

THE INFLUENCE OF EMAIL USE ON GENERATION AND POSTAGE OF MAILS BY NIPOST IN SOUTH-WEST GEOPOLITICAL ZONE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of e-mail use on postal services in South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The general objective of this study was to determine the potentials and actual effect of electronic mail use on the operations of Nigeria Postal Services and Telecommunication (NIPOST) in the South-West geopolitical zone of the country. Descriptive research survey was adopted for the study. Out of the six general post offices in geopolitical zone, four were randomly selected for the study. From each general post office, thirty respondents were randomly selected to fill out copies of the questionnaire that was personally constructed with Cronbach alpha = 0.76 and 28 patrons were randomly interviewed for additional data. The study revealed that 91.7% of the respondents believed that e-mail use has drastically reduced the age-long habit of people sending mails through the post offices in the South-West geopolitical zone. Within the last five years, 82.1% of the respondents had not sent personal letters by post instead they relied on SMS, e-mail and phone calls to contact and chat with relatives and friends. The study revealed that the use of e-mail had brought about increased generation and delivery of parcels within the last five years. In conclusion e-mail use has brought about the introduction of improved new range of services by NIPOST.

Keywords: Postal services, Electronic mail (e-mail), NIPOST; Nigeria- South-West.

INTRODUCTION

The need to establish and maintain human relationships over geographic space through communication and transmission of messages and information has pre-occupied the thinking of man since pre-historic times. The development of writing and typewriting did not affect the time needed to deliver messages across locations that were separated by great distance. The advancement recorded in methods of transportation particularly the steam locomotives began the real conquest of signal time defined by Encyclopedia Americana (2003) as the time it takes a message to go from source to its destination. Communication is doubtless a chain of events in which the significant link is the message. The chain connects a

source that originates or propagates the message to a destination that interprets the message (Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth and Harter, 2003). When understanding and cordiality have been achieved in this manner, relationships that in most cases lend fervour to humanness will evolve.

Communication by its very nature is dynamic as a process and as such changes constantly such that whenever the process is stopped, communication also stops to exist. For a line of communication to be opened and sustained in the past between two people or organizations separated by great distance, postage delivery system was originated. With phenomenal developments taking place in ICT, there has been a downward trend in peoples' use and reliance on the traditional method of writing letters to pass information/messages to relatives and friends across geographic space. For instance, hand delivered-mail until 1998 was still the main means of correspondence (Williams and Sawyer, 2005). In that year – 1998 – according to their account, the volume of email in the United States surpassed the volume of hand delivered-mail.

The Internet according to Gralla (1999) has pioneered many new ways to communicate, such as e-mail, live-chat and news group. Irrespective of the new ways Internet has introduced, Internet as Gralla (1999) further argued can accommodate some old-fashioned communications such as making telephone calls. In this study emphasis is on the impact of e-mail use on the effectiveness of NIPOST as a service provider as it relates to the transfer of messages from designated sources to intended destinations.

POSTAL SERVICES IN HISTORY

The earliest examples of postal service pre-date the invention of typewriting. Apart from the reference made to postboats to underscore the very early beginning of postal services in human history, similar account of postal services or organization was recorded in Persia by Herodotus, in China by Marco Polo and in Mexico in the days of Montezuma (Chamber's Encyclopedia, 1970). Nothing is, however, more expeditious than the method of transmitting messages/information invented and used by the Persians. It is on record that along each route, at regular intervals equal to one day's journey, were relays of men and horses, housed in stations specially set up for the purpose (Encyclopedia Americana, 1997). Snow, rain, cold or darkness could not prevent the messengers from performing their work with the greatest speed. The first man to arrive would pass the dispatches to the second, who then passed them on to a third and so on until the dispatches arrived at their destinations.

