.

Value Added

Value added service is significant to the dimensions that emerge in customer satisfaction (Ozer & Aydin, 2005). A study of mobile phone customers' satisfaction with quality dimensions was undertaken in 2006 in Finland and in other Scandinavian (Denmark, Sweden) countries. The results detailed that the important issue of service quality included service context, the service providers' image and value-added services (Sigala, 2006).

Customer Support

This has to do with the services of helping customers to effectively and accurately utilize a product. It includes helping in installation, training, troubleshooting, maintenance, upgrading and the disposal issue of a product, especially products that are technological such as televisions, computers, mobile phones, software products and other electronic products. It can be called technical support (Gerpott, Rams & Schindler, 2001). Customer support automation involves issues that are recognized by the service providers and their resolutions to sustain incidents being delivered mechanically by expert systems. The types of automated service include proactive support, pre-emptive support, self-support and assisted support.

1. **Proactive Support Automation:** refers to an automated resolution that minimizes waste of time and supports availability of service 24/7. This can be done by constantly following up and checking with measures that are analytic so as to facilitate monitoring the service and solving any difficulty.

2. **Preemptive Support Automation:** refers to a support solution generated from an application with the use of some information such as log files, database queries and configuration changes, etc. The extraction of this information can foretell a service degrading issue. As a result of this, there will be an increase in service standard.

3. **Self-Support Automation:** is the term that organizations give to their support structures which provide on-line libraries and tools for self-help and solutions that are easy to troubleshooting automatically that has accurately diagnosed and resolved issue.

4. **Assisted Support Automations:** are program software that allow the support of personnel to access customers' server remotely in order to diagnose and provide trouble ticket resolutions (business dictionary, 2021).

Promotional Package (Strategies)

Promotion is one of the mediums through which organizations communicate with consumers with respect to their product offerings (Rowley, 1998). Promotion is concerned with ensuring that consumers are aware of the company/firm and its products that the organization makes available to them (Root, 1994). Kotler and Amstrong (2010) stated that promotion was when companies informed, persuaded, or reminded customers and the general public of their products. Promotion is an important part of all companies, especially when penetrating new markets and making more or new customers. They also described it as the activities that communicated the products or services and their potential merits to the target customers and eventually persuade them to buy. The mobile service providers give different promotional offers like prepaid offers on top-up recharge, E-recharge mobile top up vouchers for prepaid connection, recharge top-up, bonus cards, phone alert, call management services, caller tunes, free mobile calls, short message services (SMS) offer, limited time free internet usage, various kinds of ring tone services, dialler tone services and other promotional offers to attract the mobile subscriber.

Chinnadurai (2006) analysed the increasing competition in mobile phone services, changing mobile subscriber taste and changing preferences of customers all over the world. These circumstances force companies to change their customer promotional strategies. It is well known that advertisement plays a dominant role in influencing the customers but most of the customers are of the opinion that promotional strategies of cellular companies are more sale oriented than customer oriented. More specifically, the objectives of any promotional strategy are to increase sales, maintain or improve market share, create or improve brand recognition, create a favourable climate for future sales, inform and educate the market, create a competitive advantage, relate to competitor's products or market position or improve promotional efficiency (Rowley, 1998). Promotion goes beyond mere communication of product awareness. It involves inducing the consumer to make a purchase. Promotions impact consumers' purchasing behaviour and decisions towards that particular brand, especially during sales promotion periods (Freo, 2005). This is in line with the submission of Kotler and Armstrong (2010) that, promotion is when companies inform, persuade or remind customers and the general public of their products.

Generally, a good publicizing advert adds value, captures the attention of potential customers and encourages loyalty. It dissuades switching (Mallikarjuma, Krishina, Bulla and Das, 2016). Moreover, proficient service broadcasting is relatively connected with customers' expectation of advantages and lead their buying conduct thereby preventing switching. (Sahari, Othman, Jakpur and Nichol, 2020). Gerrald and Cunningham (2004) posited that promoting the business through announcing various offers attracted more customers, and attractions such as free gifts or lucky draws publicized through adverts helped reduce switching behaviour.

In Nigeria, advertising/promotional strategies are one of the approaches used by organizations to bring to the notice of both prospective and existing customers information about the organization and its products and services. Promotion involves companies' effort employed to educate, inform, persuade or remind customers and the general public of their products (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014). The primary motive of companies is to use this marketing tool to attract new customers and compel them to make buying decisions while the existing customers are targeted for top of the mind recall and repeat purchase and loyalty. Aside companies and organizations using promotions to penetrate new markets, other motives are: increasing sales; maintaining or improving market share; creating or improving brand recognition; create a favourable climate for future sales, informing and educating the market, create a competitive advantage, relative to competitor's products or market position; improving promotional efficiency (Rowley, 2006). The above situation is significantly different from what obtains in Nigeria and most African countries (Omotayo, Oyeniyi & Joachim, 2010; Reena 2012).

Involuntary Switching

Switching behaviour is caused not only by distinct decisions, but also by involuntary factors which are not related to the distinct decisions (Roos, 1999). Keaveney (1995) described the factors which are beyond the control of either customers or the service providers as involuntary switching factors. Customers may switch unintentionally such as by moving house, changing jobs or branches being closed in their resident areas.

Therefore, relocation or other factors that are beyond the control of customers or service providers can destroy even the most satisfied service relationship (Taylor, Roos and Hamer, 2009). In addition, Friedman and Smith (1993) and Ganesh, Arnold and Reynolds (2000) noted that involuntary or unavoidable switches represented the most common switching behaviour in their studies.

Switching Costs

Switching costs are incurred when consumers switch service providers (Nguyen 2016). Nguyen (2016). Citing Porter (1988) argued that switching costs were costs that were involved when consumers switched from one service provider to another. The costs are in monetary units and there are also psychological costs of being a new customer and the effort and time wasted looking for information to join the new service provider. Nguyen (2016) also added that switching costs were defined as the challenges that consumers faced when they switched service providers. Sharmin (2017) defined switching as onetime costs that customers incurred as they moved from one service provider to another. Pourabedin, Foon, Chatterjee and Ho (2016) defined consumer switching costs as time spent, financial costs and psychological effects that a consumer suffered after switching service providers. Switching costs are a barrier that stops a consumer from switching to another service provider (Merwe, 2015). Chigwendea and Govender (2021) further added that switching costs could also be regarded as lock in costs which prevented the consumer from leaving the current service provider. Switching costs are also used as a defensive marketing tool that can give the company a competitive advantage (Sharnim, 2017). Switching costs can determine if it is easy for consumers to switch service providers. If the switching costs are low, consumers can easily switch service providers (Merwe, 2015; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) further added that switching costs could also lock in and make it difficult for subscribers to change service providers.

Merwe (2015) suggested that different types of switching models had also been developed by different authors such as Hu and Huang (2006), Edward and Sahadev (2011) and Huang and Hsieh (2012). Eappen (2014) also postulated that various forms of switching costs existed which were search costs, learning costs, loyal customer discount, customer habit, emotional costs, cognitive effort and consumer risk perception. Various researchers (Masuku, 2015; Sharmin, 2017; Shah etal. 2018; Pourabedin, et al. 2016; Willys, 2018; Bhattacharya 2013; Martins, Hor-Meyll & Ferreira 2013) suggested three types of switching costs: procedural costs, financial costs and relational switching costs. Procedural switching costs, also referred to as learning costs (Martins et al. 2013), involve the effort the consumer puts in in collecting information about the brand and following all the stages in switching the service provider (Masuku, 2015; Sharnim, 2017). Procedural switching costs are costs that are incurred when the consumer moves from one service provider to another; the switching costs involve time lost and the extra effort that is put looking for another service provider (Merwe, 2015). Procedural switching costs can also be divided into pre-switching search and evaluation costs (Nguyen, 2016; Masuku, 2015). Pre-switching costs are costs that are incurred when the consumer gathers information about the product he intends to shift to another service provider. Masuku (2015), Nguyen (2016) and Willys (2018) argued that pre-switching costs also involved an evaluation of the type of service being provided by the new service provider, costs of starting a new relationship and the process of learning the procedures of the new service provider.

