

Nigeria Telecom MNO - Market Share Analysis, Industry Trends & Statistics, Growth Forecasts (2026 - 2031)

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Report description:

Nigeria Telecom MNO Market Analysis

The Nigeria Telecom MNO Market size in 2026 is estimated at USD 4.76 billion, growing from 2025 value of USD 4.66 billion with 2031 projections showing USD 5.29 billion, growing at 2.12% CAGR over 2026-2031. This steady trajectory reflects tariff reforms that moved operators from defensive price caps toward sustainable pricing, expanding gross margins even as foreign-exchange volatility squeezes operating costs. Robust fiber deployments under Project Bridge, wider 5G roll-outs, and aggressive tower lease renegotiations are anchoring connectivity quality improvements that attract higher-value subscribers. Rapid migration from cash to mobile money, together with surging video streaming and gaming traffic, is shifting revenue mixes toward data-centric bundles. Strategic network-sharing pacts among incumbent operators signal a maturing competitive environment in which scale efficiencies outweigh legacy rivalry, positioning carriers to meet rising enterprise demand for ultra-reliable low-latency links.

Nigeria Telecom MNO Market Trends and Insights

Surging smartphone adoption and mobile-data demand

Smartphone penetration climbed to 58.2% of mobile subscribers in 2024, catalyzing a 33.6% year-on-year jump in average data usage to 10.9 GB per month. MTN Nigeria cut annual tower-related operating expenses by USD 70 million through revised energy indexing, channeling savings into 2,500 new 4G sectors. Sustained 42.9% data-traffic growth has accelerated backhaul upgrades and spawned device-financing schemes that improve handset affordability. Data services already cushion declining voice receipts,

accounting for 45.3% of service revenue in Q1 2025. Strong monetization of digital content, gaming, and ad-supported video suggests data-centric pricing will remain the primary revenue lever across the Nigeria telecom MNO market.

National Broadband Plan targeting 70% penetration by 2025

The Federal Ministry of Communications earmarked USD 2 billion for Project Bridge, a 90,000-km fiber backbone that reached 40% completion by mid-2025. The initiative slashes wholesale backhaul tariffs by up to 35%, unlocking last-mile investments by regional ISP consortia. IHS Towers added 10,000 km of new fiber during 2024, delivering diverse routes that lower latency for cloud workloads. Public-private co-build models, coupled with right-of-way fee waivers, have shaved deployment costs by 18% for operators committing to rural coverage milestones. Broadband adoption is now rising 7.4 percentage points annually, placing the 70% access target within reach and strengthening future cash-flow visibility for carriers.

Multiple taxation and complex regulatory fees

Telecom licensees shoulder 46 different federal, state, and municipal levies ranging from 7.5% VAT to right-of-way charges that add USD 0.60 per meter to fiber builds. Although the Federal Government scrapped a proposed 5% telecom tax in September 2025, overlapping demands continue to shrink EBIT margins by an estimated 200 basis points. MTN Nigeria contested a USD 135.7 million VAT assessment, underscoring audit ambiguities that deter capital inflows. Draft harmonization guidelines under the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission aim to consolidate fees into a single electronic window, yet timelines remain unclear. Prolonged uncertainty diverts managerial bandwidth from network expansion plans and clouds valuation benchmarks for potential new entrants into the Nigeria telecom MNO industry.

Other drivers and restraints analyzed in the detailed report include:

Rapid uptake of mobile money and fintech services 5G spectrum awards and early roll-outs by MTN and AirtelNaira devaluation inflating network opex

For complete list of drivers and restraints, kindly check the Table Of Contents.

Segment Analysis

Data and internet products accounted for 49.48% of Nigeria telecom MNO market share in 2025 as carriers pivoted toward digital experiences that monetize rising smartphone usage. The Nigeria telecom MNO market size for data services is projected to reach USD 2.75 billion by 2031 at a 2.98% CAGR, twice the growth velocity of legacy voice streams. Persistent appetite for video-on-demand and social commerce is accelerating 4G capacity upgrades in mid-band spectrum and hastening the deployment of cloud-native core networks. IoT and M2M solutions are set to be the fastest-growing revenue bucket, scaling at a 2.29% CAGR as enterprises automate supply chains, monitor cold-storage compliance, and deploy smart-metering at municipal utilities.

Voice still contributes more than USD 1 billion in annual gross turnover yet declined 6.8% year-on-year due to OTT substitution. Messaging revenue continues to recede but offers cross-sell opportunities through RCS-based marketing APIs. OTT video, cloud gaming, and Pay-TV saw renewed traction after regulatory approval for zero-rating educational content, which boosts inclusivity without cannibalizing premium bundles. Operators are sharpening content-curation partnerships to differentiate amid commoditized access. Wholesale backhaul leasing and international bandwidth resale collectively lifted other-services margins, providing incremental buffers against foreign-exchange shocks and supporting capital intensity ratios critical for sustaining the Nigeria telecom MNO market.

The Nigeria Telecom MNO Market Report is Segmented by Service Type (Voice Services, Data and Internet Services, Messaging

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Services, IoT and M2M Services, OTT and PayTV Services, Other Services), End-User (Enterprises, Consumer), and Geography. The Market Forecasts are Provided in Terms of Value (USD) and Volume (Subscribers).

List of Companies Covered in this Report:

MTN Nigeria Plc Airtel Networks Ltd (Airtel Nigeria) Globacom Ltd Emerging Markets Telecommunication Services Ltd (9mobile) Smile Communications Nigeria Ltd

Additional Benefits:

The market estimate (ME) sheet in Excel format

3 months of analyst support

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