

ASSESSMENT OF ONLINE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM) EFFECTIVENESS IN THE NIGERIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR AMONG STUDENTS OF OLABISI ONABANJO UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA

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Abstract

In today's highly competitive and digitalised economy, managing customer concerns through online platforms has become standard practice, as organisations increasingly seek to demonstrate efficiency, responsiveness, and excellence in customer care. To assess the efficiency and acceptability of these systems, this study examined the online Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems of Nigerian telecommunications companies among Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU) undergraduates, focusing on awareness, frequency of use, perceptions, and satisfaction. The study employed a survey design and a Google Forms questionnaire to collect data. Findings showed a high level of awareness, with 94.6% of respondents familiar with the online CRM platforms. Barely 26.6% frequently use eCRM, mostly through mobile apps at 68.6%. Telecom service issues for which the respondents use eCRM include network connectivity problems (45.3%), customer support complaints (32.1%), and data usage/internet speed issues, also at 32.1%. Respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of online CRM were mixed. While 34.9% found the online CRM systems effective, 43.6% of the respondents remained neutral. In conclusion, while awareness and preference for online CRM are high, usage appears to be hindered among the respondents. Therefore, it was recommended that telecom service providers must enhance user experience and efficiency to meet the expectations of their customers as they try to resolve their telecom service-related issues on online CRM platforms.

Keywords: Online customer relationship management, consumer engagement, customer satisfaction, telecommunications industry

INTRODUCTION

As economies transition toward knowledge-based systems, organisational efficiency increasingly relies on value creation across the entire value chain. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) has emerged as a pivotal mechanism within this paradigm, integrating human resources, operational processes, and

advanced technologies to sustain long-term customer value. In advanced economies such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States, CRM adoption is particularly sophisticated, driven by artificial intelligence, data analytics, and consumer-centric business models. Empirical evidence demonstrates that firms in these regions employ CRM systems to enhance profitability, brand loyalty, and

customer satisfaction through personalised engagement and real-time interaction (Wali, Uduma & Wright, 2016; Wali, 2018).

Within Africa, CRM adoption reflects broader digital transformation, though progress varies considerably. South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana have advanced due to stronger ICT infrastructure and competitive service sectors, particularly in banking and telecommunications. Yet, infrastructural deficiencies, inconsistent service quality, and limited technological integration continue to constrain CRM effectiveness in many markets (Wali et al., 2016). In Nigeria, CRM has assumed strategic importance as firms confront intensifying competition and evolving customer expectations. Telecommunications and banking organisations increasingly deploy CRM to strengthen service delivery, retention, and brand loyalty (Emuobor et al., 2025). Research confirms CRM's significant influence on organisational performance and customer patronage (Ekejiuba et al., 2025; Nwankwo & Kanyangale, 2023; Payne & Frow, 2005). Nonetheless, weak customer-centric cultures and inadequate system integration remain persistent challenges, highlighting the need for more resilient frameworks.

Despite technological advances, CRM implementation frequently falls short of expectations, with reported failure rates ranging between 18 and 75 percent (JohnnyGrow, 2024). Key causes include the absence of enterprise-wide strategies, difficulties integrating new systems with legacy infrastructures, and insufficient analytical approaches (Tetteh, 2023; Suarniki & Daud, 2024; Tazkarji & Stafford, 2020; Alawiye-Adams & Afolabi, 2014). Fragmented customer data exacerbates these challenges, as information collected across multiple channels often remains siloed, impeding the development of a unified customer view. Moreover, the diversity of CRM technologies

contributes to fragmentation, with many deployments limited to point solutions such as automated alerts or email tools (Alawiye-Adams et al., 2014). CRM systems are generally classified into operational, analytical, and collaborative categories (Bajpai, 2020), with newer forms such as electronic CRM (eCRM) and wireless CRM emerging.

Scholars consistently emphasise that CRM extends beyond its technological components. JohnnyGrow (2024) contends that technology functions as an enabler rather than an end in itself, while Suarniki and Daud (2024) and Tetteh (2023) underscore CRM as a synthesis of organisational strategy and information systems designed to prioritise customer needs. Accordingly, CRM success depends on integrated business models that align structures, processes, information flows, and technologies across the value chain.

