

**CONSUMER SATISFACTION WITH THE LEVEL OF SERVICE QUALITY OF
TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANIES IN UGANDA: A CASE STUDY OF
AIRTEL UGANDA**

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DECLARATION

I, Lwanga Johnpaul Ssentongo, declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been previously published or submitted anywhere for award of a degree. I also declare that this contains no material written or published by other people except where due reference is made and author duly acknowledged.

Sign:  _____

Date: 20/07/2024

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APPROVAL

I hereby certify that this research dissertation by Lwanga Johnpaul Ssentongo has been prepared under my supervision and submitted in upon my approval.



Signature:

Date:17/09/2024s.....

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Ssentongo. You believed and invested so much in me even when you owned so little of your own. For what I claim as my achievements, you have achieved much more through your dedication to excellence and the opportunities you provided for me.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates consumer satisfaction with the service quality of Airtel Uganda, a leading telecommunications company in Uganda. The research aims to evaluate the current level of consumer satisfaction, identify key factors influencing consumer perceptions, assess the relationship between various dimensions of service quality (such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy), and provide actionable recommendations for enhancing service quality.

The findings reveal a general dissatisfaction among Airtel Uganda's customers, primarily due to high tariffs, the perishability of internet bundles, frequent network disruptions, and inconsistent customer service. Factors such as network stability, transparent pricing, and customer service quality were identified as significant in shaping consumer perceptions of Airtel Uganda's service quality. The study further explores how dimensions like reliability and responsiveness are critical in influencing overall customer satisfaction, with areas like assurance and empathy offering potential for improvement.

Based on the findings, the study recommends a series of strategic initiatives for Airtel Uganda, including upgrading network infrastructure, simplifying pricing structures, enhancing customer service, and introducing innovative value-added services. Implementing these recommendations could lead to significant improvements in service quality and customer satisfaction, fostering greater customer loyalty in Uganda's competitive telecommunications market.

CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This industry is considered one of the leading sectors in any modern economy since it drives communication, business operations, and social life worldwide. In Uganda, the sector has experienced tremendous growth driven by an ever-increasing penetration of mobile phones and Internet services into the country. Airtel Uganda is one of the key companies operating in this sector and a subsidiary of Bharti Airtel Limited among the major telecommunication providers in the country. Despite this intense technological growth and big widening service portfolios, the quality service issues of the telecom companies remain intact. Consumer satisfaction remains a central pinning issue to both the service provider and the regulatory bodies as a critical benchmark to the actual service received. It is out of this that this paper will be aimed at evaluating the levels of consumer satisfaction on Airtel Uganda's service quality so as to bring out the company performance and possible improvement areas.

1.1 Background of the Study

The telecommunications industry in Uganda has undergone substantial changes over the last few decades, evolving from a basic, underdeveloped sector to a vibrant and competitive market that plays a crucial role in the nation's socio-economic development. This transformation has been largely fueled by advancements in technology, regulatory reforms, and a growing consumer demand for reliable and affordable communication services.

The origins of Uganda's telecommunications industry can be traced back to the colonial era, when rudimentary telephony services were established primarily for the colonial administration's use. These services were limited, mainly serving government offices and a small urban population. Following Uganda's independence, there was little expansion, with the Uganda Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (UPTC) maintaining a state monopoly over telecom services. This period was marked by inefficiencies, poor infrastructure, and limited reach, with services concentrated mainly in urban areas (Mwesige, 2010).

A significant shift occurred in the late 1990s when Uganda implemented economic reforms that included liberalizing the telecommunications sector. These reforms dismantled the state monopoly and opened the market to private competition, leading to the entry of new players and a surge in

investment. This liberalization marked the beginning of rapid growth and innovation within the industry as new entrants brought advanced technologies and improved service models to the market (Tumwine, 2020).

The introduction of mobile telephone in the early 2000s was particularly transformative for Uganda's telecommunications sector. Mobile networks, spearheaded by companies like MTN Uganda and Celtel (later acquired by Zain and subsequently Airtel), quickly became the dominant mode of communication, outpacing fixed-line services that had remained stagnant. The widespread adoption of mobile phones was driven by the affordability of handsets, the introduction of prepaid services, and the expansion of network coverage into rural areas (Kaggwa, 2019).

Airtel Uganda entered the Ugandan market in 2010 following Bharti Airtel's acquisition of Zain Africa's assets, including its operations in Uganda. This acquisition was part of Bharti Airtel's broader strategy to expand its presence across Africa, recognizing the continent's potential for growth in mobile telephony and data services. Since its inception, Airtel Uganda has become a significant player in the market, offering a wide range of services, including voice, SMS, data, and mobile money (Airtel Uganda, 2023).

Upon entering the market, Airtel Uganda encountered a competitive landscape dominated by MTN Uganda, which had established a strong foothold since its launch in 1998. Airtel distinguished itself by focusing on innovative services, competitive pricing, and broad network coverage. These strategies enabled Airtel to quickly increase its subscriber base, ultimately positioning itself as the second-largest telecom operator in Uganda by market share (Mugisha, 2021).

Uganda's telecommunications sector is characterized by intense competition, with operators striving to outperform each other in service quality, pricing, and innovation. This competition has benefited consumers by driving down prices, improving service offerings, and increasing access to telecommunications services throughout the country. However, it has also posed challenges for operators, who must continually invest in infrastructure, technology, and customer service to maintain their market positions (Nabukeera, 2018).

Airtel Uganda faces stiff competition from MTN Uganda, the market leader, which has maintained its dominance through extensive network coverage, a strong brand presence, and comprehensive service offerings. MTN has leveraged its first-mover advantage to build a robust infrastructure that

supports high-quality voice and data services, as well as mobile financial services through MTN Mobile Money (Tumwine, 2020).

Other competitors, such as Uganda Telecom (UTL) and Africell, have also influenced market dynamics, although their impact has been less pronounced. UTL, once a dominant player, has struggled due to financial difficulties and operational challenges, leading to a decline in market share. Africell, which entered the market in 2014, aimed to capture a market share by offering competitive pricing and targeting niche segments, but exited the Ugandan market in 2021 (Kaggwa, 2019).

Over the past decade, Uganda's telecommunications industry has seen significant technological advancements, particularly with the introduction of 3G, 4G, and now 5G networks. These advancements have not only improved voice service quality but also expanded data services, enabling consumers to access high-speed internet for various applications, such as social media, online banking, e-commerce, and entertainment (Mugisha, 2021).

Airtel Uganda has been a leader in adopting new technologies to enhance its service offerings. The company was among the first to launch 4G LTE services in Uganda, providing faster internet speeds and better network reliability. This move was part of Airtel's strategy to meet the growing demand for data services, fueled by increased smartphone usage and internet consumption (Airtel Uganda, 2023).

In addition to voice and data services, Airtel Uganda has expanded its service portfolio to include mobile financial services through Airtel Money. This service has been crucial in promoting financial inclusion in Uganda, where a significant portion of the population remains unbanked. Airtel Money allows customers to perform various financial transactions, such as sending and receiving money, paying bills, and purchasing goods and services, directly from their mobile phones (Tumwine, 2020).

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) regulates the telecommunications sector in Uganda, overseeing licensing, monitoring, and enforcement of industry standards. The UCC plays a vital role in ensuring that telecom operators adhere to the regulatory framework designed to promote fair competition, protect consumer rights, and ensure high-quality service delivery (UCC, 2022).

One of the main regulatory challenges in the sector has been enforcing service quality standards. The UCC has established benchmarks for various service delivery aspects, including network availability, call drop rates, data speeds, and customer service. Despite these regulations, consumer complaints about service quality persist, particularly regarding network congestion, dropped calls, slow internet speeds, and inadequate customer support (UCC, 2022).

