Educational Advancement and Development Journal (EADJ)
Volume 2 Number 1 June 2026, pp 266-273
E-ISSN: 3104-8390
https://neadafrica.com/journals/neadj

Communication Channels, Feedback Mechanisms and Dealership Performance: Evidence from MTN Dealers in Lagos State, Nigeria

[1]Bewaji, Adebayo
Department of Public Relations and Advertising,
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies,
Lagos State University, Ojo
Lagos State, Nigeria.
Email: bewajiadebayo@gmail.com

[2]Alawode, Sunday Olayinka
Department of Broadcasting and Media Studies,
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies,
Lagos State University, Ojo,
Lagos State, Nigeria.
alawodeso@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigated how MTN Nigeria's communication-channel choices and feedback mechanisms influence dealership performance in Lagos State, Nigeria, with strategic alignment and perceived customer satisfaction treated as performance outcomes. The study responded to a practical problem in telecommunications channel management: formal communication systems may exist, but dealer performance depends on whether messages are routed through appropriate channels, reach decision-makers and generate timely feedback closure. Anchored on Media Richness Theory, Participatory Communication Theory and Agency Theory, the study adopted a descriptive mixed-methods design. Dealers Perception on MTN Downstream Channel Communication questionnaire was administered to 222 registered MTN dealer-owners selected through stratified random sampling across Lagos West, Lagos East and Lagos Central. Twelve dealer representatives were also interviewed for qualitative explanation of survey patterns. Quantitative data were analysed with frequencies, means and simple linear regression, while interview data were thematically interpreted. The study discovered that channel appropriateness drives alignment ($r^2 = 0.55$). Finally, the research revealed that responsiveness drives satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.39$). However, dealers rated message routing to owners, the dealer portal, complaint acknowledgement timelines and shared learning from feedback poorly. The study concluded that dealership performance is shaped less by information volume than by channel fit, decision-maker targeting and feedback responsiveness. It recommended verified owner-facing digital channels, service-level agreements for dealer tickets and a searchable knowledge base built from resolved feedback cases.

Keywords: Downstream communication, feedback mechanisms, dealer performance, strategic alignment, telecommunications.

History:
Received : April 6, 2026
Revised : May 27, 2026
Accepted : June 1, 2026
Published : June 30, 2026
**Corresponding author*: bewajiadebayo@gmail.com

Publisher: Network for Educational Advancement and Deve lopment

INTRODUCTION

Telecommunications has become a central infrastructure of Nigeria's digital economy. It supports everyday social interaction, business transactions, financial inclusion, education, logistics and public communication. The sector's importance is reflected in national output: Telecommunications and Information Services contributed 16.06% to Nigeria's real gross domestic product in the second quarter of 2023 (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2023a). Lagos State is especially significant because it combines Nigeria's largest commercial concentration with a highly competitive retail and service environment. NBS telecommunications data also identify Lagos as a leading state for active voice and internet subscriptions, making it a strategic market for network operators (NBS, 2023b).

Within this competitive environment, MTN Nigeria remains a major operator with a wide subscriber base, broad digital-service portfolio and extensive distribution architecture (MTN Nigeria Communications Plc, 2024). Its market strength, however, is not produced by network infrastructure and advertising alone. It also depends on how effectively dealer networks interpret corporate messages, execute product and campaign directives, resolve customer concerns and represent the brand consistently at the point of sale. Dealers therefore serve as the last-mile interface between the company and subscribers.

Downstream channel communication refers to the flow of information, directives, explanations and persuasive messages from a principal organisation to intermediaries such as distributors, dealers, sub-dealers and retailers. In telecommunications, this flow includes product updates, campaign mechanics, tariff changes, commission structures, customer-service procedures, regulatory compliance instructions and training notices. Channel-management literature shows that communication coordinates behaviour, reduces uncertainty, clarifies expectations and strengthens relationship quality among partners (Mohr & Nevin, 1990; Rosenbloom, 2013; Stern et al., 2006).

