

Full Length Research Paper

Improving customer complaining behaviour for loyalty in the services sector: A case of mobile telephone companies in Uganda

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This study focuses on the concept of customers' complaining behaviour in the mobile telephone company sector. The mobile telephone company in Uganda is competitive and being a service sector, it is complex in nature. A descriptive cross-sectional survey was used. Primary data were collected using questionnaires from Makerere University mobile telephone subscribers who were students, academic staff, administrative staff and support staff. Stratified random sampling was used and the study used cross sectional survey method. A sample of 384 was used in the study where a response of 332 was attained, with 86% response rate. A pilot study was done. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlations and regression analysis. The results of the study revealed that customers' complaint behaviour influences customer loyalty. Further, the results revealed that service quality directly influences customer loyalty and also has a positive significant relationship with customers' complaint behaviour. The study has made contribution to theory, policy and practice in relation to customer complaint behaviour and to marketing in general. The study offered further clarification into the relationship between customers' complaint behaviour, service quality and customer loyalty. The limitations of the study included the selection of the study variables which was not exhaustive. On the one hand, the cross-sectional survey research design was used where the study was carried out at a specific moment in time and, as a result, causality can only be inferred from these data.

Key words: Customers' complaint behaviour, mobile telephone companies, customer loyalty.

BACKGROUND

During the past decade, mobile telephone companies have changed not only at the corporate and business

levels but also in terms of consumer engagement. The companies have introduced the use of electronic

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commerce activities like making telephone calls, using short message services (SMS), using internet services and sending/receiving money using mobile telephones. While such changes have facilitated innovative business strategies, they have also created many challenges to the user experience. Mobile telephone companies in Uganda are faced with the problem of increasing competition leading to fear of losing customers to competitors. These companies are concentrating on strategies to win customers which may have an influence on customer loyalty. Gee et al. (2008) assert that the mobile telephone industry has not been analyzed in the context of customer loyalty with respect to the integration of variables namely customers' complaint behaviour and service quality. Knowledge about these variables may help to identify common service challenges like improving service quality to achieve customer loyalty (Tronvoll, 2012).

Customers' complaint behaviour refers to the responses triggered by perceived dissatisfaction that is neither psychologically accepted nor quickly forgotten in consumption of a product or service (Homburg and Fürst, 2005). When customers decide to complain, they have previously passed through two distinct steps already identified by Hirschman (1970): they value positively the balance between costs and benefits. Both costs and benefits are not only economic, but also psychological. It is clear that the perceived benefit may not be big enough to lead a consumer to complain, even if considerable dissatisfaction exists. On the contrary, a consumer can complain even with a low level of dissatisfaction if the perceived benefit is remarkable (Day and Landon, 1977, p. 32); they value worthwhile the complaining action because they esteem positively the likelihood of obtaining a favourable solution.

A number of studies have been done on customers' complaint behaviour (CCB) and customer loyalty namely: Osarenkhoe and Komunda (2013); Komunda (2013); Tronvoll, (2012); Komunda and Oserankhoe, (2012). The main objective of the study was to establish the relationship between the study variables of CCB, service quality and customer loyalty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customers' complaint behaviour refers to the responses triggered by perceived dissatisfaction that is neither psychologically accepted nor quickly forgotten in the consumption of a product or service (Homburg and Fürst, 2005). Research by Casado et al. (2011) suggest that customers' complaint behaviour (CCB) is a complex phenomenon which is reflected in the number of alternative definitions proposed to explain this kind of behaviour. Traditionally, the common determinant of complaining behaviour was described as dissatisfaction due to inadequacies of integrity, reliability,

responsiveness, availability and functionality (Tronvoll, 2012). Hence, consumer dissatisfaction is a result of the discrepancy between expected and realized performance (Gruber, 2011). Dissatisfaction is based on disconfirmation of expectation (Oliver, 1997) and it is a customer experience that is less than the perceived expectation. Tronvoll (2007) described customers' complaint behaviour as a function of dissatisfaction. Homburg and Fürst (2005) and Orisingher et al. (2010) assert that dissatisfaction is a significant factor that attributes to complaints. Kau and Loh (2006) articulated that dissatisfaction was caused by negative disconfirmation of purchase expectations that led to legitimate complaint behaviour. Many studies concerning consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction have employed the disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1999). According to this paradigm, consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is a function of perceived discrepancies between prior expectations of the product or service and its actual performance (Oliver, 1997). Consumer complaint behaviour is linked to negative disconfirmation – whereby the perceived performance falls short of expectation, causing the consumer to become dissatisfied (Atalik, 2007).

