

**KEY OPERATIONAL DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESSFUL CALL
CENTRES: A CASE OF AIRTEL NETWORK KENYA**

BY
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REG NO: K50/66199/2010

**A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Award
of degree of Masters of Arts in Communication Studies at the School of Journalism and
Mass Communication of the University of Nairobi**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my original work and has not been presented in any other University or College for Examination or Academic purposes.

Signature:  ..

Date 20-11-2012

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This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my dear husband Mr. Martin Kanyiri Mbugua Wamae for all the support he gave all the time as I prepared and worked on this project.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENT	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
ABBREVIATIONS	x
ABSTRACT	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Problem Statement	5
1.3 Research Objectives	7
1.3.1 General Objective	7
1.3.2 Specific Objectives	7
1.3.3 The Conceptual Framework	8
1.4 Research Hypothesis	9
1.5 Assumptions and Limitations	9
1.6 Significance of the Study	10
1.7 Scope of the Study	11
1.8 Definition of Terms	12

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 Theoretical orientation	13
2.2.1 Strategic management theory	14
2.2.2 Technology and strategic management	16
2.2 Industrial review	18
2.3 Determinants of a successful call center call center service providers	20
2.3.1 Price	20
2.3.2 Network Coverage	22
2.3.3 Reliability	24
2.3.4 Product Quality	24
2.4 Empirical review	26
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	31
3.1 Introduction	31
3.2 The Research Design	31
3.3 Research study Site	31
3.4 Target Population	32
3.5 Sample size	32
3.6 Data Collection	32
3.7 Data Analysis	33
3.8 Ethical Issues and Dilemmas	34
3.9 Expected Output	34

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	35
4.1 Introduction	35
4.1.1 Distribution of respondents by gender	35
4.1.2 Distribution of respondents by age	36
4.2 Level of education of respondents	37
4.3 Years of experience of the respondents	38
4.4 Salary scale for the respondents	39
4.5 Organizational policies as key determinants of call center success	40
4.6 Pricing as a key operational determinant of successful call centers	41
4.7 The extent of network coverage acting as a key operational determinant for a successful call center	43
4.8 Product Quality and availability as key operational determinant for successful call centers..	45
4.8.1 Extent of agreement on promotions statements	47
4.9 Discussion of research findings	50
4.9.1 Pricing as a key operational factor in determining call centers	50
4.9.2 Network coverage	50
4.9.3 Product quality and availability	50
4.9.4 Use of promotions	51
4.9.5 Reliability to call centers	51

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND

RECCOMENDATIONS52

5.1 Introduction52

5.2 Summary of Findings52

5.3 Conclusion55

5.4 Recommendations56

REFERENCES57

APPENDICES67

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MANAGERS67

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CUSTOMER CARE REPRESENTATIVES74

APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CUSTOMERS81

APPENDIX IV: TIME PLAN85

APPENDIX V: BUDGET 86

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Age bracket	36
Table 4.2: Organizational policies as key determinants of call center success	40
Table 4.3: Pricing as a key operational determinant of successful call centers	41
Table 4.4: Pricing as a key operational determinant of successful call centers	42
Table 4.5: Extent of agreement on statements of network coverage	43
Table 4.6: Extent of agreement on statements of network coverage	44
Table 4.7: Extent of agreement on statements on Product Quality and availability	45
Table 4.8: Extent of agreement on statements on Product Quality and availability	46
Table 4.9: Extent of agreement on statements on Promotions	47
Table 4.11: Reliability of call centers as key determinant of successful call centers	49
Table 4.10: Extent of agreement on statements on Promotions	48

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework	8
Figure 4.1: Gender representation	35
Figure 4.2: Highest level of education attained	37
Figure 4.3: showing years of experience	38
Figure 4.4: Salary scale	39

ABBREVIATIONS

CBD	Central Business District
CCK	Communication Commission of Kenya
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KCA	Kenya communication act
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute of public policy research and analysis
KP&TC	Kenya Postal and Telecommunication Corporation
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
WTO	World Trade organization

ABSTRACT

A relentless competition amongst the mobile phone service providers has been witnessed lately in Kenya. For organizations, such as call centers that handle customer complaints on a daily basis to succeed, they need to serve their customers at a heightened level. The research hence focused on key operational determinants of successful call centers.

Data was collected from Airtel call centers, targeting its staff, and customers in form of a questionnaire. In order to keep the two samples consistent in size with one another, the researcher distributed questionnaires only to those customer respondents who were willing to participate.

The research findings established that pricing has a great effect on services on the choice of call center service providers. Call center service providers of bundled durable/services systems should give careful consideration to the pricing policies of their systems. There may be scope to induce customers to purchase packages through mixed leader strategies, where discounts upon the durable are offset against premiums on the service fee. Influence of area network coverage has an effect on the subscriber's choice for call center service providers. It is the wish of every mobile phone owner to be able to reach any person of interest at any time and from whenever he/she may be. This can as well be known as freedom of communication.

The research concludes that customers have an effect on the choice for a call center service provider. A person's reference groups are all the groups that have a direct (face-to-face) or indirect influence on their attitudes or behavior.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

This chapter presents the background of the research, statement of the problem, the objectives, the significance and lastly the scope of the research.

For organizations, such as call centers that handle customer complaints on a daily basis to succeed, they need to serve their customers at a heightened level. The success of such call centers are measured by having problems resolved on the first call, customers having the perception that they are valued by the organization, and employing call center representatives who exhibit patience, understanding, and a caring attitude (Broetzmann & Grainer, 2005). Since the beginning of trade, sellers have focused on providing products and services to satisfy their customers. Since globalization has brought about an increase in competition for customers, the emphasis has switched from customer acquisition to customer retention, particularly with the cost of acquiring a new customer estimated at 4 to 10 times higher than simply retaining one (Kumar & Kumar, 2002).

The ability to resolve effectively customer complaints in a reasonable amount of time (as perceived by the customer) should be a priority for organizations that care about increasing customer retention and reducing the costs associated with acquiring new customers. One recent study noted that 72% of customers will come back to the center if their complaints are resolved quickly, while 46% of customers will not come back to the center if their complaints are not resolved in a timely manner. The behavioral assumption of consumer theory is that all consumers are rational decision makers who seek to maximize utility. More specifically all consumers seek

to maximize a utility function subject to a budgetary constraint. This means that consumer theory asserts that all consumers purchase that combination of goods and services that will make them happiest given the amount of income they have to spend. For Engel et al. (2009), consumers apply evaluative criteria such as the standards and specifications of products in comparing alternative products. Evaluative criteria are the desired outcomes from purchase and consumption, and are expressed in the form of preferred attributes. They are shaped and influenced by individual differences and environmental influences. As such, they become product-specific manifestations of an individual's motives, values, and attitudes. The authors argue that consumers apply a four-stage process: first, they determine the evaluative criteria to use; second they decide which alternatives to consider; third, they assess the performance of the considered alternatives; and fourth, they select and apply a decision rule to make a final choice.

Customer satisfaction with an organization's products or services is often seen as the key to an organization's success and long-term competitiveness (Athanasopoulos, Gounaris, & Stathakopoulos, 2011; Hennig-Thurau & Alexander, 2008). Satisfaction is a psychological construct describing the subjective emotional state that occurs in response to an evaluation of a set of experiences (Locke, 2007). The emotional state may vary from positive (i.e., satisfaction) to negative (i.e., dissatisfaction), depending on the individual and the evaluation made. Within the marketing and consumer literature, customer satisfaction refers to the customer's emotional product/service evaluation of the experiences obtained from usage, consumption, and ownership of the specific good or service (Westbrook, 2007). Subsequently, the concept of customer satisfaction, tied to a particular product or service experience, is postulated to fade into a more stable, attitude-like overall evaluation of the product or service the customers' perception of

relationship quality (Hennig -Thurau & Alexander, 2008). In addition, research suggests that members of high quality relationships are more satisfied with the roles assumed and performed by the individual parties (Crosby et al., 2004). Hence, customer satisfaction derived from the product/service related quality perception can be interpreted as a determinant of the more complex construct of relationship quality.

According to Engel et al. (2009), the complexity of alternative evaluation will vary dramatically depending on the particular process consumers follow in their consumption decisions hence service providers have to keep on standards that attract their customers most. When decision-making is habitual in nature, alternative evaluation will, usually, simply involve the consumer forming an intention to repurchase the same product as before. However, sometimes alternative evaluation can be quite complex. Consumers may employ a number of different evaluative criteria, and these criteria will usually vary in their relative importance or salience. The salience of evaluative criteria depends on a host of situational, product, and individual factors. Steen Kamp (2008), reporting on a study involving 100 products and seven European countries, found that the five most important criteria used to evaluate food products are product quality, price, brand name/reputation, freshness, and guarantee.

Finally, for Engel et al. (2009), knowledge can also determine consumer's use of particular evaluative criteria. Knowledgeable consumers will have information stored in memory about the dimensions that are most useful for comparing choice alternatives. Consequently, they will make evaluations more easily, look less for external sources of information and, therefore, it is more difficult to influence their decision. On the other hand, some consumers may be limited in their

ability to accurately evaluate choice alternatives. These consumers may rely much more heavily on brand name or others' recommendations, because they lack the knowledge necessary for directly evaluating the product.

At the consumer level, household buyers consistently report that the two most dominant factors that impact upon their decision to purchase fresh produce in a retail store is the competitive price and quality (Asp, Elaine H. (2006). Quality however is a multi-faceted variable that considers not only the extrinsic quality attributes (freshness, color, size and shape), but also the intrinsic quality attributes (taste, flavor, texture and mouth feel), the credence attributes (method of production, fair trade and sustainable production) and the service quality attributes that are associated with the shopping experience itself (customer advice, ambience, convenience, credit facilities, etc.). There is ample evidence to demonstrate that as personal disposable income increases, the service quality dimensions become increasingly more important in the consumers' decision to purchase (Faith Ralston, PhD (2009). A low price is not important to all household buyers and a growing segment of the market is demonstrating that it is not only prepared to pay more for the desired intrinsic and credence quality attributes, but also for the associated value-added services. This is becoming all the more apparent as the disconnect between the extrinsic and intrinsic quality attributes widens.

