
| RESEARCH ARTICLE**Customer Service Deficits in Emerging Economies: Evidence from Cameroon's Telecommunications and Transport Sectors****Enowmanyi Samuel Ayuk¹✉, Atemnkeng Emiliene Atabong², Chima Ugbo Onwuka³ and Bunyui Ransom Bigi⁴**^{1,2,3,4}*EmSA Research Academy, Buea, Cameroon***Corresponding Author:** Enowmanyi Samuel Ayuk, **E-mail:** samuelayuk96@gmail.com**| ABSTRACT**

Customer service has become a strategic determinant of organizational competitiveness, customer retention, and sustainable business performance. Despite the growing body of research on service quality, limited empirical attention has been devoted to customer service deficits as a distinct phenomenon, particularly within emerging economies. This study addresses this gap by examining the influence of customer service deficits on customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors. Guided by the positivist research philosophy and a deductive approach, the study employed a cross-sectional survey design. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to consumers of telecommunications and transport services using purposive and convenience sampling techniques. A total of 150 valid responses were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis comprised reliability testing, exploratory factor analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression. The measurement instrument demonstrated excellent internal consistency (overall Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.935$) and satisfactory construct validity, confirming its suitability for subsequent statistical analyses. The findings reveal that customer service deficits remain a widespread concern, with respondents reporting only moderate levels of service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication quality, alongside low levels of customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience, and a high overall perception of poor customer service. Regression results further indicate that customer service quality significantly predicts customer outcomes. Specifically, service responsiveness and staff attitude emerged as significant positive predictors of customer satisfaction and customer experience, while complaint handling did not exert a statistically significant independent effect on customer trust. Communication quality contributed positively to customer trust and customer experience but did not significantly predict customer satisfaction. The study contributes to the customer service literature by conceptualizing customer service deficits as measurable organizational phenomena within an underexplored emerging economy. It also provides evidence-based managerial and policy insights for strengthening customer-centred service delivery and improving organizational competitiveness. Overall, the findings underscore that improving customer responsiveness, staff conduct, and communication practices is fundamental to enhancing customer experiences and promoting sustainable service performance in Cameroon and comparable emerging economies.

| KEYWORDS

Complaint handling; Customer experience; Customer satisfaction; Staff attitude; Customer service deficits; Customer trust; Emerging economies; Service responsiveness.

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1. Introduction**1.1 Background of the Study**

Customer service has become a defining feature of contemporary service economies, serving not only as a determinant of customer satisfaction but also as a driver of organizational credibility, competitive advantage, and long-term business sustainability. In service-intensive industries, where customers interact frequently with frontline employees, call centres, digital

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platforms, and complaint-resolution systems, the quality of these interactions often shapes customers' overall evaluation of an organization. Consequently, customer experience is influenced not only by the technical performance of a service but also by the responsiveness, communication, empathy, and professionalism demonstrated throughout the service encounter (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988).

As competition intensifies, customer service has evolved from a peripheral operational function into a strategic capability through which organizations create value, build customer trust, and strengthen long-term relationships. While many organizations in developed economies have institutionalized customer-centric practices and established measurable customer service standards, the situation is often different in emerging economies. In many developing contexts, customer service remains inconsistently implemented, weakly regulated, and secondary to operational service delivery, creating a disconnect between service availability and customers' actual service experience.

These challenges are particularly evident in high-contact industries such as telecommunications and transport, where customers interact with service providers regularly and often have limited alternatives. Telecommunications services facilitate communication, digital transactions, and access to information, while transport services support personal mobility, commerce, and economic activity. In both sectors, customers evaluate service providers not only on whether the core service functions effectively but also on the quality of interactions surrounding service delivery, including responsiveness, complaint resolution, staff behaviour, and communication. Consequently, technical service performance alone is insufficient to guarantee positive customer experiences.

Cameroon provides a particularly relevant context for examining these issues. As an emerging economy with a rapidly expanding service sector, the country relies heavily on telecommunications and transport services for both social and economic activities. Despite their importance, these sectors are frequently associated with concerns regarding delayed responses, ineffective complaint handling, poor communication, discourteous staff behaviour, and limited organizational accountability. Although such concerns are commonly reflected in consumer experiences, media discourse, and public commentary, they remain insufficiently examined through rigorous empirical research within the Cameroonian context.

Existing studies in Cameroon have established that service quality influences important customer outcomes, particularly within the telecommunications sector. For example, Ngambi and Abamukong (2020) reported that service quality significantly affects customer satisfaction among mobile telephony users. However, their findings also indicated that responsiveness—one of the most fundamental dimensions of customer service—remained comparatively weak. Similarly, studies conducted within Cameroon's transport and logistics sectors suggest that customer satisfaction depends not only on the technical delivery of services but also on customers' experiences throughout the service process (Diangha, Sambilla, & Nwiyoh, 2024; Mungho, 2024). Collectively, these studies demonstrate the importance of service quality while simultaneously revealing the need for a more focused investigation into the customer-facing dimensions of service delivery.

This observation exposes an important gap in the existing literature. Previous studies have generally examined service quality as a broad organizational construct, paying relatively little attention to what this study conceptualizes as customer service deficits: persistent shortcomings in the relational and human dimensions of service delivery. These deficits include delayed responses to customer enquiries, ineffective complaint resolution, poor staff attitudes, inadequate communication, and weak customer-centred practices. Unlike general service quality, which encompasses both technical and functional aspects of service delivery, customer service deficits specifically capture failures in how customers are treated, informed, supported, and engaged throughout the service experience.

The distinction is particularly important within Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors because customer interactions are continuous rather than occasional. Repeated exposure to inadequate customer service may gradually influence customer satisfaction, trust, and overall service experience while shaping broader perceptions of organizational credibility and fairness. Understanding these relational deficiencies is therefore essential for improving customer outcomes and strengthening service delivery within emerging economies.

Against this background, the present study investigates customer service deficits in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors. Specifically, it examines how service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication quality influence customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience, while also comparing customer service perceptions between the two sectors. By shifting attention from broad measures of service quality to the more specific concept of customer service deficits, the study contributes to the growing body of customer service literature and provides empirical evidence from a context that remains underrepresented in international scholarship.

Ultimately, this study proceeds from the premise that access to service should not be mistaken for quality of service, and that the presence of service providers does not necessarily guarantee the presence of customer care. In sectors as socially and economically significant as telecommunications and transport, understanding the nature and consequences of customer service

deficits is essential not only for advancing academic knowledge but also for informing managerial practice and public policy aimed at improving service delivery in Cameroon and other emerging economies.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Customer service is widely recognized as a key determinant of customer satisfaction, trust, and organizational competitiveness. However, despite continued expansion of essential services in many emerging economies, the customer-oriented aspects of service delivery often remain underdeveloped. As a result, customers frequently experience poor responsiveness, ineffective complaint handling, inadequate communication, and discourteous treatment, even where services are technically available. This challenge is particularly evident in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors, which play a critical role in communication, mobility, and economic activity. Although these sectors have expanded considerably, they continue to attract frequent customer complaints relating to delayed responses, unresolved grievances, poor frontline interactions, and limited accountability. While such concerns are widely expressed by consumers, they have received relatively little systematic empirical investigation.

Existing studies in Cameroon have shown that service quality influences customer satisfaction within telecommunications and transport-related contexts (Ngambi & Abamukong, 2020; Mungho, 2024). However, these studies have primarily examined service quality as a broad construct without specifically investigating **customer service deficits** as a distinct dimension of service delivery. Consequently, limited empirical evidence exists on how deficiencies in service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication quality influence customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience. Likewise, little is known about whether customer service perceptions differ significantly between the telecommunications and transport sectors.

This gap presents both scholarly and practical challenges. From a research perspective, it limits understanding of the relational dimensions of service delivery in emerging economies. From a managerial and policy perspective, the absence of empirical evidence makes it difficult for organizations and regulators to design effective strategies for improving customer service, strengthening consumer confidence, and enhancing organizational accountability.

Against this background, this study investigates customer service deficits in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors. Specifically, it examines the influence of service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication quality on customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience, while also comparing customer service perceptions between the two sectors. In doing so, the study addresses an important gap in the literature and contributes empirical evidence to support improved customer service management and policy development in emerging economies.

1.3 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to examine customer service deficits in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors and to assess how such deficits shape customer experience within the broader context of an emerging economy.

To achieve this broad aim, the study is guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the extent of customer service deficits perceived by consumers in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors.
2. To examine the relationship between customer service deficits and customer satisfaction in the selected sectors.
3. To determine the effect of service responsiveness on customer trust in service providers.
4. To evaluate the influence of complaint handling and staff attitude on overall customer experience.
5. To compare customer perceptions of service delivery between the telecommunications and transport sectors in Cameroon.

These objectives are intentionally structured to move the study beyond general dissatisfaction narratives and toward a more rigorous understanding of the specific dimensions through which customer service is experienced, evaluated, and judged by consumers.

1.4 Research Question

In line with the objectives of the study, the following research question guide the investigation:

Research Question

To what extent do customer service deficits affect customer experience in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

Because this study adopts a quantitative approach, the following hypotheses are formulated to guide the empirical analysis:

Main Hypothesis

H1: Customer service deficits have a significant negative effect on customer experience in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors.

Specific Hypotheses

H2: Service responsiveness has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors.

H3: Effective complaint handling has a significant positive effect on customer trust in service providers.

H4: Staff attitude has a significant positive effect on overall customer experience.

H5: Communication quality has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction.

H6: There is a significant difference in customer service perceptions between the telecommunications and transport sectors in Cameroon.

These hypotheses are grounded in service quality scholarship, which consistently shows that customer evaluations are shaped not only by what organizations deliver, but also by how they deliver it (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2018). In the present study, these relationships are examined within a context where customer service itself is under scrutiny as a potentially weak or underdeveloped organizational function.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study makes important theoretical, practical, and policy contributions. From an academic perspective, it extends the customer service literature by examining customer service deficits as a distinct construct rather than treating them solely as a component of general service quality. In doing so, it enriches understanding of how deficiencies in responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication influence customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience within the context of an emerging economy.

The study is also significant because it provides empirical evidence from Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors, two service industries that are central to economic and social life but remain relatively underrepresented in customer service research. By comparing customer perceptions across both sectors, the study broadens knowledge of service delivery challenges in essential service industries.

Practically, the findings will assist telecommunications and transport service providers, customer service managers, and organizational leaders in identifying critical areas requiring improvement. The evidence generated may support the development of more customer-centred service strategies, strengthen customer relationships, and enhance organizational competitiveness.

The study also offers valuable insights for policymakers, regulators, and consumer protection agencies by providing empirical evidence that can inform customer service standards, regulatory oversight, and initiatives aimed at improving service quality and organizational accountability.

Finally, by focusing on customer service within an emerging economy, the study contributes to the broader discourse on service delivery in developing countries. The findings provide a foundation for future research while offering evidence that may be relevant to other emerging economies facing similar customer service challenges.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study is delimited conceptually, geographically, sectorally, and methodologically.

Conceptually, the study focuses on customer service deficits as they relate to the customer-facing dimensions of service delivery. Particular attention is given to variables such as responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, communication quality, and related indicators of customer-oriented service behavior. The study does not attempt to evaluate every aspect of organizational

performance or technical infrastructure in the selected sectors. Rather, it concentrates on those dimensions of service that directly shape customer experience.

Sectorally, the study is limited to Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors. These sectors are selected because they represent high-contact service environments in which customer interaction is frequent, consequential, and often unavoidable. Their centrality to everyday life also makes them particularly suitable for investigating how customer service is perceived and experienced in practice.

Geographically, the study is situated within Cameroon, which serves as the empirical setting through which broader questions about customer service in emerging economies are explored.

Methodologically, the study adopts a quantitative research design, relying on structured responses from consumers who use telecommunications and transport services. This approach enables the study to measure perceptions, test relationships, and generate empirical evidence concerning the nature and implications of customer service deficits.

Like most perception-based studies, this research is also limited by the fact that it captures service experiences from the standpoint of the consumer rather than from internal organizational processes. However, this does not weaken the relevance of the study. On the contrary, because customer service is ultimately evaluated through customer experience, consumer perception remains one of the most legitimate and analytically meaningful points of entry into the study of service delivery.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Background

2.1.1 Customer Service

Customer service refers broadly to the range of interactions, support processes, and relational practices through which organizations engage with customers before, during, and after service delivery. It includes not only the direct provision of assistance but also the manner in which organizations communicate, respond, guide, reassure, and resolve customer concerns. In service industries especially, customer service functions as one of the most visible and consequential expressions of organizational behavior because it shapes how consumers interpret both the quality and credibility of the provider.

In marketing and service management, customer service is often understood as a strategic dimension of customer relationship management rather than a peripheral administrative function. It is central to customer retention, trust formation, loyalty, and long-term business sustainability (Kotler, Keller, & Chernev, 2022). This is particularly true in contexts where service encounters are repeated and relational rather than one-time and transactional. In such settings, customers do not merely evaluate whether a service was delivered; they also evaluate how they were treated in the process.

The distinction between technical service performance and customer service is important. A firm may provide a functioning product or service while still delivering a poor customer experience if it fails to respond to complaints, communicate effectively, or demonstrate concern for the customer's needs. This means that customer service is not reducible to efficiency or access alone. It also involves responsiveness, empathy, assurance, professionalism, and the organization's willingness to treat the customer as a valued stakeholder rather than merely a source of revenue.

Within this study, customer service is understood as the human and organizational interface of service delivery, the set of practices through which customers experience care, attention, communication, and support in their interactions with service providers. This understanding is especially relevant in the telecommunications and transport sectors, where customers depend not only on the availability of services, but also on the quality of engagement that surrounds their use.

2.1.2 Customer Service Deficits

While customer service is often discussed in terms of quality, excellence, or strategic value, the present study is concerned more specifically with customer service deficits. The term is used here to describe observable weaknesses or inadequacies in the customer-oriented dimensions of service delivery. These deficits may manifest through delayed or absent responses, ineffective complaint handling, discourteous treatment, weak communication, poor follow-up, lack of empathy, and a broader absence of customer-centered service culture.

The concept is analytically useful because it allows the study to move beyond the broad and sometimes overextended language of "poor service" and focus more precisely on the relational failures embedded in service encounters. Not every service problem is a customer service problem. A network outage, for example, may be a technical issue; however, how the provider communicates during the outage, whether customer complaints are acknowledged, and whether users are treated with respect and urgency are customer service issues. In this sense, customer service deficits refer not only to service failure, but to the quality of organizational response to customers within and after service failure.

This distinction matters particularly in emerging economies, where firms may often succeed in expanding access to services without developing corresponding service ethics or customer-oriented institutional cultures. Under such conditions, customers may receive the service in a minimal functional sense while still experiencing indifference, exclusion, or frustration in the service process. Customer service deficits therefore reflect more than isolated inefficiencies; they may also point to deeper organizational norms in which the customer is not treated as central to service value creation.

In the context of this study, customer service deficits are operationalized through dimensions such as responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication quality, all of which represent measurable indicators of how customers experience the service relationship.

2.1.3 Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is one of the most extensively studied constructs in marketing and service management literature. At its core, it refers to the customer's overall evaluative judgment of a service experience based on the extent to which the service meets or falls short of expectations. Satisfaction is therefore not simply an emotional reaction; it is also a cognitive assessment formed through comparison between expected and actual service performance.

The significance of customer satisfaction lies in its well-established relationship with key organizational outcomes such as customer loyalty, trust, repeat patronage, positive word-of-mouth, and reduced switching behavior (Oliver, 2014). In service settings, satisfaction is especially sensitive to the quality of the service encounter because customers often assess not only what they received, but also how they were treated during the process. A service may be technically available yet still produce dissatisfaction if the interaction surrounding it is frustrating, dismissive, or poorly managed.

In many emerging-market service contexts, customer satisfaction is often constrained not merely by operational shortcomings but by the customer's perception that the provider is unresponsive or unconcerned. This makes customer satisfaction a particularly relevant dependent outcome for this study. If customer service deficits are widespread in the sectors under investigation, one would reasonably expect them to be associated with lower levels of satisfaction among consumers.

Within this paper, customer satisfaction refers to the customer's overall level of contentment with the service experience as shaped by the quality-of-service interaction and organizational response.

2.1.4 Customer Trust

Customer trust refers to the consumer's confidence in the reliability, integrity, and dependability of a service provider. It reflects the extent to which customers believe that an organization will act competently, fairly, and in their interest during service delivery and in moments of difficulty or uncertainty. Trust is particularly important in sectors where service use is repeated, essential, and difficult to avoid conditions that apply strongly to both telecommunications and transport.

In service relationships, trust is not built solely through product performance; it is also cultivated through communication, transparency, responsiveness, and the perceived willingness of the provider to resolve problems when they occur. A provider that ignores customer complaints, offers little clarity during service disruptions, or treats customers dismissively may undermine trust even if its core service remains available. In this sense, trust is closely tied to the customer-facing dimensions of service behavior.

Scholars have long argued that trust is a crucial intermediary between service quality and long-term customer commitment, especially in contexts where consumers must repeatedly rely on the same providers over time (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In environments where customer service is weak, trust may erode gradually and normalize a more cynical or defensive customer orientation. This makes trust an important variable in the present study, particularly in relation to dimensions such as complaint handling and responsiveness.

2.1.5 Customer Experience

Customer experience is a broader and more integrative concept than customer satisfaction. It refers to the totality of the customer's perceptions, emotions, judgments, and interactions across the service journey. This includes not only the point of service consumption, but also the moments before, during, and after the service encounter. Customer experience is therefore shaped by multiple touchpoints, including staff behavior, communication systems, complaint procedures, waiting times, problem resolution, and the overall ease or difficulty of interacting with the service provider.

