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An Investigation of the Influence of Social CRM on Brand Reputation and Brand Loyalty In Developing Country:

Evidence from the Nigerian Telecoms Industry

BY

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DECLARATION

This thesis is presented as on original contribution based on Doctor of Philosophy Research at the university of Salford, Salford, United Kingdom and has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at any higher education institution under my name or that of any other individuals. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no materials previously published or another person except where due reference is made.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my humble work to my MUM`S soul (YASMINA) her spirit were the energy that pushed me to complete my thesis work. To her I would like to say that "I LOVE YOU MUM".

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In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and Most Merciful Praise is given to Him and peace is upon His beloved prophet Muhammad (SAW). It must recognize that there is no ease in our deeds except only one that Allah made it easy, So I seek help from Allah to ease all difficulties in the way to finish this. Nevertheless, I would like to address my great appreciations to many people for contribution to do this work successful.

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ABSTRACT

The modern business environment has undergone fundamental changes – shifting from being production-inclined to being service driven; a situation that has resulted in a shift from the traditional ways of conducting organisational and marketing processes to a new strategy that is technology-enabled and customer-centric. Particularly, the advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has created new channels for organisations like never before for exploiting customer relationship management tailored towards enhancing customer satisfaction, enhancing customer loyalty, increasing sales, and improving profitability. The internet and social media especially have enabled the flourishing of customer relationship management (CRM) practices. Business organisations can now incorporate the functionalities of the internet and social media into the traditional CRM systems to provide a platform where firms can interact and engage with consumers (both existing and prospective) in view of providing customised and personalised services. However, there have been major concerns raised on the fruition of these Social CRM systems in delivering value to both business organisations and its different stakeholders. Specifically, questions have been raised on whether these organisations claiming to implement Social CRM are fully exploiting its capabilities and are embracing the full possibilities such systems offer to businesses. Evidence in both the practitioner and academic literature has suggested that for the telecommunication industry, the transition and re-engineering of telecom operations and processes into being customer-centric has not been generally smooth. In the centre of the argument and criticism is that the needs and expectations of the customers are constantly evolving faster than the offerings and products offered by the many telecom firms and therefore needs a robust system like social CRM to manage customer relationships. In this contextual understanding, this doctorate research was embarked upon to explore the implementation of Social CRM by telecom companies in emerging markets as well as examine how such Social CRM strategies translates to customer outcomes such as brand reputation and customer loyalty. The country of Nigeria was chosen for this research given the huge potential it provides as an emerging market for the telecom firms with over 190 million people. The mixed methodology research was adopted in this research in order to gain a deeper insight of the situation both from the companies and customers' perspectives. In other words, the qualitative research approach has been used to gain insight on the implementation of social CRM by telecom firms in Nigeria and quantitative research approach was used in examining how the social CRM strategies

translates to customers' brand awareness and loyalty. Three out of the four multinational companies who are the industry leaders participated in the study whereas, 491 customer responses were empirically analysed to reflect the customer outcomes from the implementation of the social CRM strategies. The study findings indicate Nigerian telecom firms are adopting the customer-centric approach to business and are using social CRM systems as a means of gaining competitive advantage; as well as establishing a beneficial relationship with their customers and in value co-creation. On the other hand, customers were found to hold high value of the usefulness of social media marketing and social CRM in driving customer-oriented service delivery and as well influencing the brand resonance among customers. The implication of the findings and practical recommendation is provided in the thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The modern business environment has undergone fundamental changes – shifting from being production-inclined to being service driven; a situation that has resulted in a shift from the traditional ways of conducting organisational and marketing processes to a new strategy that is technology-enabled and customer-centric (Brooks *et al*. 2011; Patil & Bhakkad, 2014). Today, businesses are structured beyond the simple development, supply and sales of goods or services, to the continuous development of after sales services that is focused on developing long lasting relationship with customers (Peppers & Rogers, 2011; Rai, 2013; Elbedweihy et al. 2016). Particularly, the advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has created new channels for organisations like never for exploiting customer relationship management tailored towards enhancing customer satisfaction, enhancing customer loyalty, increasing sales, and improving profitability (Phan & Vogel, 2010; Shriedesh & Abd. Ghani, 2017; Singhal *et al*. 2018).

The internet and social media especially have enabled the flourishing of customer relationship management (CRM) practices. Business organisations can now incorporate the functionalities of the internet and social media into the traditional CRM systems to provide a platform where the firms can interact and engage with the consumers (both existing and prospective) in view of providing customised and personalised services (Greenberg, 2009; Quinton & Harridge-March 2010; Singhal *et al*. 2018). Although the application of Social CRM systems has been well documented across different business industries including the aviation industry (Morgan et al. 2011; Gajic *et al*. 2016; Gnanprakash & Kulkarni, 2016), the hospitality industry (Milovic, 2012; Mohammed, 2012; Rosman & Stuhura, 2013; Thryambakam & Bethapudi, 2013; Klutse, 2016), and telecommunication industry (Cottman, 2013; Saleh, 2016) to mention but a few; there are still major concerns raised on the fruition of these Social CRM systems in delivering value to both business organisations and its different stakeholders (Cottman, 2007; 2013; Alamgir & Shamsuddoha, 2015)**.** On the other hand, questions have been raised on whether these

organisations claiming to implement Social CRM are fully exploiting its capabilities and are embracing the full possibilities such systems offer to businesses (Alamgir & Shamsuddoha, 201).

Particularly for the telecommunication industry, the transition and re-engineering of telecom operations and processes into being customer-centric has not been generally smooth (Wu *et al.* 2009; Alamgir & Shamsuddoha, 2015). In the centre of the argument and criticism is that the needs and expectations of the customers are constantly evolving faster than the offerings and products offered by the many telecom firms and therefore needs a robust system like social CRM to manage customer relationships. being offered by many of the telecom firms. The aim of this research is to explore the implementation of Social CRM in telecom companies in Nigeria and examine how such Social CRM strategies translates to customer outcomes such as brand reputation and customer loyalty. This being the introductory chapter of the thesis is divided into six sections. The following section (1.1) provides the background to the study (i.e. background to CRM and Social CRM), followed by the discussion of the research problem in section (1.2). Section (1.3) highlights the research aim and objectives and in section (1.4) the significance of the study is presented. Section (1.5) provides an overview of the research methodology and the concluding section (1.6) provides a summary of the overall structure of the thesis.

1.1   Background to Study

The main objective of many business organisations is to maximise profit, and this is obtainable by ensuring optimal consumer satisfaction. Social Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has been advanced from the relationship marketing literature as a prominent technique for enhancing customer satisfaction and subsequent   customer retention (Reinartz *et al.*, 2004; Reimann et al. 2010; Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Nguyen & Mutum, 2012; Wang & Feng, 2012; Nwankwo & Ajemunigbohun, 2013). Simply put, CRM can be described as a technology-based solution designed to support the building process and management of the organisation-customer relationship (Jayachandran *et al.* 2005:177). According to Reimann *et al.* (2010:329) CRM is a "business strategy focused on infusing into the organisational process and culture the mind-set that customers are manageable strategic assets".

CRM systems therefore represents an avenue for businesses to identify and connect with the customers at the right time and create differentiable value by delivering satisfaction for each customer's needs and requirements and with the view of stimulating positive customer outcomes such as repeat purchase and brand loyalty (Nguyen & Mutum, 2012:401). CRM therefore requires the restructuring or re-engineering of organisational process; including the orientation of the internal staff in delivering services to customers (Nguyen & Mutum, 2012). This include the re-orientation of processes that involve the identification, acquisition and retention of customers through customer interaction management capabilities (Hansotia, 2002; Reinartz *et al.*, 2004; Ernst et al. 2011). Hansotia (2002:121) argue that at the "heart of CRM is the organisation's ability to leverage customer data creatively, effectively and efficiently to design and implement customer-focused strategies that increases the breadth, depth and length of the relationship between the organisation and customers".

Similarly, Ernst *et al*. (2011:291) describe CRM to involve the "evolution and integration of marketing ideas and newly available data, technologies and organisational forms into establishing, developing and maintaining successful long-term learning relationships with well-chosen customers". Put differently, CRM refers to a process that demands the systematic and proactive management of the relationship between the organisation and the customers, right from the initiating stage when the customer first contacts the organisation, to the maintenance stage (that is post purchase) and climaxing at the termination phase (the end of the relationship) if need be (Reinartz et al., 2004:294). Hence the essence of CRM is to align business processes in such a way as it promotes the development of a quality relationship with the customers characterised by open dialogues and interactions; providing a situation where the organisation can learn about the needs and requirements of both existing and prospective customers and use the information in delivering customised, personalised and innovative products (Payne & Frow, 2006; Payne *et al*. 2009; Peppers & Roger, 2011).

Further, developing and sustaining a long-term customer relationship provides a lot of benefits to the organisation including fostering upselling, cross-selling, increased and repeat purchasing, customer retention, word-of-mouth advertisements, reduced costs, etc. (Payne & Frow, 2006; Lusch *et al*. 2010; Nguyen & Mutum, 2012); which have been considered as an effective marketing strategy for enhancing organisational performance, productivity and profitability (Boulding *et al*.

2005; Kransnikov *et al.* 2009). CRM systems achieve this by providing a framework for coordinating the process between marketing, customer services and quality programs geared towards improving organisational performance (Boulding *et al.* 2005:157). Morgan *et al.* (2009) insinuates that the successful implementation of CRM reflects the organisation's performance in terms of the strategic identification of prospective and attractive customers, initiating and maintaining relationships with ex-customers and leveraging the relationship into customer level profits.

Evidence in marketing literature indicates that CRM since its inception in the 1990s has evolved to become a widely embraced concept in both the corridors of academic research and in managerial practices (Grönroos, 1994; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Reinartz, 2004; Askool & Nakata, 2011; Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014). Regrettably, evidence from these studies reported a high rate of failure of most CRMs systems in actual practice (Greenberg, 2004; Bohling *et al.* 2006; Osarenkhoe & Bennani, 2007; Becker *et al.*, 2009; Piskar & Faganel, 2009). Several reasons have been highlighted for such failures of most CRM systems. First, the lack of proper understanding of CRM systems and its capabilities has been mentioned as a major setback (Payne & Frow, 2005). Secondly, organisations have been criticised for considering CRM in the short-term rather than as a long-term strategy that requires fundamental changes to organisational behaviour and culture (Greenberg, 2004; Wu & Wu, 2005). Thirdly, and what is considered in this study as the most significant factor for the failure of the traditional CRM system is the advent of the internet and Social media as a communicative tool.

The birth of social media shifted the power of marketing from the organisation and marketers to the consumers as the propellers of product innovation and delivery. Social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, Google+ and a host of peer-to-per websites like the wikis, blogs, microblogs, podcasts, etc. brought a new dimension to CRM (Kim & Ko, 2012; Giannakis-Bompolis & Boutsouki, 2014). These social media tools now placed the customers at the helm of proceedings in the way business transactions are now conducted. Hence there was a need to incorporate social media into the traditional CRM systems and this birthed what is now popularly known as Social Customer Relationship Management (or Social CRM for short). Social CRM has been defined as a "business philosophy and strategy designed to engage the customer in a collaborative interaction that provides mutually beneficial value in a trusted and transparent

business environment" (Greenberg, 2010:414). The strength of this definition is that it builds upon of the traditional CRM – which is focused on the transactional relationship between the organisation and the customer, and advances it to include the social functions, processes and capabilities that are involved in the interactions between the organisation and the customers as well as among the relatives, friends and peers of the customer supported in the social media platform (Greenberg, 2010; Trainor, 2012).

In addition, Rodriguez et al. (2012:85) describe Social CRM as a business tool in the modern era for sharing contents and creating conversations that is geared towards greater customer engagement, which in turn is expected to create deeper and meaningful relationships with customers (both for existing and prospective customers) and other business partners. For customer-oriented organisations such as the telecom firms, Social CRM provides a suitable platform for enhancing customer service and satisfaction; which is a major source of competitive advantage (Pires et al. 2006; Smith, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Rai, 2013; Harrigan & Miles, 2014). To this end, social CRM is focused on fostering strong relationships between organisations and the customers through interactions that allows for strategic investment decisions on the products and/or services. In addition, Social CRM also has the function of helping business firms in market segmentation – that is helping in identifying and engage with the customers that provides the most value to the organisation (Pires *et al*. 2006; Harridge-March & Quinton, 2009; Zeng *et al*. 2010). In addition, with Social CRM, firms can identify sales trend which is needed for improving decision making and planning in the product design process, increase upselling by capturing, tracking and proffering solutions to issues within a unified system, increase the accuracy in tracking orders and customer queries, and provides the firms with a thorough understanding of the market by gathering customer insights as well as those of the competitors (Neff, 2010; Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

1.2   The Research Problem

Since the introduction of CRM in the 1990s, its framework has evolved through diverse set of identities – resulting in a highly fragmented and inconsistent conceptual domain (Zablah, et al., 2005:475). Up to the current date, the research on CRM though vast but varied has failed to address

the emerging role of customer data and customer engagement and value co-creation as advanced by the definitively emerging service-oriented business landscape and the new Social CRM perspective, which has left the tenets of the traditional CRM in question (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Grönroos, 2008; Vargo, Maglio & Akaka, 2008; Greenberg, 2010; Grönroos & Helle, 2010; Grönroos & Ravald, 2011). Recently, there has been an increasing research interest in Social CRM (Payne & Frow, 2005; Nguyen & Mutum, 2012; Wang & Feng, 2012; Khodakarami & Chan, 2014); however, the development of this research domain remains at an early stage.

According to Trainor (2012:317) one of the significant problems faced by most organisations trying to adopt Social CRM arises from the confusion on how Social CRM can be effectively implemented to influence organisational performance. Khodakarami & Chan, (2014:39) also pointing out the same issue in Social CRM research called for future studies to comprehensively explore the opportunities in customer relationship management mediated by Social media using different research methods (such as the combination of the qualitative and quantitative research methods) in developing wider knowledge and understanding of the concepts. Research studies are required to investigate the patterns of Social CRM systems and their uses across different industries and countries to explore how the characteristics of the business environment (such as national culture, level of competitiveness, industry turbulence, etc.) affect the application and support of Social CRM systems in the customer relationship management processes.

Nonetheless, Social CRM has a lot of benefits for service organisations such as those in the telecommunications industry which is arguably one of the most competitive consumer markets, characterised by high rate of innovations (Wu *et al*. 2009; Heidemann *et al*. 2012; Saleh, 2016). The very competitive nature of the telecom industry poses serious challenge for firms that are now required to commodify innovative services to suit the particular demands of the customers, who are very quick to take their SIM cards and go elsewhere once they notice a better service elsewhere (Shi *et al*., 2006; Oyeniyi & Abiodun, 2009; Zhu *et al*. 2011). Thus, for the telecom service providers, the enhancement of customer experience provides a critical means of differentiation from competitors (Wang et al. 2004; Askool & Nakata, 2011), especially in this modern era where consumers have become more social, and firms are needed to now look to Social CRM to deliver the type of differentiated experiences that translates to long-term relationship and customer loyalty.

Yet Social CRM remains a new and complex landscape – with business operators still questioning its impact on overall customer experience – everything from "what is it", to "who should own it" to "how should it be measured" (Askool & Nakata, 2011:205-206). Furthermore, the constantly evolving nature of Social media provides a unique challenge to modern business as they are required to explore the various technologies, channels and use cases to develop a sustaining investment on Social CRM strategy that is effective. An understanding of how to effectively manage customer relationship and customers' opinion of their customer relationship management in this era of Social media has therefore become an important research interest for both academicians and practitioners (Bala, 2014; Alamgir & Shamsuddoha, 2015). Finally, organisation must realise that the customers provide different economic values and the findings from studies of this nature will enable them to subsequently adapt their customer offerings and communication strategies accordingly in the fulfilment of the desire for customer-centric approach to business (Altimeter Group, 2010; Berisha-Shaqiri, 2015). In line with the stated research problem, the following questions are posed:

i. To what extent is the Nigerian telecom service providers embracing Social CRM as a tool for interacting and engaging with the consumers?
ii. What are the Social CRM tools and strategies being used by the telecom service providers?
iii. What effect does Social CRM have on customers' perceived usefulness of customer-oriented service delivery of the telecom firms in Nigeria?
iv. Does Social CRM have significant effect on customer loyalty?
v. Are the identified Social media usage patterns related to the theoretically suggested typology of social media and Social CRM applications in the literature?

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

1.3.1 Aim

In line with the gap in the literature and the research questions raised; this thesis is aimed at exploring the implementation of Social CRM in telecom companies in Nigeria and examine how

1.3.2 Objectives

In achieving this above aim, this study will gather expert perception of both industry experts and consumers in following the following objectives:

i. to explore the extent to which Social CRM systems have been implemented by telecom organisations in Nigeria in engaging and interacting with the customers

ii. to identify Social CRM tools and strategies currently adopted by the Nigeria telecom firms.

iii. to investigate the impact of Social CRM on the consumer behavioural outcomes such as brand resonance and customer loyalty

iv. to develop and validate a framework that will kind the telecoms firms in Nigeria in the delivery of consistent high-quality customer services through Social CRM.

1.4 Significance of Study

This research study has provided a guideline for interested stakeholders in the telecom industry on the efficacy of social CRM and its potency in establishing long-term customer relationship as well as providing a platform for organisations to increase their profitability and competitive advantage. This research is of great significance given the nature of today's telecom industry, which is characterised by the challenge of developing more effective means of interacting and engaging the customers not only for encouraging sales but also in the development of innovative products and services that can provide competitive advantage. For a highly competitive Nigerian telecom industry, creating a platform for engaging and interacting with customers provides a framework for retaining old customers as well as attracting new customers through cost-effective marketing strategies such as social media marketing supported by social CRM. It is further hoped that the findings of this study will enlighten managers and prospective firms in the Nigerian telecoms industry on the efficacy of Social CRM in improving customer insights and in enhancing overall organisational productivity. In addition, the evidence from the study advanced the current literature

by establishing the relationship between consumers perceived of the value and usefulness of social CRM mediated product and service offerings from the organisations. The result therefore opens up a new direction for future research.

1.5   Research Methodology: An Overview

The research methodology adopted for the current research incorporated both the descriptive and explanatory research regarding the variables and constructs of Social CRM systems, measure of firm-customer engagement or interaction on social media, perceived usefulness of social CRM, satisfaction and measure of brand resonance. In achieving the research aim and objectives, the adopted methodology involved first the review of the extant literature in gaining in-depth understanding of the Social CRM concept and the influence on organisational performance. In addition, the thesis focused on the growing body of theoretical and empirical knowledge on Social CRM, and how it should relate to organisational performance, customer engagement/interaction, satisfaction and retention. This formed the secondary data for the current study.

The primary data for the research was collected using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative data was collected using semi-structured face-to-face interview with participants recruited from three multinational telecom firms operating in the industry. On the other hand, close-ended survey questionnaire was used in collecting information from the customers of the telecom service based on the measured variables. The interview data was analysed using content analysis from which insightful categories and theme were developed on how social CRM is being implemented in the Nigerian telecom industry. The quantitative data was analysed using both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was used in measuring the participants observation or measure of each of the study's variables whereas inferential statistics was employed in testing and validating the research hypotheses. Detailed description of the research methodology is presented in chapter four of this thesis.

1.6   Thesis Outline

This chapter has introduced the research focus and the research objectives to be fulfilled. This thesis is divided into seven main chapters, including this background to research chapter. The outline of the thesis is represented in Fig. 1 below and it provides a summary of the main activities and the content of each of the chapters.

Chapter 1	An Introduction to the Research Focus. Including the background to the research, research aim and objectives and significance of the research
Chapter 2	Introduces the research context and the justification for carrying out the research. Include content like historical development of the Nigeria telecom industry, contribution of the study and scope
Chapter 3	**Literature review of CRM and Social CRM Literature**
Chapter 4	Describes the research Procedures, i.e. the philosophical basis of the research, the research design and data collection and analytic processes
Chapter 5	Analysis of the Qualitative Data and Discussion of Findings
Chapter 6	Analysis of the Quantitative Data and Discussion of Findings
Chapter 7	Conclusion and Recommendation from Findings

Figure 2: Thesis Outline

CHAPTER TWO

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT AND JUSTIFICATION OF RESEARCH

In this chapter, an overview of the telecom industry in Nigeria including its potentials and challenges is presented. Also presented in this chapter is the issue of customer relationship management in the telecom industry and propositions on how it could be management. From the issues discussed and in aligning with the research questions presented in Chapter (section 1.2) the research hypotheses are framed. Thereafter, the justification of the research and the contribution it will bring to both practice and the academia is presented. The scope of the study was also presented before the chapter concluded with a summary.

2.1   The Study Context: The Nigerian Telecom Industry

The Nigerian economy is one of the largest (if not the largest) in Africa (African Development Bank Group, 2017; UN, 2018). In economic terms, it is classified as an emerging market with rich reserves of natural resources (including ample fertile land, regular rainfall, and several types of mineral deposits especially crude oil), as well as abundant human resources with a population of over 150 million people within thirty-six states of the federation including the federal capital territory (Deutsche Bank Research, 2014). In addition to having one of the largest economies in Africa, Nigeria has currently the largest telecom market in Africa (Abdul et al., 2014:139), contributing 8.83% to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). In recent years, particularly in the past two decades, the Nigerian telecommunications industry has undergone rapid change and phenomenal growth in terms of delivery of services to both residential and business consumers. This growth has been attributed to the liberalization of the sector and the resulting competition by private operators (Ogbo *et al*. 2012, Adi, 2015).

2.1.1 Historical Development of the Nigerian Telecom Industry

The history of the modern Nigerian telecom industry can be traced back to 1985, with the establishment of the Nigeria Telecommunication Ltd (NITEL) (Adebayo & Ekejiuba, 2016; Nkordeh et al. 2017). Nonetheless, in the years ensuing up till 1992, the industry was characterised by gross underdevelopment (Ogunsola & Aboyade, 2005). The deregulation of the industry in 1992, saw the formulation of the Nigerian Communication Service (NCC) which is mandated by the Nigerian Communications Act (2003) to monitor all significant matters relating to the performance of all licensed telecoms service providers. With the 1992 deregulation of the industry, telecommunication services moved from the analogue era (i.e. voicemail, paging and voice services over the analogue E-TACS network) to a digital era comprising of Global Personal Communication Systems (GMPCS), Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP), cable broadcasting networks and the Integrated Services Digital Network (ISGDN) (Nkordeh *et al.* 2017).

Prior to the deregulation of the telecommunications industry in Nigeria and before 1999, the country was ranked the lowest in the world with teledensity of 400,000 active lines as against a population of over 100 million people (Adebayo & Ekejiuba, 2016). The deregulation of the industry saw the entrance of multinational companies such as ECONET (which is now known as Airtel) and Mobile Telephone Networks (MTN) in 2001 and in 2003 operational licenses awarded Etisalat (now known as 9Mobile) and Globacom (Nig.) - the first and still the only indigenous telecom firm in Nigeria. The entry of these companies improved the development of the industry by deepening the level competition and ensuring the large subscriber base enjoyed a better-quality service as well as variety of telecom products and services being offered (Deloitte, 2015; Adebayo & Ekejiuba, 2016). In addition, initiatives like the number portability has also enriched customer experience by limiting hassles to accessing better services on a preferred network (Deloitte, 2015).

2.1.2 Structure of the Nigeria Telecommunications Industry

The Nigerian telecommunication industry has evolved over the years since 2001 to become an oligopolistic market structure – where a very few firms have the majority market share. In terms

of technologies being delivered, the Nigerian telecommunication industry is currently divided into GSM, CDMA, Fixed Wired/Wireless technology and VoIP (NCC, 2018). Fig. 2.1 shows the percentages of subscribers using each of the technologies currently deployed. The majority of the market as indicated by 99.7% are using the Global System for Mobile (GSM) Communication services, while the remainder (0.3%) of the market are patronizing mobile CDMA (Code Division Multiple Access), Fixed (Wired/wireless) and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) with 0.1% market share respectively. The implication is that mobile (GSM) telecommunication service provide predominately control the Nigerian telecommunication industry.

MARKET SHARE BY TECHNOLOGY
(August 2018)

Technology	Mobile (GSM)	Mobile (CDMA)	Fixed (Wireless/Wired)	VoIP
Percentage	99.70%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
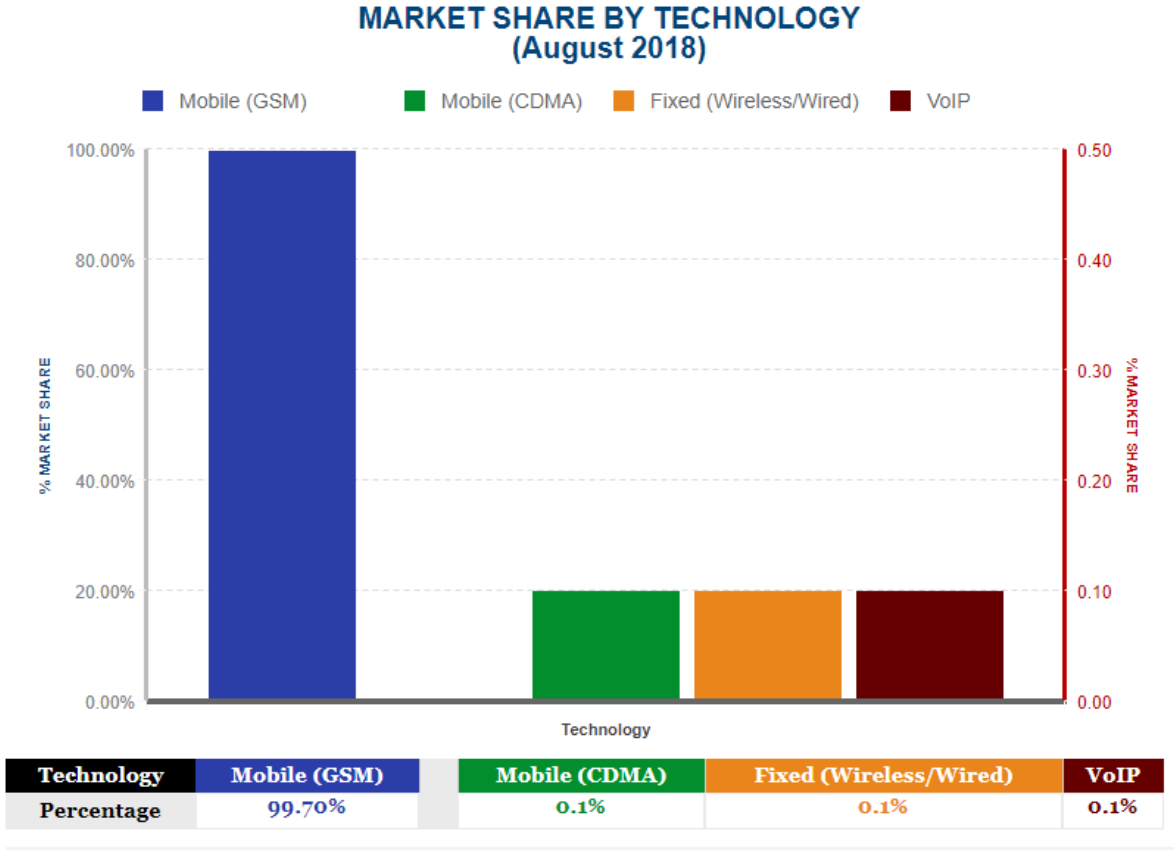
Figure 2.1: Market Share by Telecom Technology in Nigeria
(Source, NCC, 2018)

In terms of the operators of the GSM, the Nigerian telecommunication industry is currently composed for four multinational organisations, namely: MTN (Nig.), Airtel, Globacom (Nig.) and 9Mobile (formerly Etisalat). Fig. 2.2 shows the market share per operators of GSM. MTN (Nig.)

a South African based company currently controls the majority of the market share with 40%. The industry control is followed by both Globacom and Airtel, which respectively enjoy 25% share of the market. The least operator in terms of market share volume is 9Mobile with 10%.

MARKET SHARE BY OPERATOR (GSM)
(August 2018)

● Airtel   ● 9mobile   ● Globacom   ● MTN

39.94%

25.23%

25.24%

9.60%

No. of Subscribers

	Airtel	9mobile	Globacom	MTN
No. of Subscribers	40,508,087	15,411,322	40,495,418	64,106,166
Percentage(%)	25.00%	10.00%	25.00%	40.00%
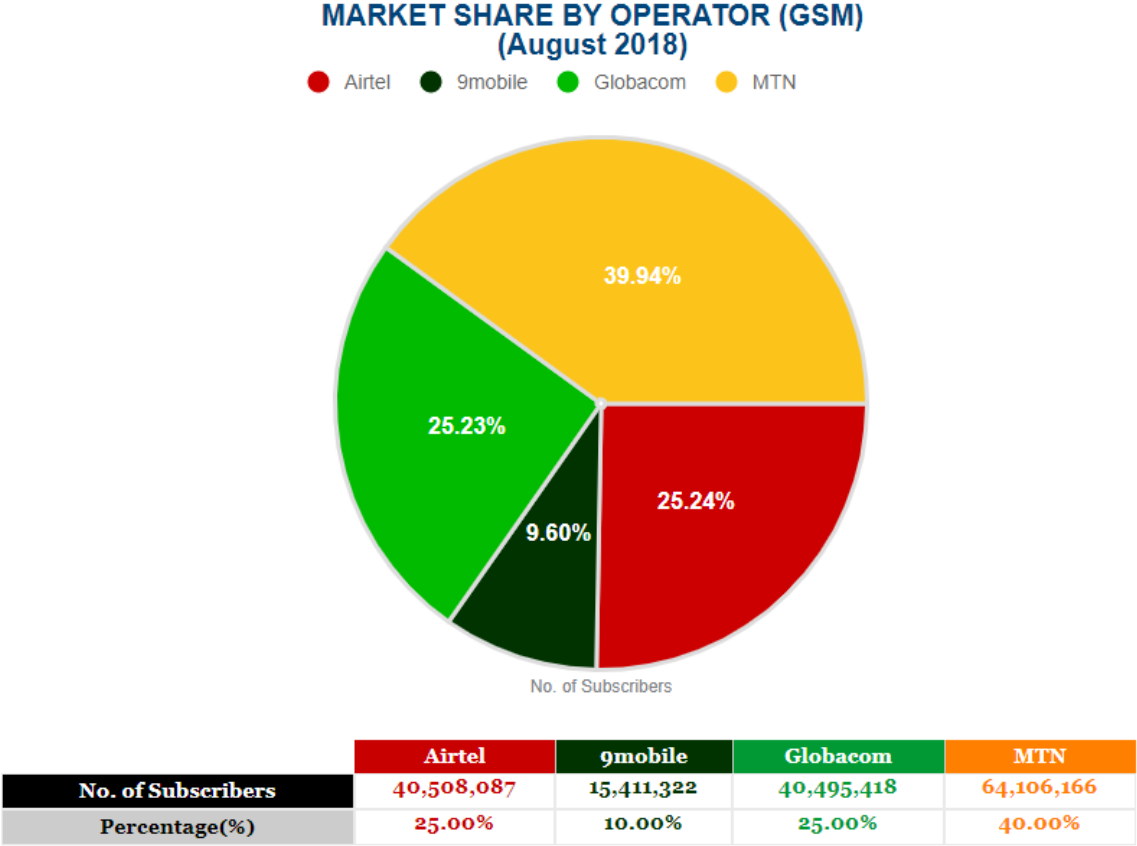
Figure 2.2: Market Share by GSM Operator
(Source, NCC, 2018)

In terms of internet subscription (GSM), there are over 104 million subscribers buying internet data from the four major companies, of which MTN has the largest market share of the internet subscription with 38 % (i.e. over 39 million subscribers) as of August 2018. Airtel and Globacom also share closely the same market share of 26%; with 27,508,240 subscribers (for Airtel) and 27,418,767 subscribers (for Globacom). 9Mobile have the least market share of the big-four; with merely 10 percent of the total number of internet subscriber (GSM)

INTERNET SUBSCRIBER DATA (GSM)
(Sep 2017 - Aug 2018)

	Aug'18	Jul'18	Jun'18	May'18	Apr'18	Mar'18	Feb'18	
Airtel	27,508,240	27,086,773	26,711,049	26,548,338	25,842,573	25,476,319	25,075,110	2
9mobile	10,241,693	10,367,260	10,585,346	10,807,862	10,847,221	10,997,506	11,132,153	
Globacom	27,418,767	27,146,075	26,571,254	26,607,441	26,372,259	26,693,756	26,733,989	:
MTN	39,459,642	39,071,670	38,937,473	39,191,085	38,147,450	37,428,647	37,963,416	3
Total	104,628,342	103,671,778	102,805,122	103,152,726	101,209,503	100,596,228	100,904,668	100

Figure 2.3: Market Share by Internet Subscriber Data (GSM)
(Source, NCC, 2018)

Giving the potentials for further development, the telecoms sector continues to attract considerable local and foreign investments. Particularly within the personal mobile sector, which has benefited from the market competition and the wider deployment of LTE as evident by the increasing demand for mobile broadband services in recent years (Oyeniyi & Abiodun, 2009; Ojo, 2010; Oyedijo, 2012). Increasing from 30,000 subscribers at the beginning of the millennium to 9.174 million connections at the end of 2004 and current over 104 million subscribers, the personal GSM business has become a very lucrative one. The active mobile subscribers also represent about 58% of the entire population and contributing about 19 percent of the total mobile telecom subscribers

on the African Continent – a feat that has earned the country the first on the African continent and the 10th place in the entire world (NCC, 2018).

In terms of internet subscription by CDMA, the market is majorly controlled by Visafone (see Fig. 2.4) and in terms of VoIP, Smile is the market leader (see Fig. 2.5).

INTERNET SUBSCRIBER DATA (CDMA)
(Sep 2017 - Aug 2018)

Multilinks ■   Visafone ■   Total ■

	Aug'18	Jul'18	Jun'18	May'18	Apr'18	Mar'18	Feb'18	Jan'18	Dec'17	Nov'17	Oct'
Multilinks	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	
Visafone	66,140	66,210	30,305	30,305	30,305	30,305	30,305	30,305	30,305	30,305	30,3
Total	66,144	66,214	30,309	30,309	30,309	30,309	30,309	30,309	30,309	30,309	30,3
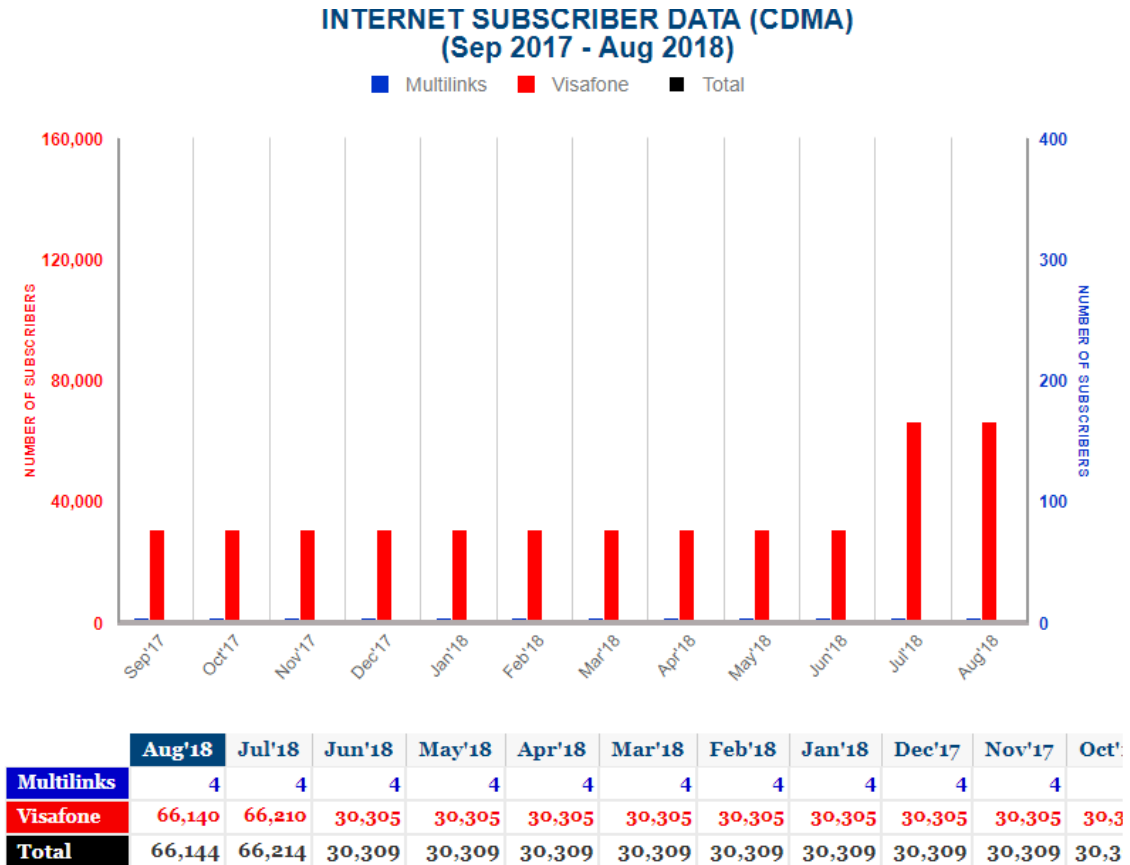
Figure 2.4: Market Share by Internet Subscriber Data (CDMA)

(Source, NCC, 2018)

INTERNET SUBSCRIBER DATA (VoIP)
(Aep 2017 - Aug 2018)

■ SMILE ■ NTEL ■ TOTAL
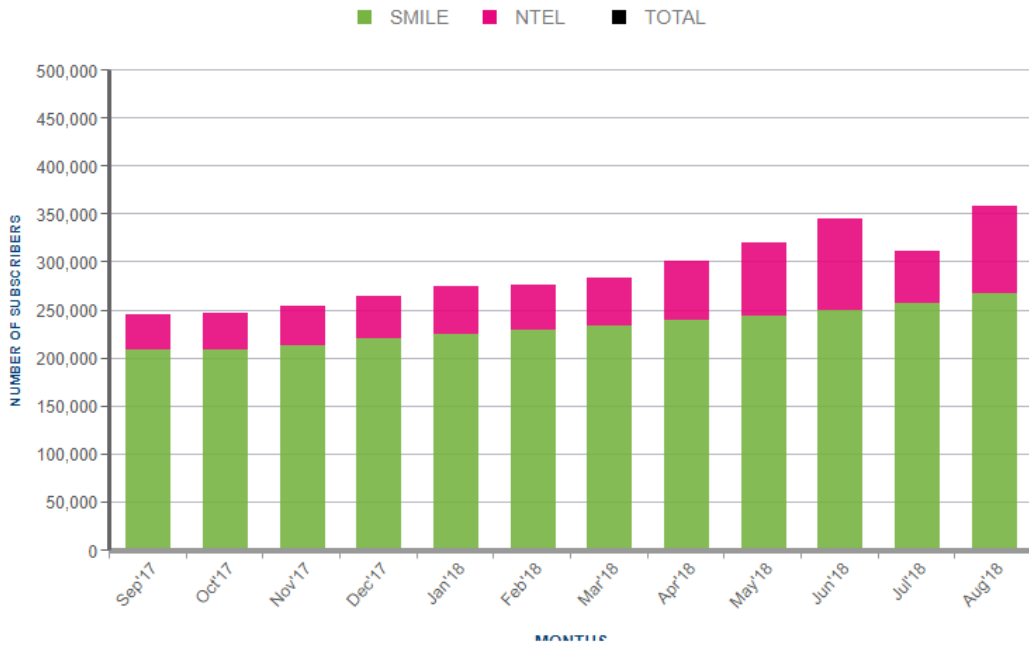
	Aug'18	Jul'18	Jun'18	May'18	Apr'18	Mar'18	Feb'18	Jan'18	Dec'17	Nov'17	Oct'17
SMILE	268,453	258,523	250,450	245,479	240,154	234,699	230,748	226,523	221,447	214,371	209,74
NTEL	91,048	53,708	95,153	76,155	61,749	50,443	45,859	49,259	44,136	40,181	38,62
TOTAL	359,501	312,231	345,603	321,634	301,903	285,142	276,607	275,782	265,583	254,552	248,36

Figure 2.5: Market Share by Internet Subscriber Data (VoIP)
(Source, NCC, 2018)

Further, Fig. 2.6 and Fig. 2.7 captures the porting activities of mobile network operators (GSM). The figures show the trend in monthly porting from one network to another by customers within the telecommunication sector per mobile. The trend captures the number of transactions per month where a subscriber request that his or her mobile number be transferred from one service operator but keeping the same number. Although between the period (September 2017 to August 2018) there have been a downtrend in both incoming and outgoing porting activities. In terms of incoming porting activities, 9Mobile enjoyed the largest of customers switching to their network except in January-March 2018 (and this coincided with the transition from Etisalat to 9Mobile).

PORTING DATA - INCOMING
(Sep 2017 - Aug 2018)
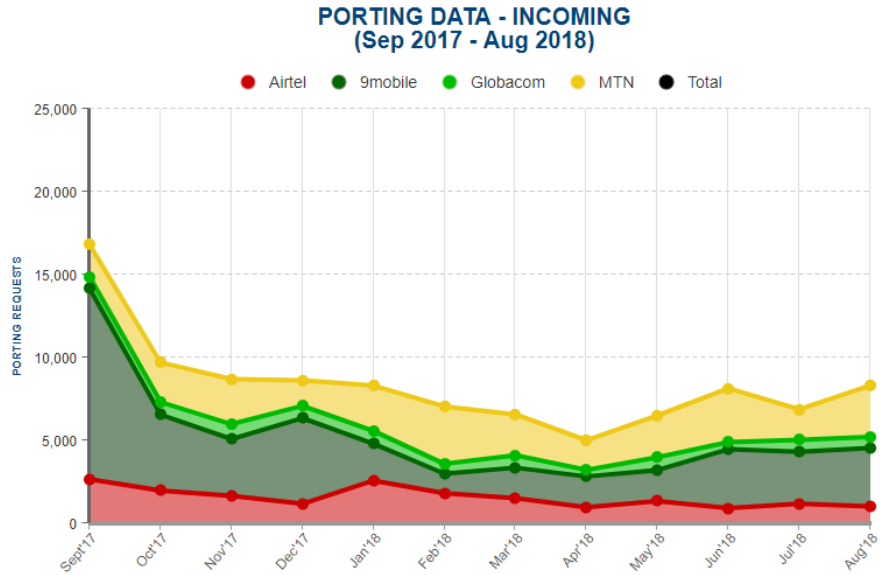
Figure 2.6: Porting Data – Incoming

(Source, NCC, 2018)

In terms outgoing porting activities, Globacom experienced the lowest number of customers leaving the network as indicated in Fig. 2.7.

PORTING DATA - OUTGOING
(Sep 2017 - Aug 2018)
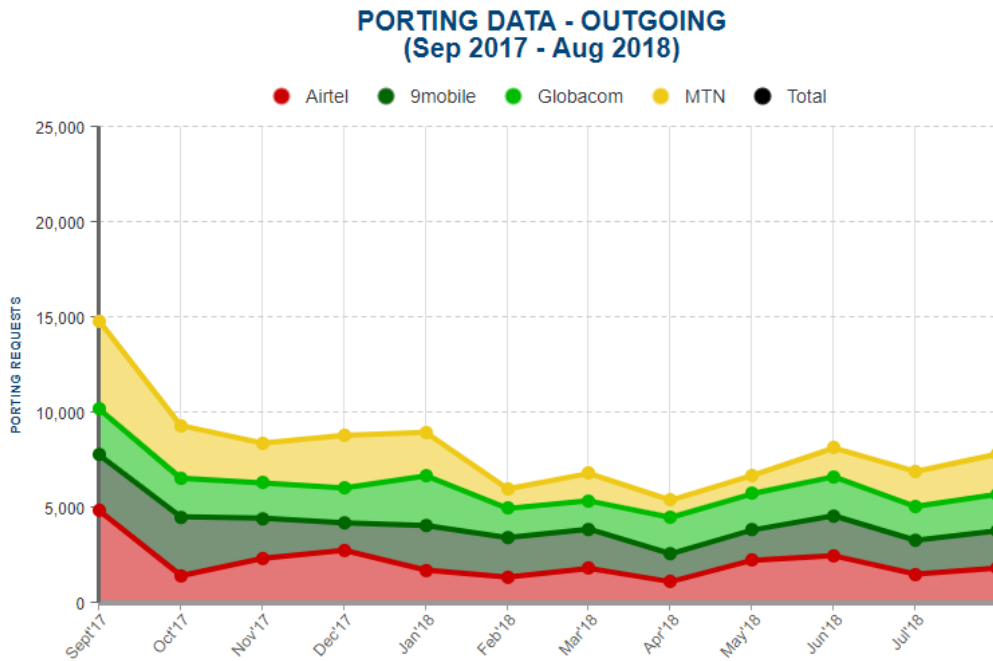
Figure 2.6: Porting Data – Outgoing

2.2 Challenges with Customer Relationship Management Faced by the Telecom Industry

The overview of the telecommunication industry in Nigeria suggests that the telecom operators are currently in competition to gain the highest market share. This means that the telecom operators must devise means for retaining their customers and gaining new customers through innovative telecom products and services as well as establish a lasting relationship with customers. However, innovations in telecommunication technologies have turned the entire world into a single community. Telecom service providers utilise perhaps the most complete array of information technology (IT) compared to any other industry, simply because their whole business process is hinged on technology usage both software and hardware (Shakeel *et al*. 2012; Chivandi *et al*. 2014; Mansaku *et al*. 2016). Currently with a simple portable device (whether a mobile phone, tablet or laptop) consumers around the globe can continuously communicate with one another within a short time frame.

While innovation in information technology (IT) has facilitated improvements in the complexity, precision and quality of telecom products and services, it is the management of customer relationship that continues to provide the differentiating factor especially in the modern era of Social media growth (Hennig-Thurau *et al.* 2010; Giannakis-Bompolis & Boutsouki, 2014; Go & You, 2016). This is even of more importance in this era of social media; which is influencing the mode of communication and changing the dynamics of both human and business relationships. With social media facilitating channels, consumers can now create a local community around a brand or product, sharing information that can have either a good or bad effect on the organisation (Smith, 2009; Brenan, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Neff, 2010). Also, for business organisations social media has changed the dynamics and channels with which businesses are reaching and engaging with consumer sphere; rendering traditional email programs and company websites obsolete (Neff, 2010).

In addition, the popularity of the new communication channels facilitated by social media platforms has increased customer contact points and created a huge increase in the volume of customer-related data (Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Xevelonakis & Som, 2012; Nyambu, 2013; Bala,

2014). The rise and exponential increase in usage and reach of social media platforms over the past few years has left business corporations and telecom firms in a situation where they need to reconsider their approach to handling Social media communications in creating customer relationships (Xevelonakis & Som, 2012; Xia, 2012; Leeflang et al. 2014). Social media in essence have now altered how businesses and their consumers interact as well as how customer relationship management (CRM) policies are being implemented, with the main focus how shifting to empowering and improving customer experience (O'Brien, 2010:32).

However, while telecom products and services are being engineered to facilitate improved interpersonal communications among consumers, the telecom firms providing such service are lagging in terms of providing personalised communications with the customers (O'Brien, 2010; Thaichon et al. 2014). Even before the widespread popularity of social media, the telecom service providers were mostly in a disadvantaged position in terms of developing formidable relationships with their valued customers, resulting in the difficulty in gaining new subscribers (customers) and ensuring efficient management of the customer information (Leeflang et al. 2014; Saleh, 2016). Gaining customer insights through direct interaction and relationship building is expected to assist the telecom firms in improving the quality of service delivered by driving better product development, prioritising of service and in improving the overall customer experience (Aydin & Ozer, 2005; Lai *et al.* 2009; Roca *et al.* 2009; He & Li, 2010; Thaichon *et al.* 2014). For the telecom industry, the quality of network is an important factor when customers measure the overall service quality (Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2008:280).

Network quality relates to the clarity of the voice calls, the quality and strength of the network signal, downloading and uploading speed and the number of errors (Thaichon *et al.*, 2014:1047). Failure to connect calls or breaking voice calls as well as poor internet connectivity can result in overall poor perception of the service quality provided in the customer's perception. However, the level of relationship between the consumer and the organisation is expected to play determining factor in influencing the consumers' willingness in making the necessary sacrifices in the consumer is willing to make sacrifices or entirely influence a different customer perspective of the quality of service or value attached to the brand (Askool & Nakata, 2011; Giannakis-Bompolis & Boutsouki, 2014). In addition, by providing core performances that meets or exceeds the expectations of the consumers, the service providers can establish a more trusting relationship with

the customers (Wang & Lo, 2002; Eisingerich & Bell, 2008). Hence, it can be inferred that increase in the quality of service quality would have a strong impact on the level of consumers' trust and attachment to the organisation or brand.

For the telecom firms, current evidence in the literature suggest that there is the need for the provision of additional service attributes (such as superior customer engagement and after sale supports) which could enhance the customers' perception of the quality of the delivered services (Aydin & Ozer, 2005; Tam, 2012; Wang & Wu, 2012). This is essential given that the modern consumers (so referred to as social consumers) are in constant pursuit of acceptance and cordial relationships with the businesses as well as with their fellow consumers; sharing thoughts, concerns and emptions about products and services (Eisingerich & Bell, 2008:257). The evidence from the literature further suggest that by providing considerate, caring and responsive customer services, the telecom firms can stimulate the consumers' confidence on their brand. Nonetheless, there is also the evidence in the literature that most telecom service providers (just like most other service providing firms) are still struggling to integrate data from customer touch-points with the business solution; meaning that they often miss-out of key opportunities to analyse and improve on the customer experience (Wu et al. 2009; Saleh, 2016).

Though most business firms are now building social media presence by wanting to be at the centre of the consumer sphere, but simply monitoring and listening to consumer conversations on social media is far from implying the adoption of social CRM. Social CRM is more considered with want is being done with the customer data in improving services and creating sustained relationship with the consumer. Hence, the Social CRM strategy of business firms should involve at the minimum avenues to identifying with the critical customers, engaging with them to understanding their sentiment and leveraging on such insights in delivering innovative products and services that ensures valued service (Seims et al. 2012; Tam, 2012). Compounding the problem of effective Social CRM adoption is that most organisational structure or work processes are fragmented and as such makes it difficult to utilise the customer data in improving overall firm efficiency (Harridge-March & Quinton, 2009; Miller & Lamas, 2010). Hence, it is vital for the business firms that implementing social CRM may implying the re-engineering of organisational structures and work processes.

For the Nigerian telecom industry, despite the reform and deregulation of the sector, the consumers are still crying out over the poor service performance of the telecom firms (Ogbo et al. 2012; Abdul et al. 2014; Alabar et al. 2014; Adi, 2015), implying the telecom products and service are not tailored to the needs and expectations of the local market. For example, with over US$ 5.750 billion investment towards the network expansion projects by telecom operators ((Abdul et al. 2014; Samuel & Olatokun, 2014), the general consumers are reported to not benefiting from the investment with complaints of poor network quality with drop calls, unsolicited text messages, sudden tariff deductions and incoherent voice transmission still prevalent in the industry (Abdul et al. 2014; Alabar et al. 2014; Samuel & Olatokun, 2014). Famutimi (2014 cited in Samuel & Olakotun, 2014), criticised the poor performance of telecoms service providers in Nigeria, and rebuked them for seriously lagging in actualising the required performance index set by the Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) and encouraged the consumers to take telecom service providers to court on account poor service delivery.

The consumer' perception of the poor service quality in the telecom industry can be attributed to four major factors. Firstly, the sheer intangible nature of the telecom products/services implies that there is only a small margin for product or service differentiation, and this is mostly in terms of pricing and customer experience (Alabar *et al.*, 2014; Adi, 2015). Secondly, the growing complexity in technological innovations implies that telecoms service providers must now diversify their services; shifting from mere voice networks to other service provision such as broadband and data services (Bender *et al*. 2011; Abdul et al., 2014; Obayemi, 2014). The implication of this is that the service providers are now accountable for multiple services, making the provision of customer experience a huge task. Thirdly, the low customer loyalty in the telecoms industry as highlighted by the ease portability of subscribers (show in Fig. 2.6 and Fig. 2.7), implies that the telecom firms need to diversify their product/service options as well as encourage rapid technological innovations (Aydin & Ozer, 2005; Ogbo et al. 2012; Shafei & Tabaa, 2016). And lastly, the increasing demanding nature of customers (in terms of the demand for prompt services and solutions to queries) implies that the telecoms firms need to keep abreast with the customers' needs and expectations (Nasser et al. 2012; Oluseye et al. 2014; Rahman, et al., 2014: IBM, 2015).

2.3   Justification for Research

Specifying the research problem. Justifying the essence of its investigation and suggesting the importance of the study is critical for all academic research (Creswell, 2012:8). The current research is founded on the need to develop a framework that will help telecom firms in responding adequately to the needs and preferences of the social customers as well as help the firms in establishing, nurturing and sustaining long-term relationships with the customers. As earlier mentioned, the emergence of Social media has made this objective very difficult and Social CRM systems are needed to complement the personal interactions provided through salespeople, customers service representatives and call centres. As Woodcock et al. (2011:58) pointed out, Social CRM is very important for modern organisations; becoming a vital feature of the sales and marketing mix.

However, in terms of academic research, Social CRM is still at a nascent stage and remains an unexplored phenomenon (Khodakarami & Chan, 2014; Saleh, 2016). Hence, there is little known on why and how firms adopt and deploy Social CRM systems. To breach this research gap, the interest of this current thesis is to look deeper into the implementation of Social CRM by telecom firms and as well explore the customers' evaluation of the organisations' Social CRM initiatives. This enabled the development of a framework that is expected to support the effective implementation of social CRM strategy in the Nigeria telecom industry. The justification for this current study is supported by the claim by Baird & Parasnis (2011:36) that significant gaps "exist between what businesses think consumers care about and what consumers are saying they want from their Social media interactions with companies". In a more recent study, it was reported that while many companies claim to be using social media for marketing purposes, it is only about 41 percent that are using social media channels for external communication and customer management (Aberdeen Group, 2012:1).

2.4   Contribution to Practice and Knowledge

This research study will provide a guideline for interested stakeholders on how Social CRM could be implemented to provide a platform for profit maximization, increasing quality of products and

services and achieving continuous customer relationship in the Nigerian telecoms industry. From the practitioner's perspective, the result of this research will be vital for modern business organisations who are left with the challenges of finding more effective way to interact, engage and communicate with customers. Corporate managers of telecom firms in Nigeria will be provided with adequate suggestions on how to better implement their Social CRM strategy for gaining value for their organisations and for their customers. In terms of contribution to academic knowledge, it is hoped that the outcome from this current study will provide answer to the currently identified gap and provide a platform for future research.

2.5 Beneficiaries of the Study

The main beneficiaries of this study will be service organisations and the work will contribute to the body of knowledge. The study outcome will assist companies in the Nigerian telecoms industry in planning an effective Social CRM strategy that will enable them to become competitive and improve other primary organisational outcomes such as enhancing profitability. It aims to enlighten managers and supervisors of the importance of developing relationship with customers through Social media channels. The evidence from this work is expected to help the organizations in reassessing their Social CRM strategies in view of further improving it for competitive advantage and profitability. In addition, it is expected that the outcome of the research will assist developers of Social CRM in developing effective applications that are specific to the needs of the consumers especially those of the Nigerian telecoms industry.

2.6 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study following the research questions presented in Chapter one:

H_1: Customers' perception of the company's customer orientation and Social CRM strategies, is related to brand resonance

H_2: Customer perceived value of the firm's Social media channel mediates the relationship between organisation's customer orientation and Social CRM strategy and brand resonance

H_3: The higher the level of customer-organisation interaction/engagement on Social media, the higher will be the level of brand loyalty

H_4: Brand resonance has a significant influence on customers' brand loyalty

H_5: There is no difference, at 5% level of significance, in customer's response to Social CRM concept adoption in telecom firms in Lagos due to personal socio-demographics (age, educational attainment and standard of living)

2.7 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research will be limited to the Nigerian telecoms industry, with the focus on the telecom firms operating in Lagos State. Lagos State was chosen because of the following reasons: (i) it is the industrial hub of the country and ranked the most populated state in Nigeria, the second fastest-growing city in Africa and the seventh in the world; (ii) most (if not all) of the companies have their headquarters in Lagos state; and (iii) a very large population (over 19Million) representing an adequate customer base for this research.

2.8 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has explored the study context with the aim of developing the research questions and justification for conducting the study. First, the chapter introduces the study context – that is the description of the Nigerian telecom industry. The Nigerian telecom industry was described as a thriving business sector in Africa and the world in general. The Nigerian telecom industry was described as a very competitive industry with four major operating firms: MTN (Nig.), Globacon, Airtel, and 9Mobile and many other smaller firms. Also discussed in this chapter in the Social CRM challenged faced by the telecom firms within the study area. The need to provide innovative

services in terms of precision and quality of service and also establishing a formidable relationship with the customers were highlighted as some of the challenges faced by the firms. The challenges/barriers in implementing Social CRM facilities was identified in this chapter as another significant challenge facing the telecoms firms. These challenges were used in developing the research questions that will be addressed by the study (see Section 2.3). In addition to this, the chapter presents the justification to the study, the contribution of the study to knowledge, the beneficiaries of the study, the research hypotheses and the scope of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0   Introduction

Since the industrial revolution, the world has undergone fundamental changes in all aspects, especially the business world which has transformed from production-oriented to service-oriented (Khan, 2008; Nolan *et al*., 2008; Gulzar, 2015). The revolution has brought about globalisation, with it an intense competition among organisations in the business environment (Nolan *et al*., 2008; Phan & Vogel, 2010; Berisha-Shaqiri, 2015). This has now required marketers and managers to constantly seek techniques and strategies that will give their companies a competitive edge. Such strategies require the production and selling of highly complex activities that requires the strategic positioning of businesses to deliver improved customer service and experience by using information technology in gaining customer insight and maintaining customer loyalty (Phan & Vogel, 2010:69). Today, marketing has gone beyond the sales of developed products or services to include the rendering of after sale services and the need to develop long-term relationship with the customers (Phan & Vogel, 2010; Berisha-Shaqiri, 2015; Elbedweihy et al. 2016).

Building lasting relationship with the customers has attracted more attention in today's business and marketing literature upon the realisation that maintaining customer loyalty has become a critical factor for business and organisational success (Oakley & Bush, 2012; So et al. 2017). Therefore, understanding how to manage lasting relationship with the profitable customers has become the focus of many research studies, both in academic and practitioner's literature So et al. 2016a; 2016b). Business firms have now come to the realisations that different customers provide different economic value and are adapting accordingly their customer offerings and communication strategies. This chapter therefore provides a review of the literature on relationship marketing and how it has evolved into the concept of customer relationship management (CRM) and more recently Social CRM. In addition, the review of the prior studies in the literature, in establishing the necessity for this current study is presented.

3.1 Relationship Marketing (RM): Theory and Principle

The soul of life is in relationships – whether one is looking at it from the societal or organisational level. Recently, organisations across the globe (based on the evidence on the number of research publications) have come to embrace the idea that establishing relationships with the customers provides a means of achieving and sustaining competitive advantage (Sherry, 2000; Dann & Dann, 2001; Bolton & Tarasi, 2007; Oakley & Bush, 2012). Sherry (2000:328) referred to such relationship as the core aspect of marketing; which was described as a critical tool for establishing cultural stability within the work environment. The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) define marketing as "the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably" (CIM, 2005:3). The definitions clearly highlight the purpose of marketing being central to the performance of every business organisation; as it addresses the most important aspects of the market environment – which is reaching out to the customer with the right product at the right price, place and time, including understanding the market competitors and ensuring that the organisation tap into the key trends (CIM, 2005:3).

Grönroos (1900:4) described this traditional view of marketing as being ultimately focused on enhancing the customers' perception of the organisation and increasing sales by influencing customers' buying behaviour without necessarily putting into consideration the needs or wants of the customers. However, a paradigm shift in the fundamentals of marketing began to arise in the early 1980s, driven by changing business landscape from being production-oriented to service-oriented, changing marketing economies, the emergence of relationship economics amongst other trends that such globalisation which is driven a growing recognition of the importance of acquiring customers but most importantly the end to retain them (Keller, 2009; Kotler, 2011; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Betancourt et al. 2014; Chattopadhyay & Bhawsar, 2017). This changing marketing landscape gave birth to the concept of relationship marketing – a concept that is based on the idea that beyond the worth on the products and/or service being exchanged, there is value of relationship between the supplier or service provider and the customers (Grönroos, 2004:99).

Dubbed the new customer approach to marketing, relationship marketing since its conception in the early 1980s has undergone several phases of evolution in terms of perception and themes (Moller & Halinen, 2000; Paryatiyar & Sheth, 2000; Gummesson, 2002; Egan, 2011). Leonard

Berry is fondly referred to as the founder of this new marketing concept and defined relationship marketing as "an approach to attracting, maintaining and enhancing customer relationships" (Berry, 1983:25). Although simple as it may seem, this definition highlights the core view of the marketing function, which is gaining new customer as well as developing and solidifying relationship with individual customers in view of enhancing customer value and loyalty. Hence, developing long term relationships with the customers is considered of greater importance to acquiring new customer. This impression is reflected in many of the subsequent definitions of the relationship marketing concept (RM).

For instance, Jackson (1985:2) describes RM as the marketing approach towards developing strong and lasting relationship with individual customers. Grönroos (1991:8) define RM as marketing approach focused on "establishing, maintaining and enhancing relationships with customers and other parties at a profit so that the objectives of the parties involved are met through the mutual exchanges and fulfilments of promises". Morgan & Hunt (1994:22) define RM to include "all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanges". Similarly, Sheth & Parvatiyar (1995:256) describe RM as ongoing cooperative market behaviour between an organisation, brand or marketer and the consumer which is reflected by the level of commitment made by the consumer to continue patronage of the brand despite the availability of different numerous. This particular definition shares the opinion that customers usually engage in relational exchanges with business organisations that they connect with and share common values with.

Buttle (1996:11) reflecting similar view, define RM as being concerned with the development and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships. Gummesson (1999 cited in Gummesson, 2000:39) as well defined RM as a marketing approach that is founded on "relationships, networks and interaction; with the acknowledgement that marketing is rooted in the management of the networks - the selling organisation, the market and the society; which is directed to long term win-win relationships with individual customers and value jointly created between the parties involved". Weitz & Bradford (1999:241) from a sales management perspective describe RM to include a variety of different marketing activities ranging from consumer frequency marketing programs to selling activities directed towards establishing formidable long-term partnerships with vital business-to-business customers. In developing this long-term relationship, the firm (or sales

representatives) and the customers go beyond simply developing mutual trusts for one another, to making beneficial and risky investments in the relationships through open communication, establishing common goals and commitment to mutual gain (Bradford & Weitz, 2009:25).

The review of the RM definitions above highlights a common underlying that RM is concerned about the management of the marketing processes that moves from the identification of potential customers to the engaging and building of long-term relationships with the customers with the objective of driving enhanced business performance through word of mouth and referencing marketing (Grönroos, 2004:101). Further critical review of the RM literature suggests that RM is portrayed as a philosophical concept with different variations, rather than as a completely merged concept with strongly developed objectives on how to bind customers, organisations, suppliers, marketers and other stakeholders into the organisation's marketing strategy and activities. Another important notion that was identified from the review of RM definition, is that the customers engage in such relational exchanges with the mind set of improving their decision-making process, maintaining consistency in decision-making, reducing the task involved in processing information and reducing the perceived risks associated with making future choices (Egan, 2011; Lee et al. 2015).

For instance, Vargo & Lusch (2004:12) suggested that customers mostly engage in relational exchanges with organisations because of the desire to customise the product or service offerings and so organisations are expected to recognise the customers as co-producers and ensure they maximise the level of consumers involvement in the customisation of the products and services to satisfy their different needs through this relational exchange. It therefore implies that consumers engage in these relational exchanges with the organisation with the aim of influencing the product and service offerings to meet their individual needs, tastes, wants and preferences. Whereas, the organisations on the other hand are engaging in the relational exchanges because of the desire to increase productivity and in gaining competitive advantage through in-depth customer insight. Business organisations are thus adopting RM in widening and expanding the depth of their customer base with the expectation of improving the revenue outcomes.

