

# Branding and Retailing in the Telecommunications Industry of Ghana

Charles Adusei<sup>1, \*</sup>, Tweneboah-Koduah Isaac<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Accounting and Finance, Garden City University College, Kumasi, Ghana

<sup>2</sup>Department of Managerial Sciences, Garden City University College, Kumasi, Ghana

## Abstract

The study investigates branding and retailing in the telecommunications industry of Ghana from the perspectives of customers, retailers and salespersons within the Upper East Region of Ghana using MTN as a case company. A mixed approach was used in the data collection through questionnaire administration and interview. The analysis on the questionnaires made use of descriptive statistics and Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance while the interview analysis was interpretative in nature. The paper finds that committed customer support services, call quality perfection and accuracy in billing were strong predictors of customer satisfaction while hindrances to customer satisfaction were frustration due to bad coverage, high cost of calls and bad customer experience from customer interactions with staff of MTN. The findings revealed that MTN supports the retailer's businesses for stocking, outlet branding, merchandising and trade promotion. The interview revealed monitoring and evaluation of distributor's performance within the contract period whereas factors that influenced the demarcation of sales territory had diverse responses from the sales territory controller's. The paper concludes that customer satisfaction is the avoidance of customer dissatisfaction and affirmed that MTN's is mindful of the marketing side of running the business from the technical perspective of the business.

## Keywords

Branding, Retailing, Salespersons, Customer Satisfaction, MTN, Ghana

Received: January 6, 2019 / Accepted: April 27, 2020 / Published online: May 31, 2020

@ 2020 The Authors. Published by American Institute of Science. This Open Access article is under the CC BY license.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

---

## 1. Introduction

Profitability is one of the key decisions in setting up and running an organization for its survival and sustainability. Successful companies see customers as the central lever of their operations and must encourage and persuade them to demand their product and service offerings. Interestingly customers sometimes build perceptions of organization's brand and compare it with competitors' hence the single most important effort of a company is to communicate their brand message and services to its customers in order to create distinctive advantage.

National Communication Authority (NCA) [1] indicated that

the total number of mobile voice subscribers had increased from 36,739, 810 as at the end of July 2016 to 36,912,019 as at the end of August 2016. This represents a percentage increase of 0.66% from July's 2016 figure of 17,774,481. MTN's market share for the month under review was 48.47%. On the other hand MTN's mobile data subscribers for August 2016 were 9,608,952. Their market share for the month under review was 50.24%. According to IMANI Ghana [2] there are currently two fixed line operators, six mobile network operators, four mobile broadband access providers, 52 authorised Internet Service Providers and over 100 value added service providers. It further indicated that at the end of April 2017, the total number of mobile voice subscriptions was 35,984,280 while the total subscriptions of mobile data

---

\* Corresponding author

E-mail address: [sircharly2002@gmail.com](mailto:sircharly2002@gmail.com) (C. Adusei)

in the country was 21,584,899 with a penetration rate of 76.22%.

The ability of a company to serve its customers profitably, can be achieved through market segmentation. Market segmentation helps organizations to clearly identify who their target markets are and also what their needs and wants are. This helps to tailor goods and services through designing product/service offering to meet the expectation of customers. In an effective marketing operation, there is the need for segmentation, targeting and positioning to meet the expectations of customers through a better deployment and utilization of marketing resources [3]. On the other hand Kotler and Keller [4] stress that the application of the marketing mix with insight into market segmentation, targeting and positioning will have the potential to deepen the knowledge of the market and the customers for effective strategy execution. Jobber and Lancaster [5] asserted that one of the ways a company can promote its operational activities is to successfully plant the right messages in the minds of its target market.

Strouse [6] insisted that customer engagement is critical in the service industry especially the telecommunication sector where subscribers can switch at any point in time so there is the need for companies to forge stronger connections with their customers more than before. Farris *et. al.*, [7] indicated that customer experience may be adduced as good or bad based on product, service, and psychological experience and how they will respond to it. Bradley [8] indicated that customer experience is the cognitive and affective outcome of the customer's exposure to, or interaction with, a company's people, processes, technologies, products, services and other output.

Distributors play a major role in the distribution systems be it a product or service in enhancing the value chain of a market. Key Distributors plays a major intermediary role by making sure that company products are available and visible so as to reach its intended market segment hence their performance is critical to the existence of any organisation. Donaldson [9] opined that consistent distributor effort in market has the potential to improve market penetration and outlet coverage which can develop new markets and new accounts. Dent [10] suggested that among other function of the distributor is its performance measurement which is based on achieving sales targets in volume and value.

Strouse [6] stressed that a competitive telecommunications marketplace demands that service providers offer a variety of alternatives to meet the diverse needs of customers. The author affirms that today's segmentation techniques benefit the customer and the service provider, by creating customized service portfolios targeted to attractive market

segments. In all these it is important of a company to communicate effectively with its stakeholders so as to be able to pass its messages across to them for their positive reaction. Communication is the basis of marketing, it is not enough to merely communicate but it should be convincing enough to supplement and provide adequate advantages as compared to competitors' services or products [11].

