

Privatization of Nigeria's Telecommunications Sector: A Comprehensive Case Study

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Abstract

The privatization of Nigeria's telecommunications sector represents one of the most significant economic reforms aimed at improving efficiency, increasing accessibility, and fostering competition. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the privatization process, its impact on service delivery, and the challenges encountered post-privatization. Using a document analysis approach, utilizing qualitative data to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the sector's transformation post-privatization, from government reports, industry publications, and financial statements of major telecom operators. Key performance indicators such as subscriber growth, network coverage, foreign direct investment, and economic contributions are analyzed using descriptive and inferential techniques. Findings reveal that privatization has led to significant improvements in telecom penetration, reduced service costs, and increased investments. However, challenges such as regulatory bottlenecks, infrastructure deficits, and market dominance by a few key players persist. The study concludes that while privatization has largely transformed the sector, strategic policy reforms are needed to enhance competition, improve rural connectivity, and ensure consumer protection. These findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and investors aiming to further develop Nigeria's telecommunications landscape.

Keywords: Privatization, Telecommunications, Nigeria, Economic Efficiency, Technological Innovation.

JEL Classification: L96, H54, O33, O55

Introduction

Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL), a state-owned monopoly struggling with various challenges, dominated the telecommunications sector in Nigeria before privatization. Despite being a vital sector that could foster economic and social connectivity, inefficiencies, lack of infrastructure, and limited accessibility plagued the telecoms scene (Afeikhena, 2003). As Nigeria had, and still has, one of the highest growth rates in population in Africa, these setbacks in telecommunication services were becoming increasingly unsustainable and problematic, necessitating the need for sectoral reform (Hassan, 2011). The government of Nigeria started looking into utilizing privatization as a possible means of solution in response to the pressures from international financial institutions that supported economic liberation and internal efficiencies (Ugorji, 1995).

The privatization and deregulation of Nigeria's telecommunications sector in 1999 marked a significant shift from state control to a competitive market-driven industry (Dieli, 2020). This transition has positively impacted the economy, boosting growth, employment opportunities, and GDP contribution from the sector (Kayinwaye & Ruth, 2023; Enahoro & Olawade, 2021). The industry has followed typical lifecycle stages, showing potential for steady growth or shakeout (Dieli, 2020). Despite challenges such as inadequate power supply and infrastructural issues (Kayinwaye & Ruth, 2023), the sector has experienced rapid growth, outpacing many established networks globally (Enahoro & Olawade, 2021). However, the privatization process faces numerous obstacles, including economic policy issues and lack of basic infrastructure (Adegbite, 2020; Enahoro & Olawade, 2021). To ensure continued success, the government must create a conducive environment for the industry to flourish (Kayinwaye & Ruth, 2023) and address the challenges hindering the full exploitation of the sector's potential (Adegbite, 2020). NITEL struggled administratively, with outdated infrastructure and limited reach, resulting in poor service quality and accessibility (Ijewere & Gbandi, 2012). The Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), focusing on attracting private investment, improving quality, and driving technological advancements (Salawu, 2017), led the process of privatization.

Privatization has positively transformed the Nigerian telecommunication sector. It has led to significant growth economically as increased telecom activities have contributed to the GDP of the country, spurred private sector investment, and created jobs within the industry (Kayinwaye & Ruth, 2023). Socially, telecom services have extended into rural areas, improving national integration and access to information. On the technological side, the establishment of private companies has fostered infrastructural development and enhanced access to the Internet, advancing Nigeria's integration into the global digital economy (Ogege, 2010).

This study aims to examine the significant impact of privatization on Nigeria's telecom sector, focusing on its economic, social, and technological influences. Key objectives include assessing whether privatization achieved its goals of industry growth, enhanced accessibility, and innovation. This study also attempts to provide information on the effectiveness of the role of the BPE and NCC as regulatory frameworks, which were crucial in promoting competition and ensuring fair practices (Chidozie et al., 2015).

Moreover, the study implies that privatization has significantly succeeded in its objectives; however, challenges remain, especially in expanding Internet service coverage to remote areas. Recommendations for this include ongoing regulatory reforms to keep up a fair market competition and transparency, and technological investment to stay in line with global advancements. According to Ijewere & Gbandi (2012), enforcing and upholding these efforts will help the nation keep the benefits of privatization for a long time, resulting in inclusive growth and access across all areas.

Scope and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess how privatization has influenced Nigeria's telecom sector, paying attention to service quality, accessibility, and economic contributions. Through an exploration of the industry's pre- and post-privatization dynamics, the study sheds light on how well privatization works to handle coverage enhancement, overcome infrastructure limitations, and address service inefficiencies (Megginson et al., 1994). This study will also examine the impact of privatization on competition and regulatory procedures within Nigeria's telecom sector.

This analysis is crucial as it extends to several key stakeholders. For government policymakers, the study gives insight into areas where privatization succeeded and where regulatory adjustments may be necessary. This is specifically relevant as Nigeria intends to handle issues in other vital industries through similar reform models (Afeikhena, 2003). The case study comprehensively informs investors on the opportunities and risks in investing within privatized sectors in Nigeria, highlighting the role of foreign direct investment in driving sectoral growth.

Additionally, this study is a contribution to the knowledge of academic discourse on privatization, demonstrating the complex nexus of political, economic, and social elements involved in the reform of the telecom industry in developing countries.

Nigeria's telecom industry has transformed into one of the fastest-growing industries in the country because of privatization, fostering and encouraging innovation, and improving access (Agbai & Okey, 2024). However, as this case study highlights, effective regulatory procedures remain critical to guarantee stability and long-term success. This analysis ultimately offers a guide for other industries and nations considering implementing similar reforms.

Statement of Problem

Before the privatization of Nigeria's telecommunications sector, the industry was plagued by inefficiencies, poor service delivery, and limited access to telecommunication services. The Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL), which held a state monopoly, was characterized by bureaucratic inefficiency, inadequate infrastructure, high costs, and poor customer service. Telephone penetration was extremely low, with fewer than 500,000 active telephone lines for a population of over 120 million people in 2001 (Muhammed & Oyinwola, 2019). This created a severe communication gap, hindering economic activities, business operations, and social interactions.

The government's decision to privatize the sector was driven by the need to address these longstanding inefficiencies, attract foreign direct investment (FDI), enhance competition, and improve service delivery. The success of telecommunications privatization has been seen as a model for other sectors, such as the power industry, with recommendations for transparent processes and competent management to ensure effective privatization (Omachi & Mohammed, 2024). However, despite significant improvements in access and

service quality post-privatization, several challenges remain, and despite progress, the telecommunications sector remains underexploited due to infrastructural limitations and economic policies (Enahoro & Olawade, 2021).

1. **Regulatory Challenges** – Issues related to price regulation, fair competition, and consumer protection continue to impact service affordability and quality.
2. **Infrastructure Deficit** – Despite privatization, telecom infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, remains inadequate due to high operational costs and poor power supply.
3. **High Costs of Services** – Although competition has driven down prices, data and call rates in Nigeria remain relatively high compared to global standards.
4. **Market Dominance by a Few Players** – The sector remains concentrated in the hands of a few major operators (MTN, Airtel, Glo, and gmobile), leading to concerns about market power and price-fixing.
5. **Security and Cyber Threats** – The digital transformation facilitated by privatization has also increased risks of fraud, cybercrime, and data breaches, requiring stronger regulatory oversight.

