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**POST COVID-19 INTERNET UTILIZATION IN MTN  
COMMUNICATIONS NIGERIA LTD: OPPORTUNITIES AND  
CHALLENGES.**

**BY**

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## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The outbreak of Corona Virus Disease in China in 2019 ( COVID-19) came with several unprecedented results which brought a lot of changes in the way things are currently done in the world. During the pandemic, millions of people lost their lives and there was palpable fear the world over that the pandemic could exterminate the human race if not arrested. Baker & Wilson (2020) in their research concluded that the pandemic could cause unprecedented loss of lives if not arrested. They expressed fear that more lives would be lost if the vaccination efforts in the world failed to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

While scientists frantically researched a solution to the virus, social and economic activities worldwide were practically stopped. Due to people's fear of leaving their houses and government orders urging people to stay home to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, several major retailers and businesses were forced to close temporarily or permanently. In extreme cases, governments ordered their citizens to be locked down in their homes to minimize the spread of the virus.

The lockdown and restriction of movements during the pandemic impacted all the activities in the world including health, education, business, the use of the internet, etc. It changed the world introducing new ways of doing things for individuals, business entities, and governments. As a result, companies had to find another way of getting their jobs done and this led to an increase in the use of the internet as some companies made provision for internet access for their staff to work from home.

Governments and big companies were forced to adapt to work-from-home setups to continue operating productively and efficiently. Some businesses that had direct contact with customers temporarily closed their doors and shifted their attention to Internet trading. Some companies that could not adapt to the changes necessitated by COVID-19 were forced into financial crises during the period and some did not recover from such setbacks even after the lockdown.

When the COVID-19 SAGA subsided, the world gradually came out of the 'lockdown' and movement restriction as businesses and offices returned to normal operations while workers returned to their jobs. However, some government parastatals and firms that adopted work-from-home during the COVID period did not completely return to the pre-COVID normal. They adopted work from home and/or a hybrid of working from both office and their homes as their new normal.

COVID-19 has fundamentally altered the global business landscape, presenting opportunities and challenges. Seetharaman et al. (2020) and Bolisani et al. (2021) both established that working from home became a normal practice during the pandemic.

For Nigerian companies, including MTN Communications Limited, the post-COVID-19 changes have presented significant opportunities. Before COVID-19, MTN staff operated primarily from centralized office locations, and internet usage within the company was mainly geared toward enhancing internal communications, customer support, and service delivery. Productivity was largely driven by physical interactions among the staff while the internet was a supplementary work tool.

However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a dramatic increase in reliance on internet services as remote work became the norm in MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd. The company quickly adapted by leveraging digital platforms and remote collaboration tools to ensure business continuity. The sudden change in the use of the internet placed immense pressure on the company's internet infrastructure, with staff productivity becoming heavily dependent on access to the internet. These changes opened new opportunities but, introduced some challenges such as cybersecurity threats.

After the pandemic, MTN partially retained the remote work arrangement introduced during the pandemic as they now operate a hybrid work arrangement in most of their units. Internet utilization remains a critical component of normal business operations as staff need access to the internet to work remotely. This comes with some challenges and there is a need for MTN to continue to leverage Internet services for improved staff productivity while addressing the associated challenges.

This study aims to fill the gap in knowledge about the opportunities that came from increased internet utilization post-COVID-19 and the associated challenges. In MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd. The research will provide insights into the opportunities created by increased internet usage, the challenges faced in the post-pandemic era, and how MTN can optimize internet services for sustained staff productivity and market dominance. This study is expected to benefit MTN's management, employees, and other organizations that adopted remote/hybrid work practices. The study can also contribute to academic research and policy discussions on the future of work in today's digital age.

Bharadwaj et al (2020) and Barnes (2020) in their findings show that increased reliance on the Internet comes with its benefits and opportunities as well as challenges such as cyber security threats, poor staff productivity, and high operating costs.

However, no study known to the researcher has investigated the post-COVID-19 internet utilization opportunities and challenges in MTN Communications Nigeria Limited. This is the lacuna that this study filled.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the opportunities and challenges of post-COVID-19 internet utilization in MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd. The research will focus on how internet services were utilized before and after the pandemic and how they have impacted staff productivity.

