

Effective Service Quality in Short-Lived Promotions; Its Effects on Brand Loyalty in the Teenage Segment

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Even though the concept of service quality is widely researched, its role in short-lived promotions needs a closer look. Its relation to the teenage market segment has also seen low exploration. The purpose of the study is to examine whether service quality and customer satisfaction experienced by teenagers positively influence customer loyalty and, subsequently form a basis upon which other researchers can contribute further to the relevance of this topic. The paper examines the relationship between service quality of products [during promotion], customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty for brands. It, again, looks at the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the promotion of service quality - customer loyalty relationship in the teenaged segment. It, lastly, explores the role of customer satisfaction in building loyalty among teen consumers. The study was founded on the social exchange theory and the consumer tribe concept. The promotional activity of Vodafone Ghana [The Vodafone X] was used as a case in the study to identify how the variables play. Purposive sampling was applied to select a sample consisting of 300 teenagers in Ghana in a study that spanned six months. An analysis of the relationships was done using Structural Equation Modelling. The findings reveal that service quality evidenced in promotional products, does not directly result in long-term customer loyalty but this can be effectively achieved through customer satisfaction gained as actual service quality exceeds customer expectation. That is to say, service quality increases customer satisfaction which leads to customers' long-term partnership with the brand. The practical implication for companies is that, product service quality should be improved in periods of promotions, with sustained efforts to improving customer satisfaction. In the light of this the firm can be assured of a long term loyalty of customers.

Key Words: Service quality, Customer satisfaction, Customer loyalty, teenage segment, promotion.

1. Introduction

Achieving sustainable competitive advantage has over the period been the goal of most organizations (Vanpoucke, Vereecke and Wetzels, 2014; Pfeffer, Hatano and Santalainen, 2005). Companies aiming to achieve sustainable competitive advantage have, among others, focused their attention on building their brand and corporate image (Nasar, Hussani, Karim & Siddiqui 2012; Agyei & Kilika 2014).

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The vast amount of studies conducted across industries on corporate image, brand loyalty and their antecedents such as service quality and customer satisfaction testify the importance organizations attach to the concept as a means of achieving competitive advantage (Agyei & Kilika 2013; Rai & Srivastava 2012; Natasha & Dayaneethie 2012; Durrani, Godil & Baig 2015; Burbock 2014; Robertson & Veerasamy 2012; Kursunlouglu 2014; Lenka, Suar & Mohapatra 2009; Izogo & Ogba 2015).

Despite emergence of these studies on the concept, the teenage segment has not yet received much attention in the literature. However, teenagers have been considered as brand loyalist. But they find it very easy to switch, if left with empty promises (Natasha & Dayaneethie, 2012). Studies have shown that teenagers have become capable of gathering information about brands they seek to associate with and as such pose as that age group with better brand consciousness (Mohtar & Abbas, 2014).

Vodafone X, lifestyle offering designed by Vodafone Ghana aimed at the Ghanaian youth who fall between the ages of 18 to 24 to give them confidence backed by product offerings that gives them the freedom to associate with things that inspire them (Vodafone X, n.d.). This offering is designed such that daily package for the teenagers range from 1 cedi which gives 50 megabytes of data, free WhatsApp, free SMS to all Vodafone numbers and free calls to all Vodafone X numbers. Teenagers are given an attractive package where the subscriber gets 1.2 gigabyte of data, free WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, and free SMS to all Vodafone numbers and free calls to all Vodafone X numbers.

The essence of designing marketing offerings to teenagers has been appreciated by scholars over the globe. Asia, the western world, America and Africa have witnessed empirical studies that have focused on marketing to teenagers (Bagram, Mohammad and Khan 2012; Godil & Baig 2015; Robertson & Veerasamy 2012). In Ghana, market segment allocated to capture the teen have been underestimated with regards to the role they play in sustaining customer loyalty. There have not been any studies conducted in Ghana that mainly focus on teenagers and their effect on customer loyalty. Theoretically, the literature is not clear on the contribution teenagers segment of markets and how their unique behaviours affect the relationships that exist between the constructs; Service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. This study adds to the literature on how the phenomenon interplays.

The present paper quantitatively examine whether service quality and customer satisfaction experienced by teenagers positively influence customer loyalty and subsequently form a basis upon which other researchers can contribute further to the relevance of this topic. Specifically, this study examines the relationship between service quality of products [during promotion], customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty for brands. In addition, it investigates the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the promotion of service quality - customer loyalty relationship in the teenaged segment. Lastly it explores the role of customer satisfaction in building loyalty among teen consumers. As a result, the researchers were guided by the following research questions: What is the relationship between service quality of product, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty for brands? What is the role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between service quality and customer

loyalty? What is the role of customer satisfaction in building loyalty among teen consumers?

