Assessment of Counter Service Efficiency, in selected Banks within the Federal University of Technology Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
This paper carried out an assessment of counter service efficiency, in First bank of Nigeria PLC, Guarantee Trust Bank and United Bank for Africa, Federal University of Technology, Akure, (FUTA), Ondo State, Nigeria. The paper searched for answers to research questions by collecting data from the customers that used counter service in these banks during the period of visitation to the banks. Data were collected from 1016 respondents, through non-participant observation. The respondents comprised customers of the three banks. Descriptive statistic was used to analyze data for this study, while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test hypotheses at 5% significant level. Cronbach Alpha was used to test for reliability. The study revealed that there is a significant difference in the efficiency in counter services of the three banks. The paper therefore recommended a continuous investment in Information Communication Technology's equipment, in order to further increase the efficiency in counter services, and increase the chances of survival of the banks in the intense competitive banking industry, which has become heavily dependent on Information Communication Technology.
Keywords: Efficiency, Counter, Counter Servicses, Counter Queing Time, Counter Service Time.

INTRODUCTION
Globalization and development in Information Communication Technology (ICT) has up turn the competition in all industry. Customers' service needs and expectations have significantly increased (Lockwood, 1995; Meyer, Chase, Roth, Voss, Sperl, Menor and Blackmon, 1999; Li, Zhao and Lee, 2001). ICT is one of the utmost relevant type of technology that an organization can use to attain a sustainable competitive advantage in this competitive environment (Ndungu, 2014), because, there is a global believe that ICT has a powerful effect on competition and insistently determines the competitive nature of nearly all businesses (Kagbojola, 2004; Keremati, 2007). In fact, Organizations that makes use of new technology have

been discovered to have a competitive advantage over their competitors (Abubakar
and Tasmin, 2012). Therefore, the use of ICT in the banking sector has progressively
become a vital factor for business advancement and a podium for acquiring
competitive advantage, particularly in an extremely competitive industry like
banking (Omotoso, et al., 2012).Also, the application of ICT concepts, techniques,
policies and implementation strategies to banking services has emerged as a
prerequisite and concern to every bank, for local and international competitiveness
(Binuyo and Aregbeshola, 2014).

In order to improve the service quality that banks offer, banks make use of
several sophisticated ICT facilities, that will aid in increasing efficiency in their
services, with the aim of outwitting their competitors and attracting more customers
to their banks.ICT adoption is a combined term for a wide range of hardware and
software, telecommunications and information management techniques, devices, and
applications, used to produce, create, process, analyze, package, distribute, store,
receive, retrieve, and transform information (Brady, Cronin and Brand
(2002).Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (2008), defined a
Counter/Customer Service as a front-line service where customers deal with public
officers and are offer several kinds of services. A banks' counter service can therefore
be referred to as, a bank's front-line service where bank officials provide several types
of banking services for their customers, across the counter. The impression one
observes from a Counter/Customer Service is very relevant because, it reflects how
efficient and effective the organization is. This efficiency and effectiveness is
perceived via the attitude of front-line officers, with regards to the services delivered,
and response time (Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, 2008).

"Efficiency is the (often measurable) ability to avoid wasting materials,
energy, efforts, money, and time in doing something or in producing desired result
efficiency (Wikipedia). This study measured efficiency in terms of time. Observed
time spent on counter queuing and service time in the selected banks. What was the
observed counter queuing time for First bank of Nigeria PLC, Guarantee Trust
Bank and United Bank for Africa, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo
State, Nigeria? What was the observed counter service time for these banks? What
is the difference in counter queuing and service time of these banks? First Bank has 4
ATMs and 3 tellers (only 2 operational), and Guarantee Trust Bank has 6 ATMs
and 4 tellers, while United Bank for Africa (UBA) has 4 ATMs and 4 tellers (only 3
operational). First Bank was opened in 2012, installed ATMs the same year, has 15
members of staff including Business Manager and Operations Manager, Guarantee
Trust Bank was opened in 2013, installed ATMs the same year, has 24 members of
staff including the Branch Manager, while United Bank for Africa (UBA) was

opened in 2005, installed ATMs in 2008 has 13 members of staff including Business Manager and Operations Manager.