In Nigeria's telecommunications sector, CRM is deployed as a strategic framework for managing customer interactions rather than merely as a technological tool (Koshti, Kasande & Gupta, 2022). Operators collect and analyse customer data, including call records, usage patterns, payment histories, and feedback to personalise engagement and proactively address issues. Building on Tetteh's (2023) conceptualisation, firms adopt integrated models that connect marketing, sales, customer service, and technical support through unified platforms. This integration ensures staff access to comprehensive customer histories across communication channels such as social media, email, call centres, and mobile applications, thereby facilitating faster and more effective responses.

Telecom companies further employ CRM to monitor satisfaction through surveys, predict churn, design loyalty programmes, execute targeted campaigns, and manage complaints efficiently. These practices enhance customer

satisfaction, loyalty, and profitability, while simultaneously strengthening operational efficiency and strategic focus. Ultimately, CRM in Nigeria exemplifies the holistic, value-driven approach articulated by JohnnyGrow (2024) and Tetteh (2023), wherein technology supports broader organisational strategies aimed at sustaining customer value.

Statement of the Problem

Customer Relationship Management systems are designed to enhance customer experience by automating interactions across sales, marketing, technical support, and customer service functions. With the increasing digitisation of the telecom industry, online CRM systems play a critical role in helping companies respond more promptly to customer concerns, deliver personalised communication, and improve overall service quality. Despite the investments made by Nigerian telecom companies in digital CRM platforms, there appears to be a gap between the availability of these tools and the satisfaction levels reported by users (Buwah, 2024).

Many undergraduates who rely extensively on telecom services frequently face challenges such as poor network quality, limited access to responsive customer support, and unresolved complaints. Although they use mobile apps, social media platforms, and other online CRM tools to seek assistance, service effectiveness often falls short of their expectations. The disconnect between CRM deployment and user satisfaction suggests potential issues in system design, responsiveness, ease of navigation, or consistency of service delivery.

These challenges raise important questions: How aware are students of the online CRM tools available to them? How frequently do they use these systems? What type of issues do they try to resolve using the online CRM systems? Do these online CRM systems effectively resolve their concerns? Understanding these dynamics is essential for strengthening CRM

implementation and ensuring that telecom operators deliver customer-centred digital services.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate undergraduates' perceptions of online CRM systems within the context of Nigerian telecommunications. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine students' awareness of online CRM systems provided by telecom operators;
2. Determine how frequently students utilise online CRM platforms;
3. Identify the types of issues students attempt to resolve using online CRM tools; and
4. Evaluate students' perceptions of the effectiveness of online CRM systems.

Scope and Significance of the Study

The study focuses on the online CRM platforms used by undergraduate students at OOU and by Nigerian telecom companies. These platforms include mobile apps (e.g., MyMTN, MyAirtel, Glo Café), social media channels, websites, live chat portals, and chatbots. The population is limited to undergraduate students across selected faculties who actively use telecom services and have interacted with online CRM tools. The study does not include postgraduate students, staff, or offline service channels such as physical service centres or call centres. The outcome of this study will provide significant insights for marketing communication professionals who consult for the telecoms as they plan their consumer engagement programmes for this population beyond students of Olabisi Onabanjo University.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Strategic and Technological Dichotomy of CRM

The evolution of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) from a rudimentary administrative function to a sophisticated, data-

driven strategic imperative represents a significant shift in organisational theory. While often idealised as a customer-centric philosophy (Buttle, 2008; Payne & Frow, 2005), critical scholarship suggests CRM is equally a technological ecosystem of surveillance and data mining. This paradox is evident in contexts such as Nigeria's telecommunications sector, where CRM aims to humanise business interactions while relying heavily on automated systems.

CRM has transitioned from manual, personalised client records of the late twentieth century (Chen & Popovich, 2003) to algorithmic frameworks. Although theorised to align organisational processes for lifetime value (Payne & Frow, 2005), modern applications often prioritise managing touchpoints over genuine human interaction. Kotler and Keller (2016) define CRM as the meticulous management of customer information across channels, underscoring its preoccupation with data capture rather than emotional connection.