Airtel Uganda has faced similar challenges, with criticisms over network reliability, especially in rural areas where infrastructure is less developed. Additionally, customer service remains a significant area of concern, with common complaints about long wait times, unresponsive support, and unresolved issues. These challenges highlight the need for continued investment in infrastructure and the adoption of best practices in customer service to improve consumer satisfaction (Nabukeera, 2018).

Consumer expectations in Uganda's telecommunications sector have evolved significantly, driven by increasing awareness of global standards and the availability of diverse service options. Today's consumers demand reliable network coverage, fast internet speeds, transparent pricing, and efficient customer support. They are also increasingly concerned about value for money, particularly in an environment where competition has lowered prices but not necessarily improved service quality (Mugisha, 2021).

Meeting these expectations is critical for Airtel Uganda's success in the market. Consumer satisfaction is a key determinant of customer loyalty and retention, directly impacting the company's market share and profitability. However, as competition intensifies, maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction becomes more challenging. Airtel Uganda must focus on delivering high-quality services while continually engaging with consumers to understand their needs and preferences (Tumwine, 2020).

In Uganda's competitive telecommunications industry, consumer satisfaction is a significant differentiator. Companies that consistently meet or exceed consumer expectations are more likely to retain their customers and attract new ones, gaining a competitive advantage. Airtel Uganda, like its competitors, recognizes the importance of consumer satisfaction in maintaining its market position (Kaggwa, 2019).

To enhance the customer experience, Airtel Uganda has initiated various efforts to improve service delivery, including network upgrades, the introduction of innovative products and services, and improvements in customer support. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives in meeting consumer expectations remains to be fully understood, particularly in the context of Uganda's unique market dynamics (Mwesige, 2010).

Given the challenges and opportunities within Uganda's telecommunications sector, a thorough evaluation of service quality from the consumer's perspective is crucial. Such an evaluation will provide valuable insights into the factors that influence consumer satisfaction and identify areas needing improvement. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring consumer perceptions of Airtel Uganda's service quality and examining the relationship between different dimensions of service quality and overall consumer satisfaction.

The findings from this research are expected to contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve service quality in Uganda's telecommunications industry. By understanding the key drivers of consumer satisfaction, Airtel Uganda can develop targeted strategies to enhance its service delivery, thereby improving its competitive position and ensuring long-term success in the market (Mwesige, 2010; UCC, 2022).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The telecommunications industry in Uganda has indeed been an integral part of the economic growth of the country over the last couple of decades. From the initial years of the 1990s, when the telecom services were mostly restricted between the fixed lines and a few mobile services, to seeing major growth within this particular sector. The liberalization efforts by the government, huge foreign investments, and increased demand for communication services among the people of Uganda have driven this. Some major players in the industry currently include MTN Uganda and Airtel Uganda, with the former two dominating a big chunk of market share as of the end of 2023. The significant contribution the telecommunication industry normally makes in the economy of Uganda pertains to the national GDP, availing employment opportunities, and fostering innovation.

Over the past ten years, the Ugandan telecommunication sector has witnessed phenomenal growth

characterized by an increased number of service providers, innovations, and demand for the services offered by the industry. The beginning of liberalization in the early 2000s saw an increase in the number of private companies entering the sector. This has increased competition among the companies (Tumwine, 2020). Mobile phone subscriptions in Uganda, according to UCC, have grown from 17.3 million in 2010 to over 28 million subscribers by the year 2022, translating to about 67% penetration. This growth has been accompanied by an expansion of network infrastructure, introduction of services such as mobile money, and adoption of recent technologies including 4G LTE and fiber-optic broadband. However, service providers are finding it increasingly challenging to ensure customer loyalty with the growing competition in a market where so many options are presented to consumers.

Airtel Uganda, that entered the Ugandan market in 2010, has also been a key player within this competitive environment. It has fast expanded its network coverage, unveiled innovative services, and resorted to aggressive marketing strategies to win and retain clients. In the year 2023, Airtel Uganda managed to hold a significant market share after that of MTN Uganda. With all those achievements, Airtel Uganda is still struggling to maintain its competitiveness in quality of service. Competition creates awareness among consumers, who also develop a number of perceptions about the quality of service, which may influence them in their choice for a service provider. This agrees with the assertion by Tumwine, 2020.

Service quality is considered a very important determinant in the field of telecommunications, upon which depend not only customer satisfaction but also retention and loyalty. In the case of Uganda-a very competitive market where various service providers are offering similar products and services-the quality of service becomes a major differentiator. Service quality in the field of telecommunications is often measured against a number of dimensions like network reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and pricing. Each one of these factors adds up to the way consumers perceive the overall quality of the service.

For example, the network should be reliable; customers would want to have constant access to communication services. Any failure of the network and poor coverage, such as high incidences of call drops, can dent customer satisfaction tremendously . Responsiveness and customer support are also fundamental; in a market characterized by numerous consumer options, quick and efficient service to queries by customers can also be one factor that affects loyalty to particular services.

Pricing strategies play an important role in the creation of appropriate perceptions of service quality in the minds of consumers. In a market like Uganda, where incomes are predominantly small, the cost of services is a major factor to consider. Airtel Uganda has, therefore, employed different pricing strategies, such as bundled offers and promotions, in a bid to attract budget-cautious consumers. However, these approaches have to be cautiously weighed against the demands of sustaining service quality, since aggressive pricing may result in cutbacks on network investment and efficient service delivery.

Apart from that, technological changes also play an important role in shaping customers' perceptions of service quality. With increasing innovations in the telecommunication sector, clients are becoming more eager for new technologies like 4G LTE and 5G that guarantee speedier and more reliable connectivity. Airtel Uganda has invested millions in upgrading its network, especially to meet these expectations. There are, however, those areas where it struggles-particularly in rural regions where the network is inconsistent.

Notwithstanding the effort Airtel Uganda has put into improving service delivery to meet customer expectations, the company still faces several challenges that contribute to tainting its record of effective service delivery. Among the major issues are network reliability; particularly, the countryside areas where infrastructure development remains at a snail's pace to catch up with urban centers (UCC, 2023). These areas complain about frequent network failure, slow internet speeds, and call drops that have reduced consumer satisfaction, and for some, taken away customers.

Another point is customer care. Although Airtel Uganda has increased and diversified its customer care centers and embraced digital support channels, consumers also complain of inconsiderate queuing time, insubordination by the customer care operators, and unattended complaints. Such complaints cumulatively factor into the negative impression of the company's quality of service.

Price is yet another challenge facing Airtel Uganda. While the company has implemented several price strategies to stand afloat, concerns exist that such pricing strategies at times make attempts that may not meet consumer expectations. In this respect, other customers have shown concern that bundling offers and promotions by the company are confusing and make no really added value

to the customers. There is also this perception that Airtel Uganda prices are generally high, particularly for data services, compared to competing brands, a factor that acts as a barrier to penetration among cost-conscious consumers (Kazooba, 2022).

Technological changes, though generally supportive in nature, do come with their own challenges for Airtel Uganda. While the company will need to upgrade its network from 3G to 4G and beyond, it faces the new challenge of ensuring that such technological improvements translate to real value for its subscribers. It is, however, still apprehensive about this being an unequal rollout, with the urban areas getting preferential treatment to the exclusion of rural ones, hence bias in technology deployment is for towns and cities. Such disparities in the quality of services can lead to perceptions of inequity among customers and impact overall customer satisfaction.