The disconfirmation paradigm was the basis of Hirschman's (1970) theory concerning exit, voice and loyalty – which provides a theoretical framework for understanding CCB. A dissatisfied customer may voice a complaint, exit or remain committed to the company (Hirschman, 1970). Despite the strategic importance of listening to and managing CCB, the current understanding of customer complaints like poor network quality, poor customer care and lack of explanation about service failure is limited (Tronvoll, 2012). Marketing literature has focused on identifying various determinants of CCB; including perceived costs; attitude towards complaining; environmental and demographic variables and the likelihood of a successful complaint (Singh, 1988). Reviewing literature reveals the major gaps: firstly, most literature focuses on identifying determinants of CCB. Secondly, the role of attitudinal and perceptual variables has not been the focal point in explaining CCB; and most studies focus on CCB as an outcome, which may not be predicted by attitude and perception (Seawright et al., 2008). The inconsistent relationship between attitude and behaviour explains why CCB cannot be accounted for fully by attitudinal and perceptual variables in consumer behaviour theories (Parasuraman et al., 2005). This calls for the integration of other variables like service quality and CCB where customer loyalty is a dependent variable.

Further, the existing models of customers' complaint behaviour focused on the separation of private action from public action (Day and Landon, 1977). This categorisation has become increasingly irrelevant (and maybe even misleading) because of recent advances in Information and Communication and Technological (ICT)

systems. In the past, when a customer experienced an unfavourable service experience, he or she talked to relatively few people; in contrast, the advent of the internet (such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, linkedin, WhatsApp, Myspace, Tagged, Meetup and Pinterest) has dramatically increased the number of people available for negative communication (Tax and Brown, 1998). In these circumstances, it becomes difficult to maintain a separation of the concepts of private action and public action. In response to these developments, the proposed model suggests new categories of complaining behaviour in terms of communication complaint responses and action complaint responses. This schema facilitates a categorisation of a wide range of complaint responses over time.

Dissatisfied customers may not voice their complaints but exit the company services because of the mistakes made by the company, billing errors and service catastrophes. Further, others may exit because of the unfavourable service encounter like uncaring, impolite, unresponsive and unknowledgeable employees. If customer complaints are not handled properly, the negative consequences may be far-reaching. Dissatisfied customers will not only discontinue their patronage, but are also likely to spread a negative message, jeopardizing the company's image (Gruber, 2011). On the other hand, Khan (2010) explained that switching mobile phones was because of voice quality and network coverage. Since it is cheaper to retain than win new customers; and service failure is inevitable, it is crucial for management of mobile telephone companies to understand CCB in order to effectively manage it. Further, the most common complaint motives include: Seeking corrective actions, followed by asking for an explanation, seeking an apology, expressing emotional anger and with low rating for compensation and seeking redress (Heung and Lam, 2003).

Complaint handling has been recognized as a critical task for service managers in mobile telephone services. There is a need to enhance the trustworthiness of mobile phone operators by keeping customers' best interest at heart, providing customized services and exemplary behaviour of contact personnel to make the interaction a memorable experience. Based on post complaint behaviour, customers who are satisfied with complaint handling engage in positive word of mouth and are more loyal than customers who are dissatisfied with complaint handling of service quality of mobile telephone service providers.

The objectives of the study are to

i) Investigate the relationship between customers' complaint behaviour and customer loyalty of mobile telephone subscribers in Makerere University.

ii) Examine the relationship between customers' complaint behaviour and service quality.

iii) Establish the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty.

iv) Assess the mediating effect of service quality on the relationship between customers' complaint behaviour and customer loyalty.