For a telecom operator, the communication channel selected for a message is itself a strategic decision. Complex or ambiguous issues may require interactive channels that permit immediate clarification, while routine notices may be adequately transmitted through leaner channels such as SMS, email or app notifications. Feedback mechanisms are equally important because dealers need reliable ways to report customer complaints, competitor actions, operational bottlenecks and emerging market conditions. This study therefore examined two connected dimensions of MTN's downstream communication in Lagos State: the appropriateness of communication channels and the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms.

Statement of the Problem

A telecommunication company may possess a strong brand, advanced infrastructure and a large subscriber base, yet still experience uneven performance across its dealership network. In Lagos State, where competition is intense and customers can easily compare providers, communication failures at the dealer level can affect sales execution, customer trust and brand consistency. A dealer who receives a complex policy through an inappropriate channel, or whose owner does not receive strategic messages directly, may fail to align outlet-level decisions with corporate priorities. Similarly, a dealer who can log a customer complaint but cannot obtain a timely response may lose customer goodwill despite using an official feedback system.

Okorie and Opeodu (2018) confirms the importance of communication in channel relationships, but there remains a need for context-specific evidence on how particular communication attributes influence dealership performance in Nigeria's telecommunications sector. Previous Nigerian studies have discussed channel-management performance and communication challenges in broad terms (Adebayo & Oduwole, 2021; Okorie & Opeodu, 2018). However, fewer studies have provided quantitative and qualitative evidence on the specific effects of communication-channel choice and feedback mechanisms among telecom dealers in Lagos State. The problem is therefore not merely whether MTN communicates with dealers, but whether the selected channels fit the message, reach the correct decision-makers and enable timely feedback closure.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine how the choice of communication channels used by MTN influences the strategic alignment of its dealers in Lagos State.
2. To assess the influence of feedback mechanisms within MTN's downstream communication structure on customer satisfaction achieved by its dealers in Lagos State.

Research Questions

1. How does MTN's choice of communication channels influence the strategic alignment of its dealers in Lagos State?
2. What is the perceived influence of available feedback mechanisms in MTN's downstream communication on customer satisfaction at MTN dealerships in Lagos State?

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Communication-channel choice is a key issue in inter-organisational relationships because channel partners depend on timely, credible and understandable information to execute a principal's strategy. Mohr and Nevin (1990) argued that communication in marketing channels involves the frequency, direction, modality and content of information exchanged between channel members. In telecommunications dealership networks, these dimensions are visible in the use of dealer portals, emails, SMS alerts, WhatsApp groups, account-manager calls, webinars and physical briefings. The effectiveness of each channel depends on whether it matches the complexity and urgency of the message.

Feedback mechanisms extend communication beyond downward instruction. They allow dealers to provide field intelligence, report faults, escalate customer complaints and obtain guidance for service recovery. Participatory communication scholarship emphasises dialogue, ownership and joint problem-solving rather than one-way transmission of information (Mefalopulos, 2008; Servaes, 1999). In customer-facing dealership environments, feedback is performance-enhancing only when reports are acknowledged, tracked, resolved and converted into shared learning across the network.

The study is anchored on two complementary theories. Media Richness Theory, propounded by Daft and Lengel in 1986, explains why ambiguous or complex messages require rich channels that allow interaction, multiple cues and rapid feedback. Agency Theory, which was propounded by Meckling in the year 1976, explains the relationship between MTN as principal and dealers as agents. According to the theory, effective communication and feedback reduce information asymmetry, improve monitoring and support strategic alignment. Participatory Communication Theory, which was postulated by Lerner in 1958, explains the importance of dialogue and learning loops in complaint resolution and customer satisfaction. Together, these theories suggest that dealership performance should improve when messages are routed through appropriate channels and when feedback loops are timely, transparent and actionable.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive mixed-methods design. The quantitative component used a structured questionnaire to obtain measurable responses from dealer-owners, while the qualitative component used interviews to explain patterns observed in the survey. This design was appropriate because the study sought to describe dealer perceptions, test relationships among variables and interpret the meanings dealers attach to communication practices within MTN's distribution network (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The target population comprised registered MTN dealers operating in Lagos State. The source project identified an accessible population of 512 registered dealerships from MTN's 2024 business records. A sample of 222 dealer-owners was used for questionnaire administration. Stratified random sampling ensured balanced representation from the three senatorial districts of Lagos State: Lagos West, Lagos East and Lagos Central, with 74 respondents selected from each district. Twelve interviewees were also purposively selected, four from each senatorial district, to provide deeper qualitative insight.