1.3 Importance of the Study.

With these challenges in mind, it becomes clear that there is a large information gap with regard to the perceptions consumers have about the quality of services that Airtel Uganda offers. In this light, the problem presents a critical challenge to the company as it strives to ensure customer satisfaction and build a base of loyal customers. Failure by the company to understand the consumers, a considerable hemorrhage of its customer base may occur due to failure to meet special needs and expectations of the clientele. This paper, therefore, seeks to ascertain the perceptions of service quality provided by Airtel Uganda and to identify factors that influence customer perception of such quality; it will also be establishing how these different dimensions of service quality contribute to the overall satisfaction of customers.

The insights acquired will help Airtel Uganda in its quest to improve its service delivery in a bid to gain a strategic market advantage. Besides, knowledge of the drivers of consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction will enable the company to devise ways of meeting customer needs more precisely. The company may decide to build network infrastructure in neglected communities, invest in customer care services, develop its pricing policies, or facilitate access to technological innovations by all consumers. The results from this study could, therefore, have wider implications for Uganda's telecommunication industry and provide relevant tips for other service providers and policy makers concerned with the improvement of service quality to enhance customers' satisfaction in the industry.

In a nutshell, Uganda's telecommunication industry has reached that juncture at which increasing competition and rapidly changing consumer expectations define the future of the sector. This, in fact, entails a great challenge in ensuring that the competitive position and the satisfaction of customers are met. This study seeks to fill the loopholes in understanding consumer perceptions about service quality at Airtel Uganda and offers recommendations which might therefore be useful in drawing actionable insights to help the company in improving its service delivery for market competitiveness.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to evaluate consumer satisfaction with Airtel Uganda's service quality. Through a comprehensive analysis of consumer perceptions, the research intends to identify the primary determinants of satisfaction and propose recommendations for enhancing service delivery. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the improvement of service quality within Uganda's telecommunications sector, thereby enhancing consumer experiences.

1.5 Specific Objectives

1. To evaluate the current level of consumer satisfaction with Airtel Uganda's service quality.
2. To identify the factors that influence consumer perceptions of service quality at Airtel Uganda.
3. To assess the relationship between various dimensions of service quality (e.g., reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy) and overall consumer satisfaction.
4. To provide actionable recommendations for improving service quality at Airtel Uganda based on consumer feedback.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What is the current level of consumer satisfaction with Airtel Uganda's service quality?
2. What factors contribute to consumer perceptions of service quality at Airtel Uganda?
3. How do different dimensions of service quality (e.g., reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy) influence overall consumer satisfaction with Airtel Uganda?
4. What recommendations can be made to enhance service quality at Airtel Uganda?

1.7 Scope of the Study

1.7.1 Subject Scope

This study will focus on consumer satisfaction with Airtel Uganda's service quality. It will examine various dimensions of service quality, including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, while also exploring how these factors impact consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

1.7.2 Geographical Scope

The research will be conducted within Uganda Christian University, targeting students who use Airtel Uganda services. The selection of this population is based on its sufficiency and relevance to the study, as the students are representative of the wider user base of Airtel Uganda.

1.7.3 Time Scope

The research will span a four-month period from May 2024 to August 2024. This timeframe has been chosen to ensure that the data collected reflects the most recent consumer experiences and perceptions of Airtel Uganda's service quality.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study holds significance for several reasons. First, it will provide Airtel Uganda with critical insights into consumer satisfaction levels and the factors driving them. This knowledge can be leveraged to enhance service delivery, improve customer satisfaction, and increase customer loyalty. Additionally, the findings will contribute to a broader understanding of service quality in Uganda's telecommunications sector. Policymakers and regulators, such as the Uganda Communications Commission, can utilize the insights gained to formulate policies and regulations that elevate service quality standards across the industry. Lastly, the study will enrich academic literature on consumer satisfaction and service quality, serving as a valuable reference for future research in this domain.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter delves into the literature surrounding consumer satisfaction and service quality in the telecommunications industry, with a focus on Airtel Uganda. It begins by defining essential concepts like service quality and consumer satisfaction, linking them to established theories like the SERVQUAL model. The chapter then examines existing research to gauge how satisfied Airtel Uganda's customers are, identifying key factors influencing their perceptions and analyzing how different elements of service quality—such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—affect overall satisfaction.

We also look at recommendations from past studies on improving service quality. By integrating both local and international insights, we aim to offer a comprehensive view of what drives consumer satisfaction and propose practical ways to enhance Airtel Uganda's services. The ultimate objective is to clearly identify the factors that influence customer experiences and suggest actionable steps for the company to improve.

2.1 Definition of Key Variables

Understanding critical variables like service quality and consumer satisfaction is crucial when examining telecommunications services. These variables are central to the research and help us understand the interaction between consumers and service providers such as Airtel Uganda.

Service Quality: In the context of telecommunications, service quality is a multi-dimensional concept that encompasses various elements that shape consumer perceptions of the service. At its core, service quality is about meeting or surpassing consumer expectations. The SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, offers a framework for evaluating service quality across five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. Each dimension is vital for understanding customer experiences with Airtel Uganda's services, although we will not consider tangibles here.

- **Reliability:** Reliability is a key aspect of service quality in telecommunications. It refers to a provider's ability to consistently deliver dependable services, such as stable network coverage and minimal disruptions. In Uganda, where the geography includes remote and rural areas, network reliability can vary widely. For Airtel Uganda, maintaining reliable network coverage is a significant challenge that requires infrastructure investments,

especially in under-served regions. Research shows that consumers highly value reliability, as consistent access to communication services is essential for both personal and business purposes.

- **Responsiveness:** Responsiveness measures how quickly and effectively a service provider addresses customer questions, problems, and requests. In telecommunications, resolving issues like network outages or billing errors quickly is crucial. Airtel Uganda's ability to respond promptly and effectively has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. This includes the efficiency of customer service channels, such as call centers and online support. With the increasing demand for immediate solutions, Airtel Uganda may benefit from enhancing its customer service infrastructure, possibly through the integration of AI-driven tools to provide quicker responses to common issues.
- **Assurance:** Assurance refers to the competence, courtesy, and trustworthiness of the service provider. It reflects consumer confidence in the company's ability to deliver quality services and handle their concerns professionally. In telecommunications, assurance is linked to how consumers perceive the expertise of customer service representatives, transaction security, and the overall trustworthiness of the provider. Airtel Uganda must work to build and maintain consumer trust, particularly in terms of data security, to avoid harming its reputation. Regular staff training and strong security measures are crucial for enhancing assurance.
- **Empathy:** Empathy is about how well a service provider understands and addresses individual customer needs. In a diverse market like Uganda, offering personalized service is key. Airtel Uganda can demonstrate empathy by providing tailored service packages, localized support, and flexibility in meeting customer needs. For example, specific plans for rural customers or small businesses can address unique challenges, improving customer satisfaction. Training customer service representatives to handle inquiries with care can also enhance the consumer experience.

Consumer Satisfaction: Consumer satisfaction reflects how well a company's services meet or exceed customer expectations. It is a critical indicator of business performance, especially in competitive markets. In Uganda, where the telecommunications sector is dynamic and competitive, consumer satisfaction sets one company apart from another.

Several factors influence consumer satisfaction, including network reliability, pricing, customer service quality, and value-added services. Network reliability is essential because it directly impacts service usability. Airtel Uganda must ensure high levels of network reliability to keep customers satisfied. Pricing is also important, as consumers are sensitive to the cost of services relative to the value they perceive. Airtel Uganda should offer transparent pricing strategies that provide value without hidden fees.

Customer service quality plays a significant role in satisfaction. Efficient and friendly customer support enhances the overall consumer experience. Airtel Uganda should prioritize training its customer service teams to effectively address customer needs. Additionally, the availability of value-added services, such as mobile money and entertainment options, affects consumer satisfaction. Airtel Uganda's innovative services like Airtel Money have been well-received, but expanding these offerings to meet growing consumer demands will be crucial.