#### **THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:**

1. To consider how staff utilized the internet in MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd. BEFORE and AFTER COVID-19
2. To determine opportunities in internet utilization in MTN Communications Nigeria Limited BEFORE and AFTER COVID-19.
3. To examine the challenges of post-COVID-19 in internet utilization by staff in MTN Communications Nigerian Ltd BEFORE and AFTER.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

These three research questions were posed to guide the study.

1. How did staff utilize the internet in MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd. BEFORE and AFTER COVID-19?
2. What are the opportunities for internet utilization in MTN Communications Nigeria Limited BEFORE and AFTER COVID-19?
3. What are the challenges of post-COVID-19 in internet utilization in MTN Communications Nigerian Ltd BEFORE and AFTER COVID-19?

#### **HYPOTHESIS:**

- Ho1:** There is no significant difference in how staff utilized the internet services in MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd., BEFORE and AFTER COVID-19.
- Ho2:** There is no significant difference in the opportunities in internet service utilization in MTN Communications Nigeria Limited, BEFORE and AFTER COVID-19.
- Ho3:** There is no significant difference in the internet utilization challenges in MTN Communications Nigeria Limited, Before and After COVID-19

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focused on MTN Communications Nigeria Limited and data was collected from MTN staff in various MTN locations in Nigeria. The staff were randomly selected from different departments and cadres in MTN Communications Nigeria branches. The study focused on internet usage before, during, and after COVID-19.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a significant acceleration in digital transformation worldwide. It made Remote work a necessity, and internet usage spiked across industries (Bolisani et al., 2020). Studies by Seetharaman (2020) and Mills et al (2021) highlighted how companies had to innovate rapidly to adapt to the new norm occasioned by the pandemic. Remote communication platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams also gained much popularity across industries post-pandemic.

MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd, a leading telecom provider in Africa, like other companies worldwide, was also affected by the pandemic. The use of the internet-enabled MTN to enhance service delivery, expand market reach, and foster innovation during and after the pandemic.

Available Research shows that remote work provides a flexible working environment, increases employee job satisfaction, provides a better work-life balance, improves employee productivity, and ultimately enhances customer service to the company's numerous customers.

On the other hand, research has also highlighted that increased internet utilization comes with the risk of cybersecurity threats, such as data breaches, hacking, and malware attacks. A report by Kaspersky (2023) emphasized the need for telecom companies to invest significantly in cybersecurity measures to protect customer data and maintain trust. Poor internet infrastructure in many African regions, as noted by Abubakar & Adeoye (2023), also impacts MTN's ability to provide high-speed internet uniformly, especially in rural areas where infrastructures are inadequate.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire-based survey was conducted targeting MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd employees across different departments to achieve the research objectives. I also interviewed some MTN employees to gather information for this study. The survey aimed to compare internet utilization in MTN Communications Ltd before and after the COVID-19 pandemic and outline the opportunities and challenges associated with internet usage.

A random sampling technique was used to select 150 respondents from various job roles, cadres, and locations in MTN Communications Ltd. The respondents were drawn from IT, administrative, and customer service departments. This population represented various internet usage patterns across the company in line with their respective job roles. I was also able to interview some staff ranging from senior managers, team leads to support officers in the course of this research.

The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents using emails while the interviews were done through phone calls or one-on-one conversations in their office.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

1. Staff utilization of Internet services in MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd.  
This section focused on the frequency and purpose of internet use before and after the COVID-19 Pandemic.
2. Opportunities in Internet Utilization in MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd before and after COVID-19:  
This section examined perceived opportunities in using the Internet for improved productivity, efficiency, innovation, and customer service in MTN Communications Ltd.
3. Challenges of Internet Utilization by Staff in MTN Communications Ltd Before and After COVID-19.  
This section dealt with challenges before and after the pandemic, such as cybersecurity concerns, infrastructure limitations, work-life balance, and technological skill gaps.



## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS:

The data for this study were collected through responses to the questionnaires sent out to various MTN staff and some were orally interviewed. The respondent's identities were not included in the questionnaire to ensure honest and accurate responses. Some organizational reports were also studied to get more information about internet utilization in MTN.

