UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA NSUKKA

PROCEEDINGS OF SECOND PROFESSIONAL SUMMIT ON INFORMATION SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (PSIST)

Theme: Scholarly Communication and Information: Mentoring, Mastery and Modernization

Held at the Nnamdi Azikiwe New Library Complex, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

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Evaluation of an ISP Services on Clients Satisfaction: The Case of World Web Limited (WWL)

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Abstract

Client's satisfaction with internet service provider (ISP) was evaluated; the results revealed that most clients were introduced to particular ISPs by friends (51.7%) because of long customer relationship and proximity of an ISP to client's facilitated choice (78.3%). Response on satisfactions rating of ISPs services were relative; it ranged from service charge (49.2%), number of hour's charge (35.7%), years of service as ISP (64.3%) and technical support service effectiveness (21.4%). Even though clients are satisfied with effective and appropriate services by ISPs, the study revealed that most ISPs do not have any form of appraisal unit and therefore recommends that ISPs should assign and support a responsive client's evaluation unit that appraises services from client's points, maintaining consistent connectivity, sale and installation of the right bandwidth as guarantee for patronage while making profit.

Keywords: Clients, ISP, internet, satisfaction, customer, WWL, Nigeria

Introduction

The ability to quickly transmit information over long distances has become an integral part of modern life. The internet has changed the way people find and use information to communicate, work, shop, learn, and live. Internet service providers provide the information backbone of the internet and World Wide Web. The Internet service providers (ISPs) directly connect people, businesses, and organizations to the internet by routing data to the desired location and unlike individual users of the internet, ISPs develop and maintain the physical, technical, and contractual connection by undertaking agreements with other ISPs to enable the transmission of data. The agreements comprise multilateral peering points, which are physical connections between computer equipment of service providers for the purpose of allowing other service providers access to other network of connections. These points of presence between ISPs provide a nearly unlimited number of potential connection pathways between data and end users.

In addition to connecting to other ISPs to form the infrastructure of the internet, service providers must connect with clients. These clients may range from individual homes to large office buildings. To allow end users to access their network, benefactors are provided with proprietary software, user identification names, e-mail addresses, or electric service. ISPs offer access to client's on a subscription basis. They may also provide related services beyond internet access, such as web hosting, web page design, and consulting services. The physical connections that carry the information to end users are often the wires or cables and wireless of telecommunications establishments.

In Nigeria, and indeed the world over, the internet is constantly expanding and evolving, and so are the internet service providers that are associated with it. Due to constantly changing technology and the relatively low additional lost of most new services, ISPs are frequently upgrading their existing services and offering new ones to attract or retain their clients. The world being made a global village by computer and information technologies implies that whosoever wants to remain relevant must join the band wagon. These important factors constitute the relevance of ISPs and their evaluation through clients' perceptions and patronage.

1.1 WWL in Nigeria

World Web Limited (WWL) was licensed in March 2000 by NCC (Nigerian Commission for Communication) to provide internet services within Nigeria. WWL provides high quality and highly personalized internet connectivity (via dial-up and wireless) from it's base in Kaduna as a stepping-stone towards transforming into a national ISP with points of presence (POP) in selected locations and a major launching pod into the telecommunications industry. Its network is optimized to provide reduced latency in routhing and traffic flow with built in redundancy.

With its satellite teleport and direct connectivity to tier-one internet backbone provider a non-stop high performance internet access can be assured. As a mark of its reliable services it is chosen to provide internet access to AOL, UUNET the largest internet solution provider in the world and over twenty five other internet service providers spread across the United States, Asia, Europe and the Middle East for their subscribers in Nigeria.

1.2 WWL Mission Statement

The mission statement of the WWL are (i) to provide high-speed, high quality internet connectivity to a regional niche that has been overlooked by existing internet service providers who prioritize their services in southern Nigeria, and (ii) to serve the society because it believes that the future belongs to people who have access to information.