The retail sector is increasingly being viewed as an important activity in the economy and its impact on society in general is readily acknowledged. There is the need to emphasize that retailers are becoming increasingly important in their role as gatekeepers within the channel of distribution. Gilbert [12] stressed that retailers have become significantly more powerful that they are more able to exert their power over suppliers and stock only the brands they wish to sell depending on their overall retail strategy and supplier relationships. Levy *et. al.*, [13] indicated that the role of the retailers has become critical due to the effect they have on consumer purchases. The effect of this is that consumers are able to purchase only what is selected and offered to them by the retailers, so retailers may be considered to be shaping consumer demand. A successful brand delivers sustainable competitive advantage and invariably results in superior profitability and market performance [14].

As the industry grows and competition becomes more intense among the telecommunications operators, Average Revenue Per User (ARPU), has been going down in the last few years. Before competition ruled the market, the service providers directed their focus on the needs of regulators and less directly on the needs of subscribers. The role of the distributors, retailers and the salespersons serves as the link between customers and the products/services of MTN. There is the need to investigate the perspectives of the customers, retailers and the salespersons on branding and retailing activities on how these ensures visibility and availability of services offered by MTN and its effects on customer satisfaction in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section two provides empirical literature on the study. Section three considers the study area and the methodology used in this paper. Section four discusses the main findings while the last section concludes the paper.

## 2. Literature Review

Alabar *et. al.*, [15] indicated that there is a closely relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the Nigerian Mobile Telephony Sector. Arslan *et. al.*, [16] revealed that service reliability and service empathy have a significant effect on customer satisfaction in a study conducted in the Pakistani Telecom Sector. Silva and Yapa [17] stressed that in the Sri Lanka Telecommunication

Industry service providers must segment their customers in designing their customer loyalty programs.

Boselie *et. al.*, [18] stated that satisfaction comes about when the assessment between two parties working relationship turns out to be positive. Muhammad [19] insisted that the desire and commitment from managers towards customers' expectations and experiences affect customer satisfaction positively through appropriate marketing strategies on the target market. Akpoyomare *et. al.* [20] found out that promotion and distribution have a higher impact on the level of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the Nigerian telecoms market. Mohammad and Noorjahan [21] postulated that loyal customer base is created by a clear understanding of the variables which brings about customer trust by providing better services for mobile phone users.

Kehinde and Yusuf [22] stressed that promotion is a good marketing tool for survival, sustenance and expansion of a business. Adusei *et. al.*, [23] affirmed that effective supervision of sales representatives with a responsive distribution strategy can enhance market penetration. Flint *et. al.*, [24] affirms that suppliers good at anticipating what customers will value will realise higher customer satisfaction and loyalty. Kim *et. al.*, [25] studied the effects of customer satisfaction and switching barrier on customer loyalty in Korean Mobile Telecommunication Services and concluded that the switching barrier have an adjustment effect on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Eshghi *et. al.*, [26] (2007) suggested that wireless service providers are better off improving customer satisfaction in order to minimize customer defection. Sharma [27] revealed that customers are more satisfied with quality of service, network coverage, quality of sound, mobile internet, customer service and promotional schemes in a study conducted among 150 customers of various telecom companies in Saudi Arabia. Yelkur [28] stressed that the customer's experience of the service, the feelings and perceptions have a pervasive influence in attracting new customers and retaining existing customers. Madan [29] revealed that by satisfying the customers, the organisation can maximize the number of users. Jones *et. al.*, [30] opined that customers experiencing a high level of satisfaction are likely to remain with their existing providers and maintain their subscriptions.

Ahmad and Buttle [31] indicated that the significance of customer loyalty is that it closely relates to the company continued survival, and to strong future growth. Gerpott *et. al.*, [32] indicated that customer retention, loyalty and satisfaction are important intermediation goals for telecommunication network operators in their way to superior success in the liberalised German market. Qi *et. al.*, [33] in a study using 846 samples from China and 689 from

the USA suggested that customer loyalty is a driver of customer lifetime values while customer satisfaction is not. Bayer [34] noted the importance of customer segmentation in the telecommunications sector which allows for precise targeting, with knowledge of what the retention and value drivers are for each customer. Chang *et. al.*, [35] reveals that customer satisfaction was dependent on the perceived level of quality delivered. Lee and Cunningham [36] stated that factors affecting customer loyalty usually set the focus on customer satisfaction and the switching barrier.

Woo and Fock [37] suggest that network providers should focus more on transmission quality and network coverage as the core attributes of their source of offerings and formulate appropriate pricing policy rather than competing customer services and other supplementary services. Jones *et. al.*, [38] stressed that service providers must show more commitments towards the relationship specific investment as this help to increase customers' dependence and thus magnified the switching barriers. Vargo and Lusch [39] advised that for marketing managers to help their companies, they need to understand what their customers' value in order to survive and grow in competitive markets. Mittal and Kamakura [40] suggested that conditions like a customer's time constraints, financial situation, effort perceptions, risk perceptions or personal characteristics may contribute directly to loyalty behaviour or shape the influence of satisfaction.