METHODOLOGY

The proposed study used the descriptive cross sectional design. A research design is defined as the way a study is planned and conducted, as well as the procedures and techniques employed to answer the research problem or question. Descriptive studies attempt to obtain complete and accurate description of situations, persons or events. It allows description of phenomena as well as collection of a large amount of data from a sizeable population in a highly economic way. Further, a cross sectional approach was used because it facilitates data collection from different respondents at one point in time (Babbie, 2010). Cross sectional studies are appropriate where the overall objective is to establish a significant relationship among variables at some point in time (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). A descriptive cross-sectional research was used and it offers an opportunity to establish the relationships between CCB and customer loyalty and to determine the influence of service quality on this relationship.

The population of the study embraced the subscribers to mobile telephone service operators who were students, academic staff, administrative staff and support staff of Makerere University. The choice of population of study was Makerere University because it is one of the oldest universities in East Africa; most people in the university are well educated and informed of their rights as consumers, are multicultural; are knowledgeable about how to go about complaining and can complain through various channels to mobile telephone companies. The University has a cosmopolitan people from all parts of the country (Uganda). The mobile telephone subscribers use mobile telephones for making telephone calls, social media and mobile money banking. The total population of Makerere University was 50,949 (academic year 2011/2012) mobile telephone subscribers.

The sampling technique used in the study was stratified random sampling. The unit of analysis was the subscribers to mobile telephone companies, specifically Makerere University students, academic staff, administrative staff and support staff. The researcher ascertained proportionate representation of the sample size for the two categories of students and staff (academic, administrative and support) of Makerere University. A list of all students and staff in Makerere University was got from the Human Resource and Registrar's offices and was used to determine the respondents for the study. Cronbach alpha was used to test the measurement scales to ascertain the reliability of the five point likert type scale which was used in the survey (Kothari, 2005). According to Nunnally (1978), a cut off alpha coefficient point of 0.70 is sufficient enough that the item scales are consistent and dependable. The overall Cronbach's alpha for customers' complaint behaviour was (.740), service quality (.936) and customer loyalty (.784). Further, parametric assumptions were tested for, which included normality, linearity, homogeneity and multicollinearity and these were all met. The pertinent results are in Table 1:

Based on Table 3, data were adequate for running other tests. The data were put in SPSS version 19 and factor analysis was run to reduce data to manageable level.

Table 1. Results of tests of statistical assumptions.

Variable	Measure	Sample size	Reliability	Normality	Linearity	Independence D/W	Homogeneity	Colinearity
Assumptions			0.6 Min	p>0.05	p>0.05	1.5 to 2.5	p>0.05	VIF 10 max
Customer Complaint Behaviour	Exit, voice, redress and Commitment	336	.740	.200	.038	1.987	.945	1.395
Service Quality	Service quality dimensions	336	.936	.200	.000	1.987	.349	1.967
Customer Loyalty	Word of mouth and making re-buy decisions	336	.784	.200	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Primary Data.

Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents.

Profile of respondents	Frequency	Percent
Age	20-29	189 57.0
	30-39	101 30.4
	40 and above	42 12.7
Gender	Male	183 55.2
	Female	149 44.8
Marital Status	Single	214 64.5
	Married	118 35.5
Level of Education	Certificate	20 6.0
	Diploma	35 10.5
	Undergraduate	163 49.1
	Masters	99 29.8
	PhD	15 4.5
	Total	332 100.0

Source: Primary Data.

respondent are presented. The age of the respondent was an important measure to try to understand the issues about CCB of the individual subscribers. Relevant results for age, gender, marital status and level of education are presented in Table 2.

From Table 2, most subscribers to the mobile telephone companies of Makerere University fall within the age bracket 20-29 with 57%. This means that the majority of respondents mainly fall in the age group of students. The lowest response was within the age bracket of 35 and above with 21.7%. All respondents were twenty and above years of age, which implies that the respondents were mature enough to ably respond to questions in the study. This is because the respondents had adequate knowledge about the operations and services of mobile telephone companies and therefore the responses of the subscribers are considered to be adequate.

