The effects of Customer Role Clarity on Emergent Change Preparedness among Firms in the Telecommunication Industry, in Nakuru Sub County, Kenya

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Abstract: This study sought to examine the link between customer role clarity and emergent change preparedness. Customer role clarity emanates from the experience that a customer obtains from a particular service provider to the extent of becoming a co-producer on their product. The complex nature of the organizations has led to the upsurge of the emergent change. These abrupt changes have left customers in a state of confusion and sometimes they abscond since they do not understand their roles in the organization. However, despite the effort put into obtaining more customers in the organization, the organization keeps on losing its grip on the customers when emergent change arises. This study adopted a census survey that was completed by all the 39 managers from Safaricom, Airtel and Telkom Telecommunication's companies in Nakuru Sub County, Kenya. The study established a significant positive relationship between customer role clarity and emergent change preparedness. The results found a significant value of 0.002 which showed a statistically significant relationship of the study variables. The findings demonstrate that if telecommunication companies clearly defined the roles of the customers, they would be prepared for any emergent change that arises. The study lays a foundation through which customer role clarity is the backbone for the investigation of other customer participation strategies.
Keywords: Customer Role Clarity, Emergent Change Preparedness.

INTRODUCTION

Developments in Social Science have birthed the idea of business development in which customer participation is found [1]. According to Wattanakamolchai [2] Customer participation has been described as active involvement of the customer in the affairs of the organization. This can either be physically or through the provision of resources by both the customer and the organization. Increasing customers' motivation and their ability enables them to become more confident in directing the kind of service and products that an organization will offer. Thus the customers realize their roles as well as adapt to any kind of unexpected change. Effective organizations facilitate customer participation, which is an essential component of organizational development [3]. In service-oriented organizations, the customer takes up a number of roles. The customer can be a buyer, user, and a co-creator. Fundamentally, the customers become valuable resources to the organization and they contribute to organizational development.

Customer participation is revealed in many forms which involve idea generation to design and testing. This way, the customer becomes a partner and a co-creator of the organization. Organizational Development is a human-centered model in which successful change is achieved by focusing change efforts on the values that the customer can add to the organization. Customer role clarity is an aspect of customer participation strategies.

This study, therefore, merged the concept of customer participation and emergent change and took a trans-disciplinary approach to examine the effects of customer role clarity on emergent change preparedness in Telecommunication industries, Nakuru Sub County.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Customer Role Clarity and Emergent Change Preparedness

In order to enhance customer participation, Bowers and Martin [4], presented a conceptual model that sought to demonstrate desirable consequences associated with the roles of employees and customers in organizations. The study indicated that the customers should be seen as employees in the organization as they are a resource to be utilized in the organization in the process of co-creation. The study recommended that customers' roles in the organization

should be increased. Additionally, the customers should understand the roles that they are playing in the organization. Essentially, this spelled out that in order to enhance customer participation, there has to be role clarity which reinforces ability and this fuels customer motivation. Roles of the customer range from being co-producers, decision makers, to partial employees.

A customer will participate in the organization depending on the organizational socialization. This socialization dictates the level of participation in the organization. Claycomb *et al.* [5] examined the differences in organizational socialization and the impact it had on customer experiences at YMCA. The study indicated three different levels of participation which were measured to identify attendance through the number of hours spent by the customer in the YMCA, information provision to the organization and other customers, and co-production in which the customer go beyond what normally would be expected of them in the organization. These levels dictate whether a customer will actively participate in the organization or not. Additionally, the study indicated that levels of customer perceptions were affected by the environment in the organization. The higher the customer participation level, the higher the preparedness of immediate changes in the organization.

On the levels of customer participation, Blazevic and Lievens [6], conducted an exploratory study to understand customer coproduced knowledge in electronic services. The study showed that customers can be identified as passive users, active informers, and bidirectional creators. When customers are passive users or active informers, their interaction with the organization is unilateral. However, when customers are bidirectional creators, they receive and give feedback to the organization in an active manner. This helps not only to identify problem areas in the organization but also the customer to be actively ready in case of emergent change occurrence. Customers have the ability to generate high levels of the organization and they are adequate problem solvers.