Thus, the marketing literature within an era focused on understanding and expanding the RM literature and its related concepts (Kotler, 2011; Moliner *et al*. 2018). With the changing business

landscape, coupled with the delimiting of geographic boundaries and the emergence of newer markets, it was thus necessary for the further expansion of marketing methods and theories (Kotler & Keller, 2012; Armstrong et al. 2013; Moliner et al. 2018). Marketing has evolved into a multifaceted and all-embracing science compared to few decades ago; moving beyond the 4Ps (Price, Product, Place and Promotion) concept into a multiplier and complex networks and relationship (Toriani & Angeloni, 2011; Kang, 2016). Also, the advancement of technological innovation has also influenced the shift of marketing focus from product selling to expansion of customer base through relationship building and management (Wahab & Ali, 2010; Saarijarrvi et al. 2013; Moliner et al. 2018). Hence customer-centric products/services and the drive to sustain long-lasting relationships with the customers have further evolved RM into new models and theories such as customer relationship management (CRM) social customer relationship management (Social CRM) – both models being the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

3.2   Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Initiating and managing customer relationship has become the yardstick for modern organisation seeking for improved productivity and sustained competitive advantage. As mentioned in the preceding section, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has emerged from RM paradigm in the last two decades as a strategic solution for business organisations seeking to address these challenges posed by the modern business landscape, which has encouraged business firms to invest in long-term relationships with the customers (Grönroos, 1994; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Galbreath & Rogers, 1999; Reinartz, 2004; Askool & Nakata, 2011; Mohammed, 2013; Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014; Giannakis-Bompolis & Boutsouki, 2014). According to Reinartz et al. (2004:293) CRM has become an important research topic for both practitioners and academics in recent years; given the realisation by business organisations across different industries that customers are pivotal for driving economic value.

Askool, S. & Nakata (2011:206) describe CRM as a two-way communication strategy that evolved from RM paradigm in the 1980s and adopted by companies for creating integration with other business activities with the primary focus of increasing customer loyalty and retention. Parvatiyar

& Sheth (2001:1) describe CRM as one of the customer-centric strategies, programs, tools and technology adopted by organisations for the management of cooperative and partnered relationships with the customers. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the definitions of CRM provided in the literature

Table 3.1: Definitions of CRM

Definition	Author
CRM is a comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring, retaining and partnering with selective customers to create superior value for the customer. It involves the integration of marketing, sales, customer service, and the supply-chain functions of the organisation to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness in delivering customer value	Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001:5)
CRM relates to strategy, the management of the dual creation of value, the intelligent use of data and technology, the acquisition of customer knowledge and the diffusion of this knowledge to the appropriate stakeholders, the development of appropriate (long-term) relationships with specific customers and/or customer groups, and the integration of processes across the many areas of the firm and across the network of firms that collaborate to generate customer value.	Boulding et al. (2005:157)
CRM is a macro level (i.e., highly aggregated) process that subsumes numerous sub processes, such as prospect identification and customer knowledge creation. Moreover, they suggest that these sub processes can often be further separated into more refined micro level processes (e.g., data collection and storage is a micro level process that forms part of the customer knowledge creation sub process).	Srivastava et al. (1999)
CRM is a philosophy and a business strategy supported by a system and a technology designed to improve human interactions in a business environment. It is an operational, transactional approach to customer management focusing around the customers facing departments, sales, marketing and customer service at the front end to information technology, finance, production, R&D and human resources at the back end	Greenberg (2004:452-453)
CRM is an information industry term for methodologies, software, and usually internet capabilities that help an enterprise manage customer relationships in an organised way. It is also an all-embracing approach, which seamlessly integrates sales, customer service, marketing, field	Xu et al. (2002:442-443)

support and other functions that touch customers. When using this approach, by integrating people, process and technologies and leveraging the internet, the relationships with all the customers including e-customers, distribution channel members, internal customers and suppliers are maximised.	
CRM (referred to as eCRM) is the combination of hardware, software, processes, applications and management commitment	Fjermestad et al. (2003:574)
CRM is a strategic approach that is concerned with creating improved shareholder value through the development of appropriate relationships with key customers and customer segment. CRM unites the potential of relationship marketing strategies and IT to create profitable, long-term relationships with customers and other key stakeholders. CRM provides enhanced opportunities to use data and information to both understand customers and concrete value with them. This requires a cross-functional integration of processes, people, operations and marketing capabilities that is enabled through information, technology and applications.	Payne & Frow (2005:168)
CRM is a systematic process to manage customer relationship initiation, maintenance, and termination across all customer contact points to maximize the value of the relationship portfolio. CRM process entails the systematic and proactive management of relationship as they move from beginning (initiation) to end (termination), with execution across the various customer-facing contact channels. This necessitates both information generation through the analysis of customer and prospect needs and behaviour and action on this information, contingent on the customer's value and life-cycle stage.	(Reinartz et al. 2004:294-295)
CRM is a combination of business process and technology that seeks to understand a company's customers from the perspective of who they are, what they do, and what they are like. In essence, CRM provides management with the opportunity to implement relationship marketing on a company-wide basis	Ryals & Knox (2001:535)
CRM is about the transformation of the entire enterprise and how it views and conducts business with its customers. CRM is a strategy for competitive advantage. It is a transformation philosophy and ideal of how businesses must compete within the 21st century. CRM is more than automation of traditional sales, marketing, supply-chain, back-office or service function using technology and process reengineering. CRM ultimately focuses on effectively turning information into intelligent business knowledge to more efficiently manage customer relationships	Galbreath & Rogers (1999:162)

CRM is not only about adoption of a technology solution concerning customers' information, but it is also a business strategy designed to improve human interactions and to build effective business relationships in a business environment	Askool & Nakata (2011:207)
CRM is not a product or service, it is an overall business strategy that enables companies to effectively manage relationships with their customers by providing an integrated view of the company's customers to everyone in the organisation	Jasola & Kapoor (2008:178)
CRM is the core business strategy that integrates internal processes and functions, and external networks, to create and deliver value to targeted customers at a profit. It is grounded on high quality customer-related data and enabled by information technology.	Buttle (2009:15)
CRM is a broad terminology and widely implemented strategy used in the management of the interactions between a firm and the customers – a process involving the use of ICT to organise, automate and synchronise business processes (such as customer service, marketing, sales activities) with the overall goal of finding, attracting and winning new customers, nurturing and retaining the existing customers, enticing former customers back to the organisation and means of reducing the cost of marketing and customer services, gaining acceptance in the market, achieving customer satisfaction and induce loyalty.	Davenport et al. (2001)
CRM is an enterprise approach to understanding and influencing customer behaviour through meaningful communications to improve customer acquisition, customer retention, customer loyalty and customer profitability	Swift (2001:12)

(Source: created by the current author)

The review of the CRM definitions (in Table 3.1) highlights the differing perspectives of authors and practitioners on how they conceive the CRM concept. While some of the commentators described CRM as a technology driven approach to the management of customer relationship (Xu et al. 2002; Fjermestad et al. 2003), others have considered CRM along the notion of a marketing or business strategy for customer relationship management (Davenport et al. 2001; Buttle, 2009; Greenberg, 2010; Askool & Nakata, 2011). Nguyen & Mutum (2012:401) attributed the popularity of the CRM concept to the paradigm shift in the focus of marketing from production efficiency –

aimed at cutting down operational costs per produced unit, resulting in the ability to sell products and services at a lower price, to a more relationship-focused based approach focused on quality, dialogue, innovation and learning – which is centred on identifying and satisfying the individual needs of the customers.

Phan & Vogel (2010:70) credited the development of the CRM concept to the realisation on the part of organisations and management of the importance of retaining old customers, given the associated cost in acquiring new customers compared to retaining the old customers. Hence, effective customer relationship management is considered essential in improving overall sales, profitability and customers' satisfaction, loyalty and retention (Buttle, 1996; Phan & Vogel, 2010; Kostojohn et al. 2011; Armstrong et al. 2013). Nonetheless, the development of CRM paradigm cannot be complete without paying tribute to the contribution made by the advancement of information and technology; as it provided the framework for automating, maintaining and exploiting customer relationship (Stone et al., 2002; Bull, 2003; Reinartz et al. 2004; Askool & Nakata, 2011). In addition, IT provides the glue that holds and enables all CRM processes (Ryals & Knox, 2001:535) which include the personalizing of each customer's needs and in differentiating products or services delivered to individual customers (Askool & Nakata, 2011:70).

Despite the wide interest and research in the CRM paradigm by academicians and practitioners, the CRM concept is argued to generally be without a unified comprehensive definition; with many researchers proposing different definitions as reflected in Table (3.1). Ryal & Knox (2001:540) describe the CRM concept as being hazy – as with the rest of the relationship marketing paradigm; but describe it as generally relating to the management of the life time relationships with the customers with the help of information and technology combined with RM philosophies that calls for the re-structuring of the entire firm around its customers. Reinartz et al. (2004:294) opinioned that it would be hard to give a unified and comprehensive definition for CRM because of the different ways it is being implemented in organisation and also because of the significant role of technology, many commentators are swayed into thinking that it is an entirely a technological initiative and forgetting about the marketing principles informing the development of the concept. The following section will focus on the different perspectives in which CRM has be formed in the literature.

3.3   The Different Perspectives to CRM

As mentioned in the last paragraph of the preceding section, the CRM concept is somewhat inconsistent and highly fragmented, and this can be pinpointed to the lack of common agreement on its conceptualisation. For example, Kim (2008) describes the CRM theory as an evolution from three important marketing perspectives: (i) relationship marketing; (ii) customer orientation marketing; and (iii) database marketing. According to Siems et al., (2012), CRM can be broadly divided into two perspectives: technical and business perspectives. From the technical perspectives, CRM is conceived as an operational and analytical procedure that emphasises the implementation of technological systems across the organisation for better understanding the different customer segments. While from the business perspectives, CRM emphasises the integration of relationship marketing with the traditional marketing mix (product, price, promotion and place) to gain valuable outcomes such as value creation, customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention (Siems et al., 2012).

Rababah et al. (2011:23-25) described CRM as comprising of four main processes: (i) customer-facing level process – "a systematic process to managing customer relationship initiation, maintenance and termination across all customer contact points to maximise the value of the relationship portfolio"; (ii) customer-oriented CRM process – encompassing all activities carried out to satisfy the need or solve a problem of the customer; (iii) cross-functional CRM process – a holistic approach including the strategy development process, value creation process, the multichannel integration process, information management process and performance assessment process of the customer relationship; and (iv) CRM macro-level process – includes activities undertaken by the organisation to create market intelligence that the organisation can leverage upon in building and sustaining a profit-maximising portfolio of customer relationships through two sub-processes: knowledge management process and interaction management process. Nonetheless, within the literature, CRM is implicitly or explicitly advanced from five major perspectives: (i) as a business process; (ii) as a business strategy, (iii) as a philosophy; (iv) as a capability; and (v) as a technology (Zablah et al. 2004:476). These different perspectives are elaborated upon in the following sub-sections.

3.3.1 CRM as a Business Process

A business process refers to a collection of tasks or activities that put together results in the fulfilment of a desired business outcome (Davenport & Beers, 1995; Davenport & Short, 1990; Hammer, 1996). In other words, a business process refers to a group of activities that business organisations employ in converting its resources (both human and machine resources) to desired products or services. Fahey *et al* (2001) shared the opinion that since such groups of tasks are often subdivided or aggregated into lower and higher-level processes, the specific nature (i.e., inputs and outputs) of a business process depends on the level of aggregation used in defining it. Along this line, CRM has been defined as a macro level (i.e., highly aggregated) process that incorporates several sub-processes, which is not excluded of identifying prospective customers and creating customer knowledge (Srivastava et al. 1999:169). It was further suggested that these sub processes can further be separated into more refined micro level processes (e.g., data collection and storage is a micro level process that forms part of the customer knowledge creation sub process). Thus, for any given set of tasks, the specification of the required inputs and intended outputs depends entirely upon how the constituent activities are aggregated.

From this business process perspective, other authors have shared similar opinion that CRM can be viewed from two different levels of aggregation. More specifically, some authors see CRM as a higher-level process that incorporates activities that the firm is undertaking to build strong, gainful and equally valuable customer relationships (Plakoyiannaki & Tzokas, 2002; Shaw, 2003; Reinartz et al., 2004). On the other hand, other authors have considered CRM from a more narrow-view, describing it as a business process concerned with the management of customer interactions for the sheer aim of engaging and sustaining long-term, profitable relationships with the customers (Galbreath & Rogers, 1999; Kohli et al., 2001; Day & Van den Bulte, 2002). When comparing both views, while the broad-view sees CRM as a macro-level business process, the narrow-based view is more interested in the management of the interactions with the customers; nevertheless, this is also a process subsumed within the macro-level process as a sub-process.

Irrespective of the level of aggregation applied in describing CRM, the central focus of CRM from a business process perspective is the development and sustenance of long-term relationships with the customers. In addition, the CRM as a business process perspective recognises that organisation-

customer relationship is not developed automatically and it is one that requires effort over time (Gronroos, 2000; Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2000). In fact, this is one of the early researches on CRM favoured the business process perspective of CRM (e.g., Day & Van den Bulte, 2002; Reinartz et al., 2004). Nonetheless, it is also important to say that the business process perspective is not without its shortcoming, and this mainly because of the many levels of aggregation on which it has been defined. This has made it unclear on the tasks that should be incorporated into the business processes and what the required input resources and output or outcome would be.

3.3.2 CRM as a Business Strategy

Strategy refers to the "overall plan for deploying resources to establish a favourable position" (Grant, 1998:14). CRM from the strategic perspectives lays emphasis on the allocation of resources for the building and maintenance of relationship with customers that offers lifetime value to the organisation, i.e. in terms of the estimated net profits over the course of the relationship; (Wang et al. 2012; Greve & Schluschen, 2018). More specifically, CRM strategic view suggests that all customers are not equally valuable and maximum profitability can only be attained when the scarce resources are invested in sustaining customer relationships that provide the optimal returns (Pozza et al. 2018). The main implication of the strategic perspective is that the organisations should continuously assess and prioritize customers based on their expected lifetime value (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018). The CRM strategic perspective promotes the value-added exchange – which represent a myriad of highly integrated collaborative exchanges.

CRM from the strategic perspective upholds the idea that there are different forms in which the organisation-customer relationship can take, and the emphasis of the organisation should be on customer retention through exceptional performance in terms of quality, delivery and value for cost rather than acquisition (Kumar & Reintarz, 2018; Pozza et al. 2018). The strategic CRM perspective primarily puts less focus on the technology underpinnings, and this is reflected in the definition of CRM as a technique for not just for understanding individual customer's needs and determine how to most efficiently and effectively deliver on those needs (Venkatraman & Fahd, 2016). Parvatiyar & Seth (2001:5) define CRM as "a comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring, retaining and partnering with selective customers to create a superior value for the

company and the customer. It involves the integration of marketing, sales, customer service, and the supply-chain functions of the organisation to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness in delivering customer value".

Venkatraman & Fahd, (2016) added that developing a CRM strategy requires detailing the objectives of the organisation and the tactics employed in achieving them. These tactics include analysing the customer segments, customising product, price, communication and channel strategies to target different segments, which may involve deploying technologies, value-added service and customer care to improve the customer experience and ensuring customer loyalty. The CRM strategy therefore represents a set of business activities focused on customer identification and prioritisation. The Gartner group (Gartner, 2004) went further to suggest four strategies to implementing CRM. The first being the extension of the depth and breadth of relationships to gain a larger share of the customer relationships. Secondly, reducing transaction barriers and costs by adopting low-cost channels such as those supported by the web and social media. Thirdly, the need for brand reinforcement through engagement in more interactive media such as social media. And lastly, use such interaction with the customers to create customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Mack et al. (2005) also proposed a strategic approach to CRM implementation as a diamond as shown in Fig. (3.1). The CRM strategic approach is categorised into three main classes: CRM-Vision, CRM-Activities, and CRM-Basis (Mack et al. 2005:100).
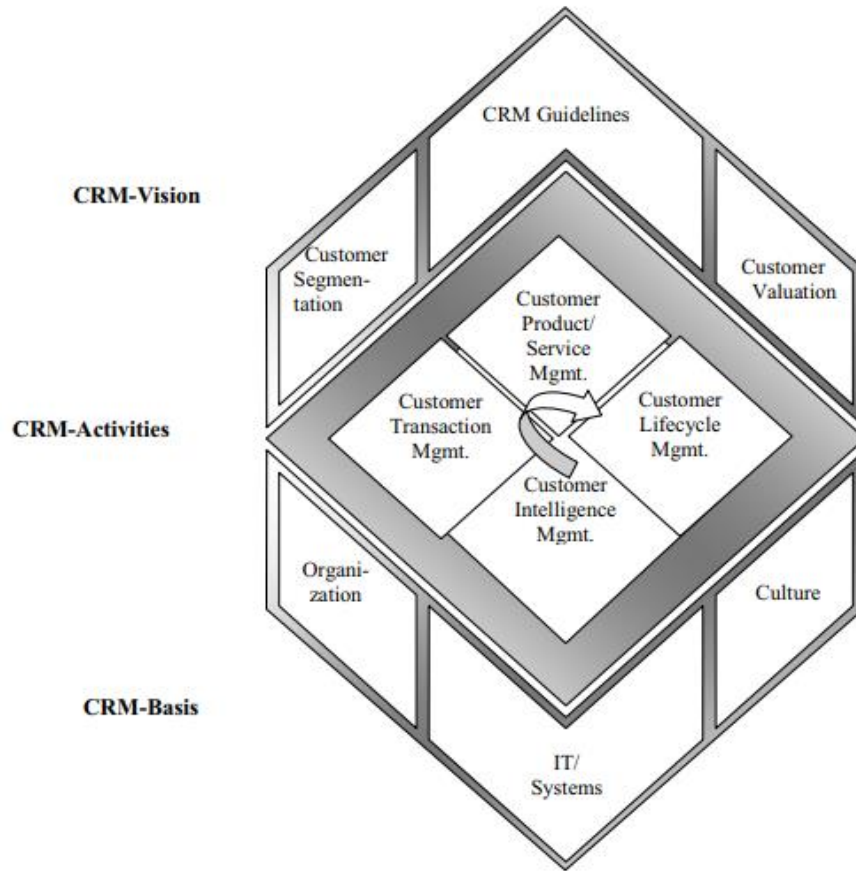
Figure 3.1: CRM Diamond

(Source: Mack et al. 2005:100)

CRM Vision:

The CRM Vision proposes the integration of CRM initiative in the corporate strategy which incorporates three significant modules: (i) the organisation's CRM guidelines to creating long term relationship with the customers; (ii) customer valuation – i.e. identifying the customers that bring value to the company; and (iii) customer segmentation – the grouping of the different customer segments in terms of the value attached to them. This is expected to help the company in differentiating the communication and services among the different customer segments.

CRM Activities:

Following the establishment of the CRM vision, the model suggested the incorporation of four cycles of CRM activities, which include: customer intelligence management, customer transaction management, customer product/service management and customer lifecycle management. Customer Intelligence Management is focused on learning and understanding the customers' behaviours and needs and exploiting such information for the company's benefit in future activities. Customer Transaction Management focuses on the managing the direct interaction between the organisation and the customer during each sales transaction. Here the company is expected to use all its marketing channels to identify all the important contact points between the company and the customers. The customer product/service management concerns building on the company-customer relationship to improve the product and services being offered. In this way, the company can tailor its products and services to the specific needs and expectations of the customers. And lastly the Customer Lifecycle Management is concerned on building, sustaining and expanding the long-term customer relationships.

CRM Basis:

The CRM basis represents the framework to the successful implementation of the CRM strategy. This include components such as the organisational structure, information and technology and database management systems and mostly important the customer-oriented corporate culture. According to the model, the full benefit of implementing the CRM approach is not based on the different stand-alone departmental functions that are common in standard organisations but one that integrates all departments in the CRM approach. The information technology and database management systems are leverage upon by the CRM solution to support the collection, processing and analysing of the customer data across the organisation. And lastly a customer oriented corporate culture that ensures all employees in the company know and accept the importance of customer value and customer relationships in enhancing the company's value.

Hence for the strategic viewpoint, CRM should help the company in staying focused on delivering best products and services to the appropriate customer targets based on their needs and expectations. Strategic CRM should be understood as an operational part of shareholder value management for the fields of marketing, sales and service; as an increase in the value of the

customer base implies an increase in the value of the entire company. Therefore, in a strategic CRM concept, strategy, technology, processes and employees must be linked to an integrated approach that rests on an existing customer-oriented strategy in which the right customers are acquired and their needs understood. It enables any representative of a company, either a sales representative or a service person, to remember who they are talking to, no matter what the transaction might be.

3.3.3 CRM as a Philosophy

From the business philosophical stance, CRM has been intimately linked with the marketing concept that emphasis that a firm's prosperity hinged on the capacity to organise its operations around the customers and be responsive to their constantly changing needs and expectations (Idzikowski, 2019). Hence a CRM based approach according to this philosophy is based on the belief that the essence of a business is to find and retain profitable customers and for the long run (Hillebrand et al. 2011; Rababah et al. 2011; Laketa et al. 2015). According to Rababah et al. (2011), CRM from business philosophy is a relationship orientation, customer retention and superior customer value creation engineered through effective process management. That is, it is recognised that for such organisation-customer exchange relationships to last, the organisation must endeavour to continuously deliver that which the customers value and what meets their expectation (Reicher & Szeghegyi, 2015; Idzikowski, 2019).

Further, the CRM business philosophy sees the I.T component of CRM has a tool for driving the customer-centric strategy of the company – which involves the integration of the ICT tool across the entire organisational departments in fostering the organisation-wide use of the consumer data to deliver improved customer experience and maximise profits (Reicher & Szeghegyi, 2015). Hence, rather than treating relational and transactional exchanges between the sellers and consumers as isolated event handled probably by the sales and marketing department, the CRM philosophy emphasises that such customer data should be shared across the entire organisation (through the product/service innovation department, frontline employees, or management) in improving customer experience and value. More so, the business philosophical approach sees the

CRM solution as a link between the sales and marketing departments to other departments of the organisation with the focus of creating improved customer value.

Preece et al. (2015) shared similar view, describing CRM as a management philosophy and a set of strategic and operational tools that may bring about further change at the organisation (although the focus of their study was in the construction industry). Nonetheless, they shared the same idea that organisation performance can be improved significantly when there is a good management of the relationship between the organisation and customers; especially in retaining those customers recognised as valued in terms of repeat purchases. Put differently, the business philosophy approach to CRM implementation suggest that building long-term and profit relationships with the customers is an essential for the prosperity of the firm and this must be driven by a sound knowledge of the customers' needs and expectations. Whilst business objective varies between individual organisations, fundamentally CRM is proposed as a means for improving customer satisfaction, enhancing employee efficiency in dealing with the customers, aid product/service innovation and increased revenue. In effect, the successful implementation of CRM could be a catalyst for organisational change, a framework for facilitating business growth and differentiating a firm from the competition.

3.3.4 CRM as a Business Capability

The CRM business capacity has been widely referred to as the capability of the firm to outperform its competitors by creating and managing close relationships with the customers (Battor & Battor, 2010; Wang & Feng, 2012). At its most basic level, CRM represents the organisation's capacity to translate customer information into customer relationships through the active use of such information and learning about the consumer trend from it (McMurrian & Matulich, 2016; So et al. 2017). Organisation with superior CRM capability have been reported to have a competitive advantage has they have been able to gather and store customer behaviour and knowledge which is used in gaining insights into the customers' expectations, tastes and continuously evolving needs (Wang & Feng, 2012). Hence from the business capability perspective, CRM represent an endogenously determined function of the organisation's capacity to harness and utilize its customers' information.

Within the management literature, three major organisational capabilities have been constantly referenced; i.e. IT infrastructure and human analytics (represented as technology solution) and the business architecture – which represents the organisation's capability to complement the technology; all three combined together to reflect the organisation's CRM capability (Battor & Battor, 2010; Coltman et al. 2010; McMurrian & Matulich, 2016). From the business capability perspective, the CRM strategy is not hinged completely on the existence of the technology but within its capacity to draw information from the different customer touchpoints such as from the customer service departments, channel partners, websites and the direct sales force. In addition, the CRM capability perspective suggests that product/service innovation is another critical aspect of the organisation's capability; as new products represent an engine for growth and provides avenue for increased sales, revenue and competitive positioning (Coltman et al. 2010). It is still coming down to the same idea that the CRM capability fosters the organisation's capacity to understand the needs and preferences of the customers, gain and assimilate external knowledge and transforms it into innovative products and services (Wang & Feng, 2012).

3.3.5 CRM as a Technology

Although, the technological aspect of CRM has been less emphasised; there is no denying that it plays a substantial role in the development and management of the customer relationships. For a start a technological tool, CRM seamlessly link the front-office (e.g. contact employees or sales representatives) and other departments of the organisation (such as logistics) in providing efficient and effective customer service and experience across the different customer touchpoints (Rodriguez et al. 2014, 2018). Also, CRM as a technological tool facilitates the firm's enablement to harness the CRM capacity as a database, data mining and as an interactive tool for collecting and storing large amounts of customer data in building customer insight and disseminating the resulting information across the different departments of the organisation (Greenberg, 2010; Rodriguez et al. 2018). According to Srivastava (2012) the technological aspects of CRM include but not limited to electronic point of sale, sales force automation, customer service helpdesk, and call centres.

3.4 Adopted CRM definition

After the review of the different CRM definitions and the various perspectives upon which commentators on the topic have described the concept, the CRM can be judged to have evolved across three major continuums: as a technological solution, wide-range business strategy and being customer-centric. This CRM continuum reflects a continually changing understanding in the literature about what constitutes CRM. Initially, CRM was considered as mainly an information-technology (IT) enabled solutions, such as sales force automation, which has led many to perceive CRM as a solely or predominantly technological initiative, ignoring the marketing principles that underpin it (Reinartz et al. 2004; Ernst et al. 2011). In a new viewpoint, CRM as later seen as a business strategy – a holistic approach to managing customer relationships in creating shareholder value (Payne & Frow, 2005:168). In this viewpoint, the objective of CRM is to unite and align IT with marketing strategies and business processes in a way that enables the organisation to acquire new customers, retain existing customers and maximise the lifetime value of its customers (Peppard, 2000; Ernst et al. 2011).

Most importantly, CRM allows firms to differentiate customer treatments based on specific customer needs and preferences. Additionally, financial metrics that are centred on customers allow firms to segregate those customers that the firm should be keeping from those it should be willing to lose enabling micro-management of profitability (Hanic & Domazet, 2011; Madsen & Johansan, 2016). By focusing on CRM, organisations can concentrate on building, developing and maintaining long-term relationship with the customers and other stakeholders in maximising profit. Hence, a comprehensive definition of CRM should therefore be one that incorporates all perspectives discussed above. Thus, for this current study, the following definition is adopted:

> *CRM is a broad terminology and widely implemented strategy used in the management of the interactions between a firm and the customers – a process involving the use of ICT to organise, automate and synchronise business processes (such as customer service, marketing, sales activities) with the overall goal of finding, attracting and winning new customers, nurturing and retaining the existing customers, enticing former customers back to the organisation and means of reducing the cost of marketing and customer services, gaining acceptance in the market, achieving customer satisfaction and induce loyalty (Daveport et al. 2001)*

3.5 Components (Types) of CRM

Resulting from the review of the CRM definitions and the different perspectives, four major components of CRM was identified from the literature: Strategic CRM, Operational CRM, Analytical CRM and Collaborative CRM (Buttle, 2009; Shanmugasundaram, 2010; Peppers and Rogers, 2011; Rababah et al. 2013; Tuzhilin, 2012). These CRM architectural dimensions represented in Fig. 3.2 are discussed below.
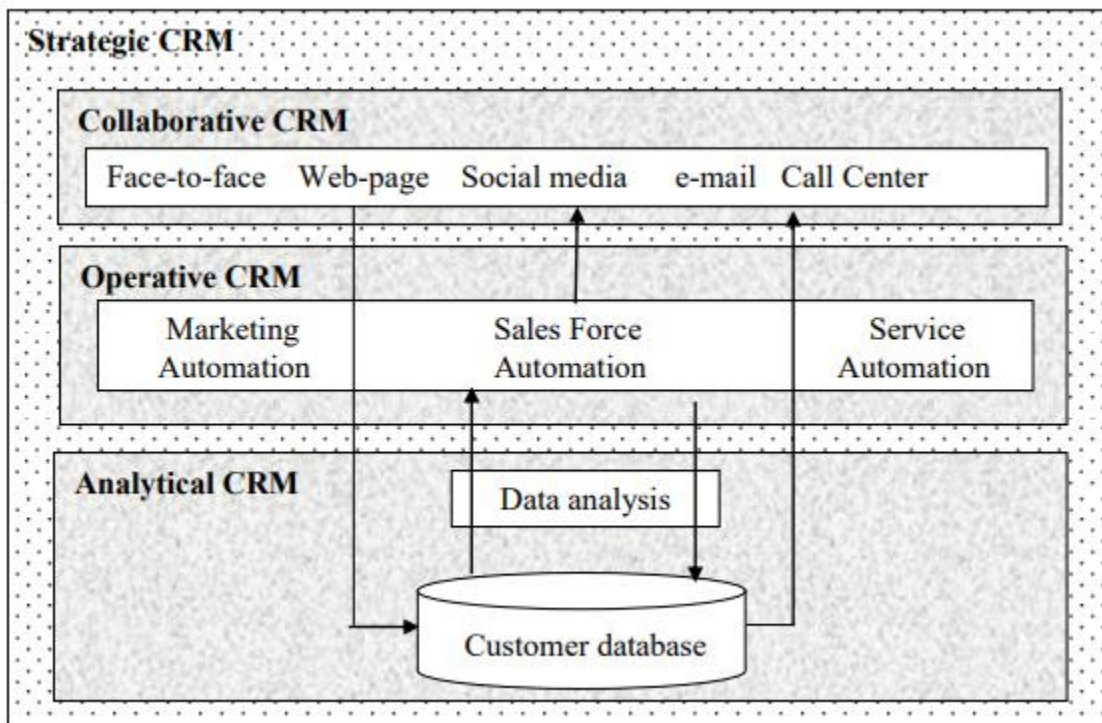
Figure 3.2: Types of CRM

(Source: Paliouras & Siakas, 2017:23)

3.5.1 Strategic CRM

Strategic CRM according to Kumar & Reinartz (2012:36) is an "organisational-wide set of activities embarked upon for a sustainable, hard-to-imitate competitive advantage". According to Bulls (2003:595) strategic CRM is a complex tool that enables organisation to differentiate

between their customer segments: transaction customers (the highly volatile customers with little loyalty tendencies) and relationship customers (the very loyal customers that are often most likely to pay a premium price for a range of reliable goods and services). Buttle (2009:5) describe the strategic CRM as being concerned with the development of a customer-centric business culture, which is focused on wining and retaining customers by creating and delivering value that is better than what the competitors are providing. In addition, the business culture is argued to be reflected in: "the behaviours of the leaders or managers within the firm, the design of formal systems of the company, and the myths and stories that are created within the firm (Buttle, 2009:5).

Thus, in this customer-centric business environment, the customers should be regarded as assets and it is expected that the organisation shifts its focus from its products or services to the customer as a means of profitability (Buttle, 2009; Kumar & Reinartz, 2012). The goal of the strategic CRM is therefore to help the organisation gain deeper knowledge of the individual customers and then use such knowledge in shaping the interactions with the customers to maximise the life-time value of the customers for the organisation (Kumar & Reinartz, 2012:36). In acquiring this customer knowledge, proper allocation of the organisation's resources to situations where they will best be utilised in enhancing customer values is required (Buttle, 2009; Rababah et al. 2011:23); with Buttle (2009:36) suggesting the use of appropriate reward systems in encouraging employee behaviours that enhance customer satisfaction and retention.

In summary, the strategic CRM stresses the importance of coordinating customer information across all contact channels in the organisation in managing systematically a lasting relationship with the customers. For instance, for the telecom industry, a customer may subscribe to both voice and data bundle and most likely interact with the telecom firm through multiple channels for the different products (data or voice), with the nature of the interactions evolving over time. This approach therefore demands that customer information be available to all departments concerned with the customer-facing functions by aligning the broader business strategy with customer strategy – that is aligning customer segments with relationship management strategies (Payne & Frow, 2005:169). In addition, Kotler (2000:11-14) argue that strategic CRM interferes with other business logics such as: production oriented, product-oriented, selling-oriented, marketing-oriented and societal marketing-oriented businesses.

3.5.2 Operational CRM

Operational CRM can be described as the CRM perspective concerned with the automation of the customer processes underpinning the front office functions which include: collecting of data, transaction processing and controlling of workflow sales, marketing and services (Kotorov, 2003; Iriana & Buttle, 2007; Buttle, 2009). Particularly, Iriana & Buttle (2007:24) describe operational CRM as comprising of business processes and technologies that can aid in the improvement of the efficiency and accuracy of the day-to-day customer facing operations which includes sales opportunities, marketing campaign management and customer service automation (which include case handling). In line with the definition, Buttle (2009:6) identify the main components of operational CRM to include: marketing automation, sales force automation and service automation.

- **Marketing Automation (MA):** is simply the application of technology to the marketing processes which includes: market segmentation, campaign management and event-based marketing (Buttle, 2009:7). *Market segmentation* in a broad sense refers to the process of dividing the market into distinct groups of buyers or consumers who have distinct needs, characteristics or behaviour and who might require separate products or marketing mixes (Armstrong & Kotler, 2005:54). Segmentation allows for the identification of smaller homogeneous groups within the target market that share similar needs, lifestyles and values (Pickton & Broderick, 2005:373; Kotler & Keller, 2012:10). Kotler & Keller (2012:212-229) highlight different types of market segmentation.

  Firstly, there is demographic segmentation; which is the segmentation of the market based on consumer characteristics such as gender, education, income, occupation, marital status etc. Secondly is geographic segmentation, i.e. dividing the target market into smaller geographic or regional locations. Thirdly is the psychograhic segmentation, which is based on attitudes, values, opinions, interests and lifestyle of consumer and lastly, behavioural segmentation; which is dividing the market based on consumers' knowledge of product, attitude towards product, use of product and response to the product or level of loyalty to product or brand.

Once the market segmentation has been undertaken, campaign management then allows marketers to use the customer-related data in order to develop, execute and evaluate targeted communications and offers on the product or services and in certain situations allow this at communications at individual customer level (Buttle, 2009:7). And lastly, event-based (or trigger) marketing is a terminology for the messaging and offering presentation to those customers identified to be most profitable at a particular point in time (Buttle 2009; Kotler & Keller, 2012).

- **Sales-Force Automation (SFA):** is a technological solution used commonly for the management of the company's selling activities (Buttle, 2009:7). Bakker et al. (2009:233) describe SFA as "the use of software to automate sales tasks, including sales activities, order processing, customer management, sales forecasting and analysis, sales force management and information sharing". Buttle (2009:7) decomposed a typical selling process into several stages which may include: "(i) lead generation; (ii) lead qualification; (iii) customers' need identification; (iv) development specifications; (v) proposal generation; (vi) proposal presentation; (vii) handling objections; and (viii) closing sales".

  Hence, the function of the SFA system is to enable the organisation in automatically assigning leads and track opportunities as they progress through the sales pipeline towards closure (Buttle, 2009:8). Other benefits of the SFA system include: improving the flow of information within the organisation, increasing the flexibility with customer services, improving the collaboration between the sales force and the production unit, enhancing overall organisational productivity, reduce costs by eliminating duplicate databases, improving the capacity of sharing best practices, better management of the sales force, and the ability to reassign leads that may not have been acted upon (Bakker et al. 2009).

- **Service Automation:** is a form of the operational CRM solution that allows the organisation to effectively and efficiently manage their service operations; whether it is delivered through call centres, contact centres, through the internet or through face-to-face contact which is claimed to enhance service quality and improve customer satisfaction and overall organisational productivity (Buttle, 2009:7).

3.5.3 Analytical CRM

The analytical CRM refers to a system that is used in providing effective analysis of the customer data and behavioural patterns in improving business decisions (Iriana and Buttle, 2007:25). Buttle (2007:9) describes analytical CRM as being mainly concerned with the "capturing, storing, extracting, integrating, processing, interpreting, distributing, using and reporting customer-related data to enhance both customer and organisational value. In other words, analytical CRM builds on the operational CRM and analyse the customer data in developing the information about the customer segmentation, behaviour of the customers and the customer value to the organisation using statistical tools such as data mining (Plakoyiannaki & Tzokas, 2002; Payne & Frow, 2005; Xu & Walton, 2005; Tuzhillin, 2012).

Zhang, (2008:100) describe the analytical CRM as being highly dependent on data mining in analysing customer data which are used for a variety of purposes including: (i) designing and executing targeted market campaigns for optimising marketing effectiveness; (ii) designing and executing specific customer campaigns including customer acquisition, cross-selling, up-selling, and retention; (iii) analysing of customer behaviour in aiding products and service decision making; and lastly (iv) predicting the probability of customer defection. Tuzhillin, (2012:589) describe the analytical CRM has been made up of three major components: (i) data analysis and customer modelling and understanding component; (ii) customer interaction component which is responsible for growing dialogue with the customer through a series of repeated and targeted actions taken by the CRM system; and (iii) the performance measurement component which determines the effectiveness of customer interactions and suggesting corrective actions via a feedback loop.

3.5.4 Collaborative CRM

Collaborative CRM comprises of the components and processes that allow an organisation to engage and collaborate with the customers and involves communicative tools such as voice technologies, fax, Web storefronts, e-mail, conferencing and face-to-face interactions (Iriana & Buttle, 2007:24). Similarly, Xu & Walton (2005:961) describe collaborative CRM as a system

integrated with the organisation-side systems that allows for greater response to customers throughout the supply chain as well as promoting sales through every channel from call centres to the web. Buttle (2009:11) describe collaborative CRM as the communication tool used by organisations to strategically and tactically align their normally separate enterprises in the supply chain for the more profitable identification, attraction, retention and development of customers and partners enabled through the use of electronic data interchange (EDI), portals, e-business, voice over internet protocol (VoIP), conferencing, chat rooms, web forums and e-mail. Zhang et al. (2008:100) describe the function of the collaborative CRM to include the coordination of a multi-channel service and support given to the customer by providing the infrastructure for responsive and effective support to customer issues, questions, complaints, etc. According to the authors, the focus of collaborative CRM is to get various departments with the organisation such as sales, technical support and marketing to share the useful information that they collect from interactions with customers to improve the quality of the service delivered.

3.6   Examples of Traditional CRM Models

Various CRM models have been presented in the literature. Some of these CRM models are briefly discussed below.

3.6.1 The Customer Lifecycle Frameworks

The customer lifecycle implies that each customer has a value over his or her tenure with a firm. Two of such models are described in Dwyer et al. (1987) and Kamakura et al. (2005). Dwyer et al. (1987) conceptualised CRM as a transition across five phase developmental stages: awareness, exploration, expansion, commitment and dissolution. The first phase a*wareness* refers to the recognition by both parties (firm and customer) of the possibility of the relationship. In phase two "*exploration*" both parties consider the obligations, benefits and burdens of the relationship. This phase is divided into sub-processes such as: (i) attraction, communication and bargaining; (ii) development and exercise of power, (iii) norm development and (iv) expectation development and

are argued to enable each party to gauge and test the goal compatibility, integrity and performance of each other (Dwyer et al. 1987:18). Phase 3 "expansion" refers to the continual increase in the benefits obtained by exchange partners and to their increasing interdependence. As the relationship develops further, it moves into the commitment (4th) phase; with the partners implicitly or explicitly pledging relational continuity even when they are aware of other available alternatives. And in the final phase (5th) the relationship comes to a possible dissolution.

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┌─────────────┐       ┌─────────────┐       ┌─────────────┐
│  Awareness  │──────▶│ Exploration │──────▶│  Expansion  │──┐
└─────────────┘       └─────────────┘       └─────────────┘  │
                                                             │
        ┌─────────────┐       ┌─────────────┐                │
        │ Dissolution │◀──────│ Commitment  │◀───────────────┘
        └─────────────┘       └─────────────┘
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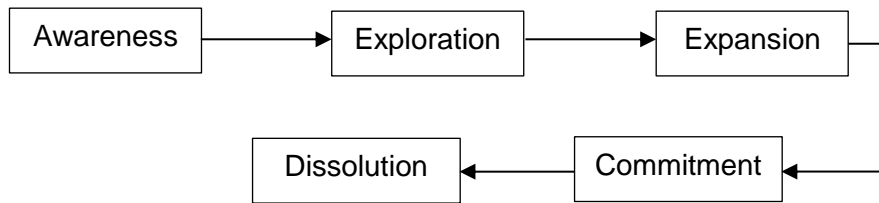
Figure 3.3: 5-stage Customer Lifecycle Framework

(Adapted from Dwyer et al. 1987)

Kamakura et al (2005:282) conceptualised the customer lifecycle framework to include three major phases: customer acquisition, customer development and customer retention. Customer acquisition refers to the adopted strategies in obtaining more and profitable customers; with the level of profitability of the customer measured in terms of how much the expected value in acquiring the customer over time exceeds the cost in doing so (Blattberg et al. 2001:38). On the other hand, customer development pertains to the growth of revenues from the existing customers. Suggested activities for developing customers include: cross-selling (that is encouraging customer to buy across categories), upselling (which is increasing the demands in the existing categories) and channel management (i.e. migrating customers across channels to lower costs or increase demand through channel-specific promotions or features). Cross-selling is reported to be most effective strategy as it yields immediate profit as well as the potential to deepen existing relationships, thereby increasing the switching cost associated with purchasing from other vendors (Kamakura et al. 2005:283). Lastly customer retention refers to the strategies used in identifying customers likely to defect to other vendors at a time and then administering interventions to increase the level of loyalty of the set of customers and prolonging their lifetime value to the organisation. Kamakura et al. (2005:287) highlighted such intervention for customer retention to

include: improving service quality, loyalty programs and targeting interventions to prevent discontinued relationship with the customers.

```
┌─────────────┐      ┌─────────────┐      ┌─────────────┐
│  Customer   │      │  Customer   │      │  Customer   │
│ Acquisition │ ───▶ │ Development │ ───▶ │  Retention  │
└─────────────┘      └─────────────┘      └─────────────┘
```
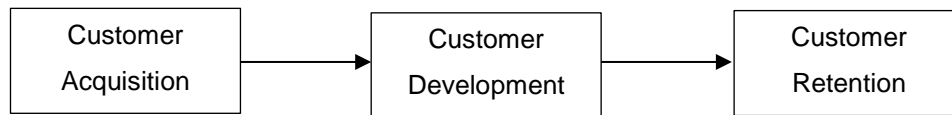
Figure 3.4: 3-stage Customer Lifecycle Framework
(Adapted from Kamakura et al. 1987)

3.6.2 Kelly's 7-key analytical application Model

Kelly (2000:264-265) conceptualised CRM as six key analytical applications: sales analysis, customer profile analysis, campaign analysis, loyalty analysis, customer contact analysis and profitability analysis. Sales analysis offers the organisation an integrated perspective on sales and enabling the sales function to understand the underlying trends and patterns in the sales data. Customer profile analysis allows the organisation to distinguish, from the mass of customer data, the individuals as well as the micro-segments. Campaign analysis provides the ability to measure the effectiveness of individual campaigns and different media. Loyalty analysis is used to measure customer loyalty with reference to the duration of the customer relationship. Customer contact analysis is used in analysing the customer contact history of any individual. Lastly, the profitability analysis measures and analyses the many different dimensions of profitability.

3.6.3 THE IDIC Model

The IDIC model describes the steps that must be taken by business organisations in converting existing customers into loyal customers. According to the model, organisations wishing to build customer value through managed relationships must be ready to identify their customers, differentiate them, interact with them and must customise some aspects of its behaviour towards

the customers (Pepper & Rogers, 2011:71). Figure 3.5 presents a graphical representation of the model.
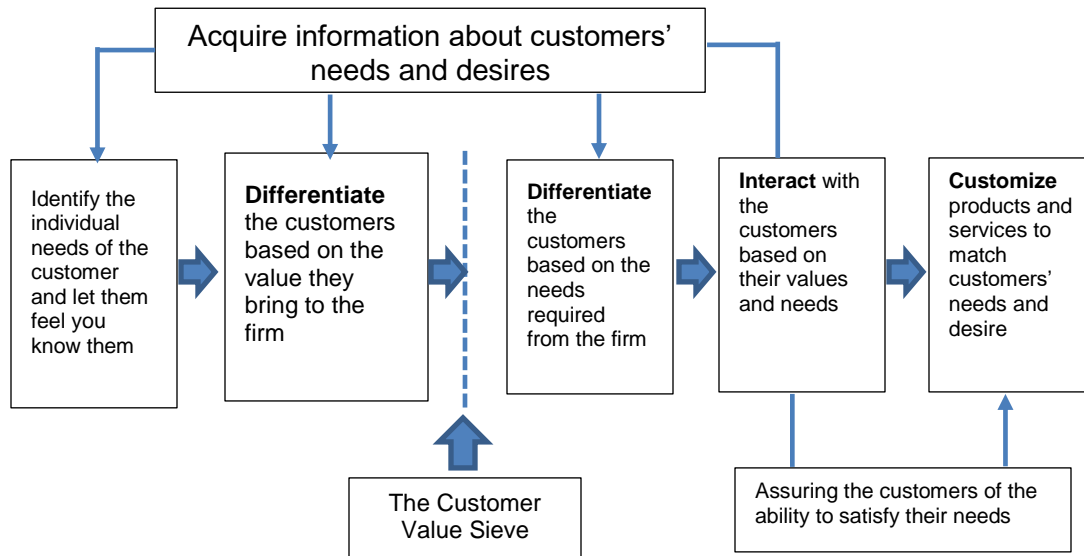
Figure 3.5: IDIC CRM Framework
(Source: Peppers & Rogers, 2011)

- *Identification*: comprises of the steps taken by the organisation to locate and contact many its customers and gather enough information about them such as: name, contact details, desires, needs, preferences, values, complains, etc. The acquired information is then used in providing customised services that satisfies the needs and desires of each individual customer.

- *Differentiation*: refers to the strategic process of identifying customers who are of immediate- or future-value to the organisation. Practically, customers offer different level of value to business organisations and so also are their values radically different. Thus, differentiation enables the organisation to devise and implement specific strategies that are tailored towards satisfying the different needs of the customers. Customer differentiation therefore entails the categorisation of customers based on their value to the organisation and the needs they have (Pepper & Rogers, 2011:77; Srivastava, 2013:18).

- *Interaction:* refers to the CRM interface used in gathering as much information as possible from the valuable customers. The information is mostly gathered in the process of communication between the organisation and the customers.

- *Customisation*: is the last component of the proposed CRM framework and is concerned with the utilisation of all the information gathered about the customer in the other processes in providing real value service or product offers that meets the needs and requirements of the customers.

3.6.4 The QCi Model

The QCi model is another form of the CRM strategy models that is customer-centric rather than focusing on the technology and process to CRM. Particularly, the QCi model emphases three significant actions in managing long term customer relationships: customer acquisition, retention and penetration (Hewson et al., 2002; Woodcock et al. 2002). The heart of the model describes the various activities that are needed to be performed by business organisations seeking to acquire and retain valuable customers and these customer management activities include: targeting, conversion, welcoming and getting to know, delivering the basics, retention activity, value development, management of dissatisfaction and wining. In addition, the model highlights the resources (people) performing the processes and implementation of the technology used in assisting those activities.
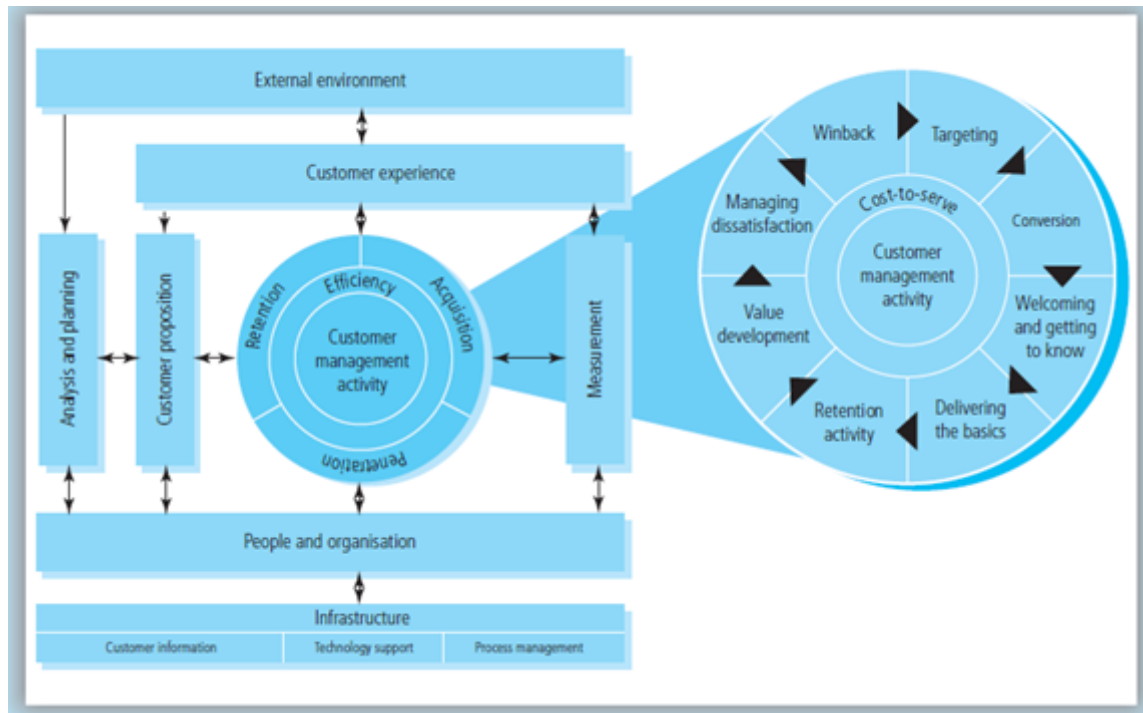
Figure 3.6: The QCi Customer Management Model
(Source: Buttle, 2009:19)

3.6.5 The CRM Value Chain Model

Francis Buttle proposed the CRM value chain model, argued to be a proven model that can assist business organisations in building long-lasting mutually beneficial relationships with the valued and profitable customers (Buttle, 2004:37, 2009:20). The CRM value chain model identifies five primary stages and four supporting conditions for the implementation of a CRM strategy towards the end goal which is enhancing customer profitability. These include: customer portfolio analysis, customer intimacy, network development, value proposition development and managing the customer lifecycle.

- *Customer portfolio analysis:* involves the analysis of the potential and actual customer base to identify significantly significant customers, including those that will generate profit and other values in the future.

- *Customer intimacy stage*: in this stage the company gets to know each selected customer and then gathers their individual information such as the profile, requirements, preferences, expectations and history.
- *Network development stage*: in this stage the company identifies, brief and manage the relationships with the network members (employees and supply chain partners) responsible for creating and delivering of the value propositions for the selected customers.
- *Value proposition development* involves the recognizing and categorising of the customer's requirements, preferences and expectations of each customers and then creating experiences that meets these customers' value.
- *Managing the customer lifecycle* involves the implementation of CRM through acquisition to retention customer and the process in developing their value and the process involves in managing a long-lasting relationship with the customers.
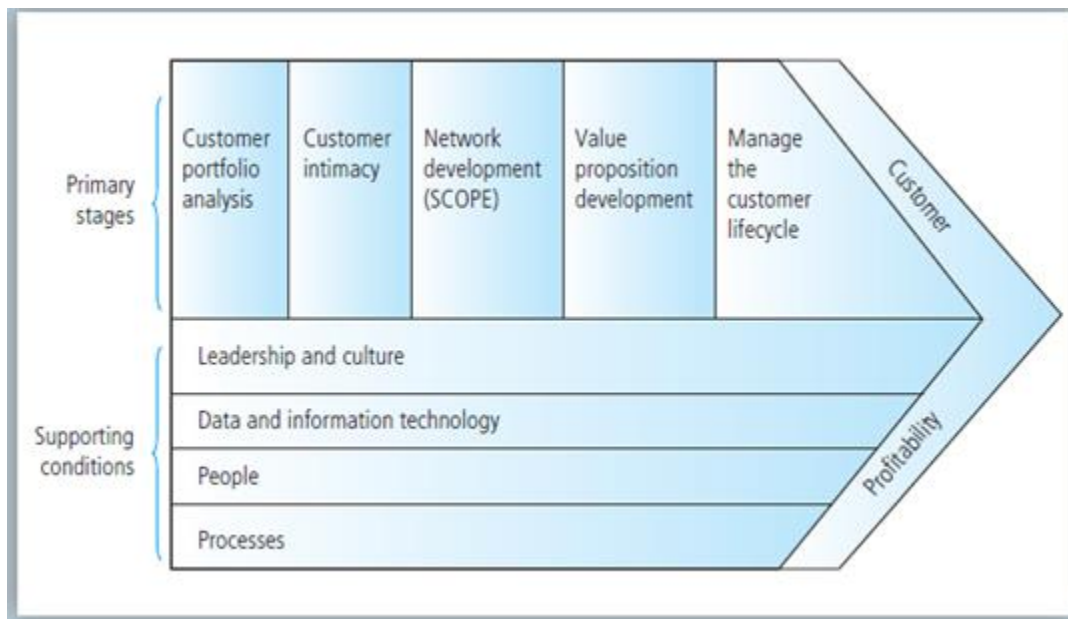
Figure 3.7: The CRM Value Chain Model

(Source Buttle, 2009:20)

These five primary stages of the model represent generally the three major sequential phases of the CRM strategy: the analysis (customer portfolio analysis and customer intimacy), the resource development and the implementation phases. In addition to the primary stages, there is the

supporting conditions include organisational leadership and culture, data and information technology, people and processes that enable the CRM strategy to function effectively and efficiently (Buttle, 2009:20).

3.6.6 The Five-Process CRM Model

Authors Adrain Payne and Pennie Frow proposed a five-core process model for the development of profitable customer relationship: strategy development process, the value creation process, the multichannel integration process, performance assessment process and the information management process (Payne & Frow, 2005:171). The model is depicted in Fig. 3.6.
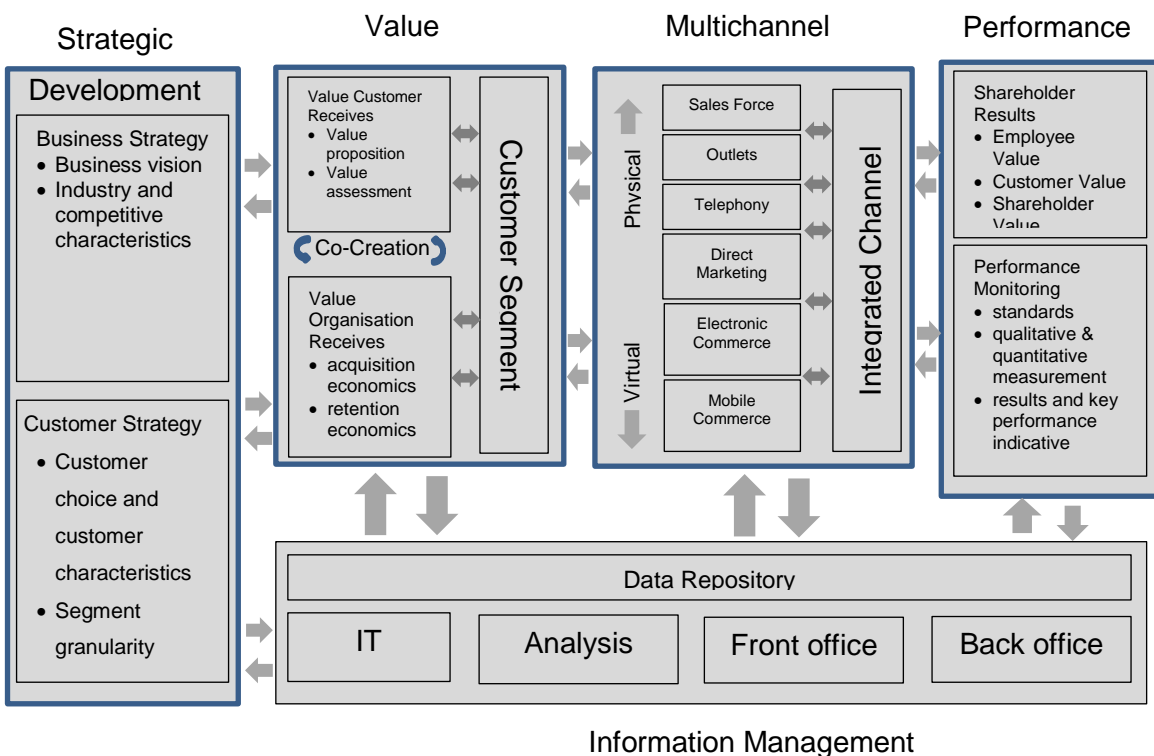
Figure 3.8: The Five-Process Model
(Payne & Frow, 2005:171)

- *Strategic development process* is concerned with the fusing together of the company's business strategy with customer strategy. The company's business strategy usually should be commenced with the articulation and reviewing of the company's vision (which should incorporate the CRM strategy) and the traditional industry analysis (Payne, 2005:170). Customer strategy on the other hand refers to the activities involved in exploring the existing and potential customer base with the aim of identifying the most appropriate and potentially valuable customer segment. In general, the strategic process is designed to help the organisation have a clearer platform on which to develop and implement its CRM activities (Payne, 2005:170)

- *Value creation process*: this entails the transformation of the outcomes from the strategy development process into programs that can both extract and deliver value in three ways: (i) the organisation determining what value it can provide for its customers; (ii) ascertaining the value the customers bring for the organisation; and (iii) the effective management of the value exchange between the customer and organisation through the process of co-creation and maximisation of the lifetime value of desirable customer segments (Payne & Frow, 2005:170).

- *Multichannel integration process*: this is argued as the most critical process of the CRM as it utilises the outputs from the business strategy and value creation processes and transforms them into value-adding activities with the customers. The primary focus is making the appropriate decisions of the combinations of channel to use which include (i) how to ensure that the customer experiences highly positive interactions with the different channels; and (ii) when a customer interacts with more than one channel, how to create and present a single unified view of the customers. managing integrated channels relies on the company's ability to hold high standards across the multiple channels which include: sale force, outlets (retail stores, branches, kiosks, etc.), telephony (traditional telephone, call centre contacts, etc.); direct marketing (radio, television, direct mail, etc.), e-commerce (email, internet; and m-commerce (mobile telephony, short message service, text message, etc.).

- *Information management process:* this is concerned with the collection, collation and used of customer data and information from all customer contact points to generate customer insight and appropriate marketing responses. The key material elements of the information

management process are the data repository, which provides a corporate memory of customers; IT systems which include the organisation's hardware, software, middle ware; analysis tools and front office and back office applications which supports the many activities involved in interfacing directly with customers and managing internal operations, administration and supplier relationships.

- *Performance assessment process*: this covers the essential task of ensuring that the organisation's strategic aims in terms of CRM are being delivered to an appropriate and acceptable standard and that a basis for future improvement is established. This process can be viewed as having two main components. The first component is shareholder results – and it provides a macroscopic view of how the organisation builds relationship with stakeholders and delivers value to them in order to drive performance as well as reducing cost. The second component is "performance monitoring" which provides a more detailed micro view of the metrics and key performance indicators of the CRM activities.

3.6.7 The Gartner Competency Model

Resulting from extensive analysis, Gartner group developed the "Eight Building Blocks of CRM" (see Figure 3.7) — a framework presented to guide companies in implementing CRM at the enterprise level (Gartner, 2004). The framework emphasizes the essence of creating a balance between the requirements of the company and the customer through eight building blocks: vision, strategy, valued customer experience, organisational collaboration, processes, information, technology and metrics (Gartner, 2004).

- *CRM Vision*: Successful CRM demands a clear vision so that a strategy and implementation can be developed to achieve it. The CRM vision is how the customer-centric enterprise wants to look and feel to its customers and prospects. The customer value proposition (CVP) and the corporate brand values are key to the CRM vision. Developing a CRM vision is argued to help the organisation in being competitive, deliver a message to the customers on what they should be expecting from the organisation, and providing the employee with the platform for delivery in terms of external customer experience. A

successful CRM vision is therefore a cornerstone to motivating staff, generating customer loyalty and gaining a greater market share (Gartner, 2004.

- *CRM Strategy*: the CRM strategy refers to the direction and financial goals of the business strategy and how the organisation sets this out in building customer loyalty; that feel-good factor that connects the customer with the organisation that makes them stay longer, make more purchases, recommend the organisation to others and are more willing to pay premium price (Gartner, 2004). The CRM strategy is therefore aimed at targeting, acquiring, developing and retaining the valuable customers in achieving the corporate goals or objectives.

- *Valued Customer Experience*: the experiences customers get at the point of initial contact with the organisation plays a crucial role in shaping their perception of the enterprise - the value it provides and the importance it places on the customer relationship. Good customer experiences drive satisfaction, trust and long-term loyalty. Poor customer experiences have the opposite effect because bad news travels faster and further than good news, thereby creating more harm to the company's ability to create new relationships with prospects (Gartner, 2004).

- *Organisational Collaboration*: many companies usually have this misconception that the implementation of CRM technologies makes them a customer-centric organization, forgetting or deliberating avoiding the necessary changes that the organisation must imbibe within the organisation. Successful implementation of CRM requires effective collaboration between the employees, teams and the whole enterprise must become more focused on the needs and wants of the customer. As a critical part of a CRM program, organisational collaboration will involve changing organizational structures, incentives and compensation, skills and even the enterprise culture (Gartner, 2004). Change management is critical to this. In the model, both value experience and organisational collaboration building blocks are joined by a yin and yang motif, emphasising that both blocks are central to the meeting, building of relationships and providing of value to both parties (organisation and customers).

- *CRM Processes*: Past efforts to re-engineer processes were primarily driven by the desire to improve the efficiency of an enterprise and reduce costs. The beneficiary was the enterprise, not its customers. The rise in CRM has directed focus on reworking key

processes that touch the customer and asking customers which processes matter to them. This is referred to as customer process re-engineering and successful re-engineering should create processes that not only meet customers' expectations but also support the customer value proposition, provide competitive differentiation and contribute to the desired customer experience (Gartner, 2004). Key elements in this block are customer lifecycle and knowledge management (discussed in the other models discussed above).

- *CRM Information:* Successful CRM requires a flow of customer information around the organization and tight integration between operational and analytical systems. Having the right information at the right time is fundamental to successful CRM strategies, providing customer insight and allowing effective interaction across any channel. Unfortunately, most companies are argued to perform poorly in terms of CRM information capabilities – the result of numerous and fragmented departments, initiatives, databases and systems. Enterprises that establish a business plan for sourcing, managing and leveraging their customer information assets are more likely to achieve their CRM goals and objectives and gain a competitive advantage (Gartner, 2004).

- *CRM Technology*: critical to the CRM process, technologies are essential enabler for any modern CRM business strategy, but they are just one piece of the puzzle. In many CRM projects, integration issues start as a relatively low priority, and then rise in prominence (cost and time) as enterprises realize that true CRM requires seamless customer-centric processes, supported by integrated technology across the enterprise and its supply chain (Gartner, 2004).

- *CRM Metrics*: this block provides the measurable indication of the performance of the other seven blocks which emphasis the CRM objectives and monitoring of the process involved in converting the customers into assets (Gartner, 2004).

Figure 3.9: The Eight-Building Block of CRM

(Source: Gartner, 2001)

3.7   Criticism of the traditional CRM systems

Over the years, CRM underpinned by relationship marketing principles, has been advocated as a critical tool and philosophy for increasing profitability and competitiveness of business organisations by enabling the identification and satisfaction of the profitable customers and establishing long term relationships. This contention has attracted a lot of interest in the research field both from academicians and practitioners (Payne & Frow, 2005; Thomas & Sullivan, 2005; Buttle, 2009). With the continuous advancement in information and communication technology, the composition of CRM began to evolve; with organisations finding the traditional database and data mining capacity enabled by the traditional CRM systems inadequate. This situation was mainly compounded with the advent of organisational websites which provided firms with a cost-effective avenue of reaching out to a large consumer base (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014).

Even smaller organisations were adopting simpler technologies such as websites, databases and email packages in taking advantage of the growing popularity and endless opportunities provided by CRM (Boulding et al, 2005; Harrigan et al. 2011). However, as both academicians and researchers began to discover, building lasting customer relationships is much more complex and requires a lot more commitment from every organisational member; which was not supported by the initial development and tenets of the traditional CRM solutions (Dibb & Meadows, 2004; Jayachandran et al., 2005; Payne & Frow, 2006; Payne et al., 2009; Nguyen & Mutum, 2012). In addition, the declining customer loyalty and ease with which customers where switching loyalty – as competitors were now able to lure away customers with their lower pricing and better purchasing incentives, brought added pressure for the need of a more elaborate CRM that can capture each individual customer needs and establish long term customer relationship (Nguyen & Mutum, 2012:401-402).

Furthermore, the changing nature of the business landscape which has become more service-, niche- and information-oriented, one characterised by market liberation, globalisation, highly competitive business environment, the proliferation of technological advancements such as social media (which has placed customer at the core of the business world), increasing fragmentation of the consumer markets, rapidly changing customer buying patterns and life styles; increasingly demanding customers, and the increase in the standards of product and service quality; has put a lot of impetus on business organisations to change the way in which customer relationship is being managed (Gronroos, 1994; Gummesson, 2002; Wilson et al., 2002; Buttle, 2009; Ernst et al., 2011; Peppers & Rogers, 2011). In addition, the traditional CRM systems have been largely criticised for their inadequacy in fostering relational exchanges between organisation and customers as well as customer-to-customer; with the traditional CRM technologies mostly, a one-way communication medium where the implementing organisation simply transfers its offline marketing approaches to an online platform (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014:150).

