

Effect of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction in Burundian Telecommunication Companies: A Case of Econet Wireless Burundi

Bonaventure Bibonimana

Faculty of Management Business Administration, Texila American University, Guyana

Abstract

The study set out to examine the effect of service quality aspects on customer satisfaction in Burundi telecommunication industry with reference to Econet wireless Burundi. The study was based on various specific objectives namely to: determine the relationship between Assurance and Customer satisfaction; evaluate the relationship between Responsiveness and Customer satisfaction; assess the relationship between Reliability and Customer satisfaction; examine the relationship between Empathy and Customer satisfaction; ascertain the relationship between Network Quality and Customer satisfaction; and investigate the effect of assurance, responsiveness, reliability, empathy, and network quality on customer satisfaction. Methodologically, the study used descriptive and correlational research design and opted for quantitative approach. The study population of 5,142 subscribers that gave the sample size of 130 determined using Roscoe's Rule of Thumb was used. Simple random sampling technique was used to select customers to be participated in the study. Both primary source and secondary source of data were used. The study employed survey method and self-administered questionnaire as data collection tool. The collected data was processed and analysed using SPSS version 25.0 whereby descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation were used to evaluate the relationship between study variables, the nature, the degree, and the direction of that relationship. The regression analysis was employed also to compute the effect of Service quality aspects on customer satisfaction and draw conclusion and recommendations.

Keywords: *Customer, Satisfaction and Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality.*

Introduction

Problem Statement

Customer satisfaction is key to any organization's success means that this success is directly associated with the demands of the customer [1]. The success factor in telecommunication companies is more complex in a competitive market; this is because service providers are expected to compete on both price and quality of services in order to meet the consumers' expectation which is change from time to time [2].

In Econet wireless Burundi, customers are dissatisfied due the poor services given. Many Econet subscribers are complaining about

losing data they are so sure they didn't use. Now the issue of disappearing data has caught the public's attention. According to Chaparadza [3], the issue of disappearing data is not unique to Burundi, even Zimbabwe, and South Africa customers made so much noise complaining about it. Although, Econet introduced a self-help portal which they say it helps users track down their data, it looks like the portal is not helping at all. Also, customers complain about putting data and not working until it expires.

This affected the company as some customers shifted to competitors. In 2018, the number of its subscribers reached 3 million and decreased to 2.6million in 2019. This study

therefore intended to establish the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction in the telecommunication industry of Burundi taking Econet Wireless Burundi as a case of this study. The service quality was measured based on its dimensions namely responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, and network quality.

Methodology

In this study the descriptive and correlational were used. A descriptive study describes things as they exist. It is used to identify and obtain information on characteristic of a particular issue like community, group or people. In other words, this type of research describes social events, social structure, social situations, etc [4]. A correlational research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. A correlation reflects the strength and/or direction of the relationship between two (or more) variables. The direction of a correlation can be either positive or negative [5].

Research Approaches

Qualitative research aims to collect primary, first-hand, textual data and analyse it using specific interpretive methods. It is a useful method in studying a phenomenon with limited accessible information as its nature is exploratory [6]. This study opted for quantitative approach. Quantitative research approach is the method of employing numerical values derived from observations to explain and describe the phenomena that the observations can reflect on them. This method employs both empirical statements, as descriptive statements about the meaning of the cases in real words not about the ought of the cases, and methods. It also applies the empirical evaluations intending to determine to which degree a norm or standard is fulfilled in a particular policy or program. Finally, the collected numerical data is analysed using mathematical methods [7].

Study Population

Research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a research. It is for the benefit of the population that research is done [8]. Polit and Hungler [9] refer to the population as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. In this study the population consisted of 5,142 customers from companies that have contract with Econet and Econet Mobile Money Agents (EcoCash) in Bujumbura.

Sampling Procedures

Sampling is a method of getting information from a certain category of the population, it's a technique of selecting individual members or a subset of the population to make statistical inferences from them and estimate the characteristics of the whole population [6]. There are several different sampling methods available, and they can be subdivided into two groups: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. This study employed probability sampling as all the respondents have the chance to be part of this study.

Sampling Methods

This study used simple random sampling to select customers. According to Crocker [6], simple random sampling is a procedure in which all the individuals in the defined population have an equal and independent chance of being selected as a member of the sample.