A study on the effects of customer participation in co-created service recovery by Dong, Evans, and Zou [7], indicated that customer participation in self-service technology contexts brought about higher levels of role clarity as the customers were more engaged in the service provision. Customer engagement means that the customer is more involved in the service provision. Therefore the level of participation engages the clarity of roles for the customers. Role clarity enables the customer to understand what is expected of them as they use the products and services of the organization.

Survey data from 154 banks investigating the impact of customer participation as presented by Xiaoyun and Qingyu [8], showed that customers have a role to play in service organizations. The customer is an information provider, co-developer, and the user of the service. However, such roles cannot be endorsed if the customer is not aware that these roles exist and the part they play in accomplishing these roles. Clarity of roles ensures that when an unintended change occurs, the customer is able to act in a way that will bring about success in the organization. Basically, if a customer does not know what their roles are, it would be hard for them to contribute meaningfully to an organization especially in times of change. Wu, Kung, and Lin [9] investigated the influence of customer participation in information technology services and found out that role clarity is essential if the customers are to participate in a meaningful way.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive research design as the study sought to provide an account of how organizations enhance their customers for emergent change. According to Kothari [10], a descriptive research design is a design that includes surveys and fact-finding enquiries. This research design sought to provide a description of the existence of circumstances just as they are. A descriptive approach also provides a multifaceted approach for collection and analysis of data. In this approach, a survey was used in order to identify significant features and distinctive features in the target population.

Study Location

The study took place in Nakuru County. Nakuru is a County in Kenya that is located in the South-East part of the Kenyan Rift Valley. According to the Nakuru County Government [11], the County has a population of 1,603,325 of this, 75 percent of households own a mobile phone. Mobile coverage in Nakuru County is at 91 percent with major mobile communications such as Telkom, Airtel and Safaricom having their presence in the county. Telecommunications organizations are faced with highly dynamic and complex environments. They are also customer-centric in which they are determined to provide the best services to their customers as their core competence and also to provide their organizations with a competitive edge. The idea behind the selection of the three Telecommunications sectors (Safaricom Limited, Telkom Kenya, and Airtel Kenya) in Nakuru Sub County was that they would enrich the study by giving a more focused approach on customer participation strategies on and emergent change preparedness. The Nakuru Sub County was chosen because of the researcher's familiarity with the region in which the organization is situated.

Target Population

The target population was the Branch Managers, Technical managers, Customer Service Managers, Public Relations Managers, Sales Managers

and Sales Representatives at the service desk. These employees were used because of their position in the organization to shed light on customer participation strategies and emergent change. Moreover, these employees are well equipped with the customer participation strategies and emergent change preparedness. The study population was 39 managers from the three telecommunication industries in Nakuru Sub County.

Census survey

The researcher employed a census survey since the target population is well defined and inclusive. Census survey will give appropriate results and the researcher is well trained and efficient [12].

Research Instruments

This study employed the use of primary and secondary data. Secondary data on customer participation at the three telecommunication companies was obtained from the given organizations' document repositories. Primary data was obtained through the use of structured questionnaires. The structured questionnaires were used because of their efficient use of time. Additionally, Bechhofer and Paterson [13] cite that structured questionnaires ensure that all the respondents answer to the same set of questions thus ensuring uniformity and standardization of questions for all the respondents. This ensures that there is transparency in meaning.

To ensure validity of the research instrument, content validity and face validity were used. The content validity was used so as to verify whether the questionnaire is in line with the specific constructs in the questionnaire [14]. Content validity assures that the respondents give their responses objectively and they are not influenced by other factors. Face validity was also used to give an estimation of whether the questionnaire appeared to measure what was supposed to measure based on the judgments of the way the questionnaire appears. For face validity, a questionnaire was given to the research supervisors who were able to verify whether it was a reflection of what ought to be measured. Validity, as defined by Kothari [15], is the extent to which a research instrument measures what it was intended to measure. Therefore, the supervisor's suggestions were incorporated to ensure that the questions were clear and relevant to the study.

