Mobile phone service recovery: Its reflection on post-complaint behaviour

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ABSTRACT

The developments in customer retention and the inevitability of service failures precipitate a creative culture of learning from mistakes and of introducing future service innovations. Therefore, this study seeks to validate and cross-validate the causal relationships between four dimensions of service recovery and post-complaint behaviour under the moderating influence of technical efficiency. Survey data were drawn from teachers of Federal Government Colleges (295) and senior officers (134) of telecommunications firms in the south-eastern zone, where GSM and at least one CDMA firm have network coverage. The data collection instruments were validated using Cronbach test, whereupon all variables surpassed 0.7. Analysis involved ANOVA, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient, multiple regressions, and partial correlations. All the dimensions of service recovery studied were critical at $p<0.05$ (two-tailed) in predicting post-complaint behaviour (see H1-H4). Specifically, attentiveness was found to have the strongest statistical interaction with post-complaint behaviour, followed by credibility, demonstration, and apology. Further, only apology and demonstration had inverse relationship with post-complaint behaviour. The statistical interaction between the constructs of independent and dependent variables were significantly moderated by technical efficiency (see H5). The paper advised service officers to be creative, proactive and relational in detecting and addressing customer issues.

Keywords: mobile phone service, customer retention, service failure, service recovery

INTRODUCTION

The telecommunications industry is a vital socio-economic engine of the contemporary economies (Gabriela and Badii, 2010; Apulu *et al.,* 2011). Perhaps following the industry's contribution to other sectors' development; and its role in periods of risks, emergencies and/or disasters and in rural-urban migration (Babaita, 2010), subscriptions to mobile telephony alone has grown from slightly less than a billion worldwide in 2001 to more than 5 billion in 2010 (Kelly, 2009; Rebello, 2010), out of which developing economies contribute greater percentage (see Adepetun, 2011b; Mokhlis and Yaakop, 2011). Since 1990, Africa has experienced between 15 to 25 percent of telecommunications-driven growth in GDP with Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, South Africa and Democratic Republic of Congo taking giant strides (Gabriela and Badii, 2010). The industry worth in Nigeria stood at $1.1 billion in 2002 with an annual growth of at least 37 percent driven predominantly by explosive adoption of mobile telephony (Wills, 2003). Investment in telecommunications runs well over $50 billion in Nigeria (Okeleke, 2011) and revenue accruing only to mobile telephony rose above $11 billion in 2010; almost double the 2009 record (Paul *et al.*, 2010). Subscriptions grew from less than 500, 000 to 45.5 million in 7 years and in about a decade to over 90 million (Adepetun, 2011b).

Perhaps, the industry's growth is informed by the pervasive connectivity amongst thousands of subscribers located even in the most remote areas (Adepetun, 2011a; Uzor, 2011) as well as subscribers' need to use more than one network (Awa, 2012). Momo (2012) reports that Nigeria's leading Opinion Polling and Research Organization in partnership with The Gallup Organization (USA) found that 45% of mobile phone users use dual lines and 19% use three (3) lines in order to circumvent network failure(s). Telecommunications in Nigeria offers N600 billion annually to federal government's coffers; provides employments to over 3 million Nigerians (Uzor, 2011; Okeleke, 2011); and attracts foreign investments, real-time knowledge sharing, globalization and indigenous skill acquisition (Adepetu, 2011a). Adepetu (2011b) recorded that MTN alone paid N700 billion taxes in the last decade and reduced expatriate workforce in favour of indigenous labour. Though each has extended its service, the industry is made up of two types of network technologies- (1) Global Systems for Mobile Communications (GSM) service providers- MTN, M-tel, Bharti Air-tel (former Zain, Celtel, and V-mobile), Glo, and Etisalat; and (2) Code Multiple Division Access (CMDA) operators- Zoom, Visafone, Multi-links, Starcomms, amongst others. User experience survey in 2009 reported a break-down of market strength of operators- MTN 46.19 percent, Glo 26.87 percent, Bharti Air-tel 24.74 percent, Etisalat 1.76 percent, M-tel 0.44 percent and Visafone, Multi-links and Starcomms yet to be properly defined perhaps because they are relatively new (Paul *et al.*, 2010).

However, the industry witnesses increasing recognition for customer retention following stiff competition, inevitability of service failures, government's legislation to enforce corporate responsibility, instability in business cycle, technology explosion, and consumer movement (Akinkuotu, 2008; Okereocha, 2008; Sajtos *et al.,* 2010). In attempt to attract and retain customers, players assume that creative culture of transformation and learning from post-consumption experiences co-exists with quality performance. Reflecting on what were ill-done, learning from them to avoid re-occurrence, and compensating customers fairly for the injuries caused by such amidst competition (owing to licensing of even smaller operators) is a key success factor (KSF) (see Lovelock *et al.*, 2009; Slater, 2008; Vos *et al.*, 2008). Scholars (Awa, 2012; Babaita, 2010) admitted that irrespective of the intervention of regulatory agencies, ample service failures in Nigeria's telecommunications industry. For instance, MTN's promo was recently stopped by NCC following subscribers' out-cry of poor service quality that greeted the programme. The scholars proposed the

following causes of service failures- network failure and network fluctuation, bombarding of junk SMS and billing for unsolicited SMS, rigorous waiting time, poor customer care, high billing and billing errors, voice mail, delays in SMS delivery and call diverts.