1.2 Problem Statement

The ability to resolve effectively customer complaints in a reasonable amount of time (as perceived by the customer) should be a priority for organizations that care about increasing customer retention and reducing the costs associated with acquiring new customers. One recent study noted that 72% of customers will come back to the center if their complaints are resolved quickly, while 46% of customers will not come back to the center if their complaints are not resolved in a timely manner (Stone, 2003). Call centers, as clear from the above, play a very important role in customer satisfaction and retention.

To become more consumer-oriented and to build a long-successful relationship with their customers, call center service providers companies need to understand what motivates them. It is also very important for potential customers to know exactly what to expect from the products of every company that they intend to patronize. This raises the question as to what factors influences subscriber's choice of a particular call Centre.

There is a general belief that strategic pricing plays a big role in this. According the then Safaricom CEO, Michael Joseph, (2010) price adjustments have a limit and a point comes when no more cuts are possible. He was referring to the recent earth shaking price reduction by Bharti Airtel of voice 3/- to any network and data reduction and maintaining unlimited internet whereas Safaricom maintained their high price of voice which is determined by their voice tariffs and the removal of unlimited internet the fact that Airtel in its money transfer service (Airtel money), has zero rated the sending money to any network, whereas Safaricom is charging worse off more to other networks. He could have been right since these reductions have not upset the customer base

for Safaricom or maybe he is from the old school of thought which sees price strategy as rarely being employed due to the fear of igniting price wars. (Marsh 2007) He never expected any further reductions. The fact of the matter is that Safaricom continue to command the biggest market share despite the fact that it is viewed by many as being expensive. This study is expected to reveal exactly what attracts customers to Safaricom despite the spirited campaign by the other call center service providers.

More importantly, the quality of the service provided might be the major consideration. This however has been discounted by the latest quality survey (November, 2010) conducted by Communication Commission of Kenya. Airtel scored the highest and was declared the best call center service providers in the country. The second best was Essar Telecoms while Safaricom shared the last slot with Orange Kenya. If quality was the reason, then Airtel would be commanding the biggest market share. It is important to note that the combined subscriber numbers of the best and the second best graded call center service providers are less than 30% of the total for Safaricom. For organizations therefore such as call centers that handle customer complaints on a daily basis, that heightened level of customer service expectation is measured by having problems resolved on the first call, customers having the perception that they are valued by the organization, and employing call center representatives who exhibit patience, understanding, and a caring attitude. This study therefore seek to fill the existing study literature gap by establishing the key operational determinants of successful call Centers for improving consumer preference to products and services of telecommunication companies.

1.3 Research Objectives

The research was guided by both general and specific objectives.

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the research was to establish the key operational determinants of successful call Centers for consumer preference.

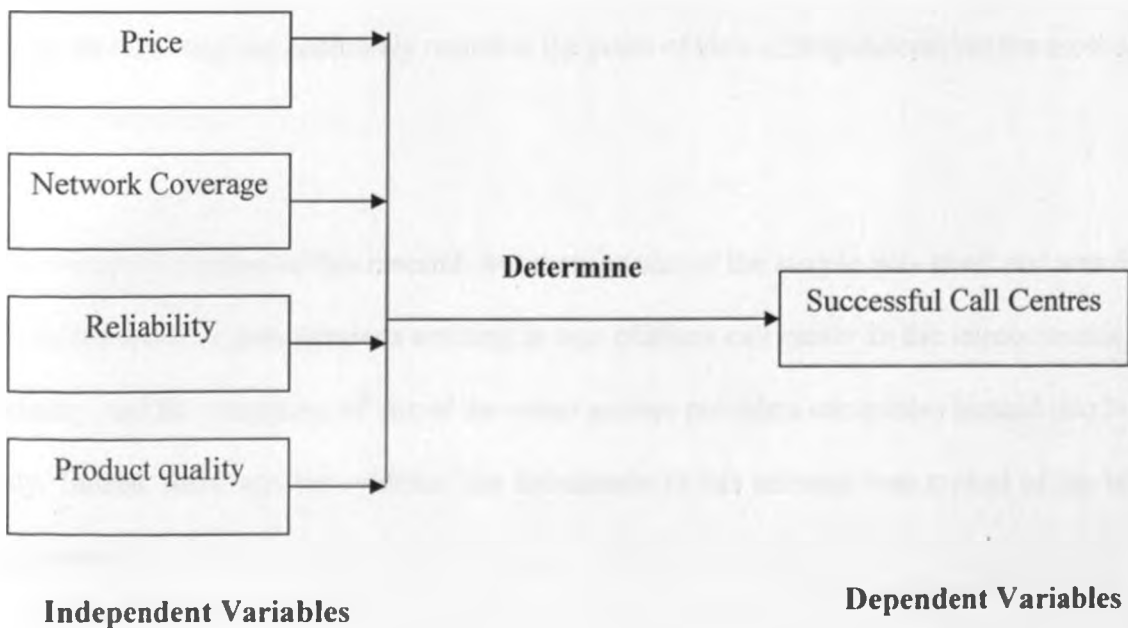
1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- i) To establish the effect of pricing of services as a key operational determinant of successful call Centers.
- ii) To establish the influence of area network coverage as a key operational determinant of successful call Centers.
- iii) To establish the effect of as a key operational determinant of successful call Centers.
- iv) To establish the influence of product quality as a key operational determinant of successful call Centers.

1.3.3 The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework included the various variables under research and how they affect each other. The dependent variable in this research was the choice of service provision while the independent variables were those factors that affected the subscriber's choice of a call center call center service providers. The dependent variables included the pricing, service quality, network coverage, promotion and the product quality. These factors are applied differently by the four call centers currently licensed in Kenya. The research was set to establish what the customers feel about the ability of each of the four in satisfying their needs. What does the customer need as far as the above variables are concerned? The study also shows how all the four factors contribute to successful call centers. The call center service provider who offers the most sort-after of the below variables, and offers it in the right quantities, is bound to carry the day.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework



1.4 Research Hypothesis

H1: Price of services has no significant effect as a key operational determinant of successful call Centers.

H2: The area of network coverage does not significantly affect a call center as a key operational determinant of successful.

H3: Products quality and availability does not significantly affect a call center as a key operational determinant of successful.

H4: Reliability does not significantly affect a call center as a key operational determinant of successful.

1.5 Assumptions and Limitations

Several assumptions and limitations pertain to this research. First, the research used Questionnaire survey instrument. This means that the respondents were not free to state their views on the questions but had to select from a number of written answers. This meant that some of the answers may not accurately represent the point of view of respondents but the most closely related view point.

The second limitation of this research was that the size of the sample was small and was limited to the call center representatives working in one offshore call center in the telecommunications industry, and the customers of one of the center service providers companies located into Nairobi only. Indeed, there was no evidence that the sample in this research was typical of the broader population.

The third limitation of this research was the fact that the collection of data took place at a particular point in time. There was no guarantee that the responses received would be indicative of responses solicited and given at another time. There was also a potential that other factors outside the control of the researcher (setting, time of day, recent conflicts, and fatigue of the participants) could influence the responses (Shell, 2008).

1.6 Significance of the Study

A number of individual groups and institutions are set to benefit from this study. On top of the list of beneficiaries are the top managers of the entire four call center operating in the country. They will be able to utilize the findings of this research to improve in the areas that most influences the customers. It goes without saying that even the new subscribers will have related demands and thus any call center service providers hoping to attract any new business will find the research very useful. The new subscribers themselves will find the report very useful because their search for call center service providers will have been made easier. Majority of them will check on the factors that influenced earlier subscribers and look for them amongst the current and future call center service providers.

The current subscribers will benefit because they will be able to evaluate the services they receive and determine if they are adequate or not. The evaluation made will form the basis of their decision on whether to move to a new provider or stick with their current one. If one decides to stay, he may as well demand more from his current call center service providers. From this he will do from a point of knowledge. With the number portability service that was

introduced recently, the number will not be a hindrance to subscriber's movement within the operating networks.

The Government through the Communication Commission of Kenya will use the study in formulating its communication policies in future. One of the policies that may benefit from the research is the taxation policy. CCK will be able to gauge the sensitivity of price and thus be able to set taxes accordingly. A quality of services survey like the one done recently will be more elaborate in the future. The survey concentrated on what CCK thought about the services rendered but did not take into consideration what the subscribers really thought. This research will in future be used as an input into the future surveys to make them more accurate. After all, the customer's opinion on what he thinks about quality service is more important than what the government thinks. Other researchers in related areas are set to benefit because they will be able to borrow ideas. They will also be assisted in formulating their research topics easily.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The scope of the research was Airtel Center at Koinange Street. Although there are many factors that may influence a subscriber, the researcher focused on three broad variables: - Price of services, network coverage, reliability and product quality. This is due to time and other resources limitation. The research tried to figure out to what extent each of the stated variable influences various subscribers. The major influence was isolated and others ranked on the basis of their importance as far as the customers were concerned. The research was undertaken during the month of July 2011 within Nairobi County.

1.8 Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided to ensure a common understanding of the primary terms used in this research. *Abandon rate is the percentage of callers who hang up after what they perceive is an unacceptable wait in the queue without a call center representative handling their call* (Schwartz, Ruffins, & Petouhoff, 2007).

Call center is the communications link between a company and its customers where call center representatives often make and receive calls to and from customers (Staples, Dalrymple, & Bryar, 2002). As defined by Brad Cleveland (2006), president of the Incoming Calls Management Institute, a call center is “a coordinated system of people, processes, technologies and strategies that provides access to organizational resources through appropriate channels of communication to enable interactions that create value for the customer and the organization” (p. 1). Call centers may also be known as contact centers, customer service centers, customer support centers, customer care centers, or customer interaction centers (Cleveland, 2006).

Call center representatives interact with customers over the telephone to provide basic customer service and support that solve customer problems and generate revenue for the company (Stevenson & Summers, 2004). Call center representatives may also be known as customer service agents, call center agents, customer service representatives (CSR's), telephone representatives, or contact center agents (Hurst, 2006).

