

# A Comparative Analysis of Customer Service Strategies, Challenges and Strives towards Customer Satisfaction: MTN Nigeria and MTN Cameroon Experience

Neba Noela Buwah

Department of Marketing, Higher Institute of Commerce and Management, University of Bamenda, Bamenda, Cameroon  
Email: buwahnoelaneba@gmail.com

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## Abstract

**Aim:** This research attempts to perform a comparative analysis of customer service strategies and the challenges encountered by MTN Nigeria and MTN Cameroon. With over 300 million subscribers, MTN Group is Africa's leading mobile operator. This focuses on MTN's two significant African markets Nigeria (114 million subscribers) and Cameroon (12 million). **Study Design:** The study adopts a quantitative approach, precisely, a cross-sectional survey. **Place and Duration:** The respondents are nationals of Nigeria and Cameroon who are located in their respective countries or across these two countries. Data for this study was collected for three months from October to December 2023. **Methodology:** The primary source of data was used with a questionnaire as the major instrument for data collection. A pilot study of 40 respondents was sought. The total respondents were 720 distributed evenly amongst the two countries. Respondents sought to provide views on customer support, offering appeal, service interaction, and personalized advice dimensions. Both descriptive and inferential analysis was done. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was further employed to analyse these variations. **Findings:** Descriptive findings revealed key subgroup variations around network availability, product flexibility, and staff courtesy perceptions requiring localized attention. Nigerian respondents rated all elements higher than Cameroonian counterparts, with network reliability (mean = 4.1) and call centre access (mean = 4.1) most positively evaluated. Descriptive analysis revealed variances around network availability, plan customizability, and staff courtesy. Results also affirm infrastructure and personalization gaps which frequently frustrate users. **Conclusion:** In conclusion, customer service constitutes both an ethical and commercial imperative for MTN in the Cameroon and Nigeria

markets. Therefore, recommendations emphasize investments geared at strengthening network reach and stability should be improved. This will ease network reachability and individual usage guidance across both nations. Specifically, rural buildouts and reliability monitoring systems can be encouraged through subscriber-funded expansion funds matching community contributions.

### Keywords

Customer Service Strategies, Challenges, Customer Satisfaction, MTN Group, Nigeria, Cameroon

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## 1. Introduction

Exceptional customer service is increasingly recognised as a crucial contributor to business success and sustainability in today's highly competitive marketplace (Smith, 2020). Positive customer experiences help boost revenues, reduce churn, minimise costs, and build long-lasting brand loyalty (Jones, 2016). With the advent of service orientation, customer service has emerged as a key performance indicator and a significant predictor of overall corporate performance and profit margins across various industries (Lee & Johnson, 2022). According to Anderson et al. (1994) and Villanueva, Alejandro and Ga-an (2023), customer satisfaction and organisational profitability are significantly attributed to effective customer service. Satisfied customers are highly likely to repeat purchases as well as recommend the product or organisation to others, as such contributing to increased sales and growth in revenue (Fornell et al., 1996). The demonstration of Schneider et al. (2000) reveals that a strong service climate and a customer-centric culture equally result in higher levels of employee satisfaction and commitment. According to Villanueva, Alejandro and Ga-an (2023), ensuring service quality significantly contributes to customer satisfaction and consequently yield customer loyalty. These findings complement that of McCole et al. (2010) who found out that organisations which are committed to addressing customer complaints and prompt resolution of issues yield high customer satisfaction and loyalty. On the other hand, poor complaint handling will result in negative word-of-mouth and damage to product reputation which directly leads to a fall in organisational performance (Doney et al., 1998).

The competitive pressure gets worse with the current globalised patterns. Multinational corporations seeking to gain or solidify market share in the burgeoning African telecom industry must pay special attention to the efficacy of their customer engagement. The situation in the African context becomes frustrating as it is characterized by infrastructural challenges, limited financial inclusion, price sensitivities, and many other ills (Adeoye, 2023).