Unavoidable network failures may be caused by weather fluctuation (e.g., before, during and after a heavy down-pour), epileptic power supply, inadequate telecoms infrastructure, multiple taxations, customs unpredictable clearance process, bad network of roads, changing policies of government and regulatory agencies, subscribers' traffic and dynamism, and others (see Awa, 2012; Apulu *et al.,* 2011; Babaita, 2010; Akinkuotu, 2008). Recovering customers who suffered these ordeals alleviates or minimizes reputational and market damage (Singh and Wilkes, 1996); and drives profitability (Shaker and Basem, 2010; Kim *et al.,* 2009) since NCC's records show a rise of defection from 2 percent in 2001 to 41 percent in 2009 (Okeleke, 2011) following perceived experience worse than expected. Scholars (Shaker and Basem, 2010; Michel *et al.,* 2009; Smith *et al.,* 2009) theorize that it costs more to acquire new customers than to keep incumbents and customers themselves prefer on-going and event-driven relationships to switching behaviour. When actual performance of a network falls short of the perceived ideals, inequity tends to result. The affected consumer expects justice and fair play from the recovery team, or takes actions (public and/or private) against the service provider in order to restore harmony amongst his cognitive elements. Consumers weigh their perceived contributions against the perceived rewards, and compare them with those of referent others in similar situations to ensure equity. Therefore, recovery critically reinforces customer satisfaction, goodwill, trust, and employee morale (Michel *et al.,* 2009; De Jong and De Ruyter, 2004), production runs (Edmondson, 2011), corporate image (Cranage, 2004; Gonzalez *et al.,* 2010), word-of-mouth publicity (Kim *et al.,* 2009; La and Kandampully, 2004), repurchase intentions (East *et al.,* 2007; Davidow, 2003) and accounts for almost 60 percent of the critical behaviours of service providers, of which 45 percent solely accounts for customer switching (Keaveney, 1995).

Studies from developed and emerging economies clearly dwelt on the correlation between the constructs of service recovery and some measures of dependent variable (see Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002; Boshoff, 1999; Davidow, 2003; Johnston and Fern, 1999; Smith *et al.,* 1999; Bitner *et al.,* 1990; Cho *et al.,* 2003; del Rio-Lanza *et al.*, 2009; Kim *et al.,* 2009; Gerpott *et al.,* 2001). This contrasts the local scene, where similar studies (Apulu *et al.,* 2011; Akinkuotu, 2008; Babaita, 2010) emphasized more on factors that affect adoption and intention to use with rare attention on correlating the various constructs of service failures and post-complaint behaviour. Babaita (2010) attempted a good work but lacked scholarly rigour and specifics in terms of the area(s) of knowledge contribution. Aside these studies neglecting the construct of demonstration and the moderating effect of technical efficiency, extrapolating the findings of the ample foreign-based studies may impair validity owing to Nigeria's peculiarity. Therefore, relying on the synergy of some constructs suggested by these scholars, we depart from these conspicuous neglects and the need to cross-validate the effect of apology, attentiveness, and credibility on post-complaint behaviour.

THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

Concept of Service Recovery

Service providers rarely respond constructively to customer issues when customers themselves are not encouraged to develop complaint attitude. Studies (Brown *et al.,* 1996; Andreassen, 2001) suggest that nothing pleases a customer more than a reliable and error-free service. However, the mantra 'service-errors are inevitable but dissatisfied customers are not'

(Hart *et al.,* 1990; Maxham, 2001) triggers off recovery efforts to compensate the affected customers in a manner at least equals their perceived ordeals (Michel *et al.,* 2009). Service error is an antecedent of service recovery and recovery itself is a critical moment of truth to reposition trusts, and to minimize detrimental actions (Hart *et al.,* 1990). Rather than impressing customers when something has gone wrong (McCollough *et al.,* 2000; Maxham, 2001), service recovery defines operator's second and perhaps rare chance of tracking, identifying, and addressing perceived service errors in order to (re)establish trust in the eyes of consumers (by limiting the harms caused by a service failure), promote customer retention and dissuade such other detrimental actions as challenging the firm through consumer rights organizations or legal frameworks (see de Rio-Lanza *et al.*, 2009; Smith *et al.,* 2009; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000; Hart *et al.,* 1990).

The service recovery team does not only resolves customer issues but also seeks out, deals with, and learns from the perceived service failures (Tax *et al.,* 1998; Smith *et al.,* 1999; Edmondson, 2011) even when they are unreported. These stress that recovery signifies acid test of customer retention and encompasses situations where providers do not only have complaint-response package, but also foster a corporate culture where employees are empowered and trained to proactively rectify service failures even before complaints are registered (Hart *et al.,* 1990; Kim *et al.,* 2009) because studies (Michel *et al.,* 2009; Hoffman *et al.,* 1995) show that most recoveries do not lead to customer satisfaction. Non-complainants are discouraged by the emotional stress, anger, and disappointment of some recovery exercises (Edmondson, 2011; Maxham, 2001; del Rio-Lanza *et al.*, 2009); they deny firms the opportunity of learning from the lessons and experiences of handling such failures (Edmondson, 2011) and often pose economic burden since the affected consumers may boycott the product and spread negative word-of-mouth (East *et al.,* 2007; Michel *et al.,* 2009).

When customers get disappointed, service providers incur costs of re-doing the service and compensating for the errors. Thus, poor service recovery wastes money, destroys employee morale and corporate reputation, infuriates customers, attracts increased advertisement budgets to create replacement demand, and sometimes causes tragedy arising from aggravated employees leaving the firm and customers turning terrors (McGrath, 2011; Michel *et al.,* 2009; Kim *et al.,* 2009). Further, studies (Hart *et al.,* 1990; Hess *et al.,* 2003) show that negative experiences are shared with 11 other persons, whereas positive ones are shared with 3 to 6 persons, who may be 3 times likely to purchase than those who received negative word-of-mouth. Therefore, instant resolution minimizes negative outcomes of a service failure (Grewal *et al.,* 2009; de Rio-Lanza *et al.,* 2009). Loyalty is assured when customers feel listened to and understood; and there exists honest interactions that deal with their emotions before the service failure is fixed. Even for a relatively minor incident, service recovery may increase dissatisfaction, frustration, and detrimental post-consumption actions. Service recovery is simply not complaint management; instead it is much broader and more proactive. Both are based on service failure encounter; complaint management is based on provider's reaction to customer complaints, whereas service recovery also addresses service failure on time before the customer deems it fit to complain (Michel *et al.,* 2009; Michel, 2001).

