

CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF SMS AS A STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TOOL IN NIGERIAN BANKING INDUSTRY

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The need for proficient financial institutions in a globalized world like ours cannot be overemphasized. Standing on this assertion, Nigerian banks embraced the use of Short Message Service (SMS) as a medium of conducting business transactions (mBanking) and maintaining customer-management relationship (mCMR) in today's e-World. An attempt to document this new business strategy pioneered the need to investigate customers' perception on the use of SMS as a strategic management tool in Nigerian Banking Industry. Strategic management theory and symbolic interaction theory were used as guide while descriptive survey design in which both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were adopted for the study. Multi-stage sampling was used in selecting respondents. A total of ninety-six (96) respondents who are customers of five (5) selected banks in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria were examined. Structured questionnaire were distributed as well as In-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted among the respondents. The data collected were tested using descriptive statistics and direct quotes. The findings were discussed with reference to relevant empirical literatures and recommendations for management of organizations both for practice and future research highlighted.

Keywords: Business, Customers, Management, Relationship, Strategy

BACKGROUND

The need for modern financial institutions to thrive and to keep afloat in the midst of competition instigates the adoption of various strategies in rendering banking services and operations. One of the strategies adopted in today's banking industry is the Information Communication Technology (ICT) and fast internet services. Avalanche of studies have shown that the utilization of ICT and internet services in rendering bank services to customers have significantly enhanced the trend and quality of performance, people and possibilities obtainable in current e-business world (Khraim, Shoubaki and Khraim, 2011; Hernandez and Mazzon, 2006). The development of e-business or e-transact breeds new products, new players as well as new channels of communication in banking industry (Khraim, Shoubaki and Khraim, 2011). As a product of new channel of communication, text messaging otherwise known as Short Message Service (SMS) has become a tool adopted by banks for financial transactions and sustenance of customer retention, customer profitability, customer loyalty as well as competitive advantage in recent times (Khurana & Chaudhary, 2010).

The focus of this study is to investigate customers' perception on the use of SMS as a strategic management tool in Nigerian Banking Industry. Short Message Service (SMS) is a worldwide recognized wireless service that enables typing and sending of brief electronic message between two or more mobile phones, fixed or portable devices over a phone network (mBlox, 2010; CTIA, 2010). The word 'SMS' is often used to describe both the channel and the messages sent to recipients (Kasesniemi and Rautianen

2002). Prior to its adoption in banking industry, SMS is popularly used by young urbanites as a social memo to connect with friends and family members as it allows for voiceless communication, fast conveyance and very useful in noisy environment (Elvis, 2009; Amin, 2007). The study conducted by mBlox revealed that SMS is the world's most encompassing means of communication (that supported video, voice, picture and text messages) available on all mobile phones and mobile networks and its reaches 5 billion phones worldwide (mBlox 2010). For example, in another study, it was reported that consumers in the U.S. exchanged not less than 5 billion text messages daily in March 2010 (CTIA, 2010). Correspondingly, Nielsen Mobile revealed that an average consumer in the U.S. sends 600 messages per month compared to using less than 200 voice minutes (Nielsen Mobile, 2010). More reports revealed that almost one quarter of the U.S. population lives in mobile-only households, meaning that they have substituted or subscribed their landline for mobile phones as they tend to communicate via text messaging or SMS than making calls (CTIA 2010). All these evidences portrayed the level of customers' preference for SMS as a medium to communicate with business enterprises or organizations in the United States.

At present, SMS has become a new channel of conducting business transactions (mBanking) and maintaining customer-management relationship (mCMR) in today's banking industry. The introduction of mobile banking (mBanking) and mobile customer-management relationship aids customer's contact with banks much better and easier (Amin, 2007; Amin and Ramayah, 2010). According to Amin (2007), mBanking and mCMR are methods used in delivering bank services to customers through short message service (SMS) using mobile phone. These processes serve as alternative to internet banking (Ahmad and Zakarya, 2015). They are easy, flexible and reliable means of communication for banks and their customers particularly in this era of globalization and security breaches (Ogunlowore and Oladele 2014). Globalization has shaped the style and form of bank operations from conventional arrangement to new form of banking practices. It is from this view point that most banks in developing countries and Nigeria inclusive follows the development strategies by adopting the use of SMS to execute business transactions, customer care services and cordial customer-management relationships for their customers which also form the basis of bank survival in a highly competitive business world (Ogunlowore and Oladele 2014; Madueme, 2009; Timothy, 2012).

Further studies revealed that banks are likely to employ both push and pull strategies for disseminating information through SMS to customers (Scharl, Dickinger and Murphy, 2005). Push strategy is a predominant method which involves sending unsolicited messages to customers in order to influence their attitude, knowledge and perception toward certain products or services at a given period of time. On the other front, pull strategy involves sending messages based on customers' requests (e.g., based on infor-

mation they found via mobile applications or on banner ads). To be sure, some studies have observed that 50 percent of text messages received by bank customers were in a push mode and 45 percent in pull mode and the remaining 5 percent in both (Dickinger & Hagherian, 2004). This observation was justified with the fact that push strategy is more cost-effective to banks than that of pull strategy, but customers may view the unsolicited contents they received through push strategy as intrusive and unwelcome (Yunos, Gao and Shim, 2003). Notable is the fact that the use of SMS as a customer-management relationship (CMR) tool in banking industry has some hitches particularly when right messages are not delivered to the right customers (Shankar, Venkatesh, Hofacker & Naik, 2010). This study aims to close this gap by investigating customers' perception on the use of SMS as a strategic management tool in Nigerian Banking firms. The study is conducted among some selected customers of five commercial banks in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. The consideration for Ibadan is due to fact that it is the largest city in West Africa. Ibadan city is fast expanding in terms of business and commercial activities having more than half of her residence educated (Nigerian Demographic Profile, 2014). Therefore, financial institutions like banks and insurance companies found the city suitable for their business activities and customer's buildup.

MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Short message service (SMS) is increasingly becoming the means which modern organizations particularly banking firms utilized in communicating and connecting with their customers in order to build strong customer-management relations in recent times. The adoption of SMS as medium for customer-management relationship in Nigerian banks rest on the acuity that text messaging is relatively cheap and even more cheaper when sent in bulk (bulk SMS cost as low as 0.75 kobo per SMS) to large recipients. More so, when information is disseminated through SMS it reaches out to virtually all the recipients because almost every one carries their cell phones with them everywhere they go. Thus, it is assumed that the message is either in a pocket or purse away from being read. However, it is important to investigate if SMS communication enhances customers' perception on the effectiveness and performance of Nigerian banking firms in recent times. More importantly, a survey report revealed that many organizations conceived that Short Message Service (SMS) is a perfect medium for sending transaction alert, business updates, and other sensitive messages than sending emails or making phone calls to their customers or suppliers (Pyramid Research, 2010) with the assumption that SMS is easy to read on a mobile phone than email that comes by dozens except one has a smart phone. Another assumption is that SMS is immediate and engaging than phone calls which can be untimely or disruptive due to bad network coverage. More so, SMS messaging is frequently use for communication among business men and women as well as young urbanites who are mostly on the move for business, career development and social purposes. Thus, the study examines the extent to which the use of SMS shapes customer-management relationship in Nigeria. Furthermore, some authors noted

that SMS or text messaging is increasingly used as a means of promoting public relations i.e. efforts for organization to understand the publics and the publics to equally understand the reasons for whatever actions an organization takes in contemporary society (Thurlow and Brown, 2003). Also, by corporate organization, business enterprises, retail companies, schools, hospitals and religious centers tend to communicate their products, services, programmes, appointment reminders, corporate policies and decisions through SMS communication in recent times (Taiwo, 2008). As a result, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders are receiving SMS more often than not on their mobile phones. On the average, mobile subscribers get at least five SMS per day. Thus, this study aims to know the customers' attitudes toward different text messaging services by Nigerian banking firms.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to short message service (SMS) as a critical factor in organization-public relationships in Nigeria. However, the specific objectives include to:

- I. Document the perception of customers on the use of SMS in Nigerian banking system
- II. Investigate the extent to which the use of SMS shape social relationship between banks customers and management in Nigeria
- III. Ascertain customers' attitudes toward different text messaging services by Nigerian banking firms

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study utilized strategic management theory and symbolic interaction theory as theoretical guide for the study.

Strategic Management Theory: An Overview

Strategic management is the act or science of mixing different strategies, formulations, implementations and evaluations together in a bid to achieve certain goals and objectives for an organization (David, 2005; Mohd Khairuddin Hashim, 2005; Zainal Abidin Mohamed, 2005). From this perspective, Strategic Management Theory (SMT) can therefore be conceived as a management theory derived from the combination of systems perspectives, contingency approach and information technology approach (Raduan, Jegak, Haslinda & Alimin, 2009). It symbolizes the systemic process of specifying organization's objectives, developing policies and plans to achieve and attain these objectives, with strategic pattern of distributing or allocating resources toward implementing the policies and plans (Sheldrake, 2003; Raduan, et. al., 2009). Proponents of Strategic Management Theory (SMT) generally assumed that SMT encompasses profit-maximizing and competition-based theory, the resource-based theory, the survival-based theory, the human resource-based theory, the agency theory and the contingency theory (David, 2005; Mohd et. al, 2005; Raduan, et. al., 2009). The consequential interactions of these theories are diagrammatically presented in Fig. 1 below:

