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Assessment of Brand Equity on Customer Relationship Management: *A study of Selected Telecom Operators in Keffi, Nasarawa State*

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Abstract

Brand equity is thus the strength of a brand in consumer's mind, experience, and knowledge. It is an additional value to a product in thought words, and actions of the consumers. Managing brand equity is important for telecom operators, since telecom operators with strong brand equity will be easier in determining marketing strategies, so it able to get the potential customers and retain the existing customers. Despite the fact that lots of global and local brands of different products have been used to measure brand equity, survey on brand equity in the service industry have not been fully explored. This is attributed to the fact that globalized world is changing very fast, and as business conditions continually change, mid-market enterprises are forced to constantly realign their business strategy to maintain their customer and growth. The study thus examined the effect of brand equity on customer relationship management using customers of telecom operators as a study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design, while regression method of analysis was used in carrying out the empirical analysis. Findings from the study revealed that brand awareness has a significant effect on customer trust. In addition, brand image was seen to also have influence on consumer's commitment on a brand. And finally, the study revealed that perceived quality has a significant impact on customer loyalty. The study thus recommends that there should be a continuous effort by telecom operators to enhance customers based-brand equity. They should bear in mind that old familiar brand dies, as a result of poor management of brand, overextension and lack of investment in developing brand equity and values.

Keywords: Brand Equity, Brand image, Brand Loyalty, Brand Awareness and Customer Relationship Management

INTRODUCTION

Due to the rapid changes in the global market and the increased competition experienced between firms and as such, brand equity has become more important. More so, given that marketing has taken on a strategic function for decision making and maintaining a competitive advantage, brand equity has been broadly discussed by both practitioners and academics.

Brands have been considered as the second most important assets for a firm after customers (Ambler, 2015; Jones, 2015). Strong brands, customer awareness, market share and satisfied customers contribute to the creation of shareholder value which depends on the value of a brand. Brand value concerns with the study of how value is created, whereas equity is concerned with the measurement of this value (Jones, 2015). Brand equity perfectly defines the value of a brand. Existing literature divides brand equity into three categories: mental brand equity, that is, the impact of the brand on the consumer's consciousness; behavioral brand equity, that is, the consumer's behavioral response to the brand ; and, financial equity, that is, the financial impact of the brand as expressed through return on investment, profit, turnover, price-to-earnings ratio, etc. (Franzen, 2009).

This research focuses on the first two categories of brand equity otherwise known as Customer based Brand Equity (CBBE). The most appropriate definition of CBBE has been given by Ebrahimi, Kheyri and Yadegari (2015) who defines Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) as the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to marketing activity with respect to that brand.

Good brand management brings about clear differentiation between products, ensures consumer loyalty and preferences and may lead to a greater market share. A strong brand will enhance a customer's attitude strength of the product association of a brand. Attitude strength is developed by experience with the product. According to Keller (1993), customer awareness and association influences inferred attributes, perceived quality and finally result to brand loyalty. He went further to say that the advantage of this dimensionality of customer-based brand equity is that it allows marketing managers to study how their marketing programs enhance their brand values in the minds of customers.

Brand equity is thus the strength of a brand in consumer's mind, experience, and knowledge. Brand equity can be termed as an additional value to a product in thought, words, and actions of the consumers. Managing brand equity is important for telecom operators, since telecom operators with strong brand equity will be easier in determining marketing strategies, so it able to get the potential customers and retain the existing customers.

Powerful brand equity increases the trust and the power of customers in visualizing and a better understanding of the characteristics of intangible services. On the other hand, many organizations (especially service organizations) come to believe this, for achieving competitive advantage and long-term survival in the market they should establish and develop powerful brands (as one of the key success factors). A strong brand equity creates the value for both the customer and the organization. On the other hand, it provides the concise and useful tools to

simplify the selection process for purchasing the products or services for the customers, and in the process of data and information analysis make it easier and faster and in this way, it creates value for customers.
One of the many sets of tools aimed at aiding the interaction between suppliers and customers are the customer relationship management (CRM) methodologies. Business is a constant race to increase the profits, keep the current customers and gain competing for customers on a globalized market like never before, and as such companies are increasingly concentrated on managing customer relationship. CRM is aimed at building strong long-term relationship that keep customers coming back repeatedly. It aims to help organization build individual customer relationship in such a way the both firm and customers get most out of exchange, providing both parties with long term benefits.