Research Objectives

This study seeks to evaluate the impact of privatization on Nigeria's telecommunications sector, examining whether it has met its intended goals of efficiency, accessibility, affordability, and competition while identifying persistent challenges and areas for further policy intervention.

Literature Review

Background on Nigeria's Telecom Sector Pre-Privatization

NITEL's performance before the privatization process exemplified the challenges commonly linked to state monopolies in developing countries. NITEL was established to provide affordable and accessible communication but was truncated by bureaucratic inefficiencies, antiquated technology, and insufficient capital investment (Afeikhena, 2003). Telecommunication coverage was not accessible in rural areas as access was limited to urban areas, customers struggled with lengthy wait times for new connections (Bello et al, 2016), and there were constant service interruptions and unrealistically high costs. NITEL's monopoly suppressed competition, which led to a stagnant sector with low levels of innovation and service development. As a result, Nigeria's telecom sector failed to keep up with the communication needs of a rapidly industrializing and urbanizing society.

Privatization Overview

Privatization is the process of transferring ownership and control of businesses from the public to the private sector (Engineeringazz, 2023). In the early 2000s, the Nigerian government worked to liberalize the telecom sector by truncating NITEL's monopoly and advocating private-sector investment. The administration saw privatization as a technique

to improve efficiency, attract foreign direct investment, increase sector revenue, and promote technological advancement. Additionally, it also followed a global trend where nations, especially in developing economies, looked to privatization to improve the performance of vital service sectors (Parker & Kirkpatrick, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

The privatization of the telecommunications sector in Nigeria can be analyzed through several economic and regulatory theories that explain the rationale, process, and impact of transferring state-owned enterprises to private ownership. Key theories include:

1. Public Choice Theory

The Public Choice Theory argues that government involvement in economic activities often leads to inefficiencies due to bureaucratic inertia, corruption, and political influence (Buchanan & Tullock, 1962). In Nigeria, before privatization, the telecommunications sector was dominated by NITEL (Nigerian Telecommunications Limited), which was plagued by inefficiency, poor service delivery, and a lack of innovation. Privatization was thus driven by the need to introduce market efficiency, improve service quality, and reduce state control.

2. Property Rights Theory

According to the Property Rights Theory (Alchian & Demsetz, 1973), state-owned enterprises suffer from weak property rights, leading to mismanagement and inefficiency. The privatization of the Nigerian telecom sector strengthened property rights by transferring ownership to private investors, ensuring profit motivation, competitive efficiency, and better service delivery.

3. Market Liberalization and Competition Theory

Liberalization Theory suggests that breaking monopolies and encouraging competition leads to efficiency, lower prices, and better consumer services (Bailey & Baumol, 1982). In Nigeria, the introduction of MTN, Airtel, Glo, and Etisalat (now gmobile) after deregulation in 2001 fostered competition, improving accessibility, affordability, and innovation.

4. Principal-Agent Theory

This theory explains the relationship between the government (principal) and private sector operators (agents). Before privatization, government-managed firms often lacked incentives for optimal performance. Privatization ensured that private telecom firms had a profit-driven incentive to provide high-quality services while being regulated to prevent market abuse.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework provides a structured approach to understanding the key variables and relationships in Nigeria's telecom privatization.

Key Concepts

- **Privatization** – The transfer of state-owned telecom enterprises to private ownership to improve efficiency.
- **Market Liberalization** – The removal of government monopoly, allowing private sector participation.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** – Capital inflow into the telecom sector post-privatization.
- **Regulatory Framework** – Policies set by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) to ensure competition, pricing regulation, and consumer protection.
- **Telecommunication Growth Metrics** – Indicators such as mobile penetration rate, internet accessibility, and call quality improvements post-privatization.

Conceptual Model

The relationship between privatization, competition, investment, and sector performance can be visualized as:

**Privatization → Market Liberalization → Increased Investment →
Technological Innovation → Improved Service Quality & Coverage**

Methodology for Data Collection and Analysis

This study on the privatization of the telecommunications sector in Nigeria employs a document analysis approach, utilizing qualitative data to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the sector's transformation post-privatization.

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design, using historical data, surveys and to assess the impact of privatization on the Nigerian telecommunications sector. It evaluates key performance indicators (KPIs) such as subscriber growth, service quality, investment inflows, and economic contributions before and after privatization.

Data Collection Method

Data was sourced from:

Government Reports & Policy Documents

- Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) reports on sector growth, market competition, and regulatory policies.
- Federal Government White Papers on telecom privatization.

Industry Reports & Financial Statements

- Annual reports from MTN Nigeria, Airtel, Glo, and 9mobile.
- Telecom sector investment reports from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and World Bank.

Academic Literature & Journal Articles

- Studies on the impact of telecom privatization in Nigeria and other developing countries.
- Comparative analysis with pre-privatization era performance.

Media Reports & Case Studies

- Articles and case studies from reputable sources like BusinessDay, The Guardian, and Nigeria Communications Week.

Data Analysis Techniques

Comparative Analysis (Pre- vs. Post-Privatization)

- Evaluation of KPIs (e.g., number of mobile users, internet penetration, telecom revenue) before and after privatization.
- Trend analysis to measure growth rates over time.

Thematic Analysis

- Identification of recurring themes in interviews and focus group discussions (e.g., challenges in regulation, service quality).

Discussion of Findings

The Telecom Sector Pre-Privatization in Nigeria

Government Monopoly through NITEL

NITEL was a combination of Nigeria External Telecommunications (NET) and the Post and Telecommunications Department's Telecommunications Division (Kehinde, 2023). Founded in 1985, it was the nation's sole provider of telecommunications services before privatization. Its task was to manage domestic and international communications as well as telephone and telegraph services (Olutayo & Omobowale, 2011).

Due to NITEL's monopolistic position, it had little or no drive to expand its customer base and improve its delivery being the sole provider of services. As a result of this, the communications structure remained underdeveloped, and a significant number of the population were unable to access basic telecommunication services. NITEL had less than 500,000 telephones for a population of almost 100 million in the late 1990s. The quantity was incredibly low with less than one line per 200 people (Onwumechili, 2005). The rural areas suffered from this majorly because most of the internet connections were concentrated in the metropolitan areas. Lack of competition hindered innovations and

customers were left with no options when communication failed. They frequently encountered hurdles when installing a landline like fraudulent tactics, technical obstacles, and inconsistent services, which sometimes required years to complete. It was evident the telecommunications sector needed urgent attention in areas like accessibility, efficiency, and reliability (Suleiman, 2014).

Issues of Inefficiency, Poor Service Delivery, Lack of Infrastructure, and Limited Access

The drive for privatization was also due to the inefficiencies of NITEL. The company suffered core system problems that hindered its capacity to deliver adequate telecom services. These issues originated from poor management, archaic infrastructure, and lack of investment in modern technology (Afeikhena, 2003). The administrative structure of the bureaucracy made decision-making slow. There were multiple cases of government and political interference leading to resource mishandling and corruption. The management was also ineffective in addressing consumer complaints, resulting in widespread dissatisfaction among its limited customer base (Kehinde, 2023).