Willys (2018) also suggested that procedural switching costs involved risks, setup time and costs of analysing the type of services being provided. Procedural switching costs can be very expensive, and during the learning process, the consumers may experience negative utility which may change their minds to abandon the idea of switching service providers (Masuku, 2015). Masuku further argued that procedural costs were incurred because of customers' lack of knowledge and ability to gather enough information about other brands. Procedural costs differ depending on the industrial sector and the product offering (Masuku, 2015; Nguyen, 2015). In the telecommunications industry, a consumer incurs costs by breaking long time relationships with the mobile network service provider and also, learning the operations of the new service provider (Shah, Husnain & Zubairshah, 2018).

Financial switching costs represent a loss in the monetary resources of a customer (Nguyen, 2016; Merwe, 2015; Willys, 2018). These costs usually occur in the insurance, furniture and telecommunications industries (Masuku, 2015). Masuku (2015) further added that financial costs made switching impossible because the customers would be in a long-term contract with their service provider, if the consumer switches he/she will incur sunk costs. Financial switching costs reduce the intention of switching service providers (Merwe, 2015). If the products and services are provided efficiently, the financial switching costs can be insignificant, and in the telecommunications sector, the service providers have similar products and the switching costs are insignificant as the service providers provide incentives which reduce the switching costs. Shah, Husnain and Zubairshah (2018) also argued that in the telecommunications sector, the consumer incurred costs when they informed family and friends that they had moved to a new mobile network service provider. They also incurred costs of buying a new line or SIM card.

Masuku (2015) and Willys (2018) agreed that relational switching costs caused psychological and emotional harm. Relational switching costs also involve individual and brand relationship losses (Martins, Hor-Meyll & Ferreira, 2013). Changing service providers' results in broken relationships between the service provider and the consumer (Masuku, 2015). The telecommunications company offers both contract and pre-paid lines which make it easy for consumers to switch mobile network service providers (Shujaat, Manzor & Syed, 2014). In the telecommunications sector, the customers face uncertainties and experience emotional pain when joining a new mobile network service provider (Shah, Husnain & Zubairshah, 2018). When consumers repeatedly purchase from one service provider, a bond develops between the two parties, and this bond can be a strategy that reduces switching of service providers (Merwe, 2015).

Hypotheses Formulation

Ho1: There is no significant influence between price (call rate) and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications industry in South-South Nigeria.

Ho2: There is no significant influence between reputation (image) and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications in South-South Nigeria.

Ho3: There is no significant influence of service quality and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications in South-South Nigeria.

Ho4: There is no significant influence of promotional package and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications in South-South Nigeria.

Ho5: There is no significant influence of involuntary switching and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications in South-South Nigeria.

Ho6: There is no significant influence of switching cost and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications in South-South Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The study was premised on the Keaveney Model of Customer Switching Behaviour. Some of the variables in the study were adapted from the model of consumer service switching behaviour by Keaveney (1995). He postulated that in a typical service-oriented organization with stiff competition, there were some antecedents of consumer switching behaviour. He further stated the antecedents as follows: price, inconvenience, core service failure, service encounter failure, involuntary, switching ethical problem, competition attraction and employee response to failure. More so, this study adopted the theoretical model because of its relevance to the service-oriented industry of which the Nigerian telecommunication industry is a major player. Also, the model of consumer service switching behaviour has been used in many service context studies hence, its adoption and replicability in the Nigerian telecommunications industry.

Empirical Review

The Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC) 2013 report posted that Nigeria had the highest number of mobile phone subscription in Africa as more than 93 million people, representing 16% of the continent, has total mobile subscription. The upsurge of this among customers results to switching from one brand to another Lim, Yeo, Goh and Koh (2018) opined that the demand for mobile service kept increasing around the world due to the improvement of technology in the telecommunications industry. In a study conducted in Malaysia, they concluded that word of mouth and core service failure had a positive influence on consumer switching behaviour in the telecommunication industry. Similarly, Grigorion, Majum and Lie (2018), using data from consumers across countries and regression model for data analysis, submitted that their data quality, billing experience, voice quality, pricing plans, call center experience and in store experience had positive effects on customers' retention across countries. The study revealed that consumers were less likely to switch brands when service providers improved their services in those areas.

In the same vein, Gunjan (2019), examining the reasons why customers switching service providers in the telecommunications industry administers semi structured questions to employees of the telecommunications industry found, out that advertisement, publishing from competition, bulk offers or better offers for family and friends were important drivers of customer switching behaviour. Rauf (2018) observed that the factors which affected brand switching in the Pakistan telecommunications industry such as quality of service, influences of family and price structure were among the determining factors that influenced customers' satisfaction towards brand switching behaviour.

Similarly, Rahin (2019), in Afghanistan did an empirical analysis on the factors affecting brand switching in the telecommunications sector. He identified the relationship between the factors that influenced the customers to switch from their particular service provider to others and also accessed the problems generally faced by the service provider. He posited that price, service quality, brand image and feature were the significant factors that influenced brand switching. From the foregoing, it could be derived that consumers switched from one service provider to another for various reasons. The need therefore, to point out the specific influence on consumer switching behaviour was quite paramount, particularly in the Mid-West region of Nigeria.

Sunjeev and Singh (2019) in a study in India x-rayed the factors which affected customer switching behaviour in Indian telecoms industry. They observed that customers switching from one brand to another were propelled or induced by either extrinsic or intrinsic factors. They concluded that extrinsic factors, mostly sales promotion, discounts, advertisement popularity, and intrinsic factors which included boredom, curiosity and a desire to try a new brand propelled customers. The study was conducted with the objective of building a conceptual model on the basis of various empirical studies done in the past.

Nimako and Nyame (2015) empirically examined validated theoretical models to explain antecedents and consequences of consumer switching intention in Ghana telecoms service context. They submited that switching intentions were found to negatively influence loyalty. The study also indicated that 59% of switching intentions were antecedents under push and pull while three types of mooring effect significantly influenced switching intentions.

In a study conducted in Nigeria in 2012 which identified the factors that discriminated among subscribers exhibiting willingness to drop their current service provider and those willing to stay, Oghojafor, Ladipo, Ighomereho, Oyeniyi and Odunewu (2014) concluded that the major factors were high call rates, poor service facilities, off bean, advertisement medium, availability of superior service providers and unattractive service plans.

Chang, Swati, Nwamgyu and Byounggu (2016) conducted a study in Australia on the determinants that caused customers to switch in order to build effective customer retention strategies. They attempted in attempt to provide a theoretical framework capturing customer service switching behaviour. Using survey data collection technique they identified four stages of customers' switching behaviours and suggested that motivational variables for switching behaviours differed across stages.

In another vein**,** Vishal, Vyas, Givalhior and Sonika (2013)**,** did a study on Indian banking industry with the purpose of providing an insight into the drivers that led a customer to switch from one service provider to another. Using an exploratory design, they reported that price, reputation, responses to service failure, customer satisfaction, service quality, service products, among others, had a significant effect on customer switching behaviour.

Husemand and Hamdi (2017) investigated a switching behaviour model in the Jordanian internet sector. They explored the TPB and examined the influence of including customer loyalty in switching behaviour model. They explained that among other factors, customers' attitude towards switching had a significant positive influence on customers' intention to switch to other service providers.