The growing prominence of customer experience in management scholarship reflects an increasing recognition that customers do not consume services in fragmented pieces. Rather, they interpret service encounters holistically. A provider may deliver a technically functional service but still create a negative customer experience if the process is stressful, opaque, or demeaning.

Conversely, even when disruptions occur, a provider may still preserve a positive experience through respectful treatment, transparency, and effective support.

For the purposes of this study, customer experience is treated as a broad evaluative outcome that captures how customers make sense of their interactions with telecommunications and transport providers. It serves as a useful dependent construct because it allows the study to capture not only isolated moments of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, but the wider relational meaning of service encounters.

2.1.6 Service Delivery in Emerging Economies

The study of service delivery in emerging economies requires attention to structural and institutional realities that often differ significantly from those in more mature market environments. In many emerging economies, service sectors operate under conditions of infrastructural strain, institutional inconsistency, limited regulatory enforcement, high consumer dependence, and varying levels of professionalization. These conditions shape not only what services can be delivered, but also how they are delivered and experienced.

A recurring issue in such contexts is the gap between market expansion and service culture. Firms may scale rapidly in terms of access, subscriptions, routes, or customer base without simultaneously developing strong systems of accountability, complaint handling, customer communication, and service ethics. This can produce service environments in which customers are formally included in the market but weakly recognized in practice. In such settings, the customer may be essential to the business model while remaining peripheral to the organization's service culture.

This structural context is highly relevant to Cameroon, where the growth and visibility of key service sectors do not always appear to have translated into corresponding improvements in customer-facing service behavior. Understanding customer service deficits in such a context therefore requires not only a firm-level perspective, but also a sensitivity to the broader institutional environment in which service interactions occur.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Servqual Theory

This study is primarily anchored in the SERVQUAL model, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), which remains one of the most influential frameworks for assessing service quality from the customer's perspective. The model proposes that customers evaluate service quality based on the gap between their expectations and their perceptions of actual service performance. It identifies five key dimensions through which service quality is commonly judged: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles.

Among these dimensions, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy are especially relevant to the present study because they speak directly to the customer-facing and relational dimensions of service delivery. Responsiveness concerns the willingness of employees or organizations to help customers promptly and effectively. Assurance relates to the competence, courtesy, and trustworthiness conveyed by service personnel. Empathy reflects the extent to which customers feel understood, respected, and individually attended to. Together, these dimensions provide a useful conceptual basis for understanding what is often missing when customers report that "there is no customer service."

The relevance of SERVQUAL to this study lies in its ability to translate abstract frustrations into measurable service dimensions. Rather than treating customer dissatisfaction as vague or anecdotal, the framework allows the study to examine specific areas in which service providers may be underperforming. In this sense, SERVQUAL offers a robust theoretical lens through which customer service deficits can be conceptualized, measured, and empirically tested.

At the same time, this study extends the logic of SERVQUAL by focusing not only on general service quality but more specifically on deficits in customer-oriented service behavior. This allows the study to retain the strengths of the framework while directing analytical attention to the particular relational failures that appear especially salient in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors.

2.2.2 Expectation-Confirmation Perspective

Although SERVQUAL serves as the primary theoretical anchor of this study, the logic of Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) also offers useful support. ECT suggests that customer satisfaction is shaped by the degree to which actual service performance confirms or disconfirms prior expectations (Oliver, 1980). When customers expect responsiveness, respectful treatment, and timely support but encounter indifference or poor communication instead, dissatisfaction is likely to emerge.

This perspective is relevant because many of the frustrations associated with customer service are not necessarily rooted in unrealistic expectations, but in the failure of providers to meet basic expectations of attentiveness and care. In this sense, customer service deficits can be understood as recurring forms of negative disconfirmation. The inclusion of this perspective

therefore strengthens the explanatory basis of the study, particularly in relation to customer satisfaction and customer experience.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Empirical Studies on Service Quality and Customer Outcomes

A substantial body of empirical research has established that service quality is a major determinant of customer satisfaction, trust, loyalty, and repurchase intentions across service industries. Although scholars have approached the concept from different theoretical and methodological angles, a consistent finding in the literature is that the way customers are treated within the service encounter significantly shapes how they evaluate service providers. This is especially evident in studies grounded in the SERVQUAL tradition, where dimensions such as responsiveness, empathy, reliability, and assurance repeatedly emerge as important predictors of customer satisfaction and broader service evaluations.

For example, empirical studies across a range of service contexts have shown that responsiveness and empathy are often among the strongest relational drivers of positive customer experience, particularly in environments where customers depend on providers repeatedly and where service disruptions are likely to occur. In such settings, customers tend to evaluate organizations not only on whether services are delivered, but also on whether providers communicate clearly, resolve issues promptly, and demonstrate a credible concern for customer welfare. These findings are important for the present study because they reinforce the idea that customer service is not merely an accessory to service delivery, but one of its core evaluative dimensions.

At the same time, the literature also suggests that customer dissatisfaction is often linked less to the mere occurrence of service failure than to the way firms respond to failure. This distinction is especially important in understanding customer service deficits. In other words, service interruptions, delays, or inconveniences may be tolerated to some extent by customers, but poor communication, indifference, dismissive staff attitudes, and unresolved complaints often produce much deeper dissatisfaction. This insight is particularly relevant to sectors such as telecommunications and transport, where interruptions and uncertainty are common and where the quality of provider response becomes central to the customer's judgment of the service.

2.3.2 Empirical Studies in Emerging Economies

The study of service delivery in emerging economies has increasingly drawn scholarly attention, particularly as service sectors continue to expand under conditions of infrastructural strain, regulatory inconsistency, and uneven organizational capacity. Empirical studies from emerging-market contexts have generally confirmed the importance of service quality for customer outcomes, but they also reveal that the determinants and expressions of customer satisfaction are often shaped by contextual realities that differ from those found in more mature market environments.

One recurring finding in this literature is that customer expectations in emerging economies are often mediated by broader institutional and infrastructural conditions. In many cases, customers may continue using services despite dissatisfaction because alternatives are limited, switching costs are high, or service dependence is unavoidable. This creates a situation in which poor service may persist without necessarily producing immediate market correction. As a result, customer dissatisfaction may become normalized, and low standards of customer care may endure even in highly visible service sectors.

Empirical evidence from African service environments has similarly shown that while service quality dimensions such as reliability and responsiveness remain important, organizational responsiveness is often inconsistent and weakly institutionalized. For instance, a study on rapid bus transit users in Dar es Salaam found that responsiveness, empathy, reliability, and tangibility had significant positive effects on customer satisfaction, underscoring the relevance of customer-facing service behavior in transport settings. This finding is important because it demonstrates that even in infrastructure-dependent sectors, the customer's evaluative experience is strongly influenced by relational dimensions of service.

What emerges from this literature is a broader recognition that in emerging economies, service delivery must be understood not only as a technical or operational issue, but also as a cultural and organizational one. This aligns closely with the present study's concern that the challenge in Cameroon may not be limited to weak service performance in general, but may involve a more specific deficit in customer-oriented service culture.

2.3.3 Empirical Studies in the Telecommunications Sector

The telecommunications sector has been one of the most frequently studied service industries in customer satisfaction and service quality research, largely because of its high-contact nature, rapid technological change, and centrality to contemporary economic and social life. Empirical studies in this sector consistently show that customer satisfaction is influenced not only by network performance and pricing, but also by customer service factors such as responsiveness, communication, support availability, and complaint resolution.

This is particularly relevant because telecommunications services are often used continuously and intensively. Customers interact with providers not only when purchasing services, but also when activating accounts, resolving technical issues, seeking assistance, making digital payments, and responding to service disruptions. As a result, customer service becomes one of the most visible and consequential dimensions of service delivery in the sector.

In the Cameroonian context, Ngambi and Abamukong (2020) provide one of the most relevant empirical contributions. Their study, based on data from 386 mobile telephony users across Yaoundé, Douala, Bamenda, and Buea, found that service quality had a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction in the mobile telecommunications sector. However, one of the most striking findings of their study is that responsiveness emerged as the least effective determinant of customer satisfaction, suggesting that although service quality matters, customer care and organizational response may be among the weakest aspects of sector performance. This finding is highly significant for the present study because it points to a potential gap between functional service provision and customer-oriented service delivery.

Similarly, other work on Cameroon's mobile telecommunications industry has shown that customer service remains a meaningful determinant of satisfaction, even when technological and infrastructural variables are taken into account. Research on technological innovation and customer satisfaction in the sector found that customer service, alongside signal quality and network coverage, significantly influenced users' satisfaction, reinforcing the idea that technical service performance alone is insufficient to secure positive customer evaluations. Taken together, these studies suggest that the telecommunications sector in Cameroon is not only a technically mediated industry, but also a deeply relational one in which the quality of provider-customer interaction matters significantly.

Yet, despite these contributions, much of the telecommunication's literature still tends to frame customer outcomes through the broader lens of service quality rather than focusing directly on the more specific notion of customer service deficits. The present study seeks to extend this literature by placing explicit analytical emphasis on those dimensions of service delivery that customers most readily experience as neglect, indifference, or weak organizational care.

2.3.4 Empirical Studies in the Transport Sector

Compared to telecommunications, the transport sector has received somewhat less attention in mainstream customer service scholarship, particularly in African and emerging-economy contexts. Yet transport is one of the most socially visible and experientially immediate service sectors, making it a particularly valuable site for understanding customer service practices. In transport settings, customers often evaluate service providers not only on movement from one point to another, but also on punctuality, communication, staff conduct, safety, clarity of information, problem handling, and general treatment. Empirical research in transport services has shown that customer satisfaction is significantly influenced by both technical and relational service dimensions. Studies have found that issues such as time efficiency, accessibility, information provision, staff courtesy, comfort, and responsiveness play important roles in shaping passenger evaluations of service quality. In many cases, poor treatment by staff or poor communication during delays may have as much impact on customer dissatisfaction as the delay itself.

This pattern is also visible in recent transport studies from Cameroon. Mungho (2024), in a study of inter-urban transport services in Buea, found that service quality had a measurable effect on customer buying Behaviour, though the findings also implied that a substantial proportion of customer decisions were shaped by other factors related to competence, courtesy, credibility, and loyalty. This is relevant because it suggests that transport users do not evaluate services solely on availability or price, but also on the broader quality of the service relationship.

Likewise, a more recent study of interurban transport in Yaoundé using the SERVQUAL framework found that although some dimensions such as assurance and responsiveness performed relatively well, significant weaknesses remained in areas such as cleanliness, comfort, timeliness, and service dependability. These findings suggest that transport service experiences in Cameroon are multi-dimensional and that customer satisfaction is shaped by a combination of operational and relational factors.

Beyond Cameroon, transport research in comparable emerging-market settings points in the same direction. For instance, evidence from Tanzania's rapid bus transit system shows that responsiveness, empathy, reliability, and tangibility significantly influence customer satisfaction among transport users. Similar evidence from Nigeria and Algeria has also shown that transport users attach considerable importance to service quality dimensions such as communication, accessibility, customer care, safety, and time efficiency. Collectively, these findings reinforce the view that transport is not merely a logistical sector but a customer-facing service environment in which service culture matters deeply.

2.3.5 Empirical Studies in Cameroon and Related Service Contexts

Although direct studies on customer service deficits in Cameroon remain limited, a number of empirical works from related service contexts help to illuminate the broader terrain in which the present study is situated. Existing research from banking,

retail, logistics, and supply chain contexts generally confirms that customer-facing service quality matters significantly for customer outcomes.

For instance, a study on logistics companies in Cameroon found that aspects of service-related system quality significantly influenced customer satisfaction, suggesting that even in operationally driven service environments, customers remain sensitive to the quality of their service experience. Similarly, research conducted in a Cameroonian business setting found that service quality dimensions such as responsiveness, reliability, and empathy played an important role in shaping customer satisfaction. These studies, while not focused directly on telecommunications or transport, reinforce the broader proposition that relational service dimensions remain central to how customers evaluate organizations.

What is notable, however, is that most of these studies frame the issue through the established language of service quality and customer satisfaction rather than directly interrogating the possibility of a more systemic customer service deficit. That is, they tell us that better service is associated with better outcomes, but they do not fully address the question of whether certain service environments are characterized by a persistent weakness in customer-centered service culture itself. This is precisely the conceptual and empirical space that the present study seeks to occupy.

2.4 Research Gap

The empirical literature reviewed above makes two things clear. First, customer-facing dimensions of service delivery such as responsiveness, communication, empathy, and complaint handling, matter significantly for customer satisfaction, trust, and broader service evaluations. Second, existing studies in Cameroon and comparable emerging-market contexts confirm that service quality is an important determinant of customer outcomes across both telecommunications and transport-related settings.

However, despite these contributions, an important gap remains. Most existing studies have approached the issue through the broad constructs of service quality, customer satisfaction, or customer loyalty, often without isolating customer service deficits as a distinct and analytically meaningful phenomenon. As a result, the literature has tended to emphasize whether services perform well, but has paid comparatively less attention to whether customers are actually being treated with care, responsiveness, and institutional seriousness. In contexts where public frustration appears to be directed not only at technical service failure but also at organizational indifference, this distinction becomes especially important.

A second gap concerns sectoral integration. Existing studies in Cameroon have generally focused on single sectors or isolated service contexts, particularly telecommunications or logistics, without offering a more integrated empirical assessment across major high-contact service sectors. Yet telecommunications and transport are two of the most visible and socially embedded service industries in the country, making them particularly valuable for understanding how customer service deficits manifest in everyday consumer life.

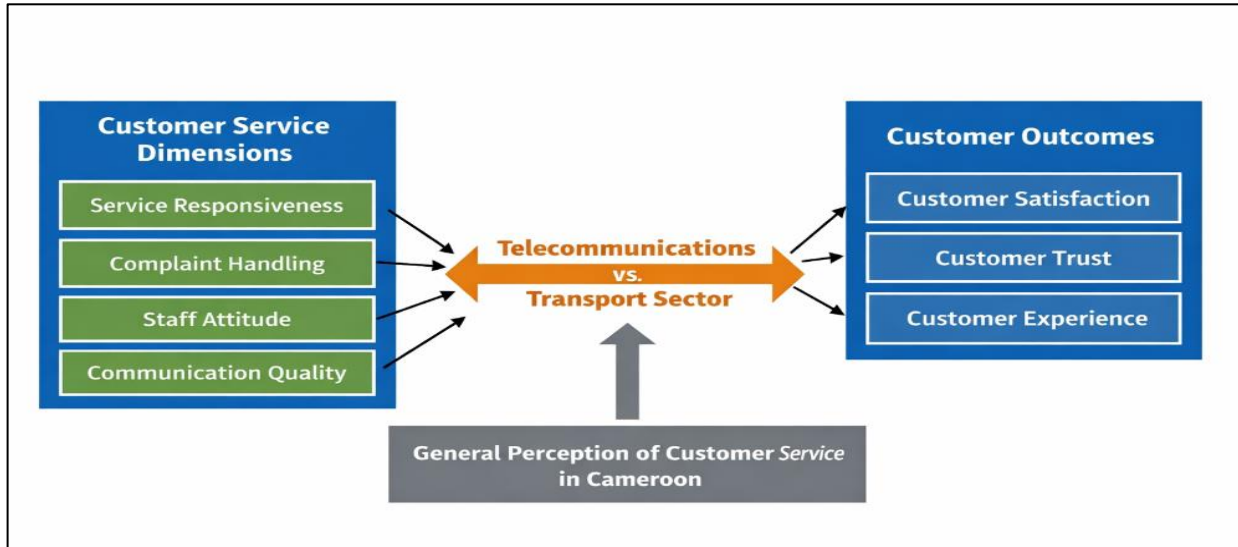
A third gap is methodological and contextual. There remains limited quantitative evidence specifically examining how customer service deficits influence broader dimensions of customer experience in Cameroon. While prior studies have shown that service quality affects satisfaction, there is still insufficient empirical work that measures customer service deficits directly and examines their implications across two essential sectors within the wider context of an emerging economy.

This study addresses these gaps by providing a focused quantitative examination of customer service deficits in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors. In doing so, it contributes to the literature by shifting attention from generalized service quality to the more specific customer-oriented failures that may define service experience in these sectors.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on the reviewed literature and the research hypotheses, this study proposes a conceptual framework that illustrates the relationship between customer service dimensions and customer outcomes within the context of Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors. As shown in Figure 3.1, service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication quality are conceptualized as key dimensions of customer service, which are expected to influence customer satisfaction, customer trust, and overall customer experience. The framework also incorporates sector type (telecommunications versus transport) as a comparative variable, while general perception of customer service in Cameroon provides contextual grounding for the analysis.

Diagram1: Conceptual Framework of Customer Service Deficits and Customer Outcomes in Cameroon's Telecommunications and Transport Sectors



Source: Author's Conceptualization (2026)

2.6 Hypothesis Development

2.6.1 Customer Service Deficits and Customer Experience

Customer experience is shaped by the cumulative quality of interactions that customers have with service providers across the service journey. In service industries, especially those characterized by repeated and unavoidable customer contact, customer experience is rarely formed through technical service performance alone. Rather, it emerges through a combination of functional delivery and relational treatment. This means that when service providers are unresponsive, fail to communicate effectively, handle complaints poorly, or display dismissive attitudes toward customers, the customer's overall experience is likely to deteriorate.

Existing service literature supports this relationship by showing that customers interpret service encounters holistically, often attaching considerable weight to how they are treated during moments of inconvenience or uncertainty (Zeithaml et al., 2018). In practical terms, a customer may tolerate service disruption more readily than organizational indifference. This is particularly relevant in sectors such as telecommunications and transport, where delays, interruptions, and service uncertainties are common. In such settings, the absence of meaningful customer care may become a central determinant of negative customer experience.

Within the context of Cameroon, where consumer frustration often appears to center on the perceived lack of concern shown by service providers, it is reasonable to expect that customer service deficits will have a direct and negative influence on how customers evaluate their service experience.

