

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE MARKETING OF ELECTRICITY IN GHANA: A CASE STUDY OF WESTERN REGION

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Abstract

Conventional marketing wisdom holds that a effective customer service provides a company with a better understanding of its customers, competitors, and environment, which subsequently leads to customer satisfaction and eventually, superior firm performance. While researchers have explored the relationship between customer satisfaction and positive customer behaviour in different organizations, such studies in Electricity Company of Ghana has been scarce. This study investigated potential effects of customer satisfaction on customer behaviour – which translates into organization performance. In order to arrive at a valid and convergent conclusion about customer satisfaction and how it relates to factors and customer behaviour, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. Quantitative survey data was obtained from customers of the Electricity Company in the western region. 2000 customers were used to provide data for the study; and 1989 usable questionnaires were received. Descriptive statistics was used to test the hypotheses. The findings of the study supported some of the hypotheses and confirmed the proposed factors of customer satisfaction, but failed to support the fact that customers of the company are satisfied. The findings of the study confirmed that power supply, disconnection management, billing processing, services connection efficiency, customer service and information generation were the major determinants of satisfaction by electricity customers. Again, customers of the company were found to be dissatisfied with the company's services. The findings also established a positive relationship between the level of customer satisfaction and customer behaviour. As indicated by the results, satisfied customers are more likely to pay all their bills, with less resistance; complain less; appreciate genuine difficulties faced by ECG; advertise the company through word-of-mouth and be ready to pay economic tariff. The managerial implications were discussed.

Key Word: Customer behavior, customer satisfaction, customer service, Non Special Load Tariff customers, Mini Special Load Tariff customers, Special Load Tariff customers.

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INTRODUCTION

No service firm could ever exist successfully without paying due attention to the issue of customer satisfaction. For most service firms their survival is contingent on being able to acquire and retain satisfied customers over a long period of time (Rust et al. 2004; Reinartz et al. 2005; Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2008). Understanding the reasons customers purchase from a service firm therefore represents an issue of essential importance. Service research has identified a multitude of potential purchase drivers. Customers are always aiming to get maximum satisfaction from the products or services that they buy. Thus, winning in today's marketplace entails the need to build customer relationship and not just building the products. Building customer relationship requires delivering superior value over competitors to the target customers (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders & Wong 2002). Whether an organization provides services that satisfies a customer or not is determined by the feedback from the customer who uses the particular service (Kotler & Keller, 2009).

The significance of customer satisfaction to an organization is evidenced in the numerous studies that have been undertaken to investigate the relationship between customer satisfaction and other related variables. (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders & Wong 2009; Agbor, 2011). Agbor (2011) investigated the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality, and found distinctive relationship between the two variables. A study by Paul, Hennig-Thurau, Gremler, Gwinner & Wiertz (2009) also tried to investigate the relationship between satisfaction and repeat purchase. The results showed a positive link between customer satisfaction and repeat purchase. Young Han Bae (2012) also studied the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, and suggested that customer satisfaction has direct association with customer loyalty. Similarly, (Ganiyu, Uche & Adeoti (2012) did a study to find out whether satisfaction is an indicator of customer loyalty. The findings of the study supported the contention that strong relationship exist between customer satisfaction and loyalty. In another development Moshan, Nawaz, Khan, Shaukat & Aslam (2011) researched into the impact of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty and intention to switch. The results of the study revealed that customer satisfaction was positively correlated with customer loyalty and negatively correlated with customer intentions to switch. Moreover, a study in South African investigated customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in four big retail stores in King William's Town. The study identified service delays, including customer queuing as creating customer dissatisfaction. In addition, the study identified that courtesy in the part of serve providers have a high correlation with customer satisfaction.

The related literature reviewed point to the fact that customer satisfaction is a critical issue that must be given the needed consideration by all service firms. The existing literatures have clearly suggested that firms that make customer satisfaction their priority often enjoy higher repeat customers who translate their purchases into greater profitability due to increase customer loyalty” (Wicks & Roethlein, 2009). Thus customers will always prefer a product or service that gives them maximum satisfaction. This requires that organizations consistently the extent to which their services satisfy the customers and any reasons for the satisfaction or dissatisfaction

While customer satisfaction studies abound in the marketing literature, a cursory look at the background studies indicates that previous researches have limited their study to firms in competitive industries (Kotler & Keller, 2009; Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders & Wong 2002; Agbor, 2011; Ganiyu, Uche & Adeoti, 2012; Young Han Bae, 2012). Customer satisfaction studies in monopoly firms are under researched. This really creates a gap in the customer satisfaction construct. Arguably, a further study of customer satisfaction in Electricity Company of Ghana, a monopoly firm, to investigate the antecedents of customer services that determine customer satisfaction in electricity marketing and the level of customer satisfaction in monopoly industry specific contexts should prove so critical and appropriate. This is not only to contribute to the findings and understanding of the linkage between customer service and customer satisfaction but also in appreciating the determinants of satisfaction of electricity consumers and to develop a model of satisfaction in the marketing of electricity..