Despite the fact that lots of global and local brands of different products have been used to measure brand equity, survey on brand equity in the service industry have not been fully explored. This is attributed to the fact that globalized world is changing very fast, and as business conditions continually change (Slama, & Tashchian, 2015)
Mid-market enterprises are forced to constantly realign their business strategy to maintain their customer and growth. Faced with the increased infiltration of companies that offer equal satisfaction levels to customers in the market, firms are compelled to come up with appropriate means of presenting their products so that brand preference, consumer loyalty and rightful perception in regard to product attributes among other objectives are realized. More so, most customer do not have full experience with the product by purchasing it for the first time. He or she is influenced by advertising, brand of producer and the trust in the product. In the process, most company find it difficult to convince or satisfy the customer on a product to buy. This task is not easy. In this process, brand could perform an important role to enable a customer better identify with a product and can make them return to its purchase based on the existence of the brand

The study thus explored the effectiveness of brand equity on customer relationship using selected telecom operators in Keffi metropolis as a study
The following questions were addressed in the course of the study:

What effect does brand awareness have on customer trust?
What influence does brand image has on customer commitment?
To what extend has perceived quality impacted on customer loyalty?

In-line with the research questions, the following hypotheses were empirically tested

Brand awareness has no significant effect on customer trust
Brand image has no significant influence on customer commitment
Perceived quality has no significant impact on customer loyalty

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Brand Equity

Brand equity is defined as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers". Aaker (1991) posits five dimensions of brand equity – brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand association, and other propriety brand assets. Brand equity has been studied for two purposes: (1) financial value for mergers and acquisitions and (2) improve marketing strategy and productivity. Aaker's brand equity theory was further developed to a consumer's perspective. Keller defined customer-based brand equity "as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand" (Bitner &Mary, 2015). This brand knowledge includes brand awareness (brand recall and recognition) and brand image (types, favorability, strength, and uniqueness of brand associations). Keller determines that "consumer based brand equity occurs when the customer is aware of the brand and holds some favorable, strong, and unique brand associations in memory"

Moreover, branding and brand management are applicable to retail brands, e.g., retail and store image, perceived retail brand association, as well as to retail brand equity measurement (Ailawadi and Keller, 2014). The customer, for this study, is a retail shopper and a member of an income group – low, middle, or high.

The focus of this study is to improve marketing strategy, e.g., "consumers response to the marketing of the brand" (Keller, 1993), in order to increase customer-based brand equity, e.g., "(the consumer) holds some favorable, strong, and unique brand associations in memory". Such marketing activities includes the product or brand positioning to specific target market(s) using specific strategies of product, price, place, and promotion (McCarthy, 2014).

Traditionally brand equity discussions are rooted in product branding in the discipline of marketing. Sometimes there seems to be ambiguity between the terms brand equity and brand value. Most often brand value represents what the brand means to a focal company (Raggio and Leone 2007), and it often includes the accounting viewpoint that sees brand value as the financial profit or value of the brand (Tuominen, 2016). Brand equity, on the other hand, seems to be the term used more frequently in the literature, but there seems to be some ambiguity about it, too. Even though brand equity is sometimes considered as referring to the financial value of the brand (Biel, 1992; Simon & Sullivan 1993), in the marketing domain it is often suggested that brand equity refers to the asset-based, intangible properties of the brand (Aaker, 1992 Lassar, Berry, 2015), which add (or subtract) value (Gilani & Mousavian, 2016) and represent what the brand means to the customer.

Aaker (2015) have done a seminal job in developing the definition and measuring scales for brand equity. More so, he defines brand equity as "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand's name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers''. He divides brand equity into five categories: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary brand assets. The first four categories are clearly intangible assets, whereas other proprietary brand assets are more external signs of the brand and thus are not commensurable with the other four components.

