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CONSUMER PREFERENCE OF DIFFERENT CYBER CAFÉ SERVICES IN KENYA

A Critical Evaluation of the Factors That Influence Preference for Different Cyber Café Services in Kisii Town

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Abstract

This study was about factors that influenced the preference for cyber café services by consumers in Kisii Town. The objectives of the study were to find out the services a cyber café offered that enticed people to visit them and spend time and/or money using the services, to establish the main potential users of the cyber café services, and to evaluate the factors that influenced preference for different cyber café services. To achieve this, a sample of 300 respondents in all the 12-cyber cafés was selected. 20 customers were picked using simple random sampling from each cyber café, 5 management staff (3 caretakers and 2 executive staff to represent the ownership of the cyber café). Questionnaires were administered to the cyber café customers and to the cyber café owners during repeated visits to each cyber café over the period of study. Assistants presented copies of the questionnaires to customers to complete as they left the cyber cafés and supplementary information was obtained from management staff of the cyber cafés. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Chi-square test was used to establish the relationship between customer categories and principal factors that influenced them to use the cyber cafés. The Chi-square value that was obtained at 95% confidence level revealed that there was more than the principle factors that influenced customer's choice for cyber café services. The findings can be used by cyber café owners to identify consumer's preference for cyber café, furnish them with knowledge of consumer expectations, aid entrepreneurs to increase sales through customer retention strategies and help future researchers, especially, in the fields of marketing. The research could also be used to strategize how to modify the cyber café to meet consumers' expectations, gain their loyalty and improve its services.

Keywords: *Consumer Preference and Cyber Café Services Process*

1. Introduction

1.1 General Background

The use of Internet as one of the essential tools for communication by different groups of people has taken the globe by storm. Not only does the Internet provide the necessary media to communicate but also

enables different people to conduct many other activities such as hardware procurement, set-up and support, online session surveys, daily quick – polls and reporting, online event chat rooms, card reader,

badge swipe integration, contact management and development, print management, customized post show reports, research, e-commerce, e-mail, trade, conferencing, computer games and many others.

Assael, H (1998), contend that marketing, when viewed in the broadest sense, is about placing focus of any business venture on the consumer, who is actually the purchaser of the firms' goods and services offered for sale. Therefore, consumer behavior must be studied because they do affect certain decisions taken by firms. He further defines consumer behavior as one where consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of product services. The study of consumer behavior is concerned not only with what consumers buy, but also how often they buy and learning the specific meanings that products hold for consumers.

For a customer to be loyal to a cyber café, there exists a number of factors not present in any other café providing Internet services. Some of these unique factors include: flexibility (variety of services), reasonable cost of services, quality and satisfactory services, efficient and effective services, conducive and supportive staff, security, legal issues, cyber cafe structure and design, on-site support networking, number of machines and placement, structure and sitting arrangements, conducive and ventilated environment and convenient operational times.

Kisii is a medium sized town with twelve cyber cafés located at different points. The cafés receive a variety of customers interested in one or more of the services they provide. There is no master plan to guide potential entrepreneurs on what triggers the use of the cyber cafés. The town has suffered closure of some cyber cafés, even though others are coming up. The market is becoming more segmented with each cyber café focusing on the needs of particular customer groups thus widening the customer choice. The cyber café users are influenced by characteristics that are rooted in cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. Other factors like café preference, cost, availability, satisfaction and quality, efficiency and effectiveness and reliability do affect the clients that seek the cyber café services

The study attempted to look at the users of the cyber cafés, the triggers to use cyber cafés and the reasons why customers repeatedly returned to the cyber cafés. The convenience, sociability, technical support, learning opportunities and computer games stood out as principal factors. The findings revealed that, for

any cyber café to be successful, profitable and competitive, it needed to have loyal customers that preferred Internet services it provided. To be competitive and avoid being phased out, a cyber café entrepreneur would keep its customers so as to get the aspect of customer loyalty. Customer's decision affected the choice of a cyber café, and therefore, many cyber café entrepreneurs gave priority to those factors that influenced the choice for cyber café services.