Sample Size

Sample size refers to the number of participants or observations included in a study. This number is usually represented by n . The sample size is defined as the number of observations used for determining the estimations of a given population [10]. This study used 130 customers of Econet. This sample size is enough as it more than 30

customers and less than 500 customers. This was supported by Roscoe's Rule of Thumb. Roscoe [11] suggested that a sample size greater than 30 and less than 500 is suitable for most behavioural studies. This compares with Sekaran and Bougie [12] that a sample size larger than 500 may lead to a type II error.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation is some aspect of the study that the researcher knows may negatively affect the results or generalizability of the results, but over which he/she probably has no control [13]. Thus, limitations may occur because of policies of an organization whereby information may be made available to professionals in the field but not students in training. Also, limitations may be time frame within which the study was focused, budget, transport, restricted access to equipment, manpower constraints or any other shortcomings [14]. The following were the limitations in this study:

1. Some respondents were busy to fill the questionnaire within a given time. It was mitigated by visiting them several time to

see who is not busy to work with and respect their appointments, as the appointment was asked by researcher.

2. The questionnaire that is in English was translated in French and Kirundi in order to help respondents to really understand the questions asked.

Discussion of Findings

The Response Rates

The study sought a sample size of 130 respondents and consequently issued the same number of questionnaires. However, 126 questionnaires of the total number issued were returned as fully answered and complete. This represents a percentage response rate of 96.9%. [15] as submit that a response rate of at least 60% from paper-based questionnaires is deemed a representative of the sample under the study.

The table 1 shows the expected number of respondents, actual number of respondents and questionnaires returned.

Table 1. Response Rate

	Number of Respondents	Percentage Rate
Expected number of respondents	130	100%
Actual number of respondents	126	96.9%
Questionnaires not returned	4	3.1%

Source: Primary Data 2023

Experience of the Respondents in Econet Wireless Burundi

The length of experience in the organization was considered as a variable in this study since

the researcher wanted to find out how long the respondents have been served in the organization. The findings were tabulated in the table 2.

Table 2. Experience of the Respondents' Distribution

Experience					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 1Year	20	15.9	15.9	15.9
	1-3Years	55	43.7	43.7	59.5

	4-6Years	27	21.4	21.4	81.0
	7-9Years	16	12.7	12.7	93.7
	10Years and plus	8	6.3	6.3	100.0
	Total	126	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary data computed (2023)

On assessment of experience of the respondents in the organization, results from the above table revealed that the majority of the respondents have been served by the organization for a period of 1 to 3 years with the statistical representation of 43.7%; followed by those who have been served for between 4 to 6 years with 21.4%; 15.9% have been served for a period of less than 1 year; 6.3% of respondents have been served for 10 years. This shows that the majority of the respondents had an experience of between 1-3 years with a statistical representation of 43.7%.

Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables in Econet Wireless Burundi

Service Quality in Econet Wireless Burundi

The descriptive statistics of Service quality was computed based on the aspects such as responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, and network quality. Findings were presented below using Likert scale (1932): Very Low level (1.00-1.79); Low level (1.80-2.59); Moderate (2.60-3.39); High level (3.40-4.19); very High level (4.20-5.00).

The results in the table above indicate that the average Mean value of responsiveness is 2.7, which means that there is a moderate level of responsiveness in Econet wireless Burundi; the average Mean of reliability is 2.45 which implies that there is a low level of reliability; the average Mean of assurance is 2.01, which means that there is a low level of assurance in Econet wireless Burundi; the average Mean of empathy is 2.55, which means that there is a low level of empathy in the organization; and the average Mean of Network quality is 2.068, which means a low level of network quality in Econet wireless Burundi. The pooled average

Mean of Service Quality is 2.354, which means that there is a low level of Service quality in Econet Wireless Burundi. According to Schneider et al [16] good service quality leads into customer satisfaction and, therefore, makes the firms more competitive in the market. High service quality can be achieved by identifying problems in service and defining measures for service performances and outcomes as well as level of customer satisfaction [17]. With Jarvenpaa [18], service delivery organizations can gain a successful competitive edge over competitors through good service quality. However, a good administration that focuses on well trained staff, valuable program offering and its influence on customers, are also components of quality dimensions.