Customer satisfaction is the “complete fulfillment of one's wishes, needs, and expectations” (Berry, 1983, p. 141). *Customer service, as defined by Byrnes (2005) is not only the experience a customer has with the company, but what that customer perceives and remembers about the service received.*

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presented a review based on the research topics and objectives of the research. The review covered the consumer theory and explored the ways it influences the consumer. The basic variables which include the price, promotion, and network coverage and product quality were all covered in detail. The chapter also looked at studies done by other researchers in the same area and concluded with the conceptual framework.

2.2 Theoretical orientation

The choice of the call center service subscribers might be guided by the economic theory of the consumer choice. It is a theory of microeconomics that relates preferences to consumer demand curves. Economists assume that anything purchased was consumed, unless the purchase is for a productive activity. Preferences are the desires by each individual for the consumption of goods and services. (Allen, M. W., 2006).

The fundamental theorem of demand states that the rate of consumption falls as the price of the good rises. This is called the substitution effect. Clearly if one does not have enough money to pay the price then they cannot buy any of those items. As prices rise, consumers will substitute away from higher priced goods and services, choosing less costly alternatives. Subsequently, as the wealth of the individual rises, demand increases, shifting the demand curve higher at all rates of consumption. This is called the income effect. As wealth rises, consumers will substitute away

from less costly inferior goods and services, choosing higher priced alternatives. (Samuelson, Paul A.; William D Nordhaus 2004)

2.2.1 Strategic management theory

Many management trends are currently sweeping the public and private sectors. One popular approach, called total quality management (TQM), focuses on improving the quality of services or products in die private sector through total organizational commitment, worker participation, and rigorous attention to inputs, outputs, and processes (Walters, 2009). Many TQM ideas have been adapted to the public sector, under the label entrepreneurial government, in a book that has been widely acclaimed by public administration practitioners, elected officials, and other knowledgeable observers of government (Osborne and Gaebler, 2010). Examples of other approaches are process innovation (Davenport, 2008) and managing behavior results (Brumback, 2008).

Although each innovative management approach emphasizes different methods, they all advocate activities such as planning, analysis and monitoring, informed decision making, and identifying missions and objectives as well as improving products and services. Furthermore, underlying all approaches is an unwritten assumption that the information infrastructure necessary to perform key activities is present. This study presents a framework for such an infrastructure in the public sector that integrates the information requirements of innovative management, methods of program assessment and monitoring, and the structure of information systems.

If innovative management is to achieve its objective, information must be available about its operations and environment that is accurate, timely, accessible, comprehensive, and continuous. This, in turn, requires an integrated and coordinated information system for collecting, organizing, and storing data. It also requires a system that creates meaningful information from the data and then presents that information in useful ways. Developing such a system - which is much more than computers, databases, and the personnel who handle them - is a tall order for any organization.

A variety of interpretations of strategy exist, most of which have a great deal to do with competition between corporations. Chamberlin's theory of monopolistic competition sees corporations as being heterogeneous, and competing on the basis of asset differences, such as technical knowledge, reputation, ability for teamwork, organisational culture and skills, and other 'invisible assets' (Chamberlin 2006). Competition therefore means cultivating unique strengths and capabilities, and defending them against imitation by other firms. Another alternative sees competition as a process linked to innovation in product, market, or technology (Schumpeter 2008). For some time, the traditional bodies of knowledge within management literature have been evolving and expanding, resulting in a blurring of their boundaries and some substantial overlaps in their content. This is clearly evident in the fields of knowledge that deal with the primary activities involved in adding value through procuring and using resources to make, sell and deliver products or services for consumption by end customers. Indeed, the concept of value itself is no longer solely the preserve of economics; writers in several fields of study have observations to make about its nature.

While these bodies of knowledge have been evolving quickly, the rate of evolution in business practice appears to have been even greater. The worldwide recession of the late 2011s and early 1990s forced firms to re-examine, at the strategic level, the ways in which they sought to add value and reduce costs throughout their entire business. The resultant changes brought about large-scale programmes of retrenchment and organizational “down-sizing”, cost reduction drives (some clearly novel in their approach), quality improvement initiatives and inventory reduction programmes (Slack, 2008)

Within operations, managers have been pressured into constantly seeking new methods of adding value, either through improved performance of their product or through the development of the “service package” and service delivery system that surround it (Normann, 2008). At the same time, they have had to find ways of reducing costs without impacting on their product or service package. Each of these drivers has led firms to a focus on techniques to manage operations beyond the firm boundary, as it has become clear that the individual firm is an insufficiently inclusive focus for identifying improvements in systems.

2.2.2 Technology and strategic management

Firms have been traditionally advised to adopt information and communication technologies to support the achievement of existing business objectives. However, entry into business-to-business e-commerce may require the concurrent adoption of new business strategies. Business-to-business markets have fewer partners, closer buyer–seller relationships, better technology and better information exchange than business to consumer markets. The proportion of these firms

engaged in business-to-business e-commerce that have developed specific strategies for their use of the Internet, cognisant of its potential impact on existing business practices, is not known.

Digital technology, particularly the Internet, has been described as an enabler of a new, quasi economically efficient marketplace: one that is only limited by the unpredictability of consumers' behavior. The new marketplace has been characterized by perfect information for all, or at least, equal access to information about products, prices and distribution (Strauss, 2011). The Internet and e-commerce have also been predicted to underpin a structural shift in business orientation, towards price convergence, with subsequent realignment of business networks. However, the impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) remains uncertain.

Moderating environmental and circumstantial constraints include, among other things, the variable rate of business representation on-line, logistics inefficiencies, imperfect information search capabilities, political boundaries and the black-box that business relationships are still today. Grover and Ramanial (2010) cite six myths and what they call counter-myths concerning the impact of emerging ICT on markets, listing competing influences, which could, for instance, challenge the conventional assumption that the new business environment benefits the customer side of a supply relationship, rather than the supplier.

If a firm adopts ICT-based innovations without a clear understanding of the scope and implications of that adoption, then not enough attention may be paid to realigning business strategy. As a result, business resources needed to achieve competitive advantage from the ICT investment may not be made available and the investment in innovation may in the end be

wasted, or even be detrimental to the firm's pre-adoption competitive position. The development of effective marketing strategy involves conducting internal, competitor and customer analyses as preliminaries to formulating strategies for market segmentation, targeting and positioning. Within this process, ICT is mostly considered either as (a) an environmental influence on the business-to-business market, along with economic, political and competitive influences or (b) as an element of internal analysis, under the potentially misleading label of "technological environment analysis" (Hutt, 2011).

2.2 Industrial review

It is generally accepted that services have a number of characteristics that differentiate them from pure goods. For instance, unlike the situation in products, the quality of a service is difficult to assess because of the large variability inherent in service delivery. These characteristics, arguably, make the selection process for services more complex and characterized by a higher level of perceived risk (Zeithaml, and Ekwulgo, 2003).

There are several types of perceived risk, namely financial, performance, physical, psychological, time, and social risk (Laroche et al., 2003). Risk perceptions depend on the following dimensions: time involved for the consumer to select the service, the involvement of the consumer in the delivery process, the efficiency of the delivery process, the amount of human contact in the delivery of the service, and the amount of effort involved in the delivery process (Bateson, 2009). However, it has been argued that when consumer enters the service industry for the first time, perceived risk is very high; however, as he/she is involved in the process of information collection, the level of perceived risk decreases and the consumer becomes more

loyal to the brand (Byron, 2009; Laroche et al., 2003). Therefore, a customer can learn about the true quality of a call center service provider only after repeated usage.

The impact of ICT innovation on business can be viewed as a succession of stages over the history of ICT. In the initial stages, the technological environment could be described in terms of product technology the set of ideas embodied in a good or a service and process technology the steps involved in producing that good or service. Decisions about the adoption of ICT are, therefore, made in the framework of production theory, in which adoption creates benefits in the form of lower production costs for a given level of output. Productivity benefits include operational gains (via rationalisation, product standardization and such) and economic gains (via lower costs of labour, economies of scale, knowledge acquisition and such). Technology adoption by a firm leads to competitive advantage through productivity-based efficiency, provided that access to the technological development was restricted, that is, provided there were effective barriers to entry (Porter, 2010).

Porter's prerequisite of barriers to entry for the achievement of competitive advantage was tested as ICT became more affordable and accessible. Accordingly, the idea of ICT-based, production related, competitive advantage became less sustainable during the 2011s and 1990s, when ICT penetration increased rapidly. Indeed, by the late 1990s, technology was increasingly forcing business operations to follow the standardized models of behaviour and terminology required by off-the-shelf business software.

In the face of wide diffusion of production technology and a market increasingly perceived as global, firms therefore needed to differentiate themselves and/or their products in the consumers' eyes, in order to establish or maintain competitive advantage. During the last decade, the source of competitive advantage has increasingly been seen to reside in the supplementary benefits provided to customers, leading to the creation of sustainable perceived value for customers. As well as high-perceived quality, control over costs, and product innovation (all of which are helped by ICT support), a firm has to have excellent service, a market-driven learning-oriented culture and speed, that is, the ability to deliver quickly and to quickly solve customer problems.

2.3 Determinants of a successful call center call center service providers

At the consumer level, household buyers consistently report that the dominant factors that impact upon their decision to purchase fresh produce in a retail store is the competitive price, quality of the product, service quality attributes that are associated with the shopping experience, the level of promotion and advertisement etc.

2.3.1 Price

Price is defined as a value that will purchase a definite quantity, weight, or other measure of a good or service. As the consideration given in exchange for transfer of ownership, price forms the essential basis for commercial transactions. It may be fixed by a contract, left to be determined by an agreed upon formula at a future date, or discovered or negotiated during the course of dealing between the parties involved. In commerce, price is determined by what: - (1) a buyer is willing to pay, (2) a seller is willing to accept, and (3) the competition is allowing to be

charged. With product, promotion, and place of marketing mix, it is one of the business variables over which organizations can exercise some degree of control (Simon Clarke, 2006).

