Brand Perception and Consumer Preferences for Mobile Network Services Among UNIBEN Students

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DECLARATION

I Amadi Favour do hereby declare that:

1. This project work is based on a study undertaken by me in the Department of Business Administration, University of Benin under the supervision of **DR. S. A. ADEKUNLE.**

2. This work has not been previously submitted for award of a degree elsewhere.

3. All ideas and views are products of my personal research effort and all references to works of others have been duly acknowledged.

4. Any litigation or liability arising from the work is to be wholly borne by me and not that of the supervisor

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CERTIFICATION

We certify that **Favour AMADI** with the Matriculation Number **MGS2104792** submitted this research work to the Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God almighty, who in his infinite mercy have seen me through the course of my study, through the hurdles, and brought me this far. Also, to my loving parents, Mr. and Mrs. Amadi, siblings, and my aunty, Mrs. Doris Uzochukwu, who have supported and encourage me through the course of this programme, I appreciate you all.

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into the preferences and perceptions of mobile network services among undergraduate students at the University of Benin (UNIBEN), offering valuable

insights into Nigeria's competitive telecom industry. By analyzing data from 385 students, we discovered that peer influence plays a significant role in shaping brand preference, whereas factors like network quality, pricing, customer service, and advertising have relatively less impact. Notably, MTN and Airtel emerge as the top choices among students, showcasing their strong brand presence on campus. The study's findings provide actionable insights for telecom providers seeking to capture this vital market, informing strategies for targeted marketing, service development, and customer retention. The study also reveals a nearly equal gender distribution among respondents, with a concentration of students in their early twenties. Based on these findings, it is recommended that telecom operators have an extensive understanding of the preferences and behaviors of this key demographic so they can enhance their market share and competitiveness in Nigeria's dynamic telecom landscape, ultimately driving growth and success in the industry.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In today's digital-driven world, mobile network services have become central to daily communication, academic activities, business transactions, and social interactions. Globally, mobile phone subscriptions reached 8.63 billion in 2023, surpassing the world's population and highlighting the deep entrenchment of mobile networks in daily life (International Telecommunication Union [ITU], 2023). For university students, particularly in Nigeria, the reliance on mobile networks is indispensable as it supports online learning platforms, social networking, financial services, and real-time access to information. With the rise of e-learning platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams, the COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of mobile network services among students, making mobile connectivity not just a luxury but a necessity (Okeke et al., 2023).

The University of Benin (UNIBEN), as one of Nigeria's premier federal universities, hosts an estimated student population of over 70,000 across its multiple campuses (UNIBEN Registry, 2024). This large and diverse body actively uses mobile network services to meet their academic and personal needs, ranging from accessing electronic library resources to

streaming entertainment content. According to Nigeria's Communications Commission (NCC), mobile internet users in the country rose to 160.1 million in January 2024, with youths and students representing the bulk of active users (NCC, 2024). Understanding how these students perceive mobile network brands and what shapes their preferences is crucial for telecommunications operators aiming to capture this vital and growing market segment.

Brand perception is the mental image and attitude that consumers hold about a brand based on their experiences, marketing communications, social influences, and product performance (Kotler et al., 2023). In the mobile network industry, students' perceptions are shaped by several key factors, including network quality, customer service efficiency, pricing structures, promotional advertisements, and peer recommendations (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2023). For Nigerian students, particularly those at UNIBEN, issues such as network coverage reliability, data bundle affordability, and customer support responsiveness have become significant determinants of loyalty and preference. A recent survey by Statista (2023) revealed that 67% of Nigerian mobile users, especially students, prioritize affordable data plans when choosing a service provider, while 52% consider network stability as the second most important factor.

Major telecom operators in Nigeria MTN, Airtel, Glo, and 9mobile constantly compete to appeal to this demographic through various marketing and service strategies. As of 2024,

MTN Nigeria holds the largest market share at 39.5%, followed by Airtel at 27.1%, Glo at 24.9%, and 9mobile with 6.8% (NCC, 2024). These companies have introduced student-centered packages such as MTN's "Pulse" and Airtel's "Trybe" plans, designed to offer discounted call rates and data bundles to the youth segment (Adeleke & Awoyemi, 2023). However, while these packages aim to boost loyalty, recurring issues such as fluctuating internet speed, hidden charges, and limited rural coverage continue to affect brand perception.

Despite the wide availability of mobile network services, many students continue to experience dissatisfaction with their providers. Recent studies show that 58% of Nigerian university students report unstable internet connectivity as a major challenge, while 45% cite high tariffs and 39% complain about poor customer care (Iheanacho et al., 2023). Interestingly, even in the face of these challenges, students often remain loyal to particular brands. This paradox highlights the need to explore the underlying reasons behind their preferences. It raises critical questions about the role of psychological ownership, habit formation, and switching costs in the Nigerian telecom context. Furthermore, factors such as gender, faculty, and year level might influence these perceptions. For instance, it remains unclear whether male students, who tend to engage more in online gaming and streaming, prioritize network speed more than females, who might value customer service and affordability (Obasi & Eze, 2023). Similarly, it is worth

exploring if final-year students, burdened with academic projects and job search activities, place greater emphasis on data reliability and pricing flexibility than first-year students who are still adjusting to campus life.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian telecommunications sector has witnessed remarkable growth, with active mobile subscriptions reaching over 220 million as of early 2024 (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2024). Despite this expansion, persistent challenges such as fluctuating network quality, inadequate customer service, and inconsistent pricing structures continue to erode consumer satisfaction. According to Iheanacho, Nwogu, and Umeh (2023), many Nigerian users, particularly youths, express dissatisfaction with mobile network services due to unstable internet connectivity and poor complaint resolution systems. Similarly, Ibrahim and Yusuf (2023) highlight that while telecom providers have intensified promotional offers and discounts, these efforts have failed to address core service delivery problems that influence user loyalty. Moreover, Obasi and Eze (2023) observe that although gender differences exist in mobile network usage patterns among Nigerian youths, most telecom studies fail to explore these variations in depth, especially within academic institutions.

At the University of Benin (UNIBEN), a premier federal university with a diverse student population, complaints regarding unreliable internet services, costly data bundles, and inefficient customer support are frequent among students. Many students continue to subscribe to the same providers despite their dissatisfaction, raising pertinent questions about what truly drives brand loyalty and service preference in this demographic. Is it brand familiarity, peer influence, pricing flexibility, or simply a lack of viable alternatives? Existing studies on Nigeria's telecom industry, while insightful, have primarily centered on general consumer behavior and national usage trends (Iheanacho et al., 2023; Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2023; Obasi & Eze, 2023). These works often overlook university students, who constitute a unique, digitally active, and influential consumer segment. Additionally, there is limited empirical evidence on how brand perception and preference differ among sub-groups within the student population — particularly across gender lines, faculties, and year levels. This omission represents a critical knowledge gap, as understanding these variations can help telecom providers design more effective, targeted strategies to enhance student satisfaction and loyalty.

This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by systematically examining the key factors that shape brand perception and consumer preference for mobile network services among UNIBEN students. By comparing the perceptions and preferences of male and female students, as well as across faculties and academic levels, this research will provide

nuanced insights that extend beyond the generalized findings of previous studies. In doing so, it aims to inform telecom operators, campus marketers, and policymakers on how best to tailor mobile services to meet the dynamic expectations of university students in Nigeria

1.3 Research Questions

The study will seek to answer the following research questions:

i.What are the key factors that influence students' perceptions of mobile network brands at UNIBEN?

ii. Which mobile network brands are most preferred among UNIBEN students, and what are the reasons for these preferences?

iii. How do perceptions and preferences for mobile network services differ based on demographic profile (gender, faculty, academic level, and preferred mobile network)

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

i. To identify the key factors that shape students' perceptions of mobile network brands (e.g., network quality, customer service, pricing, advertisements, peer influence).

ii. To determine which mobile network brands are most preferred among UNIBEN students and the reasons behind their preferences.

iii. To investigate the impact of demographic profile, (gender, age bracket, faculty, academic level, and preferred network) on university of benin students' perceptions and preferences for mobile network services.

iv. To evaluate and access consumer awareness and attitude toward branded versus non branded products.

v. To assess the influence of brand loyalty on UNIBEN students continued use of specific mobile network providers despite competitive alternatives.

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

The following research null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

i. H_{o1}: There is no significant relationship between key factors (network quality, customer service, pricing, advertisements, peer influence) and students' perceptions of mobile network brands at UNIBEN.

ii. H_{o2}: There is no significant difference in brand preferences among UNIBEN students regarding mobile network services.

iii. H_{o3}: There is no significant difference in brand perception and preference among students.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Mobile Network Service Providers

This research holds practical relevance for mobile network service providers operating in Nigeria, particularly those aiming to strengthen their foothold among the university student segment. The findings will provide actionable insights into the key factors that shape brand perception and consumer preference among students at the University of Benin (UNIBEN). By identifying what students value most — whether it be network reliability, affordable data bundles, responsive customer service, or peer influence — telecom operators such as MTN, Airtel, Glo, and 9mobile can craft more effective student-oriented marketing strategies. Furthermore, the study will guide providers in enhancing their service quality through targeted investments in infrastructure around the UNIBEN community and beyond. For example, knowledge of students' dissatisfaction with data pricing may lead to the introduction of more competitive and flexible campus-exclusive data plans. Similarly, understanding gender-based or faculty-based preferences will allow for more tailored promotional campaigns, which could significantly improve customer retention in this highly dynamic and tech-savvy consumer group.

Academics and future Research

Academically, this study will contribute richly to the growing body of knowledge on consumer behavior, brand perception, and telecommunications services in Nigeria. While several studies have examined mobile network usage in general terms, there is a noticeable gap in research focused specifically on university students — an increasingly important consumer demographic due to their high digital engagement. This study will help fill that void, providing nuanced data on how demographic variables such as gender, faculty, and academic level influence network preferences and brand perceptions. Future scholars researching mobile telecommunications, youth consumer behavior, or brand loyalty in emerging markets will find this work a valuable reference point. Additionally, by offering comparative insights with earlier works (e.g., Iheanacho et al., 2023; Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2023; Obasi & Eze, 2023), this research can serve as a foundation for more specialized studies on digital consumption patterns in Nigeria's higher education sector.

UNIBEN administration and student organizations

Beyond commercial and academic stakeholders, the study's findings may benefit the University of Benin's administration and student bodies. By highlighting the communication challenges students face — such as poor network coverage or high data costs — the university can explore partnerships with telecom providers to improve on-campus connectivity and digital access. This could include negotiated discounts for

students, improved Wi-Fi infrastructure, or collaborative digital literacy programs. Moreover, student organizations, such as faculty associations and student unions, can leverage the insights to advocate for better communication services that align with the evolving academic and social needs of their members. Enhanced telecommunications infrastructure will not only support students' academic pursuits, such as access to online learning platforms and virtual libraries, but also enrich their social networking and business ventures, which are increasingly dependent on reliable mobile internet services.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study is confined to students registered at the University of Benin, Edo State Nigeria. encompassing both undergraduate and postgraduate students, male and female, across all faculties and academic year levels. The research investigates the influence of branding strategies employed by four major mobile network service providers in Nigeria—MTN, Airtel, Glo, and 9mobile—on students' brand perceptions and preferences during the 2024/2025 academic session. Specifically, it explores how factors such as network quality, customer service, pricing, advertisements, and peer influence shape students' attitudes and choices regarding these mobile network brands. The study is geographically limited to the University of Benin main campus in Ugbowo ensuring a focused sample within a defined academic community.