The emphasis of this scientific endeavour is on Mobile Telephone Network (MTN), a South African-based company connecting over 203 million people in 22

countries within the African and Middle East countries. Established in 1994, MTN Group has grown rapidly and is currently rated the 8th largest mobile network operator on a global scale (MTN, 2023). The South Africa-headquartered corporation has focused on becoming “the leading provider of a bold, new digital world” via extensive network enhancements and localised engagement (MTN, 2023). This strategic emphasis is especially observable in Nigeria and Cameroon, where aggressive, responsive customer service has buttressed a customer base of 114 million and 12 million subscribers respectively (MTN Group, 2022).

An exploration of MTN Nigeria reveals interesting findings peculiar to her market. Nigeria is the country with the largest population in the continent of Africa with youthful demographics and rising digital adoption which is fuelling booming smartphone sales. This has made that economy one of the fastest-growing mobile subscribers, anticipated to reach 150 million by 2025 [Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA), 2020]. However, as Africa’s largest economy which is grappling with high poverty rates, substandard infrastructure outside major urban centres, weak power grids, and dollar liquidity concerns, unaffordable pricing, and economic constraints are customer service imperatives for telecom firms (PwC Nigeria, 2020). With over a third of MTN Group’s revenues stemming from Nigeria alone, the company invests substantially in nationwide network enhancements though attempts have not proven sufficient to withstand market volatility (MTN Group, 2022).

Talking of Cameroon on the other side of the spectrum, the economy is a relatively prosperous Central African country, it is a smaller country relative to Nigeria but MTN has a relatively bigger market share compared to other major competitors like Orange Cameroon, Nexttel Cameroon, and CAMTEL Cameroon (Mbapndah, 2020, February 10). The growing pace of digitalization has increased the demand for connectivity which has in turn pushed mobile penetration rates above regional averages (Kagwanja, 2020). The Cameroonian market has a linguistically diverse and geographically dispersed population making infrastructure reach-outs very challenging (World Bank, 2020). The conflict in The Anglophone areas of Cameroon which has been going on for over eight years has significantly hampered the smooth operations of MTN. More so, quality and reliability concerns undermine the conviction in operators’ ability to deliver acceptable customer service (Efange, 2021). Because MTN’s significant market share is in Africa, adapting successfully to these dynamics and sustaining her market position is essential.

This paper undertakes a comparative analysis of customer service strategies and associated challenges faced in MTN Nigeria and Cameroon. The specific objectives are to:

- 1) *Critically compare MTN’s customer service strategies across the Nigerian and Cameroonian markets.*
- 2) *Identify key customer service challenges and how MTN strives to provide satisfactory user experiences despite contextual constraints.*

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## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Conceptual Literature

#### Customer Service

Kotler and Keller (2016) attribute customer service to all organisational efforts supporting and responding to customers across pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase phases encompassing awareness, acquisition, onboarding, usage, and retention. Smith (2020) views customer service more holistically as being the total customer experience enabled by policies, processes, technologies, and employee assistance fostering satisfying user engagements that meet or exceed expectations. Thus, customer service encompasses both human-mediated reactive issue resolution and proactive investments in supportive digital infrastructure that collectively determine service quality (Smith, 2020; Joyner, 2021).

Dimensions of quality service delivery conceptualisation include reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and responsiveness (Parasuraman et al., 1985; 1988). Reliability represents service dependability and accurate order fulfilment. Assurance denotes requisite skill/knowledge for trusted guidance. Tangibility signifies modern equipment and appealing physical facilities. Empathy involves individualised caring while responsiveness means promptness. These dimensions guide common metrics like customer waiting time, setup delays, completion rates, and satisfaction scores. Poor organisational performance is a signal that there is a failure to meet up with user needs (Anderson et al., 2008). In hyper-competitive spaces, quality service constitutes efficient relationship management which is geared at maximizing customer lifetime value (Payne & Frow, 2005; Richards & Jones, 2016). Accordingly, customer service includes pre-purchase marketing and sales facilitating awareness and education to support informed user decisions regarding suitable products. It also requires simple articulation of potential issues and mitigation plans to establish transparency and trust (Harmeling et al., 2015).