H1: Customer service deficits have a significant negative effect on customer experience in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors.

2.6.2 Service Responsiveness and Customer Satisfaction

Service responsiveness refers to the willingness and ability of service providers to respond promptly and effectively to customer needs, requests, and concerns. It is one of the most frequently emphasized dimensions in service quality literature because it reflects whether customers feel seen, heard, and attended to in real time. In practical terms, responsiveness is often experienced through waiting time, speed of assistance, availability of support channels, and the promptness with which service problems are addressed.

Empirical studies have consistently found that responsiveness is positively associated with customer satisfaction because it reduces frustration and enhances the customer's perception of organizational attentiveness (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Ngambi & Abamukong, 2020). When customers encounter delays, poor follow-up, or silence from service providers, dissatisfaction often follows—not simply because a problem exists, but because the customer perceives a lack of urgency or concern.

This relationship is particularly relevant in the telecommunications and transport sectors, where service interruptions and customer queries are common. In both sectors, responsiveness may function as one of the clearest markers of whether an organization takes its customers seriously. Accordingly, this study expects service responsiveness to exert a positive influence on customer satisfaction.

H2: *Service responsiveness has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors.*

2.6.3 Complaint Handling and Customer Trust

Complaint handling refers to the processes and behaviors through which organizations receive, acknowledge, investigate, and resolve customer grievances. In service contexts, complaints are not merely disruptions to business operations; they are also moments of reputational and relational significance. How organizations respond to complaints often shapes whether customers perceive them as responsible, fair, and trustworthy.

Trust, in turn, is built not only when services function smoothly, but also when customers believe that providers will act competently and fairly in moments of difficulty (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Effective complaint handling signals that an organization is willing to take responsibility, communicate transparently, and restore confidence when service expectations are not met. Conversely, ignored or poorly managed complaints may create the impression that the provider is indifferent, evasive, or unreliable.

In service sectors where disruptions are likely and repeated interaction is common; complaint handling may be especially important in preserving trust. In the Cameroonian context, where consumers often express frustration over unresolved issues and weak follow-up, complaint handling becomes a critical lens through which organizational trustworthiness can be evaluated. This leads to the expectation that more effective complaint handling will be associated with stronger customer trust.

H3: *Effective complaint handling has a significant positive effect on customer trust in service providers.*

2.6.4 Staff Attitude and Customer Experience

Staff attitude refers to the manner in which frontline personnel interact with customers, including their level of courtesy, respectfulness, patience, attentiveness, and professionalism. In customer-facing service sectors, staff behavior often serves as the most immediate embodiment of the organization itself. For many customers, the frontline employee is not simply a representative of the firm; they are the firm in practical experience.

The literature on service encounters has consistently shown that the emotional and interpersonal tone of staff-customer interactions strongly influences customer evaluations of service quality and overall experience (Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990). Even when the technical aspects of service are acceptable, rude or dismissive staff behavior can produce a strongly negative customer experience. Conversely, respectful and empathetic interaction can soften dissatisfaction even in moments of inconvenience or service disruption.

This is especially relevant in-service environments such as transport terminals, ticketing points, customer care centers, and telecommunications service outlets, where customers often rely on frontline personnel for information, clarification, and assistance. Given the importance of interpersonal treatment in shaping customer perceptions, this study expects staff attitude to exert a significant positive influence on customer experience.

H4: *Staff attitude has a significant positive effect on overall customer experience.*

2.6.5 Communication Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Communication quality refers to the clarity, consistency, usefulness, and timeliness of information provided by service providers to customers. It includes the ability of organizations to explain service processes, notify customers of disruptions, provide understandable updates, and communicate with transparency during both routine and problematic service encounters.

Communication is especially important in-service environments characterized by uncertainty, delay, or service interruption. In such contexts, customers often judge providers not only by whether the issue is resolved, but also by whether they are kept informed and treated as entitled to explanation. Poor communication can intensify dissatisfaction by creating confusion, helplessness, and a sense of disregard, even when the underlying service issue may be unavoidable.

Service literature increasingly recognizes communication as a central contributor to customer satisfaction because it shapes customer expectations, emotional reactions, and perceived fairness (Zeithaml et al., 2018). In Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors, where service disruptions and customer complaints are often accompanied by weak or inconsistent communication, this dimension becomes especially salient. It is therefore reasonable to expect that better communication quality will be associated with higher customer satisfaction.

H5: *Communication quality has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction.*

2.6.6 Sectoral Differences in Customer Service Perceptions

Although telecommunications and transport are both service-intensive and customer-facing sectors, they differ in important ways that may shape how customer service is experienced and evaluated. Telecommunications services are often mediated through digital systems, call centers, mobile platforms, and branch-level support, whereas transport services frequently involve more immediate, physical, and time-sensitive interactions with personnel, terminals, vehicles, and route systems.

These structural differences suggest that customer service deficits may not manifest identically across the two sectors. Customers may experience poor responsiveness differently in a mobile network setting than in a transport terminal. Likewise, communication failures, complaint procedures, and staff conduct may be interpreted differently depending on the service environment. Existing literature suggests that sectoral context matters significantly in how service quality dimensions are perceived and weighted by customers.

For this reason, the present study does not assume that customer service deficits are uniform across the selected sectors. Rather, it tests whether customer perceptions of service delivery differ significantly between the telecommunications and transport sectors in Cameroon.

H6: *There is a significant difference in customer service perceptions between the telecommunications and transport sectors in Cameroon*

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy

This study adopted the positivist research philosophy, which assumes that reality can be objectively observed, measured, and explained through empirical investigation. Positivism is widely associated with quantitative research because it emphasizes systematic data collection, hypothesis testing, and statistical analysis to establish relationships among variables while minimizing researcher bias (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The adoption of positivism was appropriate because this study sought to examine the relationships between customer service deficits and customer outcomes specifically customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors. Using a structured questionnaire and statistical analyses, the study objectively tested the proposed hypotheses and generated empirical evidence to explain customer service perceptions within the study context. Consequently, the positivist philosophy provided a rigorous foundation for achieving the study's objectives.

3.2 Research Approach

This study adopted a deductive research approach, which involves developing hypotheses from established theories and empirical literature and subsequently testing them using observed data. The deductive approach is widely used in quantitative research because it enables researchers to examine whether theoretical relationships hold within a specific empirical context through statistical analysis (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The approach was appropriate for this study because it drew on the SERVQUAL framework, customer satisfaction theory, and existing service quality literature to formulate hypotheses concerning the relationships between customer service deficits and customer outcomes. These hypotheses were empirically tested using survey data collected from customers in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors, thereby contributing context-specific evidence to the existing body of customer service research in emerging economies.

3.3 Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, which involves collecting data from a defined population at a single point in time to examine patterns, relationships, and perceptions among variables. The design is widely used in quantitative research because it enables researchers to test hypotheses efficiently using standardized data collected from a relatively large sample (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The cross-sectional survey design was appropriate for this study because it sought to examine customers' perceptions of service delivery in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors and to determine whether customer service deficits influence customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience. The use of a structured questionnaire ensured consistency in data collection, facilitated statistical analysis, and enabled the proposed hypotheses to be tested objectively. Furthermore, collecting data at a single point in time provided an appropriate representation of customers' perceptions during the study period while ensuring methodological efficiency.

3.4 Population of the Study

The population of a study refers to the complete group of individuals or elements possessing the characteristics relevant to the research objectives from which the sample is drawn (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). Accordingly, the target population for this study comprised consumers in Cameroon who had used services within the telecommunications and transport sectors and had direct experience interacting with service providers.

The study focused on customers of telecommunications services, including mobile communication and related customer support services, as well as users of urban and inter-urban transport services. These respondents constituted the most appropriate source of data because the study examined customer service deficits from the customers' perspective. As the unit of analysis, consumers were best positioned to evaluate the responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication quality of service providers based on their actual service experiences.

3.5 Sample Size Determination

Given the broad and practically indefinite nature of the study population, the required sample size was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for large populations. Cochran's formula is widely recommended for quantitative survey research where the target population is sufficiently large or cannot be precisely determined, as it provides a statistically reliable estimate for inferential analysis (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

The Cochran formula is expressed as:
$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n = required sample size
- Z = standard normal deviate corresponding to the desired confidence level
- p = estimated proportion of the population possessing the attribute of interest
- $q = 1 - p$
- e = acceptable margin of error

For this study, a 95% confidence level ($Z = 1.96$), a 5% margin of error ($e = 0.05$), and an estimated population proportion of 0.50 ($p = 0.50$; $q = 0.50$) were adopted. The value of 0.50 was selected because it provides the most conservative estimate and yields the maximum required sample size when the true population proportion is unknown (Saunders et al., 2019). Applying these parameters produced a minimum required sample size of approximately 384 respondents. To account for potential non-response and incomplete questionnaires, the target sample size was increased to 400 respondents.

Although 400 questionnaires were targeted, only 150 valid responses were obtained after data collection and screening for completeness and eligibility. These valid questionnaires constituted the final sample used for analysis. While lower than the initial target, the achieved sample was considered adequate for the descriptive and inferential statistical analyses undertaken in this study, including reliability analysis, correlation analysis, multiple linear regression, and independent-samples t -tests (Hair et al., 2019).

3.6 Sampling Technique

This study adopted a non-probability sampling strategy, combining purposive and convenience sampling techniques. A non-probability approach was considered appropriate because the study sought responses from individuals with direct experience using telecommunications and/or transport services in Cameroon. Purposive sampling was first employed to ensure that only respondents who had recently interacted with service providers in either sector and were therefore capable of evaluating customer service quality were included in the study.

Following the identification of eligible participants, convenience sampling was used to recruit respondents through accessible channels, including service locations, digital platforms, university networks, and other customer communities. This approach facilitated efficient data collection from active service users across both sectors. Although 400 questionnaires were targeted, only 150 valid responses met the study's eligibility and completeness criteria and were retained for the final analysis.

While non-probability sampling limits the statistical generalizability of the findings, it is widely accepted in perception-based consumer research where the objective is to examine relationships among variables rather than estimate population parameters

(Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). Accordingly, the sampling strategy provided an appropriate and practical means of obtaining relevant customer perspectives for addressing the study's research objectives.

3.7 Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which is widely regarded as an appropriate instrument for quantitative survey research because it facilitates the collection of standardized data from a large number of respondents and supports statistical analysis (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The questionnaire was developed by adapting validated measurement items from established customer service and service quality literature to suit the context of Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors.

The questionnaire comprised two sections. Section A collected respondents' demographic information, including gender, age, educational level, employment status, sector used, frequency of service use, and length of service use. Section B measured the study constructs: service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, communication quality, customer satisfaction, customer trust, customer experience, and general perception of customer service. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The use of the Likert scale enabled respondents' perceptions to be quantified consistently and supported subsequent descriptive and inferential statistical analyses.

3.8 Measurement of Variables

The study variables were operationalized using established constructs drawn from the customer service and service quality literature and adapted to the context of Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors. The independent variable, customer service deficits, was measured using four dimensions: service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication quality. The dependent variables comprised customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience, while sector type (telecommunications or transport) served as the grouping variable for comparative analysis. All constructs were measured using multiple questionnaire items adapted from validated scales and assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The operational definitions, measurement indicators, number of items, and supporting literature for each construct are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 1: Operationalization, Measurement, and Alignment of Study Variables

Variable	Operational Definition	Items	Scale	Source	Related Hypothesis	Statistical Test
Service Responsiveness	Customers' perceptions of prompt responses	SR1–SR5R	5-point Likert	Parasuraman et al. (1988)	H2	Multiple Linear Regression
Complaint Handling	Effectiveness of complaint resolution	CH1–CH5R	5-point Likert	Tax et al. (1998)	H3	Multiple Linear Regression
Staff Attitude	Courtesy, professionalism and respect	SA1–SA5R	5-point Likert	SERVQUAL literature	H4	Multiple Linear Regression
Communication Quality	Clarity and timeliness of communication	CQ1–CQ5R	5-point Likert	SERVQUAL literature	H5	Multiple Linear Regression
Customer Satisfaction	Overall evaluation of service	CS1–CS4	5-point Likert	Oliver (1980; 1997)	H2, H5	Dependent Variable
Customer Trust	Confidence in the service provider	CT1–CT4	5-point Likert	Morgan & Hunt (1994)	H3	Dependent Variable
Customer Experience	Overall interaction with the provider	CE1–CE4	5-point Likert	Verhoef et al. (2009)	H1, H4	Dependent Variable
Sector Type	Primary service sector used	Sector	Nominal	Researcher-developed	H6	Independent Samples <i>t</i> -test

3.9 Validity of the Instrument

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument accurately measures the constructs it is intended to measure (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In this study, both content validity and construct validity were established to enhance the credibility of the measurement instrument.

Content validity was ensured by developing the questionnaire from established customer service and service quality literature and adapting validated measurement scales to the Cameroonian context. The instrument was further reviewed by experienced academics and research experts to evaluate the relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of the questionnaire items.

Construct validity was assessed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Prior to factor extraction, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted to determine the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The results confirmed that the measurement instrument demonstrated satisfactory construct validity and was appropriate for subsequent statistical analyses.

3.10 Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability refers to the consistency and internal stability of a measurement instrument (Hair et al., 2019). In this study, internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, one of the most widely accepted measures of scale reliability in quantitative research.

Cronbach's Alpha was computed for each study construct, with a minimum threshold of 0.70 adopted to indicate acceptable internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The reliability analysis demonstrated that all constructs achieved acceptable reliability levels, confirming that the questionnaire items consistently measured their intended constructs and were suitable for subsequent descriptive and inferential statistical analyses.

3.11 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Data analysis commenced with data screening and cleaning to identify incomplete responses, duplicate entries, missing values, and coding inconsistencies. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were then computed to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and the distribution of the study variables.

The internal consistency of the measurement instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, while Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to establish construct validity. Pearson correlation analysis was subsequently performed to examine the relationships among the study variables. Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to assess the influence of service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication quality on customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience. Finally, an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to determine whether significant differences existed in customer service perceptions between the telecommunications and transport sectors. All statistical tests were conducted at a 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$).

Prior to regression analysis, the assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, independence of errors, and multicollinearity were assessed to ensure the suitability of the data for multiple linear regression analysis (Hair et al., 2019; Field, 2018).

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were integral to the design and conduct of this study because it involved human participants. The study adhered to established ethical principles throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting processes. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, the intended use of the data, and their right to decline or withdraw from participation at any stage without any adverse consequences. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to completing the questionnaire.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by ensuring that respondents were not required to disclose unnecessary personal identifiers and that all information collected was used solely for academic purposes. Furthermore, the study upheld honesty, objectivity, and transparency in data analysis and reporting, while all sources consulted were appropriately acknowledged in accordance with accepted academic referencing standards. These ethical measures enhanced the credibility, integrity, and trustworthiness of the research.

4. Results Analysis

4.1 Reliability Analysis of the Measurement Instrument

Prior to descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, the internal consistency of the measurement instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The negatively worded items (SR5R, CH5R, SA5R, and CQ5R) were reverse-coded before analysis using the transformation $1 \leftrightarrow 5$, $2 \leftrightarrow 4$, $3 \leftrightarrow 3$.

The reliability coefficients were interpreted using the guidelines proposed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), Field (2018), and Hair et al. (2019), where values above 0.70 indicate acceptable reliability.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics for the Study Constructs

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Level
Service Responsiveness	5	0.836	Good
Complaint Handling	5	0.844	Good
Staff Attitude	5	0.798	Acceptable–Good
Communication Quality	5	0.774	Acceptable
Customer Satisfaction	4	0.885	Good
Customer Trust	4	0.869	Good
Customer Experience	4	0.884	Good
General Perception	4	0.923	Excellent
Overall Instrument	36	0.935	Excellent

The reliability analysis indicates that all study constructs achieved Cronbach's Alpha coefficients above the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), confirming satisfactory internal consistency. Service Responsiveness ($\alpha = 0.836$), Complaint Handling ($\alpha = 0.844$), Customer Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.885$), Customer Trust ($\alpha = 0.869$), and Customer Experience ($\alpha = 0.884$) demonstrated good reliability, while Staff Attitude ($\alpha = 0.798$) and Communication Quality ($\alpha = 0.774$) exhibited acceptable reliability. General Perception recorded an excellent reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.923$). The overall instrument achieved a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.935, indicating excellent internal consistency across all 36 items. These results confirm that the measurement instrument is reliable and suitable for subsequent inferential statistical analyses.

4.2 Item-Level Reliability Assessment

Table 3: Service Responsiveness

Item	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Alpha if Deleted
SR1	0.619	0.809
SR2	0.755	0.773
SR3	0.750	0.774
SR4	0.661	0.797
SR5R	0.453	0.861

The construct demonstrates good reliability ($\alpha = 0.836$). All corrected item–total correlations exceed the recommended threshold of 0.30. Although deleting SR5R would increase alpha slightly, the item remains theoretically relevant and statistically acceptable; therefore, it should be retained.

Table 4: Complaint Handling

Item	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Alpha if Deleted
CH1	0.720	0.794
CH2	0.663	0.812
CH3	0.688	0.802
CH4	0.661	0.810
CH5R	0.558	0.846

Complaint Handling exhibits **good reliability** ($\alpha = 0.844$). All items contribute meaningfully to the construct and should be retained.

Table 5: Staff Attitude

Item	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Alpha if Deleted
SA1	0.712	0.717
SA2	0.749	0.706
SA3	0.677	0.730
SA4	0.655	0.737
SA5R	0.229	0.882

Staff Attitude demonstrates acceptable-to-good reliability ($\alpha = 0.798$). However, SA5R shows a relatively low corrected item total correlation (0.229), indicating weaker alignment with the other items. Removing SA5R would increase alpha substantially (0.882). Nevertheless, because the item captures an important negative aspect of staff behavior, it may be retained for theoretical completeness, though researchers should note its weaker performance.

