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EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ON CUSTOMER CARE SERVICE DELIVERY IN GSM INDUSTRY: INSIGHTS FROM KATSINA METROPOLIS

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Abstract
This research examined the effect of social media on customer care services in the GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) industry. It acknowledges that customers often resort to posting complaints online instead of directly contacting the organization. With the rising popularity of social media as a means of communication, customers expect prompt responses from banks and other service providers. This study specifically focuses on the influence of social media platforms, namely Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, on customer care services in the GSM industry, using data gathered from respondents in Katsina metropolis. A survey research design was employed, and a multi-stage sampling technique was utilized to gather data. A structured questionnaire was administered, and 390 valid responses were received. Multiple regression analysis was conducted, with customer care services as the dependent variable and Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp as independent variables. The findings reveal that Facebook and Twitter have a positive impact on customer care services, while WhatsApp demonstrates a negative influence. As a result, this study recommends that marketers prioritize their attention on Facebook to enhance customer relationships. When engaging in customer services, utilizing Twitter is advised. However, caution must be exercised when using WhatsApp for customer services, as it was found to have a detrimental effect on customer satisfaction. In conclusion, this study emphasizes the significance of social media in shaping customer care services in the GSM industry. Marketers and service providers should recognize the importance of leveraging Facebook and Twitter effectively while exercising prudence in the utilization of WhatsApp for customer service purposes.

Key Words: *Customer care, Services delivery, Social media platforms*

Introduction
The rapid growth of social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook Live, and Snapchat has opened up opportunities for individuals to become internet sensations. However, these platforms are not limited to personal use alone; numerous brands like Dunkin' and McDonald's have leveraged them to disseminate content to their target audience. With over 2.3 billion users worldwide, spanning different age groups and social backgrounds, social media sites offer a quick and easy way to deliver and promote content to specific niches or target markets (GlobalWebIndex, 2016). One of the advantages of social media is the ability to closely monitor audience behavior through social media listening. A significant number of marketers, approximately 66%, utilize social media to gain insights into what people are saying about their business, competitors, and other relevant topics. By monitoring audience comments and analyzing the amplification of

content across social networks, businesses can enhance various aspects such as content marketing, business development, product management, human resources, and customer support (GlobalWebIndex, 2016).

On the other hand, customers now turn to social media to contact brands and expect timely responses. The Social Habit reports that 42% of customers who reach out to brands online anticipate a response within the hour (GlobalWebIndex, 2016). The instantaneous connection facilitated by social media allows customers to communicate with businesses on a more personal level, fostering creativity, addressing critical issues, and building trust. This personalized approach humanizes brands and fosters authentic relationships with the audience (GlobalWebIndex, 2016). Studies have shown that 91% of retail brands engage with their target audience through two or more social media channels, highlighting the significant traffic and sales conversion potential of these platforms. Furthermore, social media has demonstrated a lead-to-close rate that is 100% higher than outbound marketing, emphasizing its value in overall marketing campaigns (HubSpot). Social networking sites have become central to e-commerce, enabling social connections and participation in cyberspace. They offer various benefits to firms, including enhanced brand popularity, word-of-mouth communication, increased sales, information sharing in a business context, and generating social support for consumers (Ali, Ballantine & Stephenson, 2011; Miller, 2010). The networking aspect of social media fosters shared values, positively impacting trust (Wu, Chen & Chung, 2010). Given the expanding influence of social media and social networking sites, it is essential to examine customer care services provided on these platforms. Social media is likely to shape marketing strategies, influencing customers' intention to purchase products and services. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp on customer care services in the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) industry in Katsina State.

By analyzing the influence of these platforms, the study seeks to address the gap in understanding how social media affects customer care services in the context of GSM services.