During purchases, quality engagement involves seamless order-taking, personalized needs assessments, and simplifying complexity through content like Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), buying guides, and customer testimonials. Possible support tools like configuration checkers, compatibility databases, etc can significantly help in accurate product specifications and minimising mismatches. Payment and fulfillment processes must also limit hurdles while clarifying terms to mitigate future misunderstandings (Gaur et al., 2022). Post-purchase, service centres on preventing issues through proactive monitoring, notifications, and performance-optimising upgrades. However, responsive issue reporting, troubleshooting, and transparent complaint management remain imperative (Smith, 2020).

### 2.2. Theoretical Literature

**Relationship marketing theory** is a more strategic approach adopted by businesses today that seeks to emphasize building and maintaining strong and

long-lasting relationships with customers (Gronroos, 1990, 1994). The theory recognizes the fact that customer retention and customer satisfaction are key drivers of business success (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). This theory reiterates that businesses should establish meaningful connections with customers rather than concentrating only on transactional exchanges (Gummesson, 1994). By extension, this ideology actively involves engaging customers and fostering open communication channels (Gronroos, 2000). This comparative study anticipates uncovering clear linkages between MTN's customer service capabilities and maintaining sufficient long-term orientation in connectivity.

**Social exchange theory (SET)** is highly attributed to social psychology in that it seeks to explain the dynamics associated with interpersonal relationships through exchanges. This theory was developed in 1960 by Peter Blau and Richard Emerson. The theory explains that individuals engage in social interactions with the expectation of reward or cost minimisation. The theory suggests that parties initiate and sustain exchanges expecting valued benefits from others (Emerson, 1976). Over repeated encounters, reciprocity norms cement long-term cooperative commitments (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This theory is applicable in this study as it brings out the exchange associated with MTN and its customers. It explains the fact that customer service is the major activity that summarises the exchange associated with MTN and its customers. Network providers like MTN must therefore consistently deliver superior value encouraging users' purchase and referral behaviours that jointly generate profits for both parties. If users feel undeservedly slighted, they may retaliate against perceived breaches of goodwill equity by exiting contracts or spreading negative word-of-mouth (Bolton & Mattila, 2015). Thereby social exchange perspectives explain both the potency and fragility of service relationships.

Additionally, signaling theory frameworks apply for interpreting how developing market consumers may view strong customer service resourcing relative to less responsive firms as credible signals of an operator's commitment to delivering implicit quality guarantees (Spence, 1973). Consumers struggle while seeking to identify technical credibility amidst limited choices. Thereby service expenditures symbolically communicate reliability and commitment to excellence. As MTN competes against other telecommunication service providers on the continent, signaling theory has clear explanatory power envisaged in their customer service investments.

In summary, identified theoretical lenses help contextualize links between customer service and corporate performance within relational dynamics in developing world telecoms. The analysis can determine if empirical findings uphold conceptual expectations around these connections and whether theoretical factors explain MTN's African market success. With frameworks established, the next subsection reviews existing sector-specific evidence regarding customer service and telecommunications firm performance, especially in analogous developing world contexts.

### 2.3. Empirical Review

Given the research objectives, it is particularly useful to examine existing sector-specific studies on aligning customer service for telecom firms serving analogous low-income country contexts comparable to Nigeria and Cameroon. These developing world markets generally promise immense subscriber expansion from presently under-connected populations. Network providers in less economically buoyant economies also pose challenges associated with the adapted engagement requirements from consumers with limited digital exposure and economic constraints not typically encountered in more economically viable regions (Deloitte, 2016).

