

The Impact of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction in Cameroon's Mobile Telephony Sector

Marcel T. Ngambi
University of Yaounde II

Achu Armstrong Abamukong
University of Yaounde II

The objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between service quality and satisfaction of mobile telephone users in Cameroon. Service quality was measured using eight constructs (Tangibility, Reliability, Responsiveness, Empathy, Assurance, Economy, Technical Quality and Image) while users' satisfaction was captured through perceived performance, comparison standards and repurchase intentions. Data was collected from 386 Cameroonian mobile telephone users of the cities of Yaounde, Douala, Bamenda and Buea. We regressed measures of customer satisfaction on service quality variables.

The main result of the study is that high service quality contributes significantly to higher customer satisfaction. The most influential service quality variables were image and economy while the least effective determinant of satisfaction was responsiveness.

Based on these findings, we recommend mobile telecommunication operators to concentrate on improving their image and reputation to achieve higher customer satisfaction. Moreover, given the relatively high value of the variable "economy", a low-price strategy is also encouraged while least attention should be directed to "responsiveness".

Keywords: service quality, customer satisfaction, mobile telephony

INTRODUCTION

The environment of the mobile telecommunications industry has experienced increasing challenges and complexities in operations in the past decade. Management scholars have long argued that what primarily guarantees profitability as well as business expansion is a strategy aimed at retaining and maintaining relationship with existing customers. Importantly, the de-regularization of the sector through the removal of state monopoly rights has made it possible for private participation in the mobile telephony sector in many parts of the world, particularly Cameroon. The Government of Cameroon's restructuring of the state owned monopolistic telecommunication sector and subsequently, limiting her control has contributed to a more open and free market system. Now there is an equal playing ground for all the brands in the sector to operate effectively and profitably without unnecessary interferences from the

government. Currently, there are 4 licensed mobile service providers in the country, namely MTN, Orange, Nextel, and Camtel. Participation by such players has injected a certain level of energy and competitiveness in the market.

Notwithstanding, the competition has breathed newness into the sector, making it more effective and efficient. The industry can now boast of reasonable levels of service quality, value-added services and active engagement, and contribution to society. These network service providers are finding it extremely difficult to differentiate themselves. All of them are scrambling to earn consumers' confidence and trust. Such complexities are challenging the business models of mobile service providers. Evidently, winning over new customers through substantial price cuts, promotions and bundled offerings are commonplace. While this approach may seem viable, it is hurting meaningful growth.

A number of empirical studies have been conducted on the subject of service quality and customer satisfaction (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Spreng and Mackoy, 1996; Jones and Suh, 2000; Coyles and Gokey, 2002; Ranaweera and Prabhu, 2003; Choi et al., 2004). Research on this subject shows that most of the studies were conducted in industrialised countries such as United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan. Hence, there is dearth of relevant literature on underdeveloped and developing countries. The current research attempts to fill this gap to investigate the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in Cameroon's mobile telephony sector.

The paper is organised as follows: In the first section, we shall discuss the theoretical and empirical literature. The following section will outline the methodology of the research. Thereafter, we will present and discuss the results. We finally conclude the discussion and provide a few recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the conceptual and theoretical literature followed by a review of the empirical literature.

Conceptual and Theoretical Literature

The Concept of Service Quality

There is difficulty in having a universal definition of what constitutes quality. Quality is an elusive and indistinct construct (Parasuraman et al, 1985) and it is often construed to mean imprecise adjectives like goodness, or luxury or shininess or weight (Crosby, 1979). Unlike a product whose quality can be determined largely by examining its physical features (style, colour, texture, packaging), three main characteristics possessed by a service (intangibility, heterogeneity and inseparability) make it difficult to measure its quality. First, Zeithaml (1981) noted that most services cannot be measured, counted, inventoried, tested and verified in advance of sale to ensure quality. Thus, the intangible nature of services means, firms may find it difficult to understand how consumers perceive their services. Second, the heterogeneous nature of services performance often varies from producer to producer, consumer to consumer or from day to day making it difficult to ensure consistency in its delivery (Booms and Bitner, 1981). Third, production and consumption of many services are inseparable (Carmen and Langeard, 1980), and such quality in services cannot be engineered at the manufacturing plant and delivered to the customers.