According to the account contained in the *Encyclopedia American* (1997) the great king Cyrus (539BC) found the invention very helpful in the government of his vast empire as it brought prompt information from every part of his domain. Irrespective of government functionaries' heavy dependence on postal services to transmit and receive information for effective coordination and governance of their domains, methods of working and general organization of post offices are much the same everywhere. In human history post office services derive from the need to organize the messengers of the kings to disseminate information for effective governance. As the effort to organized local postal services failed in Paris in 1653, twenty seven years later in London, a merchant called Dockwra set up a penny post and established 400 to 500 receiving offices, seven sorting offices and a system of stamp-postmarks to indicate prepayment of postage that acted as a check on his messengers.

In Nigeria, however, development of Postal Service and Telecommunication dates back to the 19th century. The first post office was established by the British Colonial Masters in 1851 and was considered and treated as a part of the British Postal System. It was a branch of London General Post Office and remained so till 1874. When the Royal Niger Company (RNC) became actively involved in economic activities in the country, it established its own postal system in Akassa in 1887, Calabar in 1891, Burutu in 1897 and Lokoja in 1889. In 1898, the British post office established post offices at Badagry, Epe, Ikorodu, Ijebu-Oode, Ibadan and Abeokuta. In 1892, according to history the Royal Niger Company (RNC) became a member of the Universal Postal Union. By 1908, money orders and mails were directly exchanged with the German West African Colonies instead of via London, as it was the practice. In 1925, Royal Air force planes flew from Kano to Cairo carrying mails for the first time outside the country. From January 1, 1900, the Southern Nigeria Government took over the responsibility of running the postal system in the entire country. There were not too many good roads in those days and as such mails were conveyed by canoes, launchers and runners which could only operate at intervals of two weeks or so.

Internal airmail flights started in 1931; by 1906, 27 post offices were operating and at the time of independence in 1960, 176 post offices, 10 sub-post offices and 1000 postal agencies were in the country and were administered jointly with telecommunications as a government department. Later in 1996, the Federal government by Decree No. 22 made the department a quasi-commercial organization with the aim of making it more efficient and responsive to public needs.

The Nigeria Postal Service Department developed following the establishment of the Nigeria Telecommunication Limited (NITEL) on January 1, 1985. NITEL emerged from the merger of the Telecommunications arm of the defunct post and telecommunications department of the Ministry of communications with the former Nigeria External Telecommunications Limited (NET). Through the promulgation of decree No.18 of 1987 NIPOST became an extra-ministerial department with the following as its cardinal functions:

- To provide and operate facilities for collection, dispatch and distribution of inland and overseas mail at reasonable cost evolve
- To provide and operate facilities for remittance of money through the money or postal order system
- To provide and operate philatelic service in Nigeria
- To print and provide postage stamps for payment of postage tariff and payment of stamp duties, and
- To represent Nigeria in its relations with other postal administrations and other bodies concerned with postal services.

Till very recently, the postal service in Nigeria right from the colonial and post colonial eras played a significant role in facilitating communication linkages between people as well as between organizations (see www.nipost.gov.ng).

The technological revolution of the early part of the new millennium precisely 2001 massively impacted the revolution that occurred in the communication system in Nigeria. The nature of changes brought about by the new technology had significant effects the on traditional postage system. Access to relevant information at the right time would make the difference between a successful community and organization and the not-so successful one.

According to Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth and Harter (2003), communication is necessary for vital information exchange which in its effective form must ensure that information is clearly transmitted between two people or among several people. Effective communication therefore involves a combination of people, machinery and materials. It is this combination that brought about the Internet which is also called the information superhighway currently turning the world into a global village. The presumed goal of this worldwide system of computers and telecommunications is to provide humanity with

lightning-fast voice and data exchange, multimedia, interactivity, and near-universal, low-cost access – and to do so reliably and securely (Williams and Sawyer, 2005).