Ferdinand (2016) on the other hand, introduces the concept of consumer based brand equity (CBBE), which differs slightly from Aaker's (2015) definition. Keller (1993) includes the company's view and defines CBBE as "the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the 4marketing of the brand". CBBE may be either negative or positive, but it is important that it is always compared to an unnamed version of the product or service, and it relates strongly to the knowledge (memory and associations) of the brand by a specific customer. According to Keller (2003), customer-based brand equity "occurs when the consumer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and holds some strong, favorable, and unique brand associations in memory". Keller's (2003) model of brand equity focuses on brand knowledge and its components - brand awareness and brand image. Thus, compared to Aaker's (1996) brand equity concept, CBBE is narrower and emphasizes the comparison between a brand and unbranded substitutes. CBBE is often applied in other contexts, too, for example tourism (Boo et al., 2009).

The conceptual domain of consumers –based brand equity is captured as brand awareness, brand image, brand value or quality.

Brand Awareness: Brand awareness can be referred to as the degree of consumers' familiarity with a brand. Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) stated that brand awareness is a vital element of brand equity. According to Rossiter and Percy (2015), brand awareness is the ability of consumers to distinguish a brand amongst other brand. Keller (1993) conceptualized brand awareness as comprising of brand recall and brand recognition. He went further to say that brand recall is the ability of consumers to remember a brand from their mind when the product class is made know. Keller (1993) argued that "brand recognition may be more important to the extent that product decisions are made in the store". noted that brand attitude and intention to purchase a product can only be developed through brand awareness.

Brand Image: Engel Blackwell and Miniard (2013) referred to brand image as the combined effect of brand association or consumers perception of the "brands tangible and intangible association". Keller (1993) see brand image as a perception or association consumers form as a result of their memory concerning a product. According to Low and Lamb (2000), brand image can also be referred to as the emotional perception or reason that consumers place to a particular brand.
Thus, brand image does not exist in the features, technology or the actual product itself, it is sometimes brought out by advertisement, promotion or users. Brand image enables a consumer to recognize a product, lower purchase risks, evaluate the quality and obtain certain experience and satisfaction out of product differentiation.

Marketing researchers such as Keller (1993) have proposed that brand image is an important element of brand equity. Krishnan (1996) found out that brands with high brand equity are prone to more positive brand associations than those with low brand equity. Also Lassar, Walfried, Banwari Mittal & Arun, (1995) found out that brand with high brand image rating always have higher brand equity and premium price. Conclusively, Kwon (1990) reported that positive brand image is mostly likely associated with preferred brands.

Researchers have proposed that brand equity is to an extent driven by the brand association composition of the image. According to Keller (1993), favorable, unique and strong associations are assumed to provide a positive brand image which will create a bias in the mind of consumers thereby increasing the brand equity. Pitta and Katsanis (2015) also stated that a unique, favorable and strong brand image allows the brand to be easily differentiated and positioned in the consumers mind, thereby adding to the possibility of increased brand equity.

Conclusively, brand image can be said to be the brand association or consumer's perception about a particular brand as a result of their association with the brand.

Perceived Quality: According to Ferdinand (2015) perceived brand quality is a core dimension of customers based brand equity as it relates to the willingness to pay a price premium, brand choice and brand purchase intention.

Low and Lamb (2000) referred to perceived quality as the perception of the superiority of a brand when compared to alternative brand. Zeithamal (1998) defined brand quality as consumer's judgment about the whole product superiority or excellence. According to Szymanski and Henard (2001), one of the antecedents of satisfaction is perceived quality. Like brand association, perceived quality provides consumers with value and give them reason to differentiate a brand from another.
Justified by Researchers such as Carman (2014), perceived quality can be said to have a positive effect on customers purchase intention. Although there are inconsistencies on the available empirical evidence for example, Boulding et al (2013) considered service quality as one of the factors leading to purchase intention. In Cronin and Taylor (2012) as cited by Juan Carlos et al (2001) direct effect was not significant whereas there was an indirect effect which rose from satisfaction. Taylor and Baker (2014) speculated that perceived quality liked with satisfaction has an effect on consumers purchase intention.

