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Influence OfCorporate Reputation On Airtel Kenya Customer Satisfaction Among University Students: The Case Of The Technical University Of Kenya.

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I. Introduction

Among the intangible assets that firms strive to possess is corporate reputation (Ankrah, 2013). A company's corporate reputation offers strategic advantages such as boosting competitiveness, lowering obstacles to entry, predicting future financial success, and improving customer retention.A solid reputation can act as a symbol of the high calibre and dependability of goods and services and boost the effectiveness of marketing initiatives (Pool, Pool &Taghipourian, 2016). Corporate reputation exerts an impact on stakeholders' decisions, attitudes, and behaviors (Van Chi, Chi, &Quang, 2016). According to De Leaniz and Del Bosque (2016), achievement of corporate reputation is a difficult task since it cannot be purchased like patents and copyrights. It is also fragile and any mis-happening can cause damage to it (Abimbola et al., 2012). Therefore, building and maintaining reputation of an organisation requires long-term effort such as building of superior products and services, better leadership and corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. The quality and reliability of services and products indicate that the corporate reputation of a company is excellent.

Walsh and Beatty (2017) notes that customers' perceptions of how the leadership of a company treats and cares for its employees, as well as their expectations that the business only hires qualified individuals, are all factors that are considered when determining if a company is a good employer. The trustworthy and financially sound company dimension captures customers' impressions of the firm's competence, stability, and profitability. Additionally, it evaluates consumer expectations that the company will manage financial resources responsibly and that investing in the business will be risk-free. The customer's perceptions of the company's products and services in terms of quality, innovation, value, anddependability are reflected in the product and service quality component (Walsh et al., 2017). Customers' impressions of the company's role in society and the environment are reflected in the social and ecological responsibility element, which is the final consideration. The company’s role in society is equally beneficial since such initiatives can help forge a stronger bond between the company and the community.

CSR efforts aim to attract publicity while adhering to the company's mission or corporate reputation policy (Muthuri& Gilbert, 2011). In the recent past, telecommunication firms in Kenya have been actively engaging in corporate reputation practices. The valuable contribution of the private sector to development, for instance, has been affirmed by Airtel through regular engagement in corporate reputation activities.

To improve the high-quality delivery of services and products and encourage customer satisfaction, a company's reputation with its customers is essential (Bansal & Song, 2017). Customer satisfaction takes into account an organization’s level of internal and external stakeholder satisfaction, and considers its prior actions and potential future outcomes (Miotto et al., 2020). Customer happiness is built from a variety of firm factors. The first factorconsidersan organization’s behavior, which should be moral and reliable.

Statement of the Problem

Airtel Kenya, a telecommunication company in Kenya, has over the years made efforts to enhance its competitiveness in the market in diverse ways. The company has upgraded its services by providing free Airtel Money, One Network, Value Added Services (VAS), 4G Network, International roaming, Pre-paid and Post-paid services, Internet Access, local and worldwide text messaging, Blackberry gadgets and services, directory inquiries, ME2U administration, mobile top-up, 24-hour client focus, SMS and data administration.However, data from the Communication Authority of Kenya (CAK) (2021) indicates that unlike its main competitor, Airtel Company has experienced customer fluctuations that have lowered its profitability. According to CAK Report (2022), Airtel's market share by mobile data subscribers was 26.8% as of September 2020, which later dropped to 26.4% by the end of September 2021. Market share by mobile broadband subscriptionswas 27.9% by the end of September 2021. In contrast, Safaricom'smarket share in mobile data subscriptions was 67.5% as of September 2020, which later dropped to 64.6% by the end of September 2021. Market share by mobile broadband subscriptions was 65.0% by the end of September 2021.

The competition that Airtel Kenya faces from its close competitor, Safaricom, necessitates it to devise other means of gaining and retaining consumers, especially through satisfaction. Given the foregoing scenario, it is clear that maintaining a positive corporate reputation is crucial for the survival of businesses in cut-throat industries such as the telecommunications sector.

According to Floreddu and Cabiddu (2016), effective communication strategies that show how to connect with an organization's numerous stakeholders are essential if it wants to achieve its goals. As a result, businesses create plans and strategies to enhance their reputation and beat out the competitors. Therefore, this study sought to examine the impact of Airtel Kenya'sreputation on customer satisfaction and place particular emphasis on TU-K students, the research aimed to fill the knowledge gap.