The remaining sections of the paper provides detailed accounts of review of related literature in the field and the study's hypotheses, methodology used in the study, and the findings of the study. In addition, discussions and implications from the study are highlighted. The last part of the paper touches on the study's limitation and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

The findings of several researches have proven that there exists a relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Kursunlouglu 2014; Lenka Suar & Mohapatra 2009; Izogo & Ogba 2015). For instance, Kursunlouglu (2014), in exploring the effects of customer service in creating satisfaction and loyalty in shopping centres, discovered that the atmospheric aspects of customer services influenced both loyalty and satisfaction. Though incentive customer services, customer services in counter stage and customer services about payment, affected only loyalty. Lenka, Suar and Mohapatra (2009) establishes that human, technical and tangible aspects of service quality resulted in increases in customer satisfaction. Nonetheless, the human aspects were known to have greater impact on customer satisfaction which also promotes customer loyalty. This was also confirmed by Izogo and Ogba (2015) as their findings revealed that the dimensions of service quality are predictors of customer satisfaction and loyalty with the highest predictor being the commitment dimension. This indicates that the quality of services influences customer satisfaction which in turn results in customer loyalty. Odesola, Ogunlana and Ikediashi (2015) found a causal relationship between quality of six outsourced FM services and overall satisfaction.

Several researchers and marketers are on the lookout for what actually makes customers satisfied since it is arguably, the core of the marketing concept. Hussain (2016) asserts that the satisfaction of customers will lead to the growth of any business or organization. Kondasani and Panda (2015) argue that satisfaction is an outcome that stems from an evaluation and an emotion based-response to a service. This has led to much research into the variables that account for customer satisfaction. Olsen, Witell and Gustafsson(2014) identify three phases of customer satisfaction, being; strategy, measurement and analysis, and implementation. They mention that customer oriented strategy affects first the measurement and analysis phase positively, which also affects positively the implementation phase. This indicates the robust relationship amongst customer orientation and customer satisfaction with the implementation phase having the strongest influence on customer satisfaction level. Mascarenhas, Kesavan, and Bernacchi (2006) contended that "customer orientation does not necessarily imply high and interactive producer involvement along all the production-consumption stages. Most research that have been done into customer satisfaction have based on the expectancy/disconfirmation paradigm in process theory (Caruana 2002). The constructs that make the paradigm are (1) Expectations; (2) Performance; (3) Disconfirmation, and (4) Satisfaction. Expectation in the customer satisfaction literature is quite differently defined than that in the service quality literature (Churchill and Suprenanat, 1982). Whereas expectation mean an anticipated

performance in the satisfaction literature, it is described as an anticipation of future wants in the service quality literature (Boulding et al. 1993). Disconfirmation is the occurrence of discrepancies between expectation and actual performance as may be seen in the definition by Tse and Wilton (1988). Satisfaction is the positive evaluation of the performance against the expectation.

Customer loyalty has gained much attention among scholars in the world of marketing. It is therefore reasonable to gain insight into the development of loyalty overtime as well as its antecedents of change (Lariviere, Keiningham, Cooil, Aksoy & Malthouse 2014). Some researchers maintain that Loyalty is a process that progresses and not just a one-time process (Mascarenhas, et al 2006). However, studies have not considered how loyalty is built for a product resulting from the rollout of short term promotion. Likewise, it was known that total customer experience variables serves as an antecedent for the increase and decrease of the customer loyalty and that “customer loyalty is a function of one’s perception of congruence in values with the product or service provider” (Mascarenhas, et al. 2006). Loyalty refers to a favourable attitude towards a brand in addition to purchasing it repeatedly (Day 1969). It refers to the likelihood of a customer returning to buy from the service provider (Dick & Basu 1994).

Despite the fact that the relationships between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty has been extensively looked at in the literature, the youth or teen market has not been investigated. It is important for marketers to examine reactions of various segments to theorised relationships to advance knowledge in specific areas.

