



Effect of Branding on Consumer Behaviour (A Case Study of MTN Nigeria Telecommunication, Mubi Metropolis)

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Abstract— Customers are considered the lifeblood of every organization, yet due to their complex nature, it has become very difficult to satisfy and retain them. Telecommunication companies have resorted to branding strategies to enhance consumer satisfaction, retention, trust, loyalty, and profitability. Despite the adoption of branding-related strategies, customers have continued to be dissatisfied with telecommunication services. This paper examined the effect of branding on the Consumer behaviour of MTN service users in Mubi metropolis. A survey method of research was adopted for the study. The data for the study was obtained using a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of fifty (45) customers of MTN Nigeria within the Mubi metropolis.

The data were subjected to percentage (%) analysis. The study concludes in accordance with the findings that the management of MTN Nigeria telecommunication as the network with the most subscribers should improve on more consumer-friendly branding strategies such as cheap and fast data bundles, more friendly call rates, world-class customer care representation and more freebies & gift to their brand loyal customers. This suggestion can be sustained by promoting policies that encourage investment in telecommunication technologies to increase accessibility and convenience of services to enhance positive responses.

Keywords— Branding, Brand Image, Brand Awareness, Consumer Behaviour, MTN Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, Branding started gaining global popularity in the early 1960s with leading companies like General Motors known for mass production and marketing. This means that companies' survival in today's complex and challenging market depends solely on their ability to satisfy their customers (Udo-Imeh, 2015). Hence, Companies are expected to identify consumers and satisfy them to achieve competitive advantages. This also informs the presence of stiff competition in both the local and global marketplace.

Branding is one of the strategic options adopted by companies to stay afloat in the market, gain a big market share and have the best brands in the marketplace. One of the industries largely influenced by the rapid changes in consumer behaviour is the telecommunication industry, which is due to the enamours technological advancements. Companies in this industry have employed focused strategies that are well-designed to suit consumers' needs, appeals, and strong desires. The introduction of mobile phones according to Aker & Mbiti, 2010, enables individuals and firms to access information quickly, which has led to improved economy and communication. In Nigeria, a higher population has access to mobile phones and that alone stimulates the quest



for understanding the influence of branding and consequently their behavioural response. Bowen, Kotler & Makens, (2014) unanimously agree that consumer behaviour is dynamic and sophisticated which makes it significant for decision-makers to understand and employ the right marketing strategies. Telecommunication industries in Nigeria have witnessed monumental growth and the high spate competition has truly become serious in the late 21st century due to the increase in population.

This has led to a high toll of development in innovation and the desire to promptly access data when needed. In light of these competitive scenarios aided by the rapid growth in technology and information sharing, telecommunication service providers were forced into rethinking branding strategy.

According to the report of NCC, (2020) telecommunication industry contributes to the national growth and gross domestic product as contained in table 1.0

Table 1: Percentage (%) Contribution of the Telecoms Industry to the Economy

Q1 2020	Q4 2019	Q3 2019	Q2 2019	Q1 2019	Q4 2018	Q3 2018	Q2 2018	Q1 2018	2017
10.88%	10.60%	9.20%	11.39%	10.11%	9.85%	8.39%	10.43%	9.19%	8.66%

Source: NCC, (2020)

The desire for studying branding has widely become an area of concern for organisations, especially in their quest for enhanced loyalty, image, and complete advantages, but these objectives are hardly attained due to ambivalence in customers' behaviour. Similarly, other studies have noted how brands affect consumers and concluded that branding was amongst the first attributes that consumers aimed at when choosing a brand (Ahuja, 2015) but Ebrahimabadi, Javilvand, & Samiei (2011), are of a different opinion than brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty are some of the reasons for customers' preference.

Furthermore, they recognized the importance of understanding consumer-buying behaviour, since it reveals the deeper motivation behind brand choices even though social factors such as reference groups and families also affect consumer buying behaviour and brand loyalty.