Table 6: Communication Quality

Item	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Alpha if Deleted
CQ1	0.641	0.705
CQ2	0.645	0.698
CQ3	0.626	0.704
CQ4	0.699	0.683
CQ5R	0.218	0.849

Communication Quality demonstrates **acceptable reliability** ($\alpha = 0.774$). Similar to SA5R, **CQ5R** performs relatively weakly (CITC = 0.218), and deleting it would improve reliability considerably. However, the item captures insufficient information provision, which is conceptually relevant to communication quality. Retention is therefore defensible on theoretical grounds.

Table 7: Customer Satisfaction

Item	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Alpha if Deleted
CS1	0.676	0.880
CS2	0.774	0.844
CS3	0.790	0.838
CS4	0.764	0.848

Customer Satisfaction exhibits strong internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.885$), with all items performing well.

Table 8: Customer Trust

Item	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Alpha if Deleted
CT1	0.731	0.829
CT2	0.742	0.825
CT3	0.746	0.823
CT4	0.672	0.854

Customer Trust demonstrates good reliability ($\alpha = 0.869$). All items contribute adequately to the scale.

Table 9: Customer Experience

Item	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Alpha if Deleted
CE1	0.749	0.851
CE2	0.757	0.848
CE3	0.776	0.840
CE4	0.712	0.865

Interpretation: Customer Experience demonstrates **good reliability** ($\alpha = 0.884$), indicating strong scale stability.

Table 10: General Perception

Item	Corrected Item–Total Correlation	Alpha if Deleted
GP1	0.850	0.892
GP2	0.847	0.891
GP3	0.820	0.901
GP4	0.779	0.914

The General Perception scale demonstrates excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.923$), indicating very strong internal consistency.

Overall Instrument Reliability

The overall questionnaire produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.935, which exceeds the threshold for excellent reliability. This indicates that the instrument demonstrates a very high level of internal consistency across the 36 measurement items.

4.2.1 Readiness for Further Statistical Analysis

Based on the reliability assessment, the measurement instrument is considered sufficiently reliable for subsequent statistical analyses, including:

- Descriptive statistics
- Construct score computation
- Pearson correlation analysis
- Multiple linear regression
- Independent samples t-test

Although SA5R and CQ5R exhibit weaker item-total correlations, their retention is theoretically defensible because they capture important negative dimensions of staff behavior and communication quality. Consequently, no item removal is deemed necessary at this stage.

Conclusion

The reliability analysis demonstrates that the questionnaire possesses acceptable to excellent internal consistency across all constructs. The overall instrument reliability is particularly strong ($\alpha = 0.935$), indicating that the measurement scales are stable and coherent. In line with the recommendations of Hair et al., Field, and Nunnally and Bernstein, the instrument can be considered adequately reliable and ready for the subsequent stages of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis.

4.3 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA): Preliminary Construct Validity Assessment

4.3.1 Methodological Approach

Construct validity was assessed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) on the 36 Likert-scale questionnaire items measuring service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, communication quality, customer satisfaction, customer trust, customer experience, and general perception of customer service deficits in Cameroon. The reverse-worded items (SR5R, CH5R, SA5R, and CQ5R) were reverse-coded prior to analysis so that item direction was consistent within the positively framed service-quality constructs. The analysis was conducted using a correlation matrix, with principal component extraction and Varimax rotation with Kaiser normalization, consistent with common SPSS-based exploratory scale validation practice. Although principal axis factoring is often preferred when the goal is latent factor estimation, principal component extraction remains widely used in exploratory instrument assessment, particularly when the objective is to examine empirical item clustering and data reduction.

The interpretation of the results followed widely accepted psychometric and multivariate guidelines. KMO values above .80 are generally considered meritorious and values above .90 excellent; Bartlett's test should be statistically significant to support factorability. Factor retention was guided by the Kaiser criterion, scree-plot logic, cumulative explained variance, and substantive interpretability. Factor loadings of .50 or above were treated as practically meaningful, while loadings below .50 were considered weak or borderline. Cross-loading was flagged where an item loaded .40 or higher on more than one factor. These criteria are consistent with recommendations commonly associated with Hair et al. (2019), Field (2018), Tabachnick and Fidell (2019), and Kline (2016).

4.3.2 Suitability of the Data for Factor Analysis

Table 11. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Diagnostic test			Result	Interpretation
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Adequacy	Measure	of Sampling	0.929	Excellent sampling adequacy
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, chi-square			4124.700	Correlation matrix differs significantly from an identity matrix
Degrees of freedom			630	

Significance	< .001	Statistically significant
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The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was 0.929, which exceeds the commonly accepted .90 threshold for excellent sampling adequacy. This indicates that the pattern of correlations among the questionnaire items is compact enough to justify factor extraction. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant, chi-square (630) = 4124.700, $p < .001$, indicating that the item correlation matrix is not an identity matrix. In substantive terms, the items share sufficient common variance to support an exploratory factor-analytic procedure. Taken together, the KMO and Bartlett results demonstrate that the dataset is suitable for factor analysis.

4.3.3 Factor Extraction and Retention

Table 12. Initial eigenvalues and variance explained

Component	Eigenvalue	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	16.246	45.13	45.13
2	2.839	7.89	53.01
3	1.704	4.73	57.75
4	1.524	4.23	61.98
5	1.191	3.31	65.29
6	1.144	3.18	68.47
7	0.993	2.76	71.23
8	0.840	2.33	73.56
9	0.763	2.12	75.68
10	0.722	2.01	77.68
11	0.663	1.84	79.53
12	0.620	1.72	81.25

Application of the Kaiser criterion retained six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00. The first factor had a substantially larger eigenvalue (16.246) and accounted for 45.13% of the total variance, indicating the presence of a strong general evaluative dimension in the data. The subsequent retained factors had eigenvalues of 2.839, 1.704, 1.524, 1.191, 1.144, respectively. The six retained factors collectively explained 68.47% of the total variance, which is acceptable for social science research and indicates that the extracted factor solution captures a substantial proportion of the information contained in the item set.

The scree pattern supports a dominant first factor followed by a gradual flattening of the eigenvalue curve. The eigenvalues decline sharply from Component 1 to Component 2 and more gradually thereafter, with the seventh component falling below the Kaiser threshold at 0.993. Thus, both the Kaiser criterion and the scree-plot logic support retaining six factors, although the strong first factor also suggests that several customer-service perceptions are highly interrelated rather than empirically independent.

Table 13. Rotated sums of squared loadings

Retained factor	Initial eigenvalue	Rotated SS loading	Rotated % of variance	Cumulative rotated %
1	16.246	6.843	19.01	19.01
2	2.839	4.268	11.85	30.86
3	1.704	3.837	10.66	41.52
4	1.524	4.244	11.79	53.31
5	1.191	1.797	4.99	58.30
6	1.144	3.660	10.17	68.47

After Varimax rotation, the distribution of explained variance became more balanced across the retained factors. Factor 1 accounted for 19.01% of the rotated variance, while Factors 2 through 6 accounted for 11.85%, 10.66%, 11.79%, 4.99%, 10.17%, respectively. The rotated solution improves interpretability by separating general perception, responsiveness, staff attitude, communication/complaint-related service processes, and a smaller factor influenced by reverse-worded items.

4.3.4 Rotated Component Matrix

The rotated component matrix shows a meaningful but not perfectly simple structure. The General Perception items (GP1-GP4) loaded strongly and cleanly on Factor 2, with loadings ranging from .831 to .872. This provides strong evidence that the general perception scale functions as a coherent empirical dimension measuring agreement that customer service in Cameroon is poor or problematic.

Service Responsiveness was represented primarily by Factor 3. SR1, SR2, SR3, and SR4 loaded between .615 and .740 on this factor, meeting the accepted .50 threshold. SR3 also showed a secondary loading of .420 on Factor 1, indicating some overlap with the broader evaluative customer-service dimension. SR5R loaded most strongly on Factor 5 (.442), below the preferred .50 threshold, although its communality was adequate. This suggests that the reverse-worded responsiveness item may be partly influenced by wording or method effects rather than aligning cleanly with the other responsiveness items.

Staff Attitude was represented mainly by Factor 6. SA1, SA2, SA3, and SA4 loaded between .570 and .694 on this factor, supporting the empirical coherence of the staff attitude scale. SA4 also showed a secondary loading of .405 on Factor 1, indicating modest overlap with broader customer evaluations. SA5R loaded on Factor 5 (.663), rather than on the main staff attitude factor. This again suggests that reverse-worded items may have formed a small wording-related factor.

Communication Quality items were mainly associated with Factor 4. CQ1, CQ2, CQ3, and CQ4 loaded between .591 and .702, supporting the construct's empirical representation. CQ4 had a secondary loading of .475 on Factor 6, suggesting some conceptual overlap between communication clarity and staff conduct. CQ5R loaded strongly on Factor 5 (.778), further confirming that reverse-worded items behaved differently from positively worded items.

Complaint Handling did not form a fully independent clean factor. CH1, CH3, CH4, and CH5R loaded primarily on Factor 4, while CH2 loaded slightly more strongly on Factor 3. Several complaint-handling items showed cross-loadings, especially CH1, CH2, CH3, and CH4. This pattern suggests that respondents may not have sharply distinguished complaint handling from responsiveness and communication quality. In practical terms, customers may view complaint resolution, response speed, and information provision as closely connected parts of the same service-recovery experience.

Customer Satisfaction, Customer Trust, and Customer Experience clustered primarily on Factor 1. Satisfaction items loaded from .581 to .749, trust items from .636 to .670, and experience items from .555 to .729. This indicates that these constructs are empirically close and may operate as a broader outcome-oriented evaluation of service providers. The result does not invalidate the constructs theoretically, but it suggests limited discriminant separation among satisfaction, trust, and experience in this sample.

Cross-loading items were identified for SR3, CH1, CH2, CH3, CH4, SA4, CQ4, and CS2. Weak or borderline primary loadings were observed for SR5R (.442), CH4 (.490), and CH5R (.447). However, none of these items had low communalities, and the weak loadings were not sufficiently severe to justify automatic deletion. Deleting items should be avoided unless supported by reliability diagnostics, theoretical weakness, and replication in a larger validation sample. *See appendix 2 for Rotated Component Matrix*

4.3.5 Communalities

The communalities ranged from .548 to .843. All items exceeded the commonly used .40 minimum threshold, and most exceeded .60. This indicates that the retained factor solution explains a sufficient proportion of variance in every item. No item demonstrated a communality low enough to suggest that it is poorly represented by the extracted factors. Even the borderline-loading items, such as SR5R, CH4, and CH5R, had acceptable communalities, indicating that their variance was captured by the factor solution despite their less clean factor placement. *See appendix 3 for details*

4.4 Construct Validity Evaluation

The EFA provides evidence of acceptable but not perfect construct validity. The strongest evidence is observed for General Perception, which emerged as a clean and highly interpretable factor. Service Responsiveness, Staff Attitude, and Communication Quality also showed reasonably coherent factor patterns, with most positively worded items loading on their expected empirical dimensions. These results support the conclusion that the questionnaire captures important domains of customer service experience in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors.

However, the observed factor structure did not reproduce the original eight theoretical constructs exactly. Instead, the EFA retained six empirical factors. Customer Satisfaction, Customer Trust, and Customer Experience clustered together on a single broad evaluative factor, suggesting that respondents treated these outcomes as closely related aspects of their overall judgement of service providers. Complaint Handling also overlapped with responsiveness and communication quality, indicating that customers may understand complaint resolution as part of a broader service-response process rather than as an entirely separate dimension.

The reverse-worded items require special attention. SR5R, SA5R, and CQ5R loaded on Factor 5, and CH5R also showed a borderline loading pattern. This suggests a possible wording or method factor. Such a pattern is not unusual in survey research, particularly when negatively phrased items are mixed with positively phrased items. The implication is not necessarily that the items must be deleted, but that their behavior should be acknowledged. If the instrument is used in future research, these reverse-worded items should be reviewed for clarity and possibly rephrased into positively worded items to reduce method effects.

Overall, the factor solution supports the broad validity of the instrument as a measure of customer service perceptions, but it also indicates that the empirical structure is more consolidated than the theoretical model. The evidence is strongest for using the scales as theoretically informed composite measures after reliability confirmation, while recognizing that some constructs, particularly satisfaction, trust, and experience, are highly interrelated.

4.4.1 Overall Instrument Evaluation

The measurement instrument demonstrates acceptable reliability, based on the completed reliability analysis, and acceptable construct validity based on the EFA results. The KMO value was excellent, Bartlett's test was significant, the extracted factors explained 68.47% of the total variance, and all items had acceptable communalities. These findings indicate that the questionnaire is suitable for subsequent descriptive analysis and correlation analysis.

The instrument is also suitable for regression analysis, provided that multicollinearity diagnostics are examined carefully. This caution is important because customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience loaded on the same broad factor and may be strongly correlated. Regression models involving these constructs should therefore report tolerance, variance inflation factors, and theoretically justified model specification.

The instrument is suitable for Independent Samples t-tests where the objective is to compare construct scores across two groups, such as telecommunications versus transport respondents or male versus female respondents. Before conducting t-tests, assumptions regarding independence, approximate normality, and equality of variances should be assessed. Given the Likert-scale nature of the data, results should be interpreted at the composite-scale level rather than at the individual-item level.

The main methodological concerns are the sample size relative to the number of items, the emergence of six rather than eight empirical factors, the overlap among satisfaction, trust, and experience, and the apparent method effect associated with reverse-worded items. The sample of 150 respondents provides usable evidence, especially given the excellent KMO and adequate communalities, but a larger validation sample would be preferable for confirmatory factor analysis. Before publication, the authors should transparently report the six-factor EFA structure, retain theoretically important items unless reliability or future validation evidence suggests otherwise, and consider conducting confirmatory factor analysis in a larger independent sample.

Conclusion

The EFA results indicate that the questionnaire possesses adequate construct validity for the subsequent stages of quantitative analysis, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and group comparisons. The instrument captures coherent dimensions of customer service perceptions in Cameroon, particularly general negative perceptions, responsiveness, communication quality, staff attitude, and broader outcome evaluations. Nevertheless, the empirical structure is not perfectly aligned with the original eight-construct model, and reverse-worded items appear to introduce a wording-related factor. These limitations do not invalidate the instrument, but they should be acknowledged as methodological qualifications and addressed in future scale refinement.

4.5. Construct Descriptive Statistics

Table 16: Construct Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Interpretation
Service Responsiveness	2.61	1.16	1	5	Moderate (below midpoint)
Complaint Handling	2.67	1.07	1	5	Moderate (below midpoint)
Staff Attitude	2.71	1.14	1	5	Moderate
Communication Quality	2.79	1.09	1	5	Moderate
Customer Satisfaction	2.37	1.04	1	5	Low
Customer Trust	2.35	0.97	1	5	Low
Customer Experience	2.36	0.97	1	5	Low
General Perception	3.72	1.14	1	5	High (agreement that customer service is poor)

Using the common interpretation for five-point Likert scales: 1.00-2.33 = Low, 2.340-3.66 = Moderate and 3.67-5.00 = High

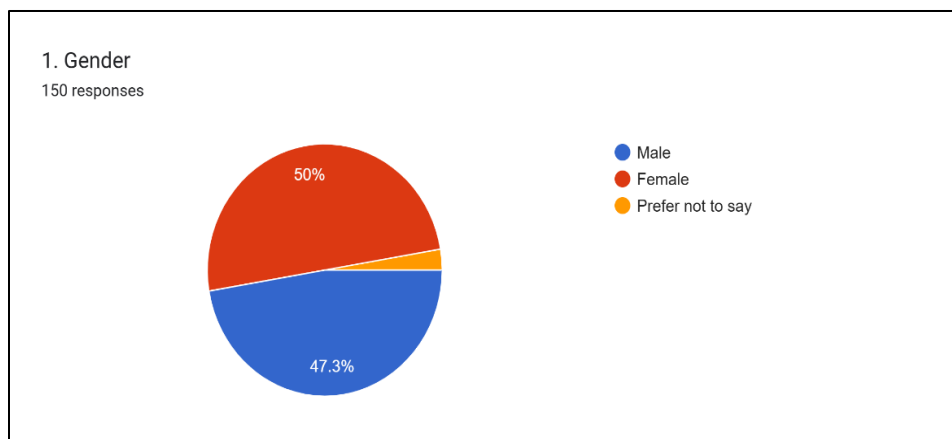
The results indicate that respondents perceived service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication quality as only moderate, suggesting that these dimensions of customer service remain inconsistent rather than satisfactory. More concerning are the low mean scores for customer satisfaction (2.37), customer trust (2.35), and customer experience (2.36), which indicate that respondents generally hold unfavorable evaluations of service delivery in the telecommunications and transport sectors. Conversely, the high mean score for general perception (3.72) demonstrates strong agreement that poor customer service is a widespread problem in Cameroon.