However, the effectiveness of service recovery depends largely on several parameters, especially the strength of the established relationship and the severity of the service failure. The severity of the service failure moderates the relationship between customer satisfaction and commitment. If the original service failure was really bad, even strong service recovery programme may get customers upset (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000; Smith *et al.*, 2009). Research (e.g., Kim *et al.,* 2009; Cranage, 2004) suggests that customers who do not have much commitment to a service provider tend to be more transaction-focused and expect

immediate recovery when a transaction falls short of their ideals. Conversely, customers committed to a service provider have lower service recovery expectations and thus, believe that continual relationship with the service provider may settle-out the service failures and turn them even more satisfied with service performance after recovery (de Rio-Lanza *et al.,* 2009; Michel *et al.,* 2009). These suggest that service providers do not only identify the strength of customer relationships but also develop agility to react to customer service failures.

Thus, the manner in which service providers respond to service failures has the potential to either restore customer satisfaction and reinforce customer loyalty, or exacerbate the situation and drive switching behaviour (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000; Bitner *et al.,* 1990). Bitner *et al.* (1990) found that over 23 percent of memorable satisfactory encounters in the hotel, airline, and restaurant industries were directly due to the way service employees responded to the service failures. They concluded that about 43 percent of dissatisfactory service encounters were due to employees' inability or unwillingness to response to service failures. Based on close examinations of the double deviations principles (Bitner *et al.,* 1990), scholars (e.g., Hoffman *et al.,* 1995; Davidow, 2003) conclude that it is often the provider's response rather than the failure itself that triggers off discontent. Therefore, customers who experienced service failures and had them successfully recovered by gracious and efficient service recovery will be the provider's best customers because they exhibit greater satisfaction than those who did not experience a service failure at all (service recovery paradox) (Etzel and Silverman, 1981). In a survey of 410 complaints of an interstate moving company, Spreng *et al.* (1995) found that satisfaction with recovery had a greater impact on repurchase and word-of-mouth intentions than did satisfaction with the initial service. This contrasts the general belief that error-free, very satisfying initial encounters were the best ways to drive customer satisfaction even when service recovery effort is much better than expected (Oliver, 1980). Other studies (Hart *et al.,* 1990) suggest that a good recovery can turn angry, frustrated customers into loyalists or fans; thus, creating more goodwill than if things had gone right initially.

Study Constructs and Hypotheses

The baseline theories that underpin this work were the golden rule of J. C. Penney, equity and social justice theories of Aristotle, justice dimensional theory of Tax and Brown, social exchange theory, relationship marketing, and the law of kamar. Specifically, studies (e.g., Bitner *et al.,* 1990; Smith *et al.* 1999; Johnston and Fern, 1999; Boshoff, 1999; Davidow, 2003) underpin this study. For instance, Bitner *et al.* (1990) surveyed the influence of redress, credibility and attentiveness on satisfaction and found that fixing the problem (redress), recognizing the problem, employee response and explanation impact on satisfaction. In their descriptive study, Johnston and Fern (1999) conceptualized four constructs (speed, redress, apology, and credibility) and listed out customer ideal complaint responses without empirically testing actual recovery. Boshoff (1999) has a six-factor scale of organizational response that was never tested empirically and Smith *et al.* (1999) measured the relationship between satisfaction and some customer service recovery alternatives. Davidow (2003) offers a seemingly more classic conceptualization that has a six dimensional scale of service recovery (timeliness, facilitation, redress, apology, credibility, and attentiveness) and empirically tested their isolated effects on two qualitative dimensions of the dependent variables- satisfaction and post-complaint behaviour. Aside these studies being alien to the telecommunications industry and to Nigeria, where culture and other environmental variables may play down on the validity of their findings, none investigated the construct of demonstration.
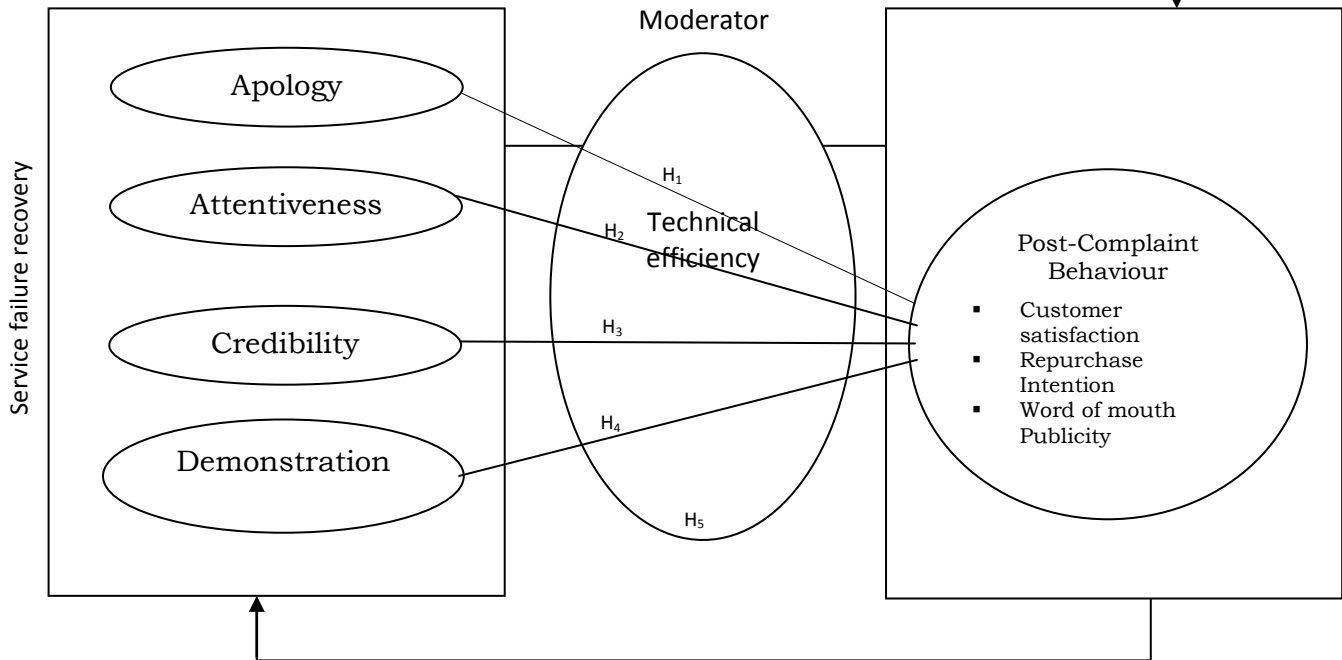
Figure 1: Research Framework