The questionnaire contained demographic items and four-point Likert-scale statements: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. Section B(i) measured perceptions of communication-channel choice and strategic alignment, while Section B(ii) measured perceptions of feedback mechanisms and customer satisfaction. The interview guide explored dealer experiences with formal channels, informal channels, escalation processes and customer complaint handling.

Content validity was strengthened through expert review. The experts checked and expressed their opinions on the correlation of vocabulary of the test with the objective of each axis. They also ensured the appropriateness of the questions to the level of tertiary institutions' students and dons.

The pilot test was conducted with 20 respondents outside the final study area, and the questionnaire achieved a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .768, indicating acceptable internal consistency (Rattray & Jones, 2007). Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means and simple linear regression, while interview data were transcribed and thematically interpreted. Ethical procedures included informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity of respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Respondent Profile (N = 222)

Variable	Category	n	%
Role	Owner	222	100.0
Senatorial district	Lagos West; Lagos East; Lagos Central	74 each	33.3 each
Years as MTN dealer	4-6 years; 7-10 years; >10 years; no response	46; 68; 86; 22	20.7; 30.6; 38.8; 9.9
Full-time employees	1-4; 5-9; 10-19	22; 69; 131	9.9; 31.1; 59.0
Primary business focus	Mixed service dealership	222	100.0

The respondents were 222 MTN dealer-owners operating across Lagos State. The sample was geographically balanced, with 74 respondents each from Lagos West, Lagos East and Lagos Central. The respondents were experienced operators: 38.8% had operated as MTN dealers for more than ten years, 30.6% had seven to ten years of experience and 20.7% had four to six years of experience. Most outlets were small and medium-sized businesses, with 59.0% employing 10-19 full-time staff and 31.1% employing 5-9 staff. All respondents reported mixed business focus, meaning that their outlets combined services such as SIM registration, airtime/e-top-up, device sales and MoMo-related activities.

Research Question 1

How does MTN's choice of communication channels influence the strategic alignment of its dealers in Lagos State?

Table 2: Communication-Channel Indicators and Strategic Alignment

Indicator	Mean	Remarks
Rich channels for complex updates	3.88	Strongly agreed
Dealer portal as single source of truth	2.00	Disagreed
SMS/email for routine changes	3.64	Agreed
Two-way channels for clarification	3.96	Strongly agreed
Clear guidance on which channel to use	1.98	Disagreed
Cross-channel message consistency	3.86	Strongly agreed
Appropriate delivery of training invitations	4.00	Strongly agreed
Channels reach the owner/decision-maker	1.96	Disagreed
Grand mean	3.14	Agreed

The first research question examined how MTN's choice of communication channels influences dealer strategic alignment. The descriptive results show a mixed but revealing pattern. Dealers strongly agreed that rich channels such as webinars and briefings help them align with complex updates (M = 3.88), and that two-way channels such as calls and question-and-answer sessions allow clarification of expectations (M = 3.96). They also agreed that SMS and email alerts are useful for routine operational changes (M = 3.64), and that training invitations delivered through appropriate channels improve adherence (M = 4.00). These high scores confirm the value of matching channel richness to message complexity.

However, the official dealer portal was rated poorly as a single source of truth (M = 2.00). Respondents also disagreed that MTN provides clear guidance on which channel should be used for which message (M = 1.98), and that MTN's channels reliably reach the owner or key decision-maker (M = 1.96). Dealers further disagreed that over-reliance on WhatsApp leads to misinterpretation (M = 2.10), suggesting that informal channels may be trusted because they are faster and more interactive than some formal alternatives.