II. Literature Review

Customer satisfaction is the result of many interrelated factors in a company. It concerns the contentedness level held by internal and external stakeholders of a company relating to its previous undertakings and future possibilities (Aigbavboa, &Thwala, 2013). It follows a process individuals adopt in interpreting and organizing their sensory impressions geared towards providing meaning to their surroundings (Va et al. 2016). Customer satisfaction can be achieved by offering reliable, personal interaction and problem-solving ability. The focus of satisfaction is usually towards consumers of a firms' products and services.

Corporate reputation

Herstein et al. (2008) argues that corporate reputation and image are how the outside world views a business. A brand's reputation is established in the minds of its internal and external stakeholders through corporate image, which is how external and internal stakeholders perceive anorganization's identity or image.

According to Helm (2007), as brand reputation has been linked to essential elements of organizational success, including customer loyalty, a positive image is a crucial component of a company's capacity to sustain its market position. It's still unclear how exactly image, reputation, and consumer loyalty are related. Better financial outcomes result from having a strong, favorable reputation since it increases investor and partner confidence and customer loyalty. A positive reputation fosters and strengthens customer loyalty, and as a result, loyal consumers foster favourable societal perceptions of the business through their behaviours and recommendations.

Corporate reputation provides strategic benefits to a company, such as strengthening competitiveness, breaking barriers of market entry, forecasting financial performance in the future, and enhancing customer retention. Corporate reputation is thus qualified as a company's intangible asset. The concept of accountability acts as the connecting thread in situational crisis communication. During a crisis, the person in control is responsible for determining the extent of harm to the company's reputation.

Products, Services and Consumer Satisfaction

According toScheff and Kotler (1996), businesses that offer high-value goods and services are likely to experience client contentment and amplified benefits, thus, growing their performance through client retention. Consumer gratification (satisfaction) is attained over the employment of approaches that guarantee goods and services are publicized efficiently in the marketplace. For this purpose, a corporation has to formulate a respectable business image.

Businesses ought to make sure that they sell the goods and services as well as the ideology underlying the significance of utilizing the merchandises, therefore warranting that the corporation preserves its sustainability out of consumer retention. The clientele refers fellow consumers, hence, growing the number of consumers utilising a particular good or service; because of the respectable association developed among the customers and the firm. Businesses ought to manufacture consumer-centered merchandise and services, hence advancing their productivity and output due to the confidence they have formed between them and their clientele. Out of faith in the delivery of valuable goods besides services, consumer gratification would conceivably be attained thus the monetary enactment of the business (Roux&Du Plessis 2014).

Most businesses may increase customer satisfaction by emphasizing what matters most to them—their customers—through a customer-centric approach that improves the quality of their products and services in line with what those consumers want. The ability to provide superior products and services gives a company a leg up in the marketplace and makes it more likely to attract and retain customers. Elsamen (2015) noted that customer satisfaction stems from the quality, cost, and accessibility of the merchandise or service offered. According to Raja and Bourne(2013), most manufacturers are merging products and services to better serve their customers. Product and service consolidation results in satisfied customers and higher earnings. Customers get satisfied since the alignment of products and services match customer wants. Aligning products to customer wants is also echoed by Ricci (2003), whoargued that for businesses must shift their focus to the needs of their customers by adopting a customer-centric focus. Customer satisfaction can be measured by how well the service or product meets the customer's needs and how well it is presented(Razak et al. 2016).

Raja and Bourne (2013) established that innovation stands out as a key factor in meeting a client’s product and service requirements and using recurrent development of the goods plus services which in turn leads to consumer gratification. Belas and Gabcova (2014) assert that client satisfaction is essential to success in retail banking, as customer interaction is one of the most fundamental company operations. Ankrah (2013) and Marete et al. (2014) noted that electronic goods and services enhanced consumer gratification (satisfaction) because they upsurge the efficacy in gaining access to funds by consumers. Susanti&Samudra (2022) argues that if a business has a good reputation, it stands to reason that its clients will likewise think highly of its services, which should immediately impact the clients' propensity to change power supply firms.