LITERATURE REVIEW

A company’s customers are those who either buy or use its product or service. While the term customer and consumer is sometimes used interchangeably to refer to the same thing, sometimes the two terms are used separately to mean different things. In this connection, a customer may refer to the person who does the buying of the products or service and the consumer is the person who ultimately consumes the product or uses the service (Solomon, 2009). Regarding the nature of the product of Electricity Company, defining customer to include buyers and users sounds more appropriate because in some cases the buyer of electricity is also the user, but other time the buyer may be different from the user. In this connection, customer satisfaction occurs when the buyer and/or user of the product is contented with the product or service. Satisfaction thus measures a customer’s feelings of pleasure or disappointment that he experiences from comparing a product’s

perceived performance or outcome with his expectations (Kotler & Keller, 2009). In this sense an electricity customer who derives pleasure or become happy from consumption of electricity because he feels he has been served well is said to be a satisfied person.

Again satisfaction can be determined by “the consumer’s response to the evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectations and the actual performance of the product or service as perceived after its consumption” (Tse & Wilton, 1988, p. 204). In this view, the literature considers satisfaction as a post-purchase evaluation by the consumer” (Fornell, 1992). Thus, the electricity consumer is better able to tell if the company has provided the right service after the use of electricity power. If the power is found to be stable, efficient and at the right quality and quantity over a required period of time, the customer is satisfied, otherwise he is dissatisfied. Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders & Wong (2002) also defined customer satisfaction in terms of how the product or service perceived performance matches the customer’s expectations. According to Schiffman & Kanuk (2004) Customer satisfaction is defined as “the individual’s perception of the performance of the products or services in relation to his or her expectations” p. 14)

A critical review of the literature indicates conceptualizations of customer satisfaction as both transaction-specific and cumulative (Boulding, et al., 1993; Andreassen, 2000). Conceptualizing satisfaction as transaction-specific means satisfaction is viewed as a post-purchase evaluation over a specific purchase occasion (Oliver, 1980). This type of satisfaction will require that electricity consumers use individual antecedents of satisfaction to judge the satisfaction of using electricity (Yi, 1990). These may include isolated consideration of power supply efficiency, disconnections management, billing processes, service connections, and information generation. Cumulative customer satisfaction on the other hand determines the overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experiences with a product or service over time (Fornell, 1992, Johnson & Fornell 1991). In this conceptualization, electricity customer shall evaluate satisfaction by considering the whole service environment of the company. While cumulative customer satisfaction is important in measuring the overall customer satisfaction, this paper also adopts the transaction-specific context of customer satisfaction. In this case the study should be able to appreciate the role of individual antecedents of satisfaction in the overall evaluation of customer satisfaction with the aim of developing the necessary model of satisfaction for electricity customers.

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Electricity Company, despite its monopoly status, has over the years determining to ensure customer satisfaction in the marketing of electricity product in Ghana. While it is common to find determinants of customer satisfaction in most product and service providing firms, especially those within the competitive industry ((Kotler & Keller, 2009; Agbor, 2011; Ganiyu, Uche & Adeoti, 2012; Young Han Bae, 2012), the same cannot be said of the marketing of electricity, which has monopoly status and also deal in product, which utility measurement seem a bit unique. The persistent public comments and, customers' remarks and complaints seem to suggest that meeting customer needs in the marketing of electricity in Ghana is still far from reach. This is because, what factors actually meet customers' expectations seem to be a challenge to the company. Further more customer satisfaction studies in a monopoly firm is under researched, making it difficult for the appropriate satisfaction model to be developed. With really any empirical studies to investigate the extent to which these public comments and customer complaints actually translate into dissatisfaction or otherwise of the customer, this study aims at addressing these gap and, to recommend effective ways of creating customer value; as well as developing a model of customer satisfaction for the electricity marketing in Ghana.

To be able to address the problem identified, the following research questions have been outlined for the study: 1) what are the determinants of satisfaction of ECG customers; 2) what is the level of customer satisfaction of users of electricity; 3) what are the consequences of customer satisfaction of electricity users; and 4) what customer service model is practical electricity marketing in Ghana.

To answer the questions raised, three hypotheses are proposed and tested. In this study, we attempt to test the links among six dimensions of customer satisfaction - for a summary of empirical studies that utilized the customer satisfaction scale, as well as the link between customer satisfaction and customer behavior. The first hypothesis tests the factors of customer satisfaction. The second hypothesis tests the level of customer satisfaction; while the third hypothesis measures the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer behaviour.

