

Service Provider Empathy and Responsiveness for Customer Satisfaction in the Telecommunications Sector

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Abstract

Customer satisfaction remains one of the crucial determinants of customer patronage and eventual organizational performance. Exploring service provider empathy and responsiveness for customer satisfaction in the telecommunications sector was the main thrust of this paper. The effects of empathy and responsiveness as dimensions of service quality were examined to establish their effect (if any) on satisfaction of mobile network users in the three major senatorial districts in Edo state. Appropriate research questions in alignment with the objectives of the study were raised, coupled with corresponding hypotheses which were tested to conduct the study. The study employed cross sectional research design executed through a survey using a total of 400 respondents as sample derived from a population of 7.1 million subscribers using the Krecjie and Morgan table for sample size determination. Data was obtained through a well- structured instrument designed in a five form Likert scale. The instrument was established to be reliable by using Cronbach alpha test. The obtained alpha values were over 0.7 for all constructs of the variables studied, indicating a high degree of items consistency. We analyzed the data using regression analysis for hypotheses testing. The results show significant effect of service provider responsiveness and service provider empathy on customer satisfaction. From the findings of the study, it is recommended that the telecommunication companies should boost customer satisfaction.

Keywords: customer satisfaction, service quality, responsiveness, empathy

1.0. Introduction

The telecommunications industry in Africa has experienced rapid growth occasioned by increasing mobile phone access and the expansion of internet services. The sector however, faces significant challenges related to service quality, infrastructure deficits, regulatory issues, and economic constraints all of which impede the delivery of high-quality telecom services (ATU, 2019). This has resulted in service failures which often spark customers' anger, hence the need for service recovery to assure customer satisfaction. It remains a key activity in actualizing customer satisfaction which occurs when a service provider

addresses service failure (Mir, Ashraf, Abbas, Sial, & Nawaz, 2023). It is a crucial aspect of customer relationship management as it can restore customer trust and loyalty, while poor recovery can exacerbate dissatisfaction and lead to negative word-of-mouth (Johnston & Michel, 2008; Mir et al., 2023).

The African Telecommunications Union (ATU) highlights that the telecom operators in Africa struggle with maintaining consistent service quality, which adversely affects the satisfaction levels of customers (ATU, 2019). This situation is further worsened by poor service recovery which could have remedied the situation. Literature identifies empathy and responsiveness as two vital components for service recovery and effective clients' services management. Empathy describes the organization's capacity to comprehend and share the customer's feelings, creating a sense of care and concern during the resolution process, while responsiveness on the other hand, involves the timeliness and adequacy of the organization's efforts to address the customers grievance or concerns (Liao, 2007; Ahmed, Vveinhardt, Warraich, Hasan, & Baloch; 2020). Despite the recognized importance of these factors, there is growing concern as some service providers fail to adequately demonstrate empathy and responsiveness as vital components of service quality, service recovery, and customer satisfaction which are also useful for developing a positive image for the organization through long-term quality services and proper handling of customer complaints (Smith, Bolton, & Wagner, 1999; Ahmed, *et al.* 2020).

Nigeria, being one of Africa's largest economies, has witnessed substantial growth in its telecom sector. With a subscriber base of over 200 million, the telecommunications sectoral contribution is fundamental to the country's economic and social development. Nigerian telecom operators however are faced with significant challenges in delivering exceptional services that satisfy or exceed customer expectations. With four foremost organizations in the Nigerian telecommunications sector, and attendant intense competition, it is strategic and necessary to investigate customer opinions on the services they receive as it would guide management decisions in channeling resources and actions towards meeting and exceeding customers' expectations to improve corporate competitiveness (Kushwah & Bhargav, 2014). It is imperative therefore that with the fierceness and intensity of competitive rivalry, telecommunications businesses are to provide high-quality services to attract and retain customers and for establishing long term mutually satisfying and beneficial relationships that will

emanate from customer satisfaction (Karunaratna, 2014; Alhkami & Alarussi, 2016).