Poor Service Delivery

Service delivery under NITEL was notoriously bad. Customers frequently experienced lags and poor voice quality in their calls, and delays in establishing connections even in urban areas where telecom services were most concentrated (Onwumechili, 2005). Additionally, customer service incompetence was also high, with repair requests and complaints often going on for weeks or months unaddressed. It was very cumbersome to obtain a telephone line and the process could take several years because of ineptitude in processing applications, corruption, and a severe lack of available lines (Onwumechili & Okereke-Arungwa, 2003).

Lack of Infrastructure

NITEL equally faced the challenge of insufficient and outdated infrastructure. Most of its equipment was fossilized, relying on old technologies that were ineffective in handling the growing demand for telecom services (Tvaronaviciene & Kalasinskaite, 2019). Resources were also one of the things the company lacked which made it unable to expand its infrastructure into rural areas. The company's limited and low investment in modern telecommunication technology showed that Nigeria was falling behind other countries in Africa and the rest of the world in terms of access and service quality (Olutayo & Omobowale, 2011).

Limited Nationwide Access

Limited infrastructure made access to telecom services costly, and it became a luxury afforded to only a small fraction of the Nigerian population (Eboibi, 2017). This lack of access further promoted the urban-rural divide, as those in urban centres had more reliable

communication services compared to the underserved rural populace (Adediran et al., 2016).

The problem of limited access was worsened by the high cost of telecommunication services. Those who could afford telephone lines faced excess call tariffs, making it difficult for the average Nigerian citizen to utilize telecom services regularly (Onwumechili, 2005). This created a situation where telecommunications, which is supposed to be a necessity for modern economies, remained out of reach for most Nigerians.

Rationale for Privatization

Economic Growth and Population Expansion

During the 1990s, the Nigerian population was rapidly growing, and the demand for telecommunication services far surpassed the supply. The country's economic development suffered because of the lack of adequate telecom infrastructure (Suleiman, 2014). As the global economy of the 1990s emerged, it was driven by speedy advancements in information and communication technology (ICT), putting telecommunications in the position of an essential infrastructure for trade, business operations, and national development. Businesses in Nigeria were struggling to keep up with their global counterparts without access to reliable telecom services, limiting the economic potential of the country (Onakoya et al., 2012).

Globalization and Technological Advancement

By the late 1990s, many developing countries were embracing telecommunications liberalization as a means to modernize their economies and attract foreign direct investment (FDI). Nigeria was increasingly isolated in a global economy that relied heavily on ICT. Privatizing the telecom sector was seen as a way to break NITEL's monopoly and introduce the competition necessary to drive innovation, improve services, and attract investment (Onwumechili & Okereke-Arunga, 2003).

Pressure from International Financial Institutions

The government of Nigeria was also under pressure from financial institutions internationally such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to integrate economic reforms, including the privatization of key enterprises owned by the state like NITEL. According to these institutions, privatization is a means to improve efficiency, reduce government involvement in commercial enterprises, and advocate for a competitive market environment (Kalejaiye et al., 2013). The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), and other Nigerian government's economic reform agenda, aligned with the global trend towards deregulation and liberalization, further advocating the privatization of the telecom sector (Kalejaiye et al., 2013).

These factors set the stage for one of the most significant economic transformations in Nigeria's history — the privatization of its telecom industry (Eboibi, 2017).

Privatization Process

To improve accessibility, service quality, and competition, Nigeria's telecommunication industry enforced privatization as a strategic move to transition from a system run by the government to a market-driven one, focused on improving service quality, accessibility, and competition. This process required a strong legislative framework, which was critical in outlining the roles and responsibilities of essential institutions involved in the enforcement of and regulating privatization efforts, basically the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) and the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) (BPE, 2019).

Legislative Framework

The legislative framework for Nigeria's telecom privatization was built upon several key policies and acts, which collectively facilitated a structured approach to privatization. The Public Enterprises (Privatization and Commercialization) Act of 1999 laid the foundation for establishing the BPE, which played a vital role in managing Nigeria's privatization activities. The BPE was tasked with preparing enterprises owned by the state for privatization, coordinating with potential investors, and making sure that the procedures and processes remained open and were beneficial to national interests (Salawu et al., 2016). The BPE's oversight and coordination allowed for a seamless transition from state-owned to privatized operations entities, advocating investment and attracting innovation in telecommunications (Afeikhena, 2003).

Role of the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE)

The BPE played a vital role in transforming the telecommunications industry by supervising the divestment of Nigeria's primary telecommunications provider, NITEL. This agency was responsible for managing bids, evaluating NITEL's assets, and ensuring openness in the bidding process (Salawu, 2017). The BPE aimed its efforts at promoting a competitive environment where consumers would benefit from improved service delivery and affordability and private companies could thrive.

Role of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC)

The NCC, in conjunction with the BPE, played a vital role in post-privatization telecom sector regulation. The Nigerian Communications Act of 2003 gave more regulatory rights to the NCC, whose duties included establishing quality standards, safeguarding consumer rights, and promoting fair competition. Thus, the NCC's function became even more significant following privatization, as it was entrusted with fostering fair pricing structures, reducing monopolistic tendencies, and establishing an even playing field for private operators (Hassan, 2011). As a result, the NCC's regulatory supervision became crucial to guaranteeing that privatization achieved its stated goals of accessibility and quality. This legislative framework, together with the proactive roles of both the BPE and NCC, provided the grounds for a successful transition from a government-owned monopoly to a competitive market driven by the private sector (Ade, 2024). This structured approach

stimulated economic growth, enhanced service delivery, and fostered infrastructure development, positioning Nigeria's telecommunications sector for long-term growth.

GSM License Auctions in Nigeria

In 2001, the auctioning of Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) licenses began (Adeyinka et al., 2009). This policy was implemented to promote and introduce competition, initiate foreign investment, and expand the coverage of mobile networks across the country. The auctioning was done under the supervision of the NCC and BPE, with the focus on fostering transparency and ensuring a bidding process that is fair to establish a robust telecom sector (Nkordeh et al., 2017).

The first auction was held in January 2001 and focused on issuing three GSM licenses to private operators. A competitive bidding process was established by the government, giving companies the ability to compete for licenses through a liberalized auction to make sure that the winner is capable financially and technically of improving the sector (Adeyinka et al., 2009). The auction attracted considerable interest from local and international participants signifying the potential for telecom growth in Nigeria (Nkordeh et al., 2017). The major participators who emerged during this process were:

- **MTN Nigeria (MTN):** MTN Nigeria, whose parent or holding company is South Africa MTN Group, with \$285 million, secured a license and became the first major private participant in Nigeria's telecom market (African Financials, 2023). The company expanded rapidly in its network across the country and significantly invested in infrastructure, placing itself as a leading telecom provider in Nigeria. Today, MTN Nigeria is one of Nigeria's largest providers of communications services, connecting approximately 77 million people in communities across the country with each other and the world. Its leadership position in coverage, capacity, and innovation has remained constant since its launch in 2001 (MTN Nigeria, 2021).
- **Econet Wireless Nigeria (later rebranded as Airtel Nigeria):** Established originally as part of Zimbabwe's Econet Group. just like MTN, Econet Wireless secured a license for the same amount. However, there were a series of changes in the ownership of the company from Celtel to Zain, and eventually Bharti Airtel, which influenced its stability and market positioning (Dorgbetor, 2019).
- **NITEL:** NITEL was granted a reserved GSM license in the new competitive landscape to maintain government presence. However, due to operational and administrative inefficiencies and low funding, NITEL struggled with the transition from a monopoly to a competitive player (Onwumechili & Okereke-Arunga, 2003). It was clear that NITEL could not meet the increasing demand for its services. NITEL was subsequently founded in 1996 as the mobile division of NITEL, a medium

to provide cellular services and support NITEL's operations in the deregulated telecom industry. However, the new telecommunications environment, prevalent with companies managed by astute private investors and executives, was too competitive for MTEL as the company, though with high expectations, barely got off the ground before collapsing. At this point, the government decided to privatize it. However, it was almost 20 years before NATCOM, a partnership based in Nigeria, acquired it from the Nigerian government for \$252 million in 2014 (Osuagwu & Elebeke, 2014).