Contemporary CRM efficacy rests on a technological triad. Operational CRM automates frontline activities, transforming sales and service into predictable workflows (Buttle & Maklan, 2019). Analytical CRM employs big data and predictive analytics to anticipate customer needs, while Collaborative CRM unifies departmental communications into a cohesive voice (Kracklauer, Mills & Seifert, 2004; Khodakarami & Chan, 2014). Despite promises of efficiency and revenue growth (Nguyen & Simkin, 2013), reliance on artificial intelligence and machine learning (Khan, Akter & Islam, 2024; Veeravalli, 2025) raises concerns about depersonalisation, reducing customers to data points and creating a paradox where increased knowledge diminishes authentic connection.

CRM Systems in Developed and Developing Economies

Online CRM has become central to digital business strategy, yet its maturity varies. In developed economies such as the United States and Western Europe, CRM systems are deeply integrated, leveraging analytics, AI, and omnichannel platforms to deliver predictive experiences. Strong institutional frameworks and ICT infrastructure support CRM as a source of competitive advantage (Kim et al., 2021; Alsaad et al., 2021).

By contrast, adoption in developing economies across Africa, Asia, and Latin America is uneven and often operational rather than strategic. Firms prioritise basic functionalities data storage, communication, and sales support- due to cost and infrastructural constraints. SMEs in these contexts struggle with limited expertise and fragmented systems, hindering CRM's full potential (Mohammed et al., 2021; Wynn & Olayinka, 2021). Outcomes are further constrained by reliance on Western paradigms that fail to align with local realities (Eze et al., 2021). While e-commerce and mobile technologies are reshaping CRM practices, structural inequalities such as digital divides and regulatory inconsistencies persist (Reardon et al., 2021). Thus, effective CRM requires adaptive frameworks that prioritise local needs and capacity building rather than technological determinism.

E-CRM and the Digital Power Shift in Nigeria's Telecommunications Sector

The shift from traditional CRM to Electronic CRM (eCRM) has reconfigured engagement dynamics, replacing physical interactions with chatbots, web portals, and mobile applications (Sigala, 2005; Ab Hamid & Kassim, 2004). Nigerian providers such as MTN, Airtel, and Globacom have advanced self-service models through applications like MyMTN, which consolidate billing, data management, and complaint resolution. These systems, however,

often function primarily as data-collection engines (Wassouf et al., 2020; Rodriguez & Boyer, 2020).

AI-driven tools aim to reduce churn and identify service gaps (Ledro, Nosella & Vinelli, 2022; Becker, Greve & Albers, 2009), yet Nigerian consumers frequently encounter friction through repetitive chatbot loops and inadequate grievance resolution, fostering digital alienation (Adeyemo et al., 2017; Osode et al., 2025). With 179.6 million active mobile subscribers as of December 2025 (Adepetun, 2026), telecom operators must differentiate through superior customer experience and responsiveness. Mobile apps, portals, chatbots, and social media channels facilitate real-time interaction (Choudhury & Harrigan, 2014), but infrastructural deficits, unreliable internet, inconsistent power, and high costs undermine performance.

Practical examples highlight diverse strategies. MTN integrates operational and analytical CRM through MyMTN and WhatsApp chatbots, automating services and personalising promotions (MTN Nigeria, 2023; MTN Group, 2023). Airtel's SmartConnect and MyAirtel platforms employ analytics to customise bundles (Airtel Africa, 2023). Globacom's Glo Café App offers self-care services but suffers usability challenges, while 9mobile leverages portals and social media to enhance responsiveness. Despite these innovations, challenges persist, including weak cybersecurity, uneven compliance with data protection regulations, limited staff training, and organisational resistance to technological change (Adedoyin & Airenvbahahie, 2025; Purnama & Manalu, 2024; Chen & Popovich, 2003; Al-Rashed, 2017). Addressing these issues is essential for achieving satisfaction, loyalty, and sustainable advantage (Peppers & Rogers, 2017).