It is apparent from the current price war that price is taken as the most important factor in attracting and retaining the subscribers within a network. However although we cannot outright doubt this believe of the call center service providers, we should consider the fact that Safaricom still controls about 70% of all subscribers in Kenya according CCK data. The reduction of their customer base of 80% in 2010 is so small when compared with the massive campaigns mounted by other call center service providers and more so by Airtel. The reduction in call rates from the high of kshs12 to kshs8, to kshs3 and now to kshs1 per minute is massive and the results should have been equally big if prices were the only factors. The reduction in rates comes to over 90% within a year yet the gain has been far much less (The standard 2007).

Telkom Kenya (Orange), operator of the country's third largest call center call center service providers wants the government to set a minimum price for calls to shield the sector from a raging price war. its chief executive said on Thursday March 24, 2011 while addressing a press conference. "The only way is for (regulator) CCK to protect the market... to set a floor...If not, you will see the market destroyed with time, (Mickael 2007). 'They should take termination rates plus ten percent'.

This scenario confirms the fact that price alone is not enough. There is more to it than just the price. Why are the subscribers opting to stick with the 'expensive' Safaricom and not switch to the 'cheaper' Aitel? There is a famous business saying that "cheap" is expensive. Could the

customers be perfecting this saying in their choice? May be Safaricom has a secret weapon that has not been discovered by other call center service providers. We hope this study will uncover it. After all the, customer is the king and he cannot go wrong. The pricing competition in Kenya includes lower rates within the network, flat rates for specific times of the day such as the pick and off-pick time. Airtel at one time offered a different rate for ten friends and family members. Unfortunately, this was the only unique pricing policy, since all the other pricing type were and are still being used by all the four call center service providers.

2.3.2 Network Coverage

A cellular network is a radio network distributed over land areas called cells, each served by at least one fixed-location transceiver known as a cell site or base station. When joined together these cells provide radio coverage over a wide geographic area. This enables a large number of portable transceivers (e.g., call centre, pagers, etc.) to communicate with each other and with fixed transceivers and telephones anywhere in the network, via base stations, even if some of the transceivers are moving through more than one cell during transmission. (P. Key, D. Smith, 2010)

It is the wish of every call centre owner to be able to reach any person of interest at any time and from whenever he/she may be. This can as well be known as freedom of communication. Any phone company that can provide this kind of freedom will definitely attract more subscribers especially those who reside in remote area and their friends and relatives on the other divide. However the nature of mobile provision service investment is capital intensive and requires a lot

of initial and running capital. Setting stations at remote location without electricity power requires the expensive diesel to run them.

Consequently it is not possible for call center service providers to be present at every location. This is more difficult for new entrants into the market who may not have enough resources to expand. This however is not the problem of the subscriber whose only need is to talk to the other end from wherever he/she may be.

Falling per-minute prices worldwide are forcing mobile network operators to re-think their business. Operating networks in cooperation with competitors or outsourcing network operations can reduce investment and operating costs by up to 30 percent over the long term. This is the result of the latest Oliver Wyman study, "New Business Designs in the Call centre Industry." It describes the consolidation and outsourcing trend currently apparent in network operations as an important step toward new business designs. The aim is to avoid duplication and save on cost. It is not unusual to find a base station of Safaricom, Orange, and Airtel, all constructed at one point. One station can serve all of them at the same time. All what was required is for the first call center service providers to reach an area to be obliged to let some of his facilities to newcomers. These new entrants into the market will only construct stations in areas where there are none (CCK, 2010).

Network infrastructure procurement costs account for an average of about 60 to 80 percent of total investment for a call centre company, and network operations, which constitute about 20 percent of recurring costs, are the largest factor for costs after marketing and sales. "In the future,

call centre networks will have to do more and cost less,” says Dr. Stephan Zoll, a call centre expert at Oliver Wyman.

2.3.3 Reliability

Call center in Kenya have mainly concentrated on free air time, reduced call rates, free mobile sets phones and until recently, road shows. Prior to the entry of Airtel Kenya with its new status, price reduction was almost always in form of promotion. The reductions were made with clear warning that it was only for the time being. (This is the famous Safaricom saying .Conditions apply). When Airtel hate the market with its offer of Kshs.3 across all the networks, It first reminded the subscribers that ‘conditions do not apply’ and that their tariffs were permanent and there to stay. Consequently many people who had been used to promotional reduction migrated knowing very well that the tariffs would last longer. (Rene Meza- The standard on 14/05/2010)

Recently, Safaricom concluded a road show which it had been conducting jointly with Citizen Media Group. The road show entertained fans all over the country for a good 45days. This promotion was meant to remind the fans that Safaricom was still in the market and still competitive. Various merchandises were given free of charge to those who attend the show.

2.3.4 Product Quality

Customer satisfaction with an organization’s products or services is often seen as the key to an organization’s success and long-term competitiveness (Athanasopoulos, Gounaris, &Stathakopoulos, 2011; Hennig – Thurau & Alexander, 2008). Satisfaction is a psychological construct describing the subjective emotional state that occurs in response to an evaluation of a

set of experiences (Locke, 2007). The emotional state may vary from positive (i.e., satisfaction) to negative (i.e., dissatisfaction), depending on the individual and the evaluation made.

Within the marketing and consumer literature, customer satisfaction refers to the customer's emotional product/service evaluation of the experiences obtained from usage, consumption, and ownership of the specific good or service (Westbrook, 2007).

Subsequently, the concept of customer satisfaction, tied to a particular product or service experience, is postulated to fade into a more stable, attitude-like overall evaluation of the product or service the customers' perception of relationship quality (Hennig-Thurau & Alexander, 2008). In addition, research suggests that members of high quality relationships are more satisfied with the roles assumed and performed by the individual parties (Crosby et al., 1990). Hence, customer satisfaction derived from the product/service related quality perception can be interpreted as a determinant of the more complex construct of relationship quality.

There are however three views for describing the overall quality of a product. First is the view of the manufacturer, who is primarily concerned with the design, engineering, and manufacturing processes involved in fabricating the product. Quality is measured by the degree of conformance to predetermined specifications and standards, and deviations from these standards can lead to poor quality and low reliability. Efforts for quality improvement are aimed at eliminating defects (components and subsystems that are out of conformance), the need for scrap and rework, and hence overall reductions in production costs. Second is the view of the consumer or user. To consumers, a high-quality product is one that will satisfy their preferences and expectations. This

consideration can include a number of characteristics, some of which contribute little or nothing to the functionality of the product but are significant in providing customer satisfaction. A third view relating to quality is to consider the product itself as a system and to incorporate those characteristics that pertain directly to the operation and functionality of the product. This approach should include overlap of the manufacturer and customer views. (Poka-Yoke, 2006)

2.4 Empirical review

Several studies have been done on the telecommunications industry. However to the best knowledge of the author, no studies have been done on the factors influencing subscriber's choice for a call center call center service providers in Kenya. Although each call centre establishes its own measures of customer satisfaction and loyalty, common measures include call abandon rates, average speed of answer, wrap-up time, percentage of blocked calls, representative turnover rate, courtesy, willingness to help, product and service knowledge, verbal skills, listening skills, feeling the problem was taken seriously, number of times the call was transferred, accuracy of response, and first-call resolution (Saxby, 2005; Schwartz, Ruffins, & Petouhoff, 2007).

Traditionally call centers have focused on technology as the main determinant in establishing successful customer service relationships, yet the key factor in building and maintaining customer relationships is the people using that technology. Even with the increase in telephone and Internet self-service options available to customers, technology cannot replace the human interaction necessary for resolving complex consumer issues (Read, 2005).

How representatives do their jobs directly impacts whether customers will stay with a company or take their business elsewhere. Every time a customer contacts a call centre, an opportunity exists to transform a customer problem into a positive experience, resulting in a positive view of the organization. Call centers which fail to provide a level of service that satisfies the customer are likely to face negative word of mouth publicity and loss of business to competitors. Negative word of mouth publicity from customers who are dissatisfied results in twice the market damage compared to the positive impact resulting from positive word of mouth publicity from satisfied customers (Goodman & Newman, 2003). Studies conducted by the Technical Assistance Research Program (1986) for the White House Office of Consumer Affairs concluded that, while the majority of unhappy customers never complained when treated poorly, these same dissatisfied customers refused to continue to do business with the organization again.

Peters (2010) revealed that 26 out of 27 customers failed to report to an organization about a bad experience, and 9 out of 10 customers would not only switch call center service providers, but would also attempt to get even with the company through negative word of mouth publicity. Customers receiving poor treatment from a company tell an average of 20 friends, neighbours, and relatives about their negative experiences (Broetzmann & Grainer, 2005). In turn, these individuals then spread the news to an additional 10 or more people. Based on the studies by Broetzmann and Grainer (2005) and Desatnick (2010), one bad customer experience could cost a company over 200 potential customers due to the negative word of mouth communication. Given that these studies were conducted prior to the widespread use of the Internet, the possibility now exists for a dissatisfied customer to use “word of mouse” technology to spread his or her story to thousands of people in a short period of time (Thompson, 2003).

On the other hand, the majority of customers who are treated in a courteous, prompt, and responsive manner are likely to remain loyal to the organization and purchase future products and services (Peters, 2010). Being able to resolve quickly a conflict or complaint has the potential of creating positive word of mouth publicity, could make the difference between a dissatisfied and a satisfied customer, and potentially could increase the overall customer base.

Global competition offers the consumer a myriad of choices and has changed the way companies do business. Three out of four call centers now use customer satisfaction as a primary measure of call centre success, and the majority of call centre representatives believe they are doing an excellent job in satisfying customers, yet only 20% of customers feel that way (Dawson, 2004). The quality of the calling experience is taking precedence over the quantity of calls processed. In the past, call centres have been primarily rated on cost efficiency (number of calls processed), but J.D. Power & Associates has begun rating call centres based on whether the customer's problem has been resolved, if the customer is satisfied, and if the customer will buy again (Hindo & Sager, 2003).