Additionally, Ajibike (2001) quoting Olufuye (2000) observed that the trends of using the new technology (ICT) through the Internet offer new avenues for knowledge acquisition, exchange and storing of information (e-mail) to facilitate decision making for global development and mobilization. Over the years, and particularly in the period following the use of Internet and GSM, it has been constant struggle for NIPOST to sustain its traditional service of mail generation and delivery and information dissemination. In many instances, inefficiency and long delays in mail delivery and poor patronage arising from mail vandalism to outright loss have been blamed for NIPOST predicaments that still persist irrespective of efforts made to revamp the system. Currently the wide spread use of electronic mail which is one of the main resources or capabilities on the Internet has brought about further incursion on the relevance of NIPOST as a service provider and NIPOST is gradually fading away in its relevance. In this research, effort was made to examine the impact of electronic mail use on NIPOST services in line with the need of making the organization creditably viable.

The general objective of this study is to determine the potentials and actual effect of electronic mail use on the operations of Nigeria Postal Services and Telecommunication (NIPOST) in the South-West geopolitical zone. To achieve this general objective, it becomes necessary not only to find out the extent to which electronic mail use has affected the generation and postage of mails by NIPOST in South-West geopolitical zone but to also find out the influence of electronic mail use on the development of new range of postal services. To this end the following research questions were raised to be answered.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- To what extent has electronic mail use affect the generation and postage of mails in South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria within the last five years?
- In what manner has electronic mail use influence the generation and delivery of parcels by NIPOST within the last five years in the South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria?
- To what extent has email use influence the development and adoption of new range of services by NIPOST in South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria within the last five years?

- To what extent has the level of awareness of the people about the new range of services being offered by NIPOST affect patronage and revenue generation in the South-West geopolitical zone within the last five years?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information is defined as idea, imaginative works of the mind and data of value that is potentially useful in decision-making, question answering and problem solving (Kaninko, 1989). Information can also be viewed as a commodity, which reduces uncertainty. In its everyday use according to Sanders (1984), information is a fact, data, opinion and the like including but certainly not confined to what is revealed in the results of study, research and scholarship in all fields of knowledge. To this end, information is conceptualized in the corpus of knowledge as the basis for the progress of human civilization and society. With the possibility of information having its good or bad side, seekers are by this realization provided subtle warning that information is not only good but could be bad depending on its handling and use. With right exploitation and positive use, information becomes revenue with which man deals with reality while attempting to understand reality. Information is persuasive and as a resource according to Campbell (1995), it is critical to personalities, municipalities, and nation states affecting their achievements, growth, developments and influence. It is critical to decision making and it is one of the significant frontiers remaining to challenge man.

The acquisition and application of information communicated can lead a person to a state of knowing and being informed which in effect is functionally central to the generation of new knowledge and the achievement of new level of understanding. According to Alemna (1999) information can be regarded as the transmission of human experience as a signal or a stimulus, symbols or a set of symbols with a potential for meaning. Man's activities are therefore information driven and information dependent in as much as it reduces uncertainty.

Talking about the adoption and diffusion of ICT and by extension e-mail use, Williams and Sawyer (2005) posited that it took the telephone 40 years to reach 10 million customers, and fax machines 20 years. Personal computers made it into many American homes in 5 years after they were introduced. According to Williams and Sawyer (2005) quoting Specter (1999) against the backdrop that no technology has ever become universal so fast, e-mail which appeared in 1981, became popular far more quickly, reaching 10 million users in a little more than a year. As at 2002 according to IDC (2003) report on Internet survey, email messages sent daily all over the world had crested 31 billion. With daily

increase in the use of Internet, the adoption of e-mail as a reliable means of communication in Nigeria is impressive especially among the elites that reside mostly in urban and sub-urban areas.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The research adopts the descriptive survey design that so heavily relied on the use of archival data as well as primary data generated through administration of questionnaire, interviews and personal observation of facilities in the post offices. The study population comprises the general post offices in the South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. In each state there is a general post office and out of the six general post offices in the study area, those located in Lagos, Ogun, Oyo and Ondo were randomly selected for the study using the table of random numbers. In each general post office, thirty respondents were also randomly selected to fill out copies of the administered questionnaire that was personally constructed with Cronbach alpha = 0.76. In the course of data collection, 28 patrons were randomly interviewed for additional data. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, tables and pie chart being the descriptive statistics considered appropriate for the study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This section contains the presentation and discussion of results of the study that assessed the effect of electronic mail use on postal services in South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Academic Qualifications of Respondents