Therefore, perceived quality can be said to be consumer's perception of the superiority of a brand which enables them to differentiate a brand from another.

Concept of Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
Swift (2000) defined CRM as a method of understanding the customer behavior through intense communication with him/her to improve the performance which is represent in attracting the customer, keeping him/ her and increasing his/ her loyalty and profitability. It can be noticed that definition regards CRM as mere communication with the organization to understanding the customer's behavior. Stone and Findlay (2001) defined CRM as the organization carrying out a lot of information about the customer from various resource and keeping it in order to divide the territories, analyze and reuse. This definition regards CRM as only collecting and recording information about the customer. Fross and Stone (2011) defined CRM as the company use of its abilities in the field of research methodology, technology e-commerce in order to manage customer relationships.

This definition for CRM regards it as the ability to use technology in the domain of dealing with customers. Parvatiyar and Sheth (2012) mentioned that CRM is a comprehensive strategy that includes the process of acquiring certain customers, keeping them and cooperating with them to create a distinguished value for both the company and the customer. This strategy requires integrating the functions of marketing, sales, customer's service and exposition chain so as to achieve the highest competence and efficiency in delivering value to the customer. As it shows, this definition regards CRM as a strategy with a main goal of delivering a distinguished value to the customers through improving the marketing productivity and satisfaction.

Schierholz, Lutz, Kolbe, and Brenner (2016), defined customer relationship management (CRM) as a complex set of interactive processes that aims to achieve an optimum balance between corporate investments and the fulfilling of customer needs in order to generate maximum profit

Empirical Review

It is argued that brand equity has a strong impact on customers' loyalty intentions (Vogel, et al., 2008) and it is likely to influence a customer's willingness to stay, repurchase, and recommend the brand.

Nazari and Bahri (2012) worked on the impact of dimensions of price satisfaction on customer's loyalty in the banking industry: Under the study they examined the Mellat banks. Based on the obtained results, factors affecting customer's brand of price was assessed, as well their relationship with the dimensions of loyalty in one of the commercial banks was assessed. The results showed that among the six affecting factors on customer's satisfaction on the price; the quality of price factor has the maximum effect and price transparency has minimal impact on customer's satisfaction.

Mahmoud (2013), examined the effect of quality of services and prices on customer's satisfaction and loyalty in the commercial industry of flight services. The results show that the quality of service has a positive and insignificant relationship on the customer's commitment, and also the price has a negative and insignificant relationship on customer's loyalty. Also, quality of service and the price have a negative relationship with loyalty. Customer's satisfaction has a positive and significant impact on customer's loyalty.

GanjiNia and kazemirad (2012), in a study entitled 'the impact of brand loyalty on bank's brand equity from the perspective of e-cards customers', by using the model of David Aaker, they concluded that the other three dimensions of brand equity (perceived quality, brand awareness and brand associations) have influence on loyalty to brand.

Seyed Javadein (2015) studied the effect of brand equity on the industrial customer's loyalty. The results showed that brand equity and trust are the most important factors affecting the behavioral patterns and attitudes of customer's loyalty. Kafash (2014) conducted a study with the title of brand value and corporate image based on customer's satisfaction. In this study the independent variables include brand loyalty, commitment to relationships, trust, received quality, brand awareness and brand equity, which were on the dependent variable of customer's satisfaction in the services company. According to the obtained results the variables which could directly create suitable brand equity for hospital are brand loyalty and quality of service, in the meantime, quality of service, with a correlation of 75 percent created a maximum importance in building the suitable brand equity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory of Services: Services include intangible duties that satisfy the needs of consumers or commercial users. In other words, services and products can be assumed on two ends of a continuum, as most cases are a combination of these two features (Nasehifar and Haghbayan, 2009). Most authors have pointed out five fundamental principles that distinguish service activities from non-service ones. These five principles include: intangibility, instability, heterogeneity, inseparability and non-possessiveness of the services (Mousavi and Rezaeian, 2007). Here, it needs to be pointed out that a complaining customer is not an enemy to the organization. Those customers who complain about specifications of a product or the services provided by the company are more likely to come back, as compared to those customers who never express any complain about the organization. That is to say an appropriate response to the complaining customers will make them 50% faithful to the organization; otherwise, they will go to the rivals. Thus, complaints should be addressed as opportunities to improve relationships with the customers. They should be used as instruments for satisfying the changeable demands of the customers (Ranjbaran et al, 2002). The studies show that only 10% of the personnel in the industrial sectors are directly in contact with the customers. However, this increases to 90% or even 100% for the service-providers (Nasehifar and Haghbayan, 2009).