As noted by Nardin (2006), customer satisfaction and loyalty are gained over time; yet losing a customer takes no time at all. Retaining existing customers is also much more cost effective than replacing them. Some studies put the cost of acquiring a customer from 4 to 10 times higher than retaining one (Kumar & Kumar, 2002). By increasing the customer retention rate just 5%, companies can double their profits (Reichheld, 2011). Providing resolution of customer problems on the first call can result in higher employee satisfaction, increased customer satisfaction, and a 3% to 6% rise in annual revenue (Goetzmann & Moutzidis, 2006).

Building customer satisfaction and retention is also much easier to accomplish when problems are resolved in a timely manner (Byrnes, 2005). Research by Feinberg, Kim, Hokama, de Ruyter, and Keen (2009) indicated that first call resolution was an essential element of the call centre operation, but according to Blanding (2009), speed of resolution had a greater effect on how a customer perceived the organization than did the quality of the resolution. Other studies focused on the attitude, competence, and response by the individual call centre representative as the major influences on customer perception (Bitner, Booms, & Mohr, 2010).

Adria and Chowdhury (2002) asserted that, “the first front-line call center service providers reached in a call centre should be able to deliver the information or service required by the customer, without reconnecting to another party of the organization. While Gulbranson (2011) noted that it was “a bit utopian to believe that all issues and conflict was resolved each time on the first attempt” (p.6) that level of resolution is exactly what the customer expects. Nevertheless, recent studies have found that only one in five callers has his or her problem resolved on the first call, with the average number of call-backs to the organization placed at four before resolution is achieved (Broetzmann & Grainer, 2005).

Call centres that make the customer call back repeatedly for additional help are likely to find an angry, dissatisfied, and often former client; however, resolving problems on the first call has the potential to lower operating costs, to reduce the number of follow-up calls, and to result in increased customer satisfaction. Companies lose approximately 65% of their customers because of poor service and lack of attention, whether the complaint is resolved or not. In sharp contrast, more than three out of four customers who complain remain loyal to the company if the call

center representative has the knowledge and skills to resolve the problem quickly and fairly (Dawson, 2011).

This study therefore sought to fill the existing study literature gap by establishing the key operational determinants of successful call Centers for consumer preference to products and services of telecommunication companies. These gaps includes customer satisfaction and whether it is dependent on quality services offered by call centers, the quality of the products offered in terms of network coverage, pricing, promotions and their relevance in enhancing customer loyalty, reliability of call centers.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methods and tools that were used in the research. They included the research design, the target population that was covered and the sampling design that contain the sample size and how it was selected. It also contains the methods and instruments of collecting data, analyzing methods and tools and the expected output of the research.

3.2 The Research Design

The research adopted a descriptive survey design. The design facilitates a comprehensive analysis of a group of customers (subscribers) who have the same behavior characteristics to the study subject at different times as supported by Zikmund (2009). The variable that is determinant is thus the composition or the apparent difference in personality and by extension, tastes which necessitates the variation in choice. The measurement is done at a single point in time and generates measurement data (Wong 2010). This research thus embraced cross-sectional descriptive design to measure how subscribers make choices.

3.3 Research study Site

This research was carried out at Airtel Center at Koinange. This also led us to the target population whose objective according to Gill and Johnson (2002), aims to identify the research population which provides all the information necessary for answering the original research question.

3.4 Target Population

Data was collected from Airtel call Centers, targeting its staff. The researcher requested that the employee questionnaire be distributed among all employees. However, participation was voluntary, especially as there was no direct contact between the researcher and the employee respondents. In order to keep the two samples consistent in size with one another, the researcher distributed questionnaires only to those customer respondents who were to participate.

3.5 Sample size

The researcher used more than one sampling technique which included area sampling, purposive sampling, stratified and systematic sampling. These were distributed over a single weekend from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The sample size consisted of 46 employee and the customers of Airtel call center respectively at their head branch Park side towers Mombasa road and Airtel Koinange branch.

3.6 Data Collection

The data collection instrument employed was the questionnaire because of the advantages it has for the study including, time saving, upholding of confidentiality and for being the best source of primary data. A questionnaire according to Riaga (2010) is a document containing a number of standard questions set to be asked to a large number of respondents in order to gather information from them. It is used to identify an area for depth study for specific requirements. It can be used to get limited information from a large number of people and when the respondents are vastly dispersed.

The researcher prepared both closed and open ended questionnaire. Closed questionnaire was expected to offer uniformity in answering the questions while open ended questionnaire gave objectivity to respondents by allowing them to provide their personal and unbiased views. All the questions were relevant to the researcher. Out of this consideration, the researcher of this research only used data which was obtained from electronic databases or libraries, journal articles or books and which was scholarly.

In addition to secondary data, the researcher also collected primary data from two sample populations, like explained above. The data collection method was questionnaires because, like Creswell (2003) explains, questionnaires allow the researcher to collect a large volume of information on a limited budget and in a short time. It should be noted that the questionnaires was handed to the HR department at the mobile telephone service providing company. The HR department sent the questionnaires to its call centre agents and representatives, later forwarding the results to the researcher via email. The personal data which was collected through the questionnaire was kept confidential. In fact, the participants were assured in the questionnaire that personal identifying information was not revealed at all, except as part of the research results.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis included determination of measures of central tendency such as the percentages, mean and standard deviation among others. Since a construct in the questionnaire was measured by multiple items, the average score of the multi-items for a construct was computed and used in further analyses

such as correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis (Wang and Benbasat, 2007). Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between variables (Wong and Hiew, 2005).

3.8 Ethical Issues and Dilemmas

Ethical issues always arise in cases where the researcher is sometimes needed to use office hours to accomplish a part of the research. Considering the fact that most of the interviews were conducted during the day, questions arose on whether it is the right thing to do. This was however overcome by seeking leave or off days from official duties. Other dilemmas arise when one is forced to use office facilities while accomplishing what appears to be private business.

3.9 Expected Output

The research expected to establish that pricing, service quality, network coverage, promotion and product quality influenced the mobile telephone users in their choice of call center call center service providers. It was also expected that more than one of the variables may be at play at any given time. Other possible reasons that are not covered in the research may also be at play and were considered while conclusions were drawn.

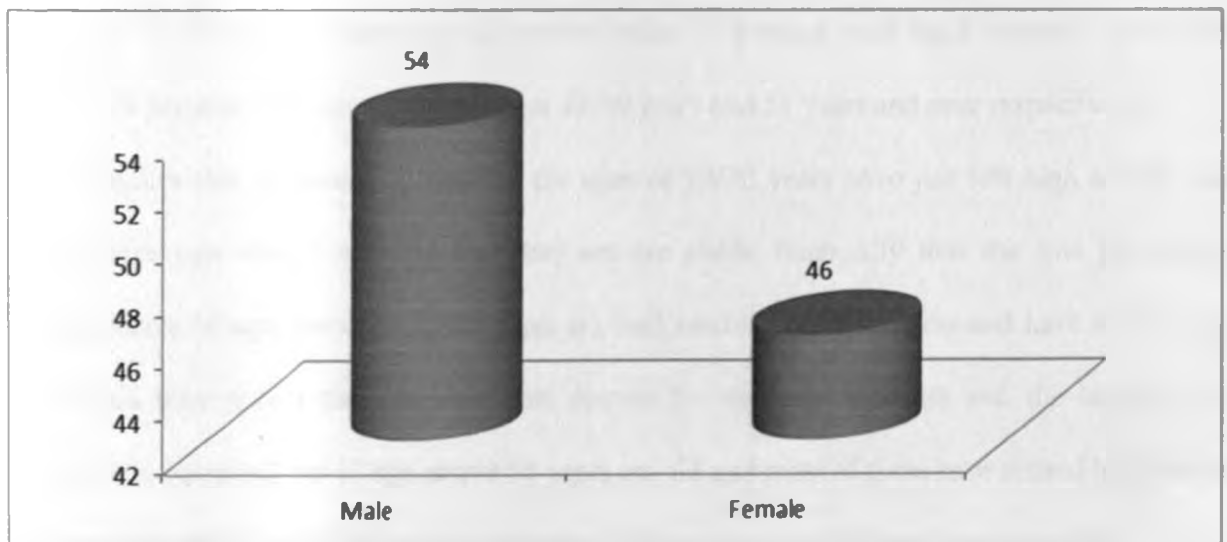
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter involved interpretation and presentation of research findings of this study. Data was examined and presented in the form of frequencies, percentages, tables, graphs and charts. The research objective was to investigate determinant factors that influence the success of call Centers service provision in Kenya. A total of 46 questionnaires were issued out to the managers, customer care agents and the customers. 3 questionnaires were given to the managers, 10 were issued to the customer care agents while the rest 33 were issued to the customers. The completed questionnaires were edited for completeness and consistency. Of the 46 questionnaires used in the sample, only 30 were returned representing 85 percent which was considered enough for subsequent analysis.

4.1.1 Distribution of respondents by gender

Figure 4.1: Gender representation



Source: Field Data (2012)

From the research findings and as depicted in figure 4.1 data analyzed revealed that majority of the respondents were male comprising 54 percent while 46 percent were female. This implies that more male respondents visit the customer care centres for services and complaints than female respondents.