Apology

Complainants expect atonement; a psychological redress and calm-down process (Zemke, 1994; Davidow, 2000) that express company's acknowledgement of complainant's ordeals, concern (Barlow and Moller, 1996) and acceptance of responsibility to reinstate his ideal state(s) if they (the ordeals) are legitimate. *'We are sorry for what happened; we will make-up and we assure you it won't happen again'* has psychological meaning to some aggrieved customers. One study specifically measured several elements of its scale against apology (Boshoff, 2005); and another measured redress and apology against customer satisfaction and loyalty and reclassified apology as a part of redress dimension- apology in the context of no redress, low level of redress apology, just an apology, partial redress, full redress, or more than full redress (Webster and Sundaram, 1998). Smith *et al.* (1999) relate empathetic response to when a service representative acknowledges a complaint without taking responsibility for resolving it.

This lack of action does not only fail to resolve customers' issues and their perceived seriousness but also positions apology as having no effect on post-complaint behaviour. Scholars show that apology is more effective when paired with redress (Davidow, 2003; Goodwin and Ross, 1992) and directly and indirectly affects interactional justice and complaint-handling satisfaction (through interactional justice) respectively (Smith *et al.,* 1999). Of the empirical inquiries on the interactions between apology and post-complaint behaviour (word-of-mouth, satisfaction and repurchase intentions), the results seem somewhat mixed. Studies (Johntson and Fern, 1999; Smith *et al.,* 1999) found that apology, facilitation, and credibility significantly affect satisfaction though the effect of apology was stronger. Some studies (Goodwin and Ross, 1992; Ruyter and Wetzels, 2000; Davidow, 2000) reported that apology does not significantly impact on customer satisfaction and others (e.g., Johnston and Fern, 1999; Martin and Smith, 1994) reported otherwise. Further, apology has a negative relationship with repurchase intentions, a positive relationship with word-of-mouth and post-complaint behaviour, and no effects on satisfaction (Davidow, 2000). Apology has significant impact on word-of-mouth publicity and satisfaction but not on repurchase intentions (Martin and Smart, 1994) perhaps due to the misunderstanding of the

role of apology as an admission of guilt (Davidow, 2003). Conversely, Kelley *et al.* (1993) exploited critical incident technique and found a positive relationship between apology and repurchase intention. This review led to the first hypothesized relationship.

H01: Apology for service failure does not significantly influence post-complaint behaviour.

Attentiveness

Attentiveness refers to personalized psychological care and attention disgusted customers receive in order calm and address their emotions and disappointments. Courtesy, empathy, and respect from service representatives impact significantly on complaint-handling and post-complaint satisfaction, and likelihoods to engage in positive word-of-mouth and repurchase behaviour (Hocutt *et al.,* 1997; Estelami, 2000; Davidow, 2000). Such impact on customer satisfaction, Estelami (2000) found, is even stronger than that of redress. Blodgett *et al.* (1997) reported that courtesy and respect significantly impact on both repurchase intentions (positive) and word-of-mouth publicity (negative). Knowledge and courteousness impact positively on satisfaction and repurchase intentions (Martin and Smart, 1994) just as McCollough *et al.* (2000) found that courtesy and professionalism impact significantly on post-recovery satisfaction. Further, effort, courtesy, concern, extra efforts by representatives, procedural issues, and employee neutrality have significant effects on customer satisfaction with outcomes (Sparks and McColl-Kennedy, 2001).

While scholars (Morris, 1988; TARP, 1981; Martin and Smith, 1994) reported that the tone of response impacts negatively on word-of-mouth and positively on satisfaction, repurchase intentions and attitude toward the firm, Sparks and Callan (1995) posit that style of communicating the feelings has minor impact on post-complaint behaviour. Edmondson's (2011) report on service failures in hospitals showed that the behaviour of middle managers in terms of responding to failures, encouraging open discussion, welcoming questions, and displaying humility and curiosity significantly affects customer satisfaction, referrals, and profitability. Thus, it is not just addressing the reasons for the complaints that matter but also the feelings. Several scholarly inquiries (Davidow, 2003; Blodgett *et al.,* 1997; Davidow, 2000) report that while it is fairly conclusive for attentiveness to stand alone, it is also increasingly apparent that indirect effects exist through interactions with other response dimensions. Blodgett *et al.* (1997) show that interaction of high attentiveness and low redress was more satisfying than high redress and low attentiveness. In like manner, Davidow (2000) found that both attentiveness and credibility have stronger impact, than redress, on post-complaint behaviour. Looking at the interactions, Davidow (2003) poses some question- is attentiveness contingent on pecuniary and non-pecuniary complaints, and can attentiveness work well without facilitation or credibility? All these arguments bring us to the second hypothesis.

H02: Attentiveness to customer issues does not significantly affect post-complaint behaviour.

Credibility

Credibility is referred to as explanation and assurance intended to regain trust after a service failure. It involves simplified detailed accounts of what went wrong, why, and what the firm will do to compensate for the issue and to stop re-occurrence. Scholars (see SOCAP, 1994; Bitner *et al.,* 1990; Conlon and Murray, 1996) suggested that acknowledging and accepting responsibility for the problems and giving simple, timely, and unambiguous explanation to consumers as well as being fair in investigating and analyzing complaints have

positive impact on customer satisfaction and repurchase intentions, even if the desired service is unavailable. The same relationship also exists when handling customer inquiries and not complaints. In addition to these findings, scholars (Davidow, 2000; Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002) suggest that credibility impacts significantly on word-of-mouth valence. Specifically, of the six dimensions of service recovery surveyed by Davidow (2000), credibility had the second strongest impacts on repurchase intentions. Thus, Martin and Smart (1994) opine that experience and knowledge of service representatives affect explanation, and ultimately post-complaint satisfaction and repurchase intentions. Further, clarity of explanation impacts directly on complainant's satisfaction (TARP, 1981) and the manner a complaint was handled is a key determinant of repurchase intention (Lewis, 1996).