Customer Satisfaction in Econet Wireless Burundi

The descriptive statistics of Customer satisfaction was computed based on the aspects such as word-of-mouth communication, repurchase, and customer loyalty. Findings were presented below using Likert scale (1932): Very Low level (1.00-1.79); Low level (1.80-2.59); Moderate (2.60-3.39); High level (3.40-4.19); very High level (4.20-5.00). Details of these analyses were shown in table below:

The results in the table above indicate that the average Mean value of word-of-mouth communication is 2.303, which means that there is a low level of word-of-mouth communication in Econet wireless Burundi; the average Mean of repurchase is 2.41 which implies that there is a low level of repurchase; the average Mean of customer loyalty is 2.33, which means that there is a low level of

customer loyalty in Econet wireless Burundi. The pooled average Mean of Customer satisfaction is 2.321, which means that there is a low level of Customer satisfaction in Econet Wireless Burundi. According to Zeithaml & Bitner [19], increasing customer satisfaction can provide company benefits like customer loyalty, extending the life cycle of a customer expanding the life of merchandise the customer purchase and increases customers positive word of mouth communication. This was in line with Tao [20] who states that when the customer is satisfied with the product or service of the company, it can make the customer to purchase frequently and to recommend products or services to potential customers. It is impossible for a business organization to grow up in case the company ignores or disregards the needs of customers.

Conclusion

The study on the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction was carried out. The results indicate that the pooled average Mean of Service Quality is 2.354, which means that there is a low level of Service quality in Econet Wireless Burundi and the pooled average Mean of Customer satisfaction is 2.321, which means that there is a low level of Customer satisfaction in Econet Wireless Burundi. The results indicate also that responsiveness has a moderate positive correlation to customer satisfaction equal to 0.632 and the p-value is .000 which is less than 0.01 ($r=.632^{**}$, $p\text{-value}<0.01$). The results indicate also a moderate positive and significant relationship between Empathy and Customer satisfaction ($r=.421^{**}$, $p\text{-value}<0.01$). The results show that Assurance has a moderate positive correlation to customer satisfaction of Econet Wireless Burundi equal to 0.513 and the p-value is .000 which is less than 0.01 ($r=.513^{**}$, $p\text{-value}<0.01$). The results indicate also that there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between network quality and Customer satisfaction ($r=.683^{**}$, $p\text{-value}$

<0.01). The results indicate that the combination of responsiveness, empathy, reliability, assurance, and network quality predict 60.7% of the variance in customer satisfaction in Econet Wireless Burundi. Assurance (Beta=.535, $\text{sig}=.000$) is a better predictor of customer satisfaction than Reliability (Beta=.339, $\text{sig}=.001$); Responsiveness (Beta=.251, $\text{sig}=.000$); Empathy (Beta=.178, $\text{sig}=.008$); and Network Quality (Beta=.038, $\text{sig}=.751$). Therefore, Econet Wireless Burundi should ensure to embrace effective service quality to increase the satisfaction of customer. This is because service quality leads to improved customer satisfaction of Econet wireless Burundi.

Recommendations

To the Management of Econet Wireless Burundi

Relationship between Responsiveness and Customer Satisfaction in Econet Wireless Burundi

1. There is a need for Econet to motivate its employees in order to recommend to customers appropriate products or services.
2. Econet should help customers in providing them a good quality and fast service.
3. There is a need for Econet and its employees to be able to recover quickly and professionally whenever the service fails to occur.

Relationship between Reliability and Customer Satisfaction in Econet Wireless Burundi

1. The company should develop confidence of customers in the quality of Econet's data bundles and feel like they get what they have paid for.
2. Econet wireless should provide a service to its customers at a time without making

any errors and must have relevant and up to date information.

Relationship between Empathy and Customer Satisfaction in Econet Wireless Burundi

1. There is a need for employees of Econet to offer customers guidance and suggestions and should have customers' best interests at heart.
2. Econet should develop a strategy whereby all customers queries are resolved within time and develop the effective communication with its customers.
3. The organization should empower the employees to be able to give customers their individual attention.