Essentially, customer satisfaction describes an appraisal of the degree to which the product or service offerings of an organization meets or surpasses the expectations of their clients. Thirunavukkarasu and Nedunchezian (2019) posit that customer satisfaction is a fundamental performance criterion for the growth and survival of corporate entities as satisfied customers would offer favorable statement of recommendations and act as brand ambassadors for the organization. The experiences of several Nigerian customers however are a far cry from their expectations as the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) has received a plethora of complaints regarding poor customer service indicating a huge disparity between expectations of the customers and the quality of services received (NCC, 2021). The study therefore investigated the link between empathy and responsiveness as service quality dimensions valuable to customers and what the telecoms service providers have offered by exploring its influence on customer satisfaction in the post-corona virus era. This is especially vital as human needs changed owing to the diverse developments across sectors and across the globe in the post Covid era. According to Wongsunopparat and Yang (2021) the corona virus pandemic altered several human practices and introduced significant changes in patterns of human actions and lifestyle. Vast majority of humans across the globe were unable to leave their homes during the pandemic and resorted to alternative ways of getting things done (Allain-Dupré, Chatry, Michalun & Moisiu, 2020; Kuboye, 2021).

With the corona virus challenge, the Nigerian society adopted the new mobile and their associated telecommunication services as an alternative to physical interaction during the lockdown. This study evaluated customer's experiences with the qualitative excellence of new mobile services that Nigerian customers were getting just coming out of the Covid era. Specifically, the objectives of this study were to evaluate the effect of service provider empathy and service provider responsiveness on customer satisfaction in the telecommunications sector. In line with the objectives the following hypotheses formulated in null form were examined:

H₀₁: there is no significant effect of empathy on customer satisfaction of mobile telecoms users in the post Covid era.

H₀₂: there is no significant effect of responsiveness on customer satisfaction of mobile telecoms users in the post Covid era.

The study contributes to the existing body of literature particularly by exploring and describing the effect of service provider empathy and responsiveness on customer satisfaction in the telecoms sector in Nigeria in the post corona virus era. Additionally, the study offers useful contributions to regulatory authorities like the National Communications Commission (NCC) in the area of policy direction by formulation of policies that adequately caters for the service provider interests as well as the customers interests. The study will particularly assist management of the telecoms organizations in their efforts to further address issues / challenges relating to service provider empathy and responsiveness in the sector thereby leading to better service quality, enhance customers' confidence, improve competitiveness and ensure better performance in the telecoms sector.

With the above being the introduction, the remainder of the paper is structured into the literature review, research methods, results and discussion and finally conclusion and recommendations.

2.0. Literature Review

2.1.1. Concept of customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a feeling of pleasure or disappointment experienced by a person after comparing the perceived performance or outcome of a product with expectations (Nassè, 2022). It is the feeling of fulfillment upon the consumption of a product or a service and stems from the post-purchase evaluation where a product or service meets or exceeds customer expectations, resulting in satisfaction, or falls short, leading to dissatisfaction (Nassè, 2024). It is the emotional response - whether positive or negative - that customers feel after using a product or service, based on how well the product meets or surpasses their expectations. It occurs after a customer compares the actual performance of a product to their anticipated expectations. Satisfaction arises when the product fulfills or exceeds expectations, while dissatisfaction results when the product fails to meet their expectations. This post-purchase evaluation reflects the perceived value and can significantly influence future buying decisions and loyalty (Nassè, 2022; Setiono & Hidayat, 2022).

Essentially, customer satisfaction is beyond a mere immediate emotional reaction as it plays a crucial role in shaping customer loyalty, word-of-mouth

referrals, and the overall brand image. The comparison between **perceived performance** (how well the product or service actually performs) and **expected performance** (the standard set by the customer before purchase) is key to determining satisfaction levels. In highly competitive markets, businesses strive to exceed customer expectations to create **high satisfaction**, often using metrics like surveys or feedback to gauge performance and make necessary improvements. Moreover, **disconfirmation theory** supports this idea by explaining that when performance exceeds expectations, positive disconfirmation occurs, resulting in high satisfaction. On the other hand, when performance falls short, negative disconfirmation arises, leading to disappointment or dissatisfaction. Therefore, organizations continually aim to bridge the gap between customer expectations and actual service delivery to foster higher satisfaction and retention.