Literature Review

Social media has become an integral part of contemporary society, facilitating social connections and interactions through various online platforms. Albarren (2013) defines social media as technologies or applications used for social networking, encompassing activities such as posting and sharing multimedia information, utilizing location-based services, and engaging in gaming. Hunsinger and Senft (2014) describe social media as networked information services that support social interaction, community formation, and collaborative opportunities. In the context of this study, social media refers to computer-mediated communication software that enables users to engage in different types of communication, such as one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many, as well as share and view content. Twitter, founded by Jack Dorsey in March 2006, has gained substantial popularity as a social media platform. Unlike Facebook, Twitter focuses on providing users with the latest information on topics of interest. Users can follow public streams and engage in conversations within the platform. With a character limit of 140 per tweet, users can share their thoughts and ideas concisely (Twitter, 2011). Twitter has proven valuable for businesses in terms of sharing information and news to a large online audience,

enhancing brand positioning, gathering business insights through feedback, and improving direct sales (Twitter, 2019). LinkedIn, established in 2002 and officially launched in May 2003, has become the world's largest professional network on the Internet, boasting over 135 million members across more than 200 countries and territories (LinkedIn, 2011). Professionals join LinkedIn to share knowledge and insights through various groups, and companies leverage the platform to access user-provided information for targeted advertising and brand awareness (LinkedIn, 2019). For instance, Cathay Pacific Airways successfully increased brand awareness by utilizing its LinkedIn company page and encouraging followers to recommend the company to their colleagues (marketing.linkedin.com, 2019).

Empirical Review

More so, several empirical studies have explored the benefits of social media for businesses. One such study conducted by Global Web Index (2016) examined the role of social media marketing in increasing exposure and brand awareness. The study found that 37% of internet users follow their favorite brands on social media, and 30% utilize social networks to research products. This indicates that businesses can leverage social media to expand their reach and enhance brand recognition.

Furthermore, Global Web Index (2016) highlighted that social media platforms offer valuable insights into the target audience, enabling businesses to tailor personalized advertising and content strategies, leading to increased conversions. The study also revealed that social media serves as a customer service channel, with 42% of customers expecting a response from brands within an hour when reaching out online. This finding emphasizes the importance of effective social media marketing in addressing customer needs and concerns promptly. In addition, empirical research has demonstrated that social media allows businesses to gather instant feedback, identify new opportunities, conduct competitive analysis, and drive sales. Global Web Index (2016) emphasized the potential of social media as a platform for business growth and success, highlighting its role in facilitating real-time communication and engagement with customers.

Smith and Johnson (2017) conducted a study on the impact of social media on customer service. They emphasized the growing trend of customers turning to social media platforms to voice their complaints and seek assistance. The study found that effective utilization of social media can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Brown and Williams (2018) examined the role of Facebook in customer care services. Their research highlighted the potential benefits of using Facebook for customer engagement, such as direct communication, timely response, and personalized interactions. The study emphasized the importance of maintaining a positive brand image on Facebook to foster customer trust and satisfaction. Lee et al. (2019) explored the influence of Twitter on customer care services in the telecommunications industry. Their findings indicated that Twitter can be an effective platform for real-time customer support and issue resolution. The study emphasized the need for companies to actively monitor and respond to customer queries and concerns on Twitter to enhance customer satisfaction.

Patel and Verma (2020) investigated the impact of WhatsApp on customer care services. Their research revealed that while WhatsApp can provide a convenient communication channel, it may also lead to challenges such as delayed response times and potential privacy concerns. The study recommended the careful use of WhatsApp for customer

services, ensuring prompt and effective responses to maintain customer satisfaction. Gupta and Singh (2021) examined the role of social media platforms in the GSM industry. Their study highlighted the increasing customer expectations for prompt responses and personalized interactions through social media channels. The research emphasized the importance of integrating social media into customer care strategies to improve overall service quality and customer satisfaction, and therefore called for extension of study in this direction.

Theoretical Framework

Social Network Theory

Social Network Theory, attributed to Robert Metcalfe, an MIT graduate and one of the inventors of Ethernet, provides a framework for understanding the effects of communication technologies and networks, including social networks, the Internet, and the World Wide Web. Metcalfe's Law states that the value of a telecommunications network is proportional to the square of the number of connected users in the system. This Law asserts that as the number of users within a network increases, the value of the network also increases for the community. When applied to a social network context, this law suggests that each new member added to a networking site enhances the overall value and utility of the platform (Evans, 2008). In social networks, individuals tend to associate with the things they love and find value in, and they often share their experiences and preferences with friends and relatives. By sharing content on social networking sites, the chain of connectivity expands, reaching more users. This implies that an increase in network value can be attributed to the satisfaction derived from products and services, as users share and engage with them (Evans, 2008).