The growing opinion that Previous empirical studies reviewed have divergent views on the relationship between branding and customers' behaviour has resulted in the need to empirically study this relationship due to the increased competition and product differentiation in the mobile phone industry.

The disclosure by NCC, (2020), which shows that MTN is leading in the industry, necessitates the need for studying the effect of their leading brand on customers' behaviour to confirm the long-time connections between the variables.

The telecommunication industry, on the other hand, is becoming more complex in its competition and most service providers find themselves uncertain about the behaviour of their customers and see it as a burden on their marketing budget.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Branding

Branding has received general attention from researchers in both business and academic discourse because of their understanding and methodological perceptions. In early research, Bennett (1995) defined branding as the use of identifiable concepts such as catchy names, symbols, terminologies, taglines, logos, and extensions combinations of these concepts to relate them to specific services and products. Lamba (2012) defines a brand as a symbol, an object, and a concept.

A symbol is a sign which shows the importance and significance of a brand. Symbols work by stimulating the cognitive process, and consumers do not evaluate alternative brands when satisfied with a certain brand.

Branding allows consumers to create emotional connections with products and organizations, which further makes it easier to identify products with an undeniably oppressive market. That is why communication between those promoting the brand and target consumers is so important. This facilitates understanding of the specific brand of their choice by potential customers.

Such communication also removes ambiguity regarding rational brand development and contributes significantly to increasing brand awareness. They are further broken down into four phases and cover brand positioning, brand communication, brand effectiveness, and brand ownership consumers give some products a higher value than other products because they develop mental and emotional relationships (Kapferer 2008).

Likewise, the name, association, and other inputs used to identify a product are also referred to as branding (Kotler 2000). If a brand is classified as high quality and significant, then there is still prestige for the product, and the brand has a significant influence on consumer behaviour, including telecommunications companies because consumers tend to switch from one Telecommunications Company to another.

Brand Equity

Brand equity according to [Seggie, Kim, & Cavusgil, 2006](#) can be characterized as the arrangement of perspectives and practices of customers related to a brand. In other words, brand value alludes to the worth given by a brand to items and administrations that it covers.

It is all advantages and liabilities components that are identified with a brand, to its name or its image (logo, packaging ...). This worth relies upon the customer's contemplations, sentiments, feelings, and activities about the brand and its value.

Companies can create brand value for their goods or services by effectively being dominant in quality, dependability, and reliability (Aaker, 1991). At the point when the brand esteem is positive, it fortifies the brand picture and makes sure about the domain of business available. Aaker, (1991) stated that brand equity consists of five main categories:

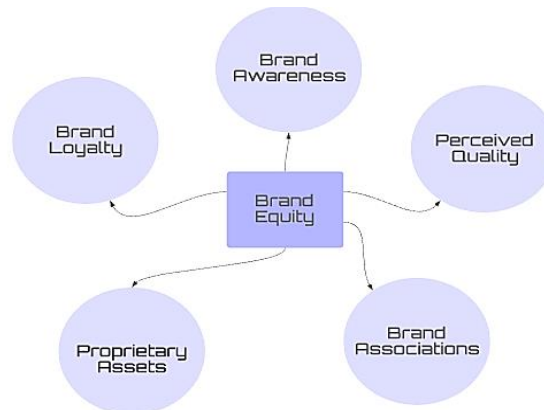


Figure 2: Aaker's brand equity model.

Brand Association

A brand association is the most recognised part of brand equity (Aaker 1992). The brand association comprises all ideas, sentiments, recognitions, images, meetings, beliefs, and perspectives relating to the branding. Chen (2001) has classified two kinds of brand affiliations-item and authoritative affiliations.

Perceived Quality

The perceived quality according to Aaker (1992), is how the customer determines the quality of a brand when comparing it with existing alternatives of equal value. The customer's opinion on the general perfection of an item is regarded as perceived quality, it is also a questionable matter that is rather difficult to identify since the demographics, personalities, cultures and experiences of all customers differ widely (Zeithaml, 1988).