1.2 Cyber Cafés

Stewart J, (1998), defines a cyber café as a cafe or shop open to the public, where a computer can be hired for specified periods to access the Internet, write a CV or play a game. He addressed the use and users of cyber cafés in the same city, the reasons and manner they were set up and developed, and the role cyber cafés play in the general development of use and knowledge about multimedia. What emerged was that cyber cafés are not only sites for technical access and for consumption and use of multimedia content and services, but also public, physical, community and cultural spaces. In this context the researcher challenged the view that computers either undermined the community, or are only relevant to the formation and activities of 'virtual' communities. Stewart further contended that if the city is our home, then the cyber café is becoming an important part of our domestic life. Cyber cafés bring Information Technology (IT) into real communities, allowing people to use and learn about them in their own way. The managers and customers of the cafés are finding new ways to incorporate this global phenomenon into the everyday life of the city.

Silverstone R, et al. (1992), said that the cyber café is not transitory phenomenon, but the evolution and extension of a very old and traditional institution, the café. Cyber cafés may service and reflect the communication and information needs of people living in a global society, but they place this in a local context, providing a social space and a convenient and hospitable location for technology access: the 'human face' of the information society. The cyber café can act as a gateway or portal between a local community, represented by individuals and formal and informal groups, and on-line communities and individuals.

McBride S, .et al. (2000), said that cyber cafés appeared to have been developed in the USA in the early 1990s, often as an extension of existing attempts to democratize access to computers and to media in general. A trendy café with computers to surf the Net was a bizarre novelty, computers and the Internet being associated with a solitary occupation

of 'anoraks' or with work. They did not seem to fit with the conviviality of a café atmosphere, where face-to-face contact, escape from work etc. is central to the experience. However, the relaxed, informal atmosphere of the café was precisely the aim as the cafés were promoted as a 'human' place to learn about computers and find information. Since 1995, cyber cafés have been cited in many major national and international magazines, newspapers and books.

While most cafés have to operate in the market, they are also social centres. They often offer a focus for a particular social group, or geographical community. The café is more than the physical space or the products it serves, it is the people who use it and work in it. A café is successful when it attracts customers back. Not that the physical aspect are not important - the decor, the drinks the computer games etc., but they are there to mediate, facilitate and lubricate the experience and activities of people. Social games appear to have a special place in cafés. Pubs, cafés, clubs, and of course amusement arcades and casinos all feature games as part of the activities. In many countries, games are the central activity in café life. Electronic games made their way into cafés and pubs as soon as they were invented. Although some games attract a limited clientele, others such as the pub quiz have a broad appeal.

However, according to McBride S, et al. (2000), as the Internet and computers suddenly became a widely diffused part of mainstream culture, then, why should cyber cafés or public Internet points continue to exist? This study showed that they had a very good reason to become an even more common and permanent part of our world. Cyber cafés are not the only public access points in the city. There are a range of 'cyber' centres. There are schools with IT centres for local business, Libraries with Internet and Compact Disk Read Only Memory (CD-ROM) facilities, business centres offering Internet access and computer facilities, 'telecottages' providing technology for business and cultural projects, video stores with computer terminals, and computer training centres. Even banks offer a chance to surf the Net. There are also initiatives to open government one-stop shops to provide on-line access to national and local government services through local telecentres.

1.3 Choice of Cyber Café Services

Schffman and Kanuk (2000), states that perception is the process by which an individual selects, organizes and interprets stimuli in the environment into a coherent picture of the world. How each individual recognizes, selects, organizes and interprets them is highly individual and based on nature of the stimulus,

expectations and motives. Learning involves change in an individual's behavior arising from experience. Most human behavior is learned, learning theorist believe that learning is produced through interplay of drives, stimulus, cues, responses and reinforcement. Through doing and learning, people acquire beliefs and attitudes. These in turn influence demand for the service. A belief is a descriptive thought a person holds about something. An attitude is person's enduring favorable or unfavorable evaluations, emotions, feelings, actions and tendencies towards some object or an idea. Attitudes lead people to behave in a fairly consistent way towards similar objects. Attitude can be reinforced, the greater the number of repeat purchase of certain service the more information we acquire about the service provider and the more difficult marketers will convince individuals to change attitude towards other related services.