Most of the staff contacted responded to the survey.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential methods, including chi-square tests, to evaluate the hypotheses.

The survey results are presented in three parts according to the research objectives.

### 1. Internet Utilization Before and After COVID-19

- 80% of the respondents indicated that internet usage in MTN Communications Ltd increased significantly after COVID-19, especially for remote work and communication.
- 60% of the respondents confirmed they used the internet primarily for internal communication and customer support before the COVID-19 pandemic. The result revealed that after the pandemic 85% of internet usage was for remote work, remote collaboration, online meetings, and real-time customer support.
- Statistical analysis (chi-square test) revealed a significant difference in internet utilization before and after the pandemic, with a p-value of 0.002. Therefore, the null hypothesis (HO1) was Rejected.

### 2. Opportunities in Internet Utilization:

- 70% of employees who responded to the questionnaire believed the pandemic presented new opportunities for leveraging internet services for remote work and improved collaboration.
- 80% of the respondents agreed that internet utilization for remote work after COVID-19 improved employees' work/life balance and staff productivity
- The chi-square test showed a significant difference in perceived opportunities (p-value of 0.005) so the null hypothesis (HO2) was Rejected.

### 3. Challenges in Internet Utilization:

- 55% of respondents revealed that challenges such as network instability and cybersecurity threats increased after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 40% of the employees said Internet Utilization for remote work during and after COVID-19 reduced teamwork and collaboration.
- The analysis revealed a significant difference in internet utilization challenges before and after COVID-19 (p-value of \*0.010\*), therefore, the null hypothesis (HO3) was Rejected.

## DISCUSSION

The research findings show that internet utilization at MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd increased significantly after the onset of COVID-19, in line with global trends in digital transformation. The COVID-19 pandemic gave rise to the full adoption of internet-based work tools in business activities in many organizations including MTN Nigeria Communication Ltd. This practice continued after COVID-19 and has created the opportunity for Remote/hybrid work. This has resulted in an improvement in staff work/life balance and increased staff productivity. The respondents also confirmed that the use of the Internet has made communication and collaboration among MTN staff easier. However, these benefits came with some challenges. The increased reliance on the internet exposed MTN Communications to vulnerabilities in infrastructure and cybersecurity, highlighting the need for stronger IT support and policies. The findings also indicate that employees faced increased connectivity issues due to the constant digital connectivity demanded by remote work.

The opportunities arising from internet usage which include increased work flexibility, increased staff productivity, and easier communication and collaboration suggest that MTN can continue to leverage internet services to maintain a competitive edge in the Nigerian communication industry. However, the company should address the identified challenges to ensure sustainable digital operations market dominance.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This study examined the utilization of the Internet in MTN Communications Nig Ltd before and after COVID-19 as well as the opportunities and challenges that came with increased Internet utilization due to the pandemic. MTN staff relied more on the Internet for remote work, collaboration, and virtual meetings during the COVID lockdown and has continued in that manner thereafter. This has presented opportunities such as increased employee productivity and enhanced connectivity but also brought challenges such as cybersecurity threats and strain on digital infrastructures.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic brought about a significant increase in internet usage in MTN Communications Ltd.

In conclusion, this research emphasizes the need for MTN to continue to improve its internet infrastructures and encourage more flexible work schedules to enjoy the full benefits arising from post-COVID-19 internet usage.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Based on the results of this research, it is recommended that MTN invests in stronger cybersecurity protocols to safeguard their data in the face of increased post-COVID-19 internet usage. They should also invest more in internet infrastructures to make up for the increased bandwidth demand by their internal and external customers to ensure network stability.
2. MTN should continue to support remote/hybrid work by employees where appropriate to continue for a better work-life balance for employees and overall increased productivity.

## **IMPLICATION**

MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd can leverage the opportunities from the post-COVID-19 internet utilization, and mitigate challenges arising for sustainable growth and enhanced employee productivity.