4.6 Descriptive Statistics

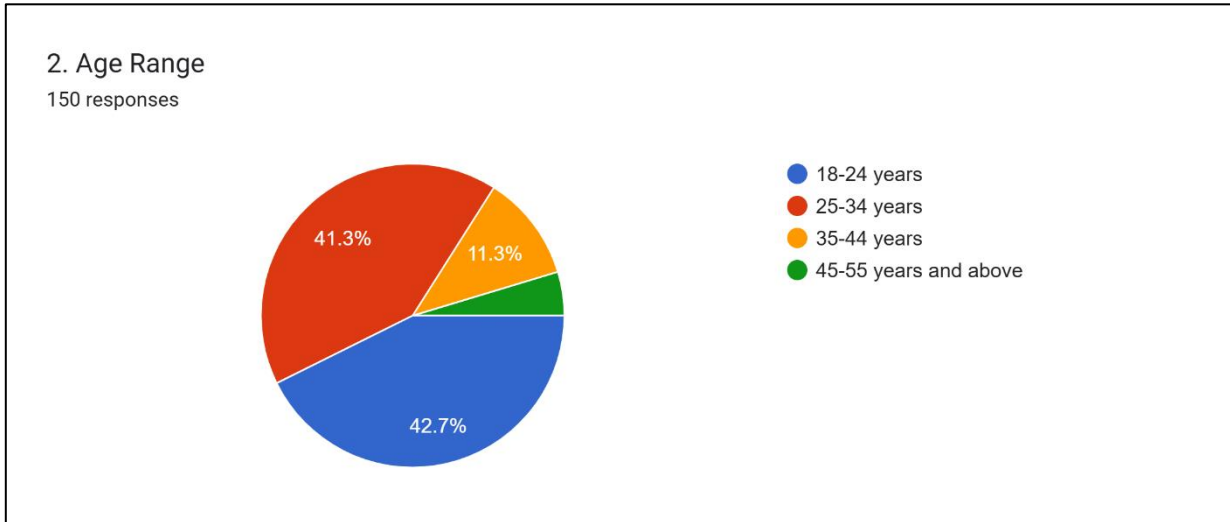
4.6.1 Respondent Characteristics

The analysis was based on 150 valid responses. Respondent characteristics are presented using frequencies and percentages. Percentages are calculated from the valid number of responses for each characteristic.

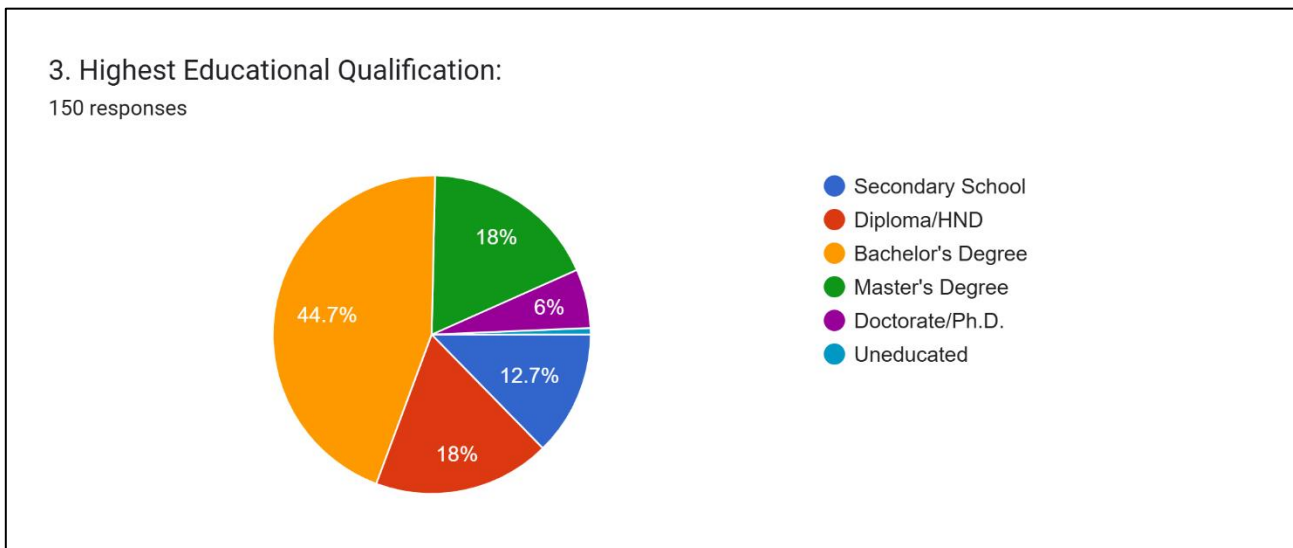
Diagram 2. Gender of respondents



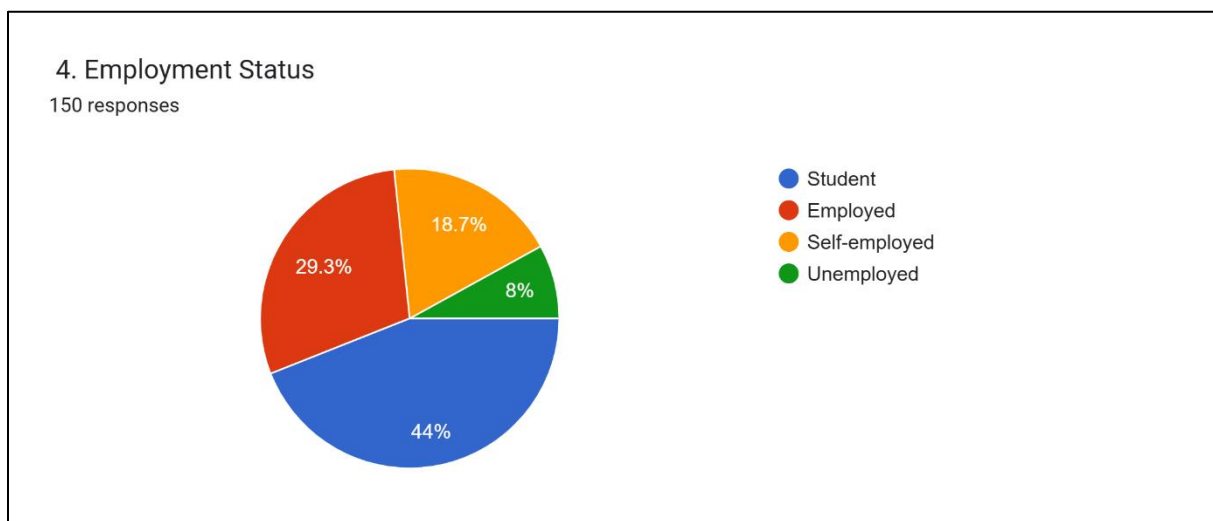
The gender distribution shows a near-balanced sample, with female respondents accounting for 50.0% and male respondents for 47.3%. This distribution suggests that the descriptive results are not dominated by one gender group, thereby allowing the reported customer service perceptions to reflect experiences from both male and female service users in broadly comparable proportions.

Table 18. Age of respondents

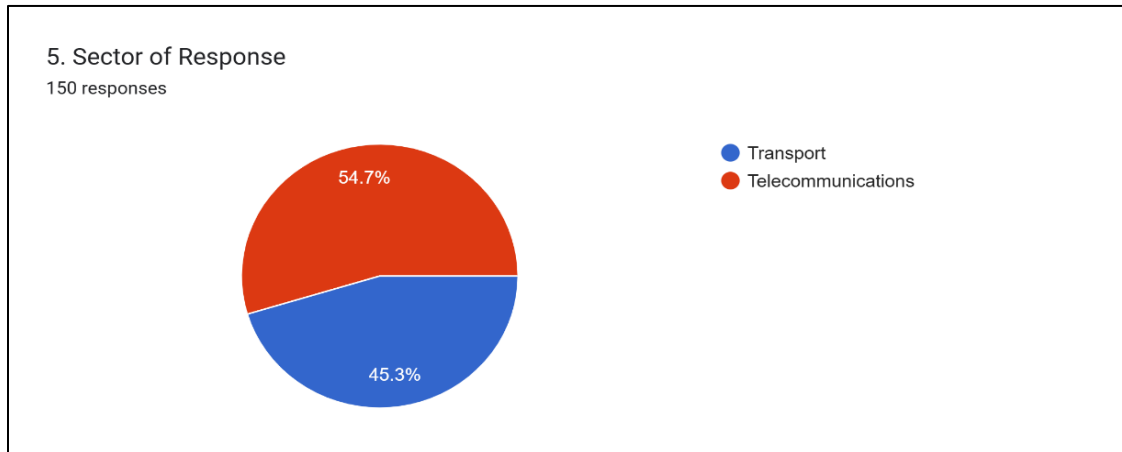
The sample is strongly concentrated among younger adults. Respondents aged 18-24 years constituted 42.7%, while those aged 25-34 years represented 41.3%. Together, these two groups accounted for 84.0% of the sample. This profile is substantively important because younger service users are likely to be frequent users of telecommunications and transport services and may have heightened expectations regarding speed, responsiveness, convenience, and communication quality.

Table 19. Educational qualification of respondents

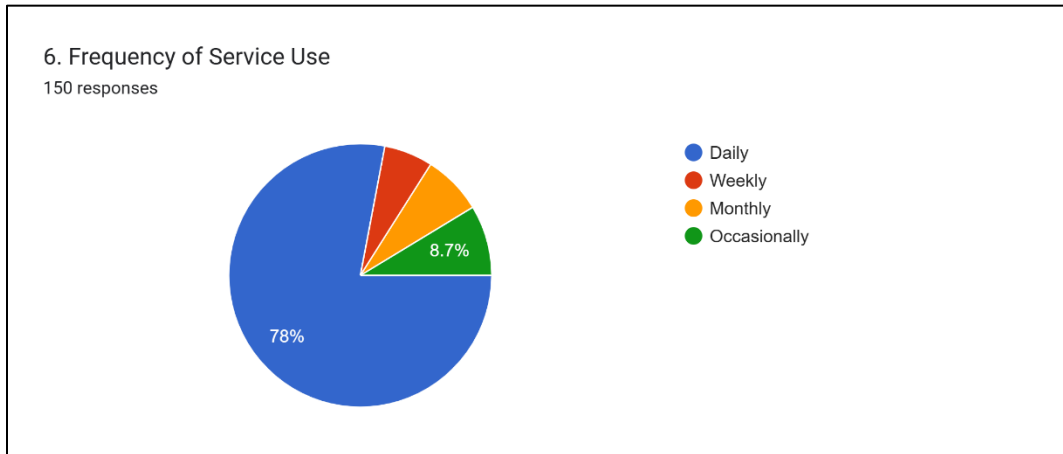
The respondents were predominantly educated, with 44.7% holding a bachelor's degree and a further 18.0% holding a master's degree. Only 0.7% reported being uneducated. This educational profile implies that the responses were largely provided by individuals who may be comparatively able to evaluate service quality, identify service failures, and articulate expectations about customer treatment, complaint handling, and institutional reliability.

Table 20. Employment status of respondents

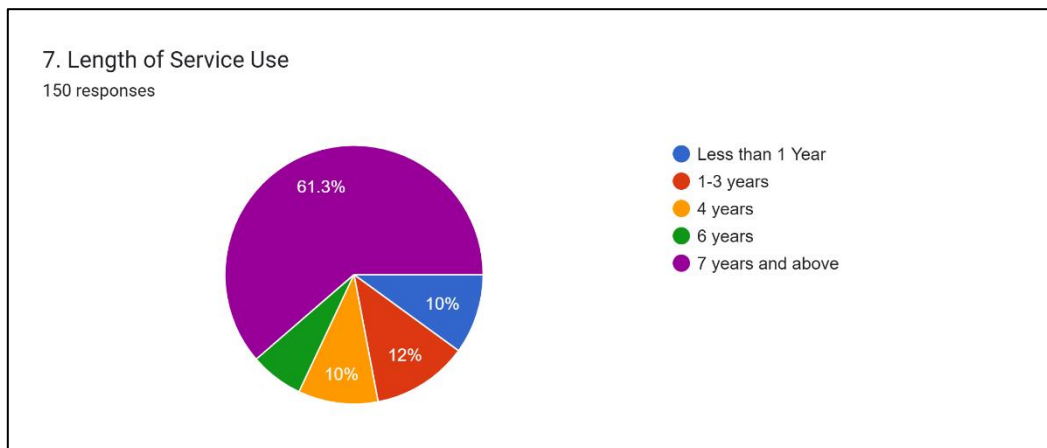
Students formed the largest employment category, representing 44.0% of respondents. Employed and self-employed respondents jointly accounted for 48.0%, while unemployed respondents represented 8.0%. The inclusion of students, salaried workers, self-employed persons, and unemployed respondents provides a range of service-use perspectives, although the relatively high student share should be considered when interpreting the strong presence of younger and frequent service users in the sample.

Table 21. Sector of response

The dataset covers both telecommunications and transport users, with telecommunications accounting for 54.7% and transport for 45.3% of responses. The distribution is sufficiently balanced to indicate that the descriptive findings reflect perceptions across both sectors rather than being overwhelmingly concentrated in only one service domain.

Table 22. Frequency of service use

The respondents were highly active service users. A substantial majority, 78.0%, reported daily use of the selected service sector. This is analytically significant because frequent users are more likely to have repeated exposure to service encounters, making their evaluations of responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, communication, satisfaction, trust, and overall experience grounded in recurring interactions rather than isolated episodes.

Table 23. Length of service use

Most respondents had long-term exposure to the services under study. Those reporting seven years or more of service use represented 61.3% of the sample. This strengthens the descriptive relevance of the findings because the reported perceptions are mainly based on accumulated service experiences rather than short-term or novice engagement with telecommunications and transport providers.

4.6 Construct-Level Descriptive Statistics

Construct scores were calculated on a five-point Likert scale. Reverse-worded items in the service-quality constructs were reverse-coded before calculating construct means, so that higher values for service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, communication quality, customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience indicate more favorable evaluations. For general perception, higher values indicate stronger agreement that customer service in Cameroon is poor or problematic. Mean scores were interpreted using common five-point Likert thresholds: low = 1.00-2.33, moderate = 2.34-3.66, and high = 3.67-5.00.

Table 23. Descriptive statistics for study constructs

Construct	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Interpretation
Service Responsiveness	150	2.41	0.84	1.00	5.00	Moderate
Complaint Handling	150	2.60	0.81	1.00	4.80	Moderate
Staff Attitude	150	2.50	0.79	1.00	5.00	Moderate
Communication Quality	150	2.64	0.76	1.00	4.80	Moderate
Customer Satisfaction	150	2.37	0.90	1.00	5.00	Moderate
Customer Trust	150	2.35	0.82	1.00	5.00	Moderate
Customer Experience	150	2.36	0.83	1.00	5.00	Moderate
General Perception	150	3.72	1.03	1.00	5.00	High

Service Responsiveness

Service responsiveness recorded a mean of 2.41 (SD = 0.84), which falls within the moderate range but is positioned close to the lower threshold. This suggests that respondents did not perceive service providers as consistently responsive when assistance was required. In substantive terms, the mean indicates that customers experience responsiveness as present in some encounters but insufficiently reliable. The result points to a service environment in which delays, difficulty obtaining help, and weak urgency in addressing customer needs remain salient features of customer experience in Cameroon.

Complaint Handling

Complaint handling produced a mean of 2.60 (SD = 0.81), indicating a moderate assessment. Although this mean is slightly higher than several other service-quality dimensions, it still remains below the neutral midpoint of 3.00. This implies that customers do not generally view complaint systems as strongly effective, fair, or satisfactory. The score suggests partial institutional attention to complaints, but not enough to generate confidence that customer concerns are consistently taken seriously, resolved adequately, and followed up appropriately.

Staff Attitude

Staff attitude had a mean of 2.50 (SD = 0.79), also within the moderate range. The score indicates that respondents perceived staff conduct as uneven rather than clearly positive. While some interactions may involve respect, courtesy, patience, and professionalism, the overall mean suggests that these qualities are not experienced consistently across service encounters. In the Cameroonian telecommunications and transport contexts, this points to a relational service deficit in which customer treatment remains a visible weakness in everyday service delivery.

Communication Quality

Communication quality recorded the highest favourable-service mean among the service-quality dimensions, at 2.64 (SD = 0.76), but it remained moderate and below the scale midpoint. This indicates that communication practices are not perceived as entirely deficient, yet they are still far from strong. Customers appear to receive some information during service encounters, but the mean suggests that clarity, adequacy, usefulness, and timeliness of communication remain inconsistent. In practical terms, customers may continue to face uncertainty when service problems arise or when important service issues require explanation.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction produced a mean of 2.37 (SD = 0.90), which lies at the lower edge of the moderate range. This result is substantively important because satisfaction reflects the cumulative evaluation of service encounters. The mean indicates that respondents were only weakly satisfied with the services received. Rather than signaling acceptable satisfaction, the score suggests restrained or fragile satisfaction, with many customers likely perceiving that service experiences fall short of expectations. This pattern is consistent with broader concerns about customer service deficits in the sectors examined.

Customer Trust

Customer trust had a mean of 2.35 (SD = 0.82), again at the lower boundary of the moderate range. This indicates that respondents did not strongly trust service providers to behave honestly, dependably, or reliably. Because trust is central to continued customer-provider relationships, the low-moderate mean suggests that service deficiencies may have weakened

customers' confidence in providers. In the Cameroonian context, this points to a credibility problem in which customers may continue using services out of necessity while remaining doubtful about provider reliability and fairness.

Customer Experience

Customer experience recorded a mean of 2.36 (SD = 0.83), placing it at the lower end of the moderate range. This score indicates that respondents' overall experiences were not strongly positive. The mean suggests that interactions with service providers are often marked by friction, limited smoothness, and insufficient feelings of being valued. Although the score does not indicate uniformly negative experiences, it shows that positive customer experience is weak and unstable rather than a dominant characteristic of service delivery.

General Perception

General perception recorded a mean of 3.72 (SD = 1.03), which falls within the high range. Because the items in this construct measured agreement with statements that customer service is generally poor, that providers do not care enough about customers, that customers are not treated as important, and that poor customer service has become common, the high mean reflects a strong negative perception of customer service in Cameroon. This finding is especially notable because it contrasts with the merely low-to-moderate scores observed for the favourable service constructs. Respondents therefore appear to hold a broadly critical view of customer service conditions, even where some individual service dimensions are rated as moderately present.