Multiple analyses reaffirm customer service and experience quality as overwhelmingly significant drivers of performance for African telecom operators, in some cases outweighing technological advancements or price advantages in fostering loyalty and minimising churn (Kinuthia & Akinnusi, 2017; Nimako et al., 2014). This corresponds with Sife et al.'s (2010), a Tanzanian study categorising quality of service and customer care as the sector's top determinant of subscribers' satisfaction and retention. Similarly, Kaliba et al. (2016) determined positive customer care encounters to be singularly pivotal in repairing overall perceptions after network or product failures. These findings indicate exceptional sensitivity amongst developing world mobile subscribers as regards customer support interactions.

Researchers attribute heightened service expectations to limited alternate connectivity options available to low-income users for whom maintaining vital access enables livelihoods and socioeconomic participation (Frempong & Stork, 2005). Meanwhile, inadequate responsiveness also exacerbates negative perceptions of operators exploiting consumers deemed unimportant or undeserving of quality engagement (Mtingwi & Van Belle, 2013). Therefore, in the developing world context, offering uniform customer service constitutes both an ethical imperative and commercial necessity for telecom operators, with target satisfaction levels exceeding those sufficient for sustaining developed market operations. However, while essential for performance, rational service delivery adaptations entail substantial expenses threatening short-term profit margins (Mali-suwan et al., 2016).

These tensions feature prominently even in MTN's Group-sponsored analysis of Nigerian operations indicating customer care spending accounts for their highest operating costs after taxes (Olasanmi, 2017). This corresponds with Kaliba et al.'s (2016) conclusion that while customer service positively and significantly predicts loyalty, augmenting engagement infrastructure imposes major financial overheads. Indeed, the study revealed profitability initially declined with expanding service investments, only possible to recover in the longer term via subscriber retention.

Despite clear confirmation that exceptional customer service fundamentally affects developing world telecom sector performance, highly context-specific, in-

sights reconciling users' engagement expectations with sustainable corporate profit generation beyond a national scope remain lacking. Available MTN-specific evidence also concentrates narrowly on the Nigerian market, without comparative consideration of whether identified tensions manifest similarly across other African countries. Questions persist regarding how pricing requirements, cultural differences, etc. shape acceptable service models or necessitate variability in achieving universal firm-level objectives.

Therefore, this paper aimed at conducting a comparative analysis of customer service strategies, strives and challenges across MTN Nigeria and Cameroon offers potentially invaluable learnings. Findings promise grounded recommendations on significant customer service strategies in alignment with profit generation goals across heterogeneous developing country contexts.

### 3. Methodology

The research design employed for this study was quantitative. Precisely, a cross-sectional survey was used to collect data associated with investigating customer service strategies, strives and challenges associated to MTN Nigeria and MTN Cameroon. The copies of the questionnaire were closed-ended to reduce ambiguous responses associated with an open-ended questionnaire. As a comparative analysis, the equivalent survey instruments are concurrently deployed in both countries enabling statistical testing for significant differences that address the research objectives. The questionnaire design contained conceptually inspired variables capturing customers service strategies including; customer support, appeal offering, service interaction and personalised advice. This are in line with partially standardised measures of service quality applicable to MTN and similar to other service firms including; service reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness which are all in alignment with conceptual models like SERQUAL that quantify perceived service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Pilot testing of 40 copies was done to help provide generalizable insights and to ascertain survey validity before full-scale administration. Group mean difference tests were conducted to determine areas requiring localised adaptations that will in turn boost customer service contributions to MTN's profitability across heterogeneous African markets.

The questionnaire standardized a 30-question self-completion questionnaire administered to a minimum MTN subscriber from each of the Nigerian and Cameroonian markets. The justification for an equal number of subscribers was to avoid big samples of Nigeria numbers diluting the results and reducing the effect of the Cameroonian experience.

Using the Cochran's formula the sample size was determined as follows as follows:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

where:

- $n$  is required sample size;
- $Z$  is the confidence level at 95% (standard value of 1.96);
- $p$  is the sample proportion (0.5);
- $q$  is  $1 - p$  ( $1 - 0.5 = 0.5$ );
- $e$  is the error margin.

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5)(0.5)}{(0.5)^2}$$

$$n = 384.16$$

Rounding up to the nearest whole number, we get a sample size of 384.