2.1.2. Service quality

Service quality can be described as the customer's perception of and response to a provided service, reflecting how well the service meets or surpasses their expectations. It represents the customer's opinion and evaluation of the service they receive, serving as an overall measure of how effectively a service aligns with or exceeds what the customer anticipates and is the preset level of quality prescription organizations have set for their products/ service offerings. It is a critical aspect of customer satisfaction and business success (Czepiel, 1990; Zeithaml, & Parasuraman, 2004; Eshghi, Roy & Ganguli, 2008). It is a measure of disparity in the customer's perceptions compared with their expectations and fundamentally examines extent of conformance to customers' expectations implying that upon consumption customers would make judgments of service they have received.

Corporate entities regardless of sector strive to satisfy and exceed customer expectations for repeat patronage, customer retention, loyalty, profitability and eventual corporate sustainability (Nunkoo, Teeroovengadum, Ringle & Sunnassee, 2019). The satisfaction of customers therefore remains a priority for industries, more especially with increasing competitiveness across firms. Research has indicated that service quality is a crucial factor influencing customer satisfaction (Farooq, Salam, Fayolle, Jaafar & Ayupp, 2018; Nunkoo, et. al., 2019), hence its imperatives in these times. In Malaysia, while exploring the service quality and customer satisfaction connection, Loke, Taiwo, Salim, Downe, and Petronas, (2011) affirmed through their research result that over 80 percent of customer satisfaction were predicted by Parasuramans' et. al, (1985) five

dimensions of quality with reliability, responsiveness and empathy displaying the most levels of effect on customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2.1.3. Empathy

Empathy concerns with the care of service providers to customers so that they can give personal attention to customers. Bove (2019) aver that empathy is a core characteristic of helping and caring interactions and thus is fundamental to service. The value of empathy is immense as it leads to improved service quality perceptions and successful sales outcomes. The attributes of this dimension are: giving individual attention to customers, employees treating customers with great care, seriously prioritizing customer interests, employees understanding customer needs and comfortable operating hours. Essentially empathy is about treating the customers as individuals as each customer is distinct, specific and peculiar, and as such their needs must be understood. Customers want to feel important and they want to be understood by the companies providing them with a specific service. Khan and Fasih (2014) described empathy as the ability of the service providers to understand and share the feelings of their customers, providing personalized attention and care. It is a crucial dimension of service quality that focuses on the human element of customer service. It involves providing individualized attention, personalized service, empathetic care, accessibility, respect, and courtesy. It also includes addressing each customer's unique problems and needs to achieve effective resolution (Kaura et al., 2012).

Al-Marri et al. (2007) submitted that customer satisfaction significantly depends on the empathy dimension in services management and empathy serves as a useful strategic tool for competitiveness. A plethora of the service-related literature on empathy is in health care, more especially because empathy is a key skill for professional helpers and care givers such as nurses, counselors, therapists and physicians in the healthcare sector (Ye, Dong, & Lee, 2017).

From the works of Barlińska, Szuster, and Winiewski, (2018); Fernández-Abascal, and Martín-Díaz, (2019), empathy includes dimensions such as:

1. **Affective/Emotional Empathy:** This is the capacity of the organization to recognize and share the emotions of the customer. This dimension involves understanding the customer's feelings of frustration, disappointment, or anger due to a service failure, and responding in a way that acknowledges these emotions.

2. **Cognitive Empathy:** This is the ability of the organization to understand the clients' perspective, thoughts, and concerns. Cognitive empathy involves putting oneself in the customer's shoes to comprehend the situation from their viewpoint, which helps in offering a more personalized and relevant solution.
3. **Behavioral Empathy:** The actions taken by the service provider to demonstrate that they care about the customer's experience. This includes spoken and non-verbal cues like voice tone, active listening, and bodily language, which convey concern and attentiveness.
4. **Empathic Concern:** The genuine care and concern that a service provider shows towards the customer's situation. This dimension goes beyond understanding and involves a proactive desire to alleviate the customer's distress and resolve the issue effectively.