Digital Natives and CRM Expectations

The limitations of CRM are most evident among digital natives (Prensky, 2001). In Nigeria, over 75% of youths aged 18-29 access the internet primarily via mobile devices (Statista, 2023). University students, a critical market segment, perceive CRM not as a corporate strategy but as a baseline requirement of their digital lifestyle.

Hyper-connected and intolerant of service failures, students rely heavily on mobile data for academic and social purposes, making them highly sensitive to service quality and pricing (Lawal et al., 2025; Bai, 2020; Wassouf et al., 2020). Price-conscious and prone to switching providers, they frequently use social media to critique CRM performance (Adeyemi & Salami, 2019). For this demographic, generic chatbot responses are seen not as an innovation but as a barrier to service. Consequently, CRM's value depends on moving beyond data centralisation toward human-centric applications (Yoo, Park & Park, 2024).

Strengthening CRM in Nigeria requires recognising that technology alone cannot compensate for a weak service culture. Scholars argue CRM must evolve from surveillance mechanisms into relationship-building tools underpinned by organisational empathy. The future of CRM in Nigeria's telecommunications sector lies not merely in deploying advanced AI but in integrating technology with responsive, customer-centric practices that acknowledge the digital literacy of primary users. Only through such integration can the promise of mutually beneficial strategic orientation (Payne & Frow, 2005) be realised.

In summary, CRM represents both a strategic philosophy and a technological ecosystem, embodying a paradox between human-centric ideals and data-driven realities. While developed economies leverage CRM as a strategic intelligence system, developing

economies often adopt it reactively, constrained by infrastructural and cultural factors. In Nigeria's telecommunications sector, E-CRM has expanded engagement opportunities but also exposed challenges of depersonalisation, infrastructural deficits, and digital alienation. The expectations of digital natives further highlight the need for CRM systems that transcend automation to deliver genuine, empathetic service. Ultimately, CRM's success depends on aligning technology with strategy, embedding customer-centric values within organisational culture, and adapting frameworks to local contexts.

Theoretical Review

Two major theories underpin this study by offering insight into user behaviour, system evaluation, and perceived service quality in digital environments. These are the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the SERVQUAL Model. Both frameworks guide the interpretation of users' attitudes, expectations, and experiences with Electronic Customer Relationship Management (eCRM) platforms, particularly within the telecommunications sector.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), developed by Davis (1989), is one of the most influential frameworks for predicting and explaining user acceptance of information systems. The model is built on two core constructs: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU). Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which an individual believes that using a system enhances task performance, while perceived ease of use denotes how effortless the user expects the system to be. According to Davis (1989), these factors shape users' attitudes toward a system, influence their behavioural intentions, and ultimately determine actual usage.

In the context of eCRM platforms such as MTN's *MyMTN App* or Glo's *HISelfCare*, TAM explains how students assess usability and performance benefits. If students perceive these platforms as easy to navigate and helpful in resolving issues or managing subscriptions, they are more likely to adopt them consistently. Conversely, systems perceived as complex or unreliable may lead to negative attitudes or avoidance of digital service channels (Davis, 1989; Ma & Liu, 2011; Hasri & Miranda, 2025).

TAM is widely applied in technology adoption research because of its simplicity and strong predictive power. Its relevance to this study lies in understanding how communication students at OOU engage with telecom eCRM systems. External variables such as interface design, system accessibility, and support features can indirectly shape PU and PEOU, thereby influencing adoption behaviour. In Nigeria, studies show that acceptance of digital platforms, including banking and telecom apps, is strongly driven by perceived convenience and effectiveness (Bankole, Bankole & Brown, 2011). Thus, TAM provides a useful lens for assessing the determinants of students' engagement with telecom CRM portals.

SERVQUAL Model

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) laid the groundwork for the SERVQUAL Model, which they introduced in 1988 (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988). The model is a widely recognised framework for evaluating service quality. The model identifies five key dimensions: tangibles, referring to physical appearance and interface design; reliability, the ability to perform promised services dependably; responsiveness, the willingness to assist customers promptly; assurance, which reflects employee competence and the ability to inspire trust; and empathy, involving personalised and attentive service.