The pluralistic nature of the CRM concept and its lack of common definition has also contributed to the fragmented nature of the research area which has seen different perspectives given to the implementation of the traditional CRM solutions. Some commentators have even brought to questioning the actual effect CRM have on actual organisational performance (Fan & Ku, 2010; Reimann et al. 2010; Keramati et al. 2010; Ernst et al. 2011). Overall, the researchers have argued

that CRM systems are no longer satisfactory for the empowered consumer and proposes a shift towards a more personalised and intimate relationship (Newell, 2003; Payne & Frow, 2005; Greenberg, 2010: Miller & Lammas, 2010; Nguyen & Simkin, 2011). The interactive and relational properties of these new social media technologies make them perfectly suited for facilitating the underlying relationship marketing principles of CRM (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010:312). Taking advantage of the available opportunities of Social media in managing customer relationship requires a thorough understanding by the organisations of why consumers are attracted to these social media and how they influence consumers' behaviour and lifestyles (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010:312) In addition, the authors argue that new strategic and tactical marketing approaches are required which aligns the characteristics of social media and organisational processes

3.8   Incorporating Social Media in Traditional CRM: The Social CRM strategy

In recent years, the advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and particularly the increasing popularity of the internet have produced a new type of consumer popularly referred to as social consumers, who are familiar with the internet and are confident in making online searches and product purchases off the internet (Rowley, 2000; Law et al. 2003; Pires et al. 2006; Brenan, 2010). The availability of the internet and social media to all have brought about a new dimension to how people communicate and the overall dynamics of human relationships. Social media provides a platform that allows people to form a sort of virtual community; where people can communicate among themselves and share vital information (Brenan, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). For consumer market, social media provides an avenue for consumers to seek advice when searching for information or assistance in decision making prior to purchasing. Thus, Social media allows consumers to form a kind of global community around a product or brand (Smith, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Smith (2009:559) describes social media has a force that have revolutionised the consumer landscape by facilitating user generated content, publishing of consumer opinion and the development of a global community around an organisation or its brands. This is similar with the

opinion of Law et al (2003:58-59), attributing the advent of the social media technology to the change in contemporary consumption; a situation that has seen the transformation of consumers from their previously passive roles in terms of product development to a more active group. Howard (2007 cited in Harridge-March & Quinton, 2009:172) attributed the diminishing trust in institutional brands and the yearning for more personalised response from organisation as the propelling factor for the computer and social network mediated communications between consumers. This computer savvy or social consumers in most cases function as virtual advisors, recommending goods, services, or brands to people who they never met physically but have formed a strong relationship with within a specific Social media platform (Zeng et al. 2010:2).

In addition to changing the consumer landscape, social media has also had a significant impact on the business and marketing environment. For many businesses today, Social media has revolutionised their method of business interaction and communication with the various stakeholders and the way they go about customer relationship management (Harridge-March & Quinton, 2009; Miller & Lamas, 2010; Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Neff (2010) describes social media platforms as the biggest marketplace where organisations these days go to when they want to gain insight on how target consumers perceive their brands; a platform argued to have overtaken the traditional company websites and email programs. Similarly, Pires et al. (2006:937) describe the internet and social media as a facilitator of the global marketplace, overcoming the barriers to time and distance and empowering consumers to communicate with peers, who influences their opinions and ultimately define the perception of brands.

Social media is considered by some commentators as a strategic tool for organisations to engage in unknown customers who are anxious to gain deeper understanding on the type of products or services been delivered (Harridge-March & Quinton, 2009; Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Social media provides the tool with which organisations and marketers can use in going the extra mile as it regards getting close to both current and prospective customers and developing long lasting relationships. Pires et al. (2006) describe the social media enabled CRM solution as end to empowering organisation in their quest to get involved in consumer interaction in social media and avenue to also personalise the interactions with the customers in view of developing long term relationships. In other definitions, Social CRM has been described as a concept for integrating

customer data from social media platforms with current traditional CRM solutions in achieving positive organisational outcomes (Myron, 2010:4; Tileaga et al. 2014:126).

In other words, social CRM represents organisational tools used in facilitating customer engagement whenever it is needed through different customer touchpoints, that are both convenient for the customers and the organisation. It also allows for the provision of more personalised customer experience that is informed, interesting to the customers and even entertaining and addresses each customer's needs and expectation of the product or service. This view of Social CRM is commonly highlighted in the very popular definition of Social CRM by Greenberg (2010:413), defining the concept as

> "*a philosophy and business strategy, supported by a Social media technology platform, business rules, processes and Social characteristics, designed to engage the customer in a collaborative conversation to provide mutually beneficial value in a trusted and transparent business environment. In this view, SOCIAL CRM is the company's response to the customer's relationship of the conversation*".

From the above, Social CRM is considered as more than a mere communication and information tool but as a business strategy that leverages on the power of social media in boosting customer relationship and engagement by building a strong win-win situation for both the organisation and the customers; resulting in a mutually beneficial value. Unlike in the traditional CRM systems, Social CRM acknowledges the power of the social consumer and the benefits of developing a more interactive relationship with these consumers. This view was also shared by Szmignin *et al*. (2005:481) who argued that although traditional CRM systems have attempted in developing engagement with the customers, the lack of interactive relationship hampered the success of such traditional CRM systems and with the Social CRM solution. This barrier has now been overcome – as social media allows not only peer to peer relationship building among consumers but also allows organisation and consumers to develop stronger bonds through the development of brand communities (Harridge-March & Quinton, 2009:171).

Li et al. (2010:294) describe social media as a form mediated viral marketing (word-of-mouth) that uses electronic communication channels including social networks in dispersing brand messages. While such viral marketing cannot be said to be a new phenomenon, with social media,

it has taken a new dimension and provides huge potential benefits to both organisations and marketers. As rightly put by Kozinets et al. (2010:71) Social CRM systems provides an ideal medium for the application of viral marketing concepts – which involves the intentional influencing of consumer-to-consumer communications using established marketing techniques. Mintel (2010) exploring the consumer market in the UK, reported that 47 percent of consumers under 35years old post online comments or reviews of products using various social networking sites, which is argued to have a significant influencing on the purchasing intentions of other potential consumers carrying out online search on those products. Thus, developing and implementing effective Social CRM strategy is paramount for modern organisations as it not only places the organisation where the customers are but also provides a medium to customer insight that results in creating competitive value (Greenberg, 2010:415).

3.8.1 Comparing Social CRM with Traditional CRM

Having reviewed the literature on the traditional CRM and social CRM systems, it could be said from the surface value that both systems are merely technological solutions that facilitated relational exchanges between the organisation and customers and other stakeholders including employees and suppliers in two different era but share the same primary focus of aiding in the planning and innovation of products and services that meets customers' needs and expectations as well as enhances the profitability and competitive position of the implementing organisation. However, a more critical review would show that there is significant difference between the traditional CRM and Social CRM solutions. For one, traditional CRM operate on the ideology that business problems of the 20th century could be overcome by the implementation and automation of marketing strategies that are focused on customer acquisition (through the gathering of customer information) and customer retention (through the distribution of loyalty programs). Thus, the traditional CRM solutions were designed to help improve customer service centres and front desks offerings (Askool & Nakata, 2013; Olszak & Bartus, 2013).

Another distinctive feature of the traditional CRM technologies is that communication follow was one-directional; with the implementing organisations transferring most of their marketing approaches offline to online platforms; thereby failing to take full advantage of the relational

opportunities provided by the internet (Shah & Murtaza, 2005). These traditional CRM systems mostly combined specific technological solutions with existing organisational processes and culture with an aim of managing customer relationships (Jayachandran et al., 2005; Payne & Frow, 2005; van Doorn et al., 2010). The general notion with the traditional CRM is that it is a technology-based resource, comprising of tactical and operational dimensions within the organisation, along with other strategic dimensions (such as customer orientation and attempted customer engagement) to achieve significant performance gains through effective customer acquisitions and retention strategies (Coltman, 2007; Borges et al., 2009; Chang et al. 2010).

On the other hand, Social CRM advanced the tenets of the traditional CRM systems and incorporated social media in establishing interactive processes (or two-way communication) between organisations and their customers (Zablah et la. 2004; Coltman, 2007; Greenberg, 2010). These interactive and relational properties of social media technologies enable organisations to fully engage with their customer and successfully reaped the rewards of establishing a long-lasting relationship with the customers and the benefits of the relationship marketing principles (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Rodriguez et al. (2012:365) differentiated Social CRM from the traditional CRM and sales force automation (SFA) solution by focusing mainly on customer engagement supported by a two-way interactive relationship with the business and supports the co-creation attributes of the customers in developing innovate product and service offerings. Social CRM systems achieves this by facilitating peer-to-peer, organisation-to-customer and business-to-business collaboration and open access to real-time communication.

Another notable distinction between Social CRM and traditional CRM systems is that the former enables business organisation to identify new markets and trend, which helps in product and service innovation (Greenberg, 2010; Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014; Harrigan & Miles, 2014). As people become more involved and dependent on social media as a channel for for keeping in contact with friends and peers, it has become a medium for a distribution of abundant information and as explained earlier organisations that are able to tap into this information to gain competitive edge and improve profitability. Social CRM therefore enables customers to become visible before the organisation and gives the customers the opportunity to make intelligent decision on how to interact with the firm (Greenberg, 2010; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010). Table 2 highlights some of the specific differences between traditional CRM systems and Social CRM solutions.

Table 3.2: Differences between CRM and SOCIAL CRM

	CRM	Social CRM
Context	• Messages are the value generators • Focus on individual relationships	• Focus on collaborative relationships. • Conversations are the value generators. • Interactions strengthens the relationship
Channels	• The demand of the history of operations stored in the internal information system.	• The need for complement information residing in internal systems with profile information and behaviour in Social networks is required
Processes	• Development of customer service processes in the standpoint of institutions. • Adaptation and optimization processes to enhance interactions transaction with customers.	• Standpoint for customer service processes are developed in. • Conversational factor are being established in institution in order to capture the new ideas and improve segmentation. • Generation of dynamic process to provide institution the capability to react on organization with what that has been noticed in Social networks.
Organization	• Transactional operations to employees communicate the intended messages. • Innovations resulting from a specialized source based on an entity.	• Orientation of new skills and roles are highly demanded for behavioural and sentimental analysis. • Gathering of innovation from employees are in closed connection with the end customer and among them through web 2.0 tools. • Requirement for analytical information and feedback involved in the sectors or immersed in Social networks based on conversations.
Technology	• CRM solutions are focused on automating and supportive business processes are internal.	• Network information is captured in order to know the customers in the Social milieu. • Initializing specific and efficient monitoring tools that support internal business processes.
Communication images and reputation of brand	• Face-to-face client-based communications are dependent on business needs	• Designed communication and monitoring are on the basis on the structured analysed information involving the traits of client Socially.

	• Direct communications are segmented from analysis of structured information.	• Metrics accounting on image and reputation analysed for the number of followers, type of comment and influence on the networks.

Source: Olszak & Bartus, (2013:373)

3.8.2 Social CRM Implementation Models

Unlike the traditional CRM that has quite several slutions for its implementation, only a few models have been proposed for implementing Social CRM. Many of the available models simply propose the integration of Social media with the traditional CRM systems. Thus, many of the traditional CRM systems described above can be transformed into Social CRM if they can incorporate a solution that can help harness data from the social media in the management of customer relationships. The following sub-sections describes the available Social CRM models that has been presented in the literature and they include: The 5M Model, the Social CRM House and the Multi-Agent Social CRM (MASOCIAL CRM) model.

3.8.2.1   The 5M's Social Insight Model

The Altimeter Group (2010) developed a Social CRM strategy to engage and capture the influence of the social consumers; a strategy they argued can be used to augment social networking to serve as a new channel for interactions within an existing end-to-end CRM processes and investments. In this proposition, the implementation of any Social CRM is focused on enhancing the relationship aspects of CRM by improving the organisation-customer relationships by encouraging more meaningful interactions. The model proposes that Social CRM strategy must begin with the gaining of meaningful customer insights through 5M's: monitoring, mapping, management, middleware and measurement, argued to provide foundational processes for filtering huge signal-to-noise ratios from the various Social media. Table (3.3) presents the detailed description of the 5M's.

Table 3.3: The 5M's Social Insight Model

	Why it's important	Resources and Requirements	What they don't always tell you	Vendors to Watch
Monitoring	Provides listening capabilities to filter out noise from the Social sphere. Encapsulate both metrics and measurement. Extract insights making measurement more effective	Brand monitoring software that monitors and scraps the Social web, has team-based workflows and connects with existing CRM databases	Use tightly scoped keywords to define the search parameters. Yet don't go too tight or you miss key opportunities – going too wide results in too much noise	Biz360, Buzzmetrics (Nielsen), Cymfony, Radian6, SAS Institute, Scoutlabs, Visible technologies
Mapping	Mapping solutions identify relationships. Due to lack of single identity, companies must link Social profiles to customer records to provide a holistic experience	First, find existing public profiles to match like LinkedIn and Google profiles. Additional database fields must be created that match customer records to Social profiles	The trick is to get them to map their profiles for you. Entice them with rewards, better service, and special deals in an opt-in manner	Facebook (profiles), Gigya, Google (profiles), OpenID, SalesView, Spredfast, SprinkIr
Management	Management systems bring CRM processes to life. Without a purpose, Social data is unactionable. Business rules and processes are needed to triage the right information to the right teams in real-time	Tie back the Social world and channels to existing innovation, marketing, sales, support and service processes. Triage profiles to create prioritisation frameworks	Companies must develop a crisis plan for the worst possible scenarios and conduct internal fire drills. Expect the worst to happen on Friday afternoon when management is not available	CoTweet Infor, KANA, Oracle, RightNow Technologies, SAP, SAS, SugarCRM
Middleware	Middleware technologies glue the Social world to the enterprise. Social CRM connects to nearly every customer facing system. Data will have to seamlessly flow between systems, and advanced dashboards that provide intelligence	Apply technologies such as complex event processing, business process management, business rules, workflows, data integration and process orchestration among disparate systems	Develop business rules based on your unique processes. They will include: workflows, complex event processing and enablement technologies to respond	Boomi, D&B Purisma, IBM, Informatica, Oracle, Pervasive, Progress Software, SAS DataFlux, SOA Software, SoftwareAG, TIBCO

Measurement	What you can't measure you can't improve; therefore, organisations must be able to benchmark what's been done.	Advanced dashboards that improve intelligence. Measure based on business objectives like improved satisfaction, spread of message	Rely on data to provide benchmarks, trending, prediction and sentiment. Bring the insight into actionable state	IBM Cognos, Information Builders, Microsoft, Oracle Hyperion QilkVIew, SAP, Businees objects, SAS Institute

(Source: Altimeter, 2010)

While it is anticipated that the implementation of such Social CRM systems begins at the departmental level (probably the IT department) by gaining customer insights, it is argued that over time the application should transcend into other departments involved in the different functional aspects of the organisational processes. The 5M's model is proposed to transcend into six major business processes: social marketing, sales, service & support, innovation, collaboration and customer experience (as shown in Fig. 3.10).

Social Marketing Model: Within the social marketing premise, the focus of the Social CRM system is to support customer advocacy by first gaining social marketing insights and then implementing rapid social marketing response, social campaign tracking and then social event management (Altimeter, 2010). *Gaining Social marketing insights* entails listening carefully to what the consumers are already saying, identifying the top influencers in such conservation, ranking the top conservations, prioritizing top channels, recognising the velocity of the discussion and being able to gauge the tone of topics (Hart & Kassen, 2012). *Rapid Social marketing response* refers to the tool that can be used by the organisation in defending the brand in terms of negative comments being said about the brand, the restriction of how far such messages is spread, understanding the influence of the individual or persons dispersing such information and the context of previous interactions. Social marketing entails that the organisation's response to the customer insight must be done in real time to avert major public relations (PR) crises. In addition, the Social CRM solution allows for the organisation to engage in *Social campaign tracking* in understanding the customers' reactions to brand product or services and using such insights in effecting product/service innovation. Lastly, Social marketing entails the use of social event

management in promoting events that connects across the different customer segments in so doing improving in real-time event experiences, tracking and following-up on lead generations.

*Social Sales Model***:** this aspect of the Social CRM solution enables the seamless lead opportunities in gaining social sale insights, providing rapid social sales responses and being proactive in social lead generations. The social sale insights build on the insights from the social customers insight in improving sales transaction channels. An implementing organisation is therefore required to identify channels (or places) where the customers are interacting and rank the influence of each customer group or segment (Altimeter, 2010). By ranking the influence of the customer segment, the organisation with the help of the Social CRM solution can target its sales efforts to avoid "ineffective and expensive shotgun approach". *Rapid Social sales response* involves the catching of a sales lead in mid-air – that is the monitoring of the major social communities to identify sales opportunities and make the necessary responses to the potential sales triggers. Lastly, the proactive social lead generation is used in reaching out to identified customer segments who are interested in gaining better knowledge of the organisation and its brands.

Social support and Service Model: This model of the Social CRM solution is used in driving customer satisfaction and inducing loyalty. This can begin from gaining social support insights and then moving unto more reactive programs such as rapid social responses to more proactive measures such as developing peer-to-peer unpaid armies (i.e. social media brand advocators). The social support and service model leverages on the social support insight component in providing the organisation with the necessary information required to rank the level of influence of both the current and prospective customers within the social media community, separating the status of friendlies or foes and selecting the appropriate response channel for each category (Hart & Kassen, 2012). The *Rapid Social response* component is used in classifying customer feedbacks and support request for quick action and response. The *Proactive Social lead generation* component helps the organisation in recognising, recruiting and rewarding its associates or advocates who provide support in terms of customer-to-customer support based on their knowledge of the products and services being offered. As argued by the model, this approach is of immerse benefit to the organisation as it reduces the conventional support/service costs and in averting terrible public relation crises that the firm would be better off not getting involved in directly.

Social Innovation Model: this model facilitates the streamlining of the formation of complex product/service ideas or concepts leveraging on consumer insights and crowdsourced research and development – a technique for increasing delivery time frames by employing customers, partners and industry observers to expedite requirement gathering, prototyping and demo testing (Harrigan et al. 2015). This is very critical for industries such as the telecommunication where the time of getting new products/service to the market has become shortened and organisations can no longer afford to design their product and services without the input of the customers. Also, the social innovation model helps provides an avenue for organisations to capitalise on the ongoing innovation trends, which ranges from the fixing of defects in the current product/service based on the complaints from the customers to gaining innovating insight on market and product trends (Peters et al. 2013). This involves capturing, organising and prioritising ideas gather from the Social customers. Innovation insights also enable organisations to identify potential market for new products.

Collaboration Module: this refers to the component of the Social CRM system that facilitates the first starts with the aggregation relationships between the organisational members and departments. This may include technologies such as the extranet systems that are used in connecting with the customers and partners to reduce organisational friction and positively stimulate the business environment (Altimeter, 2010; Gnanprakash & Kulkarni, 2016). An effective Social CRM solution system must be able to facilitate organisation-wide collaboration by synthesising knowledge of the products, services and customers' needs across the different departments (Guha et al. 2018). The collaboration insight would allow the organisation to respond more swiftly to customers' needs and reduce the bottleneck in coordinating organisational processes and in understanding the employees' diverse sentiment. In addition, the collaboration module allows the organisation to extend relationship to partners, channels, suppliers and other stakeholders. This extended collaboration provides the organisation with the ability to effectively listen and manage their extended networks using the social learning tools.

Seamless Customer Experience Module: Nowadays providing exceptional customer experience is paramount to the success of every business organisation and the customer's access to information on such product or service helps in improving the customer experience (Askool & Nakata, 2011; Alamgir & Shamsuddoha, 2015). Presenting a consistent face to the customer is

another means of improving customer experience as the customer becomes more comfortable with the organisation and its brand. As argued by the model, developing seamless customer experience requires more accurate and real-time customer information. It also entails rewarding the best and loyal customers.
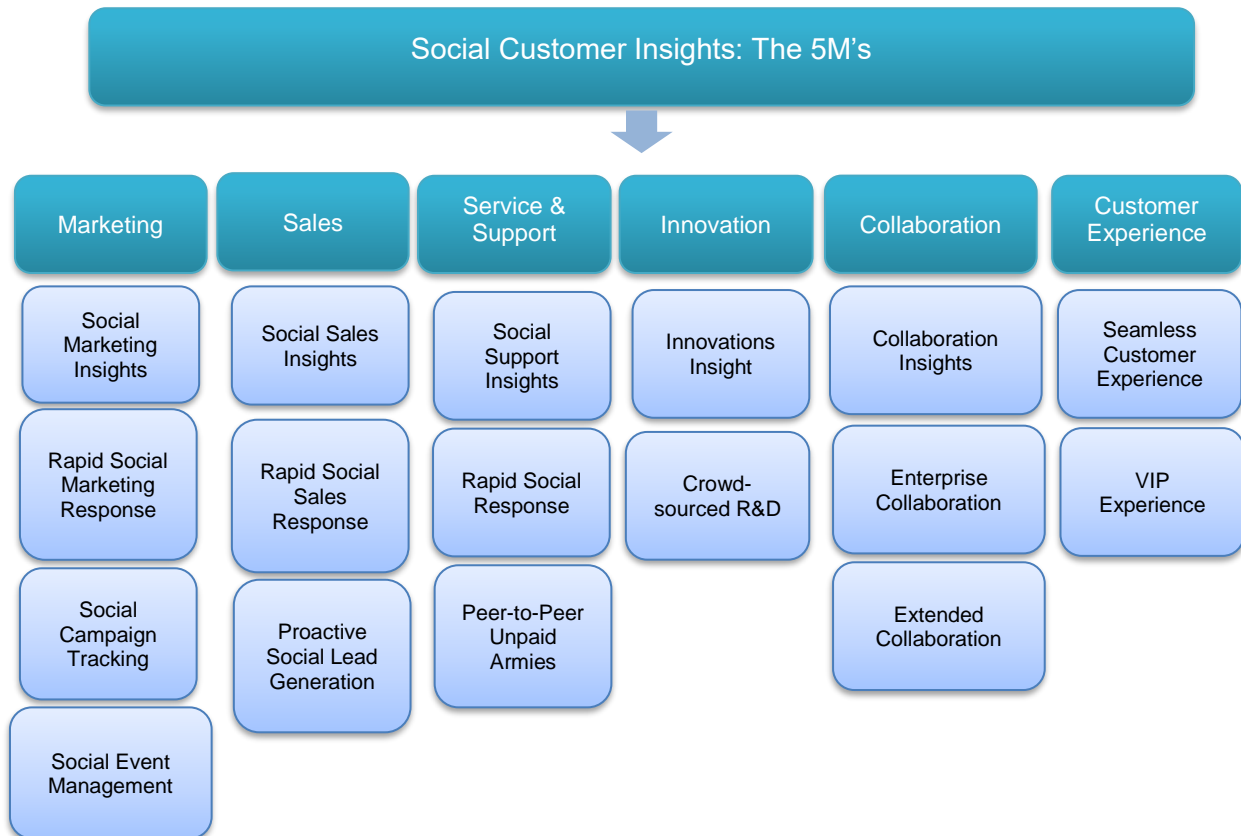
Figure 3.10: Use cases for the 5M Model
(Source, Altimeter Group, 2010)

3.8.2.2   *The Social CRM House*

The Social CRM House was proposed as a solution for incorporating social media into the traditional CRM systems (Malthouse et al. 2013). The model acknowledges the influence that social media has on how the customers are now engaging with business organisations; and the extent of this consumers' engagement now impact on the company's customer-centric approach

to business. At the core of the Social CRM House are two critical components: (i) the CRM component; and (ii) the social media component (see, Fig. 3.9).
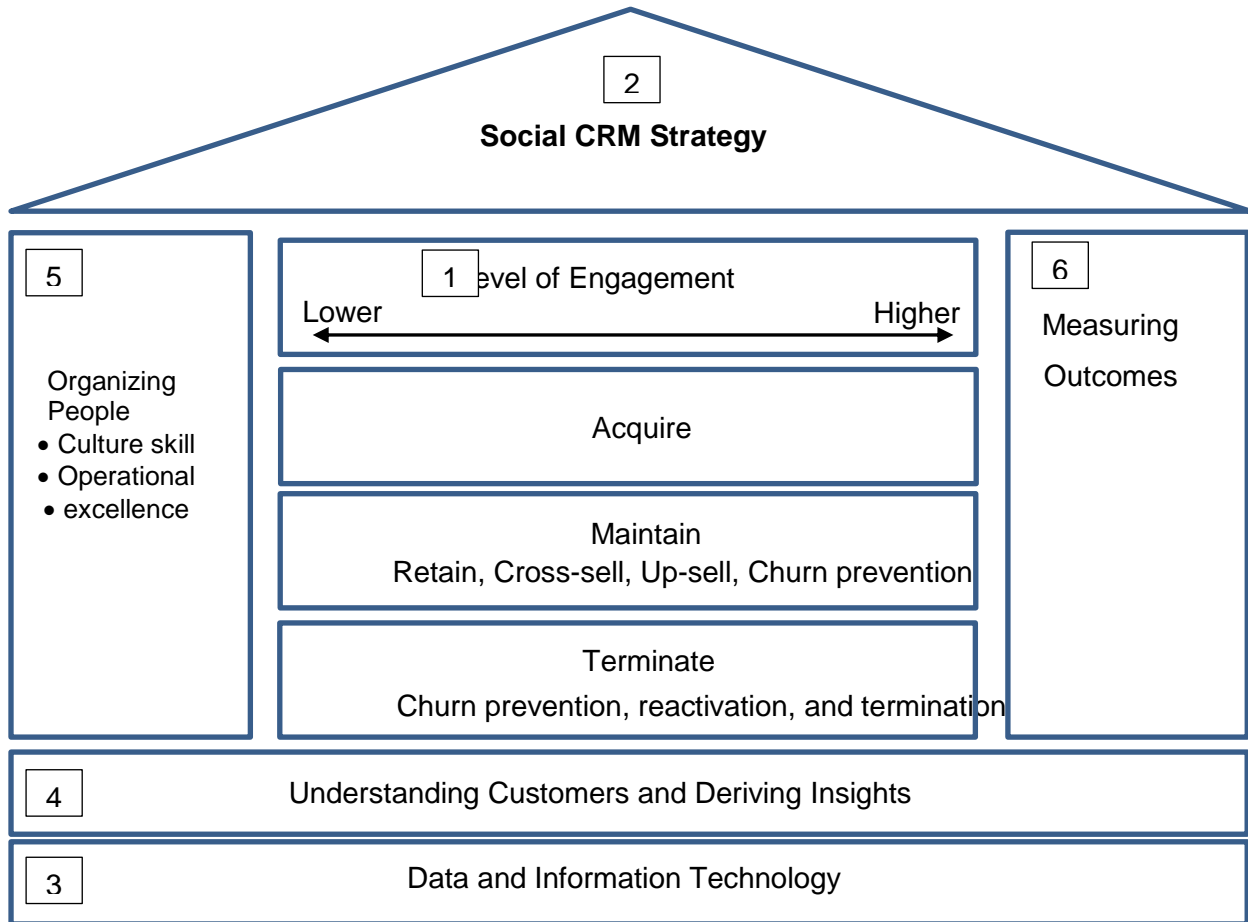
Figure 3.11: Social CRM House
(Source: Malthouse, 2013:272)

The CRM component is located at the middle of the house (represented by the number item-1) and comprises of the three main elements: (i) the relationship acquisition with the customers component; (ii) the maintenance of the relationship (retention) component; and the (iii) termination component. Advancing the proponents of the traditional CRM solutions; where the customers are usually passive, with their response to the business offerings measured by the purchasing behaviour of the component; the Social CRM model suggests the expansion of the traditional system to take advantage of social media in transforming the customers from being passive to active participants in the engagement and relationship development with the organisation. In this approach, when the user generates content relative to the specific organisation or its brand, he or

she is engaging with the company (Malthouse, 2013). This engagement is depicted to range in a continuum from a low-level to high-level engagement.

At the low-level engagement, the consumers either only passively consume content or use the very basic forms of feedback (e.g. liking the company's Facebook page) and at the higher-engagement level, the consumer actively engages with the brand in the different processes of co-creation, including the writing of reviews or creating videos promoting the product as in the case of YouTube videos. Hence according to the model, business organisations are expected to plan its social CRM strategy (the roof of the house: item 2) based on the customer's level of engagement. The model identifies two key considerations organisations must make in implementing the Social CRM strategy: value fusion (that is creating values for the organisation and its customers as well as other stakeholders); and content marketing strategy (i.e. developing engaging contents in their Social media platforms that will capture the interest of the consumers and enhance long-term customer relationships).

At the base of the Social CRM house framework is housed the data and information technology – which is used in collecting and storing customer information. The collection, analysis and application of the data (usually acquired through social media and other information technology tools) form the heartbeat of the proposed Social CRM House. The vast information available across different the social media channels can be harnessed by the organisation in gaining customer needs and desires about the product/invoice and which is then utilised in developing products and services that will satisfy the customers' requirement (Malthouse, 2013). Lastly, the two pillars of the Social CRM House involve: (i) the organisation of the people; and (ii) the measurement of outcomes. The organising people pillar entails that implementing organisations must adopt a holistic approach to organisation change and revolutionising of the mind-set of the employees through fostering of an empowering culture, developing of employees' skillsets on social CRM and encouraging operational excellence (Malthouse, 2013).

An empowering culture simply implies the organisation is fostering a culture that allows the employees to think beyond the outdated organisational norms and hierarchical structures and imbibing a Social media culture where the employees individually act as spokespersons for the company as it relates to CRM activities and the promotion of activities that encourage the diffusion

and proliferation of Social media throughout all levels and across all functions of the organisation. Developing employees' Social CRM skillsets involves the advancing their required capacity for harnessing information from social media and other customer touchpoints. Particularly, it was recommended that the company should be able to identify, attract or develop data experts that are proficient in scientific, interpretive and business intelligence (Malthouse, 2013). Scientific intelligence refers to the expertise in statistical and optimisation methods, tools and IT infrastructures for compiling, organising, aggregating and storing data from the social media and other customer touchpoints.

Interpretive intelligence implies the analytical and perceptive skills required for asking the right questions, setting up suggestions and analysing scenarios which helps in the full understanding of the nature of the data that has been generated and how it facilitates the achievement of the company's primary objectives. Business intelligence refers to the skills needed for extracting information relevant to the business aspect of the organisation from data-based and analytical insights – i.e. identifying customers' needs, opportunities for generating revenue or impacting the bottom line. Lastly, operational excellence has to do with harmonising the business processes and organisational structure in such a way that social media becomes an integral part of the organisational and CRM processes. This involves incorporating all the business process channels (including the traditional touch points such as prints and other outdoor advertising, face-to-face interactions with the front-line employees, call centres and other methods of message delivery channels) to foster the free flow of information.

Finally, the measuring outcome pillar is for measuring success of the Social CRM system. A very important aspect of every Social CRM systems would be setting a yard stick or performance indicators for evaluating the level of its implementation. The model proposes several performance indicators (Malthouse, 2013). Number one is the evaluation of the overall Social CRM strategy which should include the valuation of Social CRM benefit for both organisation and the customers. For the benefit it brings to the organisation, this can be ascertained in terms of cash flow or profit and customer life-time. While for the customers the value can be in the form of the rewards or associated benefits associated with the brand. Also, the model suggested the importance of evaluating employee performance as it concerns how they respond to consumers complaints and/or opinions on the various customer touchpoints including social media. Another identified

performance indicator is the measurement of the success of the data information infrastructure – which is the capacity to align social media data with the traditional CRM system. Measuring the amount of user generated content that relates to the organisation – as measured by the numbers of likes or retweets or reports or the number of views of brand generated contents; is another mentioned performance indicator of the social CRM system.

3.3.3 *The Multi-Agent Model for Social CRM (MASOCIAL CRM)*

The MASOCIAL CRM model is multi-agent approach to Social CRM implementation that allows: (i) the automatic acquisition and processing of various data emanating from social media channels; (ii) optimising the tasks of each individual agents; (iii) the transfer of the collected data not only to the database of the Social CRM system but also the other information systems in the organisation; (iv) the further development of the system by adding more agents and (v) the integration of the Social CRM system with other information systems (Olszak & Bartus, 2013:376). The MASOCIAL CRM model comprise mainly of two agents: the monitoring & capturing agent and the analytical agents (Fig. 3.10).
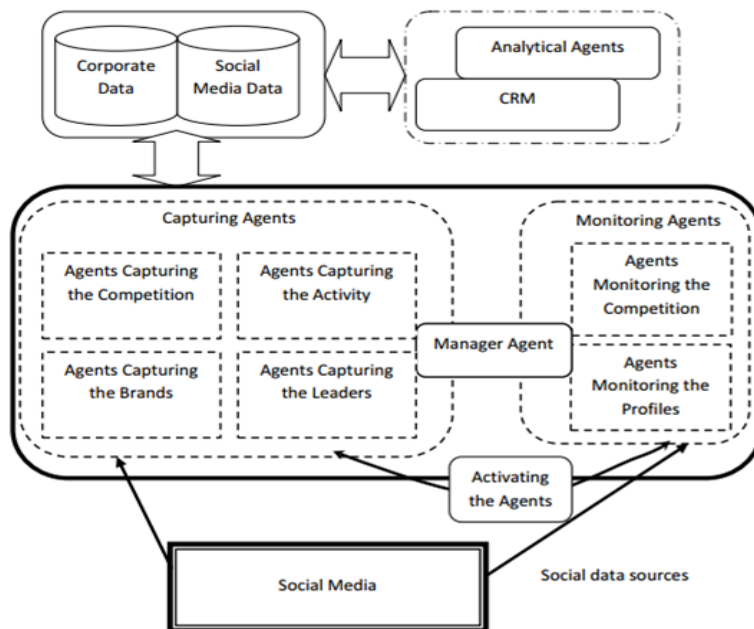
Figure 3.12: The MASOCIAL CRM Framework
(Source: Olszak & Bartus, 2013:377)

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The first group of agents (the monitoring agents) are responsible for monitoring and collecting data from consumers and competitors from the different social media channels (Olszak & Bartus, 2013). The monitoring agents are sub-divided into two groups: Agent monitoring the Competition (AMC) and Agent Monitoring the Activity (AMA) of other users, including consumers and suppliers. The objective of the AMC agents is to track the social media contents of competing organisations or brands. The AMC agent is proposed to run continuously or programmed along a time-line. Once the AMC agent detects content from the social media of the competitors, it activates the capturing agent, which then starts to acquire the new contents from the social media user profile. On the other hand, the AMA agent is used in monitoring specific activities of the consumers in social media and when new content is generated the capturing agent is once more activated (Olszak & Bartus, 2013).

The capturing agents are divided into four-sub components: (i) Agent Capturing Information about the Competition (ACC) – whose function is to acquire, store and process information about the competition from social media; (ii) the Agent Capturing Information about User Profiles (ACUP) – which captures, stores and process information relating to social media profiles of consumers, suppliers and contractors; (iii) Agent capturing information about Brands, Products and Services (ACBPS) – which acquires, stores and processes information on opinions about the organisation, its brand, products, service, customer service, etc.; and (iv) the Agent Capturing Information about Social Leaders (ACSL) – which is used in identifying profiles of Social leaders (that is most active fans or consumers) then acquires, stores and process information about them (for example, the number of activities in relation to the average number of other users' activity).

Then there is the group of agents referred to as the analytical agents and they include: (i) product agent – which is responsible for forecasting the position of the product or brand in the market; (ii) the segmentation agent, that separates the consumers according to the value they bring to the organisation; (iii) the purchase agent – that conducts analysis of the purchased products and performs appropriate market based analysis; (iii) the promotional agent – tasked with sending out offers, marketing campaigns to the relevant consumers and suppliers; (iv) Social media agent – which carries out analysis of consumer opinions on social media, and other marketing activities;

(v) user agent – responsible for highlighting the features of each segment of users, and forecasting consumer behaviour; and (vi) analysis and reports agent – prepares summary statements and reports on sales, user activities, loyalty, changing behaviour and preferences (Olszak & Bartus, 2013). The last agent referred to as the *Manager Agent*, is responsible for reliability of the whole system and manages the functions of each individual agent, particularly the monitoring and capturing agents.

3.9 Renowned Social CRM Vendors: Telecom Industry Specific

In response to the social media taking centre stage in the consumer market, organisations are now seeking and implementing Social CRM systems that delivers differentiated customer experience and value, which translates to long-term customer loyalty (Go & You, 2016:176). Expanding on the Social CRM theoretical models described above, several vendors have now developed actual models that have integrated social media into the traditional CRM systems, providing a strong breadth of functionality and commitment to business organisations. Depending on the capacity, some of the popular vendors include: Oracle Siebel, Salesforce cloud, Amdocs, Microsoft Dynamics CRM, SAP, Xtract Social Links and AsiaInfo. Most of these technologies are designed to allow organisation-customer social interactions and collaboration as well as facilitate customer knowledge sharing at the organisation-wide level (Dietrich et al. 2008; Ras & Rech, 2009). A critical factor in the successful implementation of the Social CRM technology is the competence and number of the people using it (Shimazu & Koike, 2007; Omerzel, 2010). Below is the detailed description of the features of two of the very popular Social CRM solutions currently in the market: Oracle Siebel and Salesforce Cloud.

3.9.1 Oracle Siebel Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

With the acquisition of Siebel's leading CRM solutions in 2006; Oracle designed a complete, complementary and world-class CRM solution (Oracle Siebel CRM) – a business analysis solution that delivers end-to-end customer lifecycle solutions (Jahnavi et al. 2014; Oracle Support, 2017).

The CRM solution delivers transactional, analytical and engagement features to manage all customer-facing operations – with solutions tailored to more than 20 industries including the telecom industry (Jahnavi et al. 2014; Nasir, 2015; Franklin & More, 2017). The Oracle-Siebel CRM delivers customer experience across the following modules: sales, marketing, commerce, service, social, and Siebel CRM Technology.

(i) *Siebel Sales Applications* is used to maximise industry-specific sales force automation in real-time by accelerating the quote-to-cash process, aligning sales channels, increasing pipeline and win rates and raising average transaction values. Products under the Sales Application include:

- *Siebel Sales*: designed to improve pipeline visibility, sales effectiveness, and bottom-line results, enables the organisation to share information across the teams
- *Siebel Mobile Sales*: is used to support sales professional who frequently work outside of their connected office environments and is used to free up the sales team to focus on revenue generation and improve sales productivity by responding immediately to customer inquires
- *Oracle Sales Analytics*: is used in helping organisations to compete more effectively in the marketplace by providing real-time, actionable insight into every sales opportunity at the point of customer contact
- *Siebel Partner Relationship Management*: is a comprehensive channel management solution that allows brand owners to achieve their channel business objectives by helping share information between partners and brand owners. In addition to the sales service, commerce, and marketing business processes, it also supports partner operations to facilitate collaborative relationship between partners and brand managers.

(ii) *Siebel Enterprise Marketing Application*: is a comprehensive closed-loop solution that empowers business-to-business and business-to-customer organisations across industries to achieve excellence in marketing. The products under this solution are described below.

- *Siebel e-Mail Marketing* is integrated across all customer touch points and enables the organisation to take advantage of the superior economics of e-mail, while

building customer trust, respecting their preferences and creating profitable relationships.

- *Oracle Marketing Analytics*: It tracks and measures campaign effectiveness in real time, measure return on marketing programs to optimise marketing mix and spend; understanding customer needs, buying patterns and uncover new revenue opportunities; and develop closer, more valuable customer and prospect relationships and improve marketing effectiveness.

- *Siebel Web Marketing*: enables organisations to leverage the customer informational gathered from the web interactions to deliver personalised web offers, synchronise web offers with other marketing efforts, revamp web offers based on real-time information, improve marketing results with targeted web offers and turn more prospects into buyers.

- *Siebel Events Management* is solution for planning and executing a wide range of events including seminars, product demonstrations, trade shows, conferences, etc. It enables the organisation to efficiently manage everything from planning to post-event result analysis, with fast follow-up on all event-generated leads. It also helps in quickly routing sales leads to the right channels and reduce event support cost with online registration and payment.

- *Siebel Loyalty Management*: enables organisations to create loyalty campaigns without the help of a IT expert. It delivers a full range of analytics, marketing, and service capabilities that help the organisation in understanding each customer's lifetime value and design service levels and promotions that maximise the potential of all the customer relationships.

- *Siebel Campaign/Dialogue Management*: streamlines the planning, execution and budgeting of personalised, permission-based campaigns across channels. It provides targeted e-mail campaigns (that leverage the internet to acquire new customers and build customer loyalty); profitable interaction centres (which combines Siebel contact centre to improve outbound telemarketing and inbound call handling); field conversion rates (that ensures the effectiveness of field sales campaigns); and joint marketing (which leverage business partners to maximise sales and marketing opportunities).

- *Siebel Marketing Resource Management:* is a complete solution for planning, budgeting, executing and measuring the impact of global marketing efforts. It automates and streamline key marketing processes, manage activities more effectively with a common platform across brands and regions, gain visibility into marketing performance and spending across the enterprise, improve quality with best-practice processes, optimise marketing investments with insight into past performance, and aligning global spending with corporate objectives and priorities.

*(iii)***Oracle's Siebel Customer Order Management Solution**: is a solution that simplifies the complex and mostly frustrating process of tracking thousands of products across multiple catalogues and systems. This solution also helps in delivering deeper customer insights that allows organisations to dynamically present targeted product bundles, offer intelligent cross-selling and up-selling opportunities and achieve optimal prices for products and customer segments. The products and their basic functions under this solution include:

- *Siebel Dynamic Catalogue*: provides (i) catalogue ranking so that the users can drill down to see multi-tiered categories and subcategories; (ii) powerful searching capability that allows users to find products by price and attribute values driven by customers' requirements; (iii) templated orders, allowing for quick access to frequently ordered products; (iv) intelligent orders – selected from a customer's existing assets to initiate an update, delete, suspend or resume order; and (v) integrates with the external applications stores and analyses customer response

- *Siebel Dynamic Pricer*: is an end-to-end solution that enables the analysis, planning, publishing, executing and negotiating of price. It also has the following features: (i) provides currency rationalisation that allows users to create quotes, orders and agreements in different currencies; (ii) provides multiple prices that helps improve visibility into recurring and nonrecurring prices of products; and (iii) provides consistency in products by eliminating rogue pricing and properly applying all pricing policies

- *Oracle Price Analytics*: it enables users to make insight-driven pricing decisions, to measure pricing effectiveness and to take improvement actions informed by consistent data and the right business context

- *Siebel Product and Catalogue Management*: enables organisations to develop, manage and deliver dynamic product catalogues across all channels, simplify the process of product categorisation, and equip marketers with a tool for configuring pricing rules, staging content, managing approvals and publishing catalogues

- *Siebel Quote and Order Lifecycle Management*: enables users to create, validate and manage quotes and orders across the entire order lifecycle. it supports complex pricing and product configuration, quote approval, availability checking, credit and payment verification, ensuring that products are complete, valid and accurate before being dispatched to the customer

(iv) **Siebel Social Media**: is an open integrated framework for Social media giving the customers the ability to use Oracle Social Relationship Management (SRM) cloud services with their Siebel CRM Implementation. The product under this solution include:

- *Social Customer Service:* used for, (i) easy routing and response to customer service issues from Social networks with existing customer support platform, (ii) escalate service-related Social messages from Social Engagement & Monitoring (SEM) into Siebel Call Centre, (iii) automatically route to appropriate agent for fast response, (iv) monitor Social media channels for follow-up and engagement, (v) intelligent verification of existing contact Social profiles during engagement

- *Social Marketing*: for (i) creating Social marketing campaigns and link to Siebel Marketing, (iii) push leads generated from Social into Siebel, and (iii) create Social marketing campaigns and Facebook pages Social lead generation

- *Contact Social Profiles*: used for (i) automating creation of Social media profiles for contacts from Lead capture and service, (ii) for individual contacts, viewing and storing many Social media profiles, (iii) for each Social media profile, viewing and storing detailed profile and attribute data into Siebel, (iii) providing a complete enhanced 360-degree view of a contact in Siebel CRM and (iv) integration with Oracle Master Data Management.

(v) **Siebel CRM Technology** provides the server framework to support Siebel Application. It delivers solutions for development, diagnostic, integration, productivity and mobile services. some of the product under this model include:

- *Siebel Application Deployment Manager (ADM):* tool to deploy customisation between environments.

- *Siebel Application Response Measurement (SARM)*: a framework for identifying performance in the Siebel enterprise application. Its functionality includes: (i) capturing the timing as well as resource utilisation data (CPU and memory), (ii) provides non-intrusive monitoring mechanism suitable for tracking production system performance metrics, and (iii) post-processing analysis tools to analyse collected performance data, providing detail break down on time and resource consumption

- *Siebel CRM Desktop*: provides instant access to CRM data within the context of the desktop productivity applications such as Microsoft Outlook, IBM Lotus Notes and Siebel CRM. It also allows: (i) for complete customisation and makes provision for offline capability; (ii) shares native data between the mail application and the CRM application; and exposes non-native CRM data (e.g. accounts, opportunities) within the desktop

- *Siebel Handheld*: extends to the desktop functionality to windows mobile devices.

- *Siebel Mobile Solutions*: connects mobile service professionals with accurate, up-to-date information. Deployed over wireless phones, pagers, laptops and handheld computers, providing technicians with complete access to customer information, sit and asset histories, expense reports, parts information, corporate knowledgebases, etc.

- *Siebel Remote and Mobile Web Client*: delivers CRM application functionality and data to laptop, tablet, PC and ultra-mobile PC users.

- *Siebel Server Sync* is a solution that allows seamless synchronisation of data between Siebel Database and MS Exchange Servers. Contacts, calendar and tasks information from Exchange Server can be synchronised to Siebel.

- *Siebel Wireless and Handheld* extends instant access to live Siebel CRM data with widest reach to mobile clients through mobile browsers. This allows users of mobile devices to CRM application functionality and data wherever there is a cell network coverage.

3.9.2 Salesforce Cloud

The Salesforce cloud is one of the world's foremost CRM application and enterprise cloud ecosystem (Trainor, 2012; Salesforce.com, 2017). Developed in 1999, the Salesforce was designed to reinvent CRM solution and assist businesses become more customer-centric by streamlining organisational processes effectively and efficiently across sales, customer service, marketing, business analysis, etc. These applications help organisations manage customer accounts, track sales lead, conducting and monitoring marketing campaigns and provide service post sale; in so doing providing the company with better understanding of the consumers which inevitably leads to improved business growth and success (Sultan, 2013; Franklin & More, 2017). Salesforce runs completely in the cloud, meaning there is no need for a hardware or software; eliminating the cost associated with setup and maintenance (Franklin & More, 2017). All that is required is any device and internet service and the training of the employees to use the application. The offered products are briefly described below.

- *Sales Cloud:* enables a smarter way of selling by: (i) closing more deals – by helping to track all consumer information and interactions in one place, making it available everywhere and in quickly locating experts to help push the deals; (ii) accelerate productivity by automating the entire complex business process; (iii) help in nurturing leads until they becomes sales-ready and then automatically routing them to the appropriate rep and at the right time; and (iv) assisting in making insightful decision by aggregating information in one place.

- *Service Cloud:* provides automated customer service by: (i) providing tools that enables swift customer support service; (ii) providing customers with access to information needed for self-solving of problems; (iii) provides deeper insight to consumers' behaviour in order to provide personalised service and predict future needs; and (iv) delivering of support across various platforms such as phone, app, email, Social media, etc.

- *Marketing Cloud:* helps in creating unique marketing experience for each customer by: (i) using CRM and other form of information to create personalised engagement with each customer; (ii) engage in mobile messaging to reach the customer anytime, anywhere; (iii) guide exceptional Social experiences by connecting marketing, sales,

and customer service with Social media marketing tools – enabling the company to listen, engage, publish and analyse data from vast sources and automate Social workflow; (iv) enhance new customer acquisition, re-engage inactive customers and align advertisement with every channel and manage ad campaigns; (v) predicting visitor behaviour, delivering of personalised web content, trigger emails in real time, increase conversions, click-through rates and order values; and (vi) create 1-to-1 customer journey across emails, mobile, Social, ads and the web by connecting experiences across marketing, sales, service and every customer touchpoint

- *Community Cloud:* helps in building community that connects and collaborates with the customers, partners and employees. Other functions of the community solution include: (i) providing stellar customer service – an online community that allows customers to interact with one another and offering help to one another; (ii) accelerate sale channels by connecting resellers, distributions, and partners to increase sales; and (iii) drive employee productivity by harnessing the power of online collaborations software to create Social, mobile and branded employee communities

- *Wave Analytics Cloud:* helps in transforming the wat data is explored to find answers and take appropriate actions. The wave analytics provides just more than business intelligence, it's a purpose-built suite of apps for every line of business with its functionalities including: (i) making it easy to take actions instantly by pooling information in one place where all key stakeholders can access; and (ii) assisting the firm to dynamically explore data to spot trends and visualise key performance indicators.

- *App Cloud:* provides a platform to build and deploy apps that integrate customers, employees and partners data for richer, more engaging customer experiences

3.10 Case Examples of Companies Implementing Social CRM

With the increasingly competitive global market and the growing desire to gain the largest market share, organisations are pressurised into seeing customer-centric approach to business that would improve customer satisfaction and loyalty. For the modern business organisation as discussed so far in this chapter, gaining customer insights remains a formidable strategy for gaining competitive

advantage – as it will aid in retaining old customers as well as recruit new ones. In this section, examples of organisations that have implemented Social CRM strategy is reviewed with focus on the telecommunication industry. However, few examples of organisations outside the industry will also be provided.

3.10.1 BT Group - EE

For BT Group, customer relationship management forms a significant aspect of their business strategy as reiterated by their Manager Sir Michael Rake (BT Group, 2016). By adopting Social CRM vendor such as Salesforce, customer experience across the company is improved, from marketing to contact centre, and front-line engineer to senior executive, has a role to play in establishing dynamic customer relationships. We believe that improving our customers' experience will create more growth. Having experienced a lot of customer compliant and dissatisfaction in the past years, BT adoption of Social CRM initiatives saw a steady improvement in customer's perception; as measured by the Right First Time Performance improving from -3.0% in 2015 to 6.4% in 2016. The Social CRM strategy involved harnessing of digital experience offered by online, apps and Social media.

According to the annual report for 2016 (BT Group, 2016), the company showed clear understanding of the importance of the day-to-day interactions with the customers and the desire of the customers of a consistent, reliable service, a network that offers a great experience and products that will further improve their lives. By blending its Social support strategy with its emerging live chat channel, BT Group (EE) has enhanced, consistent service spans across all touchpoints to ensure quick resolutions and customer satisfaction. Loyalty and trust are often the result of an open, honest relationship that allows for growth. Yet, while that might sound like the recipe for success in the personal realm, these elements weigh heavily on the longevity of brand relationships, as well.

From the interactions with the customers online and the adoption of Social CRM, the company was able to identify three important areas – services, network and product; that were of interest to the customers. For example, it was reported that the online platform that enables easy interactions with the customers (My EE App), has over 9million subscribers by the end of last year (BT Group,

2017). Thus, the company can be said to be fulfilling its major goal, which is leveraging on the power of communication to make the world a better place; and this is achievable through broadening and deepening of the relationships with the customer.

3.10.2   Vodafone

Vodafone Group is a cosmopolitan telecommunications corporation holding and one of the world's largest mobile phone; with the headquarter situated in London, UK. Like other telecommunication firms, Vodafone CRM management strategy involves focusing its organisational structure, business processes and knowledge around the customers. Vodafone implements its customer relationship management strategy across four core areas (Cisco Systems, 2005). First the identification of the customers – the company recognising the need to connect with customer across the various selling channels, traffics and touchpoints for interactions. Secondly, customer differentiations – recognising the long-term value of each group of customers; i.e. short-term, mid-term and long-term value. The third strategy is engaging the different customer segment to identify specific needs and wants.

The last strategy is in customisation and personalisation of the products and services to specific customer group. Though Vodafone has integrated traditional CRM into process, with the growth of Social media in recent years, the company have adopted Social CRM as a business strategy for improving the services to the customers, retain valued clients and contribute to the analysis of the capability of the company's traditional CRM applications; and taking full advantage of recent technological inventions such as Social media to raise their capacity and analysis of information on the wants and needs of the Social customers (Vodafone Group Plc, 2010). By utilizing Social CRM tools, the company has been able to further enhance the interactions with the customers and optimize its future capacity to both retain and acquire new customers.

Overall, Social CRM has enabled Vodafone to synchronize and coordinate all interactions with customers through its multiple channels such as telephone, fax, electronic mail and Social media channels. In addition, Social CRM has fostered improved organisational productiveness while maximizing the capability of the mechanization of workflow processes across the organisation

(Verhoef & Lemon, 2013). Put differently, Social CRM has allowed the company to become more efficient in handling customer related data across the organisation.

3.10.3 IDT Telecom

Established in 1990, IDT Telecom is a pioneer in Prepaid and VoIP telephony (see http://www.idt.net/). Today, IDT Telecom is an industry leader in prepaid communication and payment services through its Retail division as well as one of the world's largest providers of international voice termination through its Wholesale division. For IDT Telecom, Big Data plays a crucial role regarding its operations and engineering, as the company constantly looks at detailed records and information across multiple areas of the organization to consolidate said data and better analyse and draw insights from what's available. IDT Telecom also recognises Big Data as critical for safety purposes, as security teams seek to prevent theft of services and private information. Malicious intrusions and theft of data are growing security concerns within the telecom industry. Thus, by closely monitoring call quality and consumer activity, IDT Telecom can detect threats and improve experience simultaneously.

Like any other telecom company, customer satisfaction remains top priority at IDT, and the use of Big Data and analytics has helped bringing the services closer to the consumer. This has translated into increased call quality, lower operating costs—savings that are then passed on to the customer—and better overall user experience on both traditional and mobile applications and services. Regarding security, IDT Telecom has created monitors and thresholds that alert internal teams and, under certain conditions, automate changes on the network infrastructure when unusual activities are detected. Said alarms also inform the company of unauthorized activity that may be taking place on customer networks, so employees can enact proactive, protective measures in near real time. Analysing information collected also enables IDT Telecom to understand how it can better serve customers within specific world regions, as different areas require different services.

3.10.4 TDS Telecommunications LLC

TDS Telecommunications LLC (TDS Telecom/TDS) is the seventh largest local exchange telephone company in the U.S. with 1.2 million connections to high-speed internet, phone, and TV entertainment services in nearly 900 rural, suburban, and metropolitan communities. TDS, a growing force in the cable industry, operates BendBroadband, which is part of TDS Broadband Service LLC. For residential customers, TDS deploys up to 1Gig internet access, IPTV service (TDS TV), cable TV options, and traditional wireline services. For businesses, TDS offers advanced communications solutions, including VoIP (managed IP Hosted voice), high-speed internet, fibre optics, data networking, and hosted-managed services (see company profile on website).

While Big Data exposes telecoms to numerous new opportunities and challenges, for TDS Telecom, essential data comes from the information collected via surveys and Social media, as the brand aims to understand consumer behaviours and provide subscribers with the most reliable, targeted services possible. The company's strategic goal is based on the understanding that telecom firms are fighting to differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive environment and sustaining customer loyalty and retention, monitoring of the competition and gaining insight on technology trends (TDS, 2014). For instance, creating customer segments based on internal customer data allows the firm to understand its most loyal customers and create internal processes, enabling product managers, marketers, and frontline agents to serve customers based on internally tested best practices.

Because customer service has become crucial in the digital age, particularly in the case of loyalty and retention, TDS Telecom focuses upon transactional, perceptual, and marketing surveys to gather both customer and employee feedback, so it may quickly and easily determine customer satisfaction as it pertains to its products and employee morale regarding training and educational programs. Ultimately, telecom companies are increasing realising they must be where the data lies. Thus, TDS Telecom has also integrated Social media data to better learn where and how customers want to do business. Millennials, for instance, often take to Facebook and Twitter to ask questions and post complaints. By actively listening across mediums, TDS Telecom determines which services deserve increased attention, which issues require immediate resolution, and which factors instigate churn (TDS, 2014).

3.10.5 American Broadcasting Company (ABC)

ABC is another example of an organisation that have leveraged on the power of Social media in delivering differentiated viewing experience. While many TV networks may see Twitter and Facebook as mere distractions, executives at ABC embraced such tools to generate buzz and cultivate engagement (Albarrran & Moellinger, 2013; Shepherd, 2014). ABC Family, the company's sister network, saw early success with its original hit show, Pretty Little Liars, which continues to dominate the Social sphere by garnering consistent engagement from the age 12-34 years bracket (Brozek, 2013; Shepherd, 2014). With nearly 14 million Facebook fans and more than 2 million Twitter followers, the network encourages conversations by displaying pre-designated hashtags in the upper left corner of the television screen. These strategies encourage audience members to discuss their theories and share their reactions in real time, thereby promoting live TV in an era where DVR and on-demand services have altered traditional viewing habits (Albarrran & Moellinger, 2013).

Dancing with the Stars (DWTS) has also taken the Social sphere by storm, as the network's hit reality show now enables viewers to engage with the live broadcast (Popescu & Pennacchiott, 2011). Though DWTS typically displays viewer tweets at the bottom of the TV screen during the results portion of each dance, for season 19, the show introduced two new ways for audience members to interact via Social that go well beyond voting for their favourite couple. On "You Raise the Paddle" night, viewers can tweet their scores for each competing couple. These scores are then totalled and calculated in real time and combined with the judges' scores, allowing viewers to help or hinder these stars' chances of success. For the show's traditional "Switch Up" episode, viewers were also asked to tweet their ideal partner choices, with the winning combinations dictating which pros and which stars would dance together the following week. Such strategies allow viewers to use this second screen to both share their thoughts and directly influence the fate of each contestant.

3.11 Benefits of Social CRM Applications

Social CRM holds a lot of benefits to business organisations irrespective of the size (whether, small, medium or large corporations). One such benefits and which has been touched in the preceding sections is that Social CRM enables organisations to quickly acquire information from the Social consumers who are interested in the products or services being offered by the organisation. With the endless opportunities provided by Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Google Plus, LinkedIn, Twitter and so many others, marketers are no longer faced with the time-consuming and cumbersome nature of manually interacting with each consumer; but instead can easily monitor their interactions on these virtual communities. Basically, the primary objective of Social CRM systems is to facilitate the customer-centric approach to business by treating each customer differently to maximise the value for both the organisation and consumers (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014; Giannakis-Bompolis & Boutsouki, 2014).

For modern business organisations, social CRM goes beyond being a nice-to-have solution but a necessity for success. By leveraging on the rich insights of social media, organisations implementing social CRM are positioned for competitive advantage in terms of increasing productivity or profitability, product/service orientation and the capacity to develop long-lasting relationships with the different customers (Michaelidou et al. 2011; Sigala, 2011; Verhoef et al. 2010; Malthouse et al. 2013; Harrigan et al. 2015). Verhoef et al. (2010) reported the benefit of social CRM to include improving customer retention, customer lifetime value, customer equity and the overall performance of products or services. Sigala (2011) in a study of a tourist organisations in Greece identified the benefits of Social CRM to include, customer profitability, increase of sales data, enhancement of customer loyalty, improvement of service quality and the overall improvement in brand reputation.

Nonetheless, the successful implementation of Social CRM systems has been judged to provide value for the customers as well (Woodcock et al. 2011; Baird & Parasnis, 2011; O'Cass & Ngo, 2011 Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014; Trainor et al., 2014). Trainor *et al.* (2014) identified the benefits of Social CRM to include fostering a collaborative conversation between the organisation and the customers, which is expected to solidify the relational outcomes as well the customer

outcomes such as customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and customer retention. Rapp *et al*. (2010) also reported the that the strength of the firm-customers relationships can shape the customers' behavioural outcomes such as: customer satisfaction, loyalty and customer acquisition. Malthouse *et al*. (2013:278) also highlighted other performance outcomes of Social CRM to include enhanced employees' performance, customer acquisition and retention. The following sub-sections discusses the benefits of social CRM to the implementing organisations and customers.

3.11.1   Enables long lasting firm-customer relationship

The primary focus of any Social CRM solution is to enable the firm to engage in interactions with the different consumers, and in developing long-lasting relationships. Such data gathered from Social CRM would help the firms in gathering insights into the duration of usage activities, how often the sets of behaviours occur, and the nature or health of the organisation-customer relationship as well as current market demands (Malthouse et al. 2013; Kupper *et al*. 2014). This data should also help to expose areas for improvement, monitor success, and establish priorities to ensure the most valuable consumers are receiving optimal service. External data, specially, can reveal what kind of services customers would like to have so the company may better target or alter their marketing practices to customise and personalize upsell offers according to customer behaviour.

Social CRM would help provide real-time, personalized, and appropriate offers to improve customer engagement. Further, telecom operators require a holistic, contextual understanding of their individual subscribers' usage patterns, behaviours, and circumstances, such as location and influencer circles, to fully maximize their business opportunities. Extracting real-time insights from the data streams through analysis using Social CRM enabled technologies and process; will allow the firms to quickly react to consumer behaviour and market variation, become more informed of the consumer behaviour and current market situation, and react in more targeted ways to changes, opportunities, and threats to their business, enhancing customer relationships and driving continued loyalty. Because the amount of data being stored and analysed continues to expand, companies now required to deepen customer relationships, and this can be made possible by adopting Social CRM.

3.11.2 A medium for gaining customer insights

One of the major benefits that social CRM offers to business organisations is the ability to have large amount of data and draw conclusions about all sorts of company-customer processes and interactions (Syed et al. 2013; Marshall et al. 2015). The capacity to harness this big data technology helps in overcoming the challenges of extracting and understanding the relevant customer insights and knowledge as shared across the various customer touchpoints including the different social media channels. For Social CRM, the big data capacity provides the organisation with the capacity of transforming important aspects of the customer relationship management, in so doing giving the organisation a competitive advantage (Lipianinen, 2015; Orenga-Rogla & Chalmeta, 2016). Such Social CRM solutions allows customer knowledge to be extracted from the information gathered from the customers and converting such information or knowledge into scalable and effective real business value. Further, with such customer information and the ability of the Social CRM solution in harnessing big data, the implementing organisation can uncover hidden customer insights, converting such knowledge into opportunities that would maximise the business value for each customer, act proactively in the market by identifying new opportunities for product or service innovation and ensuring improved customer satisfaction (Grossberg, 2014).

3.11.3 A means for monitoring service usage and patronage

Social CRM also provides the organisations with a means of evaluating customer information in terms of the who, what, where, and how which can be used in measuring consumer behaviours (Rai, 2013; Trainor *et al*. 2014). From phone calls, to email or social media conversations, Social CRM enabled firms can listen to the customer feedback which will enable them to assess the what the customers are desiring and the nature of the competitive landscape (Wongsansukcharoen *et al*. 2013; Orenga-Rogla & Chalmeta, 2016). Though companies have long recognised the importance of customers' information; however, the issue has always been how to fully harness such information contained within. Interaction data is by far, the largest non-monetized data asset in for the telecommunications industry (Deloitte, 2015); with leaders of the industry turning every interaction into data and are using the data in identifying patterns that fosters deeper relationships

(Konopnicki & Shmuell-Scheuer, 2014; Inmoment, 2017). With such data, the firm would be able to monitor the customer's service usage and patronage as well as understanding exactly why they buy or leave, what they like or don't, and if the service is valuable.

3.11.4 An Enabler of Customer-Centric Approach to Business

Customer-focused business strategy has become a thing of interest for virtually in modern businesses and this sterns from the very competitive nature of modern market (Woodcock *et al*. 2011). Customer-centric strategy entails that every customer data is dispersed and utilised organisation wide in developing the product and service (Siahtiri *et al*. 2013; Cundari, 2015). Regrettably, in traditional organisational structure, organisational departments function in silos and this has significant impact on customer-focused business approach. For example, when a customer buys a product or service from a company for an extended period, it is imperative that the firm makes the necessary investments to establish a long relationship with the customer. This should not be restricted to existing customers but be extended to prospective customers. The case study companies discussed above have shown that they have taken the necessary steps to consolidate their traditional CRM systems to have a more holistic view of the social customers and in providing a more customer-centric service.