Based on the gender of the subscribers to Mobile Telephone operators, most subscribers to the companies of Makerere University by gender were males (55.2%) and the females were 44.8%. These results were confirmed by the findings of Manikas and Shea (1997) who concluded that male customers complained more than their female counterparts. In earlier surveys, Heung and Lam (2003); Kau and Loh (2006) contradicted the findings that majority of female complainers were more likely to voice their complaints than their male counterparts. This contradiction needs further research. Further, basing on marital status respondents were asked to indicate their marital status and the response indicated that the single people had the highest response with 64.5%. Since a big percentage of the respondents were students with the age group of 20-24, it gives the explanation why majority of them were single. In a nutshell, the study is consistent with the existing literature

Findings of the Study

Demographic profile of a respondent

The demographic factors of the respondents were an important measure to try to understand the issues about customers' complaint behaviour of the individual subscribers. Relevant results for gender, age bracket, education level acquired and marital status of the

Table 3. Correlations of study variables.

Variable	CCB	CL	SQ
Customer Complaint Behaviour (CCB)	1		
Customer Loyalty (CL)	.260**	1	
Service Quality (SQ)	.240**	.662**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed). Source: Primary Data

where customer complainers have been typified as being young with higher than average income and education (Heung and Lam, 2003).

Further, respondents were required to indicate their level of education based on certificate, diploma, undergraduate, masters and the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). This was important as it would indicate whether the respondents were competent to give credible responses about customer complaint behavior in the mobile telephone companies. The education level of the respondent is indicated in Table 1. Majority of respondents were at undergraduate level, explaining 48.8% and the least was PhD level with 4.5%. The mobile telephone subscribers surveyed were therefore people with different levels of study from the certificate up to the PhD level. This gives confidence that the understanding of the variables of study were not biased to any single level of education. Further, majority of the respondents were highly qualified and competent enough to provide accurate responses. Kau and Loh (2006) assert that customers with a higher level of education were more likely to complain, with the explanation that better educated customers may be more knowledgeable about their rights.

Bivariate correlation analysis was used to establish both the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the study variables. Correlation analysis was therefore run using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient technique to establish the relationship between CCB, service quality and customer loyalty. The results are presented in tabular and graph formats and discussed in line with the literature in order to establish the extent to which they relate to existing knowledge. The correlation coefficient provided a numerical summary of the direction and strength of the linear relationship between the variables. All the Pearson Correlation Coefficients (r) ranged within -1 and +1. The pertinent results are indicated in Table 3.

The results indicate that the relationship between customers' complaint behaviour and customer loyalty of

mobile telephone subscribers was positive and statistically significant.

H₁: There is a relationship between Customers' complaint behaviour and Customer Loyalty

The results depicted in Table 3 indicate that there was a positive significant correlation between customers' complaint behaviour and customer loyalty ($r=.260^{**}$, P-value =000). The study finding suggests an improvement in handling customers' complaint behaviour, will lead to an increase in customer loyalty. The hypothesis 1 which tests the relationship between customers' complaint behaviour and customer loyalty is therefore supported. The result implies that CCB improvement (subscribers voicing their complaints about their dissatisfaction as well as asking for an explanation) will lead to improved customer loyalty.

H₂: There is a relationship between Customers' complaint behaviour and Service Quality

The results depicted in Table 3 indicate that there was a positive significant correlation between customers' complaint behaviour and service quality ($r=.240^{**}$, P-value =000). The findings imply that improved CCB (voicing, seeking redress, using selected services of the MTC) will lead to an improved service quality. The hypothesis 2 was therefore supported.

When customers have quality service, they remain committed and keep subscribing to the MTC even when they may be disappointed by the MTC services as it relates with service quality. This means that when the MTC has often been offering qualitative service, service failure that may lead to disappointment will not lead to the customers de-subscribing (exiting), but will try to seek redress and understanding from the service providers because they already have good feeling and commitment to the MTC.

H₃: There is a relationship between Service Quality and Customer Loyalty

Respondents had been asked to indicate the extent to which staff of the MTC responded to the subscribers in case of a dissatisfaction based on the CCB and service quality dimensions. The results depicted in Table 3 indicate that there was a positive significant correlation between customers' complaint behaviour and service quality ($r=.662^{**}$, P-value =000) where service quality directly predicts customer loyalty. The findings mean that service quality will lead to an improvement in customer loyalty, which signifies that qualitative services are associated with loyalty of customers to the mobile telephone subscribers. The hypothesis 3 which establishes the relationship between service quality and

Table 4. Regression of Customer loyalty on Customers' complaint behaviour and Service Quality.