Ainslie G, (1992), argues that there exists a market place where the people's preference is decided, the process of decision making, leads to a formal solution to the problem of inconsistent behavior. This lets an individuals' plan to be realized while another is being frustrated, without reconciliation to an over plan. He classifies motivation into lower and upper level and proceeds to say that higher motives have to be weighed down the same dimension as passion in the process of choice.

Valarie A Ziethaml, et al. (1996), describes service as deeds, processes and performances. Services include all economic activities whose output is not physical product or construction, and are generally consumed at the time they are produced and provide added value in forms such as convenience, amusement, timeliness, comfort or health, that essentially are intangible concerns of its first purchaser. For example, an internet cyber café entrepreneur may offer services to customers that include surfing the web, e-mail, e-commerce, teleconferencing, fax, telex, multimedia access from the web etc. Each of this service may include a final, tangible report or tangible instructional material. Otherwise, the entire service is represented to the client through problem analysis activities, meeting with the client; follow up calls and reporting a series of deeds and performance. Adrian Palmer (1998), states that service marketing is the management process that identifies, anticipates and supplies customer requirements efficiently and profitably. In light of this, the research focused on cyber café industry as one of the sectors that provide services required by customers and try to unfold the factors that influence customer choice for a cyber café.

Sorensen, K. (1996), contended that growth is enabled through service marketing. A number of jobs have been in the service industry such as, information technology, education and training, small service business opportunities. Customers demand and expect excellent, satisfying services during the decision making process to purchase goods/services. Service business needs to keep up with customer expectations and compete effectively. Many entrepreneurs in the service industry seek better ways of understanding and segmenting their customers to ensure the delivery of quality services and to strengthen their positions amidst a growing number of competitors.

Stewart, J. and R. Williams (1998), said that a cyber café or any other local ICT access centre, privately or publicly run must attract customers. In this study, the users of the cyber cafes emanated from different groups and the research attempted to find out reasons why they visited the cyber cafés. There are many reasons for customers to use cyber cafés and even return to continue using them, this may include; provision of technical service, conducive atmosphere, helpful or friendly staff, convenience of location, a place to be with friends etc. Table 1 shows the diversity of use and motivations.

Reingold, H. (1994), argued that intermediaries, the cafe managers and cyber cafés act as agents in the diffusion process, facilitating voluntary uptake of their services by customers. People encounter and engage with new technologies in many different ways subject to personal and local contingencies. He actually suggests five main categories; life events, social Push, multimedia pull or instrumental need, curiosity and interest in technology or content, and finally learning and teaching. He contended further that these triggers are useful categories to understand not only why an individual might start using a service in a cyber café, but also to understand the market that the intermediary is addressing, and the tools they deploy to try to engage new customers.

2.0 Statement of the Problem

Computers and the Internet in cafés are a natural extension of existing facilities, uses of cafés and other public, or semi-public venues. People have always met to eat, drink, talk and play games in places such as inns and taverns. The first 18th century 'cafés' were centres of community for informal discussion on politics, local affairs, and culture, frequented by particular social groups. Perhaps more than traditional drinking establishments, information was central to early coffee shops, some even publishing their own newspapers, others becoming financial institutions. Cafés are sites for learning, socializing, and playing. They are a place for

travelers to find some home comforts, to write letters and find out about the area or meet others. They are places to do business or have a celebration. All these activities are characteristic of cyber cafés. Many of the activities that people go to the café for; they could do at home, but prefer to do them outside: cafés are a home from home. Home is not always convenient, or even pleasant, and people like to be in the company of others. It is not only a home; cafés are also a public venue that is not a formal work or office space (Sennett (1977)).

Entrepreneurs who invested in any service industry had quite often taken for granted some essential factors that customers regarded important when making a decision to utilize a service. With increased competition for customers and the growing number of cyber café businesses in Kisii Town, entrepreneurs needed to understand and lay emphasis on those factors customers preferred on services offered. This was an important prerequisite to satisfying the customers and hence gaining their confidence and ultimately their loyalty. A cyber café entrepreneur was then placed in a better position to offer adequate services, which in the long run translated to increased sales. There was, therefore, a need to identify and evaluate the factors that customers considered important in their choice for cyber café services.