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### INSTRUMENT FOR THE STUDY

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS DESIGNED TO EXAMINE THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES ARISING FROM THE POST-COVID-19 INTERNET UTILIZATION IN MTN COMMUNICATIONS LTD IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A DOCTORATE IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT BY THE LEARN TO LIVE BUSINESS SCHOOL ENUGU.

YOUR RESPONSE WILL PROVIDE VALUABLE INPUT TO HELP IN UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF THE INCREASED INTERNET UTILIZATION ON THE EMPLOYEES OF MTN LTD AND MTN COMMUNICATION LTD AS A COMPANY. THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS PURELY FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES AND YOUR RESPONSES WILL BE TREATED WITH STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY.

Thank You

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#### SECTION 1: RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHICS

TICK as appropriate

Department ☐ Marketing/sales ☐ IT/Technical ☐ Customer Service  
☐ Human Resources ☐ Operation

Your role in MTN Communications Ltd ☐ Management ☐ Technical Staff  
☐ Administrative Staff ☐ Sales/Marketing Staff ☐ Customer Service Staff

Years of Experience at MTN Communications Ltd ☐ 1-3 years ☐ 4-6 years  
☐ 7-10 years ☐ 11-15 years ☐ Over 15 years



Cluster 1: Staff utilization of Internet services in MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd.

		BEFORE COVID-19					AFTER COVID -19				
S/N		SA	A	N	D	SD	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Internet services were utilized at MTN Communications Ltd before COVID-19										
2	Internet utilization at MTN Communications Ltd remained the same after COVID-19.										
3	Internet utilization at MTN Communications Ltd increased moderately during and after COVID-19.										
4	Internet utilization at MTN Communications Ltd increased significantly after COVID-19.										
5	Internet utilization at MTN Communications Ltd decreased moderately after COVID-19.										
6	Internet utilization at MTN Communications Ltd decreased significantly after COVID-19.										
7	Internet utilization in MTN was mainly for internal communication and customer support before COVID-19.										
8	MTN staff utilize internet services to work remotely during and after COVID-19										
9	Internet services utilized for meetings and collaborations by MTN staff increased after COVID-19.										

Cluster 2: Opportunities in Internet Utilization in MTN Communications Nigeria Limited BEFORE and AFTER COVID-19												
The following are opportunities in internet utilization at MTN Communications Nigeria Limited.		SA	A	N	D	SD		SA	A	N	D	SD
10	Internet utilization at MTN Communications Ltd has presented new opportunities for leveraging Internet services for remote work and improved collaboration.											
11	The internet has made communication and collaboration among MTN staff easier after COVID-19.											
12	Internet utilization at MTN helped to create flexible working conditions (remote/hybrid work) during and after COVID-19.											
13	Internet utilization at MTN opened opportunities for increased productivity after COVID-19.											
14	Increased Internet utilization at MTN had a positive impact on staff productivity during COVID-19.											
15	Internet utilization at MTN for hybrid /remote work has positively impacted staff productivity.											
	Others Specify.....											
Cluster 3: Challenges of internet utilization by staff in MTN Communications Nigerian Ltd BEFORE and AFTER COVID-19												
I faced the following challenges in internet utilization at MTN Comm Nigerian Ltd.		SA	A	N	D	SD		SA	A	N	D	SD

I faced the following challenges in internet utilization at MTN Comm Nigerian Ltd.		SA	A	N	D	SD		SA	A	N	D	SD
16	MTN staff faced connectivity issues while using the internet before COVID-19											
17	Slow internet speed affected staff productivity before COVID-19.											
18	MTN experienced cybersecurity threats from staff internet utilization before COVID-19											
19	MTN staff experienced connectivity issues while working remotely during COVID-19											
20	Cybersecurity threats at MTN increased due to remote/hybrid work after COVID-19.											
21	Internet utilization after COVID-19 has reduced teamwork and collaboration in MTN.											
	MTN staff faced connectivity issues while using the internet during COVID-19											
	MTN staff faced connectivity issues while using the internet after COVID-19											
	MTN staff experienced connectivity issues while working remotely during and after COVID-19											

SA- strongly agree

A–Agree

N- Neutral

D- Disagree

SD- Strongly disagree

Thank you for your participation!