In a paper in Ghana that sought to investigate the factors influencing Non-Bank Financial Institution (NBFI's) customer switching behaviour, Koduah, Mann and Quaye (2017) found out that excessive pricing, poor service quality and customer dissatisfaction were statistically significant in influencing NBFLS's customer switching behaviour in Ghana.

Elete (2018) considered brand switching behaviour among millennial consumers of fast-food brands in Dublin, Ireland. The study was a quantitative research enquiry in which a total of one hundred and fifty fast food restaurant consumers were surveyed by means of a structured questionnaire. The findings revealed that consumers were prone to switching fast food brands if they perceived that certain aspects of the overall service delivery process fell below their expectation. Among those aspects were the food quality, service quality, price and sales promotion which all had a significant effect on brand switching behaviour while consumers were less likely to switch fast food brands on the basis of a strong and well-known brand name in the quick service restaurant industry.

Oseremen (2021) examined long-term relationship building and customer switching behaviour among mobile telecommunications operators in Nigeria. The population of the study included all mobile telecommunications companies and their subscribers in Edo State, Nigeria. The samples for the study were drawn from mobile network service providers and their subscribers. For service providers, three out of the nine mobile network operators were selected. The result showed that long-term relationship building (Two-way Communication, Customer retention Strategy, Customer Loyalty, and Relational Bond) had a positive statistically significant relationship with customer switching behaviour among mobile telecommunications operators. The research recommended, among others, that players of the mobile telecommunications industry (mobile network service providers) should embrace the application of long-term relationship-building to achieve, sustain and retain customers' usage of their products as that would enable them to compete better with other players in the industry. Also, they should engage in relational bonding to create attachment with the customer that would lead to customer retention and subsequently, profitability.

Wali (2016) looked at a comparative consumer study of firms' CRM practices and marketing effectiveness in the mobile telecommunications sectors in Nigeria and the UK. From the Nigerian study, it was found that mobile telecommunications firms' CRM practices were weak for their consumers, and therefore, had negatively impacted on the firms' marketing effectiveness over the years. Secondly, the study found that the factors underpinning the negative practices by Nigerian mobile telecoms operators were mainly externally motivated. That led to the emergence of six themes: service price; consumer privacy; complaints management; service courtesy; service quality; and service personalization. From the UK's study, it was found that MT firms' CRM practices were fair towards their consumer and the practices had a positive impact on consumer satisfaction and retention behaviours. That led to the emergence of seven themes which included service quality, service upgrade, service price, service personalization, service evaluation, complaints management and understanding customer expectations.

Asiagwu, Mojekeh and Anyasor (2021) investigated the determinants of brand switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications industry in South-South Nigeria. In the study, network coverage, sales promotional activities, price, service quality, customer service and switching cost were employed as the explanatory variables while brand switching behaviour was used as the dependent variable. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. Descriptive statistics and ordinary least square regression techniques were employed in analysing the data. The study found that network coverage, price, service quality and customer service had a significant positive influence on consumer brand switching behaviour, switching cost had a significant negative influence on brand switching behaviour and sales promotional activities have no significant positive influence on brand switching behaviour. The study recommended, among others, that mobile telecommunications service providers should also monitor and ensure that their network service was always strong in order to discourage their subscribers from migrating to other brands.

Adenuga's (2014) study tested a model which examined customer loyalty in telecommunications industry in Nigeria. The research collected data through questionnaires which were self-administered from a sample of mobile users of the telecoms industry in the Nigeria. The Partial Least Square analyses results showed a significant relationship and provided support for majority of the hypothesis setup according to extensive literature review such as customer satisfaction, service quality, customer support, customer expectation, among others. However, the results showed that there was no significant relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty but some other variables were switching barrier and interpersonal relationship in Nigeria. The study also discussed a few managerial suggestions and gave future recommendations.

Olatokun and Nwonne (2012) evaluated the significance of price (call rate), service quality, service availability, promotion and brand image as they affected users' perception in selecting a mobile telecommunications service provider in the Nigerian telecommunications market. They used Ibadan, a Nigerian municipality, as a case study. The study was a sample survey of a cross section of mobile phone users. Data were collected with an adapted questionnaire distributed to 367 users using convenience sampling technique. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach was adopted in understanding the users' choice process. The empirical evidence was based on a model fit from the result of factor analysis, regression analysis and chi-square goodness-of-fit statistics. The result revealed that paths to call rate, service quality and service availability were more significant in the users' choice process than promotion and brand image. It was recommended that mobile operators should reduce their expenditure on promotional activities and brand building but rather invest on network extensions, quality service delivery and product and services outlets infrastructural development while also concentrating on price reduction strategies as a way of increasing subscribers' base.

Khizindar, Al-Azzam and Khanfar's (2015) research evaluated the effect of the following variables, namely, price, service quality, brand image and trends on customer loyalty of service providers of mobile phones in Saudi Arabia. The study showed that the majority of respondents had prescribed to more than one service provider at the same time. Additionally, it was revealed that all the variables tested, price, service quality, brand image and trends, had a direct effect on customer loyalty of service providers. The results obtained from the research would offer necessary feedback for improving a company's strategy, marketing mix, services and product offerings, thereby achieving customer satisfaction and improving their customer loyalty while attracting new ones.

Olorunleke (2014), in a paper, investigated the relationship between the practices of imposing barriers on switching, the freedom of choice and ethical issues arising there from in carbonated soft drink industry in Nigeria. Using convenience sampling, a sample of 200 respondents (88 females and 112 male) was drawn from hotels, restaurants and other exclusive outlets. The study found that some consumers who were loyal to competing products could also decide not to patronize the outlets where barriers to choice were imposed thereby leading to loss of purchase. Also, where formidable and practicable, instituting barriers could provide a competitive instrument provided loss of sale could be minimized. But it should not be encouraged so that emerging products and competition could have a level playground for competition.

Chigwendea and Govender's (2021) paper presented an overview of the mobile telecommunications sector by highlighting the effect of the sector on the economy. It was followed by a discussion on the different types of contracts, with much focus on customer switching, so as to highlight that the industry was highly susceptible to customers switching service providers. The discussion then progressed to why customers switched, the costs and barriers associated with switching and what could be done to minimize such behaviour. A thorough review of relevant literature on consumer behaviour in general and customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and consumer switching behaviour in particular, as well as the antecedents of the abovementioned constructs culminated in the development of a conceptual model for managing customer switching in the mobile telecommunications industry.

Sahari, Othman, Jakpor and Nichol (2020) in study in Malasia examined the factors that influenced customer switching behaviour in banks. They collected data through questionnaires which were administered to respondents or customers who were investment account holders in Malaysia. Using multiple regression analysis for testing their hypotheses, they found that reputation, service quality, distance, switching cost, price, involuntary switching, advertising as well as religious beliefs were not significant drivers of the switching behaviour among the banking customers studied. They recommended that managers of banks should focus on service quality and give undivided attention to the pricing of their services.

Manzoor, Usman and Shahid (2020) conducted a research in Pakistan with the objective of investigating the factors affecting brand switching behaviour of customers in the telecommunications industry. Using a quantitative approach and with a sample of 204 respondents selected with convenient sampling technique, and using regression analysis to test the hypotheses for correlation, they found that price, brand image, network quality, value added services and promotional activities directly influenced customer switching behaviour among youngsters.