Brand Awareness

According to Keller, (2013), Awareness is defined as a customer's ability to remember and recognize brands, which is reflected in their ability to recognize and approve brands. Associate brand names, logos, symbols, etc. with certain associations in mind".

Brand Image

The brand image showed that it has the strength to control the attitudes and behaviours of consumers, the image of a brand can contribute to stronger buying intentions and brand loyalty (Khor, 2010). According to Hsieh, Pan, and Setiono (2004), a successful brand image enables consumers to identify the needs that the brand satisfies and to differentiate the brand from its competitors, which consequently increases the likelihood that consumers will purchase the brand.

Consumer Behaviour

According to Schiffman (2007) "the behaviour that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs" Consumer behaviour is the study of how people buy, what they buy when they buy and why they buy. Kotler (2009).

Consumer Decision-making Process

The consumer decision-making process is a relatively easy way to determine the level of consumer involvement in buying a product or service, figure 2.2 below entails the steps in the decision-making process.



Figure 2.2: Consumer decision-making process

Source: Kotler, (2009)

Need recognition

This is when consumers realize that a product or service is needed (Kotler, 2009). Some needs are easily recognized by publicity and referrals.

Search for Information

According to Kotler, (2009), after a prospect decides to buy a product or service, they have many sources of information, including the Internet, print media, advertisements, and personal recommendations, as well as storage experiences where appropriate. This can be a very detailed process if the user is unfamiliar with a product or process based on informal information such as word of mouth (Kotler, 2009).

Evaluation of Alternatives

Users evaluate alternatives based on their interpretations once this information is collected. Solomon, (2010) explains that one user assigns different personal weights to various factors that are recorded when searching for information, such as perceived value, brand value, price, service speed, and possible location. The better a firm understands its customers, the greater the capacity it can help consumers analyse alternatives such as the characteristics and advantages of a product (Kotler, 2009). At this stage, consumers will appreciate variables such as price, extras, and other static factors such as colour and size.

Purchase Decision

The consumer decides what to buy at this stage. If consumers received a product or service they are satisfied with, it will lead to repeat purchases in the future, (Solomon, 2010).

Purchase evaluation

This comes after an item has been purchased. Consumers assess their purchase decisions based on initial assessment and purchase criteria and establish whether an item has met, exceed, or even below their expectations (Lamb, 2011).

A conceptual framework for brand loyalty is illustrated below in Fig 2.4.