Applying SERVQUAL to eCRM systems enables researchers to assess how well digital service platforms meet customer expectations. For instance, responsiveness can be evaluated through how quickly chatbots or virtual agents reply to customer queries. Reliability may be measured by the stability of self-service apps and their ability to function without errors. Assurance may involve trust in data security or professionalism in online interactions, while empathy can be reflected in personalised recommendations or user-friendly support features (Abukhalifeh & Mat Som, 2015; Farah, Ekinci & Danayiyen, 2025; Aenusyifa, Lattu & Rosita, 2025).

In Nigeria's telecom sector, SERVQUAL is particularly relevant for evaluating the performance of mobile apps, websites, and other CRM channels. Telecom companies rely heavily on digital platforms, making service quality central to customer satisfaction and retention. Through SERVQUAL, aspects such as interface design (tangibles), speed of complaint resolution (responsiveness), and trust in data handling (assurance) become measurable indicators of overall service quality. The model, therefore, provides a comprehensive framework for assessing whether telecom CRM platforms meet or exceed user expectations in a competitive digital environment (Abukhalifeh & Mat Som, 2015; Farah et al., 2025).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-method approach within a descriptive research design, targeting Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU) students aged 15–35, consistent with the African Union Youth Charter (African Union Commission, 2006). The population comprised OOU students within this age bracket. A quantitative survey was conducted using a 14-item questionnaire developed on Google Forms. The instrument, adapted from prior studies

(Ekejiuba, 2025; Payne et al., 2005; Wali, 2018), was structured into four thematic sections aligned with the research objectives.

Instrument validity was ensured through a pre-test involving 25 students, whose feedback informed revisions for clarity and precision. A subsequent pilot test was conducted, and reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of $\alpha = 0.82$, which indicates strong internal consistency.

Based on an estimated student population of 32,000 (Olabisi Onabanjo University, 2026), a sample size of 380 was determined using the Raosoft Online Sample Size Calculator, set at a 95% confidence level, 5% margin of error, and 50–50 distribution. Seven faculties out of fourteen were selected through simple random sampling, while convenience sampling was employed to reach respondents via faculty WhatsApp groups.

WhatsApp was chosen due to its widespread use in academic settings, which facilitated response collection, enhanced participation, and minimised bias. This approach also enabled inclusion of diverse subgroups, thereby improving the generalizability of findings (Morgan, 1996; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kumar, 2019; Singer et al., 2023). Access to these platforms was granted by student association leaders, and the questionnaire link was circulated for two weeks. Data were analysed descriptively using Google Forms analytics, which presents results in percentage-based formats (Ulum et al., 2023; Manggaberani & Darlis, 2024).

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

This section presents the study's findings based on 598 student responses collected via Google Forms, representing a 157% response rate. The results are analysed and displayed in the charts and tables in line with the research questions.

Research Objective 1: Examine students' awareness of online CRM systems provided by telecom operators.

Table 1: Awareness of Online CRM Platforms

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	566	94.6
No	32	5.4
Total	598	100

Table 1 presents a clear indication that the majority of the respondents are aware of the online CRM platforms of telecoms companies in Nigeria.

Research Objective 2: Determine how frequently students utilise online CRM platforms.

Table 2: Frequency of Use of Online CRM Platforms for Issue Resolution

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Frequently	45	7.5
Frequently	114	19.1
Occasionally	159	26.6
Rarely	243	40.6
Never	37	6.2
Total	598	100

Table 2 shows that the frequency of eCRM use among the respondents is low. 40.6% of them rarely use the eCRM platforms, while 26.6% occasionally do. Barely over a quarter (26.6%) frequently use the eCRM platforms.