Hypothesis 1

Power supply, disconnection management, billing processing, services connection efficiency, customer service, and information generation do constitute the primary determinant of satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2

There is high level of satisfaction among customers of ECG

Hypothesis 3

There is significant relationship between satisfaction and behaviour of customers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

143,242 active Non Special Load Tariff (customers who use electricity for residential and some commercial purposes, other than for industrial purposes) customers of the company in the western region constitute the population for the study (ECG, Monthly Billing Report). The study takes accounts of only Non Special Load Tariff active customers. Special Load Tariff ((i.e. major customers who use electricity for industrial purposes)) and Mini SLT (consumer whose electricity usage is above residential and ordinary commercial use, but also below industrial use) customers; because the former has peculiar services characteristics; and are the most complainants. The target population also had the potential of given a fair picture of the customer services levels in the ECG. 2000 active customers, drawn from all the eleven (11) operational districts of the region were sampled for the study. The districts form a cluster for sampling respondents, and selection was in proportion to the districts' customer population. The districts were used to test the varying factors that provide satisfaction to different categories of customers, such as urban, sub-urban and rural customers. The purposive sampling method was used to select respondent from each of the districts. This was to ensure that customers selected were those who were able to respond to the questionnaire in a more realistic and less bias manner, and were also actual users of electricity.

The study addressed 33 variables altogether. Questions for the study were generated from the researchers' own experience. Customer satisfaction and outcomes were measure by a 23-item and six-item scale respectively. Customer service scale is used in this study to analyse the gap between customers' expectation versus service delivery. A five (5) Likert scale: strongly agree to strongly disagree was used in this research for all the scaled items. Zikmund (2000) observed that the Likert scale is easy to prepare and interpret, and it is also simple for respondents to answer. In addition, the scale allows for a stronger comparison and conclusions to be made (Churchill, 1983). Its seeming limitations (Ambrose, Philipp, Chauvot & Clement, 2003), this study still beliefs that the Likert scale is the best scale to use considering the research aims and data needed. In addition to the Likert scale, four-item open-ended questions were used to measure what in the customers' view, constitute factors of satisfaction.

The study required both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative approach was used to gather background information of the study, while the quantitative approach was to ensure that numerical data were ascertained to test the hypotheses. Questionnaire construct was used, and the questionnaires were administered by eight field research assistants with one field research supervisor. This was to ensure a high return rate of questionnaire. It was also to give further explanation to respondents who found certain aspects of the questionnaire difficult to understand.

Each completed questionnaire was checked immediately before computer entry to find out if there were any problems. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 11.0) was used for data analysis. Thus, frequency checks for each variable were done in order to detect the out-of-range values. Descriptive statistics including histogram, frequency, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Preliminary Analysis

A total number of 1989 out of the 2000 target sample responded to the questions, constituting 99.45% responses rate. The profile of the respondents varied from their knowledge of the electricity as a product, to the average number of years they have used electricity, and the tariff class they individually belonged to. 19% of the respondents indicated they have very good knowledge of electricity, 36.6% had good knowledge about the product and 23.7% had some amount of knowledge. Only 18.7% had virtually no knowledge about the product. This suggested that the respondents really understand what they said and recommended about the use of electricity in Ghana, and their views could be considered very useful to stakeholders.

Regarding, the number of years that these respondents had used electricity, the results showed that 29.7% had use the product for up to five years, while 28.1% had used electricity for between 6 years and ten years. AS much as 42.2% had used electricity for over ten years. Again, this is evident of the fact that respondents of the study were actually experienced and long time consumers, whose suggestions and recommendations could not be under-estimated. Finally, 65.4% of the respondents were residential customers, while 34.6% were non-residential or commercial customers. Since people who use electricity in their work places (non-residential customers) also use the product at home (residential customers), having an above average repondents of residential customers strengthens the argument for this study

*Tests of Hypotheses for Customer Satisfaction Determinants**Hypothesis 1: Factors of Customer Satisfaction*

Hypothesis 1 predicted that efficient power supply, disconnection management, billing processing, services connection efficiency, customer service and information generation would be the major determinants of satisfaction of electricity customers. The responses from the open ended questions support hypothesis 1, that the said power supply, disconnection management, billing processing, services connection efficiency, customer service and information generation would be the major determinants of satisfaction of electricity customers were factors the primarily determined satisfaction among electricity customers. When presented with open ended questions, customers' response indicated that the six factors are the main consideration for satisfaction in the use of electricity. In all the responses the six service factors were listed (with preference) among other factors. In order words, no listings of the respondents were without the six factors being listed on top.

Hypothesis 2: Level of Customer Satisfaction

Hypothesis 2 predicted a positive customer satisfaction. As illustrated by Tables 4 - 9 there was generally low level of customer satisfaction among electricity users in Ghana. The results indicated respondents' dissatisfaction for most of the factors that were considered determinants of satisfaction. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported, that customers were satisfied with the marketing of electricity in Ghana.

The individual tables highlight the degree of satisfaction of customers, in relation to the factors that determine satisfaction.