The idea of having a crop of well trained and intelligent employees on the payroll of a service delivery organization like NIPOST cannot be overemphasized. Employees of NIPOST possessed varied academic qualifications and Table 1 depicts the distribution of respondents by their academic qualifications.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Academic Qualification

S/No	Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	GCE O/L /Grade II	15	12.5
2	Diploma/NCE	25	20.8
3	HND/B. Sc/ B. Ed/ BA	50	41.7
4	M. Sc./ M. Ed/MA	30	25.0
5	Ph. D	-	-
Total		120	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

The highest number of the respondents falls within the HND/B.Sc/B.Ed/ BA qualification bracket with a relative frequency of 41.7%. Masters degree holders constitute the second largest group as represented by 25.0%. While holders of Diploma/NCE followed closely with 20.8% relative frequency, General Certificate of Examination ordinary level and Grade II certificate turned out to be the least being the only qualification acquired by 12.5% of the respondents. In all there was no PhD holder. Although it could be said that NIPOST staff are well educated, majority of them had no professional qualifications except for just five respondents that reported having background in accounting and two others with professional qualification in business education. In terms of proficiency in ICT, only 20 (16.7%) respondents claimed to be computer literate out of which only eight could effectively troubleshoot and skillfully operate the computer beyond word processing of documents and sending of e-mails. A very high percentage of the respondents as represented by 86.7% could be classified as illiterate as they did not understand the workings and effective application of computers. This general lack of computer literacy in most formal organizations in Nigeria is corroborated by the findings of Ikem and Ojo (2003) in their study of the challenge of Technology in Nigerian Universities Libraries. According to them there is lack of professional ICT and management know-how and skills required to plan, coordinate and manage the introduction of technology or to bring about a proper mechanism for making the right choices and for innovative adaptation of ICT utilization to local needs. This finding calls for a serious and purposeful investment in human resource development in the area of computer literacy and general ICT-skills acquisition in order that the relevance of NIPOST as service provider will be sustained.

Working Experience

Analysis of work experiences was done according to the number of years respondents had spent working in and for NIPOST and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Distribution of Respondents according to working Experience

S/no	Number of Years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Below 2 years	-	-
2	2-5yrs	-	-
3	6 – 9 yrs	20	16.7%
4	10 – 12 yrs	75	62.5%
5	Above 12 yrs	25	20.8%
Total		120	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Distinct from Table 2 is the fact that majority of the respondents represented by 62.5% had spent between 10-12 years working with NIPOST. This was followed by the group of respondents represented by 20.8% relative frequency that had spent more than 12 years in the service of NIPOST. Those with the least working experience had spent between 6 - 9 years working with NIPOST. Since 2001 when the government of Nigeria initiated the move to reform public organizations in the country, there has not been meaningful employment and development in terms of provision of ICT facilities to leverage efficient and effective service delivery. If anything, reorganization of NIPOST has led to downsizing of the work force because the way-bill according to the government as reported by the respondents had exceeded the organization's annual revenue generation.

Table 3: E-mail as an effective communication medium

S/no	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Strongly Agreed	85	70.8
2	Agreed	30	25.0
3	Disagreed	5	4.2
4	Strongly disagreed	-	-
5	Indifference	-	-
Total		120	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

One significant thing about the reform according to the respondents is the introduction of ICT to aid the effectiveness of NIPOST service delivery. Resulting from the combination of responses grouped under 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' in Table 3, 95.8% of the respondents believed that electronic mail use is an effective means of communication. A very small segment representing 4.2% of the total number of respondents, however, disagreed with the fact that e-mail use is an effective means of communication on the account that e-mail use is not inclusive of the illiterates urbanites and the teaming rural dwellers that would rather find it convenient and serviceable to rely on telephoning to reach out to relatives and other myriads of acquaintances scattered all over the places.