1.3 Services Provided By WWL for Clients include:

i. High speed, reliable and unlimited internet access.

ii. Web page/site design and hosting

iii. Domain Name Registration Outsourced services

iv. Technical and financial consultancy

v. Internet connectivity training and maintenance.

vi. And with their sister company Advance Micro-computer systems Limited (AMS) and their technology partners, World Web Limited can deliver complete information infrastructure solution from hardware to software; Local Area Network (LAN), Wide Area Network (WAN), and Telecommunication.

1.4 Problem Statement

In Nigeria, the internet services have not met the desires for which it was intent, with many expressing their frustration over poor services rendered by the internet service providers. It is on the basis of this problems that the study was initiated to draw the factors responsible for failure of ISPs in discharging responsibilities for which they were established and from these responses proffer meaningful suggestions and recommendations that could help to achieve success using WWL as a case study.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to:

a. Examine the types of services rendered by WWL

b. Determine the criteria clients' uses for choosing WWL and extent of clients' satisfaction

c. To find out the challenges affecting the effectiveness of WWL.

1.6 Research Questions

The following research questions were put forward for the purpose of this study:

1) What type of services do WWL service providers offer?

2) What are the criteria clients' uses in choosing WWL and extent of clients' satisfaction?

3) What are the challenges affecting the effectiveness of WWL?

Literature Review

The internet is gradually becoming a pain in the neck of many Nigerians. Many clients' have expressed frustrations over the poor services rendered by internet service providers in the country (Ufuoma, 2002). The erratic nature of the services has resulted in recurrent downtimes, which has led to huge losses for both individual and corporate companies. Internet speed in most cases is so slow that browsing has become very boring and frustrating. In the event of a breakdown of equipment, most of the ISPs are unable to provide the needed backup. Ufuoma noted that as a result of the above, cyber café operators lose a lot of money, when they have to keep turning back customers who come to browse. For other corporate organisations, the beauty of being connected to the internet is completely destroyed as they have to resort to the traditional way of doing things. He further revealed that many ISPs in the country act as middlemen as they often have to travel abroad to buy bandwidth from Satellite Companies like New Skies Satellite and Gilat Satellites among others and resell these to unsuspecting customers.

Nkanga (2007) carried out a research on why we have bad ISPs in Nigeria and came out with the results that not everyone have the know how in the management of internet service provision. According to him, some people see internet service provision only in terms of the money they can make therefore becoming a money spinner.

Sogbetun (2007) noted that it has not been smooth sailing for companies providing internet access, citing various challenges of providing decent service over infrastructure that the providers do not control. He lamented that power supply continues to be a major challenge saying, it is hardly available, and that they have to practically generate their electricity at a high cost, and by so doing the non availability of power also had a very significant effect on their patronage.

Fashedemi (1999) explained that most of the existing internet service providers in Nigeria are performing under harsh conditions. He stressed that the conditions are made unfriendly by instability in political, economic and social policies of a government that is not supportive of free access to information and human rights development.

Esharenana *et al.* (2005) investigated cyber cafes' change of internet service providers in Nigeria. Their findings revealed that a good number of cyber cafés have changed ISPs once. The lack of a poor technical support and frequent loss of contact/signals with the ISP were two of the reasons reported for cyber cafe's changing their ISP.

Marshall (1999) added that it is sometimes difficult to cancel an ISP if the client does not find their services appropriate or wish to move services, and so a user should be aware of several important factors when considering the selection of an ISP. Evaluation criteria included:

a. basic monthly fees,

b. number of hours

c. charge for extra hours

d. available options

e. set-up fees; and

f. technical support.

Other factors such as newsgroups and file transfers also influence the selection of ISP by clients.