4a. Goodness of Fit.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.263 ^a	.069	.066	.61144
2	.592 ^b	.350	.346	.51180

Source: Primary Data.

4b ANOVA^c

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.073	1	9.073	24.267	.000 ^a
	Residual	121.880	326	.374		
	Total	130.952	327			
2	Regression	45.822	2	22.911	87.468	.000 ^b
	Residual	85.130	325	.262		
	Total	130.952	327			

Source: Primary Data. a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Complaint Behaviour, service Quality. b. Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty.

4c. Coefficient of determination.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.329	.152		15.313	.000		
	CCB	.293	.060	.263	4.926	.000	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	1.052	.167		6.302	.000		
	CCB	.151	.051	.135	2.938	.004	.945	1.058
	SQ	.524	.044	.545	11.845	.000	.945	1.058

Source: Primary Data. a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Complaint Behaviour, b. Predictors: (Constant), Customer Complaint Behaviour, service Quality. c. Dependent Variable: Customer Loyalty

customer loyalty was therefore supported. From Table 3, all the variables with linear relationships had positive and significant relationships.

In a nutshell, the highest independent relationship in the study was between SQ and customer loyalty. The linear associations were all significant and positive, whereby as one independent variable increased, so did the dependent variable. Apart from the direction, the correlation provided information on the strength of the relationship and the size of the absolute value as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that service quality explains 6.9% of the variation in customer loyalty ($R^2 = .069$). At step 2, customers' complaint behaviour adds significantly to

customer loyalty as the variation increased from .069 to .350 (R^2 change=.281, p-value=.000). The results reveal that the variance explained by service quality is significant ($F=24.267$, p-value=.004). The results further revealed that the regression coefficients for CCB, increased from .135 to .545 ($F=87.468$ to ; P-value= .000) when service quality were added to the regression suggesting that service quality may be exerting a partial mediating effect.

Based on Table 4, the results show that CCB had a statistically significant influence on customer loyalty where $R^2=43.8\%$, Beta=.636 $F=251.140$; t- statistic =14.927 and P-value=.000. After mediation with service quality, the results improved to 45% of its variation

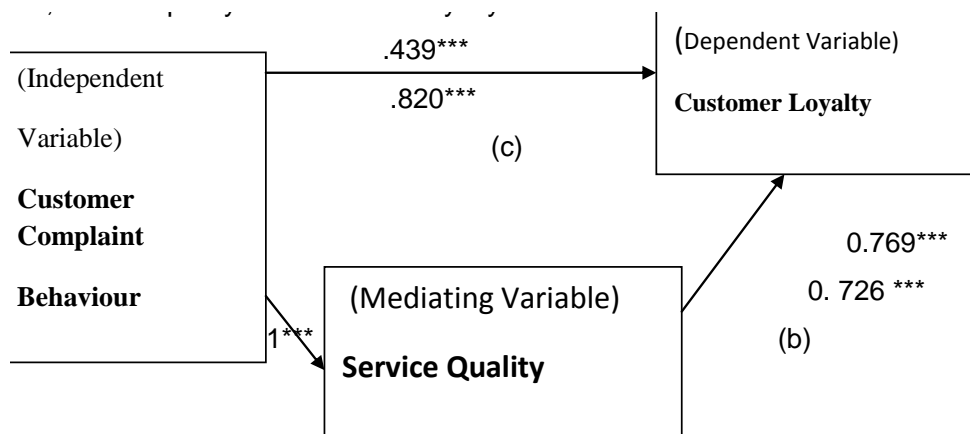


Figure 1. MedGraph of mediation of service quality. Source: Primary Data.

($R^2=.450$). The standardized regression coefficient (b) value of the computed scores of service quality was $Beta=.110$, $F=131.073$; and with a t -statistic= 2.573 ; and significance level of p -value= $.000$. The standardized regression coefficient was used because it removes the unit of measurement of the predictor and outcome variables, and this consequently enables one to compare the relative effect of predictors measured on different scales. The mediated relationship is represented in Figure 1.