Reliability refers to the degree to which a research instrument demonstrates a certain degree of consistency [16]. To ensure reliability, a pilot test was conducted at the Telecommunication branches in Kericho County. Ten questionnaires were provided to respondents so that they would assess critically the questionnaire and the content of different items on the questionnaire. Section B-D of the questionnaire was the focal point of the reliability test. The Cronbach's

alpha reliability was used to compute the reliability value. Cronbach's alpha is a method used to measure the internal consistency reliability of a group of items. The values range from zero to one whereby values that are above or at 0.7 are accepted but those above 0.9 are not accepted. This is because the value is considered to have a very narrow focus. In this study, the overall Cronbach's alpha reliability was at 0.7 which shows a high internal consistency of items in the questionnaire. The pilot study provided feedback that enabled the researcher to make essential modifications on the research instrument items. The respondents in the pilot study did not participate in the main study.

Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected through the use of a structured questionnaire. The researcher made appointments with the managers and thereafter availed herself to issue the questionnaire by herself. This was to ensure that there was a positive response rate. The researcher assured the respondents of the confidentiality in the information provided. The managers then were left to fill in the questionnaire. The researcher called and e-mailed the respondents to remind them of the day that the questionnaires would be collected; which was five days after issuing them. Given their busy schedules, the five-day period was deemed appropriate to allow the managers to think thoroughly about their responses.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data from the questionnaires. The data results were presented in form of tables and graphs. The data was first collected from the respondents. The researcher then checked the questionnaires to establish whether they were all properly and completely filled in. This process was done to ensure that the facts that would be gathered would be consistent and as uniform as possible. Having found the questionnaires as fit to continue in the analysis, the researcher then coded the questionnaires and data was entered, organized and analyzed by the researcher using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS 24.0) software. These generated descriptive statistics were to ensure that the frequencies and percentages of the study variables were tabulated.

Inferential statistics were used to derive to a conclusion on the effects of Customer Role Clarity on emergent change preparedness among the firms in the telecommunications industry, Nakuru-Sub County. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to ascertain the relationship and direction of the relationship between the study variables [17]. In addition, linear regression analysis was used to establish the association between the independent variable (customer role clarity) and the dependent variable (emergent change preparedness).

This study's hypothesis was

H_o: Customer role clarity has no statistically significant effect on emergent change preparedness among firms in Telecommunication industry in Nakuru Sub County, Kenya.

The identified Regression model for the study was:
$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1$
Where:
Y: emergent change preparedness (by coding 1 as high emergent change preparedness and 0 as low emergent change preparedness)
β_0 : constant
β's : regression coefficients.
X_1 : customer role clarity (by coding 1 as high customer clarity and 0 as low customer role clarity)

Th testing of the hypotheses was to determine the significance of independent variables. If P ≥0.05 the null hypothesis was accepted and vice versa

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The researcher sought to understand whether the telecommunication companies provide clarity of the role that the customer plays in the organization; in accordance to the third objective of the study. The study was interested in comprehending whether it was necessary for the customers to be part of the service provision process. Results show that 6 (16%) of the respondents thought it was not necessary to include the customers. 32 (84%) of the respondents thought that there is a need for the customer to take part in the service provision process. This shows that there is a realization in the telecommunications industry that customers do play a vital role in service provision and it is important for them to have a clear idea of the roles that they can play in addition to the roles they ought to play in the organization. Additionally, the respondents said that the customers provide ideas on the services that they want and those that they would like to be improved. However, not all ideas are used by the organizations because of their complex nature.
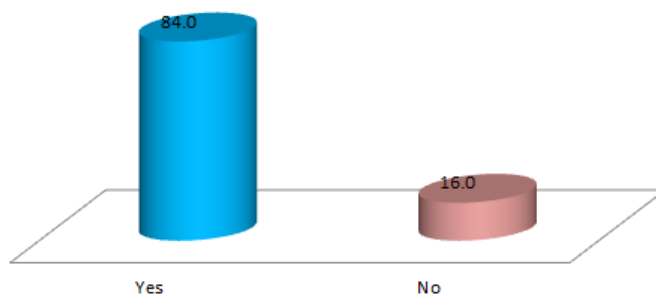