598 responses

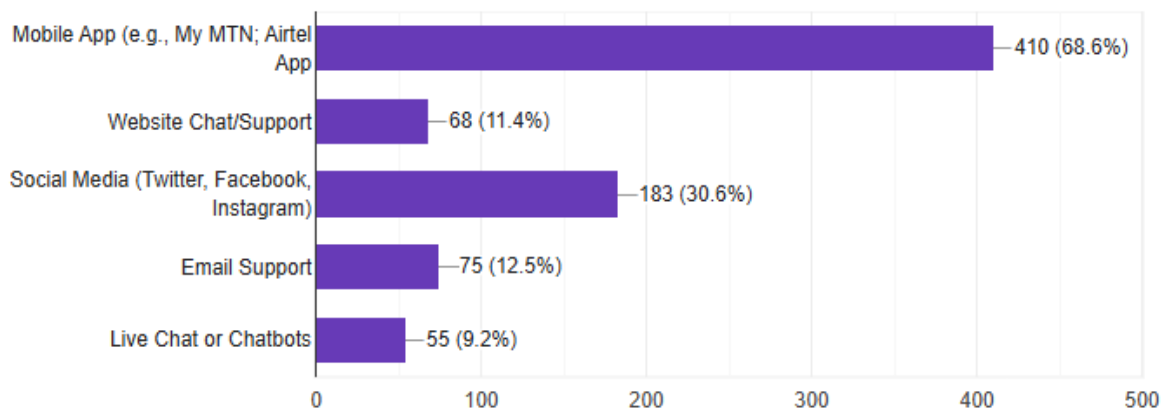


Figure 1: Most Used Online CRM Channels (Multiple Answer)

In Figure 1, among respondents who reported using eCRM platforms, mobile applications of telecom operators emerged as the most frequently utilized channel, accounting for

68.6%. The social media handles of telecom companies represented the next most common platform, with 30.6% of respondents indicating usage. In contrast, live chat services or chatbots

were the least employed, cited by only 9.2% of respondents. These findings suggest that mobile applications constitute the predominant eCRM platform among the respondents,

reflecting their central role in customer engagement and service interaction.

Research Objective 3: Identify the types of issues students attempt to resolve using online CRM tools.

Table 3: Frequency of Encountering Telecoms Service Issues

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Often	122	20.4
Often	224	37.5
Occasionally	233	39.0
Never	19	3.2
Total	598	100

To ascertain the types of issues encountered, respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they experience telecom-related problems. Overall, 57.9% reported that they often face such service issues, whereas only 3.2% indicated that they never encounter them. These results demonstrate that the majority of respondents frequently experience telecom service challenges, underscoring the persistent nature of service-related difficulties within the sector.

598 responses

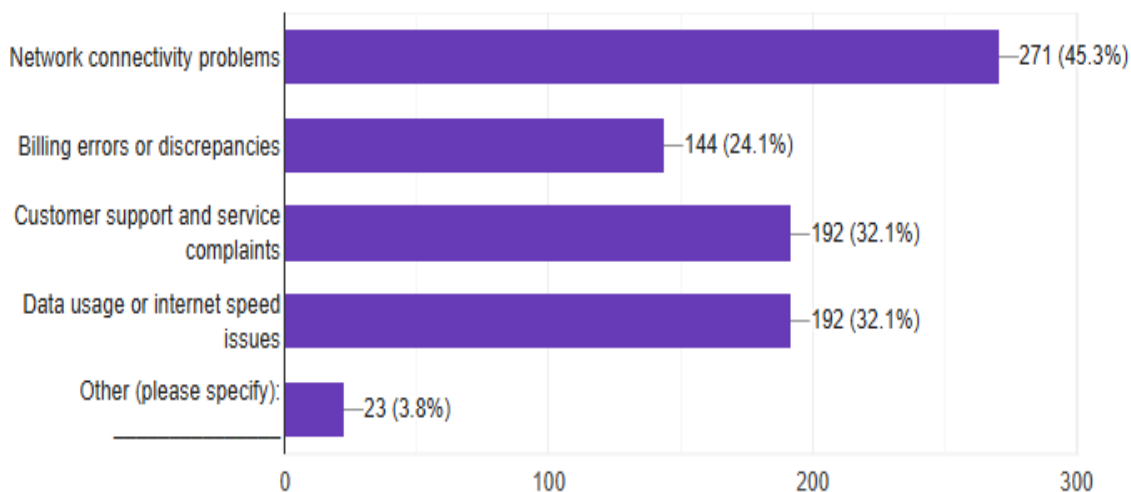


Figure 2: Specific Telecom Issues Attempted to Resolve Online (Multiple Answer)