Relationship Marketing Theory: Relationship marketing theory states that successful relationship marketing is occasioned by certain aspects of cooperative relationships that characterize successful relational exchanges (Arnett and Badrinayanan, 2005). The success of relationship marketing is pegged on three major factors. These are trust, relationship commitment, and communication (Sivadas and Dwyer, 2000). The theory suggests that successful relationship marketing efforts enhance customer loyalty and firm's performance through stronger relational bonds (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, and Sabol, 2002).

There are diverse perspectives about which relational constructs mediate the effects of relationship marketing efforts on outcomes. Besides commitment, trust and communication, satisfaction, bonding, shared values, empathy, dependence and reciprocity have been identified as vital components of relationship marketing orientation (Sin et al., 2005; Eisingerich and Bell, 2006). The aforementioned different relational mediators have been linked to many antecedents and outcomes (Palmatier et al., 2016).

It has been suggested that these components are just indicators of the global mediator relationship quality, which is essentially an overall assessment of the strength of a relationship and is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that captures the many diverse facets of an exchange relationship (De Wulf et al., 2001). The relationship marketing theory, however, fails to expound on how service quality is crucial in relationship marketing. Relationship marketing theory is adopted in this study to explain the link between the various components of relationship marketing (particularly, communication and customers‟ trust) and customer retention.

Commitment-Trust Theory: The commitment-trust theory was advanced by Morgan and Hunt (1994). The theory asserts that relationship marketing involves establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges. The foregoing constitutes a major paradigm shift from marketing theory and practice. The authors conceptualized relationship marketing and its ten forms, which are: reliability, tangibility, responsiveness, communication, access, courtesy, credibility, competence, security and understanding of customers. The scholars theorized that successful relationship marketing requires relationship commitment and trust. They modeled relationship marketing and trust as crucial mediating variables. They tested this model and compared it with rivals that do not allow relationship commitment and trust to function as mediating variables.

Commitment and trust are noted to be key because they encourage marketers to work at preserving relationship investments by cooperating with exchange partners, resist attractive short-term alternatives in favour of the expected long-term benefits of staying with existing partners, and view potentially high-risk actions as being prudent because of the belief that their partners will not act opportunistically. Therefore, when both commitment and trust, not just one or the other, are present, they produce outcomes that promote efficiency, productivity, and effectiveness. In other words, commitment and trust lead directly to cooperative behaviours that are conducive to relationship marketing success (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Commitment-trust theory fails to address service quality as a component of relationship marketing. It has also fallen short of relating the various components of relationship marketing to customer retention. In other words, it has not explained how relationship marketing influences customer retention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive research design which is useful for solving problems emanating from primary data used for the study with questionnaire as research instrument.
The target populations for this study are selected customers who patronize telecom operators in Keffi metropolis. The study adopted a purposive sampling technique to come up with the required sample since the population was heterogenous. The goal of purposive sampling is to achieve desired representation from various subgroups in the population (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). Subjects are selected in such a way that the existing subgroups in the population are more or less reproduced in the sample. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) advises that to use purposive sampling, one must first decide on the criteria under which the population and hence the sample was divided and then decide on the size of each case in the sample. In this study, however, departments and/or sections already existed hence the first step was already met since each section performs unique tasks and was therefore homogenous within itself but heterogeneous between other sections. The study identified all the sections in each of the firms which formed the different strata before selecting the units from each stratum which were to be included in the sample.