Fig-1: Need for customers to take part in the service provision process
Source: (Survey Data, 2018)

Ways of Customer Communication

The study sought to understand ways in which the customers communicate with the organization on the products and services. The main medium of communication that was identified was through social media and the customer care center.

Customer Feedback

The respondents were asked to indicate how often the customers provide feedback to the organization.

Fig-2: Customer Feedback
Source: (Survey Data, 2018)

As shown in Figure 2, 3 (8%) of the respondents indicated that the customers provide feedback monthly, 10 (26%) indicated that the customers provide feedback weekly, and 25 (66%) of the respondents indicated that the customers provide feedback when it is necessary for them to do so. The respondents also indicated that the feedback is important in measuring the extent to which the customers are satisfied with the services provided. Clear lines of communication ensure a two-way communication process between the customers and the telecommunication companies.

The study sought to ascertain whether the customers had role clarity in times of emergent change. This data is presented in Table 1.

Table-1: Customer Role Clarity

Statements	Response Rate Scale of 1-5					N
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Customers are not certain on how to effectively use self-service options when there abrupt changes in the organization	2 5.3%	0 0%	3 7.9%	6 15.8%	27 71.1%	38 100%
Customers know what is expected of them when sudden changes occur in the sector	2 5.3%	16 42.1%	12 31.6%	6 15.8%	2 5.3%	38 100%
Customers share any new information related to the services they receive with the organization that is beneficial to them during abrupt changes	0 0%	3 7.9%	6 15.8%	19 50.0%	10 26.3%	38 100%
The organization acknowledges the feedback that customers give during abrupt changes	0 0%	2 5.3%	5 13.2%	14 36.8%	17 44.7%	38 100%
Customers would recommend the products provided by organization to other customers	0 0%	0 0%	4 10.5%	17 44.7%	17 44.7%	38 100%

Source: (Survey Data, 2018)

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (71.1%) strongly agreed that customers are not certain on how to effectively use self-service options when there are abrupt changes in the organization, 6 (15.8%) agreed, 3 (7.9%), while 2 (5.3) strongly disagreed. 16 (42.1%) of the respondents disagreed that customers know what is expected of them when sudden changes occur in the sector, 12 (31.6%) were neutral, 2 (5.3%) strongly disagreed, 6 (15.8%) agreed, while 2 (5.3%) strongly agreed. Half of the respondents (50%) agree that the customers share new information related to the services they receive with the organization that is beneficial to them during abrupt changes, 6 (15.8%) were neutral, while 10 (26.3%) and 3 (7.9%) strongly agreed and disagreed respectively. 17 (44.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the organization acknowledges feedback that customers give during abrupt changes, 14 (36.8%) agreed, 5 (13.2%) were neutral, while 2 (5.3%) disagreed. 17 (44.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that customers would recommend the products provided by the organization to other customers, 4 (10.5%) were neutral, while 17 (44.7%) agreed.

These findings indicated that customers are not certain on how to effectively use self-service options when there abrupt changes in the organization. Moreover, there was an indication that the customers are not fully aware of the roles that they play in the organization when emergent changes occur. This shows that a gap exists in the telecommunications companies in Nakuru Sub County regarding the roles that customers play during emergent changes. According to Xiaoyun and Qingyu [18], there is a wide range of roles for customers to play. There is, however, a misconstrued idea of what these roles are as there is neither a comprehension nor a conveyance of these roles. The organizations should be clear on what the roles of the customer in the organization are; whether they are just to use the organization's services, co-develop services, or provide information. In the service provision industry, self-service is an essential characteristic and telecommunications companies should be clear on the roles that customers play in this aspect. Role clarity should be intensified in times of emergent change.