Figure 2 reveals that the most frequently reported telecom service issue for which respondents engaged the eCRM facilities of telecom operators in Nigeria was network connectivity, accounting for 45.3% of cases. Customer support and service-related complaints constituted 32.1%, while an equal

proportion (32.1%) of respondents utilised eCRM to address concerns regarding data usage and internet speed. Billing errors were comparatively less frequent, representing 24.1% of the reported issues. Taken together, these findings underscore that network connectivity challenges remain the

predominant driver of eCRM engagement among telecom subscribers in Nigeria, highlighting a persistent structural weakness in service delivery.

Research Objective 4: Evaluate students' perceptions of the effectiveness of online CRM systems.

Table 4: Perceived Effectiveness of Online CRM Systems

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Effective	61	10.2
Effective	209	34.9
Neutral	261	43.6
Ineffective	60	10.0
Very Ineffective	7	1.2
Total	598	100

As presented in Table 4, a cumulative 45.1% of respondents reported finding the CRM systems effective to some extent. However, a substantial proportion, 43.6%, expressed neutrality regarding their effectiveness. This distribution suggests that while nearly half of the respondents perceive some degree of utility in the eCRM systems of Nigerian telecom operators, a comparable share remains indifferent, indicating limited conviction about their overall effectiveness.

598 responses

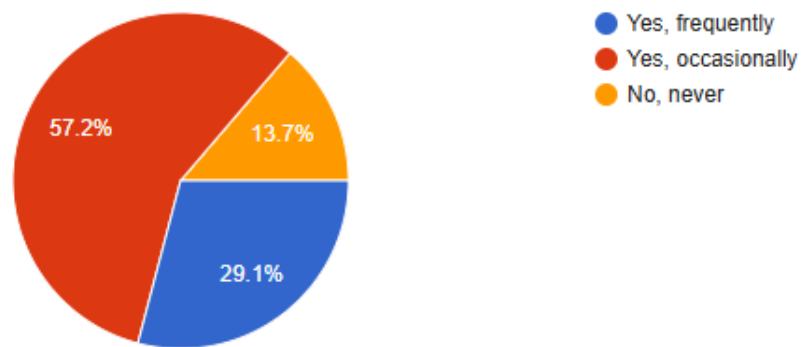


Figure 3: Perceived Rating of Response Time

Figure 3 shows that a cumulative 86.3% of the respondents have, at one time or another, experienced delays in receiving responses or solutions when using the online CRM systems of Nigerian telecommunication companies. This suggests that the systems still require significant improvement.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined the online Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems of Nigerian telecommunications companies among undergraduates at Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU). The findings indicate a high level of awareness (94.6%) of online CRM platforms among the respondents, reflecting the rapid digitisation of Nigeria's

telecommunications sector and the widespread integration of mobile and web-based customer engagement systems (Buwah 2024; Gazi et al., 2024). This supports the broader argument that digital infrastructures in emerging markets are significantly improving customer touchpoints and service visibility.

Despite high awareness levels, actual engagement with CRM platforms remains relatively low, with 40.6% of respondents rarely using these systems and only 26.6% reporting occasional use. This discrepancy highlights a critical awareness–usage gap, suggesting that availability does not necessarily translate into adoption. To address this gap, Osode et al. (2025) recommended that telecommunication services should leverage e-service quality effectively and improve their customer satisfaction. In this regard, telecoms companies should ensure proper training and integration of technology to maximise the benefits of IT knowledge for their staff and customers.