Blythe [41] pointed out that merchandising promote products at the point of sales in terms of visibility for consumers and traffic flows around a shop. Clow and Baack [42] advised that sales promotion must not be seen as a substitute for a long-term corporate and brand image-building which adds value in the eyes of the consumer. Mullins and Walker [43] stressed that manufacturers with a poor grasp of changing segmentation and who are not strongly supporting their brands will be poorly positioned in the competitive environment. Blythe [41] explained sale promotion as a wide range of activities intended to provide a short-term increase in sales. Belch and Belch [44] indicated that trade marketing is concerned with gaining and retaining access to marketing channel in order to ensure maximum shelf space, distribution and availability of products/services.

Kapferer [45] asserted that if a brand is strong, it benefits from a high degree of loyalty and stability of future sales from customers and distributors. Keller [46] affirmed that from an economic perspective brands allow consumers to lower the search costs for products both internally and externally. Blythe [41] affirms that branding is the culmination of a range of activities across the entire marketing mix, leading to a brand image which conveys a whole set of messages to the consumer about quality, price, expected performance and status.

## 3. Study Area and Methodology

### 3.1. Study Area

The study area is the Upper East Region of Ghana. The population of the region is 1,046,545 which is less than one twentieth (4.2%) of the national population. The region is one of the least urbanized in the country with only 21.0 percent of the population living in urban communities. Agriculture, hunting and forestry are the main economic activities in the Region. Industrial activity in the region is generally low. Telecommunication linkages are available at Bolgatanga, Navrongo, Sandema, Bongo and Bawku. Private telecommunication centres have sprung up, especially in Bolgatanga, Navrongo and Bawku. However, the tele-density measures very low in the Region. The proportion of the population below 20 years is higher than 50 percent [47]. The statistics tells it all that the region has a shrank market which calls for proper management of sales territories couple with effective distribution. Though the mobile telecommunications in Ghana is very competitive but the region is behind that hype, the basic issue goes beyond retain customers but how to prospect for customers to stay with them for a longer period considering the income levels of the indigenous in the informal sector. This implies that there should not be out of stock situation issues, availability of sales personnel when the need to be there to resolve complaint and good customer experience.

### 3.2. Case Company

MTN is a global communications company, world-class cellular network and the market leader in the mobile telecommunications industry in Ghana. Launched in 1994, the MTN Group has grown into a multinational telecommunications group, operating in 21 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The MTN Group is listed on the JSE Securities Exchange in South Africa under the share code: "MTN". Through steady organic growth, prudent acquisitions and robust governance, the MTN Group is rapidly achieving its vision of becoming the telecommunications leader in emerging markets. MTN's brand is the most valuable in Africa, and is ranked in the top 100 brands worldwide. MTN entered the Ghanaian market following the acquisition of Investcom in 2006. MTN's overriding mission is to be a vehicle for Ghana's economic growth and development, helping to promote Ghana's strong development potential from the provision of world-class telecommunications products and services, through to innovative and sustainable corporate social investment initiatives

### 3.3. Methodology

A mixed design was adopted for the study. The

subscribers/customers and retailers as respondents were the target sample on the services provided by MTN in the Upper East Region for the quantitative approach to solicit information from them whiles structured interview was done with the seven sales territory controllers on the sales territories operational activities and that of the Key Distributor of the Upper East Region. The study targeted one hundred and forty-seven (147) respondents but had a response rate of 89.7% which represents one hundred and thirty-two (132) respondents as the sample size. The composition was seventy subscribers/customers, fifty-five retailers and seven sales territory controllers. One hundred and twenty-five were the respondents for the questionnaire administration whiles the seven were for the interview. The data collection made use of questionnaires and structured interview guide for the study. The feedback from the questionnaires were analyse descriptively. Ranking was done on the variables using Kendall Coefficient of Concordance. The output of the interview was analyse verbatim in an interpretative manner. Ethical issues were observed in this study.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Socio-economic Demographics of Subscribers/Customers

In all the respondents were seventy (70) for the customers segment. Out of the total seventy customers sampled sixty percent (n=42) had a female representation whiles forth percent (n=28) accounted for males. This indicates female domination of the study sample, this shows that more females are benefiting from the services of MTN in the study area. The prominent age groups were 18-27 years which accounted for sixty percent of the sample while 28-37 years had a representation of thirty percent. It is significance to indicate here that the majority in terms of age are young and will be demanding value added activities which is beyond the basic functionality of a phone or mobile phone.

Senior High School leavers and Bachelor Degree holders had representation of fifty-one and twenty-six percent respectively. Education is a variable that is assumed to indicate once appreciation of an issue all things being equal. A customer is an asset to any company as he/she adds to the revenue side of the company. Loyalty with how long a customer has been with MTN had those with 1-3 years and 4-6 years represents thirty-four and thirty percent respectively. Mobile money transactions in terms of services recorded fifty percent of the services customers normally used from MTN product lines.