Excuses and/or written explanation question a service representative's control, capability, and competence in handling and/or avoiding the problem in future (Baer and Hill, 1994). Boshoff and Leong's (1998) found that service providers taking blames for customer issue is the best approach in increasing customer involvement and satisfaction and repurchase intentions rather attribution- blaming a third party or the customer. In most cases, explanations impact significantly on customer satisfaction and repurchase intentions; whereas in extreme cases, failure to pair explanation with redress attract customer guilt and reduce satisfaction and repurchase intentions (Spark and Callan, 1995). Conlon and Murray (1996) report that interaction with redress in the form of coupons or other compensation packages show the company's seriousness and increase customer satisfaction with explanation. The content of explanation and assurance is more important than even pecuniary compensation (Morris, 1988) as they change customer beliefs by establishing the organization's credibility in the eyes of the consumers and reaffirming future non-occurrence of the ordeals, thus potentially increasing satisfaction from response. Therefore, we hypothesized the relationship below.

H03: There is no significant relationship between producer's credibility and post-complaint behaviour.

Demonstration

Teaching and demonstrations represent the philosophies of idealism that span instructor's explanations by visually *showing what and how* about a phenomenon. Demonstrations represent an effective problem-solving procedure that offers clear picture of the tasks and/or concepts to be learned (Chernoff, 1994). There is apparently dearth of scholarly inquiries that show the relationship between demonstration and post-complaint behaviour and so we shall extrapolate knowledge from other constructs, especially credibility since demonstration involves some measures of explanation and assurance. Audio-visio explanation of phenomenon and experimentation offer firsthand experience (Chernoff, 1994) via logical verification of truths and principles, and practical displays of stimuli's attributes (Kozma *et al.,* 1978). Clarity of explanation impacts directly on complainant's satisfaction (TARP, 1981) and the manner a complaint was handled is a key determinant of repurchase intentions (Lewis, 1996).

Simplified demonstration of sensory inputs appeals to sensory organs (Newby *et al.,* 1996) and increases knowledge, customer satisfaction, re-purchase intentions, and word-of-mouth (Davidow, 2003; Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002). Thus, greater degree of customer's sensory involvement stimulates interests, provides firsthand experiences, and reinforces learning, attentiveness, and recalls. Customers exhibit great deal of passivity; therefore, the service representative uses facial expressions, gesticulations, tones, and questioning to keep them attentive, and to motivate them to review, clarify, and expand information base. Newby

et al. (1996) observe that sense of sight accounts for about 75 percent of what we absorb mentally whereas hearing accounts for only 13 percent. Therefore, authorities (e.g., Estelami and De Maeyer, 2002; McCollough *et al.,* 2000) suggest that demonstrator's experience and knowledge improve post-complaint behaviour and competitive positioning because of sight and hearing as well as opportunity to clear doubts and to relate principles and theories to practice. Pfeffer (1994) opines that building competitive advantage amidst prevailing knowledge economy is subject to investment in demonstrators who possess sustained and difficult-to-copy skills and competences. We hypothesized our argument below.

H04: Product demonstration does not significantly influence post-complaint behaviour.

The Moderator

Studies (e.g. Alvarez and Crespi, 2003; Gumbau-Albert and Joaquín, 2002) on the technical efficiency found that it increases with firm's size. Service representative's credibility as a function of technical efficiency and perhaps firm size (Alvarez and Crespi, 2003) impacts significantly on post-complaint behaviour (Davidow, 2000; Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002). The service representative's excuses and/or written explanation are symptoms of incompetence (see Baer and Hill, 1994). The experience and knowledge of service representatives directly affect subjective judgement, competence and clarity of explanation (Awa *et al.,* 2011; McCollough *et al.,* 2000), and ultimately on post-complaint behaviour and complaint handling manners (TARP, 1981; Lewis, 1996). The choice of words and tone, the methods and sequences of presentation of points depend on how technically competent the service representative is. Studies (e.g., Kwon and Zmud, 1987; Zhu *et al.,* 2003) suggest that large firms are known to exhibit higher technical competence and show more likelihood to attract customer satisfaction with recovery, positive word-of-mouth publicity, repurchase intentions, and ultimately competitive advantage. Our review leads to the next hypothesized relationship.

H05: The relationships between organizational response to service failures and post-complaint behaviour are not moderated by the firm's technical efficiency.

WORK PLAN AND DATA COLLECTION

Through cross-sectional survey, we controlled human biases in data collection, explained (cause-and-effect) and drew inferences from results. A preliminary study unveiled 140 target population of customer experience executives and customer care managers of the six existing GSM and CDMA firms as well as 741 federal government-employed teachers of the seven FGCs (excluding part-time teachers, PTA teachers, and NYSC teachers) in the South-Eastern Nigeria. Questionnaire was developed to target all because 881 seem manageable and the study itself seeks stronger power of prediction. The FGCs and FGGCs chosen were those in locations where GSM and at least one CDMA firms have their network coverage. On accounts that Visafone, the only CDMA firm operating effectively in the South-eastern Nigeria at least for now (see Table 1), is yet to extend its network to Ezemgbo, Leija and Okposi, the FGCs or FGGCs therein were excluded. However, our analysis was based on 429 valid returned copies of the questionnaire.