The specific objectives of the study were;

- i.) To find out the services a cyber café offered that enticed people to come in and spend time and/or money using the services
- ii.) To establish the main potential users of the cyber café services
- iii.) To evaluate the factors that influenced preference for different cyber café services

It was also hypothesized that customer's convenience, Service offered, supportive staff, Cost of service, Conducive atmosphere and Friends have influence on customer's choice for cyber café services

3.0 Research Strategy

This study was about the factors that influenced customer's choice for a cyber café services. The research partly involved a complete survey of cyber cafés and a sample of customers who used the cyber café services within the study setting. Information regarding the factors that influenced customer choice for a cyber café service was obtained via administering questionnaires to the respondents at the various cyber cafés. Assistants were engaged in presenting the questionnaires to the respondents as

they left the cyber cafés. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Research was done by administering a questionnaire to the cyber café customers, observation and oral interviews were carried out to the customers during repeated visits to each cyber café during the data collection period. Supplementary information was obtained from management staff of the cyber cafés. Primary data collection involved the use of self-administered questionnaire for literate respondents and researcher administered questionnaire to cater for those who would not easily interpret the questions due to their low literacy levels.

The research was based in Kisii Municipality, which is a rural town with a relatively adult population of 37,531 residents (Central Bureau Of Statistics Census Report, 1999). The town is central to other neighbouring districts of Homabay, Migori, Gucha, Nyamira and Rachuonyo. The population of the proposed study was drawn from Kisii Central District. The study targeted 300 respondents from 12 cyber cafés in full operation in Kisii Town during the period of research.

All 12 cyber cafés were selected because the target population was small. The respondents to participate in the research were selected using the random sampling procedure. 20 customers were picked using random sampling from each cyber café, 5 management staff (3 caretakers and 2 executive staff to represent the ownership of the cyber café). This consequently ended up with 300 respondents selected.

A questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaires were administered to respondents as they left the cyber café. The questionnaires were filled as the researcher waited to reduce non-response rates. They presented copies of the questionnaires to customers as they left the cyber cafés. The researcher presented the questionnaire to the management staff to fill.

The study incorporated data analysis tools, which included descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data collected. Likert scale was used to identify the degree of importance of each factor. Chi-square test was used to establish the relationship between customer categories and principal factors that influenced them to use the cyber cafes.

4.0 Data Analysis, Findings and Discussions

The study targeted a population of 300 respondents that encompassed 240 customers and 60 personnel from the management of the various cyber cafes.

However, the study managed to get back 60 duly completed questionnaires from the management of the cyber cafés and a total of 223 completed questionnaires from the customers.

The research identified 9% of the respondents emanated from the government category, 13% from the private company, 48% were students, 7% were self employed, 8% unemployed and 15% were professionals. The research showed that most of the customers are students and this finding concurs with the fact that the most used service is research work, which is obvious to this group of respondents.

The data that was recorded showed the following statistics as regard the period of services for various management staff from different cyber cafes. Out of 60 management staff interviewed 22% had served for less than 1 year, 35% had served between 1 and 2 years, 25% had served between 2 and 3years, 18% for more than three years. The research shows that the industry is a potential job opportunity unlike the turn over rate of employment.

On the various services provided by the cyber cafes and the outcome as collected from the field, the results obtained showed that 5% played computer games, 27% of the respondents went for e-mail services (Webcam), 3% listened to music, 2% preferred chatting, 57% carried out research, 0% consumed no snacks and 7% preferred other services.

Also on the collective turn out of customers visiting the cyber cafés on a daily basis as indicated by the management staff from the different cyber cafes, it was found that 10% received below 10 customers, 25% received between 10 and 20 customers, 23% received between 20 and 30 customers and 42% received more than 30 customers daily. The research shows that cyber café industry is a viable business venture that individuals can start and make sales.

On the cost of using the Internet, none of the cybers charged 50 cents, 40% charged Ksh.1.00 per minute online, 18% charged Ksh. 1.50 per minute online, 38% charged Ksh. 2.00 per minute online and 3% did not have a specific cost hence, considered other factors to set their prices.

The objectives of this study are satisfied by the evaluation of the factors influencing cyber café choice, the potential users and the services that are offered as in the following subsections. The hypothesis is tested using the χ^2 Square and the results are discussed accordingly.

4.1 The Cyber café Preference

Although all the respondents were sampled within Kisii town, the physical location of their cyber café was not restricted. It is common to find a cyber café in a place far away from the location of the customer.