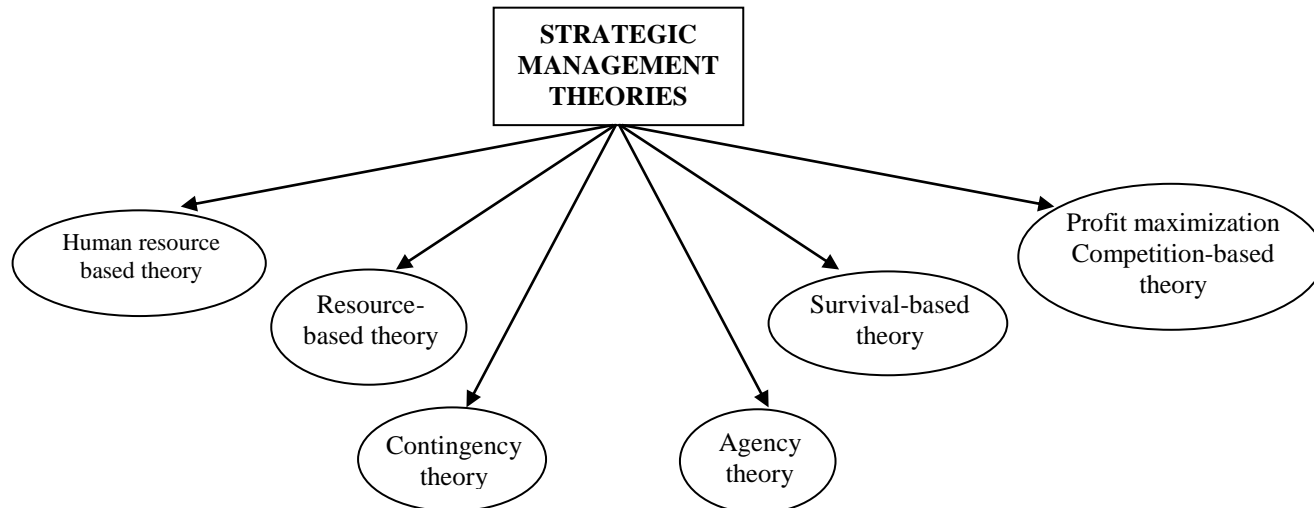


Fig 1: Strategic Management Theory Adapted from Raduan, et. al., 2009.

Having demonstrated the theoretical nexus among the sub theories that made up the strategic management theory, it is important to briefly explain the views of management theorists on each of the components. According to them, the profit-maximizing and competition-based theory focuses on the notion that the central objective of business organization is to exploit long term profit and develop sustainable competitive advantage over rivals in the external business environment. Correspondingly, the industrial-organization posits that the state or position of an organization within the external business environment is very essential for attaining and sustaining competitive advantage, which relates to the theoretical stance of the traditional industrial-organizational theorist who perceived strategic management as a systematic model for assessing competition within an industry (Porter, 1981). On the other hand, the resource-based theory materialized from the belief that the basis of organizations competitive advantage is inherent in the internal resources, as opposed to their positioning in the external environment. That is rather than simply evaluating environmental opportunities and threats in conducting business, competitive advantage depends on the unique resources and capabilities that a firm possesses (Barney, 1995).

Furthermore, the resource-based view of strategic management theory predicts that certain types of resources preserved and controlled by organizations have the capacity to generate competitive advantage and eventually greater organizational performance (Ainuddin et al., 2007). This view differs from human resource-based theory which stresses the significance and relevance of human element in developing proactive strategy for attaining development in an organization. In addition, the agency theory accentuates the underlying significant relationship between the shareholders or owners and the

agents or managers in ensuring the success of the organizations. Moreover, the contingency theory maintains the idea that there is no one or single best way or approach to manage organizations. Thus, it is worthwhile for organizations to grow managerial strategy based on the situation and condition facing the operations and performances of the organizations. As a matter of fact, it is confirmed that during the process of strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation, these main strategic management theories will serve as tools to assist management of organization in making strategic and guided managerial decision. Finally, the survival-based theory based on the concept that organization needs to continuously adapt to its competitive environment in order to survive. In this direction, it is theoretically hypothesized that organizations that strive to sustain its competitive advantage position and willing to improve performance should constantly adopt unique method of communicating or interacting with customers to know their expectation and aspiration on the quality of services rendered for the benefit of securing customer's satisfaction. Thus, SMS becomes the viable tool to meet the drive for effective and efficient communication to satisfy customer's social and commercial needs. This, therefore, drives us to the symbolic interaction theory.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interaction is another theoretical approach that has contributed to the understanding of events and phenomena in organization and society at large. It is a perspective associated with sociologists like George Herbert Mead, Charles Cooley, John Dewey and so on. It focuses on explaining events and meaning attached to them. With other focus on the institutions in society, their roles and/or functions, cooperation and antagonism as bases for understanding or explaining events, it focuses on the creative individuals in society. Specifically, it draws attention to the role of symbol and language in human interaction. The major concern of symbolic interactionists, therefore, is to explain the meaning of everyday life, events or occurrences, "via close observational work and intimate familiarity". It is believed that it is through this method that the underlying social process/realities and form of human interaction can be revealed for proper understanding of events in the world. For the interactionists, human behaviour is not just a response against "mechanistic or biological instincts". It is indeed, a reaction to interpretation of definition of situations. According to Bilton et. al 1(1996).

Individuals monitor their own behaviours by conscious thought and this thought can only operate through symbol learnt in a social context largely through language and communication. Through shared communication we gains access to shared meaning and social expectation (p. 624)

Gong by this view point, the individual is not and cannot be an isolated individual. S/He is indeed, interlocked to a network of relationships that lead to diverse occurrences in society. In other words, symbolic interactionism can be described as a theoretical approach that explains the sociological underpinning factors that led to the adoption

of SMS as a strategic tool for promoting cordial customer-management relationship, competitive advantage and organizational survival based in Nigerian banking firms. In applying symbolic interaction perspective to the study, the use of SMS as a medium of communication between customers and their banks help to develop a set of symbols with meanings about social realities are attached. In a social system, symbols, communication and the meaning attached to actions or inactions serve as the edifice upon which social interactions and relationships between or among actors (customers and organizations) are built. Symbolic interactions bring out the abstract aspect of human relations into social reality. It somewhat codifies expected behavior and structures social interactions along the dimensions of the “acceptable” and the “unacceptable” (Omobowale, 2013). For instance, Nigerian banks conceived that it is acceptable to increase the level of customer-management relationships by sending out information or alerting customers through text messages than making phone calls or sending emails for the sake of improving customer acquisition, customer retention, customer loyalty and customer profitability as well as organizational survival.