The improved customer visibility is allowing telecom providers to reiterate what other industries such as the finance and banking industry have been doing for some time – by offering services and products that customised and personalised to the individual needs of the customers. This shows that the telecommunication firms are steering away from the one-size-fits-all approach and instead are offering products and services that are addressing the needs of different consumer segments. While all customers are important, there are the certain segments that provide more value than others. Social CRM is helping the telecom firms (as demonstrated in the case studies) to determine the attributes of their high-value customers and those most likely to churn, for example those clients who are approaching the end of their contract. Not only can organizations make sure these segments are routed to higher tier agents who can provide a better experience, but they should put structures into place to proactively reach out to these customers with relevant offers and information. Acquiring new customers is neither easy nor cheap and as such organisations need to

make sure the valued customers are satisfied enough to want to continue doing business with the brand.

3.11.5   Facilitates Omnichannel Experience

With customers communicating with brands over multiple channels, organisations are now expected to engage with the customers across the different touchpoints and provide continuous experience (Verhoef *et al.* 2015; Row, 2018). The important development in recent years is the integration of traditional interactive advertising with social media channels. For instance, the embedding of live chat environment in the company's website. Another example is the mobile apps designed by Vodafone for interacting with viewers during live television shows. With omni-channel, the traditional division between two-way interactive communication channels and one-way communication becomes less obvious (Verhoef *et al.* 2015). It is therefore important to explicitly broaden this scope of channels by including customer touchpoints – which can be short, one-way or two-way interactions between customers and firms, and the exchange can be rather superficial or more intensive. Importantly, touchpoints can also involve customer-to-customer interactions through, for example, social media as well as peer-to-peer communication, which can influence brand consideration (Baxendale et al.; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010).

3.11.6   It enables Brand Reputation (Resonance)

Branding has become a more important marketing tool in today's global business world, as it plays a critical role in establishing the organisation's visibility and in the strategic positioning in international markets (Keller, 2009; 2013; Kang, 2016). For most businesses nowadays, the brand name or what it represents is the most important asset developing solid customer franchise and in gaining competitive advantage as well as ensuring future sales (Kang, 2016). In the marketing literature, several terminologies such as brand name, reputation, personality or resonance have been used in describing the measure of organisation's attractiveness or distinctiveness (Lee et al. 2015; Watson et al. 2015). For instance, brand reputation from the organisation's perspective has been defined as the measure of how the customer's attachment has affected the brand and how

likely the customer will be making a switch to other competitors when there is a change in the product feature or the price (So et al. 2017).

Herbig & Milewicz (1996:24) define brand reputation as the "estimation of the consistency of the attribute of an entity over time". This estimation is based on the entity's willingness and ability to perform an activity repeatedly in a similar fashion. The attribute of the entity describes some specific part of the entity: whether it is the price, quality and marketing skills. Keller (2009:144) rather used the term brand resonance and defines it as the "nature of the relationship customers has with the brand the extent to which they feel they are in sync with the brand". Brand resonance as argued by the author is more appropriate as it reflects the intensity or depth of the psychological bond that the consumers have with the brand, as well as the level of activity engendered by this loyalty.

A common trend in this business era is the use of Social media by consumers to continuously seek information about brand; a situation which determines the success of brands given that consumers around the world congregate in a small virtual community to talk about the brand, removing the power from the organisations in terms of brand communication (Bruhn *et al*. 2012:771). The era of Social media therefore provides both opportunities and challenges for business organisation as consumer decisions are increasing affected by Social media interactions (Hutter *et al*. 2013; Keller, 2013). Hutter *et al*. (2013:343) stress that the direct involvement of consumers in creation of brand value through Social media has given consumers ever more power to influence brands and posits challenges to organisations and marketers to manage their brand. Therefore, sending out a strong marketing communication about the brands through Social media has the propensity to drive the right information to the consumers thereby shaping their knowledge of the brand.

3.11.7   It Improves Customer Loyalty

Building and sustaining brand loyalty has long been one of the main themes of marketing research; with scholars and marketers developing several methods and models such as the classical marketing mix, brand elements, events, sponsorship, one-on-one marketing schemes and more recently, internet marketing and Social media marketing for growing brand loyalty (Keller, 2009;

Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012). The basic principle in this marketing scheme is for organisations to project a positive perception of their brands in the mind of the vast number of the Social consumers to an extent that the brands becomes desirable and irreplaceable to the consumers, which results in greater customer loyalty (Keller, 2009:140). According to Erdogmus & Cicek (2012:1356), Social media marketing provides organisations with better means of communicating with the consumers in building customer loyalty compared to the traditional marketing methods.

In the marketing literature, there seems to be a lot of definitions for brand loyalty, however many of the definitions have centred on the repeat purchasing (Oliver, 1999:34) For instance, brand loyalty can be defined as the customer's level of attachment to the brand (Aaker, 1991:39). In addition, brand loyalty can be defined as "the degree to which a customer exhibits repeat purchasing behaviour from a service provider and considers using only this provider when a need for this service arises" (Gremler & Brown, 1999:273). Similarly, Assael (1993:483) define brand loyalty in terms of the customer's repeated purchasing behaviour resulting from the satisfaction with the brand which has accumulated over time. Keller (2009:144-145) define brand loyalty as the final dimension of the consumer brand resonance; that is symbolising the level of the identification the customer has with the brand and ultimately the extent of the relationship. Nonetheless, Oliver (1999) provides a more comprehensive definition, defining brand loyalty as

> "*a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronises a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour*" (p.34)

In addition to having many definitions, brand loyalty has also been conceptualised in different ways by different researchers. There are those authors that see brand loyalty as a two-dimensional construct (Hidaka et al. 2018; Gil-Saura & Ruiz-Molina, 2019). For instance, conceptualised brand loyalty as: *true brand loyalty* and *spurious brand loyalty*. *True brand loyalty* refers to the customer's commitment to the value and price appeal of the brand, a measure of the customer's confidence that he or she has properly judged the brand based on the perceived need to economise. *Spurious brand* loyalty refers to the continuously patronage of same brand because it is the only one choice available. Other authors have conceptualised brand loyalty as a four-dimensional concept (Sawmong, 2018). Dick & Basu (1994) added two other dimensions to the Day's model

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and categorise brand loyalty into four categories: no loyalty, latent loyalty, spurious loyalty and true loyalty; with the argument that brand loyalty is a measure of the strength of the relationship between the individual's relative attitude and repeat patronage (see Fig. 3.13)

Repeat Purchase Possibility

	High	True Loyalty	Latent Loyalty
Related Attitude			
	Low	Spurious Loyalty	No Loyalty
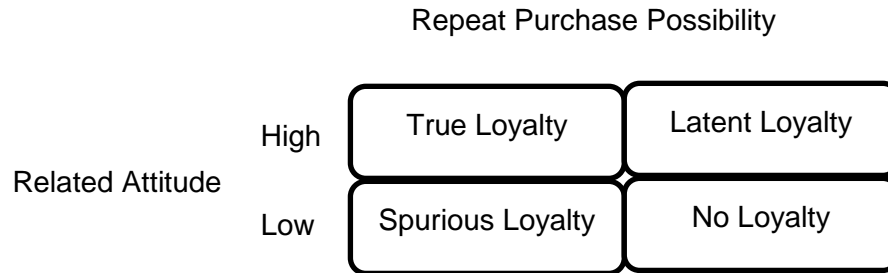
Figure 3.13: Relative Attitude-Behaviour Relationship

(Source: Dick & Basu, 1994)

Oliver (1999) on the other hand depicts the measure of brand loyalty to progress through four phases: *cognitive loyalty, affective loyalty*, *conative loyalty* and *action loyalty*. *Cognitive loyalty* is the first phase of the loyalty process and it relates to the customer's belief that the particular brand is superior to the alternatives based on prior or vicarious knowledge or on recent experience-based information. At this phase the customer loyalty is judged to be at a shallow state, and it does not go beyond the mere performance of the brand. Progressing in experience and increase level of satisfaction with the brand, the customer moves to the *affective loyalty* phase. At this phase the customer begins to develop a liking or positive attitude towards the brand based on cumulative occasions of satisfactory usage. Nevertheless, just like in the cognitive phase, the loyalty of the customers is still at a low state, as the customer has the tendency to switch to an alternative brand (Oliver, 1999:35).

The third phase of the loyalty development process is the *conative loyalty* stage which is characterised by repeated episodes of positive affect towards the brand. At this loyalty phase the customer has a good intention to continue the repurchasing of the brand, however, this commitment does not necessarily translate to the actual buying. Finally, in the action loyalty phase, purchasing intentions are converted into readiness to act. The action control paradigm proposes that this is accompanied by an additional desire to overcome obstacles that might prevent the act

and when this action is repeated, it develops an action inertia that facilitates repurchase (Oliver, 1999:36). In summary, the model describes the development process of brand loyalty from focusing on the performance aspect of the brand (cognitive), to the level of likeableness of the brand (affective), to the desire of rebuying the brand (conative) and finally to commitment to continue purchasing the brand (action).

Gaining customer (brand) loyalty is very important as studies have shown that loyal customers provide a vast array of benefits for organisations. Gil-Saura & Ruiz-Molina, (2019) highlighted these benefits to include: (i) they are less expensive to market to; (ii) are more willing to pay premium for a particular brand; (iii) willing to try new produces under the brand name; (iv) more likely to recommend the brand to friends and families; and (iv) more willing to overlook a problem related to the brand (Gil-Saura & Ruiz-Molina, 2019). It is therefore expected that organisations continue to deliver excellent and quality customer services in order to encourage brand loyalty and as well should be being able to respond to customers' discontent or displeasure instantaneously (Oliver, 1999; Lin, 2010; Keller, 2013). In this era of Social media, gaining consumers' loyalty has become even more critical given the connectivity between competing brands and the consumers (Kirk, 2011; Laroche *et al*. 2012; Lindsey, 2012; Nadeem, 2012).

Nadeem (2012:88) describe Social media as the game changer in today's business environment and argue that organisations that are able to enable their consumers in Social media have the edge and show better loyal customers who are willing to spend up to 40 percent compared to the non-loyal customers. Erdogmus & Cicek (2012:1358) conducted an empirical study to investigate the impact of Social media marketing on brand loyalty in Turkey and reported that finding that marketing campaigns on Social media is a significant driver of brand loyalty, followed by the relevancy of the content, popularity of the content among friends and the least being appearance on different Social media platforms and providing applications. Laroche et al. (2013) in a separate study empirically investigating the impact of Social media on brand trust and loyalty reported the findings that brand communities operating on Social media enhances customer trust and loyalty to a brand as well as improving the customer's relationship with the brand, other consumers and the company and the products.

3.12 Review of Previous Studies

3.12.1 Social CRM Implementation on Organisational Level

In recent years, several research studies have been conducted in response to the theoretical and practitioner propositions of the benefits provided by Social CRM in terms of driving business performances. These propositions have suggested that social CRM allows the organisations to interact with the customers by customising their marketing communication on an individual basis, thus allowing the implementing companies in enhancing customer satisfaction and driving commitment to a long-term relationship. For instance, Trainor et al. (2014) analysed the data from 308 organisations in the United States to examine the impact of Social CRM capability on customer relationship performance. An index for 15 social media technologies were presented to the participants to indicate which is commonly used by the organisations. Social CRM capabilities was operationalised using three organisation-wide dimensions: the ability to acquire customer information, disseminate such information across the organisation and the capacity to respond to customer expectations and needs. The result of the study reported some significant findings. First, it was reported that when Social CRM is viewed as an organisational resource, it positively influences customer relationship performance through firm-level capacities.

This finding was reported to be in sync with the theoretical underpinnings of the CRM literature, which has suggested that CRM solutions a framed by information technology, the basis of the IT alone is insufficient in gaining competitive advantage. Instead such technologies including social media only act as a platform for positioning the organisations in better meeting the customers' needs and expectations. Another important critical finding from the study (i.e. Trainor et al. 2014) is that there exists a complementary relationship between CRM systems and emerging technologies like social medial channels. It was found that firms with high social media technology use in collaboration with customer-centric management systems have better improved social CRM capabilities compared to organisations with low use of social media technologies. Surprisingly it was found that the firms with low customer-centric management systems exhibited higher social CRM capabilities compared to firms with high levels of customer-centric systems. The explanation given by the authors is that technology deployment has a more significant effect when combined with social CRM capabilities.

Valentin et al. (2016) carried out an exploratory study of the economic performance of companies that were already implementing Social CRM. The research study which comprised of multinational companies and small and medium enterprises in Romanian, adopted a questionnaire survey to explore the participants' perception of three major areas of Social CRM: (i) management position to the implementation of a CRM system; (ii) the transition of CRM to Social CRM and the usage of the new social media technologies in applying a CRM system; and (iii) the company's perception of the implementation of a Social CRM system using social platforms. Regarding the management position to CRM implementation, it was found that: (i) many of the implementing companies provides different customer touchpoints; (ii) that are used in addressing swiftly customer complaints through adequate collaboration between the employees of the organisations and the customers; (iii) regularly measures the level of their customer satisfaction, however it was not reported how the level of customer satisfaction was quantified; and (iv) CRM was implemented as an organisational-wide strategy where all employees both managerial and non-managerial were in constant interaction with the customers.

In terms of transitioning from CRM to Social CRM, it was found in the study that the desire to establish stronger relationship with the customers formed the basis for the transitioning. Nevertheless, it was found that only a small portion of SMEs in Romanian were applying the established rules on the use of social media from customer relational outcomes; with the employees using the social media for personal networking rather than the original purpose of engaging with the customers. It was thus suggested by the authors (Valentin et al. 2016) that if social media use is governed by rules and policies imposed by the companies, a better result in terms of outcome of Social CRM will be achieved. Lastly, in terms of the overall perception on the effectiveness of Social CRM, many of the participants shared the opinion that social media incorporated in CRM system has a positive impact on business outcomes. However, it was reported that this opinion was largely shared by employees at operational departments, with those in the managerial positions reported to be less enthusiastic on the positive impact of social media on CRM systems. Nonetheless, it was concluded in the study that in this era were millions of consumers are connected to the internet, it would be incomprehensible for business organisations to ignore such opportunities in engaging and developing long lasting relationships with the customers and increase brand loyalty.

Charoensukmongkol & Sasatanum (2017) also explored the relationship between the intensity of use of social media for customer relationship management and the business performance satisfaction by using a questionnaire survey to collect statistical data from 217 owners of small shops at a major market in Thailand. The result from the empirical study revealed that organisations that implement Social CRM tend to report better satisfaction with business performance compared to those that did not. In addition, the study result showed a positive correlation between social media use intensity for CRM and business performance satisfaction tend to be significantly higher for entrepreneurs who showed lower levels of social competency in business, as well as for firms that generated more sales from social media. It was concluded that Social CRM is vital for companies with low social competency to interact with customers in improving customer satisfaction. It was also concluded that Social CRM is very critical for companies whose customers are heavy social media users – such as the case of telecommunication firms.

Rodriquez *et al*. (2012) using social capital theory explored the impact of social media on sales processes and Business-to-Business (B2B) sales performance using quantitative data drawn from different industries including consulting, professional services, software and hard technology firms, business services, healthcare consumables and manufacturing – including industrial and chemical. The result of the study showed a strong positive relationship between social media usage and the ability of a selling organisation to create opportunities and manage relationships as well as a positive impact on relationship sale performance. In a later study Rodriguez and colleagues examined how customer focused technology (Social CRM) and customer orientation process impact sales performance using a sample of almost 1700 sales professionals. The findings showed that Social CRM has a positive impact on customer-oriented processes such as understanding the customers, adapting to customer changing needs, measuring customer satisfaction and aligning customers' needs with sales and marketing activities. Further, the study provided justification for implementing Social CRM reporting that it results in improved customer orientation processes in the firm.

In a very recent study, Rodriguez et al. (2018) examined the impact of social media mediated CRM technology on sales process behaviours across three continents: US, Europe and Asia. The study finding showed CRM effectiveness as a significant predicator of increase in sales processes, with

such relationship found not to be influenced by the geographical location of the firms. In addition, univariate Analysis of variances (ANOVAs) revealed a significant influence of CRM effectiveness on creating and managing relationships. Likewise, Eggers *et al*. (2017) investigated the antecedents of social network usage in SMEs and respective performance outcomes. The study sample included companies in four German speaking countries of Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. The result of the empirical analysis showed that social network usage is positively related to entrepreneurial orientation and mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and SME growth.

Jussila et al. (2014) surveying 125 business-to-business companies in the Finnish technology sector, explored the utilisation of social media by companies in the business-to-business markets. The findings from the study showed that many of the companies use social media more for internal process that for external engagement. Two reasons were given for this. First, it is quite tasking to encourage external user (i.e. the partnering business) to engage in novel technologies such as Social CRM. Secondly, the fear of leaking confidential information to external organisational parties would be detrimental to customer satisfaction. Although it was statistically established in the study of a strong and moderate relationship between current social media use and perceived potential for external use; it was suggested that a significant gap exist between the companies' perceived potential of social media and social media use in either business-to-business markets. It was thus suggested that to facilitate the adoption of social media by businesses it is important for more academic and pragmatic research to be carried out (Jussila et al. 2014:612).

Swani *et al* (2014) also shared the opinion that B2B marketers are often hesitant in embracing social media as a marketing tool compared to B2C marketers and this discourages then from adopting social media strategies such as the Social CRM. Specifically, the study investigated how marketers are deploying Twitter across contexts to predict key factors likely to influence messaging strategies adopted using a longitudinal context analysis and logistic regression support the assessment of a sample of more than 7000 tweets by Fortune 500 companies. The findings showed that marketers in B2B and B2C use different branding and selling strategies; with B2C using message appeals, cues, links and hashtags to support information searches; while B2B marketers tend to use more emotional than functional appeals in their tweets. However, both B2B and B2C were found not to be adopting hard sell message strategies.

Munnukka & Jarvi (2015) explored the different perceived risks that business organisations associate with the adoption of social media for marketing communication. From the data collected by interviewing representatives of 147 Finnish organisations, it was found that business organisations perceive three types of risks relating to social media marketing: time-loss, financial and functional risks. Time loss risk include risk arising from the time used in planning and designing communications in social media and the time used in monitoring such communications. Financial risk relates to uncertainty about the profitability of the business resulting from the investment and unexpected costs stemming from the implementation and usage of such social media marketing communication tools. And lastly functional risk is relating to the quality of marketing communications delivered through such solution and the ability of the system to perform the designated functions.

Nevertheless, Ekman & Erixon (2015) examined the impact of Information Technology (IT) based tools (although Social CRM was categorically pronounced) supporting relational outcomes in influencing marketing activities of an industrial firm – ACom. The data for the study was collected between 2003 and 2012. The study findings showed that mere IT based solutions (which are mainly transaction-focused) were not enough for supporting relationship-oriented business processes. It was thus concluded that the IT solutions (which were not necessarily Social CRM solutions) were not enough and there is need for solution-based systems like Social CRM that should match marketing practice of relationship-oriented firms. Considering these findings from these reviewed studies, the following propositions are made:

Proposition 1: the telecom firms in Nigeria should be adopting a form of Social CRM system in establishing relationship with the huge social customers

Proposition 2: Social CRM is an established strategy that is being employed by the Nigerian telecom firms in driving positive business outcomes

Proposition 3: It is expected that Social CRM enabled relational strategy will provide a competitive edge for the telecom firms

3.12.2 Impact of Social CRM on Business Outcomes

In additional to exploring business approaches to Social CRM implementation, other studies have also investigated the impact of Social CRM on organisational outcomes. Shriedeh & Ghani (2017) examined empirically the relationship between customer relationship management outcomes on brand equity building. Although the study sample was drawn from the Jordanian medical tourism market, the findings showed that customer relationship dimensions (measured as involvement, long-term association and joint problem solving) have a significant and positive impact on brand equity, while the knowledge management of customer data and the implementation of technology-based CRM was found to influence overall customer brand equity. In another similar study within the healthcare sector, Lingavel (2015) examined the impact of CRM on brand equity of private hospitals in Jaffna City, Sri Lanka. The findings showed that CRM contributes significantly to brand equity with IT, organisational architecture and quality of services engineered by CRM being the significant predictors of the relationship. The study concluded by stressing the importance of employees' skill acquisition and knowledge as well as organisational structure in driving the positive relationship between CRM and organisational outcomes.

Guha et al. (2018) carried out a qualitative study of SMEs to explore the influence of Social CRM on the business outcome of SMEs. The findings suggest that customers of the SMEs use social media: (i) to generate content, (ii) to influence other customers through positive reviews; (iii) mobilise actions toward the brands or products. It was thus concluded in the study, the benefits of Social CRM in the long term outweighs the financial constraints from its implementation. Maecker *et al*. (2016) conducted an explorative research involving data from a European phone provider on the impact of Social CRM on firm and customers' upselling behaviour, churn and service contacts. The study collected data between April 2012 and July 2014, using information from 334,111 comprising on customer demographic information (including gender, age, or household purchasing power), contract history (such as date of the contract start, product upgrade or termination) as well as information on individual interactions with the company's customer service. The findings indicated that social media interaction as a strong driver for upselling efforts and reduces the risk of churning. In addition, the positive influence was found to reduce the observed increases in the number of service requests and the higher overall service cost. Overall, it was reported that customers who engage with brand on social media tends to be more profitable.

Tikno (2017) examined the performance measurement of media types such as photos and videos on Facebook advertising using gender, age group and product types as the control variables. Data was collected from 18 ad-sets carried out in Facebook advertising platform for seven days. The result suggests that adverts on social media such as Facebook have positive effect on customer engagement rate on company's promotion and marketing initiatives. The finding also showed that Indonesians tend to engage more frequently in video adverts compared to images and concluded that online shop marketers and advertising designers should pay more attention to Facebook users and how they connect with the brand advertisements when making advertising and marketing strategies. This like the assertion by Malthouse et al. (2013) that organisations are employing Social CRM as a business strategy of engaging customers through social media channels with the main objective of building trust and brand loyalty. Diffley *et al*. (2018) empirically examined the chain-of-effects of Social CRM process and its impact on hotel performance. The study which gathered data from 120 key informants in Irish hotel found that Social CRM activities engaged upon by the hotels improved service innovation activities and customer performance by improving customer-linking capability.

Nadeem (2012) explored how customer engagement through social communities are influencing customer care and loyalty using quality content analysis of secondary data gathered from previous studies (Barnes, 2009; Moran & Gossieaux, 2010; Ang, 2011; Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Barry et al. 2011; Hutton & Fosdick, 2011; Valentini et al. 2011; Woodcock et al, 2011) that involved web surveys, interviews and case studies. The findings indicated that customers that engage with companies using social media channels tend to me more loyal and tend spend more time with those companies that other companies. It was further suggested that the growing popularity of social media has brought about significant shift in the ways of doing business and all business whether large or small should more on social media and related technologies (such as Social CRM) that will foster meaningful, ongoing relationships with the customers that involves frequent interactions. Wali et al. (2015) examined the impact of CRM strategy on customers brand commitment and brand loyalty in the Nigeria financial institutions. With a sample of 250 customers from different deposit accepting banks, it was reported that CRM strategy influences the customers commitment to products offerings from the bank. In other words, the extent of the relationship the banks share with their customer determines the customers' commitment to

purchasing and consumption of services offered. Further it was suggested that customer that are committed to a brand spend more time and resources promoting the firm.

Stenger (2014) explored the practices of social media managers using a qualitative research methodology based on observation of professional community of social media managers (secondary data) and in-depth interviews with social media managers (primary data). The results suggested that companies are mostly apprehensive of participating in social media interaction with the customers because of the fear that a single mis-interpreted tweet, or a wrongly construed Facebook status or a negative comment from a forum can have a damaging effect on the reputation of the company and destabilises its operations. It was further highlighted that social media managers usually employ five social media reputation management practices, that is: monitoring, content suppression, right of reply, claims management and crisis communication management. The conclusion drawn from the study was that a broad understanding of reputation must be considered, and that online reputation management needs to be dealt with at corporate, brand and product service levels as well as incorporating the perceptions and interactions of all external stakeholders including the direct customers, potential consumers, and suppliers.

Huang et al. (2018) examined the effect of social media interactivity on community benefits and how such community benefits (measured as knowledge gains and sense of membership) influence brand loyalty. In addition, the study examined the direct effects of social influence and social media richness on brand loyalty. Drawing from a sample of 229 social media users who keenly follow the Super Basketball League (SBL) teams on Facebook pages, the findings suggested that social media richness has a strong, positive and direct influence on brand loyalty, and the responsiveness had direct effects on their knowledge gains and their sense of membership, which in turn influence indirectly brand loyalty. Ahmed & Zahid (2014) empirically examined the impact of social media marketing on purchase intention, brand loyalty, brand awareness, brand relationship, brand influence on purchasing decision of others and how consumers view brand marketing on social media. The findings from the study reveal that Social CRM is a significant predictor of purchase intention, customer relationships and brand equity. Purchase intention was reported to increase as the brand shows more care towards the customers, which in turn stimulates the emotional engagement on the part of the customer towards the brand. In same way, customer's awareness about the brand, satisfaction and WOM enhance the customer's purchase intentions.

Ghazali et al. (2016) investigated the influence of switching barriers on customer retention (measured as e-store loyalty) and moderating effects of switching costs and alternative attractiveness. The study gathered data using a survey of 590 online shoppers of pure-play retailers in the UK. The findings showed a direct relationship between customer satisfaction (measured as two dimensions of switching barriers: perceived switching cost and perceived attractiveness of alternatives) and loyalty in online context. Yadav & Rahman (2017) developed a five-dimensional scale to examine the impact of social media marketing activities on purchase intention and brand equity. The findings showed that the five-dimensions of social media marketing activities (i.e. interactivity, informativeness, personalisation, trendiness, and word-of-mouth) have significant impact on customer purchase intention and brand equity. Brodie et al. (2013) investigated customer engagement in an online community, exploring both the psychological state of the members, customer engagement processes and constituent sub-processes. Using the Vibra-Train Ltd online platform as a case study, the data was collected using multi-method approach which involved observation of communication in the community and qualitative depth-interview with community members, examining the meaning the participants ascribe to their experiences within the online community. The study reveals the complex multidimensional and dynamic nature of consumer engagement, which may emerge at different levels of intensity over time, thus reflecting distinct engagement states. Further, the consumer engagement process comprises a range of sub-processes reflecting consumers' interactive experience within online brand communities, and value co-creation among community participants. Engaged consumers exhibit enhanced consumer loyalty, satisfaction, empowerment, connection, emotional bonding, trust and commitment.

In line with this, the following additional propositions are made:

Proposition 4: Social CRM has a significant influence on customer outcomes such as brand resonance and customer loyalty

Proposition 5: Customers that engage with brand in social media tends to have good perceived value of social media marketing and social CRM strategies

Proposition 6: the value customers' attach to the firms' social media marketing and Social CRM strategies influence their perception of firms' customer-centric approach to service delivery and this indirectly influences brand resonance and customer loyalty.

3.13 Identified Research Gaps

The review of the literature on Social CRM implementation and impact on business outcomes has shown overall that business practitioners are no longer questioning the influence of social media and CRM on business outcomes. Instead, social media has become a common marketing platform in many industries. Although discrepancy exists, it has been well recognized business activities that can potentially supported by social media including branding, sales, customer service, and product development (Culnan, McHugh, & Zubillaga, 2010). However, marketers are still struggling with how to effectively measure the performance of social media because existing performance measurements have not been widely accepted for the interactive media environment (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). Although significant research has been done on CRM since its emergence in the academic literature in the mid-1990s and now Social CRM, only a few studies have investigated the implementation in service industries such as the telecom industry as noted in the review. Telecommunication which is probably the most important means of communication has become a substantial part of the modern and rapidly change world we live in. In terms of consumer market, the telecom industry is arguably one of the fiercest competitive markets (Bender *et al*. 2011; Alabar *et al.*, 2014).

The rapid pace of innovation in the telecom industry, leaves the service providers with the clamour of delivering services that tends to be quickly outdated as soon as it has been launched (Aydin & Ozer, 2005; Ogbo et al. 2012; Shafei & Tabaa, 2016). In addition, the increasing competition in the telecoms market and the commoditising of the core services means that delivering unique customer experience has becomes the most important means for telecom service providers to differentiate their offerings and increasing their competitiveness (Nasser et al. 2012; Rahman, et al., 2014). Jussila et al. (2014) pointed out that to facilitate the adoption of social media and SCRM and to fill the gap between perceived social CRM potential and actual use in business organisations, it seems apparent that academic as well as pragmatic research should be carried out. Most importantly, it was pointed out that the academic research focus on gathering and organizing the fragmented empirical research to provide a systematic and holistic picture of the possibilities of social CRM in improving business outcomes, developing ways to present a better analysed picture of the financial benefits of social CRM, as well as gather more organized and varied types

of case studies, examples and case evidence into a good overall picture of how social CRM facilitates positive business outcomes.

While it's been recognised that Social CRM helps companies to appropriately make marketing decisions based on the knowledge obtained from their customers purchasing behaviours, consumers' information consumption behaviours acquired in social CRM, on the other hand, gives brand mangers the opportunity to effectively manage the diffusion of brand knowledge among customers. By combining CRM strategy and social value perspective together, brand performance could be better improved with a well-maintained relationship with customers that are both profitable and socially influential. While social CRM research is emerging with some authors focusing on solving traditional CRM problems with measurements of social media behaviours (for example Nitzan & Libai, 2011), others have gone ahead to explore the traditional scope and discuss the social value in addition (Kumar et al. 2010; Schmitt et al. 2011). Nevertheless, up to date, there is no existing research framework concentrating on the role of social CRM for brand marketing strategy in social media environment from developing market like Nigeria. Consequently, this study will further explore this research area.

3.14   Summary of Chapter

The review of the literature has shed more insight into relationship marketing, customer relationship management (CRM) and Social customer relationship management (Social CRM) values. With the popularity of Social media among consumers, present days organisations have been quick to adopt Social CRM strategy to engage and maintain intimate relationships with the consumers. Adopting and successfully implementing a Social CRM strategy is also critical for present day business organisations as it provides them with the opportunity to sell their brands to a wide range of global consumer thereby gaining competitive advantage and increasing organisational profitability. However, just like the traditional CRM systems before it, organisations are currently lack knowledge on how to implement the Social CRM systems to gain optimal performance.

While there is currently a dearth of empirical research on Social CRM systems and strategies, there are several theoretical propositions on the values Social CRM brings to both the organisations and

consumers. Also reviewed in this chapter are the various proposed Social CRM models in the literature and the notable Social CRM vendors currently in the market. In the next chapter, the overall research methodology that will be used in achieving the research aim and objectives is discussed. However, Moore notes that, while good market researchers can help decipher data, telecom companies must establish the correct infrastructure, software, and database architecture to ease analytical difficulty. The entire organization must align to work collaboratively so that Big Data may be brought to action to drive innovation throughout the enterprise and strengthen subscriber relationships.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0   Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to outline and develop the research methodology for this current study. The research methodology generally refers to the overall approach to the design process of conducting the research comprising from the description of the theoretical underpinning guiding the research to data collection and analysis (Collins & Hussey, 2003; Creswell, 2009). In the literature, various research methodologies have been described. The focus in this chapter is to review the various methodologies and then describe and justify the methodology adopted for this current study. First an overview of the research context is restated. This is followed with the discussion on research philosophy and the justification of the adopted research philosophy. The various research approaches are discussed next and then the justification of the adopted research approach. Based on the research philosophy and approach, the research design is developed. The research design is concerned with the data collection process, the study samples, sampling technique, validity and reliability of the collecting instrument and data. Also discussed in this chapter is the ethical consideration.

4.1   Re-statement of the Research Context

Social CRM as described in chapter three is a philosophy as well as a business strategy that is designed to engage the Social consumers in collaborative conversations and interactions in order to deliver mutually beneficial value for both the organisation and the customers (Greenberg, 2010:413). With the transformation of the consumer market into a single community, thanks to innovations in information and technology, companies around the globe are reacting to the consumer ownership of communication with the development of Social CRM systems (Smith, 2009; Brenan, 2010; Greenberg, 2010; Hennig-Thurau *et al.* 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Neff,

2010; Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Giannakis-Bompolis & Boutsouki, 2014; Nyambu, 2013; Bala, 2014; Go & You, 2016).

Ironically, while it could be said that the telecom industry is at the helm of the technological innovation, the same cannot be said on their level of customer engagement and their capacity to gain customer insight through Social CRM (Aydin & Ozer, 2005; Vlachos & Vrechopoulos, 2008; O'Brien, 2010; Askool & Nakata, 2011; Seims et al. 2012; Wang & Wu, 2012; Giannakis-Bompolis & Boutsouki, 2014; Leeflang et al. 2014; Thaichon *et al*. 2014; Saleh, 2016). In addition, the reported shortage of research on Social CRM (Askool & Nakata, 2011; Trainor, 2012; Khodakarami & Chan, 2014), provides the motivation for this current study aimed at developing a framework for the estimation of the influence of Social CRM on customer values such as brand reputation and customer loyalty in the Nigerian telecom industry.

4.2   Research Philosophy

The fundamental basis for every piece of research is the philosophical assumption upon which it is founded; i.e. the pre-existing notions about the society, nature of knowledge and reality, how the researcher understands the knowledge and reality and how he or she goes about acquiring the knowledge and understanding of reality (Saunders et al. 2009:108). Likewise, Oates (2006:282) defines research philosophy as a "set of shared assumptions or ways of thinking about some aspects of the world". It therefore implies that all researchers subscribe to a certain philosophical assumption whether done consciously or unconsciously (Tsang, 2017:1). In most Social science and management literature, two major philosophical assumptions are mostly used in describing the theoretical underpinning to most studies and they include: ontology and epistemology (Holden & Lynch, 2004; Saunders et al. 2009; Easterby-smith et al. 2012; Tsang, 2017). These two philosophical assumptions are discussed below particularly as it concerns this current study in terms of formulating an appropriate research methodology.

4.2.1 Ontology

Ontology is a philosophical assumption that is concerned with the nature of reality – "raising the questions of the assumptions researchers have about the way the world operates and the commitment held to those particular views" (Saunders et al. 2009:110). It is the science of being and is often used synonymously with metaphysis – one of the oldest branches of philosophy (Holden & Lynch, 2004:398). Ontology has also been described as the "nature of Social reality – i.e. being concerned with whether or not the assumption corresponds with reality" (Tsang, 2017:1). Blaikie (2010:8) defines ontology "as claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of Social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other". In this context, ontology can be said to describe what the researcher thinks is actually going on (Hay, 2002:63) and this provides the basis upon which the epistemology and other methodological positions are founded (Grix, 2002:177).

The two basic aspects to the ontological assumption are: objectivism and subjectivism/constructivism (Nonaka & Peltokorpi, 2006; Saunders et al. 2009; Easterby-Smith et al. 2012; Tsang, 2017). Objectivism portrays the philosophical position that Social entities exist in reality external to Social actors concerned with their existence (Saunders et al. 2009:110). In other words, the objectivists argue that objective facts exist about the world and these facts are not dependent on the interpretation or the presence of any individual. In this viewpoint, the world is conceived as a causal relationship between object and the highest form of knowledge is the universal knowledge (Nonaka & Peltokorpi, 2006:75). Subjectivism on the other hand holds the position that Social realities and their meanings are continually being created from the perceptions and consequent actions accomplished by Social actors (Saunders et al. 2009:110). Remenyi et al. (1998:35) describe subjectivism (which was also associated with the terminologies such as constructionism or Social constructionism) to involves the "study of the details of the situation to understand the reality or perhaps a reality working behind them". In this view, human knowledge is subjective, situational, relative and interpretational (Nonaka & Peltokorpi, 2006:75). Table 4.1 depicts the comparison between the two aspects of the ontological stance.

Table 4.1: Comparison between Objectivism and Subjectivism

Ontology	Objectivism	Subjectivism

Truth	There is a single truth	There are many truths
Facts	Facts exists and can be revealed	Facts depend on the viewpoint of the observer

Adopted from Easterby-Smith *et al*. (2012)

4.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology (unlike ontology which is concerned with what constitutes reality), is concerned how we as humans or researchers have come to know what we know and what we have uncovered (Saunders *et al*., 2009; Easterby-smith *et al*., 2012; Tsang, 2017). Epistemology has also been described as "one of the core branches of philosophy, and is concerned with the theory of knowledge, especially in regard to its methods, validation and the possible ways of gaining knowledge of Social reality". Saunders et al. (2009) describe epistemology to be concerned with what is acceptable knowledge within a specified field of study. In summary, epistemology raises the questions: (i) how reality can be known; (ii) the relationship between the research and what is known; (iii) the characteristics, the principles and assumption that guides the process of knowing and the achievement of findings; and (iv) the possibility of that process being shared and repeated by others in order to assess the quality of the research and the reliability of those findings (Chia, 2002; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). In terms of epistemology, four paradigms have often been discussed in Social science and management literature: positivism, interpretivism, realism or critical realism and pragmatism. These four paradigms are briefly discussed below.

4.2.2.1   *Positivist Paradigm*

The positivist paradigm is derived from that of natural science and is characterised by the testing of hypotheses developed from existing theory through the measurement of observable Social realities (Easterby-smith *et al*. 2012; Tsang, 2017). The positivist stance assumes that the world exists externally and objectively regardless of the belief or the stance taken by the researcher; with knowledge argued to be valid only if it is based on observations of this external reality and that general laws or theoretical models exist that can explain the cause and effect relationships which results in predicting outcomes (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Carson *et al*. 2001; Oates, 2006). The

positivist researcher therefore sees the research process as involving a structured and controlled approach which starts with first identifying a clear research topic and then follows with the construction of appropriate hypotheses suggesting casual relationships between variables and then adopting suitable research methodology to validate the hypotheses.

In addition, the position of the positivist researcher is to make time and context free generalisations based on statistical or mathematical manipulation of the quantifiable data used in uncovering the single and objective reality (Collings & Hussey, 2009; Saunders et al. 2009). Positivism is based upon values of reason, truth and validity and there is a focus purely on facts, gathered through direct observation and experience and measured empirically using quantitative methods – surveys and experiments and statistical analysis (Saunders *et al*. 2009; Blaikie, 2010; Easterby-Smith *et al*. 2012). In a practical example, the position of the positivists within the organisational context is that organisational knowledge can only be acquired through the categorisation and scientific measurement of the members' behaviour and the organisation process in producing a true representation of the reality. Accordingly, the positivist researchers are required to remain neutral and detached from the participants (Saunders et al. 2009:114).

Nevertheless the positivists' objective view that human behaviour can only be studied using scientific means have been criticised as being biased as it fails to recognises the subjective nature of each individual (including their open-mindedness, creativity, morality, aesthetic and other forms of knowledge) in the research endeavour to understand the whole (Croft, 2003; Oates, 2006; Cohen *et al*. 2007; Saunders *et al*. 2009; Easterby-Smith *et al.* 2012; Tsang, 2017). As Croft (2003:29) argued, articulating scientific knowledge is one thing; claiming that scientific knowledge is utterly objective and that only scientific knowledge is valid, certain and accurate is another, calling into question the ability for the positivist researcher to acquire accurate information from the subject while at the same time remaining independent and unbiased. In addition, Cohen et al. (2007:18) cited one criticism of positivism to be its failure to recognise the unique ability of every individual in interpreting personal experiences and representing.

4.2.2.2   *Interpretivism Paradigm*

The interpretivist research unlike the positivist holds the position that Social reality can be investigated through interactions and sharing of knowledge with the Social actors (Saunders et al. 2009; Easterby-Smith, 2012). Interpretivism (or Social constructivism as it is also referred to as) rather than assuming an objective reality, argues that reality is Socially constructed through subjective meanings, shared language and Social politics attached to the phenomena by the Social actors (Tsang, 2017:5). The main position of the interpretivist researcher is therefore to explain the subjective opinion of the Social actors through Social interaction; while keeping at the researcher keeps in mind that the scenario or opinion of the Social actors is constantly changing (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Bryman & Bell, 2007). According to Saunders et al. (2009:121), the primary concern of the researcher under this paradigm is to understand the meanings and interpretations of the Social actors and to understand their individual viewpoints and the context within which the knowledge is gained.

The ability to understand the feeling and thinking of the Social actors as well as how they communicate (verbally and non-verbally) is therefore a significant tool for the interpretivist researcher (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Easterby-Smith *et al*. 2012).   The interpretivist researcher takes an open-minded approach in investigating the Social phenomena and starts from the data instead of a literature-based theory or hypotheses that are meant to be tested. The interpretivist researcher looks at the organisation in depth and appoint to extensive conversation, observation and secondary data analysis such as the company's reports and documents in order to overcome generalisation criticism (Easterby-Smith *et al*. 2012:40). The interpretivist researcher engages the participants with some prior knowledge of the research context but assumes that this knowledge is insufficient given the complexity, multiplicity and unpredictability of the nature of what is been perceived as reality (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988:513)

The interpretivist paradigm is not without its criticism. For instance, Bryne (2001:372) argue that the "contextually laden, subjective and richly detailed" nature of the interpretivist paradigm implies that the researcher must retain the required skill necessary for unearthing the hidden and important meanings that is deeply buried in the detailed explanations and interpretations of the data. Secondly, the interpretivist paradigm has been criticised for its lack of unified doctrine that

unifies all subjective (or qualitative) research but instead surrounded with a lot of doctrines such as feminism, constructionism, interactionism and postmodernism which they argue to be relatively minor methodology admissible only at the early or exploratory stages by the researcher to familiarise one's self with the study setting before actual sampling, counting of event and serious research commences (Crofty, 2003; Silverman, 2003; Nudzor, 2009). In addition, interpretivism has been criticised for producing findings that lacks reliability giving its inherent subjective nature and the failure to record and take note of trivial but crucial pauses and overlaps which counts towards giving accurate and balanced views about the Social reality under investigation; as supported by the positivist (Holden & Patrick, 2004; Nudzor, 2009).

4.2.2.3   Realism (Critical Realism) Paradigm

Realism is another paradigm emanating from the ontology and epistemology philosophical stance and which only started gaining recognition in Social science and management literature lately (Oates, 2006; Saunders *et al*. 2009; Easterby-Smith *et al*. 2012; Tsang, 2017). Phillips (1987:205) defines realism as the "view that entities exist independently of being perceived or independently of our theories about them". Likewise, Schwandt (2007:256) describe realism as the view that theories are real features of the world – where reality refers to whatever it is in the universe (i.e. forces, structures, etc.) that causes the phenomena we perceive with our senses. Put differently, realism is the philosophical position that argues that Social reality exists independent of the researcher's perception; that is to say, objects (or organisations) are real entities with life of its own and that are born of people's mind but exist independently of any one person (Cohen et al. 2007; Saunders et al. 2009).

 Sobh & Perry (2006:1200) describe realism as the external reality as consisting of structures that are themselves sets of interrelated objects, and of mechanism through which those objects interact". In other words, it refers to the search for the understanding of the common reality of the system in which many people operate interdependently – a real world that is in existence, and it is out there to be discovered. Saunders *et al*. (2009:114) distinguish two types of realism: direct realism and the very popular critical realism. Direct realism holds the position that what the researcher sees, and senses is the accurate representation of reality; while critical realism holds the

position that what is experienced are mere sensations and images of the things in the real world, not the actual things (Saunders et al. 2009:115). For the critical realist, being clear about the relationship between the different levels of reality – physical, the biological, the Social and the researcher, is very important (Dean *et al.* 2006:8).

Another central aspect of the critical realism paradigm is the distinction between different domains (Jeppesen, 2005; Krauss, 2005; Bryman *et al.* 2011). Jeppesen (2005:4-5) categorised critical realism into three domains: the empirical, the actual and the real domains. The empirical domain encompasses our experiences of what actually happens; the actual domain constitutes the things that happened independently of whether we observed them or not (i.e. events); and lastly the real domain represents the deepest level of reality and is constituted by mechanisms with generative power. Another critical realist dimension holds the position that reality is stratified and is assumed to consist of hierarchically ordered levels where a lower level creates the conditions for a higher level (Bhaskar 1998; Danermark 2002). Based on observed phenomena the task may be to find the underlying mechanisms that produce the phenomena and to "understand the interplay between them and how they shape the outcome" (Danermark 2002:59). Hence for the realists, understanding Social reality is dependent on identifying the casual mechanism and how they work; discovering the conditions upon which the events are activated and the causes (Sayer, 2000:14).

4.2.2.3   *Pragmatist Paradigm*

The epistemological and ontological extremes represented by both the positivists and interpretivists positions have led to some long contentious debate within the Social and behavioural sciences on what constitute appropriate knowledge, there have called by certain authors for the use of multiple methods and acceptance of alternative paradigms in the research process (Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Brustad 2002; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Giacobbi *et al.* 2005). Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998:5-6) suggested that it is more appropriate for researchers to consider philosophy as a continuum rather than as extreme positions supporting either the positivists' or interpretivists' stance – with the opinion that there some instances in the research process where the researcher is required to interact with the Social actors (subjective positions) and in other times its necessary for the researcher to take an objective position in investigating the

Social reality. The philosophical position of mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods have been popularly described using pragmatism paradigm.

The pragmatist position denies that there is any single reality and sees no way in which the interpretivists or the positivist can claim they are closer to the truth than their counterpart (Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Giacobbi *et al.* 2005). Giacobbi & Poczwardowski (2005:21) describe pragmatism as the inclination for methods and theories that are more useful within specific contexts – i.e. to provide answers to practical problems, not those that are focused on revealing underlying truths about the nature of reality. The pragmatic researcher therefore recognises that scientific inquiry is contextual in nature and scientific process is strongly influenced by the past and current Social, historical and political conditions (Giacobbi & Poczwardowski, 2005:21). Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) highlighted that what is most important to the pragmatist researcher is adoption of more than on methods that is most suitable for answering the research questions and the same time simultaneously considering the consequences of such inquiry.

Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998, p.30) describe pragmatism to be intuitively appealing, mainly because it saves the researcher from engaging in the pointless debate on what constitute truth or reality and focus on what is being investigated and the value attached to it, employ different methods that are deemed appropriate and use the results in ways that result in positive outcomes within the Social context. In other words, the most important consideration for the pragmatist is the Social phenomenon being investigated and the questions that are being explored, rather than the underlying philosophical assumptions of the method. Table 4.2 depicts a summary (comparison) of the research paradigm under the two philosophical positions.

Table 4.2: Comparison of the Research Paradigms

	Research Paradigms			
	Positivism	**Interpretivism**	**Realism**	**Pragmatism**
Ontology: the researcher's view of the nature of reality or being	External, objective and independent of Social actors	Socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple	Is objective. Exists independently human thoughts and beliefs or knowledge of their existence (realist), but is interpreted	External, multiple view chosen to best enable answering of research question

			through Social condition (critical realist)	
Epistemology: the researcher's view regarding what constitutes acceptable knowledge. The relationship between the researcher and Social actors	Only observable phenomena can provide credible data, facts. focus is on causality and law like generalisations, reducing phenomena to simplest elements	Subjective meanings and Social phenomena. Focus upon the details of situation, a reality behind these details subjective meanings motivating actions	Observable phenomena provide credible data, facts. Insufficient data means inaccuracies in sensations (direct realism). Alternatively, phenomena create sensations which are open to misinterpretation (critical realism). focus on explaining within a context or contexts.	Either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable knowledge dependent upon the research question. Focus on practical applied research, integrating different perspectives to help interpret the data

Source: Saunders *et al*. 2009

4.2.3 The Philosophical Assumption Guiding this Research

The epistemological position taken in this research aligns with the pragmatism philosophical paradigm. Rather than taking the purist stance of either the positivist or interpretivist researchers, this research takes the view that true knowledge is acquired when more than one research methods (drawing from their respective strengths) are incorporated into one singular study to develop better understanding of the Social phenomenon under investigation (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Giacobbi, Jr & Poczwardowski, 2005). According to Giacobbi, Jr & Poczwardowski, (2005), the pragmatist recognises scientific inquiry as being contextual in nature and is influenced by the past and current Social, historical and political conditions. Hence, the pragmatist assesses the research finding based upon their practical knowledge of the research problem as well as the Social and more consequences of the Social context rather than the underlying philosophical assumptions guiding the research. Onwuegbuzie & Leech, (2005) highlighted two main advantages of the pragmatist philosophy:

- It provides flexibility in the investigative techniques used in addressing the research question; as the pragmatic researcher uses the qualitative research to inform the quantitative portion of the research studies and vice versa.

- Combining qualitative and quantitative data in a single research provides a conceptual framework that allows for the validation of the quantitative findings by referring to the information extracted from the qualitative data, and to construct indices from qualitative data that can be used to analyse the quantitative data.

In this study, the pragmatic paradigm permits the use of both quantitative and qualitative data in exploring the research problem and to develop better understanding of how Social CRM systems can aid in the development of customer interaction, engagement, satisfaction and future behavioural intentions within the Nigerian telecommunication industry. The quantitative approach will be used in this study to actualize the research objectives of testing hypothesized relationships. The qualitative approach is used in exploring the level of Social CRM implementation in the various telecommunication firms operating the sample area of the research. The subsequent sections will discuss the research design – including the approach, strategy and methods adopted in the study.

4.3   Research Approach

There are three main classical schools of thought as it concerns research approaches: the quantitative, qualitative and the mixed method (Creswell & Plano, 2007; Crowther & Lancaster, 2008; Saunders et al. 2009). The following sub-sections discuss the various approaches briefly.

4.3.1   Quantitative Research Approach

Quantitative research is an approach used for testing theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analysed using statistical procedures. According to Creswell (2012), the quantitative researcher identifies the research problem based on the trends in the field or on the need to explain the reason for a certain occurrence. The quantitative research study adopts the deductive technique

in developing theories or hypotheses and applying them in real world in view of testing and assessing their validity (Crowther & Lancaster, 2008). Saunders et al. (2009) identify several important characteristics of the quantitative (deductive) research approach. First it helps in explaining the casual relationships between variables and then allows for the gathering of the data which can be quantitatively measured (a second characteristics). The third feature of the approach refers to the aspect of generalisation of findings. According to Creswell (2012) the quantitative research approach enables the research to collect information from a sizeable sample to generalise the findings to the entire population.

4.3.2 Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research on the other hand refers to the research approach aimed at exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to Social or human problem (Creswell, 2012). The process of qualitative research involves the process of developing questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Snape & Spencer, 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Snape & Spencer (2003) describe the qualitative research approach as a naturalistic/interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meaning people assign to the Social phenomenon within the Social context and identified some of the prominent features to include: (i) providing deeper under of the Social world (ii) employs small scale sample; (iii) data collection using interactive methods such as interview; and (iv) provides a platform for exploring issues and concepts. Furthermore Onwuegbuzie & Leech, (2005:270) depicts the qualitative approach as a "multiple constructed realities that generate different meanings for different individuals, whose interpretations depends on the research's lens".

4.3.3 Mixed Method Research Approach

The mixed method research refers to a research approach inquiry that involves the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data; integrating both forms of data using distinct designs that may be inadequate using either approach alone to understand the research problem (Bernadi et al

2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) describe the mixed methods research as an approach which draws upon the perspectives and strengths of both quantitative and qualitative method, recognising the existence and importance of physical, natural world as well as the importance of reality and influence of human experience. Kroll & Neri, (2009) similarly describe mixed method approach as a study that involve the integration of the qualitative and quantitative findings at some stage of the research process; be that during data collection, analysis or at the interpretative stage of the research. Creswell & Plano Clark (2007. p.5) provide an elaborate definition as:

> "*a research approach with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems that either approach alone*".

4.3.4 Adopted Research Approach and Justification

In this study, the mixed method research approach is adopted. As mentioned in the above section, this research approach was adopted because it provided an avenue to fuse into one, the different research methods and techniques provided by the qualitative and quantitative research approaches to establish a firm foundation of knowledge on the research problem under focus and develop more complex and potentially novel explanations of the phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Table 4.3 shows the details of the mixed method research in comparison with the other two research approaches.

Table 4.3: Comparison of the Research Approaches

	Quantitative Research Approach	Qualitative Research Approach	Mixed Method Research Approach
Scientific Method	Deductive or top-down approach. It involves the testing of hypotheses and theory with quantifiable data	Inductive or bottom-top approach. The researcher generates new hypotheses and grounded theory from data collected during fieldwork	Combines both deductive and inductive approaches

View of human behaviour	Behaviour is perceived to be regular and predictable	Behaviour is seen as constantly evolving, dynamic, situational, Social, contextual and personal	Behaviour is somewhat predictable.
Research objectives	Description, explanation and prediction	Descriptive, exploratory and discovery based	Multiple objectives
Focus	Narrow-angle lens, testing specific hypotheses	Wide-angle and deep-angle lens examining the breadth and depth of phenomenon to learn more about them	Multi-lens focus
Nature of observation	Attempt to study behaviour under controlled conditions	Study behaviour in natural environments and in the context in which behaviour occurs	Study behaviour in more than one context or condition
Nature of reality	Objective (different observers agree on what is being observed)	Subjective, personal and Socially constructed	Commonsense realism and pragmatic view of world (i.e. what works is what is real or true)
Form of data collected	Collect quantitative data based on precise measurement using structured and validated data collection instruments (e.g. close-ended items, rating scales, behavioural responses)	Collect qualitative data (e.g. in-depth interview, participant observation, field notes, and open-ended questions). The researcher is the primary data collection instrument	Multiple forms
Nature of Data	Quantified variables	Words, images and categories	Mixture of variables, words, images and categories
Data analysis	Identify statistical relationships using descriptive and inferential techniques	Search for patterns, themes and holistic features	Combines both quantitative and qualitative techniques
Result	Focused on the generalizable findings	Particularistic findings, representation of insider (i.e. emic) viewpoint. Present multiple perspectives	Corroborated findings may lead to generalization
Form of final report	Statistical report (e.g. with correlations, comparisons of means and reporting of statistical significance of findings)	Narrative report with contextual description and direct quotations from research participants	Pragmatic and Eclectic

(Source: Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

4.4 Research Design

Research design refers to the overall research plan, structure and strategy of investigation adopted by the researcher in obtaining answers to the research problem or questions (Kerlinger, 1986; Saunders et al. 2009). Creswell (2009) describe it as the blueprint of the research; which comprise of the data collection and analysis process, including the writing of the report or thesis. Similarly, Burns & Grove (2003) describe research design as the blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings. Parahoo (1997:142) describe research design as "a plan that describes how, when and where data are to be collected and analysed". Creswell (2012) identifies six mixed method research designs: (i) the convergent parallel design, (ii) the explanatory sequential design, (iii) the exploratory sequential design, (iv) the embedded design, (v) the transformative design and (vi) the multiphase design.

In this current study, the multiphase mixed research design is adopted. Multiphase design refers to the use of series of phases or separate complex design that encompasses the "basic convergent, explanatory, exploratory and embedded designs (Creswell, 2012:437). Both qualitative (semi-structured expert interviews) and quantitative (questionnaire survey) methods were adopted in this current research to address the research questions at different levels and for gaining insight into the different aspects of the phenomenon, which is the customer's and organisation's perspective of Social CRM. Thus, to explore and better understand how companies implement Social CRM, an exploratory research strategy was first applied. Subsequently to explain the relationship between Social CRM and customer outcomes from the customer's perspective, an explanatory approach was applied. Fig. 4.1 provides a schematic diagram of the adopted research design. The overall research was divided into four main phases.
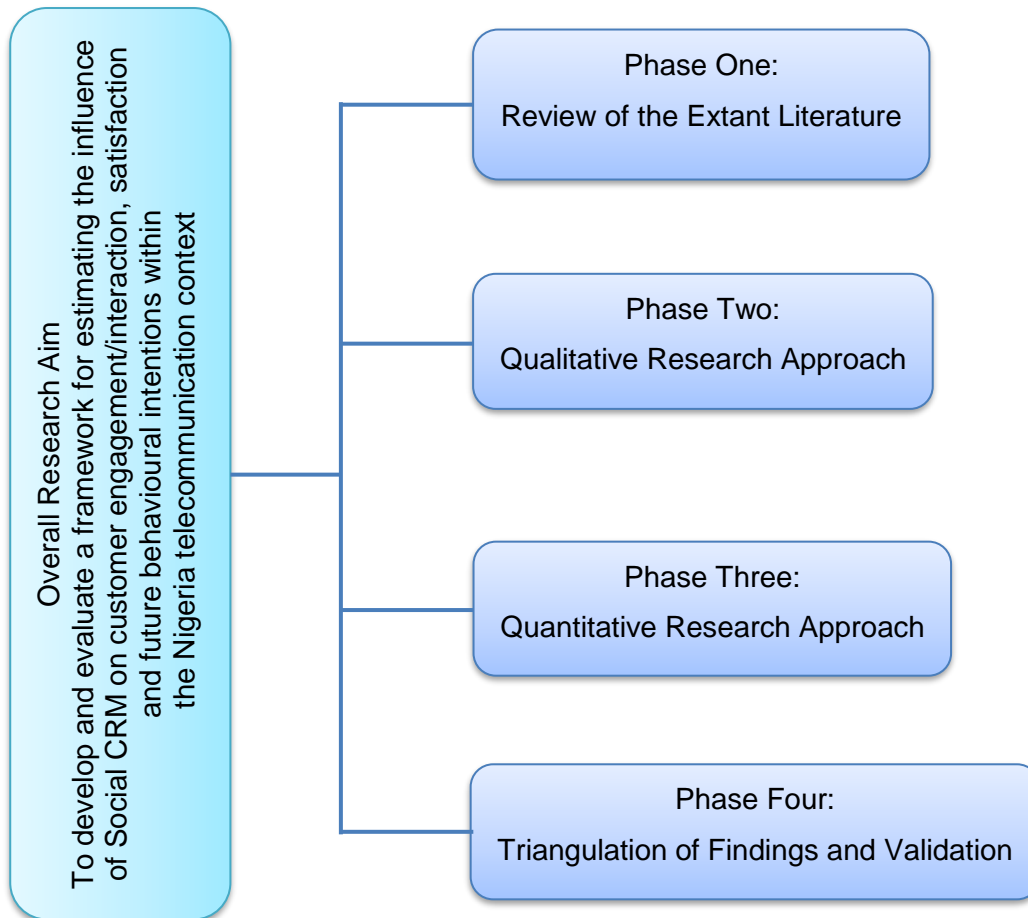
Figure 4.1: Research Design

(Designed by Researcher)

- *Phase 1*: the extant literature on CRM and Social CRM was reviewed with the purpose of identifying the gap in literature and then using it in developing the research aim and objectives. This stage particularly fulfils the first objective of the study (see Section 1.2.2, Chapter One). This stage has been completed in chapter one to three of this report.

- **Phase 2:** this comprises the first set of the primary data collected. The qualitative research approach is adopted in this stage to explore the telecom company's approach to Social CRM implementation. It addresses the questions: (i) to what extent has telecom service providers in Nigeria embraced Social CRM as an interactive and engagement tool for gaining customer insight; (ii) what the Social CRM strategies are adopted by the Nigerian

telecom service providers; and (iii) what factors are militating or promoting the successful implementation of Social CRM strategy by Nigerian telecom operators.

- **Phase 3**: in this stage, using a structured questionnaire instrument, the customers' perception of the Social CRM strategies adopted by the telecom service providers in Nigeria is explored. In addition, the impact this perception has on some selected customer outcomes is examined. The questions being addressed in this stage include: (i) what impact does Social CRM strategy have on customer's perceived brand reputation; and (ii) what impact does Social CRM have on customer loyalty.

- **Phase 4:** This is the final stage of the research and it involves the triangulation of the primary data collected in stages 2 and 3 and satisfying the research aim. In addition, finding from both set of primary data are compared with the evidence in the existing literature in order to validate and recommend the proposed framework.

As mentioned earlier, the research domain of Social CRM is still at its infancy, nevertheless it is increasingly evolving. This makes it necessary to use the pragmatic philosophical assumption to robustly investigate the current research problem. It therefore makes it important to use the mixed method (combination of both qualitative and quantitative) research in investigating the research problem. The remainder of this section is therefore dedicated to describing the methodological approach adopted in both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of this research.

4.4.1 Qualitative Research Design

In this phase of the research, an exploratory research design was adopted for preliminary investigation, as not much is not known in terms of research topic in the Nigerian telecom industry – as it concerns Social CRM implementation. Hence, the primary objective in this research phase is to explore and understand the companies perceptive of social CRM and the reveal the underlying reasons for the adoption of Social CRM and measure the level of success in the implementation. In respect to the research methodology; an exploratory design was adopted as it enabled the gathering of background information and allowed for the gaining of deeper insight into the research context (Boulding *et al.* 2005; Harrigan & Miles, 2014; Go & You, 2016). In addition, the relative infancy of the research area implies that there is little available knowledge of Social

CRM in terms of organisational adoption and implementation. Therefore, by conducting this exploratory study using qualitative research approach, this current study aims to generate useful information on how Social CRM is being approached by Nigerian telecom firms.

4.4.1.1   *Data Collection Technique: Semi-Structured Interviewees*

The interview is considered one of the most widely used methods for collecting primary data in qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Bryman et al. 2011; Creswell, 2012). One major advantage of the interview method is that it allows for an in-depth investigation into a research area (Creswell, 2012). Another advantage of the interview is that it provides the interviewer with much better flexibility to ask specific company related questions than any other survey methods (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Nevertheless, the disadvantage of the interview process is that it is time consuming and very complex (Easterby-Smith *et al*, 2008). Basically, qualitative interviews can be divided into two broad categories: unstructured and semi-structured (Creswell, 2012). In unstructured interviews there are no specific set of predetermined questions although the research has certain question in mind that needs addressing and allows the interview process to take normal course in unravelling those questions.

Whereas, in semi-structured interview, the interviewer prepares a set of questions that would likely guide the interview process (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In this current research, since there is an existing theory on CRM, Social media, and customer outcomes as well as the need for developing a theory on Social CRM, the semi-structured interviewed is deemed the best approach for gaining the organisational insight on Social CRM implementation (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Creswell, 2012). In addition, one of the advantages of the semi-structured interview is that it is somewhat more general in the frame of reference compared to structured interviews; with the interviewer given the opportunity to ask further questions in response to significant information provided by the interviewee (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Creswell, 2012; King, 2012).

4.4.1.2   *The Interview Question*

As mentioned above, the focus of the semi-structured interview is to gain a deeper understanding of the firm's adoption and implementation of Social CRM and the perceived benefits. In line with

the advice from Bryman & Bell (2007) on conducting semi-structured interview, an interview guide containing a highlight of the interview topics was developed. The formulated interview questions were designed in line with the distinct research objectives and investigate findings from the literature review (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Furthermore, in developing the semi-structured interview guide, care was taken to avoid the use of very direct questions and rather focused on the *how*, *what*, and *to what extent* questions; in order to encourage better responses from the interviewees (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Creswell, 2012). The detail semi-interview interview guide can be found in Appendix 1.

4.4.1.3   *Sampling*

In qualitative inquiry, the primary concern is not to generalize to the sample population (Creswell, 2012), but to develop an in-depth exploration of the central phenomenon (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; Creswell, 2012); in this case the adoption and implementation of Social CRM at the organisational level within the Nigerian telecom industry. Thus, in actualising this, the qualitative researcher selectively recruited the individuals (interviewees) and organisations (sites) that were sampled. Thus, the purposeful sampling technique was adopted in this qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2012). To gain deep insight into the implementation of Social CRM at the organisational level, it was deemed necessary to gather useful information from employees in relevant different departments of the four major multinational firms (MTN(Nig.), 9Mobile (formerly Etisalat), Airtel and Globacom Nig.) operating in the Nigerian telecom industry.

Although there are so many other medium sized firms operating in the industry (NCC, 2016), initial industry analysis suggest that these companies may not have the capacity to implement Social CRM and such were exempted at this stage. Employees whose roles in the organisation directly or indirectly connects with duties and responsibilities of customer service and harnessing of the company's big data were recruited for participation. This was to ensure that each of the interviewees possess expert knowledge of each company's strategy on social media and Social CRM implementation. Three representatives from each of the four organisations were recruited; making a total of twelve respondents in this phase of the research. This sample size is deemed enough based on the reporting by Creswell, (2012).

4.4.1.4   The Interviewing Procedure

After identifying the organisations to include in the study, using the purposive sampling technique, the next step was to seek access to the organisations and recruit employees in the relevant departments or position in the organisation. However, because the lack of familiarity of the primary researcher with the study population, five gatekeepers were recruited (Creswell, 2012); who provided the primary researcher access to the firms. The first gatekeeper is a close associate of the primary researcher (a colleague from the university and a citizen of Nigeria), and introduced the primary researcher to the four gatekeepers for each of the four telecom firms. was used to gain access to the Nigerian telecom industry. The role of these four other gatekeepers was to help the primary researcher gain access to the respective telecom firms and the relevant employees to be recruited for the interview (Singh & Wassenaar, 2016).

Once the respondents have been recruited (through the help of the gatekeepers) a call was as a way of formal introduction and briefing on the nature of the study as well as scheduling a date and venue for the interview. In addition, an email was sent to the prospective interviewees on the scope and nature of the research (see Appendix 2). This was done three weeks prior to the schedule dates of the interview and the essence is to ensure that the interviewees are acquainted with the scope of the research and familiar with the possible line of questions during the interview process. All interview processes were done face-to-face with each individual interviewee, and mostly in their offices. In addition, all interviewees were audio recorded (with the permission of the interviewees) to allow the interviewer (primary research) to listen properly and concentrate on the responses provided by the interviewee and react to the responses accordingly (Bryman *et al*. 2011; Creswell, 2012; Rowley, 2012).