2.1.4. Responsiveness

Responsiveness is a service quality dimension related to the willingness of service providers to help customers and provide services quickly. The attributes of this dimension are: informing customers about the certainty of the delivery time of services, willingness to help customers and readiness to respond to customer requests (Pakurár, Haddad, Nagy, Popp, & Oláh, 2019). Other aspects are promptness in addressing customer requests, availability and accessibility to help, flexibility and adaptation to helping meeting customer needs, communication with customers for updates, attentiveness, genuine interests, etc. By being responsive, organizations build trust, and foster long-term customer relationships. A firm is known to be responsive to customers when it communicates to its customers the duration of time it will take to get answers or to have their problems solved (Pakurár, et. al, 2019). It is therefore important for telecom providers to improve on the responsiveness dimension in their service quality delivery to customers. Some components of responsiveness would include service provider's promptness, timeliness, and adequacy of response, communication, pro-activity, initiative, flexibility and effectiveness in addressing the customer's issues. Flexibility in responsiveness demonstrates that the service provider is committed to finding a solution that works best for the customer, even if it requires going beyond the usual protocols.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

According to Chinda (2019), there are several theories and models for service quality and customer satisfaction. Some of these theories include the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (1977): the Attribution Theory (1980): The Satisfaction-

Value-Expectation Theory (1995): the Emotional Experience Theory (2000) etc. Some popular models include the SERVQUAL model, the SERVPERF model, and the Gronroos service quality model. This study is hinged on the **Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory and the SERVQUAL model**.

2.2.1. The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory

The **Expectancy-Disconfirmation Theory (1977)** was developed by Richard L. Oliver, and is one of the foundational theories in understanding customer satisfaction. According to this theory, customer satisfaction is determined by the comparison between a customer's expectations of a product or service and their actual experience with it. This comparison can result in three possible outcomes: positive disconfirmation, confirmation, or negative disconfirmation, each of which influences the customer's level of satisfaction. The key components of the theory are customer expectations, performance perception, disconfirmation and the satisfaction and disconfirmation relationship.

The customer expectations are the beliefs or assumptions customers hold about a product or service before experiencing it. These expectations are shaped by factors such as previous experiences, marketing, word of mouth, and personal needs. Expectations set a reference point for evaluating the actual experience. High expectations create a high standard that is challenging to meet, whereas low expectations are easier to meet or exceed, often leading to greater satisfaction. The performance perception refers to the customer's perception of the product or service's actual performance after consumption. Performance perception is subjective and can vary widely among customers based on personal standards, context, and experience. The customer evaluates whether the product or service met, exceeded, or fell short of their expectations based on how it performed. Disconfirmation occurs when there is a gap between customer expectations and the perceived performance of the product or service (Oliver 1977, Evangelidis, & Van Osselaer, 2018; Lin, Wei, & Lekhawipat, 2018). There are three types of disconfirmation:

- i. **Positive Disconfirmation:** When the actual performance exceeds expectations, leading to high satisfaction.
- ii. **Confirmation:** When the actual performance meets expectations, generally resulting in a neutral or moderate level of satisfaction.
- iii. **Negative Disconfirmation:** When actual performance falls short of expectations, leading to dissatisfaction.

Satisfaction or dissatisfaction arises from this disconfirmation process. If a customer experiences positive disconfirmation, they feel delighted, leading to loyalty and positive word of mouth. Conversely, negative disconfirmation often leads to disappointment, potential complaints, and sometimes a refusal to repurchase. Also, by accurately setting and communicating expectations through marketing, organizations can reduce the likelihood of negative disconfirmation and increase overall satisfaction. The theory also highlights the importance of "under-promising and over-delivering" to achieve positive disconfirmation and maximize customer satisfaction (Oliver 1977, Evangelidis, & Van Osselaer, 2018; Lin, Wei, & Lekhawipat, 2018).

Summarily put, the theory holds that customer satisfaction is a function of the relationship between expectations and actual experiences. Managing this relationship effectively can help companies build stronger, more positive relationships with their customers. This theory forms the basis for many customer satisfaction models, as it captures the importance of managing and meeting customer expectations by offering products or services of exceptional quality.