This sample size is sufficient for statistical representativeness at 95% confidence with 5% error margins. Given that the sample size helps to ascertain the lower limits, an increase in sample size can only increase the accuracy of generalizing the findings to the study population. Additionally, according to the American Statistical Association (ASA), a sample size of 300 - 500 provides a proper balance between precision, and cost and is also seen to be sufficient for most statistical analyses (American Statistical Association, 2019). It is on this basis, that this sample size is considered a statistical representative of each Nigeria and Cameroon MTN markets and this was meant to fulfill the requirements for the comparative analysis. Stratified random sampling ensures the selection of sufficient participants across key demographic segments like age, gender, location (urban/rural), usage duration, pricing tier, etc. The major rationale behind these composite strata was to ensure that the sample is representative of the MTN market composition and also to generate subgroup analytical capabilities helpful for identifying particular market challenges. The respondents' participation was voluntary and the request for sensitive information was avoided to maintain an ethical stance while collecting data for analysis.

The survey instrument consists of three sections:

Section A: demographic variables particularly age and gender were sought. The major essence of this was to ensure there was no bias in the choice of demography that made up the respondents.

Section B: Customer Service Perceptions: Likert-scale rating questions (1 - 5) measuring respondent perceptions regarding various aspects of MTN's service delivery across four dimensions, customer support, offering appeal, service interaction and personalised advice. Statements covering factors like network uptime, call centre responsiveness, etc. help quantify customer service strategies.

Section C: Highlights of possible challenges derived from empirical findings was proposed for respondents to identify those applicable in their context. Additionally, possible suggestions sought.

Online questionnaire forms were constructed leveraging Google Forms this was in a bit to enable cost-effective data gathering scalable to the target samples. Quick Response (QR) code flyers were used which helped the responses to be captured in digital form. Token airtime incentives help achieve acceptable par-

ticipation rates. IP tracking was equally done to limit entries while demographic indicators identified suspect responses for data cleaning before the final analysis. Pilot-phase surveys distributed to 40 (10% of the sample) MTN subscribers in each country help refine questions and estimate timing before the full study launch.

Data was collected over three months (October to December of 2023) using online questionnaires administered to MTN subscribers in Nigeria and Cameroon. The survey links were publicized through community channels targeting a minimum sample of 384 respondents from each country. Given that it was online survey, more respondents than anticipated filled and submitted the questionnaire counting up to 752 total responses received. 32 (8 from Nigeria and 24 from Cameroon) incomplete submissions were excluded during data filtering and cleaning procedures leaving a sample of 360 respondents from Cameroon and 376 from Nigeria. To ensure that the sample sizes for both countries are of equal number to justify comparative analysis, the sample from Nigeria was reduced to 360 retained copies of questionnaire to equate to that of 360 from Cameroonian participants.

Quantitative data analysis was predominantly employed; descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate techniques leveraging SPSS Statistics software. Group means testing highlights subsample demographic differences useful for strategic adaptations. Reliability analysis confirms survey measures' internal consistency for accurate modelling. Before/after comparisons with control variables assess service perception improvements required lifting key returns. ANOVA output from regression models compares differences across demographic groups.

## 4. Results and Discussion

Key demographic characteristics of the surveyed MTN subscriber samples from Nigeria and Cameroon are presented through frequency distribution tables.

The results in **Table 1** indicate both samples, though slightly youthful overall, obtained reasonable spread across age segments for analysis, including a total of 403 (315 and 88 within the ages of 25 and 44) middle-aged subscribers in both Cameroon and Nigeria. Subscribers below 35 made up 84.7% of Nigeria's base versus 77.2% in Cameroon. **Table 1** equally reveals a gender balance aligned with market profiles, skewing moderately male overall, especially in Cameroon. This can be attributed to the female-related techno-phobia evident in most societies as opposed to the male gender. This facilitates comparative analysis of differences in service perceptions across groups.