All interviews were done in English Language. By providing the interviewees with the interview guide prior to conducting the interview ensured that the interviewees had the opportunity to think thoroughly about their responses and reduce misunderstanding (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Rowley, 2012). The researcher also ensured that the entire interview process was very flexible and encouraged the interviewees to provide deeper insight into their personal perspectives (Creswell, 2012). In addition, probing questions were used in encouraging the interviewees to provide additional information to the original questions. These probes vary from exploring the content in

more depth (elaborating) to asking the interviewee to clarify responses in more detail (Saunders *et al*. 2009; Creswell, 2012).

Another important characteristic the interviewer must possess according to Creswell (2012) is being courteous and professional during and after the interview. Assuring the interviewees of the confidentiality of their responses during and after the interview, thanking the participant after the interviewee, and asking the interviewee if he or she would like a summary of the results are some of the important traits of a professional interviewer (Creswell, 2012) and these skills were brought to the fore during the interview process. All this culminates in a rich and well detailed response provided by the interviewees.

4.4.1.5   *Data Preparation: Transcription of the Audio Data*

Data preparation involves reading through the data; checking for accuracy, transcribing the data (where they are voice recorded), transforming the data; and developing and documenting a database structure that integrates the various measures (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Saunders et al. 2011). The first step after the interview process was to transcribe the data verbatim into MS word document. Saunders *et al*. (2009:485) iterated that the interviewer should not only be interested in what the interviewee is saying, but in the non-verbal communications by the interviewees. This implies that it is important that the researcher immediately transcribes the data while the verbal and non-verbal communication streams are still fresh in memory.

Another advantage of transcribing quickly the audio-recorded interview is that it provides the opportunity to assess the unbiased and accurate data at a later point which is expected to improve the reliability of the data (Silverman, 2005; Saunders *et al.* 2011). Having transcribed the recorded interview, the information was then coded to enable the retrieval of the important information as well as the development of the emerging themes. In general codes were assigned to represent each interviewee's response to specific questions (Saunders *et al*. 2009). This way qualitative data was broken down into discrete chunks to which a reference is attached. Furthermore, the coding process helped to bring similar ideas together to form thematic groups (Malhotra *et al*., 2012). The themes along other aspects formed the basis for analyses in accordance with the formulated research questions relating to organisation's adoption of social CRM.

4.4.1.6   *Qualitative Data Analysis*

A very common approach to qualitative data analysis is the inductive approach – which refers to the analysing of the data with little or no predetermined theory, framework or structure and the use of the actual data itself to derive concepts, themes or model through the interpretations made from the raw data by the researcher (Thomas, 2006; Burnard *et al*. 2008). According to Thomas (2006:238), the primary purpose of the inductive approach is to "allow the research findings to emerge from frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies". In this current study, thematic analysis under the inductive approach is adopted. The thematic analysis can be described as the qualitative analytic method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes or categories) within the data; minimally organising and describing the data set in rich detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79).

In addition, Braun & Clarke, (2006:82) define theme as "something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning with the data set. The process of thematic content analysis was essentially to identify themes and categories that emerged from the data. It involved discovering themes in the interview transcripts and attempting to verify, confirm and qualify them by searching through the data and repeating the process to identify further themes and categories (Burnard *et al*. 2008). The thematic analysis of the data was supported by the using a computer assisted software. Whilst, there are several computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) packages available such as NVivo, ATLAS.ti, and MAXQDA, in this current study NVivo was used.

However, it should be noted that the software was only for easy management and searching through of the rich data; rather than as a tool for the actual analysis. Actual analysis of the data was done by the researcher as it relates to the initial research questions (see chapter one of this thesis). Accomplishing this, the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim; the researcher then reads each transcript and makes notes in the margins of words, theories or short phrases that sum up what is being said in the text (in NVivo). The outcome of the analysis of the data produced five major themes (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Research Themes and investigated Topics

Probing Questions	Emerging Theme
• How much importance is attached to delivery of quality customer service in this organisation? Would you say your firm is very customer-centric? Would your organisation as a customer-centric, where customer satisfaction and retention is of great priority? • Do you as a firm consider the management of customer relationships as a business strategy? • How do you manage customer relationship in this organisation?	Customer Orientation
• How would you describe your current usage of Social media and what are the Social media channels used? • Do you integrate Social media with your customer relationship management strategy? • To what extent is interactive communications with customers enabled through Social media?	Adoption of Social media technology
• To what extent is Social Media used in your organisation in gathering customer's insights? • How is information gathered through Social Media utilised? • To what degree are customer interactions on Social Media utilised to address problems, customer complaints, change in customer needs, or product preferences	Social CRM implementation Strategy / Social CRM Capabilities
• What are the perceived benefits of Social CRM? • Since your company commenced the use of Social Media and Social CRM systems, how would you rate your performance in relation to: - Gaining customer insight - attracting new customers - Retaining old customers - enhancing customer outcomes such as satisfaction and customer loyalty	Perceived Benefits of Social CRM

(Developed by the researcher)

4.4.1.7 *Data Validity and Reliability*

The validity and reliability of the data are two very important aspects of research (Saunders *et al*. 2009; Malhotra *et al*. 2012; Noble & Smith, 2015). In the broadest context both validity and reliability are terms applicable to quantitative research but used in qualitative research to test the integrity and application of methods used, the test of the accuracy with which the reported findings reflect the data and the consistency within the employed analytical procedures (Long *et al*. 2000). According to Malhotra *et al*. (2012) validity refers to the extent to which a measurement represents characteristics that exist in the phenomenon under investigation. Leung, (2015) describe validity in qualitative research to mean the appropriateness of the tools, processes, and data. It ascertains whether the research question is valid for the desired outcome, the choice of methodology is appropriate for answering the research question, the design is valid for the methodology, the sampling and data analysis is appropriate, and finally the results and conclusions are valid for the sample and context.

Hence, when one talks about validity in qualitative research, it can be seen in terms of credibility and trustworthiness. Different types of validity in qualitative research have been highlighted to include: (i) descriptive validity; (ii) interpretative validity; (iii) theoretical validity; (iv) researcher bias; (v) internal validity; and (v) external validity (Johnsons, 1997; Johnson & Christensen, 2016). In this study, the interpretative validity is adopted as it refers to the accuracy in reporting the meaning attached by participants to what is being studied by the research (Johnson, 1997:285). Particularly, it refers to the degree to which the research respondents' viewpoints, thoughts, feeling, intentions, and experiences are accurately understood by the qualitative researcher and portrayed in the research report. One of ensuring interpretive validity is to get the respondents' feedback to avoid miscommunication (Johnsons, 1997; Johnson & Christensen, 2016). Hence, during the interview process, the research tried to always ask the interviews if they properly understood the questions and statement and, in most cases, repeated statements to get confirmation from the respondents.

On the hand, the reliability of the qualitative data refers to the judgement about the soundness of the research in relation to the application and appropriateness of the methods undertaken and the

integrity of the final conclusions (Malhotra *et al*. 2012). The issue of reliability also incorporates the question whether other researchers under similar conditions will have similar observations and if there is transparency in how the raw data is interpreted (Saunders *et al*. 2009; Easterby-Smith *et al*. 2012). Especially regarding qualitative interviews, there exist several factors which might threaten the reliability such as interviewer bias what relates to how the interviewer behaviour and appearance influence the respondents. There is also the interviewee bias which results from the fact that the participant probably does not want to reveal sensitive information or is overwhelmed with the interview situation what in turn leads to biased answers (Saunders *et al*., 2009).

Keeping those biases in mind the primary researcher of this current study made efforts to avoid these problems by ensuring the interviewees felt comfortable during the interviews. Furthermore, it was agreed that the interviewees were kept confidential and this way the participants were not exposed to harm in any form based on their participatioj. Another important aspect of reliability in qualitative research relates to the level of the researcher's preparation of the interviews which is critical in the prevention of poor performance on the part of the researcher during the interview process which would limit the quality of the interviewee responses (Saunders *et al*. 2009; Malhotra *et al*. 2012). Regarding this point, the researcher designed an interview guide which was used in directing the interviews process towards the intended research focus. Furthermore, it is reported that data recording, transcription and intensive engagement can increase the reliability of data (Silverman, 2005; Roberts *et al*. 2006; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). Thus, the researcher decided to record, transcribes the interview verbatim and coded all interviews to enhance the reliability.

4.4.2 Quantitative Research Design

The primary objective of this phase was to empirically examine the impact of Social CRM on customer outcomes such as perceived brand reputation and customer loyalty. Amaratunga et al. (2002) describe the quantitative research approach to be best suited for describing human behaviour which can be explained by what they termed Social facts investigated using deductive logic of natural sciences. Creswell (2012) identifies some of the advantages of quantitative research to include viewing truthfulness or reality to exist in the world, which can be quantitatively and objectively measured in terms of the relationship between the investigator and what is being investigated. Other strengths of the quantitative approach include: allowing for comparison and

replication, enables the validity and reliability of the data to be objectively determined compared to the qualitative techniques, emphasizing the need to formulate hypothesis for subsequent verification, aid in searching for the casual explanations and generally reducing the whole to the simplest possible elements in order to facilitate analysis (Amaratunga et al. 2002; Easterby-Smith, 2012). The following subsections discuss the data collection technique in this phase.

4.4.2.1   *Design of the Data Collection Instrument*

With reference to the research philosophy and approach discussed above, the questionnaire survey research method was adopted in this study. According to Oates (2006), the questionnaire/survey method is best suited for the positivist paradigm and quantitative research approach as it helps in identifying pattern and casual relationships between variables that are used in explaining social phenomena. In this study, a closed-structured questionnaire was used as it provided the advantage of gathering data from a sizeable sample which is then used in generalizing of the finding to a wider population (Collis & Hussey, 2003; Kelly *et al.* 2003). In addition, it has been reported that people agree easily in the participate in the questionnaire survey because the responses are recorded as anonymous (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The questionnaire in this current study comprised of 40 items divided into six sections (see Appendix 5**).**

Section 1: contained 3-questionnaire items measuring the demographic characteristics of the respondents in terms of gender, level of education and area of residence in Lagos state. The questionnaire items were generated by the researcher based on the focus of the study.

Section 2: contained 4-questionnaire items that measured the participants' level of usage of social media. It included questionnaires like what social media channel is mostly used (Q4), how long the participants have been using social media (Q5), the frequency of use of social media per day (Q6), and the major reasons for using the social media channels (Q7). The questionnaire items for this section were adopted from the instruments in (Gbadeyan, 2010; Eleboda & Majekodunmi, 2015).

Section 3: contained 9-questionnaire items that assessed the customers' perceived value of social media marketing/social CRM strategies of the telecom firms. The questionnaire items were measured with a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree). The

questionnaire items were adopted from the instruments in Smith (2014) and Yadav & Rahman (2017).

Section 4: In this section, 7-questionnaire items were used in evaluating the customers' evaluation of the customer-oriented practices of their preferred telecom brand. The questionnaire items were adopted from (Lozano, 2000; Donavan & Hocutt, 2001) and measured using a 5-point Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree).

Section 5: 8-questionnaire items were used in evaluating the level of interaction and engagement between the customers (respondents) and their preferred telecom brand. The questionnaire items were adopted from (Maecker *et al.* 2016; Yadav & Rahman, 2017) and measured using a 5-point Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree).

Section 6: measures brand resonance (the measure of how well the business connects with the customers both formally and informally; as well as the extent to which the customers develops strong behavioural, psychological and social bonds with the brands) using 9-questionnaire items adopted from (Hudson *et al.* 2016). The items were measured using a 5-point Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree).

4.4.2.2   *Sampling and Sample Population*

Sampling in quantitative research involves the process of selecting a subset of the population and using the finding to make generalisation on the characteristics of the entire population (Hair *et al.* 2007, Saunders *et al.* 2009). According to Saunders et al. (2009), sampling is important as it saves time and cost that will be otherwise needed to survey the whole population. Sampling techniques can be typically divided into two main groups: probability and non-probability sampling. In this study, the probability (stratified random) sampling technique was adopted because it provides every member of the population an equal opportunity to be included in the study (Saunders et al. 2009:214). In the stratified random sampling, the sample population was divided into subpopulations or strata: that is dividing the population based on the characteristics (Bryman & Bell, 2015); in this case the socio-economic characteristics of the area was used as the yardstick in divided the population into the different strata.

4.4.2.2.1 Sample Population

The sample for this phase of the study are made up of consumers of telecommunication industry in Lagos State. Lagos state is selected because it is the most populous city in Nigeria, the second fastest growing city in Africa and sixth most populous in the World (Campbell 2012). Based on Lagos State Government Report (2018), the population of Lagos Urban Area is approximately 17.5 million. The population is predominantly the youth - the highest users of Social media platforms such as Face book, Twitter, Myspace and YouTube, Instagram etc. (Greenberg, 2010). In terms of access to the internet and telecommunication products/services, Lagos is the most privileged state in Nigeria as these products are readily available with competitive prices.

Take for example broadband services, the initial field study shows that the indigenes of Lagos have a wide list of broadband providers which are not commonly available in other states in Nigeria. Also, it was noticed from the field investigation that quality and cost of broadband is far cheaper in Lagos compared to other states (Berman and Evans, 2010; Markus et. al., 2014). Another reason for choosing Lagos state is that it possesses the best media channel planning (sometimes called "communications planning") that will support SOCIAL CRM activities compared to any other city like Abuja, Port-Harcourt and Kano; which is a powerful way of gaining insight into consumer behaviour (Berman and Evans, 2010).

The channel planning in Lagos has been applied to retail messaging and merchandising. The internet has given customers the opportunity to decide on what matters to them when they are purchasing. Lagos renowned as the largest commercial city in West Africa, boast of several telecommunication firms of which the big giants include MTN, GLOBAL Communication, and 9Mobile (NCC, 2013). This highly fragmented media landscape in Lagos, expose consumers to many points of contact beyond the traditional TV and print channels that retailers have long used. Fig. 4.2 shows the maps of Lagos State.

Figure 4.2: Map of Lagos State

4.4.2.2.2 Sample Size

Sample size is a crucial issue in quantitative research; as it seeks to make statistically based generalisations from the study to the real world. What constitutes the appropriate sampling size has continuously been a source of debate in the literature (Bartlett II et al. 2001; Creswell, 2012; Saunders et al. 2009). Various proposals have been suggested for estimating sample size; however, Saunders et al. suggested a table for estimating minimum sample sizes required from different sizes of population given a 95% confidence level for different margins of error. Assuming data are collected from all cases in the sample, it is estimated that minimum required sample size for this study is 400 responses (allowing for a 5 percent margin of error).

Table 4.5: Sample Sizes for different sizes of population at a 95 percent confident level

Population	Margin of error			
	5%	3%	2%	1%
50	44	48	49	50
100	79	91	96	99
150	108	132	141	148
200	132	168	185	196
250	151	203	226	244
300	168	234	267	291
400	196	291	343	384
500	217	340	414	475
750	254	440	571	696
1 000	278	516	706	906
2 000	322	696	1091	1655
5 000	357	879	1622	3288
10 000	370	964	1936	4899
100 000	383	1056	2345	8762
1 000 000	384	1066	2395	9513
10 000 000	384	1067	2400	9595

Source: Saunders et al. (2009:219)

4.4.2.2.3 Data Collection Technique

Data collection involves the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest in a systematic manner that allows for the answering of the research question, testing of hypotheses and answering of questions (Bryman & Bell, 2015). By adopting the stratified random sampling technique as mentioned above, Lagos State was divided into four strata based on the socio-economic profile of the area. This was to ensure that the sample population provides a detailed representative of the population, as each stratum is represented proportionally within the sample (Saunders et al. 2009:.228). Table 4.6 shows the stratification of sample population (Lagos State). As shown in the last column of the table, several gatekeepers were recruited to manage the distribution of the questionnaire in each stratum. Gatekeepers were recruited for the following reasons: first the unfamiliarity of the primary researcher with the terrain and secondly, the need to recruit as many respondents as possible to satisfy the large sample size.

Table 4.6: Stratification of the Sample Area

	Locations		No. of Gatekeepers
Strata1	Alimosho, Agege	Lagos	7
Strata2	Surulere, Apapa	Mainland	3
Strata3	Ikeja, Oshodi-Isolo, Mushin	Lagos Central	4
Strata4	Victoria Island, Ikoyi, Lekki	Lagos Island	10

4.4.2.2.4   Pilot Study

A pilot study can be defined "as a small study to test research protocols, data collection instrument, sample recruitment strategies, and other research techniques in preparation for a larger study" (Hassan et al. 2006: 70). The research instrument (questionnaire) was designed in such manner that the consumers of telecom products and services self-complete the instrument with no assistance from the researcher or gatekeepers. As such, it was important that the instrument accurately satisfied the research aim and the questionnaire-items were clearly understood by the respondents (Hassan *et al*. 2006; Saunders *et al.* 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Hence, the purpose of the pilot test was to ensure that the questionnaire was understandable and fitting for the variables being measured, and that the questionnaire-items were properly defined, clearly understood and are consistent in their presentation (Hassan *et al.* 2006). For the pilot study, 15 respondents were recruited from Yaba (Lagos Mainland) and Ikoyi areas. The respondents for the pilot study were mostly student and this was the profile of participants targeted in this study. The reason is that the youths are most technology compliant and social media savvy. The general feedback from the pilot study was positive; as the participants responded accurately to the questions. Nevertheless, few grammatical suggestions were made and subsequently effected in the final version of the questionnaire.

4.4.2.3   Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis can be defined as a process of "bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999:150). Schwandt (2007:6) define data analysis as a variety of specific procedures and method; which simply put includes the different ways of working with data to answer the research questions and fulfil the research aim. In this study, the quantitative data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive data analytical approach was used in describing the different variables using frequency tables (for exploring the counts and percentage distribution of the data), the measure of central tendency (i.e. mode, mean and median) and measure of variability (i.e. range, standard deviation).

Inferential statistics on the other hand is used to identify the statistically significant difference between group of data as highlighted by the research hypotheses. In other words, inferential statistics is used in testing and validating the hypothetical model. Simple linear correlation analysis was used in testing the relationship between two variables while multi-regression analysis tested the relationship between three or more variables as proposed in the hypotheses. The correlation values did not only tell how the variables were associated but also the direction and strength of the relationship. Correlations only range from -1 to 1. A correlation of 0 means that the variables are not related. A positive correlation indicates a positive relationship (an increase in one variable leads to an increase in another variable), while a negative correlation indicates a negative relationship (an increase in one variable leads to a decrease in another variable).

The closer a correlation is to -1 or 1 the stronger the relationship between the variables. The correlation was interpreted using the rule of thumb:

> $0 - \pm 0.3$ = weak relationship;

> $0.31 - \pm 0.69$ = moderate relationship;

> $0.70 - \pm 1.00$ = strong relationship

The data analysis in this wave of the research was carried out with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, ver. 22).

4.4.2.8   Data Validity and Reliability

Validity Test of the Quantitative Data

Validity, arguably the most critical aspect of the test the quality of the questionnaire instrument. Validity in quantitative research as defined in Saunders et al. (2009:372) simply is a test that considers whether the questionnaire measures accurately what it was designed to measure or not. In addition, the authors highlighted that when talking about the validity, it usually around three aspects: content validity, criterion-related validity and construct validity (Saunders *et al*. 2009). Content validity refers to extent to which the questionnaire provides adequate coverage of the investigative question. Criterion-related validity relates to the capacity of the questionnaire items in making accurate judgement of the behaviour of the respondents in answering the questionnaires measuring the variable. And lastly construct validity refers to the extent to which the questionnaire items measure the variables that are intended to be measured.

In this study, construct validity was used in testing the validity of the questionnaire instrument using the data from the pilot testing. In other words, the loading factor (using factor analysis) was used in determining how the questionnaire items aggregate to each of the measured variables. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 4.7. Four components were extracted as measured in the questionnaire (in exception of section 1 and 2 which measured the background of the participants in terms of demographics and the use of social media). Component 1 was equivalent to perceived value of social media marketing and social CRM strategies (section 3), component 2 equivalent to the evaluation of firm's customer-oriented practice construct (section 4), component 3 the measure of firm-customer interaction/engagement via social media (section 5) and component 4 equivalent to the measure of brand resonance (section 6). Also, the correlations of each of the questionnaire items aggregated under each component as originally measured in the questionnaire. Thus, it was concluded that the questionnaire was valid.

Table 4.7: Pattern Matrix

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Q8	.876			
Q9	.779			

Q10	.886			
Q11	.850			
Q12	.779			
Q13	.709			
Q14	.807			
Q15	.839			
Q16	.773			
Q17		.834		
Q18		.920		
Q19		.794		
Q20		.749		
Q21		.831		
Q22		.669		
Q23		.852		
Q24			.727	
Q25			.775	
Q26			.917	
Q27			.773	
Q28			.805	
Q29			.893	
Q30			.867	
Q31			.745	
Q32				.844
Q33				.811
Q34				.747
Q35				.770
Q36				.681
Q37				.926
Q38				.869
Q39				.830
Q40				.910

Extraction Method: Principle Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

Reliability Test of the Quantitative Data

Reliability simply refers to the consistency of the questionnaire, the robustness of the questionnaire to produce consistent findings at different times, under different conditions and under different samples (Saunders *et al*. 2009:373). According to Mitchell (1996 as cited in Saunders et al. 2009) the different measure of reliability includes; (i) test re-test; (ii) internal consistency; and (iii) alternative form. In this current study the test of internal consistency was used in measuring the reliability of the questionnaire. Internal consistency involves correlating the responses to each question in the questionnaire with those to other questions in the questionnaire. It therefore measures the consistency of responses across either all the questions or a sub-group of the questions from your questionnaire (Saunders et al. 2009).

Whilst there are a variety of methods for calculating internal consistency, this study employed the most frequently used, Cronbach's alpha (Saunders et al. 2009; Heale & Twycross, 2015). The Cronbach's alpha was used in measuring the homogeneity or internal consistency of the items measuring each group of variables (Heale & Twycross, 2015). The value of the Cronbach's Alphas measures between 0 and 1; with values closer to 0 indicating no-internal consistency and those at the opposite end – closer to 1 indicating good internal consistency. Table 4.7 shows the Cronbach's alpha value for each of the main study variables.

The result shows excellent internal consistency between the items measuring each of the construct; with the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ranging from 0.81 to 0.920. The implication of this is that the result from this data can be generalised to the entire population with to a certain level of confidence (Saunders *et al*. 2009; Heale & Twycross, 2015). All analysis was carried out with the aid of SPSS Version 22.

Table 4.8: Reliability Test of the Quantitative Data

Major Constructs Testing the Hypotheses	Number of Items measuring the Construct	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Consumer's Perceived Value of SMM and Social CRM	9	0.807
Consumers' Evaluation of Firm's Customer-Oriented Practice	7	0.875

Level of Customer-Organisation Interaction/Engagement on Social Media	8	0.919
Brand Resonance	9	0.915

4.5   Ethical Consideration

Ethical standards in academic research are mostly concerned with the appropriateness of the researcher in conducting the study, including the protection of the participants from any form of harm or injury (Saunders et al. 2009). According to Fouka & Mantzorou (2011), major ethical issues in conducting research surrounds gaining informed consent form the participants, the act of beneficence (that is affording the exposure of the participants to any form of harm, whether emotional or physical), respect for anonymity and confidentiality, respect for privacy and protection of the vulnerable groups of people. In addition, the study was guided by the University of Salford ethical regulation. The University's ethical code also concerns the issues highlighted above which include ensuring that all participants and those involved in the study (directly and indirectly) are protected from any form of injury (whether physical or psychological). The ethical code also ensures that study is appropriate and does not cause offense to anyone involved (directly or indirectly). In so doing, the study was conducted as anonymous. Also, following the ethical code of the university, a cover letter will be attached to each questionnaire – explaining the purpose of the research and highlighting the right of the participants (see Appendix 4)

4.6   Summary of Chapter

This chapter has presented a description of the research methodology adopted in this thesis. It adopted the mixed method research – which was the combination of the quantitative and qualitative research methodology. The research design, data collection and analysis technique adopted as been presented. The next chapter presents the finding from the qualitative research.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA AND DISCUSSION

5.0   Introduction

In this chapter, the qualitative data is analysed, and the findings discussed. After analysing the interview data, five major themes emerged (see Table 5.1). The key finding from each theme is presented with the direct quotations of the respondents. In addition, the findings were discussed based on theoretical evidence in the literature.

Table 5.1: The Main Themes

Emerged Themes
1.   Customer Orientation Approach
2.   Adoption of Social Media Technology
3.   Social CRM Implementation Strategy
4.   Social CRM Capabilities
5.   Perceived Benefits of Social CRM

5.1   Characteristics of the Respondents

For this first part of the research, data was collected from the telecom firms' organisation in the Nigerian industry on their implementation of social CRM. Initially, the top-four telecom firms in the industry: MTN(Nig.), Globacom Nigeria, Airtel Nigeria and 9Mobile (formerly Etisalat Nigeria) were meant to be recruited. However, no response was received from the representatives from Airtel therefore were removed from the study. However, the sample size was deemed enough as the three companies involved represented more than 70 percent of the total market share (see NCC, 2017). For the organisations represented, three respondents from each firm with job roles relating to social media or social CRM strategy were recruited for the interview process. In addition, all participants selected were experienced professionals that have spent more than three

(3) years with the organisation and are also well experienced in the Nigeria telecom industry. These criteria suggested that the respondents were knowledgeable in social media marketing and CRM in both their organisation and the within the industry. Table 5.2 shows the summary of the background information of the participants.

Table 5.2: Background Information of the Interviewees

Company	Participants	Job Title	Duration of Service in Organisation	Years of Industry Experience
MTN Nigeria	Respondent 1	Head Customer Relations/Social Media Team	4 years	Over 8 years
	Respondent 2	Head, Marketing Department	6 years	12years
	Respondent 3	Data Centre Analyst, I.T. Division	3 years	4years
Globacom Nig.	Respondent 1	IT Officer	Over 5 years	7 years
	Respondent 2	Consumer Affairs Officer	Over 3 years	6 years
	Respondent 3	Marketing/Social Media Manager	Over 5 years	11 years
9Mobile	Respondent 1	Marketing Officer	3 years	5 years
	Respondent 2	Online Marketing Analyst	Over 7 years	15 years
	Respondent 3	Chief Technology Officer	Over 7 years	12 years

5.2   Findings from the Interview Data

This section of the chapter presents the findings from the interviews with each of the three representatives in the three case study telecom firms. Each of the sub-sections begins with a brief profile of the company and thereafter, the data collected from the interview is presented. The data finding is presented in such a way that it reflects the developing themes from the thematic analysis of the data. In addition, the data were also presented in view of addressing the first two research questions posed in this research (see Section 1.4, Chapter 1 of this thesis).

5.2.1 MTN Nigeria

5.2.1.1 *Company Profile*

MTN Nigeria Communications Ltd is a cellular telecommunications company that offers fixed line, wireless, cellular telephone services, and Internet services to over 55 million subscribers (NCC, 2018). MTN Nigeria Communications Ltd is also the largest subsidiary in the MTN Group, an African mobile telephony company with operations in 22 countries in Africa and the Middle East. Since inception in 2001, MTNN has led the growth in the voice market to become the biggest mobile operator in Nigeria and West Africa. It is now pursuing new growth opportunities in the data and ICT space. This lead position is evident in a differentiated and attractive array of product and service offerings, as well as a growing bouquet of ICT products. With over 15 Service centres, 144 Connect Stores and 247 Connect Points located in every state of the federation, MTN is poised to lead the delivery of a bold, new digital world to the Nigerian market. MTN Nigeria is 75.81% owned by MTN International (Mauritius) Limited (MTNI); 18.7% held by Nigerian shareholders through special purpose vehicles; 2.78% owned by Mobile Telephone Networks NIC B.V and 1.76% owned by Public Investment Corporation SOC Limited.

5.2.1.2 *Customer Orientation Approach*

From the interview data, MTN Nigeria can be described as a company that has fully adopted the customer-centric approach to business. According to all three of the interviewees, customer-focused service forms as important part of the company's business process and according to Respondent 1, this the reason for the company remaining the top brand in Nigeria over a decade of commencing operations. See excerpts of his response below:

Respondent 1: "*Customer service is very important for every organisation, especially for service-oriented organisations. For us MTN, customer service provides a platform to helping our customers understand our different products and services and so helping them in making the right decision on the product or service. Since we became fully operational in 2001, we have remained as the company with the largest market share and we didn't achieve this without putting our customers first. In terms of our products both voice calls and data bundle, we are second to none in Nigeria based on the quality of service delivery*"

MTN Nigeria's perspective of customer-centric approach translates to the delivery of quality projects and exceptional services to the customers and at affordable prices. This transcends to the delivery of seamless and distinctive customer experience by improving their digital performance. See Excerpts from Respondent 2 below;

Respondent 2: "*Delivering quality customer service is the core of our business; which is to ensure that our customers are digitally connected everywhere they go. The strength of our customer service approach is that we listen to the voice of customers and respond swiftly to feedback from our customers. This has helped us in developing innovative products and services that our competitors are barely able to match. Our business strategy is focused on delivering value to our customers; with a strong focus on creating unique service experience for our customers. In the last couple of years, MTN Nigeria has made remarkable progress in its growth; and this is down to ensuring the satisfaction of our customers through the delivery of value and ensuring that they maximise the benefits of our products and services at very affordable price. Till date, we continue to be drive by this singular focus of delivering seamless and distinct customer experience by further improving our digital performance. In support of this vision to provide its customers with bold, new digital world, MTN Nigeria has made massive infrastructural investment in improving the LTE device strategy. Our business is to ensure that we bridge the digital divide and provide our customers access to innovative and accessible solutions. We achieve this by focus on addressing the daily needs and challenges of our customers in connecting to the internet*"

5.2.1.3   *The Extent of Social Media Usage*

The company showed good usage of Social media was also explained by the interviewees. All three respondents asserted that their organisations deploy various Social media channels in interacting and engaging with their customers. The popular social media channels included; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. See excerpts from all three interviewees below.

Respondent *1: You would agree with me that the social media has become a veritable platform for interacting and engaging with customers. In MTN we have various channels which we use in communicating with our customers and prospective customers in real-time. We have dedicated channels on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to mention a few.*

Respondent *2: "You will agree with me that this is the era of social media and every business need a formidable presence in social media. Customers these days spend most of their time on the internet and constantly talking to one another and need to engage their brands online as well. In MTN, we have several social media channels that allow us to connect and engage with our customers. Our social media channels include, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.*

Respondent 3: *Our social network of MTN Nigeria has seen tremendous growth in the last few month – and this is an important indicator of brand strength and strong customer relationship. Like most successful brands in modern times, we (MTN) recognises the power of online communities influencing customers' personal choices, behaviour and It goes without saying that social media has become inevitable in today's world, with its captivating and limitless power fostering a new channel for propagating one's message to larger audience. With an unquestionable focus on customer engagement MTN considers social media has been very crucial one. The MTN Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram handles are the popular social media channel for customer support and engagement.*

Aside the conventional social media channels, MTN Nigeria also have a dedicated WhatsApp channel with which is used in engaging the customers (see excerpts from Respondents 1 and 2).

Respondent *1: In addition, last year we officially launched the MTN WhatsApp Customer service support channel which is developed in line with our vison of leading the delivery of a bold new digital world to our customers. With five dedicated phone numbers on their contacts, our customers via the WhatsApp application are provided with all day/week access to the MTN customer service support for prompt and easy resolution to all their complaints, enquiries and service request.*

Respondent 2: *We also have the MTN WhatsApp Customer service support channel which we engage our customers with.*

In, addition, the company have other digital touchpoints such as the MTN Voice of the Customer Initiative (mentioned by Respondent 1) and the MTN chatbots (as duly revealed by Respondent 3);

Respondent *1: we have also initiated a platform called the Voice of the Customer Initiative – which is gathering feedbacks from our customers in order to improve service delivery to our valued*

customers. These channels allow senior management to take feedback from customers directly without having to wait on the regular customer interfacing channels like the call centres, service centres or social media

Respondent *3: MTN Group is driven by the goal of positioning itself as a customer experience leader across the various markets its operating in. In recent years we have made significant investment in a set of new digital customer service tools, including chatbots powered by artificial intelligence (AI), to help bring its customer experience management capabilities to the forefront of the industry.*

5.2.1.4   *Social CRM Strategy*

The interviewees demonstrated good understanding of what Social CRM is all about and how the company is implementing social CRM strategy. All three interviewees shared the opinion that developing a close relationship with the customer is the drive for their respective Social CRM strategy as it provides a competitive advantage for their company as enable the firm to get to know their customer better, understand their needs and tailor product and service that serves those needs. The excerpts from the conversation with all three respondents on this matter are provided below

Respondent *1: I can proudly say that the success of this organisation over the years is down to our ability to know our customers, understand their needs, and develop the right products and services solutions that optimally serve the customers' needs. Every employee in this organisation is a potential contact-point to the customer and so we train our staffs to go the extra mile to the expectations of our customers. So, for us, our success lies in being at the centre of the need of the customer and translating those needs into solutions. In this company, we don't sell products we sell solutions that novel in terms of customer experience and this is why we pride ourselves as a company focused strongly on building relationships with the customer. Customer relationship to us means that we understand the customer and we use our innovation to make a difference for us. In general, our success can be linked with us being a customer centric company*

Respondent *2: Good customer relation is one of the major keys to the success of our business. Like many other organisations our focus in recent years is on building good relationship with our existing customers. Relationship building and gaining customer loyalties are marketing strategies that have*

become huge phenomenon in corporate Nigeria in recent times. You will agree with me that this is the era of social media and every business need a formidable presence in social media. Customers these days spend most of their time on the internet and constantly talking to one another and need to engage their brands online as well.

According to Respondent 3, MTN Nigeria social CRM strategy involve the deployment of different solutions and tools with machine-learning capabilities for its social media channels, which is used in capturing customer discussions, feedback and queries. See the excerpts from the conversation below:

Respondent *3: ...it mainly boils down to MTN deploying these solutions or tools with machine-learning capabilities for its social media channels and that is used to capture customer discussions, feedback and queries in the different social media channels and in automating the digital customer service channels. These solutions are also capable of instantly handling inbound customer enquiries from the different digital customer touchpoints. For social media, the principal channels being targeted include Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. The digital solutions always enable instant interaction and engagement with the customers as well as translating the information into useful data that will be employed by the company in product/service development*

5.2.1.4   *Social CRM Capabilities at MTN*

The most important challenge facing organisations in today's digital marketing world is the ability to generate and leverage deep customer insights and then deploy the information in developing innovative products and services. MTN Nigeria has over the years has positioned itself as a company interested in always improving its customers' experience and this has been made possible by investing in different digital customer service tools such as chatbots in driving its customer experience management strategy (as reported by Respondent 3). From the interview with the three interviewees from the organisation, it is concluded that that firm has a strong social CRM capability. According to interviewee 1, the company uses an array of software to foster its social CRM solutions; of which the popular the ones are salesforce and nimble. According to Respondent 2, social CRM strategy in MTN is organisational wide; with customer data transferred and interpreted by the different departments of the organisation. In addition, interviewee 3 mentioned

another solution called eGain Service and IMImobile – wich is used in driving the social CRM within the company. See the excerpts of the conversation below:

Respondent *3: The company uses the eGain Service – the industry's most comprehensive customer interaction hub software suite and its service include: integrated, award-winning applications for call tracking and resolution, contact centre knowledge management, multi-modal web self-service, email management, chat, web collaboration, fax/postal mail management, notifications and service fulfilment. This enabled us to ensure that the complaints and feedback of all customers were given quality responses; further improving the customer experience. In addition, the company also uses a customer service-drive software called IMImobile; a cloud-based communication driven software that is aimed at utilisation digital channel optimisation solutions for enhancing the customer experience management strategy.*

5.2.1.5   *Perceived Benefits of Social CRM at MTN*

The respondents generally shared similar opinion on the benefits of social CRM. Perceived benefits of social CRM generally revolved around engaging the customers and remaining connected as a means of gaining competitive advantage. Social CRM was also seen as a solution for gaining customer and market insight and enhancing brand awareness by sustaining long-lasting relationships with the customers. See excerpts from the conservation below.

Respondent *1: With social media and social CRM system business can build brand awareness and brand loyalty. Social media platforms can help increase trust in your brand, ensure the delivery of quality customer service, obtain customer insight in real-time and get to know your customers better; provides an easy access to promoting product and services content and the most important of all, engaging with the customers. The changing marketing and sales environment are instrumental to the growing interest in social media and social CRM – with more focus now on relationship-based approach in connecting with consumers. Social CRM also helps us in gaining customer insights; like what are trending, the relevant needs and preference.*

Respondent *2: We (firms) now need to connect and engage intimately with the customers in marketing our brand. This goes beyond just opening a social media account on leaving comments or answering questions in those channels, but one needs a medium of collecting this information and transferring across the organisation in delivering the product or service. Social CRM provides such platform. Another important feature of social CRM is that it depicts all members of the organisation as*

potential marketers and reduces the cost of recruiting marketing personnel or the cost incurred from engaging in conventional channels like newspaper, tv and radio adverts. Most importantly social CRM allows the brand to reach to a wider consumer base in a shorter time. Also, with Social CRM, the firm can easily gather customer feedback and use them in improving our products and services. This add up to improving customer satisfaction and user experience.

Respondent *3: Social Media and Social CRM is the way forward for business organisations. There are several reasons why every company and specifically MTN should adopt social CRM. First, it brings you in close contact with the consumer base. Secondly, it is the new form of marketing. You can easily sell your brand online at very low cost. Thirdly, for a very competitive industry like ours; you need to be abreast with the constantly evolving customer demands and needs to remain on top. Social CRM makes this easily possible. And lastly, social CRM assists in the development of innovative products and services.*

5.2.2 Globacom Nigeria

5.2.2.1   Company Profile

GLOBACOM launched in Nigeria in 2003, with the vision of becoming the leading telecommunications service provider in Nigeria and a dream of building one of Africa's biggest and best telecommunications network. With over 25 million subscribers within the first few years of operations, GLO has grown to become the second largest telecom firm in Nigeria and believes it is well on track to achieving her goal of being the biggest and best telecommunications networks in Africa. In 2011, the company made history by becoming the first single company to build an $800 million high capacity Fibre-optic cable, known as GLO-1. It is the first successful submarine cable from the United Kingdom to Nigeria. GLOBACOM'S reputation as one of the fastest growing mobile service providers in Nigeria and Africa is hinged on its incursions into other markets as demonstrated with their presence in Benin, Ghana, Ivory Coast Senegal, Gambia etc. GLOBACOM has the following range of products; Glo mobile, Glo Broad Access, Glo Gateway and Glo-1 cover.

5.2.2.2   *Customer Orientation Approach to Business*

The analysis of the data provided shows that GLOBACOM is a customer-centric business organisation; which pays strict attention to the level of customer experiences and other customer outcomes. The respondents acknowledged the importance of creating a positive consumer experience at the pre- and after-sale. As explained by respondent 1;

> "*Customer-centric approach is simply a business strategy that focus on improving customer experiences in the bid of influence repeat purchases, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. This company has built itself over the years around its customers and providing exciting and innovative products and services that reckons with our customers*".

For the company, the customer-centric business approach simply means pitting the customer at the forefront of the business strategy (Respondent 2). It is recognised in the company that being customer-centric goes beyond just offering great customer services but include fostering of sound customer experience from the awareness stage, through to the purchasing processing and the post-purchase process (Respondent 1). The respondent (interviewee 1) further elaborated and described it as a business strategy of putting the customer first and at the core of the business. This involved understanding the needs and preferences of the customers and designing the service experience that meets the individual needs of the customers, the empowering of the employees in delivering such experience and the use of relevant data for continuous improvement. According to the third interviewee, the customer-centric business approach of the business is evident by the large volume of the market share they enjoy (see excerpts below).

Respondent *3: I am proud to say GLOBACOM is a customer-centric organisation. We put our customers at the centre of our world and this is as a result of our understanding that the satisfaction of our customers is pivotal to our survival in the industry. Hence, we (the company) optimise every opportunity to celebrate our customers. This attitude has continued to pull customers in multitude to the company and keeps pushing the company to the top of the industry. In spite of this success, the organisation continues to devise several new ways to putting smiles on the faces of many of its customers and attracting prospective customers.*

The customer-centric approach of the company has also enabled the organisation to become an industry leader in terms of the voice and internet products and services offered;

Respondent *3: Globacom has consistently been in the fore when it comes to providing subscribers with value services. It was the first Nigerian telecoms network to introduce the preferred per-second billing system (which other Nigerian mobile operators will not introduce until 2007), the multimedia messaging service, text-2-email, mobile Internet, Glo Direct, Magic Plus, N1SIM and free connection for post paid subscribers. As a company, Globacom has been known for many firsts. It made history as the first single company to build a multimillion dollar high-capacity fibre-optic cable, known as Glo-1. It is also the first successful submarine cable from the United Kingdom to Nigeria; and it has decreased telecoms process and provided excess bandwidth to all the cities connected to the cable. This historical initiative has improved teleconferencing, distance learning, disaster recovery and telemedicine among several other benefits. All these achievements are tailored towards providing quality service delivery for the customers.*

5.2.2.3   *The Extent of Social Media Usage*

Each of the three interviewees responded that the company has established social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, Eskimi and Blackberry Channel. The main purpose of the company's social media channels is to connect and engage the customers with informational about the products, services and offers/promotions (as mentioned by Respondent 3). Particularly, social media was recognised as a platform for creating and gathering customer information, regarding their buying behaviour, understanding the individual needs and preferences of the customers, and the service demands (as noted by Respondent 2). It was also recognised that each social media channel has its one strengths and weaknesses and the company has being able to align its marketing activities based on the strength of each of channel;

Respondent *1: You should understand each of these different platforms have their advantages as well as disadvantages. For instance, Facebook offers a wide audience and customisable pages, while Twitter offers a fast-paced environment for the customers to quickly air their opinion and grievances should an issue arise. Instagram provide the option to display the company's art gallery and promotions for products and service; and the important aspect of this social media active that most of the customers are now active here. Nonetheless, no matter which of the platforms, the intention is to easily assess the customer and foster an individualised engagement with them; while at the same time keeping an open line where they can easily reach to us at real time.*

In addition, to the social media channels, the respondents reckoned that there were other digital channels such as the live chat services on the company's website that is used to connect with the customers online.

Respondent *3: Because we are customer-centric, we have provided several avenues through which our customers can get all the help and support they need so they can derive maximum utility with our products and services. For instance, our live chat service is available anytime on the website. This provides a quick avenue to reach us when you are online. Just click on the chat icon available wherever you are on our website to chat immediately with a customer care representative*.

5.2.2.4   *Social CRM Capabilities at Globacom*

The respondents also showed good understanding of the social CRM strategy and capacity of the organisation. Social CRM was understood by the three respondents as a tool for engaging the modern customers and managing long-term relationships. Social CRM was also considered as a tool for competitive advantage. See excerpts below of some of the responses below;

Respondent *2: Social CRM has allowed the organization to interact more freely with the customers and improved internal communication with the organisation. It has allowed the organisation and particularly the social CRM team in carrying out large-scale prospecting and engage in different view of conservation with the customers. It has also helped in developing workable insights that has helped in mitigating risks and operational costs; while improving all aspects of the customer relationship. Social has provided the organisation with the opportunity to harness the power of consumers to market goods and services, further enhancing customer satisfaction, providing support, and developing ideas for new and improved products and services. It has brought a whole new way of customer acquisitions and contributing to highly leverageable direct and indirect revenue to the organisation*

Respondent *3: Once we gather customer insight from the different channels, this information is dispersed across the relevant department who handles the information promptly. GLOBACOM can boast of best minds in the industry with excellent academic backgrounds and diverse work experience who have been contributing their quotas to the growth and performance of the company. GLOBACOM is blessed with dedicated work force (staff and consultants) of over 3,000 highly motivated, first class professionals from within and outside the country and are passionate about building*

technologically advanced infrastructure; creating new products, services and offers; and delivering customer values and experiences that surpass expectations.

5.2.2.5   *Perceived Benefits of Social CRM at Globacom*

Lastly, the respondents reckoned that Social CRM provides a lot benefits some of which include the ability to listen to customer conversation on the different social networks, ensures effective customer relationship management, improve business intelligence and lead discovery, aids in risk mitigation and reduction in operation costs; enhancing customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Interviewee 1 and 2 provides some insight on the perceived benefits as highlighted below:

Respondent *1: Social CRM has allowed the company to gain deeper market penetration and expand our market share in recent years. Before coming into the market, the market leader enjoyed a 50% share of the market; however, with swift success, they only enjoy about 35% of the market share. I don't know if I have mentioned we current the second largest telecom firm in Nigeria based on the market share. This will have achieved by ensuring that our customers are always satisfied with our products and services We have also made a point to remain the pioneer of innovative products and services and this position can only be sustained by continuing in our engagement with the customers and maintaining good and lasting relationships.*

Respondent *2: Social CRM has allowed the organization to interact more freely with the customers and improved internal communication with the organisation. It has allowed the organisation and particularly the social CRM team in carrying out large-scale prospecting and engage in different view of conservation with the customers. It has also helped in developing workable insights that has helped in mitigating risks and operational costs; while improving all aspects of the customer relationship. Social has provided the organisation with the opportunity to harness the power of consumers to market goods and services, further enhancing customer satisfaction, providing support, and developing ideas for new and improved products and services. It has brought a whole new way of customer acquisitions and contributing to highly leverageable direct and indirect revenue to the organisation.*

The introduction of social CRM has helped this organisation with a tool for the effective listening of customer conversations on social media and other digital channels which has helped in improving the level of satisfaction of the customers with our products and service. It also has helped in improving the customer experience journey and this given us the reputation we enjoy in the

industry today. Social CRM has enabled us to understand our customers better including their needs and has provided an avenue for them to voice their opinion; which the company has taken to further improve the quality of our service. Social CRM does not serve the organisation in terms of delivering positive customer outcomes (such as enhance customer satisfaction and brand loyalty), it also serves the company in terms of fostering faster decision making across the different departments. Every department of the organisation now utilise this customer information in increasing understanding of the customers' needs and preference, market and industry trends and speeding up the process in takes in arriving at critical decisions that improves the brand equity of the organisation.

5.2.3 9Mobile

5.2.3.1   *Company Profile*

Emerging Markets Telecommunication Services Ltd. (EMTS), trading as '9mobile, is a Nigerian private limited liability company. EMTS acquired a Unified Access Service License from the Nigerian Communications Commission in 2007. The License enables EMTS provide Fixed Telephony (wired or wireless), Digital Mobile Services, International Gateway Services and National/Regional Long-Distance Services in addition to spectrum assignments in the 900 and 1800 MHz bands. In its 9 years of operation, 9mobile has built up state-of-the-art telecom infrastructure and taken a leadership position of innovation and quality among mobile network operators operating in Nigeria.

With the more recent launch of 4G LTE in October 2016, 9mobile is poised to drive the future of technology in Nigeria through the delivery of high-speed data and quality voice services that will enable customers on its network to do more. With a recent name change and rebranding in July 2017, the company launched its new brand identity – 9mobile, with an unveiling of the new name and logo. The new brand identity reflects the bold and creative attributes which we share with our valued subscribers especially the vibrant youth segment. 9mobile is renowned as the most innovative, youth friendly and customer focused network in Nigeria. We have consistently demonstrated our core values of Innovation, Quality of Service and Customer centricity and have continued to offer our subscribers best in class telecommunication services tailored to suit their needs.

5.2.3.2   Customer Orientation Approach

The respondents generally agreed that a customer-centric approach to business adds value to the company by enabling it to differentiate itself from competitors who do not offer the same experience. The respondents further insinuated that customer-centric approach is geared towards increasing customer satisfaction rates. For example, see the quotes from the interview data from the respondents below:

Respondent *1: Today, our marketing department is the main driver of corporate business results. By using data and applications to truly personalize our offers, we are making a positive difference in the day-to-day experience of our customers. With our Integrated Marketing Cloud, the company has been able to shift its strategy from mass marketing to a segmented and targeted customer-centric approach, improving response rates and customer satisfaction levels. And with data analytics, the company is also able to respond to inbound requests with the right offer at the right time. Campaigns that previously took six months to bring to market now take less than 4weeks, enabling us to achieve much more.*

Respondent *2: At the core of our business strategy is the customer centric approach which to us means a total commitment to the delivering of effective and lasting customer experience. By adopting this customer centric approach, we (9Mobile) are able to engage in close interactions with the customers, collate customer issues, pay attention and create long-term relationships. This is the reason why we (9Mobile) have hundreds of Customer Experience Centres across the country while keeping online care platforms open 24 hours. The essence of this is to keep our customers first and ensure their complete satisfaction with our services. The result is happy customers who spend more, recommend more and stay longer*

5.2.3.3   The Extent of Social Media Usage

With a core focus on customer's interest, 9Mobile strives to customise its solutions that fit the customers' changing needs, while providing the benefits of convenience, coverage, value and total customer experience. Customer experience is about emotions and emotions are about people. While considering various business strategies, it is important to also look at the internal

atmosphere. The right customer experience drives retention, competitiveness and future business growth by motivating customer centric decisions.

Respondent *1: 9Mobile emerged as a good brand because it has been able to fulfil the customer needs and demand, through technological innovation, and a sustainable approach to managing customer relationships. All these factors add up in assisting the company in enhancing its brand. Our customers are considered the most valuable assets and strong tools for gaining competitive advantage. And with this recognition we are committed to delivering the best customer experience to Nigeria. Today, our marketing department is the main driver of corporate business results. By using data and applications to truly personalize our offers, we are making a positive difference in the day-to-day experience of our customers. With our Integrated Marketing Cloud, the company has been able to shift its strategy from mass marketing to a segmented and targeted customer-centric approach, improving response rates and customer satisfaction levels*

Respondent *3: Here we recognise the power of social media for how business and use social media analytics solutions for uncovering customer sentiment dispersed across countless online sources. In addition, we use these solutions for capturing data from social media to understand customer opinion & reaction to the products and services we offer. Thirdly, these solutions assist in identifying customer trends that we use in designing our marketing campaigns. Another function of the solution is that it helps in monitoring the customers' sentiments expressed across the social media channels. There are several social media channels that we use in engaging our customers. We are very active on the major social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and that is not to say those are the only ones, but they are the very common ones that most of the customers are active on. For example, the company uses its Facebook channel to inform customers of new tariffs and latest offers. The company has made it easy for customers to click through to sign up for offers and it has proved to be a very effective marketing tool.*

5.2.3.4 *Social CRM Capabilities at 9Mobile*

Within the company, data is used more effectively for insight-driven marketing (Interviewee 1). The customer information and information from the social medial engagement is used to understand the different customer segment and ensure that our products and services are delivered more accurately and at individualised level. The information is used to build the customer segments based on specific attributes such as customer value, behaviour (both voice and data) and

tenure. The information the company gathers from engaging the customers are also used in tailoring products or offers based on customer preferences. It is also used in identifying relevant upselling opportunities and branding offers for new outlets or products, create new revenue streams, with a focus on the business to customer mobile advertising market.

By integrating social media in the customer relationship management, the company is endearing itself to the customer base and increasing brand awareness by offering the best possible solutions and suitable products to customers. Social media and the CRM solutions in this company is used in fostering market research, product preferences research, and in detecting the industry trends. The focus of the social media strategy is in maintaining relationships and just as a service support tool. It is used in adapting marketing strategies and responding to the actions of the competitors which is achieved through the change in corporate culture. For this social media is used for searching for information regarding the industry and in tracking the activities of competitors; with such information used in developing innovative products and services.

5.2.3.5   *Perceived Benefits of Social CRM at 9Mobile*

Businesses all over the world are recognising the power of the social media in building customer relationships. For us social media provides a channel for engaging with our existing customers, attract new news and keep the customers updated on recent product innovations and services. Social media provides a good access to huge consumer base; with their feedbacks used in developing innovative products and improve the quality of service delivery. Most important social media provide a platform to keep abreast with the customers are thinking and saying and in so doing enable us to provide quality service delivery. To grow its business, the company's representatives recognise it is vital to be very active on social media platforms that best fits your company. As a customer-centric business we are on the very popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Google +; to mention but a few. With these platforms we have been able to engage with our customers to identify areas in our service delivery that requires improvement and so far, we have accomplished giant strides and as present we are well known as the best customer-centric telecom firm in Nigeria.

Social media helps in managing brand reputation, driving brand awareness and fosters customer engagement – that is for both existing and prospective customers. The gathered consumer insights from social media and sentiment analysis are used in accelerating problem solving, product innovation and improving sales. The use of social media all culminates in high level of customer satisfaction and has provided with the formidable brand that we are now. Effort across the organisation is being continuously made to ensure we become the largest brand in Nigeria and this means we have to continue positioning our self in attracting new customers. The company has won numerous award for its customer-centric approach to its business. With social media and our CRM strategy we have been able to speak to our customers across various digital channels in other to collate customers issues, pay attention to their needs and develop long term solutions. The objective of the organisation is to put the customers first and ensure that they are always satisfied with our products and services. The outcome is having customers who spend more, stay longer with the organisation and provides appropriate word of mouth advertisements.

5.3 Discussion of Findings: Towards the development of the Conceptual Framework for Quantitative Study

In modern business environments, customers are now to be considered as the focal element of all marketing actions, with building and management of customer relationships using Social media becoming a high priority for many companies (Rust *et al*. 2004; Karakostas *et al*. 2005; Askool & Nakata, 2011; Alamgir & Shamsuddoha, 2015). The claim from these studies is that developing a customer orientation strategy has become vital for companies to survive and be successful in the currently saturated markets. Consistent with the strategic marketing literature, customer orientation depicts the belief that understanding and satisfying customers' needs should be the priority of any business organisation (Deshpande *et al*. 2000; Webb *et al.* 2000; Luo & Seyedian, 2004). Hence, focusing on the dynamic interactions between the organisation and its customers, the customer orientation concepts holds that all members of the organisation must continuously create superior value for the customers and must do so better than the competitors.

All three telecom firms shared positive evaluation of their customer orientation strategy. Customer-oriented approach is very important for service organisations especially those in a saturated market like the Nigerian telecom industry. From the interviewee with three major companies in the industry, it can be deduced that telecom service operators are generally adopting the customer-centric approach to marketing of their products and services; otherwise referred to the market-pull model of marketing. This involves the identifying the customer's needs and then creating products that addresses and meets the needs. In this digital era, technical analysis of customer journeys has become an important feature for marketing, and this allows companies to map out customer behaviour from the time when they seek information about products and services, to make comparisons with the competitors and ultimately when they take the decision to purchase a product and buy it. According to Davenport (2006) companies that can systematically analyse this transactional data, are bound to outperform their competitors. This is in accordance with the findings in this current study; with the interviewees generally agreeing that collecting customer data provides positive outcomes for their respective telecom firms in terms of improved product/service innovation, increases in sales volume, inducing innovation and in establishing better customer engagement through the creation of stronger brand loyalty.

The telecom organisations' usage of Social media was also explored during the interview process. All three organisations reported deploying various social media channels in interacting and engaging with their customers. Aside from the popular Social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram), other innovative platforms are being used by the organisations interacting and engaging with the customers. For instance, MTN reported a dedicated WhatsApp channel in connecting with their customers. In addition, the company have a platform called the Voice of the Customer Initiative – which is used in gathering feedback from their customers with the aim of enhancing the quality of services delivered. In GLOBACOM, an internet-based channel ("live chat service") on their website is used also in communicating with their customers in real-time. other digital customer touchpoints included Blackberry, Eskimi, Instagram and Google+. These findings are in line with the theoretical background that organisations are more readily adopting Social media channels to get closer to the customers. The interviewees signify that building relationships with the customers is the functional reasons why companies are adopting social media; which is similar to the argument by Trainor et al. (2014).

The motivation behind Facebook's popularity is explained by its ability to create closer relationships with customers on a personal basis through personal and professional lives and strengthens networks. This reinforces the argument by Jussila *et al*. (2014) that there are three major reasons why organisations are adopting Social media, and these are for communication, marketing, and network management. In addition, Katona & Savary (2014) state that social media channels such as Facebook enables brand emotionalization and humanization which all three companies revealed to be central to their Social CRM strategy. Hence it can be suggested that their choice of Social media channels reflects the direction in which their marketing strategy is taking. Further exploration was conducted to investigate the traffic in the Social media channels of the three organisations (see Appendix for the screen shots the Social media channels of the companies).

In addition, a comparative analysis of the traffic of the social media channels of each of the three companies was conducted by measuring the number of followers on both Facebook and Twitter. Facebook and Twitter channels were used because of their popularity both at the individual and corporate levels (Swani *et al*. 2014; Jussila *et al*. 2014). Table 5.3 depicts the Social media performance of the three organisations in terms of followership. Using Facebook as the standard of measurement, MTN Nigeria is the best performing organisation with over 4.2 million followers, followed by 9Mobile with over 1.9 million followers and the least being Globacom Nigeria with over 1.4 million followers. With Twitter, MTN remained the best performer of the three with 746 thousand followers. However, Globacom Nigeria outperformed 9mobile with 479 thousand and 367 thousand followers respectively. In all, it can be inferred that all three organisations should be performing well in their usage of Social media channels (i.e. Facebook and Twitter).

Table 5.3: Comparative Analysis of Social Media Performance based on Followership

	Number of Followers in the Social Media Channels	
	Facebook	Twitter
MTN Nigeria	Over 4.2M	746K
9Mobile Nigeria	Over 1.9M	367K
Globacom Nigeria	Over 1.4M	479K

The analysis in Table 5.3 suggests that marketers and the management from the three telecom giants are making frantic efforts to engage their customers in social media channels in the viewing of fostering formidable relationship with the customers – both old and prospective ones. Nonetheless, an understanding of how to effectively manage customer relationships has become an important area of focus for both organisational management and even academicians. This is because organisations are realising the different economic values each customer brings to the firms and as such organisations are adapting their customer offerings and communications strategy accordingly; moving away from product-or-brand focused marketing toward a customer-focused approach. More so, communications directed towards potential customers can now be customised to each individual customer by means of emails, social media and other internet forums which are all incorporated into Social CRM (see Greenberg, 2009; Quinton & Harridge-March, 2010). This Social CRM established connection between the organisation and the customers generates a new set of knowledge which is stored in a database and translated for use by all members of the organisation in developing new products and enhancing services

The findings from this qualitative phase of the research indicates that the telecom organisations are all adopting Social CRM as a strategy to adhere closer to the customers in a mutually beneficial relationships fosters the co-creation of values (between customers and organisations) and in gaining competition advantage. This insinuation was also echoed in Senn *et al.* (2013) and Harrigan *& Miles,* (2014). The findings in the current study shows that all three organisations placed high priority in gaining new customers, retaining old customers, addressing individual needs and enhancing customer loyalty through sustained communication efforts supported by Social CRM. It was generally agreed that good customer relationships are valuable assets to telecom organisations as they consider the customers as important value co-creators and recognises the importance of Social CRM in establishing such collaborations that will provide mutual benefit to the customers and ultimately the firms in terms of increased customer patronage and competitive advantage.

The most important challenge facing organisations in today's digital marketing world is the ability to generate and leverage deep customer insights and then deploy the information in developing innovative products and services. In today's business world, big data has become the norm. Big data here means very large and complex data sets that can be very difficult to process without the

appropriate technology. Just as it has been previously mentioned in the literature (Michaelidou *et al*. 2011; Schultz *et al*. 2012; Jussila *et al*. 2014), the telecom firms involved in this current study recognises the importance of positive electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and open channel communication with the customers in understanding the customers' needs and with such knowledge producing products and services that meets the customer's specific needs. dialogue initiation has been well recognised by these telecom companies; meaning that the effectiveness can be improved by generating advanced knowledge through dialogues regarding their customers' needs, resulting in better customer solutions. The era of social media has not only increased collaboration between firm and customer but has continued to support technological advancement that are enabling firms to customise offerings to suit individual customer needs and desires.

Snijders *et al*. (2012) argued that the big data challenge before modern organisations concern the capturing, curation, storage, searching, sharing, transferring, analysis and visualisation. Hence for organisations that are implementing Social CRM; big data offer them the opportunities to follow customers during their customer journey, i.e. from brand awareness or orientation to purchasing and even becoming loyal to the brand. The findings for the interview data shows that the telecom firms in Nigeria are adopting Social CRM and this has enabled them process this big data and as well dissipate such information/knowledge across the different departments that organisational units and have shown good competences in developing, incorporating and responding to the information they gather through Social media, implying that the companies have a high Social CRM capability which in turn is expected to result in the companies achieving high customer outcomes (Harrigan *et al*. 2014; Trainor *et al*. 2014). In addition, the important role played by employees in actualising the business and Social CRM strategy was well recognised by the interviewees.

Lastly, the interviewees' opinion on the benefits of Social CRM systems in terms of gaining customer insights, attracting new customers, improving customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, was sought. The essence of this was to establish if the organisations realise the benefits of the Social CRM systems they were adopting. The interviewees' shared similar opinion on the benefits of implementing Social CRM some of which they highlighted as it creates a platform for reaching a wider consumer audience, drive brand awareness, increase sale volumes, drive product innovation, enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty and ultimately improve competitive

advantage. From the interview, it was deduced that the companies are very positive that Social media and Social CRRM has and will positively impact their business outcomes. The opinions of the three interviews are in line with the theoretical framework that suggests that Social media and Social CRM has a positive impact on organisational outcomes such as customer satisfaction, retention, and loyalty, improved sale volumes and competitive advantages (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010; Järvinen et al. 2012).

Transforming enterprises to become customer-centric while still expanding revenue and profit is one of the prime business strategies today. In this contemporary business environment, customers are the central element of all marketing actions; with the efficient of management of customer relationships becoming a priority for companies (Karakostas et al. 2005; Keramati et al. 2010). This is highlighted by the claim in the literature by both academics and practitioners that a customer orientation strategy is necessary for business survival in saturated markets. A typical customer-orientation strategy is the social CRM. Social CRM has rapidly become one of the leading competitive business strategies in the modern era. Social CRM is about managerial efforts to manage business interactions with customers. To realise social CRM success, business executives and management are expected to implement social CRM processes and technologies and foster employee behaviour that supports coordinated and more effective customer interactions throughout all customer channels.

The findings from the analysis of the qualitative data indicate that telecom firms in Nigeria to a very large extent are incorporating social media in the CRM strategy. Along with scholarly efforts to categorize organizations' usage of social media applications, marketing analysts are investigating the nature of social media applications adopted by organisations in shaping and maintaining good relationships with their customers (Go & You, 2016). Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google plus, WhatsApp, and blogs were identified as the commonly adopted social media channels by the three telecom firms investigated in this study. These social networking sites are used by the organisations to facilitate collaborative social experiences and dialogue with the customers, therefore allowing social customer relationship management or social CRM to take place (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). These social networking sites have also been regarded as effective channels for organisations seeking to implement diverse branding strategies, given that these sites allow customers to share their experiences and opinion

concerning the organisations' products and brand in real time (Jansen *et al*. 2009; Baird & Parasnis, 2011)

As identified during the interviews and with the evidence in the extant literature, many organisations today are rapidly adopting social networking services, bringing about a shift in customer relationship management from the mere managing of customers to collaborating with customers. These social media channels and networking sites offer a range of avenues for the sharing of diverse forms of information ranging from media content (such as television programs, videos, photos, books) to user-generated content (UGC). With this realisation, many practitioners and scholars are exploring how customers formulate and share their opinions within online communities and how the sharing of these opinions are affecting organisations' business outcomes (Hennig-Thurau *et al*. 2010; Go & You, 2016). Given the increasing customer ownership of communications facilitated by social media, it has become both necessary and practical for business organisations to develop multichannel social media strategies for engaging and managing relationships with their customers. This has been positively demonstrated by the three-case study organisation.

The combination of social media and customer relationship management (also known as social CRM) therefore presents an appropriate business strategy useful to getting closer to customers (Woodcock *et al*., 2011). Social CRM in this essence is all about increasing customer insight and engagement; affecting the customer lifecycle value in acquisition, retention and value development (Greenberg, 2010). By delivering insights about customer attitudes and behaviour, social CRM can help companies to put the consumer in the centre of their business strategy (Woodcock *et al*., 2011). The essence of social CRM is therefore to change the organisation's philosophy from being products-centric to customer-centric. One of the most important processes of their social CRM as highlighted in the finding is the capacity of the organisations to extract valid previously unknown, and comprehensible information from social media and other customer-contact channels and using it for value creation; which is the focus of social CRM (Hennig-Thurau *et al*. 2010; Harrigan & Miles, 2014).