Hypotheses

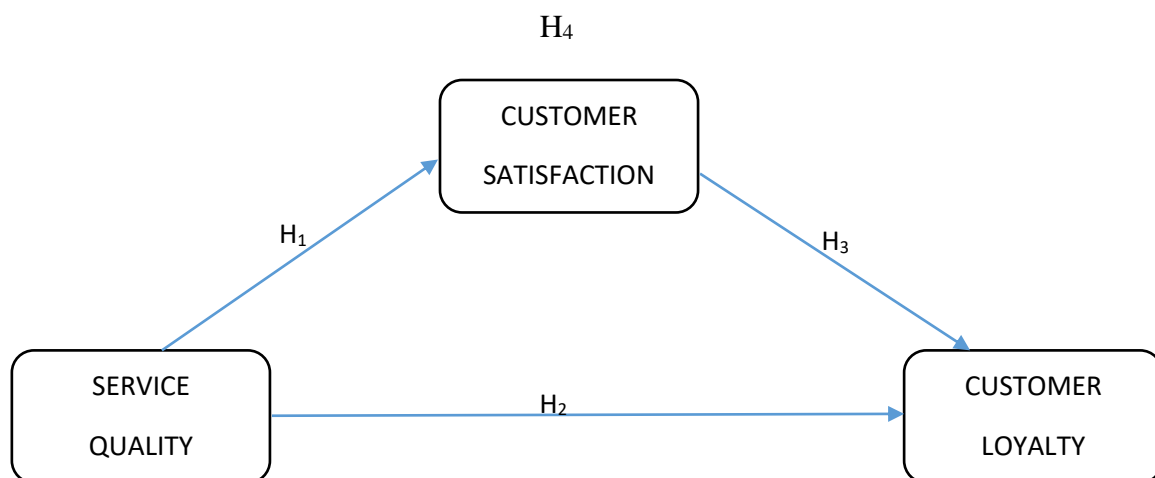
H₁: *Service quality significantly relates to Customer satisfaction.*

H₂: *Service quality significantly relates to Customer loyalty*

H₃: *Customer service significantly relates to Customer loyalty*

H₄: *Customer satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between service quality and Customer loyalty.*

Figure 1: Hypothesised Model



3. The Methodology

The population consists of students of a large state university in the capital of Ghana. The selection of the university was because of the large number of high school graduates that are admitted. The teen students of this university is hence substantial for the study. The university admits students from all parts of the country and so has a multi-ethnic setting. Foreign students are even admitted into the university. The study sampled teenaged students from the university.

The researchers employed the services of five research assistants who were students of the university. They were trained for the collection of the data. The research assistants conveniently approached 325 teenagers to fill out the questionnaire. Most of the teenagers were freshmen of the university. Out of the 325 questionnaires, 300 were usable. The response rate was 92.31%. Participants were to be present or past users of Vodafone X. The demographic description of questionnaire characteristics of the sample are shown in table 1 below:

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18	115	38.3
	19	185	61.7
Present or Past user of Vodafone X	Present	221	73.7
	Past	79	26.3
Length of usage	Less than a year	107	35.7
	Exactly a year	81	27.0
	More than a year	112	37.3
Source of airtime	Personal income	82	27.3
	Friends	29	9.7
	Allowances from parents	179	59.7
	Gifts	10	3.3

N = 300

Process

A questionnaire was developed by the researchers. Initial data was collected through a pilot study involving 50 teenagers were analysed to put the final questionnaire in a good shape. As noted already, the research was conducted in a large state university. The pilot study was also conducted in the university. The pilot study revealed that, the wording of some of the questions were difficult to understand and poorly constructed. This was corrected before the actual study was conducted. The results from the pilot study was not used in the final analysis. The final scale recorded acceptable Reliabilities (Devellis 2014).

4. The Findings

Table 2: Scale Reliabilities

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Customer Satisfaction Scale	0.737	6
Customer service Scale	0.723	4
Customer Loyalty	0.804	5