About 73% of the customers indicated that they had a favourite cyber café they visited and 27% did not care of the cyber café they visited. This shows that customers had varying determinant of their service choice as explained by Kotler P., (2001) and Chisnal P. M. J., (1998). The customers are particular to what they prefer in most cases. However, others may not agree to this; perhaps because they have other personal interests towards the services they require.

Expenditure on Cyber café: It was revealed that 66% of the respondents spent less than Ksh.500 monthly on the cyber café, 18% spent between Ksh.500 and Ksh. 1,000, 11% spent between Ksh. 1,000 and Ksh. 2,000, 2% spent between Ksh. 2,000 and Ksh. 3,000 and finally 3% spent above Ksh. 3,000. Most of the respondents cared about their budget on the cyber café and only went for the necessary information or services.

4.2 Factors Influencing Cyber Café Choice

This research was undertaken on the assumption that consumer choice is influenced by convenience, service offered, supportive staff, conducive environment, friends, cost of service among others. The frequency and percentage attraction is illustrated in table 1 below.

The results revealed that 24.4% of the customers were attracted by convenience, 28.52% preferred the service offered, 8.59% were attracted by the supportive staff, 11.68% were attracted by the conducive environment, 13.4% were influenced by friends, 12.71% were triggered by the cost of service and finally 0.69% of the customers preferred other factors.

The research undertook to evaluate the principle factors that influenced customer's choice for cyber café services. Data was collected on responses from the various categories of respondents that included Government, Private Company, Student, Self-employed, Unemployed and Professional. The observed frequencies revealed the following results as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Observed Frequencies on Factors Influencing Cyber Café Choice

INFLUENCING FACTORS								
OBSERVED FREQUENCIES								
CATEGORY	Convenience	Service offered	Supportive staff	Conducive environment	Friends	Cost of service	Others	TOTAL
Government	5	10	4	3	4	6	1	33
Private Co.	13	14	4	5	5	3	0	44
Student	27	36	10	17	20	10	0	120
Self-Employed	6	7	5	1	2	4	1	26
Unemployed	5	5	1	4	1	3	0	19
Professional	16	15	4	7	4	10	0	56
TOTAL	72	87	28	37	36	36	2	298

Source: Research Data

From the observed frequencies, the expected frequencies were calculated using the formula;

$$\text{Expected frequency (E)} = \frac{\text{Row total} \times \text{Column total}}{\text{Grand total}}$$

Table 2 shows expected frequencies values for each category of respondents

Table 2: Expected frequencies on factors influencing cyber café choice

INFLUENCING FACTORS								
EXPECTED FREQUENCIES								
	Convenience	Service offered	Supportive staff	Conducive environment	Friends	Cost of service	Others	
Government	7.973	9.634	3.101	4.097	3.987	3.987	0.221	
Private Co.	10.631	12.846	4.134	5.463	5.315	5.315	0.295	
Student	28.993	35.034	11.275	14.899	14.497	14.497	0.805	
Self-Employed	6.282	7.591	2.443	3.228	3.141	3.141	0.174	
Unemployed	4.591	5.547	1.785	2.359	2.295	2.295	0.128	
Professional	13.530	16.349	5.262	6.953	6.765	6.765	0.376	

Source: Research Data

The study analyzed the significance of the factors to establish their relation to customer's decision to

choose a cyber café. χ^2 value was computed to test the association between the factors and the customer's choice for a cyber café. Tables 3 to 9 illustrate the individual χ^2 values calculated for each category of respondents using the formula;

$$\chi^2 = \sum (\text{Oij} - \text{Eij})^2 / \text{Eij}$$

Table 3: Chi-Square (χ^2) Government category

FACTORS	Oij	Eij	Oij - Eij	-(Oij - Eij) ² /Eij
Convenience	5	7.97	-2.973	1.109
Service Offered	10	9.63	0.366	0.014
Supportive Staff	4	3.10	0.899	0.261
Conducive Environment	3	4.09	-1.097	0.294
Friends	4	3.98	0.013	0.000
Cost of Service	6	3.98	2.013	1.017
Others	1	0.22	0.779	2.737
			$\chi^2 =$	5.4308