Though the definition of service quality may vary from one person to another and even differs in different situations, it can be assessed by probing whether perceived service delivery meets, exceeds or fails to meet customer expectations (Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Oliver, 1999). Lewis and Booms (1983) postulated that service quality is a measure of how well the service level delivered matches consumer expectations. Thus, delivering quality service means conforming to customer expectations on a consistent basis. Similarly, Parasuraman et al. (1985) defined service quality as the consumer's comparison between service expectation and service performance. The authors, then undertook an exploratory qualitative study to investigate the concept of service quality intended to provide a conceptual framework for its assessment. Another issue for understanding service quality is service value which is also important in mobile services (Kleijnen et al., 2007). Cronin et al (2000) argue that service value has a mediator effect

on service quality. The type of the value will also be effective on the evaluations of service quality. Nysveen et al. (2005) states that in contrast to mobile communication, mobile transactions are related to utilitarian values.

Dimensions of Service Quality

Tangibility. Tangibility describes how the physical environment looks or how surroundings and facilities such as equipment and personnel are organized in a way which facilitates movements around and the acquisition of the product. The tangible dimension consists of creating first impression to customers and it is the wish of companies to create a first positive impression to every customer that would make the customer most likely to return in the future (Delgado and Ballester, 2004). Tangibles are used by firms to convey image and signal quality (Zeithaml et al, 2006).

Reliability. Reliability measures the consistency of performance and the dependability of the service. According to Zeithaml et al (2006), reliability is “*the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately*” or “*delivering on its promises*” Does the firm perform the service right at the first time? Does the firm honor its promises? These are some of the questions, which need to be answered by service providers if they are to achieve reliability. Every customer is thus interested in knowing whether their supplier is reliable and can keep to his promises by providing the promised quality services under condition agreed with the customer which would give the customer satisfaction. (Delgado and Ballester, 2004).

Responsiveness. Responsiveness refers to the degree to which the company can help its customers in providing good, fast and quality service. This is a vital dimension since every customer would feel highly valued if they can get a quick response of the best possible quality of service when in need (Delgado and Ballester, 2004). Responsiveness concerns the willingness or readiness of employees to provide service (Parasuraman et al., 1985). This dimension is concerned with dealing with the customer’s requests, questions and complaints promptly and attentively. A firm is known to be responsive when it communicates to its customers how long it would take to get answers or have their problems dealt with. To be successful, companies need to look at responsiveness from the view point of the customer rather than the company’s perspective (Zeithaml et al., 2006).

Assurance. The assurance service quality dimension refers to the ability, endowments and the nature of employees or personnel of the company to build trust from customers. It entails the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence. It also includes competence, courtesy, credibility and security. Andaleeb and Conway (2006) noted that assurance may not be so important relative to other industries where the risk is higher and the outcome of using the service is uncertain. For instance, in the medical and healthcare industry, assurance is an important dimension that customers use as criteria in assessing a hospital or a surgeon for an operation. The trust and confidence may be represented in the personnel who connect the customer to the organization (Zeithaml et al., 2006).

Empathy. The empathy service quality dimension refers to the manner in which the company cares and gives particular and individualized attention to their customer, making the customers to feel extra valued and special. In such a situation, if customers feel that they are being extra valued and given individualised and quality attention, this could highly encourage them to return to the company to carry out purchases again (Delgado and Ballester, 2004). Empathy entails caring and provision of individualized attention to customers by personnel of the firm (Zeithaml et al., 2006). In this respect, the customer feels unique and special. In an attempt to develop empathy, personnel of the firm should endeavour to know the names of their customers, their preferences and needs and take steps to satisfy them. Small Scale enterprises through the provision of customized services to clients are in a better position to achieve empathy than large firms.

Economy. The scale of spending from customers to acquire a good or service influences consumer’s satisfaction. The notion of price fairness refers to consumers’ assessments of whether a seller’s price is reasonable, acceptable or justifiable (Xia et al., 2004). According to Herrmann et al. (1992), price perceptions directly influence satisfaction judgments: “The research demonstrated the influence of perceived price fairness on satisfaction judgments empirically”. In a separate study on factors affecting

customer satisfaction, the authors found that “charging a fair price helps develop customer satisfaction and loyalty.” A study from Herrmann et al. (2007), also concludes that customer satisfaction is directly influenced by price perceptions, albeit indirectly, through the perception of price fairness. The price fairness itself and the way it is fixed and offered have a great impact on satisfaction.

Technical Quality. To improve their customer satisfaction, firms are making greater use of IT tools in their internal business processes (El Sawy and Bowles 1997; Srinivasan, Lilien and Rangaswamy 2002). The skills possessed by the employees of every company to resolve problems posed by customers facilitate customer service and encourage customer satisfaction. The level of technology possessed by a service company permitting its customers to get their problems solved without physically going to the office explains the technical quality of a company. Many companies enhance technical quality through research and development and the service sector is in constant runs of improvement in innovations pushed from research and development.