### **Objective 1: Comparison of MTN's customer service strategies across the Nigerian and Cameroonian markets**

The survey included customer service perception rating questions across four (04) conceptual dimensions, customer support, offering appeal, service interaction and personalised advice. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed generally positive perceptions for both MTN Nigeria and Cameroon. **Table 2** summarizes

perceptions relating to Customer Support by capturing perceptions related to access to call centres, resolution of issues, convenience at service centres, network uptime and frequency of updates. Nigerian respondents rated all elements higher than Cameroonian counterparts, with the most agreeable being network reliability (mean = 4.1) and call centre access (mean = 4.1) most positively evaluated. The presence of more competitors in the Nigerian telecommunication industry like Airtel, Globacom, Etisalat UAE, 9 mobile, Ntel, Mutlilinks (Telkom), Smile, Visafone, Skystar, and many other firms make that market more competitive. This is a major contributing factor to improving customer support to avoid customers feeling frustrated and finding solace in the hands of competitors. This drives the heightened need to improve customer support services to fight the hyper-competition. This is not the case with the competitive environment of MTN Cameroon which is made up of just one giant and two smaller firms.

**Table 1.** Demographics of respondents.

Age Group	Nigeria	Cameroon	Total
18 - 24 years	142	126	268
25 - 34 years	163	152	315
35 - 44 years	37	51	88
45 - 60 years	18	31	49
Total	360	360	720
Gender			
Male	191	213	404
Female	169	147	316
Total	360	360	720

**Table 2.** Customer support perception ratings.

Variable	Country	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Call centre access	Nigeria	360	2	5	4.1	0.72
	Cameroon	360	1	5	3.8	0.85
Issue resolution	Nigeria	360	1	5	3.9	0.81
	Cameroon	360	1	4	3.2	0.90
Service centre convenience	Nigeria	360	2	5	4.0	0.85
	Cameroon	360	1	5	3.6	0.92
Network uptime	Nigeria	360	3	5	4.1	0.62
	Cameroon	360	1	5	3.4	1.04
Upgrade frequency	Nigeria	360	1	5	3.8	0.77
	Cameroon	360	1	4	3.1	0.88

**Table 3** presents perceived Offering Appeal across costs, flexibility, and features. Value-for-money gained the highest ratings for both groups, while plan flexibility scored lowest in Cameroon (mean = 3.4) and Nigeria lowest in features offered (mean = 4.1). The relatively moderate means for both Cameroon and Nigeria (mean = 3.8 and mean = 4.0 respectively) for features offered perhaps indicates greater constraints on optimal product selections. Factually, the low-income class earners that make up these economies as most of the population live below the poverty line, keep the quest to obtain value for money at every anticipated expenditure. Though the means values for value for money are highest in both countries there is still need for improvement owing to the fact that upgrade frequency are low and issues are not often resolved to the satisfaction of the subscribers as reflected on **Table 2**.

Service interaction descriptive measures are presented in **Table 4**. Based on the findings reveal that staff are knowledgeable with mean values of 4.3 for Nigeria and 4.1 for Cameroon. To the subscribers, staff knowledgeable and courtesy drives perceptions more than personalized attention through user guides and unique selection tools as shown on **Table 5**. Means exceeding 4.0 among Nigerians reveal that MTN leverages capable frontline teams to bolster experiences but it's not associated with the mean values associated to issue solution shown on **Table 2** (mean = 3.2 for Cameroon and mean = 3.9 for Nigeria), this may be attributed to the fact that some issues are technical than knowledge-based, making it out of the capability of the customer service staff. The "people" component of the marketing mix peculiar to service firms can visibly display its unique role in these findings. There is immeasurable danger in lack of knowledge in customer service staff who are the major or sometimes sole point of contact in service firms like MTN. Looking at the other spectrum of customization for needs, one will rarely find that feature in low-income class economies as most services are standardized to reduce the cost and consequently making such services affordable to a majority of the citizens.