## 4.2. Perceived Customer Service Satisfaction

This section considers how customers assess the perceived customer satisfaction of MTN in the Upper East Region. The discussion is on the two highest mean score rank and the least two mean score rank as depicted in Figure 1. The customer's perspective on perceived customer satisfaction agreed to the consensus that customer support enhances satisfaction was ranked first with a mean rank score of 6.45 confirming that customers will welcome value additions to the services they are demanding from MTN. While call quality had the second highest mean score of 6.12 confirming that the customers are happy with the call quality as it is

perceived by them as almost perfect. This is good news for MTN as call quality is critical in terms of voice using cellular phone. This insight is in line with Kim *et. al.*, [25] stressing that call quality, value-added services and customer support are predictors of customer satisfaction in the Korean Mobile Telecommunications services. This result aligned with Mohammad and Noorjahan [21] suggesting that loyal customer base is created by a clear understanding of the variables which brings about customer trust by providing better services for mobile phone users. The result agrees with Bradley [8] indicated that a truly customer-centric organization simply means doing business in the way to ensure customer service excellence.

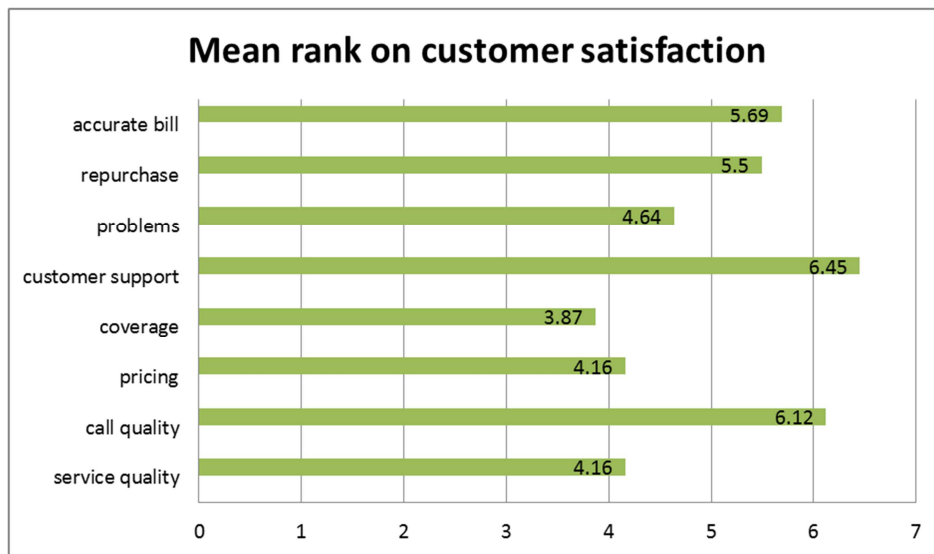


Figure 1. Mean rank on perceived customer satisfaction.

The very least ranked theme had coverage is good with a mean rank score of 3.87. This was a response when subscribers were asked if coverage is good, this is a disagreement to question by indicating that the coverage is not good which means MTN should do something on their transmission. This result rejects Eshghi *et. al.*, [26] suggesting that wireless service providers are better off improving customer satisfaction in order to minimize customer defection.

The second least themes with a mean score of 4.16 had service quality is good and pricing structures are fair to customers as concerns by the customers. This means subscribers disagreed to the question posed to them that pricing structures are fair to customers. Pricing as one of the elements in the marketing mix is critical to the tactical operational success of any organization. Companies must get their pricing structure right to be competitive enough to cater for customers and to the benefit of the company in question. In a very price sensitive environment such as the Upper East

Region, pricing must be handled tactfully by MTN with down market products but still offer superior customer service. The result disagrees with Silva and Yapa [17] stating that the most important factor determining the customer loyalty was the ability of the service provider to add value to customer's business process contrary to the common belief that low price keeps the customer with the same provider in the corporate segment market. On the hand the results aligns with authors such as Arslan *et al.*, [16] and Alabar *et al.*, [15] where their studies indicated close relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction stressing on service reliability. Though the market is price sensitive if the right services are available subscribers will pay for it. The insight to this aligns to Madan [29] revealing that by satisfying the customers, the organisation can maximize the number of users. The study further indicated that two factors which have great impact on the services of cellular companies that leads to customer satisfaction and ultimately to the maximization of profit of the organisation have been observed as the fairness in pricing and the coverage quality.

### 4.3. Hindrances to Customer Service Satisfaction

This section considers the responses of respondents on possible hindrances to customer service satisfaction be it perceived or real. Their responses were ranked using Kendall’s coefficient of concordance.

The focus of the discussion is on the three highest rank

hindrances and the very least hindrance from the perspectives of the customers.

Figure 2 considered nine themes using a five likert scale had a good reliability above 90% meaning the scale of measurement can be rely upon. With the coefficient of concordance that shows the level of consensus among the respondents on the themes recorded was 31.6%.



Figure 2. Mean rank on hindrance to customer satisfaction.