Willmott (1998) expressed the same view when he said to make an effective connection to the Web; the subscriber needs to select a service provider that meets their overall needs. An analysis of offerings and costs enables one to make a confident and well thought out decision. Users' should not choose an ISP by price (alone) and publicity, because most offer similar basic services and unlimited access for about many local ISPs not discussed in computer magazines, may be better choices based on the users needs. An understanding of options such as user ratio, local call, and band rate will help a client make an informed decision. In addition, one may also wish t evaluate special features such as guaranteed technical support, storage space for personal we page, fast modern access at no additional charge and adequate e-mail addresses.

Materials and Method

Primary and secondary data and information resources were used for this study. Survey method was used for the methodology, and the populations drawn were clients' of WWL as at March 200 and were within Kaduna Township, because statistically these clients' patronize WWL more as revealed by WWL customers' record.

The instrument used for collecting data is a structured questionnaire containing twelve open-ended items. The questionnaires were administered to the staff in charge of customer service(s) and complaint department for administration.

A total of twenty five questionnaires were distributed for the study, twenty copies were filled and returned but only fourteen were found analyzable. The questionnaires received were analysed and the results presented in graphs, simple descriptive statistics using frequency tables and percentages. Close observations and interviewed were carried out personally by the researchers for a period of three days at the WWL to validate clients' responses, these were clients coming in and out of WWL with complains. The fourteen questionnaires formed the total population for the study representing 70% of the responses. The administration of the questionnaire was accidental; it was given to clients' who came to complain about failure of service or one form of assistance for tentative assessments and comments. This method helped in the evaluation of true responses from clients who ordinarily may not give the true picture of their problems with WWL as an ISP.

Results and Discussion

4.1 Services Provided by WWL

Table 1 revealed that WWL offered ten different types of services to their clients. Results from the multiple choice showed that all clients' patronage WWL because of internet access (100%), internet connectivity (50%), site design, technical and financial consultancy, and seminar/workshop presentation had 21.4% respectively. Complete infrastructure had 6 responses representing 42.9%, none of the respondents' patronized domain name registration and outsourced services. This may not be unconnected to lack of awareness and knowledge of the benefits of these services to businesses and individuals.

Table 1: Services offered by WWL

Services		Frequency*	Percentage
(i)	Internet access	14	100
(ii)	Web page	5	35.7
(iii)	Site design	3	21.4
(iv)	Hosting	2	14.3
(v)	Domain name registration	-	0
(vi)	Outsourced services	-	0
(vii)	Technical and financial consultancy	3	21.4
(viii)	Internet connectivity	7	50
(ix)	Seminars/workshop presentation	3	21.4
(x)	Complete infrastructure	6	42.9

Source: Survey data, 2008
*Multiple choices

4.2 Determine the criteria clients' use for choosing WWL and extent of clients' satisfaction

Figure 1 and Table 2 showed the criteria clients used for choosing WWL.