H₄: Mediation between Customers' complaint behaviour and Customer Loyalty

The relationship between Customers' complaint behaviour and Customer Loyalty was mediated by Service Quality and this is presented in a medGraph in Figure 1:

The mediation of service quality between the relationship between customers' complaint behaviour and customer loyalty was further confirmed by use of a medGraph which generated results. The type of mediation is Sobel Z value 0.444851 , $P=<0.656428$. There was 95% symmetrical confidence interval where the lower was -0.49259 ; Higher 0.78183 .

The results imply that the Sobel z value is large and significant, it further confirmed that service quality mediates the relationship between customers' complaint behaviour and customer loyalty. Service quality is therefore a significant mediator in the association between customers' complaint behaviour and customer loyalty, and this reduces the relationship between the two variables by 1% in the mobile telephone company. This means that the presence of service quality weakens the direct relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. While service quality accounts for 61.7% of the indirect relationship, yet the direct relationship accounts for 61.8%. The main conclusion to be drawn from the

relationship was that service quality partially mediates the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in Uganda Mobile telephone companies. Service quality slightly weakens the direct association between customers' complaint behaviour and service quality signify that the direct relationship between customers' complaint behaviour and customer loyalty. Service quality has a direct relationship with customer loyalty with $Beta = .769$. Customers' complaint behaviour and customer loyalty is significantly mediated by service quality where $Beta=.726^{***}$; sig =.000. There is a relationship between service quality and customer loyalty with $Beta = 0.577^{***}$; after the mediation effect, Beta increased ($Beta=0.769$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study established a positive and significant relationship between customers' complaint behaviour and customer loyalty of Makerere University Mobile Telephone subscribers. This implies that customers' complaint behaviour was correlated with customer loyalty and the results indicated a positive and significant relationship between the study variables. The significant relationship between CCB and customer loyalty of mobile telephone companies suggest that for MTC to achieve customer loyalty, they ought to seek redress and voice their complaint, meaning that they could complain when the MTC is the source of disappointment, seek for an explanation from the mobile telephone company why there was a dissatisfaction and their expectations were not met. This happens when complaining becomes easier and redress becomes more certain, that consumers may be more likely to speak up.

However, there are some dissatisfied customers who do not even voice their complaints but just stay committed to the MTC by keeping subscribing to the

company services as it relates with service quality. This means that when the MTC has often been offering qualitative services, the one off time service failure will not lead to subscribers exiting or un-subscribing from the MTC. This is because they already have a positive attitude towards the company. From the survey, there was a weak correlation on exit. This means that some few MTC subscribers whose expectations are not met may exit from the MTC. Such happens when MTC subscribers make a mental judgement of 'worth it' or 'not worth it'; where they may conclude that complaining is not worth the effort and to choose other means of dealing with their unhappiness like exit.

From the consumer's perspective, the very act of complaining gives the customers an opportunity to vent their unhappiness. Some research suggests that consumers are more likely to complain when they perceive that they will have a successful outcome without spending much effort. On the other hand, they will be less likely to complain when they perceive that the marketer was at fault or that the problem is likely to reoccur/stable (Priluck and Lala, 2009). Companies should therefore encourage dissatisfied customers to complain so that they can provide information to solve the problem and retain the customer. Unfortunately, companies who do not rise to the challenge of complaining customers are turning down the important opportunity of getting information on performance of the service and on reclaiming and improving a relationship with the customers (Gruber, 2011).

There was a positive significant relationship between CCB and service quality, meaning that with an improvement in CCB, this will lead to a better quality service. Previous studies show that service quality had a positive and statistically significant relationship with customer loyalty. Mobile telephone companies in Uganda which have not handled customer complaints to the satisfaction of the customers lose customers to competitors. Basing on service quality dimensions of reliability, empathy and assurance, MTC services were not reliable and therefore subscribers kept using a few selected services implying lack of commitment to the service operators. Complaining customers do not want employees who just smile to show friendliness when handling customer complaints but those who truly mean it. In this case, subscribers lack assurance to proactively know when their complaints will be responded to. Mobile telephone operators need to develop empathy through anticipating the needs and preferences of their customers and taking steps to satisfy them through provision of customised services. Unfortunately, poor service quality and ineffective service recovery may threaten the long-term survival of the organisation (Michel et al. 2009). However, the mobile telephone companies which carry out effective complaint handling may attain service quality improvement.