NATCOM Development & Investment Limited, functioning under the name NTEL, kicked off business, although there were various upgrades to address in addition to inherited pension liabilities of N43 billion (Akwaja, 2016). Despite all odds, it has introduced its 4G LTE network, with coverage in Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt. Since making its first on-net test data call in January 2016, and its first on-net Voice-over-LTE (VoLTE) connection in February 2016, Ntel has continued to operate (Ogunsola, 2016).



Figure 1: Ntel logo under NATCOM (Okoh, 2024)

- **Globacom (Glo):** Glo entered the Nigerian telecom market in 2002 as the second national operator. Glo, fully owned by a Nigerian company, introduced innovations like per-second billing, which disrupted the market significantly. Its entry method forced other competitors to adopt similar pricing methods to remain relevant and competitive, thus benefiting consumers with lower call costs (Kadiri & Lawal, 2019).

Challenges Faced During the Privatization Process

Bureaucratic Inefficiencies

The auction process was initially hampered by bureaucratic delays and administrative bottlenecks, which affected the rollout of telecom services. There was a lack of coordination between the NCC, BPE, and other government agencies, leading to delays in securing approvals for infrastructure deployment, such as erecting telecom towers and securing spectrum allocations (Nosiri et al., 2015). Furthermore, the regulatory environment was

underdeveloped, making it difficult for operators to navigate legal and administrative requirements effectively.

In some instances, regulatory delays in issuing construction permits for network infrastructure affected the rollout speed, causing delays in reaching underserved areas (Nosiri et al., 2015).

Resistance from Vested Interests

The privatization process faced resistance from several quarters, including labour unions, NITEL staff, and certain government officials who were opposed to the changes. Labour unions feared job losses and deteriorating working conditions due to privatization. Additionally, some political figures and military officials, who perceived telecommunications as a strategic sector, resisted the liberalization due to concerns over losing control and potential national security risks (Onuoha et al., 2017).

Internal resistance within NITEL also slowed down the restructuring efforts. Employees were reluctant to embrace changes in operational practices and modern management techniques, further complicating the transition. The resistance from individuals with stakes underscored the broader issue of socio-political challenges in implementing economic reforms (Olutayo & Omobowale, 2011).

Legal Battles and NITEL's Failed Privatization Attempts

The privatization of NITEL itself was plagued with numerous legal and financial hurdles. The government attempted to sell NITEL to private investors, but these efforts repeatedly failed due to disagreements over valuation, legal disputes, and concerns about the company's debt burden. For example, the first attempt to sell NITEL to Investors International London Limited (IILL) in 2002 collapsed because the buyer could not meet payment obligations, leading to a prolonged legal dispute (Shekarau, 2002).

Subsequent attempts to privatize NITEL were equally unsuccessful, including efforts involving the Nigerian consortium, Transcorp, and the New Generation Consortium. The repeated failures to privatize NITEL were due to underlying structural problems within the company, such as legacy debts, obsolete technology, and an underdeveloped workforce that could not compete with the rapidly growing private operators (Salawu et al., 2016).

Impact of Privatization on the Nigerian Telecom Sector

The privatization process that began with the GSM license auctions in 2001 was a pivotal moment for the telecom sector. It sparked the rise of mobile communication, introduced competition, and improved service quality. However, challenges such as bureaucratic hurdles, pushback from established interests, and legal issues, particularly concerning the privatization of NITEL, did hinder progress. Nonetheless, the overall outcome of privatization was beneficial, leading to increased investment, technological improvements, and better access to services for many Nigerians (Hook, 2024).

Economic Outcomes

Increased investment

One of the key results of privatizing the telecom sector was a substantial increase in both foreign and domestic investments. Before privatization, the industry faced poor infrastructure and outdated technology, which discouraged investors. The launch of GSM licenses in 2001 opened up the sector to private players, making it an attractive investment opportunity.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) grew rapidly after privatization, with billions invested by international companies like MTN, Econet (now Airtel), and Glo. These companies made significant investments in infrastructure, network expansion, and technology upgrades. Local companies, like Glo, also contributed to the growth of mobile services across Nigeria. (Abdullahi et al., 2013).

Growth of the telecom market

The liberalization of the telecom sector shifted it from a government-run monopoly to a competitive marketplace with multiple service providers. Before privatization, telecom penetration was under 1%, with only around 500,000 phone lines in urban areas. After the issuance of GSM licenses and market liberalization, mobile subscriptions surged to over 128 million by 2013, resulting in an approximate penetration rate of 80% (Nkordeh et al., 2017). This competition led to lower call prices and better service quality, making telecom services more available to the public.

Moreover, privatization stimulated the growth of related industries, such as mobile phone sales, telecom equipment manufacturing, and software development. The rapid growth of the telecom sector significantly contributed to Nigeria's GDP, with the sector accounting for about 9% of GDP by 2015 (Uduu, 2021). The sector's contributions to GDP have been consistently high over the years, with its highest contributions often happening in the second quarter (Q2).

Quarterly Contribution of Telecom Industry to the GDP (%)

Percentage contribution of the telecoms industry to the GDP shows that Q2 contribution is always the highest. Also, it increases in Q2, falls in Q3 before rising again in Q4.