2.2.2. The SERVQUAL Model

The SERVQUAL model is a widely used tool for measuring service quality. Developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in the 1980s, the model identifies five key dimensions of service quality that are essential for delivering high-quality service. The five dimensions of the SERVQUAL model are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Parasuraman *et al.* 1985). The SERVQUAL model assesses service quality by comparing customer expectations with their perceptions of the actual service received. The gap analysis helps organizations identify areas where service improvements are needed. By using the SERVQUAL model, organizations can gain valuable insights into how well they are meeting customer expectations and aspects needing improvements to enhance overall service quality.

2.3. Review Related Empirical Literature

Arslan, Iftikhar, and Zaman, (2015) in Pakistan studied the service quality and customer satisfaction and established that service quality positively influenced both perceived value and customer satisfaction. Similar results were established from the study of Alabar, Ode, and Gbande, (2017) wherein they established that service quality influenced customer satisfaction amongst mobile phone users in Nigeria. Similarly, using structural equation modeling, the study by Ali, Dey and

Filieri (2015) using Pakistan International Airlines affirmed that all five service quality dimensions i.e. airline tangibles, terminal tangibles, personnel, empathy, and image all influenced customer satisfaction. Similarly, the study by Abubakar (2016) in Nigeria report effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in the Nigeria telecoms sector. The study used simple percentages and the Minnesota Customer Satisfaction Model (MnCSI) scale. The study reports that service quality delivery in the telecommunication industry in Nigeria was below expectations.

The link between Empathy and Customer Satisfaction

Kuo, Wu, and Deng, (2009) examined the relationship between service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and post-purchase intention in mobile value - added services in Taiwan, in their study. Using structural equation modeling and multiple regression analysis, significant relationship was established as existing between customer satisfaction and service quality dimensions of empathy and reliability. Similar results were reported by the study of Khan, and Fasih, (2014) in Pakistan, Nguyen, Pham, Tran, and Pham, (2020) in Vietnam and the research by Setiono, and Hidayat, (2022) all affirm that empathy has effects on customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, in a Sri Lankan study, Balinado, Prasetyo, Young, Persada, Miraja, and Perwira Redi (2021) investigated service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction and the results reveal empathy and reliability had significant relationship with customer satisfaction. Wang, and Lo, (2002) in China from their study on service quality, customer satisfaction, customer value, and behaviour intentions, using structural equation technique established that network quality and empathy were fundamental drivers of service quality, while tangibles, assurance and reliability were secondary. Scholars like Karatepe (2011); Ganguli and Roy (2011); Khan and Fasih (2014) also report that empathy from the organization produces an emotional connection in the customers leading to continued business dealings. In the view of the above, this study hypothesizes that:

H₁: There is a significant effect of empathy on customer satisfaction in the telecoms sector in the post Covid era.

The link between Responsiveness and Customer Satisfaction

In the study by Ye, Dong, and Lee (2017) on relationship between marketing, customer retention and satisfaction in the banking industry: the researchers

investigated how factors like bonding, responsiveness, and communication directly and indirectly affect customer retention through customer satisfaction. Part of the key findings were that bonding, communication, and responsiveness significantly affected customer satisfaction and then customer satisfaction directly influences customer retention, while bonding and responsiveness indirectly impact customer retention through customer satisfaction. The study highlights and emphasizes the role of bonding, responsiveness, and communication in driving customer satisfaction and retention. The implications from the study were that managers can retain customers by responding promptly to their needs and communicating effectively. The study by Balinado, Prasetyo, Young, Persada, Miraja, and Perwira Redi (2021) on service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction report results indicating responsiveness did not show any significant links with customer satisfaction. Dharmadasa, and Gunawardane, (2017) in Philippines examined service quality and customer satisfaction and report the existence of a statistically significant positive link between customer satisfaction and other variables; while responsiveness, technical quality and assurance did not show such effect on customer satisfaction. While some studies have reported results showing that responsiveness like the other dimensions of service quality have effects on service quality, studies by scholars like Dharmadasa and Gunawardane, (2017), Balinado *et al.*, (2021) have reported otherwise. These somewhat conflicting results beckon for scholarly attention. In the view of the above this study hypothesizes that:

H₂: there is a significant effect of responsiveness on customer satisfaction in the post covid era.