Table1: Government pay-rolled teachers in FGGCs and FGCs, and respondents from service providers

	Fed. Govt. Colleges	No of Academic Staff	Sample Size	Service Provider	Customer care executive	Customer care Manager	Sample Size
1.	FGGC, Onitsha	145	145	MTN	34	10	44
2.	FGC, Nise	77	77	GLO	25	8	33
3.	FGC, Enugu	158	158	Etisalat	18	6	24
4.	FGGC, Leija	68	XXXX	M-tel	6o	2	8
5.	FGGC, Owerri	134	134	Air-tel	8	3	11
6.	FGC, Okigwe	87	87	Visafone	16	4	20
7.	FGGC, Umuahia	115	115				
8.	FGC, Ohafia	35	35				
9.	FGC, Okposi,	48	XXXX				
10.	FGGC, Ezemgbo	41	XXXX				
	Total	**898**	**741**	**87**	**33**	**140**	**87**

Measures

The operational measurement scale(s) adopted for the independent variables was principally similar to Boshoff's (2005) RECOVSAT scale. The RECOVSAT instrument is based on disconfirmation paradigm and measures customer expectations from a recovery. The scale measures satisfaction with six dimensions of service recovery- communication, empowerment, feedback, atonement, explanation, and tangibles. All the four dimensions of service recovery of this study seem to be captured by the RECOVSAT scale. Specifically, demonstration was captured by communication, explanations, and empowerment. The RECOVSAT scale as it relates to attentiveness and apology- atonement, empathy, personalized care, communication, and willingness to make-up; and credibility- courteous and knowledgeable explanation and feedbacks. For post-complaint behaviour, Davidow's (2000) scale was adopted. He used repurchase intentions, word-of-mouth, and satisfaction. Responses to batteries of statements were linked to a 7-point scale (viz., from very favourable via unfavourable) of semantic differential test of Osgood and Tanennbaum since we used bipolar adjectives/phrases to provide respondents with an opportunity to evaluate the constructs.

Validity and Reliability

The validity of our measurement scales had already been confirmed in previous studies (see McColl-Kennedy and Sparks, 2003; Davidow, 2003) but due to change and differences in application of variables, we reconfirmed by pre-testing the scales on selected sampling units to permit correction of inconsistencies and/or ambiguities before the actual study. On the other hand, Cronbach test (α) measured the reliability of instruments that describe the factors/constructs. The instruments were internally related to the factors at levels more than 0.7 (see table 2).

Table 2: Reliability test

S/N	Construct	Number of cases	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
1.	Apology	429	7	0.887
2.	Credibility	429	8	0.850
3.	Attentiveness	429	6	0.884
4.	Demonstration	429	4	0.926
5.	Post Complaint Behaviour	429	6	0.880

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

SPSS (version 17) provides aids to the analysis. Of the numerous dimensions of service recovery, four were statistically controlled without losing sight of the moderating effect of technical efficiency. The analyses involved three test statistic- one way ANOVA, Pearson's product moment correlation, and multiple regressions analysis. While the three tests measure statistical significance; the second, adds test of strength of the associations. A confirmatory test of ANOVA results was performed using Levene's test for equality of variances. Since the data collected were mainly ordinal, SPSS procedure converted them to interval to permit the use of these inferential statistics.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of variables

Variable	Mean	N	SD
Apology	5.44	429	1.20
Attentiveness	5.16	429	1.30
Credibility	5.17	429	1.19
Demonstration	4.85	429	1.74
Post-complaint Behaviour	5.34	429	1.11

Table 3 above provides the break-down of the means and standard deviations. The mean scores for the variables range from 4.85 to 5.44, indicating that the respondents believed that all the variables have relatively high scores in determining post-complaint behaviour.

Table 4: ANOVA on service recovery and post-complaint behaviour

ANOVA

	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Customer Service Failure Recovery					
Between Groups	159.891	1	159.891	141.232	0.000
Within Groups	483.414	427	1.132		
Total	643.305	428			
Post-complaint behaviour					
Between Groups	46.598	1	46.598	38.525	0.000
Within Groups	516.483	427	1.210		
Total	563.082	428			

Source: SPSS Output (based on 2012 field survey data)

Since F_{Cal} equals 141.232, Ftab(0.05,1,427) equals 3.84, and 0.00 < 0.05, we conclude significant difference between the opinions of customers and staff about the assessment of service recovery. Also, F38.525 > F3.84 and 0.00 < 0.05, therefore, there is significant difference between the opinions of customers and staff in the assessment of post-complaint behaviour.

Levene's Confirmatory Tests

The independent sample t-test and Levene's test for equality of variance confirmed the ANOVA results on the two variables. Table 5 shows that customers assessing service recovery had a mean of 4.7 and when they assessed post-complaint behaviour, they had 5.2; whereas staff assessed service recovery at a mean of 6.0 and post-complaint behaviour at a mean of 5.9.

Table 5: Independent sample t-test and Levene's test for equality of variance on service failure and post-complaint behaviour

Group Statistics

	Class of respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std Error Mean
1.	Customer Service Failure Recovery				
	a. Customers	295	4.6678	1.27967	0.07451
	b. Staff	134	5.9851	0.12171	0.01051
2.	Post-complaint behaviour				

a. Customers		295	5.2068	1.29938	0.07565
b. Staff		134	5.9179	0.38872	0.03358

Source: SPSS Output (based on 2012 field survey data)

Thus, there is a difference between the means of the two groups of respondents in their assessment of service failure recovery and post-complaint behaviour. With F-value of 309.947 (see Levene's test for equality of variances), Ftab(0.05,2,427) = F3.84, and 0.00 < 0.05, we conclude there is significant difference between the opinions of customers and staff in the assessment of service recovery. The same can be concluded of their assessment of post-complaint behaviour since F-value = 185.622 > F3.84 and 0.00 <0.05.

Table 6: Independent Sample test

	Levene's test of equality of variances		t-test for Equality of Means					90% confidence interval of the difference	
	F	Sig	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	Lower	Upper
Customer service failure Recovery:	309.947	0.000							
(a) Equal variances assumed			-11.884	427	0.000	-1.31728	0.11084	-1.53515	-1.09941
(b) Equal variances not assumed			-17.507	305.558	0.000	-1.31728	0.07524	-1.46534	-1.16922
Post-complaint behaviour:	185.622	0.000							
(a) Equal variances assumed			-6.207	427	0.000	-0.71113	0.11457	-0.93633	-0.48593
(b) Equal variances not assumed			-8.592	387.972	0.000	-0.71113	0.08277	-0.87387	-0.54840

Statistical Test of Hypotheses

Other bivariate and multivariate tests analyzed the association amongst the variables. Since regression analysis was involved; multi-collinearity, test of model utility, and coefficient of determination were performed.