2.2 Empirical Review

Research on service quality and consumer satisfaction in Uganda's telecommunications industry provides valuable insights into the current market, particularly in relation to Airtel Uganda. This section examines studies and reports that address the research questions raised earlier.

What is the Current Level of Consumer Satisfaction with Airtel Uganda's Service Quality?

Research presents a mixed picture of consumer satisfaction with Airtel Uganda's service quality. A survey by the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) indicates that Airtel Uganda enjoys high satisfaction levels in urban areas, largely due to robust network coverage and a variety of service options. However, satisfaction is lower in rural regions, where network reliability and access to services are less consistent. The UCC report notes that Airtel Money is particularly well-regarded for its reliability and accessibility, but network issues in rural areas still negatively impact overall satisfaction.

A study by Tumwine (2020) on network quality and consumer satisfaction in Uganda highlights that Airtel Uganda has made significant investments in expanding its network, leading to improved satisfaction in urban areas. However, the study also points out ongoing issues in rural areas, where network coverage gaps persist. Collaborating with local governments and communities to improve infrastructure could help address these issues and enhance satisfaction.

Customer feedback from various channels, including social media and call centers, also offers insights into satisfaction levels. While Airtel Uganda receives positive feedback for services like Airtel Money and data bundles, common complaints include call drops, slow internet speeds, and delayed customer service responses. These issues highlight areas where Airtel Uganda needs to improve to boost overall consumer satisfaction.

What Factors Contribute to Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality at Airtel Uganda?

Several factors influence how consumers perceive service quality at Airtel Uganda. Technical quality, such as network stability and data speeds, is a primary factor. Kaggwa (2019) found that consumers value reliable and consistent service, especially those who rely on mobile data for work or education. While Airtel Uganda's efforts to upgrade its 4G network have positively impacted perceptions, similar improvements are needed in rural areas.

Customer service quality is another critical factor. Mugisha's (2021) study emphasizes that prompt and effective customer service significantly shapes consumer perceptions. Airtel Uganda's customer service has received mixed reviews, with some praising the professionalism of the staff, while others express dissatisfaction with issue resolution. Improving customer service through better training and technology could enhance consumer perceptions.

Pricing and billing practices also affect how consumers view the service. Transparent and fair pricing is crucial, as consumers are sensitive to costs and hidden fees. Studies suggest that Airtel Uganda should simplify its pricing structures and avoid unexpected charges to improve consumer satisfaction. Offering flexible pricing options could cater to diverse consumer needs.

The availability of value-added services also plays a role. Airtel Uganda's innovative services like Airtel Money have improved its image as a customer-centric provider. Expanding these services to include more options in entertainment, education, and health could further enhance consumer satisfaction.

Influence of Service Quality Dimensions on Overall Consumer Satisfaction

Research highlights the significant impact of service quality dimensions on consumer satisfaction. Reliability is crucial, as it affects the consistency and availability of services. Tumwine (2020)

found that reliable network coverage leads to higher satisfaction levels and customer loyalty. For Airtel Uganda, ensuring reliable service is essential for maintaining consumer satisfaction.

Responsiveness is another important dimension. Nabukeera (2018) found that quickly resolving customer issues is essential for positive consumer perceptions. Improving customer support through better training and advanced technologies can enhance responsiveness and overall satisfaction.

Assurance, including trust and competence, is also vital. Mwesige (2010) found that consumer trust in the service provider is linked to higher satisfaction and increased use of additional services. Airtel Uganda should focus on maintaining high standards of security and professionalism to build consumer trust.

Empathy, or the ability to understand and address individual customer needs, significantly influences satisfaction. Mugisha (2021) found that personalized service and understanding customer preferences contribute to higher satisfaction. Airtel Uganda can enhance satisfaction by offering customized service packages and localized support.

Recommendations for Enhancing Service Quality at Airtel Uganda

Based on research findings, several recommendations could improve Airtel Uganda's service quality and consumer satisfaction. First, investing in infrastructure to enhance network reliability, particularly in rural areas, is crucial. Partnering with local governments and communities to improve infrastructure can help fill coverage gaps and improve service quality.

Second, improving the responsiveness and effectiveness of customer support is essential. Training staff to handle inquiries efficiently and implementing advanced customer service technologies, like AI-driven chatbots, can boost responsiveness and customer satisfaction.

Third, adopting transparent and fair pricing strategies is vital for building consumer trust. Simplifying pricing structures, avoiding hidden charges, and offering flexible pricing options can address consumer concerns and improve satisfaction.

Finally, fostering a customer-centric culture within the organization can enhance the overall consumer experience. Training staff to provide personalized service and regularly conducting

customer satisfaction surveys can help Airtel Uganda continuously improve its services and maintain a competitive edge.

2.3 Summary of Literature

The literature review highlights the complex relationship between service quality and consumer satisfaction in Uganda's telecommunications industry. While Airtel Uganda has made significant strides in expanding its services and improving some aspects of service quality, challenges remain, particularly in meeting consumer expectations across different regions. The research reviewed emphasizes the importance of focusing on key service quality dimensions—reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—to drive consumer satisfaction. Addressing gaps, especially in rural areas and customer support, will be crucial for improving consumer satisfaction and maintaining a competitive edge in the market. The insights gained from this review will guide the analysis in the following chapters, identifying specific areas for improvement and developing strategies to enhance service quality at Airtel Uganda.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter details the methodology that will be used in this research in trying to appreciate consumer satisfaction with regard to service quality of telecommunication companies in Uganda, with special focus on Airtel Uganda. This covers the type of research design, target population, sampling techniques adopted, sample size, means of data collection, procedures for research, data analysis techniques, as well as the limitations of the study.

3.2 Research Design

The design adopted for this study is a descriptive correlation in which there is an explanation of the relationship between two variables: the independent variable. This design will provide an improved understanding of how different dimensions of service quality influence customers' overall satisfaction with Airtel Uganda services.

3.3 Research Population

The target population will be Airtel Uganda customers, particularly the student population in the various faculties at Uganda Christian University. This population targets all kinds of users who can give a general view in regard to service quality and satisfaction of different types of users.

3.4 Sampling Technique

A simple random sampling technique will be adopted in which every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. This can make the sample representative and reduce bias in order to enhance the reliability and validity of research findings.

3.5 Sample Size

The sample size shall be 100 respondents drawn from students across the various faculties at Uganda Christian University. The sample size will be determined by the formula:

$$n = \frac{1 + N(e)^2}{2e^2} \quad n = \frac{1 + N(e)^2}{2N}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = total population

e = level of significance

Thus, this makes the sample size statistically sufficient to represent the total population with the level of confidence desired.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

The data collection shall be made through a structured questionnaire, which has been chosen for its efficiency in response capture. In the questionnaire, questions are included which would elicit as much information as possible about customers' perception of service quality and satisfaction. Following distribution, the questionnaires that are completed are collected and the responses checked for completeness and accuracy.

3.7 Research Procedure

Permission from the Faculty of Business Administration will be sought before actual data collection commences, authenticating the process of the research. The questionnaires shall now be administered on the respondents, who shall fill them in regard to their experience with Airtel Uganda. After completion of data collection, cleaning, editing, coding, and analysis of the questionnaires will follow. This shall involve summarizing the data into tables, showing frequencies and percentages to pinpoint facts.

3.8 Data Analysis

The responses shall be summarized into frequencies and percentages presented in tables.

Comparing and contrasting responses shall be done in detail with support from available literature and expert views to help bring out patterns and correlations between dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

The following constraints were encountered during this study:

Change in Perception: Most of the participants had thought that this study was being carried out for the management of Airtel Uganda; hence, there could have been a biasness in their responses. The researcher, therefore, has to reassure them of confidentiality of the study and that the research was an independent one.