As a feature of a personalized end-user communication instrument, SMS is perhaps the easiest channel on which customers can be reached on the spot, as they carry the mobile phone all the time no matter where they are. Besides, the operation of SMS as a functional tool to exchange information over phones, key instructions makes its usage very simple and splendid (Suoranta and Mattila, 2004). This is quite different from internet banking which can offer broader functionality, but has the limitation of use only when the customer has access to a computer and the Internet (Collins and Sarpong, 2014). Similarly, urgent warning messages, such as SMS alerts, are received by the customer instantaneously; unlike other channels such as the post, email, Internet, telephone banking, etc. on which a bank's notifications to the customer involves the risk of delayed delivery and response. The SMS platform also acts as the bank's means of alerting its customers, especially in an emergency situation; e.g. when there is an ATM fraud happening in the region, the bank can push a mass alert (which can be subscribed or unsubscribed by the customers) or automatically alert on an individual basis when a predefined ‘abnormal’ transaction happens on a customer's account using the ATM or credit card. This competence mitigates the risk of fraud going unnoticed for a long time and increases customer confidence in the bank's information systems (Grönroos, 1994). However, customers expected behavior and structures of social interactions in banking firms determine the dimensions of the “acceptable” and the “unacceptable” meanings that is placed on the acceptance of SMS as a strategic tool for enhancing business transactions and customer-management relationships in Nigerian banking industry.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive survey design in which self-developed questionnaire and in-depth interview were used for data collection. The consideration for combining both questionnaire and interview is to fully capture the phenomena understudy. The questionnaire was made up of two parts (A and B). Part A sought information on

demographic/socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Part B consisted of questions on short message service as a factor in organization-public relations in Nigeria. It also consists of questions with options from which respondents are expected to pick response as applicable (close-ended) as well as questions which allow respondents to freely express their opinion on the subject matter (open-ended). Multi-stage sampling technique was used in selecting the 150 respondents as sample for the study. Out of which 96 respondents were able to fill the questionnaire correctly. Purposive sampling was used to select 25 participants for the in-depth interview. 5 interviews were conducted in each of the banks selected for the study. The participants are customers of the selected banks who volunteer to participate in the study. The data was analysed using both descriptive statistics and direct quotes.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

All customers above the age of 15 years within the sampled banks were included. Other customers who are within the age 0-14 years were excluded from the study.

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument for data collection was questionnaire, which was subjected to face and content validity in order to determine the extent to which the instrument measures what it is designed to measure, according to subjective assessment of experts and researchers in sociology, psychology and business administration in Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria. The scale designed to measure the variable under study was grouped into four categories (namely customer technical support, feature, data security, user-friendliness/customer satisfaction). However, to ascertain the level of consistency of the research instrument, a reliability test was carried out on each of the scale. The result shows Cronbach alpha of 0.72 for customer technical support; 0.78 for feature; 0.81 for data security; 0.86 for user-friendliness/customer satisfaction.

Ethical Consideration

Authorization was sought from the management of the organization before conducting the field work. Likewise, consent of the respondents were sought and obtained before the questionnaires were distributed. All the respondents were made to know that they are free to back out of the study at any point in time and that information obtained from them as well as their identities will be kept anonymous and strictly confidential.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The result goes thus; 61.5% were males and 38.5% were females. This point out to the fact that there is more males in pay jobs than the female counterpart in Nigeria. The age distribution of the respondents reveals that 9.4% are within 18-20years, 49.0% are within 21-30years, 29.2% are within 31-40years while 12.5% falls within 41years and above. This result indicates that majority of the respondent's falls within the age 21-30years; this is an indication that youths (between the ages of 20-40 years) constitute the greater proportion of the people (customers) who carry out business transaction with Ni-

gerian banks. This might be due to their zeal to engage in work activities in order to actualize their goals and aspirations of life. The marital status of the respondents shows that 64.6% are single, 24.0% are married while 11.5% are others (compose of separated, widow and divorce). The result shows that majority of the respondents are single with little or no family responsibility. Furthermore, the educational qualifications of the respondents depicts that 13.5% are OND holders, 80.2% are B.Sc/HND holders while 6.3% hold professional qualifications. This result reveals that majority of the respondents are HND/B.Sc (degree) holders which demonstrates that they are educated and experience people.

Perception of Customers on the Use of SMS in Nigerian Banking System

Flowing from the works of Gary and Izak (2001); Hausmann-Muela (2003); Yuji (2009) perception includes four basic variables. These are knowledge, attitude, practice, and belief [KAPB]. From table 1, it is evident that 86.5% of the respondents agreed that they had knowledge of the use of SMS in Nigerian banking firms, while 13.5% indicated that they needed the knowledge. This shows that the large number of respondents know about the use of SMS as a strategic management tool in Nigerian banks. On the other hand, attitude is defined in terms of access to SMS services which is product of technological advancement. Most often, attitude cannot be formed without external stimuli (in this case GSM). It then follows that access to GSM and SMS services sheds light on the respondents' dimension of attitude. From the table 1, majority (94.8%) of the respondents indicated that they have access to GSM and SMS services has improved their access to SMS sent by Nigerian banks in the study area, while only 5.2% disputed this. Practice has to do with putting into use certain object or knowledge acquired to determine its desirability for continued utilization or otherwise. In this study, practice is measured in the benefits associated with the utilization of GSM and SMS services as a result of improved telecommunication sector. Hence, 97.9% of the respondents claimed to have benefitted from the utilization of GSM and SMS services, while 2.1% were critical about the benefits associated with the GSM and SMS services.