The position maintained by this small number [5 (4.2%)] of respondents tends to reflect the high proportion of Internet non-users which presently stood at 62.9% being the proportion inferred from the 37.1% Internet users in Nigeria supplied by the Internet World Stats (2011). Even with the stratospheric growth rate of 21, 891.1% of Internet users in Nigeria, the interests of the illiterate majority are hardly addressed. Internet technology and

e-mail use in contemporary Nigerian societies are incapable and deficient in meeting the needs of the massive majority of rural dwellers and the illiterate urbanites.

Research Question 1:

To what extent does electronic mail use affect the generation and postage of mails in the South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria within the last five years?

Mails generation and handling constitute two major traditional activities of NIPOST from inception, and the activities were mainly dependent on manual operations. This situation, however, has changed since the advent of the Internet and its capabilities such as the real time sending and receiving of messages to and from any part of the world. What used to be akin to e-mail capability in terms of speed in time past were telegram and radio messages that were mainly used by a privileged few in Nigeria. Table 4 presents the result of the analysis of the question that sought to find out the extent to which electronic mail (e-mail) use had affected the traditional functions of NIPOST as touching the generation and postage of mails in the South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria within the last five years.

Table 4: Effect of E-mail Use on Generation and Postage of Mails

S/n	Effect of e-mail use on Services	Very high extent (%)	High extent (%)	Low extent (%)	Very low extent (%)
1	The use of e-mail has drastically reduced the age-long habit of people sending mails through the post offices	110 (91.7%)	10 (8.3%)	-	-
2	The use of e-mail has led to the generation of high volume of parcels and low volume of personal letters	120 (100%)	-	-	-
3	The use of e-mail has brought about increase in parcel generation and delivery	100 (83.3%)	20 (6.7%)	-	-

As Table 4 has clearly shown, the use of e-mail has drastically reduced the age-long habit of people sending mails through the post offices in the South-West geopolitical zone and elsewhere in Nigeria by extension. This fact is being attested to by 91.7% respondents

who believed that e-mail use has to a very high extent reduced the habit of writing and sending letters through post offices to loved ones and other acquaintances.

According to the respondents, the thrill and satisfaction that go with real time or instant messaging through the Internet cannot be equaled by NIPOST that had struggled unsuccessfully in the past and still continue to struggle to have mails delivered to destinations within a few days of postage. With increasing Internet access and use, however, NIPOST will no doubt continue to suffer loss of patronage in many respects except it chooses to invest massively in acquiring modern ICT technology/tools, in addition to training its employees so as to be able to retain loyalty of customers.

Of the 28 NIPOST patrons that were randomly interviewed, only 5 (17.9%) of them claimed to have occasionally sent very beauty postcards to loved ones. The majority represented by 82.1% relative frequency had not sent personal letters by post within the last five years instead they relied on SMS, e-mail or phone calls to contact and chat with relatives and friends separated in time and space. This finding is supported by Robin (1999) that also found out in his study that technology is fast changing the way we contemplate and do business. Organizations like NIPOST that want to remain relevant in the rapidly evolving information and knowledge society cannot afford to avoid the web and the Internet. Although e-mail use has caused a significant reduction in heavy reliance on traditional method of communication by letter writing among the people, the adoption and use of e-mail according to the respondents has to a very high extent led to the generation of high volume of parcels which contains in most cases items such as handsets, portable CD-players, shoes, clothes, books, and Journals (from abroad); and local fabrics, processed herbs, anointing oil, etc (to abroad). The respondents also opined that the post offices in the South-West geopolitical zone presently handle more parcels than ever before. This is a chance discovery which NIPOST should take advantage of in order to retain its corporate relevance more so that the private organizations that are in business to provide currier services to the people are comparably more expensive to patronize. The only thing that could erode the expected positive impact of this opportunity will be a resurgence of the old corrupt practices of outright mail thievery and vandalism of parcels that would be committed to NIPOST on trust for safe delivery. Old and inimical habits, attitudes and character according to some of the respondents must be done away with in order to grow a new and effective NIPOST with invigorating organizational culture.