4.6.1 Overall Descriptive Assessment

Taken together, the descriptive statistics indicate that customer service perceptions in Cameroon are generally unfavourable. The main favourable-service constructs fall within the moderate range, but their means cluster close to the lower boundary and remain below the neutral midpoint of the five-point scale. Customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience are especially weak because their means sit only marginally above the low category. This pattern suggests that customers do not experience telecommunications and transport services as wholly absent of responsiveness, complaint handling, respectful staff conduct, communication, satisfaction, trust, or positive experience; however, these aspects are not strong enough to indicate robust customer-centred service delivery.

The most favourable construct, communication quality, reached only 2.64, while customer trust, customer experience, and customer satisfaction were positioned at 2.35, 2.36, and 2.37 respectively. These values point to a weak service climate in which functional interactions may occur, but they do not translate into strong satisfaction, dependable trust, or consistently positive experiences. The high mean for general perception ($M = 3.72$) reinforces this conclusion by showing that respondents strongly associate customer service in Cameroon with poor treatment, insufficient provider concern, and widespread service shortcomings.

On descriptive evidence alone, the findings portray customer service in the telecommunications and transport sectors as underdeveloped, inconsistent, and insufficiently customer-oriented. The results suggest that service deficits are not confined to a single operational area; rather, they appear across responsiveness, complaints, interpersonal treatment, communication, satisfaction, trust, and overall experience. The descriptive profile therefore supports an overall assessment of customer service perceptions as cautious, critical, and largely dissatisfied, with customers reporting repeated exposure to services but limited confidence in the quality and care provided by service organizations.

4.7 Correlation Analysis

Methodological Note

Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the bivariate associations among the principal study constructs: Service Responsiveness, Complaint Handling, Staff Attitude, Communication Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Trust, Customer Experience, and General Perception. Construct scores were computed as respondent-level composite means. Reverse-worded items in the positively framed service-quality constructs were reverse-coded before composite scores were calculated. The analysis was based on 150 valid responses.

Correlation coefficients were interpreted using conventional social science guidelines, where coefficients around .10 indicate weak associations, coefficients around .30 indicate moderate associations, and coefficients of .50 or above indicate strong associations. Statistical significance was assessed using two-tailed tests. Because the General Perception scale was framed negatively, with higher scores indicating stronger agreement that customer service in Cameroon is poor, negative correlations between General Perception and the positively framed constructs were expected.

4.7.1 Correlation Matrix

Table 24. Pearson correlations among study constructs

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Service Responsiveness	1							
2. Complaint Handling	0.732	1						
3. Staff Attitude	0.750	0.746	1					
4. Communication Quality	0.620	0.715	0.705	1				
5. Customer Satisfaction	0.646	0.628	0.688	0.591	1			
6. Customer Trust	0.664	0.655	0.675	0.637	0.725	1		
7. Customer Experience	0.674	0.667	0.729	0.698	0.772	0.79	1	
8. General Perception	-0.497	-0.451	-0.453	-0.292	-0.443	-0.347	-0.420	1

Note. N = 150. SR = Service Responsiveness; CH = Complaint Handling; SA = Staff Attitude; CQ = Communication Quality; CS = Customer Satisfaction; CT = Customer Trust; CE = Customer Experience; GP = General Perception. $p < .001$.

4.7.2 Interpretation of Correlation Results

The correlation matrix indicates that all relationships among the study constructs were statistically significant at $p < .001$. The positive service-quality constructs were positively and substantially associated with one another. Service Responsiveness was very strongly correlated with Complaint Handling ($r = .732$, $p < .001$) and Staff Attitude ($r = .750$, $p < .001$), and strongly correlated with Communication Quality ($r = .620$, $p < .001$). This pattern suggests that customers who perceive service providers as responsive also tend to perceive complaint procedures, staff conduct, and communication practices more favourably. In the Cameroonian telecommunications and transport sectors, responsiveness appears to operate as part of a broader service-delivery experience rather than as an isolated dimension.

Complaint Handling was very strongly associated with Staff Attitude ($r = .746$, $p < .001$) and Communication Quality ($r = .715$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that customers' evaluations of complaint resolution are closely linked to how staff behave and how clearly providers communicate during service encounters. Substantively, this suggests that complaint handling is not perceived merely as a procedural issue; it is experienced through interpersonal treatment, responsiveness, and the quality of information provided to customers.

Staff Attitude was strongly related to Customer Satisfaction ($r = .688$, $p < .001$), Customer Trust ($r = .675$, $p < .001$), and very strongly related to Customer Experience ($r = .729$, $p < .001$). These associations indicate that respectful, courteous, patient, and professional staff conduct is central to favourable customer outcomes. In service contexts where direct contact with personnel is frequent, staff attitude appears to be a major component of customers' overall evaluation of service quality.

Communication Quality was strongly associated with Customer Satisfaction ($r = .591$, $p < .001$), Customer Trust ($r = .637$, $p < .001$), and Customer Experience ($r = .698$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that clear and useful communication contributes meaningfully to favourable customer responses. Customers who receive adequate explanations and relevant information during service problems are more likely to report satisfaction, trust, and positive experiences.

The strongest relationships were observed among Customer Satisfaction, Customer Trust, and Customer Experience. Customer Satisfaction was very strongly correlated with Customer Trust ($r = .725$, $p < .001$) and Customer Experience ($r = .772$, $p < .001$), while Customer Trust was very strongly correlated with Customer Experience ($r = .799$, $p < .001$). These results are consistent with the earlier EFA evidence showing that these constructs cluster closely together. Substantively, they suggest that customers do not sharply separate satisfaction, trust, and experience; rather, these constructs appear to represent closely connected aspects of an overall evaluation of service providers.

General Perception was negatively associated with all positively framed constructs. The strongest negative relationship was observed between General Perception and Service Responsiveness ($r = -.497$, $p < .001$), followed by Staff Attitude ($r = -.453$, $p < .001$), Complaint Handling ($r = -.451$, $p < .001$), Customer Satisfaction ($r = -.443$, $p < .001$), Customer Experience ($r = -.420$, $p < .001$), Customer Trust ($r = -.347$, $p < .001$), and Communication Quality ($r = -.292$, $p < .001$). These results indicate that respondents who evaluated specific service dimensions more favorably were less likely to agree that customer service in

Cameroon is generally poor. Conversely, weaker perceptions of responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, satisfaction, trust, and experience were associated with stronger agreement that poor customer service is widespread.

4.7.3 Methodological Implications

The correlation results provide preliminary support for the theoretical expectation that favourable service-quality dimensions are associated with more positive customer outcomes. However, the magnitude of several correlations also indicates the need for caution in subsequent regression analysis. Several inter-construct correlations exceeded .70, including Service Responsiveness with Complaint Handling, Service Responsiveness with Staff Attitude, Complaint Handling with Staff Attitude, Complaint Handling with Communication Quality, Staff Attitude with Communication Quality, Customer Satisfaction with Customer Trust, Customer Satisfaction with Customer Experience, and Customer Trust with Customer Experience. These strong associations are substantively meaningful, but they may also raise concerns about multicollinearity if highly related predictors are entered simultaneously into regression models.

Accordingly, subsequent regression analysis should include collinearity diagnostics, particularly tolerance values and variance inflation factors. The strongest concern applies to models in which satisfaction, trust, and experience are used together as predictors or simultaneous outcomes, because these constructs were highly correlated and also clustered together in the EFA. The correlations do not invalidate the use of the constructs, but they indicate that regression models should be theoretically focused and interpreted carefully.

Conclusion

The correlation analysis shows a coherent pattern of statistically significant relationships among the study constructs. Positive service-quality perceptions were strongly associated with satisfaction, trust, and customer experience, while general perceptions of poor customer service were negatively associated with favorable evaluations of specific service dimensions. These findings provide an appropriate empirical basis for proceeding to regression or hypothesis testing, provided that multicollinearity diagnostics are reported and the closely related nature of several constructs is acknowledged.

4.8 Multiple Regression Analysis

4.8.1 Methodological Approach

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether the core service-quality dimensions predicted customer outcomes in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors. Four separate regression models were estimated. Service Responsiveness, Complaint Handling, Staff Attitude, and Communication Quality were entered simultaneously as predictors. The dependent variables were Customer Satisfaction, Customer Trust, Customer Experience, and General Perception. Construct scores were computed as respondent-level composite means, with reverse-worded items reverse-coded before analysis.

The regression results are interpreted using standard quantitative research criteria. Model fit was assessed using R , R^2 , adjusted R^2 , and the overall F -test. Individual predictor effects were interpreted using unstandardized coefficients, standardized beta coefficients, t -values, and p -values. Because the correlation analysis showed strong associations among several predictors, multicollinearity was assessed using tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF). Tolerance values above .20 and VIF values below 5.00 were treated as acceptable for applied social science regression analysis, although the relatively high correlations among predictors are acknowledged when interpreting the coefficients.

4.8.2 Model Summary

Table 24. Regression model summaries

Model	Dependent variable	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	df	p
1	Customer Satisfaction	0.727	0.529	0.516	40.749	4, 145	< .001
2	Customer Trust	0.744	0.553	0.541	44.917	4, 145	< .001
3	Customer Experience	0.788	0.621	0.611	59.447	4, 145	< .001
4	General Perception	0.533	0.284	0.265	14.407	4, 145	< .001

The four regression models were statistically significant. The service-quality predictors explained 52.9% of the variance in Customer Satisfaction, 55.3% of the variance in Customer Trust, 62.1% of the variance in Customer Experience, and 28.4% of the variance in General Perception. These values indicate that service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication quality provide substantial explanatory power for the favorable customer outcome constructs, especially customer experience. The lower R^2 for General Perception suggests that broader negative perceptions of customer service in

Cameroon are influenced by these service-quality dimensions, but also likely reflect additional social, institutional, and sector-level factors not captured in the model.

4.8.3 Multicollinearity Diagnostics

Table 2. Collinearity diagnostics for predictors

Predictor	Tolerance	VIF	Interpretation
Service Responsiveness	0.369	2.707	Acceptable
Complaint Handling	0.327	3.058	Acceptable
Staff Attitude	0.318	3.147	Acceptable
Communication Quality	0.422	2.371	Acceptable

The collinearity diagnostics were within acceptable limits. VIF values ranged from 2.371 to 3.147, and tolerance values ranged from .318 to .422. These values do not exceed commonly used thresholds for problematic multicollinearity. Nevertheless, the predictors were strongly correlated conceptually and empirically, so the regression coefficients should be interpreted as the unique contribution of each predictor after controlling for the other service-quality dimensions. This is particularly important for Complaint Handling, which was strongly associated with responsiveness, staff attitude, and communication quality in the correlation analysis.

4.8.3.1 Model 1: Predicting Customer Satisfaction

Table 3. Regression coefficients for Customer Satisfaction

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	0.093	0.195		0.476	0.635
Service Responsiveness	0.240	0.101	0.223	2.383	0.018
Complaint Handling	0.131	0.110	0.118	1.185	0.238
Staff Attitude	0.389	0.114	0.345	3.409	< .001
Communication Quality	0.147	0.103	0.125	1.421	0.158

The first model significantly predicted Customer Satisfaction, $F(4, 145) = 40.749$, $p < .001$, explaining 52.9% of the variance. Service Responsiveness was a significant positive predictor of Customer Satisfaction (Beta = .223, $t = 2.383$, $p = .018$), indicating that customers who perceived providers as more responsive also reported higher satisfaction. Staff Attitude was also a significant positive predictor (Beta = .345, $t = 3.409$, $p < .001$) and was the strongest unique predictor in the model. This suggests that respectful, courteous, patient, and professional treatment by staff is especially important for satisfaction in the Cameroonian service context.

Complaint Handling was not a statistically significant unique predictor of satisfaction after controlling for the other predictors (Beta = .118, $t = 1.185$, $p = .238$). Communication Quality was also not statistically significant in this model (Beta = .125, $t = 1.421$, $p = .158$). These non-significant results do not imply that complaint handling and communication are unimportant; rather, their shared variance with responsiveness and staff attitude appears to account for much of their bivariate association with satisfaction.

4.8.3.2 Model 2: Predicting Customer Trust

Table 4. Regression coefficients for Customer Trust

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	0.171	0.173		0.987	0.325
Service Responsiveness	0.251	0.089	0.256	2.804	0.006
Complaint Handling	0.150	0.098	0.149	1.531	0.128
Staff Attitude	0.224	0.102	0.217	2.208	0.029
Communication Quality	0.235	0.092	0.219	2.562	0.011

The second model significantly predicted Customer Trust, $F(4, 145) = 44.917$, $p < .001$, explaining 55.3% of the variance. Service Responsiveness was a significant positive predictor of trust (Beta = .256, $t = 2.804$, $p = .006$). This indicates that timely assistance and visible responsiveness contribute to customers' confidence in service providers. Staff Attitude also significantly predicted trust (Beta = .217, $t = 2.208$, $p = .029$), suggesting that professional and respectful interactions support provider credibility.

Communication Quality was a significant positive predictor of Customer Trust (Beta = .219, $t = 2.562$, $p = .011$). This finding indicates that clear, useful, and adequate communication may strengthen customers' belief that providers are dependable and honest. Complaint Handling, however, was not a significant unique predictor (Beta = .149, $t = 1.531$, $p = .128$). As with the satisfaction model, this likely reflects overlap between complaint handling and the other service-quality dimensions rather than a complete absence of practical relevance.

4.8.3.3 Model 3: Predicting Customer Experience

Table 5. Regression coefficients for Customer Experience

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	-0.003	0.162		-0.021	0.983
Service Responsiveness	0.200	0.084	0.201	2.387	0.018
Complaint Handling	0.073	0.092	0.071	0.797	0.427
Staff Attitude	0.326	0.095	0.311	3.433	< .001
Communication Quality	0.331	0.086	0.303	3.850	< .001

The third model significantly predicted Customer Experience, $F(4, 145) = 59.447$, $p < .001$, explaining 62.1% of the variance. This was the strongest model among the four, indicating that customers' overall experience is highly responsive to the quality-of-service interactions. Service Responsiveness significantly predicted Customer Experience (Beta = .201, $t = 2.387$, $p = .018$), suggesting that prompt support contributes to smoother and more positive service encounters.

Staff Attitude was a significant positive predictor (Beta = .311, $t = 3.433$, $p < .001$), and Communication Quality was also significant (Beta = .303, $t = 3.850$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that customer experience is shaped not only by whether providers respond but also by how customers are treated and how clearly information is communicated. Complaint Handling was not a significant unique predictor (Beta = .071, $t = 0.797$, $p = .427$), again suggesting that its explanatory contribution may be absorbed by the broader service-response and communication environment.

4.8.3.4 Model 4: Predicting General Perception of Poor Customer Service

Table 6. Regression coefficients for General Perception

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	5.298	0.275		19.268	< .001
Service Responsiveness	-0.389	0.142	-0.317	-2.738	0.007
Complaint Handling	-0.270	0.156	-0.213	-1.730	0.086
Staff Attitude	-0.249	0.161	-0.192	-1.543	0.125
Communication Quality	0.259	0.146	0.192	1.772	0.078

The fourth model significantly predicted General Perception, $F(4, 145) = 14.407$, $p < .001$, explaining 28.4% of the variance. Because higher General Perception scores indicate stronger agreement that customer service in Cameroon is poor, negative coefficients indicate that better service-quality perceptions are associated with weaker agreement that customer service is generally poor.

Service Responsiveness was the only statistically significant unique predictor of General Perception (Beta = -.317, $t = -2.738$, $p = .007$). This indicates that customers who perceived service providers as more responsive were less likely to endorse the view that customer service in Cameroon is generally poor. Complaint Handling (Beta = -.213, $t = -1.730$, $p = .086$), Staff Attitude (Beta = -.192, $t = -1.543$, $p = .125$), and Communication Quality (Beta = .192, $t = 1.772$, $p = .078$) were not statistically significant unique predictors at the .05 level. The positive coefficient for Communication Quality should be interpreted cautiously because its

bivariate correlation with General Perception was negative; the coefficient reversal likely reflects shared variance among the predictors rather than a substantive positive effect.

Overall Interpretation

The regression results indicate that service-quality dimensions meaningfully predict customer outcomes in the telecommunications and transport sectors. Across the models, Staff Attitude emerged as one of the most consistent predictors, significantly influencing Customer Satisfaction, Customer Trust, and Customer Experience. This suggests that interpersonal treatment is central to how customers evaluate service providers in Cameroon. Service Responsiveness also showed consistent predictive importance, significantly predicting all four dependent variables, including General Perception. This indicates that timely and accessible assistance is a particularly salient dimension of customer service evaluation.

Communication Quality significantly predicted Customer Trust and Customer Experience, demonstrating that clear and useful information contributes to customers' confidence and overall service encounters. Complaint Handling, despite being positively correlated with the outcome variables, did not emerge as a significant unique predictor in the multivariate models. This does not mean that complaint handling lacks importance. Rather, the evidence suggests that complaint handling overlaps substantially with responsiveness, staff attitude, and communication quality; customers may experience complaint resolution as part of the broader service-delivery process rather than as a fully independent driver.

The findings provide support for the general proposition that better customer-service practices are associated with more favourable customer outcomes. However, the results also show that not all service-quality dimensions contribute equally once considered simultaneously. In this dataset, responsiveness and staff attitude are the most robust predictors, while communication quality contributes particularly to trust and experience. The results should be interpreted in light of the strong correlations among the predictors and the EFA evidence that some service dimensions are empirically interrelated.

Conclusion

The regression analysis demonstrates that service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication quality collectively explain substantial variance in customer satisfaction, trust, and experience, and a smaller but meaningful proportion of variance in general negative perceptions of customer service in Cameroon. The models are statistically significant, and multicollinearity diagnostics are within acceptable limits. The evidence supports proceeding with hypothesis interpretation, provided that the discussion acknowledges the overlap among service-quality dimensions and avoids overstating non-significant predictors as independent effects.