In addition, Sharman, Joseph and Poulose (2018), studied the determinants of consumer retention strategies for telecoms service industry in Central India with a view to finding out whether various factors such as customer loyalty, satisfaction, switching barriers, relationship management, alternative attractiveness and switching cost influenced consumer retention strategies. Using primary data collection technique with questionnaires of 450 respondents in three most populous cities in India which were selected with convenience sampling technique and analysed with moderating regression analysis, they found that loyalty, satisfaction, switching barriers and customer relationship management were positively related and they had a direct influence on customer retention although the relationship with alternative attractiveness was found to be weak.

Kawengiar (2019) studied the determinants of consumer brand switching behaviour on the purchase of mineral water products on Manado City, Indonesia. The study's objective of was to investigate the influence of promotion, price, brand image and brand commitment on consumer brand switching behaviour. He used multiple regression models to test the hypotheses in the data which were collected from a sample of consumers of mineral water products. The result revealed that price, promotion, brand image and brand commitment simultaneously and partially had a significant influence on brand switching behaviour. The study concluded that brand image had a strong influence on consumers' brand switching behaviour because customers did not want to buy a mineral water product which had a bad image.

Lastly, Ugwuanyi (2017) sought to assess the determinants of customers' brand switching behaviour in the alcohol beverage industry in Enugu, Nigeria. He specifically investigated the influence of product advertisement, taste, price, social groups and switching cost on consumers' brand switching. Using a sample size of 262 students as respondents and simple linear regression in testing hypotheses, he found that the major determinants of brand switching behaviours of alcohol consumers were product taste, price, and social group. While advertisement had very little effect, switching cost had no significant influence. The study recommended that managers should develop more effective advertising campaign programmes to increase consumers' preference for their brand.

Conceptual Framework

The research schema or conceptual framework was formulated to show the various linkages involving the research constructs such as price, reputation, service quality, promotional package, involuntary switching and switching cost based on which the study's conceptual hypotheses in chapter one was designed. The research scheme was based on extant empirical and theoretical literature. Figure 1 below showed the formulated research model to guide this investigation. The linkages in the framework constituted the basis for the formulation of six conceptual hypotheses for this study.

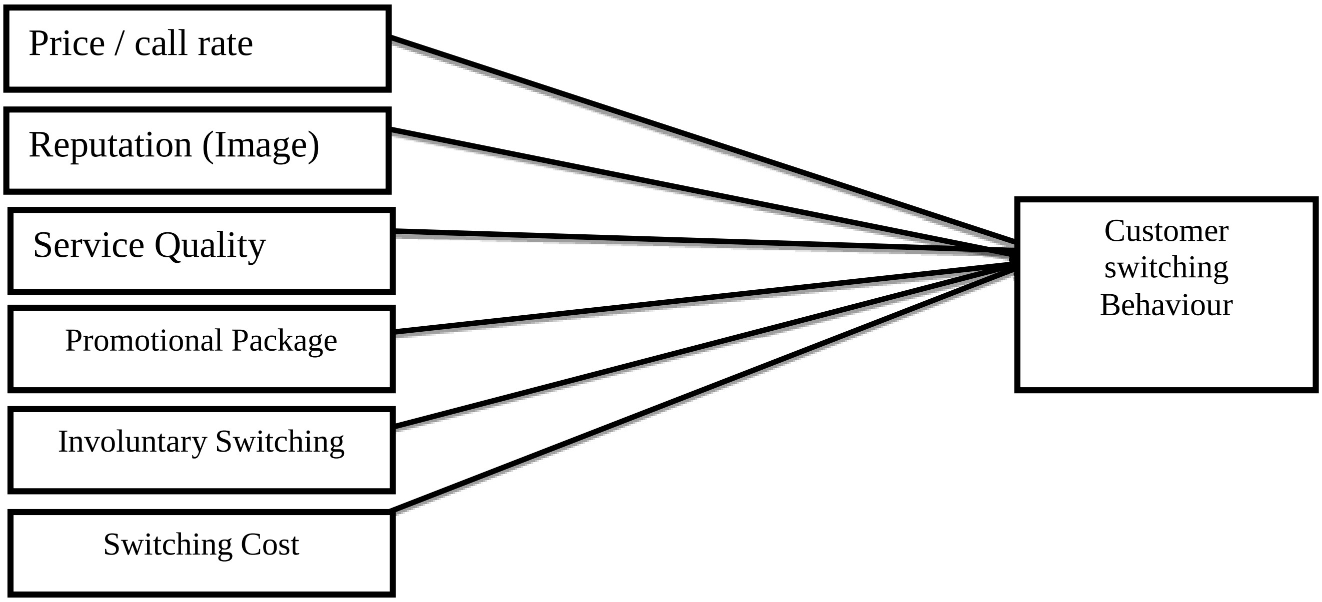

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework.
Source: Author's Conceptualisation (2023)

The conceptualization of the research model was an attempt to test the validity of the hypothesized relationships of the various constructs in the research model. The model was based on six independent variables which were price, reputation (image), service quality, promotional package, involuntary switching and switching cost while the customer switching behaviour (CSB) served as the dependent variable. Customer switching determinants were measured based on insights drawn from the empirical studies by Zang, 2009; Nimako and Nyame, 2015; Asiugwu, Mojeleh and Anyasor, 2021 as well as the theoretical review by Keaveney (1995) model and that of Colgate and Hedge, 2001

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Cross- sectional research design was adopted for this study so as to obtain the opinions of mobile telecommunication subscribers on the predicators of customer switching behaviour. The research design was appropriate because it helped to describe current practices regarding the subject matter. This study adopted the single methods of data collection where the quantitative method (survey) was used in order to enhance greater validity of the research by ensuring that there were no gaps on the information or data collected (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). It also provided numeric descriptions of the population and described events as they were (Oso & Onen, 2009). The study was conducted in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria is also known as the Niger Delta

Region. Nigeria was administratively divided into six geopolitical zones under the regime of General Sani Abacha as a way of grouping the country's states for economic and political reasons. The zone is made up of Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States in Nigeria with identical cultures, ethnic similarities and some common history (Wikipedia, 2020). The South-South geopolitical zone that is made up of six states is in line with studies of this nature as observed by Mohammed (2011) and Elete (2018). One of the things these states have in common is oil which is key to the Nigerian economy. These are the major oil producing states in Nigeria.

The population of the study was abstracted from (NCC Quarter 4 report 2020) and it comprised subscribers of the mobile telecommunications industry in Nigeria. Specifically, subscribers to mobile operators in the South-South geo political zone of Nigeria were used. The South-South geo-political zone with six states accounted for 14.5% of the total mobile subscribers in the country. By the fourth quarter of 2020, the total mobile subscribers in the South-South region stood at 29.6 million, an increase of 15.2% from 25.7 million records in the fourth quarter of 2019. The report also showed that Rivers State topped the list in the region with a total mobile subscriber of 7.46 million in the fourth quarter of 2020. It recorded an increase of 512,482 in the year, 2020, while Edo State followed closely with 7.1 million subscribers and Delta State with 6.91 million subscribers. The others included Akwa Ibom (3.91 million), Cross River (2.8 million) and Bayelsa (1.46 million) (NCC, 2020).

The researcher employed stratified sampling techniques (Kothari, 2004) or the proportionate stratified random techniques (Onyeizugbe, 2013; Omotayo, Joachim, Kolade, Chinonye & Omotayo, 2016). The choice of the sampling technique was as a result of the population of the study which was found in groups or strata in the South-South geo political zone of Nigeria.The reasons for the choice of using the stratified random sampling were not far-fetched. First the study population was found in groups and strata and secondly, it was appropriate because it was a design that met smaller sampling error criteria in line with (Kothari, 2004) who opined that a researcher should select a design that had a smaller sampling error. The technique was also suitable for the survey of institutions or households within a given geographical area (Ahmed, 2009). The researcher chose the subscribers in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria because eliciting data from them would be easy and also take a shorter time to accomplish.