The customer considered high cost of calls as their major hindrance to customer service satisfaction, followed by customer interactions and then bad coverage for mobile phones while the least of their worries were poor working environment. The service encounter must be friendly and assuring for better customer service relationships. The results are in line with Yelkur [28] stating that the customers experiences of the service, the feelings and perceptions have a pervasive influence in attracting new customers and retaining existing customers. No matter how good a company’s marketing approach to a target market is when the technical side of the business fails marketing struggled and vice versa. Transmission is critical irrespective of the status of the subscriber as this is to do with functionality of using the mobile phone which in itself is basic. Hindrances if manage well will turn out to be business opportunity and if not becomes a threat. The result is in line with Sharma [27] in a study based on primary data collected on a random basis from 150 customers of various telecom companies in Saudi Arabia revealed that customers are more satisfied with quality of service, network coverage, quality of sound, mobile internet, customer service and promotional schemes. It can be said that hindrances occurs where customers have accessibility challenge to their concerns which have the potential to lead to customer dissatisfaction.

### 4.4. MTN and Retailers Roles in Availability of Products to Subscribers/Customers

This section focuses on the retailer’s role in the distribution of MTN services in the Upper East Region. The focus of the section is the discussion on socio-economic demographics of retailers, how the retailer’s get their stocks, frequency of purchase and promotions.

#### 4.4.1. Socio-economic Demographics of Subscribers/Customers

In terms of how long the retailers have been in business was considered with a representation of forty-four percent for those between 4-6 years while forty-two percent accounted for those within the range of 1-3 years. The margins on the scratch cards are small and the retailer’s needs customers who normally purchase more and frequently to make good profits hence those who have been in the business a bit longer could have a customer base to be sure of daily sales. This can be link to Qi *et. al.*, [33] suggesting that customer loyalty is a driver of customer lifetime values while customer satisfaction is not.

Among the fifty-five outlets forty percent of the sample studied sell their products on table tops while twenty-nine and thirty-one percent respectively sells in stalls and kiosks respectively. The outlet status does not play a major decision

to influence which scratch card one should buy but its easy accessibility is key in terms of location for product availability and visibility. The result aligns with Farris *et. al.*, [7] indicated that customer experience may be adduced as good or bad based on product, service, and psychological experience and how they will respond to it.

#### 4.4.2. Retailers Getting Stocks and Frequency of Purchases

Running a business without stocks can be seen as no business at all. Stocks play a major role of any type of business since its availability ensures that customer would be served if the need be. It was revealed from the study that there are three main outlets that retailers get stocks to sell namely distributors/dealers, sales representatives of MTN and the retailer going to the outlet to purchase products. Outlet owners indicated that dealers/distributors supplies accounted for 27% while 29% affirmed that in case of out of stock the outlet owner's go and buy it from the distributor. The outlet owners consider the sales representative as the reliable source of getting stocks as 44% confirmed it. In practice this is not strange as the sales representative will follow his/her journey plan religiously and call on all the outlets. Sales representatives most often go to the field with stocks in case the distributor could not supply the retailers on that journal plan. The result is in line with Adusei *et. al.*, [23] asserting that effective sales territory management improves communications between company's and its trade partners through regular visits which has the capacity to unearth market intelligence for the company. The follow up question on frequency of purchase from the distributor revealed that 25%, 31%, 24% and 20% accounted for daily purchases, twice in a week, thrice in a week and once in a month respectively. This can be inferred that those retailers buying stocks on daily bases might not have adequate working capital to buy bulk or their outlets are fast moving which is able to sell more on a daily basis.

#### 4.4.3. Promotions

This section considers three areas under promotions where discussions are on trade promotions, outlet branding and outlet merchandising. Trade promotions are targeted at the outlets with the possibility of encouraging the outlet owners to stock more of the company products. This really helps to build and enhance the relationship between the company and the outlets which means when the company need their help the outlets will also be there for the company. It was revealed that 23 outlets owners representing 42% had benefited from trade promotions in the study area. This is not surprising since not many outlets benefit from trade promotions as it is tied to sales/performance of the retail outlet. The result confirms the assertion of Belch and Belch [44] that trade

marketing is concerned with gaining and retaining access to marketing channel in order to ensure availability of products/services.

It was revealed that 35 outlets representing 64% had some sort of merchandising. In the context of this study, merchandising simply means having posters, stickers, butins, and other materials displayed with a company branded materials. The essence of merchandising is about visibility to remind customers the presence of such brand in the outlet. The result supports Blythe [41] pointed out that merchandising is concerned with the way products are displayed in the retail outlet. The author further indicated that merchandising promote products at the point of sales in terms of visibility for consumers and traffic flows around a shop. The retailers revealed that their outlets are branded with 69% of them benefited from outlet branding with MTN colours. This is not surprising percentage terms considering the type of outlets used in selling MTN products be it a table top, stall, container and kiosk will not cost much as compared to branding a distributor outlet. Branding within this context simply means the painting of the outlet with the brand colours of the manufacturer or the service provider. This insight aligns with Keller [46] affirming that from an economic perspective brands allow consumers to lower the search costs for products both internally and externally.

#### 4.5. Sales Territory Controller's (STC) Perspective of MTN's Distributor's Role in the Service Value Chain

This section reports the excerpt from an interview with seven sales territory controllers in the Upper East Region from the MTN Office. The authors interviewed seven sales territory controllers as participants who volunteered for the study.