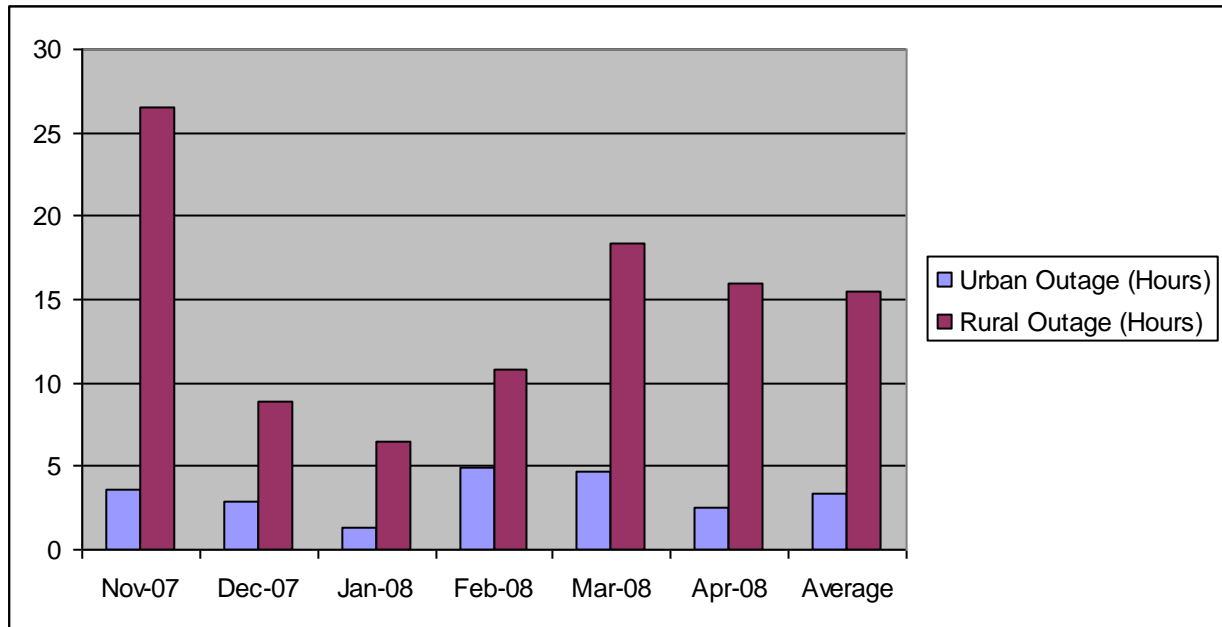
Table 1. Power Supply

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Power supply	1989	1	5	3.9186	1.1482
Restoring outage	1989	1	5	2.8195	1.2568
Response to faults	1989	1	5	3.4756	1.1645
Information about outages	1989	1	5	2.2474	1.1762

The table 1 illustrates that customers are unhappy about the power supply. The mean for all four questions confirm this fact. First, customers were in agreement power supply was not consistent (mean 3.9186; Std. 1.1482). The table also shows that customers were unhappy about the time it takes the company to restore outage supply (mean 2.8195; Std. 1.2568). Furthermore, customers believed that the company is very slow in responding to fault (mean 3.4756; Std. 1.1645), hence the usual delay in restoring power when the power goes off. Finally, customers actually disagreed to the company's approach to informing the public on plan outages.

Customers' response might be appropriately supported by figure 1 below, which shows a relatively high rate of power loss to customers, defined by power outage statistics:

Figure 1. Average Hour Power Lost per Customer - Monthly Outage Statistics for Western Region



Source: Monthly Engineering Report on Outage Statistics

Table 2. Disconnection Management

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Courtesy of disconnectors	1989	1	5	2.8632	1.2121
Disputable disconnections	1989	1	5	3.4203	1.0146
Delays in reconnections	1989	1	5	3.0478	1.1698
Pre-disconnection information	1989	1	5	3.3429	1.2207

Table 2, depicts customers position on the way ECG manages its disconnection, which has crucial impact on them. Even though the customers disagreed to the fact the disconnection personnel were not courteous (mean 2.8632; Std. 1.2121), they were of the agreed that most of the disconnections were wrongly done (3.4203; Std. 1.0146). Although customers could not be too sure of how the company deal with reconnection of affected customers (mean 3.0478; Std. 1.1698), they thought pre-disconnection information could needs some level of improvement. Thus, on the basis of the findings it could be concluded that, there is low level of satisfaction with regards to disconnection management.