4.1.2 Distribution of respondents by age

Table 4.1: Age bracket

Age bracket	Frequency	Percent
31-40 years	12	40
41-50 years	10	33
51 years and above	4	13
Total	30	100

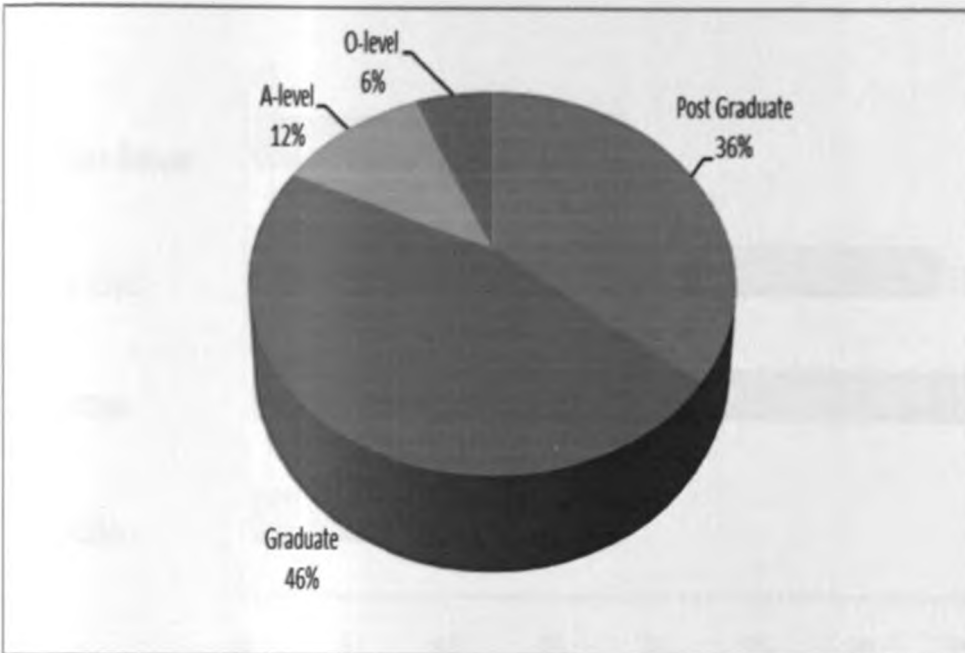
Source: Field Data (2012)

From the findings the research indicated that majority of the respondents were aged between the ages of 31-40 years comprising 40 percent while 33 percent were aged between ages 41-50 years. 13 percent were aged between ages 20-30 years and 51 years and over respectively.

This implies that respondents between the ages of 20/30 years have just left high school and other have just started working and they are not stable financially thus the low percentage. Respondents of ages between 31-50 years are well established in business and have well paying jobs thus they access the customer care centers for services, products and the launch more complains. Respondents of age above 51 years are old and most of them have retired hence some are poor and they cannot afford the expensive products an services hence less response.

4.2 Level of education of respondents

Figure 4.2: Highest level of education attained

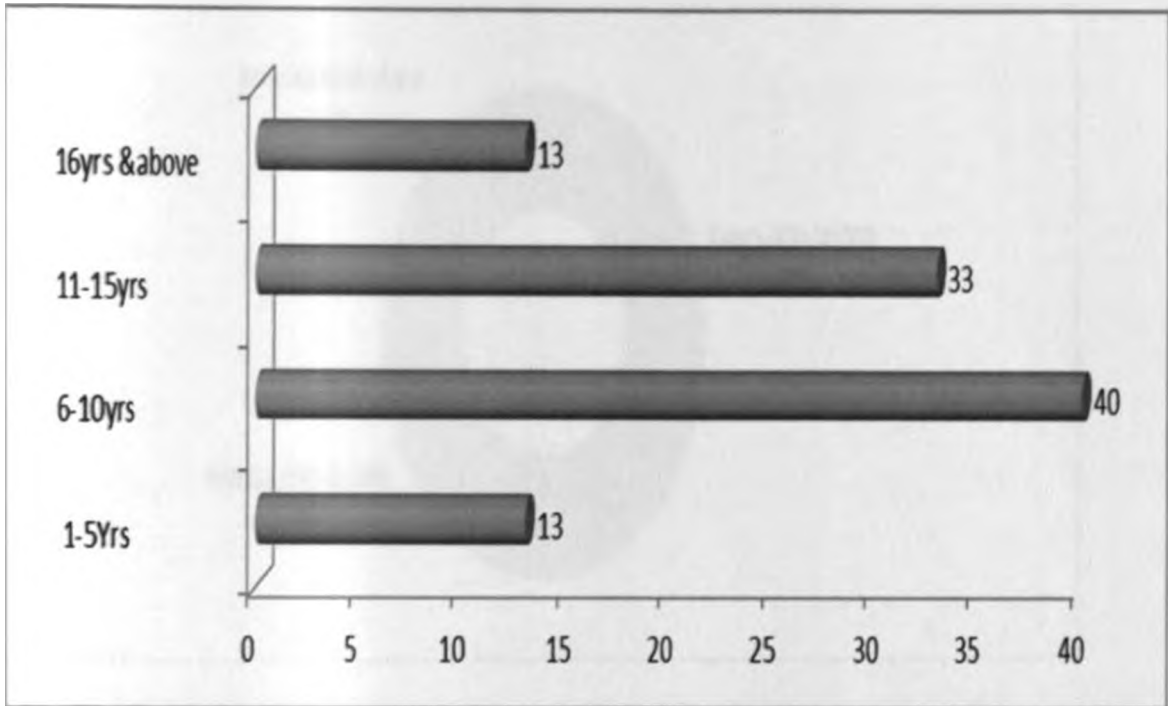


Source: Field Data (2012)

The findings of this research showed that most of the respondents were graduates which represented forty six percent (46%) while thirty six (36%) were post graduates. Twelve percent (12%) had an A level education while only six percent (6%) had an O level education. This implies that most respondents are graduates and the reason is because they are more informed of the services and products thus they want to find out more on how they can benefit them.

4.3 Years of experience of the respondents

Figure 4.3: showing years of experience



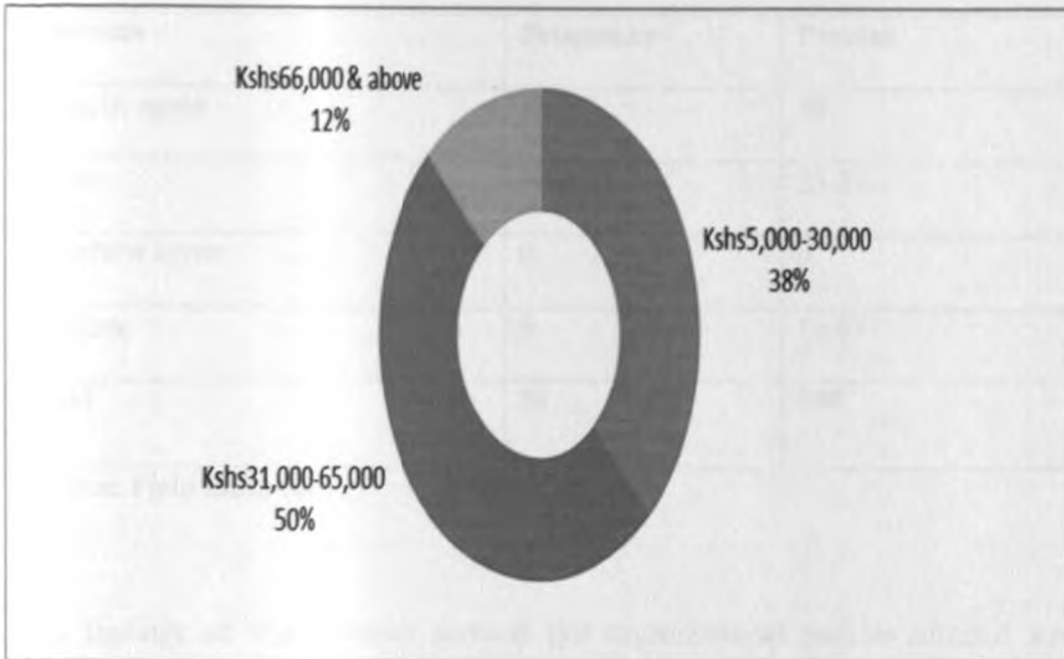
Source: Field Data (2012)

Most of the respondents had worked for Airtel between 6-10 years comprising 40 percent working while 33 percent had 11-15 years working experience. 13 percent had 16 years and above experience. A further 13 percent had worked at Airtel for a period between 1-5 years.

This implies that Airtel is a good employer and it sustains its employees by giving them better terms and good working conditions.

4.4 Salary scale for the respondents

Figure 4.4: Salary scale



Source: Field Data (2012)

Findings from the research showed that most of the respondents were earning between Kshs 31,000–65,000 comprising 50 percent while 38 percent were earning between Kshs 5,000–30,000. Only 12 percent were earning Kshs. 66,000 and above.

This implies that most employees i.e. 50% are at a salary scale of between 31,000/–65,000/- thus Airtel is pays its employees well.

4.5 Organizational policies as key determinants of call center success

Table 4.2: Organizational policies as key determinants of call center success

Response	Frequency	Percent
strongly agree	15	50
Agree	10	33.33
Somehow agree	0	0
Disagree	5	16.67
Total	30	100

Source: Field Data (2012)

The findings of this research showed that organizational policies affected strongly on the consumers usability of certain call centers. Out of 30 whose views were sought 50 percent agreed that the policies were a factor as it defines costs of various services offered by the company. This implies that this was mostly considered since the top managers are the one who makes policies and sometimes they may do so without understanding well the customers' expectations. This as noted by the respondents could affect the company positively or negatively in terms of customer retention.

4.6 Pricing as a key operational determinant of successful call centers

Table 4.3: Pricing as a key operational determinant of successful call centers

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	15	50.0
Agree	7	23.3
Somehow agree	5	16.67
Disagree	3	10.0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	30	100

Source: Field Data (2012)

Pricing has a great effect on services on the choice of a call center service provider. Call center service providers of bundled durable/services systems should give careful consideration to the pricing policies of their systems. This implies that there may be need to induce customers to purchase packages through mixed leader strategies, where discounts upon the durable are offset against premiums on the service fee.

Table 4.4: Pricing as a key operational determinant of successful call centers

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Pricing affects successful call Centers call center service providers	15	50
The rate of tariffs charged by my call center service providers are Very expensive	3	10
The rate of tariffs charged by the call centers are moderate	7	23.33
The rate of tariffs charged by my call center service providers are cheap	3	10
If prices were reviewed upwards I would Move to another call center service providers	20	66.67
If prices were reviewed upwards I would stay on and hope for the best	8	26.67
If prices were reviewed upwards I would acquire a line from a competitor and keep the two	20	66.67
Total	76	253

Source: Field Data (2012)

The findings as showed in table 4.3 revealed that majority of the respondents (50%) agreed that pricing affected successful call Centers call center service providers, the rate of tariffs charged by their call center service providers were reasonable, and if prices were reviewed upwards they would move to another call center service providers or acquire a line from a competitor and keep the two as was shown by high mean scores of and respectively. This implies that only a few

employees were not sure whether the pricing affected the success of call centers representing 16.67%. 10% did not agree that pricing affected the success of call centers.