Statement of the Problem

The acquisition and use of sophisticated ICT facilities in the banking industry, has created a lot of competition in service delivery, in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in the banking industry. Banks' customers, being aware of the efficiency in the use of ICT facilities, have become more demanding. They crave for further reduction in the time they spend on bank counter queues and the time they are attended to. Customers therefore continually carry out comparison on banks' service delivery time on counters, in order to know which bank to patronize and be loyal to. This situation has led customers into switching from one bank to another, based on service time efficiency. Some banks are perceived as being more efficient in comparison with other banks. What is the difference in counter queuing and service time in First bank of Nigeria PLC, Guarantee Trust Bank and United Bank for Africa, Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA) branch, Ondo State, Nigeria.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH
Need for Efficiency and Superiority in Banking Services

Nowadays, the marketing strategy used in the market, is easy to copy within a short period of time, and products and services offered by banks are either the same or very similar (Lim and Tang, 2000; Lockwood, 1995; Li, et. al., 2001). Thus, bank management has to pay close attention to providing superior services to its customers, because, customers' satisfaction, customers' decisions on which bank to patronize, be loyal to, purchase retention and bank survival in the strong competitive environment depends on the superiority of the products and services a bank provides (Newman and Cowling, 1996; Berry, Parasuraman, and Zeithaml, 1994; Adebanjo, 2001). Since banking services are similar, superiority in service quality can be attained through efficiency. As competition becomes more intense, banks target the cream of business via better-quality facilities and sophisticated technology based services that will help them to enhance the efficiency of their operations, reduce operational expenditure, etcetera. On that note, Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1991), opined that, it is important for banking practitioners to concentrate on differentiated strategy, referred to as, service quality enhancement, in order to reinforce their core competitive edge, and improve their competitiveness. They further stated that, banks have to comprehend the needs and expectations of customers, and satisfy them through the provision of better products and services. Good quality of service will increase business with existing clients, attract new

customers, sustain customers' confidence, reduce the number of dissatisfied customers, increase customers' satisfaction, and maximize company's' profits (Berry, et. al., 1994; Lee, Lee, and Yoo, 2000).

Effect of ICT on Banks' Efficiency

Ovia (2005) stated that ICT revolution has made the banking sector to change from the traditional mode of operations to seemingly better ways, with technological innovation that enhances efficiency. He further stated that, the use of ICT can increase efficiency. Brücher, Scherngell et al. (2003) disclosed that ICT adoption will enhance three critical areas. These areas include: transparency, quality, and efficiency in any organization. It is therefore necessary for bank management to strengthen investment in ICT product in order to expedite accurate service, convenience, and speed (Obasan, 2011). The front office automation function raises customer's service by reducing the processing time in Nigerian banks (Ilo *et al.,* 2014). ICT revolution in the area of cost per unit, speedy operation, and innovation rate, has made a lot of banks to embrace the use of ICT infrastructure in carrying out their operations (Akinuli, 1999). Though, little disruptions in ICT services that sometimes result from network failures may not allow customers to carry out transactions at a specific point in time. However, this limitation cannot be compared to the days when banking halls were filled up with by long queues due to delays in the traditional system of carrying out banking operations. ICT has an advantage over the traditional payment tools because it is more efficient, cost effective, safer, and convenient (Osabuohien, 2008).Information technology has aided banks in Nigerian, to improve, both in cost and efficiency (Ilo, *et al.,* 2014).

However, Muhammad, Gatawa, and BirninKebbi (2013)'s study, disclosed that there is an inverse relationship between additional sustained investment in ICT and efficiency. They further stated that, this is obvious because, most commercial banks in Nigeria have been in financial distress since consolidation. Their recommendation was that, in order for banks to benefit from the investment they have made on ICT therefore, they need to carry out further campaigns, and create awareness and orientation of clients' need to utilize ICT facilities, because, the acceptance of these facilities will lead to reaping the gains from investing in them (Muhammad, Gatawa, and BirninKebbi (2013).

METHODOLOGY

Since the broad objective of this study is to carry an assessment of counter service efficiency in First bank of Nigeria PLC, Guarantee Trust Bank and United Bank for Africa, Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA) branch, Ondo State, Nigeria, the researcher used non-participant observation method, to collect

data from the entire customers that used counter service in the selected banks during the period of visitation to the banks. Data were collected from 1016respondentswith the help of trained research assistants, on Mondays and Tuesdays of the first and second weeks of February, 2017. These days of the week were noted as the busiest days in similar banks, on a previous pilot study that was carried out in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The respondents comprised customers of the three banks. These banks were used because they were the only banks the researcher and the trained research assistants could gain access to carry out observation. Descriptive statistic - frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation, were used to analyze data for this study, while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test hypotheses at .05 significant level, and 95% level of confidence. Cronbach Alpha was used to test for reliability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Bank

Banks	Frequency	Percent
FBN	330	32.5
GTB	410	40.4
UBA	276	27.2
Total	1016	100.0

Source: Field Work 2017

Table 1 reveals that 330 (32.5%), out of the 1016 respondents, were First Bank of Nigeria PLC's (FBN) customers, 410 (40.4%) were Guarantee Trust Bank's (GTB) customers, while 276 (27.25) were United Bank of Africa's (UBA) customers.