4.9 Independent Samples t-Test: Sector Differences

4.9.1 Methodological Approach

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine whether respondents from the telecommunications sector differed from respondents from the transport sector on the eight construct scores. The analysis compared Service Responsiveness, Complaint Handling, Staff Attitude, Communication Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Trust, Customer Experience, and General Perception. Construct scores were computed as respondent-level composite means, with reverse-worded items reverse-coded before analysis. The telecommunications group comprised 82 respondents, while the transport group comprised 68 respondents.

Levene's test was used to assess the equality of variances. Where Levene's test was not significant, the equal-variances-assumed t-test was interpreted. Where Levene's test was significant, the unequal-variances result was interpreted. Effect sizes were reported using Cohen's d, where values around .20 are commonly interpreted as small, values around .50 as medium, and values around .80 as large.

4.9.2 Results

Table 1. Independent samples t-tests comparing telecommunications and transport respondents

Construct	Telecommunications M	Telecommunications SD	Transport M	Transport SD	Levene p	T	df	p	Mean difference	Cohen d	Effect size
Service Responsiveness	2.456	0.868	2.365	0.801	0.254	0.665	148.000	0.507	0.091	0.109	negligible
Complaint Handling	2.712	0.854	2.459	0.740	0.270	1.921	148.000	0.057	0.253	0.315	small
Staff Attitude	2.605	0.841	2.379	0.722	0.167	1.742	148.000	0.084	0.225	0.286	small
Communication Quality	2.700	0.751	2.576	0.776	0.892	0.988	148.000	0.325	0.124	0.162	negligible
Customer Satisfaction	2.442	0.932	2.290	0.855	0.228	1.030	148.000	0.305	0.152	0.169	negligible
Customer Trust	2.384	0.865	2.305	0.764	0.217	0.587	148.000	0.558	0.079	0.096	negligible
Customer Experience	2.412	0.891	2.301	0.760	0.041	0.817	147.872	0.415	0.110	0.132	negligible
General Perception	3.662	1.004	3.787	1.062	0.734	-0.741	148.000	0.460	-0.125	-0.121	negligible

Note. Mean difference = Telecommunications minus Transport. For Customer Experience, Levene's test was significant; therefore, the unequal-variances t-test was interpreted. For all other constructs, equal variances were assumed.

The independent samples t-tests showed no statistically significant sector differences at the .05 level across any of the eight constructs. Service Responsiveness did not differ significantly between telecommunications (M = 2.456, SD = 0.868) and transport respondents (M = 2.365, SD = 0.801), $t(148) = 0.665$, $p = .507$, $d = 0.109$. The effect size was negligible, indicating that perceived responsiveness was broadly similar across the two sectors.

Complaint Handling showed a marginal but non-significant difference, with telecommunications respondents reporting a slightly higher mean (M = 2.712, SD = 0.854) than transport respondents (M = 2.459, SD = 0.740), $t(148) = 1.921$, $p = .057$, $d = 0.315$. Although the effect size was small, the result does not meet the conventional .05 threshold for statistical significance. This suggests that any apparent advantage for telecommunications in complaint handling should be interpreted cautiously.

Staff Attitude also showed a small but non-significant sector difference. Telecommunications respondents reported a mean of 2.605 (SD = 0.841), compared with 2.379 (SD = 0.722) among transport respondents, $t(148) = 1.742$, $p = .084$, $d = 0.286$. This pattern indicates that staff attitude may be perceived somewhat more favourably in telecommunications, but the evidence is not strong enough to conclude that the sectors differ statistically.

Communication Quality did not differ significantly between telecommunications (M = 2.700, SD = 0.751) and transport (M = 2.576, SD = 0.776), $t(148) = 0.988$, $p = .325$, $d = 0.162$. The negligible effect size suggests that respondents experienced similar levels of communication quality across the two sectors.

Customer Satisfaction was not significantly different between telecommunications (M = 2.442, SD = 0.932) and transport (M = 2.290, SD = 0.855), $t(148) = 1.030$, $p = .305$, $d = 0.169$. This result indicates that low-end satisfaction was not sector-specific; rather, weak satisfaction appears to characterize both service contexts.

Customer Trust also did not differ significantly between telecommunications ($M = 2.384$, $SD = 0.865$) and transport ($M = 2.305$, $SD = 0.764$), $t(148) = 0.587$, $p = .558$, $d = 0.096$. The effect size was negligible, suggesting that respondents' limited trust in service providers was broadly comparable across both sectors.

For Customer Experience, Levene's test was significant, indicating unequal variances; therefore, the Welch-adjusted result was interpreted. Telecommunications respondents reported a mean of 2.412 ($SD = 0.891$), while transport respondents reported a mean of 2.301 ($SD = 0.760$). The difference was not statistically significant, $t(147.872) = 0.817$, $p = .415$, $d = 0.132$. Thus, respondents' overall service experiences were similarly weak across the two sectors.

General Perception did not differ significantly between telecommunications ($M = 3.662$, $SD = 1.004$) and transport respondents ($M = 3.787$, $SD = 1.062$), $t(148) = -0.741$, $p = .460$, $d = -0.121$. Although transport respondents reported a slightly higher level of agreement that customer service is generally poor, the difference was negligible and not statistically significant.

4.9.3 Interpretation

The sector comparison indicates that customer service perceptions are not significantly different between telecommunications and transport respondents. Across both sectors, respondents reported similar levels of responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, communication quality, satisfaction, trust, experience, and general negative perception. This finding is important because it suggests that customer service deficits in the dataset are not confined to one sector. Rather, the pattern appears to reflect a broader service-quality problem across both telecommunications and transport.

The absence of statistically significant differences does not mean that the sectors are identical in every practical respect. Complaint Handling and Staff Attitude showed small, marginal differences favouring telecommunications, but these differences did not reach statistical significance and should not be overstated. The effect sizes were small, indicating limited practical separation between the groups.

Conclusion

The independent samples t-test results show that respondents' perceptions of customer service deficits are broadly similar across the telecommunications and transport sectors. No construct differed significantly by sector at the .05 level. These results support the interpretation that customer service weaknesses in the study are cross-sectoral rather than sector-specific. The findings are suitable for inclusion in the results section, and any subsequent discussion should emphasize that the observed customer service deficits appear to represent a wider service-delivery challenge in Cameroon rather than a problem isolated to a single sector.

4.10 Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression analysis. The interpretation was based on the direction of the standardized beta coefficient, the statistical significance of the predictor, and the overall explanatory power of the model. A significance threshold of $p < .05$ was adopted.

The main hypothesis, H1, proposed that customer service deficits have a significant negative effect on customer experience in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors. The regression model predicting customer experience was statistically significant, $F(4,145) = 59.447$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 value of .621. This indicates that the service-quality dimensions jointly explained 62.1% of the variance in customer experience. Service responsiveness, staff attitude, and communication quality were significant positive predictors of customer experience. Conceptually, this means that when service responsiveness, employee attitude, and communication quality improve, customer experience also improves. Conversely, deficits in these areas are associated with poorer customer experience. Therefore, H1 is supported.

For H2, the study hypothesized that service responsiveness has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction. The regression results showed that service responsiveness significantly and positively predicted customer satisfaction, $\beta = .223$, $t = 2.383$, $p = .018$. Since the effect was positive and statistically significant, the hypothesis is accepted. This finding suggests that customers who perceive service providers as responsive are more likely to report higher satisfaction. Therefore, H2 is supported.

For H3, the hypothesis stated that effective complaint handling has a significant positive effect on customer trust. Although complaint handling had a positive coefficient, its effect on customer trust was not statistically significant, $\beta = .149$, $t = 1.531$, $p = .128$. Since the p-value exceeded the .05 significance level, the hypothesis is not supported. This result suggests that complaint handling, when considered alongside responsiveness, staff attitude, and communication quality, does not make a statistically significant unique contribution to customer trust in this model. Therefore, H3 is not supported.

For H4, the study proposed that staff attitude has a significant positive effect on overall customer experience. The regression results confirmed a significant positive relationship between staff attitude and customer experience, $\beta = .311$, $t = 3.433$, $p < .001$.

This indicates that courteous, respectful, patient, and professional staff behavior plays a major role in shaping customers' overall experience. Therefore, H4 is supported.

For H5, the hypothesis stated that communication quality has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction. The results showed that communication quality had a positive but statistically non-significant effect on customer satisfaction, $\beta = .125$, $t = 1.421$, $p = .158$. Since the relationship was not significant at the .05 level, the hypothesis is rejected. This does not necessarily mean that communication quality is unimportant; rather, its unique contribution to satisfaction was not statistically significant after controlling for the other service-quality dimensions. Therefore, H5 is not supported.

For H6, the hypothesis proposed that there is a significant difference in customer service perceptions between the telecommunications and transport sectors in Cameroon. The regression output provided does not include a sector-based comparison test, such as an independent-samples t-test or Mann-Whitney U test. Therefore, based on the available results, H6 cannot be statistically determined. A separate comparison of customer service perception scores between respondents from the telecommunications and transport sectors is required before this hypothesis can be accepted or rejected.

Table 25: Summary Of Hypothesis Decisions

Hypothesis	Statistical Evidence	Decision
H1	Customer experience model significant, $R^2 = .621$, $p < .001$	Supported
H2	Responsiveness $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction: $\beta = .223$, $p = .018$	Supported
H3	Complaint handling $\rightarrow$ Trust: $\beta = .149$, $p = .128$	Not supported
H4	Staff attitude $\rightarrow$ Customer experience: $\beta = .311$, $p < .001$	Supported
H5	Communication quality $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction : $\beta = .125$, $p = .158$	Not supported
H6	Sector comparison results not provided	Not determined

Overall, the findings demonstrate that customer service quality is a statistically meaningful predictor of customer outcomes in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors. The strongest empirical support was found for the influence of responsiveness and staff attitude, particularly in shaping satisfaction and customer experience. Communication quality was also important for customer trust and customer experience, although it did not significantly predict satisfaction in the multivariate model. Complaint handling, while theoretically relevant, did not emerge as a significant independent predictor once other service-quality dimensions were controlled.

Chapter 5. Discussions and Conclusion

5.1 Summary of the Study

This study was undertaken to provide empirical evidence on customer service deficits within Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors, two industries that are central to economic activity and everyday life yet are frequently associated with public dissatisfaction regarding the quality of customer treatment. Although customer service has long been recognized as an important determinant of customer satisfaction, trust, and organizational performance, existing scholarship has largely emphasized general service quality while giving comparatively limited attention to customer service deficits as a distinct phenomenon, particularly within emerging economies. Responding to this gap, the study sought to move beyond anecdotal accounts by systematically examining how deficiencies in customer-oriented service delivery influence customer outcomes in the Cameroonian context.

To achieve this objective, the research adopted a positivist philosophical orientation and a deductive quantitative approach. Drawing upon established service quality literature, the study conceptualized customer service deficits through four principal dimensions: service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, and communication quality. These dimensions were examined in relation to customer satisfaction, customer trust, customer experience, and broader perceptions of customer service. Six hypotheses were formulated to investigate the relationships between the service dimensions and customer outcomes, while also exploring whether customer service perceptions differed between the telecommunications and transport sectors.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to customers of telecommunications and transport service providers in Cameroon. A total of 150 valid responses were obtained and subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis.

Before hypothesis testing, the measurement instrument underwent comprehensive psychometric evaluation. The reliability analysis demonstrated acceptable to excellent internal consistency across all constructs, with an overall Cronbach's Alpha of 0.935, indicating that the instrument provided a dependable basis for subsequent statistical analyses. The exploratory factor analysis further confirmed the construct validity of the measurement instrument, with excellent sampling adequacy and a factor structure that broadly supported the theoretical organization of the questionnaire. These preliminary assessments established that the data were sufficiently robust for descriptive, correlational, and regression analyses.

The descriptive analysis revealed a generally unfavorable picture of customer service within the two sectors. While respondents reported moderate evaluations of service responsiveness, complaint handling, staff attitude, communication quality, customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience, the mean scores consistently remained below the neutral midpoint of the measurement scale. In contrast, respondents expressed a high level of agreement with statements indicating that poor customer service is widespread in Cameroon. Collectively, these findings suggest that customers perceive customer-oriented service delivery as inconsistent and insufficiently developed, reinforcing the central premise upon which the study was founded.

The correlation analysis demonstrated statistically significant associations among all major study constructs, confirming that improvements in customer-facing service dimensions are closely related to favourable customer outcomes. Customers who perceived service providers as more responsive, communicative, and respectful also reported higher levels of satisfaction, trust, and overall customer experience. Conversely, stronger perceptions that customer service in Cameroon is generally poor were associated with less favourable evaluations of these service dimensions. These findings provided empirical support for the conceptual proposition that customer service should be understood as an integrated organizational capability rather than as isolated service activities.

The regression analyses offered further insight into the relative importance of the different customer service dimensions. Overall, the service-quality variables explained substantial proportions of the variation in customer satisfaction, customer trust, customer experience, and general perceptions of customer service. More specifically, the findings confirmed that service responsiveness significantly enhanced customer satisfaction, while staff attitude exerted a significant positive influence on customer experience. By contrast, complaint handling did not emerge as a statistically significant independent predictor of customer trust after controlling for the other service-quality dimensions, and communication quality did not significantly predict customer satisfaction within the multivariate model.

Furthermore, although the study proposed a comparison between the telecommunications and transport sectors, the available statistical outputs did not include the independent-samples comparison required to determine whether customer service perceptions differed significantly between the two sectors. Consequently, this hypothesis remained unresolved pending additional comparative analysis.

Taken together, the findings provide compelling evidence that customer service is not merely an operational support function but a strategic determinant of customer outcomes within Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors.

The study demonstrates that while some dimensions of customer service contribute more strongly than others, the overall quality of customer-facing interactions plays a decisive role in shaping customer satisfaction, trust, and experience. By empirically documenting these relationships within an under-researched emerging economy, the study advances understanding of customer service deficits as measurable organizational challenges and provides an evidence-based foundation for strengthening customer-centered service delivery in Cameroon and comparable developing markets.

5.2 Comparison with Previous Empirical Studies and Theoretical Framework

The findings of this study are broadly consistent with the dominant service-quality literature, particularly the SERVQUAL tradition developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), which conceptualizes service quality through dimensions such as responsiveness, assurance, empathy, reliability, and tangibles. The present study found that service responsiveness significantly predicted customer satisfaction, supporting the argument that customers evaluate service providers not only by the final service outcome but also by the provider's willingness and ability to respond promptly. This agrees with Parasuraman et al. (1988), who identified responsiveness as a core dimension of perceived service quality. In the Cameroonian telecommunications and transport sectors, the significance of responsiveness is theoretically meaningful because customers often encounter delays, service interruptions, weak feedback systems, and uncertainty. Under such conditions, prompt response becomes a visible signal of organizational competence and customer orientation.

The finding that staff attitude significantly predicted customer experience is also consistent with Grönroos' (1984) service quality model, which distinguishes between technical quality, or what the customer receives, and functional quality, or how the service is delivered. The present findings suggest that in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors, the functional dimension of service delivery is especially important. Customers' experiences are shaped not only by whether they receive network access, transport mobility, or complaint resolution, but also by whether frontline employees treat them with courtesy, patience, respect,

and professionalism. This finding also agrees with Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault (1990), who demonstrated that service encounters are critical moments in which customers form favourable or unfavourable evaluations of service organizations. Thus, the study supports the view that frontline employee behaviour is not peripheral to service quality; it is central to the production of customer experience.

The significant relationship between communication quality and customer trust/customer experience also aligns with relationship marketing theory. Morgan and Hunt (1994) argued that trust is a central mechanism in successful relationship marketing. In this study, clear and useful communication appears to strengthen customer confidence because it reduces uncertainty and signals transparency. This is particularly important in emerging economy contexts where customers may already be skeptical of service providers due to repeated service failures, limited accountability, or poor complaint feedback. The finding therefore extends relationship marketing theory by showing that communication quality is not merely informational; it is relational. It contributes to customers' judgement of whether service providers are dependable, honest, and customer-oriented.

However, the non-significant effect of complaint handling on customer trust differs from much of the complaint-management literature. Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekar (1998), for example, argued that effective complaint handling can restore satisfaction, strengthen trust, and support relationship continuity after service failure. The present study does not fully confirm that position, since complaint handling did not make a statistically significant unique contribution to customer trust when responsiveness, staff attitude, and communication quality were controlled. This disagreement may be explained by multicollinearity and contextual overlap among the service dimensions. In practice, customers may not experience complaint handling as a separate construct. They may judge complaint handling through the speed of response, tone of staff interaction, and clarity of communication. Therefore, the result does not necessarily imply that complaint handling is unimportant. Rather, it suggests that in this context, complaint handling may operate indirectly through broader service-interaction processes.

The findings also relate strongly to expectation-disconfirmation theory, especially Oliver's (1980) argument that satisfaction arises when perceived performance meets or exceeds prior expectations. In the present study, responsiveness and staff attitude significantly predicted customer satisfaction and/or experience, suggesting that customers respond positively when service performance reduces the gap between what they expect and what they actually receive. Conversely, service deficits such as delays, poor staff conduct, weak communication, and unresolved complaints likely create negative disconfirmation, leading to dissatisfaction and poorer experience.

Finally, the study contributes to customer experience research. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) conceptualized customer experience as a multidimensional construct shaped across the customer journey, including cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and social responses. The present study supports this view by showing that customer experience in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors is not produced by a single service attribute. Rather, it emerges from the interaction of responsiveness, staff attitude, communication, and broader perceptions of service delivery. The findings therefore extend customer experience literature into an emerging economy setting, where institutional weaknesses, infrastructural constraints, and limited consumer protection may intensify the importance of human interaction and timely response.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

This study makes several important contributions to the growing body of knowledge on customer service, service quality, and customer behavior, particularly within the context of emerging economies. Although customer service has received considerable scholarly attention over the past several decades, much of the existing literature has been developed within mature economies where institutional environments, market competition, regulatory enforcement, and customer expectations differ substantially from those observed in many developing countries. By providing empirical evidence from Cameroon, this study extends the geographical and contextual boundaries of customer service research and demonstrates that customer service remains a critical determinant of customer outcomes even in institutional environments characterized by infrastructural constraints, uneven service standards, and evolving consumer protection frameworks.