The dominance of mobile applications (68.6%) as the primary access channel for eCRM further corroborates earlier assertions by Toyese (2014), Itai & Onamusi (2020), and Rodriguez et al. (2020), all of whom identified mobile interfaces as the most accessible and user-friendly CRM tools. The fact that the utilisation of social media platforms to access eCRM services recorded an appreciable 30.6% count also reinforces the growing convergence and acceptance of social networking sites as formal customer service systems (Bai, 2020; Gazi et al., 2024). This trend is consistent with the findings of Dwivedi et al. (2021), who noted that social media integration enhances customer awareness and engagement with digital service platform channels. Similarly, Rana et al. (2016) found that digital service awareness is strongly influenced by perceived accessibility and platform familiarity, such as those provided by

social networks, particularly in emerging economies.

The kind of telecom-related challenges that the respondents attempt to resolve with online CRM systems include network connectivity issues at 45.3%, service complaints at 32.1%, and slow data speed at 32.1%. Andreassen et al. (2018) recognised these issues in part, noting that system responsiveness and service reliability are key predictors of continued use of digital customer service platforms in a collaborative business environment.

Respondents' perceptions of eCRM effectiveness were generally moderate. Nearly half (45.1%) believed the systems were somewhat effective, while a similar proportion (43.6%) expressed neutrality. This balance indicates cautious evaluations, suggesting that although CRM systems provide utility, they fail to inspire strong confidence. The fact that only 13.7% of the respondents never experienced a delay using online CRM platforms is a key consideration in this instance. Adeyemo, Daniel, and Aghedo (2017), Eltayib (2020), and Gazi et al. (2024) argue that inconsistent service delivery and delayed responses often erode trust in CRM platforms. Similarly, Ashfaq et al. (2020) found that inefficiencies in telecom services discourage users from engaging with digital support systems, while perceived enjoyment, usefulness, and ease of use strongly predict continuance intention. Venkatesh, Thong, and Xu (2016) further emphasised that performance expectancy and facilitating conditions shape technology adoption, particularly in mobile service contexts. Despite high awareness of CRM systems (94.6%), the prevalence of neutral perceptions suggests these platforms meet only threshold expectations. Using SERVQUAL, Adedoyin and Airenvbahahie (2025) recommended that telecom providers enhance empathy and responsiveness, supported by long-term IT innovations to strengthen customer satisfaction.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study provided valuable insights into the online Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems of Nigerian telecommunications companies, assessed by undergraduate students at Olabisi Onabanjo University. While awareness of these online platforms was impressively high, actual engagement remained suboptimal due to factors hindering effective utilisation. Mobile apps and social media were the most preferred eCRM channels, reflecting current digital trends among young users. It can also be concluded that network connectivity issues remain the major issue for which customers often seek eCRM solutions.

While it can be concluded that those who used eCRM found it effective, the gap between user awareness and the percentage of practical usage highlighted the need for service providers to focus on user experience to achieve their purpose. This will offer a significant opportunity for digital strategy refinement to meet customer expectations in a digital-first environment.

Recommendations

Nigerian telecommunication companies must aggressively prioritise several strategic interventions to enhance the effectiveness of their online Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems and meet the expectations of their customers.

First, telecoms must achieve radically faster response times, especially across high-engagement channels like live chat and social media. Delays breed frustration and are the primary source of user distrust, which can only be solved by prompt resolutions.

Second, telecoms should immediately deploy Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to tailor interactions based on each user's history

and recurring issues. Customers will likely feel valued and engaged when eCRM systems remember their preferences, making personalisation crucial for both loyalty and service efficiency.

Third, continuous user feedback is a business imperative. Telecommunication companies must systematically integrate student insights through regular in-app reviews and campus-specific surveys. This direct, high-value data must be used to rapidly refine systems and address emerging challenges, treating customer input as the most critical indicator of CRM performance.

Fourth, seamless, multi-channel support must be guaranteed. Systems must be integrated across mobile apps, emails, and social media to ensure a unified customer journey. This step is key to delivering consistent, quality service and maximising the potential of digital CRM tools.

Finally, telecoms should create major campaigns that would sensitise and educate their subscribers on the benefits of the eCRM system, having complied with the foregoing recommendations. Such awareness would boost acceptance and usage of the eCRM platforms and increase customer satisfaction.

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