Reliance on Honesty: In this study, reliance on self-response data would mean that accuracy is based on the honesty of the respondents. To reduce the impact of this effect, the researcher made sure to impress upon the respondents the need for honest answers and reminded them of the anonymity and confidentiality of their response.

Response Variability: Such response variability could be due to the differences in interpretation of the questions or differences in individual experiences with Airtel Uganda. The current study would try to escape this problem by adopting a structured questionnaire coupled with extensive data analysis to identify inconsistencies and make amends.

Bias in Sampling: Even though the random sampling method was adopted for this study, it can still be problematic as far as sampling bias is concerned, given the kind of social circles and faculties involved. In this regard, statistical representativeness about sample size and diverse respondents across different faculties has to be guaranteed.

Practical problems of questionnaire distribution and collection: questionnaires may not be returned at all, or all the questions may not be answered. To overcome such a problem, the researcher will pursue the respondents in order to have an understanding of the meaning of the questionnaire. This will ensure higher response rates and data quality.

Taking into consideration that several challenges were faced during this study, the methodology has been built to ensure that the insights derived are robust and reliable in order to draw

conclusions on consumers' satisfaction with the service quality provided by Airtel Uganda. In fact, minute details in data collection, theory development, and analysis are targeted toward comprehensive findings that would add substantially to knowledge about customer experience and perception towards service quality.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

Analysis of the data on respondents' perceptions of the service qualities offered by Airtel Uganda is detailed in this chapter. The presentation of the data is interpretative since it also tries to draw findings about customer satisfaction. The chapter first outlines the demographic profiling of the respondents, which may be essential in putting a framework around further analyses.

This paper assesses those critical elements of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These facets indeed form the backbone on which one would ascertain the level at which Airtel Uganda is able to surpass customers' expectations and needs. Each of these topics will be critically examined by providing tables and statistical summaries to obtain the trends and patterns that might not be overtly visible. The above components are analyzed in this chapter to reveal how they influence the overall customers' satisfaction, and it further goes to unveil strengths in service offerings that Airtel Uganda has and the wanting.

This will finally give a highlight of the performance of Airtel Uganda in the key service areas and set the stage for recommendations that shall help bring about increased customer satisfaction and loyalty.

4.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

This section presents respondents' general background information. The components include the response rate, the faculty the person belongs, gender, age bracket, and number of years they have used Airtel Uganda

4.1.1 Response Rate

The response rate shows the percentage of the target population that responded to the study against the percentage of those that did not respond.

Table 4.1: Response Rate

Nature of Response	Distribution (number)	Distribution (%)
Responded	100	100
Did not respond	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 4.1. Response Rate As shown from Table 4.1, the response rate is an indicator of success regarding the reliability and generalization of the findings. The response rate defines the proportion of the target population who participated in the study. In this case, the 100% response rate means that all the targeted sample respondents participated by providing a response. This is quite a high level of response and is considered one of the major strengths of the study.

This is particularly important because a high response rate minimizes the chances of non-response bias, which could occur when either a set of characteristics or the opinions of the non-participants differ much from that of the participants. In these regards, it can badly affect the results and the precision of the conclusions derived from the data. This would therefore cut out this form of bias by assurance that every targeted participant has responded to the research study.

Besides, with a 100% response rate, the data collected are likely to represent the whole population under study. The participation of all will assure an accurate reflection of views and experiences of the target group because there are no gaps in the data which may result from missing or unrepresented voices. In effect, conclusions from this data are stronger and can thus be confidently applied to the greater population.

The ideal response rate realized by this study justifies the reliability and validity of the data. A finding like this is accurate not only in this group but is also generalizable to the whole

population for an appropriate deduction of meaningful and precise information on the research questions.

4.1.2 Respondents' Gender

The questionnaire had a section for respondents to indicate their gender.

Table 4.2: Respondents' Gender

Gender	Number	Percentage (%)
Male	43	43
Female	57	57
Total	18	100

Source: Primary data

The following table, Table 4.2, summarizes the gender structure for the respondents in this study. The responses indicated that 43% of the participants were male, while 57% of the respondents were females. A critical look at the structure indicates a slightly higher order in the proportion of female subjects in this research; this aspect may have impacts on the outcome of this study in regard to making sense of the findings.

The gender make-up of the sample is important for more than one reason. This may be slightly biased in general because the slight majority are females, and many preferences or experiences regarding telecommunication services may be gender-specific. For example, studies have shown that male and female customers tend to attach different relative importance to the various dimensions of service quality. Women could be more sensitive in issues such as customer support, ease of access of service, and network reliability, but other variables could be very important for men, such as pricing and service features.

This forms the basis on which the results of the study should be contextualized. The slight majority of females in the sample suggests that their views may count, proportionately, a bit more in the overall results. This will be most relevant in the satisfaction levels and service expectations, given that genders can shape how they evaluate differing dimensions of service quality.

For example, in case the study reveals that the general level of satisfaction with customer care is higher than with network reliability, it would be very interesting to see how those two aspects are received differently by men and women. Maybe women give a higher score to having constant and available customer care, while men might be more sensitive to technical issues related to the service.

Overall, the gender balance in Table 4.2 underlines an important demographic factor affecting the levels and expectations of satisfaction in service quality. Adding these differences to the depth and accuracy with this awareness, one can consider the perceptions of different parts of the population.

4.1.1 Faculty

The respondents were asked to indicate their faculties on the questionnaire.

Table 4.3: Faculty

Faculty	Number	Percentage (%)
Business	41	41
Law	19	19
Engineering	17	17
Theology	5	5
Social sciences	10	10
Agriculture	8	8
Other	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 4.3 gives the distribution of the respondents across various faculties. A large number of the respondents were from the Business faculty at 41 percent, while those from Law and Engineering were 19 and 17 percent, respectively. It would also determine how different groups could perceive Airtel Uganda's services based on academic training.

Business students are the largest proportion and are likely to have enhanced understanding in areas of customer service and business operations. Their studies in most instances involve in-depth analyses in service quality and business operations, hence they are likely to have high expectations in service reliability and responsiveness. With such a background, their assessment of Airtel Uganda might have been influenced, hence their overall satisfaction.

However, the same services may be judged on procedural fairness and transparency by the respondents from the faculty of law because of the legal ethos and analytical bent of mind. The divergence of views in the above case may thus come out to be very different from those from business studies or engineering streams.

The inclusion of different faculties makes sure that the diversity in the pool of respondents is a fact, hence broad views are obtained. This leads to a wide range of perspectives so that the study may mirror a wider array of perspectives to make comprehensive and credible conclusions.

This disparity in the number of faculties represented is because of random sampling, where no given faculty was targeted in particular. The proportionate number of faculties represented here by Business and Law faculties is dictated by the researcher's social networks and professional connections. This becomes a limiting factor that should be taken into consideration at the time of interpreting the results, as it brings into view the academic background influencing the reviews.

The balanced view will, therefore, be assured since the representation of the respondents across faculties will provide a balanced view of service quality perceptions. The academic background thus provides the understanding of how academic influence enhances the analysis for better conclusions on Airtel Uganda's service performance.

Age Bracket

The questionnaire had a section for respondents to indicate their age bracket.

Table 4.4: Age Bracket

Age Bracket (years)	Number	Percentage (%)
16-19	14	14
20-24	59	59
25-29	18	18
30 and above	9	9
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

Table 4.5: Distribution by age. The age groups are distributed such that the survey reveals 14% between the ages of 16-19 years, 59% between the ages of 20-24 years, 18% between the ages of 25-29 years, and the remaining 9% above 30 years of age. This also indicates that a large percentage of the respondents come from the 20-24 year group, which is the most dominated.