On the other hand, disappointed customers may not complain because they wish to avoid confrontation with the person responsible for the failure but they may be uncertain about their rights and the obligations of the organization (Heung and Lam, 2003), or because of concerns about the time and costs associated with complaining (Bamford and Xystouri, 2005). The costs of complaining include the customer taking the initiative to contact the seller, explain the problem and arrange for an acceptable resolution. Priluck and Lala (2009) suggest that the decision to complain is based on a cost-benefit analysis and the costs include time, effort and ego-involvement. However, when dissatisfied consumers fail to tell management about something that went wrong, the company stands to lose because such customers may simply disappear, defecting to competitors, spreading negative WOM to friends and denying the company an opportunity to correct mistakes. Researchers have proposed some methods to mitigate the effort to complain, including instructional literature, toll free telephone numbers, signs at point of service and internet websites (Kim et al., 2010).

Dissatisfaction that results from an unsatisfactory experience like rude and unapologetic staff as well as inadequate compensation will incite consumers to undertake another form of action like complaining to family and friends (negative word of mouth) or be disloyal (Grewal et al., 2008). Negative WOM is very dangerous to the MTC especially with the use of the social media; where one word can be spread to millions of people through twitter, facebook, a problem the mobile telephone companies should avoid.

On the other hand, based on equity/perceived justice theory, complaining customers who spent money on a product or service of the MTC which does not meet their expectations and invest time and effort in bringing the problem to the attention of the company through making a complaint expect fair treatment. This means that MTC staff need to spend time and show real effort to solve the problem and compensate customers for the "costs" they have incurred. Equity theory indicates that consumers weigh inputs against outputs across various situations and seek a fair outcome to their problem. The greater the benefits received by the consumer relative to the time and effort of complaining, the more satisfied the complainant should be (Priluck and Lala, 2009). After all, if the compensation for product failure is larger, the customer should be happier when at the end of service recovery justice prevails.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The study confirms previous studies where dissatisfaction causes complaints, but that dissatisfaction is not a necessary condition for complaining. This means that

some customers may complain for various reasons even when they are satisfied. Therefore, more research is needed to establish why satisfied customers may still complain in a developing country context, particularly within MTC services. Firstly, staff who do not provide a logical explanation to the customer are unable to recover failure. Therefore, staff should be trained in adequate communication skills to be critical listeners to the subscribers to have good interpersonal skills to have an understanding with the mobile telephone operators. More still, service operators should put in place convenient hours of operation and operators' outlets to access pay-way vending machines for reload package services. Further, MTC should establish channels of communication for customers (like 24 hour customer care centres) to handle customer complaints.

Further, it has been established that complaining behaviour is more common among dissatisfied customers than satisfied ones. This means that customers need to develop effective customer focused/centred strategies in order to improve service quality and consequently reducing on complaints as well as trying to help identify problematic areas of service delivery and to improve them. Moreover, the study found out that though complaining behaviour is influenced by previous dissatisfaction, if handled effectively, it may not have adverse effect on customer loyalty. Management should encourage customer complaints where they are dissatisfied in order to understand their feelings and establish how best to address them. Otherwise, most customers are eager to discourage family and friends from using the services if their complaints are not handled well. Therefore, management should further put in avenues through which customers can easily voice out their complaints, like customer care centres and automated services on frequently asked questions instead of complaining quietly or privately to their social groups.

The important implications are that once a company has recognized and understood what complaining customers expect from management in the MTC, it can ensure that the right employees are recruited, mentored, trained and monitored effectively. Companies can then manage their employees' behaviours appropriately to match their subscribers underlying expectations. Such behaviour should have a positive effect on handling customer complaints to attain qualitative services. Complaining customers especially desire a speedy problem solution as they "have already been inconvenienced by the company once" and just want their problem solved with the minimum of delay.

Finally, it is necessary to present both the limitations of our empirical results and the opportunities for future research. On the one hand, the cross-sectional nature of the data; i.e. the study was carried out at a specific moment in time and, as a result, causality can only be

inferred from these data. Consequently, it would be necessary to carry out a longitudinal study to reaffirm the causal relationships. Future research should seek to address these limitations by inclusion of the additional factors, use of a longitudinal research design and the use of methodological triangulation. Replication of the study and examining the relationship between study variables could serve as a useful reference for future research.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests

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