Image. It is argued that corporate image is what comes to mind when customers hear of a product. Corporate image is the consumer’s response to the total offering and can be defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a public has of an organization. It is related to business name, architecture, variety of products or services, tradition, ideology, and to the impression of quality communicated by each person interacting with the organization’s clients.

Corporate image may be considered as a function of the accumulation of purchasing/consumption experience overtime and has two principal components: functional and emotional. The functional component is related to tangible attributes that can be easily measured, while the emotional component is associated with psychological dimensions that are manifested by feelings and attitudes towards an organization. These feelings are derived from individual experiences with an organization and from the processing of information on the attributes that constitute functional indicators of image. Corporate image is, therefore, the result of an aggregate process by which customers compare and contrast the various attributes of organizations.

Corporate image was considered by Berman and Evans (1995) as a functional and emotional mixture or the prior experience of getting in contact with enterprises. These enterprises are experienced in information such as advertising, word-of-mouth effect and prediction to meet a future expectation that has a direct positive influence on satisfaction.

The Concept and Components of Customer Satisfaction

The concept of customer satisfaction has been in existence for a long time. Adam Smith in his advocating of the free market had begun telling the story of consumer satisfaction in the 18th century (Hill et al., 2007). The USA study “Index of consumer satisfaction” was the first scientifically based survey of customer satisfaction (Churchill and Surprenant, 1982). Later, various theorists such as Hunt (1977), Day (1977, 1980, 1984), Westbrook and Oliver (1980), Oliver (1980, 1981, 1997, 2014), Engel and Blackwell (1982), and Vavra (1997) have been dealing with the definition of customer satisfaction and with customer (dis)satisfaction measuring methods.

The concept of customer satisfaction can be regarded as the basis of the marketing concept because marketing focuses on customers and their needs. The aim of the marketing is a long-term customer satisfaction and its main function is to attract and retain customers (Drucker, 1999).

There is a general consensus among customer relationship marketing practitioners that no business survives without customers. It is therefore critical that organizations form a close working relationship with their clients to ensure that they are satisfied with the services being provided for them.

Satisfaction is a feeling that surfaces from an evaluation process, i.e. when the consumer of a good or service compares what is received against what is expected from the utilization of that good or service (Kotler et al., 2009).

Liu et al. (2008) brought out the following criteria for measuring the satisfaction level of customers with respect to purchase and subsequent consumption of goods or services:

- *Content:* The features of goods or services and the underlying benefits gives customer a positive consumption experience.

- *Relieved*: The alleviation of the negative state of customers' mind on the goods or services provided.
- *Novelty*: The goods or services bring freshness and excitement in customers.
- *Surprise*: The amazement and unexpected pleasure brought to people by goods or services consumed.

In service management literature, customer satisfaction is viewed as the result of a customer's perception of the value received in a transaction or relationship, the term value here refers to the perceived service quality relative to price and customer acquisition costs (Heskett et al., 1990). The value received compared to the value expected from transactions or relationships with competing vendors (Zeithaml et al., 1996).

Customer satisfaction refers to the extent to which customers are happy with the products and services provided by a business. Gaining high levels of customer satisfaction is very important to a business because satisfied customers are most likely to be loyal and to make repeat orders and to use a wide range of services offered by a business. Gerpott et al. (2001) noted that customer satisfaction is measured by a customer's estimated experience of the extent to which a provider's services fulfill his or her expectations. A number of benefits are associated with customer satisfaction; Satisfied customers are less price sensitive, buy additional products, less influenced by competitors and stay loyal longer (Zineldin, 2000). Ovenden (1995) cautions organizations to pay particular attention to the way they treat their customers since some customers may not openly display their dissatisfaction immediately. One important component in the concept of satisfaction is complaint management. Nyer (2000) investigated the relation between consumer complaints and consumer satisfaction and found that encouraging consumers to complain increased their satisfaction, and this was especially the case for the most dissatisfied customers. Research has also found that the more intensely a customer complains the greater the increases in satisfaction. Johnston (2001) argued that complaint management, not only results in customer satisfaction, but also leads to operational improvement and improved financial performance.

This study captured customer satisfaction using the following factors:

- **Perceived performance**

It often differs from objective or technical performance, especially when a product/service is complex, intangible, and when the consumer is unfamiliar with the product/service. This was used as a metric to get customer's perception of the value of service received.