Table 1: Perception of customers on the use of SMS in Nigerian banking system

| S/N | Question | Never F (%) | Rarely F (%) | Seldom F (%) | Often F (%) | Total F (%) |
|-----|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1 | The use of SMS has become vital tool in rendering quality banking services in Nigeria | 13 (13.5) | 09 (9.4) | 11 (11.5) | 63 (65.6) | 96 (100.0) |
| 2 | How often do you have access to GSM and SMS services | 05 (5.2) | 19 (19.8) | 15 (15.6) | 57 (59.4) | 96 (100.0) |
| 3 | Have you benefited from the utilization of SMS on your mobile phone or GSM | 02 (2.1) | 21 (21.9) | 10 (10.4) | 63 (65.6) | 96 (100.0) |

| S/N | Question | Never F (%) | Rarely F (%) | Seldom F (%) | Often F (%) | Total F (%) |
|-----|---|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 4 | As a customer, do you get SMS from the bank on every transaction I made with the bank | 04 (4.2) | 07 (7.3) | 08 (8.3) | 77 (80.2) | 96 (100.0) |
| 5 | I receive alert from the bank to remind me of special events, birthday or public holidays from my | 11 (11.5) | 19 (19.8) | 12 (12.5) | 54 (56.3) | 96 (100.0) |
| 6 | I use to get SMS notification of technical difficulties or service upgrading from the bank | 10 (10.4) | 23 (24.0) | 08 (8.3) | 55 (57.3) | 96 (100.0) |
| 7 | I am always SMS alert during sales promotion or new product advertisement | 09 (9.4) | 21 (21.9) | 15 (15.6) | 51 (53.1) | 96 (100.0) |
| 8 | I do receive SMS alert Public education and awareness on social issues | 07 (7.3) | 11 (11.5) | 14 (14.6) | 64 (66.6) | 96 (100.0) |
| 9 | I am satisfied with the use of SMS in Nigerian banking firms | 03 (3.1) | 14 (14.6) | 06 (6.3) | 73 (76.0) | 96 (100.0) |

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 1 reveals the respondent's distribution on the use of SMS in Nigerian banking industry. The result revealed that 65.6% of the respondents confirm that the use of SMS has become vital tool in rendering quality banking services in Nigeria, 20.9% were of the opinion that SMS is rarely used in rendering bank services while 13.5% strongly disagree with the assumption that SMS is a vital tool in Nigerian banking industry. Hence, it can be concluded that SMS has become vital tool in rendering quality banking services in Nigeria.

More so, majority of the respondents 80.2% stated that they always receive SMS alert from the bank on every transaction they carry out with the bank, 15.6% claimed that they somewhat get an SMS alert from the bank while 4.2% averted that they do not receive SMS alert from the bank on every financial transaction they. Nevertheless, we can infer that a majority of the respondents receive and read SMS alert on the transaction they engage with the bank. Also, most of the respondents 88.5% stated that the bank do send SMSes to remind them of special events, birthday or public holidays and 89.6% were of the opinion that SMSes are sent from their bank to notify them of technical difficulties or service upgrading while 90.6% submitted that their banks send them SMS to alert them of sales promotion, health tips and information about new products advertisement and 92.7% received SMSes from their banks on public enlightenment or awareness on recent social issues. Above all, majority of the respondents 96.9% claimed that they are satisfied with the use of SMS as a strategic tool in Nigerian banks. To investigate the issue further, a thirty-one year old female customer claimed to have benefitted from the use of SMS as a strategic management tool in Nigeria Banks. She said:

GSM technology brought the existence of SMS services in Nigeria. The technology is good for communication. Everybody now is using it for private and commercial purposes. It has replaced and reduced the need for travelling for shopping, visitation, information, business etc. It does also reduce cost of living and risk associated with travelling, I think it is beneficial. It facilitates business without delay across locations and that is why Nigerian banks have been keen into the use of SMS services to render better and convenient banking practices for their customers. They send information about the status of their customers' bank account, financial transaction, exchange rate, and socio-economic condition as well as health and security alertness to their customers through SMS (IDI/customer/GTB/Ibadan/2015).

Also, another beneficiary, a forty year old male respondent said:
The use of SMS as a strategic management tool to achieve desired objectives by Nigerian banks is a welcome idea. I so much appreciate it because it keeps me update on vital information which I needed to keep my business moving. I get latest news on forex trading; exchange rate, fund transfer, purchase of online products and payment of bills like electricity, water, airtime, DSTv subscription etc. I believe that the use of SMS as a strategic business management tool has improved my trust and confidence in modern day banking system particularly Nigerian banks (IDI/Customer/FCMB/Ibadan/2015).