The Smith (1984) formula was used in the determination of the sample size for the study. The estimated population for the study is 558 customers of telecom operators located different location chosen within Keffi metropolis. Smith (1984) sample technique was used to estimate a sample of 126 customers located in Keffi metropolis.

Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection and most of the questions were defined in simple format to arouse respondent interest to read carefully and answer each question to ensure easy completion. They indicate, 5= Strongly agreed = 4 = agreed = 3 = undecided = 2 = disagreed = 1 = strongly disagreed in a 5-point Likert type scale.

Correlation coefficient matrix and ordinary least square (OLS) regression analysis were used to estimate and analyze the data. The correlation coefficient shows the degree or extent to which one variable influences the other. The regression analysis was used to determine the amount of variation on dependent variable explained by the independent variables and it helped to estimate the strength and direction of the relationship between dependent variable and independent variables. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software version 24 and MS excel was used specifically for the purpose of analyzing the quantitative data and presenting it in form of tables.

The justification for the use of OLS regression is because it measures the relationships existing between two or more variables. It is simple to compute without errors and shows a precise quantitative measurement of relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Following the model utilized by Ogundele and Gbadamosi (2006) with major modifications, the brand equity were proxied by brand awareness, brand image and perceived service quality; while the dependent variable which is CRM was proxied by trust, commitment and loyalty. The model specifications here are formulated to tests the three hypotheses and they are as follows:

$$T = \beta_0 + \beta_1 BA + \mu_t ----------1$$

$$C = \beta_0 + \beta_2 BI + \mu_t ----------2$$

$$L = \beta_0 + \beta_3 PQ + \mu_t ----------3$$

Where;

β_0 = the autonomous parameter estimate (Intercept or constant)

β_1 to β_3 = Parameter coefficients of brand awareness, brand image and perceived quality

μ_t = white noise error term

BA = Brand awareness

T = Trust

BI = Brand image

C = Commitment

PQ = Perceived quality

L = Loyalty

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of Correlational Statistics

The results from the correlation analysis were examined and interpreted in-line with the model specified and was thus discussed accordingly.

Table 2: Basic Correlation Matrix Relating to brand awareness, brand image and perceived quality, Trust, commitment and loyalty

Variable	BA	T	BI	C	PQ	L
BA	1					
T	0.77892	1				
BI	0.66552	0.65561	1			
C	0.77651	0.21112	0.63833	1		
PQ	0.55661	0.45511	0.23311	0.83561	1	
L	0.45441	0.34151	0.27661	0.32221	0.82511	1

Source: Authors Computation Using SPSS 24

The results in table 2 indicate that a positive correlation exists between BA and T. This relationship is also found to be strong as indicated by the correlation coefficient value of 0.77892. Furthermore, positive and strong correlation was found to exist between BI and C. This was captured by the correlation coefficient value of 0.63833 among the two variables of interest.
Lastly, the correlation between PQ and L was found to be relatively strong and positive as indicated by the correlation coefficient value of 0.82511.

Among the three correlations of interest based on the model specification, the correlation between perceived quality and loyalty was found to be the strongest, thus showing that brand equity through perceived quality has strong link with CRM via customer loyalty.

Statistical Test of Hypothesis

The level of significance for the study is 5%, for a two-tailed test. The decision rule is that we shall accept the null hypothesis if the critical t-value (±1.96) is greater than the calculated value, otherwise reject the null hypothesis. More so, If the PV is less than 5% or 0.05 (that is PV < 0.05), it implies that the regressor in question is statistically significant at 5% level; otherwise, it is not significant at that level.