- **Comparison standards**

It consists of comparing the product to those of rivals by the consumer. They can come from numerous sources that can vary widely by individual, by situation, and by product/service type. This metric was used to understand the customer's perception of the service value of the company as compared to those of rival companies.

- **Perceived disconfirmation**

It is the evaluation of perceived performance according to one or more comparison standards. Disconfirmation can have a positive effect (generally implying a satisfying result), a negative effect (generally implying a dissatisfying result), or a zero effect. This was used to investigate whether the customer was in accordance to the quality of service or not.

- **Satisfaction feeling**

It is a state of mind, an attitude. The phrase "mixed feelings" applies here, as a consumer may have different levels of satisfaction for different parts of a product/service experience. Customers were asked if they feel satisfied by the service quality offered by their mobile telephone operator.

- **Outcomes of satisfaction feelings**

They may involve intent to repurchase, word-of-mouth (the consumer's communication with her/his network of her/his approval/disapproval for a product/service), and complaints. These outcomes also are moderated by other variables. For example, extreme dissatisfaction will not necessarily generate complaint behavior, especially if the consumer believes complaining will be futile. We used this to verify if customers are willing to repurchase or to recommend the services of the mobile network operator to

friends. From these five determinants of customer satisfaction, four questions were derived to capture customer satisfaction.

The Empirical Literature

Enormous work has been done in several areas of the world on service quality and customer satisfaction. In the USA, Demyana Nathan (2014) examined the relationship among e-service Quality Dimensions, Overall Internet Banking Service Quality, and Customer Satisfaction. He investigated the link between customer satisfaction and service quality dimensions as measured by efficiency, fulfillment, system availability, privacy, assurance/trust, site aesthetics, and responsiveness in the internet banking market. The finding revealed a significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.

In Europe, Selim Zaim and al, (2010) conducted a study in the Turk telecom sector using a structural modeling technique and using primary data collected from a survey on telecom customers in the district of Istanbul. The study was conclusive in finding a significant link between customer satisfaction and service quality. Company image had the highest impact on customer satisfaction. In the same vein, their research found a strong positive relationship between perceived quality and perceived value.

In Greece, Stergios Vranakis, and al (2012) found that company image was the main driver affecting not only customer satisfaction, but also perceived value, and customer loyalty.

In Asia, Rahaman et al (2011) explored service quality and its relationship with customer satisfaction in private commercial banks of Bangladesh. A primary cause of service quality failure was the lack of understanding of the evolving need and preferences of targeted customers.

In the same light, Ilhaamie (2010) examined the level of service quality, expectation and perception of the external customers towards the Malaysian public services using the SERVQUAL instrument. The study found that tangibility was the most important dimension of service quality. Perception was not a significant factor influencing service quality.

A number of studies have been conducted in Africa: Ojo (2010) investigated the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the telecommunication industry with a focus on Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN) in Nigeria. That study showed a positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, with *reliability* having the highest impact.

A similar study from Ode (2013) conducted on university students using MTN, led to concurrent results with *service delivery* and *reliability* being the most influential dimension of service quality affecting customer satisfaction.

Few studies in customer satisfaction exist in French speaking African countries. The findings gathered in English speaking countries may be dissimilar to those that could be observed in French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa because of differing cultural backgrounds and lifestyle. This study attempts to fill the vacuum existing in the current literature.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

Model Specification

This study used a multiple regression model to assess the impact of variables representing service quality on customer satisfaction. A SERVQUAL instrument (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1991) was utilized to measure service quality. However, we adjusted the instrument by including three additional constructs (image, economy and technical quality) to account for the environment in which the study was conducted.