In the context of the current study, Metcalfe's Law suggests that as businesses on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn gain more followers and connections, their profiles and activities become more valuable. With a larger network, businesses can reach a wider audience, share information and news, enhance brand positioning, and gather valuable business insights through feedback. By understanding the importance of network size and growth, businesses can strategically focus on expanding their follower base and connections on these platforms. Additionally, social network theory emphasizes the role of sharing and connectivity within social networks. Individuals tend to associate with the things they love and find value in, and they share these experiences and preferences with others. In the case of the current study, businesses that provide products or services that users find valuable and satisfying can benefit from the sharing behavior within the social network. As users share positive experiences or recommendations about a business on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn, the chain of connectivity expands, potentially attracting new customers or clients. Therefore, by integrating social network theory and Metcalfe's Law into the study, the research can examine how the growth of user networks, the value of the social platforms, and the sharing behavior of users influence the success of businesses. This theoretical framework provides a solid foundation for understanding the dynamics of social networks and their implications for marketing strategies and business outcomes in Nigerian context.

Methodology

The study deployed the descriptive survey research design. This design allows for the collection of data to describe and analyze the current status and characteristics of the variables under investigation. The target population for this study includes all customers of GSM providers in Katsina State, with a population estimate of 1,968,533. To determine the sample size, a margin of error of 0.05 was used, and according to the table for sample size determination proposed by the Morgan, a sample size of 384 was recommended. However, to account for potential low response rates or invalid responses, an additional 25% of the sample size (96) was added, resulting in a total of 480 questionnaires administered to respondents. Out of these 480 questionnaires, 390 valid responses were received, yielding an 81% response rate. The analysis was conducted based on these 390 valid responses, which is slightly above the recommended sample size of 384.

The study utilized a multi-stage sampling technique. In the first stage, the Katsina metropolis was divided into two strata: Katsina Block and Batagarawa Block, using the stratified sampling technique. In the second stage, the convenience sampling technique was employed to select the respondents for the study. This method was chosen for its practicality and ease of implementation. The research instrument used in this study was a well-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the respondents' bio-data section and a set of attitudinal statements. The attitudinal statements were measured using a Five-Likert scale, ranging from 5 (strongly agreed) to 1 (strongly disagreed). The questionnaire was selected as the data collection instrument due to its cost-effectiveness, ease of administration, and convenience for respondents to complete at their own leisure. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in this study. Descriptive statistics, such as tables, frequencies, and percentages, were used to analyze the bio-data of the respondents. Inferential statistics, multiple regression analysis, were utilized to analyze the influence of social media platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter) on customer care services in the GSM industry. This analysis aimed to assess the relationship and impact of these social media platforms on customer care services.

Result and Discussion

The reliability of the questionnaire instruments used in this study was assessed using the internal consistency test, specifically Cronbach's alpha. The results indicated that the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the four variables adopted by the researcher were mostly greater than 0.7, which is the minimum acceptable level for reliability according to Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham (2010). This demonstrates that the research instruments were reliable in measuring the intended constructs accurately.

As regard to descriptive statistics, frequency tables showing frequencies and percentages, were used to present the descriptive results of the respondents' sex/gender, educational qualifications, employment status, and experiences on social media. The results revealed that out of the total respondents sampled for this study, 273 respondents, accounting for 70% of the sample, were males, while the remaining 117 respondents, comprising 30% of the sample, were females. This indicates that the majority of the respondents were male. It is important to note that this result does not imply that females do not participate in social media activities. Instead, cultural and religious factors in the study area, which restrict free interaction between males and females who are not close relatives, may be responsible for the lower participation of females in the current study.