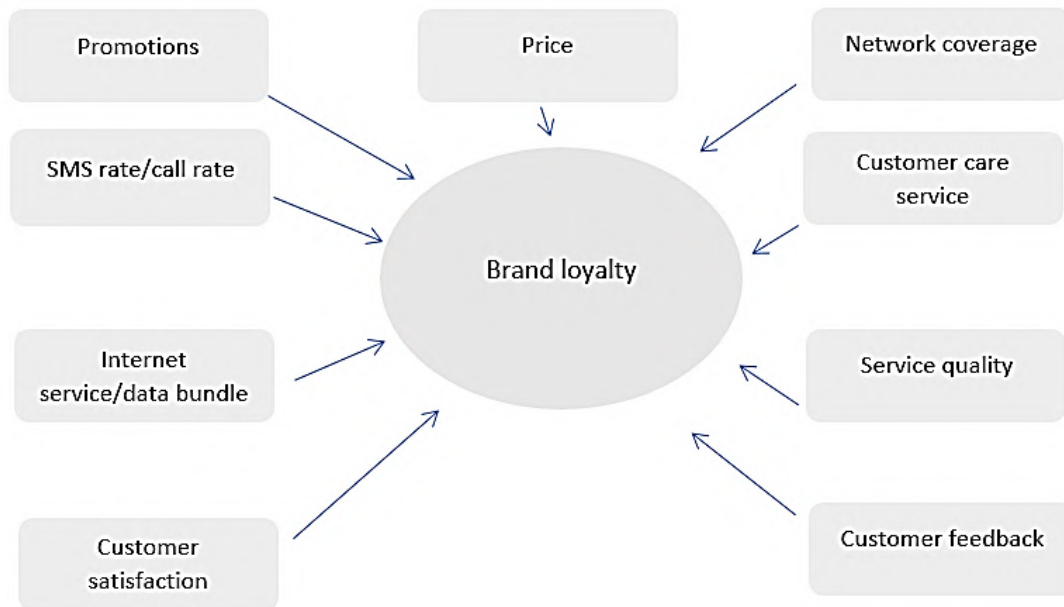


Figure 2.4: Conceptual framework for brand loyalty; Abubakar Sadiq Abdulazeez, 2022

METHODOLOGY

Primary data

In the current phase of the research process, the reliability and validity of the overall study contribute significantly (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 2007). This layer explains the collection and analysis of data used in the research. It also describes the data source, the design of the research, sample size, sample ethics, sample limitations, reliability, and validity of the research. An organized questionnaire was utilised to gather information from 45 respondents to take primary data. The structured questions were carefully designed to look for respondents' opinions about branding and were properly organized and analyzed using adequate statistical instruments. For the sake of this study, Data collected are analyzed, summarized, and interpreted accordingly with the aid of descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency distribution and percentage analysis.

Response Rate

Of the 50 effectively administered questionnaires, 45 (90 per cent) responses were recorded. These figures were sufficient as a minimum sample (30) is considered a large sample size for statistical analysis (Cooper and Schindler 2006, Saunders et al 2009).

Descriptive Analysis of Questions

Personal Details of Respondents

Details	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex:		
Male	30	66.7
Female	15	33.3
Age:		
26-35 years	18	40
36-45 years	17	37.8
46-years above	10	22.2
Educational Qualification:		
SSCE/WASSCE	17	37.8
ND/NCE	13	28.8
HND/Degree	15	33.4

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis of branding questions are presented in Figures 3.1- 3.8

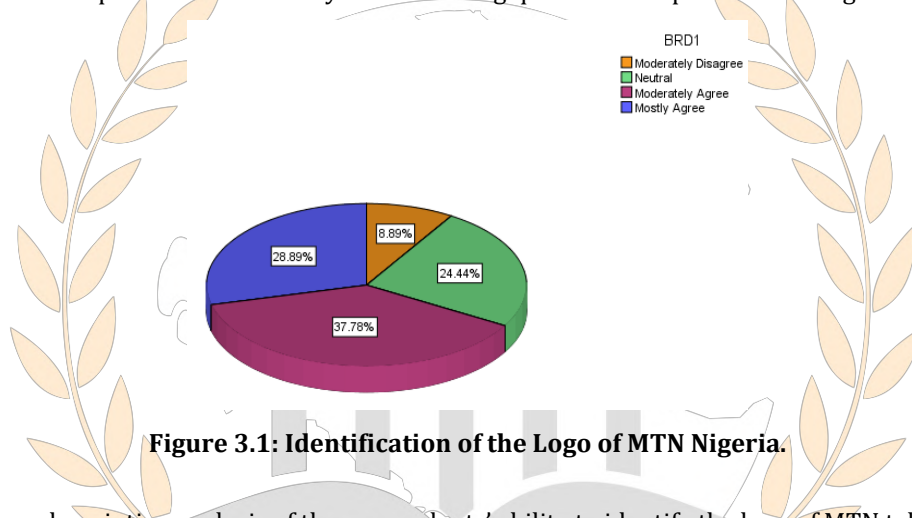


Figure 3.1: Identification of the Logo of MTN Nigeria.

Figure 3.1 shows a descriptive analysis of the respondents' ability to identify the logo of MTN telecommunication. Most of the respondents equal to 37.78% moderately agree they can identify the logo of MTN, 28.89% mostly agree, 24.44% of the respondents are neutral and the remaining 8.89% of the respondents acknowledged they cannot identify the logo of MTN Nigeria.