When the Sales Territory Controller's (STC) were asked of the main responsibilities of their key distributors, their responses had some similarities and differences. *All the seven STC's answered that their key role is to ensure product availability of stock and visibility. STC 1 added that beyond this is target achievement of the key distributor.* This result supports Dent [10] suggesting that effective role of the distributor calls for effective management of the sales territory to help the distributor to perform well and to measure its performance on the ground.

A question was posed to STC's whether MTN assigns a specific area to key distributors within which to operate and if target are set for the key distributors based on the potential of the areas to operate. *All the seven STC's in the affirmative answered yes to the two questions. STC 6 went further to stressed that key distributors are bounded by the territories and sign a quarterly performance contract with MTN.* This insight reflects Jobber and Lancaster [5] assertion that

effective sales territory management improves communications between company's and its trade partners through regular visits which has the capacity to unearth market intelligence for the company.

The study wanted to find out performance related issues on the key distributors and this led to the question how MTN assesses the performance of the key distributors. *All the seven STC's had an opinion on the question and responded that monitoring and evaluation of target given on weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly and against performance (sales volume and sales value).* The result is evident to the thoughts of Kotler and Keller [4] stressing that maximum sales coverage of a market must be the sole aim of go-to-market strategy.

A followed up question was how MTN supports key distributors to improve performance, in response to the question STC 1, 2, 4 and 5 affirmed that this is done through monitoring their day to day activities and having meetings with them. On the other hand STC 3 agreed that MTN create market for distributors to sell while STC 6 insisted that MTN marketing activities, sales support staff and new product development all help distributors to perform. STC 7 stated that MTN help the distributors to manage and monitor its sales representatives. The results align with Donaldson [9] that in meeting customer needs and serving customers better in a cost effective way will be dependent on a well design sales territory. The author further indicated that effective monitoring and evaluation of channel members help to improve performance and hence better customer services.

It was revealed to this study that the contributions of the key distributors significantly affect the growth of MTN as all the seven STC's agreed to that assertion and confirmed that MTN penalizes its key distributors if they failed to service the territory well. *STC 3 and STC 5 responded that MTN can take the dealership and award it to a new partner. STC 5 indicated that it can be a monetary to cancellation of contract.* The responses are in line with Jobber and Lancaster [5] stressing that the motive of the sales territory must be on the nature of the customers and its management on how to reach them in a cost effective manner. This can be inferred that if it does not happen as intended then questions must be asked on the roles of the key distributor and the sales representative managing the territory.

There was a question on what impact does the sales territory management have on distribution performance and this is what the STC's had to say, all the seven STC's had an opinion on the question *with STC 2, STC 5 and STC 7 indicating that this ensures target achievement of the distributor, STC 1 the distributor must ensure availability of products and services, STC 6 stressed that this enable*

*restocking as it help push secondary sales, STC 3 and STC 4 pointed that this helps in the monitoring of distributor performance.* Their views can be sum up with what Adusei *et. al.*, [23] indicated that sales force operations can be effectively manage so that it can serve as a differential factor that can set two companies apart for market coverage optimization.

The responses of STCs on their assessment on what happened in their sales territory. STC 4 and STC 7 indicated monitoring and evaluation of performance of key distributors and the Area Account Developer (AAD), STC 2 stressed that by empowering AAD's in their various territories, STC 1, STC 5, STC 3 and STC 6 stressed that to ensure that there is availability of products and services. The result is interesting considering the STC are coming from same company MTN. Salesperson assessment on territory management comes with experience, training and product/service knowledge vis-à-vis interpersonal relationship skills. The result is similar to a study by Adusei *et. al.*, [23] in the Telecommunications Industry of Ghana using Vodafone as the case company revealed that there was effective supervision of the sales territory representatives by the sales managers. The sales territory representatives confirmed that sales managers involved them in developing new or adjusted territory plans for effective distribution.

The STC were asked of the factors that influence sales force size and territory design at MTN in Bolgatanga. The responses were diverse as STC 4 and STC 7 indicated that largeness and the potential that exist within the territory, STC 1, STC 2 and STC 5 affirmed population and income level, STC 3 and STC 6 pointed out that the potential of the territory, addressable market, competition presence and sales force numbers and network coverage range. The diverse responses from the STC reflects the thought of Best [3] advising that for effective marketing operation to take place there is the need for segmentation, targeting and positioning to meet the expectations of customers through a better deployment and utilization of marketing resources. Jobber and Lancaster [5] asserted that one of the ways a company can promotes it operational activities is to successfully plant the right messages in the minds of its target market.

## 5. Conclusion

The study investigates branding and retailing in the telecommunications industry of Ghana with considerations from the perspectives of customers, retailers and salespersons within the Upper East Region using MTN as a case company. Customers are the driving force of any organization with the telecommunications industry included. Managing the customer through customer services and relationship



marketing are critical for customer retention. Customer perception of a company's service delivery can be an advantage or disadvantage to a company in his/her purchase decision making towards the product/service. Customer loyalty cannot be sustained without positive alignment of customer perception. No matter how good a product or service is the manufacturer might not have the capacity to distribute its products/service directly into the market. This is the reason why trade intermediaries are needed to play a major role in the value chain of a company. The importance of sales territory controller's role in the field and effective sales territory management are the heartbeat of branding and retailing value creation of which their roles facilitates the buyer-supplier relationships in delivering value to the customer in the telecommunications sector and the service industry at large.