Hypotheses One: ***H01: Brand awareness has no significant effect on customer trust***

Table 3: Regression Result on Brand awareness and customer trust

Summary Statistics						
Multiple R	0.8736					
R Square	0.7631					
Adjusted R Square	0.5225					
Standard Error	2.6674					
Durbin-Watson stat	1.9191					
Observations	126					
ANOVA						
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F**	*P-value*	
Regression	1	19041.20	19041.20	8.49	0.00010	
Residual	35	78497.3	2242.78			
Total	36	97538.5				
Regression Output						
	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*L-95%*	*U-95%*
Intercept	1.12321	2.0051	2.2441	0.0242	1.5883	5.4640
Brand awareness	1.41142	0.6478	2.1785	0.0113	1.2230	2.7089

Source: Authors Computation, 2017 (Micro-Excel, 16)

Test of Hypothesis One: H_{01}

From the regression result in table 3, it was observed that the calculated t-value for Brand awareness is 2.17 and whilst the tabulated value is 1.96. Since the t-calculated is greater than the t-tabulated (2.17 > 1.96) it thus falls in the rejection region and hence, we reject the first null hypothesis **($H0_1$)**. The conclusion here is that brand awareness has a significant effect on customer trust in telecom operators.

Also, by examining the overall fit and significance of the customer trust model, it can be observed that the model has a good fit, as indicated by the relatively high value of the *F*-statistic, 12.09 and it is significant at the 5.0 per cent level. That is, the F-statistic value of 0.0012 is less than 0.05 probability levels.

More so, the R^2 (R-square) value of 0.7631 shows that the model does have a good fit too. It indicates that about 76.31 percent of the variation customer trust is explained by Brand awareness, while the remaining 23.69 percent is captured by the error term.

Hypotheses Two: ***H02: Brand image has no significant influence on customer commitment***

Table 4: Regression Result on Brand image and customer commitment

Summary Statistics						
Multiple R	0.7982					
R Square	0.6371					
Adjusted R Square	0.5217					
Standard Error	0.3145					
Durbin-Watson stat	1.8881					
Observations	126					
		ANOVA				
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F**	*P-value*	
Regression	1	1014.545	1014.545	3.141	0.025	
Residual	125	851582.3	2433.78			
Total	126	852596.84				
		Regression Output				
	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*L-95%*	*U-95%*
Intercept	2.21147	0.942592	2.34615	0.0321	2.1542	3.442
Brand image	1.24866	0.627010	1.991451	0.0422	1.3551	2.741

Source: Authors Computation, 2017 (Micro-Excel, 16)

Test of Hypothesis Two: H_{02}

Mores so, from the regression result in table 3 the calculated t-value for Brand image is 2.96 and the critical value is 1.96 under 95% confidence level. Since the t-calculated is greater than the critical value (1.99 > 1.96) it also falls in the rejection region and hence, we reject the second null hypothesis **($H0_2$)**. The conclusion here is that brand image has a significant influence on customer commitment

More so, by examining the overall fit and significance of the customer commitment model, it was found to have a good fit, as indicated by the high *F*-statistic value of 11.33 and it is significant at the 5.0 per cent level. That is, the F-statistic value of 0.0041 is less than 0.05.

The R^2 (R-square) value of 0.6371 shows that the model has a very good impact and fit also. It showed that about 63.71 percent of the variation in **customer commitment** is explained by **Brand**

image, while the remaining 36.29 percentage unaccounted variation is captured by the error term.

Hypotheses Three: ***H03: Perceived quality has no significant impact on customer loyalty***

Table 5: Regression Result on Perceived quality and customer loyalty of telecommunication

Summary Statistics						
Multiple R	0.8955					
R Square	0.8019					
Adjusted R Square	0.7139					
Standard Error	18.448					
Durbin-Watson stat	1.7646					
Observations	126					
		ANOVA				
	df	***SS***	***MS***	***F****	***P-value***	
Regression	1	9449.67	9449.67	6.66	0.0000	
Residual	125	49660.45	1418.87			
Total	126	59110.12				
		Regression Output				
	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*L-95%*	*U-95%*
Intercept	1.155581	0.533474	2.16614	0.00125	1.117343	2.40128
Perceived quality	1.425418	0.633865	2.51877	0.01542	1.362752	3.21122

Source: Authors Computation, 2017 (Micro-Excel, 16)