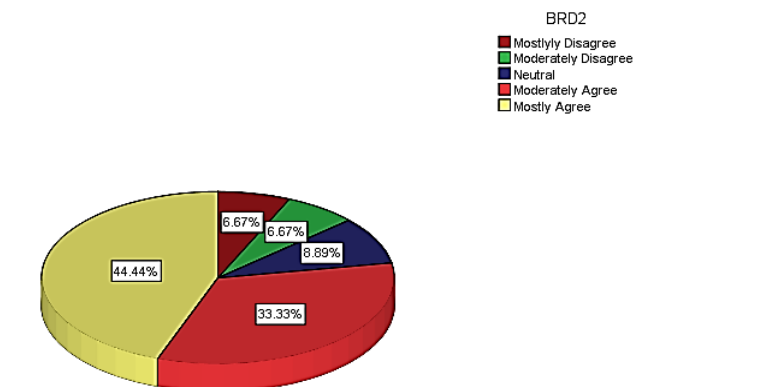


Figure 3.2: Satisfaction with the network coverage & services offered by MTN Nigeria.

Figure 3.2 reveals the descriptive analysis of whether the respondents are satisfied with the services and network coverage by MTN. 44.44% mostly agree, and 33.33% moderately agree that they are satisfied with the state-of-the-art services offered by MTN. 8.89% are neutral while the remaining 6.67% of the respondents mostly disagree with the satisfaction of services offered by MTN Nigeria.

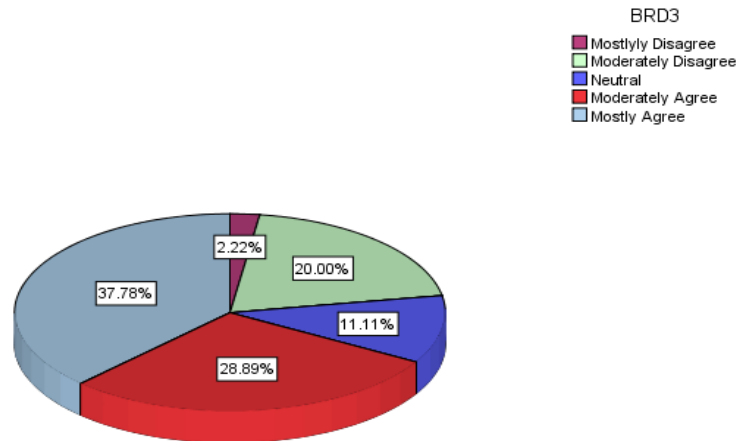


Figure 3.3: Recommendation of MTN Nigeria to other consumers.

The analysis of figure 3.3 shows that 37.79% of the respondents mostly agree that they are willing to recommend MTN Nigeria to others. 28.89% moderately agree, 20.00% moderately disagree, 11.11% are neutral, and 2.20% mostly disagree to recommend MTN Nigeria to others. This result indicates that most of the respondents equal to 66.68% are always willing to recommend the company to others without reservation, which could be attributed to their satisfaction with the service of the company.