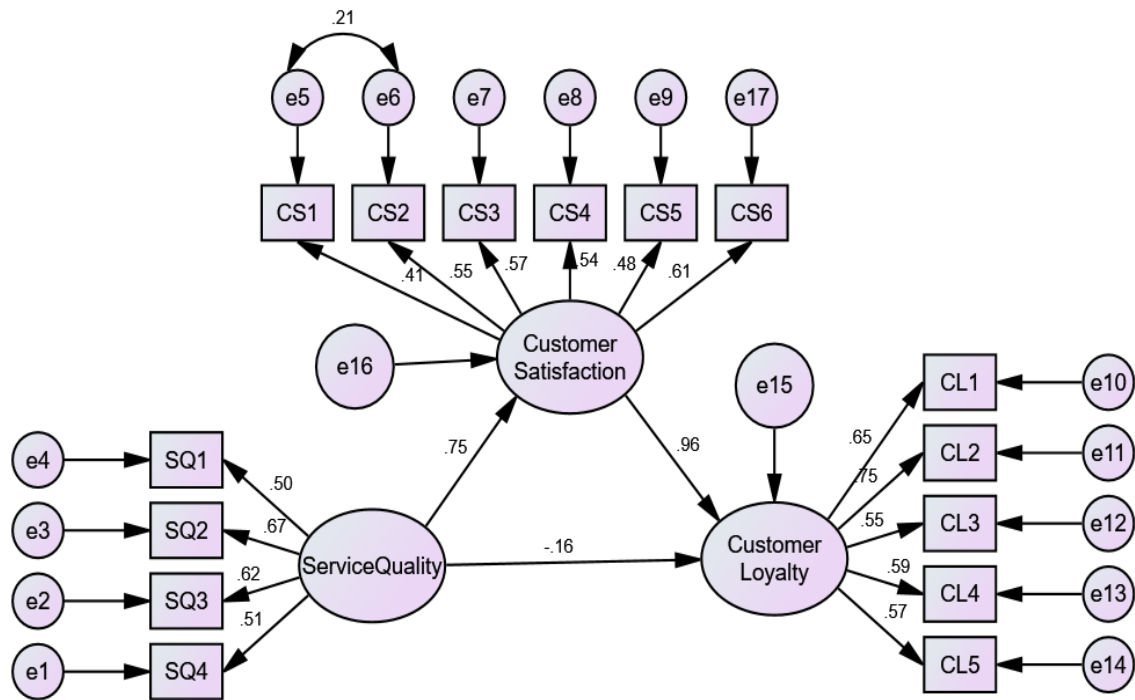
The researchers performed a SEM analysis based on data from 300 teenaged undergraduates at a large university with the AMOS version 21 statistical package on the 21 questions from three Likert-scale surveys measuring service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Circles represent latent variables and rectangles represent measure variables. A correlation table with means and standard deviations of constructs is shown in Table 3. We chose maximum likelihood parameter estimation over other estimation methods (weighted least squares, two-stage least squares, asymptotically distribution-free [ADF]) because the data were distributed normally (Kline 2005) (See Figure 2). The hypothesized model appears to be a good fit to the data. The CFI is .95; TLI is .95; and the RMSEA is .04 (See table 4). Post-hoc modifications was conducted because of initial bad fit of the data to the model. This resulted in the removal of six items. The remaining items were then renamed.

Table 3: Correlations for SEM

	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2	3
Service Quality (1)	13.80	3.66	-		
Customer Satisfaction (2)	14.79	3.71	.639**	-	
Customer Loyalty (3)	15.22	4.79	.512**	.625**	-

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

Figure 2: Results for the Structural Equation Modelling Standardised Estimates



Direct Effects

Service quality was related negatively to customer loyalty (standardized coefficient = $-.16$, $p > .05$) and predictive of Customer Satisfaction (standardized coefficient = $.75$). Customer satisfaction was predictive of customer loyalty (standardized coefficient = $.96$).

Indirect Effects

We hypothesized that the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty was mediated by customer satisfaction. The result (standardized indirect coefficient = $.72$). This path was statistically significant proving a strong mediation role of customer satisfaction.

Table 4: Model Fit Indices

Index	Cut off and citation	Value in study	Remark
Model chi-square (χ^2)	P > .05 (Barrett, 2007)	.00	Poor
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	< .05 - .08 (MacCallum et al, 1996)	.40	Good
Goodness-of-fit statistic (GFI)	> .90 (Miles and Shevlin, 1998)	.95	Good
adjusted goodness-of-fit statistic (AGFI)	> .90 (Hooper, et al., 2008)	.92	Good
Root mean square residual (RMR)	< .50 (Byrne, 1998)	.04	Good
Incremental fit indices (IFI)	\geq .95 (Maruyama 1998)	.95	Good
Normed-fit index (NFI)	\geq .95 (Hu and Bentler, 1999)	.88	Fair
Comparative fit index (CFI)	\geq 0.95 (Hu and Bentler, 1999)	.95	Good
Parsimony fit indices (PFI)	> 0.50 (Mulaik et al 1989)	.78	Good

5. Discussions/Implications

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty and the mediating effect of customer satisfaction in the teenaged target market. In spite of the many studies into service quality (Lenka, et al. 2009; Wallance, Giese & Johnson 2004;Agyei & Kilika 2013), customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, how these variables play amongst the teen market category has not been assessed. The results from this study suggest that, in the teen segment, service quality independently will not result in customer loyalty but the teen consumer must be satisfied with the quality of service before he/she would be loyal to the product. This is as a result of the unique characteristics of teenagers and the case understudy. Teenagers have been found to be prolific users of social media. They spend a considerable amount of their time interacting with others on the internet (Ahn 2011). Since Vodafone offers free internet data bundle for teenagers, satisfaction with the offer amongst the teens is considerably high. In the universities, most students learn through social media (Jenkins 2006). This makes the usage amongst university students extremely high.