More interestingly, a sixty-nine year old female respondent, a retiree of an insurance firm subtly expressed some remarks about the use of SMS for customer relations in Nigerian banks and said:

Although the use of GSM in Nigeria has fast spread. Almost every Nigerians (including children) have access to GSM and SMS services either on their own personal phones or the one owned by other people. Hence, the adoption and utilization of SMS for customer relations is highly good for businesses and organizations that aim to survive in today's competitive business world. This is because is the easiest and fastest way to disseminated information and maintain constant relationship with large number of people (customers) without spending so much. I think the use of SMS is also good for Nigerian banks that are becoming strong financial institutions in the world and on Africa continent today. Because, I get so much and better information about my bank account, health tips, new products, training opportunities, special events and holidays most especially my birthday. They (Bank management) remind and congratulate me of my birthday which I so much appreciate. To be sure, I got nothing less than 5 SMSes from my banks on my last birth-

day date which really made my day interesting and motivating. In fact, due to family and business responsibilities sometimes I don't remember my date but now my banks do the reminder for me. And if I go to any of their (Bank) branches on my birthday I do receive gifts from some of the staff who have become my friends...(IDI/Customer/First Bank of Nigeria/ Ibadan/2015).

Also, another respondent provided additional dimension of benefits of SMS utilization in Nigerian banks and said:

Honestly speaking, the emergence of ICT, GSM and SMS services in Nigerian banking sector has been a blessing and a vital tool that make the aspiration to improve customer's satisfaction and patronage possible in Nigeria. Because, they provide opportunities for dealing effectively with sophisticated business transactions and customers' relation matters. As such, the use of SMS has given many banks an edge or competitive advantage in areas like company's mission, corporate image as well as development of new services and products based on SMS survey report and feedback from their customers and the general to public (IDI/Customer/Diamond/Ibadan/2015).

From the responses above, it is evident that the use of SMS as strategic management tool by Nigerian banks has helped to improve the level of customer-management relationships. It has equally enhanced the rate at which customers perceive the quality of services provided by the Nigerian banking firms. The finding further established that prior to the adoption of mobile SMS service which tends to notify bank customers on transactions such as withdrawal, payment due and accounts credit information, bulk of the customers had to either go to the bank or ask their friends to help them obtain such information from the bank. For the majority of the customers who go to the bank for information spent an average of NGN 50 to get to the bank. While, those customers who ask their friends to help them obtain such information had at least been disappointed once by those friends. However, in current dispensation, customers who subscribed to the SMS alert service and are now receiving SMS alert on the information they need to know from the bank on their accounts, new products and services consider SMS beneficial to them. This could be a reason for the majority of the respondent's to remark the adoption SMS service in Nigerian banks a blessing and a vital tool that make the aspiration to improve customer's satisfaction and patronage possible. This is unconnected with the costs and challenges associated with the use of GSM phones and SMS services.

SMS Usage and Customer-Management Relationship in Nigerian Banking System

An examination of academic literatures revealed that short message service (SMS) is one of the modern ways of sending and receiving information in today's work

organization. However, it recent adoption in banking industry lies on the need to influence the attitude, knowledge and perception of recipients positively towards new products and services as well as to continually enhance the performance level and competitive advantage of banking firms. In Nigeria banking system, SMS has been spotted to be the viable tool used to order for products or services, or participate in contests, promotions, payment of bills and for notification of payments instead of using mail, e-mail or voicemail (Madueme, 2009; Timothy, 2012). The usage of SMS in banking firms is expected to shape the landscape of social relations between customers and bank staff. Thus, the objective here is to investigate the extent to which the uses of SMS have shaped social relationship between customers and bank staff in Nigeria.

Table 2: SMS Usage and Customer-Management Relationship in Nigerian Banking System

| S/N | Questions | Never F (%) | Rarely F (%) | Seldom F (%) | Often F (%) | Total F (%) |
|-----|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1 | The use of SMS has enhances the level of relationship existing between customers and bank staff in recent times | 07 (7.3) | 09 (9.4) | 31 (32.3) | 49 (51.0) | 96 (100.0) |
| 2 | Through the SMS I use to carry out transactions and track it to ensure it is actually done without going to the bank | 03 (3.1) | 06 (6.3) | 27 (28.1) | 60 (62.5) | 96 (100.0) |
| 3 | Sometimes, I send complaint or any difficulty I experienced using my account through SMS to the customer's relation center and I get feedback more rapid than going into the bank premises to do so | 01 (1.0) | 04 (4.2) | 11 (11.5) | 80 (83.3) | 96 (100.0) |
| 4 | SMS enables me to seek quick and fast customer's assistance from the bank | 01 (1.0) | 05 (5.2) | 38 (39.6) | 52 (54.2) | 96 (100.0) |
| 5 | I believe the adoption of SMS usage in Nigerian banking industry has positively enhance the level of competence, trust, services and social relations between customers and the management | 11 (11.5) | 19 (19.8) | 12 (12.5) | 54 (56.3) | 96 (100.0) |
| 6 | I receive SMS security alert from my bank through SMS and I also send security report to the bank through SMS | 10 (10.4) | 23 (24.0) | 08 (8.3) | 55 (57.3) | 96 (100.0) |
| 8 | The use of SMS in supporting my banking spirit and prospect to quality service has been very effective. | 03 (3.1) | 19 (19.8) | 26 (27.1) | 48 (50.0) | 96 (100.0) |

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 2 shows the respondent's view on how the use of SMS in banking firms has shaped the social relations between customers and bank staff in Nigeria. The result re-

vealed that 83.3% of the respondents claimed that the use of SMS has enhances the level of relationship existing between them and bank staff in recent times while just 16.7.0% disputed it. This means that majority of the respondents admit that the use of SMS in banking firms has shaped the facet of social relationship between customers and bank staff in Nigeria. Flowing from this, 90.6% of the respondents affirmed that they use SMS to carry out business transactions as well as to track the status of the transaction so as to ensure that it is actually done without physically carrying money around. This view was buttressed by the majority 94.8% who claimed that sometimes they send complaint or any difficulty which they experienced using their account through SMS to the customer's relation center and they receive feedback more rapid than going into the bank premises to do so. As a result of the quick response, 93.8% of the respondents avow that SMS enables them to seek and get fast customer's assistance from the bank.