Table 2: Counter Queuing Time for Each Bank

		Counter Queuing Time (Mins)					Total	Average Time (Mins)
		1 – 5	6 – 10	11 – 15	16 – 20	21 – 25		
Bank Name	First Bank	147	98	45	30	10	330	7:25
	GT Bank	387	23	0	0	0	410	2:01
	UBA	139	92	9	18	18	276	9:38
Total		673	213	54	48	28	1016	

Source: Field Work 2017

Table 2 disclosed that, out of the 330 respondents from FBN, 147 spent between 1-5 minutes on counter queue, 98 spent between 6-10 minutes, 45 spent between 11-15 minutes, 30 spent between 16-20 minutes, while the remaining 10 spent between 21-25 minutes. Out of 410 respondents from GTB, 387 spent between 1-5 minutes on counter queue, 23 spent between 6-10 minutes, 0 spent between 11-15 minutes, 0 spent between 16-20 minutes, while 0 spent between 21-25 minutes. Also, out of 276 respondents from UBA, 139 spent between 1-5 minutes on counter queue, 92 spent between 6-10 minutes, 9 spent between 11-15 minutes, 18 spent between 16-20 minutes, while the remaining 18 spent between 21-25 minutes. Out of the total number of 1016 respondents, the number that spent between 1-5 minutes on the counter queue were, 673 (66.2%), 6-10 minutes were, 213 (21.0%), 11-15 minutes were 54 (5.3%), 16-20 minutes were, 48 (4.7%), while 21-25 minutes were, 28 (2.8%). On the average, FBN's customers, spent 7.25 minutes on the counter queue, GTB spent 2.01 minutes, while UBA's customers spent 9.38 minutes. These results reveal that GTB is more efficient in terms of saving customers' time on counter queue, followed by FBN, while UBA was the least efficient.

Table 3: Counter Service Time for Each Bank

		Counter Service Time (Mins)					Total	Average Time (Mins)
		1 – 2	3 - 4	5 – 6	7 – 8	9 – 10		
Bank Name	First Bank	152	112	31	30	5	330	2:35
	GT Bank	307	29	37	37	0	410	1:57
	UBA	134	84	25	33	0	276	3:10
Total		593	225	93	100	5	1016	

Source: Field Work 2017

Table 3 revealed that, out of the 330 respondents from FBN, 152 spent between 1-2 minutes to obtain counter services, 112 spent between 3-4 minutes, 31 spent between 5-6 minutes, 30 spent between 7-8 minutes, while the remaining 5 spent between 9-10 minutes. Out of 410 respondents from GTB, 307 spent between 1-2 minutes to obtain counter services, 29 spent between 3-4 minutes, 37 spent between 5-6 minutes, 36 spent between 7-8 minutes, while 0 spent between 9-10 minutes. Also, out of 276 respondents from UBA, 134 spent between 1-2 minutes to obtain counter service, 84 spent between 3-4 minutes, 25 spent between 5-6 minutes, 33 spent between 7-8 minutes, while the remaining 0 spent between 9-10 minutes. Out of the 1016 total number of respondents, the number that spent between 1-2 minutes, to obtain counter services were, 593 (58.4%), 3-4 minutes were, 225 (22.1%), 5-6 minutes were 93 (9.2%),

7-8 minutes were, 100 (9.8%), while 9-10 minutes were, 5(0.5%). On the average, FBN's customers, spent 2.35 minutes to obtain counter services, GTB spent 1.57 minutes, while UBE's customers spent 3.10 minutes. These results again show that, GTB is more efficient in terms on time saving in offering counter services, followed by FBN, while UBA was the least efficient.