Multi-collinearity Test

Though each independent variable contains a unique piece of information about how it explains and predicts the behaviour of Y, Xi variables may correlate in a regression equation. Multi-collinearity disturbs the statistical estimation procedure and causes the estimators to have large variances. Complex correlations in data than just the pairwise correlations permit the use of tolerance and variance inflation factors (VIFs) associated with X_h. The tolerance explains the statistics used to unveil the degree to which the independent variables have linear relationships with to one another. Often this is measured by the proportion of an independent variable's variance that is not accounted for by other independent variable(s) found in the model equation. Tolerance values heading towards zero and values of VIF exceeding 10 are principal signs of multi-collinearity. Going by these rules, we conclude that there is no threat of multi-collinearity amongst the dimensions of service recovery.

Table 7: Multi-collinearity test

Model Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition index	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient			Collinearity statistics	
			B	Std. error	Beta	T	Sig	Tolerance	VIF
(constant)	8.7772	1.000	2.631	0.233	-	11.285	0.000	-	-
Apology	0.102	9.276	-0.070	0.052	-0.039	-1.342	0.468	0.518	1.929
Attentiveness	0.015	24.368	0.287	0.70	0.288	3.827	0.000	0.255	3.917
Credibility	0.024	19.314	0.113	0.081	0.156	2.368	0.063	0.218	4.588
Demonstrations	0.011	28.738	-0.024	0.060	-0.056	-0.394	0.537	0.185	5.395

Test of Model Utility

The usefulness of the overall regression statistics was tested before the individual hypotheses were tested for their levels of significance. At least, the F-ratio test allows testing hypotheses that the multiple correlations equal zero in the population from which we drew our sample. Since F_{Cal} equals 173.360, Ftab(0.05,1,428) equals 3.84, and 0.00 < 0.05, we conclude that the regression model is useful to the extent that the predictor variables significantly predict the behaviour of the dependent variables investigated. The implication is that at least one of the independent variables has none zero coefficient.

Table 8: F-ratio

ANOVA[b]

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1. Regression	162.596	1	162.596	173.360	0.00[a]
Residual	400.486	427	0.938		
Total	563.082	428			

a. Predictors: (constant) Service Recovery
b. Dependent Variable: Post-complaint behaviour

Coefficient of Determination

The model summary (see model 1 in table 9) shows the coefficient of determination (R^2=0.362**) indicating that the predictor variables explained about 36.2% variations of post-complaint behaviour; thus other factors explain the rest. The implication is that successfully recovered digusted customers engage in post-complaint behaviour. This finding draws support from previous studies (see Etzel and Silverman, 1981; Spreng *et al.,* 1995; Davidow, 2003; Kim *et al.,* 2009).

Table 9: Model Summary

Model	Variables Entered	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std Error of the Estimate
1.	a) all the predictor variables b) post-complaint behaviour	0.602[a]	0.362	0.350	0.89182

Source: SPSS Output (based on 2012 field survey data)

Hypotheses Results

The Pearson's values show the interactions between the independent and dependent variables; whereas the beta values show the direction of the relationships.

Table 10: Summary of hypotheses testing

	Hypothesis	β value	Pearson (R)	P-Value	Decision
H01	Apology for service failure does not significantly influence post-complaint behaviour.	-0.036	0.378**	0.000	Reject Ho1: Apology significantly influences post-complaint behaviour.
H02	Attentiveness to customer issues does not significantly affect customer post-complaint behaviour.	0.248	0.560**	0.000	Reject Ho2 Attentiveness significantly affects post-complaint behaviour.
H03	There is no significant relationship between producer's credibility and	0.144	0.544**	0.000	Reject Ho3: There is a significant relationship between producer's credibility and

	customer post-complaint behaviour.				customer post-complaint behaviour.
H04	Product demonstration does not significantly influence customer post-complaint behaviour.	-0.035	0.483**	0.000	Reject H04: Product demonstration significantly influences customer post-complaint behaviour.
H05	The relationships between organizational response to service failures and post-complaint behaviour are not moderated by the firm's technical efficiency.	0.759 0.427	0.406**	0.000	Reject H05: Firm's technical efficiency significantly influences the relationship between service failure recovery and post-complaint behaviour.

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (two-tailed)

DISCUSSION

The equation shows that apology has a significant positive correlation (R= 0.378, p<0.01) with post-complaint behaviour, therefore rejecting H01. In terms of the direction of the relationship, the negative weighted impact average (β= -0.036) shows that the variables were inversely related. Though the relationship appears statistically significant, the explanation to this is that more measures of apology without positive change bring about diminishing effects on post-complaint behaviour. It is the position of this finding that apology affects all the measures of post-complaint behaviour- customer satisfaction, re-purchase intentions, and word-of-mouth publicity. This contrasts this study with existing ones. Apology affects complaint-handling satisfaction (East *et al.,* 2007; Michel *et al.*, 2009; Smith *et al.,* 2009), repurchase intention (Kelley *et al.,* 1993), has no significant effect on satisfaction (Ruyter and Wetzels, 2000; Davidow, 2000), negative effects on repurchase intentions, a positive effect on word-of-mouth and post-complaint behaviour (Davidow, 2000; Martin and Smart, 1994).