The interviewees in this current study demonstrate that in their respective companies, these technologies (i.e. social media and other innovative channels such as live chat in *organisation C*) reach across the various customer touch points and they are used in enhancing customer

experience, automate marketing, sales and customer services, identify customer behavioural patterns, attend to customer complaints, determine customer satisfaction levels, support customer segmentation, etc. (Payne & Frow, 2005; Xu & Walton, 2005; Greenberg, 2010; Keramati et al. 2010). Further, all three organisations indicated a company-wide implementation strategy for social CRM; with the management recognising employees as an effective tool to the successful implementation of the social CRM strategy. It can then be said that the organisations are working in line with the suggestion of Reinartz *et al*. (2004) that customers are more interested in having contact with people than technology-driven systems.

Furthermore, the analysis of the interview data suggests that the organisations recognise the importance of their employees possessing the technical skills required to use the social CRM applications and the know-how required to convert customer data into appropriate customer knowledge (Melville et al. 2004; Coltman, 2007) and also the need for all the employees to have the right attitudes when dealing with the customers. This latter aspect is very important as it reported that employee attitudes is an important area of change required to build a customer-oriented philosophy (Bell et al. 2002). In summary, it can be said that the three telecom organisations that participated in this study are implementing social CRM and in this digital and customer-centred era, it is expected that the social CRM strategies translate to positive customer outcomes. Social CRM solutions not only have the potential of improving customer loyalty, but also the internal processes which in turn increases business efficiency (He et al. 2010; Kirk, 2011). From a marketing perspective, it identifies, and targets best customers based on frequency and monetary scoring.

Social CRM as seen from the perspectives of the interviewees helps in managing marketing campaigns with clear goals and quantifiable objectives. It also creates and manages solid sales leads for field and telesales representatives. Marketing and cross-selling opportunities are also increased. The enabled tight and accurate targeting and one-to-one marketing increases returns on marketing investments. CRM solutions also add more valuable knowledge gained directly from customer interaction. This knowledge improves product development process. From sales perspectives, CRM solutions improve telesales, field sales and sales management through real time information sharing among multiple employees. Sales efficiency is increased through wireless and internet-based order entry. Territory management is improved with real time account information

targets. Within social networks, organisations and the customers affect one another through complex social and interpersonal influences, whether consciously or unconsciously, actively or passively, normative or informative (Eck van *et al*., 2011).

Electronic Word of mouth (eWoM) reflects part of this social influence. Social media provide an unparalleled platform for consumers to publicise their personal evaluations of purchased products and thus facilitate word-of-mouth communication (Chen et al. 2011). Given that customers tend to lack trust in most forms of advertisement (Nielsen, 2007), social media and social CRM offer opportunities to create trust and to reach a large audience easily and at a very low cost. The (strong) effects of social networks on customer retention and adoption have been determined / confirmed in multiple studies (Rahmandad & Sterman, 2008; He & Li, 2010; Kirk, 2011; Nitzan & Libai, 2011; Yoganarasimhan, 2012). Although, the effects can be more complicated than just linear effects as suggested in some of these studies, the effect of social networks depends on the type of contact between customers and may vary over time (Risselada et al., 2014). Social media is gaining strong attention with business (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and even though social media is taking control of the brand reputation of companies, managers and marketers are still struggling to measure its real impact. This explains why the role that social media plays in managing brand health and reputation is perceived as one of the most important tensions.

Advocates of social media see it to create value-added content for customers and to monitor or deal with negative customer sentiment. It may also be a way to connect more strongly with customers and to engage them in the value creation. However, one of the potential dangers is that when firms fail to properly engage the customers, this could lead to the dissatisfaction of the customers and leads to negative publicity (Greenberg, 2010; Go & You, 2016). Within a social media environment, customers can easily become value destroyers instead of value creators for companies (Verhoef, Beckers, & van Doorn, 2013; Verhoef, Reinartz, & Krafft, 201**0**). Trying to engage customers in brand building through social media introduces a weaker control (Verhoef et al., 2013). On the positive side, it may create brands that are more preferred by consumers as brands are more based on customer preferences. However, the lack of control has a strong downside, especially for strong brands. Strong brands already have a strong consumer franchise and the additional returns of engaging customers in creating further brand equity is somewhat smaller. The risks of a lack of control are, however, larger for strong brands (Go & You, 2016).

Customer engagement and loyalty is an extension of customer communication that social media and social CRM technologies have enabled. As van Doorn et al. (2010, p. 254) posit, customer engagement behaviours go beyond transactions, and may be specifically defined as a customer's behavioural manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers. Social CRM technologies have shifted customers from passive recipients of marketing communications to highly active and engaged partners in value creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Hollebeek, 2011). Furthermore, some customers get involved in the co-creation of products and services (Kumar *et al.*, 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010). However, how customer engagement and loyalty initiatives are strategically and tactically enabled in the organisation and in social CRM, and how value can be created from them is less clear (Bijmolt *et al*, 2010; Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Thus, there are major challenges for organisations that are open to implementing social CRM system, but it is still deemed realistic to propose the following hypotheses:

H_1: Consumers' use of social media has a direct and positive influence on consumers' perceived value of SMM and Social CRM strategies

H_2: Perceived value of SMM and Social CRM strategies has a positive impact on how consumers measure the usefulness of the customer-oriented service delivery from telecom firms

H_3: There is significant difference, at 5% level, in customer's evaluation of the firm's SMM and social CRM strategies due to personal socio-demographics (age, level of education, and standard of living)

H_4: Customer perceived value of SMM and Social CRM strategies has a positive relationship with brand resonance

H_5: Customers' perception of the company's customer-oriented service delivery is positively related to brand resonance

H_6: Customer perceived value of the firm's SMM and Social CRM strategies mediates the relationship between organisation's customer-oriented service delivery and brand resonance

5.4   Conceptual Model for the Quantitative Research Phase

Following the discussion of the interview data and comparing with the evidence in the literature, the conceptual model (see Fig. 5.1 below) was developed in addressing the research hypotheses. The direction of flow of the relationship is depicted by the arrow heads as suggested by the research hypotheses – with the bold lines signalling direct relationships and the broken lines, the moderating relationship.
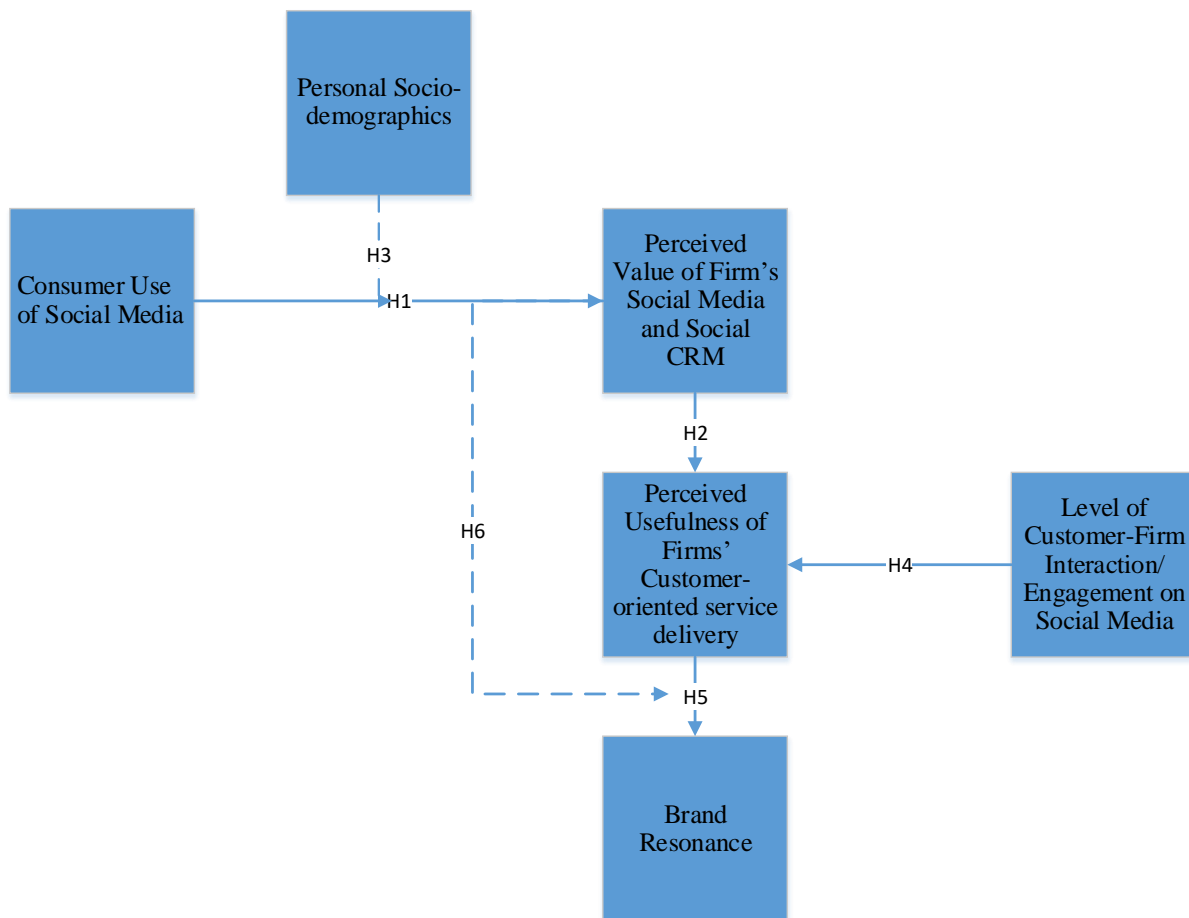
Table 5.1: Conceptual Model

5.5   Summary of Chapter

Presented in this chapter is the findings and discussion from the first phase of the research which is to explore the extent to which telecom firms in Nigeria has embraced social CRM and the strategies being employed by the telecom firms. The findings from the qualitative data analysis indicate that the sampled telecom firms like most business organisations are adopting the customer-centric approach to business. In addition, the finding indicate that the telecom firms are adopting social CRM systems as a means of gaining competitive advantage; as well as establishing a beneficial relationship with their customers and ensure co-creation value. As discussed above, the findings from this phase of the research is consistent with the literature report that business organisations are increasingly adopting social CRM systems because of the desire to understand and satisfy the needs of the customers.

For the sampled telecom firms, social CRM creates a platform for organisations and their customers to engage in dynamic interactions and relationship, which the outcome is in the creation of superior value for the customers; better than what the competitors would be offering. Social CRM achieves this by fostering the interactions and engagement between the firm and customers (both existing and prospective) in view of providing customised and personalised services. However, despite the growing interest and popularity in social CRM, there is a dearth in the literature on its fruition in delivering value to both the firm and customers. Having established that the telecom firms in Nigeria are implementing social CRM, the next phase of the research therefore seeks to evaluate the value it creates in terms of brand reputation and brand loyalty from the customers' perspective from the quantitative phase of the research design.

CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM QUANTITATIVE DATA

6.0   Introduction to Chapter

The aim of this current study is to empirically examine the influence of consumers' perception of social media marketing (SMM) offerings on the consumer buying decision processes for telecom products and services in Nigeria; as well as the moderating effect of cultural orientation on the relationship. This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of the data gathered in the second phase of the research design. First the response rate is discussed, then the findings from the descriptive statistics of the data is presented and thereafter the inferential statistics of the data as stipulated by the research hypothesis is presented. The summary of the findings concludes the chapter.

6.1   Response Rate

A minimum of 400 responses was initially set out before the commencement of the data collection process. In achieving the sample size requirement, 200 copies of the questionnaire were distributed among the gatekeepers in each stratum; implying a total of 600 questionnaires distributed. At the

end of the data collection process which lasted about three weeks, 507 copies of the questionnaires were returned; however, 15 copies were discarded as they contained incomplete data. Thus, 491 responses were used in the data analysis; giving a response rate of 82%. This indicated not a only a good response but was above the estimated sample size; implying that the data would provide a good picture of the consumer population characteristics of the Nigerian telecom industry. Further, the high response rate is in accordance with the findings in the literature that individuals are more likely to complete traditional paper-and-pencil surveys that online responses (Kwak & Radler, 2002; Mertler, 2003; Yetter & Capaccioli, 2010).

6.2   Findings from the Descriptive Statistics

This section provides descriptive analysis of the data by reporting the number of counts and percentage distribution of the information in each section of the questionnaire, the mean of central tendency of the data as well as the measure of dispersion/variability of the data set.

6.2.1 Demographic Profile of Sample

The demographics of the participants were measured by three elements, the gender distribution, highest level of education and the area of residence in Lagos State. Particularly, the last demographic variable is used in ascertaining the socio-economic status of participants within each stratum. The descriptive findings for each of the variables is presented in the subsequent subsections.

6.2.1.1   *Gender Distribution*

Out of the 490 responses that was used in the data analysis; 62.5 percent were from the male participants while the female responses provided 37.5 percent representation (see Fig. 6.1). This is contrary to the report in the literature that women are more likely to participate in survey than men (Curtin *et al.* 2000; Moore & Tarnal, 2002). Given prior knowledge of the evidence in the literature, both genders were given equal opportunity to participate in the study. As a matter of fact, effort was made to reach out equally to both genders in the different locations were the questionnaires were distributed.

Figure 6:1 Gender Distribution of the Wave 2 Sample

6.2.1.2 Age Distribution

The sample comprised mostly of young participants as shown in Figure 6.2. As shown, most of the sample were within the18-25years group with 53 percent distribution, followed by those within the age group 25-25years with 32 percent distribution. Participants within the age group 35-35years and 45-55years presented 7.5 percent representation respectively. The young age distribution is explainable and again this may be accounted for by the locations where the questionnaires were distributed. All strata, locations were students and young adults were located were targeted. This is because of the evidence in the literature that suggested that young adults are more willing to participate in survey than older adults (Stanton & Rogelberg, 2001; Kaplowitz et al. 2004).
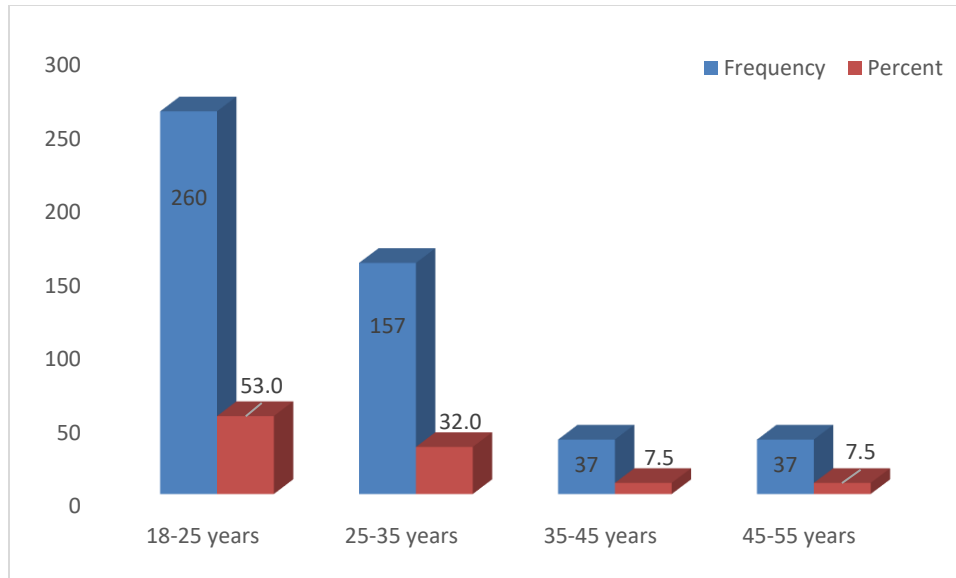
Figure 6.2: Age Distribution of the Wave 2 Sample

6.2.1.3   Level of Education

The sample also showed good level of education as majority of the sample reporting having a graduate degree or higher (postgraduate degree) – with a 59 percent representation. Participants with diploma degree presented the second largest representation with 23 percent and the least representation provided by those with O'level degree with 19 percent representation. This finding is in line with the general perception that more educated and people of affluence tend to participate more in surveys than less educated and less affluent individuals (Curtin et al. 2000; Goyder et al. 2002).
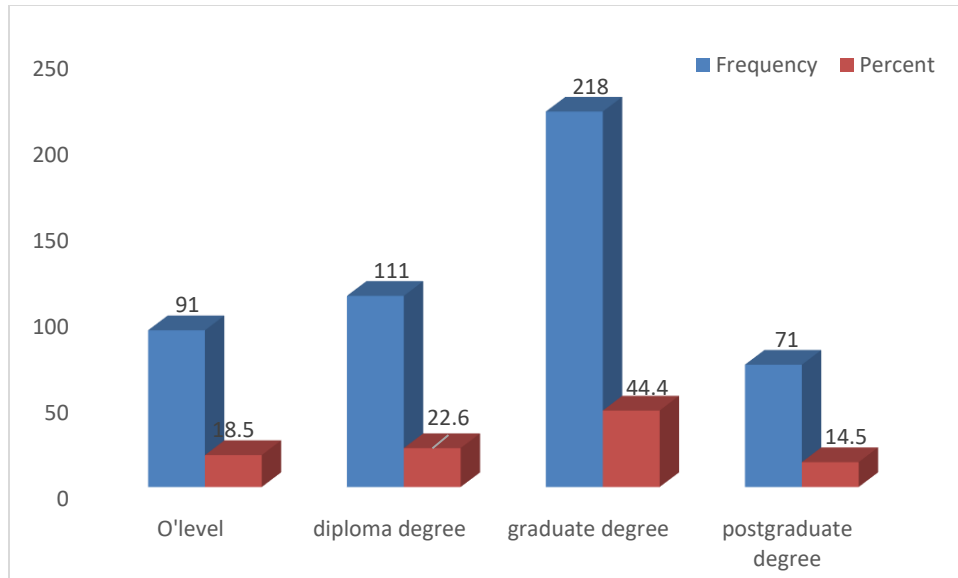
Figure 6.3: Level of Education of the Wave 2 Sample

6.2.1.4   *Sample Distribution Based on Location (Strata)*

The last demographic data describe the participants based on their location in Lagos – a measure that also doubles as a measure of the socio-economic characteristics of the status. Most of the participants (40 percent) were located on the Lagos Mainland – which can depict as people within the low socio-economic level. This is followed by participants in the Lagos Central (middle class) with 31 percent; with the participants from the Lagos Island (representing the upper-class) providing 29 percent representation. In general, the sample representation can be best described as even; and this can be down to the data collection technique which ensured that all strata were provided with equal opportunity of representation.
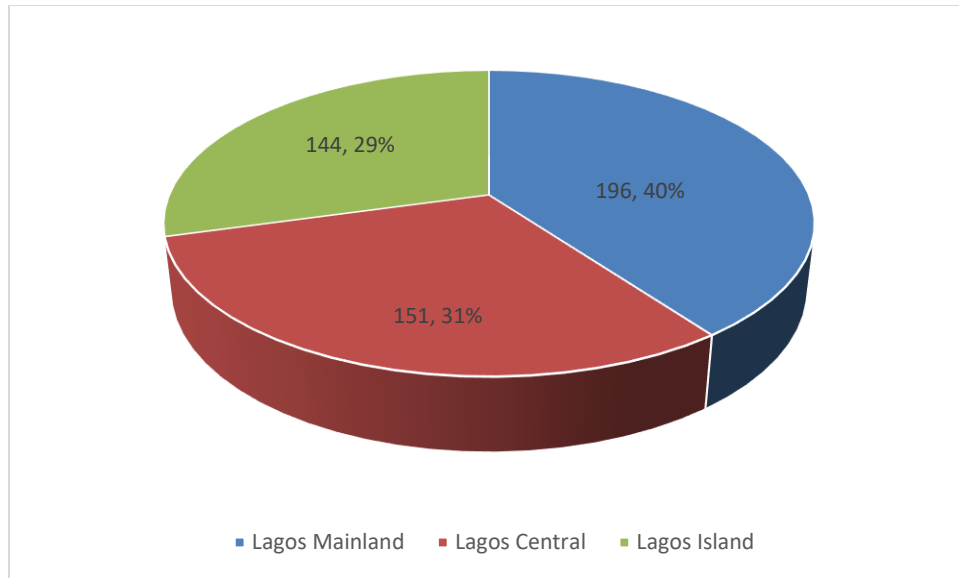
Figure 6.4: Sample Distribution Based on Location (Strata)

6.2.2 General Usage of Social Media by the Participants

In addition, as part of the background information, four questionnaire items were used in assessing the participants' general use of social media. These include: favourite social media channels used by the consumers, the number of years the consumers have been using social media, the frequency of visit to the social media channels and the main purpose for the use of the social media. The findings are discussed below.

6.2.2.1 *Consumers' Favourite Social Media Channels*

Instagram was found to be the consumers' favourite social media channel as indicated by 53 percent of the sample. This was followed by Facebook with 35 percent, and then Twitter (9 percent) and the least being YouTube with 3 percent. This finding is consistent with the report by Knight-McCord et al. (2016) that reported Instagram has grown to become the preferred choice of social media channel among young adults.
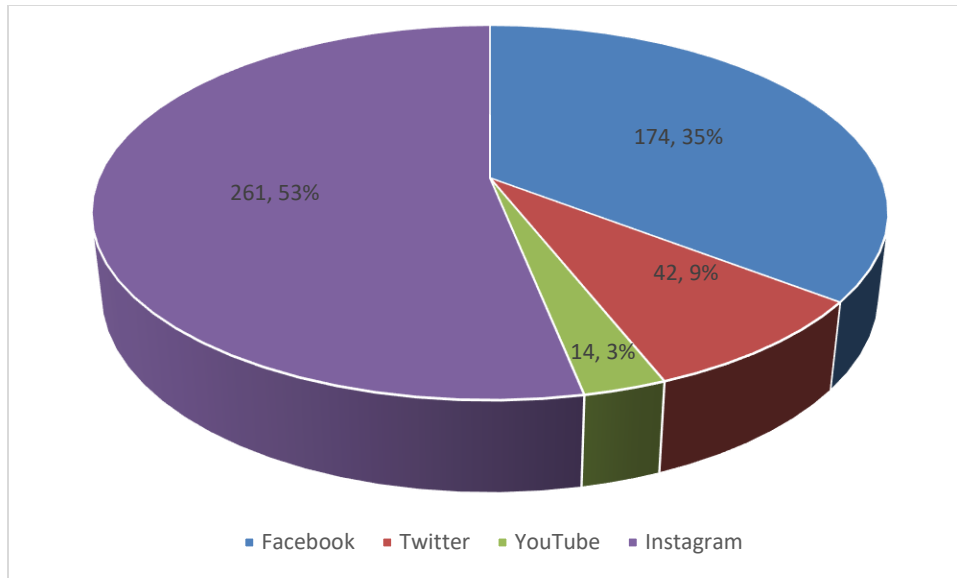
Figure 6.5: Favourite Social Media Channels

In addition, the demographic differences on the favourite social media was computed using correlation statistics. Table 6.1 shows the result of gender differences on the favourite social media choice (see Appendix 7 for the rest of the demographic characteristics). In all the favourite, social media channels in exception of YouTube the male participants outperformed the female in exception of YouTube. Recent evidence in the literature suggest that young adults are most likely to use social media channels that allow them to post pictures and videos (Knight-McCord *et al*. 2016; Smith & Anderson, 2018); and there is little wonder that Instagram and Facebook are mostly visited by this group. Almost four times as many males use Facebook (119) and Instagram (152) as they use Twitter (36). The females (14) favoured YouTube while no male indicated the use of the social media channel. Further almost the same proportion of male (58%) use Instagram as the females (42%). N.B. the sample was predominantly made of male participants than female.

Table 6.1: Impact of Gender Differences on Favourite Social Media Choice

	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Facebook	119(68.4%)	55(31.6%)	174(100%)
Twitter	36(85.7%)	6(14.3%)	42(100%)
YouTube	0(0.0%)	14(100%)	14(100%)
Instagram	152(58.2%)	109(41.8%)	261(100%)
Total	307(62.5%)	184(37.5%)	491(100%)

6.2.2.2 Duration (in Years) Using Social Media

Most of the participants (33%) reported that they have been using social media for 6-8years. This was followed by those that have been using the social media for 3-5years (27%). A sizeable portion of the sample reported using social media for up till 3years (22%); with 11 percent of the sample using social media for 9-12years and 7 percent using it for more than 12 years. Thus, it is concluded that the sample is well experience with the use of social media in terms of the number of years of usage. This finding is consistent with the report in the literature suggesting that young adults have become engrossed in the use of social media and are using the different social media channels as means of innovative learning (Lenhart *et al*. 2010; Steijn, 2014; Thomas *et al*. 2017).

Again, a cross tabulation analysis was conducted to explore the impact the demography factors have on the duration of use of social media (see Table 6.2 for the result). Note all those demographic variables that failed that reported insignificant relationship were removed from the analysis (Appendix 9). Only gender and level of education variable showed significant relationship from the chi-square test and so used in the analysis. In terms of gender distribution, the male participants outperformed the females in one category, where the 6.7% of the female responding using social media for 9-12 years compared to male with 6.2%. This therefore informs that the male participants have been generally using social media for longer period that the females. In addition, first degree graduates showed they have been using social media better in all categories.
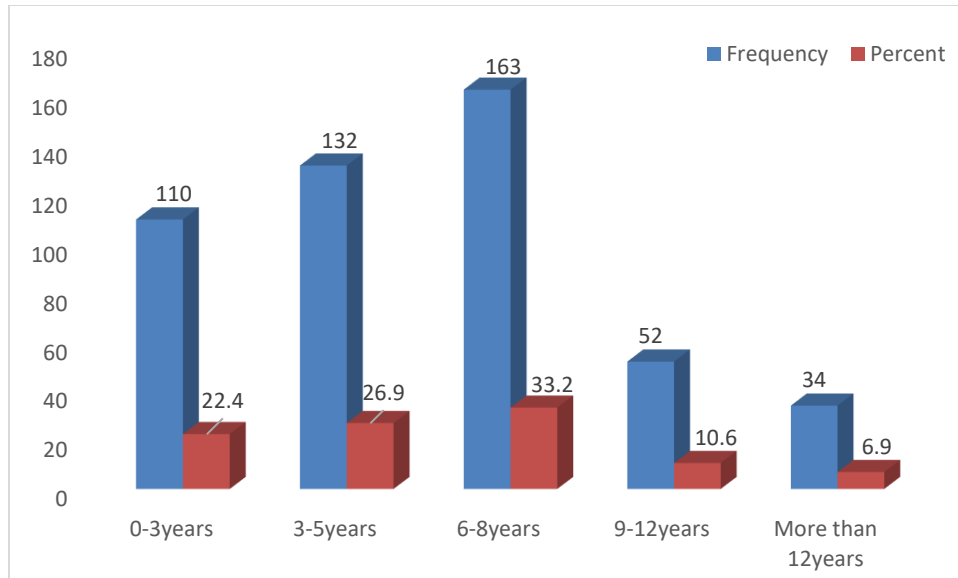
Figure 6.6: Duration of Using Social Media

Table 6.2: Cross Tabulation Analysis between Demography/Duration of Using Social Media

			Duration of use of Social Media					
			0.3yrs	3-5yrs	6-8yrs	9-12yrs	>12yrs	Total
Gender	Male	Count	71	89	110	19	18	307
		% within gender	23.1%	29.0%	35.8%	6.2%	5.9%	100%
		% of Total	14.5%	18.1%	22.4%	3.9%	3.7%	62.5%
	Female	Count	39	43	53	33	16	184
		% within gender	21.2%	23.4%	28.8%	17.9%	8.7%	100%
		% of Total	7.9%	8.8%	10.8%	6.7%	3.3%	37.5%
Level of Edu.	SSC	Count	8	33	18	32	0	91
		% within gender	8.8%	36.3%	19.8%	35.2%	0.0%	100%
		% of Total	1.6%	6.7%	3.7%	6.5%	0.0%	18.5%
	Diploma	Count	38	14	59	0	0	111
		% within gender	34.2%	12.6%	53.2%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
		% of Total	7.7%	2.9%	12.0%	0.0%	0.0%	22.6%
	Graduate	Count	50	80	70	3	15	218

		% within gender	22.9%	36.7%	32.1%	1.4%	6.9%	100%
		% of Total	10.2%	16.3%	14.3%	0.6%	3.1%	44.4%
	Postgraduate	Count	14	5	16`	17	19	71
		% within gender	19.7%	7.0%	22.5%	23.9%	26.8%	100%
		% of Total	2.9%	1.0%	3.3%	3.5%	3.9%	14.5%

6.2.2.3   Frequency of Visit to Social Media Channels

As it regards the frequency of visit to the social media channels, most of the participants (57 percent) indicated visiting social media more than 10 times a day. Other participants frequent the social media at least 2 times a day (19 percent) and 2-5 times a day (17 percent). It can therefore that the participants frequent social media on daily basis and provides a good target market for businesses engaging in social media marketing and social CRM. The finding is consistent with the report by Kuh (2001) that young adults spend close to eight hours daily online. In addition, this is good news to telecom service providers as it indicates that the consumers are willing to spend money in purchasing data (Christakis *et al*. 2011; Wang *et al*. 2011). This information is very important as it will help the telecom firms in designing future marketing strategies.
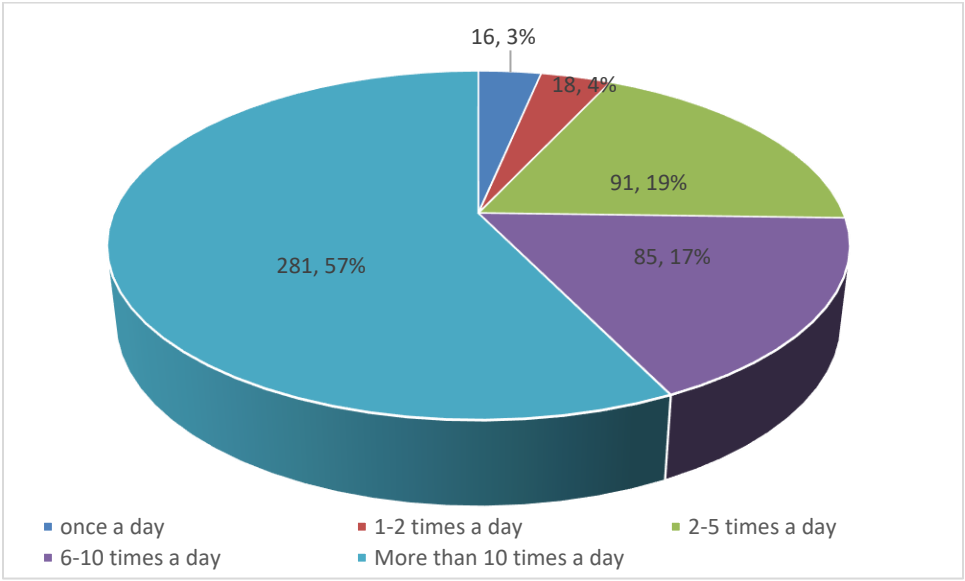
Figure 6.7: Frequency of use of Social Media

6.2.2.4   *Main Purpose of Using Social Media*

Lastly, the participants were asked to indicate what they primarily do on social media. Posting and comment on social media walls was the predominant use of social media with 20 percent representation. This was closely followed by those that indicated that they go to social media to read news feeds and comments (17 percent) and those that said they use social media for all the highlighted purposes (with 17 percent representation). A sizeable portion of the sample (16 percent) indicated that they participate in brand (company) communities online. This finding supports the insinuation in the literature that social media provides the modern digital avenue with which organisations and brands can connect with the consumers; as it provides a two-way communication platform where both parties can receive feedback on their query (Whiting & Williams, 2013; Smith and Anderson, 2018). This information is also important for businesses as it will put them in focus on what consumers are most interested in while on social media and enable them to orchestrate the right strategy in gaining the consumers attention (Krasnova *et al*. 2017).

Table 6.3: Reason for Using Social Media

	Frequency	Percentage
updating textual profile and visual profile	42	8.6
online games and playing quiz	27	5.5
reading news feeds and comments	83	16.9
Posting comments on the social media walls	100	20.4
Sending inbox messages	45	9.2
Chatting and connecting with friends	31	6.3
Participation in brand (company) communities	78	15.9
All of the above	85	17.3
Total	491	100

6.2.3 Consumers' Perceived Value of SMM and Social CRM

One of the study's major variables in this wave of the study was to measure consumer perceived value of social media marketing (SMM) and social CRM strategies of the telecom firms. Nine questionnaire items (Q8-Q16) were used in measuring this variable using a 5-point Likert scale type. Most of the sample (85 percent) had high to very-high perception of the value of the SMM and social CRM strategies of the telecom firms. Customer perceived value have continuously been recognised in marketing literature has a formidable tool; as greater levels of customer perceive value has been argued to influence customer satisfaction, increased market share and stronger competitive advantage (Ashibly, 2015). Nevertheless, the challenge facing firms and marketers is how to enhance customer perceived value.

The importance of perceived value in general in modern business environments also stems from the fact that it is easy for consumers to now compare brand, product features as well as prices online, and easy to switch between suppliers. Past studies have measured customer perceived value as multi-dimensional construct; however, in this current study it was measured as a single construct measured as social value. Social value dimension was chosen based on the idea that businesses generally design that social networking sites based on two criteria: activity-based and people-based criteria. Activity focused social media strategy places emphasis on social interaction through site-specific content while people-focused strategy emphasizes social interaction through user-driven personal content.

Perceived value has been used by some researchers in explaining why people buy some things or opt to make some expenses (Turel et al. 2010). Value is considered to source from the actual interaction with (or expected use of) a product or service and to reflect an overall perception upon their importance for an individual. Thus, following a rationale borrowed from consumer behaviour, value is captured as a perceived value concept through individual views on the difference between "what is received and what is given" (Zeithaml, 1988). Although value in marketing was traditionally associated with the perception of the utility of a product or service, more recent research using perceived value in other disciplines, including IS, acknowledged this construct to be multi-sided (Lee *et al*. 2002, Turel *et al*. 2010). Hence, social value may be of more significant importance in online that emphasize social interaction within a group, especially in social media

commerce. Therefore, marketing activities social media commerce is expected to focus on facilitating efficient social experiences.
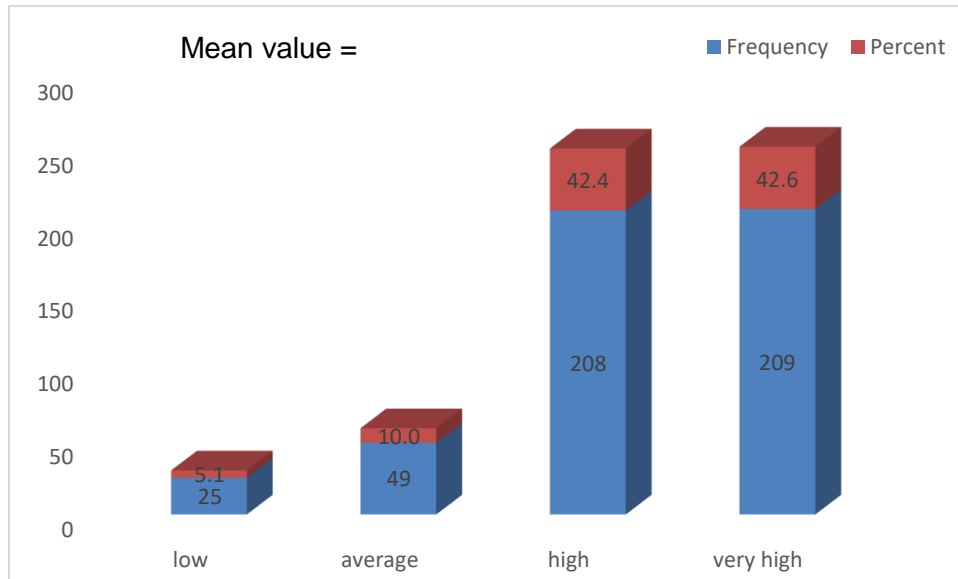
Figure 6:8: Consumers' perceived value of SMM and Social CRM

Further, the influence of the demographic factors on the perceived value of SMM and social CRM was tested using crosstabulation statistics. Nonetheless, the chi-test was first computed to determine the demographic factors that had significant relationship with the variable; the result showed only gender and level of education at $p<0.05$ (see Appendix 8). In terms of gender, no significant differences were found between the male and female participants as it regards their "very high" perception of the value of SMM and social CRM at 51 percent and 49 percent respectively (See Table 6.4). Nevertheless, the female participants had a more reversed perception of the value of SMM and social CRM as indicated by 71 percent scoring "average" perceived value. In addition, the higher the level of education, the better the perceived value of SMM and social CRM.

Table 6.4: Demographic Difference on the Perceived Value of SMM and Social CRM

Level of Value	Gender		Level of Education			
	Male	Female	O'level	Diploma Degree	Graduate Degree	Post-graduate degree
Low	25(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	25(100%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Average	14(28%)	35(71%)	14(29%)	0(0%)	35(71%)	0(0%)
High	162(78%)	46(21%)	32(15%)	60(29%)	63(30%)	53(26%)
Very High	106(51%)	103(49%)	91(19%)	111(23%)	218(44%)	71(15%)

6.2.4 Perceived Usefulness of the Customer-Oriented Service Delivery by the Telecom Firms

In the addition, the participants had a generally good impression of the customer-oriented practices of the telecom firms (see Fig. 6.9). Most of the participants (85 percent) rated the customer-oriented practices at "high" and "very-high" level. In addition, the average mean value of 26.65pts out of possible maximum score of 35 points further establishes it.
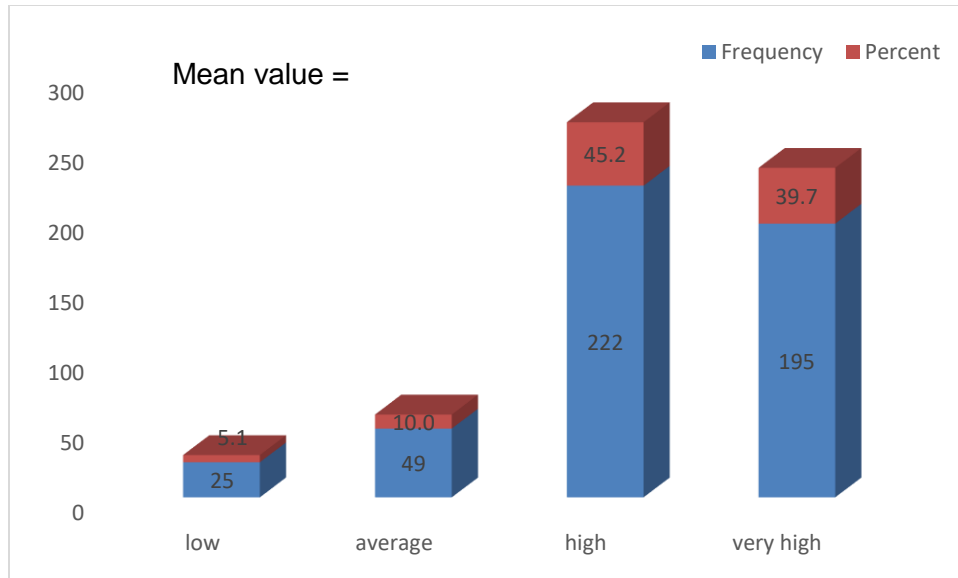
Figure 6.9: Evaluation of Firm's Customer-Oriented Service Delivery

In addition, a correlation analysis between demographics, the use of social media and the perceived firm's customer-oriented service delivery was computed (see Table 6.5). Gender, favourite social media channel, number of years using social media, frequency and the nature of usage of social media were the only significant factors that correlated with the variable – perceived firm's customer-oriented service delivery. The frequency of use of the social media channel and nature of use of social media showed the strongest correlation with the variable at (R=0.710, $p<0.01$) and (R=0.517, $p<0.01$).

Table 6.5: Correlation Analysis between Demographic Factors and Perceived Customer-Oriented Service Delivery

		Perceived Firm's Customer-Oriented Service Delivery
Gender	Pearson Correlation	0.394**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Level of Education	Pearson Correlation	-0.052
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.249
Age Group	Pearson Correlation	0.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.322
Area of Residence	Pearson Correlation	0.021
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.640
Favourite social media channel	Pearson Correlation	0.105*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.020
Number of Years using Social Media	Pearson Correlation	0.410**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Frequency of use of Social Media	Pearson Correlation	0.710**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
Nature of use of social Media	Pearson Correlation	0.517**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

These findings are significant, especially in the current competitive environment, where businesses (especially those in the service industry) to now paying more attention in developing strategies that will enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty in the view of driving positive business outcomes. Thus, it is important for the firms to understand how consumers perceive or value their customer-oriented process and the consumer and social media factors that are influencing such perception. Many organizations nowadays are embracing customer-focused strategies not only to offer commodities, but also to push the limits of customer engagement to stage experiences and

social media for customer service provide one of such avenues that allows firms to create stronger connections in improving their customers' experience.

And as Baird & Parasnis (2011) rightly pointed out, the global acceptance of social media and its attractiveness to consumers are causing businesses to feel extreme pressure in the need to engage the customers exactly where their attention is; and this does not relate to just creating a social media channel or being active online, but in developing distinctive customer service strategies that are carefully adapted for the need of this new media and the social consumers. By interacting and engaging with the customers on individual basis through social media, companies are forming very loyal social customers; customers that will be willing to spend more with the company, stay longer and will tell their friends about the company (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). This is because product and service quality, customer satisfaction and company profitability are intimately connected.

Positive organisational outcomes such as competitive advantage, thus result from maintaining higher levels of customer satisfaction. Since customers constitute the bedrock of a business, this outcome is attainable through the delivering of prompt, reliable and improved service quality which is expected to increase customer's commitment to services. Organizations that excel in this customer-oriented service delivery, considers as their primary organisational objective satisfying the customers' needs rather than just product selling or servicing. In this perspective, the organisation considers social media and social CRM has a tool for endearing the vast consumers to the brand and a means of ensuring customer loyalty to the brand. Essentially, customer satisfaction and the maintenance of customer relationship are in fact dependent on how well a product and service measure up to the customer's original expectations of quality (Rahman, 2004).

6.2.5 Measure of Customer-Firm Interaction and Engagement

The sample also indicated having a good interaction and engagement with the telecom brands on social media. 47 percent of the participant rated the level of interaction and engagement with the firms at a high-level; while 29 percent rated it at a very-high level. 11 percent rated at an average level and 13 percent rated it a low-level. In addition, the mean value of 28.12pts out of possible 40points further establishes the insinuation that the sample had a good level of perception of the quality of consumer-firm interaction and engagement especially through social media.
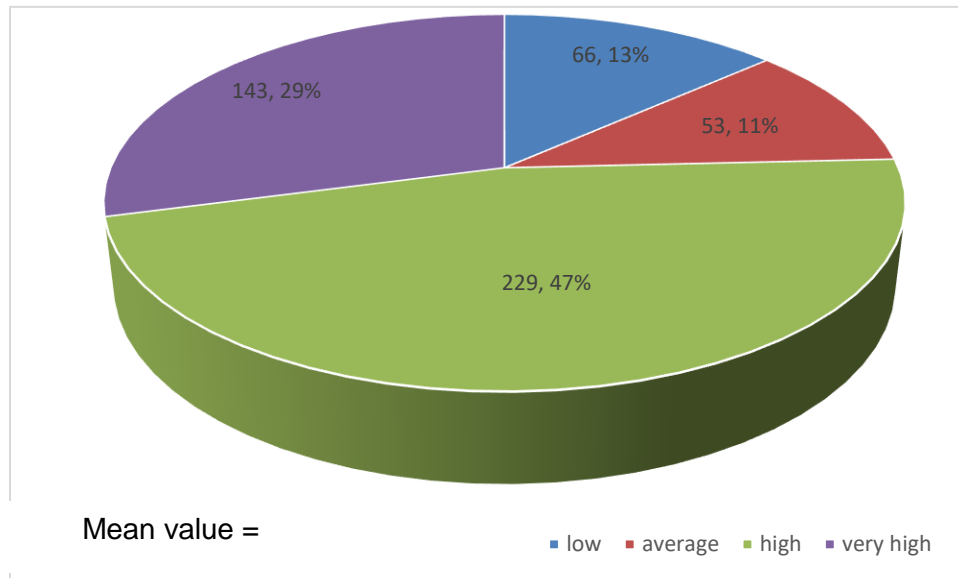
Figure 6.10: Measure of Customer-Firm Interaction and Engagement

Again, the correlation between the demographic factors (including the efficacy of the use of social media usage) and customer-firm interaction and engagement was computed (see Table 6.5). Of all the factors, only gender and frequency of use of social media have significant relationship with the dependent variable (customer-firm interaction and engagement). In the implication is that the male gender tends to interact/engage more with the telecom brands online than the females. This again is consistent with the reports in (Knight-McCord *et al*. 2016; Smith & Anderson, 2018).

Table 6.6: Correlation analysis between demographic factors and customer-firm interaction and engagement

		Customer-firm interaction and engagement
Gender	Pearson Correlation	0.426**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Level of Education	Pearson Correlation	0.063
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.163
Age Group	Pearson Correlation	0.053
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.239
Area of Residence	Pearson Correlation	0.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.617
Favourite social media channel	Pearson Correlation	0.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.459
Number of Years using Social Media	Pearson Correlation	0.062
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.172
Frequency of use of Social Media	Pearson Correlation	0.126**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.005
Nature of use of social Media	Pearson Correlation	-0.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.978

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

With consumers now being able to gather information through communication paths what were inexistent few years ago, the capacity to interact and engage businesses and brands has become possible. Consumers now equipped with mobile devices that facilitates such interactions and engagement have become automatic brand ambassadors or scorner (Gallaugher & Ransbotham, 2010). With social media, customer influence now extends beyond geographically proximate contacts, and are now being able to influence consumer behaviours through online communities, shape the success of products/service or brands and mould markets. For instance, positive word of mouth within social media communities can act as a shining that promotes the brand. However,

while firms have long recognized the importance of listening to and communicating with customers, they are struggling to navigate this emerging complex, consumer empowered environment, i.e. social media (Gallaugher & Ransbotham, 2010).

Historically, firm and customer interactions focused on two direct relationships (firm-to-customer and customer-to-firm) and one indirect relationship (customer-to-customer). Now social media not only intensifies these existing relationships but also creates new options and new variations on conventional options. Social media now offer communication paths that enable consumers to consume, produce, and redistribute content. As such, social media offer two important options: (i) they greatly enrich traditional customer and firm interaction; and (ii) they enable the firm and consumers to monitor what other customers are saying about the firm (Kane *et al*. 2009). Further, social media allow firms to create mechanisms for customer-to-customer dialog and then, more importantly, to monitor and mediate that dialog.

Customer-to-customer interaction is important; as positive word-of-mouth remains the most effective and persuasive form of advertisement (Kumar et al. 2016). Social media operate like a giant word-of-mouth machine, catalysing and accelerating the so-called viral distribution of information. For example, firms can use Twitter re-tweets, Instagram tags and Facebook's news feed and "like" buttons to encourage customers to spread information. These mechanisms are amplifiers, and alternative forms of word-of-mouth marketing; which integrates with contents that are not very observable that other forms of marketing and advertising (Neff, 2010). However, there is the negative aspect which business organisations must be aware off; as negative comments and bad publicity can quickly spread discontent and ridicule the brand. As such monitoring of customer-customer dialog and fostering customer-firm interactions and engagement acts as a measure of control of such bad publicity and as a means of gathering market intelligence (Baumol *et al*. 2016).

6.2.6 Measure of Brand Resonance

The last variable measures the level of brand resonance of the telecom firms among the consumers (sample). Again, most of the participants had very good perception of the brand resonance of the telecom firms – as indicated by 79 percent of sample scoring it the level of high to very-high brand

resonance. The mean value (30.23pts at possible maximum of 45pts) further establishment. Nonetheless the high standard deviation indicate there is a wide dispersion between the measure of the perception.
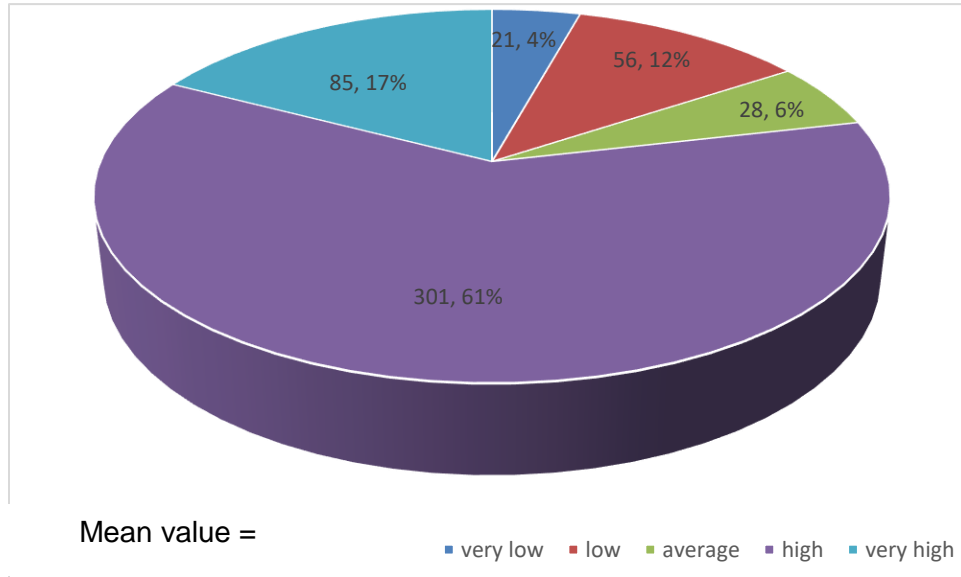
Figure 6.11: Measure of Brand Resonance

Again, the impact of the demographic factors on brand resonance was computed using correlation analysis. First there was a positive relationship between gender and brand resonance; and based on the composition of the sample it can be inferred that the male participants showed better measure of brand resonance compared to the female; as shown by (R=0.228, p<0.001). Also, the higher the level of education qualification the stronger the brand resonance as suggested by (R=0.236, p<0.003). Another factor that showed significant relationship was the number of years using social media (R=0.149, p<0.001). The positive relationship suggests that the more accustomed the consumers are to social media, the stronger their brand resonance. Also, the frequency of use of social media was found to be another significant predictor of brand resonance (R=0.124, p<0.05).

Table 6.7: Correlation analysis between demographic factors and brand resonance

		Customer-firm interaction and engagement
Gender	Pearson Correlation	0.228**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Level of Education	Pearson Correlation	0.236**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003
Age Group	Pearson Correlation	0.063
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.160
Area of Residence	Pearson Correlation	0.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.873
Favourite social media channel	Pearson Correlation	0.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.136
Number of Years using Social Media	Pearson Correlation	0.149**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001
Frequency of use of Social Media	Pearson Correlation	0.124**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.006
Nature of use of social Media	Pearson Correlation	0.007
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.869

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Modern consumers are now super-active when it comes to sharing, liking, tagging, following through tweets, posts, updates, video and picture etc. Hence, social media should have an exciting impact on a brand's resonance and visibility because it calls for instant feedback from the users which are likely to be wilful and emotive. Marketers need to understand that creating brand

resonance on social media platforms requires touchy and evocative messages that can attract consumers attention and not necessarily flooding them with messages. Creating brand resonance online is the casual connectivity - in sync to create loyal customers through judgements, responses and community feelings. Therefore, in the battle of resonance, more brands are trying to capture social-space online, but the question remains as to how far social networking is credible in terms of salience, performance, imagery, judgements, feelings and resonance (Chakraborty & Bhowmick, 2013).

Companies try to build and convey the presence and visibility and consequently synchronize their brands with the consumers over the internet on three bases – relevance, resonance and significance. Moreover, there is word of mouth communication from peers and community that does most influence the sync between brands and consumers. However, this synchronization is difficult to understand; content (feedback and participation), collaboration (collective action through two-way communication), community (sharing of common interest between "me-too" people), and collective intelligence (growth through improved use of resources, sites and people) governs the social media framework. Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, Forums, Maps etc. are the prime consumer engagement platforms leveraged by marketers to synergise the show.

6.3 Test and Validation of Research Hypotheses

This section of the chapter presents the result of the validation of the research hypotheses presented at section 5.3 (Chapter 5). Again, the reliability analysis of the main variables of study shows strong internal consistency (ranging from 0.8 to 0.9) of the items measuring each variable (as shown below. Originally presented in Table 4.7 in Section 4.4, Chapter 4). The test and validation of the hypotheses was computed using inferential statistics (linear multiple regression). The result of each of the hypotheses are described and discussed in the subsequent sub-sections.

6.3.1 Test and validation of Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 proposes that consumers' use of social media has a direct and positive influence on consumers' perceived value of SMM and Social CRM strategies. The result of the analysis shows

that there is a positive relationship between the consumers' use of social media (i.e. the aggregate of the nature of the use of social media, duration of use of social media, frequency of use of social media and favourite social media channel) and the perceived value of SMM and social CRM strategies at (R=0.632). The R square and the Adjusted R square columns indicate the variations in the measured of the dependent variable (perceived value of SMM and social CRM strategies) caused by dependent variable (the consumers' use of social media).

The R-square describes the percentage of variation in the dependent variable explained by all independent variables in the model; whereas, on the other hand the Adjusted R-squared gives the percentage of variation explained by only those independent variables that affect the dependent variable. Thus, judging by the Adjusted R-square, a measure of change in the measure of consumers' use of social media influences 42 percent change in the perceived value of SMM and social CRM strategies. The last column of the model summary table indicates the significance of the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. And with Sig. ($p<0.05$); it therefore indicates that Hypothesis 1 is fully supported at (R=0.632, $p<0.05$).

Table 6.8a: Hypothesis 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig.
Hypothesis 1	0.632	0.431	0.424	0.000

Predictors: (Constant), nature of use of social media, duration of use of social media, frequency of use of social media and favourite social media channel

Again, the individual strength of each of the independent variables (i.e. favourite social media channel, duration of use of social media, frequency of use of social media and the nature of social media) in predicting the perceived value customers attach to social media marketing and social CRM strategies of the telecom firms was computed. All the independent variables in exception the "nature of use of social media" were found to be significant predictors of consumers perceived value of SMM and Social CRM strategies at p<0.05. Favourite media channel was found to be the strongest predictor at (β=0.590, p<0.05). This therefore implies that consumers on Instagram and

Facebook will attach more value to the SMM and Social CRM strategies; implying that telecom firms should target both Instagram and Facebook when planning SMM and social CRM strategies.

The next significant predictor was duration of use of social media at (β=0.329, p<0.05). With the earlier finding that the sample have being using social media for more than three years, thus suggest that the longer they use social media, the better the appreciation of the value of SMM and social CRM strategies from the telecom firms. As earlier reported the majority, the portion of the representation comprised mainly of the male participants and those with at least a university degree. Lastly, the frequency of use of social media was also found to be a strong predictor at (β=0.209, p<0.05). the implication of this finding is that the telecom firms will have to always devise strategic means that will keep their customers constantly engaged in the social media channel. It is therefore concluded that hypothesis 1 is fully supported.

Table 6.8b: Coefficients Table for Hypothesis 1

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.
1	(Constant)	32.926	2.001		.000
	the favourite social media channel	.590	.145	.329	.000
	duration of use of social media	.329	.129	.176	.005
	frequency of use of social media	.209	.013	.141	.000
	nature of use of social media	.061	.129	.020	.636

Dependent variable: consumers' perceived value of SMM and social CRM Strategies

The finding in this hypothesis agrees with the evidence in the literature that social media technology has becoming a strong marketing tool for modern business environment and a means for engaging the customers in a long-lasting relationship (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011; de Vries et al. 2012; Gensler *et al*. 2013). The nature and dynamics of interactivity between consumers and organizations continue to evolve at a rapid pace (Ghazali et al. 2016). Specifically, while these interactions are gaining prominence in terms of marketing and customer relationship management,

consumers are simultaneously gaining increasing influence in the online sphere (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010; De Vries et al. 2012; Malthouse et al. 2013). Social media has now become a major component of the marketing mix; affecting how customers and businesses relate with one another (Gensler et al., 2013).

In addition, with social media increasingly influencing modern society, it has become imperative for brands and marketers to understand how effectively they can use social media tools in reaching out to their customers as well as understanding how the customers are viewing their social media marketing strategies (Yan, 2011; Gensler et al. 2013). Yan (2011) highlighted some of the advantages of social media, particularly as it concerns social media marketing and social CRM, and these include: building a sense of membership with the organization, communicating with brand values, encouraging consumers (or audiences) in engaging in a two-way communication. This (two-way communication) in turn is excepted to guide organisations in maintaining a competitive advantage, informing brand's vision, building positive brand associations and brand awareness and assessing whether the brand is being properly communicated to the consumers (Yan, 2011). Particularly, the last objective has been proven right in this current study as the positive relationship between social media and consumers perceived value of SMM and social CRM indicate that the consumers are being properly communicated to.

The incorporation of SMM and social CRM strategic components like reviews, commenting, referrals, user ratings, recommendations, wish lists, and sharing of information about products purchased are the part of social media marketing and are widely adopted by modern companies (Tuten and Solomon, 2016). Due to this growing popularity of social media, more than 88 percent of businesses across various industries (from manufacturing to service industries) are now adopting social media as a means of improving SMM and social CRM (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013; Malthouse et al. 2013). Yadav & Raham (2017) reported that most business corporations are now utilising different social media platforms in their day-to-day marking strategies and that consumers are not left out; with Casey (2017) also reporting that over 39 percent of modern consumers are using social media in gaining information about products, services and brans. Hence, the finding of this positive relationship between social media and consumers' perceived value of SMM and social CRM should be of interest to telecom brands. In addition, the finding that Instagram is the

favourite social media channel amongst the consumers, indicates that brand marketers need to focus on this social media channel for connecting with the consumer base.

6.3.2 Test and validation of Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 proposes that the value consumers attach to the SMM and social CRM strategies (independent variable) has a positive impact on how they perceive the usefulness of the customer-oriented service practice (dependent variable) from the telecom firms. The result of the correlation analysis is shown in Table 6.9a. A positive and significant relationship was reported between the dependent and independent variables at (R=0.574, p<0.05). The R Square indicates that a unit change in the measure of consumers' perceived value of SMM and social CRM strategies of the firms will cause a 33 percent increase in the consumers' perception of the customer-oriented practice initiated by the telecom firms.

Table 6.9a: Hypothesis 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig.
Hypothesis 2	0.574	0.329	0.328	0.000

Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Value of SMM and Social CRM Strategies

This finding agrees with the results in Rodriguez et al. (2015) that reported customer technology, such as social media marketing and CRM positively impacts customer-oriented processes. These processes include understanding customers, adapting to customers changing needs, measuring customer satisfaction, and aligning customer needs with sales and marketing activities (Rodriguez et al. 2015). The Internet has changed the nature of shopping in the past two decades which has supported the proliferation of ecommerce sites and thus shopping has shifted to e-shopping. Another revolution in the social media is the enablement for interactive engagement between customers and organisations; and with the increasing acceptance of social media opening the prospect for innovative customer-oriented processes (Liang and Turban, 2014).

Evidence from other studies have reported social CRM systems help improve the firm's capacity to collaborate both with the internal customers (employees) and the external customers (Askool & Nakata, 2011; Hutter et al. 2013; Giannakis-Bompolis & Boutsouki, 2014). This very critical as social CRM technology is designed to help business and marketers in managing effectively customer relationship by improving information sharing and communication, enabling the learning of customers' needs and creating innovative and customised solutions for the customers (Hutter et al. 2013). Further, the finding supports the suggestion in the literature that organisations are integrating use of social CRM and SMM systems in reaching new markets and gaining improved understanding of both existing and prospective customers (Panagopoulos, 2010; Rahman et al. 2014; Orenga-Rogla, S. & Chalmeta, 2016).

6.3.3 Test and validation of Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 proposes that there is significant difference, at 5% level of significance in customer's evaluation of the firm's SMM and social CRM strategies due to personal or socio-demography factors. Testing this relationship was achieved by adding the socio-demography factors in model 2. The result of the analysis shows that the demography indeed shows a significant influence in the relation as indicated by the increase in the Pearson's correlation coefficient from R=0.574 to 0.694 (see Table 6.10a).

Table 6.10a: Model Summary for Hypothesis 3

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig.
Hypothesis 3	0.694	0.482	0.477	0.000

Predictors: (Constant), Perceived Value of SMM and Social CRM Strategies, gender, level of education, age group and area of residence

Table 6.10b shows the individual effect of all predictor variables. Again, the perceived value of SMM and social CRM strategy showed the was the most significant predictor at (β=0.435, p<0.05), followed by gender at (β=0.305, p<0.05); and then level of education (β=0.135, p<0.05). Age

group and area of residence did not show any significant correlation. Thus, it is concluded that hypothesis 3 is fully supported.

Table 6.10b: Table 6.8b: Coefficients Table for Hypothesis 3

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | Sig. |
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
1 (Constant)	7.195	1.188		.000
Perceived Value of SMM and social CRM strategies	.435	.026	.551	.000
gender	.305	.373	.399	.000
level of education	.135	.190	.134	.000
age group	.251	.195	.042	.199
Area of Residence	-.038	.213	-.006	.857

Dependent Variable: consumers value the usefulness of the customer-oriented service practice

The findings in this hypothesis contributes to the view that the market is currently developing, with value placed on the quality of the relationships between organisations and their customers in maximising the positive outcomes of service interactions (Kim, 2009; Garrido-Morgado et al. 2016). This finding here is consistent with the evidence in the literature suggesting that the perceived value of SMM and social CRM advances consumers perception of the quality of the consumer-oriented service delivery by the organisations (Castellanos-Verdugo 2009; Nóbrega, 2009). Customer orientation has been a fundamental concept to the theory and practice of marketing management. It has been well established that customer-oriented firms outperform competitors and provide greater customer satisfaction.

Rapp et al. (2010) described customer orientation as a personality variable that reflects the service worker's disposition to meet customer needs. In their stud, the employee's customer-oriented disposition is positively related to both the supervisors' ratings of overall performance and the service workers' self-evaluation of overall performance. Nobrega (2009) describes customer-oriented service process as a "servant behaviour", by which service-oriented culture would be the basis for development and delivery of high-quality services. This approach refers to perform

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activities that provide benefits to those that are being served, highlighted the attributes of customer-oriented organisation to include; responsibility, simplicity, renunciation, initiative, desire to help, welfare practices and utility (Kim, 2008; Nobrega, 2009; Rapp et al. 2010; Rodriguez et al. 2014).

6.3.4 Test and validation of Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 proposes a positive and significant relationship between the level of customer-firm interaction/engagement on social media and consumers' perception of the usefulness of the customer-oriented service delivery by the telecom firms. Table 6.11 shows the result of the analysis. The level of customer-firm interaction showed a positive and significant correlation with the consumers' perceived usefulness of customer-oriented service delivery at (R=0.726, p<0.05). The implication is that by increasing the level of communication with the consumers, telecom firms in Nigeria can improve the measure with which the consumers perceive their customer-oriented services that are being delivered. The R Square (0.527) indicates that an increase measure of interaction/engagement will cause a 53 percent variance in the measure of consumers perceive usefulness of customer-oriented service. Thus, hypothesis 4 is fully supported.

Table 6.11: Model Summary for Hypothesis 4

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig.
Hypothesis 4	0.726	0.527	0.526	0.000

Dependent Variables: perceived usefulness of customer-oriented service delivery

This evidence in consonant with the report in the literature. Contemporary consumers, for instance, are highly likely to consider product or brand related information provided by other consumers, rather than relying exclusively on marketing material (Hanna et al. 2011). At the same time, today's digital consumers expect their preferences to be centre stage for the companies they choose to purchase from through collaborative, personalized interactions (Greenberg 2010; Munnukka & Järvi 2014). It has thus become crucial for companies to create a superior consumer experience, which can be leveraged by fostering enhanced consumer engagement, and which, in turn, is expected to generate enhanced customer loyalty (Brodie *et al.* 2013). Consumer needs for interactive, collaborative, and personalized interactions have been strongly influenced by the rapid

proliferation of social media, which provide a new mode of communication and interaction, not only among consumers, but also between consumers and brands (Hollebeek et al. 2014; Sasser et al. 2014).

Leading companies such as Google have created extensive engagement platforms comprising services ranging from mobile apps (e.g., Google Play), to physical devices e.g., Google Glass (Brodie et al. 2013; Breidbach et al. 2014). In addition, firms are increasingly turning to social commerce; that is, social media-enabled sales channels (Baethge et al. 2016). Social media have transformed the nature and practice of online communication into an extensive, two-way dialog among users, which may cover private and/or social topics and issues, as well as about companies' products, brands and services (Lehmkuhl & Jung, 2013). Networked consumers no longer merely act as passive recipients of product-, brand or firm-related information, but are enabled to create, modify and exchange their own, personalized content and applications through social media (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Hollebeek & Brodie 2016).