The selection of MTN, Airtel, Glo, and 9mobile(formerly known as Etisalat) is deliberate, as these providers dominate the Nigerian telecommunications market and are widely used by students, making them relevant for analyzing branding impacts. The study excludes other network providers, such as smaller or emerging operators like Smile, to maintain a manageable scope and focus on market leaders. Additionally, the research does not cover non-student populations, such as university non academic staff or local residents, as the target is to understand the unique perspectives of students only, who are often young, tech-savvy, and heavily reliant on mobile networks for academic, social, and personal purposes. Data collection is limited to the 2024/2025 academic session to ensure timeliness and relevance, capturing current student experiences and opinions in a rapidly evolving telecommunications market. By focusing on the University of Benin, the study leverages a diverse student population, representing various socioeconomic backgrounds and academic disciplines, to provide robust insights into branding effects. This scope ensures the research remains feasible while contributing valuable findings to the understanding of brand perception in Nigeria's competitive mobile network industry.

1.8 Definition of Terms

i.Brand perception: The overall impression and attitude that consumers form about a brand based on their experiences, marketing exposure, and interactions with the product

or service (Kotler & Keller, 2022). In this study, it refers to how UNIBEN students view and evaluate mobile network brands such as MTN, Airtel, Glo, and 9mobile.

ii. Consumer preference: The tendency of consumers to choose one product or service over another when presented with multiple options. It reflects their tastes, priorities, and decision-making patterns (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2021). Here, it pertains to students' favored mobile network providers and the reasons for their choices.

iii. Customer service: The assistance and support provided by telecom operators to their subscribers before, during, and after service usage. It includes complaint resolution,

iv. Mobile network Services: Telecommunications services that provide voice calls, text messaging, and internet access through mobile devices. This includes 2G, 3G, 4G, and 5G technologies offered by licensed operators in Nigeria

V. **Network Quality:** The performance of a mobile network in terms of coverage, internet speed, call clarity, and reliability. It is a critical factor influencing customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Vi. **Peer Influence**: The impact of friends, classmates, and social groups on an individual's brand perception and purchase decisions (Solomon, 2022). Among students, peer recommendations often shape telecom brand loyalty.

V. Pricing structure: The cost framework for mobile network services, including data bundles, call rates, SMS charges, and promotional packages available to students. **Vi. UNIBEN students**: Undergraduates and postgraduates enrolled at the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, across variou

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of existing literature on brand perception and consumer preference, specifically within the context of mobile network services in Nigeria. The review is structured into conceptual, theoretical, and empirical sections, followed by the research gap and summary.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Brand Perception

Brand perception is a multidimensional construct that reflects how consumers cognitively and emotionally interpret a brand's identity, personality, and overall value proposition. It is shaped by direct and indirect experiences, marketing communications, and social

influences, which collectively create an image or mental representation of the brand in the consumer's mind (Kotler & Keller, 2022). At its core, brand perception influences how customers differentiate one brand from another in highly competitive markets and informs their purchasing decisions and loyalty behaviors (Aaker, 2020).

Kotler and Keller (2022) assert that brand perception emerges from three primary sources: brand messaging (advertising, promotions, and public relations), customer experience (product/service delivery, interactions, and support), and the brand's public reputation (word of mouth, social media discourse, and third-party endorsements). In today's digitally connected world, social media and online reviews have become especially critical in shaping brand perception as they amplify consumer voices and provide instant feedback loops (Smith & Anderson, 2023).

Within the Nigerian mobile network sector, brand perception is particularly salient given the high competition among providers such as MTN, Airtel, Globacom (Glo), and 9mobile. Consumers often base their perceptions on factors including network coverage, call quality, internet speed, customer service responsiveness, and perceived value for money (Adeniran & Ayo, 2022; Emeka & Ibe, 2024). For instance, MTN is frequently perceived as a market leader due to its extensive network coverage and innovative service offerings, whereas Glo has gained a reputation for competitive pricing but has faced criticism for inconsistent network quality (Okechukwu & Salisu, 2023).

Recent empirical studies also highlight the growing importance of emotional brand associations in telecoms, where consumers not only evaluate functional benefits but also develop affective attachments based on brand symbolism and corporate social responsibility initiatives (Ibrahim & Adeyemi, 2023). For example, brands actively engaging in community development projects or sustainability programs tend to enjoy enhanced brand perception among socially conscious Nigerian consumers.

Strong brand perception is thus a strategic asset, as it fosters consumer loyalty, reduces price sensitivity, and enhances willingness to recommend the brand, even when competitors offer comparable services (Johnson et al., 2023). This loyalty is particularly valuable in telecommunications, where switching costs and perceived risks of changing providers influence consumer retention (Olufemi & Nwosu, 2023). In summary, brand perception in the Nigerian mobile network industry is an evolving construct shaped by a combination of functional service quality, marketing communication, customer experience, and social influence, all of which collectively affect consumer preference and loyalty.

2.2.2 Consumer Preference

Consumer preference refers to the predisposition or tendency of individuals to favor certain brands, products, or services over others based on a combination of cognitive evaluations and emotional attachments. These preferences are shaped by multiple

factors including perceived value, quality, brand image, past experiences, social influence, cultural factors, and personal needs (Solomon et al., 2020; Schiffman et al., 2022). In marketing, understanding consumer preference is crucial, as it directly influences purchasing decisions, customer retention, and ultimately, a company's market position.

In the context of the Nigerian telecommunications industry, consumer preference is particularly dynamic and sensitive to changes in service offerings, pricing, and network reliability. Key determinants of preference among mobile network subscribers include affordability of services, speed and reliability of internet connectivity, availability of promotional incentives such as airtime and data bonuses, and customer service responsiveness (Ogunnaike & Kehinde, 2021; Olayemi & Adebayo, 2023). For example, many consumers prefer providers that offer more generous data plans or airtime bonuses, even if other aspects of service are less satisfactory.

Moreover, technological advancements and the increasing reliance on mobile internet services have further influenced consumer expectations and preferences. Today's users prioritize fast data services for social media access, video streaming, and remote work, which puts pressure on providers to upgrade infrastructure and tailor services to meet evolving consumer demands (Eze & Nnaji, 2023). Consequently, mobile network operators in Nigeria must continuously adapt to these expectations to sustain consumer preference and remain competitive.

Another critical aspect influencing consumer preference is the perception of brand trust and consistency. Consumers are more likely to prefer and remain loyal to brands that have established a reputation for reliability, transparency in billing, and consistent quality of service (Okafor & Olamide, 2022). In urban and rural regions alike, personal experiences and word-of-mouth recommendations also contribute to preference formation, underscoring the social dimension of consumer choice.

Additionally, socio-demographic factors such as income level, education, and geographic location have been shown to significantly impact consumer preferences. For instance, urban dwellers may prioritize high-speed data and seamless connectivity, whereas rural users may emphasize affordability and basic service access (Ajayi & Musa, 2023).

2.2.3 Factors Influencing Brand Perception and Preference

The perception and preference of mobile network brands among consumers are shaped by a multitude of interrelated factors. These determinants not only influence purchasing behavior but also dictate customer retention, satisfaction, and brand advocacy. Key among these are network quality, customer service, pricing structure, advertising and promotions, and peer influence.

Network Quality

Network quality typically assessed through speed, reliability, signal strength, and geographic coverage is perhaps the most fundamental driver of brand perception in the telecommunications sector. Consumers expect uninterrupted connectivity for voice and data services, and any persistent service failure can erode brand trust (Ajibola & Olayemi, 2021). High-quality networks are associated with greater customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, particularly in areas where digital connectivity is essential for daily activities. Studies have shown that customers who experience stable internet access and reduced call drop rates are more likely to recommend the provider and less likely to switch to competitors (Bello & Sulaimon, 2023).

Customer Service

Customer service is another crucial determinant of brand perception. Efficient customer support—marked by prompt responses, empathy, courteous handling of complaints, and issue resolution—greatly enhances a consumer's experience with the brand. According to Adeoye and Lawanson (2020), telecommunications companies that prioritize customer-centric service models tend to experience higher consumer preference and lower churn rates. Digital self-care platforms, toll-free helplines, and responsive social media support have become standard expectations among modern mobile users (Okafor & Musa, 2023).

Pricing Structure

Pricing remains a major factor influencing consumer choice. This includes the cost of voice calls, SMS bundles, internet data plans, and the transparency of charges. A pricing model that reflects affordability, flexibility, and perceived value tends to attract cost-conscious consumers, especially in a developing economy like Nigeria (Nwachukwu & Dike, 2021). Moreover, users are often drawn to network providers offering promotional data bonuses, loyalty rewards, and subscription-based tariffs that match their usage patterns (Uzochukwu & Bello, 2022). Clear and transparent billing reduces dissatisfaction and enhances the brand's reputation.

Advertising and Promotions

Brand visibility through consistent and creative advertising plays a significant role in shaping brand perception. Telecom operators in Nigeria frequently engage in mass advertising campaigns involving celebrity endorsements, influencer marketing, brand jingles, and public sponsorships to build emotional connections with their target audiences (Eze & Nnadi, 2022). Particularly among youth demographics, vibrant digital marketing and humorous adverts on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube influence how network brands are perceived and whether they are adopted. Promotional offers, such as free data and airtime for new subscribers, also drive short-term adoption and long-term loyalty.

Peer Influence

Social influence from family, friends, and peer groups often affects brand choice, particularly in collectivist cultures like Nigeria where communal behavior is valued. When people within a consumer's social circle consistently use and recommend a particular service provider, there is a high likelihood of the individual adopting the same network for ease of communication and shared experience (Agboola & Adeoye, 2021). Peer influence becomes even more pronounced among young people and students, who often rely on feedback from others when choosing a network brand (Okonkwo & Usman, 2023).

2.2.4 Mobile Network Services in Nigeria

The Nigerian telecommunications industry stands as one of the largest and most dynamic in Africa, playing a critical role in national development and digital transformation. With mobile penetration exceeding 90% as of 2023, the sector has evolved into a major contributor to Nigeria's GDP and a vital enabler of social and economic inclusion (Nigerian Communications Commission [NCC], 2023). The industry is dominated by four major operators MTN Nigeria, Airtel, Globacom (Glo), and 9mobile—each offering a variety of services including voice calls, SMS, mobile internet, value-added services (VAS), and increasingly, mobile financial services (Osuagwu & Chukwuemeka, 2023).

Mobile network services in Nigeria have significantly expanded access to communication across both urban and rural communities. Providers have made substantial investments in network infrastructure, including the deployment of 4G LTE and the initial rollout of 5G

technology to improve data speed, coverage, and user experience (Adejumo & Salihu, 2022). Despite these advancements, the sector still grapples with notable challenges that affect the overall quality of service and customer satisfaction.

Key concerns among consumers include; fluctuating network quality, dropped calls, slow internet speeds, and inconsistent coverage in remote areas (Okoro & Oboh, 2022). Additionally, complaints about poor customer service delivery, delayed issue resolution, and lack of transparency in billing and promotions have undermined trust in some service providers. Furthermore, pricing structures often lack consistency and clarity, leading to confusion and dissatisfaction among users (Ibrahim & Onah, 2022).