In order to implement the procedure, the steps below, as suggested by (Hair, Bush & Ortinau 2010), were used. Dividing the target population into homogenous subgroups or strata. In this study, the target population was divided into the states in South-South Nigeria which are Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Cross-River. Drawing random samples from each stratum: Since the population is divided into strata, thereby increasing the representativeness of the population, the convenience sampling is then applied. The convenience sampling was used to randomly select samples from the cities of the states, namely, Benin City (Edo State), Asaba (Delta State), Yenagoa (Bayelsa State), Port-Harcourt (Rivers State), Uyo (Akwa-Ibom State) and Calabar (Cross-River State) for the purpose of administering questionnaires in order to obtain data from mobile telecoms service provider subscribers. A total of 400 subscribers from a finite population size of 29.6 million subscribers was used for the study after applying

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the Taro Yamane sample size determination formula. Combining the sample from each stratum into a single sample of the layer population: In that regard, the method of proportional allocation was used in each case whereby samples from different strata were kept to the size of the stratum that were computed with a proportional allocation method. The details of the computation were in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Sample Size Distribution and Allocation of Copies of the Questionnaire

S/N	Name of states	Population	Allocation	Copies of questionnaire
1.	Rivers State.	7460000	0.252 * 400 = 100	100
2.	Edo State	7100000	0.240 * 400 = 96	96
3.	Delta State	6910000	0.233 * 400 = 93	93
4.	Akwa Ibom State	3910000	0.132 * 400 = 53	53
5.	Cross River State	2800000	0.095 * 400 = 38	38
6.	Bayelsa State	1460000	0.049 * 400 = 20	20
Total		**29640000**	**400**	**400**

Source: Author's computation, 2023.

Arising from (NCC Quarter 4 report 2019), the total active subscribers to mobile telecommunications service in South-South Nigeria was 29640000.
The sample size of this study was determined using the Taro Yamaneh Formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N\,(e^2)}$$

n = sample size
N = Population
e = 5% (0.05)

Workings

$$n = \frac{29640000}{1 + 29640000\,(0.05^2)}$$

$$n = \frac{29640000}{1 + 29640000\,(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{29640000}{1 + 74100}$$

$$n = \frac{29640000}{74101}$$

n = 399.9
Sample size was 400

Sample size distribution and allocation of copies of the questionnaires, according to total active subscribers to mobile telecommunications service in South-South Nigeria, were computed and shown in Appendix IV of the study.

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A questionnaire that met the requirement of the study was designed to elicit necessary information from the subscribers to mobile telecommunication operators in South-South Nigeria. The questions were drawn based on the determinants of customer switching behaviour involving service relational attributes and demographic characteristics, and abstracted from the extant literature. A pilot study was undertaken in order to ascertain the readability of the questionnaire and correct any ambiguity related to the questions. The constructs of the study were drawn based on the extant literature and they were also influenced by the model of the study. That was done with a view to validate the research questions and accomplish the research objectives. Some of the questions were self-constructed to cover the diversity of research problems. The questionnaire consisted of two main parts. The first part mainly focused on demographics, and included personal and sensitive questions regarding the respondents' gender, age, income and education. They were measured on an interval scale.

The second part of the questionnaire covered the questions relating to the independent variables, price, reputation, service quality, promotional package, involuntary switching and switching costs. All the questions in the section were constructed with 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5-1 (Strongly Agree), (Agree), (Neutral), (Disagree) and (Strongly Disagree). Five questions were used to measure the dependent variable which was the customer switching behaviour. The 5 Point Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3= Neutral (N), 4=Agree (A), 5=Strongly Agree) (SA) is a scale that is commonly used for questionnaires, and is mostly used in survey research. Our research was also survey based and so it was easy for us to interpret the analysis. The advantage of using a Likert scale can be to create interest among respondents as, according to Robson (1993), a Likert scale can be interesting for users who often enjoy completing a scale like this. Another advantage can be simplicity as Newman (2001) suggested that the real strength of Likert scale was the simplicity and ease of use.

In an attempt to measure the reliability of the research instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to a pilot test by distributing 40 copies of the instrument to subscribers in Delta State (Warri) based on convenience sampling method. The Cronbach Alpha for internal consistency of the items of the questionnaire was conducted using the reliability procedure in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23, the values of α ranged from 0 – 1. Hence, the closer the value of α to 1, the more accepted the reliability of the data (Fisher, 2010). According to George and Mallery (2003), the rule of thumb that is generally acceptable is as follows:

$\alpha \geq 0.9$ = Excellent (High – Stakes testing)
$0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.9$ = Good (Low – Stakes testing)
$0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$ = (Acceptable)
$0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$ = (Poor)
$\alpha < 0.5$ = Unacceptable

Table 2: Reliability of Constructs

	Cronbach's Alpha	**Based on Standardized Items**	**No of Items**
Price/Call Rate	.704	.703	5
Reputation	.731	.716	5
Service Quality	.700	.730	4
Promotional Package	.742	.735	4
Involuntary Switching	.705	.732	3
Switching Cost	.720	.738	3
Customer's Switching Behaviour	.750	.752	2

***Source*: Field Survey, 2023 (SPSS OUTPUT) version 23**

The test to determine the internal consistency of the research instrument was conducted on the retrieved copies of the questionnaire with the aid of the (SPSS). Cronbach Alpha Reliability procedure and values were shown in Table 3.2. From the Table, it could be observed that all the variables of the study met the acceptable threshold.

Validity is defined as a judgment of whether data really provide evidence on what they are supposed to be about the research instrument (Dawson, 2007). Validity measures the accuracy of the research instrument. In an attempt to test the face validity of the research instrument, the measuring instrument was presented to the research supervisors and colleagues. Feedback on the relevance of the instrument in measuring the variables it was designed to measure was got.In order to ascertain the content validity of the research instrument, the research supervisors and other experts on the subject matter of this study were given the measurement tool in order to provide feedback on the effectiveness of each question in measuring the constructs (Ghauriand & Gronhaug, 2002). Informed decisions were made based on their feedbacks. Descriptive statistical tools were used for the data analysis in order to test for normality and to get the respondents' opinions on issues relating to the research constructs. Multiple regressions technique was used to test the hypotheses with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.

Model Specification

For the purpose of testing relationships among variables in the study, the advanced multivariate technique that sought to explain the relationships among multiple variables was used. The multiple regressions which, according to (Hair, Bush and Ortinan, 2010), analyses the linear relationship between dependent variable and multiple independent variables by estimating coefficients for the equation in a straight line was found suitable for the study. In the study, the dependent variable, switching behaviour and six other independent variables or predictors variables, namely, price (call rate), reputation (image), service quality, promotional package, involuntary switching and switching cost were selected from the extant literature by Keenveney (1995), Zang (2009) and Asiagwu, Mojekeh and Anyasor (2021) to mention but a few, after proper scrutiny. Grant (2007) asserted that multiple regression was a multifunctional technique that could be used for description, prediction and inferences. Deducing from that, the model was best fit for the study because its broad objective was to describe, predict and draw inference from the data collected for the purpose of the study.

The model was specified as follows:

$SWB = \beta_0 + \beta PR + \beta_2 RT + \beta_3 SQ + \beta_4 PP + \beta_5 IS + \beta_6 SC + E$
Where SWB= Switching behaviour (the outcome of interest)
β_0 = Constant
PR = Price (Call Rates)
RT = Reputation (Image)
SQ = Service Quality
PP = Promotional Package
IS = Involuntary Switching
SC = Switching Cost
β_1---> β_6>0; and 6 >0
= coefficient and a prior sign of the independent variables.
Ei = error term.