The test of H02 was not statistically supported because our research evidence showed that attentiveness attracts significant positive interaction with post-complaint behaviour (R= 0.560, p<0.05) and a direct weighted average impact (β=0.248), showing that the two variables move in the same direction (when one increases the other increases). Projecting attentiveness as the strongest determinant of post-complaint behaviour, this finding is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Davidow, 2000). Disgusted customers who experience courtesy, empathy, respect, and concern from service representatives enjoy post-complaint satisfaction, and exhibit likelihoods to engage in positive word-of-mouth and repurchase behaviour (Estelami, 2000; Davidow, 2000; East *et al.*, 2007; La and Kandampully, 2004). For H03, the result shows that service representative's credibility attracts significant positive correlation coefficient (0.544, p<0.05) and a direct weighted average impact on post-complaint behaviour (β=0.144), indicating a direct relationship. Similar studies (Conlon and Murray, 1996; Davidow, 2003) lend support to this finding. First, this study and Davidow' (2003) attest that credibility had the second strongest impacts on repurchase intentions. Second, scholars (e.g., East *et al.*, 2007; Michel *et al.*, 2009; Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002) suggest that credibility impacts significantly on believability of explanation, repurchase intentions, customer satisfaction, and word-of-mouth.

The interaction between product demonstration and post-complaint behaviour with respect to testing of H04 was not statistically significant (see R= 0.483, p < 0.05) with an inverse weighted average impact (β=-0.035). Post-complaint behaviour is positively affected

by demonstration, especially when the consumer is responsible for the ordeals (perhaps for not understanding the intricacies of the product) but the relationship may be otherwise (inverse) when there is a continual negligence by the service representative. Extrapolated knowledge from previous studies supports this finding. Clarity and simplified demonstration and practical displays of the stimulus' attributes stimulate firsthand experience and post-complaint behaviour (Davidow, 2000; TARP, 1981; Newby *et al.,* 1996) and the manner a complaint was handled is a key determinant of repurchase intentions (Lewis, 1996; Bitner *et al.,* 1990). Finally, technical efficiency directly moderates the behaviour of the predictor and dependent variables (see 0.406, $P<0.05$, $\beta=0.759$), thereby lending no support to H05. An improvement in technical efficiency provides a surge on post-complaint behaviour. This result shows consistency across existing studies. A service representative's skill expressed in his choice of words and tone, the methods and sequences of presentation and explanation of points (Alvarez and Crespi, 2003) impact significantly on post-complaint behaviour (Davidow, 2000; Maxham and Netemeyer, 2002).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The telecommunications in Nigeria is besieged with stiff competition and better informed user publics and so, players attempt to create competitive advantage via dissuading consumers' detrimental actions amidst service failures as well as encouraging customers to progress upward in the loyalty ladder. Therefore, this study draws the following specific conclusions from the discussion and test of hypotheses. First, consumers suffer service failures in the telecommunications industry and on accounts that they show willingness to retain their patronage if their issues are adequately addressed, service providers commit resources to recover them. Second, the predictor variables explained varying behaviour variations of measures of post-complaint behaviour. Though with different levels of statistical interactions and directions of relationship, all the dimensions studied were critical in determining post-complaint behaviour. Attentiveness and credibility were the most critical factors in determining post-complaint behaviour, followed by demonstration, and apology. Therefore, courtesy, politeness, careful explanation, empathy, respect, and concern from service representatives cause disgusted customers to enjoy post-complaint satisfaction, and to exhibit likelihoods to engage in positive word-of-mouth and repurchase behaviour. Third, the statistical interactions between the constructs of independent and dependent variables were significantly moderated by technical efficiency; an improved technical efficiency improves the manner of manipulation of the dimensions of service recovery and ultimately provides an improved post-complaint behaviour. The implications of these conclusions are theoretical and practical.

Theoretical

Service recovery is a comprehensive set of managerial framework; therefore, our findings expand knowledge on B_2C services and, specifically, contribute to the growth of the literature stream pertaining to telecommunications industry. The academia is provided with another stream of validated and cross-validated research evidences as well as extension of theory that stimulate further inquiries and perhaps, project learning from mistakes as a sure way of building managerial experience and competitive advantage. The proposed model added the constructs of demonstration, which was neglected by previous scholars (see Davidow, 2003; Bitner *et al.,* 1990; Smith *et al.*, 1999; Boshoff, 1999; Johnston and Fern, 1999). Further, the study attempted showing how technical efficiency moderates the relationship between recovery alternatives and measures of post-complaint behaviour.

Some of our findings, which contradict and/or confirm extant literature, add to body of theoretical framework. In cross-validating empirical evidence, attentiveness was found to be most statistically significant on post-complaint behaviour, while credibility took second position in affecting repurchase intentions, thus, confirming Davidow (2003). Apology impacts on all measures of post-complaint behaviour and contradicts extant studies (East *et al.,* 2007; Michel *et al*., 2009; Smith *et al.,* 2009; Ruyter and Wetzels, 2000; Davidow, 2000; Kelley *et al.,* 1993; Davidow, 2000; Martin and Smart, 1994). To a large extent, these findings enrich the theoretical strength and stimulate replications in order to build theory.

Practical

Operationally, the four dimensions of service recovery should be tied to post-complaint behaviour since the study revealed a statistically significant relationship between them. On the grounds that attentiveness and credibility were the most critical factors in explaining and predicting post-complaint behaviour, and that technical efficiency moderates such relationship, service officers should be trained and retrained to be proactive and relational in detecting customer issues; in showing courtesy, empathy, politeness, and concern in addressing such ordeals; and in explaining company's policies, procedures, and rules as they relate to such customer issues. Further, the manipulation of the dimensions of service recovery requires some creativity in value creation to avoid detrimental results since the study shows that incessant apology and demonstration without actually improving upon the services inversely correlate with measures of post-complaint behaviour.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

The application of our findings may be limited by its focus and other factors. First, this is a cross-sectional survey; the causal relationships identified may vary across sectors and regions or may even lose meaning overtime. Therefore, to strengthen our results requires extended data and measures by cross-validating our scale and model and/or by engaging in longitudinal study. Second, some errors seemed unavoidable in the SPSS conversion of data (e.g., from ordinal to interval scales) just as all the measures of constructs represented subjective perceptions and prone to biases. Finally, this paper did not study the strength of factors that cause service failure and demonstration is relatively under-investigated in service recovery; therefore, further scholarships are encouraged.

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