Research Question 2:

In what manner has electronic mail use influence the generation and delivery of parcels by NIPOST within the last five years in the South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria?

The cost of sending e-mail is minimal particularly where there is free access. Even when one has to pay to use cyber café, the cost of Internet access in the South-West geopolitical zone is low compared to what obtains in the states outside the South-West geopolitical zone. Lending support to this is the fact that the South-West geopolitical zone has the highest concentration of ICT related activities in addition to being the area with the highest Internet connectivity in the country. To this end, 100% of the respondents believed more patrons were able to make easy and effective contacts and communicate very frequently with friends and relatives overseas leading to the exchange of gifts. Table 5 presents some ways e-mail use has contributed to the generation and delivery of parcels in South-West geopolitical zone.

Table 5: Influence of E-mail Use on Parcel Generation and Delivery

S/n	Areas of impact of e-mail use	Yes	%	No	%
1	Facilitates easy contact with friends and relatives abroad	85	70.8	35	29.2
2	Provision of possibilities of making friends and forming network with friends	50	86.7	70	13.3
3	Provision of access to organizations abroad looking for outlet for their products and services	120	100	—	—
4	Subscription for goods through the Internet	120	100	—	—

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

According to 100% of the respondents, the use of e-mail to secure easy access to business, non-governmental, and philanthropic organizations that are looking for possible outlets for their products and services; and to subscribe for goods through the Internet constitute two commonest ways Internet and e-mail use had influenced increased parcel handling in the study area in last five years. To as many as 85 (70.8%), making quick and easy contacts with relatives abroad by e-mail has contributed significantly to generation and delivery mails and parcels in the South-West geopolitical zone. To the remaining 35 (29.2%) respondents, increased parcel handling in the geopolitical zone cannot be totally explained by the fact that many families and individuals in the area have relatives abroad. One major reason they advanced for the phenomenal increase in parcel delivery in the area is that the South-West zone being the hub of education in Nigeria caused many people to be informed about the utilitarian value of e-mail and the Internet in reaching out to the world for various

reasons – one of which is ordering and subscription for goods. The differing view expressed by the respondents notwithstanding, the ultimate is to generate high volume of parcel ready for shipment and delivery in line with NIPOST drive for sustainability.

Research Question 3

To what extent has email use influence the development and adoption of new range of services by NIPOST in South-West geopolitical zone within the last five years?

It is clear from the study that NIPOST is reorganizing. One product it has just introduced according to 75% of the respondents is improved and modified traditional Bulk posting services involving:-

- * registered letters from formal organizations – like shares certificates and dividend warrants etc;
- * Money transfer - not involving the use of postal orders and money orders of old
- * expedited mail service (EMS)/ speed post.

In addition to this are such new services as:

- i. post bank,
- ii. post insurance services and
- iii. mail/passenger service
- iv. Electronic money transfer – both local and foreign, and (v) Post cash (ICT based) being enlarged to include any form of e-business.

With the drop in revenue generation as a result of e-mail use according to 120 (100%) respondents (see Table 6), elimination of telegram and the demise of postal and money orders, the need to diversify becomes necessary and hence the introduction of the new range of services.

Table 6: Effect of E-mail Use on New NIPOST Services

S/n	Impact of e-mail on services	Very High extent	High	Low extent	Very Low extent
1	The use of e-mail and internet contribute to low revenue generation through the printing and sales of stamps	120 (100%)	–	–	–
2	The use of e-mail has resulted in the elimination of telegram	120 (100%)	–	–	–
3	E-mail has brought about the demise of the use of postal and money orders	120 (100%)	–	–	–
4	E-mail has made it possible for post offices to be involved in money transfer – locally and internationally	96 (80.0%)	24 (20.0%)	–	–