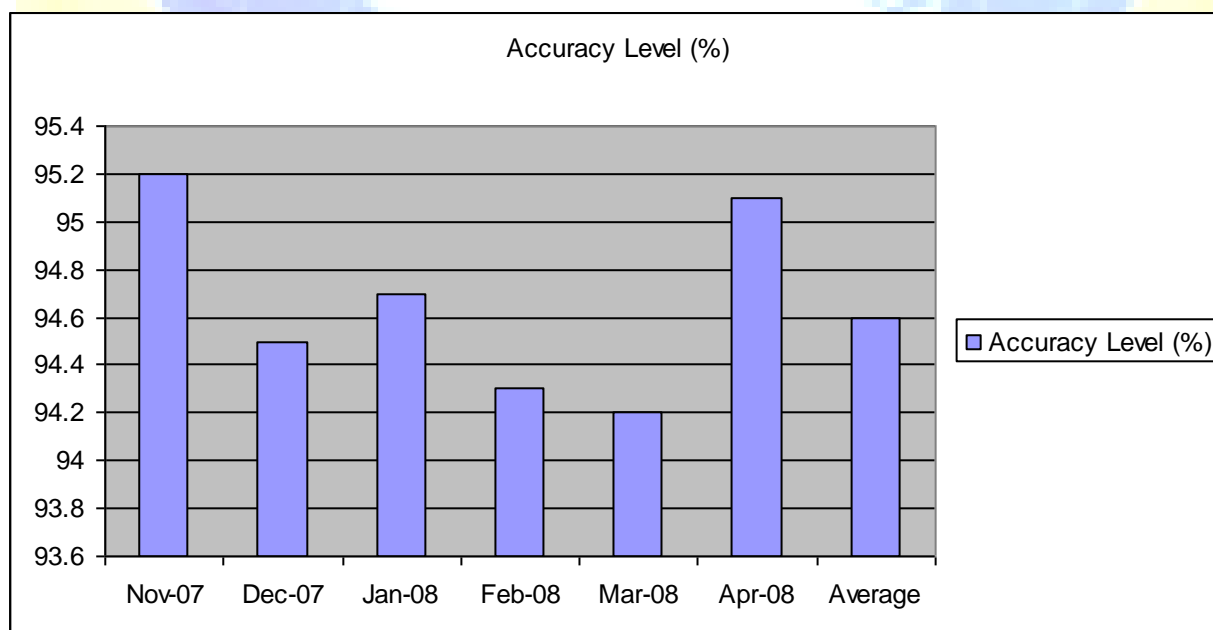
Table 3. Billing Processes

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Quality of bills	1989	1	5	3.1976	1.2031
Timely distribution of bills	1989	1	5	3.3484	1.0867
Frequency of disputed bills	1989	1	5	3.7531	0.9667
Correction of disputed bills	1989	1	5	3.4369	1.0043

Table 3 measures customers' perception of the company's billing processes. From the table 3, electricity customers had nothing much to say about the quality of bills that are produced for them (mean 3.1976; Std. 1.2031). However, they were to some extent thought that the distribution of the bills was sometimes associated with some delays (mean 3.3484; Std. 1.0867). The results also indicated that customer had high reservation about the rate of disputed bills (mean 3.7531; Std. 0.9667). Similarly, customer agreed to the fact that the time it takes to correct any disputed bills was not the best (mean 3.4369; 1.0043). Thus, the results suggested that the company's billing process was still not up to the standard that met customer expectation and thus give the customer the desired satisfaction.

This actually is evidenced in the company's billing accuracy statistics shown in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2. Average Monthly Billing Accuracy Report



Source: Monthly Customer Services Directorate Report on Billing Accuracy

Table 4. Customer Service Connection Efficiency

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cost of service connections	1989	1	5	3.9105	0.9366
Services connection procedures	1989	1	5	3.917	0.9923
Delays in services connections	1989	1	5	3.7451	1.0695

Table for depicts customers' satisfaction with regards to the level of service efficiency of the company. From the table 4, the customers believed that the company was not able to provide customer services that were efficient enough to meet customer expectation (mean 3.9105; Std. 0.9366). Their dissatisfaction stemmed from the fact that cost of receiving service is high, while at the same time, it follows a very cumbersome procedure (mean 3.917; Std. 0.9923). Moreover, the customers felt that even after incurring all the necessary costs for service, it took a relatively long time before service is offered by the company (mean 3.7451; Std. 1.0695). Thus, regarding provision f services connection, customers were once again unsatisfied with the company.

Table 5. Customer Services Environment

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Offices locations	1989	1	5	3.0995	1.3337
Complaints management	1989	1	5	3.4108	1.0384
Transaction time	1989	1	5	3.3162	0.997
Overall service impression	1989	1	5	2.816	1.2533

Table 5 presents the findings of customers' perception of the customer service environment. The table 5 suggested that the customers were indifferent in their perception about the service environment of Electricity Company. The results showed that customers find office locations quite unfriendly (mean 3.0995; Std. 1.3337). While they agreed that the company handled complaints with some level of professionalism (mean 3.4108; Std 1.0384), they felt that the transaction time at the offices of Electricity Company was a little too much (mean 3.3162; 0.997). Similarly, customers indicated that they would disagree with any suggestion that the overall customer service environment was impressive (mean 2.816; Std. 1.2533). Thus it could be concluded that customers expectation of the overall customer services environment was that of unsatisfactory.