Social CRM constitutes a consumer-centric management approach (Greenberg 2010; Dutot 2013) that considers that the customer relationship is no longer controlled by the company but is based on interactions not only between the company and focal consumers, but also among consumers themselves (Faase et al. 2011; Choudhury & Harrigan 2014). The consumer is thus regarded as a collaborative partner within a consumer-centric environment (Greenberg 2010); thus, leading to the rising importance of consumer- or customer cocreation (Vargo & Lusch 2016), and coproduction (Sawhney et al. 2005; Etgar 2008), which reflect consumer participation in organizational processes, resulting in mutual benefit for both parties (Choudhury and Harrigan 2014).

6.3.4 Test and validation of Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 proposes that the perceived value consumers attach to SMM and social CRM strategies has a positive relationship on brand resonance. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 6.12. The positive relationship was confirmed at (R=0.565, $p<0.05$). This indicate that the value consumers attaching to the SMM and social CRM strategies by the firms has a positive and direct effect on the brand resonance of the firms. The Adjusted R Square confirms this relationship

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by indicating that a measure in the increase of the predicting variable will affect a 33 percent in variance in the measure of brand resonance.

Table 6.12: Model Summary for Hypothesis 5

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig.
Hypothesis 5	0.565	0.326	0.325	0.000

Dependent Variables: Brand Resonance

Brand resonance (or loyalty) is highly central for brand success. This is because, without loyal customers, the brand would be very vulnerable because it takes loyal customer to keep the brand going (Aaker, 2010; Shafei & Tabaa, 2016). Loyal customers are important not only in regards of sales, but they also provide the brand with role models for other customers, organizations and partners through their enthusiasm for the brand. Thus, loyal customers are incremental ambassadors for the brands they support (Aaker, 2010). Moreover, loyal fans or customers are also more twice as likely to pay attention to brand advertising and have a higher rate of brand recall (Wali et al. 2015) – an important aspect of the brand salience as opined by some commentators (Keller et.al., 2008; Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012; Xevelonakis & Som, 2012). Brand Resonance comes into play when customers transcend the buying-selling paradigm and feel a deep psychological bond with the brand.

This step is typically pertinent for our purpose as it involves organic engagement from the customers' part. Social media not only create new firm-customer interactions, they expose these to others (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012). Customers can participate in the firm-customer relationship of other customers, and customers can learn about the firm by observing others. For example, commentary in online forums is visible to other customers, and user reviews have become increasingly important and helpful sources of product information (Harridge-March & Quinton, 2009; Ghazali et al. 2016; Huang et al. 2018). Beyond just observation, customers can corroborate or refute the experiences of other customers. Furthermore, social media allow firms that are otherwise separated from customers by intermediaries (e.g., those selling through resellers) to regain direct customer interaction (Huang et al. 2018). Social media also augment customer-to-customer interaction with firm-customer dialog. For example, users can interact with each other on review sites; which offers. While the firm-customer relationship existed before social media,

the expanding communication paths provide additional options for reinforcing or shaping the relationship (Lai et al. 2009; Kirk, 2011; Laroche et al. 2013).

6.3.5 Test and validation of Hypothesis 6

Hypothesis 6 proposes that customers perception of the customer-oriented service delivery is positively related to brand resonance. The result of the analysis (see Table 6.13) confirms the proposed relationship at (R=0.846, p<0.05). The Adjusted R Square (0.657) indicates that a measure in the increase in customer perception in the customer-oriented service delivery will result in a 66 percent variance in the measure of brand resonance. Thus, hypothesis 6 was fully supported.

Table 6.13: Model Summary for Hypothesis 6

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig.
Hypothesis 6	0.846	0.657	0.656	0.000

Dependent Variables: Brand Resonance

Marketers have become more interested in learning about, organizing, and facilitating brand communities (Laroche et al. 2013), which are "based on a structured set of relationships among admirers of a brand" (Lin, 2010). Many reasons underlie this interest, including the ability of brand communities to influence members' perceptions and actions, often in persistent and broad-based manner (Lingavel, 2015); to rapidly disseminate information (Nadeem, 2012); to learn consumer evaluations of new offerings, competitive actions, and so forth; and to maximize opportunities to engage and collaborate with highly loyal customers (Oluseye et al. 2014).

In the present-day cluttered and often hostile marketing environment, many marketers believe that the facilitation of brand communities is both cost effective and powerful. Regarding the cognitive component, identification with the brand community involves categorization processes, whereby the consumer formulates and maintains a self-awareness of his or her membership within the community, emphasizing the perceived similarities with other community members and dissimilarities with non-members (Oyeniyi & Abiodun, 2009; Shafei & Tabaa, 2016). This captures the consciousness-of-kind aspect of brand communities. Regarding the affective component, identification implies a sense of emotional involvement with the group, which social

psychologists have characterized as an "affective commitment" to the group (Wali et al. 2015) and which brand community research has characterized as "kinship between members" (Ahmed & Zahid, 2014).

Therefore, identification means that the consumer agrees (or strives to agree) with the community's norms, traditions, rituals, and objectives Kane et al. 2009) and promotes its well-being (Keller, 2009). Many brand relationships are also functional in that they focus on extracting greater exchange value from the company and the brand. The so-called loyal customers often engage relationships not through zealous brand evangelism, but rather through a pragmatic desire for the better deals and special treatments that come with elite relationship status (Kirk, 2011; Kim & Ko, 2012). Here again strong brand relationships emerge as a by-product of meeting functional needs, not a drive to express identity through the brand (Kim & Ko, 2012). The status of the brand relationship as a means versus an end is nowhere clearer than it is within the context of brand relationships forged at the social community level.

As evident in the literature, consumers are often more interested in the social links that come from brand relationships than they are in the brands that allow those links to form (Chomviailuk & Butcher, 2010; Gensler et al. 2013). People often develop brand relationships to gain new social connections or to level out their connections in some significant way. Brand relationships can also provide venues wherein emotional support, advice, companionship, and camaraderie are provided. As research into so-called Third Place brands (Rosenbaum et al. 2007) has shown that these strong brand relationships are a consequence, not a cause; they result from the social connections engendered through the brand relationship. In this view, robust brand relationships are built not on the backs of brands, but on a nuanced understanding of people and their needs, both practical and emotional. The reality is that people have many relational needs in their lives, and effective relationships cast a wide net of support.

6.3.6 Test and validation of Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 proposes customer perceived value of the SMM, and social CRM strategies mediate the relationship between perceived customer-oriented service delivery and brand resonance. In other words, it is expected that adding the variable "customer perceived value of SMM and social

CRM strategies" will improve the correlation coefficient reported in model 5. However, this was not the case as shown in the model summary Table 6.14. Thus, this hypothesis was rejected.

Table 6.14: Model Summary for Hypothesis 6

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig.
Hypothesis 7	0.052	0.565	0.563	0.567

Dependent Variables: Brand Resonance

6.4   Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has presented the findings from the analysis of the quantitative data as well as the discussion of the findings with reference to the literature as proposed by the research hypotheses. 491 responses were used in analysing the relationship between customers' perception of social media marketing offerings from the telecom firms on the consumer buying decision processes within the Nigerian telecom industry. The sample was comprised predominately by the male respondents with the average age of the participants with the age category 18-25years. In terms of education qualification, the sample was well educated with most participants reporting a graduate qualification at the minimum. Instagram and Facebook were found to be the first and second most used social media channels by the customers and it was suggested that the telecom firms focus on these two channels. Twitter is another important social media channel that the firms can focus on after these two channels. In addition, most participants were using these social media channels for more than 3years and visit these social media channels more than 10 times a day. The major reasons for going to social media was found to include: posting comments on walls, engagement with brands in brand communities, reading news feeds and comments and sending inbox messages.

Further, the participants shared high perception of the efficacy of the value of social media marketing (SMM) and social CRM and this perception were higher for the male participants and increases with the level of education. The sample also considered the customer-oriented services provided by the telecom firms as being useful and was found to be positively influenced by gender, the choice of favourite social media, number of years using social media, frequency of usage and nature of use of social media. The participants also reported high level of engagement with the brand in social media and this mediated by the gender and the frequency of use of social media. Lastly, the participants reported the telecom firms having a high brand resonance in the social media platforms and this again was mediated by gender, level of

education, favourite social media channel, number of years using social media, and frequency of use of social media. Lastly, the proposed hypotheses were tested and validated with all hypotheses supported in exception of hypothesis 7. The next chapter will discuss the conclusion and recommendation drawn from the research.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Introduction to Chapter

This chapter concludes the research reported in this thesis, presents its contribution, and proposes areas of further research. It begins with a summary of the thesis and draws conclusions that are derived from both the literature and empirical research reported in this dissertation. The limitations of the research undertaken are identified and discussed. The chapter concludes by proposing further direction of this research.

7.2 Summary of Findings

The thesis was set out to explore the implementation of Social CRM in telecom companies in Nigeria and examine how such Social CRM strategies translates to organisational outcomes such as brand reputation and customer loyalty. To satisfy the thesis purpose, the telecommunication industry in Nigeria (a developing market with a market of over 180 million people) was adopted as a case study. The study explored the extent of adoption and implementation of Social CRM strategies as well as the testing the interrelationship between the consumers' use of use of social media, customers' perceived value attached to the social media and social CRM strategies of the telecommunication firms, the consumers' perceived usefulness of the telecom firms' customer-oriented services delivery, the level of customer-firm interaction and engagement on social media and brand resonance and customer loyalty.

The findings of this thesis have provided insight into how Social CRM is being embraced in developing economies, using the Nigeria telecom industry as a case study. In line with the research aim, this thesis has been able to provide a deeper insight into the adoption of social CRM by business organisations and as well establish how it translates to consumer behavioural outcomes. This current study was necessary given the lack of adequate research of this scope; i.e. studies

exploring how companies especially in less technologically innovative economies are adopting Social CRM and used the evidence from the discussion with the industry experts in formulating a framework that is used to link the various social CRM aspect with customer outcomes. Given that the research area is still under-developed, an exploratory research which incorporated both inductive and deductive research approach was adopted in this thesis. After interviewing nine of the industry experts (three participants each from the three leading telecom communication giants in the country) on the adoption and implementation of Social CRM in the respective companies; five major themes were developed: customer orientation approach of the telecom firms in the industry, the adoption of social media technology, social CRM implementation strategy, social CRM capabilities and perceived benefits of the implementation of social CRM.

The summary of the significant findings from the interview data is that the telecom firms have embraced Social CRM as tool for driving organisational process. This is understandable given that these companies are mostly multinational companies and most likely have migrated their technological capacity and operational might into the local industry in Nigeria. Secondly being a business that is centred in technologically innovative products and services, it is not surprising that the companies showed good adoption and implementation of social CRM. In addition, it was generally accepted that the social CRM tools are necessary given the need to harness the social media and the need to automatically pull these data from the different social media channels and other customer contact points established by the companies and the need to analyse such data in real time to easily an directly target, approach and engage prospective and current customers across the different channels and/or touchpoints. The generally perceived benefits are that this could drive sales performance and strengthen each company's competitive advantage in the industry. The study did not only stop at the company level but also engaged the customers using a deductive research approach to measure their perception of the social media marketing offerings and social CRM strategies of the telecom firms and how it is translating to the positive customer outcomes such as brand resonance and customer loyalty. In line with the set-out objectives, the findings of the study is presented as below.

7.2.1 Objective 1: To explore the extent of implementation of social CRM by telecom firms in Nigeria

Using a descriptive analysis of the interview data, the findings indicate that the Nigerian telecom firms to a large extent are incorporating Social CRM technology and strategies in their organisational process in hope of delivering quality services and products to the customers. As shown from the data analysis and backed up with the evidence in the literature, the telecom firms like many other corporate firms are rapidly adopting social networking services, bringing about a shift in traditional customer relationship management strategy – a shift from the mere managing of customers to collaborating with customers. Social media channels and networking sites offer a range of avenues for the sharing of diverse forms of information ranging from media content (such as television programs, videos, photos, books) to user-generated content (UGC) and given the increasing customer ownership of communications facilitated by social media, it has become both necessary and practical for business organisations to develop multichannel social media strategies for engaging and managing relationships with their customers. This was clearly demonstrated as the part of the social CRM strategies currently pursued by the three case study telecom organisations.

The combination of social media and customer relationship management (which becomes social CRM) therefore presents an appropriate business strategy for the firms to get closer to the customers; with the overall purpose of gaining deeper customer insight, improved customer engagement and positively influencing the customer lifecycle value from customer acquisition, through to retention and value creation (Greenberg, 2010; Woodcock *et al*., 2011). The organisation representatives that partook in this study generally believed social CRM influences a positive change in organisational approach to business; a movement from being entire product-oriented to a more customer-centric approach to product and service delivery. One of the most important processes of their social CRM as highlighted in the finding is the capacity of the organisations to extract valid previously unknown, and comprehensible information from social media and other customer-contact channels and using it for value creation; which is the focus of social CRM (as mentioned in Hennig-Thurau *et al*. 2010; Harrigan & Miles, 2014).

Further, the findings from the discussion with the representatives from the three firms reflects the idea that in their respective companies are using social CRM technologies (i.e. social media and

other innovative channels such as live chat) in reaching across the various customer touch points and for enhancing customer experience, automating marketing strategies, sales and customer services, identifying customer behavioural patterns, attending to customer complaints, determining customer satisfaction levels and supporting customer segmentation. All three organisations indicated a company-wide implementation strategy for social CRM; with the management recognising employees as an effective tool to the successful implementation of the social CRM strategy. In addition, the analysis of the interview data suggests that the organisations recognise the importance of their employees possessing the technical skills required to use the social CRM applications and the know-how required to convert customer data into appropriate customer knowledge and the need for all the employees to have the right attitudes when dealing with the customers. This latter aspect is very important as it reported that employee attitudes is an important area of change required to build a customer-oriented philosophy. In summary, it can be said that the three telecom organisations that participated in this study are implementing social CRM and in this digital and customer-centred era, it is expected that the social CRM strategies translate to positive customer outcomes.

7.2.2   Objective 2: To identify the Social CRM tools and Strategies currently adopted by the Nigeria telecom firms

All three organisations reported deploying various social media channels in interacting and engaging with their customers. Aside from the popular Social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram), other innovative platforms are being used by the organisations interacting and engaging with the customers. For instance, MTN reported a dedicated WhatsApp channel in connecting with their customers. In addition, the company have a platform called the Voice of the Customer Initiative – which is used in gathering feedback from their customers with the aim of enhancing the quality of services delivered. In GLOBACOM, an internet-based channel ("live chat service") on their website is used also in communicating with their customers in real-time. other digital customer touchpoints included Blackberry, Eskimi, Instagram and Google+. These findings are in line with the theoretical background that organisations are more readily adopting Social media channels to get closer to the customers. The findings from the interview with the organisations' representatives suggests that building relationships with the customers is

the functional reasons why companies are adopting social media and social CRM technologies. Further the choice of the particular social media tool can be argued as being reflective of the of the direction in their marketing strategy.

All three telecom firms shared positive evaluation of their customer orientation strategy; reporting it as being critical for a highly competitive industry like the telecommunication. saturated market like the Nigerian telecom industry. From the interviewee with three major companies in the industry, it can be deduced that telecom service operators are generally adopting the customer-centric approach to marketing of their products and services; otherwise referred to the market-pull model of marketing. This involves the identifying the customer's needs through these social media channels and then creating products that addresses and meets the needs. In this digital era, technical analysis of customer journeys has become an important feature for marketing, and Social CRM tools allows companies to map out customer behaviour from the time when they seek information about products and services, to make comparisons with the competitors and ultimately when they take the decision to purchase a product and buy it. This is in accordance with the findings in this current study; with the interviewees generally agreeing that collecting customer data provides positive outcomes for their respective telecom firms in terms of improved product/service innovation, increases in sales volume, inducing innovation and in establishing better customer engagement through the creation of stronger brand loyalty.

For example, at the MTN (one of the case study firms), it was reported that the company adopts different Social CRM solutions over time including salesforce, nimble, eGain and IMImobile. However, the representatives from the other two firms failed to pinpoint the actual solution adopted but rather chose to discuss the overall strategy for the implementation. The generally assented that social CRM is used in creating value-added content for the customers and to monitoring customer communication across their various contact channels or touch points. Other highlighted benefits of social CRM as highlighted by the organisations' representatives include gaining customer insights, attracting new customers, improving customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, was sought. In addition, Social CRM is recognised to foster a platform for reaching a wider consumer audience, driving brand awareness, increase sale volumes, drive product innovation, enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty and ultimately improve competitive advantage. From the interview, it was deduced that the companies are very positive that Social media and Social CRRM has and will

positively impact their business outcomes. In summary to this set objective, it can be seen that organisations are widely recognising Social CRM has rapidly become one of the leading competitive business strategies in the modern era. Social CRM is about managerial efforts to manage business interactions with customers. To realise social CRM success, business executives and management are expected to implement social CRM processes and technologies and foster employee behaviour that supports coordinated and more effective customer interactions throughout all customer channels.

7.2.3 Objective 3: To investigate the impact of Social CRM on the consumer behavioural outcomes such as brand resonance and customer loyalty

The majority of the study participants (85% of the sampled customers) had high to very-high perception of the value of the SMM and social CRM strategies of the telecom firms. Customer perceived value have continuously been recognised in marketing literature has a formidable tool; as greater levels of customer perceive value has been argued to influence customer satisfaction, increased market share and stronger competitive advantage (Ashibly, 2015). The importance of perceived value in general in modern business environments stems from the fact that it is easy for consumers to now compare brand, product features as well as prices online, and easy to switch between suppliers. Past studies have measured customer perceived value as multi-dimensional construct; however, in this current study it was measured as a single construct measured as social value. Social value dimension was chosen based on the idea that businesses generally design that social networking sites based on two criteria: activity-based and people-based criteria. Activity focused social media strategy places emphasis on social interaction through site-specific content while people-focused strategy emphasizes social interaction through user-driven personal content.

Perceived value has been used by some researchers in explaining why people buy some things or opt to make some expenses (Turel et al. 2010). Value is considered to source from the actual interaction with (or expected use of) a product or service and to reflect an overall perception upon their importance for an individual. In terms of the customer outcome such as brand resonance and customer loyalty, most of the participants (79%) reported a high level of brand resonance. Based on demographic factors, the male participants showed better measure of brand resonance compared

to the female; as shown by (R=0.228, p<0.001). Also, the higher the level of education qualification the stronger the brand resonance as suggested by (R=0.236, p<0.003). Another factor that showed significant relationship was the number of years using social media (R=0.149, p<0.001). The positive relationship suggests that the more accustomed the consumers are to social media, the stronger their brand resonance. Also, the frequency of use of social media was found to be another significant predictor of brand resonance (R=0.124, p<0.05). Further the quantitative result also indicated a positive correlation between customers' perceived value of firm's SMM and social CRM and brand resonance at a relationship strength of (R=0.565, p<0.05). Further, customer-oriented service delivery was found to be positively related to brand resonance at (R=0.846, p<0.05).

7.2.4 Objective 4: to develop and validated a framework that will kind the telecoms firms in Nigeria in the delivery of consistent high-quality customer services through Social CRM

Advocates of social CRM sees it as a means of creating value-added content for customers and for monitoring customer communication and traffic on social media and the different customer contact points. This position is established with the findings of this current study validating the research hypotheses: a positive relationship between consumers' use of social media and perceived value attached to the firms social media and social CRM initiatives at (R=0.632, *p*<0.05) (H1); a significant relationship between perceived value of firms' social media and social CRM initiatives and the perceived usefulness of firms' customer-oriented service delivery at (R=0.574, p<0.05) (H2); personal socio-demographics as a moderator of the relationship between consumers' use of social media and perceived value attached to the firms social media and social CRM initiatives at (R=0.694, p<0.05) (H3), a direct relationship between level of customer-firm interaction and engagement to social media and perceived usefulness of firms' customer -oriented service delivery at (R=0.726, p<0.05) (H4); and a direction relationship between perceived usefulness of firms' customer oriented service delivery and brand resonance at (R=0.565, p<0.05) (H5). However, hypothesis 6 was rejected as customers' perceived value of the firms' SMM and Social CRM strategies did not moderate the relationship between perceived customer-oriented service delivery and brand resonance.

7.3 Implications of the Study

The findings of the current study have both practical and theoretical implications and the following sections would describe the practical implication and theoretical contributions of this current study.

7.3.1 Practical Implications of the Study

The evidence of this current study has provided practical implications of Social CRM adoption of telecom firms and other business organisations. First the evidence from this study shows that while similar benefit is expected from the implementation of social CRM systems, the approach and strategy may differ from one organisation to another. For instance, in terms of the available of social CRM tools, the evidence from this study shows that the organisations are adopting different technological tools and the review of the literature indicates that there a quite a few Social CRM systems and models that are available depending on the financial strength and technical know-how of the organisation. These different solutions provide the capabilities that enable companies to engage with the customer and improve customer relationship management with the difference being the complexity on how this big data (resulting from such communication and engagement) is harnessed in improving organisational operations and product innovation. In other words, the social CRM system varies from very simple to complicated models, implying there is a Social CRM solution for small to very large multinational organisations.

It is therefore recommended telecom firms embrace social CRM as a means of incorporating social media and traditional communication channels in fostering direct and dualized communication and engagement with the customers. This because it helps the firms in gaining important customer information, as well as in adequate recording of customer life cycle information that will allow management in making informed decisions that will aid improved quality in the products and services offered and in generating increased sales. It is also recommended that the firms that are seeking to adopt Social CRM and even those already implementing it to develop a clear goal and strategy, set key performance indicators and should be able to communicate this information to the different managers and employees across the different departments and units across the organisation. At this point, organisations are advised to draw adequate operational plan for the Social CRM adoption; which highlights to the department or units their role in social CRM solution

and how the integrate into the overall organisational plan for customer relationship management. During the interview it was mentioned by the participants that the different organisation applies the social CRM technology across different department, though specially in specific operations. It is therefore important that during the adoption process that the management communicate to the various department how the social CRM tools be integrated into their traditional operational process and ensure that there is adequate intra- and inter-communication and flow between the departments.

In addition, it is recommended that the organisational management was gather feedback from the employees. As earlier stated, Social CRM strategy is an organisational wide strategy that should involve all employees – as they are usually the first point of contact when a customer is reaching out to the organisation (Greenberg, 2010; Zhou et al. 2013). Full implementation of social CRM implies that the organisations need to become more data-driven not focusing entirely on the adoption of advanced technologies but in developing digital capabilities where the organisations' processes, people, culture and structure are in sync and aligned to the organisational goals (Kane et al. 2016). Furthermore, the result of this thesis shows that telecom firms need to interact more with the customers on social media as it helps in creating a positive opinion on the usefulness of the service delivery being offered. It is imperative that the content offered by the firms on social media must be interesting, entertaining and newsworthy in other to attract the interest of the customers on social media. Put differently, the firms have to develop social media contents that will make the consumers enthusiastic about their brand and encourage them to make purchase, write reviews and foster e-WOM. This is critical if the firms need to endear their brand to the customers and if the customers must develop positive value and usefulness of social media and social CRM strategy of the company.

7.3.2 Theoretical Implication of the Study

In addition to providing practical implication for telecom firms and business organisations generally regarding the adoption for Social CRM, the current study also has its theoretical underpinnings. Firstly, the evidence from the study suggest the multidimensionality and complexity of Social CRM and the theoretically model tested in this current study have attempted to establish the relationship between organisations' social CRM implementation and customers'

perceived value and usefulness of such endeavours and how it relates to the customer behavioural outcomes including brand resonance. The finding from the current study also conforms with the theoretical underpinnings in the current literature of the importance of Social CRM in fostering firm-customer interaction and engagement; with the major implication for organisations being to generate and store specific information and knowledge about the customers, their needs and desire in terms of product and service quality. Another theoretical implication is that the report creates a new research stream by synthesizing two adoption theories and applying those to Social CRM. This approach helps to investigate how the adoption of Social CRM is influenced and generates additional knowledge regarding diffusion of innovation within companies. Adoption influence factors, such as technical or organisational ones are especially important and reveal new insights of the Social CRM phenomenon.

Further, the findings of the current study advanced the current social CRM literature by exploring the influence of consumers personal characteristics in influencing their perception of the social CRM offerings of the telecom firms as well as their perception on the value and usefulness of such offerings in influencing the quality of products and services offered. Overall, with the help of both qualitative and quantitative data the study was able to conduct an in-depth exploration on social CRM adoption at the organisational level and how such offerings translate to the consumers. The current study in addition has laid evidence to request from previous studies in the literature calling for corporations to adopt comprehensive social CRM approach in gathering consumer information in the development process of new products and delivery of quality service (Go & You, 2016; Charoensukmongkol & Sasatanun, 2017; Sofi & Hakim, 2018). As previously mentioned, the interest in the literature on social CRM is on its capacity in collecting, analysing and translating valuable customer information into action in the product development and service quality delivery. However, a major question that has left in the literature is how such social CRM translates to positive customer outcome (Mazzuchelli et al. 2017; Diffley et al. 2018). The evidence from this study has shown strong support for the argument that Social CRM implement facilitates dual value creation for both the organisation and the consumers.

7.4   Research Limitations

Firstly, the research has been limited to the subject areas of customer service and customer loyalty from a Social CRM perspective due to limited time and resources. Given the time frame of this study, the other central areas of Social CRM will not be discussed. These areas are customer strategy building, incorporating Social CRM into existing company process and employee influence on the relationship with the customer. Secondly, the research was performed on a single airline company that is doing exceptionally well in terms of customer satisfaction. The results although limited from a single company perspective could be used to test the relationship between social CRM and customer loyalty and service in other airline companies or other industries. Thirdly, only the Twitter social media channel was used in this research. As discussed in the ethnography section this was done on the pre-observation that the telecom firms' social media accounts are rich in customer generated data and the interactions and activities going on there between the firms and its customers are substantial.

7.5   Recommendation for Future Research

Since this study aimed at broadening the current existing knowledge on Social CRM, we suggest that further research could be aimed at how social media can be used to improve other traditional areas of Customer Relationship Management. We feel that interesting topics could include areas such as Analytical CRM. We feel that organizations can continue to deeply analyse customer data from social networks to better understand customer behaviour. Additionally, we feel that another area of future research could focus on could be test what is the role of the employees in forming successful relationships with the customers through the social media channels. Furthermore, in future other social media channels like Facebook can be used to test if the same results regarding the connection between social CRM and customer loyalty and service will be found there as well. The findings could be used, in another way, to test the relationship between social CRM and customer loyalty and service in other airline companies or other types of industries like manufacturing companies or retailers to see if the same connections apply there as well.

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Appendix 1: Sample of Email Sent to the Interviewees

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Wagdi Hadidan, a post-graduate student at the School of Built Environment, University of Salford, working towards a Ph.D. degree. As mentioned in the previous correspondence, I am inviting you to take part in this survey which is part of the thesis titled: An Investigation of the Influence of Social CRM on Brand Reputation and Loyalty in the Nigeria Telecom Industry.

The advent of social media has brought about significant changes to the business world. Amongst these is the development of a new profile of consumers who are generally regarded as the social consumer. With these social consumers now taking center stage in product/service innovation and marketing; sustaining a long term relationship in this social media era (i.e. social CRM) is now being considered as the appropriate business strategy for gaining competitive advantage and increasing profitability.

Hence, the focus of this current research is to explore how telecom firms in Nigeria like yours are reacting to this new development and how they are implementing social CRM system as an organisational-wide strategy for managing relationships with current and prospective customers.

The reason for choosing your company for this study is because it has consistently been ranked highly as a customer-centric firm and the main objective of this survey is to learn how social media can be implemented effectively in the telecom industry and if it can be incorporated into the current customer relationship management (CRM) systems of the companies.

I assume that you are probably quite busy and I can assure you that the interview would not take more than 20-30 minutes. The data collected will be used strictly for academic purpose. If you would like to participate in this interview or have any other questions, you can respond directly to this email. The date and time for this interview can be flexible, although would not like to have the interviews completed on or before the 3rd of July, 2017. Looking forward to hearing from you and would really appreciate your assistance.

Kind regards

Wagdi Hadidan

Appendix 2: Sample Interviewee Guide

Introduction to Interview Survey

The purpose of this survey is to explore how telecom firms are utilizing Social Media as part of their Customer Relationship Management (CRM) strategy. This survey is focused on conducting interviews with specific company representatives such as you to determine the status quo of the research focus in the organisation. This semi-structured interview consists of open-ended questionnaires centered on the following core topics: the customer-centric efforts of the organisation, your organisation's use of social media as a customer relationship strategy, the social CRM capability of the organisation and the organisation's level of customer relationship performance.

Background Information

1. What is your job title/role in this organisation?
2. How long have you been working for this organisation?
3. How long have you been working in the Nigerian telecom industry?

Main Question 1: This set of questions explores the company's customer-centric approach to business

1. How much importance is attached to delivery of quality customer service in this organisation? Would you say your firm is very customer-centric? Would your organisation as a customer-centric, where customer satisfaction and retention is of great priority?
2. Do you as a firm consider the management of customer relationships as a business strategy?
3. How do you manage customer relationship in this organisation?

Main Question 2: The following questions explore the extent of social media usage in the company and its integration in customer relationship management?

4. How would you describe your current usage of social media and what are the social media channels used?

5. Do you integrate social media with your customer relationship management strategy?

6. To what extent is interactive communications with customers enabled through social media?

Question 3: The following questions explores the level of social CRM implementation in your organisation

7. To what extent is Social Media used in your organisation is gathering customer's insights?

8. How is information gathered through Social Media utilized?

9. To what degree are customer interactions on Social Media utilised to address? problems, customer complaints, change in customer needs, or product preferences?

Question 4: The following questions evaluates the Social CRM performance in your organisation

10. What are the perceived benefits of social CRM?

11. Since your company commenced the use of Social Media and Social CRM systems, how would you rate your performance in relation to:
    - Gaining customer insight
    - attracting new customers
    - Retaining old customers
    - enhancing customer outcomes such as satisfaction and customer loyalty

Appendix 3: Transcribed Interviewees

MTN Nigeria

Interview 1: MTN

Job Title/Role: Head, Customer Relations /Social Media Team

Duration of Services in Firm (Years): 4 years

Industry Experience (Years): Over 8 years

Duration: 41.19mins

Orator	Question/Response
Interviewer	Hello. Thanks for taking out time from your busy schedule to attend this interview. As a senior manager in the organisation, I will like to seek your expert opinion on social CRM implementation strategy in this organisation. For your information, the questions I will be asking it's similar to the interview guide sent to you earlier.
Interviewee	That is fine. You can begin when you are ready
Interviewer	I begin with my first question: What is the level of importance placed on the delivery of quality customer service in this your organisation?
Interviewee	Customer service is very important for every organisation, especially for service-oriented organisations. For us MTN, customer service provides a platform to helping our customers understand our different products and services and so helping them in making the right decision on the product or service.
Interviewer	So you would consider yourself as customer-centric organisation; where customer satisfaction and retention is of high priority?
Interviewee	Absolutely. Since we became fully operational in 2002, we have remained as the company with the largest market share and we didn't achieve this without putting our customers first. In terms of our products both voice

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Interviewer	That is nice. This takes us to my next question: in this modern era where developing and managing relationship has become top priority, how is your company approaching customer relationship management?
Interviewee	I can proudly say that the success of this organisation over the years is down to our ability to know our customers, understand their needs, and develop the right products and services solutions that optimally serve the customers' needs. Every employee in this organisation is a potential contact-point to the customer and so we train our staffs to go the extra mile to the expectations of our customers. So for us, our success lies in being at the centre of the need of the customer and translating those needs into solutions. In this company, we don't sell products we sell solutions that novel in terms of customer experience and this is why we pride ourselves as a company focused strongly on building relationships with the customer. Customer relationship to us means that we understand the customer and we use our innovation to make a difference for us. In general, our success can be linked with us being a customer centric company.
Interviewer	Is social media integrated into your customer relationship management approach?
Interviewee	You would agree with me that the social media has become a veritable platform for interacting and engaging with customers. In MTN we have various channels which we use in communicating with our customers and prospective customers in reality time. We have dedicated channels on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to mention a few. In addition, last year we officially launched the MTN WhatsApp Customer service support channel which is developed in line with our vison of leading the delivery of a bold new digital world to our customers. With five dedicated phone numbers on their contacts, our customers via the WhatsApp application are provided with all day/week access to the MTN customer service support for prompt and easy resolution to all their complaints, enquiries and service request. In addition to integrating social media in our CRM approach, we have also initiated a platform called the Voice of the Customer Initiative – which is gathering feedbacks from our customers in order to improve service delivery to our valued customers. These channels allows senior management to take feedback from customers directly without having to wait on the regular customer interfacing channels like the call centres, service centres or social media

Interviewer	You mentioned for instance that the Voice of the Customer Initiative helps in gathering feedback, now I will like to ask how you are able to integrate information from social media in your CRM strategy.
Interviewee	Yes I did and to answer your question; these days there are different robust software that can integrate social media channels with CRM systems. There is nimble, sugarcrm, salesforce, oracle and Microsoft dynamics. There is a long list. For us, we use a combination of two salesforce and nimble if I am exact. Both systems are very good.
Interviewer	From our discussion so far, it is obvious that this company has embraced social CRM. But I will like to further ask what you think are the benefits of the social CRM; why has it become very important for businesses
Interviewee	If we look at the system in general, I can say that the benefits that a company stands to gain from the social CRM system far out-weighs the initial cost of installing and implementing the system. This industry is a very competitive one and added with the growth of social media, staying ahead of competitors requires that you continuously remain connected with your customers. Becoming active on social media platforms is presently the best way of growing any business in this modern era. With social media and social CRM system business can build brand awareness and brand loyalty. Social media platforms can help increase trust in your brand, ensure the delivery of quality customer service, obtain customer insight in real-time and get to know your customers better; provides an easy access to promoting product and services content and the most important of all, engaging with the customers.
	The changing marketing and sales environment is instrumental to the growing interest in social media and social CRM – with more focus now on relationship based approach in connecting with consumers. Social CRM also helps us in gaining customer insights; like what are trending, the relevant needs and preference.
Interviewer	How do you manage the acquired customer information across the organisation? What I mean is what happens to the customer information once it is gathered?
Interviewee	The gathered customers' information is actually being used across the different departmental units of the organisation; from the customer touchpoint employees to those in the product innovation and development units. As I mentioned earlier the top management also use these customers' information in developing strategies that continue to push the company forward. Social CRM in essence is a technological enabling tool that makes our job easier. Aligning this to our mission, which is "To make the lives of our customers a whole lot brighter", social CRM presents a

tool that enables us to continuously and regularly gather customer feedback and used in the entire organisation to improve the service experience we deliver to our value customers. This is one strategy that we have used to maintain our number position as the largest telecom firm in Nigeria in terms of market share.

Interviewer	Lastly, how would you rate the performance of social media and social CRM systems of your organisation in terms of: (i) gaining customers' insights; (ii) attracting new customers; (iii) improving customer satisfaction; (iv) improving brand loyalty?
Interviewee	Okay I will attempt to address each of the points you have highlighted. First in terms of gaining customer insights – social media and social CRM plays a pivotal role. For instance in terms of sales, these facilities (referring to social media and social CRM) have completely changed the market. The traditional medium where sales representatives approach customers one-on-one basis is now a thing of the past; companies are now pushing their products and services to a larger pool of customers at a single instance. For us (MTN Nigeria) we have harnessed this opportunities to drive our products to both our current and prospective customers and we have been receiving a lot of positive outcomes in terms of general sales. For the other point you highlighted; it is as I have said with social media we have been able to maintain our market leadership despite the growth multi-SIMming. For the last two points, I will summarise by saying again that the success of this organisation is built upon knowing the customer, understanding their needs, developing the right propositions, products and services which meets and exceeds their expectations. Being at the centre of the needs of our customers and translating those needs into solutions ensures that our customers are always happy with our services. In addition, we don't just sell products in this company, we sell solutions such that the average customer sees as the best and by priding ourself in building strong relationship with our customers we ensure their continuous loyalty.
Interviewer	Alright thanks for the insights. We have come to the end of the interview and I must confess that you have provided me with quality information that will help in completing this academic pursuit. If you don't mind can I have your email address, in case I need any clarification on discussion in the future
Interviewee	That is no problem
Interviewer	Thank you once more for your time. [Shakes hand and leaves the office]

Interview 2: MTN

Job Title/Role: Head, Marketing Department

Duration of Services in Firm (Years): 6 years

Industry Experience (Years): 12years plus

Duration: 57.23 mins

Orator	Question/Response
Interviewer	Good morning, thank you very much for this opportunity. As previously communicated, this interview is academic in nature and it is aimed at seeking your expert opinion on social CRM and the strategy employed in this organisation. The interview will follow the format in the guide sent to you earlier
Interviewee	That is okay. So, do you want me to provide answers to the questions?
Interviewer	Not exactly, the guide was a prep before this interview. If it is okay, I will like us to begin?
Interviewee	Yes, it is okay
Interviewer	That is fine. Let me begin by asking, as the head of the marketing department, what is the organisation's marketing strategy especially in this era of social media?
Interviewee	Our marketing strategy aligns with our corporate vision, which is to deliver exceptional telecom services to our customers. In attaining this by reaching our target market and delivering the right product or service at a reasonable price. We offer both services and goods in form of SIM Cards, Internet Modems, and even cellular and smart phones to our target market. In addition, we offer consumer products (such as Internet and Bundle Plans) and individual/business products (including the mobile numbers issued out to consumers which usually begins with 0803, 0806, 0703, 0706, 0813, 0816 and in recent times, 0810 and 0903).
	We furnish our customers and target market with information about our products and service using different advertising channels like the tv, radio, newspaper and recently the use of social media. You know in this modern era, everyone is on social media. We have structured our marketing strategy to attend to this new form of marketing using social

media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and so on. Also, as part of our internet services, I can proudly say we offer the very best 3G services in the country. This include the Fastlink mobile internet data card, voice and video calling. Also, we provide our customers with the medium to search on Google web search engine with MTN Google SMS on their phone, without the need for internet connection.

Overall, findings showed that the strategies have been successful as it has attracted more subscribers over the years than any of its competitors in the industry. Going by the range of subscriber groups (0803, 0806, etc.) and the significant growth in subscriber base over the years, it can be concluded that MTN's marketing activities have, to large extent, reached its goals and objectives.

Interviewer	This leads to my second question, how much important do you as a company place on the quality of customer service?
Interviewee	Delivering quality customer service is the core of our business; which is to ensure that our customers are digitally connected everywhere they go. The strength of our customer service approach is that we listen to the voice of customers and respond swiftly to feedback from our customers. This has helped us in developing innovative products and services that our competitors are barely able to match.
Interviewer	In other words, you would say that customer satisfaction and retention is a top priority of your customer-focused business approach?
Interviewee	Exactly. Our business strategy is focused on delivering value to our customers; with a strong focus on creating unique service experience for our customers. In the last couple of years, MTN Nigeria has made remarkable progress in its growth; and this is down to ensuring the satisfaction of our customers through the delivery of value and ensuring that they maximise the benefits of our products and services at very affordable price.

Till date, we continue to be drive by this singular focus of delivering seamless and distinct customer experience by further improving our digital performance. In support of this vision to provide its customers with bold, new digital world, MTN Nigeria has made massive infrastructural investment in improving the LTE device strategy. Our business is to ensure that we bridge the digital divide and provide our customers access to innovative and accessible solutions. We achieve this by focus on addressing the daily needs and challenges of our customers in connecting to the internet

Interviewer	My next question is, as a telecom firm, how are you approaching customer relationship management?
Interviewee	Good customer relation is one of the major keys to the success of our business. Like many other organisations our focus in recent years is on building good relationship with our existing customers. Relationship building and gaining customer loyalties are marketing strategies that have become huge phenomenon in corporate Nigeria in recent times.
	The company has developed what could be described as MTN Customer Relation and Customer Loyalty Model; which has contributed massively to the significant gains in market share of the mobile phone industry in Nigeria. For instance, the company has made conscious efforts in establishing relationships with Nigerian governments and community groups through its MTN Foundation. The Foundation is committed to ensuring that the selection and approval of its projects are conducted in a manner that is transparent, systematic, efficient, and effective while promoting its mission.
	Apart from the community the company is strategically winning the loyalty of its existing individual customers by offering them very exciting deals. For instance, through its MTN Zone service it offers up to 99% discounts to customers making calls within the same network. Pay-As-You-Go subscribers could also share credit with each other on the Me2u service. The introduction of Blackberry phones and its affiliate services on the Ngerian market has also given the company a high positioning within the target market. The company also provides unique customized ringtones in Nigerian hiplife music, gospel songs and pop music.
Interviewer	Is social media integrated into your customer relationship management approach?
Interviewee	Yes. Very much so. You will agree with me that this is the era of social media and every business need a formidable presence in social media. Customers these days spend most of their time on the internet and constantly talking to one another and need to engage their brands online as well. In MTN, we have several social media channels that allow us to connect and engage with our customers. Our social media channels include, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. We also have the MTN WhatsApp Customer service support channel which we engage our customers with.
Interviewer	Is it therefore fair to say, that your company has fully integrated social media in its customer relationship strategy

Interviewee	Yes. Social media has not only revolutionised company-customer relationship but also the entire complexity of marketing. As I earlier mentioned, it is imperative that businesses seeking competitive advantage maximise the use of social media both as a marketing tool and as a mean of improving company-customer relationships. By integrating social media and CRM systems we as a business have been able to im[rove our brand awareness and brand loyalty.
Interviewer	Now that we have established your social CRM strategy; if I may ask, how is customer data been utilised in your organisation?
Interviewee	The utilisation of customer information is an organisational wide strategy for us, here in MTN. Gone are the data were a special department is singled out to deal with customer data. No, these days, customer data is needed by the marketing, customer service department, IT, those in charge of product development and innovation and above the organisational management, who need such customer information in the overall planning of the business strategy.
Interviewer	For my final question, I would like to know what is prompting your organisation to use Social CRM. Are there specific benefits of Social CRM that are of benefit to your organisation?
Interviewee	As I have pointed out earlier, social CRM has become inevitable for business organisations that could afford it in this modern business era. We (firms) now need to connect and engage intimately with the customers in marketing our brand. This goes beyond just opening a social media account on leaving comments or answering questions in those channels, but one needs a medium of collecting this information and transferring across the organisation in delivering the product or service. Social CRM provides such platform. Another important feature of social CRM is that it depicts all members of the organisation as potential marketers and reduces the cost of recruiting marketing personnel or the cost incurred from engaging in conventional channels like newspaper, tv and radio adverts. Most importantly social CRM allows the brand to reach to a wider consumer base in a shorter time. Also, with Social CRM, the firm can easily gather customer feedback and use them in improving our products and services. This add up to improving customer satisfaction and user experience.
Interviewer	This brings us to the end of the interview process. And would thank you once more for creating time to see me today. The information provided are very insightful and I am happy course it has further provided greater insight of Social CRM implementation in your organisation. I hope you

wouldn't mind me ringing you in the future if I need further clarification on the information provided?

Interviewee	That you for your compliment and I am glad I was able to be of help towards accomplishing your academic pursuit. I envy you because I have the dreams to further my academics. There is no problem with ringing me in the future. If you have any question, feel free to reach me on my numbers on the card (i.e. business card).
Interviewer	Goodbye for now [And leaves the office]

Interview 3: MTN

Job Title/Role: Data Centre Analyst: I.T Division

Duration of Services in Firm (Years): 3 years

Industry Experience (Years): 4 years

Duration: 57.23 mins

Orator	**Question/Response**
Interviewer	Good morning, what to say a big thank for seeing me this morning. I was told you are always very business and coming through your department I could see why. I hope you are okay with me starting right away because I really don't want to take much of your time.
Interviewee	That is fine? I have read through the document you sent, so I have a pretty much idea on what your research is all about.
Interviewer	For my question? What is your company's strategy for social media and CRM?
Interviewee	Operating in the ICT sector is very competitive, and this can be down to the significant contribution to economic development of a country. For us (MTN) remaining ahead of competitor implies we must foster relationships that are built on trust. This encompasses interactions with all our different stakeholders: including employees, investors, civil society organisations, communities, regulators, suppliers, governments, industry partners and the media and most importantly our esteemed customers.

Successful interactions with our stakeholders are essential for sustainable value creation. We strive to understand what is important to those who impact our business, as well as to those on whom we have an impact, and to be responsive to their expectations. This informs our material issues, our strategy development and evaluation and our management of risks.

Operating in a very dynamic market characterised by rapidly changing customer needs and growing demand for world-class services; the shift to data services has increased network requirements and customer expectations for quality services. Often this leads to network quality challenges, which ultimately can undermine brand promise.

We (MTN) can boost to be a pure-play emerging markets mobile telecommunications operator at the forefront of technological and digital changes. Guided by our values, I can confidently say we are delivering a bold, new digital world to our customers – not just in Nigeria but across Africa and the Middle East.

This has given us the reputation as one of the world's fastest growing regions for mobile telecommunications. MTN was the only telecommunications company to bag a string of New Generation Awards in recognition for the exceptional work performed by its digital and social media team. MTN was awarded gold under the Best Online Newsletter category, silver award for The Best Blog, bronze status for Customer Care and Use of Social Media and another bronze award for the Most Innovative Use of Social Media.

These awards are a testimony of the hard work that the Digital and Social Team has invested to put MTN on the map in new media platforms. MTN is a technology company and we always strive to be at the cutting edge of new ways of communicating. We wish to thank our customers for the support they have given us on these platforms and promise to raise the bar even higher to provide them with a service that they have come to expect from us.

Our BRIGHT operational strategy, serves as a compass for all branches. The strategy clearly defines the six pillars on which we are focussing to build our business sustainably

B = Best Customer Experience

R = Returns and Efficiency Focus

I = Ignite Commercial Performance

G = Growth through Data and Digital

H = Hearts and Minds

T = Technology Excellence

Interviewer	Great, this means your company is doing well in this digital age in terms of communicating and engaging with the customers.
Interviewee	Exactly.
Interviewer	This leads to my second question, how are you harnessing the potentials of social media in delivering quality customer service and experience through customer engagement?
Interviewee	MTN Group is driven by the goal of positioning itself as a customer experience leader across the various markets its operating in. In recent years we have made significant investment in a set of new digital customer service tools, including chatbots powered by artificial intelligence (AI), to help bring its customer experience management capabilities to the forefront of the industry.
	Our social network of MTN Nigeria has seen tremendous growth in the last few month – and this is an important indicator of brand strength and strong customer relationship. Like most successful brands in modern times, we (MTN) recognises the power of online communities influencing customers' personal choices, behaviour and It goes without saying that social media has become inevitable in today's world, with its captivating and limitless power fostering a new channel for propagating one's message to larger audience. With an unquestionable focus on customer engagement MTN considers social media has been very crucial one.
	Social media fosters a platform for 360 degrees engagement with the customers by providing a medium for two-way communication and feedback. Understanding and appreciating this potential, MTN Nigeria has a dedicated team that is saddled with the responsibility of ensuring that its customers are provided with real time responses to customers concerns and queries. This is not to say the social media strategy is not an organisation-wide strategy, but we have this team dedicated to ensuring a round the clock service provision. The MTN Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram handles are the popular social media channel for customer support and engagement.
Interviewer	Now that you have expressed the importance your organisation attaches to social media and the new digital, my next question is what is done

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with this customer information or put differently how do your company approach customer relationship management?

Interviewee
The importance of social media as a communication channel and a means of understanding the customer is increasingly being acknowledge across the industry and the business environment at large. For us (MTN) social media is well integrated in our customer relationship management strategy. And I guess that is what you refer to as social CRM. [The interviewer affirmed this before the interviewee continued].

MTN Nigeria has over the years has positioned itself as a company interested in always improving its customers' experience and this has been made possible by investing in different digital customer service tools such as chatbots in driving its customer experience management strategy. In the past we have used tools such as eGAin Mail that provided us with more control over incoming and outgoing emails, with the capability to track the progress and quality of email responses.

eGain Service is the industry's most comprehensive customer interaction hub software suite and its service include: integrated, award-winning applications for call tracking and resolution, contact centre knowledge management, multi-modal web self-service, email management, chat, web collaboration, fax/postal mail management, notifications and service fulfilment. This enabled us to ensure that the complaints and feedback of all customers were given quality responses; further improving the customer experience.

In addition, the company also uses a customer service-drive software called IMImobile; a cloud-based communication driven software that is aimed at utilisation digital channel optimisation solutions for enhancing the customer experience management strategy. For the old package, IMIdigital; it offered content management and integrated service delivery platform. However, in recent years, MTN group has extended the contract with IMImobile – which has given an upgraded system that include the integration of social media channels, push notifications and IMImobile's chatbot solution, to enhance and automate the mobile content service discovery experience for our customers.

Interviewer
How exactly do these solutions help in collecting customer data and improving customer relationship management?

Interviewee
Well, it mainly boils down to MTN deploying these solutions or tools with machine-learning capabilities for its social media channels and that is used to capture customer discussions, feedback and queries in the different social media channels and in automating the digital customer service channels. These solutions are also capable of instantly handling

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Interviewer	Lastly, that are the specific Social CRM benefits your organisation is seeking to gain?
Interviewee	Big Data, Social Media and Social CRM is the way forward for business organisations. There are several reasons why every company and specifically MTN should adopt social CRM. First, it brings you in close contact with the consumer base. Secondly, it is the new form of marketing. You can easily sell your brand online at very low cost. Thirdly, for a very competitive industry like ours; you need to be abreast with the constantly evolving customer demands and needs to remain on top. Social CRM makes this easily possible. And lastly, social CRM assists in the development of innovative products and services.
Interviewer	This brings us to the end of the interview process. Thank you for your time. The interview ends.

GLOBACOM Nigeria

Interview 1: Globacom Nigeria

Job Title/Role: IT Officer

Duration of Services in Firm (Years): Over 5 years

Industry Experience (Years): 7 years

Duration: 1hr:23mins

Orator	**Question/Response**
Interviewer	Good afternoon, I humbly grateful for taking out time out of your busy schedule to grant me this interview. If you are ready, I will like to begin immediately?

Interviewee	Yes, you can begin.
Interviewer	As mentioned in the earlier correspondence, this interview is part of my doctoral thesis which is aimed at investigating the level of social CRM implementation in the Nigerian telecom industry and the how it has helped the telecom firms in influencing customer values such as brand reputation and customer loyalty. This interview is aimed at the first objective, which is to gain insight on how social CRM is being implemented in your company. And so I will start by asking about your company's customer-centric approach to business?
Interviewee	First, I will start by explaining what customer-centric business approach is. Customer-centric approach is simply a business strategy that focus on improving customer experiences in the bid of influence repeat purchases, customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. This company has built itself over the years around its customers and providing exciting and innovative products and services that reckons with our customers. This core business value is also translated to every employee of this organisation, that the customer comes first. Lastly, a customer-centric business approach is concerned with the quality and value of value of customer experience. Measuring this variable and using the information for continuous improvement is one of the core business approaches in this company
Interviewer	Thank you very much for this insightful information. Now that you have established that Globacom Nigeria is customer-centric business, how does it translate to providing quality service to your customers?
Interviewee	Customer centricity is not just about offering great customer service, it means offering a great experience from the awareness stage, through the purchasing process and finally through the post-purchase process. It's a strategy that's based on putting your customer first, and at the core of your business. As a customer-centric business, you must understand your customers and design the service experience that meets that individual needs, empower your employees to deliver such experience, and use relevant data for continuous improvement. In this company we fulfil all criteria. Our customer forms the bane of business approach and this has translated to use of different solutions in creating and sustaining long lasting relationship with our customers. With these solutions we collect a wealth of data that is used in providing a 3600 view of our customers and this data is used in understanding the buying behaviour of the customers, identify opportunities for the development of unique products and services that resonates with the Nigerian market, and overall for enhancing the customer experience.

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This understanding of the customer-centric approach to delivering quality service have what has driven the company to be the fastest growing telecom firm in the Nigerian market and the second largest market share, even though we started operations after almost ten years of dominance of the industry by MTN. Another kudos is that we are the only indigenous company; while the rest are multinationals. Most of our products and services over these years have been engineered by customers needs and preferences. Products like the MMS, text-2-email, Glo Direct and so on. Recently, given that the shift in the market towards internet and data; the company has shifted focus to this area and currently we offer the cheapest package in terms of data provision.

Interviewer	In your earlier statement you mentioned the company's strategy in maintaining and sustaining long-lasting relationship with the customers. The next question, is in this modern era of social media, how is your company approaching customer relationship management?
Interviewee	Engaging the customers and developing and managing long-term relationship with them have long been recognised as effective strategy for competitive advantage and business sustainability. Two critical factors have influenced the company's customer relationship management strategy in recent years. First, the power shift between brand and customers during the economic downturn before the present government administration saw a shift between telecom firms and customers; with the later becoming more selective in the particular brand they chose to spend their money. The company's strategy in this period was to consider the different customer segment and tailored our products and service to the different segments in terms of their financial capacity. Lowering the cost of our products or services didn't affect the quality of our service, and this act was well recognised by our customers and fostered the building of the relationships that we still share till today. We still have consistent customers that we have been dealing with us for more than 10years now.

Then came the era of social media marketing and social marketing. This totally changed the entire mobile market and technology landscape. With the help of social media, customers are now comparing products and services in real time and across multiple digital touchpoints; which has presented huge problem for everyone of us. Now every business need a social media presence to remain competitive. This is so as consumers are openly discussing and spreading their opinions on brands and providing feedback on products and services. And so, it become increasingly important for businesses to focus their business strategy and efforts on social media and social CRM. With our dedicated social CRM solutions, the company has been able to manage its brand reputation, retain its customers' base and being able to reach prospective customers and

Interviewer	You have mentioned social media but have not identified the social media channels used by your company.
Interviewee	We maintain presence in the virtually all social media and blogs available. But we actively maintain the popular ones; the likes of Facebook, Twitter and now Instagram. You should understand each of these different platforms have their advantages as well as disadvantages. For instance, Facebook offers a wide audience and customisable pages, while Twitter offers a fast-paced environment for the customers to quickly air their opinion and grievances should an issue arise. Instagram provide the option to display the company's art gallery and promotions for products and service; and the important aspect of this social media active that the vast majority of the customers are now active here. Nonetheless, no matter which of the platforms, the intention is to easily assess the customer and foster an individualised engagement with them; while at the same time keeping an open line where they can easily reach to us at real time. Outside the social media, we also have a live chat service embedded in our website and is available at all time. This environment is very intuitive; as it is designed to make information enquiries and engagement seamless.
Interviewer	For the next question, how will like to understand how the customer information from these different social media channels are managed in the company?
Interviewee	This company boast of the latest CRM solutions such as the Investrack – which allows to engage with our customers and keep them informed of latest offers and product and service innovations. These solutions help in supporting the customer relationship management process such as listening to customer conversations and enquiries in the various digital channels and the handling of service requests. Information gathered from the social media channels and other digital channels are easily dispersed across the relevant departments using these CRM solutions.
Interviewer	Can you highlight some of the benefits of social CRM to your company?
Interviewee	Social CRM provides a lot of benefit to any business that is concerned about their customers and in the delivery of quality service. One of the benefits of social CRM is that it provides the company an avenue to listen to conversations of the customers online and foster a channel for close engagement. Listen to live updates from the customers help the company in understanding what matters most to the customers and find the right time to get in touch. By integrating the power of social media into our

selling and marketing processes, we have been able to better nurture the relationships with the customers.

Another benefit of social CRM is that it helps to manage all the social conversations across the different social media and digital channels. It enables real-time responses to customers' posts and discussions as they happen. It advances from one-sided communication channel of sharing contents to a two-way communication process that allows the company to share conversations with the customers in real-time.

Social CRM allows the company to pay attention to conversations that are important to the business. In our social CRM solutions, we can easily and automatically segment the customer market and receive notification on the posts from the lead and prospective customers. This enables us to stay tuned to what people are saying about our brand and what the competitors are saying through keyword tracking. You see, over recent years, the company has been able to effectively use the power of social CRM to engage our customers and develop innovative products and services that our competitors have been unable to match

Interviewer	Lastly, how would you rate your organisation's performance on social CRM strategy as it relates to (i) gaining customers' insights; (ii) engaging the customers; (iii) improving customer satisfaction; and (iv) improving brand loyalty?
Interviewee	Sincerely, we have performed extremely well. But this is not to say there are no room for improvement. Social CRM has allowed the company to gain deeper market penetration and expand our market share in recent years. Before coming into the market, the market leader enjoyed a 50% share of the market; however, with swift success, they only enjoy about 35% of the market share. I don't know if I have mentioned we current the second largest telecom firm in Nigeria based on the market share. This will have achieved by ensuring that our customers are always satisfied with our products and services We have also made a point to remain the pioneer of innovative products and services and this position can only be sustained by continuing in our engagement with the customers and maintaining good and lasting relationships.
Interviewer	Thank you very much for the insightful information you have provided. This is the end of the interview session and thank you for your time.

Interview 2: Globacom Nigeria

Job Title/Role: Consumer Affairs Officer

Duration of Services in Firm (Years): Over 3 years

Industry Experience (Years): 6 years

Duration: 52:03mins

Orator	Question/Response
Interviewer	Thank you for your time, I learnt this is your lunch break. I am very grateful and will be as quick as possible. The questions are similar to the correspondence I sent earlier.
Interviewee	Yes, it is okay. I went through the interview guide and I think I am quite familiar with your research area. So, we can start
Interviewer	For my first question, I would like you to describe the company's customer centric approach as a telecom organisation in Nigeria?
Interviewee	Being customer-centric simply means putting the customer at the forefront in everything you do. In 2015, we were awarded with three prestigious awards: The Best Telecoms Company of the Year, Most Innovative Mobile Player of the Year and the Undersea Cable Company of the year. These awards were based on the company's customer-centric approach to business. The company has always and keep demonstrating this its products and services. For instance, in the Nigerian market, we were the first to introduce per billing system and we are the frontrunners in terms of internet and data service. All these have been achieved because of the level of interest the company puts in satisfying the needs of the customers.
Interviewer	This bring me to the first major question; in this era of social media prominence, how is your company approaching customer relationship management?
Interviewee	Social media is now the marketing platform for virtually all businesses and industries. For this company, the major customer relationship management strategy in this era of social media is to create and gather customer information, regarding their buying behaviour, their individual and collective needs and preferences and their service demands. Social CRM is driven to support the company in recreating personal relationships with the customers; a dual-communication process between the company and customers. Social CRM provides a solution to communicate and deliver the appropriate values of each customers in the manners in the customers want to receive such information. The company has established several social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube

(just to mention the popular ones), that allows it to communicate and develop relationships with the customers. There is also, the live chat facility in our official website that allows our customers and prospective ones to communicate with virtual agents about our products and services or those with queries.

Interviewer	How do you as an organisation manage the acquired customer information (i.e. feedback, queries and suggestions) from the social media and other customer contact channels?
Interviewee	As a matter of fact, social media or the different digital channels are used as listening tools that are used in recording all relevant messages in online communities. By using these listening tools, the company is able to identify, and profile the different customers and aligning the product designs to suit the particular customer segments. The company can be described as one that uses both transactional focused and relationship focused solutions in managing customer information. Nonetheless, whether transactional or relationship focused, the primary objectives is to identify customer needs, and deliver superior value to our customers. The company stores and shares customer information symmetrically across the various departments. The holistic process of the solution is to allow every department in the organisation to utilise the customer data in being attentive, responsive and proactive towards the customers. All departments of the organization have access to this information from the system and can you now use in carrying out their specific functions. For instance, technical support unit could provide a solution to message filtered by the listening tool, which the customers affair department follows up on by contacting the customer to know if the solution provided was satisfactory. Again, the product development department can use such customer information as input for new product and solution design and development. It is worth that social CRM brings about a synergy among the different departments of the organisation. Synergized communication and collaboration among organisational departments is an essential for creating favourable relationships among the employees and a shared view of the customers and market with the hope of working towards a clear shared objective. in forming favourable relationships and a shared view of customers and the community with the hope of working towards clear shared objectives.
Interviewer	Can you highlight some of the benefits of social CRM the company has enjoyed in recent times?
Interviewee	Social CRM has allowed the organization to interact more freely with the customers and improved internal communication with the organisation. It has allowed the organisation and particularly the social CRM team in

Interviewer	Lastly, how would you rate your organisation's performance on social CRM strategy as it relates to (i) gaining customers' insights; (ii) engaging the customers; (iii) improving customer satisfaction; and (iv) improving brand loyalty?
Interviewee	The introduction of social CRM has helped this organisation with a tool for the effective listening of customer conversations on social media and other digital channels which has helped in improving the level of satisfaction of the customers with our products and service. It also has helped in improving the customer experience journey and this given us the reputation we enjoy in the industry today. Social CRM has enabled us to understand our customers better including their needs and has provided an avenue for them to voice their opinion; which the company has taken to further improve the quality of our service. Social CRM does not serve the organisation in terms of delivering positive customer outcomes (such as enhance customer satisfaction and brand loyalty), it also serves the company in terms of fostering faster decision making across the different departments. Every department of the organisation now utilise this customer information in increasing understanding of the customers' needs and preference, market and industry trends and speeding up the process in takes in arriving at critical decisions that improves the brand equity of the organisation.
Interviewer	This brings interview to an end. Thank you for your time.

Interview 3: Globacom Nigeria

Job Title/Role: Marketing/Social Media Manager

Duration of Services in Firm (Years): Over 5 years

Industry Experience (Years): 11 years

Orator	Question/Response
Interviewer	Thank you for taking out time to partake in this this interview. I will like to start if you are ready.
Interviewee	Yes, we can start
Interviewer	Can we start by describing your customer centric approach as a telecom organisation in Nigeria?
Interviewee	I am proud to say Globacom is a customer-centric organisation. We put our customers at the centre of our world and this is as a result of our understanding that the satisfaction of our customers is pivotal to our survival in the industry. Hence, we (the company) optimise every opportunity to celebrate our customers. This attitude has continued to pull customers in multitude to the company and keeps pushing the company to the top of the industry. In spite of this success, the organisation continues to devise several new ways to putting smiles on the faces of many of its customers and attracting prospective customers.
Interviewer	In other words, you are trying to say that the delivery of quality customer service is of high priority in the organisation?
Interviewee	Yes, that is putting it simple terms. Globacom has consistently been in the fore when it comes to providing subscribers with value services. It was the first Nigerian telecoms network to introduce the preferred per-second billing system (which other Nigerian mobile operators will not introduce until 2007), the multimedia messaging service, text-2-email, mobile Internet, Glo Direct, Magic Plus, N1SIM and free connection for post paid subscribers. As a company, Globacom has been known for many firsts. It made history as the first single company to build a multimillion dollar high-capacity fibre-optic cable, known as Glo-1. It is also the first successful submarine cable from the United Kingdom to Nigeria; and it has decreased telecoms process and provided excess bandwidth to all the cities connected to the cable. This historical initiative has improved teleconferencing, distance learning, disaster recovery and telemedicine among several other benefits. All these achievements are tailored towards providing quality service delivery for the customers
Interviewer	In this modern era of social media, how is your company approaching customer relationship management?
Interviewee	Businesses all over the world have recognized the power of developing long lasting relationship with their customers and are using Web and social media as a means of engaging existing clients, attracting new ones and

keep their customers updated on latest services and announcements. Websites packed with information such as Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus and other social networks are some of the ways these businesses communicate with their fan base. Because we are customer-centric, we have provided several avenues through which our customers can get all the help and support they need so they can derive maximum utility with our products and services. For instance, Our live chat service is available anytime on the website. This provides a quick avenue to reach us when you are online. Just click on the chat icon available wherever you are on our website to chat immediately with a customer care representative. We have also explored the social media avenues to reach our customers. We are on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Blackberry Channel, Google+ and Eskimi. All the customer needs to do is follow us on any of our social channel or site and be amongst the first to get information on our product/service offers/release and giveaways. You ca also chat with us on social media, you can send in complaints/enquiries as posts or tweets and we'll respond to you in the shortest possible time.