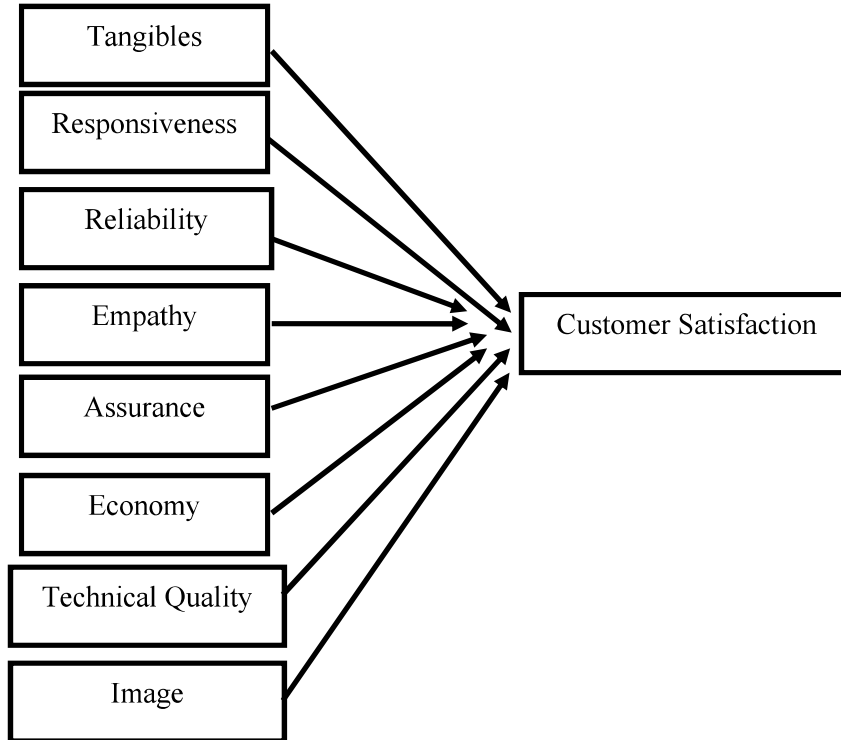
The empirical model used is specified as follows:

$$Y_i = \alpha X_i + \epsilon_i$$

Y represents the dependent variable in the regression (customer satisfaction) and the Xs represent variables standing for quality of services and ϵ is the error term.

Considering the literature discussed on service quality and customer satisfaction, we formulate the following model for the study.

FIGURE 1
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY



Operationalization of Variables and Data Presentation

400 mobile telephone users were sampled randomly from four major cities of Cameroon (Yaounde, Douala, Bamenda and Buea). These towns harbor a heterogeneous population of mobile phone users who come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. These towns were chosen because they comprise Cameroonians from two different cultures of French and English and henceforth may have different orientations towards mobile telephone companies originating from these backgrounds. To ensure that the sample was representative of the population and all mobile phone users in these four towns were given a fair chance of being part of the study, 100 mobile phone users were selected from each town. The demographic profile of respondents is presented in Table 1.

All the different variables were captured by using a five-point Likert scale eliciting responses ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Indifferent, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree. Constructs were used to capture service quality and customer satisfaction.

To capture service quality variables, we used the following constructs:

For tangibility, two constructs were used:

TA₁: Networks ability to give you access to information, SIM cards, and reload cards

TA₂: Provision of visually attractive equipment and materials

For image, two constructs were used:

IM₁ How successful is your mobile network company?

IM₂: *What is the reputation of your mobile network company?*

For technical quality, five constructs were used:

TQ₁ *Successful in completion of calls, SMS, MMS, line activation, credit reloading, etc*

TQ₂ *Employees have technological skills and knowledge in solving customers' problems*

TQ₃ *Network clarity and speed for call and other services*

TQ₄ *Network innovativeness, ability to use current technology to improve services*

TQ₅ *Providing adequate network coverage*

For economy, two constructs were used:

EC₁ *How economical is the use of your mobile telephone network's services in terms of: reloading airtime and their denominations?*

EC₂ *How economical is the use of your mobile telephone network's services in terms of: the call charge per minute/second*

For assurance, three constructs were used:

AS₁: *Ability to provide variety of value-added services Music, Internet access, etc*

AS₂: *Sincerity and patience in resolving customers' complaints*

AS₃: *the behavior of employees in instilling confidence in customers.*

For reliability, two constructs were used for reliability:

RL₁: *How timely is the delivery of SMS, MMS, voice message and other services of your network?*

RL₂: *How truthful is your mobile network to you*

Four constructs were used for empathy:

EM₁: *Having convenient periods and terms for activation, recharge and account suspension, EM₂ Having operating hours convenient to all customers*

EM₃: *Having sound loyalty program to recognize you as a frequent customer*

EM₄: *Having the customers' best interest at heart*

For responsiveness, three constructs were used:

RS₁: *How is your network efficient to tell customers exactly when services will be performed?*

RS₂: *How efficient is your network to give prompt customer services and attend to customers' needs?*

RS₃: *How are employees willing to help customers in emergency situation?*

To capture customer satisfaction, the following constructs were used:

CS₁: *What is your overall satisfaction with the services?*

CS₂: *How would you compare the service of your operator to that of rivals?*

CS₃ *Would you purchase the product/service again?*

CS₄: *Would you recommend the product/service of your operator to colleagues or contacts within your industry?*