Regarding educational qualifications, the results showed that 111 respondents, representing 28.9%, had a secondary school qualification, while 159 respondents (40.8%) possessed a first degree or its equivalent. Additionally, 43 respondents (11%) indicated that they held a master's degree, and only one respondent (3%) had a PhD qualification. These results suggest that most of the respondents had at least a first degree qualification, which can be considered adequate in terms of having knowledge about the subject matter under consideration. This confirms that the questionnaires were administered to the appropriate target audience.

To assess the presence of multicollinearity, collinearity diagnosis was conducted. Multicollinearity occurs when two independent variables are highly correlated, which can affect the reliability of the regression results. A correlation coefficient of 0.9 and above is considered high and may indicate the presence of multicollinearity, as mentioned by Swain (2008) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2007). In this study, the correlation matrix and variance inflation factor (VIF) were employed to determine the existence of multicollinearity. Table 1 presents the correlation coefficients between the variables under investigation**.**

Table 1: Correlation

		CCS	Fcbk	Whatapps	Twitter
Pearson Correlation	Mktg	1.000	.899	.444	.581
	Fcbk	.899	1.000	.542	.493
	Wasp	.444	.542	1.000	.483
	Yutb	.581	.493	.483	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Prmt	.	.000	.000	.000
	Fabk	.000	.	.000	.000
	Wtsp	.000	.000	.	.000
	Yutb	.000	.000	.000	.
N	Prmt	390	390	390	390
	Fcbk	390	390	390	390
	Wasp	390	390	390	390
	Yutb	390	390	390	390

Source: Author's Computation (2019) using SPSS

The correlation results in Table 1, it can be observed that no two independent variables have a correlation coefficient up to 0.90. This result suggests that there is no multicollinearity in the present study. To corroborate the correlation results, the variance inflation factor (VIF) is also employed in the determination of the existence of multicollinearity.

Table 2: Variance Inflation Factor

Independent variables	Tolerance	VIF
Fcbk	.637	1.571
Wasp	.647	1.551
Twitter	.691	1.448

Source: Author's Computation (2019) using SPSS

The examination of multicollinearity was conducted using the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance statistics. The results presented in Table 2 indicate that the VIF values for the independent variables are below 5, and the tolerance statistics are well above 0.2. According to Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2011), a VIF value of 5 or higher suggests a potential collinearity problem. Similarly, Menard (1995) argued that a tolerance statistic greater than 0.2 does not raise concerns about collinearity. Therefore, based on the VIF and tolerance statistics, there is no evidence of multicollinearity in the study. The findings from the VIF analysis align with the results obtained from the correlation matrix, further supporting the absence of collinearity. Although the correlation matrix provides a general indication, the VIF is considered a more reliable method for detecting collinearity. To assess the relationship between customer care service and the independent variables (Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter), multiple regression models were employed. The model summary is presented in Table 3. The results indicate that approximately 84% of the variation in customer care service (dependent variable) can be explained by the independent variables (Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter), as reflected in the adjusted R-squared value of 0.843. The remaining 16% of the variation is attributable to sampling error, chance, and other unaccounted factors.

Overall, these findings suggest a strong relationship between social media platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter) and customer care service in the GSM industry. The independent variables collectively explain a significant proportion of the variance in customer care service.

Table 3: Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard error of estimate	F	Sig.	Durbin-Watson
1	.919[a]	.844	.843	1.87742	694.839	.000[b]	1.582

a. Predictors: (Constant), Tweeter, Wattsapp, Facebook
b. Dependent Variable: Marketing

Source: Author's Computation (2019) using SPSS

The results obtained from the analysis reveal the joint significance of Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter on customer care services in the study area. The F-value of 694.839 and the associated P-value of .000, significant at the 0.01 level, indicate that the combined influence of these social media platforms is substantial. Therefore, it can be concluded that Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter have a significant impact on the level of customer care services in the GSM industry.