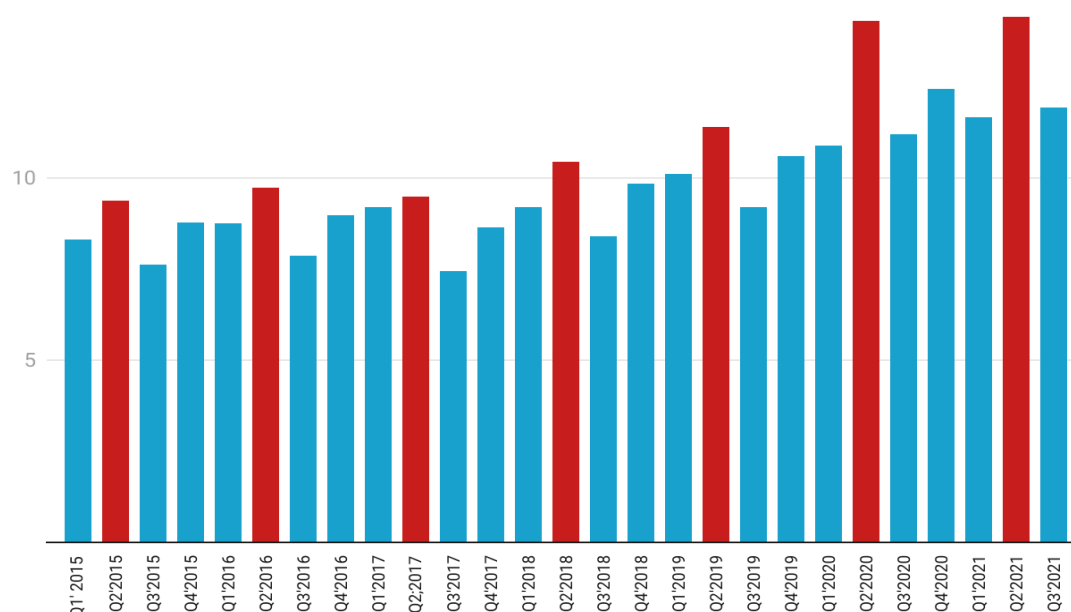


Chart: Created by Dataphyte • Source: NBS • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 2: Quarterly Contribution of the Telecom Industry to the GDP (%) (Uduu 2021)

Revenue Generation

The privatized telecom industry became a crucial source of revenue for the government through taxes, licensing fees, and regulatory charges. The GSM license auctions alone brought in \$855 million in 2001, providing a considerable boost to government income. The sector's growth also led to higher corporate taxes and value-added tax (VAT) from telecom companies. The National Communications Commission (NCC) collected various fees related to licensing and regulation, further adding to government revenues (Opata, 2013).

Social Impact

Better Access to Telecom Services

Before these reforms, telecom services were mostly found in urban areas, leaving rural areas underserved. The arrival of private companies like MTN and Glo led to widespread network expansion, effectively reducing the urban-rural communication gap (Hassan, 2011).

This improved access allowed remote areas to connect with the broader economy, enabling residents to participate in e-commerce, and mobile banking, and receive agricultural information. Enhanced communication also improved access to emergency services and healthcare, benefiting social welfare (Bello et al., 2016).

Job Creation and Employment Trends

Telecom companies directly employed thousands of workers, including engineers and customer service representatives. The industry also created numerous jobs in related fields such as mobile phone retail, telecom tower construction, and IT (software development and maintenance). The expansion of businesses linked to the telecom sector further increased job opportunities, improving economic conditions (Enahoro & Olawade, 2021).

However, the transition from a monopoly to a competitive market resulted in job losses at NITEL for some employees who could not adapt to the new system. Despite these challenges, the overall impact of privatization on employment was positive, making the telecom sector one of Nigeria's largest employers (Agba et al., 2010).

Improved Communication and Social Connections

The increased availability of telecom services enhanced social integration in Nigeria, helping to bridge communication gaps between individuals, communities, and businesses. Mobile phones became vital tools for staying connected with family and friends over distances. The telecom sector also promoted digital communication, including internet access and social media, further changing how people interact.

Additionally, privatization led to the rise of mobile money services, allowing financial inclusion for many Nigerians who previously had no access to traditional banking. Mobile banking and payment systems enabled rural residents to carry out transactions, pay bills, and access loans via their phones, encouraging economic engagement (Quadri et al., 2024).

Technological Advancements

Infrastructural Development

The privatization policy heralded a massive upgrade and expansion of Nigeria's telecom infrastructure. The telecom network lacked efficiency with outdated technologies that could not meet modern communication demands; heavy investments were placed on building state-of-the-art infrastructure for private telecom operators, including the deployment of 2G, 3G, and 4G networks. These investments advocated faster internet connections, enhanced voice quality, and increased data service availability, positioning the country for digital transformation (Ogbe & Dike, 2017). The deployment of fibre-optic cables across the country further enhanced broadband access, providing high-speed internet to businesses, educational institutions, and households (Ogbe & Dike, 2017).

Service Innovations

The liberalization of the telecom sector gave rise to numerous innovations in services and products. New services introduced post-privatization included mobile banking, mobile payment platforms, and internet-based applications that revolutionized the way businesses operated. For instance, the launch of mobile money services allowed for easier and faster financial transactions, while internet-based applications provided new avenues for communication, education, and entertainment (Enahoro & Olawade, 2021). Telecom

companies also began offering value-added services such as caller tunes, short message service (SMS) alerts, and data bundles, catering to the diverse needs of consumers. These innovations not only increased revenue for telecom operators but also enhanced customer satisfaction by providing more choices and convenience.

Challenges and Criticism of Privatization

The privatization of Nigeria's telecom sector has had a transformative impact, leading to increased investments, market growth, and enhanced technological development (Tvaronaviciene & Kalasinskaite, 2019). However, challenges such as regulatory issues, affordability concerns, and rural coverage gaps persist. Moving forward, the sector must address these lingering challenges to sustain the gains achieved and promote further digital inclusion (Ogbo-Gebhardt et al., 2017).

Affordability

Despite the increased competition and expansion of services following privatization, affordability remains a significant issue for many Nigerians. The introduction of private operators led to initial reductions in call rates and data charges, but telecom services are still expensive for a substantial segment of the population (Hassan, 2011). The cost of mobile data in Nigeria, for instance, is high compared to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. This limits the extent to which average Nigerians can access and benefit from digital services, such as internet browsing, online education, and e-commerce (Ogbo-Gebhardt et al., 2017).

The issue of affordability is further compounded by high taxes and levies imposed on telecom companies by various government agencies, which are often passed on to consumers in the form of higher tariffs. The Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF) levies, regulatory charges, and multiple taxes have contributed to the cost burden on telecom operators, which eventually affects end-user prices (Oseni, 2014). Although mobile phones are widely used across different socioeconomic classes, the cost of airtime and data remains a financial burden for many, particularly in rural and low-income urban areas.

Quality of Service

Some of the service issues that persist are network congestion, dropped calls, poor voice quality, service interruptions, and unstable data connection, despite the numerous market operators (Adediran et al., 2016). These issues have been traced to poor infrastructure, poor fiber-optic networks to meet the needs of the growing traffic, and an inadequate number of base transceiver stations (BTS). Many telecom operators have had to acquire a backup plan like diesel generators to ensure stable networks despite frequent power outages. All these issues, including poor security for telecom infrastructure and regular destruction of telecom equipment, have worsened the quality of their services. Additionally, the fines placed on telecom operators by the National Communications Commission (NCC) for

failing to meet quality-of-service standards have not been very effective in improving their services (Olayinka et al., 2019).

The customer service units of various service providers in the telecom sector is also heavily criticized for its weak resolutions, tardy responses, and poor complaint management. Subscribers have become discontent with the service delivery. They feel underserved despite the increase in the availability of telecom services. Even with the adoption of digital channels for assistance which has improved customer care, the overall service quality has not consistently lived up to the clients' expectations.