Regulatory efforts by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) have aimed to improve service delivery through initiatives such as Mobile Number Portability (MNP), spectrum reallocation, and consumer protection regulations. These efforts have encouraged competition and forced service providers to differentiate themselves through enhanced customer engagement, network quality improvements, and tailored service packages (NCC, 2023).

Meanwhile, the competitive landscape continues to be shaped by aggressive marketing campaigns, digital innovation, and strategic partnerships. Providers increasingly leverage mobile applications, social media, and influencer marketing to attract and retain

subscribers, particularly among Nigeria's youth population who prioritize affordable data services and entertainment value (Chukwu & Ahmed, 2023).

Moreover, mobile network operators have begun integrating fintech and digital service platforms, offering mobile banking, airtime lending, and bill payment services through USSD and app-based solutions, thereby expanding the relevance of telecoms in users' everyday lives (Afolayan & Odunayo, 2023). In conclusion, while the Nigerian mobile network services sector continues to face infrastructure and customer service challenges, it remains a fast-evolving industry marked by technological adoption, increased consumer demands, and policy-driven reforms. These dynamics underscore the importance of continuous investment, innovation, and customer-centric strategies in sustaining growth and competitiveness.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides a foundation for understanding the variables under investigation and offers insight into the behavioral dynamics influencing consumer choices in the telecommunications sector. This study is anchored on two established theories—Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)—which collectively explain how consumer expectations, experience, attitudes, and social influences shape brand perception and preference in mobile network services.

2.3.1 Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT)

The Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory, proposed by Oliver (1980), remains one of the most influential models in consumer satisfaction research. The theory posits that consumer satisfaction arises from a comparison between expectations and perceived performance. If performance exceeds expectations (positive disconfirmation), customers experience satisfaction; if performance falls short (negative disconfirmation), dissatisfaction occurs.

In the context of Nigerian mobile network services, consumers often hold expectations regarding network speed, call clarity, data reliability, customer service efficiency, and pricing transparency. When a service provider such as MTN or Airtel meets or surpasses these expectations—say, by providing uninterrupted 4G data service or offering prompt resolution to customer complaints—users are likely to perceive the brand favorably and exhibit stronger preference and loyalty (Uchenna & Iwuagwu, 2022).

This study aligns with the work of Oyelude and Adebayo (2023), who applied EDT in assessing consumer satisfaction among telecom users in Lagos State. Their study found that when service providers matched or exceeded the expected service quality (especially in terms of data speed and network coverage), customers demonstrated increased brand loyalty and preference. Thus, EDT helps explain the cognitive process behind the

formation of brand perception and the development of brand preference in Nigeria's telecom market.

2.3.2 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), posits that behavioral intention is the immediate predictor of actual behavior, influenced by an individual's attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms. In marketing and consumer behavior studies, this theory explains how individual evaluations and societal pressures shape decision-making.

Applied to mobile network services, a consumer's intention to adopt or switch to a particular brand is shaped by both personal beliefs (e.g., belief that Airtel is affordable and reliable) and social influence (e.g., recommendation by friends or family). Positive past experience, combined with external validation, increases the likelihood of behavioral intention translating into actual brand choice.

This is consistent with findings by Okafor and Okoye (2022), who used TRA to examine consumer switching behavior among university students in Nigeria. Their study revealed that peer recommendations and social media opinions significantly influenced brand preference and switching decisions. As such, TRA effectively captures the role of both

attitudinal disposition and peer influence in determining the consumer's brand loyalty or transition in Nigeria's competitive telecom industry.

By integrating both EDT and TRA, this study adopts a dual-lens approach: examining how expectations versus experiences shape satisfaction (EDT), and how attitudes and social factors drive decision-making (TRA). Together, these theories provide a robust framework for investigating the dynamics of brand perception and consumer preference. Among mobile network users in Nigeria.

2.4 Empirical Review

Empirical review on brand perception in Nigeria's telecom industry,Ladipo et al. (2020) conducted a study on 368 postpaid subscribers in Lagos State to investigate the relationship between brand equity dimensions and customer retention. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey design, the study found that brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty significantly predicted customer retention. The authors recommended that telecom operators enhance all brand equity dimensions to sustain customer loyalty.

Ladipo et al. (2021) explored the effect of brand personality on consumer product choice among 277 subscribers of MTN, Airtel, Glo, and 9mobile. Employing a cross-sectional survey, the study revealed that all five dimensions of brand personality sophistication,

excitement, ruggedness, sincerity, and competence significantly influenced consumer product selection. The study suggested that firms should align brand personality traits with consumer expectations to boost preference.

Muhammed et al. (2023) examined the effect of brand image on consumer purchase intentions in Nigeria's telecommunications sector. A survey administered to 1,000 individuals in Katsina State revealed that brand image had a positive and significant effect on consumer purchase intentions. The authors recommended that marketers develop efficient strategies to improve consumers' purchase intentions by enhancing brand image.

Akhigbe and Olokoyo (2019) assessed the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on brand loyalty among customers of the four largest mobile telecommunication firms in Nigeria. Distributing 386 questionnaires, the study employed simple linear regression and found no significant relationship between CSR and brand loyalty. However, favorable pricing, good quality service, and customer care were emphasized as determinants of brand loyalty. The study recommended that firms focus on these attributes to enhance brand loyalty.

Opele et al. (2020) investigated the influence of service quality on preference for GSM service providers among students of tertiary institutions in Lagos State. The study found that service assurance and empathy positively and significantly influenced preference for

mobile telecommunication providers. The authors concluded that increased service quality leads to increased preference and recommended that GSM service providers improve service assurance and empathy.

Akintola et al. (2024) examined the influence of market orientation on organizational performance in the Nigerian telecommunication industry, focusing on MTN, Glo, 9mobile, and Airtel. Surveying 286 management staff, the study found that customer orientation and inter-functional coordination significantly influenced organizational performance. The study recommended that market orientation and strategic marketing should become a culture in the telecommunication industry.

Jatau et al. (2024) explored consumer switching behavior in Nigeria's telecommunication industry, focusing on the role of value-added services. Surveying 382 students in Adamawa State, the study found that value-added services significantly impact consumer switching behavior, while service quality and price were not significant determinants. The authors suggested that mobile operators should concentrate on value-added services to attract more customers.

Ismaila et al. (2023) analyzed the effect of sales promotions on product awareness in Nigeria's telecommunication sector. The study found that sales promotions, such as discounts, giveaways, and loyalty points, increase product awareness. The authors recommended that firms utilize promotional strategies to boost product awareness.

Nwabueze (2022) conducted a qualitative study on online brand reputation management in Nigeria's telecommunication industry. Through interviews and observations, the study found that visual storytelling, user-generated content, and real-time engagement build trust and authenticity. The study recommended implementing effective public relations strategies to manage online brand reputation.

Adesina (2023) examined brand perception and loyalty among postpaid subscribers in Lagos. The study found that brand perception and loyalty are crucial for customer retention. The author recommended developing strategic marketing approaches to enhance brand equity.

The study by Opele et al. (2020) investigated the determinants of consumer preference and satisfaction among students in tertiary institutions across Lagos State. Employing a structured questionnaire and statistical analysis techniques, the researchers found that service assurance, empathy, reliability, and responsiveness were critical drivers of customer satisfaction. The findings revealed that students' preference for mobile service providers was heavily influenced by their perception of service quality. Based on these results, the authors recommended that GSM service providers should prioritize customer-centric strategies by improving the quality of service delivery, particularly focusing on the human aspects of customer interaction.

In a more recent investigation, Jatau et al. (2024) examined the dynamics of consumer switching behavior within the Nigerian telecommunications sector, focusing specifically on the impact of value-added services. Using a survey design that captured responses from over 380 undergraduate students in Adamawa State, the study found that services such as free SMS, loyalty bonuses, and bundled data packages played a significant role in influencing users to switch providers. Interestingly, the study noted that while pricing and network quality were important, they were not as influential as value-added offerings. The researchers suggested that telecom firms could enhance customer retention and reduce churn by investing in personalized and relevant value-added services.

Muhammed et al. (2023) analyzed the role of brand image in shaping consumer purchase intentions in Katsina State's telecom market. Through a survey of 1,000 participants and using regression analysis, the study concluded that a strong and favorable brand image was significantly associated with higher purchase intentions among telecom users. Consumers perceived brands with consistent messaging, visual identity, and social presence more positively. The authors advised marketing professionals to invest in coherent brand identity strategies and brand storytelling that resonate emotionally with consumers to maintain top-of-mind awareness and enhance market share.

Ladipo et al. (2021) contributed to the discourse by exploring how brand personality influences consumer choice in the telecom industry. Targeting subscribers of the major

providers—MTN, Glo, Airtel, and 9mobile—the researchers discovered that dimensions such as sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness were all critical in shaping preferences. The study, grounded in Aaker's Brand Personality Framework, emphasized that consumers tend to choose telecom brands whose personality traits align with their own self-image or aspirations. Based on this, it was recommended that companies regularly assess their brand personality and tailor it to reflect evolving consumer values.

In another study, Akhigbe and Olokoyo (2019) examined the factors influencing brand loyalty, a key indicator of consumer preference, in the Nigerian mobile telecom sector. Using data from 386 telecom users, their findings revealed that while corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives had minimal impact, favorable pricing, reliable service quality, and responsive customer care were the main drivers of loyalty and preference. The researchers concluded that telecom companies should focus on delivering consistent value and quality of service rather than relying solely on CSR initiatives to drive loyalty.

Akintola et al. (2024) investigated how customer orientation and inter-functional coordination within telecom organizations affect organizational performance. Though the study's primary focus was on internal business operations, the results showed a spillover effect on consumer preference. Customer-oriented firms that engaged in cross-departmental collaboration were better positioned to respond to customer needs and

preferences. The study concluded that by institutionalizing a market-oriented culture, telecom firms could improve customer experience and thereby increase consumer preference for their services.

Ismaila et al. (2023) conducted an empirical analysis of sales promotion strategies and their influence on consumer awareness and preference in the telecom industry. By surveying telecom users and analyzing their responsiveness to promotional campaigns such as price discounts, airtime bonuses, and loyalty rewards, the study found that these incentives significantly boosted both awareness and consumer inclination toward certain brands. It was recommended that telecom marketers use well-structured, periodic promotional campaigns to capture and retain customer interest.

In a qualitative study, Nwabueze (2022) explored how online brand reputation management affects consumer preference. Through interviews and content analysis of telecom brand engagements on social media, the study found that transparency, responsiveness, and storytelling played a pivotal role in shaping consumer trust and preference. Consumers were more likely to prefer brands that actively communicated with users, addressed complaints promptly, and projected a human, relatable identity. The study emphasized the need for strategic digital public relations and online community engagement.

Adesina (2023) examined the relationship between strategic marketing approaches and brand equity in the telecom sector. The findings demonstrated that telecom brands employing integrated marketing communication and customer segmentation strategies enjoyed higher levels of brand equity, which in turn influenced consumer preference. The researcher recommended that telecom firms should adopt data-driven marketing campaigns that speak directly to specific customer segments and meet their unique needs.