On tariffs most of the respondents agreed that the charges by the company were not expensive which represented 66.67% but again result indicated that if the prices were reviewed upwards they would shift to other networks or buy a second line.

4.7 The extent of network coverage acting as a key operational determinant for a successful call center

Table 4.5: Extent of agreement on statements of network coverage

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	17	56.67
Agree	13	43.33
Somehow agree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	30	100

Source: Field Data (2012)

The research found out that Network coverage affected the success of call centers call service providers. This as indicated from the analysis was due to poor signals in some locations where

the services could not be accessed. This would result to change of tariffs to one that the customers found having the signals.

Table 4.6: Extent of agreement on statements of network coverage

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Network coverage affects successful call Centers call center service providers	24	80
If the network of my current call center service providers did not cover all the geographical arrears that I frequently visit within the country I would move to another one who can	20	66.67
My last change of a call center service providers was necessitated by the fact that I could not receive clear signal from some locations	26	86.67
Total	70	233

Source: Field Data (2012)

Results in the table revealed that majority represented by 43.33 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that network coverage was a key determinant in choosing the network one would use as it affected successful call Centers call center service providers and that the change of a call center service providers was necessitated by the fact that they could not receive clear signal from some locations. This implies that Network coverage in terms of geographical areas in Kenya determined the kind of network that most service providers would use. Majority of the respondents cited some areas in Kenya where the network would not reach for example in the remote areas where clear signals/no at all were unavailable. In response to this question the

respondents said that there was no way they could continue to use the services of unavailable network.

4.8 Product Quality and availability as key operational determinant for successful call centers

Table 4.7: Extent of agreement on statements on Product Quality and availability

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Agree	5	16.67
Somehow agree	5	16.67
Disagree	7	23.33
Strongly disagree	3	10.0
Total	30	100.0

Source: Field Data (2012)

The research found out that the types of products offered by the company and their availability to the customers also dictated their subscription. The research found out that Airtel offered a number of products including money transfers, voice mail, text messages, cashless purchases queue services which made it easy for the customers using its services. This implies that however how Airtel's money transfer service (Airtel money) is the cheapest in the market especially with the zero rated money transfer to any network that has been introduced recently but their coverage is still not wide enough forcing people to continue using the biggest competitor Safaricom who is more expensive. Airtel still stands as the biggest competitor of Safaricom and it offers the best products and services, especially cheap call rates.

Table 4.8: Extent of agreement on statements on Product Quality and availability

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
I chose the current call center service providers because of its service quality and availability	25	83.33
Call center service providers have come up with various products which includes Money transfers, Voice Mail, Text Messages, Cashless purchases, internet connections among others. My call center service providers offer enough products to satisfy all my needs	27	90
I would like to see my call center service providers improve on some of the products	25	83.33
I stick with my call center service providers just because of the quality of a specific product that I cannot be able to get from other call center service providers	10	33.33
Total	87	290

Source: Field Data (2012)

Results showed that majority of the respondent 33.33 percent agreed that call center service providers product quality was a key determinant for successful call centers. This is because as the respondents cited was due to the fact that if a product was poor or of lower quality for example in terms of network coverage, members would tend to shift to other service providers where they would get good product however much they paid for the same whether expensive or cheap. The company had come up with various products which include Money transfers, Voice Mail, Text Messages, Cashless purchases, internet connections, queue systems among others to

improve on its service delivery. This implies that their call center service providers offer enough products to satisfy all their needs of the customers and they chose the current call center service providers because of its service quality and availability as was shown in the table above. Most of the respondents agreed that the majority of the respondents chose the services of Airtel because of their reliability and efficiency. Further the respondents cited factors as good customer relations while handling customers, good complaint management as very important key determinants for a successful call center.

4.8.1 Extent of agreement on promotions statements

Table 4.9: Extent of agreement on statements on Promotions

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	15	50.0
Agree	10	33.33
Somehow agree	0	0
Disagree	5	16.67
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	30	100

Source: Field Data (2012)

From the findings it showed that company promotions affected the success of call Centers call center service providers in Kenya. The various promotions conducted for example lower call rates, bonus point, extra call time, gifts are important to customers in influencing their choice for a certain call center service providers. The research also found out that majority believed that

promotion services had an impact in determining the choice of service to use citing other things as product awareness of the company as a key deterrent in using such a product.

Table 4.10: Extent of agreement on statements on Promotions

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Company promotions affect the successful call Centers call center service providers in Kenya	15	50
Various promotions are conducted every now and then by call center service providers in the form of lower call rates, bonus point, extra call time, gifts etc. these promotions are important to customers and may influence their choice for a certain call center service providers.	22	73.33
If better promotions were offered by a rival call center service providers, I would go for them and abandon my old call center service providers	28	93.33
Total	65	217

Source: Field Data (2012)

Majority of the respondents agreed strongly that company promotions affect the success of call Centers call center service providers in Kenya. The various promotions are conducted every now as indicated by the respondents and then by call center service providers in the form of lower call rates, bonus point, extra call time, gifts etc and that these promotions are important to customers in influence their choice for a certain call center service providers as was shown by high percentage of 50 and 33.33 percent.

This implies that only 16.67 believed that promotion services had an impact in determining the choice of service to use citing other things as product awareness of the company as a key determinant in using such a product.

Table 4.11: Reliability of call centers as key determinant of successful call centers

Responses	Frequency	Percent
strongly agree	24	80.0
Agree	0	0
Somehow agree	6	20.0
Disagree	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0
Total	30	100.0

Source: Field Data (2012)

Reliability was cited strongly as a key determinant for using certain call centers. This was supported largely by 80 percent. Reliability using the networks where there was no congestion, lack of poor network was cited as an important factor in determining the usability of certain call centers. This implies that Airtel has the best network with the least drop calls as compared to its competitor Safaricom, Orange and Yu. Customers have easy access to their mobile counterparts as well as to the call centers.

4.9 Discussion of research findings

4.9.1 Pricing as a key operational factor in determining call centers

The research found out that price was a key determinant in ensuring how various customers used various services for offered. It was discovered that though price could be considered as a less effective in determining customer's subscription it was very important since in case of price change to either positive or negative it shifted the customers on either side.

The rate of tariffs charged by the call centers was also another factor that determined the customers' subscription.

4.9.2 Network coverage

The research found out that Network coverage affected the success of call centers call service providers. This as indicated from the analysis was due to poor signals in some locations where the services could not be accessed. This would result to change of tariffs to one that the customers found having the signals.

4.9.3 Product quality and availability

The research found out that the types of products offered by the company and their availability to the customers also dictated their subscription. The research found out that Airtel offered a number of products including money transfers, voice mail, text messages, cashless purchases queue services which made it easy for the customers using its services.

4.9.4 Use of promotions

From the findings it showed that company promotions affected the success of call Centers call center service providers in Kenya. The various promotions conducted for example lower call rates, bonus point, extra call time, gifts are important to customers in influencing their choice for a certain call center service providers. The research also found out that majority believed that promotion services had an impact in determining the choice of service to use citing other things as product awareness of the company as a key deterrent in using such a product.

4.9.5 Reliability to call centers

The findings showed that majority of customers used the services due to their reliability in terms of network congestion, poor or no network reception in some areas. These influenced greatly the choice of call center call service provider to be used by the customers.

This implies that Airtel has the best network with the least drop calls as compared to its competitor Safaricom, Orange and Yu. Customers have easy access to their mobile counterparts as well as to the call centers.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendation of the study based on the data analysis and presentations. The summary presented here are in relation to the objective of the study which was to establish key operational determinants of successful call centers for consumer prevalence.

5.2 Summary of Findings

On pricing, a majority of the respondents agreed that pricing affects successful call Centers call center service providers, the rate of tariffs charged by their call center service providers were reasonable, and if prices were reviewed upwards they would move to another call center service providers and that if prices were reviewed upwards they would acquire a line from a competitor and keep the two. In the theoretical orientation in this study the researcher argues that the choice of a customer choosing a certain call center against the other depend on the price. This is supported by the fundamental theory of demand that argues that the consumption of a product or service falls as the price increases. This means that when call center increases their charges to call center the consumers tends to move away from such center. This shows and as from the findings that pricing dictates the consumer behavior to certain products and services. This is also found in the findings which showed that pricing greatly affected the usage of call centers.

On the area of network coverage, majority of the respondents strongly agreed that network coverage affects successful call Centers call center service providers and that the last change of a call center service provider was necessitated by the fact that they could not receive clear signal from some locations. This in theory talks about product quality. The theory in total quality management (TQM) argues that when a product or service quality is improved through good management and organizational commitment and innovation there is high tendency of consumption. Consumers consider more the quality of the product than even the price to some extent. In the findings the researcher found out that network coverage of call centers determined their success or failure. The larger the coverage the greater the number of consumers subscribed to such call center. The theory and the findings hence relate since unless there are improvements on service quality in terms of network coverage there will be lesser subscribers or no subscriber at all.

On this area, majority of the respondent agreed that call center service providers have come up with various products which includes Money transfers, Voice Mail, Text Messages, Cashless purchases, internet connections among others. Their call center service providers offer enough products to satisfy all their needs and they chose the current call center service providers because of its service quality and availability. Innovation is key to existence of any business as argued in the theory of strategic management. Improved service provision or innovation through creation of new products forms the basis of a successful call center. This because with introduction of new products to the market the consumers are given a choice to chose from the many products which to use. This keeps the consumer to the same subscriber as they feel their needs are catered for. The key to innovation and successful adoption of the service by a call center is the provision

of information about the operations and environment that is accurate, timely, accessible, comprehensive, and continuous. This requires proper coordination from the management and the support of all the employees to ensure the innovations are useful.