TABLE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF RESPONDENTS

Gender Male: 56%	Female: 44%
Age Less than 20: 13% Between 25 – 30: 1% Between 35 – 40: 5% 45+: 4%	Between 20 – 25: 43% Between 30 – 35: 21% Between 40 – 45: 13%
Level of education Primary: 6% University: 77%	Secondary: 17%
Level of monthly salary (FCFA) Less than 60000: 63% Between 120000 – 180000: 21%	Between 60000 – 120000: 10% 180000+ : 6%
Subscribers per mobile operator MTN: 69% Nextel: 2%	Orange: 29%

Before fully studying the characteristics of the sample, a study on the reliability of the SERVQUAL model was first conducted in order to investigate the internal consistency of the constructs. The results from the internal consistency test showed that all the constructs have Cronbach's alpha of more than 0.70 as seen in Table 2 below. The findings imply that there is high level of internal consistency among the items in each construct and as such each construct is reliable.

TABLE 2
CRONBACH'S ALPHA FOR CONSTRUCTS RELIABILITY TEST

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Tangibility	0,860	2
Reliability	0,727	2
Responsiveness	0,7	3
Empathy	0,71	4
Assurance	0,713	3
Economy	0,782	2
Technical Quality	0,761	5
Image	0,812	2
Satisfaction	0,760	4

The main hypothesis of the study is that service quality has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3 below provides the correlation coefficients between service quality variables and customer satisfaction. Most service quality variables are positively correlated with customer satisfaction

TABLE 3
PEARSON'S CORRELATIONS BETWEEN CONSTRUCTS

Variables	TANGI- BILITY	RELIA- BILITY	RESPON- SIVENESS	EMPA- THY	ASSU- RANCE	ECONOMY	TECHNICAL QUALITY	IMAGE	CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
TANGIBILITY	1	,193*	,017	,017	,520*	,055	,499*	,70*	,451*
RELIABILITY		1	,304*	,471*	,307*	,098	,084	,30*	,513*
RESPONSIVENESS			1	,322*	,003	,471*	,177*	,003*	,378*
EMPATHY				1	,313**	,378*	,081	,313**	,483*
ASSURANCE					1	,490*	,288*	,48*	,312*
ECONOMY						1	,293*	,74*	,301*
TECHNICAL QUALITY							1	,72*	,086*
IMAGE								1	,143*
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION									1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

TABLE 4
REGRESSION OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ON SERVICE QUALITY

Dependent variable	Parameter	Coefficient	StdError	T value	P- value
Customer satisfaction	Constant	2.361	.314	4.510	.000
	TANGIBILITY	0.124	.060	2.045	.042
	RELIABILITY	0.042	.027	1.573	.117
	RESPONSIVENESS	0.004	.042	.084	.093
	EMPATHY	.038	.049	.772	.044
	ASSURANCE	0.044	.050	.882	.037
	TECHNICAL QUALITY	0.243	.039	4.184	.000
	IMAGE	0.573	.036	3.907	.000
	ECONOMY	0.545	.074	4.331	.000

Source: Computer output

Table 4 presents the regression results of customer satisfaction on Service Quality dimensions. The findings show that the coefficients for all Service Quality dimensions are positive, suggesting the existence of a direct relationship between customer satisfaction and Tangibility, Responsiveness, Reliability, Assurance Empathy, Economy, Technical Quality and Image. These results therefore are consistent with the traditional view found in the existing empirical literature in which improvements in service quality may be beneficial to a firm as it helps promote customer satisfaction. However, our results also show that the coefficients for reliability, responsiveness, empathy, and assurance are not significantly different from zero indicating that these variables may not be a factor in satisfying telephony users. Indeed, the relationship although positive appears weak. Why would customer's satisfaction not respond so much to empathy, responsiveness, reliability, and assurance? One explanation may be that lack of empathy may arise from fewer individualized services offered by the companies to users, and from the existence of very few customer service stores offering after-sale services. As a result, the trust customers have on the company may affect "assurance" because courtesy, credibility, and security that users can expect to receive from the company is greatly impaired.