Table 3: Regression Analysis: Channel Appropriateness and Strategic Alignment

Predictor	B	SE	Β	t	p
Constant	0.593	0.177	-	3.355	.001
Channel appropriateness	1.064	0.064	.745	16.573	< .001
Model fit	R = .745	R^2 = .555	Adj. R^2 = .553	F = 274.7	< .001

The regression result supports the descriptive pattern. Channel appropriateness significantly predicted strategic alignment ($\beta = .745$, $t = 16.573$, $p < .001$). The model explained 55.5% of the variance in strategic alignment ($R^2 = .555$), indicating a strong relationship between perceived suitability of communication channels and the extent to which dealers align outlet-level actions with MTN's strategic intentions.

Interview findings sharpened the interpretation. Two themes emerged. The first was the informalisation of alignment: dealers described WhatsApp groups and direct calls as the channels through which urgent clarification is most often obtained. The second was routing failure: several interviewees reported that strategic messages sometimes reach outlet staff rather than owners, creating a gap between MTN's intended message and the person authorised to adjust business decisions. These findings support Media Richness Theory by showing that complex directives require interactive channels. They also support Agency Theory because poor routing increases information asymmetry and weakens the principal's ability to align agents with corporate priorities.

Research Question 2

What is the perceived influence of available feedback mechanisms in MTN's downstream communication on customer satisfaction at MTN dealerships in Lagos State?

Table 4: Feedback-Mechanism Indicators and Customer Satisfaction

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Official feedback channels resolve issues quickly	3.77	Agreed
Prompt acknowledgement and timelines	1.96	Disagreed
Feedback leads to visible fixes/updates	3.95	Strongly agreed
Slow/absent responses leave customers dissatisfied	3.99	Strongly agreed
Ticket tracking keeps customers informed	3.82	Strongly agreed
MTN shares outcomes/lessons from feedback	2.00	Disagreed
Two-way feedback improves resolution accuracy	4.00	Strongly agreed
Overall satisfaction has improved under current mechanisms	2.05	Disagreed
Training on feedback tools supports retention	3.78	Agreed
Grand mean	3.32	Agreed

The second research question examined the perceived influence of feedback mechanisms on customer satisfaction at dealerships. The descriptive data reveal a paradox. Dealers agreed that official feedback channels such as the portal and hotline help resolve issues (M = 3.77), that ticket tracking helps keep customers informed (M = 3.82), that dealer feedback produces visible system-level fixes (M = 3.95), and that two-way feedback produces more accurate resolutions and happier customers (M = 4.00). These results indicate that MTN has functioning feedback tools and that dealers recognise their potential value.

Nevertheless, the low-scoring items reveal the weakness of the system. Respondents disagreed that escalated complaints are promptly acknowledged with timelines (M = 1.96), that MTN shares feedback outcomes and lessons across the dealer network (M = 2.00), and that customer satisfaction has improved since the adoption of the current feedback mechanisms (M = 2.05). The problem is therefore not merely technological. Dealers may have tools for reporting and tracking, but slow human response and weak learning loops reduce the value of those tools at the customer interface.

Table 5: Regression Analysis: Feedback Effectiveness and Customer Satisfaction

Predictor	B	SE	Β	t	p
Constant	-0.533	0.217	-	-2.459	.015
Feedback effectiveness	0.802	0.067	.628	11.981	< .001
Model fit	R = .628	$R^2 = .395$	Adj. R^2 = .392	F = 143.5	< .001

The regression result shows that feedback effectiveness significantly predicted perceived customer satisfaction ($\beta = .628$, $t = 11.981$, $p < .001$). The model explained 39.5% of the variance in customer satisfaction ($R^2 = .395$). This is a meaningful effect, although lower than the variance explained in the channel-alignment model. The difference is logical because customer satisfaction is also affected by other factors such as network quality, pricing, device availability, staff competence and customers' prior experiences with the brand.

The qualitative findings clarify the statistical relationship. The first theme was visibility without closure: dealers can see that a ticket exists, but status visibility is not the same as resolution. The second theme was the macro-micro paradox: dealers perceive that MTN responds to repeated system problems and product errors, but individual customer complaints may remain delayed. This distinction is important because system-level fixes may improve the product environment over time, while customer satisfaction at the dealership counter depends on immediate acknowledgement, credible timelines and case-level closure. The findings align with Participatory Communication Theory, which argues that communication should operate as a two-way process of dialogue, feedback and adaptation.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that downstream channel communication is a decisive factor in the performance of MTN dealerships in Lagos State. Channel choice significantly influences strategic alignment. Dealers are most aligned when complex messages are delivered through rich, interactive and timely channels, and when routine updates are transmitted through quick, reliable channels. However, the weak ratings of the dealer portal, the absence of clear channel-use guidance and the failure of messages to reach owners directly show that formal systems do not automatically produce alignment. In many cases, alignment is sustained through informal channels and personal clarification rather than through the official channel architecture.