Table 6. Information generation

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customer survey	1989	1	5	1.7607	0.9621
Customer education by durbars	1989	1	5	1.7964	0.9658

Customer education by radio	1989	1	5	2.906	1.2344
How to have information	1989	1	5	3.7486	0.9741

The findings from the table 6 depicted how customers felt about the information generation components of the company's customer service operations. As indicated by the results, information generation had not had the desired impact of improving customer satisfaction. The results showed that as far as the customers were concerned, the company hardly conducts survey to know and understand its customers better (mean 1.7607; Std. 0.9621). Regular education of customers on the company's operations by the used of community durbars was also perceived to be far below average (mean 1.7964; Std. 0.9658). In a similar vein, customer education through radio programs was could not be considered to meet expectation (mean 2.906; Std. 1.2344). Moreover, customers agreed that they could get the needed information only when they visited the offices of the company (mean 3.7486; Std. 0.9741). The findings suggested that electricity customer were not satisfied with the information generation of the company.

Hypothesis 3: Outcomes of Customer Satisfactions

Hypothesis 3 predicted that satisfaction would be a positive indicator of customer behaviour. As table 7 illustrates, the means for the relationship between customer satisfaction and behaviour is positive and significant, supporting Hypothesis 3, that satisfied customers are more likely to pay all their bills, with less resistance; complain less; appreciate genuine difficulties faced by ECG; advertise the company through word-of-mouth and be ready to pay economic tariff. The table 10 below gives a summary of the results.

Table 7. Outcomes of Customer Satisfaction

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Regular payment of bills	1989	1	5	4.086	0.9761
Willingness to pay bills	1989	1	5	3.7004	1.2891
Level of customer complaints	1989	1	5	4.1403	0.8605
Support during times of difficulty	1989	1	5	4.2594	0.684
Word-of-mouth	1989	1	5	3.9382	0.8556
Payment of economic tariff	1989	1	5	4.0166	0.9464

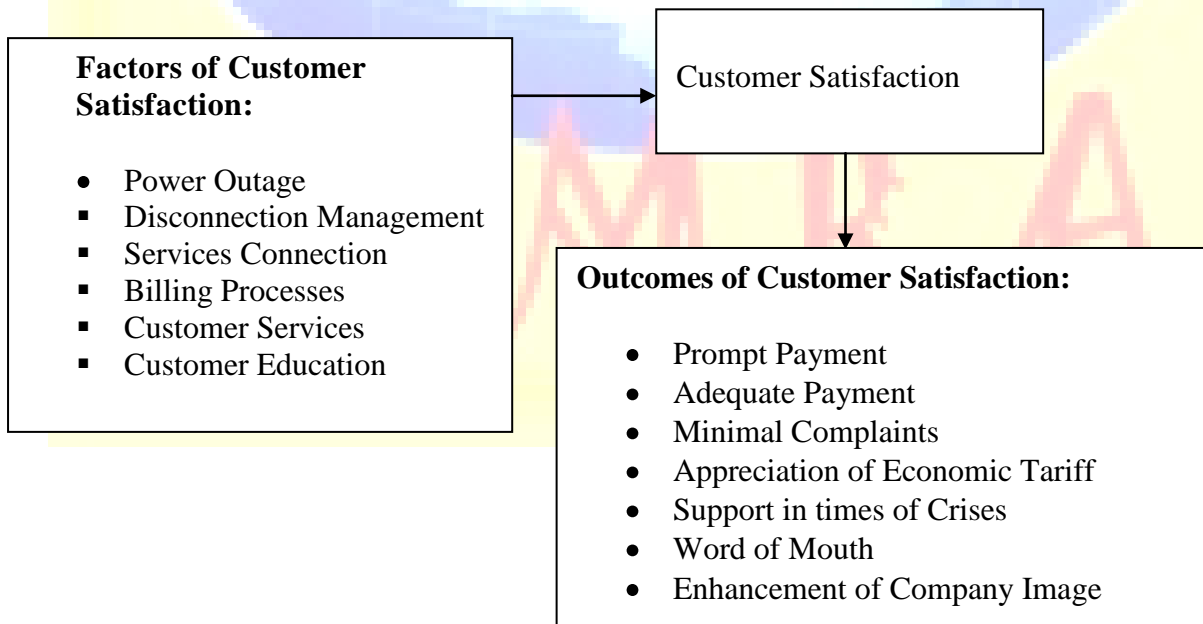
The table 10 indicates that customers would pay their bills regularly only if they are satisfied with the company's services (mean 4.086; Std. 0.9761), otherwise, they would pay with reluctance

(mean 3.7004; Std. 1.2891). Again, customer indicated they would complain less if they were satisfied with the company's services (mean 4.1403; Std. 0.8605). Also, they would understand the company in difficult times only on the basis that the company provides satisfactory services (mean 4.2594; Std. 0.684). It was also evidenced by the findings that customers would always tell friends and relatives of their services experience, especially when their expectations are met (mean 3.9382; Std. 0.8556). Finally, satisfied customers would definitely be more than ready to pay economic tariff (4.0166; Std. 0.9464). Thus, regular payment of bill, willingness to pay bills, reduced complaints, understanding the company in times of difficulty, word-of-mouth advertising and readiness to pay economic tariff could be considered as the consequences of customer satisfaction of electricity customers.