Finally, returning to Opele et al. (2020), another dimension of their research underscored the importance of consistent service quality. The study concluded that beyond the physical delivery of telecom services, the perception of quality such as dependable customer service and network stability strongly influenced consumers' long-term preferences. The authors reaffirmed the call for telecom providers to enhance the overall customer experience through reliable service delivery, technical efficiency, and empathetic customer support systems.

2.5 Research Gap

Although numerous studies have explored various factors affecting consumer preference in Nigeria's telecom sector, gaps remain in understanding the *combined* effect of brand perception elements (e.g., advertising, service quality, and pricing) on consumer preference. Most prior research tends to focus on single variables or brands, lacking a

holistic view. Additionally, there is limited empirical evidence integrating theoretical frameworks like EDT and TRA in explaining brand choice behavior among Nigerian consumers. This study seeks to fill these gaps by offering a multidimensional analysis of the link between brand perception and consumer preference.

2.6 Summary of Literature Review

The reviewed literature establishes that brand perception significantly influences consumer preference. Key factors such as network quality, customer service, pricing, advertising, and peer influence collectively shape consumers' attitudes toward telecom providers. Theoretical insights from EDT and TRA further explain how consumer expectations and social norms guide behavior. However, gaps in the literature reveal the need for a more comprehensive, theory-driven investigation of the Nigerian context, which this study aims to address.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology adopted to investigate brand perception and consumer preferences for mobile network services among students of the University of Benin (UNIBEN). It outlines the research design, population of the study, sample size and sampling technique, sources and methods of data collection, research instrument, validity

and reliability, operationalization of variables, method of data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopts a **descriptive survey design**. This design is appropriate because it enables the collection of data from a large population at a single point in time, thereby allowing the researcher to describe existing perceptions and preferences among students (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design also supports the use of quantitative methods for analyzing relationships between brand perception factors and consumer preferences.

3.3 Population of the Study

The target population of this study comprises all undergraduate students of the University of Benin (UNIBEN), Benin City. According to the UNIBEN Registry (2024), the university has an estimated student population of over 70,000 undergraduates across various faculties.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Using Yamane's (1967) formula with a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 400 students will be selected. A stratified random sampling technique will be used, stratifying students by faculty and academic level to ensure representativeness.

3.5 Sources of Data

The study relies primarily on **primary data**, collected through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data from telecom industry reports and past studies will also be used to provide background context.

3.6 Research Instrument

A **structured questionnaire** will be employed, divided into three sections:

- **Section A**: Demographic data (gender, faculty, year level, preferred network).
- **Section B**: Factors influencing brand perception (measured using a 5-point Likert scale: 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree).
- **Section C**: Consumer preferences and loyalty (preferred brand, satisfaction, reasons for loyalty).

3.7 Validity of the Instrument

Content and face validity will be ensured through expert review and pilot testing with 30 students outside the sample population.

3.8 Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability will be assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. A coefficient of 0.70 and above will be considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2019).

3.9 Operationalization of Variables

The operational definitions of the study's variables and their measurement indicators are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Operationalization of Variables

Variable	Dimension	Indicators	Measurement Scale	Likert Scale Options
Network Quality	Service coverage & speed	Strong signal strength, fast internet speed, call clarity, minimal downtime	Interval	5 = Strongly Agree → 1 = Strongly Disagree
Pricing	Affordability & flexibility	Affordable data bundles, fair call rates, flexible plans, value for money	Interval	5 = Strongly Agree → 1 = Strongly Disagree
Customer Service	Responsiveness & problem resolution	Quick complaint handling, staff courtesy, ease of reaching customer care	Interval	5 = Strongly Agree → 1 = Strongly Disagree
Advertisements	Marketing appeal & influence	Promotional messages, student-oriented packages, persuasive adverts	Interval	5 = Strongly Agree → 1 = Strongly Disagree

Peer Influence	Social recommendation	Friends' influence, peer group network choice, social trends	Interval	5 = Strongly Agree → 1 = Strongly Disagree
Brand Preference (Dependent Variable)	Loyalty & satisfaction	Preferred mobile network, reasons for loyalty, switching intentions	Interval	5 = Strongly Agree → 1 = Strongly Disagree

Source:Authors compilations 2025

3.10 Method of Data Collection

Questionnaires will be distributed physically on campus and electronically (via Google Forms) to capture a wider sample. Respondents will be assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

3.11 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for this study will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics such as frequency tables, percentages, mean scores, and charts will be employed to summarize and present the responses of the students in a clear and understandable manner. To test the stated hypotheses, inferential statistics will be applied. Specifically, the Chi-square test will be used to examine significant differences in brand perception and consumer preferences across demographic variables such as gender, faculty, and year of study. Furthermore, correlation and regression analyses will be conducted to determine the strength and

direction of the relationships between the independent variables (network quality, pricing, customer service, advertisements, and peer influence) and the dependent variable (brand preference). All statistical tests will be conducted at a 5% level of significance ($p < 0.05$), which will serve as the basis for either rejecting or accepting the research hypotheses.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we delve into the empirical evaluation of data gathered from the field survey. Specifically, 400 questionnaires were disseminated to undergraduate students of the University of Benin (UNIBEN), Benin City. Impressively, 385 of the questionnaires were returned, processed, and utilized in our analysis, reflecting an 96.3% response rate.

4.2 Demographic Analysis

The demographic data of the respondents is presented in this section below.

Table 4.1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	193	50.1%
	Female	192	49.9%
	Total	**385**	**100.0%**
Age Bracket	<18 years	17	4.4%
	18–20 years	82	21.3%
	21–23 years	127	33.0%
	24–26 years	99	25.7%
	>26 years	60	15.6%
	Total	**385**	**100.0%**
Faculty	Arts	58	15.1%

	Social Sciences	73	19.0%
	Life Sciences	62	16.1%
	Engineering	64	16.6%
	Management Sciences	128	33.2%
	Total	**385**	**100.0%**
Academic Level	100 Level	41	10.6%
	200 Level	66	17.1%
	300 Level	81	21.0%
	400 Level	121	31.4%
	500 Level	51	13.2%
	600 Level	25	6.5%
	Total	**385**	**100.0%**
Preferred Mobile Network	MTN	165	42.9%
	Glo	76	19.7%
	Airtel	108	28.1%
	9mobile	36	9.4%
	Total	**385**	**100.0%**

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Gender: Out of the total 385 respondents, 193 (50.1%) were male, while 192 (49.9%) were female. This indicates an almost equal gender distribution among the respondents, with a slight male predominance by just one individual.

Age Bracket: The age distribution reveals that the majority of respondents (127; 33.0%) are between 21 and 23 years, followed by 99 (25.7%) aged 24–26 years. Those aged 18–20 years accounted for 82 respondents (21.3%), while 60 (15.6%) were above 26 years. The least represented group was those under 18 years, with 17 respondents (4.4%). This pattern reflects a typical university-age population, with a concentration in the early twenties.

Faculty: Respondents from Management Sciences constituted the highest proportion at 128 (33.2%), indicating a strong interest or enrollment in business-related disciplines. Social Sciences followed with 73 (19.0%), Engineering with 64 (16.6%), Life Sciences with 62 (16.1%), and Arts with the lowest at 58 (15.1%).

Academic Level: A significant portion of the respondents were in their 400 Level, comprising 121 students (31.4%), making it the most represented academic level. This was followed by 300 Level (81; 21.0%), 500 Level (51; 13.2%), 200 Level (66; 17.1%), 100 Level (41; 10.6%), and 600 Level with the least at 25 students (6.5%).

Preferred Mobile Network: MTN emerged as the most preferred mobile network provider, with 165 respondents (42.9%) indicating it as their choice. Airtel followed with 108 (28.1%), then Glo with 76 (19.7%), and 9mobile with the fewest users at 36 (9.4%). This preference pattern reflects the dominance of MTN in terms of service coverage and possibly reliability, with Airtel also capturing a considerable share of users.

4.3 Descriptive Analysis of Brand Perception and Consumer Preferences for Mobile Network Services among Students of the University of Benin

This section presents descriptive analysis on the data retrieved from respondents using frequency count, percentage (%) and mean.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Analysis of Network Quality (NQ)

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
1	The mobile network I use has strong signal strength in most areas.	84 (21.8%)	116 (30.1%)	123 (31.9%)	41 (10.6%)	21 (5.5%)	3.52
2	The network provides fast internet speed for browsing and streaming.	81 (21.0%)	177 (46.0%)	79 (20.5%)	30 (7.8%)	18 (4.7%)	3.71
3	Call quality on this network is consistently clear.	92 (23.9%)	166 (43.1%)	78 (20.3%)	27 (7.0%)	22 (5.7%)	3.73
4	I experience minimal downtime or service interruptions.	94 (24.4%)	172 (44.7%)	72 (18.7%)	32 (8.3%)	15 (3.9%)	3.77
5	The network covers all areas I frequently visit.	81 (21.0%)	133 (34.5%)	87 (22.6%)	55 (14.3%)	29 (7.5%)	3.47
	Average						**3.64**

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 4.2 presents the respondents' perception of mobile network quality across five service indicators. For the statement on signal strength, 200 respondents (52.0%) either agreed or strongly agreed, while 123 (31.9%) remained neutral, and a combined 62 (16.1%) disagreed. The mean of 3.52 suggests a moderate agreement that signal strength is generally strong. Regarding internet speed, 258 respondents (67.0%) expressed agreement or strong agreement, 20.5% remained neutral, and 12.5% disagreed. This indicates a strong perception of good internet speed, reinforced by a relatively high mean of 3.71.

On call quality, 258 respondents (67.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that calls are consistently clear, while 78 (20.3%) were neutral and 49 (12.7%) disagreed. This suggests

that call clarity is well-rated by most users, reflected in a mean score of 3.73. For service uptime, 266 respondents (69.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that they experience minimal service interruptions, 18.7% remained neutral, and only 12.2% disagreed, yielding the highest mean of 3.77. Lastly, regarding network coverage, 214 respondents (55.5%) agreed or strongly agreed, 87 (22.6%) were neutral, and 84 (21.8%) disagreed, showing the most divided opinion, with the lowest mean at 3.47. On average across all five items, agreement was high (Mean = 3.64), with 22.4% strongly agreeing and 39.7% agreeing, indicating overall satisfaction with mobile network quality among respondents.

Table 4.3: Descriptive Analysis of Pricing (PR)

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
6	The network offers affordable data bundles suitable for students.	102 (26.5%)	143 (37.1%)	79 (20.5%)	34 (8.8%)	27 (7.0%)	3.67
7	Call and SMS rates are reasonable and competitive.	75 (19.5%)	159 (41.3%)	87 (22.6%)	42 (10.9%)	22 (5.7%)	3.59
8	The network provides flexible subscription plans.	90 (23.4%)	149 (38.7%)	86 (22.3%)	40 (10.4%)	20 (5.2%)	3.64
9	I feel I get value for money using this network.	106 (27.5%)	144 (37.4%)	87 (22.6%)	35 (9.1%)	13 (3.4%)	3.76
10	The network frequently offers promotions and discounts.	104 (27.0%)	168 (43.6%)	68 (17.7%)	36 (9.4%)	9 (2.3%)	3.84
	Average						**3.70**

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 4.3 highlights respondents' perceptions of pricing across five dimensions. On affordability of data bundles, 245 respondents (63.6%) agreed or strongly agreed, while 79 (20.5%) remained neutral, and 61 (15.8%) disagreed, resulting in a solid mean of 3.67. Regarding call and SMS rates, 234 (60.8%) expressed positive agreement, 87 (22.6%) were neutral, and 64 (16.6%) disagreed, yielding a mean of 3.59. In terms of flexibility of subscription plans, 239 (62.1%) responded positively, 86 (22.3%) remained neutral, and 60 (15.6%) disagreed, with a mean of 3.64.