This particular dominance is within the 20-24 age group, which constitutes university students. These individuals highly utilize mobile services, especially for communication, accessing the internet, and social media. Due to the frequent use of services, they position themselves aptly to provide credible reviews about service quality at Airtel Uganda. Since the respondents interact with mobile services frequently, they have the ability to comment in greater detail about aspects such as service reliability, responsiveness, and overall performance.

On the other hand, a lower percentage of the respondents were aged 30 years and above, which would show that this older age bracket is relatively less representative of the study. The priority

considerations of such an age group may be network reliability, service quality of customer care, and reliability of service rather than promotional deals or price. The small percentage indicative of this age bracket may suggest that the specific needs and priorities of this particular demographic are relatively less captured in the study's outcomes.

In other words, the age distribution among the respondents is of great significance to provide a holistic view of the rated service quality. The age factor influences the use and rating of mobile services in that the younger users can provide an indication of the current trends and the expectations for the services offered, while older users may focus more on the reliability of the services and the customer service provided. Knowledge of this dynamic becomes important in the interpretation of data for specific improvements meant to suit diverse customer needs.

4.1.2 How long they used Airtel Services

Respondents were asked to indicate how long they had used Airtel services.

Table 4.5: How long they used Airtel Services

How long they have used Airtel	Number	Percentage (%)
1-11 Months	23	23
1-5 years	63	63
6-10 years	14	14
More	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

It is reported from Table 4.5 that the series distribution of Airtel service usage among the respondents was using Airtel for 1-11 months constituted 23%, 63% between 1-5 years, and from

6-10 years 14%. Further, no respondent was found to have remained with Airtel service for more than a decade.

It also shows that 63% of the respondents have been customers of Airtel for a period ranging from 1 to 5 years. Such a huge proportion of the respondents would give an indication of relatively stable users who have had ample experience and thus have a well-rounded opinion about the quality of services provided by Airtel. They are likely to have experienced a wide variety of service conditions and thus would be knowledgeable about the performance of the company over time.

What is striking is the complete absence of respondents who have used its service for more than 10 years, and from such a trend, a few inferences can be reasonably made. It could be that Airtel has not been in the market long enough to retain customers for that period or simply that customers change their service providers after some time due to changing priorities or dissatisfaction.

The length of time they have utilized the services becomes an imperative guide to customer loyalty and satisfaction. Those users who have been long-standing are more likely to experience most of the aspects that relate to the service quality, which would go a long way in helping the company draw conclusions about its overall performance. The fact that most fall in the 1-5 year category suggests that while many stay with Airtel for a considerable period of time, there could be various reasons why customers turnover before reaching the 10-year mark.

In the aggregate, this service duration analysis provides critical trends in customer retention and loyalty, hence showing areas wherein Airtel can further improve its service quality for the long-term satisfaction of subscribers to reduce churning.

B. Customers' expectation about Airtel Services

Table 4.6 Reliability

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
When Airtel promises to do something by a certain time they do so	3	1.8
When customers have problems the firm is sympathetic and reassuring	2	1.732
Airtel is dependable	2	1.732
Airtel provides their services at a time they promise to	4	2

Source; Primary Data

Table 4.6 Assess why customers perceive Airtel Uganda to be reliable or not. Reliability in service quality refers to a company's ability to perform the desired service dependably and accurately. The mean of 3 for the statement "When Airtel promises to do something by a certain time, they do so" means that the customers are averagely satisfied with the reliability of Airtel. That is to say, while some find the service dependable, others may not.

The large standard deviation of 1.8 tells us that the customers' perception of reliability does vary significantly. Therefore, such high variation implies that not only are experiences with Airtel's reliability inconsistent, but some find the service reliable and on time, while others find frequent delays and problems. This difference might occur in service delivery between different regions or distinct groups of customers.

Other reliability-related metrics are scaled higher by an average of 2, further showing that many customers have problems such as service delays or inconsistencies. Such situations can only worsen overall customer satisfaction and result in frustration among customers. For example, frequent disruptions to service or slow responses to customer inquiries weaken trust that Airtel is committed to providing promised services.

The large dispersion of the range of reliability experience, as suggested by standard deviation, prescribes that these are issues Airtel needs to resolve more effectively. In this direction, it is

very necessary to ensure the service quality is uniform across different regions and customer segments. Improvement in reliability would have helped Airtel make a more substantial positive contribution towards higher customer satisfaction and lower dissatisfaction on account of lack of dependability of service.

Table 4.6 shows that while some customers find Airtel to be reliable, many customers are highly dissatisfied with its reliability. The wide variation in experience of the customers with regard to reliability of its services calls for the standardization and improvement of its service delivery. Improvement in the area of reliability issues may help in increasing the overall satisfaction of customers and ensure greater customer loyalty.

Table 4.7 Responsiveness

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
Airtel tells their customers exactly when the service will be done	4	2
Does Airtel respond to customer requests	3	1.73
Airtel customers expect prompt service from its employees	4	2
Airtel employees always have to be willing to help customers	4	2

Source; Primary Data

Table 4.7 brings out how responsive Airtel Uganda and its employees are to the needs of the customers. In this case, responsiveness means the ability of a firm to reliably inform when services are satisfactorily completed, and to deal with customer inquiries in an effective manner. This data would suggest that the mean for statements like "Airtel informs their customers precisely when the service will be finished" is around 4. That would mean a big percentage of customers feels Airtel is generally efficient in its communication and timely in resolving issues concerning services.

The relatively high average scores denote the fact that quite a number of customers view Airtel as responsive and are capable of managing the timelines for its services. The responsiveness has to be good, since this is something that directly influences customer satisfaction. Once updates are given in good time and responses to customers are timely, the trust and general satisfaction with the firm tend to improve.

However, the standard deviations of about 2 show a significant spread in the customers' experiences. Such a spread could imply that while some customers view Airtel as responsive, others might be experiencing delays or less effectiveness in communication. These differences in perceptions could arise because of a number of factors, such as the nature and complexity of issues handled, the effectiveness of service processes, or the personal performances of the customer service representatives.

Customers whose problems are more complex may take longer to have them resolved, and therefore feel that the responsiveness is lower compared to simpler inquiries. Besides, the competence of different customer service representatives may be unequal, hence making the responsiveness inconsistent or variable.

For Airtel to give a better and more even level of customer satisfaction, it should be looking to improve responsiveness in regard to all interactions. Streamlining the procedure for services could be one issue, training the customer service personnel to enhance their reception, and handling all the inquiries from the customers effectively and smoothly.

While the data in Table 4.7 above shows that most customers regard Airtel Uganda to be responsive, variation in customer experiences indicates further opportunities for improvement. By improving at inconsistencies and overall responsiveness, Airtel can hence work toward the uniform satisfaction of customers.

Table 4.8 Assurance

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
Airtel customers trust its employees	4	3
Airtel customers feel safe in their transactions with its employees	3	1.8
Airtel employees are polite	4	2.8

Source; Primary Data

Table 4.8 shows the dimension of assurance in terms of service quality by Airtel Uganda. Assuring means that the customers have faith in the company and its employees, including trustworthiness, competence, and safety. From this, it clearly follows that customers, on average, perceive assurance in Airtel as very high, with the mean being 4 for the statement "Airtel customers trust its employees." This high rating here means that the customers are generally of the opinion that Airtel's staff are knowledgeable and polite, hence making them trust the company and feel secure in dealing with the company.

The high average score indicates that a large number of customers have had positive experiences with the employees at Airtel, which in turn can create a very high level of trust. Indeed, positive contacts, where staff are seen to be competent and also polite, are crucial in establishing customer confidence. If customers feel they are working with people who know what they are doing and also show respect, their confidence in dealing with the company is greatly improved.