The study therefore makes a major contribution to literature by focusing on teenagers to explain how their unique behaviours affect the relationships that exist between the three constructs (Service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty). The teen segment has specific characteristics that makes them significantly different from other segments (Robertson & Veerasamy 2012).

It must be noted that previous studies have come out with conflicting results (variations in the magnitude, direction, and significance of service quality effect on

customer loyalty and customer satisfaction) (Carrillet, Jaramillo, & Mulki 2009). For instance, Agyei and Kilika (2013) found a positive relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. Also, Akhter, Abbasi, Ali and Afzal (2011), examining the effects of service quality and loyalty found a positive relationship between the two constructs. It is evidenced that even customers who claim that they are satisfied with a service provider nonetheless defect. A study by Chandrashekar, Rotte, Tax, and Grewal (2017) reveals that satisfaction places a pivotal role in its translation to loyalty. Alberto and Castañeda (2017) assert that the extent of strength of the satisfaction – loyalty relationship is determined by two important factors; which are trust and involvement. Involvement with mobile telephony amongst the youth in general is very great (Ahn 2011) hence, a greater relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is expected. Indeed customer satisfaction does not only result into loyalty but also excellence in human capital both employee talent and manager superiority (Luo & Homburg 2017). There is also satisfactory evidence that customer satisfaction is an important predictor of customer loyalty (Rust & Zahorik 1993; Fornell 1992; Liang & Wang, 2004).

This study reveals that, even during promotional events, customer satisfaction which results in long term loyalty may be achieved. Most of the respondents agreed that, the satisfaction gained from the promotion run by Vodafone by the introduction of the Vodafone X package would transcend the life of the promotion. That is to say, even after the time frame of the promotional event, the customer would be loyal to the product. Since satisfied customers who become loyal show their loyalty through consequential purchases (Luo & Homburg 2017), promotional activities are supposed to be embarked upon by the firm. Satisfied customers turn to become less price sensitive (Homburg, Koschate & Hoyer 2005; Stock, 2005) and so would continue purchase even when prices increase after a promotional activity elapses. In their study, Luo and Homburg's (2017) hypothesis that customer satisfaction would generate more future sales at a given level of advertising and promotion efficiency was supported.

As services constitute about 60% of the Ghanaian economy (Ghana Statistical Service 2015), it is imperative that the future of the service sector is given the necessary attention. The teen market constitutes a viable future users of services in general. This study is therefore extremely important because it comes to enhance the provision of services which in the long run ensures national growth and development. It also falls in the domain of the service dominant logic which is a new theory for research in marketing (Vargo & Lush 2004; Lovelock & Gummesson 2004).

6. Conclusion

The study dedicates attention to the teen segment and their attitude towards promotions directed towards them. It concludes that, promotional activities geared towards teens must be associated with a high degree of service quality. This will generate a lasting effect on teens - which will make them loyal to the product. We find that, the theorised model is supported by the data in this study. However, not all hypothesised relationships was supported by the findings. The assertion that service quality would lead to customer loyalty is found to be largely untrue as Lenka, Suar and Mohapatra (2009) suggest. This explains why expectation gap between

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producers and consumers may have detrimental effects on patronage. Whereas, firms believe that their products are of a good quality, the customers may not be fascinated because it does not really satisfy their needs. This will result in dissatisfaction in the customers. There is the need for consistent product research to gather customers' perceptions of the product. The focus should be on knowing the expectations of consumers especially in the teen market since they are susceptible to expectation volatility.

In spite of all the diligence given to the whole process of this research, like all social sciences, this study has limitations. The participants of the study are those in their late teens. Where law allows, this study may be replicated in early and mid-teens (13 – 16 years). A critical analysis of the data revealed substantial differences in loyalty between the present and past users of the product, the source of funds to buy the product and gender. Further research may be conducted to explore these dynamics.

The findings of this study comes to endorse the conclusions drawn by Kursunlouglu (2014) and Izogo and Ogba(2015). Beyond that, this study suggests that, much attention must be given to the satisfaction of customers if firms want customers to be loyal to their product.

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