Source: Research Data

Table 4: Chi-Square (χ^2) Private company category

FACTORS	Oij	Eij	Oij - Eij	-(Oij - Eij) ² /Eij
Convenience	13	10.63	2.369	0.528
Service Offered	14	12.84	1.154	0.104
Supportive Staff	4	4.134	-0.134	0.004
Conducive Environment	5	5.463	-0.463	0.039
Friends	5	5.315	-0.315	0.019
Cost of Service	3	5.315	-2.315	1.009
Others	0	0.295	-0.295	0.295
			$\chi^2 =$	1.9980

Source: Research Data

Table 5: Chi-Square (χ^2) Student category

FACTORS	Oij	Eij	Oij - Eij	-(Oij - Eij) ² /Eij
Convenience	27	28.99	-1.993	0.137
Service Offered	36	35.03	0.966	0.027
Supportive Staff	10	11.27	-1.275	0.144
Conducive Environment	17	14.89	2.101	0.296
Friends	20	14.49	5.503	2.089
Cost of Service	10	14.49	-4.497	1.395
Others	0	0.805	-0.805	0.805
			$\chi^2 =$	4.8935

Source: Research Data

Table 6: Chi-Square (χ^2) Self-Employed category

FACTORS	Oij	Eij	Oij - Eij	-(Oij - Eij) ² /Eij
Convenience	6	6.28	-0.282	0.013
Service Offered	7	7.59	-0.591	0.046
Supportive Staff	5	2.44	2.557	2.676
Conducive Environment	1	3.22	-2.228	1.538
Friends	2	3.14	-1.141	0.414
Cost of Service	4	3.14	0.859	0.235
Others	1	0.17	0.826	3.905
			$\chi^2 =$	8.8277

Source: Research Data

Table 7: Chi-Square (χ^2) Unemployed category

FACTORS	Oij	Eij	Oij - Eij	-(Oij - Eij) ² /Eij
Convenience	5	4.59	0.409	0.037
Service Offered	5	5.54	-0.547	0.054
Supportive Staff	1	1.78	-0.785	0.345
Conducive Environment	4	2.35	1.641	1.141
Friends	1	2.29	-1.295	0.731
Cost of Service	3	2.29	0.705	0.216
Others	0	0.12	-0.128	0.128

	8		
		$\chi^2 =$	2.6521

Source: Research Data

Table 8: Chi-Square (χ^2) Professional category

FACTORS	O _{ij}	E _{ij}	O _{ij} E _{ij}	-(O _{ij} E _{ij}) ² /E _{ij}
Convenience	16	13.53	2.470	0.451
Service Offered	15	16.34	-1.349	0.111
Supportive Staff	4	5.262	-1.262	0.303
Conducive Environment	7	6.953	0.047	0.000
Friends	4	6.765	-2.765	1.130
Cost of Service	10	6.765	3.235	1.547
Others	0	0.376	-0.376	0.376
			$\chi^2 =$	3.9179

Source: Research Data

The cumulative χ^2 for all respondent categories is summarized in Table 9.

The degrees of freedom d.f is $(r-1)(c-1) = (6-1)(7-1) = 30$

The table value at 95% level of confidence is **43.773**. This value is higher than the calculated value of **27.72**. The outcome when compared shows that it does not support the hypothesis thus the researcher concludes that the factors so far tested do not have significant influence on customers choice for cyber café services.

Table 9: Calculated Chi-Square (χ^2) for combined categories; Principal factors

CATEGORIES	Chi-Square (χ^2)
Government	5.4308
Private Co.	1.9980
Student	4.8935
Self-Employed	8.8277
Unemployed	2.6521
Professional	3.9179
$\Sigma \chi^2 =$	27.7200
d.f =	30

Significance level = 0.05	
Table value = 43.773	

Source: Research Data

The study also measured how various reasons were significant to customer's preference for a cyber café services. The reasons were tabulated and weighted using a likert scale given as **5** - Most Significant, **4** - Significant, **3** - Neutral, **2** - Least Significant and **1** - insignificant. The sum of the weighted frequencies was divided by the sum of the frequencies of the respondents to obtain the observed frequencies for every category of respondents as presented in tables 20 to 25.