However, this is considerably high with a standard deviation of 3 for the statement relating to trust, meaning that customers are considerably different from each other. Whereas a certain number have managed to develop a sense of trust, others may not have. This can be related to negative experiences in the past that might have ruined their trust in Airtel. Poor service or broken promises have had a doubt arise on the reliability of the company and the competence of staff.

In this direction, Airtel will have to make sure that all efforts at confidence-building are stepped up with a view to restoring customer confidence in the company's service through proper training of staff to attend to customers' needs promptly, as well as ensuring that such problems do not occur at all. Trust is built by trying to minimize negative experiences through constant reliable and positive ones related to the specific customer or situation.

Overall, Table 4.8 highlights that, generally, Airtel Uganda succeeds in fostering confidence among its customers, but individual experiences are highly variable. Reducing this variability through a concentration on consistent, high-quality interactions serves to further strengthen overall customer assurance and satisfaction.

Table 4.9 Empathy

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
Airtel employees give customers personal attention	4	2.8
Airtel employees know what needs the customers have	3	1.73
Airtel have the customers best interest at heart	2	1.732
Airtel Uganda's operating hours are convenient to all customers	4	2.8

Source; Primary Data

Table 4.9 measures the degree to which Airtel Uganda and its employees are responsive to their clients. Empathy, in this context, is associated with the company's ability to appreciate and take care of the special needs and challenges of its clientele. The data that is accrued from the empathetic behaviors of Airtel yield very mixed trends where a diverse set of respondents are satisfied and dissatisfied in some areas.

The mean values indicate positive tendencies in certain aspects of service delivery for customers. Precisely, the ratings for "Airtel employees give customers personal attention" and "Airtel's operating hours are convenient" are both in the region of 4. Therefore, customers generally consider that Airtel gives individual attention and the service hours are accommodative. Such factors are positive in their meaning and indicate that yes, indeed, Airtel does try to pay attention to the needs of individual customers and does offer flexibility in its service offerings.

However, the statement "Airtel has the best interest of customers at heart" scored considerably lower, averaging about 2. This wide margin unearths a point of critical concern in that whereas customers recognize the more pragmatic elements of customized service and convenience, there is a perceived lack of full commitment by Airtel to look after the greater interests and well-being of its customers. The score in this question is lower, showing that there is a gap perceived by the

customers between what the company provides in terms of service and its commitment to customer welfare.

Therefore, large standard deviations in this category add to the demonstration of variability in customer experiences. This could be because of inconsistent levels of service-or because customers perceive varying levels of concern by the company. For example, some may feel looked after and appreciated, while others may feel that they are not provided with deeper or more meaningful support. This can create mixed feelings as to whether indeed Airtel truly is empathetic in its approach towards the care of its customers.

In this respect, Airtel needs to emulate more empathetic manifestation. This may be corroborated by continuing the best levels of personal services and flexible hours of operation, but the company needs to inculcate a corporate attitude that genuinely addresses customer needs and places them first. Initiatives may range from a more proactive engagement with customers, a clearer communication of the company's commitment to their well-being, and regular addressing of feedback with a view to bringing services in line with customer expectations.

While Airtel Uganda is perceived as empathetic on certain aspects, such as personalized attention and service hours, as shown in Table 4.9, there is still room for improvement in actually paying attention to customer interests. This could therefore give a leeway through which Airtel can reduce the gap in customer satisfaction and develop a better and positive relationship with its customers.

C. Level of agreement

Table 4.10

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation
You are satisfied with Airtel Services	2	1.732
You are Proud to be a customer of Airtel	2	1.732

Source; Primary Data

Table 4.10 suggests that there is a high level of dissatisfaction with the quality of the services of Airtel Uganda as expressed by its customers. Low average scores of 2 reflect considerable

discontent among respondents in terms of both customer satisfaction and pride. That means many customers are not satisfied with the services of Airtel and hence do not feel a high degree of pride in association with the company.

A standard deviation of 1.732 further reveals the level of this dissatisfaction. There might be few satisfied customers, but generally, there is discontent. This could be connected with a number of issues previously discussed, including unreliable service delivery and perceived lack of concern for customer needs. A feeling of pride in subscribing to Airtel is observed in minimal amount among the customers; hence, they might not consider their association with this service provider as something valuable or rewarding. This improves the chances that these customers might consider other service providers.

Aggregated data analysis indicates that, whereas Airtel Uganda does reasonably well in certain aspects, such as responsiveness, assurance, and some aspects of empathy, vital concerns arise as regards service reliability and overall customer satisfaction. Variability in the experience of customers, as shown from the data, portends the fact that the service quality provided by Airtel is never constant. It is this inconsistency in the services offered that brings along the grievances of the many users and thus points out areas of important changes.

In the future, Airtel Uganda should work on enhancing the reliability of its services and strengthening its interaction with customers at every touchpoint. This will definitely enhance customer satisfaction and reduce perceived gaps in the reliability and customer centricity of the service provision. Wherefore, Airtel will be in a position to focus on retaining the clientele it already has and gaining new clients by making pointed improvements in the areas of reliability and empathy. It will, thus, go a long way toward reinforcing this important perception of itself as a reliable and valuable telecommunications service provider.

In other words, the findings indicate that Airtel Uganda needs to strive to ensure that its services become more reliable and of higher quality in order to increase the levels of satisfaction and loyalty among its customers. Indeed, paying attention to these main areas will make Airtel improve in image, reduce churning, and thus improve its relationship with its subscribers.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the findings of the research, draws conclusions from the findings, and makes recommendations on how Airtel Uganda can enhance its service quality and overall customer satisfaction. The summary amalgamates findings from the study and literature for practical strategies on improvement and future development.

5.2 Summary of Major Findings

Current Level of Consumer Satisfaction with Airtel Uganda's Service Quality

The results indicated that, on the whole, the customers of Airtel Uganda are relatively dissatisfied. Some of the main causes of dissatisfaction include:

Tariffs and Perishability of Bundles: A greater percentage of the respondents were dissatisfied with Airtel's pricing, high tariffs, and internet bundle perishability. They argued that this makes them get poor value for money since time for consumption of purchased bundles becomes very minimal.

Network Problems: The case of high speeds, as partly addressed, is still a nightmare. Whereas partial improvements have been reported in the recent past, customers both in urban and rural areas continue to face this problem with frequent disruptions that upset everybody.

Indifferent Service: There is perceived disregard and lack of commitment from Airtel to the improvement in the network-related problems. This perceived apathy has further increased disgruntlement and hurt the overall customer experience.

Factors that Contribute to Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality at Airtel Uganda

Several factors are responsible for shaping the perceptions of consumers with respect to the service quality offered by Airtel Uganda:

Technical Quality: Network stability and data speeds are basic in ensuring customer satisfaction. Kaggwa, 2019, regretted that such a service needs to be reliable, as many users depend on mobile data either for professional or educational reasons. While Airtel Uganda tries to improve its 4G network, it needs to extend such improvements into areas in the countryside where their services are still extremely bad.

Customer service quality: Good and timely customer service contributes a lot to the consumer's perception. As explained by Mugisha, 2021, good and timely service is needed for positive customer experience. Airtel Uganda has received mixed reviews in this matter; though impressed with the professionalism of the support personnel, several customers were unhappy with how their problems were addressed. Improvement in better training and technology of customer service is paramount.

Pricing and Billing Practices: Pricing and billing practices should be transparent and nondiscriminatory; this would form the most crucial basis of customer satisfaction. People are very sensitive to hidden charges and convoluted billing methods. Making pricing simple, as well as offering clear, flexible options, can reduce dissatisfaction related to cost and billing.