First, the findings reinforce the central proposition of service quality theory that customers evaluate organizations not solely on the technical quality of the services they receive but also on the quality of the interactions that accompany service delivery. The significant influence of service responsiveness on customer satisfaction and the positive effect of staff attitude on customer experience underscore the importance of interpersonal service encounters in shaping customer evaluations. These findings lend empirical support to the argument advanced in the service quality literature that prompt responses, employee courtesy, empathy, and professionalism constitute essential dimensions of perceived service quality that influence customers' post-consumption evaluations. In doing so, the study demonstrates that these theoretical relationships remain applicable within the institutional and socio-economic realities of an emerging economy such as Cameroon.

Second, the study contributes to the literature on customer satisfaction by demonstrating that satisfaction is influenced not merely by the successful delivery of a service but also by the manner in which customers are treated throughout the service process. The findings suggest that customers increasingly evaluate organizations through the responsiveness, professionalism,

and effectiveness of their customer-facing personnel. This reinforces contemporary perspectives that customer satisfaction is a multidimensional construct shaped by both functional performance and relational experiences. Consequently, the study extends existing knowledge by highlighting the strategic importance of customer-oriented organizational behavior within sectors where service interactions occur frequently and directly influence public perceptions.

Third, the findings contribute to the literature on customer trust by providing nuanced evidence regarding the role of complaint handling. While complaint handling exhibited positive associations with customer trust at the correlational level, its independent contribution within the multivariate regression model was not statistically significant after controlling for other service dimensions. This finding suggests that customer trust may emerge from the combined influence of multiple aspects of service delivery rather than from complaint resolution alone. The result refines existing theoretical assumptions by indicating that effective complaint management, although important, may be insufficient to establish trust in environments where broader concerns regarding responsiveness, communication, and employee conduct continue to shape customer perceptions. This insight encourages scholars to conceptualize customer trust as a multidimensional outcome influenced by the cumulative quality of organizational interactions rather than by isolated service recovery efforts.

Fourth, the study advances customer experience research by demonstrating that employee behavior remains one of the most influential determinants of customers' overall service experiences. The significant relationship between staff attitude and customer experience emphasizes that customers attach considerable importance to respect, courtesy, willingness to assist, and professionalism during service encounters. This finding strengthens the growing academic consensus that customer experience extends beyond transactional efficiency to encompass emotional, relational, and psychological dimensions of service interactions. Within emerging economies, where resource constraints often limit investments in advanced service technologies, the findings suggest that human interaction continues to represent a critical source of competitive differentiation.

Beyond its contributions to individual theoretical domains, this study also contributes to the broader literature on customer service in emerging economies by addressing an important contextual gap. Much of the existing empirical evidence on customer service has been generated from developed markets, where organizational systems, customer expectations, and institutional environments differ considerably from those in many African countries. By examining customer service deficits within Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors, this study provides context-specific evidence that enriches the international literature and demonstrates that theories developed primarily in advanced economies remain broadly applicable while also requiring contextual interpretation. In particular, the findings suggest that structural challenges commonly associated with emerging economies—including organizational capacity constraints, inconsistent service standards, and limited customer accountability mechanisms—may influence the relative importance of different customer service dimensions.

Finally, the study contributes conceptually by framing customer service deficits as measurable organizational phenomena rather than merely anecdotal or operational concerns. Instead of treating poor customer service as an isolated managerial problem, the research demonstrates that customer service deficits can be systematically measured through identifiable dimensions and empirically linked to important organizational outcomes, including customer satisfaction, trust, and customer experience. This perspective broadens the academic discourse by positioning customer service not only as an operational function but also as a strategic organizational capability that influences organizational performance, customer relationships, and long-term competitiveness.

Taken together, these theoretical contributions strengthen the understanding of customer service within emerging economies while extending existing service quality literature through evidence generated from the Cameroonian context. The study therefore not only confirms several established theoretical relationships but also refines current understanding by illustrating how contextual realities shape customer perceptions and organizational service performance. In doing so, it provides a valuable foundation for future scholarly inquiry into customer service management across developing countries and contributes to the growing international discourse on service excellence in emerging markets.

5.4 Managerial Implications

The findings of this study carry important managerial implications for organizations operating in Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors. Overall, the results demonstrate that customer service is not merely a supporting business function but a strategic organizational capability that significantly influences customer satisfaction, trust, and experience. Consequently, managers should view investments in customer service as long-term strategic initiatives capable of strengthening organizational reputation, customer retention, and competitive advantage rather than as routine operational expenditures.

One of the most important findings of the study is the significant influence of service responsiveness on customer satisfaction. This suggests that customers value organizations that respond promptly to inquiries, provide timely assistance, and resolve issues without unnecessary delays. Managers should therefore establish clear service standards, monitor response times, and

invest in systems that enable employees to address customer requests efficiently. Regular performance monitoring and customer feedback mechanisms can also help organizations identify areas requiring immediate improvement.

The study also highlights the critical role of staff attitude in shaping customer experience. Customers evaluate organizations not only on the services delivered but also on the manner in which those services are provided. Respectful communication, professionalism, empathy, and courtesy significantly enhance customers' overall experiences. Managers should therefore prioritize employee development through continuous customer service training, interpersonal communication workshops, and leadership programmes that reinforce a customer-centred organizational culture. Recruitment and performance evaluation systems should equally emphasize behavioural competencies alongside technical skills.

Although complaint handling demonstrated a positive relationship with customer trust, its independent effect was not statistically significant after controlling for other service dimensions. This finding suggests that organizations should avoid treating complaint resolution as an isolated customer service activity. Instead, complaint management should form part of a broader service improvement strategy that emphasizes responsiveness, effective communication, and positive employee attitudes. Managers should view customer complaints as valuable opportunities for organizational learning, service recovery, and continuous quality improvement rather than as administrative inconveniences.

The findings further indicate that communication quality remains an essential component of effective customer service. Even where its independent statistical effect was limited within the regression model, clear, accurate, timely, and transparent communication remains fundamental to managing customer expectations and reducing service-related uncertainty. Organizations should therefore strengthen both face-to-face and digital communication channels by providing consistent information, proactively informing customers about service changes, and ensuring that frontline employees communicate professionally and accurately at every stage of the customer journey.

Beyond individual service dimensions, this study demonstrates that customer service should be managed as an integrated organizational system. Improvements in responsiveness, communication, complaint handling, and staff behaviour are most effective when implemented collectively rather than independently. Senior executives should therefore adopt comprehensive customer service strategies supported by clear performance indicators, regular customer satisfaction assessments, employee accountability mechanisms, and continuous service quality improvement initiatives. Embedding customer service within organizational strategy will enable firms to build stronger customer relationships and achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

Finally, the findings provide managers with evidence that improving customer service represents both a commercial necessity and a strategic investment. In increasingly competitive service markets, organizations that consistently deliver responsive, respectful, and customer-oriented services are more likely to strengthen customer loyalty, enhance public confidence, and improve long-term organizational performance. Managers within Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors should therefore recognize customer service excellence as a key driver of sustainable organizational success rather than simply a departmental responsibility.

5.5 Policy Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for public policy and regulatory practice in Cameroon. The evidence that customer service dimensions such as responsiveness, staff attitude, complaint handling, and communication quality significantly influence customer outcomes suggests that customer service should be treated as a strategic component of national service-sector development. Policymakers can no longer view customer service solely as an internal managerial issue; it has broader consequences for consumer welfare, public confidence, market efficiency, and economic competitiveness.

For government ministries responsible for telecommunications and transport, the findings highlight the need to strengthen customer-oriented service standards across both sectors. Regulatory frameworks should incorporate measurable customer service indicators alongside traditional operational and technical performance requirements. Such indicators may include response times, complaint resolution procedures, customer communication standards, and service accessibility. Embedding these requirements within regulatory oversight would encourage service providers to place greater emphasis on customer experience as part of their operational obligations.

The study also underscores the role of telecommunications and transport regulators in promoting accountability among service providers. Regulatory agencies should establish clear benchmarks for customer service performance and require periodic reporting from licensed operators. Independent customer satisfaction assessments and public disclosure of service quality performance could further enhance transparency and encourage competition based not only on pricing and coverage but also on the quality of customer interactions.

Consumer protection agencies can also draw important lessons from the findings. The generally unfavourable perceptions of customer service identified in the study suggest that many consumers may lack effective mechanisms for addressing service-related grievances. Strengthening consumer complaint channels, simplifying dispute resolution procedures, and increasing public awareness of consumer rights could improve customer confidence and encourage service providers to respond more effectively to customer concerns.

From a broader economic perspective, improving customer service standards has implications for national competitiveness. In service-driven economies, customer experience increasingly influences consumer behavior, organizational reputation, and investment attractiveness. Countries that foster stronger customer service cultures are more likely to support business growth, enhance consumer trust, and improve the overall efficiency of service markets. Consequently, customer service improvement should be considered part of a wider strategy for strengthening the performance of Cameroon's service sector.

The findings may also offer useful insights for other emerging economies facing similar challenges. Many developing countries experience rapid growth in telecommunications and transport services while simultaneously confronting concerns about service quality and customer treatment. The Cameroonian experience suggests that strengthening customer service standards requires coordinated efforts involving regulators, policymakers, industry associations, and service providers. As emerging economies continue to expand their service sectors, customer-centred regulation and accountability mechanisms may become increasingly important for sustaining consumer confidence and long-term economic development.

Ultimately, the policy implications of this study extend beyond the telecommunications and transport sectors. They point to the need for a broader national conversation on service quality, organizational accountability, and customer rights. By establishing stronger customer service expectations and enforcement mechanisms, policymakers can contribute to a more responsive service environment that benefits consumers, organizations, and the wider economy.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

Like all empirical investigations, this study is subject to certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. While these limitations do not diminish the overall contribution of the research, they define the scope within which the results should be understood and provide opportunities for future scholarly inquiry.

First, the study adopted a cross-sectional research design, whereby data were collected at a single point in time. Although this approach was appropriate for examining the relationships among the study variables, it does not capture how customer perceptions and service experiences may evolve over time. Customer expectations are dynamic and may change in response to organizational improvements, market competition, or technological developments. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as reflecting customer perceptions during the period in which the data were collected rather than as permanent patterns of customer behavior.

Second, the study focused exclusively on the telecommunications and transport sectors in Cameroon. These sectors were deliberately selected because of their strategic importance and the frequency with which customers interact with service providers. However, customer service challenges may differ across other industries such as banking, healthcare, hospitality, education, or public administration. Therefore, caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings beyond the sectors examined in this research.

Another limitation relates to the geographical scope of the study. Although respondents represented customers within Cameroon, the findings primarily reflect the experiences of individuals who participated in the survey and may not fully capture regional variations in service delivery across the country. Differences in infrastructure, organizational practices, and customer expectations between urban and rural settings may influence customer service experiences in ways that were beyond the scope of this investigation.

Finally, this study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationships among the selected variables. While quantitative methods provide robust statistical evidence and facilitate the testing of theoretical relationships, they offer limited insight into the deeper reasons underlying customers' perceptions and experiences. Qualitative approaches such as interviews or focus group discussions could provide richer contextual explanations for why certain customer service challenges persist and how customers interpret their interactions with service providers.

Despite these limitations, the study remains methodologically robust and makes a meaningful contribution to the literature on customer service in emerging economies. The use of validated measurement scales, rigorous data screening procedures, reliability and validity assessments, and appropriate statistical techniques enhances confidence in the findings. Moreover, by addressing an underexplored research context, the study provides valuable empirical evidence that can inform both scholarly debate and practical decision-making while serving as a foundation for future research.

5.7 Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study open several promising avenues for future research on customer service in Cameroon and other emerging economies. While the present study contributes valuable empirical evidence on customer service deficits within the telecommunications and transport sectors, it also highlights opportunities for expanding both the scope and methodological approaches of future investigations.

Future studies should examine customer service across a broader range of service industries. Sectors such as banking, healthcare, hospitality, insurance, education, and public administration are equally characterized by frequent customer interactions and may present different customer service challenges. Comparative analyses across multiple industries would provide a more comprehensive understanding of customer service practices and help determine whether the patterns identified in this study are unique to the telecommunications and transport sectors or reflect broader systemic issues within Cameroon's service economy.

Given that this study focused exclusively on Cameroon, future research should also undertake comparative investigations across emerging economies. Examining customer service in countries with similar institutional and economic characteristics would provide valuable insights into how cultural, regulatory, and organizational contexts shape customer experiences. Such comparative studies could contribute to the development of more context-sensitive theories of customer service within developing countries.

The cross-sectional nature of the present study also suggests the need for longitudinal research. Customer expectations and organizational service practices evolve over time, particularly in response to technological innovation, market competition, and regulatory reforms. Longitudinal studies would enable researchers to examine how customer perceptions change and whether improvements in customer service initiatives produce sustained effects on customer satisfaction, trust, and overall customer experience.

Although this study adopted a quantitative approach, future researchers may benefit from employing mixed-methods designs that combine surveys with qualitative interviews or focus group discussions. While quantitative analysis identifies statistical relationships among variables, qualitative methods can provide deeper insights into customers' lived experiences, expectations, and perceptions of service quality. Such an approach would offer a richer understanding of the organizational and contextual factors underlying customer service deficits.

Future studies should also examine emerging issues that are transforming customer service globally. The rapid adoption of digital platforms, artificial intelligence, automated customer support, social media engagement, and omnichannel service delivery is reshaping customer expectations across both developed and emerging markets. Investigating how these technological developments influence customer satisfaction, trust, and experience within the Cameroonian context would provide timely and policy-relevant evidence.

In addition, future research should extend the conceptual framework by incorporating variables that were beyond the scope of the present study. Constructs such as customer loyalty, customer retention, perceived value, service recovery, organizational culture, employee engagement, customer relationship management, and digital service quality may provide a more comprehensive understanding of customer behaviour. Researchers may also examine mediating and moderating variables to better explain the mechanisms through which customer service influences organizational outcomes.

Finally, future studies should consider the application of more advanced analytical techniques to validate and extend the findings of this research. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) would enable researchers to examine multiple relationships simultaneously while accounting for measurement error, whereas Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) could provide additional evidence regarding the validity of the measurement instrument. The application of these advanced techniques would further strengthen the theoretical and empirical understanding of customer service within emerging economies.

Collectively, these recommendations provide a roadmap for advancing customer service research beyond the boundaries of the present study. As service industries continue to evolve in response to technological change, increasing competition, and rising customer expectations, continued scholarly attention will be essential for developing evidence-based strategies capable of improving customer experiences, organizational performance, and sustainable service delivery in Cameroon and other emerging economies.

5.8 General Conclusion

This study set out to examine customer service deficits within Cameroon's telecommunications and transport sectors and to determine how key dimensions of customer service influence customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer experience.

Against the backdrop of increasing concerns regarding service quality in many emerging economies, the study responded to a notable gap in the literature by providing empirical evidence from a context that has received relatively limited scholarly attention. Through the application of a rigorous quantitative research design, the study demonstrated that customer service is not merely an operational function but a strategic organizational capability with significant implications for customer outcomes. The findings show that customer service remains a critical determinant of how customers evaluate service providers. In particular, service responsiveness and staff attitude emerged as important drivers of customer satisfaction and customer experience, while the overall pattern of results confirmed that customer-oriented service delivery contributes positively to customer perceptions. At the same time, the findings revealed persistent deficiencies in customer service across the telecommunications and transport sectors, suggesting that many organizations have yet to fully embrace customer-centric practices as a strategic priority. These results reinforce the importance of investing in service quality as a means of improving organizational performance and strengthening relationships with customers.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on customer service by extending empirical evidence from an emerging economy. It confirms the relevance of established service quality principles within the Cameroonian context while demonstrating that contextual realities shape how customers perceive and evaluate service encounters. By conceptualizing customer service deficits as measurable organizational phenomena, the study broadens existing scholarship and provides a useful framework for future research on customer service management in developing countries.

The study also offers meaningful practical contributions. For managers, the findings provide evidence that improvements in responsiveness, employee conduct, communication, and complaint management can enhance customer outcomes and strengthen organizational competitiveness. For policymakers and regulatory authorities, the study underscores the importance of establishing stronger customer service standards, improving consumer protection mechanisms, and promoting greater organizational accountability. Collectively, these measures have the potential to improve public confidence in service providers and contribute to the development of more efficient and customer-oriented service industries.

Beyond its immediate context, this research highlights the broader importance of customer service within emerging economies. As competition intensifies and customer expectations continue to evolve, organizations can no longer rely solely on the availability or affordability of their services to remain competitive. Sustainable success increasingly depends on the ability to deliver consistent, responsive, respectful, and customer-centred service experiences. The evidence presented in this study therefore has relevance not only for Cameroon but also for other developing economies seeking to strengthen service quality and improve customer welfare.

In conclusion, this study affirms that addressing customer service deficits is both a managerial necessity and a developmental imperative. Organizations that prioritize customer-centred service delivery are better positioned to build trust, enhance customer satisfaction, and create positive service experiences that support long-term organizational success. Equally, governments and regulators have a critical role to play in fostering service environments that encourage accountability, responsiveness, and continuous improvement. It is hoped that the findings of this study will stimulate further scholarly inquiry, inform managerial decision-making, and contribute to ongoing efforts to strengthen customer service practices in Cameroon and across emerging economies. Ultimately, improving customer service is not simply about meeting customer expectations; it is about building resilient organizations, strengthening public confidence, and supporting sustainable economic development through a culture of service excellence.

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Questionnaire QR code

Appendix 1 : Questionnaire QR code