Regulatory Challenges

In the NCC, and the liberalized or open telecom market in general, regulations pose unique challenges. The NCC is responsible for fostering fair competition, the management of the allocation of spectrum, and securing the interests of the consumer (Opata, 2013). However, the government entity has faced challenges in balancing and meeting up with the interests of various stakeholders while advocating a competitive and sustainable telecom industry. Some of the key regulatory challenges include:

- **Allocation of Spectrum and Management:** The proper management of spectrum resources is vital for the growth of the telecom industry. However, there have been reasons to be concerned over the transparency and fairness of the allocation of the spectrum process in Nigeria. There have been allegations of favouritism and corruption that have damaged the sincerity of the allocation of spectrum licenses, which undermines investor confidence and the industry's growth potential.
- **Monopolistic Tendencies:** There have been instances of monopolistic or anti-competitive practices among telecom operators, despite the privatization and liberalization efforts. Larger participants like MTN and Airtel, are dominant in the market, leading to reviews on market concentration and reduced competition (Aborisade, 2021). The NCC has addressed this issue several times by implementing mobile number portability and enforcing the sharing of infrastructure, but the interventions and their effectiveness have been questioned (Odii et al., 2016).
- **Multiple Taxation and Uncertainty of Policies:** Both at federal, state, and local levels, telecom operators face numerous taxes and regulatory levies, creating a contradictory and most times complex regulatory environment. Multiple taxation discourages investment in network expansion and quality improvements and increases the cost of doing business.

Rural Connectivity

The persistent gap in rural telecom service provision is one of the major criticisms of the privatization process. Rural connectivity has remained a problem despite significant improvements in urban areas (Adediran et al, 2016). Many telecom operators take up the expansion of services in more lucrative urban markets where there is a higher concentration

of customers, resulting in limited investment in rural infrastructure. This has caused many rural communities to be left behind with limited access to telecommunications.

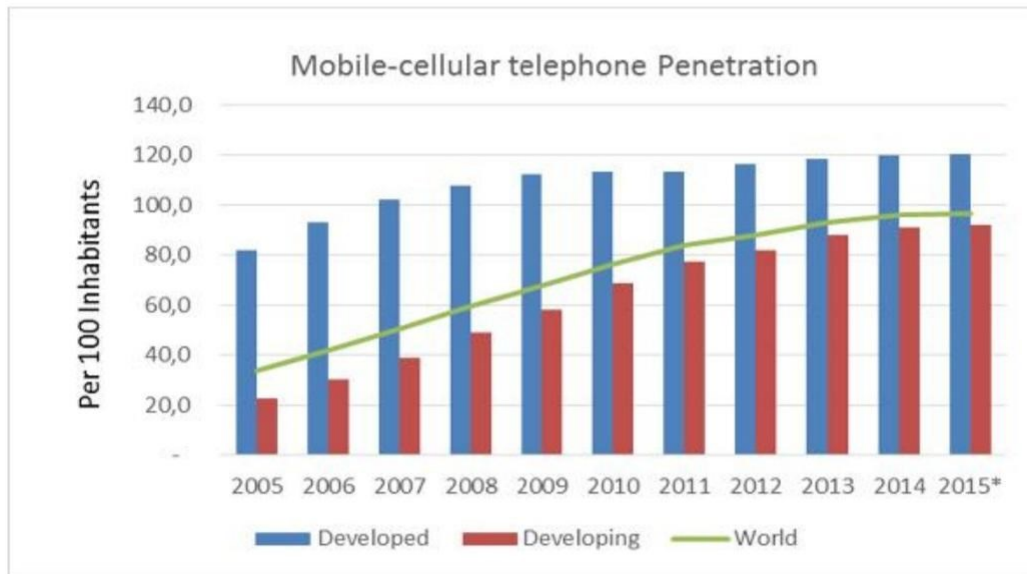


Figure 3: Mobile-cellular telephone penetration in rural regions (Adediran et al., 2016)

The Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF) was established by the Nigerian government to address the connectivity gap in unreached regions, funded by the telecom operators in supporting the rollout of services in rural communities. However, the impact of the USPF has been limited due to factors such as bureaucratic delays, corruption, and inadequate project monitoring (Adediran et al., 2016).

Comparative Analysis

Telecommunications have become an essential driver of economic development in Africa. It facilitates communication, enhances business operations, and improves access to information (Gillwald, 2005). The privatization of the telecom sector has emerged as a key strategy adopted by many African nations to attract investment, improve service delivery, and foster competition. This study will critically evaluate Nigeria's approach to the privatization of its telecommunications sector in comparison to other African countries and international standards of telecom liberalization. By examining the successes and challenges faced by these countries, valuable insights into the effectiveness of various privatization strategies and their implications for the future of telecommunications in Africa can be discovered.

This essay will compare the privatization experiences of South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya, and assess Nigeria's approach to global best practices.

South Africa: A Pioneer in Telecom Privatization

South Africa was one of the pioneering countries in Africa to start privatizing its telecommunications sector (Gillwald, 2005). The government began this process in the mid-1990s, resulting in the creation of Telkom South Africa as a public-private partnership. The main goals of this privatization were to enhance service quality, increase access, and encourage competition within the sector. A significant achievement of South Africa's approach was the rapid growth of mobile telecommunications. The entry of mobile operators such as Vodacom and MTN brought significant changes to the market, enhancing access to services, especially in rural areas. The competition introduced by these new players led to better service provision and reduced prices for consumers (Gillwald, 2005). Nevertheless, obstacles like regulatory issues and the digital divide continued to exist, underscoring the necessity for continual reforms and infrastructure investment.

Despite the challenges, South Africa's experience shows the potential benefits of privatization when combined with effective regulatory frameworks. The creation of the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) played a crucial role in supervising the sector and ensuring fair competition (Lesame, 2000). This regulatory body has played a crucial role in monitoring and addressing issues regarding market dominance and consumer protection, thereby contributing to the overall success of the privatization process.

Ghana's Telecom Privatization

In Ghana, this process started in the late 1990s, with the government aiming to liberalize the sector and attract foreign investment. The establishment of the National Communications Authority (NCA) was a significant step in regulating the industry and promoting competition (Alhassan, 2003). The NCA played a crucial role in creating an environment for private operators to thrive, which has been instrumental in shaping Ghana's telecom landscape. Ghana's approach is marked by the successful entry of multiple mobile operators, leading to significant improvements in service quality and affordability. The competition among operators has driven down prices and increased access to telecommunications services, especially in urban areas (Gillwald, 2005).

The telecom sector in Ghana has seen significant growth due to the introduction of innovative services like mobile banking and internet access (Alhassan, 2003). However, challenges persist, particularly in rural areas where connectivity barriers still exist. It is crucial to invest in underserved areas and improve infrastructure to ensure that the benefits of privatization are fairly distributed across the country. Moreover, regulatory challenges, such as ensuring compliance with service quality standards, need to be addressed to maintain consumer trust and satisfaction.

Kenya: Innovation and Mobile Money

Kenya's experience with telecom privatization is remarkable due to the rapid growth of mobile money services, such as M-Pesa. The privatization process started in the early 2000s

when the government permitted private operators to enter the market. This resulted in a significant increase in mobile subscriptions and the introduction of innovative services that have transformed the financial landscape in Kenya (Ngugi et al., 2010).