The insight from the customer's perspective showed their awareness and assessment of customer service satisfaction from their own lenses. It concludes that a customer within the Upper East Region is satisfied if MTN put in place a committed customer support services to enhance satisfaction. Call quality perfection and accuracy in billing are the other two strong predictors of customer satisfaction. It could be inferred that hindrances to customer satisfaction leads to customer dissatisfaction. Customers were frustrated due to bad coverage for mobile phones, high cost of calls and bad customer experience from customer interactions with staff of MTN. It is therefore concluded that customer satisfaction is the avoidance of customer dissatisfaction.

Promotions comes in many shapes, some are targeted at customers while others are also for the trade. The findings revealed that MTN supports the retailer's businesses for stocking purposes through dedicate sale team and the Key Distributor team to supplied the retailers religiously. The retailer's had benefited from outlet branding, merchandising and trade promotion. It can be concluded that MTN's is mindful of the marketing side of running the business from a technical perspective hence retailer's has become beneficiaries

It was revealing from the interview with the STC on the sales territory management in the Upper East Region. It was refreshing that all the seven STC knew the key distributor's role in the sales territory. It was evident from the STC's responses that there is monitoring and evaluation of distributor's performance within a time period on the contract signed between MTN and the Key Distributor. Factors that influence the demarcation of a sales territory had diverse responses from the STC's. It could be concluded that STCs know the role and functions of the Key Distributor in the management of the sales territory bearing in mind that the

STCs are there to help the distributors achieve their monthly target and trained the distributor's salesmen.

## References

- [1] National Communications Authority, (2016). Industry Information – Telecom Subscriptions for June 2016. National Communications Authority. Accra.
- [2] IMANI Ghana (2017). IMANI Telecoms Services: Ghana's Telecommunication Licensing Regime Stifling Innovation and Internet Affordability-What should be done? Special Report. August 8, 2017. Online Modern Ghana
- [3] Best, R. J. (2013). Market-Based Management. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Pearson Education Limited. Harlow.
- [4] Kotler, P. and Keller, K. L., (2014). Marketing Management, Global Edition. 15<sup>th</sup> Edition. Pearson, Prentice Hall. New Jersey.
- [5] Jobber, D. and Lancaster, G., (2015). Selling and Sales Management. 10<sup>th</sup> Edition. FT Prentice Hall. Harlow.
- [6] Strouse, K. G. (2004). Customer-Centered Telecommunications Services Marketing. ARTECH HOUSE, ING. Norwood.
- [7] Farris, P. W., Bendle, N. T., Pfeifer, P. and Reibstein, D. J., (2006). Marketing Metrics: 50+ Metrics Every Executive Should Master. Wharton School Publishing. New Jersey.
- [8] Bradley, F., (2003). Strategic Marketing in the Customer driven organization. John Wiley & Sons Inc. West Sussex
- [9] Donaldson, B., (2007). Sales Management: Principles, Process and Practice. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Palgrave Macmillan. New York.
- [10] Dent, J., (2008). Distribution Channels: Understanding and Managing Channels to Market. Kogan Page. London.
- [11] De Pelsmaker, P., Geuens, M. and Van Den Bergh, J. (2013). *Marketing Communications*. Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- [12] Gilbert, D. (2003), Retail Marketing Management. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Pearson Education Limited. Harlow
- [13] Levy, M., Weitz, B. and Grewal, D. (2014). Retailing Management. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. McGraw-Hill. New York
- [14] De Chernatony, L., McDonald, M. and Wallace, E. (2011). Creating Powerful Brands. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Butterworth-Heinemann. Oxford.
- [15] Alabar, T. T., Egena, O. and Gbande, I. R. (2017). Service quality and customer satisfaction in Nigerian Mobile Telephony. British Journal of Marketing Studies. Vol. 5, No. 3, pp. 1-13
- [16] Arslan, M., Ifikhar, M. and Zaman, R. (2015). Effect of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction. A comparative analysis of Pakistan Telecom Sector. British Journal of Marketing Studies. Vol. 3, No. 6, pp. 43-62
- [17] Silva, K. A. and Yapa, S. T. W. S. (2009). Customer Retention with special reference to telecommunication industry in Sri Lanka. Paper presented at International Conference on Business and Information, July 2009. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. pp. 1-15