The χ^2 value for each category was then computed and summed up to get the cumulative χ^2 value as shown in table 26. The table value of χ^2 for 19 degrees of freedom at 95% significance level is **30.144**. The calculated value of χ^2 is much less than the table value hence it is insignificant. The result, thus, does not support the hypothesis and we may say the reasons are not a good measure to determine what influences customers to use a cyber café.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Consumer choice is really a complex process not ascertainable by simple marketing tools. The service industry might be so well designed in terms of core and physical attributes but still fail to attract customers especially in the service market. Service markets are complicated by relations, which penetrate the augmented product/service, so much that the consumer sees the provider with complexities harbored by human beings. The cyber café falls at the softer end of community informatics, and also stands apart as many cyber cafés are commercial, and cater for those with existing expertise, looking for convenience and conviviality, rather than primarily for training and information. Many customers did not regard the technical services as the main or single reason why they visited the cyber cafés. The atmosphere, the friendly staff, the chance to meet and spend time with friends, the music and décor played essential role as customer attraction to the cyber cafés. All these are social or aesthetic factors that would influence the choice of a spending time in any cyber café. The locality of the cyber cafés was also important. The Cyber cafés are convenient local centres, either for residents or for travelers. Like other media services they are 'on demand', just turn up, and plug in.

The cyber cafés today are slowly becoming specialized, catering for different groups and interests, but most of them cater for a wide range of intersecting members of the community. Like some other semi-public spaces (shops, leisure facilities), cyber cafés bring together people from different backgrounds, and of different ages, engaged in different leisure, work and learning activities. A good cyber café creates an ambience where they can all feel comfortable, and some can stimulate interchange between customers. Cyber cafés are also about learning, opportunity and access. They are important training and advice centres, for new and experienced users alike. Cyber café service is one of the recent and fast growing industry. It is one of the potential areas for investment that business oriented people venture. However, it has many intricacies that require attention. These may include aspects to do with convenience, supportive staff, service offered, conducive environment, cost of service and friends.

Convenience, which is determined by the proximity and operating hours of the cyber café, did influence the customer's decision to use the service. Most customers preferred to visit cyber cafés, which are within their reach. The reason could be attributed to the fear to incur an extra cost of accessing such facility. Some customers opted to visit cyber cafes that operated during their 'convenient' times for instance very early in the morning before 8:00am and late after 6:00pm. Any service industry requires a conducive environment for its operations. Cyber cafés that had adequate design in terms of sitting arrangements, well-ventilated rooms and generally clean surrounding attracted more customers. However, this is coupled with the nature of the service offered, the cost of the service and the nature of the staff. Machines that are in good condition enhance faster delivery of service. Services that are offered at 'pocket friendly' costs tend to attract customers. A staff that is hospitable, willing to help, receptive and knowledgeable about the service pull customers to the cyber café.

Other factors that influence the cyber café choice included curiosity of the customer to learn about the service, discover the Internet and a place to meet friends either physically or through the electronic media.

5.2 Recommendations for Further Research

The informal nature of cyber cafés is very important as a way of providing a gentle introduction to the world of new ICTs for people may not like a classroom atmosphere, instead they just want to find out a little, and are not initially interested in using the technology for any particular reason. All the cyber cafés are expanding their clientele and developing

new areas of business, particularly those that are not resting on established communication and information uses, but are searching to expand the uses and relevance of new technology to new groups. The role of cyber cafés must not be overestimated. Many people learn about IT, have access to services, and encounter multimedia in private spaces through private networks.

Cyber café entrepreneurs should consider keenly those factors and reasons that attract customers to their services. They should emphasize on adequate feedback channels to address customer complaints amicably as far as convenience, supportive staff, service offered, conducive environment, cost of service and friends are concerned. Cyber café industry being a unique investment area, those aspiring for this kind of business enterprise should carry out thorough research and consult extensively on those aspects that will enable success in the provision of services related to cyber café.

Other areas of research in this context would be for the cyber café entrepreneurs to establish the effectiveness of their communication infrastructure and service provision against their competitors. In a final message to policy makers, I would encourage local and the national government to include cyber cafés in their ICT policy. I hope this research shows the diversity of the concept, and why commercial and community entrepreneurs should be encouraged to develop projects as a resource for local citizens and as an essential service to visitors.

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