Leadership and Consumer Satisfaction

Subramaniam et al. (2013) arguesthat governance is a factor that can guarantee an institution's reputation and, by extension, determine the level of customer satisfaction. Leadership is seen as one of the subsets of corporate reputation. A leaders’ character is essential to thecorporation's standing (Grupp& Gaines-Ross, 2016). Governance image is labeled as an advantage that a firm has and via direct reserves in it, will in the end lead to profit increase, via the allure of various shareholders, customers, and stock-holder. A respectable leader is thought to hold subsequent abilities such ascompelling, challenging, credibility, clearness, an individual with integrity, and decent communication abilities (Gerras et al., 2010). Schalkwyk et al., (2013) asserted that the CEO’s character impacts the shareholders and stockholders in financing the firm. When a company CEO has a positive repute and is, transparent, the entity is likely to acquire additional stockholders promising their capitals and extra consumer purchasing the business’s merchandise as well as services.

Mohamad et al. (2018) discovered that leaders’ ability to communicate, be dependable, and inspire is essential to the success of both client satisfaction and retention.Piehler et al. (2021), also states that human resourcesleadership requires effective management and clear communication channels to ensure that its personnel accurately reflect the institution's values and ethos when serving consumers. Having happy workers can have a positive effect on customer satisfaction. Employee happiness enhances consumer satisfaction by buildingcustomer confidence in a company's morals and concern for its people.Gambetti and Biraghi (2015) emphasizesconversational leadership style as ensuring customer satisfaction.

Cheema et al. (2015) observed adirect association between emotional obligations, vision management staff involvement and consumer satisfaction (gratification). Schalkwyk et al.(2013)also noted that visionary leadership affects customer satisfaction by employing tried-and-true methods to ensure the achievement of long-term goals.

CSR and Customer Satisfaction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is viewed as an administration-specific corporate idea. Folajin et al.(2014) noted that corporate social responsibility is a strategy used by many companies to build a good reputation in the marketplace and attract more customers. The goal of CSR is to ensure that they consider the demands of other shareholders who are outside of their organization, in this case, they strengthen their relationship with outside shareholders by putting CSR measures into action. CSR activities can be practiced through charitable giving, environmental conservation and improving labour. The expansion of CSR initiatives, followingCaroll and Shabana (2011), benefits external stakeholders and boosts the corporate reputation of the involved organisation.

Remund and McKeever (2018) points out a correlation between CSR initiatives and the satisfaction of customers. Numerous organisations have found success in retaining and attracting new customers as well as strengthening their relationship with existing customers as a direct result of their CSR efforts. Through the envelopment in social responsibility, the firm attains its reputation and becomes popular in the market (Dowling, 2014). Consequently, they get a chance to promote their products to the community. As an outcome of constructing a compact association between the public and the companies, the community trusts them. Through this trust, the community’s opinion towards their goods improves and therefore increases purchaser satisfaction (Chung, Yu, Choi & Shin, (2015); Basu& Palazzo, 2018). From these works, we deduced that client contentment is enriched by CSR as it results in enhanced sales revenue besides client faithfulness.

As explained by Ellen, Webb, and Mohr (2006), customers' attributions are crucial in shaping their reactions to CSR. Furthermore, attributions are more nuanced than previously believed, reflecting the complexity of the motivations managers and academics assign to corporations. Barasa (2016) contended thatKenya Commercial Bank (KCB) engaged in CSR activities to enhance consumer satisfaction. The CSR activities comprised of sponsoring learning for the destitute as well as sporting actions that are the chief undertakings valued by the locals improved consumer devotion and client gratification because of the increased confidence by the individuals.

Literature Gap

To determine how satisfied clients are with telecommunications firms, Owiye (2012) performed carried out a survey among mobile telecommunication customers in Mulolongoin Kenya. According to the study, telecommunication firms are unable to handle the role company reputation plays in determining consumer satisfaction. David (2019) evaluated competitive advantage techniques and how they impact Kenyan telecommunications companies' performance. However, the study did not show how a company's reputation affects performance. In a poll to determine how technological innovation affects consumers, Hinga (2019) left out the impact of corporate reputation on customer happiness. In Nairobi, Kenya, Muturi (2004) investigated the factors that influence consumer loyalty to a mobile phone service provider. Tanui (2007) also performed research, evaluating the customer loyalty programs used by Nairobi's gas stations. Mungai (2008) studied the factors that affect patron loyalty in Mombasa Port in Kenya. Wekunda (2006) carried out a research study to identify the customer-relations methods used by Kenyan internet service providers. The impact of corporate reputation on customer satisfaction has not been examined in any specific study. Therefore, the goal of the study was to fill this knowledge gap.