- [18] Boeselie, P., Hesselink, M. and Wiele, T. V. (2002). Empirical evidence for the relationship between customer satisfaction and business performance. *Managing Service Quality*, 12 (3), 184-193
- [19] Muhammad, I. I. (2011). A study on relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction: empirical evidence from Pakistan Telecommunication Industry. Vol. 1 Issue 4, pp. 523-530
- [20] Akpoyomare, O. B. E., Ladipo, K. A. P., Ighomereho, O. S. and Odunewu, V. (2014). Determinants of customer satisfaction and loyalty in Nigerian Telecommunications Industry. *British Journal of Marketing Studies*. Vol. 2, No. 5, pp. 67-83
- [21] Mohammad, M. A. and Noorjahan, P. (2009). Impact of service quality, trust and customer satisfaction on customer loyalty. *ABAC Journal*. Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 24-38
- [22] Kehinde, O. A. and Yusuf, S. A. (2012). Assessing the effectiveness of promotion as a marketing Management tool in the Nigerian Telecommunication Industry. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Economics and Management Sciences*. 3 (1): 1-6
- [23] Adusei, C., Tweneboah-Koduah, I. and Tenkorang, C. (2016). Sales Territory Management and Distributor Performance in the Telecommunications Industry in Ghana. *Expert Journal of Marketing*. Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 46-59
- [24] Flint, D. J., Blocker, C. F., Myers, M. B. and Slater, S. F. (2011). Proactive customer orientation and its role for creating customer value in global markets. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. Volume 39, Issues 2, pp. 216-233
- [25] Kim, M., Park, M. and Jeong, D. (2004). The effects of customer satisfaction and switching barrier on customer loyalty in Korean Mobile Telecommunication Services. *Telecommunication Policy* 28, 145-159.
- [26] Eshghi, A., Hanghton, D. and Topi, H. (2007). Determinants of customer loyalty in the wireless telecommunications industry. *Telecommunications Policy* 31, 93-106
- [27] Sharma, R. B. (2014). Customer Satisfaction in Telecom Sector in Saudi Arabia: An empirical investigation. *European Scientific Journal*. Vol. 10, No. 13. Pp. 354-363
- [28] Yelkur, R. (2000). Customer Satisfaction and the Services Marketing Mix. *Journal of Professional Services Marketing*, 21: 1, 105-115
- [29] Madan, M. (2016). Determinants of customer satisfaction in Telecom Industry –A study of Indian Telecom Industry. 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Recent Innovations in Science, Technology Management and Environment. 18<sup>th</sup> December 2016, pp. 422-428
- [30] Jones, M. A., Mothersbaugh, D. L., and Betty, S. E. (2002). Why customers stay: measuring the underlying dimensions of service switching costs and managing their differential strategic outcomes. *Journal of Business Research*, 55, 441-450
- [31] Ahmad, R. and Buttle, F. (2002), Customer retention management: a reflection of theory and practice. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 20 (3), 149-161
- [32] Grepott, T. J., Rams, W. and Schindler, A. (2001). Customer retention, loyalty and satisfaction in the German Mobile Cellular telecommunication market. *Telecommunications Policy*, 25, 249-269
- [33] Qi, J-Y, Zhou, Y-P, Chen, W-J and Qu, Q-X (2012). Are customer satisfaction and customer loyalty drivers of customer lifetime value in mobile data services: a comparative cross-country study. *Inf. Technical Manag.* 13: 281-296
- [34] Bayer, J. (2010). Customer segmentation in the Telecommunications Industry. *Database Marketing & Customer Strategy*. 17 (3-4), 247-256
- [35] Chang, P. K. and Chong, H. L. (2011). Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty on service provided by Malaysian Telecommunication Companies. *International Conference on Electrical Engineering and Informatics*, 17-19 July 2011, Bandung, Indonesia.
- [36] Lee, M. and Cunningham, L. F. (2001). A cost benefit approach to understanding service loyalty. *Journal of Services Marketing*. 15 (2), 113-130
- [37] Woo, K-S. and Fock, H. K. Y. (2006). Customer satisfaction in the Hong Kong Mobile Phone Industry. *The Service Industries Journal*. 19: 3, 162-174
- [38] Jones, M. A., Mothersbaugh, D. L., and Betty, S. E. (2000). Switching barriers and repurchase intentions in services. *Journal of Retailing*, 76 (2), 259-272
- [39] Vargo, S. L. and Lusch, R. F. (2008). Service dominant logic: continuing the evolution. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. 36 (1), 1-10
- [40] Mittal, V. and Kamakura, W. A. (2001). Satisfaction, repurchase intent, and repurchase behavior: Investigating the moderating effect of customer characteristics. *Journal of Marketing Research*. 38 (1), 131-142.
- [41] Blythe, J. (2006). *Essentials of Marketing Communications*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Pearson Educational Limited. Harlow
- [42] Clow, K. and Baack, D. (2017). *Integrated Advertising, Promotion and Marketing Communications Perspective*, Global Edition. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. Pearson Educational Limited, Harlow.
- [43] Mullins, J. and Walker, O. (2012). *Marketing Management; A Strategic Decision-Making Approach*. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. McGraw-Hill/Irwin. Boston.
- [44] Belch, G. and Belch, M. (2018). *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated and Marketing Communications*, Global Edition. 11<sup>th</sup> Edition. McGraw-Hill. New York.
- [45] Kapferer, J-N. (2012). *The New Strategic Brand Management: Advanced Insights and Strategic Thinking*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Kogan Page. London.
- [46] Keller, K. L. (2013). *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity*. Global Edition. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Pearson Education Limited, Harlow.
- [47] Ghana Statistical Services, (2013). 2010 Population & Housing Census. National Analytical Report. Ghana Statistical Service. Accra.