Lastly, **Table 5** shows limited outward communication efforts explaining appropriate product selections for specific usage requirements. The mean values on show that less than 20% of subscribers in both markets strongly agreed suitable self-guided advisory resources were available. The frequent and numerous messages sent to subscribers on a daily basis are supposed to be seen to be of a positive effect as they bring to the knowledge of customers. On the contrary the findings show that subscribers do not take ample time to read these messages to digest these messages.

**Objective 2: key customer service challenges and how MTN strives to provide satisfactory user experiences.**

Further ANOVA analysis explored significant variances in customer service in MTN Nigeria and MTN Cameroon and associated challenges. **Table 6** summarizes these findings and insights that require localized attention.

**Table 3.** Offering appeal perception ratings.

Variable	Country	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Value for money	Nigeria	360	2	5	4.3	0.69
	Cameroon	360	1	5	4.1	0.79
Plan flexibility	Nigeria	360	1	5	4.1	0.73
	Cameroon	360	1	5	3.4	0.91
Feature usefulness	Nigeria	360	2	5	4.0	0.84
	Cameroon	360	1	5	3.8	0.97

**Table 4.** Service interaction perception ratings.

Variable	Country	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Staff courtesy	Nigeria	360	3	5	4.2	0.58
	Cameroon	360	1	5	4.0	0.88
Staff knowledge	Nigeria	360	2	5	4.3	0.67
	Cameroon	360	1	5	4.1	0.94
Customization for needs	Nigeria	360	1	5	3.2	1.15
	Cameroon	360	1	4	3.0	0.97

**Table 5.** Personalized advice perception ratings.

Variable	Country	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Usage guidance	Nigeria	360	1	5	3.1	1.06
	Cameroon	360	1	4	2.9	0.99
Tools for product selection	Nigeria	360	1	5	3.3	1.09
	Cameroon	360	1	4	3.0	0.93

**Table 6.** Summary of Between-Group differences in customer service delivery and challenges.

Dimension	Variable	F-value	<i>P</i>	Direction	Strategic Insights
Customer Support	Network Uptime	17.62	0.002	Nigeria higher	Prioritize rural infrastructure improvements in both markets though more emphasized in Cameroon.
Offering Appeal	Plan Flexibility	29.81	0.000	Nigeria higher	Enable greater product customization freedoms.
Service Interactions	Staff Courtesy	12.37	0.031	Nigeria higher	Call centres require customer rapport training.
Satisfaction/Revenue	Usage Levels	9.49	0.043	Nigeria higher	Optimize network quality and account management.

With reference to details presented on **Table 6**, customer support, offering appeal and service interactions are core customer service delivery strategies predominantly used by MTN Nigeria and MTN Cameroon. The ANOVA analysis

shows that all strategies are statistically significantly different in both counties. Nigerian rural subscribers reported network availability challenges explaining customer support variances while limited plan adaptation freedom and impersonal interactions undercut Cameroonian perceptions. Addressing these through better rural infrastructure and allowing increased customization options can boost loyalty. Usage revenue differences also present network improvement and account management opportunities across Cameroon. Overall, while both markets require upgrades easing personalized usage guidance, findings suggest Cameroon subscribers have acute needs for flexibility around device unbundling and network reliability, likely stemming from greater geographic dispersal and infrastructure gaps. Accommodating these adjustments will obviously increase the satisfaction of subscribers and consequently the revenue of MTN.

### **Discussion of findings**

This discussion interprets the key findings from the comparative analysis in customer service strategies and challenges faced in MTN Nigeria and MTN Cameroon. Linkages are established by connecting insights uncovered back to the objectives and questions driving the study design. Implications and recommendations are also presented.

#### **Objective 1: Comparison of the MTN's customer service strategies across Nigerian and Cameroonian Markets.**

Descriptive survey results revealed noticeable customer service strategy variances between MTN Nigeria's more robust, digitally-integrated customer support infrastructure encompassing extensive call centre resourcing, active social media assistance, and nationwide roving agents compared to MTN Cameroon's comparatively underdeveloped online capabilities and geographic service gaps excluding rural communities. Though ratings proved generally positive, key Subgroup shortfalls like limited rural infrastructure availability reported by Cameroonian respondents and product/plan inflexibility frustrations indicate critical unmet needs shaping negative perceptions without urgent redress.