Specifically, the coefficients in the first model were the parameters of the model and they described the direction and strength of the relationship involving the predictors of switching and customer switching behaviour while the Ei represented the stochastic error term or random residual term which captured other factors that could cause variations in the dependent variables but were not included in the model. The apriori expectations for the variables were that all the predictors of switching behaviour were expected to have a positive relationship with the dependent variable (switching behaviour).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha reliability was conducted for the reliability analysis. The result of Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability showed that all the variables in our study had a good internal consistency with coefficients greater than .6 (See Table 4.5.1 below).

Table 3: Reliability of Constructs

	Cronbach's Alpha	**Based on Standardized Items**	**No of Items**
Price/Call Rate	.704	.703	5
Reputation	.731	.716	5
Service Quality	.700	.730	4
Promotional Package	.742	.735	4
Involuntary Switching	.705	.732	3
Switching Cost	.720	.738	3
Customer's Switching Behaviour	.750	.752	2

***Source*: field survey, 2021 (SPSS OUTPUT) version 23**

As shown in Table 3 above, the reliability constructs of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of all the independent and dependent variables which included price/call rate, as 0.704, reputation, 0.731, service quality, 0.700, promotional package, 0.742, involuntary switching, 0.705, switching cost, 0.720 and customer switching behaviour 0.750 showed a good internal consistency as they were not below 0.7 (Pallant, 2007).

Interpretations of the Multiple Regression Results

Regression analysis was carried out to analyse the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. Linear regression analysis was completed on the constructs of Price/call Rate (PR), Reputation (Re), Service Quality (SQ), Promotional Package (PP), Involuntary Switch (IS) and Switching Cost (SC) as the predictors or constant and the dependent variable of Customer Switching Behaviour (CSB).

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.770[a]	.499	.421	.63844	1.866

***Source*: Field Survey, 2023 (SPSS OUTPUT) version 23**

a. Predictors: (Constant), Price/Call Rate, Reputation, Service Quality, Promo Pac, Inv switching, Switching Cost.
b. Dependent Variable: Customer switching behaviour. (SPSS Output)

The Table above showed the model summary of the regression analysis. It showed a correlation coefficient (R) of .770 which was a positive strong correlation. The R square told how much of the variation in the independent variables was explained by the model. The value was .499 and was expressed as a percentage (multiply by 100, by shifting the decimal point two places to the right). It meant that our measurement model explained 50% of the variation in the dependent variable (consumer switching behaviour). It was quite a respectable result (particularly when compared to some of the results that were reported in the literature review). Adjusted R square value provided a better estimate of the true population value. The value was .421 which indicated that the numbers of independent variables and the sample size of this study were large enough for a study of this magnitude.

Table 5: ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	44.767	6	7.461	18.305	.000[b]
	Residual	158.149	388	.408		
	Total	202.916	394			

***Source*: Field survey, 2023 (SPSS OUTPUT) Warp-PLS 6.0 software**

a. Dependent Variable: Customer switching behaviour.

a. Predictors: (Constant), Price/Call Rate, Reputation, Service Quality, Promo Pac, Inv Switching and Switching Cost (SPSS Output)

The Table 5 above revealed the analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the regression analysis. ANOVA value assessed the statistical influence of the result. It tested the null hypotheses that multiple R in the population equals led 0, i.e., $p<0.5$ (Muijs, 2004; Pallant, 2007). The ANOVA in this study was 18.305 which was statistically significant at 0.00. It implied that the research model was a good-fit. Also, because the p-value was less than 0.05, the model was significant.

Table 6: Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.431	.199		2.171	.031
	Price/Call Rate	-.063	.074	-.053	-.850	.396
	Reputation	.184	.071	.154	2.597	.010
	Service Quality	-.312	.085	-.215	-3.673	.000
	Promo Pac	.402	.073	.283	5.483	.000
	Inv Switching	.064	.060	.058	1.078	.282
	Switching Cost	.429	.059	.346	7.285	.000

***Source*: field survey, 2023 (SPSS OUTPUT) version 23**

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Switching Behaviour
SPSS Output

The regression equation earlier stated in chapter three was expressed as follows in line with the coefficients.

Recall:

$SWB = \beta_o + \beta_1 PR + \beta_2 RT + \beta_3 SQ + \beta_4 PP + \beta_5 IS + \beta_6 SC + \varepsilon$

Thus; $SWB = .731 + -.063PR + .184RT + -.312SQ + .402PP + .064IS + .429SC + .199$.

Where SWB = customer switching behaviour of mobile telecommunications service
PR = price/call rate
RT = reputation
SQ = service quality
PP = promotional package
IS = Involuntary switching
SC = Switching cost

The smaller the value of significance (p- value) and the larger the t- value, the greater the contribution of that predictor. In this model, price/call rate ($t = 0.850$, $p = 0.396 > 0.05$), reputation ($t = 2.597$, $p = .010 < 0.05$), service quality ($t = 3.673$, $p = .000 < 0.05$), promotional packages ($t = 5.483$, $p = .000 < 0.05$), involuntary switching ($t = 1.078$, $p = .282 > 0.05$)

switching cost (t = 7.285, p = .000 < 0.05) all had a significant effect on consumer switching behaviour except price and involuntary switching (see. Table 4.7.3). From the magnitude of the t- values, we could see that switching cost had the highest effect, followed by promotional package, service quality, reputation, involuntary switching and price/call rate, in that order.

More so, standardized coefficients Beta were calculated because they provided an insight into the importance of a predictor in the model. The Beta value for switching cost (.346) indicated that switching cost had the strongest relationship on consumer switching behaviour while promotional package showed the second strongest relationship (β = .283), service quality showed the third strongest predictor, reputation showed the fourth strongest predictor, involuntary switching showed the fifth strongest predictor and price/call rate showed the sixth strongest predictor.

DISCUSSION

Ho_1: Prices (call rate) of mobile telecommunications in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria has no significant influence on customer switching behaviour. Price/call Rate (PR) variable was averaged and a regression was performed. Price/call Rate (PR) accounted for 6.3% variation in the customer switching behaviour (CSB). The F ratio and significance value (F = 18.305, p < 0.001). Price/call Rate (PR) average had a significant positive effect on customer switching behaviour averaged, (β = -.063, $p \leq .396$). The results clearly directed the positive effect of the PR. Moreover, the R^2 = -.063 revealed that the model explained 06.3% of the variance in CSB. Table 4.7.3 above showed the summary of the findings. P >= 0.005 so, the hypothesis was true and we accepted the null hypothesis which says that there is no significant and positive relationship between price (call rate) and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications industry in South-South Nigeria

Ho_2: Reputation (image) of mobile telecommunications industry in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria has no significant influence on customer switching behaviour. Reputation variables were averaged and regression was performed. Reputation averaged accounted for18.4% variation in customer switching behaviour. The F ratio (F = 18.305, p <0.001). Reputation averaged had a significant positive effect on customer switching behaviour averaged, (β = .184, $p \leq 0.010$). The results clearly directed the positive effect of the Re. Moreover, the R^2 = .154 revealed that the model explained 15.4% of the variation in CSB. The Table below showed the summary of the findings; sig of 0.10 which indicated that p <= 0.005. Thus, the hypothesis was false. We rejected the hypothesis which says there is no significant and positive relationship between reputation (image) and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications industry in South-South Nigeria

.Ho_3: Service Quality of mobile telecommunications industry in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria has no significant influence on customer switching behaviour. Service Quality variables were averaged and regression was performed. Service Quality averaged accounted for a 31.2% variation in customer switching behaviour. The F ratio (F = 18.305, p < 0.001). Service Quality averaged had a significant positive effect on BI averaged, (β = -0.312, $p \leq$

0.000). The results clearly directed the positive affect of the SQ. Moreover, the $R^2 = -.215$ revealed that the model explained 21.5% of the variance in CSB. Table 4.7.3 above showed the summary of the findings; sig = 0.00 which meant that $p <= 0.05$. To that end, hypothesis 3 was false. We reject the hypothesis which revealed that there was no significant and positive relationship between service quality and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications in South-South Nigeria.