Value-Added Services: The introduction of new services like Airtel Money has added positively to the image of Airtel. This should be expanded in terms of an increase in options for value-added services including entertainment, education, and health with a view to improve the level of customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Influence of Service Quality Dimensions on Overall Consumer Satisfaction

Reliability: This is one of the dimensions which result in customer satisfaction. Tumwine adds that reliable network coverage often leads to satisfaction and loyalty. In this case, customers view Airtel Uganda as unreliable since many express dissatisfaction with the services as a result of inconsistent delivery.

Responsiveness: The company needs to be responsive enough to solve customer problems in the shortest time possible. Nabukeera (2018) referred to responsiveness as a factor

predominantly influencing the perceptions of the customers. The study found that Airtel Uganda, in general, is responsive to customer needs, hence contributing to satisfaction, though there remains variability in how responsiveness is experienced by different customers.

Assurance: Assurance means trust and competency in delivering services. According to Mwesige (2010), consumer trust leads to a higher level of satisfaction by consumers. The result suggests that Airtel Uganda has realized an appreciable level of assurance, but there is still an avenue to consistently engage in building the trust of its customer base.

Empathy: This is the understanding and catering to individualized customer needs. Mugisha (2021) received insights that personalized services and attention to customer preferences increase satisfaction. In this study, it was indicated that Airtel Uganda is perceived as empathetic to its customers, although there are inconsistencies within this perception, hence suggesting areas for further development.

Conclusion

Results from the study indicate that customers are highly dissatisfied with factors such as the poor network service, unsatisfactory customer service, non-transparent pricing, and inconsistent added value services. All these put together contribute to a very negative overall perception of the quality of service at Airtel Uganda.

These concerns and the factor of customer satisfaction necessitate comprehensive reforms in Airtel Uganda's service delivery. Improvements, for instance, would involve aspects like reliability, customer service, price transparency, and empathy towards the customer in order to improve customer experience and create more loyalty.

5.3 Recommendations

Enhance the Reliability of the Network:

Infrastructure Upgrade: Expand the network infrastructure to ensure full coverage for high-speed data services in all regions, including the most disadvantaged rural areas. This may be through upgraded or new towers, higher speeds, and reliability enabled by newer technologies like 5G.

Regular Maintenance and Monitoring: Regularize the maintenance of the network, as well as its performance monitoring. Take proactive steps in advance to locate and resolve the network problems before it affects the customer. Apply data analytics to predict impending interruptions of service and proactively address them to ensure continuity and reliability.

Customer Service Improvement:

Comprehensive Staff Training: Create a comprehensive and intensive staff training program in order to enhance customer service representatives' problem-solving, communication, and empathic skills. Technical knowledge, the art of working with customers, and the best ways to resolve issues shall be emphasized in training courses.

Multichannel support: Extend customer support channels to online chat, social networking, on-phone support, and in-person support. All channels should be integrated and offer consistent, quality service. Take advantage of leading-edge technologies such as AI-powered chatbots to handle routine queries and responses in real time.

Simplify Pricing Structures: Review the current pricing models for simplification to ensure clarity and transparency. Create simple, clearly understandable pricing plans with easy comparability for customers. Communicate as clearly as possible regarding any price or billing practice changes to customers.

Introduce Flexible Pricing Options: Price plans should be able to accommodate a wide range of customer needs and use patterns. To this end, prepaid and postpaid service options should be available, with the ability to bundle customized data and call solutions.

Improve Value-Added Services:

Diversification of Offerings: Invest in the development of the assortment of services with value added, enhanced entertainment options, education, and health-related applications. Develop strategic alliances with content providers and service innovators to offer unique benefits and exclusive features to enhance the overall customer experience.

Innovate: Allow innovation at Airtel Uganda through a team that shall be mandated to study new service ideas and technologies. From time to time, new services and features shall be introduced in response to customer needs and preferences.

Gain Customer Trust and Confidence:

High Standards: Avail and maintain high standards of security, professionalism, and ethics in the handling of customers. Ensure that there is protection of customer data and clarity and transparency in privacy policies, followed to the core.

Develop and Maintain Trust: Keeping customers informed regarding changes in services, performance metrics, and company initiatives on a regular basis in a very transparent manner. Seek feedback from them and respond to their grievances to build up a trusting relationship over time.

Solutioning: Develop and provide service packages personalized to customers in each tier according to their needs and preference. Use insights through data to drive the right offers and recommendations for each customer to ensure relevance and value.

Localized support: Provide support localized to address specific regional or demographic needs. Adapt services and communication according to cultural and contextual differences in different strata of customers.

Corporate Social Responsibility: Be visibly involved in community development programs and environmental conservation processes. Contribute to local projects, educational initiatives, and sustainability projects that help in building an appropriate brand image with high levels of corporate responsibility.

Customer Education: Avail information to the customers on the services available, how to use them effectively, and the benefits derived from such. Run awareness campaigns and also avail materials that will enable customers to make timely decisions regarding their needs in telecommunications.

By acting upon the recommendations, Airtel Uganda is likely to experience significant improvement in the quality of its service and enhanced customer satisfaction, which would consequently keep its customers loyal. These findings present a solid foundation for such improvements and pave the way toward achieving long-term success within the competitive telecommunications market.

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**APPENDICES
QUESTIONNAIRE**

FOR CONSUMERS OF THE SERVICES OF AIRTEL UGANDA

Dear sir/madam

My name is Lwanga Johnpaul Ssentongo, and I am a student at Uganda Christian University, pursuing a Bachelor of Business Administration. I am conducting a study on "Consumer Satisfaction with the Level of Service Quality of Telecommunication Companies in Uganda: A Case Study of Airtel Uganda." You have been specifically chosen to participate in this study. The information gathered will be used solely for academic purposes and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. The success of this study greatly depends on your response, and your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

A. Bio Data

Please tick the most appropriate answer

1. Faculty

a) Business

b) Law

c) Engineering

d) Theology

e) Social sciences

f) Agriculture

g) Other

2. Gender

a) Male

b) Female

3. Age

a) 16-19years b) 20-24 years

c) 25-29 years d) Above 30 years

4. How long have you used Airtel services

a) 1-11months b) 1-5 years

c) 6-10 years d) more

B. Customers' expectations about Airtel services

Using the scale below, indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1=Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3=Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 =Strongly agree

Reliability	When Airtel promises to do something by a certain time, they do so	1 2 3 4 5
	When Airtel customers have problems, the firm is sympathetic and reassuring	1 2 3 4 5
	Airtel is dependable	1 2 3 4 5
	Airtel provides their services at the time they promise to do so	1 2 3 4 5
Responsiveness	Airtel tells their customers exactly when the service will be done	1 2 3 4 5
	Does Airtel respond to customer requests	1 2 3 4 5

	Airtel customers expect prompt service from its employees	1 2 3 4 5
	Airtel employees are always willing to help customers	1 2 3 4 5
Assurance	Airtel customers trust its employees	1 2 3 4 5
	Airtel customers feel safe in their transactions with its employees	1 2 3 4 5
	Airtel employees are polite	1 2 3 4 5
Empathy	Airtel employees are expected to give customers personal attention	1 2 3 4 5
	Airtel employees are expected to know what the needs of their customers are	1 2 3 4 5
	Airtel are expected to have their customers' best interests at heart	1 2 3 4 5
	Airtel expected to have operating hours convenient to all their customers	1 2 3 4 5

C. Using the scale below, indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

1=Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3=Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 =Strongly agree

1. You are satisfied with airtel services

1 2 3 4 5

2 You are proud to be a customer of airtel

1 2 3 4 5