Among the Service Quality dimensions, image has the highest coefficient (0.573) followed by "economy" (0.545), and "technical quality" (0.243). Those coefficients are robust and highly significant as shown by their respective t-values of 3.907, 4.331, and 4.184. Those dimensions are the most determining factors driving users' satisfaction in the Cameroonian environment. The typical user has a moderate income and is likely to be satisfied by a product having a good price/quality ratio. This ratio itself is highly influenced by the firm technical quality and firm's image.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The principal objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the mobile telephony sector of the Republic of Cameroon. Most studies have shown evidence of strong positive effect of service quality on customer satisfaction and therefore on repurchase intentions. In this study, the specific objective was to closely examine the various components of service quality and ascertain which ones are most influential to customer satisfaction in order to make recommendations for managerial strategies. In most similar studies conducted in African countries, *reliability* defined as the "ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately", has turned to be the key element leading to customer satisfaction. However, almost all these studies were conducted in English-speaking countries having a different socio-cultural and political background. To account for these differences, we have introduced three new components of service quality in our study: *image*, *economy*, and *technical quality*.

The results clearly show that reliability is not a decisive factor leading to customer satisfaction. Instead, “*image*” and “*economy*” appear to be the leading vectors to customer satisfaction. This result is at odd with those obtained in previous studies in the African context (Ojo, 2010; Ode, 2013). One possible explanation is that prices in the Cameroonian Mobile telephony sector are still relatively high compared to those observed in previously studied countries due to reduced competition; and Cameroonian users may feel more satisfied if they were offered lower prices. Indeed, despite the fact that there exist three players in the sector, competitive forces do not seem to produce expected results in terms of pricing. Mobile telephony firms always seem to act collusively in fixing prices. The State-which is in charge of regulating the market-, does not appear to fully play its role in preventing competing firms from reaching verbal understandings on product price, leaving market shares to be decided by non-price competition.

A major recommendation will therefore be for the Government to put in place good regulations and follow-up on implementation to prohibit the formation of covert or overt collusions to ensure competitive forces work well and produce expected outcomes. As for firms, a low-price strategy may be the best option to attract new users and retain older ones.

REFERENCES

- Andaleeb, S.S., & Conway, C. (2006). Customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry: An examination of the transaction-specific model. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 20(1), 3-11.
- Aydin, S., & Özer, G. (2005). The analysis of antecedents of customer loyalty in the Turkish mobile telecommunication Market. *European Journal of Marketing*, 39(7/8), 910-925.
- Babakus, E., & Boller, G.W. (1992). An empirical assessment of the SERVQUAL Scale. *Journal of Business Research*, 24(3), 253-268.
- Bitner & Hubbert. (1994). Encounter satisfaction versus overall satisfaction versus service quality: The consumer's voice. In R.T. Rust & R.L. Oliver (Eds.), *Service Quality: New Directions in Theory and Practice*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Bloemer, J., de Ruyter, K., & Wetzels, M. (1999). Linking perceived service quality with service loyalty: A multidimensional perspective. *European Journal of Marketing*, 33(11/12), 1082-1106.
- Boshoff, C., & Terblanche, N.S. (1997). Measuring retail service quality: a replication study. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 28(4), 123-129.
- Brady, M.K., Jr., Cronin, J., Jr., & Brand, R.R. (2002). Performance-only measurement of service quality: A replication and extension. *Journal of Business Research*, 55, 27-31.
- Brady, M.K., & Cronin, J., Jr. (2001). Some new thoughts on conceptualizing perceived service quality: A hierarchical approach. *Journal of Marketing*, 65, 34-49.
- Carman, J.M. (1990). Customer perceptions of service quality: an assessment of the SERVQUAL dimensions. *Journal of Retailing*, 66, 33-55.
- Caruana, A. (2002). Service loyalty: The effects of service quality and the mediating role of customer satisfaction. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(7/8), 811-828.
- Colgate, M., Stewart, K., & Kinsella, R. (1996). Customer defection: a study of the student market in Ireland. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 14(3), 23-29.
- Cronin, J.J., Jr., & Taylor, S.A. (1992). Measuring service quality: A re-examination and extension. *Journal of Marketing*, 56, 55-68.
- Cronin, J., Jr., Brady, M.K., & Hult, G.T.M. (2000). Assessing the effects of quality, value, and customer satisfaction on consumer behavioural intentions in service environments. *Journal of Retailing*, 76(2), 193-218.
- Dabholkar, P.A., Thorpe, D.I., & Rentz, J.O. (2001). A measure of service quality for retail stores: scale development and validation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 24(1), 3-16.
- Das, A., Kumar, D., & Saha, G.C. (2010). Retail service quality in context of CIS countries. *International Journal of Quality & Reliability Management*, 27(6), 658-683.
- Ehigie, B.O. (2006). Correlates of customer loyalty to their bank: a case study in Nigeria. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 24(7), 494-508.