Ho_4: Promotional package of mobile telecommunications in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria has no significant influence on customer switching behaviour.Promotional Package variables were averaged and regression was performed. Promotional package averaged accounted for a 40.2% variation in the customer switching behaviour. The F ratio ($F = 18.305$, $p < 0.001$). Promotional package averaged had a significant positive effect on customer switching behaviour averaged, ($\beta = 0.402$, $p \leq 0.000$). The results clearly directed the positive effect of the PP. Moreover, the $R^2 = .283$ showed that the model explained 21.5% of the variance in CSB. Table 4.7.3 above showed the summary of the findings. Hypothesis 4: sig = 0.00 which meant that $p <= 0.05$. To that end, hypothesis 4 was false. We rejected the hypothesis which said that there was no significant and positive relationship between promotional package and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications in South-South Nigeria

Ho_5: Involuntary switching of mobile telecommunications in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria has no significant influence on customer switching behaviour. Involuntary switching variables were averaged and regression was performed. Involuntary switching averaged accounted for a 06.4% variation in the customer switching behaviour. The F ratio ($F = 18.305$, $p < 0.001$). Involuntary switching averaged had a significant positive effect on customer switching behaviour averaged, ($\beta = 0.064$, $p \leq 0.282$). The results clearly directed the positive affect of the IS. Moreover, the $R^2 = .058$ revealed that the model explained 05.8% of the variance in CSB. Table 4 above showed the summary of the findings. Hypothesis 5: $P >= 0.005$. So, the hypothesis was true. We accepted the null hypothesis which said that there was no significant and positive relationship between involuntary switching and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications in South-South Nigeria.

Ho_6: Switching cost of mobile telecommunications in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria has no significant influence on customer switching behaviour. Switching cost variables were averaged and regression was performed. Switching cost averaged accounted for a 42.9% variation in customer switching behaviour. The F ratio ($F = 18.305$, $p < 0.001$). Switching cost averaged had a significant positive effect on customer switching behaviour averaged, ($\beta = 0.429$, $p \leq 0.000$). The results clearly directed the positive effect of the SC. Moreover, the $R^2 = .346$ revealed that the model explained 34.6% of the variance in CSB. Table 4 above showed the summary of the findings. Hypothesis 6: sig = 0.00 which meant that $p <= 0.05$. To that end, hypothesis 6 was false. We rejected the hypothesis which said that there was no significant and positive relationship between switching cost and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications in South-South Nigeria.

Table 7: Hypotheses table on the level of acceptance and rejection based on the regression result

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R^2	F	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis Supported
Ho_1	PR → CSB	-.063	-.053	18.305	-.850	.0396	Accepted
Ho_2	Re → CSB	.184	.154	18.305	2.597	.010	Rejected
Ho_3	SQ → CSB	-.312	-.215	18.305	-3.673	.000	Rejected
Ho_4	PP → CSB	.402	.283	18.305	5.483	.000	Rejected
Ho_5	IS → CSB	.064	.058	18.305	1.078	.282	Accepted
Ho_6	SC → CSB	.429	.346	18.305	7.285	.000	Rejected

***Source*: field survey, 2023 (SPSS OUTPUT) version 23**

The Table, 7 above showed the level of acceptance and rejection of hypotheses based on the regression result at a glance. The smaller the value of significance (p- value) and the larger the t- value, the greater the contribution of that predictor. In the model, price/call rate (t =0.850, p = 0.396 > 0.05), reputation (t = 2.597, p = .010 > 0.05), service quality (t = 3.673, p = .000 < 0.05), promotional packages (t = 5.483, p = .000 < 0.05), involuntary switching (t = 1.078, p = .282 > 0.05) and switching cost (t = 7.285, p = .000 < 0.05) all had a significant effect on consumer switching behaviour except price and involuntary switching (see. Table 4.7.3). From the magnitude of the t- values, we could see that switching cost has the highest effect, followed by promotional package, service quality, reputation, involuntary switching and price/call rate, in that order. More so, standardized coefficients Beta were calculated because they provided an insight into the importance of a predictor in the model. The Beta value for switching cost (.346) indicated that switching cost had the strongest relationship on consumer switching behaviour, promotional package showed the second strongest relationship (β = .283), service quality showed the third strongest predictor, reputation showed the fourth strongest predictor, involuntary switching showed the fifth strongest predictor and price/call rate showed the sixth strongest predictor.

The result of the hypotheses revealed that out of the six hypotheses formulated, two were accepted and four were rejected. The test result from the main hypothesis indicated that there was a high relationship between components of switching and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications industry in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria. The test revealed that at point p = 0.00, switching components, reputation, service quality, promotion package and service cost had a strong relationship with customer switching behaviour; meaning that the hypothesis which held that the switching components of customers in relations to GSM operators in Nigeria that were directly related to their switching behaviour for a particular network provider was valid and thus accepted. However, the hypothesis on price and involuntary switching in relation to customer switching behaviour was seen to have a least significant relationship.

Price/call rate and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications industry in South-South Nigeria

The multiple regression for price in the tested hypotheses affirmed that price had no positive and significant relationship with customer switching behaviour as it had a t-statistic of -0.850 and a probability value of 0.396 which were statistically insignificant. The findings were not in consonance with the studies conducted by Kwasegor, 2019 and Monsor, Usman and Shahid, 2020 which revealed that price had an influence on customer switching. However, in line with the multiple regression report, as explained earlier, Rajkumar and Charles (2011) posited that price was not always a factor which influenced customer switching. Rather, customers who were more cautious of high-quality services could decide to pay a high price to obtain such and not switch to mobile network with lower prices. Although the findings showed that the call rates charged by the telecoms operators could not significantly influence mobile phone users to make switching decisions, the special significance of price in the decision to purchase was undisputed in the telecommunications sector as it was elsewhere. It was particularly true in the mobile telecommunications sector as available studies suggested. Rahman, Haque and Ismail (2020), in a similar study in the Malaysian telecommunications market, observed that price was a significant contributor in the decision of mobile users in selecting a mobile operator. It implied that the price/ call rate of mobile service provider did not necessarily influence subscribers to switch. It therefore, meant that consumers considered other marketing variables such as network coverage and service quality which could influence their decision to stay with a service provider.

Reputation (image) and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications industry in South-South Nigeria.

It was found that reputation (image) had a positive and significant influence on customer switching behaviour in the mobile telecommunications industry in South-South, Nigeria, as it also had a t-statics of 2.597 and a probability value of .010 which were statistically significant. The result of the study showed that reputation played a significant role in customer switching. It therefore, corroborated the study by Mansoor etal (2020) which was conducted in Pakistan. That study found out that reputation had a direct effect on customer switching behaviour in the telecommunications industry. That also suggested that customers of mobile telecommunications service provider could decide to switch if they had a better perception of competitors' offerings. Such, managers should provide programmes such as advertising, publicity materials and good service quality that would enhance trust and confidence in their services.

Service Quality and customer's switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications industry in South-South Nigeria.