Interviewer	How do you as an organisation manage the acquired customer information (i.e. feedback, queries and suggestions) from the social media and other customer contact channels?
Interviewee	Once we gather customer insight from the different channels, this information is dispersed across the relevant department who handles the information promptly. Globacom can boast of best minds in the industry with excellent academic backgrounds and diverse work experience who have been contributing their quotas to the growth and performance of the company. Glo is blessed with dedicated work force (staff and consultants) of over 3,000 highly motivated, first class professionals from within and outside the country and are passionate about building technologically advanced infrastructure; creating new products, services and offers; and delivering customer values and experiences that surpass expectations.
Interviewer	How have you benefitted as a company from the use of the social media and your overall customer relationship management strategy?
Interviewee	Over the last few years, we as an organisation have been able to harness the benefits of social media and networks in engaging with our customers on issues relating to our products and service. An effective social media strategy allows companies to listen to customer interactions and proactively resolve customer complaints. With our effective social media and customer relationship management strategy, we have been able to improve customer loyalty, improve return on marketing investment, reduce operating and labour costs relating to marketing, improve IT efficiency, ensure more customer lifecycle moments of value and foster effective

	business intelligence and lead discovery. Social CRM are useful tools we use to better understand our customers as they facilitate listening to the discussions that take place online over the social media channels, online over blogs, and other forums. Our effective social CRM strategy uses customers' personal and professional networks to grow our business. The bedrock of our strategic direction is the leverage on technology – use of electronic decision tools across all our businesses, adding broader datasets and embedding analytics
Interviewer	Lastly, how would you rate your organisation's performance on social CRM strategy as it relates to (i) gaining customers' insights; (ii) engaging the customers; (iii) improving customer satisfaction; and (iv) improving brand loyalty?
Interviewee	Social CRM is strategic thrust that provides deepened market penetration and customer acquisition; embed customer and service delivery excellence and drives operational effectiveness. For us, our social CRM strategy has performed well in all those areas you have just mentioned. With our numerous social media channels, we are kept abreast with what our customers are talking about. This information has been instrumental in developing products and services that meets the needs and preferences of our customers. The reviews and feedback we keep getting is that our customers are in general satisfied with the products and service we offer. Also, we have the second largest market share in the Nigeria telecom industry (although we are striving to become number) and we wouldn't be able to achieve this without our loyal customers.
Interviewer	This brings interview to an end. Thank you for your time.

9Mobile

Interview 1: 9Mobile

Job Title/Role: Marketing Officer

Duration of Services in Firm (Years): 3 years

Industry Experience (Years): 5 years

Duration: 51:31mins

Orator	Question/Response

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Interviewer	Good morning. I will like to start this interview by asking your expert opinion on how your company is implementing social CRM implementation
Interviewee	For us [that is the company], customer relationship management is about strengthening the relationship between us and other customers by engaging personally with them. Social CRM solutions for us provides a platform to identify the major influencers within each of these social media channels. Social CRM solutions complements our marketing campaigns and promotion that resonate with the social media customers.
Interviewer	So, you would consider your company as a customer-centric organisation; where customer satisfaction and retention are of high priority?
Interviewee	Today, our marketing department is the main driver of corporate business results. By using data and applications to truly personalize our offers, we are making a positive difference in the day-to-day experience of our customers. With our Integrated Marketing Cloud, the company has been able to shift its strategy from mass marketing to a segmented and targeted customer-centric approach, improving response rates and customer satisfaction levels. And with data analytics, the company is also able to respond to inbound requests with the right offer at the right time. Campaigns that previously took six months to bring to market now take less than 4weeks, enabling us to achieve much more.
Interviewer	For my next question, I would like to know how you are integrating social media with customer relationship management strategy?
Interviewee	With a growing market and increasing competition, developing and sustaining customer relationship has become an important means of differentiation and path to achieve business success. To accomplish the same, we are constantly adapting to new technological imperatives and are becoming more customer-centric, focusing on customer needs rather than product features. 9Mobile maintains its brand equity by leveraging its sales of connections. This is possible with the help of a dedicated partner network, which includes a direct distribution channel and exclusive dealers' network, and each month, new consumers are joining this network. On the other hand, we promote an open communication regarding its social and environmental practices.

In terms of brand equity, 9Mobile emerged as a good brand because it has been able to fulfil the customer needs and demand, through technological innovation, and a sustainable approach to managing customer relationships. All these factors add up in assisting the company in enhancing its brand. Our customers are considered the most valuable assets and strong tools for gaining competitive advantage. And with this |

Interviewer	How do you manage the acquired customer information across the organisation? What I mean is what happens to the customer information once it is gathered?
Interviewee	In this company, data is used more effectively for insight-driven marketing. The customer information and information from the social medial engagement is used to understand the different customer segment and ensure that our products and services are delivered more accurately and at individualised level. The information is used to build the customer segments based on specific attributes such as customer value, behaviour (both voice and data) and tenure. The information the company gathers from engaging the customers are also used in tailoring products or offers based on customer preferences. It is also used in identifying relevant upselling opportunities and branding offers for new outlets or products, create new revenue streams, with a focus on the business to customer mobile advertising market.
Interviewer	The next question is, what are the benefits of social media and customer relationship management?
Interviewee	By integrating social media in the customer relationship management, the company is endearing itself to the customer base and increasing brand awareness by offering the best possible solutions and suitable products to customers. Social media and the CRM solutions in this company is used in fostering market research, product preferences research, and in detecting the industry trends. The focus of the social media strategy is in maintaining relationships and just as a service support tool. It is used in adapting marketing strategies and responding to the actions of the competitors which is achieved through the change in corporate culture. For this social media is used for searching for information regarding the industry and in tracking the activities of competitors; with such information used in developing innovative products and services.
Interviewer	For the last question, how would you rate your organisation's performance on social media and social CRM as it regards: (i) gaining customers' insights; (ii) engaging the customers; (iii) improving customer satisfaction; and (iv) improving brand loyalty?
Interviewee	In line with the benefits I just talked about, this company has benefitted from social media and social CRM, by using the solution in monitoring, capturing, analysing, exploiting and managing the customer base in

| Interviewer | Thank you and this is all for this interview and the insightful information you have provided. If there is any need for further clarification, I will contact. |

Interview 2: 9Mobile

Job Title/Role: Online Marketing Analyst

Duration of Services in Firm (Years): Over 7 years

Industry Experience (Years): 15 years

Duration: 38:41mins

Orator	Question/Response
Interviewer	Hello. I want to say a big thank for taking out time for this interview. I will like to seek your expert opinion on social CRM implementation in this organisation. If you are ready we can begin.
Interviewee	Yes we can. Hope it will not take too long?
Interviewer	Not at all. It should not last more than forty minutes. I want to start by asking about the customer centric approach adopted by your company and by this I mean to what extent is the delivery of quality customer service a priority?
Interviewee	Thank you. At the core of our business strategy is the customer centric approach which to us means a total commitment to the delivering of effective and lasting customer experience. By adopting this customer centric approach, we (9Mobile) are able to engage in close interactions

with the customers, collate customer issues, pay attention and create long-term relationships. This is the reason why we (Etisalat) have hundreds of Customer Experience Centres across the country while keeping online care platforms open 24 hours. The essence of this is to keep our customers first and ensure their complete satisfaction with our services. *The result is happy customers who spend more, recommend more and stay longer.*

Interviewer	So you would consider yourself as customer-centric organisation; where customer satisfaction and retention is of high priority?

Interviewee	Yes. With a core focus on customer's interest, 9Mobile strives to customise its solutions that fit the customers' changing needs, while providing the benefits of convenience, coverage, value and total customer experience. Customer experience is about emotions and emotions are about people. While considering various business strategies, it is important to also take a look at the internal atmosphere. The right customer experience drives retention, competitiveness and future business growth by motivating customer centric decisions.

Interviewer	In this modern era where developing and managing relationship has become top priority, how is your company approaching customer relationship management?

Interviewee	With a growing market and increasing competition, developing and sustaining customer relationship has become an important means of differentiation and path to achieve business success. To accomplish the same, we are constantly adapting to new technological imperatives and are becoming more customer-centric, focusing on customer needs rather than product features. 9Mobile maintains its brand equity by leveraging its sales of connections. This is possible with the help of a dedicated partner network, which includes a direct distribution channel and exclusive dealers' network, and each month, new consumers are joining this network. On the other hand, we promote an open communication regarding its social and environmental practices.

In terms of brand equity, 9Mobile emerged as a good brand because it is able to fulfil the customer needs and demand, technological advancement, and have a sustainable approach to customer relationships. All these factors in combinations help in increasing brand equity of the company. We consider our customers as the most valued assets and in the increasingly competitive sector, we remain firm in our resolve to deliver the best customer experience to Nigerians. Through our dedicated channels – experience centres, online support, social media, fora and other channels – we consistently engage our customers with the view of building trust, promoting transparency and delivering value. Our mission is to ensure that

we continue to build on our high standard of service across all customer engagement channels

Interviewer	If I am right, you mentioned that you integrate social media platforms in your customer-centric approach, what is the nature of your social media channels
Interviewee	We have numerous social media channels which we use in engaging with our customers. We have presence in all the common social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Google + and so many other sponsored blogs.
Interviewer	My next question is, how do you integrate social media with your customer relationship management strategy?
Interviewee	9Mobile (formerly Etisalat) is one of the fastest growing networks in Nigeria. This is not surprising considering our customer-centric approach to doing business. We are, therefore, open to our customers' feedback and we seek it out regularly, through our customer engagement channels such as the social media channels we just talked about. We also take note of customer trends as a means of measuring their faith in us. With the easy of porting from one network to another and the Multi-SIMming practice in Nigeria, we have had to set up our game in order to retain our old customers and attract new ones. In 2014, we had the highest number of inward porting from other networks, and the least outward porting traffic on the average. This is a strong indicator that our customers are overly happy with our services to the extent that they would recommend it to other people. In this company, it is not just about getting more customers. We do our best to ensure that the high quality service that attracted these customers is maintained and that they continue to enjoy the quality service delivery
Interviewer	How do you manage the acquired customer information across the organisation? What I mean is what happens to the customer information once it is gathered?
Interviewee	Etisalat began the customer forum in 2010 with the objective of engaging with customers and receiving valuable feedback on the quality of service delivery as well as product propositions and services. As the leading customer-focused company, we make it our duty to feel the pulse of our customers regarding the products and services we offer. We are keen to understand how best they want us to serve them. So, the social media and other forums we have enables us to meet with them, hear their views on our offerings, products and services and then respond to these needs in the best ways that would positively impact on their lifestyles. The forum provides us first-hand information on the experience of our customers and

empowers us to address their concerns including modifying existing products and services or introducing more innovative one. With our robust technological systems, all customer complaints are analysed promptly and thoroughly to identify the root cause or any significant learning to avoid recurrence, which then is used to improve our customer experience. We believe in building and growing customer relationships. We want to provide them with experiential solutions that meet their needs and not just push products or services to them. Being transparent is one of the company's core values, and this has helped us build trust with our customers.

In addition, our success story can largely be attributed to the efforts of our highly skilled and competent workforce. Etisalat Nigeria has a unique value proposition hinged on key areas where we focus on establishing well-rounded engagement with our employees, leaving them more than satisfied. We treat our employees as internal customers ensuring that we encourage them with proper incentives and rewards to give the highest value and contributions to our continuous development. We ensure that all our employees imbibe the core values of the organization - which is putting the customer first and these reflect in all assignments and daily operations. We, therefore, create legitimate avenues for employees to imbibe our brand culture and identity of excellence in everything that they do.

Interviewer	The next question is, what are the benefits of social media and customer relationship management?
Interviewee	It is not just us; businesses all over the world are recognising the power of the social media in building customer relationships. For us social media provides a channel for engaging with our existing customers, attract new news and keep the customers updated on recent product innovations and services. Social media provides a good access to huge consumer base; with their feedbacks used in developing innovative products and improve the quality of service delivery. Most important social media provides a platform to keep abreast with the customers are thinking and saying and in so doing enable us to provide quality service delivery.
Interviewer	Lastly, how would you rate your organisation's performance on social media as it regards: (i) gaining customers' insights; (ii) engaging the customers; (iii) improving customer satisfaction; and (iv) improving brand loyalty?
Interviewee	In order to grow your business, it is vital to be very active on social media platforms that best fits your company. As a customer-centric business we are on the very popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Google +; to mention but a few. With these platforms we

have been able to engage with our customers to identify areas in our service delivery that requires improvement and so far we have accomplished giant strides and as present we are well known as the best customer-centric telecom firm in Nigeria.

Social media helps in managing brand reputation, driving brand awareness and fosters customer engagement – that is for both existing and prospective customers. The gathered consumer insights from social media and sentiment analysis are used in accelerating problem solving, product innovation and improving sales.

The use of social media all culminates in high level of customer satisfaction and has provided with the formidable brand that we are now. Effort across the organisation is being continuously made to ensure we become the largest brand in Nigeria and this means we have to continue positioning our self in attracting new customers.

Interviewer	This brings interview to an end. I want to thank you for taking out time from your busy schedule to do this.
Interviewee	You are welcome.
Interviewer	Bye for now.

Interview 3: 9Mobile

Job Title/Role: Chief Technology Officer

Duration of Services in Firm (Years): 7years plus

Industry Experience (Years): 12 years

Duration of Interview: 35:41mins

Orator	Question/Response

Interviewer	Good morning. I will like to start this interview by asking your expert opinion on how your company is implementing social CRM implementation
Interviewee	Here we recognise the power of social media for how business and use social media analytics solutions for uncovering customer sentiment dispersed across countless online sources. In addition, we use these solutions for capturing data from social media to understand customer opinion & reaction to the products and services we offer. Thirdly, these solutions assist in identifying customer trends that we use in designing our marketing campaigns. Another function of the solution is that it helps in monitoring the customers' sentiments expressed across the social media channels
Interviewer	So, you would consider yourself as customer-centric organisation; where customer satisfaction and retention is of high priority?
Interviewee	The vision of the company [9Mobile] is focused on creating a centralised marketing solution that provides a holistic view of the customer and an end-to-end view of marketing activities. The company take full advantage of Teradata Customer Interaction Manager, which supports large volumes of data that can be used to build tailored campaigns. These were seamlessly integrated and thus remain a key industry differentiator within the Nigerian telecoms market. With Teradata Marketing Applications, we are delivering on the promise inherent in our corporate vision. It works because all we are focused on is delivering the best customer experience possible
Interviewer	In this modern era where developing and managing relationship has become top priority, how is your company approaching customer relationship management?
Interviewee	There are several social media channels that we use in engaging our customers. We are very active on the major social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and that is not to say those are the only ones, but they are the very common ones that most of the customers are active on. For example, the company uses its Facebook channel to inform customers of new tariffs and latest offers. The company has made it easy for customers to click through to sign up for offers and it has proved to be a very effective marketing tool.
Interviewer	For my next question, what is the nature of your social media strategy
Interviewee	We have numerous social media channels which we use in engaging with our customers. We have presence in all the common social media

platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Google + and so many other sponsored blogs.

Interviewer	My next question is, how do you integrate social media with your customer relationship management strategy?
Interviewee	This company remains the fastest growing network in Nigeria and this is down to the dedication of the company in ensuring that customers are always satisfied with our product and services. Customer data especially from social media constitute our big data; which is harnessed in understanding the different customer segment. By constantly engaging with the customers, we can gather the necessary customer information that is used by the company to understand market trends; that is used to understand our position in the market and what the customers are talking about. With this information the company is a better position to develop long lasting relationship with the customers and properly manage this relationship through its lifespan. Social media can also be used to increase the efficiency of these agents, by pooling together information both from the text and voice channels and social media channels.
Interviewer	How do you manage the acquired customer information across the organisation?
Interviewee	To manage the conversation with numerous subscribers to the social media channels, the company has implemented Genesys Social Engagement to integrate the social media channel into its customer care strategy. From the customer's perspective, it is a highly personalized service, yet at much lower cost than the 'personal agents' that the company offers its premium customers. With the Genesys Social Engagement solution we are using social media channels such as Facebook to address customer enquiries. This presents an extremely efficient way of handling enquiries compared to the personal agents, who normally take a longer time to handle these enquiries.
Interviewer	I am aware you have discussed this in passing, but I will like to ask the next question, what are the expected benefits of social CRM to your organisation?
Interviewee	The benefits of social media and CRM are enormous. Social CRM allows for quick communication and engagement with the customer segments. It allows for the quick response of queries before it degenerates into bad public relations. Social CRM also allows for organisational-wide dissemination of customer information; by encouraging open communication channels between the different departments and this will allow the company to adjust its IT and marketing strategy accordingly,

Interviewer	Lastly, how would you rate your organisation's performance on social media as it regards: (i) gaining customers' insights; (ii) engaging the customers; (iii) improving customer satisfaction; and (iv) improving brand loyalty?
Interviewee	The company has won numerous award for its customer-centric approach to its business. With social media and our CRM strategy we have been able to speak to our customers across various digital channels in other to collate customers issues, pay attention to their needs and develop long term solutions. The objective of the organisation is to put the customers first and ensure that they are always satisfied with our products and services. The outcome is having customers who spend more, stay longer with the organisation and provides appropriate word of mouth advertisements.
Interviewer	This brings interview to end and once again, thank you for taking out time to answer my questions. [Researcher exchanges compliments with the interviewee and leaves the office]

Appendix 4: Consent/Introduction Letter for the Wave 2 Survey:

Questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Wagdi Hadidan, a post-graduate student at the School of Built Environment, University of Salford, working towards a Ph.D. degree. As mentioned in the previous correspondence, I am inviting you to take part in this survey which is part of the thesis titled: An Investigation of the Influence of Social CRM on Brand Reputation and Loyalty in the Nigeria Telecom Industry.

I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing the attached surveys. The following questionnaire will require approximately 25-35 mins to complete. There is no compensation for participation nor is there any associated risk. To ensure that all information remain confidential, you are not required to your name or any other means of identification.

If you choose to participate in this survey, please answer all questions as honestly as possible and return the completed questionnaires promptly. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you may refuse to participate at any time. Thank you for taking the time to assist me in my educational endeavours.

The data collected will provide useful information regarding the successful completion of my thesis. If you require additional information or have questions, please contact me at the number listed below.

If you are not satisfied with the way this study is being conducted, you may report (anonymously if you so choose) any complaints to <waj_hadi@yahoo.co.uk>;

Much regards,

Wagdi Hadidan

Appendix 5:   Sample Survey Questionnaire

Section 1:   Demographic Profile

The following questions measure your demographics

1. Gender

☐ Male   ☐ Female

2. Level of Education

☐ Senior School Certificate   ☐ Diploma Degree

☐ Graduate Degree   ☐ Postgraduate Degree

3. Area of Residence in Lagos

Lagos Mainland (Alimosho, Agege, Surulelre, Apapa, etc).

Lagos Central (i.e. Ikeja)

Lagos Island (Ikoyi, Victoria Island, Lekki)

Section 2: General Information on use of social media

The following set of questions explore your usage of social media. Please read each of the questions and check the appropriate answer.

4. Which of the following social media channels you use the most? Please rank the order in terms of the frequency (**1**: use less frequently **8**: Use most frequently).

    ____Facebook

    ____Twitter

    ____YouTube

    ____Instagram

    ____Blogs

    ____LinkedIn

    Others: [please specify] _____

5. How long have you been using the social media?

    _____year(s) _____month(s)

6. How often do you visit the social media site on an average a day?

    _____times(s)/day

7. In each of the following, please indicate your major interest for using social media
    ☐ updating textual profile (e.g. status, personal information) and visual profile information (e.g. photos, visual background)
    ☐ for online games, and taking quiz
    ☐ reading news feeds and comments
    ☐ posting comments on the social media walls
    ☐ sending inbox messages

    ☐ Chatting and connecting with friends

    ☐ Participation in brand (company) communities

☐ All of the above

others (please specify) _____

Section 3: Consumers' Perceived Value of Social Media Marketing and Social CRM Strategies

The following questions assesses your perception as a customer of the social media activities of your **preferred telecom service provider**. Please read each question carefully and check the answer that best reflects your feeling

8. How important is it for you that the telecom companies are active on social media and provide customer service on their social media channels?

☐ Not Important

☐ Of Little Importance

☐ Somewhat Important

☐ Important

☐ Very Important

Please Indicate how much you agree with the following statements using the scale below:

[Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
9. Social media marketing offerings provided by the telecom firm makes it easy for me to select products/services that meets my needs and requirements					
10. I feel social media marketing strategies are used by the					

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telecom firm in addressing the individual needs of consumers

11. The company's social media offers accurate information on product

12. Marketing with social media is very interesting and informative.

13. The latest trend for telecom firms in Nigeria is to market and make visible their products on social media channels

14. The company's social media makes purchase recommendations as per my requirements

15. The company's social media facilitates personalized information search

16. I feel that social media advertising is a good source for timely information on new telecom products

Section 4: Evaluation of Firm's Customer-Oriented Practice

The following questions requires you to evaluate your experience with your preferred telecom firm in Nigeria.

Please Indicate how much you agree with the following statements using the scale below:

[Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
17. This company always put the interest of its consumers at top priority					

18. The firm has differentiated offers and different plans for the different customer segments

19. I think the knowledge of the customers' needs and wishes is the base of the different marketing activities of the company

20. I believe the company has a good strategy of creating greater value for the customers

21. My issues are in most cases resolved as promised

22. It is easy for customers to reach the company and do transactions on social media

23. The support agents online often handle my issues with empathy

Section 5:   Level of Customer-Organisation Interaction/Engagement on Social Media

The following questions assesses the level of interaction/engagement you as a customer have with your **preferred telecom service provider** on social media.

Please read each question carefully and check the answer that best reflects your feeling using the scale below:

[Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

24. The company's social media allows me to share and update the existing content with the company

25. I enjoy the interactions with the telecom firm on social media

26. Interacting with the telecom firm through social networking has created a closer affection for the brand

27. The telecom's social media facilitates two-way interaction with family and friends

28. I feel a great bond with my preferred telecom brand and this is down to social media

29 This telecom company interacts regularly with its followers and fans

30. I feel a sense of belonging with the telecom firm which is the outcome of close interaction and engagement with the firms

31 I often engage with the firm online to exchange information as it relates to the products and service

Section 6:   Measure of Brand Resonance

The following questions measure your level of connection with your preferred telecom brand. Please read each question carefully and check the answer that best reflects your feeling using the scale below:

[Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
32. I can easily recognise the brand of my preferred telecom firms whenever I see it					
33. I need this brand and rely on its benefits.					
34. Compared with other brands in the telecom industry, my favored telecom brand satisfies my basic needs.					
35. I like the look, feel, and other design aspects of my preferred brand					
36. My preferred brand is a brand name that meets my expectation					
37. I consider myself loyal to this brand					
38. I am proud to have others know that I am a user of My Mobile phone					
39. I feel a deep connection with others who use this brand.					
40 I can count on this brand to do what's best for me					

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Appendix 6:   Ethical Form from the University

Appendix 7: The Impact of Demographic Differences on Favourite Social Media Channels

the favourite social media channel * gender Crosstabulation

			gender		Total
			male	female	
the favourite social media channel	Facebook	Count	119	55	174
		% within the favourite social media channel	68.4%	31.6%	100.0%
	Twitter	Count	36	6	42
		% within the favourite social media channel	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
	YouTube	Count	0	14	14
		% within the favourite social media channel	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Instagram	Count	152	109	261

		% within the favourite social media channel	58.2%	41.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	307	184	491
		% within the favourite social media channel	62.5%	37.5%	100.0%

the favourite social media channel * level of education Crosstabulation

			level of education				
			senior school certificate	diploma degree	graduate degree	postgraduate degree	Total
the favourite social media channel	Facebook	Count	42	59	70	3	174
		% within the favourite social media channel	24.1%	33.9%	40.2%	1.7%	100.0%
	Twitter	Count	4	1	7	30	42
		% within the favourite social media channel	9.5%	2.4%	16.7%	71.4%	100.0%
	YouTube	Count	14	0	0	0	14
		% within the favourite social media channel	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Instagram	Count	31	51	141	38	261
		% within the favourite social media channel	11.9%	19.5%	54.0%	14.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	91	111	218	71	491
		% within the favourite social media channel	18.5%	22.6%	44.4%	14.5%	100.0%

the favourite social media channel * age group Crosstabulation

		age group				
		18-25 years	25-35 years	35-45 years	45-55 years	Total

the favourite social media channel	Facebook	Count	94	53	16	11	174
		% within the favourite social media channel	54.0%	30.5%	9.2%	6.3%	100.0%
	Twitter	Count	19	20	2	1	42
		% within the favourite social media channel	45.2%	47.6%	4.8%	2.4%	100.0%
	YouTube	Count	8	3	1	2	14
		% within the favourite social media channel	57.1%	21.4%	7.1%	14.3%	100.0%
	Instagram	Count	139	81	18	23	261
		% within the favourite social media channel	53.3%	31.0%	6.9%	8.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	260	157	37	37	491
		% within the favourite social media channel	53.0%	32.0%	7.5%	7.5%	100.0%

Appendix 8:   Chi-Tests of the Relationship between

Demographics and Perceived Value of SMM and social CRM

Gender Differences on Perceived Value of SMM and Social CRM

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	72.471[a]	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	81.405	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	9.162	1	.002
N of Valid Cases	491		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.37.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.137	.043	3.052	.002[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.147	.047	3.289	.001[c]
N of Valid Cases		491			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Level of Education Differences on Perceived Value of SMM and Social CRM

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	169.456[a]	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	174.420	9	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.916	1	.088
N of Valid Cases	491		

a. 2 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count
is 3.62.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.077	.037	1.711	.088[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.057	.042	1.263	.207[c]
N of Valid Cases		491			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Age Differences on Perceived Value of SMM and Social CRM

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.832[a]	9	.128
Likelihood Ratio	15.472	9	.079
Linear-by-Linear Association	.161	1	.688
N of Valid Cases	491		

a. 4 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.88.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.018	.046	-.401	.689[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.034	.046	-.750	.454[c]
N of Valid Cases		491			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

N of Valid Cases	491			

a. 4 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count
is 1.88.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.018	.046	-.401	.689[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.034	.046	-.750	.454[c]
N of Valid Cases		491			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Appendix 9: Chi-Tests of the Relationship between Demographics and Duration of Use of Social Media

Gender Vs Duration of Using Social Media

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.575[a]	4	.001
Likelihood Ratio	18.967	4	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.269	1	.012
N of Valid Cases	491		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.74.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.200			.001
	Cramer's V	.200			.001
	Contingency Coefficient	.196			.001
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.113	.046	2.517	.012[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.107	.046	2.390	.017[c]
N of Valid Cases		491			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Level of Education Vs Duration of Using Social Media

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	212.477[a]	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	214.304	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.856	1	.091
N of Valid Cases	491		

a. 1 cells (5.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.92.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.658			.000
	Cramer's V	.380			.000
	Contingency Coefficient	.550			.000
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.076	.049	1.693	.091[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.054	.050	1.198	.231[c]
N of Valid Cases		491			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Age Group Vs Duration of Using Social Media

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.077[a]	12	.779
Likelihood Ratio	7.849	12	.797
Linear-by-Linear Association	.519	1	.471
N of Valid Cases	491		

a. 4 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.56.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.128			.779
	Cramer's V	.074			.779
	Contingency Coefficient	.127			.779
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.033	.046	.720	.472[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.047	.046	1.042	.298[c]
N of Valid Cases		491			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Area of Residence Vs Duration of Using Social Media

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.918[a]	8	.349
Likelihood Ratio	8.969	8	.345
Linear-by-Linear Association	.001	1	.978
N of Valid Cases	491		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.97.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.135			.349
	Cramer's V	.095			.349
	Contingency Coefficient	.134			.349
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	-.001	.046	-.027	.978[c]
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	-.007	.046	-.161	.872[c]
N of Valid Cases		491			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

Appendix 10: First Paper

An Exploration on the Perceived Benefits of Social CRM by Telecom Experts:

Evidence from the Nigerian Telecoms Industry

Abstract

Context: Part of the greatest challenge facing modern organisations especially telecom organisations is responding to dynamic customers' needs and building relationship in view of gaining customers' trust and satisfaction within a very competitive market. Hence the aim of this study is to explore how social CRM is being approached by telecom organisations in Nigeria; a very fast developing telecom and technology market.

Design and Subjects: An exploratory research involving a semi-structure interview with 9-industry experts from the Nigerian Telecom industry. Three employees each from three of the leading telecom experts were recruited for the study**.**

Results: A thematic analysis process was adopted in identifying similarities and differences across the interview data. Themes relating to industry's to customer orientation approach; adoption and implementation of social media technology, social CRM capabilities of the firms, social CRM implementation strategies being implemented by the organisations and the perceived benefits of social CRM in the local market.

Conclusion: Implementing social CRM offers a lot of benefits for Nigeria telecom firms including improving strategies for acquiring customer information; attracting new customers and keeping the older ones and in general influencing improvement in the telecom service delivery and customer perception and acceptance of such services

INTRODUCTION

Today's business environment has undergone fundamental changes – becoming more of a service-oriented market as against a production-based market that was striving in few decades' past. This has resulted in a shift from a traditional product-focused approach to a more technology-enabled and customer-centric approach (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2001; Brooks *et al.* 2011; Patil & Bhakkad, 2014). In this modern era marketing processes have transcended the simple development, supply and sales of goods or services, to the continuous development of after sales services tailored towards developing long lasting relationship with customers (Phan & Vogel, 2010; Peppers & Rogers, 2011; Rai, 2013).

The advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has also created new channels for organisations like never before in terms of exploiting customer relationship in view of enhancing customer satisfaction, developing and managing long-term customer relationships, increasing potential sales, and retaining loyal customer (Korsakiene, 2009; Phan & Vogel, 2010). Particularly, the internet and social media have enabled customer relationship management (CRM) practices to flourish. Business organisations can now incorporate the functionalities of the internet and social media into traditional CRM systems to provide a platform where the firms can interact

and engage with the consumers (both existing and prospective) in view of providing customized and personalized services (Greenberg, 2010; Quinton & Harridge-March, 2010).

Although the use of Social CRM systems has become prominent across different business industries including the aviation industry (Gajic *et al.* 2016; Gnanprakash & Kulkarni, 2016), hospitality industry (Milovic, 2012; Mohammed, 2012; Rosman & Stuhura, 2013; Thryambakam & Bethapudi, 2013; Klutse, 2016), and telecoms (Cottman, 2013; Saleh, 2016), there are major concerns on the fruition of these Social CRM systems in terms of delivering value both for the organisation and the different stakeholders (Cottman, 2013; Alamgir & Shamsuddoha, 2015)**.** Other authors have raised the question whether the organisations claiming to implement Social CRM are fully exploiting the capabilities of the Social CRM systems and are embracing the possibilities it offers for their businesses (Alamgir & Shamsuddoha, 2015).

The basic question addressed in this paper relates to the extent which Nigerian telecom service providers have embraced Social CRM as a tool for interacting and engaging with their consumers. And secondly what are the social CRM tools and strategies used by Nigerian telecom service providers. The main goal of the study is to contribute to the larger successfulness of organizations that decide for the social CRM implementation, and to point out to the problems that may be hindering the implementation. This paper is organised as follows: first the concept of social CRM is described by presenting some definitions, Social CRM implementation studies and a review of some of the recent studies in the extant literature. Thereafter, the research methodology is presented, which leads to the presentation of the findings, its discussion and the conclusion reached.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the highly competitive nature of modern business environments, organisations are putting in greater effort in building and establishing lasting relationship with the hope of realising customer loyalty – which has become the bane of modern business and organisational success (O'Brien et al. 2015; Faed et al. 2016; Ngo & Nguyen, 2016). Therefore, understanding how to manage lasting relationship with profitable customers has become an important research area for both academicians and practitioners in recent years. Social Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has been advanced from the relationship marketing literature as a prominent technique for enhancing customer satisfaction and subsequent retention (Reinartz *et al.*, 2004; Reimann et al. 2010; Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Nguyen & Mutum, 2012; Wang & Feng, 2012; Nwankwo & Ajemunigbohun, 2013). Simply put, Social CRM can be described as a technology-based solution designed to support the building process and management of the organisation-customer relationship (Jayachandran *et al.* 2005).

Social CRM therefore represents an avenue for businesses to identify and connect with the best customers at the right time and create differentiable value to the customers by satisfying their individual needs and requirements and with the view of stimulating positive customer outcomes such as repeat purchase and brand loyalty (Nguyen & Mutum, 2012). Social CRM therefore requires the reviewing or restructuring of the entire organisational process; whether it is a product or a service driven organization or whether it involves the process of operations from suppliers through to the end application, from their internal staff through to the end customers, including the collection of the different activities such as identification, acquisition and retention of customers through customer interaction management capabilities (Hansotia, 2002; Reinartz *et al.*, 2004; Ernst et al. 2011).

Similarly, Ernst *et al.* (2011) describe Social CRM to involve the evolution and integration of marketing ideas and newly available data, technologies and organisational forms into establishing, developing and maintaining successful long-term learning relationships with well-chosen customers. A process that demands the systematic and proactive management of the relationship between the buyer and seller as it

progresses from the initiating stage to the maintenance stage and climaxing at the termination phase if need be (Reinartz et al., 2004). Hence the essence of Social CRM is to align business processes in such a way as it promotes the development of a quality relationship with the customers characterised by open dialogue and interactions; providing a situation where the organisation can learn about the needs and requirements of both existing and prospective customers and use the information in delivering customised, personalised and innovative products (Payne & Frow, 2006; Payne et al. 2009; Peppers & Roger, 2011).

Developing and sustaining such long-term customer relationship provides a lot of benefits to the organisation such as fostering upselling, cross-selling, increased and repeat purchasing, customer retention, word-of-mouth advertisements, reduced costs, etc. (Payne & Frow, 2006; Lusch et al. 2010; Nguyen & Mutum, 2012); which can be an effective marketing strategy for enhancing organisational performance, productivity and profitability (Boulding et al. 2005; Kransnikov et al. 2009). Social CRM achieves this by providing a framework for coordinating the process between marketing, customer services and quality programs geared towards improving organisational performance (Boulding et al. 2005). Particularly, the advancement of Social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, Google+ and a host of peer-to-per websites like the wikis, blogs, microblogs, podcasts, etc. has brought a new dimension to customer relationship management (Kim & Ko, 2012; Giannakis-Bompolis & Boutsouki, 2014).

Rodriguez et al. (2012) describe Social CRM as a tool for modern businesses which allows the sharing of contents and creating of conversations geared towards greater customer engagement, which in turn is expected to create deeper and meaningful relationships with customers (existing as well as prospective customers) and other business partners. Particularly for customer service providers such as the telecom firms, Social CRM provides a suitable platform for enhancing customer service and satisfaction; which is a major source of competitive advantage (Pires et al. 2006; Smith, 2009; Kaplan &

Haenlein, 2010; Rai, 2013; Harrigan & Miles, 2014). To this end, one major focus of Social CRM is to foster stronger relationships between the organisations and the customers (including prospective ones) and leveraging on such interactions and relationships in making strategic investment decisions on the delivered products and/or services. In addition, Social CRM also has the function of helping service firms particularly telecom firms in market segmentation – allowing the firms to identify and engage with the customer segments that provide the most value to the organisation (Pires et al. 2006; Harridge-March & Quinton, 2009; Zeng et al. 2010). Also with Social CRM, firms can identify sales trend which is needed for improving decision making and planning in the product design process, increase upselling by capturing, tracking and proffering solutions to issues within a unified system, increase the accuracy in tracking orders and customer queries, and provides the firms with a thorough understanding of the market by gathering customer insights as well as those of the competitors (Neff, 2010; Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

METHODS

Sample

Using purposive sampling techniques, nine industry experts of the Nigerian telecom industry were recruited – with the sample comprising of three interviewees each from the three leading telecom firms in Nigeria. The interviewees were recruited from the relevant departments within the organisations that were responsible for dealing directly or indirectly customer services and harnessing of the company's big data. This was to ensure that the appropriate insight into the implementation of Social CRM at the organisational level is uncovered; as the interviewees recruited were seasoned professionals and managers of their respective departments/portfolio. The participants were recruited on voluntary basis with the promise that their identity and information provided would be treated with confidence.

Interviews

The interviewee was guided by a semi-structured interviewee, which gave the respondents a high degree of control over the conversation. The face-to-face interviews lasted between 35mins to 80mins on the average and each interview centered on the similar broad topics (see Table 1). When new topics were raised by the respondents, it was ensured that such topic was duly dealt with. All interviews were conducted at companies' office. The interview guide was emailed to the interviewees prior to the meeting and this was to ensure that they well informed on the issues being discussed and give them the opportunity to adequately ponder on the topic. Each interview session continued until data saturation was attained. The interviewing process lasted for two weeks. With the consent of the interviewees, each interview was tape recorded and transcribed verbatim with the exclusion of all personal related information.

Table 1: Interview Guide

- What is the Customer-centric approach to business in your company?
- How is your company approach customer relationship management?
- What is your company Social CRM Strategy?
- How is you company performing with the use of Social CRM in terms of gaining customer insights, engaging customers on social media, improving customer satisfaction and other organisational outcomes?

Analysis

Each recorded interview was analysed separately and immediately after the day's session transcribed verbatim in MS Word. A thematic analysis strategy was then used in identifying the patterns or themes within the data (Malhotra et al. 2012). Thematic analysis proceeded inductivity; with the data set read thoroughly and codes assigned to text segments that bore information that were of interest as it regarded the research aim. Through a qualitative constant comparison process, pieces of data (i.e. interviews, statements, or a theme) were continuously compared in order to identify similarities and differences. Relevant codes were grouped into subthemes and were then summarised to form main themes. A second researcher reviewed the interview transcripts and

checked the relevance of each theme. Differences in research perspective were discussed and agreement was reached. A qualitative data analysis software package (QSR NVivo 9) was used to organize the data efficiently and systematically.

RESULTS

The interviews involved nine-industry experts with an average of 9years industry experience in the Nigerian telecommunication sector. The interviewees were managers in the departments such as the customer relations, I.T, marketing departments of three of the major multinational telecommunication firms in Nigeria.

Major Themes:

Nigerian Tele-firms' Customer-centric Approach to Business

All nine participants asserted that the tele-com firms' places customer-oriented service as the focus of their business strategy as it enabled them in connecting with the customers and making them understand the different products and services being offered: … "*for us (Company A), customer service provides a platform to helping our customers understand our different products and services and so helping them in making the right decision on the product or service" (Interviewee 1).* Customer-oriented service was also considered to go beyond just delivering quality telecom products and service and to include fostering sound customer experience – right from the awareness stage, through to the purchasing processing and the post-purchase process:

> *"I am proud to say GLOBACOM is a customer-centric organisation. We put our customers at the center of our world, and this is as a result of our understanding that the satisfaction of our customers is pivotal to our survival in the*

industry. Hence, we (the company) optimize every opportunity to celebrate our customers. This attitude has continued to pull customers in multitude to the company and keeps pushing the company to the top of the industry. In spite of this success, the organisation continues to devise several new ways to putting smiles on the faces of many of its customers and attracting prospective customers (Company B, Interviewee 5)".

In addition, adopting a customer-centric approach to be business was considered a means of gaining business advantage over the competitors within the industry: *customer-centric approach to business puts our company before others as we have been able to put our customers at the center of our business strategy and the result is clear, we understand the market better than any other of our competitors and we have been able to continue to improve our services better to the satisfaction of our customers (Company B, interviewee 6).*

Approach to Establishing Customer Relationship through Social Media

The interviewees were in general agreement also that social media has heavily influenced current marketing strategies; with the focus now being on the use of social media in identifying and establishing relationship with the customers. For instance, Interviewee 8 (Company C) responded that, … *"the company has been able to shift its strategy from mass marketing to a segmented and targeted customer-marketing aided with social media channels".*

Social media was also considered as a tool for creating brand strength through the interactions and building of relationship with the customers … "*in our company we recognise the power of online communities and their influence on consumers' personal choices, and behaviour, …and with the array of our social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram we have been able to create a channel for propagating our*

products and services to a large consumer audience" (Company A, Interviewee 3).

Further, social media is being leveraged as a medium for facilitating the building of relationships with the customers: … "*every employee in this organisation is a potential contact-point to the customers on social media and have been trained to go the extra mile in meeting the expectations of the customer and using the customer social media platform to engage and developing a long-term relationship with the customers. And this has been the secret of our success; the ability to develop relationship with the customers and use consumer-generated information in designing innovative products and services*" (Company A, Interviewee 1).

This opinion is similarly shared by another interviewee from Company B … "*social media has allowed the organisation to interact more freely and frequently with the customers and with the customer insights used in creating new products and services that meets customers' value and supersede their expectations*" (Interviewee 6).

Social CRM Capabilities

Each of the interviewees agreed that the most important modern challenge facing the industry is the capacity to generate and leverage on the deep customer insights provided by social media and then being able to deploy such information in offering quality and differentiated service and customer experience. The analysis of the interview data suggest that the Nigerian telecom firms are already leveraging on the vast technological software available in driving their social CRM strategy. For example, solutions such as eGain and IMImobile are being deployed by Company A as part of their Social CRM solution:

> "*The company uses the eGain Service – the industry's most comprehensive customer interaction hub software suite and its service include: integrated,*

award-winning applications for call tracking and resolution, contact centre knowledge management, multi-modal web self-service, email management, chat, web collaboration, fax/postal mail management, notifications and service fulfilment. This enabled us to ensure that the complaints and feedback of all customers were given quality responses; further improving the customer experience. In addition, the company also uses a customer service-drive software called IMImobile; a cloud-based communication driven software that is aimed at utilization digital channel optimization solutions for enhancing the customer experience management strategy" (Interviewee 3).

Other interviewees from the other companies reported the use of other Social CRM solutions such as salesforce and nimble. Irrespective of the solution being deployed, they were agreement that such social CRM solution provided the company with the opportunity in developing long-term relationship with the customers, gather customer insight and in harnessing such customer data in understanding the customer data and ensuring that their services are been delivered to the right segment with their different attributes such as value, purchase behaviour and tenure of purchase:

> … *"with our Integrated Marketing Cloud, the company has been able to shift its strategy from mass marketing to a segmented and targeted customer-centric approach, improving response rates and customer satisfaction levels. And with data analytics, the company is also able to respond to inbound requests with the right offer at the right time. Campaigns that previously took six months to bring to market now take less than 4weeks, enabling us to achieve much more* (Interviewee 9, Company C).

Perceived Benefits of Social CRM to Firms

By integrating Social CRM in their business strategies, the interviewees agreed that telecom firms in Nigeria are endearing themselves to customer base and increasing brand awareness by delivering their services to online communities: "*With social media and social CRM system business can build brand awareness and brand loyalty. Social media platforms can help increase trust in your brand, ensure the delivery of quality customer service, obtain customer insight in real-time and get to know your customers better; provides an easy access to promoting product and services content and the most important of all, engaging with the customers*" (Interviewee 1, Company A).

Social CRM was not only seen as a medium for increasing customer interaction and building relationship but also as a means of improving internal communication with the organisation: "*Social CRM has allowed the organization to interact more freely with the customers and improved internal communication with the organisation. It has allowed the organisation and particularly the social CRM team in carrying out large-scale prospecting and engagement with the customers and helped in developing workable insights that has helped in mitigating risks and operational costs; while improving all aspects of the customer relationship*" (Interviewee 4, Company B).

The perceived benefits of Social CRM also included the ease of adapting to market dynamism and in responding to actions of competitors even if it has to do with evolving the organisational culture: … "*social CRM solutions in this company is used in fostering market research, product preferences research, and in detecting the industry trends*" (interviewee 7 from Company C)" and

... *Social CRM enable the searching for information regarding industry trend and tracking market activities of the competing brands; with such information used in adapting the firm's business strategy and in the development of innovative products and services*" (Interviewee 8, Company C).

DISCUSSION

In modern business environments, customers are now to be considered as the focal element of all marketing actions, with building and management of customer relationships using

Social media becoming a high priority for many companies (Askool & Nakata, 2011; Alamgir & Shamsuddoha, 2015). The claim from these studies is that developing a customer orientation strategy has become vital for companies to survive and be successful in the currently saturated markets. Consistent with the strategic marketing literature, customer orientation depicts the belief that understanding and satisfying customers' needs should be the priority of any business organisation (Deshpande *et al.* 2000; Webb *et al.* 2000; Luo & Seyedian, 2004). Hence, focusing on the dynamic interactions between the organisation and its customers, the customer orientation concepts holds that all members of the organisation must continuously create superior value for the customers and must do so better than the competitors.

All four telecom firms shared positive evaluation of their customer orientation strategy. Customer-oriented approach is very important for service organisations especially those in a saturated market like the Nigerian telecom industry. From the interviewee with three major companies in the industry, it can be deduced that telecom service operators are generally adopting the customer-centric approach to marketing of their products and services; otherwise referred to the market-pull model of marketing. This involves the identifying the customer's needs and then creating products that addresses and meets the needs. In this digital era, technical analysis of customer journeys has become an important feature for marketing and this allows companies to map out customer behaviour from the time when they seek information about products and services, make comparison with those of competitors and ultimately when they take the decision to purchase a product and buy it. According to Davenport (2006) companies that can systematically analyse this transactional data, are bound to outperform their competitors. This is in consonant with the findings in this current study; with the interviewees generally agreeing that collecting customer data provides positive outcomes for their respective telecom firms in terms of improved product/service innovation, increases in sales volume, induce innovation and in establishing better customer engagement through the creation of stronger brand loyalty.

The organizations' usage of Social media was also explored during the interview process. All four organisations reported deploying various Social media channels in interacting and engaging with their customers. Aside from the popular Social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram), other innovative platforms are being used by the organisations interacting and engaging with the customers. For instance, MTN reported a dedicated WhatsApp channel in connecting with their customers. In addition, the company have a platform called the Voice of the Customer Initiative – which is used in gathering feedback from their customers with the aim of enhancing the quality of services delivered. In GLOBACOM, an internet-based channel ("live chat service") in their website is used also in communicating with their customers in real-time. other digital customer touchpoints included Blackberry, Eskimi, Instagram and Google+. These findings are in line with the theoretical background that organisations are more readily adopting Social media channels to get closer to the customers. The interviewees signify that building relationships with the customers is the functional reasons while companies are adopting Social media as speculated by Trainor et al. (2014).

The motivation behind Facebook's popularity is explained by its ability to create closer relationships with customers on a personal basis through personal and professional lives and strengthens networks. This reinforces the argument by Jussila *et al.* (2014) that there are three major reasons why organisations are adopting Social media, and these are for communication, marketing, and network management. In addition, Katona & Savary (2014) state that Social media channels such as Facebook enables brand emotionalization and humanization which all three companies revealed to be central to their Social CRM strategy. Hence it can be suggested that their choice of Social media channels reflects the direction in which their marketing strategy is taking. Further exploration was conducted to investigate the traffic in the Social media channels of the three organisations (see Appendix for the screen shots the Social media channels of the companies).

The findings from the analysis of the qualitative data indicate that telecom firms in Nigeria to a very large extent are incorporating social media in the CRM strategy. Along with scholarly efforts to categorize organizations' usage of social media applications, marketing analysts are investigating the nature of social media applications adopted by organisations in shaping

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and maintaining good relationships with their customers (Go & You, 2016). Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Google plus, WhatsApp, and blogs were identified as the commonly adopted social media channels by the three telecom firms investigated in this study. These social networking sites are used by the organisations to facilitate collaborative social experiences and dialogue with the customers, therefore allowing social customer relationship management or social CRM to take place (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). These social networking sites have also been regarded as effective channels for organisations seeking to implement diverse branding strategies, given that these sites allow customers to share their experiences and opinion concerning the organisation's products and brand in real time (Jansen *et al.* 2009; Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study shows that telecom firms are leverage on the advantages of Social CRM solutions in advancing their customer-centric approach to business. Social CRM is being adopted as a tool for gaining competitive advantage by establishing a mutually beneficial relationship with their customers by providing co-creation value. This finding is consistent with the evidence in the literature that modern businesses are increasingly adopting Social CRM solutions. However, despite the growing interest and popularity in social CRM, there is a dearth in the literature on how it is being implemented especially for developing countries were technological capabilities are not well advanced compared to the developed markets. Also, there is limited research evidence on the success of such solutions especially in the telecom industry. This study is therefore a first in the series of papers to come that is focused on bridging this research gap.

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The finding from the interview with the three organisations suggest that they are adopting Social CRM in order to gain competitive advantage, mutually beneficial relationships with the customers and the possibility of co-creating value (Senn *et al.* 2013; Harrigan *& Miles,* 2014). The interviews revealed that all three organisations placed high priority in gaining new customers, retaining old customers and enhancing their loyalty through sustained communication efforts supported by Social media and satisfying the individual customer's needs. The respondents were all in agreement that customer relationships are valuable assets to their firms which is clearly emphasised by the top management. By perceiving their customers as valuable assets, it implies that the companies consider their customers are important value co-creators and recognises that without this collaboration neither party achieves the mutual benefits (Senn et al. 2013).

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Appendix 11: Second Paper

Social CRM and Its Influence on Customers' Outcomes: Evidence from the Nigerian Telecoms Industry

Abstract

Context: Part of the greatest challenge facing modern organisations especially telecom organisations is responding to dynamic customers' needs and building relationship in view of gaining customers' trust and satisfaction within a very competitive market. Hence the aim of this study is to explore how social CRM is being approached by telecom organisations in Nigeria; a very fast developing telecom and technology market.

Design and Subjects: A descriptive study using a close-ended questionnaire using a mail questionnaire. Data was collected from 400 customers of the telecom industry in Nigeria as a follow-up study to an initial study exploring industry's expert's perspective of social CRM. The proposed model was tested using partial least squares structural equation modelling

Findings: demonstrate that the social CRM activities of telecom firms enhance customers' perception of service quality and value attached. This positively impacts the ability to develop a customer-linking capability, resulting in higher levels of customer performance. In turn, higher levels of customer performance are expected to lead to higher levels of financial performance.

Practical implications: Service innovation and customer-linking capability are identified as critical outcomes of the social CRM process that lead to enhanced telecom firm performance.

Originality/value: This study explains the process through which the social CRM initiatives and strategies influence improved customer outcomes.

Keywords: Social customer relationship management, social media marketing, social CRM strategy, telecom industry

INTRODUCTION

The internet and social media especially, has influenced fundamental changes to the business environment – enabling improved customer relationship practices. Business organisations can now incorporate the functionalities of the internet and social media into the traditional CRM systems to provide a platform where the firms can interact and engage with the consumers (both existing and prospective) in view of providing customised and personalised services (Gajic *et al.* 2016; Gnanprakash & Kulkarni, 2016).

Although the application of Social CRM systems has been well documented across different business industries including the aviation industry, (Morgan et al. 2011; Gajic *et al.* 2016; Gnanprakash & Kulkarni, 2016), the hospitality industry (Milovic, 2012; Mohammed, 2012; Rosman & Stuhura, 2013; Thryambakam & Bethapudi, 2013; Klutse, 2016), and telecommunication industry (Cottman, 2013; Saleh, 2016) to mention but a few; there are still major concerns raised on the fruition of these Social CRM systems in delivering value to both business organisations and its different stakeholders (Cottman, 2007; 2013; Alamgir & Shamsuddoha, 2015)**.**

On the other hand, questions have been raised on whether these organisations claiming to

implement Social CRM are fully exploiting its capabilities and are embracing the full possibilities such systems offer to businesses (Alamgir & Shamsuddoha, 2015:52).

Particularly for the telecommunication industry, the transition and re-engineering of telecom operations and processes into being customer-centric has not been generally smooth (Wu *et al.* 2009; Alamgir & Shamsuddoha, 2015). In the center of the argument and criticism is that the needs and expectations of the customers are constantly evolving faster than the offerings and products offered by the many telecom firms and therefore needs a robust system like social CRM to manage customer relationships.

The advent of social media in the new millennium have shifted the power of marketing from the organisation and marketers to the consumers as the propellers of product innovation and delivery, placing the customers at the helm of proceedings in the way business transactions are now conducted. Social CRM has been defined as a "business philosophy and strategy designed to engage the customer in a collaborative interaction that provides mutually beneficial value in a trusted and transparent business environment" (Greenberg, 2010:414). The strength of this definition is that it builds upon of the traditional CRM – which is focused on the transactional relationship between the organisation and the customer, and advances it to include the social functions, processes and capabilities that are involved in the interactions between the organisation and the customers as well as among the relatives, friends and peers of the customer supported in the social media platform (Greenberg, 2010; Trainor, 2012).

In addition, Rodriguez et al. (2012:85) describe Social CRM as a business tool in the modern era for sharing contents and creating conversations that is geared towards greater customer engagement, which in turn is expected to create deeper and meaningful relationships with customers (both for existing and prospective customers) and other business partners. For customer-oriented organisations such as the telecom firms, Social CRM provides a suitable platform for enhancing customer service and satisfaction; which is a major source of competitive advantage (Pires et al. 2006; Smith, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Rai, 2013; Harrigan & Miles, 2014).

To this end, social CRM is focused on fostering strong relationships between organisations and the customers through interactions that allows for strategic investment decisions on the products and/or services. In addition, Social CRM also has the function of helping business firms in market segmentation – that is helping in identifying and engage with the customers that provides the most value to the organisation (Pires *et al.* 2006; Harridge-March & Quinton, 2009; Zeng *et al.* 2010). In addition, with Social CRM, firms can identify sales trend which is needed for improving decision making and planning in the product design process, increase upselling by capturing, tracking and proffering solutions to issues within a unified system, increase the accuracy in tracking orders and customer queries, and provides the firms with a thorough understanding of the market by gathering customer insights as well as those of the competitors (Neff, 2010; Baird & Parasnis, 2011).

Despite the numerous benefits of social CRM, it remains a new and complex landscape for business organisations, particularly those in the very competitive service industry such as the telecom industry and one that is characterised by highly dynamic innovations rates (Wu *et al.* 2009; Heidemann *et al.* 2012; Saleh, 2016). In addition, the question continues to persist in the literature on the effectiveness of social CRM in driving customer engagement and relationship management (Diffley et al. 2018; Guba et al. 2018; Huang et al. 2018). Hence, the aim of the study was to empirically examine the influence of consumers' perception of social media marketing (SMM) offerings on the consumer buying decision processes for telecom products and services in Nigeria; as well as the moderating effect of cultural orientation on the relationship.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Social CRM and its influence on consumers' perceived value of social media marketing and firm's customer centric service approach

The most important challenge facing organisations in today's digital marketing world is the ability to generate and leverage deep customer insights and then deploy the information in developing innovative products and services. Snijders et al. (2012) argued that

the big data challenge before modern organisations concern the capturing, curation, storage, searching, sharing, transferring, analysis and visualization. Hence for organisations that are implementing Social CRM; big data offer them the opportunities to follow customers during their customer journey, i.e. orientation to purchasing and valuation of brand service quality.

Transforming enterprises to become customer-centric while still expanding revenue and profit is one of the prime business strategies today. In this contemporary business environment, customers are the central element of all marketing actions; with the efficient of management of customer relationships becoming a priority for companies (Keramati et al. 2010; Woodcock et al. 2011; Baumol et al. 2016;). Social CRM capabilities emphasize a firm's ability to engage customers in collaborative conversations and enhance customer relationships (Trainor et al. 2014). Interactive marketing technologies can not only enable more intense and higher-quality interactions with stakeholders but also increase the quantity and quality of information provided to customers.

Recent literature shows that marketing capabilities, including social CRM capabilities, lead to the development of strong customer relationships that positively influence customer satisfaction and loyalty (Hooley et al. 2005; Rapp, et al. 2010; Trainor et al. 2014). The purpose of a firm's social media brand page for instance, is to encourage consumers to react or interact (e.g., liking, commenting, sharing); therefore, when companies or brands show intention to interact and co-create value with customers, customers' engagement level should increase because they can receive better information and feel they are valued. In line with our position that social CRM capabilities emphasize the integration and accessibility of customer information to engage customers in collaborative conversations and enhance customer relationships, this study arguea that firms possessing such capabilities will be more effective in engaging customers and leveraging this information to better serve their customers. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H$_1$:   Consumers' use of social media has a direct and positive influence on consumers' perceived value of SMM and Social CRM strategies

H$_2$:   Perceived value of SMM and Social CRM strategies has a positive impact on how consumers measure the usefulness of the customer-oriented service delivery from telecom firms

H$_3$:   There is significant difference, at 5% level, in customer's evaluation of the firm's SMM and social CRM strategies due to personal socio-demographics (age, level of education, and standard of living)

Social CRM and Brand Resonance

Further, companies are now reporting customer engagement as the most important among several specific benefits they expect from their presence on social media (Sashi 2012). Increasing interest in customer engagement has paralleled both the continued evolution of the Internet and the emergence of new digital technologies. Social media brand pages for example can help companies achieve three strategic goals: building brand awareness, increasing loyalty, and boosting sales (Castronovo and Huang 2012). Research evidence shows that customer engagement is directly and positively related to relationship outcomes such as satisfaction, trust, affective commitment, and loyalty (Brodie et al. 2013).

Customer engagement expands the role of customers by including them in the value-adding process as co-creators of value. Companies may also want to encourage and reward consumers for becoming more active on the site to receive maximal relationship benefits (Gummerus et al. 2012). Previous customer engagement studies also show that engaged and satisfied customers may create and disseminate brand/firm information that other constituents can use to create reputation and positive brand image (Coulter et al. 2012).

Customer engagement occurs on social media when delighted or loyal customers share their positive feelings in interactions with others in their social networks and become advocates for a product, brand, or company (Gummerus et al. 2012; Sashi 2012). As these engaged customers develop new connections, they become advocates for the seller in interactions with other customers and even non-customers on their

social media networks. Customer engagement turns customers into fans who remain wedded through ups and downs in intimate, enduring relationships and even proselytize for the product, brand, or company (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis 2014).

Consumers who become fans of these brand pages tend to be more loyal and committed to the company and are more open to receiving information about the brand (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010; Järvinen et al. 2012). With high levels of customer engagement on social media, companies can better employ the interactive features of social media to create a better company image, better customer experiences, and more future purchase behaviors. Thus, customer engagement is also a key factor that influences customer brand awareness and consequently the firms' performance. In line with this, the following hypotheses are made:

H4: Customer perceived value of SMM and Social CRM strategies has a positive relationship with brand resonance

H5: Customers' perception of the company's customer-oriented service delivery is positively related to brand resonance

H6: Customer perceived value of the firm's SMM and Social CRM strategies mediates the relationship between organisation's customer-oriented service delivery and brand resonance

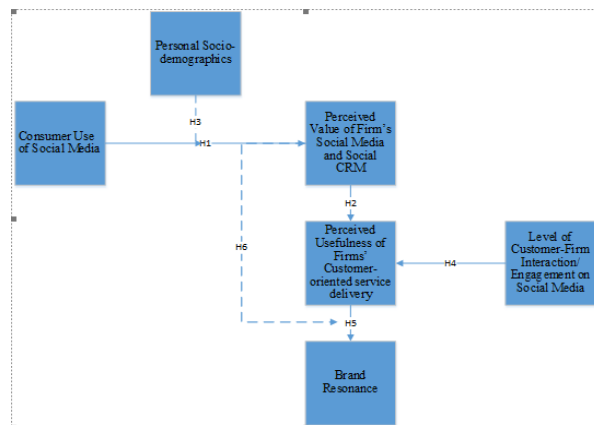Figure 1 provides an overview of all the hypothesized relationships.

Figure 3: Proposed Model

METHODOLOGY

Sample & Procedure

A previously conducted study had established the adoption of social CRM strategy by firms in Nigeria telecom industry. The sample for this study comprises of consumers of telecommunication industry in Lagos State. In terms of access to the internet and telecommunication products/services, Lagos is the most privileged state in Nigeria as these products are readily available with competitive prices. From the different parts of the state, 400 consumers of telecom services were invited to participate in the study using stratified random sampling technique (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Measures

The questionnaire included six main sections. In this study, a closed-structured questionnaire was used as it provided the advantage of gathering data from a sizeable sample which is then used in generalizing of the finding to a wider population (Collis & Hussey, 2003; Kelly *et al.* 2003. The scale measured variables such as: demography, participants level of usage of social media, customers' perceived value of favourite firm's social media marketing and social CRM strategies, evaluation of the firm's customer-oriented practices; level of engagement and interaction with the firm and measure of brand resource.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data Analysis

Preliminary analysis was performed using SPSS. Using the extrapolation method, non-response bias was assessed. Comparison between early and late responses revealed no significant differences. This was also the case when comparing Web and mail responses. Common method variance was assessed using Harman's single-factor test.

Further, Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the proposed model. The nature of this study is one

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of theory development, with the objective being to propose and test a framework that provides a holistic view of the manner in which the social CRM process enhances hotel performance. PLS-SEM is suited to research objectives of prediction and theory development (Hair et al., 2011). PLS-SEM is also recommended for smaller samples, demonstrating a greater degree of statistical power than covariance-based methods (Hair et al., 2014).

Results

Measurement Model

A two-stage methodology was used to analyse the data (Hair et al., 2011). The first stage involved an examination of the measurement model to assess reliability and validity estimates. For the first-order constructs, Cronbach's alpha values were used to assess indicator reliability. As illustrated in Table 1, all values exceeded the minimum acceptable value of 0.70, thereby establishing the internal consistency of these constructs (Hair et al., 2014). Having established the internal consistency of the items, the structural model was examined to establish the relationships between variables as proposed in the hypotheses.

Table 1: Reliability Test

Major Constructs Testing the Hypotheses	Number of Items measuring the Construct	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Consumer's Perceived Value of SMM and Social CRM	9	0.807
Consumers' Evaluation of Firm's Customer-Oriented Practice	7	0.875
Level of Customer-Organisation Interaction/Engagement on Social Media	8	0.919

Brand Resonance	9	0.915

Structural Model

The predictive value of the model was assessed using linear correlation and multi-regression analysis. Table 2 illustrates the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Hypothesis 1 is fully supported at (R=0.632, *p*<0.05); with the choice of social media channel being the strongest predictor of the relationship and followed by the duration of use of social media. Hypothesis two was also supported at (R=0.574, p<0.05). In a positive relationship was established at (R=0.694, p<0.05); with perceived value of SMM and social CRM strategy being the strongest predictor of the relationship, followed by gender and level of education. Further, hypotheses 4, 5 and 6 were supported at (R=0.726, p<0.05), (R=0.565, p<0.05), and (R=0.846, p<0.05).

Table 2: Variance Explained between the hypothesized relationships

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Sig.
Hypothesis 1	0.632	0.431	0.424	0.000
Hypothesis 2	0.574	0.329	0.328	0.000
Hypothesis 3	0.694	0.482	0.477	0.000
Hypothesis 4	0.726	0.527	0.526	0.000
Hypothesis 5	0.565	0.326	0.325	0.000
Hypothesis 6	0.846	0.657	0.656	0.000

Discussion and conclusions

Conclusions

The objective of this study was to explore the implementation of Social CRM in telecom companies in Nigeria and examine how such

Social CRM strategies translates to organisational outcomes such as brand reputation and customer loyalty. Based on this aim, the study proposed six hypothesized relationship.

While prior research findings have established a direct and positive link between social CRM and firm performance (Choudhury and Harrigan, 2014; Diffley and McCole, 2015; Trainor et al., 2014), research investigating the chain-of-effects through which social CRM results enhance firm performance by positively influence customer outcomes is lacking. Given the correlation between social media failures and a lack of social CRM planning (Rapp and Ogilvie, 2016), a greater understanding of social CRM from this strategic perspective provides valuable insight in an industry where SNSs are having a substantial effect (Li and Chang, 2016).

Practical Implications

The evidence of this current study has provided practical implications of Social CRM adoption of telecom firms and other business organisations. First the evidence from this study shows that while similar benefit is expected from the implementation of social CRM systems, the approach and strategy may differ from one organisation to another. For instance, in terms of the available of social CRM tools, the evidence from this study shows that the organisations are adopting different technological tools and the review of the literature indicates that there a quite a few Social CRM systems and models that are available depending on the financial strength and technical know-how of the organisation.

These different solutions provide the capabilities that enable companies to engage with the customer and improve customer relationship management with the difference being the complexity on how this big data (resulting from such communication and engagement) is harnessed in improving organisational operations and product innovation. In other words, the social CRM system varies from very simple to complicated models, implying there is a Social CRM solution for small to very large multinational organisations.

It is therefore recommended telecom firms embrace social CRM as a means of incorporating social media and traditional communication channels in fostering direct and dualized communication and engagement with the customers. This because it helps the firms in gaining important customer information, as well as in adequate recording of customer life cycle information that will allow management in making informed decisions that will aid improved quality in the products and services offered and in generating increased sales.

It is also recommended that the firms that are seeking to adopt Social CRM and even those already implementing it to develop a clear goal and strategy, set key performance indicators and should be able to communicate this information to the different managers and employees across the different departments and units across the organisation. At this point, organisations are advised to draw adequate operational plan for the Social CRM adoption; which highlights to the department or units their role in social CRM solution and how the integrate into the overall organisational plan for customer relationship management.

Theoretical Implications

In addition to providing practical implication for telecom firms and business organisations generally regarding the adoption for Social CRM, the current study also has its theoretical underpinnings. Firstly, the evidence from the study suggest the multidimensionality and complexity of Social CRM and the theoretically model tested in this current study have attempted to establish the relationship between organisation's social CRM implementation and customers' perceived value and usefulness of such endeavours and how it relates to the customer behavioural outcomes including brand resonance.

The finding from the current study also conforms with the theoretical underpinnings in the current literature of the importance of Social CRM in fostering firm-customer interaction and engagement; with the major implication for organisations being to generate and store specific information and knowledge about the customers, their needs and desire in terms of product and service quality. Another theoretical implication is that the report creates a new research stream by synthesizing two adoption

theories and applying those to Social CRM. This approach helps to investigate how the adoption of Social CRM is influenced and generates additional knowledge regarding diffusion of innovation within companies. Adoption influence factors, such as technical or organisational ones are especially important and reveal new insights of the Social CRM phenomenon.

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