Respondents had the strongest perception of value in response to the statement on receiving value for money, where 250 (64.9%) agreed or strongly agreed, and only 48 (12.5%) disagreed, resulting in a high mean of 3.76. The highest-rated item was on promotions and discounts, with 272 respondents (70.6%) expressing agreement, 68 (17.7%) neutral, and only 45 (11.7%) in disagreement, producing the highest mean of 3.84. On average across all five statements, 39.6% agreed, 24.8% strongly agreed, 21.1% were neutral, 9.7% disagreed, and 4.7% strongly disagreed. The overall mean of 3.70 suggests general satisfaction with mobile network pricing policies among the respondents.

Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics of Customer Service (CS)

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
11	Customer service responds quickly to complaints.	115 (29.9%)	180 (46.8%)	56 (14.5%)	26 (6.8%)	8 (2.1%)	3.95

12	Staff are courteous and helpful when contacted.	105 (27.3%)	183 (47.5%)	59 (15.3%)	25 (6.5%)	13 (3.4%)	3.89
13	I can easily reach customer care when needed.	101 (26.2%)	175 (45.5%)	65 (16.9%)	38 (9.9%)	6 (1.6%)	3.84
14	Complaints are resolved efficiently and satisfactorily.	99 (25.7%)	190 (49.4%)	53 (13.8%)	30 (7.8%)	13 (3.4%)	3.86
15	Customer service provides clear guidance and direction.	107 (27.8%)	190 (49.4%)	52 (13.5%)	27 (7.0%)	9 (2.3%)	3.93
	Average						**3.89**

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 4.4 presents the respondents' evaluation of customer service experiences across five key dimensions. For response time to complaints, 295 respondents (76.7%) agreed or strongly agreed, 56 (14.5%) were neutral, and only 34 (8.9%) disagreed, yielding the highest mean of 3.95. Similarly, staff courtesy and helpfulness recorded 288 (74.8%) in agreement, 59 (15.3%) neutral, and 38 (9.9%) in disagreement, with a strong mean of 3.89. On the ease of reaching customer care, 276 (71.7%) expressed agreement, 65 (16.9%) were neutral, and 44 (11.4%) disagreed, producing a mean of 3.84.

Concerning resolution efficiency, 289 respondents (75.1%) agreed or strongly agreed, 53 (13.8%) were neutral, and 43 (11.2%) disagreed, with a mean score of 3.86. Lastly, clarity of guidance and direction received 297 (77.2%) positive responses, 52 (13.5%) neutral, and 36 (9.3%) negative, with a high mean of 3.93. On average, 47.7% agreed and 27.4% strongly agreed with positive statements about customer service, while neutral responses averaged 14.8%, and combined disagreement averaged only 10.2%. The overall mean of

3.89 suggests a broadly favorable perception of mobile network customer service quality among respondents.

Table 4.5: Descriptive Statistics of Advertisements (AD)

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
16	I find the network's advertisements persuasive.	105 (27.3%)	182 (47.3%)	59 (15.3%)	32 (8.3%)	7 (1.8%)	3.90
17	Promotional messages appeal to students like me.	105 (27.3%)	188 (48.8%)	51 (13.2%)	30 (7.8%)	11 (2.9%)	3.90
18	I am aware of student-oriented packages offered by the network.	116 (30.1%)	166 (43.1%)	70 (18.2%)	25 (6.5%)	8 (2.1%)	3.93
19	Advertising influences my choice of network.	114 (29.6%)	174 (45.2%)	57 (14.8%)	27 (7.0%)	13 (3.4%)	3.91
20	Marketing campaigns make the network more attractive compared to competitors.	107 (27.8%)	174 (45.2%)	63 (16.4%)	27 (7.0%)	13 (3.4%)	3.87
	Average						**3.90**

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 4.5 presents the descriptive analysis of respondents' perceptions of network advertisements. For advertisement persuasiveness, 287 respondents (74.6%) agreed or strongly agreed, 59 (15.3%) were neutral, and 39 (10.1%) disagreed, yielding a mean of 3.90. Similarly, for appeal of promotional messages, 293 (76.1%) indicated agreement, 51 (13.2%) were neutral, and 41 (10.7%) disagreed, also resulting in a mean of 3.90. In terms of awareness of student-oriented packages, 282 respondents (73.2%) agreed or strongly

agreed, 70 (18.2%) were neutral, and 33 (8.6%) disagreed, producing the highest mean of 3.93.

Regarding influence of advertising on network choice, 288 respondents (74.8%) expressed agreement, 57 (14.8%) were neutral, and 40 (10.4%) disagreed, yielding a mean of 3.91. Finally, for marketing campaigns making the network more attractive, 281 respondents (73.0%) agreed or strongly agreed, 63 (16.4%) were neutral, and 40 (10.4%) disagreed, resulting in a mean of 3.87. On average, 28.4% strongly agreed, 45.9% agreed, 15.6% were neutral, 7.3% disagreed, and 2.7% strongly disagreed, with an overall mean of 3.90. This indicates that respondents generally view network advertisements as persuasive, student-oriented, and influential in shaping their network preferences.

Table 4.6: Descriptive Statistics of Peer Influence (PI)

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
21	Friends' recommendations influence my choice of mobile network.	102 (26.5%)	166 (43.1%)	65 (16.9%)	39 (10.1%)	13 (3.4%)	3.80
22	My peer group mainly uses the network I currently use.	84 (21.8%)	167 (43.4%)	75 (19.5%)	41 (10.6%)	18 (4.7%)	3.67

23	Social trends affect my decision to switch or stay with a network.	90 (23.4%)	166 (43.1%)	75 (19.5%)	36 (9.4%)	18 (4.7%)	3.71
24	I discuss mobile networks with friends before making decisions.	79 (20.6%)	117 (30.5%)	71 (18.5%)	75 (19.5%)	42 (10.9%)	3.31
25	Peer opinion plays a key role in my satisfaction with a network.	75 (19.5%)	154 (40.0%)	101 (26.2%)	34 (8.8%)	21 (5.5%)	3.59
	Average						**3.62**

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 4.6 reveals the extent to which peer influence shapes respondents' mobile network choices and satisfaction. For friends' recommendations, 268 respondents (69.6%) agreed or strongly agreed, while 65 (16.9%) were neutral and 52 (13.5%) disagreed, yielding a relatively high mean of 3.80. Similarly, for peer network alignment, 251 respondents (65.2%) agreed or strongly agreed, 75 (19.5%) were neutral, and 59 (15.3%) disagreed, producing a mean of 3.67. Regarding the influence of social trends, 256 respondents (66.5%) agreed or strongly agreed, 75 (19.5%) were neutral, and 54 (14.1%) disagreed, resulting in a mean of 3.71.

In contrast, the statement on discussing network choices with friends received the lowest mean of 3.31, with only 196 (51.1%) agreeing or strongly agreeing, while a relatively high 117 (30.4%) disagreed and 71 (18.5%) were neutral. For peer opinion influencing satisfaction, 229 respondents (59.5%) agreed or strongly agreed, 101 (26.2%) were neutral, and 55 (14.3%) disagreed, leading to a mean of 3.59. On average across all items,

40.0% agreed, 22.4% strongly agreed, 20.1% remained neutral, while 11.7% disagreed and 5.8% strongly disagreed. The overall mean of 3.62 suggests that peer influence plays a considerable, though varied, role in shaping users' mobile network decisions and satisfaction levels.

Table 4.7: Descriptive Statistics of Brand preference and loyalty (BP)

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean
21	I am satisfied with my current mobile network.	59 (15.3%)	145 (37.7%)	92 (23.9%)	54 (14.0%)	35 (9.1%)	3.36
22	I am loyal to my mobile network and unlikely to switch.	79 (20.5%)	155 (40.3%)	83 (21.6%)	46 (11.9%)	22 (5.7%)	3.58
23	The network meets my communication needs effectively.	87 (22.6%)	146 (37.9%)	98 (25.5%)	39 (10.1%)	15 (3.9%)	3.65
24	I would recommend my mobile network to others.	81 (21.0%)	165 (42.9%)	87 (22.6%)	34 (8.8%)	18 (4.7%)	3.67
25	I consider my network to be better than competitors.	66 (17.1%)	137 (35.6%)	105 (27.3%)	56 (14.5%)	21 (5.5%)	3.44
	Average						**3.54**

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 4.7 evaluates user satisfaction, loyalty, and brand preference. For satisfaction with current networks, 204 respondents (53.0%) agreed or strongly agreed, while 92 (23.9%) were neutral and 89 (23.1%) disagreed, yielding a modest mean of 3.36. Regarding network loyalty, 234 (60.8%) agreed or strongly agreed, 83 (21.6%) were neutral, and 68 (17.6%) disagreed, resulting in a higher mean of 3.58. Similarly, effective communication was

acknowledged by 233 (60.5%) respondents, while 98 (25.5%) were neutral and 54 (14.0%) disagreed, giving a solid mean of 3.65.

In terms of willingness to recommend the network, 246 respondents (63.9%) agreed or strongly agreed, 22.6% were neutral, and 13.5% disagreed, producing the highest mean of 3.67. For brand superiority, responses were more moderate, with 203 (52.7%) expressing agreement, 105 (27.3%) remaining neutral, and 77 (20.0%) disagreeing, which led to a lower mean of 3.44. On average, 38.9% of participants agreed, 19.3% strongly agreed, 24.2% were neutral, while 11.9% disagreed and 5.8% strongly disagreed. The overall mean of 3.54 indicates that while most respondents view their mobile network favorably, there remains a notable segment of neutral or dissenting opinions regarding loyalty and brand comparison.

4.4 Correlation Analysis of Brand Perception and Consumer Preferences for Mobile Network Services among Students of the University of Benin

The results from the correlation analysis provide insights into the character and orientation of the connection between the dependent and independent variables. While the correlation coefficient doesn't denote a direct functional dependence, it serves as a preliminary indicator of the strength and trend of this relationship. The details of these findings will be elaborated upon in the subsequent discussion.

Table 4.8: Correlation Results of Brand Perception and Consumer Preferences for Mobile Network Services among Students of the University of Benin

Correlations

		Brand Preference	Network Quality	Pricing	Customer Service	Advertisement	Peer Influence
Brand Preference	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (1-tailed)						
	N	385					
Network Quality	Pearson Correlation	.050	1				
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.162					
	N	385	385				
Pricing	Pearson Correlation	.031	.764**	1			
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.275	.000				
	N	385	385	385			
Customer Service	Pearson Correlation	.143**	.510**	.598**	1		
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.003	.000	.000			
	N	385	385	385	385		
Advertisement	Pearson Correlation	.101*	.517**	.578**	.711**	1	
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.024	.000	.000	.000		
	N	385	385	385	385	385	
Peer Influence	Pearson Correlation	.406**	.023	.014	.220**	.278**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.325	.394	.000	.000	
	N	385	385	385	385	385	385

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Source: Author's Estimation from SPSS 22, 2025.