Gaps in Empirical Review

From the empirical review conducted there are evident gaps in knowledge. Some of these include methodological gap such as Abubakar (2016) who used only simple percentages; geographical gap as most of the reviewed works are of foreign origins; there is also the challenge of differing findings and inconsistent results as reported by the different studies. It was also observed that even some of the works done in Nigeria such as Alabar *et al.* (2017); Onigbinde *et al.* (2014); Olu (2010); Abubakar (2016) were not conducted in Edo State; Also, none of the studies were conducted after the Covid-19 pandemic. This work therefore is unique as it will fill these evident gaps observed from past studies.

3.0. Methodology

3.1. Research design and population of the study.

The study employed a cross sectional research design executed through a survey. The data were collected from primary source by the distribution and retrieval of copies of a well-developed questionnaire. The population of the study comprised of subscribers of the four major GSM service providers in Edo State amounting to 7.1 million customers as of the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2020 (Nairametrics, 2021).

3.2. Sample size determination

A sample size of 400 respondents was used for this study. This value is made up of 384 obtained from Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for sample size determination coupled with an additional 16 copies of the questionnaire added to the sample size intended to cater for possible attrition that may arise in the course of the investigation.

3.3. Sampling technique

The sampling technique employed in this study is the multi-stage sampling technique. It entailed stratified sampling, purposive sampling, and convenience sampling techniques. The first stage was the stratified sampling technique which describes the senatorial districts as carved out by the national government to demarcate the geographical population of the state. The second stage involved purposive sampling which was based on the researchers' choice in selecting the network providers used in the study. Four service providers viz: MTN, GLO, AIRTEL and 9-Mobile were selected for the study using criteria such as longevity in operations for over 10 years, had full statewide network coverage across the three senatorial districts and had a large customer base. Other network service providers were not included as they did not satisfy these criteria. The final stage entailed using a convenience sampling to reach the customers of the selected network service providers in the three senatorial districts. Furthermore, the sample was proportionately allocated and distributed across the different network providers using proportional allocation formula to assure adequate representation of the entire population.

3.4. Source of data and instrument for data collection

The study used primary data collected through a well - structured questionnaire developed by the researchers and personally administered to the members of staff of Benson Idahosa University. The instrument of the study was prepared with Likert scale statements to gauge the respondents' opinion on the subject matter.

3.5. Validity and reliability of research instrument

The validity of the instrument was ascertained using face and content validation techniques while the reliability of the study was assured using the cronbach alpha test which gave values above 0.7 for all the variables under study. The instrument was therefore considered reliable as all the variables had values above 0.7 as stipulated by Nunnally (1978) indicating high degree items consistency and therefore acceptable for the research. The process of ascertaining the reliability of the instrument was executed by the conduct of a pilot study using 25 respondents not included in the sample. The reliability values of all variables are here presented.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha values

Variable	No. of items	alpha value
Customer Satisfaction	7	0.82
Responsiveness	4	0.75
Empathy	5	0.72

Source: Author Field work

Questionnaire Administration

Using 400 copies of the instrument, respondents' opinion were elicited on the subject matter by the researchers and two research assistants, to the users of MTN, GLO, 9-MOBILE and AIRTEL mobile networks across three (3) metropolitan cities across the state.

Method of Data Analysis

Upon retrieval of the questionnaires, multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the hypothesized relationships between the dependent and the independent variables. The choice of multiple regression is because it indicates the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

The following model was formulated in the study.

$$CS = f(\text{RESP} + \text{EMPY})$$

$$CS = a_0 + a_1\text{RESP} + a_2\text{EMPY} + \epsilon t$$

CS = customer satisfaction

RESP = responsiveness

EMPY= empathy

Our decision is based on the calculated p-value and at 5% level of significance. We uphold the null hypotheses where the calculated p-value is greater than the level of significance, while it is rejected if the calculated p-value is less than the level of significance used.

4.0. Results and Discussions

The data passed the various diagnostics tests such as normality, homoscedasticity, outliers and multicollinearity; predictors in the regression model have VIFs less than 10 and tolerance scores above 0.2. 5% level of significance was adopted and with SPSS V25 utilized with regression analysis for hypotheses testing.