The study also concluded that feedback mechanisms significantly influenced perceived customer satisfaction, but only when they are responsive. Dealers acknowledged the existence of reporting tools, ticket tracking and training; nevertheless, slow acknowledgement, delayed resolution and poor sharing of lessons reduce customer satisfaction at the retail interface. Essentially, effective downstream communication becomes performance-enhancing only when it reaches the right decision-maker, permits clarification, closes feedback loops and generates collective learning across the dealership network.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. MTN should redesign its dealer-channel architecture around message-channel fit. Complex strategic issues, regulatory changes, incentive revisions and new product launches should be communicated through richer channels such as webinars, live briefings, regional dealer meetings or structured account-manager calls. Routine information such as deadlines, stock alerts and short operational reminders can be distributed through leaner channels such as SMS, email or app notifications.
2. MTN should formalise owner-facing digital communication. Since dealers rely heavily on WhatsApp and quick two-way clarification, MTN should use verified broadcast lists or an

enterprise messaging system that reaches registered business owners directly. This should complement, not replace, the dealer portal by pushing urgent and strategic notices to the people who make outlet-level decisions.

3. The dealer portal should be repositioned as a living single source of truth. It should contain version-controlled updates, searchable product briefs, expiry dates for campaigns, frequently asked questions and a clear distinction between active and outdated directives.
4. MTN should establish service-level agreements for dealer-escalated customer tickets. Complaints involving overcharging, failed activations or unresolved service reversals should carry visible resolution timelines. Escalation progress should be displayed to dealers so that they can communicate credible updates to customers.
5. Feedback should become a collective learning system. MTN should convert recurring dealer complaints and resolved cases into weekly or bi-weekly knowledge-base updates, allowing dealers across Lagos to learn from one another's experiences, reduce repeated complaints and strengthen frontline problem-solving. MTN should also institute quarterly dealer councils across the three Lagos senatorial districts to review communication bottlenecks and incorporate dealer intelligence into channel strategy.

REFERENCES

Adebayo, O., & Oduwole, A. (2021). The impact of distribution channel management on the performance of telecommunication companies in Nigeria. *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research*, 15(2), 45-58.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.

Daft, R. L., & Lengel, R. H. (1986). Organisational information requirements, media richness and structural design. *Management Science*, 32(5), 554-571.

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Agency theory: An assessment and review. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(1), 57-74.

Jensen, M. C., & Meckling, W. H. (1976). Theory of the firm: Managerial behaviour, agency costs and ownership structure. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 3(4), 305-360.

Mefalopulos, P. (2008). *Development communication sourcebook: Broadening the boundaries of communication*. World Bank.

Mohr, J., & Nevin, J. R. (1990). Communication strategies in marketing channels: A theoretical perspective. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(4), 36-51.

MTN Nigeria Communications Plc. (2024). *Annual report 2024*.

National Bureau of Statistics. (2023a). *Nigeria gross domestic product Q2 2023*. https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/

National Bureau of Statistics. (2023b). *Telecoms data: Active voice and internet per state, porting and tariff information (Q2 2023)*. https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/

Okorie, N., & Opeodu, O. (2018). Communication challenges in marketing channels: A study of the Nigerian telecommunications industry. *Covenant Journal of Communication*, 5(2), 1-18.

Rattray, J., & Jones, M. C. (2007). Essential elements of questionnaire design and development. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 16(2), 234-243.

Rosenbloom, B. (2013). *Marketing channels: A management view* (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Servaes, J. (1999). *Communication for development: One world, multiple cultures*. Hampton Press.

Stern, L. W., El-Ansary, A. I., & Coughlan, A. T. (2006). *Marketing channels* (7th ed.). Prentice Hall.