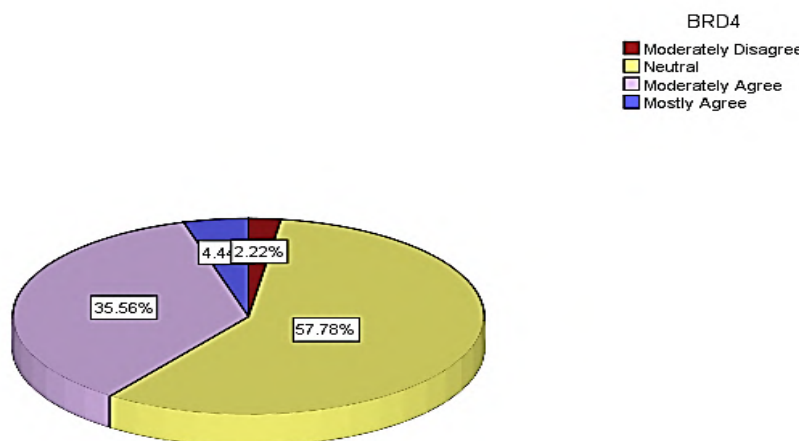


Figure 3.4: Motivation to continue using MTN Nigeria

Figure 3.4 shows a descriptive analysis of the respondents' motivation to continue using MTN Nigeria. About 57.78% were neutral, 35.56% moderately agree to continue with MTN, 4.44% mostly agree, and only 2.22% moderately disagree to continue with MTN. This analysis shows most of the respondents are not sure if they will continue with MTN Nigeria.

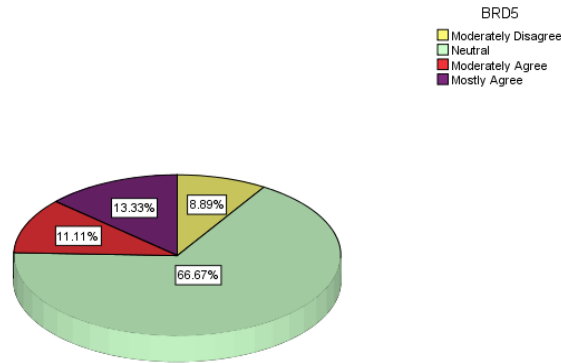


Figure 3.5: Preference of MTN Nigeria internet connectivity to other competitors.

Figure 3.5 exhibits the descriptive analysis of the opinion of the respondents on their preference of MTN internet services to other competing networks. Most of the respondents equivalent to 66.67% are neutral, 13.33% mostly agree, 11.11% of the respondents moderately agree and the remaining 8.8% of the respondents moderately disagree.

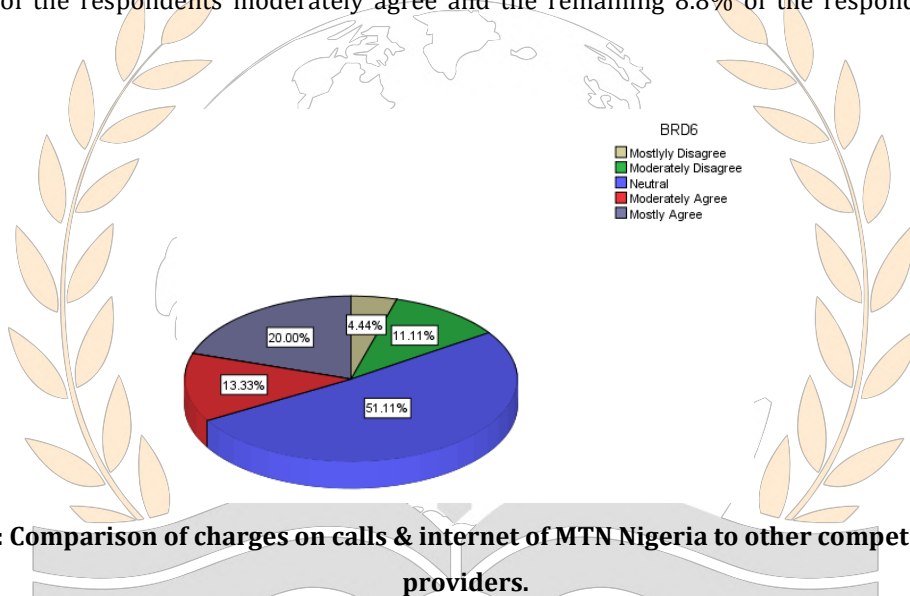


Figure 3.6: Comparison of charges on calls & internet of MTN Nigeria to other competing network providers.

The analysis of figure 3.6 shows that 51.11% of the respondents are Neutral, and 20% mostly agree that the service rates charged by MTN are cheaper than the competitor. 13.44% moderately agree, and the remaining 4.44% mostly disagree.