It was found that service quality had a positive and significant influence on customer switching behaviour in the mobile telecommunications industry in South-South, Nigeria. The result of multiple regression affirmed that service quality could constitute an important determinant of customer switching behaviour as the t-stastic of -3673 was significant at the probability value of .000. That was in consonance with a study carried out by Wal, Vander and Bond (2002) which measured service quality in cellular retail outlets in the South African environment. The authors categorically focused on perception and expectation of service quality from the

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consumers' perspective. The results in that study also showed that a significant relationship existed between the importance of a dimension to the mobile users and their perception of the service quality. The result by Rahman et al (2010) on critical factors of the choice of mobile service providers on Malaysian consumers also showed that service quality positively and significantly influenced the mobile phone user when choosing a telecoms service. It also contradicted the present study's findings. In line with the importance of service quality. Gustafsson, Johnson and Roos (2015) suggested that firms should concentrate on the improvement of service quality and charge appropriate fair prices in order to satisfy and retain their customers. So, based on the p-value of the service quality of customer switching behaviour, this study concluded that a significant and positive effect was associated with the service quality of a mobile telecoms operator in lieu of the perception of the mobile user. The implication of the findings was that mobile telecom users could switch brands, most especially due to poor service quality such as poor network coverage and web service quality.

Promotional package and customer's switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications industry in South-South Nigeria.

The multiple regression results found that promotional package was a very important determinant of customer switching behaviour as it had a value of t=5.483, p=.000<0.05, showing a great contribution as a predictor which revealed that promotional package had a positive and significant effect on customer switching behaviour. The implication of the findings was the interest in observing that despite the huge amounts of money spent on advertisement and promotional activities by the mobile telecommunications operators in Nigeria to drive profit vertically and remain competitive, this study revealed that promotion did not significantly impose on users' perception in selecting a mobile operator. The findings of this study differed in that regard from those of Rahman et al (2020) which reported that promotion significantly impacted on the Malaysian mobile user. The Nigerian mobile users differed significantly in their view on promotional offers by the mobile operators. It showed that promotional campaigns could encourage switching than retention, for example, sales promotion activities that were price sensitive could encourage customers to switch to mobile operators who offered that promotion at the time. However, promotion has an impact on consumers' perception in selecting mobile telecommunications service provider since it is used to communicate with the consumers with respect to product offerings. Promotion possesses a significant key role in determining profitability and market success. According to the findings of Alvarez and Casielles (2015), a promotional offer of a product states at the moment of purchase as an explanatory element of the process. Promotion is a tool that can help manufacturers and/or retailers in the achievement of their objectives. Immediate price reduction however, remains a more desirable technique that wields the greatest influence on the brand choice process.

Involuntary Switching and customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications industry in South-South Nigeria.

The regressions result confirmed that customer switching behaviour was not affected by involuntary switching factors such as moving house, changing jobs and the opening or closing of mobile telecoms operators service branch as the t-statistic of 1.078 was insignificant at a probability value of .282. It contradicted the works of Sahari, Othman, Jakpor and Nichol's

(2020) work on customer switching behaviour in Malaysia which found that involuntary switching influenced customers' decision to switch brands. Zhang (2009) also concluded in a study on customer switching behaviour in China did submit that involuntary switching influenced switching behaviour. The contradiction could be as a result of insufficient data for the study. However, despite the contradiction, managers of mobile telecommunications operators should ensure the investment of more base stations in enhancing good service quality and network coverage that will dissuade involuntary switching which results from poor quality and customers' movement to a new location.

Switching costs and significant customer switching behaviour in mobile telecommunications industry in South-South Nigeria.
It was revealed that switching cost did have a positive and significant effect on customer switching behaviour in the mobile telecommunications industry in Nigeria as it had a t-statistic of 7.85 that was significant at a probability value of .000. Switching cost relates to either monetary cost, emotional or social attachment bone by the customers at the time of switching from one service provider to another. In today's competitive environment, customers have to face a trade-off between costs and benefits received. For high switching costs, dissatisfied customers may remain "loyal" because the alternative service providers require customers to invest effort, time and money which can act as barriers to switching (Gronhaug & Gilly, 2019). Alternatively, satisfied customers can be disloyal if low switching costs make switching relatively easy (Jones & Sasser, 2015). Johns, Mothersbaugh & Beauty (2012) investigated the relationships between switching costs and outcomes such as customer retention by using correlation analysis. The authors' results showed that switching costs were positively and significantly related to repurchase intention.

CONCLUSION

Customers' decision to switch from one mobile service provider to another in the Nigerian mobile telecommunications industry became an issue of research by many scholars. The study on the determinants of customer switching behaviour among subscribers to mobile telecommunications service providers in South-South Nigeria tried to define the most important and significant predictors of customer switching in the industry. Finally, the study provides empirical support that price (call rate), reputation (image), service quality, promotional packages, involuntary switching and switching cost have positive and significant effect on customer switching behaviour in the Nigerian telecommunication industry with particular focus in south-south Nigeria.

Recommendations
It was found that price had no significant effect on customer switching behaviour but it is still expedient that managers should develop proper pricing strategies that are remarkably different from competitors' own in terms of moderate call rates and data charges that would dissuade customer switching. Reputation was found to have a positive and significant effect on customer switching behaviour. Therefore, telecoms service providers should plan ways of retaining customers by ensuring high quality services in terms of good network coverage, call quality, excellent customer care and good internet services to enhance positive perception in the minds

of customers who relate to the brand. Also, the study revealed that service quality was a strong predictor of customer switching behaviour. Therefore, managers should ensure good strategies that will encourage the development of trust and confidence, lead to loyalty and provide timely and quality services to customers in order for them to have a better perception of the firm and its products. More so, promotional package had a positive and significant effect on customers' switching behaviour. Based on the foregoing, managers should develop tactics and programmes that will enhance good communication channels between customers and mobile telecoms service operators. Promotion should be carefully planned to dissuade switching and build customer confidence on the activities of the firm. The study also confirmed that involuntary switching had no influence on customer switching behaviour but there was still the need for managers of mobile telecoms services to ensure that there were enough base stations that would enhance network coverage and service quality. Secondly, they should also have many customer care stations in strategic locations to handle customers' complaints promptly. Managers of mobile telecommunications service should ensure promotional programmes and tactics that will deter switching. They should provide strategies that can build relationships with the brand, thereby increasing the social and psychological risks of switching.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited in three major ways which included the scope of the study, the location studied and the shortfall of questionnaire instruments. In terms of the scope, this study focused on only the Customer Switching Behaviour (CSB) in Nigeria and did not by any means venture into other areas of programmes of network providers. It was noted that CSB also had a way of building a positive image for a company, the kind of image that could aid patronage of a company's products/services. By not delving into the other aspects of image building (CSB), the findings of this study can only be applied to the Customer Switching Behaviour of the GSM service providers in the country. Another aspect of the study that limited its findings was the area studied. Given that services are provided for the whole country and the service providers design programmes for all the consumers in the country not just the South-South alone, a complete knowledge of the consumers' perception of the customer switching behaviours of service providers would have been got by studying the opinions of Nigerians in general. By studying only, the South-South part of the country, the findings of this study would only be applied to the perception of the South-South region. The limitation of the questionnaire was another aspect that could have influenced the findings of this study. In most cases, respondents just willingly filled anything they wanted on the questionnaire and returned it to the researcher, who was under obligation to interpret the information supplied by the respondents, given that the instrument did not show any sign of damage or mutilation. Again, it showed that they did not fully understand the nature of the research, despite the efforts made to explain to some of them. This type of limitation was outside the control of the researcher.

Suggestion for Further Studies

The study was quantitative research on the determinants of customer switching behaviour in South-South Nigeria. Future studies can be done to tackle additional questions on other factors that are not covered in the study which may influence customer switching behaviour. Additional, research can be carried out on consumer emotional components as switching barriers in the Nigerian mobile telecommunications industry.

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