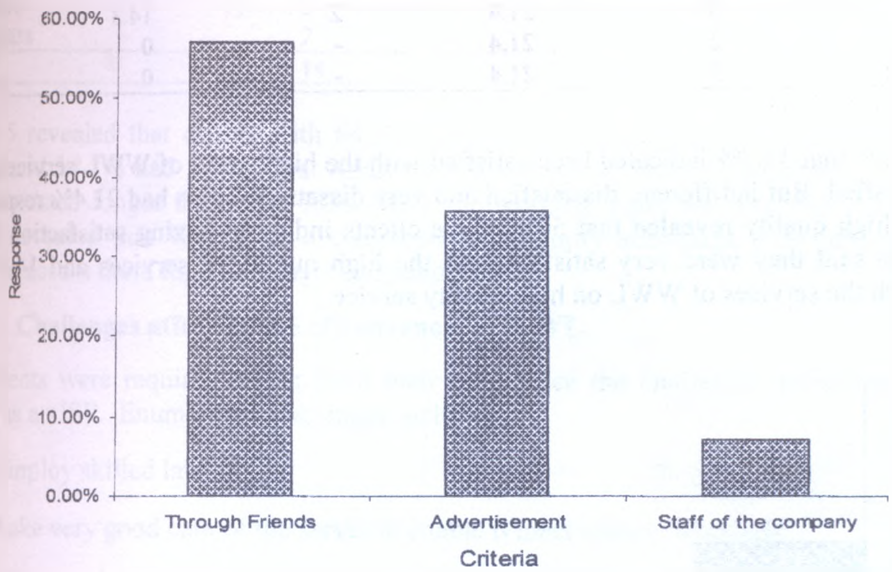

Fig. 1: Criteria clients' use for choosing an ISP

Figure 1 revealed that most clients of WWL were introduced by friends (57.1%), therefore facilitating the choice of WWL. This could be attributed to the satisfaction the clients derived from long experience, relationship and the services offered by WWL. Advertisement of WWL was able to convince 35.7% to patronage their services on bill boards, radio and television. It also has training schools and tailored courses for clients. Only 7.1% was drawn to WWL by a staff of the company. WWL was found to ensure that the three most important things customers look out for in connection which are downtimes, speed of connection and technical support were provided. Friends who became facilitators made comparison with other ISPs where this was different as all of these are practically absent. Downtimes are the order of the day; internet speed in most cases could be compared to a snail speed making browsing the internet, which ordinarily should be exciting, very boring and frustrating.

Table 2: Types of Service Subscription by WWL

	Frequency	Percentage
Basic monthly fee	6	42.9
Number of hours	5	35.7
Charges for extra hours	2	14.3
Set up or installation cost	2	14.3
Technical support services	3	21.4

Source: Survey data, 2008

In Table 2, 42.9% choose WWL because of its basic monthly fee, 35.7% was because of charges done by hours and 21.4% choose WWL because of their technical support services. Setup or installation cost and charges for extra hours had 14.3% respectively as reasons for subscribing to WWL.

To determine the extent of clients' satisfaction with WWL, the study put forward the following questions; what is the rating of quality of services to clients' satisfaction, how can the clients rate the customer complaint and technical support services provided. The study validated client's response by asking if they are ready to recommend WWL to others. The results are presented in Tables 3, 4, 5 and Figure 2.

Table 3: What are your assessments of the quality of service offered by WWLtd in terms of high speed high quality?

Assessment	High speed		High quality	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Very satisfied	3	21.4	6	42.9
Satisfied	5	35.7	7	50
Indifferent	3	21.4	2	14.3
Dissatisfied	3	21.4	-	0
Very dissatisfied	3	21.4	-	0

Source: Survey data, 2008

Table 3 revealed that 35.7% indicated been satisfied with the high speed of WWL services, 21. were very satisfied. But indifferent, dissatisfied and very dissatisfied also had 21.4% respective Response on high quality revealed that 50% of the clients indicated having satisfaction for hi quality, 42.9% said they were very satisfied with the high quality of services and 14.3% we indifferent with the services of WWL on high quality service.

