



Insights



FIXED BROADBAND EXPANSION DOMINATED BY MTN AS COMPETITORS STRUGGLE TO KEEP PACE

LEADERSHIP

Nigeria's fixed broadband segment has witnessed a significant expansion over the past year, with fresh industry data showing that the surge is largely driven by a single operator, leaving other players trailing. According to data from the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), fixed internet subscriptions experienced a dramatic increase, climbing from 14,053 in January 2025 to 124,590 by February 2026, which is a staggering rise of roughly 787 per cent over that period.

However, the growth trajectory reveals a highly concentrated market, with MTN Nigeria accounting for the overwhelming share of new connections. According to the data, MTN's FibreX fibre-to-the-home offering holds roughly 110,564 subscribers, which accounts for approximately 88.7 per cent of the overall fixed broadband market.

Industry analysts note that the operator's aggressive rollout and network investments have positioned it far ahead of competitors in a segment that has historically struggled to scale in Nigeria.

CRIMINAL CARTELS PLUNDER TELCO TOWERS ACROSS 14 STATES

BUSINESSDAY

Criminal networks have turned Nigeria's telecom towers into open-air warehouses for theft, looting 656 critical power assets across 14 states in 2025 alone and keeping up the pace in early 2026. At the same time, thieves made off with diesel in 1,344 separate incidents and cut fibre cables so often that operators recorded an average of 1,100 fibre cuts every week by late 2025.

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The 14 hardest-hit states, Delta, Rivers, Cross Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Ogun, Ondo, Edo, Lagos, Kogi, FCT, Kaduna, Niger, Osun and Kwara, have become the main battlegrounds.

In these places, armed gangs and opportunistic looters regularly raid active sites for anything they can sell: power cables, rectifiers, feeder cables, batteries, solar panels and diesel.





CRIMINAL CARTELS PLUNDER TELCO TOWERS ACROSS 14 STATES

The Nigerian telecommunications sector continues to suffer greatly as its operating environment presents itself to be very hostile. In 2025 alone, criminal elements across 14 states looted 656 critical power assets including 152 generators and 504 batteries from mobile sites, alongside 1,344 separate incidents of diesel theft and an average of 1,100 fibre cuts every week by late 2025. More concerning is that this trend is not showing any signs of slowing down. Cable theft jumped to 160 cases in January 2026 from 74 a year earlier, and fibre damage spiked 900 percent in January 2026 compared with the end of 2024, with theft and cuts triggering 88 major network outages in May 2025 alone.

These numbers paint a much more pressing challenge for the operations of Project Titan than other industry and competitive dynamics such as the emergence of satellite competition. It is one thing to plan for a competitor that plays by known rules; it is another thing entirely to plan for criminal networks that have essentially turned tower sites into shopping destinations, stripping generators, batteries, cables and diesel with a frequency and boldness that suggests they have assessed the risk and decided it is worth taking. ALTON chairman Gbenga Adebayo captured the frustration of the industry well when he noted that operators have been investing in network upgrades and optimisation, yet every stolen generator or cut fibre cable wipes out those gains. For Project Titan specifically, this matters beyond the immediate replacement cost. The business case for tower infrastructure rests on delivering reliable uptime to the operators leasing space on those sites.

Ntel must therefore make conscious efforts to ensure that there are significant investments in securing its assets from the outset rather than treating security as something to be addressed after the fact. This includes building sites in ways that reduce the appeal of what can be

stolen, whether through hybrid solar and battery configurations that eliminate the large diesel generators that are among the most frequently targeted assets, or through physical design choices that make access harder and removal slower. More importantly, Ntel through its membership of telecom operator groups and associations must continue to advocate loudly for better support from regulators and the public security architecture.

The NCC board chairman has signalled an accountability framework that would require anyone who damages telecom infrastructure to pay for repairs, and while this is a step in the right direction, the data makes clear that deterrence on paper has not yet translated into deterrence on the ground. Ntel's voice in those conversations, aligned with the broader industry through ALTON and ATCON, is one of the more practical tools available to push for enforcement that matches the scale of the problem.



FIXED BROADBAND EXPANSION DOMINATED BY MTN AS COMPETITORS STRUGGLE TO KEEP PACE

Nigeria's fixed broadband market has been transformed beyond recognition in the past thirteen months; however, this transformation has almost entirely belonged to one company. Total fixed subscribers jumped from 14,053 in January 2025 to 124,590 by February 2026, a 787 percent surge, but MTN FibreX now accounts for more than 110,564 of these connections, representing 88.7 percent of the entire market. What is most interesting about this story is that this period saw a drastic decline in the customer bases of existing providers.

For context, 21st Century saw its customer base almost wiped out, falling from 2,259 subscribers in April 2025 to just 81 in February 2026, a 96 percent loss, while SWIFT Networks, which had built

its customer base to 25,000 in late 2025, saw that figure eroded to around 14,000 by February 2026. MTN has captured the market and is acquiring customers at a very rapid pace, considering that MTN FibreX only launched in April 2025.

MTN's advantage is not difficult to understand. The company has the largest customer base in the sector and spent over N 1 trillion in capital expenditure in 2025, more than double the previous year. MTN benefits immensely from its extensive reach and brand equity, making it easier to acquire new customers and to convince the subscribers of other providers, many of whom have previously been disappointed with the quality of service received, to switch. What makes this even more significant for any new entrant is that MTN is not simply a fibre company that can be worked around by offering a wireless alternative like ntel's Tarana project. MTN plans to deploy a mix of technologies, including fixed wireless access and fibre to the home, depending on the economics and network capacity in each market, meaning it is already present across both approaches and has the resources to follow the money into any segment that shows real demand. A new entrant that underestimates this will find itself competing not just against MTN's product but against its distribution reach, its brand, and its ability to stay in a fight far longer than a smaller competitor can.

This market picture is simultaneously a warning and a validation of Ntel's strategies. The warning is clear: it is imperative that all service providers build a loyal customer base or risk experiencing what legacy fibre providers have just experienced. The only way to do so is to maintain a quality of service that keeps customers satisfied. Likewise, it is important that Ntel builds its range of products in a way that minimizes customer churn. By this, I mean that just as MTN has done, Ntel must build its brand and products to keep customers loyal by meeting them at their point of need. This approach ensures that customers not only stay with existing Ntel products but find picking up new ones entirely natural. The validation aspect of this story is that there is a real and pressing need for high speed, reliable connectivity among Nigerian individuals and firms. There is significant untapped value in attracting customers who are looking for internet connectivity for the first time; furthermore, by building its products with service quality at the forefront, Ntel can also attract customers from existing providers, as evidenced by MTN's disruptive entrance into the fibre market.