Testing of the Study Hypothesis

This section provides the findings of the research hypotheses which are presented in this study. The regression analysis model used assumed a linear relationship existed between the study variables. To measure the likelihood of the statistical model in predicting future outcomes, a coefficient of determination was carried out. The coefficient of determination, which is R squared, explained the contribution of this study's independent variable (customer role clarity) to the dependent variable (emergent change preparedness).

Table-2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.496[a]	.246	.225	.684
a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer role clarity				

This indicated that a 22.5% variance of the dependent variable was predicted by the independent variable. This , however, did not provide a formal hypothesis test for the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Therefore, the statistical model Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted.

Table-3: ANOVA Test

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.500	1	5.500	11.756	.002[b]
	Residual	16.842	36	.468		
	Total	22.342	37			
a. Dependent Variable: Emergent change preparedness levels						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Customer role clarity						

There was a statistically significant difference between the study variables as indicated in Table 4.15 $(F_{(1, 36)} =11.756)$, p=0.002). The results suggest that customer role clarity which is the independent variable is a significant predictor of emergent change preparedness. This is because the significance value was 0.002 which is less than 0.05. A beta coefficient was also analyzed.

Table-4: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.132	.312		3.626	.001
	Customer role clarity	.500	.146	.496	3.429	.002
a. Dependent Variable: Emergent change preparedness levels						

Customer role clarity had a (B=.500, P=.002), showing that holding all factors constant, a change in one unit of customer role clarity would to a change in the dependent variable (emergent change preparedness) by 50%. It can be deduced that among the independent variables, customer role clarity has an effect on emergent change preparedness. Nonetheless, a positive beta value for the independent variable further indicated that a positive correlation existed between the study variables.

These values present the following regression model:

$$Y= \beta_0 +\beta_1 x_1$$
$$Y= 1.132+0.500$$

This study, therefore, rejects the null hypothesis. Customer role clarity, therefore, does have a statistically significant effect on emergent change preparedness among firms in Telecommunications industry in Nakuru Sub County, Kenya. This is in line with a study by Carbonell *et al.* [19] who indicated that in times of abrupt change, it is important for the organization to involve the customers and communicate to the customers effectively of what is expected of them in the organization. Establishing the roles that a customer should play in an organization paves way for more involvement in the organization. Consequently, customer role clarity acts as the foundation for other customer participation strategies to be investigated on.

CONCLUSION

Customer role clarity has a stronger relationship on emergent change preparedness. This study concludes that customers should take part in the service provision process in the organization. It further infers that customers do not know what is expected of them when sudden changes occur in the sector. The study also concludes that during abrupt changes, the customers are not certain on how to effectively use self-service options. Despite this, the customers are able to share new information related to the services provided by the organization. Additionally, the study concludes that the organization acknowledges the feedback that is provided by the customers during times of abrupt changes. In return, the customers recommend the products provided by the organization to other customers. When customer roles are clear, they are able to embrace abrupt changes more.

Telecommunication industries should not simply prepare their customers for planned change only but also for emergent change.

RECOMMENDATION

This study recommends that organizations should focus on customer role clarity by first analyzing and understanding the roles that customers should play in their organizations during the emergent change. From this understanding, the organization is able to clarify to the customers as to which roles they are to play. Customer role clarity can help to distinguish between the active and passive participants. In the self-service provision, the organizations need to increase the engagement of the customers so that the customers can become more actively involved in the organization. This increases emergent change preparedness and also lays the foundation upon which other customer participation strategies depend on. This paper proposes the study of other customer participation strategies on emergent change preparedness.

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