Table 4.8 presents the correlation results between Brand Preference (BP) and various factors influencing consumer preferences for mobile network services among students of the University of Benin. The strongest and most significant positive correlation with brand preference is observed with Peer Influence (PI) ($r = .406$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that peer recommendations and social alignment play a substantial role in shaping brand loyalty.

Customer Service (CS) (r = .143, p < 0.01) and Advertisement (AD) (r = .101, p < 0.05) also show weak but statistically significant positive relationships with brand preference, suggesting that how students perceive service support and marketing efforts mildly contributes to their network preference. However, Network Quality (NQ) (r = .050, p = .162) and Pricing (PR) (r = .031, p = .275) exhibit very weak and statistically insignificant correlations with brand preference, implying that these factors, though important operationally, may not directly influence students' brand loyalty. Overall, the findings suggest that social and experiential factors (peer opinions, customer service, and advertising) have a greater impact on students' mobile network brand preference than technical or economic factors.

4.5 Hypothesis Testing

The research hypotheses were tested utilising regression analysis in order to achieve the current study's objectives. The hypotheses were evaluated with an Alpha level of significance of 0.05 (Decision rule: computed level of significance <0.05, reject null hypothesis; computed level of significance >0.05, accept null hypothesis).

Table 4.9a Model Summary of Brand Perception and Consumer Preferences for Mobile Network Services among Students of the University of Benin

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.417[a]	.174	.163	.60021	.174	15.964	5	379	.000	1.768

a. Predictors: (Constant), PI, PR, CS, AD, NQ

b. Dependent Variable: BP

Source: Statistical Package for social Sciences v.22

Table 4.9a presents the model summary of a multiple regression analysis examining the influence of Network Quality (NQ), Pricing (PR), Customer Service (CS), Advertisement (AD), and Peer Influence (PI) on Brand Preference (BP) among students of the University of Benin. The model shows a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .417, indicating a moderate positive relationship between the independent variables and brand preference. The R Square value of .174 suggests that approximately 17.4% of the variance in brand preference is explained by the combined influence of the five predictor variables. After adjusting for the number of predictors, the Adjusted R Square is slightly lower at .163, confirming the model's moderate explanatory power. The F-statistic (15.964, $p < .001$) indicates that the model is statistically significant overall, meaning that the predictors jointly have a meaningful impact on brand preference. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.768 falls within the acceptable range (1.5 to 2.5), suggesting no significant autocorrelation in the residuals. In summary, while the model does not account for a large proportion of the variance, it provides a statistically significant and meaningful

explanation of how perception-related factors influence mobile network brand preference among university students.

Table 4.9b Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Brand Perception and Consumer Preferences for Mobile Network Services among Students of the University of Benin

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	28.756	5	5.751	15.964	.000[b]
	Residual	136.534	379	.360		
	Total	165.290	384			

a. Dependent Variable: BP

b. Predictors: (Constant), PI, PR, CS, AD, NQ

Source: Statistical Package for social Sciences v.22

Table 4.9b presents the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results for the regression model examining the influence of Peer Influence (PI), Pricing (PR), Customer Service (CS), Advertisement (AD), and Network Quality (NQ) on Brand Preference (BP) among students of the University of Benin. The regression model has a sum of squares of 28.756 with 5 degrees of freedom (df), yielding a mean square of 5.751. The residual (unexplained variation) accounts for 136.534 of the total sum of squares, with 379 degrees of freedom, giving a residual mean square of 0.360. The resulting F-statistic of 15.964 is statistically significant at $p < .001$, indicating that the regression model explains a significant portion of the variance in brand preference. This confirms that, collectively, the independent variables exert a meaningful influence on students' preference for mobile network

brands. The ANOVA result validates the model's overall fitness and supports the inference that brand perception factors significantly predict consumer preferences among the sampled university population.

Table 4.9c Regression Output of Brand Perception and Consumer Preferences for Mobile Network Services among Students of the University of Benin

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	Constant	2.194	.212		10.365	.000		
	Network quality	.048	.060	.058	.793	.428	.407	2.457
	Pricing	-.020	.064	-.025	-.309	.757	.343	2.912
	Customer service	.103	.062	.118	1.666	.097	.437	2.289
	Advertisement	-.096	.061	-.113	-1.581	.115	.429	2.333
	Peer influence	.338	.041	.410	8.241	.000	.880	1.136

a. Dependent Variable: BP

Source: Statistical Package for social Sciences v.22

Table 4.9c presents the regression coefficients for the predictors of Brand Preference (BP) among students of the University of Benin. The constant value ($B = 2.194$, $p < .001$) indicates the expected baseline brand preference score when all predictors are held at zero. Among the independent variables, Peer Influence (PI) is the only statistically significant predictor ($B = .338$, $\beta = .410$, $t = 8.241$, $p < .001$), demonstrating a strong and positive effect on brand preference. This suggests that students who are influenced by their peers are more likely to express stronger brand loyalty or preference for a mobile network.

In contrast, Network Quality (NQ) ($p = .428$), Pricing (PR) ($p = .757$), Customer Service (CS) ($p = .097$), and Advertisement (AD) ($p = .115$) were not statistically significant predictors, as their p-values exceeded the .05 threshold. While Customer Service and Advertisement show modest positive and negative standardized effects respectively, they do not reach statistical significance. Collinearity statistics show all VIF values are below 5, indicating no multicollinearity concerns among the predictors. Overall, the regression output confirms that Peer Influence is the most impactful and reliable determinant of brand preference among the variables studied, highlighting the social nature of students' decision-making in mobile network selection.

Table 4.10: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Independent Sample T-test for Demographic Variables and Brand Preferences.

Demographic Characteristics	Category	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Test Statistic	P.Value
Gender	Male	Male	3.33	0.626	t=-1.155	0.249
	Female	Female	3.45	0.779		
Faculty	Arts	58	2.60	0.872	F=2.434	0.049
	Social Sciences	73	3.41	0.688		
	Life Sciences	62	3.45	0.765		
	Engineering	64	3.39	0.547		
	Management Sciences	128	3.33	0.455		
Academic Level	100 Level	41	3.34	0.772	F=0.302	0.876
	200 Level	66	3.43	0.722		
	300 Level	81	3.39	0.618		
	400 Level	121	3.53	0.696		
	500 Level	51	3.28	0.363		
	600 Level	25	3.45	0.545		

Table 4.10 examines whether demographic characteristics significantly influence brand preference for mobile network services among students at the University of Benin, using both ANOVA and independent sample t-tests.

The t-test for gender shows that female respondents reported a slightly higher mean brand preference (Mean = 3.45) compared to males (Mean = 3.33), but this difference is not statistically significant (t = -1.155, p = 0.249), as the p-value exceeds the 0.05 threshold. Therefore, gender does not significantly affect brand preference.

Regarding faculty, ANOVA results indicate a significant difference in brand preference across faculties (F = 2.434, p = 0.049). While Life Sciences students reported the highest

mean (3.45), Management Sciences had the lowest (3.33), suggesting that academic discipline plays a statistically significant role in shaping brand preference among students. For academic level, the differences in brand preference across levels (from 100 to 600 level) were minimal, with means ranging between 3.28 and 3.53, and the ANOVA result was not statistically significant ($F = 0.302$, $p = 0.876$). Hence, students' year of study does not significantly influence brand preference.

Lastly, the ANOVA for preferred mobile network shows no significant differences in brand preference across MTN, Glo, Airtel, and 9mobile users ($F = 0.100$, $p = 0.960$), indicating that brand preference remains consistent regardless of the network provider students currently use.

In summary, faculty of study is the only demographic variable that significantly influences brand preference, while gender, academic level, and preferred network provider do not show statistically significant effects.

Hypothesis 1 (Ho_1):

There is no significant relationship between key factors (network quality, customer service, pricing, advertisements, peer influence) and students' perceptions of mobile network brands at UNIBEN.

The regression model summary (Table 4.9a) shows a significant F-statistic of 15.964 with a p-value of .000, indicating that the combined independent variables (network quality, pricing, customer service, advertisements, and peer influence) significantly explain variations in students' brand preference. Since $p < 0.05$, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant relationship between these key factors and students' perceptions of mobile network brands at UNIBEN.

Hypothesis 2 (Ho_2): *There is no significant difference in brand preferences among UNIBEN students regarding mobile network services.*

The ANOVA results in Table 4.10 show a p-value of 0.960 for differences in brand preference across preferred mobile networks, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates no statistically significant variation in brand preference based on the mobile network students currently use. Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis and conclude that no significant difference exists in brand preferences among UNIBEN students across mobile network providers.

Hypothesis 3 (Ho_3):

There is no significant difference in brand perception and preference among students across different faculties and year levels at UNIBEN.

From Table 4.10, the p-value for faculty = 0.049, which is less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference in brand perception across faculties. However, the p-value for academic level = 0.876, which is greater than 0.05, shows no significant difference across

academic levels. Since a significant difference exists for at least one demographic variable (faculty), we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant difference in brand perception and preference across faculties, though not across year levels.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

4.5.1. Key Factors Shaping Brand Perception among UNIBEN Students

The study found that among the five predictors examined—Network Quality (NQ), Pricing (PR), Customer Service (CS), Advertisements (AD), and Peer Influence (PI)—only Peer Influence (PI) had a statistically significant effect on Brand Preference (BP) ($\beta = .410$, $p < .001$), as shown in Table 4.9c. While the overall model was significant ($R^2 = .174$, $p < .001$), other variables such as NQ, PR, CS, and AD did not independently predict brand preference at a significant level. This aligns with the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which emphasizes the influence of subjective norms—particularly social circles—on behavioral intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This finding is consistent with studies by Agboola & Adeoye (2021) and Okonkwo & Usman (2023), which emphasized that in collectivist cultures like Nigeria, peer groups serve as major influencers of telecom brand choices, especially among young consumers such as university students. The non-significance of pricing and network quality is particularly notable, suggesting that although students may acknowledge service disparities, they tend to choose networks aligned with their social ecosystems. This partially contrasts with findings by Ajibola & Olayemi (2021) and Bello & Sulaimon (2023), who asserted that network quality is a key

driver of preference. However, given the saturation of mobile network coverage in urban areas like Benin City, functional parity may reduce the salience of network quality and price as distinguishing factors. Instead, emotional and communal dimensions such as being on the same network as one's peers dominate.

4.5.2. Most Preferred Networks and Factors Behind Preferences

The analysis of Table 4.1 and ANOVA results in Table 4.10 indicates that MTN and Airtel are the most preferred mobile networks among students, though there is no statistically significant difference in brand preference across mobile network providers ($p = 0.960$). Additionally, while the descriptive statistics showed variations in preference based on attributes such as internet speed, customer service, and promotions (see Tables 4.2–4.7), these were not strong enough to produce significant differences among networks. This suggests a functional convergence across providers in core services, resulting in brand parity. The absence of significant preference variation by network aligns with studies by Akhigbe & Olokoyo (2019) and Jatau et al. (2024), which found that while service quality and value-added features matter, brand image and social familiarity are often stronger influencers of continued use. This phenomenon can be explained through Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) (Oliver, 1980), as users may have moderated their expectations across brands and thus perceive less disconfirmation in performance. However, the preference for MTN and Airtel also resonates with Emeka & Ibe (2024) and Okechukwu & Salisu (2023), who noted that these providers are seen as leaders in

network coverage and reliability, despite occasional service issues. Moreover, promotional offers and advertising campaigns appear to enhance brand perception, consistent with Eze & Nnadi (2022) and Ismaila et al. (2023) who emphasized the role of marketing and sales promotions in driving awareness and initial consumer interest.