Methodology

This study employedquantitative research design in a descriptive approach. The descriptive approach for the research design defined the relationship between customersatisfactionand corporatereputation as it provided an account of accurate features. It also enabledthe researcher to easily obtain responses from participants while giving accuraterepresentation of ideas.The study population where inferences were drawn was at the Technical University of Kenya (TU-K) which comprised 12,115 students; 6,888 students were pursuing Diploma programmes, with 5,227 pursuing degree programmes. The target population for the study comprised TU-K students. This was then sampled using Yamane (1973)formulaeto arrive at a sample size of 400. This is shown in table 1: Sample size and population.

Table 1: Sample Size and Population

Faculty	No. of Students	Percentage	Sample
Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment	6387	52.7	211
Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology	2755	22.7	91
Faculty of Applied Sciences and Technology	2973	24.5	98
Total	12,115	100	400

Source (TU-K, 2022)

Primary data was then collected via a semi-structured questionnaireswhich were administered to students with the help of research assistants. Gathered data was then analyzed via descriptive and linear regression analysis. Descriptive statistics was presented in the form of mean, frequency, tables and percentages while regression analysis were presented in the model summary and ANOVA table.

III. Results

Descriptive Statistics Results

According to the study's findings, 63% of respondents were male and 37% were female. The study also determined that a majority of the participants 52.29% were from the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment, 24.26 % were from the Faculty of Applied Sciences and Technology and 23.45% were from the Faculty of Social Science and Technology. This is shown in Table 2: Summary of Descriptive statistics.

Table 2: Summary of Descriptive statistics

Variable	**Overall Mean score**	**Standard Deviation**
Products and services	3.86	0.62
Leadership	3.94	0.63
Corporate Social responsibility	3.55	0.52

According to the descriptive data, the overall mean was 3.86 and the standard deviation of 0.62 on the five-point Likert scale, whereby 3.86 is rounded up to 4, hence denoting “Agree”. This was an indication that on average respondents agreed that product and services had an impact on customer satisfaction. Descriptive statistics on leadership showed that there is an overall mean of 3.94 and a standard deviation of 0.62. In other words, the respondents agreed that leadership affected consumer happiness. The overall mean on CSR was 3.55, rounded up to 4 with a standard deviation of 0.52. Therefore, based on the Likert scale, respondents agreed that CSR activities influence customer satisfaction.

Regression Analysis Outcome

The analysis outcome was based on the following objective: to determine the influence corporate reputation on customer satisfaction. The specific objectives were to: ascertain how the diversity of Airtel Kenya's services and products influence customers' satisfaction among students at TU-K; examine the influence of Airtel Kenya's leadership in assuring customers' satisfaction among TU-K students; to assess the impact of Airtel Kenya's corporate social responsibility on customer satisfaction among TU-K students. This is shown in Table 3: Summary of Regression Analysis.

Table 3: Summary of Regression Analysis

Variable	R-Squared	ANOVA_F significance
Product and Services	0.137	0
Leadership	0.233	0
Corporate social responsibility	0.169	0
Corporate reputation	0.415	0

Products and Services and Customer Satisfaction

Products and services were found to explain 13.7% of the variation in customer satisfaction hence 86.3% of the variation in customer satisfaction is explained by other factors not captured in this studysuch as branding, packaging, distribution and marketing models, promotions and publicity, among many more. Basically,86.3% was a high variation indicating that the other factors that affect customer satisfaction not captured in this study play a central role in contributing to customer satisfaction and corporate image of an organisation such as Airtel Kenya.The F-Statistic was revealed to be 224.729 at 0.000 level of significance from the ANOVA table. The significance threshold was lower than 0.05. This suggested that the model's ability to predict customer satisfaction based on a company's products and services was statistically significant. This means that a change in customer satisfaction is caused by products and services. The results of this study are consistent with those of Ankrah (2013), who found that electronic products and services increased consumer satisfaction because they improved consumers' ability to access money.