Investigating the matter further, 68.8% stated that the use of SMS has increase the level of confidence and trust they have with banking services and products. In this regard, 65.6% of the respondents avow that their banks send security alert on their account to them through SMS and they also send information on security report to the banks through SMS. Subsequently, majority of the respondents 77.1 % admit that the use of SMS support their banking spirit and prospect for quality services and products effectively. To advance the investigation, a bank customer who is also a spare part dealer was interviewed and He claimed to have been enjoying quality customer-management relationship since the adoption of SMS in Nigerian banking firms. He said:

I must be sincere with you, I really like the way Nigerian banks are now operating. The use of SMS as a tool to communicate and transact business is of great benefit to someone like me. I and my businesses have benefited so much that I hardly make phone call for any information or assistance from the customer care desk like before. Before now I use to call customer care desk which often cost me so money and time trying to seek assistance from there. At times, they don't pick up the call on time and when they eventually picked one may not grab the response clearly for quick articulation because of the incessant fluctuation of network services. However, the situation has change so much that what I do now is just to send an SMS and I got what I needed at almost immediately. (IDI/Customer/FCMB/Ibadan/2015).

An interviewee also affirmed that:

The acceptance of SMS as a tool for customer-management relationship in Nigerian banking industry has significantly the level of competence, trust and social relations existing between bank customers and the management. For instance, in the past, I use to nurture the notion that when customers who came to withdraw huge

amount of money are being robbed on their way from the bank, it is the bank staff who give the information about those customers to the robbers. This assumption for a long period did not encourage me to have any serious interaction with bank staff particularly when I want to withdraw or save huge amount of money. But now, the use of SMS has changed such notion about bank staff which has significantly improved the social relations between customers and bank staff in Nigeria (IDI/Customer/GTB/Ibadan/2015).

Still on how the SMS has promoted customer-management relationship, another interviewee stated that:

The use of SMS as a strategic management tool in Nigerian banks reduces the stress of queuing, cost of calling and delay in response from customer care desk. It also makes the ongoing process of Customers' Verification exercise and the issuance of Bank Verification Number (BVN) to bank customers in a bid to curb fraudulent activities in Nigerian banking firms and society at large much more easier. In the process, SMS was used as the tool to send the BV Number to every customer after being registered at the designated banks for the sake of privacy and security. Also, in a situation where a customer operates more than one bank account SMS served as the tool to link the bank account together with the same BV Number given to the customer. In fact, it makes the BVN exercise very easy and convenient for customers. This led to increase customer's satisfaction, trust and patronage in Nigerian banking firms (IDI/Customer/First Bank of Nigeria/Ibadan/2015).

From the responses above, it is evident that the use of SMS in Nigerian banks has produced positive social relations without any mixed reactions between the respondents and bank staff. This posture is a reflection of the level of knowledge and experience the customers has had with the use of SMS as a strategic management tool in Nigerian banking industry. It is equally an upshot of the advancement in mobile banking (mBanking) and electronic banking for business. All of these have positive effects on the lives and businesses of individuals as adduced by various scholars and confirmed by the respondents used in this study.

Customer's Attitude towards Different Text Messaging Services by Banking Firms

In empirical studies, the role of attitude has been recognized (Gopi and Ramayah, 2007; Ramayah and Suki, 2006). Explicitly, attitude is envisioned to be the key evaluative outcome of positive or negative feeling of individuals in carrying out a particular behavior or action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). It is usually admitted that attitude and behavioral purpose have significant relationship (Gopi and Ramayah, 2007; Amin, 2007;

Ramayah and Suki, 2006). Nonetheless, some studies have established that attitude is a precursor of behavioral purpose or action. In this study, the term ‘attitude’ includes a customer’s perception on the basis of “good idea”, “beneficial”, “likeliness”, “best practice” as well as “positive idea” on SMS or text messaging services adopted in banking industry. The objective here is to investigate customer’s attitude towards different text messaging services by banking firms.

Table 3: Customer’s Attitude towards Different Text Messaging Services by Banks

| S/N | Questions | Never F (%) | Rarely F (%) | Seldom F (%) | Often F (%) | Total F (%) |
|-----|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1 | Using text messaging services or SMS by banks is a good idea | 09 (9.3) | 11 (11.5) | 16 (16.7) | 60 (62.5) | 96 (100.0) |
| 2 | I found SMS from the bank useful and important for personal and business development | 13 (13.5) | 10 (10.4) | 21 (21.9) | 52 (56.2) | 96 (100.0) |
| 3 | I like reading SMS or text message that comes from the bank because it contains vital information about banking practices | 07 (7.3) | 14 (14.6) | 10 (10.4) | 65 (67.7) | 96 (100.0) |
| 4 | I like SMS or text messaging for various types of banking transactions because is a modern way of doing business conveniently | 04 (4.2) | 08 (8.4) | 28 (29.1) | 56 (58.3) | 96 (100.0) |
| 5 | I give much importance to unsolicited SMS or text messages that come on my mobile phone | 27 (28.1) | 09 (9.4) | 11 (11.5) | 49 (51.0) | 96 (100.0) |
| 6 | I found SMS convenient way to access information in terms of time management and cost-effectiveness | 03 (3.1) | 04 (4.2) | 08 (8.4) | 81 (84.4) | 96 (100.0) |