- Eysteinnsson, F., & Bjornsdottir, B.L. (2012). Service quality in convenience stores. *Journal of Academy of Business and Economics*, 12(3), 85-90.
- Feinberg, R.A., Ruyter, K.D., Trappey, C., & Lee, T-Z. (1995). Consumer-defined service quality in international retailing. *Total Quality Management*, 6(1), 61-67.
- Fisher, A. (2001). Winning the battle for customers. *Journal of Financial Services and Marketing*, 6(2), 77-83.
- Gaur, S.S., & Agrawal, R. (2006). Service quality measurement in retail store context: a review of advances made using SERVQUAL and RSQS. *The Marketing Review*, 6(4), 317-330. © Center for Promoting Ideas, USA.
- Gerpott, T.J., Rams, W., & Schindler, A. (2001). Customer retention, loyalty, and satisfaction in the German mobile cellular telecommunications market. *Telecommunications Policy*, 25(4), 249-69.
- Gremler, D.D., & Brown, S.W. (1996). Service loyalty: its nature, importance and implications. *Proceedings. American Marketing Association*, pp. 171-180.
- Grönroos, C. (1990). *Service Management and Marketing: Managing the Moments of Truth in Service Competition*. Lexington, MA Lexington Books.
- GyasiNimako, S. (2012). Exploring customer dissatisfaction/satisfaction and complaining responses among bank customers in Ghana. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 6.
- Hoskinsson, R.E., Eden, L., Lau, C.M., & Wright, M. (2000). Strategy in emerging economies. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(3), 249-267.
- Howat, G., Crilley, G., & McGrath, R. (2008). A focused service quality, benefits, overall satisfaction and loyalty model for public aquatic centres. *Managing Leisure*, 13, 139–161.
- Huang, M-H. (2009). Using service quality to enhance the perceived quality of store brands. *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, 20(2), 241-252.
- Ilhaamie. (2010). Service Quality in Malaysian Public Service: Some Findings. *International Journal of Trade, Economics and Finance*, 1(1).
- Kang, G., & James, J. (2004). Service quality dimensions: an examination of Grönroos service quality model. *Managing Service Quality*, 14(4), 266–277.
- Kaul, S. (2007). Measuring retail service quality: examining applicability of international research perspectives in India. *The Journal of Decision Makers*, 32(1), 15-26.
- Kim, S., & Jin, B. (2002). Validating the retail service quality scale for US and Korean customers of discount stores: An exploratory study. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 16(3), 223-237.
- Mehta, S.C., Lalwani, A.K., & Han, S.L. (2000). Service quality in retailing: relative efficiency of alternative measurement scales for different product-service environments. *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, 2, 62-72.
- Newman, K. (2001). Interrogating SERVQUAL: a critical assessment of service quality measurement in a high street retail bank. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 19(3), 126-139.
- Nyer, P.U. (2000). An investigation into whether complaining can cause increased consumer satisfaction. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 17(1), 9-19.
- Ojo, O. (2010). The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the telecommunication industry: Evidence from Nigeria. *Broad Research in Accounting, Negotiation and Distribution*.
- Panda, T.K. (2003). Creating customer lifetime value through effective CRM in financial services industry. *Journal of Services Research*, 2(2), 157-171.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A., & Berry, L. L. (1985). A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research. *Journal of Marketing*, 49(4), 41-50.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V.A., & Berry, L.L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring customer perception of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12-40.
- Ramakrishna, M.M., & Aravindan, S. (2012). Measuring retail service quality using RSQS and validating RSQS in the context of South Indian retail stores. *European Journal of Social Science*, 30(1-2), 59-69.

- Samaan, A. (2014). The effects of customer expectation and perceived service quality on customer satisfaction. *International Journal of Business and Management Invention*.
- Simpson, J. (2002). The Impact of the Internet in Banking: Observations and Evidence from Developed and Emerging Markets. *Telematics and Informatics*, 19, 315-330.
- Siu, N.Y.M., & Chow, D.K.H. (2003). Service quality in grocery retailing: the study of a Japanese supermarket in Hong Kong. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 16(1), 71-87.
- Thenmozhi, S.P., & Dhanapal, D. (2010). Retail service quality – a customer perception analysis. *Global Management Review*, 4(2), 1-6.
- Xia, L., Monroe, K., & Cox, J. (2004). The price is unfair! A conceptual framework of price fairness perceptions. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(4).
- Yi, Y. (1990). Critical Review of Consumer Satisfaction. *Review of Marketing*, pp. 68-123.
- Yuen, E.F.T., & Chan, S.S.L. (2010). The effect of retail service quality and product quality on customer loyalty. *Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management*, 17(3/4), 222-240.