Leadership and Customer Satisfaction

The R-Square of 0.233 or 23.3% indicates that leadership, accounts for 23.3% of the proportional variance in customer satisfaction, while, 76.7% of customer satisfaction is explained by factors not captured in the study.The F-Statistic was 169.399 at a significance level of 0.000<0.05. This suggested that the model's ability to predict customer satisfaction based on leadership was statistically significant. This can be interpreted to mean that leadership affects customer satisfaction.The study's findings concurred with those of Schalkwyk, Davis, and Pellissier (2013), who conducted research in South Africa to determine whether visionary leadership affects the implementation of the firm through customer satisfaction. The results of their study showed that visionary leadership has a real impact on customer satisfaction because it employs tried-and-true methods for ensuring the accomplishment of long-term goals.

Corporate Social Responsibility and Customer Satisfaction

R squared is established at 0.169, indicating that corporate social responsibility accounts for 16.9% of the difference in consumer satisfaction. Therefore, 83.1% of customer satisfaction is explained by other variables not captured in the study.The result for the F statistic at the 0.000<0.05inferring that the model's ability to predict consumer satisfaction based on corporate social responsibility was statistically significant. This means that corporate social responsibility has an effect on customer satisfaction. The study's findings also agreed with those of Folajin et al. (2014), who investigated the impact of corporate social responsibility at United Bank of Africa while doing research in Nigeria. Outcomes from their study demonstrated that corporate social responsibility had a lasting impact on actualising returns for a firm since it generates an impression on conveyance of value services and caring about the public welfare leading to profit intensification through upsurge in consumer retaining as an outcome of client gratification.

Corporate Reputation and Customer Satisfaction

The R squared was established to 0.415 indicating that 41.5% of the variation in customer satisfaction was due to product and services, leadership and corporate social responsibility,while 58.5% of customer satisfaction is explained by other variables or factors noted covered in the study.The result for the F statistic was 0.00<0.05suggesting that the model's ability to predict satisfaction of consumers based on product and services, leadership and corporate social responsibilitywas statistically significant. Therefore, a change in customer satisfaction is caused or affected by products and services, leadership and CSR. These study results concur with those of Chung et al. (2015), who performed research in China to assess the impact of corporate reputation on customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

IV. Conclusion

Following the study's initial research purpose, the following findings were made: customer satisfaction has a favourable and significant association with products and services. 13.7% of customer satisfaction was accounted for by goods and services. The investigation also demonstrated that the model was appropriate for predicting customer satisfaction based on products and services because it had a 0.00 level of significance. Based on descriptive statistics, the aggregate mean was 3.86, indicating that the respondents were in agreement with the link.

Customer satisfaction and leadership have a favourable and significant relationship. Customer satisfaction was found to be predicted by leadership by 23.3%. Additionally, the model summary showed a 0.00 degree of significance. This suggested that the model's ability to predict customer happiness based on leadership was statistically significant.The respondents' consensus regarding the impact of leadership on customer satisfaction was also demonstrated by the overall mean of 3.94.

Customer satisfaction and corporate social responsibility are positively and significantly correlated. R=0.41 demonstrated the relationship's favourable nature. R2 also revealed that corporate social responsibility accounts for 16.9% of the difference in consumer satisfaction. The model fit was statistically significant to predict customer happiness based on corporate social responsibility, according to the 0.00 level of significance.

Customer satisfaction has a favourable and strong association with corporate reputation. R=0.664 showed a positive relationship. R squared was 0.415, indicating that consumer reputation accounted for 41.5% of the variation in customer satisfaction (product and services, leadership and corporate social responsibility). 0.000 level of significance implied that the model fit was statistically significant to predict customer satisfaction.

Recommendations for Further Research

The study established that neither leadership, products and services and corporate social responsibility fully explained the variation in customer satisfaction. Therefore, it is important that in future, other researchers look into what other factors explain customer satisfaction for Airtel Kenya and or similar telecommunication companies.

This study was limited to the perceptions that TU-K students had on Airtel Kenya. It is important that in future, other researchers consider investigating if the outcome of the perception of Airtel Kenya at TU-K will hold for students in other similar institutions. Such an investigation will help create a knowledge base of what factors affect customer satisfaction among telecom firms.

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