4.5.3. Demographic Differences in Brand Perception and Preference

In evaluating demographic variables (Table 4.10), the study found that faculty of study significantly influenced brand preference ($p = 0.049$), whereas academic level, gender, and preferred network provider did not. Specifically, students in Life Sciences and Social Sciences had higher mean brand preference scores compared to those in Management Sciences or Engineering. This suggests that students in certain faculties may perceive telecom brands more favorably, possibly due to differences in lifestyle, data needs, or social group behaviors. For example, students in social sciences and life sciences may engage more frequently with digital platforms for academic research or social communication, making network performance more salient. This is in line with findings by Ajayi & Musa (2023), who highlighted that consumer preference varies based on socio-demographic factors such as academic discipline and usage behavior. Interestingly, the lack of significant gender difference ($p = 0.249$) aligns with Okafor & Musa (2023), who found that both male and female users report similar service perceptions when access levels are equal. Likewise, the absence of significant variation across academic levels indicates that student maturity or year of study does not meaningfully alter brand

attitudes, contrary to studies that have linked loyalty with tenure of usage (e.g., Olufemi & Nwosu, 2023). In summary, while most demographic attributes had little bearing, the field of study emerged as a meaningful differentiator, possibly due to differing technological expectations or peer environments within academic disciplines.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the major findings, draws conclusions based on the research objectives and hypotheses, and offers practical recommendations for improving organisational performance through employee involvement. The chapter also highlights the study's contribution to knowledge and proposes suggestions for further research. It is structured into the following sections: summary of findings, conclusion, recommendations, contribution to knowledge, and suggestions for future studies.

5.2 Summary of Findings

Key findings are summarised below:

i. The study found that among the five predictors examined—Network Quality (NQ), Pricing (PR), Customer Service (CS), Advertisements (AD), and Peer Influence (PI)—only Peer Influence (PI) had a statistically significant effect on Brand Preference (BP) ($\beta = .410$, $p < .001$), as shown in Table 4.9c. While the overall model was significant ($R^2 = .174$, $p < .001$), other variables such as NQ, PR, CS, and AD did not independently predict brand preference at a significant level.

ii. The analysis of Table 4.1 and ANOVA results in Table 4.10 indicates that MTN and Airtel are the most preferred mobile networks among students, though there is no statistically significant difference in brand preference across

mobile network providers (p = 0.960). Additionally, while the descriptive statistics showed variations in preference based on attributes such as internet speed, customer service, and promotions (see Tables 4.2–4.7), these were not strong enough to produce significant differences among networks. This suggests a functional convergence across providers in core services, resulting in brand parity.

iii. In evaluating demographic variables (Table 4.10), the study found that faculty of study significantly influenced brand preference (p = 0.049), whereas academic level, gender, and preferred network provider did not. Specifically, students in Life Sciences and Social Sciences had higher mean brand preference scores compared to those in Management Sciences or Engineering. This suggests that students in certain faculties may perceive telecom brands more favorably, possibly due to differences in lifestyle, data needs, or social group behaviors. For example, students in social sciences and life sciences may engage more frequently with digital platforms for academic research or social communication, making network performance more salient

5.3 Conclusion

This study focused on examining the relationship between brand perception and consumer preferences for mobile network services among undergraduate students at the University of Benin. The research sought to identify the key factors influencing brand

preference, determine the most preferred mobile networks, and assess the influence of demographic characteristics on students' perceptions. The findings revealed that among the five key factors such as network quality, pricing, customer service, advertisements, and peer influence, only peer influence had a statistically significant impact on brand preference, highlighting the strong role of social norms and interpersonal recommendations in students' decision-making. Despite MTN and Airtel emerging as the most preferred networks, the analysis showed no significant difference in brand preference across mobile network providers, suggesting a level of service parity across the major telecom operators. Furthermore, faculty of study was the only demographic variable that significantly influenced brand preference, with students in Life and Social Sciences exhibiting stronger preferences than their counterparts in other faculties. In conclusion, the study affirms that brand perception among students is less a function of technical or economic variables, and more shaped by social and contextual dynamics, underscoring the importance of peer-based marketing and segmentation in influencing brand loyalty in the Nigerian telecommunications sector.

5.4 Practical Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following practical recommendations are offered:

i. Since peer influence significantly affects students' brand preference, telecom providers should implement referral programs, peer ambassador schemes,

and campus influencer partnerships to strengthen network adoption through student-led advocacy.

ii. Although MTN and Airtel are preferred, brand preference did not differ significantly across networks. Providers should seek to disrupt this parity by introducing distinctive value propositions, such as faculty-specific data plans, academic bundles, or gamified loyalty systems targeting youth behaviour.

iii. Given that faculty of study significantly impacts brand preference, telecom companies should adopt faculty-specific engagement strategies, for instance, targeting Life Sciences and Social Sciences with promotions or services that align with their communication and data usage patterns.

5.5 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the academic discourse on consumer behavior and brand perception within the Nigerian telecommunications industry by offering a multidimensional and theory-driven assessment rooted in Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Unlike prior studies that focused on single variables or general populations, this research provides empirical evidence on how social influence, rather than functional service features, primarily drives brand preference among university students. It also establishes the novel insight that academic discipline, rather than gender or academic level, is a more meaningful demographic

differentiator in telecom brand perception thereby broadening our understanding of micro-segmentation in youth marketing within the Nigerian context.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Studies

Future studies should expand the scope beyond a single institution to include multiple universities across Nigeria's geo-political zones, allowing for comparative analysis and a more generalizable understanding of consumer preference patterns among students. This broader sample would help to assess regional differences in service access, cultural influences on brand perception, and infrastructural disparities that may affect consumer attitudes toward telecom providers. Additionally, longitudinal research designs could capture how brand perceptions evolve over time, particularly in response to innovations in network services, pricing structures, and regulatory interventions.

Moreover, subsequent research should consider qualitative approaches, such as focus group discussions or in-depth interviews, to gain richer insights into the emotional and symbolic associations students form with telecom brands. This could reveal underlying motivations, identity alignments, and the socio-cultural meanings embedded in network brand choices. Researchers might also explore the intersection of digital behaviour and brand interaction, such as the role of social media engagement, influencer marketing, and user-generated content in shaping consumer-brand relationships in the telecom sector. Such approaches will deepen our understanding of the psychosocial mechanisms

underlying brand loyalty and switching behaviour in a digitally connected student population

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APPENDICES

Frequency Table

The mobile network I use has strong signal strength in most areas.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	21	5.5	5.5	5.5
	Disagree	41	10.6	10.6	16.1
	Neutral	123	31.9	31.9	48.1
	Agree	116	30.1	30.1	78.2
	Strongly Agree	84	21.8	21.8	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

The network provides fast internet speed for browsing and streaming.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	18	4.7	4.7	4.7
	Disagree	30	7.8	7.8	12.5
	Neutral	79	20.5	20.5	33.0
	Agree	177	46.0	46.0	79.0
	Strongly Agree	81	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Call quality on this network is consistently clear.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Valid	Strongly Disagree	22	5.7	5.7	5.7
	Disagree	27	7.0	7.0	12.7
	Neutral	78	20.3	20.3	33.0
	Agree	166	43.1	43.1	76.1
	Strongly Agree	92	23.9	23.9	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

I experience minimal downtime or service interruptions.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	15	3.9	3.9	3.9
	Disagree	32	8.3	8.3	12.2
	Neutral	72	18.7	18.7	30.9
	Agree	172	44.7	44.7	75.6
	Strongly Agree	94	24.4	24.4	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

The network covers all areas I frequently

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	29	7.5	7.5	7.5
	Disagree	55	14.3	14.3	21.8
	Neutral	87	22.6	22.6	44.4
	Agree	133	34.5	34.5	79.0
	Strongly Agree	81	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

The network offers affordable data bundles suitable for students.

Call and SMS rates are reasonable and competitive.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	22	5.7	5.7	5.7
	Disagree	42	10.9	10.9	16.6
	Neutral	87	22.6	22.6	39.2
	Agree	159	41.3	41.3	80.5
	Strongly Agree	75	19.5	19.5	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	27	7.0	7.0	7.0
	Disagree	34	8.8	8.8	15.8
	Neutral	79	20.5	20.5	36.4
	Agree	143	37.1	37.1	73.5
	Strongly Agree	102	26.5	26.5	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

The network provides flexible subscription plans.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	20	5.2	5.2	5.2
	Disagree	40	10.4	10.4	15.6
	Neutral	86	22.3	22.3	37.9
	Agree	149	38.7	38.7	76.6
	Strongly Agree	90	23.4	23.4	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

I feel I get value for money using this network.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Valid	Strongly Disagree	13	3.4	3.4	3.4
	Disagree	35	9.1	9.1	12.5
	Neutral	87	22.6	22.6	35.1
	Agree	144	37.4	37.4	72.5
	Strongly Agree	106	27.5	27.5	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

The network frequently offers promotions and discounts for

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	9	2.3	2.3	2.3
	Disagree	36	9.4	9.4	11.7
	Neutral	68	17.7	17.7	29.4
	Agree	168	43.6	43.6	73.0
	Strongly Agree	104	27.0	27.0	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Customer service responds quickly to complaints.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	2.1	2.1	2.1
	Disagree	26	6.8	6.8	8.8
	Neutral	56	14.5	14.5	23.4
	Agree	180	46.8	46.8	70.1
	Strongly Agree	115	29.9	29.9	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Staff are courteous and helpful when contacted.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	13	3.4	3.4	3.4
	Disagree	25	6.5	6.5	9.9
	Neutral	59	15.3	15.3	25.2
	Agree	183	47.5	47.5	72.7
	Strongly Agree	105	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

I can easily reach customer care when needed.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	1.6	1.6	1.6
	Disagree	38	9.9	9.9	11.4
	Neutral	65	16.9	16.9	28.3
	Agree	175	45.5	45.5	73.8
	Strongly Agree	101	26.2	26.2	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Complaints are resolved efficiently and satisfactorily.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	13	3.4	3.4	3.4
	Disagree	30	7.8	7.8	11.2
	Neutral	53	13.8	13.8	24.9
	Agree	190	49.4	49.4	74.3
	Strongly Agree	99	25.7	25.7	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Customer service provides clear guidance and

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

Valid	Strongly Disagree	9	2.3	2.3	2.3
	Disagree	27	7.0	7.0	9.4
	Neutral	52	13.5	13.5	22.9
	Agree	190	49.4	49.4	72.2
	Strongly Agree	107	27.8	27.8	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