The success of M-Pesa not only improved access to financial services but also contributed to economic empowerment, especially for women and small businesses. The ability to conduct financial transactions via mobile phones revolutionized the way Kenyans engage with the economy, providing a lifeline for many who previously lacked access to traditional banking services. This innovation positioned Kenya as a leader in mobile financial services, attracting attention and investment from around the world (Waema, 2013). However, the Kenyan market is challenged by regulatory concerns and the need for continued investment in infrastructure to support the growing demand for services. As the market matures, the government must navigate the complexities of regulation to ensure that innovation continues while protecting consumers and maintaining fair competition. Kenya's experience underscores the importance of fostering an environment encouraging innovation while addressing the regulatory challenges that arise in a rapidly evolving sector (Adediran et al., 2016).

Nigeria: A Comparative Perspective

In Nigeria, there has been significant growth in mobile subscriptions and the entry of multiple operators. Challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, regulatory inconsistencies, and market fragmentation have prevented the full realization of the benefits of privatization. However, there has been tremendous growth in the percentage of the population embracing Internet services, highlighting the positive trajectory of the sector in the future.

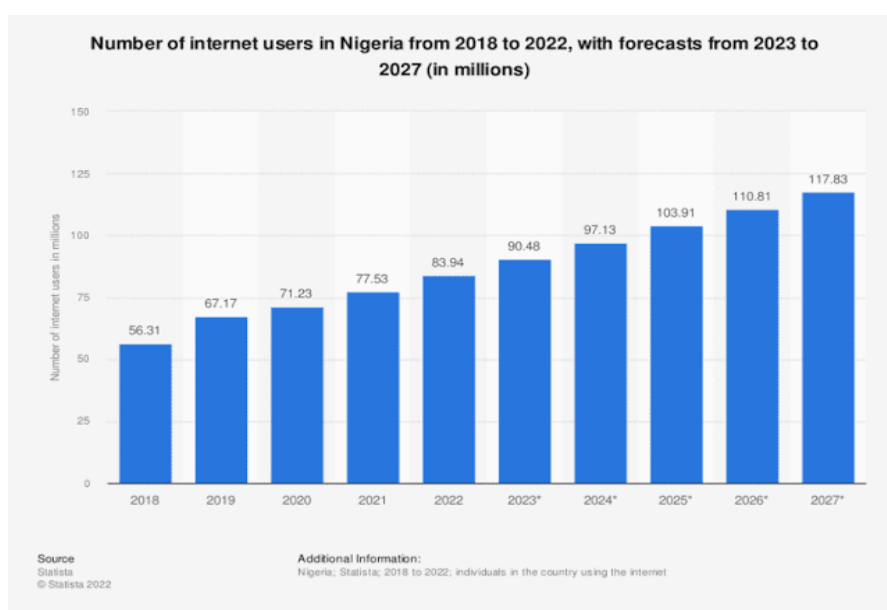


Figure 4: Number of internet users in Nigeria from 2018 to 2022 (Gillwald, 2005)

When compared to South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya, it becomes evident that Nigeria's privatization efforts have encountered more obstacles. The fragmented nature of the market, with numerous operators competing for a share, has led to difficulties in maintaining service standards and ensuring consumer protection. Furthermore, the absence of a strong regulatory framework has contributed to issues such as poor service quality and high prices for consumers. The figure below gives better insight on the impact of an efficient regulatory body on the cost of bandwidth accessed by consumers.

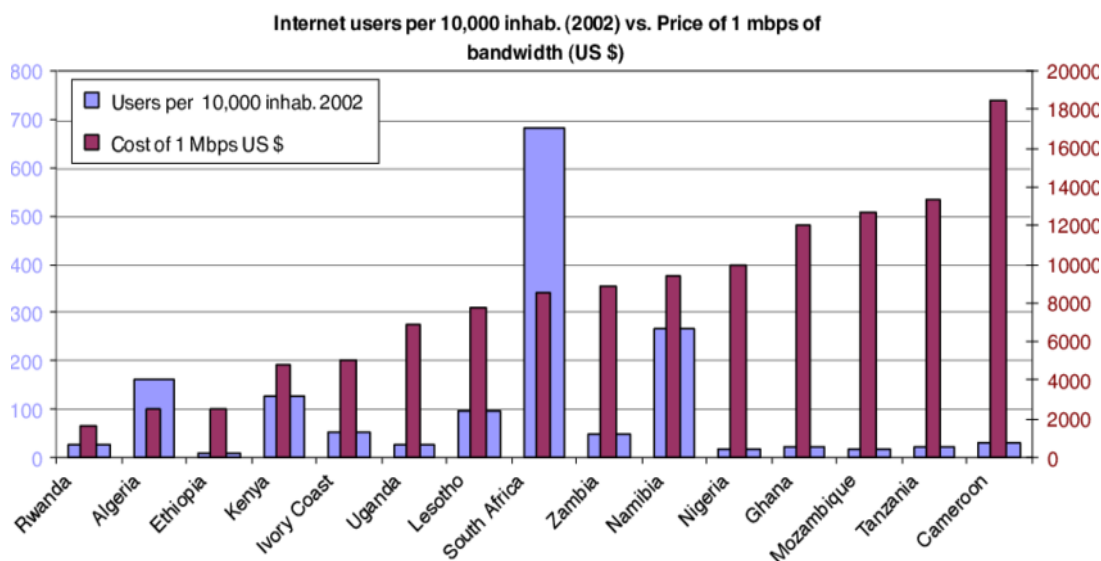


Figure 5: Comparative assessment of bandwidth price among African countries (Gillwald, 2005).

Despite the challenges, Nigeria's telecom sector has demonstrated resilience and potential for growth. The growing penetration of mobile services and the emergence of digital platforms suggest that there are opportunities for improvement and innovation. However, for Nigeria to bring its telecom sector in line with global best practices, it needs to prioritize establishing a supportive regulatory environment and investing in infrastructure development.

Policy Implications and Future Outlook

Nigeria's telecom sector has improved ever since it was privatized, resulting in significant advancements in network penetration, service access, and economic growth. However, the sector can only reach its full potential when persisting challenges and adaptation of new trends are addressed by future policies (Ijewere & Gbandi, 2012). This section discusses opportunities for growth, regulatory reforms, and the government's role in sustaining the gains of privatization.

Opportunities for Growth***5G Rollout***

The next-generation mobile network, 5G, promises a faster speed, improved connectivity, and reduced latency. The introduction of this 5G technology into the telecom sector offers a significant chance for growth and expansion (EngineeringA2z, 2023). These features may drive digital transformation across several industries by supporting advanced applications like smart cities, Internet of Things (IoT) devices, and autonomous vehicles.

- **Economic Impact:** The deployment of 5G can increase Nigeria's GDP by fostering new business opportunities and increasing productivity. On a wider scale, 5G is expected to contribute an additional \$11 billion to the economy of Sub-Saharan Africa in 2030 (GSMA, 2023).
- **Challenges:** With the great potential of the 5G network, there are some foreseen difficulties if the 5G is deployed into the system. Some of the obstacles include erecting large infrastructure and spectrum allocation as part of the requirement. To prevent the widening of the digital divide, policies should be put in place to ensure the 5G implementation reaches both urban and rural areas (Ekpe et al., 2021).

Expansion of Broadband Services

Another essential niche for growth is broadband expansion. Enhancing access to high-speed internet connections can support digital services that have become important in a post-COVID-19 world like e-learning, e-commerce, and telemedicine.