Model of Customer Satisfaction in the Marketing of Electricity in Ghana

The findings of the study no doubt provided a workable model for customer satisfaction in the electricity marketing in Ghana. All factors identified in this study were found to be the primary determinants of satisfaction. The empirical customer satisfaction model for electricity marketing displayed below has been developed on the basis of the research findings of the study.

Fig. 1: A Model of Customer Satisfaction



DISCUSSION AND POLICY DIRECTION

The analyses conducted in this study confirmed the six dimensions that influenced the satisfaction of electricity customers, which in turn, impacts on the customers behaviour toward the organization, measured by multiple financial variables (see figure 3). Thus, these should form a

workable model for electricity marketing in Ghana. Improvement in these factors may suggest that the managers of Electricity Company of Ghana recognize the need to evaluate these factors to ensure their effective management. If managers identify challenges that militate against any of the factors, corrective action can be initiated to address them with all urgency.

There is the need to improve on the existing policies and procedures on disconnection management, improve power supply and response to fault, while taking steps to employ the right caliber of staff, and given them needed and adequate training to be on top of the job. Emphasis must be on the customer, not the product (Levitt, 1960). This should repose confidence in customers, who might appreciate and bear with genuine difficulties that the company might face in its services delivery. If customers know that the company does everything to give them quality and sustainable power, they shall sincerely bear with the company on genuine faults. Customers would find it easier to pay for their bills when they know they actually used the product or service. In the face of persistent outages, customers feel cheated and sometimes refuse or delay payment as a way of demonstrating their dissatisfaction or cognitive dissonance (Kotler, 1997). This has implications on the company's revenue collection. Disconnection could be reduced with its associated costs, if power supply is stable; and this should go a long way to save the company from some operational cost and hence improve financial health of the company.

Similarly, information generation is critically linked to any successful marketing program (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). If ECG could take activities of customer education and relationship marketing seriously, the opportunities for better services delivery to customers may be enhanced. Although customer satisfaction was found to be low, this study provides some empirical evidence to suggest that better customer services performance could be achieved by the market-orientation of the company. In other words, Electricity Company of Ghana, which has a low market orientation, would need to improve, by placing more emphasis on determining and satisfying customer needs through information generation. ECG managers should emphasize customer understanding and satisfaction because this would enhance the level of market orientation, which in turn might lead to customer satisfaction, with its associated positive customer behavior to improve the company's performance. Regular customer survey should form the basis for knowing and understanding the customer, while at the same time disseminating information on the company's operations, procedures and policies to them through appropriate media. The company should also encourage suggestion from customers so as to formulate its customer services policies along lines of customer expectations.

Moreover, the analysis suggests that issues related to billing and services connections were relatively below customers' expectation. Though customers believed that the company's billing

system is one of the best, they were still not satisfied with frequent disputed bills and occasional delays in meter reading and bills distribution. The implication was that customers might lack confidence in the billing process, which might affect their attitude toward payment. Again, they might not be able to properly budget for electricity with such an erratic billing. This meant bills might be distributed at the time the customer had used his money on other equally important areas. It could be concluded that this factor might partly contribute to the huge debt owed to ECG by its customers. Payment might delay, and company's cash flow might be equally affected. If bills were done and distributed on schedule, customers could incorporate it in their monthly budgets pay on time, thereby saving the company from any cash flow problems.

With regards to services connection, customers were mainly worried about cumbersome procedures and relatively high cost of services connections. Customers also indicated by their responses that they were indeed unhappy about the undue delays in services connection even after the customer had paid for the service. Since the customer almost always wanted the easiest way possible, cumbersome procedures and undue delays were likely to compel them to look for alternatives, which usually resulted in illegality. Most customers would like to 'go it short cut' through some unscrupulous staff of the company. The result would be loss of revenue to the company, which should add to the already large amount of commercial losses of the company. This suggests that improvement in the procedures for services connection to reduce 'down time' for acquiring service would not only create satisfied customers, but also reduce commercial losses and enhance revenue collection.

Furthermore, the analyses suggest that most of the challenges that the company faces with its customers – including incessant complaints and unfriendly remarks, could be an expression of their dissatisfaction. The findings illustrated a relatively low level of satisfaction among customers. Unsatisfied customers would translate to reduced profitability, slow revenue growth and reduce pride in employees, especially the frontline staff. The customer needs and satisfaction should therefore be the priority of ECG (Drucker, 1994). Whilst doing everything to improve all the factors that determine satisfaction, there would be the need for the creation of new and mutual value between Electricity Company and individual customer. Novelty and mutuality should deepen to extend and prolong relationships, creating yet more opportunities for customer and supplier to benefit one another (Gordon 1999).