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 3 reveals the respondent’s attitude towards different text messaging services by banks in Nigeria. The result revealed that 79.2% of the respondents claimed that the use of SMS is a good idea while few 20.8% of the respondents disputed it. Thus, it can be deduced that a majority of the respondents conceived that the use of SMS is a good idea. To corroborate this, majority 78.1% of the respondents perceived SMS sent by banks useful and important for personal and business development which motivate them to like reading SMS or text message that comes from banks while 23.9% of the respondents have contrary attitude to SMS or text messaging services. More so, majority 87.4% of the respondents affirmed that they like SMS or text messaging for various types of banking transactions because is a modern way of doing business conveniently while 12.6% differed from it. Furthermore, the result shows that 62.5% of the respondents claimed that

they give much importance to unsolicited SMS or text messages that appear on their mobile phone while 37.5% of the respondents don't read unsolicited SMS. Though, large proportion of the respondents 92.8% avows that they found SMS convenient for them to read information because it saves time and cost while others (7.2%) did not.

To further substantiate the result above, one of the respondents explains:

My attitude towards the different text messaging services by banks in Nigeria is very positive. This is so because SMS from bank gives regular and vital information on transaction. The introduction SMS banking is to improve the level of customer care services in banking industry (IDI/Customer/First Bank of Nigeria/Ibadan/2015).

An interviewee affirmed that:

SMS banking in Nigerian banking industry is a welcome idea. I like it and I used it to transact business with the bank. SMS banking provides the opportunity to carry out electronic transactions and to know more about bank account status from time to time. It also saves me a lot of time in source for information about new products and services from the bank... In fact, it has enhances my reading habit tremendously...I read at least 5 SMSes on my mobile phone per day. Through this act I get pertinent information to promote my business activities. You know, in this globalized world everybody need to know about new things, policies and initiatives in order to be able to stand the test of time. (IDI/Customer/GTB/Ibadan/2015).

Furthermore, another interviewee succinctly stated that:

It is good to witness how Nigerian banks are moving sharply technologically wise. This progressive effort has change the face of Nigerian banking practices and traditions in current global market. In fact, SMS banking is a wonderful innovation and initiative which Nigerian banking firms have ever adopted because it promotes the need to meet the demand for quality services by the customers. For this reason, I want to say that I have positive attitude towards it. Yet, I think there is need to address the issue of unsolicited messages that get to customers phones occasionally. If this is done, SMS banking will continue to gain positive attitude from bank customers in Nigeria (IDI/Customer/FCMB/Ibadan/2015).

It follows that the use of SMS as a scientific management tool in Nigerian banking firms has engendered positive attitude towards banking practices from the customers. However, the Nigeria experience may not be as that of countries like Japan, Britain,

America, Malaysia, and Bahrain and so on that adopted SMS as a marketing tool to promote new products and services designed to satisfy the need of customers several years before that of Nigeria (Suoranta & Mattila, 2004; Shankar, et. al, 2010). Although, there was concern raised about the problem of unsolicited messages which banks do sent to their customers.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The principal thrust of this study has been to investigate customers' perception on the use of short message service (SMS) as a strategic management tool in Nigerian Banking Industry. The study established that customers' perception towards the use of SMS services has been positive. A majority of the customers considered SMS adoption in banking firms beneficial because the service saved them time and money as well as relief them of unnecessary anxieties. This finding is a reflection of the view that consumers like to have choices in the way they communicate with businesses and increasingly consumers are turning to SMS. The use of SMS services to communicate information about new products, policies and services by banks has enhances the reading habit of many young Nigerians who uses SMS as a means for conducting business transactions and personal development. The finding shows that majority of the customers who registered for SMS services with the banks engage in constant reading of text message or SMS that comes into their mobile phones. Aside this discovery, it was also found that SMS play a critical part in the ongoing Customers' Verification exercise which the government authorized all banks in Nigeria to carry out. The majority of respondents affirmed that after the BVN registration, SMS or text message was sent to their (customers) mobile phones as reference check and completion of the exercise. Considering the outcomes of this study, Nigerian banking firms are therefore advised to improve on the use of SMS as a strategic management tool for promoting customer-management relationships. However, there is need to ensure that the contents of the message are well organized and structured in way that will entice the interest of targeted customers. This is very important because customer-management relationships may be affected if the SMS tends to become a nuisance to the customers. Text messages which do not appear to be clearly defined may generate a negative responses from customers rather than what is expected to create customer loyalty, retention and satisfaction. Likewise, unsolicited SMS or text messages may disturb the customers resulting in more negative perception about the products and services of the bank. This calls for banks to ensure that only relevant and interesting messages are sent to the customers. In this direction factors such as consumer permission, personalization and message content play critical role to develop positive m-users attitude towards the reception of text messages of SMS on their mobile phones as revealed by studies like Tripathi and Siddiqui (2008), Khraim et. al., (2011) and Imran (2011). Moreover, the finding of this study has point out the view that «just as food and water are essential for man's survival so is communication central for fostering fruitful customer-management relationships» in a globalized world. It is clear in the study that the adoption of SMS or text messaging in Nigerian

banking firms keeps them afloat and successful even in times of economic troubles, competition, social and technological constraints.

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