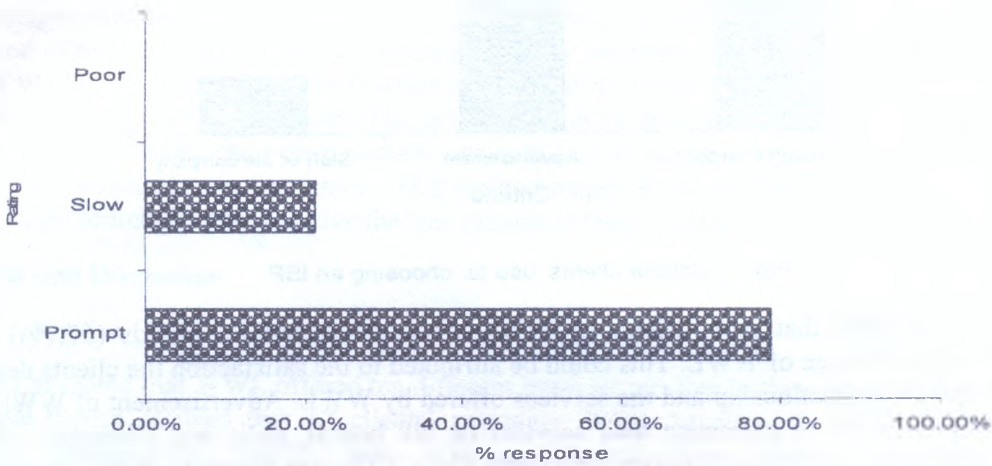

Fig. 2: Rating customer and technical support service

Figure 2 revealed the result of rating clients' response to customer and technical support servi of WWL. It showed that 78.6% of respondent indicated to received prompt response from W customer and technical support services, 21.4% said they were slow, none said the response clients was poor.

Table 4: Would you be happy to recommend WWL to others?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	14	100
No	0	0

Table 4 showed a 100% recommendation of WWL services to other clients by respondents. validate the response, clients were requested to provide reasons for their recommendations they proffered that WWL provided needed services, fast connectivity, clean and q environment, are popular, reliable, its general brand name appeal and very close to their offi Others are WWL prompt services, high speed and trainings. They also install and cha moderately with varieties of services to select from in order to meet the need of clients.

Further clients revealed some ISPs are not fair to their customers, when they pay for d dedicated band-width, they do not get value for their money. For instance, if a client pays for a dedicated bandwidth, it means that the client is supposed to get 32 kbps channeled to him dire through the bandwidth manager. It was also discovered that some of the ISPs do not h bandwidth manager. Besides, people who are ignorant of how these things work, may even pay for 64kbps and be short changed and given 32kbps instead.

Table 5: Clients experience with WWL

Years of patronage	Frequency	Percentage
1- 3 years	9	64.3
3-5 years	3	21.4
5-10 years	2	14.3
	14	100

Table 5 revealed that clients with 64.3% have 1-3 years patronage with WWL, 3-5 years had 21.4% and 14.3% had 5-10 years. Apart from revealing an increase patronage, it also show that WWL existed longer than most ISPs. With the working years and experience as an advantage, clients revealed that WWL has a comparative proximity advantage over other ISPs making it easier to access them for any form of help and support.

4.3 Challenges affecting the effectiveness of WWL

The clients were required to list from their experience the challenges affecting the services of WWL as an ISP. Enumerated challenges include:

- Employ skilled labour.
- Take very good care of the server to enable it meet clients' demands.
- Effort made to change aging equipment and the replacement of new technologies in order to improve effectiveness of services.
- Provide services at the appropriate time.
- Increase speed of the internet by having the required bandwidth.
- Increase customer services with faster connectivity.

Conclusion

The study revealed the following conclusions:

(1) There is poor service provision by numerous ISPs in the country.

(2) Training is lacking on technical know-how and operational of most services.

(3) Clients are constrained to wait on a long queue before their problems are attended to.

(4) The ISPs do not have an evaluation unit that will effectively respond to complaint attributable to insufficient man-power and required infrastructure to operate.

(5) Utility services, especially power supply and the telecommunication services are major constraints for the effective and running costs of the service provisions.

(6) The policy establishing ISPs are not adequately defined, old and maintained, this has tremendously affected the understanding of rights and privileges of both ISPs and clients.

Recommendations

From the results of the findings the study recommends the following:

(i) Internet service providers should make frantic efforts to improve their services by providing support to clients in an event of breakdown, trainings and good maintenance culture must be a continuous practice.

(ii) ISPs should monitor the claims of clients by assessing their satisfaction or not to serve as feedbacks for making amendments and improvement of services.

(iii) A complaint unit that is robust and sensitive to clients is highly recommended as an indication of the effectiveness of ISPs to clients' satisfaction.

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