- **Investment in Infrastructure:** To improve broadband penetration, especially in remote areas, expanding fibre-optic networks and utilizing satellite networks is needed (Sowande et al., 2022). Public-private investments can play a significant role in financing infrastructure development.
- **Rural Connectivity:** To bridge the digital access gap between urban and rural areas, expanding broadband services to remote regions remains a significant step. This effort will involve reducing barriers to entry for smaller providers and incentivizing investments in remote areas.

Mobile Financial Services and Digital Payments

Nigeria can leverage the telecom infrastructure to promote financial inclusion by offering digital payment services and mobile banking services given its high rate of mobile penetration. Services like mobile money, which reach the unbanked population, have contributed to the significant growth of this sector over the years (Adewale, 2024).

- **Fintech Integration:** Collaboration between Telecom companies and financial technology firms will provide smooth digital financial services and foster economic inclusion. Policy frameworks that support mobile money services should be established. Additionally, to protect consumers, maintain financial stability, and

promote innovation, regulatory clarity is needed to manage mobile money services effectively.

Regulatory Reforms

Regular improvements to tackle uprising challenges and maintain the sector's competitive advantage due to its dynamic nature are a necessity (Ijewere & Gbandi, 2012).

Quality of Service Standards

The quality of service remains an issue despite the improvement in network coverage. Issues like outages and unsatisfactory continuing experiences are often seen. Service quality regulations should be strengthened to hold operators responsible and improve service delivery.

- **Performance Benchmarks:** The NCC has to exercise its authority by establishing standards that are more stringent regarding network quality and imposing penalties on operators that flout them. Periodic public reporting and performance audits can improve telecom services.
- **Consumer Redress Mechanisms:** The quality of service will likely improve if customers had adequate channels for handling complaints. There should be explicit rules for resolving disputes set by regulatory agencies.

Addressing Market Concentration

A few major players dominate Nigeria's telecom market, which creates a reduced level of competition and affects pricing. Regulatory reforms can promote a more competitive market environment by advocating the entry of new players handling anti-competitive practices like spectrum allocation policies and supporting an alternative internet provider.

Strengthening Data Protection and Privacy

With increasing digitization, data privacy has become a critical issue. Regulatory reforms should focus on ensuring that telecom companies adhere to global best practices in data protection by implementing Data Privacy Laws, enforcing them, and setting cybersecurity standards to protect user data.

Government's Role Going Forward

The Nigerian government will continue playing a vital role in sustaining and improving the gains from telecom privatization. It must create an environment that enables the support of growth while protecting the interest of consumers (Okafor, 2007). This can be implemented by promoting digital inclusion; ensuring the benefits of telecom privatization are equitably shared. The government should prioritize initiatives that bring connectivity to marginalized communities. Community-based programs, like public Wi-Fi hotspots in libraries and schools, can improve internet access in rural and remote areas. Additionally,

providing data and call subsidies for users in rural areas, can help bridge the urban-rural divide (Masonta, 20223).

Conclusion

Summary of the key findings

The privatization of telecommunications in Nigeria's telecom sector has been transformative, significantly giving a new shape to the industry and producing considerable economic, social, and technological advancements (Tvaronaviciene & Kalasinskaite, 2019). The process kicked off in the early 2000s with the issuance of GSM licenses, removing the previous government monopoly led by NITEL and bringing in a competitive, private sector-driven market. The results have been significantly notable across several sectors as is seen in the economic growth the country experienced after privatization. The telecoms sector became one of the largest contributors to the GDP of Nigeria, boasting over 14% of the output of the economy in 2023, partly because of the investment from outside companies. It also brought the entry of private players such as MTN, Glo, and Airtel, and this greatly improved the availability and quality of telecom services (EngineeringA2z, 2023). The penetration of mobile networks increased from below 1% pre-privatization to over 90% in 2023. There is now access to telecom services across urban and rural areas, albeit with ongoing challenges in reaching some remote regions. Additionally, the industry has enhanced technological development with the implementation of 2G, 3G, 4G, and the rollout of 5G networks. This development has taken Nigeria's digital transformation to the next level, promoting improvements in digital services like e-commerce, e-health, and mobile banking.

Despite these achievements and developments, there are still several challenges to be handled, like service affordability, uneven rural coverage, and regulatory challenges. There is a need for targeted policy measures and reforms.

Recommendations

For the Government: Strengthening Regulations and Ensuring Digital Inclusion

There should be a reinforcement of regulatory measures to establish consistent service quality and consumer protection. The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) should introduce a stricter quality benchmark, improved consumer complaints resolution mechanisms, and monitor operator compliance. Digital inclusion initiatives should also be taken as a priority through public policies that facilitate telecom services to unreached regions. Programs promoting subsidies for network expansion in rural communities can close the urban-rural digital divide.

For Telecom Companies: Invest in Network Infrastructure

Telecom companies should improve their services, making them more reliable by investing in the growth and modernization of network infrastructure. To remain competitive and

meet the demands of the customers, investments in 5G network and broadband expansion are essential. Marked attention should be paid to customer service and quality standards for businesses to ensure high-quality service delivery, minimize service outages, and improve customer satisfaction. By meeting and surpassing the regulatory requirements set by the NCC, operators can expand their market share and gain the trust of customers. Telecom companies should also put measures in place to improve network coverage in rural areas by deploying affordable solutions like satellite broadband to expand rural connectivity efforts. Collaborating with the government on digital inclusion projects can also facilitate expansion.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the comprehensive nature of this study, several limitations were encountered:

1. **Limited Access to Data:** Some financial and operational reports of telecom companies were either unavailable or restricted due to confidentiality concerns, limiting a full analysis of industry performance.
2. **Regulatory Constraints:** Inconsistent policy implementation and regulatory changes over the years made it difficult to draw clear comparisons between pre- and post-privatization periods.
3. **Lack of Granular Data on Rural Coverage:** While general improvements in telecom penetration were analyzed, obtaining detailed rural-specific data remained a challenge due to inadequate reporting by service providers.

Suggestions for Further Studies

To build on the findings of this study, future research should consider:

- i. A more extended time-series analysis incorporating multiple economic cycles could provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of telecom privatization.
- ii. Also, examining the privatization of telecom sectors in similar economies (e.g., Ghana, Kenya, South Africa) can help contextualize Nigeria's experience within a broader regional framework can also unravel relevant information.
- iii. Furthermore, future studies should assess how telecom privatization has influenced Nigeria's digital economy, including fintech growth, e-commerce, and ICT-driven entrepreneurship.
- iv. Researchers can also look into investigating the role of 5G, artificial intelligence (AI), and blockchain in shaping the future of Nigeria's telecom industry.

These areas of further research will provide deeper insights into the sustainability of privatization reforms and inform future policy decisions.

Final Thoughts

In conclusion, the privatization of Nigeria's telecommunications sector has led to significant achievements, yet sustained efforts are essential to maintain this momentum. By prioritizing inclusive growth, investing in technology, and ensuring equitable access,

Nigeria can fully realize the potential of its telecommunications industry. This approach not only promises to enhance the quality of life for citizens but also strengthens Nigeria's standing as a competitive player in the global economy. By embracing these broader implications, the benefits of privatization can extend beyond economic metrics, fostering a more connected, innovative, and resilient society.

Disclosure Statement

The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.

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