Table 4: Combination of the Mean Counter Queuing Time and Service Time for FBN, GTB and UBA

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Counter Queuing Time	FBN	330	0:07:25	0:05:48	0:00:19	0:06:47	0:08:03	0:00:00	0:23:50
	GTB	410	0:02:01	0:01:15	0:00:03	0:01:54	0:02:08	0:00:01	0:05:13
	UBA	276	0:09:38	0:09:01	0:00:21	0:06:15	0:07:40	0:00:01	0:23:50
	Total	1016	0:05:07	0:05:17	0:00:09	0:04:47	0:05:26	0:00:00	0:23:50
Counter Service Time	FBN	330	0:02:35	0:01:50	0:00:06	0:02:23	0:02:47	0:00:09	0:08:57
	GTB	410	0:01:57	0:01:33	0:00:04	0:01:47	0:02:06	0:00:16	0:06:39
	UBA	276	0:03:10	0:02:13	0:00:06	0:02:28	0:02:52	0:00:09	0:06:40
	Total	1016	0:02:21	0:01:42	0:00:03	0:02:14	0:02:27	0:00:09	0:08:57

Source: Field Work 2017

Table 4 reveals the combination of the Mean counter queuing time for FBN (7.25 minutes) GTB (2.01 minutes) and UBA (9.38 minutes), and the Mean counter service time for FBN (2.35 minutes) GTB (1.57 minutes) and UBA (3.10 minutes). GTB's efficiency may be related to the fact that it had four (4) operational tellers during the period of this study, which means one operational teller over FBN and UBA, coupled with the speed in service delivery of the tellers. However, First Bank had only 2 operational tellers, while UBA had 3 operational tellers. Yet, FBN was more efficient in both the counter queuing time, and counter service time in comparison with UBA. This means that UBA's management needs to look into the reasons for this outcome, and try to work on the speed at which the tellers execute their services, this maybe through training. Also, FBN needs to increase the number of their operational tellers, because, considering the large number of their customers, two operational tellers are just too small.

Table 5: ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Counter Queuing Time	Between Groups	23852226.463	2	11926113.231	154.517	.000
	Within Groups	78186662.843	1013	77183.280		
	Total	102038889.306	1015			
Counter Service Time	Between Groups	405303.081	2	202651.540	19.831	.000
	Within Groups	10351678.493	1013	10218.834		
	Total	10756981.574	1015			

Source: Field Work 2017si

Table 5: Disclosed the ANOVA that was used to test if there is a significant difference in the counter queuing time and counter service time of the selected banks.

Ho_1=Three is no significant difference in the counter queuing time in First Bank of Nigeria PLC, Guarantee Trust Bank and United Bank for Africa, Federal University of Technology, Akure, (FUTA), Ondo State, Nigeria.

Ho_2=There is no significant difference in the counter service time in First Bank of Nigeria PLC, Guarantee Trust Bank and United Bank for Africa, Federal University of Technology, Akure, (FUTA), Ondo State, Nigeria.

TEST STATISTIC= ANOVA

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE (α) = 0.05 (1%)

LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE= 0.95 (95%)

DECISION= The value of the significant level is 0.000 for both the counter queuing time and the counter service time, which is less than the table value of 0.05. Based on these findings, the null hypotheses Ho_1, which states that there is no significant difference in the ATM queuing time in First Bank of Nigeria PLC, Guarantee Trust Bank and United Bank for Africa, Federal University of Technology, Akure, (FUTA), Ondo State, Nigeria, and Ho_2, which states, there is no significant difference in the ATM service time in First Bank of Nigeria PLC, Guarantee Trust Bank and United Bank for Africa, Federal University of Technology, Akure, (FUTA), Ondo State, Nigeria, are rejected and the alternate hypotheses which states that there is a significant difference in the ATM queuing time and ATM service time in First Bank of Nigeria PLC, Guarantee Trust Bank and United Bank for Africa, Federal University of Technology, Akure, (FUTA), Ondo State, Nigeria, are accepted.

Table 6: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	.813

Table 6 shows the reliability of the research work, with Cronbach Alpha coefficient = 0.813 which is greater than 0.7. This indicates that the result is high and it is suitable for social science.

CONCLUSION

It can be inferred from the result above, that, there is a significant difference in the counter service efficiency of First Bank of Nigeria PLC, Guarantee Trust Bank and United Bank for Africa, Federal University of Technology, Akure, (FUTA), Ondo State, Nigeria. The Mean counter queuing time for FBN was 7.25 minutes, GTB (2.01 minutes) and UBA (9.38 minutes), and the Mean counter service time for FBN was 2.35 minutes, GTB (1.57 minutes) and UBA (3.10 minutes).The paper therefore recommended a continuous investment in Information Communication Technology's equipment, in order to further increase the efficiency in counter services, and increase the chances of survival of the banks in the intense competitive banking industry, which has become heavily dependent on Information Communication Technology.

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