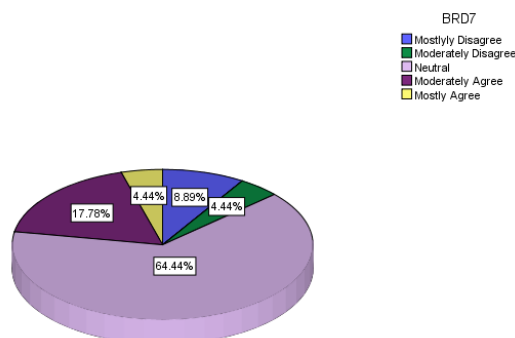


Figure 3.7: Assessment of MTN Nigeria call connectivity & internet to other competitors by the Respondents

Figure 3.7 exhibits the descriptive analysis of the opinion of the respondents on the speed of MTN Nigeria's internet services & call connectivity compared to its competitors. 64.44% of the respondents are neutral, while 17.79% moderately agree, 8.89% of the respondent moderately agree and 4.44% of the respondents each mostly agree and moderately disagree that the internet services of MTN are better.

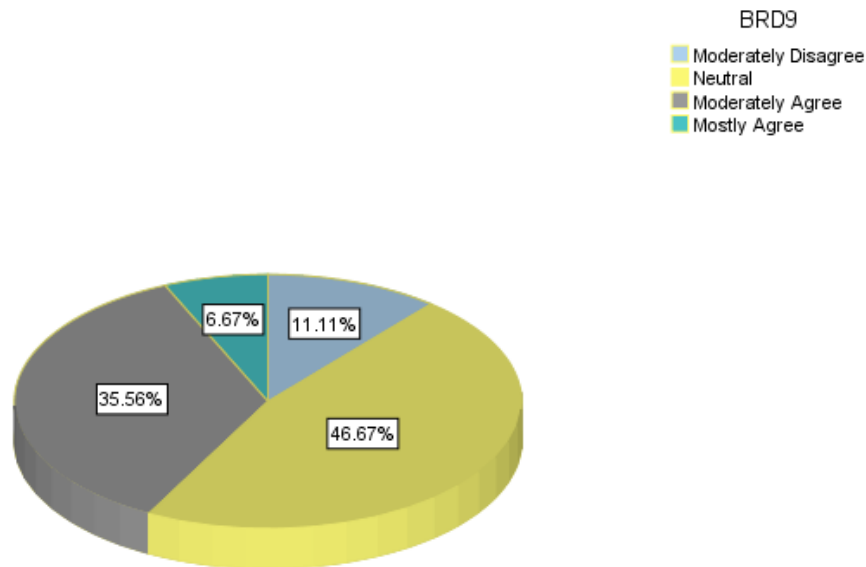


Figure 3.8: Identification of Competitors of MTN Nigeria by the Respondents

The analysis of figure 3.8 shows that 46.67% of respondents are Neutral and 35.56% moderately agree that they can identify the competitors of MTN Nigeria. However, 11.11% moderately disagree and the remaining 6.67% of the respondents mostly agree that they can identify the competitors of MTN Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Branding influences consumer behaviour in both the long and short-run since consumers are considered valuable assets that determine the profitability and competitiveness of telecommunication companies. This research establishes that branding has an influence on MTN Nigeria consumers in Adamawa state and recommends the following.

The results of this study have several implications for the management of MTN telecommunication to implement consumer-friendly branding strategies to satisfy customers' needs and expectations. These strategies are enhanced by acquiring sophisticated customer-friendly and self-service technologies that would influence customers' behaviour. This suggestion can be sustained by promoting policies that encourage accessibility and convenience of services to enhance positive consumer behavioural responses.

MTN Nigeria should design a broad base Information System to collect information relating to customer needs, aspirations, expectations, and profiles to design services that satisfy consumer needs adequately. MTN Nigeria should improve its call rates, internet services, and introduce cheaper data bundles to meet the demand of low-income earners to ensure consumers are satisfied and retained after addressing issues that are likely to trigger customer dissatisfaction with services.



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