<u>Test of Hypothesis Three: H_{03}</u>

Finally, from the regression result in Table 5 the calculated t-value for perceived quality is 2.51 and the tabulated value is 1.96. Since the t-calculated is greater than the critical t-value (that is, 2.51 > 1.96) it also falls in the rejection region and hence, we reject the third null hypothesis **($H0_3$)**. The conclusion here is that ***Perceived quality has a significant impact on customer loyalty***

The F-statistics equally showed that the overall result is significant, as indicated by the value of the *F*-statistic, 6.66 and it is significant at the 5.0 per cent level. That is, the F-statistic value of 0.0032 is less than 0.05.

Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R-square), used to measure the goodness of fit of the estimated model, indicates that the model is also reasonably fit in prediction. The R^2 (R-square) value of 0.8019 shows that the Perceived quality has a very good impact on customer loyalty. It indicates that about 80.19 percentage variation in customer loyalty is explained by Perceived quality, while the remaining unaccounted variation of 19.81 percent is captured by the white noise error term.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study revealed that brand awareness has a significant effect on customer trust. Brand awareness has been seen by many researchers to play a vital role in consumer's trust of brand which is in line with our study. In Lin and Chang (2003) study, they found out that brand awareness had the most powerful influence on consumers purchase decision.

In addition, the findings from the study also showed that brand image has a significant influence on customer commitment. In our study, brand image was seen to also have influence on consumer's commitment on a brand. This is in agreement with Kotler et al (1999) who found that brand image captures a set of belief that consumers hold about a particular brand. This belief influencing image may differ from the real attributes. This could be as a result of the customer's individual encounter and possibly the impact of differences in perception, misrepresentation or recognition. In view of this possible difference between image and actuality, telecom operators should bear in mind that building and managing of brand image attributes are long term measures.

Finally, the study revealed that perceived quality has a significant impact on customer loyalty. As Justified by Researchers such as Carman (1990), Parasuraman et al (1985, 1998) perceived quality is said to have a positive effect on customers' choice of brand. Boulding et al (1993) considered service quality as one of the factors leading to purchase intention; a direct effect was obtained in their research. Taylor and Baker (2014) found that perceived quality linked with satisfaction has an effect on consumers purchase intention

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our present study focused on consumers based brand equity and its importance on consumer's perception of customers of telecom operators. Consumer-based brand equity here is assumed to make up of brand awareness, perceived quality, brand image and brand loyalty based on Aaker (1991, 1996) conceptualization.

Conclusively, the empirical results showed that customer based-brand equity has a great importance on customer relationship and the lack of brand equity will weaken consumer's perception. Therefore, there should be a continuous effort by telecom operators to enhance customers based- brand equity. They should bear in mind that old familiar brand dies, as a result of poor management of brand, overextension and lack of investment in developing brand equity and values. Another notable conclusion that may be deduced from our study is that brands with high brand equity have the tendency of having more perceived qualities

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

i. According to the results of the study, it was found that brand equity has a positive and significant impact on the satisfaction of insurance's customer. Therefore, the study suggests to the directors of the telecom operators to attempt in identifying the important values in telecom services from the customer's perspective and try to be a pioneer on providing the more desirable services.

ii. From our findings, we therefore recommend that telecom operators should focus most of its advertisement strength at increasing customer's awareness of their brand, so that customers can consider their brand in their choice of alternative. Therefore, brand awareness should be strongly considered by telecom operators when trying to build brand equity from customer's point of view. In other words, top of mind advertising is another very important method for telecom operators, to encourage consumers in making their purchase choice based only on advertising. Although many and consecutive promotional activities through mass media is very popular in telecom industry, besides that, other more advanced and creative ways of reaching out to customers and improving a firms brand awareness exist. For example, support activities and charity involvement in cultural, sports, social and other kinds of public events.

iii. Apart from good quality product and services such as offering efficient service accurately and good network quality, good sound system, neat appearance of staffs, convenient operating hours, good customer service etc should be a major priority of telecom operators. As these are good for the business and enhances the brand.

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