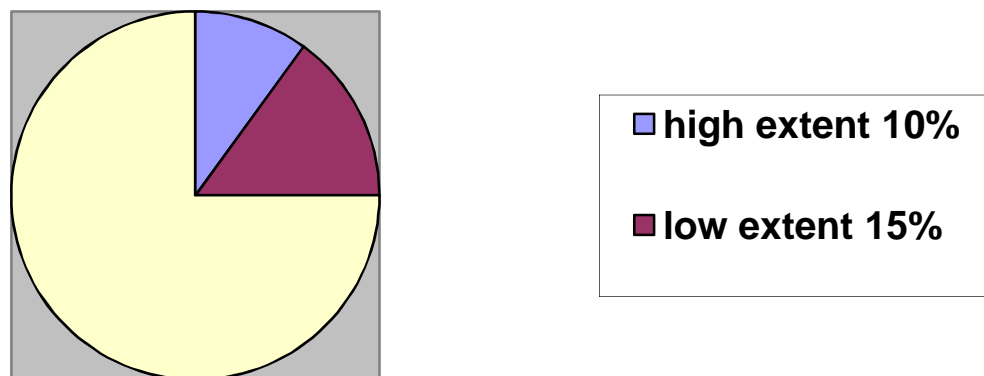
Source: Fieldwork, 2011

The explanation advanced by the respondents is in line with the fact that NIPOST has to adjust in order for it not to stop to exist. According to them, it takes NIPOST a maximum of 10 minutes to successfully complete money transfer within Nigeria and a maximum of 12 hours outside Nigeria. These are functions that were the exclusive reserve of banks and other financial institutions in the past. Empirical evidence is hard to find in the literature to support this finding. Two principal officers among the respondents also explained that with the advent of e-mail use and the Internet, NIPOST now collaborates with the International Union of Telecommunication in sharing revenue arising from handling and delivery of goods across international boundaries. This collaboration is only made possible through Internet and e-mail use in the spirit of globalization. One thing that must be endorsed by NIPOST to succeed with the new diversification is cultivation of the right attitude to uphold honesty and high standards.

Research Question 4

To what extent has the level of awareness of the people about the new range of services being offered by NIPOST affect patronage and revenue generation in the South-West geopolitical zone within the last five years?

For any organizational offering in form of products or services to be patronized, people must aware of the products or services and know something about their availability through strategic advertisement and marketing. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the respondents according to their certainty about the peoples' levels of awareness in respect of the new range of services being introduced by NIPOST to ensure corporate relevance and reliability through sustained patronage and revenue generation.



**Figure 1: Levels of peoples' awareness about the new range of services
Being introduced by NIPOST**

As figure-1 has shown, a high proportion of the respondents represented by 75.0% believed that the level of awareness of people about the new services NIPOST is offering the public in the South-West geopolitical zone is low to a very low extent. While 18 (15%) of the respondents believed that the level of peoples' awareness about NIPOST's new offerings in form of services is just to a low extent, only 10% of the respondents had contrary view. According to them, the level of awareness of the people is high enough not only to guarantee sustained patronage of the services being introduced by NIPOST, but also to generate substantial revenue for the organization. From the analysis, it could be argued that the level of awareness of the people about the range of new products NIPOST is offering the public to retain corporate relevance is low. This low level of awareness could be as a result of the overshadowing effect of the marketing strategies being adopted by the more aggressive financial institutions and courier service providers in the geopolitical zone whose purview it is to efficiently handle cash transfer and parcel delivery. NIPOST only needs to develop the right attitude and mindset to secure and retain brand loyalty from the patrons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- NIPOST management should invest massively in acquiring modern ICT technology/tools and creating awareness to the general public regarding its new services.
- There is need for training and retraining of its employees in ICT and so as to be able to retain loyalty of customers
- Government should provide fund for the organization

CONCLUSION

With the advent of the Internet, electronic communication had taking over the traditional postal services and this to a large extent had influence postal services as the rate of individual letter postage had reduced significantly. However, the introduction and aggressive marketing of new improved services, the organization wears a new look to enable it survive.

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