Additional values given to any service by the call center are very important for a business. The theory argues that if these additional values are used to improve on the service and reduce on the cost as cited by Slack (2005) on quality improvement initiatives that counts a lot in any call center. This is well illustrated from the findings that indicated that on promotions, majority of the respondents agreed that company promotions affect the successful call Centers call center service providers in Kenya and that various promotions are conducted every now and then by call center service providers in the form of lower call rates, bonus point, extra call time, gifts etc and that these promotions are important to customers and may influence their choice for a certain call center service providers. These promotions are done through various methods as indicated by the findings of this study. The theory also argues that managers seek new methods of adding value , either through performance of development of new strategies of service package and service delivery system that serve it. The additional values given to a service call center determines whether such call center will be a success considering consumer preference and taste as per the objective.

5.3 Conclusion

Pricing has a great effect on services on the choice of a call center service provider. Call center service providers of bundled durable/services systems should give careful consideration to the pricing policies of their systems. There may be need to induce customers to purchase packages through mixed leader strategies, where discounts upon the durable are offset against premiums on the service fee. The research further argues that the influence of area network coverage has an effect on the subscriber's choice for call center service providers. It is the wish of every mobile phone owner to be able to reach any person of interest at any time and from whenever he/she may be. This can as well be known as freedom of communication.

Further these researches found out that contact meeting with different customers have an effect on the choice for a call center service providers. A person's reference groups are all the groups that have a direct (face-to-face) or indirect influence on their attitudes or behavior. Groups having a direct influence are called membership groups.

Lastly the research concludes by noting that the product quality on the subscriber's choice of a call center service providers determines mostly their choice of service to use. Customer satisfaction with an organization's products or services is often seen as the key to an organization's success and long-term competitiveness. Further, promotions and advertisements have an effect on the subscriber's choice for a call center service providers. Promotion is one of the four elements of marketing mix (product, price, promotion, and place). It is the communication link between sellers and buyers that influence, inform, or persuade a potential buyer's purchasing decision.

5.4 Recommendations

The study recommends that for call centers to effectively lure consumers. There is need to effect good pricing, and invest in technological advancements to enable good network coverage.

I suggest the following topics for further study.

- The role of Corporate Social Responsibility (C.S.R) by Mobile and its impact on the mobile subscribers.
- The role of media in enhancing the best mobile services by all mobile operators in the country.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MANAGERS

The questionnaire is designed for academic research purposes only. Kindly answer all questions.

Your responses will be treated with utmost confidence.

Section A: General information

Please tick appropriately

1) Gender a) Male b) Female

2) Age bracket

a) 20-30 years

b) 31-40 years

c) 41-50 years

d) 51 years and over

3) Highest level of education attained

a) Post Graduate

b) Graduate

c) A-level

d) O-level

4) Designation at the Organization.....

5) Years of experience

- a) 1-5Yrs
- b) 6-10yrs
- c) 11-15yrs
- d) 16yrs &above

SECTION B: KEY OPERATIONAL DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESSFUL CALL CENTERS

PRICING

1. What parameters are used in designing pricing?
2. What influences shift in prices of products and services?

In a scale of 1-5, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement "price as a key operational determinant of successful call Centers". 5=strongly agree - 1=strongly disagree

Please tick appropriately

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Explain briefly to support your answer

.....

In the table below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement in a scale of

1-5. Please tick appropriately

- Strongly agree (5)
- Agree (4)
- Somehow agree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The tariffs charged are very competitive					
The tariffs provided are the best rate in the market					
The rate of tariffs charged by this call center are reasonable					
The rate of tariffs charged by this call center are Cheap					
The rate of tariffs charged by this call center are Very Cheap					
If prices were reviewed upwards I would Move to another provider					
If prices were reviewed upwards many clients would stay on and hope for the best					
If prices were reviewed upwards many clients would Acquire our services					

Section C: Network coverage

In a scale of 1-5, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement “network coverage act as a key operational determinant of a successful call Centers r”. 5=strongly agree –

1=strongly disagree

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Briefly give the reason for your answer

.....

In the table below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement in a scale of

1-5. Please tick appropriately

- Strongly agree (5)
- Agree (4)
- Somehow agree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)

Score	1	2	3	4	5
Network coverage of this call center cover all the geographical arrears in Kenya					
Everybody receives clear signal from all locations in Kenya of this call centre					

Section D: Product Quality and availability

In a scale of 1-5, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement, 'Product quality and availability act as a key operational determinant of successful call Centers' Please tick appropriately

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Explain briefly in support of your answer

.....

People mostly chose the current mobile service provider because of its service quality and availability

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

In the table below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement in a scale of

1-5. Please tick appropriately

- Strongly agree (5)
- Agree (4)
- Somehow agree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
This call center have come up with various products which includes Money transfers, Voice Mail, Text Messages, Cashless purchases, internet connections among others and offer enough products to satisfy all my needs					
All the call center products/services are improved					

Section E: Reliability

Call Centre reliability act as a key operational determinant of successful call Centers

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Explain briefly in support of your answer

.....

People chose our call center because of its reliability

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Kindly state any other factor which you think would act as a key operational determinant of successful call Centers and why

.....

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CUSTOMER CARE REPRESENTATIVES

The questionnaire is designed for academic research purposes only. Kindly answer all questions.

Your responses will be treated with utmost confidence.

Section A: General information

Please tick appropriately

6) Gender a) Male b) Female

7) Age bracket

a) 20-30 years

b) 31-40 years

c) 41-50 years

d) 51 years and over

8) Highest level of education attained

a) Post Graduate

b) Graduate

c) A-level

d) O-level

SECTION B: KEY OPERATIONAL DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESSFUL CALL CENTERS

PRICING

In a scale of 1-5, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement "price as a key operational determinant of successful call Centers". 5=strongly agree - 1=strongly disagree

Please tick appropriately

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Explain briefly to support your answer

.....

In the table below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement in a scale of

1-5. Please tick appropriately

- Strongly agree (5)
- Agree (4)
- Somehow agree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The rate of tariffs charged by this call center are Very expensive					
The rate of tariffs charged by this call center are Not expensive					
The rate of tariffs charged by this call center are reasonable					
The rate of tariffs charged by this call center are Cheap					
The rate of tariffs charged by this call center are Very Cheap					
If prices were reviewed upwards I would Move to another provider					
If prices were reviewed upwards many clients would stay on and hope for the best					
If prices were reviewed upwards many clients would Acquire our services					

Section C: Network coverage

In a scale of 1-5, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement “network coverage act as a key operational determinant of a successful call Centers r”. 5=strongly agree – 1=strongly disagree

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Briefly give the reason for your answer

.....

In the table below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement in a scale of 1-5. Please tick appropriately

- Strongly agree (5)
- Agree (4)
- Somehow agree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)

Score	1	2	3	4	5
Network coverage of this call center cover all the geographical arrears in Kenya					
Everybody receives clear signal from all locations in Kenya of this call centre					

Section D: Product Quality and availability

In a scale of 1-5, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement, 'Product quality and availability act as a key operational determinant of successful call Centers' Please tick appropriately

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Explain briefly in support of your answer

.....

People mostly chose the current mobile service provider because of its service quality and availability

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

In the table below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement in a scale of

1-5. Please tick appropriately

- Strongly agree (5)
- Agree (4)
- Somehow agree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
This call center have come up with various products which includes Money transfers, Voice Mail, Text Messages, Cashless purchases, internet connections among others and offer enough products to satisfy all my needs					
All the call center products/services are improved					

Section E: Reliability

Call Centre reliability act as a key operational determinant of successful call Centers

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Explain briefly in support of your answer

.....

People chose our call center because of its reliability

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Kindly state any other factor which you think would act as a key operational determinant of successful call Centers and why

.....

APPENDIX III: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CUSTOMERS

The questionnaire is designed for academic research purposes only. Kindly answer all questions.

Your responses will be treated with utmost confidence.

Section A: General information

Please tick appropriately

9) Gender a) Male b) Female

10) Age bracket

a) 20-30 years

b) 31-40 years

c) 41-50 years

d) 51 years and over

11) Highest level of education attained

a) Post Graduate

b) Graduate

c) A-level

d) O-level

SECTION B: SATISFACTION WITH CALL CENTERS SERVICES

PRICING

In a scale of 1-5, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement "WE ARE SATISFIED WITH PRICING OF CALL CENTERS A". 5=strongly agree - 1=strongly disagree

Please tick appropriately

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Explain briefly to support your answer

.....

.....

In the table below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement in a scale of 1-5. Please tick appropriately

- Strongly agree (5)
- Agree (4)
- Somehow agree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The rate of tariffs charged by this call center are Very expensive					
The rate of tariffs charged by this call center are Not expensive					
The rate of tariffs charged by this call center are reasonable					
The rate of tariffs charged by this call center are Cheap					
The rate of tariffs charged by this call center are Very Cheap					
If prices were reviewed upwards I would Move to another provider					
If prices were reviewed upwards many clients would stay on and hope for the best					
If prices were reviewed upwards many clients would Acquire our services					

Section C: Network coverage

In a scale of 1-5, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement "network coverage act as a key determinant my choice of call Centers r". 5=strongly agree – 1=strongly disagree

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somehow agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Briefly give the reason for your answer

.....

In the table below, please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement in a scale of 1-5. Please tick appropriately

- Strongly agree (5)
- Agree (4)
- Somehow agree (3)
- Disagree (2)
- Strongly disagree (1)

APPENDIX IV: TIME PLAN

May	June	July	August	September
Proposal writing				
	Proposal defense			
		Data collection Data Analysis		
			Report writing	
				Submission of project

APPENDIX V: BUDGET

Items	No. of units	Cost per unit	Total
Ruled foolscap rims	1	500.00	500.00
Pens- packet	1	1,000.00	1,000.00
Data collection/ assistants	5	5,000.00	25,000.00
Data analysis	1	15,000.00	15,000.00
Copy Typist	2	2009.00	4,000.00
Typing paper-rims	1	600.00	600.00
Proof reading	2	1,500.00	3,000.00
Transport-car fuel	1	6,000.00	6,000.00
Transport-Matatu	Several users	various	5,000.00
Office hire-months	1Month	15,000.00	15,000.00
Labour-office	1	10,000.00	10,000.00
Total			85,100.00