I find the network's advertisements persuasive.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	1.8	1.8	1.8
	Disagree	32	8.3	8.3	10.1
	Neutral	59	15.3	15.3	25.5
	Agree	182	47.3	47.3	72.7
	Strongly Agree	105	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Promotional messages appeal to students like me.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	11	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Disagree	30	7.8	7.8	10.6
	Neutral	51	13.2	13.2	23.9
	Agree	188	48.8	48.8	72.7
	Strongly Agree	105	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

I am aware of student-oriented packages offered by the network.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	2.1	2.1	2.1

	Disagree	25	6.5	6.5	8.6
	Neutral	70	18.2	18.2	26.8
	Agree	166	43.1	43.1	69.9
	Strongly Agree	116	30.1	30.1	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Advertising influences my choice of network.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	13	3.4	3.4	3.4
	Disagree	27	7.0	7.0	10.4
	Neutral	57	14.8	14.8	25.2
	Agree	174	45.2	45.2	70.4
	Strongly Agree	114	29.6	29.6	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Marketing campaigns make the network more attractive compared to

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	13	3.4	3.4	3.4
	Disagree	27	7.0	7.0	10.4
	Neutral	63	16.4	16.4	26.8
	Agree	174	45.2	45.3	72.1
	Strongly Agree	107	27.8	27.9	100.0
	Total	384	99.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.3		
Total		385	100.0		

Friends' recommendations influence my choice of mobile network.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	13	3.4	3.4	3.4

	Disagree	39	10.1	10.1	13.5
	Neutral	65	16.9	16.9	30.4
	Agree	166	43.1	43.1	73.5
	Strongly Agree	102	26.5	26.5	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

My peer group mainly uses the network I currently use.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	18	4.7	4.7	4.7
	Disagree	41	10.6	10.6	15.3
	Neutral	75	19.5	19.5	34.8
	Agree	167	43.4	43.4	78.2
	Strongly Agree	84	21.8	21.8	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

Social trends affect my decision to switch or stay with a network.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	18	4.7	4.7	4.7
	Disagree	36	9.4	9.4	14.0
	Neutral	75	19.5	19.5	33.5
	Agree	166	43.1	43.1	76.6
	Strongly Agree	90	23.4	23.4	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

I discuss mobile networks with friends before making decisions.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	42	10.9	10.9	10.9
	Disagree	75	19.5	19.5	30.5

Peer opinion plays a key role in my satisfaction with a network.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	21	5.5	5.5	5.5
	Disagree	34	8.8	8.8	14.3
	Neutral	101	26.2	26.2	40.5
	Agree	154	40.0	40.0	80.5
	Strongly Agree	75	19.5	19.5	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	
	Neutral	71	18.4	18.5	49.0
	Agree	117	30.4	30.5	79.4
	Strongly Agree	79	20.5	20.6	100.0
	Total	384	99.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.3		
Total		385	100.0		

I am satisfied with my current mobile network.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	35	9.1	9.1	9.1
	Disagree	54	14.0	14.0	23.1
	Neutral	92	23.9	23.9	47.0
	Agree	145	37.7	37.7	84.7
	Strongly Agree	59	15.3	15.3	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

I am loyal to my mobile network and unlikely to switch.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	22	5.7	5.7	5.7
	Disagree	46	11.9	11.9	17.7

The network meets my communication needs effectively

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	15	3.9	3.9	3.9
	Disagree	39	10.1	10.1	14.0
	Neutral	98	25.5	25.5	39.5
	Agree	146	37.9	37.9	77.4
	Strongly Agree	87	22.6	22.6	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

I would recommend my mobile network to others.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	18	4.7	4.7	4.7
	Disagree	34	8.8	8.8	13.5
	Neutral	87	22.6	22.6	36.1
	Agree	165	42.9	42.9	79.0
	Strongly Agree	81	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	
	Neutral	83	21.6	21.6	39.2
	Agree	155	40.3	40.3	79.5
	Strongly Agree	79	20.5	20.5	100.0
	Total	385	100.0	100.0	

I consider my network to be better than competitors.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	21	5.5	5.5	5.5
	Disagree	56	14.5	14.5	20.0
	Neutral	105	27.3	27.3	47.3
	Agree	137	35.6	35.6	82.9
	Strongly Agree	66	17.1	17.1	100.0

Total	385	100.0	100.0	

DESCRIPTIVES VARIABLES=NQ1 NQ2 NQ3 NQ4 NQ5 PR1 PR2 PR3 PR4 PR5 CS1 CS2 CS3 CS4 CS5 AD1 AD2 AD3 AD4 AD5 PI1 PI2 PI3 PI4 PI5 BP1 BP2 BP3 BP4 BP5 NQ PR CS AD PI BP /STATISTICS=MEAN STDDEV MIN MAX.

Descriptives

Notes

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	Cases Used	All non-missing data are used.
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Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The mobile network I use has strong signal strength in most areas.	385	1.00	5.00	3.5221	1.10875
The network provides fast internet speed for browsing and streaming.	385	1.00	5.00	3.7091	1.03257
Call quality on this network is consistently clear.	385	1.00	5.00	3.7247	1.07869
I experience minimal downtime or service interruptions.	385	1.00	5.00	3.7740	1.03247
The network covers all areas I frequently	385	1.00	5.00	3.4727	1.18801
The network offers affordable data bundles suitable for students.	385	1.00	5.00	3.6727	1.16230
Call and SMS rates are reasonable and competitive.	385	1.00	5.00	3.5792	1.09430
The network provides flexible subscription plans.	385	1.00	5.00	3.6468	1.10392
I feel I get value for money using this network.	385	1.00	5.00	3.7662	1.05692
The network frequently offers promotions and discounts for	385	1.00	5.00	3.8364	1.00350
Customer service responds quickly to complaints.	385	1.00	5.00	3.9558	.94957
Staff are courteous and helpful when contacted.	385	1.00	5.00	3.8883	.98979

I can easily reach customer care when needed.	385	1.00	5.00	3.8494	.97262
Complaints are resolved efficiently and satisfactorily.	385	1.00	5.00	3.8623	.99701
Customer service provides clear guidance and	385	1.00	5.00	3.9325	.94957
I find the network's advertisements persuasive.	385	1.00	5.00	3.8987	.95613
Promotional messages appeal to students like me.	385	1.00	5.00	3.8987	.98299
I am aware of student-oriented packages offered by the network.	385	1.00	5.00	3.9273	.96280
Advertising influences my choice of network.	385	1.00	5.00	3.9065	1.01118
Marketing campaigns make the network more attractive compared to	384	1.00	5.00	3.8724	1.00748
Friends' recommendations influence my choice of mobile network.	385	1.00	5.00	3.7922	1.05002
My peer group mainly uses the network I currently use.	385	1.00	5.00	3.6701	1.07421
Social trends affect my decision to switch or stay with a network.	385	1.00	5.00	3.7117	1.06922
I discuss mobile networks with friends before making decisions.	384	1.00	5.00	3.3021	1.29365
Peer opinion plays a key role in my satisfaction with a network.	385	1.00	5.00	3.5922	1.06675
I am satisfied with my current mobile network.	385	1.00	5.00	3.3610	1.16906

I am loyal to my mobile network and unlikely to switch.	385	1.00	5.00	3.5792	1.11317
The network meets my communication needs effectively	385	1.00	5.00	3.6519	1.05742
I would recommend my mobile network to others.	385	1.00	5.00	3.6675	1.05010
I consider my network to be better than competitors.	385	1.00	5.00	3.4442	1.10048
NQ	385	1.00	5.00	3.6405	.80092
PR	385	1.00	5.00	3.7003	.81114
CS	385	1.00	5.00	3.8977	.75279
AD	385	1.00	5.00	3.9005	.77015
PI	385	1.00	5.00	3.6138	.79578
BP	385	1.00	5.00	3.5408	.65608
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CORRELATIONS
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Correlations Notes

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	Cases Used	Statistics for each pair of variables are based on all the cases with valid data for that pair.
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Correlations

		BP	NQ	PR	CS	AD	PI
BP	Pearson Correlation	1	.050	.031	.143**	.101*	.406**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.162	.275	.003	.024	.000
	N	385	385	385	385	385	385
NQ	Pearson Correlation	.050	1	.764**	.510**	.517**	.023
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.162		.000	.000	.000	.325
	N	385	385	385	385	385	385
PR	Pearson Correlation	.031	.764**	1	.598**	.578**	.014
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.275	.000		.000	.000	.394
	N	385	385	385	385	385	385
CS	Pearson Correlation	.143**	.510**	.598**	1	.711**	.220**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.003	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	385	385	385	385	385	385
AD	Pearson Correlation	.101*	.517**	.578**	.711**	1	.278**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.024	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	385	385	385	385	385	385
PI	Pearson Correlation	.406**	.023	.014	.220**	.278**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.325	.394	.000	.000	

N	385	385	385	385	385	385

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

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REGRESSION
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  /DEPENDENT BP
  /METHOD=ENTER NQ PR CS AD PI
  /RESIDUALS DURBIN.
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Regression Notes

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	N of Rows in Working Data File	385
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.

Cases Used	Statistics are based on cases with no missing values for any variable used.

Syntax	REGRESSION /MISSING LISTWISE /STATISTICS COEFF OUTS CI(95) R ANOVA COLLIN TOL CHANGE /CRITERIA=PIN(.05) POUT(.10) /NOORIGIN /DEP

		ENDENT BP /METHOD=ENTER NQPR CSAD PI /RESIDUALS DURBIN.
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	Memory Required	6000 bytes

	Additional Memory Required for Residual Plots	0 bytes

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.417[a]	.174	.163	.60021	.174	15.964	5	379	.000	1.768

a. Predictors: (Constant), PI, PR, CS, AD, NQ

b. Dependent Variable: BP

Variables Entered/Removed[a]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	PI, PR, CS, AD, NQ[b]	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: BP

b. All requested variables entered.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	28.756	5	5.751	15.964	.000[b]
	Residual	136.534	379	.360		
	Total	165.290	384			

a. Dependent Variable: BP

b. Predictors: (Constant), PI, PR, CS, AD, NQ

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.194	.212		10.365	.000	1.778	2.611		
	NQ	.048	.060	.058	.793	.428	-.070	.165	.407	2.457
	PR	-.020	.064	-.025	-.309	.757	-.147	.107	.343	2.912
	CS	.103	.062	.118	1.666	.097	-.018	.224	.437	2.289
	AD	-.096	.061	-.113	-1.581	.115	-.215	.023	.429	2.333
	PI	.338	.041	.410	8.241	.000	.257	.419	.880	1.136

a. Dependent Variable: BP

Collinearity Diagnostics[a]

Model	Dimension	Eigenvalue	Condition Index	Variance Proportions					
				(Constant)	NQ	PR	CS	AD	PI
1	1	5.882	1.000	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	2	.059	10.022	.01	.06	.05	.00	.00	.41
	3	.023	16.124	.07	.18	.02	.22	.22	.07
	4	.017	18.857	.88	.07	.03	.01	.01	.47
	5	.011	23.277	.01	.25	.38	.29	.55	.05
	6	.010	24.454	.02	.44	.52	.48	.21	.00

a. Dependent Variable: BP

Residuals Statistics[a]

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	2.6092	4.1079	3.5408	.27365	385
Residual	-2.46263	1.30670	.00000	.59629	385
Std. Predicted Value	-3.404	2.072	.000	1.000	385
Std. Residual	-4.103	2.177	.000	.993	385

a. Dependent Variable: BP