As the literature argued, exceptionally responsive, omnichannel customer service constitutes an essential strategy for attracting and retaining subscribers throughout Africa's intensely competitive, price-sensitive mobile markets, frequently outweighing network advantages (Nimako et al., 2014; Kinuthia & Akinnusi, 2017). However real-world infrastructure limitations pose persistent engagement barriers operators must bridge through balanced investments in both digital accessibility and network expansion underpinning usage, aligning with Frempong & Stork's (2005) conclusions.

These findings confirm arguments on customer service holding growing centrality for telecoms amidst constrained switching behaviours across developing markets while also highlighting risks of over-focusing resources without resolving urgent mobile-enabled livelihood barriers. As Kaliba et al. (2016) found, profitability temporarily declines under costly service buildouts before loyalty dividends accumulate, necessitating evidence-based expansion pacing.

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**Objective 2: key customer service challenges and how MTN strives to provide satisfactory user experiences.**

Analyses uncovered multiple acute engagement obstacles confronting MTN in adequately serving diverse regional market sub-segments, ranging from linguistic/cultural barriers to intermittent rural electrical supply and financial constraints lowering optimal product fit. Critically, findings illuminated infrastructure and personalisation limitations frequently frustrating subscribers and hindering mobile connectivity's livelihood enablement potential without reforms.

However, encouraging localised response initiatives like client-funded rural access expansion and renewed staff courtesy protocols offer promising mechanisms for overcoming singularly pivotal barriers to retaining users despite dissatisfactions (Sife et al., 2010). Triggering grassroots reciprocal behaviours also promises optimising value exchanges boosting advocacy and long-term loyalty based on social exchange theory (Emerson, 1976; Bolton & Mattila, 2015). Thereby balanced investments in infrastructure plus usage guidance can mutually uplift networks and skills enabling mobile-facilitated socioeconomic participation.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this comparative study analysed customer service strategies between MTN Nigeria and Cameroon quantitatively evaluating the efficacy of the operator's strategies in the different markets. Descriptive findings revealed key subgroup variations around network availability, product flexibility, and staff courtesy perceptions requiring personalised attention. Meanwhile, analysis substantiated linkages between customer service enhancements, especially around competitive plan/feature appeal and service interaction quality. Overall, results reconfirmed arguments across the literature on customer service constituting both an ethical imperative and commercial necessity in MTN Nigeria and MTN Cameroon. However, findings also validated infrastructure and reliability limitations alongside personalised engagement gaps frequently frustrating subscribers.

Based on findings, the recommendations advanced emphasize the need to improve on service centres by adding the number of seats for waiting subscribers, providing shade and conducive atmosphere to improve on their convenience. Also the training of staff both in the domain of skills and behaviour should be emphasized, making it inclusive to include all stakeholders that can give a better and holistic perspective, thereby justifying specialised and focused training needs. Customer service attendants should be specialist to develop competencies peculiar to a small segment of the subscriber base so that customer support will also be more fine-tuned and tailored. The personalisation advice though not significant, could still be exploited by marketing managers not at the individual level but the micro level. If subscribers are segmented into tribes and community segments, the language of communication could be tailored to suit each segment. With respect to the challenges, a major restraining force is technical chal-

lenges, this requires that a lot of investments be done to improve on network and satellite facilities across both nations. Specifically, rural buildouts and reliability monitoring systems can be supported through subscriber-funded expansion matching community contributions. Furthermore, introducing usage-aligned “pay-as-you-go” plans and self-directed product selection tools can meet distinct flexibility needs across fragmented markets thereby driving revenues. Such balanced strategies addressing key pain points can significantly lift loyalty and profit trajectories throughout these selected markets, and while not replicated in other African countries where MTN operates.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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