Relationship between Assurance and Customer Satisfaction in Econet Wireless Burundi

1. There is a need for the employees of Econet to provide trustworthy, consistent, and efficient service to clients and their style of work should inspire confidence.
2. The staff of Econet should have sufficient expertise to solve customers' challenges whenever they raise them.
3. The Econet staff should courteously talk with their customers and provide clear and understandable information.

References

- [1]. Brady, M. K., & Robertson. C., 2001. Searching for a consensus on the antecedent role of service quality and satisfaction: An exploratory cross-national study. *Journal of Business Research*, 51(1), 53-60.
- [2]. Melody, T., 2001. Service Quality and Customers Preference of Cellular Mobile Service Providers. *Journal of Technology Management & Innovation*.
- [3]. Chaparadza, A., 2019. Econet customers complaining about data disappearance again.

Relationship between Network Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Econet Wireless Burundi

1. There is a need for Econet to constantly work towards improving network quality and coverage so that the uploads and downloads are fast and stable.
2. Econet should invest in high technology so that it may have a stronger and more stable network than all competitors.
3. There is a need for Econet to have a strong signal that facilitates fast network.

To the Government of Burundi and Policy Makers

1. There is a need for Agence de régulation et de contrôle des télécommunications to monitor on the quality of network and the bundles depletion.
2. The Burundi board of regulation should receive the complaints of customers and cross-check with the company and make clear decision to protect customers.
3. The government of Burundi should resource the regulatory body, free from any political influence would ensure an open and fair competitive environment devoid of any exclusive right for any mobile telephone operator.
4. The regulatory body should act an advisory body to the government on regulatory policies.

Techzim: Cloud Unboxed, available at <https://www.techzim.co.zw/2019/09/econet-customers-complaining-about-data-disappearance-again-econet-says-its-investigatingd/> retrieved on 2nd February 2025.

[4]. Khanzode, V. V., 1995. Research methodology: Techniques & trends, New Delhi: *APH publishing corporation*, p-35.

[5]. Bhandari, P., 2021. Population vs sample. Retrieved December 5th, 2021. Available at <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/40024254.pdf>

- [6]. Crocker, R. H., 2009. Qualitative research in applied linguistics: New York Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- [7]. Sukamolson, S., 2007. Fundamentals of Quantitative Research.
- [8]. Brink, P. J., & Wood, M. J., 1998. Advanced Design in Nursing Research. *Newbury Park: Sage*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/089431849000300411>
- [9]. Polit, D. F., & Hungler, P. B., 1999. Nursing research: principles and methods (6th ed.). *Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia, PA*.
- [10]. Kothari, C. R., 1985. Research Methodology (3rd ed.). *Delhi: New Age International Publishers*; p. 162-170.
- [11]. Roscoe, J. J., 1975. Fundamental research statistics for the behavioral sciences (2nd ed.). *New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston*.
- [12]. Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R., 2016. Research Methods for Business: A Skill Building Approach (7th ed.). *United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons Ltd*.
- [13]. Etyang, F. M., 2018. A step-by-step practical guide to mastering research. *FEM consultants and research centre Ltd, Kampala*.
- [14]. Mlyuka, E. E., 2011. A Simplified guide to research proposal and report writing for institutions of higher learning. Ecumenical Gathering, Dar es Salaam, *Tanzania*.
- [15]. Kothari, C. R., & Gaurav, G., 2014. Research Methodology and Techniques. *New Delhi: New Age International Publishers*.
- [16]. Schneider, B., Mayer, D. M., Ehrhart, M. G., Saltz, J. L., & Niles-Jolly, K., 2005. Understanding organization-customer links in service settings. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(6), 1017-1032. *Service Industry Management*, 12(1), 60-69.
- [17]. Grönroos, C., 1982. An applied service marketing theory. *European Journal of Marketing*, 16(7), 30-41.
- [18]. Jarvenpaa S. L., 2002. Consumer trust in an internet store: a cross-cultural validation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 5(2), pp. 15-12.
- [19]. Zeithaml V. A., & Bitner M. J., 2003. Service marketing: Integrating customer focus across the firm. *Journal of Human Resources and Sustainability Studies*, 2(4): pp. 1-16.
- [20]. Tao, F., 2014. Customer Relationship management based on Increasing Customer Satisfaction. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 5(5): pp. 256-263.