The company stands to reduce its debt level, have cooperating and understanding customers who were prepared to pay economic tariff if managers of the company initiated market orientation programs. Relationship marketing should be the core of this initiative since such marketing practice build a long-term association in which purposeful co-operation occurs; mutual dependence occurs;

and social as well as structural bonds are developed (Berry, 1983). It involves understanding the customer's needs as they go through their life cycles. In other words an effective way to have satisfied customers was to be market oriented.

Improved customer care was likely to bring about improvement in customer satisfaction and could cause an increase in profitability (Reichheld and Sasser, 1990). Increased profitability might result from regular and adequate payment of bills, willingness to pay bills, and payment of economic tariff (Buchanan and Gilles, 1990). Also satisfied customers would hardly complain, leading to savings in complaints management budget. Moreover, advertising cost would be reduced as happy customers support the company's advertisement through word-of-mouth. All company's operations should be geared towards the customer, without relegating the utmost objective of the company – profitability, to the background. The business must be seen from the point of view of its final result, that is, from the customer's point of view (Drucker, 1994). Emphasis should be on satisfying customer not just to sell electricity (Shaw, 1912). There should be managerial orientation which recognizes that business success primarily depends on identifying changing customer wants and developing products and services which match these (Dolye, 1995).

The study was limited by scope and methodology. A study of this nature should have covered the whole operational areas of Electricity Company of Ghana. Inability of the study to cover the whole operational area of the company meant generalization might not be appropriate. Future studies might consider covering the whole operational areas of the company to improve on generalization. Another limitation had to deal with the use of mean and standard deviation to test the hypotheses. While that was made possible, future research might consider using more superior methods for testing hypothesis.

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APPENDIX: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear customer,

You have been selected as one of the respondents in a survey on Customer Satisfaction

We would be grateful for your kind and honest response to each of the questions below.

ECG

Select the most appropriate from the five Scaled Question (Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Indifferent; Agree; and Strongly Agree) below. Strongly disagree indicates extreme disagreement to the statement, while strongly agree indicate extreme total agreement to the statement; and indifferent means you can neither agree nor disagree to the statement

Respondent's Details

- 1) How much knowledge do you have about electricity?
Very good knowledge () Good knowledge () Some amount of knowledge ()
No knowledge ()
- 2) On the average, how many years have you used electricity in Ghana?
Up to 5 years () 5 to 10 years () More than 10 years ()
- 3) What is your tariff class?
Residential () Non residential ()

Power Supply

- 1) The regularity of power supply is not encouraging
Strongly Disagree () Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 2) Even though we experience persistent power outage power is usually restored in the shortest possible time
Strongly Disagree () Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 3) We know faults are inevitable, but the response to fault by ECG is always slow
Strongly Disagree () Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 4) The company does well to inform us about power outage before it takes place or immediately it has occurred
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

Disconnection Management

- 5) Disconnection personnel who come to our premises to disconnect are normally courteous
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 6) A greater percentage of the disconnections done by the company are disputable
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 7) It usually takes a long time after payment of your arrears for you to be reconnected
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 8) Pre-disconnection information to the public is usually not enough
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

Billing Processes

- 9) The quality of ECG's bill is commendable
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 10) ECG's bills are usually distributed at the right time
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 11) The frequency of disputed bills is high
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 12) It always takes a relatively long time for disputed bills to be corrected
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

Services Connection Efficiency

- 13) The cost of services connection is relatively high
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 14) The procedures for services connection is too cumbersome
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 15) The time it takes to have a service connection after final payment is relatively long
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

Customer Services

- 16) The company's office locations are convenient to customers
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 17) My complaints have always been handled by the ECG officials with professionalism
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 18) Transaction time at ECG offices is usually long
Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()
- 19) Overall, I am impressed about ECG's services

Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

Information Generation

20) ECG regularly conduct a customer survey to know and understand its customers better

Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

21) We are regularly educated by ECG through public durbars in the communities

Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

22) We are regularly educated by ECG through radio programmes

Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

23) We are hardly informed by ECG except we visit their offices with complaints

Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

Outcomes of Satisfaction

28) I would pay all my bills regularly if I am given the expected services

Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

29) Sometimes I feel reluctant to pay my bills not because I do not have the money but because I am unhappy about the company's services

Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

30) I would hardly complaint if I receive a satisfactory services from the company

Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

31) If ECG can give us the right services, we would also understand them when they have genuine difficulties

Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

32) Anytime that my services expectation is met by ECG, I tell friend and relative about it

Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

33) I would be prepared to pay economic tariff only for improved services

Strongly Disagree() Disagree() Neutral() Agree() Strongly Agree()

Suggestions from Customers

23) What do you like most about ECG?

34) What do you dislike most about ECG?

35) In which area(s) of ECG's services would you like to see improvement?

36) Please offer any suggestion(s) for improvements in ECG's services