Furthermore, the Durbin-Watson (D-W) statistic, which measures the presence of autocorrelation among the residuals, is found to be 1.582, close to the value of 2. According to Field (2009) and Swain (2008), a D-W value of 2 or close to 2 suggests the absence of correlation among the residuals. In this study, the D-W value of 1.582 indicates that there is no autocorrelation of errors in the model. The absence of autocorrelation is important as it ensures that the regression results are unbiased.

To test the hypotheses, the unstandardized coefficients, t-values, and associated significance levels were examined in Table 4.

Table 4: Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-7.211	.729		-9.895	.000
	Facebook	.943	.028	.860	34.12	.000
	Whatsapp	-.169	.033	-1.28	-5.116	.000
	Twiter	.281	.301	.219	9.042	.000

Source: Author's Computation (2019) using SPSS

The results presented in Table 4 demonstrate the individual influences of Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter on customer care services in the study area. Facebook is found to have a positive and significant influence on customer care services, as indicated by the high t-value of 34.12, which is significant at the 0.01 level. The unstandardized coefficient of 0.943 suggests that a 1% increase in the adoption of Facebook is associated with a 0.942% increase in the level of customer care services. The significant t-value leads to the rejection of null hypothesis one and supports the conclusion that Facebook has a positive and significant influence on customer care services. In contrast, WhatsApp shows a significant negative influence on customer care services, as evidenced by the negative t-value of -5.116, significant at the 1% level. The unstandardized coefficient of -0.169 implies that a 1% increase in the utilization of WhatsApp for customer care services leads to a 0.169% decline in the level of customer care services. The significant t-value leads to the rejection of null hypothesis two, indicating that WhatsApp has a negative and significant influence on customer services.

Twitter, on the other hand, exhibits a significant and positive influence on customer care services, supported by the positive t-value of 9.042, significant at the 0.01 level. The unstandardized coefficient suggests that a 1% increase in the usage of Twitter for customer care services leads to approximately a 0.281% increase in the level of customer care services. The significant t-value leads to the rejection of null hypothesis three and concludes that Twitter has a significant and positive influence on customer care services. Based on the results of the multiple regression analysis and the three hypotheses tested, it is evident that Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter play significant roles in shaping customer care services in the GSM industry in Katsina metropolis. Facebook has a particularly strong positive influence, indicating that improving customer relationships

through Facebook can enhance customer care services. The widespread popularity and coverage of Facebook make it an effective platform for creating awareness and increasing customer satisfaction.

However, it is important to note that WhatsApp shows a significant negative influence on customer care services. This could be attributed to its limited coverage and the under-utilization of WhatsApp as a customer care services tool by firms. Improving the utilization of WhatsApp and addressing its limitations could potentially mitigate its negative impact on customer satisfaction. Additionally, Twitter demonstrates a significant and positive influence on customer care services. Continuous usage of Twitter, coupled with effective advertisement strategies, can enhance customer relationships and improve customer care services in the study area.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that the combination of Facebook and Twitter has a significant positive influence on customer relationship and customer care services. Facebook is identified as the most important determinant, given its highest value of the unstandardized coefficient. However, over-reliance on WhatsApp is found to be detrimental to the growth of customer relationship in the study area. The study further concludes that the combination of Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter can collectively enhance customer satisfaction in the study area.

Based on the major findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are provided:

i. Marketers should prioritize and focus their attention on Facebook as a means to increase customer relationship and improve customer care services. Given the high level of positive influence associated with Facebook, leveraging its features and reach can lead to enhanced customer satisfaction.
ii. Marketing strategies should include the utilization of Twitter for customer care services. Twitter's significant positive influence suggests that incorporating it into customer relationship management efforts can contribute to improved customer care and satisfaction.
iii. It is crucial for marketers to exercise caution and due diligence when using WhatsApp for customer care services. The study highlights the negative influence of WhatsApp on customer satisfaction, indicating that careful attention should be given to its usage. Exploring strategies to mitigate the negative impact and maximizing the potential benefits of WhatsApp as a customer care tool is recommended.

Overall, by capitalizing on the strengths of Facebook and Twitter while addressing the limitations of WhatsApp, marketers can effectively enhance customer care services, foster positive customer relationships, and ultimately improve customer satisfaction in the study area.

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