Table 2. Regression Analysis

	B	Std. Error	t-Stat	Sig.(P-Value)	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-0.224	0.157	-1.428	0.154		
RESP	0.142	0.051	2.750	0.006	0.425	2.355
EMPY	0.400	0.063	6.401	0.000	0.409	2.447

F-Stat = 104.841 P-value = 0.000
R = 0.761 R² = 0.578 Adjusted R² = 0.573

Source: Researcher's fieldwork

Interpretation of Result

Model suitability was assessed and it passed the test of significance (F = 104.841, p < .000), showing the model utilized as well fitting for the data. The results of the regression indicated the predictors; responsiveness (RESP) and empathy (EMPY) explained 57.8% (R² = 0.578) of the variance of customer satisfaction. Both predictors significantly predicted customer satisfaction. Specifically, responsiveness ($\beta = 0.142$, p = .006), and empathy ($\beta = 0.400$, p = .000). Consequently, the alternate hypotheses are upheld and the study concludes that responsiveness and empathy have significant effects on customer satisfaction.

Discussion of Findings

Service provider empathy and responsiveness on customer satisfaction were investigated using two hypotheses. The results show that both hypotheses positively and significantly affected customer satisfaction. More specifically concerning hypothesis the study established that responsiveness has a positive and

significant effect ($\beta=0.140$, $t = 2.750$, $p = 0.006$) on customer satisfaction and agrees with the outcome from previous studies such as Kumar *et al.* (2019) that the responsiveness dimension has significant effects on customer's satisfaction. Also the research by Mengste, Teshome, Belete, Gizaw, and Mulugeta, (2020) support the findings of this study wherein they revealed that responsiveness as a dimension considerably and adequately accounted for variations in customer satisfaction. The study by Shams, Rehman, Samad, and Rather, (2020) on the magnitude of service failure and responsiveness to complaint handling effect on satisfaction and brand credibility in the banking industry further affirm the finding of this study and report that timely responsiveness in complaint handling positively affects customer satisfaction and positively influences brand credibility and overall satisfaction. They suggest use of customer management systems and processes that support high level responsiveness.

With respect to hypothesis two, the result show that empathy had positive and significant effect ($\beta=0.333$, $t=6.401$, $p= 0.000$) on customer satisfaction and agrees with the outcome from previous studies such as Arslan *et al.* (2015); and Nguyen, Pham, Dung and Pham (2020) who studied these variables using commercial banks in Hanoi City, Vietnam. Their results support the findings of this study. Furthermore, Fida, Al-Balushi and Singh (2020) reported similar results from their study using four prominent Islamic banks in Oman and affirm that the empathy dimension demonstrates noteworthy influence on customer satisfaction. Also, the results of this study is further supported by a related finding in the study by Pakurár, Haddad, Nagy, Popp, and Oláh (2019) on service quality dimensions that affect customer satisfaction in the Jordanian banking sector, wherein they affirm from their study that empathy positively influenced customer satisfaction in the Jordanian banking sector.

5.0. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on findings from the analyzed data, there is a clear connection between service provider empathy and responsiveness with customer satisfaction. Both components of service quality show a considerable effect on customer satisfaction. The findings also reveal that the empathy component had a greater effect on customer satisfaction among mobile phone users in Edo State. The study also helped to further validate empathy and responsiveness as vital components of the SERVQUAL model and useful in the appraisal of service quality. The study makes the following recommendations:

1. Telecommunication network providers should continue to demonstrate empathy in their service delivery to customers. Effort must be made to understand customer uniqueness and needs. Telecom network providers must continue to educate and monitor their employees to ensure that they are empathic in dealings with customers.
2. Service providers should be responsive and prompt in resolving customer requests, questions, complaints and problems. They should endeavour to minimize the length of customer waiting time. Employees are to deliver prompt services to customers.
3. Improvement in quality service delivery should be supported by a robust and durable information technology advancement that can improve organizational responsiveness and focus on the issues of responsiveness, and empathy to increase satisfaction levels among their customers.

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